Consumer trust repair: A critical literature review

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ABSTRACT

Consumers are fundamental to organisational functioning and survival. Their loyalty, commitment, product acceptance and good long-term relationships with firms and brands are underpinned by their trust. Unfortunately, over the last decade or so, we have witnessed some of the more spectacular violations of consumer trust in the history of business. This has led to negative consequences, such as loss of competitive advantage, rage, lack of commitment and decrease in turnover. Consequently, study of trust repair has become an important theoretical concern for a growing number of trust scholars. This article reviews and synthesises existing theory and research on the topic. It first sketches general characteristics of the consumer trust repair literature, including its meta-theoretical underpinning. It then identifies specific strategies associated with consumer trust repair and synthesises them into five categories of trust repair strategies. In addition, this paper highlights theoretical processes that explain why/how trust repair strategies work. Third, the paper proposes six fruitful avenues for future research. This study contributes to the field of consumer trust repair research by critically reviewing and synthesising emerging theory and research on strategies associated with consumer trust repair, by showing why and how these strategies work and by identifying most fruitful research areas.

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1. Introduction

Consumers are key organisational stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984). They provide organisations with a key ingredient necessary for their functioning and survival—financial resources. One element underpinning the relationship between consumers and organisations and brands is trust (Dirks, Lewicki, & Zaheer, 2009). Research shows that trusting consumers are loyal and committed (e.g. Sirdeshmukh, Singh, & Sabol, 2002) and more easily accept products (e.g. García-Marzá, 2005). Trust between firms and consumers fosters strong, quality and long-term relationships (e.g. Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Nooteboom, Berger, & Noorderhaven, 1997; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekaran, 1998). Consumer trust is related to effective product branding (Keller & Lehmann, 2006) and is a source of sustainable competitive advantage (e.g. Barney & Hansen, 1994). Similarly, Castaldo, Premazzi, and Zerbini (2010) noted that consumer trust, for an organisation, is a strategic, relational asset. Trusting consumers face lower complexity related with their retail activities (Luhmann, 1979).

Unfortunately, over the last decade or so, we have witnessed a number of major organisational transgressions (e.g. the Libor rigging scandal, the FIFA corruption scandal, the Volkswagen emissions scandal) (see also Gillespie, Dietz, & Lockey, 2014). However, if Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, and Dirks (2004) are correct, these transgressions are the tip of the iceberg because only a small portion of transgressions are reported and become prominent. Such scandals among others represent events that damage employees' trust, investors' trust, the public's trust and the consumers' trust. Among others, a lack of trust damages established relationships and leads to customers' rage and disappointment, and organisations' loss of sales and competitive advantage (Barney & Hansen, 1994; Castaldo et al., 2010; Gargiulo & Ertug, 2006; Richards, Lawrence, & Burch, 2011).

Consequently, a study of trust repair became an important theoretical concern (Bachmann, Gillespie, & Priem, 2015; Dirks et al., 2009; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). From the mid-1990s onwards, an increasing number of researchers started studying trust repair. There are several forums dedicated to the topic, special issues, reviews and persistent calls for more research. However, much of this work focuses on trust repair within organisational settings. Marketing research on the topic is less developed and lacks reviews that classify, critically asses and integrate the existing research on strategies that play a role in consumer trust repair.

The time is ripe to address this research gap due to several reasons. First, existing literature on consumer trust repair spans various disciplines, making some works inaccessible or overlooked by marketing scholars. Second, existing literature reviews on the topic from organisational studies involving intra-organisational trust repair (e.g. Bachmann et al., 2015; Dirks et al., 2009; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010) do not apply to consumer trust repair because of the difference between employees and consumers. Employees and consumers differ in their expectations; they have conflicting interests and different proximities to trustees, e.g. organisations (e.g. Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Gillespie, Hurley, Dietz, & Bachmann, 2012; Schneper & Guillén, 2004; Poppo & Schepker, 2010; Gillespie & Siebert, forthcoming in 2017). Furthermore, employees and consumers face relational differences and different risks embedded in their relationships (e.g. Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Employees and consumers differ in their vulnerabilities, interests, power levels and expectations, and have varying levels of access, exposure and hence insight into an organisation's conduct. Therefore, consumer trust repair as a body of literature warrants separate treatment. Third, the different strands of literature differ in their interpretations of the nature and causes of trust violation (e.g. Gillespie & Siebert, forthcoming in 2017). I address the gap by using principles of systematic literature review and focus on establishing general characteristics of consumer trust repair literature, identifying strategies that are associated with consumer trust repair, synthesising these strategies and identifying most important areas that can guide future research.

My literature analysis reveals the following results. First, research on consumer trust repair is a relatively recent phenomenon. Literature on the topic is predominantly underpinned by positivist/post-positivist research philosophy (Blaikie, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), which involves ontologically objective reality, objective epistemology, deductive logic of inquiry and predominantly quantitative methodology (e.g. experiments and surveys). Researchers explore trust repair in the context of ability-, integrity- and benevolence-based trust violations and largely focus on consumer trust repair with organisations, industries and a system (i.e. macro perspective). Second, I identify a number of strategies that are associated with consumer trust repair and synthesise them into five categories of strategies for consumer trust repair: verbal responses, organisational restructuring, penance, hostage posting, and involvement of/role of third parties. Third, I establish six theoretical mechanisms used to explain why/how trust repair strategies work. These are as follows: resolving negative emotions, shift of trustor's attributions, improved familiarity, understanding of the scandal and reparative actions, constraining or eliminating the untrustworthy behaviour and transference of trust from a third party. Finally, building on my preceding analysis, I identify six areas for future research that have the potential to advance knowledge on the topic: process research, the role of time in trust repair, a non-positivist approach to studying consumer trust repair, theoretical mechanisms of trust repair, possibility of trust repair and extent of trust repair and factors that lead to consumer trust repair.

