The Service Recovery Journey:

Conceptualization, Integration, and Directions for Future Research

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Keywords: Service Failure, Service Recovery, Complaint Management, Customer Journey, Customer Experience

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ABSTRACT

Service failures represent temporary or permanent interruptions of the customer's regular service experience. Although the literature identifies an extensive set of organizational alternatives for recovering from service failures, researchers have approached these responses as discrete organizational actions that are loosely connected to the dynamic nature of the recovery experience. In this paper, we address this shortcoming by introducing the idea of the service recovery journey (SRJ). We first conceptualize the SRJ as the outcome of a service failure that is composed of three phases: pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery. We then synthesize the organizational responses to service failures reported in 230 journal articles and integrate them with the novel SRJ perspective. Thereafter, we provide an extensive set of questions for future research that will expand our knowledge about the pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery phases, and address the interaction between the customer's regular journey and the SRJ. Finally, we outline six considerations for recovery research seeking to affect business practice and discuss the managerial implications of adopting an SRJ perspective.

Keywords: Service Failure, Service Recovery, Complaint Management, Customer Journey, Customer Experience

Service failures occur on a regular basis. In an attempt to address such situations, service research has generated an impressive stock of knowledge about the array of organizational responses to service failures (e.g. Davidow 2003; Gelbrich and Roschk 2011a). However, many customers are still dissatisfied with how organizations respond to service failures. The 2017 National Customer Rage Survey reported that 56% of U.S. households had experienced at least one problem with products and services in the twelve months preceding the study, with only about 20% being completely satisfied with the organization's response (CCMC 2017). These findings seem to suggest that researchers and managers have not yet succeeded in their service recovery efforts.

One of the key drivers of poor recoveries might reside in the current static, transactional approach to recovery. Despite some exceptions (e.g. Surachartkumtonkun et al. 2015), organizational responses to service failures have been considered as single-point-in-time actions (Goldstein et al. 2002). Although the terms "service failure *experience"* (Holloway and Beatty 2003) and "service recovery *experience*" (Michel and Meuter 2008) are often used, we have witnessed few efforts to conceptualize and manage recovery as an experience journey. Neglecting this temporal dimension might limit our understanding of the customer's entire recovery experience and how that experience should be managed over multiple interactions.

Our paper aims to address this shortcoming in three ways. First, we introduce the idea of the *service recovery journey* (SRJ). This journey comprises the series of events underlying the recovery process, and consists of pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery phases, which collectively shape the recovery experience. The SRJ begins with a service failure, and it can either disrupt or co-exist with the customer's regular journey. Hence, we expand the current dominant view of "recovery as a single event" toward "recovery as a journey" that is comprised of distinct phases that require managerial attention. This extended perspective stems from the integration of the service recovery literature with the burgeoning customer experience literature and responds to calls for research on the dynamic nature of the customer experience (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Voorhees et al. 2017).

Second, the paper synthesizes the various organizational response options reported in the literature and integrates these through the SRJ perspective. In this regard, we update literature reviews from fifteen years ago (i.e. Davidow 2003) and papers that focus on response options but not on their temporality (i.e. Gelbrich and Roschk 2011a). Thus, we offer a contemporary overview that uncovers novel ways of understanding and using the various responses to service failures.

Lastly, we suggest various directions for future research and call for a renewed academic focus on enhancing the effectiveness of service recovery efforts. Our review of the literature reveals a dearth of research on organizational responses in the pre-recovery and post-recovery phase of the SRJ, and a limited understanding of the relationship between the regular journey and the SRJ. In addition, we provide six recommendations for effective service recovery research.

THE SERVICE RECOVERY JOURNEY

The use of the customer experience approach to alter our perspective on service failure and recovery is linked to the growing debate over where the focus of service research should lie. Service research predominantly focuses on understanding managerial actions and customer outcomes at discrete points in time, which are labeled as service encounters or touchpoints. However, this view has been criticized for failing to recognize the inherent dynamics of the service delivery process as an accumulation of multiple, connected service encounters (Patrício, Gustafsson, and Fisk 2018). Lemon and Verhoef (2016, p.74) conceptualize the service experience as “a customer’s journey with an organization over time during the purchase cycle across multiple touchpoints.” They distinguish three phases—pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase—through which an experience is formed in an iterative and dynamic manner. This journey perspective allows us to consider the dynamics of the service process and to better understand the customer's viewpoint over time (De Keyser et al. 2015), to go beyond a momentary snapshot that ignores touchpoint dependencies, and to manage the service process holistically (Lemon and Verhoef 2016).

Against this backdrop, we call for an adapted perspective on service recovery. Rather than viewing recovery as a discrete event in the post-purchase phase of the customer journey, as researchers typically do (e.g. Voorhees et al. 2017), we argue that service recovery can be considered as a separate journey. A service failure essentially represents a deviation from or even a disruption of the customer's regular journey. Such failures might occur in the pre-purchase (e.g. a webpage that fails to load when booking a hotel), purchase (e.g. a flight delay), and even the post-purchase (e.g. poor follow-up communication) phases of the customer journey. More formally, a SRJ starts with a service failure, and encompasses a pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery phase that make up the recovery experience (Miller, Craighead, and Karwan 2000) [1].

The *pre-recovery phase* spans the time period between initial awareness of a service failure and the first interaction between the customer and the organization aimed at resolving the issues caused by that failure. This phase reflects a problem awareness stage in which either the customer or the organization initiates the first contact to address a service failure and is critical to the formation of recovery expectations (Miller, Craighead, and Karwan 2000). The duration of the pre-recovery phase might vary significantly. The pre-recovery phase can be very short or even instantaneous, mostly when a service failure happens in presence of a service employee, such as a waiter spilling drinks on one's clothes. In other instances, the duration might be longer such as in the case of a power outage in which the customer and the utility company are not in direct contact.

In this phase, customers are likely to experience emotional reactions, such as anxiety or anger (Ozgen and Kurt 2012), that follow initial cognitive appraisal of the service failure [2]. This process leads customers to respond to the service failure using different coping responses (Surachartkumtonkun, McColl-Kennedy, and Patterson 2015). They might want to contact someone to solve the problem, to vent their feelings, or to seek support from friends or acquaintances. This period also includes behaviors like searching for (contact) information and writing complaint emails or Tweets.

The *recovery phase* starts when initial contact is established, and it ends either when a satisfactory recovery takes place or when customers gives up their quest for recovery because the organization fails to respond appropriately. Customers typically want to share their emotional distress with the organization (Gelbrich 2010), seek to understand why the failure occurred (Van Vaerenbergh et al. 2014), describe how the failure is going to affect the pursuit of their initial goal, and ask for a resolution to the problem. The customer and the organization often engage in close interaction in an attempt to resolve the problem.

The *post-recovery phase* covers the period following the end of the recovery phase during which customers assess and evaluate their experiences in the previous two phases. This phase can extend over a long period of time depending on the extent to which the recovery experience sticks with the customer (Strizhakova, Tsarenko, and Ruth 2012), and entails two possible situations. Customers might feel happy, valued, or even proud for having obtained an appropriate solution to the problem (Ozgen and Kurt 2012). Regular customer journeys resume if they were temporarily stopped by the failure. In some cases, customer's post-failure satisfaction (i) exceeds one's pre-failure satisfaction following an effective recovery or (ii) is higher than that of other customers who did not experience a failure, which is referred to as the service recovery paradox (de Matos, Henrique, and Rossi 2007; Michel and Meuter 2008) [3].

