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Strategic Managerial Responses to Critical Service Events in Restaurants

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College of Management and Technology

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Douglas Edwards

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and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Strategic Managerial Responses to Critical Service Events in Restaurants

by

Douglas Grant Edwards

MS, North Greenville University, 2012

BS, University of North Carolina, 1982

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

February 2016

Abstract

Inappropriate managerial responses to critical service events (CSEs) in restaurants contribute to an increased rate of customer defection and restaurant failure. Some restaurant managers lack employee-training strategies that may enhance service recovery from CSEs. This case study explored what employee-training strategies participants deemed essential to enhance service recovery to CSEs. The population for this study was restaurant managers from a U.S. regional chain in South Carolina with at least 3 years of employee-training experience. Organizational learning theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Data collection included semistructured face-to-face interviews with restaurant managers and an exploration of company archival documents related to CSEs. Using Yin’s 5 step data analysis method (i.e. compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding), 3 major themes emerged: customer needs and requests, which included the importance of listening to customers and affirming their requests; employee actions and attitudes, which included opinions about the ideal employee demonstrating a great attitude when correcting mistakes; and training, which included multiple methods to improve employee performance through continuous training. Recommendations for action included how to instruct employees to listen, apologize, solve problems, and thank customers. Restaurant managers may apply these results to improve service quality and customer experiences. Social implications include strategies to create positive experiences for employees and customers enhancing community employment and business sustainability.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my wife who has tirelessly listened to my joys and sorrows during the entire process with patience and understanding. I cannot begin to express how much I have needed her support. “Debbie, I could not have done this without you! You are my rock, and I love you very much!”

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I acknowledge my children, Nathan, David, Anna, and Jayson (son-in-law) who have listened to me describe the rigors of the Walden University DBA program and have always encouraged me to keep up the good work. Special thanks need to be given to my parents, Reggie and Wanda Edwards, who have always inspired me to pursue my dreams and work hard.

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Last, I want to thank my community research partner and the managers who participated in this study. Your dedication to quality and commitment to excellence was amazing. This study may have a positive influence on numerous other restaurant managers because of your input.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

One out of four new independent restaurants and one out of 10 franchise restaurants fail in the first year of business (Parsa, Van Der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Buljisic, 2015). Competition in the restaurant industry is intense among the 980,000 U.S. restaurants that generated $683 billion in 2013 or 4% of U.S. gross domestic product (National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2015). The social and economic costs associated with failing restaurants may affect over 1 million people per year because 10% of all U.S. workers, or 13.1 million people, are employed in the restaurant industry (NRA, 2015). Restaurant management limitations and incompetence are primary concerns for restaurant operators to prevent failure (Parsa, et al., 2011). Predictors of success include a manager's ability to increase service quality by controlling internal environmental factors and properly training the behavior of employees (Mandabach, Siddiqui, Blanch, & Vanleeuwen, 2011).

Background of the Problem

Managers who provide restaurant customers a quality service experience may achieve business success. Service quality is a major differentiation factor to gain a competitive advantage in the restaurant industry (Chang, Khan, & Tsai, 2012; Stone 2011). Other benefits of service quality include higher customer satisfaction, loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) referrals (Bin Veop Yunus, Ishak, & Rhouse, 2012).

Critical service events (CSEs) may be the most severe threat to service quality (Cant & Erdis, 2012). CSEs are specific service encounters that lead to an outcome that is dissatisfying or satisfying for customers (Lovelock & Wright, 2001). This study may be helpful to leaders and employees who need to know how to respond to dissatisfying CSEs as these encounters can lead to complaints, hostility, and defection of customers and employees. Primary issues for restaurant survival include service quality, service failure, customer complaint behavior, and service recovery (Chang, Khan, & Tsai, 2012).

Researchers (Keith, & Simmers, 2011; Maklan, & Klaus, 2011) have studied restaurant service quality and CSEs using quantitative tools. However, few qualitative investigators have explored managerial experiences of recovering from CSEs (Maklan, & Klaus, 2011). Restaurant service experience can be complicated and misunderstood (Sivakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014). Gaining qualitative insights from managers might formulate best practices for other restaurant operators desiring to prosper in business through customer retention and loyalty (Alvarez, Casielles, & Martin, 2011).

Problem Statement

Restaurant managers who lack appropriate responses to critical service events have an increased risk of permanently losing their customers (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Bowden & Dagger, 2011). Dissatisfied customers can damage a firm's reputation, as 30% of unhappy defectors will tell an average of 22 people about their experience (Tatikonda, 2013). The general business problem is that poor managerial and employee responses after service mistakes may lead to business failure (Jayawardena, Jarvis, Adams, Lu, & Tyrewala, 2013). The specific business problem is that some restaurant managers lack employee-training strategies that may enhance service recovery from CSEs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore what employee-training strategies may enhance service recovery from CSEs. The population for this study was restaurant managers from a U.S. regional chain in South Carolina with at least three years of employee-training experience. I also reviewed company archival documents regarding employee-training practices to triangulate data.

The implication for constructive social change includes the need to create positive experiences for employees and customers, which may enhance community business sustainability. Positive employee experience can occur through gaining complaint management skills useful for work and other relationships (Gazzoli, Hancer, & Park, 2012; Stone, 2011). Positive customer experience leads to less negative verbal and physical behaviors creating a more peaceful environment without causing harm to others (Bowen, Privitera, & Bob, 2011). Increasing the quality of personal and business relationships may contribute to business sustainability and job growth in local economies.

Nature of the Study

The research method for the study was qualitative because this method is useful for comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena that includes processes and outcomes (Arendt et al., 2012). Study process of qualitative research involved participant semistructured interviews to determine interpretive conclusions (Carcary, 2009; Prendergast & Chan Hak, 2013). Qualitative methods were suitable for this study because managers provided detailed feedback about how they enhanced employee responses to CSEs. Conversely, a quantitative method derives positivistic conclusions from theory testing and pre-determined variables making this approach inappropriate (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Mixed methods involve blending quantitative and qualitative data (Glogowska, 2011). I gathered data from interviews and an archival document as opposed to blending data consecutively using statistics and physical texts, making the mixed method approach inappropriate for this study.

The research design for this study was an exploratory case study. Bourgeault (2012) and Yin (2014) stated that a case study design enables research participants to explain their understanding of a phenomenon in a real-world context. CSEs are complex and emotional events where a satisfactory managerial response requires judgment of customer expectations, needs, and desires (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Understanding the factors of real-life events may occur by exploring what, how, and why questions in exploratory case study research (Bourgeault, 2012; Yin, 2014). The exclusion of other qualitative designs included grounded theory, ethnographic, phenomenological. Researchers using grounded theory seek new conceptual theories from data collection (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012) making this design unsuitable because new theory discoveries were not required for the study. Ethnographic design allows researchers to concentrate on cultural perspectives making this design unsuitable (Petty et al., 2012). Phenomenological design was not suitable because research requirements for participants excluded the need to share personal lived experience with the phenomenon (Harris, Harris, Elliott, & Baron, 2011).

Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What employee-training strategies may enhance service recovery from CSEs?

Interview Questions

The interview questions supporting the central research question were:

1. What employee-training strategies do you believe lead to an especially satisfying service encounter and how does your staff create this experience?
2. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to unsatisfactory food issues (e.g. taste, ill prepared, smell, etc.)?
3. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to poor service delivery issues (e.g. unavailable, slow, and inattentive)?
4. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to complaints about restaurant physical environment (e.g. noise, lighting, and inconsiderate customers)?
5. In your experience, why do you believe that your response strategies to CSEs lead to enhancing customer retention and loyalty?
6. What else could you share that might be relevant to employee-training strategies useful for enhancing service recovery to CSEs?

Conceptual Framework

Essential to the conceptual framework of this study was the theory of organizational learning (OL). Edvardsson, Meiren, Schafer, and Witell (2013) determined that restaurant managers need to understand OL to provide enhanced service recovery from CSEs. Argyris and Schon (1978) developed the theory of OL as a managerial process to identify and correct mistakes. Fiol and Lyles (1985) expanded the theory of OL to include corrective actions based on a better understanding of internal and external factors contributing to mistakes resulting from poor corporate culture, strategy, structure, and environment. Many restaurant managers do not adequately study why service failures occur despite the opportunity to convert angry customers into loyal ones (Lapre, 2011). Adept managers adopt OL systems to quickly identify mistakes and take corrective action to improve performance and maintain a competitive advantage (Altindag, Zehir, & Acar, 2011; Lapre, 2011).

Customer orientation (CO), a practice of discovering what customers need and expect, is an important process managers might use when developing OL systems (Altindag et al., 2011). Stegerean, Petre, and Corina (2013) established a positive relationship between OL and CO. Malhotra, Lee and Uslay (2012) stated that successful managers use customer information to allow them to create proactive solutions. Managers who have a customer-oriented mindset develop and offer products designed exclusively by customers (Oberg, 2011). Applying OL theory in this study, I determined managers were able to express what they had learned from mistakes and how their customers had influenced their decisions about employee-training strategies for recovery from CSEs. I also learned how other OL systems were useful to managers for improving employee-training strategies.

Definition of Terms

Key terms and ideas in this research study included:

Complaint management: Complaint management is an employee procedural practice that addresses customer concerns after service failure (Stone, 2011).

Customer experience: Customer experience is the cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with a firm before, during, and after purchase (Klaus & Maklan, 2013).

Customer incivility: Customer incivility is a negative verbal or non-verbal behavioral response creating physical or emotional harm to employees and customers (Sliter, Sliter & Jex, 2012).

Customer loyalty: Customer loyalty is a multidimensional attitudinal construct leading to trust, commitment, and strong intention to re-patronize a business establishment (Agrawal, Gaur, & Narayanan, 2012).

Customer orientation: Customer orientation is a managerial model where customer input creates continuous improvement in business processes (Altindag, Zehir, & Acar, 2011).

Employee empowerment: Employee empowerment is the practice of allowing employees to make real time decisions that benefit the firm and customers (Pelit, Ozturk, & Arslanturk, 2011).

Front-line employee: A front-line employee is a staff member who is directly involved as a customer interface during a service process (Barnes, Collier, Ponder, & Williams, 2013).

Organizational learning: Organizational learning is the process of acquiring information about internal and external processes to create new behaviors and practices to correct business problems within a firm (Altindag et al., 2011).

Perceptual justice: Perceptual justice is customer consideration of recovery efforts after service failure including: (a) distributive justice, perception of outcomes provided after a service failure compared to previous experiences, other known customer outcomes, and the loss experienced (Siu, Zhang, & Yau, 2013); (b) interactional justice, perception of interpersonal treatment and employee empathy after service failure via verbal and non-verbal communication (De Matos, & Leis, 2013); and (c) procedural justice, perception of policy fairness of a business firm (Kim, Yoo, & Lee, 2012).

Service co-creation: Service co-creation is product and process development resulting from a combination of employee and customer feedback (Edvardsson et al., 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Research assumptions are conceptual beliefs that may or may not be true, yet are useful for research (Francis, 2014). An assumption in this study was that managerial insight is an effective way to identify best practice responses associated with CSEs. Past researchers included a similar assumption and queried managers to: (a) determine various categories of business risk, (b) identify helpful employee-training strategies, and (c) establish responsibility for operational issues (Bharwani & Mathews, 2012; Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990; Bowen et al., 2011). Managers maintain responsibility for all service issues in an organization and should be knowledgeable regarding implementation of continuous improvements (Cant & Erdis, 2012). Mitigating the danger of this assumption, managers did explain why they believed they were qualified to address the research topic prior to interviews.

Another assumption was that managers participating in this study provided truthful answers to questions. Honest managerial responses enable more reliable research results leading to better conclusions and practices (Kvalnes, 2014). Notification of confidentiality of all answers provided, including personal information and firm name, enhanced forthrightness from each study participant.

Limitations

Identifying limitations, or weaknesses, is important because research findings should be reliable, valid, or transferable (Emanuel, 2013). Reliability for qualitative researchers is about how well the study could be repeated and show similar results, validity is about how well they investigated what they intended to investigate, and transferable is about how well the study could be applied to other cases of similar setting (Caracary, 2009). Limitations in this study included the experiences of managers of a restaurant chain within a specific geographic area. Neither customer nor employee viewpoints were considered for this study. Other limitations included the specific time of data collection, regional economic conditions, and type of restaurant. Hence, research conclusions may not be transferable to all types of restaurants, managers, or regions.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the controllable research boundaries (Rodríguez-Santos, González-Fernández, & Cervantes-Blanco, 2013). A controlled specific participant and topic framework bounded this study. Delimitations included participants who have managed for three years in a U.S. regional restaurant chain. The scope of this study was restricted solely to managerial perspectives of customer service experience to identify what training strategies might be useful in responding to CSEs. I did not examine numerous other factors that might contribute to managerial success including: (a) financial management, (b) marketing efforts, (c) competitive positioning, (d) supply chain management, and (e) human resource (HR) practices outside the bounds of this study. Hence, study relevance may not apply to all restaurant managers or those outside of SC.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Mismanagement contributes to failure in the restaurant industry (Parsa, Self, Sydnor-Busso, & Yoon, 2011). Numerous factors lead to mismanagement including incompetence, failure to develop satisfying consumer processes, lack of employee-training, burnout from stress, and shortsightedness (Parsa et al., 2011). Business managers need to focus on more than a financial plan or budget (Mezger & Violani, 2011). Effectual business practice also includes implementation of a superior customer service plan that addresses CSEs. Managers implementing the findings of this study might discover new strategies for responding to CSEs that could turn disgruntled customers into loyal patrons. Hence, realized business success may be more likely leading to continued employment and economic development for their community.

Another study contribution to business practice included reducing customer defections. Restaurant consumers are sometimes unpredictable even without experiencing unsatisfactory CSEs. Customer defection can be costly while customer acquisition may be expensive (Tatikonda, 2013). Reichheld and Sasser Jr. (1990) determined that the economic value of a customer is the lifetime value of their business transactions and their referrals. Increasing customer value and reducing defections may be important to restaurant managers (Tatikonda, 2013).

A final contribution to business practice was the advantage of peer-to-peer learning. Peer-to-peer learning includes helpfulness to solve business problems (Merl, & Schönbauer, 2014). The constructivist nature of this study might provide restaurant operators with processes that challenge their current assumptions and techniques when addressing CSEs and provide well-informed insight (Merl & Schönbauer, 2014).

Implications for Social Change

Implication for social change from this study comprised the need to create positive experiences for employees and customers enhancing community employment and business sustainability. Employment enhancement may occur through training where employees gain useful skills for work and personal relationships. Business sustainability may occur through training employees to provide extraordinary customer experiences.

Positive customer experience leads to less negative verbal and physical behaviors creating a more peaceful environment without causing harm to others (Bowen, Privitera,

& Bob, 2011). CSEs have potential to incite potentially dangerous situations for both employees and customers (Keeffe et al., 2008). Reducing violent behaviors requires careful examination and mitigation of potential stressors (Bowen et al., 2011). Managers need to take responsibility for practices that could lead to customer angst. Training employees in how to handle highly emotional incidents might be an effective strategy to de-escalate anger (Bowen et al., 2011). Instead of experiencing retaliation, properly trained employees would know how to respond to customer angst.

Harmonious significant relationships can occur when participants know how to handle conflicts and complaints (Wilde & Doherty, 2013). Happy customers create a more pleasing environment for employees. Relationship training can provide for improvements in communication and reduce incivility (Wilde & Doherty, 2013). A reduction in incivility during restaurant experiences creates a positive social outcome by reducing psychological distress in customers and employees (Lim & Lee, 2011). Conversely, toleration of incivility in business situations can produce other instances of incivility inside and outside of the workplace leading to the perpetuation of violence (Gallus, Bunk, Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, & Magley, 2014).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The intention of this qualitative case study was to explore employee-training strategies that may enhance service recovery from CSEs. Research participants answered six open-ended questions to ascertain response strategies used by them and their employees to address CSEs. Prior to data collection, I completed an extensive academic study of articles related to the research topic of enhancing service recovery to CSEs.

Investigating past research enables researchers to understand a topic more fully, identify gaps in research, and to develop questions that guide future research (Jaidka, Khoo, & Na, 2013). The purpose of the literature review included the need to: (a) explore previous research to determine best business practices, (b) identify important elements of a topic, (c) synthesize ideas, (d) understand the problem, and (e) understand research techniques (Jaidka et al., 2013). Exploring previous research to determine best business practices included using numerous academic sources for the restaurant industry including multiple: (a) countries, (b) methodologies, (c) restaurant types, (d) restaurant sizes, and (e) sample types. The literature review incorporated 124 journal articles and two business textbooks found in databases such as ProQuest Central, Emerald Management Journal, and ABI/INFORM Complete. One hundred-fourteen articles (92%) were published after 2011, and 119 articles (95%) were peer-reviewed. Total articles used in this study was 237 including 229 (92%) that were published after 2011 and 231 (92%) that were peer-reviewed.

The strategy for searching the literature included important issues associated with CSEs, such as service: (a) quality, (b) expectations, (c) delivery, (d) management, (e) training, (f) strategies, and (g) orientation. A critical analysis and synthesis of the literature indicated the need to organize the literature review into topical sections including: (a) restaurant service quality, (b) restaurant service failure, (c) customer evaluation and response, and (d) employee response and training. The last topical section of the review and important to this study is the conceptual framework of OL theory, the basis of many response strategies in the restaurant industry. Exploring these topics provided significant managerial considerations for CSEs strategy development.

In the literature review, I applied OL theory to explain important topics related to CSEs. OL theory application allowed me to gain a better understanding from past research about CSEs. Managers also gain a better understanding of firm practices when they use OL theory (Altindag et al., 2011).

Researchers determined that OL is a success factor for organizational performance (Weerawardena, Mort, Salunke, Knight, & Liesch, 2015). OL includes all elements of the customer experience (Stegerean et al., 2013). Competent managers hope to create strategies that will please customers (Alvarez et al., 2011). Managers using OL think about past failures, take corrective action, and create desirable offerings (Altindag et al., 2011). An important consideration in providing a desirable offering is delivering service quality that pleases customers (Keith & Simmers, 2012).

Service Quality

Managerial attention to service quality averts unsatisfactory CSEs (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Achieving and maintaining superior service in the restaurant industry can lead to a competitive sustainable advantage (Cant & Erdis, 2012). Quality is an antecedent to satisfaction, loyalty, and future behavioral intention (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Ha & Jang, 2012). Customers become satisfied when service quality equals or exceeds their perceived expectations (Ma, Qu, & Njite, 2011). Managers who proactively innovate and implement better service experiences have the best chance to survive and thrive in their industry (Keith & Simmers, 2012).

Restaurant managers are not always sure what service factors are most important to their customers (Cant & Erdis, 2012). Consumer expectations of service quality evolve over time and may be difficult to identify (Paananen & Seppanen, 2103; Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012). Competitors create additional managerial concern as diners often compare quality standards between competing restaurants (Bharadwaj et al., 2012). Quality standards can evolve, but important service factors mainly stay the same over time (Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012).

The major service factors that influence patron satisfaction are numerous including food quality (nutritious and appealing), atmosphere (friendly, pleasant, and entertaining), servicescape (layout and cleanliness), wait staff competence, and process management (Anwar, Mulyati, & Amelia, 2013; Cant & Erdis, 2012; Cheng-Hua, & Shiu-Chun, 2012; Choi & Sheel, 2012; Frank, 2012; Harrington, Ottenbacher, & Kendall, 2011; Mandabach et al., 2011; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012). Ancillary service factors might include wait time, price/value, service speed, accurate bill, employee grooming, error-free service, audio-video service, Internet access, and dining room design. (Ching-Shu, 2011; Harrington et al., 2011; Markovic, & Raspor, 2011). Restaurant type and customer demographics influence the importance of each factor; however, researchers determined that the most important factors are food quality, service excellence, and atmosphere (Anwar, et al., 2013; Cant & Erdis, 2012; Cheng-Hua & Shiu-Chun, 2012; Choi & Sheel, 2012; Frank, 2012; Harrington et al., 2011; Mandabach et al., 2011; Ryu et al., 2012).

