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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Healing Power of Forgiveness: How Failure Severity Moderates the Effect of Emotions on Forgiveness and Behavioural Intentions

Engin Tengilimoğlu[1]

[1](Assist. Prof. Dr.), Selcuk University, B. A. A. Tourism Faculty, Tourism Management Department, Konya, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

Despite the undesirable consequences of service failures, it is not possible to prevent them entirely due to the characteristics of the hospitality industry. In this regard, related studies have focused on the transformation of the negative consequences of service failures into positive outcomes. In such negative situations, customer forgiveness, as a healing power, is crucial in terms of both reducing negative attitudes and behaviours and developing positive ones. This study examines the effect of post-recovery emotional responses on forgiveness and the effect of forgiveness on repurchase and positive word-of-mouth intentions, with a particular focus on the moderating role of failure severity. The study used a semi-experimental research design through the scenario technique, presenting participants with realistic fictional service failure scenarios. A 2x2 between-participants factorial design was implemented, varying the service failure severity (low vs. high) and recovery type (apology vs. discount). Data were collected from 396 participants, with 99 responses for each scenario. To address the research objectives, a multi-group structural equation model was employed. The findings indicated that positive and negative emotional response influence forgiveness, which in turn has a positive effect on repurchase and positive word-of-mouth intentions. Additionally, the effect of negative emotions on forgiveness is stronger in cases of high-severity failures, whereas positive emotions are more influential in low-severity failures. Finally, it was determined that forgiveness has a greater effect on repurchase and positive word-of-mouth in cases of low-severity failures.

Keywords: Service failures, Customer forgiveness, Emotional response, Repurchase, PWOM

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the success of hospitality organisations operating in a highly competitive environment (Lewis and McCann, 2004) depends on retaining existing customers by ensuring satisfaction (Blodgett et al., 1997). Otherwise, customers leaving the organisation unsatisfied will never return (Cheng et al, 2019) and share negative reviews online (Liu et al., 2019), which damages the organisational image (Hogreve et al., 2019) and leads to the loss of potential customers (Jeong and Lee, 2017). In this context, addressing service failures (SF) that lead to customer dissatisfaction is a critical issue for organisations to both develop long-term relationships with current consumers (Koç, 2019) and not lose their potential customers (Jeong and Lee, 2017).

According to the expectancy theory, SF refers to the gap between customers' expectations and their actual experiences, where the service falls short of the expected standards (Parasuraman et al., 1991). Despite the undesirable consequences of SF, they cannot be completely prevented due to the characteristics of the hospitality industry, such as intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and simultaneous production and consumption (Zeithaml et al., 1985; Tsao, 2018;). Related studies have focused on transforming the negative consequences of SF into positive outcomes, as opposed to avoiding them completely (Cheng et al., 2019). Despite the extensive research conducted over the past four decades (Andreasen and Best, 1977; Tengilimoglu and Ozturk, 2024), SF remains a significant challenge for hospitality organisations (Jin et al., 2019).

The negative consequences of SF have necessitated organisations to develop effective recovery methods to maintain relationships with existing customers (Zhao et al., 2014). However, service recoveries provide a second opportunity for organisations to repair customer relationships damaged by SF (Kozub et al., 2014). Dissatisfied customers can be satisfied after successful service recovery (Cheng et al., 2019). Therefore, only SF is inevitable, and dissatisfaction can be avoided by developing effective recovery (Tengilimoğlu and Ozturk, 2024). Related studies show that effective recovery methods transform dissatisfaction into positive customer attitudinal and behavioural intentions, such as satisfaction (Zhao et al., 2014), trust (Bacile et al., 2018), loyalty (Liao,

Corresponding Author: Engin Tengilimoğlu **E-mail:** entengilimoglu@selcuk.edu.tr
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2007), repurchase (Cheng et al., 2019), positive emotions (Özgen et al., 2012; Valentini et al., 2020), customer forgiveness (Harrison-Walker, 2019) and sharing positive reviews (Blodgett et al., 1997). Moreover, effective recovery has also been found to reduce switching intentions (Tsao, 2018), intentions to share negative reviews (Obeidat et al., 2017), intentions to complain to third parties (Xu et al., 2016), revenge intentions (Gregoire et al., 2018), and negative emotions (Kuo and Wu, 2012; Stokburger-Sauer and Hoffman, 2023).

According to Su et al. (2013), SF triggers negative feelings because of something going wrong during a service encounter. On the other hand, service recoveries elicit both positive and negative emotions, based on how successful the recoveries are in meeting customer recovery expectations (Özgen et al., 2012; Balaji et al. 2017). Moreover, the experiential nature of the tourism industry, combined with the emotional impact of service encounters, often results in a strong emotional response from customers (Petzer et al., 2012). Although emotions are fundamental factors in determining consumer behaviour (Min and Kim, 2019), they are neglected in service failure and recovery **(SFR)** settings (McColl-Kennedy and Smith, 2006; Kozub et al., 2014;). Thus, the literature on customer emotional responses and their outcomes is relatively limited, particularly in the SFR context (Bouge et al., 2003; Özgen et al., 2012). According to McColl-Kennedy and Smith (2006), although there is growing interest in SFR incidents, there is still much room for investigation regarding customer emotions associated with such events. Hence, Bagozzi et al. (1999) suggest studying emotions particularly in the SFR domain.

