Service Failure and Recovery: A Cross-Cultural Study Comparing Brazil and France

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Abstract

Managers and academicians working with service failure/recovery are concerned with the specific variables that influence customer behavior in this context. But when it comes to companies that provide services for customers from different nationalities, the aspect of cultural differences emerge as a relevant factor. Despite the recent investigations about cross-cultural analysis of service failure/recovery, there is still a gap regarding an integration of the main relevant constructs and the test of the relationships across the customer's cultural orientation (cultural values as moderator). In order to investigate this point, a survey was conducted with consumers from Brazil and France, using a convenience sample of 443 participants. Our main results indicated that (i) there were significant differences between the two countries in terms of collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and power distance; (ii) Brazilians are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth as a reaction of low satisfaction, while the French are more likely to complain directly to the company or the consumer agency, which is attributed to the higher trait of collectivism in the Brazilian culture. These results were supported by the analysis of moderation at the individual level, when low collectivists and low power distance individuals showed stronger tendencies of complaining behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Service companies need to deliver satisfying consumption experiences in order to maintain or increase market share. However, it is almost impossible to deliver error-free services all the time, since there are many variables to be managed, including those relating to the employees, to the customers and to the complexity of the service itself. When service failures occur, managers are expected to provide a correction that can restore the customers' evaluation and favorable intentions to buy from the service provider. But what variables are important in influencing these customers' reactions?

Scientific research in the context of services marketing has demonstrated that the customer's satisfaction after a service failure and recovery are mainly influenced by perceptions of justice in the recovery process (BLODGETT, HILL and TAX, 1997; KAU and LOH, 2006; MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002; NEALE and MURPHY, 2007; VOORHEES and BRADY, 2005). Moreover, this satisfaction level has an influence in a number of behavioral responses like intentions to repurchase, intentions of favorable or unfavorable word-of-mouth and intentions to complain (ANDREASSEN 1999; BEARDEN and TEEL, 1983; MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002; VOORHEES and BRADY, 2005).

Brazilian studies have also investigated this subject of customer reactions to service failure-recovery and have supported the relevant role of perceived justice on satisfaction and the effects of satisfaction on behavioral outcomes (ALMEIDA and TOLEDO, 2003; ARAÚJO, PRIMO and ARAÚJO, 2007; CORRÊA, PEREIRA and ALMEIDA, 2006, 2007; CORTIMIGLIA et al., 2003; FERNANDES and SANTOS, 2006, 2007, 2008; FONSECA, TREZ and ESPARTEL, 2005; MATOS et al., 2006; MATOS and VIEIRA, 2007; SANTOS and FERNANDES, 2005, 2006; SANTOS and ROSSI, 2002).

However, considering the broader context of the global environment, the service firms will have to deal also with the complexities of the cultural differences, when trying to meet or exceed service customer's expectations. If we look at service contacts between customers and firms as *social exchanges*, we can argue that the customers' reactions to service failure and recovery will be affected by the individual's cultural orientation. This rationale is also adopted by other authors in the literature investigating customer complaining behavior (CCB)

in a cross-cultural approach (e.g., NGAI et al., 2007; PATTERSON, COWLEY and PRASONGSUKARN, 2006).

Even though there have been recent studies evaluating how customers' cultural orientation influence CCB, this literature are focused on perceived justice and satisfaction as customers responses. There is a gap in terms of an integrated model of the most relevant constructs and the test of the cultural orientation as a moderator in the relationships. Thus, our objectives are twofold: (i) to test an integrated model including the main variables of the CCB context (perceived justice and satisfaction) and other variables omitted in the studies dealing with cultural differences (i.e., word-of-mouth, repurchase intentions, and complaint intentions); (ii) test the moderating role of cultural value orientation. Our main contribution is to extend previous research (NGAI et al., 2007; PATTERSON, COWLEY and PRASONGSUKARN, 2006) by including 'word-of-mouth', 'repurchase intentions' and 'complaint intentions' in the investigations of cultural differences regarding customers' reactions to service failure and recovery.

The next section presents the theoretical background and the proposed relationships. After that we present the methodological details of the survey conducted in Brazil and France. In the sequence, we present the data analysis and main results. Finally, we present a discussion of these results in the context of the reviewed literature, recognizing the limitations of the present study and the research opportunities for new investigations.

THE CONTEXT OF SERVICE FAILURE AND RECOVERY

In this section, we present the theoretical background of the proposed model and the expected relationships between the constructs. We illustrate these relationships in Figure 1. Given the situation of a customer experiencing a service failure and demanding a correction from the company, the response or recovery received will have an influence on his/her satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The customer's satisfaction (low or high) will be influenced by his/her perceptions of the complaint resolution process (i.e., whether the outcome was fair or not, if the length of time to solve the problem was satisfactory, etc.). This is represented by the path between perceived justice and satisfaction (see figure 1).

On the other hand, satisfaction resulted from the recovery process will influence the customer's behavioral responses. First, repurchase intentions, or the likelihood that the customer will keep doing business with the same service provider. Second, the customer's propensity to spread positive recommendations about the company (word-of-mouth). Finally, the customer's intention to complain if new failures are experienced.

