

Why is the customer not always right?

A research regarding the drivers of customers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

Radboud University



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Preface

In front of you lies the master thesis ‘Why is the customer not always right?’. This research is written in conclusion of the master’s degree in Business Administration at the Radboud University Nijmegen. It has been partly composed as a joint effort with one other master student. Chapters two, four and five have to some extent been written as a collaboration. At the basis of this collaboration, several thesis meetings have been organized wherein both the researchers and the supervisor participated.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my fellow master student for her contribution to this research. I would also like to thank my supervisor, H. Joosten, for his assistance during this research and especially his enthusiasm regarding the subject of illegitimate customer complaining behaviour. His enthusiasm and expertise convinced me to deepen into this subject in the first place. Moreover, it motivated me even more to bring this thesis to a successful conclusion. I also wish to thank the respondents for their time, effort and contribution to this research. Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and wise counsel during the process.

I hope you enjoy reading this thesis.

Laura Fekken

Nijmegen, June 12, 2018

Abstract

The assumption that the customer is always right turns out to be outdated, unrealistic and naïve. Evidence suggests that some customers present illegitimate complaints. However, clear empirical evidence of the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour is missing due to its sensitive subject and potential for bias. Therefore, the aim of this study is to contribute to the context of illegitimate complaining behaviour by investigating all possible drivers of people to engage in such behaviour.

A survey is conducted to collect data from customers regarding illegitimate complaining behaviour in order to find empirical evidence for the drivers of this kind of behaviour.

As a result of this research, it seems that customers are motivated by three drivers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Moreover, there are two drivers that lead to less illegitimate complaining behaviour. Furthermore, the results show that the drivers of customers differ between complaints in the electronics category and other categories. Another surprising result is that the majority of the illegitimate complaints were filed at large firms.

This study made a first attempt to find empirical evidence for the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour, in order to support propositions made by previous literature. Firms should continually engage in research iterations that identify drivers of illegitimate complaints. Since at the moment less is known about this phenomenon managers should actively stay informed about new studies regarding this subject. Further research in this area should focus on investigating what drivers really matter the most.

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1. Introduction

A few years ago my parents ordered a new kitchen table. After a long time of waiting on the order, the table finally arrived. When they saw their new table, it was not as they had expected it to be. The table in the showroom had not as many dents in the wood as the table they got delivered. They expected to receive a table which looked like the one in the showroom, but this was not the case. My parents were not satisfied at all and contacted the firm where they ordered the table. They were a little bit scared that the firm would not give in and that they might even refuse to offer them a new table. For that reason my parents decided to exaggerate their complaint. They told the firm that the table was completely covered by dents and that those dents were nowhere to be found in the one they saw in the showroom. My parents decided to give their complaint some extra power by stressing out that they had to wait longer on the table than agreed on in the terms of delivery. Despite the fact that this ‘longer’ waiting time took only 2 days. Eventually, the firm offered my parents a new table, hopefully without the dents and within the agreed delivery time. My parents were satisfied with the solution and luckily the second table did meet their expectations. Although the outcome was successful, my parents will never know if the firm would have offered the same solution if they had not exaggerated their complaint.

1.1 Service recovery

It is very likely that the furniture firm in the example above operated with the assumption that “customers will behave in a manner that is both rational and functional” (Reynolds & Harris, 2006). With this assumption in mind, customer-oriented firms encourage customers to complain. They believe that the complaints are a result of dissatisfaction with their services or products (Huang & Miao, 2016). As a consequence, firms try to retain satisfied and loyal customers by compensating the complaints and attempts to recover the service. They compensate the customers regardless of the validity or legitimacy of their complaints (Baker et al., 2012). According to Kau and Loh (2006), service recovery is “the process by which steps are taken as a result of negative customer perception of initial service delivery”. Firms try to minimize the damage in the relationship with the customer and try to keep them satisfied. Moreover, delivering excellent service recovery can be beneficial for companies to turn complaining customers into satisfied and loyal ones (Bitner et al., 1990). Recovery efforts are of great importance for profitability as well, since it can determine customer retention or defection (Stauss & Friege, 1999).

1.2 Illegitimate complaints

Researchers start to realize that customer complaints do not only arise out of dissatisfaction (Huang & Miao, 2016). Satisfied customers can complain as well for other reasons. For instance, customers can profit financially from a complaint or it can be a way to express their emotions (Kowalski, 1996). Whereas firms try to deliver excellent service, there is a dark side of customers who deliberately disrupt services, are not honest and sometimes even use violence (Rose & Neidermeyer, 1999). This kind of dysfunctional customer behaviour includes shoplifting, vandalism, customer resistance, customer aggression, violence and illegitimate customer complaining (Reynolds & Harris, 2006). To give an indication of the impact of this issue, it costed \$AU112 billion globally, only considering fraudulent returns. (Jager, 2013).

Some studies start to stress the issue of customers who engage in illegitimate, opportunistic, false or fraudulent complaining behaviour (Harris & Reynolds, 2004; Berry & Seiders, 2008; Macintosh & Stevens, 2013). Wirtz and McColl-Kennedy (2010) investigated the potential drivers of customers who engage in opportunistic claiming and found that customers do not always behave legitimate. Subsequently, Baker et al. (2012) describe three possible drivers of opportunistic customer complaining. According to this article, the drivers of opportunistic customer complaining could be customer-centric, firm-centric or relationship-centric. Moreover, Joosten (2017) measured illegitimate complaints in a sample of 226 cases of the Dutch Foundation for Disputes Committees (SGC), a non-for-profit third party arbitrator that handles disputes between consumers and firms.

Despite the several studies that explored the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour, there is more research needed to cover the full picture of what drives customers to engage in such behaviour. Empirical research is desirable to fully understand the antecedents and consequences of illegitimate customer complaints (Baker et al., 2012).

1.3 Research aim

The assumption that the customer is always right turns out to be outdated, unrealistic and naïve (Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Nevertheless, the drivers of people to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour is underexposed. There are some studies that examined the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. However, these studies conducted an exploratory research and did not empirically test the hypotheses. Therefore, this research attempts to build on the exploratory researches with a confirmatory approach. The aim of this study is to contribute to the context of illegitimate complaining

behaviour by investigating all the possible drivers of people to engage in such behaviour. Therefore, the following research question will be addressed and answered:

What are the drivers of customers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour?

1.4 Theoretical relevance

Illegitimate complaining behaviour is a sensitive subject and therefore bias is likely to occur (Fisk et al., 2010). The context of illegitimate complaining is challenging and difficult to measure. Limited research has focused on opportunistic customer claiming behaviour (Macintosh & Stevens, 2013). Despite the potential importance of the subject for managers and researchers, illegitimate customer complaining behaviour has been largely underexposed (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010).

Several studies stress the importance to examine the antecedents of dysfunctional customer behaviour. According to Al-Rafee and Cronan (2006) it is needed to study more in detail the antecedents of dysfunctional customer behaviour. Furthermore, the most studies examining the antecedents of dysfunctional customer behaviour focus on shoplifting (Reynolds & Harris, 2009). The other forms of dysfunctional customer behaviour, including illegitimate complaining behaviour, are underexposed. Moreover, previous studies focused on assessing the degree to which illegitimate complaining occurs (Harris & Reynolds, 2004; Reynolds & Harris, 2005). However, these studies did not empirically test why customers engage in such behaviour. The literature regarding illegitimate complaining behaviour provides a number of theories that assume possible drivers of illegitimate complaining. However, these studies only explore the motives of customers and do not investigate these motives empirically. This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by conducting an empirical research regarding the drivers of customers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

1.5 Managerial relevance

Customers can harm a firm in a variety of ways. Customers can use the media to provoke negative publicity, spread negative word-of-mouth and create weblogs to express their negative feelings (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Moreover, customer complaining is starting to appear in more public situations. Customers used to express their unsatisfied feelings about a service or product to their personal environment, for instance friends and family. With the rise of mass media, it becomes easier for customers to expose their complaints to a broader audience. Online protection agencies, complaint websites and anti-corporation websites have grown over the

years (Grégoire & Fisher, 2007). Customers have the possibility to harm firms through these platforms with illegitimate complaints.

A lot of companies compensate the complaints of customers and attempt to recover the service to retain satisfied and loyal customers (Huang & Miao, 2016). Customer's complaints are encouraged by companies that operate under the assumption that customers are reasonable and honest in their claiming behaviour. However, these firms are not aware of the possibility that the customer might not be right. An increasing number of customers try to take advantage of service failures and claim more than what they deserve (Reynolds & Harris, 2005).

Therefore, it is of great importance for marketing managers to be aware of the existence of illegitimate complaints. More specific, it is needed to investigate why customers exaggerate or make up their complaints. Being aware of this problem and the drivers of customers gives managers the opportunity to prevent spending money, time and effort on illegitimately complaining customers. If knowledge is gained about the way customers exaggerate their claims, managers will be able to recognize illegitimate complaining behaviour. Moreover, they will be able to respond in a specific manner to make sure that they are not harmed more than necessary.

1.6 Structure of the report

This report contains five chapters. After the introduction, the theoretical framework regarding illegitimate complaining behaviour and the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour will be discussed. Hypotheses will be proposed in this chapter as well. In the third chapter the methodology used to empirically test the hypotheses will be described. Subsequently, the fourth chapter presents an in-depth analysis and the results of this study. At last, the conclusion of this study will be provided in chapter five followed by the discussion.

2. Theoretical framework

This second chapter will elaborate on the theoretical framework of illegitimate complaining behaviour. First, the concept of illegitimate complaining behaviour will be described. Thereafter, the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour will be presented followed by the hypotheses.

2.1 Illegitimate complaining behaviour

The literature provides a variety of labels to define that complaining customers may not always be right. Three label categories can be distinguished in research regarding this topic.

The first category of labels takes wrong motives of complaining customers into account. In this category the complaints of customers are perceived as unfounded or unjust. Customers want to take advantage of a firm and therefore deliberately and consciously exaggerate their complaints. It is possible that a complaining customer is not aware of his or her unjust behaviour. For this reason the label only applies to customers with proven or admitted wrong intentions. Examples of this category of labels are: fake complaints (Day et al., 1981), fraudulent complaints (Kowalski, 1996; Piron & Young, 2000), cheating (Witz & Kuhm, 2004), dishonest complaints (Reynolds & Harris, 2005), feigned complaints (Reynolds & Harris, 2005), opportunistic complaints (Reynolds & Harris, 2005) and unfair customers (Berry & Seiders, 2008).

The second category of labels defines illegitimate complaining behaviour as 'not normal'. It is up to service recovery research to conclude whether a customer is exaggerating complaints on a routine basis or if this behaviour is an exception. Examples of this category are: deviant customer behaviour (Moschis & Cox, 1989), aberrant customer behaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 1993), and jay-customer behaviour (Lovelock, 1994).

A third and last category of labels defines this type of customer behaviour as 'problematic'. The point of view that is taken determines to what extent the behaviour of customers is problematic. An illegitimate complaint can be very useful if a customer wants to take advantage of a firm. On the other hand, an illegitimate complaint can be very harmful for the firm because of the energy, time and costs it takes. Examples of labels in this category are: dysfunctional customer behaviour (Harris & Reynolds, 2003), problem customers (Bitner, Booms & Mohr, 1994) and consumer misbehaviour (Baker, 2013).

This study uses the label *illegitimate complaints*. An illegitimate complaint is defined as an unjust and unfounded complaint for which there is no basis in the quality of the product or service, when compared to professional, legal and industry standards by an independent

expert (Joosten, 2017). Ro and Wong (2011) state that customers who complain illegitimate are “exaggerating, altering, or lying about the fact or situation, or abusing service guarantees”. Three types of illegitimate complaints can be distinguished: honest, fraudulent or opportunistic (Joosten, 2017). An illegitimate complaint is honest when the customer honestly, but unjustly has the opinion that there is something wrong with the service or product. When a customer knowingly and pre-planned creates an opportunity to take advantage of the firm, the term fraudulent complaint is used. And finally, an opportunistic complaint occurs when customers find themselves in a situation in which they can take advantage of the firm.

2.2 Drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour

Baker et al. (2012) describe three possible drivers of opportunistic customer complaining. According to this article the drivers of opportunistic customer complaining could be customer-centric, firm-centric or relationship-centric.

A first customer-centric driver of opportunistic customer complaining is financial greed. Particular personality traits can be a second customer-centric driver of opportunistic complaining. Baker et al. (2012) suggest that the personality traits assertiveness and attitude towards complaining correlate with opportunistic complaining behaviour. The oppositional cultural models of customers can be a last customer-centric driver. Researchers may be better able to understand the customer-centric drivers of opportunistic complaining when they know which cultural models are used by customers in a service context.

