

Customer Dissatisfaction and Responses: Moderator Roles of Blame Attribution and Negative Word of Mouth¹

Beyza GÜLTEKİN (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6797-864X>), Hacettepe University, Turkey;
beyza@hacettepe.edu.tr

Ayşe Yazgüü GÜVERCİN (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0286-7260>), Hacettepe University, Turkey;
yazgulubozkurt@hotmail.com

Müşteri Tatminsizlik Düzeyi ve Tepkileri: Firmayı Suçlama Düzeyi ve Olumsuz Kulaktan Kulağa İletişimin Düzenleyici Etkileri²

Abstract

The present research investigates the moderating role of blame attribution in dissatisfaction-doing nothing and negative word of mouth on the dissatisfaction-switching relationships. The proposed model is tested using data collected face-to-face from 188 airline passengers who have encountered an airline service failure by the convenience sampling method. Process analysis tests the hypotheses on the moderator roles of blame attribution and negative word of mouth. The results reveal that the dissatisfaction-doing nothing link is negatively moderated by blame attribution. The dissatisfaction-switching relationship is positively moderated by negative word of mouth. With the moderation of negative word of mouth and blame attribution, this study provides a deeper understanding of the consequences of customer dissatisfaction on customer reactions such as switching and doing nothing.

Keywords : Customer Dissatisfaction, Blame Attribution, Doing Nothing, Negative Word of Mouth, Switching.

JEL Classification Codes : M10, M19, M30, M31, M39.

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı; tatminsizlik düzeyi - hiçbir şey yapmama ilişkisinde suçlama düzeyinin ve tatminsizlik düzeyi-değiştirme arasındaki ilişkide olumsuz kulaktan kulağa iletişimin düzenleyici etkileri araştırmaktır. Araştırmanın modeli, havayollarından hizmet aldıkları süreçte hizmet hatası ile karşılaşmış 188 yolcudan kolayda örneklem yöntemiyle yüz yüze toplanan veriler kullanılarak test edilmiştir. Suçlama ve olumsuz kulaktan kulağa iletişimin düzenleyicilik rollerine ilişkin hipotezleri test etmek için süreç analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, suçlama düzeyinin, tatminsizlik düzeyi-hiçbir şey yapmama ilişkisinde olumsuz düzenleyici etkisini ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, tatminsizlik-değiştirme ilişkisinde de olumsuz kulaktan kulağa iletişimin olumlu düzenleyici etkisi tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışma; müşteri tatminsizliğinin, olumsuz kulaktan kulağa iletişim ve firmayı suçlama düzeyinin düzenleyiciliğiyle müşterilerin değiştirme davranışlarına ve hiçbir şey yapmamalarına etkilerini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler : Müşteri Tatmini, Suçlama, Hiçbir Şey Yapmama, Olumsuz Kulaktan Kulağa İletişim, Değiştirme.

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1. Introduction

After a service failure, it is now easy for customers to complain, spread negative word of mouth, and even switch service providers. It is not common for customers who experience a service failure to do nothing, especially in this social media atmosphere, websites, and many other wide-open channels. This study examines customers' complicated doing nothing or reacting dilemma after dissatisfaction by exploring the boundary condition of blame attribution and negative word of mouth in airline service failures. The airline companies need to learn when customers *do nothing* and when they do give harm to the company by *switching* and spreading *negative word of mouth*.

The airline industry is critical to the global economy due to its contribution of US\$2.7 trillion (3.6%) to global gross domestic product (GDP) (IATA, 2020: 1) and its ties to other sectors such as transportation and tourism. The airline industry is expected to employ 97.8 million people and contribute US\$5.7 trillion to the global economy by 2036 (AviationBenefits, 2020). The Airline Industry Report (IATA, 2020: 16) states that air transport providers in Turkey carried approximately 209 million domestic and international passengers in 2019 and supported almost 1 million jobs. These indicators show that Turkey's airline industry provides an intensive service, and faults are inevitable in this environment (Atalik, 2007: 410). The large transaction volume and the high probability of service failures occurring in the processes (Bejou & Palmer, 1998: 7; Schoefer & Ennew, 2004: 90) led to this study's focus on the airline industry.

