Investigating the Moderating Role of Corporate Image in the Relationship between Perceived Justice and Recovery Satisfaction: Evidence from Indian Aviation Industry

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ABSTARCT: In the context of present research, author attempts to bridge the gaps in the literature by investigating perceived justice dimensions and to examine whether brand image plays moderating role in the relationships between perceived justice and recovery satisfaction. The study is based on primary data, collected from the air customers in developing country, India. The first model of the hierarchical regression analyses indicated that all three justice dimensions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice are positively related to recovery satisfaction, and the effect of distributive justice on recovery satisfaction was stronger than interactional justice, and subsequently, effect of interactional justice on recovery satisfaction was stronger than procedural justice. The results also confirmed that all three interaction terms were significant, which shows that corporate image plays a moderating role between perceived justice dimensions and recovery satisfaction.

Keywords: Corporate image; distributive justice; procedural justice; interactional justice; Indian aviation industry.
JEL Classifications: C10, L93, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

In the service environment, it is almost impossible to provide hassle free service round the clock due to unique nature of services. It hardly matters how exceptional the service an organization delivers, every organization still often makes mistakes in meeting the expectations of more demanding customers, who have a propensity to be more demanding and less loyal than ever before. It is impossible to ensure hundred percent error free services to customers due to unique nature of services (Bitner, 1993). del Rio-Lanza et al. (2009) argue that even the most customer oriented organization with the strongest quality program is unlikely to be able to eliminate all service failures. Service failure causes customer dissatisfaction with the service provider, and due to that customers may exit silently, spread a negative word of mouth, raise their complaints to the operator, or continue with the same service provider regardless of their dissatisfaction (Kim et al., 2009).

Service Recovery refers to the actions taken by a company in rejoinder to a service failure (see Figure 1). Failures occur because of various reasons like: the service may be unavailable when promised; it may be delivered behind schedule or too leisurely; the outcome may be erroneous or inadequately executed and employees may be discourteous. All this type of failures brings about negative feelings and responses from customers. If not resolved, then these service failures may result in customers leaving, telling other customers about their negative experiences and even challenging the company through customer's rights or legal ways.
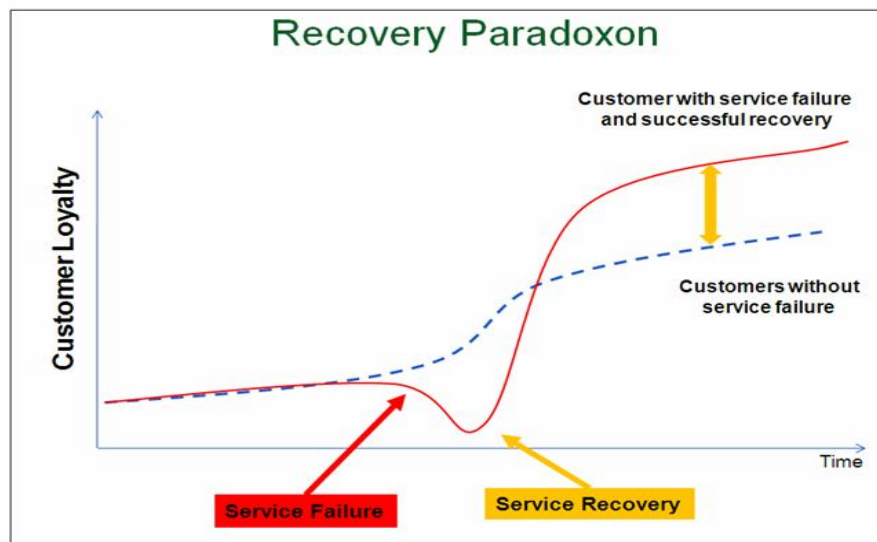
Figure 1. Recovery Paradoxon

Past research has revealed that, resolving customer problem effectively and efficiently has a sturdy impact of customer's satisfaction, loyalty and bottom line performance. Therefore, customers who experience service failures, but eventually satisfied based on service recovery efforts by the organization, will be more loyal than those whose issues are not resolved in the due course of time. The customers who complain and have their problems resolved swiftly, are much more likely to patronage the same service provider again than those whose complaints are not resolved in time. The customers, who never complain are less likely to repatronage.

