

**PROMOTING ADAPTIVE SERVICE EXPERIENCE WITH INSPIRED
FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES - A Replication and Extension Study in Retailing**

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The President:

Prof. Dr. Manuel Ammann

*For my father,
Prof. Dr. Dieter Hauschke*

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Abstract

Delivering excellent service offerings is critical to physical retailers' long-term success. In this context, frontline employees (FLEs) have become the key players in creating value for customers and represent a key opportunity, particularly for service-focused retailers, to strengthen the future of physical retail. Facing changing consumer behaviors due to the aftermath of COVID-19 and increasingly fierce competition from established offline and new online competitors, physical retailers struggle to stay competitive without cutting payroll expenses for FLEs. In response to this dilemma, scholars recognized the importance of FLEs customizing their services to customer needs to enhance service interactions at the physical point of sale (POS) in so-called *adaptive service offerings*. Understanding the factors that affect adaptive service offerings, specifically in retail, is important because physical retail is heavily disrupted by the progressive shift from product to customer experience. As a result, retailers must educate FLEs on why and how to adapt service offerings and provide the right work settings. Consequently, physical retailers need to reengage with their customers by positioning themselves as providers of inspiring shopping experiences to increase their share of wallets, cross-selling, and profitability. FLEs are one important source of such inspiring shopping experiences. This dissertation contributes to a better understanding of how retailers can promote *FLE inspiration* by extending Wilder et al.'s (2014) study and testing a more comprehensive framework of adaptive service offerings that considers psychological mechanisms, namely FLE inspiration. My findings can help physical retailers train their FLEs more effectively. Building on the qualitative data from 293 FLEs in the DACH region (Study 1), two online survey studies were conducted, in the UK (Study 2) with 248 FLEs, and with 525 FLEs from the German-speaking DACH area (Study 3) to test this new model. The findings showed that FLE inspiration significantly mediates the effect of retailers' perceived service climate and FLEs' structural empowerment on three FLE variables, namely empathy, anticipation, and creativity. These three FLE-level variables precede adaptive service offerings. Most importantly, the combined findings of the three studies provide strong support for FLE inspiration mediating the relationship between FLEs' immediate work environment and their attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. These findings offer managers practical insights into how they can inspire their FLEs and improve service offering adaptation.

Abstract in German

Die Ereignisse der vergangenen Jahre haben den stationären Handel auf die Probe gestellt. Der langfristige Erfolg stationärer Handelsunternehmen hängt maßgeblich von der Exzellenz ihres Services ab. Besonders dem Verkaufspersonal kommt hierbei eine entscheidende Schlüsselrolle zu. Angesichts der drastischen Veränderungen im Konsumentenverhalten durch COVID-19 und einen sich verschärfenden Wettbewerb, haben stationäre Einzelhändler:innen Schwierigkeiten, ohne die Einsparung von Personalkosten am Markt existieren zu können. In Anbetracht diesen Dilemmas gewinnen individuelle Lösungen für die Servicebedürfnisse von Kund:innen am Verkaufsort weiterhin an Bedeutung. Insbesondere der Wandel vom Produktfokus hin zum Kundenerlebnis im Handel, verdeutlicht heute mehr denn je die zentrale Bedeutung des Verständnisses für die Erfolgsfaktoren von *adaptivem Verkaufsverhalten*. In diesem Kontext müssen stationäre Einzelhändler:innen die Schulung ihres Verkaufspersonals sicherstellen. Neben dem wie und warum eines adaptiven Verkaufsverhalten, müssen Händler:innen auch die dafür notwendigen strukturellen Arbeitsbedingungen schaffen.

Stationäre Einzelhändler müssen neue Wege finden, um mit ihren Kund:innen zu interagieren und ein inspirierendes Einkaufserlebnis anzubieten. Kundeninspiration verspricht die Ausgaben pro Kund:in zu erhöhen, Cross-Selling zu fördern und die Rentabilität von Handelsunternehmen zu verbessern. Besonders das Verkaufspersonal ist hierbei ein wichtiger Inspirationstreiber. Vor diesem Hintergrund setzt sich die vorliegende Dissertation zum Ziel, Auslöser von *Mitarbeiterinspiration*, sowie die daraus abgeleiteten Handlungsempfehlungen zu identifizieren, wie Mitarbeiterinspiration im stationären Handel gefördert werden kann. Zentraler Bestandteil hierbei ist es, die Studie von Wilder et al. (2014) um ein neues psychologisches Konstrukt (Mitarbeiterinspiration) zu erweitern. Dies soll dazu beitragen, ein aussagekräftigeres Untersuchungsmodell zum adaptiven Verkaufsverhaltens zu etablieren. Die Ergebnisse der qualitativen Erhebung im DACH-Raum (Studie 1; N = 293) sowie zweier online Befragungen im Vereinigten Königreich (Studie 2; N = 248) und der DACH-Region (Studie 3; N = 525) präsentiert Mitarbeiterinspiration als eine wichtige Zielgröße, zur Gewinnung neuer Impulse bei Mitarbeiter:innen während der Serviceerbringung. Es zeigt sich, dass ein Eigeninitiativen förderndes Serviceklima, sowie strukturelles

Empowerment auf Ebene des Verkaufspersonals, Mitarbeiterinspiration hervorrufe. Hierbei ergeben sich folglich positive Effekte für das Verhalten und die Einstellung von Mitarbeiter:innen (d.h. Empathie, Antizipation und Kreativität) während der Serviceerbringung. Mitarbeiterinspiration erweist sich als effektiver Hebel für stationäre Einzelhändler:innen, um ein adaptives Verkaufsverhalten trotz einschneidender Veränderungen im Konsumentenverhalten zu fördern.

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List of Abbreviations

AVE	average variance extracted
CFA	confirmatory factor analysis
CFI	confirmatory fit index
CI	confidence interval
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
et al.	et alia (and others)
FLE	frontline employee
i.e.	id est (that is)
IFI	incremental fit index
ML	maximum likelihood
POS	point of sale
RMSEA	root mean square error of approximation
SRMR	standardized root mean residual
TLI	Tucker-Lewis index

1 Introduction

1.1 Excellent Service Offerings Without Increasing Costs

In an era of rising e-commerce, with the metaverse comprising a new digital frontier driven by technological advances and unprecedented change (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2022), physical retailers are exposed to severe pressures from market competition (Evanschitzky et al., 2020; Grewal et al., 2021; Kumar & Pansari, 2014; Verhoef et al., 2023).¹ Rapid developments have markedly shifted the retail sector from a multichannel to an omnichannel agenda, influencing hybrid customers' shopping habits (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Mathur et al., 2008). Customers nowadays engage with retailers across a vast array of channels (Grewal et al., 2016; Verhoef et al., 2015). Consequently, consumers are reverting from straightforward, single-channel to sophisticated, network-like omnichannel purchasing habits that cover diverse offline and online touchpoints (Srinivasan et al., 2016). Moreover, customers increasingly engage in multifaceted shopping behavior (Kleinlecher et al., 2020), using physical stores to explore and test products and then buying them online for less (Fassnacht et al., 2019; Rudolph et al., 2021a). As a result, customers are becoming versatile (Edelman & Singer, 2015).

Today, customers have higher service expectations than in the past, and while they no longer settle for a one-size-fits-all service experience, they can equally easily forget good service experiences (Gauri et al., 2021; Wilder et al., 2014). According to Boston Retail Partners, 79% of customers identified the adaptability of frontline employees (FLEs) as an important factor in determining which physical store to shop at (Goldberg, 2020). Therefore, physical stores must devise strategies to successfully differentiate themselves from the fierce online competition, increasing product homogeneity, and price-matching policies (Evanschitzky et al., 2020; Grewal et al., 2021; Kumar & Pansari, 2014). This pressure is further compounded by the fact that the in-store shopping frequency has been declining steadily for years and affects almost all

¹ Hennig-Thurau et al. (2022, p. 889) defined the metaverse as a new computer-mediated environment consisting of virtual worlds in which people act and communicate with each other in real-time via digital representatives referred to as avatars.

physical retailers (Gode, 2021). In response to these challenges, physical retailers were compelled to determine how to provide excellent service offerings without increasing costs (Wilder et al., 2014). Consequently, the retailing sector has redirected its emphasis from products to customer experience as the primary differentiator of retailers (Neumüller, 2022). Understanding the factors that affect excellent service offerings, specifically in retail, is important because physical retail is being heavily disrupted and retailers must thus educate FLEs on how and when to adapt services and provide the right work settings for them to be able to do so (Rudolph, 2021; Wilder et al., 2014).

To further foster the service interaction quality and thereby enhance customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and physical stores' profitability, one strategy is to focus on FLEs' ability to adapt service offerings to customer needs at the physical point of sale (POS), with so-called *adaptive service offerings* (Homburg et al., 2009; Hughes et al., 2019). Gwinner et al. (2005) defined adaptive service offerings as "the deliberate modification of the service offering and/or the employee's interpersonal behavior in a situationally appropriate manner to meet perceived consumer needs" (p. 135). In so doing, FLEs adapt services by listening and responding to customer needs, which underlines the importance of the employee-customer relationship (Packard & Berger, 2021). Hence, physical retailers must enhance the attractiveness and experiential value of physical stores by investing in FLEs' capability to offer adaptive services (Grewal et al., 2021; Hoyer et al., 2020) and are thereby urged to leverage existing customer relationships (Zeithaml, 2000).

Given that retaining existing customers is typically more cost-effective than attracting new customers (Reinartz et al., 2005), marketers (e.g., IKEA, H&M) realize that they need to reengage with their customers by positioning themselves as providers of inspiring shopping experiences to increase their share of wallets, cross-selling, and profitability (Rudolph et al., 2023). For instance, Herhausen et al. (2019) found that for store-based customers in particular, inspiration is a key driver of loyalty, and thus customer inspiration may be a promising strategy for store-based retailers to survive in today's competition (Böttger et al., 2017; Kleinlercher et al., 2018; Rudolph et al., 2023). Customer inspiration is "a customer's temporary motivational state that facilitates the transition from the reception of a marketing-induced idea to the intrinsic pursuit of a consumption-related goal" (Böttger et al., 2017, p. 129). FLEs are one

important source of such inspiring shopping experiences because they are crucial in shaping customer service perceptions (Böttger et al., 2017; Rudolph et al., 2023).

Particularly, Neumüller (2022) clarified the relationship between FLEs and customer inspiration, demonstrating that inspired FLEs, more than merely satisfied FLEs, trigger customer inspiration and improve important attitudinal outcomes (e.g., customer loyalty). Inspired FLEs react to changes in their environment (e.g., shifts in consumer behavior) and behave more openly and proactively in a dynamic environment compared to less inspired FLEs (Baron et al., 2020). FLEs who do not simply adhere to classic service scripts but rather advise customers individually and focus on problem-solving through an excellent service offering play a key role in future differentiation (Kumar & Pansari, 2016), and inspiring FLEs thus have great potential for adapting services at the physical POS without incurring additional costs (Neumüller, 2022). Consequently, I will add an important perspective on adaptive service offerings in retail contexts by considering *FLE inspiration* (Neumüller, 2022). These new ideas help uncover customers' latent needs faster, solve service problems creatively, and promote excellent service offerings. While FLEs are instrumental in facilitating excellent service offerings, retailers must comprehend the psychological mechanisms that shape their attitudes along with their behaviors (Coelho et al., 2011).

The subsequent sections elaborate on the outbreak and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for retailers (Chapter 1.1.1) and the importance of FLEs for physical retailers (Chapter 1.1.2), before analyzing why physical retailers should seek to support FLEs with in-store technologies (Chapter 1.1.3). The threat of dominant in-store technology to the employee-customer relationship that physical retailers face is subsequently highlighted (Chapter 1.1.4), which suggests that FLE inspiration is an essential new concept to be explored in the context of adaptive service offerings (Chapter 1.1.5).

1.1.1 Retailing in a Crisis-Laden World

Apart from the challenges arising from intensive competition and hybrid consumer preferences, the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most dramatic external events in the past decade (Pantano et al., 2020; Shankar et al., 2021; Sheth, 2020; Verhoef et al., 2023). The large-scale and far-reaching interventions that were implemented to deal with the outbreak have not been observed in Western countries

since the end of the Second World War (Verhoef et al., 2023) and especially the service sectors, such as retail, were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic containment measures (Atmar et al., 2020; Berry et al., 2020; Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). The extent of the current disruption in modern retailing surpasses previous external shocks (i.e., recessions) or crises observed in the industry (Sheth, 2020). Many physical retailers in the “nonessentials” segment (e.g., those operating in the apparel sector) were forced to shut down their stores during the pandemic containment lockdowns (Verhoef et al., 2023). Moreover, discretionary consumer spending for nonessential products has plummeted (Rudolph et al., 2021b). At the same time, physical retailers of food or hygiene products have faced unexpected purchasing behaviors (e.g., hoarding toilet paper), heightened demand for DIY products, and increased online shopping (Verhoef et al., 2023). Now, as countries relax their COVID-19 restrictions, physical retailers must adjust to the new reality left in their wake.

Nevertheless, FLEs’ stress remains at a historic high, even as other negative emotions related to the COVID-19 pandemic subsided. This high level of stress may partly be due to the recovery itself, as many regions of the world struggle to control high inflation (Gallup, 2023). Customers are pessimistic about the general economic outlook and are holding back expenditures (Dekimpe & van Heerde, 2023). For example, Germany and Austria’s inflation rates were still high in the first half of 2023, at 6.1% and 8.8%, respectively (Allianz, 2023). Since FLEs’ stress affects their productivity and performance, physical retailers must address these concerns to expedite the recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic (Gallup, 2023; Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). Similarly, it will be necessary for physical retailers to understand the in-store experiences that customers are likely to value after the pandemic (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). Hence, the data shows that the retail sector is undergoing rapid reimagination and transformation due to shifts in customer buying habits stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak (Grewal et al., 2021). The novel behaviors adopted by consumers during the pandemic are likely to become the “new normal” (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). As a result, physical retailers need FLEs who are sensitized to constant changes and willing to find adaptive service solutions to respond appropriately in today’s turbulent environment (Rudolph et al., 2021b).

1.1.2 Importance of Frontline Employees to Retailers

FLEs who serve as the face of the physical retailer are critical assets and vital for a company's success (Grewal et al., 2021; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Jung et al., 2022). They recognize and respond to customers' needs and are the human face of a physical retailer and a key determinant of perceived service quality that can set a physical retailer apart from its competition (Gauri et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Moreover, they play a significant role in delivering outstanding service quality as well as shaping in-store shopping experiences (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Grönroos, 2020; Holmqvist et al., 2019; Mägi, 2003; Sok et al., 2021; Volmer et al., 2012). FLEs also gather valuable market information directly from customers (Rapp et al., 2015), generate ideas for improving services (Lages & Piercy, 2012), realize innovative services at the POS (Cadwallader et al., 2010), convey changing customer requirements and potential enhancements in customer service internally (Bettencourt et al., 2005), facilitate institutional transformation (Ahearne et al., 2010), and elevate service recovery (Van der Heijden et al., 2013). Consequently, FLEs are crucial for maintaining a competitive advantage, differentiating a brand (Siriani et al., 2013), and driving physical retailers' success (Chebat et al., 2002; Chung & Schneider, 2002; Evanschitzky et al., 2012; Hartline et al., 2000; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Mende & Noble, 2019).

However, most of the world's FLEs are currently engaged in "quiet quitting,"² and over 75% of FLEs today have little emotional attachment to their employers (Gallup, 2023).³ FLEs are often under-compensated, insufficiently skilled, overburdened, and extremely overwhelmed (Dreison et al., 2018; Singh, 2000). Overall, Gallup (2023) estimated that 44% of FLEs experienced a great deal of daily stress, repeating the record high observed in 2021 (i.e., 44% daily stress) and continuing a trend of elevated stress. The relatively high levels of stress FLEs report result from the lack of attractiveness of the sector due to the rather low wages and unfavorable working hours that depend on store opening times (Rudolph, 2021). Key tasks in the stores

² Gallup (2023, p. 4) defined quiet quitting as these employees are filling a seat and watching the clock. They put in the minimum effort required, and they are psychologically disconnected from their employer. Although they are minimally productive, they are more likely to be stressed and burnt out than engaged workers because they feel lost and disconnected from their workplace.

³ The total number of globally employed respondents included in the full trend of data (2009 through 2022) was 2,208,292. For the 2022 data, the total was 122,416.

include operating the scanner/cash register, restocking shelves, and ordering merchandise. These activities are generally perceived as monotonous, further diminishing FLEs' motivation (Biernath, 2016). The diminished motivation and heightened stress of FLEs became even more pronounced with the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic (Grewal et al., 2021; Rens et al., 2021). FLEs employed by physical retailers that had to shut down, either indefinitely or for a limited time, experienced turmoil and a tough employment market (Verhoef et al., 2023). Those employed in critical services (e.g., grocery and DIY stores) faced harsher working conditions (e.g., the hazard of contracting the virus, mask mandates, and confrontations with aggressive customers) (Verhoef et al., 2023). Consequently, FLEs are more likely to resist their organization's strategic change initiatives, such as the implementation of new technologies (e.g., Robotics) and service innovations (e.g., self-checkouts) at the POS or the restructuring of existing work routines (Furst & Cable, 2008).

To summarize, the COVID-19 pandemic both highlighted and exacerbated the challenges FLEs face and revealed how critical they are to physical retailers. However, according to a new global survey by Forrester Consulting, not much has been done to make their jobs more satisfying. For instance, although 63% of retailers around the globe are operating with an FLE deficit at present, only 8% plan to invest in improving the frontline experience in the next 12 months to help address their labor shortages (Edelson, 2023).⁴ The challenges faced by FLEs in retailing have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for in-store technologies to play a crucial role in addressing FLE motivation issues and stress levels. Incorporating appropriate in-store technologies into the solution could play a key role in enhancing FLEs' satisfaction and engagement, which in turn are crucial for increasing revenue and profitability and reducing costs. These latter aspects are highly prioritized by retailers (Grewal et al., 2020; Shankar et al., 2021).

⁴ N = 502 business leaders in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia who are charged with making decisions regarding FLEs scheduling, communication, task management, and learning. The study was conducted in November 2022.

1.1.3 Opportunities Afforded by In-Store Technologies in Retailing

Given these circumstances and an increasing number of available in-store technologies, retailers need to be innovative as they juggle in-store customer experience with labor efficiency (Gauri et al., 2021; Grewal et al., 2021; Hess et al., 2020; Shankar et al., 2021). Compounding excellent service experiences that generate high customer satisfaction and low cost will likely be a “daunting task” for most retailers (Mittal et al., 2005, p. 547). High levels of customization are costly because FLEs typically play a leading role in service delivery (Anderson et al., 1997), and payroll is generally the second-largest expense for physical retailers, following the cost of sold goods (Fisher et al., 2019). Therefore, one common strategy to stay competitive is to downsize the labor force and decrease the associated personnel costs (Grewal et al., 2021). Reducing FLEs’ working hours while maintaining output and cutting training budgets are also common ways to cut labor costs (Fisher et al., 2019).

Since maintaining inadequate staff levels and providing insufficient training to FLEs have consistently proven ineffective, the challenges physical retailers face in accurately ascertaining the optimal staffing levels and training needs specific to each store are crucial issues (Fisher et al., 2019). Training and building FLEs’ skills, although misaligned with retailers’ cost-cutting objectives, are indispensable for ensuring service excellence (Leaman, 2018). Furthermore, the use of more in-store technologies could improve operational efficiency and the customer experience while addressing the tradeoff between understaffing and optimizing resource allocation (Riegger et al., 2021). Unlike FLEs, in-store technology is a scalable alternative to human resources (Pitardi et al., 2021) that can be deployed in physical stores where the cost structure needs to be adjusted to increase profitability (Zhang et al., 2010).

To simultaneously improve service and save money, service robots (e.g., Pepper) complete tasks to relieve or even replace FLEs, such as scanning shelves to identify when inventory is low, providing relevant product information to customers, and supporting FLEs’ excellent service delivery (Grewal et al., 2021; McLeay et al., 2021; Wirtz et al., 2018; Wirtz & Zeithaml, 2018; Xiao & Kumar, 2021; Yoganathan et al., 2021). In some instances, service robots are increasingly becoming the favored mode of service delivery for specific customers, especially in potentially embarrassing situations, such as in certain medical contexts (Pitardi et al., 2021). Furthermore, in-store

technologies (e.g., RFID tags, sensors, facial recognition) support FLEs by collecting data about customers' in-store behavior at the physical POS and giving them more time to adapt a service (Hoyer et al., 2020; Shankar et al., 2021). For instance, ZARA equips its FLEs with tablets that provide data-driven recommendations and styling inspirations to assist customers (Wideeyes.ai, 2019). H&M introduced voice-activated mirrors in their New York City shop that activate when a person gazes into them sufficiently long, providing selfies, styling recommendations, and promotions (Visual Art, 2023). Similarly, Carrefour uses Bluetooth and Wi-Fi to identify the location of in-store customers and sends push notifications on their smartphones based on their in-store movements (Netcore, 2019).

In-store technology is pivotal in establishing efficient retail processes that benefit customers, FLEs, and retailers (Grewal et al., 2021; Pitardi et al., 2021; Shankar et al., 2021). By leveraging in-store retail technology, FLEs are liberated from mundane and time-consuming tasks and gain access to new customer data, allowing them to concentrate on providing exceptional customer service due to adaptive service offerings and creating memorable in-store consumer experiences in the digital age (Gauri et al., 2021; Grewal et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021; Wedel & Kanaan, 2016; Wilder et al., 2014).

1.1.4 Relevance of Frontline Employees' Customer Interactions

However, despite the advantages outlined in the previous section, the dominating focus on leveraging in-store technology jeopardizes service-focused retailers' biggest competitive advantages over the market competition, which are FLEs' ability to adapt services to customer needs and interact with FLEs face-to-face (Fisher et al., 2019; Gauri et al., 2021; Homburg et al., 2009; Hughes et al., 2019). Regardless of the technological innovations implemented, face-to-face interactions with FLEs are still relevant and positively affect conversion (Hughes et al., 2019; Jain et al., 2020). The findings from various studies indicate that superior in-store customer experiences caused by FLEs at the POS are positively associated with key metrics, such as customer loyalty (Herhausen et al., 2019), customer satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009), conversion rates (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), store visits, the share of wallet, and profitability (Grewal et al., 2009). Thus, securing and expanding market share in retailing depends on the capacity of

physical retailers to deliver an elevated in-store customer experience (Homburg et al., 2009; Korschun et al., 2014).

Central to this endeavor is the physical store, which assumes a critical role in shaping the customer journey and facilitating the creation of enhanced in-store customer experiences (Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Moreover, one practitioner study indicated that the physical store remains the most frequently used shopping channel for German customers (PwC, 2023).⁵ Considering this background, it is not surprising that an increasing number of pure online players (e.g., Amazon, Westwing, Zalando) have started opening physical stores (Kleinlercher et al., 2018). Despite the numerous advantages associated with online shopping, such as cost-effectiveness, convenience, and a wider assortment of products (Avery et al., 2012), consumers attribute considerable value to and derive pleasure from engaging in shopping activities within physical stores (Mende & Noble, 2019). Hence, the on-site atmosphere is a crucial component of the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), and offering attentive service or a unique human interaction remains a key differentiator of retailers in service provision (Bowen, 2016; Larivière et al., 2017; Subramony et al., 2021).

1.1.5 Importance of Frontline Employee Inspiration in Providing Adaptive Service Offerings in Retailing

Retail FLEs, especially in comparison to FLEs in other sectors (e.g., real estate and insurance), have a broad knowledge of customers' shopping behavior because of frequent contact with customers throughout the day (Jaakkola et al., 2017). FLEs in retail recognize customer needs more quickly and offer them appropriate services (Rudolph, 2021). Previous studies have shown the positive effects of adapting service offerings on customers, companies, and FLEs (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Ahearne et al., 2005; Alnakhli et al., 2020; Anh et al., 2016; Barnes et al., 2013; Bock et al., 2016; Boorom et al., 1998; Evanschitzky et al., 2012; Franke & Park, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2022; Gwinner et al., 2005; Jong & De Ruyter, 2004; Leischnig & Kasper-Brauer, 2015; Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995; Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Silva et al., 2020; Simintiras et

⁵ N = 513 customers, study conducted in July 2023.

al., 2013; Subramony et al., 2021). FLEs who adapt sales offerings achieve more successful sales, satisfy customers more, and improve customers' anticipation of future interactions with FLEs (Boorom et al., 1998; Franke & Park, 2006; Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Wilder et al., 2014).

While FLEs' adaptive service offerings still vary based on their training and management recognition (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012), effectively executing transformation projects frequently requires FLEs to make substantial attitudinal and behavioral adjustments (Ahearne et al., 2010). Understanding the psychological mechanisms that influence FLEs' adaptive service offerings can help retailers train FLEs to enhance service interaction quality (Crawford et al., 2022) and resolve the goal conflict of labor efficiency while ensuring service excellence. However, the psychological mechanisms driving service adaptability are largely neglected (Shalley et al., 2004; Singh et al., 2017; Subramony et al., 2021). The existing time-tested motivational concepts and measurements, such as intrinsic motivation (e.g., Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000), work engagement (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), citizenship behavior (e.g., Choi, 2007), customer stewardship control (e.g., Schepers et al., 2012), psychological empowerment (e.g., Spreitzer, 2008), employee engagement (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2002), and organizational commitment (e.g., Mowday et al., 1979), as well as newer concepts, such as FLE passion (Crawford et al., 2022), provide some guidance but do not fully capture internal mechanisms that explain the service novelty in a superior adaptive service offering. Gaining such new service understanding is necessary because FLEs affect a retailer's bottom line and the ubiquitous service roles (Stuart, 2020). Since FLEs are essential for delivering superior service, retail managers must grasp the psychological processes influencing their attitudes and behaviors (Coelho et al., 2011).

This neglected view on psychological mechanisms highlights the importance of investigating FLE inspiration, in contrast to traditional approaches focused on FLEs' satisfaction or motivation, which have been studied extensively so far (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006; Wolter et al., 2019). Drawing on prior definitions of inspiration in social psychology (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), Neumüller (2022) defined FLE inspiration as “a state during which FLEs gain new, epistemic insights/ideas and are compelled to actualize these epistemic insights at work” (p. 49). FLE inspiration is a crucial indicator that influences the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (e.g., intrinsic motivation and

creativity) of FLEs and customer attitudinal outcomes throughout service encounters (Neumüller, 2022). It is crucial to study motivational variables, such as FLE inspiration, because motivation explains the intensity of an FLE's inclination and choice to participate in specific behaviors (Mitchell, 1982).

Exploring FLE inspiration would allow us to identify the mechanisms that facilitate the identification of new customer needs and complementary psychological mechanisms. “FLE inspiration is conceptualized as an epistemic-motivational construct, which emerges as a response to epistemic cues and leads to attitudinal and behavioral changes in FLEs” (Neumüller, 2022, p. 175). Indeed, the main challenge for physical retailers is to create a work environment in which FLEs are inclined to use their knowledge and creativity profitably (Mende & Noble, 2019). Inspiration is a specific type of intrinsic motivation triggered by an outside force that compels a new idea's actualization (Thrash et al., 2010b) and intrinsic motivation drives various FLE behaviors, including creativity and adaptive service offerings (Coelho et al., 2012; Gwinner et al., 2005).

When FLEs become inspired, they experience a mind-broadening moment that positively affects their behavior and performance at the POS – more so than alternative constructs, such as satisfaction or engagement (Neumüller, 2022). Inspired FLEs develop creative service solutions, are more proactive when solving customer problems, and pass on their inspiring ideas to customers (Neumüller, 2022). For example, a new TV series on cooking that advertises a kitchen tool, such as a vapor steamer, may inspire an FLE who sells kitchen gadgets. When a customer at the POS asks about this tool the next day, this FLE can recommend a novel and healthy creative recipe cooked in the steamer. Importantly, FLE inspiration goes beyond extrinsic rewards, such as bonuses. Inspired FLEs enjoy work in and of itself, as they are driven by values, colleagues, or a vision (Neumüller, 2022) that are cost-neutral which helps to resolve the dilemma between cutting costs and heightening service excellence. Therefore, FLE inspiration may uniquely contribute to our understanding of service adaptability because it explains FLEs' openness to changes in customer needs and transforms innovative ideas into adaptive service offerings for customers.

To summarize, a service-focused retailer should utilize inspiring FLEs to enhance service interaction quality, a crucial factor in achieving market superiority for physical retailers. *First*, FLE inspiration, rather than FLE engagement or FLE satisfaction, can help improve FLEs' adaptive service offerings due to service novelty, commit them to the service-focused retailer, and motivate them to proactively drive organizational change. *Second*, FLE inspiration, with the help of in-store technology, may play an important role in addressing the current issue of ensuring excellent service at a low cost.

1.2 Motivation for Replicating and Extending the Work of Wilder et al. (2014)

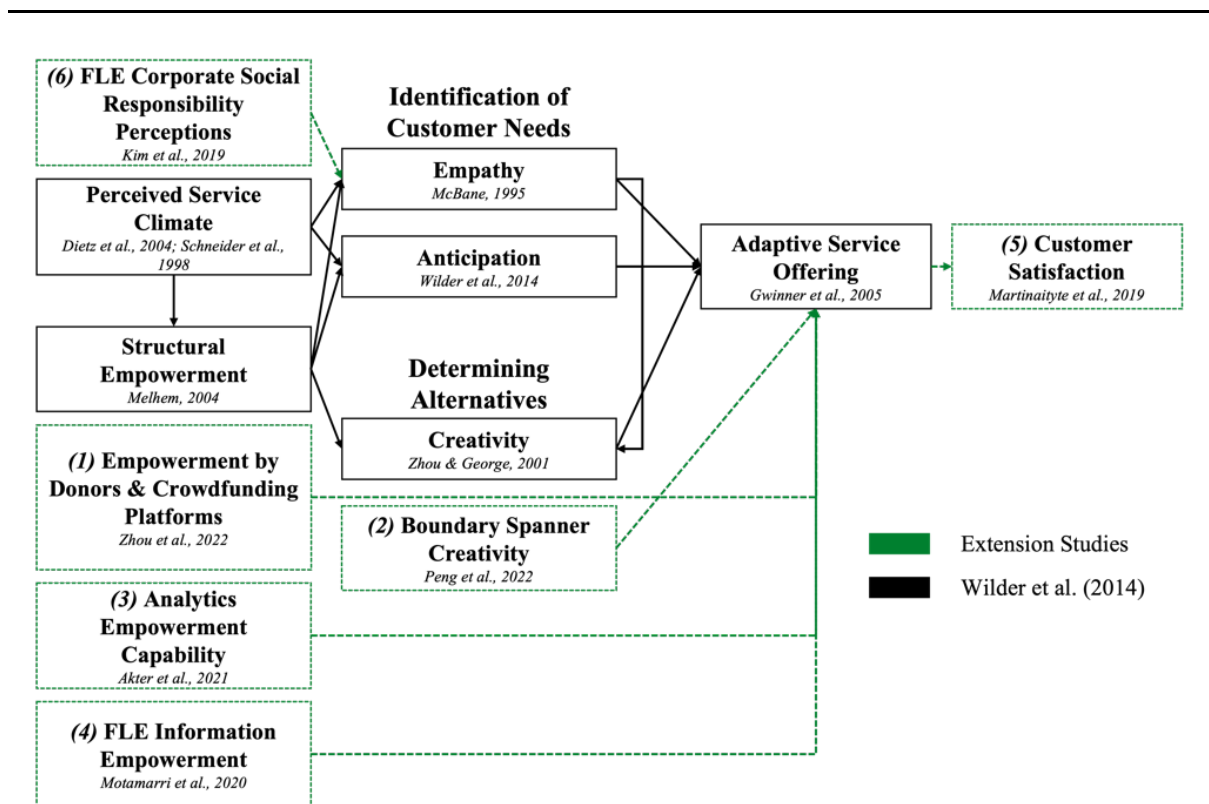
Previous service research focused on FLEs' internal motivations and characteristics as drivers of adaptive service offerings (Franke & Park, 2006; Gwinner et al., 2005; Homburg et al., 2009; Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Weitz et al., 1986). Wilder et al. (2014) were the first researchers to focus on (employee-external) environmental work factors as drivers of adaptive service offerings, investigating how managers empower FLEs to adapt their service offerings and how organizational culture fosters FLEs' critical thinking skills. Wilder et al. (2014) identified two key steps in adapting a service offering: (i) utilizing FLE anticipation and empathy to determine consumer expectations and (ii) employing FLE creativity to develop new options to satisfy these requirements. Their results indicated that the perceived service climate substantially affects the recognition of customer needs. Simultaneously, empowered FLEs tend to create alternative service solutions. Focusing on environmental work factors in retail is crucial because FLEs' adaptive service offerings not only depend on hiring the "right" people predisposed to reading customers' needs and catering to them but also on creating a suitable work environment in which FLEs can acquire these skills (Wilder et al., 2014). Apart from the evidence presented by Wilder et al. (2014), service scholars have barely paid attention to environmental work factors in the context of adaptive service offerings (Subramony et al., 2021).

For this dissertation, I reviewed the literature referring to Wilder et al. (2014) to identify studies that aimed to replicate and extend the original study. To this end, a citation analysis was conducted to identify authors who built on or cited Wilder et al.'s (2014) study in their papers. Based on the analysis, areas of improvement regarding the explanatory power of Wilder et al.'s (2014) model in retail were identified and a three-step approach was used to analyze the relevant citations of Wilder et al. (2014). *First*, a Google Scholar search yielded 179 resources citing Wilder et al. (2014). *Second*, the Web of Science database was searched for all peer-reviewed articles that cited Wilder et al.'s study (2014). This search reduced the list to 84 articles. *Third*, I manually reviewed the contents of these 84 articles to determine whether the various publications that cited the original study were extension studies or simply a citation of the findings

of Wilder et al. (2014). Accordingly, I reviewed the key extension streams to emphasize the necessity of the present replication and extension study.

