

SERVICE RECOVERY SATISFACTION IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) IN MALAYSIA: ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

Researchers and practitioners often pay less attention to service recovery research compared to service quality or customer satisfaction, particularly in the context of Open and Distance Learning. Moreover, the antecedents and outcomes of service recovery satisfaction are frequently given less emphasis by Open and Distance Learning institutions in their efforts to gain advantages in the current higher education business environment. Service organisations such as Open and Distance Learning institutions are often focused on delivering services with the approach of getting it right the first time. Service failure is inevitable and when service delivery fails at some point, the whole process will be disrupted and the students will be dissatisfied and disappointed. This is where service recovery satisfaction through justice dimensions plays its role. This study explores the relationship between justice dimensions (Distributive, Procedural, Interpersonal and Informational Justice) and Service Recovery Satisfaction, in addition to examining the moderating effects of University Image. In order to regain lost customer support, service providers must overcome the negative impact of poorly performed service. Previous studies have attempted to identify the impact of service recovery satisfaction by analysing the variation in post-recovery customer outcomes. The present study explores four customer outcomes: Repurchase Intention, Word of Mouth, Trust and Loyalty within the Malaysian ODL context.

Keywords: *Service Recovery Satisfaction, Justice Theory, University Image, Open Distance Learning*

INTRODUCTION

The business landscape in the educational sector is becoming more complicated as many tertiary institutions offer similar academic programmes. In addition, with the large number of universities and colleges operating in Malaysia, one would expect stiff competition ahead in the higher education industry. Good service and satisfaction are among the common competitive advantages offered by these institutions to ensure their sustainability and growth. However, higher education institutions often neglect to recover their students' satisfaction right after a service failure and very little is known about service recovery satisfaction and its outcomes. The inability to recover satisfaction during service recovery efforts may cause the customer to leave and lead to undesirable effects on the service provider's finances (Shapiro & Nieman-Gonder, 2006). While service failure is inevitable, the failure situation will get worse if students are not provided with effective service recovery (Hart, Heskett, & Sasser, 1990). Dissatisfied students will lodge a complaint and having high numbers of complaints signals to the management that something is not right somewhere along their service delivery process. Unsolved complaints or late rectification action by the service provider would further diminish and affect the students' behavioural outcomes. This is why educational institutions should not ignore the importance of service recovery as the competition in educational services is intense and students are always tempted by competitors. The cost and profitability benefits of keeping existing customers is only highlighted by a few studies have been conducted in the area of service failure recovery as the retention strategy (Andreassen, 2001; Tax & Brown, 1998a). Johnston and Michel (2008) and Lewis and McCann (2004) state that research on service failure and recovery is still evolving and conducting more research in the area of service failure is very important, to facilitate the process of providing satisfactory recovery and to alleviate dissatisfied students to satisfied level. Among recent studies on service recovery in the education industry, a study by Waqas, Ali, and Khan (2014) describes service recovery in the education industry as very important and at a critical phase. However, Waqas et al. (2014) did not examine the effects of service recovery satisfaction and its outcomes. Hence, the present study aims to fill this gap. This study has two objectives, the first of which is to determine the relationships that constitute antecedents of service recovery satisfaction and university image. The second objective of this study is to determine the relationships that constitute service recovery satisfaction and its outcomes. This study is carried out in the context of open and distance learning (ODL) and aims to offer some useful information about the variables under investigation with the expectation of contributing to the understanding and further development of knowledge in this particular field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Open and Distance Learning

In Malaysia Education Blueprint, the Government emphasises the importance of lifelong learning (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011). Lifelong learning will enable Malaysians to meet the changing skill needs of a high-income economy and maximises the potential of individuals who are currently outside the workforce through reskilling and upskilling opportunities. It also enables the development of personal interests and talents for a more fulfilled life. Malaysians need to move from a world where education is seen as something that happens only during one's youth, to a world where Malaysians of all ages constantly seek out learning opportunities to enrich themselves and this mode will become a way of life for all Malaysians. In the lifelong learning concept, globalised or open and distance learning (ODL) is gaining attention with the help of the excellent progress of internet penetration. The level of internet penetration in Malaysia currently stands at 67%, the seventh highest penetration rate across Asia. This places Malaysia in a good position to

