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Moving Toward Collaborative Service Recovery: A Multiactor Orientation

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Abstract. Service recovery research has traditionally been firm-centric, focusing primarily on the time and effort expended by firms in addressing service failures. The subsequent shift to a customer-centric orientation addressed the customer's role in recovery situations, and the recent dyadic orientation has explored the effectiveness of their joint efforts. However, earlier conceptualizations failed to take adequate account of the complexity of service recovery encounters in which multiple actors collaborate and integrate resources. This study explores how multiactor collaborations influence the customer's experience of service recovery by adopting a multiactor orientation and by applying service-dominant logic. After reviewing the customer experience literature, a collaborative recovery experience framework is developed that emphasizes the joint efforts of multiple actors and customers to achieve a favorable recovery experience. In a contextualization, the usefulness of the new framework to explain customer experiences in collaborative service processes is shown. Finally, further research avenues are proposed.

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Keywords: customer experience • service recovery • customer collaboration • corecovery • service failure

Introduction

In today's service landscape, understanding the customer's experience is a priority for all service-type organizations (Voorhees et al. 2017). Where that experience involves a service failure, recovery efforts exert a major influence on customer behavior. Digitalization and mobile technologies make the service recovery process increasingly complex by giving customers and service firms quick and easy access to multiple actors to resolve problem situations.

On the basis of a literature review, this study identifies three approaches to service recovery: firm-centric, customer-centric, and a focus on the joint efforts of customer and service firm (dyadic orientation). The *firm-centric orientation* has traditionally regarded the customer as passive, referring only to the firm's responses in rectifying a service failure (Grönroos 1988). These studies typically analyze how a firm can coordinate its resources for service recovery in a way that makes the customer feel that he or she has been fairly treated (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011). The more recent *customer-centric orientation* assigns the customer a more active role and explores how direct involvement in the process influences his or her evaluation of service recovery (e.g., Dong et al. 2008). Most recently, the *dyadic orientation* focuses on the combined efforts of customer and service firm (e.g., Roggeveen et al. 2012, Hazée et al. 2017), encompassing and challenging the earlier approaches (e.g., Roggeveen et al. 2012, Dong et al. 2016).

Based on the service-dominant (S-D) logic perspective on service ecosystems (Vargo and Lusch 2011, 2016), two shortcomings have been identified in existing approaches to service recovery. First, service recovery research typically focuses on single-actor engagement. Here we argue that a multiactor orientation is crucial in addressing the inherent complexities of service recovery encounters (e.g., Edvardsson et al. 2011). Second, these processes are commonly described in terms of single-service encounters (Zhang et al. 2018). However, service recovery does not occur in isolation but in a dynamic and emergent environment. Consequently, the multiple actors who participate in this process collaborate and integrate resources in multiple encounters that shape the customer's experience.

Because service recovery presents challenges for the relationship between customer and firm, the customer's experience of that process must be taken into account as part of the recovery effort, and some studies have addressed the inherent complexity of managing and shaping these experiences over a series of encounters (Voorhees et al. 2017). In line with the current customer experience literature (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), it is argued that the involvement of multiple actors in multiple recovery encounters can have a significant impact on the customer's experience of service recovery.

Against this backdrop, this study extends the concept of service recovery to include multiple actors and multiple encounters in what becomes a collaborative experience. Based on marketing discourse in relation to customer experiences (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) and in line with recent insights from S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2011, 2016), a collaborative recovery experience is understood here as the customer's response to the efforts of multiple actors interacting across multiple encounters in recovering a service failure. This collaborative framework is used to explore the dynamic nature of the customer's experiences in what is essentially a conflict situation (Voorhees et al. 2014, 2017). The proposed framework broadens the conceptualization of service recovery and offers a new way of understanding the customer's experiences in such situations.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Based on an overview of the service recovery literature, different orientations are identified and problematized. Conceptualization of the customer's experiences of collaborative recovery is extended to envision a multiactor orientation, in which multiple actors integrate their resources (e.g., skills, time, money, effort) and collaborate to resolve the customer's problem. This process is envisioned in terms of three distinct but connected phases. The paper concludes by identifying managerial implications and articulates a future research agenda grounded in the proposed conceptual framework.

Literature Overview: Conceptualizations and Shortcomings

Identifying Service Recovery Orientations

In four decades of research on service failure, including how firms should deal with these failures (Van Vaerenbergh and Orsingher 2016), different theoretical points of departure have assigned different roles to the customer. As shown in Table 1, the literature review identified three orientations: firm-centric, customer-centric, and dyadic. The traditional firm-centric approach is rooted in the service quality literature (Bell and Zemke 1987, Kelley and Davis 1994), focusing on the service firm's role in the recovery process, whereas the customer is typically viewed as a passive recipient. In particular, these studies address how service firms can orchestrate their resources to ensure that the service recovery process is as fair as possible in meeting customer expectations (Boshoff 1999, Gelbrich and Roschk 2011) and in dealing with the customer's emotional distress (DeWitt et al. 2008). By contrast, the customer-centric orientation emphasizes the customer's role in the recovery encounter and often views the service firm as static (e.g., Dong et al. 2008). Finally, the dyadic orientation is rooted in the S-D logic mind-set (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008), in which the firm, the customer, and their networks play an active role as cocreators of the service recovery solution (Roggeveen et al. 2012).