Food quality. Providing excellent food quality should be a high priority for restaurant operators. Consumer response to research surveys reveals that outstanding food is the best predictor of future purchase intention and satisfaction (Cheng-Hua & Shiu-Chun, 2012). This finding is true for all restaurant types including: (a) fast food, (b) fine dining, (c) quick service, and (d) full service (Frank, 2012; Harrington et al., 2011; Parsa, Gregory, Self, & Dutta, 2012). Consumers paid more if a restaurant offered better food quality (Parsa et al., 2012).

Other researchers examined the importance of food quality by menu type, demographics, and special needs. Researchers (Anwar et al., 2013; Cheng-Hua & Shiu-Chun, 2012; Frank, 2012; Harrington et al., 2011; Joo & Cho, 2012) studied Indonesian, Indian, Asian, German, and U.S. consumers and determined that food quality is of primary importance to each culture. Sampled participants from different age groups (i.e. teenagers, adults, and seniors) and genders indicate that food quality is the most important factor when choosing a restaurant (Frank, 2012; Harrington et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2012). Joo and Cho (2012) conducted a study of perspectives and demands of handicapped restaurant consumers in Korea to provide restaurant managers information that could facilitate future improvements. Sampled participants of this study indicated that food quality was the most important factor, followed by the location of the restaurant (Joo & Cho, 2012).

Evaluation of food quality is objective and subjective. Objectively, consumers evaluate food safety and healthiness (Harrington et al., 2011). Food safety becomes a major concern for restaurateurs if serious illness occurs after customer consumption. Diners view healthy food as nutritious and meeting their desired caloric standards (Harrington et al., 2011). Some restaurant patrons have food allergies (e.g. gluten, peanut, milk) that must be satisfied. Subjectively, consumers favor appealing food. Appealing food smells, looks, and tastes good (Harrington et al., 2011). Examples of food quality CSEs might include (a) uncooked or under-cooked food, (b) terrible taste, (c) unsanitary dishes or utensils, (d) too spicy or bland, (e) poor quality ingredients, and (f) rottenness. Damage occurs to future customer intention when unsatisfactory CSEs include food quality (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012).

Service excellence. Service excellence as a beneficial exchange of competency (Campbell, Maglio, & Davis, 2011). When service excellence occurs, consumers perceive the value of the exchange higher than the cost (Campbell et al., 2011; Ha & Jang, 2012). Service exchange begins at first contact (e.g. reservation phone call) and ends after customer departure (Harris, Harris, Elliott, & Baron, 2011). Customers perceive value based on all conscious and subconscious service factors (Campbell et al., 2011).

Positive customer evaluation of tangible and intangible benefits with staff interactions determines service excellence (Campbell et al., 2011). Employee behavior may be critical to customer satisfaction (Choi & Sheel, 2012). Wait staff need to demonstrate product knowledge, friendliness, and empathy to their customers (Cant & Erdis, 2012). Server competence is a priority for some consumers (Anwar et al., 2013). Attentive service is very important for fine diners (Harrington et al., 2011).

Fulfilling needs and wants through a quick and responsive service process leads to service excellence (Choi & Sheel, 2012). Service process issues include (a) reservation policy, (b) wait time, (c) ordering procedure, (d) menu selection, (e) food presentation, (f) ongoing service interaction, (g) billing method, and (h) checkout. Choi and Sheel (2012) explored the influence of waiting time in family restaurants and found the most critical factor affecting customer satisfaction was sitting service, or provisions for customers while waiting for their table. Kimes (2011) determined that anger was probable when reservations were mishandled and reservation polices were unfair. Researchers in Croatia found that an accurate bill and error-free service were important (Markovic & Raspor, 2011). Poor managerial design of service process leads to failure (Frazer, 2013). Examples of nonexcellent service leading to CSEs might include (a) rude reservation attendant or server, (b) longer than anticipated wait time for seating, (c) mishandled order, (d) unfulfilled specific request, (e) waiter prejudice, and (f) server incompetence.

Atmosphere. Another important service quality factor is restaurant atmosphere. Atmosphere is the physical environment of a restaurant facility including exterior and interior design elements, cleanliness, décor, lighting, music, air quality, comfort, and noise (Upadhyaya, Hakeem, & Chavan, 2013). A satisfying atmosphere can provide customer psychological and social intangible benefits (Liu, Huang, & Chen, 2014). Researchers determined that atmosphere could be an important competitive element used by managers to attract and retain customers (Cant & Erdis, 2012; Upadhyaya et al., 2013). A significant relationship exists between physical environment and restaurant image and customer perceived value (Ryu et al., 2013). A pleasant atmosphere is experiential marketing, enhancing customer experience through enjoyable ambiance, layout, signage, and accessories (Upadhyaya et al., 2013).

Walter and Edvardsson (2012) analyzed the effect of the physical environment on customer service experiences. The researchers described the physical environment as an experience room that included: (a) physical artifacts, (b) intangible artifacts (i.e. themes, brand, culture), (c) technology, (d) customer placement, (e) customer involvement, and (f) interaction with employees (Walter & Edvardsson, 2012). Analyzing 122 interviews, Walter and Edvardsson found results indicating that physical environment could play a role before arrival, at the start of a visit, during a visit, at the end of a visit, and after leaving. During visit was most important to research participants.

Unfavorable sensory perceptions of the environment lead some restaurant patrons to have unfavorable experiences (Upadhyaya et al., 2013). Music and lighting had a significant influence on customer experience with loud music and color of walls influencing unfavorable experiences (Walter & Edvardsson, 2012). Loud and disruptive customers may also contribute to a dissatisfying experience (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2013). Customer descriptions of favorable environmental experiences include multiple factors while descriptions of unfavorable experiences usually only include single elements (Walter & Edvardsson, 2012).

Managerial implications related to atmosphere quality include considerations of function, social, and emotional dimensions to match service processes (Walter & Edvardsson, 2012). Customer preferences for atmosphere quality are also an important consideration (Cant & Erdis, 2013). Examples of poor atmosphere quality leading to CSEs might include: (a) trash debris in front of the building, (b) dirty floors, (c) loud music, (d) customer or employee fighting, (e) unsanitary bathrooms, and (f) uncomfortable temperature.

Measurement. Restaurant managers need to measure service quality to determine customer appraisal and achievement of internal goals and targets (Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012). Diagnosing service problems and CSEs becomes difficult without measurement (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Ma et al., 2011). Managers need to measure gaps between their perceptions about quality and quality perceptions of their customers and employees (Roushdy, 2012; Sobaih, Coleman, Ritchie, Jones, 2011).

Measuring quality is very difficult because unlike consumer goods, restaurant service includes intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability (Ma et al., 2011). Many diners patronize restaurants for social- psychological reasons and because restaurant experiences can be subjective measuring intangibles becomes complex (Ma et al., 2011). Measuring heterogeneity, or uniformity of service, can be difficult because quality may not be the same daily. Calculating inseparability, the link between customer influence and staff members on service process, can be challenging because customers are sometimes unpredictable (Ma et al., 2011). Nonetheless, managers can use many industry measurement tools to determine how well service quality meets customer expectation (Ma et al., 2011).

The most widely used measuring tool in the restaurant industry is SERVQUAL (Dawson & Titz, 2012; Gracia, Bakker, & Grau, 2011; Ma et al., 2011; Maklan & Klaus, 2011; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012). Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed SERVQUAL to measure five dimensions using 22 questions. Developing

SERVQUAL required consideration of various quality concepts including: (a) perceived quality versus objective quality, (b) quality as attitude, (c) quality versus satisfaction, and (d) expectations compared to perceptions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). SERVQUAL's five dimensions include: (a) reliability, dependable and accurate service; (b) responsiveness, timely and willing service; (c) tangibles, appearance of physical structure, equipment, and staff; (d) assurance, employee knowledge and politeness, and; (e) empathy, employee caring of individualized customer needs (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Researchers testing these dimensions typically use a 5 or 7 point Likert-type scale to question a sampled customer's opinion (Lee et al., 2012).

Some managers and researchers prefer to use another measuring tool, DINESERV (Keith & Simmers, 2011; Ma et al., 2011; Vanniarajan & Meharajan, 2012). DINESERV is an expanded version of SERVQUAL adding one more dimension (i.e. price fairness) and seven more questions (e.g. rational calculation of prices) (Ma et al., 2011; Vanniarajan & Meharajan, 2012). Researchers argued for the use of DINESERV as specifically useful for the restaurant industry as compared to SERVQUAL, a more generic tool useful for numerous service industries (Vanniarajan & Meharajan, 2012).

An alternative tool to SERVQUAL and DINESERV is FAIRSERV (Keith & Simmers, 2011). Researchers' use of FAIRSERV determines customer reaction to service procedures by employing justice and fairness theories (Keith & Simmers, 2011). Service fairness dimensions are procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational (Keith & Simmers, 2011).

Another measurement model is Importance Performance Analysis (IPA), a method of prioritizing the importance of product attributes (Ma et al., 2011). Researcher use of IPA assesses consumer perception of importance and performance of each phase of service. Ha and Jang (2012) used IPA to develop a qualitative survey that consisted of three sections: (a) customers' perceived performance in respect to six categories of consumer value - efficiency, excellence, social, emotional, epistemic, and virtue; (b) customer assessment of satisfaction regarding dining experiences, and (c) customer post-consumption behavioral intentions. Analyzing these customer preferences across different types of restaurants, Ha and Jang (2012) created IPA grids indicating where managerial focus in performance should occur in four qualitative areas based on performance.

Critical incident technique (CIT) is a qualitative measurement tool researchers use to categorize service incidents to differentiate very satisfactory service encounters from very dissatisfactory (Bitner et al., 1990). Use and validation of CIT in a study by Bitner et al. was instrumental in inspiring 140 other CIT studies (Gremler, 2004). Gremler (2004) studied CIT in service research and concluded acceptability of the instrument for: (a) customer evaluations of service, (b) service failure and recovery, and (c) service delivery. CIT is an evaluative phenomenological tool where the perspective of respondents can be classified, behaviors identified, and future implications inferred. Investigators using CIT can isolate the various moments in a service process to determine the potential areas of failure and avoid the risk of customer dissatisfaction (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). CIT can be helpful to identify consumer zone of tolerance, the range of acceptable employee response to service failure (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Content analysis of elaborated participant stories describing critical events allows researchers to create themes, which may be valuable to solve problems, develop role- playing, and provide training for employees (Milner, Ostmeier, & Franke, 2013).

Industry third party awards provide another measurement of service quality. The prestigious Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award (MBNQA) is an award for outstanding service performance given to U.S. businesses (Young, 2012). Many restaurateurs consider the Red Michelin guide as a significant worldwide recognition of service quality (Edelheim, Lee, Lee, & Caldicott, 2011). Third party awards exist to inform the public of outstanding performance (Edelheim et al., 2011). Managers view awards as beneficial for marketing purposes, increased employee retention, and staff confidence (Edelheim et al., 2011). Customers of award-winning restaurants often are more confident when making their purchases at these restaurants (Edelheim et al., 2011). The limited number of third party awards means that only a few operators will ever receive them.

Measurement ratings that should be of concern to managers are Internet consumer ratings (Chua & Banerjee, 2013). Internet sites such as TripAdvisor®, Yelp®, and Zagat® influence people considering new restaurant patronage (Gyung Kim, Wang, & Mattila, 2010). In addition to hospitality sites, consumers also rely on information from Twitter and Facebook (Chua, & Banerjee, 2013). Social media has a major influence on buyer behavior (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) through use of the Internet is a very popular customer response tool in the hospitality industry (Dawson & Titz, 2013).

Consumers provide other consumers with detailed information about perceived quality of goods and services from restaurant visits through quantitative star ratings and qualitative statements (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Customer knowledge from social media includes customer dislikes, expectations, likes, personal opinions, and preferences from responses to questionnaires and posts (Chua & Banerjee, 2013). Domain-specific sites (i.e. TripAdvisor®) are more influential in consumer decision-making than domain-independent sites like Facebook® (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Dawson and Titz (2012) found that a majority of undergraduate and graduate students examine online feedback before trying a new restaurant.

Popularity of social media sites provides managers a warning and an opportunity. The warning is the need to provide beneficial recovery from dissatisfactory CSEs or face consumer wrath in social media. An opportunity is the need to gain consumer feedback, reinforce brand image, and innovate via posted comments (Chua & Banerjee, 2013).

Innovation and implementation. Service quality innovation and implementation should be a continuous process (Anwar et al., 2013). Collection of innovative ideas comes from management, employees, customers, competitors, and industry sources (Anwar et al., 2013). Total quality management (TQM) is a managerial discipline that emphasizes continuous improvement using customer requirements and satisfaction standards daily (Green, 2012; Lam, Lee, Ooi, & Lin, 2011). Managerial advantages of TQM are process improvement, variability reduction, fact-based management, competitive advantage, and organizational alignment (Green, 2012). The MBNQA recognizes operational excellence of the six TQM dimensions including: (a) leadership, (b) strategic planning, (c) information and analysis, (d) customer orientation, (e) process management, and (f) human resource management (Lam et al., 2011). Lam et al. (2011) determined a significant relationship between TQM and organizational learning (i.e. customer orientation). Managers who implement TQM achieve higher levels of service quality (Lam et al., 2011).

Young (2012) studied the operational features of K & N Management (KNM), a fast-casual restaurant chain in Texas and recipient of the MBNQA. At KNM, management goals include: (a) create enthusiastic fans of every customer, (b) create a memorable experience, (c) create loyal advocates of the brand, (d) emphasize high quality, and (e) learn from the best in the industry (Young, 2012). KNM management practices include: (a) aligning culture to core values, (b) measuring practices through customer feedback, (c) emphasizing that the food business is the people business, and (d) providing continuous on-the-job training that highlights that everything matters when delighting guests (Young, 2012). Secret shoppers enhance organizational learning by showing service personnel how they were performing via video recordings (Young, 2012).

Satisfaction and loyalty. Restaurant managers generate customer satisfaction when they understand, measure, innovate, and provide service quality (Bin Veop Yunus, et al., 2012; Choi & Sheel, 2012; Ha & Jang, 2012). Customer satisfaction is a primary goal for business proprietors (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Marketing researchers defined customer satisfaction in different ways (Liu et al., 2014). One way is positive affective reaction to an enjoyable experience (Jani & Han, 2011; Liu et al., 2014). Another way is cognitive perception that payment provides an adequate or superior return (Choi & Sheel, 2012; Jani & Han, 2011).

Researchers determined a significant relationship between satisfaction and loyalty (Jani & Han, 2011; Ramseook – Munhurrun, 2012). The concept of customer loyalty includes seven determinants: (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) emotions, (e) perception of corporate image, (f) value perception, and (g) quality (Agrawal et al., 2012). Agrawal et al. (2012) provided a conceptual model that found that satisfaction (influenced by emotions) led to trust which led to a commitment that led to customer loyalty.

Loyal customers offer many benefits to business. They provide positive WOM referrals that might lead to new customers (Liu et al., 2014). Loyal patrons spend more and purchase more often leading to profit increases (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). Loyalty reduces new customer acquisition cost (Evanschitzky et al., 2012).

Customer dissatisfaction and defection include high costs (Tatikonda, 2013). Managers who calculate acquisition cost, retention cost, and customer lifetime value gain an increased understanding of customer loyalty importance (Tatikonda, 2013). Knowing the value of satisfaction and loyalty, restaurant leaders should diligently seek to prevent unsatisfactory CSEs from ever occurring. Unfortunately, despite best effort, service failure and CSEs occur in the restaurant industry (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Gyung

Kim et al., 2010). However, service recovery can lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty behavior (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

Service Failure and Recovery

Failure. CSEs are especially dissatisfying service failures (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Managers, employees, and customers know that service breakdowns can occur at any time during a dining experience (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Understanding the nature of service failure is important because managers can design preventative processes and train employees to avoid making mistakes (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Bitner et al., 1990; Chang et al., 2012; Nguyen et al., 2012).

Service failure is a customer perception that something in the delivery process has not met expectation (Lovelock, 1999). Customers scrutinize every aspect of their experience (Lovelock, 1999). Specific aspects include communication, product offering, staff truthfulness, employee attitude, courteousness, service processes, environment, wait time, and other customer behaviors (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Waiters, patrons, or a combination of both can create service errors (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). After mishaps, consumer appraisal process includes determining the locus of responsibility, stability of the situation (i.e. temporary or permanent), and controllability (i.e. who is in control over the situation) (Tojib & Khajehzadeh, 2014). From an employee perspective, determining who caused the slip-up is not as important as fixing the problem (Sikakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014; Tojib & Khajehzadeh, 2014).

Customer perception defines the occurrence of CSEs (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). The range of perception among diners can significantly vary. Guest health and safety might be a primary concern for some while others might consider a poor Wi-Fi connection a critical event (Bharadwaj et al., 2012; Cobanoglu, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Berezina, 2012). Horrible food taste, spoilage, dirty dinnerware, nasty bathrooms, disrespectful servers, loud and obnoxious greeters, pungent odors, and misplaced orders are all examples of CSEs. Even third-party customers can be a problem through negative emotional outbursts at an adjacent table creating environmental CSEs (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2013). Negative emotional behaviors by third-party customers influence another customer's future intentions and can lead to negative WOM (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2013).

Failure research. Chang, Khan, and Tsai (2012) studied three different types of service failure including: (a) product defects, (b) improper handling of reservations, and (c) unfriendly staff. Researchers compared these failure types with three categories of events including: (a) birthday party, (b) business party, and (c) family gathering (Chang et al., 2012). Investigators sought to answer whether complaint behavior would intensify depending on occasion importance (Chang et al., 2012). Chang et al. (2012) found results indicating that product defects caused the most intensive complaint behaviors for birthday and business parties supporting the hypothesis that perceived event importance moderates customer complaint behavior to mistakes.

Investigators also determined that service failure is outcome or process based; *controllable* or *uncontrollable* (Chang et al., 2012; Sikakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014). An example of a controllable outcome error is the inability to deliver a menu item because of poor supply chain management. A controllable process mistake would occur by forcing customers to wait longer because of staff shortages. Examples of uncontrollable outcome and process blunders include power outage or equipment breakdown, which might create longer service time. Managers can determine severity for each type of error by measuring occurrence rate, timing, proximity, and cycle (Sikakumar et al., 2014).

Failure through double and triple deviation. Multiple opportunities exist to spoil a customer's experience because service delivery is a continuous process (Sikakumar et al., 2014). Service recovery can become complex when employee attempts to recover from one failure lead to another failure only worsening the customer situation (Edvardsson, Tronvoll, & Hoykinpuro, 2011). Many buyers may give service providers a second chance when mistakes happen (Edvardsson et al., 2011). However, double and triple deviation (i.e. two or three sequential failures resulting from one failed recovery effort) can be very unsatisfying to consumers (Edvardsson et al., 2011). A poor recovery strategy can lead to additional service failures and increase customer aggravation (Edvardsson et al., 2011).

Recovery. When failures occur, employees need to initiate recovery to correct mistakes (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Recovery strategy implementation must be a priority of service enterprises (Bharwani & Matthews, 2012; Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Gyung Kim et al., 2010; Nguyen et al., 2012; Vázquez-Casielles, Iglesias, & Varela-Neira, 2012). Recovery efforts should match customer recovery expectation (Stone, 2011). Severe failures require increased recovery efforts (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Without satisfactory recovery, customers complain and defect (Nguyen et al., 2012; Tatikonda, 2013).

Roushdy (2012) found that the prevalent customer concern was adequate resolution of service disappointments. Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran (1998) determined that 50% of research participants were dissatisfied with personnel responses after service failure. Customer perception of a satisfactory recovery solution provides re-establishment of organizational trust and positive future purchase intention (Siu et al., 2013). Understanding how to resolve egregious errors through recovery strategies is important to keep diners coming back for more (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Siu et al., 2013; Vázquez-Casielles et al., 2012; Wang, Hsu, & Chih, 2014).