These failures lead to customer dissatisfaction (Bell & Zemke, 1987) which in turn engenders negative behaviours (Daunt & Harris, 2011: 135; Tsaur et al., 2018: 34) such as switching (Schoefer et al., 2019: 250) spreading negative word of mouth (Anderson, 1998: 6; Gyung Kim et al., 2010: 976), stop purchasing (Crié, 2003: 63), and complaining (Singh, 1988: 95). There is plenty of research (Maute & Forrester, 1993: 219; Oliver, 1997; Schoefer et al., 2019: 247) in dissatisfaction-complaint relationship literature. However, most dissatisfied consumers do not complain (Stauss & Seidel, 2019); just about 5-10% of dissatisfied customers complain following a service failure (Tax & Brown, 1998: 77).

Some customers even prefer doing nothing after dissatisfaction with a service failure (Ping, 1993: 343; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004: 449). Doing nothing can be seen as mysterious for the service companies since this kind of response cannot provide any benefit (Folkes, 1984: 409) or feedback about the failure (Istanbuluoglu et al., 2017: 1112). Despite its importance to practice, doing nothing is often disregarded in the service failure literature (Mattila & Ro, 2008: 92; Richins, 1983: 70), creating a considerable gap to consider.

Customers need to know why service fails to act accordingly (Bejou et al., 1996: 7). Explaining the root of the problem after a service failure, especially whether it is the firm's blame or not, will help customers understand the situation better and respond respectively. Although consumers can mainly blame themselves or the company for service failure (Krishnan & Valle, 1979: 445), dissatisfied customers blame the company for their

dissatisfaction with airline services (Deloitte, n.d.). Therefore, this examination of the moderating effect of blame attribution on the dissatisfaction-doing-nothing relationship contributes to the literature and provides insight for practitioners.

Apart from being silent, dissatisfied customers may generate negative word of mouth and switch to another service provider. The switching response can be considered quite harmful for the companies (Maute & Forrester, 1993: 223). Even after switching, 25% of the lost customers spread negative word of mouth (Wangenheim, 2005: 76). Another critical customer response that companies should consider in their marketing operations is negative word of mouth (Gyung Kim et al., 2010: 975). Negative word of mouth has several risks, such as damaging goodwill, causing oneself and others to have negative emotions and opinions about the company (Sweeney et al., 2005: 334), and customers switching. However, service providers especially prefer to have this negative feedback of customers directly to themselves, not friends, relatives, or the public.

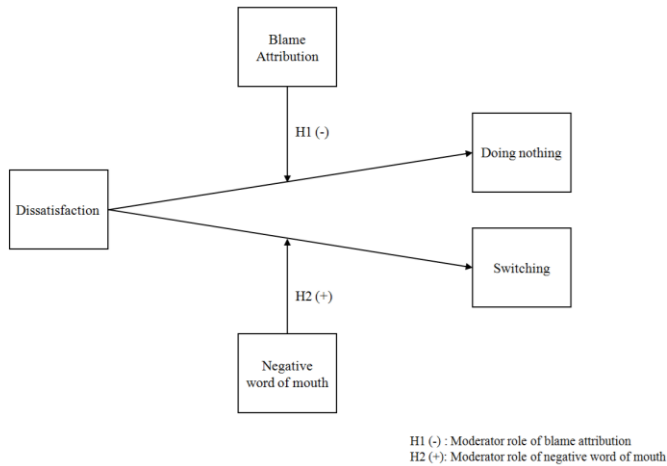
Since customers are more likely to disseminate negative word of mouth about services than they are about goods (Matos et al., 2008: 578), examining the role of negative word of mouth in the relationship between dissatisfaction and switching seems to be quite impactful in the airline service industry. To our knowledge, no study has been conducted in the literature that examines the critical role of dissatisfied customers' negative word of mouth before switching.