The systematic literature review included searches of the Scopus, Business Source Premier, and Web of Science databases. Using the keywords "cocreation," "customer participation," "customer engagement," and "customer involvement" in combination with "service recovery," which limited the search to relevant topics and removed duplications, resulted in a total of 36 articles. From these 36 articles, a total of 17 were considered relevant for the purpose of this paper. Additionally, to ensure the inclusion of the most cited service recovery articles, 10 articles using only "service recovery" as a keyword in Scopus were selected, of which 2 overlapped. In total, 8 articles were categorized as firm-centric, 5 as customer-centric, and 12 as dyadic. The summary in Table 1 is based on the emergent categorization.

The Firm-Centric Orientation

Early service recovery research was grounded in the pioneering work of Grönroos (1988) and Kelley and Davis (1994) and typically focused on the time and effort invested by service firms to solve the customer's problem. To understand how firms could respond to unfavorable customer experiences, disconfirmation theory was initially used to determine how customer expectations related to actual performance (Olshavsky and Miller 1972, Oliver 1977). In particular, service recovery researchers spent a long time exploring how recovery efforts influenced customer satisfaction (Boshoff 1997, Wallin Andreassen 2000). Cognitive appraisal theory (Folkman et al. 1986) was also widely used to examine the role of emotions in shaping how customers experienced service recovery encounters (e.g., Stephens and Gwinner 1998, DeWitt et al. 2008, del Río-Lanza et al. 2009).

However, the predominant theoretical approach to customer perceptions of the fairness of service recovery procedures, interactions, and outcomes was justice theory (Maxham and Netemeyer 2002, McColl-Kennedy and Sparks 2003, Van Vaerenbergh and Orsingher 2016). Based on Adams' (1963, 1965) pioneering work on inequity and subsequently on social

Table 1. Overview of the Literature Illustrating Triple Orientation of Service Recovery Research

Author(s) (year)	Orientation	Explanation of core concept	Core concept	Theoretical root of core concept	Type of study
Hart et al. (1990)	F-O	"Workers on the front line to identify and solve the customer's problem" (p. 150)	Service recovery	Service quality	Conceptual
Maxham and Netemeyer (2002)	F-O	As in Kelley and Davis (1994)	Service recovery	Service quality	Empirical/quantitative
Smith and Bolton (1998)	F-O	The actions a service provider takes in response to a service failure (Grönroos 1988)	Service recovery	Service quality	Empirical/quantitative
Maxham (2001)	F-O	As in Kelley and Davis (1994)	Service recovery	Service quality	Empirical/quantitative
Hess et al. (2003)	F-O	"Compensate a customer for the losses produced by the service failure" (p. 131, based on Grönroos 1988)	Customer service recovery expectations	Service quality	Empirical/quantitative
Kelley and Davis (1994)	F-O	"Activities that are performed as a result of customer perceptions of initial service delivery behavior falling below the customer's zone of tolerance" (p. 53, based on Grönroos 1988)	Service recovery	Service quality	Empirical/quantitative
Spreng et al. (1995)	F-O	"Activities in which a company engages to address a customer complaint regarding a perceived service failure" (p. 15, based on Grönroos 1988)	Service recovery	Service quality	Empirical/quantitative
Karande et al. (2007)	C-O	"Asking a customer what the firm can do to rectify a problem after a complaint is voiced" (p. 187)	Customer voice	Justice theory	Empirical/quantitative
Dong et al. (2008)	C-O	"The degree to which the customer is involved in taking actions to respond to a service failure" (p. 126)	CP in service recovery	Service-dominant logic	Empirical/quantitative
Zhu et al. (2013)	C-O	"[P]rocess by which customers recover from SST [self-service technology] failures using their own effort" (p. 15)	Customer recovery	Expectancy theory	Empirical/quantitative
Cheung and To (2016)	C-O	"The extent to which customers are willing to perform their part of the recovery work" (p. 2527)	Customer cocreation of service recovery	Customer-dominant logic	Empirical/quantitative
Balaji et al. (2018)	C-O	As in Dong et al. (2008)	Customer participation in service recovery/joint recovery	General value cocreation	Empirical/quantitative
Edvardsson et al. (2011)	D-O	Customer and firm integrating their resources in the service recovery process to cocreate value	Value cocreation	Service-dominant logic	Empirical/qualitative
Roggeveen et al. (2012)	D-O	"Shape or personalize the content of the service recovery through joint collaboration with the service provider" (p. 772)	Corecovery	Service-dominant logic	Empirical/quantitative
Xu et al. (2014b)	D-O	"A process of creating a solution through interactions between a service company and its customers" (p. 371)	CP and corecovery	General value cocreation	Empirical/quantitative
Xu et al. (2014a)	D-O	Resources jointly used to create a more favorable customer experience	Cocreation service recovery	General value cocreation	Empirical/mixed methods
Heidenreich et al. (2015)	D-O	"Joint value creation by the company and the customer" (p. 280)	Cocreation in service failures	General value cocreation	Empirical/quantitative
Park and Ha (2016)	D-O	"The joint creation of a service recovery through a series of interactions and dialogs between a customer and a service provider to identify a recovery solution that satisfies the customer's needs in the situation" (p. 310)	Cocreation of service recovery	Service-dominant logic	Empirical/quantitative
Gohary et al. (2016a)	D-O	As in Xu et al. (2014b, p. 137)	Corecovery, CI and CE	General value cocreation	Empirical/quantitative

