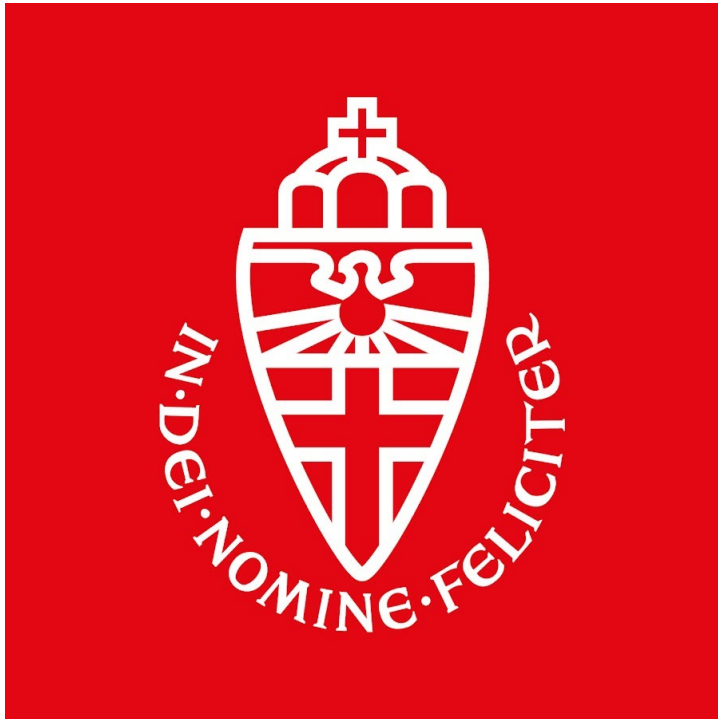# Gotta catch 'em all

The effectiveness of communication channels in reducing illegitimate complaining.

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Acknowledgments

This thesis is the final part of the Master in Marketing at Radboud University. Since the dawn of time marketing is everywhere. There are many pieces of literature, studies, and cases you could drown in and basically spend a lifetime understanding, teaching and implementing. Like the famous Henry Ford has once said: "A man who stops advertising to save money, is like a man who stops a clock to save time". Inspiring words like these and many others are worth thinking about. I want to thank all the great pioneers who inspired me to take a leap of faith and start this complex and exciting journey. I also want to thank Dr. H.W.M. Joosten and Dr. H.A. Widyanto for their great support, professional advice, and assistance. Thanks to committed and enthusiastic individuals like Dr. Joosten you not only learn but you evolve. And that evolution is what is needed for becoming a great student and successful marketeer. Special thanks to my personal and professional network for sharing our survey with their connections. Without the proper amount of inspiration, guidance, and help from professors and personal networks the end result would have been different. I also want to thank my parents and partner for their love and support in the past stressful months.

Anna Bo Kleij

Abstract

Illegitimate complaints are exaggerated, made up or the firm is wrongly blamed. There are different types of illegitimate complainants, the greedy customer however costs firms the most time and money. Therefore, the aim of this study is to deter illegitimate complaints. Neutralizations are used by greedy customers as excuses for their behavior. Neutralizations have a negative effect on cognitive dissonance, deterrence tactics try to limit this effect. As a result, the chances of deviant behavior like illegitimate complaining decrease. In this study, the greedy customer is forced to file their complaints via email and telephone as deterrence tactics. Results show that greedy customers who have to file their complaints via telephone will feel more cognitive dissonance and will experience less intention to complain illegitimately than greedy customers who have to file their complaints via telephone. Also, greedy customers who have to file complaints via telephone will experience more cognitive dissonance and will experience less intention to complain illegitimately compared to when greedy customers are not forced to file their complaints via a certain communication channel.

Keywords: Illegitimate complaining, communication channels, cognitive dissonance

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

When delivering products and services, something can always go wrong. When a product is not satisfactory, customers are dissatisfied and may complain. When that happens, the firm's service recovery starts, who want to make customers satisfied again. Most firms act under the motto "the customer is always right" (Wilson, 2016).

