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An integrated service recovery process for service failures: Insights from systematic review

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Abstract

Purpose

The current research conceptualizes service recovery process (SRPs) within pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery. The study intends to provide a summary of factors and strategies with respect to SRPs. Also, the current research highlights different responses by organizations to SRPs. These responses are synthesized in this research in the context of SRPs.

Method

The study provides a systemic literature review that considers only studies that have been published within the past 11 years to highlight the different response options used today. This study only selected papers that are included in a rigorous review process such that they explicitly contribute towards practice, theory, and policy.

Findings

The pre-recovery is about the awareness of the problem whereby communication between the customer and organization is initiated to resolve the issue and it provides a critical foundation for the recovery expectations. The recovery phase concluded with either a satisfactory resolution of the problem or when the customer gives up on his/her query due to another failure of the organization. Post-recovery encompasses the period in which the recovery efforts have concluded, and the customers have now started to

evaluate their experience of preceding phases. A major contribution of this study is that it provides a summary of factors and strategies with respect to SRPs.

Implications

The managers of service-providing organization can use this synthesis to evaluate the response of their organization to different instances of service failures along SRPs. They can then modify their responses. Managers can also use this synthesis as part of an employee training programme to ensure wide coverage of potential responses of the organization following a failure of service.

Originality

The current research then highlights different questions which can be explored in future studies regarding the various phases involved in SRPs. Lastly, the research outlines recommendations for businesses looking to benefit from adopting SRPs by also considering the related managerial implications. The study will provide a conceptual framework as to the future direction of the overall study through highlighting gaps of understanding related to SRPs

Key words: Service recovery (SR), service recovery process (SRPs), service failure, factors, strategies, pre-recovery, recovery, post-recovery.

1 INTRODUCTION

Service recovery (SR) arises when a permanent or a temporary interruption takes place in the regular provision of services to a customer or number of customers. Both SR and complaints handling are pure examples of increasing service elements (Grönroos, 2020). Although various alternatives are mentioned in the literature concerning the recovery of service when an interruption arises, the existing literature showed that recovery efforts are usually exerted in a discrete and non-uniform manner. As a result, many leading service providers face service failure, a high level of customer dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, and customer switching (Grönroos, 2020A; Grönroos, 2020b). For writers such as Belding (2019) and Fan and Niu (2016), the increased usage of social media has seen an increase in the number of reported service failure stories and social pressure on

organizations for quick actions. Some studies (e.g. Khamitov et al., 2019; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2013) have highlighted that the competitive business environment has seen an increase in choice for customers; therefore, the number of service failures has increased because customers' expectations have become too high or customers are not satisfied with organizational responses when service recovery (SR) has occurred. Recent studies (e.g. Kim & Baker, 2020; Khamitov et al., 2019) stated that service failure occurs when one or more customers are not happy with the service or when they show serious grievances. According to a Customer Care Measurement and Consulting (2017), 56% of households revealed that they experienced different faults with services within the last 12 months, which has increased the service failure rate including complaining behaviour. In another study, 20% of households shared that they are satisfied with their service providers especially with respect to their efforts in handling SR (Customer Care Measurement and Consulting, 2017). Out of 423,889 US airlines' flights, it was found that approximately 70,000 flights were delayed and 700 flights were cancelled (US Department of Transportation, 2016), which increased customers' dissatisfaction and focus on SR.

Researchers, including Kim and Baker (2020) and Khamitov et al. (2019), have argued that SR and service failure are inseparable from each other. SR can lead to and cause anxiety, frustration, dissatisfaction, and complaining behaviour among customers (Knox & Oest, 2014; Ozgen & Duman-Kurt, 2012); therefore, even leading service providers sometimes face losses and negative word of mouth (Belding, 2019; Lovelock, C., & Patterson, 2015). However, SR strategies are helpful to identify the causes of failure which may be useful to improve service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty (El-Helaly et al., 2013; Krishna et al., 2011). The findings of various studies have highlighted that SR efforts are inadequate (Michel et al., 2009; Strizhakova et al., 2012); therefore, most customers remain dissatisfied and leave the service provider (El-Helaly et al., 2013; Krishna et al., 2011). Studies on the subject, including Van-Vaerenbergh et al. (2012, 2018), show that organizations utilize various responses to manage SR. However, such responses are discrete and often unpredictable. Research frameworks for organizational responses to SR as well as for handling the uncertainty of customers are inadequate (Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2014, 2019). This shortcoming is addressed in this study

through the concept of SR processes (SRPs). In this study, SR will be reviewed as to its conceptualization and a literature review will be presented related to the three core phases: pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery.

1.1 BRIEF BACKGROUND

Different researchers, including Gelbrich and Roschk (2011a), Ozgen and Duman-Kurt (2012), and Van-Vaerenbergh et al. (2019), highlighted different options of SR such as offering an apology to the customer, including providing compensation, offering explanation regarding failure, and showing empathy. Different organizations respond to failure instances differently as is evident from the literature on the subject (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011a; Davidow, 2003). However, customers might not be adequately satisfied with the response of the organizations in the event of a service failure (Holmqvist, & Grönroos, 2012). One of the reasons behind poor satisfaction among customers regarding recovery could be the static and transactional approach to recovery (Michel et al., 2009; Strizhakova et al., 2012).

The existing literature (e.g. Surachartkumtonkun et al., 2015) points out that the response of organizations to SR has been discretionary and uncertain, thereby causing dissatisfaction among customers as they are unable to predict the response of the organization if an event failure arises. Some studies (e.g. Xu et al., 2016) highlighted that even though the term ‘SR experience’ is often used in the literature, indicating the response of the organizations, yet there are few instances where such efforts were conceptualized by organizations (Arsenovic et al., 2019). Reflecting this, this study intends to address this gap by taking a three-pronged approach. Firstly, the study will provide an introduction to SRPs. In providing this introduction, the study will include examples to illustrate the process of recovery within the three phases of pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery. The SRP is initiated the moment failure of service arises.

