

MAPPING THE SERVICE-FAILURE RECOVERY LITERATURE: A SCOPING REVIEW

Daniel P. Nowak, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Andrew J. Dahl, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Jimmy W. Peltier, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

ABSTRACT

The nature of the service failure-recovery literature is expansive, complex, and heterogeneous. The full range of content is difficult to traverse given the long history and broad interests in the service failure-recovery domain. While some may argue that the service failure-recovery literature is in the mature stage of academic inquiry, emergent literature, and particularly in the area of digital marketing and artificial intelligence is magnifying its importance. This scoping review provides an overview of relevant definitions, scales, and operationalizations of key concepts within the service failure-recovery field. Relevant topics covered in this scoping review of the service failure-recovery literature encompass (1) core definitions, (2) service failure typologies, (3) service recovery antecedents, (4) service recovery outcomes, (5) core service recovery theories, (6) service recovery strategies – reactive, adaptive, and proactive recovery, and (7) identification of recent comprehensive literature reviews. Our scoping review provides theoretical and practical implications to advance research in this topic area.

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of service design, training, and other organizational efforts, mistakes are bound to happen that lead to service failures, sometimes severe (Fouroudi et al., 2022). As a result, service failure and recovery (SFR) is a critical research domain (Hess et al., 2003), and one that continues to garner researchers' and practitioners' interest (Adil et al., 2022; Bacile, 2022; Béal & Grégoire, 2022; Harrison-Walker, 2022; Honora et al., 2022; Huang & Dootson, 2022; Jin et al., 2023). Throughout its history, the *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Consumer Complaining Behavior (JCS/D&CB)* has published articles covering a range of topics, with articles addressing consumer complaining behavior and complaint management most relevant to the broader SFR literature (Dahl & Peltier, 2015, Nowak et al., 2023). Although Nowak et al. (2023) highlight that managing consumer complaints and the firm's service recovery response is relatively underexplored within the *JCS/D&CB*, the topic continues to generate increased interest from a broader research community with over 50% of peer-reviewed articles appearing within the last five full years (2018-present). Figure 1 shows the results of a Web of Science search for articles using either a "service failure" or "service recovery" topic as of February 2023. The search uncovered 1,924 relevant documents (article, review article, early access, or editorial material) published since 1988, including 72% published in the past ten years (2014-present).

The early roots of the SFR discipline and related terminology emerged from several key sources. For example, Oliver (1980) defined 'customer satisfaction' as a function of expectation and expectation disconfirmation, and later explored the roles of disconfirmation perceptions and attribution judgments (Oliver, 1989). Boshoff (1999) later encouraged SFR researchers to consider

satisfaction specific to service recovery with the RECOVSAT scale. Early work from Fornell and Wernerfelt (1987) highlighted SFR's profitability, establishing complaint management as a key defensive marketing strategy. Hart et. al (1990) provided practitioners rich service recovery case studies and managerial guidance, helping spur further managerial adoption of SFR. Blodgett et. al. (1997) advanced the SFR literature towards adapting justice scales via their study on justice and postcomplaint behavior. Finally, several researchers contributed to influential articles on SFR by addressing failure typologies, service recovery antecedents, and service failure management (Kelly et. al., 1993, Kelly & Davis, 1995, Hoffman et. al., 1995).

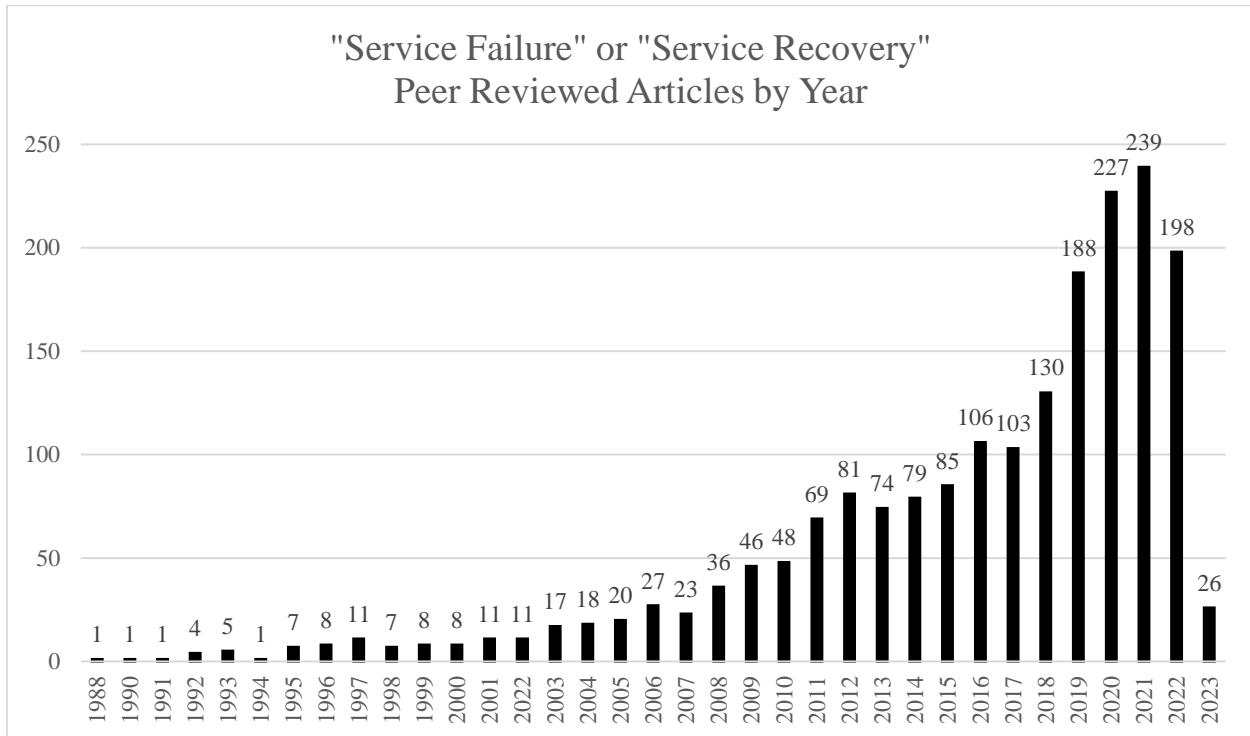
Despite reaching a certain level of maturity as a research domain (Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016), digital servitization (Manser Payne et al., 2021), customer engagement in co-creation (Patrício et al., 2011; Polese et al., 2017), technological advances (Huang & Rust, 2018; Huang & Dootson, 2022), and a host of other issues are escalating the complexity of service ecosystems. As a result, the rising complexity increases opportunities for service provider and firm errors leading to service failures that require evolving service recovery strategies (Fouroud et al., 2020; Parasuraman, 2006). For example, the rapid deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) is upending various service industries (Huang & Rust, 2018; Manser Payne et al., 2021), creating new service delivery mechanisms and customer-technology service interactions via chatbots and other digital service assistants (Huang & Dootson, 2022; Pizzi et al., 2021). The explosive growth of ChatGPT and other GPT-trained AI is likely to have similarly profound effects on SFR (Peltier et al., 2023), particularly if firms lose personal touch with customers when deploying AI as a cost-saving measure. Consequently, scholars continue to explore SFR in new contexts using diverse theories that may challenge the established premises of the existing SFR literature (Grégoire & Mattila, 2021; Jin et al., 2023).

