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Master Thesis

***Blame, Response and Recovery Paradox:
A Multi-Scenario Investigation of Service
Recovery***

From a hotel manager's perspective

by

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ABSTRACT

Service failures are inevitable.

Therefore, companies must use effective complaint management to save customer relationships. This paper develops a new model in the service recovery literature based on a multi-scenario investigation. Specifically, the paper examines how the service recovery paradox (SRP), blame attribution, and employee response quality affect customers' behavioral and emotional responses in a hotel context. This study seeks to (1) understand how different factors shape customers' reactions to service failure, and (2) provide practical guidance for both managers and researchers.

Three major findings are provided based on a survey of mostly female students respondents. *First*, results showed that a service failure always inflicts severe damage and a true SRP does not occur, as post-failure scores never statistically exceed a no-failure situation. *Second*, while an external cause (e.g., weather) reduces the initial negative impact, it does not change how fair customers expect service providers to be. *Third*, employee responses are a powerful independent factor, as a good response drastically outperforms a bad one in terms of customer satisfaction, Word-Of-Mouth (WOM) and repurchase intentions, while no interaction damages customers' evaluations just as much as a bad one.

Theoretically, this research expands the double deviation literature by showing that skipping direct complaints is a severe interaction failure. Managerially, it highlights that unvoiced complaints are highly damaging and that managers should adapt their recovery strategies depending on who is to blame.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

i.e.	<i>in other words</i>
SRP	Service Recovery Paradox
WOM	Word-of-mouth
SFR	Service Failure and Recovery
e.g.	<i>for example</i>
CLT	Central Limit Theorem
TVE	Total Variance Expected
AI	Artificial Intelligence

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Service failures are inevitable even in the best run service organizations” (Mount, 2012, p. 1). Many authors support this view arguing that service failures are unavoidable (Abdo et al., 2025; Edström et al., 2022; Harrison-Walker, 2019; Lunardo et al., 2023; Michel & Meuter, 2008; Ok et al. 2006). Firms therefore need effective complaint management systems to ensure successful recovery when a failure occurs or when a customer submits a complaint (Lee et al., 2024; Oflaç et al., 2021; Tax et al., 1998). Service recovery, defined as the effort a company makes to rectify a service failure perceived by customers (Maxham, 2001), is of crucial importance for managers. Interestingly, some authors found that companies should encourage customers to complain rather than deny their failures, even though many managers think otherwise (Lee et al., 2024; Oflaç et al., 2021). When addressed directly to companies, complaints will turn into failure-related data that will help comprehend which recovery strategy is the best one given a failure scenario. However, the best recovery strategy for one company is not necessarily the best for another. Authors argue in favor of a continuous learning curve on this topic as it evolves with time but also considerably changes between industries (De Matos et al., 2009; Harrison-Walker, 2019). For these reasons, it is a topic worth investigating to develop even more guidelines.

As mentioned, recovery-related elements are crucial for managers to understand. Organizational learning (i.e., “establish procedures that facilitate easy and prompt complaint handling” (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011, p. 38)) is one of them. Though, while being of big help for them, managers struggle :

- Knowing how to effectively deliver service recovery as customers may have different perceptions as to what the right way is (Tax et al., 1998)
- Knowing how much compensation is needed (Edström et al., 2022)
- Understanding reasons why a customer would complain even after they delivered what they would call a great recovery (McCollough, 2000)
- Recognizing the absence of a complaint as an issue in their management that masks potential customer switching (De Matos et al., 2009)
- Seeing beyond short-term economic benefits such as the impact of WOM (Swanson & Kelley, 2001)
- Understanding the consequences of dissatisfied customers on their future behavior (Magnini et al., 2007)

This research focuses on three major elements of the literature – the service recovery paradox (SRP), the blame attribution and the employee response – that

affect the service recovery in order to give managerial indications in the context of a hotel. The research question will be as follows:

To what extent do service recovery paradox, blame attribution and employee response influence the effects of service recovery on customer satisfaction and post-experience behavioral intentions?

In order to respond to this main research question, the following sub-questions need to be addressed:

1. Does SRP apply in this specific hospitality context? Are there any significant differences in customers' post-experience behavioral intentions?
2. How does blame attribution impact the customer's reaction toward service failures? Does blame attribution serve as a justification mechanism for customers' negative or positive responses to service failures?
3. To what degree does the quality of employee recovery response impact customer's post-experience behavioral intentions?
4.
 - a. Does the blame attribution affect the customer evaluation of the employee recovery response?
 - b. To what extent do blame attribution and employee recovery response influence the service recovery paradox?

When dealing with service recovery, many elements are to be taken into account to implement an effective strategy such as the *service recovery paradox* (Magnini et al. 2007; McCollough, 2000; Smith & Bolton, 1998) (i.e., a greater customer satisfaction after a successful recovery than before (Pina E Cunha et al., 2009)), the *perception of justice* in the recovery process (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011; Oflaç et al., 2021), the *double deviation effect*, which is the notion of two failures in a row (Mount, 2012; Ok et al., 2006), the *industry sector* (De Matos et al., 2009; Harrison-Walker, 2019), the *different types of service agents* such as robots versus humans (Leo & Huh, 2020; Yu et al., 2024) and many others. Service recovery is therefore a topic dependent on the situation, as well as being in constant evolution with its time, making it worthwhile to analyze through a new multi-scenario investigation. In the literature, many recommendations for future research on the concept of service recovery have been addressed such as:

- Revalidating and replicating studies in different contexts in order to ensure generalizability (Edström et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Magnini et al., 2007).

- Extending the field by adding new dimensions (Gao et al., 2022; Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2019) or testing different roles for variables (Lee et al., 2024).
- Exploring in more detail psychological drivers impacting customer reactions after a failure occurred, such as emotions (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011) or attributions varying across different service industries (McCollough, 2000; Oflaç et al., 2021).
- Deepening the understanding of interactions and behaviors between customers and employees (Collier et al., 2018; Tax et al., 1998) as well as customers and robots (Yu et al., 2024).
- And, providing, yet more, practical tools and knowledge to aid future research in the field (Harrison-Walker, 2019).

This study tries to provide more detailed knowledge on the topic by taking into account recommendations from the literature and creating a new model and testing three major factors of the service recovery field from the manager's perspective.

Because this study is based on multiple extensive factors, many paths and theories are investigated but the primary focus is on the three following theories. Firstly, *the attribution theory* will be partially used. It is a categorization system by Weiner (1980), which looks into three dimensions of attribution, locus of causality, stability and controllability, and has been widely utilized by authors in the service recovery literature (Chang et al., 2015; McCollough, 2000; Oflaç et al., 2021; Smith & Bolton, 1998). Secondly, only two of the three dimensions of *the perceived justice theory* will be discussed. In 1989, Goodwin and Ross used this theory, which considers distributive, procedural and interactional justice, to explain customers' attitudes and behaviors toward the service provider. It has then been widely used by many scholars such as Gelbrich and Roschk (2011), McCollough (2000), Lim et al. (2025) and Tax et al. (1998). Finally, the existence of *the service recovery paradox* will be examined, in line with previous research by many authors (Cheng et al., 2015; Lim et al., 2025; Ok et al., 2006; Pina E Cunha et al., 2009). Being one of the most controversial concepts in the service recovery literature, it will be tested in the particular context of this study. All of these theories will be defined in the following chapters.

Grégoire and Mattila wrote in 2021 that though “service failure and recovery (SFR) is a prolific subfield of service science [...] the field is at a crossroads in terms of growth and relevance” (p. 323). By measuring the impact of three factors at the same time, this research should address these crossroads, providing theoretical insights and a great number of managerial implications in terms of customer emotional responses, behavioral intentions and attitudinal outcomes.

Theoretical contributions. While past research usually examined variables alone, Gao et al. (2022) recommended a broader approach in terms of dimensions being examined. This study will therefore be based on a holistic model on service failure recovery that simultaneously investigates the interaction between attribution, SRP and the type of responses given by employees. This will allow a more realistic perspective as there are usually more than one factor to take into account in real life. Following recommendations of McCollough (2000) and Leo and Huh (2020), this study includes the attribution theory to enrich the model. By focusing on the locus of attribution (Abdo et al., 2025) in hospitality incidents, it will fill some empirical gaps. Emphasizing the different types of explanations provided by frontline employees will also contribute greatly to the literature (Tax et al., 1998). Examining recovery evaluation from both customers and employees can lead to perceptual misalignment in what constitutes the *right* interactional response (Collier et al., 2018). Finally, by integrating SRP in this model, it should bring new empirical evidence regarding the conditions under which it is accepted or rejected in the context of a holistic model, as recommended by De Matos (2007) in the hospitality industry.

Managerial contributions. “Understanding customer’s perspectives on the source of failures and the effectiveness of recovery efforts provides valuable insights for continuous improvement” (Abdo et al., 2025, p. 810). Indeed, customer complaints should be seen as failure-related data that feed managers guidelines during service failure recoveries (Oflač et al., 2021), such as allocating resources appropriately to avoid overcompensations (Edström et al., 2022). This study aims to expand the knowledge of customers’ reactions after a service failure and recovery. These insights should help minimize negative WOM and prevent customers from switching to competitors among other things (Harrison-Walker, 2019; Michel & Meuter, 2008; Soares et al., 2017).

This study is organized as follows. The next chapter presents a summary of the literature review on service failure and recovery including its relevance and definitions of associated key concepts. Then, the conceptual model is developed with

proposed relationships and hypotheses. The study methodology, with the description of the entire survey, and the study results, with analyses, follows right after. The discussion chapter then summarizes, displays the results and generates theoretical and managerial contributions. Finally, the conclusion addresses the limits and recommendations for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions

Before diving into the core analysis of this study, clarifying the terminology of associated notions is crucial as many definitions exist on the same notions.

Service Failure and Service Recovery

First of all, to understand the mechanics of service resolution, “it is essential to differentiate between service recovery and service failure” (Gao et al., 2022, p. 3).

Service failure happens when a firm does not meet a customer’s standard. Harrison-Walker (2019, p. 379) defines it as a provided service that is “less than adequate or fails to live up to the customer’s expectations”. This notion of expectations is closely linked to the **disconfirmation framework**, where a customer compares what they expected with what they actually received (McCollough et al., 2000). From the customer’s perspective, service failures can refer to any problems, whether they are real or simply perceived, occurring during the service such as a flight delay (Maxham, 2001).

Service failures do not always originate from the company itself. Abdo et al. (2025) remind us that customers themselves can be the cause by misusing or breaking rules, their experience will be affected without any employees stepping in. Customers can also respond negatively to a perfectly good service if their **expectations** are unrealistic (Abdo et al., 2025). Therefore, companies should better understand these expectations which are “a key determinant of consumer responses to service failures” (Köcher et al., 2025, p. 11). If customers have biased expectations, recovering from the service failure will be much harder for the firm to manage.

As soon as a failure occurs, companies step in to fix it. This phase, called **service recovery**, is defined as “attempts by firms to rectify some consumer-perceived service failure (e.g., faulty service, discourteous employees, etc.)” (Maxham, 2001, p. 11). It is important to note that fixing a mistake is not the same as providing good service in the first place. As Lee et al. (2024, p. 1588) highlight, “understanding the difference between service quality and service recovery quality is critical when making service recovery design decisions.” Standard service quality is about doing things right the first time, while recovery quality is about rectifying things that went wrong. Therefore, the first idea to understand when discussing service recovery is that “managers and employees must strive for a reliable, error-free service that is very satisfying” (Michel & Meuter, 2008, p. 452).

In the academic literature, **service failure and recovery (SFR)** research is divided into two main areas as explained by Grégoire and Mattila (2021). Quantitative SFR focuses on hard data from social media or company databases for example, whereas behavioral SFR focuses on human psychology and emotions. Though the authors argue that the latter is at the basis of the field, both should be included in research.

In the past few years, SFR has expanded its specific frameworks and research perspectives. For example, recovery is no longer seen as just a single event but more as a timeline. Van Vaerenbergh et al. (2019) conceptualized the service recovery journey (SJR) composed of pre-recovery, recovery and post-recovery phases. This means that firms must manage the customer's experience before, during and long after the actual recovery has been performed.

“The goal of recovery is to restore the customer’s satisfaction with the provider such that the customer will not engage in negative WOM and will want to renew his/her relationship with the company” (Harrison-Walker, 2019, p. 383). To achieve this, firms rely on **organizational responses** (i.e., “the initial reactions by a company in response to a complaint” (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011, p. 26)), which usually includes tools such as apologies or financial compensations (Harrison-Walker, 2019; Tax et al., 1998).

These responses can be directly evaluated through the view of **justice theory** (Goodwin & Ross, 1989), which distinguishes between distributive justice (i.e., fairness of tangible compensation), procedural justice (i.e., fairness of the recovery procedures) and interactional justice (i.e., fairness of recovery interactions).

Key dimensions of service failure and recovery

Though, companies must understand that the proper service recovery strategy might not be the most adequate one depending on the customer. Indeed, services are personalized for each individual (Abdo et al., 2025) with their own expectations, thus it is possible that the service failure strategy utilized does not translate into the anticipated positive result (Harrison-Walker, 2019), which is why an “effective service recovery requires that the “right” recovery strategies be implemented” (Harrison-Walker, 2019, p. 377).

When implementing service recovery strategies, there are failure-related aspects that need to be clarified. Firstly, Gao et al. (2022) argue in favor of three distinct notions to categorize service failures : core service failures (i.e., failing to deliver the basic service required), interactional service failures (i.e., rude behaviors or negative attitudes from employees) and process service failures (i.e., delivery issues, such as

long waiting times and delays). Secondly, besides the type of failure in itself, problems can be classified on the basis of their severity also called failure magnitude (De Matos et al., 2007; Swanson & Hsu, 2011). It is important to consider severity when implementing service recovery strategies as they are based on the subjective perception of customers and when badly managed, it could lead to customers rejecting any excuses and fully blaming the company for the problem (Chang et al., 2015).

Attribution Theory

To comprehend how customers evaluate failure situations, literature relies on behavioral SFR such as the **attribution theory**. Attribution occurs when a product's performance fails to match a customer's expectations, leading them to question the locus (i.e., whether the cause is internal or external), stability (i.e., whether the cause is permanent or temporary), and controllability (i.e., whether the service provider could have prevented it) of the outcome (Abdo et al., 2025; Weiner, 2000). Weiner (2000) also reminds that customers are more likely to look for causal locus when a failure occurs. Consequently, attribution theory serves as "a cornerstone in understanding how customers perceive and interpret the reasons behind service failures and recovery attempts" (Mir et al., 2023, p. 2079).

Adopted by many authors to explain customers' reactions to company responses (Abdo et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2024; Leo & Huh, 2020; McCollough, 2000; Nikbin et al., 2012), the impact of attribution is highly valuable when choosing a recovery strategy : companies should adapt their organizational responses based on who is at fault. Indeed, who the customer holds responsible influences their perception of fairness, their satisfaction as well as their future behavior (Nikbin et al., 2012). Specifically, if the failure is entirely the firm's fault, customers become skeptical of any apologies offered and view recovery efforts suspiciously, which makes the recovery process less effective (Abdo et al., 2025). Therefore, to manage these customer's attitudinal and emotional responses, the employee interaction is crucial as it might shape these attributions.

Disconfirmation Framework

As previously mentioned, customer expectations are at the basis of understanding how people judge service failures and service recovery. To evaluate these situations, researchers have relied on the **disconfirmation framework** (Gao et al., 2022; Köcher et al., 2025; McCollough et al., 2000; Michel & Meuter, 2008; Smith and Bolton, 1998). Disconfirmation is the gap between what is expected by customers

and what is actually performed by the firm, as perceived by the customer (Magnini et al., 2007).

The disconfirmation framework is directly linked to the customer's satisfaction, which depends on two separate stages in a service failure situation (Köcher et al., 2025) : Initial disconfirmation (i.e., "the gap between customers' expectations that a service might fail (failure expectations) and actual service performance" (Köcher et al., 2025, p. 2)) and recovery disconfirmation (i.e., the gap between what customers expect the service provider to do after a failure (recovery expectations)" (Köcher et al., 2025, p. 2)). Depending on how these gaps are perceived, the customer's ultimate reaction will be either positive or negative.

