The Effect of Service Recovery on Guest Satisfaction in Iran's Hospitality Industry
(Providing an Operational Solution)

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Abstract

Background: Service providers are strongly concerned about the negative effects of service failure. Therefore, the negative effects of failures can be reduced by allocating appropriate service recovery efforts.

Objective: This exploratory research aimed to find the reasons for customer complaints and service failure and provide solutions for service recovery in the hospitality industry. Hence, a qualitative approach was adopted and the critical incident technique (CIT) was used to analyze the opinions of experts in the field. Then, the purposive sampling method and the snowball sampling method were employed to interview 15 experts in the hospitality industry, and their views were extracted and studied using the phenomenological paradigm and Delphi method.

Findings and conclusions: According to the results, it was found that most of the participants of the research chose the hotel through the introduction of friends, the respective architecture and service, a work mission, advertising, accompanying foreign guests, previous stay history, and reputation in the service provision. However, the participants mentioned failure to meet expectations, improper behavior, higher prices, nonprofessional personnel (lack of needs assessment), lack of mastery of menu items, and lack of facilities and hygiene items as the factors influencing service failure. According to the results, behavioral protocols and guidelines, guests' opinions, management experience, supervision, training, and opinions of personnel can be used to improve service delivery. Moreover, the hotel policies in service recovery were known to be the transparent process of complaint investigation, assessment of customer satisfaction, and assurance to guests to solve the problem.

Keywords: Guest satisfaction, Hospitality industry, Service failure, Service recovery.

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the leading sectors among different service industries because it is followed by high revenues and leads to a positive trade balance in many countries. With the growth of tourism, the hospitality industry has become more important (Wan Yi et al., 2018). Thus, experts in the hospitality industry should focus on providing more affordable and high-quality services to customers. This industry mainly aims to satisfy the customer in terms of service and money and to maintain a stable long-term relationship. Customer satisfaction is a critical factor in the service industry. It is also one of the first missions and objectives of senior management of organizations; hence, constant adherence to customer satisfaction is considered a prerequisite for success. Customer service failure is an inevitable part of the hospitality industry. However, this does not necessarily mean that the customer is lost forever. Considering a proper service recovery strategy, these failures should be viewed as an opportunity for businesses. Behaviors with unsatisfied customers can be extremely challenging but it is an essential skill in the hospitality industry. How to control the situation to reach a positive solution has been known as service recovery. In principle, service recovery is defined as saying the right thing at the right time. When discussing customer retention, poor service recovery can be disastrous (Keith Trend, 2023). Angry and sad customers are a normal part of any business and when the service quality does not meet the customer's expectations, they will be unhappy. Any

organization should have well-defined plans for service recovery. Although service companies have made significant efforts on the service failure, it is difficult to identify the reasons for possible failure of such efforts, in particular, in the hospitality sector (Keith Williams, 2023). Unfortunately, little emphasis is placed on the importance of service innovation in the hospitality industry. Cross et al. (2020) have highlighted service innovation as a possible option to handle the crisis and make a strong foundation for the future. The researchers believe that service innovation should be considered an important approach in the hospitality industry.

Khamitov et al. (2020) systematically reviewed 236 studies on trademark infringement, service failure recovery, and the product-harm crisis in a 21-year period. In addition, Foroudi et al. (2020) studied service failure and service recovery in 416 business-related articles from 1993 to 2019. According to the studies, customer retention rates can increase by up to 70% after service recovery. Satisfied and loyal customers act as brand ambassadors. Furthermore, Roshanak Baleshzar and Kambiz Heydarzade (2016) investigated the effect of service recovery on satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising, willingness to re-support, fairness, and consumers' disapproval. The hypotheses were tested in a scenario-based experiment. The research used factorial design (service failure) * (dependency of the recovering company) among 210 students and the results indicated higher levels of consumer

satisfaction, willingness to re-support, and positive WOM advertising in the case of the recovery effort in comparison to the cases of the previous service failure experience in other companies when it was an internal failure. Consequently, consumers exhibited more favorable perceptions of satisfaction, willingness to re-support, and positive WOM advertising when a service failure experience has already been made with an unrelated firm compared to the experience of a service failure with a related firm. It should be noted that no research on service failure has reported the effect of satisfaction, re-support, and positive WOM advertising. This research also provided empirical evidence of the fundamental psychological mechanisms leading to reciprocal effects. Mehdi Kazemi et al. (2013) examined the prioritization of service recovery strategies from the perspective of customers of Internet service companies against the service failures of these companies. According to the statistical results, among the six service recovery strategies, empowerment, priority, and recovery (blood money), explanations, communication, and concrete things and feedback have been ranked second to sixth priorities. In their field study, Samadi et al. (2008) investigated failure in providing services, service recovery strategies, and their effect on consumer behavior. The results demonstrated a significant relationship between the service failure dimensions and the service recovery strategies and the recovery strategies with the guests' intentions. It was also shown that guests' perception of

