

Illegitimate complaints: are they legit?

Linking neutralization techniques and customer-company relationships to
illegitimate complaining behavior

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Hereby I state that this master thesis is original and exclusively written by myself. When I used knowledge or ideas of other resources, I have mentioned this explicitly in the text and references.

Preface

In front of you lies the master thesis entitled “Illegitimate complaints: are they legit?”. This research was carried out to obtain my master’s degree in Business Administration. The study has been conducted in the period from November 2018 until June 2019.

This study is an extension of two previously conducted studies of my supervisor dr. H. Joosten. Based on these findings, this study aims to both confirm the suggested drivers of illegitimate complaints, and investigate the relationship with neutralization techniques and the customer-company relationship. Together with three fellow students, I took on the challenge to investigate this sensitive topic. We collaborated for data collection and analyses, whereas we all had our own process in writing our thesis. Therefore, I would like to thank Stijn van Pinxteren, Koos Rouwhorst, and Suzanne van Vliet for their pleasant and successful cooperation. Moreover, without all the respondents of our survey, we would not have been able to execute this study. Therefore, a special thanks to them, and to my family and friends.

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor dr. H. Joosten for his helpful and professional guidance. He certainly conveyed his enthusiasm about this topic to me, which in turn helped me to successfully complete this thesis.

I am proud to present you this thesis, and I hope you will enjoy reading it.

Laura Zendijk

Nijmegen, June 7, 2019

Abstract

Making mistakes is common in products and services. As a consequence, customers could complain about these mistakes. As previously discussed, these complaints can be legitimate, but also exaggerated or even forged. Moreover, illegitimate complaints can cause a lot of personal and financial damage for businesses, something that companies like to prevent.

This study is a follow-up to previous studies of dr. H. Joosten, in which drivers of illegitimate complaints are identified. Current study is an attempt to confirm those drivers. Furthermore, potential types of illegitimate complainants are described, and linked to neutralization techniques. Hereafter, the impact on the customer-company relationship was compared and discussed per type. Therefore, the following research question is set up: *“What are the relationships between the three types of illegitimate complainants, the neutralization techniques, and the customer-company relationship?”*. By conducting an online survey, data was gathered for a regression analysis, factor analysis, cluster analysis and multivariate analysis of variance. The analyses suggested four clusters of illegitimate complainants, which partially matched with the hypothesized clusters. The first type of illegitimate complainants is driven by distributive-, interactional-, and procedural injustice, and a sense of loss of control. The second type is driven by a lack of morality of the service provider, the halo effect, and the contrast effect. The third type is driven by internal attribution, a liberal redress policy of the service provider, financial greed, and opportunism. The fourth type was considered as irrelevant. Thus, the regression analysis only partially confirmed the hypotheses about which factors drive which type of illegitimate complainant. Since these clusters did not conform with the hypothesized clusters, the hypotheses hereafter were tested with the hypothesized clusters, based on previous studies.

To prevent customers from complaining illegitimately in the future, companies should invest time and money in the relationship with their customers. More specifically, showing goodwill to customers to prevent them from experiencing a sense of loss of control is of high importance. However, since illegitimate complaints of the can-type are induced by the opportunity that arises, company's redress policy should not be too liberal. In other words, companies should adopt the customer is always right principle, as long as strict boundaries regarding the redress policy are set. Nonetheless, further research is desirable to investigate whether these findings hold when the adjusted types of the cluster analysis are used.

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1. Introduction

During my job as a front office employee in a hotel, I encountered customer complaints on a daily basis. In terms of content, these complaints differed considerably, ranging from minor complaints about a shortage of eggs at breakfast, to larger complaints about a mistake in the reservation. Handling these complaints was challenging, but usually resulted in satisfied guests. I frequently wondered to what extent all these complaints corresponded with the actual incident. Sometimes, the illegitimacy of this complaint was proven (such as a deficiency in the room, which turned out not to be broken), but generally the truth remains unclear. Moreover, since frontline employees are often the primary targets of expressions of aggression in service organizations (Grandey *et al.*, 2010), I personally felt the need for a deeper understanding of this behavior. This, to provide a defense of frontline employees against complainants. Easier recognition of an illegitimate complaining attempt, prevents frontline employees to fall for them.

Making mistakes is common in products and services. As a consequence, customers could complain about these mistakes. As previously discussed, these complaints can be legitimate, but also exaggerated or even forged. Moreover, illegitimate complaints can cause a lot of personal and financial damage for businesses, something that companies like to prevent. Challenging in investigating this issue is the fact that customers need to admit that they perform this behavior. Moreover, it is not always recognized by illegitimate complainants. Nevertheless, previous research has generated some useful insights into this phenomenon.

Several studies focused on classifying different types of illegitimate complainants. In 2016, Huang and Miao identified three types: *opportunistic plotters*, *repetitive grumblers*, and *occasional tyrants*. *Opportunistic plotters* try to exploit the hospitality of others. They usually complain after utilizing the service, which makes it harder for the service provider to check the actual facts in this complaint. *Repetitive grumblers* do not even need an inducement to complain. They complain repeatedly in order to get financial compensation. *Occasional tyrants* exploit “the customer is always right” attitude of organizations. A minor mistake of the service provider can induce them to ask for unrealistic and disproportionate requests.

Recently, Joosten (unpublished) proposed three other types of illegitimate complainers: a *want-type*, a *can-type*, and a *need-type*. The *want-type* is based on four drivers, and is based on perceived maltreatment by the service provider. The *can-type* is similar to the occasional tyrants of the previously mentioned types of Huang and Miao (2016). These complainants abuse a liberal redress policy of the service provider, by exaggerating every inaccuracy they encounter. The third group initially filed a legitimate complaint, but after repeated attempts to contact the company without any reaction, they exaggerate the complaint in order to draw attention to the case. This *need-type*, got to this action due to an experienced sense of loss of control regarding the service provider.

The latter three types are based on two studies (Joosten, unpublished). The first study, an explorative multiple case study, investigated the illegitimacy of complaints in files of the “Geschillencommissie”. The second study was based on a survey in which the drivers of this behavior were investigated. Based on these drivers, the three types are suggested. The three types of Huang and Miao (2016) were based on only sixteen interviews with frontline employees in the hospitality industry. Due to this limited qualitative research, the empirical

evidence of these types is lower than the types Joosten proposed. This study aims to confirm the three types Joosten proposed. However, it is under researched whether there is a difference in the use of neutralization techniques among these types. Furthermore, the relationship between the complainant and the organization can be affected by the illegitimate complaint. Per type, this effect will be investigated as well.

1.1 Neutralization theory

It is not a prerequisite that illegitimate complainants are unsatisfied customers (Ro & Wong, 2012, p. 420). This behavior occurs specifically among opportunistic complainers who exaggerate the complaint, or lie about the situation to benefit financially (Jacoby & Jaccard, 1981; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Despite this deliberate action, illegitimate complainants feel connected with the society and therefore, aim to justify their behavior (Sykes & Matza, 1957). This is known as the neutralization theory. This theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) explains five techniques delinquents use to justify their behavior. These techniques are called *the denial of responsibility*, *the denial of injury*, *the denial of the victim*, *the condemnation of the condemners*, and *the appeal to higher loyalties*. After this study, this theory is extended by several researchers who added seven techniques: *the claim of normalcy*, *the denial of negative intent*, *the claim of relative acceptability*, *the metaphor of the ledger*, *the claim of entitlement*, *the defense of necessity*, and *the justification by postponement*. Some techniques do not only focus on excusing the behavior for the complainant him or herself, but also for those who disapprove of the behavior. This study investigates whether illegitimate complainants use these techniques to justify their behavior. If so, the diversity in the use of techniques by different types of complainants is investigated as well.

1.2 Relationship variables

When someone buys a product or a service, the customer and the organization in question get into a relationship (Henning-Thyrau & Hansen, 2013). When a customer and a service provider end up in a situation in which illegitimate complaints play a role, this could affect this relationship. Hirschman (1970) identified three possible responses to relationship problems. The first option is exit, which leads to the end of a relationship. The second option is loyalty. Now, the customer takes no action, and passively accepts the relationship issue. The third and final option is called voice. In this response, the customer files a complaint directed to the relationship partner, in this case the service provider. Hereafter, Singh and Pandya (1991) added the option “third party action” which describes the consequences of involving an external agency to handle the situation.

This research will investigate the effect of these illegitimate complaints on the customer-company relationship. This will be tested by measuring the change in *customer satisfaction*, *customer loyalty*, *word of mouth*, *customer trust*, and *customer commitment*, after the illegitimate complaint was filed.

1.3 Research aim

The purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, it is aimed to confirm the three proposed types of illegitimate complainants (Joosten, unpublished). Hereafter, the relationship between the clusters and the neutralization techniques is examined. Finally, the clusters are linked to relationship variables, to examine the consequences for the relationship between the customer and the service provider. Concretely, the research question this study seeks to answer is:

What are the relationships between the three types of illegitimate complainants, the neutralization techniques, and the customer-company relationship?

1.4 Relevance

Theoretical relevance

For marketing academics, this study is relevant because outcomes can contribute to build knowledge about illegitimate complaints. This study can contribute to a deeper understanding of customer motives to complain illegitimately. Previous research discovered several types of illegitimate complainants (Joosten, unpublished). However, there is a research gap in the relationship between those types of illegitimate complainants and the neutralization techniques. This gap will be investigated, which will contribute to academic literature about illegitimate complaints. Furthermore, the consequences for the relationship between the customer and the company are unknown as well.

Practical relevance

For marketing managers, outcomes of this study could advise them on how to deal with illegitimate complaining. When a certain type of illegitimate complainant is recognized, they could anticipate this behavior in early stages, and limit the damage accordingly. Currently, companies are overspending in complaint handling (Joosten, unpublished). More extensive knowledge about this issue could diminish those spendings. A better understanding of the relationship between the types of complainants and the corresponding neutralization technique provides useful insights into managerial decisions about complaint handling. Money, time and effort can be saved, as well as their image to the outside world. Given the frequency of this behavior, and the personal and financial consequences it carries, this study contributes to the reduction of the knowledge gap concerning this issue of illegitimate complaining.

1.5 Outline

This study consists of five sections. In the following section, there will be elaborated on the theoretical background of illegitimate complaining. Moreover, hypotheses are formulated about the relationship between the types of illegitimate complainants and both the neutralization techniques, and the customer-company relationship. Section three is devoted to the methodology used in this study, whereas section four will present the analysis and the results. The final section will contain the conclusions of this study together with theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theory behind the drivers of illegitimate complaints is discussed. Furthermore, the neutralization techniques and the relationship variables are described. Based on this, hypotheses are formulated, and the interconnectedness of the constructs is visualized in the conceptual framework.

2.1 Illegitimate complaints

Illegitimate complaints are defined as complaints which are unjust and unfounded. In other words, they are not based on a lack of quality of the product or service in question (Joosten, unpublished). Those complaints can be honestly, fraudulent, and opportunistically filed. Honest illegitimate complaints are filed when a customer sincerely believes that the complaint is justifiable. However, this complaint is unjust. Deliberately creating an opportunity to take advantage of a firm is a fraudulent complaint. This type of complaints is pre-planned. Opportunistic illegitimate complaints on the other hand are not pre-planned. A situation in which the customer can take advantage of the firm occurs, whereafter the customer gratefully uses the situation and files a complaint.

This is the third study in the range of studying illegitimate complaining behavior. The first study, a multiple case study, focused on exploring the drivers of illegitimate complaining behavior. This study resulted in a list of drivers which potentially influence illegitimate complaining behavior: *contrast effect*, *loss of control*, *negative attitude towards complaining* and *positive subjective norm*, *perceived lack of morality*, *anger*, and *gender*. Hereafter, a second study aimed to test these distinguished drivers, by conducting a regression analysis. Together, the drivers seemed to explain 62% of the variation in illegitimate complaints. A cluster analysis revealed three potential types of illegitimate complainants: a *want-type*, a *can-type*, and a *need-type*. Current study aims to confirm these types of illegitimate complainants. Hereafter, the relationship between these types and a) neutralization techniques and b) relationship variables is investigated.

2.2 Drivers of illegitimate complaints

By conducting two studies, Joosten (unpublished) identified ten potential drivers of illegitimate complaints. In the first study, 226 files of the Dutch “Geschillencommissie” were tested on the legitimacy of the complaints. This showed that a striking 64% of the complaints were illegitimate, indicating that customers in only one third of the files submitted a correct complaint. Given the frequency this behavior occurs, Joosten (unpublished) set up a second study in which the drivers of illegitimate complaining behavior were tested. Hereafter, the list of variables seemed to explain 62% of the variation in illegitimate complaints. Moreover, a cluster analysis revealed the three potential types of illegitimate complainants: the *want-type*, the *can-type*, and the *need-type*. Based on these studies, the following drivers are proposed.

2.2.1 Lack of morality

When a service failure occurs, consumers could blame the service provider for failing on purpose. By arguing “in order to benefit financially, the service provider fails deliberately”, consumers blame them for a lack of morality. By doing this, the consumer experiences strong feelings revenge for what has been done to him or her (Grégoire *et al.*, 2010; Joosten, unpublished; Wooten, 2009). These feelings are strengthened by the realization that the service provider could have acted differently, but chose not to do so. Lack of morality is closely related to a lack of ability (Joosten, unpublished). Customers could blame the service provider for a lack of ability, a shortcoming of required skills to act correctly, or for the aforementioned lack of morality. The latter leads to a higher urge to avenge the service provider due to the deliberate nature of the service failure (Wooten, 2009).

2.2.2 Perceived injustice

If a service provider is at fault, the service recovery process comes into force. The way in which this process is perceived by the customer is regulated by the justice theory. This theory argues that justice in service recovery can be assessed based on a) the distribution, b) the procedure, and c) the interactions (McColl-Kennedy & Sparks, 2003).

Distributive justice is the outcome of the service recovery process. This could be in the form of financial compensation, or by apologizing for the situation. It arises when customers perceive the service delivery as inadequate (Joosten, unpublished).

Procedural justice refers to the actual process of service recovery. Whether or not the customer is able to let his voice heard highly influences the assessment of procedural justice (Bies & Shapiro, 1988). When the service recovery is lengthy, energy-consuming, or inflexible, the process is perceived as injustice.

The interactions between the service provider and the customer is assessed by the interactional justice. The communication and the way in which customers are threatened components of this form of justice. When customers perceive the service providers approach to be disrespectful, rude, unkind, uncaring, dishonest, or impolite, interactional injustice is present (Joosten, unpublished).

The customers' perceived justice in a service recovery process is highly influenced by the level of distributive justice. However, this assessment is based on a comparison with outcomes of alternative cases, which are often not clear (Van den Bos, Vermunt & Wilke, 1997). Therefore, the perceived fairness of a service recovery process is usually based on procedural and interactional justice. Nonetheless, this theory aims to explain complaining in general, both legitimately and illegitimately.

Customer evaluations of complaint handling are related to the received outcomes (distributive justice), the procedures to get to that certain outcome (procedural justice), and the quality of the interpersonal procedure during the process (interactional justice) (Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar, 1998). Therefore, the success of the service recovery depends on both the process and the outcome of the process (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001).

2.2.3 Halo effect

In 1920, Edward Thorndike noticed that people have the tendency to think of a person as rather good or rather inferior. This happens in everyday situations. For example: a person meets a very attractive hairdresser. As a result of this attractiveness, the person assumes the hairdresser to possess some other positive features as well. This misjudgment occurs constantly, and reflects the preferences, prejudices, ideology, aspirations, and social perception of the person at issue (Lachman & Bass, 1985; Gibson & Gore, 2016; Wade & DiMaria, 2003; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Levy & Dugan, 1960). In the context of service recovery, this halo effect manifests itself in consumer judgments. Affinity with a brand may impact the assessment of the brand's performance (Wirz & Bateson, 1995). However, this applies the other way around as well. A single service failure as a first impression for a customer could, as a result of the halo effect, leading to excessive complaining behavior hereafter (Halstead *et al.*, 1996, p. 109). The perception of the customers inclines them to negatively evaluate other aspects of the service recovery process as well. Especially when the incremental transaction costs for additional complaints are low, exaggerated or illegitimate complaints are induced (Halstead *et al.*, 1996).

