

# **SERVICE FAILURE AND CUSTOMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR**

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**ABSTRACT:** Service failure and complaining behavior has engaged more attention in the past years. A service failure breaks the faith of the customers. As the anticipation of customers regarding service standard increase, it is crucial for companies to make the service even better and error-free. Complaining behavior possibly observed as the customer answer to disappointing buying experiences. In most cases, complaint choices comprise an attempt to find a remedy, communicating with other people about the disappointment, swearing never to repurchase a product or service and approaching third parties. The research paper explores the previous literature and highlights the various concepts related to service failure and customers complaining behavior.

**KEYWORDS:** service failure; complaining behavior

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

A very less has been described in writing on customer behavior related to a hospitality setting (Clark & Wood, 1998). Lewis (1981) pays particular attention to atmosphere, image and food quality and thought about carefully on the factors that decide consumer understanding when they come across a meal at a restaurant. The restaurant business needs a lot of people to do the work and is full of occurrences. The bad service by the restaurant employees are perceived by the customers whole-time during the service procedures, such as problem in getting a reservation; low speed delivery; misplaced order; uneatable or soggy food; and inaccurate bill. The employees' reactions when they deal directly with customers and the tangible environment standard help in the service quality estimation (Bitner, 1990). A satisfactory recovery from a failure built customers loyalty levels stronger (Hart et al., 1990; Feinberg et al., 1990). Industrialization brings the chances to lower the failure. Greater human interaction services are full of negative events and can harm the buyer-seller future links. While controlling service failures, several companies have included effective recovery procedures to carry out the service delivery properly in unfavorable situations (Shostack, 1984). Blodgett et al. (1993) explain complaint actions and point out that they constantly keep changing and the customers' early answers are built upon aspects like the probability of success, frame of mind with regard to complaining and the significance of the product. When unsatisfied customer attempt to find remedy, w-o-m behavior, repeat purchase plan mainly depends on the complainant's realization of justice. There is a significant proof that if an organization manages complaints effectively it lessens the occurrence of bad w-o-m and improves the chance to buy services or products again (Kelly et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1993). Complainants possibly participate in an effective w-o-m, and to a great extent become faithful customers, if they recognize a high level of fairness.

## **II. DEFINING SERVICE FAILURE**

Inseparable as well as intangible service characteristics make it certain that failures will happen. From a consumer's viewpoint, a failure is a condition where certain things not correct. Greater human interaction services have an effect that companies cannot hide failures from customers (Boshoff, 1997). Service failures possibly differ in magnitude, such as contaminated food experience, delay while delivering order (Kelley & Davis, 1994). Previous written works give rise to a large number of classifications indicating the basic features of service failures (Bitner et al., 1990; Gronroos, 1990). It has also been noticed that failures can change along with time and

frequency measurements. Halstead et al. (1993) shows that service failure possibly have two consequences. Halo effect possibly influence consumer's judgment in an unfavorable way and a domino effect possibly give rise to failures in different areas of the service operations. Recognizing, tracking and examining failures are useful for service firms as it permit management to find failure conditions (Hoffman et al., 1995). Companies must design proper recovery policies to deal with the failures properly. Service failure can be explained as a defective outcome that can lower the trust of the customers (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). Previous research assert that dissatisfaction emerge when delivery of the service does not complement with the customer's strong hopes or beliefs (Kelley, Hoffman, & Davis, 1993; Kelley & Davis, 1994). Outcome and process service failures make a difference to the judgments of the customers during recovery assessment. Smith et al. (1999) discovered that customers who met with an outcome failure were more satisfied when recovery is given afterwards as compared to customers who come across a process failure. Compensation and fast recovery efforts enhance customers' judgment linked with impartial treatment by the organization when customers met with an outcome failure; on the contrary an apology was influential to a greater extent when process failure takes place (Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999). Mittal, Ross, and Baldasare (1998) revealed that satisfaction and behavioral intentions were influenced by the negative and positive conditions. The outcomes give special importance to systematic examination and suitable management of failures in an organization. The systematic investigation of failures may help to reduce the negative incidents and can make the recovery practices better (Hoffman et al., 1995).

