THE EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND RELATIONSHIP DURATION ON NEGATIVE WOM IN SERVICE FAILURE ENCOUNTERS

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ETHICAL DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have conducted my work in accordance with academic rules and ethical behavior at every stage from the planning of the thesis to its defense. I confirm that I have cited all ideas, information and findings that are not specific to my study, as required by the code of ethical behavior, and that all statements not cited are my own.

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND RELATIONSHIP DURATION ON NEGATIVE WOM IN SERVICE FAILURE ENCOUNTERS

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Master's Program in Business Administration

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Customers often spread negative word of mouth when they are not satisfied with the services they purchased. Customers behave similarly after a service failure. This research firstly examines the effects of relationship quality on negative word of mouth after an internet service failure. In addition, relationship duration is tested as a moderator between relationship quality and negative word of mouth. Previous research found no association between relationship quality and negative word of mouth in the food crisis context, but the current study proves that relationship quality has a negative effect on negative word of mouth in the internet service context. In addition, the results showed that relationship duration did not moderate this association. The implications are also discussed so that service managers can utilize relationship quality after service failures.

Keywords: Relationship Quality, Negative WOM, Service Failure, Relationship Duration, PLS-SEM

ÖZET

HİZMET HATASI KARŞILAŞMALARINDA İLİŞKİ KALİTESİ VE İLİŞKİ SÜRESİNİN OLUMSUZ AĞIZDAN AĞIZA YAYMA ÜZERİNE ETKİLERİ

Kara, Tuğberk

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Müşteriler genellikle satın aldıkları hizmetlerden memnun kalmadıkları zaman ağızdan ağıza olumsuz sözler yayarlar. Müşteriler bir hizmet hatasından sonra benzer şekilde davranırlar. Bu araştırma öncelikle, bir internet hizmet hatasından sonra ilişki kalitesinin olumsuz ağızdan ağıza yayma üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Ayrıca ilişki süresi, ilişki kalitesi ile olumsuz ağızdan ağıza yayma arasında aracı olarak test edilmiştir. Önceki araştırmalar, gıda krizi bağlamında ilişki kalitesi ile olumsuz ağızdan ağıza yayma arasında bir ilişki bulamadı, ancak mevcut çalışma, ilişki kalitesinin internet hizmeti bağlamında olumsuz ağızdan ağıza yayma üzerinde olumsuz bir etkiye sahip olduğunu kanıtlıyor. Ek olarak, sonuçlar ilişki süresinin bu ilişkiyi düzenlemediğini göstermiştir. Hizmet yöneticilerinin hizmet hatalarından sonra ilişki kalitesini kullanabilmeleri için çıkarımlar da tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İlişki Kalitesi, Olumsuz Ağızdan Ağıza Yayma, Hizmet Hatası, İlişki Süresi, PLS-SEM

I dedicate this research to my parents for their continuous love, support, and inspiration in everything I have done and have attempted throughout my whole academic and professional career. I appreciate their constant encouragement and continued pride in me. Without them, I would not have been able to accomplish this beautiful adventure.

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PREFACE

For this thesis, I made a bulk donation to KACUV for survey participants in the research as I promised. There is a voucher in Appendix C.

Lifelong learning has always become a priority for me. Therefore, I attended this master's program and tried to improve myself.

The achievements I have attained will be indicators of what I will achieve in the future.

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22.06.2023

Tuğberk Kara

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SEM: Structural Equations Modelling

PLS-SEM: Partial Least Squares SEM

CB-SEM: Covariance-Based SEM

RQ: Relationship Quality

SF: Service Failure

RD: Relationship Duration

B2B: Business to Business

B2C: Business to Customer

WOM: Word of Mouth

NWOM: Negative WOM

EWOM/E-WOM: Electronic WOM

MWOM: Mobile WOM

FWOM: Face to Face WOM

CR: Composite Reliability

AVE: Average Variance Extracted

HTMT: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

VIF: Variance Inflation Factor

OLS: Ordinary Least Squares

AMOS: Analysis of Moment Structures

LISREL: Linear Structural Relations

SAS: Statistical Analysis Software

HLYRS: How Long Have You Been Receiving Service

ANPEX: Answer for Previous Experience

SBC: Self-Brand Connect

FD: Failure Duration

SATS: Satisfaction

TRUS: Trust

COMM: Commitment

KACUV: The Hope Foundation for Children with Cancer

IND: Indicator

REL: Reliability

Var: Variable

C. Alpha: Cronbach's Alpha

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Significance of the Study

In the relationship marketing literature, there is broad agreement that relationship quality (RQ) is a significant factor in determining the permanency and density of the relationships between the exchange partners and, thus, performing successful relationship marketing (Hennig-Thurau, 2000).

Understanding customer needs to build long-term relationships, and consequently having customers who are intentionally inclined to maintain the relationship, requires high RQ. This requires that businesses collect beneficial and thorough information about their customers, and turn this into superior value, to have a competitive advantage among the rivals (Olavarría-Jaraba et al., 2018).

There is no scientific agreement over which structures constitute RQ, how to measure RQ, what causes RQ, and which outcomes RQ results in (Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019). However, there is agreement that three dimensions, which are satisfaction, trust, and commitment, are necessary to develop, and preserve RQ among the parties (Sarmiento Guede, de Esteban Curiel and Antonovica, 2018). In the literature, many studies tried to investigate RQ in different contexts (e.g., Bejou, Wray and Ingram, 1996; Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990; Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021; Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019; De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci, 2001; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Kousheshi et al., 2019; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler, 2002; Fernandes and Pinto, 2019; Athanasopoulou, 2009; Kim and Cha, 2002; Olavarría-Jaraba et al., 2018; Al-alak, 2014; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016; Wong, Hung and Chow, 2007). This research examines RQ in the internet service context, a particular service industry, and after a service failure (SF).

While SFs and their results have growing importance, to date, to the best of the author's knowledge, only Seo (2012) has researched predicting nWom as a consequence of RQ as a main construct in the food crisis context. This research also draws attention to relationship duration (RD) to measure how the length of a relationship affects the link between the two variables as a moderator.

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1.2. Aim of the Study

This paper aims to provide a fundamental basis for the effect of RQ on nWom. The first-order reflective construct of RQ is tested in the internet service industry. Then the paper draws out a composite model for prediction between the two constructs and this relationship forms the foundation for the empirical research. This study applied a rigorous statistical method to analyze path coefficients among the constructs RQ, nWom, and RD. Thus, two main gaps motivate the research design. First, to the best of the author's knowledge, previous studies have not examined the prediction of RQ as a construct on nWom in the internet service context. Second, after a SF, to the best of the author's knowledge, previous research has not tested RD as a moderator between RQ and nWom in the internet service context (Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021).

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

In the literature review that follows, the author discusses the conceptualization, antecedents, and consequences of relationship quality, how negative word of mouth emerges as a consequence of relationship quality, and the moderation effects of relationship duration between relationship quality and negative word of mouth. In the subsequent sections, the author tests a conceptual model in the internet service context, then theoretical and practical implications are reported. Finally, study limitations and the prospects for further research are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptualization of Relationship Quality

RQ is first empirically tested in a business-to-customer (B2C) context, however, research on RQ in the business-to-business (B2B) setting has increased during the past few decades (Lasrado, Thaichon and Nyadzayo, 2023). More research is done in B2B than in B2C settings because RQ has greater importance where relationships between customers and service providers can develop more slowly, endure longer, expose higher switching costs, and have a bigger influence on results than in a B2C setting (Zhang, Netzer and Ansari, 2014; Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019; Jiang et al., 2016; Lasrado, Thaichon and Nyadzayo, 2023). Previous research has studied RQ from the buyer's side in a B2B context, such as how far a buyer is willing to continue a B2B relationship over time (Lasrado, Thaichon and Nyadzayo, 2023). However, there is still a need for more research in the B2C context because, in recent years, online shopping has significantly increased on B2C electronic commerce platforms that increasingly make shopping cost-savvy and efficient (Miao et al., 2022).

In this study, the definition of RQ is consistent with previous studies on relationship marketing (Palmatier et al., 2007), which is a general evaluation of a relationship's strength (Storbacka, Strandvik and Grönroos, 1994; Smith, 1998a). Although various components of RQ have been examined, such as cooperative norms (Baker, Simpson and Siguaw, 1999), opportunism (Dorsch, Swanson and Kelley, 1998), customer orientation (Dorsch, Swanson and Kelley, 1998), power equilibrium (Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott, 1999), there is no consensus on measurement of RQ (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Fernandes and Pinto, 2019). Furthermore, Jiang et al. (2016, p. 297) mention that there is "a lack of consensus on the dimensions and contents of this construct," and Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler (2002, p. 234) note "there is not a common consensus regarding the conceptualization of relationship quality" (Hennig-Thurau, 2000). Prior studies emphasize relationship satisfaction, trust, and relationship commitment as the key components of RQ (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci, 2001).