Smith and Bolton (2002) addressed service recovery as a moment of truth for the company, which is decisive for gratifying its customers as well as corroborating its associations with them. Gronroos, (1988) defined service recovery as the actions an organization takes in order to respond to a service failure. Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001) defined service recovery strategies as the strategies practiced by an organization and its employees to come back the customer to a state of satisfaction. The final goal of service recovery is to appease dissatisfied customers all the way through apposite actions in order to lessen potential harm to customer relationships caused by failure of services (Ha and Jang, 2009).

Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001) argue that researchers across the world have utilized justice theory as the main framework for investigating service recovery procedures in order to comprehend effective service recovery more vitally. According to justice theory, perceived justice is a multi-dimensional concept comprising three dimensions namely: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Regardless of the recent advances with reference to the effects of perceived justice on post-recovery satisfaction, there is still need to find out how recovery efforts made by service provider affect consequent customers' recovery satisfaction.

del Rio-Lanza et al., (2009) suggested that there is a rich interest in exploring the relative importance of the dimensions of perceived justice on recovery satisfaction because these dimensions do not explain recovery satisfaction in equal relative important manner. In the findings of the study, authors stressed that there is urgent need to analyze the dimensions of perceived justice separately rather than aggregate form. Later, study recommended considering role of moderating factors in the relationships between perceived justice and recovery satisfaction. Among these variables, they recommended studying customers' image about the company's brand, and global satisfaction with the company and their attributions of the causes of the problem. On the other hand, regardless of the

importance of brand image, little effort has been made to examine the role of brand image in relation to perceived justice regarding service recovery efforts and recovery satisfaction.

Moreover, Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005) examine that the explicit effects of the three justice dimensions on customer loyalty are quite diverse form each other. But literature has not been found related to effect of perceived justice dimensions on satisfaction with service recovery. Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) investigated the effects of perceived justice on satisfaction with service recovery, but they did not investigate the relative effects of the perceived justice dimensions.

Based on the above background, current study attempts to bridge the gaps in the literature by investigating perceived justice dimensions and to examine whether brand image plays moderating role in the relationships between perceived justice and recovery satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Service providers and customers can not avoid the incidents that take place during exchange processes. Consequently, they anticipate flaxen behaviour from each other and they do their appraisal based on perceived justice. Justice theory by Adam (1963) states that in every exchange that takes place, people evaluate the inputs against the outcomes and compare them with those of others in parallel situations. In the incident that there is an equilibrium between them, the exchange is considered as 'fair', but if the outcomes do not meet with the person's expectations, then this results in discrimination. Past literature related to service failure and recovery has presented substantial evidence of the appropriateness of the concept of justice as a source for understanding the process of service recovery and its outcomes (Smith et al. 1999; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran, 1998; Blodgett et al., 1997; Godwin and Ross, 1992).

Distributive justice: del Rio-Lanza (2009) defined distributive justice as the assignment of tangible resources by the company to resolve and recompense for a service failure. According to Walster et al. (1973), when an individual perceives that benefits have not been allocated equitably; he/she experiences distress, which in turn motivates him/her to refurbish the distributive justice. Various authors across the world like: Godwin and Ross, (1992); Hoffman et al., (1995); Smith et al. (1999) provided evidence based on their empirical studies that perceived fairness of tangible outcomes have a positive effect on recovery evaluation. Previous literature in service recovery has measured distributive justice with the help of five variables, namely: justice, fairness, need, value, and reward' of outcomes (Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; Wirtz and Mattila, 2004; Smith et al., 1999).

Procedural Justice: del Rio-Lanza, (2009) defined procedural justice as the techniques the company uses to deal with the problems arising during service delivery in terms of accessibility, timing/speed, process control, delay and flexibility to adapt to the consumers' recovery needs. Moreover, according to Davidow (2003) procedural justice includes policies, procedures, and tools that firms use to support communication with customers and specifically, the time taken to process complaints and to arrive at a decision. Mattila (2001) in the context of service recovery defined procedural justice as the customer's perception for the several stages of procedures and processes needed to recover the failed service. Past literature supported six sub-dimensions for procedural justice like; flexibility, accessibility, process control, decision control, response speed, and acceptance of responsibility (del Rio-Lanza, 2009; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran, 1998; Blodgett et al., 1997; Thibaut and Walker, 1975).