Conversely, customers might not find the resolution satisfactory or they might not get a resolution at all. Such "double deviation" generates emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses that are the opposite of those seen in the case of a satisfactory resolution. In other words, customers may feel angry, upset, and annoyed (Ozgen and Kurt 2012). Even though a service failure can elicit customer rage, this feeling typically occurs after a failed recovery (Surachartkumtonkun, McColl-Kennedy, and Patterson 2015). An organization's failure to fix the problem may sometimes lead to a restart of the SRJ.

Importantly, the SRJ can affect the regular customer journey in three ways. First, the SRJ can result in a temporary halt of the regular journey, such as when a customer experiencing a failure of Internet connectivity has to wait until the service provider fixes the problem. Second, the SRJ might cause customers to abandon their regular journey, such as when a customer decides to leave a hotel earlier than planned because the hotel's air conditioning system breaks down. Finally, the SRJ might run in parallel with the regular journey and continue after it, such as when a customer attends a planned conference meeting while interacting with the airline company to recover lost baggage.

Moreover, the SRJ and its various phases might differ depending on the type of service failure and the importance the customer and organization attach to the failure. The SRJ might be more extensive if customers are confronted with a core service failure with high criticality (e.g., flight cancellation). Customers may take more time to formulate their complaint and gather relevant information in the pre-recovery phase. Hence, organizations may need to display more efforts (e.g., combine an apology, explanation, and monetary compensation in the recovery phase and perform follow-up communication in the post-recovery phase) to successfully end the SRJ. Conversely, a low severity process failure (e.g., slow service) might result in a short SRJ in which a simple organizational response (e.g., apology) suffices to address customer complaints voiced in real-time (e.g. Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). Hence, there is not one "standard" SRJ as failure-, customer- and organization-specific factors vary.

INTEGRATING ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO SERVICE FAILURES IN THE SERVICE RECOVERY JOURNEY

In this section, we synthesize and integrate the extant body of knowledge on organizational responses to service failures into the SRJ. An analysis of 230 journal articles reveals 21 potential organizational responses to service failures. Web Appendix A provides more details about the article selection and coding procedure, while Web Appendix B lists all of the sources covered by this synthesis. Table 1 lists these response options and their definitions. Figure 1 displays the summary framework. To position the response options into the logic of the SRJ and ensure a manageable number of categories, we classified the 21 response options into a two-dimensional framework. The first dimension reflects the pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery phases of the journey. The second dimension reflects the tripartite categorization of compensation, favorable employee behavior, and organizational procedures adopted from Gelbrich and Roschk (2011a).

------ TABLE 1 AND FIGURE 1 HERE ------

Organizational response options in the pre-recovery phase

The pre-recovery phase covers the time period between initial awareness of a service failure and the first interaction between the customer and the organization [4]. Failure reporting is critical in this phase, as it provides organizations with an opportunity to restore the damage in a subsequent phase. However, only 4.8% of the analyzed papers examined organizational actions in the pre-recovery phase. The literature identifies two potential organizational procedural responses: *facilitation* and *initiation*.

Facilitation refers to the ease with which customers can express their dissatisfaction or other views to the organization (Davidow 2003). As most customers do not complain to the organization, facilitating the expression of their dissatisfaction is the first step in involving them in the recovery process. Research suggests that applying clear complaint-handling procedures, and providing customers with toll-free numbers, questionnaires, and care desks (Davidow 2003) may facilitate customer complaints. Organizations may also proactively initiate a SRJ before the customer complaints, which the literature refers to as *initiation*. Research shows that customers react positively to initiation (Xu et al. 2014).

Organizational response options in the recovery phase

An overwhelming 96.9% of papers identified and tested potential organizational responses in the recovery phase. This phase is central to the customer's SRJ, as it marks the stage during which the organization should develop an effective solution to the original failure (Nguyen and McColl-Kennedy 2003). Researchers examined numerous response options that pertain to all three types of organizational responses: immediate vs. delayed monetary compensation, new/exchanged goods, new/reperformed service, and apology as *compensation* options; credibility feedback, excuse, justification, referential account, courtesy, effort, empathy, willingness to listen as *favorable employee behavior* options; and customer participation, employee empowerment, flexibility and recovery time as *organizational procedure* options.

Delayed monetary compensation and *immediate monetary compensation* refer to a quantifiable amount of money provided in the future (e.g. voucher, store credit) or the present (e.g. discount, money back), respectively, to recompense customers for their loss (Roschk and Gelbrich 2014). *New/replacement goods* and *new/reperformed services* refer to the exchange of an object or activity that was initially deemed unsatisfactory. Roschk and Gelbrich (2014) suggest that a bad product (service) should be replaced (reperformed), and a monetary loss should be matched with immediate monetary compensation.

In a broader sense, compensation responses may involve intangible elements and can be considered as psychological reward for the customer's "social loss" (e.g., displaying regret for a failure; Gelbrich and Roschk 2011a). One of the clearest recommendations in recovery research is that organizations should apologize for service failures. An *apology* refers to a public expression of remorse through which the organization acknowledges the complainant's distress (Davidow 2003; Wang, Mattila, and Barlett 2009. An apology is particularly valuable at this stage, as it provides an emotional benefit that can offset the lack of attention customers feel after a failure (Roschk and Gelbrich 2014). Favorable employee behaviors also play an important role in managing customers' emotional reactions. An *excuse* involves "denying full responsibility by providing some external cause or mitigating circumstance" (Wang, Mattila, and Bartlett 2009, p.796). *Justification* refers to "the decision maker accept[ing] full responsibility but deny[ing] that the act in question is inappropriate by pointing to the fulfilment of some superordinate goal" (Shaw, Wild, and Colquitt 2003, p.445). A *referential account* "minimizes the perceived unfavorability of the failure by invoking downward comparison, e.g. with those who are worse off following the service failure" (Bradley and Sparks 2012, p.41). *Credibility feedback* refers to informing customers about what the organization is doing to prevent the problem in the future and establishes "the credibility of the organization in the customer's eyes, thus potentially increasing his or her satisfaction from the response" (Davidow 2003, p.242). This information may be about the organization's plans to improve those processes that caused a failure to occur (Johnston and Fern 1999), but may also be about a warning or punishment of the employee following a failure, that is designed to prevent that failure from happening again (Pugh, Brady, and Hopkins 2018).

Employees can make a difference in various other ways as well. *Courtesy* refers to employee behavior that "demonstrates politeness and respect, friendliness and patience" (Liao 2007, p.478). Furthermore, customers typically prefer to interact with employees who invest a significant amount of energy in finding the most appropriate solution thus making a genuine *effort* (Mostafa, Lages, and Sääksjärvi 2014); while *empathy* (i.e., the provision of caring, individual attention) may also positively impact customers (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998). Finally, *willingness to listen* refers to the employee's commitment to listen to the customer's description of an unsatisfactory experience.

Next, organizational procedures are also important to the recovery process. *Customer participation* in recovery allows customers to “shape or personalize the content of the service recovery through joint collaboration with the service provider” (Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Grewal 2012, p.772). Such participation gives customers a feeling of control over the recovery process, which makes them less likely to demand additional compensation (Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Grewal 2012). *Employee empowerment* in service recovery refers to the delegation of authority over the organizational response to frontline employees (Boshoff and Leong 1998). Empowered employees can customize the problem’s resolution to the customer’s needs without asking for their supervisors’ approval. Some research suggests that *flexibility* is another important organizational procedure option. The level of flexibility can range from seeking to treat all customers similarly to providing a response that is customized to the problem and to the complainant’s wishes (Sparks and McColl-Kennedy 2001). To avoid perceptions of negative inequity among customers, organizations should provide clear explanations on why certain differences exist.

