

THE EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SERVICE RECOVERY JUSTICE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY: ROLE OF CUSTOMER AFFECTION AS MODERATOR IN MALAYSIAN TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Customer loyalty has been the goal of service providers including telecommunication companies. They need to make sure that they can retain their customers as long as possible. Service recovery is one of the aspects that should be focused on as telecommunication services tend to receive a lot of complaints from the users. The ability of service providers to handle and solve all the problems appropriately will provide justice to their customers. Previous studies found the link between customer affection and loyalty which indicates its importance to strengthen the emotional tie between customers and companies after service recovery. Therefore, this study is intended to examine the moderating effect of customer affection on the link between service justice and customer loyalty. An analysis of 100 data using multiple regression analysis revealed that procedural justice is significant to influence customer loyalty. This finding indicates that telecommunication companies should pay attention on procedural justice in performing their service recovery. The results also found that customer affection does not significantly moderate the relationship between service justice and customer loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Services are defined as a group of economic activities and not directly related to manufacturing of goods, mining or agriculture. They commonly include the arrangement of human value added activities including the type of work, counsel, managerial skills, intermediation and also training. They vary from different sorts of economic activities in various ways. Services economy can lead to the development of the economies in the country (Ehret & Wirtz, 2010). This statement has been supported by Hussin and Ching (2013), Ilyani Azer, Hamnah Che Hamzah, Siti Aisyah Mohammad and Hasni Abdullah (2016) who found that service sector generates the highest contribution to the Malaysia's economic growth.

Telecommunication industry within the sector of information and communication technology has brought a significant impact to the economic growth. Telecommunication industry is one of the industries which are having high forward and backward linkages (Kauri & Malhotra, 2014). Telecommunication helps in distributing information to all sectors and sections of the society, in this manner facilitating all sectors including agriculture, services, governance and

social sector. The role of telecommunication in contributing to the economic development has been recognized around the world (Kauri & Malhotra, 2014). Major players in telecommunication industry in Malaysia are Maxis, Celcom, Digi, U Mobile, and Red One.

With the rapid development of communication industry in Malaysia, it is progressively normal for telecommunication consumers to face issues with communication and multimedia services in Malaysia. A report from Communication and Multimedia Consumer Forum of Malaysia (CFM) shows that among the top five customer complaints categories received in 2015 include poor service, billing and charging, poor coverage, Short Message Service (SMS) and no coverage. 42% of the total complaints received represented the poor services whereas a total of 29% were related to billing and charging issues. Customer complaint is imperative since it provides marketers with the understanding on what they can utilize in order to improve their services and retain their customers.

Complaints in this context of study are on communication. Customers could directly lodge complaints through phone, fax, letter, online, email or directly walk in to the telecommunication companies (e.g Maxis, Celcom, Digi) in order to report all the unsatisfactory services provided. As a service provider, a telecommunication company must resolve the complaints received in an objective, efficient and fair manner in order to ensure that customers' satisfaction is regained.

Nowadays, in the highly competitive business environment,

many companies strive to offer high quality customer service to ensure success. However, making mistakes in delivering services is inevitable even for the service company that is well-known for its excellent customer service (del Río-Lanza, Vázquez-Casielles & Díaz-Martín, 2009). They can run from experiencing service failure. Some companies make mistakes when matching the expectations of current customers, who are more demanding and less loyal as compared to those in previous years (Nikbin, Ismail, Marimuthu & Armesh, 2012).

Failure to offer good service can create dissatisfaction among customers and as a result they lodge complaints to the service provider. Therefore, service recovery is a moment of truth for the company to retain customers. In previous studies, service failure and recovery were addressed by looking into the influence of perceived justice as independent variable (Mattila, 2006; Mattila & Cranage, 2005; Varela-Neira et al., 2010). However, there is lack of study on the impact of perceived service recovery justice on customer affection and loyalty. Therefore, this research was proposed to address the limitation of the existing studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Loyalty

Retaining current customers is imperative for matured service industries such as telecommunication industry. Thus, customer loyalty is an extremely important issue for mobile service providers. In this research, the focus is on customer loyalty in mobile telecommunication services. Customer loyalty is defined as an attitude of intent to purchase a product or service

(Gamboa & Gonzales, 2014; as cited in Kasemsap, 2017). Customer loyalty is an essential factor in business survival (Chen, 2016). It is described as a customer's repeat purchase behaviour due to emotional commitment or expression of a favourable attitude towards the service provider (McAlexander, Kim, & Roberts, 2003). Customer loyalty provides a desirable atmosphere for firms because it reduces marketing costs, raises referrals, and promotes price premiums (Şimşek & Tekeli, 2015). Customer loyalty can be regarded as long-term and the short-term loyalty (Jones & Sasser, 1995). Customers with long-term loyalty do not easily switch to other service providers, while customers with short-term loyalty defect more easily when offered a perceived better alternative. It is beneficial for service providers to establish a relationship with customers for a long term advantage.

