

# Effect of Procedural Justice, Perceived Safety and Forgiveness in Nigeria's Domestic Airline Service

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**Abstract**— Exertions were made by service firms to address issues of service failure. Particularly, through effective strategy that enhance customer satisfaction and subsequent retention of customer. This study conceptualizes and empirically validates a model exploring the relationship between procedural justice, perceived safety, forgiveness constructs and satisfaction service recovery of domestic airline passengers of Nigeria. Sample of 444 domestic airline passengers by the use of cluster sampling technique were obtained for the study. The data were analyzed by the use of PLS technique. Results obtained recommend that the perceived safety procedural justice, and forgiveness have a significant effect on satisfaction service recovery. Theoretical and practical implications of the study were as well discussed and conclusions drawn.

**Keywords:** Service recovery, Procedural justice, Perceived safety, Forgiveness and Domestic airline.

## 1. Introduction

Service firms make every single effort to deliver error free service in order to heighten satisfaction of customer and advance enduring customer relationship, but it is difficult even for the finest firms to escape mistakes entirely during the service delivery procedure. Resultantly, effective service recovery is needed for relationship building and customer retention. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault, (1990) revealed that most customers can withstand some service mistakes and mistakes only do not lead to dissatisfaction. Refusal to proceed with service recovery measures is the principal reason for customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, it is vital that when mistakes ensue, corrective measures essentially are to be taken by service firms to effectively turn unhappy customers into pleased ones (Gursoy, Chen, & Kim, 2005). Numerous studies show that failure in service recovery is a vital reason for customer loss; while successful service recovery can increase customer satisfaction and retention (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002).

Equally managers and researchers recognize the significance of service recovery. Considerable research has been carried out on the effectiveness and features of service recovery and its influence on customers. Previous studies frequently use critical incident examination to assess customers' service consumption experience and summarize the attributes of service recovery (Bitner et al., 1990). Recently, scholars like (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998; Wagner, Bolton, & Smith., 1999) started to examine how customers' assess service recovery using justice theory. The theory has provided a robust theoretical foundation for service recovery research, and quite significant findings have been deduced from these studies. Perceived justice is found to be a significant influence in the formation of customers' evaluative judgments of the recovery process. While past research stressed the cognitive antecedents (perceived justice) to customer assessments, in recent years consumptions emotion have been revealed to play a fundamental part in satisfaction judgment (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). Clearly emotions have an essential share in the consumers' evaluation of service recovery experience. Schoefer and Ennew, (2005); del Río-Lanza, Vázquez-Casielles, and Díaz-Martín, (2009) by their empirical studies, suggested that customers' judgment of justice to the service recovery will have a noteworthy influence on their emotional responses which in turn affect their satisfaction with service recovery (SSR). The existing literature is intended to be extended by the current study through the investigation of how forgiveness and perception of safety could influence satisfaction service recovery. A model was conceptually proposed to explain the influence of procedural justice, and forgiveness on satisfaction service recovery in the service recovery situation.

Additionally, a lot of preceding studies, like Schoefer and Ennew, (2005) implemented experimental/scenario-based method in which irrelevant variables influence can be controlled, but they lack external validity, they therefore will not be universally applicable. Similarly, del Río-Lanza et al., (2009). Uses post survey methods in which

customer's true evaluation of service recovery is difficult to obtain through recalled of events that may differ from real situations. In trying to overcome some of the above mentioned problems, the conceptual model using data collected from prospective domestic airline passengers of both Abuja and Lagos airports that expect quality service recovery performance, that will lead them to forgive and become satisfied with the recovery process is used in the present study. Service failures such as flight cancellations, loss of baggage, attitude of staff (ground and cabin), and air strikes (Bamford & Xystouri, 2005) or mishap could have an effect on satisfaction, and we argue that the steps taken with increase in perception of safety during recovery from failure will make customer to forgive and subsequently it will affect their satisfaction with the recovery.

## 2. Conceptual background.

Regardless of efforts to strategize on service delivery procedure to be as free from error as possible (Chase & Stewart, 1994; Shostack, 1984), people involvement and its intangibility make service failure prevention difficult (Dewitt, Brady, & Brady, 2003; Dong, Evans, & Zou, 2008; Hart, Heskett, & Sasser, 1990). Service failure creates undesirable customer responses (Keaveney, 1995). Substantial scholars' attention has focused on developing strategies to recover from service failures in order to reduce these negative consequences (Davidow, 2003; Miller, Craighead, & Karwan, 2000). However, the findings of previous studies vary, for instance McCollough, Berry, and Yadav, (2000) studied customer satisfaction after service failure and recovery by means of scenario-based experiment and institute that distributive and interactional justice are important predictors of post recovery satisfaction in contrast Wagner et al., (1999) initiate that all the three justices together explain high satisfaction after service recovery or either by different antecedents or variables. Hence, re-evaluation of service recovery is critical in gaining a profound understanding of effective strategies for service recovery, this paper considers how perception of safety and forgiveness influence satisfaction service recovery in Nigerias' domestic airline.