Given the importance of SFR brought on by COVID, digital marketing, AI, and other related technologies and contexts, in this invited article we utilize a scoping review perspective to summarize key concepts within the literature. Scoping reviews as a methodology employ a rapid mapping process to provide a high-level overview of a topic (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peterson et al., 2017). Unlike a systematic review or meta-analysis, scoping reviews take a more descriptive approach (Peters et al., 2020), and are particularly useful for synthesizing diverse research streams related to a broad topic (Pham et al., 2014). Given the rapidly expanding interest in SFR issues, the current scoping review prioritizes integrating key concepts, definitions, relevant scales, and frameworks of the SFR literature. While many definitions, scales, and frameworks exist, the scoping review provides a starting point to help researchers navigate critical elements related to SFR issues.

We thus contribute to the literature by providing a descriptive account of relevant SFR concepts. We briefly discuss the scoping review methodology and purpose of our review, and then start by describing **core definitions** of SFR. Second, we identify different **service failure typologies** (*service vs. product-based failures, brand vs. service transgressions*). Third, we move on to discuss some of the most common **service recovery antecedents** (*relationship quality, service recovery expectations, recovery initiation, firm resources, customer knowledge/information/transparency, and role clarity*) and **SFR outcomes** (*customer and firm outcomes*). Fourth, we highlight five **core service recovery theories** applied within the extant SFR literature (*justice theory, social comparison theory, expectation-disconfirmation theory, service-dominant logic, and attribution theory*). Fifth, the scoping review discusses three different **service recovery strategies** (*reactive, adaptive, and proactive*), and relevant sub-topics. Specifically, we address the following core concepts for each sub-topic – **reactive recovery**: *apologies, recovery*

compensation; **adaptive recovery:** employee empowerment, customer voice, humor, timeliness of recovery; **proactive recovery:** service guarantees, customer service orientation, artificial intelligence. Finally, we identify recent and pertinent **literature reviews**, our review’s **limitations**, and summarize the scoping review with a **conclusion**.

Figure 1.
Service Failure or Service Recovery Peer Reviewed Articles By Year



Note. Based on Web of Science database search (“service failure” or “service recovery”) in February 2023 restricted to four document types: article, review article, early access, or editorial material.

SCOPING REVIEW METHODOLOGY & PURPOSE

In order to organize and synthesize core elements of the diverse SFR literature, the study follows the approach of a scoping literature review. Scoping reviews are useful in cases of broad topics with extensive and diverse bodies of literature and have become a popular research strategy (Pham et al., 2014). Scoping literature reviews are not systematic or comprehensive in nature, but rather a rapid mapping technique (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). Unlike systematic reviews or meta-analysis that take a more analytical approach, a scoping review tends to be more descriptive in nature (Peters et al., 2020). A common goal of scoping reviews is to explore relevant literature to generate a high-level overview rather than providing answers to specific research questions or detailed future research agendas (Peterson et al., 2017). Despite the increased popularity of the scoping review methodology, there are no well-established criteria on how to conduct or assess the quality of a scoping review (Whittemore et al., 2014). Instead, researchers using this methodology define a review’s purpose and identify relevant boundaries.

The purpose of the current scoping review is to provide scholars and practitioners with an accessible overview of the SFR literature. The themes in this scoping review were collated through

an iterative process by which three marketing scholars discussed and identified significant service recovery themes. The themes were selected based on author judgments related to assessments based on academic relevance and practitioner salience. Two independent marketing scholars reviewed these themes to verify the validity of the selected sub-topics. For the most part, articles highlighted in this review are all from journals rated A*, A, or B by the *Australian Business Dean's Council* as of February 2023. The review also integrates information from select academic books relevant to the service recovery category. Consistent with other scoping reviews, the current review does not claim that the comprised list of concepts or themes related to the SFR literature is exhaustive or comprehensive.