Subsequently, Baker et al. (2012) describe firm-centric drivers of opportunistic complaining. The authors expect that it is more likely that opportunistic customer complaining behaviour occurs in firms that have liberal redress practices than in firms that have more conservative redress practices. The 100 percent money back guarantee is an example of a liberal redress policy. Moreover, Baker et al. (2012) suggest that large firms will more likely have to deal with opportunistic complaining than small firms.

The third driver is relationship-centric. Baker et al. (2012) suggest that opportunistic complaining behaviour is more likely to occur when the customer possesses low justice perceptions in the relationship between the customer and the firm than when the customer possesses high justice perceptions. Furthermore, the possibility that a customer will complain opportunistic is more likely in a one-time transaction context than in a longer term customer-firm relationship.

The article of Baker et al. (2012) is a good starting point in determining the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. However, this article only suggests possible drivers and

does not empirically test the drivers. Joosten (2017) built on this research topic and conducted a multiple-case study in cooperation with the Dutch Foundation for Disputes Committees (SGC). This is a non-for-profit third party arbitrator that handles disputes between consumers and firms. Joosten (2017) measured illegitimate complaints in a sample of 226 cases provided by the SGC. The case files contain all communication between customer and firm and involve the home furnishing sector. Therefore, it was possible for the researcher to investigate the motivations and underlying cognitions of complainants as well. The drivers that were found in this study as well as the drivers that were not confirmed in this study will be discussed below. Moreover, there are still possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour that need further investigation and explanation. These drivers will be discussed as well.

2.3 Suggested drivers of illegitimate complaining

The following drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour were found in the case study of Joosten (2017). The underlying theory will be discussed and hypotheses will be provided.

2.3.1 Contrast effect

The expectations of a customer affect the way customers complain. When customers have high expectations of the company, they are very disappointed if these expectations are not met. This can reduce the satisfaction of the purchase (Anderson, 1978; Oliver & Swan, 1989) When customers encounter a difference between high expectations and low actual performance, they will assess the product or service disproportionately negative. High expectations can be the result of positive meetings with the company, strong brand values, strong promises, high prices or a strong service level. As a consequence, customers might increase any discrepancy between product, company or brand expectations and actual performance. Joosten (2017) indicates a contrast effect in 10 (30%) of the illegitimate case files of the 127 case files studied. This points out that a reason for the fact that some customers filed exaggerated complaints may be that customers magnify the discrepancy between what is delivered and what was expected. The fact that the customers experienced a contrast between high expectations and low performance led to illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Customers who experience high contrast between what is delivered and what was expected are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.3.2 Loss of control

Control is "the belief that one can determine one's own behaviour and influence one's own environment" (Poon, 2004). After a service failure, customers may experience a loss of control

because their behaviour did not result in the desired outcome (Joosten, 2012). For example, relying on the firm did not lead to adequate service delivery and therefore customers can experience a loss of control. Losing the sense of control plays a role when for example customers have contacted the company several times, but have not received any response. The service provider is not willing to listen to the customer, refuses to come to the phone and does not reply to letters and emails. Promises to visit the customer, assess the complaint and discuss possible solutions are never kept. As a result, customers lament that they do not know what else they could do to make the firm respond to their complaints. According to the reactance theory, the feelings of losing control can lead to the desire to regain this control (Brehm, 1966). Customers may try to regain control by exaggerating their complaint. In the study of Joosten (2017), 24 (44%) of the 55 illegitimate case files indicate a perceived loss of control. This result suggests that perceived loss of control is related to illegitimate complaints. Customers may think that the firm is more inclined or forced to respond if the complaint is more extensive and severe (Joosten, 2017). Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Customers who experience the feeling of losing control are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.3.3 Halo effect

Another driver of illegitimate complaining that Joosten (2017) found in his research is the halo effect. When the halo effect occurs, the assessment of a certain aspect of an object influences the response to other aspects of that object (Wirtz & Bateson, 1995). In terms of illegitimate complaining behaviour, this means that a negative experience of a customer with a certain aspect of a firm, leads to negative evaluations of other aspects of that firm. A negative experience with a service recovery for example can lead to negative evaluations and complaints about additional aspects of the performance. There is a difference between the halo effect and heightened awareness. When a customer experiences a service failure, his or her state of awareness becomes higher. As a consequence the customer is more sensitive and aware of other failures in the service or product (Magnini et al., 2007). Heightened awareness can result in legitimate complaints about other parts of the service, whereas the halo effect can lead to illegitimate complaints. In the data of the research of Joosten (2017) there are 10 case files of the total sample of 226 (4%) that indicate a halo effect. In 32 cases (14%) the additional complaints are legitimate. This may be an indication of heightened awareness. The halo effect can give direction to the perceptions of the customer about a service failure. It can make them

more susceptible to evaluate other aspects of a firm negatively and exaggerate their complaint. Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H3: Customers with a negative experience with a certain aspect of the firm are more likely to engage in additional illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.3.4 Subjective norm

In some cases of the research of Joosten (2017) the customers use the opinion of others to strengthen their claim. The theory behind this phenomenon is the theory of reasoned action. This theory assumes that the intention of an individual to behave in a particular way, partly depends on the perceptions of the individual of what others think about how he or she should behave. This is also called the subjective or social norm. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kowalski, 1996). Complaining or not complaining can be a high social risk. When a customer does complain, they can fear that others will perceive them as ‘whiners’ or that they might be excluded from valued social groups (Kowalski, 1996). Not complaining can involve a social risk as well for customers when others perceive them as pushover. Of all the 226 analysed case files, 116 files contain illegitimate complaints (Joosten, 2017). In 15% of these cases the complaining customer is referring to others. In some cases the customers themselves are reluctant to complain. However, in these cases they state that others noticed that the product or service is not as it should be and therefore they complain. In other cases the customer believes that his or her complaint is legitimate and uses the opinion of others to strengthen the complaint. In other words, the opinion of others can make the customer complain illegitimately. Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Customers who value the opinion of relevant others are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.3.5 Attitude towards complaining

One of the customer-centric drivers of opportunistic complaining that Baker et al. (2012) suggest are particular personality traits. Attitude towards complaining is such a trait that correlates with opportunistic complaining behaviour. The choice of customers to seek redress is affected by their attitude towards complaining (Blodgett, Granbois & Walters, 1993). Customers with a negative attitude towards complaining can make the decisions to not complain, even when they are highly dissatisfied. This is also supported by the study of Joosten (2017). The results of this study suggest that customers who are reluctant to file complaints are also reluctant to file illegitimate complaints. When an individual holds a more favourable

attitude towards complaining, he or she is more inclined to file a complaint to the firm (Kim et al., 2003). To extent this logic, Baker et al. (2012) suggest that the positive relationship between attitude towards complaining and the tendency to file an illegitimate complaint occurs as well. Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H5: Customers with a positive attitude towards complaining are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.4 Suggested but not confirmed drivers of illegitimate complaining

There are several drivers of illegitimate complaining that did not have a significant effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour in the case study of Joosten (2017). However, these drivers can still play an role in additional research to the drivers of illegitimate complaining. Therefore, these drivers will be discusses below and hypotheses will be provided.

2.4.1 Perceptions of injustice

It may occur that customers feel treated unjustly by the service provider. Feelings of injustice can be distributive, procedural or interactional (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Distributive justice focuses on the outcomes of the service (recovery) process. According to Joosten (2017) distributive justice is present when customers indicate the delivery or remedy to be inadequate and not what they deserve. Procedural justices involves the way in which the outcomes are delivered. This is present when customers posit the service (recovery) process to be lengthy, energy-consuming or inflexible (Joosten, 2017). Interactional justices concerns interactions with the service provider during the process. Perceived interactional injustice occurs when customers point out that they have been treated disrespectful or that the firm was rude, unkind, did not seem to care, dishonest, or impolite (Joosten, 2017). Customers who feel that they are treated unjustly may exaggerate their complaint in order to get the attention of the company and to receive what they deserve. Joosten (2017) does not find support for the effect of perceived injustice on illegitimate complaining behaviour in the SGC files. However, more research is desirable to investigate the possible effect of perceived injustice on illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H6: Customers who experience high perceptions of injustice are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.4.2 Prior experience

In the study of Joosten (2017) some customers mention previous positive experiences with the company in their complaint. According to the literature there are two ways in which previous experiences can influence the reactions of customers to service (recovery) failures. One way is buffering, this means that a bad recovery should have a less harmful impact when the previous experience of the customer with the firm was very positive (Tax et al, 1998). As a consequence, these positive previous experiences can form a buffer against illegitimate complaining behaviour. Magnifying is the second perspective. This occurs when previous experiences of the customers with the firm are very positive. As a consequence, their expectations for recovery increases. This applies especially for loyal customers (Kelley & Davis, 1994). In this case, the positive prior experiences of customers can magnify expectations and promote illegitimate complaints. Joosten (2017) found 4 case files where customers mention previous positive experiences with the firm, 1 case concerned an illegitimate complaint, 3 cases concerned legitimate complaints. This could indicate a buffering effect. However, the sample is too small to find clear empirical evidence. Therefore, more empirical research is needed to investigate whether previous experiences could lead to a buffering or magnifying effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. The following hypotheses are formulated:

H7a: Customers who experience a buffering effect on prior experience are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

H7b: Customers who experience a magnifying effect on prior experience are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.4.3 Duration of the dispute

In many cases customers are not dissatisfied because the firm does not meet their service expectations (Bitner et al., 1990). According to this article, a poor response of the firm to the failure is the reason for dissatisfaction. Swanson and Kelley (2001) elaborate on this finding and state that customers are more satisfied with the service recovery efforts if the response of the firm and the employees on the failure is fast. Therefore, it could be possible that customers express their unsatisfied feelings after a long duration of the dispute with filing an illegitimate complaint. However, Joosten (2017) does not find support for this assumption in the SGC files. The duration of the process in the cases of illegitimate complaining (12.6 months) was only slightly higher than the duration in the cases of legitimate complaining (11 months). These

findings need further research to find out if duration of the dispute has an effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H8: Customers who experience a long duration of the dispute are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.4.4 Product/service type

There are some product and service categories that provide the most complaints. These categories are: restaurants, hotels, airlines, auto repairs, clothing, furniture, electronics, groceries (Estelami, 2000; Goodwin & Ross 1989; Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar, 1998). Joosten (2017) did not find any differences in the presence of illegitimate complaints in the categories of home furnishing. However, there could be differences between illegitimate complaining behaviour in a product or a service type of industry. The service industry is known for its willingness to keep customers happy and satisfied and therefore they are prone to illegitimate complaints (Huang & Miao, 2016). Based on these findings, it can be expected that illegitimate complaints are more common in service type industries than product type industries. Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H9: Illegitimate customer complaining behaviour occurs more often in service type industries than product type industries.

2.4.5 Object value

Joosten (2017) had the expectation that object value might have an effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. The more value an individual attributes to an object, the higher the disappointment will be if the object fails. Filing an illegitimate complaint can be a way to express this dissatisfaction. However, in the study of Joosten (2017) the object value of illegitimate complaints (€6.300) were not very different from the object value of legitimate complaints (€6.960). More research is needed to investigate the effect of the value of an object on illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H10: Customers who perceive a high object value are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5 Drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour for further research

The following possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour are not investigated in the research of Joosten (2017). However, they could play a role in determining why customers file illegitimate complaints.

