Unpacking Customer Rage Elicitation: A Dynamic Model

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ABSTRACT

Unlike prior research that has confined customer rage to a single point in time, this article explores the unfolding of rage over three time periods, at the initial service failure (Episode 1) and two ineffective service recovery attempts (Episodes 2 and 3). In each episode, we examine the association between loss, or a threat of loss, of personal resources (e.g., self-esteem, sense of justice, sense of control and economic resources such as time and money) and negative emotions. We empirically demonstrate for the first time that although rage may sometimes take place at the initial service failure (Episode 1), rage does not tend to be an immediate reaction. Rather, it is when service failures remain unresolved that residual negative emotions are carried forward into the next episode, so that rage is dominant at Episodes 2 and 3. This carryover of negative emotion spirals with more resources being threatened propelling the customer into rage. The authors offer a methodological contribution demonstrating the dynamic nature of appraisals and emotions in a sequence of related episodes in the elicitation of rage. Finally, differences between U.S. and Thai responses are discussed with important theoretical and managerial implications.
“The lawyer was retained to represent me in court … . After paying the retainer ($1000), he was never available. … It was disappointing (Episode 1) … . When I tried to contact him again…, he still would not return my calls. By this time, I was getting angry (Episode 2)… . I finally left one more message and I told him how incompetent he has been … . I would be filing a complaint of abandonment … . (I was) extremely angry with his representation. I felt like he deserved to be punished. …I ended up yelling, screaming and then crying, and told him I was going to try to have him disbarred (Episode 3).” (Female, 36, U.S. legal service)

Customer rage is occurring around the globe negatively impacting customers and employees. When customers experience intense anger or rage, they tend to want to express their emotions, behaving aggressively to others (Bougie, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2003; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2009). Exposure to enraged customers is distressing for employees and can potentially create a negative contagion effect on other customers (Harris and Reynolds 2003). Furthermore, some negative emotions such as rage can result in switching behavior (Roos and Friman 2008; Roos, Friman, and Edvardsson 2009). It is not surprising therefore that customer rage has attracted the attention of both practitioners and researchers. A recent study by the Center for Services Leadership and Customer Care Measurement & Consulting has revealed an alarming number of rage incidents in the U.S. (Grainer et al. 2014). Yet, despite its growing occurrence, customer rage is still not well understood with many organizations ill-equipped to manage customer rage effectively or to avoid rage occurring in the first place.

Customer rage is defined as an extreme negative emotion (e.g., outrage, hate, disgust, fury) accompanied by an expression (physical, verbal, nonverbal) and potentially harmful behaviors (e.g., customer aggression, exit, and negative word of mouth) toward the organization following a series of dissatisfactory service experiences (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2009). Prior studies on intense anger tend to focus on customers’ behavioral responses (Bougie, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2003; Gelbrich 2010) and not the unfolding of rage emotions. Indeed, the process of rage elicitation is not well understood. Research that examines the cause of negative emotions
tends to focus on anger rather than rage (except e.g., Patterson et al. 2009; Roos and Friman 2008). Moreover, the appraisal-emotion link has been viewed as occurring at a single point in time.

Rather than conceptualizing rage as occurring at a single point in time, we unpack rage elicitation over three time periods, empirically demonstrating for the first time that in the majority of instances rage tends not to be an immediate reaction. Rather, and importantly, when service failures remain unresolved, residual negative emotions are carried forward into the next episode resulting from threats to personal resources, such as self-esteem, sense of justice, sense of self control and economic resources such as time and money. This carryover of negative emotion spirals and even more resources are threatened, propelling the customer into rage.

Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1989), and emotion regulation (Thompson 1994), we argue that rage escalates over time from loss, or a threat of loss, of personal resources. COR theory explains that individuals, when faced with a stressful event, such as service failure or a failed recovery attempt, experience a loss or a threat of loss of personal resources. As more stressors are confronted, the individual is “decreasingly capable of meeting the challenge, resulting in loss spirals” (Hobfoll et al. 1996, p326). Further, this theory highlights the sequential effects associated with stressful situations.

We build on Schneider and Bowen’s (1999) foundational work which argues that intense negative emotions are likely to be a consequence of the appraisal of a threat to basic human needs of security, self-esteem and justice, and extend it by incorporating COR theory. COR theory is comprehensive in scope, including other important personal resources, such as time,
money and sense of control, as well as incorporating the dynamic process, thus helping to more fully explicate the elicitation of rage.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, we aim to develop a dynamic process model of customer rage elicitation (Figure 1), centered on personal resource re-evaluation, retention, and re-building. The customer rage elicitation process commences when a customer encounters an initial service failure (Episode 1) and appraises it as a threat to their personal resources. In such situations, individuals strive to retain, protect and build resources that are threatened (Hobfoll 1989). When a service provider then responds with an ineffective service recovery (start of Episode 2), customers re-evaluate their resources, and strive to retain, protect and build their resources that continue to be threatened. This process continues to the next episode. Second, we aim to extend the usefulness of the critical incident technique by examining a sequence of service failures, and investigating the dynamic relationship between customer re-evaluations of threats to their personal resources (cognitive appraisals) and resultant negative emotions.

Our work contributes in at least four important ways. First, using COR theory and building on Cohen and Areni’s (1991) conceptual framework, as well as Schneider and Bowen’s foundational study, we unpack customer rage emotion elicitation, showing that rage tends not to occur immediately. Rather, customer rage emotion elicitation tends to take place over a series of related episodes. Second, we show that rage is propelled by customers’ re-evaluations of their personal resources. Specifically, we identify the nature of resource re-evaluation (i.e., identifying which resources are threatened) in three different episodes (i.e., the initial service failure, the first ineffective service recovery, and the second ineffective service recovery), and then examine the
nature and strength of association between such appraisals and negative emotions in each episode. We show that when service failures remain unresolved, the residual emotions are carried forward into the next episode, spiraling into rage upon re-evaluation of one’s personal resources. Third, our study demonstrates the extent to which national culture (U.S. [Western culture] and Thailand [Eastern culture]) impacts the likelihood of customers reacting in rage. Finally, our work contributes methodologically by extending the usefulness of the critical incident technique to include a sequence of related service failures, enabling examination of the relationship between appraisals of threats to personal resources and unfolding emotions.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. In the next section we review stressful consumption events, emotions, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, and emotion regulation literature. We define the constructs of interest and develop a set of hypotheses that guide the research. We then outline our methods, present the results, and finally, discuss the theoretical and managerial implications, and offer directions for future research.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESES

Stressful Consumption Events

A stressful event is defined as a situation that causes real or perceived threats of losses to individuals’ resources and one which the individual desires to rectify (Lazarus 1999). Service failure and ineffective recovery are stressful service consumption events (Moschis 2007). When service failure or ineffective recovery occurs, customers fail to obtain the expected outcome resulting in a loss of personal resources (Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). The types of customer resources which are at risk depend on the circumstances surrounding the service failure and ineffective recovery (Surachartkumtonkun, Patterson, and McColl-Kennedy 2013). For
example, rude behavior of employees is typically viewed as a threat to a customer’s psychological resources, such as their self-esteem.