This approach reduced the list to six extension studies (published in highly ranked journals, such as the *Journal of Marketing Research*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *International Journal of Information Management*, *Journal of Management and Service Business*) based on Wilder et al. (2014), which formed the basis for the analyses. In recent years, six relevant literature streams related to Wilder et al.'s (2014) research have emerged, each with a different conceptual base and disciplinary orientation. In particular, my literature review identified six extension studies on environmental work factors (e.g., corporate social responsibility, empowerment), antecedents (e.g., creativity) of adaptive service offerings, and outcomes of adaptive service offerings (e.g., customer satisfaction) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Extensions to Wilder et al. (2014)



Source: Author's illustration based on Wilder et al. (2014). Note: Squares represent latent constructs; dashed lines represent extensions.

In the following, I briefly present and discuss the quintessence of the findings from the six studies that extended Wilder et al.'s (2014) work.

(i) Wilder et al.'s (2014) research on service marketing investigated the consequences of FLE empowerment by managers for adaptive service offerings. Zhou et al. (2022) contributed to the FLE empowerment research in service marketing by highlighting how donors and crowdfunding platforms may empower FLEs and improve their service outcomes.

(ii) Wilder et al. (2014) investigated FLE creativity in the service context and its consequences for adaptive service offerings. Building on these findings, Peng et al.'s (2022) results further clarified the mediating role of creativity and extended the relationship between FLE creativity and adaptive service offerings in service contexts.

(iii) Akter et al. (2021) extended emergency service adaptation research by demonstrating the direct and indirect effects of analytics empowerment capability and strategic agility on service adaptation.

(iv) The conceptual empowerment development of Motamarri et al. (2020) differed from Wilder et al.'s (2014) research and other studies that used one-dimensional or single-item measures.

(v) Wilder et al. (2014) conceptualized creative performance as a component of adaptive service offerings. Martinaityte et al.'s (2019) study expanded Wilder et al.'s (2014) model of adaptive service offerings by examining customer satisfaction as an outcome of adaptive service offerings and provided a more rigorous test of this relationship.

(vi) Like Wilder et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2019) reflected on the motivation of frontline service work investigations and suggested that FLEs' corporate social responsibility perceptions are positively linked to employee-customer interactions. Table 1 summarizes the main contributions and resulting research gaps of each extension.

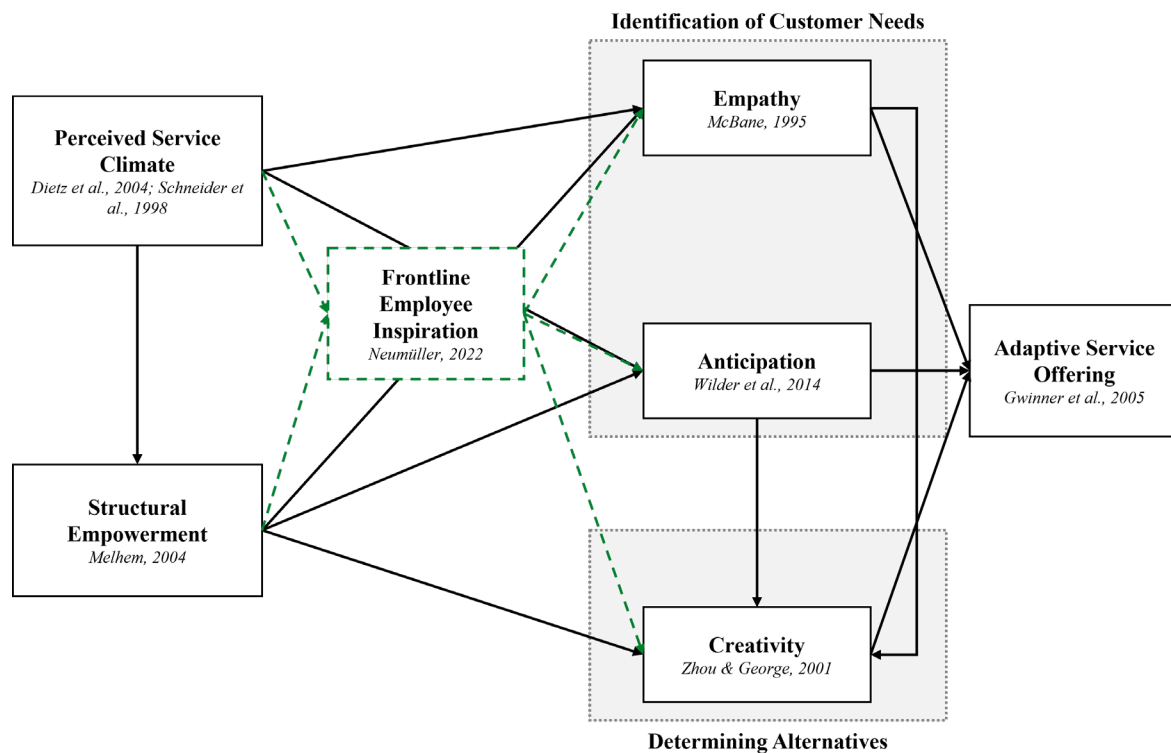
Table 1
Overview of the Relevant Extensions of Wilder et al. (2014)

Author	Journal	Literature Extension	Industry	Country	Sample Size	Main Contribution	Resulting Research Gap	Outcome of Work Environment Factors	Impact on Empathy	Impact on Anticipation	Impact on Creativity
Zhou, C., Gill, M., & Liu, Q. (2022)	Journal of Marketing Research	FLE Empowerment	Education	USA	Records of grades 3–5 of 5,767 elementary schools in the subjects of English and Mathematics from 2004 to 2013, resulting in 102,744 observations	FLE empowerment by stakeholders (donors and crowdfunding platforms) who are not service providers can improve service outcomes.	Expanding analyses of empowerment from donors and crowdfunding platforms to more comprehensive data. California does not represent all states in the United States or other countries.	NO	NO	NO	NO
Peng, J., Yang, X., & Huan, T. C. (2022)	International Journal of Hospitality Management	FLE Creativity	Hotel Industry	China	32 FLEs from three luxury hotels of the Marriott International Hotel Group	This study aimed to elucidate the mediating role of creativity and broaden the connection between FLE creativity and adaptive service offerings within service environments.	The role of empowerment and the mediation of creativity should be further examined across various industries and cultural contexts. Power distance might potentially diminish the positive effect of empowerment.	YES	NO	NO	NO
Akter, S., Bandara, R. J., & Sajib, S. (2021)	International Journal of Operations & Production Management	Emergency Services	Corporate Services/Govt. Services/Cooperative/ Trust-Based Services/Non-Profit Services	Australia	245 Service Systems Managers	This study built on Wilder et al.'s (2014) previous research on empowerment and adaptive service offerings, which concentrated solely on the service climate to deliver creative and adaptive service offerings.	Future scholars should explore the connection between empowerment and adaptive service offerings in specific service settings, like retail.	NO	NO	NO	NO
Motamarri, S., Akter, S., & Yanamandram, V. (2020)	International Journal of Information Management	FLE Empowerment	17 different Industries	Australia	304 FLEs	Conceptualized empowerment measures encompass distinct dimensions, including access to tools and information to aid decision-making. This knowledge is provided through training and development, equipping FLEs to better serve the organization's customers.	Investigations of potential effects of empowerment on the adaptive capabilities of FLEs. Sample consisted of FLEs from different industries, assess whether any sectorial differences exist in perceived levels of empowerment.	NO	NO	NO	NO
Martinaityte, I., Sacramento, C., & Aryee, S. (2019)	Journal of Management	Customer Satisfaction	Retail Banking/Cosmetics	Lithuania	329 FLEs and 51 Branch Managers / data on customer satisfaction from company records for the 6 months prior to and 6 months after the quarter of survey	This study extended Wilder et al.'s (2014) model of adaptive service offering by investigating customer satisfaction as a result of creative performance, offering a more thorough examination of this relationship.	Determine when standardization or adaptability in service provision results in customer satisfaction and increased physical stores' profitability.	NO	NO	NO	NO
Kim, J., Lacey, R., Kim, H. R., & Suh, J. (2019)	Service Business	Corporate Social Responsibility	Insurance Company	South Korea	237 FLEs	FLEs' perceptions of corporate social responsibility are positively associated with customer interactions, as corporate social responsibility plays a contributory role.	Future research should consider additional sources of FLE motivations and prosocial behavior that could influence FLEs' psychological needs and inclination to assist others.	NO	YES	NO	NO
This Replication and Extension Study	-	Psychological mechanism that drive FLEs behaviors and attitudes	Physical Retailers	UK & DACH Countries	Study 1: 293 FLEs Study 2: 248 FLEs (UK) Study 3: 525 FLEs	FLE inspiration is a novel and significant indicator for improving FLEs' adaptive service offerings during service interactions at the POS.	-	YES	YES	YES	YES

The review of papers related to or extending Wilder et al. (2014) yielded several key insights. Firstly, I found six different research extensions of Wilder et al. (2014) that broaden various research activity streams. Secondly, I identified a gap in the influence of environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) on other FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity) mediated by psychological mechanisms (e.g., FLE inspiration) in Wilder et al. (2014). In particular, the psychological mechanisms driving service adaptability have been neglected in the literature thus far (Shalley et al., 2004; Singh et al., 2017; Subramony et al., 2021) and, for this reason, my dissertation aimed to replicate and extend Wilder et al.'s (2014) model to develop a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings and explore how physical retailers can enhance inspiring experiences. Figure 2 presents the newly established comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offering based on the outlined gap.

Figure 2

Comprehensive Antecedent Model of Adaptive Service Offering



Source: Author's illustration based on Wilder et al. (2014) and Neumüller (2022). Note: Squares represent latent constructs; dashed lines represent extensions.

Replication is largely acknowledged as the cornerstone of scientific knowledge and one of the most important methods of verifying facts in social sciences (Blaug, 1992; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1984; Schmidt, 2009). “Replication allows us to demonstrate that something is really there, with extensions to see how broadly and in what instances it exists and can be used” (Hubbard et al., 1998, p. 252). Verification and elaboration must be the logical consequences of theory building (Flynn et al., 1990). Kuhn (1962) labeled this examination of existing theory “normal science,” whereby cumulative research is especially important because theories can never be entirely proven or disproven (Hempel, 1966). Hence, while every successful replication speaks in support of a given theory, each unsuccessful one raises further doubts (Popper, 1978). Replications are a fundamental aspect of the empirical research practice (Aguinis et al., 2017; Bergh et al., 2017; Block et al., 2022; Dau et al., 2021; De Massis et al., 2020; Hensel, 2021; Köhler & Cortina, 2021; Maula & Stam, 2020; Ryan & Tipu, 2022) as they guarantee that research is not solely based on the skewed results of numerous individual studies (Walker et al., 2019). Therefore, I proposed this replication and extension study for three reasons.

First, previous research on FLEs’ adaptive service offerings focused on one specific group of drivers, namely employee personality-level variables (Franke & Park, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2022; Gwinner et al., 2005; Homburg et al., 2009; Román & Iacobucci, 2010), such as FLEs’ tolerance for ambiguity or intrinsic motivation (Weitz et al., 1986). Wilder et al. (2014) focused on (employee-external) environmental work factors as drivers of adaptive service offerings, including how managers empower FLEs to adapt their service offerings and how organizational culture fosters FLEs’ critical thinking skills. As noted earlier, it is essential to prioritize environmental work factors because the adaptability of FLEs’ service offerings does not solely rely on hiring individuals who are naturally predisposed to understanding customers’ needs and catering to them; rather, the emergence of adaptive service offerings also depends on providing FLEs with a suitable work setting in which these skills can flourish. However, Wilder et al. (2014) did not assess psychological mechanisms as relevant antecedents of adaptive service offerings. Given this gap, a theoretical extension incorporating FLE inspiration into the wider framework offered by Wilder et al. (2014) would enable the identification of the mechanism that facilitates the creation of customer needs (i.e., FLE empathy and anticipation) and its complementary psychological mechanisms (i.e., FLE

creativity). To best capture and extend the results of Wilder et al. (2014) in today's highly dynamic environment, I add an important perspective on adaptive service offerings in retail contexts by considering FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022). The relationship between FLE inspiration and relevant similar constructs from Wilder et al. (2014), i.e., "adaptive service offering," "perceived service climate," "structural empowerment," "anticipation," "creativity," and "empathy," has not been conclusively investigated to date (Neumüller, 2022). According to Coelho et al. (2021), the relationships between management orientations (e.g., service orientation), control mechanisms (e.g., culture), and creativity have largely been overlooked in the literature while the effects of management orientations on FLEs' creativity have largely been ignored. Furthermore, Sok et al. (2018) concluded that creativity and empathy share a common foundation. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore (i) the relationship between environmental work factors, such as "perceived service climate" or "structural empowerment," and FLE inspiration and (ii) the relationship of FLE inspiration with three FLE variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity) and "adaptive service offering" (Wilder et al., 2014). This research addressed the appeal for additional research on the underexplored subject of FLEs' behaviors and attitudes to exceed customers' expectations (Singh et al., 2017).

Second, following Tsikriktsis (2004), I examined whether Wilder et al.'s (2014) model based on a US sample also applies to a sample from the UK retail sector and to a German-speaking sample from the DACH retail region. The focus on US FLEs brings up concerns about the applicability of the results in other cultural and national settings, particularly because culture influences FLEs' job experiences (Erez & Earley, 1987; Schepers & van der Borgh, 2020). For instance, US firms have greater power distance than German-speaking firms, which suggests that FLEs in German-speaking regions may be more empowered than their US peers within the retail sector (Hofstede et al., 2010). Lower power distance leads to fewer hierarchical levels, which may play a vital role in enhancing service adaptability in that FLEs are given more autonomy by their managers when interacting with their customers. Hofstede et al. (2010) defined culture as the "collective programming of the mind" that shapes cultural conventions, expectations, and both individual and organizational behavior. Consequently, cultural differences may influence the effect of FLEs' service adaptability on service quality due to cross-cultural differences in customers' service expectations (Hofstede et al.,

2010; Peterson & Barreto, 2018). Future research should confirm the conclusions of Wilder et al. (2014) in various national and cultural contexts.

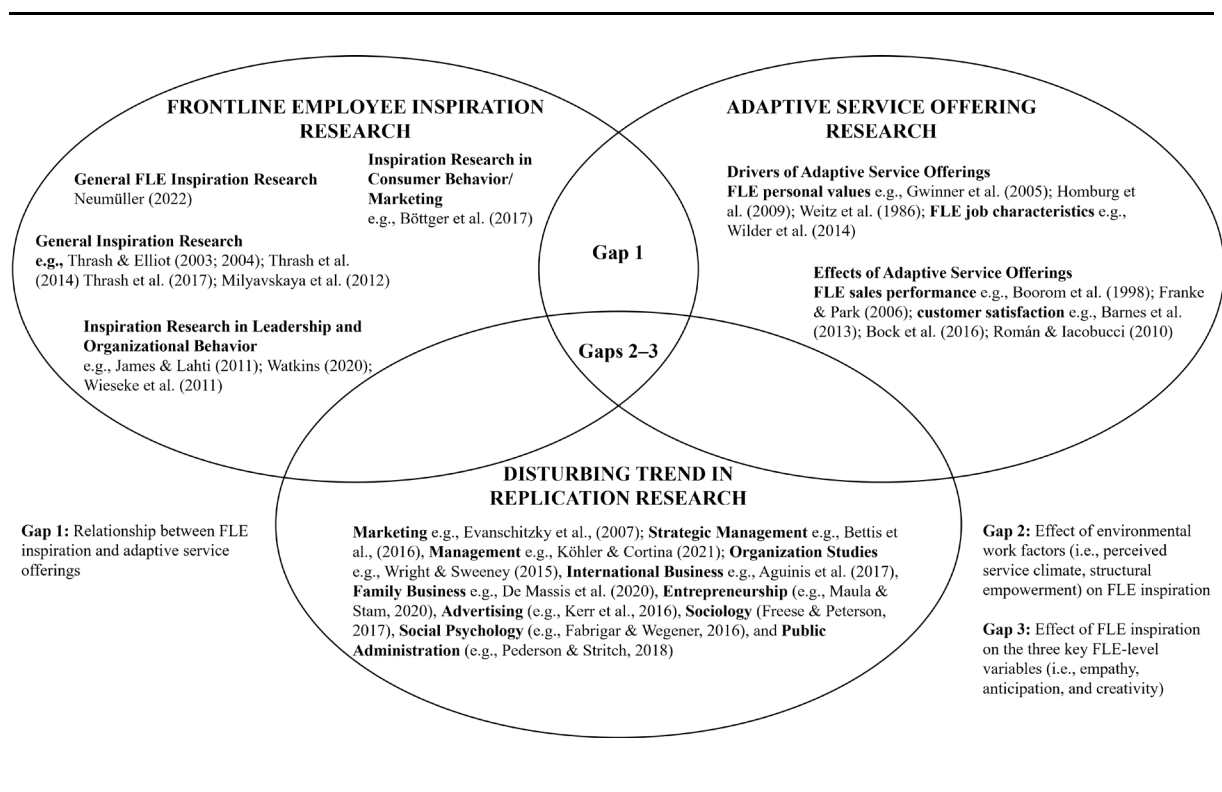
Third, I sought to empirically contribute to the adaptive service offerings literature by strengthening the explained variance of the dimensions proposed by Wilder et al. (2014) in the retail context. The retail sector has redirected its emphasis from products to customer experience as the primary competitive differentiator of retailers, strongly motivating the study of adaptive service offerings in physical stores (Neumüller, 2022). Although Wilder et al. (2014) considered 15 different service industries, in their main study, retail services accounted for only a small sample size of 65 out of 498 FLEs. However, a larger sample size is required to increase the power to detect significant differences and maximize the diversity within the FLE sample.

In sum, by replicating and extending Wilder et al.'s (2014) study on adaptive service offerings in retail, I responded to previous calls for research on the effects of an organization on adaptability (Gwinner et al., 2005; Lyngdoh et al., 2018; Subramony et al., 2021; Wilder et al., 2014) and the more general psychological causes of attitudinal and behavioral changes in FLEs in retail (Shalley et al., 2004; Singh et al., 2017; Subramony et al., 2021). Since Wilder et al.'s (2014) model did not include any motivational process variable (i.e., FLE inspiration), the transferability of the existing knowledge from the extension studies of Wilder et al. (2014) is limited. Furthermore, my dissertation aimed to reduce practitioners' doubts when making decisions based on the findings of the traditional single-study designs in leading journals (Evanschitzky et al., 2007).

1.3 Research Gaps

A detailed review of the importance of FLEs to physical retailers, opportunities afforded by in-store technologies, and the importance of FLE inspiration in providing adaptive service offerings in retailing was followed by a thorough citation analysis of Wilder et al. (2014) and the role of replication studies in social sciences, from which three research gaps were identified. As depicted in Figure 3, gap 1 comprises the overlap between FLE inspiration research and FLE adaptive service offering related research, while gaps 2 to 3 comprise the overlap between FLE inspiration research, FLE adaptive service offering related research, and replication studies in social sciences.⁶

Figure 3
Overview of Research Gaps



Source: Author's illustration.

⁶ Note that gaps 2–3 build on each other, extending Wilder et al.'s (2014) study by testing a more comprehensive framework and helping physical retailers in a changing retail landscape train their FLEs accurately, thereby enhancing inspiring employee and customer experiences without additional costs. However, for the sake of comprehension and precision, these gaps are addressed individually.

Research Gap 1: Relationship between FLE Inspiration and Adaptive Service Offerings

The existing studies lack an assessment of the more general psychological causes of FLEs' attitudinal and behavioral changes in adaptive service offerings. Although various service and marketing scholars have shown that the research on adaptive service offerings is connected to various positive customer outcomes, the psychological drivers of adaptive service offerings have largely been neglected so far (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Ahearne et al., 2005; Alnakhli et al., 2020; Anh et al., 2016; Barnes et al., 2013; Bock et al., 2016; Boorum et al., 1998; Evanschitzky et al., 2012; Franke & Park, 2006; Gwinner et al., 2005; Jong & De Ruyter, 2004; Leischnig & Kasper-Brauer, 2015; Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995; Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Silva et al., 2020; Simintiras et al., 2013; Subramony et al., 2021). Additionally, prior service research mostly focused on FLEs' internal motivations or predispositions, such as FLEs' intrinsic motivation, as one of the drivers (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Gilbert et al., 2022; Gwinner et al., 2005; Homburg et al., 2009; Weitz et al., 1986).

Bridging this gap is important, as FLEs are crucial in providing adaptive service offerings (Wilder et al., 2014) and enacting novel service approaches at the POS (Cadwallader et al., 2010). Therefore, retailers must comprehend the psychological processes shaping their attitudes and behaviors (Coelho et al., 2011). Hence, the psychological mechanisms that influence FLEs' adaptive service offerings can help retailers train FLEs to enhance service interaction quality (Crawford et al., 2022) and resolve the goal conflict of labor efficiency while ensuring service excellence. Moreover, research in social psychology suggests that being inspired leads to increased creativity, efficiency, and a positive outlook (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004), all of which are essential skills for FLEs to effectively adapt service offerings (Dong et al., 2015; Wang & Netemeyer, 2004; Wilder et al., 2014). Contrary to FLE satisfaction (Locke, 1976), FLE affect (Pugh, 2001), and FLE engagement (Kumar & Pansari, 2014), FLE inspiration contains a sense of transcendence (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), which might account for how FLEs generate new service impulses and adaptive service offerings to induce customer inspiration (Böttger et al., 2017; Neumüller, 2022).

However, the psychological mechanisms driving service adaptability have not been addressed (Shalley et al., 2004; Singh et al., 2017; Subramony et al., 2021), even

by Wilder et al. (2014). Therefore, in this dissertation, I sought to answer the question: *How can an antecedent model of adaptive service offerings that links psychological mechanisms with FLE attitudes and behaviors be developed?*

Research Gap 2: Effect of Environmental Work Factors (i.e., Perceived Service Climate, Structural Empowerment) on FLE Inspiration

While the marketing and service scholars have thoroughly examined causes that affect FLEs' behaviors and attitudes, including service climate (Sok et al., 2023), customer satisfaction (Frey et al., 2013), the relationship between FLEs and supervisors (Tierney et al., 2006; Tierney & Farmer, 2004), corporate advertising (Wentzel et al., 2010), personal traits (Hurley, 1998), individual values (Sousa & Coelho, 2011), and the social setting (Sergeant & Frenkel, 2000), they failed to provide conclusive evidence on the sources that can trigger FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022).

This aspect is intriguing because the psychological work experiences of FLEs can affect their attitudes, emotions, and behaviors in the workplace (Hackman, 1980), ultimately influencing the organization's performance (Harter et al., 2010). Various empirical studies, especially in leadership research (e.g., Bass, 1988; Grant & Hofmann, 2011; James & Lahti, 2011; Larwood et al., 1995; Shamir et al., 1998), entrepreneurship research (e.g., Bhansing et al., 2018; Wartiovaara et al., 2019), social psychology research (e.g., Milyavskaya et al., 2012; Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004; Thrash et al., 2017), and organizational research (e.g., An & Youn, 2018; Avramenko, 2013; Straume & Vittersø, 2012; Watkins, 2020), have shed light on the benefits of being inspired. However, thus far, these studies lack examination of the sources that can trigger FLE inspiration, which makes it challenging to compare the effects of different sources of inspiration.

Although Neumüller's (2022) study offers a suitable foundation for investigating sources of FLE inspiration in a retail context, a conclusive understanding of the effects of environmental work factors (e.g., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) on FLE inspiration is lacking (Neumüller, 2022). Thus, this dissertation addressed another crucial question: *How can physical retailers successfully provide appropriate sources of FLE inspiration?*

Research Gap 3: Effect of FLE Inspiration on the Three Key FLE-Level Variables (i.e., Empathy, Anticipation, and Creativity)

To date, no study has offered retailers guidance on using psychological mechanisms to enhance adaptive service offerings or clarified the mediating role of FLE inspiration in this process. In the past, service research has focused substantial effort on identifying the fundamental causes influencing FLEs' attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Auh et al., 2019; Cadwallader et al., 2010; Crawford et al., 2022; Evanschitzky et al., 2011; Friend et al., 2020; Grandey et al., 2011; Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Rapp et al., 2017; Schepers & van der Borgh, 2020). Factors that were found to influence FLEs' attitudes and behaviors include intrinsic motivation (e.g., Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000), work engagement (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), citizenship behavior (e.g., Choi, 2007), customer stewardship control (e.g., Schepers et al., 2012), psychological empowerment (e.g., Spreitzer, 2008), employee engagement (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2002), organizational commitment (e.g., Mowday et al., 1979), and newer concepts, such as FLE passion (Crawford et al., 2022).

However, service scholars have paid minimal attention to FLE inspiration and its ability to affect FLE attitudes and behaviors (Neumüller, 2022). As a result, its connection with other work-related constructs (e.g., FLE empathy) is poorly understood (Wieseke et al., 2012). Addressing this gap is significant because such a theoretical extension would allow for identifying mechanisms that facilitate the creation of the customer needs (i.e., FLE empathy and FLE anticipation) and complementary psychological processes (i.e., FLE creativity) included in the model of Wilder et al. (2014). To advance the development of FLE inspiration research in the marketing and service domains, the mechanism through which FLEs pass on their inspiration to customers at the physical POS using adaptive service offerings requires further research attention. In addition, it is essential to empirically investigate FLE inspiration and validate this construct to further advance the measurement (MacKenzie, 2003). Therefore, I posed another key question: *How does FLE inspiration affect the outcome of FLE attitudes and behaviors during adaptive service offerings?*

1.4 Research Strategy

1.4.1 Research Questions and Contribution

In response to the identified research gaps, I proposed five research questions. Questions 1 through 4 addressed the attitudinal and behavioral changes triggered by FLE inspiration, whereas Question 5 aimed to propose an approach for marketers and retailers to leverage FLE inspiration effectively to promote adaptive service experiences in an evolving inspiration-dominant logic at the service level.⁷

Research Question 1:

How can an antecedent model of adaptive service offerings that links psychological mechanisms with FLE attitudes and behaviors be developed?

(Chapter 2)

To understand the opportunities arising from FLE inspiration in the context of adaptive service experiences and address Research Question 1, I sought to place FLE inspiration in a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings based on Wilder et al. (2014) that integrates the findings from extant inspiration theory (Neumüller, 2022; Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004). “FLE inspiration is conceptualized as an epistemic-motivational construct, which emerges as a response to epistemic cues and leads to attitudinal and behavioral changes in FLEs” (Neumüller, 2022, p. 175), whereby inspiration is a specific type of intrinsic motivation triggered by an outside force that compels a new idea’s actualization (Thrash et al., 2010). Intrinsic motivation drives various FLE behaviors, including creativity and adaptive service offerings (Coelho et al., 2012; Gwinner et al., 2005). Since Wilder et al.’s (2014) model did not include any motivational process variable (i.e., FLE inspiration), I considered a mediating role of FLE inspiration in this relationship because FLE inspiration has an

⁷ I introduce the idea of an inspiration-dominant logic (I-D logic), which builds on the service-dominant logic (S-D logic) and is contrary to the goods-dominant (G-D) logic of Vargo and Lusch (2004) to provide a starting point for considering the role of inspiration in the concept of services to explain the transfer of inspiration from FLEs to customers (Böttger et al., 2017; Neumüller, 2022).

important transmission function from a source (e.g., an unrealized notion for service enhancement) to a new subject (e.g., FLE adapt a service offering) (Neumüller, 2022).

To clarify the notion of FLE inspiration, structural equation modeling was used to test a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings that included the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6, Studies 1, 2, and 3). Additionally, Studies 2 and 3 provide proof of predictive validity, demonstrating that FLE inspiration distinctly forecasts relevant FLE outcomes (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity) that contribute to superior adaptive service offerings beyond traditional metrics (e.g., FLE satisfaction).

Theoretical Contribution. This thesis connected two bodies of research, FLE inspiration (e.g., Neumüller, 2022) and adaptive service offering research (e.g., Wilder et al., 2014), and introduced a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings derived from the findings of studies on psychological inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004). In this way, the dissertation makes two contributions to the literature. *First*, the understanding of more general psychological causes of attitudinal and behavioral changes in FLEs in retail is deepened (Singh et al., 2017). *Second*, the empirical literature on adaptive service offerings is extended. FLE inspiration clarifies the direct and indirect mediating effect of a perceived service climate and structural empowerment on FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity) which may open new avenues for future research on FLE inspiration in other employee-customer service interactions. For instance, future studies could test the inspiration spillover from FLEs to customers and thus gradually enlarge the nomological net.

Managerial Contribution. This research has practical ramifications for retailers, suggesting that investment in workforce development can advance FLEs' capacity to realize their inspiration at work. In addition, retailers must understand the psychological mechanisms that drive FLE behavior. Due to the enhanced feelings of empathy, anticipation, and creativity through FLE inspiration, FLEs are more willing to adapt services at the physical POS without significant costs. In general, retailers should consider that adaptive service offerings do not solely depend on hiring the right people but also on providing FLEs with appropriate work settings in which these skills can flourish.

Research Question 2:

How can physical retailers successfully provide appropriate sources of
FLE inspiration?

(Chapter 4)

To answer this question, I sought to address the sources of FLE inspiration by considering what job resources (e.g., coaching, supervisor support) and workplace factors (e.g., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) in the FLEs' work environment induce FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022). In this context, I refer to the results of Study 1 (Chapter 4), an exploratory investigation that highlights the importance of various environmental work sources of FLE inspiration. To confirm and extend the insights obtained from Study 1, I carried out two separate surveys (Studies 2 and 3) with large samples of FLEs from physical retailers who currently hold service jobs in the UK and DACH regions.

Theoretical Contribution. This dissertation adds significant findings to a previous attempt to investigate sources of FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022) by showing how environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) inspire FLEs to actualize ideas in the workplace and explain the novelty in a superior adaptive service offering. The findings complement those of existing studies on service research that explored the influence of rewards, job complexity, and supervisor relationships on FLE motivation, attitudes, and behaviors (Coelho & Augusto, 2010). Additionally, I incorporate previous research on inspiration that delved into various sources of inspiration, including artwork, leader behavior, ideological messages, role models, and vision statements (e.g., An & Yoon, 2018; Bass, 1985; James & Lahti, 2011; Watkins, 2020).

Managerial Contribution. From a managerial perspective, it is important to understand precisely how and with what frequency different on-the-job sources inspire FLEs. With this level of comprehension, retail managers can effectively utilize motivational techniques to enhance the performance of their FLEs and improve service interactions at the POS. Therefore, this thesis outlines the rate at which different on-the-job sources inspire FLEs in the DACH countries (Study 1). These insights can be

especially useful when assessing internal human resource practices that aim to enhance FLEs' adaptive service offerings.

Research Question 3:

How does FLE inspiration affect the outcome of FLE attitudes and behaviors during adaptive service offerings?

(Chapters 5–6)

Research has yet to address the outcomes of FLE inspiration in more detail (Neumüller, 2022) and thus I sought to explore FLE inspiration in the more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings of hypothesized outcomes. To address this question, two cross-sectional online surveys were conducted to collect primary data from 248 FLEs from the UK and 525 FLEs from the DACH retail sectors to demonstrate that FLE inspiration predicts FLE attitudes and behaviors (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity) over and above the predictive ability of FLEs' engagement or satisfaction.

Theoretical Contribution. This dissertation expanded upon and constructively enriched previous FLE research by illustrating the link between FLE inspiration and established outcome variables (i.e., FLE empathy, anticipation, and creativity). Existing service scholars have largely concentrated on work engagement (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), intrinsic motivation (e.g., Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000), work engagement (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), citizenship behavior (e.g., Choi, 2007), customer stewardship control (e.g., Schepers et al., 2012), psychological empowerment (e.g., Spreitzer, 2008), employee engagement (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2002), and organizational commitment (e.g., Mowday et al., 1979), as well as newer concepts, such as FLE passion (Crawford et al., 2022), as antecedents of FLE attitudes and behavior. This dissertation introduced FLE inspiration as a unique concept to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological process that influences FLE behavior and attitudes.

Managerial Contribution. Managers may question whether it is worthwhile to implement FLE inspiration as a novel indicator, potentially supplanting established indicators like FLE engagement or satisfaction. The findings of this work offer a compelling argument for the positive effect of FLE inspiration on adaptive service

offerings (Studies 2 and 3), backed by strong theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence. As a result, it presents a case for retail firms to consider FLE inspiration as a crucial metric in an evolving inspiration-dominant logic at the service level.

Research Question 4:

How convincing are the relationships presented by Wilder et al. (2014) and the newly developed extensions in the retailing context in terms of explanatory power?

(Chapters 5–6)

It is necessary to compare the plausibility of the replication and extension studies of Wilder et al. (2014) concerning the original research ideas. In this context, I suggested that (i) the current conceptualization of the conceptual model of the adaptive service offering in Wilder et al. (2014) in retailing is inadequate, and (ii) the findings of the traditional single-study design lack credibility.