The following sections provide the literature review and a theoretical foundation before testing the stated hypotheses using survey data from the airline sector. The results are then discussed in detail, their implications for theory and practice, and suggestions for further research.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Companies constantly strive to reduce dissatisfaction because, while satisfaction often results in positive outcomes such as increased customer loyalty, dissatisfaction has negative effects (Oliver, 1999: 33). Accordingly, the consequences of dissatisfaction, namely doing nothing and switching, will be investigated with the moderating roles of blame attribution and word of mouth, respectively, to understand these relationships' nature better. The proposed model is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure: 1
Research Framework



2.1. Moderating Effect of Blame Attribution on the Relationship between Dissatisfaction and Doing Nothing

Doing nothing is present when dissatisfied customers do not express their complaints in any way (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004: 449). Accordingly, when customers feel dissatisfied, they may prefer to do nothing (Ro & Mattila, 2015: 98). They may consider that it may be better to do nothing after examining the costs and possible consequences of alternative responses (Day, 1984: 496). Consequently, the reasons why customers stay passive are various: The thought of customer's not benefiting from taking action (Folkes, 1984: 398), the customer's scepticism regarding their rights and the obligations of the company, and their unwillingness to meet the person who is responsible for the failure, or reluctance to affirm the company's unresponsiveness (Tax & Brown, 1998).

Customers prevent the problem from being identified by ignoring it (Ro, 2015: 439). Disregarding the problem or the failure impedes companies in recovering from service failures and increasing service quality (Istanbulluoglu et al., 2017: 1110).

People naturally seek causes, especially in adverse and unexpected circumstances (Weiner, 2000: 384). Accordingly, blame attribution help to explain customer responses after a service failure (Folkes, 1984: 398). Blame attribution theory states that this response

might change based on the level of blame attributed to the external (e.g., the company) or internal factors (e.g., themselves). Dissatisfied customers are more likely to take action if they blame the company (Krishnan & Valle, 1979: 446; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004: 452). When dissatisfied customers blame the company for the failure, positive emotions decrease, and anger increases toward the service provider (Ortiz et al., 2017: 453). As a customer attributes blame to a firm, he/she may be willing to punish or harm the firm, and revenge may even occur (Joireman et al., 2013: 318).

On the other contrary, when customers attribute little blame to the corporation, such remarkable reactions may be an option for the customers. Consumers might even prefer to do nothing (Harris et al., 2006: 455). Therefore, when the firm's blame is high, this might weaken the impact of dissatisfaction with doing nothing. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: The effect of dissatisfaction on doing nothing is more robust (weaker) when the level of blame attributed to the company is lower (higher).

2.2. Moderating Effect of Negative Word of Mouth on the Relationship between Dissatisfaction and Switching

The term "switching" refers to customers terminating their relationship with a company due to dissatisfaction (Hirschman, 1970: 21). In other words, switching occurs when customers change their companies, reduce their purchases, or declare that they will not purchase from a company in the future. To put it simply, switching means the customer terminates the relationship with the company (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004: 448).

After a service failure, 85% of dissatisfied customers show switching behaviour (Keaveney, 1995: 80). Similarly, Schoefer et al. (2019: 253) and Mattila and Ro (2008: 100) found a positive relationship between dissatisfaction and switching. Dissatisfied customers are more prone to explore alternatives and be receptive to competitors' offerings (Istanbulluoglu et al., 2017: 1119). The dissatisfaction-switching link is well established in the literature. However, the critical role of word of mouth in this relationship is unknown.