A study on B2B financial services in South Africa showed empirical support for the view that customers seem to neglect distinct individual dimensions of such a service, such as satisfaction, trust, and commitment separately; instead, service providers should reconsider these dimensions to establish a more holistic construct to build long-term relationships during service experiences (Theron, Terblanche and Boshoff, 2013). Hence, these three dimensions overlap, under the Gestalt theory, in some service settings, such as the banking industry (Lasrado, Thaichon and Nyadzayo, 2023). Creating enduring, long-term connections with customers in the face of competitors require dedication-based relationships, and according to the social exchange theory, these dedication-based relationships are established on trust (Chang et al., 2012; Ganesan, 1994; Lasrado, Thaichon and Nyadzayo, 2023).

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23), trust exists "when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity." Crosby, Evans and Cowles (1990) tested a model in the life insurance customers including RQ, a two-dimensional construct consisting of buyer satisfaction and trust in the salesperson. The result showed that RQ influenced the customer's anticipated future interaction with the salesperson. The customer's trust is not gained by going against the customer's interests and deceiving the customer with false information (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990).

Therefore, trust is a key RQ construct that refers to confidence, integrity, and reliability in long-term marketing relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Heffernan et al., 2008; Macintosh, 2009). In fact, in buyer and seller relationships, Doney and Cannon (1997, p. 36) define trust "as the perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust." An exchange partner's perceived credibility is their actual credibility; it is the expectation that their spoken or written statements will be reputable (Lindskold, 1978). Next, the degree to which one partner sincerely cares about the well-being of the other partner, and is driven to achieve mutual advantage, is referred to as benevolence; Doney and Cannon's (1997) research aimed to provide a fresh grasp on how trust evolves and how it affects commercial purchasing decisions. They offered four contributions to the trust literature in marketing. First, they provided a cognitive theoretical framework including five processes isolated for influencing the development of trust. These five processes are calculative, prediction, capability,

intentionality, and transference. Second, they evaluated the trust in a firm and the trust in a salesperson in the firm. Third, they looked at how trust affected both the buying firm's present supplier selection choice and its intended future purchase behavior. Finally, they constructed a larger nomological model outlining antecedents and consequences of trust in an industrial buying setting (Doney and Cannon, 1997).

Likewise, commitment is the second essential dimension of RQ. According to Berry and Parasuraman (1991, p. 139), "relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment" in the context of service marketing. In parallel with Morgan and Hunt (1994), commitment is a customer's persistent desire to work with a company and readiness to put in the effort necessary to maintain strong connections. In addition, clients are more likely to continue doing business with companies who make them feel recognized, and who value their unique customer status (Lacey, Suh and Morgan, 2007). If a customer trusts a service provider, the client becomes more committed to the service provider in a B2B context (Gounaris, 2005). Commitment is the determination to maintain the connection and helps to stabilize behaviors over time (Segarra-Moliner, Moliner-Tena and Sánchez-Garcia, 2013). Furthermore, it is a long-term perspective on a specific relationship, and at the core is a readiness to make short-term sacrifices to reap long-term rewards (Lasrado, Thaichon and Nyadzayo, 2023). Two types of commitment stem from different motivations for maintaining a relationship. Affective commitment is a strong feeling of loyalty and belonging to the other person to maintain a relationship because one likes the other party and values the connection (Gouranis, 2005). In contrast, calculative commitment is a negative sense of motivation (Geyskens et al., 1996) based on cost-benefit analysis, which will cause one partner to leave the relationship if necessary, or not to leave and recognize the obligations that tie one party to their partner (Gouranis, 2005).

The third vital dimension of RQ is satisfaction. Initially, satisfaction is generally evaluated by researchers because customers require satisfactory delivery of service to develop successful ongoing relationships (Crosby and Stevens, 1987; Palmatier et al., 2007). Storbacka, Strandvik and Grönroos (1994, p.25) define customer satisfaction as "customers' cognitive and affective evaluation based on their personal experience across all service episodes within the relationship." Researchers generally concur that customer satisfaction is a powerful predictor of behavioral factors, including

repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth, and loyalty (Ravald and Grönroos, 1996; Liljander and Strandvik, 1995). The customer is satisfied if the performance of the service or the product is at the expected level. The customer becomes highly satisfied if the performance is better than expected, or dissatisfied if the performance is lower than expected. Hence, this cognitive dimension, the result of a comparison between perceived performance and expectations, creates a feeling of satisfaction for the customer that forms the affective dimension of satisfaction (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). Roberts, Varki and Brodie (2003) also mention the cumulative satisfaction of a customer, based on the overall evaluation of the health of the exchange relationship (Fernandes and Pinto, 2019). Moreover, customer satisfaction is the assurance that the salesperson will continue to meet the expectations or needs of the customer (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990). In terms of interaction satisfaction, the goal of profit maximization is made easier when a provider ensures a client is satisfied with every encounter and transaction. This promotes both short-term profit and long-term partnerships (Lasrado, Thaichon and Nyadzayo, 2023).

Thus, from the buyer's perspective, both satisfaction and trust are important constructs in an overly complex and uncertain environment, such as life insurance service settings, (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990). Roberts, Varki and Brodie (2003) and Athanasopoulou (2009) state that RQ studies began with Dwyer and Oh (1987), who selected the auto industry to study RQ. Crosby, Evans and Cowles (1990) and Dwyer and Oh (1987) proposed that indicators of a higher-order construct of RQ were relationship satisfaction and trust (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci, 2001). Later, Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpande (1992), Storbacka, Strandvik and Grönroos (1994), and Morgan and Hunt (1994) used commitment as a dimension of RQ in their studies (Athanasopoulou, 2009). Thus, researchers expect an association between higher quality relationships and higher levels of satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Smith, 1998b; Dorsch, Swanson and Kelley, 1998). As an illustration, Olavarría-Jaraba et al. (2018) considered RQ as a reflective first-order construct consisting of three dimensions, namely, satisfaction, trust, and commitment, and aimed to identify the effect of RQ on customer relationship proneness (CRP) in Mexico and Spain. The authors found, using an online survey, that the influence of RQ on customers' CRP, i.e., customers' intention to sustain the relationship with the company is significantly supported both for Mexican and Spanish banking customers, such that

good RQ contributes to CRP in online channels in banking.

SF refers to the service delivery performance failing to reach customer expectations (Hess Jr., Ganesan and Klein, 2003), which may create customer dissatisfaction (Fouroudi et al., 2020). SFs and irresponsible corporate behavior lead to negative opinions among customers (Antonetti and Maklan, 2016). For instance, dishonesty (e.g., intentionally choosing longer routes) is an example of an encounter failure related to a taxi service and may result in negative online reviews (Xu, Yan and Mak, 2021).

Xu, Liu and Gursoy (2018) examined how SFs and recovery measures affect both negative and positive emotions in airline customer reviews online. According to the study, several factors impact the customers' positive or negative emotions. These factors are severity, magnitude, and causes of SFs. In addition, monetary or non-monetary compensation only for current travel, not including future travel, can decrease customers' negative feelings. In addition, rather than focusing on the severity of the SF and compensations, airlines should give more importance to the attributes that affect customers' emotions, such as the magnitude and causes of the SF, speed of recovery, apologies, and positive employee behaviors & attitudes. Moreover, airline type (premium vs budget) and cabin class (business vs standard) have moderating roles on customer emotions. For business class passengers, feelings, whether positive or negative, are higher as a result of SF attributes and recovery actions, except compensations. Next, full-service passengers feel more positive/negative emotions in comparison to low-cost airline consumers, except for monetary compensation for future travel (Xu, Liu and Gursoy, 2018).

Sands et al. (2022) investigated the role of customer engagement in customer responses to SFs that can affect business relationships, revenues, and profitability in a B2B context. Their research is also important because current SF and recovery literature have not sufficiently focused on customer-firm relationships identifying provisions of customers. Especially, they found that high customer engagement can protect the company against the negative effects of small and frequent SFs. In addition, people are more likely to be tolerant of micro failures that are similar to hassles or irritants occurring between individuals during daily life, if they are more engaged with

the firm, though they are small and repeat over time, but impact through accumulation (Sands et al., 2022).

