



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR : CONSUMERS' EVALUATIONS
ON SERVICE RECOVERY STRATEGIES***

NORZIE IRIANI AHMAD

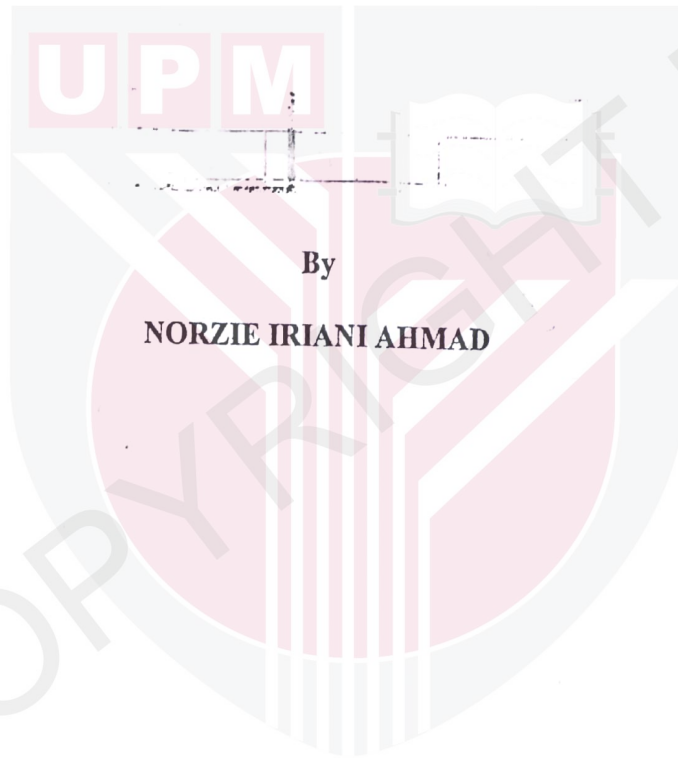
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Consumers' Evaluations on Service Recovery Strategies



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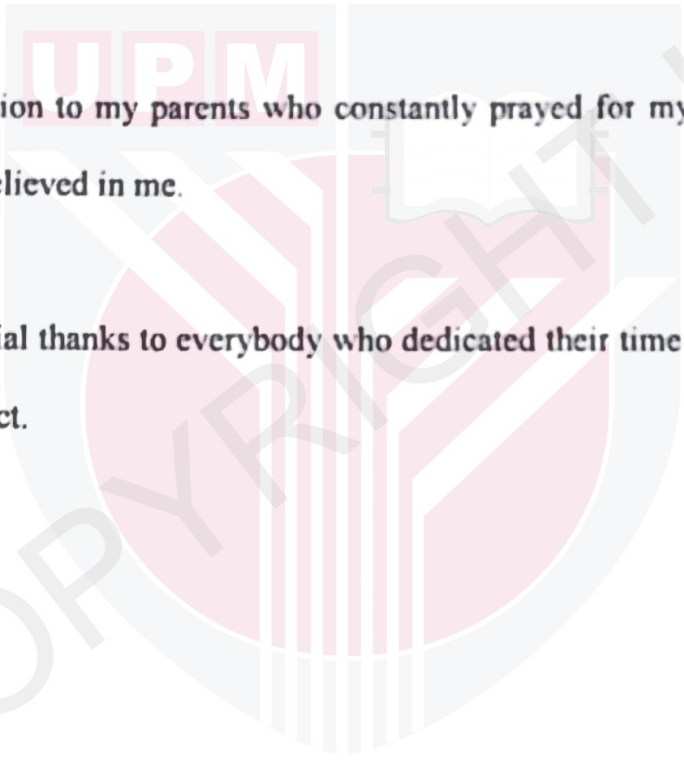
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Thesis submitted Partial in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Business Administration in the
Graduate School of Management
Univeristi Putra Malaysia

September 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Allah for his bless throughout the preparation of this project paper.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my academic supervisor,  for his advice, guidance and encouragement throughout my thesis writing.

My deep appreciation to my parents who constantly prayed for my betterment and my siblings who believed in me.

And finally, a special thanks to everybody who dedicated their time in helping me to complete this project.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

**CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR:
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September 2001

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Much of the service recovery research to date has attempted to identify and classify service encounters from either the customer's or employee's perspective. This research tends to examine the relative importance of service recovery activities in determining overall satisfaction and consequent behavioral intentions, thus, trying to identify and classify service delivery failures and recovery strategies in particular Pizza Hut and Shakeys' Pizza restaurants. In this research, a non-probability sampling in which units of the sample are selected based on the convenience of the researcher ^{were} ~~was~~ used for the sample purposes. As its name implies, convenience sampling involved collecting information from members of the population who were conveniently available to provide it. A total of 350 sets of questionnaires were

distributed to Pizza Hut and Shakey's patrons. Of ^{the} 323 returned questionnaires, 23 had incomplete information and were deemed invalid for this research. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis. Furthermore, alpha coefficients were computed for scale reliability.