Interactional Justice: Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001) defined interactional justice in the context of service recovery that the evaluation of the degree to which the customers have experienced justice in human interactions from

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the employees of service organization during the service recovery process. Findings
from the past literature suggested six sub dimensions for interactional justice
namely; courtesy, honesty, offering explanations, empathy, endeavour, and offering
apologies (del Rio-Lanza, 2009; McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003; Clemmer,
1988; Tax et al., 1998). Generally, interactional justice focuses on interpersonal
interactions during service delivery process.

Corporate image: Corporate image may be defined as perception of an
organization held in consumer memory and works as a filter which influences the
perception of the operation of the company (Gronroos, 1998; Keller, 1993). Dobni
and Zinkhan (1990) defined corporate image as the representation of a brand in the
consumer's mind that is linked to an offering. Keller, (1993) argued that corporate
image can be seen as a set of perceptions about a brand the consumer forms as
reflected by brand associations. According to Ngyun and Lelanc (2001) corporate
image is related to the different physical and behavioural attributes of the company,
like; business name, architecture, variety of goods or services, tradition, ideology,
and to the feeling of quality communicated by each person interacting with the
clients of the company. The corporate brand is intangible in nature and invaluable
for the organization. Robert and Dowling (2002) argued that the corporate brand is
a valuable intangible asset, that is hard to impersonate, and which may help
corporation in achieving sustained superior financial performance. Good brand
image not only indicates that the brand has a positive image but also exhibits a
higher level of brand image strength in comparison to other brands (Kim and Kim,
2005).

Perceived justice and recovery satisfaction: The main purpose of service
recovery efforts is to budge a customer from a state of dissatisfaction to a state of
satisfaction (Zemke, 1993). Wirtz and Mattila (2004) specify that recovery
outcomes, procedures, and interactional treatment have a combined effect on post-
recovery satisfaction. Satisfaction and future loyalty of customers are dependent on
their feelings on whether they have been treated fairly or not. In general, customers
expect a service recovery to be fair in order to recover their satisfaction and
loyalty. Numerous authors have found that all three forms of justice including
distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice have a positive effect
on overall service recovery satisfaction (Kim et al, 2009; dos Santos and
Fernandes, 2008; Karande et al., 2007; Karatepe, 2006; Kau and Loh, 2006;
Patterson et al., 2006; Ok et al., 2005; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner, 1999; Tax et al.,
1998; Clemmer and Schneider, 1996;). These studies were conducted in different
service industries like; hotel customers, mobile phone buyers, Undergraduate
students, Airline passengers.

On the basis of above background, following hypotheses are proposed in the
context of present study:

H1. There exists a positive relationship between perceived justice and recovery
satisfaction.

❖ H1a. There exists a positive relationship between distributive justice and
recovery satisfaction.
❖ H1b. There exists a positive relationship between procedural justice and
recovery satisfaction.
❖ H1c. There exists a positive relationship between interactional justice and
recovery satisfaction.

Perceived justice, recovery satisfaction and brand image: Past literature
hypothesizes that corporate image influences customers' satisfaction (Andreassen
and Lindestad, 1998). Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) argued that high level of
corporate image is related to a better perception of the quality, business name and
ideology of an organization. Good brand image not only indicates that the brand has
a positive image but also shows a higher level of brand image strength than other
brands Kim and Kim, (2005). Thus, a good corporate image is vital for companies.

Consumers who build up a positive mental image of a brand will have a propensity towards high customer satisfaction through a halo effect where all things linked with the brand are similarly valenced (Lai et al., 2009). The reaction of these type of situations assure consumers that even if service failures occur quite often, when customers have a positive mental image of a brand, they will think that the company will benefit them in future course of time. Hence, the effect of perceived justice due to recovery efforts made by corporate, who got positive mental image, might have a stronger impact on the recovery satisfaction of customers. In the past literature related to the present study, author did not find enough previous studies, who have examined the moderating role of corporate image in relation to perceived justice in service recovery.

Therefore, current research proposes the following hypotheses:

H_2: The effect of perceived justice on recovery satisfaction is higher given customers have a positive image of the corporation.

❖ H_{2a}: The effect of distributive justice on recovery satisfaction is higher given customers have a positive image of the corporation.

