



university of  
 groningen

faculty of economics  
 and business

customer insights center

# Can't get no satisfaction?

*How Attachment Styles affect Customer-  
and Employee-Firm Relationships*

Dr. J.T. Bouma (RUGCIC)

Dr. Ir. M.J. Gijsenberg (RUGCIC)

Dr. L.H. Teunter (MetrixLab)

Report RUGCIC-201701

ISBN 978-90-367-9898-3



# Contents

✓ Management summary	Page 3
✓ Relationships and Attachment Styles	Page 9
✓ Attachment Styles and Employee Satisfaction	Page 20
✓ Attachment Styles and Customer Satisfaction	Page 27
✓ Conclusions	Page 35
✓ Resumes of the authors	Page 38
✓ Appendices	Page 42
✓ References	Page 47
✓ Customer Insights Center	Page 53





university of  
 groningen

faculty of economics  
 and business

customer insights center

# Management Summary





# Have you ever wondered why certain customers are never satisfied (whatever employees do)?



- ❖ Certain people check 'poor' quicker than others.
- ❖ Certain people write on tables.
- ❖ Certain people make a scene.

*Could science explain why?*



## People differ, that's a fact...



**A.** Some people have modest expectations and when these are fulfilled they rate their relationships positively... and tend to stay.



**B.** Other people seem to be never satisfied, regardless how well others try to serve them... and are switching relationships whenever they can.



# Research from psychology explains differences based on these three main Attachment Styles

- ❑ Anxiety = being scared of being left alone.
- ❑ Avoidance = trying to avoid closeness.
- ❑ Security = seeking for deep relationships (= opposite of both the above).



Attachment styles are usually shaped in our young years by caretakers who were (not) present, which provided humans with a loving or hating environment and established a basis for future decisions regarding relationships in general.



# Our research shows that Attachment Styles explain differences in customer and employee relationships

- The Customer Insights Center of the University of Groningen (RUGCIC) and MetrixLab found among 798 **customers** that Attachment Styles explained Trust in and Satisfaction with firms, which in turn influenced NPS and Satisfaction\*.
- Furthermore, our research reported among 841 **employees** that Attachment Styles explained Employee Engagement, which in turn influenced Ambassadorship of their employers\*\*.
- *These findings will be explained in more detail later in this report.*





# Recommendations for (marketing) managers

1. Include Attachment Style measurements to customer feedback questionnaires in order to understand why some are (not) easily satisfied\*.
2. Target customer selections and marketing campaigns using Attachment Styles. Adjust the tone of voice in communication/customer interactions. Even though Secure customers are more easily satisfied, focus on all three Attachment Styles to minimize customer complaints handling costs and churn\*.
3. Include Attachment Style measurements in the hiring process of employees to grasp and manage commitment, dissatisfaction and distrust issues and to improve their customer relationships\*\*.
4. Improve the issues mentioned above via motivational drivers (e.g. trusting environment, team building activities, celebrations, compliments, etc.)\*\*.
5. Accept that NOT everyone can be fully satisfied after all\*.

\* Gijsenberg, Verbeke, Hendriks, Bouma, Teunter (2017); \*\* Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn (2009); Van IJzendoorn et al. (2006); Verbeke, Bagozzi, & van den Berg (2013).





university of  
 groningen

faculty of economics  
 and business

customer insights center

# Introduction to Relationships and Attachment Styles