Finally, *recovery time* is the amount of time that passes between the customers’ initial complaint and the organization’s handling of that complaint (Hogreve, Bilstein, and Mandl 2017). The provision of a quick, initial response to customers’ complaints is an important step in the recovery phase. Customers generally accept that organizations need some time to respond to failures, and negative consequences arise only if organizations wait too long to respond (Davidow 2003). However, speed *per se* is not always beneficial. For example, automatic (e-mail) replies are just as ineffective as not replying at all (Mattila et al. 2013).

It is also recommended to ensure an appropriate recovery time for providing a solution to the customer’s problem. A faster, final resolution of a failure typically results in more favorable customer behavior (Larivière and Van den Poel 2005) and leads the customer to believe that future failures are unlikely (Wirtz and Mattila 2004). In fact, customers have a “recovery time zone of tolerance”—their compensation expectations follow an inverted U-shape. After a period of indifference concerning recovery time, compensation expectations first increase before decreasing in the long run (Hogreve, Bilstein, and Mandl 2017).

Organizational response options in the post-recovery phase

The post-recovery phase relates to the period following the end of the recovery efforts. Only 7% of papers examined recovery options for this phase. Research focuses solely on response options that relate to organizational procedures, including follow-up processes and process recovery communication.

Follow-up refers to procedures aimed at checking whether the problem was resolved to the customer's satisfaction (Mostafa, Lages, and Sääksjärvi 2014) and is typically appreciated by customers (Johnson and Fern 1999). *Process recovery communication* informs customers about the steps the organization has taken to prevent a recurring failure, and tends to enhance customer outcomes (Van Vaerenbergh, Larivière, and Vermeir 2012), and, for major failures, even influences organization-level stock returns (Rasoulian et al. 2017).

The literature reveals a carryover effect from the recovery phase to the post-recovery phase. Follow-up processes positively affect customer outcomes, but only if the problem was initially resolved in an effective manner (Mostafa, Lages, and Sääksjärvi 2014). In contrast, customers whose problems were not effectively resolved in the recovery phase react more favorably to process recovery communication than customers who were satisfied with the recovery efforts (Van Vaerenbergh, Larivière, and Vermeir 2012). Therefore, follow-up processes should be initiated if customers were satisfied in the recovery phase, while process recovery communication is recommended for customers who leave that phase dissatisfied.

THE SERVICE RECOVERY JOURNEY: AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the mature body of service recovery literature, organizations still struggle to deliver effective recovery and they continue to view recovery as a cost rather than an investment (Davidow 2015). However, longitudinal research over a ten-year period by Morgeson et al. (2018) indicates that the importance of effective recovery procedures on customer loyalty has increased significantly in recent years. This situation is paradoxical and leads to a critical question: How far does our academic knowledge actually reach, and what holes in our knowledge need to be addressed in order to aid practice?

By considering service recovery as a journey, we can identify gaps in our current knowledge (see Table 2 for a summary). First, as evidenced by the blank spaces in Figure 1, our analysis reveals that the extant literature mainly focuses on response options in the recovery phase while virtually ignoring the pre- and post-recovery phases. Yet, these phases might prove critical for advancing the field. Second, the extant literature treats recovery as a distinct activity that is disconnected from customers' regular journey. An understanding of how the SRJ affects the regular journey and vice versa may contribute to the design of more effective service recoveries.

------ *TABLE 2 HERE* ------

Expanding our knowledge of response options

The pre-recovery phase

Research on the pre-recovery phase has focused on the impact of facilitation and initiation on customer outcomes (see Figure 1). Many issues require further exploration. Technological innovations allow organizations to detect failures before they are noticed by customers. Future research might examine whether and how organizations should proactively communicate these failures to customers. For example, credit card companies rely on machine learning to detect fraudulent transactions triggering immediate card rejections at the point of sale and initiating fraud investigations of which customers are not aware. Researchers need to explore whether the proactive communication of such activities and/or problem resolutions increases (e.g. my bank has up-to-date technologies and is transparent) or decreases (e.g. my bank is unsafe) customers' level of trust in the organization.

Future research may also expand our knowledge of facilitation in the pre-recovery phase. A standard recommendation in the service recovery field is to make it easy for customers to complain (Davidow 2003), but empirical investigations of this type of facilitation are rare. Few studies examine how customers choose complaint channels (Mattila and Wirtz 2004). The 2017 National Customer Rage Survey, for instance, shows that consumers prefer to report failures via telephone, by a margin of nearly 6 to 1 over the Internet (CCMC 2017). This situation is surprising given today's availability of various online complaint channels. Researchers could investigate why customers still prefer the telephone as a complaint channel, how this preference differs across segments (e.g. age, culture), and why online complaint channels are not growing as quickly as might be expected.

Along similar lines, Microsoft's (2017) State of Global Customer Service report indicates that customers pick different channels to complain, and that channel choice moves from self-service interaction to live employee interaction depending on whether customers can solve the problems themselves. More research is needed into what facilitation truly means, and whether there is a hierarchy in complaint channel choice (e.g. social media as the ultimate channel for taking revenge if all other channels do not produce satisfactory results; Grégoire, Salle, and Tripp 2015). This situation also opens up the question whether the organization would consider a same complaint of a single customer via different channels as one complaint or as multiple complaints. The latter situation may occur when the organization's databases and systems are not sufficiently integrated and may cause additional frustration or anger among customers.

Furthermore, as most customers do not report failures (Davidow 2015), researchers should explore how organizations can actively *motivate* customers to share their feedback with the organization. Research on the actions organizations can take to stimulate complaints—beyond facilitation—is surprisingly scarce. In the following, therefore, we propose several response options related to compensation, favorable employee behavior, and organizational procedures that may motivate customers to report service failures.

First, researchers might examine whether organizations should compensate customers (e.g. money, loyalty points, gamification badges) for merely spotting failures and/or sharing their complaints. Compensation for complaining could infuse trust among complainers and provide a signal that the organization takes recovery seriously. Research could investigate whether compensation for complaining affects the number and the quality of the complaints and whether it triggers opportunistic behavior (Wirtz and McColl-Kennedy 2010).

Second, surprisingly little is known about how (favorable) employee behavior can stimulate customers to report failures. Future research might consider how employees may facilitate customer complaints by informally soliciting negative feedback (e.g. reaching out to customers and asking which aspects of certain services can be improved) or by detecting (non-)verbal customer reactions following the delivery of a service. To this end, researchers might consider the extent to which employees can use emotional technologies to detect and recognize emotions that signal discontent (Huang and Rust 2018).

Third, researchers may examine the extent to which signals of the organization's focus on service recovery can actually convince customers to report service failures. For example, Van Vaerenbergh, Larivière, and Vermeir (2012) suggest that organizations might engage in process recovery communication aimed at the entire customer base, including both complaining and non-complaining customers. Hence, this communication could serve as a signal to noncomplaining customers that the organization is actively using complaints to prevent customer problems, which might make them more likely to report failures.

In addition to motivating customers to report failures, organizations might use the pre-recovery phase to manage customer expectations about the remainder of the SRJ. In this regard, research might consider how communication covering common organizational responses in the subsequent recovery phase may act as a form of (psychological) compensation. For instance, guarantees represent a promise that the customer will be compensated by the organization in the recovery phase if the service is not sufficiently delivered (Hogreve and Gremler 2009). From a SRJ perspective, future research could examine whether the mere presence of a guarantee is able to mitigate the negative feelings customers experience following a service failure, and whether customers' perceptions of the presence of a guarantee and the process of invoking it affect their expectations for the subsequent phases of the journey. Even though Hogreve and Gremler (2009) called for a better understanding of the relationship between service guarantees and service recovery, few researchers have responded to this challenge.

Guarantees offer customers a promise that their problems will be resolved. However, some organizations choose the opposite path—claiming non-responsibility for failures even before the SRJ starts. Even though such action seems not recommended, major companies like Facebook and Twitter claim non-accountability for certain failures. Research should investigate the extent to which such claims affect customer perceptions, and how such proactive excuses may inhibit customers from reporting failures to an organization or affect customer expectations for the remainder of the SRJ.