The study will introduce SRP as ‘recovery as a journey’ meaning that the study takes a step forward from ‘recovery as a single event’. This is helpful in highlighting it as a concept requiring managerial attention. As such, it includes the SR literature as well as the customer experience literature (Voorhees et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Secondly, the study also summarizes the factors and strategies with respect to pre-

recovery, recovery, and post-recovery stages. This is the major contribution of this study as these factors and strategies have never been discussed in a collective form with respect to each SRP. The third contribution of this study is to offer organizational responses with respect to SRPs. These organizational responses can guide service providers regarding which questions are useful with respect to improving each process of SRP. Therefore, the study will provide a literature review that considers only studies that have been published within the past 11 years to highlight the different response options used today. Lastly, the study will provide a conceptual framework as to the future direction of the overall study through highlighting gaps of understanding related to SRPs.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 SELECTION OF SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Ferrari (2015) observed that there are two types of literature reviews: systematic and non-systematic. Non-systematic reviews are narrative in nature. It has also been observed that non-systematic reviews are majorly employed to summarize the literature on a subject while avoiding duplication on the subject in the process of review (Adam et al., 2015). A systematic review, on the other hand, is conducted to critically review the existing literature on a subject and highlight the grey areas on the subject. A systematic review also includes synthesizing the findings (Ferrari, 2015; Adam et al., 2015). The main difference between the two is that a non-systematic review lacks planning and, as such, the evaluation and selection bias cannot be adequately addressed in a non-systematic review. Further, the findings of a research based on a non-systematic review may also not be reproducible due to the absence of evaluation of selection and evaluation bias (Ferrari, 2015; Adam et al., 2015). Since a systematic review encourages the determining, examination, and synthesizing of literature, its methodology, rationale, and findings are clear and can be synthesized compared to a non-systematic review (Ferrari, 2015; Adam et al., 2015). Thus, the current research utilizes a systematic review of literature to critically understand the conceptualization and phases of SR.

2.2 SEARCH CRITERIA

This study only selected papers that are included in a rigorous review process such that they explicitly contribute towards practice, theory, and policy. Therefore, the current study searched four databases: Web of Science, Chartered Association of Business schools (CABS), Clarivate, and Scopus. On the basis of this research strategy, the following criteria of inclusion and exclusion of studies are utilized in respect of systematic review.

Table 1: Criteria for selection

| Inclusion | Exclusion |
|--|--|
| Only such studies will be selected which make an explicit contribution to SR strategies. | The current study ignored the literature which either did not provide explicit contribution to SR strategies or did not thoroughly discuss different phases of SR. |
| Only those studies are included which are published in Web of science, CABS, Clarivate, and Scopus. | This study did not consider studies from databases other than Web of science, CABS, Clarivate, and Scopus indexed journals. |
| Only those studies are included in systematic review which are conducted from 2009 onwards so that recent literature on the subject is included. | The present study ignored the existing literature published before 2009. |
| Studies are included if they utilize one of the following research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and conceptual studies. | In this study, book reviews, editorial content, critical reviews, and industry perspectives were not included. |
| In this review, only those journal articles which are written in the English language are targeted. | Any journal article not written in the English language was excluded from the literature review of this research. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Only studies that have an abstract, are fully referenced, and explicitly contribute to the body of knowledge are included. | Studies that do not have an abstract, references, and explicit contribution were excluded. |
|--|--|

The present study has used different search strategies with the purpose to find the most relevant as well as up-to-date data with respect to SRPs. Table 2 summarizes the search strategies used to identify reputed studies from Web of science, CABS, Clarivate, and Scopus indexed journals.