First, the results of Wilder et al. (2014) do not fully resolve the question of which psychological mechanisms facilitate the creation of customer needs (i.e., FLE empathy and anticipation) and determine their complementary psychological mechanisms (i.e., FLE creativity). As a result, a mediating role of FLE inspiration in the extended conceptual model of adaptive service offerings was proposed (Neumüller, 2022).

Second, while Wilder et al. (2014) considered 15 different service industries, specifically understanding the factors that affect adaptive service offerings in retail is key to gauging the robustness of their findings and justifying the hypothesized relationships. In their work, retail services only accounted for a small sample size of 65 out of 498 FLEs in the main study. Following Tsikriktsis (2004), I intended to examine the validity and causal order of the original findings by collecting new data to determine whether the model developed by Wilder et al. (2014), which is based on a US sample, is also valid for the UK and German-speaking DACH samples (Studies 2 and 3).

Overarching Question From the Practical Perspective:

How can physical retailers successfully implement FLE inspiration to promote adaptive service experiences at the physical POS?

(Chapter 7)

From an applicable standpoint, a crucial question is how physical retailers can apply this dissertation's data-driven insights to promote adaptive service experiences at the POS. At present, practitioners can only apply FLE inspiration insights to a limited extent (Neumüller, 2022) and thus an objective of this dissertation is to inform managers about how to invest their operational resources to affect relevant FLE key performance indicators. The findings of this dissertation provide information for physical retailers on how to shape their workplace designs and guide managers of physical retailers on leveraging drivers of adaptive service offering and the role of inspired FLEs in this process.

The guide presented in this dissertation in Chapter 7.3.2 acknowledges concrete strategic levers, showing that environmental work factors may inspire FLEs differently and that FLE inspiration may vary across the generic business models in retail. To investigate how work environment factors and FLE-level variables in retail affect FLEs' adaptive service offerings depending on the retailers' business models, I used Rudolph's (2000) taxonomy which distinguishes between three generic retail business models—global discounters, content retailers, and channel retailers. *Global discounters* (e.g., Denner, Decathlon, IKEA) strive toward price leadership while *content retailers* (e.g., Migros, H&M) seek to attain product leadership, and *channel retailers* (e.g., Walmart, Globus, Saks Fifth Avenue) focus on customer leadership (Rudolph, 2000). Rudolph's (2000) taxonomy is a suitable foundation for grasping the advantages of FLE inspiration and applying adaptive service offerings based on physical retailers' business models. In this way, practitioners can significantly enhance the probability of FLE inspiration within their company and foster adaptive service offerings.

1.4.2 Dissertation Outline and Mixed-Method Approach

The thesis is segmented into seven chapters (Table 2). *Chapter 1* describes the research focus, establishes its theoretical and practical significance, and introduces the five research questions crafted to steer the research. *Chapter 2* concentrates on Research Question 1 and extensively examines the current scholars on FLE inspiration and adaptive service offerings. Based on the extant inspiration research, the objective of this chapter was to place FLE inspiration in a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings based on Wilder et al. (2014) and propose a set of hypotheses based on insights from the literature. *Chapter 3* demonstrates the disturbing trend and different types of replication studies in social sciences while in *Chapter 4*, I present the qualitative results of this study on the sources of FLE inspiration in the DACH region, thereby addressing Research Question 2.

To address Research Questions 2 and 3, I evaluated FLE inspiration in a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings based on Wilder et al. (2014). Hence, the developed hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling. *Chapter 5* presents a quantitative investigation of the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration based on UK FLEs (Study 2), addressing Research Questions 2 and 3 while *Chapter 6* describes the quantitative investigation of the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration based on DACH FLEs (Study 3). These analyses also addressed Research Questions 2 and 3.

Chapter 7 outlines the implications for physical retailers based on their generic business models. To this end, a taxonomy was developed grounded on the insights derived from the literature and the qualitative study 1 and quantitative studies 2 and 3. Apart from offering an overview of leveraging drivers of adaptive service offerings and the role of inspired FLEs for retail managers, Chapter 7 reviews the outcomes of the previous studies and discusses their effects and limitations. Additionally, I identified potential avenues for future research.

This dissertation is made up of three empirical studies. Study 1, which was administered to 293 DACH-based FLEs working in retail who have direct customer contact, investigated the sources of FLE inspiration using a qualitative approach involving an exploratory survey inquiring about the most recent moment of inspiration FLEs experienced that affected their work (Research Question 2). Following the recommendations of established marketing and service literature (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017), a mixed-method approach was used to refine and validate the definition and scale of FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022) and develop it into a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). To quantitatively measure the effect of the sources of FLE inspiration from Study 1, the influencing sources were extracted and analyzed with different sets of questions by established measurable constructs (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment). My approach aligns with recent mixed-methods studies on psychological constructs (e.g., Crawford et al., 2022).

The objective of Studies 2–3 was to quantitatively investigate and validate the sources of FLE inspiration in a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings based on Wilder et al. (2014) (Research Question 1) and examine the employee-level attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity) of FLE inspiration (Research Question 3). Study 2 investigated the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration through an online experiment conducted via the Prolific Academic platform with 248 UK-based FLEs who held a service job at the POS at the time of the study. Similarly to Study 2, Study 3 involved a cross-sectional online survey administered to 525 DACH-based FLEs working in physical retailing via the INNOFACT AG market research panel and investigated the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration.

Table 2
Overview of Chapters

CHAPTER	OBJECTIVES	STUDY
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	Demonstrate the theoretical and practical importance of FLE inspiration in adaptive service experiences.	/
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review and Hypothesis Development	Develop a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings and explore how physical retailers can enhance inspiring experiences.	/
CHAPTER 3: Why We Need to Replicate	Present the disturbing trend of replications over time and show how different types of replications are essential to establish the robustness and reliability of research findings.	/
CHAPTER 4: Sources of FLE Inspiration	Explore quantitatively the antecedents of FLE inspiration and the frequency with which various sources induce FLE inspiration in the DACH region.	Study 1: (<i>N</i> = 293)
CHAPTER 5: Effect of FLE Inspiration	Investigate the core link between environmental work factors and their influence on other established FLE attitudes and behaviors mediated by psychological mechanisms in the UK.	Study 2: (<i>N</i> = 248)
CHAPTER 6: Validation of the Effects of FLE Inspiration	Validate the core link between environmental work factors and their effects on other established FLE attitudes and behaviors mediated by psychological mechanisms in the DACH region.	Study 3: (<i>N</i> = 525)
CHAPTER 7: Synthesis and Contribution	Derive implications for physical retailers based on a taxonomy, summarize the main conclusions for scholars and retailers, and detail the constraints and future research avenues.	/

Source: Author's illustration.

2 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

While the first chapter provided the introduction and problematization to place FLE inspiration in the context of adaptive service offerings, the second chapter reviews the literature outlining adaptive service offerings and inspiration-related research to develop a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings and explore how physical retailers can cause inspiring experiences.

2.1 Why Inspire Frontline Employees?

2.1.1 *The State of Frontline Employee Research in Service and Marketing Literature*

Over the past four decades, service and marketing research scholars have increasingly paid attention to the relationship between FLEs' behaviors, emotions, and job-related attitudes and their customers (Subramony et al., 2021). FLEs play a crucial role in meeting the service-offering expectations of organizations and customers (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Moreover, FLEs play crucial cross-functional roles, such as (internally) conveying customer requirements and inclinations to retailers and (externally) acting as representatives of the retailer and its brand (Keller, 2003; Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Sasser et al., 1997; Schneider et al., 1980; Solomon et al., 1985).

Five clusters have emerged in the management, service, and marketing literature on FLEs (Subramony et al., 2021), with three clusters relevant to marketing and service research. To approach the topic, an integrated and synthesized overview of the three remaining clusters of FLEs is provided. Subramony et al. (2021) identified the *collective predictors and effects cluster* (170 articles), which was first introduced in the early 1980s, and explored the indicators of FLE behaviors and their outcomes at the customer level (e.g., high-performance work systems, HRM, climate, job satisfaction, turnover, and retention) (e.g., Hale et al., 2016; Kelley et al., 1996; McKay et al., 2011; Parasuramen et al., 1980; Schneider et al., 1980, 1998, 2005; Tremblay, 2020). Subsequently, in the early 1990s, the *service encounter cluster* (150 articles) was outlined, which examined the interactions between FLEs and customers at the POS (e.g., service engagement, digital interface, and servicescape) (e.g., Bitner, 1990; Delcourt et al., 2016; Price et al., 1995; Sirianni et al., 2013; Van Dolen et al., 2002;

Vilnai-Yavetz & Rafaeli, 2006; Xiao & Kumer, 2019). Later on, the *customer orientation cluster* (118 articles) focused on the experiences and behaviors of FLEs in customer service fulfillment (e.g., service-profit chain, linkage, customer orientation, and service interaction) (e.g., Brown et al., 2002; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Homburg et al., 2009; Hughes & Ogilvie, 2020; Menguc et al., 2016; Mohrjackson, 1991). In summary, service and marketing research has largely focused on FLEs from the consumer view-point, examining how FLEs' attitudes and behaviors affect consumers through service exchanges (Subramony et al., 2021). Hence, the literature on FLEs presents a diverse and complex picture amid a rapidly changing service landscape (Subramony et al., 2021). This summary of the main research findings and concepts from the last four decades has led researchers to spotlight the role of FLE attitudes and behaviors in customer orientation as an important research issue to address. According to Subramony et al. (2021, p. 12), the research on the customer orientation cluster offers room for new relevant insights, which highlights two pressing questions,

“How do different facets of customer orientation help us predict customer outcomes, affective dynamics in service encounters, and FLE stress and strain outcomes? What is the interactive effect of unit-level customer orientation and FLE service-related traits and attitudes on service outcomes?” (p. 12).

By establishing a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings by including FLE inspiration as a new motivational construct, this dissertation contributes to FLE attitudes and behaviors research in service and marketing and FLE-related research. Therefore, by providing evidence that FLE inspiration affects FLE attitudes and behaviors, I responded to service scholars' call for a deeper exploration of how FLEs adapt a service offering and thereby enhance customer orientation (Subramony et al., 2021). This thesis contributes to the FLE research by studying FLE inspiration within adaptive service offerings and examining the subject of FLE inspiration from a service and marketing standpoint. To guide my research endeavor, I examined the existing research on adaptive service offerings in the marketing and service literature (Chapter 2.1.2) and summarized the current understanding in the field of inspiration (Chapter 2.1.3).

2.1.2 Previous Research on Adaptive Service Offerings

For over 30 years, the service and marketing research on adaptive service offerings has been based on the conceptualization of Spiro and Weitz (1990) (Weitz et al., 1986)⁸ which postulates that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to selling (Wilder et al., 2014). A skilled FLE should thus be able to identify and utilize an adaptive service offering that fits the specific needs and characteristics of each prospective customer during or across customer interactions (Gwinner et al., 2005; Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Weitz et al., 1986). FLEs can closely monitor their customers' reactions during a sales pitch and make strategic adjustments accordingly (Román & Iacobucci, 2010). Thus, while adaptive service offerings are costly (Wilder et al., 2014), especially when compared to many of today's in-store technological alternatives, they are nevertheless thought to be extremely effective (Franke & Park, 2006; Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Specifically, a service can be adapted in various ways in the service environment. This includes (i) adapting it to the service offering, (ii) modifying the interpersonal behavior of the FLE, (iii) or incorporating a combination of both (Gwinner et al., 2005). Due to these key differences, some researchers presume that adaptive service offerings are more important in the service than in the product environment (Anderson et al., 1997; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996). Based on Porter et al.'s (2003) study that empirically tested the moderating effect of the selling situation, Giacobbe et al. (2006) expanded it even further, suggesting that adaptive service offerings are especially beneficial compared to strict service scripts when: (i) the offerings are complex, and FLEs have many options to alter the facets of the offering, (ii) customers are diverse, with varying needs and preferences, and (iii) the relationship is expected to lead to future opportunities for profit. Simply put, an FLE's capability to adapt service offerings depends on whether a company prioritizes customization and effectively communicates these expectations to its FLEs (Wilder et al., 2014).

⁸ Service and marketing researchers have frequently used the term "adaptive service offering" (Wilder et al., 2014) interchangeably with "adaptive selling" (Román & Iacobucci, 2010), "adaptive selling behavior" (Franke & Park, 2006; Spiro & Weitz, 1990), and "employee adaptive behavior" (Gwinner et al., 2005).

As a result, it was hypothesized that modifying the attitudes and behaviors of FLEs in this way would improve their performance (Spiro & Weitz, 1990). For example, a meta-analysis by Franke and Park (2006) showed that adaptive service offerings improve sales performance, as measured by self-reported ratings, manager ratings, or more objective performance metrics (Boorom et al., 1998; Kara et al., 2013; Rapp et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2002). Further research confirmed that adaptive service offerings lead to positive customer evaluations (Bitner et al., 1990). Following these findings, service and marketing scholars derived empirical evidence for several antecedents that enhance adaptive service offerings, such as sales experience and training (Shoemaker & Johlke, 2002); sales technology, including customer relationship management and social media tools (Rapp et al., 2008; Itani et al., 2017); learning orientation (Park & Holloway, 2003); knowledge and empowering leadership (Rapp et al., 2006); intrinsic motivation (Jaramillo et al., 2007; Spiro & Weitz, 1990); sales-service ambidexterity (Agnihotri et al., 2017); and customer orientation (Itani et al., 2019). Numerous studies have also focused on FLE characteristics such as ability, interest to understand behavior, quiet ego, self-monitoring, thought self-leadership, self-introspection, and motivation, that can and will enhance their performance (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Boorom et al., 1998; Gilbert et al., 2022; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Jaramillo et al., 2007; Levy and Sharma, 1994; Park & Holloway, 2003; Sujan et al., 1994).

However, given the acknowledged importance and contribution of adaptive service offerings to the service and marketing literature, several questions remain unanswered in the current literature. Hence, rather than only focusing on FLEs' personality traits (e.g., Gwinner et al., 2005), internal motivations (e.g., Weitz et al., 1986), or characteristics of the firm (e.g., Wilder et al., 2014), this dissertation simultaneously explored the role of psychological mechanisms in driving FLEs' attitudes and behaviors, sources in the FLEs' work environment that trigger psychological mechanisms, and methods to facilitate adaptive service offerings. This dissertation thus extends the studies on adaptive service offerings from the FLE perspective and responds to the request for more investigation into the relatively unexplored discipline of FLEs, their behaviors, and attitudes (Singh et al., 2017).

2.1.3 Relevance of Inspiration Research in the Service and Marketing Literature

The concept of inspiration has been extensively studied in various fields such as engineering and design, religion, anthropology, education, musicology, social psychology, and marketing, with each recognizing distinct external sources and outcomes of inspiration (e.g., Böttger et al., 2017; Eliade & Adams, 1987; Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004). In this context, especially the literature concerning social psychology has been comprehensively discussed (Hart, 1998; Oleynick et al., 2014; Thrash et al., 2014). In approaching FLE inspiration as a new motivational driver, and prior to integrating the conceptualization into the service and marketing literature, a comprehensive and synthesized summary of the existing explorations of inspiration is provided.

2.1.3.1 Inspiration in Various Fields of Research

Researchers have examined various resources to elucidate the sources and outcomes of inspiration. For instance, design studies often refer to muses – who are believed to inspire artists and poets, bringing creative ideas into their minds – as a personified source of inspiration (Halskov, 2010; Williams, 1997). Engineers and designers frequently draw inspiration from the shapes and textures found in nature (Beer et al., 1997; Quinn & Gaughran, 2010) while theology recognizes the person of Christ as a divine source of inspiration (Schwöbel, 1987) and acknowledges spiritual connections between therapists and patients that can inspire more effective therapeutic measures (Chamberlain et al., 1996; O'Grady & Richards, 2010; West, 2000; White, 2002).

Moreover, pedagogy research has demonstrated role models' positive effects on children's education (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995) and high-potential students and alumni of high schools can inspire their peers and motivate them to set higher goals (Lockwood et al., 2002; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Tjas et al., 1996). Studies on leadership have revealed that individuals with exceptional personalities can inspire and boost their audience's motivation, leading to improved performance at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Various researchers, such as Longstaffe (2005), Dess and Picken (2000), Steele (1977), Flynn and Staw (2004), Judge and Piccolo (2004), De Luque et al. (2008), and Densten (2002), supported these findings. Inspiring and motivating

leadership qualities often stem from the ability to communicate a vision and anticipate future needs (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Shamir et al., 1993; Wieseke et al., 2011), emotional intelligence (Chopra & Kanji, 2010), and a willingness to be receptive to the ideas of FLEs (Detert & Burris, 2007).

2.1.3.2 *Inspiration in the Social Psychology Literature*

Thrash and Elliot's (2003) influential contributions have substantially shaped the understanding of inspiration within social psychology. Thrash and Elliot (2003) defined it as an “epistemic-motivational state” sparked by a powerful insight that drives an individual to realize an idea (p. 827). Their approach to conceptualizing inspiration includes three models (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004): (i) the *tripartite*, (ii) the *process*, and (iii) the *transmission* model.

According to the *tripartite model of inspiration*, inspiration is built on three key characterizations (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Firstly, inspiration encompasses *evocation*, highlighting its unpredictable quality, indicating that an individual's inspiration requires an external trigger (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Secondly, inspiration entails *transcendence*, which refers to the capacity of an inspirational moment to surpass the self and its usual preoccupations, inspiring the person to become aware of new possibilities (Abraham et al., 2012) and transcending personal limits (Ashforth & Pratt, 2003). Thirdly, inspiration often leads to *approach motivation*, which is the force that drives individuals to delve deeper into an idea or bring it to fruition (Thrash et al., 2010a). Inspiration thus tends to stimulate a desire for action rather than avoidance (Thrash & Elliot, 2003) and the three characteristics that were identified, as well as their interaction, are necessary to differentiate inspiration from other constructs (Thrash et al., 2014).

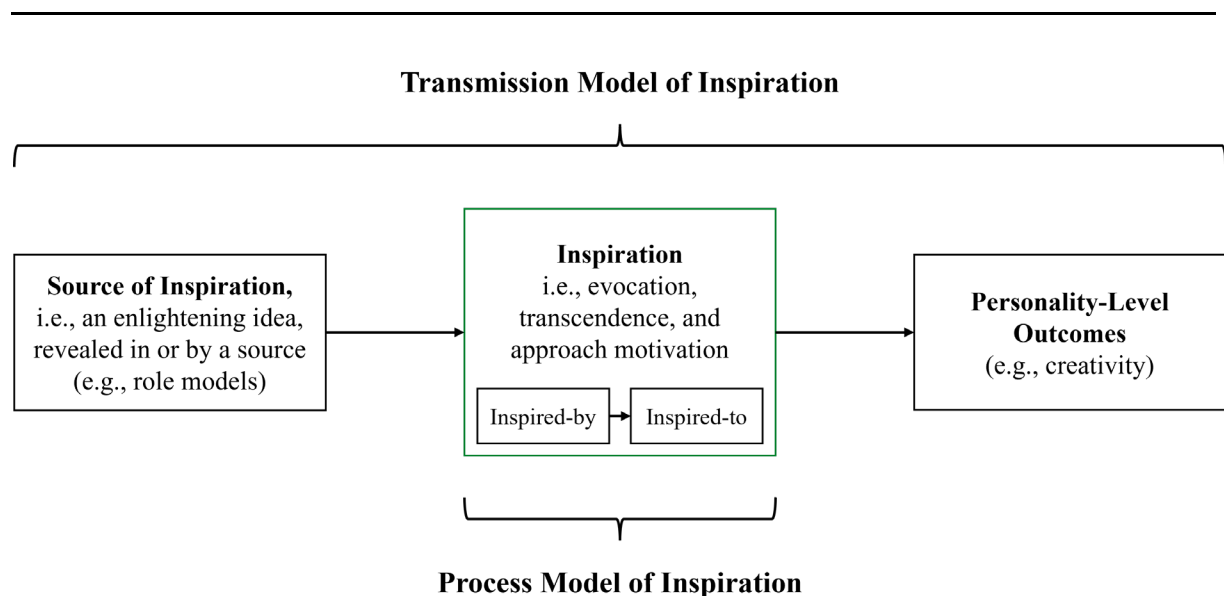
The *process model of inspiration*, outlined by Thrash and Elliot (2004), delineates inspiration as involving two sequential processes: an epistemic process (*inspired-by*) that precedes a motivational process (*inspired-to*). The “inspired-by” phase stimulates FLEs to new possibilities, enhancing their appreciation for the intrinsic value of a stimulus through evocation and transcendence. Subsequently, the “inspired-to” phase motivates the FLE to actualize the newly conceived insight characterized by approach motivation (Thrash et al., 2010a). This model allows for analyzing scenarios where one process may occur without the other. For example, someone might admire

an artist's artwork (in-spired-by) without feeling the urge to paint (inspired-to) (Thrash, 2021).

Additionally, Thrash and Elliot (2004) developed the *transmission model of inspiration*. This model positions inspiration as a mediator (transmitter) between antecedents and outcomes, where the mediator channels the perceived intrinsic values from a source or stimulus object (antecedent) to the target object (outcome) (Thrash et al., 2010b). For example, when FLEs go out of their way to helpfully assist customers (antecedent), they may inspire their coworkers to do the same (mediator). This positive behavior can lead to a culture of helpfulness among FLEs, resulting in a better adaptive service experience (future outcome). Within this framework, Thrash and Elliot (2003) defined the "trigger" as the origin that incites inspiration, which could be a customer or a service idea, and the "target" as the focus of the ensuing motivation, such as an individual ambition, a creative work, or an envisioned future persona. This suggests that the nature of inspired behavior or attitudes is contingent on the substance of the initial insight that ignited the inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004). Figure 4 shows the merged perspective of the process and transmission models of inspiration.

Figure 4

Embedded Approach of the Transmission and Process Models



Source: Author's illustration based on Thrash and Elliot (2003; 2004) and Neumüller (2022).

In addition, Thrash et al. (2014) considered three distinct forms of transmission: (i) replication, (ii) actualization, and (iii) expression. *Replication*, which can also be called emulation or extension, is the act of replicating the valuable characteristics of a source in a new object. For example, an FLE in a customer-facing role may be motivated by a colleague's adaptive service offering and use it in future customer interactions. *Actualization* happens when someone turns their thoughts into reality by bringing new possibilities to work. For instance, an FLE may develop a new idea to improve services and communicate it to their sales manager. *Expression* occurs when thoughts come out effortlessly and take shape clearly and practically, allowing them to be conveyed instantly and naturally as shown when inspired FLEs showcase their creativity by innovatively presenting a product at the POS. Sometimes, to extend or actualize an idea, it is necessary to plan or pursue sub-goals to guide the initial impulse in a specific direction. However, when it comes to expression, no such planning is needed (Thrash et al., 2014).

It is important to understand inspiration comprehensively, considering its sources and outcomes, since inspiration is a response to certain triggers, such as people or ideas, and necessarily results in some form of realization, such as creating a new service idea (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Psychology has mainly focused on exploring the relationship between inspiration and creativity, and Halskov (2010), Halskov and Dalsgaard (2007), and Eckert and Stacey (2003) suggested that supernatural and transcendental forces prove the influence of inspiration and positive emotions on creativity (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Baas et al., 2008; Thrash et al., 2010b). Additionally, Stefanovich (2011) found that seemingly unrelated activities and objects can lead to creative insights. Some studies have investigated other indicators of creativity predicted by inspiration, including poetic creativity (Thrash et al., 2010a), the receipt of US patents (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), and self-reported creativity (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Other outcomes examined by psychological research are productivity, efficiency (Thrash et al., 2010a), goal-striving (Milyavskaya et al., 2012), self-determination, work mastery, perceived competence, positive affect (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), and hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Thrash et al., 2010b).

In sum, the transmission model of inspiration provides a foundational theoretical framework for understanding the origins of inspiration in FLEs and its effect on their behaviors and attitudes towards adapting service offerings (Neumüller, 2022). Social psychology research on inspiration has typically concentrated on personal experiences and customer tendencies. Hence, Thrash and Elliot's (2003; 2004) framework is well-suited for examining the factors leading to and resulting from FLE inspiration in the context of adaptive service offerings in physical stores.

2.1.3.3 Inspiration in the Marketing Literature

Notably, in the marketing literature, customer inspiration has only recently been conceptualized and examined more explicitly based on the inspiration theory of Thrash and Elliot (2003; Böttger et al., 2017). Böttger and colleagues (2017) developed a new concept by applying the existing psychological theories on inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004; Thrash et al., 2010) to marketing. Defining customer inspiration as “a temporary motivational state that facilitates the transition from the reception of a marketing-induced idea to the intrinsic pursuit of a consumption-related goal” (Böttger et al., 2017, p. 129), Böttger et al. (2017) defined inspiration as a two-dimensional construct that involves an epistemic and a motivational component. While the epistemic inspired-by-component relates to the sudden realization of a latent need or want and the stimulation of one's imagination, the inspired-to-component relates to the motivation to pursue a consumption-related goal. Various studies have built on the psychological inspiration literature and the research by Böttger et al. (2017; Gao et al., 2021; Herhausen et al., 2019; Izogo & Mpinganjira, 2020; Kasamani et al., 2022; Kwon & Boger, 2020; Oltra et al., 2021; Saha & Mukherjee, 2022; Sheng et al., 2020) to gain a clearer understanding of this temporary experience in marketing.

The scholars added new relevant sources and outcomes in the marketing context to the knowledge in the field of inspiration. Regarding the sources, studies have indicated that the promotional strategies organizations employ, such as commercials (Böttger et al., 2017; Gao et al., 2021; Oltra et al., 2021; Winterich et al., 2019) and labeled clips (Chang, 2020; Kwon & Boger, 2020), might induce customer inspiration. In terms of the outcomes, research indicates that inspiring customers can significantly improve various outcomes, including their loyalty, delight, satisfaction, and engagement (Böttger et al., 2017; Gao et al., 2021; Herhausen et al., 2019), as well as

their reusing practices (Winterich et al., 2019), pro-environmental intent (Kwon & Boger, 2020), donation behavior (Liang et al., 2016), purchase intention (Sheng et al., 2020), well-being (Chang, 2020), and online word-of-mouth (Oltra et al., 2021).

In summary, scholars across various disciplines have largely relied on the psychological definition of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004) and have generally focused on an in-depth investigation of the antecedents and outcomes of inspiration. Thus, it is clear that the main objective of a retailer should be to inspire its customers to increase their share of wallets, cross-selling, and profitability (Rudolph et al., 2023). Scholars have advocated for a deeper exploration into the causes driving customer inspiration and suggested that interaction with FLEs during adaptive service experiences can be a significant factor in fostering customer inspiration (Böttger et al., 2017; Neumüller, 2022; Rudolph et al., 2023). This suggests that inspiration among FLEs is an important emerging concept in an evolving inspiration-dominant logic to be studied, and its role in the concept of services should be investigated to explain the transmission of inspiration from FLEs to customers (Neumüller, 2022).

2.1.3.4 Importance of Frontline Employee Inspiration Research

In her conceptualization of FLE inspiration, Neumüller (2022) focused on “inspiration as a psychological state that is temporarily elevated after being evoked by a stimulus object (e.g., an inspiring new service idea)” (p. 49). Being a transient state rather than a lasting characteristic of FLEs, the concept of FLE inspiration offers a theoretical basis for understanding how FLEs' work surroundings and the design of their workplace influence their attitudes and behaviors. According to Neumüller (2022), FLE inspiration is a

“temporary, intrinsic motivational state during which FLEs spontaneously gain epistemic (i.e., illuminating, eye-opening, compelling) insights (directly or through intrapsychic processes) from within or outside the workplace (inspired-by) and feel compelled to actualize or express these insights at work (inspired-to)” (p. 54).

Consistent with the tripartite model of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), an outside source within a FLEs' surroundings evokes inspiration, transcends their thinking beyond current ideas, offers a novel service approach to address a work-related issue,

and motivates FLEs to implement this newfound perspective into practical actions at the POS (Neumüller, 2022). The three main elements of evocation, transcendence, and motivation comprise a complete FLE inspiration experience (Neumüller, 2022). As described earlier, the process model of inspiration by Thrash and Elliot (2004) proposes that FLE inspiration consists of inspired-by and inspired-to processes, which occur one after the other. Based on the transmission model of inspiration (Thrash et al., 2010b), FLE inspiration is a reaction to sources in the FLE's (work or private) surroundings, and it can result in work-related achievements, such as implementing a new idea during adaptive service offerings (Neumüller, 2022).

In this context, Neumüller (2022) identified several key antecedents, while the outcomes of FLE inspiration were also determined. Through examining the nomological network, Neumüller (2022) discovered that FLE inspiration acts as a mediator between related sources and FLE traits (antecedents) and influences FLE behavior and job-related attitudes (outcomes). Regarding the antecedents of FLE inspiration, sources connected to work (e.g., the brand, company's products, and colleagues) or sources unrelated to work (e.g., family and personal values) might initiate FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022). In terms of the FLE traits, work-related curiosity predicts FLE inspiration, which leads to increased satisfaction, proactivity, engagement, intrinsic motivation, psychological empowerment, and creativity among FLEs (Neumüller, 2022). Inspired FLEs are often seen as more adaptable, focused on customer needs, and open, which enhances customers' perceptions of their interactions (Neumüller, 2022). Furthermore, FLE inspiration significantly affects interactions with customers, as inspired FLEs are more likely to inspire customers than those who are merely satisfied or emotionally neutral (Neumüller, 2022). Customer inspiration mediates the relationship between FLE inspiration and various customer behaviors, such as impulsive buying, service satisfaction, overall quality of customer interactions, purchase intentions, and loyalty intentions (Neumüller, 2022).

Additionally, Neumüller (2022) created the nomological network of associated constructs and found that FLE inspiration plays a significant role in inducing various FLE attitudes and behaviors, such as engagement (Auh et al., 2014) and creativity (Coelho & Augusto, 2010), which have been extensively examined within service-oriented literature on FLEs. As a novel motivational concept, FLE inspiration contributes to service research by providing an additional underlying psychological

mechanism that explains how FLEs respond to new and captivating stimuli in their surroundings (Mitchell, 1982; Neumüller, 2022). This finding is important, as previous studies have primarily concentrated on the emotional and motivational experiences of FLEs at work, such as their positive feelings and emotions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006), engagement (Menguc et al., 2013), behavior (Coelho & Augusto, 2010), and satisfaction (Brown & Lam, 2008), without clarifying FLEs' perceptions of new environmental cues, their openness to new opportunities, and the ways they draw inspiration from them (Neumüller, 2022).

2.1.3.5 Contrast to Established Motivational Concepts and Measurements

According to Neumüller (2022), FLE inspiration is a deeper and more complex factor that explains variance in FLE attitudes and behaviors. This construct might even be more impactful than other commonly studied concepts and contextual factors, such as leader-member exchange, psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, satisfaction, engagement, and work-related curiosity as antecedents of FLE attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Auh et al., 2019; Coelho et al., 2011; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Shalley et al., 2004; Spreitzer, 2008). For example, in Neumüller's (2022) study, neither FLE engagement nor FLE satisfaction were significant predictors of FLE creativity or FLE proactivity. However, FLE inspiration showed a significant correlation with both FLE creativity and FLE proactivity, unlike FLE engagement and FLE satisfaction (Neumüller, 2022).

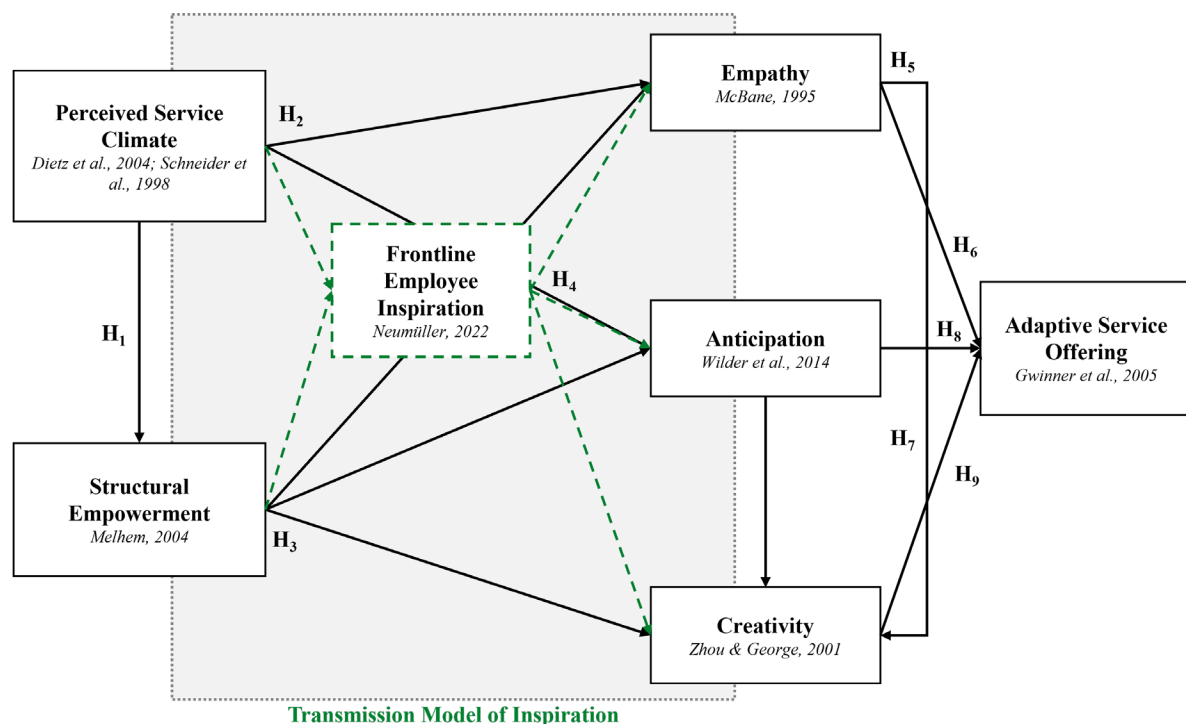
The retailer who understands the psychological mechanism that shapes FLEs' understanding and perception of their work can enhance customer adaptive service experiences (Crawford et al., 2022). However, it is not easy to find answers to questions such as why some FLEs view their work as a hobby while others consider it as a means to earn a paycheck (Crawford et al., 2022). As mentioned previously, other existing motivational time-tested concepts and measurements, for instance, citizenship behavior (e.g., Choi, 2007), customer stewardship control (e.g., Schepers et al., 2012), and organizational commitment (e.g., Mowday et al., 1979), as well as newer concepts, such as FLE passion (Crawford et al., 2022), do not fully capture internal mechanisms to explain differences in FLE perspectives regarding their work role. This process through which FLEs gain awareness of new ideas that are worth pursuing and the results of Neumüller (2022) highlight the importance of inspiring FLEs rather than just satisfying

or engaging them to gain their support for organizational change initiatives (Ahearne et al., 2010; Neumüller, 2022). FLE inspiration plays a unique role in helping retailers understand how FLEs decide which goal is worth pursuing and what motivates them to display new attitudes and behaviors that help them achieve this goal (Locke & Latham, 1990).

