

**Illegitimate complaining: the consequence of customers  
who 'want' to, 'can', or 'must' complain**

*A research study on the different categories of illegitimate complainers, the excuses these complainers use to justify their behavior, and the effects on the relationship with the organization in question.*

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## Preface

Is this train late again? Why has my package not arrived yet? Why does the screen of my mobile phone always break so easily? Complaining: whether justified or not, we all do it, and it is part of our daily lives. The master thesis that is in front of you, is about illegitimate complaining. I would like to introduce this topic with an example of my own.

Recently, I bought a new blouse online. Much to my regret, the blouse was wrinkled due to the shipment. I, therefore, tried to iron it on a high temperature, but it immediately melted, and got stuck to the iron. However, the instructions for washing indicated that it was possible to iron the blouse, provided that it was on a low temperature. I contacted the firm in question, and claimed that I only ironed the blouse on a low temperature, but that the fabric melted anyhow. The organization gave me the benefit of the doubt, and sent me a new blouse. I found myself guilty of engaging in illegitimate complaining behaviour. Even though this behaviour is inexcusable, it is interesting to see that many people can relate to such a situation. In this research, it becomes clear that a lot of people complain illegitimately, and many of them were willing to admit this unjust behaviour. Illegitimate complaining: it is a delicate, but interesting topic, on which research is scant.

Therefore, I proudly present my thesis: *“Illegitimate complaining: the consequence of customers who ‘want’ to, ‘can’, or ‘must’ complain”*. This thesis was written as part of the Business Administration Master program at the Radboud University, specialized for the department of Marketing.

My interest for this topic was raised by my supervisor Dr. H. Joosten, who guided me through the process of conducting research, analysing data, and writing a thesis. He helped me develop a higher level of academic thinking and writing. I would like to thank him for his expertise, time, and supervision. Besides, I would like to thank Stijn van Pinxteren, Koos Rouwhorst, and Laura Zendijk; the three other students that also investigated illegitimate complaining behaviour. I took great satisfaction from our collaboration in collecting and analysing the data. Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my family and friends for their support, and all the respondents that were willing to be honest. They helped me to finish this research successfully.

I hope you enjoy reading this master thesis,

Suzanne van Vliet (Dongen, June 14, 2019)

## Abstract

“*The customer is always right*” is a slogan that many firms unrealistically rely on. Illegitimate complaints are a common, and, oftentimes, problematic phenomenon for organizations with service recovery policies in place. However, some illegitimate complainers can, in fact, be beneficial for the firm in terms of long-term profitability: the ‘can’ complainers.

While research on illegitimate complaining behaviour is scant due to the sensitive nature of this topic, some studies did examine the subject more thoroughly. It was suggested that certain categories of illegitimate complainers exist. The purpose of this, in the first place confirmatory study, was to validate these different types of complainers. Furthermore, this research aimed to examine to what extent these complainers use different neutralization techniques to justify their behaviour, and to what extent the relationship with the organization in question would change as a consequence of an illegitimate complaint.

An online survey has been conducted, and 502 illegitimate complainants have been analysed. By means of a hierarchical cluster analysis, it was found that people complain illegitimately because they ‘want’ to (as part of a predetermined plan), ‘can’ (due to opportunism), or ‘must’ (as a final cry for help). Besides, a One-Way MANOVA, showed that these different complainers use certain neutralization techniques more often than others, and that ‘want’ to and ‘must’ complainers experience a deteriorated relationship with the firm in question after their complaint. ‘Can’ complainers, however, experience an improved relationship with the firm in terms of a higher level of satisfaction, trust, commitment, word-of-mouth, and repurchase intention.

Businesses that still go by the “*customer is always right*” standard are advised to reconsider this philosophy: the customer is not always right. Managers can benefit a lot from the knowledge of studies regarding this subject. Besides, future research is recommended to replicate this study, to validate and extend the findings of this research, to, ultimately, broaden the knowledge on illegitimate complaining.

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# 1. Introduction

Customer complaints are rising sharply in today's internet-driven world (Ma, Sun & Kekre, 2015). The customer is, nowadays, more demanding (Power, 1991), more savvy (Keller, Apéria & Georgson, 2008), better cognizant, and more assertive in the emergence of service problems (Hoffman, Kelley & Rotalsky, 1995). Besides, the rapid growth of consumer societies that represent consumer rights makes customers more aware: they want more in terms of (service) quality (Lewis & Spyrapopoulos, 2001). Customers are, therefore, more likely to complain when service failures occur.

A classic complaint is a report of failure of a product or service (Galitsky, González & Chesñevar, 2009), in which the expectations of customers, in contrast to the actual performance, are not being met, or exceeded (Hess, Ganesan & Klein, 2003). This can lead to perceived feelings of dissatisfaction of the customer (Prim & Pras, 1999), causing negative word-of-mouth, redress seeking behaviour (e.g. requesting for a refund or repair), and exits (Blodgett, Granbois & Walters, 1993). This can impact the firm's profitability in a negative way (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004).

Service organizations that are willing to correct mistakes, and take customer concerns seriously, may be able to distinguish themselves successfully from competition by implementing effective service recoveries (Kelley & Davis, 1994). *Service recovery* refers to the actions and activities that the service provider performs in response to service failures (Grönroos, 1998), to effectively solve customer problems and manage customer relationships (Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998). Firms can use and learn from service failures to, eventually, (re)establish the reliability of the organization from a customers' viewpoint (Hart, Heskett & Sasser, 1990). Hampton Inn Hotels, for example, realized an additional \$11 million because of their successful service recovery strategy (Tax & Brown, 1998). Therefore, service recovery (also called 'complaint handling') is considered an important part of the quality management program for organizations (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005).

Service recovery can be used as a means to enhance the retention of customers faced with a service problem (Hart et al., 1990), as it costs five times more to replace a customer with a new one, than to actually retain a customer (Desatnick, 1988). Besides, satisfied customers, as opposed to dissatisfied customers, are often associated with loyalty and goodwill, and have a higher repurchase intention (Blodgett et al., 1993).

Therefore, many companies have adopted the following slogan: "*The customer is always right*" (Huang, Zhao, Miao & Fu, 2014, p. 544). Organizations that integrate this motto

into practice, spend a lot of time and money in the service recovery process, trying to satisfy customers after a service failure (Joosten, unpublished). However, some researchers have shown that customers may not always be right, and may complain without a cause (e.g. Reynolds & Harris, 2005). The question arises whether service providers should welcome all customer complaints, or if businesses are better off abandoning this slogan.

Most service recovery research has studied customer complaints that were motivated by dissatisfaction due to honest, and genuine failures. It was assumed that customers do not complain without any cause (Day, 1980; Day, Grabicke, Schaetzle, & Staubach, 1981; Prim & Pras, 1999; Singh, 1988). However, only a small number of studies have acknowledged that some customers do complain without having experienced any service failure (Reynolds & Harris, 2005; Daunt & Harris, 2012; Berry & Seiders, 2008). Customers may also make up their claims, or exaggerate them (Ro & Wong, 2012). This behaviour can be called *illegitimate* (unreal), or *opportunistic* (when complainers take advantage of the service failure to gain something from it (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010)). Both can have severe consequences for organizations in terms of resources, time, and energy invested (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Joosten, unpublished).

Interestingly, limited research on illegitimate complaining is available, as it is considered a sensitive issue. This behaviour can be seen as illegal and unethical. Besides, illegitimate or opportunistic complaining behaviour has largely been ignored by academic literature, as it is almost impossible to find clear empirical evidence for these actions of customers (Ro & Wong, 2012). To sum, investigating this topic is difficult, and measuring this form of dysfunctional customer behaviour is prone to biases (Fisk et al., 2010).

However, some researchers have tried to investigate this topic more thoroughly. Baker, Magnini, and Perdue (2012), for example, suggested some possible drivers of opportunistic complaining behaviour. Unfortunately, these were not empirically tested. Besides, Daunt and Harris (2012) examined the motives of customers to engage in dysfunctional customer behaviour, but the results were based on self-reports, in a limited context, only. Finally, Reynolds and Harris (2005) found that there were different complainants, and different motives for illegitimate complaining behaviour. This study was qualitative in nature.

Joosten (unpublished), as a consequence, was the first to investigate illegitimate complaining behaviour in a large-scale, empirical, and quantitative setting. In this research, the prevalence, types, timing, and drivers of illegitimate complaints were examined in 325 case files of the “Dutch Foundation for Disputes Committees”. The results of this first explorative research showed that more than two-third of all the filed complaints were illegitimate.

Therefore, this study indicated that illegitimate complaints are a common, and problematic phenomenon (as the average case value was 6400 euros).

Hereafter, an explanatory study was done by Joosten (unpublished) to investigate the drivers for illegitimate complaining behaviour. In this study, it was found that there are certain drivers for this behaviour, that could be grouped (on the basis of resemblance) into three categories: 1) the complaint has been a predetermined plan, 2) the complaint was due to opportunism, and 3) the complaint was a final cry for help. These categories may be summarized by (1) 'want' to, (2) 'can', and (3) 'must' complain. However, the data of this study did not provide strong conclusions for these different categories.

The current study, therefore, aims to validate these categories by means of a confirmatory study. Furthermore, this research wants to examine rationalizing behaviour of customers in justifying their claims, since people may be inclined to condone their behaviour when confronted with their own deviant actions. The Neutralization Theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) explains that people can use a series of justifications to neutralize their unethical behaviour (e.g. passing the blame to others than themselves). Customers who have a predetermined plan to complain illegitimately ('want') might use other excuses than customers who complain illegitimately since they see no other way out ('must'). To the best of the researchers' knowledge, these different categories of complainers, and the excuses belonging to these categories, have not been fully examined yet.

Finally, the current research wants to examine the effect of the different categories of illegitimate complainers on the relationship with the organization (e.g. loyalty). People who complained illegitimately since they see no other way out ('must'), might never even want to return to the organization in the future, due to anger or disappointment. The results of this research might, therefore, be interesting for firms who rely on "*the customer is always right*" policies: in most cases, it is not profitable to retain every customer (Woo & Fock, 2004).

To sum, the purpose of this current research is to build further upon the exploratory and explanatory research of Joosten (unpublished), and to contribute to the gap in the literature on illegitimate claims regarding the different categories of illegitimate complainants, the excuses they use to justify their behaviour, and the effects on the relationship with the organization. More specifically, this study proposes the following research question: *To what extent do people who 'want' to, 'can', or 'must' complain illegitimately use different excuses to justify their behaviour, and to what extent do people in these different categories experience different effects on their relationship with the firm?* Consequently, the following sub questions are set:

1. What are the different categories of illegitimate complainers?

2. What excuses do people in the different categories of complainers use to justify their illegitimate complaining behaviour?
3. How do the different categories of complainers influence the experience of a changed relationship with the firm?

As mentioned before, academic literature has largely ignored illegitimate complaining behaviour, due to the sensitive nature of this topic (Ro & Wong, 2012). The research that has been done up until now, only was exploratory, or explanatory in nature (Joosten, unpublished). This research wants to contribute to the existing literature on (why people engage in) illegitimate complaining behaviour by means of a confirmatory study, highlighting the theoretical relevance. Furthermore, it wants to examine the effect of illegitimate complaining behaviour on the use of neutralization techniques, and the relationship with the firm, as these extensions have not been fully examined in this context yet.

This research is, besides theoretically relevant, also practically relevant, as many organizations have adopted the slogan: “*The customer is always right*”. They spend a lot of time and money in service recovery processes, trying to satisfy customers after a service failure (Joosten, unpublished). However, illegitimate complaints are a common and, thus, problematic phenomenon (Joosten, unpublished). This is called the ‘Dirty Little Secret of Marketing’ (Berry & Seiders, 2008); many marketers know about it, but it is hardly discussed in public. The philosophy of “*the customer is always right*” might, therefore, be reconsidered. “*Let the seller beware*” seems to be a more applicable motto and marketing challenge nowadays (Woo & Fock, 2004). A better understanding of the reasons why customers engage in illegitimate complaining and knowing how, as an organization, to deal with these customers is of utmost importance. It will help managers in their service recovery process, and in identifying the people who are unjust in their complaints. This research will help in coping with illegitimate complaining as an organization.

The remainder of this thesis will delve further into the topic of illegitimate complaining. In chapter two, the theoretical background of illegitimate complaints will be discussed, and hypotheses are established that will be tested in this study. In chapter three, the methodology will be discussed, and in chapter four, the analysis, and the results will be presented. This thesis will finalize with a conclusion and a discussion, in which managerial implications, limitations, and future research directions will be given.

## 2. Theoretical background

This chapter discusses the definitions of illegitimate complaints, the types of illegitimate complainers, the drivers and categories of illegitimate complaints, the justifying behaviours of illegitimate complaints, and, finally, illegitimate complaints and relationship variables. In this chapter, hypotheses will be proposed that are to be tested in this study.

### 2.1 Illegitimate complaints

Most studies define Customer Complaining Behaviour (CCB) as the consequence of dissatisfaction (Reynolds & Harris, 2005; Day, 1980; Day, Grabicke, Schaetzle, & Staubach, 1981; Prim & Pras, 1999; Singh, 1988). However, Kowalski (1996) notes that it is about the perceived dissatisfaction, and defines complaining as “*an expression of dissatisfaction, whether subjectively experienced or not, for the purpose of venting emotions, or achieving intra physic goals, or both*” (p. 180). Building further upon this, existing literature demonstrates there are multiple labels to describe the complaints of customers that may not always be right. Certain ‘unjust’ complaints can be categorized into three different labels; 1) ‘wrong’ motives of people, 2) ‘not normal’ behaviour, and 3) ‘problematic’ behaviour.

The first category that the literature refers to, discusses customer complaints that are driven by the ‘wrong’ motives. Researchers state that these complaints are not only unfounded and unjust, but they are also dishonest: the customer is consciously fabricating, or exaggerating complaints, primarily motivated by personal gain. Examples of labels within this category are as follows: opportunistic complaints (Reynolds & Harris, 2005), faked complaints (Day, Grabicke, Schaetzle, & Staubach, 1981), and unfair customers (Berry & Seiders, 2008). Important to note is that these labels should only be used when the wrong intentions are proved, or admitted (not when the customer sincerely believes that his or her complaint is true).

A second category in the existing literature addresses ‘not normal’ behaviour of customers, referring to deviant (Harris & Daunt, 2011), or aberrant customer behaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 1993). Lovelock (in Harris & Reynolds, 2004) refers to ‘jaycustomers’, to label customers who ‘misbehave’ in a similar way such as jaywalkers who cross the streets in unauthorized places. The label ‘not normal’ behaviour, therefore, suggests (un)intentional abnormal behaviours of customers due to, for example, the thrill, boredom, or resentment.

Finally, the third category that is distinguished is ‘problematic’ behaviour. This behaviour is also called ‘dysfunctional’ customer behaviour, in which customers “*intentionally or unintentionally, overtly or covertly, act in a manner that, in some way, disrupts otherwise*

*functional service encounters*” (Harris & Reynolds, 2003, p. 145). Exaggerated complaints can be dysfunctional for the organization in terms of energy, costs and time spent.

Since these three categories are not exhaustive, and do not completely exclude each other, the term ‘illegitimate complaints’ is preferred above all the others described above. According to Joosten (unpublished), 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*”. This definition takes a more holistic and neutral position in describing the ‘unjust’ complaints of customers. Taking into account the definitions of Kowalski (1996) (as mentioned before), and Ro & Wong (2012) in which the customer can also be “*exaggerating, altering or lying about the fact*” (p. 420), the definition of illegitimate customer complaints of the current study is as follows: *A complaint for which there is insufficient basis in the quality of the product or service, in which the customer exaggerates, alters or lies about a situation, due to perceived feelings of dissatisfaction about that situation.*

## **2.2 Types of illegitimate complainers**

There seem to be different types of illegitimate complainers. Huang & Miao (2016), for example, examined illegitimate customer complaining behaviour (ICCB) within hospitality business settings. They found that there are three types of illegitimate complainants, “*opportunistic plotters, repetitive grumblers, and occasional tyrants*” (p. 655). Opportunistic plotters are complainants who want to take advantage of the company that has a service recovery policy in place. These customers mostly complain to gain something from the organization (e.g. free meals). Repetitive grumblers are customers who always try to gain something from the company, seeking for monetary rewards. They are especially inclined to repeat that behaviour when it has led to a successful compensation. Finally, occasional tyrants are complainers who, sporadically, complain without a reason. However, these results of this study were not empirically tested. Nevertheless, it gives a first indication of the different complainants that exist in the literature. Recently, Joosten (unpublished) suggested that there are, indeed, different types of complainers. This will be discussed at the end of paragraph 2.3, as these results are the starting points for the hypotheses of the current research.

## **2.3 Drivers and categories of illegitimate complaints**

Research on why people engage in complaining behaviour as such has been abundant. Amongst the performance theories, one of the most common applied theories to explain complaining

behaviour is the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory, that posits that people perceive the service quality to be poor when the experience is worse than expected, which will result in dissatisfaction, and complaining behaviour (e.g. Anderson, 1973). Criticism on this theory led to the portrayal of expectations as a zone, rather than individual points on a scale: The Zone of Tolerance (Berry & Parasuraman, 2004), in which the customer will accept deviances of expectations to a certain extent before actually engaging in complaining behaviour. Furthermore, the Prospect Theory posits that customers can perceive the losses to be larger than the gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), which can lead to complaining behaviour. Besides, certain fairness theories have also been developed, such as the Equity Theory, that assumes that a customer is likely to restore equity (engage in complaining behaviour) when their contributions (e.g. money), and the rewards (e.g. service experience) are not balanced (Adams, 1965). Finally, according to the Commitment Theory of Morgan and Hunt (1994), a customer can also engage in complaining behaviour as a result of commitment to a relationship with the firm, not necessarily as a result of an unfavourable service experience.

In contrast to the rich literature on complaining behaviour, research on why people engage in illegitimate complaining is scant (Joosten, unpublished). Baker, Magnini, and Perdue (2012) did suggest some possible drivers of opportunistic complaining behaviour. According to these researchers, there are customer-centric, firm-centric, and relationship-centric determinants of opportunistic complaining. Examples of customer-centric drivers are financial greed, the propensity of an individual to voice a (valid) complaint, particular personality traits such as assertiveness, and the attitude towards complaining. Firm-centric determinants of opportunistic behaviour are more about whether or not the firm has liberal redress practices (where complaining customers are given the benefit of a doubt, and will be compensated as a consequence) in place, or the size of the firm. Finally, relationship-centric determinants also seem to matter, in which perceptions of justice play an important role (Theory of Justice). Baker et al. (2012), for example, distinguished three types of justices that were important in the relationship between the customer and the firm; 1) distributive justice; referring to the perceived fairness of the outcome, 2) interactional justice; referring to the (appropriate) manner of treatment of the individual during the process, and 3) procedural justice; referring to the perceived fairness of the whole process. However, these three different categories of drivers were not empirically tested.

Besides Baker et al. (2012), Daunt & Harris (2012) also investigated the drivers of dysfunctional customer behaviour. The results of their data revealed three clusters: financial egoists (misbehaviour due to both financial and egotistical reasons), money grabbers

(misbehaviour mostly driven by financial motives), and ego revengers (misbehaviour due to reasons of ego and revenge). However, these results are all based on self-reports, and in a limited organizational context only.

Finally, Reynolds & Harris (2005) did an exploratory and qualitative research on the drivers of illegitimate customer complaining. They found six typologies for articulating fraudulent complaints: 1) “*freeloaders*” (p. 327) (customers motivated solely by monetary gain), 2) “*fraudulent returners*” (p. 328) (customers who intentionally create product failures), 3) “*fault transferors*” (p. 328) (customers who blame the organization instead of themselves to avoid responsibility), 4) “*solitary ego gains*” (p. 329) (customers who want to boost their own ego), 5) “*peer-induced esteem seekers*” (p. 329) (customers who feel that there is an ‘audience’ listening), and 6) “*disruptive gains*” (p. 330) (customers who only want to cause disruption with their illegitimate complaint).

Since the above-mentioned studies are all rather suggestive, based on limited data, or qualitative in nature, Joosten (unpublished) recently examined illegitimate complaining behaviour more thoroughly. In this study, the prevalence, types, timing, and drivers of illegitimate complaints were investigated in a multiple-case study, in cooperation with the ‘Dutch Foundation for Disputes Committees’. This is an independent organization that offers complainants (consumers and businesses) alternative dispute schemes to help resolve their dispute out of court. In this research, 325 case files with complaints about home furnishing were examined, and were held against a report of an industry expert that judged whether or not the complaint was justified, unjustified, or partly justified. The results of this explorative research indicated that 226 files contained 950 complaints concerning home furnishing (both products and services), most of them about the quality of the product or service (806 complaints), which were called *primary complaints*. There were also *secondary complaints* (144 complaints), which were about other issues than the quality of the product or service, like the service recovery process, demands for compensation, or the additional costs. Interestingly, around two-third (64%) of all the primary complaints were illegitimate. This research indicated that illegitimate complaints are a common and problematic phenomenon, as the average case value was 6400 euros. The prevalence of the secondary complaints appeared not to be related to illegitimate complaining. However, if the secondary complaint was added later, the primary complaint was most likely illegitimate.