The recovery phase

The introduction of the SRJ perspective points to several areas for further research in the recovery phase. First, customers respond favorably if they are able to address service failures themselves (i.e. customer participation; Dong, Evans, and Zhou 2008). Self-service options that enable customers to resolve issues on their own are growing rapidly, and several IT organizations are investing heavily in developing Artificial Intelligent (AI) applications for this purpose. At the same time, some studies suggest that many consumers still prefer to interact with employees when something goes wrong (De Keyser, Schepers, and Konus 2015). Both of these aspects carry implications for how organizations design customer and employee roles in the SRJ. How can customers be prepared for their own role in the recovery? How should companies design SRJs to ensure seamless transitions between self-service and the employee-assisted experience? How can organizations foster interactional justice through technology?

Furthermore, research should investigate whether providing customers with information tools (e.g. websites, apps) that keep them informed about efforts to resolve the problem affects customer outcomes along the SRJ. Research has found that complaining customers might display a high need for information and clarification (Mittal, Huppertz and Khare 2008). The provision of information throughout the journey might help satisfy this need.

The post-recovery phase

Although some research acknowledges the existence of a service recovery paradox, past research shows that customers do not fully regain trust after a seemingly effective recovery (Basso and Pizzutti 2016). Rebuilding trust should be a major goal for organizations. This observation highlights the need to better understand how the post-recovery phase might rebuild trust and relationships. For example, who should communicate with the customer? What should be the timing, the frequency, the content and the tone-of-voice of the communication? Organizations typically assume that the customer-relationship manager is responsible for this communication that has never been challenged. Customers may, for example, have more appreciation for follow-up communication from the employee who first handled the complaint.

The post-recovery phase is also an ideal moment for the organization to look back and improve those processes that caused the failure to occur (Michel, Bowen, and Johnston 2009). Although researchers outline the benefits of process recovery communication, the ways in which organizations can engage in problem prevention are not well-understood. As an extensive discussion of process recovery from an organizational point of view falls beyond the scope of this paper, we gladly refer the reader to Van Vaerenbergh and Orsingher (2016) for several future research directions. From a customer perspective, little is known about whether customers want to play a more active role in the process recovery. Customers complain not only because they want their own problems resolved, but also to ensure that the organization improves its processes so that the same problems do not occur again (e.g. CCMC 2017). This observation raises the questions of whether customers want to be actively involved in such endeavors, how organizations can motivate customers to do so effectively, and whether process recoveries developed together with customers have a greater impact on customer outcomes than process recoveries handled solely by the organization.

As shown in Figure 1, research on compensation and favorable employee behavior in the post-recovery phase has yet to emerge. One area that is of particular interest relates to organizations offering a second form of compensation in the post-recovery phase. Even if an initial failure has been fixed, an organization may reach out to customers with additional apologies and/or compensation (e.g. the free use of a service for a certain period). More research is needed into how such activities affect customers and when feelings of overcompensation might arise. In addition, future research can examine the consequences of compensating customers for effective process-improvement ideas resulting from their complaints. Davidow (2015), for instance, suggests letting customers try an improved product or service following their complaint to demonstrate the end result of their complaint.

Another observation is that not every SRJ results in a favorable outcome for the customer. Customers experiencing a double deviation might seek revenge (e.g. Surachartkumtonkun, McColl-Kennedy, and Patterson 2015). A double deviation might require the start of a second SRJ, which may further interrupt and/or co-exist with the customer's regular journey and initial SRJ. Few studies examine how organizations can recover from such situations or focus on "trust" recovery options (Basso and Pizzutti 2016). Future research may examine how a double-deviation SRJ unfolds over time, how the organizational responses needed to recover from a double deviation differ from those needed to recover from a service failure alone, and how many restarts of a SRJ customers can bear.

Understanding interrelationships between the regular journey and the service recovery journey

The shift to considering service recovery as a journey raises an additional set of questions that transcend any one phase in the SRJ. More precisely, conceptualizing a link between the customer's regular journey and the SRJ and vice versa introduces unresolved issues, which we detail in the following paragraphs.

The impact of the service recovery journey on the customer's regular journey

When the SRJ implies a temporary pause in or continuation of the regular customer journey, we need to understand how that regular journey is affected. A service failure temporarily raises customer's expectations, thereby narrowing the zone of tolerance (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1993). Research shows that customers update their overall assessment of an organization after a service recovery and that expectations have an immediate but declining effect on satisfaction over time (Oliver and Burke 1999).

However, this body of research has predominantly focused on the level of post-experience customer evaluations. Little is known about if and how customers update their expectations for the remainder of the customer journey following service failure and recovery episodes. Do they process subsequent service encounters as if nothing happened, or do they focus on different aspects of the service encounter? Do they feel entitled to receive a better treatment during the remainder of the regular journey? Do they become more sensitive to signals of potential failures? Similarly, we know little about whether customers change their own behaviors in the remainder of their regular journeys. Do they put more effort into their own participation in order to gain more control over the outcome of the encounter? If so, organizations can devote more attention (e.g. put more emphasis on feedback) to customers who have gone through a SRJ in subsequent service encounters.

The impact of the regular journey on the customer's service recovery journey

To date, we have limited insights about the relationship between the customer's regular journey and the SRJ. We believe that two aspects of this relationship need further investigation. The first concerns the stage of the regular journey (i.e., pre-purchase, purchase, post-purchase; Lemon and Verhoef 2016) during which the failure occurs. The failure occurred in the pre-purchase stage in 1% of the studies we reviewed, in the purchase stage in 54% of the studies, and in the post-purchase stage in 20% of the studies. We could not identify the particular stage in which the failure occurred in 25% of the studies.

The stage in which the failure occurs might influence how customers process information. For example, Lee and Ariely's (2006) shopping goals theory suggests that consumers construe the goals of their shopping experience in more abstract (concrete) terms when they are in the first (second) stage of the shopping process. Should organizations respond differently to service failures depending on when a failure happens in the regular journey? Recovery research along these lines might benefit from incorporating theories on customers' intertemporal choices and preferences (Berns, Laibson, and Loewenstein 2007).

Of particular interest is the apparent lack of research on failures in the pre-purchase stage. The dominant view on service recovery is that organizational responses to service failures are triggered by customer complaints on the core service encounter (Voorhees et al. 2017). However, the pre-purchase stage affects customers' decision-making process (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). Besides the recognition of customer needs, this stage involves searching information, making initial contact with the organization and familiarizing oneself with the firm's offering (Voorhees et al. 2017). Failures in the pre-purchase phase might remain unnoticed to service providers as customers rather quit the process than making an effort to complain. Thus, future research should explore how organizations can uncover and rectify failures in the early stage of the service experience. The use of analytics to detect and prevent failures in the pre-purchase phase seems recommended.

In addition, recovery research might consider how the customer's goals in the regular journey inform the SRJ. The customer experience literature views customer journeys as driven by a set of distinct (sub)goals (i.e. desired end-states) that drive customer actions and interactions with organizations (De Keyser et al. 2015). As such, the integration of the customer experience literature with the service recovery literature positions goal theory as a complement to existing theories that might expand our current understanding of recovery.