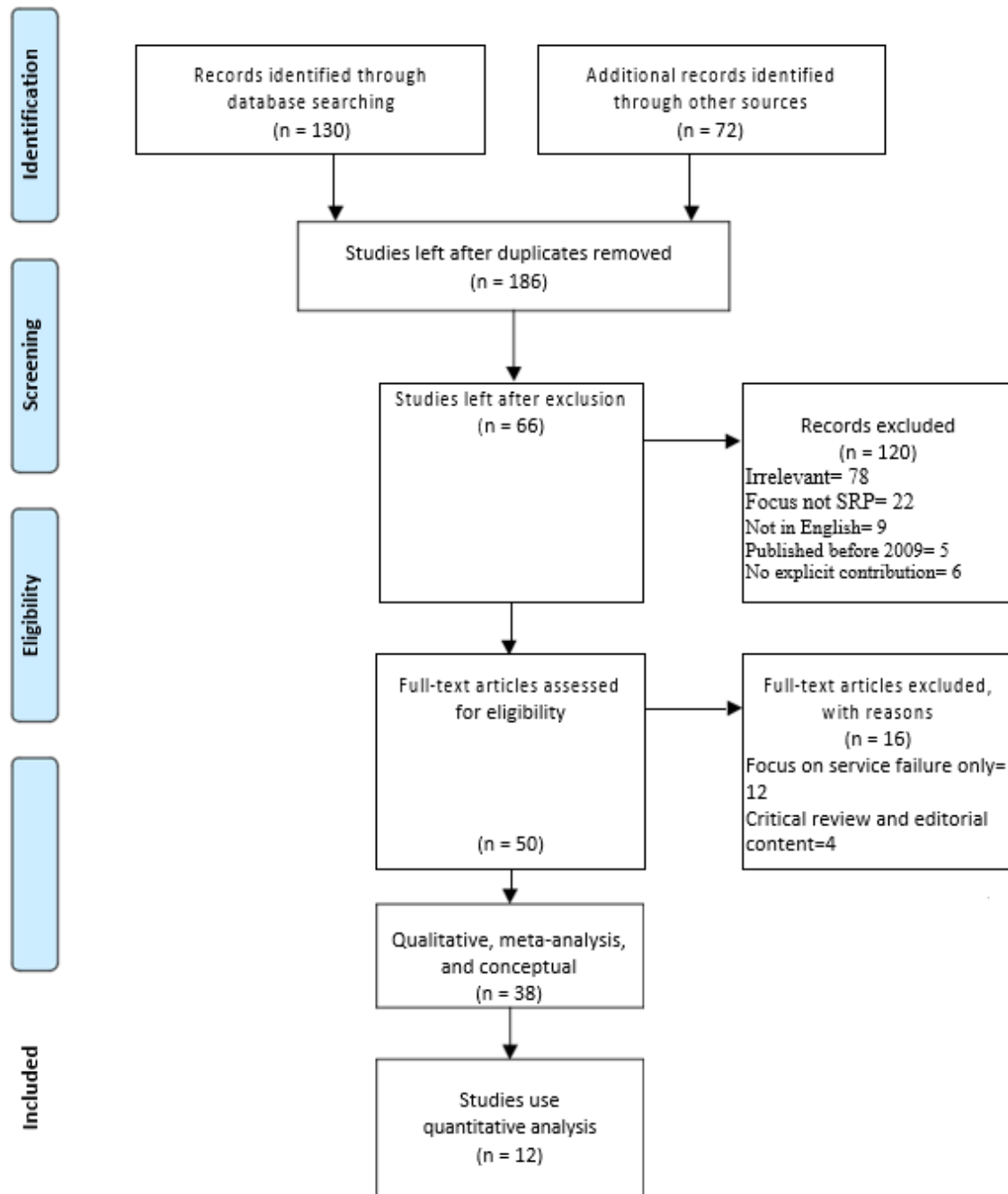
Table 2: Keywords searched

| First search | Second search |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Service and recovery and strategies. | Recovery AND service AND phases. |
| Conceptualization and service and recovery. | Exploration AND recovery AND service. |
| Integration and service and recovery. | Recovery AND service AND failure. |
| Differences and service and recovery and strategies. | |

2.2.1 Results of search

In this research, 186 research studies were retrieved from the above-mentioned databases. Subsequently, they were evaluated for potential duplication and their number were thus reduced to 66 owing to focus on subject, relevancy, publication year, language, and contribution. Out of these 66, it was found that 12 studies were in the context of SR only whereas 4 studies gave editorial and critical content which fell short of inclusion criteria. The remaining 50 studies met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Out of these 50 studies, 38 studies were found to have utilized conceptual, meta-analysis, and qualitative review approach whereas only 12 studies were found to have utilized quantitative approach. The complete overview of the search results is shown in Figure 1. The objective of the search results is to highlight the reliability and transparency in the selection procedure of the systematic review.

Figure 1: Flow diagram for the selection of studies included in a systematic review



3. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF AN INTEGRATED SRPs

The reason behind selecting a customer experience-oriented approach in research on SR is due to increased debate on changing the focus from an organization-oriented perspective to a customer-oriented perspective (Voorhees et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The literature on SR has mainly considered customer outcomes following managerial actions as touchpoints or service encounters (Ozgen et al., 2012). However, such an approach has been argued against by some researchers (e.g. Patrício et al., 2018; Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2019) due to its lack of recognition concerning the dynamics of the service delivery process and because the process is multidimensional and requires thorough inspection. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) observed that customer experience is the journey of the customer with a firm over a period of time involving multiple touchpoints and purchase cycles. There are three phases engulfing this entire process: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase (Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2014, 2019). Taking this perspective into account enables the ability to view the dynamics of the service process and to develop a better understanding about the viewpoint of the customer about services (Strizhakova et al., 2012).

There are three ways whereby SRPs influence the regular customer journey. Firstly, SRPs can cause a temporary stop in the regular journey, for example, when internet fails to connect, and the customer has to wait for service provider to fix the issue (Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2014, 2019). Secondly, SRPs can even result in a customer abandoning their regular journey, for example, a poor air conditioning system can cause customers to check out of a hotel earlier than planned (Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2014, 2019). Thirdly, SRPs and regular journey might run parallel to each other, for example, when a customer attends a planned meeting while also interacting with an airlines company about lost luggage (Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2014, 2019). Besides, different phases of SRPs might differ from each other in regard to the type of failure in service and the significance attached to that failure by the organization and the customer. If core service fails, then SRPs might be more extensive, such as in the case of flight cancellation (Belding, 2019). In pre-recovery phase, the customers are likely to take time to lodge their

complaint and collect information (Ozgen et al., 2012). Therefore, the organization needs to exert more efforts here (e.g. provide explanation, offer an apology, and provide compensation in recovery phase and then combine it with follow-up communication in post-recovery phase). This will successfully conclude the SRPs. SRPs are likely to be short when the failure of process is less severe. In such an instance, a simple apology is sufficient to address the concern of the customer (Rosenmayer et al., 2018; Roggeveen et al., 2012). This is the reason that no single standard can be regarded as universal to address the concerns of customers. This study has summarized the definitions of pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery stages in Table 3.

Table 3: Definitions of pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery stages

| Definitions | Pre-recovery | Recovery | Post-recovery |
|---|---|---|--|
| Ozgen and Duman Kurt (2012), Ozkan-Tektas and Basgoze (2017) | This service recovery process is all about managing positive and negative emotions because when customer initially made contact then he/she is more frustrated. | NA | It is the final stage where customer's initial negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and sadness can convert into positive word of mouth if he/she is dealt with properly. |
| Tektas (2017), Gelbrich and Roschk (2011b), Guo et al. (2016), Joireman et al. (2013) | NA | It is the stage where customer collaboration can be enhanced, therefore, service providers are learning and improving their services with the purpose to avoid deviations. | It is a stage which showed either customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction voice. At this stage, customer can show either positive or negative word of mouth publicly. |
| Van-Vaerenbergh et al (2019), Van Vaerenbergh et al. 2014) | It is a problem awareness process of service recovery where either customer or service provider made the initial contact for acknowledging the service failure. | This service recovery stage provides a solution to problem which can either satisfy or dissatisfy the customer and as a result the customer can end the contact with either happiness or frustration. | This process specifically belongs to customer because here the customer thinks about their previous experiences which can bring customer loyalty back or search for platform for taking revenge. |

Although there are studies (e.g. Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2014, 2019; Ozgen et al., 2012; Rosenmayer et al., 2018) on SRPs, these studies did not discuss what the specific factors and strategies with respect to pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery are. The understanding of factors and strategies is useful to improve the performance of service

providers, especially when they know which specific factor and strategies fall in which phase of SR. Therefore, the present study has gathered the factors and strategies with respect to each SRP. Furthermore, there is limited understanding available in the literature regarding the questions that can guide organizational response options and procedures that can improve SRPs. This study summarizes organizational response options and procedures as per pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery processes.