2.5.1 Assimilation

In some case files of Joosten (2017), customers mention that there are actually more things wrong with the product or service, but that they decided to accept these shortcomings and to not complain about it. Although the effects were too small to draw conclusions from, this may indicate assimilation. The assimilation theory proposes that customers have previously held positions that makes them reluctant to acknowledge discrepancies. Therefore, they assimilate judgment toward their initial feelings for an object or event (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). Customers are according to the assimilation theory more likely to mitigate their complaint instead of exaggerating it when they look for a redress. Consequently, signs of assimilation are expected to be more present in cases of legitimate complaining (Joosten, 2017). Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H11: Customers who possess signs of assimilation are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.2 Opportunism

Opportunistic behaviour appears when customers take advantage of the firm after a service failure by claiming not only what they should, but also what they could (Berry & Seiders, 2008; Wirtz & Kum, 2004; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Customers feel that the company can handle a (financial) loss and therefore they exaggerate their complaint. For example, they believe that the firm is very large and can easily afford a loss. Customers who show opportunistic behaviour recognize opportunities to take financial advantage of a service failure and efforts to recover the service (Berry & Seiders, 2008). The way in which this opportunity can be exploited is by exaggerating or making up the complaint. Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H12: Customers with opportunistic behaviour are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.3 Conflict framing style

Several researchers noticed that complaining customers use different styles to communicate their dissatisfaction. It has been found that some customers adopt a personal and emotional style and focus on damaging the firm. Others maintain composed and focus on ensuring practical outcomes. Beverland et al. (2010) refer to these two conflict-framing styles as personal-based and task-based. Customers who adopt a personal-based conflict framing style frame the conflict in a personal way, feel a strong sense of injustice, are out for revenge and are not really open to

reason. In these personal-based cases, customers are not solution-focused, they are trying to cause damage, use emotional language and/or make general assessments about the brand or service provider. They are more willing to exaggerate their complaint. Customers who adopt a task-based conflict framing style are solution-focused and therefore open to reason and use viable arguments. The purpose of customers with this framing style is to get the best recovery possible. In task-based cases, customers are willing to give the service provider a chance to make up for the service failure. Therefore, they are less likely to file illegitimate complaints (Joosten, 2017). Subsequently, following hypotheses are formulated:

H13a: Customers with a personal-based conflict framing style are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

H13b: Customers with a task-based conflict framing style are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.4 Desire for revenge

According to Joireman et al. (2013) some customers have a strong sense of punishing the company for the damage it has caused them. They want the company to pay for the misbehaviour or make the company regret its incapability to deliver what was expected. This feeling of revenge is often accompanied by strong emotions (e.g. anger, indignation, resentment, aggression), negative cognitions (e.g. betrayal) and threats. As a consequence, customers can contact television programs, spread negative word of mouth and so on. These expressions point to a desire for revenge. Illegitimate complaining behaviour can also be a way to express these feelings of revenge and damaging the firm. Therefore the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H14: Customers with a high desire for revenge, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.5 Perceived greed

Grégoire, Laufer and Tripp (2010) define perceived greed as “when a customer believes that a firm has opportunistically tried to take advantage of a situation to the detriment of the customer’s interest”. They believe the firm has a lack of morality and failed on purpose to take financial advantage. As a consequence the customer will not only be dissatisfied, but search for an opportunity to take revenge. A possible way for the customer to take revenge and harm the firm is filing an illegitimate complaint. Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H15: Customers who perceive greed of a firm are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.6 External attribution

The attribution theory assumes that people attribute causes to events and that this cognitive perception affects their emotions and behaviour (Folkes, 1984). External attribution means that an individual believes that a certain event is the consequence of an outside cause and not the result of the individual's behaviour. Internal attribution suggests that an individual sees him or herself responsible for a certain cause and not the environment. This theory can be applied to complaining customers. Complaining customers make inferences about who is responsible for the service failure, the firm or the customer itself. It is possible that the customer attributes the cause of the service failure to him or herself. In that case, the customer is more willing to find a solution together with the firm. On the contrary, customers will blame the firm if they believe that the firm is responsible for the service failure. As a consequence the customer will experience stronger feelings of anger and the desire to take revenge (Folkes, 1984). Illegitimate complaining can be a result of these feelings of anger and revenge. Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H16: Customers who attribute the cause of the service recovery failure in an external way are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.7 Anger and disappointment

Emotions are important to take into account when a service failure occurs (Bugg Holloway et al., 2009). Emotions are even more important when customers put time and energy in the relationship with the firm and the service recovery process (Dasu & Chase, 2010). Anger and disappointment are expressions of negative emotions (Holloway et al., 2009). These negative emotions play an important role when a customer experiences a service recovery failure (Keeffe, 2010). Customers can be disappointed and dissatisfied when there is no solution found to solve the service failure. As a result, these feelings can develop into the desire to take revenge. Illegitimate complaints can be a way to fulfil the desire to take revenge. Therefore, the hypotheses posit:

H17a: Customers who experience feelings of anger are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

H17b: Customers who experience feelings of disappointment are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.8 Firm size

As mentioned before, Baker et al. (2012) assume that large firms are more likely to have to deal with opportunistic complaining than small firms. Support for this assumption can be found in the article of Wirtz and McColl-Kennedy (2010). They conclude that customers tend to be more opportunistic when they are involved with a large firm in comparison to a small firm. Furthermore, they found that deviant behaviour is considered as less unjust if it occurs in a large store instead of a small store. The denial of injury of neutralization theory can be used to explain these findings. This theory states that individuals are more tend to complain opportunistically with a large firm, because they believe that the firm is big enough to not be harmed by their behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H18: Customers who perceive a firm as large are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.9 Liberal redress policies

According to Baker et al. (2012), excellent liberal redress policies can potentially increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Liberal redress policies such as 100 percent money back guarantees have become more commonplace (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). These companies highlight the value of customer complaints and stress that complaints from customers should be welcomed and encouraged (Bennett, 1997, Prim & Pras, 1999, DeWitt & Brady, 2003, Snellman & Vihtkari, 2003). Business models that focus on attaining too much customer satisfaction, may cause some customers to behave in opportunistic manners (Yani-de-Soriano & Slater, 2009). It should be recognized that customers are more likely to complain opportunistically when the benefits, such as financial compensation, outweigh the costs, such as the difficulty of filing the complaint (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Mentioning these compensations on, for example, the website can increase illegitimate complaining behaviour. In other words, liberal redress policies can unintentionally encourage and create opportunities for customers to show illegitimate complaining behaviour (Reynolds & Harris, 2005). Therefore the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H19: Customers facing a firm with liberal redress practices are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.10 Negotiating tactic

Customers frequently negotiate to get the best possible deal for themselves (Harris & Mowen, 2001). They negotiate about the price and delivery before a purchase for instance. Moreover,

some customers negotiate about a redress for an unsatisfactory experience after a purchase. By complaining about unsatisfactory product performance these customers want to maximize the value of their purchase. The study of Harris and Mowen (2001) shows that customers who are prone to negotiate appear to show intentions to complain in order to get a better deal. Thus, the personality trait bargaining proneness seems to have an effect on complaining behaviour. Therefore, it is imaginable that these customers have a tendency to file an illegitimate complaint as well. The Hypothesis that follows from this theory reads:

H20: Customers who are prone to negotiate are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

2.5.11 Neutralization techniques

The neutralization theory of Sykes and Matza (1957) explains how individuals use different techniques to justify their misbehaviour. Despite their illegal activities, individuals try to convince themselves that their behaviour is appropriate. Since illegitimate complaining can be seen as a misbehaviour as well these neutralization techniques can offer an explanation for this kind of behaviour (Harris & Dumas, 2009).

The first neutralization technique that could have an effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour is *denial of injury*. This happens when customers think that their illegitimate complaint will not hurt the firm or its employees (Vitell & Grove, 1987). This way of thinking makes it easier for a customer to file an illegitimate complaint. They will not feel any remorse, because they believe that their complaint will not hurt the firm. Therefore, the following Hypothesis posits:

H21a: Customers who believe the firm will not be harmed by their illegitimate complaint, are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.

Metaphor of the ledger is the second neutralization technique that could be considered regarding illegitimate complaining behaviour. Customers use this technique to balance the good with the evil (Minor, 1981). They compensate their misbehaviour by good and decent behaviour. In the context of illegitimate complaining behaviour, this means that customers could rationalize their illegitimate complain by stating that they are usually honest or almost never complain. Thus, by rationalizing their misbehaviour, customers who believe that they are normally honest could engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H21b: Customers who believe that they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.

Claims of relative acceptability is a third neutralization technique. By using this technique, customers compare their own misbehaviour with the misbehaviour of someone else (Hinduja, 2007; Harris & Duman, 2009). They state that the misbehaviour of the other person is much worse than their own misbehaviour. The customers can compare themselves with other kinds of misbehaviour, theft or scamming for instance. If they believe that theft is worse than filing an illegitimate complaint, they could use this neutralization technique to explain and accept their misbehaviour. Therefore, the following Hypothesis posits:

H21c: Customers who believe theft and scam are worse than illegitimate complaining are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.

When a customer feels that he or she had no other choice than conducting a misbehaviour, the neutralization technique *defense of necessity* applies (Minor, 1981). Customers consider it necessary to file an illegitimate complaint. They believe it is the only way to get something done from the firm, for instance, receiving a refund. These thoughts could lead to the choice to file an illegitimate complaint. Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H21d: Customers who believe illegitimate complaining is the only way to get something done from the firm are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.

The last neutralization technique that has a possible effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour is *postponement*. This technique applies when customers do not think about the consequences of their behaviour (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003). For instance, some customers do not think about the possibility that they might regret their illegitimate complaint. They do not want to feel guilty about their behaviour and decide to ignore these feelings. By ignoring these feelings of regret, the possibility that the customer files an illegitimate complaint increases. Therefore, the following Hypothesis posits:

H21e: Customers who do not think about regretting their illegitimate complaint are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.

2.5.12 Financial greed

Baker et al. (2012) already suggested that one of the possible customer-centric drivers of opportunistic complaining is financial greed. This means that an individual is greedy and therefore engages in illegitimate complaining behaviour. The goal is to be compensated by the

firm. Several studies state that this kind of behaviour is one of the main determinants of deviant customer behaviour, such as shoplifting, fraudulent retail returns and opportunistic complaining (Bernstein, 1985; Rensik & Harmon, 1983). Moreover, Reynold and Harris (2005) found that the most often used customer-centric driver for opportunistic behaviour is monetary gain. Customers want to receive something without paying for it. An opportunity to fulfil this financial greed is exaggerating the complaint (Baker et al., 2012). Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H22: Customers who are financial greedy are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.

2.5.13 Gender

Harris (2008) states that previous research about the effect of demographic characteristics of customers on complaining and fraudulent return activities has no clear consensus. Subsequently, Harris (2008) conducted an own research into demographic characteristics and fraudulent returning. The results suggest that fraudulent returning is more commonly female than male. Since fraudulent returning and illegitimate complaining behaviour are both known as deviant customer behaviour, it can be expected that females are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour as well. Therefore, the following Hypothesis posits:

H23: Female customers are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than male customers.

2.5.14 Age

Harris (2008) found that younger customers engage more frequently in fraudulent returning practices than older customers. These finding are supported by several other studies (Siegel, 1993; Schmidt et al., 1999). Moreover, Harris (2008) mentions several studies that offer support for the assumption that younger customers are more likely to complain (Kraft, 1977; Shuptrine & Wenglorz, 1981). Therefore, the following Hypothesis is formulated:

H24: Younger customers are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than older customers.

2.5.15 Education

Results show that customers with lower levels of education are more likely to engage in fraudulent returns (Harris, 2008). Illegitimate customer complaining behaviour can be seen as misbehaviour of customers as well. Subsequently, it can be expected that customers with lower

education are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than customers with higher levels of education. Therefore, the Hypothesis posits:

H20: Customers who have a lower level of education are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than customers with a higher level of education.

2.6 Conceptual model

Based on the literature described in this chapter, several drivers of illegitimate customer complaining behaviour are assumed. These assumptions are represented in the conceptual model in Figure 1.