service failure and service recovery strategies are the factors affecting the behavioral intentions of foreign hotel guests. Park and Ha Sal (2016) tried to provide a model for service recovery in the hospitality industry to improve service failure and service recovery strategies to increase the positive intention of the service brand. The researchers evaluated recovery services in 4-star hotels and above. They stated inattention to service recovery strategies can be followed by negative outcomes in terms of loyalty and repeated use of hotel services by customers. However, researchers have identified the hotel's failure and tried to use the service recovery strategy to provide the ground for service improvement. Warnberg and Orsinger (2016) also presented "An Integrated Framework and Research Program in the Field of Service Recovery" to investigate the framework consisting of focal structures, causal relationships, interdisciplinary, and theoretical levels in the service recovery variable, which was less considered in other studies. Their research obtained the following results:
First, they created an interdisciplinary and multilevel theoretical framework that related organizational investments in service recovery to organizational, employee, and customer outcomes. Second, they integrated conceptual and empirical propositions obtained from previous research. Thirdly, they proposed suggestions to other researchers to conduct interdisciplinary studies on service recovery. In their paper "A Way to Recovery: Overcoming Service Failure through Positive Emotions", Lastner et al.

(2016) attempted to create a framework for service recovery through the concept of positive emotions in two gratitude and honor dimensions in the service failure and recovery process by service providers. The researchers conducted this research through two studies. The result of the first study illustrated that benevolent motives have led to a sense of pride with a mediating role in recovery activities and operation results. The second study concluded that accountability in service recovery, both in service providers and in customers, created a positive sense of gratitude and pride. Nikbin et al.'s (2015) paper "The Role of Pre-Recovery Emotions of Airline Passengers during the Service Recovery Process" explained the relationships between the causal dependence (sustainability and controllability) of airline passengers, pre-recovery emotions, post-recovery emotions, and overall satisfaction and analyzed and investigated the mediating effect of pre-recovery emotions on the relationship between causality attributes and post-recovery emotions. According to the results, two dimensions of causal relationships affected pre-recovery emotions. Pre-recovery emotions were significantly related to positive and negative post-recovery emotions. It was also found that post-recovery emotions had a significant relationship to overall satisfaction. In addition, pre-recovery emotions moderate the relationship between affection and post-recovery emotions. Bombayor, Skash, and Robison (2015) studied the role of tangible recovery in recovery services in developed and underdeveloped countries.

According to them, the type of satisfaction with the levels of recovery services in countries can be very different depending on the level of social and non-social promotion.

For example, researchers investigated the two countries Madagascar as a least developed country and Switzerland as a developed country. Their results confirmed different social levels, economic classes, and people's attitudes in least-developed countries in terms of service recovery compared to developed countries, which resulted in higher satisfaction in least-developed countries. Kim and Jang (2014) addressed the formulation of scenario writing in the field of service recovery and service failure. They stated that scenario writing is a major step and method in marketing, in particular, in service recovery and service failure. These cases are rarely studied due to their respective costs and ethical issues. However, this research process raises the question for the researchers: do the results from the laboratories accurately predict the right behavior in the real world? To gain more accurate information about service failure, the results obtained from the scenario were compared with the ones from the real world. Considering the previous studies, six modes and scenarios were set for recovery service activities. Negative emotions with behaviors such as anger and dissatisfaction with service failure are the modes manifested in the case of poor recovery services from the customer. In the case of the high-quality recovery services provided by the companies, positive emotions such as overall

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satisfaction and the intention to repurchase from the customers would be exhibited. Finally, the third level, which is the average level of services, can provide the ground for changes in attitude or continued purchase behavior of the customer. In their paper "Satisfaction with Service Recovery: Perceived Justice and Emotional Responses", Riolanza et al. (2013) addressed the relationship between perceived justice, emotions, and satisfaction during the service recovery process. The researchers analyzed a model that measured the direct effect of perceived justice on satisfaction and its indirect effect on emotions. Their findings indicated the mediating role of negative emotions in justice and satisfaction.

