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## RESEARCH ARTICLE



# Mapping the service recovery research landscape: A bibliometric-based systematic review

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## Abstract

With businesses under increasing pressure to provide excellent customer service, postfailure recovery strategies have become critical for long-term customer satisfaction and loyalty. The domain of service recovery has extensively been examined in academia; however, systematic studies that provide a consolidated overview remains scant. To this end, we provide a systematic review and synthesis of service recovery literature by conducting a bibliometric-based cocitation analysis of 24,741 cited references from 1020 articles from across disciplines. The study identifies 10 major research clusters that represent different research streams of service recovery and explores their intellectual foundations. In addition, the research presents a conceptual framework to serve as a parsimonious guide for both practitioners and researchers. Furthermore, the study reveals a number of gaps in the existing literature and suggests promising directions for further investigation, including but not limited to: expanding methodological horizons in service recovery research, understanding service recovery mechanisms in Metaverse and synthetic environments, globalizing service recovery research, revitalizing service recovery processes in the age of artificial intelligence and robotics, investigating service recovery as an investment, and exploring service recovery in shared economies. Notably, this study serves managers, firstly, by providing them with a parsimonious structure of service recovery field that could help identify areas of improvement in their own service recovery systems and, secondly, by highlighting areas where academic knowledge base could inform industry solutions.

## KEYWORDS

artificial intelligence and robotics, bibliometrics, metaverse, service failure, service recovery, sharing economy, systematic review

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Considering the ever-increasing significance of services offered, contemporary businesses face higher pressure than ever before to provide excellent customer service. The number of dissatisfied customers turning to alternative providers is on the rise globally with annual service failures cost to organizations reaching as high as \$75 billion in the United States (Hyken, 2018) and £37 billion in the United Kingdom (Downey, 2017). Even for the world's leading firms, service failures remain unavoidable, and inadequate recovery measures can lead to dire consequences (Cantor & Li, 2018). For instance, following Samsung Galaxy Note 7 smartphone failures, the company's refusal to compensate customers for their losses resulted in a massive backlash from the public, legal notices being served to the tech giant, and a \$5.3 billion financial loss (Shamsi et al., 2017). Industries such as aviation, hospitality, health care, retail, and banking are highly susceptible to service failures due to the high level of customer–employee contact, as well as problems that arise from the general service characteristics of heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability (Izogo & Jayawardhena, 2018; Koc, 2019; Lee, 2018). With customers having more power to select alternative service providers than ever before and post negative comments online that act as reference, devising an effective service recovery plan has become a key concern for businesses. Even after a service failure, successful service recovery can yield profitable outcomes for the firm by increasing customer retention, satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth behaviors (Babin et al., 2021; Weitzl & Hutzinger, 2019).

A dominant trend in service recovery literature is that studies have addressed service failures within a particular discipline, concentrating on a small number of narrowly defined issues. For instance, human resource management studies focus on how corporations can assist their employees in dealing with complainants (Hewagama et al., 2019), marketing management studies discuss how customers respond to a business's service recovery efforts (Chang & Hung, 2018), while operations management studies concentrate on determining how organizations can improve service recovery systems (Smith et al., 2019). The multidisciplinary nature and the abundance of literature present a challenge to acquire a broad perspective of the field and analyze its development. Relatedly, real-world issues require a multidisciplinary approach to resolution (Jeffrey, 2003), which leaves a theoretical shortcoming and organizations continue to struggle with several areas of service recovery management despite over four decades of research (Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016).

Studies to examine the domain of service recovery across disciplines with an integrated model, linking important research themes within this field, remain scant. While there are some qualitative epitomes of service recovery, they tend to be either restricted in scope (Huang & Ha, 2020), are not multidisciplinary (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2018), misaligned with recent advancements in the field (Krishna et al., 2011), or lack rigor associated with the common literature review (Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017). To

address the aforementioned shortcomings, this study adopts an interdisciplinary bibliometric review approach to provide a holistic understanding and state-of-the-art review for service recovery research and its underlying principles. More specifically, we aim to address the below-stated research questions:

RQ1: Which journals, areas of research, and regions predominate the service recovery research?

RQ2: Which papers are most prominent?

RQ3: What are the prominent thematic clusters in the field? And how these interact conceptually?

RQ4: What are the avenues for future research?

This study makes several advancements to the service recovery literature. First, we identify most influential publications and highlight their interconnections to evidence the interdisciplinary nature of service recovery research. Second, we reveal 10 research clusters that present the theoretical underpinnings in service recovery research and develop an integrated model to present the holistic understanding of the service recovery. Finally, we discuss future research paths drawn through the consolidated findings of research clusters, and provide some practical implications.

The following sections are structured such that. Section 2 introduces bibliometric citation analysis and its methodology. This is followed by identifying influential journals, research areas, and regions in the domain of service recovery in Section 3. A network analysis model based on cocitation of references is then presented to gauge the theoretical underpinnings of the service recovery research. The ensuing section identifies the prominent themes using a cluster analysis and discusses the significant contributions and perspectives of each cluster in Section 4. The study then presents an integrated conceptual framework designed on the basis of the cluster analysis in Section 5. Section 6 presents agenda for future research. The last Section 7 discusses the findings of the study, presents its practical implications as well as its limitations.

## 2 | BIBLIOMETRIC CITATION ANALYSIS

Traditional qualitative literature reviews in interdisciplinary fields like service recovery are constrained in their ability to manage large amounts of data and tend to rely heavily on the writers' opinion (Hart et al., 1990). A bibliometric citation analysis, on the other hand, addresses these limitations as it can handle vast amounts of data, allows prioritizing of the publications in the data set, and groups publications into distinct clusters according to the citation patterns of the research community (Ashraf et al., 2022; Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Due to the advances in bibliometric softwares and scholarly databases technologies, evaluation of vast amounts of scientific data is now possible. Scientific databases such as Web of Science and Scopus has facilitated gathering large volumes of bibliometric data relatively easier, and bibliometric software like

Citespace and VOSviewer enabled studying these generated data in a quantitatively objective manner, thus leading to a recent surge in scholarly interest about bibliometric analysis. Bibliometrics has been employed in numerous domains of business research, including corporate strategy, electronic commerce, finance, human resources, and marketing (Backhaus et al., 2011; Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2019). Evaluations via bibliometrics aid authors to identify the research fields' intellectual structure, influential papers, and research clusters (Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017; Nova-Reyes et al., 2020). They also help avoid drawbacks of conventional methods, such as narrow scope or selection bias of an individual researcher (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Fouroudi et al., 2020). With this in mind, this study uses bibliometrics to systematically review the research that has been published on the topic of service recovery.

## 2.1 | Search strategy

Scopus was used to collect data for this study, as it is the leading multidisciplinary database of scientific publications (Norris & Oppenheim, 2007). It offers more than six times as many articles as Web of Science (Comerio & Strozzi, 2018), and numerous recent Bibliometric and Scientometric have utilized Scopus database for this purpose (e.g., Baas et al., 2020; Baumgartner, 2010; Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021; Surulinathi et al., 2020), thereby attesting its utility for the purpose (Durán-Sánchez et al., 2019; Guerrero-Baena et al., 2015). As citation data is critical for quality and impacting studies, Scopus is considered more comprehensive than Web of Science as it also provides higher citation counts across all disciplines (Lasda Bergman, 2012).

For a multidisciplinary investigation of service recovery domain, a wide-ranging search approach that maximizes coverage of relevant papers is essential. The sample consists of all publications that embraces the keywords "service recover\*" in either the article title, abstract, or keywords (Ballew, 2009; Blummer & Kenton, 2014). From the original search, we received 1677 documents. Non-English articles, editorials, conference papers, brief surveys, retracted articles, and book chapters were then excluded using the exclusion criteria. This exercise decreased the number of publications to 1329.

An examination of retrieved publications over time revealed that 88% of the refereed journal articles were published after 2005 (see Figure 1). To yield the largest sample size, limit any potential complications that may arise from prior years' unsystematic coverage (Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017), and ensure that the findings were still relevant in light of recent advances in the field, research papers published in 2005 and later were analyzed. The multidisciplinary inquiry into the service recovery sector calls for a comprehensive search strategy that thoroughly covers all relevant publications in the field. Therefore, the sample included Business, Management, Finance, Economics, Econometrics, Accounting, Decision Sciences, Psychology, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, and other Multidisciplinary subjects as categorized by Scopus database (data retrieved December 29, 2021). Our attention on publications on a wider scale related to service recovery field from 2005 to 2021 resulted in 1020 documents, from 1027 authors, published in 163 journals, with 24,741 cited references and 2859 retrieved keywords. The cited references included publications of all years, not just 2005–2021 (Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017).

## 2.2 | Methodology

This study utilizes a document co-citation analysis of 24,741 legitimate references from our sample to identify most influential journals, major publications, and their network-wide influence, as well as the methodological profile of service recovery domain and major thematic clusters. CiteSpace version 5.8.R3 was used for bibliometric analysis. The software is well recognized in academic literature, free to use, and receives updates on a regular basis (Chen & Shin, 2021; Kim & Chen, 2015). In addition to descriptive statistics such as the number of citations an individual study receives, CiteSpace supports network analytic approaches that enable visualization of the links between the selected publications (Chen, 2006). Individual papers in the network are referred to as "nodes," while the connection between two nodes is referred to as a "link" (Cui et al., 2018). To enhance the networks' explicability and concentration on the most important articles threshold parameters were established to include only those articles that have at least three citations, three cocitations, and a cocitation cosine coefficient value of 20. Pathfinder pruning algorithm was used on the merged networks. This enabled us to concentrate on the

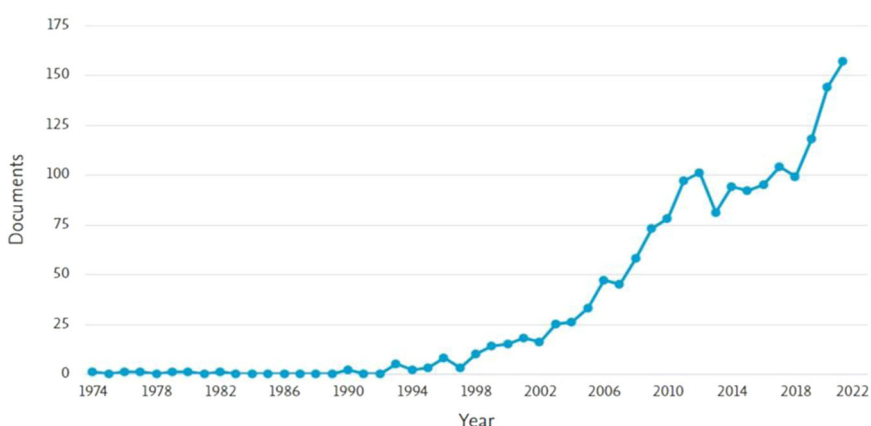


FIGURE 1 Year-wise publication count.

most significant relationships between publications and increase the clarity of the final network structure. The reductions resulted in a conclusive network consisting of 144 nodes and 326 linkages.

### 2.2.1 | Analysis of the sample

According to the Scopus databases' categorization, most active study areas in the service recovery domain are Business, Management and Accounting (892 publications), Social Sciences (230), Economics, Econometrics and Finance (111), Decision Sciences (73), Psychology (42), and Arts and Humanities (33). Figure 2 illustrates percentage-based classification of retrieved articles by their subject areas.

