

THE IMPACT OF SERVICE RECOVERY ON CONSUMER LOYALTY WITH A MEDIATING ROLE OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE FAST FOOD INDUSTRY OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The current study's purpose is to recognise the links between the approaches of service recovery, consumer loyalty dimensions (behavioural and attitudinal loyalty), and consumer satisfaction concerning the fast-food restaurant sector in Lahore, Pakistan. The researcher has utilised the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Square) method and considered 450 consumers of fast-food restaurants, of which only 430 consumers are in the inclusion criteria. The current study has provided in-depth insights into how effective service recovery approaches influence consumer loyalty, covering both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty directly. Furthermore, this study examines how service recovery indirectly impacts consumer satisfaction. The influence of service recovery makes it more efficient for fast-food restaurant managers. Service managers, professionals, and academicians are highly interested in how the fast-food restaurant sector counters the challenges of service failure and consumer discontent in the business. The results show that some approaches to service recovery positively impact customer satisfaction from service recovery and customer loyalty in the fast-food outlet.

Keywords: Consumer satisfaction, fast-food restaurant, consumer loyalty, service recovery

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Multinational fast-food chains are aware of consumer loyalty's significance because it is perceived as the most remarkable intangible asset and a necessary element to maintain a competitive position in a marketplace (Yang & Chao, 2017). Chen and Wang (2016) also found that consumer loyalty is a strong strategic element to developing viability on a long-term basis, particularly in the context of B2C. Therefore, recovery of service is the strategic element for the restaurant business in the highly competitive market (Cheung & To, 2016). Service recovery is declared the main issue from the scholarly perspective and indicates that service failure is unavoidable because the nature of services is intangible (Jung & Seock, 2017).

The fast-food business started in Pakistan in 1997 and 1998 when international fast-food chains, such as KFC, Pizza Hut, and McDonald's, entered Pakistan. Consumers in the food sector have a dynamic nature, which is why the fast-food restaurant industry must behave responsively to incorporate consumer needs. If the consumer is not satisfied, service failure occurs, and the service recovery approach can help retain the previous consumer and develop consumer satisfaction from service recovery (Jung & Seock, 2017).

The fast-food sector has been extended and experienced rapid inclination after opening giant global fast-food chains in Pakistan, such as KFC, McDonald's, and Pizza Hut. Local food businesses have become interested in developing fast-food

businesses due to the extreme popularity of fast food among urban families in Pakistan. However, the challenges related to service recovery have been identified by previous studies in the fast-food sector. Ikponmwen (2011) found that an apology, an explanation about the leading reason for service failure, and follow-up significantly positively impact service recovery.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- To examine the impact of service recovery on consumer loyalty in fast-food industry.
- To investigate the impact of service recovery on consumer satisfaction in fast-food industry.
- To inspect the impact of consumer satisfaction on consumer loyalty.
- To examine mediating role of consumer satisfaction between service recovery and consumer loyalty.

1.3 Significance

The findings will assist the fast-food restaurants in Pakistan to implement only those service recovery approaches that are most effective in developing consumer loyalty and examine how consumer satisfaction from service recovery can develop consumer loyalty. The current study is significant, particularly for fast-food businesses in Pakistan, because it describes and examines the link between service recovery and consumer loyalty. Hence, fast-food restaurants can make necessary changes suitable for business success and improve performance and profitability.

Literature Review

2.1 Service Recovery

Service recovery is an action designed to resolve consumer complaints, modify negative or dissatisfied consumer behavior, and retain consumers (Miller, Craighead, & Karwan, 2000). Tax and Brown (2012) affirmed that the effective approaches related to service recovery had a substantial influence on business productivity, profitability, and performance. A research study by Coulter (2009) indicated that timing is the critical element in performing the service recovery and enabling higher consumer satisfaction; the efforts related to service recovery must be performed

quickly without delay. Another study has indicated the significance of compensation as the most powerful recovery approach (Tax & Brown, 2012). Following are the service recovery methods confirmed by previous scholarly studies:

2.1.1 Apology

Liao (2007) found that an apology is an acknowledgement that the service provider is responsible for the consumer's negative experience, and it comprises the expression that shows regret. The study by Park and Park (2016) considered it psychological compensation when a service failure occurs.

2.1.2 Problem Solving Attitude

As stated by Battaglia et al., 2012, problem-solving is all about the capability of a service provider to determine the main reason for service failure, accordingly, make a plan, and perform the appropriate measures.

