

RADBOUD UNIVERSITY

Why isn't the customer always right?

A confirmatory research to find out the drivers of
illegitimate complaining customer behaviour

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Preface

This research was carried out as a Masters thesis to complete the study Business Administration. The topic of this research is illegitimate complaining behaviour. The research has been established in collaboration with a partner student. The chapters 2, 4 and 5 have been jointly composed. By means of several meetings between my partner student, the supervisor and myself this research has been completed. I would like to thank the other researcher as well as the supervisor for the useful contribution and cooperation.

Abstract

The idea that the customers is always right and organizations should do everything to keep the customer happy is simply an unrealistic and sometimes wrong thought. Illegitimate complaining behaviour costs organizations a lot of time, energy and money. Uncovering the drivers why customers complaining illegitimately is therefore at utmost importance and contributes to the first steps towards developing practical guidance to help companies acknowledge unfair behaviour of their customers.

Researches of Baker et al. (2012) and Joosten (2012) already suggested potential drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. Nevertheless, more empirical research is needed to support these drivers. Therefore the research question of this research is: *what are the drivers of customers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour?* In order to answer the question several hypotheses are formulated. To test the hypotheses, this study conducted a survey asking respondents for self-reported data.

According to the results, a task-based conflict framing style leads to less illegitimate complaints. Furthermore, two neutralization techniques are found to be significant. Customers who believe that they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Also, customers who believe to be exaggerating or think making up a complaint is the only way to get something done from the firm are likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour.

For (service-) managers focussing on delivering excellent service to customers, the results of this study show that the use of liberal redress practices can be used without the worry whether it increases illegitimate complaining behaviour. Next, it is of importance to handle often returning customers carefully. These customers attach great value to the firms' service recovery policies. As a manager it is therefore of importance to recognize these customers and invest in them by communication. Also, it is of great importance to minimize the chance of customers using one of the two neutralization techniques. A possible strategy to prevent this is to train front-line employees in the identification and managing of these neutralization techniques used by the customers. Lastly, firms should continually engage in research iterations that identify drivers of illegitimate complaints.

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1. Introduction

On April 5th 2015, two days before our direct return flight from Shanghai to Amsterdam, we received an email from KLM with the message that the flight was cancelled due to a technical defect. I was not sad about it because this meant two extra days in Shanghai at the expense of KLM. Everything would be declared so we obviously took advantage of this. But then ... our flight on the 7th of April started with a delay in Shanghai. It soon became apparent that we were not going to make our connection flight to Delhi. What happened next; we waited 16 hours on an airport floor and eventually we flew via Delhi to London and then back to Amsterdam. In total we have travelled for 48 hours. This really sounds like a horrible story right? But did I mention the fun part? We have turned an airport floor into a cinema, told each other epic stories in the middle of the night and laughed until we fell asleep. These 48 hours really felt like a normal day of travelling. We knew that we were going to get money from KLM. We had of course already looked this up on the website of KLM. On the website a couple reasons of cancellation are mentioned in which you receive money from KLM. We decided to all complain individually in order to make the problem sound extra dramatic. One person would focus on medication problems due to the delay and another would focus on missing a workday due to the delay. With a nice, well-thought trough plan, everyone wrote his or her letter of complaint. Result: all 30 complaining students received a compensation of 600 Euros plus declarations of all costs made during the delay and a 50-Euro voucher for a following KLM flight. Wow, nobody expected that.

1.1 Service recovery policies

The example above shows that customer complaining is far from always correct. Customer complains can be overdramatic, opportunistic or even false (Joosten, 2017). Does KLM encourage to complain by clearly placing a ‘complaining policy’ on their website with the pay-off ‘Delay=Compensation, claim your rights’? Nowadays firms welcome and even proactively encourage customer complaints (Prim & Pras, 1998). Also Snellman & Vihtkari (2003) confirm this, many firms even adopt the so-called *liberal redress policies* (e.g. 100% ‘satisfaction guarantees’). Many firms give customers huge compensation – regardless of the validity or legitimacy of their complaint (Baker et al., 2012; Wirtz and McColl-Kennedy, 2010), and so does KLM. It is known that keeping a current customers is easier and less expensive than attracting a new one. It is therefore not surprising that these service recovery policies are an extremely important aspect in the strategy of firms to retaining current

customers. So, firms have to do everything to keep their customers. Right? To which point is 'the customer always right'? About 64% of all complaints are not fully truth (Joosten, 2017). We call these *illegitimate complaints*. Why do customers overdramatize their complaints?

1.2 Illegitimate complaining behaviour

The idea that the customer is always right and organizations should do everything to keep the customer happy is simply an unrealistic and sometimes wrong thought (Joosten, 2017). Research shows that customers are becoming more aggressive and unjust complaints are increasing (Kim, 2008; Reynolds & Harris, 2005). More and more researchers now start to realize that customer complaints are not only a way to express their dissatisfaction but may also a way to profit from, for instance, financially (Kowalski, 1996). Reporting your complaint on social media seems to be growing and customers are trying to make the complaint sound as nice as possible just to stand out on the World Wide Web. Besides the fact that front line employees have to deal with these complaining customers in a customer-oriented way, the impact of marketing activities on promoting constant customer satisfaction, service recovery, and preventing service failure has become a huge cost for firms (Baker, 2012). It takes a lot of energy and time to keep every customer as satisfied as possible at any time. It is therefore extremely important that service firms adjudge this unfair complaining behaviour of certain customers and manage those customers effectively (Berry & Seiders, 2008). In order to prevent this behaviour we need to know what the drivers are for customers to show illegitimate complaining behaviour. Currently, little is known about the drivers of this behaviour. According to Ro and Wong (2012) it is hard to find clear empirical evidence of fraudulent customer complaints. Although Baker et al. (2012) and Joosten (2017) have found in their exploratory research some evidence for possible drivers of opportunistic complaining, they have not tested the drivers. Therefore more research is needed to find out more about this behaviour.

1.3 Research aim

This study focuses on finding out the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. The aim is to find out whether customers engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. There is a lack of literature surrounding opportunistic customer complaining behaviour (Baker et al., 2012). From a managerial perspective, customers are becoming more aggressive, opportunistic complaints are increasing and this costs organizations a lot of time, energy and money (Kim, 2003; Baker et al., 2012). Should marketing managers continue to (over)spend

money, time and effort to welcome and encourage complaints, give customers the benefit of the doubt, honour all complaints and compensate customers generously (Berry & Seiders, 2008)? From a theoretical perspective, most research so far is based on the assumption that customer complaints are motivated by dissatisfaction resulting from genuine service failures and those customers does not knowingly complain without a cause (Joosten, 2017). This is often difficult to investigate because of the sensitivity of the subject. According to Berry and Seiders (2008), we can only deal with the issue of what is really acceptable customer behaviour by analysing what is unacceptable.

The aim of this research therefore is to find out the drivers of customers to show this illegitimate complaining behaviour. Formally, the research question is: *what are the drivers of customers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour?*

1.4 Theoretical relevance

Most research on service recovery so far has said that customer complaints are genuine and motivated by dissatisfaction resulting from genuine service failures (Reynolds and Harris, 2005; Day, 1980). While most research is focused on the best ways to satisfy current customers and regain customer trust after a service failure, possible dark sides remain unexplored (Joosten, 2017). More and more research finds that the customer is not always right. Research shows that customers are becoming more aggressive and unjust complaints are increasing (Kim, 2008; Reynolds & Harris, 2005). Yet only a small portion of literature acknowledges that some customers may complain illegitimately (Berry and Seiders, 2008). So far, no research has focused on empirically addressing why customers complain illegitimate, only on possible theories why it occurs (Joosten, 2017). A thorough understanding of these motivations is important for further research on illegitimate complaining. Therefore, this study addresses this gap and tries to add to the existing literature by providing insight in why customers engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour and what drivers of this behaviour are.

1.5. Managerial relevance

Where previous research was mainly focused on managerial advice on how to respond to illegitimate complaining customers, this study will focus on potential drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour and possible actions managers can take to decrease such behaviour. Nowadays more and more customers attempt to take advantage of service failures, and claim what they can, rather than what they deserve (Reynolds & Harris, 2005). These illegitimate

complaints cost organizations a lot of energy, time and money. Uncovering the drivers why customers complain illegitimately is therefore at utmost importance and contributes to the first steps towards developing practical guidance to help firms acknowledge unfair behaviour of their customers. Finding solutions to decrease this illegitimate behaviour will help organizations to distinguish between fair and unfair complaints and use money, time and energy for the right things.

1.6. Structure of the report

The following chapter provides a theoretical background regarding illegitimate complaining behaviour and possible drivers of this behaviour will be explained. The corresponding hypotheses to each of these drivers will be presented as well. Additionally, the elaboration of the method is described in chapter three, the analysis and results in chapter 4 and lastly the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5.

2. Theoretical background

In this second chapter illegitimate complaining behaviour is discussed and key literature is presented. This chapter also provides a definition of illegitimate complaining behaviour applied to this research. The possible drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour and the corresponding hypotheses to each of these drivers will be presented as well.

