Do Customers want Employees' Authentic Service or Just Service? The Effects of Employees' Authenticity and Justice on Customers' Commitment and Behavior

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to examine the structural relationship between customers' perception of authenticity, justice, customer commitment, and customer behavior in franchise coffee shops. To test the hypotheses of the study, a total of 428 customers in Korea were considered in an empirical analysis using a two-step structural equation model (SEM) approach. In particular, employees' authenticity had relatively great influence on customers' continuous and affective commitment and their justice had greater influence on customers' normative commitment. Also, customers' continuous commitment, normative commitment, and affective commitment significantly influence customer participation behavior, while normative commitment and affective commitment have a significant effect customer citizenship behavior. Research thus far divided justice and authenticity into separate concepts and examined relation with customer commitment or behaviors but the present study put cognitive process of justice and emotional process of authenticity on the same line and evaluated their different influence on customer commitment and behaviors, thereby verifying that not justice perceived by customers induced desirable customer behaviors but authenticity they felt with their heart played a more superior role in customer commitment or behaviors. This means that authentic services rather than justice induce customers' positive behaviors.

Keywords: authenticity, justice, customer commitment, customer participation behavior, customer citizenship behavior

INTRODUCTION

In a service company, customers hold such great influence that they are called partial employees[1]. In particular, customers want authentic services from service providers. As a result, companies have reached the stage at which they should deliver genuine, not pretentious, interaction. In such experiences, the key element is authenticity; services with authenticity cannot be imitated easily and are a key element of service discrimination[2]. The issue of authenticity has become a topic of conversation in to-day's diverse environments, and customers want to perceive authenticity in numerous points of contact with companies. Whether a person is authentic may be judged according to his or her subtle facial expressions[3]. Because a genuine heart and a smile shown to customers may improve customer responses[4], understanding and managing authentic expressions in the dimension of companies is the most essential method to apply in order to gain a competitive edge over other companies and differentiate one company from another[5].

In the service process, in addition to authenticity,

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customers perceive justice provided by service providers and how fair recovery efforts are in terms of problem solving[6]. Therefore, one significant difference between authenticity and justice is that authenticity starts from the inside of those who provide services, but justice begins from customers' points of view[7]. As a result, because perceiving justice in cognitive terms does not make customers forgive service failure, authentic emotional evaluation of companies' recovery efforts in the service process should be accompanied. In such a service recovery process, a company must assess whether its authenticity of services is received from the heart or whether its justice is excellent. Grayson[8] noted that authenticity of high level derives service evaluation of high level, and since service quality increases when authenticity increases, authenticity plays a very important role within a service company. Martinez-Tur, Peiro, Ramos, and Moliner[9] observed that justice perceived by customers in a service encounter is an important element in determining their degree of satisfaction. In addition, customer participation behavior (CPB) and customer citizenship behavior (CCB) as predictors of customer behavior are important variables to determine customers' breakaway [10] and customer loyalty[11]; therefore, they are very meaningful variables in marketing terms.

In particular, in the case of foodservice industries, in which service quality is largely determined by personal services, the meaning of authenticity and justice as perceived by customers are very great. Moreover, a significant amount of research has been carried out on the effects of authenticity[12,13] and justice[14,15] on relationship quality as perceived by customers, but only in the context of their effects on commitment and customer behavior. In particular, research which differentiated customer behavior into customer participation behavior and citizenship behavior was rare. In addition, literature which studied authenticity and justice co-linearly was difficult to find. This study intends to present authenticity as an emotional evaluation and justice as a cognitive evaluation of recovery efforts in a service situation.

