

# Trust Recovery Following a Double Deviation

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## Abstract

Although double deviation (i.e., unsatisfactory service recovery) is an acknowledged phenomenon in the field of marketing, little attention has been devoted to determining what actions firms can take to restore consumer trust in the wake of such an event. Across four experimental studies of different populations and service sectors, we show that double deviation intensifies the trust violation generated by the initial service failure and that recovery from double deviations requires fundamentally different strategies than recovery from single deviations. Our results suggest that financial compensation is not an especially effective strategy for double deviations compared to the effectiveness of apologies and promises that the problem will not occur in the future. However, it is important for firms to match the type of double deviation to the recovery strategy, with apologies being more effective for integrity violations and promises being more effective for competence violations.

## Keywords

trust recovery, trust violation, double deviation, promise, apology

## Introduction

The number of complaints on sites such as ripoffreport.com and consumersaffairs.com and complaint boards around the world illustrate that service failures are frequent and even inherent to service encounters. Consistent with this reality, researchers have emphasized the importance of understanding how firms can restore customer satisfaction after an initial service failure (i.e., a single deviation) through recovery processes (Mccollough, Berry, and Yadav 2000; Orsingher, Valentini, and de Angelis 2010; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999). Similarly, customer trust, which is the “expectation that the service provider is dependable and can be relied upon to deliver on its promises” (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol 2002, p. 17), can also be breached in a service failure situation (Laer and de Ruyter 2010; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998; Xie and Peng 2009). A trust violation occurs when the individual (i.e., the consumer) realizes that the recipient of that trust (i.e., the company) is acting in a manner contrary to or that does not satisfy the individual’s expectations (Tomlinson, Dineen, and Lewicki 2004). As a consequence, firms must strive to restore customer trust to maintain relationships with customers (Morgan and Hunt 1994) and to prevent them from avoiding or retaliating against the firm (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009).

If a company is unable to appropriately restore service after a failure, a double-deviation situation arises (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990). Although double deviation (i.e., unsatisfactory service recovery) is an acknowledged phenomenon in the field of marketing, studies of double deviation are surprisingly scarce. As exceptions, Joireman et al. (2013) explore how apology or compensation leads customers to

desire reconciliation more than revenge after a double deviation, and Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002) focus on complaining customers’ overall satisfaction with the firm after two service failures and recovery attempts. However, little attention has been devoted to determining what actions firms can take to restore consumer trust in the wake of such a situation.

Similarly, in the field of organizational behavior, papers dealing with trust violation and recovery have focused on the tactics that the accused party can employ to recover trust (e.g., apology and denial) but largely only after the occurrence of single or multiple failures (i.e., not after double deviations).

Based on the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt 1994), which posits trust as a key factor in developing and maintaining successful relationships, this article elucidates how a company can recover client trust after a double deviation. Trust, unlike satisfaction with complaint handling, has a future-oriented component in that the trustor must gain confidence in the predictability of a trustee’s behavior (e.g., Schumann et al. 2010). Antecedents of trust that have been repeatedly demonstrated are beliefs in the trustee’s competence (e.g., Doney and Cannon 1997), benevolence (e.g., Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol 2002), and integrity

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(e.g., Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990; Morgan and Hunt 1994). Hence, we propose that attributions of competence and integrity play a crucial role in understanding the process of restoring consumer trust in double-deviation situations. Companies should resort to specific tactics that signal competence and integrity to customers. In this study, two tactics were explored in depth: (1) a promise that failures will not recur and (2) an apology.

The findings from these four experimental studies make several contributions to the service recovery literature. First, our findings indicate that the occurrence of a double deviation intensifies the trust violation generated by a single deviation and that a promise that the failure will not be repeated and apology tactics restore trust in a company to a greater degree after a double deviation than after a single deviation. Second, our findings emphasize the critical role of integrity (for apology) and competence (for promise) attributions as the underlying mechanisms through which the recovery tactics impact consumer trust. Third, our studies reveal a boundary condition of recovery tactic effectiveness by showing that a promise is more effective when the violation pertains to competence and that an apology is more effective when the violation is related to integrity.

## Trust Violation

Negative episodes that fail to satisfy customer expectations and that reveal unexpected behaviors can reduce feelings of trust. Therefore, a service failure can represent a consumer trust violation (Wang and Huff 2007) and has implications for relationship creation and maintenance (Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). As noted by Grégoire and Fisher (2006, p. 34), “a service failure may generate feelings of broken trust and therefore be viewed as an act of betrayal.”

Customers’ negative reactions to single deviations can be circumvented by a process of service recovery that is initiated by customer complaints or by the company. The service recovery process involves restoring the levels of perceived justice (Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998), which in turn affect customer satisfaction with complaint handling (Orsingher, Valentini, and de Angelis 2010; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998) and consumer trust (Dewitt, Nguyen, and Marshall 2008; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998). Thus, the literature on service and relationship marketing regards companies’ service recovery efforts as mechanisms by which trust can be rebuilt after violations caused by service failures.

However, when service recovery is poor, trust may be severely eroded. According to Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990), service recovery can represent an additional failure, thereby intensifying the effects of the single deviation. Morgan and Hunt (1994) note that the hostility and bitterness stemming from disagreements that are not resolved properly can trigger consequences such as relationship dissolution.

Studies have reported that unsatisfactory service recovery (i.e., a double-deviation situation) has a negative effect on

consumer trust (e.g., Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998; Kau and Loh 2006; Holloway, Wang, and Beatty 2009). Nevertheless, most research (e.g., Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998; Mattila 2001; Kau and Loh 2006; Holloway, Wang, and Beatty 2009) has focused on comparisons between successful and unsuccessful service recoveries rather than on comparisons between the effects of double deviations and the effects of single deviations. Because an unsuccessful effort to recover the initial service failure violates the customer expectations twice, a double-deviation situation increases the erosion of trust that was breached by the initial service failure. This logic is presented in the first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Trust is violated to a greater extent for customers exposed to a double deviation than for those exposed to a single deviation.

## Trust Recovery

Kim et al. (2004, p. 105) defined trust recovery as “activities directed at making a trustor’s trusting beliefs and trusting intentions more positive after a violation is perceived to have occurred.” In the service recovery literature, some studies (e.g., Choi and La 2013; DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall 2008; Kau and Loh 2006; Weun, Beatty, and Jones 2004; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar 1998) focus on the effects that perceptions of the justice of a recovery effort have on trust. Albeit trust recovery is not the focus of these studies, they identify the effects of service recovery on consumer trust. Weun, Beatty, and Jones (2004) and Choi and La (2013), for instance, found that satisfaction with the service recovery is positively linked to trust; DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall (2008) show that service recovery influences feelings of trust through perception of justice; and Kau and Loh (2006), comparing mobile phone consumers who were satisfied or dissatisfied with service recovery, found that complainers who are satisfied present a higher level of trust than complainers who are dissatisfied. These studies provide evidence that service recovery can restore trust after a single deviation. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has focused on how specific tactics can be used to restore trust after a double deviation.

In this study, we explore how trust recovery occurs through apology and the promise of the nonrecurrence of failures. Whereas apology has been widely explored as a tactic to restore justice during a service recovery process (e.g., Liao 2007), promise has received much less attention in the marketing and service recovery literature. We propose that making a promise and offering an apology can restore trust after a double deviation because these measures can signal a company’s ability and integrity attributes, respectively, which represent relevant drivers of trust. Moreover, these tactics provide the psychological repair necessary to rebuild a relationship after a conflict is negatively solved from the consumer’s perspective, as in double deviation.