3.1. Pre-recovery process

The pre-recovery phase involves the time period between coming to know about the failure of service and the interaction of the customer with the organization to resolve the failure. This phase is about the awareness of the problem whereby communication between the customer and organization is initiated to resolve the issue and it provides a critical foundation for the recovery expectations (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011a; Ozgen & Duman-Kurt, 2012; Van-Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). The duration of this phase differs depending on the situation. It can even be simultaneous with the moment of failure (e.g. waiter accidentally spilling water on the table or on the customer). It is found that evidence of customer touchpoints, brand equity, and employee awareness about customer policies can make this process simple and fast, but most of the existing literature has ignored these important factors.

Some studies (e.g. Lin, 2010; Wirtz, 2018) highlighted the nature of service and organizational type, but they did not explain the importance of these factors for SRPs. The organizational type and nature of services (i.e. online, physical, and self-service) are important as customers usually expect a quick response from online and self-services, especially from private service providers (Wirtz, 2018). Researchers (e.g. Arsenovic et al., 2019; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2013; Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011b; Hogleve et al., 2017) argued that communication system, disputed resolution system, and complaint handling policies are not very quick, especially in public services, therefore there are more chances of services recovery failure and customer dissatisfaction. There is a need to improve strategies by using systems, such as an integrated communication system and services dispute resolution system (Hogleve et al., 2017; Kim & Baker, 2017), so that a service provider can contact the customer when service failure has occurred (Ozgen & Duman-Kurt, 2012). Some studies suggested that there should be service failure indicators and

a threshold that can guide employees and the organization to realize the failure and then make initial contact giving a positive impression and care for customers (Arsenovic et al., 2019; Hoffman et al., 2016; Hogleve et al., 2017). These failure indicators and thresholds can give guidance to an organization and minimize the anxiety of customers before they make first contact in frustration (Arsenovic et al., 2019; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2013; Hogleve et al., 2017) Employees can successfully operate the pre-recovery stage when they have an explicit organizational definition of service failure, explicit service failure policies, and employee awareness about customer policies (Wirtz, 2018; Zhang & Geng, 2019). These pre-recovery factors are not collectively discussed, especially under pre-recovery, therefore, service providers can improve their pre-recovery strategies by focusing on these factors.

3.1.1. Organizational reactions for pre-recovery

The pre-recovery phase is the time period in which the initial awareness of the SR takes place and the first contact between the company and customer is established. In this phase, the most critical step is reporting the failure so that the organization is able to exert efforts to repair the damage in the next phase. However, there is limited literature which showed how an organization should act during the pre-recovery phase (Ozgen & Duman-Kurt, 2012). There are two potential responses that organizations can make in this phase: initiation and facilitation. Facilitation represents the ease of conveying dissatisfaction to the organization (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2013). Since some customers may not complain, it is important that the organization facilitates them to express their dissatisfaction easily to the organization so that they can be involved in the recovery process. This facilitation can be provided through the application of a complaint handling procedure, providing a free or toll-free number to customers and establishing care desks for example (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2013; Edvardsson et al., 2011). Initiation represents starting SRPs before a complaint is lodged by the customer. Research shows that customers positively react to initiation (El-Helaly et al., 2013).

3.2. RECOVERY PROCESS

The recovery phase begins when the initial contact between the organization and the customer is established and it concludes with either a satisfactory resolution of the

problem or when the customer gives up on his/her query due to another failure of the organization (Krishna et al., 2011; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). Generally, some customers are more interested to exchange their emotions, such as anxiety and frustration with an organization, which may be useful because they explain the failure causes in detail to their service providers (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014). Customers want to understand the resolution of their problem. This involves closer interaction between the customer and the organization (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019).

Some studies (e.g. Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019; Migacz et al., 2018) identified the detailed responses of organizations in the initial recovery phase. This phase is critical to the SRPs as it represents the stage whereby the organization must devise an effective solution to rectify the failure (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2012). Different response options have been identified by researchers and they classified them into various categories: immediate versus delayed compensation, offering apology, providing new goods, exchanging the good, providing new service, justification, credibility feedback, excuse, courtesy, referential account, empathy, effort, listening to the customer whole heartedly, employee empowerment, customer participation, recovery and flexibility time as organizational procedure options (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019; Migacz et al., 2018; Wirtz, 2018; Zhang and Geng, 2019).

The compensation response in a broader sense can also involve intangible features and, as such, it can become a psychological reward to compensate the customer for social loss (Gelbrich, 2010; Guo et al., 2016). One of the chief recommendations in the literature on recovery of service is that the organization should offer an apology to customers for service failure (Tektaş, 2017; Wirtz, 2018; Kim et al., 2017). An apology represents the public expression of remorse thereby acknowledging the distress the customer went through (Kim et al., 2017). An apology is valuable because it provides emotional benefit which offsets the lack of attention felt by the customer following the failure of service (Roschk & Gelbrich, 2014). Favourable behaviours of employees play a critical role in managing the emotional reactions of customers. However, merely giving an excuse to customers is akin to denial of responsibility by the organization, which can cause dissatisfaction among customers (Ozgen & Duman Kurt, 2012).

Although some studies explained the usefulness of organizational resources, power, control system, and consumer perception (Valenzuela & Cooksey, 2014; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2012; Zhang and Geng, 2019), they did not explain their importance for specific SRPs. These are some of the important factors that can enhance the success of recovery strategies. For example, human, financial, physical, and informational resources (Guchait et al., 2019; Kim & Baker, 2017) are very important for satisfactory resolution of the problem. If there is proper employee training, reward, and empowerment, then front-line employees can work hard for giving appropriate justification and feedback in response of service recovery (Kim & Baker, 2017; Kim & Baker, 2020; Knox & Van Oest, 2014; Krishna et al., 2011). Other studies highlighted that both understanding of customer perception and forgiveness can enhance the chances of services recovery and customer loyalty (Guo et al., 2016; Guchait et al., 2019; Hazée et al., 2017; Joireman et al., 2016). Huang and Ha (2020) stated that front-line employees should create polite, friendly, and competence-oriented responses that can regain customer trust and satisfaction in services.