### **III. MAGNITUDE OF SERVICE FAILURE**

Various research on recovery have indicated that the intensity of the failure is one among other factors that decide satisfaction and has a great effect on customer replies to recovery (Weun, Beatty, & Jones, 2004; Smith & Bolton, 2002). The awareness of failure intensity is important in the development of a suitable recovery procedure (Hart et al., 1990). Severe failures affect in such a way that customers feel significant loss, and because of that customers' satisfaction levels are reduced (Harris et al., 2006). Failures which customers consider as severe, it is tough for customers to return to a normal state (Mattila, 1999). When intensity of the service failures is high, companies help the customers by providing recovery. Existing research strongly suggest that failure intensity may influence customers judgment linked with recovery procedures. For e.g. compensation and an apology possibly develop satisfaction when customers have to wait for 30 minutes for the order at a restaurant, but if the delay result in a failure to catch a flight or unable to attend an exam would compensation and apology satisfy the need of the customers? Recovery attempts by the company may not be able to get rid of intense loss (Magnini et al., 2007). As stated by the prospect theory, customers consider the harm as huge when severe failure occurs as compared to the benefit earned from the company's recovery attempts. If the types of failure complement the recovery attempt, that recovery possibly is understood as insufficient for a failure that is severe (Thaler, 1985; Smith et al., 1999). Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1993) indicate that the customer's ability to deal with failures is determined by the situation. As a consequence, the failures severity plays a main part in customers' judgment of recovery attempts by the company. In case of a severe failure, customers possibly are unsatisfied psychologically since the harm by the failure considerably greater than the benefits. The failure intensity helps the customers to make a judgment about the fairness of the recovery steps taken by the company. Smith et al. (1999) put forward that the classification and failure severity effect customers' estimation of a failure and recovery experience. For e.g. an intense failure has a considerable effect on customers' association with the service provider and thus cause customers' to shift (Keaveney, 1995). Prior research put forward that a critical failure possibly give rise to higher level of disappointment in spite of well organized recovery (Firnstahl, 1989). Bolton and Drew (1992) state that even a well managed negative situation may not counterbalance the harmful effect of service failure. This shows that customer interpretation of justice effect customer likings in a different manner determined by the failure severity. Smith et al. (1999) state that failure severity effect not only how customers answer in the adverse circumstances but also what feelings customer develop regarding the company's recovery attempts and as a result of that influencing the customers justice beliefs. Customers gave greater importance to apology when they come across a process failure whereas when customers met with an outcome failure, they gave more importance to fast action and compensation. When service failure intensity is high, compensation has a considerable effect in contrast when failure intensity is low compensation effect decrease. Austin and Walster (1974) recommend that highly rewarded consumers are not satisfied much as compared to those customers who receive balanced rewards because they feel ashamed of something that is not fair or equal. When failure intensity is small, apologies and quick reply may increase customer satisfaction but compensation may prove to be unnecessary it will not have a great effect on satisfaction. When failure intensity is high, compensation may prove essential in building up satisfaction and customers may feel that the employee's behavior is impartial after the failure incident. When the results are more favorable or equal to what customers believe, positive customer satisfaction probably take place, therefore customers emotional attachment with the company may further improve.

