



# **ServiceKey® Construct Validity and Criterion Validity**

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## ***Introduction***

ServiceKey®, also known as the Barnett Assessment of Service Behaviors™ (BASeB), is a measure of stable constructs associated with increased effectiveness and productivity among individuals employed in or seeking employment in service-oriented, non-sales positions in which the individual will provide service to customers and/or interface with key business partners (Barnett, 2008a). The theoretical foundation of ServiceKey® is the Barnett Integrated Model™ (BIM), which is built around Barnett's Four Levels™ (Barnett, 2008a). This is a hierarchical, development model of customer service. Level One behaviors (each of which is measured by a ServiceKey® scale) are those person factors that successful CSRs bring to their job; these are behaviors and proficiencies that are very difficult to instill in individuals via training. Perhaps the most important Level One ServiceKey® scale is Service Aptitude, which is a measure of helping behaviors. Level Four domains are those associated with individuals who exceed expectations. A full description of BIM is beyond the scope of the present literature review; for a more in-depth treatment, see Barnett (2008b).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the construct validity and criterion validity of ServiceKey®. Studies of the criterion validity of customer service measures are often plagued by the same problem: the lack of objective data to serve as a criterion with which to compare the measure. Managers' and supervisors' ratings of individuals' performance are subjective and prone to bias, a problem which may be exacerbated by the fact that managers and their employees tend to have significantly different ServiceKey® profiles (Barnett, 2008c). This study examined the construct validity and

criterion validity of ServiceKey® by examining the relationship between ServiceKey® scores and the number of customer compliments received by customer service representatives (CSRs) recorded at a national call center. There were two hypotheses for this study:

H<sub>1</sub>: Because compliments are typically given for exceptional customer service and not merely average customer service, it was hypothesized that Level Four scales would best differentiate the CSRs who received an above average number of customer compliments from the CSRs who received an average number of customer compliments.

H<sub>2</sub>: Because the Service Aptitude scale measures the frequency of helping behaviors, it was hypothesized that this scale would differentiate the CSRs who received an above average number of customer compliments from the CSRs who received an average number of customer compliments.

## **Methods**

### *Participants*

The participants for this study consisted of customer service representatives ( $n = 72$ ) from one national call center for a large financial services company.

### *Measures*

ServiceKey®, also known as *The Barnett Assessment of Service Behaviors*<sup>TM</sup> (*BASeB*): See Barnett (2008a) for more information.

*Compliments:* This is the number of customer compliments each CSR received. Each CSR received at least two compliments. The maximum number of compliments any CSR received was seven.

