Going the extra mile: Unveiling the roots of franchisee organisational citizenship behaviours in franchise systems

Marko Grünhagen
Eastern Illinois University, USA

Anna Watson (iD)
Edinburgh Napier University, UK

Evelien Croonen (iD)
University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Abstract

While researchers and practitioners have recognised the essential role of employee organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), there is an absence of their consideration within franchise systems as a unique context. We aim to address this gap by exploring the nature of franchisee OCBs and their antecedents. Through a set of semi-structured qualitative interviews, we find critical new evidence, not only of the existence of *franchisee* OCBs but also of *franchisor* OCBs, reflecting the reciprocal character of franchise relationships. Further, we reveal frequent shifts of franchisee OCBs from one referent to another, often from the franchisor to franchisee peers, or even industry groups outside the franchisor-franchisee dyad, in the wake of disappointed interactions with the franchisor. Ultimately, we point at the critical role of the franchisor's field consultant as the liaison person who appears frequently mismanaged by franchisors in the eyes of franchisees.

Corresponding author:
Evelien Croonen, Faculty of Economics & Business, University of Groningen, PO BOX 800, Groningen 9700 AV, The Netherlands.
Email: e.p.m.croonen@rug.nl

Introduction

For several decades, both researchers and practitioners have recognised the essential role of employee discretionary, or organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), such as helping co-workers or participating in the organisational community (Dierdorff et al., 2021; Ocampo et al., 2018; Organ, 1988). Empirical evidence demonstrates the organisational implications of such behaviours in areas such as customer satisfaction, profitability, efficiency and productivity (Erdogan et al., 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2009, 2014). There is a substantive literature that considers a range of issues pertaining to OCBs, such as types of OCBs, potential antecedents and consequences, across a number of domains and disciplines, such as human resource management (HRM), marketing, hospital and health administration and military psychology (Erdogan et al., 2020; Mowbray et al., 2015; Podsakoff et al., 2000). However, there is an dearth of knowledge on franchisee OCBs within franchise systems as a unique organisational context. Given the above-mentioned performance consequences of OCBs in other organisational contexts, and the well-known impact of other types of franchisee behaviour on franchisee and franchise system performance (Gillis et al., 2020; Kidwell et al., 2007), we assert that knowledge of franchisee OCBs and their antecedents is crucial for effective franchise system management. For example, helping others (altruism) is a well-known key dimension of OCB (Organ, 1988); thus, it is plausible that franchisees helping other franchisees in their franchise system (e.g. through sharing knowledge) enhance franchise unit performance (e.g. unit customer satisfaction, unit profitability) and, ultimately, franchise system performance (Brand et al., 2018). For this reason, it is important to understand the types of franchisee OCBs that may occur in franchise systems, and how franchisors can encourage franchisee OCBs. In short, our objective is to explore the nature of franchisee OCBs and their antecedents.

Franchise systems form a specific type of entrepreneurial network where the franchisor leads franchisees in collectively seizing a business opportunity by rapidly growing a system of geographically dispersed units with a shared business format (Combs and Ketchen, 2003; Pizanti and Lerner, 2003). The franchisees in the system are 'semi-autonomous entrepreneurs' who pay for the right to use the franchisor's business format, invest substantial resources to meet the franchisor's requirements and take risks in adopting the franchisor's business format in running their businesses (Combs et al., 2011; Dada and Watson, 2013). Although franchisees are not employees of the franchisor and operate as legally independent businesses, they are often viewed as quasi-employees as they 'fully embody the firm's identity in their interactions with consumers' (Lawrence and Kaufmann, 2019, p. 150). Yet, the franchising literature, based on assumptions of franchisees as agents of the franchisor, has focused on controlling the behaviour of franchisees to ensure that they do not engage in detrimental behaviours that damage the franchise system (Brown et al., 2016; Kidwell et al., 2007; Paik and Choi, 2007). Consequently, despite the potential importance of franchisee OCBs, our understanding of the nature of franchisee OCBs and their antecedents is limited.

In light of the critical role franchisees play in the organisational success of their respective franchise systems, and the pervasiveness of the contemporary franchise business model (Dant and Grünhagen, 2014; Gillis et al., 2020), we aim to contribute to this crucial debate regarding franchisor-franchisee exchange interactions. Hence, building on social exchange theory (SET), we set out to conduct an exploratory qualitative study drawing upon 21 semi-structured interviews with franchisees to obtain a better understanding of how and why franchisees engage in OCBs. Our research makes the following contributions to OCB literature and, more specifically, to the franchising literature.

Responding to recent research calls to increase scientific understanding of OCBs in different organisational contexts (Dierdorff et al., 2021; Ocampo et al., 2018), we demonstrate the existence

of OCBs in the franchising context. This emerges as a unique organisational and entrepreneurial context where franchisees can be considered semi-autonomous entrepreneurs or quasi-employees. More specifically, we contribute to the franchising literature in three ways. First, we extend the literature on antecedents of franchisee behaviour by focusing on proactive and desirable franchisee behaviour types rather than undesirable, opportunistic franchisee behaviours such as free-riding and non-compliance (Davies et al., 2011; Kashyap and Savidas, 2012; Kidwell et al., 2007). We can distinguish different types of OCBs in which franchisees engage, and, in so doing, we provide a richer understanding of franchisee behaviour than is currently provided in the literature. We also classify franchisee OCB types in a new framework, distinguishing different referents and types of OCBs. Moreover, we find evidence of *franchisor* OCBs as perceived by franchisees in our study, offering support for the previously established 'dual agency' character of franchise relationships (Grünhagen et al., 2017; Paik and Choi, 2007). Prior franchising research has mainly considered franchisor-franchisee relationships as one-directional principal-agent relationships (Kashyap et al., 2012; Quinn and Doherty, 2000). Further, the timing of our study points to the role of the recent COVID pandemic as a catalyst likely to have triggered a greater occurrence, or at a minimum, heightened awareness, of such franchisor OCBs. Ultimately, OCBs appear as reciprocal behaviours between franchisors and franchisees, suggesting that SET is a fruitful theoretical paradigm for studying franchisee OCBs.

Second, in line with conceptual suggestions in the OCB (Lavelle et al., 2007) and SET literature (Cropanzano et al., 2017), we are able to distinguish multiple referents for franchisee OCBs, namely: individual franchisee peers (i.e. franchisees in the same franchise system), the overall franchisee peer network, franchisor representatives, the franchisor and the community/industry peers outside of the focal franchise systems. Such a multi-referent perspective is relatively new to franchising research that typically focuses on franchisor-franchisee interactions, and to a much smaller extent on franchisee peer-to-peer interactions (El Akremi et al., 2011; Hadjielias et al., 2021). Critically, our study shows that a negative event with one referent may lead to an opportunistic shift to engage in constructive behaviour with a different referent in the franchisee's sphere of relationships. Consequently, we observe incidents where there is a shift in the focal organisation towards which franchisees direct their OCBs.

Finally, we provide new insights into the criticality of the franchisor's field consultant as the liaison person between the franchisee and the franchisor and the resulting franchisee OCBs. The role of such liaisons in franchisor-franchisee relationships and the effective functioning of franchise systems has to date been somewhat neglected in franchising research (exceptions are Bradach, 1997, 1998). We find diametrically opposed perceptions of the field consultant. While franchisors employ them largely to monitor and gather data on their franchisees through outlet visits (Grünhagen et al., 2008), franchisees frequently and consistently view them as lacking the expected insights or experience to offer the requisite support. Consequently, dissatisfied franchisees may turn to referents, or foci, outside their franchise systems. The mismatch of expectations regarding the liaison person drives franchisees away from their franchisor and may cause significant harm to the franchise system's cohesion and, ultimately, the brand – the exact opposite of the intention with which the liaison role was created in the first instance. Our research points to the liaison person as the glue that holds the franchise system together in an ideal scenario, a finding in keeping with SET literature on the importance of boundary spanners in inter-organisational exchange relationships (Huang et al., 2016; Schilke and Cook, 2013). Further, we highlight the importance of the interpersonal connection between the liaison person, as an individual, and franchisees. Liaison individuals are critical resources for franchisees and hard to imitate. Our study points to a significant discrepancy in perceptions regarding their role and, critically, the detrimental consequences arising from their adverse employment by the franchisor.

Literature review

Definitions, dimensions and antecedents of employee OCBs

Building on Organ (1988), scholars have defined OCB as an individual behaviour that is discretionary in nature, not explicitly or directly recognised by the organisation's formal reward system, and that promotes the effective functioning of organisations (Ocampo et al., 2018; Podsakoff et al., 2000). In a HRM context, OCB has been referred to as 'The Good Soldier Syndrome' (Organ, 1988). OCB is conceptualised around positive organisationally relevant behaviours of employees, organisationally functional extra-role behaviours and any political behaviours, such as full and responsible organisational participation (Van Dyne et al., 1994). Different dimensions of employee OCBs have been distinguished for which Organ's five OCB dimensions form an important base (Ocampo et al., 2018); they constitute: altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, civic virtue and sportsmanship (Organ, 1988). Scholars have distinguished other dimensions – some of which, but not all, are closely related to Organ's dimensions. For example, Podsakoff et al. (2000) found 30 dimensions of OCB which can be classified into seven different themes: helping behaviour, loyalty, compliance, individual initiative, sportsmanship, self-development and civic virtue. Others have aimed to structure the OCB dimensions by classifying them into groups, for example by distinguishing between OCBs with different aims (Li et al., 2017; Morrison and Phelps, 1999); 'affiliative' (i.e. prosocial behaviours aimed at enhancing smooth organisational functioning) and 'proactive' OCBs (i.e. behaviours aimed at changing the current organisation), or by distinguishing between OCBs with different beneficiaries or targets (Williams and Anderson, 1991); OCBs directed at other individuals (OCBIs) or directed to benefit the organisation (OCBOs). Overall, it can be concluded that to date, there is no single taxonomy for OC with the relevance of different OCB dimensions likely to depend upon the types of jobs and organisational contexts under study (Ackfeldt and Coote, 2005; Marinova et al., 2019). As we explain in more detail, franchise systems have particular characteristics that mean that dimensions of employee OCBs found in previous research may not translate directly to franchisee OCBs.