2.1.3 Explanations to Consumer

Various scholarly studies have argued that explaining to the consumer during service failure implies outlining the main reasons that led to the service failure in a concrete, clarified, and specified manner (Choi & La, 2013). Similarly, Ikponmwen (2011) found that it is important for consumers to know the main reason for service failure. This shows that the service provider is aware of the problems consumers face.

2.1.4 Recovery Speed

Choi and La (2013) confirmed that a quick counter from the service provider for a complaint creates valuable outcomes, while the delayed actions reflect the service provider postponing the required actions. If the service provider responds quickly when service failure occurs, it increases the opportunity for a service provider to develop a relationship with the discontent consumer (Park & Park, 2016).

2.1.4 Providing Compensation

Ennew and Schoefer (2003) study defined compensation as the payment provided when service failure occurred through providing an opportunity for future discounts or free services in future.

2.1.5 Empathy

While Boshoff (1999) has indicated that empathy deals are about dealing with the consumer in a way that reflects a caring and problem-solving attitude and decreases overall inconvenience to the consumer.

2.1.6 Follow-Up

Follow-up is also known as feedback, in which the restaurant service provider provides the necessary information to the consumer along with informing about what the service providers are doing to resolve the issue (Johnston & Mehra, 2002).

2.2 Consumer Satisfaction with Service Recovery

Therefore, as affirmed by Lin (2006), the primary goal of the fast-food restaurant service sector is to satisfy the consumer. Similarly, Chang (2004) has referred to it as the favourable and positive emotions of the consumer regarding the efforts related to service recovery. At the same time, a study by Cheung and To (2016) has referred to it as the consumer attitude and behaviour after the service recovery consumption. Thus, assessing consumer satisfaction is paramount for enabling consumer retention and promoting affirmative word of mouth through communication.

2.3 Consumer Loyalty

Kamran-Disfani et al. (2017) found that consumer loyalty has attracted the significant attention of service practitioners and academic scholars; therefore, most service providers have modified their approaches to attaining consumer loyalty. By reviewing the previous scholarly studies such as Mostafa et al. (2015), Cossio-Silva et al. (2016), Kaur and Soch (2013) and Kamran-Disfani et al. (2017), it has been noted that most of the studies have used two significant dimensions for evaluating and measuring the consumer loyalty: behavioural and attitudinal loyalty.

2.3.1 Behavioural Loyalty

As indicated by Lii and Lee (2012), at the beginning of 1960, the concept of consumer loyalty was studied

from a behavioural perspective by examining the repeated purchasing behaviour of consumers. It also refers to the interest level of the consumer in dealing with the previous service provider and developing positive contact (Kaur & Soch, 2013).

2.3.2 Attitudinal Loyalty

It impacts their ability to engage efficiently in affirmative WOM, as indicated by Kaur and Soch (2013). That is why it implies the affirmative personal behaviour of consumers towards the specific product and services (Kamran-Disfani et al., 2017). Attitudinal loyalty is also defined by Komunda and Osarenkhoe (2012) as the positive impact on the intention to maintain a significant relationship with the service providers.

So, the study hypotheses are;

Hypothesis 1: Service recovery has a significantly positive impact on consumer loyalty (both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty).

Hypothesis 2: Service recovery has a significantly positive impact on consumer satisfaction from service recovery.

Hypothesis 3: Customer satisfaction from service recovery positively influences consumer loyalty (behavioural and attitudinal).

The study by Yaya et al. (2013) highlights how consumer satisfaction from service recovery mediates the link between consumer loyalty and service recovery. At the same time, another study by Komunda and Osarenkhoe (2012) studied the influence of service recovery on repurchasing intention and communication through WOM. Furthermore, it is affirmed that consumer satisfaction from service recovery mediates the positive relationship between consumer loyalty and service recovery, which are responsiveness and contact. The significance of these relationships is found in western literature profoundly. Therefore, it is substantial to explore the influence of service recovery on consumer loyalty with the mediating role of consumer satisfaction in fast-food outlets in Lahore, Pakistan.

Hypothesis 4: The effect of service recovery on consumer loyalty (behavioral and attitudinal) is significantly mediated by consumer satisfaction.