The lack of direct communication with the customer results in the fact that the decision-makers and planners cannot set the priorities correctly and thus the performance of the service cannot meet the customers' expectations, leading to disagreement among the customers in terms of service quality (Ha & Zhang, 2012). Service failure refers to situations where the service provided is below the desired level of customer expectations (Geum et al., 2011). Service failure can occur for all types of responses, unavailable service at the time of delivery, delay in service delivery, failure in service results, or nonaccountable employees (Kandulapati & Belamkonda, 2014). In fact, all service companies have experienced cases of customer dissatisfaction with service results, service processes, or both. On the other hand, service failure refers to a mistake or problem during the delivery of services or

products, which can be considered a major factor in changing customer behavior. What customers actually receive from the organization as service recovery for their complaints is the basis for evaluating organizational responses to complaints (Huffman & Kelly, 2000). Research suggests that service recovery from the organization increases customer satisfaction. The hospitality industry, as a major player in the tourism sector, contributes significantly to the success of the industry in countries. Hence, providing high-quality service and managing service failure have become two major concerns for experts in the hospitality sector. Due to the service failure in the industry, hoteliers need efficient planning on how to provide services. Anyone who has experienced a service failure is aware of the importance of service recovery in preventing damage to a company's image. The service provider must be aware of the problem and, if possible, provide a quick solution. However, how far can service recovery be extended? In a highly competitive industry like the hospitality industry, hoteliers must have an effective service recovery plan to investigate any service failure.

Customer orientation is rarely considered in Iran. Several studies have been conducted on how personnel behave with customers and the relationship between their behavior with profitability in business, but few studies have been published about how to behave with complaining customers and the effect of this behavior on their perceptions, other customers, and their intention to re-

purchase. The unique nature of the service makes it impossible to guarantee a faultless service. Even many customer-oriented organizations with the strongest quality programs are not able to eliminate all service failures. Several researchers have suggested possible recovery actions for establishing an interaction between personnel and customers. For example, Hong (2010) showed that after recovery actions, customer satisfaction and their subsequent behavioral intentions depend on the perception of the employees' effort and recovery. Hong (2005) demonstrated that a company and its employees may express sympathy and resolve problems thoughtfully, sincerely apologize, and compensate for the damages. In short, apologizing, offering a discount from the total bill, not receiving the amount of food, and providing a suggestion to compensate for the problem are different solutions that organizations can provide. Service recovery in this research refers to "actions taken by the service provider as a result of a service failure to reduce or resolve a customer's problem." This research helps marketers to understand the customers' perceptions and reactions, cope with their negative effects, and create and maintain a positive relationship with customers. Therefore, it was tried to investigate the reactions of complaining and neglected consumers in Iran.

The primary question of the research is: how does service recovery affect guest satisfaction in Iran's hospitality industry?

2. Theoretical framework

Due to human intervention in services, it is difficult to avoid errors in the service delivery process (Wen & Chan, 2012). Hence, service providers are very concerned about the negative effects of service failure. Observations indicate that appropriate recovery efforts can reduce the negative effects of failures (Jung & Lee, 2017; Mohammad & Gul-E-Rana, 2019; Riaz & Khan, 2016). Service recovery efforts are aimed at achieving positive customer evaluations, but earlier studies have provided mixed findings on the effectiveness of service recovery efforts (Harun et al., 2018). Furthermore, studies have shown that a large number of consumers are dissatisfied with service recovery (Ma & Zhang, 2021). Thus, it is of high importance to investigate how recovery efforts can lead to better consumer evaluations. According to previous research, consumers know different ways for service recovery, but they see them less in the efforts and responses of service providers (Rozak & Gelbrich, 2017). Therefore, consumer reciprocity has been attracted by service researchers. Consumers' willingness to reciprocity is one of the emotional-motivational states (Da & Seo, 2016) and refers to "the desire to do (something) to provide rewards to the organization's activities (Langan, 2014). In addition, consumer forgiveness is one of the most fundamental human emotions in the field of service failure and recovery (Wee et al., 2020), which originates from service recovery efforts (Mohammed & Gul-E-Rana, 2020). Hence, this study hypothesized that consumers' willingness to recover and forgive is a potentially desirable outcome of service recovery. For example, investing in the effective

