CHAPTER 3

GAPS IN LITERATURE

The previous chapter highlights relevant articles required for identification of research gaps. A thorough scrutiny of extant literature was conducted in academic databases like Google Scholar, EBSCO, Emerald Insight, JSTOR, Science Direct, and ProQuest using keywords like “webcare”, “online response”, “company response”, “management response”, “online reviews”, “corporate response”, “service recovery”, “forgive”, “forgiveness”, and “consumer forgiveness” resulting in the following research gaps:

**Gap I:** Extant literature on webcare reveals the growing relevance of this communication tool for marketers. It is salient to note that like any other marketer-generated communication tool, webcare too has certain inbuilt characteristics which could be manipulated by the marketers in order to nullify detrimental effects of consumer complaints and negative reviews. However, perhaps due to the relative newness of the
domain, limited research attention has been given to systematically explore these characteristics. Further, extant literature on webcare reveals researchers’ overdependence on justice perceptions in order to explain the effectiveness of these recovery/response procedures. Limited attention has been given to examine whether webcare provided in response to negative reviews influences coping behavior, i.e., forgiving/sanctioning the marketer’s transgressions, of other consumers who read the review and the associated webcare. While consumers coping behavior has been studied in offline service recovery context, paucity of research exists regarding its usage in the domain of online responses and webcare.

**Gap II:** Extant studies on online reviews suggest that severity of failure plays a salient role in determining the intensity of negative emotions felt by the consumers which eventually gets reflected in their negative reviews. Accordingly, marketers should develop appropriate webcare strategies to counter negative reviews varying in their levels of severity. However, less attention in the domain of webcare and online responses has been given to consider this situational factor i.e., severity of failure, into account.

**Gap III:** Extant studies on consumer forgiveness treat it as a final outcome variable while completely ignoring the subsequent outcomes of forgiveness on various aspects of consumer behavior. It is argued that these outcomes are worthy enough to be considered because consumers engage in various types of decision making after forgiving/not forgiving the wrong–doings of the company, e.g., whether to continue using the product or service, whether to tell others about the poor experience, etc. However, less academic focus has been given to examine these effects.