2.2.4 Liberal redress policy

Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty can be increased by an exceptional redress policy of the service provider (Baker *et al.*, 2012). Nevertheless, this liberal attitude can provoke illegitimate complaints, by intriguing people to take advantage of it. Whereas on one hand customer complaints are encouraged by the organization trying to optimize the customer experience (Bennett, 1997; Prim & Bras, 1999; DeWitt & Brady, 2003; Snellman & Vihtkari, 2003), customers are on the other hand unintentionally inspired to complain illegitimately (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Despite the fact that those liberal “the customer is always right” policies have become more mainstream (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003), Reynolds and Harris (2006) call this philosophy outdated, unrealistic, and naïve. Organizations with such a redress policy tend to give complaining customer the benefit of the doubt and compensate them generously, regardless of the legitimacy of the complaint (Baker *et al.*, 2012; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004; Ro & Wong, 2012; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003).

2.2.5 Internal attribution

Attribution theory refers to the perception that people are rational information processors for whom causal inferences influence their actions (Heider, 1958). Causal inferences highly influence people's behavior. In other words, whether or not a customer complains after a product or service failure, depends on the perceived guilty of this failure (Folkes, 1984). This behavior can be attributed externally and internally. In case of external attribution, the customer considers the behavior as a result of an outside force, in this case the company. As a consequence, anger and desire to take revenge on the company comes into play. In case of internal attribution, the customer intends to solve the situation since he/she perceives oneself guilty to the product or service failure. Regularly, this perceived guilty of the product or service

failure is wrong. People tend to attribute the cause internally in case of success (self-enhancing bias), and externally in case of failures (self-protecting bias) (Bitner, Booms & Mohr, 1994).

2.2.6 Contrast effect

The contrast effect occurs when there is a difference between the expectations of the customer about a product or service, and its actual performance (Anderson, 1973; Oliver & Swan, 1989). Consequently, the customer satisfaction and the evaluation of the product or service will be unreasonable negative compared to a more similar perception. High customer expectations can be the result of positive confrontations between the customer and the firm, strong brand values or promises of the firm, high prices of the product or service, and a strong service level of the firm (Joosten, unpublished). These factors intensify inconsistencies between expectations and actual performance.

2.2.7 Loss of control

Customers can believe that they can regulate both their own behavior, and their environment (Poon, 2004). In case of service failure, customers could notice that their behavior (e.g. relying on the firm) did not result in the desired outcome (e.g. adequate service delivery) (Chang, 2006; Joosten *et al.*, 2012). This loss of control could arise when a customer notices that the service provider is not listening to the customer, or ignores phone calls and emails. Moreover, the customer experiences a greater loss of control when the service provider keeps refusing to react to the complaints. Enforced by the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), customers are encouraged to set this control straight. Therefore, customers intend to attract attention from the service provider by exaggerating or forging their complaint.

2.2.8 Others

The following variables were not significant in the study of Joosten (unpublished). Due to this insignificance in previous study, there is no effect on the types of illegitimate complainants expected, and therefore not included in the hypotheses. However, other previous studies suggest that it is worth considering an influence of these drivers on illegitimate complaining behavior. Therefore, they are included in the survey to confirm whether or not they are significant drivers of illegitimate complaints.

Planning

A complaint is driven by planning, when the complainant deliberately planned to take advantage of the situation beforehand (Joosten, unpublished). Complaints driven by planning are not induced by a service failure. An example of an illegitimate complaint driven by planning is when a customer intentionally creates product failures, and then returns it to the company (Reynolds & Harris, 2005).

Opportunism

Opportunism occurs when a customer aims to take advantage of the company, and therefore claims both what he/she should claim, and what he/she can claim (Berry & Seiders, 2008; Wirtz & Kum, 2004; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). In other words, the customer files a complaint illegitimately, to maximize the benefits from the situation (Kelley, Skinner & Ferrell, 1989, p. 329). When a customer indicates that he/she took advantage of the situation, this complaint could have been driven by opportunism. Only when the opportunity arises to behave opportunistically, customers do so (Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008).

Assimilation theory

Customers do not necessarily complain about all the service failures they face (Joosten, unpublished). Assimilation theory states that customers aim to reduce dissonant feelings by mitigating evaluations about product and service performances (Anderson, 1973; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). In case of unsoften evaluations, the customers dissonant feelings last. Therefore, customers do not always complain when they face a service failure, in order to get rid of the uncomfortable feeling of dissonance. This theory is expressed when a product or service has more deficiencies, about which the customer did not complain.

Negative attitude towards complaining

A customer either has a positive or a negative attitude towards complaining (Blodgett, Granbois & Walters, 1993). Customers with a positive attitude towards complaining face less barriers to complain than someone with a negative attitude towards complaining. They perceive complaining to be successful and feel comfortable to do so (Richins, 1982). Someone who states that he/she is not very likely to complain in general has a negative attitude towards complaining.

Positive subjective norms towards illegitimate complaining

People's perception of what other people expect them to do influences their intention to perform certain behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Consecutively, customer complaining behavior is influenced by concerns with social norms (Kowalski, 1996). When a person has the impression that his friends or relatives would exaggerate or forge the complaint in this situation, a barrier to perform this behavior as well is reduced. In this case, this person reveals positive subjective norms towards illegitimate complaining.

Financial greed

When a customer intentionally abused the company for its own benefit, the complaint is driven by financial greed (Reynolds & Harris, 2005). It is the opposite of lack of morality, where the company intentionally abused the customer. When an illegitimate complaint is driven by financial greed, the customer tries to gain something for nothing (Joosten, unpublished). It is a frequently used driver for illegitimate complaining behavior (Jacoby & Jaccard, 1981; Harris, 2008). When customers see the opportunity to take advantage of the situation, it is of lesser importance whether it is legitimate or not.

Disappointment

Disappointment is experienced when the product or service does not match the expectations (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999). Since disappointment directly influences behavior, it influences complaining behavior as well. When the customer indicates to be disappointed towards the company, this could drive illegitimate complaining behavior.

Anger

When a service failure occurs, emotions, especially anger, play an important role in the subsequent process (Bougie *et al.*, 2003; Dasu & Chase, 2010; Holloway *et al.*, 2009; Keeffe *et al.*, 2007; Kim, Wang & Matilla, 2010; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). Anger arises when the first attempt for a solution fails. Hereafter, angry customers do not aim to solve the issue, but they want revenge (Joosten, unpublished). This happens in an aggressive and hostile manner, by exaggerating the complaint (Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004).

2.3 Types of illegitimate complainants

Based on the previously described drives of illegitimate complaints, Joosten (unpublished) proposed three types of illegitimate complainants: people who complain illegitimately because a) they want to complain, b) they can complain, or c) they need to complain.

The first type is the *want-type*. This type is potentially based on a lack of morality of the service provider, and perceived injustice. Complaints of the *want-type* are a result of perceived unfairness in the situation. This encourages a willingness for revenge, which in turn induces this misbehavior (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Joosten, unpublished). Arguments such as “it was unfair”, “they did it on purpose” express the willingness to complain illegitimately, without any legal underlying motivation. The complainant comes up with a complaint, in an attempt to gain an advantage. Based on this study (Joosten, unpublished) the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Illegitimate complaints of the want-type are driven by a lack of morality of the service provider, and perceived procedural-, interactional-, and distributive injustice.

Second, there is a group who complain just because they can, namely the *can-type*. The halo effect, a liberal redress policy of the service provider, and internal attribution could drive this type to complain illegitimately. The cause of the problem was the complainants own fault, and therefore the complaint they file is illegitimate. However, due to the liberal redress policy of the company, this type of illegitimate complainants just tries to turn the situation into a promising position for them. Moreover, when this type discovers an actual shortcoming in the product or service in question, he/she sees the opportunity to take advantage of the situation. Just like the *want-type*, financial rewards are a purpose of these complaints. This *can-type* of complainants exploits “the customer is always right” attitude of the company, by requesting unrealistic demands.

H2: Illegitimate complaints of the can-type are driven by the halo effect, a liberal redress policy of the service provider and internal attribution of the complainant.

Finally, there is a type of illegitimate complainants who, opposed to the previous two types, only complain when they see no other alternatives. For this type, their illegitimate complaints are driven by the contrast effect and a perception of loss of control. Since the contrast effect results in dissatisfied customers, exaggerated complaints can be expected (Ro & Wong, 2012). Hereafter, the customers try to solve the issue. However, after repeated attempts, they feel like they lost complete control over the situation. The desperation of the experienced loss of control could invigorate this. As a consequence, they exaggerate the situation in order to draw attention to their case. This type is referred to as the *need-type* of illegitimate complainants.

H3: Illegitimate complaints of the need-type are driven by the contrast effect and loss of control.

2.4 Neutralization theory

In 1957, Sykes and Matza discovered five techniques people use to justify their deviant behavior. In their study, these techniques are investigated related to deviant behavior of delinquents. The first technique is the *denial of responsibility*. By arguing “it was not my fault”, the delinquent aims to justify his or her behavior by moving away from his responsibility for the deviant behavior. Furthermore, this technique efficiently diminishes the disapproval of both self and others. Second, the *denial of injury* technique is used to decrease the value of the complaint. When a hotel guest illegitimately complains about the service, and the frontline employee offers him a free night, this illegitimate complain can be excused by saying “It wasn’t a big deal. They could afford the loss”. In the third technique, the complainant tries to shift the focus to the conditions. The person tries to neutralize his act by arguing that his performance was not wrong since it was a justified punishment according to the circumstances. Therefore, Sykes and Matza called this technique the *denial of the victim*. Next to shifting the focus to the circumstances, the complainant can try to shift the focus from himself to others. In this fourth technique, the *condemnation of the condemners*, the attention is no longer on the actual complaint, but on those who disapprove of the behavior. Finally, complainants *appeal to higher loyalties* to justify the action. This controls the behavior, both internal and external. A complainant who argues “My friend needed me. What was I supposed to do?” is implementing this technique.

Based on this research, multiple studies dived deeper into possible techniques to neutralize deviant behavior. In 1974, Klockars investigated the phenomenon of compensating bad incidents with good behavior. In the perspective of a complainant, deviant behavior could be explained by saying “usually, I always stick to the rules”. This technique was named the *metaphor of the ledger*. Hereupon, Benson identified the *defense of necessity* (1985). When complainants engage in neutralization through the defense of necessity, they invoke the urgency of the situation. By arguing “otherwise I would not be treated seriously by the organization” the necessity of exaggerating the complaint is indicated. The *denial of negative intent* extended this technique by focusing on the nature of the intention of the complainant

before the actual complaint (Henry, 1990). Arguing “it was not intentional to exaggerate my complaint” is an example of this neutralization technique. Nine years later, Henry and Eaton (1999) identified another neutralization technique: the *claim of relative acceptability*. Complainants who use this technique focus on the bad nature of the actions of other individuals. They compare their complaint to even worse behavior of others, claiming that their behavior was relatively acceptable. Hereafter, Coleman formulated both the *claim of entitlement* (1994) and the *claim of normalcy* (2002). The first neutralization technique implies that the complainant claims his or hers perceived rights. A possible response of a complainant could be “I should be allowed to have a windfall now and then as well”. The second technique Coleman identified focuses on the bigger picture. Arguing “everybody exaggerates now and then” displays the claim of normalcy technique. By doing this, the incident becomes relatively unimportant in the light of the circumstances. Shortly hereafter, Cromwell and Thurman (2003) implemented the impact of the feelings of the consequences of the specific action. They called this the *justification by postponement* neutralization technique. Following this, it enables complainants to just not think about the incident anymore. When he/she manages to do so, the deviant behavior is neutralized.

Since the illegitimate complaints of the *want-type* are based on a sense of unfairness caused by the service provider, the complainant probably does not experience a sense of guilt towards them. He/she might believe that it is normal and that the organization would not experience severe damage because of the complaint. The following two hypotheses are based on these arguments:

H4: The want-type of illegitimate complainant uses the condemnation of the condemner as neutralization technique.

H5: The want-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of the victim as neutralization technique.

The moment an opportunity arises for exaggerating or forging complaints, the *can-type* claims that the inducement of this situation was not his or her fault. In other words, the *denial of responsibility* technique is used. Moreover, when this consideration got off, the thought about creating a windfall from this situation can be attractive as well. Hereafter, the claim that he/she normally always abides by the rules, and the notion that the service provider deserves it for the mistake they made, activates the exaggeration or forging of the complaint. Therefore, the *metaphor of the ledger*, and the *denial of the victim* could be used as a neutralization technique as well.

H6: The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of responsibility as neutralization technique.

H7: The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the claim of entitlement as neutralization technique.

H8: The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the metaphor of the ledger as neutralization technique.

H9: The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of the victim as neutralization technique.

When the contrast effect is exerted, expectations and the actual performance of a product or service do not match, the customer is disappointed (Joosten, unpublished). After this disappointment, complaints are not preconceived which can be used to justify the behavior. Furthermore, the sense of loss of control induces a *defense of necessity*. When the complaint will not be exaggerated, the company might not pay attention to it.

Based on the arguments mentioned above, the following hypotheses are set up:

H10: The need-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of negative intent as neutralization technique.

H11: The need-type of illegitimate complainant uses the defense of necessity as neutralization technique.

2.5 Relationship variables

When someone buys a product or a service, the customer and the organization in question get into a relationship (Henning-Thyrau & Hansen, 2013). This relationship is based on mutual trust and commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), reciprocal communication (Berscheid, 1994; Duck, 1994), social support (Adelman *et al.*, 1994), self-disclosure, (Derlega *et al.*, 1993), emotion (Clark & Reis, 1988), shared values (Barnes, 1995b), and the need for service guarantees (Berry, 1995). Czepiel defined in 1990 a customer-company relationship as a mutual special status between the customer and the company. A strong customer-company relationship generates benefits for both the firm and the customers. Firms take advantage of increased profitability, since it is cheaper to retain a loyal customer instead of acquiring new customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Customers, on the other hand, benefit from increased importance, variability, and involvement due to extra attention on this relationship. Simultaneously, customers' desire to feel important is met (Jackson, 1993; Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991). Since loyal customers are more profitable for companies (Payne & Frow, 2005), customer relationship management (hereafter referred to as CRM) is devoted to develop long-term relationships with customers. CRM is about attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships (Berry, 1983; Barnes, 1994; Grönroos, 1994). While building a strong network with customers individually, mutual benefits arise (Shani & Chalasani, 1992). Profitable, long-term-relationships with customers ought to be created (Payne & Frow, 2005). Despite these mutual benefits, each party in the relationship could have different ideas about its magnitude and strength (Buttle, 2004). The service provider can experience a very strong relationship with the customer, whereas the customer considers the interaction as a one-off.

When a customer and a service provider end up in a situation in which illegitimate complaints play a role, this could affect their relationship. Hirschman (1970) identified three possible responses to relationship problems. The first option is exit, which leads to an end of the relationship. The second option is loyalty. Here, the customer takes no action, and passively accepts the relationship issue. The third and final option is called voice. In this response, the customer files a complaint directed to the relationship partner, in this case the service provider.

Hereafter, Singh and Pandya (1991) added the option “third party action” which describes the consequences of involving an external agency to handle the situation.

This research will investigate the effect of these illegitimate complaints on the customer-company relationship.

Customer satisfaction

In the attempt to improve customer loyalty, and accordingly the business performance, customer satisfaction is an essential prerequisite (Grønholdt, Martensen, & Kristensen, 2010). Satisfaction is as a judgment of a product or service by the customer (Oliver, 1970). This judgment is based on the organization's' ability to produce high quality products, to control complaint handling effectively, and to have a good reputation (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). This leads to an increased level of repurchase intentions among the customers. This satisfaction is not irreversibly damaged once the service provider makes a mistake. The art of turning angry customers into loyal customers can be clarified by the service recovery paradox (Hart, Heskett & Sasser, 1990). The service paradox can be defined as “the situation in which post recovery satisfaction is greater than that prior to the service failure when customers receive high recovery performance” (De Matos *et al.*, 2007; Maxham, 2001; McCullough, 1995; McCollough & Bharadwaj, 1992; Smith & Bolton, 1998). This happens for example when a customer complains about a cancelled flight. When the airline offers impressive service recovery (for example apologies, another flight on the same day, discounts for the next reservation), it is very possible that the customer ends up being more loyal to the airline then when the original flight would not have been cancelled at all.