Social media has enhanced the quick implementation of supporting strategies at recovery stage (Schaefer & Schamari, 2016; Fan & Niu, 2016). For example, people are now more engaged and involved in sharing their positive and negative experiences on social media which created social pressure and influence for service providers to give quick recovery response (Rosenmayer et al., 2018; Schaefer & Schamari, 2016; Fan & Niu, 2016). Furthermore, social media helps service providers to engage and understand consumer experiences, which ultimately enhances the chances of co-creation opportunities and customer involvement recognition (Hazée et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018; Kunz and Walsh, 2020). As a result, service providers can now learn from customers' social interactions and shared experiences through social media, which ultimately reduces bottlenecks during the recovery stage (Zhang et al., 2018; Schaefer & Schamari, 2016). It can be argued that social media has become a SR and co-creation opportunity tool.

3.2.2. Organizational reactions for recovery phase

There are various ways in which employees can create a difference. For example, the courteous treatment of customers by employees induces satisfaction among customers as they are being treated politely and respectfully (Voorhees et al., 2017). Moreover, customers are also found to have interacted more with those employees who put in effort and time to find solutions most suitable to the needs of the customers. Treating customers with empathy also has a positive significant influence on customers (Hogreve et al., 2017; Valenzuela & Cooksey, 2014). Finally, a willingness to listen to customers represents the commitment of employees to listen to the description provided by the customers about their unsatisfactory experience.

The procedures of the organization are also critical to the recovery process. The participation of customers in SRP induces satisfaction among customers (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2018). Increasing customers' participation can give them a feeling that their service providers think they are special, and their concerns should be addressed on a priority basis. Furthermore, it can also create a positive feeling and they might not demand compensation in their response to the service failure (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2018). The participation of customers also fully empowers customers throughout the SRPs and their concerns are useful to overcome the causes of service failure (Michel et al., 2009).

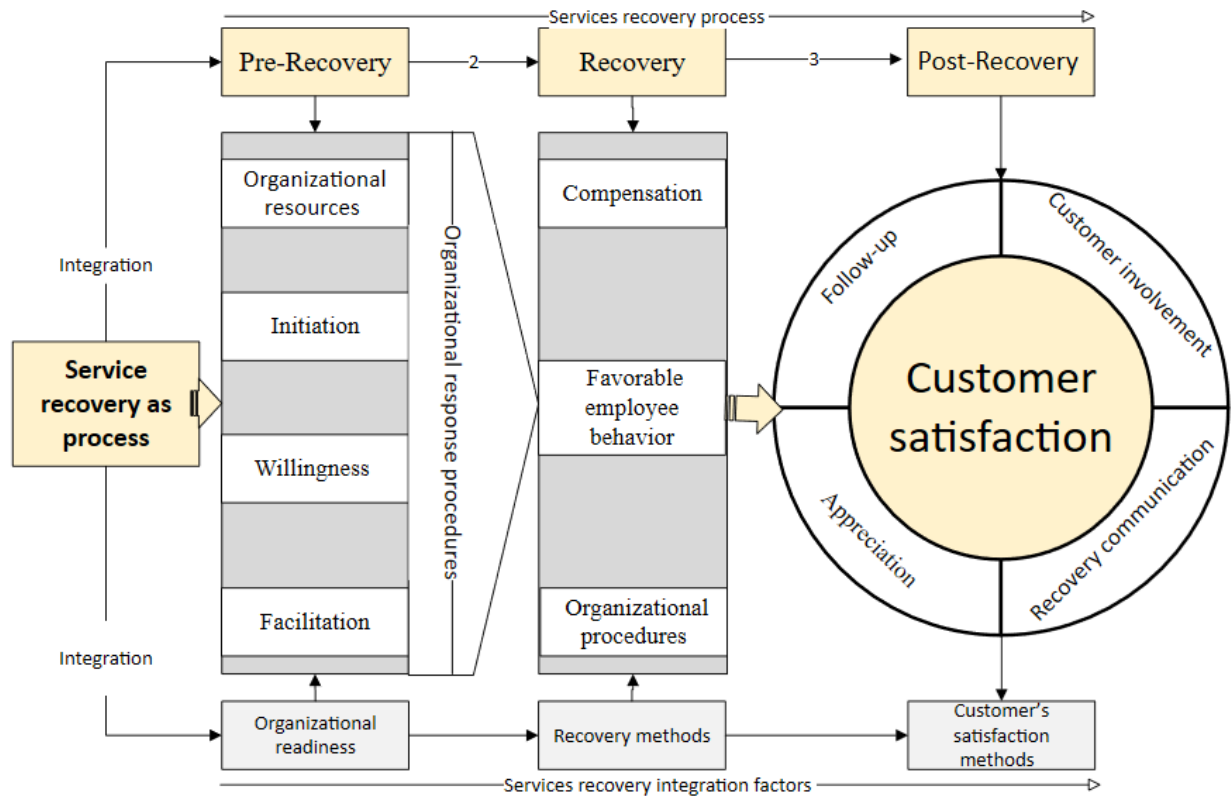
Employees who are empowered by the organization can offer customized solutions to the customers thereby inducing satisfaction among customers about the recovery process. Therefore, researchers point out that another important feature of the process is flexibility. The flexibility level ranges from treating customers alike to responding to them in a customized manner so that their problems are solved according to their wishes (Michel et al., 2009). In order to prevent the perspective of inequity among customers concerning the recovery process, organizations should explain the reasons behind differences in provision of services (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Finally, recovery time represents the amount of time between the initial lodging of the complaint by the customer and the conclusion of the complaint by the organization (Hogreve et al., 2017). One of the most significant steps in the recovery process includes the provision of a quick response to customers. Generally, customers accept that organizations will take some time to respond

to the SR, but if the wait grows long then it can have a negative effect on the customer (Valenzuela & Cooksey, 2014; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Nevertheless, the pace of response is not always beneficial; for example, automated responses are almost always instantaneous, but they are ineffective when customers seek to understand their situation instead of receive merely a swift response (Kim & Baker, 2020).