According to Schweitzer, Hershey, and Bradlow (2006, p. 4), promises “represent an assertive impression management

approach designed to convey positive intentions about future acts,” and their primary effect is to reduce uncertainty over the transgressor’s future behavior (Dirk et al. 2011). Schweitzer, Hershey, and Bradlow (2006) found that if an individual who is the victim of a violation of trust believes the promise, then he or she will reinstate positive expectations regarding the future behavior of the partner, thus allowing the extension of these expectations for the purpose of rebuilding trust. Likewise, Baumgartner et al. (2009) found that the use of a promise leads to higher levels of trust.

An apology is, in turn, a message issued by the offender to the victim wherein the offender admits responsibility for the violation and for possible damages (Hareli and Eisikovits 2006; Lewicki and Bunker 1996; Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie 1989). According to Davidow (2000), an apology is a form of psychological compensation that restores equilibrium between client and company. For Laer and de Ruyter (2010), an apology is related to guilt; to make an apology, the company must admit responsibility for the failure.

Studies have found a positive relationship between issuance of an apology and satisfaction with service recovery (Liao 2007; Mattila 2001; Smith and Bolton 2002; Smith, Bolton, and Wagner 1999; Wirtz and Mattila 2004). In most of these studies, the apology is used as a tactic to restore justice. For example, Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) and Liao (2007) found that an apology increases perceptions of justice and that through these perceptions it influences consumer satisfaction with service recovery. Hence, most studies have considered how an apology influences satisfaction after a single deviation.

Based on the commitment-trust paradigm, an apology can also restore trust. Once the transgressor accepts and assumes responsibility for the acts that caused the violation, an apology provides cues regarding the transgressor’s wish to maintain the relationship rather than end it (Cremer 2010). In this line, de Ruyter and Wetzels (2000), by exploring the direct effect of an apology on satisfaction, quality, loyalty, and trust, indicate that trust is the only long-term variable for which the statement of an apology appears to be directly important. Laer and de Ruyter (2010) and Xie and Peng (2009) found that an apology has a positive effect on customers’ perceptions of a company’s integrity. Therefore, there is evidence that apologizing can be an important tactic to restore a client’s trust after a double deviation.

These two tactics—promise and apology—are considered psychological tactics, offering emotional instead of tangible benefits for the victim (e.g., voucher/coupon, discount, or credit; Roschk and Gelbrich 2014). After making complaints (e.g., after a single failure), consumers generally expect the company to focus all efforts toward service recovery, that is, to offer something more “concrete” than psychological compensation to repair the failure. Researchers (e.g., Boshoff 1997; Goodwin and Ross 1990) reported that apology was of limited effect after a failure unless it was accompanied by some form of compensation. As noted by Goodwin and Ross (1990, p. 39), “an apology . . . may be perceived as fraudulent if not followed by a tangible outcome.” Hence, it is likely that after a

single deviation, consumers do not consider apology alone and promise to be diagnostic cues for a company’s integrity and competence.

However, after a double deviation, the effect of psychological tactics can be different. Following an unsuccessful failure resolution, the dissatisfied consumer is likely to experience feelings of frustration and anger (Bougie, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2003; Gelbrich 2010); in such a case, through psychological tactics such as apology and promise, the company is able to signal regret and empathy to the client (Liao 2007) and, consequently, enhance feelings of trust. Thus, we propose the following:

**Hypothesis 2:** A company’s apology is more effective in restoring trust in the company after a double deviation than after a single deviation.

**Hypothesis 3:** A company’s promise that the failure will not recur is more effective in restoring trust in the company after a double deviation than after a single deviation.

Making a promise could be a signal that the transgressor has exerted substantial effort to restore the relationship. According to commitment-trust theory, when a party devotes substantial effort to maintain or rebuild a valued relationship with another party, the latter has less intention to leave or avoid the company (Eastlick, Lotz, and Warrington 2006; Morgan and Hunt 1994).

Specifically, attribution theory (Calder and Burnkrant 1977; Kelley and Michela 1980) helps explain the mechanisms by which promises can restore customer trust. Attribution refers to the perception or inference of cause. The logic is that people interpret behavior in terms of its causes and that these interpretations play an important role in determining their reactions to the behavior. Consequences of these causal attributions could be related to behavior, affect, or expectancy (Kelly and Michela 1980). Therefore, based on the promise made by the company responsible for a double deviation, a customer can make initial judgments regarding the company’s competence. The information contained in the promise (e.g., the implementation of a new control system) serves as an indication of the company’s competence. Observing indications that there are no further causes for such failures, the customer may then attribute a higher level of competence to the company.

Therefore, the expectation is that trust recovery occurs through attributions of competence based on the signals sent by the promise. This logic is also supported by the findings of Dirks et al. (2011) who conducted simulations of decision making and found that subjects perceive the signals transmitted by a promise as indicators of competence, which in turn affect trust. Therefore, we propose the following:

**Hypothesis 4:** After a double deviation, the level of attribution of the company’s competence mediates the effect of company’s promise that the failure will not recur on customer trust.

The link between an apology and trust recovery following a double deviation also finds support in attribution theory

(Calder and Burnkrant 1977; Kelley and Michela 1980). An apology for a failure may influence customers' judgments. A customer can regard this action as a signal by means of which to judge a company's values and principles, thereby attributing higher levels of integrity to a company that apologizes. Furthermore, the relationship between an apology and integrity observed by Xie and Peng (2009) suggests that the effect of an apology on trust recovery is mediated by attributions of integrity.

Based on attribution theory, the cues regarding integrity that are contained in an apology lead to an expectation of integrity in the apologizing company's future behavior. Thus, such an apology will lead to attributions of integrity as a characteristic of the company. When a customer then assigns higher levels of integrity to the company, his or her trust, which was violated by the double deviation, can be improved. This logic is presented in the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5:** After a double deviation, the level of attribution of the company's integrity mediates the effect of the apology made by the company on customer trust.

Note that Hypotheses 2, 3, 4 and 5 presuppose direct effects of recovery tactics (apology and promise) on customer trust. These effects have been previously established in the literature (e.g., Cremer 2010; Schweitzer, Hershey, and Bradlow 2006; de Ruyter and Wetzels 2000) and are not the focus of the present research.

## Type of Trust Violation

Although the tactics described above can be employed to rebuild customer trust, the specific type of trust violation<sup>1</sup> (Kim et al. 2004; Laer and de Ruyter 2010) may moderate the relationship between recovery tactics and customer trust in a company. Similarly, Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) and Roschk and Gelbrich (2014) found that consumers believe that service recovery efforts must match the failure type.

Based on the cue diagnosticity approach (Skowronski and Carlston 1987), the type of violation may signal customers so that they judge the company according to the characteristics of the violation. As predicted by cue theory, when the cues are congruent with the situation that the person must judge (i.e., the trust violation), the diagnostic capacity of the information (i.e., recovery tactic) increases, and the information can be employed to make causal attributions concerning the future acts of the sender of the information (i.e., the company).

In this study, we considered two types of trust violation: violations based on competence and violations based on integrity. According to Kim et al. (2004), a trust violation based on competence involves the perception of a lack of skills and techniques on the part of the other party to perform tasks, whereas a trust violation based on integrity involves the perception that the other party adheres to a set of principles and values that are considered unacceptable by the individual.