Besides the number of illegitimate complaints, the types of these primary illegitimate complaints were examined. Three categories were found to be important: neutral complaints (in which the consumer neutrally stated that something was wrong with the product or service,

while in reality it was not), qualitative exaggerated complaints (in which the customer over-coloured the perceived performance of the service provider by using inflated words to express him- or herself), and quantitative exaggerated complaints (in which the customer over-coloured the perceived performance of the service provider by using exaggerated numbers and quantities to express him- or herself). It appeared that most illegitimate complaints were the result of a lack of knowledge, or the wrong expectations. Besides, it was found that illegitimate complaining was, in most cases, not planned. Furthermore, some drivers were found that seemed to be important for illegitimate complaining behaviour (as some drivers were more present in illegitimate cases than in legitimate ones).

Consequently, an explanatory study was done by Joosten (unpublished) to investigate and confirm these drivers further. In this study it was, indeed, found that most of the drivers of the exploratory study of Joosten (unpublished), and certain other drivers, were important for illegitimate complaining behaviour. These drivers could be grouped (on the basis of resemblance by a cluster analysis) into three categories once more: the complaint was a predetermined plan (even though, in the previous study, few people planned to complain illegitimately upfront), the complaint was due to opportunism, or the complaint was a final cry for help. The drivers of Joosten (unpublished), belonging to each category, will be explained by an English definition next (the questions were, however, asked in Dutch in the study of Joosten (unpublished)). Hereafter, typologies for these categories will be given, that still need to be validated in the current confirmatory study. Therefore, hypotheses are set up that will be tested in this research.

### **2.3.1 A predetermined plan: 'want'**

In the first category, the illegitimate complaint has been a predetermined plan. This category can be explained by the following variables: distributive injustice, procedural injustice, interactional injustice, and lack of morality.

*Distributive injustice* – Distributive injustice was defined as follows: “The company’s proposal to resolve the complaint was unfair to me”.

*Procedural injustice* – Procedural injustice was operationalized as follows: “The way the company treated me during the complaint was rude”.

*Interactional injustice* – Interactional injustice was defined as: “The company’s complaint procedure was slow and difficult”.

*Lack of morality* – Lack of morality was defined as: “The company had the wrong intentions”.

The category ‘a predetermined plan’ seems to be summarized as follows: the person in question was unfair in his/her complaint, and did it on purpose, as a consequence of anger with the firm. The procedure, the outcome, and the way the individual was treated was disappointing. Besides, the individual perceived the company as unfair. The typology ‘want’ to complain illegitimately best captures this category. Consequently, the following hypotheses are set:

*H1: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category are driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, and (d) lack of morality.*

*H2: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category are not driven by (a) internal attribution, (b) liberal redress policy, (c) halo-effect, (d) loss of control, and (e) contrast effect.*

### **2.3.2 Opportunism: ‘can’**

In the second category, the complaint was illegitimate due to opportunism. This category can be explained by the variables attribution to self, liberal redress policy, and halo-effect.

*Internal attribution* – Internal attribution was defined as: “The cause of the problem was my own fault”.

*Liberal redress policy* – Liberal redress policy was operationalized as follows: “The company has a good liberal redress policy, and I made use of it”.

*Halo-effect* – Halo-effect is defined as: “After I discovered a defect in the product/service, I discovered even more defects”.

The category ‘opportunism’ seems to be summarized as follows: the person in question complained illegitimately on purpose. He/she took advantage of the liberal redress policy. He/she also complained illegitimately since it was so easy to do it, and more defects were to be seen. The typology ‘can’ complain illegitimately best captures this category. Consequently, the following hypotheses are set:

*H3: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ category are driven by (a) internal attribution, (b) liberal redress policy, and (c) halo-effect.*

*H4: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ category are not driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, (d) lack of morality, (e) loss of control, and (f) contrast effect.*

### **2.3.3 A final cry for help: ‘must’**

Finally, in the third category, the complaint was a final cry for help. This category can be explained by two loss of control variables, and two contrast effect variables.

*Loss of control* – Loss of control was operationalized as follows: “The company no longer responded to my requests”, and “The company did not adhere to the agreements”.

*Contrast effect* – Contrast effect was defined as: “My expectations of the product/service were worse than expected”, and “My expectations of the product/service were high”.

The category ‘a final cry for help’ seems to be summarized as follows: the person in question experienced a difference between what he/she expected, and what he/she got. The firm also stopped responding to his/her requests. The individual was angry and/or disappointed, and could not do anything else than complain illegitimately. The typology ‘must’ complain illegitimately best captures this category. Consequently, the following hypotheses are set:

*H5: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category are driven by (a) loss of control, and (b) contrast effect.*

*H6: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category are not driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, (d) lack of morality, (e) internal attribution, (f) liberal redress policy, and (g) halo-effect.*

## **2.4 Justifying behaviours of illegitimate complaints**

Besides the validation of the aforementioned categories of complainers, this study aims to examine whether or not they relate to the use of certain neutralization techniques. According to the Neutralization Theory of Sykes & Matza (1957), people tend to, temporarily, neutralize certain values, and make use of neutralization techniques when committing illegitimate acts (whereas those norms would normally impede them to do it). In other words, people can justify their deviant behaviour (which they themselves perceive as wrong) such as illegitimate complaints, so that they would not feel guilty when performing that behaviour. This can also be linked to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1962). An individual may feel an unpleasant tension in the mind when performing something unethical such as illegitimate complaining, which can motivate that individual to justify his/her behaviour to eliminate that tension.

Sykes & Matza (1957) introduced the Neutralization Theory within juvenile delinquency, and showed that youngsters tend to ignore certain rules to be able to commit deviant behaviour. Different techniques are possible to use for an individual to convince him-

or herself that his or her actions are acceptable in a certain situation. There are five major techniques (Sykes & Matza, 1957), which will be discussed hereafter. Interestingly, these techniques may also be applicable to illegitimate complaining, as a lot of excuses seem to relate to the three categories of ‘want’ to complain, ‘can’ complain, and ‘must’ complain. Therefore, additional hypotheses are established, that will be tested in this study.

#### **2.4.1 Denial of responsibility**

The first neutralization technique is called *denial of responsibility*. Using this technique, the individual will state that he/she is a victim of the situation, and claims that it is not his/her fault. The individual was forced to do it. Linking this to illegitimate complaining behaviour, it can be expected that the complaint was not a predetermined plan, nor due to opportunism. It is more likely that the illegitimate complaint will be justified since he/she had no other option; the complaint being a final cry for help.

*H7: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category will score higher on denial of responsibility than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

#### **2.4.2. Denial of injury**

The second technique that can be used is *denial of injury*, in which the individual plays down the injury or harm when performing the deviant act. The individual insists that nobody has suffered from his/her act. In case of illegitimate complaints, it is likely that this complaint will be justified due to opportunism instead of having no other options or pre-planning the claim.

*H8: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ category will score higher on denial of injury than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

#### **2.4.3 Denial of the victim**

The third neutralization technique focuses on the *denial of the victim*. When an individual uses this technique, he/she can accept the responsibility for the deviant behaviour, but he/she is convinced that it is not wrong in light of the circumstances: “*The injury, it may be claimed, is not really an injury; rather, it is a form of rightful retaliation or punishment*” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). When applying this to illegitimate complaining behaviour, it can be expected that justifying an illegitimate complaint with this technique will probably be a predetermined plan. The responsibility is accepted and the individual feels like ‘punishing’ the service organization.

*H9: Illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category will score higher on denial of victim than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

#### **2.4.4 Condemnation of the condemners**

The fourth technique is the so-called *condemnation of the condemners*. Here, the individual focuses the attention on those who disapprove the violations of his/her acts, instead of centring its own deviant actions. The blame is shifted to others, and others will be judged, instead of oneself. When an individual justifies an illegitimate complaint with this technique, it will probably be due to opportunism, or a predetermined plan, rather than a final cry for help. The individual knows that his/her behaviour is wrong, but chooses not to stress this, since the opportunity arises to focus on another actor.

*H10: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'want' category will score higher on condemnation of the condemners than illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category.*

#### **2.4.5 Appeal to higher loyalties**

Finally, the fifth neutralization technique is called *appeal to higher loyalties*. Here, the individual is so caught up in the dilemma, that he/she sees him- or herself obliged to ignore norms and laws. The individual believes that the actions performed were for the greater good, and the long-term consequences would make up for the actions. This situation is somewhat comparable to the situation of the first technique, *denial of responsibility*, since the blame is attributed to external factors instead of themselves. It is, therefore, more likely that an illegitimate complaint will be justified since he/she was urged to do it; the complaint being a final cry for help.

*H11: Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category will score higher on appeal to higher loyalties than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

#### **2.4.6 Defence of necessity**

Next to the originally proposed neutralization techniques of Sykes and Matza (1957), other researchers have, subsequently, proposed additional techniques. The first one is *defence of necessity* (Minor, 1981), that posits that if an act that is perceived necessary by the individual, he/she would not feel guilty about the act, even if it is morally wrong. This situation is, again, somewhat comparable to *denial of responsibility*, and *appeal to higher loyalties*, as the

illegitimate complaint will most likely be justified by arguing that the individual had to do it (it was necessary), and he/she had no other choice.

*H12: Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category will score higher on defence of necessity than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

#### **2.4.7 Metaphor of the ledger**

The second extension of Minor (1981) is the *metaphor of the ledger*. This technique is used when an individual counterbalances all the good and bad behaviours that he/she performed. The surplus of good actions will, eventually, result in the affordance of doing some bad actions. Linking this to illegitimate complaining, it can be expected that justifying an illegitimate complaint with this technique will probably be the result of opportunism: the individual, normally, always follows the rules, and may, therefore, once take advantage of the situation.

*H13: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will score higher on metaphor of the ledger than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

#### **2.4.8 Claim of normalcy**

The third added neutralization technique is *claim of normalcy* (Coleman, 1994), that explains people justify their behaviour by reasoning that all people ever engage in such behaviour. This behaviour, therefore, cannot be wrong. In case of illegitimate complaining, it is most likely that an individual is opportunistic, or has a pre-determined plan when using this technique. It is somewhat comparable to *condemnation of the condemners*, in which the individual knows his behaviour is wrong, but focuses the attention on others instead of themselves.

*H14: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'want' category will score higher on claim of normalcy than illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category.*

#### **2.4.9 Claim of entitlement**

Coleman (1994) also introduced the fourth additional technique; *claim of entitlement*, in which people state that they have the right to engage in the deviant behaviour, and that they sometimes deserve to benefit from actions taken. Linking this to illegitimate complaining behaviour, it is more likely that an individual is opportunistic when using this technique as an excuse: the individual may believe that he/she deserves that windfall once in a while.

*H15: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will score higher on claim of entitlement than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

#### **2.4.10 Denial of negative intent**

The fifth extension is *denial of negative intent* (Henry, 1990). Using this technique, an individual diminishes his/her responsibility, as the performed act was at least not supposed to cause any harm upfront. In case of illegitimate complaints, the behaviour is most likely to be justified by the individual as it was, at least, not his/her intention: the situation arose, or he/she had no other choice but to complain illegitimately.

*H16: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'must' category will score higher on denial of negative intent than illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category.*

#### **2.4.11 Claims of relative acceptability**

Another extension, the sixth in this case, was also proposed by Henry (1990): *claims of relative acceptability*. Here, the individual tries to minimize the consequences of his/her deviant behaviour, by comparing the actions to other perpetrators that perform even worse actions. In light of this comparison, the actions of the individual are only minor violations. Again, the same principles of *claim of normalcy* and *condemnation of the condemners* apply to illegitimate complaining behaviour, as the individual is most likely to shift the attention to other actors instead of themselves. This can either be due to opportunism or a predetermined plan.

*H17: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'want' category will score higher on claims of relative acceptability than illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category.*

#### **2.4.12 Justification by postponement**

Cromwell and Thurman (2003) introduced the last additional technique, called *justification by postponement*, in which individuals simply deal with their deviant actions later, and put it out of their minds. Linking this to illegitimate complaining behaviour, it is more likely that an individual is opportunistic when using this technique as an excuse for the performed behaviour. The individual is in the situation where he/she can take advantage of it. He/she knows the behaviour is morally wrong, but decides to deal with the unpleasant tension later.

*H18: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will score higher on justification by postponement than illegitimate complainers in other categories.*

### **2.5 Illegitimate complaints and relationship variables**

Finally, the current research wants to examine the extent to which the three categories of complainers experience a different effect on their relationship with the firm after complaining

illegitimately. As mentioned before, complaints about a service failure wherein expectations are not meeting the actual performance of a product or service, can lead to perceived feelings dissatisfaction of the customer (Prim & Pras, 1999). This, in turn, can lead to negative word-of-mouth, redress seeking behaviour (i.e. requesting for a refund or repair), and exits (Blodgett, Granbois & Walters, 1993). This can negatively impact the profitability of a firm (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). Therefore, service recovery can be used as a means to enhance the retention of customers faced with a service problem (Hart, Heskett & Sasser, 1990), since it costs five times more to replace a customer with a new one than to actually retain a customer (Desatnick, 1988).

The existing literature is mainly focusing on true, just, and legitimate complaining, in which “*the customer is always right*” in service recovery policies (Huang, Zhao, Miao & Fu, 2014, 544). However, firms are also willing to spend a lot of time and money to be able to give the customer an acceptable compensation in the service recovery process, even though the complaint is not valid, nor legitimate (Baker, Magnini, & Perdue, 2012), as they hope for better long-term performance of the organization when giving in. In fact, according to Blodgett, Granbois, and Walters (1993), satisfied customers, as opposed to dissatisfied customers, are often associated with loyalty, goodwill and repeated purchases. Therefore, organizations may even encourage active (illegitimate) complaining (Prim & Pras, 1999).

Businesses that earn the favour and loyalty of customers by satisfying their needs and wants is also known as relationship marketing (Berry, 1995). Relationship marketing is defined as “*attracting, maintaining and – in multi-service organizations – enhancing customer relationships*” (Berry, 1983, p. 25), which seems to be of greatest importance nowadays (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Morgan and Hunt (1994) state that successful relationship marketing requires not only satisfaction, but also trust and commitment. These are the two key mediating variables, that can ultimately lead to a better performance of the organization (high degree of loyalty: repurchase intention, and word of mouth (WOM) (Prim & Pras, 1999)). In other words, even though the customer ‘may not always be right’, satisfaction, trust, and commitment of the customer seem the transcending factors that most organizations strive for and, therefore, give customers the benefit of the doubt. The question arises whether businesses should really aim to retain every customer, as in most cases, this is not very profitable (Woo & Fock, 2004). Therefore, the current study wants to examine the effect of the three categories of complainers on *satisfaction, trust, commitment*, and, ultimately, *loyalty* (that consists of *repurchase intention* and *WOM*). As the definitions of these variables are somewhat more straightforward than the those of the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour and the neutralization techniques, the

definitions of the relationship variables will not be discussed here. For an extensive overview of the definitions, chapter 3.6 ('Measurement') can be consulted.

### **2.5.1 'Want' to complain and relationship variables**

People in the 'want' category are complainers who complain illegitimately with a predetermined plan. They complain with a purpose: to gain something from it. As mentioned before, they are, most likely, driven by perceptions of justice, and lack of morality. Interestingly, there appears to be a relationship between justice evaluations and satisfaction (Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar, 1998). An individual in the 'want' category will, presumably, experience injustice about the situation, resulting in lower levels of satisfaction and, as a consequence, lower levels of trust, commitment, and loyalty. Besides, an individual in the 'want' category will also be motivated by lack of morality, in which the individual believes that the company has the wrong intentions. This will, most likely, lead to a deteriorated relationship with the firm. To sum, the following hypothesis is established:

*H19: Illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category will have a lower score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention, than before the complaint.*

### **2.5.2 'Can' complain and relationship variables**

People in the 'can' category are complainers who complain illegitimately as a consequence of the situation: it occurred, and advantage could be taken. As mentioned before, they are, most likely, driven by internal attribution, the liberal redress policy, and the halo-effect. A link to Reciprocity Theory might be appropriate here. This theory states that individuals can have the feeling that they have to give something back to another party after performing an act. They want to reward the actions of others with something in return (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006). In this case, illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category could feel guilty about their unjust actions (as they know the firm was not wrong), and may want to reward the firm for giving in to their illegitimate complaints by a higher level of satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established:

*H20: Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will have a higher score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint.*

### 2.5.3 ‘Must’ complain and relationship variables

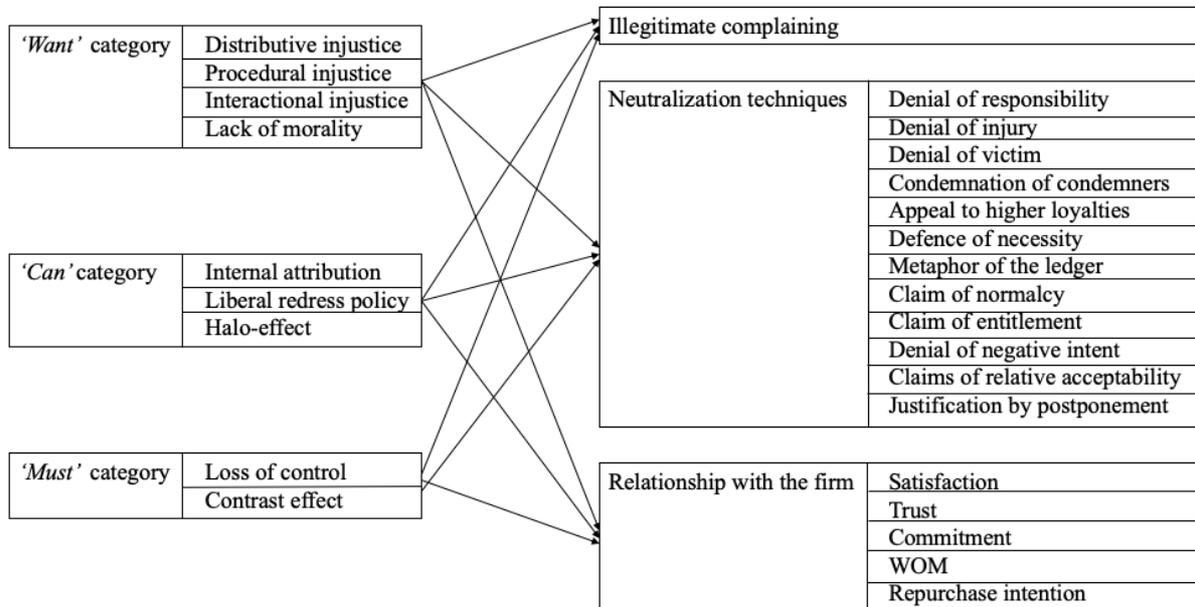
People in the ‘must’ category are complainers who are obliged to complain illegitimately. Their complaints can be seen as a desperate attempt to be taken seriously. These complainers will most likely be driven by loss of control, and contrast effect. Especially when the service failure is attributed to the firm (which is the case here), people experience lower levels of satisfaction (Kalamas, Laroche & Makdessian, 2008), and, as a consequence, a lower level of trust, commitment, and loyalty. Therefore, this situation is somewhat comparable to illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category, as these complainers will also be angry and disappointed with the firm. To sum, the following hypothesis is established:

*H21: Illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category will have a lower score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint.*

### 2.6 Conceptual model

Based on the aforementioned research question and hypotheses, the following conceptual model has been developed, which is a representation of the central concepts of this study, and the relationships between them. It serves as a basis for this research.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



### 3. Method

This chapter focuses on the methodology that was used to test the aforementioned hypotheses. First, the research design will be discussed, followed by non-response, the sampling method, procedure, and research ethics. Finally, the measurement, and the data analysis process will be provided.

#### 3.1 Research design

The following research question will be examined: *To what extent do people who 'want' to, 'can', or 'must' complain illegitimately use different excuses to justify their behaviour, and to what extent do people in these different categories experience different effects on their relationship with the firm?* To test this research question and the associated hypotheses, a quantitative research has been conducted. Building further upon earlier studies of Joosten (unpublished), this study is confirmatory in nature. By means of a large-scale online survey, self-reported data was gathered about the illegitimate complaining behaviours of participants. Due to this sensitive topic, and the potential biases involved in investigating it (Fisk et al., 2010), an online survey was chosen. This method can guarantee anonymity of respondents, and can facilitate the sharing of experiences and opinions (Coomber, 1997). Another reason why an online survey has been conducted, was because of the reach: *"the ease by which potential respondents can be approached"* (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006, p. 438). Furthermore, Van Selm and Jankowski (2006) mention the efficiency, and time benefits of conducting a survey. Likewise, thanks to the inexpensive nature of an online survey (in comparison to conventional paper-and-pencil surveys), economic advantages were achieved. Finally, the absence of interviewer bias, and convenience for the respondents (Smith, 1997; Brennan, Rae & Parackal, 1999) were recognized, that led to choosing an online survey as the appropriate method.