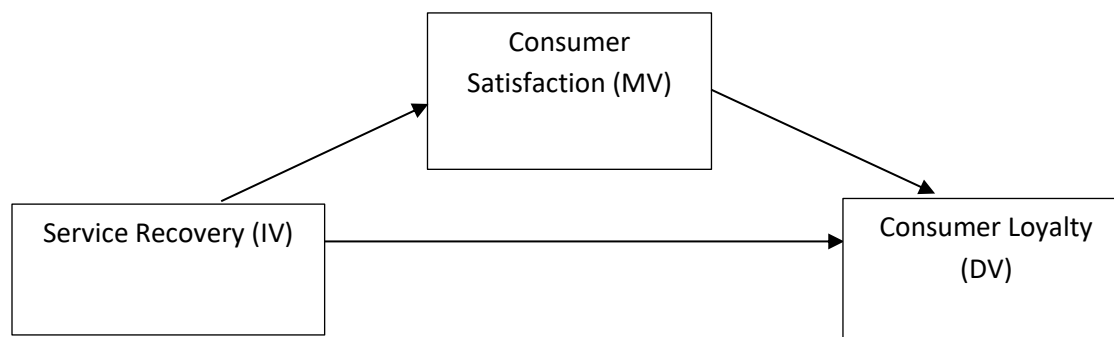


Figure 2.1: Research Framework

The theoretical and interdependent relationship between three major variables is presented in the above framework. Among these variables, service recovery is independent, while consumer loyalty is dependent. However, consumer satisfaction is defined as a mediating variable.

Methodology

The current study investigates the impact of service recovery on consumer loyalty and the mediating role of consumer satisfaction in the fast-food sector of Lahore, Pakistan.

The current study has considered the quantitative research method for analyzing the links and relationships between different variables. The researcher accumulated the data by asking close-ended questions of the research participants.

There are two significant research designs which are deductive and inductive (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). The deductive method examines the theoretical approach in which the researcher develops the hypotheses or creates a theory. Based on this, the researcher formulated the research approach. A similar deductive approach yields the positivism paradigm. The researcher has considered the deductive approach, and the existing researcher verifies the theory. Therefore, the deductive approach is suitable.

The research population consisted of all the consumers who are involved in the consumption of fast-food items. From this population, a sample of 450 consumers, calculated using the formula of sample size using accuracy level, confidence level, and range as calculated in research, has developed, and accessed by adopting the convenience sampling

method (Morgan, V., & Krejcie, 1970). As we know, the convenience sampling method involves the selection of a non-probability sample. Therefore, the 450 sample consumers who were most conveniently available were selected through an online survey. The convenience sampling method was used because it is the most cost and time-effective method compared to other methods (Edgar & Manz, 2017). For examining the effectiveness of service recovery, the researcher of the current study has considered different measures developed by the previous studies, which are comprised of 30 items (Liao, 2007; Del Rio-Lanza et al., 2009; Kim, 2007). The researcher has measured consumer satisfaction from service recovery using a scale of 13 items based on past literature studies by Wen and Geng-qing Chi (2013), Kaur and Soch (2013). The researcher has measured consumer loyalty based on eight items of scale according to previous studies by Kaur and Soch (2013).

The researcher used AMOS and SPSS software (version .25) to analyze the data. According to the nature of the study, AMOS analysis is considered more suitable for identifying the mediating aspect of consumer satisfaction in studying the influence of service recovery on consumer loyalty. It has been previously used by the studies of Gao, Yao, and Li (2022).

Results

Respondents Characteristics

It is necessary to explore the characteristics of the consumers to better determine the impact on customer satisfaction, service failures, customer loyalty, and service recovery.

Table 4.1: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	389	86.4
Female	54	12.0

Table 4.1 shows that regarding the demographics of this study, from a total of 450 respondents, we got 443 responses back, which were eligible for the

analysis. There were 54 females, which is almost 12% of the total, and 389 males, which is approximately 86% of the total sample.

Table 4.2: Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
Less than 20	54	12.0
21-30	205	45.6
31-40	172	38.2
Above 40	15	3.3

Table 4.2 shows that the age, in relation to the demographics of this study, has been divided into four groups to determine the age for analysis: less than 20 years, 21 to 30 years, 31 to 40 years, and above 40 years. The biggest chunk of respondents was aged 21 to 31 years, approximately 205, which

is 54.6% of the total sample. The large portion of this sample is because Pakistan's population is mostly comprised of youth, and this age category tends to eat more fast food than others. Other age groups participating in this survey are 12%, 38% and 3%, respectively.

Table 4.3: Consumer Preferences

Preference	Frequency	Percent
KFC	409	90.9
Pizza hut	8	1.8
Subway	8	1.8
McDonald's	20	4.5

Table 4.3 indicates the preferences of the public of Lahore regarding fast food chain restaurants. We have selected four big fast-food chain restaurants, including KFC, Pizza Hut, subway, and McDonald's, to estimate people's preferences. This table showed

that the highly preferred fast-food restaurant is KFC as 409 respondents from 450, which is 90.9% of the total sample, chose KFC as their preferred restaurant than McDonald's, which is 4.5%, and then Pizza Hut and Subway at 1.8%.

