

Please Forgive Me: Victims' versus Observers' Perspective on the Service Recovery Process

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Abstract

This experimental study examined how service recovery strategies (apology, apology with compensation, apology with excuse) affect forgiveness among victims and observers of service failure and recovery experiences in the hotel context. The results of surveying 471 respondents revealed the disproportional effect of recovery strategies on emotional and decisional forgiveness among victims and observers. Apology and compensation were the most compelling strategies for both groups, with the effect stronger for observers. Only for the latter recovery, specifically, apology and excuse led to emotional forgiveness. The study confirms the spillover effect of both tangible and psychological recovery strategies on customers indirectly involved with service failure and recovery experiences. Moreover, given the capacity of the psychological recoveries, such as an apology and excuse to facilitate emotional forgiveness among observers, service providers should pay special attention to the training of the frontline staff and create a welcoming and friendly climate throughout the customer journey.

Keywords: *service recovery; forgiveness; harm direction*

Track: Consumer Behaviour