harness the advantages of online learning in order to widen access to good quality content, enhance the quality of teaching and learning, lower the cost of delivery and bring Malaysian expertise to the global community. Instead of delivering common or traditional classroom interaction, higher education institutions are now opting to offer ODL in response to global competition and demand. ODL institutions offer students the opportunity to study at their own pace, and ODL is characterised as a multi-dimensional concept in bridging time, location, cost, education, and communication gap between students, colleagues, and their tutors (Antwerpen, 2015). ODL concentrates on removing the barriers of access and flexibility which exist in conventional learning, and supporting students in their hopes and expectations that they can succeed through this new way of learning. Currently, there are three dedicated ODL institutions that are actively operating, namely the Open University of Malaysia (OUM), Asia e University (AeU) and Wawasan Open University (WOU). ODL has turned out to be a mainstream platform of learning in the recent decades, offering many advantages to adult learners.

Service Failure and Service Recovery

A service failure can be likened to a broken promise. It occurs whenever a product or service fails to meet the customer's expectations. Service failure is unavoidable and arises when service delivery performance does not meet a customer's expectation (Kelley & Davis, 1994). Service failure is usually associated with mistake, problem or error that happens in the delivery of the service (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). Discrepancy between service performance and customer expectations can also be considered as a failure. According to Lewis and Spyropoulos (2001), service failure happens when consumers are disappointed with the service they receive, or when the performance of a product or service falls below their expectations. In higher educational institutions, the accomplishment of service delivery relies upon the efforts put in by the academic and non-academic staff (Cooper, 2007). There are various factors which cause service failure in higher educational institutions (Abdullah, 2006; Hill, 1995). Past studies by Swanson and Davis (2000), Voss, Gruber, and Reppel (2010), and Chahal and Devi (2013) have indicated that in general, service failures in the education sector can be categorised into three groups: Group I (professors'/faculty's reaction to service delivery system failure), Group II (faculty's reaction to students' needs and requests) and Group III (unprompted and unsolicited actions or behaviour of the teaching or non-teaching staff with the students in the institutions). If service failure occurs, the organisation has the chance to fix the situation by providing effective service recovery. However, service failure opens the window of opportunity in a different and positive perspective (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

The service recovery process is meant to provide a solution to the problems caused by the service failure in order to rectify the relationship between the customer and the service provider (Cambra-Fierro, Melero-Polo, & Sese, 2015). Past research has determined that service recovery will lead to various reactions from customers (Joireman, Gregoire, Devezer, & Tripp, 2013). Customers will regain satisfaction if the service provider puts in adequate recovery efforts to provide effective solutions to the problem (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2015). Service recovery is an action initiated by a service provider to rectify the problems caused by service failure that can affect the level of customer satisfaction (Karatepe, 2006; Sheth, Sisodia, & Sharma, 2000). Gronroos (1990) defines service recovery as systematic actions taken by a service provider to rectify the error following a service failure in order to regain customer support. More attention needs to be given to research on service recovery as this field is often neglected in designing overall customer satisfaction (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998b; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Service recovery is important to regain the customer's satisfaction and also to strengthen the provider's relationship with their customers (Blodgett, Hill, & Tax, 1997; Smith & Bolton, 2002).

Justice Theory

The leading theoretical perspective in service recovery studies has centred on justice theory (Maxham III & Netemeyer, 2002a; McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003). Based on these researchers, justice is the most suitable concept for understanding antecedents and outcomes of service recovery satisfaction. This theory implies that customers can decide based on their own input and the output they have received compared to the service organisation's input and output. Justice theory states that in an exchange, customers evaluate a service recovery attempt as just or unjust (DeWitt, Nguyen, & Marshall, 2008). Adams (1963) mentions that in exchanges, people evaluate the investment they put in, such as cost, time and energy, against the outcomes (such as recovery actions like refund, replacement, apology, employee behaviour, procedures to solve the problem and the image associated with responsive organisations) and compares them with those of others in similar situations. When this evaluation is balanced, people consider the exchange as fair. However, if it is not, the exchange is considered as unfair.