The purpose of this study was to examine the structural relationship between customers' perception of authenticity, justice, customer commitment, and customer behavior in franchise coffee shops.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship between Authenticity and Commitment

Authenticity defined in the psychology literature as "the unobstructed operation of one's true or core self in one's daily enterprise"[13, p 294]. Price, Arnould and Deibler[16] noted that authenticity is an emotional and intimate element of an encounter as the result of physical and psychological sense of distance demanded in a service situation. In addition, authenticity indicates agreement between the inside condition and perceivable behavior[17]; customers regard a service provider as sincere and authentic when the service provider responds sincerely to customers and expresses ardent emotions. Moreover, in a relationship between service providers and customers, commitment is an implicit and explicit pledge between those entities to continue the relationship [18] and involves a desire to maintain a valuable relationship[19]. Based on such definitions, the most key concept of commitment is the psychological link an individual has with other subjects. Commitment may be categorized according to the three-component model of commitment (continuous, normative, and affective) based on Meyer and Allen[20]. Continuous commitment refers to customers' commitment to stay with a certain company, affective commitment is the psychological attachment to a certain company in emotional terms, and normative commitment is the commitment to stay with a certain organization based on psychological burden or a sense of duty that one should stay with a certain organization.

Gilmore and Pine[5] noted that the customers' more positive recognition of employees' authenticity such as attitudes or gestures, has a close relationship with their commitment. Also, Bove and Johnson[21] asserted that customers exhibit commitment to a company and form truly loyal attitudes when service employees provide authentic services to customers. Choi, Ko, Kim, and Mattila[22] suggested that, if customers positively perceive brand authenticity, customers will experience positive commitment and loyalty. Kernis and Goldman[13] observed authenticity in terms of relationship to indicate openness, honesty, and faithfulness, and authenticity plays an important role in customers' positive commitment or behavi-

oral aspects. Mukherjee and Nath[23] asserted that, when online markets provided authentic services with an open attitude, intention of customers to continuously interact with the companies increased. Ilicic and Webster[24] suggested that relational authenticity triggers positive attitudes and purchase intent toward certain brands and, in particular, the higher the perception of authenticity in provided services, the higher the commitment customers have, and as a result, their purchase intent increases. In addition, Morhart, Malar, Guevremont, Girardin, and Grohmann[25] asserted that the customers' perceived brand authenticity increases brand attachment and intent toward word of mouth and motivates them to make commitments to certain brands. Based on previous studies on authenticity, this study assumes that employees' authenticity will have a significant effect on the commitment of customers, and the following hypothesis is presented:

> Hypothesis 1: The perception of employee's authenticity is positively related to the commitment of customers (continuous[a], normative[b], affective[c]).

Relationship between Justice and Commitment

Justice, as perceived by customers, is an evaluation about what is provided by service providers and the company's efforts to recover the company's services in terms of problem solving by service providers[6]. In particular, justice in a service situation largely includes customers' perception about distributional, procedural, and interactional justice shown by service providers in the recovery process[26]. A combination of such lower dimensions determines customers' overall perception about justice as well as customers' future behavior and attitudes[27]. Distributional justice refers to customers' perception about a company's efforts to resolve a certain problem, and the more visible rewards the company provides, the more perceived distributional justice increases. Procedural justice signifies appropriateness in terms of process, speed, and flexibility in the service recovery process. Interactional justice refers to employees' kindness, etiquette, honesty, and the degree of sympathy in the process of service being provided.

In a study on the effect justice has on services

provided by employees and customer commitment, Yi and Gong[28] examined the significant, causal relationship between justice of employees and customer commitment. Kim and Kandampully[29] asserted that customers' perception of employees' justice is directly related to the former's positive commitment, while Pablo and Tomas[30] investigated the effect of customers' favorable perceptions of justice on customer citizenship behavior and satisfaction. DeWitt, Nguyen and Marshall[27] suggested that the more positively customers recognize justice of employees, the more favorable their emotional response and commitment (such as loyalty) to the employees are. Also, Ha and Jang[31] asserted that the customers' perceived justice of employees has a significant effect on customers' behavioral intent, and Qin, Chen and Wan[32] explained that customers recognizing justice of employees positively also tend to experience positive loyalty. Ellyawati, Ourwanto and Dharmmesta[14] observed that employees' justice as experienced by customers at service touch-points more significantly affect customers' satisfaction than negative emotions do. Also, Hibbert, Piacentini and Hogg[33] found that customers' perceived justice is the most important factor in determining their behavior, and Mansori, Tyng and Mohd Ismail[15] also stated that employees' justice as experienced by customers in service situations directly affects customer satis- faction and word of mouth. The following hypothesis is presented:

> Hypothesis 2: The perception of employee's justice is positively related to the commitment of customers (continuous[a], normative[b], affectivec).

