

Deciphering Assorted Findings On Marketer Transgression Linked To Service Recovery Paradox

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ABSTRACT

It has been of great importance both to academicians and practitioners to home in on the factors that constitute service failure. Though the need of the hour for the service providers is to provide efficient and defect-free services, it is almost diabolical that customers need to be nudged to complain. Service Recovery Paradox (SRP) refers to a seemingly illogical situation where – following a failure / recovery process – higher levels of customer satisfaction are achieved than in the case of customers who have not experienced any service failure. The goal of this research is built upon contemporary and current understanding by investigating the SRP using a string of published reports.

Keywords: Services, Complaints, Recovery, Satisfaction, Paradox, Service Recovery Paradox (SRP)

INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of superior satisfaction after a failure and subsequent recovery being higher than without failure having occurred or than that of the pre-failure period is the “Service Recovery Paradox”. Researchers have called it an observed phenomenon, where post-failure customer satisfaction levels exceed pre-failure customer satisfaction levels (Figure 1). The term Service Recovery Paradox was coined by McCollough & Bharadwaj in 1992. Consequently, avid researchers dwelt on the topic and produced a remarkable collection of readings, some of which need to be elicited for the minds of the current generation of readers. Indeed, several completed research works for Ph.D. programmes surfaced during this investigative review, including the one guided by illustrious Services Marketing Professor, Dr. Leonard L. Berry. Arguably, the service sector plays a vital role in the economy of developed as well as developing countries. Economies across the world lay special emphasis on the service sector and the service sector's contribution to the GDP is growing steadily in most countries. Dissatisfied customers may decide not to complain (Voorhees et al., 2006), rather, they exit the service instead (Bodey and Grace, 2006). Companies, however, should encourage dissatisfied customers to complain so that they can solve the problem and retain the customers (Tronvoll, 2008). Companies who do not rise to the challenge of complaining customers are turning down the important opportunity to reclaim and improve a relationship (Rothenberg et al., 2008). Customer complaints are a valuable source of important market intelligence, which companies should use to learn from the complaint in general and to correct the root cause of the problem and to improve the service or product, in particular (Brown et al., 1996; McCollough et al., 2000).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To revisit a large body of eminent published works that deal with service recovery and the relating paradox.
- ❖ To visually model the various efforts of previous researchers for easier and quicker interpretation.
- ❖ To put to rest several myths and anecdotal commentaries on the subject.
- ❖ To raise a new issue in recovery using an old fable from the auto industry for the benefit of future research works on Service Recovery Paradox. This one is frequently narrated by industry experts who demand complete customer care and handle delicate situations.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the present paper is as follows :

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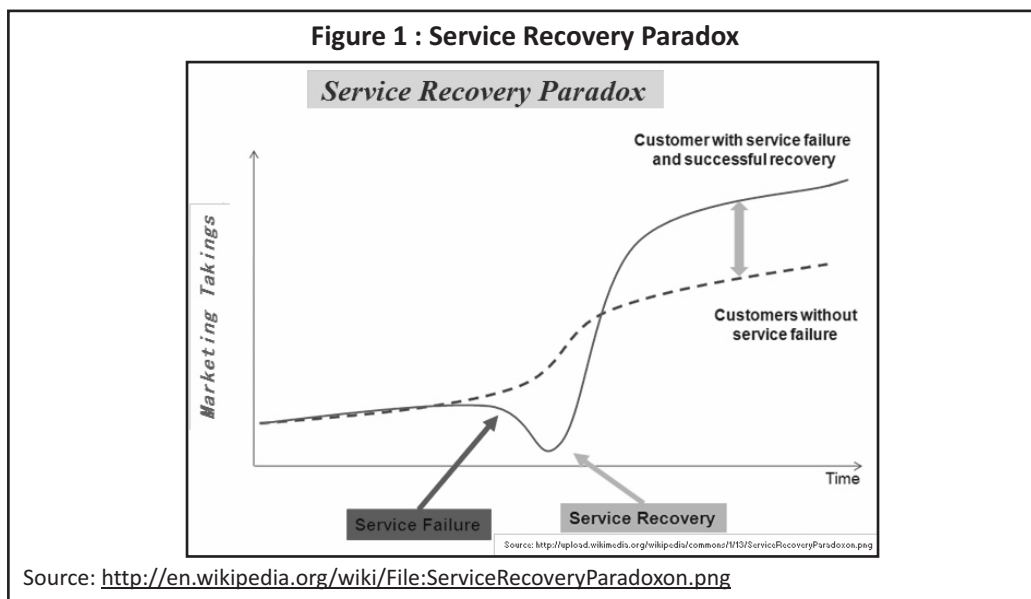
- ❖ The paper is exploratory and descriptive in nature.
- ❖ The present study provides insights into innovative ideas expressed by both theoreticians & practitioners.
- ❖ The paper is based on Secondary sources – leading periodicals, journals, magazines, and other publications.
- ❖ The study presents brief details and highlights the commonalty of various contemporary and current researchers regarding Service Recovery Paradox.
- ❖ **Time Period Of The Study:** The researchers referred to around 100 papers published on Service Recovery Paradox during the period from 1995 - 2012. For simplicity and convenience, only those papers that were accessed digitally have been quoted here (Refer to Annexure 1).

