EXPLORING RESTAURANT SERVICE SABOTAGE BEHAVIORS IN THE U.S.

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ABSTRACT

Service sabotage refers to employee's deliberate actions that negatively influence the delivery of service or service standards. Extent literature asserts that service sabotage is prevalent, costly, and detrimental in the service industry. However, the expression of service sabotage may vary drastically depending on the industry because service sabotage behaviors are context-specific. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore prevalent restaurant service sabotage behaviors. A total of 419 non-managerial front-of-house frontline employees in full-service restaurants in the U.S. were recruited from an online restaurant employee panel. Results show that 80.4% of the respondents had sabotaged restaurant service at least once a year, and eight out of 39 types of restaurant service sabotage behaviors were conducted by 51.7% or more of the research participants. Among identified restaurant sabotage behaviors, complaining about customers with colleagues was the most prevalent, followed by passive-aggressive sabotage behaviors. According to the cluster analysis, service saboteurs tend to be younger, and a larger proportion of them work in fine-dining restaurants (30.9%). This study yielded practical insights for restaurant managers to effectively manage service sabotage and provided a foundation for restaurant service sabotage scale development in future research.

Keywords: restaurant, service sabotage, cluster analysis

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, employees' behaviors have been considered positive and compliant with organizational norms (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999). However, negative employee behaviors have been identified and researched over time, including workplace deviant behaviors (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), antisocial behaviors (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997), dysfunctional behaviors (Griffin, O'Leary-Kelly, & Collins, 1998), and organizational misbehaviors (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999). These researchers have shown that some employees intentionally engage in negative behaviors that affect the organization, people within it, or both. Although researchers use different labels to describe such negative workplace behaviors, it is generally agreed that these misconducts may cause direct or indirect damages to the organization or its members.

The characteristics of the restaurant industry, the uniqueness of restaurant service, and the extensive interactions between frontline employees and customers all contribute to the urgent need to better understand and manage restaurant service sabotage. However, restaurant service sabotage has not been studied extensively, while service sabotage behaviors have been studied in overall hospitality organizations (Harris & Ogbonna, 2012), call centers (Skarlicki et al., 2008), and hotels (Yeşiltaş & Tuna, 2018). Furthermore, service sabotage behaviors are context-specific, that is, service sabotage behaviors occurring in call centers (e.g., deliberately transferring the call to the wrong department) (Skarlicki et al., 2008) or in hotels (e.g., intentionally changing guest room temperature and setting the alarm clocks) (Harris & Ogbonna, 2009) can be different from those taking place in restaurants.

Recently, *service sabotage* has drawn attention in various sectors of the service industry (Harris & Ogbonna, 2012; Lee & Ok, 2014; Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008; Yeşiltaş & Tuna, 2018). Service sabotage refers to employee's deliberate actions that intentionally and negatively influence the delivery of service or service standards (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). The prevalence of service sabotage in the hospitality industry is high, and nearly 100% of frontline employees stated that they had witnessed service sabotage behaviors in the workplace (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). The financial cost of service sabotage is estimated to reach billions of dollars every year accounting for the damage due to service sabotage as well as prevention and correction of such behaviors (Fagbohungbe, Akinbode, & Ayodeji, 2012; Harris, 2012). Furthermore, service sabotage has a strong and negative influence on service quality and the rapport between employees and customers, resulting in decreased customer satisfaction (Harris & Ogbonna, 2006). In short, service sabotage is prevalent, costly, and detrimental in the service industry; therefore, managing service sabotage in various service industries including the restaurant industry is critically important.

The restaurant industry has negative images among job seekers because of high levels of job stress, long work hours, and relatively low pay (Zhao & Ghiselli, 2016). The phenomenon is even worse for frontline employees who provide service to customers directly. The paradox lies in the fact that while the work environment is unfavorable for frontline employees, their performance is essential to the customers' dining experience (Gounaris & Boukis, 2013; Spinelli & Canavos, 2000). Another unique characteristic of restaurant service is the inseparability of production and consumption (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), as there is almost no lapse in time between production and consumption of service.