According to disconfirmation theory, satisfaction happens when a customer has an experience that is better than what they expected (Michel & Meuter, 2008). This comparison leads to two opposite results:

- *Positive disconfirmation*

This occurs when the company's recovery performance is higher than what the customer expected (Gao et al., 2022). If this positive gap is wide enough, it can create a **service recovery paradox**, where the customer ends up more satisfied than if no failure occurred at all (Gao et al., 2022).

- *Negative disconfirmation*

On the other hand, if the recovery performance is below the customer's expectations and flawed, it can create a **double negative effect** (McCollough et al., 2000; Smith & Bolton, 1998).

"In both positive and negative recovery outcomes, the recovery can take on greater importance than the original service failure" (Mount, 2012, p. 3).

On the one hand, performing an exceptional recovery can lead to highly positive outcomes, primarily by triggering the Service Recovery Paradox (SRP).

The service recovery paradox

According to the disconfirmation framework, the direction of the gap dictates the customer's emotional outcome: "the more negative the disconfirmation, the greater the dissatisfaction, whereas the more positive the disconfirmation, the greater the satisfaction" (McCollough et al., 2000, p. 122). Therefore, these positive and negative evaluations of service recovery determine customers' **post-recovery satisfaction**.

When these recovery efforts are exceptional, they trigger the **Service Recovery Paradox** (SRP). This phenomenon happens in the case of a highly effective recovery performance, when the firm does not just fix the mistake but raises the post-recovery satisfaction above the original baseline and, thus, surpasses an error-free service (Edström et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2022; Magnini et al., 2007).

On the other hand, failing to deliver an adequate recovery, whether it is flawed or inexistent, introduces severe strategic risks, turning a potential paradox into a double deviation effect.

The double deviation effect

“Providing service recovery not only presents an opportunity but also poses a risk” (Edström et al., 2022, p. 2). When a company fails to meet a customer’s initial expectations, restoring that satisfaction through an effective recovery is vital to keep the customer relationship (Ok et al., 2006). While customers accept that mistakes happen, they are nonetheless sensitive to the manner those mistakes are handled (De Matos et al., 2007). Consequently, firms should not over-promise by setting the customer expectations too high because it could backfire: if the recovery is weak, the customer’s disappointment will be increased and if it is strong, it may not generate more satisfaction as the customer already expects a perfect outcome (Köcher et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of **double deviation** occurs when an initial service failure is followed by a failed service recovery (Mount, 2012), thus leaving “the customer with two dissatisfying experiences” (Edström et al., 2022, p. 2). This consecutive combination will negatively affect the customer’s overall satisfaction, his intent to return as well as his WOM behavior (De Matos et al., 2007; Gao et al., 2022; Mount, 2012).

This double incident can also trigger a **halo effect**, turning the bad start into a negative experience for the rest of the customer’s journey (Mount, 2012). Because the service provider failed him twice, the customer loses trust and becomes highly sensitive to everything. As a result, he will expect mistakes and notice other problems throughout the rest of his service experience (Mount, 2012).

This aligns strongly with the critical view of McCollough et al. (2000) who argue that because customers never actively seek dissatisfaction, any service failure will lead to lower satisfaction than a no-failure condition, even if successfully resolved. When the recovery fails, this negative disconfirmation is multiplied, thus proving that service failures are more likely to damage a relationship than to trigger a positive paradox.

2.2. Relevance of the topic

Service recovery is an essential topic since failures are inevitable and depend on many factors. *Managerially*, it allows the firm to implement strategies to recover from the failure while keeping customers satisfied. *Theoretically*, it helps understanding how different types of failures affect customers.

2.2.1 Relevance for managers

Retaining customers is far cheaper than acquiring new ones. Every manager knows this fundamental truth: that keeping customers happy is the most profitable strategy. However, service failures cause immediate negative emotions to customers which threaten long-term relationships (Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2019). Firms must therefore implement accommodative solutions to improve their brand reputation and avoid negative WOM (Chang et al., 2015).

Profit & Image : *Why does service recovery matter ?*

Since mistakes are unavoidable, no firm can provide a perfect service every time (Ok et al., 2006). In today's competitive market, post-failure strategies are crucial to keep customers satisfied and loyal (Mir et al., 2023). Because customer retention is highly profitable and keeps overall costs down (Maxham, 2001), a clear plan to fix mistakes early on will help managers allocate resources strategically instead of wasting money (Harrison-Walker, 2019).

Without a recovery process, managers cannot build long-term brand attachment, which in time will destroy brand equity (i.e., fairness of outcome) (Lim et al., 2025). Therefore, excellent service recovery must be seen as a core competency for market survival (Michel & Meuter, 2008). By having a strong recovery plan, managers can understand where they stand against rivals (Magnini et al., 2007), reduce customer churn rate (i.e., percentage of customers discontinuing their relationship with the firm) (Edström et al., 2022) and protect the firm from multiple failures occurring at the same time (Harrison-Walker, 2019).

Finally, Edström et al. (2022, p. 8) remind that a clear blame-attribution can help protect profit margins: if a failure is caused by external factors, "the best managerial strategy is probably to not make use of service recovery" whereas when the company is to blame, "managers may benefit from recovery strategies." Understanding the perception of blame helps managers to determine whether to offer direct explanation, financial compensation or simply limit their response (Edström et al., 2022).

Customer psychology: *What do customers expect after a failure?*

When interacting with a customer after a failure, weak excuses and blame-shifting (i.e., insincere and superficial excuses) pushes the customer further away (Lee et al., 2024). Therefore, shared information must be carefully chosen as transparency directly affects customers' evaluation of the service provider (Tax et al., 1998).

A poor communication creates confusion and defensiveness, whereas a clear explanation helps the customer understand the situation and thus, leading him to a quicker resolution. To succeed, managers should understand that perceived fairness drives recovery success (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011; Maxham, 2001). "It is the customer, not the company, who decides what is fair" (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011, p. 39). If managers do not take into account this reality, they risk assuming the failure is resolved while the customer remains frustrated and ready to engage in negative behaviors (McCollough, 2000). Consequently, to achieve this perceived fairness of treatment, recovery strategies should maximize post-failure satisfaction to ensure repurchase intentions (Lee et al., 2024). However, managers should avoid the expectations trap because raising expectations too high will backfire if the firm does not deliver accordingly (Köcher et al., 2025). Instead, effective service recoveries need to combine fair procedures and compensation as well as high-quality interaction (Mir et al., 2023), while keeping in mind that human empathetic interactions are, at least today, preferred to automated machines (Köcher et al., 2025).

To achieve the right equilibrium of compensation, understanding customers' psychological mechanisms behind it is key. For example, due to an anchoring effect (i.e., cognitive bias where people rely on the first information offered), managers can offer lower financial compensation, than the standard procedure, without damaging the customer's satisfaction (Edström et al., 2022). This allows service providers to save valuable resources while still keeping customers satisfied.

Frontline operations: *How do employees transform complaints into solutions?*

Turning customer complaints into operational solutions requires a corporate culture focused on internal learning systems (Abdo et al., 2025; Edström et al., 2022; Harrison-Walker, 2019; Lee et al., 2024; Magnini et al., 2007; Mount, 2012). This offers a significant advantage as "a mindset of continuous improvement might lessen the likelihood that issues will repeat" (Lee et al., 2024, p. 1597). Since front-line employees are the face of the company when a crisis occurs, "organizations in the

service industry should carefully train their employees in polite and respectful communication with complainants” (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011, p. 39).

The behavior of front-line employees is the most crucial tool in services for de-escalating customer frustrations on the spot (Abdo et al., 2025; McCollough, 2000; Michel & Meuter, 2008; Swanson & Kelley, 2001). Managers must therefore set clear guidelines, train employees to explain the nature and severity of the failure and the immediate steps required to fix it (Mount, 2012). Magnini et al. (2007) postulate that “front-line service providers may adopt an improved attitude toward customer complaints if they are reminded by management that most service failures go unreported” (p. 221). This aligns with the well-known adage that “96% of your customers don’t complain, they just don’t come back”, implying that only 4% of customers complain” (Mount, 2012, p. 3). Nevertheless, managers should carefully monitor their employees to motivate them but not lead them to burnout for example. Indeed, managers need to balance such hidden costs against immediate profits (McCollough, 2000). Finally, to ensure consistent service quality, managers must conduct a thorough control to verify if the failure has been permanently fixed (Mount, 2012).

However, anticipating customer reactions remains a major challenge for managers as they are “not predictable agents whose unchangeable wishes, tastes, and expectations may be completely identified in advance” (Pina E Cunha et al., 2009, p. 659). Because customer tolerance thresholds change constantly, it is complex to establish a universal baseline across different service settings and personality types (Edström et al., 2022). This complexity highlights the need for understanding and introducing frameworks to managers, like the Service Recovery Paradox (SRP), by demonstrating its strong theoretical relevance.

2.2.2 Relevance for researchers

Historical evolution of SFR research

“Service failure and recovery is an important research subject in the services marketing literature” (De Matos et al., 2009, p. 469). This is largely due to the fact that the reactions and behaviors of consumers after claiming a complaint have become a central focus of marketing studies over the years (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011). Analyzing how complaints are managed and how failures are resolved remains critical today. Indeed, even though early research in the field was initially described as poor (Maxham, 2001), the literature on SFR has since then drastically shifted with the majority of papers being written over the last two decades (Mir et al., 2023).

Theoretical frameworks of Justice and Attribution theory

Authors have found that attitudes and subjective perceptions are at the basis of service failure recovery, which makes every recovery action likely to affect the customers' responses in terms of perceptions, emotions and complaint behaviors (Grégoire & Mattila, 2021). Consequently, empirical studies continuously try to identify “the “right” combinations of recovery efforts” (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019, p. 24). For instance, combining distributive and procedural justice is crucial to achieve customer satisfaction (Lim et al., 2025; Mir et al., 2023). This demonstrates that post-failure evaluation is a multidimensional complex phenomenon where, for example, satisfaction, fairness perceptions and causal attributions are closely linked (Tax et al., 1998). Furthermore, the initial quality of the service directly influences how customers evaluate recovery efforts. According to McCollough (2000), the baseline quality will impact the customer's attributions for the failure, which ultimately will determine their final satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction and behavioral outcomes depend greatly on blame attribution (i.e., who the customer holds responsible for the failure) (Abdo et al., 2025). Because customers have initial expectations, how they assign blame influences their perception of fairness and equity in the recovery process (Abdo et al., 2025). Interactional justice (i.e., fairness of interaction) is therefore crucial (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011) because service failures usually require immediate human interaction with frontline employees. Consequently, empathetic and respectful communication becomes even more critical when dealing with nonmonetary complaints, such as employee rudeness (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011).

2.3. Gaps & controversial concepts in the literature

As Harrison-Walker (2019, p. 376) stated it “although there has been extensive research regarding service failure and recovery, we have much to learn.”

The Service Recovery Paradox (SRP) debate

Indeed, while being widely researched, the universal applicability of the SRP remains highly debated (Lunardo et al., 2023; Michel & Meuter, 2008; Mount, 2012). For instance, some authors argue in favor but on conditions such as the type of failure (Mount, 2012), the generational feature (Soares et al., 2017), the level of compensation (Edström et al., 2022), the guilt feelings (Cheng et al., 2015) or whether the failure occurred during a customer’s first encounter with the service provider (Magnini et al., 2007). In contrast to these conditional perspectives, some authors provide complete support, validating the paradox as a real and powerful phenomenon such as Krishna et al. (2011) and some complete non-support, by finding no evidence whatsoever like Köcher et al. (2025). Between these extremes, other researchers found very mixed results. While they do not clearly observe SRP, their data still reveals key mechanisms aligning with the SRP logic (Maxham, 2001; Ok et al. 2006).

However, recent studies suggest that the SRP is a rare event in practice (Edström et al., 2022; Michel & Meuter, 2008). To achieve this effect, companies must deliver a recovery that exceeds customers’ expectations (McCollough et al., 2000). While some researchers argue that methodological choices (e.g., surveys vs. experiments, cross-sectional vs. longitudinal data) do not clearly explain these contradictions (Michel & Meuter, 2008), this ongoing debate highlights the need to identify the situational conditions leading to the SRP (Krishna et al., 2011).

Customer attributions & Employee responses

Managing a failure requires understanding how customer perceptions are formed. While polite communication is expected as a standard treatment, interactional justice is not sufficient on its own as genuine satisfaction requires a combination of both courtesy and fair compensation (Lim et al., 2025). Therefore, frontline employees’ responses significantly influence these attributions. Research shows that defensive tactics increase the customer’s tendency to place the locus of blame on the firm but do not alter perceived controllability (Chang et al., 2015). Consequently, while managers can influence the *who* factor, they cannot easily change the *how controllable* factor. Additionally, adequate responses are highly situational. As Edström et al. (2022) postulate, when no one is at fault (e.g., bad weather),

attempting a recovery might backfire. Yet, conflicting viewpoints advise always compensating regardless of the situation (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011), leaving the relation between attribution and recovery justice inconclusive.

Limitation from the literature

A key limitation in service recovery literature is its reliance on small samples and cross-sectional experiments (i.e., data collected at a single point in time) (Mount, 2012). These methods capture short-term intentions rather than actual long-term customer behavior and repurchase intentions (Mount, 2012; Norvell et al., 2018). As a result, the permanent benefits of successful recovery remain unclear (Norvell et al., 2018). Service recovery literature is also usually limited to the investigation of just one element (Collier et al., 2018). Furthermore, while certain sectors like hospitality are frequently analyzed (Mount, 2012), authors note that there is no universal recovery strategy as optimal outcomes depend entirely on the specific industry context (Harrison-Walker, 2019). Consequently, implementing identical strategies across different sectors often leads to conflicting results (Abdo et al., 2025; Oflaç et al., 2021). This study tries to address some of these gaps as much as resources are available.

Identified research gaps

New technologies like online review (Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2019) and service robots (Köcher et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2024) have granted customers more power than ever (Mir et al., 2023). To adapt to these changes, researchers need to study customer fairness in new cultural contexts where expectations differ (Gao et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2025). Future studies should also test these ideas in short-term services like hotels instead of only focusing on long-term relationships as recommended by Soares et al. (2017).

Additionally, there is still a need for long-term studies to see how fairness impacts real customer behavior, word-of mouth and satisfaction over time (Maxham, 2001). To understand complaints completely, researchers must look at both customer expectations and the service provider explanations (Tax et al., 1998). In particular, it is needed to examine how a lack of effort or empathy from frontline employees damage customer evaluation and future behavior (Collier et al., 2018).

Lastly, the locus of attribution for a failure requires closer attention. While often ignored because customers assume the firm is always at fault (Abdo et al., 2025), understanding blame is crucial when customers themselves cause the problem or when it is caused by bad weather for example (McCollough, 2000). Ultimately, Abdo

et al. (2025) remind that this topic remains unpredictable as even when applying the same recovery strategy, the literature shows that different emotional and behavioral outcomes are reported, making further research a continuous requirement.