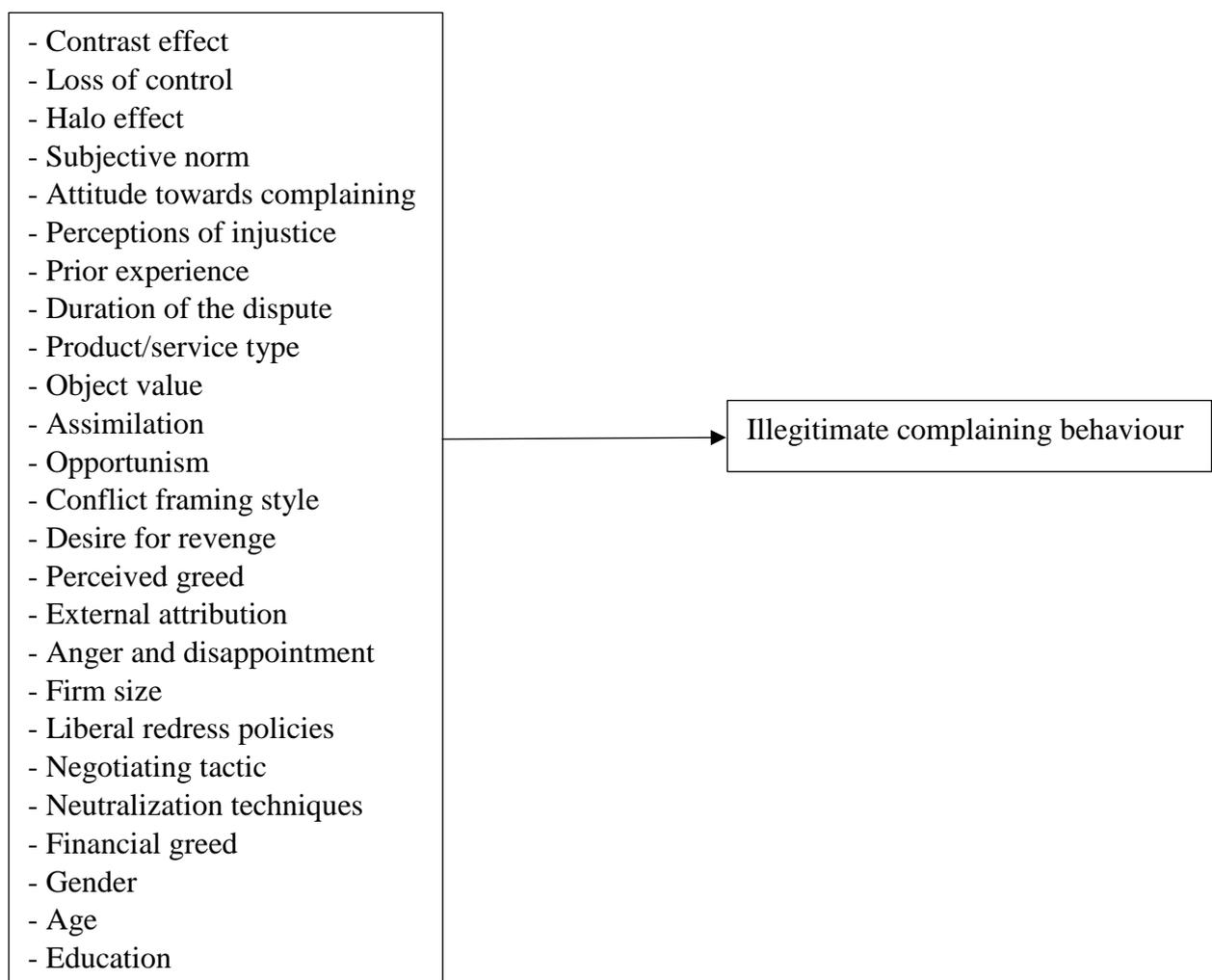


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. Method

This chapter will describe how the research is conducted to test the composed hypotheses. The research design will be explained, as well as the measurement, pre-test, procedure and research ethics, sample and the data analysis strategy.

3.1 Research design

The studies of Baker et al (2012) and Joosten (2017) try to generate insights about the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour and attempt to posit hypotheses. Therefore, both studies can be labelled as exploratory researches. This study builds on these exploratory studies with a confirmatory research. The purpose of this confirmatory study is to test and confirm possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour as supposed in the study of Joosten (2017). A survey is conducted to collect data from customers regarding illegitimate complaining behaviour in order to find empirical evidence for the drivers of this kind of behaviour. In the past, surveys have been successfully conducted in studies about customer misbehaviour (Daunt & Harris, 2012). Berry and Seiders (2008) recommended to use a survey for measuring at-risk situation of customer unfairness as well.

However, the area of illegitimate complaining is challenging to measure. It is a sensitive subject to ask questions about and it is possible that bias occurs (Fisk, 2010). Conducting a survey is a first step in limiting the social desirability bias. In this way, the quantitative data is collected via an online channel and therefore the anonymity of respondents is ensured (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Moreover, it is important to take the construction and formulation of the questions into account when designing the survey. It is desirable to formulate appropriate and neutral questions without any form of judgement (Nederhof, 1985). With this in mind, the questions regarding the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour are constructed.

3.2 Measurement

All the respondents faced the same survey. At first, the topic of the survey and an explanation of what the respondents can expect is provided. The survey consists of three parts, which will be elaborated on in the following paragraphs. The survey started with a short introduction of the subject, followed by some general questions about the illegitimate complaint of the respondents. Thereafter, the respondents were asked questions regarding their motives to engage in such behaviour. Finally, a few questions were asked about their demographics. Since this research focuses on the Dutch population, the questions of the survey were all asked in Dutch. The final survey is included in Appendix I.

3.2.1 Illegitimate complaining behaviour

After the introduction a personal example of a situation where the researchers illegitimately filed a complaint is described. By providing a personal example, the respondent hopefully feels more comfortable to describe an own illegitimate complaint as well. The respondents are encouraged to think of a similar situation in their own life. To help the respondent relive the complaint situation, the survey contains some general questions about the complaint. The respondents were asked the following questions about their complaint: ‘*When did the complaint occur?*’, ‘*About which product or service did you complain?*’, ‘*By which shop or firm did you complain?*’, ‘*What is the size of the firm?*’, ‘*What was your complaint?*’, ‘*To what extent did you exaggerate the complaint?*’, ‘*To what extent did you make up the complaint?*’, ‘*What did you propose as solution?*’, ‘*To what extent did you exaggerate the proposed solution?*’, ‘*What did the firm propose as solution?*’, ‘*How long did the process take?*’, ‘*Did you exaggerate or made up a complaint before?*’, ‘*To what extent do you perceive yourself as regular customer of the firm?*’ and ‘*To what extent are your previous experiences with the firm positive?*’.

3.2.2 Drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour

After the general questions about the complaint, the respondents are asked to what extent the statements relate to their decision to exaggerate or make up the complaint. The statements concern all the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour as proposed in chapter 2. The following drivers are being measured: contrast effect, loss of control, halo effect, subjective norm, attitude towards complaining, perceptions of injustice, prior experience, duration of the dispute, object value, assimilation, opportunism, conflict framing style, desire for revenge, perceived greed, external attribution, anger and disappointment, firm size, liberal redress policies, negotiating tactic, neutralization techniques and financial greed. The study measures the effect of these independent variables on the dependent variable, illegitimate complaining behaviour. The majority of the drivers will be measured with more than one item using a five-point Likert scale anchored by strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Contrast effect plays up when someone has high expectations of a company, while this is not fulfilled in the performance. This construct will be measured using three items of Hess, Ganesan, and Klein (2003). The items measure the degree to which a customer expects a business to solve a certain problem the customer has experienced. The scale has been adjusted to fit the context of this research. The five-point Likert scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: ‘*I expected the firm to do everything in its power to solve my problem, but they did not live up to this expectation*’,

'I expected the firm to exert much effort to solve the problem, but they did not live up to this expectation', 'I expected the firm to try to make up for the steak being, but they did not live up to this expectation.'

Loss of control occurs when customers experience that their behaviour does not result in the desired outcome. This construct will be measured using a five-point Likert scale, which measures a person's perception towards the amount of effort an employee puts into a particular service encounter. This scale of Mohr and Bitner (1995) is slightly modified to fit with the topic of this research. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'I felt powerless towards the firm', 'The firm no longer responded to my phone calls and requests', 'The firm did not spend much time in taking care of my needs.'*

Halo effect occurs when the assessment of a certain aspect of an object influences the response to other aspects of that object. This construct will be measured with two self-composed statements. A five-point Likert scale is used ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'Due to the failure I paid better attention and found more defects', 'The failure of the firm also influenced my judgement of other aspects of the product/service'*.

Subjective norm involves the influence of opinions of others. The items are based on a scale by Keller, Lipkus, and Rimer (2002) which measures the extent to which a person is experiencing anxiety regarding what others might think about an action he/she has taken. The statements are modified to fit with the subject of illegitimate complaining. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'If I would tell my family and acquaintances that I exaggerated/made up a complaint, that would not scare them', 'I think my family and acquaintances would have exaggerated/made up a complaint as well if they were in my situation'*.

Attitude towards complaining is the way customers feel about complaining behaviour. This construct will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The statements are self-composed. The respondents are asked to answer the following two statements: *'I am not someone who complains quickly', 'I think a lot of people complain too quickly'*.

Perceptions of injustice means that customers feel that the service provider treats them unjustly. This construct will be measured using a three-item scale of Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002, 2003). This scale is adapted to fit the context of this research. The answer category ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' on a five-point Likert scale.

Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'I feel that the company did not make an effort to come up with the best solution'*, *'I feel that the firm did not show a real interest and did not try to be fair'*, *'I feel that the firm did not handle the problem in a fair manner with respect to its policies and procedures'*.

Prior experience with a firm can influence the reactions of customers to a service failure in two ways. Buffering occurs when the previous experience of the customer is a buffer for a bad service recovery. This effect is measured with the following self-composed statement: *'The firm treated me wrong during the complaint, but I am still positive about the firm'*. Magnifying occurs when the expectations for service recovery increases. This effect is measured with the following self-composed statement: *'I am angry with the firm that they treat a regular customer this bad'*. The statements will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Duration of the dispute will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Subjects in the studies by Gorn et al. (2004) measure how quickly something appears to have occurred. This scale is used to measure the duration of the dispute. The respondents are asked to answer the following statement: *'Handling the situation went slow'*.

Object value will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Raghurir and Srivastava (2002) used a scale to measure a person's attitude toward the price of a product. This scale is used to develop one statement to measure the influence of object value. The respondents are asked to answer the following statement: *'The product/service was very expensive'*.

Assimilation may indicate that customers are reluctant to acknowledge discrepancies from previously held positions. Therefore, they assimilate judgement toward their initial feelings for an object or event. This construct will be measured using two self-composed statements on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'Besides the filed complaint, there were more things wrong, but I decided to not complain about that'*, *'Despite the fact that there were more defects, I took them for granted'*.

Opportunism appears when customers take advantages of the firm after a service failure. The statements are based on a scale developed by Paulhus (1984). This construct will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following two statements: *'I planned to act in this manner'*, *'I got the opportunity to take advantage of my complaint'*.

Conflict framing style noticed that complaining customers use different styles to communicate their injustice. These two different complaining styles will be measured using two self-composed statements on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following two statements: *'During the complaint process I tried to pressurize the entrepreneur to get it my way'*, which measures a personal-based conflict framing style and *'During the complaint process I tried to come to a solution by consulting and collaborating'*, which measures a task-based framing style.

Desire for revenge is the strong sense of punishing the company for the damage it has caused the customers. The statements to measure this construct are based on a scale used by Singh (1988, 1990). The scale assesses the likelihood that a consumer would express his or her dissatisfaction after a purchase to parties who were not involved in the exchange but who could bring some pressure to bear on the offending marketer. The five-point Likert scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'I wanted to punish the firm in a certain way'*, *'I wanted to cause nuisance within the firm'*, *'I wanted pay back for the firm'*.

Perceived greed refers to what extent a customer believes that a firm has opportunistically tried to take advantage of a situation to the detriment of the customers interest. Grégoire et al (2010) adapted a scale in their study to measure the perception of a firm's greed. Three statements are based on this scale using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'The company was primary motivated by its own interests'*, *'The firm did intend to take advantage of me'*, *'The firm had wrong intentions'*.

External attribution means that customers will blame the firm if they believe that the firm is responsible for the service failure. Mattila and Patterson (2004) developed a scale with three statements to measure a person's beliefs about a particular service failure occurring under the control of the immediate service provider. The statements are slightly modified to better measure this construct. In this study the statements will be measured with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'The complaint occurred due to the firm'*, *'I got the impression that the firm intentionally gave me bad service'*, *'I feel that the firm could have prevent the complaint'*.

Anger and disappointment with a firm can result in the desire to take revenge using illegitimate complaints. These two different emotions will be measured using two different questions based on the scale developed by Izard (1977) that is part of the Differential Emotions

Scale. A five-point Likert scale that ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' is used to answer the statements. Respondents are asked to answer the following two statements: '*I felt angry*', '*I felt disappointed*'.

Firm size will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The respondents are asked to answer the following self-composed statements: '*The firm involved was large*', '*The firm involved has a large number of employees*'.

Liberal redress policies can be used by firms to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. This construct will be measured using two self-composed statements on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following three statements: '*The firm had a generous complaint policy*', '*The firm had a generous warranty policy*'.

Negotiating tactic concerns the extent to which customers use negotiating tactics to get what they want. This construct will be measured with one self-composed statement. A five-point Likert scale is used ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The respondents are asked to answer the following statement: '*I know that you always have to stake higher during negotiations to get what you want*'.

Neutralization techniques will be measured with five self-composed statements. A five-point Likert scale is used ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The respondents are asked to answer the following statements: '*I think the firm does not experience any damage of my exaggerated/made up complaint*', '*I am normally honest as a consumer, so I can exaggerate/make up for one time*', '*In comparison to theft and scam, exaggerating/making up a complaint is not that bad*', '*Exaggerating/making up the complaint was the only way to get something done from the firm*', '*I did not think about regretting that I exaggerated/made up the complaint*'.

Financial greed appears when customers want to take financial advantage of the service failure. This construct will be measured using two self-composed statements on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following three statements: '*I wanted to make money*', '*I wanted to gain something for nothing*'.