Finding indicates that basically, for any given service failure, offering the customer coupons or managerial intervention, increased positive future intentions toward the provider, but interestingly, in this study, it was found that even the effective recovery effort has taken in place, yet it's still led the customers to switch. The most important finding is that if the number of switching customers as well as their intention to spread negative word-of-mouth to be reduced, enhancing coupon, discount and managerial intervention as part of the recovery strategies are necessary. Customers' future intentions toward the provider depended on the type of service failures and service recovery strategies to compensate the incident. From the service provider's perspective, considering core service failures, getting it right the first time is the best strategy for a service firm.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Pengurusan Perniagaan.

**GELAGAT ADUAN PENGGUNA:
PENILAIAN PENGGUNA TERHADAP STRATEGI PEMULIHAN
PERKHIDMATAN**

Oleh

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Kebanyakan kajian pemulihan perkhidmatan terkini telah mencuba untuk mengenal pasti dan mengklasifikasikan permasalahan perkhidmatan daripada perspektif pelanggan atau perspektif pekerja. Kajian ini cenderung di dalam mengkaji kepentingan aktiviti pemulihan perkhidmatan di dalam menentukan kepuasan menyeluruh dan gelagat pengguna pada masa akan datang, dengan demikian, cuba mengenal pasti dan mengklasifikasikan kegagalan penghantaran perkhidmatan dan strategi pemulihan khususnya di rangkaian restoran Pizza Hut dan Shakey's Pizza.

Di dalam kajian ini , 'a non-probability sampling' di mana unit sampel dipilih berdasarkan kemudahan penyelidik untuk tujuan sampel telah digunakan di mana kemudahan untuk mengumpul maklumat daripada anggota penduduk dengan mudah boleh didapati. Sebanyak 350 set soal selidik dibahagi kepada rangkaian-rangkaian restoran Pizza Hut dan Shakey's Pizza di sekitar Kuala Lumpur dan Petaling Jaya. Daripada 323 soal selidik yang dikembalikan, 23 daripadanya mempunyai maklumat yang tidak lengkap dan dianggap tidak sah untuk penyelidikan ini. Data dianalisa menggunakan 'Descriptive' dan 'Inferential' analisis. 'Alpha coefficients' juga digunakan untuk menghitung kebolehpercayaan skala.

Berdasarkan keputusan yang didapati daripada kajian ini, untuk sebarang kegagalan perkhidmatan, menawarkan kupon ataupun campur tangan daripada pihak pengurusan, sepatutnya meningkatkan kecenderungan masa hadapan yang positif pengguna ke arah pembekal perkhidmatan, tetapi sebaliknya, walaupun usaha-usaha pemulihan perkhidmatan yang efektif telah ditawarkan kepada pengguna ia masih mendorong mereka untuk menukar kepada pembekal perkhidmatan yang lain. Maklumat penting yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa sekiranya bilangan pengguna yang menukarkan pilihan mereka kepada pembekal perkhidmatan yang lain dan kecenderungan penularan kata-kata negatif itu hendak dikurangkan, maka, penambahan kupon, potongan harga dan campur tangan daripada pihak pengurusan sebagai sebahagian daripada strategi pemulihan adalah perlu. Kecenderungan masa hadapan pengguna ke arah pembekal perkhidmatan itu bergantung pada jenis kegagalan perkhidmatan dan strategi pemulihan perkhidmatan

yang ditawarkan sebagai gantirugi. Daripada perspektif pembekal perkhidmatan yang berhadapan dengan kegagalan perkhidmatan teras, mengenalpasti kegagalan dan memperbetulkan kegagalan tersebut terlebih dahulu adalah strategi terbaik untuk sesebuah firma perkhidmatan.



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CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.0 Introduction

“A problem is a problem when the customer feels it is a problem” (Diamond, Ward and Faber, 1976: pp. 58-62). Consumer dissatisfaction may be defined as the result of the discrepancy between expected and realized performance or dissatisfaction with an attribute. Consumer complaint behavior is a term that covers all the different actions consumers take when they are dissatisfied with a purchase. Once a problem has been recognized, there are three options available under consumer complaining behavior (CCB), to resolve it: do nothing; take private action by switching brands or suppliers, boycotting the product/service or warning family and friends; take public action by seeking redress, bringing legal action, complaining to the media and/or registering a complaint with a consumer association.

In today's increasingly competitive environment, consumers are becoming more discriminating in their purchases and making complaints about poor after-sales service, product quality and value for money. Furthermore, there are number of factors that have been found to influence whether or not consumer complaint, one of

them is the type of product or service involved. Another factor is the cost and social importance of the product.

In addition, mistakes are a critical part of every service. Hard as they try, even the best service companies can't prevent the occasional late flight, burned steak, or missed delivery. The fact is, in services, often performed in the customer's presence, errors are inevitable. But dissatisfied customers are not. While companies may not be able to prevent all problems, they can learn to recover from them. A good recovery can turn angry, frustrated customers into loyal ones. It can, in fact, create more goodwill than if things had gone smoothly in the first place.