Relationship between Commitment and Customer Behavior

Customer participation behavior and customer citizenship behavior refer to the roles customers play in the production and delivery process of services by customers essentially (customer participation behavior) or voluntarily (customer citizenship behavior) based on the inseparable characteristics of services [34,35]. When customer participation behavior is excellent, service quality and customer satisfaction increase. Furthermore, customer citizenship behavior is not an essential role in the service provision pro-

cess, but it means that voluntary roles by customers may enhance service quality[36]. In a study on customer commitment and participation behavior, Bettencourt[34] stated that customer commitment to the company increases the likelihood of positive word-of-mouth and active voice such as voluntary behavior. Moreover, Ahn[36] asserted that normative commitment, continuous commitment, and affective commitment positively affect participation behavior as relationship commitment. In one of the major studies on commitment of customer and customer citizenship behavior, Gruen, Summers, and Acito[37] observed that customer citizenship beha- vior may increase with emotional commitment. Yi and Gong [28] suggested that customer commitment positively influences customer citizenship behavior which Bove, Pervan, Beatty and Shiu[38] confirmed in their study. Bartikowski and Walsh[39] observed that committed customers are aware of the goals and values of the company, and therefore are highly motivated to engage in customer citizenship behavior such as helping other customers. Soch and Aggarwal[40] stated that committed customers help other customers because of their satisfaction with the company. Curth, Uhrich and Benkenstein[41] asserted that emotional commitment to service providers maintained their customer-firm relationship more strongly, and as a

result, customer citizenship behavior increased. Abbasi, Zivarmo and Ebrahimi[42] also noted that commitment to a certain company increased citizenship behavior toward the company. Based on previous studies, this study assumes that the three aspects of commitment - continuous, normative, and affective - have a meaningful impact on customer behavior, and the following hypotheses are provided (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 3: The commitment of customers (continuous[a], normative[b], affective[c]) is positively related to the customer participation behavior.

Hypothesis 4: The commitment of customers (continuous[a], normative[b], affective[c]) is positively related to customer citizenship behavior.

METHODS

Sample and Data Collection

The data used for the current study were collected from customers in franchise coffee shops in Seoul, the capital of Korea, in 2015. In order to comply with our objectives and test our research hypotheses, we designed a study based on a personal survey of the franchise coffee shop customers. Five ranked franchise coffee shops were chosen in terms
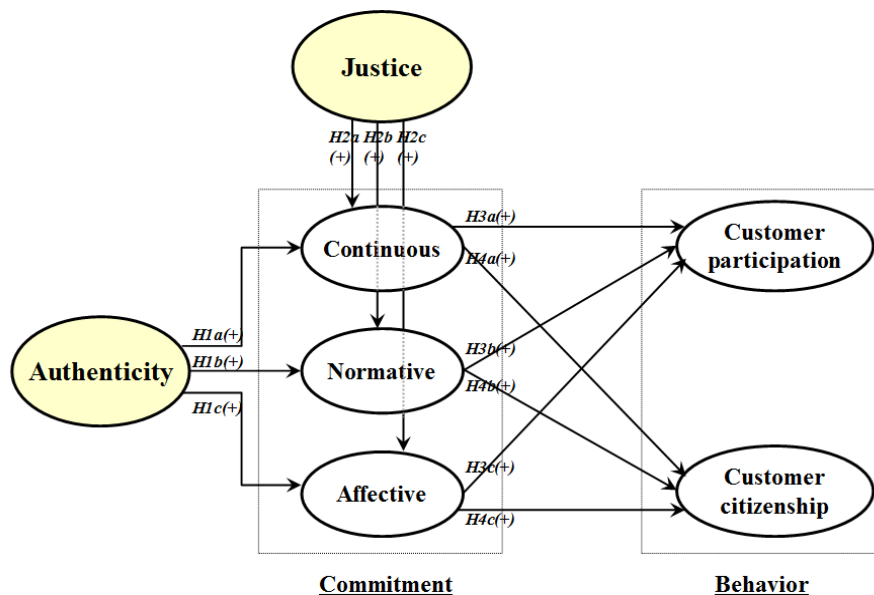