After filing illegitimate complaints, customer satisfaction could be modified. To what extent this happens might depend on the type of illegitimate complainant. The *can-type* of illegitimate complainants abuse a minor mistake of the service provider. The customer is not necessarily deeply disappointed, but encounters the opportunity to benefit from the resulting situation. Furthermore, due to the service recovery paradox, post recovery satisfaction can be greater than before the service failure when the service recovery process is exceeding expectations (De Matos *et al.*, 2007; Maxham, 2001; McCullough, 1995; McCollough & Bharadwaj, 1992; Smith & Bolton, 1998). After this complaint handling, customer satisfaction about the company could be increased.

H12: The can-type of illegitimate complainants experiences an increase in satisfaction after the service recovery process.

Customer loyalty

The construct “customer loyalty” is threefold (Bowen & Chen, 2001). Loyal customers have a positive attitude towards the company. This positive attitude is converted into repurchases of the products or services of this company. Moreover, loyal customers tend to recommend this organization or these products to others.

It can be considered as an attitude or as behavior (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). When it is seen as an attitude, loyalty is based on a combination of feelings that together generate an overall perception of a product, service, or organization (Fournier, 1994). When loyalty is seen

as behavior, it is based on repurchasing from a company, broadening the range of the relationship, and recommending to others (Yi, 1990).

Loyalty can be damaged in several ways. When a *need-type* of complainant experiences a sense of loss of control, the customers encounter a need to regain this control (Brehm, 1966). Since the decision of repurchasing is completely the customers', he/she could decide not to come back to this organization. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H13: The need-type of illegitimate complainants experiences a decrease in loyalty after the service recovery process.

Word of mouth

Word of mouth (hereafter referred to as WOM) is an informal means of communication about goods and services, between private parties (Anderson, 1998; Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993; Zhang, Feick & Mittal, 2014). The level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is considered as the key motivation of product-related word of mouth (Anderson, 1998; Arndt, 1967; Bitner, 1990; Dichter, 1966; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Rogers, 1962; Westbrook, 1987; Yi, 1991). There is no valuation of positivity or negativity in the term itself (Anderson, 1998). Therefore, it can be positive (e.g. sharing novel experiences, recommendations to others) and negative (e.g. private complaining, spreading of product denigration).

Coherent to the previously mentioned hypothesized decrease in customer loyalty, the probability of a dissatisfied customer is real after an experienced loss of control. Moreover, the likeliness of dispersing negative WOM could increase.

H14: The need-type of illegitimate complainants experiences an increase in word of mouth after the service recovery process.

Customer trust

Customer trust is "the belief that the service provider can be relied on to behave in such a manner that the long-term interests of the consumers will be served" (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). It exists when the customer has confidence in the reliability and integrity of the service provider (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), and believes that his/her needs will be fulfilled by the organization (Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Halinen, 1996; Moore, 1988). Trust is an important mediator between a company activities and consumer loyalty (Ball *et al.*, 2014; Chaudhuri & Holbrook; 2001; Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). Trust consists of two components: competence trust, and benevolence trust (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013; Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002). In other words, the customer must rely on both the ability of the organization to provide the service, and the honesty of the organization.

Due to the contrast effect, a *need-type* of illegitimate complainants experience a difference between the expectations and the actual performance of a product or service (Anderson, 1973; Oliver & Swan, 1989). As a consequence, the customer could perceive the relationship with the organization as disappointed. Whether this perception is justified or not, the trust of the customer in the organization for the potential next interaction could be damaged. Therefore is stated:

H15: The need-type of illegitimate complainants experiences a decrease in trust after the service recovery process.

Commitment

Commitment is defined as “a customer’s emotional attachment to and identification with an entity which he/she might use” (Allen *et al.*, 1990; Fullerton, 2005; Jones *et al.*, 2007; Karpen *et al.*, 2015). In other words, it is the customers’ ambition for a sustainable and valued relationship with the company (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpandé, 1992). Morgan and Hunt (1994) even state that commitment is about the belief of the customer and the organization that a continuing relationship is so important, that everything possible must be done to protect it. Following this, customers are expected to voice, in order to preserve the relationship with the service provider in case of a mistake.

The *want-type* of illegitimate complainants complain because they want to. They perceive the situation as unjust, without an actual inducement by means of a mistake of the company in question. Therefore, it is expected that this type of complainant will not experience any change in the relationship with the service provider. It is a plausible thought that this complainant will perform exactly the same deviant behavior the next time, whether it is for the same company, or another.

H16: The want-type of illegitimate complainants experiences no change in relationship variables after the service recovery process.

2.6 Conceptual model

Resulting from previous literature, the conceptual model below was developed (figure 1). On the left hand side, the drivers of illegitimate complaints are positioned. These drivers potentially cluster into three types of illegitimate complainants. Hereafter, the relationship between those types and the dependent variables on the right hand side (neutralization techniques and relationship variables) is investigated.

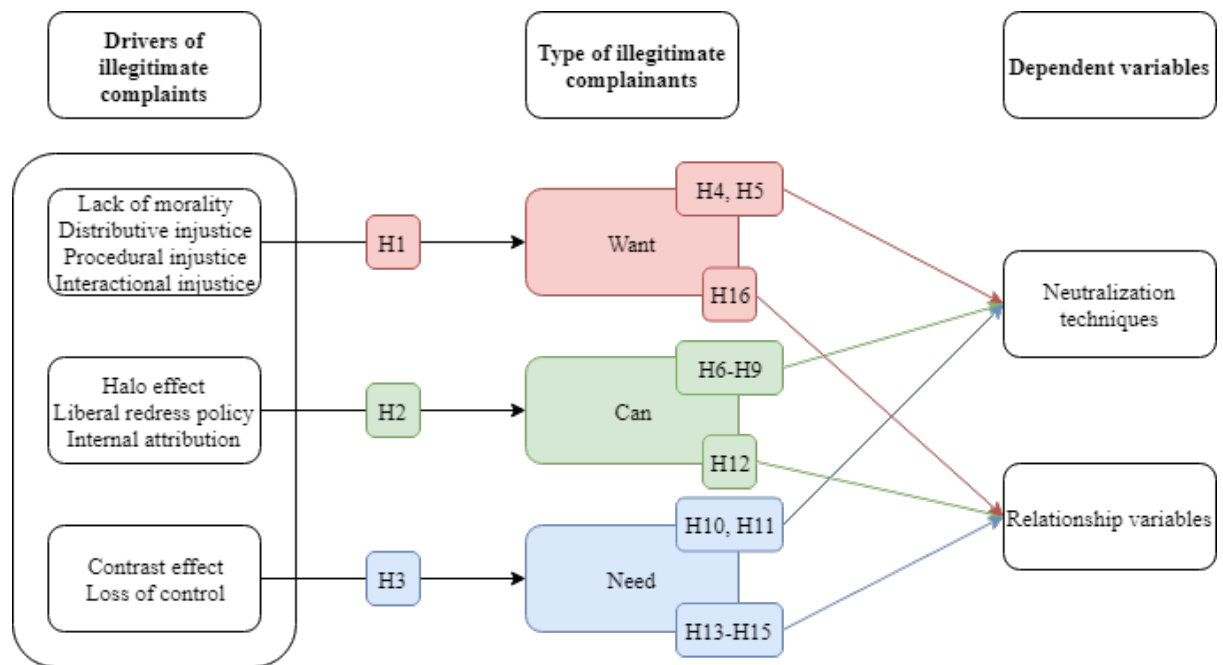


Figure 1. Conceptual model

3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology of this research. First, the research design, and the research procedure are discussed. Hereafter, follows a section on research ethics, followed by a review of the sample. Finally, the operationalization of the measures and the data analysis are described.

3.1 Research design

Illegitimate complaining is a sensitive subject. It requires the respondents' willingness to admit a type of deviant behavior, which is unethical, and maybe even on the verge of illegal. This makes it challenging to let respondents admit this questionable behavior (Joosten, 2017). Furthermore, due to this sensitivity, it is hard to find straightforward empirical evidence regarding this topic (Ro & Wong, 2012; Fiske *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, an anonymous online survey to collect data was recommended to collect data about consumer misbehavior (Daunt & Harris, 2012; Berry & Seiders, 2008). Previous research identified drivers of illegitimate complaining behavior, and proposes types of illegitimate complainants. It suggested to investigate the neutralization techniques complainants use to generate useful knowledge concerning future procedures.

In order to test the hypotheses, a confirmatory survey is conducted. This method has several benefits: it is fast, it is cheap or even free, and it generates an instant access to a wide audience (Wright, 2005). Considering the limited time and resources available in this study, and the necessity to guarantee anonymity for the respondents, these advantages were decisive in the process of selecting the data collection method. The benefit of instant access to a wide audience limited the risk of a low response rate. Furthermore, previous studies investigating this sensitive topic deliberately and successfully used this research design as well (Daunt & Harris, 2012; Harris, 2008; Albers-Miller, 1999; Akers, Massey, Clarke & Lauer, 1983; Joosten, unpublished).

Nevertheless, since the risk of encouraging the social desirability bias is undeniable (Chung & Monroe, 2003), there is a potential negative effect on validity and reliability (King & Bruner, 2000; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). By focusing on normalizing this behavior throughout the introduction, and by being transparent in the presentation of examples concerning ourselves, current study attempts to minimize this bias. The questions in the survey are based on the unpublished manuscript of Joosten, combined with twelve questions regarding the neutralization techniques, and five questions regarding the relationship variables.

3.2 Procedure

The survey was pre-tested among a diverse sample of ten respondents to optimize the draft version. The survey was tested on understandability, clearness of the questions, and on duration to give a time indication of completing the survey. Based on these tests, the phrasing of the questions regarding the neutralization techniques was adjusted for more clarification. The final survey is provided in Appendix I. An overview of the comments of the pre-test is provided in Appendix III.

After pre-testing the survey, the final survey was disseminated via Facebook, LinkedIn, and by WhatsApp. The latter channel had the advantage of addressing people personally, which increased the likelihood of people actually filling in the survey. However, privacy and anonymity issues might arise. To reduce this concern, the anonymity of filling in the survey was strongly emphasized.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic of illegitimate complaining behavior, it is hard to find empirical evidence for this practice (Fisk, 2010). By aiming to reduce response bias, the introduction was dedicated to reduce this anxiety and to show the “normalness” of this behavior. Personal examples were presented to gain the trust of the respondents. The focus on anonymity was emphasized by highlighting it in bold in the text. Furthermore, a short introduction to the definition of illegitimate complaining was provided to clarify the meaning of the topic for everybody.

Hereafter, respondents were invited to actively come up with their own situation of complaining illegitimately. This was done by asking what product or service the complaint was about, the value of the product the complaints was about, the organization or institution where the complaint was filed, how big this organization or institution was, what the complaint was about, to what extent the complaint was exaggerated and forged, and when this situation took place. These questions intended to help the respondent create a vivid image of the situation. Furthermore, statements on a 5-point Likert scale (totally disagree - totally agree) about the situation were proposed. The third section of the questionnaire focused on exploring the neutralization techniques. The fourth section was focused on investigating the impact of illegitimate complaints on the relationship variables, whereas the last section asked for some demographic information of the respondents, such as age, gender, and level of education.

3.3 Research ethics

The topic of illegitimate complaints is due to the deviance of the behavior ethically challenging (Goodwin, 2003). The American Psychological Association (APA) (n.d.) set up the American Psychological Association’s Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct in order to guide ethical decisions in various areas. It consists of five aspirational general principles: beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect for people’s rights and dignity.

First, beneficence and nonmaleficence. The researchers must be concerned with everyone he/she deals with during the entire process of the study. The study must be beneficial to others and it is not tolerated to harm anyone during this process. Researchers must be aware of the influence and potential (unintended) consequences of the outcomes. In this case, participating in the study, by filling in the survey, is completely voluntary and respondents can withdraw from this participation on every moment during the survey, just by closing the questionnaire.

Second, fidelity and responsibility. The researchers must be aware of the responsibilities, both professional and scientific, to everyone involved in the process. Moreover, researchers commonly invest time and effort to them, and show interest to those with whom they work.

Third, integrity. The generated knowledge must be accurate, honest, and truthful. The knowledge used from previous research, must be cited properly, by giving the original authors the credits they deserve. This needs to be expressed by following the APA-guidelines both in-text and in the reference list.

Fourth, justice. Researchers must be aware of the fact that everybody can access and benefit from the outcomes of the study. They must therefore be aware of potential biases, and limits of expertise. A potential bias of this data collection is the selection bias, or more specifically the overrepresentation of students in the dataset.

Fifth, respect for people's rights and dignity. Researchers must respect diversity in culture, individuals and roles. The dignity, right to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination must be ensured at all times. Anonymity is guaranteed throughout the whole study. Naturally, also after the study, personal information will under no condition be shared with third parties.

3.4 Sample

In order to generate the dataset, respondents were gathered using convenience sampling. This nonrandom sampling method was suited since it provided the opportunity to realize the desired number of 500 respondents, despite the sensitive nature of the subject. This method could go at the expense of the generalizability, since, taking into account the environment the survey will be distributed in, there was a possibility that the population between eighteen and 30 years (or more specifically: students) are overrepresented. Nevertheless, generalizability is not the main purpose of this study. Discovering relationships between the variables, and testing hypotheses is of greater importance. Moreover, the information from the demographic questions was used to analyze this potential overrepresentation, and determine what this means for the outcome of this study.

3.5 Measures

The survey was conducted on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree'. An overview of the operationalization is provided in Appendix II. Since both the drivers of performing illegitimate complaining behavior, and the related neutralization techniques, and the impact on relationship variables had to be tested, the risk of an excessive questionnaire needed to be monitored. Otherwise, the risk of respondents quitting before finishing the questionnaire raised. Hence, several constructs were measured with a single-item. The reduction of the reliability must therefore be taken into consideration.

Regarding the measure of the relationship variables, the standardized measurement scales of the constructs were used from the *Marketing Scales Handbook* (Bruner, 2017). However, such scales did not exist for measuring neutralization techniques. Therefore, based on previous literature, twelve newly developed scales were used.

Illegitimate complaints - A complaint is considered illegitimate when it is unfounded with respect to the product or service (Joosten, unpublished). Illegitimate complaining behavior was measured using a two-item scale: "I have exaggerated the problem", and "I have forged

the problem” (in Dutch: “Ik heb het probleem overdreven” and “Ik heb het probleem verzonnen”).

Lack of morality - Lack of morality is defined as “the judgement that the perpetrator is causing damage to others in order to obtain a personal advantage” (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016, p. 432). It is measured with a one-item scale adapted from Grégoire *et al.* (2010). An example is: “The company intentionally tried to abuse me” (in Dutch: “Het bedrijf probeerde opzettelijk misbruik van mij te maken”).

Justice theory - “Justice perceptions are the individual subjective assessments of organizational responses” (Gelbrich & Roschk, 2011, p. 26). Therefore, perceptions of injustice can be defined as the negative individual subjective assessment of an organizational response. It was measured with a three-item scale adapted from Joosten *et al.* (2017). An example is: “The way the company treated me during the complaint was rude” (in Dutch: “De manier waarop het bedrijf mij behandelde was onbeleefd”).

Halo effect - The halo effect is defined as “the notion that a singly service failure could potentially lead to multiple complaints” (Halstead *et al.*, 1996, p.109). It was measured with a one-time scale (Joosten, unpublished): “After I discovered an error in the product/service, I discovered more defects” (in Dutch: “Nadat ik een fout ontdekte in het product/de dienst, ontdekte ik nog meer gebreken”).

Liberal redress policy - When a company gives complaining customers the benefit of the doubt and, regardless of the legitimacy of the complaint, compensate them generously, the redress policy is considered as liberal (Ro and Wong, 2012; Baker *et al.*, 2012; Joosten, unpublished; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007; Wirtz and McColl-Kennedy, 2010; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). It is measured with a one-item scale by: “The company has a good guarantee regulation and I made use of it” (in Dutch: “Het bedrijf heeft een goede garantieregeling en daar heb ik gebruik van gemaakt”).