SERVICE FAILURE-RECOVERY SCOPING REVIEW RESULTS

Core Service Recovery Definitions

Multiple definitions of service recovery exist within the extant service literature. For example, Johnston & Hewa (1997, p. 467) provide an early definition of service recovery “as the actions of a service provider to mitigate and/or repair the damage to a customer that results from the provider’s failure to deliver a service as it is designed.” Tax & Brown (2000, p. 272) further define service recovery as “a process that identifies service failures, effectively resolves customer problems, classifies root cause(s), and yields data that can be integrated with other measures of performance to assess and improve the service system.” Björlin Lidén & Skålén (2003, p. 37) describe service recovery as “the process that begins when the company becomes aware that dissatisfaction has occurred, to the situation when the problem has been solved, and/or the customer has been reimbursed to achieve satisfaction.” Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher (2016, p. 330) state “service recovery represents the set of actions an organization takes to reestablish customer satisfaction and loyalty after a service failure, to ensure that failure incidents encourage organizational learning and process improvements, and to train and reward employees for this purpose.” Khamitov et al. (2020, p. 520) define service recovery as “all the actions a firm can take to redress the grievances or loss caused by a service failure.” Santos-Vijande et al. (2013, p. 935) make a distinction between service recovery and integrated service recovery systems, defining integrated service recovery systems as “a higher order construct which represents the firms’ ability to anticipate and prevent failures, react efficiently to recovery needs, maximizing the quality of long-term client relationships and enhance the firm’s organizational learning process so as to improve its future provision of services.” Service recovery performance is also a common term used in the literature, and is defined as “the behaviors in which customer service employees who directly handle customer complaints engage to recover customer satisfaction and loyalty after service failures” (Liao, 2007, p. 476).

Types of Service Failure

Prior to service recovery, there must be a service failure incident. The following section identifies premises of two commonly investigated service failure typologies.

Service vs. Product-Based Failures: Consumers exhibit different expectations for service-based failures compared to product-based failures, with customers being less forgiving for product-based failures (Catenazzo & Paulssen, 2015). Bolkan & Daly (2008) show that it is more critical for firms to assume responsibility in product-based failures. In part, mass product failures can be more widespread and affect multiple customers. The media often publicizes these occurrences of defective or dangerous products associated with major product recalls (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000).

Khamitov et al. (2020) suggest researchers integrate the product-crisis and SFR literature to create a more comprehensive discipline investigating negative events in marketing.

Brand vs. Service Transgressions: Transgressions from a firm can occur at the brand level or during frontline service employee-customer interactions. Brand transgressions are typically broader than service failures, while a service failure is a discrete incident that fails to match a customer's expectations (Gamze & Elif, 2020). Brand transgressions are damaging actions by a brand that violate norms endorsed by customers, which may make it difficult for firms to recover (Aaker et al., 2004). However, a customer's awareness of a brand's corporate responsibility initiatives may impact how the customer reacts to the brand's transgression (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015). For example, customers may give moral licensing to brands who acted morally in the past, or forgive brands with a shared identity (Karani, 2021; Ryoo, 2022). In comparison, service transgressions are violations of relationship-relevant norms (Jones et al., 2011). Chong and Ahmed (2018) highlight three conflict framing categories related to service failure – damaged identity, identity at risk, and identity preservation. Customers' motivation to forgive service transgressions can stem from atonement, disillusionment, as self-healing, or grace (Tsarenko et al., 2019). Beyond the dyadic relationship, service incidents that break ethical norms may also affect third-party customers (Sharma et al., 2020).

Relevant scales or measurement instruments for service failure typologies: Service transgressions scale (Jones et al., 2011). Product failure and service recovery scale (Catenazzo & Paulssen, 2015). Brand transgression, service failure recovery, and product-harm crisis framework (Khamitov et al., 2020). Post-purchase dissonance scale (Montgomery & Barnes, 1993).

Service Recovery Antecedents

Research exploring customer antecedents is among the most popular areas of research among service scholars, particularly in *JCS/D&CB* (Dahl & Peltier, 2015, Nowak et al., 2023). Distinguishing service recovery antecedents allows for a deeper understanding of customer satisfaction and relationship marketing (Andreassen, 2000). The purpose of the following section is to identify commonly investigated service recovery antecedents and relevant literature.

Relationship Quality: The relationship between a customer and a firm is a common antecedent in the service recovery literature. Relationship quality, or strength of the relationship, involves the customer's evaluation of the dyadic relationship with the firm, including components of satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Kwiatek et al., 2020). The level of relationship quality (i.e., strength of the relationship) may also affect the outcomes of the relationship from the seller's perspective. A service failure in a new relationship has the potential to impact the relationship more negatively, given that there are fewer chances for the customer to evaluate and less relationship strength (Boulding et al., 1993). Yet, longer-term customers tend to have higher service recovery expectations (Kwon & Jang, 2012, Palmer & Bejou, 2016). Studies show that customers with a stronger customer-firm relationship are more likely to voice service concerns, less likely to engage in negative word of mouth, and show greater satisfaction with successful service recovery (Ashley & Varki, 2009). However, competing research shows when relationship levels are high between a customer and a firm, service recovery failures may have a stronger negative effect on repurchase intentions (Holloway et al., 2009).

