Service Recovery In The Hospitality Industry In Ghana: Perception Of Customers And Service Providers

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Abstract

Many restaurants in Ghana rarely survive beyond two decades due to limited attention to the strategic management of service recovery. Thus, this paper seeks to compare the customer's and service provider's perception of service recovery in the various restaurants in Ghana. The descriptive design study involved 37 managers, 54 waiters/waitresses and 169 customers of 10 restaurants in the Kumasi metropolis. Stratified sampling (for the grades) (simple random) sampling technique was used in selecting the restaurants (individual restaurants) for the study, as well as the waiters, waitresses and managers. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The study adopted descriptive statistical methods to measure central tendencies and standard deviation in analysing the data. The study showed that both customers and service providers perceive the Kumasi metropolis' restaurants to practice various service recovery justices. However, the restaurants' level of service recovery practices depended mainly on the category or grade. The study concluded that service recovery practices are emerging as a vital component of restaurants in Ghana. This study, therefore, recommends training, workshops and seminars on service recovery.

Keywords: Restaurants, service recovery, customer perception, service providers, justices theory

Introduction

Service failures are some of the challenges facing many service organisations worldwide. Even organisations that have the strongest quality programs are unable to eradicate service failures and therefore result in customer dissatisfaction with the service provider, (Del Rio-Lanza, 2009). Indeed numerous hospitality outlets like the restaurants collapse within the first three years of their establishment on account of innumerable factors consisting of defection emanating from the dissatisfaction of customers. This

notwithstanding, to Chan and Mackenzie (2013), the hospitality industry is expected to demonstrate love or kindness by welcoming customers and taking care of their basic needs such as food, drink, and accommodation so that these guests will feel satisfied. From the above definition, the hospitality industry comprises both physical and invisible aspects of services delivery. It involves the process of receiving guests and meeting their basic needs such as providing them with food, beverages, and a place to rest. It is associated with organisations that are directly into the provision of food, beverages, and accommodations to people who are outside their place of residence. Quite apart from these benefits the industry contributes significantly to the growth of a country's economy. Unequivocally, its benefits to national economies are that it generates revenue and contributes significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), provides lucrative employment, improves social services, develops infrastructure, and brings about improvement of rural communities, (Mensah, 2009). However many of these hospitality outlets such as restaurants, do not do well in this part of our world. Literature reveals that insufficient strategic planning by owners in the restaurant business, financial inconsistency; poor service recovery delivery, lack of and quality skilled personnel, poor infrastructure, and lack of appropriate maintenance are among the factors that lead to the collapse or dwindling of hospitality enterprises in the world (Gummesson, 2014; Burns, 2014; Michel & Meuter, 2008).

In Ghana, restaurants rarely survive beyond a few years of establishment due to service failures and the inability to retain customers. The defection rate of restaurant customers in Ghana is therefore unsurprisingly high as a result of limited attention to service recovery, and there are also few studies conducted in the area of service recovery practices and the level of service recovery practices in Ghana. The study aims to compare the perception of the customers and service providers on the level of service recovery practices of restaurants in Kumasi, specifically to determine the level of practice of service recovery of restaurants in the Kumasi metropolis. This paper seeks to answer the research question, what is the level of practice of service recovery among restaurants in Kumasi? The paper, therefore, seeks to compare the perceptions of customers and service providers in terms of the level of practice of service recovery in the various restaurants in Ghana.

Theory underpinning the study
The justice theory explains that clients see four unique kinds of justice: distributive or outcome, procedural interactional justice, and informational. In most cases when these four justices are implemented after a service failure, customers will be satisfied with the service rendered by a firm. Hoffman and Kelley (2000), stress that the four justices are interrelated since the outcome links to the interpersonal conduct during the recovery evaluation. The theory is based on the assumptions that more often customers would like to strike a balance between the inputs invested and outputs received and that the customers expect the compensation to be neither inadequate nor excessive but rather it