**IV. CLASSIFICATION OF SERVICE FAILURES**

Researchers suggest different classifications of service failures or disappointing situations (Kelley, Hoffman, & Davis, 1993; Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994; Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). The outcome-process categorization is more common (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991; Gronroos, 1988). The outcome feature of a service experience means what customers really get from the service in contrast the process feature involves the way in which the service is carried out (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1985; Gronroos, 1988). The firm does not satisfy the consumer's primary service requirement in an outcome failure while on the contrary the delivery of the main service contains faults in the process failure. The services marketing written works gives no details on which category of failure have a greater effect on customers' satisfaction decisions. Customers possibly arrange the different kind of wasted resources into distinct class; this is put forward by resource exchange and mental accounting principles. Satisfaction of the customers is determined by the manner in which resources are classified during service failure/recovery experience. This is indicated by prospect theory, resource exchange theory and mental accounting principles. People interchange resources that are similar, as stated by the resource exchange theory. Satisfaction is more when resources from the identical class are interchanged as compared to resources from dissimilar class are interchanged (Brinberg & Wood, 1983; Brinberg & Castell, 1982). People use different indirect methods to allocate resources to non-identical mental thinking. This is stated by the mental accounting principles (Thaler 1985; Benartzi & Thaler, 1995). People allocate social as well as economic resources to separate mental thinking. When a person makes a judgment, resources are considered differently according to their usefulness, this is proposed by prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Customers give more worth when comparable resources are interchanged than those resources which are different. This is anticipated by all the theories. Hence, customers will desire to accept resources that are equivalent to the failure, during service/failure recovery experience. Since social and economic resources are arranged in separate mental thinking, so they indicate different resources. Therefore, customers will favor an economic resource and social resource as recovery attempts, if a service failure results in the waste of an economic resource and social resource. Customers face economic harm when an outcome failure takes place, for instance a booked room in a guest house is not available because more reservations are accepted. Hence, recovery attribute like compensation which is an economic resource help in rebuilding customer's awareness of distributive justice. The resources are kept in different mental thinking so the effect of a social resource i.e. an apology on customer realization of distributive justice will be minor for outcome failures. In the same way, response speed helps in building understanding of procedural justice. Customers met with a social loss when a process failure takes place (e.g. receptionist at front desk is impolite). Accordingly, apology share politeness to the customer so customers' understanding of interactional justice will be elevated. The influence of compensation on the recognition of interactional justice will be smaller, when customers face process failure since the resources are kept in distinct accounts e.g. when customers are handled impolitely by the server, they will give not so much value to a discount as compared to an apology. Apology is close to social resources as compared with fast response and compensation which are close to economic resources. With regard to Thaler's (1985) model, the resources which are close have a considerable impact on the understanding of justice as compared to resources which are far away.

**V. COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR**

Dissatisfaction has been explained as a harmful emotion, in reply to a particular consumption incident (Woodruff, Cadotte, & Jenkins, 1983). Even though, dissatisfaction is an essential situation for complaining behavior, lack of satisfaction has been found to describe only a little percentage of customers' intension to complain. Day and Landon (1976) questioned participants what steps they took in reaction to their very disappointing consumer incident, and discovered that a little percent of these participants express annoyance to the seller. Bearden and Tee1 (1983) discovered dissatisfaction interpret only small percentage of the variance of the customers' intension to complain. Day (1984) give the very reasonable clarification of the role of disappointment in the customers' intension to complain. The determination to complain depends upon interpersonal and situational factors. These factors are highlighted by Hirschman (1970), in the theory of exit, loyalty and voice. Consumer intension to complain is explained as a group of actions emerged out of customer disappointment (Hirschman, 1970). Consumer intention to complain has been perceived as an after failure reaction caused by consumer anger (Day, 1984; Oliver, 1980). By assessing the difference between prediction and performance results, is usually regarded as customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, where low hopes lead to disappointment (Oliver, 1997; Churchill & Surprenant, 1982). Earlier research classifies groups of complaint behavior to describe consumer intension to complain. Hirschman (1970) developed a framework of customers' grievance. In his classification, unsatisfied consumers can leave or raise a complaint. Day and Landon (1977) form a concept based on two categories. The first category discriminates no action from action and the second category differentiated private action from public