Synthesis of some key empirical studies

To show how this study fits in the literature, the table below displays previous papers on the topic as well as the position of this study :

Table 1. Summary of some key empirical studies

STUDY	CONTEXT	KEY VARIABLES	MAIN FINDINGS	SRP evidence
McCollough (2000)	Hotels	Service quality, Failure/Recovery attributions, Post-recovery satisfaction	Initial service quality drives causal attributions, and in turn satisfaction	Yes (with full compensation)
Michel & Meuter (2008)	Multi-industries	Methodology type (cross-sectional vs. longitudinal data), Paradox occurrence	Mixed evidence for the paradox; methodology alone does not explain the conflicting results	Mixed/ Inconclusive
Gelbrich & Roschk (2011)	Meta- analysis	Organizational responses, Justice perceptions (interactional, procedural, distributive), Satisfaction	Interactional justice is crucial for non-monetary complaints and direct service settings	Situational
Chang et al. (2015)	General service context	Response strategies (defensive vs. accommodative), Attribution (locus, controllability)	Defensive strategies shift the locus of attribution to the service provider but do not alter the perceived controllability	Not tested
Norvell et al. (2018)	Restaurants	Short-term satisfaction, Complaining behavior, Short vs. Long-term loyalty and repurchase intentions	Successful recovery increase repurchase intentions in the medium term but in the long-term, loyalty will depend completely on core failure	Mixed/ Conditional (Medium term only)
Abdo et al. (2025)	Customer-to-customer (C2C) interactions	Mixed methods, Customer behaviors, Attribution theory	Customer behaviors complement but cannot replace fair recovery efforts from the firm	Mixed/ Situational
Kau & Loh (2006)	Mobile telecommunication service	Perceived justice (distributional, procedural, interactional), Satisfaction,* Trust, WOM, Loyalty SRP	Perceived justice significantly affects post-recovery satisfaction, which in turn drives higher trust, positive WOM and loyalty. Distributive justice has the strongest impact.	No
Current study (2026)	Hotels	Blame attribution, Type of employee response, SRP	Examines how hotel employee responses and the blame shape customer outcomes	To be determined

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

After defining the core notions and identifying the research gaps, this chapter develops the study's hypotheses and the associated research model.

3.1. Hypotheses

Firstly, as stated previously, the SRP, by definition, surpasses the levels of satisfaction, repurchase and WOM intentions of the no-failure scenario when compared to the successful recovery scenario (Edström et al., 2022; Magnini et al., 2007; Michel & Meuter, 2008). In their study on hotel guests, Karatepe and Ekiz (2004) found significant positive effects of atonement (i.e., the hotel's response restoring the customer to an equal or better situation than before the complaint) on complainant satisfaction (i.e., the satisfaction after the recovery has taken place). Though they did not find significant results with complainant loyalty, which included WOM and repurchase intent items, Magnini et al. (2007) found support for SRP in the form of greater post-failure satisfaction but also purchase intent and likelihood of spreading WOM. In the specific context of hotels, some authors found support for SRP (Karatepe & Ekiz, 2004; Magnini et al., 2007; Smith & Bolton, 1998) but many argue that it depends on the situational factors and accuracy of the real-world settings (Lunardo et al., 2023; McCollough, 2000; Michel & Meuter, 2008; Mount, 2012). Based on these studies in the hotel industry, I test this controversial concept of SRP with a new experimental design and argue in favor of it. Thus, I hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1. The service recovery paradox applies in this hotel setting by increasing **(a)** the overall satisfaction, **(b)** the WOM likelihood and **(c)** the repurchase intentions.

Beyond the SRP, attribution theory also steps in when a service failure happens (Weiner, 1980). How a customer feels and reacts is directly influenced by their perceived responsibility for the failure (Weiner, 1980) and as a result, the overall impact of a failure changes based on its causality (Nikbin et al., 2012). While controllability and stability are key dimensions of causality (Weiner, 2000), the locus of attribution, defined as "whether the cause resides within or outside of the actor" (Weiner, 2000, p. 384), is usually the first factor that comes to the customer's mind. In the literature, Mir et al. (2023) have found adverse effects from stability and blame attributions on customer evaluation and satisfaction. However, when no one is to blame, general satisfaction is not negatively affected as it relies on these attributions, yet the outcome satisfaction declines because the customer remains frustrated on

the spot (McCollough, 2000). Interestingly, in the case of a failure blamed on another customer, Abdo et al. (2025) found that its mediating effect on satisfaction, propensity to complain and positive WOM likelihood is significant, whereas when it is blamed on the service provider, there is no significant impact. Locus attribution is also positively related to negative WOM (Chang et al., 2015), especially because external causes that could have been prevented and controlled have a much more damaging impact (Weiner, 2000). Based on these insights, I hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2. When no one is to blame for the failure, **(a)** satisfaction with the experience, **(b)** WOM likelihood, **(c)** repurchase intentions and **(d)** fairness of treatment perception will increase positively compared to when the service provider is to blame.

Regardless of who caused the failure, frontline employees' behavior should reflect the company's commitment to its customers. Even though customers are usually focused on financial or material compensations, Mir et al. (2023) remind that being treated in a fair and respectful way matters just as much.

On the one hand, an *employee's good response*, combining apologies, courtesy and active problem-solving, will make customers feel valued and respected. Mir et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of empathy in the employee's attitude as it is essential in the customer-employee interaction. Showing empathy will improve the customer's perception of fairness — specifically interactional justice — which in turn will increase their satisfaction (Nikbin et al., 2012). In line with this, Gelbrich and Roschk (2011, p. 36) also found that "favorable employee behavior is the most powerful determinant of interactional justice."

On the other hand, a *bad employee response* acts as a second failure, which worsens the initial damage. Indeed, Mount (2012) found that a rude staff triggers a double deviation that substantially decreases any chance of return. This negative reaction to the failure is even worse when customers have high recovery expectations, making a poor employee performance completely backfire (Köcher et al., 2025). This happens because while accommodative strategies, including explanations and apologies, lead to positive evaluations, defensive tactics like shifting the blame strongly harm customers' trust as well as their loyalty toward the service provider (Chang et al., 2015; Lee & Song, 2010). Respondents in the study of Tax et al. (1998) reported that financial compensation loses its value if delivered by an unconcerned employee.

In contrast, a *no employee response* situation either when the company does not respond to the complaint (Lee & Song, 2010) or simply because a customer chooses to stay silent (i.e., no customer-employee interaction). For competitive service

providers, retaining customers is key (Soares et al., 2017), therefore, complaining is important as it allows the firm to fix its failure (Tax et al., 1998). Though complaints are helpful for companies, research shows that customers are more likely to share their negative emotions (Mir et al., 2023) and their propensity to complain depends on the type of problem they are facing (Mount, 2012). Therefore, when customers choose to stay silent about a failure (i.e., by not complaining to the firm nor a third-party directly), the firm is left unaware of the failure and can't take any action to rectify it. Yet, silence might be better than facing a hostile employee. Indeed, courtesy is only a starting point that does not automatically lead to increased satisfaction with the recovery. In line with this, Lim et al. (2025, p. 273) affirm that "interactional justice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for customer satisfaction." Consequently, no interaction at all (i.e., no employee response) might be less damaging to the customer's emotions and behaviors than an inadequate and poor interaction with the employee. By extension, a research by Lee and Song (2010) shows that avoiding a complaint (i.e., taking no action after a complaint) is less damaging to customers' perception that the company is at fault than a defensive and hostile response. Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 3. After a failure, a *good* employee response will lead to higher levels of **(a)** satisfaction with the experience, **(b)** WOM likelihood, **(c)** repurchase intentions and **(d)** fairness of treatment perception, compared to a *bad* employee response.

Hypothesis 4. After a failure, *no conversation* with the employee will lead to higher levels of **(a)** satisfaction with the experience, **(b)** WOM likelihood, **(c)** repurchase intentions and **(d)** fairness of treatment perception, compared to a *bad* employee response.

Beyond the type of response provided, the effect of an employee's behavior depends heavily on the customer's blame attribution for the failure (Lee & Song, 2010). Research shows that the positive impact of a service recovery on customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions is significantly stronger when customers blame external factors rather than the service provider itself (Abdo et al., 2025).

When a failure occurs but no one is initially to blame, a good employee response is seen as a very positive and unexpected gesture, which in turn strongly improves the customer evaluation of the firm (Lee & Song, 2010). This occurs because uncontrollable failures, such as bad weather, lowers recovery expectations, which in turn will allow an excellent employee response to create a powerful positive

disconfirmation effect (Gao et al., 2022). In addition, this great unexpected employee response will generate an also powerful “halo effect,” making the customer highly appreciative of the extra effort (McCollough, 2000; Nikbin et al., 2012).

However, if the hotel is clearly at fault, customers will become more critical. In line with this, Weitzl and Hutzinger (2019) show that a satisfactory recovery can paradoxically increase blame attribution among committed customers, thus limiting its overall recovery effectiveness.

While a good response (i.e., fast, polite and adequate) can have counterintuitive outcomes, consequences are far worse if the recovery is poorly executed, especially when it is the company's failure. As a reminder, shifting the blame to others or being defensive, increases customers' perception that the company is at fault (Chang et al., 2015; Lee & Song, 2010). In this situation, combining a clear failure from the service provider with an inadequate employee response can create a double negative experience, more commonly named, a double deviation. This poor interaction will then lower customer's trust and behavioral intentions as well as potentially driving them to complain to third parties (Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2019). Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 5. A good employee response when no one is to blame for the failure will lead to higher **(a)** satisfaction with the experience, **(b)** WOM likelihood, **(c)** repurchase intentions and **(d)** fairness of treatment perception, than a good employee response when the hotel is to blame.

Hypothesis 6. A bad employee response when the hotel is to blame for the failure will lead to lower **(a)** satisfaction with the experience, **(b)** WOM likelihood, **(c)** repurchase intentions and **(d)** fairness of treatment perception, than a bad employee response when no one is to blame.

Finally, research showed that SRP is not a universal nor a random occurrence (De Matos et al., 2009; Michel & Meuter, 2008). Instead, post-recovery satisfaction will depend on the gap between recovery performances and initial expectations (Lee et al., 2024). Attribution theory provides explanations for these evaluations based on who the customer thinks is responsible for the problem (Abdo et al., 2025). Therefore, the occurrence of SRP is highly conditional as it depends on both customers' attribution of blame and evaluation of the employee's reaction (Abdo et al., 2025; Edström et al., 2022).

Regarding the attribution of blame, SRP is more likely to occur if the customer perceives that the hotel had little control over the failure (Magnini et al., 2007). When

a failure is perceived as internal and controllable, customers are less forgiving and even an excellent recovery won't work if they believe the problem is stable and recurring (Magnini et al., 2007; McCollough, 2000).

At the same time, the type of employee response is crucial. An SRP only occurs when employees provide adequate organizational responses through genuine sincerity rather than superficial efforts (Edström et al., 2022; Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011; Magnini et al., 2007). Indeed, when interactional justice is poor, instead of an SRP, a double deviation often occurs, leading customers to spread negative WOM (McCollough, 2000; Ok et al., 2006). Though service recovery might lead to SRP, it might also backfire into a double deviation situation. In line with this risk, many studies support the idea that high recovery performances do not automatically surpass no-failure conditions (Köcher et al., 2025; Ok et al., 2006).

While Hypothesis 1 argues in favor of SRP regarding specific variables, this hypothesis proposes that SRP is conditional upon attribution of blame, type of employee response or both. This leads to the following formulation:

Hypothesis 7. (a) Blame attribution, and (b) the type of employee response influence the service recovery paradox.

The summary of all relations of the hypotheses is displayed in the table below:

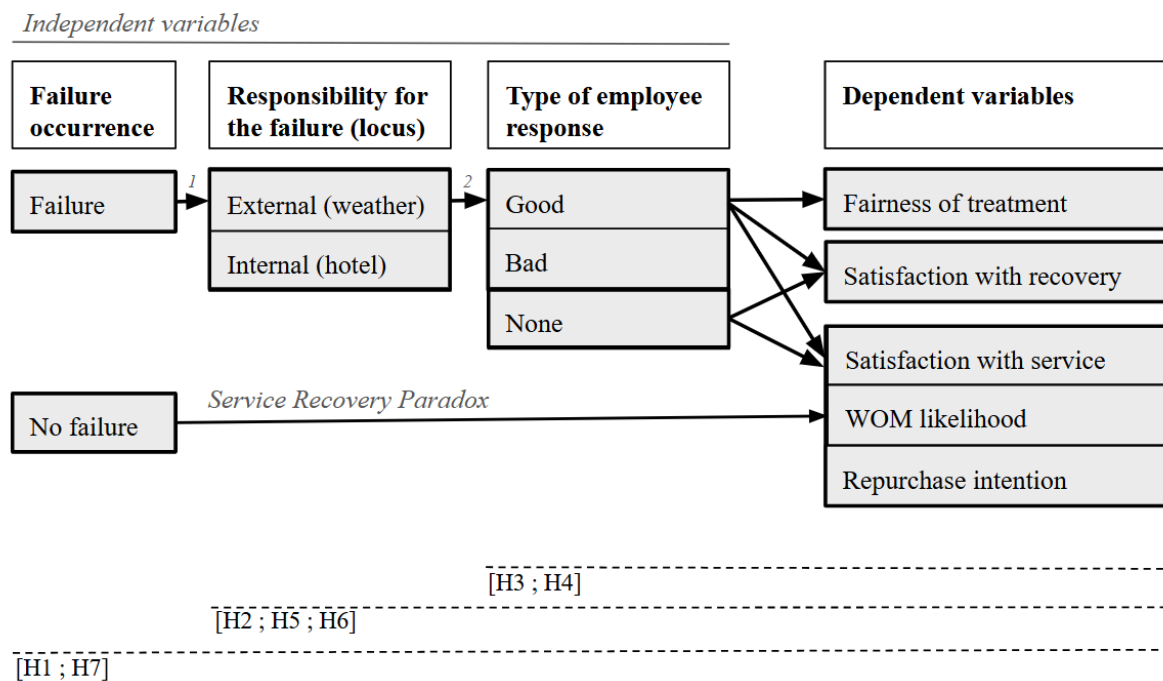
Table 2. Summary of the hypotheses

H1. SRP → (+) : (a) overall satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions
H2. External (vs. Internal) → (+) : (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception
H3. Good (vs. Bad) response → (+) : (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception
H4. No (vs. Bad) response → (+) : (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception
H5. Good response × External (vs. Internal) → (+) : (a) experience's satisfaction ; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception
H6. Bad response × Internal (vs. External) → (-) : (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception
H7. (a) Blame attribution → SRP; (b) Employee response type → SRP

3.2. Research Model

The research model below illustrates the relationships between the independent (*Failure occurrence, Responsibility for the failure and Type of employee response*) and the dependent variables (*Fairness of treatment, Satisfaction with the recovery, Satisfaction with the service, WOM likelihood and Repurchase intentions*). It also provides a summary of the hypothesized relationships discussed in the previous section. The dependent variables are defined in section ...

Figure 1. Research model



Note. 1 Check for Attribution of blame 2 Check for Response perception

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Sampling process

A minimum of 210 respondents are needed as there will be 7 different scenarios to assess. This number of responses will ensure statistical validity according to the Central Limit Theorem (CLT) (Field, 2013).

As I am a student and I do not have a broad network, the survey was mainly sent to my friends, family and other students, therefore the survey was completely in French to ensure a maximum of responses. The variables were named after the English concepts for the analysis part.

4.2. Data collection and Experimental design

Data collection method

This study followed a primary data collection approach, though quite long to collect data, it was necessary as there were scenarios involved, that were specific to the research (Nunan, Birks & Malhotra, 2020).

A scenario-based approach was employed as it is usually used in the service recovery literature (Edström et al., 2022; Hazée et al., 2017; Leo & Huh, 2020; McCollough, 2000) even though, it might be hard to generalize to reality (Leo & Huh, 2020). Interestingly, Mount (2012) noticed that when researching the SRP, there is no single correct methodology, only few that are preferable than others depending on the situation. For this study, through randomisation and a between-subjects design, each person was exposed to only one scenario and the choice of scenario was made randomly (Nunan, Birks & Malhotra, 2020). A cross-sectional experiment was chosen, though being often used, because of the complexity of the model and the resources available as a master student.

A self-completed online questionnaire was chosen to permit a maximum of standardised responses that can be statistically analyzed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2023) as well as being one of the most common ways nowadays to collect data (Edström et al., 2022; Leo & Huh, 2020; Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2019). On the survey tool LimeSurvey, the questionnaire lasted for a month from mid-March until mid-April 2026. It was sent through both a non-probability sampling technique and a probability sampling technique (Nunan, Birks & Malhotra, 2020).

On the one hand, I sent it mostly to my entourage which turned into a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling: I sent it to people I know who sent it to people they know. Because I am a French student in Switzerland, data was mostly

collected from these countries. On the other hand, I used SurveyCircle which is a self-selection sampling technique where respondents participated voluntarily. This choice enabled me to reach my targeted number of respondents faster and to diversify the type of respondents. Though, it is debatable that it is a probability sampling technique because people on this website are keener to respond than the average person.

