Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERCEIVED JUSTICE AND SERVICE RECOVERY OUTCOMES BY MEANS OF PLS-SEM[1]

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Abstract

Objective: Service sector is a very important and fast-growing industry in the global era. Most firms work hard to satisfy their customers by providing high quality service in order to keep them happy and to differentiate from their competitors. Although the service companies try their best, it is quite hard for them to provide 100% error-free service. Implying efficient service recovery strategies is a must for service firms due to the fact that service failures are inevitable and occur at some point of the service encounter. Successful service recovery strategies mostly rely on whether the customers perceive them as fair or not. Thus, the concept of perceived justice which has three dimensions (distributional, procedural and interactional) is very important for the customers for evaluating service recovery. This study aims to explore the relationships between perceived justice and service recovery outcomes and suggest strategies for service firms.

Materials and Methods: A convenience sampling method was used in the research. In order to test the relationships among dimensions of perceived justice (distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice) and satisfaction, repurchase intention and positive word of mouth, a research model was developed based on the literature. PLS-SEM was conducted to analyze the data.

Results: The results showed that procedural and interactional justice had positive effects on the satisfaction and satisfaction leads to repurchase intentions and positive word of mouth. Various strategies were proposed for service managers in order to improve the effectiveness of management strategies.

Conclusion: Service firms need to pay attention for their service recovery processes and the behaviors of their frontline personel in order to satisfy their customers after a service failure. Satisfied customers may increase the probability of having new customers for the firm by word of mouth.

Key Words: Justice theory, Service Failure, Service Recovery, PLS-SEM

ALGILANAN ADALET VE HİZMET TELAFİSİ ARDILLARI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİLERİN PLS-SEM İLE ARAŞTIRILMASI

Öz

Amaç: Hizmet sektörü günümüzde oldukça önemli ve hızlı büyüyen bir endüstri haline gelmiştir. Birçok işletme müşterilerini tatmin etmek ve rakiplerinden farklılaşabilmek için kaliteli hizmet sunmaya gayret göstermektedir. Hizmet işletmeleri ellerinden gelenin en iyisini yapsa dahi, tamamen hatasız hizmet sunmak oldukça zordur. Hizmet hatalarının kaçınılmaz olmasından dolayı etkili hizmet telafisi stratejileri uygulamak hizmet işletmeleri için çok önemlidir. Hizmet telafisi stratejilerinin başarısı genellikle müşterilerin hizmet telafisi uygulamalarını ne kadar adil olarak algıladığı ile ilgilidir. Bu nedenle algılanan adaletin üç boyutunun

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(dağıtım, süreç ve etkileşim) hizmet telafisinin değerlendirilmesinde önemli rol oynadığı söylenebilir. Bu çalışma, algılanan adalet ile hizmet telafisi sonuçları arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesine ve araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulgular ışığında hizmet işletmelerine strateji önerilerinde bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.
Gereç ve Yöntem: Araştırmada tesadüfi olmayan örnekleme yöntemlerinden kolayda örnekleme yoluyla veri toplanmıştır. Algılanan adalet boyutları (dağıtım adaleti, süreç adaleti, etkileşim adaleti), tatmin, tekrar satın alma niyeti ve olumlu ağızdan ağıza iletişim arasındaki ilişkileri test etmek için ilgili literatür incelenerek araştırma modeli oluşturulmuştur. Toplanan verileri analiz etmek için PLS-SEM kullanılmıştır.
Bulgular: Sonuçlar süreç ve etkileşim adaletinin tatmin üzerinde olumlu etkilere sahip olduklarını, tatminin de tekrar satın alma niyeti ve olumlu ağızdan ağıza iletişimi olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermektedir. Hizmet yöneticilerine yönetim stratejilerini geliştirmelerine yönelik çeşitli strateji önerilerinde bulunulmuştur.
Sonuç: Hizmet işletmeleri hizmet hatasından sonra tatminsizlik yaşayan müşterileri tekrar tatmin edebilmek için özellikle hizmet telafisi süreçlerine ve sahne önü çalışanlarının davranışlarına önem vermelidirler. Tatmin olmuş müşteriler olumlu ağızdan ağıza iletişimde bulunarak işletmenin yeni müşteriler kazanmasına yardımcı olabilirler.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Adalet teorisi, Hizmet hatası, Hizmet telafisi, PLS-SEM

1. Introduction

Since the service industry tend to grow on a daily basis, the importance of understanding services and service management are well recognized by many researchers. A service can be defined as a performance or benefits which consumers do not own any tangible assets in the end of a transaction. Services are also being used as a tool for differentiation by many retailers and manufacturers. There is greater risk in buying services compared to products because services are often based on experience and credence qualities. Service consumers usually give more importance to word of mouth communication rather than advertising. To judge the quality of services, customers usually rely on physical ques, prices and service providers and they are more loyal to service firms when they are satisfied. Changing their service providers can be challenging for customers as the switching costs of choosing to buy from another service company may be very high (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 357).