3.2.3 Demographic variables

After the questions regarding the drivers of engaging in illegitimate complaining behaviour, the respondents were asked to describe in their own words what the main reason was to exaggerate

or make up their complaint. The survey ended with questions about the gender, age and highest educational level of the respondent.

3.3 Pre-test

Before the distribution of the actual survey a pre-test is conducted to make sure the survey does not contain any inconsistencies. The results of the pre-test may reveal inconsistencies, unclear items or wrongly formulated questions. Three different pretesting methods are used to detect inconsistencies and uncertainties in the survey.

At first, face validity is assured by presenting the survey to the supervisor of this research, H. Joosten. Face validity indicates if the test and the items of the test are appropriate and relevant to measure the concept of the research (Holden, 2010). H. Joosten has extensive knowledge and experience in the subject of illegitimate complaining behaviour. In several meetings with H. Joosten the survey is discussed and adjusted according to the feedback provided.

The cognitive pretesting think-aloud method is used to make sure the respondents understand the questions in the survey (Koskey, 2016). Five respondents were asked to read the questions aloud and respond to these questions together with the researcher. The respondents explained what they thought the items were asking and what their answers to the questions would be. With this method, the researcher can compare the answers and explanations of the respondents with what the survey items are intended to assess. Inconsistencies between the interpretation of the respondent and the actual intention of the questions are adjusted.

At last, the plus-minus method is used as well to assure that the respondents fully understand the questions in the survey. With this method, respondents allocate plus marks behind the questions they understand and thus rate as good. Minus marks are allocated behind the questions they do not understand and are perceived as bad (Sienot, 1997). Five respondents were asked to fill in the survey using this method. Questions marked with a minus were discussed with the respondents and adjusted according to their feedback.

3.4 Procedure and research ethics

The data of this research is collected between April 16 and May 4, 2018. Since illegitimate complaining behaviour is a sensitive issue it is desirable to carefully distribute the survey to the respondents. The survey is distributed to respondents mainly through e-mail, WhatsApp and Facebook. When distributing the survey, the respondents received a personal message with additional information about the research as well, to make it more personal. The target group

for this research is very broad. Respondents of all ages, genders and education levels were allowed to fill in the survey.

Research ethics of the APA general principles had to be considered during the procedure, since humans participated to the research (Goodwin, 2003). This means that the results of this study will only be used for this research to concern confidentiality. Privacy issues were tackled by assuring anonymity. Moreover, openness about the subject and results were ensured. In the introduction of the survey the respondents are informed that the research is for academic purposes only, that it is anonymous, that the results will be handled confidentially and that there are no right or wrong answers. Moreover, the respondents were asked to answer the questions as honestly as possible. The introduction provides an explanation of the subject of the survey as well. It is important for the respondents to know where the survey is about, to be able to understand the questions and answer them as honest as possible. The survey consisted of 67 questions. The questions about the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour were divided in approximately 10 questions at a time to reduce the risk of respondents quitting the survey early. After the 10 questions the respondents had to click on the 'next' button to answer the following 10 questions. In this way, the respondents are not overloaded with all the questions at once. Moreover, the respondents were informed that participating the survey will take around 15 minutes of their time. After filling in all the questions the respondents were thanked for their participation.

3.5 Sample

Since this research will conduct a regression analysis after collection of the data, the sample size requirements for regression analysis need to be assured. The minimal sample size for regression analysis according to Hair (2014) is a ratio of 5 respondents for each independent variable. By the means of a convenient sampling method, a total of 155 native Dutch people participated the survey. Hence, the sample size requirement is met. Notable is that 522 people opened and started the survey. However, only 155 respondents finished the survey. This means that 367 respondents did not make it to the end of the survey. Almost all of these 367 respondents stopped the survey before answering the first question at all.

The average age of the sample is 29, ranging from 17 to 64 years old. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents were females (67.1%) in comparison to males (32.9%). For most respondents the highest educational level is university (54.8%), followed by HBO (35.5%), MBO (6.5%) and secondary education (3.2%). No respondents with elementary school as highest educational level participated in the survey. Moreover, most complaints were filed in a

large firm (74.8%) compared to middle sized (11.6%) and small firms (13.5%). Lastly, it was notable that more than one third of the respondents (57) complained about an electronic device.

3.6 Data analysis

The survey is created with the program Qualtrics. The data is exported to IBM SPSS Statistics 22 for the analysis when the sample size requirements were met. At first, the data is prepared and transformed by deleting uncomplete and invalid responses and variables are renamed. Thereafter, a factor analysis is conducted to assure that the items in the survey that are supposed to measure a specific construct, are indeed measuring that construct. Subsequently a regression analysis is conducted. Regression analysis is used to test whether there is a relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables. This study contains one dependent variable and several independent variables and therefore a regression analysis is suitable. Moreover, a moderation analysis will be conducted to detect possible moderating effects. These analyses will be discussed in the next chapter. An overview of the variables used for the analysis and corresponding survey items can be found in Appendix II.

4. Results

This fourth chapter presents the analysis conducted and the results obtained. At first, the factor and reliability analysis will be discussed. Subsequently, the descriptive statistics of the variables will be presented. The results of the regression analysis and the moderation analysis will follow. Finally, this chapter will conclude with the results of the additional analysis.

4.1 Factor and reliability analysis

In order to assess discriminant validity of the constructs, a factor analysis (principal component analysis) has been performed. In other words, it is checked whether the items that were expected to cluster on one construct, were in accordance with these expectations. For fifteen different constructs a factor analysis is conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, Cronbach's alpha, as well as the factor loadings presented in Appendix III are scrutinised. The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis and should be above the threshold value of .50 (Hair, 2014). Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should be below the threshold of $\alpha=.05$. This indicates that the correlations between items are sufficiently large enough to perform the factor analysis. The internal consistency can be explained as the extent to which the variables, or set of variables are consistent in what it is intended to measure (Hair, 2014). This will be checked using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each scale. Hereby, an alpha coefficient of above .70 is desired and above .60 is required.

For fourteen constructs the items are bundled together based on the results in Table 1 as well as the factor loadings presented in Appendix III. For the construct opportunism Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is not significant. Therefore, the items will be included in the regression analysis separately instead of bundled together. For illegitimate complaining Cronbach's alpha is .466 which is below the required threshold of .60. However, based on theoretical assumptions the items will still be bundled together to measure the concept of illegitimate complaining.

Factor	KMO measure	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Cronbach's alpha
Illegitimate complaining	.500	.000	.466
Contrast effect	.730	.000	.920
Loss of control	.685	.000	.746
Halo effect	.500	.000	.711
Subjective norm	.500	.000	.603
Attitude towards complaining	.500	.000	.620

Perceptions of injustice	.742	.000	.879
Assimilation	.500	.000	.783
Opportunism	.500	.142	.212
Desire for revenge	.730	.000	.864
Perceived greed	.695	.000	.843
External attribution	.602	.000	.754
Firm size	.500	.000	.959
Liberal redress policies	.500	.000	.684
Financial greed	.500	.000	.626

Table 1: KMO, Bartlett's Test and Cronbach's alpha of all constructs

4.2 Descriptive statistics

In order to get a first impression of the results of this research, the descriptive statistics of all variables that will be included in the regression analysis are shown in Table 2. As mentioned before, more females and respondents with university as highest educational level participated the survey. Most complaints were filed in a large firm. Several possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour show a large mean of above 3.5. These variables are: attitude towards complaining (M=3.80, SD=.88), firm size (driver) (M=3.82, SD=1.13), negotiation tactic (M=3.78, SD=1.10) and damage to the firm (M=3.80, SD=1.30).

	N	Mean	SD
Illegitimate complaining	155	2.84	1.09
Contrast effect	155	2.22	1.22
Loss of control	155	2.04	.99
Halo effect	155	1.89	1.10
Subjective norm	155	3.48	1.01
Attitude towards complaining	155	3.80	.88
Perceptions of injustice	155	2.37	1.20
Buffering	155	2.02	1.21
Magnifying	155	1.95	1.22
Duration of the dispute	155	2.32	1.37
Object value	155	2.88	1.46
Assimilation	155	1.83	1.03
Planned behaviour	155	2.48	1.45

Taking advantage	155	2.98	1.49
Personal-based style	155	2.22	1.23
Task-based style	155	3.44	1.29
Desire for revenge	155	1.71	1.05
Perceived greed	155	1.98	1.01
External attribution	155	2.40	1.20
Anger	155	2.54	1.53
Disappointment	155	2.94	1.46
Firm size (driver)	155	3.82	1.13
Liberal redress policies	155	3.01	1.06
Negotiation tactic	155	3.78	1.10
Damage to the firm	155	3.80	1.30
Honest customer	155	3.60	1.20
Compared to theft	155	3.18	1.16
Getting something done	155	3.21	1.26
Regret afterwards	155	3.09	1.41
Financial greed	155	2.19	1.25
Age	155	29.21	12.14
Regular customer	155	2.94	1.51
	N	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	155		
Women		104	67.1%
Men		51	32.9%
Education	155		
Secondary education		5	3.2%
MBO		10	6.5%
HBO		55	35.5%
University		85	54.8%
Firm size (general)	155		
Small		21	13.5%
Middle		18	11.6%
Large		116	74.8%

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

4.3 Regression analysis

To further investigate the relationships between all variables, regression analysis will be used to learn more about the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. To test the research hypotheses, multiple regression analysis is conducted to analyse the proposed relationships between the variables. Before interpreting the results, the assumptions for linear regression had to be checked. At first, the normal distribution of the variables is assured by assessing the skewness and kurtosis measures. All variables have a skewness and kurtosis measure between -3 and 3, which is acceptable. The assumption of multicollinearity is checked by evaluating the tolerance values and VIF scores. There are no variables with a tolerance value of below .10 and VIF scores above 10, which means that this assumption is not violated as well. Subsequently, the normal probability plot shows a straight diagonal line from bottom left to top right. This indicates that the assumption of linearity is met. The scatterplot for homoscedasticity does not show any kind of concentration of the dots and does not show some sort of pattern. It can be concluded that the data is homoscedastic. Moreover, the standardized predicted value shows that the errors do not correlate since the mean has a value of 0.0 and the standard deviation is 1.000. The normality of the error term distribution is checked by looking at the histogram of the standardized residuals and shows a normal curve. This means that the histogram is normally distributed. The normal probability plot of the standardized residuals shows a diagonal line, which indicates a normal distribution as well. After assuring and meeting all assumptions, the variables education, firm size and gender are transformed into dummy variables to be able to include in the regression analysis.

A multiple linear regression analysis is conducted to predict which drivers have an influence on illegitimate complaining behaviour. All possible drivers as supposed in chapter 2 are included in the analysis since it is desirable to investigate all possible effects. As a result, a significant regression equation was found ($F(37,117)=2.949$, $p<.000$) with an adjusted R^2 of .319. This means that 31.9% of variance of illegitimate complaining is explained by the variables included in the analysis. Regular customer ($p=.017$), honest customer ($p=.017$), getting something done ($p=.040$), magnifying ($p=.018$) and task-based style ($p=.008$) are significant predictors of illegitimate complaining behaviour with $\alpha=.05$, whereas all other variables are not significant. These results are presented in Table 3. To make sure that the model has the highest explained variance, all the variables are excluded from the model and subsequently added to the model one by one. The increase or decrease of the explained variance

is assessed. Since the explained variance did not increase by deleting a specific variable, the final model includes all variables.

The coefficients of the variables give more insights in the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as shown in Table 3 as well. The variables regular customer (B=.137), honest customer (B=.187) and getting something done (B=.155) have a positive effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. Magnifying (B=-.240) and task-based style (B=-.178) show a negative effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour.