An experimental 2 (failure attribution : internal/ hotel vs. external/ no one) x 3 (type of employee response: good vs. bad vs. none) factorial design with an added control group was employed for this study. A control scenario was created as well to test the SRP with a third factor: the occurrence of a failure. In this way, there are 7 groups in total: 6 treatment groups experiencing a failure which involved different combinations of the experimental factors (Emerson, 2019) and 1 no-failure control group.

Experimental design

Industry. The scenarios portrayed a failure in a hotel context. Many factors motivated this choice.

First, the hotel industry has been widely researched in the service recovery and failure literature (Edström et al., 2022; Hazée et al., 2017; Magnini et al., 2007; McCollough, 2000; Mount, 2012; Oflaç et al., 2021). Though “a favorite of service recovery paradox” studies (Mount, 2012, p. 3), the hospitality industry gets mixed results from authors. For example, De Matos et al. (2007) state that it depends on the subjects (i.e., students vs. non-students), Magnini et al. (2007) on contextual influences, such as the severity of the failure or the customer’s relationship with the company and Edström et al. (2022) on recovery efforts and customer’s expectation. Because of its conditional existence and high support in SRP (De Matos et al., 2007), hotels are an interesting industry to study.

Secondly, customers encounter several failures in the hospitality industry. With frequent failures (Magnini et al, 2007; Smith & Bolton, 1998) such as overbooking (Edström et al., 2022; McCollough, 2000) or something not working (e.g., hair dryer) (Mount, 2012), the hotel context is a believable scenario for respondents as much for the failure in itself than the common recovery response afterwards (Magnini et al., 2007; McCollough, 2000).

Finally, because most of the respondents were supposed to be students, it was important to choose a service category they could relate to. It was safe to argue that hotels were a familiar place quite recognizable (Edström et al., 2022) for the general public, thus the hotel context was chosen.

Failure types. As I just explained, types of failures are numerous in the hospitality industry. For example, Mount (2012) analyzed many problem types (e.g., everything in working order, internet service) and found on one hand that “there is support for the SRP by problem type” (p. 7) and on the other hand, that a responsive staff and a clean room impacted greatly the intent to return. Therefore, the type of failure can lead to various consequences. The attribution in itself can also be considered as a failure. As explained in a previous section, many actors can hold the blame, whether it is the service provider, another customer or the customer himself. Authors have included responsibility (Leo & Huh, 2020), recovery attribution (McCollough, 2000), attribution of blame for the failure (Goodwin & Ross, 1989) or service failure attribution (Abdo et al., 2025) to their models and found significant relations with post-recovery satisfaction and negative emotions for example. Weiner (2000) stated that attribution search is more likely to occur after a failure rather than when everything went well, making it an interesting variable to study in this context. Therefore, for a wider view, two types of failures in direct link with the blame attribution will be adopted: a dirty room (hotel’s at fault) and no power in the room (weather/ no one’s at fault).

Employee response types. Finally, the type of employee response is of great importance in the service recovery process. Indeed, because customers interact directly with front-line employees, their behavior and actions matter (Tax et al., 1998). “Sincerity/rudeness” it is “just” out there”, as Mount (2012, p. 7) reminds us, it is hard to monitor this intangible aspect. It is subjected to interpretation because the way of saying something may be perceived differently than what was intended, which means that, according to him, the response in itself wouldn’t suffice. There is also the growing presence of robots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as frontline employees. According to Köcher et al. (2025, p. 11), “customers feel more valued when served by a human rather than a robot. Even in the absence of failure, human interactions have been shown to lead to greater appreciation and positive downstream effects.”

For this reason, I chose to keep human interactions in the idea to observe greater differences in my variables and maybe in the SRP. In order to measure the type of employee response, I used, in broad terms, the factor ‘service recovery performance’ with its three levels — no failure, low-recovery performance, high-recovery performance — from McCollough et al. (2000) with greater differences between the two latter. Consequently, I created three levels of employee response after a failure : good, bad and none (see **Table 3**). I tried in the case of both good and bad employee responses, to portray the service provider with the same kind of text (i.e., subjects, order and number of sentences) but in a way that they are realistically opposites. As

for the none condition, it described a situation of no interaction at all between the customer and the employee: the customer does not complain to the employee, there is thus no interaction between both sides.

Scenarios. Every scenario started by asking the respondent to imagine themselves arriving at a hotel that they had reserved. The employee gave them their key and they went to their room. Then, depending on the scenario, information on the room not being cleaned (i.e., Scenarios 1, 2, 3) or the power being shut down due to the storm (i.e., Scenarios 4, 5, 6) or everything being in working order/ problem-free stay (i.e., Scenario 7) was given. The second part of the scenario was either the respondent having a dialogue with the employee (i.e., Scenarios 1, 2, 4, 5) or talking to himself (i.e., Scenarios 3, 6).

A summary of the seven scenarios is characterized below :

Table 3. Summary of the scenarios

Context and Blame	Failure occurrence	Scenario	Type of employee response	Summary of the scenario*
You arrive at a hotel and are being offered a dirty room.	Yes	Scenario 1 [S1HG]	Good	You complain to the receptionist. He reacts immediately. He sincerely apologizes, proposes another room and makes sure everything is alright.
		Scenario 2 [S2HB]	Bad	You complain to the receptionist. He minimizes the situation. He does not apologize and only proposes an inadequate solution very tardively.
		Scenario 3 [S3HN]	None	You decide to do nothing and enjoy your stay.
You arrive at a hotel and the thunder cuts off the power supply.	Yes	Scenario 4 [S4NHG]	Good	You complain to the receptionist. He informs you about the situation. He reassures you and distributes water bottles and flashlights.
		Scenario 5 [S5NHB]	Bad	You complain to the receptionist. He is disorganized and does not communicate anything about the situation. He does not reassure nor give you any solution.
		Scenario 6 [S6NHN]	None	You decide to do nothing and enjoy your stay.
You arrive at a hotel.	No	Scenario 7 [S7CONTR]	-	You are being offered a room with everything in working order. You enjoy your stay.

*Note : For the entirety of the scenarios, see Appendix 1

4.3. Survey's structure

No special characteristics were expected to be fulfilled except being over 18 and having been in a hotel, which were asked in the first two questions.

The survey was divided into five major sections.

Section 1. The first section includes the context which is the same for all the scenarios (i.e., arriving at a hotel and picking up the keys). Then, something occurs depending on the scenarios. It is followed by 3-items adapted from Maxham (2001) and Köcher et al.(2025) to depict *satisfaction with the service*. And finally, the end of the scenario is presented for the six first ones with either an attempt to recover from the failure or nothing of the sort.

Section 2. The survey was designed to measure the following variables in that same order for all the scenarios (see **Table 4**): *fairness of treatment*, *repurchase intentions*, *WOM likelihood* and *satisfaction with the recovery*.

Section 3. Manipulation checks were necessary to measure accurately the responses, therefore, two of the independent variables were presented as follows:

Employee response. [EMP] How would you evaluate the employee response in this scenario? (item designed for this survey) This item was measured with a 5-points Likert scale anchored by 1 = "Very bad" and 5 = "Very good" with the midpoint labeled "No response given."

Blame attribution. [RESP] To what extent do you think the hotel was responsible? (item adapted from Leo and Huh, 2020) This item was measured with a 7-points Likert scale anchored by 1 = "Not responsible at all" and 7 = "Entirely responsible."

Additionally, *satisfaction with the service* was measured again with the exact same items to test measure how the different types of employees' responses influenced the customer's satisfaction. For consistency regarding the structure of the scenarios, satisfaction for the no-failure condition was measured with this specific variable rather than the one from Section 2, as it represents the final satisfaction with the overall service experience. It was then followed by 3-items designed for this study to assess *scenario realism*.

Section 4. Since dependent variables cannot fully explain the behaviors and psychology of a customer, experiences and habits were added to the survey in the form of questions about their relationship with hotels in general, the frequency of their stay, their willingness to pay and the importance of some proposed services (see

Appendix 2). Understanding the differences of customers' habits helps target a group in a more accurate way. Also, it is quite crucial to comprehend how respondents rank proposed services to determine if the specific scenario they were assigned to, actually resonated with them. For example, Mount (2012, p. 4) found “cleanliness of guest room to be the single most important attribute of a guest experience.”

Section 5. Finally, respondents were asked if the scenario was about a restaurant as an attention-check question. It was then followed by demographic questions concerning the nationality, the gender, the age and the occupation.

4.4. Operationalization of variables

All dependent variables and Scenario realism were measured on a 7-Likert scale ranging from 1 = “Pas du tout d’accord” to 7 = “Tout à fait d’accord”, with the exception of Satisfaction with the recovery that was measured with a 7-point semantic differential scale (see Appendix 2).

To determine the number and nature of the factors as well as testing if they were intended to measure a predefined variable, I conducted a factor analysis of all items using the oblimin rotation (see **Table 4**). Only multi-items were analyzed (i.e. Satisfaction with the service, Repurchase intentions, WOM likelihood, Satisfaction with the recovery, Satisfaction with the service (continued) and Scenario realism). All of the items loaded with their respective factor with eigenvalues larger than 1, factor loadings above .718 and expected total variance (TVE) for each variable between 66.828 to 92.951. Given these figures, no items were removed.

The operationalization of variables needs to meet three quality criteria in order to interpret the data accurately (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2023). The objectivity criterion was verified as respondents answered to the same survey structure and they were not influenced by the researcher. Thus, biases were avoided. The reliability criterion was then analyzed through the reliability analysis. The accuracy and consistency of the measures were supported as every construct had a Cronbach’s alpha above .7 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) without removing any items (see **Table 4**). Finally, the validity criterion was respected as the majority of the items came from the literature and manipulation checks were included. These results lead me to aggregate my variables - Satisfaction with the service, Repurchase intentions, WOM likelihood, Satisfaction with the recovery, Satisfaction with the service (continued) and Scenario realism - into constructs named respectively SATS, REPUR, WOM, SATR, SATSSUITE, REAL.

For this study, the dependent variables are defined as follows:

SATS/ SATSSUITE. It represents the customer’s emotional and cognitive response after the first service encounter, occurring when the actual experience outperforms the initial expectations (Andreassen, 2000; Michel & Meuter, 2008). This variable was used again, in the form of SatSSuite with the exact same items, for a comparison of satisfaction levels as recommended by Edström et al. (2022). To differentiate the both, they will be defined as initial satisfaction (SATS) and secondary satisfaction (SATSSUITE).

SATR. It refers to the secondary evaluation made by a customer after the attempt of the service provider to resolve the failure (Michel & Meuter, 2008). It is a function of negative feelings, recovery expectations and the perceived quality of the firm's response (Andreassen, 2000).

REPUR. This variable refers to “whether or not the customer intends to do business with the service provider again in the future at least once” (Harrison-Walker, 2019, p. 380).

WOM. It is defined as the behavior of sharing information and personal experiences about a company with potential future customers (Orsingher et al., 2010). This study focuses on the likelihood to spread either positive or negative WOM.

Table 4. Factor and reliability analysis of the dependent variables and scenario realism

Variables/ Items/ Sources	Factor loadings	TVE	Cronbach's alpha
SATS (adapted from Maxham (2001), Köcher et al. (2025) and McCollough (2000))		92.20	.956
[SatS01] Je suis satisfait(e) avec la qualité de cet hôtel.	.962		
[SatS02] Cette prestation répond aux attentes que j'ai d'un hôtel.	.972		
[SatS03] Dans l'ensemble, je suis très satisfait(e) avec cette expérience.	.947		
FAIR (adapted from Lim et al (2025) and De Matos et al.(2007))		81.82	.883
[FAIR01] La communication de l'employé à mon égard était appropriée.	.911		
[FAIR02] Je trouve que ma plainte a été traitée équitablement.	.949		
[FAIR03R] Dans l'ensemble, la manière dont mon problème a été résolu par l'hôtel était injuste.	.851		
REPUR (adapted from Harrison-Walker (2019))		87.48	.928
[REPUR01] Je suis susceptible de séjourner à nouveau dans cet hôtel dans le futur.	.939		
[REPUR02R] Il est probable que je ne retourne plus jamais dans cet hôtel.	.930		
[REPUR03] Il est probable que je retourne dans cet hôtel dans le futur.	.937		
WOM (adapted from Harrison-Walker (2019), Maxham (2001) and Weitzl and Hutzinger (2019))		75.16	.887
[WOM01] Au vu de mon expérience avec cet hôtel, je recommanderai leur service à mes amis.	.916		
[WOM02R] Dans le futur, je pourrais faire du bouche-à-oreille négatif à propos de l'hôtel.	.738		
[WOM03R] Je vais me plaindre à mes amis ou ma famille à propos de cet hôtel.	.896		
[WOM04] Je recommanderai les services de l'hôtel à mes amis.	.905		

Note. R items were reverse-coded in the analysis

TVE : Total Variance Expected

(continued)

Variables/ Items/ Sources	Factor loadings	TVE	Cronbach's alpha
SATR (adapted from De Matos et al. (2009))		86.28	.946
[SatR01] Choisir cet hôtel était un choix Terrible Merveilleux	.906		
[SatR02] Je suis très Insatisfait(e) Satisfait(e)	.928		
[SatR03] Le service est Horrible Excellent	.926		
[SatR04] Par rapport à ce service, je me sens Mécontent(e) Content(e)	.955		
SATSSUITE (adapted from Maxham (2001) and Köcher et al. (2025))		92.95	.962
[SatSsuite01] Je suis satisfait(e) avec la qualité de cet hôtel.	.970		
[SatSsuite02] Cette prestation répond aux attentes que j'ai d'un hôtel.	.966		
[SatSsuite03] Dans l'ensemble, je suis très satisfait(e) avec cette expérience.	.956		
REAL (designed for this study)		66.83	.751
[REAL01] La situation décrite était réaliste.	.862		
[REAL02] J'ai été capable de me mettre dans la situation.	.718		
[REAL03] Il est probable que les clients d'hôtels vivent cette situation dans la vie réelle.	.864		

Note. R items were reverse-coded in the analysis

TVE : Total Variance Expected

4.5. Pretest & Method analysis

Pretest

A pre-test was conducted with four respondents, from my close circle, to evaluate the clarity of the survey. Their completion times ranged from 4 minutes 20 seconds to 5 minutes 20 seconds. Based on their written feedback in the opened-question at the end, several adjustments were made:

Respondent 1 - Scenario 1 [S1HG] (5:20)

The respondent reported a loss of attention and confusion when reading both parts of the scenario in a row. To fix this, key text elements like the instructions were formatted in bold and red to improve readability and maintain focus.

Respondent 2 - Scenario 3 [S3HN] (4:53)

Two issues were identified. First, a French typo was corrected across the whole survey (“recommenderai” to “recommanderai”). Second, to clear up confusion regarding the exact meaning of the “responsibility” questions, the wording was changed to “responsibility of the situation”.

Respondent 3 - Scenario 4 [S4NHG] (4:20)

The ranking question forced respondents to order their preferences in order to proceed with the survey but all 6 options needed to be ranked, causing frustration to the respondent. To fix this, the requirement was changed to a minimum of 5 choices, for a smoother experience.

Respondent 4 - Scenario 6 [S6NHB] (5:03)

The respondent scrolled back to check their previous answer on satisfaction before rating the second one. A page break was added to separate these sections, forbidding the respondent to scroll back. Additionally, the respondent found the interactive slider question (i.e., SATR) quite strange but it was kept to maintain survey variety and because no other respondents raised it.

Analysis method

Excel and SPSS were used to manage and analyze the data. Excel was firstly used to sort and filter the responses. Then, the dataset was imported into SPSS for statistical analyses and testing the hypotheses.

5. Results

5.1. Description of the sample

Out of the 311 respondents who clicked on the survey, only 250 completed it. I restricted the analysis to respondents who passed the instructed attention check (see chapter 4.4), thus leaving a final sample of 243 responses, which accounts for around 78% of the total clicks (see Appendix 3):

Gender. The sample is composed of a majority of female respondents (64.2%). Males represented only 34.6% of it and 1.2% of respondents preferred to not answer the question.

