EMERGENCY SERVICE RECOVERY AND REPURCHASE INTENTION IN SCENIC-AREA HOTELS: EVIDENCE FROM NANNING*

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Abstract

This research article aims to: 1) examine the effects of four emergency service recovery strategies tangible compensation, response speed, apology and explanation, and proactive recovery on customers' repurchase intention in scenic-area hotels; 2) compare the relative influence of these recovery strategies; and 3) investigate whether situational factors, including consumption motivation context and error severity, moderate the relationship between recovery strategies and repurchase intention. The study employed a quantitative research design. Data were collected from 388 customers who had stayed at hotels in Nanning Qingxiu Mountain Scenic Area. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability and validity tests, multiple regression analysis, and hierarchical regression analysis through SPSS.

The research results found that:

1. Tangible compensation, apology and explanation, and proactive recovery have significant positive effects on repurchase intention, while response speed does not show a statistically significant effect.

2. Tangible compensation exerts the strongest influence on repurchase intention among the four strategies.

3. Consumption motivation context and error severity do not significantly moderate the relationship between emergency service recovery strategies and repurchase intention.

Keywords: emergency service recovery, repurchase intention, scenic-area hotels, service failure, situational factors.

Introduction

As a flagship tourist destination in Guangxi, Nanning Qingxiu Mountain Scenic Area drives regional tourism development, with its surrounding hotels playing a critical role in shaping visitor satisfaction; the revival of cultural tourism and consumption upgrades have diversified customer demands, while the immediacy of hotel services makes service failures inevitable such as reservation system malfunctions, facility damage and operational errors. Unlike urban hotels, scenic area hotels face stronger scenario-specific binding, as service failures directly disrupt travel experiences and risk losing repeat customers, and current recovery practices often rely on standardized compensation and suffer from inefficient response procedures, highlighting the need for systematic research. From an academic perspective, service recovery research has evolved around equity theory, with strategies categorized into tangible compensation, response speed, apology and explanation, and proactive recovery, and while studies confirm positive correlations between recovery strategies and repurchase

intention, gaps remain in exploring scenic area hotel contexts and the moderating role of situational factors.

This study thus raises four key research questions: whether the four emergency service recovery strategies have significant positive impacts on customer repurchase intention and whether there are differences in impact intensity; whether consumption motivation context moderates the relationship between recovery strategies and repurchase intention; whether error severity moderates this relationship; and how hotels should formulate differentiated recovery strategies considering both situational factors. Corresponding research objectives include verifying the impact of the four recovery strategies on repurchase intention and their relative importance, analyzing the moderating effect of consumption motivation context, examining the moderating effect of error severity, and providing directional guidance for differentiated recovery strategies.

The research focuses on hotels in and around Nanning Qingxiu Mountain Scenic Area, with data collection including 388 customer questionnaires and interviews with 20 to 30 customers and 5 to 8 hotel staff conducted between November 2025 and May 2026. Two main research hypotheses are proposed: emergency service recovery strategies positively impact repurchase intention, covering tangible compensation, response speed, apology and explanation, and proactive recovery; and situational differences including consumption motivation context and error severity moderate the above relationship.

Key definitions involved in the research are as follows: hotel industry emergency service recovery refers to measures taken after sudden service failures including four dimensions; customer repurchase intent is the tendency to reuse hotel services encompassing behavioral and word-of-mouth intentions; and contextual differences are external factors including consumption motivation and error severity. The contribution of this study lies in integrating and validating a theoretical model incorporating situational moderators, analyzing strategy

effectiveness across contexts, and identifying key strategies for resource optimization.

Objectives

1. To test the effects of emergency service recovery strategies (tangible compensation, response speed, apology and explanation, proactive recovery) on customers' repurchase intention in scenic-area hotels.

2. To identify which recovery strategies are most influential by comparing the relative strength of their effects on repurchase intention.

3. To examine whether situational factors (consumption motivation context and error severity) moderate the relationship between service recovery strategies and repurchase intention.

Literature Review

Service failures in hotels are not merely operational problems but emotional events that can strongly influence how customers evaluate subsequent recovery efforts. Empirical evidence shows that service mistakes trigger negative emotions, which in turn shape customers' perceptions of recovery effectiveness and their willingness to maintain the relationship with the hotel. When recovery actions successfully reduce negative emotions and restore a sense of fairness, customers are more likely to form positive post-failure behavioral intentions. This emotional mechanism provides a clear rationale for treating repurchase intention as a key outcome of service recovery in the hotel industry (Hu et al., 2013).