In addition to different OCB dimensions, research has also identified a wide range of antecedents of employee OCBs (Ocampo et al., 2018; Podsakoff et al., 2000); Podsakoff et al. (2000) categorise these into four major groups: individual (employee) characteristics, task characteristics, organisational characteristics and leadership characteristics. Individual (employee) characteristics comprise, for example, employee attitudes (e.g. satisfaction, trust in leader), dispositional variables (e.g. conscientiousness, agreeableness) and employee role perceptions (e.g. role ambiguity, role conflict). Task characteristics include, for example, task feedback and task routinisation. Organisational OCB antecedents reflect, among others, organisational formalisation, flexibility and support, whereas the final group of OCB antecedents – leadership characteristics – comprise of different types of leadership behaviours, such as whether the leader engages in transformational leadership, articulates a vision or fosters the acceptance of group goals. The groups distinguished by Podsakoff et al. (2000) represent a wide range of antecedents; more recent research, however, has distinguished further antecedents discussed in the review by Ocampo et al., (2018). The wide range of OCB antecedents is also reflected in the array of theoretical perspectives adopted in OCB research including, for example, organisational justice theory (Lavelle et al., 2007), SET (Kim et al., 2023), regulatory focus theory (Shin et al., 2017) or role theory (Dierdorff et al., 2021). Ultimately, it can be concluded that insights on OCB dimensions and antecedents are fragmented; there is not yet a comprehensive theoretical framework on employee OCBs that could be used as a starting point in explaining franchisee OCBs. This lack of a comprehensive framework justifies our

qualitative approach in which we aim to explore the nature and antecedents of franchisee OCBs in franchise systems.

Franchisees as quasi-employees

Franchise systems have a specific organisational and entrepreneurial context; therefore, a simple translation of insights from OCB research to franchising contexts is challenging, if not impossible. Franchise systems comprise of hybrid forms of organisations combining elements of inter- and intra-organisational exchange (Bradach and Eccles, 1989; Clarkin and Rosa, 2005; Croonen and Broekhuizen, 2019). Franchisees are independent business owners/entrepreneurs and not employees (Grünhagen et al., 2014; Weaven et al., 2009); franchisors and franchisees have long-term contractual, inter-organisational relationships. Yet, at the same time, franchisor-franchisee relationships involve intra-organisational elements due to there being a hierarchy in the franchisor-franchisee relationship, with the franchisor as the system leader and fellow franchisees from the same system as co-workers (Croonen and Broekhuizen, 2019; Croonen et al., 2024). The hierarchy is reflected in the fact that franchisees are contractually obligated to adhere to the business format provided by the franchisor, and the franchisor monitors the franchisee's compliance. While franchisor-franchisee relationships are not based on employment contracts, but rather on inter-organisational franchise contracts that enshrine the legal independence of franchisees, franchisees are economically dependent on their franchisors (Grünhagen and Sadeh, 2021). Moreover, as franchisees coexist with their franchisors and their fellow franchisees in long-term, mutually committed relationships that involve frequent communication, support systems, monitoring, incentives and rules of conduct, it appears reasonable to draw parallels to such facets that resemble a relationship between employers and employees (hence, the term – quasi-employee).

Despite these similarities between franchisor-franchisee and employer-employee relationships, there are also differences among them which makes drawing insights from OCB research more complex. First, the fact that franchisees are independent business owners/entrepreneurs and residual claimants of their unit's performance is typically used as an argument for why franchisees are more motivated to put effort into their units than salaried company managers (Bradach, 1997; Combs and Ketchen, 2003). Additionally, it is well-known that independent small business owners and entrepreneurs, in addition to monetary goals, also have non-monetary and personal goals, which also affect their business decisions and behaviours (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Walker and Brown, 2004). Moreover, compared to company managers, franchisees have more autonomy whilst they are monitored differently from company managers (Bradach, 1997; 1998). The combination of higher goal diversity and greater autonomy of franchisees, compared to salaried company managers, may cause differences in the nature and antecedents of franchisee OCBs compared to employee OCBs.

Additionally, the above argument is based on a comparison of franchisees and managers of company-owned units, this comparison is based on a specific type of job, namely that of running a unit that is part of a system operating under a uniform business format. Research on employee OCBs has, often implicitly, focused on all kinds of jobs; for example, in terms of job rank in the organisation or industry type (Ocampo et al., 2018). It is important to account explicitly for the *type* of job under study because each has different role requirements (Ackfeldt and Coote, 2005; Dierdorff et al., 2021). Franchisees – at least when they are active owners of single units or a small number of multiple units – operate their franchise units in labour-intensive and geographically dispersed industries, such as retailing, fast-food and hospitality (Combs and Ketchen, 2003), close to their customers (Ackfeldt and Coote, 2005). Franchisees, thus, directly interact with customers and, thereby, have the potential to offer customer insights and critical local market knowledge

(Kaufmann and Eroglu, 1999), not just to the franchisor but also to their franchisee peers in the franchise system. The specific types of roles that franchisees fulfil may therefore, lead to differences in the nature and antecedents of OCBs when compared to other contexts in which jobs are, for example, less labour-intensive, more concentrated in one location and require fewer customer interactions. In sum, franchise systems are networks of interdependent firms combining inter- and intra-organisational characteristics; hence, they offer a novel context in which to explore OCBs.

Antecedents of franchisee behaviour

As has become clear from our review, employee OCBs have been widely investigated; however, there is a lack of research on franchisee OCBs. The franchising literature is substantial with numerous analyses of antecedents of franchisee behaviours (for reviews, see Combs et al., 2011; Dada, 2018, 2023; Nijmeijer et al., 2014). Several franchising studies have aimed to explain antecedents of franchisee behavioural intentions or actual behaviours, implicitly assuming that franchisee behaviours can enhance or damage franchise system performance. These studies aim to explain a wide range of behaviours, such as intent to remain in, or leave, the franchise system (Croonen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2020), compliance (Davies et al., 2011; Winsor et al., 2012), free riding (Kidwell et al., 2007) or opportunism (Kang and Jindal, 2015). Building on the assumption that the economic motives of franchisors and franchisees are not totally aligned, resulting in potential agency problems and relational risks (Grünhagen et al., 2017; Winsor et al., 2012), many studies have focused on undesirable franchisee behaviours and their prevention. These are predominantly quantitative analyses and have focused on different antecedents studied in isolation, such as the level of conflict (Davies et al., 2011), affective commitment (Mignonac et al., 2015) or formalisation and external competition (Kidwell et al., 2007). Relatively few studies have aimed to explain more proactive and desirable franchisee behaviours, such as in- and extra-role behaviours (Kashyap and Sivadas, 2012), franchisee entrepreneurial behaviours (Watson et al., 2020) or franchisee brand supportive behaviours (Yakimova et al., 2019). For example, Kashyap and Sivada's study finds that shared values positively affect franchisee in-and extra-role behaviours, whereas the study by Watson et al. (2020) finds that franchisee entrepreneurial behaviours form a mediating variable between franchisee proactive dispositions and franchisee performance. The study by Yakimova et al. (2019) explains how different franchisor control procedures affect franchisee trust and brand-supportive behaviours.

In sum, the studies on destructive, undesirable franchisee behaviours have quantitatively investigated antecedents in isolation rather than broader, more comprehensive frameworks. Moreover, the few studies that have aimed to explain constructive, proactive franchisee behaviours have either quantitatively examined antecedents in isolation (Kashyap and Sivadas, 2012; Watson et al., 2020), or they have adopted qualitative research methods to develop broader frameworks of antecedents of very specific types of franchisee behaviour (Yakimova et al., 2019), narrower than the OCB concept. Thus, our understanding of how and why OCBs are undertaken by franchisees is limited, and our qualitative study aims to fill this gap by exploring the nature and antecedents of franchisee OCBs.

Theoretical basis for our study: SET

To study the complex dynamics of franchisee OCBs, we use SET as a theoretical starting point. SET is considered one of the most enduring and critical theories for explaining many types of organisational behaviour (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Cropanzano et al., 2017), including OCBs (Lavelle et al., 2007; Reader et al., 2017), and different types of franchisee

behaviours (Croonen et al., 2024; Mignonac et al., 2015). Rather than as a single theory, SET can be seen as a broad conceptual paradigm spanning multiple social disciplines and different model variations (Cropanzano et al., 2017). One common premise in the SET paradigm is that parties in exchange relationships exchange tangible and intangible resources through a process of reciprocity, whereby parties aim to mutually share the exchange benefits and obligations (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Based on their assessments of the exchange relationship, parties determine their attitudes and behaviours towards their exchange partners. For example, the SET paradigm has been used to explain how employees determine their work efforts and how much extra effort to invest, based on the nature of the exchange relationship with their employer (Bergeron and Thompson, 2020). The SET paradigm is, therefore, suitable for our qualitative exploration of the complex dynamics regarding franchisee OCBs in franchise systems as a unique exchange context (Croonen et al., 2024).

Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of our research objective in which we aim to provide a rich understanding of the nature and underlying motives of individual OCBs in franchise systems as a unique organisational context, and given our ontological assumption that individuals engage in behaviours as a result of how they interpret their contexts (social construction), we undertook a qualitative interpretive study using in-depth interviews. Overall, qualitative research is appropriate for exploring and capturing the rich, dynamic and context-specific nature of social phenomena (Miles and Huberman, 1994). More specifically, we determined that a qualitative approach was more appropriate than a quantitative approach to address our research questions for three reasons. First, guided by a constructivism paradigm, we deem context as important in theory development (Bogna et al., 2020). As argued earlier, OCBs have yet to be explored in the context of franchising. The franchisee-franchisor relationship and the franchisee-franchisee relationship are very different from traditional employer-employee and employee-employee contexts, given that franchisees are semi-autonomous entrepreneurs, or quasi-employees, who pay fees to the franchisors in return for using the brand name and franchisor support and knowledge. Thus, the manifestation of OCBs and the motives for OCBs cannot be assumed to be the same as traditional organisational forms. Second, as the very nature of OCBs means they are socially constructed and experienced (Morrison, 1994), the ability of qualitative research to '*embrace the complex and dynamic quality of the social world*' (Värlander et al., 2020, p. 4) and generate an in-depth understanding of how and why organisational members behave (Perrigot et al., 2021) makes it an appropriate methodological approach. Thirdly, the complexity of franchisor-franchisee relationships justifies the use of qualitative approaches (Croonen and Brand, 2015; Jell-Ojobor and Windsperger, 2017), and may explain why, in recent years, we have seen an increase in qualitative research in franchising studies (Hadjielias et al., 2021). Thus, we determined that qualitative in-depth interviews provided an appropriate theory-method fit (Gehman et al., 2018).

Data collection

In order to select franchisees for interviewing, we combined purposive, convenience and snowball sampling. The final sample consisted of 21 respondents based in the Midwestern United States. To enhance our study's internal and external validity, we aimed to develop a franchisee sample with a medium level of heterogeneity (Gibbert et al., 2008; Yin, 2018). Some heterogeneity is needed to capture a range of experiences, providing a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study in different situations, thus, enhancing the study's external validity (Charmaz,

2006). Yet, the sample should not be too heterogeneous, as this could hinder the ability to draw meaningful conclusions and compromise the study's internal validity (Gibbert et al., 2008; Yin, 2018). While both internal and external validity are important, internal validity is essential because a study cannot achieve high external validity without strong internal validity, though the reverse can occur (Gibbert et al., 2008). For this reason, we aimed for homogeneity in our sample in several important dimensions, and we adopted two analysis strategies for dealing with the exceptions in our sample (i.e. 'investigator triangulation' and 'pattern matching'; see our "Data analysis" section).

We aimed for homogeneity in several franchise system characteristics and franchisee characteristics. First, related to franchise system characteristics, all our interview respondents were in business format franchise systems, all in retail and service industries, rather than product or trademark franchises. Table 1 shows that all these systems are relatively large, the smallest has more than 100 units, and have several decades of franchising experience; the system with the least franchising experience has 15 years of such experience. Although there may be some differences among business format franchise systems in terms of design or structure (e.g. the presence of company owned units), business format franchise systems show many similarities in structures and design because they are all designed to replicate a business format at a large scale. So, despite differences in industry, product assortment, size or age among franchise systems, the underlying business models, the modes and levels of standardisation, the monitoring techniques and the structures and incentives have many commonalities (Felstead, 1993). Second, related to the franchisee characteristics, Table 1 shows that all franchisees have considerable experience in franchising. We required respondents to have been franchisees in their current system for at least 2 years, on the assumption that when franchisees first join a system, they will be engaged in a steep learning curve as they familiarise themselves with the system processes, and their system peers, and are thus more likely to be recipients of OCBs rather than directly engaging in them themselves. Moreover, Table 1 shows that all franchisees are single-unit owners or relatively small multi-unit owners – the one exception is Fred Green with 20 units.

The initial sample was selected drawing on relevant contacts of the research team, and respondents were then asked to suggest other franchisees who could be approached. Overall, approximately every third franchisee who was contacted agreed to an interview. We ceased recruiting respondents once data saturation had been reached, that is, no new themes or information were observed in the data (Boddy, 2016). The interviews were conducted between May 2021 and April 2022. It should be noted that the timing of data collection coincided with a period when COVID restrictions were fluctuating, and therefore it was challenging for franchisees to find time for interviews given their focus on the business during these difficult times. Further, due to COVID, all of the interviews were conducted and recorded using video conferencing software (*Skype*). The interviews lasted between 34 and 85 minutes, with an average duration of 56 minutes.

We developed a semi-structured interview protocol, following a thorough review of the literature, to ensure a conversational style (Creswell, 1999) whilst still ensuring a consistent line of inquiry (Yin, 2018). To enable this, the order of the questions was fluid, and guided by the order in which issues arose, rather than rigidly following the guide (Yin, 2018). The interviews began with a brief explanation of the study and an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. At this stage, we were careful not to mention OCBs specifically, but rather explained that the research explored respondent interactions with other system members, notably the franchisor and franchisee peers, so as not to lead them. Respondents were asked to reaffirm their consent to participate, and for the interview to be recorded before the interview proceeded. In the first part of the interview, franchisees were asked to provide some contextual information about their background and experience. The remainder of the interview was divided into three parts,

Table 1. Respondent overview.

Respondent	Franchisee name[a]	Industry	Franchise system name[a]	Franchise system's no. of years in franchising	Franchise system's total no. of units	Franchisee's no. of years of franchising experience[b]	Franchisee's no. of units
1	Ashley Williams	Real estate	Home & Heart Realty	>50	>10,000	5	3
2	Rebecca Fisher	Fast Food	Burgers & Cones	>50	>5,000	27	1
3	Bob Jones	Real estate	Bold Realty	>40	>5,000	25	1
4	Anthony Veach	Real estate	Home & Heart Realty	>50	>10,000	21	2
5	Jessica French	Physical fitness	Fun & Fitness	>40	>5,000	13	1
6	Frank Sharp	Real estate	Mighty Oak Realty	>40	>400	14	1
7	Cole Smith	Real estate	Home & Heart Realty	>50	>10,000	25	1
8	Susan Shock	Employment agency	Back on Track Employment	>30	>500	15	1
9	Jeff Long	Hospitality	Great Stay Suites	>40	>1,000	15	3
10	Rick Porter	Fast food	Joe's Sandwich Shop	>30	>1,000	2	2
11	Fred Green	Automotive/Tire	Quality Tire	>40	>400	9	20
12	Ronald Taylor	Fast food	Great Chicken	>50	>1,000	7	1
13	Jim Pound	Garage door services	Garage Help	>15	>100	34	3
14	Derek Miller	Furniture	Furniture Outlet	>40	>100	16	1
15	Dennis Nichols	Employment agency	Staffing Help	>50	>1,000	36	5
16	Sandeep Kumar	Hospitality	Friendly Stay Inn	>50	>1,000	4	1
17	Spencer Reid	Fast food	King Sandwiches	>30	>1,000	21	1
18	Suket Singh	Fast food	Best Meats/Hot & Spicy Wings	>40	>1,000	7	7
19	David Sanders	Fast food	Say Cheese Pizzeria	>20	>1,000	13	1
20	Sally Hodges	Cosmetics	Cosmetic Queens	>50	>1,000	27	3
21	John Carpenter	Fast food	Big Burger	>50	>10,000	52	6

[a]Respondents have been provided with pseudonyms for both their names and company names in order to maintain anonymity.
[b]This number reflects the respondent's experience in franchising per se, not only in their current franchise system.

with each focusing on the relationship and interactions with respect to different system beneficiaries, namely the franchisor and other franchisees. With respect to each beneficiary, respondents were first asked some general questions about the relationship and communication with the other party. They were then asked to provide specific examples of how they had helped that party, their motivations for doing so, and the outcomes associated with that help. If they had not provided any help or support, they were asked about the reasons for not doing so. We also explored whether help was ever ignored or requests for help were refused and their reasons for so doing. A final question related to relationships across the system as a whole. The interview ended by providing the respondent with the opportunity to make any final comments or ask questions about the research.

We transcribed the interviews to facilitate data analysis. As a check on the appropriateness of the interview protocol, after the first five interviews, the data was reviewed by the research team, and some of the key emerging themes were discussed (cf. investigator triangulation, Yin, 2018). From this analysis, we determined that the interview protocol was appropriate to address the research questions, and the interviews continued until saturation had been achieved. The final data set consisted of 314 pages of transcription.

