

CUSTOMERS SERVICE EXPERIENCE IN HOSPITALS: A DIP AND SOS CONSTRUCT OF NEGATIVE ENCOUNTERS

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INTRODUCTION

In order to keep a competitive advantage and to fulfill the needs of customers, service companies must offer favorable customer experiences and services. A service experience may be seen as a service process that creates customers' cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses, resulting in a mental mark, a memory (Johnston and Clark, 2001). If the service experience is negative, the customers' perceived justice influences complaint behaviors (Schoefer and Diamantopoulos, 2008), as well as their emotions and loyalty towards the firm (DeWitt et al., 2008).

Recent service research shows that negative emotions have an important impact on customer loyalty (e.g. Wong, 2004; Roos et al., 2009). Further, empirical studies show that negative emotions influence word-of-mouth and complaining behaviors (e.g. Liljander and Strandvik, 1997), as well as re-purchase intentions and customers' attitudes toward the company (e.g. Davidow, 2003). In fact, customers' experiences, causing negative emotions, can result in substantial damage to firms in terms of their reputation and relationship to their customers. It appears that those studies that have used measures of emotion reveal a lack of consistency in embracing more facets of negative emotions. Most studies have used single or limited sets of negative emotions. It seems there is a need for more thorough examination and testing of the negative emotions in CSE and SRF. In fact, Bagozzi et al. (1999) request further research on how emotions should be measured, and how emotions are related to each other. Wong (2004, p. 366) calls for attention to investigate further the role of emotions in service encounters.

However, there appears to be no research that has focused simultaneously on the negative motions in CSE and the follow-up processes of SRF. Therefore, our research intends to address this gap by focusing on negative emotions in both CSE- and SRF-processes in the health care industry. The objective is to describe and test an SOS-construct and its dimensions of negative emotions in CSE and SRF (i.e. Self, Other and Situational). Also, we describe similarities and differences of negative emotions in CSE and SRF. Consequently, this article focuses on an area within service recovery that hereto is neglected. As such this article makes a contribution to the call for more research on the role of emotions in service research (e.g. Bagozzi et al., 1999).

METHODOLOGY

The project used a quantitative survey on 385 users of health care services in Puerto Rico. The study was conducted in the local health care industry, since it provides access to a variety of negative service encounters due to the high level of patient-employee interaction. Consequently, using the health care industry as a setting is both relevant to the service industry, and at the same time allows the study to be narrowed down to one setting. The negative incidents included a wide range of services, from encounters with the hospitals' service personnel to the performance of doctors. Measures from previous studies (i.e. Table 1 and Table 2) were used to construct the survey. Measurement scales used a 'don't know' option to prevent respondents from answering neutrally when they cannot relate to the question.

Table 1: Example of measures of emotions based on service literature. Additionally literature on emotions relevant to health care will be added.

Emotion Concept	Representative research
Self	Three dimensions of justice (i.e. DIP): <i>Distributive justice</i> – (i) fair outcome, (ii) got as deserved, (iii) the required compensation, and (iv) the right outcome. <i>Procedural justice</i> – (i) time taken to resolve problem and (ii) adequate flexibility.

	<i>Interactional justice</i> – (i) concern, (ii) effort, (iii) appropriate communications, and (iv) courtesy.
1) Shame	Westbrook (1987); Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993); Oliver (1993); Svaeri et.al (2010)
2) Guilt	Westbrook (1987); Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Oliver (1993); Mano and Oliver (1993); Liljander and Strandvik (1997); Dubé and Kalyani (2000); Krampf et al. (2003); White and Yu (2005); Svaeri et.al (2010)
3) Regret	Zeelenberg and Pieters (1999); White and Yu (2005) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
4) Embarrassment	
5) Sadness	Ellsworth (1985); Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Oliver (1993); Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993); Oliver (1994); Dubé and Kalyani (2000); Krampf et al. (2003); Phillips and Baumgartner (2002); Chebat, Davidow, and Codjovi (2005); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
6) Loneliness	Dubé and Trudeau (1996) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
7) Unhappy	Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993)
8) Depression	Dubé and Trudeau (1996); Liljander and Strandvik (1997); Phillips and Baumgartner (2002); White and Yu (2005) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
Other	
1) Anger	Westbrook (1987); Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Oliver (1993); Ellsworth (1985); Liljander and Strandvik (1997); Brown and Kirmani (1999); Dubé and Kalyani (2000); Krampf et al. (2003); Mccoll-Kennedy and Sparks (2003); Young and Smith (2005); Chebat, Davidow, and Codjovi (2005); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
2) Irritation	Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993); Matitla and Enz (2002); Young and Smith (2005); DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall (2008) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
3) Rage	Brown and Kirmani (1999) ; Krampf et al. (2003); DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall (2008) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
4) Discouragement	Dubé and Trudeau (1996); Krampf et al. (2003) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
5) Frustration	Dubé and Trudeau (1996); Young and Smith (2005) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
6) Disempowerment	
7) Distress	Westbrook (1987); Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993); Phillips and Baumgartner (2002); DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall (2008) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
Situational	
1) Fear	Westbrook (1987); Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Oliver (1993); Ellsworth (1985); Mano and Oliver (1993); Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993); Brown and Kirmani (1999); Krampf et al. (2003) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
2) Worry	Dubé and Trudeau (1996) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
3) Anxiety	Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993); Dubé and Trudeau (1996); Chebat, Davidow, and Codjovi (2005) ; Svaeri et.al (2010)
4) Nervousness	Mano, Haim and Oliver (1993); Oliver (1994); Brown and Kirmani (1999); Svaeri et.al (2010)