3.3. Post-recovery process

The phase of post-recovery encompasses the period in which the recovery efforts have concluded and the customers have now started to evaluate their experience of preceding phases (Ozgen & Duman-Kurt, 2012; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). The length of duration of this phase depends on the effectiveness of the recovery experience of the customer (Ozgen & Duman-Kurt, 2012). There are two possibilities in this phase: Customer is delighted with the SR or the customer is dissatisfied with the recovery efforts (Ozgen & Duman-Kurt, 2012). If the SR was temporary, then the regular journey of the customer resumes. In some instances, the post-failure satisfaction of the customer exceeds their pre-failure satisfaction, and it may even become higher than the satisfaction of customers who did not face the failure. This is called the recovery paradox (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). When the customer does not find the recovery satisfactory then it generates cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses among customers. This means that customers could feel upset, angry, and even annoyed with the organization (Ozgen & Kurt, 2012). When the recovery efforts fail, the customer could feel enraged (Surachartkumtonkun et al., 2015). The failure of the organization during the recovery phase can result in even the restarting of the SRPs. The below given figure has demonstrated the simple form of SRPs based on systematic literature review.

Figure 2: Service recovery processes (SRPs)



There is inadequate understanding of which specific strategies enhance the effectiveness at post-recovery stage (Tektaş, 2017; Ozgen & Duman Kurt, 2012). For example, it is found that if employees are successful in creating a polite, friendly, and competence-oriented response, then it is more likely that the customer will have a positive experience and voice customer satisfaction (Huang & Ha, 2020). Social media is now usually used as a communication tool for customer interactions with their social network and service provider as many service providers have created official pages and teams for creating word of mouth (Zhang et al., 2018; Schaeffers & Schamari, 2016). On the other hand, if a customer experienced that he/she wasted time, respect, money, and other resources, then it is more likely that he/she will seek customer revenge, such as creating negative word of mouth, rating, and recommendation, which will ultimately influence the number of customers (Rosenmayer et al., 2018; Schaeffers & Schamari, 2016). If social media has increased the social proof of success, then it has also increased the social proof of service failure, which can influence the purchase intention of customers because customers are more likely to buy those services recommended by their social circle (Schaeffers &

Schamari, 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). Therefore, service providers have to focus on these specific strategies so that they can produce positive SR experiences which can regain customer loyalty as well as create positive word of mouth for engaging other customers. The study has summarized the factors and strategies of these three SRPs in Table 4. The major contribution of this study is that no study was found that had summarized and explained these factors and processes with respect to, specifically, pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery stages. These factors and strategies are different as per the organizational type and nature of services. Furthermore, it is also found that there is gap in literature regarding cause and effect such as how pre-recovery, post-recovery, and recovery strategies are affecting on each other.

Table 4: Factors and strategies of service recovery processes

| Description | Pre-recovery | | Recovery | | Post-recovery | |
|---|---|---------|--|---|---|---------|
| | Strategies | Factors | Strategies | Factors | Strategies | Factors |
| Arsenovic et al. (2019), Cambra-Fierro et al. (2013), Gelbrich and Roschk (2011a), Hogreve et al. (2017), Kim and Baker (2017), Kim and Baker (2020), Knox and Van Oest (2014), Krishna et al. (2011), Michel et al. (2009), Ozgen and Duman Kurt (2012), Roggeveen | Customer feedback, complaint management system, complaint management policies, service failure threshold, failure indicators, failure detection policies, service failure organizational definition and explicit policies | | Co-recovery, customer collaboration, social influence, co-recovery as a cost-efficient strategy, organizational performance, simple compensation, overcompensation, and focus on recovery time reduction | Employee knowledge, learn, train, reward, skills, empowerment, and efforts. Technical support | Customer involvement acknowledgment, social media as communication tool, social media as a recovery tool, social proof of success, word of mouth (positive or negative) | NA |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|----|
| et al. (2012), Rosenmayer et al. (2018), Schaefers & Schamari (2016), Wirtz (2018), Zhang and Geng (2019), Fan and Niu (2016), Zhang et al. (2018) | | | | | | |
| Huang and Ha (2020), El-Helaly et al. (2013), Gelbrich and Roschk (2011a), Khamitov et al. (2019), Morgeson et al. (2018), Ozkan-Tektas and Basgoze (2017), Valenzuela and Cooksey (2014), Van Vaerenbergh et al. (2012), Zhang and Geng (2019), Huang and Ha (2020) | Awareness about organizational service failure diagnosis system, understanding about integrated organizational communication, organizational complaint handling system | NA | Warmth oriented, competence-oriented focus, understanding customer knowledge management | Organizational sincerity, resources, control, and power. Employee empowerment and knowledge. Good employee behaviour and organizational procedure | Post-recovery, complaint, experiences, and emotions. Customer voice and rage | NA |
| Edvardsson et al. (2011), Fan and Niu (2016), Gelbrich (2010), Joireman et al. (2013), Lemon & | Customer touchpoints, pre-recovery emotions, | Organizational type and nature of services | Understanding customer experience, apologies, explanations, substitutions, empathy, anger, frustration, | Employee communication skills, employee competence, and employee attitude | NA | NA |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|----|
| Verhoef (2016), Lin (2010), Wirtz (2018) | | | reconciliation, and compensation | | | |
| Guo et al. (2016), Guchait et al. (2019), Hazée et al. (2017), Joireman et al. (2016) | Understanding employee acknowledgement and response influence | NA | NA | Understanding employee perception, encouragement, belief, and customer forgiveness | Understanding customer revenge | NA |

3.3.1. Organizational reactions for post-recovery process

The post-recovery phase represents the period after the recovery phase has ended. This phase has been discussed by only 7% of the papers. The focus of research regarding this phase has been on response options only, such as communication and other follow-up protocols. Follow up represents the procedure employed by the organization to check whether the problem has been resolved to the complete satisfaction of the customer (Sengupta et al., 2015). For this process to be effective, it is important that it effectively secures positive feedback from the customer (Sengupta et al., 2015). Communication here represents the information dispensed by the organization to the customers to prevent the failure from arising again, so that outcomes can be enhanced for customers (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2012). Rasoulilian et al. (2017) argued that major failures can have a negative impact even on the stock of the organization. The literature shows that there is a carryover effect in the post-recovery phase from the recovery phase. Effective follow-up processes influence customer outcomes but only if the issue was initially resolved quite effectively (Mostafa et al., 2014). However, those customers who are not really satisfied with the efforts of their service providers at recovery are likely to

communicate more during the process recovery communication compared to the ones whose problems were solved (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2012).