Providing service to customers in restaurants requires extensive face-to-face communications including both verbal and nonverbal interactions. However, it is not uncommon to find frontline employees being abused by difficult customers (Skarlicki, et. al, 2008), and revenge against abusive customers was one of the major drivers for service saboteurs (Harris & Ogbonna, 2012). Front-of-house frontline employees provide service to customers throughout the dining period, and prolonged service contacts along with challenging customers increase the likelihood of service sabotage (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). To sum up, the purpose of the study was to explore service sabotage behaviors in the U.S. restaurant industry.

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Specific objectives were to:
1. Identify prevalent restaurant service sabotage behaviors in the U.S., and
2. Evaluate the differences between restaurant service saboteurs and non-saboteurs.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The Concept of Service Sabotage
Harris and Ogbonna (2002) defined service sabotage as "organizational member behaviors that are intentionally designed negatively to affect service" (p. 166). Researchers have used various terms to describe negative employee behaviors depending on the focal point of such actions. For example, workplace deviance focuses on interpersonal and organizational deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). While service sabotage is one example of negative organizational employee behavior; it is conceptually different from previously studied scales, and it is unknown how different it is from the other negative employee behaviors, such as workplace deviance.

In actuality, service sabotage should not be seen as another term for the general concept of workplace deviance, nor is it merely a subcategory within it. Sabotage behaviors are explicitly intended to cause harm, whereas deviance focuses on violating norms (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002). Therefore, service sabotage and workplace deviance are conceptually different. Furthermore, a more detailed look at the definition of service sabotage clarifies that service sabotage happens for a reason. Service sabotage is derived from organizational members' intention (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2012), and this intentionality sets service sabotage apart from the common service failure.

Service failure refers to service performance that falls below customers' expectations (Hoffman & Bateson, 1997), and it is typically not deliberate. While service sabotage is different from service failure in terms of the deliberate nature of such an action, service sabotage and service failure behaviors may be difficult to distinguish from the customer's perspective. For instance, service staff may provide false information about the menu due to lack of knowledge or inadequate training (i.e., service failure), but service saboteurs may intentionally mislead customers by providing incorrect information. It is, therefore, plausible that frontline employees disguise service sabotage as service failure in front of customers to evade punishment. Perhaps, frontline employees who intentionally spilled drinks on customers' backs but immediately apologized for their accidental clumsiness may be viewed as service failure, when in fact it could be service sabotage (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002).

Investigation of critical incidents of restaurant service sabotage behaviors yielded different types of restaurant service sabotage behaviors (Tao, 2017). A total of 243 critical incidents were identified through Tao's in-depth individual interviews with restaurant frontline employees, revealing four types of service sabotage behaviors: acting *passive-aggressive, targeting customers, targeting colleagues,* and *targeting restaurants*. Unlike Tao's categorization of service sabotage behaviors mainly based on the targets of such behaviors, Browning (2008) used seriousness (minor–serious) and whether the event targets customers (indirectly–directly) as two dimensions to categorize service sabotage behaviors in adventure tourism and hospitality organizations. Although the typologies and study settings may be different, the targets seem to be of importance in the service sabotage literature.

In summary, service sabotage is conceptually different from other negative employee behaviors, and service sabotage and service failure can be difficult to differentiate, particularly from the customer's viewpoint. Service saboteurs may intentionally conceal their misbehaviors to avoid being caught or punished, and therefore, it is challenging for others to identify service sabotage and even more so to effectively manage service sabotage.

The Impact of Service Sabotage on the Restaurant Industry
It was estimated that the sales at U.S. restaurants increased to $863 billion with a workforce of 15.3 million employees in 2019 (National Restaurant Association, 2019). Researchers estimate that service sabotage costs firms billions of dollars every year (Fagbohungbe et al., 2012; Harris, 2012), which is clearly a heavy burden on the industry. Furthermore, 85% of frontline employees reported engaging in service sabotage, and nearly 100% of them have witnessed service sabotage in their workplace (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). If this estimate remains valid today, considering the large workforce in the U.S. restaurant industry, the number of service saboteurs (often frontline employees) can be substantial, and the subsequent negative effect of service sabotage could be devastating.