Age. The age ranges from 18 to 80 with a mean of 26.64 and a median of 22. The sample is therefore young.

Nationality. The sample is largely French with 86.4% of responses compared to 10.3% of Swiss and 3.3% of others (i.e., Cameroun, Hong Kong, Mauritius, Reunion Island, Lebanon, Turkey and Viet Nam).

Occupation. As for the occupation, relative to the age results, the biggest category was by far students (70%). Employees represent 17.3% of the sample, followed by self-employed (7%), retired people (2.9%) and others (2.9%) (i.e., Ph.D. students, professors and military men).

Frequency of stay. Finally, the frequency of stay at a hotel for the whole sample gives a mean of 5.24 and a median of 5.00. This score of 5 represents exactly the *once-a-year* response option, which balances this sample perfectly. With an equal number of respondents staying at hotels less than once a year and more than once a year, this panel makes a quite suitable sample to evaluate the survey.

5.2. Structural consistency checks

To ensure the validity of the experimental findings and eliminate potential biases across the seven groups, a series of structural consistency tests was performed. Following the data cleaning process, these tests sought to verify that the groups are homogeneous regarding control variables not included in the initial research model (Nunan, Birks & Malhotra, 2020). In addition, this section presents the manipulation checks tested to ensure that the experimental treatments were accurately perceived by the respondents.

Manipulation checks: Control variables

To check if the nominal variables are well-distributed across the seven groups, Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) tests of independence were performed and the results are presented in **Table 5**. To summarize, tests show that for gender (**GEN**), nationality (**NAT**), occupation (**OCC**), hotel experience (**HOT**) and frequency of stay (**FRE**), the distribution across the groups is homogeneous, meaning that respondents' profiles are statistically equal across all groups.

Table 5. Control variables and structural consistency checks

Variable	Statistical Test	Value	p-value	Results*
Gender [GEN]	Chi-square (χ^2)	10.179	.600	Homogeneous distribution
Nationality [NAT]	Chi-square (χ^2)	3.364	.992	Homogeneous distribution
Occupation [OCC]	Chi-square (χ^2)	24.034	.460	Homogeneous distribution
Hotel experience [HOT]	Chi-square (χ^2)	33.723	.090	Homogeneous distribution
Frequency of stay [FRE]	Chi-square (χ^2)	31.136	.409	Homogeneous distribution
Age [AGE]	Levene's test Welch (<i>W</i>)	2.586 .835	.019 .545	Homogeneous distribution by Welch
Prix minimum [PMOY01]	Levene's test ANOVA (<i>F</i>)	.595 1.231	.734 .291	Homogeneous distribution
Prix maximum [PMOY02]	Levene's test Welch (<i>W</i>)	3.324 1.254	.004 .286	Homogeneous distribution By Welch
Prix moyen [PMOY03]	Levene's test ANOVA (<i>F</i>)	1.436 1.095	.202 .366	Homogeneous distribution
Scenario realism [REAL]	Levene's test ANOVA (<i>F</i>)	.947 3.162	.462 .005	Homogeneous distribution

Note. If $p > .05$, there is a homogeneous distribution, therefore structural consistency is given

Regarding the metric variables, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the group means as displayed in Table 5. Levene's tests were performed to check the equality of variances and were found significant for minimum price (**PMOY01**) and mean price (**PMOY03**) structural consistency was therefore given for these variables. As for age (**AGE**) and maximum price (**PMOY02**), p-values were lower than the accepted error likelihood of .05. The more robust Welch ANOVA test was therefore used and found for AGE [$W = .835$; $p = .545$] and PMOY02 [$W = 1.254$; $p = .286$]. Consequently, means do not differ significantly across groups, hence group homogeneity is assumed. Finally, scenario realism (**REAL**) was analyzed and though the Levene's test showed equality of variances [value = .947; $p = .462$], the ANOVA indicated a significant result ($F = 3.162$; $p = .005$). Even though the level of realism of the scenarios is statistically different from one group to another, the mean scores for all groups remain substantially high (between 5.06 and 6.02), which confirms that every scenario was perceived as highly credible for the respondents.

Manipulation checks: Independent variables

Manipulation checks were also performed on the independent variables to assess the perception of the experimental treatments. Before diving into analyses, it was firstly necessary to calculate two new factors from the experimental scenarios (see **Table 6**). Scenario 7 was naturally removed from both independent variables analyses because they only concern failure-scenarios.

Table 6. Independent variables construction

New factors	Associated dimensions	Associated scenarios	Associated dependent variables
CAUSE	Hotel-caused failure	1; 2; 3	All variables
	Weather-caused failure	4; 5; 6	All variables
RESPONSE	Good response	1; 4	All variables
	Bad response	2; 5	All variables
	No response	3; 6	Removal of FAIR

CAUSE. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to test if respondents accurately attributed the failure to either the hotel or the weather, using the responsibility attribution item (RESP).

Firstly, the Levene's test was significant [$F = 11.772$; $p \leq .001$], which indicates that there are unequal variances between the groups. Therefore, the

independent-samples t-test with equal variances not assumed was then interpreted [$t = 11.468$; $p \leq .001$] and revealed a highly significant difference between the two dimensions. Indeed, the mean score for the hotel-caused failure group was substantially higher [$M = 5.68$] than that of the weather-caused failure group [$M = 3.33$]. This demonstrates that respondents in the hotel scenarios successfully attributed a higher amount of blame to the hotel, hence the causality manipulation is validated.

RESPONSE. An independent-samples t-test was also conducted to assess if respondents accurately perceived the type of employee response (EMP). Because this item was only shown to respondents experiencing an employee interaction, scenarios 3 and 6 (none condition) were removed from the analyses.

Results displayed a not-significant Levene's test [$F = .111$; $p = .740$], thus equal variances are assumed. The independent-samples t-test was significant [$F = 269.474$; $p \leq .001$], meaning that the two dimensions are highly different. The mean score for the Good response group was higher [$M = 4.39$] than that of the Bad response group [$M = 2.22$]. This confirms that respondents clearly distinguished between Good and Bad responses, hence the response manipulation was highly successful.

All analyses and statistical values are summarized in the tables below:

Table 7a. Manipulation checks summary

Independent variable	Manipulation factor	Statistical tests	Value	p	Results
Blame/ Responsibility attribution (RESP)	CAUSE (Hotel vs. Weather/no one)	Levene's test Independent t-test (t) (with equal variances not assumed)	11.772 11.468	<.001 <.001	Manipulation is successful Significant mean difference between Hotel and Weather [resp. 5.68 and 3.33]
Type of employee response (EMP)	RESPONSE (Good vs. Bad)	Levene's test Independent t-test (t) (with equal variances assumed)	.111 16.292	.740 <.001	Manipulation is successful Significant mean difference between Good and Bad [resp. 4.39 and 2.22]

Note. If $p > .05$, there is a homogeneous distribution, therefore structural consistency is given

Table 7b. Mean differences for CAUSE's and RESPONSE's dimensions

	CAUSE		RESPONSE	
	Hotel	Weather	Good	Bad
Mean values	5.68	3.33	4.39	2.22

5.3. Hypotheses testing

All analyses and results are displayed in this section. The interpretation of these findings will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.3.1. Statistical test for mean comparisons (independent variables)

CAUSE. To assess the impact of the cause of the failure, independent-samples t-tests were conducted (see **Table 8**). For *SATS*, Levene's test was the only one significant, but the t-test under the condition of equal variances not assumed showed a highly significant result, thus confirming that the cause radically changes initial satisfaction. As for *FAIR*, though the Levene's test showed a homogeneous distribution [$F = .607$; $p = .437$], the t-test was not significant [$t = .098$; $p = .922$], thus revealed no difference, proving that the cause does not impact fairness perceptions. Finally, *REPUR*, *WOM*, *SATSSUITE* and *SATR* were all highly significant, proving that the cause of failure has a massive impact on these four variables. Mean scores for the significant variables are all higher for the external cause (see **Table 9**).

Table 8. Statistical test for means comparisons (CAUSE and RESPONSE)

Dependent variables	CAUSE				RESPONSE			
	LEVENE'S TEST		T TEST		LEVENE'S TEST		ANOVA	
	Value	p	t	p bilateral	Value	p	F value	p
REPUR	.013	.911	-3.520	<.001	.280	.756	47.406	<.001
WOM	.582	.446	-4.956	<.001	.176	.839	39.228	<.001
SATSSUITE	.218	.641	-4.552	<.001	.865	.423	45.970	<.001
SATS	16.961	<.001	-15.372	<.001	.336	.715	.015	.985
SATR	.072	.788	-3.599	<.001	.494	.611	68.257	<.001
FAIR	.607	.437	.098	.922	None employee response removed			
					LEVENE'S TEST		T TEST	
					Value	p	t	p bilateral
					8.442	.004	13.592	<.001

Note. Levene's test: If $p > .05$, there is a homogeneous distribution, thus structural consistency is given.
If $p < .05$, equal variances are not assumed

Table 9. Mean comparisons (CAUSE)

	REPUR		WOM		SATSSUITE		SATS		SATR		FAIR	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Mean values	2.8	3.64	2.87	3.80	2.49	3.42	1.46	4.07	3.05	3.75	4.75	4.72

Note. 1: Hotel; 2: Weather

RESPONSE (good vs. bad vs. none). A one-way ANOVA was conducted to analyze the impact of the employee response. Levene's tests were non-significant for every dependent variable, therefore homogeneity of variances can be assumed. The ANOVA results were highly significant for *REPUR*, *WOM*, *SATSSUITE* and *SATR*, proving that the type of response has a substantial impact on these variables. Consequently, LSD post-hoc criteria were applied to examine these specific differences and found significant relations between Good vs. Bad and Good vs. None for these four variables, meaning that a bad response impacts as much as a no response at all (see **Table 10a**). For every four significant variables, the mean differences between Good-Bad responses were lower than for Good-None responses (see **Table 10b**). SATS was the only exception since it was non-significant [$F = .015$; $p = .985$], meaning that customers evaluate their satisfaction regardless of the type of employees' response.

Table 10a. Multiple comparisons LSD post-hoc (RESPONSE: good vs. bad vs. none)

Dependent variable	(I) RESPONSE	(J) RESPONSE	Mean difference (I-J)	p-value
REPUR	Good	Bad	1.91	<.001
	Good	None	2.25	<.001
	Bad	None	.34	.178
WOM	Good	Bad	1.51	<.001
	Good	None	1.68	<.001
	Bad	None	.17	.408
SATSSUITE	Good	Bad	1.65	<.001
	Good	None	1.95	<.001
	Bad	None	.30	.169
SATR	Good	Bad	1.74	<.001
	Good	None	2.05	<.001
	Bad	None	.32	.097

Table 10b. Mean comparisons (RESPONSE: good vs. bad vs. none)

	REPUR			WOM			SATSSUITE			SATS			SATR		
	G	B	N	G	B	N	G	B	N	G	B	N	G	B	N
Mean values	4.60	2.69	2.35	4.4	2.9	2.71	4.15	2.50	2.20	2.73	2.75	2.79	4.66	2.92	2.60

Note. G: Good; B: Bad; N: None

RESPONSE (good vs. bad). Finally, an independent-samples t-test was conducted on *FAIR* by removing the None scenarios. Levene's test was significant, indicating unequal variances between the two groups. The t-test with equal variances not assumed showed a significant result [$t = 13.592$; $p \leq .001$]. This confirms that, contrary to the cause factor, the type of response (Good vs. Bad) impacts the customer's perceptions of fairness of treatment (with respectively $M_{\text{good}} = 6.03$ and $M_{\text{bad}} = 3.42$) (see **Table 10c**).

Table 10c. Mean comparisons (RESPONSE: good vs. bad)

	FAIR	
	G	B
Mean values	6.03	3.42

Note. G: Good; B: Bad; N: None

FAILURE OCCURRENCE. To test the SRP effect, a series of Dunnett's post-hoc bilateral t-tests (i.e., test comparing experimental groups against the control one) (see **Table 11a**). The mean scores are summarized in **Table 11b**. The results displayed that for almost all scenarios across *REPUR*, *WOM* and *SATSSUITE* the differences were highly significant ($p < .001$). All mean differences (I-J) were consistently negative, meaning that experiencing a service failure significantly destroys customer satisfaction, WOM likelihood and repurchase intentions compared to a no-failure service. The only exception was found in the comparison with S4NHG for *REPUR*. Indeed, a non-significant result was observed ($p = .175$), indicating that customer repurchase intentions did not statistically differ from the no-failure scenario. Despite a mean difference of I-J = $-.696$, Scenario 4 has mitigated the impact of the failure on repurchase intentions. Interestingly, the greatest mean difference for the three variables was consistently with S3HN and the smallest one with S4NHG. Compared to the no-failure scenario, the order from best to worst regarding the three dependent variables is: S4NHG > S1HG > S5NHB and S6NHN > S2HB > S3HN. Therefore, if a failure is occurring, it seems better when it is a situation of good employee response and external blame.

Table 11a. Dunnett's post-hoc bilateral t-tests (FAILURE OCCURRENCE)

Dependent variables	Comparison between scenarios					
	1-7	2-7	3-7	4-7	5-7	6-7
REPUR	<.001	<.001	<.001	.175	<.001	<.001
<i>Mean difference</i>	-1.33	-3.36	-3.88	-.70	-2.48	-2.74
WOM	<.001	<.001	<.001	.001	<.001	<.001
<i>Mean difference</i>	-2.15	-3.34	-3.95	-1.01	-2.84	-2.68
SATSSUITE	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
<i>Mean difference</i>	-2.26	-4.02	-4.67	-1.65	-3.16	-3.22

Table 11b. Mean comparisons (FAILURE OCCURENCE)

Dependent variables	Scenarios						
	S1HG	S2HB	S3HN	S4NHG	S5NHB	S6NHN	S7CONTR
REPUR	4.3	2.27	1.75	4.93	3.15	2.89	5.63
WOM	3.85	2.65	2.05	4.98	3.15	3.32	5.99
SATSSUITE	3.85	2.09	1.43	4.46	2.95	2.88	6.11

5.3.2. Main and interaction effects of the independent variables

To examine the joint effect of attribution (CAUSE) and employee response (RESPONSE), a series of two-way ANOVAs were conducted (see **Table 12**). The mean scores are summarized in **Table 13**.

RESPONSE (Good vs. Bad) & CAUSE (Internal vs. External)

This framework analyses every dependent variable with the four scenarios 1, 2, 4 and 5.

Main effect of RESPONSE. The analysis showed a highly significant effect of the employee's response across almost all variables ($p < .001$) with the logical exception of initial satisfaction with the service [$F = .260$; $p = .873$] as it is measured before the employee interacts with the customer. The response explains the fairness perception [$F = 183.748$] and satisfaction with the recovery [$F = 96.420$].

Main effect of CAUSE. Results were significant for all the variables ($p < .005$) except for FAIR [$F = .065$; $p = .799$], meaning that fairness perceptions depend strictly on how the situation is handled rather than the cause of the failure. Analyses revealed that the cause explains substantially initial satisfaction with the service [$F = 140.394$; $p \leq .001$].

Interaction effect RESPONSE*CAUSE. The interaction effect was non-significant across all variables ($p > .05$). This means that a good response improves the customers' evaluation to the same extent as a bad response harms it, regardless of whether the cause of the failure was internal or external.

RESPONSE (Good vs. Bad vs. None) & CAUSE (Internal vs. External)

This framework removes FAIR from its analysis as it adds the two none condition scenarios (3 and 6) (see **Table 12**).

Main effect of RESPONSE. Even with the inclusion of the None condition, the main effect of the employee's response remains significant ($p < .001$) for all dependent variables except, once again, for initial satisfaction with the service [$F = .117$; $p = .890$]. Response also explains substantially satisfaction with the recovery [$F = 79.555$; $p \leq .001$].

Main effect of CAUSE. All variables are significant ($p < .001$) and the main effect of cause is even more pronounced on initial satisfaction with the service [$F = 233.739$; $p \leq .001$].

Interaction effect RESPONSE*CAUSE. Same as the first framework, the interaction effects remain non-significant across all dependent variables ($p > .05$).