However, certain disadvantages, such as social desirability were important to consider, as the topic of this study is highly sensitive and unethical. *"People have a need to appear more altruistic and society-oriented than they actually are"* (Chung & Monroe, 2003, p. 291). Social desirability is the tendency of individuals to answer questions in such a way that will be viewed favourably by others, and in which they will deny socially undesirable actions (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987), especially in situations that are considered more unethical (Chung & Monroe, 2003). Therefore, examples in which the researchers stated they also sometimes engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour were given, and, as stated before, anonymity was assured to overcome social desirability.

### **3.2 Non-response**

According to Porter (2004), there are certain techniques to combat non-response. Some of these techniques are applicable to the current study, such as the use of the Internet. Furthermore, a short questionnaire length may prevent non-response. The ideal questionnaire length lies between the 10 and 13 minutes (Porter, 2004), which is also, on average, the time participants were occupied with the survey of current study. Another important strategy is providing assurances of confidentiality. As already mentioned before, the survey of this research emphasizes this (stated in bold on the first page of the survey) to encourage sincere responses, and to increase the response rate. Finally, an incentive can be used to stimulate more participants to join. However, in the current study, it was decided not to use an incentive, as individuals could have had the feeling that their answers would not be confidential anymore.

### **3.3 Sampling method**

In this study, a convenience sample has been used. A convenience sample is called a non-probability sampling method, in which participants are included in the survey based on ease of availability (Babbie, 2015), and their voluntary participation (Sousa, Zauszniewski & Musil, 2004). Every participant does not have an equal probability of being selected from the population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

A convenience sampling method has several advantages; it is, compared to other sampling strategies, easy to conduct, inexpensive, and data can be gathered within a short period of time (Bornstein, Jager & Putnick, 2013). However, this form of research is prone to biases, as the researcher has no control over the representativeness of the sample (Babbie, 2015). Nonetheless, the goal of the current research is to test the variables and hypotheses, and the extent to which this phenomenon is generalizable to the population is not the main focus. Still, the participants of the online survey were asked to answer questions about demographic characteristics. Eventually, the results can show whether or not certain groups of people were overrepresented, and what these characteristics could mean for the outcome. To sum, a convenience sample is not the preferred method for scientific research (Babbie, 2015). However, considering the sensitive topic of this study, the limited available time, and the advantages, a convenience sample has been chosen as the appropriate method for sampling.

### 3.4 Procedure

The survey in this study builds further upon an earlier online survey of Joosten (unpublished), that was pre-tested among 40 participants for comprehensibility. Besides, a plus-minus method was used with six participants as an extra check for understandability of the survey, and to see on what parts the survey could improve. In this reader-focused method, individuals were asked to read a text (the survey about illegitimate complaining behaviour), and to denote plusses and minuses on the margin of the text (Sienot, 1997). These marks were, then, discussed with the participant, which led to uncovering as much problems as possible in the survey.

Based on the online pre-test and the plus-minus method, the introduction of the survey was written. In the current study, the same introduction of the survey of Joosten (unpublished) was used, but has slightly been adjusted for some sentences to make the text more comprehensive. Besides, the names of the researchers and the illegitimate complaining examples were, for the obvious reasons, altered. Furthermore, new questions about the usage of the neutralization techniques, and the (changed) relationship with the firm were added (Appendix I). The survey has, ultimately, changed to a great extent, and, therefore, a new pre-test has been conducted with ten participants. The read-aloud/think-aloud method has been used, in which participants were asked to fill in the online survey, while thinking aloud (Sienot, 1997). The researcher sat next to the respondent, and noted the remarks. Special attention was devoted to the validity and the comprehensibility of the questions. These comments were, ultimately, discussed with other researchers before finalizing the survey (Appendix III).

The survey of current study started with thanking the participants for their effort, an introduction of the researchers, and an explanation of the purpose. Consequently, full anonymity was assured, and an indication of the length of the questionnaire was given. Next, the researchers were depicted with their names and photos, together with the Radboud University logo. On the second page, the participants were asked to think about a situation in which they exaggerated or made up a complaint. To assist them in their thinking process, several examples of the researchers were given in which they also exaggerated, or made up a complaint. Hereafter, questions about that specific situation in which the participant complained about the product or service were asked (the value of the product, the company in question, and the specific problem). Participants could indicate to what extent they exaggerated or made up their complaint (measured on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from ‘not exaggerated/made up at all’ until ‘fully exaggerated/made up’), and how long this incident lasted.

Next, 5-point Likert-scale questions (ranging from ‘totally disagree’ until ‘totally agree’) followed about, for example, the fault of the problem, and the experience with the

product/service, and the company. Thereafter, the behaviour of the participants was addressed (also by means of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘totally disagree’ until ‘totally agree’), with questions such as whether or not the complaint was pre-planned (these questions, ultimately, reflect the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour). Then, the questions about the neutralization techniques followed, and whether or not their relationship with the firm had changed due to this incident. Finally, after answering all of the questions of this survey, the participants were thanked, and the e-mail addresses of the researchers were given, so that respondents could ask for the results if interested.

### **3.5 Research Ethics**

In the current study, research ethics are considered to make the researchers aware of responsible conduct of research (Babbie, 2015). Therefore, the principles of the *American Psychological Association* (APA) (Babbie, 2015) were used for their code of ethics: APA guidelines were followed, and references give credit to researchers in this style. Besides, this research has considered ethical obligations to their participants (e.g. not deceiving participants, identifying the role of the researcher). On top, informed consent was considered (participants of the survey did participate voluntarily, and participants were protected from harm such as psychological injury, thanks to the transparency of this research). This research also has obligations to other academic colleagues. In the analysis of data, for example, the shortcomings were described, and negative and unexpected findings were reported. Rather than attempting to support a hypothesis in favour of the research, the researchers’ purpose was to discover what was really going on. Furthermore, as explained before, in protecting the well-being and identity of participants, anonymity of the results was guaranteed. It should, finally, be noted that the researchers were not swayed with personal desires, or demands of sponsors (Babbie, 2015).

### **3.6 Measurement**

This research aims to build further upon the exploratory and explanatory research of Joosten (unpublished), that investigated the drivers of illegitimate complaining behaviour (dependent variable). These drivers are, as this research is confirmatory in nature, taken from the previous studies of Joosten (unpublished). Therefore, only the definitions of the constructs will be provided here. For the full set of questions, and thus the operationalization belonging to the constructs, Appendix II can be consulted. All of the following constructs are measured by

statements (items) that could be answered on a 5-point Likert scale (answers ranging from: ‘fully disagree – disagree – not disagree/not agree – agree – fully agree’) in Dutch.

*Illegitimate complaints (dependent variable)* – In this study, this construct has a binary definition, in which the individual can either complain without experiencing dissatisfaction (the complaint is completely made up), or complain because of dissatisfaction, but in which the situation is being exaggerated, altered, or lied about.

*Attribution theory (driver)* – Refers to the extent to which an individual appoints the responsibility for a cause to him- or herself (*internal*), or others (*external*) (Folkes, 1984).

*Contrast effect (driver)* – Refers to the negative discrepancy of the expectations of the customer about a good or service, and the actual performance (Anderson, 1973).

*Lack of morality (driver)* – Refers to the individual that is attributing the service failure completely to the firm, as the individual perceives the firm is focused on advantages for itself only (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016).

*Financial greed (driver)* – Concerns the extent to which an individual is trying to acquire free goods and services, without the good or service actually causing dissatisfaction, or failing in performance (Reynolds & Harris, 2005).

*Planning (driver)* – Refers to the extent to which the individual proactively searches for opportunities to complain, as part of a predetermined plan (Reynolds & Harris, 2005).

*Opportunism (driver)* – This definition refers to an individual taking advantage of the situation he/she finds him-/herself in, driven by self-interest (Singh & Sirdeshmukh, 2000; Reynolds & Harris, 2005).

*Disappointment (driver)* - Refers to the expression of a negative emotion: sincere dissatisfaction as a consequence of a service failure (Bugg Holloway, Wang & Beatty, 2009).

*Anger (driver)* – Refers to the emotional response to a failed service encounter (Bougie, Pieters & Zeelenberg, 2003), which is a harmful, and frustrating situation.

*Liberal redress policy (driver)* – Refers to the extent to which the organization in question has guarantee schemes in place, and even pro-actively encourages and welcomes customer complaints, with, for example, “100% money back guarantees” (Reynolds & Harris, 2005; Joosten, unpublished).

*Loss of control (driver)* – Refers the consequence of not being able to take responsibility for any outcome, either desired, or undesired (Chang, 2006): “a very unpleasant sensation, and provides a strong motivation to try to re-establish control” (Hui & Toffoli, 2002, p. 1840).

*Halo-effect (driver)* – Refers to the extent to which an individual detects more failures as a result of one complaint about a service failure (Halstead, Morash & Ozment, 1996).

*Assimilation (driver)* – Refers to the individual that is experiencing genuine failure of the product or service, but does not complain about it, due to the unpleasant feeling of cognitive dissonance (Anderson, 1973).

*Perceptions of injustice (driver)* – The extent to which an individual perceives the complaint handling (the manner of treatment, the procedure, and the outcome) of the firm as fair (Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar, 1998).

*Negative attitude towards complaining (driver)* – An individual's unfavourable position towards reaching out to the firm after a service failure (Blodgett, Granbois & Walters, 1993).

*Positive subjective norm (driver)* – Concerns the extent to which an individual perceives others (e.g. friends, family) would also act in the same way (Kowalski, 1996).

In the current study, the researcher is, besides the aforementioned drivers, interested in the excuses people use to justify their behaviour. It is important to note that no measurement scales existed for the use of a certain neutralization technique as a consequence of illegitimate complaining behaviour, as these techniques are generally used in other contexts, such as juvenile delinquency (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Therefore, new scales were developed (in the context of illegitimate complaining), but based on other academic studies that also made use of neutralization techniques in another setting. Besides, it was chosen to use only one item per construct, considering the great length of the survey. Again, all of the constructs are measured by statements (items) that could be answered on a similar 5-point Likert scale in Dutch.

*Denial of responsibility (neutralization technique)* – The definition of this technique in the current study is as follows: putting the blame to others than oneself, as a result of illegitimate complaining behaviour. The following statement reflects the operationalization of this construct: “*It is not my fault*” (McGregor, 2008, p. 266), which has only been changed to the past (“*It was not my fault*”). This exact definition is also used by Sykes and Matza (1957), Harris and Dumas (2009), and Harris and Daunt (2011).

*Denial of injury (neutralization technique)* – Here, this technique refers to the lack of harm to the firm as a consequence of illegitimate complaining behaviour. The statement “*no one got hurt*” (McGregor, 2008, p. 266) defines this construct well. However, this construct has been made more applicable to the context of illegitimate complaining behaviour, and is, therefore, operationalized as follows: “*it will not cause serious damage to the company*”.

*Denial of victim (neutralization technique)* – The definition of this technique refers to individuals not feeling guilty, as they see their illegitimate complaining behaviour as a punishment, or revenge for the firm in question. As McGregor (2008) operationalizes this

technique as “*they deserve what they get*” (p. 266), this study uses the following statement to operationalize *denial of victim*: “the company earns it by what it has done”.

*Condemnation of the condemners (neutralization technique)* – This construct refers to shifting the blame for one’s own illegitimate behaviour, and turn the spotlights to, for example the firm (that is criticizing the individual for his/her behaviour). McGregor (2008) operationalizes this technique by means of the following statement: “*Everyone else, including you, is doing it*” (p. 266). However, it does not cover the definition completely. Vittel & Grove (1987) explain this technique as follows: individuals turn the attention towards another who has critique on their behaviour “*by pointing out that they engage in similar disapproved behaviour*” (Vittel & Grove, 1987, p. 434). Based on this statement, the operationalization is the following: “The company is also not always honest towards their customers”.

*Appeal to higher loyalties (neutralization technique)* – The definition of this technique refers to illegitimate complaining behaviour being justified when the individual can show he/she is loyal to another individual (subgroup/society/family/friends etc.). McGregor (2008) operationalizes this with the following statement: “*I did it to protect, or take care of, someone*” (p. 266). In the current study, this neutralization technique is captured by the following statement: “I didn’t do it for myself, but on principle, or for others”.

*Defence of necessity (neutralization technique)* – Refers to the individual not feeling guilty about its own illegitimate complaining behaviour, since it was behaviour that was necessary, and therefore, not wrong in the abstract. Harris and Daunt (2011) explain this by the following statement: “*I had no choice but to do it*” (p. 837). This statement has been made applicable to the current context by means of the following operationalization: “I had to complain illegitimately, otherwise the firm did not take me seriously”.

*Metaphor of the ledger (neutralization technique)* – Refers to the individual minimizing its illegitimate complaining behaviour, by saying that all of the good behaviours performed in the past make up for this one time the behaviour is aberrant. “*If you weigh all of my good deeds against my bad deeds, you’ll see I’m a decent person*” (Hinduja, 2007, p. 190). In the current study, this operationalization was more applicable: “Normally, I always adhere to the rules”.

*Claim of normalcy (neutralization technique)* – Refers to justifying illegitimate complaining behaviour by saying everybody engages in such behaviour once in a while. Hinduja (2007) explains this technique as follows: “*look, everyone is doing it, so how could it be wrong*” (p. 190). In the current study this operationalization is the same, only made applicable to the current context: “everyone exaggerates once in a while”.

*Claim of entitlement (neutralization technique)* – In this situation, an individual justifies its own illegitimate complaining behaviour, it was perceived that he/she “*has the right to claim something*” (McGregor, 2008, p. 271). Therefore, the following statement “*I know my rights. I work hard and deserve things*” (McGregor, 2008, p. 266) reflects this technique well. In the current study, the operationalization is as follows: “I also deserve a windfall sometimes”.

*Denial of negative intent (neutralization technique)* – This technique refers to an individual diminishing guilt, since it was not his/her intention to complain illegitimately upfront. The statement “*I didn’t intend to cause harm*” (p. 190) of Hinduja (2007) reflects this technique well. However, in the current study, this statement is somewhat altered to complaining behaviour; “it was not my intention to exaggerate my complaint”.

*Claims of relative acceptability (neutralization technique)* – This technique refers to an individual minimizing its own illegitimate complaining behaviour, by comparing themselves to others who even perform more questionable behaviours. McGregor (2008) uses this statement: “*how I act is nothing compared to others*” (p. 266), and Hinduja (2007) states the following: “*at least I am not a murderer or rapist; people engage in much worse activity than this*” (p. 190). Therefore, based on both academics, the following statement reflects this technique in the current study: “other people do much worse things”.

*Justification by postponement (neutralization technique)* – Finally, the definition of this technique refers to the procrastination of dealing with the illegitimate complaining behaviour: “*I don’t think about it*” (Harris & Daunt, 2011, p. 838). However, the statement of McGregor (2008) seems to cover this definition even better: “*I will act now and deal with my feelings later*” (p. 266). Therefore, this definition is used for the current study: “In that moment, I was not really thinking about the consequences of my behaviour (feelings only came later on)”.

In the current study, besides the neutralization techniques, questions about the (changed) relationship with the firm in question were asked. The variables that were measured, were as follows: *satisfaction, trust, commitment, repurchase intention, and Word of Mouth*. For these types of variables, a measurement scale did already exist in previous studies. However, considering the ideal questionnaire length of Porter (2004), and the overwhelming number of questions already, only one statement has been chosen to represent each of the relationship variables. The researcher was interested in whether or not the relationship with the firm had changed for the participant after filing the illegitimate complaint. All of the statements about the relationship with the firm were measured on a 5-point Likert-scale (ranging from: ‘much smaller – smaller – has not changed – bigger – much bigger’).

*Satisfaction (relationship variable)* – Refers to an individual being content about the firm after he/she has illegitimately complained. Haumann, Quaiser, Wieseke, and Rese (2014), used the following definition: “*a customer’s post-consumption evaluation of a product or service, determined by the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations, and the actual performance*” (p. 80). In the current study, this definition is shortened to: “my satisfaction about the firm in question after this situation is...”.

*Trust (relationship variable)* – In the current study, the definition of *trust* refers to an individual having honest and sincere feelings about the firm after he/she illegitimately complained. Morgan and Hunt (1994) define this variable as follows: “*when one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity*” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). Therefore, the current study operationalizes this variable as follows: “The trust I have in this company in question after this situation is...”.

*Commitment (relationship variable)* – This variable refers to the emotional attachment of an individual with the firm, after he/she illegitimately complained. Morgan and Hunt (1994) use the following definition: when an individual “*believes the relationship is worth working on, to ensure that it endures indefinitely*” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). To keep the operationalization somewhat broader, the following statement has been chosen to represent this variable: “My connection with the company in question after this situation is...”.

*Repurchase intention (relationship variable)* – Repurchase intention is also called loyalty when repeated purchase behaviour is shown over time (Hellier, Geursen, Carr & Rickard, 2003). In this study, it is referring to the chance that an individual will make another purchase at the firm, after he/she complained illegitimately. The definition of Hellier et al. (2003) is as follows: “*the individual’s judgement about buying again a designated service from the same company, taking into account his or her current situation and likely circumstances* (p. 1764). Based on this definition, the operationalization of *repurchase intention* in the current study is as follows: “the chance that I will make another purchase with the company in question after this situation is...”.

*Word of Mouth (WOM) (relationship variable)* – Refers to the intention of an individual to recommend the firm to others, such as friends and family, after he/she complained illegitimately. Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, and Evans (2006) define WOM as follows: “*the likelihood of a customer positively referring the seller to another potential customer*” (p. 139). Based on Palmatier et al. (2006), the current study uses the following operationalization: “the chance that I recommend others (family, friends, etc.) about the company in question after this situation is...”.

### 3.7 Data analysis

In this section, the data analysis strategy will be discussed to test the hypotheses that are central in this study. For the analysis of the data, the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 will be used. First of all, a preliminary analysis will be done to examine whether or not the different drivers of the previous studies of Joosten (unpublished) are indeed significant for the dependent variable ‘illegitimate complaining’. This can be done by means of a multiple regression analysis. A multiple regression analysis can, namely, be used to analyse the relationship between a single dependent variable and multiple independent variables (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014). It is a dependence technique, used to predict an independent variable from the knowledge of multiple independent variables. The variables need to be metrically scaled, which is the case here.

Hereafter, the hypotheses will be tested. H1 until H6 will be tested by means of a cluster analysis. “*Cluster analysis involves grouping similar objects into distinct, mutually exclusive subsets referred to as clusters*” (Mangiameli, Chen & West, 1996, p. 402). This is an important analysis, that allows the researcher to see if the categories can, indeed, be confirmed (drivers that could be grouped into ‘want’ to, ‘can’, and ‘must’ complain). Hereafter, a factor analysis could validate these typologies. A factor analysis is a multivariate technique for the identification of correlations between a set of observed variables that stem from their relationship to one or more latent variables (the typologies in this case) (Field, 2013). In this study, the items are measured on a quasi-interval scale, and are, therefore, suited for conducting a factor analysis (Field, 2013).

Next, H7 until H22 will be tested by means of a One-Way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The hypotheses all concern differences between the groups ‘want’ to, ‘can’, and ‘must’ complain, on the dependent variables ‘neutralization technique’ and ‘relationship with the firm’. As the hypotheses all suppose these three groups score differently on the dependent variables (lower/higher means), a One-Way MANOVA will be the appropriate technique for the analysis. This is a multivariate test in which the basic Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is extended to situations in which there are several dependent variables (Field, 2013). It can be used to detect group differences on multiple outcomes. Interestingly, a One-Way MANOVA has greater power than ANOVA to detect effects, as it allows for correlations between dependent variables (Field, 2013).

## 4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the analyses will be discussed, aimed at confirming or rejecting the hypotheses that were stated in chapter two. First, the sample will be discussed, followed by the multiple regression analysis, cluster- and factor analysis, and the One-Way MANOVA.

### 4.1 Sample

The current research used a convenience sampling method. In total, 502 native Dutch respondents completed the online survey, in which they indicated that they have complained illegitimately. However, an impressive number of 792 respondents have started the survey, but did not finish it. After deleting 285 respondents with non-response (every respondent who did not fill in anything, or less than 70% of the survey questions), 507 valid responses remained (with three respondents having a completion rate of 70%, and 504 respondents having a completion rate of 100%). However, five respondents filled in the survey without having an actual complaint (indicated ‘not applicable’ or ‘no idea’ when they were asked about the problem that led them to complain, followed by ‘do not agree, do not disagree’ as the answer for every question). Therefore, these responses have been deleted too (of which three respondents had the 70% completion rate). To sum, 502 responses, with a completion rate of 100%, were taken into account in the analysis. For multiple regression analysis, the preferred sample size is 100 observations, with 15 to 20 observations per independent variable (Hair et al., 2014). For cluster analysis, no specific rules-of-thumb exist about the preferred sample size. However, very small sample sizes can lead to the clustering of variables on a high dimensional attribution space only (Dolnicar, 2002). When conducting a factor analysis, four to five items per number of respondents per variable are needed (Hair et al., 2014). Besides, a minimum sample size of 30 is desired for (M)ANOVA (Hair et al., 2014). To sum, all of the requirements are met with a sample size of 502 respondents.