As SF is a negative event, most previous studies only consider negative emotions to understand customer responses (Smith and Bolton, 2002; Joireman et al., 2016). Only a few studies have addressed positive emotions or both positive and negative emotions (Xu et al., 2018; Stokburger-Sauer and Hoffman, 2023). However, positive and negative emotions associated with the service encounter may arise from simultaneously and independently (Balaji et al., 2017). Thus, experiencing a negative emotion does not actually prevent experiencing a positive emotion (Babin et al., 1998). Related studies have shown that SF and failed recoveries trigger negative emotions, whereas successful recoveries trigger positive emotions. Therefore, it is crucial to consider both negative and positive emotions simultaneously in the context of SFR.

The appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991) argues that certain emotions are formed as a result of certain cognitive appraisals (Xu et al., 2018). The term "appraisal" is used to describe the process of assessing the importance of an event to an individual's personal well-being. The event must be appraised in a way that affects the person for an emotion to develop because of appraisals (Bouge et al., 2003). In the context of appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), SF represents a transgression (Obeidat et al., 2017) that initiates the cognitive appraisal process, leading consumers to develop emotional responses and coping behaviours (Hur and Jung, 2019). Due to the appraisals in which customers assess the actual service performance in relation to their expectations, both positive and negative emotional responses tend to be elicited (Xu et al., 2018). These emotional responses subsequently transform into coping behaviours (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), which can be described as the actions undertaken by individuals to overcome, tolerate, or minimise a stressful situation (Haj-Salem and Chebat, 2014). The psychological literature suggests that coping responses to transgression situations are summarised under three dimensions of Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM): revenge, benevolence, and avoidance (McCollugh et al., 2013). According to TRIM, all responses to transgression situations are derived from these motivations. For instance, high levels of benevolence and low levels of revenge and avoidance motivation are considered forgiveness (Gerlsma et al., 2020). By forgiving, individuals give up their revenge and avoidance (Barcaccia et al., 2021). Forgiveness represents one of the numerous coping strategies that individuals use in response to transgressions, but it is highly neglected about SFR encounters (Harrison-Walker, 2019).

The fact that customers spend a considerable period of time in hospitality organisations, interacting extensively with both employees and other customers, has led to the importance of forgiveness for the well-being of all parties (Hur and Jung, 2019). The process of customer forgiveness entails the act of relinquishing feelings of anger and a desire for retribution against a supplier who has wronged the customer, while simultaneously fostering positive feelings and beliefs about that supplier (Joireman et al., 2016). In this process, customers' thoughts, feelings, and motivations towards organisations shift from negative to at least neutral and at most positive (Barcaccia et al., 2021). Forgiveness reduces stress responses to wrongdoing and increase the chances of establishing positive relationships in the future. Therefore, it is considered a "healing power" capable of repairing damaged relationships between parties (Hur and Jung, 2019).

Despite its desirable behavioural outcomes such as loyalty and repurchase (Harrison-Walker, 2019; Muhammad and Rana, 2020), customer forgiveness has been largely neglected in the context of SFR (Hur and Jung, 2019). Moreover, only one (Zourrig et al., 2015) of the few studies on this topic has addressed positive and negative emotions as antecedents of forgiveness. While Zourrig et al. (2015) focused on cultural background and group membership in the relationships between emotions and forgiveness, they did not consider the role of SF severity. In addition, because their study excluded recovery, the influence of recovery on emotional responses, and thus forgiveness, could not be examined. To the best of the author's knowledge, no previous studies investigating the relationship between emotions and forgiveness have considered the potential moderating effect of SF severity. To fill this gap, this study examines the effect of post-recovery emotional responses on forgiveness and the effect of forgiveness on repurchase and

positive word-of-mouth (PWOM) intentions, focusing on the moderating role of failure severity through the use of multi-group SEM.

The first section of the study includes the conceptual framework and the development of the hypotheses. The second section describes the methodology used and assesses the reliability and validity of the research. The third section presents the results of the multi-group SEM, and the fourth section discusses the findings and provides recommendations for managing service failures in hospitality organisations.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Emotions as Antecedents of Forgiveness

Appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991), which considers consumer behaviour through a sequential process involving appraisal, emotional response, and coping behaviour, provides an appropriate framework for understanding consumer responses following an SFR encounter. This framework states that customers initiate an appraisal process instance of SF. In this process, emotional responses are shaped by the comparisons they make between the service they receive and their expectations. In this context, related studies (Özgen et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2018) have shown that customers feel various emotional states following SF. However, the timing of measuring emotions is crucial, as they can change drastically during the SFR encounter (McColl-Kennedy and Smith, 2006). In this regard, Valentini et al. (2020) stated that two points in the encounter process can cause changes in emotions, that is, the SF and the recovery. Therefore, the emotional responses of customers are subject to change, contingent upon their appraisal of the incident following the SF or recovery process (Xu et al., 2018; Valentini et al., 2020). For instance, SF leads to heightened negative emotions and a reduction in positive ones. In contrast, successful recovery methods that satisfy customer expectations diminish negative emotions while enhancing positive ones. Furthermore, poor recovery can lead to a second deviation, increasing negative emotions and decreasing positive emotions (Xu et al., 2018). In addition, it is well known that customers exhibit greater emotional involvement during the recovery phase than they do during the initial service delivery (Smith and Bolton, 2002).