2.1 Illegitimate complaining behaviour

Making mistakes is a daily event in all organizations. Where people work, mistakes are made. This is not so bad either; because everyone learns from mistakes and that way you get better every day. Firms can only learn from mistakes if customers make them known. So far there is no problem. Customers expressing their complaints become a problem when unjust, opportunistic, fraudulent, and on occasions pre-planned. Such unjust and on occasions pre-planned complaints have been labelled “faked complaints” by Day et al. (1981). In contrast with a lot of literature customer complaining behaviour does not always has to be driven by a genuine service failure and customer complaints, therefore, may be illegitimate or even downright false.

Literature nowadays presents a broad range of labels to describe this illegitimate complaining behaviour of customers (Joosten, 2017). A first category of labels is described as ‘wrong motives of complaining customers’, or according to some other authors faked complaints (Day et al., 1981), fraudulent complaints (Kowalski, 1996; Piron and Young, 2000), cheating (Witz and Kuhm, 2004), dishonest complaints (Reynolds and Harris, 2005), feigned complaints (Reynolds and Harris, 2005), opportunistic complaints (Reynolds and Harris, 2005), and unfair customers (Berry and Seiders, 2008). This category is described as customers complaining dishonest. This category of customers exaggerates their complaints in order to gain some (financial) benefit from the firm. However, it is possible that the customer truly believes that he or she is right and really deserves a benefit from the firm (Joosten, 2017).

A second label is called: ‘not normal customer behaviour’, or as other authors call it deviant customer behaviour (Moschis and Cox, 1989), aberrant customer behaviour (Fullerton and Punj, 1993), and jay customer behaviour (Lovelock, 1994). A majority of complaining customers act normal and claim what they should. This group of customers is not acting normal. They try to claim what they can and that makes their behaviour illegitimate (Joosten, 2017).

A last category found describes this illegitimate complaining behaviour as ‘problematic customer behaviour’ or dysfunctional customer behaviour (Reynolds and Harris, 2003), problem customers (Bitner, Booms and Mohr, 1994) and customer misbehaviour (Baker, 2013). Exaggerating a complaint may have proven to be very functional for a customer (because the firm compensates him generously), but dysfunctional for the service employee and the firm (because of the energy, time and costs involved) (Joosten, 2017).

It is difficult for firms to give customers the ‘illegitimate complainant’ label. Firms do not want to say that their customers are scammers, for example. Therefore, for this study the label of Joosten (2017) is used: ‘illegitimate complaints’. According to Joosten (2017) an illegitimate complaint is a 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. When a complaint is illegitimate, unjust or unfounded, firms want to get rid of these customers at all times. An illegitimate complaint can be honest, fraudulent or opportunistic. An honest illegitimate complaint is when a customer honestly, but unjustly thinks there is something wrong with the service or product. A fraudulent complaint is when a customer knowingly and pre-planned creates an opportunity to take advantage of the firm. An opportunistic complaint is when a customer finds himself in a situation in which he or she can take advantage of the firm (Joosten, 2017).

2.2 Potential drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour

Some potential drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour are already suggested in the research by Baker et al. (2012). Baker et al. (2012) distinguish between customer-centric drivers (like customer financial greed, personality traits like assertiveness, and attitudes towards complaining), firm-centric drivers (like generous redress practices and firm size) and relationship-centric drivers (like one-time transaction and customer possesses low justice perceptions). The fact that these potential drivers have not yet been tested makes them a good basis for this research (Baker et al., 2012).

According to previous literature it is nearly impossible to find clear empirical evidence of illegitimate complaining behaviour due to its sensitive nature and potential for bias (Ro & Wong, 2012; Fiske et al., 2010). Illegitimate complaining is a sensitive issue because it is a type of behaviour which –when done on purpose- is not only considered illegal in most countries, but which is also considered unethical by many people (Joosten, 2017). It is unlikely that customers will readily admit that they engage in such behaviour. Since the

article of Baker et al. (2012) did not empirically test the different drivers it forms a good starting point in determining the possible drivers of illegitimate complaining. Also Joosten (2017) has succeeded in finding and testing some of the potential drivers of illegitimate complaining. He looked for some possible reasons of illegitimate complaining behaviour by going through various complaint forms from a third party arbitrator. He conducted a multiple-case study in cooperation with the Dutch Foundation for Disputes Committees (SGC) and found several reasons why customers might complain illegitimate, such as loss of control, contract between expectations and performance or attitude towards complaining (Joosten, 2017). He found these drivers in a sample of 226 cases provided by the SGC. These case files contained all communication between customers and the firm. The drivers' Joosten (2017) and Baker (2012) found form the basis for this research. Although these drivers are more or less present in the research of Joosten (2017), more empirical evidence is needed to support these drivers. Below an explanation of each driver and the corresponding hypotheses will be given.

2.3 Suggested drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour

2.3.1 Contrast effect

The customer's high expectations affect the way customers complain. When customers have high expectations of the firm, they are very disappointed when these expectations are not met (Anderson, 1973; Oliver and Swan, 1989). This can reduce the satisfaction of the purchase. High expectations can be the result of (1) positive meetings with the firm, (2) strong brand values, (3) strong promises, (4) high prices or (5) a strong service level (Joosten, 2017). Customers can then increase any discrepancy between product, firm or brand expectations and actual performance (Joosten, 2017). When customers encounter a difference between high expectations and low actual performance, they will disproportionately assess the product or service in question. They could indicate a contrast effect. When customers encounter a discrepancy between high expectations and low actual performance, they will evaluate the product or service in questions disproportionately negative and thus may exaggerate their complaint (Anderson, 1973). Joosten (2017) indicates contract effect in 10 (30%) of the illegitimate case files of the 127 case files studied. Thus, one 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. 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

According to Poon, is control 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 (e.g. relying on the firm) did not result in the desired outcome. Losing sense of control plays a role when for example customers have contacted the firm many times, but have not received any response (Joosten, 2017). 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. Customers lament that they do not know what else they can do to make the firm respond to their complaints. They feel they have lost control and want to get their control back. Customers may try to regain control by exaggerating their complaint. In 24 (44%) of the 55 illegitimate case files of Joosten's (2017) study indicates a perceived loss of control. This result suggests that perceived loss of control is related to illegitimate complaints. They may think that the firm is more inclined to -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) has 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 customer complaining this means that a negative experience of a customer with a certain aspect of a firm, for example the service or recovery, leads to negative evaluation of other aspects of that firm. 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 which may be an indication of heightened awareness. The halo effect can give direction to the perceptions of the customer about a service failure and can make them more susceptible to evaluate other aspects of a firm negatively and exaggerate their complaint. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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 and Ajzen, 1975; Kowalski, 1966). 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. In 15% of these cases the complaining customer is referring to others. The customer believes that his or her complaint is legitimate and uses the opinion of others to strengthen the complaint. When these others have a positive attitude towards complaining, the customer will share this opinion (Joosten, 2017). 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

Blodgett, Granbois and Walters (1993) have found that customers’ attitude towards complaining influences their choice to seek redress. It could be that highly dissatisfied customers choose not to complain to the service provider because they have a negative predisposition towards complaining. Thereby people’s decision to complain is often influenced by the (un)desired social consequences that complaining generates or relates to (Kowalski, 1996). This suggests that people’s attitude towards complaining influences the

chance of illegitimate complaining. As Kowalski (1996) asserts, although highly dissatisfied with the service delivery, not only customers' negative predisposition towards complaining can refrain them from engaging in complaining behavior, also the concern with being perceived unfavorably can make customers decide not to complain. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Customers who have a negative attitude towards complaining are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behavior

2.4. Suggested but not confirmed drivers of illegitimate complaining

2.4.1 Perception of injustice

Customers often feel that the service provider treats them unjustly. This feeling arises when customers are treated unfairly during the (recovery) process, when results are delivered in an unfair way, and when they have the feeling that the interaction with the service provider during the process is not fair (procedural justice) (Thibault and Walker, 1975). Perceived distributive injustice is present when customers indicate the delivery or remedy to be inadequate and not what they deserve (Joosten, 2017). According to Joosten (2017), perceived procedural injustice is present when customers posit the service (recovery) process to be (1) lengthy, (2) energy-consuming or (3) inflexible. Perceived interactional injustice, lastly, is present 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 threatened unjustly may exaggerate their complaint in order to get the attention of the firm and receive what they deserve. However, Joosten (2017) does not find support for this assumption in the SGC files. The results of Joosten (2017) suggest that perception of injustice is a driver of complaints, however a difference between illegitimate and legitimate complaints was not found. 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

Some customers refer in their complaint to previous positive experiences with the firm. In the literature it is suggested that there are two ways in which previous experiences can influence the reactions of customers to service (recovery) failure; by buffering or by magnifying (Tax et al., 1998; Kelley & Davis, 1994). Buffering means that for customers whose experience

has been very positive, one bad recovery should have a less harmful impact (Tax et al., 1998). The second perspective, by magnifying, the positive previous experiences increase the expectations for recovery, especially for loyal customers (Kelley & Davis, 1994). Previous positive experiences can have similar effects on illegitimate complaints: prior positive effects can be a buffer against illegitimate complaints, or they can magnify expectations and promote illegitimate complaints (Joosten, 2017). Prior experiences magnify expectations and could promote illegitimate complaints. However, Joosten (2017) did not find support for this assumption in the SGC files. The results of Joosten (2017) are too small to find clear empirical evidence. Therefore the following hypotheses are formulated:

H7a: Customers who experiences 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

According to Bitner et al. (1990) in many cases customers are not dissatisfied because the firm does not meet their service expectations. A poor response of the firm to the failure is the reason for dissatisfaction according to this article. Swanson and Kelley (2001) elaborate on this finding and state that customers are more satisfied with the service recovery efforts if the reaction of the employees on the failure is fast. 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 contradictory findings need further research to find out if duration of the dispute has an effect on illegitimate complaining. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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

2.4.4 Product/service type

Joosten (2017) did not find any differences in the presence of illegitimate complaints in the category of home furnishing. However, this case study does not measure differences between illegitimate complaining 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). More in detail, there are some product and service categories that provide the most complaints. These categories are: restaurants, hotels, airlines, auto repairs, clothing, furniture, electronics, and groceries (Estelami, 2000; Goodwin & Ross 1989; Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar, 1998). Based on these findings, it can be expected that illegitimate complaints occur in these categories the most as well. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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

2.4.5 Object value

Joosten (2017) expected in his case study that object value might have an effect on illegitimate complaining. The more value an individual attributes to an object, the more this person will be disappointed if the object fails. However, in the study of Joosten (2017) the object value of illegitimate complaints (€6300) were not very different from the object value of legitimate complaints (€6960). 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 IC for further research

2.5.1 Assimilation

In some case files of Joosten (2017), customers state that there are actually more things wrong with the product or service, but that they decided to accept these and not complain about them. Although the effect was too small to draw conclusions on, this may indicate assimilation. Assimilation Theory proposes that customers are reluctant to acknowledge discrepancies from previously held positions and therefore assimilates judgment toward their initial feelings for an object or event (Oliver and DeSarbo, 1988). Customers are according to Assimilation Theory more likely to mitigate their complaint instead of exaggerating it when they look for 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 advantages 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: 654). Customers feel the firm can handle a (financial) loss (e.g. firm X is very large and can easily afford it) and therefore they exaggerating their 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 injustice. 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. Literature describes these two conflict-framing styles as personal-based and task-based (Beverland et al., 2010). 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 reasserting the self and are less open to reason. In personal-based cases, customers are not solution-focused, they are trying to cause much damage, use emotional language and/or make general assessments about the brand or service provider. According to Beverland et al. (2010) customers who adopt a task-based conflict framing style are solution-focused and therefore open to reason with viable arguments. The purpose of customers with this framing style is to get the best recovery possible. In task-based cases, customers are solution-focused, open to reason, and willing to give the service provider a chance to make up for the service failure. Customers who show a personal-based conflict framing style are trying less openly to reason and therefore are prone to exaggerating their complaint then customers who possess a task-based conflict framing style and are willing to give the service provider a chance to makeup for the failure (Joosten, 2017). Joosten (2017) did not find any difference between the illegitimate and the legitimate complaints. Therefore the 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 (task based style)

2.5.4 Desire for revenge

According to Joireman et al. (2013) some customers have a strong sense of punishing the firm for the damage it has caused them. They want the firm to pay for their misbehaviour or make the firm 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 far as threats are concerned, one can think of threatening contact with television programs, spreading negative word of mouth, the bash of the firm on the internet, and so on. These expressions point to a desire for revenge: "an individual wants to punish a firm and cause damage for the damage it has caused" (Joosten, 2017). In order to damage the firm as much as possible they exaggerate their complaints. 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 a customer who believes that a firm has opportunistically tried to take advantage of the situation to the detriment of the customer's interest. 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 following hypothesis is formulated:

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

2.5.6 External attribution

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 that it is not the result of behaviour of the individual itself. 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 other hand, 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 following hypothesis is formulated:

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 or disappointment

Emotions are important to take into account when a service failure occurs (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 (Bouie et al., 2003; Keeffe et al., 2007). Especially the emotion of anger is found to be important in the service recovery process (Holloway et al., 2009; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004; Kim, Wang & Matilla, 2010). Customers can be disappointed and dissatisfied when there is no solution found to solve the service failure. As a result, customers can develop feelings of anger and the desire to take revenge. Illegitimate complaints can be a way to fulfil the desire to take revenge. Therefore the following hypotheses are formulated:

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

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

2.5.8 Firm size

Suggested by Baker et al. (2012), the size of the firm may also intervene to influence this type of customer misbehaviour. It is expected that customers are more prone to be opportunistic when transacting with large firms as opposed to small ones. This is based on the

fact that customers believe that their behaviour causes insignificant harm to larger firms. Support for this assumption can be found in the article of Wirtz and McColl-Kennedy (2010) who also found that firm size influences customer misbehaviour. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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. However, management focus in the area may in some cases lead to more illegitimate complaints. A lot of research highlights the value of customer complaints and stresses that complaints from customers should be welcomed and encouraged by an organization (Bennett, 1997, Prim and Pras, 1999, De Witt and Brady, 2003, Snellman and Vihtkari, 2003). However, much of this research is based on the assumption that customers do not complain without reason (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). Nevertheless, 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 and Reynolds, 2003). The mentioning of these compensations on, for example, the website can increase this. In other words, liberal redress policies can unintentionally encourage and create opportunities to show illegitimate complaining behaviour (Reynolds and Harris, 2005).

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 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 purchases. The study of Harris and Mowen (2001) shows that customers who are prone to negotiate appear to show intentions to complain. Therefore, it is imaginable that these customers have a tendency to file an illegitimate complaint as well. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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

2.5.11 Neutralization techniques

The neutralization theory explains different reasons why individuals misbehave. For this research five techniques are tested. An explanation of the techniques can be found below, followed by the hypothesis.

Denial of injury

Denial of injury is happening when the complaining customer feels (s)he will not hurt the firm or its employee(s) by complaining illegitimately (Vitell & Grove, 1987). Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

21a: Customers who believe the firm will not be harmed by their complaint, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (damage to the firm)

Claims of relative acceptability

People using the claims of relative acceptability as a neutralization technique do so by comparing their own misbehavior with the misbehavior or someone else. They usually claim that (the) other person(s) act in much worse behavior than they did (Hinduja, 2007; Harris & Dumas, 2009). The comparison does not need to be with the same kind of misbehavior; it can be completely different. Specifically, people could illegitimately complain about a small item (e.g., by claiming a refund on a small digital cable, worth only € 7), and compare this with the illegitimately complain of a large item. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

21b: Customers who believe theft is worse than exaggerating/making up a complaint are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (compared to theft)

Defense of necessity

A person could use the defense of necessity technique when that person felt like (s)he had no other choice than conduct the misbehavior: it was considered necessary (Minor, 1981). Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

21c: Customers who believe exaggerating/making up a complaint is the only way to get something done are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (getting something done)

Metaphor of the ledger

The metaphor of the ledger technique is a neutralization technique that is used to balance the good with the evil (Minor, 1981). In other words, the misbehavior is compensated by the good, decent behavior. A customer could use this technique to rationalize an illegitimate complain by thinking (s)he usually never complains, not even when the customer would be “allowed” to complain. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

21d: Customers who believe they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour

Postponement

A person would use this neutralization technique by not thinking about the consequences of his behavior (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003). It is often used when people do not want to feel guilty about their actions (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003). In case of illegitimately complaining, feelings of guilt could arise to the surface. A customer could, for instance, claim a refund on a product (s)he is aware is nothing wrong with, but just chooses to ignore this feeling to not feel guilty. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

21e: Customers who do not think about regretting their exaggerated/made up complaint are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour

2.5.12 Financial greed

Baker et al. (2012) already suggested, although not tested, that one of the possible customer-centric drivers is customer financial greed. This construct of receiving something without paying for it is confirmed by Reynold and Harris (2005). They found that the most often used customer-driver for opportunistic behavior is monetary gain. Complaining can be considered by customers as an opportunity, a chance to appease financial greed (Baker, Magnini & Perdue, 2012). The way in which this opportunity can be exploited is by exaggerating the complaint. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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

2.5.13 Gender

Research into demographic characteristics and fraudulent returning by Harris (2008) suggests that fraudulent returning is more commonly female than male. Also Siegel (1993) and Schmidt et al. (1999) found evidence that female consumers are positively related to fraudulent returning. This suggests that there could also be a link between gender and illegitimate complaining. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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

2.5.14 Age

The research by Harris (2008) also suggests a relationship between age and fraudulent returning. Also Schmidt et al. (1999) found empirical evidence that younger customers are more likely to be fraudulent returners. This suggests that there could be a link between age and illegitimate complaining. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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