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Table 1. (Continued)

Author(s) (year)	Orientation	Explanation of core concept	Core concept	Theoretical root of core concept	Type of study
Gohary et al. (2016b)	D-O	As in Xu et al. (2014b, p. 137)	Corecovery	Service-dominant logic	Empirical/quantitative
Dong et al. (2016)	D-O	"Different locations of recovery effort, depending on who rectifies the service failure" (p. 291)	Locus of recovery	Coproduction/cocreation	Empirical/quantitative
Hazée et al. (2017)	D-O	Customers integrating their own resources with existing resources provided by the firm to maximize value	Cocreation of service recovery	General value cocreation	Empirical/quantitative
Sugathan et al. (2017)	D-O	Resources and efforts jointly responsible for service failure	Cocreation of service failure	General value cocreation	Empirical/quantitative
Vázquez-Casielles et al. (2017)	D-O	Process in which an organization invites the customer to cocreate service recovery	Cocreation in service recovery	Service logic/service-dominant logic	Empirical/quantitative

Note. F-O, firm-centric orientation; C-O, customer-centric orientation; D-O, dyadic orientation; CI, customer involvement; CP, customer participation; CE, customer engagement.

exchange theory, justice theory is a multidimensional framework for examining the distributive, procedural, and interactive aspects of fairness in this context (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011). In the service recovery literature, distributive justice relates to the physical resources a firm assigns to a customer to rectify a service failure (Tax et al. 1998), whereas procedural justice relates to the perceived fairness of the firm's procedures and policies—often referred to as "the means by which the ends are accomplished" (Tax et al. 1998, p. 62). Finally, interactive justice has been defined as "the fairness of the interpersonal treatment people receive during the enactment of procedures" (Tax et al. 1998, p. 62). These theories were widely used to clarify how service firms could coordinate their resources to shape service recovery encounters that were perceived as fair, leading on to a broader view that acknowledges the customer's role (Johnston and Michel 2008, Michel et al. 2009).

The Customer-Centric Orientation

As customers became increasingly demanding (Kumar-Madupalli and Poddar 2014), service recovery researchers moved on from a focus on the firm's options for rectifying a service failure to the issue of how the customer could contribute in service recovery encounters understood as situation specific. In this context, service recovery scholars explored how customers wish to be treated (Dong et al. 2008, Gruber 2011). This resulted in an increased focus on customers as value cocreators, and this strand of research emphasized the customer's active role in the service recovery process.

The customer-centric orientation is a response to increasingly empowered customers who dictate what they want and expect from their service firms. Commonly attributed to Dong et al. (2008), this customer-centric approach has had a seminal influence on the evolution of service recovery research that explores how customers shape service recovery encounters through activities and interactions. Dong et al. (2008, p. 128) defined service recovery encounters as "the degree to which the customer is involved in taking actions to respond to a service failure." The evidence suggests that customers who participate in recovery encounters are more satisfied with the service firms' efforts and that this has a positive impact on their intention to be involved if similar situations arise in the future. This customer-centric approach most often explored the contribution of customers in self-service technology contexts (Dong et al. 2008, Zhu et al. 2013). Although only a few theories (e.g., expectancy theory, attribution theory) have been applied to how customers act to rectify a service failure, with or without interacting with the service firm (Zhu et al. 2013), these findings have proved influential for more than a decade (Balaji et al. 2018), contributing to developments in the field and highlighting the customer's active role.

The Dyadic Orientation

Recent research has turned its attention to how the customer and the service firm cocreate service recovery to achieve a favorable customer experience. As in previous research, a number of different theories have been applied to explore this dyadic relationship and the perceived fairness of the outcome from the customer's perspective, including justice theory (Gohary et al. 2016a, b) and attribution theory (Sugathan et al. 2017). In contrast with the firm- and customer-oriented approaches, the dyadic orientation focuses on how the customer and the service firm cocreate value during the service recovery process (Roggeveen et al. 2012, Xu et al. 2014b). Gohary et al. (2016a, b) based their dyadic investigations on the Xu et al. (2014b, p. 371) conceptualization of corecovery, which is defined as "a process of creating a solution through interactions between a service company and its customers." Dyadic research explores strategies that service firms can use to cocreate effective service recovery encounters (Heidenreich et al. 2015).

