Online Narratives of Restaurant Service Deviation in Botswana: A Comparative Study of Gaborone and Maun

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ABSTRACT

A comparative analysis of 71 sub-optimal TripAdvisor narratives of restaurant service recovery in Gaborone and Maun, Botswana, is undertaken. The aim is to review the service recovery processes used to address service deviation. Using the Labovian structure, the study highlights that for the two sites, reviewers presented their narratives in an emotional manner, clouded with disappointment and regret. The narratives eventually lead to the presentation of codas, some that communicate decisions not to visit the facility again. In minor incidents, a balancing act through the use modal verbs and adverbs of contrast in the coda is achieved; that rouses an optimistic decision for repeat visitation. However, some of the narratives suggest the existence of highly complex service recovery processes, this evidenced by the occurrence of 'quadruple' deviation. Further research is required to ascertain whether it is widely existent.

Key words: Restaurants, complex service recovery process, online reviews, Botswana

INTRODUCTION

Gaborone is the highest receiver of Botswana's visitors by air (54.8%), followed by Maun (at 30.7% (Statistics Botswana, 2020). Moswete, *et al*. (2008) describe these locations as primary urban centres in the country. The two sites also have a high presence of restaurant activity online (TripAdvisor, 2018). Despite this importance, Musikavanhu (2017) argues that the restaurant sector in the country faces problems of poor service delivery. Building on Manwa (2011), Musikavanhu (2017) pronounces the problem using the views of management, customers and employees, citing several determinants of service quality that failed to meet the expectations of these groups. Musikavanhu (2017) and Chatibura and Siya (2018) also argue that the breadth of literature on the quality of service in Botswana is very limited. Given this background, it is imperative to understand the context of service delivery in the sector. This context could be used by restaurant managers to devise service recovery models (Dimitriou, 2017), that could be used to address service deviation. As such, the content and structure of online narratives of restaurant service deviation on TripAdvisor, were studied in order to understand the subtle comments derived from online contexts. By so doing, the study builds

on Sparks and Browning (2010) and Vásquez (2012), however, with an emphasis on the restaurant sector. Ultimately, the study aims to identify the recovery processes used by restaurants in Botswana for poor service.

Although Loo, Boo and Khoo-Lattimore (2013) criticized the use of TripAdvisor for studying online complaints citing they may have been posted by unethical rivals rather than actual customers, the site has been used for similar discourse-pragmatic studies (e.g. Vásquez, 2011; Vásquez, 2012; Zhang & Vásquez, 2014). As such, this study particularly analysed cases of service failure or service deviation on TripAdvisor, like Loo, *et al.* (2013) and Edvardsson, Tronvoll and Höykinpuro (2011), but using Labov's (1972) structure. There is a dearth of literature on the analysis of narratives that give rise to service deviation particularly in the restaurant sector, using the structure.

The practical lessons that can be learnt from such a study are important for a relatively infant hospitality industry such as that of Botswana, where due importance has been attached to tourism as a tool for diversifying the country's economy (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Restaurant Service Failure and Recovery

The topic of service failure or deviation and its recovery in the restaurant sector has interested academics for more than three decades (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2016). Of importance to note have been studies on the types of service failures that are common in the restaurant service setting (e.g. Chan, Hassan & Bho, 2014; Gupta, McLaughlin & Gomez, 2007; Tsai and Su, 2009) or the cultural context of service failure (Liu, Warden, Lee & Huang, 2001; Mueller, Palmer & McMullan, 2003; Warden, Huang & Chen, 2008). Susskind (2005) examined restaurant customers' episodic reactions to recent service failures they had experienced. Mattila (1999) also investigated factors, such as the size of the failure that affects service recovery efforts in a restaurant setting.

Studies of service recovery (both successful and unsuccessful) are modelled within the Complex Service Recovery Process (CSRP) (Edvardsson, *et al.*, 2011). The process begins with an unfavourable service and experience, usually termed a single deviation (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2016). Double deviation can then occur if service failure occurs twice in a row, with the initial service and then with the service recovery (Casado-Diaz & Mas-Ruiz, 2007; Johnston & Fern, 1999). Triple deviation occurs when an additional attempt also fails (Edvardsson, *et al.*, 2011). In the restaurant sector, most of the studies on the service recovery process have been based on experimental or manipulative scenarios (Ok, Back & Shanklin, 2006) or critical incident techniques (CIT) (e.g. Tsai & Su, 2009). For instance, Ok, *et al.* (2006) assessed changes in customers' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes after experiencing a service failure and recovery using scenario experimentation. Baker and Kim (2018) used CIT to study the perceptions of other customers' service failures and their impact on consumers' emotions and behaviours. Very few studies have analysed the CSRP in the restaurant sector from a discourse perspective. Edvardsson, *et al.* (2011) for instance, used narratives from conversational interviews with customers, employees and managers to analyse double service recovery attempts. On the other hand, Loo, *et al.* (2013) reviewed 1,032 comments written by customers and e-mailed to the management of two restaurants in Malaysia. This study however used reviews from an online travel community, TripAdvisor. The reviews were studied using Labov's narrative structure.