Recovery strategies. Developing a recovery strategy involves identifying: (a) service failure type, (b) customer needs, (c) customer requests, and (d) employee intervention, and (e) customer responses labeled as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Bitner et al., 1990). Understanding failure type may be necessary to determine what customers need to gain to make up for a loss (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). A lost order, for example, might require giving a free meal. Customer wishes moderate what might be given (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Consumers expect compensation for the hassle of service failure (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Employee remuneration might include discounts, replacement, refunds, gifts, coupons, apologies, empathetic listening, and remediation (Huang & Lin, 2011). Tracking customer response during and after recovery response enables managers to know whether evidence of satisfaction exists (Huang & Lin, 2011).

Two general approaches to recovery are financial and social compensation (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011; Huang & Lin, 2011). Financial exchanges are utilitarian and social exchanges are hedonic (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Huang & Lin, 2011). A utilitarian exchange might incorporate money, spiff, or discount whereas hedonic exchanges involve apology, empathy, or experiential upgrades (e.g. first class).

Huang and Lin (2011) studied utilitarian and hedonic exchanges for different types of service establishments and determined that compensation type should match service type. Gelbrich and Roschk (2011) examined effect of overcompensation (i.e. excess remuneration comparable to mistake value) versus simple compensation (i.e. equal remuneration comparable to mistake value) and discovered that overcompensation had less incremental effect on post-complaint satisfaction than simple compensation. However, in highly competitive markets and in markets that rely heavily on relationship marketing, overcompensation is an effective strategy (Gelbrich & Roshk, 2011).

Recovery and customer type. All consumers expect a positive recovery experience, but not every consumer is the same (Gyung Kim et al., 2010; Kim, Ok, & Canter, 2012; Stone, 2011). Customer type can moderate recovery preference (Kim et al., 2012; Nguyen et al., 2012). Moderating variables to service recovery include past experiences with the firm and customer traits like personality, demographic, cultural, and emotional intelligence (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

Kim et al. (2012) sought to discover if (a) high relational customers differed from low relational customers in recovery expectation, performance evaluation, disconfirmation perception, and recovery satisfaction, and (b) the quality of customer-firm relationships influenced the effect of recovery expectation-performance gaps in full service restaurants. Using quantitative methods, investigators found that high customer relationship and prior experiences led to higher recovery expectation; however, these customers were easier to satisfy than low relational customers (Kim et al., 2012). Prior customer experience creates wider zones of tolerance that may be the result of high cumulative satisfaction from past experiences (Kim et al., 2012). Low relational and less experienced customers increase risk to restaurant managers who need to understand that even a single service failure can lead to customer belief that the restaurant staff is incompetent, thereby necessitating more service recovery effort (Kim et al., 2012). A successful recuperation might strengthen relationship quality from low to high and influence future intention (Wang et al., 2014).

Recovery and justice perception. Consumer satisfaction with service recovery depends on justice perception, which compares fairness of output with input exchange process (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Gulas & Larsen, 2012; Gyung Kim et al., 2010; Nguyen et al., 2012; Siu et al., 2013; Stone, 2011; Tax et al., 1998). Opinions about justice can change over time (Nguyen et al., 2012). Researchers determined three-dimensional factors of justice that include: (a) distributive, (b) interactional, and (c) procedural (Nguyen et al., 2012).

Distributive justice is the comparison of outcome to input by weighing equitable issues (Nguyen et al., 2012). Customers need to believe that outcomes are fair and similar to what others receive. An affirmative patron sense of distributive justice might occur through the provision of tangible compensation (e.g. refund and discount) demonstrating a contractual preference (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

Procedural justice is thoughtful consideration of process fairness (Nguyen et al., 2012). Patrons need to believe they had a say in the outcome. Positive customer opinion of procedural justice might occur via speedy correction (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

Interactional justice is treatment of customer during the process of recovery (Nguyen et al., 2012). Consumers demand dignity and respect. Employee attitude of humility, politeness, and concern enhances perceptions of interactional justice (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

Not all customers want the same solution to service failure and may desire one form of justice over another (Nguyen et al., 2012). Custom tailoring recovery processes that matches individual needs provides food purchasers a sense of exceptional treatment (Nguyen et al., 2012). Without consideration of preferences, recovery effort is less likely (Nguyen et al., 2012).

Using justice theory, Nguyen et al. (2012) examined Australian hospitality consumers in a qualitative study to determine effective recovery strategies. Study participants indicated the need for customize personalized solutions (versus standard solutions) and fast tangible compensation (Nguyen et al., 2012). Managerial implications from this study include the need to: (a) significantly invest in service recovery efforts by training employees to detect customer dissatisfaction (i.e. identifying verbal and non-verbal messages), (b) understand different levels of customer expectation related to justice perception, and (c) provide a range of multiple solutions to correct failures (Nguyen et al., 2012).

Recovery and co-creation. Multiple recovery solutions include the possibility of co-created solutions between staff and diners (Pranic & Roehl, 2012; Roggeveen, Tsiros, & Grewal, 2012). Pranic and Roehl (2012) examined the management of service recovery from customer empowerment (CE) standpoint. Typically, complainants have little power over how service providers respond to service failure (Pranic & Roehl, 2012). CE is a firm strategy where information and a sense of control allow customers the option to self-select correction remedies in the service recovery process (Pranic & Roehl, 2012). Managerial implication is the need to tailor compensation and resolution individually to each complainant (Pranic & Roehl, 2012).

Roggeveen, Tsiros, and Grewal (2012) also found that consumer co-creation could positively influence post-recovery evaluation. Coupled with compensation, co-creation is an effective recovery strategy and leads to repurchase intention (Roggeveen et al., 2012). Customers need to view the process of co-creation in a positive manner for it to be effective (Roggeveen et al., 2012). When customers view the process of co-creation as *work*, it can lead to a negative reaction (Roggeveen et al., 2012). Employees need to meet or exceed customer requests for co-creation or suffer from poor evaluations. Consumer requests tend to be less costly than what many managers might potentially offer to resolve failures lending credence to involve customers in recovery (Roggeveen et al., 2012).

Recovery factors and benefits. Researchers determined that four important factors lead to satisfying recovery solutions (Edvardsson et al., 2011). The first factor is communication including employee ability to: (a) listen to customers, (b) communicate with other employees in the service system, and (c) preempt frustration by communicating advanced solutions in the event of service failure (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Second, employee competence is necessary which includes the ability to understand a customer's situation, expectations, and then solve the problem (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Third, timing is critical as the employee sets a resolution time period that matches customer expectation and delivers the solution on time (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Finally, managers need a service recovery system that configures available resources, empowers employees, and defines specific processes that shape co-creation of service recovery (Edvardsson et al., 2011).

Benefits of recovery include solving customer problems, creating satisfaction, developing effective complaint processing, increasing response speed, and generating staff competence (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Retaining a disgruntled consumer provides a 30% to 150% return on the investment in the process (Edvardsson et al., 2011). An effective recovery strategy enhances customer experience with a firm and transforms a disgruntled customer into a loyal one (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012).

Consumer Behavior

Understanding consumer behavior enables restaurant managers to provide beneficial affective and cognitive experiences leading to satisfaction (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Hunger satisfaction is important, but so are psychological and social considerations (Boakye, Kwon, Blankson, & Prybutok, 2012; Brown, Edwards, & Hartwell, 2013). Which consideration is most important depends on the type of consumer, occasion, and restaurant (Chang et al., 2012; Ha & Jang, 2012). Consumers can demand high or low relational and experiential exchanges; moderate or high quality food (Brown et al., 2013; Ha & Jang, 2012; Jani & Han, 2011). Occasions might be casual, formal, (un)important, for pleasure or business, (non)social, stressful or uneventful. Restaurant types include fast, casual, full service, and fine dining. Many influential factors contribute to consumer expectation before, experience during, and evaluation after food consumption.

Expectation. Consumers have expectations before arriving at eating establishments (Tam, 2011). Expectations include all aspects of the dining experience. Influencing expectations of first-time diners are WOM and referral (Gyung Kim et al., 2010; Schmitt, Skiera, & Van den Bulte, 2011). Frequent diners consider all past experiences and form cumulative expectation (Kim et al., 2012). These expectations have a direct effect on potential satisfaction (Tam, 2011).

The expectancy-disconfirmation model may be useful to explain customer satisfaction as a comparison of expectation to perceived performance (Tam, 2011). If perceived performance exceeds expectation, positive disconfirmation and satisfaction occurs (Van Ryzin, 2013). Negative disconfirmation happens when perceived performance is less than expected creating dissatisfaction (Van Ryzin, 2013). When expectation matches performance, conformation occurs (Van Ryzin, 2013).

Researchers determined two general types of consumer expectation, normative and predictive (Tam, 2011). *Normative* expectations are what consumers would ideally like to receive in a service experience while *predictive* expectations are what they expect to receive (Tam, 2011). Normative expectations are stable whereas predictive expectations can change with each service experience (Liao, Liu, Liu, To, & Lin, 2011). In combination, these expectations influence purchase decisions and determine satisfaction levels after purchase (Liao et al., 2011)). Consumer choice of restaurant A instead of B happens because of expectation that A will provide something better than B. Comparison of real-time consumption experience at restaurant A takes place within the context of prior expectation and determines satisfaction and post purchase behavior (Tam, 2011).

Tam (2011) discovered that when purchase importance was high, consumer expectations had an increased influence on disconfirmation. Before a high importance purchase, consumers will likely engage in detailed information gathering (Tam, 2011). Managers of full service and fine dining restaurants need awareness of consumer Internet rating sites, which directly influence consumer expectation (Chua, & Banerjee, 2013; Harrington et al., 2011). TripAdvisor® and Zagat® are popular online review sites (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Disgruntled customers can post detailed experiences with unsatisfactory CSEs that will influence the expectations of potential patrons (Schmitt et al., 2011).

Bowden and Dagger (2011) also found that satisfaction judgments were low or high depending on whether anticipatory expectations were high or low. Consumers update their expectations during consumption and every time they dine at a specific establishment. The implication for restaurant managers is the need to monitor services during customer consumption and provide delightful surprises to create memorable experiences (Bowden & Dagger, 2011). Restaurant staff members should continuously communicate with customers to determine how they feel about the food and service to determine satisfaction (Bowden & Dagger, 2011).

Experience. Restaurant consumer experience includes all direct and indirect encounters before, during, and after purchase (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). The first direct encounter might be a phone conversation with a reservation attendant while the first indirect encounter might be hearing about the restaurant from a friend. Subsequent encounters become important touch points that influence a consumer experience evaluation.

Modern marketing has evolved from a simple product and service orientation to an experience orientation (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). Boakye et al. (2012) suggested that consumers believe they make investments in experience when frequenting restaurants. Boakye et al. developed a service investment model from customer satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment size. The researchers determined: (a) customer satisfaction was a value function of benefits minus costs, (b) quality of alternatives was comparison of competitive choices, and (c) investment size was the amount of resources (e.g. time, effort, and money) used by customers when making service choices (Boakye et al.). Experiences that lead to customer loyalty are those where satisfaction accompanies a large investment (Boakye et al.).

Maklan and Klaus (2011) developed another experience model called Customer Experience Quality (EXQ). EXQ is product-service-system marketing tool (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). The key factors of EXQ are product use, outcome satisfaction, process moments-of-truth, and peace of mind (Maklan & Klaus, 2011).

Product use includes available selections and the ability to compare these (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). Consumers enjoy seeing attractive options when perusing a menu (Pearlman & Chacko, 2012). Consumer satisfaction takes place when product comparisons make sense (Klaus & Maklan, 2013).

Outcome satisfaction occurs with positive transaction value (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). Results matter. An example of outcome focus is customer desire to maintain patronage because procedures are much easier than the competition. Another example is quicker service in the fast food industry (Frank, 2012).

Process moments-of-truth are points when services fail requiring staff flexibility (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). Consumer confidence that waiters will react quickly and correctly to service failures demonstrates a positive moment-of-truth. Other critical dimensions include proactive response, risk perception, and staff interpersonal skill (Maklan & Klaus, 2011).

Peace of mind is mainly consumer emotional assessment of all service interactions (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). Buyers enjoy easy, no hassle experiences (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). Patrons with peace of mind have a long-term view of their business relationships (Maklan & Klaus, 2011).

Maklan and Klaus (2011) suggested that when using EXQ, the preceding four factors should include: (a) total cognitive-emotional assessment of value from the customer's point of view, (b) capturing the consumer's value-in-use of the firm's offer, (c) examination of emotional responses in addition to functional delivery, and (d) evaluations of pre and post experiences over a specified time. Sampling 800 customers in four different firms, researchers found that moments-of-truth had the highest effect on loyalty intentions and an increased influence on WOM behavior (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Investigators also discovered that peace-of-mind had the highest effect on purchaser satisfaction (Klaus & Maklan, 2013).

Evaluation. Consumer evaluations of service experience should significantly concern restaurant managers (Bowden & Dagger, 2011). Positive assessment leads to satisfaction, loyalty, and positive WOM (Jani & Han, 2011; Liu et al., 2014). Negative appraisals lead to complaint, defection, and negative WOM (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

Eating experiences include comparisons to theater performances where the audience evaluates every aspect of what they see and hear before, during, and after the show (Harris et al., 2011). Using a customer-critic approach in a qualitative phenomenological study, Harris et al. evaluated consumer experience at an upscale restaurant in Lancashire, England. The researchers explored evaluation of scenography (environment), narrative (text and timing), actors and acting (employee quality), audience (customers), sensory stimuli (lighting and music), and general discussion of the performance (Harris et al., 2001). Results from participant feedback indicated that the best part of the performance was food in terms of quality and presentation (Harris et al., 2001). Participants indicated that some elements of the performance were bland including the clothing of wait staff, seating, music, and lighting (Harris et al., 2011). Bland did not mean uncomfortable (Harris et al., 2011). Some observers criticized the wait staff because they did not reinforce the quality of the food image or provide descriptions of recipes and contents found in the food (Harris et al., 2011). Most participants stated that they would not return because the experience was not distinctive enough even though the food was satisfying (Harris et al., 2001).

Better performances lead to better evaluations while performances involving unsatisfactory CSEs lead to poor evaluations. When negative CSEs happen, a series of cognitive appraisals occur in a consumer’s mind (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Primary appraisal is of event severity and secondary appraisal is emotional ability to cope with dissatisfaction (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). These appraisals may be sequential or concurrent and will determine coping strategy (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

Coping strategies include problem focused, emotion focused, and avoidance (Donoghue & de Klerk, 2013). Consumers using a problem focused strategy attempt to resolve the problem by seeking a remedy (Donoghue & de Klerk, 2013). Emotion focused patrons inwardly attempt to deal with their emotions as a way of coping (Donoghue & de Klerk, 2013). Those who prefer to ignore the failure by taking no action, use avoidance strategies (Donoghue & de Klerk, 2013). Coping strategy leads to consumer response (Tojib & Khajehzadeh, 2014).

Response. Customers experiencing service failure might express their displeasure in various ways including silence, complaint to restaurant staff, incivility, negative

WOM, and complaint to a third party. (Tojib & Khajehzadeh, 2014). Not all responses may be desirable for restaurant management and staff (Gi Park, Kim, & O'Neill, 2014). Consumer response to CSEs influences employee effectiveness of service recovery (Alvarez et al., 2011; Ang & Buttle, 2012; Gulas & Larsen, 2012; Hansen, Samuelsen, & Andreassen, 2011; Stone, 2011).

Diners may remain silent when they believe the failure does not warrant a complaint (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2012). However, silence is not golden (Gyung Kim et al., 2010; Gulas & Larsen, 2012). Consumer inaction does not equate to satisfaction or predict future purchase intention (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Employees cannot fix a problem they are unaware of when consumers remain silent.

CSEs can be highly emotional to some customers causing incivility (Sliter et al., 2012). Incivility expression includes rudeness, verbal aggression, and bullying (Sliter, Pui, Sliter, & Jex, 2011). Incivility can be physically and emotionally harmful to all involved parties (Sliter et al., 2012).

Negative WOM and complaints to third parties damage firm reputation discouraging patronage from current or potential customers (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014; Chang et al., 2012). Buyers complain to third parties like the Better Business Bureau (BBB) or government health agency as a way to force corrective action on the offending business (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Negative WOM is a way to warn other customers of poor business practices (Chua & Banerjee, 2013).

Technology changes the way consumers communicate with others (Gulas & Larsen, 2012). Internet rating sites include real-time purchasing guidance to consumers

(Gulas & Larsen, 2012). Many consumers use online review sites before making purchases (Amblee & Bui, 2011). Shoppers might trust eWOM more than they do manufacturer descriptions (Amblee & Bui, 2011). Negative WOM spreads faster on the internet (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014).

Complaint response is the preferable consumer coping strategy enabling staff members to gain an understanding of failure and provide suitable recovery strategies (Stone, 2011). Researchers determined that resolution of complaints could lead to satisfaction and even loyalty (Gulas et al., 2010). Instead of viewing complaints as a problem, restaurant managers need to view complaint management as a profit center because complaints identify service deficiencies (Alvarez et al., 2011; Gi Park et al., 2014).

Hansen, Samuelsen, and Andreassen (2011) cited research that showed 55% of dissatisfied customers only complained sometimes or never suggesting that consumers rarely complained. Diner complaint can take place because of four motivations including: (a) customer attitude toward complaining, (b) subjective norm toward complaining, (c) past frequency toward complaining, and (d) recent past complaining behavior (Hansen et al., 2011). Customer attitude toward complaining and frequency of past complaining has a positive effect on complaining intentions (Hansen et al., 2011). Subjective norms (e.g. cultural factors) can have a negative influence on complaint intention (Gi Park et al., 2014; Hansen et al., 2011). If recent past complaint behavior resulted in dissatisfactory results, consumers are less likely to complain (Hansen et al., 2011). Consumers have a negative attitude toward complaining because of unpleasantness and riskiness associated with potential disagreeable outcomes (Hansen et al., 2011). Understanding consumer behavior should enable restaurant operators to design and implement ways to make consumer complaint easier (Hansen et al., 2011).

Employee Behavior

Front-line employee (FLE) behavior influences ease of complaint (Alvarez et al., 2011). Employees who listen well and provide good service quality facilitate more consumer freedom to complain when necessary (Alvarez et al., 2011). Patrons need to sense that they can trust staff members (Alvarez et al., 2011). Trust plus service quality equals loyalty (Alvarez et al., 2011).

Competent employees are a critical success factor to business organizations (Pelit et al., 2011). Employee performance has a profound effect on customer satisfaction, improved return on assets, and profitability (Bharwani & Butt, 2012). Alonso and O'Neill (2011) defined the ideal hospitality employee as someone exhibiting positive attitude and aptitude. Restaurant managers have indicated that servers need positive external and internal attributes (Crawford, 2013). External attributes include (a) effective communication skills, (b) ability to make satisfying decisions from customer point of view, (c) a caring attitude, (d) ability to make customers comfortable, and (e) the determination to exceed expectation and wow customers (Baum & Segal, 2014; Crawford, 2011). Internal attributes include passion, professionalism, and people orientation (Crawford, 2011).

Hospitality employees poorly suited for serving others can be harmful to themselves and others (Keefe et al., 2008). Restaurant employees often deal with emotional situations (Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Dalal, 2013). Dining establishments can be stressful environments (Sliter et al., 2012). Some employees are better at mitigating customer emotion than others (Beal et al., 2013). Mishandling grievances can lead to serious consequences including customer anger and retaliation toward the offending employee and other staff members (Sliter et al., 2011). Customer incivility can cause employee burnout, exhaustion, decreased job satisfaction, decline in mental health, and withdrawal behaviors (Sliter et al., 2012).