2.2 How to Inspire Frontline Employees

Addressing the limitations of previous literature, this section describes the development of a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings based on Wilder et al. (2014) that includes FLE inspiration, together with their associated hypotheses. I investigated how retailers' perceived service climate and structural empowerment influence FLE inspiration (H₁; H₂; H₃) and postulated that FLE inspiration partially mediates the effect of the environmental work factors on three FLE variables, namely empathy, anticipation, and creativity (H₄₋₁; H₄₋₂; H₄₋₃). These three variables were proposed to precede adaptive service offerings (H₅; H₆; H₇; H₈; H₉). Age, gender, degree, the retail industry, service intensity, and service duration, were control variables. The model in Figure 5 details the hypotheses presented in the following subsections of this dissertation.

Figure 5
Conceptual Research Model and Overview of Hypotheses



Source: Author's illustration based on Wilder et al. (2014) and Neumüller (2022). Note: Squares represent latent constructs; dashed lines represent extensions.

2.2.1 *Effects of Environmental Work Factors on Frontline Employee Inspiration*

Perceived Service Climate: FLEs identify service climate as the organization's essence or the workplace atmosphere (Snow, 2002). More specifically, the perceived service climate by individual FLEs refers to their understanding of the customer service policies, procedures, and practices that are encouraged, supported, and anticipated within the service organization where they work (Schneider et al., 1998; Wilder et al., 2014). As it is transient and directly controllable by organizations, service climate can be actively nurtured and managed (Denison, 1996). The context or environment in which FLEs operate explains the effect of service climate on their work attitudes and behaviors (Schneider et al., 2011; 2013), whereby the conceptualization and operationalization of service climate can occur at either the organizational or individual level (Hochstein et al., 2017).

Organizational climate, at its core, comprises shared and collective values and meanings derived by FLEs from their work environment (Menguc et al., 2017). It significantly influences FLEs' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, as it represents what the organization values and rewards (Hochstein et al., 2017; Sok et al., 2023). On the other hand, at the individual level, service climate takes on a psychological aspect (Ostroff et al., 2003) and serves "as a representation of the meaning inherent in organizational features, events, and processes" (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989, p. 547). Essentially, an FLE's perspective on the work environment revolves around its effect on their daily life and personal values, surpassing objective organizational features (Brown et al., 2011; Hochstein et al., 2017). Individual life experiences influence FLEs' diverse interpretations of the significance, rewards, and expectations set forth by the organization (Gabler et al., 2018; Hochstein et al., 2017). Hence, FLEs are more inclined to attain optimal performance outcomes when their differences, such as skills, abilities, or work attitudes and behaviors, receive substantial support from the work environment or service climate (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Edwards et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Sok et al., 2021; van Vianen, 2018).

Therefore, Sok et al. (2023) proposed the presence of a quality-focused service climate or an initiative-focused service climate. While both a quality-focused service climate and an initiative-focused service climate share the common goal of delivering high levels of service quality, there are significant differences in how they achieve this

objective (Sok et al., 2023). Raub and Liao (2012) defined the initiative-focused form as a service climate that motivates FLEs to actively engage in self-starting and initiative-taking practices. In an initiative-focused service climate, FLEs would implement innovative solutions and alternatives to provide superior service quality (Sok et al., 2023). A climate that advocates taking the initiative encourages the provision of superior service offerings through proactive measures that go beyond the expected call of duty (Sok et al., 2023). The perception of such a service climate stands in contrast to a quality-focused service climate, which encourages FLEs to comply with service-offering practices that have been authorized and/or proven effective through prior use (Auh et al., 2011; Schneider, 1990).

Drawing on this, an initiative-focused service climate fosters a service environment that is inclined to stimulate and motivate FLEs towards proactive and self-starting attitudes and behaviors, enabling them to effectively address customer needs (Raub & Liao, 2012; Sok et al., 2023), instead of understanding standardization as a foundation of differentiation (McKay et al., 2011). This inclination may entail taking on tasks that are not explicitly defined within their formal job descriptions (Sok et al., 2018). With a robust initiative-focused service climate, creative thinking and risk-taking are actively encouraged, empowering FLEs to proactively provide unexpected value-added services to meet the myriad of customer needs they encounter (Raub & Liao, 2012). Moreover, it is common for customers to experience frustration when an FLE must seek managerial authorization before solving a problem (Wilder et al., 2014). In contrast, an initiative-focused service climate empowers FLEs to make on-the-spot decisions to resolve issues swiftly and endorses superior service quality by creating a supportive FLE environment (Bowen & Schneider, 2014). Carless (2004), Hartline and Ferrell (1996), and Hennig-Thurau and Thurau (2003) supported this idea by viewing management commitment and organizational service culture as causes of empowerment because management commitment is often understood as an indicator of trust in FLEs. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis was derived:

***H₁:** An initiative-focused service climate positively influences an FLE's perception of structural empowerment.*

I identified distinct factors in FLEs' work environment, inspiring leadership, and service climate that shape the emergence of FLE inspiration and increase employee-

level behaviors (creativity) and emotions (empathy, anticipation). James and Lahti (2011) showed that inspiring leadership (i.e., how convincingly a leader communicates the company's vision determines its impact) and organizational factors (e.g., corporate structure, group incentives) positively affect FLEs' vision inspiration. Building on this, Straume and Vittersø (2012) revealed that novel, complex, and challenging service environments serve as a wellspring of inspiration and thereby encourage self-development and growth. Expanding upon this, Avramenko's (2013) research showed that inspiration extends beyond personal life to organizational environments. FLEs linked workplace inspiration to energy, freedom, and happiness, with perceptions differing based on their position in the organization. Thus, FLEs who identified with their company's initiative-focused service climate were more open to work-relevant inspiring influences. Sok et al. (2023), Hochstein et al. (2017), Jerger and Wirtz (2017), and Salanova et al. (2005) demonstrated that service climate is an important factor influencing FLEs' attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, according to Homburg et al. (2009), training and role-playing improve the empathetic ability of FLEs. Moreover, Rudolph and Schweizer (2019) favored offering sources of inspiration, including a compelling, purposeful, and distinctive value proposition along with corporate values, to guide FLEs' work behavior, inspiration, and other positive attitudes and behaviors. Comprehensively, the organization's endorsement and encouragement of customer-centric ideals resulted in a noticeable elevation of positive FLE attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Crant, 2000; Daly et al., 2009; Parker et al., 2006). Therefore, I proposed that the perceived service climate is important in facilitating FLE inspiration, empathy, and anticipation.

***H₂:** An initiative-focused service climate positively influences (a) FLE inspiration, (b) FLE empathy, and (c) FLE anticipation.*

Structural Empowerment: Further, the role of structural empowerment in giving companies concrete, practical recommendations for improving FLE service adaptability was examined. Structural empowerment that focuses on an organization-centric perspective can be increased by management, in contrast to psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), which is understood as a psychological state residing within FLEs (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Structural Empowerment is defined as “a practice, or set of practices, involving the delegation of the responsibility down the

hierarchy to give employees increased decision-making authority concerning the execution of their primary work tasks” (Leach et al., 2003, p. 28). Hence, structural empowerment denotes establishing workplace social structures that empower FLEs to achieve their work goals by providing support and access to opportunities, resources, and pertinent information (Kanter, 1977). This includes opportunities for learning and development through access to challenging assignments and new skills that enhance professional growth. Structurally empowering conditions also involve access to crucial organizational information about goals, values, policies, and decisions. Support involves receiving feedback and assistance from subordinates, peers, and management, while resources mean having access to temporary help and sufficient time to meet work responsibilities and fulfill institutional goals (Kanter, 1977; Monje-Amor et al., 2021).

Structural empowerment of FLEs in service organizations has often been described as an efficient strategy to enhance the flexibility of FLE attitudes and behaviors that would be otherwise scripted (Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Monje-Amor et al., 2021; Wilder et al., 2014). Furthermore, structural empowerment is directly related to increased FLE adaptive offerings (Scott & Bruce, 1994) and organizations are progressively adopting structural empowerment as a management strategy to foster FLE engagement and enhance performance (Boamah & Laschinger, 2015). Structural empowerment is mainly being explored in healthcare settings, and it was shown to be a significant predictor of several key FLE work outcomes, such as high levels of job satisfaction (Laschinger et al., 2001a; 2004; Manojlovich, 2005), higher effectiveness and work engagement (Laschinger et al., 2009), organizational commitment (Laschinger et al., 2001b), organizational trust, justice, and respect (Laschinger et al., 2001b; Laschinger & Finegan, 2005), and low levels of job strain and burnout (Laschinger et al., 2001a, 2003). In summary, when FLEs are empowered to alter services in response to customers’ needs, and the management addresses the fundamental human need for autonomy while not insisting on strict protocol adherence, FLEs are more likely to be intrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Since structural empowerment is the underlying mechanism explaining why FLEs experience inspiration, empathy, anticipation, and creativity, the following hypothesis was derived:

H₃: An FLE’s structural empowerment positively influences (a) FLE inspiration, (b) FLE empathy, (c) FLE anticipation, and (d) FLE creativity.

2.2.2 Mediating Role of Frontline Employee Inspiration

FLE Inspiration: Drawing on earlier definitions of inspiration in social psychology, Neumüller (2022) described FLE inspiration as a condition wherein FLEs acquire new epistemic insights or ideas (i.e., inspired-by) and feel driven to implement these insights in their work (i.e., inspired-to). This conceptualization incorporates the three fundamental characteristics of inspiration—transcendence, evocation, and approach motivation—and emphasizes its distinctive role in transmitting these qualities (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004; Thrash et al., 2010a). Therefore, the concept of having a sudden realization or insight has been linked to “aha moments” (Bowden et al., 2005; Lane, 2000), and these moments of clarity are believed to spark inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). When becoming inspired, the FLEs feel captivated and deeply drawn to the attractiveness of a specific idea that has entered their consciousness (Neumüller, 2022). Additionally, FLEs who are inspired demonstrate a future-oriented mindset as they are focused on conveying their newly acquired insights to a future service interaction (Neumüller, 2022).

Inspiration, in its origin, is an antecedent of creativity (i.e., the process of motivation that can lead to such a creative output) and induces emotional responses, notably positive affect, which is defined as a state of enjoyable mood (Thrash et al., 2014) marked by heightened energy and motivation (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), intense focus, and enjoyable excitement (Watson et al., 1988). Furthermore, in the context of daily work, Thrash and Elliot (2004) discovered that inspiration is related to being open to experiences and engaging in task-oriented behaviors (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Moreover, inspiration entails questioning and reevaluating the existing work procedures, prompting FLEs to direct their focus beyond themselves and toward something that surpasses their current boundaries (Shiota et al., 2014).

Neumüller (2022) demonstrated that FLE inspiration is a crucial predictor of FLE behaviors and attitudes, significantly influencing a range of FLE outcomes, such as creativity. According to previous inspiration research (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004; Thrash et al., 2014) and the findings of Neumüller (2022), FLE inspiration mediates the relationship between the source and the outcome of inspiration. Thereby, in line with past research (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004; Neumüller, 2022), it can provide a

rationale for explaining the direct and indirect mediating effect of a perceived service climate and structural empowerment on the three FLE-level variables.

H_{4.1}: FLE inspiration positively influences (a) FLE empathy, (b) FLE anticipation, and (c) FLE creativity.

H_{4.2}: FLE inspiration partially mediates the positive relationship between the environmental work factors (i.e., (i) perceived service climate, (ii) structural empowerment) and the three FLE-level variables (i.e., (a) empathy, (b) anticipation, (c) creativity).

Rudolph and Schweizer (2019) emphasized that a company's value proposition, which embodies the company's values, must be meaningful to benefit FLEs, customers, and society. It should also be unique, distinguished from competitors, and focused on clear objectives. Moreover, FLEs should understand it and be able to achieve it (Rudolph, 2021). Retailers can receive various benefits from inspiring FLEs, depending on their unique value proposition and business model (Neumüller, 2022).

Rudolph (2000) categorized three generic business models in retailing based on the three most crucial drivers of customer value, namely price, product, and service. These models are (i) global discounters (e.g., low-cost products), (ii) content retailers (e.g., unique assortments), and (iii) channel retailers (e.g., customer-oriented solutions). With the help of FLE inspiration, global discounters can encourage proactive attitudes, behaviors, and active involvement in tasks that enhance FLEs' readiness to support organizational change (Cadwallader et al., 2010; Wieseke et al., 2011) and may spark creative ideas that improve retailers' efficiency and effectiveness. Content retailers could enhance FLEs' capacity due to their inspiration to recognize and share new cues from their surroundings (e.g., emerging customer needs and market trends) (Gebhardt et al., 2019), which might effectively differentiate their offerings and make them more compelling to customers. In the context of channel retailers, by elevating FLE inspiration, adaptive service offerings can be enriched, potentially leading to noticeable improvements in FLE attitudes and behaviors (i.e., empathy, anticipation, creativity) (Neumüller, 2022). In conclusion, the potential for FLE inspiration is contingent upon a retailer's value proposition and business model.

***H_{4.3}:** The strengths of the relationships between the environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment), partially mediated by FLE inspiration, and the three FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, creativity) differ depending on the generic business model.*

2.2.3 Superior Adaptive Service Offerings Due to Frontline Employee Inspiration

Empathy: In service interactions, FLE empathy is essential for identifying and meeting customer needs (Aggarwal et al., 2005; Wieseke et al., 2012) because empathy enhances FLEs' understanding of customers' emotions (Bettencourt et al., 2001). Accordingly, Wieseke et al. (2012) defined empathy as "a person's ability to sense another's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, to share the other's emotional experience, and to react to the observed experiences of another person" (p. 317). Research has shown that FLE empathy plays a pivotal role in mediating pro-social behavior (Decety et al., 2016), leading to improved service quality and customer satisfaction (Malhotra & Ackfeldt, 2016), service delivery (Umasuthan et al., 2017), and service evaluation (Min et al., 2015). Moreover, the reciprocal effect of customer empathy on FLEs further amplifies the positive influence of FLE empathy on customer satisfaction (Wieseke et al., 2012). Ultimately, empathy fosters a reciprocity-based social interaction that benefits both customers and the firm by creating engaging and mutually beneficial relationships (Davis et al., 2017; Riedl et al., 2014). In sum, the results emphasize the vital role of empathy as a cognitive and emotional process in fostering successful service interactions (Wieseke et al., 2012). Carlozzi et al. (1995) discovered a direct correlation between empathy and creative thinking capabilities. Additionally, Giacobbe et al. (2006) observed that empathetic FLEs have a deeper comprehension of customer desires and foster creativity when customizing adaptive service offerings. Thus, based on these inputs, the following hypothesis was derived:

***H₅:** FLE empathy positively influences FLE creativity.*

In particular, Homburg et al. (2009) linked empathy to increased customer knowledge, which helps FLEs adapt to different customer needs. Finally, empirical studies have reported a significant relationship between personality traits such as

empathy and diverse types of adaptive behaviors (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Weitz et al., 1986).

H₆: FLE empathy positively influences adaptive service offerings.

Anticipation: Anticipation relates to understanding customers' needs during a service experience (Wilder et al., 2014) and previous studies indicated that to effectively adapt a service, FLEs must understand customer needs during service interactions (e.g., Gwinner et al., 2005; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Spiro & Weitz, 1990). Besides empathy, the ability of an FLE to foresee customer desires also plays a crucial role in enhancing creativity (Wilder et al., 2014). Gong et al. (2012) discovered that initiative-taking FLEs who excel in information sharing and trust-building tend to be more creative. Similarly, Friedman and Förster (2005) determined that the act of anticipation itself can stimulate creative thinking.

H₇: FLE anticipation positively influences FLE creativity.

Service and retail companies highly value proactive FLEs who anticipate issues before customers address them. These proactive FLEs frequently come up with a wide range of adaptive service offerings to meet potential customer needs during service interactions (Wilder et al., 2014).

H₈: FLE anticipation positively influences adaptive service offerings.

Creativity: Service offerings include identifying diverse customer needs, negotiating, co-creating value propositions, and building customer relationships (Agnihotri et al., 2014). Especially today, FLEs must interact with idiosyncratic customer needs and manage diverse conflicts (Coelho et al., 2021). In this context, creativity is vital for fulfilling customers' unique needs (Agnihotri et al., 2014; Sousa & Coelho, 2011) and, therefore, service and marketing researchers have recently started to focus on FLE creativity (e.g., Agnihotri et al., 2014; Coelho et al., 2021; Sok et al., 2018). The literature describes FLE creativity primarily as a process of generating ideas that leads to the creation of inventive outputs (Amabile et al., 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Zhou & George, 2001). For instance, Oldham and Cummings (1996) defined FLE creativity as "products, ideas, or procedures that satisfy two conditions: (i) they are novel or original and (ii) they are potentially relevant or useful for the

organization” (p. 906). FLE creativity ranges from incremental procedural suggestions to radical breakthroughs (Madjar et al., 2011) that can help FLEs generate novel and valuable ideas for new products or practices in daily activities (Gong et al., 2013).

Building on this, firms often greatly value FLE creativity as a key driver of success (Sok et al., 2018) and the literature shows that FLE creativity is of utmost importance, not only for enhancing customer experiences and satisfaction (Coelho et al., 2011; Daly et al., 2009), but also for driving organizational innovation and influencing performance, which ultimately enhances the company’s competitive advantage (Agnihotri et al., 2014; Amabile et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2011; Hirst et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2012; Liu, 2013; Strutton et al., 2009).

Drawing on these outcomes, creative FLEs are more likely to uncover customers’ latent needs and use this knowledge to productively and effectively solve their service problems, thereby creating superior adaptive service offerings tailored to meet the specific requirements at hand (Coelho et al., 2011; 2018; Grewal et al., 2009). In line with Wilder et al. (2014), I limited creativity to creative problem-solving to devise new ways to satisfy unique customer requests (Hunt, 1994). Creativity is important for adapting service offerings to customers’ unique needs because creative FLEs can extend service interactions beyond service scripts (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004; Wilder et al., 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis was derived:

H₉: FLE creativity positively influences adaptive service offerings.

2.2.4 Summary

Based on the outlined distinctions, 11 hypotheses (Table 3) were proposed to determine the role of FLE inspiration as a psychological mechanism in adaptive service offerings of FLEs and classify the recognized constructs as either antecedents or outcomes of FLE inspiration.

Table 3
Overview of the Main Hypotheses

HYPOTHESIS	HYPOTHESIS STATEMENT
H ₁	An <i>initiative-focused service climate</i> positively influences an FLE's perception of structural empowerment.
H ₂	An <i>initiative-focused service climate</i> positively influences (a) FLE inspiration, (b) FLE empathy, and (c) FLE anticipation.
H ₃	An <i>FLE's structural empowerment</i> positively influences (a) FLE inspiration, (b) FLE empathy, (c) FLE anticipation, and (d) FLE creativity.
H ₄₋₁	<i>FLE inspiration</i> positively influences (a) FLE empathy, (b) FLE anticipation, and (c) FLE creativity.
H ₄₋₂	<i>FLE inspiration</i> partially mediates the positive relationship between the environmental work factors (i.e., (i) perceived service climate, (ii) structural empowerment) and the three FLE-level variables (i.e., (a) empathy, (b) anticipation, (c) creativity).
H ₄₋₃	The strengths of the relationships between the environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment), partially mediated by FLE inspiration, and the three FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, creativity) differ depending on the <i>generic business model</i> .
H ₅	<i>FLE empathy</i> positively influences FLE creativity.
H ₆	<i>FLE empathy</i> positively influences adaptive service offerings.
H ₇	<i>FLE anticipation</i> positively influences FLE creativity.
H ₈	<i>FLE anticipation</i> positively influences adaptive service offerings.
H ₉	<i>FLE creativity</i> positively influences adaptive service offerings.

Source: Author's illustration.

3 Why We Need to Replicate

3.1 The Disturbing Trend in Replication Research

Given the favorable reaction over the past decades to calls for more replications in diverse fields, including marketing (e.g., Evanschitzky et al., 2007), strategic management (e.g., Bettis et al., 2016), management (e.g., Singh et al., 2003; Tsang & Kwan, 1999), organization studies (e.g., Wright & Sweeney, 2015), international business (e.g., Aguinis et al., 2017), family business (e.g., De Massis et al., 2020), entrepreneurship (e.g., Maula & Stam, 2020), advertising (e.g., Kerr et al., 2016), software engineering (Gómez et al., 2014), information systems (e.g., Berthon et al., 2002), sociology (Freese & Peterson, 2017), social psychology (e.g., Fabrigar & Wegener, 2016), medicine (Lüdtke, 2008), education (e.g., Makel & Plucker, 2014), and public administration (e.g., Pederson & Stritch, 2018), the type of replication that can either validate or refute the results of the existing empirical studies remains scarce in many social sciences (Block et al., 2022; Dau et al., 2021; Köhler & Cortina, 2021; van Witteloostuijn, 2020).

For example, Hubbard and Vetter (1996) reviewed replication studies published between 1970 and 1991 in 18 leading business journals (i.e., marketing, management, accounting, finance, and economics) and found that 6.2% (266 of 4,270) of all empirical studies in that period were only replications. The second review by Hubbard et al. (1998) revealed that the prevalence of replication studies in strategic management of 5.3% (37 of 701 articles) for the period spanning 1976–1995 was similar to that found in the previous study. Likewise, similar studies on the status quo of replications across diverse academic disciplines (e.g., Block et al., 2022; Darley, 2000; Evanschitzky et al., 2007; Hubbard & Armstrong, 1994; Köhler & Cortina, 2021; Mueller-Langer et al., 2019) reported comparably low incidences of replication studies, typically near 5%.

One explanation for this might be that replication research is frequently called non-original and viewed as simply repetitive, and as such, it might be less likely to be accepted in top journals (Dau et al., 2021; Easley et al., 2013; Evanschitzky et al., 2007). Intrinsically, they are unlikely to contribute positively to the researcher's reputation (e.g., due to a kind of academic "truth police") (Dau et al., 2021; Koole & Lakens,

2012). Further, publishing novel theoretical contributions in top-tier journals is strongly encouraged (Corley & Gioia, 2011), making replication research less appealing. Researchers are often driven by external rewards, such as the prestige of publishing novel work rather than replicating the existing studies (Dau et al., 2021; Köhler & Cortina, 2021). Given these findings, the number of replication studies shows no significant upward trend in the social sciences over time (Block et al., 2022; Dau et al., 2021; Köhler & Cortina, 2021).

3.2 Categories of Replication Studies

Various interpretations of what qualifies as a replication exist (Block et al., 2022; Dau et al., 2021), whereby one can differentiate between replication and replication with extension (e.g., Hubbard & Armstrong, 1994) or offer a more comprehensive classification (e.g., Köhler & Cortina, 2021). Tsang and Kwan (1999) proposed perhaps the best-known classification in science, recognized as a landmark in the academic literature (Dau et al., 2021). The researchers provided the typology of six different types of replication studies based on two dimensions, namely the (i) source of the data and (ii) research design. Table 4 plots the six types of replication studies identified by Tsang and Kwan (1999), although I followed the renaming of Dau et al. (2021) to make the different forms more intuitive.

Table 4
Typology of Replication Studies in Research

		Research Design (Measurement and/or Analysis)	
		Same	Different
Data Source	Same Sample	<i>Reproduction</i>	<i>Re-Analysis of Data</i>
	Same Population (Different Sample)	<i>Direct Replication</i>	Conceptual Extension
	Different Population	Empirical Generalization	Generalization and Extension

Source: Author's illustration based on Dau et al. (2021) and Tsang and Kwan (1999). Note: Italics denote theory-checking replications, and bold type indicates the theory fine-tuning replications.

Based on Tsang and Kwan's (1999) typology, one key aspect of research design is deciding whether to maintain the same variable measurement and analysis as the original study or to modify one or both components. When considering the data source, it is important to determine whether the study should be replicated using the same

sample as the original, a different sample within the same population, or an entirely different population (e.g., location, industry, period, and subjects) (Tsang & Kwan, 1999). The most limited form of replication is *reproduction*, which involves utilizing data and a research design that is identical to those used in the original study (Dau et al., 2021). In their *data re-analysis*, Tsang and Kwan (1999) employed an altered research design concerning either variable measurement or data analysis with the same data. Researchers often conduct this type of replication along with sensitivity analysis to demonstrate the strength and reliability of their initial results (Dau et al., 2021). From the perspective of Popperian philosophy of science, neither data *reproduction* nor *re-analysis* qualifies as replication because the underlying data and analyzed observations remain the same, offering limited contributions at best (Schmidt, 2009), whereas replications must incorporate new observations into the existing body of results to solidify knowledge (Dau et al., 2021).

In line with the labeling introduced by Dau et al. (2021), Schmidt (2009), and Walker et al. (2019), a *direct replication* involves selecting a distinct sample from the same population while employing the same constructs and analytical methods of measurement (e.g., a random sample of FLEs in a retailer's organization is replicated using a different random sample of FLEs working for the same retailer). This replication aims to evaluate the sample's reliability and representativeness (Dau et al., 2021). Another replication method, known as *conceptual extension*, involves using a different sample from the same population as the original study but utilizing different measurements or analytical methods (Tsang & Kwan, 1999). *Empirical generalizations* are based on the same research design as the original study but utilize data from a different population (Tsang & Kwan, 1999). Empirical generalizations examine the generalizability of the original findings across various geographical, institutional, or cultural contexts, as well as different organizations, industries, periods, and levels of analysis (Dau et al., 2021). Finally, in contrast to the narrowest type of replication, the *generalization and extension* method uses data sources and research designs that differ from those employed in the original study (Tsang & Kwan, 1999).

The boundaries of the original theory can be determined when the investigation of theory fine-tuning replications (i.e., conceptual extension, empirical generalizations, and generalization and extension) yields findings that differ from the initial ones (Köhler & Cortina, 2021). Such findings contribute to the development of an improved

theory that clarifies (i) why the initial theory may not be suitable beyond its limitations and (ii) the outcomes that occur beyond these limitations (Dau et al., 2021). According to Köhler and Cortina (2021), so-called *constructive replication* refers to maintaining the original study's characteristics while improving it in some manner. Tsang and Kwan (1999) characterized this approach as a *conceptual extension*, *empirical generalizations*, and *generalization and extension*. Following Tsang and Kwan (1999), Dau et al. (2021), and Köhler and Cortina (2021), I concluded that a replication study is constructive if it surpasses the original study in terms of external validity (i.e., sample quality), internal validity (i.e., quality of variables used, measurement, or empirical analysis), or both. Such replications offer solid evidence concerning effect sizes and significance levels, and they are useful for fine-tuning theory (Dau et al., 2021). If the original study's findings are verified or even extended, they can be generalizable to different contexts and research designs (Dau et al., 2021).

In my analysis, I conclude that the field of social sciences still has a long way to go. Thus, the backbone of my dissertation is a generalization and extension study with new data sources (i.e., UK- and DACH-based retail FLEs) and a novel research design (i.e., integration of FLE inspiration) compared to the original approach of Wilder et al. (2014). With this dissertation, I hope to initiate an important change and guide others interested in replicating studies.

4 Sources of Frontline Employee Inspiration

4.1 Introduction and Scope of Research

In this chapter, the sources of inspiration among FLEs in retailing are thoroughly examined using one distinct exploratory qualitative research study, denoted as Study 1 in subsequent sections. The term “source” is used synonymously with stimulus or trigger object as outlined in the psychological literature on inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004) to denote the precise cues within the FLE’s work environment that elicit FLE inspiration (Chapter 2.1.3.2).

Service and marketing research must provide a comprehensive and unified explanation of the origins of FLE inspiration within their work environment. This represents a key gap that requires attention, given that FLEs function at the POS of retailers, catering to a range of customer requirements and directly engaging with customers (Coelho et al., 2011). Consequently, their exposure to diverse sources of inspiration might vary significantly from FLEs who lack direct customer interaction, such as administrative personnel or storeroom workers.

To enhance the current state of knowledge concerning the origins of FLE inspiration, the qualitative findings from Neumüller’s (2022) study conducted with US-based FLEs were examined in more detail. The qualitative inquiry and its resultant classified inputs from (i) work-related sources and (ii) sources not found in the immediate work environment established an optimal inception for further exploration of the sources of FLE inspiration in the German-speaking DACH region. From the practitioner’s perspective, one crucial question was addressed, namely “How often do FLEs experience FLE inspiration from different sources, such as leaders, coworkers, customers, and the physical store environment at work?”

4.2 Study 1: Explorative Approach to Frontline Employee Inspiration

4.2.1 Methodology

To better understand and measure the frequency of the sources of FLE inspiration in a retail context, a qualitative exploration of the origins of FLE inspiration was conducted using a single survey study involving a large sample of FLEs (N = 293) in different service industries from the DACH region recruited through the online panel provider INNOFACT AG. At the beginning of the survey, participants (e.g., employees from IKEA, Edeka, Lidl, or Manor) were asked to recall their most recent moment of inspiration at work. In an open text field, they were requested to write 1–2 sentences to describe that particular moment to gather insights about what they perceive as inspiring in their current work situation and what is affecting their work. Sample answers include:

“Mich inspiriert die Zusammenarbeit und die Anerkennung der Kollegen und Vorgesetzten” (*Sales FLE, Global Discounter*)

“Meine Kunden inspirieren mich immer wieder mit ihren Ideen welche wir dann versuchen umzusetzen” (*Retail Salesperson, Content Retailer*)

“Es inspiriert mich die Wünsche der Kunden zu realisieren und sie mit meiner Kreativität zu begeistern” (*Sales Representative, Channel Retailer*)

Appendix A contains an in-depth outline of the aggregate-level classifications based on the qualitative data, along with select qualitative quotations corresponding to each source. The qualitative results were translated and methodologically triangulated into a more comprehensive and measurable antecedent model of adaptive service offerings in Studies 2 and 3 (Patton, 1990).

4.2.1.1 Participants and Procedure

Data was gathered from an online sample of 293 individuals recruited from the DACH region who worked in various retail sectors (25.9% male, 41.6% over 45 years old). Regarding education, 14.3% of respondents had completed high school, 15.7% had an associate degree, and 6.8% had obtained a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 10.9% of respondents were new job entrants (i.e., less than one year with a retailer), and the remaining 89.1% worked for the retailer for more than one year. Most participants

were employed in the food retail sector (42.7%), followed by the apparel and fashion industry (11.3%). Fewer participants were involved in hobbies, books, and music (10.6%), furniture (8.2%), and home improvement (5.8%) sectors. The remaining 21.4% of the participants worked in other industries (such as electronics, pharmacies, and personal care).

The frequency of customer interaction was assessed on a 5-point scale adapted from Stock and Bednarek (2014) and used by Neumüller (2022), where 5 represented “several times an hour,” 4 denoted “several times a day,” 3 indicated “several times a week,” 2 signified “several times a month,” and one denoted “very seldom/never.” Respondents who reported minimal customer contact (1) or having contact only a few times a month (2) were excluded from the sample to focus exclusively on FLEs who frequently engage with customers (Coelho et al., 2011; Neumüller, 2022). The data of respondents who failed the attention check and who had not recounted an inspiring situation at work was also removed from the overall dataset prior to analysis. The resulting sample comprised FLEs from the DACH region who regularly interacted with customers. Specifically, 6.8% of participants engaged with customers several times a week, 19.5% engaged several times a day, and 71.0% engaged several times an hour.

4.2.1.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive data for each of the 15 sources of FLE inspiration, as identified by Neumüller (2022), are presented in Table 5. The surveyed FLEs indicated that their extended work environment, that is, their customers, inspires them the most frequently ($N = 189$). Moreover, the sources present within the immediate work environment of FLEs play a pivotal role in instigating FLE inspiration. In descending order, coworkers ($N = 24$), company’s products/services ($N = 24$), company’s values ($N = 17$), company’s training ($N = 9$), physical store environment ($N = 9$), company’s success ($N = 6$), and internal leader ($N = 1$) tended to spark recurring moments of inspiration. On the other hand, the private environment of FLEs, i.e., their personal values ($N = 13$) and private life ($N = 1$) assumes a subordinate role in initiating FLE inspiration compared to work environment sources.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of Source Items (DACH)

<i>Sources of Frontline Employee Inspiration</i>	#	%
Personal Values	13	4.4
Private Life (e.g., family)	1	.3
Customers	189	64.5
Coworkers	24	8.2
Company's Products/Services	24	8.2
Company's Success	6	2.0
Direct Superior	0	.0
Physical Store Environment	9	3.1
Company's Values	17	5.8
Internal Leader	1	.3
Company's Brand	0	.0
Company's Training	9	3.1
Company's History	0	.0
External Leader (e.g., Jeff Bezos)	0	.0
Social Media	0	.0
Σ	293	100.0

Source: Author's illustration based on Neumüller (2022).