Our synthesis reveals that researchers mainly approach service recovery from exchange theory perspectives, such as social exchange theory (i.e. equity theory, justice theory; e.g. Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999), resource exchange theory (e.g. Roschk and Gelbrich 2014), or social resource theory (e.g. Roschk and Gelbrich 2017). The dominant view is that a resource loss (e.g. a loss of money) should be offset with a similar resource (i.e. monetary compensation; e.g. Roschk and Gelbrich 2014). Although these theoretical perspectives have made a valuable contribution to service recovery theory and practice, Van Vaerenbergh and Orsingher (2016) suggests that one theoretical framework might be insufficient to fully capture the complexities associated with service recovery. Goal theory is complementary to exchange theories. Diener and Fujita (1995), for instance, show that people may have different levels of reliance on and appraisals of resources depending on their goals. Resources serving as a means to attain certain goals result in satisfaction. In contrast, people have negative or neutral perceptions of resources that do not contribute to the attainment of a goal.

Given that a failure deviates or interrupts the regular journey, customers may be unable to achieve their goals. This lack of goal attainment can have a significant impact on the customer's emotional reaction and on his or her motivation to pursue the journey (Touré-Tillery and Fishbach 2011). Goal systems theory (e.g. Kruglanski et al. 2002) could inform researchers about the structure of goals that are hindered by a service failure.

Organizational responses to service failures developed with the aim of satisfying customers through social and resource exchange may differ from responses developed with the aim of helping customers attain their goals. For example, a service failure (e.g. a flight cancellation) engenders a negative consequence (i.e. not being able to take advantage of vacation days) that blocks a desired goal (i.e. make the family happy). The negative emotion associated with the failure is related to the goal blockage rather than to the flight cancellation. The typical recovery for a missed connection as a result of a flight cancellation, as informed by exchange theories, is to rebook the customer on another flight. However, the real challenge for the organization is to help the customer attain his or her main goal (i.e. make the family happy) rather than to focus only on the new service (i.e. book another flight), and to understand and help attain the set of related goals that emerge from having experienced the service failure (i.e. relax and make the best out of the vacation days). Furthermore, people taking a flight to go on vacation or attend a wedding may require different recoveries (e.g. stay one day longer at the destination in order to execute the original travel plans; have access to the business lounge to take a shower and dress appropriately; have a taxi booked to reach the location as soon as possible after arrival). This goal heterogeneity is not explicitly modeled in prior research on service recovery and represents a major challenge for future research.

To this end, the application of the rich literature on how people set, attain, and evaluate goals (e.g. Austin and Vancouver 1996; Kruglanksi et al. 2002) to service recovery issues can expand our knowledge about service recovery and raises several pertinent questions. How do customers set goals for their SRJs, and which sub-goals emerge as a result of progressing along those journeys? Do goal-based responses to service failures result in better customer evaluations than exchange-based responses? How can organizations cost-effectively accommodate the potentially significant goal heterogeneity during service recovery? What is the best approach to understanding the large variety of customer goals?

TOWARD A MORE IMPACTFUL RESEARCH PROGRAM

To ensure the impact of the above research agenda, we discuss six considerations service recovery researchers should keep in mind in order to craft a more impactful research program: (1) combining organizational response options, (2) accounting for heterogeneity, (3) adoption of behavioral and financial metrics, (4) studying of complex interactions, (5) exploration of organizational perspectives, and (6) usage of different methodologies.

Combining organizational response options in service recovery research

Research testing interaction effects among organizational responses is still fairly limited and is typically restricted to the manipulation of up to three different responses. Hogreve, Bilstein and Mandl (2017), for instance, find that an apology and a display of favorable employee behavior together with timely re-performance of the service makes customers less likely to demand additional monetary compensation; while Wirtz and Mattila (2004) find that offering compensation in a rude manner and without an apology may leave consumers feeling “bought off” by the organization. These spillover effects are also evident in conjunction with other recovery options. Conlon and Murray (1996) show that an explanation is more effective when combined with coupons or other types of compensation. In addition, accepting responsibility for a service failure (i.e. justification with an apology) results in higher levels of customer outcomes than when the organization simply makes excuses. Bradley and Sparks

(2012) find that providing excuses and apologies result in higher satisfaction levels than justification or referential accounts. Xu, et al. (2014) show that customer participation in service recovery has little effect on customer outcomes if customers need to initiate the participation in service recovery themselves. Customers who are heard during service recovery are less likely to demand compensation (Roggeveen, Grewal, and Tsiros 2012).

Such empirical studies are especially powerful as they highlight how various organizational response options interact. In this way, they hold significant managerial value in guiding business practice to set up 'right' combinations of recovery efforts. Future research is necessary to fully understand the relationships between more elaborate sets of organizational responses to service failures along the SRJ.

Accounting for heterogeneity in service recovery research

The situational nature of service failures and recovery warrants a further investigation of heterogeneity in service recovery. Researchers may account for failure-related (e.g., failure type, failure source), organization-related (e.g., industry type) and customer-related (e.g., age, gender, culture) heterogeneity. While research has devoted a lot of attention to failure-related moderators, we want to emphasize two important factors in particular.

First, research should account for industry-specific effects. Morgeson et al.'s (2018) comprehensive study on complaint handling outcomes demonstrates that the strength of the relationship between perceptions of complaint handling and customer loyalty varies significantly across industries. Some industries (e.g. financial services) register a larger impact of complaint handling in comparison to other industries (e.g. retail). From their findings, it is clear that market concentration and industry competitiveness need to be modeled explicitly in service recovery. The less competitive an industry, the less an organization typically invests in complaint handling. Similarly, customer service recovery expectations are also shaped by the organization's positioning within an industry. If an organization competes on price, customers might be satisfied with less extensive recoveries. Therefore, service recovery should be understood in light of the industry setting.

Second, as service providers are increasingly confronted with a multicultural customer base, more research should account for the impact of specific cultural values. Not only are many Western societies becoming more ethnically diverse, causing service providers to deal with a plethora of customers with different cultural backgrounds, many organizations are also investing to gain global market share, targeting rapidly growing economies around the world (Kumar et al. 2013). More cross-cultural research could assist managers in understanding cross-cultural variation at the individual level in service recovery expectations and developing cultural-specific recovery procedures.

Behavioral and financial metrics in service recovery research

Virtually all studies on service recovery rely on perceptual metrics, such as perceived justice, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. To have a stronger impact on practice, we advocate the use of behavioral metrics, like customer churn/retention and customer lifetime value. Such examinations might be particularly important for demonstrating the return on investments in recovery at the individual customer level and creating more awareness of the importance of service recovery throughout the organization.

At the organization level, more research examining the effect of service recovery on financial outcomes is necessary. For example, event studies of the effects of service recovery on abnormal stock market returns may be particularly useful for understanding the financial returns of service recovery (see Rasoulian et al. 2017 for an initial example). It is clear that if recovery efforts are not justified by their financial returns, then the SRJ will not be a priority for management. Currently there is a dearth of academic research on the return of recovery investment. If service recovery is to become a core part of any organization's customer-focused efforts, new models for calculating the return-on-recovery along the SRJ need to be developed. The return-on-quality (Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham 1995) and return-on-marketing (Rust, Lemon, and Zeithaml 2004) frameworks may provide excellent grounds for tackling this challenge.

Complex interactions in service recovery

Studies on organizational responses to service failures show little variation in study contexts and they mostly focus on “simple” dyadic settings. More specifically, the extant studies focus on restaurants (23.5%), hotels (19.6%), offline and online retail (18.3%), and airlines (10.4%). While service failures are common in these settings, the significant increase in new business contexts in the modern economy requires that researchers focus on more complex interactions and account for multi-actor complexity in recovery processes.

Services are increasingly delivered through complex service networks that are composed of multiple actors that contribute to service exchange. The overall quality of the service depends on the variety of network partners, with failures potentially affecting the whole network (Tax, McCutcheon, and Wilkinson 2013). Given this complexity, the party responsible for service failures may not be readily apparent to customers. As a result, customers may erroneously attribute a failure to a certain actor or blame all actors in the network (Allen, Brady, and Voorhees 2014). Researchers should therefore work to understand the impact and roles of the various actors involved in service networks in case of a failure. Here, sharing economy contexts as well as healthcare settings might provide fertile research grounds.