Service firms need to provide quality service experiences for their customers to keep their market share stable or even increase it. Even though the service firms aim to provide zero defect service, problems often occur due to the unique characteristics of services. It is well known that customers usually face service failures during the service encounters. As a result, unfavorable service experiences may lead to unsatisfied customers and ultimately, customer defection. It would be beneficial for the service managers to understand the reason of the failures and compensate those failures by implementing effective service recovery strategies.

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationships among the dimensions of perceived justice (distributional, procedural and interactional justice), satisfaction, repurchase intention and positive word of mouth and to suggest service management strategies for service firms. There are a few studies that examined the relationships among the perceived justice dimensions, satisfaction and outcomes of service recovery in Turkey. Thus, this study is expected to have a contribution to this area.

2. Service Failure and Recovery

The problems encountered during a service delivery such as incorrect transaction in a bank account, over-cooked meal and delayed flight can be defined as a service failure (Maxham, 2001: 11). Although most service firms give a lot of efforts to make their customers happy, sometimes things go wrong and customers may feel dissatisfied after the service encounter. After an unsuccessful service encounter, customers may express their feelings such as anger, frustration and rage. These negative emotions could be eased by the service recovery attempts of the service providers. The effective service recovery mostly comforts angry and unhappy customers to a certain point while inappropriate recovery efforts could easily make things much worse (Nguyen & Kennedy, 2003: 46).

Sometimes it is tempting for service employees or managers to dismiss the service failure and ignore the complaints of customers but managers should inform the service employees (especially the frontline employees) that the customer complaints are actually beneficial for the firm. Customer complaints may show the firm the error of their service delivery process and they can fix the problem by listening to their customers. After experiencing a service failure, most customers choose to leave the current service firm and a lot of companies do not get the chance to learn what they did wrong. By encouraging the customers to express their feelings and complain, service firms could handle the problem quicker and more efficiently (Hart et al., 1990: 148-156).

The actions of a service firm as a response for various service failures can be defined as service recovery (Weun et al., 2004: 134; Andreassen, 2000: 3). Hart et al. (1990) offered some strategies for service firms to imply successful recovery strategies. Their suggestion for effective recovery strategies were: Measuring the costs, breaking the silence, solving the customers' problem even if it is not the company's fault, anticipate needs for recovery, acting fast, training the service employees and empowering the front line. Service companies need to remember that no matter what strategy they choose for service recovery, there would be little chance for success if their customers perceive the recovery as unfair (Hart et al., 1990: 148-156).

3. Justice Theory

Customers usually weigh what they gain from a service against their inputs (economic, energy, cognitive costs and time) when they form their evaluations of the service recovery. Consumers generally compare those inputs with the outputs such as compensation, apology, replacement, discounts, the employee behaviors and the policies of the firm to handle service failures. After that perceived justice would lead the customers to evaluate if the recovery strategy implied by the service firm was fair or not. The process of service recovery, the results of the service recovery strategies and the service employees' behaviors towards the customers and even customers themselves all have an important part when they evaluate the service recovery (Hoffman & Kelley, 2000: 420).

Distributive justice is related with the outcomes of the service firm's efforts for solving the problems that occurred during the service encounter. Even though distributive justice mostly linked together only with the monetary terms, it is also related with the

nonmonetary terms such as emotions, costs of complaining and benefits of ego. When customers believe that the service outcome is not worth the costs they endured, their distributive justice perceptions would be affected negatively. Some of the common outcomes related with the distributive justice are compensation, replacement, discount and free upgrades or services. Procedural justice is related with the processes which the service provider implements in order to redress the failures occurred. Thus, even the recovery strategy offered by the firm makes the customers satisfied, if they perceive the recovery process as inadequate, the recovery outcome may be perceived as a poor one. It is known that customers evaluate faster and efficient service recoveries better than the slow ones even the outcomes are equal. Speed, controllability, accessibility and flexibility are important components of an effective procedural justice. The third dimension of the perceived justice; interactional justice can be defined as dealing with interpersonal behaviors during the service recovery. Therefore, interactional justice is related with how service recovery is applied and how the outcomes of the recovery are offered to the customers. Courtesy, politeness and empathy are some of the common traits of an effective interactional justice (Hoffman & Kelley, 2000: 420-421; McCollough, 2000: 430).

