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Practice of service recovery in automobile assistance

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Abstract

This study investigated practices of service recovery in automobile assistance. With 13 variables identified in literature, 20 managers and 386 customers were interviewed in three separate companies. Differences were found between opinions of customers and managers, mainly related to communication, compensation, correction monitoring, information capturing, and refund.

Keywords: service failure, service management, service quality, service recovery

1 Introduction

Services have gained importance over the past decades. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) showed that in the 80's services had accounted for roughly three quarters of U.S. GDP and were responsible for the creation of nine out of ten new jobs in the country. Nobrega (1997) stated that service sector grew in importance and participation in the gross domestic product, especially in more developed countries. Lovelock and Wirtz (2006) indicated that the increased automation of industry, besides political-governmental factors, social and technological changes increased the demand for skilled labor in service worldwide. Grönroos (2009) mentioned the service sector's participation in the global economy, ranging from 50% in developing countries, and approximately 70% in more developed countries. Growth in size and importance of participation makes the companies seek to improve their skills to improve their service level in order to create competitive advantage and improve their customer relationships.

Though, no matter how good a company is in service, there is a number of factors, both in internal and external environment, that can cause failures in service. Production-consumption simultaneity, a feature present in most of the services, often demands customer participation, with possibility of failures. The search for differentiating, competitiveness and market increasing, make it necessary that the company should adopt measures to minimize (or if possible, avoid) the effect of these failures on the perception of quality by the customer, trying not only prevent, but to manage their effects and recuperate credibility with the customer, in case he has been affected.

The share of services sector in economy together with the fact that the service is more and more competitive (Zemke and Bell, 2000; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2006; Grönroos, 2009) suggests that company's relationship with customer depends on how he perceives the quality of service he receives. Nevertheless, failure to provide services is more difficult to reverse than when it occurs in the production of goods. In this context it is important that companies should adopt practices in service recovery, in order to remain competitive and minimize damage to their relationships with customers.

Service Recovery began to be exploited in the 90's. Tax and Brown (1998) states that the theme began to receive greater attention at the end of this decade, and at that time there were few studies on service recovery. Zhu and Sivakumar (2001) commented that only in the late 90's there was a significant increase in work related to disaster recovery services.

The present study evaluates the practice of services recovery in automobile assistance through surveys with customers and managers. International literature on service recovery was accessed, and then a reference model was adopted, integrating elements from international literature confronted with Brazilian studies on the theme.

Service recovery, then, becomes an object of study with potential to contribute not only to service companies, but for anyone who intends to use service as a differential factor in

the relationship with customers. Thus, besides the generation of knowledge management services, this work is justified by the contribution that can be generated for business management.

2 Fundamentals

2.1 Service failure

The constant concern for customer satisfaction is an important factor in the pursuit of service excellence. The reduction of failure on service operations is one of the main guidelines of this movement, which emerged in the 90s (SANTOS, FERNANDES and MELLO, 2008). Although not so much explored in Brazil, the study of failure recovery also generated studies that investigated specific segments such as retail (FIGUEIREDO, and ARKADER, OSORIO, 2002 and CORREA, PEREIRA and ALMEIDA, 2007), restaurants (OLIVEIRA, 2002), electrical (XAVIER, 2004), telecommunications (ARAUJO, PRIMO and ARAUJO, 2006), airlines (PEDROSA, 2006), logistics (FLORES 2006) auto services (KUYVEN and SILVA, 2002; DRINK and ROSS, 2006), telephone operators (CORRÊA, PEREIRA and ALMEIDA, 2007), hospitals (TORRES, 2003 and CAMPOS, 2008;), banks (SANTOS, FERNANDES and MELLO, 2008)) and Universities (PEREIRA, 2010). There are also studies on the reaction of customers in relation to the act of recovering service failures (ALMEIDA & TOLEDO, 2003; PEDROSA and CUNHA, 2006; SANTOS and FERNANDES, 2007; SANTOS and FERNANDES, 2008; SANTOS, COSTA and SANDER, 2009; BATTAGLIA and BORCHARDT, 2010).