The key academic journals in the sample are *Journal of Marketing* (15), *Journal of Service Marketing* (14), *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (14), *Journal of Retailing* (9), *Journal of Services Marketing* (9), *Journal of Business Research* (8), *International Journal of Service Industry Management* (7), and *Journal of Consumer Research* (5).

The top-rated journals identified by the number of cumulative citations are *Journal of Services Marketing* (2581), *Journal of Service Research* (2050), *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (1864), *Journal of Business Research* (1705), *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (866), *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (836), *Tourism Management* (815), *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* (739), *Service Industries Journal* (687), *Journal of Retailing* (648), *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* (528), *Managing Service Quality* (521), and *European Journal of Marketing* (510). Additionally, the analysis reveals that economics, social psychology, and marketing journals are also extensively cited in

service recovery, indicating their significant contribution to the theoretical underpinnings of service recovery research.

Finally, Figure 3 represents the nations that have made the most prolific contributions to the field of service recovery. The major contribution in terms of articles is from United States (325), with no other country even crossing the 100 articles count.

## 3 | REVIEW OF KEY PUBLICATIONS

The study undertakes a systematic content analysis of the networks' 144 core nodes to identify their method of investigation and their contribution to the service recovery domain. For method classification purposes, the studies are classified into five distinct categories. The first category is of conceptual studies where contributions are largely theoretical in nature and do not rely on data (Yadav, 2010). Conceptual articles present theoretical synthesis or direct attention to under-researched yet substantial domains. The second category is of qualitative studies, which include ethnographic field studies, focus groups, and interviews that aid in the formulation or validation of theories (Tenny et al., 2017). The third category includes quantitative empirical studies which are concerned with the systematic investigation of service recovery (Watson, 2015), using statistical or numerical analysis using secondary data or survey data. The fourth category comprises of experimental research (Mattila et al., 2020). It is used to test hypotheses and identify causal relationships. The fifth category is of mixed method studies, which employ both quantitative and qualitative approaches successively in a single manuscript (Harrison et al., 2020).

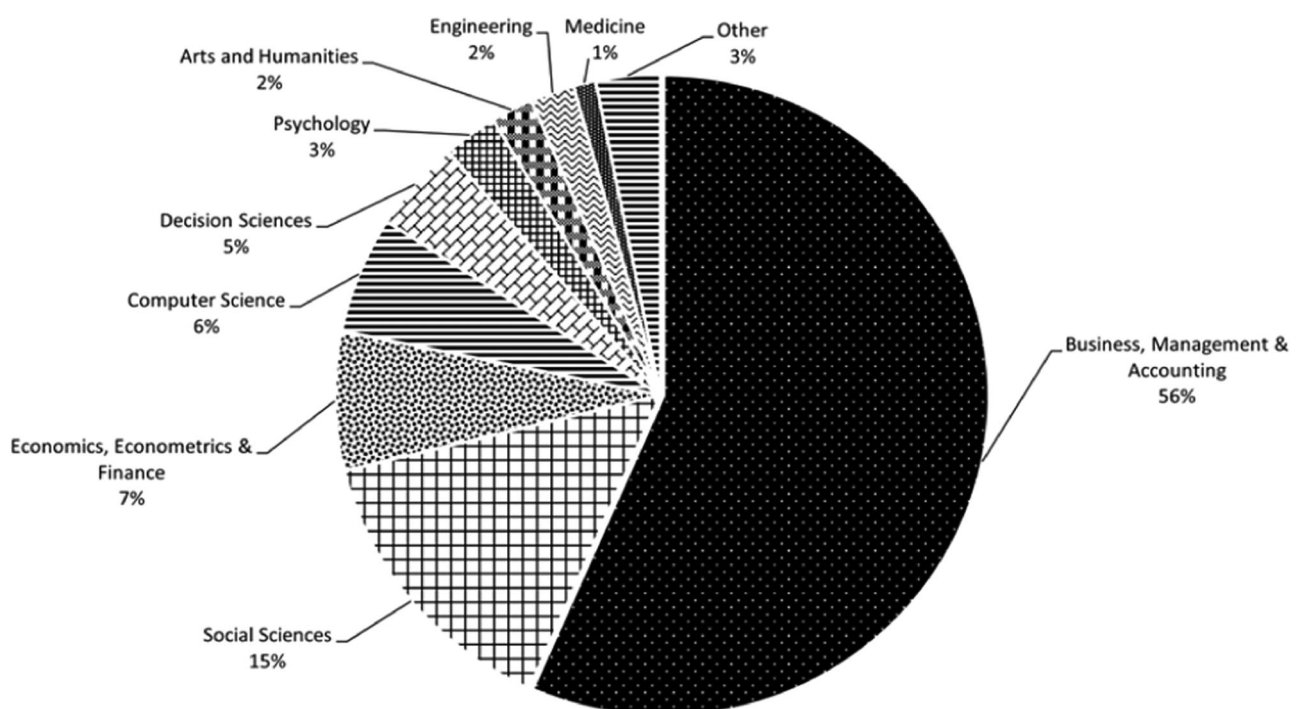
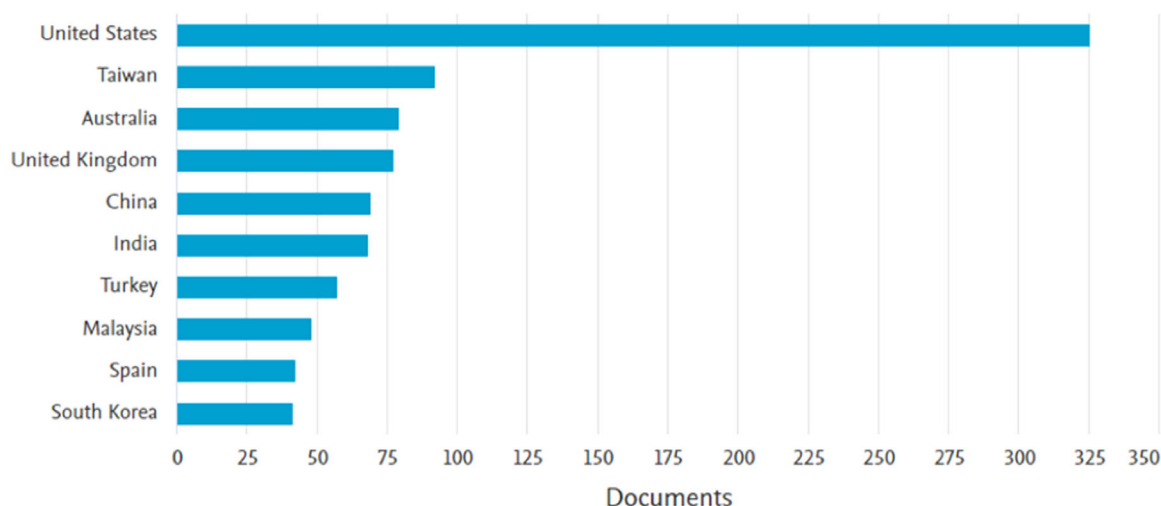


FIGURE 2 Documents by subject area.



**FIGURE 3** Most prolific countries affiliated to service recovery.

Discounting books from the analysis, the remaining 137 publications are predominantly quantitative (52 publications) followed by experimental (37), conceptual (14), and qualitative (9) studies. Examining the evolution through time (Table 1), a consistent growth in the quantity of articles and a change in the method of contributions is observed. The quantitative contributions have increased consistently, while the experimental studies have become increasingly relevant in the past few years. This is because experiments allow service researchers to investigate cause-and-effect relationships and thus provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2021). However, conceptual studies are on decline in the service recovery domain. It is not surprising as the scarcity of conceptual articles reflects a general decline in the quantity of conceptual papers produced in the discipline of marketing as a whole (Yadav, 2010).

The following section looks at structural and temporal properties of the publications. The structural properties include betweenness centrality which demonstrates the long-term relevance of a study in an area, whereas the temporal properties include citation burst which emphasizes its value across a certain period (Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017). Table 2 lists the top 25 most cited studies ranked by their citation frequency while Figure 4 graphically showcases the structural characteristics of the citation network.

### 3.1 | Influential contributions in service recovery domain (publications with high citation count)

To gauge a document's significance, researchers typically look at its citations (Garfield, 1979). Citespace refers to highly cited nodes as "landmark nodes" as they reflect major intellectual breakthroughs in their field of study (Chen, 2004). Although it is easier for old papers to accumulate a large number of total citations, some of the most frequently cited publications have recently been published, indicating their importance and rapid acceptance within the scholarly community of service recovery (Ioannidis et al., 2022).

**TABLE 1** Methods in service recovery research over time.

Nature of study	Years 1980–2000	Years 2001–2021	Total	Overall (%)
Quantitative	22	30	52	43.0
Qualitative	6	3	9	7.5
Mixed Methods	2	6	8	6.5
Experimental	9	28	37	30.8
Conceptual	9	5	14	11.7

Smith et al.'s (1999) (108 citations) study which discusses several companies' successful service recovery strategies, was the most referenced research of the network. The second most cited paper was Tax et al.'s (1998) (68), wherein a number of strategies to effectively handle customer complaints are discussed. The third most cited paper is that of Bitner et al.'s (1990) (62), which highlights the many actions of frontline personnel that impact patrons' perceptions of individual service experiences as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Among the other most cited works are McCollough (1995) (42) examination of the nature and causes of consumer satisfaction in the aftermath of service recovery and Goodwin and Ross's (1992) (28) sociological perspective on how consumers' attitudes to service failures are impacted by their sense of procedural and interactional fairness.

### 3.2 | Structural properties of prominent publications in service recovery (betweenness centrality)

Betweenness centrality measures the extent to which a node is connected to one or more groups of nodes in the network. The centrality scores are standardized between intervals [0,1], with

S. No	Rank reference	Frequency	Centrality	Burst	Cluster
1	Smith et al. (1999)	108	0.08	6.44	7
2	Tax et al. (1998)	68	0.52	8.34	7
3	Bitner et al. (1990)	62	0.14	6.92	4
4	McCollough et al. (2000)	42	0.14	10.82	11
5	Goodwin and Ross (1992)	28	0.66	3.23	2
6	McColl-Kennedy and Sparks (2003)	26	0.62	-	6
7	Bitner et al. (1990)	26	0.11	-	1
8	Anderson and Gerbing (1988)	25	0.00	-	6
9	Davidow (2003)	24	0.14	-	7
10	Boshoff (1997)	23	0.69	-	2
11	Patterson et al. (2006)	19	0.13	3.23	5
12	Oliver (1997)	19	0.12	3.71	4
13	Wirtz and Mattila (2004)	19	0.26	3.44	5
14	Hess et al. (2003)	18	0.06	4.38	11
15	Maxham and Netemeyer (2002b)	18	0.06	5.19	5
16	Fornell and Larcker (1981)	18	0.08	-	4
17	Spreng et al. (1995)	18	0.09	-	9
18	Wong (2004)	17	0.08	-	4
19	Gronroos (1988)	16	0.00	4.95	4
20	Zeithaml et al. (1996)	14	0.00	-	7
21	Keaveney (1995)	13	0.00	-	4
22	Folkes (1984)	13	0.00	-	1
23	Kelley et al. (1993)	13	0.19	3.70	2
24	Mattila and Patterson (2004a)	13	0.03	4.90	5
25	Homburg and Fürst (2005)	13	0.28	4.26	7

**TABLE 2** Top 25 references with the highest citation frequency.

value closer to 1 indicating high centrality score. High betweenness centrality reflects intellectual shifts and prominent publications (Chen, 2006; Freeman, 1978). Citespace highlights these nodes with purple trims, thickness of which indicates strength of betweenness centrality. Our citation network highlights Boshoff (1997) publication with the highest betweenness centrality score of 0.69 and is thus considered seminal in the discipline. The paper draws on a variety of research streams in social psychology, economics, and marketing to examine several factors associated with effective service recovery. Goodwin and Ross's (1992) study has the second highest centrality score of 0.66 and has often been cocited in articles from a wide range of clusters that relate research on service quality research (Mattila & Patterson, 2004; Zeithaml et al., 1996), fairness theory (McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003) and customer satisfaction (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). McColl-Kennedy and Sparks's (2003) article has the third highest centrality score 0.62 and integrates the research

on consumer responses to service failures (Goodwin & Ross, 1992) and customer satisfaction enhancement (Bitner et al., 1990).