	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	2.429	.881		2.758	.007
Contrast effect	-.070	.104	-.079	-.673	.502
Loss of control	.216	.155	.197	1.391	.167
Halo effect	.007	.115	.007	.057	.955
Subjective norm	-.022	.104	-.021	-.212	.832
Attitude towards complaining	.107	.098	.087	1.093	.277
Perceptions of injustice	.011	.126	.012	.086	.931
Buffering	-.038	.072	-.042	-.530	.597
Magnifying	-.240	.100	-.267	-2.395	.018*
Duration of the dispute	-.107	.085	-.134	-1.257	.211
Object value	-.007	.061	-.010	-.122	.903
Assimilation	.027	.097	.025	.276	.783
Planned behaviour	.050	.060	.066	.824	.412
Taking advantage	.105	.074	.143	1.414	.160
Personal-based style	.017	.085	.019	.198	.844
Task-based style	-.178	.067	-.211	-2.678	.008**
Desire for revenge	.112	.132	.107	.844	.401
Perceived greed	.070	.152	.065	.458	.648
External attribution	-.183	.099	-.202	-1.849	.067
Anger	.076	.096	.106	.794	.429
Disappointment	-.118	.079	-.158	-1.498	.137
Firm size (driver)	-.001	.100	-.002	-.013	.990
Liberal redress policies	.028	.088	.027	.313	.755
Negotiation tactic	-.164	.090	-.164	-1.811	.073

Damage to the firm	-.055	.072	-.066	-.766	.445
Honest customer	.187	.077	.206	2.415	.017*
Compared to theft	.064	.095	.068	.670	.504
Getting something done	.155	.075	.179	2.079	.040*
Regret afterwards	.043	.061	.055	.702	.484
Financial greed	.097	.083	.111	1.163	.247
Gender	-.232	.183	-.100	-1.268	.207
Age	-.005	.009	-.055	-.563	.574
MBO	.230	.571	.052	.403	.688
HBO	-.044	.475	-.019	-.093	.926
WO	-.294	.460	-.134	-.639	.524
Regular customer	.137	.057	.190	2.418	.017*
Small sized firm	.125	.387	.039	.323	.747
Middle sized firm	-.006	.313	-.002	-.021	.984

* = $p < .05$ ** = $p < .01$

Table 3: Coefficients Table

4.4 Moderation analysis

In addition to the regression analysis, a moderation analysis has been conducted to determine the moderating effect of gender, age, education and firm size. This analysis is executed with the program PROCESS of Andrew F. Hayes in IBM SPSS Statistics 22. Since there are a large number of independent variables involved in this study, the decision has been made to only include the significant variables in the moderation analysis. There were no significant interaction effects found of these independent variables with gender, age, education and firm size.

4.5 Additional analysis

After investigating the complaints of the respondents it was found that a large number of complaints in the dataset concern electronics (N=57). An additional analysis is conducted to assess the difference between complaints concerning electronic products versus complaints concerning other products and services. Before conducting the regression analysis of the different categories, the assumptions are checked and as a result they are not violated.

A multiple linear regression analysis is conducted for the category electronics and for the category others to predict the variables that have a significant influence on illegitimate

complaining. A significant regression equation was found for the category electronics ($F(37,19)=3.453$, $p<.003$) with an adjusted R2 of .618. Therefore, it can be stated that 61,8% of the variance of illegitimate complaining is explained by the variables included in the model. The significant effects are shown below in Table 4. Negative significant effects are found for the variables task-based style ($B=-.279$), external attribution ($B=-.497$), anger ($B=-.504$), negotiation tactic ($B=-.460$) and damage to the firm ($B=-.274$). The variables disappointment ($B=.427$), liberal redress policies ($B=.319$), financial greed ($B=.254$) and age ($B=.040$) show a positive significant effect on illegitimate complaining.

For the category others, a significant regression equation was found ($F(37,60)=3.453$, $p<.043$) as well with an adjusted R2 of .197. This means that 19,7% of variance of illegitimate complaining is explained by means of the variables. The significant driver can be found in Table 4. This variable is regular customer ($B=.226$) and has a positive significant effect on illegitimate complaining.

	B	SE	β	t	p
<i>Category electronics</i>					
(Constant)	.213	1.144		.186	.184
Task-based style	-.279	.097	-.406	-2.882	.010**
External attribution	-.497	.223	-.480	-2.230	.038*
Anger	-.504	.177	-.507	-2.856	.010**
Disappointment	.427	.157	.550	2.715	.014*
Liberal redress policies	.319	.145	.378	2.207	.040*
Negotiation tactic	-.460	.186	-.531	-2.467	.023*
Damage to the firm	-.274	.126	-.343	-2.180	.042*
Financial greed	.254	.116	.355	2.195	.041*
Age	.040	.017	.387	2.352	.030*
<i>Category others</i>					
(Constant)	2.598	1.521		1.708	.093
Regular customer	.226	.108	.256	2.098	.040*

* = $p<.05$ ** = $p<.01$

Table 4: Regression analysis different categories

5. Conclusion and discussion

In this last chapter a conclusion on the research will be provided and discussed in the light of existing literature. Furthermore, the theoretical implications will be addressed as well as the managerial implications of this research. The last paragraph of this chapter will discuss some important limitations of the research and directions for further research.

5.1 Conclusion

It seems that the assumption that the customer is always right is outdated, unrealistic and naïve (Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Customers do not complain only out of dissatisfaction (Huang & Miao, 2016). While firms try to deliver excellent service, there is a dark side of customers who deliberately disrupt services and file illegitimate complaints (Rose & Neidermeyer, 1999). Nevertheless, the drivers of people to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour are underexposed and not empirically tested. This study is a first attempt to contribute to this research field by investigating all possible drivers of customers to engage in such behaviour. Therefore, the following research question is addressed and will be answered in this chapter:

What are the drivers of customers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour?

This research shows that customers are motivated by three drivers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Moreover, there are two drivers that lead to less illegitimate complaining behaviour. All drivers that were found to have a significant effect will be elaborated on in this paragraph. Moreover, Table 5 shows the results of all hypotheses as suggested in chapter 2.

At first, two neutralization techniques are found to have a significant positive effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. In more detail, customers who believe they are normally honest as a customer, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Secondly, customers who believe exaggerating or making up a complaint is the only way to get something done from the firm are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

In the beginning of the survey the respondents were asked if they perceived themselves as a regular customer of the firm. As a result, this perception seems to be a driver to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour as well. This means that respondents who perceived themselves as a regular customer, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

Next to drivers that increase illegitimate complaining, the results show there are drivers that can decrease illegitimate complaining behaviour as well. Customers with a task-based conflict framing style are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Task-based customers are solution-focused and open to reason. They are less prone to exaggerate or make up a complaint. At the same time, a task-based conflict framing style appears to be the strongest significant driver.

A notable conclusion is the significant negative effect of the driver magnifying on illegitimate complaining behaviour. According to existing literature, the prospect was that customers magnify their service recovery expectations due to positive prior experiences and therefore promote illegitimate complaints. However, this study shows opposite results compared to previous literature. Therefore, some additional explanation for this conclusion will be provided in the next paragraph.

The results of this study reveal several differences compared to the study of Joosten (2017). First of all, the above described significant drivers were mentioned but not yet investigated in Joosten (2017). Moreover, drivers that showed significant effects in Joosten (2017) are insignificant in this study. However, there are some similarities between the studies as well. The drivers that had no effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour in Joosten (2017) are also insignificant in this study.

This study contained 25 hypotheses about the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. All hypotheses were empirically tested, except for Hypothesis 9, the difference between product and service type. Although the differences in drivers of illegitimate complaining between products and services could not be tested, an additional analysis has been conducted. In this analysis the differences between the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour in the electronic products category versus complaints about other products and services are assessed. The choice for the electronic category is based on the fact that one third of the respondents complained about electronic devices. Surprisingly the significant drivers for electronics are different compared to the overall model and the category with other products and services. The significant drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour that are in line with the existing literature are disappointment, liberal redress policies, financial greed and task-based style. Anger, negotiation tactic, damage to the firm and external attribution show a significant but negative effect, which is not in line with the theory. This will be explained in the limitations paragraph.

Besides the conclusions that can be drawn from the regression analysis conducted, there are some notable results in the descriptive statistics as well. While negotiation tactic, damage

to the firm, attitude towards complaining and firm size have a high mean (>3.5), no significant effect was found on illegitimate complaining behaviour. This indicates that although respondents scored high on negotiation tactic, damage to the firm, attitude towards complaining and firm size it does not necessarily lead to more exaggerated or made up complaints. Another surprising conclusion that can be drawn from the descriptive statistics is the fact that almost 75% of the complaints were filed in large firms instead of small and middle sized firms. This indicates that exaggerating or making up a complaint mainly occurs in large firms.

In the light of existing literature, further elaboration on the conclusions will be provided in the upcoming paragraph.

Hypothesis	Supported/ rejected
H1 Customers who experience high contrast between what is delivered and what was expected are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H2 Customers who experience the feeling of losing control are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H3 Customers with a negative experience with a certain aspect of the firm are more likely to engage in additional illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H4 Customers who value the opinion of relevant others are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H5 Customers with a positive attitude towards complaining are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H6 Customers who experience high perceptions of injustice are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H7a Customers who experience a buffering effect on prior experience are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H7b Customers who experience a magnifying effect on prior experience are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H8 Customers who experience a long duration of the dispute are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H9 Illegitimate customer complaining behaviour occurs more often in service type industries than product type industries.	-

H10	Customers who perceive a high object value are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H11	Customers who possess signs of assimilation are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H12	Customers with opportunistic behaviour are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H13a	Customers with a personal-based conflict framing style are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H13b	Customers with a task-based conflict framing style are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Supported
H14	Customers with a high desire for revenge, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H15	Customers who perceive greed of a firm are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H16	Customers who attribute the cause of the service recovery failure in an external way are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H17a	Customers who experience feelings of anger are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H17b	Customers who experience feelings of disappointment are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H18	Customers who perceive a firm as large are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H19	Customers facing a firm with liberal redress practices are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H20	Customers who are prone to negotiate are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H21a	Customers who believe the firm will not be harmed by their illegitimate complaint, are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H21b	Customers who believe that they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.	Supported

H21c	Customers who believe theft and scam are worse than illegitimate complaining are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H21d	Customers who believe illegitimate complaining is the only way to get something done from the firm are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.	Supported
H21e	Customers who do not think about regretting their illegitimate complaint are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H22	Customers who are financial greedy are more likely to engage in illegitimate customer complaining behaviour.	Rejected
H23	Female customers are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than male customers.	Rejected
H24	Younger customers are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than older customers.	Rejected
H25	Customers who have a lower level of education are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than customers with a higher level of education.	Rejected

Table 5: Overview hypotheses and results

5.2 Theoretical implications

Conceptual papers and literature reviews have predominantly discussed the topic of illegitimate complaining behaviour without further empirical support (Fisk et al, 2010; Baker et al., 2012). This study made a first attempt to find this empirical evidence, in order to support propositions made by Baker et al. (2012) and Joosten (2017). The findings of this research contribute to the theoretical understanding of the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. A more in-depth explanation of the results and corresponding literature will be provided in this paragraph.

There are several drivers confirmed in this study that have an effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour and correspond with existing literature as well. At first, the results show that customers with a task-based conflict framing style are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. This is in line with the theory of Beverland et al. (2010). Customers with a task-based style are solution focused, open to reason and willing to give the service provider a chance to make up for the service failure. Therefore they are less likely to engage in

illegitimate complaining behaviour. The findings of this study are in line with this theory and therefore contribute to our knowledge about illegitimate complaining behaviour.

Moreover, the results show that customers who believe exaggerating or making up a complaint is the only way to get something done from the firm are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. This can be explained by the neutralization technique, defense of necessity. According to Minor (1981), customers might use the defense of necessity technique when they feel their only option is to conduct the misbehaviour. The customer could feel it is necessary to illegitimately complain. This theory can explain the positive effect found in this study of defense of necessity on illegitimate complaining behaviour.

A third results that is in line with existing literature is that customers who believe they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. An explanation for this finding can be found in the neutralization technique metaphor of the ledger. Customers use this technique to compensate the misbehaviour by stating that they are normally honest as a customer (Minor, 1981).

It was hypothesized that previous experiences of the customer can magnify expectations and therefore promote illegitimate complaining behaviour. However, the results of this study are not in line with the assumption. Instead of a positive significant effect, this research found a negative significant effect. This means that previous experiences of the customer magnify expectations and will lead to less illegitimate complaining behaviour. Several reasons for this contradicting result can be given. At first explanation could be that the question asked to the respondents does not properly measure the magnifying effect as described in theory. The theory states that high service recovery expectations due to positive prior experiences could promote illegitimate complaints. In this study this was measured with the following question: *'I am angry with the firm that they treat a regular customer this bad'*. However, this question does not include the expectations about the recovery and previous experiences with the firm. Therefore, the question is incorrectly formulated, meaning that the magnifying effect could not be measured. The conclusion of this incorrectly formulated question reads as follows, customers who are angry at the firm for treating a regular customer bad, are not more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. A theoretical explanation for this finding could be the buffering effect. This means that despite the service failure, the prior experience with the firm forms a buffer against illegitimate complaints (Tax et al., 1998). The fact that the customers perceived themselves as regular customers transcended the feelings of anger and led to less exaggerated and made up complaints.