As in firm-centric research, the dyadic approach has drawn on different theoretical frameworks to examine how customers experience joint service recovery efforts. Justice theory has been used to investigate the perceived fairness of service recovery outcomes when both the customer and service firm contribute to the encounter. Gohary et al. (2016a) found a higher level of satisfaction based on perceived fairness of treatment if the service recovery experience was cocreated. Gohary et al. (2016b) suggested that customers' willingness to cocreate the service recovery encounter is influenced by their social environment, confirming the importance of cultural context. The customer participation literature shows how customers can blame themselves for a service failure, resulting in a negative experience (Heidenreich et al. 2015). The next section discusses the limitations of the firm-centric, customer-centric, and dyadic approaches as a point of departure for a new conceptualization of the customer experience of collaborative recovery.

Limitations of Previous Approaches

It is clear from earlier research that service recovery can be very complex and that it is not enough to focus on any single interaction (Bitner et al. 1990); in some cases, a second or even a third recovery encounter might be necessary to rectify an unfavorable experience (Edvardsson et al. 2011). The uniqueness of service problems means that recovery issues are likely to be highly diverse (Sivakumar et al. 2014). For this reason, such encounters are highly complex, dynamic, and specific to the customer in question. In most cases, then, the customer will have to explain the issue and contribute knowledge and other resources toward identifying the problem and suggesting how he or she would like it to be solved (Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola 2012, Sampson and Spring 2012).

Although it is an essential step toward aligning service recovery research with S-D logic, the dyadic orientation is narrow and cannot capture the complexities arising when the service recovery process extends to actors beyond the firm, including customers. The contemporary service landscape requires a broader view, because multiple actors collaborate in shaping the recovery process and therefore the customer experience. Dyadic research typically conceptualizes service recovery encounters as single interactions in which the customer and service firm integrate their resources (Xu et al. 2014a, Dong et al. 2016, Sugathan et al. 2017). However, the concept of corecovery introduced by Dong et al. (2008) illustrated that current theorizing is problematic. Studies that refer to "corecovery" have most often grounded the idea in S-D logic (Xu et al. 2014b, Hazée et al. 2017), in which value is cocreated through joint interactions (Vargo and Lusch 2016). Dong et al. (2008) defined corecovery on the basis of Dabholkar's (1990) work on customer participation and Grönroos' (1988) early work on service recovery. Because of these theoretical underpinnings, corecovery is not based on S-D logic. Instead, Dabholkar (1990) and Grönroos (1988) align with traditional service quality research, which is based on goods-dominant logic. In particular, despite the reference to joint ("co-") recovery, this conceptualization is too narrow and customer-centric.

This use of corecovery as a theoretical concept (e.g., Gohary et al. 2016a, b; Xu et al. 2014b) has led to a misunderstanding: that the customer is the creator of value rather than a cocreator. This has shifted the focus from what firms can do to rectify a service failure to exploring how the customer's time and effort can contribute to rectifying the service failure (Dong et al. 2008, Balaji et al. 2018). In line with the evolution of S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008), Roggeveen et al. (2012, p. 772) extended the concept of corecovery to propose that value cocreation depends on the joint efforts of the customer and the service firm, conceptualized as a process in which "customers help shape or personalize the content of the service recovery through joint collaboration with the service provider."

In recent years, further empirical exploration of the circumstances in which the customer plays an active role has driven conceptual development extending that role to include resource integration (Xu et al. 2014a, Sugathan et al. 2017). In this regard, scholars have argued the need to accommodate greater complexity, because value cocreation during service recovery encounters often extends beyond a single encounter to a series of interactions and dialogs in seeking to identify and resolve the customer's concerns (Park and Ha 2016). In other words, existing service recovery research is too narrow in focus and needs to take a broader view for a number of reasons. First, in today's service landscape, customers encounter increasingly complex service situations, some of which result in service failures (Parasuraman 2006, Van Vaerenbergh et al. 2014). It follows that service firms must be capable of understanding and dealing with more complex situations and customer-specific challenges. Second, the rapid growth of mobile technologies, digitalization, and social media means that service ecosystems have expanded beyond the firm to include multiple actors, enabling the customer to become directly involved in the recovery process.