### 3.3 | Temporal properties of trending publications in service recovery (citation burst)

When there is a spike in the number of references, it is known as citation burst (Chen, 2014). Figure 5 illustrates the articles with the strongest citation burst arranged in chronological order.

Early in the history of service recovery studies, researchers primarily focused on developing theory-driven service recovery models to improve customers' satisfaction following service failures (Bitner et al., 1990, burst strength 6.43; Goodwin & Ross, 1992, burst strength 5.82). It is worth mentioning that Kelly et al.'s (1993, p. 3.77), historical examination of several varieties of service breakdowns and efficacies of recovery



**FIGURE 4** Citation network diagram based on document cocitation analysis.

strategies has played a crucial role in the domain development. In the years from 2010 to 2012, consumer behavior and customer satisfaction publications reigned, with articles by Mattila (2004, p. 5.39), Maxham and Netemeyer (2002a, p. 4.78), and Oliver (1997, p. 5.14) amongst others that showcased significant surges in citations. In recent years, the focus of trending research has shifted to include empirical investigations of most constructive techniques to increase customer satisfaction with optimum service recovery systems (such as of McCollough et al., 2000, p. 11.06; Michel et al., 2009, p. 4.18; Smith et al., 1999, p. 5.86; Tax et al., 1998, p. 9.16).

#### 4 | COCITATION NETWORK AND RESEARCH CLUSTERS

To identify influential themes of service recovery research, cluster analysis is used in this study by analyzing the cocitation patterns of the sampled papers. The clustering procedure maximizes the modularity of the network by identifying clusters within cited references using a smart local moving algorithm for community detection (Waltman & van Eck, 2013). Modularity is a critical metric at the global network level as it refers to the ease with which a

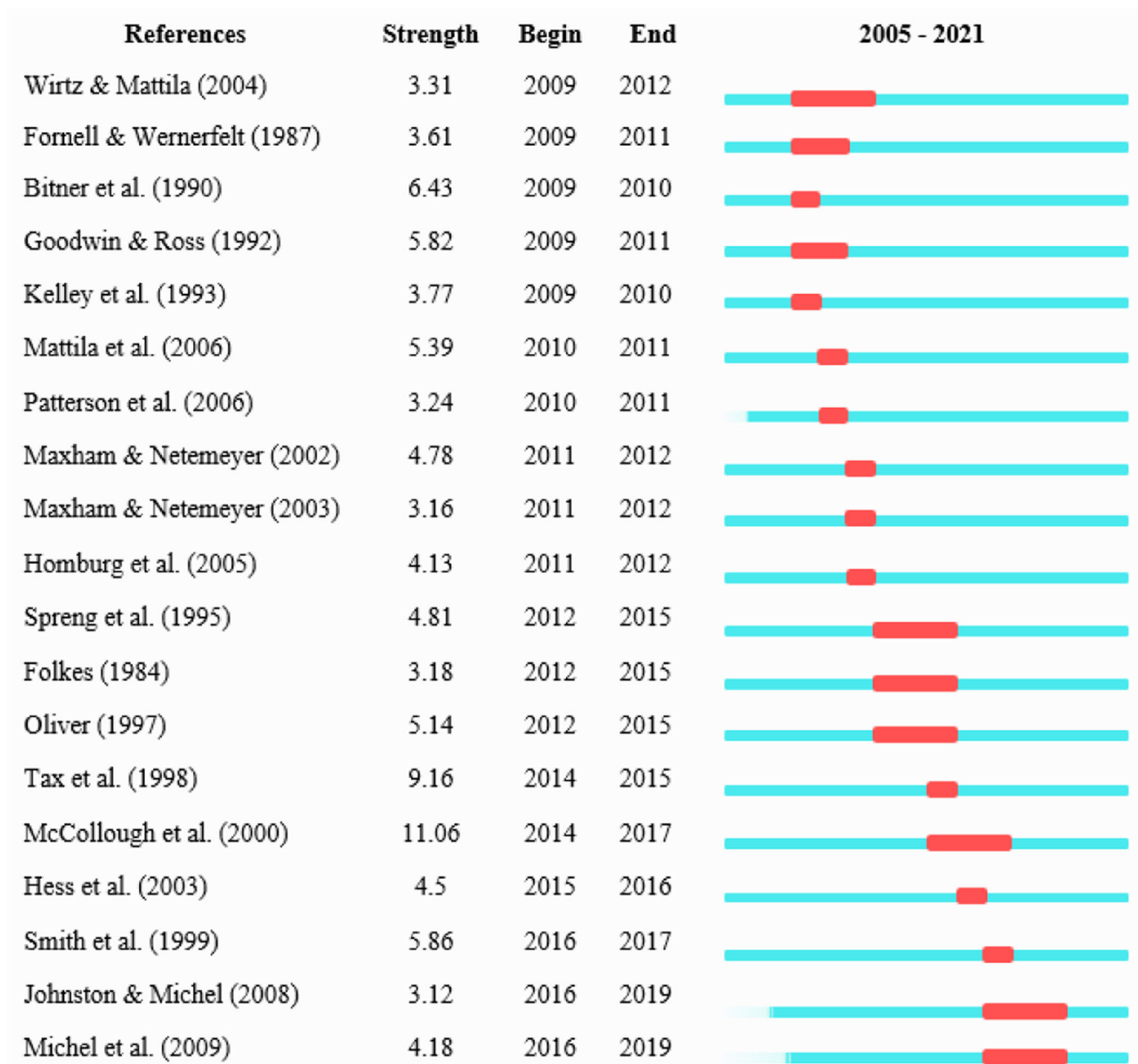


FIGURE 5 Top 19 references with the strongest citation bursts.

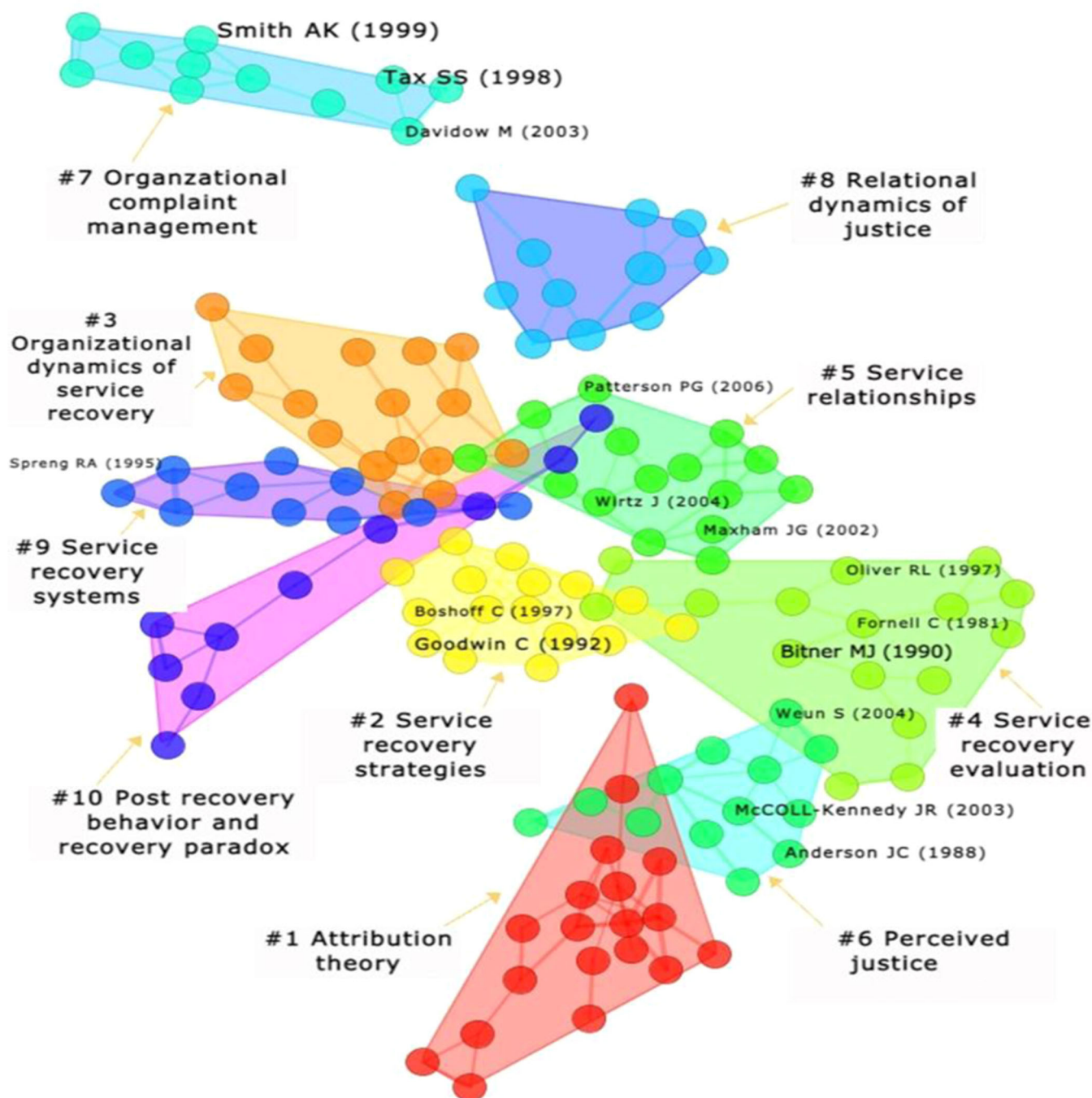
network may be partitioned into homogenous clusters. Our analysis identifies 10 major clusters within the network, as shown in Figure 6 and listed in Table 3. The size of a cluster is proportional to the total number of publications contained within the cluster.

Cluster analysis demonstrate that Attribution theory (18 cluster members) and service recovery strategies (16 cluster members) are the two largest clusters of the list. Organizational dynamics of service recovery (cluster 3) is the newest cluster with the mean publication year of 2005, while service recovery evaluation (cluster 4) happens to be the oldest cluster with the mean publication year of 1995. The silhouette value is an indicator of the cluster solution's validity. All major clusters have a silhouette score greater than 0.85, indicating that the cluster solution is of high quality, indicating robust and

meaningful results (Gurzki & Woisetschlager, 2017; Wei et al., 2015). The following section provides an overview of the identified ten thematic clusters of service recovery domain.