Based on the discussion above, a promise that failures will not recur is more effective in recovering customer trust when the type of violation is congruent with the tactic (i.e., when the

violation is competence based). The same occurs with an apology, which is more effective when the type of violation is based on integrity. Thus, we present Hypotheses 6 and 7:

**Hypothesis 6:** Following a double deviation, a company's promise that the failure will not recur leads to greater trust when the violation is based on competence than when it is based on integrity.

**Hypothesis 7:** Following a double deviation, the apology made by the company leads to greater trust when the violation is based on integrity than when it is based on competence.

Based on the research hypotheses, our theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

## Overview of the Studies

To test our hypotheses, we conducted four experimental studies. In Study 1 (A and B), we tested the effect of single versus double deviation on trust and examined whether promise and apology are more effective at recovering trust after a single or a double deviation (Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3). In Study 2, we examined whether attributions (integrity and competence attributions) represent an underlying mechanism that explains the process through which promise and apology restore consumer trust (Hypotheses 4 and 5). In Study 3, we explored the role of the type of violation on the effectiveness of trust recovery tactics after a double deviation (Hypotheses 6 and 7).

## Study 1A

The first study was designed to examine Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

### Design and Participants

We used a factorial 2 (type of deviation: single; double)  $\times$  2 (trust recovery: apology; promise) between-subjects design with random assignment.

The participants included 104 undergraduate students who were invited to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire in a consumer behavior laboratory. No screening procedure was used to remove participants from the analysis. That is true for all studies. The average age of the participants in the sample was 22.88 years ( $\sigma = 7.68$ ), and 68.3% of them were females.

### Procedures

To operationalize the study, we asked each participant to recall a hotel that he or she had stayed at least once during the previous 12 months (the participant or someone in his or her family should have booked the hotel to guarantee that there was a certain level of trust between the respondent and the selected hotel). After the participants provided us with the names of the hotels, we surveyed the level of initial trust (T1) of the participants in the hotels. In the sequence, we measured all of the control and demographic variables.



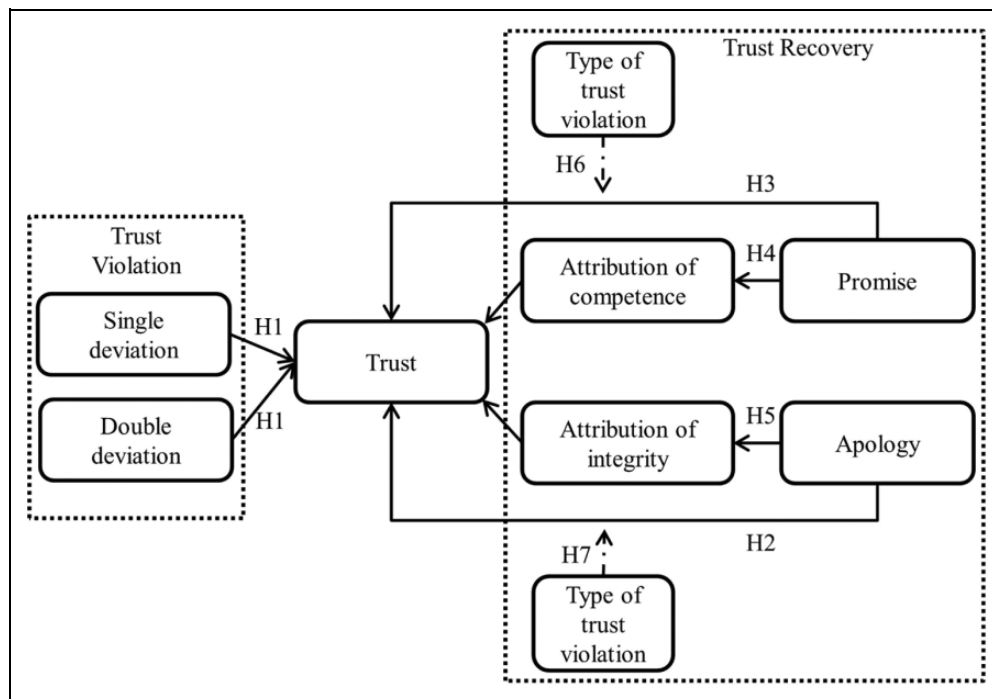


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

One week later, we again questioned the same participants, this time applying failure and trust recovery tactics manipulations. The service failure scenario was based on Smith, Bolton, and Wagner (1999) and Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009). The failure corresponding to the original service failure was identical in the two experimental deviation conditions (i.e., single or double deviation). In the single-deviation condition, only this scenario was presented (the subject did not complain). Notably, in the double-deviation condition, the subject complained and the company failed to achieve service recovery. After applying the deviation manipulation, we asked respondents their feelings regarding trust in the hotel (T2).

Next, we applied the trust recovery tactics manipulation. An introductory text indicated that after 1 week, the participant received a phone call from the hotel manager (or, in the single-deviation context, the participant was contacted by the manager at the hotel's reception desk). Through the message from the manager, we manipulated the trust recovery tactic. The conditions are presented in the Appendix. After the manipulation of the trust recovery tactic, we surveyed the participants' trust levels (T3) and the manipulations checks. To correlate individual participants' answers from the first and second phases of the research, we asked the subjects to provide the last three digits of their academic identification numbers in both phases.

## Measures

Trust was measured using the scale described by Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol (2002;  $\alpha_{T1} = .89$ ,  $\alpha_{T2} = .92$ ,  $\alpha_{T3} = .87$ ). As control variables, we measured the number of times the participant had stayed at the hotel during the last 3 years, how long

the participant had been aware of the particular hotel, the amount of money spent on the hotel, the hotel's number of "stars," the participant's main reason for staying at the hotel, the participant's satisfaction with the hotel, previous recalled complaints for the hotel, whether the participant had complained to hotels before, and the severity of the failure. We measured the perception of failure severity (the failure was identical in all scenarios) using a scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ) from Mattila (2001). Except for failure severity,  $M = 5.46$ ,  $F(1, 99) = 6.214$ ,  $p < .05$ , and whether the participant had complained to hotels previously, 85.6% did not,  $F(1, 99) = 4.548$ ,  $p < .05$ , none of the control variables had a significant controlling effect on trust. Therefore, the two variables "failure severity" and "whether the participant had complained to hotels previously" were included in subsequent analyses. The scale items are presented in the Appendix.

To assess the realism of the scenario, we asked the participants to indicate on a 7-point scale whether the situation presented was realistic. Supporting the realism of our scenario, the realism assessed by the participants ( $M = 5.25$ ) was significantly above the midpoint of four both overall ( $p < .001$ ) and within each of the experimental conditions ( $p < .001$ ). The same results were obtained for the other studies described in this work; this point is therefore not discussed further.

## Results

### Manipulation Check

To assess the perceptions of the tactic employed by the company, we adopted a nominal variable, following Kim

et al. (2004). When the message contained an apology, 96.2% of the participants stated that the hotel offered an apology; when the message contained a promise, 92.3% of the participants stated that the hotel had made a promise that the failures would not be repeated.

### Type of Deviation

To test Hypothesis 1, we measured the change in trust from the initial level of trust (T1) to the level of trust after the deviation condition (T2). In the single-deviation condition, the initial level of trust ( $M = 6.03$ ) was higher than the level of trust after the deviation failure ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $t = 11.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, in the double-deviation condition, the initial level of trust ( $M = 5.88$ ) was higher than the level of trust after the deviation ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $t = 16.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ). There was a difference in the level of trust violation in the single- and double-deviation contexts. In the single-deviation condition, trust decreased by  $-2.64$  from the initial level, whereas in the double-deviation condition, trust decreased by  $-3.24$ ,  $F(1, 102) = 3.971$ ,  $p < .05$ . These results demonstrate that a change in trust occurs after both single and double deviations and, more importantly, that there is a greater breach of trust after a double deviation than after a single deviation.

