

# Did I Get a Worst Deal? How Social Class Comparison and Discrimination Perceptions Influence Responses of Consumers to Service Recovery

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## **Abstract**

Social comparison theory suggests that people are naturally prone to compare their performance to others. Surprisingly, little research has focused on social comparison during a service recovery process, particularly related to social class comparisons. In this research we propose that after a recovery situation compensation comparison interacts with the social class (lower or upper) of the ‘target’ consumer (i.e. who the consumer is comparing himself with), affecting consumers responses. Across three between-subject experiments, using written scenarios we found that upward (downward) comparison with an upper (lower) social class target will lead to more discriminatory perceptions and that discrimination perceptions influence negatively consumer responses. However, this negative effect only happens when the perceived discrimination is against the consumer, otherwise, (i.e. when against the target consumer) discrimination does not trigger negative consumer responses.

**Keywords:** *service failure; discrimination; negative eWOM*

**Track:** Services Marketing