Subsequently, the variations in the frequency with which different sources of FLE inspiration occur in the DACH countries were examined. As shown in Table 6, the sources of FLE inspiration differed across the DACH countries. On average, participants from all countries reported that their latest instance of workplace inspiration was primarily sparked by their customers ($N_{CH} = 78$; $N_{DE} = 65$; $N_{AUT} = 46$)⁹, followed by their coworkers in Germany ($N = 11$) and Austria ($N = 10$), whereas in Switzerland, the second most common trigger was the company's products/services ($N = 12$).

The least important sources of FLE inspiration were the influence from the internal leader ($N = 1$) and physical store environment ($N = 1$) in Switzerland, company values ($N = 2$) in Germany, and their private lives (e.g., family) ($N = 1$) in Austria. FLEs from all DACH countries were most strongly inspired by company-related sources (i.e., customers, coworkers, company's products/services, and company's values) (*ranked 1_{st}*), followed by FLEs' immediate private background (i.e., private life and personal values) (*2_{nd}*).

⁹ CH = Switzerland, DE = Germany, AUT = Austria

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics of Source Items Based on Countries (DACH)

<i>Sources of Frontline Employee Inspiration</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		<i>Germany</i>		<i>Austria</i>	
	<i>N=111</i>		<i>N=92</i>		<i>N=90</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Personal Values	6	5.4	3	3.3	4	4.4
Private Life (e.g., family)	0	.0	0	.0	1	1.1
Customers	78	70.3	65	70.7	46	51.1
Coworkers	3	2.7	11	12.0	10	11.1
Company's Products/Services	12	10.8	7	7.6	5	5.6
Company's Success	2	1.8	0	.0	4	4.4
Direct Superior	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Physical Store Environment	1	.9	4	4.3	4	4.4
Company's Values	6	5.4	2	2.2	9	10.0
Internal Leader	1	.9	0	.0	0	.0
Company's Brand	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Company's Training	2	1.8	0	.0	7	7.8
Company's History	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
External Leader (e.g., Jeff Bezos)	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Social Media	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Σ	111	100.0	92	100.0	90	100.0

Source: Author's illustration based on Neumüller (2022).

4.2.2 Discussion and Implications of Qualitative Findings

Study 1 sought to examine the frequency with which specific sources at work inspire FLEs using a sample of FLEs in various retail sectors obtained from INNOFACT AG. The descriptive findings from Study 1 indicated that inspiration emerges as a reactive state prompted by either work-related or external sources that influence FLEs directly or indirectly by triggering internal psychological mechanisms. Interestingly, in contrast to Neumüller's (2022) findings, FLEs most commonly find inspiration from sources within their immediate work environment, such as customers, coworkers, and the company's products/services. In contrast, the company's values, training, physical store environment, and success are less important in inducing FLE inspiration. Furthermore, sources in the FLEs' private environment, e.g., their personal values and private life, were reported to trigger inspiration less frequently.

Noticeably, social media and external leaders (role models) do not appear to inspire FLEs in their work in any way. Similarly, the company's history, brand, and direct superior did not seem to trigger FLE inspiration either, and the findings indicate that engaging with customers at the POS appears to be the best approach to boosting FLEs' openness to potentially inspiring stimuli.

Theoretical Contribution. Remarkably, the findings from Study 1 underscored the significance of the immediate work environment in triggering FLE inspiration. This stands in sharp contrast to the findings of Neumüller (2022), which demonstrated that sources within FLEs' immediate work surroundings play a less significant role in instigating distinct episodes of FLE inspiration. FLEs could potentially believe that a tangible novel work-relevant concept stems from an abrupt flash of insight (aha-moment) (Bowden et al., 2005; Lane, 2000) and, in such instances, they may tend to scrutinize specific work-related notions (e.g., coworkers, customers, corporate values) rather than regard their family as a wellspring of general inspiration (Neumüller, 2022). The outcomes empirically situate the wellsprings of FLE inspiration in the workplace, especially within the German-speaking DACH region, thereby enhancing the existing service and marketing literature (e.g., Böttger et al., 2017; Watkins, 2020).

Managerial Contribution. Retailers must proactively cultivate a culture of inspiration-dominant logic while providing FLEs with an optimal working milieu that seamlessly facilitates the realization of FLE inspiration on the job. The dynamics through which FLEs collaboratively operate within their teams and engage with customers wield profound repercussions in the realm of FLE inspiration. Given that customer and peer interactions and the company's products and services emerged as the chief impetuses in Study 1, retailers ought to empower FLEs to exchange ideas, fostering a mutual wellspring of inspiration to adapt to emerging environmental stimuli. Consequently, retailers should strive to elevate the initiative-focused service climate, firmly anchoring the essence of FLE inspiration within the organization's overarching vision and mission (e.g., value proposition) while consistently reinforcing its significance throughout everyday business operations (Rudolph & Schweitzer, 2019; Sok et al., 2023).

5 Effects of Frontline Employee Inspiration

5.1 Introduction and Scope of Research

FLEs who provide excellent service interactions at the POS through service offering adaptation excel in today's fiercely contested retail industry and allow FLEs to gain and keep a competitive advantage (Evanschitzky et al., 2020; Grewal et al., 2021; Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Wilder et al., 2014).¹⁰ This section argues that FLE inspiration is vital for enhancing FLEs' abilities to provide superior adaptive services and strengthening retailers' competitive advantage. In this context, I propose a mediating effect of FLE inspiration in the relationship of retailers' perceived service climate and structural empowerment with FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity), which precede adaptive service offerings. Accordingly, I put forth Research Question 3: How does FLE inspiration affect the outcome of FLE attitudes and behaviors during adaptive service offerings?

5.2 Study 2: Replication and Extension Study of Wilder et al. (2014)

5.2.1 Methodology

The objective of Study 2 was to investigate and provide further evidence of the predictive validity and the proposed effects of the retailers' environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate and structural empowerment) on three FLE variables, namely empathy, anticipation, and creativity (H₁; H₂; H₃) mediated by FLE inspiration (H₄₋₁; H₄₋₂; H₄₋₃). These three variables were proposed to precede adaptive service offerings (H₅; H₆; H₇; H₈; H₉) in the UK.

5.2.1.1 Participants and Procedure

Primary data from the retail sector was gathered through a cross-sectional online survey using the crowdsourcing platform Prolific Academic. This platform has gained

¹⁰ A previous iteration of this study by Hauschke, A., Rudolph, T. & Evanschitzky, H. (2023) was showcased at the 52nd Annual Conference of the European Marketing Academy.

popularity for its superior data quality compared to other platforms, such as MTurk (Peer et al., 2017), as highlighted by recent retailing and service research (Aiello et al., 2020; Jörling et al., 2019). After eliminating the data from respondents who did not pass the attention check (Peer et al., 2014), 248 FLEs from the UK (58.5% female, mean age = 35.71) who held a service job at the POS at the time of the study were recruited and asked about their current job (see Table 7). Participants were selected from different retail industries to further elucidate possible discrepancies between these industries and business models based on Rudolph's Taxonomy (2000). Rudolph (2000) distinguished between three generic retail business models, namely global discounters, content retailers, and channel retailers, whereby global discounters (e.g., Denner, Decathlon, IKEA) strive towards price leadership, content retailers (e.g., Migros, H&M) seek to attain product leadership, and channel retailers (e.g., Walmart, Globus, Saks Fifth Avenue) focus on customer leadership (see Table 8). As certain group-level information was not collected, all participants were analyzed independently.

Table 7
Breakdown of the Sample in the UK

<i>Service Industry</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers (e.g., Home Centers)	11	4.4
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores (including Shoes, Jewelry)	44	17.7
Electronics and Appliance Stores (including Microwaves, Fridges, and Mobile Phones)	7	2.8
Food and Beverage Stores (including Grocery Stores, Specialty Food Stores)	89	35.9
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	4	1.6
Gasoline Stations	1	0.4
General Merchandise Stores (including Department Stores, Supercenters, and Warehouse Clubs)	18	7.3
Health and Personal Care Stores (including Pharmacies, Cosmetics Stores, and Optical Goods Stores)	14	5.6
Hospitality (including Accommodation Services, Restaurants)	9	3.6
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	3	1.2
Sporting Goods, Hobbies, Musical Instruments, and Book Stores	4	1.6
Miscellaneous Store Retailers (Florists, Office Suppliers, Gift Stores, Pet Suppliers)	25	10.1
Other	19	7.7
Σ	248	100.0

Source: Author's illustration based on Neumüller (2022).

Table 8
Breakdown of the Generic Business Models in the UK Sample

<i>Rudolph's Taxonomy for Generic Business Models</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
Global Discounter	44	17.7
Content Retailer	57	23.0
Channel Retailer	147	59.3
Σ	248	100.0

Source: Author's illustration based on Rudolph (2000).

The average length of employment was 6.69 years, and the average time spent in the current role was 5.68 years. Moreover, 46.8% of respondents held managerial roles (e.g., supervising a group of FLEs). The resulting sample comprised UK-based FLEs with frequent customer contact: 6.0% engaged with customers several times a week, 19.8% did so several times a day, and 73.4% had interactions several times an hour (Neumüller, 2022; Stock & Bednarek, 2014).

In contrast to the overall UK labor force, participants in this study were better educated. A larger proportion of respondents held a bachelor's degree (35.5%) relative to the general UK labor force (26.4%) (OECD, 2022). This is consistent with the findings of Paolacci et al. (2010) which indicate that the level of educational attainment of online panel participants tends to surpass that of the broader population. Since Thrash and Elliot (2003) demonstrated that educational level does not affect an individual's inspiration, I anticipated the outcomes of this investigation to apply to the entire retail workforce in the UK. To measure the constructs, established scales from the literature were used (Neumüller, 2022; Wilder et al., 2014).

5.2.1.2 Measurement Model

The measurement items were validated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which is a type of structural equation modeling that focuses on measurement models and examines the connections between observed indicators (i.e., items) and latent variables or factors (Brown, 2006). It is frequently employed in scale development to confirm the factor structure of the measurement scale (factors) and the configuration of item-factor relationships (factor loadings). The goodness-of-fit statistics, discriminant validity, and internal consistency of all constructs of the 32-item 7-factor measurement model were examined, and all items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

I used SPSS AMOS version 28.0.0. to assess the overall model fit. All values were acceptable (Homburg & Baumgartner, 1995; Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 = 817.618$ $df = 443$, $p < .001$; confirmatory fit index (CFI) = .932; Bollen's incremental fit index (IFI) = .933; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .924; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .059; standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = .060. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested that (i) SRMR values of .08 or below, (ii) RMSEA values of .06 or below, (iii) CFI and TLI values of .95 or higher, and (iv) the χ^2/df ratio of less than 3.0

indicate a good fit between the target model and the collected data when using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation (Kline, 2010).

5.2.1.3 Common Method Bias

Since using only one measurement instrument to collect the data could have artificially inflated correlations between constructs, contributing to the common method bias (Auh et al., 2016), Harman's one-factor test was performed to assess the common method bias (Harman, 1976; Podsakoff et al., 2003). All FLE self-reported variables were entered into an exploratory factor analysis with a non-rotated solution. The results revealed that common method bias was not an issue since the total variance extracted by one factor was 32.298%, which is below the recommended threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, the common method bias did not affect the estimation results.

5.2.1.4 Discriminant Validity

The model's standardized regression coefficients were compared with and without the inclusion of a common latent factor, accounting for an unmeasured latent method factor (Eisingerich et al., 2019). The small differences indicated that no common factor influenced the covariance among the assessed constructs (Eisingerich et al., 2019). Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommended method, I verified that the measurable indicators significantly loaded onto their proposed factors (all > .50) and checked for cross-loadings (all < .35). All item loadings were highly significant, and the average variance extracted (AVE) estimates exceeded the recommended threshold of .50, confirming the convergent validity of each scale (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; see Table 9). Cronbach's α scores varied from .843 to .938.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) method. The AVEs for each pair of constructs were compared, and the squared correlations between constructs were calculated. The results showed that all squared correlations were lower than the respective AVE for each construct, supporting discriminant validity (Eisingerich et al., 2019). Table 9 lists the information and measurement items for all study variables, while Table 10 summarizes the correlations and descriptive statistics, including AVEs and composite reliabilities.

Table 9
Data and Measures (UK)

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Study 2 (UK)</i>			
		<i>Item Loadings</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>
Structural Empowerment (<i>Melhem, 2004</i>)	I don't need to get management approval before I handle problems.	.886	.875	.707	.878
	I have the authority to correct problems when they occur.	.882			
	I have a lot of control over how I do my job.	.748			
Perceived Service Climate (<i>Dietz et al., 2004</i> ; <i>Schneider et al., 1998</i>)	The quality of support I get from other employees and management allows me to excel at providing superior customer service.	.756	.843	.528	.848
	Where I work, we set clear performance standards for service quality.	.743			
	The culture of our organization is to put the customers' needs first.	.683			
	My work environment encourages employees to provide customers an excellent service experience	.761			
	Where I work, individuals are recognized for their contributions to service quality improvement.	.686			
Frontline Employee Inspiration (<i>Neumüller, 2022</i>)	My imagination was stimulated.	.707	.924	.669	.923
	I was intrigued by a new idea.	.791			
	I felt like an idea spontaneously entered my mind.	.667			
	I was inspired to do my job in a new and better way.	.903			
	I felt a desire to do my job in a new and better way.	.893			
Empathy (<i>McBane, 1995</i>)	I was motivated to do my job in a new and better way	.910	.885	.666	.888
	I try to empathize with the feelings of a customer during a service experience.	.842			
	When providing a service to a customer, it is easy for me to see the experience from his or her perspective.	.753			
	During a service experience, I usually try to "put myself in the customer's shoes."	.813			
	I try to understand the customer's point of view when delivering a service experience.	.852			
Anticipation (<i>Wilder et al., 2014</i>)	I try to anticipate the needs of my customers.	.753	.906	.666	.908
	I try to discover the needs of customers before they are aware of them.	.730			
	I often recognize customer needs before they tell me about them.	.859			
	It is easy for me to realize the needs of my customers before they bring them to my attention.	.850			
	I can often predict the needs of customers.	.878			
Creativity (<i>Zhou & George, 2001</i>)	I often have new and innovative ideas on how to improve my job performance.	.918	.938	.797	.940
	I frequently come up with creative solutions to problems at work.	.898			
	I regularly suggest new ways of performing work tasks.	.906			
	I often exhibit creativity on the job when given the opportunity.	.848			

Adaptive Service Offerings (Gwinner et al., 2005)	I usually adapt the type of service to meet the unique needs of each customer.	.855	.868	.583	.873
	I tailor a service experience to meet a customer's needs.	.817			
	I modify my normal job performance in order to meet the individual needs of a customer.	.624			
	I vary the actual service offering on a number of dimensions depending on the needs of the customer.	.695			
	I believe that each customer requires a unique approach.	.802			

Note: The measurements used anchors of 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree.” AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability

Table 10
Correlations, Descriptive Statistics, and Reliabilities (UK)

Variable	Squared Correlations						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Structural Empowerment	.707						
2 Perceived Service Climate	.232	.528					
3 Frontline Employee Inspiration	.437	.202	.669				
4 Empathy	.514	.302	.403	.666			
5 Anticipation	.461	.154	.479	.409	.666		
6 Creativity	.433	.171	.571	.294	.560	.797	
7 Adaptive Service Offerings	.302	.205	.398	.561	.429	.434	.583
Mean	5.028	5.033	4.464	5.487	4.879	4.476	5.487
Standard Deviation	1.462	1.195	1.282	1.074	1.127	1.469	.975

Note: Average variances extracted (AVE) are presented in bold along the diagonal.

5.2.2 Analysis and Results

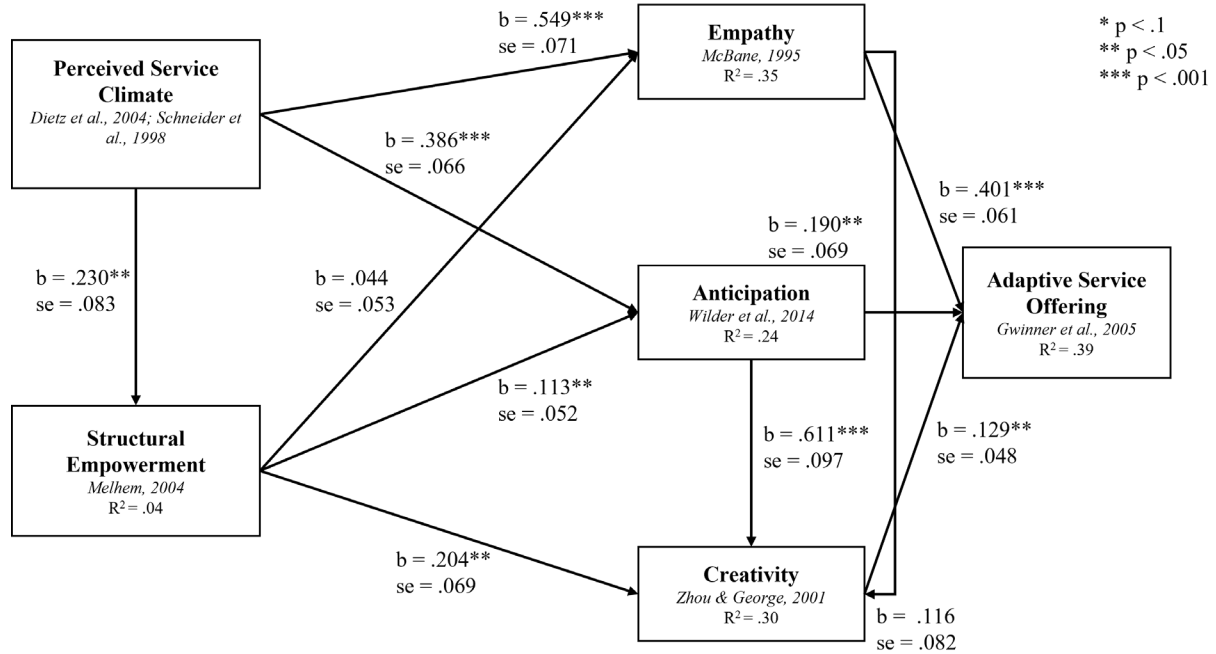
Following the evaluation of the measurement model, the comprehensive structural model was examined to identify the structural relationships between constructs in the replication. This analysis also aimed to determine how much variance does FLE inspiration predicts in pertinent behavioral and attitudinal constructs, extending the findings of Wilder et al. (2014).

5.2.2.1 Structural Equation Model

Replication. Similar to the measurement model, the goodness-of-fit statistics revealed an overall acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 505.135$, $df = 288$, $p < .001$; CFI = .948; IFI = .948; TLI = .941; RMSEA = .055; SRMR = .069) (Homburg & Baumgartner, 1995; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The control variables, including gender, age, degree, and retail industry, did not significantly affect FLE inspiration. Therefore, Wilder et al.'s (2014) model was successfully replicated with our dataset and the results of the structural equation model estimation are depicted in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Replication UK: Unstandardized Path Coefficients and Standard Errors



Source: Author's illustration based on Wilder et al. (2014). Note: Squares represent latent constructs.

Table 11

Replication UK: AMOS Results

Effect of	On	Std Beta (β)	P-Value
Perceived Service Climate	Structural Empowerment	.204	.006
Perceived Service Climate	Empathy	.582	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Anticipation	.435	<.001
Structural Empowerment	Empathy	.053	.398
Structural Empowerment	Anticipation	.144	.030
Structural Empowerment	Creativity	.187	.003
Empathy	Creativity	.089	.158
Empathy	Adaptive Service Offering	.439	<.001
Anticipation	Creativity	.440	<.001
Anticipation	Adaptive Service Offering	.196	.006
Creativity	Adaptive Service Offering	.184	.008

Source: Author's illustration.

In sum, the replication of Wilder et al. (2014) in retail supported most of the hypotheses about the influence of the environmental work factors on the three FLE attitudinal and behavioral variables that affect the adaptive service offerings of FLEs in the UK. In line with H₁, the perceived service climate significantly influenced structural empowerment ($\beta = .204$, $p = .006$) and had strong significant effects on FLE empathy

($\beta = .582, p < .001$) and FLE anticipation ($\beta = .435, p < .001$), supporting H_{2(b)} and H_{2(c)}. In H₃, I hypothesized that structural empowerment relates positively to three FLE attitudinal and behavioral variables and the results show that structural empowerment had significant direct effects on FLE anticipation ($\beta = .144, p = .030$) and FLE creativity ($\beta = .187, p = .003$), supporting H_{3(c)} and H_{3(d)}. However, no significant relationship emerged between structural empowerment and FLE empathy ($\beta = .053; n.s.$), disconfirming H_{3(b)}.

The results revealed a strong positive influence of FLE empathy on adaptive service offerings ($\beta = .439, p < .001$), supporting H₆. Surprisingly, the findings also revealed a non-significant relationship between FLE empathy and FLE creativity ($\beta = .089; n.s.$), disconfirming H₅. Consistent with H₇ and H₈, FLE anticipation was also strongly positively related to FLE creativity ($\beta = .440, p < .001$) and adaptive service offerings ($\beta = .196, p = .006$). Furthermore, the results showed a positive direct effect of FLE creativity on the adaptive service offering ($\beta = .184, p = .008$), in line with H₉.

Extension. The estimation of the structural equation model produced an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 833.982, df = 448, p < .001$; CFI = .930; IFI = .931; TLI = .923; RMSEA = .059; SRMR = .067) (Homburg & Baumgartner, 1995; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The control variables, including gender, age, degree, and retail industry, did not significantly affect FLE inspiration. Therefore, I successfully replicated and extended Wilder et al.'s (2014) model with our dataset. As illustrated in Figure 7, the mediating role of FLE inspiration in delivering adaptive service offerings was significant and the results of the structural equation model estimation are depicted in Table 12. In sum, the analysis showed that including FLE inspiration significantly adds to the predictive power of the original model of Wilder et al. (2014).

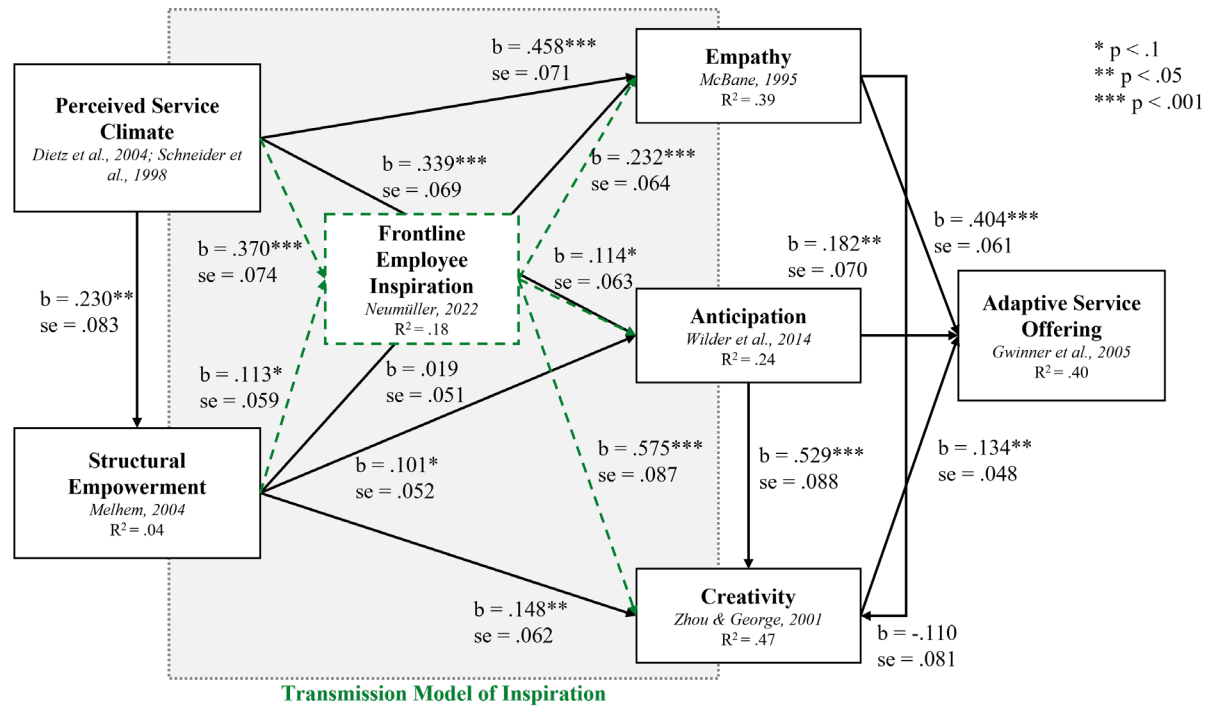
Antecedents of FLE inspiration. In line with H_{2(a)} and H_{3(a)}, perceived service climate ($\beta = .375, p < .001$) and structural empowerment ($\beta = .129, p = .053$) significantly predicted FLE inspiration.

Consequences of FLE inspiration. Each path coefficient, from FLE inspiration to its anticipated outcomes, was significant and positive. Consistent with H₄₋₁, the results revealed that FLE inspiration significantly predicts FLE empathy ($\beta = .242, p < .001$), FLE anticipation ($\beta = .127, p = .069$), and FLE creativity

($\beta = .456, p < .001$). Hence, FLEs feel more empathetic, evaluate customer needs more accurately, and their inspiration enhances their creativity as a result of FLE inspiration.

Figure 7

Extension UK: Unstandardized Path Coefficients and Standard Errors



Source: Author's illustration based on Wilder et al. (2014) and Neumüller (2022). Note: Squares represent latent constructs; dashed lines represent extensions.

Table 12

Extension UK: AMOS Results

Effect of	On	Std Beta (β)	P-Value
Perceived Service Climate	Structural Empowerment	.204	.006
Perceived Service Climate	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.375	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Empathy	.485	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Anticipation	.381	<.001
Structural Empowerment	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.129	.053
Structural Empowerment	Anticipation	.128	.052
Structural Empowerment	Empathy	.022	.718
Structural Empowerment	Creativity	.134	.017
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Empathy	.242	<.001
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Anticipation	.127	.069
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Creativity	.456	<.001
Empathy	Creativity	-.084	.174
Empathy	Adaptive Service Offering	.442	<.001
Anticipation	Creativity	.378	<.001
Anticipation	Adaptive Service Offering	.187	.009
Creativity	Adaptive Service Offering	.192	.006

Source: Author's illustration.

5.2.2.2 Mediation Analysis

To test for mediation, the approach of Zhao et al. (2010) was applied, and a bootstrapping technique was employed to estimate all pathways simultaneously. Mediation was considered significant when the 95% confidence interval (CI) for both the lower and upper limits was entirely negative or entirely positive. To test H₄₋₂, I assessed the mediating role of FLE inspiration in the relationship between the environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) and the three FLE variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, creativity). The results revealed a significant positive indirect effect of the effect of perceived service climate on FLE empathy ($b = .096, p = .002$), FLE anticipation ($b = .068, p = .009$), and FLE creativity ($b = .416, p < .001$), supporting H₄₋₂.

Furthermore, the direct effect of perceived service climate on FLE empathy ($b = .458, p < .001$) and FLE anticipation ($b = .339, p < .001$) in the presence of the mediator FLE inspiration was also significant. Hence, FLE inspiration partially mediated the relationship between perceived service climate and FLE empathy and FLE anticipation because both the indirect and the direct paths were significant, while it also fully mediated the relationship between perceived service climate and FLE creativity (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Thus, the findings unveiled a significant indirect effect of structural empowerment on FLE creativity ($b = .121, p = .028$) and an insignificant indirect effect on FLE empathy ($b = .026, p = .072$) and FLE anticipation ($b = .013, p = .106$), partially supporting H₄₋₂. Additionally, the results indicated a significant direct effect of structural empowerment on FLE anticipation ($b = .101, p = .052$) and FLE creativity ($b = .148, p = .017$) but not on FLE empathy ($b = .019, p = .718$).

For this reason, FLE inspiration only partially mediated the relationship between structural empowerment and FLE creativity (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Further analyses revealed a competitive mediating relationship between structural empowerment and FLE anticipation and an insignificant direct and indirect relationship between structural empowerment and FLE empathy. The mediation analysis is summarized in Table 13.

Table 13
Mediation Analysis Summary (UK)

Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		P-Value	Conclusion
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	.458 (<i><.001</i>)	.096	.036	.181	.002	Complementary Mediation
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	.339 (<i><.001</i>)	.068	.020	.134	.009	Complementary Mediation
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity		.416	.253	.613	<i><.001</i>	Full Mediation
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	.019 (.718)	.026	-.003	.074	.072	Not Significant
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	.101 (.052)	.013	-.002	.054	.106	Competitive Mediation
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	.148 (.017)	.121	.014	.250	.028	Complementary Mediation

Source: The author's illustration is based on Collier (2020). Note: I used a bootstrapping procedure with 248 cases and 5,000 subsamples. The numbers in parentheses reflect the significance levels of the direct effects.

5.2.2.3 Multigroup Analysis

In line with H₄₋₃, the results suggest that the environmental work factors affect FLE inspiration differently depending on the business model of each retailer. Interestingly, the findings revealed a negative – albeit insignificant – correlation between the perceived service climate and FLE inspiration ($\beta = -.034$, *n.s.*) for the global discounter. On the other hand, the perceived service climate significantly affected FLE inspiration for the content retailer ($\beta = .394$, $p = .007$) and the channel retailer ($\beta = .483$, $p < .001$).

While the results did not support a significant direct effect of structural empowerment on FLE inspiration ($\beta = .131$, *n.s.*) for the channel retailer, structural empowerment had a significant negative direct effect on FLE inspiration ($\beta = -.215$, $p = .086$) among content retailers. Surprisingly, the results indicated a strong influence of structural empowerment on FLE inspiration ($\beta = .467$, $p = .010$) for FLEs at global discounters.

Moreover, FLE inspiration significantly predicted FLE empathy for each business model ($\beta_{GD} = .309, p = .077$; $\beta_{CR} = .225, p = .061$; $\beta_{CHR} = .167, p = .073$), whereas the direct effects of FLE inspiration on FLE anticipation for each business model were not statistically significant. Furthermore, FLE inspiration had a strong significant positive direct effect on the FLE creativity for each business model ($\beta_{GD} = .589, p < .001$; $\beta_{CR} = .451, p < .001$; $\beta_{CHR} = .431, p < .001$). The three generic business models had different effect sizes, confirming H₄₋₃.

Table 14
AMOS Results Based on Generic Business Models (UK)

		<i>Global Discounter</i>	<i>Content Retailer</i>	<i>Channel Retailer</i>
		<i>N=44</i>	<i>N=57</i>	<i>N=147</i>
<i>Effect of</i>	<i>On</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>
Perceived Service Climate	Structural Empowerment	.164	.189	.286**
Perceived Service Climate	Frontline Employee Inspiration	-.034	.394**	.483***
Perceived Service Climate	Empathy	.423**	.607***	.511***
Perceived Service Climate	Anticipation	.212	.560***	.350**
Structural Empowerment	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.467**	-.215*	.131
Structural Empowerment	Empathy	.083	-.153	.058
Structural Empowerment	Anticipation	.219	-.119	.176**
Structural Empowerment	Creativity	.169	.003	.140*
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Empathy	.309*	.225*	.167*
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Anticipation	.147	.165	.053
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Creativity	.589***	.451***	.431***
Empathy	Creativity	-.032	-.051	-.119
Empathy	Adaptive Service Offering	.134	.589***	.517***
Anticipation	Creativity	.204	.497***	.373***
Anticipation	Adaptive Service Offering	.420**	.367**	.001
Creativity	Adaptive Service Offering	.137	-.194	.349***

Source: Author's illustration. Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

5.2.2.4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

A hierarchical regression analysis was run to determine whether the integration of FLE inspiration improved the predictive effect of the work environment factors (i.e., perceived service climate and structural empowerment) on FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity). Notably, adding FLE inspiration to the model explained an additional 17% of the variance in FLE creativity ($\Delta R^2 = .17, p < .001$), and 4% of the variance in FLE empathy ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p < .001$), resulting in a significant change in R^2 for adaptive service offerings ($\Delta R^2 = .01; p < .1$). Together, the results in Table 15 show that the explained variance increased significantly.

Table 15
Results of Hierarchical Regression (UK)

	<i>Model 1 (Replication)</i>				<i>Model 2 (Extension)</i>			
	<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Anticipation</i>	<i>Creativity</i>	<i>Adaptive Service Offering</i>	<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Anticipation</i>	<i>Creativity</i>	<i>Adaptive Service Offering</i>
R ²	.35	.24	.30	.39	.39	.24	.47	.40
ΔR ²					.04	.00	.17	.01
F					15.93***	.00	77.94***	4.05*

Source: Author's illustration. Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$;
 $0.19 \leq R^2 < 0.33$ – Weak, $0.33 \leq R^2 < 0.67$ – Moderate, $R^2 \geq 0.67$ – Substantial (Chin, 1998)

5.2.3 Summary of Findings

A UK-based FLE sample was used to generate and validate a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings. The new model built on the conceptual model of adaptive service offering of Wilder et al. (2014) and the conceptualization of FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022) and evaluated how two distinct sources within the work environment of FLEs inspire and invigorate them to apply recently obtained service insights in their interactions with customers. By including FLE inspiration, I offer insights into psychological processes that influence FLEs' behaviors and attitudes necessary to provide an adaptive service offering. This approach demonstrated a strong link between FLE inspiration and their attitudes and behaviors (Chapter 5.2.2).