4. Literature Review

As the development of service industy grows on a daily basis, the number of researches enhance in order to understand the unique nature of services and what makes a successful service. Understanding the service failure and service recovery is crucial for service firms to make their customers satisfied.

Blodgett et al. (1993: 399) found that perceived justice affected the complaining customers' negative word of mouth and their repurchase intentions. They also found that perceived justice mediated the effects of likelihood of success, attitude towards complaining, product importance, stability and controllability on complaining behavior. Blodgett et al. (1997: 201) found that distributive justice and interactional justice influenced repurchase intentions positively while they influenced the negative word of mouth negatively and the interactional justice had the greatest impact. Procedural justice was found to have no significant effect on repurchase intentions and negative word of mouth. Smith et al. (1999: 369) investigated if service recovery attributes had an affect on the dimensions of perceived justice and if perceived justice had an effect on the satisfaction with the service encounter in hotel and restaurant sectors. They found that distributive, procedural and interactional justice affected satisfaction with the service encounter positively. The most effective dimension of justice on satisfaction was found to be the distributive justice. The results also revealed that compensation had a positive effect on distributive justice while response speed had a positive effect on procedural justice and apology had a positive effect on interactional justice.

McCollough et al. (2000: 132) found that interactional and distributive justice had a positive effect on satisfaction after service recovery. Mattila (2001: 590) examined if the consumers' perceived justice differed among various service industries. In the restaurant industry, distributive justice had the greatest impact on satisfaction and interactional justice had also positive impact on satisfaction. On the other hand, procedural justice was not found

to have an impact on satisfaction. Distributive jutice was found to have the biggest impact on satisfaction, while it was followed by interactional and procedural justice respectively on the dry-cleaning industry. Interactional justice was found to have the greatest impact on satisfaction in the hair-dressing industry, while distributive justice and procedural justice were also found to have a positive impact. Qin et al. (2012: 2) investigated the relationships between customer loyalty, post-recovery satisfaction and perceived switching cost on the online shopping industry. Their findings indicated that distributive justice had a positive effect on customer loyalty, while procedural and interactional justice did not. Procedural, distributive and interactional justice all had positive effect on post-recovery satisfaction and distributive justice was found to have the biggest impact.

Kuo and Wu (2012: 133-134) conducted a research on online retailing services and tried to investigate the relationships with perceived justice dimensions and emotions, post-recovery satisfaction and post-repurchase intentions. They found that both distributive and procedural justice had a positive effect on positive emotions and negative effect on negative emotions but interactional justice did not have an effect on both of emotions. They also found that distributive, interactional and procedural justice had positive effects on post-recovery satisfaction while distributive justice had the biggest effect. Distributive justice was found to effect post-repurchase intentions positive while procedural and interactional justice did not have an effect on post-repurchase intentions. Cai and Qu (2018: 323) investigated the relationships among perceived justice dimensions, emotions, revisit intentions and positive word of mouth. They found that distributive and procedural justice had positive effects on revisit intentions and positive word of mouth. Migacz et al. (2018: 93-94) found that airline companies need to pay attention at all three dimensions of perceived justice for customer satisfaction. Distributive justice was found to be the most important justice dimension for satisfaction.

Guchait et al. (2019: 931) found that distributive, procedural and interactional justice had positive effects on customer loyalty. Trust was also found to have a mediation effect between perceived justice dimensions and customer loyalty. Chen and Kim (2019: 108) found that all three dimensions of perceived justice had positive effects on positive emotions and positive emotions affected satisfaction and word of mouth intentions positively. Muhammad and Rana (2020: 4) investigated the relationships among perceived justice dimensions, customer forgiveness and satisfaction. They found that distributive and interactional justice affected satisfaction both directly and undirectly while procedural justice affected satisfaction indirectly through customer forgiveness. Amin et al. (2020: 51-52) found that procedural and interactional justice affected satisfaction but distributive justice did not.