*Emotions*

Anger, reportedly the most studied intense negative emotion in business, has been found to be associated with stressful events (Lazarus 1999). When anger turns to rage it is likely to result in destructive behaviors, such as verbal abuse, vandalism, and even physical injury to one’s self and/or to others (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2009; McColl-Kennedy and Smith 2006; Richins 1997). There is evidence suggesting that a double deviation service failure can intensify the level of anger (Priluck and Lala 2009) and can lead to customer retaliation for the offending organization (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009).

The theory of stress and coping (Lazarus and Folkman 1984) identifies two key psychological processes, namely, cognitive appraisal and coping, to explain an individual’s emotional and behavioral responses to a stressful life event. At the cognitive appraisal stage, when a person evaluates an encounter as a threat to their resources or a loss of personal significance, negative emotions can be expected. Cognitive appraisals together with negative emotions then drive the person to respond to the situation (Lazarus 1999). This mechanism is known as the coping process. Individuals deal with stressful situations using different coping strategies (Folkman and Moskowitz 2004), principally: (1) problem-focused coping (attempting to change or alleviate the sources of stress such as planning to solve the problem and confronting the cause); and (2) emotion-focused coping (attempting to make one feel better such as telling friends, seeking family support, and trying to avoid thinking about the problem).

*Conservation of Resources Theory and Emotion Regulation*
**Conservation of Resources Theory.** Hobfoll’s (1989) theory of conservation of resources (COR) builds on the theory of stress and coping and offers a compelling frame to explain customer rage elicitation. A key focus of COR theory is that an individual possesses or has access to valued resources. These resources are categorized into four main groups: (1) “objects”, e.g., pharmaceutical drugs or cars; (2) “conditions” that are valued and sought after e.g., healthy states such as physical well-being and security; (3) “personal characteristics”, or what could be termed “psychological” resources, e.g., positive sense of self, or self-esteem and a sense of justice; and (4) “energies”, or economic resources, e.g., time and money. The basic tenet of COR theory is that individuals “strive to retain, protect and build resources and that what is threatening to them is the potential or actual loss of these valued resources” (Hobfoll 1989, p.516).

Note that these resources, valued by the individuals, can be tangible (e.g., money or rewards) or intangible (e.g., self-esteem). Negative emotions will occur when valued resources are threatened, lost, or insufficiently gained to cover the resource investment. For example, customers may invest their resources (such as money and time) in demanding a service replacement (e.g., calling customer service and waiting on the phone) with the expectation of receiving a resolution (resource gain e.g., be given an upgrade at a hotel or resort). When the company fails to provide effective service recovery, customers experience stress and accompanying negative emotions because their valued resources are threatened or in the worst case, lost. However, we argue that customers are unlikely to experience extreme negative emotion immediately after a perceived threat to some resources if they view the net gain of valued resources to be far greater than their perceived loss.

**Emotion Regulation.** Individuals are capable of altering or even removing immediate negative emotional or behavioral responses (Baumeister and Leary 1995). This is a result of
emotion regulation mechanism through which the intensity of negative emotions is dampened or suppressed (Thompson 1994). Emotion regulation is part of social competence and pro-social behavior. It is a critical function that helps individuals deal with a changing environment.

When customers first experience a threat of personal significance resulting from a service failure, they attempt to regulate their negative emotions. By drawing on the emotion regulation mechanism, customers can delay the display of strong emotions. This emotion regulation together with a problem-focused coping strategy means that many customers are likely to believe that they can procure a resolution to the problem (and obtain a net resource gain), and consequently regulate their emotions, at least to some extent. However, expressing extreme anger and associated harmful behaviors is sometimes unavoidable because the capacity to delay emotions and their expression is overcome by continued emotion-provoking arousals (Baumeister and Heatherton 1996). When experiencing repeated failures (with continued threat to resources), the customer is likely to exhaust their capacity to control their expression of felt emotions.

Accordingly, we propose that, in the majority of service failure incidents, rage emotions tend not to manifest immediately after an initial service failure (Episode 1). Rather, they tend to unfold over time, such that rage emotions are dominant in Episodes 2 and 3. Therefore:

H1 Rage emotions are expected to be more frequently exhibited in Episodes 2 and 3 than in Episode 1.

In the next section, we identify and explain factors that may weaken the emotion regulation function, resulting in customers reacting aggressively.

*Threats to Resources*
According to COR theory, resources are defined as those “objects, personal characteristics, conditions or energies that are valued by an individual, or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, or energies” (Hobfoll 1989, p. 516). We argue that negative emotions, including rage, are driven by the customer’s evaluation of threats to their valued resources, including for example, their economic resources (such as money and time), personal or psychological resources (such as self-esteem and one’s sense of justice), and desirable conditions (such as having a sense of control and physical well-being).

The following section puts forward hypotheses for each set of resources, relevant to service failure and recovery settings, namely economic resources, self-esteem, sense of justice, sense of control and physical well-being.

Economic resources (“Energies”). Economic resources include money and time. When customers pay for a physical good or service, they expect firms to value their financial commitment and protect their economic well-being (e.g., being reliable). Time convenience is especially important to many customers and is sought as a benefit in service experiences (Kleijnen, de Ruyter, and Wetzels 2007). When economic resources are at stake, customers might be motivated to put effort into controlling their emotions in order to have the core service failure rectified or to receive compensation from the service provider. However, several attempts to control oneself and one’s emotions to solve a problem that does not seem to be resolved easily, will diminish an individual’s capacity to stay focused on the goal (Baumeister and Heatherton 1996). Indeed, in a triple deviation, resource exhaustion and anticipation of a net resource loss will weaken the individual’s emotion regulation mechanism. Therefore, we propose that:
H2a Threats to economic resources are associated with rage emotions in Episode 3.

“Personal characteristics”. Perhaps better termed psychological resources, these personal resources include self-esteem and a sense of justice. Self-esteem resource refers to an individual’s sense of self-worth (Rosenberg 1965) and is fundamental to the human psyche. In services a customer’s self-esteem is maintained and enhanced through the quality of interpersonal interactions between service employees and customers (Patterson et al. 2009). When self-esteem is threatened (Baumeister and Heatherton 1996), a severe negative emotional reaction such as anger, hostility, even violent behavior, is likely to occur.

Sense of justice resource refers to a sense that one should receive no less than what one thinks one deserves (Lerner 2003). This valued resource is evidenced in three main areas: benefits or outcomes (distributive justice), process elements (procedural justice), and interpersonal treatment (interactional justice) (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998). When a sense of justice is threatened, there is a perception of being cheated and this can result in immediate high negatively valenced emotions, with the potential desire to punish the source of the injustice (Lerner 2003).