Restaurant operators consider positive employee responses a critical success factor (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011). Competent employees are hard to find (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011). The annual employee attrition rate in the restaurant industry is 31% making staff retention a problem (Bharwani & Butt, 2012). Despite these challenges and to reduce the negative effects of unsatisfactory CSEs, managers must intentionally hire, train, and retain the right employees.

Hiring. Before hiring a FLE, managers need to use pre-qualifying tools to assess personality profile and emotional intelligence (Kim,Yoo, Lee, & Kim, 2012; Torres & Kline, 2013). Pre-employment testing can predict future behavior (Walker, van Jaarsveld, & Skarlicki, 2014). Employees with negative affectivity have an increased propensity to become uncivil (Walker et al., 2014). Workers with high trait anger are more likely to handle customer interpersonal conflicts negatively (Sliter et al., 2011). High emotional intelligence contributes positively to emotional labor and service recovery performance (Kim et al., 2012). Kim, Yoo, Lee, and Kim (2012) discovered that managers should hire employees with higher emotional intelligence in service industries requiring a high degree of emotional labor. High emotional intelligence also reduces employee emotional exhaustion (Kim et al., 2012).

Hiring considerations should also include job-matching abilities (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011). Quality people produce quality service (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011). Service industry operators need employees that demonstrate strong work ethic, timeliness, responsibility, and accountability (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011). When job skills match job description, the probability of delighting customers may be increased (Torres & Kline, 2013). Delighting customers preempts many potentially unsatisfactory CSEs.

Training. Service employees need training to delight diners (Crawford, 2013). Crawford (2013) determined that nature *and* nurture could help explain server excellence. Nature relates to intrinsic gift and ability while nurture comes about through training and motivation (Crawford, 2013). Motivational training is a critical HR management process that enables employees to make practical and strategic decisions (Alfalla-Luque, Marín-García, & Medina-López, 2012).

Training employees leads to service quality and business performance success by improving employee performance and skill, implementing new procedures and processes, and orienting new employees (Ballesteros & De Saá, 2012). Training is a proactive and reactive process intended to increase employee knowledge and understanding to produce cognitive, affective, and behavioral change (Ballesteros & De Saá, 2012). Effective learning often leads to permanent practical applications useful for superior job performance (Ballesteros & De Saá, 2012).

Full time and part time employees need similar training to align them with organizational goals (Sobiah et al., 2011). Restaurant operators often use part time staff, but may not understand the perceptual differences between part and full time workers or the need to train part time workers the same as full time employees (Sobiah et al., 2011). Sobiah et al. (2011) found that part time workers were less satisfied with quality and quantity of training.

Training wait staff involves a heightened awareness of how to delight customers (Torres & Kline, 2013). Using consumer response letters written to hospitality managers, Torres & Kline (2013) discovered five important managerial considerations as a training model. First, employees need strategies to resolve problems even when the firm is not responsible for them (e.g. dealing with bad weather) (Torres & Kline, 2013). Servers need technical mastery skill in job performance demonstrating superior professionalism (Torres & Kline, 2013). Patrons want waiters to be aware of competitive service levels and surpass them by offering better service (Torres & Kline, 2013). Employees need to demonstrate kindness and extreme friendliness (Torres & Kline, 2013). Finally, servers need to learn how to provide customers respect and esteem (Torres & Kline, 2013).

Employees desire training to understand how to implement successful behaviors (Latham, Ford, & Tzabbar, 2012). Potential training methods include mystery shopper feedback and problem-based learning (Dawson & Titz, 2012; Latham et al., 2012). Mystery shopper feedback involves the direct benefit of receiving pseudo shopper feedback to coach employee performance and the indirect benefit of putting employees on notice that at undisclosed time intervals someone may be watching their performance

(Latham et al., 2012). Managers using mystery shoppers experience employee and organizational improvements and profit $2.00 for every $1.00 spent (Latham et al., 2012). Problem-based learning involves staff evaluation of past failures and online feedback (Dawson & Titz, 2012). After analyzing problematic situations through collective brainstorming, improvement strategies are implemented (Dawson & Titz, 2012).

Managers use complaint management training to enable employees to respond effectively to CSEs (Alvarez et al., 2011; Ang & Battle, 2012; Stone, 2011; Tax et al., 1998; Xu, Tronvoll, & Edvardsson, 2014). Complaint may be inevitable in the restaurant industry (Bin Veop Yunus, 2012). Proper handling of complaints leads to desirable outcomes (Ang & Battle, 2012). Ang and Battle discovered that managers use complaint management to improve outcomes of customer advocacy, customer satisfaction, and customer-facing processes. A combination of visibility, easy-to-use process, responsiveness, and fair communication is the basis of successful complaint management (Alvarez et al., 2011; Ang & Battle, 2012).

Employees need to understand customer perceptions of value and quality (Xu et al., 2014). Consumers want to be a part of the process of recovery and expect to be heard (Xu et al., 2014). Customer participation (i.e. co-creation) in service recovery creates higher perceived procedural justice and increases customer satisfaction (Xu et al., 2014). Stone (2011) found that all consumers expected a positive outcome after service failures that might include monetary funds, credits, or other remedies.

Customers need 12 positive experiences to overcome one bad one as they update their evaluations of service (Stone, 2011). Many firms underestimate losses in profitability resulting from poor complaint management (Stone, 2011). Researchers discovered that 50% of participants were dissatisfied with complaint handling experiences (Tax et al., 1998). Good complaint management variables include: (a) clear procedures, (b) fast and reliable response, (c) ease of process with one point of contact, (d) up-to-date real time information, (e) employee-training and empowerment, and (f) follow up procedures that lead to operational changes based on data.

Employee empowerment is an important complaint management variable (Pelit et al., 2011; Stone, 2012). Definition of employee empowerment includes allowing employees to participate in making decisions that benefit the firm and customers (Pelit et al., 2011). Empowerment has both psychological and behavioral components (Pelit et al., 2011). Psychological empowerment occurs when employees feel empowered (Pelit et al., 2011). Behavioral empowerment occurs when employees can implement personal decisions in service delivery (Pelit et al., 2011). Depending on standardized solutions may fail (Xu et al., 2014). Staff members need empowerment training to learn how to communicate sincere creative solutions to customers yearning for justice and satisfaction after CSEs (Sijun, Beatty, & Liu, 2012; Xu et al., 2014).

Managers can measure success of complaint management by using RECOVSAT, a six dimensional tool that includes: (a) communication - employee clarity to solve problems, (b) empowerment - ability of FLE to solve the problem with no additional help, (c) feedback - progress reporting during process of resolving problem, (d) atonement - apology and redress, (e) explanation - what and how problem occurred, and (f) tangibles - manner of presentation of solution (Stone, 2012). Managerial use of RECOVSAT helps identify if current complaint management procedures are effectively satisfying customers (Stone, 2012). Linking employee compensation to some or all elements of RECOVSAT is a management practice in some organizations (Stone, 2012).

Retention. Hiring and training the right staff increases employee satisfaction and retention (Ballesteros & De Saá, 2012; Bharwani & Butt, 2012). The ability to delight customers leads to happier employees (Barnes et al., 2013). Happy employees are more likely to keep customers happy (Jayawardena et al., 2013). Workers indicate the need for a positive work environment, supervisor support, and availability of resources to fulfill consumer demand (Ballesteros & De Saá, 2012).

Fulfilling customers can be very satisfying for restaurant professionals. However, when CSEs occur, servers will depend on their natural and learned talents to respond appropriately to create a satisfying customer experience. Successful restaurant operators understand that successful hiring and training may be a preemptive and proactive approach to reducing unsatisfactory CSEs. Beyond hiring right, effective training might be more likely when OL occurs within the context of CO.

Customer Orientation and Organizational Learning

A managerial method where customer input creates continuous improvement in business processes defines CO (Altindag et al., 2011). Effective CO is managerial ability to successfully and successively interact with customers and use that information to make offering improvements (Ramani & Kumar, 2008). Using CO, managers undertake to align corporate culture with customer desire and interest (Altindag et al., 2011). A CO mindset includes the belief that while superior products are important, individual customer needs are of foremost concern and that customer-to-customer linkages are vital (Ramani & Kumar, 2008). Oberg (2011) defined CO as developing and offering products designed exclusively by customers. He et al., (2011) stated that CO was both value-based (i.e. defined by customer need) and action-based (i.e. defined by customer feedback).

The process of acquiring and transferring learning to create new behaviors and practices within a firm defines OL theory (Altindag et al., 2011; Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Implementation of OL occurs when managers create proactive processes that systematically enable staff members to collect information about internal and external processes to detect and correct problems (Altindag et al., 2011; Muehlfeld, Rao Sahib, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2012). Enhancement of OL takes place when team members are quick to admit mistakes and can analyze failures together to create solutions (Muehlfeld et al., 2012). The usefulness of OL theory is that managers maintain a broader understanding of interactive internal processes including use of technology, systems, services, products, environment, and people (Altindag et al., 2011).

Researchers have compared and contrasted OL with other theories including (a) activity theory (Park, Cho, Yoon, & Han, 2013) and institutional theory (Iarossi, Miller, O'Connor, & Keil, 2013). Activity theory comprises three team-learning approaches including (a) action learning, (b) problem-based learning, and (c) project-based learning (Park et al., 2013). Whereas activity theory includes elements comprising OL such as teamwork and problem solving, activity theory is mainly limited to a teamwork context while OL includes the broader context of systems thinking and total management control (Hilden & Tikkamaki, 2013). Institutional theory is similar to OL because both theories include the concept of firm sustainability (Iarossi et al., 2013). However, managerial decisions using institutional theory typically address external market pressures rather than internal process problems (Iarossi et al., 2013).

Managers experience better firm performance and competitiveness when combining CO and OL when addressing internal process problems (Stegerean et al., 2013). Mindless managers face potential failure by not learning from their mistakes and by being inattentive to customer opinions forcing them to rely on past processes and products (Malhotra, Lee, & Uslay, 2012). Managerial effectiveness to satisfy patrons, especially after unsatisfactory CSEs, depends on a good listening and complaint system (Alvarez et al., 2011).

Listening to customers may be more probable when staff members encourage diner feedback (Anwar et al. 2013). Two-way feedback should be continuous during the dining experience and can be verbal or written (Bharadwaj et al., 2012). Managers adept at understanding the voice of the customer gain a competitive advantage (Bharadwaj et al., 2012; Stegerean et al., 2013). Customer complaints can be easier to obtain when management and staff actively demonstrate interest in hearing what consumers like and do not like (Ang et al., 2012). A combination of visibility, easy-to-use process, responsiveness, and fair communication generates higher levels of consumer advocacy and satisfaction (Ang et al., 2012).

Consumer advocacy has been growing in use on social media and consumer rating websites (Chua & Banjeree, 2013). Managers want complimentary high ratings and often view complaints negatively. Complaints actually enable operators to gain the information they need to implement processes to correct problems before they become increasingly problematic (Alvarez et al., 2011). Social media can become a CO and OL tool contributing to the important managerial practice of customer knowledge management (Chua & Banerjee, 2013).

Gaining web-based consumer feedback can lead to an increased understanding of likes, dislikes, expectations, opinions, and preferences (Chua & Banerjee, 2013). Problem-based learning, a popular learning technique in medical schools, is useful for evaluating eWOM (Dawson & Titz, 2012). Team consideration of problem within a particular context leads to application of critical thinking and development of solutions (Dawson & Titz, 2012). Bernoff and Li (2008) determined effective use of social media included: (a) listening to customer feedback to innovate, (b) talking to consumers to promote products and services, (c) energizing customers to share their experiences with others, (d) supporting customers through problem resolution, and (d) managing employees based on consumer feedback.

Whether externally or internally collected, customer information becomes a valuable intellectual asset to firms. Customer core competency becomes firm core competency (Oberg, 2011). The numerous advantages of CO and OL theory include (a) sustainable innovation, (b) TQM enhancement, (c) superior product creation and delivery, (d) employee satisfaction, and (e) customer satisfaction (Ayuso, Rodríguez, García-Castro, & Ariño, 2011; Bharadwaj, Nevin, & Wallman, 2012; Gazzoli, Hancer, & Park, 2012; Lam et al., 2011; Liang & Jun-Shu, 2012; Oakland, 2011).

Sustainable innovation. Consumer innovation can lead to product and service improvements (Chua & Banerjee, 2013). Customer empowerment occurs when patrons actively voice opinions and participate in designing firm offerings (Ramani & Kumar, 2008). Innovativeness can also include procedures and markets (Dulger, Alpay, Yilmaz, & Bodur, 2014). Ayuso, Rodriguez, Garcia-Castro, and Arino (2011) studied whether stakeholder engagement led to sustainable innovation and found results that engaging key internal and external stakeholders had a positive influence on innovation especially in the food and beverage industry. Stegerean, Petre, and Corina (2013) also determined that customer orientation led to innovativeness in the hotel industry.

TQM enhancement. One element of TQM is customer orientation (Lam et al., 2011). Managers using TQM attempt to prevent problems before they happen by asking questions about cost, waste, error, systems, processes, and job requirements (Oakland, 2011). TQM implementation may be helpful for all levels of management and employees (Oakland, 2011). Customer input provides valuable strategy information for organizational leaders interested in improving planning, performance, processes, people, customer relationships, commitment, culture, and communication (Oakland, 2011).

Superior product creation and delivery. Creation and delivery of superior products is another advantage of customer orientation (Bharadwaj, Nevin, & Wallman, 2012). Edvardsson et al. (2013) studied new service development and found that the most important source of ideas was customers followed by employees, competitors, and suppliers. Customer co-creation with other staff members is a key success factor of new service development (Edvardsson et al., 2013). Fuchs and Schreier (2011) examined new product development and argued that leaders who empower customers when developing new products gain a competitive advantage. Listening well to customers enables managers to customize and improve firm offerings (Ramani & Kumar, 2008).

Employee satisfaction. Customer orientated managers also experience increased employee satisfaction and team enthusiasm (Gazzoli et al., 2012; Pau, 2011). Customer oriented employees believe that their jobs are important and feel empowered to make real time service decisions with customers (Gazzoli et al., 2012). Employees who are confident in their ability to serve customers become more satisfied with their jobs and show more organizational commitment (Gazzoli & Park, 2012).

Customer satisfaction. Another advantage of CO is customer satisfaction (Liang & Jun-Shu, 2012). High satisfaction influences future behavioral intention (Liang & Jun-Shu, 2012). Customer oriented managers implement and reinforce customer quality requirements by creating regular use of customer feedback and empowerment to innovate new products and services. Strengthened customer relationships occur when customers believe that managers and employees listen well and respond with pleasing co-created offerings (Liang & Jun-Shu, 2012; Malhotra, Lee, Uslay, 2012).

Managerial adoption of OL theory can have a positive effect on restaurant performance (Stegerean et al., 2013). Diners evolve from being indifferent patrons to loyal devotees when restaurateurs place a high value on relational feedback. A competitive advantage occurs when consumers know their opinion counts and when managers use these opinions to innovate superior products and services.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 was an introduction to restaurant managerial issues associated with CSEs and the need for employee-training strategies leading to successful service recovery. In addition to the general and specific business problem, topics include: (a) background of the problem, (b) purpose, and nature of the study; (c) research questions, (d) conceptual framework, (e) definition of key terms, (f) description of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations; and (g) the significance of the study. Also included in Section 1 is a literature review of five important topics relevant to this research study. The objective of Section 2 is to provide research purpose, design, and process. Section 3 includes a presentation of the research findings, recommendations, and reflections.

Section 2: The Project

The business problem presented in Section 1 is that some restaurant managers lack employee-training strategies that may enhance service recovery from CSEs. Improper service response can result from misunderstandings about service quality, service failure, service recovery, and customer behavior (Bin Veop Yunus, 2012). The literature review included these issues as important research findings for managers desiring to empower appropriate employee response to CSEs. Essential to the conceptual framework of this study is CO and OL, both of which allow managers to discover a rich source of information from their customers that is useful for employee training (Lapre, 2011; Malhotra et al., 2012).

The procedures and method of this qualitative exploratory case study are included in Section 2. Section 2 includes: (a) the purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) research participants, (d) research method and design, (e) ethical research, (f) data collection instruments, (g) data collection technique, (h) data organization techniques, (i) data analysis and analysis, and (j) research reliability and validity. Section 2 concludes with a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore what employee-training strategies may enhance service recovery from CSEs. The population for this study was restaurant managers from a U.S. regional chain in South Carolina with at least three years of employee-training experience. I also reviewed company archival documents regarding employee-training practices to triangulate data.

The implication for constructive social change includes the need to create positive experiences for employees and customers, which may enhance community business sustainability. Positive employee experience can occur through gaining complaint management skills useful for work and other relationships (Gazzoli, Hancer, & Park, 2012; Stone, 2011). Positive customer experience leads to less negative verbal and physical behaviors creating a more peaceful environment without causing harm to others (Bowen, Privitera, & Bob, 2011). Increasing the quality of personal and business relationships may contribute to business sustainability and job growth in local economies.

Role of the Researcher

Bourgeault (2012) stated that qualitative researchers were the primary research instrument; thus, I was responsible for collecting data. The research process included semistructured face-to-face interviews and an exploration of company archival documents related to CSEs. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to understand what participants perceive and believe about a phenomenon through words, expressions, and gestures (Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012). My role was to (a) listen well, (b) ask good questions, (c) maintain a good understanding of the topic, (d) follow ethical standards, and (e) withhold biases.

Miner-Romanoff (2012) suggested that prior experience with a research topic might be beneficial in enabling the researcher to reflect on prior expertise to derive greater meaning from participant responses. I am familiar with the restaurant industry as an avid consumer. I have also served as a business advisor to restaurant owners. Even though I have never owned or operated a restaurant, I do have experience as a former retail business owner and as a general business advisor to chief executive officers in SC. This study did not include any participants with whom I have a past or current relationship. However, my experience with restaurants as a consumer and as a business advisor provided helpful insights into understanding managerial responses.

Researchers need to follow ethical standards by respecting participants, demonstrating justice, and providing participant benefit (Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). Enhancement of ethical procedures can occur through participant informed consent and appraisement of the intent, risks, and benefits associated with this study (Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013). My role in this process was to communicate openly and honestly with each participant and to follow the protocols of the Belmont Report.

Researchers need to consider any potential biases associated with their investigations (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010). Bias might occur because of personal experiences, perspectives, and values (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Reducing bias can take place through (a) maintaining a high degree of consciousness of potential bias, (b) taking private notes during research, (c) member checking, confirming participant meaning, and (d) transcript review (Miner- Romanoff, 2012). Objectivity means that the researcher does not superimpose any personal economic or special interest in the topic that could create a distortion in the results of a study (APA, 2010). Without prejudicing the data with my business background, I viewed data objectively, allowing participants to express what they thought about CSEs and how they addressed CSEs with their customers. This approach allowed me to mitigate bias and view data from a personal lens.

The rationale for the semistructured interview process included the need to have participants freely and openly express opinions and ideas about their experiences. Researcher understanding of what, how, and why may be more probable using a semistructured interview protocol (Bourgeault, 2012). The design of interview questions allowed additional follow-up questions to gain greater participant clarification (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The combination of interviews and data examination represents a model of case study research and triangulation of data (Klonoski, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Participants

Participants for this study consisted of SC managers from a U.S. regional restaurant chain with at least three years of employee-training experience in responding to CSEs. Yin (2014) stated that experience with a phenomenon was a prerequisite for participants in a qualitative case study. Learning about successful training strategies may be more probable through interviewing those who have experience with service quality, customer complaint, and employee behavior (Anwar et al., 2013). Leveraging their managerial knowledge, participants in this study were encouraged to reflect and elaborate on experiences with CSEs. Oversight of operational and human resource procedures is a managerial role (Alfalla-Luque et al., 2012); hence, restaurant managers retain accountability for proactive development of effective training strategies for employees facing CSEs (Altindag et al., 2011).