action. Singh (1990) suggests the classification of consumers' intension to complain. The three categories are private, voice and third party. Not all unsatisfied customers express anger, however service providers' must support unsatisfied consumers to raise the negative incidents so that they have a chance to rectify the issue (Day et al., 1981). Customers make use of different channels of complaint, these quiet customers possibly involved in communicating bad w-o-m to relatives/friends or using third-party (Singh, 1990). The reason why consumers do not express dissatisfaction is described by the cost-benefit theory (Lee & Soberon-Ferrer, 1999; Kolodinsky, 1992, 1995; Kolodinsky & Aleong, 1990) and state that customers complain only when the profits gained is greater than the attempts made by the customer. In banking services customers may remain quiet for specific issues and possibly shift to competitors because of the belief that a positive result from complaining is small (Colgate & Hedge, 2001). Various researchers have tried to interpret consumer intension to complain in the restaurant setting. Most of the participants express dissatisfaction to management while rest of the participants kept silent when complications arise at a restaurant (Su & Bowen, 2001). Su and Bowen (2001) put forward that restaurant customers probably convey their disappointment to management when customers trust that their complaining efforts will be appreciated or when the dining event was of great significance for them. Gursoy et al. (2003) proposed two customer groups and tried to divide unsatisfied restaurant customers based on their answers towards complain. First group can be called voicers, these are the customers who do not complain straight away to the management rather than they complain to their relatives and friends about their disappointing dining episode whereas talkers group customers share an unsatisfied dining incident with multiple people. Lam and Tang (2003) recognized four categories of habits associated with customers' grievance which are publicizing, complaints to management, bad-mouthing and personal actions. Their results recommend that active and vocal complainers seem to be young, highly educated people and obtain greater incomes. Previous research recognized the importance of customer-seller associations, it is revealed that greater the communication between restaurants and customers, the customers will show their disappointment to the management more frequently (Cheng and Lam, 2008).

## **VI. CUSTOMERS INTENSION TO COMPLAIN**

Various writers have noticed that there is not any theory that covers customers' intension to complain behavior (Kelly & Davis, 1994; Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Blodgett et al., 1993). Various distinct theories from several areas of study help in the investigation of customers' intension to complain (Blodgett et al., 1993). Attribution theory (Folkes, 1984), Hirschman's (1970) theory, satisfaction/dissatisfaction analysis (Day, Grabiske, Schaetzle, & Staubach, 1981; Day, 1984) and confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1980) all make it possible to clarify why some unsatisfied consumers lookout for remedy, whereas others quietly exit, swearing never ever to purchase things from there. The theories present the conceptual base which permits to effectively interpret unsatisfied consumers' primary intension to complain; it is fairness notion (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Greenberg, 1990; Clemmer & Schneider, 1996) that helps in understanding unsatisfied consumers' post intension complaint behavior. The theory of justice has been extensively and strongly implemented to describe a single person response to a range of dispute conditions and has its base in social psychology. Fairness philosophy have been implemented in the situation of buyer seller affairs (Oliver & Swan, 1989; Clemmer, 1993), law enforcement and the legal system (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), workers relations (Greenberg, 1990), recruitment and advancement decisions and pay increment (Folger & Konovsky, 1989). The earlier works have displayed that impartial behavior has both behavioral (e.g. repurchase intentions) and psychological results (e.g. trust, loyalty and satisfaction).

## **VII. IMPORTANCE OF HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

The value of engaging a recent customer is significantly greater than the value of maintaining an old customer (Spreng, Harrell, & Mackoy, 1995; Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987). Service institutions could improve their net profit by lowering the rate of defection (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Creating deep-rooted connections with customers is essential for businesses. Gilly (1987) noticed that if buyers are pleased with how their grievances are managed, their frustration can be lowered, and the possibility of buying back becomes greater. Moreover, successfully managed grievance may have a substantial influence on the profitability, negative w-o-m behavior and customers' tendency to buy products or services again (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998). Improper company replies to failures and careless handling of complaints affect not only customers but also families and friends by way of customers anti w-o-m behavior (Hoffman & Kelly, 2000; Hoffman & Chung, 1999). Keaveney (1995) discovered that inadequate employee replies to failures possibly increase chance of abandoning a product or service by the customers in favor of a competitor.