Clearly, some resources are more important than others (Hobfoll 2001). The ranking of the importance of resources is influenced by an individual’s hierarchy of goals. When valuable resources are taken away or damaged, most people tend to experience intense emotions instantly and tend to be less forgiving. Both self-esteem and a sense of justice form part of the meaning of self. If a person’s self-view is not confirmed, it may cause the individual to respond aggressively in order to protect the meaning of self. Moreover, Baumeister and Heatherton (1996) show that ego threats are likely to lead to self-regulation failure. Therefore, we hypothesize that:
H2b Threats to self-esteem and sense of justice are associated with rage emotions in all three episodes.

“Conditions”. This resource refers to valued states and may include for example the state of being in control of a situation or physical well-being. Sense of control resource refers to a belief that one has access to the resources required to achieve a goal, deal with a problem, or control a situation. When an individual has no power or a lack of a sense of control over a situation, negative emotions are expected to arise as well as the associated behavioral outcomes, such as withdrawal or maladaptive behaviors (Bowen and Johnston 1999). Perceived sense of control resources can be enhanced through three aspects—behavioral control, cognitive control, and decisional control (Averill 1973). Customers need to feel a sense of control for a satisfying relationship with service providers. When employees repeatedly fail to provide a satisfactory recovery we expect customers will perceive that they have a lack of control over the situation and feel a sense of helplessness. Hence, threat to a sense of control is likely to be most prominent in Episode 3, and will be a powerful trigger of rage emotions. Therefore,

H2c Threat to sense of control is associated with rage emotions only in Episode 3.

Physical well-being resource refers to being free from threats of physical harm. Consistent with Maslow’s theory, customers cannot be satisfied with service encounters unless they are first in a secure situation. Customers expect firms to provide measures that are designed to help protect their physical well-being. Individuals may become enraged if an organization fails to provide basic security. For example, the public became irate at McDonald’s lack of security that resulted in a 6-year-old girl being injured by a needle in one of their playgrounds (Webster 2010). When employees failed to meet an accepted safety standard (e.g., driving too fast, not
caring about the capacity of a vehicle), or where hospital staff cannot respond quickly enough to urgent medical needs, customers felt that their health was under threat, and hence responded with rage. Therefore, we propose that:

H2d Threat to physical well-being is associated with rage emotions in all episodes.

Dynamic Process of Cognitive Appraisal, Re-evaluation and Emotion Carryover

According to COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), when experiencing a stressful event, individuals will invest resources in order to protect against resource loss, recover from losses, and gain resources. Cognitive appraisal is a dynamic process, meaning that a re-evaluation will always occur when new information is presented (Lazarus 1999). Hence, emotions (and their related behaviors) recur as long as a situation is appraised and then re-evaluated in light of a new event. In services that comprise a series of customer and service provider interactions, we argue that customers will experience a range and a sequence of emotions as the individual appraises and makes re-revaluations of the situation.

When encountering an initial service failure followed by an ineffective service recovery (double deviation), customers experience a series of negative emotions in which the intensity of emotions tends to increase as the situation unfolds (Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock 1999). Based on excitation transfer theory (Zillmann 1971), escalation in the intensity of negative emotion occurs because negative emotions, such as anger, dissipate slowly and an individual tends to carry that emotional state over to a subsequent episode. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H3 In an ineffective service recovery, negative emotion from the previous episode will carry over and be associated with heightened negative emotions in the subsequent episode.
Impact of National Culture

National culture is important here because there is evidence suggesting that service evaluations and expectations of individuals from collectivist and individualist countries are different (Mattila and Patterson 2004). In collectivist societies, such as Thailand, negative emotions are reported as less intense, less frequent, or of shorter duration than in individualist societies, such as the U.S. (Markus and Kitayama 1991). COR theory explains that the differences among individuals in their degree of reactivity to stressful events occur as a result of normative values shared within like cultures or groups (Hobfoll 1989). People from the same culture share a set of values and agreed on set of common values which may differ from other cultures. Collectivist societies emphasize in-group values over those of the individual. While in individualistic societies the focus is on the individual, rather than the group.

Individualistic values tend to encourage open emotional expression (Butler, Lee, and Gross 2007). However, emotion regulation is a habitual practice for individuals from collectivist societies where a key goal is to maintain social conformity and avoid disharmony (Gross and John 2003). Accordingly, Asian people are governed by social norms that mask the expression of their true emotions due to concerns about self-presentation, more so than their Caucasian counterparts (Butler, Lee, and Gross 2007). Characterized by high fatalistic tendencies, that is, belief in fate or luck, Asian people tend to use fatalistic ideas, such as “It’s my unlucky day” to explain an unfavorable event and thereby alleviating negative emotions (Chan, Wan, and Sin 2009).

Therefore, in incidents that might provoke extreme negative emotion, Thais are expected to be more likely than their American counterparts to control, or at least mask, the onset of
negative emotions and quickly de-escalate anger. Given that both Thai and U.S. customers can regulate their strong emotional responses to a certain extent, the occurrence of rage is likely to be minimal in Episode 1. We therefore hypothesize that:

H4 In Episodes 2 and 3, U.S. customers are more likely than their Thai counterparts to express rage emotions.

Control Variables

There is some evidence that displays of negative emotions are influenced by the criticality of the transaction, strength of relationship, attribution of blame, trait anger-temperament, and gender. Although we do not make formal hypotheses about such statistical associations, we capture the potential influence of each variable in our model. First, criticality of transaction may have a positive impact on a customer’s ability to regulate and delay rage expression. When the outcome of a transaction is perceived as important, an individual has a greater incentive to subdue intense negative emotions (Anderson and Bushman 2003) and to act strategically in order to get the problem resolved. Concerning attribution of blame, there is an abundance of psychology and marketing literature (e.g., Bitner 1990; Weiner 1985) suggesting that the perceived cause of failure can influence customers’ emotional and behavioral reactions. Next, strength of a relationship has been found to have a positive impact on customers’ attitude toward a firm’s performance, and propels customers to become more tolerant of service failure (Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003). It also has an effect on how a customer holds a desire to take revenge or to boycott a company (after a service failure) over time (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Regarding trait-anger temperament, individuals have different levels of tolerance to emotion-provoking events. State-trait anger theory (Spielberger et al. 1983) attempts to explain
how individual differences in anger proneness are due to personality traits. Finally, regarding differences in negative emotion expression, women tend to be more emotional and experience higher negative emotions than men (Fujita, Diener, and Sandvik 1991). Therefore, inclusion of these control variables is designed to provide robust tests of our hypotheses.