Initial procedures for gaining access to participants included using a list of franchises in the United States. Hutt (2010) used a Franchise Times top 200 list, a public database, to determine stakeholder relationships. I used the most recent Franchise Times top 200 list (Maze, 2014) in this study to identify the restaurant franchises that operate in SC. Using the public database, LinkedIn®, I located and emailed executives of two randomly selected franchises inviting them to participate in my research study. Claybaugh and Haseman (2013) determined that LinkedIn® was useful as a professional networking site to find executive email information. This process was designed to be repeated with two more randomly selected franchises until initial executive response; however, this became unnecessary because an initial response occurred shortly after the first email.

Upon the first executive response, I initiated a phone call with the executive and requested and received access to the authorized representative of the organization. An authorized representative is an individual that has the authority to make a company decision such as participation in a scientific research study (Masterson & Cormican, 2013). I emailed an informational letter (see Appendix A) to the authorized representative to explain the study. Upon addressing questions about participation in an email exchange, organizational consent took place in writing using a letter of cooperation (see Appendix B).

After approval by corporate and Walden University Institutional Review Board (approval number: 10-29-2015-0423695), a purposeful sample took place of restaurant managers in SC. The corporate authorized representative helped to identify all managers in SC that met the criteria of this study and provided these managers with the introduction letter (see Appendix B). Rivera-Segarra, Rivera, López-Soto, Crespo-Ramos, and Marqués-Reyes (2014) used a research process where authorized representatives: (a) identified potential participants, (b) informed the participants of a research study, and (c) provided participants with researchers' contact information if they desired to be included in the study. The authorized representative told interested managers to contact me directly. Managers who were willing to participate contacted me by email or phone. Upon initial managerial contact with me, I ensured that each participant understood the intent, benefit, and qualification of my research. Upon agreement to participate, each manager received a follow-up email containing the informed consent form with a confirmation of the agreed time when data collection would occur (see Appendix C). Interviews took place face-to-face only after I received a participant's signed informed consent form or an email response stating *I agree* to participate in the study.

Establishing a working relationship with participants is important to qualitative research and includes the need to express the purpose and process of the study (Swauger, 2011). Building a relationship with participants included various strategies. First, I provided participants with my email address, phone number, and encouraged them to contact me prior to research if they had any questions or concerns. Anderson (2013) found that establishing early trust with participants enabled them to respond more willingly to the research process. Next, I assured that participant selection and research conformed to ethical standards and the Belmont Report. Frechtling and Boo (2012) stated that ethical standards include a participant understanding that research is voluntary, beneficial, and private. The timing of the interview conformed to the convenience of the interviewee and occurred at an off-site venue. Henderson (2014) found that participants became more relaxed when they met at a convenient location. I also avoided distracting participants with non-preparedness. Hoff (2011) determined that researcher preparation might contribute to better quality participant responses. Finally, as a current business advisor to many different business owners and managers, I have experience helping clients become comfortable about expressing their views so I determined to do the same with research participants. Making interviewees comfortable through exploring common experiences before an interview might enhance their responses (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

Research Method and Design

Matching the goals of research and answering the research question can be guiding factors for selecting a research method and design (Hayes, Bonner, & Douglas, 2013). The focus of this study was to explore employee-training strategies to counter the side effects of dissatisfactory CSEs. Encounters with CSEs can be complex and emotional requiring insightful responses (Edvardsson et al., 2011). A qualitative case study approach suits the needs of a study when the problem of a study highlights a complex human experience needing holistic examination (Amerson, 2011).

Method

Qualitative method is a valuable research approach for the restaurant industry (Arendt et al., 2012). Barnes et al. (2013) used qualitative research methods to evaluate critical incidents in the restaurant industry. Crawford (2013) interviewed hospitality managers to determine their views on service quality. This qualitative research study included managerial interviews designed to determine response strategies to critical incidents in the restaurant industry. The value of qualitative research comes from the deeper insights that participants can express about their experiences with a phenomenon (Wisdom et al., 2012). Qualitative researchers engage participants to describe in detail their perspectives to achieve deeper insights (Wisdom et al., 2012).

Qualitative methodology was the best choice for this study because desirable research conclusions were subjective and based on interpretivism and constructivism. Constructive interpretations arise through comparison and contrast of multiple realities (Slevitch, 2011). The intent of research was not to produce a one-size-fits-all employee-training strategy for CSEs. Chenail, Duffy, St George, and Wulff (2011) found that qualitative research findings might include limited application. Rather, an understanding of the perspectives and insights of managers lived experiences of many episodes of unsatisfactory CSEs was beneficial in producing many strategic ideas (De Matos & Leis, 2013).

Garcia and Gluesing (2013) argued that a qualitative method is important when studying organizational change. Change management includes employee-training strategies (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013). Deeper insight into daily business practices may be more probable with a qualitative method (Ardley, 2011; Garcia & Gluesing, 2013).

Quantitative methodology derives from positivism or the determination of objective reality (Slevitch, 2011). Quantitative researchers explore hypotheses with much larger sample sizes to arrive at empirical conclusions using a large volume of data points.

Participant engagement is informal and may lack rich insight (Barnham, 2012). The elements of quantitative methodology were unsuitable for this study because deeper participant responses were required. The focus of this study was to provide qualitative data through an open dialogue with participants giving them an opportunity to share in-depth experience with the study phenomenon; therefore, a quantitative method was incompatible with my research goals.

A mixed method approach includes both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. While this combination may seem suitable for this study, answering the research question is not possible using the quantitative portion of mixed methods. Although positivism is a useful paradigm in management research, researchers have determined that non-positivistic investigation modes can link theory and practice in a better way (Anosike, Ehrich, & Ahmed, 2012). Another factor making mixed methods undesirable was the need for broad researcher experience (Wisdom et al., 2012). Objective reality was inconsequential to this study; rather, exploration and interpretation of lived experiences and subjective thoughts, feelings, and opinions of managers occurred.

Research Design

A case study design is suitable for a study when the focus of the research question is to explore a deep understanding of an organizational process in a real life context (Cronin, 2014; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) viewed case studies as an exploration of individuals and the decisions they make in response to events. Collection of data in case studies often involves asking *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2014). Researchers use case study designs to evaluate a complex phenomenon to create an in-depth understanding of interactive processes, decisions, and relationships (Carcary, 2009).

The benefit of case study research is that it allows the researcher personal interaction with participants to determine perceptions and interpretations to questions (Klonoski, 2013). Researchers hear answers and become active listeners able to see non-verbal cues that might lead to additional explorative questions (Klonoski, 2013). Another benefit of case study research is that it is triangulated research (Yin, 2014). Triangulation is researcher use of multiple data sources (Cronin, 2014) Yin (2014) suggested that data sources might include interviews, documents, site visits, and general observations. Triangulation can decrease the limitations of a single case strategy and increase the possibility of convergence of findings (Cronin, 2014; Yin, 2014). Case studies are also beneficial for researching a single organization like a U.S. regional restaurant chain. A single exploratory case study is a common research design for business entities (Chua & Banerjee, 2013; Oberg, 2011; Yin, 2014).

Case study researchers attempt to increase validity using more than one source for data collection (Oberg, 2011). Depth of participant responses leads to data saturation (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013). Data saturation has been a debatable issue for some qualitative researchers (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Data saturation in this study occurred through using those most qualified to answer the research topic (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013; Walker, 2012). The sample for this study included managers from a single restaurant chain. Redundancy of responses insured data saturation (Walker, 2012).

Additional qualitative designs include grounded theory, ethnographic, and phenomenological (Petty et al., 2012). These designs were considered, but were eliminated because they were not practical for the intentions of the study. Researchers pick one design over another to align the research purpose, process, and questions (Carcary, 2009).

Researchers using grounded theory maintain an interest in generating descriptive theory (Zarif, 2012). Using larger sample sizes, researchers develop theories of social interaction and behavior (Piko, 2014). Ciby and Raya (2014) determined that conceptual models might be developed by using grounded theory. The primary purpose of this study was not to develop social theory or conceptual models, but to identify managerial training strategies making this design unsuitable.

Researchers use ethnographic design to understand shared patterns of cultural beliefs and behaviors (Petty et al., 2012). Cultural behaviors are explored, described, and interpreted using ethnographic design (Williams, Lindtner, Anderson, & Dourish, 2014). Using this approach, researchers might study cultural groups in a natural setting over long periods to substantiate routines (Boddy, 2011). Cultural behaviors were not the subject of this research; rather, participants' viewpoints of a phenomenon making this design unsuitable.

I considered using a phenomenological design for this study. Miner-Romanoff (2012) determined that phenomenological studies were useful to explore detailed specific understanding of participants' subjective experiences. Harris et al. (2011) used a qualitative phenomenological study to evaluate service experience in a restaurant.

Anosike et al. (2012) suggested that phenomenological research enables managers to discuss their lived experiences through self-awareness of their management actions to help them understand how their actions form the basis for understanding organizational policies. Phenomenology is limited to participant lived experiences and does not consider other data sources such as company documents, websites, and on-site exploration (Petty et al., 2012) which made this design unsuitable.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study was restaurant managers who work in a U.S. regional restaurant chain. A purposeful sample consisted of managers who oversee restaurants in SC. Bezzina and Saunders (2014) suggested that purposeful samples enabled researchers to focus on study topics relevant to participants creating an increased understanding of a phenomenon. Researchers should consider which purposeful sample would be best suited to provide rich insight for research questions (Abrams, 2011; O’Reilly & Parker, 2012). Walker (2012) determined the need for researchers to identify a purposeful sample with a good comprehension of the research problem. A purposeful sample of managers with at least three years of employee-training experience participated in semistructured interviews because these leaders were more suited to identify employee-training strategies that may enhance service recovery from CSEs. The authorized representative identified the prospective managers who met this qualification, sent an email invitation to all who qualified, and requested that those who were interested contact me directly via email.

A sample size of six managers participated in a semistructured interview. In case study research, determining relevant sample size can be difficult (Marshall et al., 2013). Rowley (2012) suggested a sample size of 1 to 10. Yin (2014) proposed the need for six participants. Marshall et al (2013) concluded that 15 to 30 participants was the most appropriate sample size. Larger sample sizes may not yield increased data depth (Rowley, 2012). The sample size in this study conformed to requirements set by Rowley (2012) and Yin (2014).

Data saturation should determine relevant sample size in a research study (Walker, 2012). Walker suggested that data and theoretical saturation occur when sampling becomes redundant with repetitive sample responses and lack of new themes. Qualitative researchers need flexibility to realize that an acceptable sample size is one that adequately answers the research question (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Additional recruitment of participants is sometimes necessary to achieve saturation (McDonald, 2015). In this study, I interviewed six managers and concluded interviews after achieving data saturation.

Criterion for selecting participants includes a qualification of the population. Participant familiarity with a research topic is an important consideration for researchers (Francis-Smythe, Robinson, & Ross, 2013). Managers maintain responsibility for the operational success of restaurants and are most qualified to address service quality issues because of their educational and practical experience (Alfalla-Luque et al., 2012). Thinking about past unsuccessful practices and innovating future successful strategies is a managerial duty (Dulgar et al., 2014). The population of this study was restaurant managers working for a U.S. restaurant chain in SC with at least three years of employee-training experience.

The process for selecting the interview setting includes a consideration of the most appropriate place to conduct research. Interviews should take place in a setting that is non-distracting to participants (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Participants determine which time and place is convenient to preclude interruptions (Javalgi, Granot, & Alejando, 2011). Face-to-face interviews might occur at a public library conference room or other public place where privacy and a non-distracting environment exist. Participants should be able to conduct interviews at a place that is comfortable for them (Eriksson, Susanna, & Axelsson, 2012).

Ethical Research

Ethical considerations are important because academic research involves collecting information from people (Rabionet, 2011). These considerations include (a) protecting participants from harm or loss, (b) insuring trust and integrity, and (c) providing safeguards against malfeasance (Israel & Hay, 2006). Privacy, reliability, and accuracy become important issues for both the researcher and for the participants (Israel & Hay, 2006). Frechtling and Boo (2012) suggested that ethical considerations include (a) the responsibilities of researchers, sponsors, and informants, (b) the rules regarding practice, reports, and results, and (c) the interactions of researchers. Prior to data collection, I received the National Institutes of Health certification number, 1315206, upon successful completion of the protecting human research participant’s course. This section includes the consent process, incentives, withdrawal, ethical concerns, confidentiality, and data protection.

Informed Consent Process

Upon approval by Walden University Institutional Review Board (approval number: 10-29-2015-0423695), the initial procedure for gaining access to participants included getting permission from corporate executive management to access managers within the chain. Research participants need to understand the study purpose and procedures (Terrell, 2012). I emailed an introduction letter (see Appendix A) to executive management to explain the study allowing for any questions. Executive consent took place in writing using a letter of cooperation (see Appendix B). Written consent is necessary before proceeding with research (Owen, 2014).

After executive informed consent, the firm's authorized representative contacted and informed prospective managers about the proposed study by emailing them the information letter (Appendix B). Managers who responded to me were apprised of the intent, benefit, and qualification of my research. Terrell (2012) stated that research participants needed to understand the potential benefits and intent of a study. Informed consent includes providing specific study details (Van Wijk, 2014). Upon agreement to participate, each manager received a follow-up email confirming the agreed time when interviews would occur along with an informed consent form (see Appendix C).

Prior to interviews, each participate read and signed the informed consent form (Owen, 2014). Participants replied, *I agree*, either through email notification or in writing before being a part of this research. The informed consent form and the letter of cooperation (Appendix C & D) included details regarding: (a) procedures, (b) voluntary nature of the study, (c) risks, (d) incentive compensation, (e) confidentiality, and (f) contact information (Terrell, 2012). All participants received a signed copy of their informed consent form.

Incentives

Research participants may become more willing to contribute to a study if they are incentivized (Perez, Nie, Ardern, Radhu, & Ritvo, 2013; Sanchez-Fernandez, Munoz-Levia, & Montro-Rios, 2012). Managerial interviewees received a $50.00 gift card incentive for their contribution to this study. Executive authorized representatives did not receive any incentive for their assistance.

Withdrawal

Protecting human subjects includes making sure that they know that they are in control of the process (Strause, 2013). Participants are less likely to respond freely to study requirements if they feel coerced (Frechtling & Boo, 2012). Participants should understand that their participation is voluntary (Van Wijk, 2014). Study respondents were informed that withdrawal could occur at any time before final study submission for Walden University approval, for any reason, and without penalty. Upon withdrawal, all participants understood that data collected from them would be destroyed. No participant withdrew from this study.

Ethical Protection

Strause (2013) determined that research participants need autonomy to make decisions about interview logistics. Face-to-face interviews took place at a time and location in SC that was selected by the participant providing them with a sense of control. Additional ethical protection for each participant took place by following various elements suggested by Qu and Dumay (2011) including: (a) respect for participants, (b) making participants comfortable, (c) disclosing the research intent before data collection, and (d) disclosing participant right to privacy and confidentiality. Participants had the right to listen (i.e. digital recordings) or view (i.e. written or digital transcripts) any personal data at any time. Allowing all participants to check and confirm the personal data of their interviews ensures ethical adequacy and accuracy (Morse, 2015).

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Fein and Kulik (2011) suggested that confidentiality includes identity and data protection. Both the restaurant chain and participants were confidential in this study. Alphanumeric pseudonyms include the identification of participants instead of actual names (Snyder, 2012). Johnson (2014) used alphabetical letters to classify participants in a research study. Participant responses have been safely stored in a password protected external USB drive that is only accessible by me. Research information will be stored in a bank security box for a minimum five-year period before destruction by incineration.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument in this study. Arendt et al. (2012) and Yin (2014) stated that the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research is the researcher. McDonald (2015) completed research as the primary data collection instrument. McNulty (2012) interviewed five participants as the primary data collection instrument. Other instruments useful in qualitative approaches include observation, interviews, focus groups, and documents (Arendt et al., 2012). The data collection instruments in this study included semistructured interviews and examination of company archival documents.

Use of semistructured interviews creates rich depth of meaning associated with a phenomenon because the interviewer can be conversational with the interviewee using open-ended questions as well as follow up questions (Rowley, Jones, Vassiliou, & Hanna, 2012). Semistructured interviews contain flexibility and flow according to interviewee responses (Rowley et al., 2012). My work experience as a business advisor was beneficial to respond to participants. McNulty (2012) determined that her vocation enabled her to ask relevant follow up questions. Different interviewee responses to questions should guide researchers to ask clarifying follow up questions (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

An exploration of company archival documents occurred in this study to compare company policies to managerial responses. Villeneuve and Hutchinson (2012) combined interviews and company archival documents to triangulate data collection. Company policies guide employees to make decisions that might be beneficial to customers (Kimes, 2011). Managers are responsible to implement company policies (Kimes, 2011). Company handbooks include key performance measurements for customer interactions (Smith & Harris, 2014). The process to obtain company archival documents was by requesting access to policy manuals that included procedures for responding to CSEs.

Enhancement of reliability and validity included member checking. Written transcription occurred for each recorded interview. By examining written transcriptions, interviewers are able to think about the ideas and statements of participants (Sinden, Macdermid, Buckman, Davis, Matthews, & Viola, 2013). Member checking is useful to identify codes and themes (Traube, Cederbaum, Kerkorian, Bhupali, & McKay, 2013). Allowing participants to view their transcript provides them with an opportunity to identify misunderstandings and misinterpretations (McNulty, 2012). Ozertugrul (2015) suggested that participant validation of transcripts might increase trustworthiness. All participants received a copy of their transcript by email and were given seven days to clarify responses. All interviewees verified their responses by reply email.

All interviewees addressed the questions listed in Appendix D. The questions resulted from a literature review regarding CSEs, service quality, customer behavior, and employee behavior. Searcy (2012) stated that a literature review provides the basis for research questions. Yıldız (2012) developed research questions through a topical research review. Literature reviews are useful to develop future research questions (Galati & Moessner, 2013). The design of questions was to evaluate experiences with CSEs leading to formulation of employee-training strategies that address restaurant service failures.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection technique in this study included face-to-face semistructured interviews and a company archival document review using a systematic process after IRB approval. The first step was to communicate by email with qualified restaurant managers who responded to the introduction letter (see Appendix A). Brittin and Obeidat (2011) used email to contact research participants and Williams (2012) suggested that email was a valid recruitment tool. Brandauer and Hovmand (2013) used email to communicate with research participants. In my email, I explained details about the study and sought to reaffirm qualification at initial contact by discussing years of management and employee-training experience. Initial contact should also assure managers that they have corporate consent to participate in research (Arendt et al., 2011).

Participants received and returned a signed consent form before the interview (Owen, 2014). Upon agreement, an interview date, time, and location were determined. Recommended locations are neutral, away from the business, and with minimal distraction (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Participants were able to choose an off-site venue (Strause, 2013). Javalgi, Granot, and Alejando (2011) determined that participants should identify which time and place is convenient for them. Privacy is an important consideration for research settings (Moreno, Goniu, Moreno, & Diekema, 2013). All study participants chose to meet with me in their private office at a time when no interruptions were possible. There was no pilot study preceding this study.

Protocol for each interview started with a brief introduction of myself to establish rapport with the participant (Rowley, 2012). During that time, interviewees confirmed that they had enough time available to complete the interview and received another introduction about the nature of the study, and their role in providing information about their experience with the phenomenon (Rowley, 2012). Participants were told that interviews were designed to last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and include six open-ended semistructured questions (see Appendix D). Qualitative researchers may use open-ended questions for depth of insight (Wilson, 2012). Follow up questions probe for deeper insight by encouraging the informant to elaborate, clarify, and reflect on responses (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

During the interview, I took field notes using a small spiral bound notebook to record statements or words that were emphasized by participants. Researchers use field notes to record observations that cannot be audibly recorded (Arendt, 2011). Observational notes might include a participant’s body language, verbal expression, and attitude (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Grant (2014) used field notes to record emotions. Comparing notes with the written transcription of interview might enhance reliability and validity (Arendt, 2011). During data analysis, I used collected field notes to confirm ideas from transcriptions.