Service recovery from an organizational perspective

Most studies approached service recovery using customers as the unit of analysis. Significantly less research has considered organizations or employees as the unit of analysis (Van Vaerenbergh and Orsingher 2016). Perhaps one of the most fundamental questions to address is why so many organizations fail at service recovery (Michel, Bowen, and Johnston 2009). The dominant picture is that many organizations still seem to consider service recovery to be a necessary evil, only pay lip service to a true customer orientation, consider it less relevant for their industry and/or do not even bother to invest in it at all (Davidow 2015). The exact reasons behind the apparent contempt toward service recovery are not fully established, yet the literature offers several suggestions. Davidow (2018) suggests that organizations are too focused on efficiency (as reflected in the key performance indicators or the use of cheap technology to replace value-adding employees), while instead service recovery requires effective processes. Morgeson et al. (2018) argue that much of managerial recovery literature may be too focused on describing best practices that are erroneously considered as universally applicable. Given the complexity of the service industry, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to deal with service recovery.

The fact that after decades of research on service recovery we are still unable to provide a theory-driven, empirically verified answer to the question why a significant number of organizations still fail at guiding customers successfully through their SRJ reinforces the notion that more research taking an organizational perspective needs to be done. Researchers may seek to uncover why organizations like Amazon, Zappos and the Ritz Carlton have developed such a strong reputation for service recovery, and why some industries perform much better in service recovery than others (Morgeson et al. 2018).

Methodological innovations in service recovery research

Service recovery researchers typically rely on scenario-based experiments (55.7% of studies) or retrospective surveys (38.7% of studies) to test the effectiveness of various organizational responses to service failures. While these methods have several merits, they are also prone to certain weaknesses. For example, scenarios "may not capture the richness of an actual service encounter" (Tojib and Khajehzadeh, 2014, p.1552). Researchers may therefore need to embrace a wider set of methodologies. More qualitative work, including in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, or laddering techniques could help to bring more depth into service recovery research. More precisely, in-depth interviews can aid to derive a more complete understanding of the different phases of the SRJ, and of how customers transition from one phase to another. Discourse analysis might be helpful in understanding the content of customers' conversational and written "reality" of the service failure and recovery. Laddering techniques can inform researchers about the set of goals that the service failure has blocked, and the service recovery should help to re-attain.

At the same time, researchers would benefit from more advanced quantitative approaches. For instance, conjoint analyses can assist in finding optimal combinations of organizational response options along the SRJ. Text mining approaches may help researchers to analyze the growing pool of email- and online textual complaints datasets. Herein lies enormous potential to uncover specifics on customer emotions and behavior along the SRJ. Next, customer repurchase behavior and churn modeling could help service recovery researchers to demonstrate the financial impact of good recovery interventions. Finally, neuroscientific tools could help uncover unconscious customer reactions to service failure and recovery actions. While customers are not aware of these reactions, they may significantly impact customer behavior.

Moreover, as online customer tracking, the connection of Internet of Things devices, and machine-to-machine communication enhance the availability of big data, recovery researchers will have to rely on machine-learning techniques to handle such data and find ways to use that data to predict and deal with service failures and recovery. Finally, researchers may need to focus more on data-collection methods that allow for information to be accurately captured across the whole SRJ. Surachartkumtonkun, McColl-Kennedy, and Patterson (2015) adopt a Critical Incident Technique (CIT) for sequential events, which could be useful for capturing dynamics across a SRJ. In particular, the rise of mobile diaries that capture real-time data and measure attitudes and experiences in the moment may offer significant untapped potential for service recovery researchers.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The SRJ perspective provides practitioners with a new lens to evaluate their current practices. In the following section, we outline several touchstones that managers may use to evaluate their recovery systems and to pinpoint opportunities for improvement.

First, managers can use our synthesis to assess current organizational responses to service failures along the SRJ and update them if necessary. They may also use our synthesis in their employee training programs to ensure exhaustive coverage of the potential organizational responses to service failures.

Second, acknowledgement of the close connection between the regular customer journey and the SRJ can help make service recovery a managerial priority, especially as customer experience management is high on most organizational agendas. The close connection between both journeys suggests that if organizations wish to deliver compelling customer experiences by designing complete customer journeys, they should almost automatically concurrently design a SRJ and manage it as a core business activity.

Third, the recognition of service recovery as a journey requires organizations to move beyond “recovery as a single event” toward the development of systematic recovery management systems that seek to rebuild customer trust in the organization. A SRJ perspective implies that recovery comprises a series of actions that connect the customer and the organization with the aim of resolving a failure. For instance, the National Customer Rage Survey reports an average of 4.1 contacts per recovery (CCMC 2017). In optimizing the SRJ’s flow, the consistency and connectivity of touchpoints are critical design factors (Homburg, Jozić, and Kuehnl 2017). Recovery consistency implies that organizational responses match across the SRJ, which requires that every actor within the system acts in accordance with what is required and allowed.

Considering recovery as a journey also requires organizations to functionally integrate touchpoints across the journey to ensure seamless transitions between them (Homburg, Jozić, and Kuehnl 2017). This integration is particularly important given the diverse channels customers use at various points along the SRJ. For example, customers experiencing a problem with their Internet services may use a self-service application on their mobile phones and a Frequently Asked Questions page on the service-provider's website in an attempt to resolve the problem themselves. They may then call the contact center to inform the service provider about the failure. They may then be transferred from one contact center agent to a more specialized agent, and have a technician come over to resolve the problem. In such cases, customers often have to explain the problem more than once. Connectivity is crucial for enhancing the flow, efficiency and speed of the recovery process - one of the core problems reported in relation to recovery programs (CCMC 2017). The need for connectivity also requires organizations to alleviate departmental silos to let information float freely between different departments and employees involved in the SRJ. Lack of connectivity may for instance lead to situations in which customers who are still in recovery, receive promotions to purchase a service or product that just failed on them. The growing availability of AI-applications that can support the service frontline in real-time may assist service organizations to this end.

Organizations must therefore be able to systematically monitor, track and disseminate customer data across the SRJ. Many organizations send a survey after a problem is resolved, thereby polling for information on customer satisfaction with the recovery. A simple step forward might be to expand these satisfaction surveys to include measures of customer satisfaction with each phase in the SRJ. More advanced organizations might set up structures and develop tools that monitor customer behavior across touchpoints and offer up-to-date dashboards that enable real-time recovery management. A performance-monitoring system should gather a longitudinal dataset that allows for prediction of the likelihood of success and failure in the various stages of the SRJ.

Fourth, recovery systems must be context sensitive (De Keyser et al. 2015). The goal heterogeneity underlying customer journeys requires the organization to allow employees/technologies to alter recovery actions to fit customers' situations. The importance of this design factor should not be underestimated, as complainers often indicate a need for personalized interactions (CCMC 2017). Contextualization requires extensive training of employees to enable them to recognize and act upon relevant situational factors (Davidow 2015). AI technologies may assist employees or even directly engage with customers. For instance, by making use of a wide set of contextual information (e.g. location, purchase history, emotional state), chatbots are able to enhance the success of recovery efforts by supporting live agents in offering personalized responses to service failures (Hyken 2017).