Unfortunately, there are not only justified and honest complaints but also illegitimate complaints: exaggerated or invented complaints. Khantimirov and Karande (2018) show a growing amount of customers that complain illegitimately. A customer's dysfunctional behavior leads to direct and indirect costs. Restoring damaged, property or legal costs of lawsuits are examples of direct costs. Indirect costs are, for example, the costs of the increased workloads for the employees and training costs to teach employees how to handle illegitimate complaints (Harris & Reynolds, 2003).

So, illegitimate complaints cost firms money and time. Therefore, firms would like to avoid such complaints. Firms have the intention to actively control and handle complaints, which encourages illegitimate and legitimate complaints (Harris & Reynolds, 2005). So avoiding is not yet succeeded, and a better understanding of illegitimate complaints is necessary. Unfortunately, research into this subject is complex due to the topic's sensitivity and because illegitimate complaining is illegal. Therefore, customers are reluctant to admit that they are engaged in unethical and illegitimate behavior (Joosten, 2022).

Nevertheless, the marketing department of Radboud University has conducted research into illegitimate complaints. In a first qualitative study, possible drivers of illegitimate complaining were found. In a second, more quantitative study, some drivers were confirmed. In a third study, different types of illegal complainants were distinguished, and the connection was made between illegitimate complaining and neutralization techniques and relationship variables. In a fourth large-scale (confirmatory) study, four different types of complainants were identified, each with different motives to complain, different rationalizations to justify their behavior, and different effects on the relationship with the company. The four types of complainers are the immoral, failing, greedy, and opportunistic types of customers. The types of complainers are based on two underlying factors. The perception of who is to blame for the problem, the firm, or the customer is the first factor (the perception). The second factor is whether the illegitimate complaint was made to take advantage of the other party or not

(intention). The four types also differ in the dimensions of illegitimate complaining, neutralization techniques, and relationship variables. The *immoral customer type* sees the firm as the culprit. The firm does not keep promises and does not respond. Their illegitimate behavior does not sit well with the immoral customer type. Therefore this type uses several neutralizations to justify the behavior, like denial of responsibility (it was not my fault) or denial of the victim (the firm deserves it for what they have done). The *failing firm type* feels that the firm has mistreated him, not purposefully. This type is the least illegitimate complainer of all types, feels less need to justify their behavior, and scores relatively low on all neutralization techniques. The highest scoring technique is 'the firm would not suffer from my complaint.' The *opportunistic illegitimate complainer* cheats because of a liberal redress policy of the firm. The neutralizations used are justification by postponement (at the time, I did not think about the consequences of my behavior) and claim of relative acceptability (others do worse things). The *greedy customer type* deliberately complains illegitimate out of his greed. This type of customer highly exaggerates and makes up their complaints more than any other type. The neutralizations used most are the claim of normalcy (everyone does it) and the claim of entitlement (like everyone else, I have the right to some windfall). The greedy customer type admits to pre-plan their illegitimate complaining out of personal greed. One-eight of the sample belongs to this category. So, it is a relatively small group, but the level of fraud is the highest of all types. Therefore this group costs the largest amount of money and time for firms, so this is the most important group of illegitimate complainers to tackle for firms. That is why this study will focus on the greedy customer type. Also, the focus of this study is on the greedy customer types since these types blame themselves instead of the firm. Therefore their behavior should change to deter the illegitimate complaining (Joosten, 2022).

Now that the different types of complainers with their different motives are known, the present study aims to look for ways to prevent the different forms of illegal complaints to reduce initial discussed costs and inconveniences for firms. Several theories and models suggest ways to avoid illegitimate complaining. Dootson et al. (2018) show that deterrence tactics can decrease the positive effect of neutralization techniques on deviant behavior. Deterrence tactics are messages that undermine different neutralisations. This increases cognitive dissonance and increases deviant behavior. However, not only do the deterrence tactics of Dootson et al. (2018) might affect illegitimate lying behavior, but customers having to use a certain communication channel might have the same effect. Different theories point in that direction, Hancock et al. (2004) distinguished different communication channels that might

affect lying behavior. The telephone is a type that allows people to communicate in different physical locations with vocal and paralinguistic cues intact. On the other hand, email is text-based and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Email eliminates nonverbal cues in communication. The Media Richness Theory further explains the differences between telephone and email as communication channels by classifying the telephone as rich media and email as less rich media. Dennis et al. (1998) also assume that lying is highly uncertain, meaning that users choose to lie most frequently in rich media. However, the Social Distance Theory shows that users should choose less rich media like email to maintain social distance between the liar and the target (DePaulo et al., 1996).