4. CONCLUSION

The focus of researchers has been to identify and understand relevant responses related to service failures. This systematic review highlighted that either SR strategies are not correctly followed, or service providers have inadequate understanding about it. As a result, many service providers are unable to take benefit from customer knowledge and experiences which can increase their chances for competitive advantages. The aim of this research is to increase the ambit of the research on the subject by conceptualizing SR in such a way as to regard it as a journey involving different phases. This perspective highlights a fresh way of researching and seeing the phenomenon and the researcher believes that such an effort was significantly needed. This article is an effort to move away from the traditional approach in the domain of SR, the focus of which is on the reaction of the customer to different response options of the organization without conceptualizing recovery and failure as a journey. The contribution in the shape of SRPs is that it highlights the different processes involved in the customer's journey so that the journey is completed effectively.

The focus of research has been to highlight and understand the relevant responses to service failure. The current research is an attempt to increase the ambit of such efforts as it conceptualizes the SR as a journey involving different phases. This perspective highlights a fresh way to see and research the phenomenon and we believe that such an effort is highly needed. It is observed that the focus of the literature on SR is to identify categories of recovery measures which enhance satisfaction of customers. This research is an attempt to shift away from traditional approaches of SR and instead focus on the reaction of customers as a pivotal point to assess the response options available to organizations. The contribution in the form of SRPs is that it acknowledges the nature of SR and is helpful to identify how managers and researchers should design and apply different response mechanisms related to SRPs to ensure a holistic recovery experience. The researcher believes that the current effort to innovate organizational responses

towards a dynamic rather than a static perspective is helpful in enhancing the SR in both theory and practice. The study has provided a conceptual framework which is the explicit contribution of this study by highlighting which factors are useful to make an SR journey more successful for both customers and services providers. Table 5 highlights which response options and organizational procedures can support pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery processes. These responses were distributed across the literature and in Table 5 they are gathered under the correct phase of SRPs. The focus of service providers on the questions asked in Table 5 can improve customer satisfaction and the likelihood of recovery; this is the unique contribution of this study.

Table 5: Service provider response options and procedures during pre-service recovery, recovery, and post-recovery processes

| Description | Response options | Organizational procedures |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Pre-recovery process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To what extent do guarantees overcome customers' negative feelings? ✓ Does a guarantee influence the customer's expectations? ✓ Can a customer's perception be affected by non-accountability claims? ✓ Are complaints stimulated when non-monetary compensation is provided? ✓ Does compensation trigger opportunistic behaviour? ✓ To what extent does the empathetic behaviour of employees proactively stimulate complaints? ✓ How effectively can an integrated system be used? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How can organizations communicate proactively about failures? ✓ Is the trust of the customer enhanced or diminished under proactive initiating? ✓ How do customers select different channels of lodging a complaint? ✓ How do customers navigate through different channels of complaint? ✓ Are customers reluctant to use different digital channels to lodge a complaint? |
| Recovery process | NA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How can customers be equipped to assume a role in the process of service recovery? ✓ How can customers' different perceptions be considered by the company with regard to self-service? ✓ How can interactional justice be fostered by organizations in both |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| | | <p>recovery encounters and technology? How can the needs of the customers be satisfied by organizations in regard to information control through SRPs?</p> |
| Post-recovery process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Should the organization offer follow-up compensation? If it should, then at what point should it be offered? ✓ How does follow-up compensation influence customer outcomes? ✓ Do feelings related to overcompensation arise? ✓ Should the organization compensate customers for ideas related to process improvement? ✓ What options of compensation are critical to recover from double deviation? ✓ Do customers appreciate follow-up interaction with the organization? ✓ If a process involves a number of employees, then which one should be preferred? ✓ How and when should extra efforts be invested by managers or employees in post-recovery relationship with customers? ✓ What behaviour of employees is critical to recover from double deviation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How frequently can an organization follow up and make a quick response? ✓ Does follow-up communication give rise to negative feelings about failure of service or does it restore positive feelings? ✓ What should be the manner of engaging in post-recovery communication? ✓ How can customers be involved in post-recovery process? ✓ How does this process affect customer satisfaction and customer loyalty? ✓ What procedures of recovery are critical to recover from double deviation? |