In the contemporary hospitality industry, marketers rely heavily on online reviews on web-based opinion platforms and social networking sites, such as Yelp.com and Facebook. Popularity of social networking makes the service saboteurs, especially thrill-seeking saboteurs (Harris & Ogbonna, 2009) to be more problematic. Today's young customers are extremely involved in sharing their experience online, and some employees also readily share a part of their work days online using postings, photos, or videos. For example, two Domino's Pizza employees filmed themselves tampering with a customer's food in the kitchen and uploaded the video to social media; this video clip went viral on the internet in a short time (Clifford, 2009). Millions of customers viewed the video and expressed how disgusted they were through comments within a few days, and Domino's Pizza faced a public relations crisis. This single incident of service sabotage that deliberately violated multiple hygiene codes illustrated how service sabotage is capable of endangering the reputation of a restaurant brand with only a few clicks.

Service sabotage has profound impacts on multiple areas in an organization, including personnel, service quality, and labor performance (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002, 2006). Moreover, working conditions in restaurants, including prolonged service contacts (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002), a high level of job stress (Harris & Ogbonna, 2012), emotional dissonance (Lee & Ok, 2014), and mistreatment from customers (Skarlicki et al., 2008), contribute to the likelihood of employee service sabotage. However, it is challenging for managers to effectively identify and prevent restaurant service sabotage behaviors because it can be difficult to distinguish between service sabotage and service failure. As the connotation of restaurant service sabotage remains unclear to scholars and practitioners, further investigation is needed.

METHODS
Sample Selection
The target population was non-managerial front-of-house frontline employees (e.g., waiter/waitress, host/hostess, or bartender) in full-service restaurants in the U.S. Employees working in both chain and independently-owned restaurants were invited via an online survey company (Qualtrics) to cover a broader spectrum of restaurant service sabotage behaviors. However, employees in limited-service restaurants were excluded from the study sample because of limited customer-employee interactions. The target sample size was set at 400 with the intent to recruit participants with more socio-demographic diversity to identify current trends of restaurant service sabotage behaviors.

Instrument Development

The instrument consisted of four major parts, including questions pertaining to eligibility to take the survey (Part A), work characteristics (Part B), restaurant service sabotage (Part C), and demographics (Part D). Part A inquired if the survey participant was over the age of 18, employed in a full-service restaurant in the U.S. as a frontline service provider with less than 50% of supervisory responsibility. Part B asked survey participants about the type of restaurants they work for (e.g., chain or independently-owned restaurant), restaurant segment, their position, hours of work per week, tenure with current employer, and average amount of tips received.

To better gauge restaurant service sabotage behaviors, a set of 39 items were listed in Part C (Tao, 2017). Tao applied critical incident techniques to analyze 243 potential service sabotage incidents from the in-depth individual interviews with non-managerial frontline employees in the U.S. A total of 29 service sabotage behaviors were identified in addition to the other 10 items adapted from the previous literature (Tao, 2017). Questions in Part C started with the probe, "*I have intentionally*" followed by each behavioral item, such as "*acted rudely toward customers*" and "*stopped serving food earlier than regular hours.*" Participants were instructed to rate on a 7-point behavior frequency scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (daily). Participants could also choose the "not applicable" option, if that particular item was not applicable due to his/her position. The rationale was that service sabotage behaviors could be very context-specific and varied in the way of expression. A host/hostess may not have the same opportunity to sabotage service as a waiter/waitress due to the essence of the job. By differentiating between "never" (i.e., respondents could have engaged in service sabotage, but chose not to) and "not applicable" (i.e., respondents could not engage in service sabotage due to job nature), it was anticipated to attain more insightful results from participants. To ensure the data quality, two attention check questions were included in the middle of the survey. After the instrument was developed, a panel of experts consisting of six professors and three senior managers in the restaurant industry reviewed it for content validity, and the survey instrument was converted to an online format using the Qualtrics survey system.

The online instrument was pilot-tested using a panel of 30 non-managerial frontline employees in full-service restaurants to assess inter-item reliability and usability of the survey instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the 39-item scale was .94, showing high internal consistency of the instrument. However, no respondent admitted to have "served contaminated food." After consulting the foodservice and service quality experts, the verbiage of this item was altered to "served unsanitary food" to ensure content validity and usability prior to main data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis

Permission was obtained from Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board prior to data collection. Participants were recruited from an online restaurant employee panel by hiring an online research firm, Qualtrics. A cover letter stating the purpose of the study was displayed on the first page of the online survey. Anyone who was not qualified to complete the survey or failed to pass the attention check questions was excluded from the survey. Moreover, survey responses completed in less than one third of the average time for completing the pilot study were removed to ensure data quality. Data collection was conducted between May 31 and June 8, 2017 and completed when the target sample size of 400 completed responses was attained.