Narration and Labov's Structure

A narrative is an oral, written or filmed account of events and experiences (Smith, 2000). Narratives on TripAdvisor can be viewed as a form of computer mediated communication (CMC) that comprises elements of both spoken and written discourse (Vásquez, 2011), allowing such communication to be studied through a close analysis of the text (Jaworski & Pritchard 2005). A corpus of negative impressions can be communicated by restaurant guests in response to service failure using texts on Trip Advisor (Ford, Sturman & Heaton, 2012; Vásquez, 2011) or other platforms such as Expedia, Yelp (Xiang, Du, Ma & Fan, 2017) or Skytrax in the airline industry (Xu, Liu & Gursoy (2018).

Fully formed true narratives consist of six elements following Labov's (1972) classical structure. The narrative starts with an abstract, follows through to the orientation, and proceeds to the complicating action, and the evaluation or high point. An abstract (an optional aspect of the structure) introduces the narrative, stating what it is about, whilst the orientation identifies the time, place, characters and situation in a narrative (Mondada, 2000). This section of the narrative sets the scene of the story. The complicating actions are the sequence of events that tell what happened (Katz & Champion, 2009). In the online hotel forum of negative reviews for instance, most of the complicating actions started with temporal deictic anchor events such as '…upon arrival…' or '…we were told…' (Vásquez, 2012). Within the complicating actions, there is also a key event which is unpredictable or problematic (Mondada, 2000), which indicates what can be reported as a failure (Sparks & Browning, 2010). In the genre of negative online reviews, this is a 'built-in' feature of the narrative (Vásquez, 2012). In addition, the overall experience of a place can also be presented as a complicating action (Vásquez, 2012).

In the restaurant service recovery context, the complicating actions can occur within the realm of the restaurant service sequence. The restaurant service sequence (mostly performed by the service staff) is the bridge between the production system, beverage provision and the customer process (Cousins, Lillicrap & Weekes, 2014). The sequence, according to Cousins, *et al*., (2014) consists of eleven stages; preparation for service, taking bookings, greeting and seating/directing, taking food and beverage orders, serving food, serving beverages, clearing during service, billing, dealing with payments, dishwashing and clearing after service.

The next aspect of a narrative, the evaluation, tells the reader what the narrator thinks about a person, place, thing, event or entire experience (Smith, 2006). The evaluation is the reason behind the story being told (Mondada, 2000). For instance, Loo, *et al*. (2013) realized that most the customers' complaint motives were written to express their emotional anger in both single failure and double deviation scenarios.

In discourse analysis, internal and external evaluation can be used (Al-Ameedi & Al Shamiri. 2018; Blyth, 2005; Shrubshall, 1997). With external evaluation, the narrator makes a comment which is directed towards the reader (Mondada, 2000). At lexical level, emotion words such as 'yuck', 'gross' or 'finally' can be used and at syntactical level, the entire sentence can be used to describe the emotional state of the narrator (Kleres, 2010). For example, in Sparks and Browning's (2010) study, clauses such as 'this was an awful hotel' and 'it was a horrible experience' were used. Internal evaluation on the other hand, uses prosodic features such as punctuation (Veenendaal, Groen & Verhoeven, 2014) or rhetorical devices such as intensifiers, explicatives, correlatives or comparatives (Shrubshall, 1997). Both external and internal evaluation is important as it indicates why the story was unusual and why telling it was important (Mondada, 2000). Evaluation can therefore occur in any or all phases of the narrative (Vásquez, 2012).

From evaluation, the narrative proceeds to the resolution, which answers the question, 'what happened finally?' (Mondada, 2000). In some instances, the problematic situation is resolved, or it continues to exist. In Sparks and Browning's (2010) study, some hotel guests left, others refused to pay whilst others reported the matter to management. The narrative concludes with a coda that returns the narrator to the present, bringing the narrator and the audience back to the point at which they started the narrative (Katz & Champion, 2009). The codas of online hotel narratives tend to be mostly some form of advice, suggestion, warning, directive or admonition (Vásquez, 2012; Sparks & Browning, 2010).

Impacts of Customer Reviews on Business

On average, businesses focus on optimal reviews as they are believed to attract more customers and sales. Ye, Law, Gin and Chen (2011) emphasize the importance of online user-generated reviews to business performance in tourism, stating that traveller reviews have a significant impact on online sales, with a 10 percent increase in traveller review ratings boosting online bookings by more than five percent. However, Berger, Sorenses and Rasmussen (2010) conclude that though sub-optimal reviews can impact a restaurant through negative product evaluation, they can also impact the business through increased awareness and accessibility, which may have positive downstream effects on sales. They also argue that an increase in sub-optimal reviews for popular brands may lead to an increase in sales for less popular brands.