According to appraisal theory, emotional responses to events are crucial antecedents of behavioural outcomes (Min and Kim, 2019). In this line, the emotions that arise because of appraisals shape coping behaviours (Haj-Salem and Chebat, 2014). Related studies tend to focus on revenge as a coping response (Gregoire et al., 2018) while neglecting forgiveness (Hur and Jung, 2019), notwithstanding its desirable outcomes, including satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase (Muhammad and Rana, 2020).

While SF results in both financial and social losses for customers (Obeidat et al., 2017), recovery efforts that focus on compensating for these losses lead customers to develop positive emotional responses during the appraisal process (Özgen et al., 2012), thereby facilitating forgiveness (Zourrig et al., 2015). Forgiveness and revenge are often regarded as two sides of the same coin, influenced by similar factors but in a reversed way. For instance, negative emotions have been found to reduce forgiveness (Su et al., 2023) while enhancing the desire for revenge (Haj-Salem and Chebat, 2014). Conversely, positive emotions have been found to diminish the desire for revenge (Gregoire et al., 2018) while enhancing forgiveness (Zourrig et al., 2015). In consideration of these findings, we developed hypotheses H_1 and H_2, which posit that positive and negative emotional response influence forgiveness.

H_1: Positive emotions positively affect forgiveness.
H_2: Negative emotions negatively affect forgiveness.

Forgiveness and Behavioural Intentions

Forgiveness is much more than letting go of destructive behaviours (Houwelingen et al., 2022). It is a process that leads to a change in behaviours and attitudes from negative to at least neutral to at most positive (Barcaccia et al., 2021). Similarly, Harrison-Walker (2019) posits that forgiveness is a conscious and intentional process that effectively transforms a retaliatory and negative response into a constructive and positive one. It allows the individual to regain psychological balance and encourages constructive behaviour towards the transgressor (Tsarenko and Tojib, 2011). In other words, when people forgive, their desire for revenge and avoidance of the transgressor decreases and their motivation for benevolent behaviour increases (Barcaccia et al., 2021). Thus, when customers forgive a company due to a satisfactory resolution of a previous problem, their likelihood to repurchase and spread PWOM is expected to increase (Harrison-Walker, 2019).

Repurchase intention is the individual's assessment of whether to purchase a particular service again from the same provider, given their current situation and potential future circumstances (Hellier et al., 2003). In the SFR setting, it is defined as the consumer's intention to return to a service provider after experiencing SF (Salagrama et al., 2021). Thus, it is crucial for the hospitality industry as it directly impacts long-term business sustainability and profitability (Mohammed et al., 2022).

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined word of mouth (WOM) as "*all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers*". The intangibility of tourism products makes it difficult to assess their quality prior to consumption (Tsao, 2018). Therefore, customers frequently rely on the experiences and recommendations of previous consumers when making purchasing decisions (Filieri et al., 2018).

Forgiveness is a process by which negative behaviours such as revenge and avoidance are reduced and positive behaviours are increased (Houwelingen et al., 2022). Consistent with this notion, related research has found that forgiveness increases repurchase intentions (Tsarenko and Tojib, 2015; Salagrama et al., 2021; Elbaz et al., 2023) and reduces negative WOM intentions in various contexts (Tsarenko and Tojib, 2011; Salagrama et al., 2021; Elbaz et al., 2023). Considering these findings, H_3 and H_4 are developed, stating that forgiveness has a positive impact on both repurchase and PWOM intentions.

H_3: Forgiveness has a positive effect on repurchase intention.
H_4: Forgiveness has a positive effect on PWOM intention.

The Moderating Role of Failure Severity

SF severity is determined by how intensely it is perceived by the customer (Salagrama et al., 2021). As SF severity increases, customers' perceptions of economic and/or social losses also increase (Gelbrich and Roschk, 2011). Thus, it indicates a greater gap between the expected and actual service (Obeidat et al., 2017). Related research has shown that responses to SFR such as negative emotions (Cho et al., 2016), satisfaction (Obeidat et al., 2017), negative WOM (Elbaz et al., 2023), repurchase (Sparks and Fredline, 2007), revenge (Surachartkumtonkun et al., 2013) and forgiveness (Tsarenko and Tojib, 2015; Hur and Jung, 2019) are affected by SF severity.

However, the majority of these studies focused on the direct effect of SF severity, and only Salagrama et al. (2021) tested the moderating effect on the relationship between empathy and forgiveness. Their findings indicated that the effect of empathy on forgiveness decreased in severe failures. Given that empathy is a positive emotion, the results can be interpreted as indicating a reduction in the effect of positive emotions on forgiveness in cases of severe failure. Moreover, in studies examining the effects of positive and negative emotions on satisfaction, there is a lack of consensus on the most effective emotions (Deng et al., 2013). Some authors (Phillips and Baumgartner, 2002) have found that positive emotions are more effective in terms of satisfaction, while others (Han and Back, 2007) have found that negative emotions are more effective. These contradictory results can be attributed to the varying degrees of emotional intensity. The extant psychological literature indicates that intense emotions, whether positive or negative, exert a more pronounced influence on behaviour than non-intense emotions (Karreman et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2021). It is well established that SF severity increases the intensity of the negative emotions, regardless of the success of the recovery effort (Cho et al., 2016). Therefore, in instances of severe failure, customers may be more strongly influenced by the more intensely experienced negative emotions when determining coping behaviours. In consideration of these discussions, the H5 and H6 hypotheses were developed, which posit that SF severity has a moderating influence on the effect of emotions on forgiveness.