The proposed relationships might be different depending on the specific customers' characteristics, especially considering the context of global environment and the cultural differences between customers from diverse countries. Thus, cultural values are suggested as moderators in the model. In this model, we revisit relationships already tested in the literature and integrate them. Our contribution in this model is the proposed moderating effect of cultural values in the relationships between (i) perceived justice and satisfaction, (ii) satisfaction and repurchase intentions, (iii) satisfaction and word-of-mouth and (iv) satisfaction and complaint intentions.

Perceived Justice and Satisfaction

Perceived justice is conceptualized as the degree to which consumers feel that they have been treated fairly regarding the complaint handling process following the service failure (MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002; NEALE and MURPHY, 2007; TAX, BROWN, and CHANDRASHEKARAN, 1998). This construct is usually considered in a three-component format, composed by a distributive dimension (i.e., the perceived fairness of the redress offered by the service provider), a procedural dimension, (i.e., the perceived fairness of the

retailer's return and exchange policy), and an interactional dimension (i.e., referring to the manner in which the service provider responded to the consumer's complaint).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that complaining customers who present more favorable evaluation of the dimensions of justice are more likely to manifest a higher satisfaction with the complaint resolution process (BLODGETT, HILL and TAX, 1997; KAU and LOH, 2006; MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002; TAX, BROWN, and CHANDRASHEKARAN, 1998; VOORHEES and BRADY, 2005). Indeed, perceived justice is considered in these studies as an important predictor of the customer satisfaction. Based on this rationale, we propose:

H1: There is a positive relationship between perceived justice and the customer satisfaction after service recovery.

Customers' Behavioral Responses to Services Failures

The relationships between customer satisfaction and its consequences (e.g. repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth) have been studied in the marketing literature with greater attention in the last years (ANDERSON, 1998; LABARBERA and MARZURSKY, 1983; OLIVER, 1980, 1997; SZYMANSKI and HENARD, 2001). Specifically in the context of service failure and recovery, there is evidence that cumulated satisfaction is associated both with repurchase intentions (MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002; SMITH and BOLTON, 1998) and favorable word-of-mouth intentions (MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002). Likewise, the studies dealing with the customer's satisfaction with the complaint resolution process have produced coherent results, namely a positive relationship between satisfaction and the consequences of repurchase intentions and propensity to spread positive word-of-mouth (ANDREASSEN 1999; LIN and DING, 2005; MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002).

Based on these findings, we expect that:

H2: Satisfaction after service recovery is positively related with repurchase intentions.

H3: Satisfaction after service recovery is positively related with favorable word-of-mouth intentions.

Another relevant variable in this context of service failure and recovery is the customers' propensity to complain either to the company, to the consumer agency (e.g. PROCON) or to their friends and relatives. Research in this subject have demonstrated that customers with higher satisfaction after recovery are less likely to complain and the opposite is also true, i.e., customers with lower satisfaction after recovery present greater chances to complain (BEARDEN and TEEL, 1983; VOORHEES and BRADY, 2005). Thus, these findings reveal an inverse relationship between satisfaction after received recovery and the customer propensity to complain.

The manifested inverse relationship makes sense if we think that the complaining behavior becomes an alternative for the customer to get rid of the negative feeling produced by the dissatisfaction experience. In this way, Wangenheim (2005) shows that there is a relationship between unfavorable recommendations and the feeling of relief and dissonance reduction in the customers who are switching to other service provider after dissatisfaction with services failures. Thus, we propose:

H4: Satisfaction after service recovery is negatively related with complaining intentions.

Cultural Values as Moderators of Customers' Responses

People usually use references to judge themselves and others, to influence the actions and thoughts of other people, and to judge what is right or wrong for them. These modes of

conduct are covered by the concept of "value" (ROKEACH, 1981), which are related to concepts, beliefs and/or desirable ends. Hofstede (2007) argue that these values are different when we compare people from different countries and cultures. In his extensive research, Hofstede (1991) proposed a cultural typology, in which five cultural dimensions were identified: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and long term orientation.

In this paper, we work with the first three dimensions because they are the ones that have greater influence in the individuals' interaction with a service firm that is providing him a recovery for a failure, as indicated by Patterson, Cowley and Prasongsukarn (2006) and Ngai et al., (2007). It is reasonable to propose an individual's value orientation influencing his/her behavior in a situation of service failure/recovery because *service encounters are social exchanges*. In the next paragraphs we present the relevant dimensions, as defined by Hofstede (2007).

- Collectivism: the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In low collectivist (individualist) societies, individual is expected to look after him/herself before worrying with the group. On the other hand, collectivists are strongly integrated into groups, starting with the family, and they are more dependent on the approval of the group for their decisions.

- Power Distance: the extent to which members accept and expect that power is distributed unequally in a given institution (e.g., organization, family). In a broader conceptualization, it includes how inequality is judged in a society, if individuals in low positions of power accept that their leaders take the decisions without much consultation. In lower Power Distance cultures, individuals minimize inequalities and decentralize decisions and, then, symbols of status and privileges are less evident. But in higher Power Distance cultures, people rely on those who hold power, power is centralized, and there are differences between subordinates and superiors in terms of salary and status.