**VIII. PROPENSITY TO COMPLAIN**

Propensity to complain is explained as an attempt to find remedy or sharing disappointment with an organization when there is a displeasing service experience. Previous works indicate that the seriousness of the disappointment caused by the failure is one among many factors that determine propensity to complain (Goodman & Newman, 2003; Day & Landon, 1977). Propensity to complain is recognized as being a primary element in interpreting consumers' intention to complain because of its influence on the customers' choice to complain or not. Likewise attitude towards complaining, also keep a well matched association with customers intention to complain behavior.

**IX. ATTITUDE TOWARD COMPLAINING**

The customers' tendency to ask for remedy from the organization when unhappy with the service or product is known as attitude towards complaining (Richins, 1987). Some customers are confident and look out for remedy when they are annoyed, whereas other customers are not willing to complain regardless of how angry they are. The overall way how customers express dissatisfaction to sellers; not particular to a given incident of disappointment (Singh & Wilkes, 1996, p. 353) can be described as attitude toward complaining, and help in the forecast of customers intention to complain. Actually, the significance of attitudes in connection with customer dissatisfaction is well reported by Hirschman (1970), who's conceptual structure for recognizing exit and complaint behaviors surely bring up that attitude toward complaining has a sufficiently great impact on intention to complain behavior. Furthermore, the connection between intention to complain behavior and ATC has been identified in previous studies (Singh & Wilkes, 1996; Kim, Kim, Im, & Shim, 2003; Blodgett & Anderson, 2000; Blodgett, Granbois, & Walters, 1993). Attitude toward complaining does act as a crucial variable in the forecast of customers' intention to complain behavior. Blodgett and Anderson (2000) discovered that unsatisfied consumers with a favorable attitude towards complaining are very possibly to go for remedy whereas it was discovered that attitude toward complaining has an effective connection with customers' complaint behavior (Singh and Wilkes, 1996). Individuals with an effective ATC will have an intense propensity to complain, when customers are unsatisfied.

**X. MOTIVES FOR COMPLAINING**

A further thought-provoking question is whether a customer looks out for the probability of success when he/she asks for remedy or it is a customer's attitude towards complaining? Customers' attitude towards complaining suggest that regardless of what organizations do to motivate unsatisfied customers' to complain, some unsatisfied customers will not ask for remedy. On the contrary, possibility of success, indicate that polite and mannerly complaint-handling policies possibly attract those unsatisfied customers, who would otherwise leave, to look out for remedy. Unsatisfied customers who have a favorable attitude toward complaining want to give the seller an opportunity to find a solution for the issue prior telling others about their disappointment.

**XI. CONCLUSION**

Service providers should give support to customers who are unsatisfied so that the customers may hope that the company will handle the issues properly. Service providers required to recognize that some disappointed customers will not give the supplier an opportunity to resolve the problem, since the customers' sense that the retailer will not be prepared to sort out the difficulty, or the customers are unwilling and hesitant. Instead looking for remedy, the majority of the unsatisfied consumers will rather leave and participate in anti w-o-m behavior. Lost profits and sales are the final outcomes for the company. Taking into consideration that it costs more to engage a recent customer as compared to an old customer, service providers should make great efforts to build an environment that motivate unsatisfied customers to go for remedy. Unsatisfied consumers who look for remedy anticipate getting an impartial deal so they should be handled with politeness. Consumers who are given remedy, and recognize that impartiality has been done, possibly purchase goods and services again from the seller and become involved in effective w-o-m behavior, therefore positive attitude for the seller may increase. Complainants who are aware of unfairness are not likely to purchase goods and services from the company (Folkes, 1984), they participate in anti w-o-m behavior and possibly inform others not to shop there.

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