This article aims at trust repair researchers and contributes to emerging theory and research on consumer trust repair by critically reviewing and synthesising theory and research on strategies that lead to consumer trust repair. In addition, it identifies processes that explain why/how specific strategies work. The paper also flags what needs to be done to advance this research field.

This paper is structured as follows. I start by defining key concepts used in this study. Then, the methodological approach followed to collect and analyse the relevant literature is explained. Third, I report the findings of my analysis. I identify general characteristics of consumer trust repair theory and research, including meta-theoretical underpinnings of this body of literature. Then, I review and synthesise individual strategies associated with consumer trust repair and establish theoretical processes that show how/why they work. Finally, I build on my findings to identify the six most fruitful areas for future research.

2. Definitions of key concepts: trust, trust repair, trustor, trustee and consumer

Trust is an elusive, multiplex concept (e.g. Castaldo, 2007; Castaldo et al., 2010; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Dietz and Hartog, 2006; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002; McKnight & Chervany, 2001; Seppänen, Blomqvist, & Sundqvist, 2007). The most influential definitions (based on the number of citations of papers where these definitions are proposed (according to Google Scholar at the time of writing) and on how often trust scholars use them in their research (see Castaldo et al., 2010; for example)) include those developed by Moorman et al. (1992, 1993), Morgan and Hunt (1994), Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) and Rousseau et al. (1998). Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman (1993: 82) defined trust 'as a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence'. Morgan and Hunt (1994: 23) defined trust as a trustor's 'confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity'. In the context of organisation studies, Mayer et al. (1995: 712) defined trust as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party'. Similarly, Rousseau et al. (1998: 395) conceptualised trust as 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another'. The majority of researchers agree on one or both of the following central elements of trust: (1) behavioural intention (or willingness) or behaviour; (2) expectation (or confidence, belief). For the purpose of clarity, I need to note that trust is not cooperation, predictability, legitimacy or corporate reputation (see e.g. Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006; Gillespie et al., 2014; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Lamin & Zaheer, 2012; Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998; Suchman, 1995). In this study, I employ Rousseau et al.'s (1998) cross-disciplinary definition of trust.

Understanding of trust repair phenomenon varies with the definition of trust concept used and with the nature of trust repair itself. However, in essence, trust repair or trust restoration entails improvement in a trustor's trust after it was damaged by a trust violation (e.g. Dirks et al., 2009; Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009; Xie & Peng, 2009; Gillespie et al., 2012; Gillespie & Siebert, forthcoming in 2017).

In this study, I use the terms 'trustor', 'trustee' and 'consumer' as follows. *Trustor* refers to individuals whose trust has been damaged (in this study, individual consumers). I use the term *trustee* for the target of a trustor's trust (e.g. another individual or an organisation). I use the term *consumer* as broadly defined by the American Marketing Association (American Marketing Association, 2016) as, 'Traditionally, the ultimate user or consumer of goods, ideas, and services.' This definition also states that the term also is used to imply the buyer or decision maker and the ultimate consumer. So, for example, 'a mother buying cereal for consumption by a small child is often called the consumer although she may not be the ultimate user.'

3. Methodology

I use the principles of systematic literature review, including a

literature review protocol (Fink, 2005; Hart, 1998; Jesson, 2011; Ridley, 2012), to collect and analyse the relevant literature. Before searching for and reviewing the relevant literature, I developed a critical review form with 14 analytical points. These allowed me to perform my analysis critically, comprehensively and systematically. The analytical points were: (1) bibliographic details; (2) focus of the paper; (3) theory used (where relevant); (4) key findings; (5) research philosophy (Blaikie, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011); (6) methodology; (7) definition of consumer's trust and consumer's trust repair; (8) type of trustor and trustee; (9) trust domain; (10) type of trust violation; (11) geographical location of the study; (12) research context; (13) theoretical and practical contribution; and (14) further recommendations and reported limitations.

I searched for the literature between January and April 2016. To identify as many relevant consumer trust repair papers as possible, I conducted a comprehensive literature search by searching for relevant papers in: (1) all marketing journals listed in the Academic Journal Quality Guide (2015) ('The ABS list'); (2) two comprehensive databases (Business Source Premier by Ebsco and Scopus). The literature search focused on all listed science disciplines (including marketing); (3) Google Scholar; (4) Arnott's (2007a) extensive cross-disciplinary bibliography on trust (consisting of several hundred references), published in the *European Journal of Marketing* (Vol. 41 No. 9/10); (5) First International Network on Trust's (FINT) conference archives and (6) a trust-specific journal – *Journal of Trust Research*.