**METHOD**

The critical incident technique (CIT) has been used extensively and in different forms in service research (e.g., Edvardsson and Roos 2001; Roos 1999, 2002; Stauss and Weinlich 1997). In the main, CIT has been viewed as static and typically used to find the frequency of occurrence of incidents or determinant factors of customer evaluations of relationships. More recent approaches, including sequential incident technique (SIT), switching path analysis technique (SPAT), and criticality critical incident technique (CCIT), are process-oriented designed to capture the dynamic elements. SIT (Stauss and Weinlich 1997) not only captures the critical incident but also the usual (uncritical) incident. SPAT (Roos 1999, 2002) focuses on making the process of the critical incident explicable by analyzing what is happening during the incident and then identifying common reasons from the story that explain the consequences (i.e., actual behavior). CCIT (Edvardsson and Roos 2001) considers time, history and memory of customers when collecting and analyzing critical incidents. It emphasizes the intended behavioral consequences of the customer relationship making it applicable for ongoing relationships.

Although these techniques are useful, they do not adequately capture changes within a given critical incident. Thus we developed a further variation of the traditional CIT that not only captures the process through cognitive appraisal categories but also the outcome of the process, and changes in emotions at three episodes within a critical incident, which we label RECIT
(Rage Emotion Critical Incident Technique). In doing so, we provide a methodological contribution extending prior techniques by: (1) capturing the dynamic process and its outcome (i.e., changing appraisals and emotions) in three episodes within a critical incident; and (2) linking one episode to the next through emotions. Hence the whole process of the critical incident is considered in the analysis, not merely each separate independent episode.

We define a rage emotion critical incident as a series of failed service encounters between the customer and an organization (or its service employee) that ultimately lead to a customer’s extreme emotional reaction accompanied by potentially harmful expressions. To be included, incidents met the following criteria: (1) experienced rage emotions accompanied by expression (e.g., yelling, slamming the telephone, cursing); (2) related to a dissatisfying service experience that were caused by an organization; and (3) occurred in the past 6 months. A six-month time frame is appropriate for respondents to recall service encounters because it is recent enough for reliable recall, yet long enough to include some infrequently visited services (e.g., hospitals) (Keaveney 1995). Although asking customers to recall a past event could result in potential retrieval bias, relatively rare and unexpected situations may be recalled with greater accuracy than those that occur frequently and cause no surprise (East and Uncles 2008).

Respondents were asked to recall a recent customer rage incident and answer a series of open-ended questions including: (1) Describe the circumstances surrounding this incident. Please tell us, in your own words, what happened to trigger these intense emotions. Also, describe any specific factors that may have helped to exacerbate the situation; (2) Describe how you felt at the various points during the incident and why you felt that way. To facilitate providing details of emotions and appraisals at various points during the incident, respondents were then asked to write their answers as sequential statements: (a) After the initial failure (Episode 1), I
felt…………….[allowing at least 10 lines]; because…………[allowing at least 10 lines]; (b) After the organization’s response, (Episode 2) I felt…………….[allowing at least 10 lines] because…………….[allowing at least 10 lines]; (c) After that describe what happened (Episode 3)…………….[allowing at least 10 lines], and how you felt…………….[allowing at least 10 lines] because…………….[allowing at least 10 lines]. Note at least ten lines were physically inserted in between each section of each question to encourage detailed responses. Pilot testing confirmed the appropriateness of this design.

**Questionnaire Development**

*Exploratory Study.* A self-administered questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions was developed based on cognitive appraisal and emotion literature (e.g., Folkman and Lazarus 1980) and from the results of an initial exploratory study of twenty four in-depth interviews. The authors followed a combined etic-emic approach developed by Berry (1989) to understand the psychological phenomena within a single culture and enable cross-cultural comparisons. The authors first began the research in the Western culture, U.S. (emic) to gain understanding of the meanings and relationships of key constructs. Following standard practice, the constructs were assumed to be a valid basis for studying and comparing the phenomenon in other cultures. The authors then applied the constructs to the other culture (imposed etic) to discover the meaning and relationships of the key construct in that culture (Thailand).

*Pretest.* To ensure meaning equivalence of both English and Thai questions, the English-version questionnaire was translated into Thai by a bilingual person whose mother language is Thai and then back-translated into English by a different bilingual person who was equally fluent in both languages (Hui and Triandis 1985). The Thai questionnaire was pretested with 10
respondents to ensure the English meanings were equivalent in Thai. Some modifications were necessary as some words or phrases had no exact comparable Thai translation (Brislin 1980).

**Sampling and Data Collection**

The population of interest was customers who had experienced an extreme form of negative emotion accompanied by some form of rage behavior (e.g., yelling, slamming the telephone, threatening, cursing) following a service failure in the past 6 months. An explanation of intense emotions was given in the instructions (see Appendix). The questionnaire was administered by professional market research companies in Thailand and the U.S.. Thirteen incidents failed to meet at least one of the three critical incident criteria and were eliminated. A total of 435 incidents (223 in the United States and 212 in Thailand) were used in the final analysis. A broad range of organizations were represented with the most common being banks, supermarkets, restaurants, hotels, health care services, utilities, and airlines. The modes of service encounters are “in person” (71.6%), “over the telephone” (27.4%), and “online” (1%). The average age of respondents was 36 years old (Thai 30.8; U.S. 41.1) with 54.5% being female (Thai 51.4%; U.S. 57.4%). The two country samples were similar in terms of education with the U.S. sample including 16.6% with high school only education and 69% with a college degree, compared to 14.6% and 74% in the Thai sample.

For data analysis, we employed content analysis and multinomial logistic regression. The following section describes the methods.

**Content Analysis**

Three judges were provided with the coding scheme of cognitive appraisals and emotions which was derived from previous work (e.g., Folkman and Lazarus 1980). Emotion
words were grouped on the basis of Shaver et al.’s (1987) categorization and Richins’ (1997) Consumption Emotion Set. We classified emotion words from the customers’ written text and only the most intense emotion word was extracted. There is evidence suggesting that more intense emotions have a greater impact on customer satisfaction (van Dolen et al. 2001) and take longer to alter the experience of that emotion (Foa and Kozak 1986) than less intense emotions. Judges sorted an emotion word into one of the seven emotion groups (i.e., rage, anger, disappointment, embarrassment, worry, fear, and surprise). The last five emotion groups were collapsed into a “low level of negative emotion” category, yielding three categories in total - rage, anger, and low level of negative emotion.