Causes for occurrence of failures in services may be different. Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) point to three different groups for the classification of service failures: a)

failure due to employee responses to problems in service delivery system; b) failures caused by employees' response to specific requests and needs customer; c) failures caused by unpredictable and unwanted attitudes of contact personal. In all three cases, the authors point causes only caused by human actions in attendance, but a study by Hoffman and Bateson (2001) mentions that service failures causes are divided in two: the stage, visible to customers, and behind the scenes, invisible to them. Failures occurred on stage are usually execution failure. So, failures in 'background' are process failures, which have not yet become visible to customers. Failures in background, despite the internal damage, do not usually reach the customer and do not affect their satisfaction with the service. But when they become visible, and occur in contact with the client, this may result in dissatisfaction (ZEITHALM and BITNER, 2003).

The effort to recover from a failure can be an opportunity for the service provider company to invest in customer relationship. It is possible that the recovery process causes a better impression than the first time, because it demonstrates the organization's interest in providing a good service (LOVELOCK and WIRTZ 2006; GRONROOS, 2009, 2010 BERRY,). Almeida and Toledo (2003) argue that failure recovery can be an opportunity for companies demonstrate a superior quality and special care to their customers, because in general, people would be more attentive in a disaster recovery situation than in normal circumstances. Pedrosa and Cunha (2006) stated that companies should see that service recovery is a tool for the assessment of its processes and that these can be improved with their experiences.

2.2 Service failure recovery

Lovelock and Wright (2004 p. 169) conceptualize recovery services as "the systematic efforts of a company after a service failure to correct a problem and retain the goodwill of a

client". This effort to retain the customer also varies with the cost of change. The lower the costs of change for the customers, the greater the company's effort to retain them in its customer base (Lovelock and Wright, 2004; Grönroos, 2009).

When a failure occurs in the performance of the service, customer's confidence is affected. Even the most prepared organizations may not be able to prevent all failures. Therefore, in order to recover that trust, it is necessary to apply a series of measures, which are part of the process called service recovery. Slack, Chambers and Johnston (2002) conceptualize recovery service as a set of actions taken by an organization when failures occur in the process. Hart, Heskett and Sasser Jr. (1990) and Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) conceptualize failure recovery as do the job right the second time, when the "do it right the first time" does not happen.

Both the company and the client can initiate the process of service recovery. There are situations where the failure is apparent for both, but there are also situations in which the company becomes aware of the fact that only by communication or customer complaint. Therefore it is necessary that there is a continuous stimulus for the client to lodge complaints where they find fault situations. Companies should also prepare a suitable structure for receiving and processing these complaints (LOVELOCK and WIRTZ, 2006; SANTOS, FERNANDES and MELLO 2008, and GRÖNROOS, 2009).

There are cases where the handling of customer complaints is seen as the starting point of recovery services. Santos and Fernandes (2008) argue that customers use the answers to their claims to establish their attitudes to business and the inadequate management of the complaint may generate a double shift, which occurs when a company fails twice in meeting customer needs. Dealing with customer complaints and the way how the company solves the problems, can often be decisive for losing or retaining customers. The act of protesting,

complaining is "an expression through which a customer formalizes his dissatisfaction with some aspect of a service experience" (SANTOS COSTA and SANDER 2009 p.154).

Oliveira (2002), Xavier (2004), and Lovelock and Wirtz (2006) argue that customers who complain give companies a chance to fix problems, restore relations with the complainant and improve the service. So it can be seen that the complaint as an opportunity for the implementation of improvements in services. Araújo, Primo and Araújo (2006) also indicate that there is direct correlation between the handling of complaints and a future intention to repurchase by customers.

Berry and Parasuraman (1995) argue that the process of recovery services include the following: a) staff prepared for the recovery b) empower employees, c) technical support and information to employees. According to this statement, it is assumed that employees should be trained, have autonomy and support the organization in order to quickly solve the problem caused by the failure. Figueiredo, Ozório and Raeder (2002) conceptualize that an apology from the company is generally well received by the client, but not enough to remedy the problems caused by a fault detected by him. Santos, Costa and Sander (2009) further advocate that companies that are striving to regain its customers in the event of failure, are more likely to have them back, and the opposite may be also true.