Descriptive statistics and reliability tests were performed for data analysis using IBM SPSS Version 24. Cluster analysis was also used to discover the heterogeneity among participants. Following the two-step approach, hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method with squared Euclidian distance was performed first to determine the appropriate number of clusters prior to executing the k-means procedure (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013). Furthermore, a series of t-test and chi-square analysis was applied to assess if the differences between the clusters were statistically significant. The statistical significance was set at the .05 level for inferential statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Characteristics of Survey Participants

Approximately 6,000 online panel members from the restaurant employee panel were randomly selected by the online research company (Qualtrics) to receive survey invitations with a URL linked to the online survey. Of those, 3,232 individuals accessed the first page of the survey (response rate = 53.9%). After that, the researcher screened out or excluded 2,813 participants because they (a) did not provide consent to enter the survey (*n* = 228), (b) were under 18 years of age (*n* = 9), (c) were not employed in the U.S. (*n* = 719), (d) did not work as a frontline employee (*n* = 709), (e) had more than 50% supervisory responsibilities (*n* = 774), (f) did not work in full-service restaurants (*n* = 342), (g) did not pass the attention check questions (*n* = 25), or (h) never finished the survey (*n* = 7). Therefore, 419 usable responses were included for data analysis.

Survey participants' characteristics are summarized in Table 1. The majority of participants were between 18 and 29 years old (*n* = 252, 60.1%) and female (*n* = 355, 84.7%). The ratio of female participants is slightly higher than that reported in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, where 70.0% of servers and 80.8% of hostesses were female (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). A vast majority of participants were Caucasians (*n* = 366, 87.4%), and most had some college education (*n* = 176, 42.0%). In addition, the majority of participants had worked for their current employers for three years or less (*n* = 281, 67.4%) in casual dining restaurants, e.g., T.G.I. Friday's (*n* = 325, 77.6%). Only 22.4% of the participants (*n* = 94) worked for the fine dining restaurants, e.g., Ruth's Chris Steak House, and more than half of the participants worked at chain restaurants (*n* = 222, 53%). In terms of work characteristics, around three quarters of the participants were wait staff (*n* = 318, 75.9%), receiving an average tip amount between 16% and 20% of sales (*n* = 190, 45.3%). A significant number of participants worked more than 20 hours every week (*n* = 340, 81.2%).

Prevalent Restaurant Service Sabotage Behaviors

Means, standard deviations, and participation rates of the 39 restaurant service sabotage behaviors are summarized in Table 2. The mean scores of the top 10 most frequent behavioral items ranged from 2.23 to 4.10 on a 7-point behavior frequency scale. Of those, "complained about customers with colleagues" was rated the highest (4.10 ± 2.07) with 15.5% of the participants doing this on a daily basis, 15.3% weekly, 13.1% monthly, 22.4% several times a year, with only 19.6% of the respondents never doing this. This behavior initially seemed as if it might not directly affect the delivery of service. However, if someone recorded the conflict and shared the video on social networking sites, a single incident can devastate the restaurant's reputation (Whitley, 2012). On the other hand, even if a customer is unaware of intentional complaints by the saboteur, this behavior may lead to decreased service quality. In addition to "complained about customers with colleagues," it is notable that the following two most prevalent service sabotage behaviors were also toward customers, including "made fun of a customer or group of

Table 1. Characteristics of Survey Participants (n = 419)		
Characteristic	n	%
Age		
18 – 29 years	252	60.1
30 – 39 years	98	23.4
40 – 49 years	45	10.7
50 – 59 years	19	4.5
60 years or older	5	1.2
Gender		
Female	355	84.7
Male	61	14.6
Prefer not to disclose	3	0.7
Ethnicity[a]		
White / Caucasian	366	87.4
African American	25	6.0
Hispanic	24	5.7
Asian	12	2.9
Native American	13	3.1
Pacific Islander	3	0.7
Other	4	1.0
Education		
Less than high school degree	5	1.2
High school diploma or GED	112	26.7
Some college	176	42.0
Associate's degree	53	12.6
Bachelor's degree	65	15.5
Advanced or professional degree beyond college degree	8	1.9
Years with current employer[b]		
3 or less	281	67.4
4 – 6 years	85	20.4
7 – 9 years	22	5.3
10 – 12 years	16	3.8
13 years or more	13	3.1

[a]The total number of responses exceeds 419 due to multiple responses.
[b]The total number of responses is less than 419 due to missing data.

customers behind their back" (2.79 ± 1.95) and "lied to customers" (2.52 ± 1.66). In other words, service sabotage behaviors toward organization members (i.e., colleagues and managers) or the organization itself (i.e., restaurant) are less prevalent in the current study, indicating that properly managing service sabotage behaviors toward customers should be the restaurant manager's priority.