So, there are different theories with different outcomes without a clear understanding of how a forced communication channel decreases lying behavior. It is useful to determine whether the effects that appear from other research also occur with illegitimate complaints and whether you can reduce illegitimate complaints in this way. Also, how this effect holds for the greedy customer is unknown while it costs firms time and money. Therefore, this study shows whether and how communication channels can be used to counter illegitimate complaints from greedy customers. The results of this study give hands-on advice for organizations on which communication channel should be used for complaints to increase cognitive dissonance to reduce the number of illegitimate complaints.

1.2 Research aim

To build further on previous research by Joosten (2022), the research aim of this study is whether and how communication channels can be used to deter illegitimate complaints of greedy customers. The research question is, therefore: 'What is the effect of communication channels on the illegitimate complaining behavior of greedy customers as described in the typology of Joosten (2022)?'.

1.3 Theoretical relevance

Hancock et al. (2004) show the impact of communication technology on lying behavior. The Media Richness Theory tells that communication channels with multiple cue systems, natural language, feedback, and message personalization are rich media. So, telephone and face-to-face communication channels are classified as rich media. Dennis et al. (1998) also state that users often choose to lie in rich media. However, DePaulo et al. (1996) assume that users should choose less rich media since lying makes people uncomfortable, and less rich media can

maintain social distance between the liar and target. The contradicting theories show that results are unclear for lying behavior with communication systems. Also, little is known about how illegitimate complaining can be prevented or reduced. Existing theories show different types of illegitimate complainers (Joosten, 2022). However, how illegitimate complaining can be prevented by using different communication channels is not researched yet. The number of illegitimate complaints has increased, and illegitimately greedy customer complaints cost firms time and money (Joosten, 2022). Therefore, it is important to prevent this behavior. This gap in the literature is being filled with this thesis.

1.4 Practical relevance

Harris and Reynolds (2003) show that the increasing amount of illegitimate complaints directly and indirectly financially influence firms. It also costs companies much time to deal with all complaints. Moreover, the time and money it costs companies to deal with illegal complaints do not create a learning curve because these are not legal complaints (Joosten, 2021). That is why new insights must be gained to tackle these disadvantages for companies: reducing illegal complaints. This study will give hands-on advice on what communication channels should be used to decrease illegitimate complaints. Therefore, firms can re-evaluate their customer complaint and service recovery procedures. When it is known how illegal complaints can be reduced by a company, it saves companies a lot of money and time.

1.5 Thesis outline

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the literature about illegitimate complaining behavior. Different types of illegitimate complaints are described, and existing theories regarding changing behavior are discussed. In chapter 3 the methodology is presented. Chapter 4 presents the main results. With these results, the answer to the main research question of this thesis is conducted in chapter 5. Also, theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations, and possibilities for future research are given in chapter 5.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

At first, this chapter explains the concept of illegitimate complaints. Then different types of illegitimate complaints are elaborated on that are described by Joosten (2022). After that, deterrence tactics and different communication technologies are discussed. Then, main insights from the Media Richness Theory, Social Distance Theory, and the Online Disinhibition Effect are shown. After that, hypotheses will be formed.

2.2 Illegitimate complaints

When a product or service is not satisfied by the customer, the customer might complain. These are legitimate complaints in nature (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). However, customers may try to get compensation by complaining illegitimate and therefore taking advantage of firms' service recovery policies (Baker et al., 2012). Illegitimate complaining is defined by Baker et al. (2012) as fictitious complaints by individuals to service providers to receive compensation for their make-believe service failures. According to Ro and Wong (2012), illegitimate customer complaints are complaints from customers who are deliberately fabricating problems. Joosten (2022), described three dimensions of illegitimate complaining. These dimensions are complaints that are exaggerated, made up, or in which the firm is wrongly blamed. This costs firms time and money, and customers can not learn from illegitimate complaints since the customer is not dissatisfied with a product or service.