Attribution theory - Attribution theory refers to what extent customers assign causes internal or external (Folkes, 1984). Derived from the attributional style questionnaire (ASQ) from Peterson *et al.* (1982), a two-item scale was used to gauge the extent of internal or external attribution. An example is “The cause of the problem was the responsibility of the company” (in Dutch: “De oorzaak van het probleem lag bij het bedrijf”).

Contrast effect - The contrast effect is defined as the negatively perceived discrepancy between expectations and product performance (Anderson, 1973). Derived from Allen, Brady, Robinson & Voorhees (2015), a two-item scale was used to assess the extent of contrast. An example is “My experience with the product/service was much worse than expected” (in Dutch: “Mijn ervaring met het product/de dienst was veel slechter dan verwacht”).

Loss of control - Wallston *et al.* (1987) defined control as “the belief that one can determine its own internal states and behavior, influence one's environment, and/or bring about desired outcomes”. Consecutively, loss of control can be defined as the belief that one can not determine this. It is measured by a two-item scale adapted from Chae, Boyoun and Zhu (2014). An example is: “The company did not respond (anymore) to my questions and requests” (in Dutch: “Het bedrijf reageerde niet (meer) op mijn vragen en verzoeken”).

Planning - When the filing of a complaint was pre-planned, a complaint is fraudulent (Joosten, unpublished). Such a complaint is fake by definition (Day *et al.*, 1980). The driver is

measured by a one-item scale: “I pre-planned to take advantage of the situation” (in Dutch: “Ik heb van tevoren gepland om te proberen een voordeeltje te behalen”).

Opportunism - Opportunism is defined as a customer who is taking advantage of an opportunity (Singh & Sirdeshmukh, 2000). It is measured with a one-item scale adapted from Daunt and Harris (2012): “I made use of the situation to take advantage” (in Dutch: “Ik heb van de gelegenheid gebruik gemaakt om een voordeeltje te behalen”).

Assimilation theory - Assimilation theory states that customers aim to reduce dissonant feelings by mitigating evaluations about product and service performances (Anderson, 1973; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). It is measured by a one-item scale from Joosten (unpublished): “The product/service had more deficiencies, over which I did not complain (in Dutch: “Het product/de dienst had nog meer gebreken, maar daarover heb ik niet geklaagd”).

Attitude towards complaining - Someone’s attitude towards complaining is the predisposition towards voicing a complaint after experiencing a service failure and the social norm towards the justice of illegitimate complaining (Blodgett *et al.*, 1993). It is measured by a one-item scale from Thøgersen, Juhl and Poulsen (2009): “I do not complain very easily” (in Dutch: “Ik ben iemand die niet snel klaagt.”).

Social norms towards illegitimate complaining - The concern with the social norm has an impact on whether or not customer complain (Kowalski, 1996). This is measured by the one-item scale from Thøgersen, Juhl and Poulsen (2009): “I think my friends and acquaintances would have forged or exaggerated their complaint in the same situation” (in Dutch: “Ik denk dat mijn vrienden of bekenden in dezelfde situatie de klacht ook overdreven of verzonnen zouden hebben”).

Financial greed - Reynolds and Harris (2005, p. 327) defined financial greed as “an attempt to obtain free goods and services without experiencing any genuine dissatisfactory incidences”. The illegitimate complaint is a deliberate action to gain something for nothing. By means of the one-item scale “I deliberately tried to abuse the company” (in Dutch: “Ik probeerde opzettelijk misbruik te maken van het bedrijf”), this driver is measured.

Disappointment - Disappointment is what someone feels, expects, intends, hopes, or desires do not happen (Craib, 2002). This driver is measured with a one-item scale by: I was disappointed in the company (in Dutch: “Ik was teleurgesteld in het bedrijf”).

Anger - The emotion anger is defined as “an emotion which is associated with appraising an event as harmful and frustrating” (Bougie *et al.*, 2003, p. 379). This emotion is measured with a one-item scale by: “I was angry with the company” (in Dutch: “Ik was boos op het bedrijf”).

Neutralization techniques - The neutralization theory consists of twelve techniques to justify deviant behavior. Every technique included in the current study was measured with a one-item scale based on theories of Sykes and Matza (1957), Klockards (1974), Benson (1985), Henry (1990), Henry and Eaton (1999), Coleman (1994, 2002) and Cromwell and Thurman (2003).

Denial of responsibility - This technique is defined as a complainant that aims to justify its behavior by moving away from his responsibility for this deviant behavior (Sykes & Matza, 1957). It is measured by the 5-point scale, ranging from “completely disagree” to “completely agree” with the statement: “It was not my fault” (in Dutch: “Het was niet mijn schuld”).

Denial of injury - In order to decrease the value of the complaint (Sykes & Matza, 1957), the complainant argues: “The service provider will not be damaged severely because of my complaint” (in Dutch: “Het bedrijf zal er heus geen ernstige schade door lijden”).

Denial of the victim - By applying this technique, the complainant attempts to neutralize its behavior by arguing that it was a justified punishment for the service provider in the light of the circumstances (Sykes & Matza, 1957). “The service provider deserves it for what they have done” (in Dutch: “Het bedrijf verdient het door wat ze gedaan hebben”).

The condemnation of the condemners - The complainant tries to move the attention to the company instead of the actual complaint (Sykes & Matza, 1957). It is measured by the statement: “The company is also not always honest to its customers” (in Dutch: “Het bedrijf is ook niet altijd eerlijk tegenover klanten”).

Appeal to higher loyalties - The appeal to higher loyalties technique is controlling the behavior, both for the complainant itself, as for other (Sykes & Matza, 1957). “I did not do it for myself (but for principles or for others)”, is the statement that is used for assessing this technique (in Dutch: “Ik deed het niet voor mezelf (maar uit principe of voor anderen”).

Claim of normalcy - Coleman (2002) introduced the neutralization technique in which complainants focus on the bigger picture. “Everybody exaggerates now and then” is a statement by which this is measured (in Dutch: “Iedereen overdrijft wel eens”).

Denial of negative intent - When applying the denial of negative intent, the complainant focuses on the intention before the actual complaint (Henry, 1990). It is measured by a one-item scale: “It was not preconceived to complain exaggeratedly” (in Dutch: “Ik was op voorhand niet van plan om overdreven te klagen”).

Claims of relative acceptability - By focusing on the bad nature of the actions of other individuals, complainants aim to neutralize their own behavior (Henry & Eaton, 1999). “Other people do much worse things” measures this technique (in Dutch: “Andere mensen doen veel ergere dingen”).

Metaphor of the ledger - Compensating one’s own bad acts with good behavior, defined as the metaphor of the ledger (Klockars, 1974). It is measured by the statement “Normally, I always stick to the rules” (in Dutch: “Normaal gesproken houd ik me wel aan de regels”).

Claim of entitlement - In this technique, the complainant claims his or her perceived rights (Coleman, 1994). It is measured by the statement: “I can have a windfall now and then” (in Dutch: “Ik mag ook wel eens een meevallertje hebben”).

Defense of necessity - In 1985, Benson identified that complainants invoke the situation. He defined this technique as indicating the necessity of exaggerating the complaint “Otherwise, the company would not take me seriously” (in Dutch: “Anders werd ik niet serieus genomen door het bedrijf”).

Justification by postponement - Cromwell and Thurman (2003) introduced the impact of the feelings of the consequences of the complaint. It enables complainants to just not think about the incident anymore. When he/she manages to do so, the deviant behavior is neutralized. It is measured by: “At that time, I was not really thinking about the consequences (feelings came in later)” (in Dutch: “Op dat moment dacht ik niet echt na over de consequenties (gevoelens kwamen later pas”).

Relationship variables - The relationship variables are all measured with a one-item scale. The statements are based on the *Marketing Scales Handbook* (Bruner, 2017). Possible answers range on a 5-point Likert scale from “a lot smaller” to “a lot bigger”.

Loyalty - Loyalty is defined as “the likelihood of engaging in certain loyalty-related activities” (Bolton & Mattila, 2015). It is measured with an adapted scale from (Bolton & Matilla, 2015) for use with a variety of businesses. It is based on the scale of repurchase intention by the statement “The chance that I will make another purchase at the company in question is after this situation”. For the Dutch survey, this is translated into: “De kans dat ik nogmaals een aankoop doe bij het bedrijf in kwestie is na deze situatie”.

Word of mouth - Word of mouth is “the subjective probability that a person will tell others about something” (Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993). It is neutral, both in terms of what is being talked about, as well as the positive or negative opinion of the respondent. It is measured by the statement “the probability that I recommend others (family/friends/etc.) the company is after this situation” (in Dutch: “De kans dat ik anderen (familie/vrienden/etc.) het bedrijf in kwestie aanraad is na deze situatie”).

Trust - Trust exists when the customer and the company both have a mutual confidence in the reliability and integrity of the service provider (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p.23). “It trust evolves out of past satisfying experiences where the customers’ reliability and dependability expectations concerning the service provider must have been met” (Anderson & Weitz, 1989; Halinen, 1996; Moore, 1988). In this study, it is measured with the statement: “My trust in this company is after this situation” (in Dutch: “Het vertrouwen dat ik in het bedrijf in kwestie heb is na deze situatie”).

Commitment - Commitment is defined as “a customer’s emotional attachment to and identification with an entity which he/she might use” (Allen *et al.*, 1990; Fullerton, 2005; Jones *et al.*, 2007; Karpen *et al.*, 2015). It is measured by the one-item scale “My relationship with the company is after this situation” (in Dutch: “Mijn band met het bedrijf is na deze situatie”).

Satisfaction - Allen (2016), Oliver and Bearden (1985), and Westbrook and Oliver (1981) defined customer satisfaction as “the degree to which a customer is glad about a decision he/she made and believes that it was the right decision”. It is measured with a one-item scale by the statement: “My satisfaction with the company is after this situation” (in Dutch: “Mijn tevredenheid over het bedrijf is na deze situatie”).

3.6 Data analysis

The questionnaire was conducted using the program Qualtrics. The survey was launched online in the evening of March 18th 2019. Hereafter, respondents were collected in the following two months. Several reminders were sent out. Filling in the survey took about ten minutes, and consisted of 60 questions. After this data collection, the dataset was picked up from Qualtrics, and imported into the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0.

This study aims to confirm the previously identified types of illegitimate complainants and, in addition, identify how these types relate to both the neutralization techniques and relationship variables. In order to test this, the dataset was first screened and cleaned. This was done by checking for errors, and correcting them in the data file. The suggestions for improvement can be found in Appendix III. Hereafter, preliminary analysis was conducted to

check whether the three proposed types of illegitimate complainants (Joosten, unpublished) can be confirmed. This was done by conducting both a multiple regression analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis, and cluster analysis. Since these types of illegitimate complainants are based on drivers that are already a selection of potential drivers, it was expected that these hypotheses could be confirmed. If not, further consideration is needed whether an adjustment to the types, or to the research process must be made. In case of a confirmation of these types, we would assume that the aforementioned types exist. Hereafter, the distinctive effect of these types on neutralization techniques, and the relationship variables was tested. Therefore, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. This is suited for analyses with multiple dependent variables, which suits the research question. Since this research is conducted together with three colleagues, the four individual outcomes will be compared and considered.

4. Results

This chapter presents the results of the analyses. First, the sample is described. Hereafter, the multiple regression analysis, hierarchical cluster analysis, and common factor analysis are conducted. Based on these analyses, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (hereinafter referred to as MANOVA) is conducted, and the hypothesized relationships are either confirmed or rejected.

4.1 Sample

For gathering respondents, the convenient sampling method is used. This nonrandom sampling method includes members of the target population of the study that meet certain relevant criteria, such as accessibility, and availability (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Because of the sensitive nature of the topic of current study, this is considered as a suitable method. In total, 507 Dutch respondents completed the survey. Three respondents completed the survey for at least 70%. Since the last part of the survey consists of demographic data, this part does not have an impact on the hypotheses. Five respondents were deleted due to responses such as “no complaint”, or “inapplicable” at the first five questions. Therefore, 502 respondents were included in the analysis. Since 24 independent variables are included in the survey, the requirement for the desired sample size is met (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Of these 502 respondents, 306 are female (61.0%), and 196 are male (39.0%). The age ranges from 17 to 78 years old. Since there are 340 respondents (67.7%) from university, there are in general highly educated respondents in this dataset.

4.2 Regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the relationship between several independent variables, the drivers, and one dependent variable, a certain type of illegitimate complaining (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The purpose was to confirm the previously identified significant drivers of illegitimate complaining behavior.

In order to do so, a logarithm of the mean of Q8 (“In hoeverre heeft u de klacht overdreven?”) and Q9 (“In hoeverre heeft u de klacht verzonnen?”) was composed first. This was necessary due to a large skewness and kurtosis of this variable. Hereafter, normality of the variables was improved by creating polynomials. The only significant polynomial was *perceived distributive injustice* (third power). The polynomials of the other variables were deleted, since the original scales turned out to be a better fit. Normality of the error term of the dependent variable was approved by means of the normal P-P plot (Appendix IV, Figure 3), and a histogram of the dataset (Appendix IV, Figure 2). There were no signs of multicollinearity ($VIF < 10$, $Tolerance > .10$) (Appendix IV, Table 9). Outliers were judged and were not considered to be problematic. Linearity was approved by a unpatterned scatterplot (Appendix IV, Figure 4). The assumptions were checked and approved. The model explained 38.5% of the illegitimate complaining behavior (adjusted $R^2 = .385$) (Appendix IV, Table 10).

Hereafter, the actual multiple regression analysis was conducted. The following variables turned out to be significant (Appendix IV, Table 12): *internal attribution*, *financial*

greed, opportunism, halo effect, social norm, and distributive injustice ($p < .001$). However in previous study, financial greed, opportunism, and social norm had no significant outcome. A stepwise regression analysis hereafter confirmed the same list of significant variables of this study. However, since the goal of current study is to confirm previously identified clusters, the significant variables of previous study are included in the subsequent analyses.

4.3 Cluster analysis

To identify the types of illegitimate complaints, hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted. This method is chosen to identify the types of illegitimate complainants, based on the significant drivers. Ward's method was used to maximize the differences between the clusters, which leads to a clear representation in a dendrogram. The squared Euclidean distance was used to enlarge the differences between the drivers, leading to a clear visualization of the clusters. The variables were standardized to z scores, because it clarified the output, without hurting the analysis. Hereafter, the analysis was run and interpreted (Figure 1). For this analysis, the significant drivers of previous study were combined with the three additional significant drivers of current study: *financial greed, opportunism, and social norm*. Based on theory and previous analyses, these clusters were perceived as meaningful.