Data analysis

For the data analysis, a number of strategies were used to help ensure the reliability and internal validity of our findings (Gibbert et al., 2008; Yin, 2018). As highlighted earlier, analysis began during the data collection process, whereby we began to identify themes. Upon completing data collection, each member of the research team independently reviewed all transcripts, noting salient, interesting and illuminating content (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The team then convened to discuss these insights, which facilitated initial theorising (Glaser, 1978). The transcripts were then uploaded to *NVIVO* to allow for systematic coding. At this stage, we followed the approach suggested by Gioia et al. (2013), whereby we initially used an open coding approach (first-order analysis) where descriptive codes were generated. Here, we focused on identifying different types of OCBs and their beneficiaries, as well as on antecedents. At this stage, coding was undertaken by two members of the research team, who then compared their codes. In the next stage, we undertook axial coding where we looked for relationships and similarities and differences between the categories (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Again, at this stage, two members of the research team were involved. In our final stage of analysis, the themes were distilled into aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). Our analytical approach was an abductive one, whereby we continually moved back and forth between our empirical data and the literature, being careful not to force the data into pre-defined categories (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). This approach is similar to Yin's pattern-matching strategy, an important strategy for enhancing a study's internal validity (Yin, 2018). In these latter analysis stages, all members of the research team were again involved, enabling us to arrive at a consensual interpretation of the data (Gioia et al., 2013). The involvement of different members of the research team in different analysis stages is a form of investigator triangulation, which also enhances a study's internal validity (Gibbert et al., 2008; Yin, 2018).

Findings

In this section, we present our interview findings regarding the nature and antecedents of franchisee OCBs.

The nature of franchisee OCBs

Regarding the nature of OCBs, we distinguish OCBs based on the *focal referent* towards which the OCB was directed, as well as the *type* of OCB.

A classification based on OCB referents

Our findings show that in the context of franchising, there are five key referents, or targets, for franchisee OCBs – see the left column in Table 2. In labelling these, we follow the Williams and Anderson (1991) distinction between organisational (OCBO) versus individual targets (OCBI), and propose the following taxonomy: (1) citizenship directed at individual or small groups of franchisee peers, often based on geographic proximity, which we term OCBFEE-I; (2) citizenship focused on the franchisee peer network as a whole (OCBFEE-O); (3) citizenship directed at individual franchisor representatives, often the field consultant, which we term OCBFOR-I; (4) citizenship directed at the franchisor (OCBFOR-O); (5) OCBs directed at organisations or communities external to the franchise system (OCB-EXT). Depending on the referent, these OCBs also reflect different *types* of behaviours.

A classification based on OCB types

Regarding the types of OCBs, we found different types of behaviours (see the middle column in Table 2). Given, as Dekas et al. (2013) note, that conceptualisations of OCBs may differ in different contextual settings, in categorising the type of behaviour we draw on both Organ's (1988) and Dekas et al.'s (2013) OCB dimensions. In relation to OCBs directed towards individual franchisee peers (OCBFEE-I), we saw evidence of helping behaviours encompassing both altruism and courtesy (Dekas et al., 2013), such as checking up on individuals, and providing cover, and community building – termed 'social participation' by Dekas et al. (2013) – organising and participating in social activities not directly related to the workplace. There was also evidence of sharing of knowledge/ideas/solutions, aimed at both individual franchisee peers (OCB-FEE-I) and the wider franchisee peer network (OCBFEE-O). OCBs directed at the franchisor (OCBFOR-O) tended to take the form of civic virtue (i.e. participation in the political life of the organisation (Podsakoff et al., 2000)) and included participating in the piloting of new products/services, and sitting on the Franchisee Advisory Council. Table 2 outlines the different types of OCBs that we identified, with different focal referents.

Antecedents of franchisee OCBs

Personal motivations. It is important to note that, consistent with employee OCB studies, we find that franchisees had differing and potentially mixed *personal motivations* for engaging in OCBs. In some cases, motivations were altruistic in nature, whilst in others OCBs were motivated by self-interest (ego-based motivations), for example motivated by desire for status, or anticipation of reciprocation of OCBs that would benefit the individual. For example, one franchisee commented in relation to participating in the Franchisee Advisory Council:

> There's a little bit of credibility that you can build [. . .] among the other operators and within the corporation. [. . .] I certainly wanted my voice heard and my opinion to be heard. Probably the biggest payoff for me is individual growth. Working with business people who were more intelligent, more experienced. (John)

Table 2. Examples of franchisee OCBs with different focal referents.

Focal referent	Types of OCB	Sample quotes
Individual franchisee peers (OCBFEE-I)	**Helping**	
	• Passing on customer leads	'They send business to me, and I send business to them'. (Cole)
	• Sharing supplies	'We have these hot bags for catering, and if you have a really large catering event and you don't have enough of them, generally speaking, we all kind of have them, and so we would just kind of loan them, and back [. . .] we did this all the time. Borrowed and loaned some of these hot bags for special events and stuff like that [. . .]'. (Ronald)
	• Providing cover	'I have offered my assistance to the gentleman in [franchisee location]. He had a stroke, and so he has five offices and 35 agents or, whatever. So, I did offer, you know [. . .]'. (Anthony)
	Knowledge sharing	
	Sharing knowledge/ideas/'fixes' with specific franchisee peers	'Like okay, your sales are doing really well, what are you doing? Celebrate that, but also what are you doing and how can I join in with that, or hey, I figured out how to attract really good talent, or I'm figuring out how to do this with marketing, or I figured out a way to save on this cost, or I figured out a way, you know, so, we just help each other'. (Ronald)
	Community building	'Each year, my husband and I personally send out an email that says: Hey, we are going to the winery this afternoon and then for dinner and would love for you to come. Most of them get a hotel room here, and then we have breakfast together afterwards outside of work'. (Susan)
Franchisee peer network (OCBFEE-O)	**Knowledge sharing**	
	• Sharing innovations	'If they've had a marketing thing that worked great, they get into the marketing team and say, hey, we tried this at work you all should think about it too'. (Ashley)
	• Sharing ideas/fixes	'You know, we share good practices, you know, among those things. It could be, hey, listen, I have this new insurance guy. Insurance rates are phenomenal. You know, anything that would save somebody money, we share'. (Suket)
Franchisor liaison (OCBFOR-I)	**Helping**	'So, they may be working with an owner on something that you just worked through, so they will say "Hey, could you reach out to Jacky up in Schaumburg and just have a conversation around how you came through this struggle?"'(Susan)
Franchisor (OCBFOR-O)	**Civic virtue**	
	• Franchisee mentoring/training	'When we would have our council meetings, we would offer training, it'd be an all-day event'. (Anthony)
	• Advisory council roles	'We basically had to hold somebody's hands for two months straight and give them tough love and do evaluations on top of that, so it's basically an extra . . . But it is a good responsibility to have'. (Rick)
	• Piloting	'I have been on a lot of focus groups over these years, when we give them our opinion and insight'. (Cole)
		'I happen to be one of the elected franchisees [of the Franchise Advisory Council], and we spend about three hours a month on a call. [. . .] We were able to push back and give our opinion on things as franchise owners'. (David)
	• Policing	'. . . but then we started testing certain things. One of the things that we did, we tested the bacon when they brought out bacon. You know, we started doing a few things like that, you know, which, you know, as a franchisee you always feel good when somebody calls you up and says, hey, we're, we're thinking about doing this and we want you to help us, give us feedback'. (Spencer)
		'I kept telling our field consultant that that store is filthy. I am ashamed that we have got a store like that in our network'. (Spencer)
External community/ industry peers (OCB-EXT)	**Knowledge sharing**	
	• Sharing know-how with other industry groups	'So, I put a lot of energy into developing strong relationships with other companies both my size, smaller, bigger, and so on [outside of the system], that I could really talk to. So, I just carried that over'. (Spencer)
		'I am serving on the board of directors for the association, things of that nature kind of, you know, brainstorm with them and bounce stuff off them. [. . .] There are a couple of them that are franchises, none of them are [from the respondent's franchise system]. It's more an association-oriented aspect versus corporate aspect'. (Frank)

OCB: organisational citizenship behaviour.

Our findings show that franchisees with different personal motivations may engage in the same types of OCBs with the same referents, so personal motivations were not a major antecedent in explaining franchisee OCBs. Our findings did reveal, however, a number of factors that promoted, or suppressed, altruistically motivated OCBs. We, therefore, explore these further.

Organisational influences. As could be expected, the extent to which franchisees engaged in OCBs, and the focus of those behaviours, was influenced by their *perceived relationship quality* with the focal referent. These perceptions were developed over time, and in the context of the franchisor head office, where field consultants often changed, incumbents would be judged against their predecessors either positively or negatively, with repercussions for relationship quality perceptions. Indeed, we found that the field consultant played a critical role in franchisee's decisions to engage in OCBs directed at the franchisor (OCBFOR-O). We found evidence that often relationships with the field consultant weakened where there were high levels of staff turnover, or where franchisees felt that the consultants did not have sufficient business knowledge. For example, one franchisee commented:

> Before, we had great people. I had great relationships with them. I knew the Regional Director next door, and I could pick up the phone, they take my call. Now I couldn't pick them out of a line-up. They just come and go, and they're not incentivised on having a relationship with me, and so I don't even know who they are. (Jessica)

If their relationship was not good with the field consultant, then the franchisees often shifted their OCBs to other referents than the franchisor, such as franchisee peers (OCBFEE-I or OCBFEE-O). In some cases, the referent organisation was even outside the franchise system – for example regional industry associations (OCB-EXT). This shift outside of the system occurred when relationships with the field consultant and other franchisees were weak. In this regard, it was clear that the organisation, or reference group with which franchisees identified, was not static, and often changes in field consultant staff meant that the franchisees shifted the direction of their OCBs.