Furthermore, Berger, *et al.*, (2010) contend that though some businesses and individuals try to quieten negative publicity, it can actually have positive effects. Ultimately, this has led to the conclusion that online reviews, despite the valence, play a significant role on the consumer's decision making process. Optimal and sub-optimal reviews are both significant in consumers' decision making processes and as such, were considered for analysis in this study.

METHODS

The Areas of Focus

Gaborone and Maun were selected as the areas of focus for this study. Gaborone is the capital city of Botswana and is in the south of the country. The city is a popular destination for travellers visiting friends and relatives (Moswete, *et al.,* 2008). The city has a large breadth and concentration of restaurant infrastructure in the upcoming metropolitan area (Hospitality & Tourism Association of Botswana [HATAB], 2017). Maun, located in the northwest and often referred to as the gateway to the Okavango Delta, is a leading destination in the country (Mbaiwa, 2003). This urban village is also a gateway to the Chobe National Park, the Moremi Game Reserve, the Kasane Forest Reserve, and other protected areas in northern Botswana (Moswete, *et al.*, 2008). The two areas accounted for the largest share (85%) of tourist arrivals in the country by air in 2018 (Statistics Botswana, 2020). They are both primary urban centres (Moswete, *et al.*, 2008), are the fastest growing urban centres in Botswana (Mbaiwa, Toteng & Moswete, 2007) and are both gateways to key tourist destinations in the country (Moswete, *et al.*, 2008).

The two urban centres also had the largest share of restaurants listed on TripAdvisor. Gaborone and Maun accounted for 60% and 13%, respectively, of the 150 restaurants in Botswana reviewed on TripAdvisor (at the time of writing) (TripAdvisor, 2018). As leading

tourism centres, with marked online presence on TripAdvisor, the two cities were justified in their selection for analysis in this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected from TripAdvisor, one of the sources of user-generated computer mediated content for discourse-pragmatic studies (e.g. Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013; Cenni & Goethals, 2017; Vásquez, 2011; Vásquez, 2012; Zhang & Vásquez, 2014). Although reviews from computer mediated content can be amplified or exaggerated, there is rising credibility in the genuine use of such platforms for academic work (Vásquez, 2012).

Data collection occurred between January 2018 and November 2020, using reviews that spanned from 2008 to 2018. Restaurant reviews on TripAdvisor recorded as 'poor' and 'terrible' (respectively rated '2' and '1' on a scale of 5) were analysed, as they had a higher likelihood of containing cases of service deviation (Sparks & Browning, 2010). Online audiences also pay more attention to them (Vásquez, 2012). During this time, Gaborone had 90 restaurants listed on TripAdvisor, with 81 of them having 3406 reviews (Chatibura & Siya, 2018). The other nine restaurants had no reviews. Of the 81 restaurants, 53 had 290 reviews rated '1' or '2'. Similarly, Maun had 19 restaurants with 491 reviews. Ten of the reviews (representing 2% of the reviews) from eight restaurants, were rated '1' or '2'.

Three steps of coding were used, adopting the principles of qualitative analysis suggested by Blair (2015). First, based on a content perspective, all the text from the sub-optimal customer reviews were copied onto two Microsoft word documents, one for Gaborone and the other for Maun. Secondly, using a perspective approach, reviews describing failed service recoveries (deviation) were identified using a highlighter pen, a manual approach that allowed the researchers to 'know exactly which sheet held which comment' (Blair, 2015 p. 22). The reviews identified, revolved around unresolved dissatisfaction with either the sensoric nature of the food (Chan, *et al*., 2014; Lawless & Heyman, 2010; Leitzmann, 2012; Meilgaard, Civille & Carr, 2006), failures in the service delivery system (Ford, *et al*., 2012) or failures in the service setting (Ford, *et al*., 2012; Sporre, Jonsson & Ekström, 2013). Using the stated criteria, a total of 64 reviews with unsuccessful service recovery attempts from 30 restaurants were identified for Gaborone. These represented 22% of the 290 sub-optimal reviews. Some of the reviews had multiple incidents of failed service recovery which were analysed separately. Sixty-eight incidents from the reviews were finally identified and each was assigned a number from G1 - G68. For Maun, three reviews rated '1'or '2' and representing 30% of the 10 sub-optimal reviews, detailed unsuccessful service recovery attempts. The reviews were copied onto a word document and numbered from M1 to M3. Single deviation incidents, where recovery was successful, were excluded from further analysis.