It should be noted that 51 respondents indicated they had not exaggerated the complaint, or made one up (answered both of the questions about illegitimate complaining behaviour with “not at all exaggerated” and “not at all made up”). This suggests these respondents did not complain illegitimately. However, it was decided not to exclude these participants from the dataset. These participants, for example, all had a valid answer on the question in which they were asked to describe the problem with the product/service. Besides, when analysing the rest of their answers, it appeared that the complaint could, in fact, be illegitimate, as the answers were, generally, on the extreme side.

Finally, some descriptive statistics are discussed. In total, 306 women (61.0%), and 196 men (39.0%) have participated in the survey. Furthermore, the average age of these respondents was 27 years. Interestingly, almost 70% of the respondents had an age of 25 or younger. Furthermore, the sample of this study was highly educated. 340 respondents (67.7%) indicated their highest education level was the University, and 120 respondents (23.9%) denoted this for HBO level education. Besides, the majority of the respondents (394 in this case: 78.5%) voiced their complaint at a big firm (in contrast to 48 respondents (9.6%) at a small firm, and 60 respondents (12.0%) at a medium sized firm). Most of these complaints were filed last year (208 respondents, 41.4%). However, 133 respondents indicated they filed the complaint more than one year ago (26.5%), and 161 respondents indicated it happened more than two years ago (32.1%). Interestingly, 314 respondents stated that this was the first time they ever exaggerated/made up a complaint (62.5%). 106 respondents (21.1%) acknowledged they complained illegitimately two times in their lives, 30 respondents (6.0%) did it three times, and 52 respondents (10.4%) who complained illegitimately more than three times.

Finally, respondents indicated that they complained illegitimately about very different things (e.g. broken mobile phones, late deliveries of packages, cold meals in restaurants, low quality clothing, delays with public transport, lost products, or products that were bought as the result of an impulse). Interestingly, the analysis showed respondents complained illegitimately about products/services that were free, up until products with a value of 55,000 euros. The average case value of the complaints was 407.95 euros.

## **4.2 Multiple regression analysis**

First, a multiple regression analysis was conducted, to see whether or not the different drivers of the previous studies of Joosten (unpublished) were significant for the dependent variable 'illegitimate complaining'. Several assumptions were checked before the actual analysis.

### **4.2.1 Assumptions multiple regression analysis**

In multiple regression, the independent variables must, preferably, have a high correlation with the dependent variable. However, the independent variables should not correlate with each other. A check for multicollinearity is, therefore, important (Hair et al., 2014). All the independent variables that are to be included in the multiple regression analysis, have a VIF value of  $<10$ , and a Tolerance value of  $>.10$  (Appendix IV) (Hair et al., 2014), which means

that multicollinearity is not an issue here. However, before conducting the actual multiple regression, four assumptions have to be met.

The first assumption refers to the linearity of the phenomenon measured (Hair et al., 2014). This assumption can be checked by means of a (residual) scatterplot. The scatterplot (as can be seen in Appendix IV) showed that the positive and negative residuals were considerably spread around the horizontal zero-line, which indicates linearity. However, the scatterplot indicated some sort of pattern. Therefore, the variables in the analysis were centred first, and, hereafter, (second and third order) polynomial terms were included in the model to assess non-linearity (Field, 2013). It appeared that none of the polynomial terms were significant, except for the variable 'distributive injustice', as the third order polynomial was significant. Therefore, this variable improved the linearity of the model, and it was taken into account in the analysis.

The second assumption is the constant variance of the error terms (Hair et al., 2014). This assumption refers to homoscedasticity, which is the constant range of error terms of an independent variable (Hair et al., 2014). For this assumption, the scatterplot was analysed again, in which no clear pattern such as a triangle (that indicates heteroscedasticity) could be seen. The variance appears to be constant, as the dots are equally spread across the values.

The third assumption refers to the independence of error terms, which states that the predicted value is not related to any other prediction (Hair et al., 2014). For this assumption, the Durbin-Watson test was used, which tests for serial correlations between errors (Field, 2013). A value of, approximately, 2 indicates uncorrelated residuals. In this case, the value of Durbin-Watson was 1.916 (Appendix IV). Therefore, this assumption was met.

Finally, the fourth assumption is the normality of the error term distribution (Hair et al., 2014). For this assumption, the histogram of the standardized residuals of the variables was examined. The histogram indicated that the residuals in the model were not normally distributed. The normal probability plot (normal P-Plot of the standardized residuals) was also used for this assumption, but here the dots were laying on the diagonal line, which assumes a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it was chosen to transform the variables of the model (since all of the variables had an unfavourable skewness and kurtosis), to see if normality could be improved. For all of the independent variables, a transformation (inverse, logarithm, square, or square root) did not result in a satisfying solution. However, for the dependent variable 'illegitimate complaining', a logarithmic transformation showed an improved skewness and kurtosis (as the values must be as close to zero as possible (Field, 2013)). Besides, the histogram and P-Plot belonging to this model indicated normality of the

error term distribution (Appendix IV). Therefore, the decision was made to use the transformed dependent variable in the multiple regression analysis.

#### **4.2.2 The final model**

After testing the aforementioned assumptions, the actual multiple regression analysis was conducted (Appendix IV). In this analysis, all of the drivers (as can be seen in Table 2, Appendix II) were taken as the independent variables (including the polynomial terms for ‘distributive injustice’), and the transformed variable ‘illegitimate complaining’ was taken as the dependent variable. The overall model ( $F(22, 479) = 15.274, p < .001$ ) indicated that the drivers together explain 38.5% (Adjusted  $R^2 = .385$ ) of the variance in illegitimate complaining.

Interestingly, the results of the analysis showed that not all of the independent variables had a significant effect on ‘illegitimate complaining’. This is an unexpected finding, as most variables were, in fact, significant for the dependent variable in earlier studies of Joosten (unpublished). The variables that were significant, are the following: ‘internal attribution’ ( $\beta = .054, p < .001$ ), ‘financial greed’ ( $\beta = .126, p < .001$ ), ‘opportunism’ ( $\beta = .039, p < .05$ ), ‘halo-effect’ ( $\beta = .034, p < .05$ ), ‘positive subjective norm’ ( $\beta = .045, p < .05$ ), and distributive injustice (polynomial term3) ( $\beta = -.020, p < .05$ ). What is even more remarkable, is that ‘financial greed’, ‘opportunism’, and ‘positive subjective norm’ are variables that were not present in the predefined categories for ‘want’ to, ‘can’ or ‘must’ complain (as stated in chapter 2.3). However, the purpose of this study was to confirm these categories of complainers, and, therefore, regardless of the significance level, all of the variables within the categories of Joosten were taken into account in the cluster analysis (that will be explained next). Nevertheless, these significant variables are, supposedly, important for illegitimate complaining. Therefore, special attention will be devoted to these variables in the extra analysis, which is discussed in detail in Appendix IX (the reader is advised to study these results after chapter 4.5.1 (that discusses the hypothesis testing of the One-Way MANOVA), and before chapter 5 (in which all of the results will be discussed)).

#### **4.3 Cluster analysis**

To examine whether or not the categories ‘want’ to, ‘can’, and ‘must’ complain, and the different drivers belonging to each category, could be confirmed, a hierarchical cluster analysis has been conducted. Therefore, the variables chosen for cluster modelling were selected on the basis of theoretical reasoning, as a consequence of the studies of Joosten (unpublished): ‘internal attribution’, ‘contrast effect1’, ‘contrast effect2’, ‘lack of morality’, ‘liberal redress policy’, ‘loss of control1’, ‘loss of control2’, ‘halo-effect’, ‘distributive injustice’ (the original

variable instead of the polynomial term), ‘procedural injustice’, and ‘interactional injustice’. Ward’s minimum variance method is used in this analysis, as it maximizes the significance of difference between clusters (Mangiameli, Chen & West, 1996). A dendrogram is used to guide estimates of the actual number of clusters existing in the data. Here, three clusters were distinguished (Appendix V). However, even though three clusters were also expected, the classification of these clusters, and the variables belonging to these clusters appeared to be moderately different than those of Joosten (unpublished). This will be discussed in the next section, in which hypotheses 1 until 6 will be confirmed, or rejected.

#### **4.3.1 Hypothesis testing: ‘Want’ to complain cluster**

The first cluster that was distinguished, consists of the variables ‘lack of morality’, ‘halo-effect’, ‘contrast effect1’, and ‘contrast effect2’. When the researcher tried to interpret this cluster, it appeared that this cluster should belong to illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category. However, lack of morality was the only variable that was also proposed in the ‘want’ cluster of Joosten (unpublished). Therefore, it seems that this is a necessary condition: the conviction that the firm in question is dishonest, and that it is deceiving customers on purpose.

Hypothesis 1 covered the illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category, that were, supposedly, driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, and (d) lack of morality. Based on the results of the hierarchical cluster analysis, hypothesis 1a, 1b, and 1c cannot be confirmed. Nevertheless, hypothesis 1d is confirmed. Furthermore, hypothesis 2 stated that illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category were, supposedly, not driven by (a) internal attribution, (b) liberal redress policy, (c) halo-effect, (d) loss of control, and (e) contrast effect. Therefore, hypothesis 2a, 2b, 2d can be confirmed, and hypothesis 2c, and 2e can be rejected.

#### **4.3.2 Hypothesis testing: ‘Can’ complain cluster**

The second cluster that was distinguished includes the variables ‘liberal redress policy’, and ‘internal attribution’. This cluster seems to relate to illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ category. Both variables seem to be necessary for ‘can’ complainers (which is in accordance with the typology of Joosten (unpublished)).

Hypothesis 3 covered the illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ category, that were, supposedly, driven by (a) internal attribution, (b) liberal redress policy, and (c) halo-effect. Based on the results of the hierarchical cluster analysis, hypothesis 3a, and 3b can be confirmed. However, halo-effect was found to be related to complainers in the ‘want’ category. Therefore,

hypothesis 3c is rejected. Hypothesis 4 stated that illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category were, supposedly, not driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, (d) lack of morality, (e) loss of control, and (f) contrast effect. It can be concluded that hypothesis 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, and 4f can be confirmed.

### **4.3.3 Hypothesis testing: ‘Must’ complain cluster**

Finally, the last cluster that was distinguished, is the one with the variables ‘distributive injustice’, ‘interactional injustice’, ‘procedural injustice’, ‘loss of control1’, and ‘loss of control2’. This cluster seems to belong to the illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category. However, as both of the loss of control variables were the only variables that were also in this proposed cluster of Joosten (unpublished), it seems that this is a necessary condition again.

Hypothesis 5 covered the illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category, that were, supposedly, driven by (a) loss of control, and (b) contrast effect. Based on the results of the hierarchical cluster analysis, hypothesis 5a is confirmed. However, contrast effect was found to be related to complainers in the ‘want’ category. Therefore, hypothesis 5b is rejected. Furthermore, hypothesis 6 stated that illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category were, supposedly, not driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, (d) lack of morality, (e) internal attribution, (f) liberal redress policy, and (g) halo-effect. However, hypothesis 6a, 6b, and 6c cannot be confirmed. Nevertheless, hypothesis 6d, 6e, 6f, and 6g can be confirmed.

## **4.4 Factor Analysis**

Next to the hierarchical cluster analysis, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted in order to find support for the three clusters (Appendix VI). For this analysis, Common Factor Analysis (Principal Axis Factoring) was chosen, as the estimated factors based on the common variance only (instead of the total variance) were of interest (Hair et al., 2014). All of the variables of the aforementioned clusters were taken into account. As these variables were single-item constructs, no reliability analyses were conducted. Oblique Rotation (Direct Oblimin) was chosen, as it allowed the factors to correlate (Field, 2013).

First, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, the measure of sampling adequacy (Field, 2013), indicated that factor analysis was suited for this data, since the value exceeded the threshold of .50 (KMO = .885). Besides, Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated a significant value ( $\chi^2 (55) = 2053.9, p < .001$ ), which means there was enough correlation between the items

(Field, 2013), Furthermore, the Factor Correlation Matrix showed that the Oblique Rotation was the right choice, as the correlation between two factors was more than  $|.30|$  (Field, 2013). Moreover, all of the communalities had a value of  $> .20$  after extraction (Field, 2013), except for 'contrast effect2' (with a value of  $.107$ ). It means this item should be excluded from the analysis, as this individual item does not explain enough variance. Since 'contrast effect1' would still be taken into account in the analysis, it was decided to exclude 'contrast effect2'.

Hereafter, a new factor analysis was done as a second attempt (Appendix VII), without 'contrast effect2'. The KMO test and Bartlett's test of sphericity both indicated factor analysis was suited for this data (KMO =  $.891$ ; Bartlett's test of sphericity =  $(\chi^2(45) = 2012.4, p < .001)$ ). Again, the Oblique Rotation was the right method of rotation. Besides, all communalities had a higher value than  $.20$  after extraction. This final analysis extracted three factors (which is in accordance with the studies of Joosten (unpublished)), that had an eigenvalue above 1, and a cumulative explained variance of  $68.05\%$ . For the interpretation of the factors, the Pattern Matrix was used. More specifically, the highest loadings of the items on a particular factor were of importance. Here, all of the items had a factor loading above the minimum level of  $|.30|$  (Field, 2013). However, one cross-loader was found: 'lack of morality' (difference between the highest and the second highest factor loading of one single item must be  $<|.20|$  (Field, 2013)), that had a high loading on the first and third factor (with a difference between the two factors of  $.024$ ). Nevertheless, due to theoretical reasons, it was chosen not to delete this item, as it was an important variable in the study of Joosten (unpublished), and a necessary condition for the 'want' to complainers. According to the final results of this factor analysis, the items 'liberal redress policy', 'loss of control1', 'loss of control2', 'distributive injustice', 'interactional injustice', and 'procedural injustice' belonged to the first factor. 'Internal attribution' and 'contrast effect1' belonged to the second factor, and 'lack of morality' (which is the cross-loader, but has the highest loading on the last factor) and 'halo-effect' belonged to the third factor. Unfortunately, the categories of the hierarchical cluster analysis, and those of Joosten (unpublished), do not really match the categories that were distinguished here. Nevertheless, the decision was made to focus on the theory instead of the results of this factor analysis, as a factor analysis aims to group items, preferably with combined scores (Field, 2013), but these results are not conclusive. Besides, this research aims to find underlying cohesion. Therefore, it was decided to continue with the categories of Joosten (unpublished), and to follow that reasoning in the rest of the analysis.

#### 4.5 One-Way MANOVA

Before conducting the One-Way MANOVA, new variables were made that represented the different clusters. The mean score of the variables ‘distributive injustice’, ‘procedural injustice’, ‘interactional injustice’, and ‘lack of morality’ together represented the ‘want’ to complain category. Besides, the mean score of the variables ‘internal attribution’, ‘liberal redress policy’ and ‘halo-effect’ together represented the ‘can’ category. Finally, the mean score of the variables ‘loss of control1’, ‘loss of control2’, ‘contrast1’, and ‘contrast2’ together represented the ‘must’ category. Hereafter, all of the respondents were categorized in a certain cluster, following the extreme group approach: the respondent was classified in that cluster on which he/she had the highest mean score. Based on these mean scores on the clusters, respondents were given the number 1 (that represented the ‘must’ category; 198 respondents, 39.4%), the number 2 (that represented the ‘want’ category; 55 respondents, 11.0%), or the number 3 (that represented the ‘can’ category; 193 respondents, 38.4%). 56 respondents (11.2%) were found who had a similar score on two or more clusters, and, therefore, these respondents were excluded from the analysis.

To examine to what extent the groups ‘want’ to, ‘can’, and ‘must’ complain differ on the dependent variables ‘neutralization technique’ (hypotheses 7 until 18), and ‘relationship with the firm’ (hypotheses 19 until 21), a One-Way MANOVA was conducted (Appendix VIII). Before testing the hypotheses, some assumptions were important to consider. First, the data should be randomly sampled, measured at an interval level (which is the case here) (Field, 2013). Furthermore, observations must be independent from each other. Here, no participant is in more than one group, for example, and, therefore, this assumption is met (Field, 2013). Besides, the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices needed to be assessed. For this assumption, Box’s M test has been used (Box’s M = 471.7,  $F(306, 78133) = 1.47, p < 001$ ). However, Box’s M test should be non-significant (Hair et al., 2014), suggesting that the assumption is not met for this analysis. This significant effect might be due to the large number of cases in the data (Field, 2013), as Box’s M test is sensitive to large data files, and to deviances of the normality assumption. Thus, the next assumption that the researcher needed to consider was multivariate normality. Unfortunately, only the univariate normality for each dependent variable could be assessed in SPSS (Field, 2013). When looking at the skewness and kurtosis, it, again, appeared that most of the dependent variables in this research were not normally distributed. However, a MANOVA is assumed to be a robust test, that is able to manage multivariate non-normality (in terms of the Type I-error rate: the number of time a test will find

a significant effect when, in reality, there is no effect to find (Field, 2013)). Nevertheless, an important consideration is that the results of the One-Way MANOVA might not be robust.

#### 4.5.1 Hypotheses testing

First, the multivariate tests were examined (Appendix VIII). There appeared to be a statistically significant difference in the dependent variables for the different groups ( $F(34, 854) = 9.57, p < .001$ , Wilk's  $\Lambda = .524$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .276$ ). Besides, the tables 'Multiple comparisons' and 'Descriptive Statistics' were assessed, since many significant univariate ANOVA's were found (table 'Tests of Between-Subjects Effects'). The Games-Howell post-hoc procedure was used to draw conclusions about the differences between the groups (since Box's M test was significant and, therefore, the group variances were not equal) (Field, 2013). In this analysis, an alpha correction has been made to account for multiple ANOVA's being run. Therefore, a statistical significance at  $p < .025$  is accepted.

First, the hypotheses regarding the neutralization techniques are discussed. Hypothesis 7 covered the illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category, that were expected to have a higher score on denial of responsibility than illegitimate complainers in the other categories. Significant univariate main effects were obtained for denial of responsibility ( $F(2) = 82.23, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .271$ ), which is the variable with the highest proportion of explained variance (medium sized effect). The mean scores for denial of responsibility were significantly different for the category 'can' complain (mean = 2.62), with a lower mean than the mean of the 'must' complainers (mean = 4.11), and 'want' to complainers (mean = 4.04). No significant difference was found between the 'must' and 'want' to complainers. Therefore, hypothesis 7 is partially supported: illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category, indeed, have a higher score on denial of responsibility than illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category, but they do not necessarily have a higher score than illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category.

Hypothesis 8 stated that illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category would have a higher score on denial of injury than illegitimate complainers in other categories. However, no significant univariate main effects were found for denial of injury ( $F(2) = .072, p = .930$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 8 is rejected.

Hypothesis 9 referred to illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category, that were expected to have a higher score on denial of victim than illegitimate complainers in other categories. Significant univariate main effects were obtained for denial of victim ( $F(2) = 52.68, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .192$ ), which is a variable that also explains a lot of variance. The mean scores for denial of victim were significantly different for all of the categories: 'must' complain

(mean = 2.98), 'want' to complain (mean = 3.56), and 'can' complain (mean = 2.09). Therefore, hypothesis 9 is supported, as 'want' to complainers had the highest score on denial of victim.

Hypothesis 10 covered illegitimate 'can' and 'want' to complainers, that were expected to have a higher score on condemnation of the condemners than illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category. Significant univariate main effects were found for condemnation of the condemners ( $F(2) = 17.42, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .073$ ). The mean scores for condemnation of the condemners were significantly different for 'want' to complainers (mean = 3.84), with a higher mean compared to 'must' complainers (mean = 2.99) or 'can' complainers (mean = 2.89). No significant difference was found between the 'must' and 'can' complainers. Therefore, hypothesis 10 is partially supported: illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category, indeed, have a higher score on condemnation of the condemners than complainers in the 'must' category, but they also have a higher score than complainers in the 'can' category.

Hypothesis 11 stated that illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category were expected to have a higher score on appeal to higher loyalties than illegitimate complainers in other categories. Significant univariate main effects were found for appeal to higher loyalties ( $F(2) = 11.93, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .051$ ). The mean scores for this variable were significantly different for 'can' complain (mean = 1.81), with a lower mean compared to 'must' complain (mean = 2.33), and 'want' to complain (mean = 2.31). No significant difference was found between the 'must' and 'want' category. Therefore, hypothesis 11 is, again, partially supported: the 'must' category, indeed, has a higher score on appeal to higher loyalties than the 'can' category, but the 'want' category also has a higher score on appeal to higher loyalties.

Hypothesis 12 referred to illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category that would have a higher score on defence of necessity than illegitimate complainers in other categories. Significant univariate main effects were found for defence of necessity ( $F(2) = 7.29, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .032$ ). The mean scores for defence of necessity were significantly different for 'can' complain (mean = 2.91), with a lower mean compared to 'must' complain (mean = 3.28), and 'want' to complain (mean = 3.49). No significant difference was found between the 'must' and 'want' category. Therefore, hypothesis 12 is, anew, partially supported: the 'must' category, indeed, has a higher score on defence of necessity than the 'can' category, but the 'want' category also has a higher score on defence of necessity.