❖ H_{2b}: The effect of procedural justice on recovery satisfaction is higher given customers have a positive image of the corporation.
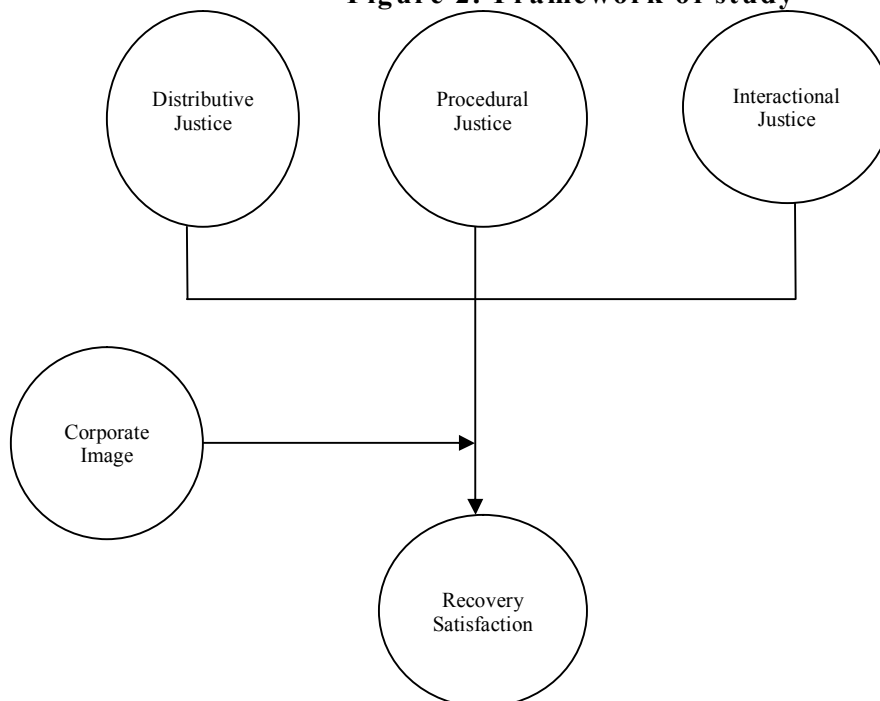
❖ H_{2c}: The effect of interactional justice on recovery satisfaction is higher given customers have a positive image of the corporation.

❖

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework of this study was hypothesized according to the objectives of the study and the literature consulted for the present study (See figure 2).

Figure 2. Framework of study

Distributive, procedural and interactional justices will affect recovery satisfaction (H_{1a}, H_{1b}, H_{1c}). Moreover, corporate image plays moderating role between the relationship between distributive, procedural, and interactional justices and recovery satisfaction (H_{2a}, H_{2b}, H_{2c}).

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4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
4.1. Measurement Scales
Multiple item scales were used to measure each construct in this study. Mostly validated measuring scales were used with slight modifications to meet the objectives of the study. All the scales under study were measured on seven point Likert's scale ranging from 'strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Whereas in the case of corporate image, three items were on seven-point scale of "Very Low" and "Very High" and the 4th item with "Much Worse" and "Much Better". To meet the objectives of the study, distributive justice was measured by a four-item scale adopted from Blodgett et al., (1997) and Smith et al., (1999). The procedural justice was measured by a four-item scale adapted from Blodgett et al. (1997) and Karatepe (2006). To measure the interactional justice construct, we used a five-item scale adapted from Karatepe (2006), Smith et al., (1999), and Tax et al. (1998). The recovery satisfaction scale was measured by a four-item scale adapted from Maxham and Netemeyer (2002). The four-item scale for corporate image was adapted from Zeithaml (1988), and Selnes (1993).

4.2. Data Collection
Primary data were collected from people who travel by airlines operating in Indian aviation industry. The respondents were approached by the researcher at airports at the time, when they were waiting to board plane. The procedure of approaching air customers at that time was helpful without having to obtain customer records in advance by requesting department of Indian aviation. A screening question was asked to check if respondents encountered any service failure with airline operators during the past six months. The structured questionnaire was administered among target population by researcher himself. Since, the questionnaire was adapted form past studies, so it was imperative to test it for suitability to Indian context and service industry. A pilot study was conducted to ascertain the suitability of the constructs (n=52) in Indian aviation industry setting. Reliability check has been performed to know the suitability of the construct for this industry and context. After ascertaining the suitability of the study constructs, the questionnaire was administered to the customer's sample size of 217 respondents. Since pilot study results were in the favour of the constructs, those responses were also included in the sample. Out of the 217 collected, 19 questionnaires were either incomplete or the answers were found to be unreliable, leaving a remaining 198 questionnaires that were retained for further data analysis.