H_5: Failure severity moderates the effect of positive emotions on forgiveness.
H_6: Failure severity moderates the effect of negative emotions on forgiveness.

While some authors argue that forgiveness entails more than merely relinquishing destructive behaviours (Houwelingen et al., 2022), others posit that forgiveness can lead to a positive or at least neutral change in negative attitudes (Barcaccia et al., 2021). These explanations can be interpreted to suggest that forgiveness does not necessarily result in the development of positive behaviours; rather, some of them may be neutral. Tsarenko and Tojib (2012) posited that some customers may forgive an SF and move on without exhibiting positive behaviour towards the organisation. However, it is not clear in which circumstances this may occur. Tengilimoğlu and Öztürk (2024) investigated the moderating role of SF severity on the relationship between recovery satisfaction, advocacy, and tolerance. Their findings indicated that in severe failure, the effect of recovery satisfaction on advocacy and tolerance diminishes. In this regard, the relationship between forgiveness and behavioural intentions is also expected to be moderated by SF severity.

H_7: Failure severity moderates the effect of forgiveness on repurchase intention.
H_8: Failure severity moderates the effect of forgiveness on PWOM intention.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of post-recovery emotional responses on forgiveness and the effect of forgiveness on repurchase and PWOM intentions, with a specific focus on the moderating role of SF severity. The multi-group structural equation model (Figure 1) was used to address the research objectives.

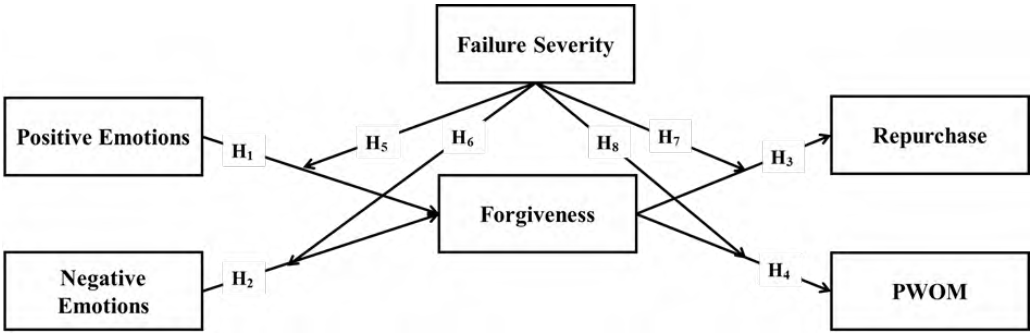

Figure 1. Research Model

The data were gathered using the scenario technique, which is a semi-experimental research design. This technique presents participants with fictional scenarios describing events that could occur in real life. Participants were then asked to answer questionnaires by imagining that the situation described in the scenarios happened to them. It is widely employed in studies on SFR, (Hur and Jang, 2019; Fu et al., 2022) due to its advantages, including the ability to minimise recall bias, ensure internal consistency and provide an enhanced level of control in manipulations (Tengilimoğlu and Öztürk, 2024). Approval was received from the Selcuk University, B.A.A. Tourism Faculty Ethics Committee (No: 2024/07; dated 30/05/2024) regarding the ethical suitability of the items of the scale used.

Experiential Design and Scenario Development

A factorial experimental design was used with two SF severities (low/high) × two compensation types (apology/20% discount), with participants randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions. In the process of developing the scenarios, both expert opinions and online reviews were used. To develop a scenario for a high-severity SF, we considered the case of a hotel that provides a room to a booked customer one day late due to overbooking. For low-severity SF, a scenario was devised in which a hotel provides a room to a customer one hour late, due to the completion of the cleaning process. This decision was made on the grounds that both SF are directly related to the primary product offered by hospitality organisations (room), and it is possible to make a direct comparison between the severities of the two failures. Furthermore, it was agreed that incorporating these SFs into the scenarios would enhance their validity and realism, as they are frequently highlighted in online reviews and are likely to occur in real-life situations.

A comprehensive literature review revealed that recovery methods such as apologies and compensation are frequently employed in response to SF (Liao, 2007; Roschk and Gelbrich, 2014). The results were subsequently discussed in the context of a focus group. It was ultimately determined that two distinct recovery methods should be employed in instances of relevant SF: an apology and a discount. The discount rate is set at 20% of the total amount due on the invoice.

In the scenarios, participants were asked to consider a situation in which they had made a reservation at a five-star hotel two months prior for a summer vacation. Upon arrival at the hotel on the relevant date to check in, they encountered one of the SF (low/high) previously mentioned. The hotel responded to this SF within the scope of the relevant service recovery methods (apology/discount). The participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire, considering the aforementioned SFR incidents.

Reality and Manipulation Check

To check the realism of the scenarios, the participants were asked to read the scenarios and provide a rating for the degree of realism they perceived in each one on a five-point Likert scale. This rating was based on two criteria: experimental realism, which concerned the extent to which the participants perceived the scenario to be realistic, and mundane realism, which concerned the probability of the scenario occurring in real life (Lu et al., 2019). The extant literature indicates that values calculated above the scale's midpoint are sufficient for the scenario's realism (Liu et al., 2019). A one-sample t-test was performed across all the experimental conditions, using a test value of 3. The realism checks showed that the scenarios were perceived as both experimentally and mundanely realistic (t-values > 1.96, $p < .05$).