Hart, Heskett and Sasser Jr. (1990) argue that managers should avoid simple solutions like simply not solving the problem work or not to satisfy the customer because companies must prevent the loss of the same, since the cost to replace it would be much greater than to keep it. When "do it right the first time" does not work, it becomes necessary posture of a recovery by the company, because when you have attention to the prevention of defects, there is usually no preparation of the company to deal with these when they occur (Heskett , Sasser, JR and Hart 1994). The authors argue that "while generally there is nothing better than

running a service in a manner satisfactory to the customer at the outset, there is nothing worse than fail to meet an unsatisfied customer."

Not always a refund for any injury caused by a failure is sufficient to reverse a negative situation caused by itself. Correa, Pereira and Almeida (2007) found that, although customers have considerable satisfaction with refund, there is, for these, a high rate of advertisement "word-of-mouth" negative, as well as changes in purchasing habits.

Service recovery is also an opportunity to delight the customer, since he can perceive this action as a company's commitment to customer satisfaction. Hart, Heskett and Sasser Jr. (1990) and Zemke and Bell (2000) argue that customers who experienced successful failure recovery, are generally more satisfied and more willing to hire the company again than those who did not go through an experience of failure. This phenomenon, Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) give the name of the recovery paradox. This thought suggests that customers can experience greater satisfaction due to the recovery than in the absence of failures.

3 Methodology

3.1 Construct

To define the variables used in the construct of this work, the literature review allowed do identify and select service recovery variables used in empirical studies. In total, 13 elements were selected (Es), according to the frequency of citations (Table 1).

The frequency is determined by the amount of times the element was cited in the selected papers, since the intensity is based on how important the job is searched each element. There are papers in which an element is the main focus of study, while in others there are only citations. Papers like those of Nobrega, (1997), Rousseau (1998), Macedo (2010) and Gurgel, Nobrega and Souza (2011) made use of this method in their studies.

Table 1: Intensity and frequency for addressing service recovery elements, by Brazilian researchers.

Elements	Other authors																		Sum	
	A 1 ⁱ	A 2 ⁱⁱ	A 3 ⁱⁱⁱ	A 4 ^{iv}	A 5 ^v	A 6 ^{vi}	A 7 ^{vii}	A 8 ^{viii}	A 9 ^{ix}	A 10 ^x	A 11 ^{xi}	A 12 ^{xii}	A 13 ^{xiii}	A 14 ^{xiv}	A 15 ^{xv}	A 16 ^{xvi}	A 17 ^{xvii}	A 18 ^{xviii}		A 19 ^{xix}
E1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	1	12
E2	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	12
E3	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	1	14
E4	5	0	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	1	19
E5	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	9	1	22
E6	0	0	5	0	0	9	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	25
E7	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	9	0	1	0	9	0	0	1	0	9	1	37
E8	0	0	5	5	5	1	9	0	5	0	1	0	5	0	1	5	0	5	0	47
E9	5	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	9	0	0	0	9	1	0	5	1	0	9	49
E10	5	0	5	5	9	9	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	1	49
E11	0	5	0	5	9	0	0	9	0	9	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	52
E12	0	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	9	9	0	0	5	0	0	5	5	5	58
E13	5	5	0	0	9	9	0	9	0	5	0	5	0	0	9	0	0	5	9	70

Legend: 0: not cited element; 1: only mentioned element; 5: mentioned and short deepened element; 9: strongly deepened element

For a deeper understanding of research and conceptualization of the elements used as analytical variables, Table 2 was made, with the concepts of recovery of each element identified and the authors' mention in their paper.