- Uncertainty Avoidance: refers to the individual's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Cultures high in this dimension tend to feel uncomfortable in unstructured situations (e.g. unexpected events) and prevent this by strict rules and mechanisms of control. People low in this dimension are more willing to deal with the unknown and tend to be more relativist.

In the context of the social exchanges between consumers and the services firms, especially in the situations of service failure and recovery, research has demonstrated that the cultural dimensions of Hofstede have relevant influence. For example, an experimental study by Patterson, Cowley and Prasongsukarn (2006) shows that perceptions of justice interacts with the recovery process, in such a way that (i) an apology from a service provider has a greater effect in customers with higher Power Distance and (ii) collectivist customers perceive more interactional justice when there is an organization-initiated recovery.

Ngai et al. (2007) show that Asian customers in a hotel context are less likely to complain and less familiar with the channels for complaint, when compared to 'non-Asians' customers. The authors defends that, with a collectivist culture, Asians are more likely to attribute the blame to external causes and tend to find disturbing to register a complain to the hotel management. Moreover, the authors add, these Asian guests are accustomed to a higher power distance society, which might influence the difficulty in complaining to the service provider. However, they do manifest private complaining action, as negative word-of-mouth, in a greater extension than the non-Asians group.

Based on the reviewed literature, we expect that the cultural values will have an influence in the way customers react to the situations of service failure/recovery. Specifically, we propose that the *strength* between the constructs in the model will vary between the groups

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of *low* versus *high* Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance. Thus, we propose:

H5a: The relationships of the model are different between groups of *low* versus *high* *Collectivism*.

H5b: The relationships of the model are different between groups of *low* versus *high* *Uncertainty Avoidance*.

H5c: The relationships of the model are different between groups of *low* versus *high* *Power Distance*.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the theoretical background, Figure 1 presents the constructs and hypotheses proposed in the model that was submitted to empirical test.

Figure 1 – Theoretical Model of the Customers' Responses to Service Failures
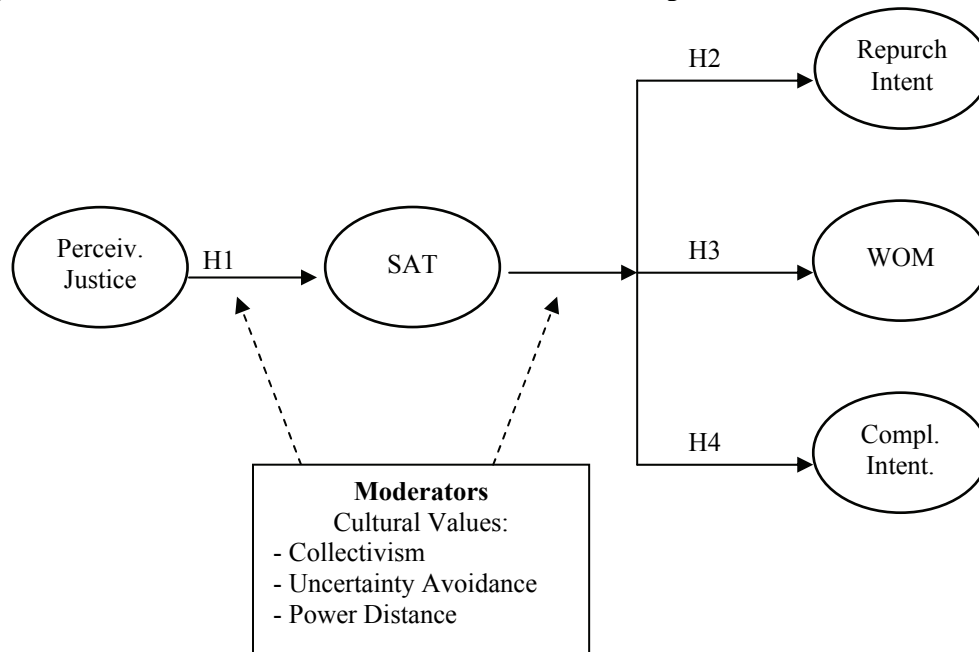
Notes: Perceiv. Justice = perceived justice; SAT = satisfaction; Repurc Intent = repurchase intentions; WOM = word-of-mouth; Compl. Intent = complaining intentions.

METHOD

A survey was conducted among customers who had experienced a failure and a recovery in the last twelve months. In the current stage of the project, two samples are analyzed with participants from Brazil and France. We used a convenience sample of graduate and undergraduate students in both countries. Participants received the instructions in the beginning of the questionnaire asking them to remember a recent negative experience with a service provider and their reactions following the service failure. This retrospective design is common in the service research investigations (e.g. KEAVENEY, 1995; PUJARI, 2004; WARDEN et al., 2003) and we followed the authors' instructions to reduce possible errors by asking for more recent events, enabling that respondents choose the service of their interest and giving the time necessary to complete the instrument.

In France, the questionnaire was administered to students in a *Management* course, located in Marseille, in the period of November 2007 to January 2008. In the end of the data collection, a total of 194 respondents had participated. In Brazil, data collection was

conducted in the capital of a State in the south of the country in the period February-April 2008 and a group of 249 students took part in the research.