Notably, the trust measures T1 and T2 were not correlated in either condition ( $p > .05$ ), and there was no difference in the initial level of trust between single and double deviations,  $F(1, 102) = .549$ ,  $p = .461$ .

### Trust Recovery

To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, we assessed recovered trust ( $\Delta\text{Trust}$ ) by measuring the difference between the level of trust after the deviation (T2) and the level of trust after the recovery tactic (T3). The dependent variable was  $\Delta\text{Trust} = T3 - T2$ .

Regarding  $\Delta\text{Trust}$ , there was no effect of the interaction between the deviation condition (single and double deviation) and the recovery tactics (apology and promise) on  $\Delta\text{Trust}$ ,  $F(1, 100) = .263$ ,  $p = .609$ ; furthermore, the recovery tactics did not show a main effect on  $\Delta\text{Trust}$ ,  $F(1, 100) = 1.977$ ,  $p = .163$ . As expected, there was a main effect of the deviation condition on  $\Delta\text{Trust}$ ,  $F(1, 100) = 27.660$ ,  $p < .01$ .

In the apology condition (Hypothesis 2), there was a difference in  $\Delta\text{Trust}$  after single ( $M = .21$ ) and double deviations,  $M = 1.54$ ,  $F(1, 50) = 12.995$ ,  $p < .001$ . After an apology was offered ( $M = 4.30$ ), the trust level (T3) was higher than after the occurrence of a double deviation (T2;  $M = 2.75$ ,  $t = 7.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but the trust level (T3) was significantly lower than the initial level of trust (T1;  $M = 6.04$ ,  $t = 6.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result provides evidence that an apology aids in the recovery of trust after a double deviation but that trust is not completely recovered under these conditions. In the single-deviation context, the level of trust after the apology was made (T3;  $M = 3.55$ ) was similar to the level of trust after the single failure (T2;  $M = 3.34$ ,  $t = .68$ ,  $p = .503$ ), demonstrating that an

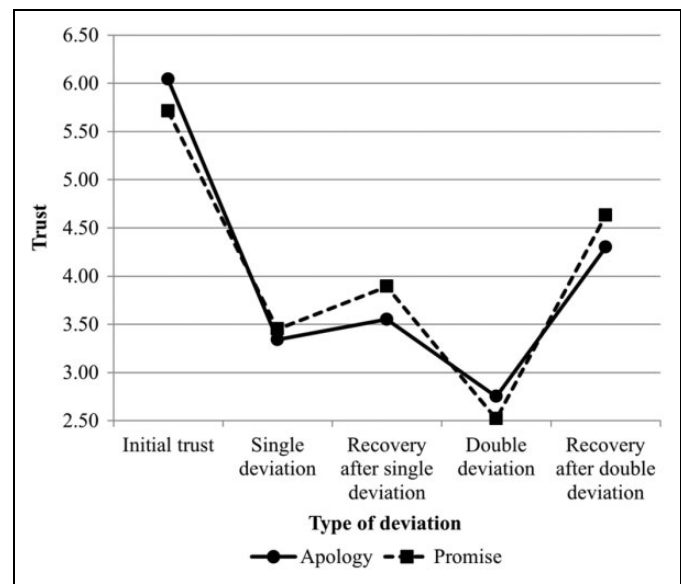


Figure 2. Effect of trust recovery tactics—Study 1.

apology is not as effective in restoring trust after a single deviation as it is after a double deviation.

The same is true for the promise condition (Hypothesis 3). There was a difference between trust recovered after single ( $M = 4.44$ ) and double deviations,  $M = 2.11$ ,  $F(1, 50) = 14.739$ ,  $p < .001$ . The level of trust after the making of a promise (T3;  $M = 4.63$ ) was higher than the level of trust after the double deviation (T2;  $M = 2.52$ ,  $t = 6.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ), demonstrating the capacity of a promise to restore trust after a double deviation. However, the level of trust recovered remained lower than the initial level ( $M = 5.71$ ,  $t = 3.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the single-deviation context, the level of trust after the promise was made ( $M = 3.89$ ) was similar to that after the single failure ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $t = 1.60$ ,  $p = .121$ ), demonstrating that a promise is not as effective at restoring trust after a single deviation as it is after a double deviation. These results are presented in Figure 2.

## Discussion

The difference in the extent of the trust violation observed in single and double deviations demonstrates that a double deviation represents a severe breach of the client's trust in the company, a finding that supports Hypothesis 1. This breach of trust helps explain why relationships between companies and clients are broken and, in extreme cases, why a desire for vengeance may arise (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) that may lead to the sharing of negative information.

However, after a double deviation, a company could employ a promise or an apology as an effective tactic to restore a client's trust. Our findings indicate that both promises and apologies increase the client's level of trust after a company fails in the complaint-handling process; however, trust is not restored to its initial levels. Additionally, in support of Hypotheses 2

and 3, these psychological tactics are more effective at recovering trust after a double deviation than after a single deviation; in the latter case, the service recovery remains in process and other tactics could be applied with more success. It is important to mention that we obtained these findings without offering something tangible as compensation for the failure, a tactic that is tested in Study 2.

## Study 1B

To provide further support for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, we developed an experimental study in another context (Internet provider) using a different population (Mechanical Turk – MTurk subjects) and simulated scenarios (not real companies as in Study 1A).

### Design and Participants

The design was the same as that of Study 1A: a 2 (type of deviation: single; double)  $\times$  2 (trust recovery tactic: apology; promise) between-subjects design with random assignment.

The participants were 130 MTurk subjects (56.2% male, average age 32.5 years).

### Procedures

The operationalization was similar to that used in Study 1A; however, instead of asking the participant to recall an actual company, we simulated a scenario in which a trust violation occurred with Internet service due to an Internet provider failure (see the Appendix). Hence, we did not measure initial trust (T1) in this study. After the deviation (single or double) occurred, we measured trust (T2), and after the trust recovery tactic (apology or promise) was applied, we measured it again (T3).

### Measures

We measured trust using the same scale used in Study 1A ( $\alpha_{T2} = .92$ ,  $\alpha_{T3} = .95$ ). None of the control variables interfered with the dependent variable.

## Results

### Manipulation Check

Using the same items to check the manipulations as in Study 1A, we found that 90.7% of the participants correctly identified the apology and 87.2% correctly identified the promise as the trust recovery tactic used by the company. Additionally, subjects exposed to the double-deviation scenario perceived that the company had little success to recover the failure ( $M = 2.75$ ) than in the case of the single-deviation context,  $M = 4.25$ ,  $F(1, 128) = 35.437$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### Type of Deviation

There was an effect of the type of deviation condition on trust,  $F(1, 128) = 32.522$ ,  $p < .001$ . Specifically, trust after the double

deviation ( $M = 2.70$ ) was lower than trust after the single deviation ( $M = 4.02$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1.