In the third step, the online narratives were then studied for the presence of Labov's (1972) elements of narrative structure. Independent and free clauses were used as the units for narrative analysis. This step also used template coding, where themes were presented in each of the elements. The reviews were then categorised based on two criteria. First, the reviews were classified according to the stage at which deviation first occurred. The eleven-stage service sequence proposed by Cousins, *et al*. (2014) was used. The typology was selected in part because it details the interaction between the customer and the service or production staff in the restaurant set up. This follows advice from Vásquez (2012) who noted that complicating actions in the hotel setup resulted from the interactions and communications between customers and hotel staff. The second criterion was to classify the reviews based on the set of complicating actions described, into those that sequentially gave rise to either double or triple deviation incidents. A schematic presentation of the methodology is illustrated in Figure 1.
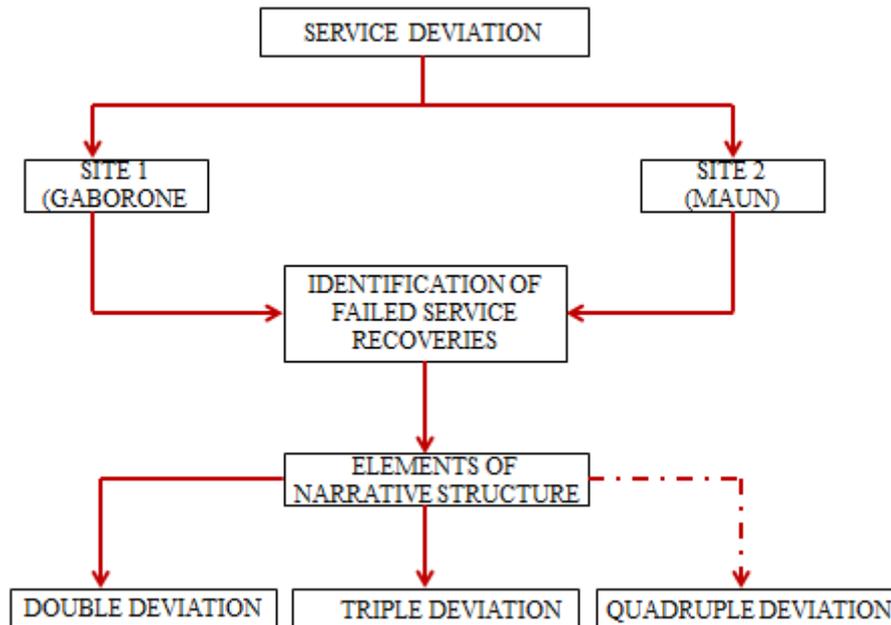
Figure 1: A schematic representation of the methodology

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are based on 67 TripAdvisor reviews of sub-optimal restaurant experience in Gaborone and Maun, where the narratives culminate into double or triple service deviation. The results were derived from 33 restaurants. The majority (88%) of the restaurants were full-service independent or franchise restaurants. The rest, offered limited service. The reviewers' experiences as presented in narration form, were analysed at each stage of Labov's narrative structure. The practical and theoretical implications of this study are highlighted in the subsequent sections.

Narratives of Failed Service Recovery Attempts

The narratives analysed in this study follow, to a large extent, Labov's structure. All six elements, i.e., the abstract, orientation clauses, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda, were present though in varying concentrations.

The Abstracts

Very few reviewers (only 10) gave an introduction to the narration in the form of an abstract. The ones identifiable (8 from Gaborone and 2 from Maun), ranged from short (16 words) to long (100 words) clauses. The abstracts reviewed referred to some form of expectation which was not met. In Incident G1, the reviewer for instance states, *what we'd hoped would be a fun family Sunday lunch turned out to be a disappointment.* In Incident M2, the reviewer also stated that they *decided to go and have pizza a few nights ago and was shocked as how the place was run down and poorly managed*. In another incident, G47, the reviewer gave a similar outline: *So many years later, I finally got to take my partner to [name of restaurant] to experience for himself all the greatness of what I experienced and fondly*

remembered of this once star of an Asian Kitchen–just to leave with my head hanging in embarrassment of the culinary insult we had submitted ourselves to! I should have been alerted to what was to follow just by looking at its sad and worn décor and furnishings–coupled with staff who seem to no longer take pride in what they can sell their customers, although trying their best to be of service!

The abstract (in Incident G47) used *em* dashes; first to emphasize an abrupt change in the reviewer's writing from the superfluous palliative thoughts of their fond memories of the restaurant to the indispensable comments on what the story is about. Secondly, the *em* dash was used by the reviewer to add emphasis to the extenuating circumstances of why the narrative was written, by describing the service staff.

Another abstract (Incident G42), implicitly indicates that the reviewer wrote the narrative with caution. This was achieved by drawing the audience to other positive reviews they had posted previously and using clauses like *reviewer of a few* and *I am conscious of the impact of negative reviews*: *Fellow reviewers may note that I posted a favorable review on a restaurant in the same complex whilst in recently in Gaborone. This cannot be said for this establishment's rump steak on the day I dined here. As a traveler of many years, reviewer of a few and dependent upon hospitality industry whilst I travel, I am conscious of the impact of negative reviews. I also take pride in promoting African service excellence and the fact that Botswana is known for its beef - regretfully not the beef in stock in this restaurant on the day of my dining here.* The abstract reveals elements of interpersonal dynamics as the reviewer tries to maintain good rapport with other participants (Besnier, 1994). As shown, the reviewer appeals to multiple audiences (e.g. fellow reviewers, the facility, the reader, fellow travellers) and them self, as statements to this effect were juxtaposed in the abstract. On the other hand, the explicit use of first-person pronouns such as 'I' in *I am conscious of the impact of negative reviews…*, for instance relate to ego-involvement.