To identify the literature on consumer trust repair in an organisation, I developed several keywords, ranging from general to specific. More general keywords were used in data sources with fewer studies, while more specific keywords were used in large data sets. I applied the keyword 'trust' to identify potentially relevant studies from marketing journals listed on the ABS list and from the *Journal of Trust Research*. I focused on each paper's subject, keywords, title and abstract. No other limitations were applied. I used the more specific keywords 'custom* & trust' and 'consum* & trust' when searching in Business Source Premier by Ebsco and Scopus. I focused on studies that included specific keywords in the title. This was necessary because of the high number of studies pertaining to trust and my limited resources. The keywords used for the literature search using Google Scholar included 'trust repair and marketing', 'trust repair and marketing', 'consumer trust repair', 'consumer trust repair', 'customer trust repair', 'customer trust repair', 'corporate brand and trust repair', 'corporate brand and trust restoration', 'brand and trust repair', 'brand and trust repair' and 'brand and trust restoration'. I examined Arnott's (2007a) extensive cross-disciplinary bibliography on trust and all available FINT conference papers, without applying any specific keywords.

I developed literature inclusion and exclusion criteria. Papers were excluded on the following basis: (1) not dealing with consumer trust repair; (2) not empirical or conceptual (e.g. commentaries, book reviews, dialogues, summaries of conference abstracts, executive abstracts, calendars, abstracts and keywords, editorials, literature reviews and newspaper/magazine articles); and (3) examining trust in a financial or legal sense (e.g. trust funds, anti-trust law). In total, after duplicates were excluded, the search yielded 5148 potentially relevant articles. To establish each paper's relevance, I examined its title, abstract and, where necessary, entire contents. I identified 30 papers that focused on consumer trust repair.

4. Findings

In this section, I report the findings of my analysis. These are organised around three themes: general characteristics of consumer trust repair theory and research, including research philosophy and methodology, specific strategies that lead to consumer trust repair integrated in five categories of trust repair strategies, and theoretical mechanisms that explain why/how identified strategies repair consumer trust.

4.1. General characteristics

Consumer trust repair is a nascent research area. Academic interest in the topic started in the mid-2000s (e.g. Choi & Nazareth, 2005; Huff, 2005; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Ring, 2005; Xie & Peng, 2009). Since then, one to six papers a year have been published. Research on the topic peaked between 2009 and 2012. Fig. 1 identifies research outlets in which reviewed studies have been published. From this list, it is evident that research on the topic has been published in outlets ranging from high-ranking marketing and business journals (e.g. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*) to conference papers and a PhD. Fig. 1 also shows that while much literature on the topic was published in marketing journals, consumer trust repair literature research was also published across several other disciplines.

Before proceeding further with my analysis, some clarification is needed. First, several studies included in this review are not full-blown consumer trust repair studies. These studies deal with the topic indirectly, mentioning it in Introduction or Discussion sections. They are included in this review predominantly because of the relative scarcity of research on the topic. Second, the majority of the reviewed studies do not acknowledge conceptual differences between consumers and customers (Doyle, 2011) and frequently use both terms interchangeably. From the perspective of this study,

Journal publication outlet	Number of studies
Journal of Services Marketing	2
Decision Support Systems	1
Internet Research, 2013	1
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	1
Proceedings of the European Conference on Information Management and Evaluation: ECIME	1
ACM SIGMIS Database	1
International Journal of Business Management & Economic Research	1
Institute of Business Ethics	1
Restoring Trust in Organizations and Leaders: Enduring Challenges and Emerging Answers	1
Business Ethics Quarterly	1
Quantitative Marketing and Economics	1
Journal of Business Research	1
Marketing Dynamism & Sustainability: Things Change, Things Stay the Same….	1
International Journal of Bank Marketing	1
The Service Industries Journal	1
Journal of Organizational and End User Computing	1
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	1
Food Policy	1
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	1
Food, Culture & Society	1
Food & Drug LJ	1
Policy & Politics	1
Organization Studies	1
International Journal of Electronic Commerce	1
International Journal of Research in Marketing	1
Journal of Global Information Technology Management	1
Psychology & Marketing	1
Procedia Engineering	1
PhD thesis	1
Total	30

Fig. 1. Breakdown of consumer trust repair studies in various publication outlets.

this is not problematic because I use the American Marketing Association's (2016) more inclusive definition of consumers (see the section on Definitions of key concepts for more details).

Researchers have studied consumer trust repair in the context of a number of trust violations, including hacking of private consumer data held by a firm and unauthorised information sharing (Bansal & Zahedi, 2015); reception of poor-quality or defective products or poor-quality service (Chen, Wu, & Chang, 2013); various financial scandals (Dameri & Bonfante, 2007; Debab & Yateem, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2012; Ring, 2005; Spicer & Okhmatovskiy, 2015); online market inefficiencies in the context of electronics purchases (Datta & Chatterjee, 2011); violation of shoppers' expectations of store employees' job competence (Friend, Costley, & Brown, 2010); fraud and data manipulation (Gillespie et al., 2014); food scares, including mad cow disease (Giraud-Heraud, Rouached and Soler, 2006; Richards et al., 2011); misleading advertising (Knight, Mather, & Mathieson, 2015); price gouging (Mattila, 2009); faulty products (Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Wu, Chien, Chen, & Wu, 2013; Zhang, 2012); food quality problems (Roberts, 2011); negative publicity related with product-harm crisis and environmental pollution crisis (Xie & Peng, 2009); the growing gap between consumers and food systems (Meyer, Coveney, Henderson, Ward, & Taylor, 2012); the widening gap between food production and consumers (Richards et al., 2011); and the increasing complexity of the public pension sector (Ring, 2005). Taken together, and drawing on Mayer et al. (1995), dimensions of trustworthiness and trust repair literature in organisation studies (e.g. Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Gillespie et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2004), the majority of these events can be grouped into three categories of trust violation: ability, benevolence and integrity trust violations. The fourth category of trust violations relates to the notion of decreased consumer insight or knowledge about a trustee or related business practices and products. For example, the widening gap between food production and consumers (Richards et al., 2011), the increasing complexity of the public pension sector (Ring, 2005) and the growing gap between consumers and the food system (Meyer et al., 2012) are all underpinned by the consumer's reduced insights or knowledge.