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management of service failures can lead to mutual emotions (Firo et al., 2014) and customers' future support (Dovata et al., 2019). A service failure results in the loss of consumer resources (e.g., time & money), but service recovery efforts with cash or goods and social initiatives (e.g., apologies) will reduce these losses (Chang et al., 2012). Customers review the efforts of service recovery providers in terms of honesty, reliability, and accountability (La & Choi, 2019). Researchers in service recovery increasingly emphasize perceived justice as a mechanism for assessing service failure and recovery actions (Ma & Zhang, 2021; Matikiti et al., 2019; Mohammad & Gul-E-Rana; 2019). Sparks and Friedlin (2007) claimed that service recovery efforts have different types, including the explanation of failure for compensation. Several researchers argued that recovery efforts by organizations would lead to a positive perception of justice. In this regard, Liu et al. (2019) claimed that recovery efforts (e.g., compensation and quick response to the customers) are manifestations of perceived justice. In other words, the perception of justice represents consumers' evaluation of organizational efforts for service recovery (Ampang et al., 2020; Nancy et al., 2021; Rifi & Mostafa, 2022). Regarding the hospitality and tourism industry, service failure may result from human intervention at any stage of the service delivery process (Suskind, 2002) and its unpredictable nature (Bae et al., 2021). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2021), service failure has a devastating effect on both the hospitality

and tourism industry and the global economy because many countries depend on sustainable tourism revenue. As reported by global statistics in 2019, 330 million jobs were supported by the hospitality and tourism industry, which contributed 10% to the total global gross domestic product (GDP), equivalent to $8.9 trillion (WTTC, 2020). For this reason, service recovery strategies have been repeatedly studied in this industry to provide effective responses to service failure. Earlier studies have demonstrated that successful implementation of service recovery strategies will gain back the customers' trust, emotions (Sanchez-Garcia & Coras-Peres, 2011), satisfaction, and perception of fairness (Hong et al., 2020) and increase their satisfaction compared to the previous experience of service failure even if any mistakes or defects and service failures have harmful consequences on the expectations and satisfaction of customers (Wu et al., 2018) such as loss of confidence (Gohari et al., 2016) or replacement of the service provider (Kioni, 1995). However, the effect, nature, and severity of service failure can vary in different contexts. Let us consider an example: the most common service failures will occur in a restaurant if food is cooked incorrectly (or customers face other food-related issues) or service is provided slowly (Suskind & Vicari, 2011). Similarly, flight delays and cancellations, lost luggage, and any booking-related issues are the most common failures in the airline industry (Migage et al., 2018). If customers have different experiences and expectations of the services promised by the related

organization, this will affect their perception of service failure. For example, the customer is likely to have higher expectations of the service of a luxurious restaurant compared to a fast-food chain restaurant. Therefore, any service failure may have stronger negative behavioral consequences for customers with higher expectations (Chu et al., 2017; Namkong & Jang, 2010).

3. Methodology

Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the structures of lived experience and consciousness of the studied phenomenon according to first-hand people's perspectives. This method was introduced by Edmund Hesserl's philosophical studies and as it was expanding, it was used in non-philosophical areas of research as a qualitative method. Phenomenological research aims to clearly explain and identify phenomena as they are perceived by people in a specific situation. Phenomenology is used both as a research philosophy and as a research method. Therefore, a qualitative approach was adopted in this exploratory research and the critical incident technique (CIT) was used to analyze the experts' opinions. Then, purposive sampling and snowball sampling were employed to interview with 15 experts in the hospitality industry and their views were extracted and investigated using the Delphi method. CIT is one of the special techniques used for in-depth research and investigation. It is a systematic way to collect people's data and customer feedback. CIT is a set of procedures used to collect direct observations of human behavior that are

of critical importance and meet defined methodological criteria. These observations are tracked as important incidents and applied to solve practical problems and develop broad scientific principles. This technique is a systematic research method for recalling important observations, incidents, or behaviors by people with first-hand experience. The CIT questionnaire simply asks respondents to recall and retell a true story about some problems experienced in a specific service context.

An open-ended questionnaire, including 12 questions, was used to interview with the experts in the field. This research used the phenomenology paradigm to take advantage of the experiences of the customers of hotels. The statistical population of the research includes the experts who have received the service improvement program from the hotel. Tehran City was chosen for the following reasons:

1. The percentage of people's income in Tehran is higher than in other cities in Iran.

2. The behavior of other chain hotels in other cities can be understood largely by examining the hotels of a chain in one city and hence a solution can be provided for other cities by investigating these hotels in Tehran and determining their weaknesses.