Finally, the dynamic nature of the SRJ also illustrates the need to continuously adapt organizational processes and touchpoints to prevent failures (Homburg, Jozić, and Kuehnl 2017). Customers' complaints may reveal the goals they were pursuing in their regular journeys, thus providing rich insights into customers' goal heterogeneity. Notably, customers often complain to prevent companies from making the same mistake in the future (CCMC 2017), which makes problem prevention highly important. Enriching recovery data with additional customer insights gained from observational data and, potentially, the participation of complaining customers on advisory boards (e.g. public-participation projects) may be important for enhancing both the regular customer journey and the SRJ. Likewise, the rise of IoT applications may enable organizations to proactively engage in problem prevention and adapt touchpoints accordingly. The continuous flow of data from sensors may be used to predict and prevent upcoming failures, thereby developing a competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

Researchers have focused on identifying and understanding appropriate responses to service failures for many decades. This paper attempts to broaden the scope of this research domain by conceptualizing service recovery as a journey that involves multiple phases. This perspective offers a fresh way of seeing and researching this phenomenon, and we believe this effort was necessary. As Goldstein et al. (2002, p.129) note, "the observed data analysis in service recovery research has not been guided by the Gestalt of the service concept. Instead, the analysis has focused on identifying categories of recovery efforts that are linked to satisfaction." With this paper, we have attempted to break free from traditional approaches to service recovery, which focus on customer reactions to a set of organizational response options without conceptualizing failure and recovery as an entire journey. The SRJ perspective's contribution is that it recognizes the extended nature of any service recovery, and helps identifying how researchers and managers should apply and design the various response options over the SRJ to ensure a more effective recovery experience. We hope that our efforts to reorient thinking about organizational responses to service failures from a static perspective to a dynamic one help to improve service recovery theory and practice.

ENDNOTES

[1] While any service failure initiates a SRJ, this journey does not necessarily encompass input from the focal organization. A failure may trigger a ruminative process in which the failure lingers in the customer's mind for an extended period of time (Strizhakova, Tsarenko, and Ruth 2012). Customers may also seek to recover from the failure by talking to relatives, friends, and/or others, omitting any contact with the focal organization. In this paper, we focus on SRJs that involve the focal organization.

[2] We do not intend to provide an extensive elaboration of how customer reactions to service failures unfold over time. We refer the reader to Surachartkumtonkun, McColl-Kennedy and Patterson's (2015) study on how and why customers' extreme negative emotion and behavior changes over time as customers lose more and more personal (e.g. self-esteem) and economic (e.g. time) resources over the course of service failure and *ineffective* recovery episodes. Instead, this paper synthesizes responses to service failures in light of a SRJ, with the aim of identifying how organizations might provide *effective* recoveries.

[3] We do not recommend using these insights as a viable strategy. The service recovery paradox only affects those customers that complain to the organization, which is typically a minority of all customers experiencing a service failure.

[4] The literature also identifies a set of circumstances and actions that may help organizations to buffer customers' initial reactions to a service failure. These circumstances and actions are not classified as part of the SRJ as they represent preemptive actions that target the organization's entire (or partial) customer base *before* a failure occurs. They include brand equity (Brady et al. 2008), corporate social responsibility (Bolton and Mattila 2015), the presence of religious symbols in the servicescape (Newton, Wong, and Cassidy 2018), the activation of customer power (Sembada, Tsarenko, and Tojib 2016), rapport between customers and employees (Worsfold, Worsfold, and Bradley 2007), or the presence of warnings about potential service failures before the service is delivered (i.e. inoculation; Mikolon, Quaiser, and Wieseke 2015), among others.

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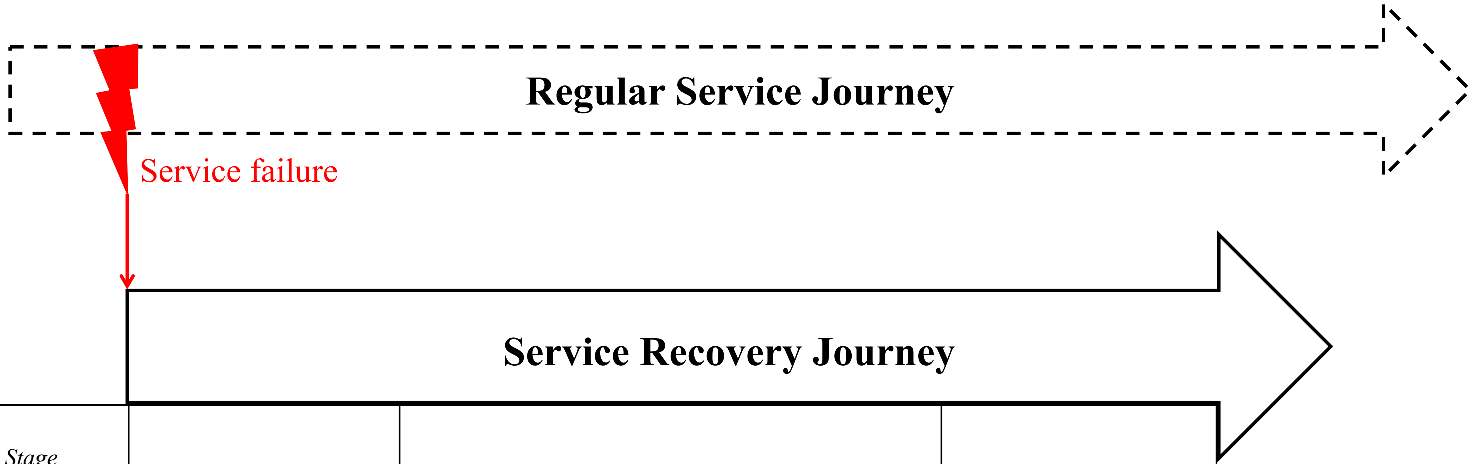
Figure 1: A framework of the service recovery journey



Stage / *Type of organizational response*	**Pre-Recovery**	**Recovery**	**Post-Recovery**
Compensation	-	• Immediate monetary compensation • Delayed monetary compensation • New/exchanged goods • New/reperformed service • Apology • Employee reprimand	-
Favorable employee behavior	-	• Excuse • Justification • Referential account • Credibility feedback • Courtesy • Effort • Empathy • Willingness to listen	-
Organizational procedures	• Facilitation • Initiation	• Customer participation • Employee empowerment • Flexibility • Recovery time	• Follow-up • Process recovery communication

Table 1: Organizational responses to service failures identified in prior literature (in alphabetical order)

Organizational response	Definition	Representative study	% of studies
Apology	An expression of remorse for a negative event	Liao (2007)	53.3%
Customer participation	An opportunity for customers to shape or personalize the recovery through joint collaboration with the organization	Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Grewal (2012)	10.0%
Courtesy	Behavior that demonstrates politeness and respect	Liao (2007)	16.1%
Credibility feedback	Communication with customers indicating that the organization will try to avoid the cause of the failure in the future	Johnston and Fern (1999)	7.8%
Delayed monetary compensation	Currency or token representing a quantifiable amount of money to be provided in the future (e.g. voucher, store credit)	Roschk and Gelbrich (2014)	40.0%
Effort	The amount of energy the service employee puts into solving the problem	Mostafa, Lages, and Sääksjärvi 2014	11.3%
Empathy	Behavior that demonstrates concern for the customer's situation	Tax, Brown, and Chandrasherakan (1998)	12.2%
Employee empowerment	Frontline employees have the authority to solve customer problems	Hocutt and Stone (1998)	4.8%
Excuse	An attempt to absolve the organization of responsibility for the adverse outcome	Wang, Mattila, and Bartlett (2009)	10.0%
Facilitation	Policies, procedures, and structures that an organization has in place to support customers engaging in complaints and communication	Davidow (2003)	14.3%
Flexibility	Treatment of customers that ranges from similar treatment according to organizational policies and procedures to treatment on a case-by-case basis	Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001)	3.0%
Follow-up	After a recovery encounter, asking the customer whether the organization satisfactorily resolved the problem	Mostafa, Lages, and Sääksjärvi 2014	3.9%
Immediate monetary compensation	Currency or token representing a quantifiable amount of money provided in the present (e.g. discount, money back)	Roschk and Gelbrich (2014)	43.9%
Initiation	Proactively executing recovery before the customer complains	Xu et al. (2014)	2.6%
Justification	Admission of responsibility aimed at legitimizing the organization's actions on the basis of shared needs and/or higher goals	Bradley and Sparks (2012)	25.7%
New/replacement goods	Exchange/replacement of a concrete object	Roschk and Gelbrich (2014)	13.0%
New/reperformed service	Exchange/replacement of a concrete activity	Roschk and Gelbrich (2014)	24.3%
Process recovery communication	Communication with customers indicating what the organization has done to prevent the failure in the future	Van Vaerenbergh, Larivière, and Vermeir (2012)	2.6%
Referential account	Explicitly invoking downward comparisons with other customers in an attempt to minimize the perceived criticality of the failure	Bonifield and Cole (2008)	3.5%
Recovery time	The timespan between the initial customer complaint and the final resolution offered by the organization	Hogreve, Bilstein, and Mandl (2017)	20.4%
Willingness to listen	Employees allow customers to explain their failure experience	Nguyen and McColl-Kennedy (2003)	8.7%