Heider's Balance Theory (1958 c.f. Woodside & Chebat, 2001) mentions that "... if I dislike what I own, I may either begin to like it or sell it." (Woodside & Chebat, 2001: 478) that, clarifies the balance among the person, the product, and the reaction of the person about a product. In this context, dissatisfaction might balance the entities' fit by switching to another service provider. When customers are dissatisfied with a product, they want to warn and inform their friends and family (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004: 449) and are prone to influence their environment (Kim et al., 2016: 514). So, as dissatisfied customers disseminate negative word of mouth about a service failure, they are expected to act to maintain the balance.

Negative word of mouth is the communication about the negative situation to at least one relative or friend as the dissatisfaction occurs (Richins, 1983: 69) and includes

persuading friends/relatives to stop trading with the troubled company (Ozer et al., 2010: 123). Spreading the negative word of mouth about the company can continue after customer switching (Wangenheim, 2005: 76). Furthermore, extant research mainly focuses on the external impact of word of mouth, such as its influence on other customers' switch (Williams & Buttle, 2014: 1439), not on customers who spread negative word of mouth. In this sense, dissatisfied customers may think it is hypocritical to continue their relationship with the firm after talking about the failure. However, just a few research illustrate how negative word of mouth leads to switching (e.g., East et al., 2008). In this context, the present study proposes that negative word of mouth reinforces dissatisfied customers' likelihood to switch. Since word of mouth shapes customer attitudes, intention to purchase, and purchase behaviour (Wangenheim, 2005: 74), it would be influential immediately after dissatisfaction.

As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The effect of dissatisfaction on switching is more robust (weaker) when more (less) customers engage in negative word of mouth.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling

We studied Turkish consumers who use airlines for their domestic or international travels. Because of its geographic position, Turkey is a significant aviation partner for Europe. Besides Turkey being a global international airport hub at the intersection of Europe with emerging markets such as the Middle East and Northern Africa, air transport providers in Turkey carried approximately 209 million domestic and international passengers in 2019. They supported almost 1 million jobs (Directorate General of Civil Aviation, 2020: 16). Examining a single industry enables scholars to understand better its processes and practices (Garvin, 1988).

Since it was impossible to obtain a complete list of these passengers, we used the convenience sampling method to collect the face-to-face survey data from airline customers who live in Ankara, Turkey. Participants are the persons who confirmed the voluntary participation form. The survey started with a screening question, "Have you experienced any air transport problems while travelling from Ankara?" Only those who answered "yes" to this question proceeded to the survey and analysis. For data analysis, we received 188 final usable questionnaires. 56,4% of respondents were male, and 40,9% were between the ages of 26 and 35. Most respondents (68,1%) were university graduates, and 64,4% identified as middle-income customers. Regarding the reason for travelling, respondents travelled because of business (20,2%), education (10,6%), visiting family and friends (35,6%), holiday (31,9%), and other (1,7%).

3.2. Questionnaire Design

We designed the survey form in English and translated it into Turkish through the translation/back-translation method (Brislin et al., 1973). The pilot study with 30 respondents confirmed that the questionnaire is suitable for the preliminary test.

We operationalised customer dissatisfaction as the airline consumer's dissatisfaction and unhappiness after the airline service failure. We measured it with three items from Varela-Neira et al. (2010: 67). We operationalised blame attribution as airline consumers' level of blame toward the airline company and captured three items developed by Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002: 69). We operationalised doing nothing as taking no action, remaining passive, and measuring it with two items from Mattila and Ro (2008: 96).

We operationalised negative word of mouth as shared negative experiences and opinions of airline customers and tapped it using three items from Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004: 451). Finally, we operationalised switching as airline customers' stopping patronage and changing to other airline companies and measured it with four items we adapted (Bergel & Brock, 2018: 472).

Except for blame attribution, all variables are quantified using a 5-point Likert scale [strongly disagree (1), strongly agree (5)]. Blame attribution is measured using a 5-point scale [Item 1: not all responsible (1), totally responsible (5); Item 2: strongly disagree (1), strongly agree (5); and Item 3: not at all (1), ultimately (5)]. The summary of the variable operationalisations is presented in Table 1.