FLE inspiration clarified the direct and indirect mediating effects of a perceived service climate and structural empowerment on FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity). In general, retailers might consider that adaptive service offerings do not depend solely on hiring the right people but also on providing FLEs with the right work setting in which these skills can flourish. The new model was found to have good reliability and validity and can thus contribute to the FLE-related adaptive service offering research. Table 16 summarizes all estimated path coefficients for direct and indirect effects.

Table 16
Estimated Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) (UK)

<i>Direct Effects</i>	<i>Tested Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path Coefficient</i>
Perceived Service Climate → Structural Empowerment	H ₁ : ✓	.230**
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration	H _{2(a)} : ✓	.370***
Perceived Service Climate → Empathy	H _{2(b)} : ✓	.458***
Perceived Service Climate → Anticipation	H _{2(c)} : ✓	.339***
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration	H _{3(a)} : ✓	.113*
Structural Empowerment → Anticipation	H _{3(b)} : ✓	.101*
Structural Empowerment → Empathy	H _{3(b)} : not supported	.019
Structural Empowerment → Creativity	H _{3(d)} : ✓	.148**
Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	H _{4(a)} : ✓	.232***
Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	H _{4(b)} : ✓	.114*
Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	H _{4(c)} : ✓	.575***
Empathy → Creativity	H ₅ : not supported	-.110
Empathy → Adaptive Service Offering	H ₆ : ✓	.404***
Anticipation → Creativity	H ₇ : ✓	.529***
Anticipation → Adaptive Service Offering	H ₈ : ✓	.182**
Creativity → Adaptive Service Offering	H ₉ : ✓	.134**
<i>Indirect Effects</i>		
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	H _{4-2-i(a)} : ✓	.096**
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	H _{4-2-i(b)} : ✓	.068**
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	H _{4-2-i(c)} : ✓	.416***
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	H _{4-2-ii(a)} : not supported	.026
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	H _{4-2-ii(b)} : not supported	.013
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	H _{4-2-ii(c)} : ✓	.121**

Source: Author's illustration. Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Study 2 attempted to replicate and extend the conceptual model of adaptive service offering put forward by Wilder et al. (2014) in the UK and the results of the structural equation model partially supported their configuration. While Wilder et al. (2014) provided evidence that structural empowerment is a significant antecedent of FLE empathy, and FLE empathy precedes FLE creativity, Study 2 did not find support for the two hypothesized relationships concerning this aspect (Hypothesis 3b and Hypothesis 5). One possible reason for the discrepancy between prior research and these findings may be that Wilder et al. (2014) examined 15 different service industries instead of only focusing on retailing. With the retail industry increasingly emphasizing customer experience over products as the

primary driver of competitive advantage, a compelling rationale emerges for delving into FLE inspiration within service interactions.

In terms of the generic business models, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a statistically insignificant difference between the three generic business models in FLE inspiration. The results of the structural equation model in Chapter 5.2.2.3 indicated statistically significant relationships and highlighted different approaches retailers should focus on to foster FLE inspiration. Specifically, depending on their business models, they could consider three aspects, (i) global discounter = structural empowerment, (ii) content retailer = perceived service climate, and (iii) channel retailer = perceived service climate. Unfortunately, participants were only asked to report their perceptions of the most suitable generic business model for their respective retailers but by incorporating the retailer's name alongside the reported perceived generic business model in Study 3 in Chapter 6.2.2.3, I ensured that the findings transcend mere theoretical speculation. Furthermore, Study 3 investigated whether FLE inspiration mediated the proposed effects of the retailers' environmental work factors on three FLE variables in a DACH-based retail sample to verify the indications of the presumed findings in the UK.

As the investigation in Study 2 focused on FLEs from the UK, the results' applicability to various national and cultural settings is limited, especially because cultural differences substantially influence FLEs' work environments (Aycan et al., 2000). It may thus be useful to replicate the study with FLEs from different countries to enhance the generalizability of the findings (Wilder et al., 2014) as this would allow us to test and even extend the robustness of the more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings.

6 Validation of the Effects of Frontline Employee Inspiration

6.1 Introduction and Scope of Research

To build on the findings from Study 2 and to quantify and generalize Research Question 4, Study 3 sought to (i) purify and expand the nomological validity of FLE inspiration, (ii) test the hypotheses, and (iii) provide further evidence of predictive validity by assessing whether FLE inspiration significantly improves FLEs' attitudes and behaviors (i.e., FLE empathy, anticipation, and creativity) in the DACH area.

This study followed previous service and retailing literature, emphasizing that conventional methods, such as offering an extensive array of products at competitive prices, fall short of satisfying customer demands (Arnold et al., 2005; Barnes et al., 2010). Instead, a growing emphasis is placed on hedonic shopping motivations, transcending the utilitarian value alone (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Babin et al., 1994; Childers et al., 2001; Grewal et al., 2009). Shoppers no longer merely seek products but rather actively explore fresh ideas and sources of inspiration (e.g., FLEs at the POS) (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Böttger et al., 2017; Rudolph et al., 2023). Thereby, I posed Research Question 3: How does FLE inspiration affect the outcome of FLE attitudes and behaviors during adaptive service offerings? Subsequently, I demonstrated that the research presented here contributes to the FLE-related adaptive service offering research by enhancing the generalizability of Wilder et al.'s (2014) findings and the results of Study 2.

6.2 Study 3: Replication and Extension Study of Wilder et al. (2014)

6.2.1 Methodology

As shown in Study 2, the objective of Study 3 was to thoroughly examine and substantiate both the predictive validity and the hypothesized effects of the retailers' environmental work factors, namely perceived service climate and structural empowerment on three FLE variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity) (H_1 ; H_2 ; H_3) mediated by FLE inspiration (H_{4-1} ; H_{4-2} ; H_{4-3}). These three variables were

proposed to precede adaptive service offerings (H₅; H₆; H₇; H₈; H₉) in the DACH area. In Study 3, evidence and comparisons of the effects of FLE inspiration for each DACH country in the hypothesized relationships were also provided.

6.2.1.1 Participants and Procedure

A cross-sectional online survey with primary data from the retail sector was used. After excluding the data from respondents who did not pass the attention check (Peer et al., 2014), the final sample comprised 525 FLEs from the DACH region (76.2% female, mean age = 41.81) who held a service job at the POS at the time of the study and responded to questions concerning their current job (see Table 17). Following Rudolph's Taxonomy (2000), I selected participants from different retail industries to shed further light on possible discrepancies between these industries and business models (see Table 18). As certain group-level information was not collected, all participants were analyzed independently.

Table 17
Breakdown of the Sample in the DACH region

<i>Service Industry</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers (e.g., Home Centers)	25	4.8
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores (including Shoes, Jewelry)	61	11.6
Electronics and Appliance Stores (including Microwaves, Fridges, and Mobile Phones)	24	4.6
Food and Beverage Stores (including Grocery Stores, Specialty Food Stores)	224	42.7
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	29	5.5
Gasoline Stations	10	1.9
General Merchandise Stores (including Department Stores, Supercenters, and Warehouse Clubs)	9	1.7
Health and Personal Care Stores (including Pharmacies, Cosmetics Stores, and Optical Goods Stores)	20	3.8
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	8	1.5
Sporting Goods, Hobbies, Musical Instruments, and Book Stores	12	2.3
Miscellaneous Store Retailers (Florists, Office Suppliers, Gift Stores, Pet Suppliers)	68	13.0
Other	35	6.7
Σ	525	100.0

Source: Author's illustration based on Neumüller (2022).

Table 18
Breakdown of the Generic Business Models in the DACH sample

<i>Rudolph's Taxonomy for Generic Business Models</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
Global Discounter	123	23.4
Content Retailer	221	42.1
Channel Retailer	181	34.5
Σ	525	100.0

Source: Author's illustration based on Rudolph (2000).

The average duration of employment of the surveyed FLEs was 17.69 years. Furthermore, 44.2% of respondents held managerial roles, such as overseeing a team of FLEs. The resulting sample comprised DACH-based FLEs with frequent customer interaction: 7.2% engaged with customers several times a week, 18.7% did so several times a day, and 71.2% had interactions several times an hour (Neumüller, 2022; Stock & Bednarek, 2014). Contrasted with the overall DACH labor force, respondents in this study were less educated (OECD, 2022). Only a small percentage of respondents held a bachelor's degree (5.3%), while 15.2% had a high school diploma, and 57.3% possessed an associate degree. To measure the constructs, I used established scales from the literature (Neumüller, 2022; Wilder et al., 2014) and collected data through the online panel provider INNOFACT AG.

6.2.1.2 Measurement Model

The measurement items were validated using CFA and the goodness-of-fit statistics, discriminant validity, and internal consistency of all constructs in the 32-item, 7-factor covariance structure measurement model were examined. Every item was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale. I used AMOS (version 28) to assess the overall model fit and obtained good values (Homburg & Baumgartner, 1995; Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 = 1156,484$ $df = 443$, $p < .001$; CFI = .945; IFI = .945; TLI = .938; RMSEA = .055; and SRMR = .042.

6.2.1.3 Common Method Bias

Since only one measurement instrument was used to collect the data, Harman's one-factor test was conducted to assess common method bias (Harman, 1976; Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicated that common method bias was not an issue because the total variance extracted by one factor was 38.623%, which is below the recommended threshold of 50%.

6.2.1.4 Discriminant Validity

The model's standardized regression coefficients were compared with and without the inclusion of a common latent factor, accounting for an unmeasured latent method factor (Eisingerich et al., 2019). The small differences indicated that no common factor influenced the covariance among the assessed constructs (Eisingerich et al., 2019). Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommended method, I

verified that the measurable indicators significantly loaded onto their proposed factors (all > .50) and checked for cross-loadings (all < .35). All item loadings were highly significant, and the average variance extracted (AVE) estimates exceeded the recommended threshold of .50, confirming the convergent validity of each scale (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; see Table 19). Cronbach's α scores varied from .866 to .942.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) method. The AVEs for each pair of constructs were compared, and the squared correlations between constructs were calculated. The results showed that all squared correlations were lower than the respective AVE for each construct, supporting discriminant validity (Eisingerich et al., 2019). Table 19 lists the information and measurement items for all study variables, while Table 20 summarizes the correlations and descriptive statistics, including AVEs and composite reliabilities.

Table 19
Data and Measures (DACH)

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Study 3 (DACH)</i>			
		<i>Item loadings</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>
Structural Empowerment (Melhem, 2004)	Ich brauche keine Zustimmung der Filialführung, bevor ich mich um Probleme kümmere.	.786	.866	.693	.871
	Ich habe die Erlaubnis Probleme eigenständig zu lösen, wenn diese auftreten.	.881			
	Ich habe viel Kontrolle darüber, wie ich meine Arbeit erledige.	.827			
Perceived Service Climate (Dietz et al., 2004; Schneider et al., 1998)	Die Unterstützung, die ich von anderen Mitarbeitern und dem Management erhalte, ermöglicht es mir, einen hervorragenden Kundenservice zu bieten.	.864	.872	.590	.877
	In der Firma in der ich arbeite, werden klare Leistungsstandards für die Servicequalität festgelegt.	.677			
	Die Kultur unserer Firma ist darauf ausgerichtet, die Bedürfnisse der Kunden an erste Stelle zu setzen.	.690			
	Mein Arbeitsumfeld ermutigt Mitarbeiter dazu, Kunden einen hervorragenden Service zu bieten.	.858			
	In der Firma in der ich arbeite, werden Einzelpersonen für ihre Beiträge zur Verbesserung der Servicequalität gewürdigt.	.731			
Frontline Employee Inspiration (Neumüller, 2022)	Meine Phantasie wurde angeregt.	.764	.907	.623	.908
	Ich war von einer neuen Idee fasziniert.	.799			
	Ich hatte das Gefühl, dass mir spontan eine Idee in den Sinn kam.	.715			
	Ich wurde dazu inspiriert, meine Arbeit auf eine neue und bessere Art zu machen.	.802			
	Ich verspürte den Wunsch, meine Arbeit auf eine neue und bessere Art zu machen.	.788			
	Ich war motiviert, meine Arbeit auf eine neue und bessere Art zu machen.	.862			

Empathy (McBane, 1995)	Ich versuche mich in die Gefühle eines Kunden während der Service-Erfahrung hineinzuversetzen.	.929	.942	.806	.943
	Wenn ich für einen Kunden eine Serviceleistung erbringe, fällt es mir leicht, sein Kundenerlebnis nachzuempfinden.	.846			
	Während einer Serviceleistung versuche ich üblicherweise mich in die Lage des Kunden hineinzuversetzen.	.913			
	Ich versuche die Sichtweise des Kunden zu verstehen, während ich eine Serviceleistung erbringe.	.902			
Anticipation (Wilder et al., 2014)	Ich versuche, die Bedürfnisse meiner Kunden vorherzusehen.	.831	.936	.747	.937
	Ich versuche, die Bedürfnisse der Kunden zu identifizieren, bevor sie ihnen selbst bewusst werden.	.839			
	Oft erkenne ich die Bedürfnisse meiner Kunden, bevor sie mir diese mitteilen.	.884			
	Es fällt mir leicht, die Bedürfnisse meiner Kunden zu erkennen, bevor Kunden sie an mich richten.	.897			
Creativity (Zhou & George, 2001)	Ich kann die Bedürfnisse der Kunden oft vorhersagen.	.870			
	Ich habe oft neue und innovative Ideen, wie ich meine Arbeitsleistung verbessern kann.	.869	.900	.694	.901
	Ich finde häufig kreative Lösungen für Probleme bei der Arbeit.	.846			
	Ich schlage regelmäßig neue Wege zur Ausführung von Arbeitsaufgaben vor.	.802			
Adaptive Service Offering (Gwinner et al., 2005)	Wenn sich die Gelegenheit bietet, zeige ich mich bei der Arbeit oft kreativ.	.814			
	Normalerweise passe ich meine Serviceleistung an die individuellen Bedürfnisse eines jeden Kunden an.	.858	.891	.627	.893
	Ich stimme das Service-Erlebnis auf die Bedürfnisse der Kunden ab.	.815			
	Ich ändere meine Arbeitsweise, um auf die individuellen Bedürfnisse eines Kunden einzugehen.	.751			
	Ich variiere den Umfang des Serviceangebots je nach Bedürfnis der Kunden.	.778			
	Ich glaube, dass man auf jeden Kunden individuell eingehen sollte.	.752			

Note: The measurements used anchors of 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree.” AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability

Table 20
Correlations, Descriptive Statistics, and Reliabilities (DACH)

Variable	Squared Correlations						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Anticipation	.747						
2 Structural Empowerment	.363	.693					
3 Perceived Service Climate	.364	.564	.590				
4 Creativity	.658	.552	.492	.694			
5 Adaptive Service Offerings	.510	.469	.521	.521	.627		
6 Empathy	.680	.407	.492	.605	.594	.806	
7 Frontline Employee Inspiration	.332	.392	.523	.597	.515	.426	.623
Mean	4.570	5.174	4.824	4.804	5.706	5.401	4.640
Standard Deviation	1.348	1.489	1.369	1.299	1.137	1.238	1.356

Note: Average variances extracted (AVE) are presented in bold along the diagonal.

6.2.2 Analysis and Results

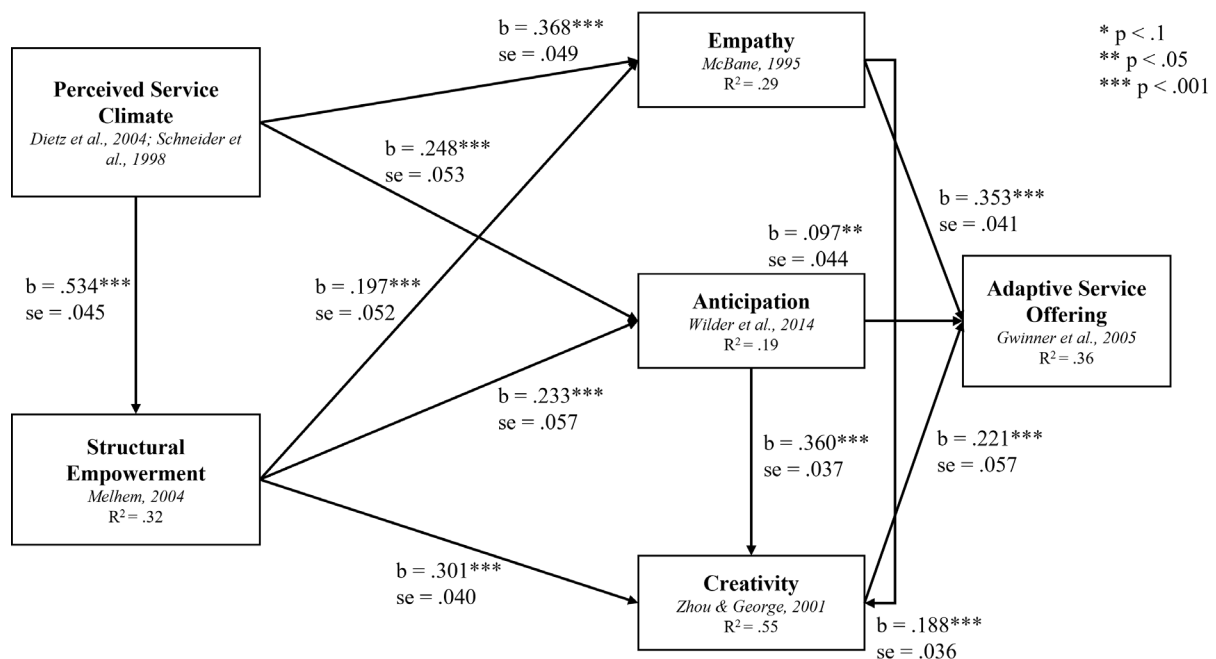
Following the assessment of the measurement model, the complete structural model was examined to establish the relationships between constructs in the replication and to assess the variance in relevant attitudinal and behavioral constructs explained by FLE inspiration in the DACH sample.

6.2.2.1 Structural Equation Model

Replication. Similar to the measurement model, the goodness-of-fit statistics for the model were acceptable, ($\chi^2 = 934.111$, $df = 288$, $p < .001$; CFI = .939; IFI = .939; TLI = .931; RMSEA = .065; SRMR = .1089 (Homburg & Baumgartner, 1995; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The control variables, including gender, age, degree, and retail industry, did not significantly affect FLE inspiration. Hence, I effectively replicated the model proposed by Wilder et al. (2014) using our retailing dataset and Figure 8 presents the path estimates of the structural model.

Figure 8

Replication DACH: Unstandardized Path Coefficients and Standard Errors



Source: Author's illustration based on Wilder et al. (2014). Note: Squares represent latent constructs.

Table 21
Replication DACH: AMOS Results

<i>Effect of</i>	<i>On</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Perceived Service Climate	Structural Empowerment	.570	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Empathy	.401	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Anticipation	.263	<.001
Structural Empowerment	Empathy	.202	<.001
Structural Empowerment	Anticipation	.232	<.001
Structural Empowerment	Creativity	.344	<.001
Empathy	Creativity	.211	<.001
Empathy	Adaptive Service Offering	.405	<.001
Anticipation	Creativity	.413	<.001
Anticipation	Adaptive Service Offering	.114	.028
Creativity	Adaptive Service Offering	.227	<.001

Source: Author's illustration.

Table 21 details the results, which indicated that all proposed hypotheses were significant. Furthermore, the perceived service climate was more strongly associated with structural empowerment ($\beta = .570$, $p < .001$) than with FLE empathy ($\beta = .401$, $p < .001$) and FLE anticipation ($\beta = .263$, $p < .001$), supporting H₁, H_{2(b)}, and H_{2(c)}.

Concerning H₃, structural empowerment significantly affected all attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (*empathy*: $\beta = .202$, $p < .001$; *anticipation*: $\beta = .232$, $p < .001$; *creativity*: $\beta = .344$, $p < .001$). FLE empathy elicited FLE creativity ($\beta = .211$, $p < .001$) and adaptive service offering ($\beta = .405$, $p < .001$), in line with H₅ and H₆. FLE anticipation positively predicted both FLE creativity ($\beta = .413$, $p < .001$) and adaptive service offerings ($\beta = .114$, $p = .028$), supporting H₇ and H₈. Concerning H₉, FLE creativity positively affected adaptive service offerings ($\beta = .227$, $p < .001$).

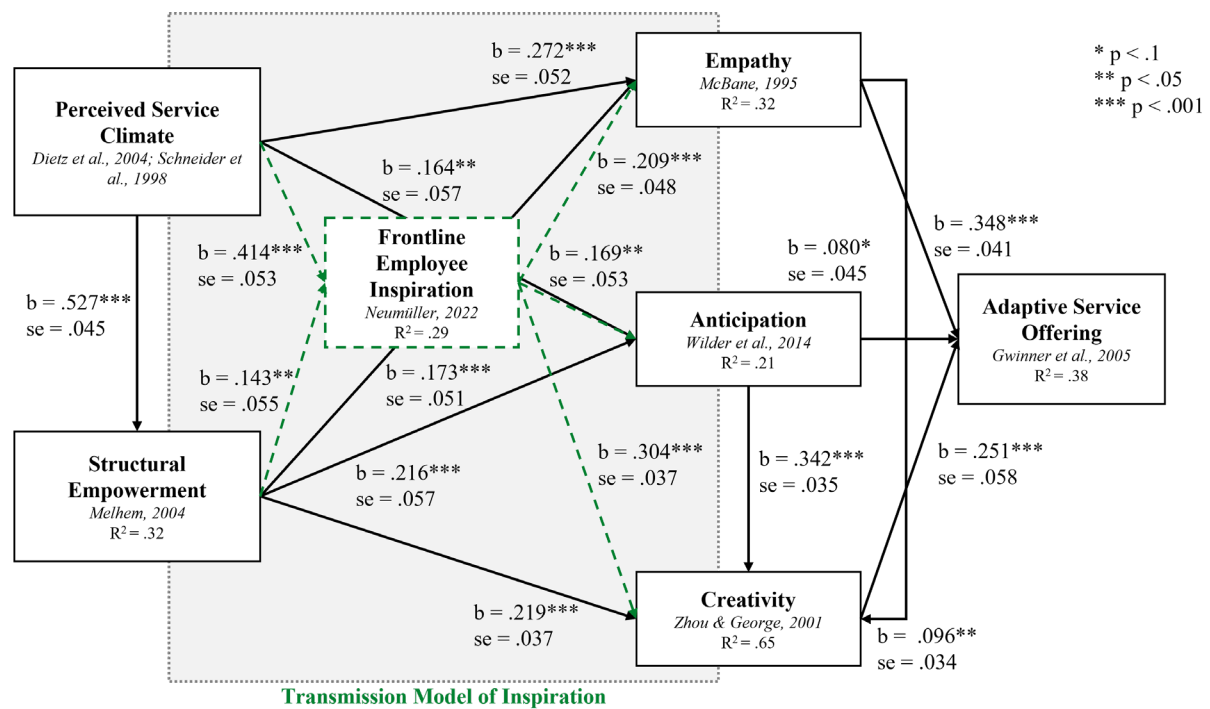
Extension. Similar to the measurement model, the goodness-of-fit statistics for the model were good ($\chi^2 = 1395.019$, $df = 448$, $p < .001$; CFI = .927; IFI = .927; TLI = .919; RMSEA = .064; SRMR = .092) (Homburg & Baumgartner, 1995; Hu & Bentler, 1999) while the effects of the control variables age, gender, degree, and retail sector on FLE inspiration were insignificant. Therefore, I successfully replicated and extended Wilder et al.'s (2014) model with our dataset. Figure 9 shows that the mediating role of FLE inspiration in delivering adaptive service offerings was significant and, as observed in Study 2, the analysis demonstrated that integrating FLE inspiration noticeably increased the predictive power of Wilder et al.'s (2014) original model.

Antecedents of FLE inspiration. In line with H_{2(a)} and H_{3(a)}, perceived service climate ($\beta = .442, p < .001$) and structural empowerment ($\beta = .143, p = .009$) significantly predicted FLE inspiration.

Consequences of FLE inspiration. FLE inspiration positively predicted FLE empathy ($\beta = .214, p < .001$), FLE anticipation ($\beta = .168, p = .001$), and FLE creativity ($\beta = .343, p < .001$), confirming H₄₋₁. Echoing the findings of Study 2, the analysis showed that FLEs exhibit a heightened sense of empathy, assess customer needs more accurately, and have inspiration that unequivocally amplifies their creativity.

Figure 9

Extension DACH: Unstandardized Path Coefficients and Standard Errors



Source: Author's illustration based on Wilder et al. (2014) and Neumüller (2022). Note: Squares represent latent constructs; dashed lines represent extensions.

Table 22**Extension DACH: AMOS Results**

<i>Effect of</i>	<i>On</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Perceived Service Climate	Structural Empowerment	.564	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.442	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Empathy	.296	<.001
Perceived Service Climate	Anticipation	.175	.004
Structural Empowerment	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.143	.009
Structural Empowerment	Anticipation	.215	<.001
Structural Empowerment	Empathy	.177	<.001
Structural Empowerment	Creativity	.247	<.001
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Empathy	.214	<.001
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Anticipation	.168	.001
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Creativity	.343	<.001
Empathy	Creativity	.106	.005
Empathy	Adaptive Service Offering	.398	<.001
Anticipation	Creativity	.387	<.001
Anticipation	Adaptive Service Offering	.094	.077
Creativity	Adaptive Service Offering	.260	<.001

Source: Author's illustration.

6.2.2.2 Mediation Analysis

As detailed in Table 23, I focused on the first three stages of the model (retailers' environmental work factors → FLE inspiration → three FLE variables) and found significant mediation effects of retailers' environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) on the three FLE variables (i.e., FLE empathy, anticipation, and creativity) through FLE inspiration. To test for mediation, a bootstrapping procedure was used to simultaneously estimate all paths (Zhao et al., 2010).

The direct link between perceived service climate, FLE empathy ($b = .272$, $p < .001$), and FLE anticipation ($b = .164$, $p = .004$) was significant, suggesting complementary mediation. In addition, I found significant mediation effects of perceived service climate on FLE empathy ($b = .194$, $p < .001$), FLE anticipation ($b = .197$, $p < .001$), and FLE creativity ($b = .432$, $p < .001$) (i.e., full mediation) through FLE inspiration, supporting H_{4.2} (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The direct effects of structural empowerment on FLE empathy ($b = .173$, $p < .001$), FLE anticipation ($b = .216$, $p < .001$), and FLE creativity ($b = .219$, $p < .001$) and the indirect paths through FLE inspiration (empathy: $\beta = .030$, $p = .014$; anticipation: $\beta = .024$, $p = .017$; creativity: $\beta = .145$, $p < .001$) were significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986), indicating complementary mediation. Thus, H_{4.2} was confirmed.

Table 23
Mediation Analysis Summary (DACH)

Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		P-Value	Conclusion
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	.272 (<i><.001</i>)	.194	.102	.308	<i><.001</i>	Complementary Mediation
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	.164 (.004)	.197	.111	.303	<i><.001</i>	Complementary Mediation
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity		.432	.349	.524	<i><.001</i>	Full Mediation
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	.173 (<i><.001</i>)	.030	.006	.072	.014	Complementary Mediation
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	.216 (<i><.001</i>)	.024	.004	.063	.017	Complementary Mediation
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	.219 (<i><.001</i>)	.145	.073	.229	<i><.001</i>	Complementary Mediation

Source: The author's illustration is based on Collier (2020). Note: I used a bootstrapping procedure with 525 cases and 5,000 subsamples. The numbers in parentheses reflect the significance levels of the direct effects.

6.2.2.3 Multigroup Analysis

A one-way ANOVA revealed a weak statistically significant difference in FLE inspiration between the three DACH countries ($F(2, 522) = 2.334, p = .098$) and Table 24 summarizes the differences in the effects between each country.

The perceived service climate significantly increased FLE inspiration in each country considered ($\beta_{CH} = .374, p < .001$; $\beta_{DEU} = .350, p = .001$; $\beta_{AUT} = .567, p < .001$), which, in turn, positively affected the three FLE variables in Switzerland (*empathy*: $\beta_{CH} = .234, p = .014$; *anticipation*: $\beta_{CH} = .251, p = .013$; *creativity*: $\beta_{CH} = .428, p < .001$) and Germany (*empathy*: $\beta_{DEU} = .275, p < .001$; *anticipation*: $\beta_{DEU} = .205, p = .013$; *creativity*: $\beta_{DEU} = .234, p < .001$) but only FLE creativity in Austria (*empathy*: $\beta_{AUT} = .143, p = n.s.$; *anticipation*: $\beta_{AUT} = .098, p = n.s.$; *creativity*: $\beta_{AUT} = .401, p < .001$). Interestingly, compared to the perceived service climate, structural empowerment significantly predicted FLE inspiration in Switzerland only ($\beta_{CH} = .349, p < .001$; $\beta_{DEU} = .093, p = n.s.$; $\beta_{AUT} = .044, p = n.s.$).

Table 24**AMOS Results Based on Countries (DACH)**

		Switzerland	Germany	Austria
		N=175	N=179	N=171
<i>Effect of</i>	<i>On</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>
Perceived Service Climate	Structural Empowerment	.520***	.610***	.525***
Perceived Service Climate	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.374***	.350**	.567***
Perceived Service Climate	Empathy	.346***	.222**	.341***
Perceived Service Climate	Anticipation	.118	.166	.237**
Structural Empowerment	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.349***	.093	.044
Structural Empowerment	Empathy	.057	.238**	.232**
Structural Empowerment	Anticipation	.121	.251**	.229**
Structural Empowerment	Creativity	.175**	.296***	.223**
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Empathy	.234**	.275***	.143
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Anticipation	.251**	.205**	.098
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Creativity	.428***	.234***	.401***
Empathy	Creativity	.109*	.099	.124*
Empathy	Adaptive Service Offering	.293***	.464***	.402***
Anticipation	Creativity	.426***	.436***	.289***
Anticipation	Adaptive Service Offering	.011	.243**	.034
Creativity	Adaptive Service Offering	.449***	.063	.288**

Source: Author's illustration. Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

In line with H₄₋₃, a one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in FLE inspiration between the three generic business models ($F(2, 522) = 2.683, p = .069$). Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons found that the mean values of FLE inspiration were insignificantly different between global discounters and content retailers ($p = .836$) and were significantly different between global discounters and channel retailers ($p = .087, 95\% CI = [-.7058, .0368]$). The difference in FLE inspiration between the content and channel retailers was insignificant ($p = .162$). In sum, FLEs in the global discounter conditions reported a significantly lower level of FLE inspiration ($M = 4.49$) compared to those in the channel retailer ($M = 4.82$) conditions.

Compared to the UK, our findings in the DACH countries revealed a positive significant correlation between the perceived service climate and FLE inspiration ($\beta_{GD} = .467, p < .001$; $\beta_{CR} = .416, p < .001$; $\beta_{CHR} = .432, p < .001$) for all three generic business models. On the other hand, structural empowerment significantly affected FLE inspiration for the global discounters ($\beta = .225, p = .053$) and the channel retailers ($\beta = .133, p = .099$) while the hypothesized relationship was not statistically significant for the content retailers ($\beta_{CT} = .102, p = n.s.$).

Furthermore, FLE inspiration significantly predicted FLE empathy for the content retailers and channel retailers ($\beta_{GD} = .052, p = n.s.; \beta_{CR} = .257, p < .001; \beta_{CHR} = .279, p < .001$). Similarly, the direct effects of FLE inspiration on FLE anticipation were also only statistically significant for the content retailers and channel retailers ($\beta_{GD} = -.035, p = n.s.; \beta_{CR} = .221, p = .005; \beta_{CHR} = .299, p = .001$). Consistent with the results from Study 2, FLE inspiration had a strong significant positive direct effect on the FLE creativity for each business model ($\beta_{GD} = .353, p < .001; \beta_{CR} = .382, p < .001; \beta_{CHR} = .257, p < .001$). Although the three generic business models displayed varying effect sizes, the results confirmed H_{4.3}.

Table 25
AMOS Results Based on Generic Business Models (DACH)

<i>Effect of</i>	<i>On</i>	<i>Global</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Channel</i>
		<i>Discounter</i>	<i>Retailer</i>	<i>Retailer</i>
		<i>N=123</i>	<i>N=221</i>	<i>N=181</i>
<i>Effect of</i>	<i>On</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>	<i>Std Beta (β)</i>
Perceived Service Climate	Structural Empowerment	.654***	.610***	.350***
Perceived Service Climate	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.467***	.416***	.432***
Perceived Service Climate	Empathy	.197	.331***	.319***
Perceived Service Climate	Anticipation	.284**	.142	.074
Structural Empowerment	Frontline Employee Inspiration	.225*	.102	.133*
Structural Empowerment	Empathy	.395**	.089	.111
Structural Empowerment	Anticipation	.259**	.214**	.181**
Structural Empowerment	Creativity	.210**	.274***	.231***
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Empathy	.052	.257***	.279***
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Anticipation	-.035	.221**	.299**
Frontline Employee Inspiration	Creativity	.353***	.382***	.257**
Empathy	Creativity	.076	.075	.166**
Empathy	Adaptive Service Offering	.409***	.453***	.287***
Anticipation	Creativity	.466***	.365***	.375***
Anticipation	Adaptive Service Offering	-.035	.141*	.122
Creativity	Adaptive Service Offering	.296**	.248**	.252**

Source: Author's illustration. Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

6.2.2.4 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

A hierarchical regression analysis was run to determine whether FLE inspiration enhances the interaction between the work environment factors (i.e., perceived service climate and structural empowerment) and FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, and creativity). Remarkably, adding FLE inspiration to the model, as in Study 2, explained an additional 10% of the variance in FLE creativity ($\Delta R^2 = .10, p < .001$), 3% of the variance in FLE empathy ($\Delta R^2 = .03, p < .001$), and 2% of the variance in FLE anticipation ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .001$), resulting in a significant change in

R^2 for adaptive service offerings ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .001$). The results in Table 26 show that the explained variance increased significantly.