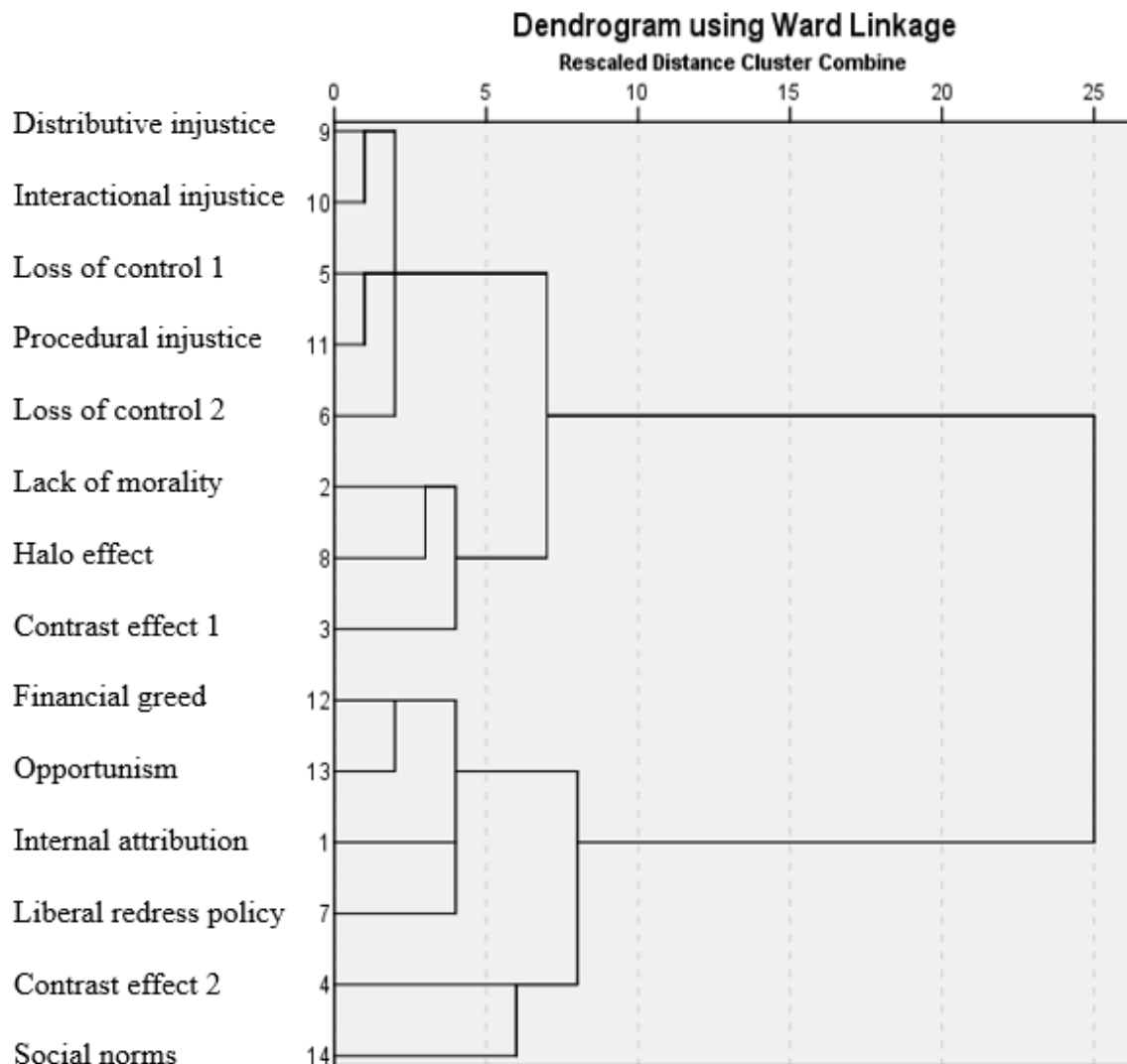


Figure 1. Dendrogram using Ward Linkage

4.4 Factor analysis

By means of common factor analysis, the previously identified clusters were further investigated. This analysis was conducted to determine the number of types of illegitimate complainants, and to compare the outcomes with the cluster analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 (91) = 2438.907, p < .001$), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was sufficient ($KMO = .867$) (Field, 2013). Based on theory (Joosten, unpublished), three factors are expected. Since the factors can be correlated, oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin) was applied for interpretation of the factors. The factor correlation matrix showed that the factors are to a small extent correlated (Hair *et al.*, 2014).

The analysis identified three separate clusters. The communalities showed that *contrast 2* and *opportunism* were lower than .20, indicating that the variance of these drivers was not shared enough with the other variables (Field, 2013). However, since this analysis was conducted on a supportive base, instead of a decisive base, contrast 2 and opportunism were not excluded from the analysis. Apart from the driver positive subjective norms towards

illegitimate complaining, the factor loadings exceed the minimum level of $|\lambda| \geq .30$. Due to comparison with the cluster analysis, there was decided to leave this driver in the analysis. A liberal redress policy of the company contributed negatively to the first factor. There were three factors with an eigenvalue larger than 1, and a cumulative explained variance of 56.4%. Based on previous studies, this number of factors was expected. Since the first factor was in accordance with the first cluster of the cluster analysis, the main conclusion of this analysis was that this cluster is strong.

Table 1. Results factor analysis

	Factor			Communalities
	1	2	3	
Interactional injustice	.856			.323
Distributive injustice	.807			.427
Loss of control 1	.779			.409
Procedural injustice	.770			.799
Loss of control 2	.691			.293
Liberal redress policy	-.536	.317		.429
Lack of morality	.492			.599
Financial greed		.831		.566
Opportunism		.512		.115
Internal attribution		.401		.354
Positive subjective norms towards illegitimate complaining		.250		.664
Halo effect			.503	.720
Contrast effect 1			.488	.572
Contrast effect 2			.354	.062

4.5 Multivariate analysis of variance

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was performed to compare the relationship between one independent variable (consisting of three groups: either the want-type, can-type, or need-type of illegitimate complainant), and multiple dependent variables (neutralization techniques and relationship variables). This analysis was preferred over multiple ANOVA analyses, since it reduces the risk of a Type 1 error (Pallant, 2013), and it facilitates easier comparison of the relationships jointly. Since this analysis aimed to confirm or reject H4 until H16, this analysis was based on the hypothesized clusters. The previously described neutralization techniques, and five relationship variables were used as dependent variables. The classification of the clusters was used as independent variable.

To be able to compare each of the clusters with drivers of illegitimate complaints, the respondents were first classified into the cluster the respondent belongs to. Therefore, the drivers of each cluster were mean centered. Respondents received a mean score per cluster. Based on the highest mean score per cluster, the respondents were classified into one of these clusters. 56 respondents scored equally high on some clusters. Since the sample size was large, and the differences need to be highlighted, these respondents were left out of the analysis. This approach resulted in the following distribution of respondents (Table 2).

Table 2. Classification of respondents (based on hypothesized clusters)

		Classification of Respondents			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Need	198	39.4	44.4	44.4
	Want	55	11.0	12.3	56.7
	Can	193	38.4	43.3	100.0
	Total	446	88.8	100.0	
Missing	System	56	11.2		
Total		502	100.0		

Before conducting the actual analysis, assumptions for normality, linearity, outliers, multicollinearity, and homogeneity were checked (Pallant, 2001). Normality was checked using Mahalanobis distances. The maximum value of case 29 (74.63) seemed to exceed the critical value of 40.79 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) (Appendix VII, Table 19). Because there was only one case out of 446 that exceed the critical value, this case was left in the dataset. Moreover, since there are over 30 cases in each cell, potential violations of normality or equality in variance will not influence the outcomes. Linearity was approved by the scatterplot. There were no signs of multicollinearity ($VIF < 10$, $Tolerance > .10$). Box's M test of equality of covariance matrices was significant ($p < .000$) (Appendix VII, Table 17), and therefore indicated heterogeneity of variances. However, due to the large group sizes, the MANOVA is robust against this violation (Allen & Bennett, 2008). Pillai's Trace indicates statistically significant differences among the types of illegitimate complainants (Pillai's Trace = .519, $F = 8.820$, $p < .000$, partial eta squared = .259) (Appendix VII, Table 18). To identify the differences between the clusters, a post hoc analysis was conducted. Considering the unequal group sizes (Table 2), and the heterogeneity of variances in this analysis (Appendix VII, Table 17), the Games Howell post-hoc analysis was most suitable to use. The following five neutralization techniques were not significant (Appendix VII, Table 20): *denial of injury*, *claim of normalcy*, *claim of relative acceptability*, *metaphor of the ledger*, and *justification by postponement*. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the types of illegitimate complainants on these techniques.

4.6 Hypothesis testing

Clusters

The results of the analyses are shown in Appendices IV until VII. The variables in the regression analysis together explained 38.5% of illegitimate complaining behavior (adjusted $R^2 = .385$), which is an acceptable percentage (Field, 2013). By evaluating the results of the analyses, the hypotheses of the current study were either confirmed or rejected. The hypotheses H4 until H11 are confirmed when the type of illegitimate complainant used the neutralization technique in question more than the other two clusters.

Hypothesis 1 covers the drivers of the want-type. Based on previous studies, a cluster of the variables *lack of morality*, and *perceived procedural*-, *interactional*-, and *distributive injustice* is expected. The cluster analysis revealed four clusters. One of them consists of

procedural-, interactional-, and distributive injustice, combined with two drivers of loss of control. These latter two were hypothesized to be a driver of the need-type of illegitimate complainants. The dendrogram shows that lack of morality only fits in this cluster on a very high level (Figure 1). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Hypothesis 2 covers the drivers of the can-type. This type was hypothesized to be driven by the *halo effect*, a *liberal redress policy* of the service provider, and *internal attribution* of the complainant. However, the dendrogram showed a cluster based on only a liberal redress policy and internal attribution. The halo effect was not linked to this cluster. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Hypothesis 3 covers the drivers of the need-type. The *contrast effect* and a *sense of loss of control* among the complainant were hypothesized to drive this type to complain illegitimately. Nevertheless, these drivers are distributed over two clusters (see hypothesis 1). Loss of control is clustered together with the drivers of the injustice theory, whereas the contrast effect is clustered with the halo effect and a lack of morality of the service provider. Hypothesis 3 is therefore rejected as well.

Neutralization techniques

The following hypotheses are confirmed or rejected based on the hypothesized clusters. Hypothesis 4 until 11 cover the relationship between the types of illegitimate complainants, and the use of certain neutralization techniques.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 cover the relationship between the want-type of illegitimate complainants and the neutralization techniques. Hypothesis 4 suggested a relationship between the want-type of illegitimate complainants, and the use of the condemnation of the condemner technique. The one-way MANOVA analysis revealed that cluster 2, the want-type, used the condemnation of the condemner technique significantly more than cluster 1 and 3 ($MD = .84, p < .001$; $MD = .95, p < .001$). Hypothesis 5 suggested a relationship between the want-type of illegitimate complainants and the use of the denial of the victim as neutralization technique. This technique is used significantly more by the want-type than by the two other types ($MD = .58, p = .001$; $MD = 1.48, p < .001$). Therefore, both hypotheses 4 and 5 can be confirmed.

Hypotheses 6, 7, 8, and 9 cover the relationship between the can-type of illegitimate complainants and the neutralization techniques. They suggest that the can-type of illegitimate complainants use the denial of responsibility as neutralization technique, claim of entitlement, metaphor of the ledger, or denial of the victim as neutralization technique. The denial of responsibility is used most by the need-type of illegitimate complainants ($MD = 1.49, p < .001$). The claim of entitlement is used most by the can-type, however, these effects are not significant ($MD = .20, p = .066$; $MD = .30, p = .078$). The metaphor of the ledger is used most by the need-type, however these effect are not significant either ($MD = .23, p = .181$; $MD = .12, p = .295$). The denial of the victim is used most by the want-type of illegitimate complaints, and least by the can-type ($MD = -.90, p < .001$; $MD = -1.48, p < .001$). Therefore, hypotheses 6, 7, 8, and 9 are rejected.

Hypotheses 10, and 11 cover the relationship between the need-type of illegitimate complainants and the neutralization techniques. It suggests that the need-type uses the denial of negative intent, and the defense of necessity as neutralization techniques. The denial of negative intent is used most by the need-type ($MD = .03, p = .976$ (n.s.); $MD = .57, p < .001$).

Despite the fact that this relationship was in the right direction, it was insignificant. The latter technique is used significantly more by the need-type than by the can-type ($MD = .37, p = .007$). However, there is no significant effect between the need-type and the want-type on technique. Therefore, hypothesis 10 and 11 are both rejected.

Relationship variables

Hypotheses 12 until 16 propose relationships between the types of illegitimate complainants, and the customer-company relationship. Again, the hypothesis will be confirmed when the type of illegitimate complainant in questions scores the highest on the relationship variable in question. An overview of the output can be found in Appendix VII.

Hypothesis 12 covers the positive relationship between the can-type of illegitimate complainants and the relationship variable satisfaction. The results showed that the satisfaction indeed has a positive significant effect on satisfaction ($\beta = .202, p < .001$). Therefore, hypothesis 12 is confirmed.

Hypotheses 13, 14, and 15 cover the relationship between the need-type of illegitimate complainants and the relationship variables loyalty, word of mouth, and trust respectively. The need-type has a negative effect on all three variables ($\beta = -.224, p < .001$; $\beta = -.260, p < .001$; $\beta = -.280, p < .001$ respectively). Since the hypotheses 13 and 15 are about a decrease in loyalty and trust respectively, these are confirmed. Hypothesis 14 suggests an increase in word of mouth, and needs to be rejected.

Hypothesis 16 covers the relationship between the want-type of illegitimate complainants and relationship variables. This type has the lowest score on all five relationship variables ($\beta = -.287$; $\beta = -.325$; $\beta = -.325$; $\beta = -.400$; $\beta = -.394$, all $p < .001$). Therefore, the customer-company relationship between the want-type and the company appears to be rather vulnerable. Hypothesis 16 is thus rejected.

4.7 Additional analysis

Despite the fact that the previously defined theory-based clusters were not confirmed in this study, the dataset provided some interesting new insights. Therefore, an additional analysis is presented below. This analysis was based on the clusters derived from the dataset of this study. Considering that the hypotheses were based on different clusters, this analysis did not test any hypotheses. Comparing both analyses generated some valuable understandings. Due to the similar research design of the analysis that tested the hypotheses, there was chosen to conduct a MANOVA analysis again.

First, the respondents were classified into the cluster the respondent belongs to. Based on the regression analysis, there are two types of illegitimate complainants identified that theoretically and practically make sense (figure 1). The first cluster consisted of loss of control 1 and 2, and distributive-, interactional-, and procedural injustice. The second clusters consisted of financial greed, opportunism, internal attribution, and liberal redress policy. The other two clusters were considered to be unrealistic. This approach resulted in the following distribution (Table 3).

Table 3. Classification of respondents (based on new clusters)

Classification of Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	160	31.9	32.7	32.7
	2	329	65.5	67.3	100.0
	Total	489	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	13	2.6		
Total		502	100.0		

Before conducting this additional analysis, assumptions for normality, linearity, outliers, multicollinearity, and homogeneity were checked again (Pallant, 2001). Again, the Mahalanobis distances suggested violation of the normality (Appendix VIII, Table 19). Consulting this and the size of the dataset (N = 489), no adjustment to the cases was made. The other assumptions were approved. Since the original analysis is based on three clusters, and the additional analysis is based on two clusters, a comparison of post-hoc analyses was not possible.

5. Discussion

The chapter contains a conclusion, and a section about suggestions for further research based on this study. Hereafter, the implications, both theoretical and managerial, will be discussed. This chapter ends with a section about the limitations of current study, and some suggestions for further research.

5.1 Conclusion

This research has been set up to provide an answer to the following research question: “*What are the relationships between the three types of illegitimate complainants, the neutralization techniques, and the customer-company relationship?*”. The answer to this question contributes theoretically to knowledge about customer-company relationships, and practically to earlier recognition of illegitimate complaining behavior, and therefore saving unnecessary costs for companies.

Drivers

In a previous study by Joosten (unpublished), the following drivers of illegitimate complaining behavior were identified: distributive-, interactional-, and procedural injustice, lack of morality, internal attribution, a liberal redress policy, the halo effect, loss of control, and the contrast effect. These drivers are based on combined findings of an explorative multiple case study based on files of the Geschillencommissie, and a regression analysis based on an online survey. However, these drivers differ to a large extent from the significant drivers of current study (internal attribution, financial greed, opportunism, the halo effect, social norms towards illegitimate complaining, and distributive injustice). Since financial greed, opportunism, and social norms towards illegitimate complaining were expected to have an indispensable effect as well (Baker *et al.*, 2012; Reynold & Harris, 2005), these drivers have been added to the analyses of current study. The effect of these drivers was confirmed, whereas financial greed has the strongest positive effect on illegitimate complaining behavior of all drivers. Since distributive injustice, and internal attribution are confirmed in both studies, customers are triggered by the suggested outcome of the service recovery process (distributive injustice), and when they have nothing to lose (internal attribution).