Table 2: Research agenda for the service recovery journey

Topic	Research Questions
Response options in the pre-recovery phase	**Compensation** • To what extent may guarantees mitigate customers' negative feelings following a service failure? • Does (the presence of) a guarantee affect customer expectations in subsequent phases of the SRJ? • Do non-accountability claims affect customer perceptions about and complaint behavior to the organization? • Does offering (non-)monetary compensation stimulate complaints? Does this compensation affect the number and quality of complaints? Does it trigger opportunistic behavior?
	Favorable employee behavior • To what extent can employee empathy/willingness to listen proactively stimulate customer complaints? • Can emotional technologies help detect customer discontent? How should such technologies be deployed?
	Organizational procedures • How should organizations proactively communicate about service failures? • Does proactively initiating the recovery process enhance and/or diminish customer trust? • How do customers choose among different complaint channels? Is there a hierarchy? • How do customers navigate across the various multi-channel complaint mechanisms? • Why are customers reluctant to use digital complaint channels?
Response options in the recovery phase (*)	**Organizational procedures** • How can customers be prepared to take on their role in service recovery? • How should companies take customers' preferences for self-service and employee-assisted recovery into account? • How can organizations foster interactional justice in both technology and employee-based recovery encounters? • How can organizations satisfy customers' needs for information control throughout the SRJ?
Response options in the post-recovery phase	**Compensation** • Should organizations offer follow-up compensation? If so, when? What are the effects of follow-up compensation on customer outcomes? When do feelings of overcompensation arise? • Should organizations compensate customers for effective process-improvement ideas? • What compensation options are critical for recovering from a double deviation?
	Favorable employee behavior • Do customers appreciate follow-up communication more from employees involved in the SRJ or managers? • If there are multiple employees involved in the SJR, which employee would be preferred by the customer? • When and how should employees or managers invest extra effort in the relationship with the customer after the recovery? • What employee behaviors are critical for recovering from a double deviation?
	Organizational procedures • What should be the content, the frequency, and the tone of follow-up communication with customers? • To what extent does follow-up communication bring back negative feelings related to the failure and/or positive feelings following the recovery? • How should organizations engage in process recovery communication? What different formats might exist? • To what extent can customers be involved in complaint-based process improvements? What is the impact on satisfaction and loyalty? • What recovery procedures are critical for recovering from a double deviation?
Understanding interrelationships between the regular journey and the SRJ	**The impact of the SRJ on the regular customer journey** • How does going through an SRJ affect the remainder of the customer experience (e.g. expectations)? • Do customers seek to gain more control over the outcome of encounters that follow a SRJ?
	The impact of the regular customer journey on the SRJ • Should organizations respond differently to failures depending on when the failure happens in the regular customer journey? • How do customers set goals for the SRJ? Which (sub)goals emerge along the SRJ? • Do goal-based responses to service failures result in better customer evaluations than exchange-based responses? • How can organizations accommodate significant goal heterogeneity in service recovery attempts? • What is the best approach for understanding the variety of goals underlying the regular journey and the SRJ?

* The extant service recovery literature has focused extensively on understanding compensation and favorable employee behavior in the recovery phase of the SRJ. Hence, our research agenda focuses on developing knowledge related to organizational procedures in the recovery phase.

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WEB APPENDIX A: IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION OF ARTICLES

We performed an online literature search to identify studies examining organizational responses to service failures. We searched for articles in the various databases (i.e. Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and Science Direct) using the following keywords: 'service recovery', 'service failure', 'customer complaining', 'customer complaint', 'complaint handling', 'complaint management', and 'customer dissatisfaction'. We also conducted an issue-by-issue search of journals frequently reporting service recovery studies: *Journal of Service Research, International Journal of Service Industry Management/Journal of Service Management, Journal of Services Marketing, Journal of Service Theory and Practice/Managing Service Quality, Service Business, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research,* and *International Journal of Hospitality Management.* Finally, we performed a reference analysis of prominent articles in the literature (e.g. Davidow 2003, Gelbrich and Roschk 2011a; Orsingher, Valentini, and de Angelis 2010; Smith, Bolton and Wagner 1999). This process generated more than 500 articles for review, covering the period 1975 to the beginning of 2018.

In the next stage, we selected articles for inclusion using the following criteria. First, we only included articles which have gone through a rigorous review process, thus eliminating business press articles, doctoral dissertations, master theses, and conference proceedings listed in the databases. This first step narrowed down the number of articles for review to 344. In a second step, we read these articles in detail. Given our focus on organizational responses to service failures, articles had to deal with discrete organizational responses after service failures. 110 articles were excluded as they focused only on customer reactions to service failures, examined perceived justice without studying specific recovery options, examined the effects of service recovery *in general,* or examined employee or organization perspectives to service recovery. We also had to exclude four articles from our database as we could not retrieve a hard copy or digital copy of the article. We ultimately retained 230 articles studying discrete organizational responses to service failures.

Next, we read all 230 articles to identify the different response options. Articles were coded in terms of the specific organizational response option(s) under examination, the customer outcomes used to evaluate the effectiveness of the recovery option (e.g. perceived justice, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty), and study characteristics (e.g. method, service setting). Afterwards, we listed all potential response options identified in literature. Studies examining the same organizational responses under different terms (e.g. apology and psychological compensation, compensation and atonement) were grouped together based on their definition. We assigned labels to the variables depending on the frequency of use throughout the literature (e.g. psychological compensation was coded under the more commonly used term 'apology'). As mentioned in the paper, we identified 22 different organizational responses to service failures in literature (see Table 1 in the paper).

Finally, the four authors classified the 22 organizational response options identified in prior literature along the pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery phases of the recovery journey based on theoretical grounds. In a next step, the four authors further subdivided the organizational response options within each phase of the recovery journey using Gelbrich and Roschk's (2011) three-dimensional classification of organizational responses to service failures (i.e. compensation, favorable employee behavior, and organizational procedures). This resulted in a 3 (pre-recovery, recovery, post-recovery) by 3 (compensation, favorable employee behavior, organizational procedures) classification of organizational response options reported in extent literature (see Figure 1 in the paper). The intercoder reliability for classifying the 22 response options in the 3 by 3 framework, calculated as Krippendorff's alpha (see Hayes and Krippendorff 2007 for more information) suggested a high level of agreement among the four coders (> 90%). Inconsistencies were resolved through discussion.

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WEB APPENDIX B: LIST OF RETAINED ARTICLES

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