Table 4.4: Reliability Analysis Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Service Recovery Approaches	0.964	7
Attitudinal Loyalty	0.876	6
Behavioural Loyalty	0.854	4
Customer Satisfaction	0.805	5
Overall	0.867	30

Table 4.4 exhibited the reliability of the factors, which explains the test measures of the dependability of a characteristic. The values are similar, as the process is repeated multiple times. Here, the

Cronbach alpha value for the reliability statistics .90 and up is considered excellent. .80 - .89 as good, .70 - .79 as adequate, and below .70 as may have limited applicability (Sim & Wright, 2005).

Table 4.5: Fitness Indices

Index	Values
RMSEA	0.063
P-Value	0.000
df/Chi Square	349.953
CFI	0.89
NFI	0.90
TLI	0.854

The fit indices are intended to demonstrate how much data is close to model fitness. In testing their two models, Martin and Cullen (2006) report RMSEA values of 0.16 and 0.17. These findings are about three times the accepted value of 0.05 and indicate a poor fit. In the current study, results indicate an RMSEA value near 0.063. It means the model is a good fit.

According to Martin and Cullen (2006), TLI values must be one or near 1. Thus, the NFI value is 0.90, which also supports model fitness.

A good-fitting model should have a CFI greater than 0.95. Thus, the CFI values indicate that neither model is a good fit for the data tested. At the same time, the study findings reported a CFI value of 0.89. Hence, it is also demonstrating the good fitness of the model. The major objective of these results was to examine the model's effectiveness with theoretically selected variables. From the fit indices quoted, the sample data support the model with acceptable results of all indices.

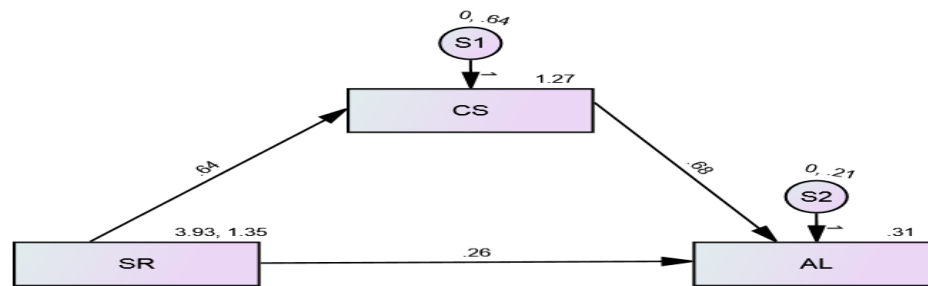


Figure 4.1: Model with mediation

Figure 4.1 provides a detailed overview of the relationship between study variables by indicating an association between study constructs and their indicators. In this way, this figure provides information about both structural and measurement models. The structural model demonstrates the

relationship between study variables, while the measurement model provides information about the relationship between study constructs and their indicators. According to the results, a strong relationship exists in both models.