The reviewed studies feature four categories of trustees: individuals, products, organisations and industries/systems. Most studies take a macro perspective on consumer trust repair; specifically, most studies involve organisations as trustees. In total, 22 of 30 reviewed studies involve organisations as trustees; for example, a US-based E-commerce business (Bansal & Zahedi, 2015); banks (Dameri & Bonfante, 2007; Debab & Yateem, 2012); a government entity (Daniel, 2008); various brick-and-mortar and online retailers (Chen et al., 2013; Datta & Chatterjee, 2011; Friend et al., 2010; Liao, Luo, & Gurung, 2009; Richards et al., 2011; Utz, Matzat, & Snijders, 2009; Wu et al., 2013; Xie & Peng, 2009; Zhang, 2012); financial institutions; various service providers (e.g. health care providers, restaurants, hotels, the BBC, Severn Trent) (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2014; Huff, 2005; La & Choi, 2012; Mattila, 2009); pharmaceuticals (Knight et al., 2015); and various manufacturers, including Siemens, Mattel, Toyota and BAE Systems (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2014; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005). Few studies involve an industry/system as a trustee; for example, financial institutions and the financial market (Gillespie et al., 2012); the food industry/system (Meyer et al., 2012; Roberts, 2011), the private and public pension sectors (Ring, 2005) and the banking system (Spicer & Okhmatovskiy, 2015). Only Van Laer and De Ruyter (2010) focused on consumer trust repair with individuals (GP, CEO and sales representative). Similarly, studies by Giraud-Héraud et al. (2006) and Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Helsen (2008) offer the only examples of consumer trust repair in food products (e.g. meat and peanut butter).

Consumer trust repair was studied in different countries, including the US (e.g. Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Daniel, 2008; Mattila, 2009), Taiwan (e.g. Chen et al., 2013), Italy (e.g. Dameri & Bonfante, 2007), the UK (e.g. Dietz & Gillespie, 2012), Germany (e.g. Dietz & Gillespie, 2012), Russia (e.g. Spicer & Okhmatovskiy, 2015), Japan (e.g. Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005), China (e.g. Xie & Peng, 2009) and New Zealand (e.g. Friend et al., 2010).

4.1.1. Research philosophy and methodology

Philosophically, most researchers approach consumer trust repair with positivist/post-positivist assumptions (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011) (e.g. Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Chen et al., 2013; Choi & Nazareth, 2005; Dameri & Bonfante, 2007; Daniel, 2008; Datta & Chatterjee, 2011; Debab & Yateem, 2012; Dietz and Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2014; Giraud-Héraud et al., 2006; Gillespie et al., 2012; Huff, 2005; Knight et al., 2015; La & Choi, 2012; Liao et al., 2009; Mattila, 2009; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Roberts, 2011; Utz et al., 2009; Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010; Wu et al., 2013; Xie & Peng, 2009; Zhang, 2012). For example, ontologically, these studies construe the consumer trust repair objective and use a 'scientific method' or a 'hypothetico-deductive' or 'theory-testing' approach (Blaikie, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). Experimental (e.g. Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Xie & Peng, 2009) and survey (e.g. Chen et al., 2013; Datta & Chatterjee, 2011) research methodologies are dominant. These studies frequently involve large sample sizes, enabling researchers to generalise their 'true' findings to a population. Qualitative research designs are less common. Most frequently used is a case study methodology (Yin, 2013), which can 'test' deductively developed theories (Gillespie et al., 2014; Roberts, 2011).

Only a few studies are underpinned by other research philosophies (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011) (e.g. Friend et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 2012; Ring, 2005). Of these studies, few are underpinned by interpretivism. These interpretive research studies involve inductive or abductive reasoning. Qualitative methodologies include grounded theory methodology (e.g. Meyer et al., 2012), a case study approach and other qualitative approaches, some based on phenomenology or hermeneutics (e.g. Ring, 2005). To collect qualitative data, usually from a small number of research participants, interpretivist researchers conduct unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Friend et al. (2010) collected qualitative data about negative retail shopping experiences from nine purposefully selected participants. Richards, Lawrence and Burch's (2011) study included elements of a critical theory (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). For example, these authors are critical of food retailers' practices aiming to influence consumer perceptions and beliefs about the retailer and products sold. The following exemplary quote from Richards et al. (2011: 41) illustrates the following: 'Morrisons, as a national retail chain with a multimillion dollar turnover, and which sources goods from all corners of the globe, is disguising its true place in the global food economy, presenting instead an image of localness, connectedness and tradition'.