Table 2: service recovery elements used in literature

Service Recovery Elements		Concept	Authors
E1	Information capture / handle complaints	Company should make it easier for the customer making claims and pay attention to them	Kuyven and Silva (2002); Oliveira (2002); Torres (2003); Xavier (2004); Weber (2005); Araújo, Primo and Araújo (2006); Santos and Fernandes (2006); Pedrosa and Cunha (2006); Santos and Fernandes (2007); Santos e Fernandes (2008); Campos (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2008); Silva and Ribeiro (2008); Samiha (2008) Santos, Costa and Sander (2009); Battaglia and Borchardt, (2010); Battaglia (2010);
E2	Apologize	Company always should apologize to the customers in case of failures.	Figueiredo, Ozório e Arkader (2002); Yim <i>et al</i> (2003); Wirtz e Mattila (2004); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2006); Michel, Bowen e Johnston (2007); Santos, Costa and Sander (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2009); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010); Krishna, Dangayach and Jain (2011)
E3	Speed of response	There should be agility in the process of responding to complaints of failure and recovery	Xavier, Heck e Campos (2001); Kuyven e Silva (2002); Oliveira (2002); Torres (2003); Xavier (2004); Wirtz and Mattila (2004); Weber (2005); Araújo, Primo and Araújo (2006); Campos (2008); Samiha (2008); Silva and Ribeiro (2008); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010); Krishna, Dangayach and Jain (2011)
E4	Failure correction	The failure should be effectively corrected	Figueiredo, Ozório e Arkader (2002); Kuyven and Silva (2002); Lidén and Skalen (2003); Yim <i>et al</i> (2003); Torres (2003); Wirtz e Mattila (2004); Weber (2005); Pedrosa (2006); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2006); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2007); Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2007); Santos, Costa and Sander (2008); Samiha (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2009); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010)
E5	Management monitoring	The role of management closely monitoring the entire recovery process	Figueiredo, Ozório and Arkader (2002); Kuyven and Silva (2002); Torres (2003); Xavier (2004); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2006); Flores (2006); Michel and Meuter (2008); Silva and Ribeiro (2008); Battaglia (2010); Battaglia e Borchardt (2010); Pereira (2010); Krishna, Dangayach e Jain (2011)
E6	Keep customer informed	The client must be informed of your progress	Xavier, Heck and Campos (2001); Kuyven and Silva (2002); Oliveira (2002); Yim <i>et al</i> (2003); Weber (2005); Campos (2008); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010);
E7	Refund	When recovery is not possible, customer should be refunded	Oliveira (2002); Lidén and Skalen (2003); Yim <i>et al</i> (2003); Xavier (2004); Wirtz and Mattila (2004); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2006); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2007); Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2007); Pereira (2010);

E8	Compensation	Offering of gifts, extra services or amenities in addition to the refund or failure correction	Xavier, Heck and Campos (2001); Figueiredo, Ozório and Arkader (2002); Almeida and Toledo (2003); Lidén and Skalen (2003); Yim <i>et al</i> (2003); Torres (2003); Wirtz and Mattila (2004); Xavier (2004); Pedrosa (2006); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2006); Corrêa, Pereira and Almeida (2007); Michel, Bowen e Johnston (2007); Campos (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2008); Samiha (2008); Silva and Ribeiro (2008); Santos, Costa e Sander (2009); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010); Krishna, Dangayach and Jain (2011)
E9	Perceived justice	Awakening the client a feeling that there was justice in the treatment of his case	Almeida and Toledo (2003); Torres (2003); Yim <i>et al</i> (2003); Wirtz and Mattila (2004); Xavier (2004); Weber (2005); Araújo, Primo and Araújo (2006); Flores (2006); Santos e Fernandes (2006); Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2007); Santos and Fernandes (2007); Back and Shanklin (2007); Santos, Fernandes and Meller (2008); Santos and Fernandes (2008); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010)
E10	Customer relationship	Company should invest in a good relationship with customers	Xavier, Heck and Campos (2001); Kuyven and Silva (2002); Yim <i>et al</i> (2003); Xavier (2004); Santos and Fernandes (2006); Santos and Fernandes (2007); Michel, Bowen e Johnston (2007); Back and Shanklin (2007); Santos and Fernandes (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2009); Battaglia and Borchardt (2010); Pereira (2010)
E11	Employees empowerment	Employee's autonomy to make decisions necessary to correct the service.	Lidén and Skalen (2003); Xavier (2004); Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2007); Campos (2008); Silva and Ribeiro (2008); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010)
E12	Empathy	The customer feel that there is an interest of the company to serve him well and provide good service	Xavier, Heck e Campos (2001); Kuyven and Silva (2002); Oliveira (2002); Xavier (2004); Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2007); Campos (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2008); Samiha (2008); Santos, Costa and Sander (2009); Battaglia (2010); Pereira (2010); Krishna, Dangayach and Jain (2011)
E13	Trained employees	Staff trained to serve the customer well and give the correct treatment to the complaint.	Torres (2003); Xavier (2004); Weber (2005); Pedrosa (2006); Pedrosa e Cunha (2006); Michel, Bowen and Johnston (2007); Michel and Meuter (2008); Santos, Fernandes e Meller (2008); Silva and Ribeiro (2008); Battaglia and Borchardt (2010); Pereira (2010); Krishna, Dangayach and Jain (2011).