Table 12. Main and interaction effects on dependent variables

Dependent Variable	RESPONSE* (Good vs. Bad)		CAUSE* (Internal vs. External)		RESPONSE × CAUSE*	
	F value	p	F value	p	F value	p
SATS	.026	.873	140.394	<.001	.449	.504
FAIR	183.748	<.001	.065	.799	.314	.576
SATR	96.420	<.001	8.153	.005	.185	.667
WOM	61.297	<.001	17.834	<.001	2.683	.104
SATSSUITE	60.603	<.001	12.174	.001	.348	.556
REPUR	58.395	<.001	9.282	.003	.248	.620
Dependent Variable	RESPONSE** (Good vs. Bad vs. None)		CAUSE** (Internal vs. External)		RESPONSE × CAUSE**	
	F value	p	F value	p	F value	p
SATS	.117	.890	233.739	<.001	.557	.574
SATR	79.555	<.001	26.645	<.001	2.626	.075
WOM	48.774	<.001	38.399	<.001	2.309	.102
SATSSUITE	55.656	<.001	34.635	<.001	2.285	.104
REPUR	52.744	<.001	20.597	<.001	.568	.567

Note. *Analyses including only S1HG, S2HB, S4NHG and S5NHB

**Analyses including S1HG, S2HB, S3HN, S4NHG, S5NHB and S6NHN

Table 13. Mean comparisons by main effects (RESPONSE and CAUSE)

Dependent variables (Mean values)	RESPONSE* (Good vs. Bad)			CAUSE* (Internal vs. External)	
	Good	Bad		Hotel	Weather
SATS	2.73	2.75		1.53	4.04
FAIR	6.00	6.06		4.75	4.72
SATR	4.66	2.92		3.55	4.06
WOM	4.4	2.89		3.25	4.08
SATSSUITE	4.15	2.50		2.97	3.72
REPUR	4.60	2.69		3.28	4.05

Note. *Analyses including only S1HG, S2HB, S4NHG and S5NHB

(continued)

Mean values of dependent variables	RESPONSE** (<i>Good vs. Bad vs. None</i>)			CAUSE** (<i>Internal vs. External</i>)	
	Good	Bad	None	Hotel	Weather
SATS	2.73	2.75	2.79	1.46	4.07
SATR	4.66	2.92	2.60	3.05	3.75
WOM	4.4	2.89	2.72	2.87	3.81
SATSSUITE	4.15	2.50	2.20	2.49	3.42
REPUR	4.60	2.69	2.35	2.80	3.64

Note. **Analyses including S1HG, S2HB, S3HN, S4NHG, S5NHB and S6NHN

5.3.3 Hypotheses validation summary

Based on these statistical analyses, the individual outcome of each hypothesis is presented as well as a summary of all research hypotheses (see **Table 14**).

Hypothesis 1 (SRP → (+): (a) overall satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions)

This hypothesis is not supported because Dunnett's post-hoc tests showed that experiencing a service failure systematically damages customers' evaluations ($p < .001$). Satisfaction with the service (SATSSUITE) fails to recover to the control baseline of $M = 6.11$, reaching only the maximum of $M = 4.46$ for Scenario 4 (S4NHG). Therefore, **H1a** is rejected. The same analysis can be done on WOM likelihood (maximum of $M = 4.98$ vs. control $M = 5.99$) and repurchase intentions (maximum of $M = 4.93$ vs. control $M = 5.63$), thus **H1b** and **H1c** are rejected. Interestingly, while not surpassing the control group, S4NHG was the only one that managed to match repurchase intentions with the control group ($M = 4.93$ vs. $M = 5.63$, non-significant difference), though it could not exceed it.

Hypothesis 2 (External (vs. Internal) → (+): (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception)

This hypothesis is partially supported because the independent t-tests and two-way ANOVAs showed that an external cause significantly improves most customer perceptions ($p < .005$). Failures with external cause generate higher scores for initial satisfaction with the service ($M_{\text{external}} = 4.07$ vs. $M_{\text{internal}} = 1.46$), WOM likelihood ($M_{\text{external}} = 3.81$ vs. $M_{\text{internal}} = 2.87$) and repurchase intentions ($M_{\text{external}} = 3.64$ vs. $M_{\text{internal}} = 2.80$), validating **H2a**, **H2b** and **H2c**. However **H2d** is rejected because the failure leaves fairness perceptions of treatment completely unaffected [$F = .065$; $p = .799$]. Therefore, customers are more tolerant about the overall experience when the weather is to blame but it does not change how they evaluate fairness of treatment.

Hypothesis 3 (Good (vs. Bad) response → (+): (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception)

This hypothesis is supported because the type of employee response has a massive and highly significant main effect across all hypothesized dimensions ($p < .001$). Thus, providing a good response dramatically outperforms a bad one for satisfaction with the recovery ($M_{\text{good}} = 4.66$ vs. $M_{\text{bad}} = 2.92$), WOM likelihood ($M_{\text{good}} = 4.40$ vs. $M_{\text{bad}} = 2.89$) and repurchase intentions ($M_{\text{good}} = 4.60$ vs. $M_{\text{bad}} = 2.69$), validating **H3a**, **H3b** and **H3c**. Furthermore, the

independent t-test confirmed that the type of response strongly impacts fairness perceptions [$t = 13.592$; $p \leq .001$], supporting **H3d**.

Hypothesis 4 (No (vs. Bad) response $\rightarrow$ (+): (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception)

This hypothesis is not supported because the one-way ANOVA and LSD post-hoc revealed no statistical difference between bad employee response and no response at all. The none condition penalizes secondary satisfaction with the service ($M_{none} = 2.20$ vs. $M_{bad} = 2.50$) and WOM likelihood ($M_{none} = 2.72$ vs. $M_{bad} = 2.89$) to a statistically identical extent ($p > .05$). Therefore, **H4a**, **H4b**, **H4c** and **H4d** are rejected. This shows that no interaction with the employee creates the same magnitude as handling the situation poorly, invalidating the idea that no interaction is better than poor interaction.

Hypothesis 5 & 6 (respectively **Good response $\times$ External (vs. Internal) $\rightarrow$ (+): (a) experience's satisfaction ; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception,**
and **Bad response $\times$ Internal (vs. External) $\rightarrow$ (-): (a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception)**

Both of these hypotheses are not supported as the two-way ANOVAs across both experimental frameworks generated completely non-significant interaction values ($p > .05$). The positive impact of a good response does not multiply under an external cause, hence **H5** is rejected. Similarly, a bad response does not trigger a negative double deviation when the failure is internal, meaning **H6** is rejected. Therefore, the two factors work completely independently. This proves that the employee's response has always the same impact on customers, no matter who is to blame for the failure.

Hypothesis 7 ((a) Blame attribution $\rightarrow$ SRP; (b) Employee response type $\rightarrow$ SRP)

This hypothesis is partially supported. Because Hypothesis 1 was rejected, these factors cannot be validated as successful predictive factors of the SRP. However, the data confirmed that the cause of the failure (**H7a**) and the type of employee response (**H7b**) act as key factors that control the distance to the baseline. While they failed to create a real paradox, they function as essential boundary conditions that determine how closely a recovery strategy can mitigate a failure and approach the SRP threshold.

Table 14. Hypotheses validation summary

Hypotheses tested		Validation	Statistical basis
H1. SRP → (+):	(a) overall satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions	Rejected Rejected Rejected	Opposite direction Opposite direction Opposite direction
H2. External (vs. <i>Internal</i>) → (+):	(a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception	Validated Validated Validated Rejected	No significant difference
H3. Good (vs. <i>Bad</i>) response → (+):	(a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception	Validated Validated Validated Validated	
H4. No (vs. <i>Bad</i>) response → (+):	(a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception	Rejected Rejected Rejected Rejected	No significant difference No significant difference No significant difference No significant difference
H5. Good response × External (vs. <i>Internal</i>) → (+):	(a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception	Rejected	No significant interaction
H6. Bad response × Internal (vs. <i>External</i>) → (-):	(a) experience's satisfaction; (b) WOM likelihood; (c) repurchase intentions; (d) fairness of treatment perception	Rejected	No significant interaction
H7. Factors as functions of SRP	(a) Blame attribution → SRP ; (b) Employee response type → SRP	No/ Partially No/ Partially	Mitigates partially Mitigates partially

5.4. Additional exploratory analyses across scenarios

Beyond the formal research hypotheses, a global comparison across all scenarios was conducted to capture the cumulative dynamics of the cause of the failure and the type of response provided.

5.4.1. Pairwise comparisons for SATS, SATSSUITE and SATR

A two-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted on SATS, SATSSUITE and SATR without the control group (S7CONTR). Due to a non-significant Box's M test (i.e., no homogeneity of covariance matrices) (Box's $M = 66.950$; $p \leq .001$). The global scenario effect was highly significant (Pillai's Trace = 1.080, $F = 2.147$, $p \leq .001$) (see **Table 15a**).

Table 15a. Multivariate tests (scenarios $\times$ satisfaction)

Test de box de l'égalité des matrices de covariances		Tests multivariés	
Test de Box	66.950	Pillai's Trace value	1.080
F	2.147	F	22.833
p	<.001	p	<.001

Following this, univariate tests were conducted and displayed significant individual effects on all variables: SATS [$F = 47.024$; $p \leq .001$], SATSSUITE [$F = 29.466$; $p \leq .001$] and SATR [$F = 37.208$; $p \leq .001$] (see **Table 15b**). Levene's tests were significant for SATS [$Value = 4.439$; $p \leq .001$] and SATSSUITE [$Value = 3.097$; $p = .010$] but non-significant for SATR [$Value = .490$; $p = .783$] (see **Table 15b**).

Table 15b. Tests of between-subjects effects and Levene's test (scenarios $\times$ satisfaction)

Dependent variable	Tests of between-subjects effects		Levene's tests	
	F	p	Value	p
SATS	47.024	<.001	4.439	<.001
SATSSUITE	29.466	<.001	3.097	.010
SATR	37.208	<.001	.490	.783

Therefore, post-hoc tests were applied: Dunnett's T3 for SATS and SATSSUITE and Tukey's HSD for SATR (see **Table 15c**). The post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed the following non-significant ($p > .05$) pairs:

SATS. The three hotel-caused and three weather-caused failure scenarios did not differ within one another ($p > .05$). This is consistent as SATS was measured before

the second part of the scenario including the recovery and the employee interaction.

SATSSUITE. No significant differences were found between S1HG and S4NHG ($p = .579$), S1HG and S5NHB ($p = .075$), S2HB and S3HN ($p = .061$), S2HB and S6NHN ($p = .083$) and finally, between S5NHB and S6NHN ($p = 1.000$).

SATR. No significant differences were found between S1HG and S4NHG ($p = .193$), S2HB and S5NHB ($p = .537$), S2HB and S6NHN ($p = .439$) and lastly, between S5NHB and S6NHN ($p = 1.000$).

Table 15c. Multiple comparisons post-hoc tests (scenarios $\times$ satisfaction)

Dependent variable		SATS		SATSSUITE		SATR	
Post-hoc test		Dunnett's T3		Dunnett's T3		Tukey	
(I) randnumber	(J) randnumber	(I-J) Mean difference	p	(I-J) Mean difference	p	(I-J) Mean difference	p
1	2	-.1759	1.000	1.7593	<.001	1.6597	<.001
1	3	.1414	1.000	2.4175	<.001	2.4053	<.001
1	4	-2.6536	<.001	-.6089	.579	-.5809	.193
1	5	-2.5455	<.001	.9024	.075	1.2311	<.001
1	6	-2.6637	<.001	.9690	.044	1.2061	<.001
2	3	.3173	.976	.6582	.061	.7456	.041
2	4	-2.4777	<.001	-2.3682	<.001	-2.2406	<.001
2	5	-2.3695	<.001	-.8569	.040	-.4587	.537
2	6	-2.4877	<.001	-.7903	.083	-.4536	.439
3	4	-2.7950	<.001	-3.0264	<.001	-2.9862	<.001
3	5	-2.6869	<.001	-1.5152	<.001	-1.1742	<.001
3	6	-2.8051	<.001	-1.4485	<.001	-1.1992	<.001
4	5	.1081	1.000	1.5113	<.001	1.8119	<.001
4	6	-.0101	1.000	1.5779	<.001	1.7870	<.001
5	6	-.1182	1.000	.0666	1.000	-.0250	1.000

Table 15d. Mean comparisons (scenarios $\times$ satisfaction)

Mean values	S1HG	S2HB	S3HN	S4NHG	S5NHB	S6NHN
SATS	1.44	1.62	1.30	4.1	3.99	4.11
SATSSUITE	3.85	2.09	1.43	4.46	2.95	2.88
SATR	4.38	2.72	1.97	4.96	3.14	3.17

5.4.2. Impact on the importance of the type of service

To understand what service matters most to customers in a hotel, respondents were asked to rank six hotel services, based on the issues experienced in the scenarios, in order of preference. These options included Wifi and Water flow (representing weather-caused failures), Clean bathroom and Clean bedroom (representing hotel-caused failures), Employees behavior and Other for any additional service such as a pool or laundry.

The frequency analysis shows a clear and quite permanent hierarchy in what customers value most in a hotel. Overall, basic core services dominated the rankings: Water, Bathroom and Bedroom consistently captured the top three most important services across all scenarios, with cumulative importance scores between 70% and 94% (see **Table 16a**).

Table 16a. Global service importance frequencies and final priority rank

Scenarios	Hotel's services					
	WIFI	WATER	BATHROOM	BEDROOM	EMPLOYEES	OTHER
IMP 1	1.6	43.6	21.4	21.8	7.4	4.1
IMP 2	2.1	18.5	43.6	27.6	8.2	0
IMP 3	9.9	18.1	25.5	34.2	11.1	1.2
IMP4	25.9	10.3	7.4	13.2	37.9	5.3
IMP5	51.9	8.2	1.6	2.1	30.5	5.8
IMP 6	7.8	0.4	0.4	1.2	4.5	26.3
FINAL PRIORITY RANK	5	1	2	3	4	6

Note. IMP1 to IMP6 represent the global ranking frequencies (%) assigned by the entire sample to each hotel service. The “Final priority rank” is determined by the total accumulated primary preference (IMP1) scores across all 7 scenarios (respectively 11.2, 306.4, 148.8, 126.3, 51.3 and 28.8 with a maximum possible score of 700) calculated with the table in Appendix 4

Specifically, Water and Bathroom constantly alternate as the top priority across most scenarios (see **Table 16b**). In contrast, secondary services like Wifi and Employees are systematically pushed to the bottom. Indeed, Wifi never breaks into the top 3 and the employees' pleasantness even decreased to its lowest point (9.1% in Scenario 3 (S3HN)). Overall, no matter the scenario, core physical comfort (Running water, Clean bathroom and Clean bedroom) always outperform digital (Wifi) and relational services (Employees' pleasantness). The bold formatting in Table 16b. Highlights that even

when a service failure is not actively experienced in a scenario, customers still prioritize core physical elements over everything else.

Table 16b. Cumulative Top 3 importance scores and rankings per scenario (%)

Scenarios	Hotel's services					
	WIFI	WATER	BATHROOM	BEDROOM	EMPLOYEES	OTHER
1	8.4	72.2 (3)	94.4 (1)	88.9 (2)	33.3	2.8
2	2.8	88.9 (1')	88.9 (1')	77.8 (2)	36.2	5.6
3	6.1	90.9 (2)	94 (1')	94 5 (1')	9.1	6
4	17.6	94.1 (1)	82.3 (2)	70.7 (3)	32.4	2.9
5	21.3	75.7 (3)	94 (1)	75.8 (2)	27.3	6
6	16.2	78.3 (3)	94.5 (1)	86.4 (2)	21.6	2.7
7	23.5	61.8 (3)	85.3 (1)	64.2 (2)	26.5	11.7

Note. (1)-(3): Priority rank of the three highest cumulative importance scores (IMP1+IMP2+IMP3) for each scenario calculated with the table in Appendix 4

Hotel services featured in the specific scenarios are highlighted in bold

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Summary of the study's findings

The empirical findings of this study provide answers to the main research question, its sub-questions and additional examination. This section responds to the latter.