2.3 Types of illegitimate complaints

Illegitimate complainants often apply neutralization techniques when trying to justify deviant behavior. Neutralization techniques are excuses that justify or rationalize bad behavior to prevent feelings of guilt and accusations from others (Joosten, 2022). The first five introduced neutralization techniques are denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemned, and appeal to higher loyalty (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Later, the claim of entitlement is added (Eliason, 2003). Furthermore, defense of necessity, a metaphor of the ledger, claims of normalcy, denial of negative intent, and claims of relative acceptability are added by Harris and Dumas (2009).

Intention and attribution are the two concepts on which different types of illegitimate complainers can be distinguished. Intention describes whether the problem is created on

purpose and attribution shows if the problem that led to illegitimate complaining is created by the firm or the customer (Joosten, 2022). Based on these aspects, different types of illegitimate complainers can be distinguished since both aspects affect someone's motivation and response as shown in figure 1. Joosten's (2022) typology describes four types of illegitimate complainers. The drivers of illegitimate complaining are related to the extent of their illegitimate claims, their use of neutralization techniques, and the effect on the relationship with the firm (Joosten, 2022). Figure 1 shows the four types that will be discussed in bold.
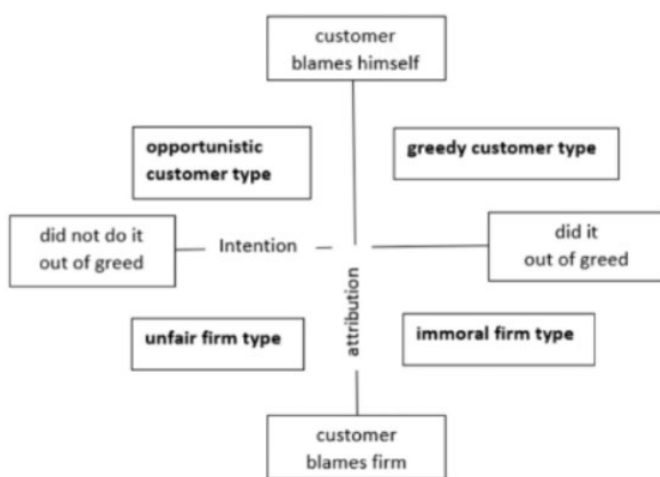
Figure 1: Four types of illegitimate complainers (Joosten, 2022)

Type 1, the *immoral firm type*, feels that the firm has deliberately cheated on him to make a profit. Because of a feeling of lost control by the customer, illegitimate complaining is the last cry for help. This type only slightly exaggerates, blames the firm, and makes up complaints. This is less than the greedy or opportunistic customer type. However, several neutralizations are used since the illegitimate complaining does not sit well with the customer. Neutralization techniques that are used by type 1 complainants are denial of responsibility (it was not my fault), denial of the victim (the firm deserves it for what they have done), condemnation of condemner (the firm also is not always fair towards their customers), appeal to higher loyalties (customer did not do it for themselves but for others or out of principle) and defense of necessity (if I had not done it, the firm would not have taken me seriously).

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Remarkable is that the customer blames the firm for almost all neutralizations to justify illegitimate behavior.

Type 2, the *failing firm type,* has the feeling that the firm has treated him not on purpose unfairly, perhaps because of lack of ability. This type of customer exaggerates, blames the firm and makes up complaints the least of all types. Probably because of the lowest degree of an illegitimate complaining score, this type feels less need to justify their behavior and therefore scores low on all neutralization techniques.