3.2 The research

This research was conducted, at first, through a literature review about failure recovery and service recovery, aiming to identify the necessary elements to deal with the question. A construct was developed, based on literature review, in order to prepare a questionnaire for survey. Based on this tool, the research made use of gathering data from primary sources, obtained directly from the object of research: managers and customers of authorized automobile assistance companies.

3.3 Universe and population

20 managers and 386 customers of three authorized automobile assistance, representatives of different brands, responded the questionnaires. A general view of some data from the three companies are shown in Table 3

Table 3: Summary of company characteristics

Company	Average number of appointments per month	Number of employees in the workshop	Total of responding managers	Sex of respondents	
				M	F
Alfa	820	27	07	07	zero
Beta	800	25	07	05	02
Gama	850	15	06	05	01

Source: research (2011)

The universe was divided into two segments: managers of three dealerships and customers of each one. From the studied companies, all the managers were interviewed, so it is a census research.

Relative to customers, the universe was formed by those who are regular users of preventive maintenance services and / or correction of the three utilities in question, who have used the services of the same the last time in a period of time not exceeding one year, and

have experienced at least one episode of failure. Customers who for more than one year do not use utility services were not considered, once this is a period of time large enough for respondents to remember with reliable details about his last experience with the company.

3.4 The questionnaire

A questionnaire was used, containing 13 questions – one question for each of the service recovery element. It made use of a Likert scale of 11 points, starting at 0 (I strongly disagree) up to 10 (I strongly agree). Pre-tests were conducted, and a few adjustments were introduced aiming to make questions more clear and comprehensive. Two questions were regrouped.

The survey was conducted with a total of 693 questionnaires, and from these, 386 were considered for statistical purposes, since the other questionnaires could not be used for the following reasons (Table 4):

Table 4: Questionnaires not valid for the research

Frequency	Reason
189	Never experienced failures in service
66	Used the services of the companies for over a year;
38	Presented 100% of the responses in a single column, indicating that the respondent did not give due attention, not understood or responded biased, damaging the final result. These were also disregarded.
14	Invalidated / strikethrough

Source: research (2011)

The sample was divided by companies, as follows (Table 5):

Table 5: sample of respondent customers by company

Company	Total of responses	Experienced failure on service (total)	Experienced failure on service (%)
Alfa	210	130	62%
Beta	184	130	71%
Gama	181	126	70%
Total	575	386	

Source: research (2011)

Once the respondents of the research were selected by convenience and accessibility, the sample is characterized as non-probabilistic. The use of this method is advocated by Cooper and Schindler (2003, p. 167), when they say that "it is possible to use probability sampling procedures because they do not satisfactorily meet the objectives of sampling." Thus, since carefully controlled, this sampling can produce acceptable results.

3.5 Data collecting

Data were collected in two stages: first the customers were interviewed, then questionnaires were applied with the managers of the companies.

At the contact, an explanation was made about the nature of the research, its importance and objectives, but was asked for sincerity and seriousness in the responses, which were filled by the responders. It was given the time they considered necessary to respond to the survey in order to provide them with a more detailed reading of the issues and therefore more consistent responses. It was felt that the respondents took an average of five to ten minutes to answer the questionnaire completely. In general, those who used less than five minutes marked all the alternatives in a single column, indicating a lack of commitment to

research or intent to vitiate the result. These questionnaires were considered invalid for the research.

3.6 Data analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using parametric and nonparametric tests, according to results of normality. Data were expressed as mean and standard deviation, as well as absolute and relative frequency, and were evaluated by statistical software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0, Data Analysis Software System (Statistical), version 8.0. According to data available to those with normal distribution were analyzed by t test for independent samples and ANOVA followed by Tukey test. The variables which did not present normality, were analyzed with Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis test.