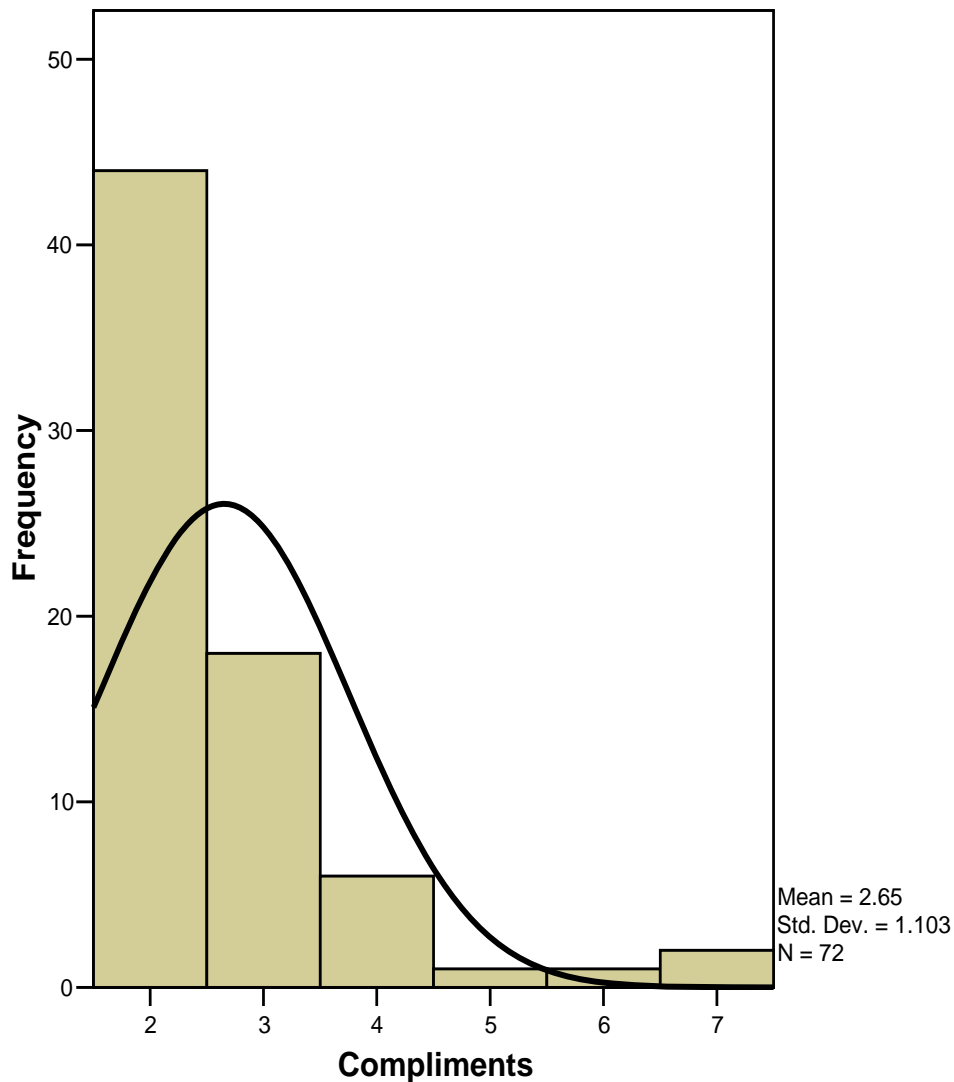
### *Procedures*

The CSRs' calls were recorded as part of their normal job activities. Random calls were analyzed; thus, the CSRs did not know which calls would be analyzed for the purpose of the study.

## **Results**

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions for the statistical analyses to be used. As shown in Figure 1, the dependent variable (compliments) was found not to be normally distributed.

Figure 1: The Distribution of the Dependent Variable (Compliments)



In order to determine which ServiceKey® scales differentiate the CSRs who received an above average number of compliments (compliments  $\geq 3$ ) from those who received an average number of compliments (compliments  $< 3$ ), a Kruskal-Wallis Test was performed. As shown in Figure 2, the Sales Identity and Initiative scales (both Level Four scales) significantly differentiated these two groups ( $p > .10$ ), and the Service Aptitude scale, although it was not statistically significant, was the next best variable at differentiating the two groups.

*Figure 2: Summary of Kruskal-Wallis Test Comparing ServiceKey® Profiles of CSRs with ≥ 3 Compliments (N = 28) to CRs with > 3 Compliments (N = 44)*

	Energy	Focus	Sales Identity	Problem Solving	Computer	Service Aptitude	Initiative	Stress Tolerance
Chi-Square	.862	.014	2.830	.815	.810	1.428	3.066	1.131
df	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.353	.907	.093*	.367	.368	.232	.080*	.288

\*  $p < .10$

	Approval	Information	Attention	Control	Telephone	Coachability	Intentions	Standards
Chi-Square	.008	.081	.786	.002	.299	.088	.036	1.034
df	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.930	.776	.375	.967	.584	.767	.849	.309

As shown in Figures 3-5, the descriptive statistics show clear differences in the group means.