Researchers working in the service failure and recovery context have used justice theory as the main framework in order to investigate service recovery strategies and understand clearly what constitutes a successful service recovery (McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003). Justice theory is critical for studying a person's reaction in a conflict situation (Konovsky, 2000). In the service failure and service recovery context, failure is representative of a conflict situation. Therefore, perceived justice seems appropriate in explaining and extending customer attitude and behaviour in response to service recovery (Blodgett et al., 1997). In the area of complaint handling and service recovery, the concept of justice has been the most suitable basis for understanding the process of service recovery and its outcomes (Blodgett et al., 1997; Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Tax et al., 1998b).

ARGUMENTATION

Satisfaction has been studied extensively and has often been treated as the single most important construct that determines consumers' subsequent behaviours (Oliver, 2015).

"We define satisfaction with recovery as customer satisfaction with a particular transaction involving a failure and recovery" (Smith & Bolton, as cited in Maxham III & Netemeyer, 2002b, p.240).

This definition broadly recognises that satisfaction is among the utmost elements which influence complainants' future behavioural intentions in both offline and online settings (Du, Fan, & Feng, 2010; Hocutt, Bowers, & Donovan, 2006; Kuo & Wu, 2012). Given these circumstances, service recovery satisfaction is verified as the main aspect of the customers' assessments of the service and the service provider (de Matos, Henrique, & Rossi, 2007). Service recovery satisfaction is different from common satisfaction because service recovery satisfaction focuses on a customer's frame of mind after experiencing a service failure (Wang, Hsu, & Chih, 2014). It is a transitory and encounter-specific assessment of a service failure recovery (Boshoff, 1999; McCollough, Berry, & Yadav, 2000). The level of service recovery satisfaction depends on many factors, although essentially these are altogether grounded in the customer's experience of the service and also his or her interaction with the service provider. The perceptions of justice are imperative antecedents of recovery satisfaction (Kohsuwan & Lawkobkit, 2013). Smith, Bolton and Janet (1999) have argued that customer satisfaction with service failure/recovery encounters will be influenced by the customer's perception of the justice dimensions.

Antecedents of Service Recovery Satisfaction

The goal of service recovery is to shift customers' dissatisfaction to a condition of satisfaction (Zemke, 1993). Therefore, in order to develop a successful recovery, it is vital for service firms to comprehend the dimensions of justice: distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational (Colquitt, 2001) as the antecedents of the service recovery satisfaction. These different dimensions of justice relate to rewards, policies and procedures, complaint handling and fair information dissemination. Tax et al. (1998b) state that perceived justice is a multi-dimensional concept, while Wirtz and Mattila (2004) showed that service recovery, such as compensation, procedures, and interactional treatment, has a combined effect on post-recovery satisfaction. Past studies have concentrated on one type (overall perception of fairness), two types (Distributive Justice and Procedural Justice), three types (adding Interactional Justice) and four types of justice (expanding Interactional Justice into Interpersonal and Informational Justice) as the antecedents to recovery satisfaction (Cropanzano, Fortin, & Kirk, 2015; De Clercq & Saridakis, 2015; Fu, Wu, Huang, Song, & Gong, 2015; Lopes & da Silva, 2015; Nikbin, Armesh, Heydari, & Jalalkamali, 2011; Nikbin, Ismail, Marimuthu, Armesh, 2012; Nikbin, Ismail, & Marimuthu, 2013; Nikbin, Marimuthu, Hyun, & Ismail, 2015). In view of whether to use three or four dimensions of justice in research, Krishna, Dangayach, and Jain (2011) mention that Informational Justice should be included in future service recovery research as the fourth dimension of justice and their study filled the gap by incorporating Informational Justice into their research framework.

Distributive Justice

The first type of justice is Distributive Justice, which looks at individuals' impressions of the fairness of the results that they receive. Adams (1963, 1965) has highlighted that one of the early theories of justice contends that the fairest allocations are those that compensate individuals to the extent of their contribution. Before 1975, the research on justice was fundamentally based on Distributive Justice. Adams (1963, 1965) suggests that to determine whether an outcome was fair, the ratio of one's contributions or inputs to one's outcome has to be calculated and the ratio must then be compared. Allocation of benefits and cost is the main element in Distributive Justice. In a situation of service failure, Distributive Justice can be defined as perceived fairness of the outcome of service recovery (Nikbin, Ismail, Marimuthu, & Abu-Jarad, 2011). In addition, customers expect to be compensated for the inconvenience related to the failure and for having to go through the recovery process. The typical forms of compensation are refunds, credits, correction of charges, repairs and replacement, and apologies, or any combination of these. Distributive Justice has been found to influence satisfaction, repurchase intention, and word-of-mouth decisions in a variety of service recovery settings (Mansori, Tyng, & Ismail, 2014). Hence, the first hypothesis relates Distributive Justice with service recovery satisfaction. Based on the literature above, it is expected that Distributive Justice dimensions have a positive relationship with service recovery satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesis can be set out as follows:

H₁: Perception of Justice has a positive relationship with service recovery satisfaction, where the detailed hypothesis is:

H_{1a}: Distributive Justice has a positive relationship with service recovery satisfaction.

Procedural Justice

The second type of justice is Procedural Justice. Mattila (2001) state that Procedural Justice is the perception of justice in terms of processes or procedures to recover from service failure. A timely response is required in case of service failure. Procedural Justice refers to

the individual's view of the fairness of the procedures and processes, which is used to determine the results that they receive (Greenberg, 2009). Thibaut, and Walker (1975, 1978) found that individuals were more tolerant of unfavourable results as long as the procedure used to reach such results was felt to be reasonable. Procedural fairness is concerned with the policies and rules that form the complaint process. Procedural Justice emphasises several criteria, for example, that procedures should be applied consistently across the board and be free from bias, ensure that accurate information is collected and used in decision making include mechanisms to correct flawed or inaccurate decisions, conform to personal or prevailing standards of ethics, and lastly ensure that the opinions of various groups affected by the decision have been taken into account. The second hypothesis indicates the relationship between Procedural Justice and service recovery satisfaction, as follows:

H_{1b}: Procedural Justice has a positive relationship with service recovery satisfaction.

Interpersonal and Informational Justice

Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter and Ng (2001) provide valuable insights on organisational justice, justice dimension, size of relationships among justice dimensions, the relative importance of different justice criteria, and the unique effects of justice dimensions on recovery satisfaction. Among their findings is that Interactional Justice should be separated into two different dimensions: interpersonal treatment and informational justice. Interpersonal treatment refers to the interactional component of the service delivery process, whereas Informational Justice refers to the perceived adequacy and truthfulness of information explaining the causes of unfavourable outcomes (Colquitt, 2001). Therefore, this study includes the fourth factor of perceived justice namely informational justice and uses the four-factor justice dimensions as recommended by Krishna et al., (2011). This study also predominantly considers Informational Justice as one of the justice dimensions that has not been seriously considered in the service recovery literature. The main foundation of reasonable interpersonal conduct is the show of politeness, concern, and honesty, together with the offer of an explanation as to why the service failure occurred in the first place and a clear display of efforts to solve the problem. In addition, Greenberg (1993) describes Informational Justice in detail and stresses on the explanation given to people, which relays the information about why procedures were used in a certain manner or why outcomes were distributed in a certain way. Interpersonal Justice and Informational Justice should be treated separately due to their logical dissimilarity and the fact that they have been shown to lead to independent results (Greenberg, 1993). Interpersonal Justice fundamentally serves to change responses to decision outcomes, since a display of sensitivity can help individuals to feel better about unfavourable results (Greenberg, 1994). On the other hand, Informational Justice fundamentally acts to adjust responses to procedures, in that explanations provide the information needed to assess the parts of the process. Informational injustice mirrors a perceived insufficiency of fairness in a condition of sufficient information about change (Colquitt et al., 2001; Timming, 2012). Informational Justice, as introduced by Colquitt (2001), has been gaining the interest of researchers since the last decade. It has been relatively ignored in service marketing literature and has only lately been applied in this context (Lee & Park, 2010). Hence, this is one of the research gaps that form the main foundation of the present study. The third hypothesis is proposed to explore the relationship between Interpersonal Justice and service recovery satisfaction, while the fourth hypothesis indicates the relationship between Informational Justice and service recovery satisfaction. Therefore, based on the literature discussed above, the two hypotheses are set out as follows:

H_{1c}: Interpersonal Justice has a positive relationship with service recovery satisfaction.

H_{1d}: Informational Justice has a positive relationship with service recovery satisfaction.