4.2. Strategies associated with consumer trust repair[1]

In this section, I synthesise and discuss identified strategies that

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[1] It needs to be noted that organisation's reactions after trust violation does not necessarily lead to trust repair. In this section 1 focus solely on strategies that lead to consumer trust repair according to empirical evidence and/or theoretical arguments.

lead to consumer trust repair into five categories of consumer trust repair. Fig. 2 shows an integrative framework that includes the categories of consumer trust repair strategies. Table 1 shows specific trust repair strategies subsumed by each category and links each specific trust repair strategy with the relevant literature. In the remainder of this section, I discuss trust repair strategies.

4.2.1. Verbal responses

Verbal responses for trust repair are an organisation's responses that do not involve a tangible element (Farrell & Gibbons, 1989 cited in Dirks et al., 2009: 87). I identify a number of verbal responses that are associated with consumer trust repair. These are as follows: apology, denial, promise, explanation, information sharing and advertising.

Apology was the most studied strategy for consumer trust repair. Researchers found that apology was effective, to varying degrees, for recovering consumer trust (e.g. Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Friend et al., 2010; Knight et al., 2015; Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2009; Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010; Xie & Peng, 2009). 'Plain' apology, narrative apology, narrative apology offered by the trustee himself, and explicit and unreserved apology were more effective for trust repair than apology with explanation (e.g. Utz et al., 2009), analytic apology (e.g. Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010) and an apology offered on the trustee's behalf (e.g. Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010). Sincere apology also fostered trust repair (e.g. Knight et al., 2015; Mattila, 2009). Apology more effectively recovered consumer trust after competency vis-a-vis benevolence trust violations (e.g. Bansal & Zahedi, 2015). Apology after trust failure attributable to the trustee had limited the effectiveness for trust repair (e.g. Mattila, 2009). Apology was more effective than denial, regardless of the type of trust violation (e.g. Utz et al., 2009).

Research shows that denial, in some contexts and to various degrees, fosters consumer trust repair (e.g. Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2009; Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010). Analytic denial, after morality- or integrity-based trust violations, more effectively improved damaged trust that analytic apology (e.g. Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010). However, some researchers found that in comparison with apology (or some types of apology), denial (or some types of denial) was less effective for consumer trust repair (e.g. Knight et al., 2015; Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2009; Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010), regardless of the trust violation type (e.g. Utz et al., 2009). For example, Van Laer and De Ruyter (2010) found that narrative apology was superior to narrative and analytic denial in the context of integrity trust violation. Interestingly, researchers also found that in the context of integrity- or morality-based trust violations, denial was ineffective for trust repair (e.g. Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Gillespie et al., 2014; Knight et al., 2015; Utz et al., 2009) and could even lead to distrust (e.g. Gillespie et al., 2014).

The role of explanations in consumer trust repair is almost non-existent (e.g. Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2009). Explanations refer to a trustee's statement(s) about his/her responsibility for his/her actions (Bies & Shapiro, 1987 cited in Mattila, 2009, p. 212). For example, a trustee might explain that an event/transgression was caused by a technical problem. Mattila (2009) empirically studied consumer trust repair in a hotel after a trust violation involving price gouging in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Utz et al. (2009) explored consumer trust repair in an e-retailer after integrity-based and competence-based trust violations. These studies show that explanations have limited value for trust repair. For example, Utz et al. (2009) found that once a trustee added explanation to a 'plain' apology, damaged trust improved less than after an apology without explanation. Mattila (2009) found that causal explanation with external attribution was not enough for full repair of consumer trust. However, a combination of sincere apology and causal explanation recovered customers' trust more effectively than denial.

Some researchers suggested that a trustee's information sharing with trustors after trust violation plays an important role in trust repair (e.g. Chen et al., 2013; Xie & Peng, 2009). This involves sharing, disclosing and demonstrating evidence, updating news

Categories of strategies
associated with consumer
trust repair*
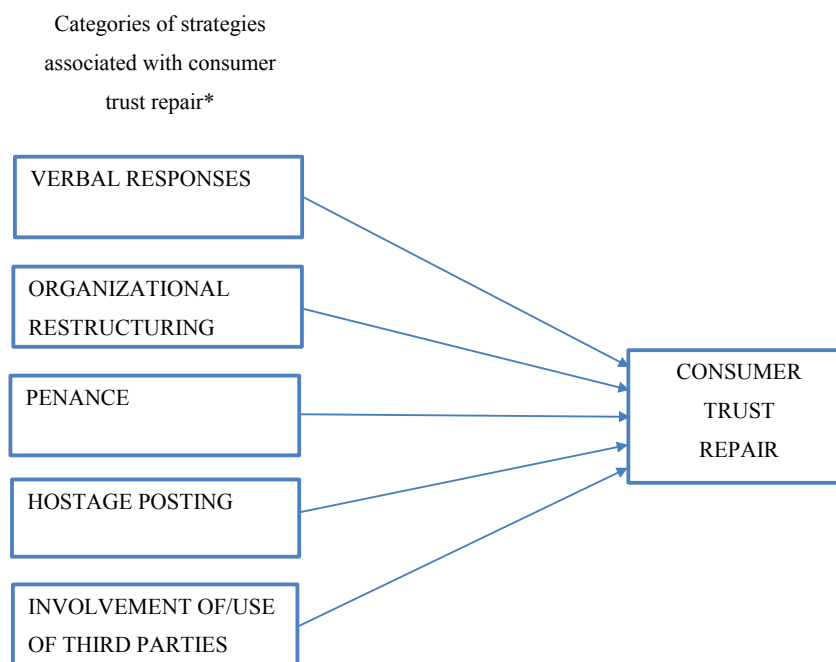
* Please see section below for definition of each category of consumer trust repair strategy

Fig. 2. An integrative framework of consumer trust repair.