One of the judges was an author and the other two were junior Marketing faculty. Despite an *a priori* classification scheme, the three judges were encouraged to develop new categories, if necessary. On completion, the judges compared their classifications. Any disagreement that could not be resolved was given to a fourth judge, who made the final decision. Inter-judge reliability of coding ranged from 91%-93.4% for cognitive appraisal and 92.2%-92.4% for emotions in Episodes 1 to 3. Although these figures indicate high agreement among judges and exceed the accepted benchmark of 80% (Latham and Saari 1984), they may be partly influenced by the relatively small number of coding categories (Fleiss 1971). Therefore, two other measures of inter-judge reliability were used. Fleiss Kappa, which incorporates a correction for the extent of agreement expected by chance and allows the use of multiple judges, was found to range from 0.87 – 0.91 for cognitive appraisal and 0.83 – 0.87 for emotion coding in Episodes 1 to 3, and Perreault and Leigh’s index (Ir) which is robust and more appropriate for the type of data typically found in marketing studies was also used. In our study, the Ir was well above accepted limits, at 0.95 for cognitive appraisal and 0.92 for emotion in Episodes 1 to 3, respectively.
Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis

Multinomial logistic regression is used to estimate the impact of the independent variables on the probability that each of the three negative emotional states (i.e., rage, anger, and low level of negative emotion) would be elicited at Episode 1 (initial failure), Episode 2 (first ineffective or no recovery), and Episode 3 (second ineffective or no recovery). When the multinomial regression model is estimated, one category of negative emotions must be used as a reference category because once j-1 alternative probabilities are identified, the jth is then known. In the current study, rage emotion is set as the base category. The elicitation of other negative emotions (i.e., low negative emotion and anger) were estimated and interpreted with reference to the base category—rage emotion. For the independent variables, dummy variables were used for each category of cognitive appraisals (0 = present, 1 = absent). Country was coded 0 for the U.S. and 1 for Thailand. Anger and low negative emotion from the previous episode were coded 0 for present and 1 for absent. In addition, attribution of blame, criticality of transaction, strength of an existing relationship, and trait anger-temperament were measured using established 5 point scales. For trait anger-temperament, six items (α = .91) were adapted from Spielberger et al. (1983). Factor loadings range from 0.78 to 0.89. Gender was coded 1 for females and 0 for males.

RESULTS

Content Analysis: Cognitive Appraisals and Negative Emotions

This section provides descriptive statistics for the types of cognitive appraisal and negative emotion in each episode. As some incidents had limited details for coding and some reported the problem to be resolved at the end of Episode 2 or 3, the total number of critical incidents was
reduced from 435 in Episode 1 to 415 and 223 in Episodes 2 and 3, respectively. Some respondents (n=32) reported the experience of several ineffective service recoveries (more than two times) before reaching rage. We limited the coding to a maximum of three episodes.

*Classification of Cognitive Appraisal.* Figure 2 shows the pattern of cognitive appraisals that trigger negative emotions for Episodes 1 to 3. Several interesting trends are apparent. First, violations of justice display by far the highest incidence in all three episodes (45%, 55%, and 52%, respectively). When the problem is not resolved in Episode 1, the most noticeable increase in frequency is a threat to a sense of control which jumps significantly from 9% (Episode 1) to 20% and 32% in Episodes 2 and 3, respectively. Also, threats to self-esteem increase from 10% (Episode 1) to 25% and 18% in Episodes 2 and 3, respectively. In contrast, threat to one’s economic well-being drops from 38% to 11% and 12%, over the observation periods. Threat to physical well-being is minimal, with only 11.5% and 2.9% in Episodes 1 and 2 respectively, and not present in Episode 3. Table 1 provides definitions of the threats to personal resources with illustrative quotes of appraisals and emotions.

[Figure 2 and Table 1 about here]

*Classification of Negative Emotions.* Figure 2 shows the frequency of occurrence of customers’ negative emotions at each episode. As expected, rage is the smallest emotion category in Episode 1 (13.6%) but increases dramatically to 70% (McNemar’s test p< 0.00) and 71% (McNemar’s test p< 0.00), in Episodes 2 and 3. On the other hand, low level of negative emotion (54%) was the largest category in Episode 1 but significantly declined to 7% (McNemar’s test p< 0.00) and 10% (McNemar’s test p< 0.00). This supports H1, that is, rage emotions are dominant in Episodes 2 and 3.
In terms of cultural differences, in all three episodes rage was more likely to be reported by U.S. customers than Thai (Episode1: TH: 11.8%, US: 15.2%; Episode2: TH: 66.5%, US: 73.8%; Episode3: TH: 62.9%, US: 79.4%), whereas low level negative emotion was reported more by Thais than U.S. customers (Episode1: TH: 63.2%, US: 45.3%; Episode2: TH: 10%, US: 3.9%; Episode 3: TH: 12.9%, US: 6.5%). Chi square testing confirmed that U.S. customers were more likely than their Thai counterparts to experience rage in Episode 2 (p<0.01) and Episode 3 (p< 0.01). Thus, H4 is supported.

Results of Multinomial Logistic Regression

Table 2 summarizes the results of multinomial logistic regression models where the dependent variable in each model is negative emotion that occurs during the initial service failure (Model 1), first ineffective (or no) service recovery (Model 2), and second ineffective (or no) service recovery (Model 3). Rage emotion was assigned a value of zero and the other emotions (i.e., low level of negative emotion and anger) were estimated and interpreted with reference to rage emotion. The size of the coefficients indicates the extent to which the independent or control variables contribute to the occurrence of that emotion beyond their contribution to the occurrence of rage. The chi-squared statistic is the difference in the -2 log likelihood between the final model and the intercept model. All models are statistically significant beyond the .01 level. The correct classification rates ranged from 58.6% to 74.4% which were significantly better than the chance classification rates.

[Table 2 about here]

The results in Table 2 (Models 1 to 3), by and large, support the general proposition that a perceived threat to fundamental personal resources will be positively associated with negative
emotions at each episode. More specifically, H2a predicts that threats to economic resources will be associated with rage only in Episode 3. Model 3 shows that when threats to economic resources occur, the probability of reacting with rage increases in relation to the probability of reacting with low level negative emotions (b = -1.67, p < .05), but not so when compared to anger. Thus, H2a is supported. Next, H2b hypothesized that threats to one’s self-esteem and sense of justice resources will be associated with rage in all three episodes. The data in Table 2, by and large, support this. As threats to self-esteem occur, the probability of reacting with rage increases in all three episodes (p < .01 to p < .05). For threats to justice, the probability of reacting with rage, rather than a lower valenced negative emotion or anger, holds for four of the six coefficients over the three episodes, with significance ranging from p < .01 to p < .05.

Hypothesis 2c predicts that a threat to a sense of control would only be associated with rage in Episode 3. The data support this prediction with the probability of reacting with rage compared with the probability of low level emotion (b = -3.99, p < .01), or anger (b = -1.22, p < .05). Finally, H2d predicts that a threat to physical well-being will be associated with rage in all episodes. The results for Models 1 and 2 do not support this hypothesis.

In summary, in Model 1 (initial service failure), threats to self-esteem and justice resources are the predominant appraisals driving customer rage. In Model 2 (first ineffective recovery attempt), threats to self-esteem is again the dominant appraisal, although threats to justice resources are also present. Finally, in Model 3, both threats to self-esteem and a sense of control are more likely to trigger rage than anger emotions. Interestingly, in Episode 3 all threats were significant in predicting the likelihood of rage over lower negative emotions. Taken together, these results show an appraisal of a threat to customers’ self-esteem is likely to trigger rage emotions in all three time periods.
Mixed support is found for H3 which predicts that negative emotions in the previous episode will carry over and be associated with heightened negative emotions in the subsequent episode. The results only support the positive relationship between anger from the previous episode and the probability of reacting with rage in the subsequent episode. When anger occurs and carries over to the next episode, the probability of reacting with rage increases in relation to the probability of reacting with anger in both Model 2 \((b = -1.09, p < .01)\) and Model 3 \((b = -2.37, p < .01)\). However, the low negative emotion from the previous episode (both Models 2 and 3) is not significant. This suggests that low negative emotion does not carry over to induce rage or anger in the subsequent episode.