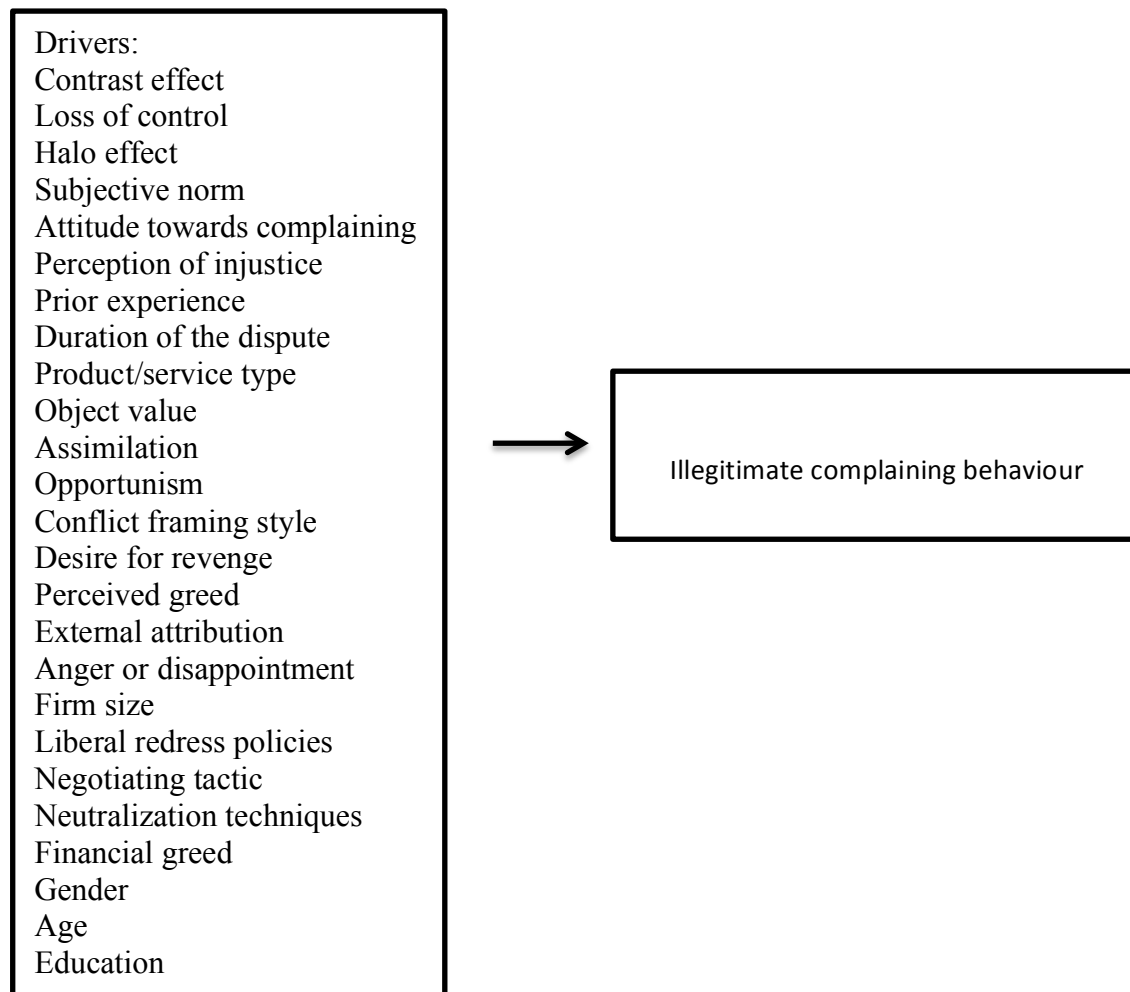
2.5.15 Education

Research into demographic characteristics and fraudulent returning by Harris (2008) again also suggests that fraudulent returning is more likely to be less well educated. This suggests that there could be a link between education and illegitimate complaining. Therefore the following hypothesis is formulated:

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.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework and hypotheses. It is expected that the potential drivers have a direct effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. Moreover, the firm size, gender, age, level of education and liberal redress policies are expected to have a positive moderating effect on the outcome.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



3. Methodology

In this third chapter the methodology will be explained. Firstly the research design used for this empirical research will be described followed by the procedures used. Next the questionnaire and scales used are discussed in detail followed by the results of the pre-test. A discussion of the research procedure and research ethics is mentioned and the chapters will be closed by the applied statistical treatments.

3.1 Research design

Previous literature has suggested that it is nearly impossible to find clear empirical evidence of illegitimate complaining behaviour due to its sensitive nature and potential biases (Ro & Wong, 2012; Fiske et al., 2010). Illegitimate complaining is a sensitive issue because it is a type of behaviour which – when done on purpose – is not only considered illegal in most countries, but which is also considered unethical by many people. It is unlikely that customers will readily admit that they engage in such behavior (Joosten, 2017).

Since both the study of Joosten (2017) and Baker (2012) is based on exploratory research forms this is a good starting point for further research. These studies are both based on theory and they test possible drivers on the basis of their own interpretation. In order to find clear empirical evidence of illegitimate complaining it is necessary to investigate the perceptions of the customers and test if the drivers found are really what customers would say themselves.

To test the hypotheses, this study will conduct a survey asking respondents for self-reported data. This study is unlike the research of Joosten (2017) and Baker et al. (2012), confirmatory in nature and will test if the drivers found by Joosten (2017) and Baker et al. (2012) are actually what people say when asked in a questionnaire. Since this study is confirmatory, a survey has been chosen as data source. Surveys are often used successfully in studies on customer misbehaviour (Daunt & Harris, 2012). Also Berry and Seiders (2008) recommended the use of surveys for measuring at-risk situations of customer misbehaviour.

3.2 Procedure and sample

3.2.1 Respondents

Respondents for the survey are collected using a non-probability sampling method, the convenience sample. Since it is a very sensitive topic respondents were personally ask to participate and collect in the researcher's own acquaintances. The questionnaire has been

distributed via Facebook, LinkedIn and e-mail. By distribution via e-mail it was made more personal although the privacy and anonymity were not guaranteed. Therefore it was made clear in advance that the answers are pre-eminently confidential and anonymous and used for this thesis only.

3.2.2. Questionnaire

Since previous literature has suggested that it is nearly impossible to find clear empirical evidence of illegitimate complaining behaviour because of the sensitivity of the topic, it is very important to minimize the response biases (Fisk, 2010). Therefore the introduction of the questionnaire was mainly focused on the sensitivity of the theme. Therefore the researchers firstly convinced the respondent, that the purpose of the research is solely for academic purpose and that anonymity will be guaranteed. Furthermore, the respondents gained trust, through the fact that the researchers expressed that all answers provided will be handled with the greatest confidentiality. To make the respondent at ease they were told that there are no wrong or right answers and they were asked to answer the questions open-minded and with the greatest honesty possible. The introduction of the questionnaire also provided a short explanation of the subject.

To tempt the respondents to admit that they have ever committed to illegitimate complaining behaviour, the questionnaire started with two common situations in which customers often exaggerate or makeup a complaint. These examples were meant to help the respondent to come up with an example of illegitimate complaining. Next respondents were asked whether he or she has ever been in a situation where he or she exaggerated or made-up a complaint. When the respondents read a text about a small example of illegitimate complaining and the fact that the respondent knows that the questionnaire is anonymous, for someone of their own circle of acquaintances and for academic purpose only, it was assumed they would answer the questions that follow fairly. The questions that followed were all about the complaint experience of the respondent. To help the respondent relive the complaint experience, the questionnaire started of with some questions about the complaint. For example: when the complaint has been filled in, about what product the complaint was, by which firm, to what extent they exaggerated their complaint and questions about the solution they suggested.

The second section of the questionnaire was focused on finding out the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. The operationalization of the drivers mentioned in chapter 2 can be read in paragraph measurement. The questionnaire ended with questions

about the respondents' gender, age and level of education. Respondents interested in the results were given the opportunity to leave their email address.

3.2.3 Pre-test

To check whether the measurement instrument used is valid and would measure what was thought of at forehand, a pre-test was conducted. Firstly a professor with knowledge of measurement instruments has checked the survey. Thereafter the pre-test continued with two pre-test methods to check for usability and length of the questionnaire: +/- method and read out loud method. Firstly five respondents were ask to read each question and indicate to what extent they understand the question by giving the question a + of – sign. Secondly five respondents were asked read out loud the question and tell what they think. All ten respondents were personally asked to participate in the pre-test. All respondents were acquaintances of the researchers in order to speed up the process. To prevent any inconsistencies, unclear items or wrongly formulated questions in the final questionnaire, this pre-test was set up. In response to the pre-test minor adjustments were made. The final questionnaire is included in Appendix I.

3.3 Measurement

In this paragraph the measurement scales used for the questionnaire are mentioned per independent variable. The independent variables measured are: contrast effect, loss of control, halo effect, subjective norm, attitude towards complaining, perception of injustice, prior experience, duration of the dispute, product/service type, object value, assimilation, opportunism, conflict framing style, desire for revenge, perceived greed, external attribution, anger or disappointment, firm size, liberal redress policies, negotiating tactic, neutralization techniques, financial greed, gender, age and education. The study has measured the effect of these independent variables on the dependent variable, illegitimate complaining behaviour.

All drivers were measured with items using five-point Likert-type scales anchored by strongly disagree – strongly agree. Respondents who indicated anything else than 'strongly disagree' are considered to have complained illegitimately at least to some extent, as they would have completely disagreed with the statement otherwise.