should be adequate and appropriately given. This means that for a firm to grow there should be systematic programs in place to help win aggrieved clients back and even when giving out compensations, the service providers should learn to give it equitably so as not to cause more dissatisfaction to the customers. The hospitality industry cannot develop without actualising approaches and measures that can add to such development. Nonetheless, if clients, who are the fundamental donors of such development and significant partners, are always not satisfied with the services offered to them and also perceive the services offered them as not up to desire, at that point, there could be a failure and this can prompt calamitous impact on the firm (La, 2019). After a service failure, customer defection is bound to happen and even an organisation's standing might be in danger if service recovery is ineffectively dealt with (Maxham &Netemyer, 2002). The best way to address these oddities is by performing service recovery.
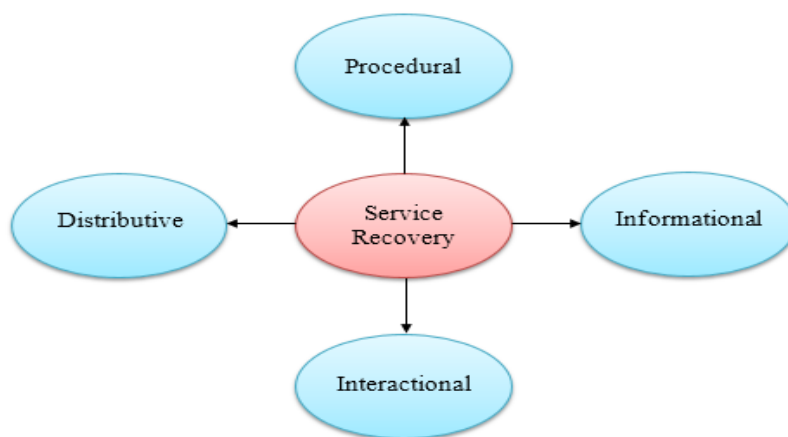
Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study: Adapted from Adams Justice Dimension Theory (1963). The dimensions of service recovery.

Literature Review

Distributive or outcome justice

Distributive justice is one of the basic premises of legitimate ethics for organizations' on which corporate social responsibility is based. This best explains how organizations' could incorporate the interest of their customers into their policies and under this context when restaurants can compensate their customers for failing to meet their needs, then the concept of distributive or outcome justice is achieved. According to La (2019), compensations should be given promptly when there is a failure. Hence, for the customer to perceive the Ghanaian restaurant operators to be more responsible, equitable outcomes and compensations should be ensured when handling service failure compliance, and this has been well explained by the equity theory.

Procedural justice

Procedural justice relates to timing, responsiveness, and recovery policy vital in service recovery (Smith et al., 1999). This suggests that when reactions are done timely concerning a service failure, it enhances the clients' impression of the firm on corporate social responsibility, whereas if it takes longer to react to a service failure, the clients' perception will be adversely affected Anytime a firm identifies a problem the best way to solve it is to start a recovery procedure on time (Ramadan, 2012).

Interactional justice

Interactional justice on the order hand is concerned with the exchange of information and how outcomes are communicated. This is identifying with politeness courtesy and sympathy to clients who have encountered a service failure. If the quality of the communication and treatment (apology), during recovery is viewed as improper, clients are probably going to have a negative impression of the firm. This justice has been vehemently proven to affect the quality of services rendered by many service providers who implement it (Johnston, 2008).

Informational justice

Undoubtedly, this justice dimension has been recognised to have a powerful effect on the emotional attachment of the customers and the restaurant as well. It is the fairness achieved when relevant reasons are communicated effectively to the aggrieved customers and also appropriate compensations have been given to them so that their commitment and patronage can be retrieved. This justice dimension has the efficacy to restore the goodwill, confidence, and trust of customers in the services of the restaurant, and therefore enables them to form favourable perceptions of the restaurants (Hassan & Hashim, 2011). When meticulously considered, informational justice possesses the power to retrieve and recover customers who have lost trust in the services of the restaurant, and therefore have withdrawn their patronage. This helps the restaurant to minimise the cost of losing committed customers and so maximise profit in the process. The main purpose of service recovery in addition to satisfying the customer is to use the information gained from the failure and its consequences to drive improvements through an organisation by focusing managerial attention on specific problem areas, (Johnston et al., 2008). Learning from failures moves service recovery away from the transactional activity, towards a managerial activity that improves systems and processes to ensure future customers are satisfied and the cost is reduced. Indeed, learning from failure may be more important than simply recovering individual customers, because process improvements that influence customer satisfaction represent the most significant means of creating bottom-line impacts through recovery, (Johnston & Clark, 2005).

Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey approach to describe the relationship between service failure and restaurant recovery procedures. We used a quantitative technique to define specific elements of the population by randomly selecting individuals to complete a series of questionnaires. Managers, waiters/waitresses, and customers of all restaurants in Kumasi Metropolis made up the study's target group. Customers account for 610 of the entire target population of 800, managers for 46, and waiters and waitresses for 144. The De Vaus (2002) sample size calculation was used to obtain the study's sample size of 260 people. The sample units were chosen using a multi-stage sampling process. To choose the restaurants, the researcher used a stratified sample technique. This is because the Ghana Tourist Authority has already classified the restaurants into grades (strata) (2010). The various restaurants for the study were picked using simple random sampling: 2 restaurants from grade one, 3 restaurants from grade two, and 5 restaurants from grade three. There are 72 registered restaurants in the Ashanti Region, according to the Ghana Tourism Authority. Within the Kumasi Metropolis, 34 eateries can be located. The Ghana Tourist Board assigns a rating to these restaurants each year based on their capacity, service delivery, number of facilities, excellent ambiance and décor, excellent quality furnishing, fixtures, and fittings, extensive cuisine, flawless/ impeccable professional and high level of service, superior quality tableware and linen, and a wide selection of drinks and wine. Following that, the waiters, waitresses, and managers were chosen using the purposive sample approach, as this group is better knowledgeable about service recovery practices. The clients for the study were chosen using a basic random selection technique.

The majority of the data for this study came from a structured questionnaire. As a result, the questionnaire was mostly made up of closed-ended questions. Ordinal, binary, and multi-choice questions dominated the categorical questions. Restaurant clients and service providers (managers and waiters/waitresses) each received their own questionnaire. The researchers used a Likert scale ranging from "1=Extremely Disagree" to "7=Extremely Agree." Inconsistencies in the raw data were corrected. The cleansed data was coded and loaded into Microsoft Excel 10 for the first time. The Statistical Software Program for Social Sciences was used to import the Microsoft data format (SPSS). Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to validate the study's measurement items using Lisrel Version 8.50. (CFA). Cronbach Alpha analysis was used to assess the reliability of validated assessment items. The researchers used both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were the descriptive statistical techniques employed in the investigation. The study used descriptive and inferential statistics as well as descriptive and inferential analyses.

The primary constructs examined in this study included service recovery. Service recovery was measured using four key sub-constructs, including distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and informational justice, as the main independent variable. Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (1997) and Maxham and Netemeyer (1998)

research were used to assess distributive fairness (2002). Six (6) items derived from Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) and Maxham and Netemeyer (1999) research were used to assess procedural justice (2002). Six (6) items derived from Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) and Maxham and Netemeyer (1999) research were used to assess the interactional or interpersonal justice dimension of service recovery (2002). Informational justice was also assessed using four questions taken from Colquitt (2001), Maxham and Netemeyer (2003), and Homburg and Furst (2003) investigations (2005).

Results

Demographic information of service providers

In this section of the study, the characteristics of restaurant management, waiters/waitresses are explored. Gender, age, respondent's position, and years in current position are among the factors. Table 1 shows the outcome of the distribution of the respondent's personal attributes.

Table 1 Demographic summary of service providers

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender			
	Male	39	42.4
	Female	52	57.6
Age (Years)			
	< 20	12	13.3
	20-29	44	48.0
	30-39	22	24.5
	40-49	12	13.3
	50+	1	1.0
Position			
	Manager	39	42.9
	Waiter/Waitress	52	57.1
Years in Position			
	1 Year	37	40.8
	2-4 Years	32	35.2
	5-10 Years	22	24.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Personal information of customers

In this section of the study, the characteristics of restaurant clients are explored. Gender, age, and greatest educational level of the respondent, marital status of the respondent, occupation of the respondents and monthly income of the respondent were among the consumer characteristics discussed. Table 2 shows the results of the distribution of the consumers' personal attributes.

Table 2. Demographic summary of customers

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	106	62.6
Female	63	37.4
Age		
< 20	5	2.7
20-30	70	41.2
31-40	54	31.9
41-50	16	9.3
> 50	25	14.8
Education (Highest)		
No formal schooling	3	1.6
Primary school completed	1	.5
SSS/Middle school completed	36	21.4
College/University/Polytechnic completed	110	64.8
Post-graduate degree	19	11.5
Marital status		
Never married	44	25.8
Married	62	36.8
Living with partner	30	17.6
Widowed	15	8.8
Divorced	12	7.1
Separated	6	3.8
Occupation		
Government employee	40	23.6
Non-paid student	9	5.5
Private employee	25	14.8
Self-employed	67	39.6
Unemployed (able to work)	20	12.1
Unemployed (Unable to work)	5	2.7
Retired	3	1.6
Monthly Income		
< ¢1,000	31	18.1
¢1,001-¢2,000	45	26.9
> ¢2,000	93	54.8

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Perception of service providers

This section of the research looks at how restaurant managers, waiters, and waitresses feel about their service recovery tactics. Distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and informational justice were the service recovery mechanisms that were studied. Table 3 shows the cross-tabulated results of the restaurant service recovery solutions based on the grades or levels of the restaurants. Restaurants with the highest ratings received a 1 while those with the lowest ratings received a 3.