There is extensive literature demonstrating that SF leads to negative customer outcomes (Sands et al., 2022), mostly referring to dissatisfaction and negative emotions (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990; Johnston and Hewa, 1997; Gelbrich, 2009; Li, Qiu and Liu, 2016; Balaji, Roy and Quazi, 2017; Su and Teng, 2018, Harrison-Walker, 2019). After SFs, the risk of customer complaints increases. Hence, customers' unpleasant emotions in response to failures influence their subsequent behaviors, such as nWom (Harrison-Walker, 2019). Thus, SF is generally linked to the satisfaction component of RQ (Fouroudi et al., 2020). Weun, Beatty and Jones (2004) showed a significant negative affect for SF severity on satisfaction, trust, and commitment, separately. The customer's perceived loss is greater when the SF is more intense. Grégoire and Fisher (2006) emphasize the importance of understanding how buyer-seller relationships influence consumers' reactions to SFs because SFs have the power to turn loyal customers into "enemies." The authors contend that the attributions customers make regarding the firm's capacity to control a SF determine how RQ works. For example, when the controllability of a firm over a SF is low, strong RQ customers retaliate less than low RQ customers. However, when the customers believe that the firm can adequately control the SF, the opposite is true, but the difference in retaliation between them is not prominent (Grégoire and Fisher, 2006). Furthermore, Sultan (2018) argued that, in the telecom industry, providing solutions for problems or compensation is crucial in the SF encounters to maximize RQ and Wom.

According to the theory of reasoned action, affective dimensions serve as a mediator between cognitive factors and conative outcomes (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Hence, according to this theory, an antecedent to commitment, satisfaction, and trust in business contexts is the cognitive, performance-based notion known as "service failure" (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006).

2.2. Antecedents and Consequences of Relationship Quality

There are literature review studies on RQ in marketing (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021), financial services (Fernandes and Pinto, 2019), and supply chain (Qian, Seuring and Wagner, 2021) fields. As shown in Figure

1, Athanasopoulou (2009) grouped antecedents and consequences into four and three main categories, respectively.

ANTECEDENTS

Characteristics of relationship parties
Similarity
Formalization
Centralization
Expertise
Market/Customer/Selling Orientation

Relationship attributes
Relationship Duration
Social Bonds
Relationship
Termination Costs
Switching Costs
Cooperation

Offer characteristics
Service Quality
Distributor Channel
Function Performance

The Environment
Environmental
Uncertainty
Environment

RQ DIMENSIONS

Trust

Satisfaction

Commitment

CONSEQUENCES

Performance
Sales Effectiveness
Service Quality

Relational Benefits
Relationship
Strength
Relationship
Longevity
Customer Retention
Customer Loyalty

Satisfaction of two parties
Salesperson
Satisfaction
Buyer's Satisfaction
with Supplier

Figure 1. Antecedents, Consequences & Dimensions of RQ (Source: Athanasopoulou, 2009)

In this research, the author created a new categorization for antecedents and consequences of RQ. This new categorization was inspired by the object-oriented paradigm, a logical way of system design based on entities that are templates of real-world objects and the communication between these objects (Bruegge and Dutoit, 2010). The antecedents of RQ that are frequently discussed in the literature are presented under the private identity attributes, private behavioral attributes, private state attributes, public interface attributes, and public state attributes classes.

The *class of private identity attributes* represents the properties of the parties in the relationship. These include variables like similarity (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990;

Palmatier et al., 2006; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016), salesperson(seller)'s expertise (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990; Wray, Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Bejou, Wray and Ingram, 1996; Palmatier et al., 2006; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016), supplier expertise (Smith, 1998a; Smith, 1998b), service provider attributes (Kim and Cha, 2002; Al-alak, 2014).

The *class of private behavioral attributes* represents the actions, and how one party interacts with the others in the relationship. These include variables such as relational selling behavior (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990), seller's ethical orientation/ethical salesperson behavior (Wray, Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Bejou, Wray and Ingram, 1996), selling orientation (Wray, Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Bejou, Wray and Ingram, 1996), customer orientation (Wray, Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Bejou, Wray and Ingram, 1996; Kim and Cha, 2002), interaction (Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019; Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021), relational orientation (Kim and Cha, 2002; Al-alak, 2014), information sharing (Wong, Hung and Chow, 2007; Nyadzayo, Matanda and Ewing, 2016), disclosing information/mutual disclosure (Kim and Cha, 2002; Al-alak, 2014), conflict handling (Nyadzayo, Matanda and Ewing, 2016), frequency of interaction (Palmatier et al., 2006), communication (Palmatier et al., 2006; Palmatier et al., 2007; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016).

The *class of private state attributes* represents the characteristics coherent with the relationship. These include variables such as relationship duration (Wray, Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Bejou, Wray and Ingram, 1996; Palmatier et al., 2006), relationship termination costs (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), relationship/relational benefits (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Henning-Thurau et al., 2002; Palmatier et al., 2006; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016), relationship investment (Palmatier et al., 2006; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016), perceived relationship investment (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci, 2001; Olavarría-Jaraba et al., 2018), relationship attributes (Athanasopoulou, 2009; Qian, Seuring and Wagner, 2021), shared values (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The *class of public interface attributes* represents the connection of the relationship with the outer world. These include variables such as environmental uncertainty (Kumar, Scheer and Steenkamp, 1995) and environment (Zineldin, 1995), market

orientation (Olavarría-Jaraba et al., 2018), and switching costs (de Ruyter, Moorman and Lemmink, 2001).

The class *of public state attributes* represents how the products or services are seen in the market. These include variables such as service quality (Storbacka, Strandvik and Grönroos, 1994; Giovanis, Athanasopoulou and Tsoukatos, 2015) and after-sales service (de Ruyter, Moorman and Lemmink, 2001).

The most discussed consequences of RQ in the literature are categorized as public state returning attributes, private state returning attributes, private behavioral returning attributes, and public behavioral returning attributes classes.

The *class of public state returning attributes* represents the way that product or service delivery is carried out in the market. These include variables such as sales effectiveness (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990), service quality (Woo and Ennew, 2004), and export performance (Lages, Lages and Lages, 2005).

The *class of private state returning attributes* represents the characteristics coherent with the relationship as an outcome. These include variables such as long-term relationship (Scanlan and McPhail, 2000; Friman et al., 2002), customer retention (Henning-Thurau, 2000; Radia et al., 2022), relationship continuity (Kim and Cha, 2002; Al-alak, 2014), buyer's satisfaction with the supplier (Sanzo et al., 2003) and salesperson's satisfaction (Park and Deitz, 2006).

The *class of private behavioral returning attributes* represents the actions and how one party interacts with the other parties in the relationship as an outcome. These include variables such as anticipation of future interaction (Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990; Wong, Hung and Chow, 2007), cooperation (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), loyalty (de Ruyter, Moorman and Lemmink, 2001; Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021), customer loyalty (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler, 2002; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016), and compliance (Hausman and Johnston, 2010).

The *class of public behavioral returning attributes* represents the actions and how one party interacts with others in the outer world as an outcome of the relationship. These

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include variables such as word of mouth (Kim and Cha, 2002; Al-alak, 2014) and electronic word of mouth (Sarmiento Guede, de Esteban Curiel and Antonovica, 2018; Kousheshi et al., 2019).

2.3. Nwom As a Consequence of RQ

Gilly et al. (1998) state that when choosing a product and a service provider, Wom is crucial. Wom has a considerable influence on consumers' purchasing decisions because, although it is informal communication between customers about purchases, this method provides customers with prominent information about them through Wom (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008; Paisri, Ruanguttamanun and Sujchaphong, 2022). Previous research examines the effects of RQ on positive Wom (Kim and Cha, 2002; Al-Alak, 2014; Ng, David and Dagger, 2011). For example, Al-alak (2014) showed that committed client relationships yield high RQ and, as a consequence, create positive Wom because RQ was found to be associated positively to relationship continuity and Wom. In addition, there was a significant link between relationship continuity and Wom. It was also found that RQ has a positive effect on Wom (Ng, David and Dagger, 2011). In addition, it was found that Wom behavior is affected by functional quality, but not by technical quality. Moreover, confidence and social benefits positively affect Wom. Sultan (2018) found that, in pre-touch, in-touch, post-touch, and service-failure stages, the effects of customer experience on Wom are partially mediated by RQ. More recently, Fernandes and Pinto (2019) found that customer experience has a positive impact on RQ, retention, Wom, and tolerance. In addition, RQ mediates the relationship between customer experience and retention, Wom intentions, and tolerance.

Weun, Beatty and Jones (2004) investigated the main effect of SF severity and its interaction with satisfaction on trust, commitment, and negative Wom. They showed that the perceived severity of a SF had a significant negative influence on satisfaction, trust, and commitment, but a significant positive influence on negative Wom. They also tested the moderating effect of SF severity. The authors found that when there are more serious SFs, distributive justice has less impact on post-recovery satisfaction. Furthermore, they showed that the impact of satisfaction on commitment lessens under more extreme SF circumstances. However, the influence of satisfaction on trust and negative Wom was found stable across changing levels of SF severity (Weun, Beatty

and Jones, 2004). Grégoire and Fisher (2006) studied the effects of RQ after SFs, including negative Wom, but in the different context of customers' desire to retaliate and the firm's controllability over a SF. According to the findings, when there is low controllability on the desire for retaliation, high RQ customers feel much less need for retaliation than low RQ customers. The authors call this case the "love is blind" effect. High controllability on the desire for retaliation causes higher RQ customers to seek a higher level of retaliation than low RQ customers. The authors call this case the "love becomes hate" effect. Furthermore, the results supported the view that a need for retaliation increases negative Wom, leading to complaints to third-party organization, and thus affecting sales (Grégoire and Fisher, 2006).