Contrast effect plays up when someone had high expectations of a firm, but this is not fulfilled in the performance. This construct will be measured using an adapted version of the scale of Hess, Ganesan, and Klein (2003). The scale has three, five-point Likert-scale statements and measures the degree to which a customer expects a business to solve a certain

problem the customer has experienced. The scale has been added to the extent to which the expectations corresponded to the performance. The 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'*, and *'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 strike up when customers have for example contacted the firm many times but have not received any response. This construct will be measured using a five-point Likert-type item, which measures a person's perception towards the amount of effort an employee put into a particular service encounter. The scale is a slightly modified version of a scale used by Mohr and Bitner (1995). The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'I felt powerless towards the company'*, *'The firm no longer responded to my phone calls and requests'*, and *'The company 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 using an own-invented five-point Likert-type item and ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. 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 has to do with 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 other might think about an action he/she has taken. The statements are modified to fit with the subject of illegitimate complaining. 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 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 construct will be measured using a five-point Likert-type item and ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The items are

slightly modified and based on a scale by Keller, Lipkus, and Rimer (2002) which measures the extent to which a person is experiencing anxiety regarding what other might think about an action he/she has taken. The statements are modified to fit with the subject of illegitimate complaining. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'I am not someone who complains quickly', 'I think a lot of people complain too quickly'*.

Perception of injustice is the perceived fairness of policies, procedures, and criteria used by the organization in arriving at the outcome of the service recovery experience (Blodgett, Hill and Tax, 1997). This construct will be measured using a three-item scale adapted of Maxham III and Netemeyer (2013). This scale is based on Blodgett, Hill and Tax (1997) and was focused on the telephone complaints by a well-established electronic retailer. The scale for Perception of injustice towards illegitimate complaining behaviour is a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. 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', and 'I feel that the firm did not handle the problem in a fair manner with respect to its policies and procedures'*.

Prior experience is referred to in their complaint when the previous experience with the customers was positive and therefore they are extra disappointed. This construct will be measured using an own-invented five-point Likert scale and ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'I see myself as a regular customer of this firm', 'I am angry with the firm that they treat a regular customer this bad', 'The firm treated me wrong during the complaint, but I am still positive about the firm', 'My prior experiences with the firm are positive'*.

Duration of the dispute will be measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The scale is based on the studies by Gorn et al. (2004) which 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 statements: *'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 three statements to measure the influence of object value. The respondents are asked to answer the following

statements: *'The product/service was very expensive'*, *'The product/service was good value for the money'*.

Assimilation may indicate that customers are reluctant to acknowledge discrepancies from previously held positions and therefore assimilate judgement toward their initial feelings for an object or event. This construct will be measured using an own-invented five-point Likert-scale. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'Besides the filled complaint, there were more things wrong, but I decided to not complain about that'*, and *'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. This construct will be measured using a five-point Likert-scale. Scores are based upon the extent to which respondents consider the statements about their behaviour to be true. This scale was developed by Paulhus (1984). The scale for Opportunism towards illegitimate complaining behaviour is slightly modified to make it fit with opportunism. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'I planned to act in this manner'*, and *'I exaggerated my complaint, because I had the possibility to take advantage of it'*.

Conflict framing style noticed that complaining customers use different styles to communicate their injustice. This construct will be measured using a modified scale of Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar (1998). The scale for Conflict framing style towards illegitimate complaining behaviour is a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: *'During the complaint process I tried to pressurize the entrepreneur to get it my way'*, *'During the complaint process I tried to come to a solution by consulting and collaborating'*.

Desire for revenge is the strong sense of punishing the firm for the damage it has caused the customers. This construct will be measured using a five-point Likert-type scale to assess the likelihood that a customer 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 scale is a slightly modified version of the scale used by Singh (1988). The 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 a nuisance within the firm'*, and *'I wanted pay back from 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 customer's interest. Grégoire et al. (2010) adapted a scale in their study to measure the perception of a firm's greed. Two 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 company did intend to take advantage of me*', and '*The company 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 being due to something under the control of the immediate service provider. The statements are slightly modified to be better able to measure this construct. In this study the statements will be used 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*', and '*I feel that the firm could have prevented the complaint*'.

Anger or disappointment with a firm can result in the desire to take revenge using illegitimate complaints. This construct will be measured using an adapted version of the scale developed by Izard (1977) that is part of the Differential Emotions Scale. A five-point Likert scale, ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' is used to answer the statements. Respondents are asked to answer the following statements: '*I complained the way I did because felt angry*', '*I complained the way I did because I felt disappointed*'.

Firm size will be measured using an own-invented five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The respondents are asked to answer the following statements: '*The fact that the firm involved was large affected my reaction*', '*The firm involved has a large number of employees and that affected my reaction*'.

Liberal redress policies are the policies of a firm about service recovery services. The mentioning of these compensations might increase illegitimate complaining behaviour. This construct will be measured using a five-point Likert-scale. Scores are based upon the extent to which respondents consider the statements about their behaviour to be true. This scale was developed by Paulhus (1984). The scale for liberal redress policies towards illegitimate complaining behaviour is slightly modified to make it fit with liberal redress policies. The scale ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Respondents are asked to answer the

following statements: *'I profited from the generous complaint policy of the firm', and 'The generous warranty policy seduced me to complain exaggerate/fictional'.*

Negotiating tactics 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 exaggerated/made up the complaint, because 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', 'Normally, I am a honest 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 wangle something from the firm', 'Later, I regretted 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 three 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 exaggerated/made up the complaint to make money', 'I exaggerated/made up the complaint to gain something for nothing', 'I made money by exaggerating/making up the complaint'.*

The questionnaire ends with asking for the respondent's gender, age and level of education. The complaints are divided into group products or group services afterwards in order to check whether product/service type has an influence on illegitimate complaining behaviour.

3.4 Data procedure and research ethics

The questionnaire was carried out with the program Qualtrics. The data is collected between April 16th and May 4th. The respondents were asked to participate by Facebook, LinkedIn, email, via whatsapp and face-to-face at the University. Since people were asked to participate in the research, research ethics had to be considered during the entire time of the research (Goodwin, 2013). Therefore the results are only used for this research, anonymity

and privacy is assured and there were only good answers. When the respondents decided to participate, the online survey was sent by email. Filling in the questionnaire took about 15 minutes and consisted out of 66 questions.

3.5. Sample

A total of 155 Dutch people have participated in the research and filled in the questionnaire. Since Qualtrics forced participants to answer, there were no missing data, except of the ones who decided to stop filling in the questionnaire. A total of 522 people started the questionnaire and only 155 decided to fill it in to the end. This is not very surprising giving the length and duration of the questionnaire, the fact that you had to come up with a complaint in order to fill in the questionnaire and the fact that open and closed questions were asked at a random base. The recommended minimum sample size for regression analysis is met (5:1) (Hair, 2014). This means that the results are generalizable. Furthermore, concerning the sample, more women (67,1%) than men (32,9%) participated in the research. The average age is 29 years; ranging from 17 to 64. Moreover most participated were high educated (%) and most complaints were about big firms (74,8%).

3.6. Data Analysis

When all the data was collected the data was prepared before it could be analysed in SPSS. Incomplete questionnaires were removed from the database. The data of Qualtrics exported to SPSS is checked in order to make sure that the data had all the correct labels to the variables. As soon as the data file was correct, the statistical treatment started.

The aim of this study was to identify potential drivers for illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore a regression analysis was carried out. Since this study contains of one dependent variable and several independent variables, a regression analysis can be used. Regression analysis is used to test whether there is a relationship between illegitimate complaining behaviour and several drivers. After all the data was collected and the data file was correct, the analysis was carried out with the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0. First all the variables has been given a label, and transformed with the use of a factor analysis into the appropriate format for the regression analysis. Lastly, by doing a moderation analysis using the PROCESS Tool of A. F. Hayes potential moderators are tested. The regression analysis as well as the factor analysis will be discussed in chapter 4 as well as the checks for the assumption and the results will be presented.

4. Analysis and results

The fourth chapter presents an overview of obtained results from the conducted analysis. The factor analysis will be discussed together with the reliability analysis for factor analysis. Thereafter, the regression analysis will be presented together with some additional analysis. Chapter four will end with the results of the hypothesis testing and some other remarkable results found.

