

The Impact of Service Recovery Communication Channel on Perceived Quality of Service Recovery and Consumer Behavior

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Consumers often encounter service failure, which consequently leads to consumer dissatisfaction, negative word-of-mouth, and the collapse of consumer loyalty (Kuo & Wu, 2012). As the critical negative impact of service failure has been revealed, service recovery—the process to solve consumer problems as a result of service failure (Miller, Craighead, & Karwan, 2000)—has recently been considered a crucial marketing strategy for researchers and service providers in maintaining customers relationships (Maxham, 2001). This study primarily aims to identify effective service recovery processes that positively influence consumer satisfaction, word-of-mouth intention, and loyalty intention based on the disconfirmation paradigm theory.

This study focused particularly on the communication channels for delivery of service recovery, such as social networking service (SNS), telephone, and letter or e-mail, because very little research has been conducted about the communication channels used to reach dissatisfied consumers (Mattila & Wirtz, 2004). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed: H1. Communication using SNS (H1a), phone (H1b), and letter or e-mail (H1c) for service recovery positively influences consumers' perceived quality of service recovery. Furthermore, as an antecedent to the service recovery quality, this study examined the effect of service failure severity. Weun, Beatty, and Jones (2004) found that failure severity influences consumer satisfaction and word-of-mouth intention, but most researchers have treated failure severity as a constant (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). Therefore, this study has proposed the following: H2. The level of perceived severity of service failure negatively influences consumers' perceived quality of service recovery. In addition, we measured the outcome of service recovery by consumer satisfaction, word-of-mouth intention, and loyalty intention, which have been considered important outcomes of service recovery (Miller et al., 2000) as following: H3. A higher perceived quality of service recovery positively influences consumers' satisfaction (H3a), word-of-mouth intention (H3b), and loyalty intention (H3c).

This study conducted a scenario-based experimental survey using a fictitious name of an apparel service provider, mitigating the difficulties related to the observation of service failure in a real-life setting. We used *Qualtrics.com* to collect data, and participants were randomly assigned to three different groups of communication channels (SNS, phone, letter or e-mail). We collected 365 participants, of which 44.9% were males and 55.1% were females. We conducted ANOVA to examine the differences in perceived quality of service recovery across the three types of communication channel (H1a, b, c). There are no significant effects of communication

channels on perceived quality of service recovery. That is, consumers' perceived quality of service recovery has not shown any differences by communication channels of service recovery.

Regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between consumers' perceived service failure severity and quality of service recovery (H2) and quality of service recovery and satisfaction, word-of-mouth intention, and loyalty intention (H3). The regression model for the relationship between service failure severity and quality of service recovery (H2) was significant ($R^2 = .048$, $F(1, 363) = 19.29$, $p < .001$). Service failure severity was found to be a significant factor of perceived quality of service recovery ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .001$). The regression models for the relationship between perceived quality of service recovery and satisfaction (H3a) ($R^2 = .749$, $F(1, 363) = 1087.64$, $p < .001$), word-of-mouth intention (H3b) ($R^2 = .481$, $F(1, 363) = 337.95$, $p < .001$), and loyalty intention (H3c) ($R^2 = .444$, $F(1, 363) = 292.02$, $p < .001$) were all significant. Quality of service recovery was found to be a significant factor of satisfaction ($\beta = .866$, $p < .001$), word-of-mouth intention ($\beta = .694$, $p < .001$), and loyalty intention ($\beta = .668$, $p < .001$).

This study's results confirm the importance of perceived quality of service recovery, which determines consumers' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. However, this study reveals insignificance of communication channels to deliver service recovery activities. Although apology has been considered an effective service recovery for consumers (Zemke & Bell, 1992), this study suggests that the communication channel used to deliver an apology is not influential to consumers.

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