4 Results

4.1 Respondents data

The research was conducted in Northeast region of Brazil, in Mossoró city. The city is situated in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, and its population is 270,000. The predominance of the local economic activities are oil exploration and fruit. The number of vehicles is about 35,000, and has increased about 2,000 each year (DENATRAN, 2011).

In Table 6 data of respondent customers are presented.

Table 6: summary of customers' characteristics

Company	Total of responses	Experienced service failure (N)	Experienced service failure (%)	Sex (%)		Failure identified by (%)		Vehicle time of usage (%)		How long has been company's customer		Made use of Call Center (%)
				M	F	Customer	Company	< 5 years	> 5 years	< 5 years	> 5 years	
Alfa	210	130	62	58	42	86%	14%	76%	24%	84%	16%	27%
Beta	184	130	71	60	40	92%	8%	74%	26%	85%	15%	36%
Gama	181	126	70	69	31	91%	9%	89%	11%	90%	10%	47%

Source: research (2011)

4.2 Descriptive statistics

Table 7 shows the comparative values of frequency responses of managers and customers in all questions, for the three companies. The values shown indicate that, according to managers, the companies often put into practice the elements of service recovery. Otherwise, the perception of the customers present a less concentration in the largest categories of agreement and more scattered correlation between median and non-compliance.

Table 7: Comparative of frequency responses of managers and customers in all questions, for the three companies (global results)

Variable	Category	Managers			Customers		
		Freq.	%	Ac. %	Freq.	%	Ac. %
Service Recovery (Q1 to Q13)	0 Strongly disagree	1	0,4	100	661	14,0	100
	1	1	0,4	99,8	293	6,2	85,9
	2	2	0,8	99,4	383	8,1	79,7
	3	3	1,2	98,6	280	5,9	71,6
	4	2	0,8	97,4	346	7,3	65,7
	5	7	2,7	96,6	768	16,2	68,4
	6	9	3,5	93,9	583	12,3	42,2
	7	38	14,6	90,4	485	10,2	29,9
	8	48	18,5	75,8	385	8,1	19,7
	9	84	32,3	57,3	295	6,2	11,6
	10 Strongly agree	65	25	25	258	5,4	5,4

Source: research (2011)

In this segment there is considerable concentration of responses in the category 0 (strongly disagree), representing 14% of respondents, while the segment managers, this category shows only 0.4% of responses.

4.3 Average Tests

It is possible to compare the mean responses of managers with the average test performed on the responses of customers, allowing the results can be compared to each question, thus making it possible to assess whether there are significant differences between the perceptions of managers and the customer regarding the practice of the elements of service recovery in surveyed companies.

Table 8 shows the comparison between the overall test managers average with the average of all utility customers, considering the overall result of all questions. While the overall average of the managers was 8.33 (SD \pm 0.77), the overall customer average was 4.74 (SD \pm 2.20), suggesting that customers perceive disaster recovery practices with lower intensity than the managers said that companies do.

Table 8: Average \pm standard deviation on service recovery, for all companies responses from managers and customers

	Service Recovery		P value
	Customers	Managers	
Companies	4,74 \pm 2,20	8,33 \pm 0,77	0,0001**

* Statistical difference (p<0,05); ** Statistical difference (p<0,01); Source: research (2011)

Table 9 shows the mean and standard deviation of results divided by each of the surveyed companies. It is noticed that the concessionaire Alpha showed the highest average

among both customers and managers, followed by concessionaires Beta and Gamma. The results suggest that the company with greater difference between the perceptions of clients and managers is Gama.

Table 9: Average \pm standard deviation on service recovery practices, for each company responses from managers and customers

	Service Recovery		P value
	Customers	Managers	
Alfa	5,65 \pm 1,86	8,93 \pm 0,55	0,0001**
Beta	4,56 \pm 1,99	8,23 \pm 0,57	0,0001**
Gama	4,02 \pm 2,42	7,75 \pm 0,78	0,0006**

* Statistical difference ($p < 0,05$); ** Statistical difference ($p < 0,01$); Source: research (2011)

Table 10 shows the average level of service recovery in each question, for all companies, comparing the results of management versus customers. It can be seen, in elements E3, E5, E6, E8 and E13, greater differences, suggesting for these elements, greater discrepancy between what customers perceive and what managers say it is done by companies. The elements with shorter differences between the averages are E1, E4, E7 and E11.