Reciprocation was also an important theme for OCBs. This was the case for OCBs motivated by altruism or more self-serving in nature. Franchisees often engaged in OCBs in anticipation of benefiting from OCBs themselves in the future, or if they felt there could be an immediate future benefit. As one franchisee commented:

> I think that for me, any opportunity that you have to build a relationship is important in our field because if I can help someone, you know, I think what you're putting into the universe is what you get back out of the universe. (Ashley)

Important here, in terms of OCBs directed at the franchisor, was that the franchisor had also engaged in OCBs, or extra-role behaviours, directed towards the franchisee. Extra-role behaviours involved well-being checks, particularly during COVID, but also at other times of crisis, for example, inclement weather related, or availability to respond to franchisee queries outside of regular business hours. Examples of franchisor OCBs included providing resources to help franchisees deal with crisis events in the form of financial or human resources. As one franchisee explained:

> [. . .] the other day [franchisor field representative] just showed up and started breading chicken in my restaurant because he knew that I was short-staffed. (Ronald)

Franchisee brand identification; identification with the franchisor's brand also was an important determinant of OCBs, but the relationship was complex. Where there was *trust* in the franchisor as the brand protector, then strong brand identification resulted in OCBs directed at the franchisor

(OCBFOR-O), for example through serving on the Franchise Advisory Council or offering to pilot new products. This brand identification also led to some evidence of self-policing within franchise systems. This is exemplified by one franchisee who, having seen a store that they felt did not convey the correct brand image, intervened to help the franchisee. As the franchisee put it:

> I am a huge believer in passion about [name of franchise brand] and the brand and the people that still work up there that I have heavy relationships with, so yeah, it was definitely a pride thing to bring it up, to help them make those improvements, or at least help advocate for them to get the right assistance that they would need. (Derek)

In other cases, franchisees would not intervene, but franchisees who were considered to be operating the business in a way that is potentially damaging to the brand were left isolated (OCBs would be withheld). However, where franchisees felt the franchisor was not running the brand appropriately – that is trust had been lost in them – particularly related to the quality of field staff – then OCBs were directed to other members of the franchisee network, either at an individual or a collective level (OCBFEE-I or -O).

The *culture* of the franchise system as perceived by the franchisee played a role here too – some franchise systems are highly competitive, which meant that franchisees are less likely to engage in peer-to-peer OCBs (OCBFEE-O or -I). Other systems are far more co-operative and aim for solidarity, with terms such as '*family*', '*sisterhood*', '*tribe*' and '*fraternity*' used to describe the franchise system, or as one franchisee put it: '*We're singing the same song, but just in different rooms*' (Spencer). Often small groups of franchisees, usually in close geographical proximity, had very strong bonds, prompting OCBs. As one franchisee explained:

> There are certain colleagues you I can turn to and say 'I need the shirt off your back', and they've already got it unbuttoned. (Bob)

The value of OCBs is in the eye of the beholder

Interestingly, because franchisees engaged in OCBs with different focal referents as shown in Table 2, the very behaviours which were offered to benefit one referent may be deemed as non-constructive, or even destructive, by other referents. For example, some franchisees shared ideas or innovations with other franchisees within the system but did not reveal these to the franchisor. Thus, from the perspective of the franchisor these might be deemed as non-constructive behaviours, but from the perspective of franchisee peers, these would be considered OCBs. Table 3 explores OCBs from the franchisor's perspective, highlighting how the effects may differ depending on the focus of OCBs. We also found examples where franchisees engaged in what we term withholding behaviours, motivated by organisational concern. For example, some franchisees ignored franchisor processes because they felt these were damaging to the brand, or their individual business – as one franchisee commented:

> I spend a percentage of my time just protecting my company from my parent company. (Dennis)

Discussion and implications

Our research objective was to explore the nature of franchisee OCBs and their antecedents. Although so far, franchising research has mostly studied detrimental, opportunistic franchisee behaviours (Kidwell et al., 2007; Paik and Choi, 2007) with the aim to prevent such behaviours, our study contributes to franchising research by adding insights into the nature of proactive, positive franchisee

Table 3. Franchisee OCB categories with the franchisor as a focal referent.

Intent and type of OCBs	Constructive intent	Non-constructive intent
'Proactive' type	Examples: being on the Franchise Advisory Board, being a board member of the Franchisee Association and being involved in product pilot testing.	Examples: carrying out your own ideas/ innovations and sharing with other referents, such as franchisee peers.
'Withholding' type	Examples: not doing what the franchisor wants because you feel it is detrimental to the brand	Examples: ignoring the field consultant because you think it will be damaging to your outlet (*This may lead to a shift of focus in referents, such as franchisee peers or the external community/ industry peers*).

OCB: organisational citizenship behaviour.

behaviours and their antecedents. Regarding the nature of OCBs, we empirically observed a variety of franchisee OCBs targeting different referents. Whilst it has been recognised that OCBs may be directed at different types of beneficiaries or targets (Williams and Anderson, 1991), generally distinguishing between OCBI (OCBs directed towards Individuals) or OCBO (OCBs directed at the Organisation), our study is rare in presenting a fine-grained taxonomy of franchisee OCBs in franchise systems, distinguishing five different referents. In particular, the identification of franchisee OCBs directed outward of the focal franchise system represents a novel finding with potentially negative implications for franchise system performance. Our multi-referent franchisee OCB taxonomy confirms the importance of earlier calls for 'multi-foci' or 'multi-referent' perspectives in OCB research (Lavelle et al., 2007) and even in SET research (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Thus, our findings regarding the occurrence of outward-directed OCBs could be explored in other OCB contexts.

Regarding the antecedents of OCBs, our results suggest that franchisees are motivated to engage in OCBs for a range of different reasons – some more altruistic and some more self-serving. Thus, in keeping with Rioux and Penner (2001), OCBs are not solely a response to the organisational context but also may reflect altruistic motivations (prosocial), organisational concern motives (concern for the franchise brand) or more ego-based motivations (self-serving), such as achieving social status, or in anticipation of OCBs being reciprocated which could enhance franchise unit performance (anticipation of personal gain). Whilst we cannot conclude that motivations can predict the type of OCB, or the focal referent, we do find that OCBs directed at other franchisees, either individuals or small groups (OCBFEE-I), the franchisee network (OCBFEE-O), individuals within the franchisor organisation (OCBFOR-I) and external to the franchise organisation (OCB-EXT) are most frequently motivated by prosocial factors. OCBs directed at the franchisor organisation, however (OCBFOR-O) can be motivated by either organisational concern, or more ego-related motivations around status and personal gain.

Social exchanges appear to play an important role in developing more altruistic motivations and prosocial behaviours and also in determining the principal referent of OCBs. Where franchisees primarily direct their OCBs should be of concern to the franchise organisation. Whilst OCBs directed at referents other than the franchisor, organisation may provide benefits to the system indirectly – for example, sharing 'fixes' between franchisee peers which improve outlet and ultimately system performance – they may have negative consequences due to loss of franchisor know-how and the potential for withholding behaviours. This could, for instance, challenge a franchisor's ability to pilot new products or gain market intelligence. Our suggestion that OCBs directed at other referents may be non-constructive, or even destructive to the franchisor, is in

keeping with the idea posed by Cropanzano et al. (2017) that the same behaviour can have a positive valence to some parties but be negative to others. We find that the relative quality of exchanges with different focal groups (individual franchisees, franchisor liaison, franchisee peer network and franchise organisation) affects the focal referent to which/whom franchisees primarily direct their OCBs. Given the potential negative associations where OCBs are primarily directed away from the franchisor, in considering the theoretical implications of our study, we focus on the antecedents for OCBs directed at the franchisor. Drawing on these findings, we outline propositions to enable further theory-building.

Theoretical implications

Our findings highlight how the relative quality of exchanges with different focal groups affects the focal referent to which/whom franchisees primarily direct their OCBs. In particular, we identify that *franchisee-franchisor relationship quality*, *reciprocation* of OCBs by the franchisor, and *brand identification* by the franchisee are key to promoting OCBs directed toward the franchisor (OCBFOR-I or -O). These findings could potentially be explained by the dual processes of social exchange and organisational identification, given the association between high-quality social exchange relationships and organisational identification (Lavelle et al., 2007). Organisational identification refers to '*the perception of oneness or belongingness*' to an organisation or group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989: 21). It is suggested that identification with an organisation means that individuals are affected by the organisation's successes and failures as if they were their own; thus, inspiring them to engage in OCBs to help the organisation reach its goals (Zagenczyk and Powell, 2023). Franchise organisations, though, may contain many potential referents or focal groups with which franchisees may identify (Grünhagen et al., 2022b); accordingly, the relative strength of identification may affect the extent to which OCBs are directed at the franchisor (OCBFOR-O) or franchisees (OCBFEE-O).

Whilst franchisee-franchisor relationship quality has long been recognised as being of key importance, this has primarily been explored with a focus on reducing destructive or opportunistic behaviours (Croonen et al., 2024; Kang and Jindal, 2015). Here, we find that the relationship is perhaps more critical than previously identified – not only may it reduce opportunistic behaviour, but it can promote discretionary pro-organisational behaviours too. Further, we reveal that the franchisor's field consultant (or franchisor liaison) plays a critical role in shaping franchisee perceptions of the quality of their relationship with the franchisor. Field consultants provide a source of first contact to which franchisees turn when assistance is needed. They also have responsibilities for ensuring that franchisees adhere to franchisor standards and processes. In this regard such liaisons are intended to act as the 'glue' that holds the system, that is franchisees and franchisor, together. This liaison role is notably under-explored in franchising research (Bradach, 1997 is an exception); yet, studies of OCBs in employment contexts have highlighted the importance of leader-member exchanges on commitment and identification with the organisation and citizenship behaviours (Teng et al., 2020). Moreover, the SET literature points to the important role of 'boundary spanners' in maintaining high-quality inter-organisational exchange relationships (Huang et al., 2016; Zaheer et al., 1998).