5. Methodology

A survey was conducted on consumers who experienced a service failure in the last six months in Bursa, Turkey. An online questionnaire was used to collect the data and convenience sampling method was chosen. Participants were asked to remember a service failure they lived through in the last 6 months and the service recovery actions the service firm implemented to compensate the failure. This retrospective method was chosen instead

of written scenarios because the retrospective method is related with the real service failure and recovery situations instead of imaginary ones. The scale used in the survey included 17 items and six dimensions (distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, satisfaction, positive word of mouth and repurchase intentions). The items were adapted from the work of De Matos et al. (2011: 228).

5.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table-1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%	Marital Status	Frequency	%
Female	105	47.9	Single	150	68.5
Male	114	52.1	Married	69	31.5
Total	219	100	**Total**	219	100
Age	**Frequency**	**%**	**Education**	**Frequency**	**%**
Under 18	9	4.1	Less than a high school diploma	24	11.0
18-24 years old	69	31.5	High school degree or equivalent	87	39.7
25-34 years old	111	50.7	Bachelor's degree	87	39.7
35-44 years old	9	4.1	Master's degree	18	8.3
45-55 years old	18	8.2	PhD	3	1.3
Over 55 years old	3	1.4			
Total	219	100	**Total**	219	100

According to the survey, 219 respondents answered the questions and 9 of them were under the age of 18, which was %4.1 of the whole respondents, while 69 people, a percentage of 31.5 were between 18-24 years old. 111 respondents were between the ages of 25-34, a percentage of 50.7 of all respondents. 9 people were between 35-44 years, 18 were between 45-55 years and only 3 people were over 55 years old, which were %4.1, %8.2 and %1.4 of the whole respondents, respectively. 105 respondents, which are equal to % 47.9 of the whole, were female and 114 people, equal to %52.1 were male. The education status of the respondents were: 24 people (%11.0) had a degree less than a high school diploma, 87 respondents (%39.7) had high school degree or equivalent, 87 people (%39.7) had bachelor's degree, 18 people (%8.3) had master's degree and 3 respondents (%1.3) had PhD degree. The marital status of the respondents consisted of 150 single (%68.5) and 69 married (%31.5) people.

## 5.2. Conceptual model and research hypotheses

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model and the hypotheses. As it can be seen, the research model consists of the variables that are distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, satisfaction, repurchase intention and positive word of mouth and the relationships among them.

The researh hypotheses are:

H_1 : Distributive justice influences satisfaction positively.

H_2 : Procedural justice influences satisfaction positively.

H_3 : Interactional justice influences satisfaction positively.

H_4 : Satisfaction influences positive WOM positively.

H_5 : Satisfaction influences repurchase intention positively.

Figure 1- Research Model
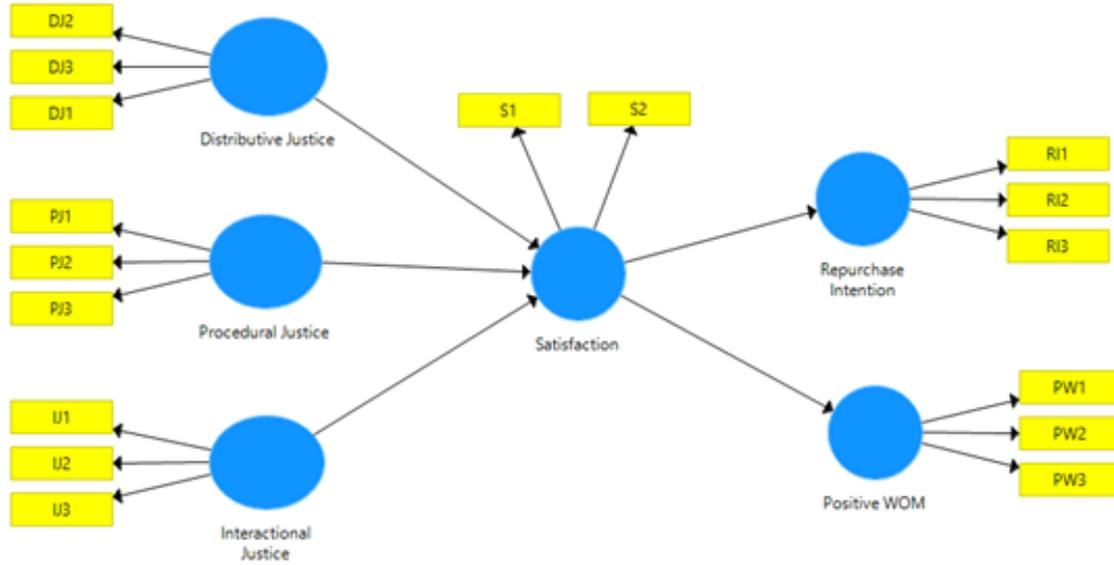
After testing the structural relationships among research constructs, AVE and CR methods were carried out for construct reliability and validity. Table 2 summarizes the construct reliability and validity results.