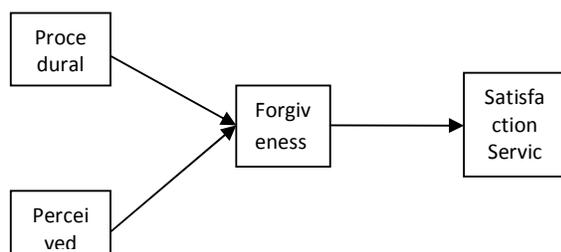


Figure 1. Conceptual model

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

### 3.1 Procedural Justice

Procedural justice consists of customer views of whatever processes that were employed to bring about a resolution in any service failure situation (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Lind & Tyler, 1988). In particular, it is concerned with the fairness of the measures and procedures employed in reaching any recovery result (Blodgett, Hill, & Tax, 1997). In assessing procedural justice customers include their perceptions of policies and procedures, consideration of service recovery elements such as the ability to be modified (flexibility) and reacting quickly and positively (responsiveness) of the organization as a whole throughout the course of the recovery (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; Gustafsson, 2009; Hoffman, Kelley, & Chung, 2003; Mccoll-kennedy, Sparks, Mccoll-kennedy, & Sparks, 2003).

Greenberg, (1990) also defines procedural justice as the means employed in attaining results. In other words, procedural justice denotes to the assessment of the method used to come up with outcomes, or more specifically, the strategies and measures used to accomplish the result (Lind and Tyler 1988; Thibaut and Walker 1975). In a service recovery setting procedural justice refers to the policies and procedures engaged to handle the process of recovery. A service firm could deliver to the customer a full reimbursement as a consequence of a service failure (distributive justice). Though, if the customer waits longer to receive the refund because the firm's policy requires that employees need to clear all compensation offers with the manager, customer may not perceive the process to be fair (procedural justice). Since the service process is often times an integral part of the entire product or service offering (Bitner et al., 1990), firms could presumably benefit from establishing procedural justice during the recovery effort. It seems probable that perceptions of procedural justice will expand as the level of procedure-related service recovery upsurges. That is, when a customer's perception concerning the procedure-related service recovery is low (high), the balance and correctness regarding procedural justice will also be low (high) and the effect seems likely for satisfaction with the recovery.

Based on the above, we hypothesized that:

H1 Procedural justice has a positive influence on satisfaction service recovery.

### 3.2 Perceived Safety

Perception of safety is a coinciding emotion of concern, panic and nervousness felt while experiencing an anxiety producing situation like air mishap (Hosany & Gilbert,

2009; Richins, 1997). The occurrence of mishaps cannot be getting rid of completely and passengers are cognizant of this fact. The perceived risk is assumed as the subjective anticipation of a loss (Sweeney, Soutar, & Johnson, 1999) and create feelings of uncertainty, uneasiness, and nervousness (Dowling & Staelin, 1994). Airlines try to limit the risks related to air travel through various safety measures like service quality (Rhoades & Waguespack, 1999) or try to draw conclusions about flight safety based on aircraft appearance. The encounter shape passengers' perception of safety. We therefore hypothesize that safety measures have a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

H2 Perceived Safety positively influence satisfaction service recovery

### 3.3 Forgiveness

Customer forgiveness is gaining increased attention in the service failure literature. We argued that customer forgiveness has come to be an increasingly relevant construct when customers experience a relational norm violation in the context of a strong customer-firm relationship, like a severe service failure, or a failed recovery, and infer that the company has despicable intentions. Under these conditions anger and desires for avoidance and revenge are high, the desire for reconciliation is low, and forgiveness becomes an especially relevant focus of investigation, on the other hand, some scholars have argued that forgiveness follows justice; without justice, forgiveness is difficult to find (Karremans & Van Lange, 2005; Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007). Justice values are involved in the process of conflict settlement. People are concerned with whether they are treated fairly. With fair treatment, people have stronger inclinations to forgive. Hence, justice and forgiveness have a strong positive relationship.