Extending the Conceptualization of Service Recovery

Various theories, concepts, and frameworks have been used to explore service recovery situations. Despite their different theoretical underpinnings, a number of specific orientations recur. This study builds on Roggeveen et al. (2012, p. 772), whose dyadic conceptualization of value cocreation during service recovery emphasized the customer's "joint collaboration with the service provider." While acknowledging the customer as a cocreator of value, Vargo and Lusch (2016, p. 8) recently updated and extended S-D logic, which is embedded in the service ecosystem, arguing that "value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary." The ecosystem view emphasizes the collaboration among multiple actors when integrating and deploying resources to cocreate value for themselves and others. The actors assess value within the specific social and business context in relation to intended outcomes (Vargo and Lusch 2016). This value is understood as actor defined (i.e., it differs for the firm and the customer), contextual (because the same situation might be assessed differently over time by the same actor), and experiential (in that customers respond differently to situations such as service recovery, depending, e.g., on what is important to them and on their previous experiences).

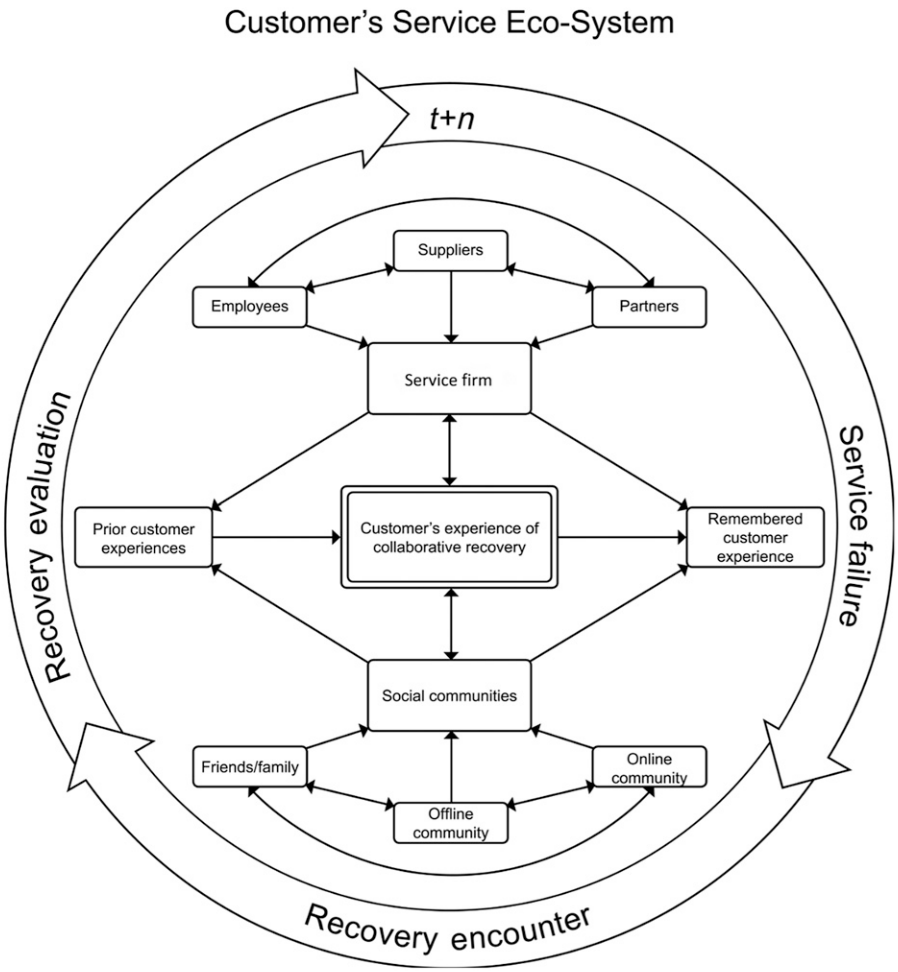
The multiactor orientation is rooted in the service ecosystem perspective advanced in relation to S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2011), which emphasizes the need for collaboration (in terms of efforts and resources) among all engaged actors in pursuit of a favorable customer experience. Because the concept of collaboration is frequently referred to but rarely defined in service research, this review looked at studies that have addressed the issue. Theories of collaboration generally insist that the concept must encompass who is doing what, what it means, and to what end (Wood and Gray 1991). Extending Gray's (1989, p. 5) definition of collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solution that go beyond their own limited visions of what is possible," Wood and Gray (1991, p. 146) defined collaboration as "a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain."

For present purposes, collaborative recovery is understood as a process in which multiple actors (including the customer) interact and integrate resources through organized activities to recover a failed situation and so achieve a favorable recovery experience. As part of the collaboration, actors integrate resources that include their activities and interactions in deploying skills, time, money, and effort (Xu et al. 2014a). As Mele et al. (2010) pointed out, resources have no inherent value but create value when used in a specific context.

In all interactions, experiences emerge. Lemon and Verhoef (2016, p. 71) defined customer experience as the "customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey." Moreover, social interactions influence experiences among peer customers (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), and this is an essential embedded element of the multiactor orientation proposed here. Research on marketing and consumer behavior has highlighted the importance of social environment as a dimension that shapes customer experience (Verhoef et al. 2009), especially in terms of the influence of different actors within a community (Luo 2005, White and Dahl 2006). This experiential lens reveals the dynamics and complexities of how the activities and interactions of multiple actors determine the processes and outcomes that constitute the customer recovery experience.