Orientation Clauses

Almost all reviews, except for 10 from 68 incidents in Gaborone and one (from three incidents) in Maun, contained orientation information in the narrative of who was involved in the comments, where or when the events occurred. For instance, some reviewers (e.g. Incidents G8, G37, G47) were visiting the restaurant with their family and friends. In others (e.g. G5, G10, G23, G26, M1, M2, M3) the narrator was the only person involved in the incident as personal pronouns such as 'I', 'me', or 'my' were used. With other reviews (e.g. Incidents G12, G60, G64), the authors assumed the reviewer and/or someone else were present.

Some of the reviewers (e.g. Incident G61) were visiting for the first time upon recommendation from friends or family or upon reading positive online reviews of the restaurant (e.g. Incidents G55, G59). Others were repeat visitors (e.g. Incident G4 - *I've been here a couple of times*; Incident G14 - *I have tried their buffet several times in the past…*). The main reasons provided for visiting the restaurant trips was to celebrate with friends and family (e.g. Incident G48 - *… to celebrate my son's 18th birthday;* Incident G57- *Group Xmas day lunch*; Incident M1; Incident G55 - *… for a relative's birthday dinner*).

In general, the orientation information was minimally presented. This could be due to two main reasons. Firstly, the nature of TripAdvisor as an online travel community is secure and requires a reviewer to sign in as a user by providing their personal details such as name (or pseudonym), nationality and age. Secondly, the reviewers are aware they are commenting on features for a specified restaurant and may assume readers are mindful too. The reader also has access to the reviewer's details including their past contributions, membership status, places last visited and votes. This scenario creates some form of shared context or knowledge between

the reviewer and the audience. Given this background, it may be unnecessary for the reviewer to provide detailed orientation information in the reviews. Additionally, the context of the review, which is negative may not be conducive for providing such information.

Despite such anecdotal information though, the orientation provided in most of the reviews was important in contextualizing the way the narratives where presented. For instance, the reasons cited by reviewers for the restaurant visit (such as birthday celebrations) gave credence to the emotional state (at personal or interpersonal level) highlighted later, in the complicating actions and the evaluation.

Complicating Actions

Most clauses were written following the classical restaurant service sequence, where after greeting and seating a guest for instance, an order should be taken (Cousins, *et al.,* 2014). However, they were limited to six of the eleven stages. Each review would be classified into double, triple or quadruple deviation depending on the number of failed service recovery attempts (complicating actions) narrated. Based on this criteria, double deviation narratives were contained in 34 reviews (with 38 incidents) for Gaborone and three reviews (with three incidents) for Maun. Triple deviation occurred in 22 reviews (22 incidents) and 'quadruple deviation' in 8 reviews (8 incidents) for Gaborone. There were no triple and 'quadruple' deviation incidents for Maun. This gave a total of 71 incidents for both sites.
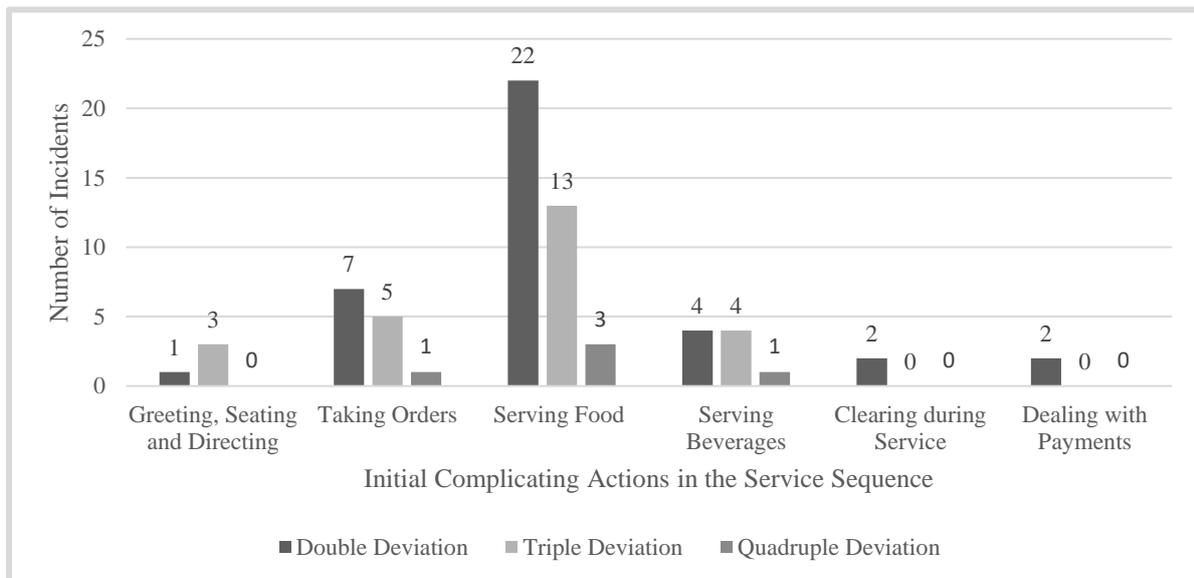
Figure 1. Deviations in the Service Sequence for Gaborone

The complicating actions which resulted in failed service recovery attempts (in all three types of deviations) at restaurants in Gaborone, occurred mostly at two stages of the service sequence; during order taking and during the service of food.