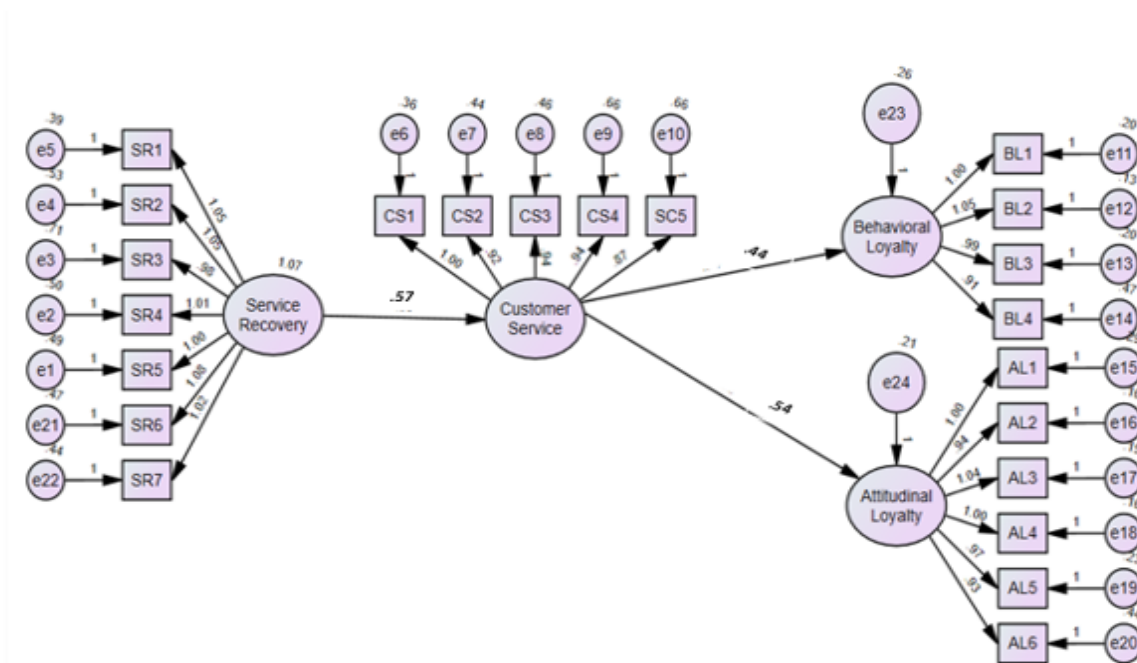


Figure 4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Figure 4.2 shows the presentation of confirmatory factor analysis. This analysis demonstrates that the relationship between observed variables and their

underlying constructs exists appropriately. Hence, it is stated that all the tested hypotheses are achieved adequately.

Table 4.6: Results of Study Hypothesis

Hypothesis			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
CS	<---	SR	.644	.033	19.766	0.002	Supported
AL	<---	SR	.264	.026	10.343	0.001	Supported
AL	<---	CS	.679	.027	25.115	0.003	Supported

The service recovery approach is a significant factor influencing customer satisfaction towards restaurant food, as the table indicated, with a significant p-value of .000, less than $\alpha=0.05$. The beta coefficient of the model indicates that if a one-unit change occurs in the health consciousness factor, then consumer loyalty is changed by .644 units towards organic cosmetics.

Service recovery is another factor that also has a significant influence on attitudinal loyalty towards fast food. The table results show that the p-value is .001, less than $\alpha=0.05$. The estimation of the beta coefficient indicates that if service recovery is changed by 1 unit, customer loyalty will be changed by .264 units.

Similarly, the third hypothesis is supported as the p-value (0.003) demonstrates that customer satisfaction strongly impacts consumer loyalty with a 0.679 beta coefficient. It means that if customer satisfaction is increased by 1 per cent, consumer loyalty is changed by 0.679.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is evident from this study's findings that all service recovery approaches influence attitudinal consumer loyalty, except service recovery speed and apology. These findings are logical because fast-food restaurant managers give an apology to their consumers if the consumer complains about their ineffective service. The two results partially support the findings of the scholarly study by Komunda and Osarenkhoe (2012) and McCollough et al., 2000, which indicates that approaches to service recovery positively impact consumer loyalty.

Subsequently, it has come to the knowledge that the more a fast-food restaurant chain in Pakistan emphasizes resolving the issues of consumers, giving an explanation, responding in an efficient, polite, and

prompt manner, providing compensation, and offering follow-ups, the greater the satisfaction level from the service recovery process.

The given results are matched with the findings of past studies. It is consistent with the scholarly finding that compensation is perceived as an efficient approach that brings consumer satisfaction from service recovery (Kim, 2007). Meanwhile, the findings are matched with another scholarly study according to which compensation, recovery speed, and apology positively influence consumer satisfaction from service recovery (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). The findings also matched another study in which the overall service recovery positively influences consumer satisfaction (Yaya et al., 2013; Komunda & Osarenkhoe, 2012). Further findings are aligned with the study by Mostafa et al. (2015) that recovery speed and problem-solving attitude can positively influence consumer satisfaction, while the empathetic attitude does not influence consumer satisfaction.

The findings advocate the significance of consumer satisfaction from service recovery in impacting both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. The most significant effect is found on attitudinal loyalty.

Fast-food restaurant chains must pay significant attention to accomplish the approaches of service recovery that assist the restaurant managers in obtaining consumer satisfaction from service recovery due to the substantial influence on behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. The greater the consumer satisfaction from service recovery, the more they agreed to discuss and recommend the brand to others. Furthermore, they will be interested in acquiring the company's service again, and they will be more interested in trying the new product offered by the company.