Table: 1
Operationalisation of the Constructs

Variables	Factor Loading	t value
Dissatisfaction ($\alpha = .84$; AVE = .66; CR = .85)		
D1. After the failure, I was dissatisfied with the service.	.654	Fixed
D2.	.877	9,779
D3	.886	9,818
Blame attribution ($\alpha = .92$; AVE = .79; CR = .92)		
BA1. To what extent was the airline company responsible for the problem you experienced?	.879	Fixed
BA2.	.896	16,868
BA3.	.898	16,923
Doing Nothing ($\alpha = \text{N/A}$; AVE = .70; CR = .82)		
DN1. I took no action.	.693	Fixed
DN2.	.960	5,514
Negative word of mouth ($\alpha = \text{N/A}$; AVE = .84; CR = .91)		
NWOM1. I have talked with friends about this experience.	.960	Fixed
NWOM2.	.870	12,807
NWOM3	Deleted	-
Switching ($\alpha = .78$; AVE = .55; CR = .79)		
S1. Occasionally I think about ending the business relationship with this airline company.	.605	Fixed
S2.	.810	7,812
S3.	.801	7,787
S4.	Deleted	-

Note Cronbach's Alpha (α), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), N/A: Not applicable.

3.3. Analysis and Results

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess all latent construct measures' psychometric properties, including dissatisfaction, doing nothing, blame attribution, switching, and negative word of mouth (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). We deleted two items with low factor loadings (lower than ,50) and the CFA indices [$\chi^2 = 76,735$, d.f. = 55, $p = ,028$; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0,046; normed fit index (NFI) = ,947; comparative fit index (CFI) = ,984; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = ,978] indicate a good model fit (Bentler, 1990). In addition, all standardised factor loadings are more than ,50, and the AVE values of all constructs are greater than or equal to ,50, indicating that convergent validity has been established (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The standardised factor loadings are included in Table 1, as are the composite reliability values and the average variances extracted (AVEs) for that construct.

The descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables are presented in Table 2, including the square roots of the AVE with each variable along the diagonal, which are greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients in the off-diagonal elements, inferring that the constructs have discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs were satisfactory (Hair et al., 2010), ranging from ,78 to ,92, verifying the reliability of the scales.

Table: 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Variables	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Dissatisfaction	3,59	1,05	,81				
2. Doing nothing	2,91	1,18	-,118	,84			
3. Blame attribution	4,07	1,16	,407**	-,300	,89		
4. Switching	2,46	1,37	,531**	-,152*	,325**	,74	
5. Negative word of mouth	3,97	1,08	-,424**	-,334**	,369**	,391**	,92

* $p < ,05$; ** $p < ,01$.

Notes: Values below the diagonal refer to correlation estimates among constructs, and values on the diagonal refer to the square root of the average variance extracted from the respective construct.

Due to the cross-sectional nature of our study, the possibility of standard method bias (CMB) in our data should be investigated (Straub et al., 2004). CMB threatens the study's validity and focal relationships (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We emphasised the questionnaire design to prevent CMB in our study data. Firstly, we ordered the measures to avoid respondents' propensity to respond to items similarly. Secondly, we ensured that everything was concise and clear, so we double-barrelled or avoided abstract questions. Thirdly, we clarified to participants that there were no right /wrong responses to the questions. Finally, to reduce evaluation apprehension, we assured respondents that their responses would be strictly confidential (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