4.1. Factor and reliability analysis

In order to assess discriminant validity of the constructs, a factor analysis (principal component analysis) has been performed. By means of this factor analysis it is checked whether the items that cluster on a factor, were in accordance with theoretical expectations. For fifteen different independent variables a factor analysis is conducted in order to check if the items measure the same constructs. In order to check whether the variables could be bundled together the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's test of Sphericity and Cronbach's alpha are checked. The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis and should be above the threshold value of .500 (Hair, 2014). Furthermore, Bartlett's test of Sphericity should be below the threshold value ($p < .050$), which 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). Calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each scale, wherein an alpha coefficient of above $\alpha = .70$ is desired and above $\alpha = .60$ is required, will check this extent. A summary of KMO, Bartlett's Test and the Cronbach's Alpha for all factors is displayed in Tabel 1. The factor loadings can be found in Appendix 3

Table 1: Summary of KMO, Bartlett's Test and Cronbach's Alpha for all factors

Factor	KMO Measure of Sample Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of significance	Cronbach's Alpha for reliability
Illegitimate complaining	.500	.000	.466
Contrast effect (driver)	.730	.000	.920
Loss of control (driver)	.685	.000	.746

Halo effect (driver)	.500	.000	.711
Subjective norm (driver)	.500	.000	.603
Attitude towards complaining (driver)	.500	.000	.620
Perception of Injustice (driver)	.742	.000	.879
Assimilation (driver)	.500	.000	.783
Opportunism (driver)	.500	.142	.212
Desire for revenge (driver)	.730	.000	.864
Perceived Greed (driver)	.695	.000	.843
External attribution (driver)	.602	.000	.754
Firm size (driver)	.500	.000	.959
Liberal redress policies (driver)	.500	.000	.684
Financial greed (driver)	.500	.000	.626

Based on the results above, the items of most variables are bundled together. For ‘opportunism’ Bartlett’s test of sphericity is not significant and thus the items will be included in the regression analysis separately. For ‘illegitimate complaining’ the Cronbach’s $\alpha = .466$ which is below the required threshold of $\alpha > .60$. Based on theoretical assumptions the items will still be bundled together to measure the concept of illegitimate complaining.

4.2. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics of all variables that will be included in the regression analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of all variables

	N	M	SD
Illegitimate complaining	155	2.84	1.091
Contrast effect (driver)	155	2.22	1.222
Loss of control (driver)	155	2.04	.994
Halo effect (driver)	155	1.89	1.097
Subjective norm (driver)	155	3.48	1.010
Attitude towards complaining (driver)	155	3.80	.884
Perception of Injustice (driver)	155	2.37	1.203

Buffering (driver)	155	2.02	1.209
Magnifying (driver)	155	1.95	1.216
Duration of the dispute (driver)	155	2.32	1.366
Object value (driver)	155	2.88	1.455
Assimilation (driver)	155	1.83	1.034
Planned behaviour (driver)	155	2.48	1.452
Taking advantage (driver)	155	2.98	1.488
Personal based style (driver)	155	2.22	1.234
Task based style (driver)	155	3.44	1.290
Desire for revenge (driver)	155	1.71	1.049
Perceived greed (driver)	155	1.98	1.009
External attribution (driver)	155	2.40	1.202
Anger (driver)	155	2.54	1.526
Disappointment (driver)	155	2.94	1.462
Firm size (driver)	155	3.82	1.1337
Liberal redress policies (driver)	155	3.01	1.064
Negotiation tactic (driver)	155	3.78	1.095
Damage to the firm (driver)	155	3.80	1.296
Honest customer (driver)	155	3.60	1.198
Compared to theft (driver)	155	3.18	1.159
Getting something done (driver)	155	3.21	1.262
Regret afterwards (driver)	155	3.09	1.411
Financial greed (driver)	155	2.19	1.249
Gender	155	1.67	.471
Age	155	29.21	12.143
Education	155	4.42	.755
Regular customer (driver)	155	2.94	1.513
Firm size	155	2.61	.715

4.3. Regression analysis

To investigate the relationships between all variables further, regression methods have been used to learn more about the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

To test the research hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis is conducted to analyse the

proposed relationships. Before interpreting the results, the assumptions for linear regression had to be checked. To see whether the variables were normally distributed the skewness and kurtosis have been checked. All variables were between -3 and 3, which is acceptable. Multicollinearity is checked by the tolerance values. None of these are $< .10$ so this assumption is not violated. The normal probability plot has a straight diagonal line from bottom left to top right, which indicated linearity. The scatterplot for homoscedasticity does not show any kind of concentration of the dots and does not show some sort of patterns it can be concluded that the data is homoscedastic. By looking at the standardized predicted value it can be concluded that the errors do not correlate because 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 the histogram is quite normally distributed. Also the normal probability plot of the standardized residuals shows a diagonal line, which indicates a normal distribution. The variables education, firm size and gender are included as a dummy in the regression analysis.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict illegitimate complaining based on several drivers. A significant regression equation was found ($F(37,117) = 2,949, p < .000$) with an adjusted R^2 of .319, which means 31,9% of variance in illegitimate complaining is explained by the variables. Regular customer ($p = .017$), honest customer ($p = .017$), getting something done ($p = .040$), magnifying ($p = .018$) and task based style ($p = .008$) were significant predictors of illegitimate complaining behaviour with $\alpha = .05$, whereas all others are not significant. To make sure the model has the highest explained variance, it is checked whether the R^2 will rise when variables are deleted. One by one the variables were deleted and the model was checked on R^2 . None of the deleted variables had a significant increase in R^2 so the model with all variables included has the highest explained variance.

To further analyse the results of the multiple regression analysis and the relationship of the independent and the dependent variables, the coefficients of the variables gave more insights as also shown in Table 3. 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 ($B = -.178$) have a negative effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour.

Table 3: Coefficients table

	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	2,429	,881		2,758	,007
Contrast effect (driver)	-,070	,104	-,079	-,673	,502
Loss of control (driver)	,216	,155	,197	1,391	,167
Halo effect (driver)	,007	,115	,007	,057	,955
Subjective norm (driver)	-,022	,104	-,021	-,212	,832
Attitude towards complaining (driver)	,107	,098	,087	1,093	,277
Perception of injustice (driver)	,011	,126	,012	,086	,931
Buffering (driver)	-,038	,072	-,042	-,530	,597
Magnifying (driver)	-,240	,100	-,267	-2,395	,018*
Duration of the dispute (driver)	-,107	,085	-,134	-1,257	,211
Object value (driver)	-,007	,061	-,010	-,122	,903
Assimilation (driver)	,027	,097	,025	,276	,783
Planned behaviour (driver)	,050	,060	,066	,824	,412
Taking advantage (driver)	,105	,074	,143	1,414	,160
Personal based style (driver)	,017	,085	,019	,198	,844
Task based style (driver)	-,178	,067	-,211	-2,678	,008**
Desire for Revenge (driver)	,112	,132	,107	,844	,401
Perceived Greed (driver)	,070	,152	,065	,458	,648
External Attribution (driver)	-,183	,099	-,202	-1,849	,067
Anger (driver)	,076	,096	,106	,794	,429
Disappointment (driver)	-,118	,079	-,158	-1,498	,137
Firm size (driver)	-,001	,100	-,002	-,013	,990
Liberal Redress Policies (driver)	,028	,088	,027	,313	,755
Negotiation tactic (driver)	-,164	,090	-,164	-1,811	,073
Damage to the firm (driver)	-,055	,072	-,066	-,766	,445
Honest customer (driver)	,187	,077	,206	2,415	,017*
Compared to theft (driver)	,064	,095	,068	,670	,504
Getting something done (driver)	,155	,075	,179	2,079	,040*
Regret afterwards (driver)	,043	,061	,055	,702	,484

Financial Greed (driver)	,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 (driver)	,137	,057	,190	2,418	,017*
Small sized firm	,125	,387	,039	,323	,747
Middle sized firm	-,006	,313	-,002	-,021	,984

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

4.4 Moderation analysis

To further analyse the proposed hypotheses, a moderation analysis has been conducted to study the moderating effect of gender, age, education and firm size. With the program PROCESS of Andrew F. Hayes the moderation analysis has been conducted. Since the analysis consists of many variables only interaction effects for the significant variables were tested in the moderation analysis. There were no significant differences found in the level of education, gender, age and firm size.

4.5 Additional analysis

The research showed that a lot of complaints were about electronics (N = 57). Therefore an additional analysis was conducted to see the differences between complaints about electronic products versus complaints about other products and services. Again the assumptions are checked and not violated. Only the significant effects are shown in Table 4.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict illegitimate complaining based on several drivers for the category electronics. A significant regression equation was found ($F(37,19) = 3.453, p < .003$) with an adjusted R² of .618, which means 61,8% of variance in illegitimate complaining is explained by the variables. In Table 4 the significant drivers can be found.

A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict illegitimate complaining based on several drivers for the category others. A significant regression equation was found ($F(37,60)=3.453, p<.043$) with an adjusted R² of .197, which means 19,7% of variance in illegitimate complaining is explained by the variables. In Table 4 the significant drivers can be found.

Table 4: Regression electronics

	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*

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

5. Conclusion and discussion

In this chapter, conclusions are formed based on the results. These conclusions will be discussed in light of existing literature. Also, the theoretical and managerial contribution of this research is discussed followed by the limitations and suggestions for further research.

5.1. Conclusion

In contrast with a lot of literature, customer complaining behaviour does not always need to be driven by a genuine service failure. Therefore, customer complaints may be illegitimate or even downright false. Previous research by Baker et al. (2012) and Joosten (2017) already found some evidence for the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour. In order to test whether the drivers that Baker et al. (2012) and Joosten (2017) found are in line with the drivers that customers would name themselves, this research has been set up in order to answer the following research question: *'What are the drivers of customers to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour?'* In order to answer this question several hypotheses were developed, which can be found in Table 5. Not all hypotheses were supported. However, better insights into the different drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour have been found. The hypotheses for task based style, honest customer and getting something done are supported.