#### 4.1 | Cluster 1: Attribution theory

Attribution theory emerged as the largest cluster, with 18 cluster members, a silhouette value of 0.93, and an average publication year of 1996. This cluster predominantly focuses on the attribution theory, or the study of how people make causal inferences of a poor service experience, and how those interpretations influence their evaluations and behaviors (Weiner, 2000). Stability, controllability,



**FIGURE 6** Cluster view of citation network.

and locus of causation are the three basic assessments that people typically use to categorize assumed causes. The degree to which people think an event's cause is transient rather than permanent is referred to as stability attributions (Choi & Mattila, 2008). Attributions of controllability involve the notion that an event could have been averted (Taylor, 1994). The degree to which people think they or another party was responsible for an event is known as the locus of causation (Weiner, 2000). This theory has been widely adopted by marketing academics, particularly in the field of service failure and recovery. Folkes et al. (1987) examined the influence of service

failure attributions on customers' behavioral intentions, namely, complaint intentions, loyalty, and negative word-of-mouth. When customers believe that service failure could have been prevented, they express less loyalty, intend to file more complaints, and disseminate more negative word-of-mouth. Such effects of attribution on consumer behavior were consistent with the other findings by researchers like Folkes (1984), Maxham and Netemeyer (2002a), and Weiner (2000). Moreover, Bitner et al. (1990) identified additional variables such as physical surroundings, employee explanation, and compensation that influence customers' perceptions of service failure

TABLE 3 Overview of clusters.

Cluster no.	Cluster size	Silhouette	Mean year	Label	Cited authors and their citation count in clusters
1	18	0.932	1996	Attribution theory	Bitner et al. (1990, 26 cit); Folkes (1984, 13 cit); Liao (2007, 10 cit); Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 7 cit); Smith et al. (1999, 7 cit); Walster et al. (1973, 6 cit); Joireman et al. (2013, 4 cit); Maxham & Netemeyer (2002a, 5 cit); Schoefer and Ennew (2005, 4 cit); McCullough et al. (1998, 4 cit); Conlon and Murray (1996, 4 cit); Folkes et al. (1987, 4 cit); del Río-Lanza et al. (2009, 3 cit); Thibaut and Walker (1975, 3 cit); Choi and Mattila (2008, 3 cit); Weiner (2000, 3 cit); Bougie et al. (2003, 3 cit); Taylor (1994, 3 cit)
2	16	0.888	1998	Service recovery strategies	Goodwin and Ross (1992, 28 cit); Boshoff (1997, 23 cit); Kelley et al. (1993, 13 cit); Webster and Sundaram (1998, 11 cit); Blodgett et al. (1997, 9 cit); Bagozzi et al. (1999, 6 cit); Chan and Wan (2008, 6 cit); Mattila (2001, 6 cit); Hoffman et al. (1995, 4 cit); Maxham and Netemeyer (2002b, 4 cit); Singh (1988, 3 cit); Tax et al. (1998, 3 cit); Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005, 3 cit); Dong et al. (2008, 3 cit); Hair et al. (1998, 3 cit); Liljander and Strandvik (1997, 3 cit)
3	16	0.965	2005	Organizational dynamics of service recovery	Mittal et al. (2008, 12 cit); Hart et al. (1990, 9 cit); Johnston and Michel (2008, 9 cit); Van Vaerenbergh and Orsingher (2016, 8 cit); Smith and Karwan (2010, 8 cit); Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005, 5 cit); Michel (2001, 5 cit); Van Vaerenbergh et al. (2014, 4 cit); Xie and Peng (2009, 4 cit); Kelley and Davis (1994, 4 cit); Craighead et al. (2009, 3 cit); Johnston and Fern (1999, 3 cit); Lewis and McCann (2004, 3 cit); Babakus et al. (2003, 3 cit); Karande et al. (2007, 3 cit); Prasongsukam and Patterson (2012, 3 cit)
4	15	0.872	1995	Service recovery evaluation	Bitner et al. (1990, 62 cit); Oliver (1997, 19 cit); Fornell and Larcker (1981, 18 cit); Wong (2004, 17 cit); Gronroos (1988, 16 cit); Keaveney (1995, 13 cit); Oliver and Swan (1989, 10 cit); Seiders and Berry (1998, 6 cit); Bitner et al. (1994, 5 cit); Orsingher et al. (2009, 4 cit); Bagozzi and Yi (1988, 3 cit); Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008, 3 cit); Gyung Kim et al. (2010, 3 cit); Oliver and DeSarbo (1988, 3 cit); Maxham (2001, 3 cit)
5	15	0.955	2001	Service relationships	Patterson et al. (2006, 19 cit); Wirtz and Mattila (2004, 19 cit); Maxham and Netemeyer (2002b, 18 cit); Mattila and Patterson (2004, 13 cit); Grewal et al. (2008, 9 cit); Mattila and Patterson (2004b, 7 cit); de Ruyter and Wetzels (2000, 7 cit); Oliver (1980, 4 cit); Ganesan (1994, 3 cit); Berry (1995, 3 cit); Bendapudi and Berry (1997, 3 cit); Bonifield and Cole (2008, 3 cit); Mittal et al. (2008, 3 cit); Sajtos et al. (2010, 3 cit); Jones et al. (2000, 3 cit)
6	13	0.942	2001	Perceived Justice	McColl-Kennedy and Sparks (2003, 26 cit); Anderson and Gerbing (1988, 25 cit); Ha and Jang (2009, 12 cit); Smith and Bolton (1998, 11 cit); Choi and Choi (2014, 6 cit); Oliver and Swan (1989, 5 cit); Thibaut and Walker (1975, 5 cit); Gelbrich (2010, 3 cit); Blodgett et al. (1997, 3 cit); Wen and Geng-qing Chi (2013, 3 cit); Swanson and Hsu (2011, 3 cit); Bejou and Palmer (1998, 3 cit); Tsarenko and Strizhakova (2013, 3 cit)
7	11	0.977	2000	Organizational complaint management	Smith et al. (1999, 108 cit); Tax et al. (1998, 68 cit); Davidow (2003, 24 cit); Zeithaml et al. (1996, 14 cit); Homburg and Furst (2005, 13 cit); Maxham and Netemeyer (2003, 10 cit); Fornell and Wernerfelt (1987, 8 cit); Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001, 7 cit); Gelbrich and Roschk (2011, 6 cit); Morgan and Hunt (1994, 3 cit); DeWitt et al. (2008, 3 cit)
8	10	0.968	2002	Relational dynamics of justice	Ok et al. (2005, 8 cit); DeWitt et al. (2008, 5 cit); Kim et al. (2009, 4 cit); Mattila and Cranage (2005, 4 cit); Karatepe (2006, 3 cit); Smith and Bolton (2002, 3 cit); Hair (2006, 3 cit); Adams (1963, 3 cit); Wirtz and Mattila (2004, 3 cit); del Río Lanza et al. (2009, 3 cit)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Cluster no.	Cluster size	Silhouette	Mean year	Label	Cited authors and their citation count in clusters
9	10	0.926	1996	Service recovery systems	Spreng et al. (1995, 18 cit); Tax and Brown (1998, 12 cit); Hart et al. (1990, 9 cit); Nunnally (1978, 4 cit); De Matos et al. (2007, 4 cit) Reichheld and Sasser (1990, 3 cit); Boshoff and Allen (2000, 3 cit); Podsakoff et al. (2003, 3 cit); Nunnally (1994, 3 cit); Van Vaerenbergh et al. (2012, 3 cit)
10	10	0.925	2002	Post recovery behavior and recovery paradox	Wallin Andreassen (2000, 12 cit); Smith and Bolton (2002, 9 cit); Harris et al. (2006, 6 cit); Mittal et al. (2008, 5 cit); Maxham and Netemeyer (2002a, 4 cit); Levesque and McDougall (2009, 4 cit); Miller et al. (2000, 4 cit); Andreassen (2001, 4 cit); Swanson and Kelley (2001, 3 cit); McCollough et al. (2000, 3 cit)

causes. The majority of the studies in this cluster used empirical surveys and had a consumer behavior focus. This helps researchers to gain insights into consumers' perceptions and intentions relative to the service recovery.

## 4.2 | Cluster 2: Service recovery strategies

The cluster has 16 members, a mean publication year of 1998, and a silhouette score of 0.89. Service providers have a variety of ways to handle service failures with some strategies better suited than others to meet specific objectives such as assuring customer satisfaction, preserving loyalty, and retaining clienteles. Hoffman et al. (1995) illustrate the fundamental role of fair treatment in retaining customers. While customers are frequently concerned with outcomes such as rebates, repairs, and replacements, they are also impacted by the experience of a fair recovery processes and favorable dealing with employees. Miller et al. (2000) have distinguished between two types of responses: psychological and tangible. Psychological restitution entails apology and empathy (typically through sincerity), whereas tangible service recovery encompasses both fair fixing and value-added atonement. Kelley et al. (1993) proposed a much broader array of strategies that include apology, discount, reimbursement, repair, intervention by employee/management, additional repairs, and replacements to ensure customers' need for justice are met. Another critical method for resolving service failures is to offer adequate opportunity for consumers to voice their complaints and problems to the service personnel (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). When consumers get the opportunity to be heard, significant shifts in attitude may occur, which increases the fairness perception.

Consumer expectations of service recovery also depend on multiple factors. For example, consumers anticipate varying levels of reimbursement or compensation based on the severity of service breakdown (Mattila, 2001). To an irritated consumer simply a fair fix would suffice, however, for a customer who felt victimized, value-added compensation may be required. Similarly, attitudes regarding empowerment, consumption criticality, and monetary rebates, will vary between individuals due to the norms that constitute their national culture (Chan & Wan, 2008). To address variations in expectations, Boshoff (1997) advocates for the need to empower frontline personnel so they may adopt the appropriate recovery approach in a timely fashion. Prompt communication coupled with managerial intervention and complimentary services can significantly mitigate aggrieved customers' negative emotions such as perceived betrayal, anger, and revenge (Hoffman et al., 1995). Also, it discourages consumers from spreading unfavorable word-of-mouth. (Webster & Sundaram, 1998).

## 4.3 | Cluster 3: Organizational dynamics of service recovery

This cluster appeared with 16 members, a silhouette value of 0.96, and 2005 as the average publication year, making it the most recent cluster in the network. The main emphasis of this cluster is the

analysis of service recovery processes and systems at organizational level. For positive feedback and consumer retention, organizations need to establish effective recovery systems (Lewis & McCann, 2004; Michel, 2001; Prasongsukarn & Patterson, 2012; Xie & Peng, 2009).

Previous studies have identified employee performance and behavior as one of the most essential aspects of a well-managed recovery system. Employee empowerment (giving front-line employees authority to manage complaints) and employee trainings to handle dissatisfied customers were found to be the crucial elements to effectively handle consumer complaints (Babakus et al., 2003). When employees are offered greater job resources, they are less vulnerable to burnout and remain more engaged. This boosts their performance. Van Vaerenbergh and Orsingher (2016) introduce an integrated framework to illustrate the dynamics of service recovery procedures. They suggest that firms should adopt human resource management techniques for service recovery, such as offering trainings, adopting incentive systems, and implementing employee performance evaluations to motivate their workers.