However, the negative effect of magnifying in this study could also be the result of the limitations in the research design. These limitations will be discussed in the final paragraph of this chapter. This second scenario is more likely an explanation for the negative effect of magnifying, given the fact that the results show a positive effect for the driver regular customer. This means that customers who perceive themselves as regular customers of the firm engage more in illegitimate complaining behaviour. It is likely that this effect explains the magnifying effect, instead of the original predefined question for the magnifying effect. From theory it is known that a regular customer has positive prior experiences with the firm, otherwise the customer will not return to the firm on a regular basis. Thereby, positive previous experiences can magnify expectations and promote illegitimate complaints (Kelly & Davis, 1994). In this way the hypothesised effect of magnifying can still be explained by the effect found for the driver regular customer. In short, the negative effect of magnifying and the positive effect of regular customer can indicate both a buffering and a magnifying effect. Due to these opposing results, it must be taken into account that both the buffering and magnifying effect are incorrectly measured in this study. Thus, it cannot be said with certainty whether a magnifying or buffering effect has been found.

Next to the significant effects a lot of hypotheses are not supported. This could have several reasons. At first there is the possibility that the hypothesized effect simply does not exist. This scenario is very likely due to the nature of this research. There is no previous research that investigates all possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour at once. This study is a first attempt to empirically investigate and recognize all possible drivers found in existing literature. Therefore, the aim of this study was to take all these drivers into account and identify which have an effect and thus matter the most. Hence, it makes sense that there are a lot of rejected hypotheses. A second reason for the lack of significant effects in this study could be the research design and associated limitations. This will be discussed in the limitation paragraph.

Even though not hypothesized, this study found an important difference between the drivers of two distinct categories. For the category electronics different drivers are found compared to the rest of the dataset. Nowadays, electronics are crucial in our daily life. For instance, mobile phones are rapidly becoming the central communication device in peoples life's (Lane et al., 2010). Therefore, it is not surprising that one third of the complaints in this study concern this category. Moreover, this is in line with the theory of Estelami (2000) and Goodwin & Ross (1989). They state that electronics is one of the categories that provide the most complaints. A lot of respondents in this category electronics file an illegitimate complaint

at their insurance company. According to the results, they want to receive a monetary compensation for their broken electronic device. Therefore, it is not surprising that financial greed has a positive significant effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. This indicates that customers are motivated to complain illegitimately in order to receive a financial compensation from their insurance company. With this compensation they want to fix or replace their broken electronic device. Moreover, the underlying business model of insurance companies might as well explain the positive effect of the driver liberal redress policies found in this research. Mentioning compensations such as 100 percent money back guarantees may cause some customers to behave in opportunistic manners (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Since customers know that their insurance company can compensate them, it is likely that this causes an increase in illegitimate complaining behaviour. The third driver that has an effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour is disappointment. This can be explained by the fact that electronic devices, such as mobile phones, are of high importance and have a high emotional value for customers (Lane et al., 2010). Therefore, customers will be more disappointed when something is wrong with it. Lastly, task-based conflict framing style is found to be significant as well. This result is in line with the results found in the overall model. In comparison to the category others, the only driver for this part of the dataset is regular customer. This effect is already explained earlier in this paragraph.

5.3 Managerial implications

For managers focussing on delivering excellent service to customers, the results of this study have several important implications. Nowadays, there are still numerous companies that welcome and sometimes even pro-actively encourage customer complaints (Prim & Pras, 1998). Customers receive huge compensations, regardless of the validity of the complaint (Baker et al, 2012). Companies use these liberal redress policies in order to retain current customers. However, previous literature assumed that these practices can encourage customers to complain illegitimately (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Yani-de-Soriano & Slater, 2009). Liberal redress policies is the only driver in this study that can be influenced by the firm itself. Therefore, it is important to mention that the results show that customers facing a firm with liberal redress practices are not more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. The use of liberal redress practices can be used without worrying about increased illegitimate complaining behaviour.

The other drivers that are included in this research are mostly characteristics and perceptions of the customers themselves, like the feeling of disappointment, attitude towards

complaining and object value. Therefore, it is more complicated for a manager to control these drivers. However, it seems that a large proportion of the drivers that were measured in this study do not have an impact on increasing illegitimate complaining behaviour.

There are some drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour that managers should take into account. An important implication for managers to consider is the power of a regular customer. It seems that customers who consider themselves as a regular customer are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore, it is of importance as a manager to treat your regular customers carefully. These customers attach great value to your service recovery policies. Regular customers with previous positive experiences have high expectations for service recovery (Kelly & Davis, 1994). This means that you have to live up to these high expectations as a manager. Managers should try to compensate the complaints and attempt to recover the service. They need to try to minimize the damage in the relationship with the customer and try to keep regular customers satisfied (Kau & Loh, 2006).

Moreover, the results show that customers with a task-based conflict framing style are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. These customers are solution-focused and therefore open to reason with viable arguments (Beverland et al., 2010). They are willing to give the service provider a chance to make up for the service failure. As a manager it is therefore of importance to recognize these customers and invest in them by communication. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to implement a task-based style as a manager when a service failure occurs. By focussing on the solution and being open to reason, it is possible that the customer involved in the service failure adopts this task-based style as well. This could lead to less illegitimate complaining behaviour.

Lastly, the use of two neutralization techniques seems to explain why people misbehave. These techniques are called defense of necessity and metaphor of the ledger. The defense of necessity technique means that individuals feel like they do not have another choice than conducting the misbehaviour. They perceive this misbehaviour as necessary (Minor, 1981). The neutralization technique metaphor of the ledger means that individuals rationalize an illegitimate complaint by stating that he or she usually never complains. Therefore, they believe one exaggerated or made up complained is allowed (Minor, 1981). As a manager it is of great importance to minimize the chance that customers develop these kind of feelings. A possible strategy to minimize this chance is to train front-line personnel in the identification and managing of these neutralization techniques used by the customers. Furthermore, firms should continually engage in research iterations that identify drivers of illegitimate complaints. Since

less is known about this phenomenon managers should actively stay informed about new studies regarding this subject.

5.4 Limitations and further research

As mentioned before, an important limitation of this research is the design of the survey. The respondents were forced to fill in all questions and did not have the option to fill in that a question was not applicable for their complaint. As a consequence, the results can be biased. It is reasonable that the respondents filled in a very low score on the question while they actually wanted to fill in that the question did not apply at all to their situation. Therefore, it is possible that some drivers showed a negative effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour instead of a positive effect as supposed in existing literature. This applies for several significant negative drivers in the additional analysis of the electronics category. Namely, external attribution, anger, negotiation tactic and damage to the firm. Moreover, this is the case with the significant negative effect of magnifying in the overall model. It is possible that this limitation in the research design caused the lack of significant effects in this study as well.

Another limitation is the sample of this research. It did not appear to be homogeneous. Females were clearly overrepresented in the sample as were high educated people. These violations with regard to the sample may have negatively influenced the obtained results. Moreover, the sample size of this study is relatively small with a ratio of 8 respondents for each independent variable. According to Hair et al. (2014) a ratio of 5 respondents for each independent variable is required. However, 15 to 20 respondents for each independent variable is more desirable. It is possible that the results of this research change if the sample size is bigger and more homogeneous.

Since the subject of this study is in essence an illegal activity, participants could feel constrained in their response. Respondents may have answered the questions more socially desirable. Moreover, it is possible that respondents refused to admit that a certain driver did play part in their exaggerated or made up complaint. As this fact was known at beforehand, an attempt was made to reduce this bias, by giving two personal examples of the researchers at the beginning of the survey. Furthermore, the respondents were informed that there are no wrong answers and that the answers are completely anonymous. However, the fact that 522 respondents did open the questionnaire but never answered the first question may indicate that social desirability did played a part after all. A possible solution for this limitation for future research might be the use of in-depth interviews to gather data instead of a survey. By conducting interviews the researcher has the opportunity to ask the respondents more thorough

about why they engaged in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Moreover, with interviews, the respondents have to explain their motives in their own words. It is possible that respondents provide different answers compared to the questions that are used in a survey. However, it is of great importance that respondents feel safe to give honest answers during interviews since it is less anonymous than filling in a survey. Moreover, this research focussed on conscious illegitimate complaining behaviour. Respondents had to come up with an exaggerated or made up complaints at forehand and therefore they need to be aware of their behaviour. This is another reason why in-depth interviews are recommended for further research. By the use of in-depth interviews the unconscious part of the brain can become obsolete and drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour can be found.

A subsequent limitation is that Hypothesis 9 could not be measured. The Hypothesis involves the difference between complaints about products and services. The Hypothesis could not be measured due to the open question that was asked to the respondents about their complaint. The survey did not include a closed question that asked if the complaint was about a product or service. Unfortunately, during the analysis it appeared that it was impossible to uncover this division. Therefore, it is desirable to investigate this Hypothesis in further research.

Another limitation of this research is the fact that not all possible moderating effects could be measured. Since this research contains more than 20 independent variables it was impossible to test all potential moderating effects. Especially since there were no clear interaction effects expected beforehand. Therefore, this research included only the moderating effects of the significant drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour.

To conclude, there are several overall directions for further research in the field of illegitimate complaining behaviour. The results show that different drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour apply to complaints in different categories. Therefore, it is desirable to take these differences between product and service categories into account in further research. Moreover, further research should learn from the limitations that this research contains in the design of the survey. Respondents need to have the option to fill in that a specific driver did not apply to their illegitimate complaint. A last direction for further research is to achieve a more parsimonious model. The aim is to predict as much as possible variance of illegitimate complaining behaviour with as little as possible drivers. Since this study has focused on all possible drivers that were found in the exploratory researches of Baker et al (2012) and Joosten (2017) it is desirable to investigate what really matters the most.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Survey

Beste deelnemer,

Hartelijk dank voor uw bereidheid om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek! Wij zijn Julia en Laura, masterstudenten Bedrijfskunde aan de Radboud Universiteit. Wij doen onderzoek naar klachten van consumenten. Meer specifiek: wij doen onderzoek naar de motieven van mensen om klachten te overdrijven of te verzinnen. Het blijkt dat veel mensen dit wel eens doen, maar dat er weinig bekend is over de oorzaken en motieven.

Wij willen graag uw mening daarover weten. Vanzelfsprekend zijn er geen goede of foute antwoorden en zijn de antwoorden geheel anoniem. Het invullen van de vragenlijst duurt ongeveer x minuten. Wilt u proberen de vragen zo eerlijk mogelijk te beantwoorden?

Indien u vragen heeft over het onderzoek of graag op de hoogte gehouden wil worden over de resultaten, dan kunt u altijd contact met ons opnemen via de volgende emailadressen:

julianeleman@hotmail.com

laurafekken@gmail.com

Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek.

Julia Neleman en Laura Fekken



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Om duidelijker te maken wat wordt bedoeld met overdreven of verzonnen klachten geven wij hieronder allebei een persoonlijk voorbeeld van zo 'n klacht.

Julia: 'Afgelopen zomer heb ik mijn iPhone laten vallen terwijl ik aan het fietsen was. Mijn iPhone viel op de weg en mijn scherm was totaal kapot. Ik baalde hier ontzettend van en heb toen besloten om de schade te melden bij mijn verzekering. De verzekering keert alleen uit bij schade opgelopen binnenshuis en heb daarom verzonnen dat mijn iPhone van de vensterbank was gevallen toen ik aan het stofzuigen was.'

Laura: 'Toen ik voor mijn kamer een nieuwe tafel bestelde, bleek bij bezorging dat de kleur van deze tafel donkerder was dan wat ik voor ogen had. Ik wilde graag de goede kleur tafel, dus besloot ik een klacht in te dienen bij de winkel. Ik heb gezegd dat de tafel een compleet andere kleur heeft dan wat ik had besteld en dat de oneffenheden in het hout ook niet overeenkwamen.'

Neem na het lezen van onze persoonlijke voorbeelden de tijd om na te denken over een situatie waarin u zelf overdreven of verzonnen heeft geklaagd.

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De volgende vragen hebben betrekking op de door u overdreven of verzonnen klacht.

1. Wanneer speelde de klacht?

- Het afgelopen jaar
- Langer dan een jaar geleden
- Langer dan twee jaar geleden

2. Over welk product of welke dienst heeft u geklaagd?

3. Bij welke winkel of welk bedrijf heeft u geklaagd?

4. Hoe groot was het bedrijf waar u heeft geklaagd?

- Klein (bijvoorbeeld eenmanszaak of familiebedrijf)
- Middelgroot (bijvoorbeeld 2 of 3 vestigingen)
- Groot (winkelketen of grote producent)

5. Wat was uw klacht?

6. Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre heeft u de klacht overdreven (dus erger gemaakt dan het daadwerkelijk was)?

Helemaal niet overdreven 0 0 0 0 0 Geheel overdreven

7. Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre heeft u de klacht verzonnen (dus anders gemaakt dan het daadwerkelijk was)?