To ensure that the SF severity manipulation worked as intended, we used the SF severity scale developed by Hess et al., (2003). The participants were asked to rate the SF presented in the stimulus material on a five-point Likert scale, according to three criteria: "severity," "majority," and "significance". The results of the independent t-test demonstrated that the SF severity manipulation was effective (M_{high}=4.10, SD=0.99 vs. M_{low}=2.71, SD=0.58; t(396)=-16.83, $p < .001$), as the high severity failure group had a significantly higher average.

Sampling and Data Collection

The study participants were individuals who stayed in a five-star hotel in the past six months. We used purposive sampling, a common technique that is especially useful when the number of potential respondents with specific, relevant experiences is limited (Tax et al., 1998). Participants were first asked a screening question to verify if they had stayed in a five-star hotel in the last six months. Those who responded "no" were excluded, while those who answered "yes" were invited to complete a follow-up questionnaire.

The online questionnaire was randomly sent to 4,000 individuals from a pre-existing email list. Of these, 1,405 responses were received. Of the 1,405 participants who answered the screening question, 541 answered "yes" and participated in the follow-up questionnaire. Table 1 presents the number of participants for each scenario.

Table 1. Sampling and Recovery Manipulation Check

Sampling and Recovery Manipulation Check Questions		HS Apology	HS Discount	LS Apology	LS Discount	Total
Have you stayed in a 5-star hotel in the last six months?	Yes	134	137	130	140	541
	No	240	242	195	187	864
	Total	**374**	**379**	**325**	**327**	**1.405**
Recovery manipulation check	Correct	106	104	105	103	418
	False	28	33	25	37	123
	Total	**134**	**137**	**130**	**140**	**541**

Not: HS = *High Severity Failure; LS = Low Severity Failure*

Participants were asked if they received a discount coupon to ensure that they accurately understood the recovery method in the scenarios. For all scenarios, 541 participants answered the manipulation check question. Of the total number of participants, 418 provided correct answers, while 123 were excluded from the study due to their incorrect answers. Because of the screening and manipulation check questions, a total of 418 questionnaires were obtained. Twenty two questionnaires were excluded due to unanswered questions. A total of 396 questionnaires, 99 per scenario, were included in the analysis.

Hair et al. (2008) recommended that each group in a multi-group sample should have at least 20 observations. For covariance-based structural equation models (CB-SEM), a minimum sample size of ten times the number of items in the measurement model is recommended (Byrne, 2016). The total sample size of 396, 99 participants per scenario, meets both the 10:1 item-to-sample ratio required for CB-SEM and the criterion of 20 observations per group for multiple group analysis.

Measures

All scales used in this study were adapted from previous studies. Positive and negative emotions were developed by Kuo and Wu (2012) for the online retail sector and adapted by the author for the hospitality context. The consumer forgiveness scale was derived from the benevolence category of the TRIM inventory (McCullough et al., 2006) by Hur and Jung (2019) and modified for a consumer-service provider encounter in the hospitality sector. The PWOM intention scale was obtained from Singh and Crisafulli, (2015) and adapted to the hospitality setting by the author. Finally, the repurchase intention scale was developed by Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) and adapted to the hospitality setting by Xu et al. (2014). All construct measures were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Reliability and Validity

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the measurement reliability and convergent validity of the measures for the full sample. Hair et al (2008) proposed that to evaluate the convergent validity of a measurement model, it is essential to ascertain that the standardised factor loadings are significantly linked to the underlying latent construct, with a loading estimate of at least 0.60. Additionally, they recommend that AVE should exceed 0.50 and that the reliability values, including CR and CA, should be above 0.70. As indicated in Table 2, the CR and CA exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.7. Furthermore, the AVE for all constructs was above the recommended threshold of 0.50. Additionally, all the standardised factor loadings were both positive and statistically significant, with a value exceeding the threshold of 0.6, thus demonstrating unidimensionality and convergent validity. Moreover, the skewness and kurtosis values ranging between +1.5 and -1.5 indicate a normal distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

According to the results of the CFA conducted for the full sample, one problematic error covariance between FOR_1 and FOR_2 was determined. With a modification index (MI) of 133.177 and a parameter change statistics (PC) of 0.190, it is clear that the error covariance between FOR_1 and FOR_2 represents a model misspecification. When CFA was conducted separately for the

Table 2. Analysis of Reliability and Validity

Construct	tems	Mean	SD	Skewness	urtosis	t value	actor Loading
ositive motions 0 803 Composite Relia ility 0 924 Cron ach s lpha 0 923	1	3 73	915	- 647	425	-	0 907
	2	3 69	913	- 602	173	27 426	0 907
	3	3 63	982	- 612	038	25 357	0 873
Negative motions 0 784 Composite Relia ility 0 916 Cron ach s lpha 0 916	N 1	2 30	972	719	020	-	0 889
	N 2	2 31	931	653	111	25 193	0 897
	N 3	2 24	964	784	481	23 904	0 871
orgiveness 0 708 Composite Relia ility 0 905 Cron ach s lpha 0 914	F R 1	3 90	918	- 699	130	-	0 722
	F R 2	3 79	906	- 634	255	24 333	0 759
	F R 3	3 42	1 051	- 336	- 415	18 611	0 942
	F R 4	3 54	1 004	- 358	- 476	18 243	0 920
Repurchase 0 814 Composite Relia ility 0 929 Cron ach s lpha 0 927	R 1	3 10	974	- 077	- 366	-	0 895
	R 2	3 00	1 037	063	- 569	28 872	0 938
	R 3	2 96	1 019	191	- 378	25 101	0 873
ositive M 0 650 Composite Relia ility 0 847 Cron ach s lpha 0 842	1	2 50	940	302	- 263	-	0 741
	2	2 76	920	199	- 111	15 552	0 832
	3	2 71	893	148	095	15 664	0 841