Table 2: Example of selected Justice Concepts in Service Research

Justice Concept	Representative research
Procedural	
assumption	Tax and Brown (1998)
responsibility	Tax and Brown (1998); Mccoll-Kennedy and Sparks (2003)

Speed/quick response	Tax and Brown (1998); Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); McCole (2004); Voorhees and Brady (2005); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008); DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008); Svaeri et al (2009)
timing	Tax and Brown (1998); Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003)
convenience	Tax and Brown (1998)
follow-up	Tax and Brown (1998)
process control	Tax and Brown (1998)
flexibility	Tax and Brown (1998); Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); McCole (2004); DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008)
knowledge of process	Tax and Brown (1998)
Fair/fairly designed policies and practices/procedures	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); McCole (2004); Voorhees and Brady (2005); Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***; Svaeri et al (2009); Svaeri et al (2009)
gave me the service the customer was entitled to have	Svaeri et al (2009)
fair with respect to policies and procedures	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); Voorhees and Brady (2005); DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008)
supervisor invention	Mccoll-Kennedy and Sparks (2003)
customer had a say/influence over income	Kim and Smith (2005)*; Colquitt (2001)***
adapted policies	Kim and Smith (2005)*;
adequate procedures	Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
Customers can express views and feelings	Colquitt (2001)***; Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
procedures are applied consistently/fairly	Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***; Svari et al (2009)
procedures are free of bias	Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
procedures are based on accurate information	Colquitt (2001)***
Customers can appeal the outcome	Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
procedures uphold ethical and moral standards	Colquitt (2001)***
Solving the problem	Schoefer and Ennew (2008)
The process was fair	Voorhees and Brady (2005)
overall fair procedures	Voorhees and Brady (2005); Svaeri et al (2009)
Fair problem handling	Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
Interactional	
Politeness/ courtesy	Tax and Brown (1998); Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Mattila and Patterson (2004)*; Kim and Smith (2005)*; Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006)** Colquitt (2001)*** (Called the dimension "Interpersonal"); Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)*** (Called the dimension "Interpersonal")
empathy	Tax and Brown (1998); Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006)**; Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
Effort/worked hard	Tax and Brown (1998); Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); Mattila and Patterson (2004)*; McCole (2004); Voorhees and Brady (2005); DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008); Svaeri et al (2009)
explanation/information	Tax and Brown (1998); Mccoll-Kennedy and Sparks (2003); Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006)**; Schoefer and Ennew (2008)

Honest/candid/ethical	Tax and Brown (1998); Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); Voorhees and Brady (2005); Svaeri et al (2009)
Attitude	Tax and Brown (1998)
concern	Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Mattila and Patterson (2004)*; McCole (2004); Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006)**; DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008)
appropriate communications	Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Kim and Smith (2005)*; McCole (2004); DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008)
courteous treatment/dignity	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); Colquitt (2001)***(Called the dimension "Interpersonal"); Voorhees and Brady (2005)
showed a real interest	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); Voorhees and Brady (2005); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
Showed care	Mccoll-Kennedy and Sparks (2003)
Respect	Colquitt (2001)***(Called the dimension "Interpersonal"); Adidam and Pol (2006)***(Called the dimension "Interpersonal"); Svaeri et al (2009)
no improper remarks or comments	Colquitt (2001)***(Called the dimension "Interpersonal"); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
Treated fairly/tried to be fair	Voorhees and Brady (2005); Svaeri et al (2009)
professionalism	Adidam and Pol (2006)***(Called the dimension "Interpersonal")
Willingness to solve the problem	Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
Fair overall behavior	Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
Informational (added by Colquitt 2001)	
Candid/open in (his/her) communications	Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
explained the procedures thoroughly	Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
reasonable explanations regarding the procedures	Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
communicated details in a timely manner	Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
communications tailored to individuals' specific needs	Colquitt (2001)***
Distributive	
compensation issues	Tax and Brown (1998); Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006)**; Schoefer and Ennew (2008)
reimbursement	Tax and Brown (1998)
refund	Tax and Brown (1998)
replacement	Tax and Brown (1998); Mccoll-Kennedy and Sparks (2003)
repair	Tax and Brown (1998)
credit	Tax and Brown (1998)
correction	Tax and Brown (1998)
apology	Tax and Brown (1998); Mccoll-Kennedy and Sparks (2003); Shapiro and Nieman-Gonder (2006)**(Defined apology as interactional justice); Schoefer and Ennew (2008) (Defined apology as interactional justice);
no resolution	Tax and Brown (1998)
Same compensation as others	Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008)
got as deserved	Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Kim and Smith (2005)*; McCole