All these outcomes will increase the profitability of the restaurant chain. The past result is aligned with the results of another study according to which consumer satisfaction from service recovery positively impacts consumer loyalty. Various studies have affirmed this by Yaya et al. (2013), Chen and Wang (2016), Liat et al. (2017), Lii and Lee (2012), Cambra-Fierro et al., (2017), and De Matos et al., (2013).

The results of the current study have indicated that consumer satisfaction from service recovery has mediated a significant positive influence in resolving consumer complaints, giving explanations and follow-ups, and providing compensation for both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. It will lead to increased consumer satisfaction from service recovery and, subsequently, attitudinal loyalty increases. A similar effect is found in the mediating role of consumer satisfaction on the link between service recovery on behavioural loyalty. Our results agree with the research study by Yaya et al. (2013), in which consumer satisfaction from service recovery has a positive mediating role between consumer loyalty and service recovery.

5.1 Practical Recommendations

This study offers various managerial points. In the fast-food restaurant business, managers are generally instructed to think similarly to the consumer, show respect and empathy, and achieve the consumer's expectations as it influences consumer retention. Therefore, managers must behave proactively when offering the procedures of service recovery. All these must be systematically developed, and employees must be trained to follow them.

Moreover, fast-food restaurants must understand that a problem-solving attitude is an effective approach to service recovery, and the consumers expect it from restaurant service providers. Accordingly, consumer satisfaction from the service recovery increases when the restaurant resolves the problem quickly. Furthermore, managers must also emphasize follow-ups to improve the image of their fast-food restaurant.

5.2 Direction for Future Research

The current study has offered a significant direction for future research. Firstly, the researcher has elaborated on the service recovery approaches to

investigate the influence of each service recovery approach on loyalty. Seven approaches have been considered, including giving explanations, apologizing, providing compensation, increasing the recovery speed, follow-ups, and showing empathy.

5.3 Theoretical Recommendations

This study indicates that recovery speed and apology do not positively impact consumer loyalty. That is why future researchers can compare more approaches related to service recovery and compare them to each other to examine the impact of each approach on consumer loyalty. For instance, researchers can examine the combined effect of empathy, giving an explanation and apology on consumer loyalty. Meanwhile, future researchers can also compare tangible approaches related to service recovery. For instance, exploring follow-ups, compensations, recovery speed, and problem-solving attitude with the intangible approaches while inspecting whether giving explanations, empathy, and apology impacts consumer loyalty dimensions in a more precise manner. Additionally, future studies can classify service recovery approaches into different levels, which may lead to obtaining different responses from research participants and obtaining improved findings.

The current study has emphasized investigating the impact of service recovery on positive outcomes on consumer loyalty. Therefore, future studies can focus on studying its influence on the adverse consequences, for example, the switching intention of the consumer. Furthermore, this study proposes that future research can be based on the expectation theory, according to which the behavior of value co-creation may provide meaningful insights to examine the link between service recovery justice and consumer behavior outcomes.

The researcher of the current study expects that the approaches related to service recovery can directly impact issues of fast-food restaurant service providers after continuous failures. Therefore, the future study can be based on accessing its influence on the brand image and brand credibility of another sector with similar services, such as five-star hotels or airlines. The current study has not found an impact of empathy and apology on consumer loyalty. Therefore, further research may be emphasized by re-examining a similar study in another sector and

face-to-face interaction. It could help acquire more responses from the consumer.

5.4 Limitations

This study has focused on the discontent and complainant consumers who have faced the service failure issue with their previous experience in the fast-food restaurant chain and ignored the content and non-complainant consumer. Future research can also consider both complainants and non-complainant consumers, and this will provide more meaningful findings.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings have confirmed that the problem-solving attitude, compensation, providing an explanation, follow-ups, and empathy are all approaches that impact both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. Furthermore, the current study has found that consumer satisfaction from service recovery has a mediating role with a link between behavioural and attitudinal loyalty and problem-solving attitude, compensations, providing explanations, follow-ups, and empathy. This indicates that the fast-food restaurant sector in Pakistan must emphasize service recovery approaches to enable consumer satisfaction that yields consumer loyalty.

However, it has been highlighted in the current study that apologies do not have an indirect relationship with consumer satisfaction or a direct relationship with consumer loyalty. Therefore, merely offering an apology is only efficient if it has been performed with the other service recovery approaches. This is due to the link to the significance of fast-food restaurant services in modern society; therefore, consumers assume the common service failure as the extreme failure in the core services of the restaurant sector. This is also matched with the scholarly findings of a previous study, in which the consumer needs an apology and expects a solution to the problem and compensation due to service failure (Levesque & McDougall, 2000).

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