6.1.1. Research findings

Does the SRP actually work?

Does SRP apply in this specific hospitality context? No, a true paradox does not emerge in this model based on a hotel context. A service failure inflicts damages that cannot be surpassed, meaning that a no-failure situation is always preferred.

Are there significant differences in behavioral intentions? Yes, significant differences exist. While WOM likelihood remains deeply damaged across all failure scenarios compared to the control group, repurchase intentions show a different pattern. Scenario 4 (S4NHG) showed that optimal conditions can somehow protect the repurchase intention even if satisfaction is not fully restored.

Does blame attribution have an impact?

How does blame attribution impact customers' reaction toward service failures? Blame attribution acts as a buffer against initial negative reactions. Indeed, customers reported higher scores for initial satisfaction, WOM likelihood and repurchase intentions when a failure was attributed to an external cause rather than an internal one.

Does it serve as a justification mechanism for fairness perceptions? No, it does not because the evaluation of fairness remains unchanged even when customers are more tolerant in case of external causes. They always expect fair treatment regardless of the cause of the failure.

Do frontline employees' responses have an impact?

To what degree does the quality of employee recovery response impact customer's post-experience behavioral intentions? The quality of the employee response is the single most powerful driver of post-recovery customer states. A good employee response will recover customer satisfaction, WOM likelihood and repurchase intentions. Interestingly, no interaction whatsoever

damages customers' evaluation to the same extent as handling the recovery in a poor manner, proving that no interaction is just as harmful as a bad interaction.

Does blame attribution affect the customer evaluation of the employee recovery response? No, because results showed that blame attribution does not alter how customers evaluate employees' response. A good response helps and a bad response harms to the same extent, whether the hotel or the weather is at fault.

To what extent do blame attribution and employee recovery response influence the service recovery paradox? In this study, a true SRP was not achieved. However, these two factors were found to be essential conditions that can control the distance to the baseline. This means that while failures create a full paradox, they mitigate the damage and approach the paradox threshold.

6.1.2. Interpretation of pairwise comparisons (SATS, SATSSUITE, STR)

The additional analyses revealed four major insights regarding customer satisfaction.

A neutralization effect. On the one hand, as already assessed in Hypothesis 2a., customers are significantly harsher, regarding SATS, immediately after a failure when the hotel is responsible ($M = 1.30$ - 1.62) than when the weather is at fault ($M = 3.99$ - 4.11). On the other hand, an excellent recovery (i.e., Good response) generates no significant differences for SATSSUITE ($MS_{1HG} = 3.85$ vs. $MS_{4NHG} = 4.46$) and SATR ($MS_{1HG} = 4.38$ vs. $MS_{4NHG} = 4.96$), regardless of the cause. This means that a good employee response neutralizes the initial dissatisfaction of a hotel-caused failure.

Passive and bad behavior. In terms of post-recovery satisfaction (SATSSUITE and SATR), results displayed that customers perceive bad response and no interaction on the same level, regardless of the initial failure attribution, except for SATR between S2HB and S3HN (respectively $M = 2.72$ vs. $M = 1.97$). This means that offering a bad response or not providing any response triggers the same post-recovery satisfaction for the customer.

The external cause factor. Differences were also observed when comparing only the cause of the failure. Significant differences were found for both SATSSUITE ($MS_{2HB} = 2.09$ vs. $MS_{5NHB} = 2.95$; $MS_{3HN} = 1.43$ vs. $MS_{6NHN} = 2.88$) and SATR ($MS_{3HN} = 1.97$ vs. $MS_{6NHN} = 3.17$), proving that post-recovery satisfaction, regardless of the type of response, is considerably higher in a weather-caused failure compared to a hotel-cause failure.

Interestingly, results show no significant differences between S1HG and S5NHB for the variable SATSSUITE. This means that customers perceive a good response in a hotel-caused failure on the same level as a bad response in a weather-caused failure.

Service recovery vs. double-deviation. Finally, comparing SATS and SATSSUITE within each scenario displayed significant positive shifts for the first four scenarios (increases of respectively 2.41, 0.47, 0.13 and 0.36). In contrast, important significant negative shifts for the bad and no response weather-caused failure scenarios were found (decreases of respectively - 1.04 and - 1.23). A similar pattern can be observed when comparing the three satisfaction variables. Indeed, the first four scenarios follow a logic of increased satisfaction ($SATS < SATSSUITE < SATR$). Conversely, 5NHB and S6NHN trigger a double deviation effect by scoring better before the poor or absence interaction of the employee during the recovery ($SATSSUITE < SATR < SATS$).

6.1.3. Interpretation of the hierarchy importance of services

The findings displayed that customer preferences follow a very strict order. Core physical needs (Running water, Clean bathroom and Clean bedroom) are the non-negotiable standard of a hotel stay. If these basic elements fail, secondary services like Wifi or employees' pleasantness completely lose their value.

This could explain why employee pleasantness dropped to its lowest priority during major failures: customers do not care about friendly employees if they cannot access their basic physical comfort. Ultimately, regardless of the failure's cause, core physical infrastructure is a strict *must have* before they can care about digital and relational services.

6.2. Comparison with existing literature

The findings in this study show that the SRP is very hard to achieve, which is directly in line with the research of Mount (2012), Lunardo et al. (2023) and Edström et al. (2022). While some previous studies claimed that a good recovery makes customers happier than if nothing went wrong, Smith and Bolton (1998) concluded that this paradox is highly selective: it only occurs when customers give the absolute highest scores to the recovery. Aligning with Lunardo et al. (2023, p. 10), results support “organizational learning during the follow-up recovery as a boundary condition for the occurrence of the SRP”.

It also highlights the crucial importance of the frontline employee’s response during a failure. By purposefully focusing on recovery interactions, it allows an observation of customer reactions and the limits of the SRP. This choice is deeply linked to blame and attribution. Leo and Huh (2020) proved that the type of service provider changes how customers assign blame after a failure. Furthermore, the results of this study are consistent with those of Oflaç et al. (2021), which show that where the customer places the fault (i.e. locus of failure) is crucial. When customers perceive the service provider as completely responsible for the failure, their feeling of fairness decreases considerably. However, monitoring this human response is quite complex. Indeed, as Mount (2012, p. 7) reminds us regarding employee behavior like sincerity or rudeness, “it is hard to monitor this intangible aspect”. It is heavily subject to interpretation because the way of interacting may be perceived differently than what was intended, meaning that the employee’s response in itself might not suffice if the customer perceives a lack of honesty.

This study expands the literature by looking at many different customers’ reactions and intentions following a recovery. Indeed, standard research has heavily focused on basic satisfaction and repatronage intentions. Following the direction suggested by Abdo et al. (2025), this study goes further by developing an extension of positive behaviors and intentions that arise after a service recovery process.

As this study looks at how customers help to solve the failure, Hazée et al. (2017) offered a good warning: letting customers co-create the solution does not automatically make them happy. Additionally, the results align with the strict boundary condition found by Abdo et al. (2025) which states that when customers know the firm is not responsible, providing financial compensation does not change their level of satisfaction. In this case, customers are completely satisfied simply with a clear explanation.

6.3. Theoretical contributions

One of the purposes of this study is to expand the existing literature on service recovery by investigating a wider range of customer reactions and behavioral intentions after a service failure. As highlighted by De Matos (2009), the majority of research has focused heavily on how situational variables affect satisfaction and repurchase intentions. This study extended the literature to address a gap identified by Collier et al. (2018), by investigating a more complex model with not just one dependent variable resulting from service recovery efforts. By examining multiple customer outcomes, as recommended by Maxham (2001), the results showed that while overall satisfaction might stay damaged by a failure, specific behavioral intentions can still recover.

Furthermore, this research deepens our understanding of blame and behavioral dynamics during customer-employee interactions. The findings align with Oflaç et al. (2021) on the importance of locus of attribution. Gaps defined by many authors are being addressed in this study such as a wider investigation of locus of responsibility (Abdo et al., 2025), including new dimensions such as service failure type (Edström et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2022), including traditional predictors of fair perceptions like expectations and attributions (Tax et al., 1998) or observing the impact of failures attributed to no one at all like the weather (McCollough, 2000).

Finally, this study contributes to the ongoing debate about the conditions of the existence of the SRP. By observing that a true paradox is highly selective and difficult to achieve, the findings of this study support the skeptical framework of Edström et al. (2022). Indeed, as they explain it, triggering the SRP requires creating an unexpected value that goes completely beyond what is normally viewed as the standard responsibility, showing why the SRP could become an even rare phenomenon in future research.

6.4. Managerial implications

From a practical perspective, this study provides hotel managers with new strategies to optimize their service recovery process without wasting financial resources. Turning these research insights into daily workplace rules gives a clear structure to build effective management frameworks (Grégoire & Mattila, 2021; Köcher et al., 2025).

Stop chasing the paradox. “Ultimately, the goal of recovery is to restore the customer’s satisfaction with the provider such that the customer will not engage in negative WOM and will want to renew his/her relationship with the company.” (Harrison-Walker, 2019, p. 383)

Since this study shows that a service failure systematically damages customer evaluations, managers must stop looking at recovery as a tool to make guests happier than before. Indeed, service recovery presents a risk of double deviation which results in even more dissatisfaction for customers (Swanson & Kelley, 2001). In the point of view of managers, error-free services are always preferred (Michel & Meuter, 2008). Instead, prevention is key, thus when a failure happens, managers must handle it with discretion. According to Lee et al. (2024), factors like concern for face also deeply influence the customer perceptions. Since the findings confirm that a good employee response dramatically outperforms a bad one and no interaction is as bad as poor interaction, managers must train their employees to actively seek feedback and solve failures with genuine motivation and politeness (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011).

Save resources on external failures. “To ensure repurchase and positive WOM, companies should at any rate reimburse complainants for their loss.” (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011, p. 38)

This study reveals that a good response (i.e., fast, polite and adequate) always works the same way, regardless of who is to blame, though being naturally higher when the cause is external, and is quite effective on the customers’ evaluations. As Grégoire and Mattila (2021) note that, relying on biased samples causes managers to overemphasize financial compensation. They should update their CRM databases to segment customers and offer clear and adequate explanations instead of automatically wasting money for external causes. Magnini et al. (2007) also suggest *red-flagging* hotel customers who have experienced a past failure, ensuring frontline employees to provide special care for them. Thus, maybe in those specific cases, financial compensation could be necessary.

Put resources on employee's empowerment. "Optimal recovery strategies vary by industry." (Harrison-Walker, 2019, p. 385)

In this specific context, the worst decision a manager can make is to remain passive. The findings prove that doing nothing is just as destructive as handling a situation poorly, as not looking actively for feedback is penalizing. Magnini et al. (2007, p. 221) remind us of the simplicity of asking for feedback by stating that "one direct way to solicit complaints is to ask straight-to-the-point questions, like "How is everything?"". Because real failures are unpredictable, rigid standard scripts fail. As highlighted by Pina E Cunha et al. (2009), hotels must recognize the crucial role of employee improvisation. Managers should move away from strict protocols and empower frontline employees with the autonomy to make real-time decisions, insofar as they are polite and empathetic. This should ensure fast and genuine solutions that protect customer loyalty and satisfaction (Lim et al., 2025).

Empower employees and never blame the weather. It is possible that "frontline employees perceive apologizing as an admission of guilt even if they are not to be blamed for the failure." (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011, p. 39)

The pairwise comparisons of scenarios showed how employee responses change customer satisfaction. First, a good response has a powerful neutralization effect as it brings satisfaction for a hotel-caused failure back to the same levels as a weather-caused failure. This proves that a great employee response can fix a hotel-caused failure. Conversely, the data displayed a critical side effect with the weather-caused failure. While customers show initial tolerance when the weather is at fault, a bad or absence employee response triggers a double deviation effect. This completely destroys the customer's initial satisfaction and reverses the hierarchy by decreasing scores to a point where customers are just as dissatisfied as if the hotel had caused the failure itself. Managers must therefore teach their employees to never use external causes as an excuse for bad or passive performances, as the frontline interaction is a crucial driver of the final evaluation.

Core services first, secondary services second. "Although some researchers have argued that the best strategy is to fail-safe the original service delivery, it is nearly impossible to eliminate all failures." (Michel & Meuter, 2008, p. 441)

Even if zero-failures are impossible to reach, the findings show that managers must focus their efforts where it matters most. Since customers prioritize running water, clean bathrooms and clean bedrooms, hotels should direct their maintenance budgets and cleaning efforts toward *fail-safing* these three major services. Employee

pleasantness and wifi are also important but they cannot compensate for a failure in core physical comfort. Protecting these essentials when delivering the initial service will allow a better customer evaluation than relying on failure recovery.

7. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed how the service recovery paradox, the blame attribution and the frontline employees' response influence customers' behavioral and emotional outcomes in the hospitality context. By testing these factors in a multi-investigation, this research helps us understand better the post-failure dynamics.

7.1. Limits of the study

While this study provides valuable data for the hotel sector, it has some limitations. It is focused on a single service industry: the hotel sector. Although providing great managerial guidelines for hotel's managers, it is non-transferrable for other types of services because consumer perceptions, expectations and importance of human interactions vary from one service sector to another.

Additionally, the sample was largely composed of younger respondents and students. This specific segment does not represent the whole hotel guest panel. Indeed, as stated by Gelbrich and Roschk (2011, p. 37), "students pay more attention to distributive justice when assessing cumulative satisfaction" and "in exchange for tangible outcome, they might accept suboptimal procedures applied to receive this outcome." Therefore, an older sample with less sensitivity to financial compensations could increase the fairness of treatment and trigger an SRP.

Finally, Lunardo et al. (2023) remind that experimental scenario-based designs can sometimes limit the natural emotional depth of real-world interactions. Although being evaluated as quite realistic scenarios, it is not a real situation they are living in as well as not real intentions of repurchase or WOM. Without any ways to be sure of their said intentions, the study remains limited as to its accuracy in the real-world.

7.2. Recommendations for future research

This paper offers crucial theoretical and managerial insights on service recovery strategies. Theoretically, this study reveals that the cause of the failure and the employee's response act independently. Also the results show that a good human interaction is always valued, no matter who is to blame for the failure. Managerially, it provides many strategies to adopt regarding the type of failure the hotel's employee might face. It also offers indication to allocate efforts appropriately to avoid wasting resources and to prevent dissatisfaction from poor frontline interactions.

Interestingly, when researching service categories with failures, respondents do not usually cite hotels as the worst one that comes to mind, as hospitality is typically not among the most problematic or cited services (De Matos, 2009; Harrison-Walker, 2019).

Several directions for future research can be addressed.

First, future studies should replicate this holistic model across other service industries where failures are more sizable and frequent to ensure generalizability. By examining sectors like healthcare or aviation, it could reveal if customers' blame attribution and recovery expectations change depending on riskier factors like safety and big sum of money.

Then, researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to track actual long-term customer behavior and repurchase decisions over time rather than just measuring immediate, short-term intentions. This approach would help confirm if the positive effects of a good frontline response remain strong over the evolution of the long-term customer relationship. It would also improve the scenario-based experiment by including more concrete and real factors.

Future papers could also explore how new digital contexts, online reviews or the introduction of AI influence customer blame attributions and fairness perceptions. As we live in a world that is more and more relying on automated operations, it would crucially help to understand how customers react when interacting with AI or self-service kiosks instead of human employees.

Finally, to conclude this paper, a recommendation on SRP from Magnini et al., 2007, p. 220) would be that "rather than offering evidence for or against the existence of the paradox, researchers would be better served to approach the subject by analyzing intervening factors which could enhance or hinder the odds of the occurrence of a paradoxical satisfaction after a failure and a first-rate redress".