Service Sabotage Can Sometimes Benefit Customers

Not all of the top 10 most prevalent restaurant service sabotage behaviors were deemed detrimental to customers. In fact, some service sabotage behaviors benefited customers but hurt the restaurant profitability. Some examples included "under-charged customers" (2.32 ± 1.57) and "given out free food and/or beverages without authorization" (2.28 ± 1.51). For example, an IHOP server was arrested for giving away free drinks that were worth $3,000 to customers, and he claimed himself as the "modern day Robin Hood" (Hafner, 2016). This type of service sabotage behavior can be deemed as larceny, stealing the money that belongs to the restaurants and benefitting customers. A plausible explanation is that the IHOP server may receive higher amount of tips from the customers and may develop better employee-customer rapport, although his behavior of giving out free drinks negatively influence the restaurants' profitability and service standards. Harris and Ogbonna (2006) identified the negative association between service sabotage and employee-customer rapport, yet we suspect that this relationship may not be generalized to the service sabotage behaviors that are actually benefiting customers, such as under-charging customers or giving out free food/beverages without authorization.

Types of Restaurant Service Sabotage Behaviors

Recent media coverages of service sabotage (Hilaire, 2017) revealed service sabotage behaviors pertaining to intentional contamination. However, results of this study did not include such behaviors as frequently as other sabotage behaviors. Participants reported "given or served with unclean utensils" ranked 28th and "served unsanitary food" ranked 37th among the 39 items presented in the survey. This finding implies that saboteurs tend to engage in minor and indirect (to customers) sabotage behaviors in restaurants, which is consistent with previous research (Browning, 2008).

The majority of prevalent restaurant service sabotage behaviors were characterized as *passive-aggressive*; that is, an indirect expression of hostility that conveys aggressive feelings through passive means such as malicious compliance (Johnson & Klee, 2007). Although the authors were unable to ascertain the specific underlying psychological reasons for passive-aggressive behaviors due to the limitation of quantitative data collected, several restaurant service sabotage behaviors identified in this study appeared to fit the description of passive-aggression. Some of these examples are *I have intentionally* "completed the bare minimum amount of side jobs," "withheld some information from customers," "provided the bare minimum amount of customer service," and "spent too much time fantasizing, daydreaming, and/or playing with cell phone instead of working." Passive-aggressive sabotage behaviors are mostly indirect and minor (Browning, 2008), and it can be challenging for customers, colleagues, or managers to identify (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). Therefore, it may be very difficult to identify such service sabotage behaviors and to take corrective actions. Even if managers detect passive-aggressive sabotage behaviors, they may face the dilemma of taking severe corrective actions against such subtle sabotage behaviors considering the hefty cost of employee turnover in the hospitality industry (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008).

Participation Rate of Restaurant Service Saboteurs

Another notable finding in regards to restaurant service sabotage behaviors is the percentage of respondents who reported that they had participated in the behavior at least once a year, which is termed as the participation rate by Bennett and Robinson (2000). The participation rates of the top 10 most prevalent service sabotage behavior items ranged from 42.7% to 80.4%. Over 80% of participants reported that they have intentionally "complained about customers with colleagues" (80.4%). Further, more than half of the respondents reported that, at least once a year, they have "completed the bare minimum amount of side jobs" (57.0%), "made fun of a customer or group of customers behind their back" (56.2%), "lied to customers" (55.4%), "withheld some information from customers" (52.8%), "given out free food and/or beverages without authorization" (52.0%), "under-charged customers" (51.9%), and "provided the bare minimum amount of customer service" (51.7%). These eight sabotage behaviors with greater than 50% participation rate account for one fifth of all behavior items.