It seems that a task-based conflict framing style leads to less illegitimate complaints. Customers who are task-based are solution-focused and open to reason. These customers are therefore willing to give the service provider a chance to make up for the service failure. They are less prone to exaggerate or make up a complaint. This is at the same time also the strongest significant driver of illegitimate complaining behaviour.

Two neutralization techniques are found to be significant. These are honest customer and getting something done. This means that customers, who believe they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. 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.

A notable conclusion found is that the driver magnifying is significant but has a negative effect on illegitimate complaining behaviour. According to the theory the expectation was that customers magnify their service recovery expectations due to positive prior experiences and therefore could promote illegitimate complaints. This behaviour applies mostly for loyal customers, though the results found are not in line with the theory.

However, in the beginning of the survey the respondents were asked if they perceived themselves as a regular customer of the firm. The results show that this has a positive effect on the illegitimate complaining behaviour of the customers. This means that respondents, who perceive themselves as a regular customer, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. This is a surprising result in comparison with the negative effect of magnifying found in this study. Therefore, an additional explanation can be found in the next paragraph.

In comparison to the study of Joosten (2017) none of the drivers that were confirmed in his research are found to be significant in this research. The drivers that were not confirmed in the study of Joosten (2017) are also not significant in this study. Three drivers that Joosten (2017) indicated for further research are found to be significant, namely honest customer, task based style and getting some done.

Hypothesis 9, the difference between product and service type, could not be tested. This will be explained in the limitations paragraph. Although the differences in drivers between products and services could not be tested, an additional analysis has been done. The differences between the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour about electronic products versus complaints about other products and services were tested. The choice for electronics is based on the fact that one third of the respondents complained about electronics. Surprisingly the significant drivers for electronics are different compared to the overall model and the category others. The significant drivers, which are in line with the theory, are disappointment, liberal redress policies, financial greed and task based style. Anger, negotiation tactic, damage to the firm and external attribution are found to be significant but have a negative effect which is not in line with the theory. This will be discussed in the limitations paragraph.

Although negotiation tactic, damage to the firm, attitude towards complaining and firm size have a high mean ($M > 3.50$), no significant effect was found. 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 is the fact that almost 75 percent of the complaints were about large firms instead of small and middle-sized firms. This indicated that exaggerating or making up a complaint mainly occurs in large firms.

Table 5: Summary of the hypotheses

	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? (contrast effect)	Rejected
H2	Customers who experience the feeling of losing control are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour? (loss of control)	Rejected
H3	Customers with a negative experience with a certain aspect of the firm are more likely to engage in additional illegitimate complaining behaviour (halo effect)	Rejected
H4	Customers who value the opinion of relevant others are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (subjective norm)	Rejected
H5	Customers with a negative attitude towards complaining are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (attitude towards complaining)	Rejected
H6	Customers who experience high perceptions of injustice, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (perception of injustice)	Rejected
H7a	Customers who experiences a buffering effect on prior experience, are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (buffering)	Rejected
H7b	Customers who experience a magnifying effect on prior experience, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. (magnifying)	Rejected
H8	Customers who experience a long duration of the dispute, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (duration of the dispute)	Rejected
H9	Illegitimate customer complaining behaviour occurs more often in service type industries than product type industries (product/service type)	—

H10	Customers who perceive a high object value, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (object value)	Rejected
H11	Customers who possess signs of assimilation, are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (assimilation)	Rejected
H12	Customers with opportunistic behaviour, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (planned behaviour/taking advantage)	Rejected
H13a	Customers with a personal-based conflict framing style, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (personal based style)	Rejected
H13b	Customers with a task-based conflict framing style, are less likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (task based style)	Supported
H14	Customers with a high desire for revenge, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (desire for revenge)	Rejected
H15	Customers who perceive greed of a firm, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (perceived greed)	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 (external attribution)	Rejected
H17a	Customers who experience anger, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (anger)	Rejected
H17b	Customers who experience disappointment, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (disappointment)	Rejected
H18	Customers who perceive a firm as large, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (firm size)	Rejected
H19	Customers facing a firm with liberal redress practices, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (liberal redress policies)	Rejected
H20	Customers who use a negotiating tactic are more likely to	Rejected

	engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (negotiating tactic)	
H21a	Customers who believe the firm will not be harmed by their complaint, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (damage to the firm)	Rejected
H21b	Customers who believe they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (honest customer)	Supported
H21c	Customers who believe theft is worse than exaggerating/making up a complaint are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (compared to theft)	Rejected
H21d	Customers who believe exaggerating/making up a complaint is the only way to get something done are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (getting something done)	Supported
H21e	Customers who do not think about regretting their exaggerated/made up complaint are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (regret afterwards)	Rejected
H22	Customers who are financial greedy are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour (financial greed)	Rejected
H23	Female customers are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than male customers (gender)	Rejected
H24	Younger customers are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour than older customers (age)	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 (education)	Rejected

5.2. Theoretical contribution

5.2.1. Supported hypotheses

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). Findings of this research contribute to the theoretical understanding of the drivers of illegitimate complaining.

It was found 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). In task-based cases customers 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 the hypothesis that followed from this theory.

Moreover the results show that customers who believe exaggerating or making up a complaint are the only ways to get something done are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. This can be explained by the neutralization technique, defence of necessity. A person could use the defence of necessity technique when that person felt like he or she had no other choice than to conduct the misbehaviour. The customer may feel that it is necessary to illegitimately complain. This is in line with the theory of Minor (1981). The findings of this study are in line with the hypothesis that followed from this theory.

The results show that customers, who believe they are normally honest, are more likely to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. This can also be explained by the neutralization technique, metaphor of the ledger. Stating that you are normally an honest customer compensates the misbehaviour. This is also in line with the theory of Minor (1981).

It was hypothesized that customers who experience a magnifying effect on prior experience will more likely engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour. However, this effect was not found in this study, which is not in line with the theory. Instead of a positive significant effect, this research found a negative significant effect. Several reasons for this contradicting result can be given. First of all a theoretical 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. The question asked in the survey was: *'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 magnifying effect could not be measured. It is possible that due to the wrongly formulated question, a buffering effect is found. This means that prior experience with the firm could have been a buffer against illegitimate complaints despite the fact that they were mad about the service failure (Tax et al., 1998). The feeling of being a regular customer transcended the feelings of anger and led to less exaggerated and made up complaints.

Moreover, the negative effect of magnifying in this study could also be the result of the research design and associated limitations, which will be discussed in the limitations paragraph. This second scenario is more likely, given the fact that the results show that a positive effect for regular customer is found. This means that customers who perceive themselves as regular customers of the firm engage more in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Instead of the actual question about the magnifying effect, this question (I perceive myself as a regular customer of this firm) better explains the magnifying effect. It can be expected that a regular customer had positive prior experiences with the firm, otherwise the customer would not return to the firm on a regular basis. Thereby previous positive experience can magnify expectations and promote illegitimate complaints (Kelly & Davis, 1994). This way the hypothesised effect of magnifying can probably be explained due to the effect found for regular customer. However, due to the opposing results, it must be taken into account that both the buffering and magnifying effect are possibly measured wrong in this study. Thus, it cannot be said with certainty whether a magnifying or buffering effect has been found.

5.2.2. Rejected hypotheses

Next to the significant effects, several hypotheses are not supported. This can have several reasons. First of all it is possible that the hypothesized effect simply does not exist. In this research this is not very surprising due to the fact that the research has an exploratory nature. There is no previous research that investigates all these possible drivers at once. Therefore this is the first research that includes all variables in order to measure which drivers matters the most. Thus, it makes sense that there are rejected hypotheses as well. Thereby the lack of significant effects in this study could also be the result of the research design and associated limitations, which will be discussed in the limitation paragraph.

5.2.3 Additional finding

Furthermore, even though not hypothesized, this study found another important difference between the drivers of different product categories. For the category electronics different drivers are found compared to the rest of the dataset. A lot of electronics nowadays is very important in our daily life. A mobile phone is rapidly becoming the central communication device in people's lives (Lane et al., 2010). Therefore, it is not surprising that one third of the complaints were about this category. This is in line with the theory of Estelami (2000) and Goodwin and Ross (1989) that states that electronics is one of the categories that provide the most complaints.

According to the dataset, a lot of respondents in this category complaint illegitimate at their insurance company to make money for their broken electronica. This can be an explanation for the positive effect of liberal redress policies found in this research. According to Harris and Reynolds (2003) customers are more likely to complain opportunistically when the benefits, such as financial compensation, outweigh the costs. This is often the case for insurance companies where customers want to receive a financial benefit out of their complaint in order to replace their broken electronica. Therefore, it is not surprising that financial greed is positive significant. This indicates that customers often want money from their insurance company to fix or replace their broken electronic device. Moreover, disappointment is also found to be significant which is not surprising as well for this category. For instance, a mobile phone is of high importance and is high on emotional value, customers will be more disappointed when something is wrong with it. Finally, task based conflict framing style is found to be significant which was also found in the overall model and explained in the beginning of this paragraph. In comparison to the category others, the only driver for this part of the dataset is regular customer. This effect is also already explained earlier in this paragraph.