Type 3, the *greedy customer type,* cheats deliberately on the firm out of greed. This type exaggerates, blames the firm, and makes up complaints more than any other type. The greedy customer type admits to being the malefactor. The claim of normalcy (everyone does it) and claim of entitlement (like everyone else, I have a right to some windfall) are neutralization techniques used by type 3 customers. So, to justify misbehavior, this type refers to others instead of the company. Greedy customers feel entitled to complain illegitimately. The relationship between the customer and the firm stays the same so that the customer will visit again.

Type 4, the *opportunistic illegitimate complainer,* cheats on the firm because of the firm's liberal redress policy. More than types 1 and 2 but less than type 3 customers, type 4 exaggerates and makes up complaints. Justification by postponement (at the time, I did not think about the consequences of my behavior, which only occurred later) and other people doing worse things (claim of relative acceptability) are neutralization techniques used by opportunistic complainers. However, misbehavior of the firm is not referred to as type 4 since these customers know that the firm has done nothing wrong.

The greedy type is the most severe illegitimate complainer out of the four customer types. This type deliberately exaggerates and makes up complaints out of his greed more than any other type. Therefore, the focus of this research is on the greedy customer type. According to Joosten (2022), type 3 uses the claim of normalcy (everyone does it) and the claim of entitlement (like everyone else, I have a right to some windfall) the most as neutralization techniques. Denial of injury and denial of victim are the third and fourth most used neutralization techniques by greedy customers. This research will test whether greedy customers use the neutralizations claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement the most, coming third and fourth denial of injury and denial of victim. Therefore, the first hypothesis is stated.

Hypothesis 1: Greedy customers use the neutralization techniques claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement more than denial of injury and denial of punishment.

2.4 Theories of behavioral change

First, four types of illegitimate complainers are distinguished (Joosten, 2022). Subsequently, theories that can counter or prevent illegitimate behavior are explained in this paragraph.

2.4.1 Deterrence tactics

As discussed, neutralizations have a negative effect on cognitive dissonance. Dootson et al. (2018) have developed the deterrence theory, which states that specific deterrence tactics can affect the effect of neutralizations on cognitive dissonance. The deterrence tactics bring back cognitive dissonance that was decreased because of the neutralizations. As a result, the chances of deviant behavior like illegitimate complaining decrease. This study searches for deterrence tactics based on other theories. However, the created deterrence tactics of this study will be tested on the effect of cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimate like the study of Dootson et al. (2018).

2.4.2 Communication technology

Lying in everyday social interactions is frequent behavior. Social psychology shows that one-third of daily interactions involve lying behavior (Turner et al., 1996). Hancock et al (2004) revealed that one out of every four interactions involved a lie. Nowadays, communication technologies, such as email, instant messaging, and mobile phones are used more than ever in daily interactions (Wang et al., 2019). The telephone is a sort of communication technology that allows individuals in separate physical locations to converse while maintaining voice and paralinguistic clues. Another type of communication technology is email. Email is a text-based Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) that eliminates or distorts nonverbal channels and modifies the temporal processes of communication. Hancock et al. (2004) show that communication technologies are distinguished by differences in underlying dimensions:

- *the synchronicity* of the interaction (i.e., the degree to which messages are exchanged instantaneously and in real-time)
- *recordability* of the medium (i.e., the degree to which the interaction is automatically documented)
- whether or not the speaker and listener are *distributed* (i.e., they do not share the same physical space)

Media that are synchronous, face-to-face and telephone, increase the chance of lying behavior. When someone asks if you like their shirt while you do not, a decision is created to lie or not. This will less likely arise when composing an email. Secondly, the higher the degree to which the interaction is automatically documented, the less likely users are to be willing to lie. The recordability is the highest for email since emails are often saved by the sender and the receiver but also by servers hosting the email accounts. Instant messages can also be saved easily. Face-to-face and telephone are typically recordless. These recordless media are chosen to lie in more frequently. Finally, when the speaker and listener do not share the same space, the chances of lying behavior decrease. This is because topics that can be contradicted by the physical setting are limited. For example, telling someone that you are working on your laptop while actually, you are checking social media. The speaker and listener are distributed in communication technologies like email, telephone, and instant messaging.