Hypothesis 13 covered illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category that were expected to have a higher score on metaphor of the ledger than illegitimate complainers in other categories. However, no significant univariate main effects were found for metaphor of the ledger ( $F(2) = 2.10, p = .124, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .009$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 13 is rejected.

Hypothesis 14 referred to illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ and ‘want’ category, that would score higher on claim of normalcy than illegitimate complainers in the ‘must’ category. However, no significant univariate main effects were found for claim of normalcy ( $F(2) = 2.30$ ,  $p = .101$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .010$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 14 is rejected.

Hypothesis 15 covered illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ category, that would have a higher score on claim of entitlement than illegitimate complainers in other categories. However, taking into account the alpha correction, no significant univariate main effects were found for claim of entitlement ( $F(2) = 3.71$ ,  $p = .025$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .016$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 15 is rejected.

Hypothesis 16 stated illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ and ‘must’ category will score higher on denial of negative intent than illegitimate complainers in the ‘want’ category. Significant univariate main effects were found for denial of negative intent ( $F(2) = 14.82$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .063$ ). The mean scores for denial of negative intent were significantly different for ‘can’ complain (mean = 3.24), with a lower mean compared to ‘must’ complain (mean = 3.81), and ‘want’ to complain (mean = 3.78). Again, no significant difference was found between the ‘must’ and ‘want’ category. Therefore, hypothesis 16 rejected.

Hypothesis 17 covered illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ and ‘want’ category, that would have a higher score on claims of relative acceptability than illegitimate complainers in the must category. However, no significant univariate main effects were found for claims of relative acceptability ( $F(2) = .558$ ,  $p = .573$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 17 is rejected.

Hypothesis 18 referred to illegitimate complainers in the ‘can’ category that were expected to have a higher score on justification by postponement than illegitimate complainers in other categories. However, no significant univariate main effects were found for justification by postponement ( $F(2) = .923$ ,  $p = .398$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 18 is rejected.

Finally, some hypotheses were stated about the relationship variables. For all of the relationship variables, significant univariate main effects were found (repurchase intention ( $F(2) = 37.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .144$ ), WOM ( $F(2) = 38.28$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .173$ ), trust ( $F(2) = 46.48$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .205$ ), commitment ( $F(2) = 57.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .205$ ), and satisfaction ( $F(2) = 65.16$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .227$ )). All of the variables explain a lot of variance within the model, but satisfaction is the variable that explains the most. The mean scores for repurchase intention were significantly different for all of the categories: ‘must’ complain (mean = 2.66), ‘want’ to complain (mean = 2.31), and ‘can’ complain (mean = 3.19). ‘Can’ complain has the highest mean, followed by ‘must’, and ‘want’. The mean scores for

WOM were significantly different for 'can' complain (mean = 3.18), with a higher mean compared to 'must' (mean = 2.58), and 'want' to complain (mean = 2.29). The mean scores for trust were, again, significantly different for 'can' complain (mean = 3.34), with a higher mean compared to 'must' (mean = 2.64), and 'want' to complain (mean = 2.33). The mean scores for commitment were significantly different for all of the categories: 'must' complain (mean = 2.67), 'want' to complain (mean = 2.09), and 'can' complain (mean = 3.25). 'Can' complain has the highest mean, followed by 'must' and 'want'. Finally, the mean scores for satisfaction were, again, significantly different for all of the categories: 'must' complain (mean = 2.77), 'want' to complain (mean = 2.18), and 'can' complain (mean = 3.54). Important to note is the following: when illegitimate complainers would have a mean score of 3, then the relationship with the firm in question has not changed (answered 'unchanged'). When illegitimate complainers have a mean score lower than 3, the relationship with the firm in question has deteriorated. When illegitimate complainers have a mean score higher than 3, the relationship with the firm in question has improved.

Hypothesis 19 covered illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category, that would have a lower score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint. The results of the comparison of mean scores indicated that illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category, indeed, have a lower score on all of the relationship variables after their complaint. Therefore, hypothesis 19a, 19b, 19c, 19d, and 19e can be confirmed.

Hypothesis 20 referred to illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category, that were expected to have a higher score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint. The results of the comparison of mean scores indicated that illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category, indeed, have a higher score on all of the relationship variables after their complaint. Therefore, hypothesis 20a, 20b, 20c, 20d, and 20e can be confirmed.

Finally, hypothesis 21 covered illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category that would have a lower score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint. The results of the comparison of mean scores indicated that illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category, indeed, have a lower score on all of the relationship variables after their complaint. Therefore, hypothesis 21a, 21b, 21c, 21d, and 21e can be confirmed.

## 5. Discussion

In this chapter, a conclusion of the research question and sub questions will be given, and the results of the previous chapter will be linked with the existing literature, as part of the theoretical contributions. Besides, managerial implications and the limitations of this research will be discussed. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

### 5.1 Conclusion

Illegitimate complaining: it is a topic that was largely ignored by academic literature. On the one hand, it is difficult for researchers to find clear empirical evidence for it, and it is prone to biases. On the other hand, for respondents, it is just as difficult as for researchers, as illegitimate behaviour is considered unethical and illegal, and admitting one engages in such behaviour can be confronting. Therefore, people are, generally, resistant to participate. Although this research was successfully able to find empirical evidence for illegitimate complaining behaviour, it still seems to be a delicate matter, as 209 participants, from a total of 792 participants, did not finish the survey. Even though special attention was aimed at non-response, anonymity, and examples were given of illegitimate complaining behavior of the researchers, the topic still seems to be a sensitive and unethical one. This might explain why many respondents dropped out early.

In practice, many organizations nowadays have adopted the slogan “*the customer is always right*”, and a lot of time and money is spent on the service recovery process (Joosten, unpublished). However, illegitimate complaining is a phenomenon that many customers are guilty of (Day, 1980; Day, Grabiske, Schaetzle, & Staubach, 1981; Prim & Pras, 1999; Singh, 1988; Joosten, unpublished). This has been confirmed in this research once again. Therefore, there is an urgent need for organizations to realize the customer may not always be right. This ‘Dirty Little Secret of Marketing’ (Berry & Seiders, 2008) must no longer be a secret. This research wants to contribute to breaking the illegitimate complaining taboo.

Some researchers have tried to investigate illegitimate complaining behaviour, but these studies were mostly conceptual, qualitative in nature, or based on limited data. However, Joosten (unpublished) recently examined illegitimate complaining behaviour more thoroughly in several studies. The first study was explorative in nature, in which it was found that illegitimate complaining behaviour was a common and problematic phenomenon. Hereafter, an explanatory study was conducted to investigate the motives of people to engage in illegitimate complaining behaviour, and some clues were found that people do it since they ‘can’, ‘must’, or ‘want’ to. The current research aimed to validate these categories. Besides, an extension was

made to the use of neutralization techniques, and the effect on the relationship with the organization. Therefore, the following research question was set: *To what extent do people who 'want' to, 'can', or 'must' complain illegitimately use different excuses to justify their behaviour, and to what extent do people in these different categories experience different effects on their relationship with the firm?* This research question will be answered by means of the three predefined sub questions: 1) *What are the different categories of illegitimate complainers?*, 2) *What excuses do people in the different categories of complainers use to justify their illegitimate complaining behaviour?*, and 3) *How do the different categories of complainers influence the experience of a changed relationship with the firm?* 21 hypotheses were proposed to, ultimately, give an answer to these questions. An overview of these hypotheses, and the results, is given in table 1.

Based on the literature (previous studies of Joosten), and the hierarchical cluster analysis of this study, the answer to the first sub question is as follows: there are, indeed, three different categories of illegitimate complainers: 'want' to complainers, 'can' complainers, and 'must' complainers. The 'want' to complainers seem to be, particularly, driven by lack of morality. The 'can' complainers are especially driven by internal attribution, and liberal redress policy. Finally, the 'must' complainers are principally driven by loss of control.

The answer on the second sub question was found by means of a One-Way MANOVA. Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' and 'want' category, generally, use the following neutralization techniques more than the 'can' category: denial of responsibility, appeal to higher loyalties, defence of necessity, and denial of negative intent. Besides, 'want' to complainers use denial of victim, and condemnation of the condemners more than 'can' complainers and 'must' complainers. Interestingly, 'can' complainers do not significantly use any of the neutralization techniques more than other complainers do. However, the extra analysis in this research showed that the 'want' to complain category was somewhat ambiguous. By excluding this category from the analysis, new insights regarding the 'can' complainers were to be seen. They use the following neutralization techniques (as was expected in the hypotheses as well) more than 'must' complainers: claim of normalcy, and claim of entitlement.

Finally, the answer on the third sub question was also provided by means of a One-Way MANOVA. Illegitimate complainers in the 'want' and 'must' category experience a deteriorated relationship with the firm after their complaint. 'Can' complainers, however, experience an improved relationship with the firm after their complaint.

*Table 1: Overview of the hypotheses and results*

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Result</b>
H1 Illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category are driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, and (d) lack of morality.	1a, 1b, 1c: rejected. 1d: confirmed
H2 Illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category are not driven by (a) internal attribution, (b) liberal redress policy, (c) halo-effect, (d) loss of control, and (e) contrast effect.	2a, 2b, 2d: confirmed 2c, 2e: rejected
H3 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category are driven by (a) internal attribution, (b) liberal redress policy, and (c) halo-effect.	3a, 3b: confirmed 3c: rejected
H4 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category are not driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, (d) lack of morality, (e) loss of control, and (f) contrast effect.	4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 4f: confirmed
H5 Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category are driven by (a) loss of control, and (b) contrast effect.	5a: confirmed 5b: rejected
H6 Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category are not driven by (a) distributive injustice, (b) procedural injustice, (c) interactional injustice, (d) lack of morality, (e) internal attribution, (f) liberal redress policy, and (g) halo-effect	61, 6b, 6c: rejected 6d, 6e, 6f, 6g: confirmed
H7 Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category will score higher on denial of responsibility than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Partially confirmed
H8 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will score higher on denial of injury than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Rejected
H9 Illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category will score higher on denial of victim than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Confirmed
H10 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'want' category will score higher on condemnation of the condemners than illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category.	Partially confirmed
H11 Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category will score higher on appeal to higher loyalties than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Partially confirmed
H12 Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category will score higher on defence of necessity than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Partially confirmed
H13 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will score higher on metaphor of the ledger than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Rejected
H14 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'want' category will score higher on claim of normalcy than illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category.	Rejected
H15 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will score higher on claim of entitlement than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Rejected
H16 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'must' category will score higher on denial of negative intent than illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category.	Rejected
H17 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' and 'want' category will score higher on claims of relative acceptability than illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category.	Rejected
H18 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will score higher on justification by postponement than illegitimate complainers in other categories.	Rejected
H19 Illegitimate complainers in the 'want' category will have a lower score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint.	Confirmed
H20 Illegitimate complainers in the 'can' category will have a higher score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint.	Confirmed
H21 Illegitimate complainers in the 'must' category will have a lower score on (a) satisfaction, (b) trust, (c) commitment, (d) WOM, and (e) repurchase intention than before the complaint.	Confirmed

## 5.2 Theoretical contributions

This study is theoretically relevant, as it was the first research that was not conceptual, qualitative in nature, or based on limited data. Besides, this study was confirmatory in nature, and made use of a large sample, in contrast to the previous studies. It contributes to the existing literature on (why people engage in) illegitimate complaining behaviour: it appeared that there are different categories of illegitimate complainers, who use different neutralization techniques to justify their behaviour, and who experience a different relationship with the firm in question after their illegitimate complaint. The neutralization techniques and relationship with the firm

were extensions that had not been examined in this context yet, that helped increase the knowledge of this sensitive topic. In this paragraph, a more in-depth explanation of the results, and the corresponding literature will be given.

There are three categories of complainers to distinguish. This is in line with the results of Joosten (unpublished). However, the classification of these categories and the variables belonging to these categories appeared to be moderately different. Complainers in the ‘want’ category were not necessarily driven by distributive injustice, procedural injustice, and interactional injustice. However, it was found that complainers in the ‘want’ category were driven by ‘halo-effect’, ‘contrast effect1’, ‘contrast effect2’, but mostly by ‘lack of morality’. Both contrast-effect variables suggest that the product/service did not meet the expectations of the complainer. Furthermore, besides the original defects, more defects were found, indicated by the halo-effect variable. However, as lack of morality was the only variable that was also proposed in this cluster of Joosten (unpublished), this variable seems the decisive variable for ‘want’ to complainers: the firm that is intentionally swindling the customer. This corresponds to the literature that states that lack of morality is a strong motivator, that could lead to feelings of revenge (Wooten, 2009; Grégoire, Lauffer & Tripp, 2010), that could make customers complain illegitimately, as a consequence of a predetermined plan. No specific label for ‘want’ to complainers did exist in the literature yet. However, this category seems to correspond most to what the literature describes as the “wrong” motives of complaining customers: the unjust/unfounded complaints, in which the customer is dishonest, and is consciously making up, or exaggerating the complaint (Day, Grabicke, Schaeztle, & Staubach, 1981; Reynolds & Harris, 2005; Berry & Seiders, 2008).

Besides, as expected, complainers in the ‘want’ category, generally, make use of the following neutralization techniques when justifying their behaviour: denial of victim, and condemnation of condemners. However, contrary to the expectations, denial of responsibility, appeal to higher loyalties, defence of necessity, and denial of negative intent are also highly used techniques for this category, just like they are for the category ‘must’ complainers. Denial of responsibility, appeal to higher loyalties and defence of necessity are techniques that, subsequently, can be explained for this category: the anger with the firm in question made them do it. This might also explain why ‘want’ to complainers experience a deteriorated relationship with the firm after their complaint: this category has the lowest scores on repurchase intention, WOM, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. It can be concluded that injustice evaluations (Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar, 1998) are not enough to establish a deteriorated relationship with the firm. The feeling that the firm is purposely betraying

customers (lack of morality), and the anger accompanying this feeling, is the straw that breaks the camel's back. One interesting finding is the significant result for denial of negative intent for this category. However, this result cannot be explained easily, as it suggests that the person in question was not planning to complain illegitimately. An explanation for this result might lie in this category of complainers being somewhat comparable to the category of 'must' complainers, that were, indeed, expected to have a higher score on denial of negative intent than 'want' to complainers. This might also explain why 'must' complainers and 'want' to complainers, generally, have the same results for the use of certain neutralization techniques. Furthermore, the extra analysis of this research (Appendix IX) confirmed that the 'want' to complain category is somewhat ambiguous, since 'must' and 'can' category were the only two clear categories. Therefore, the question arises whether there are indeed three categories of illegitimate complainers, or whether there are, ultimately, only two categories to distinguish.

Second, complainers in the 'can' category were not necessarily driven by halo-effect, but by internal attribution, and liberal redress policy. Both variables seem to be necessary for 'can' complainers. This was confirmed in the extra analysis of this research. Internal attribution suggests the complainer filed an illegitimate complaint on purpose, and it was completely attributable to him-or herself. Thus, normally, there would be nothing the complainer could do. However, the firm in question had a liberal redress policy in place, and advantage of this policy could be taken. This corresponds to the literature, that states that liberal redress policies are open to abuse (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010), especially to opportunistic ('can') complainers (Ro & Wong, 2012). Furthermore, the label 'opportunistic plotters' (Huang & Miao, 2016) in the academic literature seems to correspond most to 'can' complainers.

An interesting finding of this research was that none of the expected neutralization techniques were more frequently used by 'can' complainers, compared to other categories. The reason for this might, again, lie in the ambiguous category of 'want' to complainers, that may cause troubled effects for 'can' complainers. When this category was excluded from the analysis, significant effects for 'can' complainers appeared for claim of normalcy, and claim of entitlement. The 'want' category might, therefore, be a redundant one. However, the researcher urges future research to delve into this matter even more deeply. For denial of injury, metaphor of the ledger, claims of relative acceptability, and justification by postponement, were, contrary to the expectation, no significant effects found. These techniques might be unimportant in the context of illegitimate complaining, as these excuses were used by neither of the categories of illegitimate complainers. Lastly, as expected, 'can' complainers do experience a better relationship with the firm after their complaint. This corresponds to the Reciprocity Theory

(Falk & Fischbacher, 2006), in which individuals may, indeed, have the feeling they have to give something back to the firm as a consequence of their illegitimate complaint. This is interesting knowledge for practitioners, which will be discussed more in-depth in the next paragraph of this chapter.

Finally, complainers in the ‘must’ category were not necessarily driven by contrast effect, but by loss of control. Both loss of control variables seem to be the necessary conditions for ‘must’ complainers, as these variables were also found in the clusters of Joosten (unpublished), and the extra analysis of this research. It is about the feeling that the complainer is unable to do something about the situation. This corresponds with the literature, in which the Reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) describes that people have a strong motivation to regain control after a dissatisfying service encounter. The helpless customer (‘must’ complainer) is very likely to complain illegitimately to the service provider as an attempt to regain control, as he/she may think the firm is more inclined to respond to that customer if the complaint is more severe (Kowalski, 1996). No specific label for ‘must’ to complainers did exist in the literature yet. However, this category seems to correspond most to actual Customer Complaining Behaviour (CCB): “*an expression of dissatisfaction, whether subjectively experienced or not*” (Kowalski, 1996, p. 180), only applied to illegitimate complaining. Especially the subjective experience seems to matter for this category: a customer may truly believe his/her complaint is true, and may therefore, as a final cry for help, complain illegitimately.

Besides, complainers in the ‘must’ category, generally, make use of the following neutralization techniques when justifying their behaviour: denial of responsibility, appeal to higher loyalties, defence of necessity, and denial of negative intent. These results were all according to expectation. Lastly, ‘must’ complainers indeed experience a deteriorated relationship with the firm. It all comes down to the same conclusion as was drawn for the ‘want’ category: the angriness with the firm in question made them do it. The service failure was attributed to the firm, which resulted in a lower satisfaction, trust, commitment, WOM, and repurchase intention (Kalamas, Laroche & Makdessian, 2008).

### **5.3 Managerial implications**

The results of this research are relevant for businesses with complaint handling procedures in place. As stated before, a lot of companies still rely on “*The customer is always right*” policy (Huang, Zhao, Miao & Fu, 2014, p. 544), and, thereby, spend a lot of money and time in service recovery processes (Joosten, unpublished). However, the results of this research, including the results of earlier studies (Reynolds & Harris, 2005; Daunt & Harris, 2012; Berry & Seiders,

2008; Joosten, unpublished), showed that the customer is, undoubtedly, not always right. Illegitimate complaining is a common, and problematic phenomenon, especially within big firms, since people are more inclined to voice an illegitimate complaint when it concerns a large company (394 respondents in this research: 78.5%). The managerial implications of this research mostly address to the results of the relationship variables of this research.

First, an important take-away from this research is that it is, indeed, not profitable to retain every customer (Woo & Fock, 2004), or to proactively encourage all customer complaints (Prim & Pras, 1999). Therefore, firms might reconsider giving every customer the benefit of the doubt, regardless of the validity of their complaint. In this research, it became clear that ‘must’ complainers and ‘want’ to complainers are not beneficial in terms of their relationship with that firm, as these customers will anyhow experience a deteriorated relationship, and leave the company. However, firms can profit from ‘can’ complainers by, for example, having a liberal redress policy in place to retain them. In such policies, opportunities are given to people to complain illegitimately (Harris & Reynolds, 2005), but these ‘can’ complainers will stay with the company as a result of reciprocal feelings. For ‘can’ complainers, therefore, the researcher wants to emphasize the importance of relationship marketing: the firm can call the customer, for example, after a week, to check if the product/service is still working properly.

Nevertheless, the company needs to weigh up carefully what is desired. On the one hand, the company can turn a blind eye to the illegitimate complainants in the ‘can’ category, and give in, accompanied with long term profitability. On the other hand, the company can choose not to tolerate illegitimate complainants in the ‘can’ category, which comes at the expense of long-term profitability, but it is a choice that is more ethically justified.

By any means, a firm may want to avoid ‘must’ and ‘want’ to complainers. First, as ‘must’ complainers are mostly driven by a loss of control, the company should prevent such feelings with the customer. The company must listen carefully to the complaint, and respond to the customer in a timely and kind manner: treat the customer right (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Besides, in a search for a solution, the customer can be consulted too, as the most important thing is that the customer does not have the feeling that he/she is losing control. Second, as ‘want’ to complainers are mostly driven by a lack of morality, the company should prevent that customers perceive the service was failed on purpose. Therefore, the firm is advised to apologize for what happened (regardless of the validity of the complaint), to make clear this situation had not occurred due to the firm taking advantage of the situation.

Besides, firms can train personnel to make decisions without following strict guidelines, that, generally, make customers angry, and to flexibly handle complaints (Ro & Wong, 2012).

Every complaint must be taken seriously, but it is important that questions are asked regarding the (cause) of the problem. Employees may be trained in detecting what kind of neutralization technique is used. 'Must' and 'want' to complainers both use denial of responsibility, appeal to higher loyalties, defence of necessity and denial of negative intent more often than 'can' complainers do. Finally, experts may be hired that are able to judge whether or not a complaint is legitimate or not (Joosten, unpublished).