Helemaal niet verzonnen 0 0 0 0 0 Geheel verzonnen

8. Wat stelde u voor als oplossing voor de klacht (indien van toepassing)

9. Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre heeft u de door u voorgestelde oplossing overdreven (dus meer gevraagd/geëist dan u zelf redelijk vond)? (indien van toepassing)

Helemaal niet overdreven 0 0 0 0 0 Geheel overdreven

10. Wat stelde het bedrijf voor als oplossing? (indien van toepassing)

11. Hoe lang heeft het klachtenproces geduurd?

12. Heeft u vaker een klacht overdreven of verzonnen?

- Dit was de enige keer
- 2 keer
- 3 keer
- Vaker dan 3 keer

13. Ik beschouw mezelf als vaste klant van dit bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

14. Mijn eerdere ervaringen met het bedrijf zijn positief.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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De volgende stellingen hebben betrekking op de motieven van mensen om klachten te overdrijven of te verzinnen. Geef aan op een schaal van 1 (helemaal mee oneens) tot 5 (helemaal mee eens) in hoeverre de stellingen van toepassing zijn op de door u eerder beschreven klacht.

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre speelden de volgende overwegingen een rol bij uw beslissing om uw klacht te overdrijven of te verzinnen?

15. Ik heb het gevoel dat het bedrijf niet zijn/haar best heeft gedaan om tot de beste oplossing te komen voor mij.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

16. Ik heb het gevoel dat het bedrijf geen belangstelling toonde en niet eerlijk was tijdens het proces.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

17. Ik vind dat het bedrijf niet volgens eerlijke richtlijnen en procedures handelde tijdens het proces.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

18. De voornaamste drijfveer van het bedrijf was hun eigen belang.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

19. Het bedrijf probeerde misbruik te maken van mij.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

20. Het bedrijf had verkeerde bedoelingen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

21. Ik voelde mij machteloos tegenover het bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

22. Het bedrijf reageerde niet langer op mijn telefoontjes en verzoeken.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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Ter herhaling nogmaals de vraag:

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre speelden de volgende overwegingen een rol bij uw beslissing om uw klacht te overdrijven of te verzinnen?

23. Het bedrijf besteedde niet veel tijd aan het rekening houden met mijn behoeften.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

24. De klacht ontstond door toedoen van het bedrijf zelf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

25. Ik kreeg het idee dat het bedrijf met opzet slechte service bood.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

26. Ik denk dat het bedrijf de klacht had kunnen voorkomen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

27. Ik verwachtte dat het bedrijf er alles aan zou doen om het probleem op te lossen, maar deze verwachting werd niet waargemaakt.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

28. Ik verwachtte dat het bedrijf veel moeite zou doen om het probleem op te lossen, maar deze verwachting werd niet waargemaakt.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

29. Ik verwachtte dat het bedrijf wilde goedmaken wat ze hadden veroorzaakt, maar deze verwachting werd niet waargemaakt.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

30. Ik wilde het bedrijf op een bepaalde manier straffen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

31. Ik wilde overlast veroorzaken bij het bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

→ volgende pagina

Ter herhaling nogmaals de vraag:

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre speelden de volgende overwegingen een rol bij uw beslissing om uw klacht te overdrijven of te verzinnen?

32. Ik wilde het bedrijf het betaald zetten.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

33. Ik voelde boosheid.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

34. Ik voelde teleurstelling.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

35. Het bedrijf had een ruimhartig klachtenbeleid.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

36. Ik heb van te voren gepland om mij op deze manier te gedragen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

37. Het bedrijf had een ruime garantieregeling.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

38. Ik kreeg de mogelijkheid om voordeel uit mijn klacht te halen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

39. Ik wilde geld verdienen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

40. Ik wilde iets krijgen voor niks.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

→ volgende pagina

Ter herhaling nogmaals de vraag:

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre speelden de volgende overwegingen een rol bij uw beslissing om uw klacht te overdrijven of te verzinnen?

41. Door de fout ging ik beter opletten en vond ik nog meer gebreken.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

42. De fout van het bedrijf heeft ook mijn oordeel over andere aspecten van het product of de dienst beïnvloed.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

43. Als ik mijn vrienden en kennissen zou vertellen dat ik een klacht verzonnen of overdreven had, zouden ze daar niet van schrikken.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

44. Ik denk dat mijn vrienden en kennissen in dezelfde situatie de klacht ook verzonnen of overdreven zouden hebben.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

45. Ik weet dat je altijd hoger moet inzetten tijdens onderhandelingen om uiteindelijk te krijgen wat je wil.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

46. Ik denk dat het bedrijf geen grote schade zou ondervinden van mijn overdreven/verzonnen klacht.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

47. Ik ben normaal gesproken eerlijk als consument, dus ik mag best een keertje overdrijven/verzinnen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

48. Vergeleken met bijvoorbeeld diefstal en oplichting is het overdrijven/verzinnen van een klacht niet ernstig.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

→ volgende pagina

Ter herhaling nogmaals de vraag:

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5: In hoeverre speelden de volgende overwegingen een rol bij uw beslissing om uw klacht te overdrijven of te verzinnen?

49. Het overdrijven/verzinnen van de klacht was de enige manier om iets gedaan te krijgen van het bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

50. Ik heb er niet over nagedacht dat ik spijt zou kunnen krijgen van het overdrijven of verzinnen van de klacht.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

51. Ik ben boos op het bedrijf dat ze een vaste klant zo slecht behandelen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

52. Het bedrijf heeft me slecht behandeld bij deze klacht, maar ik blijf positief over het bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

53. Het afhandelen van de situatie ging langzaam.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

54. Het product/de dienst was erg duur.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

55. Het product/de dienst was een hele goede aankoop

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

56. Het betrokken bedrijf was groot.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

57. Het betrokken bedrijf had veel werknemers.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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Hieronder volgen de laatste vragen die betrekking hebben op de door u overdreven of verzonden klacht.

58. Tijdens het klachtproces heb ik geprobeerd de ondernemer zoveel mogelijk onder druk te zetten om mijn zin te krijgen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

59. Tijdens het klachtenproces heb ik geprobeerd in overleg en samenwerking tot een oplossing te komen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

60. Naast de klacht die ik had ingediend waren er eigenlijk nog meer dingen fout, maar ik heb besloten om hierover niet te klagen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

61. Ondanks dat het product/de dienst nog meer gebreken had, nam ik die voor lief.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

62. Ik ben iemand die niet snel klaagt.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

63. Ik vind dat veel mensen te snel klagen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

64. Kunt u in eigen woorden aangeven wat de doorslaggevende/belangrijkste overweging/oorzaak was om overdreven of verzonnen te klagen?

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65. Wat is uw leeftijd in jaren?

66. Wat is uw geslacht?

- Man
- Vrouw

67. Wat is uw hoogst genoten opleiding (met of zonder diploma)?

- Lagere school/basisonderwijs
- Voortgezet onderwijs
- MBO
- HBO
- Universiteit

Bedankt voor het invullen van de vragenlijst!

Appendix II: Overview constructs and survey items

Construct	Survey item
Illegitimate complaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To what extent did you exaggerate your complaint (made it worse than it was)?- To what extent did you make up your complaint (made it different than it was)?
Contrast effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I expected the firm to do everything in its power to solve my problem, but they did not live up to this expectation.- I expected the firm to exert much effort to solve the problem, but they did not live up to this expectation.- I expected the firm to try to make up for the steak being, but they did not live up to this expectation.
Loss of control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I felt powerless towards the firm.- The firm no longer responded to my phone calls and requests.- The firm did not spend much time in taking care of my needs.
Halo effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Due to the failure I paid better attention and found more defects.- The failure of the firm also influenced my judgement of other aspects of the product/service.
Subjective norm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- If I would tell my family and acquaintances that I exaggerated/made up a complaint, that would not scare them.- I think my family and acquaintances would have exaggerated/made up a complaint as well if they were in my situation.
Attitude towards complaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I am not someone who complains quickly.- I think a lot of people complain too quickly.
Perceptions of injustice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I feel that the company did not make an effort to come up with the best solution.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel that the firm did not show a real interest and did not try to be fair. - I feel that the firm did not handle the problem in a fair manner with respect to its policies and procedures.
Prior experience	Magnifying	I am angry with the firm that they treat a regular customer this bad.
	Buffering	The firm treated me wrong during the complaint, but I am still positive about the firm.
Duration of the dispute		Handling the situation went slow.
Object value		The product/service was very expensive.
Assimilation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Besides the filed complaint, there were more things wrong, but I decided to not complain about that. - Despite the fact that there were more defects, I took them for granted.
Opportunism	Planned behaviour	I planned to act in this manner.
	Taking advantage	I got the opportunity to take advantage of my complaint.
Conflict framing style	Personal-based style	During the complaint process I tried to pressurize the entrepreneur to get it my way.
	Task-based style	During the complaint process I tried to come to a solution by consulting and collaborating.
Desire for revenge		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I wanted to punish the firm in a certain way. - I wanted to cause nuisance within the firm. - I wanted pay back for the firm.
Perceived greed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The company was primarily motivated by its own interests. - The firm did intend to take advantage of me. - The firm had wrong intentions.
External attribution		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The complaint occurred due to the firm. - I got the impression that the firm intentionally gave me bad service. - I feel that the firm could have prevented the complaint.

Anger and disappointment	Anger	I felt angry.
	Disappointment	I felt disappointed.
Firm size (driver)		- The firm involved was large. - The firm involved has a large number of employees.
Liberal redress policies		- The firm had a generous complaint policy. - The firm had a generous warranty policy.
Negotiation tactic		I know that you always have to stake higher during negotiations to get what you want.
Neutralization techniques	Damage to the firm	I think the firm does not experience any damage of my exaggerated/made up complaint.
	Honest customer	I am normally honest as a consumer, so I can exaggerate/make up for one time.
	Compared to theft	In comparison to theft and scam, exaggerating/making up a complaint is not that bad.
	Getting something done	Exaggerating/making up the complaint was the only way to get something done from the firm.
	Regret afterwards	I did not think about regretting that I exaggerated/made up the complaint.
Financial greed		- I wanted to make money. - I wanted to gain something for nothing.
Age		What is your age in years?
Gender		What is your gender?
Education		What is your highest educational level (with or without graduation)?
Regular customer		I perceive myself as a regular customer of this firm.
Firm size (general)		How big was the firm were you filed your complaint?
Product/service type		About which product or service did you complain?

Appendix III: Factor loadings factor analysis

Construct	Item	Factor loading
Illegitimate complaining	To what extent have you exaggerated your complaint?	.810
	To what extent have you made up the complaint?	.810
Contrast effect	I expected the firm to do everything in its power to solve my problem, but they did not live up to this expectation.	.945
	I expected the firm to exert much effort to solve the problem, but they did not live up to this expectation.	.949
	I expected the firm to try to make up for the steak being, but they did not live up to this expectation.	.891
Loss of control	I felt powerless towards the firm.	.812
	The firm no longer responded to my phone calls and requests.	.800
	The firm did not spend much time in taking care of my needs.	.852
Halo effect	Due to the failure I paid better attention and found more defects.	.882
	The failure of the firm also influenced my judgement of other aspects of the product/service.	.882
Subjective norm	If I would tell my family and acquaintances that I exaggerated/made up a complaint, that would not scare them.	.848
	I think my family and acquaintances would have exaggerated/made up a complaint as well if they were in my situation.	.848
Attitude towards complaining	I am not someone who complains quickly.	.852
	I think a lot of people complain too quickly.	.852
Perceptions of injustice	I feel that the company did not make an effort to come up with the best solution.	.890

	I feel that the firm did not show a real interest and did not try to be fair.	.910
	I feel that the company did not make an effort to come up with the best solution.	.896
Assimilation	Besides the filed complaint, there were more things wrong, but I decided to not complain about that.	.906
	Despite the fact that there were more defects, I took them for granted.	.906
Opportunism	I planned to act in this manner.	.748
	I got the opportunity to take advantage of my complaint.	.748
Desire for revenge	I wanted to punish the firm in a certain way.	.874
	I wanted to cause nuisance within the firm.	.918
	I wanted pay back for the firm.	.897
Perceived greed	The company was primarily motivated by its own interests.	.829
	The firm did intend to take advantage of me.	.919
	The firm had wrong intentions.	.927
External attribution	The complaint occurred due to the firm.	.861
	I got the impression that the firm intentionally gave me bad service.	.679
	I feel that the firm could have prevented the complaint.	.902
Firm size (driver)	The firm involved was large.	.980
	The firm involved has a large number of employees.	.980
Liberal redress policies	The firm had a generous complaint policy.	.875
	The firm had a generous warranty policy.	.875
Financial greed	I wanted to make money.	.853
	I wanted to gain something for nothing.	.853