We find that when franchisees develop strong relationships with the liaison consultant, it can create a strong sense of obligation and motivate OCBs directed towards the franchisor. However, we found that in many cases, franchisees in our study had perceptions of the liaison person that appear diametrically opposed to the intentions of their franchisors. While franchisors employ them largely to monitor and offer support to their franchisees through outlet visits (Bradach, 1997; Grünhagen et al., 2008), we found that franchisees often viewed them as lacking the knowledge or background to offer the expected support. In cases where franchisees experienced a frequent

turnover of liaison individuals, or felt they were inadequate, this led to a sense of dissatisfaction with the franchisor. As such, this meant that OCBs were directed away from the franchisor, usually towards other franchisees, but in some cases to referents outside of their franchise system, such as other local traders, or industry bodies. This adds a dynamic to the aforementioned multi-referent view on OCBs; not only can franchisees target different referents with their OCBs, but changes in their exchange relationships with specific referents can induce shifts in OCBs towards other referents. In sum, these findings lead to the following propositions:

- Proposition 1: Franchisees with strong perceived relationship quality with their field consultant will be more likely to engage in OCBs targeting the franchisor (OCBFOR-O) compared to those with weaker perceived relationship quality.
- Proposition 2: Changes in franchisee perceived relationship quality with their field consultant will lead to OCBs being directed away from the franchisor (OCBFOR-O or -I) towards other focal referents (OCBFEE-O or -I).

Our finding that perceived reciprocity of OCBs from the franchisor is an important antecedent to franchisee OCBs is in keeping with SET's reciprocity concept, where parties exchange tangible and intangible resources to mutually share exchange benefits and obligations (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Through their own OCBs, franchisors can signal to franchisees that they value the exchange and that they intend to reciprocate with good behaviours. This leads to the following proposition on franchisee-franchisor reciprocity:

- Proposition 3: Franchisees who perceive that OCBs directed to the franchisor will be reciprocated by the franchisor, are more likely to engage in OCBs targeting the franchisor (OCBFOR-O) than those who do not perceive such reciprocity.

Our findings also highlight the role of the franchisor's brand as a crucial resource in the franchisee exchange relationship with the franchisor (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The greater the value the franchisee assigns to this resource and thus, the higher the franchisee's brand identification, the greater the likelihood of franchisee OCBs targeting the franchisor's organisation (OCBFOR-O). Yet, in cases when franchisees have a high brand identification, but a low level of trust in their franchisors, that is to say, they do not trust the franchisor to protect the brand, then franchisees shift their OCBs to other referents, more specifically, individual franchisee peers (OCBFEE-I), the peer network (OCBFEE-O) or even referents external to the franchise system (OCB-EXT). In this regard, again the franchisor liaison has a critical role, in this case in creating franchisee trust in their franchisor. This finding fits with the calls for a multi-referent view in SET (Cropanzano et al., 2017) and OCB research (Lavelle et al., 2007) to account for multiple referents and shifts among those. Hence:

- Proposition 4: Franchisees who identify strongly with the franchise brand are more likely to engage in OCBs targeting the franchisor (OCBFOR-O) as the referent. However, franchisee trust in the franchisor will moderate this relationship such that in cases of low franchisee trust, a shift towards other OCB referents, more specifically; OCBFEE-I or -O or OCB-EXT), becomes more likely, whereas in cases of high franchisee trust franchisees keep targeting the franchisor with their OCBs (OCBFOR-O).

Our final antecedent, franchisee perceptions of *system culture*, primarily explains franchisee engagement in OCBs directed towards their peers. We include this here though, as franchisors

may wish to encourage some types of OCBFEE-I (helping and social participation), given they are likely to positively affect the overall franchise system performance, and should not deflect OCBs away from the franchisor. As highlighted earlier, however, other types of OCBFEE-I or -O may have negative consequences if this represents withholding behaviour in relation to the franchisor. We suggest that knowledge sharing which primarily targets franchisees (OCBFEE-I or -Os) rather than the franchisor, could be such an example. We find that the organisational culture, defined as '*the patterns of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organisational functioning and that provide norms for behaviour in the organisation*' (Desphandé and Webster, 1989, p. 4), can influence franchisee engagement in peer directed OCBs. Organisational cultural studies have distinguished four types of organisational culture: clans, adhocracies, hierarchies and markets. Clan cultures emphasise cohesiveness, a sense of family, solidarity and teamwork, which makes the establishment of good relationships and trust (and OCBs) a norm (Moorman et al., 1993). From a SET perspective, such culture also implies a high-quality generalised exchange among franchisees, where franchisees are not necessarily engaged in direct quid-pro-quo exchanges but connected through a web of mutual dependencies (Croonen et al., 2024; Das and Teng, 2002). Drawing on our findings and this literature, this leads to the following propositions:

- Proposition 5: The extent to which the franchise system has a clan culture, as opposed to the three other culture type, increases the likelihood that franchisees will engage in OCBs targeting their peers (OCBFEE-I or -O).
- Proposition 6: Where OCBs are directed at referents other than the franchisor (OCBFOR-I or -O) the extent to which these are non-constructive or even destructive from the franchisor's perspective will depend on the type of OCB – such that knowledge sharing behaviours are more likely to be non-constructive or destructive than helping behaviours.

Practical implications

Assuming that franchisors and franchise systems benefit the most from franchisee OCBs targeted at the franchisor rather than at other referents, our findings lead to four key practical implications for franchisors who want to encourage franchisee OCBs targeted at them. First, since our findings demonstrate that the franchisee's relationship with their field consultant – as the key liaison point in the franchisor-franchisee relationship – is important in their overall perceived relationship quality with the franchisor, it is crucial for franchisors to consider field consultants as a key boundary-spanning resource in franchise systems in order to promote OCBFORs. This means that franchisors need to select, train *and* maintain committed, competent field consultants to increase the likelihood of having good relationships with franchisees.

Second, since our findings show that franchisees value reciprocity in the form of franchisor OCBs targeted at them, we suggest franchisors engage in OCBs towards their franchisees as well. However, based on previous research on exchange relationships and franchisee-franchisor relationships (Anand et al., 2010; Croonen et al., 2024), there are clues that franchisors should not overdo it because of the marginal returns of additional investments in franchise relationships that are already perceived as good relationships.

Third, our findings demonstrate that franchisee brand identification can fuel franchisee OCBs towards their franchisors, especially when combined with high franchisee trust in franchisors. In addition to building a strong brand with which franchisees can identify, for franchisors it is beneficial to build trust with their franchisees. From previous research, we know that franchisors can build trust in their franchisees by fulfilling their strategic and operational duties (Croonen and

Broekhuizen, 2019), by being open in their communications (Kang and Jindal, 2018) and by involving franchisees in strategic decision-making (White, 2010).

Our fourth and final practical implication relates to the role of franchise system culture. Our findings show that a clan culture promotes franchisee OCBs targeted at their peers (OCBFEE-I or -O). Such peer-targeted OCBs, especially in the form of helping behaviours, can ultimately also benefit the franchise system as a whole, especially when combined with OCBFOR-O, which suggests that it is beneficial for franchisors to invest in a system clan culture. Research in other areas suggests that transformational leadership, rather than transactional leadership, is a key determinant of the development of a clan culture (Kim, 2014).

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations, many of which are related to the empirical data collection. First, the methodology employed a combination of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling, which may have introduced bias by relying on the research team's existing contacts. This may have resulted in the recruitment of franchisees who share similar predispositions – such as being more vocal or engaged than their peers – potentially reflecting their use of OCBs. While the interviews showed a broad and varied range of perceptions, such underlying biases cannot conclusively be ruled out. Relatedly, the interviewed franchisees in this study operate their businesses in the Midwestern United States. While franchisees from both rural and urban areas were included, a regional influence may have resulted nonetheless. Subsequent research on franchisee OCB should attempt to gather data from more randomly selected samples, for example, through quantitative surveys with a broader geographic base.

Second, our study included mostly relatively small franchisees (i.e. those with one or a few units), with larger franchisees as the exception. In large part, this is owed to the challenges of establishing contact with larger franchisees which often operate out of corporate offices with multiple layers of administration and hierarchy. In other words, it is quite difficult to find larger franchisees who are willing to agree to a lengthy interview, or even simply to return a phone call. Hence, our findings may be relegated to themes that had relevance to the included franchisees, but may only be partially reflective of topics relevant to the wider community of franchisees overall. In our current study, sample homogeneity helped to ensure internal validity (see under "Data collection" in our "Methodology" section), but future studies ought to attempt to broaden the scope of the types of franchisees, such as multi-unit or even multi-brand franchisees (Grünhagen et al., 2022a) as their OCBs may differ from those revealed in our study.

Third, empirical research is needed to study whether, and how, franchisee OCBs actually affect different dimensions of performance such as marketing or financial performance at different levels, for example, a franchise unit or the franchise system as a whole. The relationships between OCBs and their outcomes are complicated and may require a longitudinal approach to study the outcomes of OCBs over time (Koys, 2001). Moreover, adding to the complexity is recent research that notes the 'dark side' or negative consequences of OCBs (Bolino et al., 2013; Klotz et al., 2018), and our finding that OCBs may have different outcomes for different targets.