Table 1
Strategies associated with consumer trust repair.

Strategy	Types
Verbal Responses	• Apology (Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Chen et al., 2013; Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Friend et al., 2010; Knight et al., 2015; Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2009; Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010; Wu et al., 2013; Xie & Peng, 2009; Zhang, 2012) • Denial (Bansal & Zahedi, 2015; Knight et al., 2015; Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2009; Van Laer & De Ruyter, 2010) • Promise (Zhang, 2012) • Explanation (Mattila, 2009; Utz et al., 2009) • Information sharing (Chen et al., 2013; Daniel, 2008; Debab & Yateem, 2012; Wu et al., 2013; Xie & Peng, 2009) • Advertising (Cleeren et al., 2008; Gill, 2008)
Organisational Restructuring	• Adoption of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Roberts, 2011; Shim, Serido and Tang, 2013) • Introduction of new private product labelling (Giraud-Héraud et al., 2006) • Local food production (Meyer et al., 2012) • Introduction of new customer recognition programs (Debab & Yateem, 2012) • Pension policy change (Ring, 2005) • Reforms in board governance, cultural change within institutions, replacing senior leaders and redesigning incentive structures to better align management's and stakeholders' interests (Gillespie et al., 2014; Gillespie et al., 2012) • Re-establishing a positive organisational identity amongst the workforce (Gillespie et al., 2014) • Reforming targeting procedures and culture (Gillespie et al., 2014)
Penance Hostage Posting Involvement of/Use of Third Parties	• Financial compensations (Chen et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2013; Xie & Peng, 2009) • Monitoring and self-sanctioning (Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005) • Celebrity endorsement (Richards et al., 2011) • Expert endorsement (Richards et al., 2011) • Store layouts mimicking traditional markets (Richards et al., 2011) • Photographs of farmers (Richards et al., 2011) • Central bank involvement (Debab & Yateem, 2012) • Use of trusted online intermediaries (Datta & Chatterjee, 2011) • Involvement of the state/government (Spicer & Okhmatovskiy, 2015; Zhang, 2012)

during the transgression handling process, and clarifying facts to a trustor (Xie & Peng, 2009). For example, a trustee communicating evidence and clarifying facts and various updates can improve consumer trust in a firm (e.g. Xie & Peng, 2009). Chen et al. (2013) found that prompt information sharing (communication) and adequate information led to trust repair.

Only two studies explored the role of an organisation's advertising on consumer trust repair (Cleeren et al., 2008; Gill, 2008). These studies argued that an organisation's advertising can recover consumer trust. Specifically, Cleeren et al. (2008) found that after salmonella poisoning, an organisation's advertising led to improved consumer trust. Gill (2008) theorised that brand advertising (specifically with an online focus) restores consumers' trust in the banking sector. However, both studies are limited; therefore, more research studies on the role of advertising are needed. For example, Cleeren et al. (2008) discussed about re-established consumer's trust and repurchasing simultaneously. This is problematic because purchasing is not necessarily an act of trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). Because key concepts are not defined, it is not possible to establish whether repurchasing is understood by the authors as evidence of recovered trust. In addition, this study did not clearly specify the content of the advertising. Gill's (2008) study lacked theoretical arguments for why advertising would recover trust. Similarly, promise (Zhang, 2012) received very little attention from trust repair researchers. Specifically, Zhang's (2012) conceptual study focused on consumer trust repair. This study proposed that a promise facilitates trust repair. However, this proposition was not empirically tested and more research is required.

4.2.2. Organisational restructuring

One of the main approaches to trust repair involves organisational restructuring. Organisational restructuring relates to modifications, removal or introduction of new elements to an organisation's structure, policies and functioning. A number of strategies associated with consumer trust repair fall under this category of organisational restructuring. These are as follows: adoption of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Roberts, 2011);

introduction of new private product labelling (Giraud-Héraud et al., 2006); change in food manufacturing (e.g. local food production) (Meyer et al., 2012); introduction of new customer recognition programs (Debab & Yateem, 2012); pension policy changes (e.g. a guaranteed, non-means-tested state pension for all, set at a reasonable minimum level and accompanied by real public consultation) (Ring, 2005); reforms in board governance, cultural change within institutions, replacing senior leaders and redesigning incentive structures to better align management's and stakeholders' interests (Gillespie et al., 2014; Gillespie et al., 2012); reforming targeting procedures and culture (Gillespie et al., 2014). Meyer et al. (2012) suggested that to re-establish the trust of metropolitan consumers, they need to be reconnected with the food system. This might be achieved through an increase in local food production and consumption. These studies share one important similarity—they are conceptual or speculative in nature. Researchers frequently make suggestions about consumer trust repair in passing without full theorising or theory testing.