Table 3. Service providers' perception of service recovery practices: Mean scores and analysis of variance of the service providers' perception of service recovery practices

Service Recovery	Grades	Mean ± Std. Dev.	F-Statistics and P-value		Grades		
			F	p-value	2*1	3*1	3*2
Distributive	Grade 3	5.45±0.718	4.476	0.014*	0.521	0.004**	0.034
	Grade 2	5.80±0.337					
	Grade 1	5.89±0.605					
	Total	**5.77±0.590**					
Procedural	Grade 3	5.35±0.64	7.441	0.001**	0.479	0.001**	0.000**
	Grade 2	5.92±0.39					
	Grade 1	5.83±0.60					
	Total	**5.75±0.60**					
Interactional	Grade 3	5.17±0.75	12.196	0.000**	0.650	0.000**	0.000**
	Grade 2	5.76±0.27					
	Grade 1	5.82±0.52					
	Total	**5.67±0.58**					
Informational	Grade 3	4.89±1.29	8.631	0.000**	0.198	0.001**	0.000**
	Grade 2	5.66±0.44					
	Grade 1	5.94±0.94					
	Total	**5.57±0.99**					

*Significant at 5% (0.05) and **Significant at 1% (0.01)
Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 3 shows that the service providers agreed that the restaurants produce positive outcomes from apology efforts to resolve problems of customers fairly and also compensate consumers in the event of service failures through their distributive justice strategies (μ=5.77, σ=.59). Procedurally, the service providers agreed that the restaurants respond quickly and timely to customers' ' problems, exhibit flexibility in solving problems, employ fair policies and practices to handle customer problems, and also provide credible feedback on customer complaints (μ=5.75, σ=.60). In terms of interaction with customers, the restaurants are also perceived by the service providers to have personnel that care and consider the views of customers, empathize and exhibit

a high level of honesty in responding to customer complaints (μ=5.62, σ=.65). In terms of information, the restaurants are candid in their communication with customers; explain complaint decision-making processes to customers, communicate details of the requested information promptly, and provide thorough information on any form of service failures to customers (μ=5.57, σ=.99). The grade 3 restaurants were perceived to be less than grades 2 and 1 in the provision and practices of service recovery strategies. Whereas the respondents of grade 3 restaurants fairly agreed to the provision and practice of service recovery strategies, the service providers agreed that the grade 2 and 1 restaurants have in place strategies to recover services.

Perception of customers
The perception of the customers of the restaurants about the service recovery strategies of the restaurants is discussed in this part of the study. The evaluated service recovery strategies were distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, and informational justice. The cross-tabulated results of the service recovery strategies of the restaurants based on the grades or levels of the restaurants are shown in Table 4. The highest-ranked restaurants were graded as 1 and the lowest-ranked restaurants were graded as 3.

Table 4. Customers' perception of service recovery practices: Mean scores and analysis of variance of the customers' perception of service recovery practices

Service Recovery	Grades	Mean ± Std. Dev.	F-Statistics and P-value		Level
			F	p-value	
Distributive	Grade 3	5.66±0.646	2.424	0.091	No significant
	Grade 2	5.61±0.594			
	Grade 1	5.56±0.542			
	Total	5.56±0.634			
Procedural	Grade 3	5.56±0.645	1.720	0.182	No significant
	Grade 2	5.73±0.495			
	Grade 1	5.55±0.599			
	Total	5.66±0.568			
Interactional	Grade 3	5.59±0.681	2.055	0.131	No significant
	Grade 2	5.71±0.596			
	Grade 1	5.49±0.677			
	Total	5.62±0.646			
Informational	Grade 3	3.90±1.165	1.707	0.184	No significant
	Grade 2	3.85±1.225			
	Grade 1	3.50±1.260			
	Total	3.76±1.227			

Note: [1=Extremely Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Fairly Disagree, 4= Undecided/Uncertain, 5=Fairly Agree, 6=Agree, 7=Extremely Agree]