Service recovery is widely understood as a multidimensional process rather than a single corrective action. Research examining consumer emotions and behavioral intentions demonstrates that different recovery methods—such

as compensation, procedural handling, and interpersonal interaction—operate through distinct psychological pathways. These differences imply that recovery strategies should be decomposed into specific dimensions in empirical analysis, as customers may respond more strongly to some approaches than others. This perspective supports the analytical comparison of multiple recovery strategies when assessing their relative impact on repurchase intention (Zhang & Gao, 2011).

From a managerial and evaluative perspective, effective hotel service recovery should be assessed based on customers' perceptions of the recovery process and outcomes, rather than on internal managerial effort alone. Recovery strategies need to be observable, understandable, and meaningful to customers in order to influence post-failure evaluations. Prior work emphasizes that recovery effectiveness is closely tied to how clearly customers perceive compensation, responsiveness, communication, and corrective action, which justifies operationalizing recovery strategies as customer-facing dimensions in empirical hotel research (Wang, 2008).

The effectiveness of service recovery strategies is also shaped by contextual interpretation rather than being universally stable across situations. Research on high-end hotel services shows that monetary compensation is not always the most effective recovery strategy; instead, its impact depends on how customers attribute responsibility for the service failure. When failures are perceived as controllable or attributable to the hotel, customers may expect stronger or more comprehensive recovery efforts. This contextual sensitivity highlights the importance of considering situational factors when examining how recovery strategies influence repurchase intention (Fu et al., 2014).

Beyond the hotel context, evidence from the food service industry further confirms that recovery performance is positively associated with customers' repurchase intentions, and that this relationship can be mediated by customers' post-recovery service quality perceptions. These findings reinforce the broader service management view that recovery efforts play a critical role in restoring

customer relationships after failure and converting negative experiences into future loyalty. Although service contexts differ, this evidence supports the general expectation that effective recovery strategies can drive repurchase intention in hospitality settings (Amoako et al., 2023).

Methodology

1. Population and Samples

Customers with consumption experience at Qingxiu Mountain Scenic Area hotels. 400 questionnaires distributed, 388 valid responses collected.

2. Data Collection Tools

Structured questionnaire including demographic variables, independent variable scale, dependent variable scale, and moderating variable scale.

Demographic Variables: Gender, age, education, consumption frequency, motivation, and budget.

Independent Variable Scale: 14 items measuring the four recovery strategy dimensions.

Dependent Variable Scale: 8 items measuring behavioral and word-of-mouth intentions.

Moderating Variable Scale: 10 items measuring consumption motivation and error severity.

3. Data Collection

Hybrid online-offline survey conducted between November 2025 and May 2026.

Descriptive statistical analysis, validity and reliability tests, multiple regression analysis, and moderating effect tests using SPSS.

Research Framework

Based on the above literature review, this study constructs a theoretical framework with emergency service recovery strategies as the independent variable, customer repurchase intention as the dependent variable, and situational differences as the moderating variables. Specifically, the independent variable includes four dimensions: tangible compensation, response speed, apology and explanation, and proactive recovery; the dependent variable includes two dimensions: behavioral intention and word-of-mouth intention; the moderating variables include two situational factors: consumption motivation context and error severity. The framework aims to explore the direct impact of the four recovery strategies on repurchase intention and the moderating role of the two situational factors in this relationship, providing a clear theoretical guide for subsequent empirical research (Figure 1).
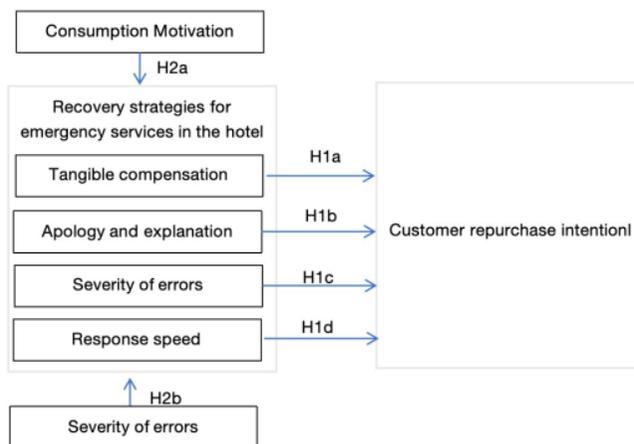

Figure 1 Research model (Source: Constructed by the researchers)

Results

1. Symbols Used in Data Analysis

In the data analysis process, the following symbols are uniformly adopted to represent key statistical indicators: $\bar{x}$ denotes the mean value, which reflects the central tendency of the sample data distribution; S.D. stands for the standard deviation, used to measure the degree of dispersion of the data; and N represents the sample size, i.e., the number of valid questionnaires collected.