5.3. Managerial contribution

For (service-) managers focussing on delivering excellent service to customers, the results of this study have several important implications. In today's business world firms welcome and sometimes pro-actively encourage customer complaints (Prim & Pras, 1998). There are a lot of firms that give their customers huge compensations, regardless of the validity of the complaint (Baker et al., 2012). This is also done since keeping a current customer is easier and less expensive than attracting a new one. It is therefore not very surprising that these liberal redress policies are an extremely important aspect in the strategy of firms to retain

current customers. It is possible that by actively encouraging customers to let themselves heard when they are dissatisfied, the firm encourages customers to complain. One of the hypothesized drivers of illegitimate complaining, which is a characteristics of the firm itself, is liberal redress policies. This means that a firm can influence the power of this driver. As a result of this study it seems 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 whether it increases illegitimate complaining behaviour.

Opposite, some other drivers are mostly part of characteristics and perceptions of the customer. Examples are the feeling of disappointment, the attitude towards complaining and the object value. This means that a firm has less impact on these drivers. However, luckily it seems that these drivers have no impact on increasing illegitimate complaining behaviour in this study. Therefore, it is no need for firms to worry about these drivers.

An important implication for managers to consider is the power of a regular customer. It seems those customers who consider themselves as a regular customer increase the effect of illegitimate complaining behaviour. Therefore, it is important to handle the most often returning 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). So, managers need to make sure that they live up to these high expectations. Firms should compensate the complaints and attempt to recover the service failures. They should try to keep the customer satisfied and minimize the damage in the relationship (Kau & Loh, 2006).

Moreover, many customers adopt a task-based conflict framing style. This means these customers are solution-focused and therefore open to reason with viable arguments. These customers just want to get the best recovery possible. These customers 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.

Lastly, the use of two neutralization techniques seems to explain why people misbehave. These techniques are called defence of necessity and metaphor of the ledger. The defence of necessity technique means that individuals feel like they do not have another choice than to conduct the misbehaviour. They see this misbehaviour as the only thing considered necessary (Minor, 1981). The neutralization technique metaphor of the ledger means that individuals rationalize an illegitimate complaint by thinking that they usually

never complain. They think that therefore one exaggerated or made up complaint is allowed (Minor, 1981). As a manager it is of great importance to minimize these feelings. A possible strategy to minimize these feelings is to train front-line employees in the identification and management of these neutralization techniques used by the customers. Furthermore, 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.

5.4. Limitations and further research

As mentioned before, a big limitation is the design of the survey that is distributed for this research. 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. Therefore, some results can be biased since it is reasonable that the respondents for which this applies filled in a very low score on the question because they actually wanted to fill in that the question did not apply to their situation at all. Therefore it is possible that some effects turned out to be negative on illegitimate complaining behaviour. This is probably the case with several significant negative drivers in the additional analysis of the electronics category. Moreover, this could be the case with the significant negative effect of magnifying in the overall model. This limitation in the research design might also have caused the lack of significant effects in this study.

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 sizes were relatively small with only eight respondents per driver. Although according to Hair et al. (2014) five respondents were required per variable, fifteen to twenty respondents are more desirable. This could have influenced the results of this research.

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 and refused to admit that a certain driver did play part in their exaggerated or made up complaint. This fact was expected at forehand, an attempt was made to reduce this bias. First of all, at the beginning of the survey two personal examples of the researchers were shown. Secondly, it was stated that there were no wrong answers and results were completely anonymous. The fact that 522 respondents did open the questionnaire but never answered the

first question may also indicate that social desirability played a part. 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 can 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. This is the opposite of what the respondents were asked to do in this survey where they had to answer closed questions about whether a specific driver played a part in their illegitimate complaint.

Moreover, this research has focussed on conscious illegitimate complaining behaviour. Since respondents had to come up with an exaggerated and made up complaints at forehand, they had to be aware of their behaviour. As with a lot of behaviour many things happen unconsciously. This is another reason why for further research in-depth interviews are recommended. By the use of in-depth interviews the unconscious part of the brain can become obsolete and possible drivers can be found.

In contrast to the hypothesis formulated in Chapter 2, the difference between complaints about products and services is not measured. This is due to the fact that there was no closed question included in the survey about this separation. Making this separation afterwards was unfortunately impossible. Since the service industry is known for its willingness to keep customers happy and satisfied it could be of interest to include and test this effect in a future research (Huang & Miao, 2016).

Since this research contains more than twenty independent variables it was impossible to test all potential moderating effects. Especially since there were no clear moderators expected beforehand. Therefore, in this research only the moderating effects of the significant drivers were measured. This can be taken into account in future research.

An overall direction for further research is to achieve a more parsimonious model, whereas less possible drivers of illegitimate complaining explain as much variance as possible. 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 measure what really matters the most.

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Appendix

Appendix I Questionnaire

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



START ENQUÊTE

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.'

1. Na het lezen van de geschetste situaties, kunt u zelf een situatie herinneren waarin u onterecht een klacht heeft ingediend?

- Ja
- Nee

Indien nee, dan wordt de respondent doorverwezen naar de 'bedankpagina'.

2. Wanneer speelde de klacht?

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

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

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

5. 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)

6. Wat was uw klacht?

7. Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 in hoeverre heeft u de klacht overdreven (dus erger voorgesteld dan het daadwerkelijk is)?

Helemaal niet overdreven 0 0 0 0 0 Geheel overdriven

8. In hoeverre heeft u het probleem verzonnen (anders voorgesteld dan het daadwerkelijk was)

Helemaal niet verzonnen 0 0 0 0 0 Geheel verzonnen

9. Wat stelde u voor als oplossing voor de klacht

10. In hoeverre heeft u de oplossing overdreven (dus meer gevraagd/geëist dan u zelf redelijk vond)?

Helemaal niet overdreven 0 0 0 0 0 Geheel overdreven

11. Wat stelde het bedrijf voor als oplossing?

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

In hoeverre speelden de volgende overwegingen een rol bij uw beslissing om uw klacht te overdrijven/te verzinnen?

12. 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

13. Ik heb het gevoel dat de medewerker geen belangstelling toonde en niet eerlijk was tijdens het proces.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

14. 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

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

16. Het bedrijf probeerde misbruik te maken van mij.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

17. Het bedrijf had verkeerde bedoelingen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

18. Ik voelde mij machteloos tegenover het bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

20. Het bedrijf besteedde niet veel tijd aan het rekening houden van mijn behoeften.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

24. 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

25. 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

26. 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

27. 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

28. 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

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

30. Ik wilde overlast veroorzaken bij het bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

31. Ik wilde het bedrijf het betaald zetten.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

32. Ik klaagde op deze manier, omdat ik boosheid voelde.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

33. Ik klaagde op deze manier, omdat ik teleurstelling voelde.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

34. Ik heb geprofiteerd van het ruimhartige klachtenbeleid van het bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

36. De ruime garantieregeling van het bedrijf verleide mij om overdreven/verzonnen te klagen

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

37. Ik heb overdreven/verzonnen geklaagd omdat de mogelijkheid zich voordeed daar voordeel uit te halen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

38. Ik heb de klacht verzonnen/overdreven om geld te verdienen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

39. Ik heb de klacht verzonnen/overdreven om iets te krijgen voor niks.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

40. Ik heb geld verdiend door de klacht te verzinnen/overdrijven.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

41. 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

42. 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

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

44. 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

45. Ik ben iemand die niet snel klaagt.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

46. Ik vind dat veel mensen te snel klagen.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

47. 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

48. 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

49. Ik heb de klacht overdreven/verzonnen omdat 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

50. Ik denk dat het bedrijf geen grote schade ondervindt van mijn overdreven/verzonden klacht.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

51. 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

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

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

53. 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

54. Ik heb er later wel spijt van gehad dat ik mijn klacht heb overdreven/verzonden.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

55. Ik beschouw mezelf als “vaste klant” van dit bedrijf.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

56. 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

57. 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

58. Mijn eerdere ervaringen met het bedrijf zijn positief.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

59. Het afhandelen van de situatie ging langzaam.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

60. Het product/de dienst was erg duur.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

61. Het product/de dienst was het geld waard.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

62. Het betrokken bedrijf was groot.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

63. Het betrokken bedrijf had veel werknemers.

Helemaal mee oneens 0 0 0 0 0 Helemaal mee eens

62. Hoe lang heeft het klachtenproces geduurd?

63. Heeft u al vaker een klacht overdreven/verzonnen?

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

64. Wat is uw leeftijd in jaren?

65. Wat is uw geslacht?

- Man
- Vrouw

66. 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 Construct and survey items

Construct	Survey item
Illegitimate complaining	To what extent have you exaggerated your complaint? To what extent have you made up the complaint?
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. 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	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	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	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	I am not someone who complains quickly. I think a lot of people complain too quickly.
Perception of injustice	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		
	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		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		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		The company was primarily motivated by its own interests.
		The firm did intend to take advantage of me.

External attribution		The firm had wrong intentions. 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		
	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?

Appendix III Factor loadings

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
Peception 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		
	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