For H4, we predicted that U.S. customers are more likely than Thais to exhibit rage in Episodes 2 and 3. The chi-square tests in the previous section support this hypothesis. The multinomial logistic regression results also show further support and provide additional insights about U.S. and Thai customers regarding the probability of experiencing rage emotions over other negative emotions. From Models 1 and 2, it is clear that U.S. customers are more likely than Thais to express rage immediately rather than low level negative emotions at both Episode 1 \((b = -.77, p < .01)\) and Episode 2 \((b = -1.09, p < .05)\). In addition, when comparing the probability of expressing anger or rage, the result \((b = -1.09, p < .01)\) in Model 3 is significant, suggesting U.S. customers are more likely than Thai customers to express rage after experiencing a second failed service recovery attempt.

For control variables, strength of relationship is significant in Models 2 and 3. The results suggest that strength of relationship can partially act as a buffer in reducing the intensity of anger or restraining rage during the ineffective (or nonexistent) service recovery. Customers with a strong relationship with the offending service organization tend to control their emotions and
respond with low negative emotion ($b = .46, p < .05$) after the first ineffective recovery and only exhibit anger ($b = .40, p < .01$), rather than rage, after experiencing two consecutive ineffective recovery attempts. Criticality of transaction is marginally significant, showing a positive relationship with anger in Model 1 ($b = 0.20, p < .10$) and a negative relationship with low negative emotion in Model 2 ($b = -.32, p < .10$). Criticality can act as an incentive for customers to regulate their emotions and delay rage expression, but only at the initial service failure. Trait anger-temperament is not significant in Models 2 and 3 and only marginally significant in Model 1 ($b = -.22, p < .10$). This finding highlights the importance of cognitive appraisals over personality trait as a key driver of negative emotion in the context of failed service encounters. This finding is consistent with several studies in cognitive psychology (e.g., Ellsworth and Scherer 2003). Finally, attribution of blame and gender is marginally significant only in Model 3.

Additional Analysis

To assess if the type of service impacted customers’ emotion elicitation, we recoded industry types into two categories: (1) continuous services such as insurance, telephone subscription, and banking where customers typically have a membership relationship; and (2) discrete transaction services, such as restaurant, public transport, and car rental, where switching barriers are minimal allowing customers to freely defect if unhappy. Some 72% of the total incidents were classified as discrete transaction services and 28% as continuous. This was then entered as a control variable in the multinomial regression. Results show that the type of service is not significant in any model.

Next, the time interval between the service recovery efforts is different for some customers. For example, customer A experienced the recovery effort one week after the initial
failure while for customer B the recovery effort occurred almost immediately after the initial failure. We randomly coded the time interval for 60 incidents. In each episode we carefully read the details of the sequence of the incident and assigned a value of 0 for the recovery responses that occurred in less than one day, and assigned a value of 1 for service responses greater than one day. To test whether the variation in the time interval has an influence on rage responses, we ran multinomial regression with time interval as a control variable. The results showed that the time interval had no significant impact on the customers’ emotion responses in any episode.

DISCUSSION

Viewing customers as people who have personal resources that they value, want to retain, protect and build, provides useful insights into explicating rage elicitation which heretofore has not been well understood. Our analysis helps capture the dynamic nature of cognitive appraisals and emotions in a sequence of related episodes in the elicitation of rage. The results highlight the critical role of resources’ re-evaluation as a trigger of extreme negative emotions in a “double (triple) deviation” service failure situation. Results also show that cultural norms and values in Eastern and Western cultures impact customers’ propensity to exhibit rage. Several key points emanating from these results are worthy of further discussion.

First, our results (Figure 2) show that rage does not tend to manifest immediately with only 13.6% of respondents reporting rage emotion following the initial service failure. Delay in the onset of rage appears to be the outcome of emotion regulation, that is, where customers try to align their emotional expressions with social norms. However, there appears to be a limit to how long a customer can suppress strong negative emotions. Our results bear this out with rage dominating only when customers have encountered continued threats to their personal resources.
The negative emotions escalate when the problem is not addressed following an initial complaint. In other words, ineffective handling of a customer problem only gets people more enraged.

Second, our analysis method (RECIT) helps capture emotion escalating from one episode to the next, showing that anger has a carryover effect which partly influences rage elicitation in the subsequent episode. Several studies (e.g., Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009; Smith and Bolton 2002) have paid attention to anger to explain customer dissatisfaction, revenge or switching behavior. Our results extend this work, by showing that when customers felt anger due to a failed service/recovery, anger can stimulate rage when followed by a further dissatisfactory encounter. Furthermore, we show that while low level negative emotions, such as disappointment, appear to have less influence on customers’ responses to service failures (Zeelenberg and Pieters 1999), these emotions are common in the first encounter. Caution needs to be exercised because customers’ emotions can change from low intensity to rage if service failures are not satisfactorily solved. Ignoring early warning signs of unhappy customers can mean that customers will experience carryover of negative emotions which can escalate into harmful rage.

Third, as shown in Table 2, all appraisal categories (except threats to physical well-being) have at some point triggered rage emotions. Threats to self-esteem and threats to a sense of justice are the predominant appraisals that trigger rage in all three episodes. According to COR theory, this result suggests that a sense of justice and especially self-esteem, when lost or damaged is difficult to rebuild to recover the loss and regain the resource. Consequently, it is likely that customers would avoid any future contact with these offending organizations. Thus,
considerable care needs to be exercised by front-line service employees to restore a customer’s self-esteem and a sense of justice.

Next, emotion regulation impacts only certain types of threats. The threat to economic resources triggers rage, rather than lower level negative emotions, only in Episode 3. However, the association between threats to physical well-being and rage was not significant in any of the three episodes. This result is not surprising because physical well-being or more seriously life itself may be at stake, and hence customers are motivated to put all their effort into controlling their emotions as their destiny lies in the hands of the service provider(s). By suppressing negative emotions, customers try to cope strategically with the service failure in order to achieve the desired outcome (e.g., continue to wait in order to get an examination by a doctor). Unlike threats to physical well-being, customers may not be able to control their emotions after several repeated threats to their economic resources. Interestingly, customers become less focused on their economic resources (money and effective use of time) or physical well-being after the initial service failure, and instead appraise the service failure as a threat to their psychological resources. This could be a result of a customer’s cognitive appraisal under the influence of negative emotions that are carried over from the previous episode. This is consistent with Lazarus (1999) and Cohen and Areni (1991) who also emphasize the dynamic process of cognitive appraisal and related emotions.