Figure 1. A proposed conceptual framework.

of sales in 2014: Starbucks, Coffee Bean, Cafebene, Ediya, and Angel-In-Us. A pilot test using 30 customers at franchise coffee shops was conducted to ensure the reliability of the scales, and several modifications were made based on feedback from the pilot test. The data collection was carried out during the period from March 1~15, 2015. With the cooperation of the managers of the franchise coffee shop involved, a questionnaire survey was conducted among customers. Participants answered the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to visitors of these franchise coffee shops. After eliminating unusable responses among the completed questionnaires, 428 responses were coded for data analysis (85.6% response rate).

Instrument Development

The questionnaire instrument divided into five parts. The first four parts pertained to authenticity and justice of employees, customer commitment, and behavior. Part five contained questions about participant demographic information (e.g., gender, age, education level, martial status, and visiting frequency).

Authenticity was measured with to five items on a 7-point scale (1: strongly disagree to 7: strongly agree) based on Gilmore and Pine[5] and Kim[2]. Authenticity items included "I feel a sense of authenticity from the employees' service" and "I feel a sense of humanity from the employees' service."

Justice is typically divided into three categories: distribution, procedural, and interactional justice[43, 44,45,46]. To measure customers' perceptions of justice, this study adapted the multi-item scales proposed by Smith and Bolton[43] and Maxham and Netemeyer[26]. Justice items (12 items) included "Considering the trouble caused and the time lost, the compensation I received was acceptable (Distribution justice, 4 items)," "I think my problem was resolved in the right way (Procedural justice, 4 items)," and "The employees were honest when dealing with my problem (Interactional justice, 4 items).

Customer commitment divide into three factors: continuous, affective, and normative commitment [47,48,49,50]. The current study examined three dimensions of customers' commitment: Continuous,

normative, and affective. Commitment items (11 items) included, "I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this coffee shop (continuous, 3 items)," "This coffee shop deserves my loyalty (normative, 4 items)," and "I feel a strong sense of belonging to this coffee shop (affective, 4 items)." Customer behavior is divided into two dimensions: participation behavior (in-role) and citizenship behavior (out-role).

Customer participation behavior divided into two categories: customer citizenship behavior, and customer participation behavior[51,52,53]. Customer participation behavior items included, "I perform all the tasks that are required of me" and "I adequately completed all the behaviors expected (5 items)," and customer citizenship behavior items included, "I help other customers if they seem to have problems" and "I give advice to other customers (6 items)."

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were performed to profile the participants' demographic information. Also, The validity and reliability of the respondents' replies regarding authenticity, justice, continuous commitment, normative commitment, affective commitment, customer participation behavior, and customer citizenship behavior were tested through correlation analysis, reliability analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis using SPSS (V 18.0) and AMOS (V 5.0) program. Following Anderson and Gerbing's[54] two-step procedure, after estimating the measurement model, the second step was to estimate the structural equation model (SEM).

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

For the customers surveyed at coffee shops, the typical respondent was female (64.5%), between 20 and 29 years old (67.1%), university educated (68.4 %), non-married (77.4%), and accustomed to visiting a coffee shop 2~3 times per week (47.5%).