Service Recovery Expectations: The outcome of a service interaction is predicated on a post hoc evaluation of reconstructed expectations by the customer (Oliver, 2014). To evaluate if a customer's expectations have been met, there needs to be an evaluation of the convergence of service outcomes and customer expectations. Convergence occurs if "a consumer's expectations

are confirmed when the product performs as expected, negatively disconfirmed when the product performs more poorly than expected, and positively disconfirmed when the product performs better than expected” (Powers & Valentine, 2008, p. 101). Customers often have different expectations as it relates to what satisfies them, including different service recovery expectations. Multiple factors may exist that influence a customer’s service recovery expectations. For example, the greater the level of service failure, the higher the customer’s expectations of recovery from the service provider (Smith et al., 1999, Kim & Ulgado, 2012). Brand perceptions or brand personality perceptions may also impact service recovery expectations. Brand personality reflects a set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997), with customers exhibiting different levels of forgiveness following a service failure, regardless of their relationship with the firm, due to a brand’s personality (Hassey, 2019).

Recovery Initiation: The firm or a customer may initiate the service recovery process. Accordingly, the source of initiation can produce divergent outcomes (Patterson et al., 2006). In general, firm-initiated recoveries produce a more favorable response than customer-initiated recoveries (Xu et al., 2014, Nuansi & Ngamcharoenmongkol, 2021). However, in some contexts such as unstable recoveries, customers engaging in self-serving behaviors, or customer errors, customer-initiated service recovery may produce better outcomes (Swanson & Kelley, 2001, Dao & Theotakis, 2021).

Firm Resources: The Resource-Based View contends that firms with valuable resources that are not easily duplicated or substituted will have a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Some service organizations may enjoy having resource advantages relative to other firms. Specific to service recovery, service firms with dynamic capabilities (Samiha et al., 2018), knowledge-based resources (Mjahed Hammami et al., 2021), and absorptive capacity (Yuan et al., 2022) may be able to more easily navigate and respond to service failures. Dynamic capabilities include “organizational and strategic routines by which firms achieve new resource configurations as markets emerge, collide, split, evolve, and die” (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000, p. 1107). Knowledge-based resources include tacit or explicit knowledge combined with tangible resources which allow the firm to function, the firm’s know-how (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Absorptive capacity reflects a set of processes by which firms assimilate and exploit knowledge (Zahra & George, 2002). Dorsch et al. (2017) outline the differences in inherent and contextual resource characteristics. Inherent resource characteristics include resource stickiness, fungibility, divisibility, and depletion. Contextual resource conditions include resource assembly, valence, availability, and exchangeability. These resource categories reflect operant resources, a concept from the service dominant logic literature (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Operant resources may impact SFR quality (Skourtis et al., 2019), and thus may be relevant control or moderating variables for SFR researchers.

Customer Knowledge, Information, and Transparency: Lack of clarity and information is one of the major sources of customer complaints (Chang & Jung-Sung, 2018). Customer knowledge can be divided into two categories; systematic customer information and customer knowledge competence, which is based on the customers’ ability to act on knowledge (Campbell, 2003). Customers who conduct limited information searches tend to exhibit high inertia, meaning they are unlikely to perceive attractive alternatives, potentially making them more amenable to service recovery efforts (Chia-Ying, 2015). Conversely, customers who make informed choices are more likely to reduce blame toward service providers (Mattila & Cranage, 2005).

Research attention in understanding how firms can create more transparency in SFR is increasing (Honora et al., 2022). Firm-initiated transparent service recoveries reflect an attempt to

enable inward organizational observability by disclosing information related to decisions, procedures, and performance to customers affected by service failures (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014). Service failure recoveries jointly co-created by the firm and customer may offer more transparency (Balaji et al., 2018). Firms may transform negative information and service failures observed by virtually present others on social media into positive signals through transparent service recoveries. Firms may leverage this transformation via increased information, decreased information asymmetry, and trust (Hogreve et al., 2019).

Customer Role and Employee Role Clarity: Customer role clarity involves the extent to which firm policies, procedures, social norms, and knowledge of consequences are intelligible to a customer, which affects the customer's likelihood, and understanding of, customer value co-creation with a firm (Dong et al., 2008). The more a customer is clear on their role within a service interaction, the more likely they will participate in value co-creation (Meuter et al., 2005). Understanding the role of "other customers" within the service recovery process is still evolving; and entails when a customer impacts the service recovery of a different customer (Kim & Baker, 2020).

Relevant scales or measurement instruments for core service recovery antecedents: Dynamic capabilities scale (Kump et al., 2019). Knowledge-based resources scale (Nieves et al., 2014). Absorptive capacity scale (Camisón & Forés, 2010). Blame attribution scale (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002b). Customer loyalty scale (McMullan, 2005). Customer relationship management (CRM) scales (Robinson et al., 2011, Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). Service recovery system antecedent scale (Smith et al., 2019). Scale for propensity to complain, service recovery expectations, and controllability attribution (Borah et al., 2020).

Service Failure and Recovery Outcomes

Customer Outcomes: Larsen & Wright (2021) suggest that aggregate consumer satisfaction is the ultimate dependent variable in marketing theory and practice, making it a critical construct in SFR. Customer satisfaction involves "an evaluation between what was received and what was expected" (Parker & Mathews, 2001, p. 2). Customer satisfaction with service recovery is a post-recovery, transaction-specific judgment that is a function of initial service disconfirmation and service recovery disconfirmation (McCollough et al., 2000b). Customers may be so delighted by service recovery efforts that they experience greater satisfaction post-failure than pre-failure, a phenomenon labeled the service recovery paradox (de Matos et al., 2007). However, researchers have questioned the relevance of the service recovery paradox as this phenomenon may only apply to small failures (Magnini et al., 2007), may not be a viable managerial strategy (Michel & Meuter, 2008), and evidence suggests this effect may not meaningfully exist at all (Kau et al., 2006), and even when it does, customers may no longer trust the service provider (Basso & Pizzutti, 2016). Given the low rate of complaining customers, practitioners may have an interest in understanding how to increase the number of dissatisfied consumers who complain (Davidow 2015).