Xie and Heung (2012) studied RQ in a branding context and found that it negatively affects consumers' emotional responses. In addition, consumers' negative emotions affect customers' intentions measured by positive Wom and repurchasing. The authors found that brand RQ can help the hotel organization protect itself from the effects of SFs. Hotel customers with high brand RQ would experience fewer negative emotions. Furthermore, brand RQ has a greater influence on customers' future behavioral intentions than present failure or bad feelings, therefore, despite these factors, positive future behavioral intentions would be maintained. In addition, Hu (2018) argued that service failure might lead customers to consider the service providers as greedy or incompetent because of their emotional, utilitarian, and oppositional attitudes toward relationship marketing in a restaurant setting. In addition, the author found that both perceived greed and incompetence had positive effects on negative Wom intentions.

eWom is defined as the informal communications between customers and others concerning evaluations of goods, services, and/or retailers in the online context (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler, 2002). In this context, Sarmiento Guede, de Esteban Curiel and Antonovica (2018) argued that e-satisfaction, e-trust, and e-commitment affect eWom. Similarly, Kousheshi et al. (2019) demonstrated a favorable association existing between website quality, online relationship bonds, and seller reputation. The findings also indicated that online RQ has a favorable impact on online customer reviews, online customer loyalty, and online customer share and eWom. On the other hand, Tsao and Hsieh (2012) investigated how a company's RQ in the physical marketplace affects positive e-Wom, showing that when customers'

satisfaction or trust transforms into a commitment to the company, they spread eWom. They suggested product type to be a moderator, there was no significant moderation of customer commitment's influence on positive eWom communication. Recently, Kousheshi et al. (2019) argued that only a few aspects, such as entertainment, convenience, pleasure, security, risk-taking, and customer relationship investment, have been discussed by scholars in terms of factors related to RQ in internet-based transactions. In addition, factors like online loyalty and eWom have mostly been studied in terms of the consequences of online RQ (Kousheshi et al., 2019). More recently, in a telecommunication service context, Oraedu et al. (2021) showed the effects of RQ's trust and satisfaction dimensions on both positive face-to-face Wom (fWom) and eWom. Velicia-Martin et al. (2023) studied customers' mobile shopping on smartphones and recommend this channel to others with mobile Wom (mWom). A significant link was found between mWom and affective commitment.

Seo (2012) explored the effects of RQ on consumer responses related to food safety information shared on social media. Results showed that there is no statistically significant relationship between RQ and negative Wom intention. In addition, RQ was manipulated in terms of whether the information was provided by a trusted friend (high RQ) or an unknown person (low RQ), with the content of the posts, and the credibility of the posts. Migacz (2018) studied negative Wom in the context of service recovery in the hospitality industry. The results showed that both post-recovery satisfaction and satisfaction with the firm significantly predict negative Wom. In addition, trust did not have a significant moderating effect between negative Wom, and both post-recovery satisfaction and satisfaction with the firm. Migacz (2018) examined the individual effects of the two dimensions of RQ, namely, satisfaction and trust, on negative Wom, however, the current study focused on the construct of RQ's prediction of negative Wom in the internet service context.

To the best of the author's knowledge, the effect of RQ on negative Wom has not been studied in the internet service industry. Previously, studies have focused on the relationships between RQ and positive Wom (Kim and Cha, 2002; Al-Alak, 2014; Ng, David and Dagger, 2011), eWom (Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016; Sarmiento Guede, de Esteban Curiel and Antonovica, 2018; Kousheshi et al., 2019; Oraedu et al., 2021), mWom (Velicia-Martin et al., 2023) and positive eWom (Purnasari and Yuliando,

2015; Tsao and Hsieh, 2012). The relationship between RQ and negative Wom was also found not significant in a food crisis context (Seo, 2012). However, it was shown that overall satisfaction has a negative effect on negative Wom in service recovery management (Migacz, 2018). Therefore, this study looks at this gap found in the literature by examining RQ as a first-order reflective construct, resulting in negative Wom in an internet service context when a SF exists. Based on the preceding discussion, it is hypothesized as follows:

H1. RQ leads to decreased negative Wom.

2.4. Influence of RD on nWom

RD is defined by Palmatier et al. (2006), as "the length of time that a relationship between exchange partners has existed" (p. 140). Thus, RD means the length of the relationship after the customer starts to use the service or the product (Verhoef, Franses and Hoekstra, 2001; Béal, Sabadie and Grégoire, 2019). The length of the relationship is a critical element to determine the bonding between the customer and the service provider (Gouranis and Venetis, 2002). Palmatier et al. (2007) demonstrated the positive effect of RD in buyer-salesperson relationships on the buyer RQ with the salesperson. This is consistent with the previous literature, because time allows both sides to make better predictions and strengthen the relationship (Anderson and Weitz, 1989; Verma, Sharma and Sheth, 2016). Verma, Sharma and Sheth (2016) studied antecedents of relationships in online retailing but could not identify RD and interaction frequency as antecedents.

On the other hand, Itani, El Haddad and Kalra (2020) state that relationship duration (RD) is a key relational characteristic that can influence and modify customers' relationships with businesses. It is highlighted that ignoring time dynamics within customer-service company relationships might lead to a lack of knowledge about the service exchange between service company personnel and their customers. The researchers also point out that time is a significant situational feature, because of RD's significant part in social interchange and connections between customers and service providers, as well as the conflicting findings about its moderating effects in the research. Similarly, according to Chang et al. (2015), a longer relationship can improve a firm's capacity to anticipate its partner's behavior and contribute to the assessment of the partnership's level of quality. Loyal customers with longer relationships are more

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familiar with the service levels, receive more benefits, and are better positioned to appreciate RQ, so a company's actions are anticipated to increase RQ, in contrast to acquiring new customers (Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021). Also, it has been shown that the duration of the relationship is critical for both quality of service, and also successful bonding with customers in building trust in industrial service relationships (Gounaris and Venetis, 2002).

According to Wangenheim (2005), as service customers' product involvement increases, their likelihood of spreading nWom increases for a failed service. Because the duration of a relationship is significantly associated with long-term behavioral intentions, dissatisfied customers who are highly involved with a service would be more likely to diffuse nWom (Sakiyama et al., 2023).

Donthu et al. (2021) conducted a literature review on eWom and emphasized that customers' perceptions may depend on the nature of the service provider-customer relationship. Because perceptions vary with respect to the length and quality of the relationship and consumers' characteristics in services marketing. Therefore, service providers should foresee negative Wom affecting the customer's intentions due to RD, to grasp the effectiveness of services that are intangible without physical evidence (Donthu et al., 2021).

Hence, the above discussions lead to the following hypothesis:
H2. RD leads to decreased negative Wom.

2.5. Moderating Effect of Relationship Duration

Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran (2021) tested RD as a moderator in e-tails, but in this type of relationship, experience between the partners is based only on tangible merchandise sold online. However, the authors only examined e-tailers of services, and they highlight the need to seek others, such as digital banks and online insurance policy sellers, because consumer behaviors may differ for products and services (Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021). In another study, Dahana, Miwa and Morisada (2019), studying the effects of cross-buying behavior in an online shopping mall, found that RD appeared to reduce cross-buying's effects on spending and purchase rate.

Moreover, as Béal, Sabadie and Grégoire (2019) stated, research examining the moderator effects of RD in the service recovery literature is limited. Therefore, the authors examined the effects of relationship length in a service recovery context in the retail banking sector, a specific contractual service sector. Considering the results, multi-banking consumers are more likely to switch banks when a service fails in the setting of short or average relationships, since a successful service recovery is less likely to win them back. For consumers with longer ties, effective recovery and multi-banking had little bearing on cross-buying change and profitability. Hence, a potential inertia effect over time was considered to exist, and a non-linear relationship length was found to interact with service recovery satisfaction, which could predict trends in cross-buying (Béal, Sabadie and Grégoire, 2019).