H3 Forgiveness mediates the relationship between procedural justice, Perceived safety and satisfaction service recovery.

### 3.4 Satisfaction service recovery

Satisfaction with service recovery has been considered serious for service firms in sustaining positive relationships with customers after service failure (Maxham, 2001; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002; Stauss, 2002). Service failure and recovery encounters often arouses robust emotional responses from customers, which may influence customers' resolution of whether to carry on in a relationship with a company indirectly or directly. Satisfaction with service recovery mostly, however, taps the cognitive aspects of consumer behavior

(expectations, disconfirmations, and justice perception) (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2003; Smith et al., 1999; Wirtz and Mattila, 2004).

Previous research suggests that emotional responses to service failure and subsequent recovery influence customer affection, affection is distinct from customers' emotional responses in that customer affection is engendered and further reinforced or damaged by customers' emotional reactions in response to service recovery efforts. While customers' emotional responses to service failure and recovery encounters have received some attention (Weiss et al., 1999; Chebat and Slusarczyk, 2005; DeWitt et al., 2008; Namkung and Jang, 2010).

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Sample and Data collection

Cross sectional survey was used to collect data from domestic airline passengers' of MM Airport, Lagos and Abuja International Airport, Nigeria that voluntarily participated, through the use of the cluster sampling method the questionnaires were administered at the departure hall of both Airports. However, of the 505 administered questionnaires only 444 were filled and returned, out of which total of 53 questionnaires were also excluded on account of multivariate outliers and missing data leaving 391 as effective valid responses, achieving 77% response rate.

### 4.2 Measures

Measures were taken from previous studies. Satisfaction service recovery items were adapted from (McCollough et al., 2000; Nikbin, Marimuthu, Hyun, & Ismail, 2014). Procedural justice items were adapted from (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2003; Wagner et al., 1999) as well. Items of Perceived safety were adapted from (Ringle, Sarstedt, & Zimmermann, 2011). While the measures of Forgiveness were adapted from McCollough & Bharadwaj, (1992). All measures were based on a 5point Likert Scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

### 4.3 Model Estimation

We conducted preliminary analysis and data screening. Precisely, missing values and outliers, were assessed, normality and multicollinearity tests were conducted without any severe issue. We also evaluated non-response bias the result proposes we progress with data analysis. By use of PLS structural equation modelling SmartPLS (Hock, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2010), we evaluated both the measurement and the structural model. PLS a variance based SEM technique was chosen based on the

consideration that: present study wanted to discover the justice, and attribution theory rather than confirms them. So also the complexity of the research model (Chin, 2010).

In assessing the measurement model's internal consistency, the Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients range between 0.57 and 0.82 while composite reliability coefficients range between 0.75 and 0.87, higher than the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978) which indicated adequate internal consistency reliability of measures (Nunnally, 1978). Factor loadings were also adequate as they range between 0.51 and 0.85. To achieve the model fit, 5 items whose outer loadings fall below 0.7 were deleted (Chin, 2010) to arrive at the revised model. Convergent and discriminant validity of the instruments were evaluated through the approaches developed in PLS context by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Accordingly, the AVE of each latent construct was above 0.5 indicating adequate convergent and discriminant validity. Further, as suggested by Fornell & Larcker (1981) the square root of the AVE should be higher than the correlations among the latent variables have been achieved also. As per table 1.

Table 1: Item loading, internal consistency, Average Variance Extracted and R Square

Construct	Indicator	Loading s	Composit e reliability	AVE
Forgiveness	FOR01	0.717	0.835	0.561
	FOR05	0.734		
	FOR06	0.853		
	FOR07	0.681		
Procedural justice	PRO01	0.511	0.774	0.544
	PRO04	0.850		
	PROC5	0.804		
Perceived safety	PS01	0.769	0.867	0.521
	PS02	0.687		
	PS03	0.732		
	PS04	0.652		
	PS06	0.818		
	PS07	0.658		

Satisfaction service recovery	SSR01	0.768	0.846	0.525
	SSR02	0.751		
	SSR03	0.768		
	SSR04	0.737		
	SSR05	0.583		

The structural model was assessed by applying the bootstrapping procedure with 500 bootstrap samples and 391 cases to examine the significance of the path coefficients (Chin, 2010). We tested mediation effect by PLS approach in which we evaluated the significance of the relevant path coefficients via bootstrap (Chin, 2010).