Measurement Model

To measure the reliability and validity of the constructs in our proposed model, we performed confirmatory factor analysis on the seven constructs of

authenticity, justice, continuous commitment, normative commitment, affective commitment, customer participation behavior, and customer citizenship behavior[54,55]. As shown in Table 1, the level for internal consistency in each construct was acceptable with Cronbach's alpha estimates, ranging from .884 to .948. Composite construct reliability estimates, ranging from .778 to .907 above the recommended cutoff of .60[55], were considered acceptable. Convergent validity was observed since all confirmatory factor loadings exceeded .70 (except CCB5) and were significant at the alpha level of .001[54]. Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the average variance extracted (AVE) with the squared correlation between constructs. Discriminant validity was evident, since the variance extracted estimates ranging from .674 to .819 and exceeded all squared correlations for each pair of constructs, ranging from .054 to .454 (Table 3). These results suggested that the seven-factors were distinct and unidimensional. All fit indices exceed their acceptance level (χ^2=712.282, df= 351, χ^2/df=2.029, GFI=.898, CFI=.968, RMSEA=.049). All statistics supported the overall, satisfactory measurement quality given the number of indicators. Table 2 depicts the correlations of key constructs in this study.

Structural Equation Modeling

SEM was used to test the hypothesized model. The overall model chi-square was 1,391.992, with 358 degrees of freedom (*p*<.001). Also, the CFI was .909, and IFI was .909, exceeding the .90 recommendation of Bentler[56]. The model's fit, as indicated by these indexes, was deemed satisfactory; thus, it provided

a good basis for testing the hypothesized paths. Based on the results presented in Figure 2, most hypotheses were supported;

Hypothesis 1: authenticity has a positive effect on customers' commitment (continuous[a], normative[b], affective[c]); Hypothesis 2: justice has a positive effect on customers' commitment (continuous[a], normative[b], affective[c]); Hypothesis 3: commitment (continuous[a], normative[b], affective[c]) has a positive effect on customer participant behavior; and Hypothesis 4: commitment (normative[b], affective[c]) has a positive effect on customer citizenship behavior. However, the effect of continuous commitment on customer citizenship behavior (Hypothesis 4[a]) is not significant at the .05 level.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion of Finding

This study attempted to look into the effect of customers' perception of employees' authenticity and justice on customer commitment and behavior. The study shows that employees' authenticity has a significant effect on customers' commitment. More specifically, employees' authenticity among emotional evaluation is found to have a significant effect on customers' continuous commitment (β=.200), normative commitment (β=.179), and affectivecommitment (β=.267). These findings support previous work[21,24]. This means that, in a service situation, the higher the authenticity is perceived in emotional terms by customers, the customers' commitment increases. In particular, authenticity is found to be most influential

Table 1. Reliabilities and confirmatory factor analysis

Construct	Standardized loadings	*t*-value	CCR[a]	AVE[b]	Item-to-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha
Authenticity			.852	.729		.918
AU_1	.911	fixed			.812	
AU_2	.923	27.838[***]			.850	
AU_3	.841	22.200[***]			.832	
AU_4	.727	18.535[***]			.755	
Justice			.844	.722		.884
Distribution	.819	fixed			.752	

Table 1. Continued

Construct	Standardized loadings	t-value	CCR[a]	AVE[b]	Item-to-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha
Procedural	.911	21.473***			.710	
Interactional	.817	19.226***			.754	
Continuous com			.795	.810		.927
CM$_1$	.870	fixed			.831	
CM$_2$	.925	27.202***			.869	
CM$_3$	.904	26.182***			.853	
Normative com			.855	.803		.941
CM$_4$	.850	fixed			.808	
CM$_5$	.898	25.172***			.867	
CM$_6$	.924	26.571***			.890	
CM$_7$	.912	25.914***			.876	
Affective com			.907	.819		.948
CM$_8$	.918	fixed			.886	
CM$_9$	.902	30.515***			.871	
CM$_{10}$	.908	31.036***			.876	
CM$_{11}$	.893	29.660***			.863	
CPB			.778	.677		.917
CPB$_1$	.740	fixed			.766	
CPB$_2$	.788	22.884***			.795	
CPB$_3$	.841	17.578***			.808	
CPB$_4$	.844	17.856***			.748	
CPB$_5$	.895	18.734***			.818	
CCB			.855	.674		.927
CCB$_1$	.806	fixed			.805	
CCB$_2$	.903	22.721***			.831	
CCB$_3$	.919	23.344***			.851	
CCB$_4$	.892	22.297***			.833	
CCB$_5$	.668	15.000***			.692	
CCB$_6$	.709	16.188***			.733	

Note: [a] CCR=composite construct reliability; [b] AVE=average variance extracted; Com=commitment, CPB=customer participant behavior, CCB=customer citizenship behavior; χ^2=712.282 (df=351) $p<.001$; χ^2/ df=2.029; Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)=.898; Normed Fit Index (NFI)=.968; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)=.963; Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=.968; Incremental Fit Index (IFI)=.968; Root Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=.049; Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) =.088; *** $p<.001$.