#### **5.4 Limitations and future research**

Though the results of the current study have relevant theoretical and valuable managerial implications, both must be interpreted in light of the limitations and shortcomings, which will be discussed next. Besides, interesting avenues for future research are considered.

The first limitation of this research concerns the use of a convenience sample to reach possible respondents. This form is considered a risky sampling method for social research, as it does not permit any control over the representativeness of the sample (Babbie, 2015). However, the advantages of such a non-probability method were balanced against the disadvantages, and taking into account the fact that illegitimate complaining is a sensitive issue, it was decided that this form of sampling was justified. However, generalizing the outcomes must be done with great caution, as this research might lack external validity (Calder, Phillips & Tybout, 1982). The demographic statistics also confirmed that females of the age of 25 and younger, for example, were overrepresented in this study. Therefore, future researches could make use of another sampling method to improve generalizability.

Second, the choice for the use of an online survey needs to be debated. This method may also contribute to invalid samples through the self-selection bias, and the non-response bias (Vaske, 2008). Besides, although several measures have been taken to control social desirability, it might still be the case that respondents felt like they could not be honest, as a consequence of self-presentation concerns. Illegitimate complaining is a taboo topic, that can generate inaccurate survey estimates, distorted by the social desirability bias (Krumpal, 2013). Future studies might try to overcome this issue by using other methods to generate data, like an in-depth interview, or a participant observation. This last method is the most suitable one to make statements about actual behaviour (Bleijenbergh, 2013). Regarding the online survey, three shortcomings need to be addressed. The first is about the gender-question, in which only two choices were given to respondents ('man', or 'woman'). To the researchers' great regret, one respondent was somewhat offended, since there was no option to choose 'other' as an answer for this question. The researcher never meant to insult anyone with this research, and,

this consideration will doubtlessly be taken into account in possible future studies. Besides, the survey was only available in Dutch, which meant that not every respondent had the opportunity to participate, and interesting results might have been lost. It would have been better if the survey was also available in English. Lastly, as this research was confirmatory in nature, it was assumed people do complain illegitimately. Respondents were not given the opportunity to answer that they did not complain illegitimately, or that one question might not be applicable for them (they could then only answer the question with ‘do not agree/do not disagree’). This might have led to biased results. Future research could take all of these shortcomings into account when studying illegitimate complaining behaviour.

The third limitation of this research concerns some statistical shortcomings. First, all of the variables in this research were single-item measures. The reason for this was the confirmatory nature of this research, in which the best items of the previous studies of Joosten (unpublished) were already selected. However, single-item measures are, generally, discouraged, as reliability and validity can hardly be estimated (Wanous & Reichers, 1996). Nevertheless, single-item measures can be equally valid as multiple-item measures (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007). Besides, based on the practical grounds of minimizing respondent refusal and cost (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007), the decision was made to make use of single-item constructs. Nevertheless, this might have had consequences for the reliability and validity of this research. Another notion regarding the validity concerns the absence of clear measurement scales for the use of neutralization techniques in the context of illegitimate complaining. Although the scales of this research were based on other academics, no standards existed, which could have affected the validity. Furthermore, in the current study, most of the variables were not normally distributed. Although the researcher already expected this about the data upfront, variables were transformed to see if normality could be improved (which appeared not to be the case). The results of the regression analysis and the One-Way MANOVA might, as a consequence, be biased due to non-linearity. This may also explain why certain variables in the regression analysis were not significant in the current study, contrary to the results of Joosten (unpublished). However, one important notion is that the constant of the regression model was significant, meaning that the model explained a lot of variance in the dependent variable illegitimate complaining, and no major independent variables were missed out (Hair et al., 2014), which is valuable knowledge for future research. To sum, although the researcher tried to overcome the aforementioned limitations, it might be that the outcomes of this research are not robust. Therefore, future researchers may try to replicate the current study with multiple-

item measures, with another sampling method (for more variation in the data), to validate the results of this research.

Fourth, the decision was made to categorize participants based on their highest mean score on a particular cluster (as the most extreme answers were the most relevant ones). However, some respondents were found that had a relatively high mean score on more than one cluster. Although the highest score on only one of those clusters determined whether or not the respondent was classified within that cluster, it might also be possible that an illegitimate complainer belongs to more than one category. Besides, the extra analysis of this research showed that only two clear categories of complainers could be distinguished: ‘can’ and ‘must’ complainers. Future inquiries might take into account the notion that illegitimate complainers can belong to multiple categories, and might provide an answer whether or not two or more categories of complainers, in reality, exist.

The limitations of this study could have caused insignificant or less strong effects. Thus, the researcher genuinely hopes that researchers will continue studying this interesting topic, to extend the findings and to broaden the knowledge on illegitimate complaining.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Survey of current study

Beste meneer/mevrouw,

Hartelijk dank voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek! Wij zijn Stijn van Pinxteren, Koos Rouwhorst, Suzanne van Vliet en Laura Zendijk, masterstudenten Marketing van de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. Voor onze masterthesis doen wij - onder begeleiding van onze docent Dr. Herm Joosten - onderzoek naar het klaaggedrag van consumenten.

Iedereen heeft wel eens geklaagd over een product of dienst. Veel mensen willen ook toegeven dat hun klacht soms niet helemaal eerlijk (namelijk overdreven of verzonnen) is. U claimt bijvoorbeeld schade aan uw mobiele telefoon die u zelf veroorzaakt heeft of u klaagt over het eten in een restaurant, terwijl er niets mis mee is. Het kan ook zijn dat u klaagt bij uw kabelmaatschappij dat u al weken zonder internet zit, terwijl u maar een dag zonder zat of u eist daarbij een schadevergoeding die helemaal of deels onterecht is.

Dit onderzoek richt zich op de motivatie van consumenten om klachten te overdrijven of te verzinnen. Wij begrijpen dat dit onderwerp wellicht gevoelig ligt, daarom is deze enquête volledig anoniem wat betekent dat niemand kan achterhalen wie de antwoorden heeft ingevuld. Daarnaast gebruiken wij de gegevens uitsluitend voor dit onderzoek en is deelname geheel vrijwillig. Tot slot zijn er geen goede of foute antwoorden, omdat het gaat over hoe u de situatie heeft beleefd. De enquête zal ongeveer 10 minuten duren.

Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw deelname! U helpt ons en de wetenschap een stap verder!

Stijn van Pinxteren  
Koos Rouwhorst  
Suzanne van Vliet  
Laura Zendijk  
Dr. Herm Joosten



**Radboud University**



Uit onderzoek blijkt dat veel mensen wel eens een klacht hebben overdreven of verzonnen. Heeft u ook wel eens een klacht overdreven of verzonnen? Denk dan terug aan die situatie bij het beantwoorden van de vragen.

Toelichting: Mocht u niet onmiddellijk een eigen overdreven of verzonnen klacht te binnen schieten, dan helpen misschien voorbeelden uit ons eigen leven:

**Stijn:** “Toen we in mijn huis een extra televisieabonnement kochten bij een provider heeft dit de eerste week niet gewerkt. Vervolgens hebben we onze klacht hierover ontzettend overdreven met het resultaat dat we een half jaar lang ons hele pakket t.w.v. €75,- per maand gratis kregen.”

**Koos:** “Mijn koffer is de heenreis van vakantie eens kwijtgeraakt. Waar ik de eerste vijf dagen aan het lijntje werd gehouden met de belofte dat mijn koffer ‘de dag er na zou aankomen’ hoorde ik vanaf dag vijf niks meer over mijn koffer. Uiteindelijk bij de vliegmaatschappij een hoger bedrag opgegeven over de waarde van de inhoud dan dat er daadwerkelijk in zat. Ik verwachtte niet het gehele bedrag te krijgen, en dit bleek waar.”

**Suzanne:** “Ik heb wel eens een nieuwe blouse op een te warme temperatuur gestreken (zonder te kijken of ik die blouse wel kon strijken) waardoor het materiaal smolt. Op het label stond echter dat je het kledingstuk op een lage temperatuur kon strijken. Ik heb het bedrijf daarom verteld dat ik niet te warm gestreken heb en mijn klacht dus overdreven om zo een nieuwe blouse te krijgen.”

**Laura:** "Mijn mobiele telefoon was buitenshuis gevallen en hierdoor kapotgegaan. Vervolgens heb ik aan de verzekering doorgegeven dat dit in huis was gebeurd. Daardoor heb ik geld terug kunnen krijgen via mijn inboedelverzekering, en bleef de schade voor mij beperkt.

**Herm:** “De touroperator vertelde dat ze mij om moesten boeken naar een ander hotel in Spanje. Ik heb gedaan alsof ik dit heel erg vond en daardoor kreeg ik uiteindelijk voor elkaar dat ik een veel betere hotelkamer kreeg, met uitzicht op zee.”

**Neem de tijd om goed na te denken over een situatie waarin u een klacht (deels) heeft overdreven of verzonnen**

Over welk product of welke dienst heeft u overdreven of verzonnen geklaagd (of een claim ingediend)?

---

Wat was de waarde van het product/de dienst ongeveer?

---

Wat is de naam van het bedrijf/de instantie waar u heeft geklaagd?

---

Hoe groot was het bedrijf waar u heeft geklaagd?

- Klein bedrijf (bijv. eenmanszaak)
- Middelgroot bedrijf (bijv. 2 of 3 vestigingen)
- Groot bedrijf (bijv. winkelketen of grote producent)

Wat was (volgens u) het probleem met het betreffende product of de dienst?

---

In hoeverre heeft u de klacht overdreven (dus **erger** voorgesteld dan het daadwerkelijk was)?

	Helemaal niet overdreven	Een klein beetje overdreven	Half overdreven	Grotendeels overdreven	Geheel overdreven
Probleem overdreven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

In hoeverre heeft u de klacht verzonnen (ofwel **anders** voorgesteld dan het daadwerkelijk was)?

	Helemaal niet verzonnen	Een klein beetje verzonnen	Half verzonnen	Grotendeels verzonnen	Geheel verzonnen
Probleem verzonnen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Wanneer speelde uw beschreven situatie?

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

Nu volgen een paar stellingen over de omstandigheden van de klacht. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
De oorzaak van de klacht was mijn eigen schuld	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De oorzaak van de klacht was de schuld van het bedrijf	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mijn ervaring met het product/de dienst was veel slechter dan verwacht	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het bedrijf probeerde opzettelijk misbruik van mij te maken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik probeerde opzettelijk misbruik te maken van het bedrijf	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb van tevoren gepland om te proberen een voordeeltje te behalen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb van de gelegenheid gebruik gemaakt om een voordeeltje te behalen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ik was teleurgesteld in het bedrijf	<input type="radio"/>				
Ik was boos op het bedrijf	<input type="radio"/>				
Het bedrijf heeft een goede garantieregeling en daar heb ik gebruik van gemaakt	<input type="radio"/>				

We zijn al op de helft van de vragen. Nu volgen een paar stellingen over de omstandigheden van de klacht. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stellingen?

	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Het bedrijf reageerde niet (meer) op mijn vragen en verzoeken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het bedrijf hield zich niet aan de afspraken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik had hoge verwachtingen van het product/de dienst	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nadat ik een fout ontdekte in het product/de dienst ontdekte ik nog meer gebreken	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>Het product/de dienst had nog meer gebreken, maar daarover heb ik niet geklaagd</p>		<input type="radio"/>						
<p>Het voorstel van het bedrijf om de klacht op te lossen was oneerlijk naar mij toe</p>		<input type="radio"/>						
<p>De manier waarop het bedrijf mij behandelde was onbeleefd</p>		<input type="radio"/>						
<p>De klachtprocedure van het bedrijf was traag en moeizaam</p>		<input type="radio"/>						
<p>Ik ben iemand die niet snel klaagt</p>		<input type="radio"/>						
<p>Ik denk dat mijn vrienden of bekenden in dezelfde situatie de klacht ook overdreven of verzonnen zouden hebben</p>		<input type="radio"/>						

In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende stellingen betreffende uw klacht?

	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Het was niet mijn schuld	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het bedrijf zal er heus geen ernstige schade door lijden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het bedrijf verdient het door wat ze gedaan hebben	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het bedrijf is ook niet altijd eerlijk tegenover klanten	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik deed het niet voor mezelf (maar uit principe of voor anderen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Iedereen overdrijft wel eens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik was niet op voorhand van plan om overdreven te klagen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andere mensen doen veel ergere dingen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Normaal gesproken houd ik me wel aan de regels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik mag ook wel eens een meevallertje hebben	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Anders werd ik  
niet serieus  
genomen door het  
bedrijf

Op dat moment  
dacht ik niet echt  
na over de  
consequenties  
(gevoelens  
kwamen later  
pas)

We zijn bijna aan het einde van de vragenlijst. We willen nog graag weten in hoeverre uw houding ten opzichte van het bedrijf is veranderd na het indienen van uw klacht.

	Veel kleiner	Kleiner	Onveranderd	Groter	Veel groter
De kans dat ik nogmaals aan aankoop doe bij het bedrijf in kwestie is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>				
De kans dat ik anderen (familie/vrienden/etc.) het bedrijf in kwestie aanraad is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>				
Het vertrouwen dat ik in het bedrijf in kwestie heb na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>				
Mijn band met het bedrijf is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>				
Mijn tevredenheid over het bedrijf is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>				

Als laatste nog 5 korte vragen.

Wat is de totale tijd dat uw beschreven situatie (van klacht indienen tot afhandeling) heeft gespeeld?

---

Heeft u al vaker een klacht overdreven/verzonnen?

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

Wat is uw leeftijd?

---

Wat is uw geslacht?

- Man
  - Vrouw
- 

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

- Lagere school/basisonderwijs
  - Voortgezet onderwijs
  - MBO (MAVO)
  - HBO
  - Universiteit
- 

Dit waren de vragen. **Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking.** Indien u geïnteresseerd bent in de resultaten van het onderzoek kunt u een mail sturen naar [s.vanpinxteren@student.ru.nl](mailto:s.vanpinxteren@student.ru.nl), [k.rouwhorst@student.ru.nl](mailto:k.rouwhorst@student.ru.nl), [suzannevan.vliet@student.ru.nl](mailto:suzannevan.vliet@student.ru.nl) of [laura.zendijk@student.ru.nl](mailto:laura.zendijk@student.ru.nl).

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## Appendix II: Operationalization of the central constructs

Table 2: The dependent variable (DV) and the drivers

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item(s)</b>
<b>Illegitimate complaining (DV)</b>	In hoeverre heeft u de klacht overdreven (dus <b>erger</b> voorgesteld dan het daadwerkelijk was)? In hoeverre heeft u de klacht verzonnen (ofwel <b>anders</b> voorgesteld dan het daadwerkelijk was)
<b>Internal attribution</b>	De oorzaak van de klacht was mijn eigen schuld
<b>External attribution</b>	De oorzaak van de klacht was de schuld van het bedrijf
<b>Contrast effect</b>	Mijn ervaring met het product/de dienst was slechter dan verwacht ( <i>contrast effect1</i> ) Ik had hoge verwachtingen van het product/de dienst ( <i>contrast effect2</i> )
<b>Lack of morality</b>	Het bedrijf probeerde opzettelijk misbruik van mij te maken
<b>Financial greed</b>	Ik probeerde opzettelijk misbruik te maken van het bedrijf
<b>Planning</b>	Ik heb van tevoren gepland om te proberen een voordeeltje te behalen
<b>Opportunism</b>	Ik heb van de gelegenheid gebruik gemaakt om een voordeeltje te behalen
<b>Disappointment</b>	Ik was teleurgesteld in het bedrijf
<b>Anger</b>	Ik was boos op het bedrijf
<b>Liberal redress policy</b>	Het bedrijf heeft een goede garantieregeling en daar heb ik gebruik van gemaakt
<b>Loss of control</b>	Het bedrijf reageerde niet (meer) op mijn vragen en verzoeken ( <i>loss of control1</i> ) Het bedrijf hield zich niet aan de afspraken ( <i>loss of control2</i> )
<b>Halo-effect</b>	Nadat ik een fout ontdekte in het product/de dienst, ontdekte ik nog meer gebreken
<b>Assimilation</b>	Het product/de dienst had nog meer gebreken, maar daarover heb ik niet geklaagd
<b>Distributive injustice</b>	Het voorstel van het bedrijf om de klacht op te lossen was oneerlijk naar mij toe
<b>Interactional injustice</b>	De manier waarop het bedrijf mij behandelde was onbeleefd
<b>Procedural injustice</b>	De klachtprocedure van het bedrijf was traag en moeizaam
<b>Negative attitude towards complaining</b>	Ik ben iemand die niet snel klaagt

<b>Positive subjective norm</b>	Ik denk dat mijn vrienden of bekenden in dezelfde situatie de klacht ook overdreven of verzonnen zouden hebben
---------------------------------	--

Table 3: The neutralization techniques

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item(s)</b>
<b>Denial of responsibility</b>	Het was niet mijn schuld
<b>Denial of injury</b>	Het bedrijf zal er heus geen ernstige schade door lijden
<b>Denial of the victim</b>	Het bedrijf verdient het door wat ze gedaan hebben
<b>Condemnation of the condemners</b>	Het bedrijf is ook niet altijd eerlijk tegenover klanten
<b>Appeal to higher loyalties</b>	Ik deed het niet voor mezelf (maar uit principe of voor anderen)
<b>Claim of normalcy</b>	Iedereen overdrijft wel eens
<b>Denial of negative intent</b>	Ik was op voorhand niet van plan om overdreven te klagen
<b>Claims of relative acceptability</b>	Andere mensen doen veel ergere dingen
<b>Metaphor of the ledger</b>	Normaal gesproken houd ik me wel aan de regels
<b>Claim of entitlement</b>	Ik mag ook wel eens een meevallertje hebben
<b>Defence of necessity</b>	Anders werd ik niet serieus genomen door het bedrijf
<b>Justification by postponement</b>	Op dat moment dacht ik niet echt na over de consequenties (gevoelens kwamen later pas)

Table 4: The relationship variables

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item(s)</b>
<b>Repurchase intention</b>	De kans dat ik nogmaals een aankoop doe bij het bedrijf in kwestie is na deze situatie:
<b>Word of Mouth (WOM)</b>	De kans dat ik anderen (familie/vrienden/etc.) het bedrijf in kwestie aanraad is na deze situatie:
<b>Trust</b>	Het vertrouwen dat ik in het bedrijf in kwestie heb is na deze situatie:
<b>Commitment</b>	Mijn band met het bedrijf is na deze situatie:
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Mijn tevredenheid over het bedrijf is na deze situatie:

## Appendix III: Pre-tests of the survey

Table 5: Descriptive information about the pre-test

Respondent	Leeftijd	Opleiding	Apparaat	Datum	Tijdsduur
1	23	Hbo	Laptop	9-3-2019	11:15 min
2	21	Hbo	Laptop	10-3-2019	18:40 min
3	23	WO	Laptop	10-3-2019	11 min
4	53	WO	Laptop	10-3-2019	16 min
5	26	Hbo	Laptop	11-3-2019	10 min
6	30	Hbo	Laptop	10-3-2019	11 min
7	24	WO	Laptop	11-3-2019	13 min
8	23	WO	Laptop	11-2-2019	8 min
9	59	WO	iPad	11-2-19	7 min
10	55	Hbo	Laptop	13-2-19	12 min

Table 6: Notes of the respondents regarding the survey

<p><b>Respondent 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geen opmerkingen</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respondent 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vraag ‘Het product/de dienst had nog meer gebreken, maar daarover heb ik niet geklaagd’. Deze vraag is onduidelijk, want het ging er toch juist om dat ik heb overdreven, als er meer te klagen was dan had ik dat bij de ‘klacht’ wel aangegeven.</li> <li>• Vraag met betrekking tot studierichting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respondent 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hoe specifiek moet de vraag over de klacht.</li> <li>• Vraag grootte van het bedrijf: wat als het een online bedrijf is?</li> <li>• Toevoegen bij “het bedrijf verdiende het”. Verdiende wat? De overdreven klacht.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respondent 4:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typefout in voorbeelden</li> </ul>

**Respondent 5:**

- Vraag grootte van het bedrijf: wat als het een online bedrijf is?
- Vraag het was niet mijn schuld: concreter, wat was precies niet mijn schuld?