4.2.3. Penance and hostage posting

Few researchers study the role of other strategies in consumer trust repair (e.g. Datta & Chatterjee, 2011; Meyer et al., 2012; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Richards et al., 2011; Xie & Peng, 2009). Specifically, Xie and Peng (2009) found that penance (e.g. financial compensation) was responsible for consumer trust repair. Penance refers to a punishment that a trustee inflicts on himself to signal the expression of repentance for wrongdoing (Stevenson & Waite, 2011). However, this was ineffective for repairing consumer perceptions of a trustee's integrity and benevolence. Nakayachi and Watabe (2005) conducted three experiments and found that hostage posting (e.g. voluntary monitoring and self-sanctioning) can help repair organisational trustworthiness as perceived by the public/consumers. Hostage posting refers to 'a self-sanctioning system in an uncertain situation' (Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005, p. 2).

4.2.4. Involvement of/use of third parties

Involvement of/use of third parties relates to the organisational

use of third parties for achieving trust repair. Only two studies involved the idea that involvement of third parties repair consumer. Richards et al. (2011) argued that celebrity or expert endorsement, store layouts mimicking traditional markets and photographs of farmers lead to repair of consumer trust in food retailers and the food they sell. Datta and Chatterjee (2011) studied trust repair in an online environment. These authors showed that trust in online intermediaries improves trust in a trustee. While these studies provide some preliminary insights into consumer trust repair, their findings and suggestions are limited. Most importantly, these findings are almost exclusively observed under laboratory conditions or do not establish causality between independent variables and consumer trust.

4.3. Underlying processes of consumer trust repair

The reviewed studies involve a number of arguments to explain why/how specific strategies repair consumer trust. First, several studies (e.g. Chen et al., 2013; Huff, 2005; La & Choi, 2012; Xie & Peng, 2009; Zhang, 2012) involve the idea that trust violation leads to negative feelings or moods for consumers. To recover trust, consumers' negative feelings or moods should be neutralised. Chen et al. (2013) theorised that prompt information sharing with customers and financial compensation lead to trust repair because these factors turn trustors' negative feelings, resulting from the trust failure, into positive ones. Relatedly, information sharing plays a role in consumers' sense-making about what went wrong and why after trust violation, which is important for trust repair. Another approach to trust repair involves the idea that, after a trust violation, trustees need to manage trustors' perceptions of them and the trust failure (e.g. Mattila, 2009). The key here is to make the trustor's perceptions of the trustee positive. For example, Mattila (2009), who studied consumer trust repair after price gouging by hotels, found that a sincere apology combined with organisations' causal explanation (pointing to an external cause of the failure) effectively repaired consumer trust, as this trust repair strategy positively influenced trustors' perceptions of the trustee. Third, I identified an approach to trust repair that requires a trustor's knowledge about a trustee (e.g. Meyer et al., 2012). For example, Meyer et al. (2012) explicitly stated that the problem of damaged trust is underpinned by a disconnect between consumers and 'faceless' organisations, and that the solution to damaged consumer trust is reconnecting consumers with organisations through 'face work' (Giddens, 1990, 1991, 1994). Fourth, the mechanism/process of trust repair involves the idea that for trust to recover, trustors need information about the scandal and about trustees' future actions (e.g. Chen et al., 2013; Xie & Peng, 2009). The fifth assumption involves the idea that trust violations result from a trustee's untrustworthy actions. To recover trust, consumers need to believe that in the future, the trustee's untrustworthy behaviour will be constrained (e.g. Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005; Debab & Yateem, 2012; Roberts, 2011; Richards et al., 2011; Ring, 2005; Giraud-Héraud et al., 2006). Finally, several researchers theorise that consumer trust repair is a matter of the trustee borrowing trustworthiness from someone else (e.g. Richards et al., 2011). The concept of transference explains why Richards et al. (2011) suggested that supermarkets can recover consumer trust by using direct quality claims (e.g. Red Tractor logo) and through discursive claims-making (e.g. celebrity or expert endorsement, store layouts mimicking traditional markets, photographs of farmers).

4.4. Discussion

Analysis of the extant literature led me to conclude that theory and research on consumer trust repair is relatively new. Recent academic interest in consumer trust repair corresponds with a growing number of scandals, organisational wrongdoings and failures of corporate governance over the last two decades or so (see e.g. Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Gillespie et al., 2014). Most studies are underpinned by a positivist/post-positivist research philosophy. This is not unusual given that positivist/post-positivist and functionalist paradigms are dominant in trust research in general (Isaeva, Bachmann, Bristow, & Saunders, 2015; Möllering, 2006; Siebert, Martin, & Bozic, 2016). While some studies involve individual trustees, most focus on consumer trust repair in organisations. Consumer trust repair was studied after different types of trust violations; the most prevalent are ability-, integrity- and benevolence-based failures of trust. Researchers have theorised and established a number of strategies that lead to consumer trust repair and mechanisms/processes underpinning these. Categories of strategies that lead to consumer trust repair include verbal responses, organisational restructuring, penance, hostage posting and the role of third parties. Theoretical mechanisms that explain why/how trust repair strategies work include resolving negative emotions, a shift of trustors' attributions, improved familiarity, understanding of the scandal and reparative actions, constraining or eliminating the untrustworthy behaviour and transference of trust from a third party. This plurality of theoretical arguments shows that different researchers have different assumptions underpinning their work(s). Researchers focusing on consumer trust repair took a macro perspective and focused on consumer trust repair with organisations, industries and a system.