Any conceptualization of service recovery must be grounded in the customer's experience. This is shaped by previous experiences, including any conflicts associated with the recovery process. When actors collaborate, their activities, attitudes, and behaviors are likely to have a significant impact on the customer's cognitive, emotional, and sensory responses and on whether experiences and outcomes are recalled as favorable or unfavorable. By giving customers an active role in the recovery process, they are more likely to experience a sense of coherence and control. This paper broadens the scope of the customer's experience of collaborative

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Customer's Experience of Collaborative Recovery



Notes. *t+n* specifies that the process is continuous. As a consequence, the customer might experience collaborative recoveries in the future.

service recovery to encompass the customer's cognitive, emotional, and sensory responses to multiple actors' resource integration efforts (Figure 1).

The Role of the Service Firm

In considering how the customer and the service firm interact to cocreate the service recovery encounter, the multiactor orientation looks beyond the service firm to a range of associated actors. These may include one or many employees, suppliers (e.g., of support or transportation services), and partners providing solutions or services (e.g., financial, mobile technology), many of whom interact directly or indirectly with one another and with the customer. Through the lens of customer experience, service firms can comprehend how these activities and interactions trigger the customer's cognitive, emotional, and sensory responses to shaping the customer's perception of service recovery. In addition to their interactions with a firm's partners or suppliers, customers' engagement with other customers or social media actors can influence their experience of collaborative recovery and how it will be remembered.

The Role of the Social Community

A customer's interactions with multiple actors in his or her social community can shape the experience of collaborative recovery. These communities may include the customer's friends, family, and other offline community members that the customer has a close relationship with and trust. Additionally, digitalization and increased mobility mean that the customer's service ecosystem may encompass social media and brand communities within which the customer uses, creates, and shares information. These communities play an essential role in integrating resources that influence or enable the customer's experience of service recovery.

From the experiential perspective, prior service encounters influence the customer's current perceptions, both favorable and unfavorable. Remembered interactions (especially recoveries) shape customer

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expectations and influence how the customer experiences his or her next service recovery encounter. A multiactor orientation rooted in S-D logic also takes account of the social community, which is beyond the control of service firms, suppliers, and partners, as resource providers in the cocreation of a favorable customer recovery outcome. In these linked service encounters, resource integration includes the knowledge and skills needed when replacing a nonfunctional product or securing financial compensation. In these multiactor situations, the customer's sense of control and comprehension of the process is paramount.

From a practical point of view, incorporating the community dimension when conceptualizing the recovery experience is important for two main reasons. First, this acknowledges the inherent heterogeneity of a firm's customers. It is well established that customers now share and compare their experiences with others (De Bellis et al. 2015); these experiences are unique to each customer and include recollections of previous service failures. A multiactor experiential orientation offers a new way for service firms to assess their customers' underlying needs and expectations, including their expected level of involvement. Second, this orientation enables service firms to look beyond the traditional dyadic approach when resolving the customer's problem and maintaining or developing the relationship. The next section discusses this approach in relation to the three phases of service failure, recovery, and evaluation.

The Service Failure

Service failures can be highly emotional events, and customers often share their negative emotions with their social communities as well as with friends and family. Social communities serve as an emotional sounding board, bringing sympathy, empathy, and competence to the evaluation of service failure. This may involve face-to-face dialog and interaction or social media channels and brand communities such as discussion boards or user-generated reviews. There is now a plethora of user-generated content, often related to customers' accounts of failures involving a specific service or firm.

By confirming or validating the customer's experience, user-generated content can be a source of inspiration and influence and, in some cases, a platform for customers to voice their complaints. Consider the case of Jim, a new PhD student, who brings his laptop to campus tech support for a software update. Unfortunately, tech support accidentally deletes all of Jim's data. Tech support apologizes for the accident but takes no further action. When speaking with his supervisors, Jim explains that it is not a major issue, because he uses cloud-based services. Nevertheless, his supervisors express their dissatisfaction with tech support. Later that day, Jim is surfing the web and interacts online with a person who lost a draft of an academic paper after her laptop crashed following an update. Because Jim can relate to this situation, he reconsiders his own service failure experience, which he now perceives as significantly more severe.

This ecosystem perspective on customers' experiences of service failure is crucial because it offers a more nuanced view. As the example shows, the perceived severity of a service failure is not just about the practical hassle but also influenced by perceptions within the customer's service ecosystem.

The Recovery Encounter

While connected to a workstation, Jim's keyboard stops working. As he always does when confronted with tech issues, he asks campus technical support to fix it. Three alternative scenarios help to illustrate customer experiences of the collaborative recovery encounter.