**Respondent 6:**

- Niet meteen duidelijk dat de klacht, die ze moeten invullen op pagina 1 een **overdreven** klacht moet zijn (niet zomaar een algemene klacht)
- Oorzaak van de schuld lag tussenin: hij trok te hard aan de sok en bedrijf kan ook productiefout hebben gemaakt
- Het bedrijf probeerde opzettelijk misbruik van me te maken: onduidelijk à weet niet wat hij moet invullen
- Ik ben iemand die snel klaagt in plaats van **niet** snel klaagt (hij las erover heen)
- Het was **niet** mijn schuld moet worden mijn schuld (hij leest er weer overheen: je moet het zelf omdraaien)
- Het was niet mijn opzet om overdreven te klagen (moet van tevoren zijn?)
- Rare vraag: heeft u al vaker een klacht overdreven: 0 keer, 1 tot 2 keer, 3 tot 4 keer (weet hij veel hoe vaak hij heeft geklaagd, zal wel ergens tussenin liggen)
- Radboud mailadressen gebruiken in plaats van eigen mails (staat professioneler)

**Respondent 7:**

- Professioneler als namen op alfabetische volgorde staan
- Overdreven of verzonnen in tweede scherm dikgedrukt maken?
- Namen dikgedrukt maken bij voorbeelden klaaggedrag
- Waar heeft u geklaagd: lijkt op de locatie waar het is. Duidelijker: wat is de naam van het bedrijf of instantie? Naam bedrijf: voelt niet goed. Soort privacy schending. Wat voor soort bedrijf is beter: Hema = warenhuis bv. Eventueel nog categorieën maken: warenhuis, elektra etc.
- Wat was het probleem met het betreffende product: er hoeft niet per se een probleem te zijn. Hij wilde van tevoren al klagen. Dus vraagstelling klopt niet. Daarnaast moet balkje groter worden gemaakt, je kan nu niet makkelijk teruglezen wat je precies getypt hebt.
- Mijn ervaring met product/dienst was **veel** slechter moet slechter worden. Veel is niet goed.
- Niet van toepassing button maken.
- Uit het niets: het was niet mijn schuld. Het moet zijn: de overdreven klacht was niet mijn schuld.
- Neutralization techniques: beetje spreektaal.
- Anders werd ik niet serieus genomen door het bedrijf: als ik niet overdreven had geklaagd werd ik niet serieus genomen door het bedrijf.
- Consequenties: moeten negatieve consequenties zijn.
- Heeft u vaker een klacht verzonnen: 3 en vaker dan 3 lijken erg op elkaar. 1x, paar keer, of veel vaker.
- Geslacht: 'anders' als 3<sup>e</sup> categorie?

**Respondent 8:**

- Ze heeft ooit een horloge geclaimd terwijl ie gestolen was ipv dat hij kwijt was voor op de reisverzekering. Heeft ze duidelijk helemaal verzonnen. Maar ook helemaal overdreven? Is niet helemaal duidelijk. Niet van toepassing optie erbij.
- Garantieregeling: niet van toepassing erbij
- Het product/dienst had nog meer gebreken: niet van toepassing erbij
- Overdreven en verzonnen klachten halen we door elkaar: is niet hetzelfde. Overdreven: kras op telefoon: 28 barsten in. Verzonnen: is gewoon niet waar: horloge niet gestolen maar kwijt.

- Anders werd ik niet serieus genomen: niet van toepassing erbij op verzonnen klacht.
- Totale tijd: van indienen tot totale afhandeling!

**Respondent 9:**

- Wijzigen aantal spelfouten in de inleiding.
- Nadat ik een fout ontdekte in het product... etc. De vragen betreffen een product en deze specifieke situatie ging over een huurservice. Niet van toepassing optie mist dan.
- Nuance tussen helemaal mee oneens en oneens is misschien wat klein.
- Vraag wat is de totale tijd dat uw beschreven situatie... Vreemde vraag die onduidelijk is.
- Het bericht u bent over de helft van de vragen komt te laat. Ik zou deze een blok naar voren schuiven.

**Respondent 10:**

- Waar heeft u geklaagd? Moet dit met naam en toenaam?
- Ik heb een verjaarde klacht. Is dat dan verzonnen of overdreven?
- Schaal is soms wat onduidelijk, dan moet ik de vraag twee keer lezen.
- Vragen lijken soms erg op elkaar
- Antwoordcategorieën (oneens- mee eens) vallen deels weg op de laptop, dan moet je naar boven scrollen.
- Bij een aantal vragen vul ik liever ja of nee in i.p.v. eens of oneens.
- Je kunt niet terug om je vorige antwoorden te controleren of aan te passen.
- De vraag 'op dit moment dacht ik niet na over de consequenties' moet ik wel twee keer lezen.
- Wat is de totale tijd dat uw situatie heeft gespeeld is een onduidelijke vraag.
- Een spelfout wijzigen in de inleiding.

## Appendix IV: Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 7: Coefficients table (for assessing multicollinearity)

	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>	
	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
Internal attribution	.538	1.868
External attribution	.422	2.372
Contrast effect1	.566	1.766
Lack of morality	.618	1.617
Financial greed	.454	2.205
Planning	.700	1.429
Opportunism	.681	1.467
Disappointment	.293	3.409
Anger	.358	2.796
Liberal redress policy	.641	1.560
Loss of control1	.427	2.339
Loss of control2	.458	2.185
Contrast effect2	.890	1.123
Halo-effect	.647	1.545
Assimilation	.766	1.305
Interactional injustice	.337	2.964
Procedural injustice	.462	2.164
Negative attitude towards complaining	.942	1.062
Positive subjective norm	.927	1.078
Distributive injustice (centred)	.160	6.256
Distributive injustice (polynomial term2)	.255	3.917
Distributive injustice (polynomial term3)	.104	9.625

Table 8: Model Summary

Model Summary										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	St. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin Watson
1	.642 <sup>a</sup>	.412	.385	.33232	.412	15.274	22	479	.000	1.916

Table 9: ANOVA

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.089	22	1.686	15.274	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	52.869	479	.110		
	Total	89.958	501			

Figure 2: Scatterplot (logarithmic dependent variable)

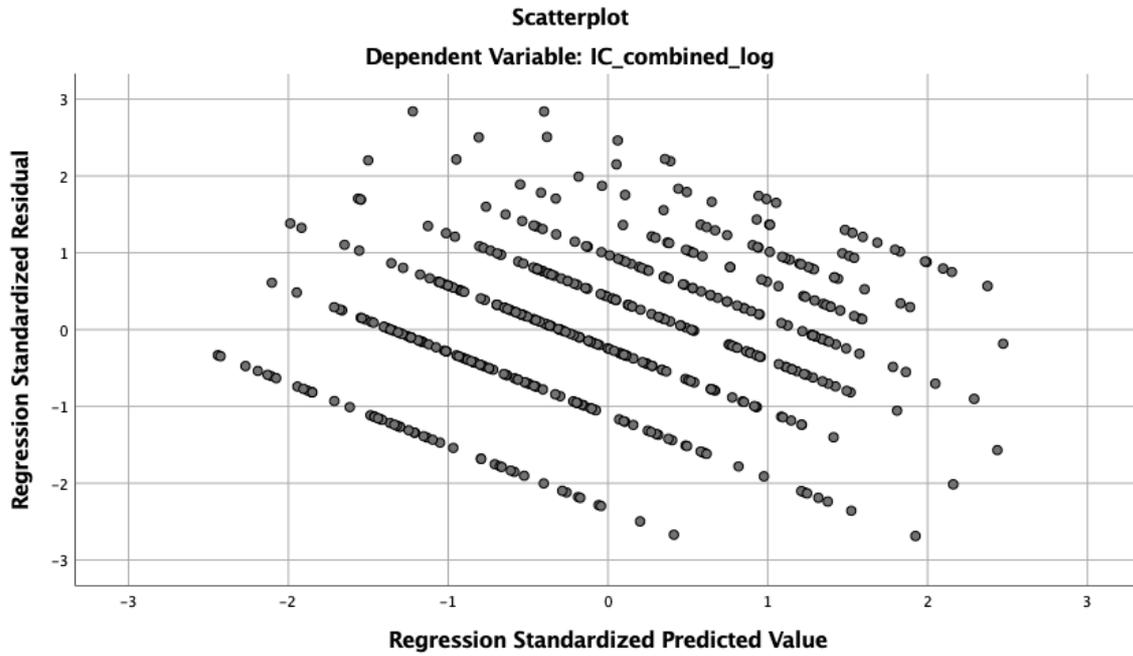


Figure 3: Histogram (logarithmic dependent variable)

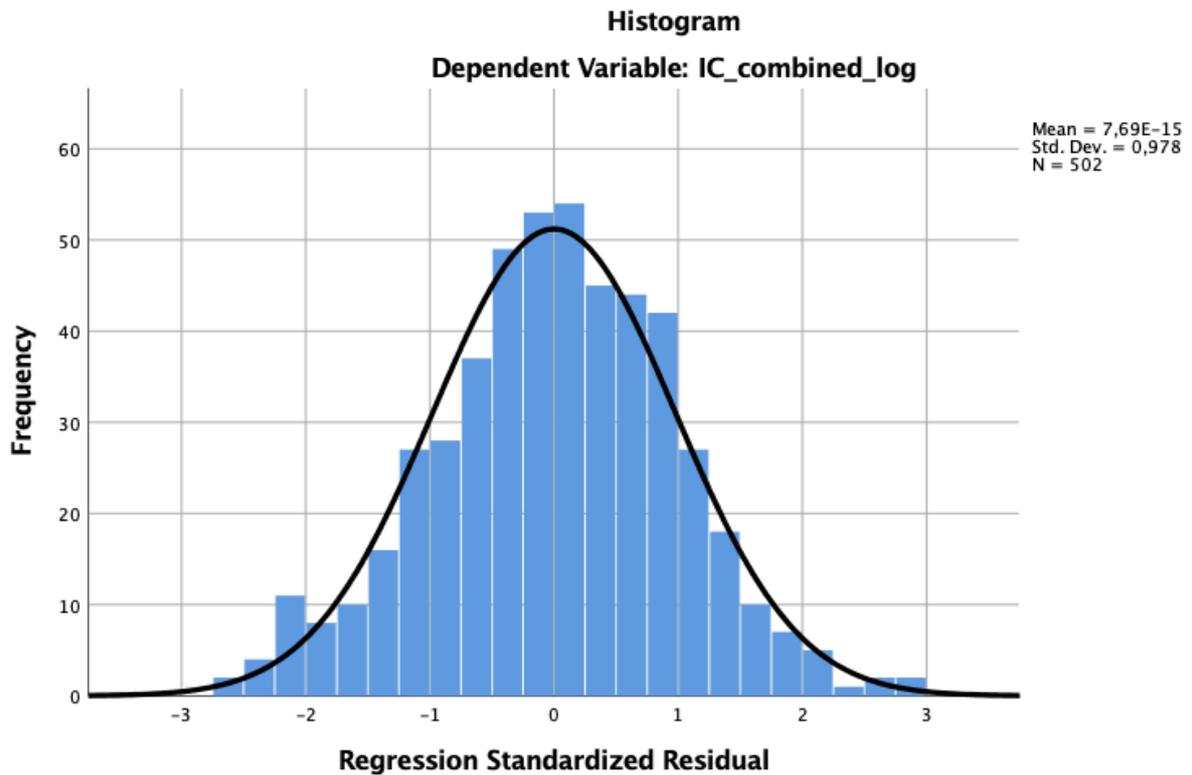


Figure 4: Normal P-Plot (logarithmic dependent variable)

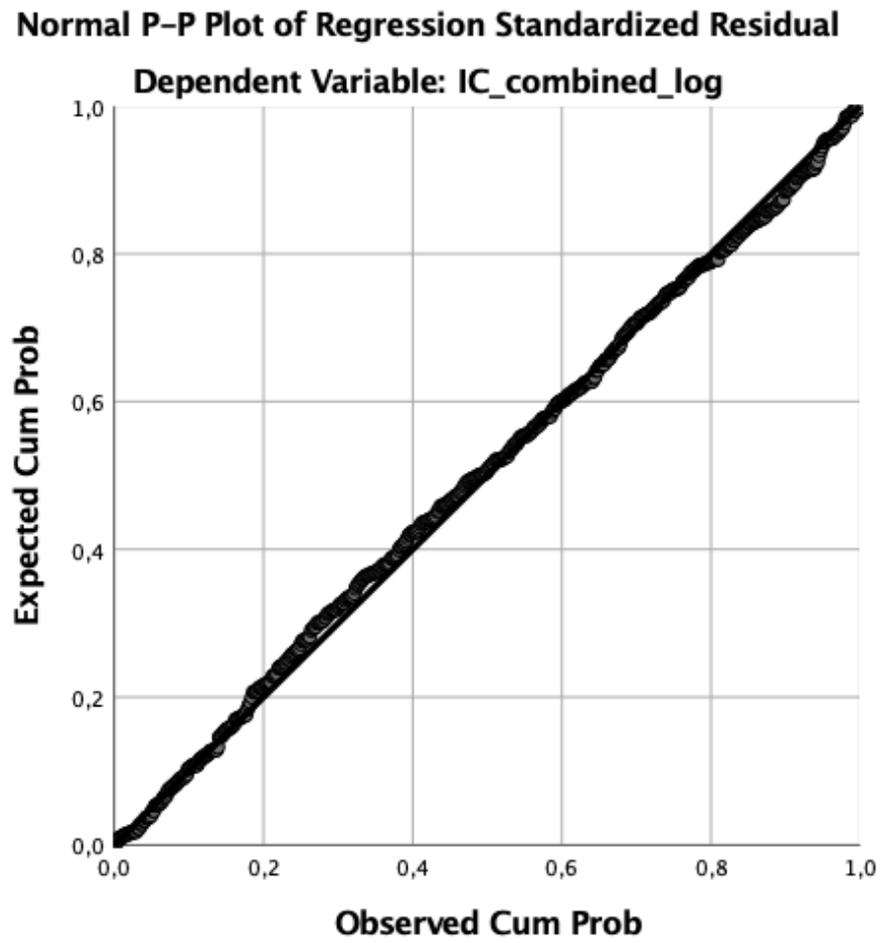
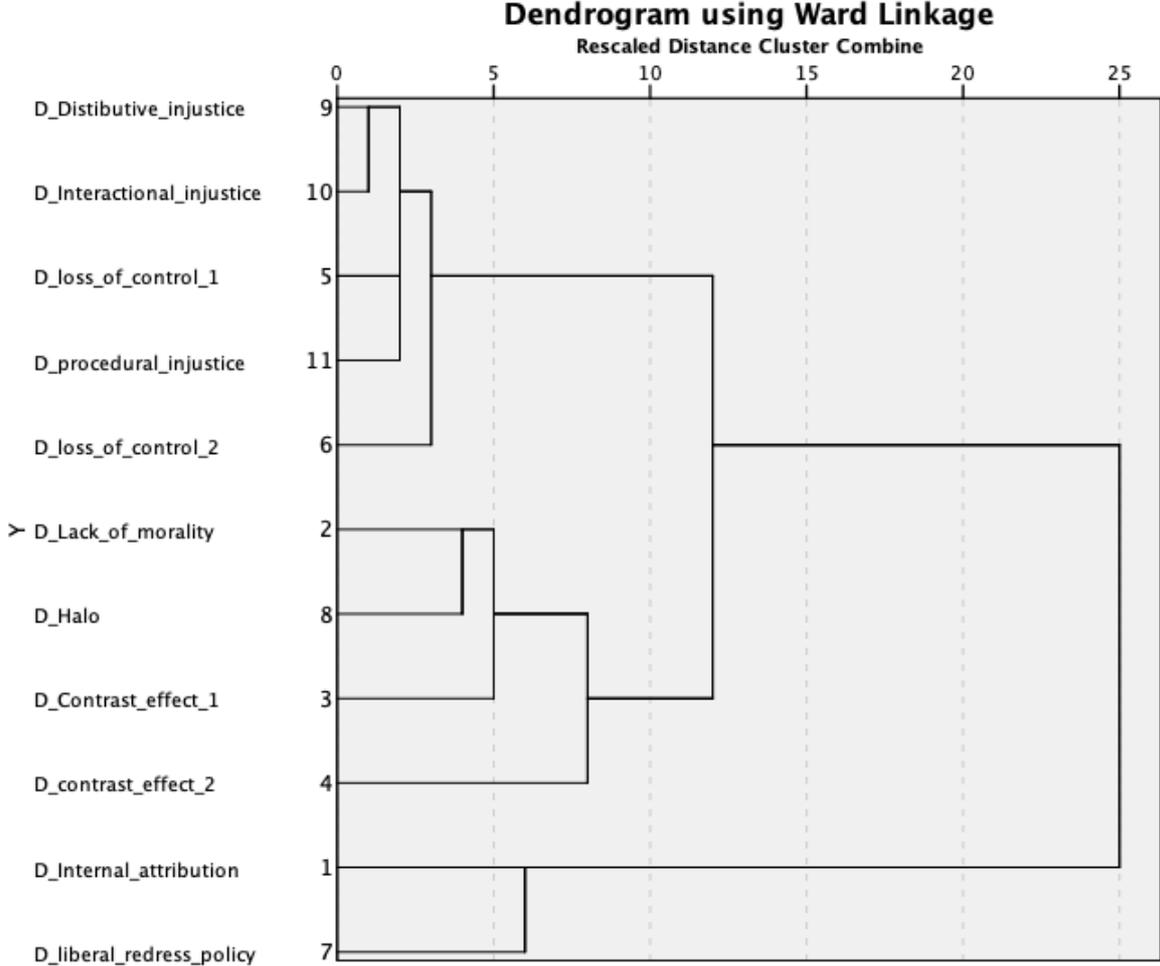


Table 10: Coefficients

Model	Coefficients			t	Sig.					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients							
	B	Std. Error	Beta							
1	(Constant)	-.030	.151							
	Internal attribution	.054	.014	.178	3.722	.000				
	External attribution	.004	.016	.014	.258	.797				
	Contrast effect1	-.016	.016	-.047	-1.002	.317				
	Lack of morality	.015	.017	.038	.851	.395				
	Financial greed	.126	.017	.376	7.227	.000				
	Planning	-.001	.013	-.003	-.080	.936				
	Opportunism	.039	.014	.123	2.899	.004				
	Disappointment	-.016	.020	-.051	-.784	.433				
	Anger	.001	.018	.004	.063	.950				
	Liberal redress policy	.010	.015	.030	.696	.487				
	Loss of control1	.003	.020	.007	.139	.889				
	Loss of control2	-.016	.017	-.047	-.900	.369				
	Contrast effect2	.020	.016	.045	1.200	.231				
	Halo-effect	.034	.017	.088	2.025	.043				
	Assimilation	-.017	.016	-.044	-1.100	.272				
	Interactional injustice	.015	.022	.040	.670	.503				
	Procedural injustice	.012	.016	.040	.769	.443				
	Negative attitude towards complaining	-.016	.014	-.041	-1.148	.251				
	Positive subjective norm	.045	.016	.100	2.744	.006				
	Distributive injustice (centred)	.028	.030	.082	.933	.351				
	Distributive injustice (polynomial term2)	.024	.017	.097	1.405	.161				
	Distributive injustice (polynomial term3)	-.020	.009	-.237	-2.181	.030				

### Appendix V: Hierarchical cluster analysis

Figure 5: Dendrogram for the identification of the number of clusters



## Appendix VI: Exploratory Factor Analysis (first attempt)

Table 11: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			.885
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		2053.862
	df		55
	Sig.		.000

Table 12: Factor Correlation Matrix

Factor Correlation Matrix				
Factor	1	2	3	
1	1.000	.150	-.460	
2	.150	1.000	-.151	
3	-.460	-.151	1.000	

Table 13: Communalities

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Internal attribution	.220	.436
Contrast effect1	.297	.453
Lack of morality	.338	.409
Liberal redress policy	.316	.460
Loss of control1	.559	.597
Loss of control2	.524	.564
Contrast effect2	.083	.107
Halo-effect	.243	.379
Distributive injustice	.616	.663
Interactional injustice	.653	.729
Procedural injustice	.519	.573

Table 14: Total Variance Explained

Total Variance Explained							
Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings <sup>a</sup>
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	4.578	41.615	41.615	4.150	37.729	37.729	4.026
2	1.344	12.221	53.836	.723	6.569	44.297	.876
3	1.058	9.619	63.456	.498	4.524	48.822	1.860
4	.855	7.769	71.224				
5	.604	5.491	76.715				
6	.578	5.250	81.966				
7	.558	5.075	87.041				
8	.436	3.965	91.006				
9	.398	3.622	94.628				
10	.345	3.137	97.765				
11	.246	2.235	100.000				

Table 15: Pattern Matrix\*

Pattern Matrix			
	Factor		
	1	2	3
Internal attribution			.663
Contrast effect1		.308	-.473
Lack of morality	.548		
Liberal redress policy	-.423	.367	
Loss of control1	.752		
Loss of control2	.670		
Contrast effect2		.318	
Halo-effect		.501	
Distributive injustice	.792		
Interactional injustice	.868		
Procedural injustice	.771		

\*Note: Pattern Matrix with all of the factorloadings (cross-loaders included)

## Appendix VII: Exploratory Factor Analysis (second attempt)

Table 16: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			.891
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		2012.364
	df		45
	Sig.		.000

Table 17: Factor Correlation Matrix

Factor Correlation Matrix			
Factor	1	2	3
1	1.000	.459	.308
2	.459	1.000	.169
3	.308	.169	1.000

Table 18: Communalities

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Internal attribution	.220	.498
Contrast effect1	.286	.409
Lack of morality	.337	.425
Liberal redress policy	.296	.394
Loss of control1	.558	.596
Loss of control2	.515	.561
Halo-effect	.239	.449
Distributive injustice	.616	.665
Interactional injustice	.653	.734
Procedural injustice	.518	.572