4.3. Demographic Profile
The structured questionnaire used in the study included a section on customer's profile, as various demographic and other factors were likely to influence the customer services offered by the company. Information on demographic and socio-economic features may also be helpful to provide services effectively. A demographic profile of the respondents consisted of age, gender, marital status, educational qualifications, employment status, and monthly income. Among the respondents 61.4 percent were of the age group 28 to 40 years, and 23 percent of 27 years and below age group. A good mix of male and female respondents was found in the data collected comprising males with 52.3 percent and females with 47.7 percent. The majority of the respondents were married (62.5 percent), as percentage of unmarried was 37.5 percent. There were more post graduate respondents (59.6 percent) than graduate and others. Moreover the occupational variables showed that the respondents had major portion of professionals (72.4 percent), where as the percentage of self employment, others were 19.5 percent, 5.7 percent respectively. In the survey it was also found that the respondents came from different income backgrounds; a major part of them (64.7 percent) earned more than Rs.40, 000 per month but less than Rs.40, 000 were only 35.3 percent.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The SPSS software package 17.0 version was used for analyzing the data collected for this study. The Microsoft –Excel software package was also used to make some basic computations like calculation of the average values, standard deviation etc.

5.1. Reliability Test

To test the reliability of the set of items forming the scale a measure of construct reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was computed. Cronbach's alpha is useful in measuring how well a set of variables or items measure a single, one-dimensional latent construct. The alpha values of 0.70 or greater represent satisfactory reliability of the items measuring the construct (dimension) and reliability less than 0.60 is considered poor (Sekaran, 2003). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha value for all constructs ranges from 0.752 to 0.903 (See table 1), which ensures that constructs used for the study are quite reliable.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis Results

Name of Construct	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	No. of Respondents
Corporate Image	4	0.786	198
Recovery Satisfaction	4	0.752	198
Distributive Justice	3	0.903	198
Procedural Justice	3	0.812	198
Interactional Justice	5	0.796	198

5.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was performed in the study to check whether the data collected are consistent with the prescribed structure. The results for exploratory factor analysis with KMO (0.883), Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Chi-square 1673.314, significance 0.000) proves that exploratory factor analysis done with the eleven study variables is effective.

Three factors were extracted using the methods of principal component analysis. The three factors extracted from the study variables explain 77.74% of the variance. Principal Component Analysis using varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization was employed to find the dimensionality of the data set collected. The loadings of the dimensions identified in factor analysis were stable. Each of the variable loaded high on a single factor. The selected factors were based on Eigen values equal to or greater than 1.00. Cut-off point was 0.40 in case of current study. Factor loadings matrix is shown in Table 2.

5.3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted on the primary data collected to test the study hypotheses. Moreover, same type of regression attempted to investigate the relationship between perceived justice dimensions and recovery satisfaction and the moderating role of corporate image in the relationship between perceived justice and recovery satisfaction.

The first model of the hierarchical regression analyses indicated that all three justice dimensions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice are positively related to recovery satisfaction (See the table 3). This positive relationship of perceived justice dimensions with recovery satisfaction supports Hypotheses H_{1a}, H_{1b}, and H_{1c}. This model supports the fact that the effect of distributive justice on recovery satisfaction was stronger than interactional justice, and subsequently, effect of interactional justice on recovery satisfaction was stronger than procedural justice.

Table 2. Factor Loadings Matrix

Variable	Factor Loadings		
	1	2	3
Interactional Justice1	0.483	.892	
Interactional Justice2		.926	0.451
Interactional Justice3	0.513	.808	0.491
Interactional Justice4	0.441	.656	
Interactional Justice5	0.411	.585	
Procedural Justice1		0.511	.770
Procedural Justice2		0.421	.611
Procedural Justice3	0.433		.823
Distributive Justice1	.813	0.542	
Distributive Justice2	.883		0.551
Distributive Justice3	.716	0.472	

Table 3. Multiple Regression Results

Model	Variable	Beta value (Stnd.)	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Value	Change Statistics	
							R Square Change	F change
1	Procedural Justice	0.317	0.851	0.725	0.708	63.637	0.725	63.637
	Distributive Justice	0.483						
	Interactional Justice	0.393						

The second model of the analysis investigated the direct effect of corporate image on recovery satisfaction. Results of the study provided evidences of direct positive impact of corporate image on recovery satisfaction (See the table 4 below).