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1. Entirety of the scenarios

SCENARIO 1 (S1HG)	SCENARIO 2 (S2HB)	SCENARIO 3 (S3HN)
Imaginez que vous arrivez à un hôtel que vous avez réservé. Vous donnez votre nom à l'employé de la réception, il vous donne les clés et vous entrez dans votre chambre. Une fois dans votre chambre, vous remarquez que celle-ci est sale et n'a pas été faite.		
[Suite du scénario] <i>Vous décidez de descendre à la réception.</i> Vous : - Excusez-moi, je viens d'entrer dans ma chambre et j'ai remarqué qu'elle était sale. La chambre ne semble pas avoir été faite et la salle de bain n'est pas propre. Employé : - Oh, je suis sincèrement désolé pour cette situation, vous avez bien fait de venir me voir. Je comprends que cela soit très gênant. Je vais m'en occuper tout de suite. <i>Quelques secondes plus tard</i> Employé (après vérification) : - J'ai une autre chambre que je peux vous proposer. Elle est au même étage et est prête immédiatement. Je peux vous accompagner si vous le souhaitez pour vous aider avec vos bagages. Et je reste bien entendu disponible si vous avez besoin de quoi que ce soit. Vous : - Merci beaucoup !	[Suite du scénario] <i>Vous décidez de descendre à la réception.</i> Vous : - Excusez-moi, je viens d'entrer dans ma chambre et j'ai remarqué qu'elle était sale. La chambre ne semble pas avoir été faite et la salle de bain n'est pas propre. Employé : - Oh, vous savez, ce n'est pas la peine de s'inquiéter, c'est des choses qui arrivent. Ce n'est pas dramatique non plus. Mais bon, je vais voir ça. <i>Quelques minutes plus tard</i> Employé (après vérification) : - Bon, j'ai trouvé une autre chambre mais elle ne sera prête que dans un moment. Je peux vous la proposer mais faudra revenir un peu plus tard avec votre clé. Vous : - D'accord...merci.	[Suite du scénario] Vous (à vous-même) : - La chambre n'a pas l'air d'avoir été faite et la salle de bain n'est pas propre...mais je n'ai pas envie de m'en occuper maintenant. Je vais laisser comme ça et profiter de mon séjour.

SCENARIO 4 (S4NHG)	SCENARIO 5 (S5NHB)	SCENARIO 6 (S6NHN)
Imaginez que vous arrivez à un hôtel que vous avez réservé. Vous donnez votre nom à l'employé de la réception, il vous donne les clés et vous entrez dans votre chambre. Une fois dans votre chambre, vous remarquez que le tonnerre gronde et que la foudre a provoqué une coupure de courant.		
[Suite du scénario] <i>Vous décidez de descendre à la réception.</i> Vous : - Excusez-moi, je viens d'entrer dans ma chambre et j'ai remarqué qu'il n'y a plus de courant. Le wifi ne marche plus et le robinet ne fonctionne pas. Employé : - Oh, je suis sincèrement désolé pour cette situation, vous avez bien fait de venir me voir. Je comprends que cela soit très gênant. Je vais m'en occuper tout de suite. <i>Quelques secondes plus tard</i> Employé (après vérification) : - Le problème est en cours de résolution. En attendant, je peux vous proposer une lampe torche et une bouteille d'eau. Je peux vous raccompagner si vous le souhaitez pour vous aider à regagner votre chambre. Et je reste bien entendu disponible si vous avez besoin de quoi que ce soit. Vous : - Merci beaucoup !	[Suite du scénario] <i>Vous décidez de descendre à la réception.</i> Vous : - Excusez-moi, je viens d'entrer dans ma chambre et j'ai remarqué qu'il n'y a plus de courant. Le wifi ne marche plus et le robinet ne fonctionne pas. Employé : - Oh, vous savez, ce n'est pas la peine de s'inquiéter, c'est des choses qui arrivent. C'est pas dra-ma-tique non plus. Mais bon... je vais voir ça. <i>Quelques minutes plus tard</i> Employé (après vérification) : - Bon alors, je peux rien faire pour la panne de courant mais à vue de nez, ça devrait revenir dans un moment. Faut patienter, c'est tout. Je peux vous proposer une lampe torche si vous en avez vraiment besoin. Vous : - D'accord...merci.	[Suite du scénario] Vous (à vous-même) : Le wifi ne marche plus et le robinet ne fonctionne pas...mais je n'ai pas envie de m'en occuper maintenant. Je vais laisser comme ça et profiter de mon séjour.

SCENARIO 7 (S7CONTR)

Imaginez que vous arrivez à un hôtel que vous avez réservé. Vous donnez votre nom à l'employé de la réception, il vous donne les clés et vous entrez dans votre chambre.

Vous (à vous-même) :

La chambre a été faite, la salle de bain est propre, l'eau coule bien et le wifi fonctionne sans problème : tout est en ordre.

APPENDIX 2. Entire survey (S1HG)**Participation à une enquête académique - Mémoire de master**

Bienvenue dans cette enquête .

Merci d'avance pour votre participation. Cette étude s'inscrit dans ma thèse de master à la Chaire de Marketing I de l'Université de Fribourg, Suisse.

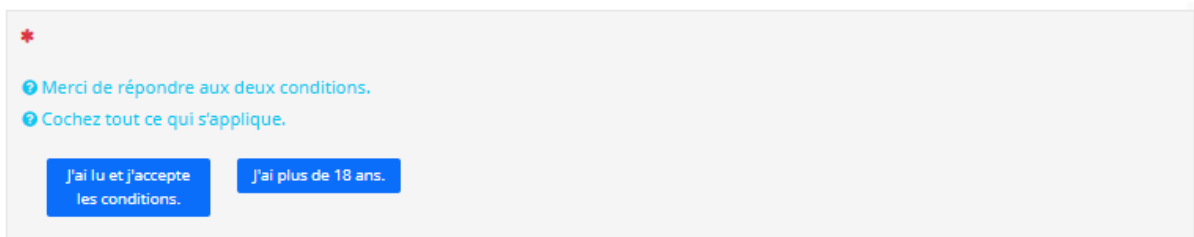
La participation à cette étude prend **environ 4 minutes**. Le questionnaire comprend un scénario fictif. Il vous sera demandé d'évaluer des points afin d'apprécier l'importance relative de différents attributs ou critères en fonction de vos préférences.

Les données seront collectées de manière **anonyme** et seront utilisées et partagées à des fins de recherche.

Il n'y a pas de récompense pour votre participation, mais vous pouvez trouver gratifiantes les tâches qui vous sont confiées dans cette étude ainsi que le fait de contribuer à un projet de recherche. La participation à cette étude est volontaire et vous pouvez à tout moment choisir de retirer votre participation sans donner de motif. Si vous décidez de vous retirer, vos données ne seront pas sauvegardées. Nous ne considérons qu'il n'y a pas de risques prévisibles, d'inconforts, d'inconvénients ou de préjudices liés à la participation de cette étude.

Si vous avez des questions concernant cette étude ou la gestion des données collectées, veuillez contacter: elise.weill@unifr.ch.

Il y a 68 questions dans ce questionnaire.



*
Merci de répondre aux deux conditions.
Cochez tout ce qui s'applique.

J'ai lu et j'accepte les conditions. J'ai plus de 18 ans.

*J'ai déjà passé une nuit dans un hôtel.

• Veuillez sélectionner une réponse ci-dessous.

☐ Oui

☐ Non

SECTION 1—

Veillez lire attentivement le scénario présenté avant de répondre aux questions, afin de garantir la qualité et la pertinence de vos réponses.

Imaginez que vous arrivez à un hôtel que vous avez réservé. Vous donnez votre nom à l'employé de la réception, il vous donne les clés et vous entrez dans votre chambre.

Une fois dans votre chambre, vous remarquez que celle-ci est sale et n'a pas été faite.

*À partir du scénario lu, répondez aux questions en vous mettant dans la situation décrite.

	Pas du tout d'accord	Pas d'accord	Plutôt pas d'accord	Neutre	Plutôt d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
Je suis satisfait(e) avec la qualité de cet hôtel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cette prestation répond aux attentes que j'ai d'un hôtel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dans l'ensemble, je suis très satisfait(e) avec cette expérience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Suite du scénario]

Vous décidez de descendre à la réception.

Vous :

- Excusez-moi, je viens d'entrer dans ma chambre et j'ai remarqué qu'elle était sale. La chambre ne semble pas avoir été faite et la salle de bain n'est pas propre.

Employé :

- Oh, je suis sincèrement désolé pour cette situation, vous avez bien fait de venir me voir. Je comprends que cela soit très gênant. Je vais m'en occuper tout de suite.

Quelques secondes plus tard

Employé (après vérification) :

- J'ai une autre chambre que je peux vous proposer. Elle est au même étage et est prête immédiatement. Je peux vous accompagner si vous le souhaitez pour vous aider avec vos bagages. Et je reste bien entendu disponible si vous avez besoin de quoi que ce soit.

Vous :

- Merci beaucoup !

SECTION 2—

* En vous plaçant dans la situation décrite, répondez aux questions suivantes.

	Pas du tout d'accord	Pas d'accord	Plutôt pas d'accord	Neutre	Plutôt d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
La communication de l'employé à mon égard était appropriée.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Je trouve que ma plainte a été traitée équitablement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dans l'ensemble, la manière dont mon problème a été résolu par l'hôtel était injuste.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

*

	Pas du tout d'accord	Pas d'accord	Plutôt pas d'accord	Neutre	Plutôt d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
Je suis susceptible de séjourner à nouveau dans cet hôtel dans le futur.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Il est probable que je ne retourne plus jamais dans cet hôtel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Il est probable que je retourne dans cet hôtel dans le futur.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

* Veuillez répondre aux questions suivantes en prenant en compte le scénario que vous venez de lire.

	Pas du tout d'accord	Pas d'accord	Plutôt pas d'accord	Neutre	Plutôt d'accord	D'accord	Tout à fait d'accord
Au vu de mon expérience avec cet hôtel, je recommanderai leur service à mes amis.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dans le futur, je pourrais faire du bouche-à-oreille négatif à propos de l'hôtel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Je vais me plaindre à mes amis ou ma famille à propos de cet hôtel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Je recommanderai les services de l'hôtel à mes amis.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

* Sur la base de cette expérience, veuillez évaluer les phrases suivantes concernant l'hôtel.

🔒 Seuls les nombres sont acceptés.
Chaque entrée doit être entre 1 et 7

Choisir cet hôtel était un choix	<input type="range"/> Terrible Merveilleux
Je suis très	<input type="range"/> Insatisfait(e) Satisfait(e)
Le service est	<input type="range"/> Horrible Excellent
Par rapport à ce service, je me sens	<input type="range"/> Mécontent(e) Content(e)

SECTION 3—

* Comment évalueriez-vous la réponse de l'employé dans ce scénario ?

🔍 Veuillez sélectionner une réponse ci-dessous.

Aucune réponse fournie

[illegible]

* En prenant en compte l'entièreté du scénario que vous venez de lire, veuillez répondre aux questions suivantes :

[illegible]

[illegible]

SECTION 4—

Expériences et habitudes personnelles

* Quelques questions pour mieux savoir votre relation avec les hôtels.

	Oui	Incertain	Non
J'ai déjà réservé un hôtel pour moi.	☐	☐	☐
J'ai déjà travaillé dans un hôtel.	☐	☐	☐

* A quelle fréquence séjournez-vous dans un hôtel ?

🕒 Veuillez sélectionner une réponse ci-dessous.

Veuillez choisir ... ▼

De manière générale, quel prix êtes-vous prêt à payer pour une chambre ?

🕒 Seuls les nombres sont acceptés.

Au minimum

Au maximum

Généralement, je paie aux alentours de

* Veuillez classer les services proposés par les hôtels par ordre d'importance pour vous.

🕒 Du plus important au moins important

🕒 Effectuez un double-clic ou glissez/déposez le/les élément(s) de la liste de gauche vers la liste de droite.

Veuillez sélectionner de 5 à 6 réponses.

Articles disponibles

Ce qui m'importe le plus n'est pas mentionné ici

L'eau courante

Un personnel d'hôtel appréciable

La salle de bain propre

Le wifi

La chambre faite

Votre classement

SECTION 5—

Quelques informations à propos de vous

*Le scénario concernait un restaurant.

☐ Oui ☐ Non

*De quel pays venez-vous ?

📘 Veuillez sélectionner une réponse ci-dessous.

☐ France

☐ Suisse

☐ Autre :

*Quel est votre genre ?

📘 Veuillez sélectionner une réponse ci-dessous.

*Quel est votre âge ?

📘 Votre réponse doit être comprise entre 18 et 99
Seul un nombre entier peut être inscrit dans ce champ.

*Que faites-vous dans la vie ?

📘 Veuillez sélectionner une réponse ci-dessous.

Remarques générales

📘 (Questionnaire, Expériences personnelles, ...)

Merci beaucoup pour votre participation !

Si vous avez une quelconque question, veuillez vous adresser à elise.weill@unifr.ch

Pour les participants SurveyCircle, voici le code : 9WRN-ARGM-XMKM-X61D

APPENDIX 3. Detailed sample description

Variables	Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage	Mean value	Min value	Max value
GEN	1 (M)	84	34.6			
	2 (F)	156	64.2			
	3 (no response)	3	1.2			
AGE	-	243	100	26.64	18	80
NAT	1 (FR)	210	86.4			
	2 (CH)	25	10.3			
	3 (other)	8	3.3			
OCC	1 (student)	170	70			
	2 (employee)	42	17.3			
	3 (self-employed)	17	7.0			
	4 (retired)	7	2.9			
	5 (other)	7	2.9			
FRE	1 (once a week)	0	0	5.24	2	7
	2 (once a month)	9	3.7			
	3 (twice a month)	3	1.2			
	4 (4 to 5 times a year)	53	21.8			
	5 (2 to 3 times a year)	75	30.9			
	6 (once a year)	62	25.5			
	7 (every couple years)	41	16.9			

APPENDIX 4. Top 3 service importance frequencies per scenarios (%)

	WIFI			WATER			BATHROOM			BEDROOM			EMPLOYEES			OTHER		
	1*	2*	3*	1*	2*	3*	1*	2*	3*	1*	2*	3*	1*	2*	3*	1*	2*	3*
1	5.6	2.8	0	25	22.2	25	22.2	36.1	36.1	33.3	27.8	27.8	11.1	11.1	11.1	2.8		0
2	0	0	2.8	58.3	13.9	16.7	19.4	52.8	16.7	11.1	30.6	36.1	5.6	2.8	27.8	5.6		0
3	0	0	6.1	57.6	12.1	21.2	18.2	57.6	18.2	21.2	27.3	45.5	0	3	6.1	3		3
4	2.9	5.9	8.8	50	26.5	17.6	23.5	29.4	29.4	11.8	26.5	32.4	8.8	11.8	11.8	2.9		0
5	0	6.1	15.2	42.4	21.2	12.1	15.2	45.5	33.3	30.3	18.2	27.3	9.1	9.1	9.1	3		3
6	2.7	0	13.5	37.8	21.6	18.9	29.7	37.8	27	16.2	32.4	37.8	10.8	8.1	2.7	2.7		0
7	0	0	23.5	35.3	11.8	14.7	20.6	47.1	17.6	2.4	29.4	32.4	5.9	11.8	8.8	8.8		2.9

Note. *: Respectively IMP1, IMP2 and IMP3 represent ranking frequencies (%)

DECLARATION OF HONOR



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DECLARATION

Par ma signature, j'atteste avoir rédigé personnellement ce travail écrit et n'avoir utilisé que les sources et moyens autorisés, et mentionné comme telles les citations et paraphrases.

J'ai pris connaissance de la décision du Conseil de Faculté du 09.11.2004 l'autorisant à me retirer le titre conféré sur la base du présent travail dans le cas où ma déclaration ne correspondrait pas à la vérité.

De plus, je déclare que ce travail ou des parties qui le composent, n'ont encore jamais été soumis sous cette forme comme épreuve à valider, conformément à la décision du Conseil de Faculté du 18.11.2013.

..... Schiltigheim, le 31 mai 2026

.....
(signature)



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D E C L A R A T I O N : A U T O R I S A T I O N D E P U B L I C A T I O N

Par ma signature, j'autorise la Chaire de Marketing à publier mon nom, le titre ainsi que le PDF de mon travail de fin d'étude sur le site internet de la Chaire.

Nom et Prénom Weill Elise
Lieu Schiltighem
Date 31/05/2026
Signature