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study makes a contribution in several aspects. Firstly, it supplements our knowledge of the dynamics of customers' behaviour during service recovery. The theoretical framework deciphers the divergence of views on Service Recovery Paradox in previous research. Secondly, it will be helpful for industry experts to recognize more about their customers and develop an appropriate attitude towards service recovery. Managers will understand why and how better service recovery could or could not always get reliable and appealing outcomes. Employees in the service sector would learn further about how to deliver service recovery more effectively and efficiently. Understanding of the paradigm of disconfirmation (Banerjee, 2012) between perception and expectation to examine the effect of service recovery on customers' satisfaction is required. Another strong contribution of this paper lies in the finding that all identified concepts must not be seen in strict isolation, as in previous research, but have to be understood as a network of interrelated concepts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing takings in Figure 2 is the collection of benefits that accrue from the efforts made by marketers, including among others: Loyalty, Satisfaction, Feeling of fairness, Repurchase intention, The notion of justice, Trust, Positive word of mouth and Consumer advocacy besides more tangible returns like Market-share, Long-term viability, Weathering short-term business disaster, Top line and Bottom line financial results. Transgressions are defined as violations of relationship-relevant norms, and refer to the breaches of the implicit or explicit rules guiding relationship performance and evaluations (Aaker, Fournier and Brasel, 2004).



Researchers and marketing professionals have observed a paradigm change that fundamentally stresses on retaining existing customers by striving for new permanent relationships, rather than drawing new customers and performing one-time interactions. The development and protection of long-lasting relationships between consumers and suppliers surface with the importance of the concept of loyalty. Without loyalty, clients would be willing to negotiate with different suppliers, and strong relationships would be threatened. Therefore, research efforts that examine the procedure and the mechanisms that produce, reduce and influence consumers' loyalty have attracted a great deal of attention within the area of marketing (Oliver, 1999; Bolton, Kannan and Bramlet, 2000).

Service recovery processes are those activities that a company employs to address customers' complaints regarding a service failure (Spreng et al., 1995). However, service recovery research and implementation is still in infancy stage as far as business practices are concerned. Service providers are yet to comprehend that service recovery is not a cost and time waste process, but a tool to create loyal and satisfied customers. Not only this, it is a much cheaper way of endorsement as compared to companies spending millions on advertising. Service failures occur when the service providers do not live up to the customer's expectancy. Service recovery research and its implementation is still in infancy stage as the service industry itself. It can do wonders if systematically used. To use service recovery, service providers should be first clear about the failure and recovery process should be designed according to the service failure type.

Krishna (2011) studied failure and the resulting different types of losses, listing them in order of importance to the customer as: Health loss, Character loss, Emotional loss, Respect loss, Loss of identity/image, Relationship loss, Loss of belief, Time loss, Money loss, Comfort loss.

Caldwell (2009) stretched the issue to new heights and established the customers' perception of such service failure due to wilful neglect and hence, being unethical. Questions involving the antecedents and consequences of organizational unethical behavior remain largely unanswered and lie outside the scope of the present study. Questions involving what organizations can do to correct or recover from having engaged in unethical behavior as well as individual responses to those efforts are the concern here.