University Image

Organisation image portrays the customer's perception of the service provider, which is shaped by the customer's prior experience, and ultimately contributes toward the whole image of the company (Andreassen, 2001). Customers who build up a positive mind pattern of an image will be inclined toward high satisfaction (Lai, Griffin, & Babin, 2009). Despite the fact that the service failure occurred, when customers have a positive state of mind of an image, they will think that the service provider will still bring benefit to them in the future. In this way, the effect of perceived justice on the recovery satisfaction due to recovery efforts may be stronger for customers who have a positive image. University image is a topic that has attracted interest and received more attention from other researchers. It is important to see how universities are creating value and developing research on university image (Sung & Yang, 2008). This may be attributed to the increase in competition among universities particularly in recognising the importance of and contribution of university image in attracting and recruiting students (Aghaz, Hashemi, & Sharifi Atashgah, 2015; Arpan, Raney, & Zivnuska, 2003). Numerous universities have increased investments to enhance their university image in terms of prestige or quality (Civera & Meoli, 2017). Azoury, Daou, and Khoury (2014) carried out a study on university image that is relatively similar to research on corporate image but conducted in a tertiary education setting. Their aim is to clarify the components of image and attributes of students' satisfaction, and explore the relationship between the different parts of the universities' image and to what magnitude they may influence the students' satisfaction. This study will further enrich the existing literature on service recovery and will add new knowledge to the service provider-customer relationship by considering the effect of university image on ODL students. Therefore, it is posited that:

H₂: University image moderates the relationship between Perceived Justice and service recovery satisfaction.

Outcomes of Service Recovery Satisfaction

Customers who encounter a fair procedure, fair interpersonal treatment and fair information dissemination regarding process and outcome are likely to develop higher service recovery satisfaction towards the service provider. In addition, customers who are treated fairly are also likely to develop higher behavioural outcomes for the future (Humphrey, Ellis, Conlon, & Tinsley, 2004). Findings from past research has shown that satisfaction with recovery will lead to positive behavioural outcomes (Cengiz, ER, & Kurtaran, 2007) and many past researchers do not examine the full series of potential customer outcomes, and choose only to concentrate on one or a handful of outcome variables (Wirtz & Matilla, 2004). In addition, not many studies look into the importance of outcomes of service recovery satisfaction in the context of ODL, compared to a large number of studies on service quality, customer satisfaction and customer retention. The outcomes of service recovery satisfaction are considered in the following four sub-sections.

Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention is one of the key elements of the outcomes of service recovery satisfaction (Thomas, Blattberg, & Fox, 2004). Griffin and Lowenstein (2001) contend that a business organisation has a 60 - 70 per cent chance to make repeat sales to an active customer and only 5 - 20 per cent chance of selling to a new customer. Profitability can be increased by reducing the cost of getting new customers through patronage (Mittal & Lassar, 1998). The outcomes of service recovery satisfaction ought to increase future repurchase

intention (Andreassen, 2001). Ro (2014) states that repurchase intention is strongly impacted by the customer's perceptions of service recovery satisfaction. In higher education, major services delivered by service provider are academic services (students' records, examination, lecturers delivering lectures), students' financial services, and students support-related activities. Although the academic programme is regarded as a product of higher education institutions, repurchase intention in the context of higher education can be regarded as selling academic programmes, where the undergraduate students continue on their tertiary education to a higher level such as enrolling for master's degree, doctorate degree, or professional certification programme over an extended period of time. It is sensible to anticipate that customers who obtain satisfaction from service recovery will likely return and repurchase the product or service compared to a customer who is dissatisfied with the service recovery. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H₃: Service recovery satisfaction has a positive relationship with behavioural outcomes, where the detailed hypothesis is:

H_{3a}: Service recovery satisfaction has a positive relationship with repurchase intention.