Types

The hypothesized types of illegitimate complainants were not confirmed. Next to distributive-, interactional-, and procedural injustice, the want-type of illegitimate complainants seems to be driven by a sense of loss of control of the customer instead of a lack of morality of the service provider. Since loss of control was hypothesized to be a driver of the need-type of illegitimate complainant, this new cluster could be summarized as a *desperate want-type of illegitimate complainant*. Despite the argumentation in Chapter 2, this cluster seemed to be a combination of the *want-type*, and the *need-type* of illegitimate complainants. Based on the results of the regression analysis, the following line of reasoning could be applicable to the mode of thought of a *desperate want-type* of illegitimate complainants:

“After filing a complaint, the company treated me very rude (*interactional injustice*). I did not like the whole situation. The process was slow (*procedural injustice*), and at one point, the company stopped responding at all (*loss of control*). The proposal I finally received from the company was unfair to me (*distributive injustice*). Therefore, I exaggerated my complaint: to attract their attention, to arrive at a better solution.”

The hypothesized can-type of illegitimate complainants reasonably matches partially with the second group in the cluster analysis. This cluster consists of *internal attribution*, a *liberal redress policy* of the service provider, *financial greed*, and *opportunism*. Since financial greed and opportunism are clustered together, the conclusion of Reynold and Harris (2005) is confirmed. The grouping of a liberal redress policy of the service provider and opportunism makes sense. When a customer is unjustifiably redressed by the company after a service failure, the opportunity complainant sees the opportunity to claim even more. Caused by their liberal redress policy, the company has made up for something that was not even its own fault. Due to the deliberate nature of financial greed and opportunism, this is considered as a characteristic of this type of illegitimate complainants. This type can therefore be renamed as *deliberate can-type of illegitimate complainants*. The following story could be applicable to this type:

“The service provider was not at fault, it was my own fault (*internal attribution*). However, due to the very *liberal redress policy* of the service provider, it is so easy to take advantage of this situation. It would be a pity if I do not try it. I just try to abuse the company (*financial greed*), and by this means take advantage of the situation myself (*opportunism*).”

The cluster analysis presented a third cluster, consisting of the *halo effect*, a *lack of morality* of the service provider, and the *contrast effect*. Based on previous study (Joosten, unpublished), these drivers were ex ante not expected to cluster together. The halo effect was hypothesized as a driver for the *can-type*, the *lack of morality* was hypothesized as a driver of the *want-type*, and the contrast effect was hypothesized as a driver of the *need-type* of illegitimate complainants. However, the *need-type* has not been manifested in current study. A possible explanation for this could be that this study is restricted to illegitimate complaints (as opposed to legitimate complaints). When a customer experiences the *contrast effect*, and the company in question refuses to handle this well, the complaint of the customer could suddenly become legitimate instead of illegitimate. Further research should give a decisive answer whether this is actually the case. This issue is discussed extensively in section 5.4.

Regarding the third cluster, all the three drivers are based on a certain degree of disappointment, either enforced by own expectations, the product or service, or the company. Many influential factors in this process occur due to a thought-process in the mind of the customer. Therefore, an all-embracing term for this cluster could be *the disappointed think-type of illegitimate complainants*. The following story could be applicable to this type:

“I was disappointed since this product/service does not fit with my expectations (*contrast effect*). How was this possible? I started to think about it, and took a more detailed look into

the product/service. I suddenly discovered even more deficiencies (*halo effect*). I thought: this can not be a coincidence! The company deliberately tried to abuse me (*lack of morality*).”

Neutralization techniques

The hypothesized want-type uses both the condemnation of the condemners technique, and the denial of the victim technique to neutralize its behavior. This type was expected to be driven by a lack of morality of the service provider, and distributive-, procedural-, and interactional injustice. When a customer experiences the cause of the failure as a deliberate action of the company, the condemnation of the condemner technique is a logical reaction to this action. Arguing that the company is not always honest to its customers is in line with a lack of morality of the company, and neutralizes the behavior of the illegitimate complainant. Furthermore, when the want-type of illegitimate complainants feels badly treated by the company, the denial of the victim technique is a logical reaction by blaming the company for this situation. Driven by the injustice theory, the use of the denial of the victim technique is a logical reaction, since it both assumes poor treatment of the company, for which the complainant revenges. However, this type is driven by internal attribution as well. This driver assumes a mistake of the complainant instead of the company. However, the condemnation of the condemner technique does not necessarily assume a mistake of the company. Therefore, it is likely that a complainant who is primarily driven by the injustice theory uses the denial of the victim as neutralization technique, and a complainant who is primarily driven by internal attribution neutralizes its behavior with the condemnation of the condemner technique.

Regarding the hypothesized need-type of illegitimate complainants, the denial of negative intent, and the defense of necessity were expected to be used by this type. These techniques are both used significantly less by the hypothesized can-type of illegitimate complainants. However, there is no significant difference between the use of the need-type and the want-type. This could be explained by the outcome of the cluster analysis, that revealed that these two types are more similar to each other compared to the hypothesized can-type. Therefore, the use of neutralization techniques could be more similar as well. A technique which is used by the need-type of illegitimate complainants is the denial of responsibility. This makes sense, since this complaint is induced by a situation that was genuinely not the customers' mistake. The complaint was established by non-response of the company (loss of control), or because the experience was a lot worse than expectations (contrast effect). The can-type complaints just because they see the opportunity, instead of the necessity. Therefore, it is a logical finding that the need-type uses this technique more than the can-type.

A striking finding is that the can-type of illegitimate complainants hardly uses neutralization techniques, compared to the other two types. This can-type made significantly the least use of the denial of responsibility technique. Since this relationship was tested with a cluster based on, among others, internal attribution, claiming that the cause of the problem was not the complainants own fault (denial of responsibility) would make no sense. This also applies to the denial of the victim technique, where the complainant would claim that the company deserves it for what they have done. However, the situation was to blame for the complainant, so claiming that the company was at fault would not have been logical either. The reasoning regarding the limited use of the denial of negative intent technique is more nuanced. The complainant may get the idea to complain illegitimately either before or during the process.

Depending on whether the complainant knew beforehand about the liberal redress policy of the company, he/she may come up with the idea of taking advantage of it. Whether it makes sense that the denial of negative intent technique is least used by this type therefore depends on this.

Relationship variables

During the service recovery process, the customer-company is most vulnerable to the hypothesized want-type. This makes sense because the deliberate nature of a lack of morality of the service provider will probably not suit the complainant well. The cause of the problem is not by accident, and could therefore happen again the next time. This deliberateness of the company leads to anger and sadness. It responds to emotions directly, which the customers are unlikely to forget easily.

The can-type on the other hand, appears to have the most positive consequences for the customer-company relationship. This could be explained by the fact that this type had almost nothing to lose with complaining. There was no external party guilty to the cause of the problem (internal attribution). Notwithstanding, the halo effect could have reduced the customer-company relationship. However, this was not the case in this dataset.

Below, an overview of the hypotheses and the results are presented (Table 4). Hypotheses 4, 5, and 12 were confirmed, albeit based on the hypothesized clusters.

Table 4. Overview of hypotheses and results

Hypothesis	Result
H1 Illegitimate complaints of the want-type are driven by a lack of morality of the service provider, and perceived procedural-, interactional-, and distributive injustice.	Rejected
H2 Illegitimate complaints of the can-type are driven by the halo effect, a liberal redress policy of the service provider and internal attribution of the complainant.	Rejected
H3 Illegitimate complaints of the need-type are driven by the contrast effect and loss of control.	Rejected
H4 The want-type of illegitimate complainant uses the condemnation of the condemner as neutralization technique.	Confirmed*
H5 The want-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of the victim as neutralization technique.	Confirmed*
H6 The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of responsibility as neutralization technique.	Rejected*
H7 The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the claim of entitlement as neutralization technique.	Rejected*
H8 The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the metaphor of the ledger as neutralization technique.	Rejected*
H9 The can-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of the victim as neutralization technique.	Rejected*
H10 The need-type of illegitimate complainant uses the denial of negative intent as neutralization technique.	Rejected*
H11 The need-type of illegitimate complainant uses the defense of necessity as neutralization technique.	Rejected*
H12 The can-type of illegitimate complainants experiences an increase in satisfaction after the service recovery process.	Confirmed*
H13 The need-type of illegitimate complainants experiences a decrease in loyalty after the service recovery process.	Rejected*
H14 The need-type of illegitimate complainants experiences an increase in word of mouth after the service recovery process.	Rejected*
H15 The need-type of illegitimate complainants experiences a decrease in trust after the service recovery process.	Rejected*
H16 The want-type of illegitimate complainants experiences no change in relationship variables after the service recovery process.	Rejected*

Note * = based on hypothesized clusters

5.2 Theoretical contributions

This study is relevant for (marketing) academics because it contributes to the knowledge about both the antecedents of illegitimate complaining, and its consequences. Current study aimed to confirm the types of illegitimate complainants, relate those types to neutralization techniques, and investigate the effect on the customer-company relationship. Accordingly, the results of this study provide insights in understanding illegitimate complaining behavior.

As stated in Chapter 2, illegitimate complaining behavior is under-researched. Most studies are small-scale experiments (e.g. Berry & Seiders, 2008; Reynolds & Harris, 2009; Daunt & Harris, 2012). Current study is confirmative in nature, and aims to explore new relationships. It contributes to the literature by providing an investigation based on a large dataset, consisting of real-life situations. It provides insights into the types itself, and the behavior of these types. In other words, it enhances existing academic knowledge about illegitimate complaining behavior.

Comparing both the set-up and the findings of the current study to previous study of Joosten (unpublished) there are some striking differences and similarities. Honest complaints do not play a role in current study. Fraudulent complaints on the other hand, correspond slightly to the deliberate can-type of current study. This type files a complaint to benefit financially, and because he/she sees the opportunity to do so. Fraudulent complaints are deliberately and pre-planned. The deliberate nature of these complaints matches with the deliberate can-type, although those complaints are not pre-planned. The opportunistic complaints correspond to a larger extent to the deliberate can-type. Both are created by the opportunity that arises when something went wrong in the process. A liberal redress policy could, enforced by the opportunism of the customer, induce an opportunistic complaint.

The typology of Huang and Miao (2013) provides an interesting comparison with current study. The opportunistic plotters make use of the hospitality of companies. Providing a liberal redress policy is an expression of a careful customer service. This customer service can be abused by the deliberate can-type of illegitimate complainants. In other words, current study provides support for this type of complainants. However, no driver has been tested that measures whether or not someone always files an illegitimate complaint. The repetitive grumbler can therefore not be confirmed. Finally, the occasional tyrants. Starting from “the customer is always right” assumption, this type exploits companies to benefit him/herself. The comparison to current study is twofold. From the customer perspective, the disappointed think-type of illegitimate complainants fit with these tyrants. As a result of disappointing quality, a customer can file a complaint. From his/her perspective, the content of this complaint can be real or exaggerated. If it is real, it can be considered as an honest complaint (Joosten, unpublished). If it is exaggerated, it corresponds to the occasional tyrants (Huang & Miao, 2013). However, the contrast effect does not measure how real the complaint actually is, but how the situation is experienced by the complainant. This is an interesting distinction.

5.3 Managerial implications

As mentioned before, early recognition of an illegitimate complaining attempt, prevents frontline employees to fall for them. Deeper insights into the drivers, types, and neutralization techniques of illegitimate complainants could help practitioners in deciding whether to continue investing time, money, and effort in complaint handling. The findings of this study are especially relevant for managers and employees in the service recovery process.

First, illegitimate complaints of the want-type are driven by a *lack of morality* of the service provider, the *halo effect*, and the *contrast effect*. Perceived lack of morality is an influential trigger to this type of illegitimate complainants, while companies may influence this perception to a large extent. Based on own experience, focusing on clear communication to

customers can prevent many problems and miscommunication in an early stage. A company showing its goodwill to their customers deactivates the perceived lack of morality among the want-type of illegitimate complainants. This approach tackles the halo effect at the same time. By assuring that there are not many factors to complain about, the influence of this driver is limited to a minimum as well. Lastly, it is important for this type of illegitimate complainant that companies do not set unrealistic expectations. This initiates the complaining process of the want-type, enforced by the contrast effect. Make sure that the customer will not be disappointed, and guide them by means of a professional customer service.

Second, illegitimate complaints of the can-type are driven by *internal attribution* of the customer, and a *liberal redress policy* of the company. When a customer perceives the cause of the problem as an own mistake, internal attribution comes into force. However, the company in question has little influence on this. Contrarily, a liberal redress policy of the company is under their own influence. Companies should make sure that its redress policy does not provoke complainants of the can-type to complain illegitimately. A suggestion is to formulate detailed terms and conditions, in which restrictions regarding guarantee policies are described.

Third, the need-type of illegitimate complainants is driven by a sense of *loss of control*, and *distributive*-, *interactional*-, and *procedural injustice*. A sense of loss of control seems to be the decisive driver in the process. Being dissatisfied is not enough to complain illegitimately. Experiencing a sense of loss of control could be the trigger to exaggerate a complaint. Therefore, it is of great importance that company's prevent this. This implies valuing customer service highly by companies, and always responding to customer messages in a proper way. Moreover, a liberal policy regarding the outcome of the service recovery process prevents customers from experiencing distributive injustice. These measures combined reduce the tendency of the need-type to complain illegitimately.

Last, illegitimate complainants are time-, money-, and energy consuming (Joosten, unpublished). Even though that a can-type of illegitimate complainants perceives that the customer-company relationship is improved after the service recovery process, does not necessarily mean that the company in question is happy to sustain this relationship. Illegitimate complaints take away the attention from legitimate complaints that need to be solved. Managers should consider this as well.

5.4 Limitations and further research

Despite careful attention to the set-up and execution of this study, there are some limitations and shortcomings in this study. These limitations provide interesting opportunities for further research in this field.

First, the method of this study is suboptimal. After thorough discussion of the possibilities, an online survey was, due to the sensitive nature of this topic, considered to be the best option. Nevertheless, there are several impediments to this method. The research has three major disadvantages. The researcher has, apart from the initial distribution, no control over the sample selection, the validity is jeopardized due to the unequal chance for the population to participate in this study, and the assured anonymity induces the possibility that not every response of the survey is from a unique individual (Duda & Nobile, 2010). Moreover, this online distribution enhances the possibility to ignore an invitation to participate in the

survey (Evans & Mathur, 2005). By addressing people directly, an attempt was made to limit this latter disadvantage. Future studies should take this issue into account and use, if possible, random sampling methods. This would improve the generalizability of the study over an entire population. Joosten (unpublished) suggest interviewing as an alternative research method for the online survey. However, the sensitive nature of the topic would have entailed several difficulties such as social desirable answers, or problems with collecting participants. Initially, the set-up of this study had a confirmative nature, for which an online survey was considered as a more suitable method.

Second, there are some limitations regarding the internal reliability, and the external validity of the dataset. The respondents are gathered using convenience sampling, a method which can be subject to sampling bias. More specifically, the dataset consists to a large extent of highly educated people. In certain situations, their behavior could differ from other segments of the population. This, in turn, could have threatened the external validity of this study (Given, 2008). However, generalizability was not the ultimate goal of this study. Current study identified types of illegitimate complainants, investigated its relationship with neutralization techniques, and its effect on the relationship with the company. From this point, further research could focus on the generalizability by extending these findings to the entire population. Moreover, the recall bias could have influenced the findings as well (Coughlin, 1990). This bias comes into force when the incident in question occurred long ago, whereby details are blurred in memory. Since 32.1% of the complaints took place more than two years ago, these cases are likely to be influenced by this recall bias. Further research could focus on more recent cases, and therefore improve the internal reliability. Furthermore, both the validity and the reliability can be violated due to the single-item measures of several variables in the dataset (Wanous *et al.*, 1997). Considering the questionnaire length, this decision was taken deliberately.

Third, the skewness and kurtosis of the data is not optimal. This should be assured to be able to conduct the analyses. However, due to the large sample size, this has no substantial impact on the analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996, p. 73). Since the histogram was well-shaped, this impact is likely to be limited. Despite the fact that the researchers aimed to reduce the impact of this limitation, some influence of this shortcoming can not be precluded.

Last, one could argue about the actual definition of an illegitimate complaint. The definition used in this study (“the extent to which complainants either make up or exaggerate their complaint” (Joosten, unpublished)) can be unsatisfying in some respects. In current study, it is measured by statements about exaggeration and forging of the complaint. However, this might not be an all-embracing measurement. In other words, the two-item scale of this study is not a thorough measure of the construct. Further research could identify the aspects of which illegitimate complaints consist of, and deploy an exhaustive definition.