### Trust Recovery

Again, we assessed recovered trust through the difference between the level of trust after the deviation (T2) and the level of trust after the recovery tactic (T3). There was no effect of the interaction between the type of deviation and the recovery tactic on  $\Delta\text{Trust}$ ,  $F(1, 126) = .032$ ,  $p = .859$ ; further, the recovery tactic did not exhibit a main effect on  $\Delta\text{Trust}$ ,  $F(1, 126) = 3.068$ ,  $p = .082$ . As expected, there was a main effect of the type of deviation on  $\Delta\text{Trust}$ ,  $F(1, 126) = 9.561$ ,  $p < .01$ . Specifically, in the apology condition, there was a difference in  $\Delta\text{Trust}$  after single ( $M = .79$ ) and double deviations,  $M = 1.24$ ,  $F(1, 60) = 4.437$ ,  $p < .05$ . Hence, apology was more efficient for recovering trust after a double than after a single deviation, supporting Hypothesis 2. After an apology was offered ( $M = 3.70$ ), the trust level (T3) was higher than after the occurrence of the double deviation (T2;  $M = 2.45$ ,  $t = 7.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The apology also showed an effect on recovering trust after a single deviation because trust after the recovery tactic ( $M = 4.86$ ) was higher than after the single deviation ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $t = 6.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These findings provide evidence that an apology can recover trust in both contexts (single and double deviations) but is more efficient for restoring trust after a double deviation.

The same held true for the promise condition. There was a difference in  $\Delta\text{Trust}$  recovered after single ( $M = 1.03$ ) and double deviations,  $M = 1.53$ ,  $F(1, 66) = 5.202$ ,  $p < .05$ . Based on this and supporting Hypothesis 3, the promise was more efficient at restoring trust in the double-deviation context than in the single-deviation context. The level of trust after the recovery tactic (T3;  $M = 4.46$ ) was higher than after the double deviation (T2;  $M = 2.92$ ,  $t = 9.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ), demonstrating the capacity of a promise to restore trust after a double deviation. Moreover, similar to the apology, the promise also showed an effect on the recovery of trust after a single deviation because trust after the recovery tactic ( $M = 5.01$ ) was higher than trust after the single deviation ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $t = 7.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## Discussion

The findings of Study 1B indicate that trust suffers greater erosion after a double deviation than after a single deviation and that there is a significant difference in the level of trust recovered through apology and promise after single and double deviations. Both trust recovery tactics work well in single- and double-deviation contexts, but the level of trust recovered is higher after a double deviation than after a single deviation. Study 1B extends the results of Study 1A by providing internal (by using a fictitious company) and external (by exploring another service context) validity to the findings. To further generalize the results, we conducted a

follow-up study with 143 MTurk workers in the context of an airline (flight canceled), and the results support our hypotheses.<sup>2</sup>

## Study 2

In Study 2, we examined Hypotheses 4 and 5, which consider the effect of trust recovery tactics and the mediating role of attributions of competence and integrity. In addition, two other trust recovery tactics (financial compensation and third-party endorsement) were considered to validate the choice of examining promise and apology. We also included a condition with no recovery tactic (a control group).

### Design and Participants

We used a single-factor design with a control group with random assignment. We manipulated the trust recovery tactic as a factor with four conditions (the promise that the failure will not recur, apology, financial compensation, and third-party endorsement); the condition of no recovery tactic constituted the control group. In Study 2, unlike Study 1, all participants were exposed to double deviation only (there is no single-deviation condition).

The participants included 132 workers and businessmen linked to retail. These participants were members of a commercial association and attended monthly meetings. At one of these meetings, the researchers invited the subjects to participate in the study. The average age was 36.62 years ( $\sigma = 13.61$ ), with females constituting the majority (65.9%).

### Procedures

We used the hotel failure context and the same experimental procedures applied in the first study. The double-deviation scenario was similar to that considered by Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009) used in Study 1A. In a pretest, we analyzed the double deviation using a sample of 57 subjects from the same study population. We applied the 3-item perceived problem resolution index of Joireman et al. (2013): (1) the hotel staff did not do (did) their best to serve me well, (2) the hotel did not redress (redressed) the situation quickly, and (3) the hotel did not try (tried hard) to resolve the problem. We measured these items after the single deviation ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and after the double deviation ( $\alpha = .80$ ). We found that after the double deviation, the perceived problem resolution was significantly lower ( $M = 1.52$ ) than after the single deviation ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $t = 3.21$ ,  $p < .01$ ); this result indicates that our core scenario represents a double deviation.

After being exposed to the double-deviation scenario, the participants were exposed to the trust recovery tactic. An introductory text indicated that after a week, Peter (the character) received a letter from the hotel. Through the letter, we manipulated the trust recovery tactic (see the Appendix). The promise that the failure will not recur and the apology were manipulated in the same manner as in previous studies;

financial compensation consisted of an offer of a 50% discount on the next stay at the hotel, and third-party endorsement was offered through International Organization for Standardization (ISO 9001) certification.

### Measurements

Trust was measured using the same scale used in Study 1A ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Attributions of integrity ( $\alpha = .87$ ) and competence ( $\alpha = .86$ ) were measured using scales from Kim et al. (2004).

As control variables, general satisfaction,  $\alpha = .83$ ,  $M = 4.73$ ,  $F(1, 126) = 4.192$ ,  $p < .05$ , as well as the perceived severity of the failure,  $\alpha = .77$ ,  $M = 6.01$ ,  $F(1, 126) = 9.850$ ,  $p < .01$ , had significant effects on trust and were included as covariates in the analysis of covariance.

## Results

### Manipulation Check

As in Study 1A, we used a nominal variable. For the five conditions, at least 82% of the participants correctly indicated the tactic used.

### Trust Recovery

Trust recovery tactics exhibited a significant effect on trust,  $F(4, 125) = 7.453$ ,  $p < .001$ . Specifically, the promise group ( $M = 4.55$ ) exhibited a higher trust level than the control group ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The promise tactic led to higher levels of trust than either financial compensation ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ) or third-party endorsement ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, a promise appears to be more appropriate than alternative tactics for rebuilding trust after a double deviation.

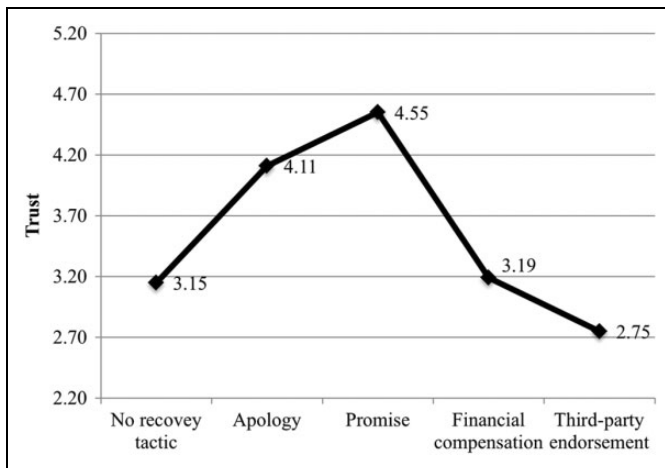
Respondents facing the apology condition ( $M = 4.11$ ) also exhibited higher levels of trust than the control group ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The apology tactic was more efficient than financial compensation ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ) or third-party endorsement ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in restoring trust levels.

Finally, the promise ( $M = 4.55$ ) and the apology ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $p = .25$ ) did not differ in their effects on trust. These results are presented in Figure 3.