Note: Mean ± Standard Deviation

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 4 shows that the customers agreed that the restaurants produce positive outcomes from efforts to resolve customer complaints in a fair manner and also compensate consumers for service failures through their distributive justice strategies (μ=5.56, σ=.63). Procedurally, the customers agreed that the restaurants respond quickly and timely to complaints and other problems, exhibit flexibility in solving problems, offer fair policies and practices to handle problems, and also provide credible feedback on complaints (μ=5.66, σ=.57). In terms of interaction with customers, the restaurants are also perceived by the customers to have personnel that care and consider the views of customers, empathise and exhibit a high level of honesty in responding to complaints (μ=5.62, σ=.65). However, customers were undecided or uncertain about the informational service recovery strategic practices of the restaurants (μ=3.76, σ=1.23). Evidently, the grade 3 restaurants were perceived to be lesser than grades 2 and 1 in the provision and practices of service recovery strategies. Whereas the customers of grade 3 restaurants fairly agreed to the provision and practice of distributive, procedural and interactional service recovery strategies, the customers of grade 2 and 1 restaurants agreed to receive distributive, procedural and interactional service recovery justices.

Service recovery practices of restaurants

Both customers and service providers perceive the restaurants in the Kumasi Metropolis' to practice various service recovery justices including distributive, procedural, interactional and informational justices. In the distributive channels of the restaurants, efforts are made by service providers to resolve problems responsively and fairly. The restaurants also offer adequate compensation to customers in the phase of service failures. Procedurally, the restaurants respond to customers' complaints, flexibly and fairly. In terms of interaction with customers, the restaurants' employees are honest, caring and empathetic with customers. The restaurants are also candid in their communication with customers and explain vividly the processes used in making decisions about customer complaints. More so, information requested by customers is communicated timely to customers. Nonetheless, the level of service recovery practices of the restaurants depended largely on the category or grade of the restaurant. The higher the grade of the restaurant, the higher the practice of service recovery practices in the Kumasi Metropolis. Evidence from this study shows that service recovery strategies are vital to customer satisfaction and the sustainability of restaurants.

Discussion

The service recovery practices of the food industry are aimed at correcting failures to ensure justice and fairness in the delivery of services in order to increase the satisfaction of customers. In the restaurant industry of Ghana, both customers and service providers

perceived the service recovery as practiced in the form of distributive, procedural, interactional and informational justice in our various restaurants. Thus, besides the economic performance of the restaurants, their capacity to effectively employ socially-friendly food management practices is also dependent on the effectiveness of service recovery strategies that stimulate patronage and re-patronage behavioural intention of customers. This study, therefore, supported available literature that service recovery is a corrective measure to help curb customer defection.

Conclusion

Customers and service providers perceive the restaurants in the Kumasi metropolis to practice various forms of service recovery justices including distributive, procedural, interactional and informational justices. However, these service recovery practices are not well structured and strategically designed also the level of service recovery practices of the restaurants depended mainly on the category or grade of the restaurant. The level of service recovery practices of the restaurants depended mainly on the category or grade of the restaurant. The higher the grade of the restaurant, the higher the practice of service recovery, within the Kumasi metropolis. The study implies that service recovery practices are highly unstructured and unsystematic. The practice is not formalized but largely ad hoc and also the traditionally, higher graded restaurants have a higher practice of service recovery relative to lower graded restaurants.

Implication to theory and practice

The study implies that many restaurants in Ghana, especially the highly graded ones in the industry are implementing justice strategies to redress any form of dissatisfaction in order to minimise any form of negative post-purchase behaviours. Nonetheless, practically, the implementation of service recovery strategies does not always redress service failure and minimise negative behaviours as there is an enormous difference in consumers' behaviour. . The implication of the study is that service recovery practices are highly unstructured and unsystematic. The practice is not formalized but largely ad hoc and also the traditionally, higher graded restaurants have a higher practice of service recovery relative to lower graded restaurants. This is a novel study in Ghana, as there is no study on looking at the perception index of service recovery strategies in Ghana's restaurant industry. Thus, this study is critical to bridging the knowledge gap on service recovery strategies implementation in restaurants in Ghana.

Recommendation

It is therefore imperative to build the educational and knowledge capacity of restaurant managers in the area of service recovery practices. Thus, the National Hospitality Association of Ghana, the Food and Beverage Association of Ghana, and the Ghana Hotels Associations could periodically organize workshops and seminars on service recovery strategies for the various managers, and staff of restaurants in Ghana.

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