While the goal is successful service recovery, firms may also fail in the service recovery effort which may lead to a "double deviation" effect whereby a poor service recovery exacerbates the initial service failure (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002b; Basso & Pizzutti, 2016). In these cases, customers with a deeper relationship with a firm may feel a more profound sense of betrayal (Holloway et al., 2009), possibly leading these unsatisfied customers to engage in dysfunctional customer behavior (Aron & Kultgen, 2019) or customer rage (Nguyen, McColl-Kennedy, 2003, McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009, Surachartkumtonkun et al., 2013). Although the extant SFR

literature is clear on what to do in customer rage contexts, managers may fail to implement suggested strategies. Understanding why this is the case may warrant future research.

Firm Outcomes: Organizations make strategic decisions at the macro level for their service recovery strategies, affecting firm-level outcomes such as process improvements and firm performance (Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016). Firms that do not adequately address service failures can negatively impact customer loyalty, thereby damaging the firm (Krishna et al., 2011). In contrast, firms that appropriately manage service failures may benefit via stronger repatronage intentions and positive word-of-mouth behaviors that ultimately benefit the firm (Huang, 2011). Customers perceive firms that adequately manage and address customer trust and emotions as displaying a higher level of justice, mediating the relationship with customer loyalty (DeWitt et al., 2008). When service recovery retention efforts are successful, ancillary benefits may accrue to the firm, including decreasing customers' price sensitivity and transaction costs (J. S. Smith et al., 2010).

Relevant scales or measurement instruments for service recovery outcomes: Satisfaction with recovery scales (Boshoff, 1999, Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002b, Homburg & Fürst, 2005). Behavioral and attitudinal loyalty scales (DeWitt et al., 2008). Customer rage scales (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009). Forgiveness and negative word-of-mouth scale (Harrison-Walker, 2019). Dysfunctional customer behavior scale (Kang et al., 2019). Emotional recovery and economic recovery scales (Wei et al., 2020).

Core Service Recovery Theories

The following section identifies five commonly employed theories in the extant SFR literature. Similar to other aspects of this scoping review, the outlined theories are not collectively exhaustive of all theoretical frameworks used to date.

Justice and Equity Theory: Perceived justice has become the dominant theoretical perspective in the SFR literature (Yim et al., 2003) and is one of the most common theories used when studying online service failures (Adil et al., 2022). The SFR literature commonly evaluates three types of perceived justice: procedural, interactional, and distributive justice (Blodgett et al., 1997, Krishna et al., 2011). Procedural justice is the perceived fairness of how allocation decisions are made and the speed at which a problem is addressed and resolved (Blodgett et al., 1997, Konovsky, 2000). Interactional justice reflects the extent to which customers feel they have been treated fairly in a service interaction (Blodgett et al., 1997, Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002a). Finally, distributional justice is the customer's perception that the service recovery outcome is fair (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002a).

Fairness or equity is an essential function of satisfaction with service recovery (Andreassen, 2000). One approach in the SFR literature involves separating the measurement of justice perceptions from measurements that use equity and fairness theories (McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003). Equity theory entails an examination of the ratio of rewards, costs, and investments compared to a referent other (Alexander, 2002). Justice theories evaluate a customer's perceptions related to service recovery; however, in some instances, measuring customers' perceptions may be inadequate or inappropriate as customers' knowledge may be uncertain (Vincent-Wayne, 1999), customers may not have a sufficient choice (Mattila & Cranage, 2005), power asymmetry may exist (Teimoury et al., 2010), perceptual justice measures may not account for customer loyalty (Brunner et al., 2008), or consider relevant outside observers (Bacile, 2022).

Social Comparison Theory: Social comparison theory involves a "process of thinking about information about one or more people in relation to the self" (Wood, 1996, p. 520).

Marketers can use social comparison as a tool to frame SFR. For example, downward social comparison involves showing customers that their situation is not as bad relative to others (Antonetti et al., 2018). People make downward comparisons when they are low in subjective well-being to feel better about themselves (Wood et al., 2000). Downward social comparisons made by agents of a firm may improve customers' post-purchase behavioral intentions, reduce anger among customers, improve customer satisfaction, and improve word-of-mouth behavior (Bonifield & Cole, 2008, Vázquez-Casielles et al., 2012). Conversely, upward comparisons occur if customers compare themselves to those who are socially better (H. Kim & Jang, 2021). For example, firms may employ an upward comparison by showing that more loyal customers receive more benefits than less loyal customers. Both upwards and downward comparisons are possible; however, there is evidence that downward comparisons have a more substantial effect (Yi & Kim, 2017).

Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory: The expectation-disconfirmation theory framework suggests that customers compare the service recovery performance against prior expectations to determine the level of satisfaction with the service recovery process and outcome (Yim et al., 2003). Positive disconfirmation exists when the service recovery performance exceeds expectations; negative disconfirmation occurs when performance does not meet expectations. This dynamic represents a negative relationship; the greater (lower) expectations of failure, the less (more) negative disconfirmation (McCullough et al., 2000a).

Service-Dominant Logic: The service-dominant logic (SDL) perspective has become a popular service theory, including to help understand value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). SDL theorizes that firms can only create value propositions that are not realized until customers are engaged in the service encounter (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). When SFR occurs, firms and customers are not on opposite sides but must work to co-create solutions to best resolve the situation (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014). Customers engage in service recovery co-creation by “explaining what they want from the service provider in the case of a SFR and interact with employees by giving appropriate information and act courteously with employees as a means of establishing a strong rapport” (Skourtis et al., 2019, p. 997). Studies show that customers co-creating service recovery positively impacts justice perceptions, which can impact customer satisfaction (Cheung & To, 2016).