### Mediation

To test Hypotheses 4 and 5, mediation tests were conducted following the procedures described by Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010). To test Hypothesis 4, the independent variable was dummy coded (0 = no trust recovery tactic; 1 = promise of nonrecurrence of the failure); the mediator variable is the attribution of competence, and trust is the dependent variable. The path between the independent and mediator variables was positive ( $a = .42$ ,  $t = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the path between the attribution of competence and trust was positive ( $b = .78$ ,  $t = 7.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The indirect effect of a promise on trust through the attribution of competence was also significant ( $a \times b = .33$ ,  $z = 1.99$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the confidence interval





**Figure 3.** Effect of trust recovery tactics—Study 2.

(95%) for the indirect effect, which is calculated using 5,000 resamples obtained via a bootstrapping procedure, did not include a zero or null effect (.04–.69). The total effect of a promise on trust was significant ( $c? = .64$ ,  $t = 2.83$ ,  $p < .01$ ). By contrast, the direct effect of this tactic on trust was not significant ( $c = .30$ ,  $t = 1.86$ ,  $p = .07$ ), revealing full mediation and supporting Hypothesis 4.

We also assessed the mediation of the attribution of integrity on the path between a promise and trust. The path between a promise and the attribution of integrity ( $a = .36$ ,  $t = 1.63$ ,  $p = .10$ ) was not significant; thus, there was no mediation (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010).

To test Hypothesis 5, we used apology as the independent variable (dummy variable), the attribution of integrity as the mediator variable, and trust as the dependent variable. The path between the independent and mediator variables was positive ( $a = .92$ ,  $t = 2.42$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the path between the mediator and dependent variables was also positive ( $b = .55$ ,  $t = 5.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The apology exerted a significant indirect effect on trust ( $a \times b = .51$ ,  $z = 2.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ); the confidence interval of this effect (95% through 5,000 resamples) did not contain a zero or null effect, ranging from 0.13 to 1.11. The total effect of the apology on trust was significant ( $c? = .89$ ,  $t = 2.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ), although the direct effect was not significant ( $c = .37$ ,  $t = 1.24$ ,  $p = .22$ ). These results reveal that the attribution of integrity fully mediated the effect of the apology on trust, a finding that supports Hypothesis 5.

The relationship between apology and the attribution of competence was not significant ( $a = .59$ ,  $t = 1.56$ ,  $p = .12$ ); thus, the attribution of competence did not play a mediating role in the relationship between apology and trust.

## Discussion

Our findings reinforce the idea that both a promise and an apology have a positive effect on the restoration of trust. Furthermore, through the mediation of the attribution of competence, we observed that this effect occurs through a process

that involves both the recognition of cues provided by the promise and causal attribution regarding a company's future behavior. In the same way, the apology provides information on the attribution of integrity, which in turn explains the mechanism by which the apology positively influences customer trust. Furthermore, we conducted a follow-up study with 139 employees of a company. The results support these mediations.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the findings concerning the inclusion of financial compensation and third-party endorsement reinforce the assumption that promise and apology tactics are more effective for trust recovery after double deviations than after single deviations.

## Study 3

In the third study, we sought to test Hypotheses 6 and 7, which propose a moderating role of the type of violation on the relationship between recovery tactics and trust.

### Design and Participants

This study was operationalized using a 3 (trust recovery tactic: promise; apology; no tactic)  $\times$  2 (type of violation: competence; integrity) between-subjects experimental design with random assignment. All participants were exposed to the double deviation.

The participants in this study were 163 Master Business Administration (MBA) students. Their average age was 28.33 years ( $\sigma = 7.12$  years), and the majority of the participants were female (53.4%).

### Procedures

The experimental procedures in the hotel context were similar to those described in Study 1A. In the double deviation, we manipulated the type of trust violation; the violation was either competence- or integrity based. In the competence-based violation, the manipulation presented a failure resulting from the hotel clerk's lack of skills and knowledge of booking procedures. In the integrity-based violation, the violation involved the practice of maintaining a high occupancy rate at the hotel regardless of reservations (values and principles that were unacceptable or incompatible with those accepted by the subject; see the Appendix).

Additionally, we performed a pilot study with 25 MBA students to determine whether the subjects perceived that the competence- and integrity-based violations we considered were associated with company competence and company integrity, respectively. The students reported aspects of the company pertaining to the described violation through open questions. Based on the categorization of the responses in an open question, 92% (80%) of the participants indicated that the competence (integrity)-based violation scenario was related to the employee's lack of ability or skills to perform his job (the lack of relevant ethical principles). Based on these results, our manipulations of the type of violation were considered satisfactory and were used in the main study.

## Measurements

Trust ( $\alpha = .91$ ) was measured using the same scales used in the previous experiments. We also adapted to the scenario of this study and tested the same control variables as in Study 1A and found that none had an effect on trust except the severity of the failure,  $\alpha = .76$ ,  $M = 6.37$ ,  $F(1, 105) = 5.039$ ,  $p < .05$ , that item was thus included in the analysis.

## Results

### Manipulation Check

Approximately 85%, 93%, and 89% of the participants stated the tactic used (apology, a promise, or no tactic, respectively) correctly. With respect to the type of trust violation, 92% and 94% of the participants indicated the type of failure (competence or integrity, respectively) correctly.

### Trust Recovery

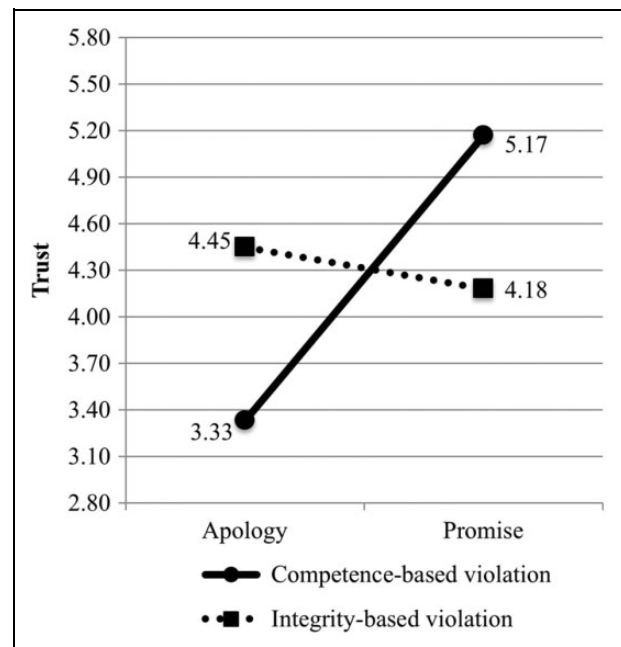
Trust recovery tactics had a significant effect on trust,  $F(2, 159) = 23.310$ ,  $p < .001$ . Compared to the condition with no recovery tactic ( $M = 2.82$ ), the promise condition was associated with a higher level of trust ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as was the apology condition ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### Moderation

To assess the moderating role of the type of violation in the relationship between tactics and trust, the condition of no recovery tactic was removed from the analysis. The trust recovery tactic presented a significant main effect on trust,  $F(1, 105) = 9.095$ ,  $p < .01$ , but the violation type did not,  $F(1, 105) = .063$ ,  $p = .803$ . There was a significant effect of the interaction between the recovery tactic and the type of violation on trust,  $F(1, 105) = 16.949$ ,  $p < .001$ . Specifically, the participants who were exposed to the promise presented higher levels of trust when the violation was based on competence ( $M = 5.17$ ) than when it was based on integrity,  $M = 4.18$ ,  $F(1, 105) = 7.233$ ,  $p < .01$ , thus supporting Hypothesis 6.

However, when the letter from the hotel contained an apology, trust was greater when the violation was based on integrity ( $M = 4.45$ ) than when the violation was based on competence,  $M = 3.33$ ,  $F(1, 105) = 9.893$ ,  $p < .01$ . These results support Hypothesis 7 and are depicted in Figure 4.