2. Basic Information Statistics

A total of 388 valid responses were collected from customers of hotels in Nanning Qingxiu Mountain Scenic Area. Demographically, male respondents accounted for a slight majority (54.90%) compared to females (45.10%). In terms of age distribution, the 36-45 age group was the largest (50.77%), followed by the 26-35 age group (32.73%), indicating that middle-aged and young adults constitute the main customer group of these hotels. Regarding educational background, undergraduate graduates dominated the sample (52.84%), with junior college graduates ranking second (34.54%). From the perspective of consumption behavior, over half of the respondents (53.87%) had stayed at the hotels 3-5 times in the past year, and 29.64% had stayed 1-2 times. In terms of consumption motivation, participating in scenic area activities was the most common purpose (67.53%), followed by business conferences (64.95%) and leisure vacations (61.08%). For the single-consumption budget, the majority of respondents (88.15%) fell into the 501-2000 yuan range, with 44.59% in the 501-1000 yuan bracket and 43.56% in the 1001-2000 yuan bracket.

3. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Descriptive statistical analysis of all variables was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale, with the overall perception level of each variable falling into the medium category except for one item in the proactive recovery dimension.

For the independent variable, the tangible compensation dimension included four items, all of which were rated medium; among them, "the hotel gave away food and drink vouchers" had the highest mean (3.40), while "the hotel offered a free room upgrade" had the lowest (2.66). The three items in the response speed dimension were all medium-rated, with "the problem was resolved within 1 hour" having the highest mean (2.91) and "the hotel immediately arranged someone to deal with the problem" having the lowest (2.75) and the largest standard deviation (0.910), indicating large differences in customer evaluations. In the apology and explanation dimension, "the hotel explained the cause of the error in detail" obtained the highest mean (3.19), while "the hotel manager apologized in person" had the lowest (2.82). For the proactive recovery dimension, "the hotel took the initiative to find out and apologize before I complained" was rated high (mean=3.44), while the other three items were medium-rated, with "hotel follow-up inquiry on satisfaction" having the lowest mean (2.73).

For the dependent variable, the four items in the behavioral intention dimension were all medium-rated; "I will choose this hotel again in the next year" and "I will give priority to this hotel" had the highest mean (3.28), and "I will increase the frequency of spending in this hotel" had the lowest (2.97). In the word-of-mouth communication intention dimension, all four items were medium-rated, with "I will share positive reviews on social media" having the highest mean (2.95) and "I will encourage my colleagues to choose this hotel" having the lowest (2.62).

For the moderating variable, the five items in the consumption motivation context dimension were all medium-rated; "this stay is for a family reunion" had the highest mean (3.24), and "this stay is for an event at the scenic spot" had the lowest (2.93). Among the five items in the error severity dimension, all were medium-rated, with "there was an economic loss" having the highest mean (3.33), reflecting that customers perceive economic losses caused by service errors as the most serious consequence.

4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing was conducted using multiple regression analysis and hierarchical regression analysis. The results showed that among the four dimensions of emergency service recovery strategies, three had a significant positive impact on customer repurchase intention ($p<0.01$), verifying Hypotheses H1a, H1c, and H1d. Specifically, tangible compensation had the strongest impact ($\beta=0.503$), followed by apology and explanation ($\beta=0.280$) and proactive recovery ($\beta=0.199$). However, the impact of response speed on repurchase intention was not statistically significant ($\beta=0.050$, $p=0.051$), failing to verify Hypothesis H1b. Regarding the moderating effect, the interaction terms of consumption motivation context and error severity with each recovery strategy dimension were not significant ($p>0.05$), indicating that situational differences did not moderate the relationship between emergency service recovery strategies and customer repurchase intention, thus failing to verify Hypotheses H2a and H2b. Additionally, the adjusted R^2 of the regression model was 0.919, indicating that the four recovery strategy dimensions collectively explained 91.9% of the variance in customer repurchase intention.

Discussion

The results of research objective 1 found that tangible compensation, apology and explanation, and proactive recovery significantly enhance customers' repurchase intention in scenic-area hotels, whereas response speed does not exert a statistically significant effect. This is because service recovery in tourism-oriented hotel contexts functions not only as a procedural correction but also as a mechanism for restoring perceived fairness and emotional balance. Tangible compensation directly offsets economic loss and experience disruption, while apology and explanation repair psychological contract breaches and

reduce negative emotions. Proactive recovery further strengthens relational trust by demonstrating responsibility and attentiveness. These findings align with equity theory and justice theory, which emphasize distributive and interactional justice as core determinants of post-failure evaluations. They are also consistent with prior hotel industry research indicating that compensation and interpersonal communication significantly influence repurchase intention, while purely procedural dimensions may be less decisive when service failures are not highly urgent.