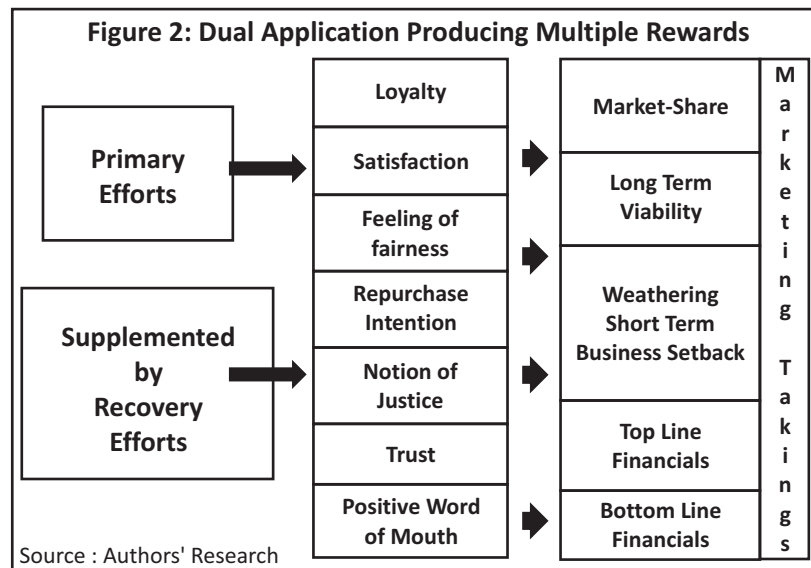
FINDINGS

For purpose of simplicity and reader affability, the results are clubbed into three categories starting with those on affirmative, then those with intermediate or conditional and finally those with the denial of the existence of the paradox phenomena. Since most research is done on multiple factors, these results are also summarized for more comprehensive understanding of the central issue. All these secondary data were originally based on market transgression studies. The Figure 1 summarizes the body of work.

❖ **Affirmative Instance** : Investigating customer satisfaction against Complaints, Kau (2006) found that the levels of trust, WOM and loyalty were significantly higher for those respondents who were satisfied with the service recovery as compared to those who were dissatisfied. The same study also showed that dissatisfied complainants would exhibit a lower level of trust, and were more likely to engage in negative word-of-mouth behavior as compared with those who were dissatisfied initially, but chose not to complain. Analysis showed that a service recovery paradox is most likely to occur when the failure is not considered by the customer to be severe - the customer has had no prior failure with the firm, the cause of the failure was viewed as unstable by the customer and the customer perceived that the company had little control over the cause of the failure as reported by Magnini (2007).

Interesting insights into customer behavior were recorded by Tsarenko (2011), where forgiveness in the service failure context shows customers going through a sequence of phases, though not distinctive, yet distinguishable, described as: Cognitive appraisal and Emotional predisposition: Defensive and emotional response: Consideration of fairness and options: Cognitive and emotional reframing: Forgiveness and resolution. Pioneering work done by Santos (2007) in observing perceptions of justice compared the notion of justice in its three dimensions - namely procedural justice, interactional justice and distributive justice, where one needs to be aware that the customer is to be satisfied on all fronts to be comprehensively won over. On the same lines, another study by Lin (2011) showed that distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice have a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction. During the development and refinement of the measure to assess service recovery, Sabharwal (2010) found that justice perceptions influence customer satisfaction when the customers lodge a complaint and undergo a recovery procedure. Chelminski (2011) in a study established that consumer advocacy is positively related to consumer complaining (i.e.

voicing and Negative Word of Mouth (NWOM)), and that the likelihood of NWOM is consistently greater than the likelihood of voicing. This type of result should surely alarm and caution the practitioner. Since marketing today relies substantially on web content, the research finding by Santos (2007) indicated that interpersonal treatment by the e-retailer improves consumer perceptions of the online recovery process. Consumers' trust in the firm's website is strongly influenced by satisfaction with complaint handling, familiarity and the quality of prior experiences with the website; while consumer trust in Internet shopping is mainly affected by familiarity and the quality of prior experiences with Internet purchasing. Another upcoming and related industry is the Knowledge-based industry. Hammami (2011) developed a general framework to understand the differences in Service Recovery Performance (SRP). The research showed that various knowledge-based resources such as Customer Orientation (CO), Internal Orientation (IO), and Information Technology (IT) complement one another to impact SRP. Ignoring the complementarities of these resources in assessing SRP can seriously underestimate the impact of IT on the knowledge assets that are embedded in the firm recovery competency.



❖ **Conditional Occurrences** : Several conditional results have been reported in this field. Investigating Service Recovery Paradox reports in six situations or contingencies, Krishna et al. (2011) observed that only successful service recovery paradox exists. They cautioned that researchers need to find the deepest part of the service recovery paradox to be practically used by the managers.

Another conditional acceptance by Santos (2007) speaks of consumer trust and loyalty, where distributive and interactional justice perceptions of service recovery impact the satisfaction with the way the complaint is handled, which, in turn, influences the consumer's level of trust. Customers with higher educational level are found to be more demanding than customers with a lower educational level in terms of effort and justice. Customers with a higher educational level, after positive recovery processes, seem to be more loyal than customers with lower educational level (Fierro, 2011). Weak service recovery influenced customer intentions about continued patronage and recommendation. When failures are minor, say in account management and bank charges, these are shown to have a marked effect on intended loyalty behaviors (Jones, 2007).