Table 2 Correlations estimates

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Authenticity	1.000	.372[a]	.054	.094	.069	.126	.115
2. Justice	.610	1.000	.058	.075	.090	.082	.123
3. Continuous commitment	.233	.241	1.000	.426	.153	.134	.077
4. Normative commitment	.308	.274	.653	1.000	.288	.220	.183
5. Affective commitment	.264	.300	.392	.537	1.000	.104	.080
6. Customer participant behavior	.355	.288	.367	.470	.323	1.000	.454
7. Customer citizenship behavior	.340	.351	. 278	.428	.284	.674	1.000

Note: All variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1(strongly disagree) to 7(strongly agree); All correlations are significant at $p<.001$(2-tailed); [a] r^2.
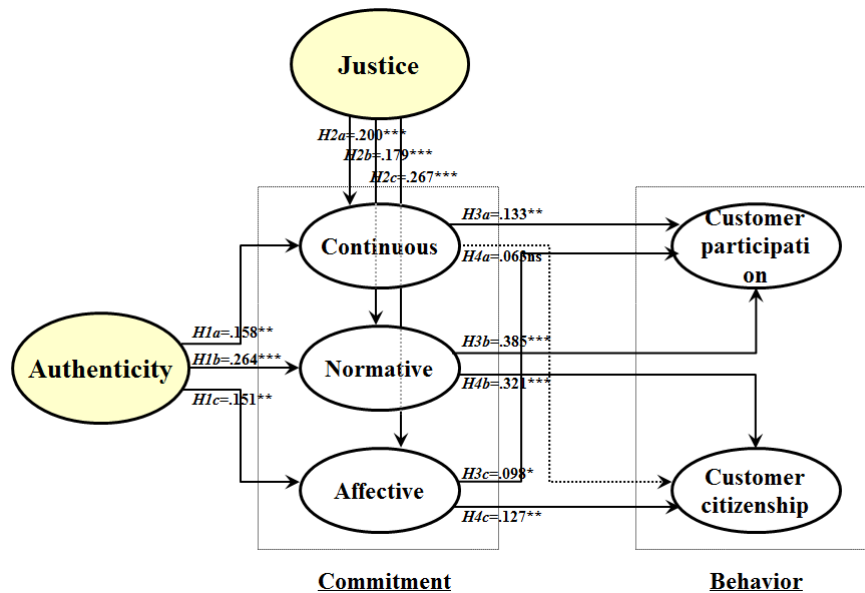

Figure 2. Structural parameter estimate.

in customers' emotional commitment (such as continuous and affective commitment). In the service recovery process, authenticity customers felt their emotions about an organization change in a positive manner, and as a result, the customers come to have a psychological attachment toward the company in emotional terms.

Also, employees' justice among cognitive evaluation has a significant and positive effect on customer commitment (continuous=β=.158; normative=β=.264; affective=β=.151). These results are in line with the studies done by Kim and Kandampully[29] and Yi and Gong[28], which suggest that, if customers positively perceive employees' justice, customers experience positive commitment. In particular, justice occurring in the service recovery process most greatly affects customers' normative commitment, and this is judged to be because the more customers perceive justice, the more commitment they have toward a certain company based on a psychological sense of burden or a sense of duty.