Participants received a verbal *thank you* from me for their involvement at the end of the interview. Lin and Yeh (2014) determined that gratitude enhances relationship well-being. I also informed interviewees that they would receive a copy of the transcription for personal review one day after their interview. Participates were given seven days to clarify any part of their interview (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Member checking might enhance trustworthiness (Ozertugrul, 2015). Each study participant received their transcript within one day of interview and verified their response within seven days which enhanced trustworthiness.

The process to obtain company archival documents was two-fold. First, I requested that the corporate authorized representative provide me with any company archival documents that included service procedures and employee-training practices for responding to CSEs. Second, I requested that participating managers provide me with any written documentation they used for employee training when responding to CSEs. I examined these documents to gain any additional insight into policies and procedures regarding CSEs and employee training. Smith and Harris (2014) determined that company archival documents included procedures that enhanced customer service experience. Villeneuve and Hutchinson (2012) used company archival documents to triangulate data collected from interviews. Archival data might include (a) survey data from managers and employees, (b) policies, and (c) organizational records (Yin, 2014).

There were advantages to the data collection technique in this study. Miner-Romanoff (2012) stated the importance of face-to-face conversations with study participants. Discussion of sensitive or difficult topics may be easier through face-to-face interviews (Arendt, 2012). Optimal expression of experience and insight might occur when participants can freely express themselves in person with the researcher (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Disadvantages might occur using the data collection technique. Van De Mieroop and Vrolix (2014) stated that time consumption was a disadvantage of interviews. Interviewer bias can also be a disadvantage. Researcher bias can skew accuracy when the interviewer believes that the interviewee is highly incompetent (Arendt et al., 2012). Overcoming this tendency requires the upmost respect for all participants allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings (Arendt et al., 2012). Minimization of bias can also occur through a high degree of consciousness about researcher preconceptions (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). During interviews, I withheld judgements regarding participant competency and consciously controlled preconceptions to allow participants the ability to express ideas freely.

The final data collection technique included member checking by interviewee and interviewer. I emailed participants a copy of their interview transcription for member checking allowing them seven days for confirmation. All participants verified their responses. Morse (2015) stated that member checking allows participants to confirm responses, add new information, or make corrections. Member checking might enhance trustworthiness (Ozertugrul, 2015). O'Reilly and Marx (2011) used member checking to enhance understanding of research findings. I viewed written transcripts to compare them to the digital smartphone recordings for accuracy, and for codes and themes. Accuracy is important in research (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Traube et al. (2013) determined that potential new ideas might emerge from transcript review as the researcher identifies codes and themes. Researcher reflective thoughts may lead to identifying codes and themes (Sinden et al., 2013).

Data Organization Technique

Case study researchers must organize large amounts of data from multiple sources (Yin, 2014). This research study contained digital audio recordings, digital transcripts, hand-written field notes, and company archival documents. Yin (2014) suggested creating a single case study database and establishing a chain of evidence. Researchers should securely protect digital data (Hahnel, 2014). This study included using computer technology to store digital information via a password protected USB drive. Miner-Romanoff (2012) used a password protected USB drive while completing research. Major and minor file headings separated data to maintain easy access (McNulty, 2012). The collection of written data occurred in a single dedicated spiral bound notebook.

Establishing a chain of evidence is important in case studies through confirming research protocols and comparing research questions to responses to conclusions (Yin, 2014).

Organization of data for themes and codes use a combination of manual and computer technology (Tebid, Du Plessis, Beukes, Van Niekerk, & Jooste, 2011). Exclusive use of computer technology may not be completely effective for subjective research (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Manual techniques include a system of color highlights and numbers to distinguish and organize themes. Comparison and matching of field notes was manual in this study. A researcher, as necessary, may use various Excel® spreadsheets and NVivo, a computer software program, as aids to analyze and corroborate manual results. NVivo organizes and manages research material by allowing the researcher to find dominant and sub-dominant themes, threads, and to search on common ideas (Bedos, Loignon, Landry, Allison, & Richard, 2013). Excel® and NVivo were used in this study. Before final analysis, participants were able to confirm meanings associated with their responses (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

Data was protected from theft and tampering. Data was kept securely locked in a safe place during and after the collection process at the researcher’s residence. Data will be stored in a bank security box for five years. After this time frame, data destruction will occur by incineration in accordance with Walden University doctoral study procedures.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for qualitative methodology involves sorting and organizing the data into themes and codes (Arendt, 2012). Themes and codes may have a direct link to literature review, research questions, and conceptual framework. What a researcher understands about a topic can provide a heightened awareness of important themes and enable an increased correlation of findings (Cater, Machtmes, & Fox, 2013).

The intent for data analysis was to discover themes to answer the central research question. The conceptual framework of organizational learning theory and the customer orientation model forms a contextual basis for understanding responses to research questions. Researchers use the conceptual framework as a connecting link between literature review and study results (Borrego, Foster, & Froyd, 2014). Study themes and codes become more meaningful by comparing conceptual framework considerations with participant responses (Borrego, Foster, & Froyd, 2014). The key themes in the literature review and conceptual framework included service excellence, justice, listening to customers, learning, empathy, training procedures, satisfaction, loyalty, consumer expectation, and response strategies. Throughout data analysis, I used these themes as guiding principles in formulating actual data themes and categories.

Process of data analysis begins after researcher completion of word-for-word transcription and achievement of data saturation (Cater et al., 2013). Yin (2014) stated that data analysis involves examining answers to discover meaningful patterns, themes, and codes that answer the research question. Data analysis includes researcher checking of field notes and observations to identify discrepancies (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

Tools useful for analysis include pen, paper, highlighters, a digital recording device, Word®, Excel®, and NVivo (Bedos et al., 2013; Weih, 2014). To record participants digitally, I chose to use Dictate®, a smartphone application with five star reviews for functionality and reliability. I used a pen and a highlighter to make notes and to identify common themes after transcriptions were complete. A researcher's mind may be the most important tool (Yin, 2014). Weih (2014) suggested that using manual and cognitive evaluation (i.e. pencil and paper analysis) was a way of interpreting data. An Excel® spreadsheet may also be useful to organize and sort data into categories. NVivo may be helpful to support manually developed themes and codes (Bedos et al., 2014). I used Excel® and NVivo as tools to enhance manual data analysis.

The process of data analysis in this study included data triangulation of interviews and company archival documents using Yin's (2011) data analysis method. Yin suggested that qualitative researchers may use a five step process which includes: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. Buchanan (2013) used Yin's (2011) data analysis method in another qualitative case study. Bruce, McPherson, Sabeti, and Flynn (2011) also analyzed case study data using Yin's (2011) five-step process.

Step One: Compiling

The first step is compiling or organizing data in a coherent manner. Yin (2011) suggested organizing data includes reexamination of field notes, documents, and interviews. Each interviewee idea consists of value and relevancy (Sealey & Hathorn, 2014). Descriptions arise from answers given to interview questions (Morse, 2015). Putting data in sequential order of collection may be helpful during this step (Yin, 2011). In step one, I organized data in a sequential manner to evaluate each interview answer.

Step Two: Disassembling

The second step of disassembling involves breaking down data into smaller pieces (Yin, 2011). This process includes coding relevant pieces of data. Researchers use coding to assign descriptive attributes to language data as a way of explaining the meaning of data (Saldana, 2013). Coding may be interpretive (Saldana, 2013). Coding in this study included manual methods and NVivo codes by using the NVivo query tab. During disassembly, reading and re-reading transcriptions enables a researcher to determine response relevancy to research questions (Sealey & Hathorn, 2014). Insignificant and unclear comments can be eliminated (Sealey & Hathorn, 2014). During this step, I reread each manuscript at least five times to determine response relevancy and to eliminate unclear comments.

Step Three: Reassembling

The procedure of reassembling data takes place by researcher evaluation of codes. Categorized groupings of codes become themes (Saldana, 2013). A theme may be a meaningful descriptive sentence, phrase, or word that comprises what the data means (Morse, 2015). Researcher identification of themes may be easier using digital software programs like NVivo (Bedos et al., 2013). During this step, I used manual methods, NVivo, and an Excel® spreadsheet to record emerging patterns and themes.

Step Four: Interpreting

The process of interpretation includes researcher understanding about a topic and data analysis (Yin, 2014). Researchers need an intellectual ability to comprehend the issues of their study to adequately interpret data findings (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

Researcher experience with a topic may also aid interpretation (Yin, 2014). Interpreting data in this study took place using researcher understanding and judgment about the topic in correlation with the emerging themes from data analysis (Carcary, 2009).

Step Five: Concluding

The final step of data analysis is data concluding. This stage includes thoughtful researcher consideration of all preceding steps and the entire research process to develop conclusions (Morse, 2015). Researchers should use a recursive and iterative process to reach conclusions (Yin, 2011). The significance and implications of the study is what researchers attempt to describe in the concluding step (Yin, 2011). Denzin (2012) described this step as methodological triangulation, a point when the researcher combines all sources of data to provide conclusions that explain the phenomenon in detail. I used conclusions from this study to describe lessons and strategic applications for the central research question.

Reliability and Validity

Quality standards of research include reliability and validity (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Without these standards, research results might be questionable or unacceptable (Miner-Romanoff, 2102). Academic research requires a rigorous process that will yield reliable useful results (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Reliability means research is dependable, consistent, and repeatable (Carcary, 2009; Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Validity is about correctness (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012).

Qualitative methodologists seek research answers from interpretivism and constructivism (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Quantitative researchers conduct empirical research and can be critical of qualitative investigations (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Nonetheless, qualitative and quantitative researchers equally desire to gain a deeper understanding of what they study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined trustworthiness as the commonality between the two methodologies. Trustworthiness arises from truth, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Many qualitative researchers have stated that dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability define trustworthiness (Miner-Romanoff, 2012; Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

Dependability

Dependability includes process reliability (Colbert, Wyatt-Smith, & Klenowski, 2012). Researcher discipline requires the need for an intelligent research process that logically describes: (a) purpose of the study, (b) participant choices, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, and (e) data interpretation (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Enhancing service recovery from CSEs through useful employee-training strategies was an important discovery in this study. Six restaurant managers became study informants because of their responsibility for organizational training. Interpretation of data resulted from participant responses, and company archival documents.

Other ways of enhancing dependability include describing the method, peer review, and paying attention to details (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A qualitative case study design suited this type of study. Peer review occurred throughout the study process via academic and committee advising. Paying attention to details included the use of the Walden Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) rubric for doctoral studies.

Credibility

Research credibility includes the concepts of accuracy, or internal validity (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Credibility in qualitative research depends on the effort of the researcher (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Digital recording and written transcription of all participants took place to enhance accuracy. Credibility increases through critical data examination of respondent testimonies to determine similarities and irregularities (Harvey, Cushion, & Sammon, 2015). Interpreting responses comprises checking results multiple times. Participants' member checked their responses via personal examination of transcripts (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Credibility enhancement also includes data triangulation (Yin, 2014).

Establishing trust with participants enables them to give honest answers (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Trust may be more likely through assurances of confidentiality and information security (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Forthright responses increase credibility (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). During this research, I attempted to establish trust with participants, carefully questioned, and clarified responses.

Transferability

The usefulness of research findings from one entity to another is transferability, or external validity (Hitchcock & Newman, 2013). Transferability was limited in this study. Participants included restaurant managers in SC. Within this geographic context, transferability may increase. Consumer cultural norms in SC might be different from other locations. Future research may be necessary in other locations to enhance transferability.

The value of qualitative inquiry is its thought provoking nature (Thomas & Magilvy, 2012). Transferability can occur when the reader uses another's experience to derive meaning for their experience (Kupritz & Hillsman, 2011). The employee-training strategies in this study may be helpful in countering the negative effects of CSEs. What works for participants in this study might work for other managers. Even if strategies do not work, value includes comparing and contrasting experiences that could lead to alternative solutions (Thomas & Magilvy, 2012).

Confirmability

Confirmability is reflection that research achieves dependability, credibility, and transferability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2012). Similar to construct validity in quantitative research, confirmability in qualitative research includes researcher reflexivity (Thomas & Magilvy, 2012). A reflexive researcher allows the research process to unfold without bias intervention (Morse, 2015). Instead of leading the process, following takes place (Thomas & Magilvy, 2012). I accomplished confirmability by consciously removing my own preconceptions of possible interviewee responses and allowed participants to express their thoughts.

Maintaining reflexivity requires researcher cognizance of biases during the research process (Morse, 2015). Participant responses should be clear and guide clarification questions, not opinions. I withheld bias by withholding statements that might coach participants to answer in a certain way. Confirmability increases when researchers seek new insights from a broad view of research results to avoid bias (Black, Palombaro, & Dole, 2013).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 established primary considerations associated with this research study. Section 2 included a summary of the purpose statement along with the role of the researcher. Detailed information about participant selection included: (a) the targeted population, (b) eligibility requirements, and (c) gaining access. The research method consisted of a qualitative phenomenological design and researcher arguments defended this approach. Ethical research standards contained information about how implementation would occur. Data collection specification consisted of: (a) instruments, (b) technique, (c) organization, and (d) analysis. This section ended with a description of how research reliability and validity would be accomplished.

Section 3 includes research findings, application for professional practice, and implications for social change. Presentation of findings include themes and responses and compares these to literature review and conceptual framework. Application for professional practice includes suggestions to improve managerial ability. Implications for social change is explained along with recommendations for action. Section 3 will conclude with recommendations for future research, reflections, and a conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Research findings for this exploratory case study are included in this section. Data were collected from six managerial participants and company archival documents. This section includes (a) presentation of findings, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendations for action, (e) recommendations for further research, (f) reflections, and (g) closing comments.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore what employee-training strategies may enhance service recovery from CSEs. Restaurant managers from a U.S. regional chain in SC with at least three years of employee-training experience were interviewed for this study. De Matos and Leis (2013) determined that the qualitative method of interviewing managers was beneficial in producing strategic ideas. The participants in this study expressed their opinions about how they believed their employees should respond to customers experiencing CSEs. Findings included six themes related to enhancing service recovery: (a) customer needs and requests, (b) employee actions and attitudes, (c) training, (d) communication, (e) quick response, and (f) policies and procedures.

Managerial participants indicated that their understanding of enhancing service recovery from CSEs was because of three primary sources: (a) following company protocols, (b) learning from customers, and (c) years of managerial experience. The years of experience differed for each participant (see Table 1). Eighty percent of participants had five or more years of restaurant industry experience and 80% of participants had five or more years of managerial experience. The average number of years of restaurant experience was 18 and the average number of years of managerial experience was 11. Gaining insight of successful training strategies may be more probable through interviewing those who have experience with service quality, customer complaint, and employee behavior (Anwar et al., 2013).

Table 1

Years of Restaurant and Managerial Experience

Participants	Restaurant Experience	Managerial Experience
P1	17	14
P2	35	30
P3	4	4
P4	13	5
P5	20	16
P6	20	14

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question addressed in this study was: What employee-training strategies may enhance service recovery from CSEs? Six study participants answered six interview questions individually at different locations during face-to-face semistructured interviews. An investigation of company archival documents also occurred in this study to compare company policies to managerial responses. Villeneuve and Hutchinson (2012) combined interviews and company archival documents to triangulate data collection. The interview questions were:

1. What employee-training strategies do you believe lead to an especially satisfying service encounter and how does your staff create this experience?
2. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to unsatisfactory food issues (e.g. taste, ill prepared, smell, etc.)?
3. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to poor service delivery issues (e.g. unavailable, slow, and inattentive)?
4. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to complaints about restaurant physical environment (e.g. noise, lighting, and inconsiderate customers)?
5. In your experience, why do you believe that your response strategies to CSEs lead to enhancing customer retention and loyalty?
6. What else could you share that might be relevant to employee-training strategies useful for enhancing service recovery to CSEs?

The major service factors that influence restaurant customer satisfaction include food (nutritious and appealing), service (speed and competence), and atmosphere (friendly, pleasant and entertaining) quality (Cant & Erdis, 2012; Choi & Sheel, 2012). This focus aided the investigation of employee-training strategies because participants were able to describe ways their employees respond to specific service failures. The conceptual framework of OL was also a significant part of the responses from participants. Learning from customers is an important element to create satisfactory response strategies that lead to successful business transactions (Malhotra et al., 2012).

After data collection from interviews and company archival documents, I identified various themes related to the research topic. The process of data analysis in this study included data triangulation of interviews and company archival documents using Yin's (2011) data analysis method. Yin (2014) stated that data analysis involves examining answers to discover meaningful patterns, themes, and codes that answer the research question. NVivo software was used to assist and identify the six themes associated with the research question.

Table 2 includes the occurrence rate of themes among participants. The themes highlight which employee-training strategies managers believed were effective when attempting to enhance service recovery to CSEs. I considered the conceptual framework and the literature review and compared them to the themes to evaluate the reliability of the study.

The significance of the responses indicated that organizational learning and customer orientation were important components in guiding service recovery responses. Data analysis indicated that the central research question was associated with the conceptual framework. The findings of this study identified what employee-training strategies managers deem essential to enhance service recovery to CSEs.

Table 2

Frequency of Themes

Themes	*n*	% of rate of occurrence
Customer needs and requests	126	30.73%
Employee actions and attitudes	112	27.32%
Training	73	17.80%
Communication	39	9.51%
Quick Response	38	9.27%
Policies and procedures	22	5.37%

Note. n = frequency

Theme 1: Customer Needs and Requests

The first major theme among study respondents was understanding customer needs and requests. Theme 1 was developed from responses to all interview questions. In Table 2 and 3, participants indicated significant emphasis on an employee’s need to know about customer demands resulting from CSEs. Six (100%) managers suggested that a customer-centric mindset was important to service recovery situations. Managerial consensus with this theme corroborates the findings of Klaus and Maklan (2013) who determined that understanding consumer behavior enables restaurant workers to provide beneficial affective and cognitive experiences leading to satisfaction (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Ogbeide, Boser, Harrington, and Ottenbacher (2015) confirmed the findings of Klaus and Maklan (2013).

Table 3

Frequency of First Major Theme

Theme	*n*	% of rate of occurrence
Customer needs and requests	126	30.73%

Note. n = frequency

Each manager expressed his or her understanding of the first theme in different ways. P5 stated that customers always come first and need to be completely satisfied. P1 shared that dissatisfied customers become upset when employees do not take the time to listen and respond appropriately to complaints. P2 suggested that mistakes occur when employees do not listen well to diner requests. P5 noted:

> I think if you genuinely care about people's concerns then they become loyal to you. They know that you're listening, that you're hearing them, and that you care about them. To me this is like my home. I spend probably just as much time here as I do my house and anybody that walks through that door is like somebody at my house, so I try to take care of them as I'm their host. They're my guest. I would think that if I make their experiences great and memorable that they consider this a place that they'll like to frequent, and I think that the team kind of follows that lead. Just putting smiles on people's faces and making conversations; not just treating them as a customer - treating them as a guest.

All (100%) managers in the study responded to interview question one by stating that they make a conscious effort every day to remind employees to pay attention to customer requests. Employee-training strategies to prevent CSEs from occurring (i.e. interview questions one and six) included (a) taking the time needed to understand completely what a customer wants, (b) affirming customer requests, (c) demonstrating a caring attitude, and (d) delivering food and service accurately. Brown et al. (2013) determined that consumers had multiple interests when dining at restaurants including satisfying their hunger as well as their psychological and social needs.

Managerial participant responses demonstrated support for the idea that diners may be interested in more than a great meal. Five (83%) managers indicated that they train their employees to demonstrate good social skills including smiling, showing kindness, demonstrating enthusiasm, and using good communication skills. Bharadwaj et al. (2012) determined that two-way communication is preferable to consumers during the dining experience and leads to a more satisfying experience. P3 suggested that it was important to develop a relationship with every customer. P4 trained employees to understand that personal relationship development was a priority with every restaurant guest. P1 suggested that employees should not pick and choose which guest to listen to. P1 explained:

> I really believe in satisfying all guests. My people here know that I don't pick and choose who I'm nice to. We are nice to everybody here - everybody that walks in my door.