Compared to Harris and Ogbonna's study (2006) which identified service sabotage behaviors that respondents *have heard about*, prevalent restaurant service sabotage behaviors identified in this study reflect what respondents *intentionally have done* in their workplace. Our data, therefore, provide a more precise estimate for service sabotage behaviors as well as service failure that may be attributable to sabotage behaviors in the restaurant industry. Similar to the 85% of customer-contact employees in hotels and restaurants engaging in at least one service sabotage behavior in 2002 (Harris &

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Participation Rates of Restaurant Service Sabotage Behaviors (n = 419)

Rank of items based on means. I have intentionally…	M[a]	SD	Participation Rate[b]
1. Complained about customers with colleagues	4.10	2.07	80.4
2. Made fun of a customer or group of customers behind their back	2.79	1.95	56.2
3. Lied to customers	2.52	1.66	55.4
4. Completed the bare minimum amount of side jobs	2.50	1.62	57.0
5. Withheld some information from customers	2.40	1.62	52.8
6. Under-charged customers	2.32	1.57	51.9
7. Rushed customers	2.31	1.65	47.6
8. Given out free food and/or beverages without authorization	2.28	1.51	52.0
9. Provided the bare minimum amount of customer service	2.24	1.50	51.7
10. Spent too much time fantasizing, daydreaming, and/or playing with cell phone instead of working	2.23	1.72	42.7
11. Treated customers sarcastically	2.07	1.55	41.8
12. Not checked a customer's ID when selling alcoholic beverages	1.91	1.54	32.4
13. Snuck foods and/or beverages out of the restaurant	1.88	1.50	32.1
14. Neglected to follow my supervisor's instructions	1.87	1.31	37.6
15. Simplified and/or omitted service procedures without authorization	1.85	1.44	33.6
16. Taken extra time for breaks	1.84	1.42	32.1
17. Told a customer that I fixed something but didn't fix it	1.84	1.27	37.9
18. Acted rudely toward customers	1.76	1.21	36.4
19. Made customers wait longer than usual	1.73	1.26	31.8
20. Ignored customers	1.68	1.22	30.4
21. Put a customer on hold for a long period of time when taking reservations or to-go orders	1.64	1.23	29.2
22. Created drama about colleagues	1.57	1.09	29.2
23. Disregarded food and/or beverage quality standards	1.54	1.21	22.1
24. Used illegal drugs before and/or during shifts	1.54	1.42	15.8
25. Dragged out work in order to get overtime	1.48	1.09	20.2
26. Stopped serving food earlier than regular hours	1.47	1.07	20.7
27. Yelled at customers and/or colleagues	1.42	0.90	23.3
28. Given or served with unclean utensils	1.33	0.96	13.9
29. Encouraged other employees to dislike a colleague	1.32	0.89	15.2
30. Argued with other wait staff to serve customers who tip well	1.31	0.88	14.2
31. Adhered to rules excessively to delay the service to customers	1.27	0.80	13.6
32. Entered wrong orders to eat and/or drink them later	1.25	0.84	11.1
33. Hung up on a customer when taking reservations or to-go orders	1.21	0.80	8.5
34. Disconnected a phone call when taking reservations or to-go orders	1.20	0.70	10.1
35. Stormed out the restaurant	1.19	0.59	12.6
36. Not shown up at work without notice (i.e., no call, no show)	1.15	0.45	12.5
37. Served unsanitary food	1.14	0.63	5.8
38. Over-charged customers	1.13	0.54	8.0
39. Asked my colleagues to withdraw from providing high quality service to customers	1.10	0.55	4.5

[a]Response ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (daily).
[b]Percentage of respondents who indicated that they had participated in the behavior at least once a year.

Ogbonna, 2002), the current study reveals that 80.4% of restaurant frontline employees sabotaged service in 2017. The percentage of participation in service sabotage has not changed drastically in the past 15 years, implying that these behaviors are still prevalent and restaurant managers need to engage in preventing, correcting, and managing service sabotage behaviors among their employees.

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis was conducted to gain a better understanding of individuals who engage in service sabotage behaviors. Results from the dendrogram of hierarchical cluster analysis indicate that a two- or three-cluster resolution may be appropriate. Both two- and three-cluster resolutions were analyzed by the k-means procedure afterwards, and convergence was reached in 25 iterations. The two-

cluster resolution was deemed better because the distribution of samples in the 3-cluster resolution was highly uneven. Furthermore, results show that the two clustered groups differed significantly on all 39 restaurant service sabotage behavior items (p < .001), except for "not shown up at work without notice (i.e., no call, no show)."