Another finding is that customer commitment triggered by employees' authenticity and justice has a significant impact on their behavior; continuous co-

mmitment (β=.133), normative commitment (β=.385), and affective commitment (β=.098) has a significant effect on customer participation behavior, while normative commitment (β=.321) and affective commitment (β=.127) affect customer citizenship behavior. In particular, normative commitment was determined to be the most important variable for customer commitment affecting customer participation and citizenship behavior, with normative commitment having a greater effect than others. This result was similar to the statements by Bettencourt[34] and Ahn [36] that customer commitment in a service situation would significantly affect their participation behavior, Bove, Pervan, Beatty and Shiu[38] and Yi and Gong[28] offered comments that the more positive consumption emotions such as the commitment that customers experience in the service line, the more strongly customer citizenship behavior could be affected. In addition, it was consistent with the result of a study by Bansal, Irving, and Taylor[50] that was normative commitment variable with the greatest influence on customers' conversion intent. Moreover, in the present study, customers' continuous commitment did not have a significant effect on customer citizenship behavior, and such a result was partially consistent with the result of a study by Meyer and Allen[20], which indicated that, because alternatives with possible continuous efforts were lacking, influence of continuous commitment may not be great.

Theoretical Implications

This study addressing the question, "Is service cognitive or emotional?" is meaningful in that it showed that service situation was affected by a cognitive element of justice as well as an emotional element of authenticity, and presented the role at a corporate level for effective service recovery. In particular, because providing services without any errors by a service company is realistically impossible, more efforts should be made in the service recovery process to strengthen competitiveness. Therefore, this study applied the concepts of employees' authenticity and justice in the service recovery process to restaurants and clarified organic mechanism by verifying the fact that, in a service situation, authenticity and justice perceived by customers affect customer commitment, and such customer commitment has a sig-

nificant effect on customer participation behavior (in-role) and customer citizenship behavior (extra-role). In addition, research thus far has divided justice and authenticity into separate concepts and examined the relation with customer commitment and behavior. However, the present study put the cognitive process of justice and emotional process of authenticity on the same line and evaluated their different influence on customer commitment and behavior. This further verified that it was not justice perceived by customers that induced desirable customer behavior, but perceived authenticity they felt with their heart played a greater role in customer commitment and behavior. This means that authentic services rather than justice induce customers' positive behavior. Based on this result, in a service situation, positive, voluntary, and authentic service efforts turn the misfortune into an advantage and play a very important role in inducing the paradox of service recovery. Therefore, in the process of recovering service failures, service efforts by employees with authenticity are more important than efforts in behavioral terms by mere apology or form.

Practical Implications

This may present a new paradigm of service recovery on the company level, given the fact that, in actuality, customers want authentic appearance of companies although they have interest in formative efforts such as provision of coupons or drinks in order to recover service failures. To this end, companies should be devoted to listening to customers' opinions by being equipped with systematic elements of listening to customers' opinions, or in other words, what they want. Moreover, by building organic communications systems between the company and its employees, service providers, the company should seek specific measures of resolution for employees' complaints or problems occurring in a service situation. As a result, by educating employees to have constructive and positive attitudes so that employees can more actively resolve customers' dissatisfaction, the company should entice employees to participate in alleviating customers' dissatisfaction or in the service recovery process. Furthermore, internal marketing is important. Given that, when employees are satisfied, customers are satisfied, efficient service

recovery strategies should be made. In addition, this study clarified that normative commitment among diverse commitments was the most important factor for determining customer participation behavior and citizenship behavior. Therefore, this study presented the fact that, in order to increase customers' participation behavior and citizenship behavior, customers' normative commitment should be applied in the service production and delivery process.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its implications, several limitations of the study need to be addressed. First, the sample of this study was customers using coffee houses in the metropolitan area, which relates to representativeness. Similarly, the coffee shops selected as the subjects cannot be judged as representative restaurants of the general population. Second, respondents provided recollected past experiences in order to reflect psychological experiences about the service recovery process. Therefore, it may be difficult for them to give accurate responses depending on past experiences, and errors according to recollection of wrong memories may have occurred. Third, diverse control variables and moderating variables were not considered in the mechanism of authenticity and justice leading to commitment and behavior. Finally, this study considered only behavioral aspects of customers as the final variables, but it is judged that future research must input various variables of emotion, trust, and satisfaction.

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