Several studies also emphasize collecting customer complaint information to design successful recovery procedures. In general, consumers are more prone to share their emotions, such as anger, frustration, and stress with the firm. Therefore, having a thorough understanding of failure causes is advantageous for the service providers (Karande et al., 2007; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014). Smith and Karwan (2010) demonstrate that firms spend differently in their recovery systems based on the value they give to consumer complaints. While some businesses have a robust recovery mechanism, others place less focus on building such systems and do not seem to adequately utilize these complaints to improve their failed procedures. Consequently, they are unable to support their employees dealing with dissatisfied clients (Michel et al., 2009). Furthermore, Johnston and Michel (2008) and Craighead et al. (2009) suggest that storing complaint data, monitoring service failures, evaluating costs, and determining the optimal recovery strategy are needed to cope with different types of failure. Thus, the rich insights obtained from the empirical and conceptual studies of this cluster signifies the necessity of establishing systematic service recovery policies and procedures at the organizational level.

#### 4.4 | Cluster 4: Service recovery evaluation

This cluster has a total of 15 members, silhouette value of 0.872 and a mean publication year of 1995, making it the oldest cluster in the network. The cluster focuses on factors that directly or indirectly influence service recovery evaluations. This is generally defined by equity theory as "how customers assess the recovery attempts made by service representatives to resolve a problem." This theory is applicable to circumstances involving trade and explains the origins of service recovery evaluation (Wong, 2004). Equity theory balances customer investments/losses with the benefits/rewards they receive during service recovery (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). Several researchers assert that consumers' evaluation of satisfaction and fair

treatment are highly contingent on their belief that justice has been served (Gyung Kim et al., 2010; Orsingher et al., 2009; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008; Seiders & Berry, 1998). Prior studies indicate that interactional justice (interpersonal treatment) is the most influential factor in improving recovery evaluations (Orsingher et al., 2009; Seiders & Berry, 1998), therefore, service representatives play crucial role in service interactions as consumers primarily base their assessment on service employees' conduct. Another firm-controlled element that affects postrecovery evaluation is the recovery strategies that are deployed (Gyung Kim et al., 2010). Poor strategies aggravate customers' already negative perception of service breakdown (Keaveney, 1995), leading to double deviation scenario (Bitner et al., 1990).

Studies also highlight customer-specific factors such customer emotions and expectations that influence their postrecovery evaluations. Emotional reactions such as irritability, anger, or frustration have been shown to strongly impact service ratings (Wong, 2004). Positive emotional states are associated with more favorable appraisals than negative emotional states (Gyung Kim et al., 2010; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Maxham (2001) declared client expectations as another evaluation determinant, claiming that consumer satisfaction and repurchase intention can be severely affected when consumer expectations are not met. The discrepancy between customer expectations and delivered service has a considerable impact on customer evaluation and loyalty (Bitner et al., 1990; Gronroos, 1988).

Finally, some studies also emphasize the impact of failure severity on recovery evaluation. High severity increases dissatisfaction which may require additional recovery efforts to recuperate customer satisfaction (Wong, 2004). Under extreme failure circumstances where clients perceive significant wastage of time, comfort and cost, organization's recovery efforts would need to include complimentary services with fair compensation and sincere apology (Bitner et al., 1990). Thus, the collective theoretical and practical findings of this cluster reveal that a favorable customer evaluation is a result of a combination of firm-controlled, consumer-dependent, and failure severity, alluding to the multi-dimensional nature of service recovery evaluations.

#### 4.5 | Cluster 5: Service relationships

This cluster has 15 members, an average publication year of 2001, and a silhouette value of 0.955. This cluster primarily focusses on the impact of service recovery on customer-firm or buyer-seller relationship. Relationship marketing emphasizes the significance of trust and commitment in exchange relationships, and how this trust can be beneficial to foster customer loyalty (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997; Sajtos et al., 2010). However, many companies do not realize the sustainable comparative edge that can be acquired through stronger customer-firm relationships (Ganesan, 1994). Customers who have long-term relationships with the firm are more tolerant towards service failures and reflect greater satisfaction with

complaint resolution (Berry, 1995; de Ruyter & Wetzels, 2000). Sajtó et al. (2010) demonstrate that the impact of failure severity, a crucial component that affects postrecovery evaluations, is minimal on customer loyalty and customer value, indicating that corporate image and trust mitigates the detrimental consequences of service failure severity on interpersonal relationships. Ganesan (1994) in his comprehensive study on vendor-retailer relationship, illustrates that a retailer's dependency on the vendor has a favorable impact on retailer's long-term orientation towards vendor. Further, the author states that if trust exists between vendor and retailer, the risk of avaricious acts in long-term relationships can be eliminated. Moreover, notable authors have underlined the significance of compensation in preserving relationships (Bonifield & Cole, 2008; Grewal et al., 2008; Mattila & Patterson, 2004; de Ruyter & Wetzels, 2000; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Transaction-based companies can recover successfully by offering fair compensation which fosters long-lasting loyalty (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002b). Robust and long-term interpersonal relationships have also been proven to enhance consumers' propensity to repurchase (Jones et al., 2000). Thus, the cumulative findings and implications of this cluster suggest that organizations should strive to preserve their relational bond with the customers, as it generates sustainable advantage for the organization and mitigates the detrimental effects of service failures.

#### 4.6 | Cluster 6: Perceived justice

This cluster comprises 13 members, silhouette value of 0.942, and its average publication year is 2001. Within the realms of service recovery research, the significance of perceived justice in influencing the success of service recovery measures has been repeatedly emphasized (Blodgett et al., 1997; Ha & Jang, 2009; McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003). This theoretical approach examines how fair consumers perceive the service recovery effort to be, and how consumers become more satisfied when the perceived justice levels elevate.

According to Blodgett et al. (1997), justice theory is a three-dimensional concept of procedural, distributive, and interactional justice (McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003). Distributive justice deals with perception regarding principles and policies that govern how recovery choices are made (Smith et al., 1998). Interactional justice focusses on how the consumer is dealt with through-out the recovery process (Wen & Geng-qing Chi, 2013). While procedural justice is the psychological influence of the processes followed on the fairness perceptions of an individual (e.g., whether customers are given opportunity to vocalize their concerns; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Firm's service recovery efforts influence each of these three aspects of justice. For instance, the fairness perceptions of consumer after apology and compensation affects distributive justice, whereas procedural justice is influenced when cognitive control is offered to consumers by explaining circumstances that led to the service breakdown. Finally, interactional justice is dependent on the manner (kindness, respectfulness, politeness) in which service provider deals

with customers throughout the recovery process. Generally, research indicates a correlation between greater levels of recovery satisfaction and increased level of perceived justice.

It is also recognized that the fairness perception also affects positive and negative consumer emotions. According to Gelbrich (2010) and Choi and Choi (2014), peoples' perception about the fairness of service recovery efforts has an impact on their emotional state (such as anger, disillusionment, helplessness, pleasure, and joy), which consequently influences their coping response(s), complaints, and negative word-of-mouth. Similarly, Tsarenko and Strizhakova (2013) and Wen and Geng-qing Chi (2013) suggest that an individuals' perception of justice affects their emotional state, which then ultimately affects their behavioral intentions.

#### 4.7 | Cluster 7: Organizational complaint management

The cluster comprises 11 members, silhouette value of 0.977 and average publication year of 2000. It has significant managerial emphasis, since the articles contained in this cluster focus extensively on complaint management by the organization. Effective complaint handling is critical to a business's long-term success in developing customer relations (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It acts both as a real endeavor to rectify the shortcomings and a chance for the business to reinforce complainants' repurchase intentions (Homburg & Fürst, 2005; Tax et al., 1998). Several complaint recovery frameworks have been theorized. For instance, Smith et al. (1999) examined satisfaction as a dependent variable, while concentrating on a subset of organizational response alternatives. The research framework presented by Davidow (2003) provides a comprehensive analysis of why consumers act in a certain manner after receiving a certain response from an organization. The author delineates six aspects of managerial reactions to customer complaints including reimbursement, apology, facilitation, timeliness, responsiveness, and credibility. Moreover, empirical studies by Maxham and Netemeyer (2003), Smith et al. (1999) and Tax et al. (1998) revealed that perceived justice mediates the relationship between organizational responses and complainant's subsequent satisfaction, indicating that consumers who perceive that an organization responded fairly to their complaint, reflect higher levels of postcomplaint satisfaction. A meta-analysis conducted by Gelbrich and Roschk (2011), indicates that organizational response involving reimbursement and pleasing staff conduct has more positive effect on complaint-handling satisfaction. A generous complaint management system induces favorable word-of-mouth intentions (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987). Furthermore, Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001) mentioned that most complaint management tasks must be undertaken by frontline personnel who are directly in contact with complainants. Other effective complaint-handling strategies found in the literature focus on increasing the speed with which a problem is identified and resolved, as well as empowering frontline employees to offer immediate and appropriate form of compensation as per their

judgement. In addition to enhancing consumer satisfaction, successful complaint handling strategies may also benefit the firm. A model proposed by Fornell and Wernerfelt (1987) illustrates that an excellent complaint management not only raises market share but also minimizes the cost of offensive marketing (e.g., advertising). The empirical findings of this cluster summarize the significance of effective complaint management at the organizational level.

#### 4.8 | Cluster 8: Relational dynamics of justice

This cluster consists of 10 members, a mean publication year of 2002 and a silhouette score of 0.968. It uncovers the relative influence of each individual component of perceived justice (distributive, interactional, procedural) on relationship determinant factors such as commitment, trust, intention to return, and favorable word-of-mouth intentions (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Ok et al., 2005; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). DeWitt et al. (2008) examined the role of emotions and trust in mediating the relation between customer loyalty and perceived justice. The authors demonstrate that after a service recovery, perceived justice positively influenced customer trust and emotions, thereby restoring customer loyalty. Several empirical studies revealed that the majority of relationship-determining factors are not directly influenced by perceived justice; rather, there exist an indirect relation (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2009; Ok et al., 2005). Ok et al. (2005) discovered that all three dimensions of justice directly affected recovery satisfaction, which ultimately affected customer loyalty, trust, and behavioral intentions, with procedural justice having a greater impact on recovery satisfaction than distributive and interactional justice. Similarly, another study discovered that justice had a greater indirect influence on emotions as compared to other two justice dimensions, thereby increasing customer satisfaction (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009). Contrary to this argument, Karatepe (2006) investigated a comparable phenomenon in hotel setting and deduced that among all justice types, fair interpersonal treatment (interactional justice) contributes most to complaint handling satisfaction. Whereas Kim et al. (2009) adopted Adam's (1963) justice theory and argued that while all aspects of justice are important to obtain service recovery satisfaction, fair distributive treatment, such as compensation, refunds, and discount vouchers, appeared to be more enticing for hotel guests than other forms of justice. An additional element "informational justice" having significant influence has been recognized in Mattila and Cranage's (2005) study. The authors claim that consumers are less likely to be disappointed if they are timely informed about failures, such as delays. The authors further contend that tangible compensation combined with empathy, sincere apologies, and forewarning increases customer retention. Kim et al. (2009) suggest that all three aspects of justice should be considered while implementing systematic recovery procedures, since it is the combination all justice types that ultimately determines satisfaction and subsequent behavior. This implies that company employees and managers must consistently strive to deliver fair recovery

performance to establish long-term relationships based on trust and commitment (Smith & Bolton, 2002). To summarize, the insights presented in this cluster contribute to the understanding of each facet of justice in varied failure circumstances. Therefore, to maximize customer happiness and retention, it is vital to monitor every aspect of perceived justice at the organizational level.