In addition, a threat to a sense of control was only significant in Episode 3. This might be explained in that at Episode 3 a customer has afforded the offending firm three opportunities to rectify the problem, but with no satisfactory resolution in sight. It is at this point that the customer feels that they have lost control over the situation, exhausting their ability to regulate their emotions, thus triggering rage.
Fifth, from a cross cultural perspective, our findings support the view that customers in collectivist societies, such as Thailand, tend to emphasize social harmony, and social norms of keeping emotions in check (Patterson and Smith 2003). Thai customers reported a higher percentage of low level of negative emotion in Episodes 1 to 3 than the U.S. customers. In addition, the result in Model 3 shows that (in Episode 3) Thai customers are less likely than U.S. customers to express rage over anger after multiple failed service recovery experiences. This is consistent with prior research (e.g., Markus and Kitayama 1991) which suggests a greater propensity of individuals from collectivist societies to experience negative emotions at lower intensity or shorter duration than in individualist societies. Perhaps some Thai customers may experience rage after Episode 3, or experience rage in only one episode and after that they may subdue their rage emotions due to their cultural conditioning which values harmony and social conformity (Gross and John 2003), and therefore exhibit low level negative emotion or anger but not rage in Episode 3.

Finally, and counter-intuitively perhaps, high trait anger-temperament does not contribute to rage elicitation. This result emphasizes the importance of cognitive appraisal of the violation of personal resources and emotion residual as the key factors that provoke strong negative emotion. This implies that a customer, regardless of personality trait, is likely to go into rage if an organization continuously threatens or violates their personal resources (especially the need for self-esteem) and does not exercise its responsibility to provide a fair resolution. Finally, the results in Table 2 show that strength of relationship mitigates a customer’s propensity to go into rage. The positive coefficients in Episodes 2 and 3 indicate that when there is a strong existing relationship with an organization they are more likely to express low valenced emotions (e.g., disappointment), rather than rage in Episode 2, and express anger rather than rage in Episode 3.
Managerial Implications

Our findings suggest a number of important managerial implications. First, customer rage can be managed if an organization takes action to remedy the problem in the early stages. For example, BBN Technologies in Massachusetts has developed an interactive-voice-response system across a range of service industries that allows call centers to detect the rising tone of a customer’s voice. This enables an experienced supervisor to intervene to defuse customer emotions before they escalate to anger and then to rage. Next, firms who rely on face-to-face interaction could train front-line employees to similarly detect rising negative customer emotions and immediately alert an experienced supervisor. Employees play a key role in influencing emotional responses (van Dolen et al. 2001). Even experienced supervisors need to be trained in the use of language and timing that neurolinguistic psychology has demonstrated to be effective in defusing anger. For example, a pacing technique where a person’s behavior is mirrored, so the person sees him/herself can be very useful. Pacing can be as straightforward as saying “Mr. X, you look quite upset, let me try and help you”. Also, employees should also be trained to use a ‘Partnering’ technique (e.g., “I can see that you are upset over this situation. I am very happy to work with you to resolve the problem”) to defuse anger. Clearly, these and other similar techniques should be incorporated into training programs and refresher courses for employees who have been with the firm for some time in order to keep these important skills sharp.

While the goal of any service organization is for zero failures, in medium and high contact services where people (employees and customers) are an integral part of the service delivery process, failure is inevitable from time to time. So in general, to minimize failures (and therefore rage incidents) organizations need to systematically identify the root causes of failures and focus on redesigning service processes. In some cases the education of customers is required
to minimize the chances of failure (Tax, Colgate, and Bowen 2006). Next and in a similar vein of preventing failures in the first instance, it is important for organizations to emphasize treating the customer as a person first, and a customer second (Schneider and Bowen 1999). Front-line employees should view a customer as a person who possesses a set of personal resources that the customer strives to retain, protect and build (e.g., economic, self-esteem, sense of justice, sense of control, and physical well-being). A key goal of any recovery strategy then must be to restore those resources (e.g., offering a sincere apology or fixing the problem quickly) to prevent negative emotions from escalating. Importantly, our analysis shows that violation of a sense of justice and particularly self-esteem ultimately led to many rage incidents.

A further consideration to avoid rage incidents occurring, organizations should carefully design services that build customers’ self-esteem. In services customers’ self-esteem is maintained and enhanced through the quality of interpersonal interactions between service employees and customers (Patterson et al. 2009). Service firms that excel in this understand the importance of self-esteem and treat their customers as unique and important individuals, not merely forming a part of a broader customer segment. Many specialty coffee shops, for example, understand the importance of boosting self-esteem of their customers, especially regulars, with front-line employees making eye contact, remembering customers’ preferred brews, and offering a genuine ‘Thank you” for their custom. Another approach is to enact small details (Bolton et al. 2014) that are individually relevant and valued by the respective customers. For example, offering a “human touch” such as providing umbrellas for customers when it is raining or for a bank to arrange to meet with the customer who has just had their wallet stolen and providing them with emergency cash. All of these efforts have the same ultimate goal of making
customers feel a sense of importance, belonging and being valued, and thus enhancing their self-esteem.

Finally, front-line employees need to be aware of cultural differences in emotion expression. Although Asian customers who come from a collectivist society are more reluctant initially to express their negative emotion openly, it is a mistake to assume that they are not feeling strong negative emotions, such as anger or rage, and will not behave in a harmful or aggressive manner. In fact, Asian customers may resist expressing strong negative emotion initially. But if they continue to experience service failure or ineffective recovery, they may well respond as violently as Western customers, albeit at a later point in time.

Limitations and Future research

A key contribution of this article is that we demonstrate empirically for the first time the elicitation of rage over a series of related critical incidents highlighting dynamic aspects of rage elicitation. Furthermore, we provide a methodological contribution through RECIT, that builds on and extends prior CIT measures. However, as with all research we acknowledge limitations. While respondents provided detailed accounts of how they felt at the various episodes, future research might extend this study with the use of quasi-experiments to avoid potential memory bias and control for the time intervals between recovery efforts. Our study focused on the evaluation of resources that give rise to rage emotion during service failure and accompanying ineffective service recovery. In this context, customers invested psychological and economic resources by interacting with a service provider to obtain a resolution. However, the circumstances where the benefits of resource gain exceed the costs of resource investment means looking at COR theory through a different lens. Our study was limited to one western and one
eastern cultural sample. Although the chosen countries provide interesting comparisons, future studies could extend the scope to include other countries. Another interesting area would be to investigate the behavioral consequences of rage, including customer switching behaviors and intentions. While this was not the focus of our study it is an area that might be pursued in future research. We encourage future research into these potentially fruitful avenues.
Figure 1: Conceptual dynamic process model

Source: Adapted from Cohen and Areni (1991)
Figure 2: Re-evaluation of threats to resources that trigger negative emotions at each episode

Re-evaluation of threats to resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-complaint episode following an initial service failure (Episode 1)</th>
<th>First ineffective service recovery episode (Episode 2)</th>
<th>Second ineffective service recovery episode (Episode 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 435</td>
<td>N = 415</td>
<td>N = 223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-esteem</strong></td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justice</strong></td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical well-being</strong></td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (1) Percentages do not sum to 100% because multiple responses are allowed, (2) Threats to physical well-being are not included in Episodes 2 and 3 because occurrences are only 3.4% in Episode 2 and no respondent mentioned it in Episode 3.