3. Sampling will be more readily accessible in Tehran

The set of primary dimensions and components was developed, and the Delphi method (Qasemi et al., 2018) was used as a qualitative strategy due to the inability to solve the problem using accurate analytical techniques and the

time-consuming nature of frequent meetings with 15 experts in the hospitality industry (these interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic) and compliance with their anonymity. Sampling to participate in the panel was taken through face-to-face meetings, telephone, and correspondence. Most of the experts who participated in the research were faculty members, postgraduates, and experts, and had between 10 and 20 years of experience in positions related to the research topic. Data collection in phenomenological studies often involves in-depth interviews with experts. According to Polkinghorne (1989), interviewing 5 to 25 people with full experience of the related phenomenon is sufficient for data collection. VanManen (1990) also stated that slow conversations, written responses, and multimedia pieces are among the data collected by the phenomenologist. In general, 15 heterogeneous samples are used to obtain a wide range of opinions, quality answers, and acceptable solutions in the Delphi method. In most cases, purpose-based sampling is used, but if experts are not identified, snowball sampling is also used. In the case of many identified experts, random sampling is used.

4. Findings

Phenomenology describes the meanings of a concept or phenomenon according to some people's views based on their experiences with that phenomenon. Thus, it seeks to understand the common experiences of some people. Therefore, the view of a group of experts, which are selected by purposive sampling or snowball sampling, is usually used in management and social science research. As stated by Husserl, phenomenology is a macro-method and the original method of any type of research in social and human sciences. Phenomenological research can be classified as basic research. However, studies cannot be categorized simply. Sometimes research is conducted with a practical approach to expand the boundaries of knowledge in a particular field. Some have called this kind of research method applied developmental research. The usual research process in the quantitative approach is to study sources to choose the appropriate theory, formulate hypotheses, and test and analyze them statistically. In contrast, there may not be a study-related theory in the qualitative approach, or the researcher does not want to limit his work to existing theories. Consequently, the qualitative approach can be used to develop a new theory for explaining the phenomenon or new patterns that are found in the data. The qualitative approach emphasizes the quality of the data, and thus the collected data is fundamentally qualitative (Kulis & Hussey, 2013). The final findings are not pre-determined in qualitative research, which is mainly exploratory and seeks to "build" concepts, models, and frameworks (Bommard & Ibert, 2001). Therefore, a qualitative approach was adopted to find factors affecting service recovery and customer satisfaction but there was no predetermined framework such as theory or model, and this framework was designed according to the collected data. Earlier studies in the field

were first reviewed for a relatively comprehensive understanding of the available literature, and accordingly, a preliminary list of complaint investigation and service recovery components affecting customer satisfaction was provided to conduct the present research. Then, these factors were completed and finalized with the Delphi method. Since the Delphi method relies on anonymity, controlled feedback, and statistical group response and avoids the influence of prominent people in discussion groups or group pressure for conformity, a valid consensus of experts can be reached using the method. The main statistics used in Delphi studies are central tendency (mean, median, and mode) and distribution index, standard deviation (SD), and interquartile range; however, using the median and mode is more desirable, and the average could also be used.

In the next step, experts' opinions about the elements and variables of the initial theoretical model were collected through interviews and using the Delphi method to achieve the final model of customer satisfaction. The questionnaire was provided to the experts twice in two stages. It was used to measure the variables of the initial conceptual model of the research. All items were designed with a five-point Likert scale as completely important (5), very important (4), moderately important (3), unimportant (2), and completely unimportant (1) to determine the importance of the elements of the initial model. Moreover, content analysis was performed to identify the main factors in

the initial unstructured questionnaire (interview) to analyze the Delphi results in the first round of the research, the results of which turned the unstructured questionnaire into a structured questionnaire and formed the basis of the next rounds. The second round used quantitative methods in which the Likert rating technique was used, and central and dispersion indices were used to show the degree of experts' consensus in the third and subsequent rounds.

The analysis results of the phenomenological method (qualitative part)

Step 1: Forming a Delphi panel

The problem of the research was defined, and the necessary characteristics for the participants in the Delphi panel were determined. Then, the candidates for participation in the panel were identified and invited. This stage was completed with the selection of panel members. Table 1 is a summary of the characteristics of the panel members.