Failed Service Recovery: Double Deviation (First Attempt)

Complicating actions giving rise to double deviation during order taking represented failure in the service delivery system. Reviewers described service staff displaying inappropriate behaviour (e.g. Incident G38 - *She practically threw the menus at us and told us to hurry up because the kitchen was closing in half an hour*) and having difficulties taking orders (e.g. Incident G19 - *the waiter had three takes at taking our order*). In other cases, some

of the ingredients and items displayed on the menu were not available (e.g. Incident G26 - *2 basic orders from the menu were not available*).

During the service of food, failures in the service delivery system were also noted. For instance, a service delay occurred in Incident G6 – (*One plate of food arrived and by the time the plate was finished the second one still did not arrive*). Other reviewers described inappropriate behaviour by the service staff or a superior actor (e.g. Incident G14 - *I have informed a waitress about it and her answer was, "tell the chef". What!?* Incident G40 - *I went to the Manager…He looked and replied me in such arrogant manner and said 'If you know our service then why you NORTH INDIANs came to us'. …After hearing this RACIST REMARK I decided not to stay anymore and decided to go...*). In this case, the reviewer used capital letters for emphasis in two clauses, 'North Indian' and 'racist remark'. The emphasis can be considered as a central reason for their decision to leave; heedless of the wait, which they were willing to endure.

Some of the failures, during this stage were a result of the sensorial quality of the served food which failed to meet the reviewers' expectations (e.g. Incident G36 - *It was completely tasteless and swam in something that looked more like dish-washing liquid than a sauce*). In some, the reviewer complained of the presence of chemical and biological contaminants (e.g. Incident G28 - *They served a slice of cake that had a clearly visible green layer of fungi growing on it to my 4-year old daughter*). In other reviews, ingredients and menu items were unavailable (e.g. Incident G10 - *ordered a cheeseburger which arrived without cheese*; Incident G56 - *instead of telling me they didn't have the salami they DARE PUT POLONY in my pizza!*).

Similarly, the reviews from Maun displayed failure during order taking and the service of food. During order taking, in Incident M2 for instance, the reviewer indicated that *our order was not completed properly even though the waiter wrote down the order and the manager confirmed the order was still incorrect. The restaurant was not even busy!* This was a service delivery system failure. The other two reviewers also indicated failures in the service delivery system, chiefly relating to delays during the service of food. In particular, Incident M1 described service delays after ordering; *unfortunately had to remind the staff including the kitchen staff about the 4 meals I had ordered as they initially forgot about it…they lied to me explaining that my order would be complete in 2 minutes. 2 hour wait just to have staff running away to avoid confrontation.* Incident M3 also described service delays (*our food took more than an hour to be prepared. When it finally came it was cold.*).

Failed Service Recoveries: Triple Deviation (Second Attempt)

In incidents that progressed into triple deviation for restaurants in Gaborone, efforts to recover the failure were unsuccessful, twice in a row. Incident G43 for instance stated that *After some grumbling from the waiter it was replaced with a slightly thicker steak which was soooooo sinewy and cooked medium [nowhere near rare] - not sure what cut it was but definitely not fillet and everyone at our table who ordered fillet had the same experience*). In other cases, even a superior actor was unsuccessful in remedying the failure (e.g. Incident G37- *The waitress was adamant that the trolley should go. I spoke to the chef to ask him if he could make a plan, maybe allowing me to place it in a corner somewhere. The chef was as adamant as the waitress, the trolley must go, Management rules apparently*).

Failed Service Recoveries: 'Quadruple Deviation' (Third Attempt)

In eight cases, a third attempt at service recovery was also unsuccessful, giving rise to 'quadruple deviation' (e.g. Incident G9 - *When I asked the waitress why it was so, it took a*

long time for her to come back with an answer. She spoke to one of her superiors and tried telling me that it was indeed a 300g size. No manager bothered to come and resolve the problem. Eventually somebody came and said that they would give me a discount instead. They gave me a 10% discount for giving me 33% less steak. Anyway, at the end of the meal, I went up to the Manager/owner to complain about the experience. That turned out to be worse. Instead of apologizing for their error, she tried saying that by giving me a discount, it should be fine).