Attribution Theory: Attribution theory views customers as rational actors seeking to evaluate failure causes (Folkes, 1984). Customers attribute causes (e.g., locus, stability, control) to events (Weiner, 1980). Attribution theory has been employed in the SFR literature in various contexts, including exploring behavioral dimensions, word-of-mouth intentions, repatronage intentions, and complaining behavior (Srivastava & Gosain, 2020). Notably, customers may shift blame by overstating an employee's role in service failures while underestimating their personal role (Michel et al., 2009).

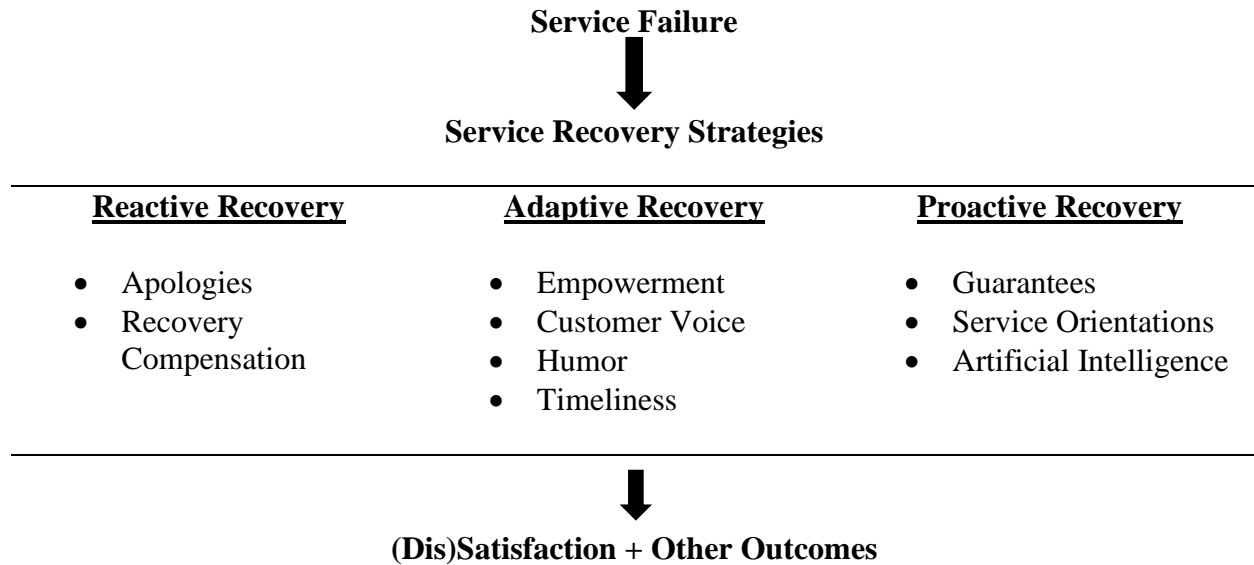
Relevant scales or measurement instruments for core service recovery theories: Perceived justice scales (Tax & Brown, 1998). A-CRAFT scale (Davidow, 2014), Co-creation and service recovery scale (Skourtis et al., 2019). S-D logic vectors (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). Downward social comparison scale (Antonetti et al., 2018). Service failure attribution framework (Srivastava & Gosain, 2020). Scale for perceived justice, corporate responsibility, and service recovery (S. La & Choi, 2019). Scale for perceived justice and employee effort (Yani-de-Soriano et al., 2019). Service recovery expectations/disconfirmation scale (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020).

SERVICE RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Firms may employ different recovery strategies as part of the service recovery process. The following section of the scoping review discusses three types of service recovery strategies – reactive, adaptive, and proactive – and noteworthy sub-elements for each strategy. See Figure 2.

Figure 2.

Service Recovery Strategies



Reactive Service Recovery Strategies (Post-Recovery Stage)

Reactive SFR strategies involve firms and their representatives following a set process to respond to service failures (Krishna et al., 2011). Krishna et al. (2011) propose seven fundamental steps in the SFR process, including: (1) acknowledgment, (2) empathy, (3) apology, (4) ownership, (5) fix, (6) assurance, and (7) compensation. Reactive service recoveries are generally predictable, automatic, or repeated encounters whereby interacting actors develop habits that involve little or no conscious thought (Kamath et al., 2020).

Apologies: No clear, discrete definition of ‘apology’ exists, as scholars utilize diverse conceptualizations (Slocum et al., 2011). For example, some operationalize apologies as responsibility and regret for trust violations (Kim et al., 2004). Still, others emphasize that one party must feel dissatisfaction with a situation; however, guilt does not need to be admitted (Davidow, 2003). Studies show apologies entail three components that affect customer satisfaction: empathy, intensity, and timing (Roschk & Kaiser, 2013). Apologies may take the form of an offer of compensation which is “focused on the restoration of equity through exchange,” or be an expression of empathy which is a recognition of, and concern of, another’s suffering (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010, p. 38).

Service Recovery Compensation: Compensating customers involves an interactive versus passive process (Mattila & Cranage, 2005). Service recovery compensation is an exchange situation where a firm attempts to remunerate a customer following a service failure by refunding money, offering discounts, or providing comparable items of value to restore the equity of the

original transaction (Worsfold et al., 2007, Bambauer-Sachse & Rabeson, 2015). Multiple factors can influence the effectiveness of service recovery compensation, including locus of responsibility, timeliness, and resource similarity (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004, Grewal et al., 2008, Roschk & Gelbrich, 2014). Firms may also employ different processes to deliver compensation, including hedonic or utilitarian models (Huang & Lin, 2011), or mix-and-match refund models (Stakhovych & Tamaddoni, 2020).