Donthu et al. (2021), in the literature review of eWom, found no study where RD was studied as a moderator on eWom. Moreover, Fouroudi et al. (2020) did not mention RD in SF literature. However, Wetzel, Haenel and Hess (2022) studied RD as a moderator, heightening the negative effect of service contract termination explanation on negative Wom. They found only that an explanation variable reduces negative Wom more effectively the longer the relationship with the consumer exists, in contrast to the link where RD does not have a significant moderator effect between preannouncement and negative Wom variables. Nonetheless, Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran (2021) studied RD as a moderator between the effects of RQ and self-brand connect (SBC). SBC is the association between the brand and the person as a consequence of connecting the brand to the customer's personality, own image, or style and populating this new self, which is oriented on the brand to incorporate the brand into their self-concept, to the outside world, hence forming the self-brand connection (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). Specifically, compared to new customers, the impact of RQ on SBC is accelerated for customer relationships with a longer history of e-tails. Because RD positively moderates the effects of RQ on SBC, the impact of RQ is greater for long term customers on SBC compared to newcomers. Therefore, the firms should do their best to retain customers, preserve satisfaction, and form a connection between the brand and the customer. Since RD has hardly ever been tested as a moderator in an online context (Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021), current research is aimed to fill this gap by testing RD as a moderator between RQ and negative Wom in the case of a SF.

Based on the above arguments, it is expected that the influence of the quality of the relationship on the degree of negative Wom will vary on the length of the relationship between the service provider and the customer. Hence, it is expected that when long-term customers encounter a SF, the influence of RQ on negative Wom decreases.

H3. RD moderates the relationship between RQ and negative Wom.

In conclusion, Figure 2 shows a comprehensive conceptual model to examine RQ, its antecedents, and consequences for testing in the context of a service after a SF.
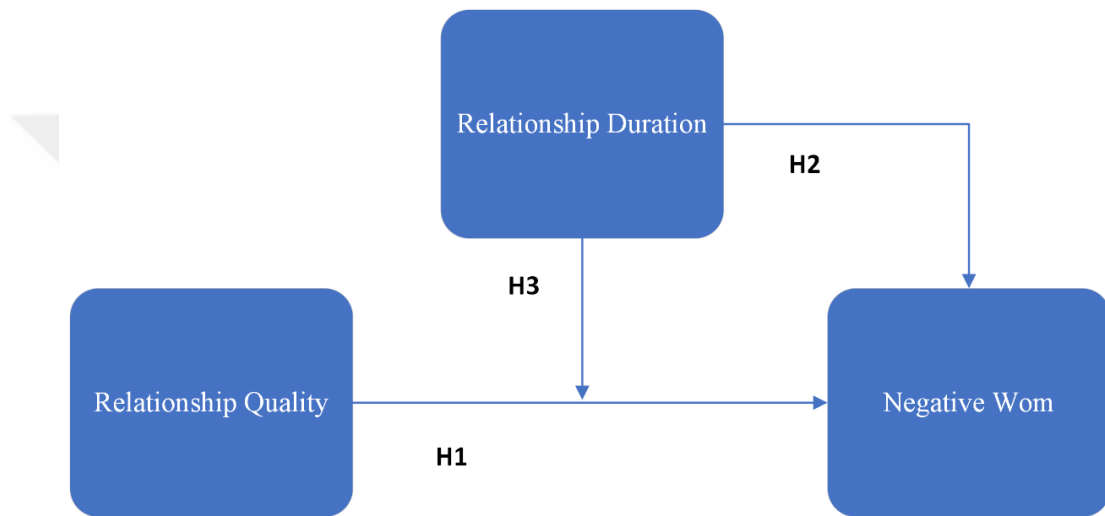
Figure 2. Conceptual Model

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sampling

Using a convenience sampling method, data were collected from 159 respondents, who were aged 18 and older. 81 males (50.94%) and 78 females (49.06%) filled out the survey. 10 (6.29%) participants were in the 18-25 age group, 29 (18.24%) participants were between the ages of 26-34, 48 (30.19%) participants were between the ages of 35-44, 31 (19.49%) participants were between the ages of 45-54, and 41 (25.79%) were in the age group of 55 years and above. 11 (6.92%) participants had at most high school degree, 97 (61.00%) participants had bachelor's degree, and 51 (32.08%) participants had master's or doctoral degree. 16 (10.063%) participants earned less than 8500 TL, 27 (16.981%) participants earned between 8500 TL and 13999 TL, 37 (23.27%) participants earned between 14000 TL and 18999 TL, 16 (10.063%) participants earned between 19000 TL and 23999 TL, 7 (4.403%) participants earned between 24000 TL and 28999 TL, and 56 (35.22%) participants earned more than 29000TL per month. 48 (30.19%) participants were single, and 111 (69.81%) participants were married. 28 (17.610%) participants were working in the public sector, 73 (45.912%) in the private sector, 20 (12.578%) had their own company, 3 (1.887%) were housewives, 1 (0.629%) was unemployed, 26 (16.352%) were retired, 5 (3.145%) were students, and 3 (1.887%) had other working statuses. The demographic characteristics of the sample are provided in *Table 1*.

Table 1. A Summary of the Respondents' Demographics

		n	%
Gender	Male	81	50.94
	Female	78	49.06
Education level	High school or less	11	6.92
	Bachelor's degree	97	61.00
	Graduate degree	51	32.08

Table 1 (Continued). A Summary of the Respondents' Demographics

	18-25	10	6.29
	26-34	29	18.24
Age	35-44	48	30.19
	45-54	31	19.49
	55 or more	41	25.79
	Below 8500	16	10.063
	8500-13999	27	16.981
	14000-18999	37	23.270
Net Income Level	19000-23999	16	10.063
	24000-28999	7	4.403
	29000 or more	56	35.220
Marital Status	Single	48	30.19
	Married	111	69.81
	Public Sector Employee	28	17.610
	Private Sector Employee	73	45.912
	Own Company	20	12.578
Work Status	Housewife	3	1.887
	Unemployed	1	0.629
	Retired	26	16.352
	Student	5	3.145
	Other	3	1.887

3.2. Data Collection

An online questionnaire was prepared by using Google Forms, a survey administration webpage offered by Google. The survey link was shared on social media, instant messaging platforms, and cold emails were sent between 01.11.2023 and 03.27.2023. The survey was disseminated via email addresses on social media such as Instagram and Twitter in the profile pages of political parties, influencers, politicians, journalists, artists, volunteering organizations or associations, and agencies. The utmost care was

taken not to collect any personal information and anonymity was assured. Moreover, participants were requested to forward the survey link to their acquaintances to increase participation. It should be noted that the personal information of participants was not recorded.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, it was mentioned that participation was voluntary; responses and analyses of the data would be only used for academic research. In addition, donation information was given to the participants both in the information form at the beginning of the survey and the survey link post. For each fully and properly filled questionnaire, the research thesis author would donate a small amount to KACUV (The Hope Foundation for Children with Cancer) in Turkey. Then the participants would approve their participation in the questionnaire that their participation was voluntary; all the information would be kept anonymous by the researcher, and the participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage, stated in both the information and consent form (See Appendix B).

Participants were first asked if they had ever encountered a SF before with their current internet service provider company. Then, RD and RQ questions were asked. After that, participants were asked to read a SF hypothetical scenario and answer negative Wom questions. Finally, demographic information was collected.

The scenario presents a service failure where the internet service provider is unable to meet customer expectations in terms of connection speed. It also describes a severe service failure and a poor-quality recovery performance. An expert evaluation form was prepared and then evaluated by three academicians in terms of whether the scenario is realistic, clear, and easy to read (See Appendix A).

3.3. Measures

RD was evaluated with a single question: "About how long have you been receiving service from this provider?" In line with the literature (Dagger, Danaher and Gibbs, 2009; Doney and Cannon, 1997), the number of months was required as an answer.

The RQ construct has three dimensions (satisfaction, trust, and commitment), and was measured by using De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci (2001)'s nine items.

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It should be noted that the 1st item of the commitment dimension was adapted from Sun (2010) to better reflect the characteristics of the service industry. In De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci (2001)'s study, Cronbach's alpha values for satisfaction, trust, and commitment dimensions were between 0.70 and 0.93, and the higher-order construct of RQ's composite reliability was between 0.78 and 0.90. In Sun (2010)'s study, the author adapted the commitment construct from De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci (2001)'s work, and the commitment construct's Cronbach alpha value was 0.90 and the composite reliability value was 0.94.

Negative Wom (nWom) was measured with three items from Wetzel, Haenel and Hess (2022). In Wetzel, Haenel and Hess (2022)'s study, Cronbach's alpha value of the nWom scale was 0.96.

7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) were used to assess all constructs, except RD. *Table 2* contains the items and some statistical parameters for scales used to measure the constructs.