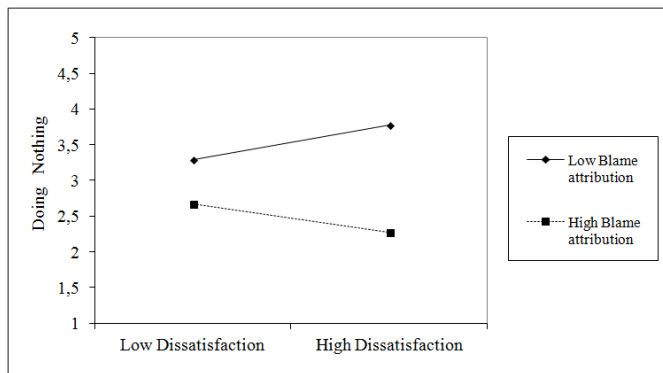
Additionally, as an ex-post statistical test, we controlled for CMB in the research questionnaire with Harman's single-factor technique. Four factors were generated from unrotated factor solutions, according to test results. The first factor accounts for only 39,69%

of the total variation, which is less than the 50% criteria. This result suggests that CMB does not threaten bias in our data.

To test the blame attribution's moderating role on the impact of dissatisfaction on doing nothing (H1), we utilised process analysis (Model 1) (Hayes, 2013). The results show that the overall model is significant [$F(3,184) = 7,69, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0,111$]. Accordingly, the interaction effect of dissatisfaction and blame for doing nothing is negative and significant ($\beta = -,18, p < ,05, S.E. = ,08; 95\% CI: -,35 \text{ to } -,01$) such that when customers blame companies for the service faults, the effect of dissatisfaction on doing nothing is lower. Therefore, H1 is supported.

Floodlight analysis identifies the Johnson-Neyman points that determine the blame attribution levels. The effect of dissatisfaction on doing nothing is significant. The analysis reveals that, for blame attribution scores below $-2,57$, the effect is positive and significant, while blame attribution has no significant influence on doing nothing for blame scores above $-2,57$. Figure 2 shows the moderating effect of blame attribution on the link between dissatisfaction and doing nothing.

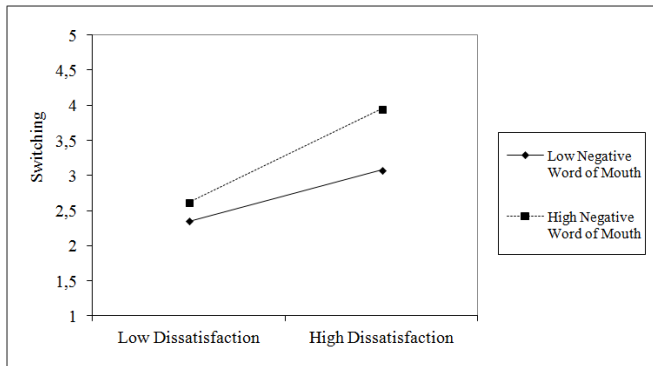
Figure: 2
The Moderating Effect of Blame Attribution on the Dissatisfaction-Doing Nothing Relationship



Our study used process analysis (Model 1) to investigate the moderating effect of negative word of mouth on the impact of dissatisfaction on switching (H2) with 5000 replications and a 95% confidence interval (Hayes, 2013). The overall model is significant ($F(3, 184) = 30,4779, p < ,001, R^2 = ,322$). The interaction effect of dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth on switching is positive and significant ($\beta = ,13, p < ,05; S.E. = ,06; 95\% CI: ,01 \text{ to } ,26$); when customers spread negative word of mouth, the effect of dissatisfaction on switching is stronger. Thus, H2 is also supported. Specifically, floodlight analysis shows that the effect is positive and significant for negative word of mouth scores

above -1.68. In contrast, for negative word of mouth scores below -1.68, dissatisfaction has no significant influence on switching. Figure 3 shows the interaction effect.

Figure: 3
The Moderating Effect of Negative Word of Mouth on The Dissatisfaction-Switching Relationship



4. Discussion and Implications

This research has two main findings. First, the findings indicate that the effect of dissatisfaction on doing nothing is negatively moderated by blame attribution. And when dissatisfied customers do not hold the company responsible for their dissatisfaction, they are more likely to do nothing. Second, the dissatisfaction-switching relationship is positively moderated by negative word of mouth. When dissatisfied consumers disseminate the negative word of mouth about their unfavourable experience, the likelihood of them switching to a different provider increases. The consequences of these discoveries for theory and practice will be discussed in further depth in the following sections.