The language used in the French sample was English with the original scale items format. The reason was that participants had a good level of this language, since the course taught to them was in English. This English version was submitted to a pre-test and received the comments from three English native speakers who were Management Professors. On the other hand, the Brazilian version of the questionnaire was in Portuguese, mainly because the scales of perceived justice, satisfaction, word-of-mouth, repurchase intentions and complaint intentions had been used and validated before by Brazilian studies (e.g., FERNANDES and SANTOS, 2006, 2008; FONSECA, TREZ and ESPARTEL, 2005; MATOS et al., 2006; SANTOS and FERNANDES, 2005; SANTOS and ROSSI, 2002). Although the construct of cultural dimensions is relatively new in the context of failure/recovery research, especially in Brazil, the construct has been investigated in Brazil in other research contexts (see, for example, AÑAÑA and NIQUE, 2007; MARMITT and NIQUE, 2002; NIQUE et al., 2005; ROSSI and SILVEIRA, 1999; TORRES and PAIVA, 2007; ZANELA, FREITAS and BECKER, 1998). Moreover, a Portuguese version of the cultural dimensions was also found in research conducted in Portugal (see SOARES, 2004). Thus, there was no difficulty in producing a Brazilian version of the questionnaire in the Brazilian Portuguese format. The next paragraphs give more details about each construct and the operational definition.

The first section of the instrument measured the cultural values, with the following dimensions: (i) collectivism/individualism (6 items), uncertainty avoidance (5 items) and power distance (5 items), based on the CVSCALE (cultural value scale) from Donthu and Yoo (1998), used also by Patterson, Cowley and Prasongsukarn (2006). In this approach, cultural values are measured in the individual level, which means that when separating participants in terms of one of these constructs (e.g. low vs. high collectivism), the answers to the construct will be used. As a result, we allow that both nationalities enter the specific subgroups (e.g., low collectivists). Nevertheless, a comparison was performed to check if there were differences in the origin of the subject classified in each group. The approach of individual level analysis was chosen in order to keep with the reviewed literature and provide stronger basis for comparing results.

Next, the instrument asked the participant to remember a problem that he/she had experienced with a service firm in the last twelve months. Three questions were dealing with this aspect: (i) 'What was the nature of the problem you experienced?' followed by eight alternatives and an 'other' option, adapted from previous research that presented the most common categories of service failures (KEAVENEY, 1995); (ii) 'What was the industry?', measured by an open-ended question; (iii) Whether the respondent complained to the company (yes/no). If he/she had complained, we asked about the mechanism of complaining (going to the company, calling the company, writing a letter or e-mail or 'other'). If he/she did not complain, we asked the reason, using the categories presented by Voorhees, Brady and Horowitz (2006).

In the sequence, we measured <u>Perceived Justice</u>, using 9 items provided by Patterson, Cowley and Prasongsukarn (2006), Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) and Voorhees and Brady (2005). We used a 7-point Likert scale, with anchors 'strongly disagree-strongly agree'. After that, we measured <u>Satisfaction</u> after the recovery effort using 3 items and 7-point Likert scale (strongly disagree-strongly agree), adapted from Voorhees and Brady (2005). <u>Repurchase Intentions</u> was the next measured construct, using 3 items adapted from Smith and Bolton (1998) and Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996), with scale ranging from 1 = very unlikely to 7 = very likely. Then, participants answered the items about their chances to engage in <u>positive word-of-mouth</u>, using 3 items adapted from Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996), anchored by 1 = very unlikely to 7 = very likely. After that, respondents

were asked about their future complaining intentions (if the problem they reported happened to them again, what were the chances that they would…) measured by 3 items and using the same anchors of very unlikely-very likely (Voorhees and Brady, 2005; Kim et al., 2003). Finally, questions measuring gender, age and nationality of the participant were used.

After data collection and data process in a statistical software, we performed the following analysis in this sequence: (i) initial check for missing values and outliers; (ii) descriptive statistics of the scales and the demographic questions; (iii) scales purification based on reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability) and the average variance extracted (AVE), as suggested in the literature (FORNELL and LARCKER, 1981); (iv) measurement model analysis and exclusion of items with standardized coefficients lower than 0.60, which complemented the purification analysis; (v) structural model analysis, testing the proposed relationships between constructs in each country; (vi) test of moderation effects.

RESULTS

We obtained a total sample of 443 participants, with 194 from France (43%) and 249 from Brazil (57%). However, the sample analyzed for our research aims included only those consumers who had complained about their presented problem, since only this group would have answers for the perceived fairness in the complaint resolution process (i.e., perceived justice). After using this filter, the missing value and outlier analysis were conducted in each of the two samples. The outlier analysis followed the procedures recommended by Hair et al. (1998, p.69).

In the French sample, from the initial 194 respondents, 135 (70%) had complained to the company and 59 (30%) did not. The sample of 135 presented complete answers in all the items. The outlier analysis did not identify any extreme case, since the higher value of Mahalanobis distance presented significance of 0.031 (did not reach the level of 0.001). After this process, the final French sample that was submitted to all subsequent analyses had **135 cases**.

In the Brazilian sample, from the initial 249 cases, 179 (72%) complained about their problem. From this total, only 16 cases (9%) presented one or more items with missing values and were deleted from the database. The same procedure of outlier analysis was also applied to this sample and no extreme case was found, since the case with higher Mahalanobis distance presented sig. = 0.017 (did not reach the level of 0.001). Thus, the final Brazilian sample was composed by **163 cases**.