Previous research has provided the link between customer affection and loyalty. Fournier (1998) argued that customers' emotional tie with a brand helps them remain loyal to the brand. Park et al. (2006) also argued that individuals are likely to be loyal to their partners when they are emotionally attached to while resisting competing alternatives.

Customer Affection

Customer affection is defined as a disposition or a specific state of mind that is associated with a feeling of 'liking' or a type of love. Customer affection is distinct from customers' emotional responses in which customer affection is engendered and further strengthened or weakened by customers' emotional reactions in response to service recovery efforts (Yim et al., 2008). Furthermore,

customer affection serves as a relationship-sustaining 'emotional bond' or 'affectionate tie' between a customer and a firm (Young, 2006), which may be formed through a series of favourable experiences and interactions (Yim et al., 2008).

Perceived Service Recovery Justice

Service recovery is the process for resolving failure in order to maintain the perception of quality. It involves the actions taken by the service providers to address customer complaints regarding a perceived service failure (Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2009). Thus, service recovery is a critical step for transforming dissatisfied customers into satisfied ones and maintaining positive relationships with them (Ha & Jang, 2009). Hence, service recovery is crucial for business to re-establish and/or maintain positive relationships with their customers.

Perceived justice is one of the efforts that can help in service recovery. There are three dimensions of justice which are distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Blodgett, Hill & Tax, 1997; Smith, Bolton & Wagner, 1999; Tax & Brown, 1998). The first factor is distributive justice. Distributive justice concerns perceived fairness of the specific outcomes of the firm recovery effort such as discounts, refund and store credits (Choi & Choi, 2014); the allocation of costs and benefits in achieving equitable exchange relationships (Kim et al., 2009); the assignment of tangible resources by the firm to rectify and compensate for a service failure (del Rio-Lanza et al., 2009); perceived fairness of actual and tangible outcomes compared to inputs (Ha & Jang, 2009); and the allocation of costs and benefits in achieving

equitable exchange relationships (Karatepe, 2006).

The second factor is procedural justice. Several authors have defined procedural justice specifically based on their studies. According to Choi and Choi (2014) procedural justice is related to the perceived fairness of the procedures by which a service recovery is undertaken and the methods the firm uses to deal with the problems arising during service delivery in aspects such as accessibility, timing/speed, process control, delay and flexibility to adapt to the consumer's recovery needs. The third factor is interactional justice that refers to the manners by which customers are treated, which includes elements such as courtesy, politeness, and efforts in dealing with customers by service personnel during the service recovery process. It also means that the fairness of the interpersonal treatment people receive during the enactment of procedures (Karatepe, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used correlation research design in order to examine the relationship among the variables of interest. A total of 100 respondents were selected for the study based on the suggested number of samples (Salkind, 1977). Convenience sampling was used in order to select the samples for the study. Out of 100 sets of questionnaire was distributed among telecommunication consumers and 100 sets of questionnaire were returned, showed the response rate of 100%.

Research Instrument

Perceived service recovery justice has 3 dimensions; distributive justice, interactional justice and procedural justice. It was measured using a questionnaire developed by Smith et al., (1999) and Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) that contained 9 items and each of the dimension contained 3 items, which were measured on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. Customer loyalty was measured using a questionnaire developed by Yim et al. (2008) that consists of 3 items. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. Customer affection was measured using a questionnaire developed by Thomson et al.,(2005) and Yim et al. (2008). The measurement consists of 3 items and the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree.

Data Analysis

Data for the study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive, multiple hierarchical regression and reliability analysis were used to analyze the data to answer the research questions pertaining to the customer affection on the relationship between perceived service recovery and customer loyalty among telecommunication services consumers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Variable	Description	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	38	38
	Female	62	62
Age	18 – 30 years old	86	86.0
	31 – 40 years old	7	7.0
	41 – 50 years old	3	3.0
	51 years old and above	4	4.0
Mobile telecommunication	Maxis	30	30.0
	Celcom	50	50.0
	Digi	9	9.0
	U-Mobile	9	9.0
	Others	2	2.0
Years of using the service	< 1 years	11	11.0
	1 – 2 years	8	8.0
	2 – 3 years	10	10.0
	3 – 5 years	13	13.0
	> 5 years	58	58.0