P4 trained his staff to consider customers as family members:

> We try to make sure that we actually love up a lot on our customers, and try to develop that relationship. Talk to them about what's going on. If they’re having a

> bad day, we talk to them. If they're having a great day, we talk to them. We learn who their kids' names are, what their wife name is…I train my employees to know each customer by name.

When CSEs occur in food, service, and environment delivery (i.e. interview questions two through four), managers indicated that employees needed a heightened awareness to understand customer needs and requests. After mishaps, consumer appraisal process includes determining the locus of responsibility, stability of the situation (i.e. temporary or permanent), and controllability (i.e. who is in control over the situation) (Tojib & Khajehzadeh, 2014). From an employee perspective, determining who caused the slip-up is not as important as fixing the problem (Sikakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014). Consumers demand that service workers provide fair solutions to CSEs (Nguyen et al., 2012). Kaur and Sharma (2015) confirmed that consumers demand distinctive employee solutions to CSEs. Managers in this study indicated that their employee-training strategies to enhance service recovery from CSEs included (a) apology, (b) problem clarification, and (c) solution facilitation (collaboration).

Six (100%) managers stated the necessity to apologize to any disgruntled customer. P6 stated:

> Rather than cut them off, or interrupt, or anything like that, just listen to what the issue is. The goal is to obviously apologize. We did something wrong, one of the hardest things to do is to admit you did something wrong. Just say I'm sorry, I'll get it right for you.

Managers shared that employees need to express that they were sorry for the mistake and for not meeting customer expectation when apologizing. Participant P5 stated the need for employees to be sincere and empathetic when they apologize. Stone (2011) discovered that an apology is an important recovery element to customers experiencing service failures. P6 indicated the need for customers to know that the company is willing to admit it has made a mistake. P6 stated, “We did something wrong, one of the hardest things to do is to admit you did something wrong. Just say we're sorry, we'll get it right for you.”

Five (83%) managers discussed the need for problem clarification with customers. While customers will explicitly express dissatisfaction, participant P3 stated that problem clarification occurs when there is a complete understanding of the problem by both parties. To facilitate this understanding, participant P3 trains employees to ask clarifying questions when necessary. P3 said, “You’ve got to gather facts. As many facts as you can, as quick as possible before you make any sort of statements. You need to know what's going on.” Front-line employee behavior influences consumer freedom to complain (Alvarez et al., 2011). Proper employee assessment of consumer complaints might lead to a better solution (Ogbeide et al., 2015). P5 emphasized that employees must be trained to correctly understand customer grievances. Typical problems for managers in this study included incorrect order delivery, slow service, and poorly prepared food.

Six (100%) managers indicated that solution facilitation was an important training strategy for their employees because customer dissatisfaction is often greater following CSEs. Latham et al. (2012) determined that employees desire training to be successful when handling consumer problems. Depending on failure type, managerial participants indicated different ways of training employees to solve CSEs. Three managers (50%) allowed employees to solve minor service failures, but specified that they prefer to handle all major CSEs. Three managers (50%) indicated that they empower their employees to solve CSEs, unless the customer asks to speak to a manager. Solutions to minor and major service failures included (a) replacing a menu item, (b) offering a free menu item, (c) offering a free meal, (d) refund, and (e) coupons for future meals.

Providing employee empowerment is an important complaint management tool that allows employees to make decisions that benefit the firm (Pelit et al., 2011). Customer co-creation in service recovery creates higher perceived procedural justice and increases customer satisfaction (Xu et al., 2014). Walsh, Yang, Dose, and Hille (2015) examined employee empowerment and determined the possibility of negative or positive outcomes for customers and business entities. P5 stated that he believed that employees should be empowered to co-create solutions with customers. P5 stated,

> I like to instill ownership in the team members where they don't have to say, "Oh, you have a problem. Let me go get a manager." It is more or less, if you have a problem, ask the customer, "What can I do to fix it?"

Theme 2: Employee Actions and Attitudes

The second major theme that emerged from data collection was employee actions and attitudes. Theme 2 was developed from all interview questions and company archival documents. Employee actions include following company protocols and responding to customer requests. Employee attitudes include general employee demeanor toward customers and specific attitudinal responses during CSEs. Managerial importance of employee actions and attitudes to enhance service recovery after CSEs is indicated in Table 2 and 4. When failures occur, employees need to initiate recovery to make the situation right (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012).

Table 4

Frequency of Second Major Theme

Theme	*n*	% of rate of occurrence
Employee actions and attitudes	112	27.32%

Note. n = frequency

All (100%) managers indicated the importance of employees following company processes designed to enhance customer satisfaction. Employee performance has a profound effect on customer satisfaction, improved return on assets, and profitability (Bharwani & Butt, 2012). Restaurant servers need technical mastery skill in job performance demonstrating superior professionalism (Torres & Kline, 2013).

Participant P1 described the importance of a customer training process to ensure that employees need to know how to do their jobs by stating that each employee must understand and deliver what is required of their job description. Participant P3 stated that all employees must perform their jobs correctly if the team was going to succeed. A common sentiment among all (100%) managerial respondents regarding employee behavior was the need to treat people as they would want to be treated. P5 succinctly said that she tells employees, “Treat people the way you would want your mama treated.” P1 said he tells staff members, “You have to treat everybody the same, there is not picking and choosing.” To create a memorable dining experience, three (50%) indicated that they try to motivate their employees to create memorable and extraordinary dining experiences. P3 tells his employees to take the “extra little step that makes customers feel special.” Crawford (2013) determined that service employees need training to delight diners. Employee actions addressing CSEs need to “over-the-top,” according to P4.

Employee attitudes are also critical when responding to customers who have experienced CSEs. All (100%) managers indicated that they train their employees to demonstrate kindness and concern whenever customers express dissatisfaction. All (100%) indicated that attitude was more important than employee actions. P1, P2, and P6 regularly trains employees to always be nice. P4 trains employees that a smile is a part of their uniform:

> If my associates come in and they're face looks down, or I can feel the negative energy coming off of them, I have to make sure that I bring them to the office, talk to them, find out what's going on, find out do they need to be at work today, if they don't. See if we can turn that frown upside down, and just bring them into a better attitude.

Attitudes are contagious according to P4 and when staff members have great attitudes, “A great attitude and a smile can fix anything!” P5 described a great employee attitude as incorporating the right tone of voice and body language. Attitudes should convey a caring enthusiastic heart according to P5. P6 noted that he trained employees to always be friendly no matter what happened:

> One of the things I like to talk to people about when I hire them is, I tell them it's not always going to be bright and sunny. There's going to be times when you're going to struggle a little bit. The ones that are going to be really successful at this job, really any job, are the ones that continue to have a positive attitude, keep a smile on their face, and just keep plugging away.

The responses of the managerial study respondents confirms the findings of Torres and Kline (2013) that employees need to demonstrate kindness and know how to provide customers respect and esteem (Torres & Kline, 2013). Employee attitudes of humility, politeness, and concern enhances perceptions of interactional justice (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Siddiqi (2015) also determined that employee attitudes have a positive relationship to satisfactory customer outcomes.

Theme 3: Training

The third major theme that emerged from data collection was training. Theme 3 was developed from interview questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, and company archival documents. Managerial importance of training to enhance service recovery after CSEs is indicated in Table 2 and 5. Alonso and O’Neill (2011) determined that employees performed better when trained properly. Training employees leads to business performance success by improving employee skills, implementing new procedures, and orienting new employees (Ballesteros & De Saa, 2012).

All (100%) managers emphasized the need to train employees. Training begins after an employee is hired. Training new hires includes (a) learning about company policies and procedures, (b) learning to use restaurant tools, (c) watching videos, and (d) role playing. P1 stated:

> When I deal with a new hire I make sure that we have all the tools that we need for this new hire. I really believe if they (new hires) don't have the tools they need, they cannot succeed.

P1, P3, P4, P5, and P6 train new employees one-on-one so they can see how they treat customers and employees. Each new hire must demonstrate job competence before being allowed to serve customers.

Table 5

Frequency of Third Major Theme

Theme	*n*	% of rate of occurrence
Training	73	17.80%

Note. n = frequency

All (100%) respondents indicated that training continued after employee orientation process. Ongoing training included (a) one-on-one interaction, (b) staff meetings, (c) communication boards, (d) text messages, and (e) role playing. An important study finding was that five (83%) participants stated that they have one-on-one interactions with employees every day, four participants (67%) used role-playing, and three participants (50%) have regular staff meetings. P4 explained that discussions about company policies and procedures occurred every day:

> We discuss policies and procedures every day. We have systems in place, and those systems have to be followed. I reiterate it every single day, all the time. Once I drill it, and drill it, and drill it, they get tired of me saying it. So then they're like, "Okay, well, we know we're supposed to do this, so let's make sure it's taken care of. But we focus on policies and procedures every day. We keep a copy of our handbook in the office at all times.

When CSEs occur, all (100%) of managerial participants stated that they trained their employees to correct the service failures by ensuring that all customers should leave the premises satisfied. “No matter what the issue is, if the customer is unsatisfied, we lose” (P1, personal communication, November 13, 2015). P1 trained his employees to consider the lifetime value of customers when they responded to CSEs because repeat customers were financially valuable. P5 noted that employees need training to solve problems quickly because restaurant customers do not like to wait. To enable employees to know how to respond appropriately, P5 regularly asks employees how they would respond to imaginary service failure scenarios. P5 believed that preparation for failure was critical in enhancing service recovery when CSEs occurred. Latham et al. (2012) found that employees desire training to understand how to implement successful behavior. Dawson and Titz (2012) determined that potential training methods include mystery shopper feedback and customer feedback cards. The franchise in this study regularly uses mystery shoppers and customer feedback cards and results are given to managers to assess their teams.

Theme 4: Communication

Communication was the fourth major theme in this study. Theme 4 was developed from responses to all interview questions. All (100%) study respondents mentioned communication when answering interview question 6. Ang et al. (2012) found that managers need to see improving communications as a way to improve customer satisfaction. Table 2 and 6 indicate that communication was the fourth major theme used by managers when training employees how to enhance service recovery to CSEs. Managerial participants primarily discussed communication as an internal organizational issue which included three communication modes between (a) front-line employees and managers, (b) one-on-one interaction, and (c) staff meetings.

Table 6

Frequency of Fourth Major Theme

Theme	*n*	% of rate of occurrence
Communication	39	9.51%

Note. n = frequency

The first mode of communication was between front-line employees and managers. Five (83%) managers mentioned that they train their employees to communicate directly to them when CSEs occur. Managers indicated that they need to know how employees responded to a service failure to assess if they might be needed to assist the recovery process. Four (67%) managers indicated that when they learn about failures from their employees, if possible, they personally speak to customers to ensure satisfaction. P5 stated that whenever service failures occurred there was a need for management to know about it, to understand how the customer was disappointed, and to assess employee response. P5 believed that managers should follow up with customers by asking, “Did we take care of your issue?” P3 was insistent about his diligence to ask employees about their daily work to gain feedback from them about any problems they may have recently encountered. Participant P6 expressed that an important consideration when hiring employees was determining the interpersonal communication skills of potential hires. Kim et al. (2012) determined the need for managers to assess communication skill and emotional intelligence of potential employees.

The second mode of communication was one-on-one interactions. All (100%) managers have one-on-one interactions with all staff members on a regular basis. Service failures and remedies are discussed during these exchanges. P5 stated that corrective discussions with employees were handled on a one-on-one basis. P6 believed that the best employee training was accomplished one-on-one. P6 personally trains every new employee for 12 hours and noted:

> That allows the manager to do a lot of demonstrating, individually, one-on-one with the new hire. That new employee can watch the unit director and how they interact with customers. Just how they carry themselves, how they talk to customers, how they talk to the other employees.

The third mode of communication was staff meetings. Three (50%) managers hold staff meetings on a regular basis. At these meetings, service failures and remedies are discussed. Employees are apprised of customer input from customer survey cards and as well as recent service encounter issues. Customer input provides valuable strategy information for organizational leaders interested in improving planning, performance, processes, people, customer relationships, commitment, culture, and communication (Oakland, 2011). At staff meetings, employees are encouraged to ask questions related to CSEs. Managerial participants stated that these meetings gave staff members a collective opportunity to agree on appropriate recovery strategies to CSEs that were useful to train new and existing employees. Stegerean et al. (2013) found that managers that listened to customers and employees would gain a competitive advantage. Astakhova & Porter (2015) determined that a positive relationship existed between communication, passion, and job performance.

Theme 5: Quick response

The fifth major theme among study respondents was quick response. For interview questions 2, 3, and 4, managers specified that response time was a critical component in training employees to respond to CSEs. Table 2 and 7 indicate that quick response was the fifth most important element managers used when training employees how to enhance service recovery to CSEs.

P5 stated that customers do not like to wait for anything. The challenge for restaurant operators is that they have to deliver exceptional service quickly according to P1. This sentiment was shared by four (67%) managerial participants. Timing is critical when handling service failures as the employee must set a resolution period that matches customer expectation (Edvardsson et al., 2011). The solution also needs to be delivered on time (Edvardsson et al., 2011).

Table 7

Frequency of Fifth Major Theme

Theme	*n*	% of rate of occurrence
Response	38	9.27%

Note. n = frequency

Managerial participants indicated that they train their employees to respond immediately to service failures as soon as they become aware of them. Participant P5 instructs employees to fix problems quickly:

> Because the longer somebody is waiting, the more upset they become. It's just one of those things where it just makes sense. You know, you want to fix it quickly because they're here to eat. They're here to get it now, and you don't want somebody waiting on top of being upset because their food is not right.

This confirms Maklan and Klaus's (2011) research results that consumers become more confident with employees that react quickly to service failure. Positive customer opinion of procedural justice might occur via speedy correction (Gyung Kim et al., 2010).

While all (100%) managers indicated the need for immediate responses to service failures, this practice might go awry if recovery efforts do not match customer recovery expectations (Stone, 2011). Service recovery can become complex when employee attempts to recover from one failure lead to another failure, worsening the customer situation (Edvardsson et al., 2011). None (0%) of the managerial participants indicated an understanding of the potential for double and triple deviation (Edvardsson et al., 2011).

Theme 6: Policies and Procedures

The final theme among study participants was policies and procedures. Theme 6 was developed from responses to interview question 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and company archival documents. Table 2 and 8 indicate that policies and procedures was the sixth major theme utilized by managers when training employees how to enhance service recovery to CSEs. All (100%) managers viewed policies and procedures as a critical employee training tool which enabled employees to respond more favorably to CSEs.

Table 8

Frequency of Sixth Major Theme

Theme	*n*	% of rate of occurrence
Policies and procedures	22	5.37%

Note. n = frequency

Company policies and procedures are taught to every new employee. New staff members watch videos, spend time with managers, interact with other employees, and learn about the franchise’s service program. Orientation time varied from 10 -12 hours. The franchise’s service program includes five customer focus points: (a) speak to me, (b) act like you care, (c) hurry, (d) get it right, and (e) bring me back. All (100%) managers indicated that reinforcing company policies and procedures continues after the orientation process is over. P3 described reinforcing the service program as a “daily thing, every shift…they may not do something one day and then the next day and it's, oh wait hold on, lets go back.” P4 reminded employees every day about company policies and procedures because he wanted to ensure that employees knew exactly what to do. P6 believed that employees who followed policies would enhance service recovery to CSEs.

Tie to Conceptual Framework

Organization learning was the conceptual framework for the study. The theory of OL was developed by Argyris and Schon (1978) as a managerial process to identify and correct mistakes. Fiol and Lyles (1985) expanded the theory of OL to include corrective actions based on a better understanding of internal and external factors contributing to mistakes resulting from poor corporate culture, strategy, structure, and environment. Managers may adopt OL systems that include capturing customer feedback (i.e. customer orientation) to quickly identify mistakes and take corrective action to improve performance and maintain a competitive advantage (Altindag et al., 2011; Lapre, 2011). Five major themes in the study revealed a tie to the conceptual framework (a) customer needs and requests, (b) employee actions and attitudes, (c) communication, and (d) training, and (e) policies and procedures.

Customer orientation is a practice of discovering what customers need and expect (Stegerean et al. (2013). Malhotra et al. (2012) stated that successful managers use customer information to allow them to create proactive solutions. Theme 1, customer needs and requests, includes the concept of customer orientation. Employees gather information from customers to determine how to best serve them after CSEs. Listening to customers may be more probable when staff members encourage diner feedback (Anwar et al. 2013). Managerial study respondents shared that they train their employees to participate in two-way communication with customers. Customer complaints can be easier to obtain when management and staff actively demonstrate interest in hearing what consumers like and do not like (Ang et al., 2012). Employee learning from customer feedback provided managers in the study opportunities to improve future employee training efforts.

The conceptual framework was tied with Theme 2, employee actions and attitudes. Managers expressed that employee responses do not always work leading to a need to learn from mistakes. Employees were encouraged to share with managers what they learned from recovery efforts to facilitate better future recovery protocols. The process of acquiring and transferring learning to create new behaviors and practices within a firm defines OL theory (Altindag et al., 2011; Fiol & Lyles, 1985). These manager-employee discussions were often real-time after service recovery efforts as well as during staff meetings.

Theme 3, training, was tied to the conceptual framework because OL includes learning how to avoid critical mistakes (Malhotra et al., 2012). When training employees, managerial participants indicated that they prefer a proactive approach of avoiding mistakes because proactive solutions are better than reactive responses. P6 described the training process as a way to ensure quality standards that satisfy customers. P3 indicated that if employees always followed the franchise’s service program, CSEs would never occur.

Theme 4, communication, was tied to the conceptual framework because OL occurs when managers create proactive processes that systematically enable staff members to collect information about internal and external processes that will be communicated to others (Muehlfeld et al., 2012). Managerial participants demonstrated through their employee-training efforts that communication was an important element to enhance service recovery to CSEs. Five (83%) managers expressed satisfaction with communication levels between them, front-line employees, and other staff members. Participant P4 stated that he challenges employees to learn something new every day from customers and to let others know about it.

Company policies and procedures were tied to the conceptual framework because according to managerial participants, these documents comprised learning protocols gleaned from past customer interactions. Managers use technology and archival systems to develop a broader understanding of internal processes that please customers (Altindag et al., 2011). Study participants believed that company protocols were based on continuous improvement and on the changing dynamics of consumer demand. Through examination of the franchise's service program documents, I discovered this paragraph:

> Today's competitive marketplace demands that the quality of our service match the quality of our food. It's not an either/or proposition. To be truly competitive, we have to do both equally well.

Organizational learning includes knowledge sharing and knowledge application based on determination of marketplace demand (Boateng & Agyemang, 2015). Study participants indicated that company policies and procedures were important to employee success.

Tie to Existing Literature on Effective Business Practice

Numerous strategic managerial responses to CSEs in restaurants can be found in existing literature on effective business practice. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are more probable when appropriate responses to CSEs occur from managers and employees (Nguyen et al., 2012; Tatikonda, 2013). Employee training strategies found in existing literature include (a) determining failure type to match recovery efforts to meet customer expectation, (b) understanding customer needs and requests, (d) empowering employees, and (e) allowing customer co-creation (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Siu et al., 2013; Vázquez-Casielles et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2014).