#### 4.9 | Cluster 9: Service recovery systems

This cluster has 10 members, silhouette value of 0.926 with average publication year of 1996. Core theme of the cluster centers around the significance of effective service recovery systems. Every organization has its own recovery mechanism that is triggered in case of service breakdown. The purpose of an effective recovery system is to deliver services in a manner that satisfies customers' demands while retaining customers and building long-term loyalty. Tax and Brown (1998) illustrate the fundamental role of fair treatment in retaining customers. Although customers are frequently concerned with outcomes such as rebates, repairs, and replacements, they may as well be impacted by experiencing fair recovery processes and favorable dealing with service employees. According to Hart et al. (1990), unsuccessful service recovery attempts reinforce customer dissatisfaction. However, an effective recovery may transform agitated consumers into loyal ones; thus, the recovery encounter is the chance for service providers to retain consumers. A broader perspective is adopted by Reichheld and Sasser (1990) who devised the concept of zero-defection to improve customer retention. Authors claim that if firms realized how costly it is to lose a client, they would have designed more accurate procedures to retain their clients. They recommend that managers utilize defections to consistently improve the quality and value of the services they deliver.

Another critical element of recovery system is to offer consumers an adequate opportunity to share their concerns with the service representative. Organizations might increase their chances of keeping consumers by encouraging them to lodge complaints (Spreng et al., 1995). Tax and Brown (1998) suggest that businesses must build an extensive and systematic recovery system that enables unsatisfied consumers to file complaints and provides a fair resolution. Moreover, a thorough research conducted by Van Vaerenbergh et al. (2012) underlines the significance of communication in improving service recovery processes. The authors contend that communicating process improvements based on consumer complaints can increase customer satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and revisit intention. The insights from this cluster contribute to the better understanding of optimizing recovery mechanisms to systematically tackle service failures.

#### 4.10 | Cluster 10: Postrecovery behavior and service recovery paradox

This cluster is composed of 10 members, with a silhouette value of 0.925 and average publication year of 2002. The studies incorporated in the cluster focus on the significance of postrecovery

behavior and service recovery paradox. The collective empirical findings of this cluster illustrate that an effective service recovery strategy contributes to postrecovery satisfaction and favorable consumer behavior that is even more pronounced than in situation involving zero-error service. Studies demonstrate that post-recovery behavior such as loyalty, consumer retention, overall satisfaction, and word-of-mouth intention, are entirely contingent on effective recovery strategies (Harris et al., 2006; Levesque & McDougall, 2009; Miller et al., 2000; Smith & Bolton, 2002; Swanson & Kelley, 2001; Wallin Andreassen, 2000).

McCollough et al. (2000) and Mittal et al. (2008), concluded that service recovery paradox is the most effective strategy to boost postrecovery satisfaction. Marketing research defines service recovery paradox as the phenomena that occurs when customers' satisfaction with recovery exceeds the satisfaction they had before service failure. McCollough et al. (2000) investigates the influence of service recovery paradox by comparing postrecovery satisfaction with zero-error service. Their results imply that the effectiveness of service recovery promotes postrecovery satisfaction., however, this effect is least valuable in comparison with a reliable, first time zero-error service. Furthermore, they discovered that an effective recovery has a greater positive disconfirmation effect, potentially leading to satisfaction greater than or equal to zero-error service. Lending support to their research, Michel and Meuter's (2008) study also validates the existence of service recovery paradox claiming that a recovery process that exceeds customer expectations is more satisfying and induces more positive word-of-mouth than a service experience free of errors. Besides boosting satisfaction and revisit intention, service recovery paradox also enhances corporate image. Gohary et al. (2016) infer from their study that following the service recovery paradox, the positive corporate image for complainants becomes greater than that of noncomplainants and greater than or equal to that of regular pleased consumers. Thus, the conceptual and experimental evidence presented in this cluster delivers concrete suggestions on how organizations can modify their service recovery strategies to accomplish favorable outcomes via service recovery paradox.

## 5 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

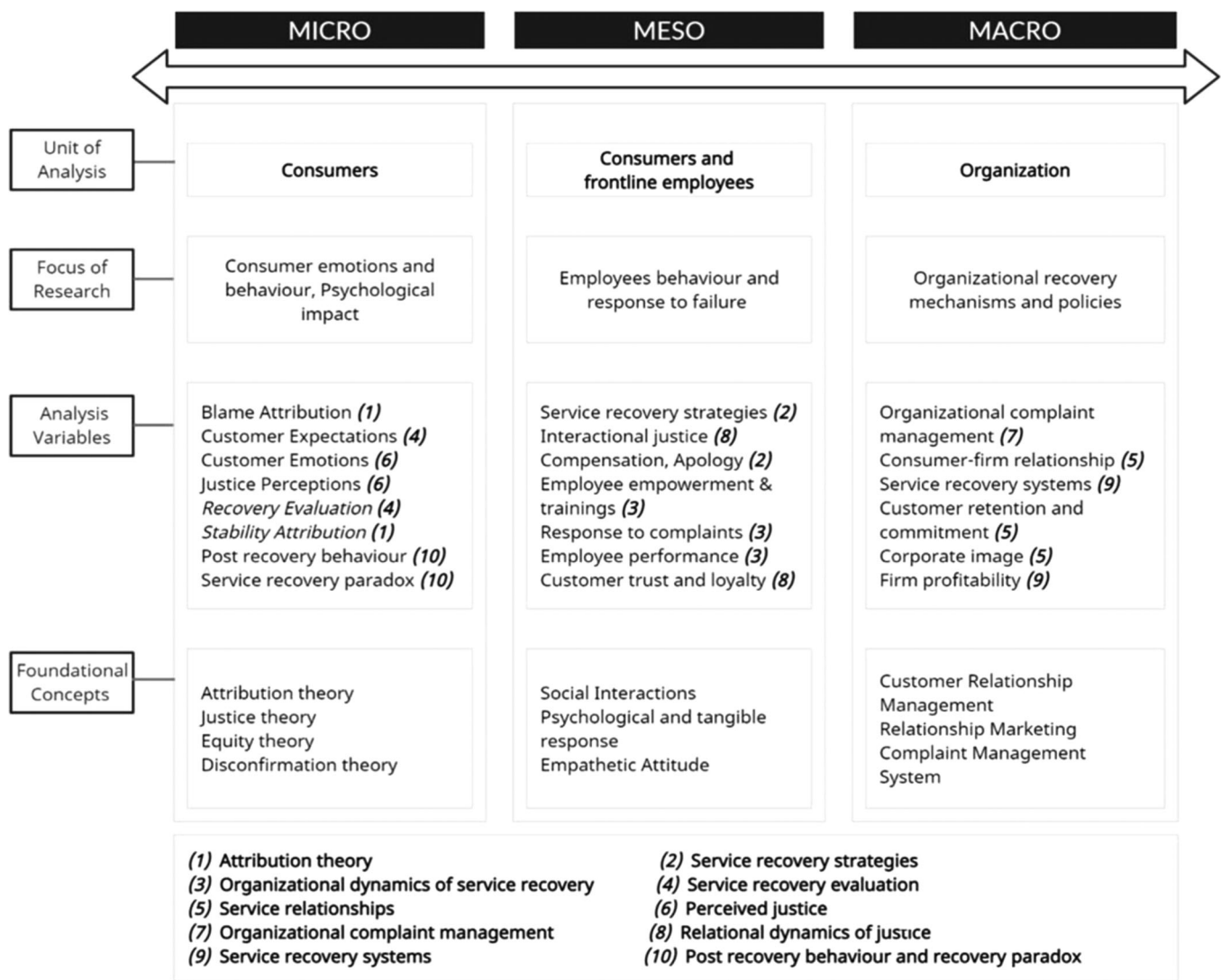
To expand the scope of the findings, concepts identified in this bibliometric-based systematic review were synthesized and integrated into a conceptual framework. While there are numerous related models in the field of service recovery (Bitner et al., 1990; Davidow, 2003; Krishna et al., 2011; Mattila & Patterson, 2004; McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003; Miller et al., 2000; Oliver, 1997; Smith et al., 1999; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2018), Figure 7 presents the most comprehensive model to date.

Majority of service recovery literature adopts a micro-lens by examining the psychological impact, individual reactions, and perceptions. The predominant unit of study for micro stream is an "individual consumer." Micro level extensively draws on fundamental

concepts and theories of attribution theory, justice theory, equity theory, and disconfirmation theory. Consumers emotional state, justice perceptions, attribution of controllability, and stability are the key components of micro stream. Various research scholars have discovered that when justice norms are broken during the recovery phase, consumers feel a strong emotional urge (anger, wrath) that motivates them to seek revenge (cluster 6). Moreover, the stability and blame attributions also have adverse effect on service evaluation and consumer satisfaction (cluster 1). Extensive research has examined the effects of service recovery paradox and documented that it leads to consumer retention, loyalty, and favorable word-of-mouth, whereas a failed recovery (double deviation) leads to customers' switching behavior and retaliation (cluster 10, 4). This emphasizes the need of considering psychological and individual perspectives while striving to undertake service recovery efforts.

Meso-level focusses on the consumers' interaction and overall experience with service representative. This level is based on the foundational concepts of interpersonal relationships and employee performance and behavior. Employee response and behavior during a service interaction has been examined extensively. Several conceptual studies reveal that frontline employees have a significant impact in determining customers' recovery evaluation (Bitner et al., 1990; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996). Service providers' empathetic response to customer concerns is a prerequisite for effective service interactions. Empathetic response in conjunction with quick-fix, apology, and compensation are critical components of a good recovery approach (cluster 2). Moreover, stronger interpersonal relationship results in higher trust and loyalty which in turn reduces anger and frustration and promotes customer satisfaction (cluster 8). The two fundamental variables of meso stream are employees' empowerment and training which have been identified to improve service interactions. Empowered employees are more prepared to take the responsibility and respond faster to complaints (cluster 3). By empowering employees, organizations will face lower employee turnover, high morals, and staff will hold themselves accountable for their behavior and performance. In addition, frontline-personnel need training to regulate their own emotions and react effectively to the emotions of customers, not just vocally but also via appropriate body language and facial expressions. Employees' talents and abilities will help organizations generate more delighted consumers and bigger revenues.

Macro level is designed to give managerial insights to strengthen organizational recovery mechanisms, and to develop new policies to preserve long-term customer relationships, thus "organization" is designated as standard unit of analysis for macro level. Research scholars in macro stream have applied more elaborate concepts such as customer relationship management, complaint management system, customer retention management, and so forth. Numerous empirical studies reveal that businesses lose customers due to ineffective complaint management. Studies identify the positive impact of organizational complaint management on customer satisfaction, justice evaluations, long-term commitment and increased market share (cluster 7). Customer-firm relationship can



**FIGURE 7** A conceptual model of service recovery.

also be strengthened by a systematic service recovery and an effective complaint management system which increases customers' forgiveness, loyalty, and retention (cluster 5). Finally, to preserve corporate image and increase firm profitability, there is an immediate need to design highly structured and effective service recovery systems and organizational policies (clusters 9 and 10).