Table 26
Results of Hierarchical Regression (DACH)

	<i>Model 1 (Replication)</i>				<i>Model 2 (Extension)</i>			
	<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Anticipation</i>	<i>Creativity</i>	<i>Adaptive Service Offering</i>	<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Anticipation</i>	<i>Creativity</i>	<i>Adaptive Service Offering</i>
R^2	.29	.19	.55	.36	.32	.21	.65	.38
ΔR^2					.03	.02	.10	.02
F					22.94***	13.16***	148.57***	16.77***

Source: Author's illustration. Note. * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$;

$0.19 \leq R^2 < 0.33$ – Weak, $0.33 \leq R^2 < 0.67$ – Moderate, $R^2 \geq 0.67$ – Substantial (Chin, 1998)

6.2.3 Discussion and Implications of Quantitative Findings

In line with Study 2 (Chapter 5), I extended Wilder et al.'s (2014) model to develop a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings and explored how physical retailers can enhance inspiring experiences based on a final DACH-area sample of 525 FLEs in retailing. By doing this, I demonstrated, as in Study 2, a robust direct and indirect relationship between the retailers' environmental work factors, FLE inspiration, and related FLE attitudes and behaviors, as discussed in Chapter 6.2.2.

More generally, I provide new insights into the nomological network of FLE inspiration to gain a deeper understanding of its drivers and effects, thereby contributing to the FLE-related adaptive service offering research. Studies 2 and 3 introduced a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings, embedding an inspiration-dominant logic into management practice. Drawing on an exploratory approach through which sources of FLE inspiration were synthesized, Study 1 confirmed that the immediate work environment of FLEs is the main mechanism through which FLE inspiration is created, and Studies 2 and 3 further verified the role of FLE inspiration in the context of FLE attitudinal and behavioral down-stream consequences. Table 27 summarizes the estimated path coefficients encompassing both direct and indirect effects.

Table 27**Estimated Path Coefficients (Unstandardized) (DACH)**

<i>Direct Effects</i>	<i>Tested Hypothesis</i>	<i>Path Coefficient</i>
Perceived Service Climate → Structural Empowerment	H ₁ : ✓	.527***
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration	H _{2(a)} : ✓	.414***
Perceived Service Climate → Empathy	H _{2(b)} : ✓	.272***
Perceived Service Climate → Anticipation	H _{2(c)} : ✓	.164**
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration	H _{3(a)} : ✓	.143**
Structural Empowerment → Anticipation	H _{3(b)} : ✓	.216***
Structural Empowerment → Empathy	H _{3(b)} : ✓	.173***
Structural Empowerment → Creativity	H _{3(d)} : ✓	.219***
Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	H _{4(a)} : ✓	.209***
Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	H _{4(b)} : ✓	.169**
Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	H _{4(c)} : ✓	.304***
Empathy → Creativity	H ₅ : ✓	.096**
Empathy → Adaptive Service Offering	H ₆ : ✓	.348***
Anticipation → Creativity	H ₇ : ✓	.342***
Anticipation → Adaptive Service Offering	H ₈ : ✓	.080*
Creativity → Adaptive Service Offering	H ₉ : ✓	.251***
<i>Indirect Effects</i>		
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	H _{4-2-i(a)} : ✓	.194***
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	H _{4-2-i(b)} : ✓	.197***
Perceived Service Climate → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	H _{4-2-i(c)} : ✓	.432***
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Empathy	H _{4-2-ii(c)} : ✓	.030**
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Anticipation	H _{4-2-ii(c)} : ✓	.024**
Structural Empowerment → Frontline Employee Inspiration → Creativity	H _{4-2-ii(c)} : ✓	.145***

Source: Author's illustration. Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Unlike Study 2, Study 3 presented evidence that structural empowerment is a significant antecedent of FLE empathy, which, in turn, precedes FLE creativity. Therefore, in line with previous research (e.g., Giacobbe et al., 2006; Wilder et al., 2014), the quantitative findings of Study 3 indicated that FLE empathy assumes an important transmission function in the context of adaptive service offerings.

Finally, a one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between the three generic business models in FLE inspiration. The results of the structural equation model in Chapter 6.2.2.3 indicated statistically significant relationships and supported the distinct approaches from Study 2, suggesting that retailers should focus on fostering FLE inspiration.

6.2.3.1 Theoretical Implications

This dissertation contributes to the new research stream on FLE inspiration in several ways. *First*, the findings showed that many sources, although predominantly the immediate work environment of FLEs, contribute to FLE inspiration in an adaptive service offering context. On a broader level, research in social psychology has proposed illuminative, epistemic cues as antecedents to inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004). By operationalizing cues such as the perceived service climate and structural empowerment of FLEs, this dissertation provides a comprehensive, fine-grained conceptualization of activities through which retailers can facilitate FLE inspiration. Retailing scholars should, therefore, consider potential inspirational effects when studying the ability of FLEs to provide an adaptive service offering.

Second, by establishing FLE inspiration as a key mediator of the relationship between environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) and FLE attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (i.e., empathy, anticipation, creativity), the findings confirmed Neumüller's (2022) conceptualization of FLE inspiration and extended it to a broader retail context in the UK and DACH region. Linking attitudes and behaviors to inspiration gives retail scholars a new perspective for further theorizing these phenomena and researchers are encouraged to also use and extend this theory since it has proven useful. Scholars may further test additional antecedents, moderators, and consequences of FLE inspiration to contribute to developing an inspiration-dominant logic. Without considering the mediating effect of FLE inspiration, we may not fully understand why and how psychological mechanisms influence FLEs' adaptive service offerings (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Third, FLE inspiration affected outcomes, including FLE-level attitudes and behaviors (i.e., empathy, anticipation, creativity), which precede adaptive service offerings and are important to many retailers. While Neumüller (2022) did not assess inspiration's effect on FLE empathy and FLE anticipation, the findings presented in this dissertation suggest that retailers can benefit financially from inspiration-focused strategies that enhance service interaction quality and ensure competitive advantage.

6.2.3.2 Managerial Implications

For retail businesses, superior adaptive service offerings and an uplift in revenue enhance the value of studying the effects of FLE inspiration. In this sense, the results of this dissertation provide actionable implications for marketers and retailers. *Firstly*, retail managers should consider the perceived service climate of FLEs and their structural empowerment level as a direct route to enhance FLEs' capacity to actualize their inspiration in the workplace. To facilitate this, retailers must understand the psychological mechanisms that drive FLEs' attitudes and behaviors (Coelho et al., 2011). Due to the more pronounced feelings of empathy, anticipation, and creativity through FLE inspiration, FLEs are more willing to adapt services at the physical POS without significant costs.

Secondly, the structural model shows that each environmental work factor can be leveraged to enhance FLE inspiration and the corresponding attitudinal and behavioral FLE variables (i.e., FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, FLE creativity), which precede service offering adaptations. However, from a strategic perspective, the effect of FLE inspiration on downstream consequences underscores the important role of simultaneously managing these immediate work environment factors. It implies that managers should simultaneously consider the orchestrated effect based on their generic business model linking the perceived service climate and structural empowerment with FLE inspiration and the ability of an FLE to provide an adaptive service offering if they want to enhance the desired customer outcomes, such as share of wallets, cross-selling, and profitability (Rudolph et al., 2023). Such a strategy might be especially effective if it underscores the importance of single operational activities and the retailer's holistic value proposition. In this sense, I argue for an integrated inspiration-dominant logic management that accounts for FLE inspiration's differentiating function.

Thirdly, organizations should hire transformative managers who encourage an inspiration-dominant logic. Encouraging customers to expect excellent service offerings helps embed this attitude and behavior in FLEs' immediate workplace. This, in turn, contributes positively to cultivating FLE inspiration. Simultaneously, broadening the role of FLEs and allowing them to handle more complex customer challenges improves their ability to provide superior adaptive service offerings.

7 Synthesis and Contributions

7.1 Overview of Research Questions and Key Insights

Five research questions were explored through three distinct studies to advance our current knowledge of adaptive service offerings, FLE inspiration, and service research.

Research Question 1:

How can an antecedent model of adaptive service offerings that links psychological mechanisms with FLE attitudes and behaviors be developed?

The primary aim of this thesis was to offer an essential new perspective on the drivers of adaptive service offerings by considering an important new psychological construct, namely FLE inspiration. I aimed to understand the psychological causes of FLEs' attitudinal and behavioral changes in retail and advance the adaptive service offerings literature on the effects of FLE inspiration. On a broader level, FLE inspiration is a psychological mechanism that clarifies how inspirational stimuli in the FLEs' environment influence their attitudes and behaviors (Neumüller, 2022), which is based on the transmission, tripartite, and component process model of general inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; 2004; Thrash et al., 2010b).

While showing that FLE inspiration is intricately linked to a substantial network of associated outcomes, including FLE engagement, psychological empowerment, FLE proactivity, FLE satisfaction, FLE intrinsic motivation, and FLE creativity, and offering initial evidence for work-related curiosity as antecedent of FLE inspiration, Neumüller (2022) did not test a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings and did not explore the ways in which physical retailers can enhance inspiring experiences or the mechanisms through which FLE inspiration is created. This dissertation addressed this literature gap and investigated how retailers can “create” perceptions of inspiration among their FLEs. In qualitative (Study 1) and quantitative (Studies 2 and 3) research conducted in the immediate work environment of FLEs, I assessed factors that may effectively induce inspiration and predict the outcomes of FLE attitudes and behaviors during adaptive service offerings. Consistent with prior

inspiration research (e.g., Böttger et al., 2017; Neumüller, 2022; Thrash et al., 2010a), the findings and empirical evidence suggest that FLE inspiration has a crucial transmission function in adaptive service offerings. In particular, practitioners and academics can use this more comprehensive framework to understand and measure the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration in the context of the ability of an FLE to provide an adaptive service offering.

Finding 1: The results support the new FLE inspiration scale as a crucial psychological mechanism in the more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings, which is triggered by FLEs' environmental work factors (i.e., source) that inspire FLEs to actualize new ideas in the workplace (i.e., outcome), and explain the service novelty in a superior adaptive service offering.

Research Question 2:

How can physical retailers successfully provide appropriate sources of FLE inspiration?

Within the qualitative exploration (Study 1), the frequencies of sources of FLE inspiration were measured based on Neumüller's (2022) non-work-related sources (e.g., personal values) and work-related sources (e.g., company products/services). The important findings derived from the DACH sample were compared to Neumüller's (2022) results from the US sample, which showed that the sources of FLE inspiration in an FLE's direct work environment, i.e., customers, coworkers, and the company's products/services, are more relevant than those in the FLE's private environment. The company's values, training, physical store environment, and success are less important in inducing FLE inspiration. Notably, sources in an FLE's private environment, such as personal values and private life, trigger inspiration less frequently.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, social media and external leaders (role models) do not inspire FLEs' work in any way. Furthermore, participants mentioned that the company's history, brand, and direct superior also did not trigger FLE inspiration. Study 1 showed that engaging with customers at the POS appears to be the best approach to boosting FLEs' openness to potentially inspiring stimuli. A large set of qualitative data was analyzed to identify a set of inspiration-enhancing sources (Chapter 4), along with FLE inspiration as a potential mediator, through which the mentioned sources in the

direct work environment influence FLE inspiration, and thereby confirmed a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings (Chapters 5 and 6).

However, given the qualitative nature of Study 1, the analysis did not reveal which factor had the strongest effect on FLE inspiration. Furthermore, it needed to be clarified whether the theoretically suggested intervention of FLE inspiration fitted the empirical data. Therefore, using a large set of actual retail FLEs, Study 2 (UK) and Study 3 (DACH) were conducted to address these important questions, and the outcomes corroborated the qualitative findings (Study 1). Concerning FLE environmental work factors, both studies found that the perceived service climate and structural empowerment significantly predicted FLE inspiration (Chapters 5 and 6). This supports the relevance of retailers' perceived service climate and FLEs' structural empowerment level in eliciting FLEs' inspiration.

Moreover, Studies 2 and 3 identified three possible strategies that inspire retail FLEs differently based on their retailer's generic business model. *First*, global discounters should mainly focus on structural empowerment because of their efficient business processes and perceived service climate as a lever for FLE inspiration. *Second*, the perceived service climate needs to be more relevant for FLEs at content retailers as it fosters FLE inspiration to drive product creation and innovation forward. *Third*, channel retailers' increased focus on perceived service climate and structural empowerment may enhance their inspirational ability and affect their FLEs, strengthening their competitive advantage by delivering superior adaptive service offerings. In summary, these results indicate that FLEs' perceptions of inspiration sources vary based on their country (i.e., UK or DACH; Studies 1, 2, and 3) and the generic business model to which their retailer belongs (i.e., global discounter content retailer, channel retailer; Studies 2 and 3).

Finding 2: Work-related sources (e.g., a company's products/services, the brand, one's coworkers) were mentioned more frequently than non-work-related sources (e.g., personal values, family) as major sources of FLE inspiration.

Finding 3: Engaging with customers at the POS appears to be the best approach in boosting FLEs' openness to potentially inspiring stimuli.

Finding 4: The emergence of FLE inspiration depends significantly on retailers' perceived service climate and FLEs' structural empowerment level.

Finding 5: Three potential strategy approaches elicited a sense of FLE inspiration based on the three generic business models: (1) global discounter (i.e., price leadership) = focus is on structural empowerment and perceived service climate; (2) content retailer (i.e., product leadership) = focus is only on perceived service climate; (3) channel retailer (i.e., service leadership) = focus is on perceived service climate and structural empowerment.

Finding 6: Structural empowerment in Switzerland, in comparison to Germany and Austria, is able to generate elevated FLE inspiration, which subsequently results in enhanced FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, FLE creativity, and service offering adaptation.

Research Question 3:

How does FLE inspiration affect the outcome of FLE attitudes and behaviors during adaptive service offerings?

FLE inspiration is deeply intertwined with a profound network of associated outcomes (Neumüller, 2022). According to Studies 2 and 3, FLE inspiration explains variance in FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, and FLE creativity, which are three highly relevant FLE attitudes and behaviors during service interactions at the physical POS in a dynamic market environment. The findings highlight the relevance of FLE inspiration in eliciting FLEs' superior adaptive service offerings, and this more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings was quantitatively validated in Chapters 5 and 6.

Furthermore, the results of Studies 2 and 3 showed that FLE inspiration partially mediated the perceived service climate's effect on empathy and anticipation, while FLE inspiration fully mediated the effect of perceived service climate on FLE creativity. In contrast to what was initially hypothesized, FLE inspiration was not a significant mediator of the relationship between structural empowerment, FLE empathy, and FLE anticipation in the UK (Study 2). On the contrary, Study 3 in DACH showed that FLE inspiration mediates the effect of structural empowerment on FLE empathy, FLE

anticipation, and FLE creativity (Chapter 6). These findings indicate that FLE inspiration is a crucial psychological mechanism linking FLE inspiration to FLE attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in retail.

Finding 7: FLE inspiration predicted FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, and FLE creativity.

Finding 8: FLE inspiration significantly mediated the effect of the environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) on the three FLE-level variables (i.e., empathy, anticipation, creativity), except for structural empowerment, FLE empathy (H_{4-2-ii(a)}), and FLE anticipation (H_{4-2-ii(b)}) in the UK sample.

Research Question 4:

How convincing are the relationships presented by Wilder et al. (2014) and the newly developed extensions in the retailing context in terms of explanatory power?

As stated in the beginning (Chapter 1.2), this dissertation attempted to replicate and extend Wilder et al.'s (2014) conceptual model of the adaptive service offering in retailing with three objectives: (i) to justify and verify the predictive validity of the conceptual model of the adaptive service offering in the retailing industry alone, (ii) to clarify the role of FLEs' different cultural backgrounds (i.e., UK and DACH) compared to the US cultural background in Wilder et al. (2014), and (iii) to extend Wilder et al.'s (2014) research on the effects of psychological mechanisms (i.e., FLE inspiration) on FLEs' attitudes and behaviors. This research is the first systematic account of the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration based on Wilder et al.'s (2014) conceptual model of adaptive service offering.

The empirical results of Study 2 provided partial support for their configuration. Specifically, Wilder et al. (2014) identified structural empowerment as a significant antecedent of FLE empathy that preceded FLE creativity in the US population. Study 2, whether the replication or the extension with FLE inspiration, did not support the two hypothesized relationships in the UK population. Study 3 with the DACH population achieved all three research objectives. A comparison of my results based on the UK and DACH samples focusing only on retail with the original data of Wilder et al. (2014)

from the US and 15 different industries revealed mainly similarities and a few differences between the hypothesized relationships.

Overall, the results of Studies 2 and 3 add to the growing evidence supporting the conceptualization of FLE inspiration as an important antecedent of FLE attitudes and behaviors, and the superordinate construct based on its ability to explain additional (and a greater portion of) the variance in the more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings in retailing beyond the original model of Wilder et al. (2014). Given the well-documented positive effect of FLE inspiration on several FLE downstream consequences, I offer guidance on environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) that foster FLE inspiration and, as a consequence, FLEs' positive attitudes and behaviors (i.e., FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, FLE creativity), which precede adaptive service offering. This dissertation may encourage retail scholars to further study the FLE inspiration construct due to its relevance to the retail industry in an evolving inspiration-dominant logic.

Finding 9: I successfully replicated and extended Wilder et al.'s (2014) model in retailing using a UK dataset. The goodness-of-fit statistics for the measurement and the structural models were good, following Homburg and Baumgartner (1995). The analyses confirmed all hypotheses in the predicted direction except for H_{3(b)} (structural empowerment → empathy), H₅ (empathy → creativity), H_{4-2-ii(a)} (structural empowerment → frontline employee inspiration → empathy), and H_{4-2-ii(b)} (structural empowerment → frontline employee inspiration → anticipation).

Finding 10: I successfully replicated and extended Wilder et al.'s (2014) model in retailing using the DACH dataset. The goodness-of-fit statistics for the measurement and the structural models were good, following Homburg and Baumgartner (1995). The results supported all hypotheses in the predicted direction.

7.2 Contribution to Research Streams

7.2.1 Contribution to Adaptive Service Offering Literature

This dissertation contributes to the adaptive service offering literature in three ways. *First*, it highlights the importance of FLE inspiration (Neumüller, 2022) as a novel psychological process affecting FLEs' behaviors and attitudes to provide a superior adaptive service offering, addressing the need to further study the relatively unexplored topic of FLE attitudes and behaviors (Shalley et al., 2004; Singh et al., 2017) and validate FLE inspiration as a novel motivational construct within the realm of adapting a service (Grewal et al., 2021). Based on the results, it discusses different approaches to enhance customer orientation (Subramony et al., 2021) and the analysis showed that FLE inspiration as a new epistemic-motivational construct uniquely explains additional variance in FLE attitudes and behaviors (e.g., FLE creativity) beyond the predictive power of the conceptual model of adaptive service offering put forward by Wilder et al. (2014) that had traditionally been used to explain FLEs' service offering adaptations in retail.

Second, consistent with prior scholars (e.g., Wilder et al., 2014), physical retailers should prioritize developing and nurturing their FLEs' ability to adapt to customer service journeys at the POS instead of solely focusing on their personalities and motivations. To address this issue in retailing, I responded to previous calls for research on how retail managers affect adaptability (e.g., Gwinner et al., 2005; Lyngdoh et al., 2018; Subramony et al., 2021; Wilder et al., 2014) and demonstrated that an organization's perceived service climate and level of structural empowerment have a profound effect on the abilities and skills necessary to adapt a service offering. This contribution is important because adaptive service-offering scholars still mainly focus on FLEs' personality-level variables (e.g., Gilbert et al., 2022) at work.

Third, I contributed to the limited research on FLE anticipation by showing that perceived service climate and structural empowerment influenced FLE anticipation directly and indirectly through FLE inspiration, affecting both FLE creativity and adaptive service offering. In so doing, this study contributes to previous inquiries on the effects of environmental work factors on FLE anticipation (Wilder et al., 2014) by focusing on the effect of FLE inspiration in a more refined manner.

7.2.2 Contribution to Frontline Employee Inspiration Literature

By delving into the underexplored subject of FLE inspiration, this dissertation broadens the scope of a meaningful network of antecedents and outcomes of such inspiration. By testing and empirically validating the more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offering across multiple studies, the results indicated that perceived service climate (Schneider et al., 1998) and structural empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) are important sources of FLE inspiration. Moreover, FLE inspiration significantly influences various FLE attitude and behavior variables, such as FLE empathy (Wieseke et al., 2012), FLE anticipation (Wilder et al., 2014), and FLE creativity (Coelho & Augusto, 2010), which are frequently examined in service interactions at the physical POS and in FLE-related research.

Service and marketing research also benefits from introducing the novel motivational framework of FLE inspiration, as it elucidates how FLEs react to inducing stimuli in their surroundings (Neumüller, 2022). Previous research on FLEs primarily concentrated on motivational concepts, such as intrinsic motivation (e.g., Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000), work engagement (e.g., Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), citizenship behavior (e.g., Choi, 2007), customer stewardship control (e.g., Schepers et al., 2012), psychological empowerment (e.g., Spreitzer, 2008), employee engagement (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2002), and organizational commitment (e.g., Mowday et al., 1979), as well as newer concepts, such as FLE passion (Crawford et al., 2022), which provide some guidance but do not fully capture how FLEs process cues in their immediate work surroundings and shift their mind to new possibilities that explain the service novelty in a superior adaptive service offering. Thus, this study substantially enhances the existing literature by concentrating on FLE inspiration.

Finally, Studies 1, 2, and 3 confirmed that FLE inspiration is appropriate for cross-culturally investigating inspiration. For example, scholars developing new and adapting the existing models linking employee-centric and customer-centric constructs should consider FLE inspiration to provide a starting point for thinking more clearly about the role of inspiration in the concept of services and to explain the transfer of inspiration from FLEs to customers in an evolving inspiration-dominant logic (Böttger et al., 2017; Neumüller, 2022; Rudolph et al., 2023).

7.2.3 Contribution to Replication Research

The findings of this thesis provide valuable suggestions for authors, reviewers, and editors interested in replication studies. Previous research suggests that the field's focus on generating new theoretical contributions often stifles attempts to design replication studies, as top journals strongly encourage novel contributions (Corley & Gioia, 2011). As a result, scholars may avoid replication studies to circumvent potential criticism for failing to provide theoretical contributions and novelty (Dau et al., 2021; Köhler & Cortina, 2021). However, replication and extension studies are crucial to validate the hypothesized relationships and effect sizes, and further refine the underlying theories that were previously developed (Tsang & Kwan, 1999; Walker et al., 2019). Therefore, the following process in conducting replication studies draws on Dau et al.'s (2021) and Walker et al.'s (2019) suggestions and the key findings of this dissertation informing the generalization and extension studies with new data sources (i.e., UK- and DACH-based retail FLE) and novel research designs (i.e., integration of FLE inspiration). It is intended as a best practice guideline for authors, reviewers, and editors who aim to increase replication culture through new publications or respond to calls for new papers in the academic community.

The replication process is cyclical, with the results from one phase serving as inputs for the next phase of the replication process, and it comprises three individual steps. The first step (*i – Assessing*) should involve a critical assessment of the desirability of a given study in the respective field, the feasibility of the considered study, and the power of the internal and external validity of the original study.

The second step (*ii – Choosing*) should be to decide which of the six types in the typology of replication studies in Table 4 (Chapter 3.2) are most appropriate, considering the source of data and research design, external validity (i.e., sample quality), internal validity (i.e., quality of variables used, measurement, or empirical analysis), or both compared to the original study.

The third step (*iii – Executing*) involves developing a theory and empirical design before collecting data and conducting analyses. Lastly, careful attention should be paid to comparing and validating the findings of the replication and original studies to determine whether the replication expanded the previous results in a way that can be generalized to various contexts and research designs.

7.3 Practical Contribution and Leveraging Frontline Employee Inspiration

Chapter 7.2 outlined this dissertation's contribution to current literature on adaptive service offerings, FLE inspiration, and replication studies while addressing targeted research inquiries. This chapter summarizes the dissertation's findings, providing a practical implication for practitioners (Chapter 7.3.1) and a taxonomy of an evolving inspiration-dominant logic for fostering FLE inspiration in retailing companies based on their generic business model (Chapter 7.3.2). From the practitioners' perspective, this study addressed one crucial question: How can physical retailers successfully implement FLE inspiration to promote adaptive service experiences at the physical POS?

7.3.1 Implications for Practitioners

This dissertation aimed to expand the theoretical understanding of the foundations, processes, and applications of FLE inspiration in the context of adaptive service offerings in retailing. Three distinct and sound studies provide important perspectives and insights into the topic. For retail managers to use them, these insights must be actionable. Therefore, this chapter aims to synthesize this dissertation's findings and provide strategic levers to guide retail practitioners in their efforts to inspire their FLEs and improve service offering adaptation at the POS. The insights gained from this thesis have profound suggestions for retail managers.

Firstly, FLEs can help build unique competitive advantages through creating meaningful customer experiences (Kumar & Pansari, 2014). Scholars have noted that digital transformation forces retailers to offer more training, rewards, recognition, and information to engage FLEs to become more adaptive and provide customized service (Crawford et al., 2022; Gwinner et al., 2005). One finding of this dissertation suggested that FLEs should be provided with access to opportunities, information, support, and resources, and retailers should prioritize customization and effectively communicate these expectations to their FLEs to inspire them (Studies 2 and 3). With the rapid development and increased use of self-service options, such as online shopping, physical retailers have fewer chances to communicate with their customers face-to-face (Avery et al., 2012). This presents an opportunity for FLEs to stand out by making the

most of these limited interactions at the POS. By creating inspirational and memorable experiences through inspired FLEs, retailers can differentiate themselves and improve customer orientation, thereby enhancing their (financial) returns (Böttger et al., 2017; Neumüller, 2022; Rudolph et al., 2023).

Secondly, the results suggested that transformative managers inspire FLEs, demonstrating that engaging with customers at the POS is beneficial for eliciting FLE inspiration (Study 1). FLEs benefit from demanding managers but also from customers with high expectations (Crawford et al., 2022). Additionally, meeting customers' expectations within the service environment is a significant factor in developing inspiration within an FLE. Furthermore, expanding the scope of the FLE role to encompass more intricate challenges will enhance their inspirational levels and foster greater long-term commitment (Monje-Amor et al., 2021).

Thirdly, many physical retailers are investing in new in-store technology but neglect redesigning FLEs' roles at the POS. These FLEs must engage more as they are responsible for managing unpredictable face-to-face customer interactions. Therefore, the FLE inspiration scale, validated across multiple countries in the adaptive service offering environments, serves as a novel management instrument for assessing the incidence of inspiration among FLEs and identifying those with high levels of inspiration (Studies 2 and 3). This scale can be useful for screening and hiring potential FLEs (Neumüller, 2022). It can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of training offered to FLEs through before-and-after evaluations. Additionally, it can assist in designing future roles that provide optimal work environments for FLEs, fostering their inspirational level and customer orientation.

Overall, this thesis marks the initial step in firmly embedding an evolving inspiration-dominant logic into retail practice. By developing a comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings that incorporates psychological mechanisms, it examines the antecedents and outcomes of FLE inspiration. This work provides evidence-based direction for influencing FLE-related attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The taxonomy presented in Chapter 7.3.2 (Figure 10) expands on these results' implications for retailers, offering practical illustrations of how to cultivate FLE inspiration within retail organizations.

7.3.2 Taxonomy of an Evolving Inspiration-Dominant Logic

To shed further light on the different strategic levers based on empirical results, I first compared how the different generic business models vary in their level of structural empowerment and perceived service climate in the UK and DACH. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in perceived service climate between the three generic business models in the UK ($F(2, 245) = 5.577, p = .004$). Specifically, Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons found significant differences in perceived service climate between global discounters and content retailers ($p = .043, 95\% CI = [-1.1246, -.0137]$) and global discounters and channel retailers ($p = .003, 95\% CI = [-1.1466, .1954]$). The difference in perceived service climate between the content and channel retailers was insignificant ($p = .843$). In sum, FLEs in the global discounter conditions reported a significantly lower level of perceived service climate ($M = 4.50$) compared to those in content retailer ($M = 5.07$) and channel retailer ($M = 5.18$) conditions. In terms of structural empowerment level, ANOVA revealed a statistically insignificant difference between the three generic business models in structural empowerment in the UK.

More importantly, a one-way ANOVA revealed a highly significant difference in perceived service climate between three generic business models in DACH ($F(2, 522) = 7.941, p < .001$). Specifically, Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons found an insignificant difference between global discounters and content retailers ($p = .239$) but a significant difference between global discounters and channel retailers ($p < .001, 95\% CI = [-.9810, -.2388]$) in perceived service climate. The difference between the content and channel retailers in perceived service climate was significant ($p = .020, 95\% CI = [-.6822, -.0455]$). In sum, FLEs in the global discounter conditions, as in the UK, reported a significantly lower perceived service climate ($M = 4.51$) than those in channel retailer ($M = 5.12$) conditions. Moreover, FLEs in the content retailer conditions reported a significantly lower perceived service climate ($M = 4.76$) compared to those in channel retailer ($M = 5.12$) conditions.

Finally, a one-way ANOVA revealed a highly significant difference in structural empowerment between the three generic business models in DACH ($F(2, 522) = 7.348, p < .001$). Specifically, Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons revealed an insignificant difference between global discounters and content retailers ($p = .213$) and

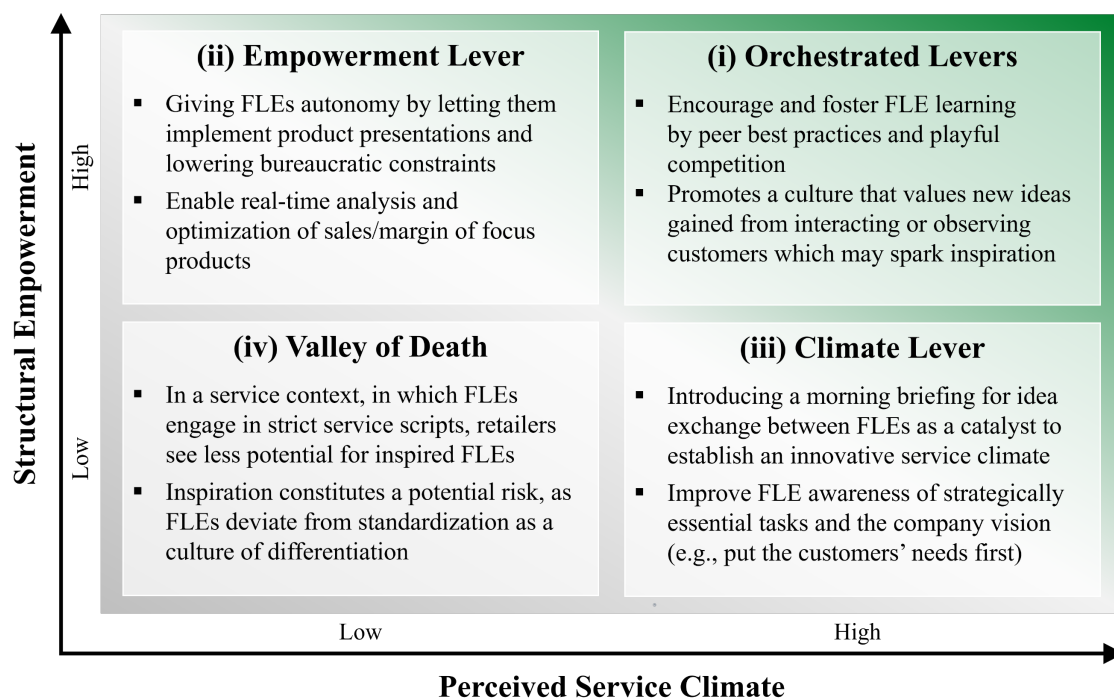
a significant difference between global discounters and channel retailers ($p < .001$, 95% $CI = [-1.0481, -.2401]$) in structural empowerment. The difference in structural empowerment between the content and channel retailers was significant ($p = .036$, 95% $CI = [-.7123, -.0191]$). Hence, FLEs in the global discounter conditions reported a significantly lower level of structural empowerment ($M = 4.83$) compared to those in channel retailer ($M = 5.48$) conditions. Moreover, FLEs in the content retailer conditions reported a significantly lower level of structural empowerment ($M = 5.11$) compared to those in channel retailer ($M = 5.48$) conditions. These findings indicate that FLEs in the global discounter condition generally demonstrate lower levels of structural empowerment and perceived service climate compared to FLEs in the content and channel retailer conditions in both the UK and DACH countries. More importantly, the group means for the channel retailer were consistently above the group means for the global discounter and content retailer conditions in all countries, ranging from 5.12 to 5.48.