Our fourth limitation relates to the timing of our study during the recent pandemic. While the initial height of the pandemic had subsided and businesses were returning to a degree of normalcy, the recent impact of the crisis still lingered. The pandemic fundamentally triggered a 'pulling together' of franchisees and franchisors in most cases, whereas increased acrimony, or conflict, during the crisis months was rarely reported by the majority of our respondents. In part, the shared existential threat of the pandemic may have resulted in greater OCBs in a type of 'survival mode'. While we cannot separate crisis-induced OCBs from those regularly occurring, we suggest that the

observed OCBs may have been heightened by the crisis. We do not believe, however, that previously dysfunctional franchisee-franchisor dyads revert to OCB-rich thriving relationships solely based on the pandemic.

One avenue for future inquiries is the validation of OCBs in franchise relationships post-pandemic. While our research establishes the existence of such helping behaviours in the realm of franchising, both by franchisees and franchisors, subsequent studies ought to investigate it in situations absent of crises, in different cultural contexts and in larger scale studies. Further, taking our novel discovery of franchisor OCBs, future research may investigate the existence of OCBs by more powerful dyadic channel partners outside of the franchise realm, for example in more general supply chain relationships, or among participants in the sharing economy.

Relatedly, future research should explore the role of liaison consultants, or boundary spanners, (Zaheer et al., 1998) and the consequences of their mismanagement in constellations outside franchising. Similar criticality has been found in the context of professional sales, where sales managers perform a critical role in the development of 'sales force relationalism' (Kashyap et al., 2007), and among key account representatives who perform a critical communication function at the buyer/seller interface (Schultz and Evans, 2002). Many other value chain relationships rely on key individuals to maintain open communication between the partners. For example, strategic alliances or small business/entrepreneurial networks attach critical roles to key liaison consultants who tie the partners together and deserve similar attention (Martin-Rios and Erhardt, 2017; Miller et al., 2007). Do underperforming liaison consultants in these inter-organisational contexts cause shifts or redirections of OCBs and resulting allegiances towards other competing referents in a similar way that franchisees in our study sought out? Such important consequences of perceived mismanagement of liaison roles by the key decision makers, such as the franchisors in our study, deserve more attention in future studies.

Conclusion

Our research objective was to explore the nature of franchisee OCBs and their antecedents within franchise systems. We hope that our multi-referent franchisee OCB taxonomy and SET-based propositions on OCB antecedents provide a fertile starting point for further research into franchisee OCBs and OCBs in other contexts.

ORCID iDs

Anna Watson   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9307-9744

Evelien Croonen   https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0350-6061

References

Ackfeldt AL and Coote LV (2005) A study of organizational citizenship behaviors in a retail setting. *Journal of Business Research* 58: 151–159.

Anand S, Vidyarthi PR, Liden RC, et al. (2010) Good citizens in poor-quality relationships: Idiosyncratic deals as a substitute for relationship quality. *Academy of Management Journal* 53: 970–988.

Ashforth BE and Mael F (1989) Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review* 14: 20–39.

Bergeron DM and Thompson PS (2020) Speaking up at work: The role of perceived organizational support in explaining the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and voice behavior. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 56: 195–215.

Blau PM (1964) *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: John Wiley.

Boddy CR (2016) Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 19: 426–432.

Bogna F, Raineri A and Dell G (2020) Critical realism and constructivism: Merging research paradigms for a deeper qualitative study. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 15: 461–484.

Bolino MC, Klotz AC, Turnley WH, et al. (2013) Exploring the dark side of organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 34: 542–559.

Bradach JL (1997) Using the plural form in the management of restaurant chains. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42: 276–303.

Bradach JL (1998) *Franchise Organizations*. Harvard Business Press.

Bradach JL and Eccles RG (1989) Price, authority, and trust: From ideal types to plural forms. *Annual Review of Sociology* 15: 97–118.

Brand MJ, Croonen EPM and Leenders RT (2018) Entrepreneurial networking: A blessing or a curse? Differential effects for low, medium and high performing franchisees. *Small Business Economics* 50: 783–805.

Brown JR, Weaven SK, Dant RP, et al. (2016) Boosting the effectiveness of channel governance options: The moderating role of relational norms. *European Journal of Marketing* 50: 29–57.

Carsrud A and Brännback M (2011) Entrepreneurial motivations: What do we still need to know? *Journal of Small Business Management* 49: 9–26.

Charmaz K (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage.

Clarkin JE and Rosa PJ (2005) Entrepreneurial teams within franchise firms. *International Small Business Journal* 23: 303–334.

Combs JG and Ketchen DJ (2003) Why do firms use franchising as an entrepreneurial strategy? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management* 29: 443–465.

Combs JG, Ketchen DJ, Shook CL, et al. (2011) Antecedents and consequences of franchising: Past accomplishments and future challenges. *Journal of Management* 37: 99–126.

Creswell JW (1999) Mixed-method research:introduction and application. In: Cizek GJ (ed.) *Handbook of Educational Policy*. Academic Press, pp.455–472.

Croonen EPM and Brand MJ (2015) Antecedents of franchisee responses to franchisor-initiated strategic change. *International Small Business Journal* 33: 254–276.

Croonen EPM and Broekhuizen TLJ (2019) How do franchisees assess franchisor trustworthiness. *Journal of Small Business Management* 57: 845–871.

Croonen EPM, Broekhuizen TLJ and Brand MJ (2024) Trust and control in franchise networks: A dyadic, multi-referent analysis on franchisee network exit intentions. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. Epub ahead of print 25 May 2024. https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587241254724

Cropanzano R, Anthony EL, Daniels SR, et al. (2017) Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of Management Annals* 11: 479–516.

Cropanzano R and Mitchell MS (2005) Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management* 31: 874–900.

Dada O (2018) A model of entrepreneurial autonomy in franchised outlets:a systematic review of the empirical evidence. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 20: 206–226.

Dada O (2023) Curbing franchisee failure: A systematic review of the empirical evidence. *Journal of Small Business Management* 61: 1991–2037.

Dada O and Watson A (2013) The effect of entrepreneurial orientation on the franchise relationship. *International Small Business Journal* 31: 955–977.

Dant RP and Grünhagen M (2014) International franchising research: Some thoughts on the what, where, when, and how. *Journal of Marketing Channels* 21: 124–132.

Das TK and Teng BS (2002) Alliance constellations: A social exchange perspective. *Academy of Management Review* 27: 445–456.

Davies MAP, Lassar W, Manolis C, et al. (2011) A model of trust and compliance in franchise relationships. *Journal of Business Venturing* 26: 321–340.

Dekas KH, Bauer TN, Welle B, et al. (2013) Organizational citizenship behavior, Version 2.0: A review and qualitative investigation of OSBs for knowledge workers at Google and beyond. *Academy of Management Perspectives* 27: 219–237.

Desphandé R and Webster FE (1989) Organisational culture and marketing: Defining the research agenda. *Journal of Marketing* 53: 3–15.

Dierdorff EC, Rubin RS and Ellington JK (2021) Interpersonal skills, role cognitions, and OCB: Exploring mediating mechanisms and contextual constraints on role enactment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 129: 103604.

Dubois A and Gadde LE (2002) Systematic combining: An abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research* 55: 553–560.

El Akremi A, Mignonac K and Perrigot R (2011) Opportunistic behaviors in franchise chains: The role of cohesion among franchisees. *Strategic Management Journal* 31: 930–948.

Erdogan B, Karaeminogullari A, Bauer TN, et al. (2020) Perceived overqualification at work: Implications for extra-role behaviors and advice network centrality. *Journal of Management* 46: 583–606.

Felstead A (1993) *The Corporate Paradox: Power and Control in the Business Franchise*. London: Routledge.

Gehman J, Glaser VL, Eisenhardt KM, et al. (2018) Finding theory-method fit: A comparison of three qualitative approaches to theorybuilding. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 27: 284–300.

Gibbert M, Ruigrok W and Wicki B (2008) What passes as a rigorous case study? *Strategic Management Journal* 29: 1465–1474.

Gillis WE, Combs JG and Yin X (2020) Franchise management capabilities and franchisor performance under alternative franchise ownership strategies. *Journal of Business Venturing* 35: 105899.

Gioia DA, Corley KG and Hamilton AL (2013) Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioiamethodology. *Organizational Research Methods* 16: 15–31.

Glaser B (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Grünhagen M, DiPietro R, Stassen RE, et al. (2008) The effective delivery of franchisor services: A comparison of U.S. and German support practices for franchisees. *Journal of Marketing Channels* 15: 315–335.

Grünhagen M, González-Díaz M, Hussain D, et al. (2022a) Multibrand, multisystem and multirole franchising: A qualitative exploration and framework development in Brazil. *Journal of Small Business Management* 60: 253–288.

Grünhagen M and Sadeh F (2021) The impact of pre-contract disclosure on M&A performance in franchising. *Journal of Inter-Organizational Relationships* 27: 15–26.

Grünhagen M, Watson A, González-Diaz M, et al. (2022b) Multiple identities in franchising. In: *International society of franchising annual conference proceedings*, Burlington, Canada, June 2022.

Grünhagen M, Wollan ML, Dada O, et al. (2014) The moderating influence of HR operational Autonomy on the entrepreneurial orientation-performance link in franchise systems. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 10: 827–844.