The total number of respondents participating in this study is 100, representing different telecommunication companies in Malaysia. The number of female respondents is almost double than male respondents (38 male respondents or 38%; 62 female respondents or 62%). A total of 86 respondents aged between 18 to 30 years old (86%) while 4 respondents or 4% aged between 31 to 40 years old. Majority of respondents chose

Celcom as their main mobile telecommunication service with 50 respondents or 50%, followed by Maxis (30 respondents or 30%). An equal number of respondents chose Digi and U-Mobile with 9 respondents or 9% and others (2 respondents or 2%). Regarding the duration of using the service, most respondents had been using the service more than 5 years (58 respondents or 58%) and only 8 respondents or 8% had been using the service for less than 1 year.

Table 2: The Results of Factor Analysis of the Independent Variables

	Component		
	1	2	3
IJ8	.860		
IJ9	.839		
IJ10	.693		
PJ12		.794	
PJ11		.784	
PJ13		.726	
DJ6			.832
DJ5			.798
DJ7			.693
% variance explained (74.292%)	25.942	24.739	23.611
MSA			.779-.904
KMO			.849
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square	440.953
		Df	36
		Sig.	.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

A principle component factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed to examine the dimensionality of service justice. The results indicate the emergence of a three factor structure, comprising distributive justice, interactional justice and procedural justice. This three factor structure explains 74.29% of the variance in the model with MSA ranging from .779 to .904. The KMO value of .849 indicates that the correlation matrix is sufficient for factor

analysis to be conducted. The first factor consists of three items with loadings ranged from .693 to .860. This factor is identified as Interactional Justice. The second factor also comprises three items with loadings in the range from .726 to .794. This factor is named as Procedural Justice. The last component consists of three items with loadings ranging from .693 to .832. This factor is identified as Distributive Justice.

Table 3: The Results of Factor Analysis of the Moderating Variables

		Component
		1
I love the company.		.954
Generally speaking, I feel affectionate toward the company.		.946
I feel friendly with the company.		.922
% variance explained		88.543
MSA		.709-.840
KMO		.755
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	255.676
	Df	3
	Sig.	.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

A principle component factor analysis with Varimax rotation was also performed for the moderating variable; customer affection. Three items hold together to produce one component as originally conceptualized with factor loadings in the range of .922 to .954. The results indicate the existence of this component explaining 88.54% of the

variance that indicates the goodness of the instrument to measure customer affection. The MSA values ranged from .709 to .840 show the adequacy of sampling for each item. The KMO value of .755 indicates the suitability of correlation matrix of items. The factor was named customer affection as originally proposed.

Table 4: The Results of Factor Analysis of the Dependent Variables

		Component
		1
I will continue to use the company services in the future.		.885
I will continue to use the company services even if other alternatives are available.		.858
When choosing the same product category, I considered the company as my first choice.		.807
% variance explained		72.385
MSA		.651-.772
KMO		.693
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	100.805
	Df	3
	Sig.	.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

A principle component factor analysis was also performed for items measuring customer loyalty. The results indicate the existence of a construct explaining 72.39% of the variance with MSA ranging from .651

to .772. The KMO value of .693 indicates the sufficient correlation matrix of items. The component consists of three items with loadings ranged from .807 to .885, representing customer loyalty.

Table 5: The Results of Reliability Analysis

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Distributive Justice	3	.812
Interactional Justice	3	.827
Procedural Justice	3	.798
Customer Affection	3	.935
Customer Loyalty	3	.808

Reliability analysis was performed to examine the consistency of items in measuring the intended variables. All variables have high reliability with Cronbach's alphas in the

range of .798 for procedural justice and .935 for customer affection.

Table 6: The Results of Correlation Analysis

No	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Distributive Justice	3.32	.67	(.812)				
2	Interactional Justice	3.54	.70	.543**	(.827)			
3	Procedural Justice	3.43	.65	.605**	.594**	(.798)		
4	Customer Affection	3.14	.91	.425**	.374**	.558**	(.935)	
5	Customer Loyalty	3.41	.83	.407**	.268**	.468**	.542**	(.808)

Notes: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed); N=100; Cronbach's alphas in the parentheses along the diagonal

The results of correlation analysis indicate that there is a significant relationship among factors

of justice, indicating convergent validity. The highest correlation is between procedural justice and

distributive justice ($r=.605$) and the lowest correlation is between interactional justice and distributive justice ($r=.543$). The relationship between independent variable and dependent variable is also observed. The highest correlation is between procedural justice and customer loyalty ($r=.468$) and the lowest correlation is between interactional justice and customer loyalty($r=.268$). These findings indicate potential relationship between justice and customer loyalty.