Adaptive Service Recovery (Recovery Stage)

Adaptive service recovery is the ability of frontline employees to adjust their behavior to the context of a specific service recovery event (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996). Adaptability is critical as it measures both customer satisfaction and the frontline service employee's problem-solving ability (Silva et al., 2020). Frontline employees' adaptive problem-solving can more significantly impact distributive justice than compensation (Mostafa et al., 2015). Managers need to distinguish between adaptive and proactive service strategies, as adaptive strategies tend to focus on listening and problem-solving skills, whereas proactive strategies focus on fixing or optimizing service routines (Jong & De Ruyter, 2004).

Employee Empowerment: Employee empowerment allows employees autonomy during service recovery and may involve handling exceptions, creating novel solutions, or using discretion in how frontline employees interact with customers (Hocutt & Stone, 1998). Management can demonstrate its commitment to customer satisfaction by empowering frontline employees (Ashill et al., 2008). Firms must go beyond giving employees autonomy over the service recovery process by providing tools and resources that enable frontline employees to feel a psychological sense of ownership or empowerment (Robertson & O'Reilly, 2020).

Customer voice: In the service recovery literature, 'voice' is generally the ability of the customer to provide input or express how they feel about a given situation (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001). When customers experience a service failure, they can respond by exiting the relationship, attempting to change the situation rather than leaving (voice), or engaging in negative word-of-mouth (Singh, 1990). (Harrison-Walker, 2022, p. 27) describes voice as a "functional role leading customers to believe they can influence the outcome of the service recovery, as well as a value-expressive role by providing cathartic satisfaction from being able to express their point of view." Customers who feel they cannot influence a service interaction may experience 'powerlessness' (Bunker & Bradley, 2007). Given technological and communication advances, customers have increasingly turned to social media to voice complaints to massive audiences, requiring firms to integrate highly adaptive service recovery strategies into the brand's social media strategy (Abney et al., 2017). In service recovery interactions, the customer's voice is important and may enhance recovery satisfaction (Pranic & Roehl, 2012), but the frontline service provider's perspective must also be understood (Danaher & Gallan, 2016).

Humor: Humor can be an effective tool for service firms if used appropriately. Studies demonstrate that humor may positively impact emotions and physical health (Warren et al., 2018). Employees can also use humor to develop customer rapport and facilitate complaint management (Mathies et al., 2016). Negative situations often trigger or are ripe sources for humor; however, humor can easily backfire if used incorrectly or in the wrong context (Mcgraw et al., 2015). For example, firms should avoid using humor in online contexts if trustworthiness is essential or if the complaint is written in a neutral tone (Shin & Larson, 2020).

Timeliness of Recovery: How quickly firms respond to service failures is well-established as a critical factor (Hart et al., 1990; Liu et al., 2019), and is a basic requirement influencing

procedural justice and customer emotions (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005). The timeliness of service recovery can also impact service quality perceptions and future consumption behaviors (Xu et al., 2019). Although a faster recovery is typically better, timeliness in service recovery is not a linear relationship (Hogreve et al., 2017), and delayed recovery may be more effective when customers experience high-intensity negative emotions (Tang et al., 2018). Hence, the speed of response is a critical adaptive service recovery design factor, given different approaches and relative effectiveness.

Proactive Service Recovery (Pre-Recovery Phase)

A proactive service recovery strategy occurs when a firm anticipates service failures and consumer complaints and preemptively invests resources to strengthen customer relationships to attenuate possible negative service interactions (Grant & Ashford, 2008, Jones et al., 2011). Firms need to engage in proactive service recovery strategies as some dissatisfied customers do not report service failures, instead choosing to exit the relationship and engage in negative word-of-mouth behavior (Blodgett et al., 2015). Proactive service organizations understand that mistakes are inevitable and provide learning opportunities (Johnston & Mehra, 2002).

Service Guarantees: A service guarantee presents a service standard promise and offers compensation when this standard is not achieved (Björölin Lidén & Skålén, 2003). Service guarantees are a proactive form of service recovery by which firms can manage recovery expectations in the pre-recovery phase and thereby formalize the service recovery process (Björölin Lidén & Skålén, 2003, Myrden & Kelloway, 2014, Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). However, service guarantees may have limited effectiveness as a customer service tool (McColl et al., 2005). For example, service recovery quality and personality factors may influence a customer's willingness to invoke a guarantee (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014).

Customer Service Orientation: Sheth et al. (2000, p. 56) describe the customer-centric orientation approach as "understanding and satisfying the needs, wants, and resources of individual customers rather than those of mass markets or market segments." This approach contrasts market-oriented approaches, which emphasize firms amplifying their capabilities and value propositions to compete in the marketplace (La & Kandampully, 2004). Proactive complaint management is a core component of customer-centric firms and service recovery efforts focused on improving organizational culture, customer centricity, and value co-creation (Davidow, 2014, 2020). Firms developing customer-centric orientations is a response to increasing customer empowerment (Jin et al., 2023), and is vital for engaging customers in proactive service behaviors (Ye et al., 2019). There are different forms of customer service orientation, including customer-oriented citizenship behavior (Bavik, 2019), relationship-orientation (Plouffe et al., 2009), locomotion and assessment orientations (Jasmand et al., 2012), and service recovery orientation (Smith et al., 2019). The various conceptualizations of customer service-related orientations may have differential effects on service recovery that warrant further investigation (Niknejad et al., 2020; Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016).