4.1. Theoretical Implications

This research combines service failure, blame attribution theory, balance theory, and dissatisfaction responses. Our findings provide several contributions to the service failure research in marketing literature.

This study provides a better insight into doing nothing to respond to dissatisfaction. Previous empirical research has produced contradictory findings on the relationship between dissatisfaction and doing nothing. We conceptualised blaming the firm after a failure with the blame attribution theory for a broader understanding of blame in a theoretical framework. We expected that the interaction effect of dissatisfaction and blame for doing nothing would be negative and significant (H1). Our first hypothesis is supported. The blame attribution theory assumes that when people face surprising or negative situations, they make causal inferences, and their actions are influenced by these explanations (Folkes, 1984: 400;

Weiner, 2000: 382). In line with blame attribution theory, our findings indicate that when dissatisfied customers attribute failures to themselves rather than the service provider, they either do not take action or prefer to do nothing. In other words, not blaming the firm bolster the relationship between dissatisfaction and doing nothing.

Then, this article deals with a so-far unnoted aspect of customer word of mouth: pre-switching negative word of mouth. We provide evidence of how negative word of mouth influences the switching behaviours of dissatisfied customers. We expected the interaction effect of dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth on switching is positive and significant (H2). Our second hypothesis is supported. Confirmation of the first hypothesis is consistent with Heider's Balance Theory (1958 c.f. Woodside & Chebat, 2001: 478), which asserts that when a person disfavours a product, the s/he cannot continue using it unless s/he starts to like it. Consistent with this theory, this study found dissatisfied customers prefer to switch and quit their relationships with the service provider. This second hypothesis contributes to the literature by explaining how dissatisfaction and negative word of mouth interact with switching. The previous studies investigate the influence of dissatisfaction on negative word of mouth (Anderson, 1998: 5; Richins, 1983: 47; Williams & Buttle, 2014: 1423) and switching (Keaveney, 1995: 71; Mattila & Ro, 2008:89; Schoefer et al., 2019: 247) as entirely separate variables. This study deepens the understanding of the negative word of mouth and switching reactions towards dissatisfaction by examining their interaction effect.

4.2. Managerial Implications

Companies regard customer complaints as superior to the customers' doing nothing since complaining might relieve the customers by reflecting their reaction (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004: 449). It opens a way for the companies to notice and compensate for the service failure (Folkes, 1984: 409). Although service providers consider customers' doing nothing as a *negative* response, it might not be the case when considering the role of blame attribution after dissatisfaction.

The moderating effect of blame attribution in this relationship shows that companies should better understand how dissatisfied customers try to solve the problem. Our results clearly show that dissatisfied customers who do not blame the companies for their dissatisfaction are more prone to do nothing or not take action, which can be considered an advantage for the companies to provide high-quality services. As a result, a company can expect customers to do nothing when they do not focus on its blame. Accordingly, airline companies are advised to listen to their dissatisfied customers to ascertain the degree of blame attributed to the company, which may help them develop more effective service recovery strategies. Identifying customers who are unsatisfied but do nothing may enable companies to evaluate their communication channels' efficiency and ease of use (Istanbulluoglu et al., 2017: 1119). Farooq et al. (2018: 346) also found the crucial role of personnel services on customer satisfaction. A clear understanding of the attributed blame to the service provider would enable the service personnel to explain the situation and remind the customer's responsibilities like arrival time, baggage limits, problems with ticketing,

refunds, cancellations, etc. In this way, customers might pay attention to their responsibilities besides their rights.

In addition to the core flight service of airlines, many other support services can cause customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, to meet customers' needs and expectations, companies should also ensure the staff's communication skills training (Bejou et al., 1996: 18) and customer services. More specifically, service personnel might thank the dissatisfied customers. You, Yang, Wang & Deng (2020: 147) emphasised the consumers' appreciation by thanking is more crucial in post-recovery satisfaction than an apology that focuses on the service provider's fault.