Notes: ² 222 586 **d. .** 93 ² **d. .** 2 393 0 935 **C** 0 977 **N** 0 961 **TL** 0 970 **RMS A** 0 059

low-severity group (MI=62.908; PC=0.160) and high-severity group (MI=72.486, PC=0.221) it was seen that these items were problematic for all groups. Establishing a reasonable number of covariances between items belonging to the same construct to improve model fit is a common and accepted practice in the literature (Byrne, 2016). Therefore, an error covariance was established between these items. Then, CFA was conducted again, and the results are shown in Table 2.

As stated by Hair et al. (2008), a measurement model is deemed to be an acceptable fit when the following criteria are met: the GFI is greater than 0.90, the RMSEA is less than 0.08, the TLI is higher than 0.90, and the CFI is also greater than 0.90. In this model, the indices obtained were X^2 = 222.586; d.f. = 93; X^2/d.f. = 2.393; GFI = 0.935; CFI = 0.977; NFI = 0.961; TLI = 0.970; and RMSEA = 0.059, indicating an acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2008; Byrne, 2016).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker)

Construct	ornell Larcker Criteria			
	N	R	R	M
ositive motions	**0. 9**			
Negative motions	-0 642	**0.**		
orgiveness	0 755	-0 762	**0. 41**	
Repurchase	0 571	-0 508	0 645	**0.902**
ositive M	0 528	-0 446	0 586	0 669	**0. 0**

Notes: p 0 001

Fornell and Larcker's (1981) method was used to test for discriminant validity, which requires that the correlation between each pair of latent variables be less than the square root of the AVE for each respective variable. As shown in Table 3, the square root of the AVE calculated for each construct is higher than the correlation of that construct with the other constructs, confirming the discriminant validity.

Testing for the Measurement Invariance

To validate comparisons across groups, it is essential that all groups interpret the measurement model consistently (Byrne, 2016). This is assessed through invariance analysis by comparing the X^2 and df values of the configural model with those of the constrained model. If the X^2 difference per degree of freedom is less than 3.84, the invariance condition is considered satisfied (Byrne, 2016).

Table 4. Test of Multigroup Invariance

Models	²	D	value	nvariance
Con i ural Model	338 205	186	-	-
Fully Constrained	354 101	198	0 093	Yes

According to Table 4, invariance is ensured as the X2 difference among the groups is not significant (p>0.05).

Findings

As shown in Table 5, most of the participants consist of males. In terms of date of birth, those born between 1981 and 1998 had the highest participation rate. Married people make up the majority of those surveyed regarding marital status. As for the education level, those with a university degree made up most of the participants.

Table 5. Demographic Findings

tem	Ans er	n	
ender	Female	170	42 93
	Male	226	57 07
Date o irth	1999 and later	58	14 64
	1981-1998	188	47 47
	1965-1980	105	26 51
	1946-1964	45	11 36
Marital Status	Sin le	155	39 14
	Married	241	60 85
ducation	rimary School	7	1 76
	Hi h School	53	13 38
	niversity	261	65 90
	ost raduate	75	18 93

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

SEM was employed to analyse the structural model shown in Figure 1 (full sample). As illustrated in Table 6, all of the fitness measures (X^2 = 293.147; d.f. = 98; X^2/d.f. = 2.991; GFI = 0.917; CFI = 0.965; NFI = 0.949; TLI = 0.957; RMSEA = 0.071) exhibited a reasonable fit to the data (Hair et al. 2008; Bryne, 2016).

Table 6. Structural Parameter Estimates and Goodness-of-fit Indices

ath	Std. Coe .	t value	S	R^2	value	Results
H1 ositive motions For iveness	0 469	9 192	0 041	0 716	0 000	Supported
H2 Ne ative motions For iveness	-0 464	5 945	0 040		0 000	Supported
H3 For iveness Repurchase	0 665	8 805	0 071	0 443	0 000	Supported
H4 For iveness ositive M	0 609	14 391	0 064	0 371	0 000	Supported

Notes: ^{2} 293 147 **d. .** 98 ^{2} **d. .** 2 991 0 917 **C** 0 965 **N** 0 949 **TL** 0 957 **RMS A** 0 071

As expected, the results obtained from the full sample demonstrated that positive emotions significantly enhanced forgiveness (β = 0.469***), whereas negative emotions significantly reduced forgiveness (β = -0.464***), thereby supporting H_1 and H_2. On the other hand, forgiveness has a positive impact on both repurchase (β = 0.665***) and PWOM intentions (β = 0.609***), thereby supporting H_3 and H_4. Furthermore, as indicated by R^2 values, positive and negative emotions explain forgiveness to a high degree (R^2=0.716), while forgiveness explains repurchase and PWOM intentions to a medium degree (Chin, 1998).