As shown in Table 3, Cluster 1 consists of 97 participants while Cluster 2 contains 233. The ratings for restaurant service sabotage behavior items were relatively higher in Cluster 1 compared to Cluster 2, ranging from 1.14 to 5.82 on a 7-point behavior frequency scale. In other words, participants in Cluster 1 have a greater propensity to engage in service sabotage (i.e., *restaurant service saboteurs*). Results from the t-test show that mean differences in restaurant service sabotage items were significant for all variables, except for "not

Table 3. Means and Mean Differences of Clusters

Rank of items based on mean differences.	Mean[a]		Mean Difference	t-value
I have intentionally…	Cluster 1 (n = 97)	Cluster 2 (n = 233)		
1. Complained about customers with colleagues	5.82	3.13	2.70	15.51***
2. Made fun of a customer or group of customers behind their back	4.47	1.89	2.58	12.82***
3. Rushed customers	3.80	1.60	2.20	11.81***
4. Lied to customers	3.95	1.82	2.13	12.00***
5. Completed the bare minimum amount of side jobs	3.86	1.88	1.98	11.81***
6. Neglected to follow my supervisor's instructions	3.25	1.30	1.95	12.35***
7. Withheld some information from customers	3.70	1.76	1.94	10.89***
8. Spent too much time fantasizing, daydreaming, and/or playing with cell phone instead of working	3.54	1.61	1.93	8.75***
9. Provided the bare minimum amount of customer service	3.46	1.62	1.85	10.67***
10. Simplified and/or omitted service procedures without authorization	3.07	1.28	1.79	9.57***
11. Given out free food and/or beverages without authorization	3.44	1.74	1.71	10.12***
12. Told a customer that I fixed something but didn't fix it	3.01	1.33	1.68	10.54***
13. Snuck foods and/or beverages out of the restaurant	3.02	1.36	1.66	8.30***
14. Under-charged customers	3.40	1.81	1.59	8.58***
15. Not checked a customer's ID when selling alcoholic beverages	2.95	1.46	1.49	7.23***
16. Taken extra time for breaks	2.79	1.44	1.36	7.05***
17. Disregarded food and/or beverage quality standards	2.52	1.16	1.35	7.30***
18. Made customers wait longer than usual	2.57	1.30	1.26	7.51***
19. Treated customers sarcastically	2.79	1.55	1.25	6.84***
20. Ignored customers	2.46	1.24	1.22	7.78***
21. Acted rudely toward customers	2.45	1.35	1.10	7.07***
22. Put a customer on hold for a long period of time when taking reservations or to-go orders	2.32	1.31	1.01	5.44***
23. Used illegal drugs before and/or during shifts	2.18	1.26	0.92	4.30***
24. Yelled at customers and/or colleagues	2.00	1.15	0.85	6.22***
25. Dragged out work in order to get overtime	2.05	1.26	0.79	4.89***
26. Created drama about colleagues	2.10	1.33	0.77	5.12***
27. Given or served with unclean utensils	1.89	1.12	0.76	4.86***
28. Encouraged other employees to dislike a colleague	1.84	1.11	0.72	5.11***
29. Adhered to rules excessively to delay the service to customers	1.76	1.06	0.71	5.34***
30. Argued with other wait staff to serve customers who tip well	1.77	1.11	0.67	4.85***
31. Stopped serving food earlier than regular hours	1.82	1.36	0.46	3.17**
32. Hung up on a customer when taking reservations or to-go orders	1.53	1.06	0.46	3.29**
33. Served unsanitary food	1.46	1.02	0.44	3.93***
34. Disconnected a phone call when taking reservations or to-go orders	1.43	1.09	0.35	3.10**
35. Asked my colleagues to withdraw from providing high quality service to customers	1.36	1.02	0.34	3.26**
36. Entered wrong orders to eat and/or drink them later	1.47	1.17	0.31	2.43*
37. Stormed out the restaurant	1.35	1.13	0.22	2.74**
38. Over-charged customers	1.27	1.06	0.21	2.37*
39. Not shown up at work without notice (i.e., no call, no show)	1.14	1.17	-0.03	-0.50

[a]Response ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (daily); * $p < .05$ (two-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed); *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

shown up at work without notice (i.e., no call, no show)." Items with larger mean differences (i.e., top five among the 39 items) were "complained about customers with colleagues" (mean difference = 2.70), "made fun of a customer or group of customers behind their back" (mean difference = 2.58) "rushed customers" (mean difference = 2.20), "lied to customers" (mean difference = 2.13), and "completed the bare minimum amount of side jobs" (mean difference = 1.98), showing that restaurant service saboteurs behave quite differently compared to their counterpart.