A deeper understanding of the effect of negative word-of-mouth communication on the dissatisfaction-switching relationship would enable businesses to acknowledge the significance of service failure management and take proactive action. Customers' switching responses become more crucial as the competition grows (Jung et al., 2017: 140). Gupta (2018: 35) states that customers tend to switch to companies with better service. An airline service provider might be too late to compensate after dissatisfied customers switch in this competitive environment. Thus, negative word of mouth about a service encounter may serve as a warning sign for these businesses before dissatisfied customers change. Since acquiring new customers is more expensive than retaining existing ones (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990: 104), companies can reduce negative word of mouth by making their service recovery processes impeccable (Williams & Buttle, 2014: 1425). A deep insight into the switching response enables companies to learn how to decrease customer turnover (Rajagopal, 2020: 1) and retain their existing customers.

This result indicates that just talking about failure can affect post-dissatisfaction behaviour. Firms should be concerned about the issues behind customer dissatisfaction. However, companies' limited access to negative word of mouth prevents them from having information about their mistakes. This situation may lead to negative consequences beyond the control of the company. For this reason, increasing the complaint channels and enabling customers to access them quickly is essential. In this way, airline service providers can recover from failures, and customers can get satisfied.

Additionally, we show that firms should prevent dissatisfied customers from negative word-of-mouth actions. If they succeed, they can retain these customers. Companies need to improve their complaint management processes and procedures; they should be more straightforward, more customer-oriented, and not time-consuming (Bejou et al., 1996: 18). Besides, companies can encourage customers to return and contact the company (Istanbulluoglu et al., 2017: 1119).

5. Limitations and Future Directions for Research

While the study adds to our understanding of the consequences of customer dissatisfaction, researchers and managers must interpret the findings in light of certain

limitations. Firstly, since data were collected using a cross-sectional research design, establishing causal relationships between dissatisfaction and its consequences is a critical issue to consider. Therefore, future researchers might implement an experimental research design to make causal inferences better. Second, this study examined the proposed conceptual model in the airline industry. To increase generalisation, an enticing direction for future research would be replicating the model in other travel/hospitality industries, such as accommodation. Additional research can validate the model in a low-cost or full-service airline or a different airline travel class (Sezgen et al., 2019: 67).

Third, only switching and doing nothing were included in the model as consequences of dissatisfaction. Future research can consist of other responses of dissatisfied customers (i.e., complaining and repurchase intention). Following the justice theory, future research can investigate post-recovery satisfaction's effects on response types (Moliner-Velázquez et al., 2015: 474). Furthermore, including different service recovery types (i.e., firm, co-creation, customer) (Bagherzadeh et al., 2020: 3) in the model might help service providers manage customer dissatisfaction and their responses after a service failure.

Customers' dissatisfaction response to a failure may differ among service categories (Mattila & Ro, 2008: 103). Gures et al. (2020: 219) revealed that flight delays, customer support services, and employee behaviours are the reasons for dissatisfaction in the Turkish airline industry. Therefore, it could be a valuable contribution to empirically examine the impact of different reasons for dissatisfaction in this model's context.

Future studies can examine the blame attribution more comprehensively by considering different factors that customers may blame, such as luck, employees, advertising campaigns, and situational or external factors (Krishnan & Valle, 1979: 445).

Huang and Philp (2021: 877) found that consumers are less willing to share negative word-of-mouth following a service failure caused by an artificial intelligence (AI) recommendation system than after a service failure caused by a human employee, even though the failure, firm blame, or dissatisfaction with the failure are identical. Future studies might compare customer reactions after AI failure with human employee failure.

Finally, it would contribute to comparing pre-word-of-mouth and post-word-of-mouth behaviours. Understanding the impact of negative word of mouth on dissatisfaction responses enables businesses to monitor for undesirable behaviours following negative word of mouth.

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