Table 2- Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
Distributive Justice	DJ1	0.890	0.866	0.788	0.918
	DJ2	0.887			
	DJ3	0.887			
Procedural Justice	PJ1	0.919	0.914	0.853	0.946
	PJ2	0.939			
	PJ3	0.912			
Interactional Justice	IJ1	0.920	0.889	0.819	0.931
	IJ2	0.937			
	IJ3	0.857			
Satisfaction	S1	0.969	0.937	0.941	0.970
	S2	0.971			
Repurchase Intention	RI1	0.925	0.883	0.811	0.928
	RI2	0.896			
	RI3	0.879			
Positive WOM	PW1	0.957	0.958	0.923	0.973
	PW2	0.970			
	PW3	0.954			

The Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.866 to 0.958; Composite reliability (CR) values are higher than 0.70 and average variance extracted (AVE) values are higher than 0.50. These results indicate that all of the dimensions are reliable and valid (Jung et al., 2017: 145).

5.3. Structural model and standardized path coefficients

PLS-Sem was used for testing the research hypotheses. Path coefficients and test results of hypotheses were shown in Table 3. According to the modeling results, four of the paths were found to be statistically significant.

Table 3- Path Coefficients and t Values

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	Result
H_1	Distributive Justice- Satisfaction	0.101	1.195	Not Supported
H_2	Procedural Justice- Satisfaction	0.635	6.126***	Supported
H_3	Interactional Justice- Satisfaction	0.188	1.772*	Supported
H_4	Satisfaction- Positive WOM	0.847	20.722***	Supported
H_5	Satisfaction- Repurchase Intention	0.835	24.016***	Supported

t-values for two-tailed test
* **1.65 (sig. level 10%)**
** **1.96 (sig. level=5%)**
*** **t-value 2.58 (sig. level=1%) (Hair et al., 2011:145 ; Rezaei, 2015: 10)**

Figure 2 shows the structural model with standardized path coefficients.

Figure 2- Path Coefficients
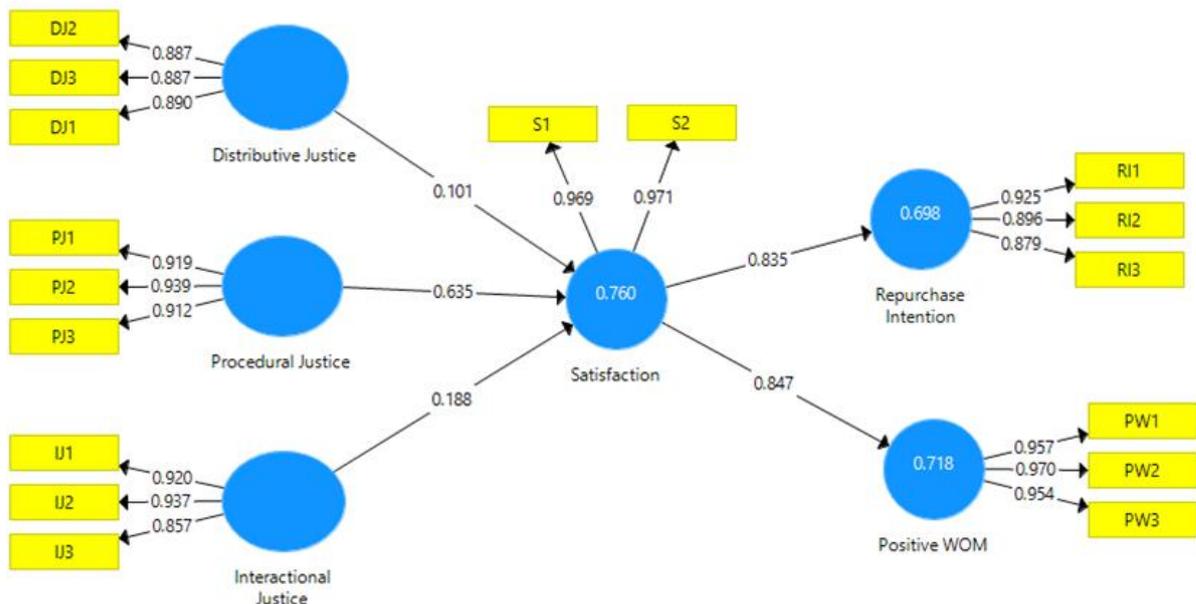
Table 3 and Figure 2 show the results of the hypothesis tests and structural relationships. The path coefficient between distributive justice and satisfaction is 0.101, the path coefficient between procedural justice and satisfaction is 0.635, the path coefficient