Despite the fact that businesses implement effective macrolevel mechanisms to handle service failures, it is necessary to revive interest in the meso and micro levels to design a service recovery system that would consistently increase postrecovery satisfaction.

## 6 | AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section identifies potential research avenues by addressing gaps identified in this study. Table 4 provides an overview and preliminary research questions to inspire further scholarly inquiries in the field.

### 6.1 | Expanding methodological horizons in service recovery research

The bulk of studies within the realm of service recovery have heavily relied on a limited set of dominant research methods. These dominant methodologies primarily involve scenario-based experimental designs (e.g., Del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Gelbrich, 2010; Gyung Kim et al., 2010), and surveys (e.g., Babakus et al., 2003; Cantor & Li, 2018; Cheung & To, 2016). Given the unique attributes of the service industry, which include novelty-seeking tendencies, cocreated experiences, and episodic nature (So et al., 2021), scholars in the field of service recovery should consider utilizing a range of methods to measure customers' responses (Kim & So, 2023). The adoption of alternative methodologies, such as field studies, longitudinal study designs, and the use of creative analytical tools is crucial for the enhanced understanding of service recovery domain, as these methods address the limitations inherent in traditional

**TABLE 4** Future areas of research.

Thematic areas	Research gaps	Proposed research questions for future research
1. Expanding methodological horizons in service recovery research	Predominance of the use of quantitative methods in memorable tourism experience studies	How might longitudinal studies or ethnographies enhance our understanding of the long-term impacts and influences of service recovery strategies on customer behavior and loyalty?  How GIS based systems can help identify service failure/recovery hotspots?
2. Understanding Metaverse and synthetic service recovery	Lack of understanding regarding the merits and effectiveness of integrated service recovery strategies in both the metaverse and real-world environments	What are the specific challenges of service recovery in the metaverse, and how do they differ from those in traditional settings?  To what extent does the Proteus effect influence customer reactions to service failure and recovery in the metaverse?  Can service failure in space be compensated in other?
3. Revitalizing service recovery in the age of artificial intelligence and robotics	Insufficient understanding of AI-driven service robot and customer interactions in the context of service recovery.	How do service recovery strategies differ in the context of AI and robotics compared to traditional service recovery methods?  How can companies effectively balance the use of artificial intelligence and robotics with human intervention in service recovery processes to maximize customer satisfaction?
4. Globalizing service recovery research	Service recovery research has a geographical bias and limited studies exist on Asian and Arab customers	How do cultural differences influence the effectiveness of service recovery strategies in different regions, such as Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, and what are the best approaches for adapting these strategies to meet the unique cultural expectations and preferences of customers in each region?  How do language barriers and communication styles affect the perception of service recovery in cross-cultural settings, and what can be done to minimize misunderstandings and improve outcomes.
5. Investigating service recovery as an investment	There is a lack of research incorporating objective outcome measures to understand the financial benefits of service recovery investments and their relationship with firm performance.	How does investment in service recovery processes impact shareholder value and intangible resources such as brand and customer equity?  Is there a significant correlation between service recovery efforts and financial performance measures such as revenue growth and profitability?
6. Embracing temporal dynamics in service recovery	Most studies have assumed consistency of customer behavior over time and relied on cross-sectional research designs. Limited longitudinal studies demonstrate service recovery is a dynamic rather than a static process.	How do customers' perceptions of justice (i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) during a service failure and recovery evolve over time, and how do these perceptions influence their subsequent behavior?  What are the longitudinal effects of different service recovery strategies on customer behavior and their subsequent satisfaction and loyalty levels? How do these effects vary based on the timing of the service failure, the severity of failure and the characteristics of the customer?
7. Service recovery in shared economies	Shared economy platforms necessitate a reevaluation of service recovery models due to the distributed responsibility among platforms, providers, and consumers.	What are the key factors that influence the effectiveness of service recovery efforts in shared economies, and how can platforms, providers, and consumers work together to improve these factors?

(Continues)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Thematic areas	Research gaps	Proposed research questions for future research
		What are the differences in consumer expectations and preferences for service recovery in shared economies compared to traditional service contexts, and how can firms adapt their recovery strategies to meet these differences?

methods and provide a more nuanced understanding of service recovery processes and practices.

While scenario-based experiments are useful in gauging participants' perceptions of service recovery while ensuring higher levels of internal validity, it is common knowledge that they fall short on capturing the complexities of real-life encounters (Kim & So, 2023; Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2019). Field studies enable researchers to embed real-life richness in their studies thereby enhancing ecological validity and generalizability (Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2006). As field studies are resource-intensive exercises (Ashraf & Merunka, 2017; Thomas et al., 2019), simpler quasi-experimental variations could serve as an alternative to capture real-life experiences more economically. For example, Guo et al. (2016), in their study on service recovery and consumers desire for control, used a recall exercise of participants own service failure experience during the last 6 months as a stimulus to their study. This approach allows for the exploration of complex, context-specific factors that may be overlooked in controlled experimental settings, leading to more robust and applicable findings.

Researchers could also explore nontraditional and innovative data collection methods to enrich our understanding of service recovery. This includes relatively established study designs such as longitudinal studies or ethnographies, or objective data collection methods more common in other disciplines such as biometric techniques (e.g., facial expression analysis, heart rate variability, galvanic skin response), or emerging avenues of novel data sets supported by new technologies such as IoT-enabled devices, sensor data, and Geographical Information Systems. For example, netnography, which is an adapted ethnographic technique for online data (Kozinets, 2002; Moriuchi, 2023), could further broaden our understanding of not only service recovery strategies and dynamics, but also how online user communities interact on such issues (Kozinets, 2002). Alternatively, human's biological characteristics could also offer novel directions for research. Bagozzi et al. (2012) examined the genetic makeup and neural activation to identify characteristics of salespeople who demonstrate higher levels of customer orientation. Ethical considerations aside, the importance of front lines employees in service recovery alludes to the potential of how such methods could expand our understanding of employee-customer interface of service recovery. In retailing, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and visualizations are often used to identify retail locations and consumer clusters for efficient decision making (Ozimec et al., 2010). Service recovery studies could examine

how GIS could be embedded with service recovery systems to identify "hot spots" to facilitate visualization of service recovery system efficiencies as a function of their service location characteristics.

## 6.2 | Understanding metaverse and synthetic service recovery

Metaverse presents interesting opportunities for businesses where consumers come for "synthetic" experiences (Golf-Papez et al., 2022). Recent studies find that immersive virtual hospitality experiences are the second most popular form of experience sought by customers in the metaverse (McKinsey & Company, 2022). However, little is known on how to optimally design and structure these experiences (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Yoo et al., 2023). It is intuitive to forecast that in such a scenario, service failure and dissatisfaction would be common, hence a pressing need to simultaneously understand effective service recovery systems and strategies for the metaverse.

Interestingly, the effects of customers metaverse experiences on firms and brands are not expected to remain confined to the bounds of virtual space only. Although, metaverse is conceptualized as an alternative virtual reality space brought to life via avatars (Yoo et al., 2023), but many firms intentionally embed their virtual and 'real' world services together. For example, in McDonalds virtual brand land individuals cannot only meet to socialize virtually but also order food for their home consumption (Dwivedi, 2023), while others integrate their Metaverse Rewards as part of their loyalty program (Starbucks Odyssey; Hadi et al., 2023). This integration of virtual and real-world presents novel avenues, such as service failures in one space being compensated in other; however, the merits of this approach require further investigation. Even when the virtual and real worlds are not integrated by service providers, Proteus effect demonstrates that experiences in these spaces influence each other. Studies on Proteus effect find that peoples' real-life behavior is affected by their avatar's lived experiences such that virtual experiences have been shown to affect their real-life confidence, warmth, socialness, and ability to exercise more (Belk et al., 2022). This presents opportunities for researchers to examine existing service failure and recovery theories such as attribution and justice theory, in tandem with Proteus effect. Thus, the interface of service delivery across metaverse and real-world presents an exciting avenue for future research in service recovery.

### 6.3 | Revitalizing service recovery in the age of artificial intelligence and robotics

Studies in service recovery focus on the characteristics and dynamics of interpersonal interactions between human service providers and customers (e.g., Bitner et al., 1990; González-Gómez et al., 2021; Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Lteif et al., 2023; Mittal et al., 2008; Robertson et al., 2023). Understanding these dynamics have been essential to ensure customer satisfaction and drive business success. However, the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI)-driven service robots has surged among businesses in recent years, with projections suggesting that they will comprise 60% of service roles by 2030 (McKinsey & Company, 2017).

This presents an interesting opportunity for researchers to advance service recovery research in the context of service robot–customer interactions. Such an advancement is merited as our understanding of human–customer interactions can only provide a relational schema for robot–customer interactions but not replicate it. Some human characteristics that are critical for successful service recovery such as empowered decision making (Babakus et al., 2003; Hart et al., 1990), customer care, and concern (Park et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2020), may not fundamentally be inferred by customers from their interactions with robots. However, robots could also offer service recovery advantage over humans as certain human traits that negatively affect service recovery efforts such as role stressors, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Ashill et al., 2009; Van Vaerenbergh & Orsingher, 2016), may be absent. Future studies should also consider advancements in Generative AI (e.g., Google Bard; OpenAI; ChatGPT), as these could potentially enrich robot–customer interactions. For example, Lv et al. (2022) demonstrate that AI systems could generate high empathy perceptions by engaging in multi-sensory interaction (text and voice vs. text only) thereby enabling AI systems to demonstrate emotional intelligence. This alludes to natural advantage of AI-based robots for service recovery in certain scenarios such as low-magnitude service recovery where procedural (prompt response) and interactional justice (apology) perceptions are important determinants of customer affection (Choi & Choi, 2014).

### 6.4 | Globalizing service recovery research

Figure 1 shows that the majority of existing service recovery literature originates from North American and Western European contexts. This emphasizes the need for researchers to broaden their geographical scope of inquiry to include other regions and cultures. This would not only introduce new insights but also make existing service recovery findings more relevant to a wider range of organizations who are operating in non-western settings (Baker et al., 2008; Khamitov et al., 2020). Prior studies demonstrate that consumer–service provider exchanges differ across cultures. For example, Mattila (1999) demonstrated that Japanese customers, due to the significant role of politeness and respect in their culture,

had higher service expectations and lower satisfaction levels than their American counterparts. In a subsequent study, Mattila and Patterson (2004) demonstrate that easterners and westerners differ in how they attribute situational factors in a service failure. This influences how these customers perceive employee explanations on failure causes, employee efforts, and service recovery satisfaction. Similarly, Wong (2004) demonstrate that recovery strategies differ for different cultures such that compensation only drives repurchase intentions and word of mouth in American context but not in Singaporean and Australian settings. However, an apology was found to influence satisfaction in the Singaporean and Australian settings but not in the American context. These findings indicate that the unique cultural values across regions provide an interesting avenue to enrich our understanding of service recovery domain. Hence, future researchers may consider conducting cross-cultural studies to explore consumer expectations, perceptions, and responses to service recovery efforts so that organizations are able to design more relevant local service recovery strategies (Khamitov et al., 2020).