Word of Mouth

Referral to the word-of-mouth form has been identified as one of the important methods of spreading the word about a product or service, either positively or negatively. However, information obtained through direct encounters, such as face-to-face contact, is still trustworthy information (Liu, Sudharshan, & Hamer, 2000). Lacey and Morgan (2008) define word-of-mouth (WOM) as referring to conveying or delivering an individual suggestion to others regarding a service provider and its product or service. WOM is a casual or informal mode of communication among customers about the merits of an organisation's product or service (Westbrook, 1987). Harrison-Walker (2001) characterises WOM as an informal communication between a non-commercial communicator and a receiver with respect to a brand, product, an organisation or a service. It enables the relay of information to customers about the organisation or service provider, which helps customers to decide on whether to give business to them or not (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993). Past studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between service recovery satisfaction and WOM (De Matos, Rossi, Veiga, & Vieira, 2009; Lii & Lee, 2012; Wen & Chi, 2013). In a service setting, it is imperative that if service failure should happen, steps must be taken to placate the disappointed customer. Otherwise, it is likely that they will either exit or spread negative WOM about the service provider. If this happens, the service provider will be likely to experience a drop in sales and profits. Then again, customers who receive effective service recovery will probably repatronise the service provider and even spread positive WOM about the service provider, and subsequently disseminate goodwill. In short, satisfaction with service recovery would encourage positive WOM. However, despite many past studies indicating a promising relationship between service recovery satisfaction and dissemination of positive WOM, it is still unclear how the mechanism of service recovery contributes to the formation of a positive WOM (Wang & Chang, 2013). A better comprehension of the effect of service recovery satisfaction on customer-service provider relationships could empower service providers to convey more compelling service recovery, in order to produce positive WOM. Hence, it is posited that there is a positive relationship between customer service recovery satisfaction and WOM. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H_{3b}: Service recovery satisfaction has a positive relationship with WOM.

Trust

There has been rising consensus in the field of social psychology field with respect to the centrality of trust to exchange, signifying the most vital variable in a relationship (Ball, Coelho, & Machás, 2004). Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990) characterise trust as a conviction created by the customer in light of a belief that the service provider is dependable and would act in the best interest of the customer. In this manner, trust exists when one has certainty that his or her needs will be met through actions undertaken by the exchange partner (Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010; Wang & Chang, 2013). Investigations conducted in organisation studies have shown that policies and procedures are firmly related to trust (Forret & Love, 2008). The development of trust in a relationship relies on upon direct physical or interactive experiences with a service provider. These experiences are often missing in an online context (Gao, 2005). When effective service is delivered, customer satisfaction and loyalty are gained through trust, which can eliminate or minimise uncertainties and risks (Gao, 2005). When a service is unsuccessful, the customer's trust is broken. To win back the customer, trust must be redeveloped after service recovery satisfaction is achieved. Customers are probably going to perceive the service provider as unreliable if the service recovery they receive is poor (DeWitt et al., 2008). As such, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H_{3c}: Service recovery satisfaction has a positive relationship with trust.

Loyalty

Customer loyalty refers to customers' commitment to a service provider and can be understood as the customers' continued patronage with the same provider. Customer loyalty is reflected in long-term relationships where the survival of the provider lies in its capacity to retain and attract potential customers. Loyal customers require less marketing effort and are considered to be more profitable than new customers (Dawkins & Reichheld, 1990). Reichheld and Sasser (1990) state that a service provider could increase its profit by 100 per cent just by increasing retention rate by five per cent. Retention is believed to be a function which measures existing customers' level of satisfaction. Customer loyalty can be defined as the decision to repurchase or repatronise a favoured product or service in the future, causing repetitive same-brand purchasing, despite situational effects and advertising efforts that may encourage switching behaviour (Oliver, 1999; Richard & Zhang, 2012). Past studies have also indicated that customer loyalty may even be improved by effective service recovery efforts (Haverila & Naumann, 2011). Service recovery involves different elements in an online context. Shankar, Smith, and Rangaswamy (2003) have demonstrated that although the levels of customer loyalty for online and offline customers are the same, loyalty to the service provider is higher when the service is chosen through an online rather than an offline platform. Blodgett, Wakefield, and Barnes (1995) and Kau and Loh (2006) state that a high satisfaction level would lead the customer to repatronise the same provider while unsatisfactory conditions would instead lead the customer to exit and spread negative word of mouth. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H_{3d}: Service recovery satisfaction has a positive relationship with loyalty.

PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

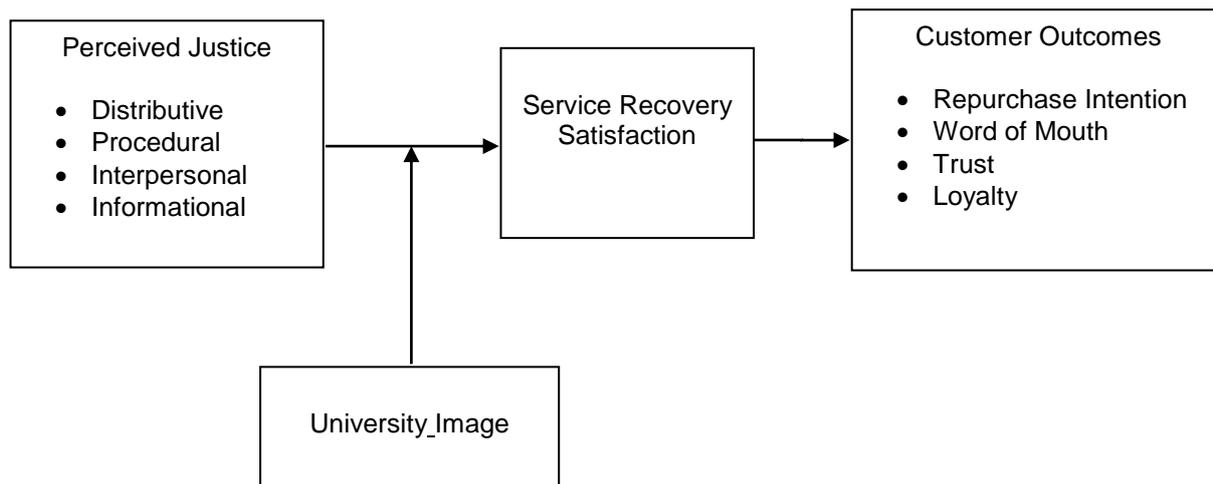


Figure 1: Antecedents and Outcomes of Service Recovery Satisfaction

The model in Figure 1 proposes that the antecedents of service recovery satisfaction consist of Distributive, Procedural, Interpersonal and Informational Justice. The model above also illustrates the outcomes of service recovery satisfaction, which are Word of Mouth, Loyalty, Trust and Repurchase Intention. It is hypothesised that a higher level of service recovery satisfaction will lead to enhanced customer outcomes. Justice theory offers theoretical support for this model. The moderator variable in this model is University Image. The rationale underlying this research framework is straightforward. Firstly, service recovery satisfaction is driven by customer perception of justice. A higher level of customer perception of justice will lead to higher level of service recovery satisfaction. In this study, it is expected that the four justice dimensions each significantly contribute to recovery evaluations and explain a high percentage of variation in overall satisfaction with customer assessment of service recovery efforts (Smith & Bolton, 1998; Tax & Brown, 2000). For service recovery outcomes, Wirtz and Mattila (2004) state that there is a positive relationship between recovery performance and post recovery satisfaction. Kau and Loh (2006) indicate that recovery satisfaction will lead to positive outcomes such as loyalty, trust and WOM. Trust, which is one of the outcome elements, has been found to be the foundation to relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Customers who receive effective service recovery are more likely to repatronise and engage in positive WOM behaviour for the service provider (Kau & Loh, 2006; Kumar Piaralal, Kumar Piaralal, & Awais Bhatti, 2014). Loyalty is a commitment to a particular service provider and is always echoed as the continued patronage of or repurchase intent towards the same provider (Dlačić, Arslanagić, Kadić-Maglajić, Marković, & Raspor, 2014; Pai, 2015).

CONCLUSION

No matter how rigorous the service or quality procedure established by the service provider, service failure is inevitable particularly in environments where there is no physical or direct interaction between the customer and service provider. In ODL, when service failure happens, students will feel disappointed, angry, or unhappy, and may leave the institution if their complaints or dissatisfactions are not adequately addressed. Therefore, service failure must be overcome and the institution must have an effective service recovery. Service recovery is an on-going effort and stakeholders must see the application of service recovery as a fundamental requirement to maintain overall customer satisfaction. This paper

discusses the relevant literature for the construct under study, such as justice dimensions, service recovery satisfaction, customer outcomes and university image in ODL industry in Malaysia. This paper also covers relevant literature on service recovery, the proposed theoretical framework of the study and other important relevant literature related to independent variables and dependent variables for hypotheses development. Insights are also offered into the idea of service recovery satisfaction, justice dimensions and university image in the Malaysian ODL environment.

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