The preliminary classification framework is presented and discussed based on the prior ANOVAs and structural equation model results in Chapters 5 and 6. Classifications, particularly taxonomies, are the leading descriptive tools that provide an exhaustive and definitive array of types with minimal complexity. They differ from typologies in that they classify items based on empirically observable and measurable characteristics (Bailey, 1994). The classificatory framework is intended to assist practitioners. Aligning the framework with existing well-known, tried, and tested theories is expected to increase the intelligibility and relevancy of retailing practices. After the first iteration, the LATCH criteria proposed by Wurman (2001) were used as a starting point for the preliminary framework. The category-based criteria were chosen because they allowed the adaptive service offering literature to be combined with the conceptualization of FLE inspiration. Therefore, the first classification principle derived from the empirical findings in Chapters 5 and 6, and the prior mean comparisons were based on categories of different strategic levers that foster FLE inspiration depending on retailers' generic business models. Structural empowerment and the perceived service climate of FLEs were included as classification principles. I focused on two dimensions from the FLE perspective, namely perceived service climate on the x-axis and structural empowerment on the y-axis when building a 2x2 taxonomy

of miscellaneous mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive categories of strategies to inspire FLE (see Figure 10) (Bailey, 1994).

The level of structural empowerment and perceived service climate can vary, with ratings ranging from 1 to 4 classified as low and ratings from 5 to 7 classified as high. Accordingly, I labeled each of the four categories in my taxonomy as follows: (i) *Orchestrated Levers* (high structural empowerment and high perceived service climate); (ii) *Empowerment Lever* (high structural empowerment and low perceived service climate); (iii) *Climate Lever* (low structural empowerment and high perceived service climate); and (iv) *Valley of Death* (low structural empowerment and low perceived service climate). Depending on their value proposition, retailers must implement or improve appropriate strategic levers to trigger FLE inspiration.¹¹

Figure 10
Taxonomy of an Evolving Inspiration-Dominant Logic



Source: Author's illustration. Note: The figure depicts examples in each strategic lever category.

¹¹ To simplify the approach and ensure physical retailers can implement the inspiration-dominant logic taxonomy, I distinguished between two groups (high/low), resulting in a 2x2 framework.

The taxonomy of an evolving inspiration-dominant logic serves as a framework and reference for retail practitioners seeking to improve FLE inspiration through novel strategies or enhanced current initiatives. The taxonomy in Figure 10 draws on the key implications for physical retailers in the evolving inspiration-dominant logic of this dissertation. The questionnaire in Appendices B and C provides time-tested scales for analyzing the status quo. Next, each of the four categories will be discussed in turn.

(i) *Orchestrated Levers*. Service-focused physical retailers should ideally strive to establish high levels of structural empowerment and perceived service climate for their FLEs to become service leaders in their respective markets. These retailers benefit from both levers, which lead to inspired, empathic, authentic, and creative FLEs, directly contributing to firm performance and positively influencing service offering adaption. Initial evidence revealed significant relationships between the generic business models (Studies 2 and 3), showing that *channel retailers* should consider the orchestrated effect of retailers' perceived service climate and structural empowerment of FLEs. Hence, channel retailers can achieve peak levels of FLE inspiration and set themselves apart through exceptional adaptive service offerings at the POS, as FLE inspiration is pivotal for future market positioning and strengthening their competitive advantage.

(ii) *Empowerment Lever*. A focus on a high structural empowerment level accompanied by a low perceived service climate implies that the retailer empowers FLEs to foster their inspirational level. However, for FLEs, retailers' perceived service climate only plays a subordinate role in eliciting inspiration at work and I showed that structural empowerment is a strategic lever in inspirational strategy, especially for *global discounters*. To promote structural empowerment, global discounters can provide FLEs with greater autonomy in their work, set challenging goals, and foster teamwork while building a supportive service culture (Monje-Amor et al., 2021). In this case, FLE inspiration may help global discounters accelerate proactive attitudes, behaviors, and active involvement in tasks that enhance FLEs' readiness to support organizational change (Cadwallader et al., 2010; Wieseke et al., 2011) and spark creative ideas that improve retailers' efficiency.

(iii) *Climate Lever*. Physical retailers in this group must prioritize improving the perceived service climate of their FLEs and focus less on the initial structural empowerment level. Despite the best efforts of managers to give autonomy to FLEs, data from Studies 2 and 3 suggested that *content retailers* need to establish a strong, inspiring, meaningful, and unique value proposition (e.g., putting the customers' needs first) to foster inspiration in their FLEs. Companies that belong to this category could enhance a service environment that values inspiration and, consequently, FLEs' capacity due to their inspiration to recognize and share cues from their surroundings about new emerging customer needs and market trends (Gebhardt et al., 2019), which might effectively differentiate their offerings and make them more compelling to customers.

(iv) *Valley of Death*. Typically, when firms focus on standardization as differentiation and insist on strict service scripts and routines (e.g., scripted responses to customers' requests) but overlook FLE inspiration, they hinder FLEs from executing creative ideas and going "off script" during service interactions at the POS. Drawing on the empirical evidence in this thesis, I recommend that retail managers in this group dedicate most of their assets to increasing structural empowerment levels or elevating the perceived service climate for their FLEs, depending on their generic business models and value proposition. Focusing on structural empowerment helps firms that aim to be cost leaders through streamlined and efficient operations elicit FLE inspiration. Firms that either develop or sell market innovative products and aim to be product leaders should prioritize offering FLEs a conducive service climate to thoroughly harness FLE inspiration. Subsequently, managers focusing on customer service and striving to become service leaders should consider the orchestrated effect of linking perceived service climate and structural empowerment with FLE inspiration and the ability of an FLE to provide an adaptive service offering simultaneously if they want to enhance desired customer outcomes, such as share of wallets, cross-selling, and profitability (Rudolph et al., 2023).

Table 28 provides an additional overview of a potential strategic lever for each environmental work factor in eliciting FLE inspiration. Although physical retailers may rate the relevance of these strategic levers differently based on their unique circumstances, the sequence in which they are outlined does not have a specific ranking in terms of effectiveness.

Table 28
Examples of Potential Strategic Levers to Elicit FLE Inspiration

<i>Sources of Frontline Employee Inspiration</i>	<i>Exemplary Strategic Levers</i>
Structural Empowerment	Give FLEs freedom to present experiential product presentations at the POS and broaden their duties and activities in the workplace. (<i>Autonomy</i>)
	Enable real-time analysis and optimization of sales/margin of focus products and encourage FLEs to try out the retailer's new products. (<i>Information</i>)
	Inspire and foster FLE learning through peer best practices and the possibility of working at another retailer's store. (<i>Resources</i>)
	Encourage playful competition through gamification and lowering bureaucratic constraints, accelerating the overall attractiveness of working at the POS. (<i>Incentives</i>)
Perceived Service Climate	Improve FLE awareness of strategically essential tasks and the company's value proposition (e.g., put the customers' needs first) and simultaneously cultivate a service climate that supports and encourages these motivational orientations that advance new inspiring ideas and does not punish taking initiative.
	Establish clear communication channels to effectively convey important service climate-related information to FLEs by consistently addressing correlated matters during coaching sessions, performance evaluations, and development training.
	Implement a morning briefing that allows FLEs to share their thoughts and leverage their colleagues' knowledge as a catalyst for generating new innovative ideas.
	Incorporate FLE inspiration into the company's vision to promote a work environment that values inspiration.

Source: Author's illustration.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

The findings of the mixed-methods studies should be understood in light of their limitations, which offer pathways for additional research.

7.4.1 Methodological Approach

Firstly, the data used in Studies 2 and 3 were cross-sectional, which made it impossible to determine causality. Future research could thus use a longitudinal or experimental design to address a stronger case for causality. For example, a longitudinal approach could conclusively establish the causal effects of environmental work factors (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment) on FLE inspiration and the related attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (i.e., FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, FLE creativity). While this dissertation offers valuable insights into FLEs' attitudinal and behavioral changes, future research should complement these findings by gathering sales metrics to help confirm the effects of FLE inspiration on physical retailers' outcomes, such as sales and customer loyalty. Conversely, a trial method could be employed to create a training program aimed at enhancing FLE inspiration. This module can then be integrated into a treatment or training program, especially within service-focused settings such as channel retailers, where FLEs play a crucial role in adapting service offerings. Studies could compare pre- and post-training outcomes and training versus non-training control groups.

Secondly, our understanding of how FLEs inspire customers during service interactions in real-life situations at the POS of physical retailers is still limited. Future studies could address this shortcoming by designing a dyadic field study to investigate FLEs and customer inspiration. A dyadic study would enhance the current understanding of the inspirational spillover during adaptive service offerings (e.g., Homburg & Stock, 2004) and promote an evolving inspiration-dominant logic. Future studies designed to examine the influence of FLE inspiration on customers should incorporate control variables to consider the influence of digital (e.g., in-store technology) and mobile touchpoints when customers shop at the physical POS.

Thirdly, even when collecting dyadic data from FLEs and their customers, researchers could additionally consider the effects of FLE inspiration from their

managers' viewpoint. For instance, forthcoming scholars could utilize a triadic approach to investigate the effects of FLE inspiration at the FLE, company, and customer levels.

7.4.2 Sampling and Industry Focus

Firstly, this thesis relied on multiple research methods, such as a qualitative exploratory method (Study 1) and cross-sectional survey research (Studies 2 and 3) of UK and DACH FLEs. Although I surveyed FLEs across various retailers, the data were predominantly sourced from online panel data. Instead of focusing on a single retailer, I recruited the sample from a diverse range of retailing industries, which made assessing the shared component of the perceived service climate or the structural empowerment level challenging. Treating all participants individually resulted in missing the distinctive elements of different organizational environmental work factors. While the inclusion of diverse physical retailers with different value propositions enhanced the broader applicability of the results, upcoming studies might explore interactions and viewpoints within specific FLE cohorts.

Secondly, future research should consider collecting data on FLE inspiration from multiple firms spanning various industries. This expansion should extend beyond platforms such as Mechanical Turk or Prolific, where isolating specific industries while maintaining a substantial sample size can be challenging. Furthermore, future research should focus on confirming the stability and reliability of these effects in field settings, preferably involving FLEs from a wide range of retail and service companies. Additionally, the newly developed, more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings could be validated in settings other than retail. For instance, examining the inspirational levels of hospitality service FLEs could provide valuable insights. Exploring the inspirational dynamic between FLEs and customers within hospitality service interactions would be an exciting topic to further develop and strengthen the evolving inspiration-dominant logic in academia. Therefore, I would encourage researchers to apply the new model to diverse contexts.

Thirdly, in Studies 2 and 3, the FLEs exhibited remarkably high mean values in the surveys, emphasizing numerous positive outcomes of FLE inspiration. However, it is important to note that FLEs may perceive their immediate work environment as less favorable. For instance, if the work environment hinders the realization of higher levels

of structural empowerment or a positive service culture, FLEs might experience frustration in their workplace. The future academic focus should thus be directed toward understanding the specific conditions that lead to the emergence of these negative effects as such an inquiry can offer valuable insights into mitigating the adverse consequences of FLE inspiration within the context of an FLE's ability to adapt service offerings.

Fourthly, in Study 2 in the UK, the distribution of the generic business models was uneven, and the names of the physical retailers were not queried in the survey. Therefore, future research could reevaluate the hypothesized relationships in the context of the generic business models by focusing more on global discounter and content retailer FLEs. Moreover, due to privacy concerns, I could only verify the selected value proposition of 371 FLEs, who additionally named their employer in the DACH sample in Study 3. Future research could devise new measurements to assess the generic business models in line with the current data protection policy.

7.4.3 Antecedents and Outcomes

Firstly, the proposed comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings, with FLE inspiration as a psychological mechanism, allowed for the establishment of associations with some constructs (i.e., perceived service climate, structural empowerment, FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, FLE creativity) but not with other motivational constructs (e.g., intrinsic motivation, citizenship behavior, psychological empowerment, employee engagement, frontline employee passion). Therefore, future research should gradually enlarge the nomological network presented here to build a relevant theory.

Secondly, although this thesis sheds light on the effects of the perceived service climate on FLE inspiration, upcoming studies could explore the interaction between quality-focused and initiative-focused climates (Sok et al., 2023) in the FLEs' immediate work environment. A promising area of investigation would be to explore how various climates contribute to inducing FLE inspiration. Moreover, a related practical issue is that the moment of inspiration and the opportunity to adapt a service do not necessarily coincide. In addition to clarifying the literal moment of inspiration,

this study opens opportunities to investigate the role of time- and space-related distance as moderators of the connection linking FLE inspiration and its sources.

Thirdly, this thesis identified multiple crucial effects of FLE inspiration in a more comprehensive antecedent model of adaptive service offerings (i.e., FLE empathy, FLE anticipation, FLE creativity). To extend the new model, it might be worthwhile to incorporate customer inspiration in a dyadic context because this latter state was shown to benefit the customer and firm (Böttger et al., 2017; Neumüller, 2022; Rudolph et al., 2023). For example, customer inspiration may affect attitudinal outcomes (i.e., word of mouth, loyalty, brand innovativeness) and behavioral outcomes (i.e., number of purchased products, the sum spent) due to the spillover of FLE inspiration in the context of adaptive service offerings.

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9 Appendices

Appendix A Coding Results (Study 1) (Chapter 4)

<i>Sources of Frontline Employee Inspiration</i>	<i>Sample Quotes</i>
Personal Values	“Ich habe schon immer den Kontakt mit den unterschiedlichsten Menschen geliebt und mag den Umgang mit Zahlen und Geld. Ich mag die Abwechslung zwischen Kasse und Verräumung”
Private Life (e.g., family)	“Mein Hobby, Eishockey”
Customers	“Es inspiriert mich die Wünsche der Kunden zu realisieren und sie mit meiner Kreativität zu begeistern”
Coworkers	“Mich inspiriert die Zusammenarbeit und die Anerkennung der Kollegen und Vorgesetzten”
Company's Products/Services	“Inspiriert hat mich die Vielfalt und Herstellung der Möbel aus welchen Material wird es hergestellt wie kann man alles gut nutzen und den Kunden weitergeben das sie mit ihrer Einrichtung zufrieden sind”
Company's Success	”Die strategische Neupositionierung am Markt mit all seinen Facetten”
Direct Superior	/
Physical Store Environment	“Der Aufbau der neuen Werbeaktion. Dort kann man sich ein klein wenig kreativ entfalten”
Company's Values	“Umsetzen der gemeinsamen Ziele. Selbstständig entscheiden und supporten”
Internal Leader	“Führung der Mitarbeiter und DB3”
Company's Brand	/
Company's Training	“Wie man effizient arbeiten kann wenn man Prozesse beschleunigt und dann auch sieht das Kunden mit dem Ergebnis zufrieden sind”
Company's History	/
External Leader (e.g., Jeff Bezos)	/
Social Media	/

Source: Author’s illustration based on Neumüller (2022).

Appendix B Questionnaire for Study 2 (Chapter 5)

Welcome!

Thank you for taking part in this study.

Participation will take approximately 7 minutes. You do not need any special expertise to participate in the study. **This survey is for service workers. When answering the questions, please think of your current job as a service worker interacting with customers at the physical point of sale.**

By answering this survey, you indicate your voluntary consent to participate in this research. Your responses will be completely anonymous. You have the right to decline to participate and withdraw from the research now or at any time after the study has begun by closing your web browser or after completion by contacting andreas.hauschke@unisg.ch.

You will receive your unique completion code after you have completed at the end of the survey. You will need this information to receive payment for your participation.

Please click "**Continue**" to start.

➡ 1	With your current workplace in mind, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (<i>Gwinner et al., 2005</i>)						
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I usually adapt the type of service to meet the unique needs of each customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I tailor a service experience to meet a customer's needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I modify my normal job performance in order to meet the individual needs of a customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I vary the actual service offering on a number of dimensions depending on the needs of the customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe that each customer requires a unique approach.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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➡ 2	Please think of your most recent moment of inspiration at work: Thinking back to this inspiring moment at work, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (<i>Neumüller, 2022</i>)						
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
My imagination was stimulated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I was intrigued by a new idea.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt like an idea spontaneously entered my mind.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I was inspired to do my job in a new and better way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt a desire to do my job in a new and better way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I was motivated to do my job in a new and better way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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➤ 3 With your current workplace in mind, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (McBane, 1995)							
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I try to empathize with the feelings of a customer during a service experience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When providing a service to a customer, it is easy for me to see the experience from his or her perspective.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
During a service experience, I usually try to “put myself in the customer’s shoes”.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I try to understand the customer’s point of view when delivering a service experience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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➤ 4 With your current workplace in mind, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Wilder et al., 2014)							
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I try to anticipate the needs of my customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I try to discover the needs of customers before they are aware of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often recognize customer needs before they tell me about them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy for me to realize the needs of my customers before they bring them to my attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can often predict the needs of customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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➤ 5 With your current workplace in mind, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Zhou & George, 2001)							
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I often have new and innovative ideas on how to improve my job performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I frequently come up with creative solutions to problems at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I regularly suggest new ways of performing work tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I often exhibit creativity on the job when given the opportunity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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➤ 6 With your current workplace in mind, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Dietz et al., 2004; Schneider et al., 1998)							
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
The quality of support I get from other employees and management allows me to excel at providing superior customer service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Where I work, we set clear performance standards for service quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The culture of our organization is to put the customers' needs first.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My work environment encourages employees to provide customers an excellent service experience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Where I work, individuals are recognized for their contributions to service quality improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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➤ 7 With your current workplace in mind, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Melhem, 2004)							
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I don't need to get management approval before I handle problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have the authority to correct problems when they occur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a lot of control over how I do my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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➤ 8	
I am _____ years old and	☐ female. ☐ male.

➤ 9 What is your current job title?

➤ 10 What is the purpose of your company? (Rudolph, 2000)		
☐ Strives to be the cost leader based on lean and efficient business processes and low prices. (Aldi)	☐ Focuses on developing and/or selling innovative products and strives to be product leaders in their market. (Zara)	☐ Focuses on customer service and strives to become service leaders in their respective markets. (Walmart)

➤ 11 At your work, do you interact with customers? "Customer" refers to private end-users or consumers. (Neumüller, 2022)
☐ Yes.
☐ No.

➤ 12 How often do you interact with customers at work? (Stock & Bednarek, 2014)		
☐ Never.	☐ Very seldom.	☐ Several times a month.
☐ Several times a week.	☐ Several times a day.	☐ Several times an hour.

➤ 13 For how long have you been working at your company and in your current job position? (Neumüller, 2022)

I have been working for ____ years in my current position.	I have been working for ____ years at my company.
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➤ 14 Do you have managerial responsibility? (Neumüller, 2022)

☐ Yes.	☐ No.
-------------------------------	------------------------------

➤ 15 In what retail sector do you work? (Neumüller, 2022)

☐ Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers (e.g., Home Centers). ☐ Clothing and clothing accessories stores (including Shoes, Jewelry). ☐ Electronics and Appliance Stores (including Microwave, Fridge, Mobile Phones). ☐ Food and Beverage Stores (including Grocery Stores, Specialty Food Stores). ☐ Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores. ☐ Gasoline stations. ☐ General Merchandise Stores (including Department Stores, Supercenters, Warehouse Clubs). ☐ Health and Personal Care Stores (including Pharmacies, Cosmetics Stores, Optical Goods Stores). ☐ Hospitality (including Accommodation Services, Restaurants). ☐ Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers. ☐ Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, and Book Stores. ☐ Miscellaneous Store Retailers (Florists, Office Suppliers, Gift Stores, Pet Suppliers). ☐ Another: _____
--

➤ 16 What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed? (Neumüller, 2022)

☐ Less than high school.	☐ High school graduate (includes equivalency).	☐ Some college, no degree.
☐ Associate's degree.	☐ Bachelor's degree.	☐ Graduate or professional degree.

---End of questionnaire---

Appendix C Questionnaire for Study 3 (Chapter 6)

Herzlich willkommen!

Das Ausfüllen des Fragebogens dauert etwa 7-10 Minuten. Sie benötigen keine besonderen Vorkenntnisse, um an der Studie teilnehmen zu können. **Bitte denken Sie bei der Beantwortung der Fragen an Ihre derzeitige Tätigkeit als Servicemitarbeiter im Handel mit täglichem Kundenkontakt.**

Bitte lesen Sie die Fragen aufmerksam durch und beantworten Sie diese intuitiv, ehrlich, alleine und vollständig. Es gibt keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten. Von Interesse ist Ihre persönliche Meinung. Ihnen wird absolute Anonymität zugesichert. Ihre Angaben werden ausschliesslich für wissenschaftliche Zwecke verwendet und so aufbereitet, dass keinerlei Rückschlüsse auf Ihre individuelle Meinung gezogen werden können.

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Unterstützung!

Bitte klicken Sie auf "Weiter", um zu beginnen.

➔ 1		
Ich bin _____ Jahre alt und		
☐ Weiblich.	☐ Männlich.	

➔ 2 Sind Sie zur Zeit berufstätig?		
☐ Ja, Vollzeit berufstätig.	☐ Ja, Teilzeit berufstätig.	☐ Geringfügig beschäftigt.
☐ Zur Zeit arbeitslos.	☐ Nein, bin nicht berufstätig.	

➔ 3 In welcher Branche ist das Unternehmen, für das Sie arbeiten, tätig?		
☐ Einzelhandel.		
☐ Telekommunikation.		
☐ Banken, Finanz- und Versicherungswesen.		
☐ Energie und Umwelt.		
☐ Logistik und Transportwesen.		
☐ Immobilien.		
☐ Industrie und Produktion.		
☐ Gesundheitswesen.		
☐ Öffentliche Verwaltung.		
☐ Touristik, Gastronomie, Hotellerie.		
☐ Dienstleistungen.		
☐ IT.		
☐ Andere Branche: _____		

➔ 4 Sie haben angegeben, im Einzelhandel beschäftigt zu sein. Haben Sie bei Ihrer täglichen Arbeit Kundenkontakt am stationären Verkaufsort (im Geschäft)? (Neumüller, 2022)		
☐ Ja.		
☐ Nein.		

➔ 5 Wie oft haben Sie im Rahmen Ihrer Tätigkeit Kundenkontakt am stationären Verkaufsort (im Geschäft)? (Stock & Bednarek, 2014)		
☐ Nie.	☐ Sehr selten.	☐ Mehrmals im Monat.
☐ Mehrmals pro Woche.	☐ Mehrmals am Tag.	☐ Mehrmals pro Stunde.

➔ 6 Wie lautet Ihre konkrete Berufsbezeichnung für Ihre derzeitige Tätigkeit im Einzelhandel?		

➔ 7 Wie lautet der Name Ihres Arbeitgebers?

➔ 8 Welches der folgenden Leistungsversprechen strebt ihr Arbeitgeber am ehesten an? (Rudolph, 2000)

☐ Strebt die Kostenführerschaft auf Basis effizienter Prozesse und niedriger Preise an. (z.B. Aldi)	☐ Strebt die Produktführerschaft durch die Entwicklung und/oder den Verkauf innovativer Produkte im Markt an. (z.B. Zara)	☐ Strebt nach Servieführerschaft durch ausgezeichneten Kundeservice. (z.B. Walmart)
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---Nächste Seite---

➔ 9 Was hat Sie bei Ihrer Arbeit im Einzelhandel zuletzt inspiriert? Bitte beschreiben Sie diesen Moment in 1-2 Sätzen. (Neumüller, 2022)

---Nächste Seite---

➔ 10 Bitte denken Sie an den zuvor beschriebenen Moment, in dem Sie im Hinblick auf ihr Arbeitsverhalten inspiriert wurden. Treffen Sie Ihre Einschätzung zu den folgenden Aussagen basierend auf dieser inspirierenden Erfahrung. (Neumüller, 2022)

Antworten Sie dabei bitte jeweils auf einer Skala von 1 = «stimme überhaupt nicht zu» bis 7 = «stimme voll und ganz zu». Mit den Werten dazwischen können Sie Ihr Urteil jeweils abstimmen.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu						Stimme voll und ganz zu
Meine Phantasie wurde angeregt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ich war von einer neuen Idee fasziniert.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ich hatte das Gefühl, dass mir spontan eine Idee in den Sinn kam.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ich wurde dazu inspiriert, meine Arbeit auf eine neue und bessere Art zu machen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ich verspürte den Wunsch, meine Arbeit auf eine neue und bessere Art zu machen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ich war motiviert, meine Arbeit auf eine neue und bessere Art zu machen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

---Nächste Seite---

➤ 11 Bitte geben Sie an, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu Ihrer Arbeit zustimmen. <i>(Gwinner et al., 2005)</i>								
	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu						Stimme voll und ganz zu	
Normalerweise passe ich meine Serviceleistung an die individuellen Bedürfnisse eines jeden Kunden an.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich stimme das Service-Erlebnis auf die Bedürfnisse der Kunden ab.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich ändere meine Arbeitsweise, um auf die individuellen Bedürfnisse eines Kunden einzugehen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich variiere den Umfang des Serviceangebots je nach Bedürfnis der Kunden.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich glaube, dass man auf jeden Kunden individuell eingehen sollte.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

---Nächste Seite---

➤ 12 Bitte geben Sie an, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu Ihrer Arbeit zustimmen. <i>(McBane, 1995)</i>								
	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu						Stimme voll und ganz zu	
Ich versuche mich in die Gefühle eines Kunden während der Service-Erfahrung hineinzuversetzen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Wenn ich für einen Kunden eine Serviceleistung erbringe, fällt es mir leicht, sein Kundenerlebnis nachzuempfinden.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Während einer Serviceleistung versuche ich üblicherweise mich in die Lage des Kunden hineinzuversetzen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich versuche die Sichtweise des Kunden zu verstehen, während ich eine Serviceleistung erbringe.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

---Nächste Seite---

➤ 13 Bitte geben Sie an, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu Ihrer Arbeit zustimmen. <i>(Wilder et al., 2014)</i>								
	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu						Stimme voll und ganz zu	
Ich versuche, die Bedürfnisse meiner Kunden vorherzusehen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich versuche, die Bedürfnisse der Kunden zu identifizieren, bevor sie ihnen selbst bewusst werden.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Oft erkenne ich die Bedürfnisse meiner Kunden, bevor sie mir diese mitteilen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Es fällt mir leicht, die Bedürfnisse meiner Kunden zu erkennen, bevor Kunden sie an mich richten.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich kann die Bedürfnisse der Kunden oft vorhersagen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

---Nächste Seite---

➤ 14 Bitte geben Sie an, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu Ihrer Arbeit zustimmen. (Zhou & George, 2001)								
	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu						Stimme voll und ganz zu	
Ich habe oft neue und innovative Ideen, wie ich meine Arbeitsleistung verbessern kann.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich finde häufig kreative Lösungen für Probleme bei der Arbeit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich schlage regelmäßig neue Wege zur Ausführung von Arbeitsaufgaben vor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Wenn sich die Gelegenheit bietet, zeige ich mich bei der Arbeit oft kreativ.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

---Nächste Seite---

➤ 15 Bitte geben Sie an, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu Ihrer Arbeit zustimmen. (Dietz et al., 2004; Schneider et al., 1998)								
	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu						Stimme voll und ganz zu	
Die Unterstützung, die ich von anderen Mitarbeitern und dem Management erhalte, ermöglicht es mir, einen hervorragenden Kundenservice zu bieten.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
In der Firma in der ich arbeite, werden klare Leistungsstandards für die Servicequalität festgelegt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Die Kultur unserer Firma ist darauf ausgerichtet, die Bedürfnisse der Kunden an erste Stelle zu setzen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Mein Arbeitsumfeld ermutigt Mitarbeiter dazu, Kunden einen hervorragenden Service zu bieten.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
In der Firma in der ich arbeite, werden Einzelpersonen für ihre Beiträge zur Verbesserung der Servicequalität gewürdigt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

---Nächste Seite---

➤ 16 Bitte geben Sie an, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu Ihrer Arbeit zustimmen. (Melhem, 2004)								
	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu						Stimme voll und ganz zu	
Ich brauche keine Zustimmung der Filialführung, bevor ich mich um Probleme kümmere.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich habe die Erlaubnis Probleme eigenständig zu lösen, wenn diese auftreten.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Ich habe viel Kontrolle darüber, wie ich meine Arbeit erledige.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

---Nächste Seite---

➤ 17 Wie lange arbeiten Sie bei ihrem aktuellen Arbeitgeber und in Ihrer aktuellen Position?	
Ich arbeite seit ____ Jahren in meiner derzeitigen Position.	Ich arbeite seit ____ Jahren bei meinem aktuellen Arbeitgeber.

➡ **18 Tragen Sie Führungsverantwortung?** (Neumüller, 2022)

☐ Ja.	☐ Nein.
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➡ **19 In welchem Einzelhandelssegment arbeiten Sie?** (Neumüller, 2022)

- | |
|--|
| ☐ Baumaterial, Gartengeräte und -zubehör (z. B. Baumärkte).
☐ Bekleidung und Bekleidungszubehör (einschließlich Schuhe und Schmuck).
☐ Elektronik und Haushaltsgeräte (einschließlich Mikrowellengeräte, Kühlschränke, Mobiltelefone).
☐ Lebensmittel- und Getränkemärkte (einschließlich Spezialitätenläden).
☐ Möbelhäuser und Einrichtungshäuser.
☐ Tankstellen.
☐ Warenhäuser.
☐ Geschäfte für Gesundheits- und Körperpflege (einschließlich Apotheken, Kosmetikgeschäfte und Optiker).
☐ Gastgewerbe (einschließlich Beherbergungsdienstleistungen und Restaurants).
☐ Kraftfahrzeug- und Teilehändler.
☐ Sportartikel-, Hobby-, Musikinstrumenten- und Buchläden.
☐ Diverse Einzelhändler (Floristen, Bürobearbeitungsartikel, Geschenkartikel, Haustierbedarfartikel).
☐ Andere: _____ |
|--|

➡ **20 Welches ist der höchste Abschluss, den Sie erworben haben?** (Neumüller, 2022)

☐ Obligatorische Schule / Hauptschule.	☐ Höhere Berufs-/Fachausbildung.	☐ Lehre.
☐ Abitur/Matura/Berufsmatura.	☐ Studium.	☐ Andere Ausbildung.

---Ende des Fragebogens---

9.1 Curriculum Vitae

Andreas Hauschke

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WORK EXPERIENCE

01.24 – today	UNIVERSITY OF ST.GALLEN INSTITUTE OF RETAIL MANAGEMENT <i>St. Gallen, Switzerland</i> Head of Executive Education
01.20 – 12.23	UNIVERSITY OF ST.GALLEN INSTITUTE OF RETAIL MANAGEMENT <i>St. Gallen, Switzerland</i> Research Associate & Ph.D. Candidate
04.19 – 10.19	RETAIL CAPITAL PARTNERS AG <i>Pfäffikon (SZ), Switzerland</i> Junior Consultant – Merger & Acquisitions Corporate Strategy
10.17 – 10.18	GFT TECHNOLOGIES SE <i>Stuttgart, Germany</i> Working Student of the Chairman of the Group (Ulrich Dietz) and CEO (Marika Lulay)
04.17 – 10.17	ENBW ENERGIE BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG AG <i>Stuttgart, Germany</i> Intern at the strategy department for the rollout of smart meterings
06.16 – 09.16	MTU FRIEDRICHSHAFEN GMBH <i>Friedrichshafen, Germany</i> Freelance Consultant
12.14 – 12.15	JBT STUDENTISCHE UNTERNEHMENSBERATUNG GMBH <i>Stuttgart, Germany</i> CEO
03.15 – 04.15	ADAC TRUCKSERVICE GMBH & CO. KG <i>Laichingen, Germany</i> Freelance Consultant
09.14 – 12.14	DIVIA GMBH <i>Stuttgart, Germany</i> Intern in the business development department

EDUCATION

01.20 – 12.23	UNIVERSITY OF ST.GALLEN Ph.D. in Management – <i>focus on retail marketing</i>	St. Gallen, Switzerland
10.17 – 01.20	UNIVERSITY OF HOHENHEIM M.Sc. in Management – <i>focus on marketing and management</i>	Stuttgart, Germany
09.16 – 01.17	UNIVERSIDAD REY JUAN CARLOS B.Sc. in Business Administration – <i>Erasmus+ exchange semester with a focus on international management</i>	Madrid, Spain
10.13 – 06.17	UNIVERSITY OF HOHENHEIM B.Sc. in Business Administration and Economics	Stuttgart, Germany
09.10 – 06.13	PHILIPP-MATTHÄUS-HAHN-SCHULE German Abitur	Balingen, Germany

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Rudolph, T., Hauschke, A., & Hoang, M. (2024). Chancen für den Handel im Metaverse. *Marketing Review St.Gallen*, 41(2), 22–30.
- Rudolph, T., Linzmajer, M., Eggenschwiler, M., & Hauschke, A. (2023): Kundeninspiration im Schweizer Handel 2023. Forschungszentrum für Handelsmanagement, Universität St. Gallen.
- Hauschke, A., Rudolph, T., & Evanschitzky, H. (2023). Service excellence by inspired frontline employees. EMAC Annual Conference 2023, Denmark, Odense.
- Linzmajer, M., Klink, B. D., Hauschke, A., & Rudolph, T. (2021). Contagious frontline employees: The effect of frontline employee empowerment on online customer reviews. Rostocker Dienstleistungstagung, Konferenzbeitrag.
- Engelhorn, F., & Hauschke, A. (2021). Corona-Pandemie als Treiber des Experience Managements im Handel. *Marketing Review St.Gallen*, 38(5), 6–9.
- Bischof, S., Rudolph, T., & Hauschke, A. (2020). Wie Aboboxen profitabel werden. *Harvard Business Manager*, (9), 50–57.