From the 135 French consumers, 72 (53%) were female and 63 (47%) males. Age in this sample varied between 19 and 25 years, with mean of 21 years. In terms of the experienced problem, the option 'mistake or problem with the service' was marked with more frequency (35%), followed by 'inconvenience/too long a wait' (32%), 'pricing problem' (10%), 'ethical problem' (10%), 'employee interaction' (6%), 'poor responses to a previous problem' (4%) and 'company policy problem' (3%). This question enabled the respondent to choose more than one of the alternatives.

In the Brazilian sample, from the 163 consumers, 72 (44%) were female and 91 (56%) were males. Age varied between 18 and 71 years, with mean of 25 years. Regarding the problem manifested by the respondent, the two most frequent options were the same as those in the French sample: 'mistake or problem with the service' (31%) and 'inconvenience/too long a wait' (31%), followed by 'company policy problem' (9%), 'employee interaction' (8%), 'ethical problem' (8%) and 'poor responses to a previous problem' (6%).

In Table 1 we present a descriptive analysis of the constructs for each country and we test whether there is a significant difference between responses in the samples.

We can see from Table 1 that there are significant mean differences for all constructs, with exception of the last one, 'complaining intentions'. For example, Brazilian consumers

manifested higher collectivism than the French ones, in agreement with expectations. Similarly, uncertainty avoidance was stronger in Brazil. Power distance, on the other hand, was stronger in France, although studies of Hofstede (2007) suggest that this factor is equally high in both countries. In the samples of this study, however, the mean values (2.87 and 2.41) remained in the low to medium level of the scale varying from 1 to 7.

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics by Country

Constructs	France		Brazil		*F test*	Sig.
	Mean	Stand. Deviation	Mean	Stand. Deviation		
Collectivism	4.40	0.82	4.69	0.93	8.10	0.005
Uncertainty Avoidance	4.80	0.79	5.57	0.74	75.21	0.000
Power Distance	2.87	0.98	2.41	0.91	17.23	0.000
Perceived Justice	3.41	1.34	2.66	1.55	19.42	0.000
Satisfaction	3.86	1.61	2.87	1.68	26.50	0.000
Repurchase intentions	3.31	1.69	2.89	1.88	4.08	0.044
Word-of-mouth	2.87	1.70	2.20	1.57	12.65	0.000
Complaining intentions	5.73	1.29	5.93	1.14	2.04	0.154

Notes: a new variable was created for each construct based on the mean value of the items. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated (sig. = 0.05); sample of 298 cases.

Table 1 also shows that perceived justice, satisfaction, repurchase intentions and propensity to favorable word-of-mouth was significantly lower for the Brazilians when compared to the French. Before analyzing the structural model, we purified the scales by the measurement model of each construct. These results are presented next.

Reliability and Validity of the Measures

In the stage of measurement models evaluation, we test each construct in terms of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE), as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Moreover, we exclude items that have a weak relationship with the construct of interest (i.e., standardized coefficient lower than 0.60). These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 - Measurement Properties

Construct	Before purification			After purification		
	Alpha	CR	AVE	Alpha	CR	AVE
France						
Collectivism	0.61	0.64	0.25	0.61	0.64	0.38
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.63	0.66	0.29	0.60	0.61	0.34
Power Distance	0.52	0.57	0.24	0.54	0.58	0.33
Perceived Justice	0.90	0.91	0.52	0.90	0.91	0.55
Satisfaction	0.92	0.93	0.81	-	-	-
Repurchase intentions	0.93	0.93	0.82	-	-	-
Word-of-mouth	0.96	0.97	0.90	-	-	-
Complaining intentions	0.68	0.68	0.43	0.48	0.48	0.32
Brazil						
Collectivism	0.70	0.70	0.30	0.72	0.72	0.47
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.61	0.62	0.26	0.54	0.57	0.32
Power Distance	0.57	0.57	0.23	0.50	0.52	0.30
Perceived Justice	0.93	0.94	0.63	0.93	0.93	0.64
Satisfaction	0.93	0.93	0.82	-	-	-
Repurchase intentions	0.95	0.95	0.87	-	-	-
Word-of-mouth	0.96	0.97	0.91	-	-	-
Complaining intentions	0.38	0.44	0.25	0.48	0.54	0.37

Notes: Alpha = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

We can see from Table 2 that the scales of satisfaction, repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth presented very favorable results, so that no purification was needed. In these scales, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were in the 0.90 level and the average variance extracted in the 0.80 level. These findings are well above the suggested limit of 0.70 of reliability and 0.50 for AVE.

The remaining constructs were submitted to exclusion of one or more items because they presented items with low standardized coefficient between construct and items. For example, in the construct of perceived justice, one of the items was excluded and the measurement properties achieved the desired level.