Grünhagen M, Zheng XV and Wang JJ (2017) When the music stops playing: Post-litigation relationship dissolution in franchising. *Journal of Retailing* 93: 138–153.

Hadjielias E, Dada O and Eliades K (2021) Entrepreneurial process in international multi-unit franchise outlets: A social capital perspective. *Journal of Business Research* 134: 13–28.

Huang Y, Luo Y, Liu Y, et al. (2016) An investigation of interpersonal ties in interorganisational exchanges in emerging markets: A boundary-spanning perspective. *Journal of Management* 42: 1557–1587.

Jell-Ojobor M and Windsperger J (2017) Determinants of the governance structure of theinternational franchise firm: A case study analysis in the automotive rental industry. *International Marketing Review* 34: 814–884.

Kang B and Jindal RP (2015) Opportunism in buyer–seller relationships: Some unexplored antecedents. *Journal of Business Research* 68: 735–742.

Kang B and Jindal RP (2018) The dual role of communication in franchise relationships: A franchisee perspective. *Journal of Small Business Management* 56: 197–214.

Kashyap V, Antia KD and Frazier GL (2012) Contracts, extracontractual incentives, and ex-post behavior in franchise channel relationships. *Journal of Marketing Research* 49: 260–276.

Kashyap V, Puga Ribeiro A, Asare A, et al. (2007) Developing sales force relationalism: The role of distributive and procedural justice. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 27: 235–245.

Kashyap V and Sivadas E (2012) An exploratory examination of shared values in channel relationships. *Journal of Business Research* 65: 586–593.

Kaufmann PJ and Eroglu S (1999) Standardization and adaptation in business format franchising. *Journal of Business Venturing* 14: 69–85.

Kidwell RE, Nygaard A and Silkoset R (2007) Antecedents and effects of free riding in the franchisor-franchisee relationship. *Journal of Business Venturing* 22: 522–544.

Kim H (2014) Transformational leadership, organizational clan culture, organizational affective commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior: A case of South Korea's public sector. *Public Organization Review* 14: 397–417.

Kim YJ, Lam CF, Oh J, et al. (2023) Employee constructive voice: An integrative review and dyadic approach. *Journal of Management* 49:430–473.

Klotz AC, Bolino MC, Song H, et al. (2018) Examining the nature, causes, and consequences of profiles of organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 39: 629–647.

Koys DJ (2001) The effects of employee satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and turnover on organizational effectiveness: A unit-level, longitudinal study. *Personnel Psychology* 54: 101–114.

Lavelle JJ, Rupp DE and Brockner J (2007) Taking a multifoci approach to the study of justice, social exchange, and citizenship behavior: The target similarity model. *Journal of Management* 33: 841–866.

Lawrence B and Kaufmann PJ (2019) Channel members' relationships with the brands they sell and the organizations that own them. *Industrial Marketing Management* 83: 148–161.

Li N, Chiaburu DS and Kirkman BL (2017) Cross-level influences of empowering leadership on citizenship behavior: Organizational support climate as a double-edged sword. *Journal of Management* 43: 1076–1102.

Marinova SV, Cao XY and Park H (2019) Constructive organisational values climate and organisational citizenship behaviors: A configurational view. *Journal of Management* 45: 2045–2071.

Martin-Rios C and Erhardt N (2017) Small business activity and knowledge exchange in informal interfirm networks. *International Small Business Journal* 35: 285–305.

Mignonac K, Vandenberghe C, Perrigot R, et al. (2015) A multi-study investigation of outcomes of franchisees' affective commitment to their franchise organization. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice* 39: 1–28.

Miles MB and Huberman AM (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller NJ, Besser T and Malshe A (2007) Strategic networking among small businesses in small US communities. *International Small Business Journal* 25: 631–665.

Moorman C, Desphandé R and Zaltman G (1993) Factors affecting trust in market research relationships. *Journal of Marketing* 57: 81–101.

Morrison EW (1994) Role definitions and organizational citizenship behavior: The importance of the employee's perspective. *Academy of Management Journal* 37: 1543–1567.

Morrison EW and Phelps CC (1999) Taking charge at work: Extrarole efforts to initiate workplace change. *Academy of Management Journal* 42: 403–419.

Mowbray PK, Wilkonson A and Tse HHM (2015) An integrative review of employee voice: Identifying a common conceptualization and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 17: 382–400.

Nijmeijer KJ, Fabbricotti IN and Huijsman R (2014) Making franchising work: A framework based on a systematic review. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 16: 82–83.

Ocampo L, Acedillo V, Bacunador AM, et al. (2018) A historical review of the development of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and its implications for the twenty-first century. *Personnel Review* 47: 821–861.

Organ DW (1988) A restatement of the satisfaction-performance hypothesis. *Journal of Management* 14: 547–557.

Paik Y and Choi DY (2007) Control, autonomy and collaboration in the fast food industry. *International Small Business Journal* 25: 539–562.

Perrigot R, Watson A and Dada O (2021) Sustainability and green practices: The role of stakeholder power in fast-food franchise chains. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 33: 3442–3464.

Pizanti I and Lerner M (2003) Examining control and autonomy in the franchisor-franchisee relationship. *International Small Business Journal* 21: 131–159.

Podsakoff NP, Podsakoff PM, MacKenzie SB, et al. (2014) Consequences of unit-level organizational citizenship behaviors: A review and recommendations for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 35: 87–119.

Podsakoff NP, Whiting SW, Podsakoff PM, et al. (2009) Individual-and organizational-level consequences of organizational citizenship behaviors: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94: 122–141.

Podsakoff PM, MacKenzie SB, Paine JB, et al. (2000) Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management* 26: 513–563.

Quinn B and Doherty AM (2000) Power and control in international retail franchising; evidence from theory and practice. *International Marketing Review* 17: 354–372.

Reader TW, Mearns K, Lopes C, et al. (2017) Organizational support for the workforce and employee safety citizenship behaviors: A social exchange relationship. *Human Relations* 70: 362–385.

Rioux SM and Penner LA (2001) The causes of organizational citizenship behavior: Amotivational analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86: 1306–1314.

Schilke O and Cook KS (2013) A cross-level process theory of trust development in interorganizational relationships. *Strategic Organization* 11: 281–303.

Schultz RJ and Evans KR (2002) Strategic collaborative communication by key account representatives. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 22: 23–31.

Shin Y, Kim MS, Choi JN, et al. (2017) Does leader-follower regulatory fit matter? The role of regulatory fit in followers' organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Management* 43: 1211–1233.

Strauss AL and Corbin J (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Teng CC, Lu ACC, Huang ZY, et al. (2020) Ethical work climate, organizational identification, leader-member-exchange (LMX) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB): A study of three-star hotels in Taiwan. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 32: 212–229.

Van Dyne L, Graham JW and Dienesch RM (1994) Organizational citizenship behavior: Construct redefinition, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal* 37: 765–802.

Värlander SW, Sölvell I and Klyver K (2020) Entrepreneurship as a vocational choice in contested entrepreneurship communities: The role of entrepreneurs' justification strategies. *Journal of Business Venturing* 35: 106006.

Walker E and Brown A (2004) What success factors are important to small business owners? *International Small Business Journal* 22: 577–594.

Wang JJ, Grünhagen M, Ji LJ, et al. (2020) Conflict aftermath: Dispute resolution and financial performance in franchising. *Journal of Retailing* 96: 548–562.

Watson A, Dada O, López-Fernández B, et al. (2020) The influence of entrepreneurial personality on franchisee performance: A cross-cultural analysis. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship* 38: 605–628.

Weaven S, Grace D and Manning M (2009) Franchisee personality: An examination in the context of franchise unit density and service classification. *European Journal of Marketing* 43: 90–109.

White DW (2010) The impact of marketing strategy creation style on the formation of a climate of trust in a retail franchise setting. *European Journal of Marketing* 44: 162–179.

Williams LJ and Anderson SE (1991) Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. *Journal of Management* 17: 601–617.

Winsor RD, Manolis C, Kaufmann PJ, et al. (2012) Manifest conflict and conflict aftermath in franchise systems; A 10-year examination. *Journal of Small Business Management* 50: 621–651.

Yakimova R, Owens M and Sydow J (2019) Formal control influence on franchisee trust and brand-supportive behavior within franchise networks. *Industrial Marketing Management* 76: 123–135.

Yin RK (2018) *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zagenczyk TJ and Powell EE (2023) Social networks and citizenship behavior: The mediating effect of organizational identification. *Human Resource Management* 62: 461–475.

Zaheer A, McEvily B and Perrone V (1998) Does trust matter? Exploring the effects of interorganizational and interpersonal trust on performance. *Organisation Science* 9: 141–159.

Author biographies

Marko Grünhagen, PhD (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA) is a Professor of Marketing and the Lumpkin Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship at Eastern Illinois University, USA. His main research focus is franchising, with major publications in prominent journals like Journal of Retailing, Journal of Business Research, and the Journal of Small Business Management.

Dr. Anna Watson is a Professor of Marketing at Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, UK. She is also an Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for Research in Economics and Management (CREM) and Visiting Professor at University of Rennes 1. Her research explores various facets of franchise management, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Dr. Evelien Croonen's main topics of interest are strategy, management and performance of inter-organizational networks, with a special focus on franchise networks. She published articles in journal such as Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice, Small Business Economics, and Journal of Small Business Management.