### 6.5 | Investigating service recovery as an investment

Although existing literature on service recovery provides a basis for understanding its relationship with firm performance (Boshoff, 1997), there remains a paucity of research incorporating objective outcome measures. Many organizations view service recovery as a cost, rather than a strategic investment, which may limit their willingness to invest in improving service recovery processes (Rosenbaum, 2015). By incorporating objective outcome measures such as shareholder value (Shekhar Kumar et al., 2013), future research can demonstrate the financial benefits of service recovery investments and promote a shift in organizational attitudes towards viewing service recovery as a strategic investment rather than an expense (Khamitov et al., 2020).

A multimethod approach, which includes quantitative econometric analysis and qualitative case studies, can help uncover the relationship between service recovery and firm performance metrics. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of the various factors of service recovery investments that influence firm's financial metrics, as well as identify, best practices for organizations seeking to enhance their service recovery capabilities for better results.

### 6.6 | Embracing temporal dynamics in service recovery

To date, service recovery research has generally assumed consistency in consumer behavior over time. However, the limited longitudinal investigations conducted thus far have yielded valuable insights, which justify embracing the temporal nature of service recovery. For instance, studies demonstrate the importance of “timing” as the

effectiveness of service recovery strategies in restoring customer satisfaction and loyalty is more pronounced for customers who have experienced a service failure in the recent (vs. distant) past (McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003) or within 6 months. Alternatively, while taking an organizational perspective, Davidow (2003) demonstrates that the effectiveness of service recovery efforts (apology, quality improvements, compensation, active communication) are not temporally static with each strategy having a different decay pattern and build-up intensity. Maxham and Netemeyer (2002b) further investigate the effects of a major service recovery strategy, that is, compensation, to find that the effect is not even linear. The expectations of compensation do not increase during the initial phase of service recovery (time zone of tolerance) but then increases with time before reducing in the long run. This dynamic and, at times, nonlinear nature of service recovery indicates the importance of temporal considerations in future service recovery studies. Researchers can use various research designs, such as repeated measures or panel data, to analyze changes in consumer behavior over time (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011). By addressing this research gap, future studies can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of service recovery and inform the development of effective strategies for managing customer complaints and enhancing customer satisfaction.

## 6.7 | Service recovery in shared economies

The preeminent concentration in current service recovery scholarship revolves around attributing the responsibility for service failures to organizations and the consequent expectation that they will execute appropriate recovery strategies (Sosa et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the rise of collaborative consumption platforms in the shared economy calls for a re-evaluation of service recovery models (Benoit et al., 2022). In these settings, responsibility is distributed among platforms, providers, and consumers, complicating traditional service recovery frameworks. For example, a stay that was booked with a superhost via AirBnB involves multiple independent stakeholders who are expected to deliver the service. In case of a failure, the ascription of responsibility for the failure (e.g., Superhost) may differ from the entity responsible for resolving the problem (e.g., AirBnB). By investigating how firms handle service failure and recovery in shared economies, researchers can elucidate the dynamics of shared responsibility and devise innovative recovery tactics. Some of the possible key areas for exploration could include: How can platforms, providers, and consumers work together to address service failures and implement effective recovery strategies? What collaborative models or frameworks could be developed to facilitate this process?

## 7 | DISCUSSION

The study undertakes a comprehensive and interdisciplinary review of service recovery literature. It bridges the views on service recovery from specialized and fragmented disciplines such as psychology,

marketing, management, economics, and social sciences, using bibliometric-based systematic review. This study systematically uncovers the influential knowledge sources and dynamics of the domain by highlighting key publications, journals, regions, and areas of research while avoiding potential disciplinary biases that could obstruct such an exhaustive review. Such a comprehensive perspective on service recovery benefits both the academics and the practitioners in their understanding of effective service recovery systems.

Seminal studies by Smith and Bolton (1990) and Tax et al. (1998) have established the basis for subsequent research on the influence of service recovery on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Recognized as the two most frequently cited works in this field, they provide the foundations upon which further investigations have been developed. Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar's work delved into the significant roles of perceived justice and recovery satisfaction in shaping customer responses to service failures. Several other highly cited studies in the domain include those of Davidow (2003) and Maxham and Netemeyer (2002b), which focus on the effect of customer complaint behavior on service recovery, and Smith et al. (1999), who studied the impact of customer affective response to service failure and recovery. Their citation patterns signify a trend towards more psychological perspective on service recovery. Methodologically, quantitative techniques, especially structural equation modeling (SEM), have been heavily favored in service recovery research to ascertain the complex causal relationships among different variables. Additionally, an emerging trend is the use of experimental designs. Despite this, a smaller yet significant portion of research relies on qualitative methods, mainly case studies and content analysis, suggesting that future research could benefit from the integration of these methods.

Further through bibliometric techniques, the study identifies 10 significant research clusters as a comprehensive blueprint of the scholarly discourse on service recovery. The first cluster revolves around attribution theory, a cornerstone in understanding how customers perceive and interpret the reasons behind service failures and recovery attempts. In the context of service recovery, the way customers attribute the cause of service failure significantly affects their satisfaction with the recovery efforts (Choi & Mattila, 2008). The second cluster of service recovery strategies encompasses an array of tactical responses organizations employ to rectify service failures, including compensation, apology, and prompt response. It underscores the importance of selecting appropriate recovery strategies that best align with specific failure contexts to effectively restore customer satisfaction. The third identified cluster is organizational dynamics of service recovery. This area investigates how an organization's internal dynamics, including leadership, culture, and employee empowerment, can affect the effectiveness of service recovery processes. The fourth cluster is service recovery evaluation, indicating the importance of understanding how customers assess the effectiveness of service recovery attempts. This cluster discusses metrics and models for evaluating service recovery efforts, which are vital for gauging their success. Service relationships constitute the

fifth cluster, reflecting on the role of ongoing relationships between the service provider and customer in shaping service recovery outcomes. The existing rapport can serve as a buffer in times of service failure, often dictating the expectations and perceptions regarding service recovery. The sixth cluster, "perceived justice," underscores the role of fairness perceptions in the context of service recovery. It emphasizes three dimensions of justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) and their collective impact on customer satisfaction postrecovery. The seventh cluster, Organizational Complaint Management, studies the procedures and strategies employed by organizations to manage customer complaints effectively. Exploring this cluster can provide important insights into handling customer grievances proficiently, ultimately leading to enhanced customer satisfaction. Relational Dynamics of Justice, the eighth cluster, includes the interpersonal elements of perceived justice during service recovery. It offers a nuanced understanding of the role of employee-customer interactions in perceived justice, a valuable insight for training service employees. Service recovery Systems, the ninth cluster, investigates the systems put in place by organizations to handle service failures. These can include technology-based systems or procedural systems, and their analysis can lead to more efficient and effective service recovery systems. Lastly, the 10th cluster focuses on Post Recovery Behavior and the Recovery Paradox. This cluster delves into understanding the behaviors exhibited by customers subsequent to the recovery process. Moreover, it brings to light the intriguing "Recovery Paradox"—a phenomenon in which the level of customer satisfaction following successful service recovery can, interestingly, surpass the satisfaction levels that existed before the service failure. This paradox underscores the potential of effective service recovery to not only rectify errors but to enhance customer relationships, making it a focal area of interest in this field.

Using these 10 key research clusters in the field of service recovery, the study also presents an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that facilitates navigation of the complex dynamics of service recovery. By considering the unique contributions of psychology, marketing, management, economics, and social sciences, the holistic framework provides a parsimonious structure to the relationships among various service recovery elements, such as cultural differences, complaint management processes, justice dimensions, and customer evaluations, to indicate how they work in tandem for optimal service recovery. Equipped with this understanding, managers can design and implement comprehensive service recovery eco-systems that fosters stronger customer relationships and enduring loyalty.

Finally, the study highlights several promising research avenues that build upon its interdisciplinary foundations. First, there is a need for broadening the use of research methods such as field studies, longitudinal designs, and biometric techniques, to capture the unique attributes of the service industry. Second, the metaverse offers an emerging context for investigating service recovery strategies in virtual environments that also influence real-world expectations and experiences. Third, the rise of AI and robotics in service roles

presents opportunities for studying robot-customer service recovery dynamics. Fourth, extending research scope geographically to explore cultural differences in service recovery is urged. Fifth, framing service recovery as an investment rather than a cost can shift organizational attitudes and research with objective outcome measures can reinforce this perspective. Sixth, considering the evolutionary nature of customer behavior over time, the temporal dynamics in service recovery should be embraced more. Lastly, the emergence of shared economies calls for research into the unique challenges of service recovery where traditional boundaries between service providers and customers are blurred.

## 7.1 | Practical implications

First, for organizations and managers new to the field, the study provides a foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of service recovery and applying evidence-based strategies in their operations. Second, for established organizations and seasoned managers, the study presents an opportunity to refine their existing service recovery practices by leveraging the latest research and interdisciplinary insights on service recovery. The thematic clusters of the study highlight important components of a comprehensive service recovery ecosystem. These clusters and the conceptual framework provide a parsimonious structure for managers to compare their organizational service recovery ecosystems to identify gaps and areas of further improvements. Third, these clusters also indicate areas wherein the academia has necessary knowledge base to actively contribute to the industry. For example in the United Kingdom, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) projects are collaboratively designed by academia and industry partners to facilitate the use of academic knowledge to inform managerial decision making. Managers who are interested to further develop their service recovery systems could use the thematic cluster guide of this study to identify potential avenues wherein the academia can facilitate industry solutions. Finally, the future research agenda of service recovery highlights the potential future trajectory of the field. Industry practitioners who are working in these areas and remain interested to develop service recovery solutions for the future, could consider academic-industry partnership around these themes to develop solutions that are not only scientifically rigorous but also practically relevant.

## 7.2 | Limitations and conclusion

In general, bibliographic methods are retroactive, emphasizing the most frequently cocited references which may be considered as influential, but not representative of the entire field. However, they remain the stimulus that shape the evolution of a field. Furthermore, the papers were downloaded from the Scopus database in December 2021. Knowing fully that the knowledge domains are vast, dynamic, and ever-changing entities, it seems improbable that an identical set

of keywords and papers would emerge 4 years from now. While the search term service recovery is effective in that it returns almost all recent, relevant, and highly cited articles, future research may incorporate alternative search terms.

Nonetheless, this bibliometric-based systematic review offers a comprehensive overview of the service recovery field, introduces a synthesized conceptual framework that addresses the domain's inherent fragmentation, and delineates potential avenues for future research that warrants exploration. The study's implications are far-reaching and resonates with a variety of stakeholders. It highlights that the fundamental assumptions (e.g., human touch, dyadic interactions, limited history, and reach of service reviews) which define our understanding of service recovery are challenged by the rapid developments in the field of technology (robotic interactions, automated processes, artificial intelligence, multistakeholder involvement) and globalization. Such a reorientation of fundamentals represents an exciting future for the field that would lead to more dynamic and complex theoretical explanations to integrate these novel service realities into the recovery literature.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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