The construct of complaining intentions was the only one that presented a major difference between the two samples. In the Brazilian sample, this construct presented one of the items with very low loading with the construct (0.13). In the French sample, this value was 0.65. One of the challenges in purifying scales in a study involving more than one sample is to implement the same purification process in the different samples, so that the final purified model can be run in these samples. The result in the complaint intentions item in the Brazilian sample suggested us to exclude this item from the two samples. We conducted this exclusion and recalculated the measurement properties. We can see from table 2 that the statistics of the measurement model improved in the Brazilian sample, at the cost of reducing these same values in the French sample. Finally, we could reach a reliability index and an average variance extracted that were similar in the two samples. We note that other studies have also found low reliability for the construct of 'complaining intentions', suggesting that it is a complicated measure, as we discuss in the final section of this paper.

Discriminant validity was conducted by comparing constructs' shared variance (squared correlation) with the AVE of each construct, following the criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Findings are presented in Table 3. For example, in the French sample, the higher correlation was found between repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth (0.84), but even in this case the shared variance (0.71) was lower than the AVE in repurchase intentions (0.82) and word-of-mouth (0.90). All the other comparisons showed convergent results, supporting discriminant validity.

Table 3 – Correlations, Shared Variance and AVE

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
France								
1. Collectivism	**0.38**	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.03	-0.02
2. Uncertainty Avoidance	0.00	**0.34**	-0.19	-0.05	0.10	0.09	0.04	0.19
3. Power Distance	0.00	0.04	**0.33**	-0.05	0.02	0.02	0.01	-0.12
4. Perceived Justice	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.55**	0.58	0.55	0.67	-0.46
5. Satisfaction	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.34	**0.81**	<u>0.74</u>	<u>0.70</u>	-0.29
6. Repurchase intentions	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.30	0.55	**0.82**	<u>0.84</u>	-0.34
7. Word-of-mouth	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.45	0.49	0.71	**0.90**	-0.30
8. Complaining intentions	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.21	0.08	0.12	0.09	**0.32**
Brazil								
1. Collectivism	**0.47**	0.19	-0.11	0.06	0.17	0.11	0.15	0.12
2. Uncertainty Avoidance	0.04	**0.32**	0.02	0.08	0.11	0.13	0.07	0.05
3. Power Distance	0.01	0.00	**0.30**	0.19	0.15	0.17	0.11	-0.25
4. Perceived Justice	0.00	0.01	0.04	**0.64**	0.59	0.49	0.59	-0.43
5. Satisfaction	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.35	**0.82**	<u>0.80</u>	<u>0.88</u>	-0.29
6. Repurchase intentions	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.24	0.64	**0.87**	<u>0.83</u>	-0.37
7. Word-of-mouth	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.35	0.77	0.69	**0.91**	-0.33
8. Complaining intentions	0.01	0.00	0.06	0.18	0.08	0.14	0.11	**0.37**

Notes: Values in diagonal are the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct, above the diagonal are the correlations and below the diagonal are the shared variances (*r* squared).

Similar results were found in the Brazilian sample. In this case, the higher correlation was between satisfaction and word-of-mouth (0.88), with a shared variance of 0.77, but this value is inferior when compared to the AVE of satisfaction (0.82) and word-of-mouth (0.91). In all the other comparisons, the shared variance was also inferior than the average variances extracted. These findings support the discriminant validity and indicates that constructs are different from each other and that they can be represented in a structural model.

The Relationships of the Model in Each Country

We initiated our structural model analysis by estimating the model with the purified scales in each country. Our aim was to evaluate whether the relationships were similar between the countries in terms of the amount of explanation in dependent variables and strength of each predictor. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 – Test of the Structural Model by Country

Hypotheses		Coefficient	Stand. Error	Standardized coefficient (β)	t test	sig
	France					
H1	Perceived Justice $\rightarrow$ SAT	0.81	0.13	0.63	6.33	0.000
H2	SAT $\rightarrow$ Repurchase Intent	0.80	0.08	0.79	9.98	0.000
H3	SAT $\rightarrow$ WOM	0.88	0.08	0.76	10.59	0.000
H4	SAT $\rightarrow$ Complaint Intent.	-0.28	0.10	-0.52	-2.71	0.010

Fit: χ^2=328; df=148; χ^2/df = 2.22; GFI=0.80; AGFI=0.75; NFI=0.86; CFI=0.92; RMSEA=0.10
R^2: SAT =0.39 ; WOM = 0.58; Repurchase Intent = 0.63; Complaining Intent = 0.27

Hypotheses		Coefficient	Stand. Error	Standardized coefficient (β)	t test	sig
	Brazil					
H1	Perceived Justice $\rightarrow$ SAT	0.77	0.11	0.61	7.3	0.000
H2	SAT $\rightarrow$ Repurchase Intent	0.94	0.07	0.83	14.34	0.000
H3	SAT $\rightarrow$ WOM	0.90	0.05	0.90	17.93	0.000
H4	SAT $\rightarrow$ Complaint Intent.	-0.27	0.10	-0.40	-2.69	0.010

Fit: χ^2=344; df=148; χ^2/df = 2.33; GFI=0.82; AGFI=0.77; NFI=0.90; CFI=0.94; RMSEA=0.09
R^2: SAT = 0.37; WOM = 0.81; Repurchase Intent = 0.68; Complaining Intent = 0.16

In general, we note in Table 4 that the model presented relatively similar fit indexes in both samples. One of the differences was the higher variance explained for word-of-mouth in Brazil (0.81) in comparison to France (0.58). This might be a result of the first sample characteristic of higher collectivism. We explore more this finding in the discussion section. Another difference was the higher explanation for the complaint intentions in the French sample (0.27) in relation to the Brazilian group (0.16).