Table 1. Summary of the characteristics of the panel members

Row	Fields of study & level of education	Job, position
1	Ph.D. in educational administration	CEO of travel and tourism agency
2	MA in Tourism Administration	Active in tourism
3	MA in Cultural Administration	University Professor and active in the hospitality industry
4	MA in Business Administration	Internal manager of the hotel
5	BA in Industrial Engineering	Active in the hospitality industry
6	BA in Hospitality Administration	Expert and active in the hospitality industry
7	MA in Hospitality Administration	Active in the food and beverage industry
8	Ph.D. in Administration	University professor
9	MA in Administration	Hotel and restaurant operator
10	MA in business administration	Active in the petroleum industry
11	MA in Tourism Administration	Active in tourism
12	BA in Hospitality Administration	University professor and expert in the hospitality industry
13	BA in Engineering	Active in the hospitality industry
14	MA in Business Administration	University Professor and active in the hospitality industry
15	MA in Tourism Administration	Active in tourism

Step 2: Analyzing the answers to the first questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire for identifying the requirements of the research topic was provided to the panel members in the second stage and similar or close proposed items were merged after receiving the answers and reviewing the members' views. Table 2 reports the results of the second stage.

Table 2. The results of the second stage of the research

How to choose a hotel Introduction by friends, the respective architecture and service, insisting on receiving high-quality services, undertaking business missions, advertising, hosting foreign guests, previous stay history, reputation in providing services, curiosity about hotels, management based on organizational chart, in-person visiting, presenting the capacity of Iranian hotels to foreign guests, monitoring the affairs by the owner, and job needs
How to cope with service failure Failure to meet expectations, improper behavior, offering higher prices, non-professional personnel (lack of needs assessment), lack of mastery of menu items, and lack of facilities and hygiene items compared to the number of guests.
How to make a complaint (state a problem) Complaining to the main headquarters, complaining to the hotel manager, inappropriate behavior, reporting to the reception, reporting to public relations, reporting to senior managers, reporting to the hotel management, posting comments on social networks (Instagram), reporting to the reception supervisor, complaining to the residential and internal manager, and complaining to the relevant manager.
How to share negative experiences with others Using word-of-mouth communication, completing the survey form inside the room, posting comments on social networks (Instagram), not returning the customers despite WOM communication, guest-generated review sites, social networks, non-retelling, and the virtual world.
How personnel behave and react after a problem occurs (acceptable level of their response) Improper behavior, proper behavior according to the related training, unemotional behavior, proper behavior (in organizational management), indifference, improper behavior in different situations, personnel behavior according to the presence of the owner or manager, and slow investigation process.
How the personnel try for service recovery Improving services and offers, influencing personnel from management, offering discounts and apologies in the case of training the apology skills
Satisfying options for service recovery Combination options (financial and non-financial) in different situations, providing options depending on the moment of the occurrence of the problem, professional behavior, acceleration in resolving the problem, apologizing, and putting oneself into the guest's shoes.
How to improve hotel services Using behavioral protocols and guidelines, training and surveying the guests, good hygiene, experienced personnel, experienced manager, technical and engineering arrangements (housekeeping), control, supervision, and survey of personnel.
The effect of how to cope with the problem on the complaint investigation process Reporting all the details and following up, not using alternative ways (disgruntling, grumbling, etc.) instead of reporting the problem.
The effect of hotel policies on the complaint investigation process Developing a transparent process for investigating the complaints and a customer satisfaction measurement system (CRM), assuring the guests of the problem investigation.
The effect of the presence/absence of another guest at the place where the problem occurred on the investigation process Investigating the problem of the unsatisfied person in place. Unwillingness to resolve the problem in the absence of another guest. The guests may become angry in the presence of a third person; hence, their problem may be discussed in another room.
The effect of the problem investigation process (complaint review) on guest satisfaction The relevant official must listen to and follow up on the problem and inform the guest(s) after problem-solving, providing the services expected from the hotel's star, high-quality services, personnel with hospitality-related education, giving authority to the personnel, fast investigation process of the problem, the investigation process of the problem or complaint, accountability, and management control over the services.

Step 3: The level of agreement by prioritizing the items according to the panel members' views

After collecting the first-stage questionnaire, the answers were classified to set the second-stage questionnaire. The second questionnaire was a close-ended one and was provided to the members as the items from the previous stage to prioritize and determine the level of agreement of each panel member with the desired category using a Likert scale (completely disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4, completely agree = 5). Table 3 shows the results.