Scenario 1. Campus technical support asks Jim to bring in his laptop so that they can install an update. Jim walks back to his office to retrieve his laptop, brings it to technical support, and meets with a frontline employee. He in turn requests the assistance of a colleague who is an expert on software updates, and the problem is solved. This shows how, even in less complex situations, multiple actors with complementary resources contribute in different ways to the recovery process by sharing insights and integrating resources (e.g., knowledge of similar problems, use of diagnostic equipment) and engage in an ongoing dialogue with the customer to rectify the service failure.

Scenario 2. Jim returns to his office and plugs his laptop into the workstation. The laptop is still not working. The tech support team decides to call the manufacturer, and there is a wait time of more than 2 hours. After the tech support speaks with three of the manufacturer's employees, the manufacturer sends a USB stick that will hopefully solve the problem when it reaches tech support in two or three working days.

In more complex situations such as this, the relevance of the multiactor orientation becomes more apparent, because the engaged actors now include the service firm, employees, suppliers (in this case, a manufacturer), a transportation service partner, and a financial transaction partner. Complex services recoveries that require a second or even a third recovery iteration commonly engage multiple actors in the customer's and service firm's ecosystem. To ensure collaborative recovery, these actors and their activities and interactions must be coordinated, and a predefined approach is unlikely to be successful because each recovery situation is to some extent unique, at least from the customer's perspective. For this reason, a situation-specific, flexible, and dynamic approach is needed, which often involves empowering the customer.

The customer's experience of the recovery process may vary over time depending on what is done, how different collaborating actors in the service ecosystem behave, and what cognitive and emotional reactions are invoked. More complex recoveries often require niche or specialized competencies that a single service firm rarely possesses. In particular, it is crucial to acknowledge the flexibility and dynamics of service recovery encounters in light of customers' increasing mobility.

Scenario 3. Jim cannot wait for two or three days; he finds this unacceptable and returns home. In searching for alternatives, online advice is a natural choice, but he finds nothing that helps him solve the problem. Jim visits a global online community website for assistance. He explains his problem in detail and asks what he should do. Within 15 minutes, four people respond that they have experienced similar issues. They share their expertise and offer practical suggestions and advice. One person shares the published post with a colleague, who posts a relevant link to an obscure website where a new update can be downloaded. Jim's brother, who is a programmer, assures him that this is safe; he downloads the update, and the keyboard is restored to working order.

This scenario illustrates how recovery may include several actors beyond the control of the service firm and how the customer can be empowered by others to take control. It also shows how the customer can coordinate collaboration by integrating resources from multiple actors and online communities. Service recovery studies have tended to overlook how customers are empowered by this connectivity within large communities that commonly include service firms. By sharing experiences through brand communities and social media channels, customers can help others resolve service failures using a do-it-yourself approach, bypassing service firms and integrating resources to collaborate with other actors.

The Recovery Evaluation

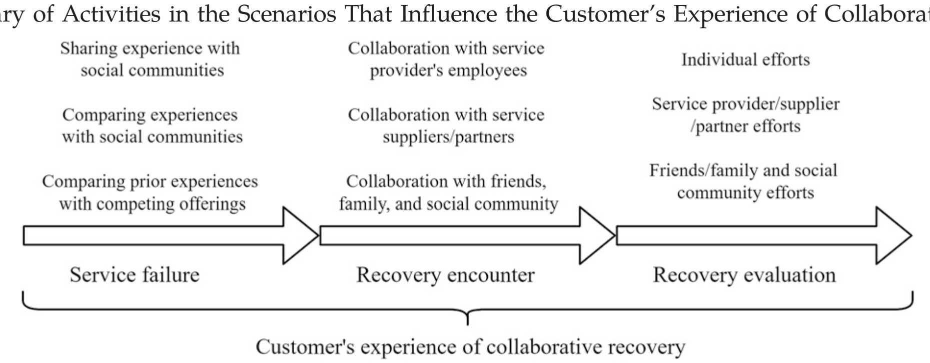
Customers are aware that service firms need and expect them to integrate resources to resolve problems caused by service failures. By investing their time, effort, and other resources in this way, the customer can collaborate with the service firm to identify a mutually beneficial solution. The customer's investment of time and effort highlights an important but often overlooked fact: as part of the corecovery encounter, customers need to evaluate their own interactions and how they experience their own actions during the service recovery process.

When using a multiactor orientation, it is necessary to acknowledge that service recoveries rarely involve single interactions but are more likely to include several interactions with multiple, collaborating actors, often at different points in time and possibly in different locations. These complex service recovery encounters are not uncommon. Whereas some may be short and clear-cut, others are long and complex and may include triple deviations.

In complex recoveries, customers collaborate with multiple actors and integrate a wide range of resources in situations that to some extent require unique or distinct approaches, and this must be accounted for in future research. Beyond the service firm's efforts, customer evaluation of a recovery experience is also based on how the customer perceives his or her own and multiple other actors' efforts. In Scenario 3, Jim's own collaboration with the online community and his brother enabled him to resolve the problem.