Table 19: Total Variance Explained

Total Variance Explained							
Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings <sup>a</sup>
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	4.572	44.716	45.716	4.145	41.449	41.449	3.993
2	1.180	11.796	57.513	.652	6.517	47.966	1.768
3	1.053	10.534	68.046	.507	5.070	53.036	1.283
4	.605	6.046	74.092				
5	.578	5.781	79.874				
6	.569	5.693	85.567				
7	.444	4.438	90.005				
8	.405	4.052	94.057				
9	.348	3.484	97.541				
10	.246	2.459	100.000				

Table 20: Pattern Matrix\*

	Pattern Matrix		
	Factor		
	1	2	3
Internal attribution		-.715	
Contrast effect1		.479	
Lack of morality	.403		.427
Liberal redress policy	-.539		
Loss of control1	.764		
Loss of control2	.652		
Halo effect			.602
Distributive injustice	.788		
Interactional injustice	.875		
Procedural injustice	.770		

\*Note: Pattern Matrix with all of the factorloadings (cross-loaders included)

## Appendix VIII: One-Way MANOVA

Table 21: Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices <sup>a</sup>	
Box's M	471.699
F	1.416
df1	306
df2	78133.164
Sig.	.000

Table 22: Multivariate tests

Effect		Multivariate Tests <sup>a</sup>					
		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.988	2158.968 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	427.000	.000	.988
	Wilks' Lambda	.012	2158.968 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	427.000	.000	.988
	Hotelling's Trace	85.954	2158.968 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	427.000	.000	.988
	Roy's Largest Root	85.954	2158.968 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	427.000	.000	.988
Clusterindeling_Joosten	Pillai's Trace	.519	8.820	34.000	856.000	.000	.259
	Wilks' Lambda	.524	9.572 <sup>b</sup>	34.000	854.000	.000	.276
	Hotelling's Trace	.825	10.337	34.000	852.000	.000	.292
	Roy's Largest Root	.709	17.846 <sup>c</sup>	17.000	428.000	.000	.415

Table 23: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects\*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects							
Source	Dependent variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Clusterindeling_Joosten	Denial of responsibility	239.493	2	119.747	82.231	.000	.271
	Denial of injury	.094	2	.047	.072	.930	.000
	Denial of victim	128.903	2	64.452	52.681	.000	.192
	Condemnation of the condemners	39.799	2	19.900	17.422	.000	.073
	Appeal to higher loyalties	29.146	2	14.573	11.926	.000	.051
	Claim of normalcy	2.609	2	1.305	2.300	.101	.010
	Denial of negative intent	35.362	2	17.681	14.820	.000	.063
	Claims of relative acceptability	.892	2	.446	.558	.573	.003
	Metaphor of the ledger	2.850	2	1.425	2.098	.124	.009
	Claim of entitlement	5.652	2	2.826	3.705	.025	.016
	Defence of necessity	20.557	2	10.278	7.286	.001	.032
	Justification by postponement	2.105	2	1.052	.923	.398	.004
	Repurchase intention	44.966	2	22.483	37.254	.000	.144
	WOM	51.074	2	25.537	38.276	.000	.173
	Trust	68.623	2	34.312	46.478	.000	.205
Commitment	69.467	2	34.733	57.250	.000	.205	
Satisfaction	102.647	2	51.324	65.164	.000	.227	

\*Note: The most relevant results (clusterindeling\_Joosten) are displayed. The results of the Corrected Model, Intercept, Error, Total, and Corrected Total are excluded.

Table 24: Multiple Comparisons\*

Dependent Variable		Multiple Comparisons		Mean Difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig.
		(I) Cluster indeling_ Joosten	(J) Cluster indeling_ Joosten			
Denial of responsibility	Games-Howell	1	2	.07	.173	.903
			3	1.49*	.123	.000
		2	1	-.07	.173	.903
			3	1.42*	.180	.000
		3	1	-1.49*	1.23	.000
			2	-1.42*	.180	.000
Denial of injury	Games-Howell	1	2	.05	.128	.930
			3	.01	.081	.985
		2	1	-.05	.128	.930
			3	-.03	.125	.962
		3	1	-.01	.081	.985
			2	.03	.125	.962
Denial of victim	Games-Howell	1	2	-.58*	.157	.001
			3	.90*	.113	.000
		2	1	.58*	.157	.001
			3	1.48*	.155	.000
		3	1	-.90*	.113	.000
			2	-1.48*	.155	.000
Condemnation of the condemners	Games-Howell	1	2	-.84*	.135	.000
			3	.11	.111	.590
		2	1	.84*	.135	.000
			3	.95*	.140	.000
		3	1	-.11	.111	.590
			2	-.95*	.140	.000
Appeal to higher loyalties	Games-Howell	1	2	.02	.180	.994
			3	.52*	.110	.000
		2	1	-.02	.180	.994
			3	.50*	.175	.015
		3	1	-.52*	.110	.000
			2	-.50*	.175	.015
Claim of normalcy	Games-Howell	1	2	.21	.117	.167
			3	-.03	.076	.913
		2	1	-.21	.117	.167
			3	-.24	.115	.092
		3	1	.03	.076	.913
			2	.24	.115	.92
Denial of negative intent	Games-Howell	1	2	.03	.148	.976
			3	.57*	.112	.000
		2	1	-.03	.148	.976
			3	.54*	.155	.002
		3	1	-.57*	.112	.000
			2	-.54*	.155	.002
Claims of relative acceptability	Games-Howell	1	2	.06	.145	.905
			3	.09	.089	.538
		2	1	-.06	.145	.905
			3	.03	.144	.971
		3	1	-.09	.089	.538
			2	-.03	.144	.971
Metaphor of the ledger	Games-Howell	1	2	.23	.128	.181
			3	.12	.083	.295
		2	1	-.23	.128	.181
			3	-.10	.131	.706
		3	1	-.12	.083	.295
			2	.10	.131	.706
Claim of entitlement	Games-Howell	1	2	.10	.138	.748
			3	-.20	.088	.066
		2	1	-.10	.138	.748



Table 25: Descriptive statistics (mean scores)\*

Descriptive Statistics				
	Clusterindeling_Joosten	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Denial of responsibility	1	4.11	1.134	198
	2	4.04	1.138	55
	3	2.62	1.294	193
	Total	3.46	1.410	446
Denial of injury	1	4.28	.843	198
	2	4.24	.838	55
	3	4.27	.757	193
	Total	4.27	.805	446
Denial of victim	1	2.98	1.155	198
	2	3.56	.996	55
	3	2.09	1.084	193
	Total	2.67	1.228	446
Condemnation of the condemners	1	2.99	1.040	198
	2	3.84	.834	55
	3	2.89	1.154	193
	Total	3.05	1.107	446
Appeal to higher loyalties	1	2.33	1.183	198
	2	2.31	1.184	55
	3	1.81	.995	193
	Total	2.10	1.132	446
Claim of normalcy	1	3.99	.777	198
	2	3.78	.762	55
	3	4.03	.725	193
	Total	3.98	.755	446
Denial of negative intent	1	3.81	1.028	198
	2	3.78	.956	55
	3	3.24	1.188	193
	Total	3.56	1.126	446
Claims of relative acceptability	1	3.93	.907	198
	2	3.89	.963	55
	3	3.84	.860	193
	Total	3.89	.893	446
Metaphor of the ledger	1	4.01	.780	198
	2	3.78	.854	55
	3	3.89	.858	193
	Total	3.93	.826	446
Claim of entitlement	1	3.59	.912	198
	2	3.49	.900	55
	3	3.79	.824	193
	Total	3.66	.879	446
Defence of necessity	1	3.28	1.144	198
	2	3.49	1.169	55
	3	2.91	1.236	193
	Total	3.15	1.204	446
Justification by postponement	1	2.60	1.084	198
	2	2.73	1.096	55
	3	2.51	1.041	193
	Total	2.58	1.067	446
Repurchase intention	1	2.66	.838	198
	2	2.31	.960	55
	3	3.19	.643	193
	Total	2.85	.838	446
WOM	1	2.58	.879	198
	2	2.29	.956	55
	3	3.18	.700	193
	Total	2.80	.883	446
Trust	1	2.64	.901	198
	2	2.33	1.055	55
	3	3.34	.747	193
	Total	2.90	.943	446
Commitment	1	2.67	.854	198
	2	2.09	.845	55
	3	3.25	.671	193

Satisfaction	Total	2.85	.872	446
	1	2.77	.958	198
	2	2.18	1.038	55
	3	3.54	.757	193
	Total	3.03	1.007	446

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\* Note: 1 = must, 2 = want, 3 = can.

## **Appendix IX: Extra analysis with the significant variables of this research**

To test the hypotheses of this study, the clusters of Joosten (unpublished) were used in the analysis. However, this research was not able to validate these clusters entirely. When taking into account the significant variables of the regression analysis, other clusters than those (that were set a priori) of Joosten (unpublished) were found. Therefore, an additional analysis with the variables of Joosten, and the significant variables of this research, was done.

First, a new hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted. Here, the significant variables ‘financial greed’, ‘opportunism’, and ‘positive subjective norm’ were, next to the variables that were already proposed by Joosten (unpublished) (‘internal attribution’, ‘contrast effect1’, ‘contrast effect2’, ‘lack of morality’, ‘liberal redress policy’, ‘loss of control1’, ‘loss of control2’, ‘halo-effect’, ‘distributive injustice’, ‘procedural injustice’, and ‘interactional injustice’), taken into account. The same procedures were followed, and a new hierarchical cluster analysis indicated two clear clusters (which can be seen in figure 6 in this Appendix). The first is the one with the variables ‘distributive injustice’, ‘interactional injustice’, ‘procedural injustice’, ‘loss of control1’, and ‘loss of control2’, which is in accordance with the category of ‘must’ complainers (as loss of control is the necessary condition for this category). The second one is a cluster with the variables: ‘liberal redress policy’, ‘internal attribution’, ‘financial greed’, and ‘opportunism’, which is in accordance with the category of ‘can’ complainers (as internal attribution and liberal redress policy are necessary conditions for this category). The other clusters that were found were ambiguous, and were not taken into account in further analysis, which means that ‘want’ to complainers were excluded.

Hereafter, all of the respondents were classified in a certain cluster again, following the extreme group approach. Based on the mean scores on the clusters, respondents were given the number 1 (that represented the ‘must’ complain category: 160 respondents, 31.9%), or the number 2 (that represented the ‘can’ complain category: 329 respondents, 65.5%). A total of 13 respondents (2.6%) were left who had a similar score on the two clusters, and, therefore, these respondents were not taken into account in the analysis. Hereafter, a new One-Way MANOVA had been conducted to examine to what extent the categories ‘must’ complain, and ‘can’ complain differ on the dependent variables ‘neutralization techniques’ and ‘relationship variables’, and to see to what extent the results were different from the previous analysis. Once again, there appeared to be a statistically significant difference in the dependent variables for the different groups ( $F(17, 471) = 22.63, p < .001, \text{Wilk's } \Lambda = .550, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .450$ ). This time, no post-hoc tests were performed, because there were only two groups to distinguish.

Interestingly, most of the results for the neutralization techniques appeared to be approximately the same (Appendix VIII) as the results conducted by the previous MANOVA with three categories. The ‘must’ complainers (mean = 4.27), for example, also had a higher mean score on denial of responsibility than the ‘can’ complainers (mean = 3.12) ( $F(1) = 88.72, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .154$ ). The same goes for denial of victim, appeal to higher loyalties, denial of negative intent, and defence of necessity. Furthermore, some variables that were not significant in the previous analysis, were also insignificant in this analysis: denial of injury, claims of relative acceptability, metaphor of the ledger, and justification by postponement. However, three variables deserve some extra attention, as the results are slightly different than the results of the previous One-Way MANOVA. The first is condemnation of the condemners. In the previous analysis, no significant difference was found between the ‘must’ and ‘can’ complainers. In this new analysis, the ‘must’ complainers (mean = 3.59) have a higher mean score on condemnation of the condemners than the ‘can’ complainers (mean = 2.88) ( $F(1) = 48.29, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .090$ ). Besides, claim of normalcy, now, showed a significant univariate main effect (in contrast to the previous analysis) ( $F(1) = 9.44, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .019$ ), with a higher mean for ‘can’ complainers (mean = 4.04) than ‘must’ complainers (mean = 3.82). Finally, claim of entitlement, also showed a significant univariate main effect (in contrast to the previous analysis) ( $F(1) = 8.23, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .017$ ), with, anew, a higher mean for ‘can’ complainers (mean = 3.73) than ‘must’ complainers (mean = 3.49).

Again, all of the relationship variables showed a significant univariate main effect (as can be seen in table 28 ‘Tests of Between-Subjects Effects’). Besides, all of the results were in accordance with the previous analysis: complainers in the ‘must’ category score significantly lower on satisfaction, trust, commitment, WOM, and repurchase intention than before the complaint. However, complainers in the ‘can’ category score significantly higher on satisfaction, trust, commitment, WOM, and repurchase intention than before the complaint. The results, tables and figures belonging to this analysis are displayed next.

Figure 6: New dendrogram for the identification of the number of clusters

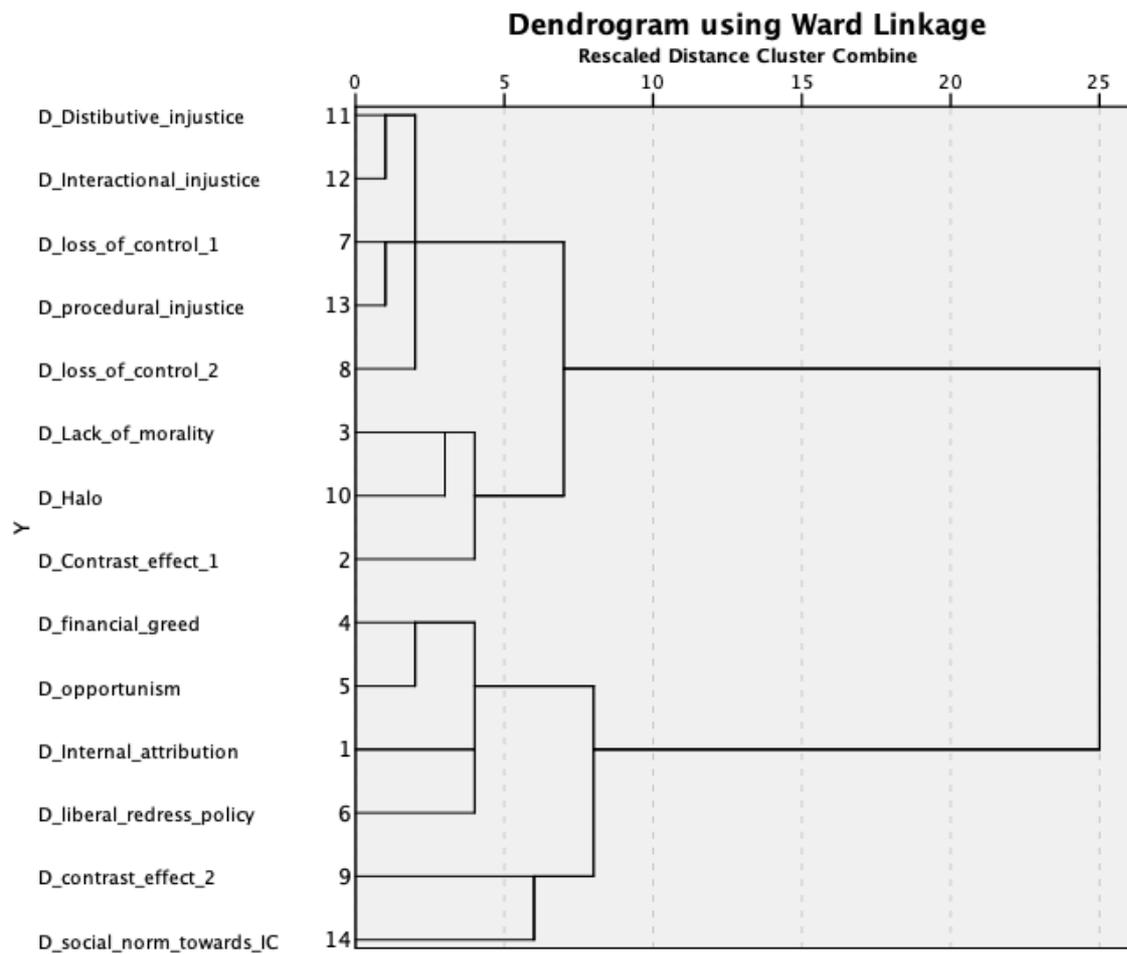


Table 26: Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices <sup>a</sup>	
Box's M	258.795
F	1.619
df1	153
df2	331793.272
Sig.	.000

Table 27: Multivariate tests

Effect		Multivariate Tests <sup>a</sup>					Partial Eta Squared
		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.991	2956.825 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	471.000	.000	.991
	Wilks' Lambda	.009	2956.825 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	471.000	.000	.991
	Hotelling's Trace	106.722	2956.825 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	471.000	.000	.991
	Roy's Largest Root	106.772	2956.825 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	471.000	.000	.991
Clusterindeling_Our_ Data	Pillai's Trace	.450	22.625 <sup>b</sup>	34.000	471.000	.000	.450
	Wilks' Lambda	.550	22.625 <sup>b</sup>	34.000	471.000	.000	.450
	Hotelling's Trace	.817	22.625 <sup>b</sup>	34.000	471.000	.000	.450
	Roy's Largest Root	.817	22.625 <sup>b</sup>	17.000	471.000	.000	.450

Table 28: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects\*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects							
Source	Dependent variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Clusterindeling_ Our_Data	Denial of responsibility	143.968	1	143.968	88.719	.000	.154
	Denial of injury	.029	1	.029	.045	.831	.000
	Denial of victim	157.497	1	157.497	131.908	.000	.213
	Condemnation of the condemners	53.662	1	53.662	48.292	.000	.090
	Appeal to higher loyalties	48.212	1	48.212	40.820	.000	.077
	Claim of normalcy	5.103	1	5.103	9.438	.002	.019
	Denial of negative intent	35.754	1	35.754	29.907	.000	.058
	Claims of relative acceptability	1.063	1	1.063	1.373	.242	.003
	Metaphor of the ledger	.562	1	.562	.803	.371	.002
	Claim of entitlement	6.303	1	6.303	8.321	.004	.017
	Defence of necessity	17.238	1	17.238	12.263	.001	.025
	Justification by postponement	.376	1	.376	.340	.560	.001
	Repurchase intention	81.334	1	81.334	140.470	.000	.224
	WOM	93.588	1	93.588	147.802	.000	.233
	Trust	130.277	1	130.277	192.849	.000	.284
	Commitment	110.050	1	101.050	188.142	.000	.279
Satisfaction	167.710	1	167.710	232.533	.000	.323	

\*Note: The most relevant results (Clusterindeling\_Our\_Data) are displayed. The results of the Corrected Model, Intercept, Error, Total, and Corrected Total are excluded.

Table 29: Descriptive statistics (mean scores)\*

Descriptive Statistics				
	Clusterindeling_Our_Data	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Denial of responsibility	1	4.27	.997	160
	2	3.12	1.389	329
	Total	3.50	1.384	489
Denial of injury	1	4.27	.814	160
	2	4.25	.796	329
	Total	4.26	.802	489
Denial of victim	1	3.55	.983	160
	2	2.34	1.142	329
	Total	2.74	1.231	489
Condemnation of the condemners	1	3.59	.934	160
	2	2.88	1.108	329
	Total	3.11	1.104	489
Appeal to higher loyalties	1	2.58	1.221	160
	2	1.91	1.015	329
	Total	2.12	1.130	489
Claim of normalcy	1	3.82	.816	160
	2	4.04	.693	329
	Total	3.97	.742	489
Denial of negative intent	1	3.96	.986	160
	2	3.38	1.142	329
	Total	3.57	1.125	489
Claims of relative acceptability	1	3.81	.959	160
	2	3.91	.838	329
	Total	3.88	.880	489
Metaphor of the ledger	1	3.97	.831	160
	2	3.90	.839	329
	Total	3.93	.836	489
Claim of entitlement	1	3.49	.876	160
	2	3.73	.868	329
	Total	3.65	.877	489
Defence of necessity	1	3.41	1.140	160
	2	3.01	1.207	329
	Total	3.14	1.199	489
Justification by postponement	1	2.61	1.059	160
	2	2.55	1.050	329
	Total	2.57	1.052	489
Repurchase intention	1	2.23	.911	160
	2	3.09	.676	329
	Total	2.81	.863	489
WOM	1	2.14	.901	160
	2	3.07	.740	329
	Total	2.76	.908	489
Trust	1	2.12	.900	160
	2	3.22	.781	329
	Total	2.86	.970	489
Commitment	1	2.15	.870	160
	2	3.16	.708	329
	Total	2.83	.900	489
Satisfaction	1	2.15	.933	160
	2	3.40	.806	329
	Total	2.99	1.031	489

\* Note: 1 = must, 2 = can.