5. Agenda for future research

The reminder of this paper identifies six research areas that can guide future research on this topic, thereby significantly contributing to advancing knowledge of consumer trust repair (see also Arnott, 2007b).

5.1. Process perspective

The papers reviewed here use a variance approach (Langley, 1999; Mohr, 1982) to study consumer trust repair. This approach is important and valuable; it also enables us to learn the 'what' of trust repair. However, this approach is ill equipped for studying the 'how' of trust repair (i.e. process approach). Thus, research on consumer trust repair requires more process-oriented theorising, where time is a central element in the theorising (Langley, 1999; Mohr, 1982). Such process studies could tell us more about how trust repair happens. Process orientation is also very useful for studying the role of context in trust repair and exploring how trust repair shapes the context within which it is embedded and vice versa.

5.2. Time and consumer trust repair

No reviewed study focuses on the role of time in consumer trust repair. This is a direct consequence of variance theorising where temporal ordering of determinants of trust repair is not important (Mohr, 1982). Future research can explore the role of time in trust repair; for example, whether it is possible that different strategies or factors play a role in trust repair at different times. Similarly, one can explore when exactly trust repair occurs. Is there a tipping point when a trustor's trust is rebuilt or is there a transition zone? If so, researchers could explore when it starts and how long it lasts. In addition, researchers could investigate the role of theoretical mechanisms at different times during trust repair; for example, it might be that shortly after a scandal, consumers might feel negative emotions and a need for organisational restructuring. However, it is

possible that multiple trust repair mechanisms might not only be necessary at the same time (Bachmann et al., 2015; Dirks et al., 2009) for trust to be recovered, but that different mechanisms may be salient at different times. For example, for consumer trust repair, consumer relational or social equilibrium and structural trust repair mechanisms (Bachmann et al., 2015) may play an important role immediately after a scandal. However, if consumers make a judgement about whether they can trust an organisation several months after a scandal compared to during it (i.e. did trust repair occur?), only structural trust repair mechanisms might be relevant.

5.3. Non-positivist/post-positivist approaches to consumer trust repair

The majority of the reviewed studies are underpinned by a positivist/post-positivist research philosophy (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln et al., 2011). While such research is common, important and valuable (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013), it is problematic because this approach limits what can be discovered (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Gioia et al., 2013; Locke, 2011) about consumer trust repair. Therefore, there is currently great potential for new discoveries about consumer trust repair if researchers adopt interpretivism, critical theory, critical realism and post-modernism, for example. These research philosophies can challenge existing assumptions about consumer trust repair and provide novel insights about the phenomenon. For example, critical theory could shift focus from managerial agency in trust repair, the notion of trust as a being good, positive and beneficial.

5.4. Determinants of consumer trust repair

Researchers have explored a number of strategies associated with consumer trust repair; however, more research in this area is needed. Apology and denial received the most research attention; only a few studies explore other determinants of consumer trust repair. Therefore, future research can investigate if there are any additional trust repair determinants. This is highly likely, given that researchers frequently focus on endogenous determinants of trust repair. For example, regulation and control (e.g. regulation, laws, policies), which received attention in the context of trust repair within organisational settings, went almost unnoticed in the context of marketing. Future research in this area could examine specific determinants across different trustees (e.g. individuals, organisations) and in the context of different trust failures.

5.5. Theoretical mechanism of consumer trust repair

This review shows that researchers use a number of theoretical mechanisms for theorising consumer trust repair. However, this work is far from complete. More research is needed to establish whether there are additional theoretical mechanisms central to consumer trust repair. To do this, researchers could develop or borrow from other theoretical perspectives not previously applied to consumer trust repair. Inductive/abductive theory building approaches could be especially valuable here. Such approaches can help to tease out or 'discover' potential additional processes central to consumer trust repair. In addition, researchers can examine how existing trust repair mechanisms apply to different trust repair strategies.

5.6. Possibility of consumer trust repair

Interestingly, the majority of the reviewed trust repair studies do not establish the phenomenon of consumer trust repair. In other words, most trust repair studies do not establish the very phenomenon they try to understand, explain and/or predict. While this is common in social sciences (Merton, 1987), it is nevertheless problematic (Van de Ven, 2007, 2015). Assuming that all scandals lead to trust violations and/or that consumer trust existed before a scandal is not appropriate (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Kim et al., 2004). Therefore, future research can investigate, for example, if consumer trust repair is possible outside laboratory settings, if consumer trust can ever fully recover, and if recovered consumer trust is qualitatively different from pre-trust violation trust.

6. Conclusion

This study reviews and synthesises theory and research on consumer trust repair. This is a relatively nascent research field. Existing studies provide important initial insights into strategies and processes associated with consumer trust repair. However, my findings led me to conclude that more research is required. This is mainly because the existing literature is scarce, and most studies share similar philosophical and methodological assumptions, leading to fundamentally similar findings. To advance knowledge on this topic, researchers can follow any of six directions for future research identified in this study. I hope that this study invites marketing and other scholars to this existing and promising research area and provides a strong foundation for future research on consumer trust repair.

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