Previous frameworks have tended to portray service recovery encounters as controlled exclusively by service firms. This study extends that conceptualization to include multiple actors who provide options that previous research has typically overlooked. This extended conceptualization helps to explain why customer recoveries may be more or less successful even where the service firm invests the same effort. From our three scenarios, we present a detailed summary of the recovery activities that influence the customer's experience of collaborative recovery (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Summary of Activities in the Scenarios That Influence the Customer's Experience of Collaborative Recovery



Managerial Implications

This multiactor conceptualization of the customer's experience of collaborative recovery provides some tentative guidelines for managers. First, service firms must understand that customers are empowered by options that the service firm is not aware of and cannot control, notably by collaborating with other actors in their community. Firms must therefore find new ways of addressing service failures from the customer's perspective. A further important implication is that firms need to identify the actors in a service's ecosystem in order to clarify what they can control. In every case, service firms should seek to resolve service failures as quickly and as smoothly as possible; if the customer perceives that the firm is not involved in the recovery process, the recovery will be credited to other actors, and the customer is likely to select an alternative service firm in future. Finally, because customers' recovery experiences extend beyond the interactions during a service failure, firms must consider how the entire process and the outcome, including prior experiences, shape the individual customer's experience.

Limitations and Further Research

On the basis of this framework, future research should seek to clarify how customers experience collaboration with multiple actors in resolving service issues. However, as is the case for all conceptual studies, more empirical evidence is needed, and three areas in particular invite further research. First, it would be useful to explore differences in customers' experiences of service recovery depending on the engaged actors who contribute to the process. For more complex recoveries that require the efforts of multiple actors, it seems important to determine whether there is any optimal collaboration that can handle a wide range of processes. Situations that are unfamiliar to the customer are often very engaging, because they require the customer to reflect on the consequences and take longer, requiring several interactions for resource integration (e.g., complex healthcare, buying a house or apartment) compared with low-involvement services (e.g., general retail, public transportation).

Second, further research should examine how different actors influence customers' perceptions of the severity and outcome of service recovery. In particular, it would be interesting to explore the moderating role of trust, which has previously been used to explain how the customer feels about the service firm (Kau and Wan-Yiun Loh 2006, DeWitt et al. 2008) and to explore how trust in different actors influences the customer's experience of service failures and recovery outcomes.

Third, this study employed a midrange theory (customer experience) and a grand theory (S-D logic) to pursue an extended understanding of service recovery. However, other cross-disciplinary theories might prove useful for a more in-depth understanding of how multiple actors cocreate service recovery encounters. Earlier research has referred to the customer participation literature (Dong and Sivakumar 2017) to understand the behavioral consequences of multiactor interactions. The psychology-based customer involvement literature (e.g., Zaichkowsky 1985) has already been applied to service recovery (Cheung and To 2016), and these theories may prove useful in deepening understanding of the customer's experience of collaborative recovery.

Finally, despite the increased focus on customer efforts during service recovery encounters, empirical studies have yet to acknowledge or explore those efforts. To the authors' knowledge, no study has yet considered customers' evaluations of their own efforts during cocreated service recovery encounters in terms of their contribution to process, interaction, and involvement. This is especially problematic because customers often identify time and effort as key reasons for voicing complaints (Voorhees et al. 2006).

It also seems important to explore which actors serve as resource integrators during service recovery encounters. It would be particularly interesting to identify the drivers for actors to engage in helping other customers to resolve issues and the benefits of integrating resources despite one's own lack of responsibility for the issue. The reasons underlying decisions to self-recover also should be examined to determine whether self-recovery increases satisfaction.

Conclusion

This conceptual study contributes to the service recovery literature in two ways. First, the literature review identified three orientations: firm-centric, customer-centric, and dyadic. Drawing on S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch 2011, 2016), the study proposes a deeper multiactor orientation. Second, this paper extends existing understanding of service recovery encounters by employing an experiential perspective rooted in emerging marketing discourse on customer experience (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). This approach looks beyond the customer's immediate experience of the recovery encounter to prior experiences that influence how the customer experiences and recalls that encounter.

The conceptualization of customer experience introduced here highlights the interactive nature of service recovery, in which multiple actors typically collaborate to resolve an experienced service failure. Even in simple recoveries involving a single encounter with the service firm, customers commonly interact with different employees, suppliers, and partners, who must themselves collaborate and contribute necessary resources. This collaboration shapes the customer's experience of service recovery by influencing his or her cognitive, emotional, and sensory responses. Because service failures are often emotional and may not always be resolved by one encounter, customers tend to look to their social community for emotional support and guidance, including friends, family, and online communities. As a result, customers can collaborate with the service firm while simultaneously working with their own social community to integrate the resources of multiple actors, enabling them to contribute directly to the cocreation of the recovery experience.

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