Step 3:

Items
The introduction by friends affects the choice of a hotel.
Negative experiences are shared with others by completing the survey form.
Failure to meet expectations is a major cause of service failure.
Previous stay history and reputation in providing services affect the choice of a hotel.
Complaining to the hotel manager is a way to state the problem.
Nonprofessional personnel (lack of customer needs assessment) is one of the factors affecting service failure.
Posting comments on social networks (Instagram) is a way to state the problem.
Trying to show the capacity of Iran's hotels to foreign guests affects the choice of a hotel.
Complaining to the main headquarters of the hotel is a way to state the problem.
Improper behavior of personnel is a reason for not solving problems.
Offering higher prices and not complying with hygiene issues are the factors affecting service failure.
Proper behavior of the personnel after the occurrence of a problem affects the problem-solving.
Non accountable personnel will negatively influence service recovery.
The personnel will take action for service recovery according to the managers' behavior.
The slow investigation process with the problem is an unacceptable behavior of the personnel.
Negative experiences are shared with others through word-of-mouth communication.
The personnel can take action for service recovery by improving services and providing suggestions.
Negative experiences are shared with others through guest-generated review sites.
Service recovery is satisfactory by combining financial and non-financial options.
Negative experiences cannot be recounted to others.
Hotels improve services by adopting behavioral protocols and guidelines.
Dealing with the problem of the dissatisfied guest in place affects the investigation process of the complaint.
Training the personnel affects the improvement of hotel services.
Service recovery is satisfactory by providing non-financial options.
A survey of hotel guests affects the improvement of services.
Reporting all the details from the hotel to the guests affects the complaint investigation process.
Hotels take action for service recovery by developing a transparent complaint investigation process.
Follow-up by hotel guests affects the complaint investigation process.
Keeping informed the guest of the problem-solving affects the guests' satisfaction.
The customer satisfaction measurement system (CRM) affects the complaint investigation process.
Sometimes, there is no desire to resolve the problem when the guest is no longer present at the hotel.
If the relevant official listens to and follows up on the problem, the guest will be satisfied.
A professional behavior for service recovery can be satisfactory.

Step 4: The level of agreement with the identified items according to the panel members' views

The items obtained from the order of the results from the first and second questionnaires were provided to the panel members in the form of a questionnaire to determine their level of agreement with the specified requirements. The third questionnaire was developed to reach a consensus. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4. Results of the third questionnaire

Items	The level of agreement with the items
The introduction by friends affects the choice of a hotel.	99%
Negative experiences are shared with others by completing the survey form.	81%
Failure to meet expectations is a major cause of service failure.	92%
Previous stay history and reputation in providing services affect the choice of a hotel.	99%
Complaining to the hotel manager is a way to state the problem.	89%
Nonprofessional personnel (lack of customer needs assessment) is one of the factors affecting service failure.	86%
Posting comments on social networks (Instagram) is a way to state the problem.	77%
Trying to show the capacity of Iran's hotels to foreign guests affects the choice of a hotel.	92%
Complaining to the main headquarters of the hotel is a way to state the problem.	81%
Improper behavior of personnel is a reason for not solving problems.	91%
Offering higher prices and not complying with hygiene issues are the factors affecting service failure.	96%
Proper behavior of the personnel after the occurrence of a problem affects the problem-solving.	98%
Non accountable personnel will negatively influence service recovery.	99%
The personnel will take action for service recovery according to the managers' behavior.	98%
The slow investigation process with the problem is an unacceptable behavior of the personnel.	96%
Negative experiences are shared with others through word-of-mouth communication.	89%
The personnel can take action for service recovery by improving services and providing suggestions.	99%
Negative experiences are shared with others through guest-generated review sites.	89%
Service recovery is satisfactory by combining financial and non-financial options.	93%
Negative experiences can be not recounted to others.	27%
Hotels improve services by adopting behavioral protocols and guidelines.	96%
Dealing with the problem of the dissatisfied guest in place affects the investigation process of the complaint.	99%
Training the personnel affects the improvement of hotel services.	100%
Service recovery is satisfactory by providing non-financial options.	86%
A survey of hotel guests affects the improvement of services.	98%
Reporting all the details from the hotel to the guests affects the complaint investigation process.	82%
Hotels take action for service recovery by developing a transparent complaint investigation process.	94%
Follow-up by hotel guests affects the complaint investigation process.	92%
Keeping informed the guest of the problem-solving affects the guests' satisfaction.	97%
The customer satisfaction measurement system (CRM) affects the complaint investigation process.	98%
Sometimes, there is no desire to resolve the problem when the guest is no longer present at the hotel.	58%
If the relevant official listens to and follows up on the problem, the guest will be satisfied.	99%
A professional behavior for service recovery can be satisfactory.	99%