Artificial Intelligence-Enabled Technologies: Artificial intelligence (AI) is an emerging technology revolutionizing service innovation (Lv et al., 2022) and is employed in a variety of service interaction contexts that could result in service failures or be used to proactively deploy the service recovery process (Peltier et al., 2023; Wirtz et al., 2021). Service providers can use AI-enabled technologies for front-end (consumer-facing) interactions or back-end operations (Manser Payne et al., 2021). On the front-end, AI can detect human emotions, which can autonomously engage in protocols to improve the customers' mood or to deliver targeted service offerings. On

the back-end, AI improves predictive capabilities, fraud detection, enhances employee productivity, and saves on employee labor costs (Huang & Rust, 2018). One example of how AI may benefit service recovery is that AI may alleviate customer embarrassment with an in-human service agent in specific contexts due to its perceived lack of agency and emotion (Pitardi et al., 2021). Despite AI's promising technological leaps, customers may be more likely to perceive sincerity and experience service recovery satisfaction in human-to-human interactions than human-to-AI interactions (Hu et al., 2021). For example, frontline employees may be better suited than AI to handle SFR interactions involving high affect and risk, personalized service contexts, or other instances where customers need more attention and assurance (Robinson et al., 2020).

Relevant scales or measurement instruments for service recovery strategy: Adaptive and proactive recovery scales (Silva et al., 2020). Customer voice scale (Harrison-Walker, 2022). AI and service research frameworks (Huang & Rust, 2018; Manser Payne et al., 2021; Peltier et al., 2023). Frontline employee empowerment scale (Ashill et al., 2008). Service-oriented architecture framework (Niknejad et al., 2020). Service orientation scale (Briggs et al., 2020). Post-recovery satisfaction scale (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999).

SERVICE FAILURE-RECOVERY LITERATURE REVIEWS

Given the long-standing interest and importance of the SFR topic, several recent literature reviews exist that use various methods and cover relevant sub-topics. The following section identifies substantive literature reviews that coincide with increasing research attention on SFR. Consistent with the scoping review's purpose, we identify these to assist researchers or scholars looking to understand the extant literature in this topic area. Table 1 identifies relevant, comprehensive literature review studies or research agendas published since 2016. Of note, multiple reviews address SFR issues related to online or digital-enabled service encounters (e.g., Adil et al. 2022; Manser Payne et al., 2021; Manu & Sreejesh, 2021; Bock et al., 2020).

LIMITATIONS

Scoping reviews as a method have several limitations. First, scoping reviews are not systematic nor comprehensive (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peterson et al., 2017; Whittemore et al., 2014). The list of concepts reviewed in the current review does not provide a comprehensive list of all the relevant terms in the SFR literature. In addition, there is limited commentary and analysis regarding which terms or concepts may be more popular among scholars, relevant to practitioners, or whether a given area within the literature is underdeveloped. Beyond those covered, the authors considered other potential topics as part of the scoping review's original outline. However, the additional concepts and sub-topics were deemed less relevant to address in this scoping review relative to the covered concepts. For example, this review does not catalog customer or employee personality factors such as sociodemographic characteristics, personality traits, or cultural factors. Second, while the concepts defined in this study could be relevant for B2B contexts, this study primarily focused on B2C service recovery contexts. Third, there is a growing interest in how investments in human capital impact service recovery and customer satisfaction (Chauradia et al., 2021, Wright, 2021), but this aspect is not addressed in this review. Future scoping reviews could look to build on the current study by addressing the described limitations as well as other emerging topics and themes.

Table 1.
Recent Literature Reviews in Service Research

Study	Journal	Review Focus
Adil et al. (2022)	<i>Journal of Service Theory and Practice</i>	Online service failures
Baliga et al. (2021)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	B2B service failures and recoveries
Manser Payne et al. (2021)	<i>Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing</i>	Artificial intelligence and servitization
Manu & Sreejesh (2021)	<i>Journal of Strategic Marketing</i>	Online service failure
Kuppelwieser & Klaus (2021)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	B2C and B2B customer experience quality
Bock et al. (2020)	<i>The Journal of Services Marketing</i>	Artificial intelligence service encounters
Fouroudi et al. (2020)	<i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	Service failure
Groth et al. (2019)	<i>Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior</i>	Service interactions and customer service
Koc (2019)	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management</i>	Service recovery in hospitality & tourism
Van Vaerenbergh et al. (2019)	<i>Journal of Service Research</i>	Service recovery journey
Jain et al. (2017)	<i>Journal of Service Theory and Practice</i>	Customer experience
Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher (2016)	<i>Academy of Management Perspectives</i>	Multilevel service recovery

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, SFR is a critical service management concept for firms to understand to ensure the quality of service and performance of their organizations. The scoping review presented in this study adds to the SFR literature by providing a practical tool for marketing scholars and practitioners to quickly traverse and understand the boundaries of the SFR literature. Core concepts reviewed and described in this study include: (1) SFR definitions, (2) service failure typologies, (3) SFR antecedents, (4) service recovery outcomes, (5) service recovery theories, (6) service recovery strategies, and (7) recent comprehensive literature reviews of service recovery. While the SFR literature has reached a level of maturity, there are still many opportunities for scholars to advance the field.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Andrew J. Dahl
Associate Professor of Marketing
College of Business & Economics
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
800 W Main St. Whitewater, WI 53190, USA

E-mail: dahlaj18@uww.edu
Phone: +1-262-472-6950

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