1.1 Background of the Study

For the last two decades, research on services marketing has been dominated by issues such as the measurement of service quality (e.g SERVQUAL) and the relationship between customer perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985, 1988; Mills 1990, Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, and Zeithaml 1993; Freeman and Dart 1993). Consequently, research on service failure and recovery has been a relatively neglected area in services marketing (Parasuraman 1995).

The extent literature on service recovery has recognized the important of both service failure and subsequent service recovery on retaining customers and building customer relationships (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Blodgett, Granbois, and Walters 1993; Gilly and Gelb 1982; Goodwin and Ross 1988; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman 1993).

Much of the service recovery research to date has attempted to identify and classify service encounters from either the customer's (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault 1990; Keaveney 1995; Kelly, Hoffman and Davis 1993), or employee's (Bitner, Booms and Mohr 1994) perspective. What is needed is a theoretical framework to clarify the relationship between a service organization's recovery efforts and the customer's subsequent perceptions and behavioral intentions.

This research tends to examine the relative importance of service recovery activities in determining overall satisfaction and consequent behavioral intentions. Furthermore, this paper also seeks to identify the characteristics of customers who are most or least likely to be satisfied with a recovery process and their evaluations on the service recovery strategies provided by the service providers. In order to be able to adjust a recovery process to individuals' needs and expectations, the emphasis of differentiation should be on readily observable differences between individuals. While personality may be an important contributor to satisfaction with the recovery process, it is much more difficult for a front-line employee to be able to assess this characteristic of a customer than general demographic characteristics.

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1.2 Problem Statement

Marketers agree that consumer complaints are useful sources of information that help marketers identify sources of dissatisfaction, and therefore should be encouraged. However, does complaining have a more direct beneficial effect? Can consumer complaining itself improve satisfaction by allowing dissatisfied consumers a chance to vent their anger and frustration? When service failure is acknowledged and service recovery considered, three questions, among others, need to be addressed:

1. How should recovery take place?
2. Who should recover?
3. How quickly should recovery take place?

The study proposes that, if the appropriate combination of “how”, “who” and “how quickly” can be found in the services provided, the customer is likely to be satisfied. Service recovery is of particular importance if one considers that in many (according to some studies, the majority of) instances dissatisfied customers simply do not complain to the seller or service provider. The few who do complain provide valuable information in terms of what can be done to improve customer satisfaction. The unwillingness to air complaints results in ignorance among service firm decision makers and has a number of serious consequences. To avoid these negative outcomes customers ought to be encouraged to complain while service providers should be

willing and able to respond. In other words, effective service recovery is dependent on both customer and employee inputs.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective addresses the purpose of the investigation. It can be divided into two categories; General objective that will discuss the overall objective and the specific objectives that will define the problems in more detailed to gain better understanding on each variable in the study.

1.3.1 General objective

- (a) To examine the consumers' evaluations on service delivery failures.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- (a) To identify and classify service failures within the restaurant industry.
- (b) To identify and classify recovery strategies utilized by restaurants to correct failures.
- (c) To investigate the effects on customers' future intentions toward the provider of different recovery strategies after a service failure.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study is hopefully will be of interest to many parties. Namely, the study will of relatively significant to academicians, researchers and service providers. It is important for the study to find out consumers' evaluations of a service firm's effort to resolve their service problem. These evaluations perhaps would affect the consumers' future intentions toward the provider of different recovery strategies after a service failure. This will enhance the researcher to investigate the responses from urban consumers specifically in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya towards service recovery rendered by service providers. The result will help the service providers to provide better recovery system in the future. By knowing the level of consumers' satisfaction towards the recovery strategies, service providers can develop an appropriate level of recovery system that is consistent throughout consumers' perspective.

Furthermore, the results also will enhance the service providers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current recovery system in the service industry.

Therefore, an improvement can be continuously made in order to increase consumers' intention for future purchase.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

1.5.1 Chapter One

First chapter describes the overall view of the study, which embodies background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives of the study and the significance of the study to specific parties.

1.5.2 Chapter Two

Chapter two discusses an overview of service industries, and the fast food restaurant industry.

1.5.3 Chapter Three

Chapter three covers the literature review for variables involved in the study.

1.5.4 Chapter Four

Chapter four explains in detail how the study is conducted. This chapter includes the sampling process, questionnaire design and data collection methods. The statistical analysis used in the study is also included in this chapter.

1.5.5 Chapter Five

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study based on the results of the statistical analysis. This chapter examines data processing, analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the survey. The result or outputs of computer computation are compiled, summarized and presented in tabular format. The researcher used the Statistical Package of social science (SPSS) 10.0 for windows software program to perform complex statistical analysis on the data. In summary, this chapter will narrow the result into Statistical test.

1.5.6 Chapter Six

Chapter six consists of the conclusions, marketing implications of the study and recommendations based on the findings from chapter five. Lastly, research limitations and possible areas for future research are also included.

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