Research themes with ties to existing literature included (a) customer needs and requests, (b) employee actions and attitudes, (c) training, (d) communication, (e) quick response, and (f) policies and procedures. Study results seem consistent with previous scholarly literature. Theme 1, customer needs and requests, was emphasized by managerial participants as well as in past researcher discoveries. Understanding consumer behavior enables restaurant managers to provide beneficial affective and cognitive experiences leading to satisfaction (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Study respondents expressed importance of employee characteristics in Theme 2. Alonso and O'Neill (2011) defined the ideal hospitality employee as someone exhibiting great attitude and aptitude, a finding that seemed congruent with managerial responses. Managers viewed theme 3, training, as important to employee capability to respond to CSEs. Ballesteros and De Saa (2102) found that training was a proactive and reactive process intended to increase employee knowledge and understanding to produce cognitive, affective, and behavioral change. The importance of Theme 4, communication, seems prevalent in many scholarly articles detailing recovery strategies to CSEs (Bin Veop Yunus, 2012; Edvardsson et al., 2011). In Theme 5, response time, existing literature (Pelit et al., 2011) and managers indicated the need for quick recovery strategies. Sijun et al., (2012) demonstrated that employees using Theme 6, company policies and procedures, were more likely to provide suitable solutions to employee requests.

Applications to Professional Practice

Study findings indicated the need for restaurant managers to develop strategic employee responses to restaurant CSEs as an important application to professional practice. Without positive employee responses to CSEs, study participants communicated the virtual impossibility of service recovery. Without service recovery from CSEs, restaurant managers will experience customer defection and negative word-of-mouth (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Restaurant customers are demanding (Sliter et al., 2011). Depending on the severity of CSEs, consumer response may include rudeness, verbal aggression, and bullying (Sliter et al., 2011). The ability of a restaurant manager to implement study results may increase positive affective and behavioral responses from consumers.

Findings from this study may be helpful to restaurant managers who have struggled to understand constructive ways to respond to customer complaints after CSEs. According to P1, getting customers to come back repeatedly requires good response strategies. Satisfied customers may become loyal customers (Tatikonda, 2013). Business operators often underestimate the value of loyalty (Tatikonda, 2013). P1 indicated that a loyal customer might be worth thousands of dollars. To become more profitable, restaurant managers might apply study themes in their professional practice.

Theme 1 indicated the importance of understanding customers' needs and requests. Employers need to hire employees who listen well according to P6. Hiring practices may need to include personality assessments and emotional intelligence tests (Torres & Kline, 2013). Employees need updated information regarding customer demands (Bhardwani et al., 2012). Using organizational learning, managers can help employees to gain a better understanding of customer needs and requests. Understanding the voice of the customer may be a key success element for employee response to CSEs. Study participants indicated that they best way to understand customers after CSEs was to let the customer explain what was wrong without interruption.

Applying Theme 2, employee actions and attitudes, managers indicated the importance of employee actions and attitudes. All (100%) managers believed attitude was the most important employee attribute. Three (50%) managers indicated that because they believed that they could not train employee attitudes, they rely on trying to identify positive attitudes in potential hires. P6 stated:

> The attitude is the most important thing when you make a selection of an employee, someone you're going to hire, it's the most important thing to look at. Somebody that's not necessarily the most outgoing person, but somebody that's just friendly.

Study findings indicate that restaurant managers may want to examine hiring practices to determine if attitudinal assessments are addressed. P6 believed good employee attitudes led to employee actions conducive for service recovery from CSEs. Study findings also indicate that employee actions need to include the (a) Golden Rule – do to others as you would have them to do to you (Luke 6:31 New International Version), (b) accuracy, (c) consistency, and (d) fairness.

The application to professional practice from Theme 3 includes the need to provide employees with training. Study findings indicated that managers considered training more than just a personnel development tool, but a proactive approach preparing employee response to CSEs. All (100%) managers believed that training enabled their employees to enhance service recovery to CSEs. Study participants indicated what, how, and when other managers might train their employees. Useful tools for training included using (a) company policies and procedures, (b) customer feedback cards, (c) personal experiences, (d) real-time customer CSEs, and (e) role-playing. How managers might train included (a) initial orientation, (b) one-on-one, and (c) staff meetings. When to train was simply every day as employee training should be a never-ending process.

Managerial participants indicated that applying Theme 4, communication, enhanced service recovery to CSEs. Crawford (2013) determined that a positive external attribute of restaurant servers comprised effective communication skills. Managerial participants demonstrated why internal communications between staff members and management might improve business practices. Talib et al., (2011) concluded that good communication between managers and employees led to better total quality. Restaurant managers should consider how they and their employees communicate to each other. Study respondents emphasized respectful continuous communication and feedback each day with employees to assess job performance. Particular communication modes found in this study incorporated (a) daily one-on-one conversations, (b) open dialogue during staff meetings, and (c) quick team huddles.

The application to professional practice from Theme 5, quick response, includes the need to respond to CSEs immediately. Four (67%) managers indicated that customers were often impatient when dining at restaurants. Young (2012) demonstrated that speed of service is an important customer quality element. P5 was adamant about his belief that customers demand solutions to CSEs immediately because diners who were hungry do not want to be bothered by a service problem. The implication for other restaurant managers includes the need to determine how to speed up service delivery, especially service recovery efforts to CSEs.

The final application to professional practice comprised Theme 6, company policies and procedures. Study findings included company archival documents that managers and employees used to address service failure and recovery efforts. All (100%) managerial participants indicated their confidence that company protocols, when followed, were effective in enhancing service recovery to CSEs. Sijun et al., (2012) stated that not every firm has developed effective policies and procedures. The application of how Theme 6 might be applied included managerial assessment of current service recovery procedures and making any procedural adjustments that might improve service recovery efforts to CSEs.

Implications for Social Change

Implications for social change comprise strategies to create positive experiences for employees and customers enhancing community employment and business sustainability. Corporate social responsibility includes (a) employee development, (b) employee welfare, and (c) employee well-being (Tang, Gallagher, and Bie, 2014). Employee development leads to service quality and business performance success by improving employee performance and skill (Ballesteros & De Saa, 2012). When given proper job training, Keefe et al. (2008) determined that employees experienced positive morale, less work stress and burnout. When employees feel good about their abilities and sense well-being, service quality is more probable (Viitala, Tanskanen, & Santti, 2015). Business sustainability occurs when service quality is delivered consistently (Oberg, 2011) and consumer perceptions about corporate social responsibility are attitudinally positive (Kim,Vogt, and Knutson, 2015).

Employees who know how to respond to CSEs are more likely to create a pleasant customer experience (Cheng-Hua & Shiu-Chun, 2012). Study findings may enable managers to train employees how to create positive relationships out of negative circumstances. Training employees in how to handle highly emotional incidents might be an effective strategy to de-escalate anger (Bowen et al., 2011). Harmonious significant relationships can occur when participants know how to handle conflicts and complaints (Wilde & Doherty, 2013). A reduction in incivility during restaurant experiences creates a positive social outcome by reducing psychological distress in customers and employees (Lim & Lee, 2011).

Rather than view CSEs negatively, three (50%) managers indicated that CSEs might be an opportunity to build a personal relationship. P5 stated, “I have made many friends through mistakes.” His viewpoint was that friendships can result from adversity.

The implication for social change from study findings includes improving (a) relationship skills of employees, (b) relationship quality between employees and significant others, (c) community enhancement through positive restaurant experiences. Relationship quality has a positive correlation to better business practice and sustainability (Bharadwai et al., 2012).

Recommendations for Action

Restaurant managers may apply study findings to enhance service recovery with complaining customers who experience CSEs. Recommendations for action may extend beyond service failure situations and lead to increased employee competence. Competent employees are a critical success factor to business organizations (Pelit et al., 2011). As demonstrated in responses to theme 2, all (100%) participants identified the importance of employee actions and attitudes as critical success factors in service recovery to CSEs. Major strategic recommendations for managers who train employees how to enhance service recovery to CSEs include (a) listening, (b) apologizing, (c) solving, and (d) thanking.

Listening to customers is important because they want to be heard and understood (Epler, 2014). Listening is the first priority according to participant P6. Alvarez et al., (2011) determined that consumer trust and loyalty resulted from good listening. Without listening, customers may think that staff members do not care about them or their opinions (Huang & Lin, 2011). When CSEs occur, factors contributing to customer desire to be heard include (a) empathy from a sympathetic listener (Cant & Erdis, 2012), (b) justice to make the situation right (Nguyen et al., 2012) and (c) co-creation to have a say in the remedy (Xu et al., 2014).

How employees listen is important according to participant P1 who stated that employees need to listen to complaining customers without interruption by letting them completely explain what is wrong. Employee listening involves understanding exactly why a customer is upset (Epler, 2014). Participant P3 explained that employees need to sympathize with hurt feelings expressed by complaining customers. Active listening includes both verbal and nonverbal elements (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). Employees who listen to customers need to show that they are listening by head nodding and eye contact (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). Full listening engagement occurs when an employee can identify the customer's motives, intentions, and objectives (Epler, 2014). Based on study findings, restaurant managers need to train their employees to listen well to customers after CSEs occur. How employees listen to customers should include (a) active listening, (b) clarifying questions if misunderstandings exist, and (c) empathetic words and gestures.

Empathy may be expressed best through employee apology, the second recommendation for action. Bin Veop Yunus (2012) determined that apology was an important service recovery practice when CSEs occur. Roushdy (2012) found that employee apology after failures was significant to form a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Apology may assuage patron displeasure (Tax et al., 1998). All (100%) managers indicated that a heart-felt apology was important in responding to customer complaints.

How should employees apologize? Participant P5 stated that an apology is more than saying you are sorry, it was taking responsibility for the mistake. Sincerity is also an important component according to participate P5. Apologizes acknowledge customer angst by indicating that the employee cares about correcting grievances (Roushdy, 2012). Based on study respondents and the findings of Byrne, Barling, and Dupre (2014), employees need to be trained to apologize by acknowledging (a) remorse, (b) responsibility, (c) empathy, and (d) the need to rectify the mistake.

Solving mistakes is the third recommendation for action. Without rectifying mistakes, customers might experience double or triple deviation leading to increased consternation (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Customer anger from failed service recovery increases the likelihood of retaliation (Keefe et al., 2008). Customer retaliation may be exhibited by attacking employees verbally or physically and by negative word-of-mouth (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Only satisfied customers can become loyal customers (Tatikonda, 2013). To solve mistakes and create solutions, employees need to leverage what they learned in the first application, listening. Participant P1 stated that he always trains employees to ask customers how they believe the situation should be resolved.

The final recommendation for action is thanking customers. Beldona and Kher (2014) determined that service recovery was enhanced when employees understood customer sacrifice associated with CSEs and were able to express gratitude for customer willingness to permit corrective solutions. Three (50%) study participants emphasized employee need to thank customers after resolving service issues related to CSEs.

Managerial participants expressed different ways of how employees should thank customers. Researchers have found that prescriptive and non-prescriptive ways of expressing gratitude may depend on the type of service failure (Beldona & Kher, 2014). P6 was specific about the way employees are trained to thank customers:

> The last thing you always want to do is just thank the customer by saying, "Hey, thanks for coming in, thanks for bringing that to our attention, and thank you for letting us have the chance to fix it.

All (100%) managers used most, if not all, of the recommendations for action. Consistent with Young’s (2012) research, study respondents indicated that initial and ongoing training using these recommended elements for action was a critical success factor to employee success. Other restaurant managers may find these recommendations helpful as well. Business supervisors may also find these recommendations helpful including those who manage hospitality and service industry employees.

Publication of this study may provide material for future scholars to consider when studying employee-training strategies that enhance service recovery to CSEs. I will pursue publication of this study in the ProQuest dissertation database and other business journals. Because I work as a business advisor and consultant, study findings will be disseminated in upcoming meetings and seminars where employee service excellence is a featured topic.

Recommendations for Further Study

Restaurant CSEs may result from various mistakes associated with poor service delivery. The intent of this exploratory case study was to provide restaurant managers with employee training strategies to enhance recovery to CSEs. While findings may be of interest to restaurant managers, the need for future research exists. Recommendations for further study result from study complexity, research method, and study limitations.

Study complexity includes the idea that CSEs involve objective and subjective service failures (Paananen & Seppanen, 2013). CSEs occur because people, products, processes, emotions, and expectations can breakdown (Bin Veop Yunus et al., 2012). Findings in this study include general recommendations that may be used to enhance service recovery to CSEs; however, study findings may not apply to all CSEs. Future research could be conducted to examine single CSEs in depth. Future researchers should conduct studies that would examine specific service failures and apply findings to specific recovery training strategies.

Research methodology was a qualitative exploratory case study. One regional restaurant chain was selected and six restaurant managers participated in providing experiential data. While qualitative data was appropriate for this study, future research might include quantitative data or mixed methods. My recommendations for future quantitative research studies would include identifying a severity ranking of CSEs and a classification system of CSEs.

Study limitations included the experiences of managers of a restaurant chain within a specific geographic area. Neither customer nor employee viewpoints were considered in this study. Other limitations included the specific time of data collection, regional economic conditions, and type of restaurant. Research conclusions may not be transferable to all types of restaurants, managers, or regions. Recommendations for future research should include other geographic areas, restaurant types, and employee and customer viewpoints.

Reflections

The motivation for this study derives from personal experience. Two years ago my wife and I were enjoying a restaurant meal at a local restaurant when we encountered a critical service event. Because the employee and the manager mishandled the service recovery process, I was inspired to research what strategies might be useful to managers and employees to enhance service recovery to CSEs.

As a business advisor, the doctoral process has been both enjoyable and challenging. The process was enjoyable because I like learning about business processes; challenging because researchers need to work hard. I have attempted to combine personal beliefs with scholarly research results to form a better understanding of best business practices. Personal biases may result from being a past business owner who managed and trained employees. Throughout the research process, I have maintained an intentional approach to reduce bias during data collection from study participants. I did not coach or help any participant with responses. I simply listened and responded with clarifying questions.

What surprised me about research participants was their enthusiasm to be a part of this study. Some managers thanked me for allowing them to be included in a research process. One manager told me that our interview had helped him think more deeply about being a competent manager. Each participant demonstrated a passion for management and a love for the restaurant industry. I was inspired to see how all managers indicated a love for people and customer service. I am hopeful that our interactions were as helpful to them as they were for me.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore what employee-training strategies may enhance service recovery from CSEs. Employee training strategies to enhance service recovery to CSEs were derived from themes developed from semistructured interviews with six managerial participants in SC and examination of company archival documents. Yin’s data analysis method and NVivo allowed me to discover codes and themes relevant to the research topic.

Themes included (a) customer needs and requests, (b) employee actions and attitudes, (c) training, (d) communication, (e) quick response, and (f) policies and procedures. Study findings confirmed existing literature and extended knowledge about employee response strategies to CSEs. Ties were found to the OL conceptual framework. Application to professional practice comprised (a) allowing customers to explain what was wrong without interruption, (b) identifying employee attitudes as more important than actions, (c) training continuously, (d) communicating effectively, (e) responding immediately, and (f) following company policies and procedures.

There were several recommendations for action suggested for managers. Employees need to be trained to: (a) listen actively, (b) apologize empathetically, (c) solve effectively, and (d) thank sincerely every customer that experiences CSEs. The strategies that were developed in this study may be helpful to managers in the restaurant industry and other service industries where CSEs may exist. Managers may be able to guide their employees to generate a remarkable service experience for customers despite the negativity associated with CSEs.

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Appendix A – Introduction Letter

Greetings,

I am writing this letter to introduce myself and to make you aware of a research study that could provide benefit to you and your organization. I am D. Grant Edwards and I am currently a Walden University doctoral candidate in the DBA marketing program.

My research study examines unsatisfactory critical service events in the restaurant industry from a managerial perspective. Delving into this topic might provide the beneficial employee-training strategies that could counter customer dissatisfaction and create customer loyalty. As you would probably agree, customer satisfaction and loyalty is an important issue for any business.

Would you consider being a part of this research? It will not require much on your part – only a 45 – 60 minute interview with me that will investigate your personal thoughts, feelings, and experience with service quality issues, critical service events, and training strategies that you may have used in the past. I will limit the number of questions to approximately10-12. To qualify, I am looking for individuals who meet the following criteria:

- Managerial experience of at least 3+ years.
- Prior experience in training employees based on collected customer feedback.

If you are willing to be a part of this study, I have included an informed consent form for you to examine which provides details of the study, expectations, risks and benefits, and a confidentiality statement. If you have any questions, please contact me by calling my cell phone [redacted] or through email at: [redacted]. Once you decide that you will help in this research process, please state "I consent" via email or in writing through mail to [redacted].

All the Best,

D. Grant Edwards

Appendix B – Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name: [redacted]________________
Contact Information: [redacted]_______

Date: 10-31-15

Dear Douglas Edwards,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled, Strategic Managerial Responses to Critical Service Events in Restaurants, within our organization, [redacted]. I understand that the purpose of this study is to explore managerial thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding service quality issues, critical service events, and employee-training strategies that they may have used in the past.

As part of this study, I authorize you to interview managers who are in charge of employee training in restaurants located in SC. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. I understand that managers participating in this study will be asked to:

- Participate in a 45 – 60 minute off-site interview in person to share experiences with critical service events and employee-training strategies.
- Allow a digital recording of the interview.
- Allow transcription of the interview along with the opportunity to review the transcription to insure accuracy.

I understand that my organization's responsibilities will include:

- Allowing the researcher to examine any company policy documents that might explain how managers should train employees to respond to CSEs and allow the researcher to view and take notes regarding policies addressing CSEs.
- Allowing managers to provide any additional company policy documents that might explain how they train employees to respond to CSEs.
- Identifying managers that have at least 3 years of employee training experience located in SC. All of these managers will be given the researcher's introduction letter and instructed to contact the researcher if they are willing to participate in this study.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the researcher's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Printed Name of Authorized Corporate Representative [redacted]__________________

Corporate Representative Signature ________[redacted]_________________________

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix C – Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study examining employee-training strategies related to critical service events. You were chosen for this study because of your years of managerial experience ability to train employees. This form is a part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

A researcher named D. Grant Edwards, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, is conducting this study. Research gathered in this study will occur in SC.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences of restaurant managers regarding service quality issues, critical service events, and employee-training strategies that they may have used in the past.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a 45 – 60 minute interview in person to share experiences with critical service events and employee-training strategies.
- Allow a digital recording of the interview.
- Allow transcription of the interview along with the opportunity to review the transcription to insure accuracy.
- Allow the researcher to examine any company policy documents that might explain how managers should train employees to respond to CSEs. The researcher will only view and take notes of these documents.

A sample question for the interview would be:

- What elements of the service experience do you believe lead to an especially satisfying service encounter and how does your staff create this experience?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. Additionally, if you decide to participate, you will be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefit to yourself.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no known risks associated with this study. The setting and conversation during the interview will be similar to that of a job interview. There could be a benefit to you, but no benefit is guaranteed. Potential benefit might include gaining insights from other managers about their use of employee-training strategies that counter the negative side effects of unsatisfactory critical service events.

Compensation:

Participants will be compensated for this study with a $50 gift card in appreciation of their time.

Privacy:
Any information that you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not use your name or anything else that could identify you or your company in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by using a USB drive that is password protected. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by Walden University.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now or in the future by contacting me at [redacted] or [redacted]. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is [redacted]. Walden University's approval number for this study is 10-29-2015-0423695 and it expires on October 28, 2016.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below (or replying to this email with the words, "I consent", I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant ______________________________________

Date of consent ____

Participant's Signature ____

Researcher's Signature ____

Appendix D – Interview Questions

Each participant answered all of the following semistructured, open-ended questions in each interview. The central research question for this study was: What employee-training strategies will enhance recovery from unsatisfactory CSEs? The interview questions were:

1. What employee-training strategies do you believe lead to an especially satisfying service encounter and how does your staff create this experience?
2. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to unsatisfactory food issues (e.g. taste, ill-prepared, smell, etc.)?
3. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to poor service delivery issues (e.g. unavailable, slow, inattentive, etc.)?
4. How do you train employees to respond to CSEs related to complaints about restaurant physical environment (e.g. noise, lighting, inconsiderate customers, etc.)?
5. In your experience, why do you believe that your response strategies to CSEs lead to enhancing customer retention and loyalty?
6. What else could you share that might be relevant to employee-training strategies useful for enhancing service recovery to CSEs?