Table 2. Constructs, All Items Before Applying Model Assessments Using PLS-SEM

Construct/ Scale Reference	Item	Abbrev.	Mean	SD
Relationship Quality		RQ		
Satisfaction De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci, 2001		SATS		
	As a regular customer, I have a high-quality relationship with this service provider.	SATS1	4.346	1.638
	I am happy with the efforts this service provider is making toward customers.	SATS2	4.575	1.449
	I am satisfied with the relationship I have with this service provider.	SATS3	4.824	1.429

Table 2 (Continued). Constructs, All Items Before Applying Model Assessments Using PLS-SEM

Trust De Wulf, Odekerken- Schröder and Iacobucci, 2001		TRUS		
	This service provider gives me a feeling of trust.	TRUS1	4.667	1.517
	I have trust in this service provider.			
	This service provider gives me a trustworthy impression.	TRUS2	4.634	1.498
		TRUS3	4.627	1.486
Commitment Sun, 2010; De Wulf, Odekerken- Schröder and Iacobucci, 2001		COMM		
	I am willing to make efforts to remain a customer of this service provider.	COMM1	3.935	1.537
	I feel loyal toward this service provider.			
	Even if this service provider would be more difficult to reach, I would still keep buying there.	COMM2	3.922	1.740
		COMM3	3.235	1.640

Table 2 (Continued). Constructs, All Items Before Applying Model Assessments Using PLS-SEM

Negative Wom Wetzel, Haenel and Hess, 2022		NWOM		
	I will spread negative word-of-mouth about this service provider.	NWOM1	4.497	1.786
	I will tell others about my experience to denigrate this service provider to others.	NWOM2	4.778	1.681
	I will share my experience with others to warn others not to buy the products or services from this service provider.	NWOM3	4.765	1.600
Relationship Duration Dagger, Danaher and Gibbs, 2009; Doney and Cannon, 1997		HLYRS	49.098	45.258

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES AND RESULTS

4.1. Analysis

The proposed model was tested using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), using SmartPLS 4.0 software package. PLS-SEM is capable of assessing constructs using factor and composite models in addition to estimating structural models and testing the model fit (Velicia-Martin et al., 2023). The researchers collected data using a Likert-type scale, which is presumed to be non-normal (Radia et al., 2022). PLS-SEM is an improved alternative to Covariance Based SEM (CB-SEM) because CB-SEM requires normal distribution data (Hair et al., 2017). Researchers have been using PLS-SEM in the marketing field (Guenther et al., 2023). The following flow diagram is applied during the analysis (see Figure 3).

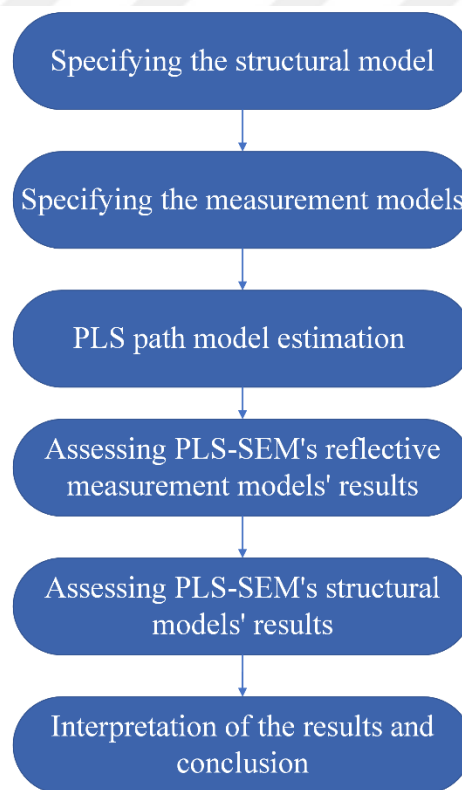Figure 3. Systematic Procedure for a PLS-SEM Model (Source: Hair et al., 2017)

In the PLS path model, the sample size should be at least ten times the maximum arrowhead number, that can point at a single latent variable (Barclay, Higgins and Thompson, 1995). Kock and Hadaya's (2018) inverse square root method is able to calculate a minimum sample size (n_{min}) using the formula $n_{min} > (2.486 / |p_{min}|)^2$, where

p_{min} is the lowest statistical path coefficient in the PLS-SEM model to obtain a statistical power level of 80% (Hair, Sarstedt and Ringle, 2019; Hair et al., 2022; Ringle et al., 2023). The results of the absolute value of the minimum path coefficient between the constructs of the model estimation during the trial-and-error phase of the analysis were between 0.11 and 0.2. Hence, in line with Hair et al. (2022), according to *Table 3*, the sample size in this research (n=153) was sufficient for a PLS-SEM analysis after omitting missing value data (2 observations) and the elements with the same responses to all consecutive questions (4 observations).

Table 3. Minimum Sample Sizes for Various Minimum Path Coefficients (Source: Hair et al., 2022)

P_{min}	Significance level 1%	Significance level 5%	Significance level 10%
0.05 – 0.1	1,004	619	451
0.11 – 0.2	251	155	113
0.21 – 0.3	112	69	51
0.31 – 0.4	63	39	29
0.41 – 0.5	41	25	19

RQ was designed as a reflective first-order construct in this model, with three dimensions, namely, satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Olavarría-Jaraba et al., 2018). RQ and nWom were used as reflective latent variables as the changes in the variable revealed the changes in the indicators, because the indicators' covariation was caused by the constructs (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, it was decided to employ the scales of RQ in De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Iacobucci (2001)'s study, which were defined as a reflective construct (Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021). The recommended two-step process was utilized; after assessing the measurement (outer) model, the structural (inner) model was evaluated (Hair et al., 2017).

4.2. Outer (Measurement) Model Assessment
To evaluate the outer model, first, the model's internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were analyzed. Hair et al. (2017) state that the outer loadings of all items should be at least 0.708. For the first run of the model, all items were included in the PLS-SEM model. However, if there are items

between 0.40 and 0.70, the author recommends examining items' the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) before eliminating them (Hair et al., 2017). Otherwise, Hair et al., (2017) state that items that are below 0.40, should be removed from the model.

After the first run, there were no items below 0.40. Only COMM3 and SATS1 had factor loadings of 0.538 and 0.690, respectively. So, the researcher looked at the AVE and CR of the RQ variable. AVE of RQ was greater than 0.5 and CR (rho_c) was more than 0.7, thus both COMM3 and SATS1 items were retained in the model. All other items had outer loadings greater than 0.708. Both latent constructs NWOM and RQ in the model had Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and CR greater than 0.70. Henseler, Hubona and Ray (2016) also recommend looking at rho_a values for reliability. All rho_a values of the variables were greater than 0.70. Hence, the model had internal consistency reliability (See Table 4) (Hair et al., 2017; Guenther et al., 2023).

To validate convergent reliability, no AVE values should be less than 0.50. Indicator loadings except COMM3 and SATS1 were greater than 0.708. Because the AVE and CR values of RQ and NWOM are greater than threshold values, COMM3 and SATS1 were kept in the model. AVE values of the constructs were 0.624 and 0.790; CR values of the constructs were 0.918 and 0.936. Hence, the model had convergent validity (See Table 4) (Hair et al., 2017; Guenther et al., 2023).

Table 4. Items, Factor Loading and Convergent Validity Measures

Items	Factor Loading	C. Alpha	C.R. (rho_a)	AVE
RQ		0.922	0.934	0.624
SATS1 <- RQ	0.690			
SATS2 <- RQ	0.806			
SATS3 <- RQ	0.856			
TRUS1 <- RQ	0.890			
TRUS2 <- RQ	0.898			
TRUS3 <- RQ	0.898			
COMM1 <- RQ	0.746			
COMM2 <- RQ	0.709			

Table 4 (Continued). Items, Factor Loading and Convergent Validity Measures

COMM3 <- RQ	0.538			
NWOM		0.871	0.938	0.790
NWOM1 <- NWOM	0.814			
NWOM2 <- NWOM	0.925			
NWOM3 <- NWOM	0.923			

To validate discriminant validity, the researcher initially checked cross-loadings. No indicator loaded higher on other constructs; this was because of the higher outer loading for each indicator compared to its cross-loadings on the other constructs (see Table 5) (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 5. Cross Loadings of the Indicators

	RQ	NWOM
COMM1	0.746	-0.095
COMM2	0.707	-0.131
COMM3	0.536	-0.166
NWOM1	-0.104	0.816
NWOM2	-0.190	0.940
NWOM3	-0.174	0.908
SATS1	0.692	-0.021
SATS2	0.808	-0.121
SATS3	0.857	-0.144
TRUS1	0.891	-0.191
TRUS2	0.899	-0.165
TRUS3	0.898	-0.119

Next, analysis of the Fornell-Larcker criterion showed that the square root of the AVE values for all constructs exceeded the latent variable correlations (see Table 6) (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 6. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Values

	HLYRS	NWOM	RQ
HLYRS	Single-item construct		
NWOM	-0.191	**0.889**	
RQ	0.005	-0.182	**0.790**

Then Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was checked for validity. It is recommended that HTMT is used for discriminant validity because it gives better results than both cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2014). In this analysis, the HTMT criterion should be below 0.85 for two distinct reflective constructs and below 0.90 for similar constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Hence, the model had discriminant validity (See Table 7).