Negative emotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-complaint episode following an initial service failure (Episode 1)</th>
<th>First ineffective service recovery episode (Episode 2)</th>
<th>Second ineffective service recovery episode (Episode 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 435</td>
<td>N = 415</td>
<td>N = 223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low level of negative emotion</strong></td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anger</strong></td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rage</strong></td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (1) Percentages do not sum to 100% because multiple responses are allowed, (2) Threats to physical well-being are not included in Episodes 2 and 3 because occurrences are only 3.4% in Episode 2 and no respondent mentioned it in Episode 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Re-evaluation</th>
<th>Personal Resources</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic resources</td>
<td>Feeling a threat to one's economic resources (e.g., money, time, financial security)</td>
<td>Failed service encounters were perceived as (1) inefficient (time-consuming) service experience (“…I was trying to find a sales assistant to find this [bathroom item for refurbishment] and get their opinion … But I could not find one … [until] 20 minutes later …”) (2) inconvenience (“…the store is quite far from my place … I have to drive all the way back … to change the CD”), or (3) unexpected payment (“I was surprised that I need to pay extra money for this medication [which I thought should be covered by the insurance]…”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>Feeling a threat to one's self-worth (e.g., losing self-respect, appearing unethical, appearing to be incompetent)</td>
<td>Threat to self-esteem made customers feel (1) unimportant (“I asked the person for help. They were chatting with each other and I could tell from their face that they didn’t want to help. I felt like I was unimportant to them…”), (2) insulted (“I asked the nurse when I can see the doctor … she scolded me and told me to wait … I felt that I was treated like a dog.”), or (3) humiliated in public (“[at the water service office] I had one document missing … The staff yelled at me in front of everyone. … It was embarrassing…”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of justice</td>
<td>Feeling that what they receive is less than what they deserve (e.g., something unfair happened, feeling cheated)</td>
<td>Customers often described a threat to their justice (fairness) needs when they felt that they were (1) cheated (“I was cheated by the dealer. I was told they would sell me the car at a price [XXX] … Later, they admitted they couldn't sell me the car at that price.”), (2) told a lie (“They installed a satellite on my house and said we had 3 months of free premium channels and we didn't. … We had been lied to…”), or (3) treated unfairly—service providers deliberately tried to break the implicit or explicit promise (“This is unfair. … The phone company changed my service plan without informing me.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of control</td>
<td>A feeling of not being able to achieve a goal, deal with a problem, or control a situation (e.g., felt helpless, powerless [unable to make one own decision or choose freely or control a situation])</td>
<td>Customers often described a situation as one in which they felt (1) helpless (“They [auto repair shop] made a mistake. … My car is forever broken. … I really don’t know what to do next. I felt helpless”), (2) powerless (“I did not understand why I had several overdraft charges … they [the bank] would not do anything. (I felt) powerless… nothing I could do to get rid of the charges …”), or (3) no control or no way out of the problem (“I keep receiving calls from a debt collector … I told them that I made a payment already but they still keep calling… I really don’t know what to do …”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical well-being</td>
<td>Feeling a threat to one's (or loved one's) physical well-being (e.g., physical harm, health harm, safety issues)</td>
<td>Customers felt that (1) their security or that of their loved ones was at risk (“My mom was sick. … We needed a doctor now but the nurse just told me to wait…” or (2) their health is at risk (“The waitress served us the stir fry that has some hair on [it] … it was disgusting.”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Resource categories and negative emotions: illustrative quotes
Table 2: Multinomial logistic regression results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Re-evaluation of threat to personal resources</th>
<th>Pre-complaint episode following an initial service failure (n=435)</th>
<th>First ineffective recovery episode (n=415)</th>
<th>Second ineffective recovery episode (n=223)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat to economic resources</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to self-esteem</td>
<td>-2.28***</td>
<td>-1.77***</td>
<td>-2.93***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to sense of justice</td>
<td>-1.81***</td>
<td>-0.97**</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to sense of control</td>
<td>-1.19**</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to physical well-being</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other main effects variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>0.77***</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-1.09**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger from previous episode</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-1.50***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-negative emotion from previous episode</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait anger-temperament</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.22*</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of relationship</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticality of transaction</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>-0.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution of blame</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-2 Log likelihood: 745.6 | 553.9 | 275.4
Chi-square (df): 76.17***(22) | 83.01***(26) | 76.97***(24)
Correct classification rate: 58.6% | 71.1% | 74.4%
Correct classification by chance: 41.5% | 54.8% | 55.0%

2-tailed test * p <.1, **p <.05, ***p <.01. Note that threat to physical well-being is excluded in Model 3 due to its absence in Episode 3. For purposes of interpreting the results, it should be noted that the ‘base’ dependent variable in each model is rage emotions. So for example in column 1 low level emotions are compared with rage. So a negative coefficient indicates a greater probability of exhibiting rage rather than low level emotions; while a positive coefficient indicates a higher probability of low level emotions.
REFERENCES


Appendix: Questionnaire Introduction

Instructions to respondents

CUSTOMER RAGE SURVEY

Please read the following carefully

The purpose of this survey is to gather information related to customer rage incidents. Customer rage involves intense or extreme emotional reactions to a dissatisfying service experience. These emotional reactions may involve feelings of anger, fury, rage, hostility, ferocity, hate and vengefulness, etc. These reactions tend to be much more intense than feelings of frustration, irritation, agitation, or annoyance. We are interested in customer rage triggered by a failure or action on the part of the organization rather than rage induced by other customers. At times, customers who experience feelings of rage will use verbal, non-verbal, and/or physical actions to express these emotions (e.g., raising their voice, yelling, threatening, gesturing, stomping their feet, pounding their fist, storming out).

In the first section of the survey, you will be asked to recall an experience as a customer in which YOU experienced rage triggered by a failure or action on the part of an organization. In the second section of the survey, you will be asked to answer a series of questions about the incident you described.
Authors’ bios

**Jiraporn Surachtumtonkun**, PhD is a lecturer in the Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Australia, which she joined in 2012. She earned her PhD in Marketing from the Australian School of Business at The University of New South Wales, Sydney. Her research interests include service failure and recovery, customer rage, and cross-cultural marketing. She has published in the *Journal of Retailing* and presented papers at the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference and the AMA Winter Marketing Educators’ Conference.