We also determined whether a promise is more efficient than taking no action in the integrity-based violation condition. In this condition, the inclusion of a promise ( $M = 4.18$ ) leads to a higher level of trust after a double deviation than the use of no tactic (control group),  $M = 2.96$ ,  $F(1, 49) = 9.807$ ,  $p < .01$ . Similarly, apologizing is preferable to taking no action to restore trust in the competence-based violation, as shown by the fact that the trust generated by an apology ( $M = 3.33$ ) is higher than that generated by no tactic,  $M = 2.65$ ,  $F(1, 52) = 3.897$ ,  $p < .05$ .



**Figure 4.** Interaction between violation types and trust recovery tactics—Study 3.

## Discussion

By reinforcing the findings of the previous studies, the third study showed that both a promise and an apology are reasonable tactics for companies to resolve double-deviation situations. However, the effectiveness of the trust recovery tactics differs according to the type of violation. Specifically, a promise is more effective at restoring trust when the failure is based on competence than when it is based on integrity. The reverse is observed with the apology, which is more effective when failure is based on integrity than on competence. These findings support the idea that when there is congruence of the signals transmitted by the recovery tactic and the signals transmitted by the type of violation, the trust levels are higher than when there is no congruence.

## General Discussion

To date, studies such as that of Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar (1998) have demonstrated that double deviations have a negative effect on trust relative to the effect of a successful service recovery. Based on our findings, double deviation represents a double failure to meet the customer's initial expectations of the service provider, which increases the breach of trust caused by the initial failure.

Few studies in marketing (e.g., Xie and Peng 2009; Laer and de Ruyter 2010) have explored the possibility of restoring customer trust, and although some studies (e.g., Choi and La 2013; DeWitt, Nguyen, and Marshall 2008; Kau and Loh 2006; Weun, Beatty, and Jones 2004) demonstrate the influence of service recovery efforts on trust, to the best of our

knowledge, no study has addressed double-deviation situations or promises that the failure will not occur again as a recovery effort.

Focusing on understanding how to recover trust in double-deviation contexts, our findings indicate that customer trust in a company can be restored using a promise or an apology. Although both tactics can work well after a single deviation (as found by Smith et al. [1999] and de Ruyter and Wetzels [2000] for apology and by Schweitzer, Hershey, and Bradlow [2006] and Tomlinson [2012] for promise in the conflict management context) as well as after a double deviation, they are more effective for restoring trust after a double deviation. Psychological tactics such as apology and promise may be more effective when the conflict between a company and a consumer has concluded and the outcome for the consumer was unfavorable because in this situation the client has feelings of anger and frustration that can only be mitigated by tactics that offer emotional benefits. Moreover, it seems that the client's focus after an unsuccessful resolution is no longer on the complaint and the recovery efforts but on his or her future relationship with the company, whereas after a single deviation the client is still focused on resolution of the failure; in the latter case, tangible benefits may be more effective. Notably, this study was designed to be one of the first to compare the effectiveness of various tactics for restoring trust after single and double deviations. Few studies have compared the actions required to address an initial failure with the actions required in situations in which there was an inappropriate response to this failure. One exception is the work of Johnston and Fern (1999) who distinguished actions after single and double deviations in terms of their effectiveness in generating consumer satisfaction and delight.

Additionally, it is worth noting that trust, which represents an expectation of the service provider's dependability, is future-oriented in nature, and the tactics necessary to recover it may differ from those necessary to restore satisfaction after a complaint. A compensation such as a voucher may restore satisfaction in a specific failure situation; however, provision of a voucher does not signal that the company can be relied upon to deliver on its obligations in the same way that promises about future behavior and apologies do. This is because the latter two tactics are also future-driven; they help restore equilibrium between the customer and the company and provide a basis for future interactions.

In the context of attribution theory (Calder and Burnkrant 1977; Kelley and Michela 1980), the findings of this study indicate that the effect of a promise that failures will not recur is based on attributions of competence, and attribution of competence is the mechanism that explains how this trust recovery tactic operates. Herein, we have extended the findings of earlier studies in organizational behavior on the effect of promises on trust (Schweitzer, Hershey, and Bradlow 2006; Tomlinson 2012) by revealing the underlying mechanism of the tactic and its efficacy in restoring the trust of customers who were victims of failed service recoveries.

Similarly, in this study, we demonstrated that apology is useful in recovering customer trust after a double deviation and that recovery of customer trust after an apology operates through attributions of integrity. Thus, this article has extended the understanding of the effects of apologies on trust (de Ruyter and Wetzels 2000; Laer and de Ruyter 2010) by demonstrating the effectiveness of this tactic in rebuilding customer trust after a double deviation and highlighting its underlying mechanism.

Consistent with the cue diagnosticity approach, recovery tactics had different effects on different violations. The trust recovery tactic was more efficient in restoring trust when it was congruent with the type of trust violation experienced by a customer. Thus, each trust recovery tactic is more efficient within a specific domain of violation.

### *Managerial Implications*

It is well known that companies should develop monitoring systems to detect and resolve service failures and thereby avoid consumer dissatisfaction and exit. However, managers are not always aware of the consequences of these actions, that is, of the occurrence of unsatisfactory service recoveries. Keeping in mind that, as shown by this research, there is deep erosion in consumer trust after a poor service recovery, companies should also develop systems to identify the results of the service recovery process. A simple contact with the complainant after the recovery effort could be part of such a system. If managers detect a double deviation, they can employ tactics such as public online communications to help restore customer trust in an attempt to avoid negative effects on their company (Tripp and Grégoire 2011). Our results demonstrate that, contrary to what some may think, money (i.e., financial compensation) does not buy trust after double deviation; instead, companies can restore the client's trust (at least in part) and maintain the relationship with him or her by making an apology or a promise of nonrecurrence of the failure. However, it is worth noting that whereas making an apology does not require many resources, making a promise requires that the internal problems that generated the initial failure be resolved; otherwise, the promise will be a deception.

Moreover, although trust can be restored by either a promise or an apology, these tactics have different efficacies. Promises have more efficacy in restoring trust when the trust violation is based on a company's competence, as, for example, slow service in an understaffed store or by unprepared employees in on-the-job training programs, a room that is not clean, a meal that is cold, or baggage that arrives damaged. On the other hand, apology has more efficacy when the client perceives the failure as resulting from a lack of integrity or improper company principles and values, such as treating the customer badly because the customer bought a ticket from a daily deal website, having rules that benefit the company written in fine print to make it more difficult for consumers to read them or giving a table reserved by one client to another who arrives earlier at the restaurant to ensure its occupancy.

Therefore, to apply these trust recovery tactics, it is important to first detect the type of service failure that occurred (whether based on competence or on integrity). If the failure was based on competence, after the company identifies and solves the internal problems that generated the perceived lack of competence, the manager can contact the client, explain that the problem experienced by the client was resolved, and promise that it will not happen again. If the failure was based on integrity, the manager can contact the client and apologize. It is important that the manager recognize the failure and the company's responsibility for the problem. The apology must be sincere and must reveal a genuine interest of the company in the client.

Because service staff's ability to interpret the specifics of each service failure and decide which recovery tactic will be used is important, firms should design training programs specific to these findings. A set of actions can be developed jointly with managers and employees to ensure that customer service representatives are able to identify failures in the service system. Frontline employees would be supported by efforts to build a classification of failures and from classroom practice in selecting from that classification to determine the type of failure that occurred.

## Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Although we used three different service contexts in the experimental studies described here, it is important for future studies to expand the findings to other service contexts (e.g., to contexts in which the role of human contact is more pronounced, such as restaurants and medical services).

Longitudinal studies could also be developed to explore the role of the length of time between the occurrence of the trust violation and the application of recovery tactics because this may be an important factor in the recovery tactic's efficacy (Frantz and Bennisson 2005; Lewicki and Bunker 1996; Wirtz and Mattila 2004).

This study was also limited in that it explored only two trust recovery tactics. Other tactics (e.g., denial and reticence) may be explored in future studies. Moreover, the financial compensation used in Study 2 was delayed monetary compensation (a discount on the daily rate for the next stay at the hotel). We suggest that future research consider immediate monetary compensation (e.g., a refund), which, according to Roschk and Gelbrich (2014), would have a greater impact on customer relations and that it also consider different discount amounts (the 50% discount offered may have been viewed as too generous, leading to a sense of guilt and thereby eroding its compensatory effect). Regarding the two tactics studied, future studies could also address whether an apology and a promise that the failure will not recur have different effects on trust when they are combined.

Future studies could also consider the effect of the persuasiveness of the message (conveying the tactic); we did not control for the perceived persuasiveness of the message

in this study, which could limit the results. In this sense, persuasiveness can be manipulated through the eloquence employed to communicate the trust recovery tactic to the customer.

Finally, we did not control for the initial level of trust (except in Study 1A) and focused on the effects of single and double deviations on trust. Hence, new studies could control for the initial level of trust and examine negative emotions and satisfaction as variables affected by it and as mediators of the effect on trust.

## Appendix

### Study 1A

*Scenario for Time 1.* Think of a hotel where you've stayed over the past 12 months and that you or someone in your family selected and reserved.

Write down the name of this hotel:

*Scenario for Time 2—Single deviation (double deviation).* You booked a room at this hotel again, and the day of your trip has finally arrived. After a long and tiring journey, you arrive at the hotel at approximately 3 p.m. and go directly to the reception desk to complete your entry form. The hotel check-in time is 2 p.m. However, when asking for the room you had booked, the hotel desk clerk tells you that you cannot enter your room at that moment, as it has not yet been released for occupancy. The hotel desk clerk tells you that you can only enter the room at 5 p.m.

You then sit at the front desk waiting until 5 p.m. to enter your room. (Double deviation: After receiving this information, you complain to the hotel desk clerk and ask him to resolve the problem. The hotel desk clerk then consults the computer again and verifies some information. He then informs you that he cannot do anything, and you will have to wait until 5 p.m. You then sit at the front desk and wait until 5 p.m. to enter your room.)

*Scenario for Time 3—Single deviation (double deviation).* When you finally go to the front desk to get your room key, the hotel manager, Mr. Mark, tells you:

(Double deviation: Still related to the hotel, imagine that one day after you leave the hotel, the manager Mr. Mark, telephones you and reports the following:)

Good afternoon, sir (a). We are aware that it has not been possible for you to immediately occupy the room you booked due a failure on the part of the hotel. For this reason, I want to inform you that we are modifying our operating procedures to improve customer service and we promise that the failures that occurred during your check in with our hotel will not be repeated in the future (in the apology condition: We take full responsibility for the failure, and for this reason, we wish to express our sincere apology for the failure you experienced).



### Study 1B

*Scenario for Time 2—Single deviation (double deviation).* You must finish some important work for tomorrow and need to use the Internet. You turn on the computer to start working. However, the Internet is not working. So, you call the Internet service provider and listen to an electronic message that says the company has already detected the problem with the Internet connection in your area and is trying to resolve the problem. So, you decide to go to a coffee shop with free Wi-Fi to finish your work, which turns out to be a good decision because the Internet service was not back up until the next day. (Double deviation: Two hours later, you are obviously upset because you still have no Internet and no work done. You decide to call the provider again. This time, you explain your situation and make a complaint to an attendant. The attendant explains that he cannot do anything and that you should wait. Then, you decide to go to a coffee shop with free Wi-Fi to finish your work, which turns out to be a good decision because the Internet service was not back up until the next day.)

*Scenario for Time 3.* Late the next day, you receive a phone call from the Internet service provider supervisor:

Hello. We are aware that your internet connection was not working yesterday. For this reason, I want to inform you that we are modifying our operating procedures to improve customer service and thereby promise that faults, as occurred with you, will not be repeated in the future. (In the apology condition: We are aware that your Internet connection was not working yesterday. We take full responsibility for the failure, and for this reason, we wish to express our sincere apologies for the failure that occurred.)

### Study 2

*Promise of nonrecurrence of the failures/apology/financial compensation/third-party endorsement/absence of tactics—Control group.* We wish to thank for your decision to stay at our hotel between March 2 and 3, 2012. We are aware that you were unable to immediately occupy the room that you had booked with us because of a failure by the hotel./ We have since modified our operational procedures to improve our customer service, and we promise that failures such as the one you experienced will not be repeated in the future./ We take full responsibility for this, and we would like to express our sincere apology for the failure that you experienced./ We would like to inform you that we are giving you a 50% discount off the daily rate for your next stay at our hotel./ We would like to inform you that we have been certified by ISO 9001. This certification attests that the hotel has a quality management system that is committed to the quality of operational processes./ We also wish to inform you our telephone number has changed. The new number is (11) 3208-0501.

### Study 3

*Competence-based violation (integrity-based violation).* Peter makes a complaint to the manager, Mark, telling him what's going on and requesting action. Mark explains to Peter that his reservation was not in fact carried out by the hotel because the employee who received it did not have the necessary skills and knowledge about the booking procedures adopted by the company. (Mark explains to Peter that there are no rooms available at the time because a group of six people without reservations had arrived and were allocated in the rooms not yet occupied to maintain a high occupancy rate.)

### Scales and Items

#### Trust

I feel that this hotel is:

Very undependable/very dependable

Very incompetent/very competent

Of very low integrity/of very high integrity

Very unresponsive to customers/very responsive to customers

#### Failure Severity

The severity of the hotel failure is:

Unimportant/very important

Not serious/very serious

#### Attributions of Integrity

I like the hotel's moral values and ethical principles.

Solid moral values and ethical principles appear to guide the hotel's behavior.

The hotel has a great deal of integrity (moral values and ethical principles).

#### Attributions of Competence

The hotel's employees are very capable of performing their job.

The hotel's employees have a great deal of knowledge about the work that needs to be done in their jobs.

I feel very confident about the hotel employees' skills.

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### Authors' Note

Kenny Basso and Cristiane Pizzutti contributed equally to this article and are listed in alphabetical order.

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## Notes

1. In this article, the type of trust violation and the type of failure are the same because the context is service recovery.
2. We find the same effect of the deviation condition on trust,  $F(1, 141) = 5.290, p < .05$ . Additionally, offering an apology enhances  $\Delta$ Trust to a higher degree after a double ( $M = 1.37$ ) than after a single deviation,  $M = 0.76, F(1, 69) = 5.604, p < .05$ . The same is true for the promise condition,  $F(1, 70) = 7.682, p < .01$ .
3. There is a significant indirect effect of the promise on trust through the attribution of competence ( $a \times b = .23; z = 1.96; p < .05; CI [.01, .47]$ ). The same occurs for the effect of apology on trust through the attribution of integrity ( $a \times b = .59; z = 2.59; p < .01; CI [.16, 1.15]$ ).

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