Table 4. Multiple Regression Results

Model	Variable	Beta value (Stnd.)	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Value	Change Statistics	
							R Square Change	F change
2	Procedural Justice	0.213	0.885	0.783	0.771	32.206	.0798	32.206
	Distributive Justice	0.253						
	Interactional Justice	0.264						
	Corporate Image	0.521						

5.4. Moderation Analysis

Third model of the study revealed the moderating effect and interaction terms between perceived justice dimensions and corporate image (See the table 5). All the three stated hypotheses H_{2a}, H_{2b}, and H_{3c} were supported. It means that in all the three dimensions, interaction terms were significant, which shows that corporate image plays a moderating role between perceived justice dimensions and recovery satisfaction, not rejecting any Hypotheses.

Table 5. Moderation Analysis Results

Model	Moderating Variable	Beta value (Stnd.)	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Value	Change Statistics	
							R Square Change	F change
3	Corporate Image X Procedural Justice	0.207	0.926	0.858	0.842	9.897	0.073	9.897
	Corporate Image X Distributive Justice	0.712						
	Corporate Image X Interactional Justice	0.404						

6. DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed that all the three dimensions of perceived justice namely; distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice are positively related to recovery satisfaction. The study model supports the fact that the effect of distributive justice on recovery satisfaction was stronger than interactional justice. This finding of the study is consistent with the past studies conducted by Maxham and Netemeyer, (2002), and Smith, Bolton, and Wagner, (1999). Further it was found that the effect of interactional justice on recovery satisfaction is stronger than procedural justice. The impact of distributive justice on recovery satisfaction appears to be stronger than that of interactional justice, which is consistent with the previous findings of Smith, Bolton, and Wagner, (1999) and Maxham and Netemeyer (2002). The momentous role of distributive justice in influencing customer satisfaction would be supported by fair distributive treatment in terms of discounts, refunds etc. that are important in returning back satisfaction from Indian air customers. Thus, management of Indian aviation industry should execute an effective way of distributive justice. Moreover, Indian aviation management should also implement an effective way of interactional justice such as appearing courteous and respectful, offering apologies, and showing empathy and attentiveness, since interaction justice was found an important predictor of recovery satisfaction in the study.

Interaction terms of all the three dimensions of the perceived justice were found significant, which supports the fact that corporate image plays a moderating role in the relationship among all the three dimensions of perceived justice. This result supports the plea that corporate image will affect the effects of procedural justice on recovery satisfaction.

6.1. Managerial Implications Fo The Study

Present study proposes following key implications for Indian aviation management based on the findings:

❖ The aviation management should focus on training employees to make them understand about the aspects of perceived justice, the fair distributive treatment, interpersonal communication is important to the customers.

❖ In order to increase distributive justice which had a stronger relationship with recovery satisfaction; management of Indian aviation should develop specific monetary compensation guidelines while training both full-time and part-time employees to quickly and properly react to various service failure

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situations. Moreover, they need to train front desk staff to offer proper arrays of compensations with similar values and let their customers select the best compensation.

❖ Regarding, distributive treatment training, they should also employ a training program, which specifically illustrates the reactions improving the interactional justice practice through teaching how to properly treat angry and frustrated customers, with the help of empathy and apology.

6.2. Limitations And Future Research

Like all other studies, this research also suffers from various limitations, that curb the generalization of the findings and provides avenues to the researchers for future research. Since the present study only focused on one service industry (Indian airline industry) and in a specific developing nation, the results cannot be generalized to other service sectors and different geographical locations. Hence, future research can replicate this study in other service sectors and different countries to validate the results of this study. Moreover, future research may also search few other moderating variables in the relationship between perceived justice with service recovery and recovery satisfaction.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Earlier research in the area of service recovery has helped the researchers to understand the important role of perceived justice on recovery satisfaction. Though, the current research furthermore investigated the role of corporate image in service recovery situations. Current study attempts to bridge the gaps in the literature by investigating perceived justice dimensions and to examine whether brand image plays moderating role in the relationships between perceived justice and recovery satisfaction.

The first model of the hierarchical regression analyses indicated that all three justice dimensions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice are positively related to recovery satisfaction, and the effect of distributive justice on recovery satisfaction was stronger than interactional justice, and subsequently, effect of interactional justice on recovery satisfaction was stronger than procedural justice. The results also confirmed that all three interaction terms were significant, which shows that corporate image plays a moderating role between perceived justice dimensions and recovery satisfaction.

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