Multi-group SEM analysis was used to investigate the moderating effects of SF severity on the conceptual model. In order to determine the discrepancies between the high- and low-severity failure groups, the X^2 difference approach was used. If the X^2 value exceeds 3.84 per df, the difference between the two groups' coefficients reaches the level of significance (Byrne, 2016). The estimated coefficients, X^2 differences, and model indices are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. The results of testing moderating effects of failure severity

ath	Lo Severity			High Severity			^{2} Di erence Test	
	Std Coe	S	t-value	Std Coe	S	t-value	^{2}	^{2}
F R	0 531	0 064	7 141	0 407	0 051	5 931	378 934	3 433
N F R	-0 382	0 060	-5 379	-0 549	0 052	-7 250	375 935	0 434
F R R	0 753	0 089	10 236	0 598	0 086	7 048	380 942	5 441
F R M	0 721	0 088	8 027	0 490	0 069	4 908	384 786	9 285

Notes: p 0 05 **p** 0 01 **p** 0 001
^{2} 375 501 **d. .** 196 ^{2} **d. .** 1 916 0 896 **C** 0 966 **N** 0 931 **TL** 0 958 **RMS A** 0 048

The analysis of the causal path from positive emotions to forgiveness and from negative emotions to forgiveness indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. These results revealed that SF severity did not moderate the effect of emotion on forgiveness; therefore, H_5 and H_6 were not supported.

The findings confirm that SF severity moderates the effect of forgiveness on repurchase (Δx^2=5.441) and PWOM (Δx^2=9.285) intentions. Therefore, H7 and H8 are supported. The investigation of the path coefficients revealed that the positive influence of forgiveness on repurchase and PWOM was greater in the low severe failure group than in the high severe failure group. It can

be concluded that customers who have experienced low severe failure are significantly more likely to repurchase and engage in PWOM than those who have experienced high severe failure. The results for the full sample and groups are presented separately in Figure 2.

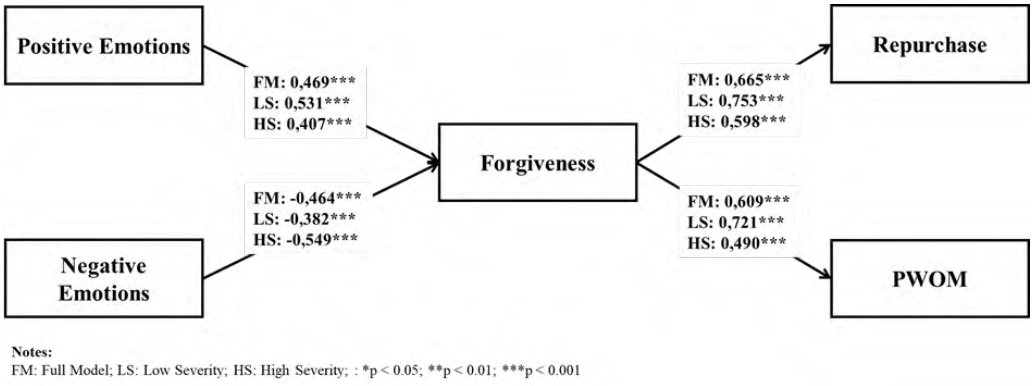

Figure 2. Results of the Model

Discussion and Conclusion

The natural characteristics of the hospitality industry make SF inevitable (Tsao, 2018). On the other hand, the negative consequences of SF threaten the survival of organisations (Koç, 2019) and force them to develop effective recovery strategies (Tengilimoglu and Ozturk, 2024). Thanks to this circle the subject on the agenda for more than 40 years and it is still a major problem for the hospitality industry (Jin et al., 2019). In this sense, it is seen that related studies focus on the transformation of the negative consequences of SF into positive outcomes (Cheng et al., 2019). According to appraisal theory, SF refers to transgressions that cause customers both social and economic losses. In such instances, it is crucial for organisations to obtain forgiveness through effective recovery strategies to facilitate a transformation of customers' negative attitudes and behaviours into positive ones. Furthermore, in the hospitality industry, where customers typically spend a considerable amount of time, forgiveness is crucial for the well-being of both employees and customers by providing the opportunity for restored relationships (Hur and Jung, 2019).

Appraisal theory provides a suitable theoretical framework for understanding customers' emotional responses and their impact on coping behaviours. The findings confirm that both positive and negative emotional responses, elicited from appraisals following an SF and subsequent recovery encounter, influence forgiveness as a coping response. Although it is well established that emotions influence behavioural intentions, there is a lack of attention on emotions as an antecedent of forgiveness in SFR incidents. Related studies typically tend to relate emotions with satisfaction, repurchase, WOM, justice perceptions and revenge intentions (Smith and Bolton 2002; Gregoire et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2018; Valentini et al., 2020;). Only Zourrig et al. (2015) investigated the effect of positive emotions on forgiveness, and their findings showed that positive emotions play a crucial role in enhancing the likelihood of forgiveness. The concepts of forgiveness and revenge are considered to be two sides of the same coin (Houwelingen et al., 2022), meaning that they are both affected by similar factors, but in opposite ways. It is well documented that negative emotions increase the desire for revenge (Haj-Salem and Chebat, 2014; Gregoire et al., 2018). Therefore, it is anticipated that such emotions are likely to reduce forgiveness.