❖ **Cases Going Against The Grain** : The construct of consumer trust in situation of complaint handling does not mediate the relationship between the dimensions of fairness and trust. Both repurchase intention and word-of-mouth communication were influenced by trust in the study by Santos (2007). Furthermore, only customers who had prior relationships with a seller will be less dissatisfied, more loyal, less likely to terminate doing business with that seller, and unlikely to spread negative word-of-mouth than patrons who did not have prior relationships with the seller as per Priluck (2009).

Yet another study in the online retailing context conducted by Lin (2011) showed that the service recovery paradox

does not appear to exist. Another independent empirical research by Brock (2010) provided conflicting evidence in support of and against this paradoxical viewpoint. There are researchers who have found scant traces and hence, play down the phenomena. Meuter's (2008) survey findings support the argument that a service recovery paradox is a rare event, and the hypothesized mean differences are not very large, which diminishes their managerial relevance.

Some studies are available on what scholars refer to as the Double Deviation, referring to a situation of two failures.

Ok (2007) found when customers are somewhat satisfied with recovery efforts, their initial overall satisfaction could be carried over after two transactional evaluations. Double deviation effects were obvious and consistent when customers were either highly dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with service recovery. This was supported by McCollough (2009) in his summary statement that interpreted that customers are somewhat satisfied with recovery efforts, their initial overall satisfaction could be carried over after two transactional evaluations. Double deviation effects were obvious and consistent when customers were either highly dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with service recovery. By far, the most consistent and emphatic statement came from Maxham (2002), who claimed that recoveries can produce a "recovery paradox" after one failure, that they do not trigger such paradoxical increases after two failures. Furthermore, "double deviations" can occur following two consecutive unsatisfactory recoveries or following an unsatisfactory recovery in response to a second failure. Additionally, recovery efforts are attenuated when two similar failures occur and when two failures happen in close time proximity. Poor service recoveries have been shown to exacerbate already low customer evaluations following a failure, hence, producing a "double deviation" effect (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990).

WRAPPING UP

Frontline service employees are the ones irate customers face after service failures. As part of effective service recovery, these employees must be trained how to handle complaints and frustrated customers. Service personnel must be taught to remain calm, not take the customers' reactions personally, and how to respond. Admitting blame is difficult, particularly to personnel with little education. Therefore, appropriate training is a must. Since service recovery must be immediate, employees should be taught how to recognize legitimate issues and also, when faced with unreasonable complaints, not admit fault or employ service recovery measures designed to compensate customers for legitimate problems.

NEWTWIRL

An old fable pertaining to service recovery in the auto industry runs somewhat like this. A German chose to purchase a Rolls Royce as opposed to a better established home-grown automobile. Soon, the car developed a snag, and help had to be called from across the sea. The team arrived, worked on the problem, rectified it to the complete approval of the customer, and took a signature for endorsing satisfaction. On being asked for charges, the team assured the customer that he would receive the bill shortly and left. When the bill did not arrive, the gentleman sent a reminder. After another span of delay, the famous German pride surfaced and the gentleman demanded an explanation for the hold-up. The response from the equally conceited company was – What bill? What repair? You are mistaken – we never sent any team. Your Rolls Royce never broke down!

THE WAY FORWARD

Using the sequence of events in the automobile allegory, a carefully controlled simulation experiment can be designed, and the results would certainly throw up many interesting angles of customer perception. However, care needs to be taken regarding the ethical angle mentioned earlier and the possible cost - both monetary and emotional - since this will involve genuine people and authentic situations.

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Annexure 1: Articles On Service Recovery & The Associated Paradox