between interactional justice and satisfaction is 0.188. In addition, the path coefficients between satisfaction and repurchase intention and positive word of mouth are 0.835 and 0.847 respectively. R^2 values (0.760, 0.698 and 0.718) can also be seen from the Table 3. The R^2 values are the proportion of the variances in the endogenous variables that are predictable from the exogenous variables.

According to the PLS modeling results, all of the hypotheses were supported except hypothesis 1. Procedural justice and interactional justice were found to have statistically significant impact on satisfaction, while distributive justice was not. In addition, satisfaction was found to have significant positive effects on repurchase intention and positive word of mouth. As it can be seen from Figure 2, the highest path coefficient between justice dimensions and satisfaction is 0.635, which belongs to procedural justice- satisfaction. This means that procedural justice is the most important justice dimension for customers. Service companies need to pay attention to procedural justice in order to satisfy their customers following a service failure. Interactional justice is another important justice dimension with a path coefficient of 0.188. According to R^2 values (0.760, 0.698 and 0.718), which are measures of the model's predictive power and the coefficients represent the amount of variance in the constructs explained by the other constructs linked to them, all of the justice dimensions were found to be important antecedents of satisfaction and satisfaction was found to be an important antecedent of repurchase intention and positive word of mouth. The path coefficients between satisfaction-repurchase intention and satisfaction-positive word of mouth are 0.835 and 0.847, respectively. Thus, it can be said that satisfaction plays an important role on both repurchase intention and positive word of mouth following a service failure and recovery.

6. Conclusion

In this study, the relationships between the dimensions of perceived justice and satisfaction, repurchase intention and positive word of mouth were explored by means of PLS-Sem. Findings indicated that the paths between interactional justice- satisfaction, procedural justice- satisfaction, satisfaction- repurchase intention and satisfaction- positive word of mouth were found to be statistically significant while the path between distributive justice- satisfaction was not. Thus, the results showed that customers who went through a service recovery attach more importance to the service recovery processes and how they were treated by the service employees rather than distributive outcomes of the service recovery. Especially customers would like to witness effective service recovery process according to the results. Service firms need to imply effective recovery processes in order to make the customer satisfied. They should give quick response to service failures and try to get rid of the failure immediately. To do that, they need to train the employees (especially the ones who work on the frontline because they are the ones who interact with the customers often) and empower them with authority. Thus, the frontline employees would not need to consult the managers every single time a failure occurs to ask what to do to solve the problem and they could act with authority and solve the problem in a quick manner. Interactional justice is another important dimension for customers in order to get satisfied following a service failure. Service employees need to be kind and gentle during the service recovery

process and should show empathy towards angry and dissatisfied customers. They need to ease their anger and dissatisfaction by their attitude and behaviors. The lack of proper behaviors towards dissatisfied and angry customers may backfire and even the service recovery process is appropriate, these unpleasant behaviors easily make customers feel even worse.

Satisfaction was found to have strong positive effect on both repurchase intention and positive word of mouth. It is normal that satisfied customers tend to buy from the same company again because unlike products, services have unique characteristics and it is difficult for customers to have the same quality service from every service provider. Hence, people usually are more loyal to service firms if they are satisfied with the services they provide. Word of mouth is a key communication type in our time. Most consumers tend to listen or read other consumers' experiences with other service firms instead of watching or listening adverts. As social media become a daily part of human lives, word of mouth became more efficient than ever. People disucss their experiences, exchange stories on Facebook, Twitter, complaint web sites and various blogs. If customers face an effective recovery following a service failure, it is much likely that they will feel satisfied and this satisfaction will lead to positive word of mouth. Customers usually like to share their experiences (especially with their closer social groups) and hence, satisfied customers will spread the positive word around and this may lead most likely to new customers for the service company.

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