Table 11 presents the average level of service recovery in each question, for each company. There are differences between the perceptions of clients and managers in all companies, however, the elements of major and minor differences in perceptions vary from one company to another.

Table 10: Average for the level of service recovery practices, in each question, for all the companies

Q	Element	Companies	
		Managers	Customers
1	E1 - Information capture / handle complaints	8,69	5,54
2	E2 - Apologize	8,25	4,90
3	E3 - Speed of response	8,44	4,36
4	E4 - Failure correction	8,52	5,32
5	E5 - Management monitoring	8,81	3,91
6	E6 - Keep customer informed	8,62	4,57
7	E7 - Refund	6,11	3,54
8	E8 - Compensation	7,32	3,44
9	E9 - Perceived justice	8,27	4,49
10	E10 - Customer relationship	8,72	5,05
11	E11 - Employees empowerment	6,82	4,28
12	E12 - Empathy	9,31	5,49
13	E13 - Trained employees	9,82	5,73

Source: research (2011)

Table 11: Average for the level of service recovery practices, in each question, for each company

Q	Element	Alfa		Beta		Gama	
		Manag.	Cust.	Manag.	Cust.	Manag.	Cust.
1	E1 - Information capture / handle complaints	9	5,84	8,57	5,33	8,5	5,44
2	E2 - Apologize	8,85	5,53	8,57	4,85	7,33	4,31
3	E3 - Speed of response	8,7	5,33	8,28	4,43	8,33	3,33
4	E4 - Failure correction	8,28	5,83	8,28	5,48	9	4,64
5	E5 - Management monitoring	8,57	4,37	8,71	4,33	9,16	3,02
6	E6 - Keep customer informed	9,14	5,53	8,42	4,3	8,3	3,88
7	E7 - Refund	8,42	3,93	5,42	3,11	4,5	3,59
8	E8 - Compensation	8,85	3,99	8	2,74	5,1	3,59
9	E9 - Perceived justice	9	5,36	8	4,55	7,8	3,57
10	E10 - Customer relationship	9,28	5,62	8,57	4,95	8,3	4,59
11	E11 - Employees empowerment	8,28	4,42	6,57	4,04	5,6	4,37
12	E12 - Empathy	9,85	6,39	9,57	5,4	8,5	4,67
13	E13 - Trained employees	9,85	6,02	10	5,46	9,6	5,7

Source: research (2011)

The results analyzed through the statistical methods used, and statistically validate the tool used, which were made on descriptive analysis of many aspects of the variables identified and adopted. It is understood that results could be identified that contribute to the resolution of the issue of this research and its goals. In addition to allowing the description and discussion of results, the analysis allows new questions to be created.

In general, results indicate that companies' managers perceive, in their routines, a strong presence of most of service recovery elements, but this presence is not seen so strongly perceived by customers.

The fact of identifying differences between the perceptions of managers and customers can be considered natural, but results presented in elements such as refund and compensation, for which authors such as Xavier, Heck and Campos (2001), Figueiredo, and Ozório Arkader (2002); Almeida and Toledo (2003); Skalen and Lidén (2003), Yim et al (2003), Torres (2003), Mattila and Wirtz (2004), Xavier (2004), Pedrosa (2006); Corrêa Pereira and Almeida (2006) Corrêa Pereira and Almeida (2007), Michael Bowen and Johnston (2007), Campos (2008), Santos Costa and Sander (2008), Samiha (2008), Silva and Ribeiro (2008), Santos, Costa and Sander (2009), Battaglia (2010), Pereira (2010), Krishna, Dangayach and Jain (2011), are important items of service recovery, suggest that firms should pay more attention to this fact, making it more noticeable to the customer, because the perception that there was just treatment after failure, many times, may depend on how the company repair the damage and compensate the customer for inconvenience resulting from this situation. But, once the refund is not always well accepted, being sometimes considered offensive, it is a resource to be used as an option, because there is only refund when the failure is not corrected. If the failure is corrected and even then the company refunds the customer, it becomes a compensation.