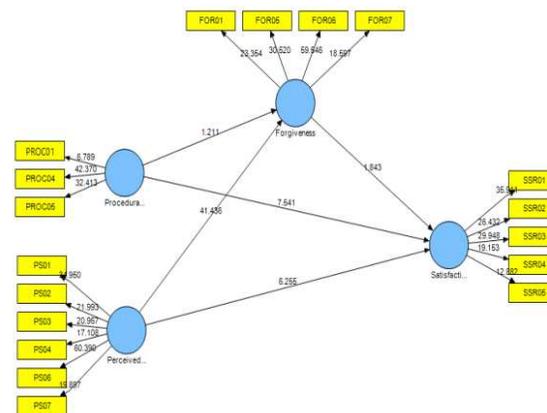


Figure 2. Hypotheses testing

Table 3: Result of Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses Path	Path Coefficients	Standard Error	T Value	P Value	Decision
PS->SSR	0.466	0.075	6.255	0.000	Supported
PJ->SSR	0.275	0.037	7.541	0.000	Supported
PS->FOR->SSR	0.099	0.055	1.801	0.036	Not Supported
PJ->FOR->SSR	0.005	0.005	0.911	0.182	Supported

#### 4.4 Result

The hypothesized significant positive relationship between procedural justice and satisfaction service recovery ( $\beta = 0.275$ ,  $t = 7.541$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), perceived safety and satisfaction service recovery ( $\beta = 0.466$ ,  $t = 6.255$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), procedural justice, forgiveness and satisfaction service recovery ( $\beta = 0.005$ ,  $t = 0.911$ ,  $p < 0.182$ ) were all supported, consistent with prior research on the significant relationship between procedural justice and satisfaction service recovery (Ok, Back, & Shanklin, 2005) and forgiveness (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006) perceived safety and satisfaction (Ringle et al., 2011) lastly hypothesis between perceived safety, forgiveness and satisfaction service recovery was not supported.

#### 5. Discussion

The research was to validate a model for the domestic airline sector and to particularly evaluate the mediating influence of forgiveness on the relationship between procedural justice, perceived safety and satisfaction service recovery. It is not unexpected to find that there is a significant relationship between the independent and the mediating variables because safety issues like proper check on pilot competence, safety check of aircraft and its appearance should naturally enhance passenger satisfaction with service recovery. Procedural Justice issues are as well understood to increase the satisfaction of aggrieved passengers' satisfaction with the recovery process as suggested by Ok, Back, and Shanklin, (2005) that showed procedural justice of restaurant customer had greater influence on satisfaction service recovery than the other two justices.

The study provides significant insight into the mediating role of forgiveness on the link between procedural justice, perceived safety and satisfaction service recovery. Therefore, a passenger that forgives will continue with relationship despite the service failure.

#### 5.1 Theoretical Implications

The research contributes to theory by empirically validating the role of perceived safety as a construct that is scant in justice theory research. The study also additionally provides empirical evidence of forgiveness construct that is applied to marketing domain. Particularly, the mediating role of forgiveness on the link between procedural justice, perceived safety and outcome variable of satisfaction service recovery is empirically validated. Precisely, the outcome of our research has theoretically contributed to the literature on service recovery in particular and services marketing in general.

#### 5.2 Managerial Implications

The study findings suggest that to enhance passengers' satisfaction service recovery, it is necessary to reduce risk perception of customer by increasing safety perception in the domestic airline service. To achieve that, through proper check on pilot competence, check on the safety of the aircraft and its appearance. There must also be clear procedural justice. A convincing finding of this study is the provisional role of forgiveness. Impliedly, passengers' forgiveness increases long term relationship between passengers and domestic airlines, thus making them to operate at a profit.

#### 5.3 Limitations and future research direction

Beside the contribution of the study, it should be interpreted with its limitations. Firstly, the data for the study was cross-sectional. In future, studies should try longitudinal designs given the fact that customer perception and attitude changes with time. Second, the study investigated data from domestic airline passengers' future studies should consider passengers of International airlines. The variances of 56 % indicate that several other factors also account for satisfaction service recovery in domestic airline services. Thus, the effects of construct like controllability, purpose of travel, and possibly the role of culture should be examined by future studies.

#### 5.4 Conclusions

The present research establishes that it will be of benefit for domestic airlines to improve on perception of safety in a service recovery situation and to also seek for passengers forgiveness during the recovery process in view of the enormous challenges of service failure facing the domestic airline sector, Managers of domestic airline would benefit immensely from insights regarding drivers of satisfaction service recovery through passenger retention and improving their financial performance.

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