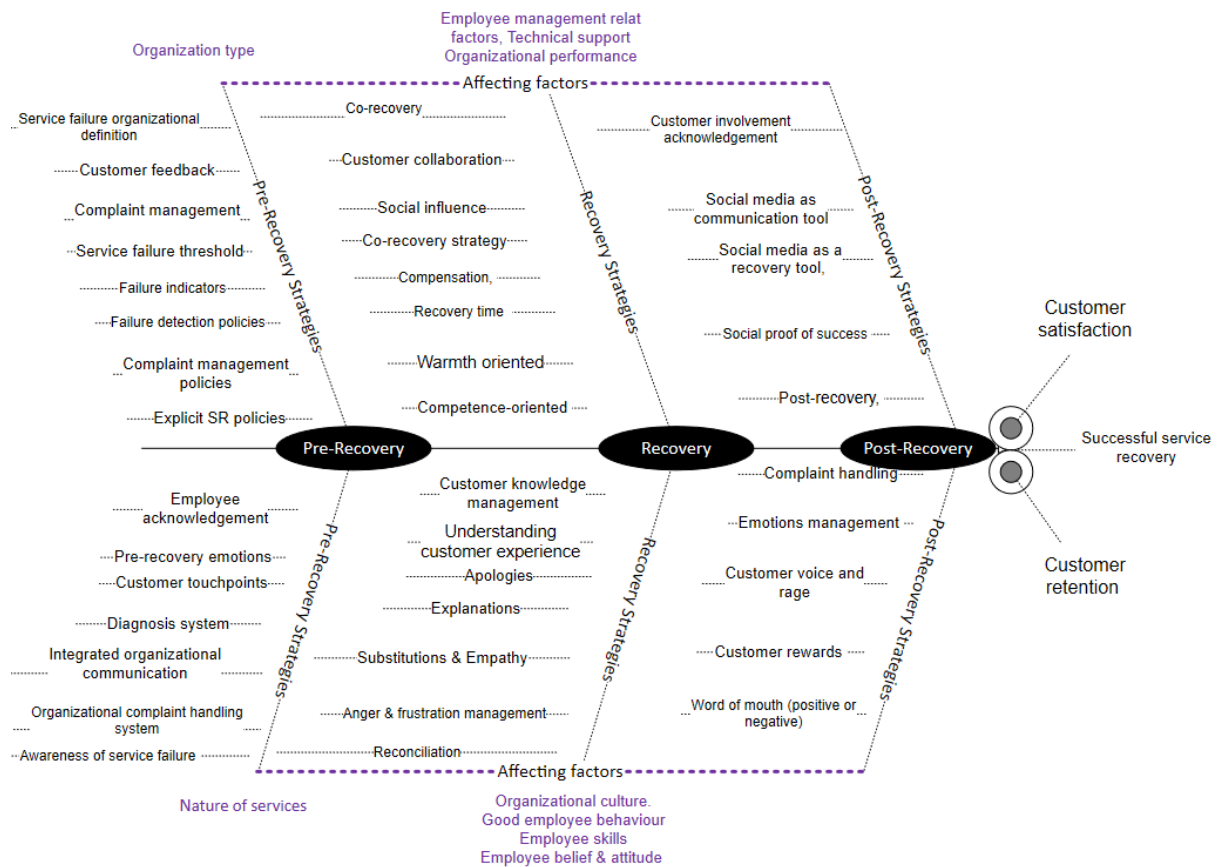
4.3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Firstly, the managers of service-providing organization can use this synthesis to evaluate the response of their organization to different instances of service failures along SRPs. They can then modify their responses. Managers can also use this synthesis as part of an employee training programme to ensure wide coverage of potential responses of the organization following a failure of service. Secondly, by realizing the relationship between SRPs and customer's regular journey, SR can be made a priority of the organization, particularly when the organization is keen to manage the customer experience to develop customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The close proximity between the two suggests that if the organization is keen on delivering compelling customer experiences by designing complete journeys of customers, they should devise SRPS and utilize them

as a core activity of their business. Thirdly, the organization has to move ahead of recognizing SR as only a single event and instead must recognize it as a complete journey that is dynamic in nature. This change in perspective will be helpful for the organization to eventually rebuild customers' trust in their service providers. The SRPs' perspective highlighted those different actions together constitute the recovery process and they connect the customer and the organization in the resolution of the service failure. In optimizing the flow of SRPs, the connectivity and consistency of touchpoints are critical design factors. Recovery consistency means that the response of the organization must be aligned to SRPs, which means that each actor in the system must be in line with what is allowed and required.

4.4. RESEARCH GAP AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Figure 3: Service recovery process as cause and affect fish bone diagram



The major contribution of this study is that no study was found that had summarized and explained these factors and processes with respect to, specifically, pre-recovery, recovery, and post-recovery stages. These factors and strategies are different as per the organizational type and nature of services. Furthermore, it is also found that there is gap in literature regarding cause and effect such as how pre-recovery, post-recovery, and recovery strategies are affecting on each other. The figure 3 also demonstrated that although there are some factors available with respect to pre-recovery and recovery strategies however there is inadequate understanding regarding which specific factors can influence the post-recovery stage strategies.

Although there is adequate literature available on SR, many organizations are still unable to offer an effective and satisfactory SR experience to their customers. The main reasons behind this failure are that these organizations viewed SR as increasing expenditure rather than as an investment to reduce errors and to improve processes, performance, and quality (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019; Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011a). However, Morgeson et al.'s (2018) longitudinal research over a period of decade showed that the significance of an effective recovery procedure on customer loyalty has increased in recent years. This paradoxical situation gives rise to two critical questions: How far can academic knowledge actually reach and What grey areas are there in the knowledge that need to be addressed? By viewing SRPs as a learning process, especially service providers, potential grey areas can be identified.

Firstly, the analysis shows that the literature on the subject is primarily focused on different response options during the recovery phase and omits the pre-recovery and post-recovery phases. However, the ignored phases are equally significant to achieve customer satisfaction with the recovery process. Secondly, the literature also treats recovery as an isolated or independent factor instead of part of the customer's journey with the organization. Understanding that SRPs affect the regular journey of customers would be helpful to devise effective recoveries.

The focus of the research on pre-recovery phase has been on the effect of initiating and facilitating customer outcomes. However, various issues still required further understanding and elaboration. Technological innovations are helpful to enable

organizations to identify service failures or their likelihood to arise before customers notice them. Thus, future research can focus on devising mechanisms to proactively communicate such failures and organizations' response strategies to customers. For instance, various credit card agencies use technology to detect potential for fraud activity thereby triggering the immediate rejection of a transaction even though the customer is not aware of it. Researchers can investigate whether such proactive communication would increase the satisfaction level of customers or decrease it or even cause dissatisfaction.

Future studies may also be helpful to increase the ambit of knowledge in the pre-recovery phase. One of the most recurring recommendations in the literature was to make it easier for the customer to contact the service provider in the event of SR (Arsenovic et al., 2019). Different studies also examined how complaint channels are employed by customers (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011ab). For example, the Customer Care Measurement and Consulting (2017) showed that customers prefer using a telephone to report SR compared to reporting it on the internet by a margin of 6 to 1. This is a surprising development given the fact that the internet is the most widely utilized channel for communication these days, particularly also because of social media. However, the fact that customers still prefer lodging complaints over the telephone represents an area which researchers can investigate, and they can investigate why online channels are not becoming equally popular.

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