The coefficients of the model were all significant in both samples. The standardized coefficients show the relative influence of the predictors in the endogenous constructs. Again, we note two findings from this analysis: (i) word-of-mouth is more dependent on satisfaction for the Brazilian sample (0.90) in relation to the French group (0.76); (ii) complaint intentions is more related to satisfaction in the French group (-0.52), when compared to the Brazilian sample (-0.40).

The differences observed based on the standardized coefficients might be influenced by the cultural differences between these countries. But if we would like to know the influence of the cultural values, we must use them to segment the samples in groups of low versus high collectivism, for example, instead of testing Brazilian versus French consumers. This is the individual level analysis discussed before in the methodological section. We used this analysis for testing the moderating effects of the cultural values and present the results in the next section.

Moderating Effects

In this stage, we created a new variable for each construct measuring cultural values (only items that remained after purification process were used). After that, we calculated the median for each variable and divided the sample in 2 groups, using this median split for each variable. As a result, we had each of the three cultural value segmenting the entire sample in groups (e.g., low vs. high collectivism).

We crossed these categories with the sample in order to check the distribution of the groups between the countries, as presented in Table 5. We found that the relationships presented before (Table 1) were maintained after the median split because (i) high collectivism was more concentrated among Brazilians; (ii) high uncertainty avoidance group also had a greater frequency of Brazilians and (iii) high power distance group was related to the French group.

Table 5 – Moderating Variables in Two Levels (low vs. high) by Country

Construct	Level	Brazil	France	Total	Difference
Collectivism	Low	67	81	148	χ^2= 10.55
	High	96	54	150	Sig. = 0.001
	Total	*163*	*135*	*298*	
Uncertainty Avoidance	Low	39	86	125	χ^2= 47.98
	High	124	49	173	Sig. = 0.001
	Total	*163*	*135*	*298*	
Power distance	Low	84	47	131	χ^2= 8.38
	High	79	88	167	Sig. = 0.004
	Total	*163*	*135*	*298*	

We conclude from table 5 that even after considering the cultural values in the individual level, the difference between countries are still valid, since the chi-square tests presented in Table 5 suggest significant differences for all the variables.

Using the individual level analysis, the moderating effects proposed in Figure 1 were tested. The results for this final analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 – Moderating Effects: Relationships by Groups

Relationship	Constrained model χ^2	df	Unconstrained model χ^2	Dif χ^2	Sig.	Unstandardized Coefficient	
Collectivism						*Low*	*High*
Perceived Justice $\rightarrow$ SAT	865.69	305	864.18	1.51	0.219	0.83	0.88
SAT $\rightarrow$ Repurchase Intent	865.69	305	861.92	3.77	0.052	0.82	0.85
SAT $\rightarrow$ WOM	865.69	305	848.63	17.06	0.000	0.90	0.88
SAT $\rightarrow$ Complaint Intent.	865.69	305	694.13	171.56	0.000	**-0.28**	**-0.17**
Uncertainty Avoidance						*Low*	*High*
Perceived Justice $\rightarrow$ SAT	891.00	305	889.97	1.03	0.309	0.82	0.86
SAT $\rightarrow$ Repurchase Intent	891.00	305	886.62	4.38	0.036	0.87	0.82
SAT $\rightarrow$ WOM	891.00	305	874.07	16.93	0.000	0.93	0.87
SAT $\rightarrow$ Complaint Intent.	891.00	305	719.02	171.98	0.000	-0.22	-0.23
Power Distance						*Low*	*High*
Perceived Justice $\rightarrow$ SAT	829.64	305	828.24	1.40	0.236	0.89	0.82
SAT $\rightarrow$ Repurchase Intent	829.64	305	825.43	4.22	0.040	0.85	0.84
SAT $\rightarrow$ WOM	829.64	305	813.57	16.07	0.000	0.90	0.89
SAT $\rightarrow$ Complaint Intent.	829.64	305	656.64	173.01	0.000	**-0.26**	**-0.18**

In general, we see from table 6 that the effects of perceived justice on satisfaction were not significantly different between the groups. Still, the relationships between

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satisfaction and its consequences were significantly different between the groups related to collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and power distance.

However, considering the significant links, the regression coefficients associated with the groups were very similar in some cases (e.g., 0.90 vs. 0.88), indicating a lack of *practical* significance. Because of this, we emphasize one relationship to receive greater attention: the effects of satisfaction on complaining intentions. Negative coefficients were found for this link, revealing that *lower* satisfaction after recovery is associated with *higher* likelihood of consumer complaining. In this way, low collectivists presented stronger tendencies to complain (-0.28) when compared to high collectivists (-0.17). According to this finding, the lower the satisfaction, the higher the chances to complain, but since the slope of the relationship is stronger for the low collectivists, this group present a higher tendency to complain giving a satisfaction level.