Table 7. Discriminant Validity Results (HTMT Matrix)

	HLYRS	NWOM	RQ
HLYRS	Single-item construct		
NWOM	0.193		
RQ	0.045	0.175	

Analysis results were also given as a summary tabulation for faster control (see Table 8).

Table 8. Results Summary for the Model

Latent Var.	Indicators	Convergent Validity			Internal Consistency Reliability		Discriminant Validity
		Loadings	Ind. Rel.	AVE	C.R (rho_c)	Cronbach's Alpha	
		>0.7	>0.5	>0.5	>0.708 & < 0.95	>0.708 & < 0.95	HTMT confidence interval does not include 1
RQ	SATS1	0.69	0.476	0.624	0.918	0.922	Yes
	SATS2	0.806	0.649				
	SATS3	0.856	0.732				
	TRUS1	0.890	0.792				
	TRUS2	0.898	0.806				
	TRUS3	0.898	0.806				
	COMM1	0.746	0.556				
	COMM2	0.709	0.502				
	COMM3	0.538	0.289				
NWom	NWOM1	0.814	0.662	0.790	0.936	0.871	Yes
	NWOM2	0.925	0.855				

Table 8 (Continued). Results Summary for the Model

	NWOM3	0.923	0.851				

4.3. Inner (Structural) Model Assessment

The association between proposed constructs was investigated using a path model, and the significance of the route models was assessed using a bootstrap resample process. Initially, to assess the structural model, for collinearity assessment, inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) coefficients were checked. According to Hair et al. (2017), in a reflective model, inner VIF values should be under 5, for better results, they should be under 3. All inner VIF coefficients were between 1.002 and 1.040. Hence, there was no collinearity issue in the model (Hair et al., 2017; Guenther et al., 2023). Later, the researcher looked at R-square (R^2) and f-square (f^2) values. R^2 and f^2 of the endogenous latent variable of nWom were 7.0% and 3.6 % respectively. Hence, as the effect size (0.036) was greater than 2%, the researcher accepted that there was some effect of the latent variable of RQ on nWom (Cohen, 1988; Guenther et al., 2023).

After the bootstrap resampling procedure, all paths within the model were found significant using 5000 subsamples. Then for testing hypotheses, a complete bootstrapping procedure was applied. The results of the path coefficients, standard deviation, t, and p values are given in *Table 9* and Figure 4. The results provided support for H1 and H2. Both RQ (β = - 0.1823, t = 1.9612, p = 0.0499) and RD (β = - 0.1867, t = 2.1231, p = 0.0338) showed a negative effect on nWom. However, significance testing of the moderation in the bootstrapping ($p = 0.8434$) found no moderating effect of RD on the RQ and nWom relationship. Hence H3 was not supported.

Table 9. Results of the Conceptual Model

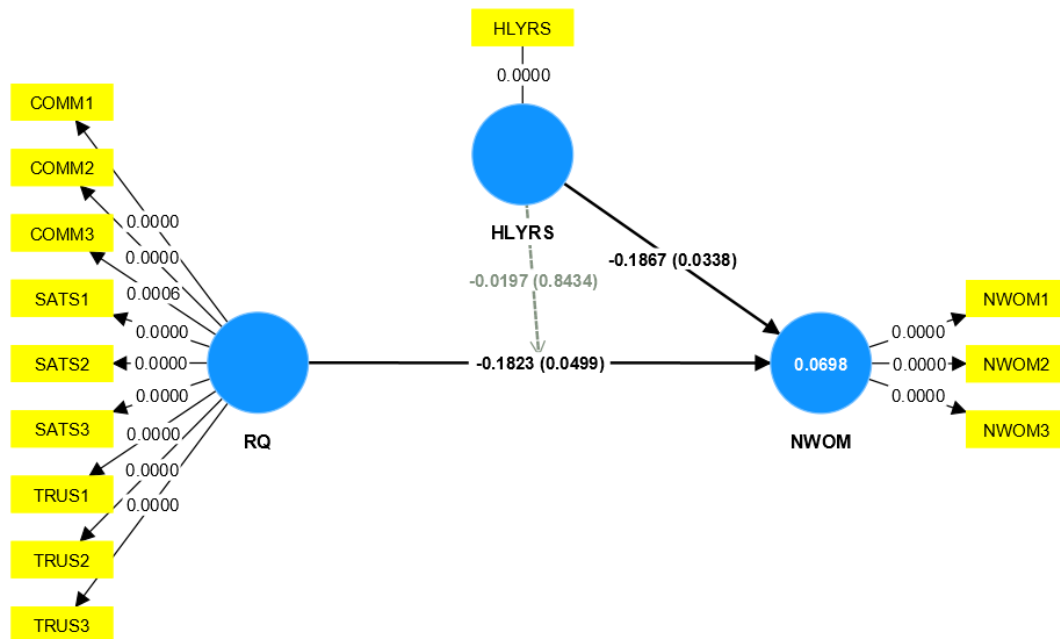| Variables	Beta Value	Standard Deviation	t value	P value	Support for Hypothesis (p < 0.05)
RQ -> NWOM	-0.1823	0.0929	1.9612	0.0499	Yes
HLYRS x RQ -> NWOM	-0.0197	0.0995	0.1975	0.8434	No
HLYRS -> NWOM	-0.1867	0.0879	2.1231	0.0338	Yes

Figure 4. Final PLS-SEM Model

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussions

Most of the literature has concentrated on developing comprehensive models like finding new antecedents or consequences of RQ. However, this study tries to emphasize the association of RQ and nWom and the prediction of nWom in contrast to the previous literature mostly focusing on how to increase positive Wom/eWom. Next, this study tries to uncover RD since its moderating role has not been tested previously in RQ research in service settings.

From a theoretical perspective, as far as the author is aware, no other study has attempted empirically to show that RQ and nWom have a negative significant relationship. In other words, in the case of a SF, higher RQ between a customer and a service provider leads to lower nWom and vice versa. However, previous research did not find any effect of RQ on nWom in food crisis context (Seo, 2012). Seo (2012) studied RQ in a different meaning such that RQ represented a close friend or an anonymous person like a binary variable in a model, but in this research, RQ was tested as a three-dimensional construct. Additionally, this research tested RD to moderate the relationship between RQ and nWom but found no moderation effect in contrast to the previous research done between the variables of RQ, SBC, and loyalty in the online retailing context (Dorai, Balasubramanian and Sivakumaran, 2021). In general, the significance of moderation is hard to find because it is linked to limited effect sizes and it will be harder to see small impacts as significant to explain the endogenous construct with the contribution of moderation (Hair et al., 2021).

5.2. Managerial Implications of the Study

Taking into consideration the effects of RD on nWom, managers should give importance to customer retention (Gounaris, 2005). If a customer becomes a longer service receiver, it is less probability to share nWom (Béal, Sabadie and Grégoire, 2019). Several campaigns or personalized discounts during contract renewal periods can be offered for internet services.

In the case of SF encounters, customers would have lower satisfaction, trust, or commitment levels to the service provider (Forrester and Maute, 2001; Yuan et al., 2020). To prevent the negative effects of SF whether there is a successful recovery or not, managers should think of giving compensations to customers to sustain RQ consistently to return it to a pre-failure state (Xu, Liu and Gursoy, 2018). These compensations may be a reduced bill for that billing period or a gift coupon for other products or services (Xu, Liu and Gursoy, 2018). However, it is always better to prevent failures from the beginning.

Especially in monopolized internet markets like Turkey, managers should not ignore RQ during failures (Forrester and Maute, 2001). Otherwise, service managers become vulnerable to detrimental customer reactions because of RQ's direct influence on nWom (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007). Hence, firms should communicate the quality of their service standards efficiently to customers, but this communication should not be based on eye-catching advertisements which are unfounded (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007; Forrester and Maute, 2001).

Thus, this study shows attaining competitive advantage is better through relationship strategic development (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007). However, developing relationship strategies should be defined on not only increasing RQ and its dimensions (satisfaction, trust, and commitment) but also on homogenous service policies, specifications, and technical qualifications to have a longer service continuum (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007; Forrester and Maute, 2001).

Applying artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques would be of utmost necessity in all stages such as service developing, testing, moving to production, support, and maintenance phases to prevent failures, and even in more social phases like relationship development, sales, and marketing to make a differentiated outcome and enhanced value for customers to increase RQ and eliminate nWom (Forrester and Maute, 2001).