The results also show that the relationship between the moderating variable and other variables is also significant with the highest correlation between procedural justice and customer affection ($r=.558$) and the lowest correlation between interactional justice and customer affection ($r=.374$). The findings indicate the potential moderating effect of customer affection on the studied relationships.

Table 7: The Results of the Regression Analysis on the Moderating Effect of Customer Affection on Service Justice and Customer Loyalty

	Customer Loyalty		
	M1	M2	M3
<u>Independent Variables</u>			
Distributive Justice	.218	.166	.242
Interactional Justice	-.078	-.089	-.219
Procedural Justice	.383**	.203	.170
<u>Moderator</u>			
Customer Affection		.391**	.242
<u>Interaction Terms</u>			
DJ*CA			-.153
IJ*CA			.280
PJ*CA			.077
R	.497	.592	.593
R ²	.247	.351	.352
Adjusted R ²	.224	.323	.303
F Change	10.508	15.139	.057
Sig. F Change	.000	.000	.982
Durbin Watson			1.930

Notes: ** significant at the 0.01 level; * significant at the 0.05 level

Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of different types of justice on customer loyalty and the moderating effect of customer affection on the main relationships. M1 indicates a direct influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

M2 shows the changes in beta values when the moderator is included and M3 presents the findings of the moderating effects of a moderator on the relationship concerned through the changes in beta values when interaction terms are included in the regression model.

The regression model explains the percentage of variance explained in the dependent variable, which is customer loyalty. Model one explained 24.7 percent of the variance. Model two explained 35.1 percent of variance with 10.4 percent of increment and model three explained 35.2 percent of the variance with 0.1 percent increment in the total variance explained. The Durbin Watson value of 1.930 denotes the absence of autocorrelation in the regression model.

Examining the influence of individual independent variables on the dependent variable, it was found that procedural justice is the only significant predictor of customer loyalty ($\beta = .383$, $p < .01$). This is supported by the findings of del Río-Lanza et al.'s (2009) study that procedural justice shows the strongest relative influence on satisfaction, as well as being the only dimension affecting the emotions. Nikbin et al. (2012) found that the influence of procedural justices on switching intentions was stronger than distributive and informational justices. Meanwhile, the present study also found that interactional justice and distributive justice are not significant to influence customer loyalty. Moreover, interactional justice has negative influence on customer loyalty.

Pertaining to the influence of the moderator on the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, the beta values in M2 and M3 are referred to. In M2, customer affection was found to significantly affect loyalty. Therefore, customer affection should be regarded as one of the independent variables when assessing customer loyalty in future studies. In M3, the inclusion of the interaction terms did not produce

any significant effect. Therefore, customer affection does not moderate the relationship between justice and customer. La and Choi (2012) stated that after the customers experienced service failure and recovery, customer affection has a greater influence on customer trust but less in loyalty intention, whereas customer trust becomes more influential in loyalty intention in comparison to the time prior to a service failure.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, this study was conducted to examine the influence of perceived service recovery justice on customer loyalty, looking at the role of customer affection as a moderator in the Malaysian telecommunication industry. Moreover, there are three dimensions under justice which are distributive justice, interactional justice and procedural justice. The result shows that procedural justice is the significant factor that contributes to customer loyalty. Besides, the moderating variable which is customer affection does not significantly influence the link between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

This study discovered that procedural justice is the most significant factor that contributes to customer loyalty. Therefore, it is very important for the organization to increase and retain the customer loyalty after the service failure by focusing on procedural justice. Malaysian telecommunication companies such as Maxis, Celcom, Digi, U-mobile and others need to ensure that they have a fair policy and procedures that facilitate the service recovery effort by focusing on the win-win situation for both parties.

They have to make sure that the processes, procedures, and the policies are both fair for the customers and also for the organization. The manager's needs to make sure that they empower their employees in dealing with customers so that they will feel part of an organization's decision making and also the employees are able to make a quick resolution during the service failure. The organization needs to train the employees on how to deal with their customers, so that they will be able to handle dissatisfied customers effectively.

Suggestion for future research

From the findings, these are some of the recommendations for future studies. Future researchers may consider adding other dimensions which can contribute to customer loyalty other than procedural justice, interactional justice and distributive justice. Not only that, they can also used another variable as a moderator such as switching costs in order to gain a better result. Switching costs are expected to affect customer defection since customers have to remain with the service providers regardless their feelings towards the companies. Moreover, the number of respondents using different telecommunication service providers also needs to be balanced up in order to have equal representatives for the study.

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