	JOURNAL	VOLUME / ISSUE	TITLE	AUTHOR/S
1	ProQuest Dissertations and Theses	1995 ProQuest	The Recovery Paradox: A Conceptual Model And Empirical Investigation Of Customer Satisfaction	McCollough, Michael Ashton
2	Journal of Marketing	Vol. 66 (October 2002), pp. 57-71	Multiple Service Failures and Recovery Efforts	James G. Maxham III & Richard G. Netemeyer
3	The Marketing Review	2011, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 41-56	A Conceptual Framework For The Service Recovery Paradox	A. Krishna et al.
4	ProQuest LLC	UMI 3357892, 2009	Individual Reactions To Organizational Ethical Failures Ph D	James L. Caldwell
5	Latin American Business Review	Vol. 8(2), 2007	Impact of Service Recovery Processes in Car Repair Services	Cristiane Pizzutti dos Santos & Daniel V. H. D. Fernandes
6	ProQuest	2003, UMI 3136182	Service Recovery And The Elusive Paradox _ Ph D	Anthony H. Kerr
7	Advances In Management	Vol. 4 (7) July (2011)	Critical Factors of Service Failure and Corresponding Recovery System	Krishna Anupam et al.
8	International Journal of Business and Social Science	Vol. 2, No. 21 [Special Issue - November 2011]	Role of Educational Level in Moderating Service Recovery Processes	Jesús J. Cambra Fierro et al.
9	Services Marketing Quarterly	Vol. 28(1), 2006	Remedial Recovery Strategy	Wen-Bao Lin
10	Journal of Marketing Science	2007, (4): 28-37	Dual-Expectation Model To Service Recovery Context	TU Rungting et al.
11	Journal of Business Economics and Management	2011 Volume 12(3): pp. 503-528	Managing Service Recovery Processes	Jesús J. Cambra Fierro et al.
12	Journal of Services Marketing	21/3 (2007) pp. 213-225	The Service Recovery Paradox Justifiable Theory Or Smouldering Myth	Vincent P. Magnini et al.
13	Brazilian Administration Review	2008	Antecedents and Consequences of Consumer Trust in the Context of Service Recovery	Cristiane Pizzutti dos Santos
14	Journal of Marketing & Communication	May - August 2010, Vol. 6, Issue 1	Linkage Between Service Quality and Customers Loyalty in Commercial Banks	S. Manimaran
15	The Service Industries Journal	Vol.27, No.6, September 2007, pp.671-686	Mixed Findings on the Service Recovery Paradox	Chihyung Ok
16	Managing Service Quality	Vol. 21, No. 5, 2011	Responses To Online Retailer's Service Recovery	Hsin-Hui Lin et al.
17	Brazilian Administration Review	pp. 225-246, July/Sept., 2011	Perceptions of Justice after Recovery Efforts	Cristiane Pizzutti dos Santos
18	Academy of Marketing Studies Journal	Volume 13, Number 1, 2009	Post-Recovery Customer Satisfaction	Michael A. McCollough
19	Journal of Services Marketing	20/2 (2006), pp. 101-111	A Comparison Between Complainants And Non-Complainants	Ah-Keng Kau and Elizabeth Wan-Yiun Loh
20	Journal of Services Marketing	25/5 (2011), 381-392	A Transactional Model Of Forgiveness In The Service Failure Context	Yelena Tsarenko and Dewi Rooslanı Tojib
21	The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems	Vol. 41, No. 3, 2011 pp. 296-314	Service Recovery Performance	Samiha Mjated Hammami & Abdelfattah Triki
22	Journal of Services Research	Volume 10, Number 1	Scale Development Approach For Service Recovery	Nidhi Sabharwal, Harmeen Soch & Harsandaldeep Kaur

23	Journal of Services Marketing	25/5 (2011), pp. 361-370	Consumer Advocacy And Complaining Behaviour	Piotr Chelminski & Robin A. Coulter
24	Journal of Service Management	Vol. 22, No. 1, 2011 pp. 85-110	How Complaining Customers Want To Be Treated By Frontline Employees	Thorsten Gruber
25	Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Studies	Volume 13, 2008 Number 2	Recovery Performance And Service Failure	Michael A. McCollough
26	International Journal of Service Industry Management	Vol. 19, No. 4, 2008, pp. 441-457	The Service Recovery Paradox	Stefan Michel & Matthew L. Meuter
27	Journal of Marketing Research	Vol. XLIV (February 2007), pp.153-163	Satisfaction Strength and Customer Loyalty	Murali Chandrashekar et al.
28	American Marketing Association	Winter, 2010	Service Recovery Paradox_Myth Or Reality	Christian Brock et al.
29	International Journal of Bank Marketing	Vol. 25, No. 3, 2007 pp. 161-172	Service Failure And Customer Loyalty In UK Banks	Henry Jones & Jillian Dawes Farquhar
30	American Marketing Association, Conference Proceedings	2001; 12,	Recovery Performance And Service Failure Harm	Michael A. McCollough
31	Services Marketing Quarterly	30: pp.365-376 , 2009	Customers' Responses to Service Debacles and Subsequent Recovery	Randi Priluck & Joseph Wisenblit
32	Advances in Consumer Research	Volume 33, © 2006	Consumer Forgiveness Following Marketer Transgressions	Emily Chung & Michael Beverland
33	Amity Management Analyst	Volume VI, No I & II	Customer Expectation in the Service Industry	Padmakali Banerjee & Prabuddha Baneerjee