Similar difference was found for the relationship satisfaction – complaining intentions when comparing the groups with low (-0.26) vs. high (-0.18) power distance. The stronger coefficient in the group with low power distance indicates that individuals with a sense of egalitarian groups (lower power distance) are more likely to complain. This group does not feel inhibited to manifest a complaint, because it does not to be like a challenge to the authority. This discussion is more elaborated in the next section.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As other organizations in the market, service firms need to provide offers that satisfy customer needs and motivate them to repeat purchases. Different from companies dealing with a more tangible offer, however, service providers face higher risks of creating a situation of failure and customer dissatisfaction due to the inherent characteristics of the service, like intangibility and heterogeneity (i.e., quality perception is dependent on a variety of factors, like customer's expectations and experiences, front-line employee empathy and even other customers' behavior).

Research in the field of service failure/recovery have investigated the factors influencing customer satisfaction after a recovery and how this satisfaction influences the behavioral intentions of this customer, in terms of repeating purchase, recommending and/or complaining in case of new failures (KAU and LOH, 2006; MAXHAM and NETEMEYER, 2002; VOORHEES and BRADY, 2005).

However, considering the global environment as a context, few studies have investigated how customers from different cultures react to situations of service failure/ recovery. With the globalization of the markets and the growth of the service industry, it has become a reality for many service firms to conduct business with customers from different nationalities. Recent studies dealing with service failure/recovery in a cross-cultural approach have focused on specific points (e.g., perceived justice and customer satisfaction, PATTERSON, COWLEY and PRASONGSUKARN). But there is still a gap regarding an integration of the main relevant constructs related to customers' reactions to failure/recovery and the test of these relationships across the customer's cultural orientation.

Thus, we conducted a survey research comparing two countries (Brazil and France) in order to (i) test a theoretical model that integrated the main variables of the CCB context (perceived justice, satisfaction, word-of-mouth, repurchase intentions, and complaint intentions); (ii) test the moderating role of cultural value orientation.

Our results indicated significant differences between the two countries, in terms of collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and power distance. However, our greater interest was in the individual level analysis (instead of the country level analysis). Nevertheless, we show in the results that the analysis at the individual level maintained the relationships found in the country level. We used individual level because studies based on cultural dimensions, rather

than nationality, should present greater explanatory power, since they enable us to extrapolate beyond the countries included in the sample (PATTERSON, COWLEY and PRASONGSUKARN, 2006).

Initially, we tested the proposed model in each country and found significant relationships for each of the samples. One of the differences between the countries was the effect of satisfaction on word-of-mouth, which was stronger for Brazilians when compared to the French. Word-of-mouth from Brazilians were more dependent on their satisfaction level. A possible reason might be that Brazilians, as more collectivists than the French, are more inhibited to engage in a formal complaint process. Instead, they talk about the problem with friends and relatives (the word-of-mouth effect). This is in agreement with the findings form Ngai et al. (2007), who found that Asians, as a collectivist culture, also engaged in word-of-mouth in a similar context of service failure. As the French people are less collectivist than the Brazilians, they also show higher propensity to complain. This might explain why the effect of satisfaction on complaining intentions was greater for the French sample.

From the individual level analysis, two findings regarding the complaining intentions and how it depends on the satisfaction level are noteworthy.

First, lower collectivists presented stronger tendencies to complain for a given satisfaction level, when compared to higher collectivists. This is in agreement with studies (NGAI et al., 2007) showing that more individualist individuals have greater tendencies to complain. The rationale is that collectivists tend to maintain social harmony by avoiding direct confrontations, but individualists are more likely to engage in a voice response, i.e., complaining to the party responsible for the dissatisfaction (CHAN and WAN, 2008).

Second, individuals with lower power distance also presented stronger tendencies to complain for a given satisfaction level, when compared to those with greater power distance. This is in agreement with the literature (NGAI et al., 2007) showing that the lower power distance individuals are those who see others in a more egalitarian way and, thus, does not feel inhibited to manifest a complaint because complaining is perceived as a consumer right and it is not associated with a challenge to the authority.

As a managerial implication, this study calls attention for the fact that customer behavior in the conditions of service failure/recovery is influenced by the customer value orientation. It is difficult that a front-line employee of a service company will be able to recognize the different cultural orientations of the customers and customize the recovery and/or treatment during a service delivery. But in a context of relationship marketing techniques, it might be useful for those companies operating in different countries to include in their database variables that represent the cultural values of the customers. In this way, they might have greater chances to meet or exceed customers' expectations.

We recognize that some limitations should be addressed in future studies. For example, in the current stage of the research, we collected data from two countries, i.e., Brazil and France. In the next steps, we will be adding new respondents from USA, Italy, Finland and New Zealand. Another shortcoming is the relatively low reliability in the scale of 'complaining intentions', although the literature has witnessed a difficulty in measuring and explaining this construct (e.g. ZEELENBERG and PIETERS, 1999). Nevertheless, future studies should emphasize the development of a more reliable scale for this construct. Moreover, our measures for 'cultural values' were based on Hofstede's typology of cultural dimensions, but future studies might investigate whether different conceptualizations of value produce convergent results, as suggested by Zhang, Beatty and Walsh (2008). Future studies should also make efforts to obtain greater sample sizes in each country. Another opportunity for future research is to investigate the motivations of non-complaining customers and test whether there is an influence of the cultural value orientation. These new investigations are needed in order to keep the service research literature advancing.

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