The results of research objective 2 found that tangible compensation has the strongest impact among the four recovery strategies, followed by apology and explanation and proactive recovery. This is because scenic-area hotel consumption is often experience-driven and financially visible; customers perceive economic restitution as a concrete and immediate restoration of fairness. Compared with emotional reassurance or proactive efforts, material compensation provides a more tangible signal of accountability and loss recovery. This finding is consistent with attribution theory, which suggests that when customers attribute failure responsibility to the service provider, stronger compensatory actions are expected. It also echoes empirical research in hospitality contexts showing that monetary or material compensation often produces stronger behavioral responses than procedural improvements alone. However, unlike some studies that position interpersonal recovery as equally dominant, this study highlights a clearer hierarchy of influence within scenic tourism settings.

The results of research objective 3 found that consumption motivation context and error severity do not significantly moderate the relationship between service recovery strategies and repurchase intention. This is because the core recovery mechanisms appear to operate relatively consistently across different situational interpretations in this setting. In scenic-area hotels, most service failures are perceived as manageable rather than catastrophic, and recovery

actions may sufficiently restore fairness regardless of customers' original motivation or perceived severity. This partially diverges from contextual and contingency perspectives suggesting that recovery effectiveness varies across situations. The difference may stem from the relatively homogeneous sample characteristics and moderate error intensity levels observed in this study. Therefore, while prior literature emphasizes situational sensitivity in recovery processes, the present findings suggest that in certain tourism hotel contexts, core recovery strategies maintain stable effectiveness across different consumption motivations and error severity levels.

Overall, this study contributes to service recovery theory by demonstrating that distributive and interactional justice mechanisms dominate repurchase intention formation in scenic-area hotels, while procedural speed and situational contingencies play comparatively limited roles. The findings refine existing theoretical perspectives by identifying a context-specific hierarchy of recovery effectiveness rather than assuming uniform multidimensional influence.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that not all emergency service recovery strategies exert equal influence on repurchase intention in scenic-area hotels. Among the four strategies examined, tangible compensation emerges as the dominant driver, followed by apology and explanation and proactive recovery, while response speed does not significantly influence repurchase intention. These findings indicate a clear hierarchy of recovery effectiveness in the scenic-area hotel context, where customers prioritize visible economic restitution and emotional reassurance over procedural rapidity.

Importantly, the absence of moderating effects from consumption motivation context and error severity suggests that the effectiveness of core

recovery strategies remains relatively stable across different situational conditions within this setting. However, this stability should be interpreted within the study's empirical boundaries. The sample is geographically confined to hotels surrounding Qingxiu Mountain Scenic Area, where service failures are generally moderate in intensity and tourism activities are experience-oriented rather than time-critical. Consequently, the findings may not fully apply to business hotels, luxury resorts, or destinations characterized by high-risk or high-urgency service failures. Additionally, individual customer characteristics such as prior loyalty, brand attachment, and personality traits were not incorporated into the model, limiting conclusions regarding heterogeneous customer responses.

Therefore, the conclusions of this study should be understood as context-specific insights applicable primarily to scenic tourism hotel environments with similar consumption patterns and service structures.

Recommendation

Based on the identified hierarchy of recovery effectiveness, managerial actions should be strategically concentrated rather than evenly distributed across all recovery dimensions.

First, institutionalize scenic-resource-based tangible compensation mechanisms. Since tangible compensation is the strongest predictor of repurchase intention, scenic-area hotels should leverage their locational advantages by integrating destination-specific resources into recovery design. Instead of relying solely on room upgrades or generic discounts, hotels can collaborate with scenic spot operators to offer complimentary Qingxiu Mountain tickets, priority entry passes, bundled experience vouchers, or exclusive access to leisure facilities. Such compensation not only restores perceived economic loss but also enhances the overall tourism experience, transforming service failure into experiential value enhancement.

Second, systematize structured emotional recovery protocols. Given the significant role of apology and explanation, hotels should standardize communication processes that emphasize accountability, transparency, and corrective action. Recovery scripts should explicitly clarify the cause of the failure, the steps taken to prevent recurrence, and the hotel's commitment to customer experience continuity. Emotional reassurance should be positioned as a formal component of service recovery rather than an optional courtesy.

Third, reposition response speed as a threshold factor rather than a competitive differentiator. Since response speed did not significantly affect repurchase intention, managerial resources should not be disproportionately allocated to marginal gains in response time. Instead, response speed should be maintained at an acceptable operational baseline, while strategic emphasis is placed on the quality and substance of recovery outcomes.

Overall, the practical implication of this study is not to expand recovery complexity, but to concentrate investment in high-impact strategies—particularly destination-integrated tangible compensation—thereby maximizing resource efficiency in scenic-area hotel service management.

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