In terms of participants' demographics, there was a significant difference in age between Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 ($t_{225.283}$ = -2.009, p < .05). The average age for Cluster 1 was 2.1 years younger than the average age of those in Cluster 2. This finding shows that restaurant service saboteurs tend to be relatively younger which is consistent with previous literature in the call center setting (Skarlicki et al., 2008). Moreover, there was a significant association between clusters and restaurant segments. Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 had different proportions of workplaces between casual-dining restaurants and fine-dining restaurants ($c^2(1)$ = 4.834, p < .05). It is interesting to note that 30.9% of respondents in Cluster 1 (i.e., *restaurant service saboteurs*) work in fine-dining restaurants which is higher than Cluster 2 (19.7%). Most of the times, customers expect to receive higher service quality in fine-dining restaurants; however, this counter-intuitive finding may be due to the prolonged service contacts as reported in the previous research (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research was to explore prevalent restaurant service sabotage behaviors. Descriptive statistics revealed that restaurant service sabotage behaviors, especially passive-aggressive behaviors were prevalent. Service sabotage behaviors toward customers occurred more often than those toward colleagues, managers, and restaurant itself among the prevalent behavioral items. The majority (80.4%) of respondents admitted that they engaged in one or more restaurant service sabotage behaviors at least once a year. Eight different restaurant service sabotage behavior items were committed by more than half of the respondents. Furthermore, the two clustered groups were identified by using hierarchical and k-mean cluster analyses. Restaurant service saboteurs tend to be younger, and a larger proportion of saboteurs work in fine-dining restaurants compared to those who had lower propensity to engage in service sabotage.

As service sabotage behaviors vary depending on the context, restaurant managers may not be fully aware of how the behavior is exhibited. This study provides a comprehensive list of 39 restaurant service sabotage behaviors for the managers' reference. Of those, restaurant managers should pay close attention to the prevalent service sabotage behaviors to effectively detect and manage them. Moreover, restaurant managers should address passive-aggressive service sabotage behaviors in the early phase although they are more indirect (i.e., toward customers) and minor in nature, making it hard to be detected. However, passive aggression may become direct and more severe if proper supervision and management are absent. Informing frontline employees that managers are aware of such behaviors and they will not be tolerated may deter employees from engaging in these negative behaviors.

Besides practical applications addressed above, researchers may apply findings from this study as a foundation to develop a valid scale to measure restaurant service sabotage and attain more insights of this prevalent, costly, and yet, critical phenomenon in the restaurant industry. The list of 39 restaurant service sabotage items may be used as the item pool when conducting the future research in restaurant sabotage service.

The study should be interpreted with caution due to the following limitations. Restaurant service sabotage is a sensitive topic in the workplace. Past literature cautioned the effect of social desirability bias when studying service sabotage (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). While one cannot guarantee that data from this study are free from the social desirability bias, participants in the current study were recruited from an online panel where they could access the online survey anonymously to minimize the impact of social desirability bias. This practice assured a less stressful environment when taking the survey. Further, data in this study were collected from frontline employees in full-service restaurants in the U.S. where tipping is a social norm. Therefore, the results from this study may not be generalizable to other restaurant segments (e.g., quick service or fast casual) or to other regions where tipping is not required or expected. Finally, the authors were unable to identify the underlying psychological reasons for displaying passive-aggressive sabotage behaviors due to the nature of the quantitative data collected in the current study. Future studies may apply qualitative methods to gain a better understanding of the passive-aggressive sabotage behaviors.

The essence of the study was exploratory with the purpose of identifying prevalent restaurant service sabotage behaviors in the U.S. This is an initial effort to elicit more research toward this important yet understudied issue existing in the U.S. restaurant industry. In this sense, the aim of the study was achieved, and future researchers should continue exploring ways to correctly measure restaurant service sabotage behaviors and developing strategies to discourage employees from engaging service sabotage behaviors.

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