5.3. Recommendations for Future Research

While this research has several distinctive results, it also suffers from several limitations. The author collected data with limited availability of time, budget, and

with the help of close or personal connections. If the data size were much larger, the author believes that the moderation effect of RD could be more effectively demonstrated (Memon et al., 2019).

Next, there is also a second important variable affecting customer-firm relationships called failure duration (FD), defined as the length of the duration of service remedial measures subjectively determined by consumers (Lee, Shih and Huang, 2020). After a SF, FD starts and continues until a service error recovers. Lee, Shih and Huang (2020) indicate that FD is a relationship moderator between attributions, the severity of SF, empathy, and consumer forgiveness. Hence the author believes that FD can be applied to both B2B and B2C relationships in the relationship marketing, services, and recovery literature. Thus, it is essential, in the service recovery contexts, to examine the effects of failure length. Our understanding of relationships after a SF could be expanded by this new moderator.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Expert Evaluation Form

RESEARCHED CONSTRUCTS

- **Service Failure** refers to a situation where a service provider does not meet customer expectations in terms of its service products or engages in service behaviors that customers evaluate as unsatisfactory. Consumers will form their service satisfaction toward an internet service provider based on their cumulative satisfaction with the individual services they receive, such as *connection speed* and technical support and consulting.
- **Severity of Failure** refers to the magnitude of loss that customers experience due to the failure.
- **Quality of Recovery Performance** refers to the degree of reparation that the service provider offers after a failure has occurred.

The scenario below presents a service failure where the internet service provider is unable to meet customer expectations in terms of connection speed. The scenario describes a severe service failure and a poor-quality recovery performance. *Table 10* provides the expressions used to represent researched constructs.

Table 10. Expressions Used to Represent Researched Constructs

Researched Constructs	Scenario
Service failure: connection speed	You are invited to an online engagement ceremony of your close relative living in another country. The video conferencing program requires a fast and large amount of streaming sound and video data. You believe that your internet package can handle this situation. In the past, you have used this program for other meetings without any problems. But when you start the video conferencing program to attend the event, the sound becomes distorted, and images download lately.
Level of quality of recovery performance: poor	To solve the problem, you call customer service support. In response to your complaint, the representative apologizes for the problem and asks you to wait on the phone. 20 minutes have passed, but nothing has been done to solve the problem.
Level of service failure severity: severe	The online ceremony is almost over, and you feel frustrated. You think that your relatives may feel you don't care about them.

Scenario in Turkish:

Başka bir ülkede yaşayan yakın bir akrabanızın online nişan törenine davetlisiniz. Görüntülü konferans programı, hızlı ve büyük miktarda ses ve görüntü akışı verisi gerektiriyor. İnternet paketinizin bu durumun üstesinden gelebileceğine inanıyorsunuz. Geçmişte, bu programı başka toplantılar için sorunsuz bir şekilde kullanmıştınız. Ancak etkinliğe katılmak için görüntülü görüşme programını başlattığınızda ses bozulmaya başlıyor ve görüntüler geç geliyordu.

Sorunu çözmek için müşteri hizmetleri desteğini aradınız. Şikayetinize cevaben müşteri temsilcisi sorun için özür diledi ve telefonda beklemenizi rica etti. Aradan 20 dakika geçmesine rağmen sorununuzun çözümüne yönelik hiçbir şey yapılmadı.

Çevrimiçi tören neredeyse bitti ve kendinizi hayal kırıklığına uğramış hissediyorsunuz. Akrabalarınızın kendilerini umursamadığınızı hissedeceklerini düşünüyorsunuz.

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

To answer questions, please mark X as the best-suited alternative.

	YES	NO
The internet connection speed problem is believable		
Customer service support approach is believable		
The scenario is clear and is not open to misinterpretation		
The scenario is easy to read and understand		

Comments: _____
_____
_____
_____

Please indicate if the scenario accurately represents the researched constructs.

	YES	NO
Service Failure		
Severe Service Failure		
Poor Quality of Recovery Performance		

Comments: _____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B - Questionnaire in Turkish

Bilgilendirme Formu

Öncelikle araştırmamıza katılıp destek verdiğiniz için teşekkür ederiz.

Bu araştırma İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi İşletme Bölümü Yüksek Lisans Tezi kapsamında yapılmaktadır. Araştırma, hizmet kalitesinin müşteriler üzerine etkisi hakkındadır.

Bu çalışma yaklaşık 7 dakika sürmektedir. Çalışma esnasında sizden alınan bilgiler tüm gizlilik koşullarınca araştırmacılar tarafından sadece bilimsel çalışma için kullanılacaktır. Çalışmanın sonuçları bilimsel kongrelerde veya dergilerde yayınlanabilir. Yayınlarda tamamen anonim bir anlatım olacaktır. Doğru ve eksiksiz olarak doldurulan her anket başına küçük bir tutar KAÇUV'a (Kanserli Çocuklara Umut Vakfı'na) yüksek lisans araştırmacısı tarafından bağış yapılacaktır.

Çalışmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışmaya katılmama veya katıldıktan sonra herhangi bir anda gerekçe bildirmeden çekilme hakkına sahipsiniz.

Lütfen tüm soruları gerçek düşüncelerinizi belirterek yanıtlayınız. Soruların doğru ya da yanlış yanıtları yoktur. Bizim için önemli olan sizin gerçek düşünce ve duygularınızı yansıtan yanıtlar vermenizdir. Sorulara vereceğiniz cevaplar gizli tutulacak ve sadece bu araştırma için kullanılacaktır. Bilgileriniz anonim olarak saklanacaklardır. İlginiz ve desteğiniz için teşekkür ederiz.

Araştırma hakkında bilgi almak için aşağıdaki iletişim adreslerinden araştırmacılara ulaşabilirsiniz:

Tuğberk Kara:

Tuğba Tuğrul:

Onay Formu

Bilgilendirme formunu okudum ve katılmam istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını, gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Bu çalışmayı istediğim zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğimi ve bıraktığım takdirde herhangi bir olumsuzluk ile karşılaşmayacağımı anladım.

Bu koşullarda söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı

☐ kabul ediyorum. (Devam edebilmek için işaretlemek zorunlu)

1. Bölüm

Şu anda hizmet aldığınız internet firmasında bir hizmet hatası/problemi yaşadınız mı? (*Yalnız bir şıkkı işaretleyin*)

☐ Evet   ☐Hayır

Bu internet firmasından yaklaşık olarak ne kadar süredir hizmet alıyorsunuz?

……………. Ay (Sayı belirtiniz; zorunlu alan)

(Her soruda yalnız bir şıkkı işaretleyin)	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Kısmen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Düzenli bir müşterisi olarak, bu hizmet sağlayıcısı ile yüksek kalitede bir ilişkim var.							
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısının müşterilere yönelik gösterdiği çabalardan memnunum.							
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısıyla olan ilişkimden memnunum.							
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısı bana güven duygusu veriyor.							
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısına güveniyorum.							
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısı bende güvenilir bir izlenim bırakıyor.							

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Kısmen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısının müşterisi olmaya devam etmek için çaba sarf etmeye hazırım.							
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısına karşı kendimi sadık hissediyorum.							
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısına ulaşmak daha zor olsa bile, yine de buradan hizmet satın almaya devam ederim.							

2. Bölüm

Müşterisi olduğunuz internet firması ile ilgili aşağıdaki gibi bir durum yaşadığınızı hayal ediniz ve sonraki soruları buna göre cevaplayınız.

Başka bir ülkede yaşayan yakın bir akrabanızın online nişan törenine davetlisiniz. Görüntülü konferans programı, hızlı ve büyük miktarda ses ve görüntü akışı verisi gerektiriyor. Evde kullandığınız kablolu ağ bağlantısındaki internet paketinizin bu durumun üstesinden gelebileceğine inanıyorsunuz. Geçmişte, bu programı başka toplantılar için sorunsuz bir şekilde kullanmıştınız. Ancak etkinliğe katılmak için görüntülü görüşme programını başlattığınızda ses bozulmaya başlıyor ve görüntüler geç geliyordu. Sorunu çözmek için internet firmasının müşteri hizmetleri desteğini aradınız. Şikayetinize cevaben müşteri hizmetleri görevlisi sorun için özür diledi ve telefonda beklemenizi rica etti. Aradan 20 dakika geçmesine rağmen sorununuzun çözümüne yönelik hiçbir şey yapılmadı.

Çevrimiçi tören neredeyse bitti ve kendinizi hayal kırıklığına uğramış hissediyorsunuz. Akrabalarınızın kendilerini umursamadığınızı hissedeceklerini düşünüyorsunuz.

(Her soruda yalnız bir şıkkı işaretleyin)	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kısmen katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Kısmen katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Bu hizmet sağlayıcısı hakkında olumsuz sözler yayarım.							