Although the path coefficients between the high and low failure severity groups differed slightly, the moderating effect of SF severity on the relationship between emotions and forgiveness was not significant. Nevertheless, the differences between the two groups led to a shift in the most influential emotion type on forgiveness. In the high-severity failure group, negative emotions and in the low-severity failure group, positive emotions were found to be more effective on forgiveness. Despite a consensus among authors that emotions influence recovery satisfaction, related studies yielded inconsistent findings regarding the most influential type of emotions. For instance, some authors (Kuo and Wu, 2012; Balaji et al., 2017) have argued that negative emotions have a stronger effect, while others (Xu et al., 2018) have observed that positive emotions have a stronger effect. These contradictory results can be explained by the intensity of the emotions. According to the psychological literature, intense emotions, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, have a more pronounced effect on behaviour than non-intense emotions (Karreman et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2021). Petzer et al. (2012) suggest that the intensity of emotions is determined by how customers evaluate the service they receive compared to their expectations. The higher SF severity leads to a greater gap, which in turn results in more intense negative emotional responses (Fu et al., 2022).

Forgiveness has been identified as a coping mechanism that can mitigate negative attitudes and cultivate positive ones following a transgression, such as SF (Barcaccia et al., 2021). Consistent with this notion, the findings revealed that forgiveness increased

repurchase and PWOM intentions. Similarly, prior research has found that forgiveness increases repurchase and reduces negative WOM intentions (Harrison-Walker, 2019; Salagrama et al., 2021; Elbaz et al., 2023). Therefore, forgiveness facilitates the establishment of positive relationships with existing customers in the future and the acquisition of new ones.

The results of the multi-group SEM analysis indicate that the effect of forgiveness on repurchase and PWOM intentions is moderated by SF severity. Although Tsarenko and Tojib (2012) posit that while some customers may forgive, they do not engage in positive behaviours, choosing instead to be neutral, the specific circumstances under which this may occur remain unclear. This study provides an explanation for this uncertainty by focusing on the role of SF severity. In related studies, it has been demonstrated that an increase in SF severity has a direct negative impact on forgiveness, WOM, and repurchase intentions (Sparks and Fredline, 2007; Elbaz et al., 2023). Therefore, it is likely to moderate the relationships between these variables. For instance, Tengilimoğlu and Öztürk (2024) revealed that the effect of recovery satisfaction on advocacy and tolerance is moderated by SF severity. Additionally, Cho et al. (2016) demonstrated that the impact of dissatisfaction on negative WOM increases in high-severity failures. In this study, it is observed that SF severity decreases the effect of forgiveness on repurchase and PWOM intentions.

This study provides several contributions to the existing literature on SFR. It contributes to the understanding of a relatively neglected topic by addressing both positive and negative emotions as an outcome of the service recovery process as well as antecedents of subsequent coping behaviour. In the context of SF, it is observed that the majority of relevant studies focus on negative emotions. A limited number of studies have addressed both positive and negative emotions simultaneously, with the majority focusing on a range of outcomes, including customer satisfaction, repurchase, WOM, justice perceptions, and revenge intention. In this context, the relationship between emotions and forgiveness has been largely neglected. Moreover, the study offers an explanation for the inconsistent findings regarding the relative impact of different emotions, with a particular emphasis on the role of SF severity. To the best of the author's knowledge, this study is the first to investigate the effect of SF severity on the relationships between emotions and forgiveness. Thus, it provides essential insights into the circumstances that may lead to forgiveness following SF.

The findings of this study offer insights for hospitality organisations aiming to enhance their strategies for managing SF and recovery processes, with a view to foster customer forgiveness. First, the study demonstrates that forgiveness is a viable option for those who have experienced a SF, provided that effective recovery methods are employed. Second, it highlights the crucial role of emotional responses in the context of forgiveness. Third, it indicates that forgiveness can encourage the desirable behaviours that are essential for hospitality businesses. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it reveals the critical role of SF severity in all these relationships. In consideration of these findings, it is essential that practitioners expand their understanding and abilities in the context of managing customer emotions. Determining SF severity can contribute to their ability to do so as they affect the intensity of emotions. Based on the results, it may be advantageous to prioritise the reduction of negative emotions in high-severity failures and to focus on increasing positive emotions in low-severity failures. As evidenced by related studies, staff attitudes, such as courtesy and empathy, along with recovery procedures, such as initiation, follow-up, and compensation, can elicit positive emotions and reduce negative ones during low-severity failures. However, financial components, such as compensation, coupons, and new product offerings, can increase positive emotions while reducing negative ones during high-severity failures.

This study has some limitations concerning the use of two-dimensional emotional representations. In the literature, it is posited that particular emotions may be associated with specific behaviours. Therefore, future research could utilise distinct emotions for the analysis of forgiveness and future behaviours. For instance, Bonifield and Cole (2006) argued that anger and regret could be effective in retaliatory behaviours after service failures. Furthermore, Harrison-Walker (2019) found that discrete emotions such as anger, frustration, irritation, regret, disappointment, and uncertainty that occur as a result of service failures are effective on patronage intentions, reconciliation, negative WOM, and share of wallet reduction. In future studies, examining the role of service failure severity in the impact of such discrete emotions on behavioural intentions may be an important contribution to the literature and to practitioners. In addition, the recovery methods used in the study were apologies and discounts; future studies could focus on the results of different recovery methods.

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ORCID ID of the author

Engin Tengilimoğlu 0000-0001-7080-6147

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