	(2004); DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008); Iyer and Muncy (2008)
the required/needed compensation	Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); McCole (2004); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008); Iyer and Muncy (2008)
the right/appropriate /adequate outcome/compensation	Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Kim and Smith (2005)*; Colquitt (2001)***; Voorhees and Brady (2005); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008); Iyer and Muncy (2008); Svaeri et al (2009)
outcome reflect what you have contributed to the organization/value for money	Colquitt (2001)***; Svaeri et al (2009)
outcome is justified, given your performance	Colquitt (2001)***
The needed outcome	Mattila and Patterson (2004)*; DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008)
positive outcome	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); Voorhees and Brady (2005)
(overall) fair outcome	Smith, Bolton and Wagner (1999); Mattila and Patterson* (2004); Kim and Smith (2005)*; McCole (2004); Voorhees and Brady (2005); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008); DeWitt., Nguyen and Marshall (2008); Iyer and Muncy (2008); Svaeri et al (2009)
fair outcome given time and hassle/effort	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003); Colquitt (2001)***; Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***; Svaeri et al (2009)
No more hassle than for others	Sindhav, Holland, Rodie, Adidam and Pol (2006)***
fair outcome given the inconvenience	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003)
more than fair outcome	Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003)
fair final outcome	Voorhees and Brady (2005)
fair deal	Voorhees and Brady (2005)

*Used only 1 dimension construct of justice

**Used a 2 dimension construct of (i) Distributive and (iv) Interactional justice

***Used a 4 dimension construct of justice, including (i) Distributive Justice, (iv) Interpersonal Justice, (iiv) Procedural Justice and (iiiv) Informational Justice

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The DIP-construct applied and tested in this study consists of 15 paired items of perceived justice in negative service encounters and the complaint-handling processes, all of which generated the same three dimensions, namely:

- (1) distributive;
- (2) interactional; and
- (3) procedural.

Meanwhile, the SOS-construct is defined by the categories, namely:

- (1) Self
- (2) Other
- (3) Situational

An implication based upon the empirical findings and testing of the measurement models is that the dimensions of the DIP-construct might assist in the management of perceived justice in customer-firm service encounters. Management might, i.e. benefit from using the items of the three dimensions as a checklist, or to create guidelines of important factors for making sure that customers perceive the service as fair. Using the findings of the study, these checklists can include the procedures, interactions and fairness of results, reflecting the three dimensions of justice.

The applicability and usefulness of the proposed SOS-construct in research endeavors and business practices may be characterized and summarized as follows:

- The three dimensional pattern of the SOS-construct shows that there are three significantly different sets of negative emotions that can be expected, depending on who or what the cause of the situation in the service encounter is.
- When the negative incident is related to the customer (i.e. 'self'), the negative emotions will share the characteristics of having an internal focus. Shame, guilt, regret, embarrassment, sadness, loneliness, unhappiness, and depression are the emotions that most likely will occur when the customer blames him/herself for the incident.
- The negative emotions related to incidents caused by the company (i.e. 'other') have significantly different characteristics. Irritation, discouragement, frustration, disempowerment and distress (and potentially rage and anger) will most likely be expected when the customer blames the company for the situation.
- When neither the company nor the customer is to blame (i.e. 'situational'), the negative emotions that are most likely to occur are fear, worry, anxiety, and nervousness.

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the findings in the current study, it is concluded that even though the customers' perceived justice varies in strength over time, it may remain fairly unchanged from the time when the negative incidents occur until after service recovery processes have taken place. Therefore, the link between the initial negative service encounters and the actual handling of the complaint is crucial in managing critical incidents in service encounters.

The DIP-construct brings together, complements and fortifies existing theory and previous research in the context of justice in service encounters and complaint handling. Addressing both pre- and post-complaint processes provides a complementary contribution to the field in focus.

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