In all the eight reviews resulting in 'quadruple deviation', it was evident that the reviewers repeatedly sought for engagement with the servers and superior actors like chefs and managers without success. The use of adverbs like 'again', 'until', 'still' and 'further', and temporal adverbial clauses such as '*Then nothing.*' in the narratives also suggest so (e.g. Incident G14 - *I have again informed the restaurant manager and all he can say is I will inform the chef! Then nothing*; Incident G48 - *… having to call waiters myself, they still don't take note until you call them again...*).

To a large extent, the reviewers were searching for some form of distributive, procedural or interactional justice as the incidents were perceived unfair by the reviewers. The reviewers' perceptions of unfair and unprofessional treatment are most likely the main reasons they rated the restaurants as poor or terrible. This is consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of fairness on how service providers treat customers arguing that perceived injustice influences behavioural and revisit intentions (Ha & Jang, 2009; Lee & Park, 2010).

Evaluation

External evaluative clauses, more prevalent in reviews from Gaborone, occurred as free clauses whilst others were embedded in the other structural categories such as the abstract, orientation or complicating actions. The free clauses occurred as reviewers interrupted the narration in order to comment directly about the events (e.g. Incident G8 - *one of the most humiliating experiences of my life;* Incident G13 - *we were really disappointed by our meals*; Incident M3 – *disappointing*; Incident G44 - *How embarrassing!;* Incident G55 - *I was extremely disappointed with our evening at [name of restaurant], especially at the price;* Incident G56 - *It was gros and I was angry!*). Other comments were a reflection of the reviewers' self-involvement (e.g. Incident G44 - *And, I am ashamed to admit, this is the third time we have had this experience, so why did we go back??* Incident G63 - *…and guess what! I WISH I HAD NOT DONE THAT…*). In general, the external evaluation reflected an emotional connection with the narration.

The use of internal evaluation was more subtle, but more frequent in reviews from Gaborone than in those from Maun. Internal evaluation was achieved using rhetoric elements such as intensifiers for emphasis. For instance, capitalization and exclamation was common (e.g. Incident G2 - *…but they didn't careless*! Incident G14 - *What?!* Incident G21 – COLD; Incident GG28 – she REFUSED to go!!!!). Emphatic adverbs like 'very', 'really', 'extremely', and 'so', often used to express enthusiastic involvement on the part of the narrator (Radić-Bojanić, 2006), were also used (e.g. Incidents G13, G22, G47, G55, G62). Elongation was used but to a limited extent (e.g. Incident G43 - *soooooo sinewy*). Quantifiers such as 'whole', 'totally' and 'all' were noted in Incident G24 (*Our whole day was spoiled*), Incident G45 (*Used to be our favourite spot now totally off our list*) and Incident G20 (*no lemon flavor at all*), for instance. Comparators were also used in the form of questions (e.g. Incident G23 – *Seriously?* Incident G44 - *so why did we go back???*).

Overall, both external and internal evaluation displayed emotions of disappointment and to some extent anger, regret or embarrassment. These findings support Vázquez's (2011)

observation that the notion of expectation is a relevant characteristic of some TripAdvisor complaints, where the reviewers make explicit reference to disappointment emanating from a mismatch between what was provided from what was expected and from previous experiences.

Resolution

In most of the incidents, for both Gaborone and Maun, the reviewers did not indicate what was done to resolve the service failure. However, six key types of resolutions emerged for those that indicated. In some incidents (e.g. Incidents G8; G14; G24; G41; G62; G64), the reviewers left without being served. In others (e.g. Incidents G4; G32; G42), they only paid for the portion of food eaten or served correctly. In some (e.g. Incidents G2; G14; G30; G35; G39; G40; G44; G45; G46; G55; M2), the reviewers reported the service failure to the service staff or a superior actor but to no avail. There was unjustified compensation or intervention from the service staff or superior actors in other incidents (e.g. Incidents G9; G23; G49; G50; G51; G54; G58; M1), whilst in the last set of reviews, the reviewers indicated that there was no management to report to (e.g. Incidents G1; G34; G37).

Coda

The coda effect in the narratives studied for both Gaborone and Maun, was directed at three types of audiences: the narrator, fellow reviewers and the restaurant facility. To most of the reviewers, the coda was an explicit resolution to leave and/or not visit the facility again. This was achieved in part, using self-directed expressions (e.g. Incident G4 - *Needless to say I won't be returning back anytime soon*; Incident G34 - *I will definitely never go back*; Incident M2 – *won't see me again in a long time).* In other cases, the coda was presented as advice or recommendation to the reader who in a number of scenarios, was perceived as a fellow reviewer or potential diner (e.g. Incident G6 - *look somewhere else before you waste your hard earn money;* Incident G38 - *If you want to eat out in Gaborone there are much better restaurants than this one!).* Some codas were however presented to incite future engagement with the restaurant facility (e.g. Incident G41 – *However, if I hear that they have improved, I may try again*; Incident G51 - *Hope they shall have stepped up their act during my next visit…).*

The coda had the effect of returning the audience to the present but also gave insight into future dining recommendations and the reviewers' revisit intentions. This was achieved by the frequent use of modal verbs such as 'will' 'if' 'still', 'may' and 'would' and adverbs of contrast such as 'even though' and 'however'. This aspect allowed the narrator an opportunity to express their thoughts at the time of writing the review, in some form of retrospection. The verbs were also used to reveal optimism, signifying the value of the entire meal experience (and not just one stage of the service sequence) in evoking revisit intentions.

MANAGERIAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study reinforces the need for restaurants to use TripAdvisor to assess areas of customer dis/satisfaction (Sparks & Browning, 2010). In Botswana, the two sites provided an indication of some of the issues that restaurant managers should note in order to devise service recovery models. For instance, the study highlighted a higher prevalence of deviation during order taking, and the service of food; stages that can be recognized as key for service recovery.

It was also apparent from the study, that some superior actors such as supervisors were key players in complicating service recovery. In most cases their unprofessionalism resultantly

led to service deviation. Supervisory staff should play a more active and professional role, being exemplary were possible and customizing their approach depending on the severity of the service failure.

This study also identified the presence of 'quadruple' deviation (Figure 1), service recovery which fails three times in a row. Despite its trivial rate of incidence, its occurrence signifies the presence of a severely complex service recovery process, since deviation mostly arose from an interaction including the customers and restaurant management or owners.

The issues highlighted in this study can go a long way in helping managers device ways through which service delivery in restaurants could be improved. For example, restaurants need to develop standardized and institutionalized feedback mechanisms across the sub-sector that aggrieved customers can follow, until a satisfactory resolution is achieved. More importantly, the restaurant staff needs to be trained on customer service so that some of the issues highlighted in the study as contributing to service delivery could be avoided.

From a theoretical point of view, this study also highlighted that TripAdvisor restaurant reviews in Botswana were packaged in the typical Labovian pattern that follows a six structured approach. The comparison approach adopted in this study highlighted that the two sites were similar when rated against almost all the elements of Labov's structure. Though the abstracts and orientation clauses were minimally highlighted for each site, the complicating actions and evaluation, including the codas that were reviewed, were presented vividly. The evaluation component of the narratives allowed the reviewers an opportunity to relive the emotional experience that is associated with sub-optimal experiences. The evaluation was consistent with negative emotions of sub-optimal service encounters such as anger, frustration and annoyance (McColl-Kennedy & Smith, 2006). This finding also supports Bacile's (2020) conclusion that a sub-optimal customer perceived service climate produces a sub-optimal customer experience.

Though minor and optional, the coda was also used by some reviewers to arouse optimism for repeat visitation, despite the severity of the service deviation. This balancing act had the overall effect of reversing the unfavourable experience to some extent. Although service deviation is inevitable and leads to customer dissatisfaction, it can be minimized through such introspective acts. This aspect reinforces the view that restaurant experiences may not be entirely based on one stage of the service sequence but on the entirety of the experience. At least, restaurants should take this observation as an opportunity to redeem their ratings. It was also apparent that reviewers presented their narratives following the typical restaurant service sequence where after greeting and seating for instance, an order should be taken. This implies that managers should also follow a procedural approach in remedying service failure.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is limited in its approach to a manual qualitative form of analysis that is based on the authors' interpretative abilities. For example, the abstracts that were identified provided very limited information. The fact that they were limited denied the research an opportunity to further interrogate the detail. The same applies to orientation information which was minimally presented. Therefore, other methods of data collection such as interviews could help shed more light in this regard. Consequently, mixed methods approaches could be adopted to enrich similar studies. The subsequent categorization of reviews into three types of deviation; based on the sequence of complicating actions was also a limitation. Lastly, since the study only focused on the narratives of failed service recovery attempts (and hence excluded successful attempts), a small corpus of reviews was inevitably used.

It may also be worthwhile to study failed service recovery attempts using cases from other countries or locations, to ascertain the prevalence of failed attempts at service recovery,

particularly those that lead to 'quadruple' deviation. These would provide different contexts which may help improve the understanding of service recovery in restaurants. In addition, comprehensive studies that focus on both the perceptions of management or employees and customers could be carried out to give a clear picture of why failed service recovery occurs and how it could mitigated.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study support the use of narration in analysing failed service recovery in the restaurant sector. It was evident that service deviation contexts led to psychological states and incidents that were coupled with disappointment and to some extent anger and regret, which eventually with most reviewers, led to them deciding on not visiting the facility again. This was consistent across the two sites, both in Gaborone and Maun. However, a few reviewers in their final evaluation, could decide to revisit as they based their final decision on the entirety of the meal experience. These optimistic decisions should be valued and used by restaurant facilities as a form of redemption.

In general, the study observed and confirmed the existence of complex recovery processes. These should be assessed further. Service recovery models should be tailored to address them. In addition, the optimism expressed in the codas of the narrations, reflects the endemic potential of service recovery in redeeming restaurant ratings on TripAdvisor.

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