Figure 3: Group Means on the Initiative Scale

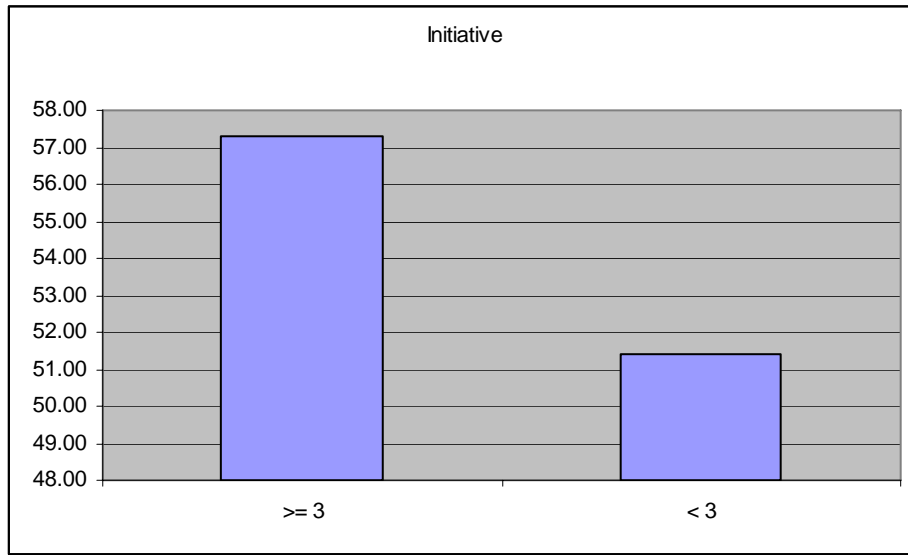
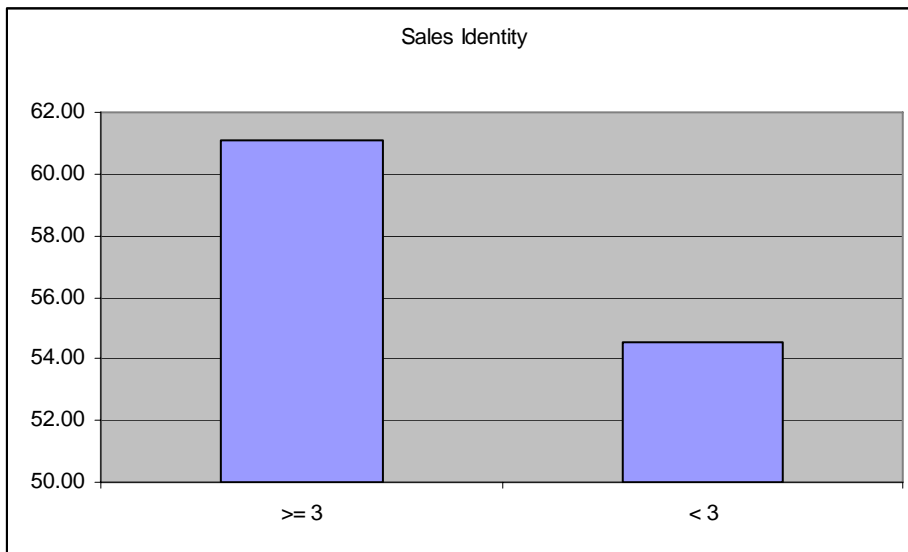
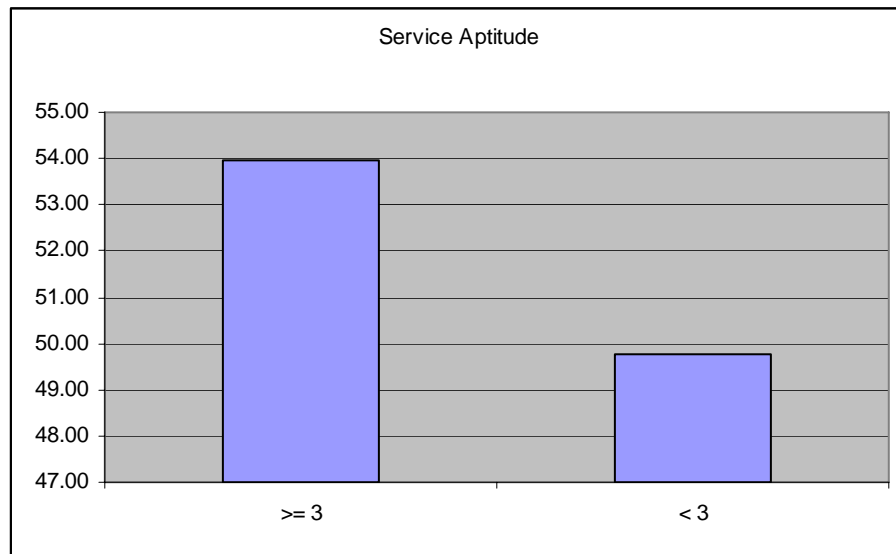


Figure 4: Group Means on the Sales Identity Scale



*Figure 5: Group Means on the Service Aptitude Scale*



## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the construct validity and criterion validity of ServiceKey® by examining the relationship between ServiceKey® scores and the number of customer compliments received by customer service representatives (CSRs). The results of this study suggest that Level Four behaviors, particularly a positive identification with selling (Sales Identity) and anticipating service needs before they are expressed by the customer (Initiative), are those that distinguish average customer service from excellent customer service; thus, we accept H<sub>1</sub>. The Service Aptitude scale did not significantly differentiate the CSRs who received an above average number of compliments from those who received an average number of compliments; thus, we reject H<sub>2</sub>. There are many possible explanations for this result. First, it should be noted that after the Sales Identity and Initiative scales, the Service Aptitude scale was the

next best scale at differentiating the two groups. The small sample size and the distribution of the data may explain why this was not significant. Another possible explanation for this result is that customer compliments are not elicited by CSRs simply being helpful (i.e., demonstrating Service Aptitude) but are instead elicited by Level Four behaviors.

This study was limited in several ways. The sample size was small and limited to one company and service environment. It is possible that a larger study with more participants in multiple companies and service environments could yield different findings.

Taken together, the results of this study provide empirical support for the Barnett Integrated Model™ and for the construct validity and criterion validity of ServiceKey®.

## **References**

- Barnett, M. D. (2008a). *ServiceKey Technical Manual: A technical manual for the Barnett Assessment of Service Behaviors*. Granbury, TX: Barnett Consulting.
- Barnett, D. K. (2008b). *Four levels of customer service* (in press).
- Barnett, D. K. (2008c). Comparison of managers' and CSRs' ServiceKey profiles at a financial services firm. (Unpublished internal study).