Above mentioned limitations might have contributed to insignificant results. A different research design potentially diminish this influence, which in turn influence the outcome in turn. This future research can give a decisive answer to the drivers per type, and its influence on the customer-company relationship. Furthermore, current study provides no information about the size of the clusters, and the frequency each type attempts to complain illegitimately. Further research could investigate this by presenting participants the three categories, and ask: which of these types do you feel related with?

Apart from the *claim of normalcy* neutralization technique, the additional analysis revealed the same insignificant neutralization techniques (Appendix VIII, Table 25) as the original analysis. In the original analysis, *claim of normalcy* had no significant differences between the types. However, in the additional analysis, based on the clusters derived from the cluster analysis, the difference between the two clusters is significant (Appendix VIII, Table 25). In the first analysis, the can-type is driven by the *halo effect*, *internal attribution*, and a *liberal redress policy* of the company. In the latter analysis, the can-type of illegitimate complainants is driven by *financial greed*, *opportunism*, *internal attribution*, and a *liberal redress policy* of the company. Therefore, financial greed and opportunism could drive this difference in the use of the *claim of normalcy* technique. Future research could provide a definitive answer.

Since the can-type faces the most positive consequences for the customer-company relationship, the additional analysis suggests that financial greed and opportunism might not influence this relationship heavily. Even without these two drivers benefits the customer-company relationship of the can-type of illegitimate complainants and the service provider from this process. Therefore, internal attribution and a liberal redress policy of the company might provoke this positive relationship. Again, future research needs to provide a definitive answer.

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Appendices

Appendix I - Survey

Deze enquête is ontwikkeld in samenwerking met van Pinxteren, Rouwhorst, van Vliet, en Dr. Joosten (unpublished).

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 kapot gegaan. 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?

Waar heeft u geklaagd (bij wat voor een soort bedrijf of welke instantie)?

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 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"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik was boos op het bedrijf	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Het bedrijf heeft een goede garantieregeling en daar heb ik gebruik van gemaakt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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"/>
Het product/de dienst had nog meer gebreken, maar daarover heb ik niet geklaagd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het voorstel van het bedrijf om de klacht op te lossen was oneerlijk naar mij toe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De manier waarop het bedrijf mij behandelde was onbeleefd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De klachtenprocedure van het bedrijf was traag en moeizaam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ik ben iemand die niet snel klaagt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik denk dat mijn vrienden of bekenden in dezelfde situatie de klacht ook overdreven of verzonnen zouden hebben	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<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"/>

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

☐☐☐☐☐

Ik mag ook
wel eens een
meevallertje
hebben

☐☐☐☐☐

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 een aankoop doe bij het bedrijf in kwestie is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De kans dat ik anderen (familie/vrienden/ etc,) het bedrijf in kwestie aanraad is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het vertrouwen dat ik in het bedrijf in kwestie heb is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mijn band met het bedrijf is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mijn tevredenheid over het bedrijf is na deze situatie:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<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?

☐ Leeftijd in jaren _____

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, k.rouwhorst@student.ru.nl, suzannevan.vliet@student.ru.nl of laura.zendijk@student.ru.nl.

Appendix II - Operationalization

Table 5. Drivers of illegitimate complaining

Construct	Item(s)
Attribution theory	De oorzaak van het probleem lag bij het bedrijf (external). De oorzaak van het probleem was mijn eigen schuld (internal).
Contrast effect	Ik had hoge verwachtingen van het product/de dienst. Mijn ervaring met het product/de dienst was veel slechter dan verwacht.
Lack of morality	Het bedrijf probeerde opzettelijk misbruik van mij te maken.
Financial greed	Ik probeerde opzettelijk misbruik te maken van het bedrijf.
Planning	Ik heb van tevoren gepland om te proberen een voordeeltje te behalen.
Opportunism	Ik heb van de gelegenheid gebruik gemaakt om een voordeeltje te behalen.
Disappointment	Ik was teleurgesteld in het bedrijf.
Anger	Ik was boos op het bedrijf.
Liberal redress policy	Het bedrijf heeft een goede garantieregeling en daar heb ik gebruik van gemaakt.
Loss of control	Het bedrijf reageerde niet (meer) op mijn vragen en verzoeken. Het bedrijf hield zich niet aan de afspraken.
Halo effect	Nadat ik een fout ontdekte in het product/de dienst, ontdekte ik nog meer gebreken.
Assimilation theory	Het product/de dienst had nog meer gebreken, maar daarover heb ik niet geklaagd.
Justice theory	Het voorstel van het bedrijf om de klacht op te lossen was oneerlijk naar mij toe (distributive). De manier waarop het bedrijf mij behandelde was onbeleefd (interactional). De klachtenprocedure van het bedrijf was traag en moeizaam (procedural).
Attitude towards complaining	Ik ben iemand die niet snel klaagt.

Social norms towards illegitimate complaining	Ik denk dat mijn vrienden of bekenden in dezelfde situatie de klacht ook overdreven of verzonnen zouden hebben.
--	---

Table 6. Neutralization techniques

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

Table 7. Relationship variables

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

Appendix III - Pre-test

Table 8. Pre-test

Respondent	Age	Education	Device	Date	Time length
1	23	HBO	Laptop	09-03-2019	11 minutes
2	21	HBO	Laptop	10-03-2019	19 minutes
3	23	WO	Laptop	10-03-2019	11 minutes
4	53	WO	Laptop	10-03-2019	16 minutes
5	26	HBO	Laptop	11-03-2019	10 minutes
6	30	HBO	Laptop	10-03-2019	11 minutes
7	24	WO	Laptop	11-03-2019	13 minutes
8	23	WO	Laptop	11-03-2019	8 minutes
9	59	WO	iPad	11-03-2019	7 minutes
10	55	HBO	Laptop	13-03-2019	12 minutes

Respondent	Comments
1	(No comments)
2	Question 'Het product/de dienst had nog meer gebreken, maar daarover heb ik niet geklaagd'. This question is unclear, because I was about <u>me</u> who exaggerated. When there was more to complain about, I would have indicated it when complaining. Question regarding education.
3	How specific needs to be the question about the complaint? Question regarding the size of the company: what about online companies? Add to: "het bedrijf verdiende het". Deserved what? The exaggerated complaint.
4	Typo in examples.
5	Question regarding the size of the company: what about online companies? Question "het was niet mijn schuld". More concrete, what exactly was not my fault?
6	Not immediately clear that the complaint (page 1), an exaggerated complaint should be (not just a general complaint). Cause of the complaint was unclear: he pulled on a sock too roughly, whereas the company could have made a production error. 'Het bedrijf probeerde opzettelijk misbruik van me te maken': unclear. 'Ik ben iemand die snel klaagt' instead of 'niet snel klaagt' (he read over it) 'Het was niet mijn opzet om overdreven te klagen' (should be 'beforehand'?) Weird question: 'heeft u al vaker een klacht overdreven'. 0 times, 1 to 2 times, 3 to 4 times (he does not know how often he complained, make it more general) Use university email addresses instead of own email addresses (more professional)
7	More professional when our names are alphabetically ordered. Exaggerated or filed in the second screen, make it bold. Make names bold at examples on the first page.

	<p>‘Waar heeft u geklaagd’. Suggests a location. More clear: ‘wat is de naam van het bedrijf of instantie?’. However: the name of the company suggests privacy violation. What kind of company is better: Hema = warehouse for example. Potentially, make categories: warehouse, electronics etcetera.</p> <p>‘Wat was het probleem met het betreffende product’. There is not necessarily a problem. Some people plan to complain beforehand. So, this question is incorrect. Furthermore, the bar needs to be larger. Now, it is hard to read what you wrote exactly.</p> <p>‘Mijn ervaring met product/dienst was veel slechter’. Delete ‘veel’.</p> <p>Add ‘inapplicable’ option.</p> <p>Out of nowhere: ‘het was niet mijn schuld’. Should be: ‘de overdreven klacht was niet mijn schuld’.</p> <p>Neutralization techniques: colloquial language.</p> <p>‘Anders werd ik niet serieus genomen door het bedrijf’. Add ‘als ik niet overdreven had geklaagd’.</p> <p>Consequenties: should be ‘negatieve consequenties’.</p> <p>‘Heeft u vaker een klacht verzonnen’. 3 times and more than 3 times are very similar. Should be: ‘1x, paar keer, of veel vaker’.</p> <p>Gender: add ‘other’ as third category.</p>
8	<p>She once claimed a stolen watch at travel insurance, while she actually lost it. She clearly made it up completely, but is it completely exaggerated as well? Is not clear. Add: ‘niet van toepassing’.</p> <p>Garantieregeling: add ‘inapplicable’.</p> <p>Het product/dienst had nog meer gebreken: add ‘inapplicable’.</p> <p>Exaggerated and filed complaints are mixed up: they are not the same.</p> <p>Exaggerated: there is a scratch on your phone, but argue that there are 28 scratches. Forged: it is just not true, the watch is not stolen but lost.</p> <p>‘Anders werd ik niet serieus genomen’. add ‘inapplicable’ when the complaint is forged.</p> <p>‘Totale tijd’. Clarify, from filing until overall finish.</p>
9	<p>Correct some typos in the introduction.</p> <p>‘Nadat ik een fout ontdekte in het product...’ etcetera. These questions are regarding a product, whereas this specific situation is about a service. Add: ‘inapplicable’.</p> <p>Nuance between ‘completely disagree’ and ‘disagree’ might be too narrow.</p> <p>Question ‘wat is de totale tijd dat uw beschreven situatie...’. Strange question, unclear. - The message ‘U bent over de helft van de vragen’ is too late. I suggest to move it a block forward.</p>
10	<p>‘Waar heeft u geklaagd?’. Should it be by name?</p> <p>My complaint is out-of-date. Is it then exaggerated or forged?</p> <p>Scale is a little unclear sometimes. Then, I have to read the question twice.</p> <p>Many questions are very similar.</p> <p>Response categories (disagree - agree) drop off the screen on the laptop. You have to scroll up to see it.</p> <p>For some questions, I prefer to fill in ‘ja’ or ‘nee’, instead of ‘eens’ or ‘oneens’.</p> <p>You are unable to return to previous responses (to check or adjust them).</p> <p>Question ‘Op dit moment dacht ik niet na over de consequenties’. I had to read it twice.</p> <p>‘Wat is de totale tijd dat uw situatie heeft gespeeld?’. Unclear question.</p> <p>Correct a typo in the introduction</p>

Appendix IV - Regression Analysis

Table 9. Coefficients table for assessing multicollinearity

	Coefficients	
	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
Internal attribution	.535	1.868
External attribution	.422	2.372
Contrast effect 1	.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 control 1	.427	2.339
Loss of control 2	.458	2.185
Contrast effect 2	.890	1.123
Halo effect	.647	1.545
Assimilation theory	.766	1.305
Interactional injustice	.337	2.964
Procedural injustice	.462	2.164
Negative attitude	.942	1.062
towards complaining		
Positive subjective	.927	1.078
norms towards		
illegitimate		
complaining		
Distributive injustice	.160	6.256
(centered)		
Distributive injustice P2	.255	3.917
Distributive injustice P3	.104	9.625

Table 10. Model Summary

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.642	.412	.385	.33223	.412	15.274	22	479	.000