6 Final considerations

The practice of service recovery can be considered a differentiation factor beyond the mere compliance with quality specifications, since, in essence, it overcomes this, but gives the consumer the confidence provided by a company prepared to act efficiently, acting proactively in the event of any failure in service operation.

Literature uses to deal with service recovery, but its practical aspects not so much. This article presented started from the assumption that there are difficulties in ensuring ongoing quality services because of peculiar service operations characteristics, presenting an evolution of the theme, and proposing guidelines to ensure customer satisfaction even when there are failures that cannot be prevented by quality tools.

This research results suggest that there are differences between the perceptions of managers of the companies surveyed and their customers regarding the presence of elements of service recovery, requiring more effort to these that this difference in perception may be minimized.

Through statistical methods it was possible to identify the application of elements of service recovery listed as variables in this study, under managers' perspective, when they reported their level of agreement regarding the practice of the elements, and under customers' perspective, when they reported their perceptions about companies' practices.

Elements such as information collection and handling of complaints, empathy and trained employees are the most strongly perceived by customers, indicating that they consider to communicate well with companies, realize that there is interest in serving them well and providing good service, and that employees are trained. To customers, these elements have stronger presence in the actions of the studied companies.

Although not included in this research instrument, it was possible to identify that service recovery is a little known theme, both by customers and by managers. During applications of questionnaires, in informal talks, some respondents, both customers and managers, confounded service recovery with customer attendance quality.

Statistical analysis allowed a clear view about the performance of each company in relation to the perception of the presence of elements of service recovery by customers. The comparison highlighted the differences between the three researched companies, so that Alfa was considered, by customers, to have a greater presence of elements of recovery. The other two companies showed differences. Company Beta presented results, for some variables, superior to GAMA Company. This third, in general, had the lowest frequencies, indicating little presence of service recovery actions.

According to the managers' opinions, more evident practices are related to the elements: information capture / handle complaints; apologize; fast response; failure correction; managers monitoring; perceived justice; customer relationship; empathy; and trained staff.

As for customers, the practices are related to more perceived elements E1 - information capture / handle complaints, E4 - bug fix, E10 - customer relationship, E12 - empathy and E13 - trained staff. Both categories of respondents perceive the slightest evidence in the application of elements such as reimbursement (E7), compensation (E8) and autonomy of employees (E11).

Finally, it is seen that, despite being a still little explored subject, it is important that service companies include in their actions, elements of service recovery. It was not possible to identify why compensation and refund obtained lower results than those of other elements, what suggests that further studies be made in order to better exploit this information.

Supposedly competitive companies should have unique features, the puts them distant from their competitors. For these companies, there must be investment in efforts designed to reduce the occurrence of failures, improving the prevention and recovery from them.

7 Managerial implications

One of the principal results this research showed is the difference of perception between companies' managers and their customers. Even though these differences may occur, it seems that, in the selected companies, the gap was too great. So, it may be useful to approximate managers to customers perceptions, through some kind of meetings or focus groups.

The lack of comprehension on certain terms suggests a need for learning on service recovery studies. Even though "practical" managers tend to avoid theoretical events, literature disposes some concepts, as well as proceedings, that a automobile assistance may use, for identifying, understanding, and managing service failures.

8 Limitations and future studies

Due to accessibility, the survey could not be applied in a larger universe of companies, as well as customers, and the results are restricted to the universe considered in this research. The implications of the results of sample customers are limited to a population of similar characteristics of the samples studied, and cannot be generalized to the population as a whole.

This study enables further research and proposes directions for the study of service recovery proceedings. The lack of an instrument to evaluate the presence of actions in service

recovery companies led to the development of the instruments used in this study. The instrument used for this research might be adapted for replication in other segments.

It is also possible that future studies can analyze the influence of the service recovery elements on customer retention as well as their influence on the choice of the brand or company to be used. It can be seen then, a number of possibilities for new studies showing that there is still much to be researched about the recovery of service failures.

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