5. Conclusion

Some factors for service recovery in the hospitality industry were identified through qualitative research and interviews. According to the observations, most of the participants chose the hotel through the introduction of friends, the hotel architecture and service, a business mission, advertising, hosting foreign guests, previous stay history, reputation in

providing services, and so forth. In addition, participants mentioned factors such as failure to meet expectations, improper behavior, offering higher prices, non-professional personnel (lack of needs assessment), lack of mastery of menu items, and lack of facilities and hygiene items for coping with service failure. The guests made their complaints through the main headquarters, the hotel manager, reception, public relations, social networks (Instagram), and the residential and internal managers. They also shared their negative experiences with others through word-of-mouth communication, completing the survey form inside the room, posting comments on social networks (Instagram), guest-generated review sites, other social networks, and so on. After stating the problems, the guests expected to receive service recovery by offering discounts and apologies in the case of training the apology skills, fruit containers, and so forth. Furthermore, most participants expected service recovery as a combination of financial/non-financial options. According to the participants' views, the behavioral protocols and guidelines, surveying the guests, experienced managers, supervision, and training and survey of personnel are the ways to improve service delivery. The transparent process of the complaint investigation, assessment of customer satisfaction, and assurance to guests to solve the problem were considered to be the hotel's policies for service recovery. Finally, hotels can affect the guests' satisfaction and loyalty by listening to the guests, following up with the relevant officials, informing them after problem-solving, providing the expected services, improving the quality of services, giving

authority to the personnel, and the management controls.

6.Suggestions for further research
The following suggestions are provided for future research:
1. This research focused on one industry (i.e., the hospitality industry), which affects the generalizability of the results. Due to its specific context, the service recovery process has different effects and therefore the results can be different from one industry to another. Hence, other service industries, including travel and tourism agencies, airlines, and restaurants are suggested to be examined in future studies.
2. Since the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic which specifically influenced the tourism and hotel industry, the above factors are suggested to be evaluated by future researchers after the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Future research should expand the studied samples. This study was conducted on different guests in Tehran City; therefore, culture may be a confounding factor and limit the findings. Thus, future studies should address problems in different cultural contexts.
4. Future research can use the longitudinal field research method (longitudinal design) to review service failure, service recovery methods, and customer satisfaction and discover the causal relationships more correctly.
5. Future studies can determine the effects of different levels of monetary compensation (financial options); that is, discounts, full refunds, 50% refund of the cost of the meal, savings in the customer's user account, and using them in future visits for providing a more complete set of failure

recovery strategies for the personnel in the hospitality industry.

6. Variables such as perceived justice, WOM communication, emotions, guests' participation in the service recovery process, service technologies, and so on were not investigated in the present research. Therefore, they are suggested to be studied in future research.

7. Strategic structures of the organization related to frontline personnel and service providers, including socialization, empowerment, behavioral rewards, role adaptation, teamwork, self-control, and so on play a vital role in the service recovery process that should be examined carefully.

8. Future researchers can determine the effect of some mediating variables on the service recovery process. For example, researchers and managers would likely take advantage of a better understanding of the role of customer gender, level of participation, personality traits, situational factors, and product- and service-related factors that may affect consumer perceptions after service failure and recovery efforts.

7.Limitations

As with any other study, this research has some limitations that are as follows:

1. Incoherent and irregular structure in the service recovery and problem-solving in the tourism and hospitality industry. For example, there are rules and regulations for investigating patients' complaints in the health and medical education system, but the hospitality service industry has not established such rules to oblige the respective authorities to comply with and implement them.

2. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world and Iran significantly changed the way the services were provided, eliminated some services, adjusted the workforce, and even closed residential centers. Therefore, the data for this research was collected very hard.

3. Due to the lack of a structured system, each of the semi-private, private, and state-owned hotels has its specific service recovery (of course, if there is a policy in the hotel), and sometimes the same procedures are neglected by changing the management system (senior managers) or board of directors.

4. The experimental nature of the present research limits its generalizability. The cross-sectional design of the research does not allow us to make causal inferences. Hence, future studies can use the longitudinal field research methods (longitudinal design) to review service failure, service recovery methods, and customer satisfaction and discover the causal relationships more correctly.

5. Due to non-transparency in some administrative systems of Iran, even if there is a procedure for service recovery, the guests and the business generally would not achieve the desired results for reasons such as improper training of personnel (their ignorance), competitors' unawareness about the existing system, guests who do not misuse the procedure (according to the business owners), and guests' unawareness about their rights**.**

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