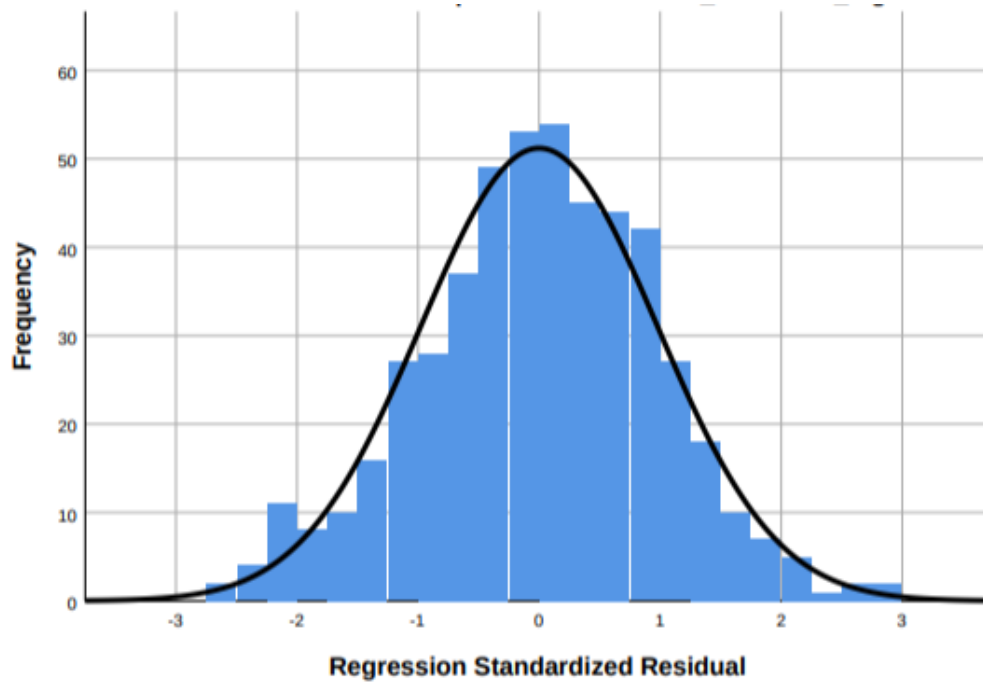


Figure 2. Histogram

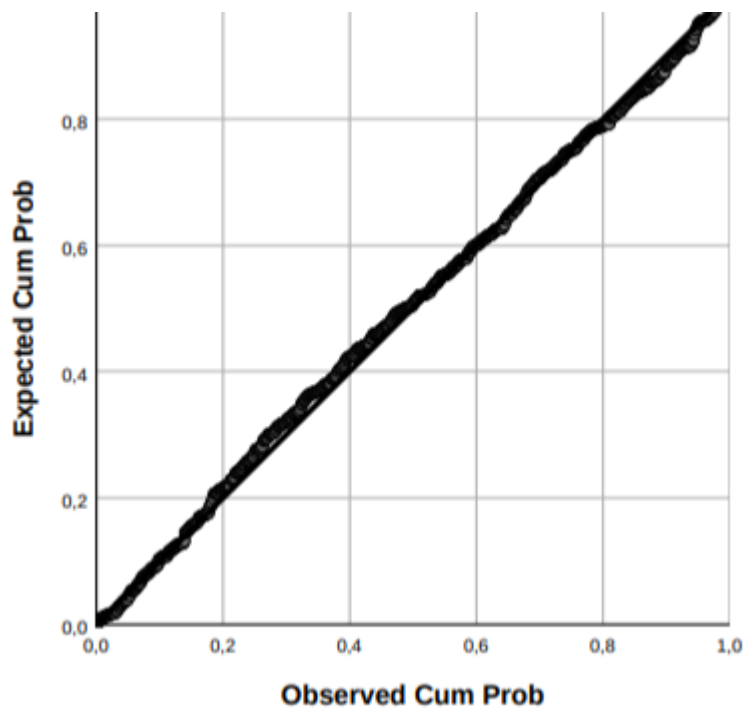


Figure 3. Normal P-P plot

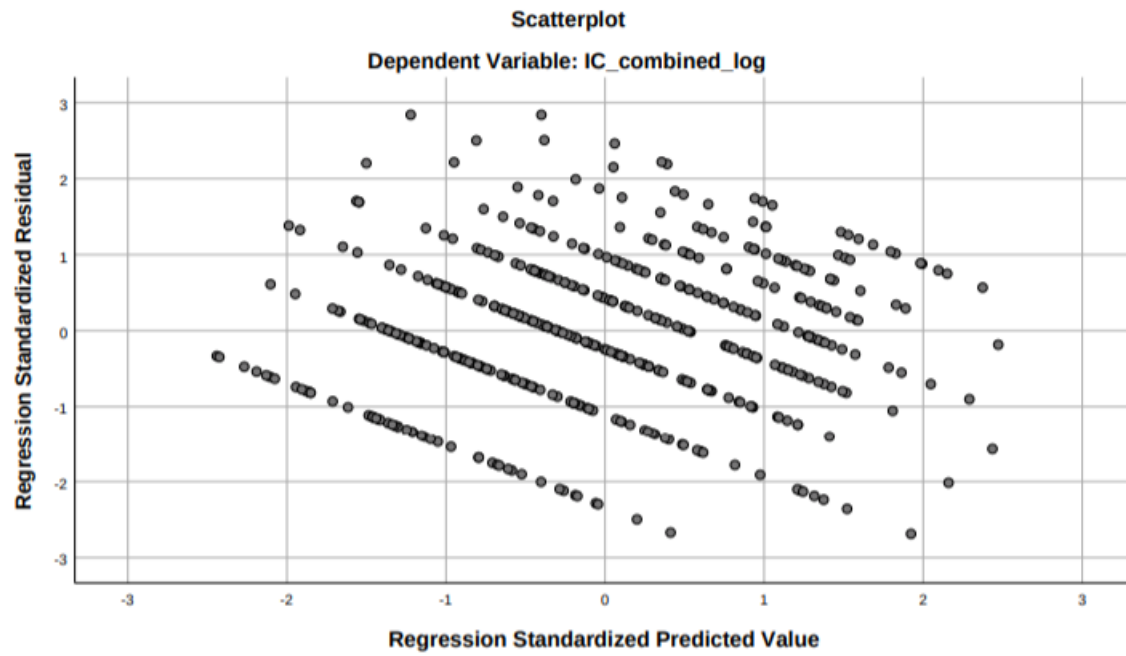


Figure 4. Scatterplot

Table 11. ANOVA table

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

Table 12. Coefficients table

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.030	.151		-.199	.843
	Internal attribution	.054	.014	.178	3.722	.000
	External attribution	.004	.016	.014	.258	.797
	Contrast effect 1	-.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 control 1	.003	.020	.007	.139	.886
	Loss of control 2	-.016	.017	-.047	-.900	.369
	Contrast effect 2	.020	.016	.045	1.200	.231
	Halo effect	.034	.017	.088	2.025	.043
	Assimilation theory	-.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 norms towards illegitimate complaining	.045	.016	.100	2.744	.006
	Distributive injustice (centered)	.028	.030	.082	.933	.351
	Distributive injustice P2	.024	.017	.097	1.405	.161
	Distributive injustice P3	-.020	.009	-.237	-2.181	.030

Dependent Variable: IC_combined_log

Appendix V - Cluster Analysis

Table 13. Agglomeration Schedule

Agglomeration Schedule						
Stage	Cluster Combined		Coefficients	Stage Cluster First Appears		Next Stage
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	
1	9	10	134.273	0	0	3
2	5	11	324.314	0	0	3
3	5	9	536.999	2	1	4
4	5	6	765.476	3	0	11
5	12	13	1018.480	0	0	9
6	2	8	1332.605	0	0	7
7	2	3	1682.710	6	0	11
8	1	7	2047.415	0	0	9
9	1	12	2431.615	8	5	12
10	4	14	2916.081	0	0	12
11	2	5	3462.616	7	4	13
12	1	4	4078.117	9	10	13
13	1	2	5918.976	12	11	0

Appendix VI - Factor Analysis

Table 14. *KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity*

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.867
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2438.907
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Table 15. *Factor Correlation Matrix*

Factor Correlation Matrix			
Factor	1	2	3
1	1.000		
2	-.200	1.000	
3	.297	-.036	1.000

Table 16. *Total Variance Explained*

Total Variance Explained							
Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Loadings	Sums of Squared		Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	4.807	34.335	34.335	4.373	31.233	31.233	4.157
2	1.720	12.284	46.619	1.242	8.873	40.105	1.649
3	1.372	9.801	54.420	.718	5.125	45.231	1.467
4	.919	6.565	62.985				
5	.883	6.306	69.291				
6	.784	5.601	74.892				
7	.603	4.309	79.201				
8	.574	4.098	83.299				
9	.550	3.929	87.299				
10	.435	3.108	90.336				
11	.396	2.828	93.164				
12	.380	2.716	95.880				
13	.336	2.399	98.278				
14	.241	1.722	100.000				

Appendix VII - Multivariate Analysis Of Variance

Table 17. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices	
Box's M	471.699
F	1.416
df1	306
df2	78133.164
Sig.	.000

Table 18. Multivariate Tests

		Multivariate Tests						
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed power
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.988	2159.968	17.000	427.000	.000	.988	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.012	2158.967	17.000	427.000	.000	.988	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	85.954	2158.967	17.000	427.000	.000	.988	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	85.954	2158.967	17.000	427.000	.000	.988	1.000
	Root							
Classification of Clusters	Pillai's Trace	.519	8.820	34.000	856.000	.000	.259	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.524	9.572	34.000	854.000	.000	.276	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.825	10.337	34.000	852.000	.000	.292	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.709	17.846	17.000	428.000	.000	.415	1.000
	Root							

Table 19. Residuals Statistics

Residuals Statistics					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	.8324	3.4294	1.9888	.54006	446
Std. Predicted Value	-2.141	2.667	.000	1.000	446
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.058	.322	.152	.039	446
Adjusted Predicted Value	.8249	3.4517	1.9908	.54228	446
Residual	-1.74290	1.69002	.00000	.76607	446
Std. Residual	-2.231	2.164	.000	.981	446
Stud. Residual	-2.287	2.198	-.001	1.001	446
Deleted Residual	-1.83050	1.77610	-.00197	.79845	446
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.298	2.208	-.001	1.002	446
Mahal. Distance	1.424	74.625	16.962	9.221	446
Cook's Distance	.000	.028	.002	.003	446
Centered Leverage Value	.003	.168	.038	.021	446

Table 20. Test of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Test of Between-Subjects Effects						
		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Classification of Clusters	Denial of responsibility	239.493	2	119.747	82.231	.000***	.271	1.000
	Denial of injury	.094	2	.047	.072	.930	.000	.061
	Denial of the victim	128.903	2	64.452	52.681	.000***	.192	1.000
	Condemnation of the condemners	39.799	2	19.900	17.422	.000***	.073	1.000
	Appeal to higher loyalties	29.146	2	14.573	11.926	.000***	.051	.995
	Claim of normalcy	2.609	2	1.305	2.300	.101	.010	.467
	Denial of negative intent	35.362	2	17.681	14.820	.000***	.063	.999
	Claim of relative acceptability	.892	2	.446	.588	.573	.003	.142
	Metaphor of the ledger	2.850	2	1.425	2.098	.124	.009	.431
	Claim of entitlement	5.652	2	2.826	3.705	.025*	.016	.679
	Defense of necessity	20.557	2	10.278	7.268	.001**	.032	.936
	Justification by postponement	2.105	2	1.052	.923	.398	.004	.210
	Loyalty	44.966	2	22.483	37.254	.000***	.144	1.000
	Word of mouth	51.074	2	25.537	38.276	.000***	.147	1.000
	Trust	68.623	2	34.312	46.478	.000***	.173	1.000
	Commitment	69.467	2	34.799	57.250	.000***	.205	1.000
	Satisfaction	102.647	2	51.324	65.164	.000***	.227	1.000

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 21. Multiple Comparisons (based on hypothesized clusters)

Multiple Comparisons				
Games-Howell				
Dependent variable	(I) Cluster	(J) Cluster	(I-J) Mean- difference	Std. Error
Het was niet mijn schuld	1	2	.07	.173
		3	1.49*	.123
	2	1	-.07	.173
		3	1.42*	.180
	3	1	-1.49*	.123
		2	-1.42*	.180
Het bedrijf zal er heus geen ernstige schade door lijden	1	2	.05	.128
		3	.01	.081
	2	1	-.05	.128
		3	-.03	.125
	3	1	-.01	.081
		2	.03	.125
Het bedrijf verdient het door wat ze gedaan hebben	1	2	-.58*	.157
		3	.90*	.113
	2	1	.58*	.157
		3	1.48*	.155
	3	1	-.90*	.113
		2	-1.48*	.155
Het bedrijf is ook niet altijd eerlijk tegenover klanten	1	2	-.84*	.135
		3	.95*	.111
	2	1	.84*	.135
		3	.95*	.140
	3	1	-.11	.111
		2	-.95*	.140
Ik deed het niet voor mezelf (maar uit principe of voor anderen)	1	2	.02	.180
		3	.52*	.110
	2	1	-.02	.180
		3	.50*	.175
	3	1	-.52*	.110
		2	-.50*	.175
Iedereen overdrijft wel eens	1	2	.21	.117
		3	-.03	.076
	2	1	-.21	.117
		3	-.24	.115
	3	1	.03	.076
		2	.24	.115

Ik was niet op voorhand van plan om overdreven te klagen	1	2	.03	.148
		3	.57*	.112
	2	1	-.03	.148
		3	.54*	.155
	3	1	-.57*	.112
		2	-.54*	.155
Andere mensen doen veel ergere dingen	1	2	.06	.145
		3	.09	.089
	2	1	-.06	.145
		3	.03	.144
	3	1	-.09	.089
		2	-.03	.144
Normaal gesproken houd ik me wel aan de regels	1	2	.23	.128
		3	.12	.083
	2	1	-.23	.128
		3	-.10	.131
	3	1	-.12	.083
		2	.10	.131
Ik mag ook wel eens een meevallertje hebben	1	2	.10	.138
		3	-.20	.088
	2	1	-.10	.138
		3	-.30	.135
	3	1	.20	.088
		2	.30	.135
Anders werd ik niet serieus genomen door het bedrijf	1	2	-.21	.177
		3	.37*	.121
	2	1	.21	.177
		3	.58*	.181
	3	1	-.37*	.121
		2	-.58*	.181
Op dat moment dacht ik niet na over de consequenties (gevoelens kwamen later pas)	1	2	-.13	.167
		3	.08	.108
	2	1	.13	.167
		3	.21	.166
	3	1	-.08	.108
		2	-.21	.166

Note. * The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Appendix VIII - Additional Analysis

Table 22. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices (based on new clusters)

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices	
Box's M	258.795
F	1.619
df1	153
df2	331793.272
Sig.	.000

Table 23. Multivariate Tests (based on new clusters)

Multivariate Tests								
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed power
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.991	2956.825	17.000	471.000	.000	.991	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.009	2956.825	17.000	471.000	.000	.991	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	106.722	2956.825	17.000	471.000	.000	.991	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	106.722	2956.825	17.000	471.000	.000	.991	1.000
	Root							
Classification of new Clusters	Pillai's Trace	.450	22.625	17.000	471.000	.000	.450	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.550	22.625	17.000	471.000	.000	.450	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.817	22.625	17.000	471.000	.000	.450	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.817	22.625	17.000	471.000	.000	.450	1.000
	Root							

Table 24. Residuals Statistics (based on new clusters)

Residuals Statistics					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	.8411	2.4445	1.6728	.31490	489
Std. Predicted Value	-2.641	2.451	.000	1.000	489
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.025	.141	.066	.017	489
Adjusted Predicted Value	.8307	2.4671	1.6739	.31552	489
Residual	-1.01874	.87247	.00000	.34847	489
Std. Residual	-2.872	2.460	.000	.982	489
Stud. Residual	-2.920	2.498	-.002	1.001	489
Deleted Residual	-1.05276	.89968	-.00112	.36195	489
Stud. Deleted Residual	-2.943	2.512	-.002	1.003	489
Mahal. Distance	1.455	76.270	16.965	9.356	489
Cook's Distance	.000	.039	.002	.004	489
Centered Leverage Value	.003	.156	.035	.019	489

Table 25. Test of Between-Subjects Effects (based on new clusters)

Source	Dependent Variable	Test of Between-Subjects Effects						
		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Classification of new Clusters	Denial of responsibility	143.968	1	143.968	88.719	.000***	.154	1.000
	Denial of injury	.094	1	.029	.045	.831	.000	.055
	Denial of the victim	128.903	1	157.497	131.908	.000***	.213	1.000
	Condemnation of the condemners	39.799	1	53.662	48.292	.000***	.090	1.000
	Appeal to higher loyalties	29.146	1	48.212	40.820	.000***	.077	1.000
	Claim of normalcy	2.609	1	5.103	9.438	.002**	.019	.866
	Denial of negative intent	35.362	1	35.754	29.907	.000***	.058	1.000
	Claim of relative acceptability	.892	1	1.063	1.373	.242	.003	.216
	Metaphor of the ledger	2.850	1	.562	.803	.371	.002	.145
	Claim of entitlement	5.652	1	6.303	8.321	.004**	.017	.821
	Defense of necessity	20.557	1	17.238	12.263	.001***	.025	.938
	Justification by postponement	2.105	1	.376	.340	.560	.001	.090
	Loyalty	44.966	1	81.334	140.470	.000***	.224	1.000
	Word of mouth	51.074	1	93.588	147.802	.000***	.233	1.000
	Trust	68.623	1	130.277	192.849	.000***	.284	1.000
	Commitment	69.467	1	110.050	188.142	.000***	.279	1.000
	Satisfaction	102.647	1	167.710	232.533	.000***	.323	1.000

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 26. *Parameter Estimates (based on new clusters)*

Dependent Variable	Parameter	Parameter Estimates					
		B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Denial of responsibility	Intercept	3.119	.070	44.404	.000***	.802	1.000
	1	1.156	.123	9.419	.000***	.154	1.000
	2	0					
Denial of injury	Intercept	4.252	.044	96.131	.000***	.950	1.000
	1	.016	.077	.213	.831	.000	.055
	2	0					
Denial of the victim	Intercept	2.340	.060	38.850	.000***	.756	1.000
	1	1.210	.105	11.485	.000***	.213	1.000
	2	0					
Condemnation of the condemners	Intercept	2.881	.058	49.581	.000***	.835	1.000
	1	.706	.102	6.949	.000***	.090	1.000
	2	0					
Appeal to higher loyalties	Intercept	1.906	.060	31.808	.000***	.675	1.000
	1	.669	.105	6.389	.000***	.077	1.000
	2	0					
Claim of normalcy	Intercept	4.036	.041	99.571	.000***	.953	1.000
	1	-.218	.071	-3.072	.002**	.019	.866
	2	0					
Denial of negative intent	Intercept	3.380	.060	56.071	.000***	.866	1.000
	1	.576	.105	5.469	.000***	.058	1.000
	2	0					
Claim of relative acceptability	Intercept	3.912	.048	80.664	.000***	.930	1.000
	1	-.099	.085	-1.172	.242	.003	.216
	2	0					
Metaphor of the ledger	Intercept	3.903	.046	84.623	.000***	.936	1.000
	1	.072	.081	.896	.371	.002	.145
	2	0					
Claim of entitlement	Intercept	3.729	.048	77.724	.000***	.925	1.000
	1	-.242	.084	-2.885	.004**	.017	.821
	2	0					
Defense of necessity	Intercept	3.006	.065	45.989	.000***	.813	1.000
	1	.400	.114	3.502	.001**	.025	.938
	2	0					
Justification by postponement	Intercept	2.547	.058	43.886	.000***	.798	1.000
	1	.059	.101	.583	.560	.001	.090
	2	0					

Loyalty	Intercept	3.094	.042	73.757	.000***	.918	1.000
	1	-.869	.073	-11.852	.000***	.224	1.000
	2	0					
Word of mouth	Intercept	3.070	.044	69.977	.000***	.910	1.000
	1	-.932	.077	-12.157	.000***	.233	1.000
	2	0					
Trust	Intercept	3.219	.045	71.035	.000***	.912	1.000
	1	-1.100	.079	-13.887	.000***	.284	1.000
	2	0					
Commitment	Intercept	3.161	.042	74.969	.000***	.920	1.000
	1	-1.011	.074	-13.716	.000***	.279	1.000
	2	0					
Satisfaction	Intercept	3.398	.047	72.578	.000***	.915	1.000
	1	-1.248	.082	-15.249	.000***	.323	1.000
	2	0					

*Note. Cluster 2 is set to zero because it is redundant. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$*