So, design features affect lying behavior. The effect of design features tells that when a medium scores high on synchronicity and the speaker and listener are distributed, but scores low on recordability, lying behavior occurs more frequently. Consequently, lying behavior will occur the least in email, followed by instant messaging and face-to-face, and most frequently on the telephone (Hancock et al., 2004).

2.4.3 Media Richness Theory

The Media Richness Theory (MRT) assumes that users prefer rich media for more equivocal communication. Equivocation is defined by Bavelas et al. (1990) as non-straightforward communication which appears ambiguous and obscure. MRT describes that media is rich when immediate feedback, multiple cues, message personalization, and language variety are available. According to MRT, based on the four criteria, face-to-face is the richest medium, followed by telephone, the least rich media are email and instant messaging (Ishii et al., 2019). The most appropriate medium is chosen by matching the richness of a medium to the level of equivocality of the task. The Media Richness Theory assumes that lying is highly equivocal, meaning that users choose to lie most frequently in rich media (Dennis et al., 1998). According to MRT, lying is the most common in face-to-face conversations, followed by telephone and instant messaging. Lies occur least often in email.

2.4.4 Social distance theory

However, the study of De Paulo et al. (1996) has contradicting insights as social interactions in which lies were or were not told are compared. Results show that interactions in which respondents did not lie are classified as more intimate and enjoyable by the participants, compared to interactions in which the participants did tell lies. Face-to-face interactions were most frequent in this research, followed by telephone, and email was used least frequently. Nonetheless, differences in lying behavior between the communication technologies were significant. A technology with more distance between the speaker and listener, like telephone and email, was used the most when the respondent lied. Email contains a bigger distance than telephone, so respondents lied most in emails. So, users will choose less rich media because lying makes people uncomfortable and less rich media can maintain social distance between the liar and target. Respondents were less likely to lie when there is no or little distance, so face-to-face communication. Concluding, according to the Social Distance Theory, users are most likely to deceive using email, followed by telephone, and finally face-to-face communication (DePaulo et al., 1996).

2.4.5 Online Disinhibition Effect

According to the Online Disinhibition Effect from Suler (2004), people behave differently in online communication compared to face-to-face communication. For instance, people show unusual acts of kindness and express themselves more openly in an online environment. A less kind side of the Online Disinhibition effect shows that people communicate with rude language, hatred, and even threats are made online. Illegitimate complaining is also a negative side of something that people would do in an online environment while they would not act the same in an offline environment. Invisibility and asynchronicity are the most important reasons why people will lie more often in an online environment. Invisibility stands for the fact that people can not see each other in an online environment. With asynchronicity, it is meant that people do not interact with each other in real-time. Email is an example where invisibility and asynchronicity are high. For telephone, invisibility scores high but communication on that medium is synchron. Therefore, people will choose to lie more frequently via email compared to telephone.

Concluding, mentioned theories have different outcomes. Hancock et al. (2004) show that lying behavior will occur the least in email, followed by instant messaging and face-to-face, and most frequently on the telephone. Also, according to MRT, lying is the least common

in email, followed by instant messaging and telephone. MRT also shows that lies occur most frequently in face-to-face conversations. This study will focus on the differences between telephone and email since most firms use these communication channels for complaint handling (Rosenmayer et al., 2018). The Social Distance Theory shows that users are least likely to deceive using face-to-face, followed by telephone, and finally email (DePaulo et al., 1996). When comparing these two communication techniques, the social distance theory together with the Online Disinhibition Effect and the Deterrence tactics from Dootson et al. (2018) is the base for this research; cognitive dissonance will be higher when consumers are forced to file a complaint via telephone than via email. Also, the intention to complain illegitimately will decrease when consumers are forced to file a complaint via telephone. Nevertheless, greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via telephone experience more cognitive dissonance and a lower intention to complain illegitimately compared to when no deterrence tactics are used. Finally, greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via email experience more cognitive dissonance and a lower intention to complain illegitimately compared to when no deterrence tactics are used. Therefore, the following hypotheses are stated:

> *Hypothesis 2: Greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via telephone experience more cognitive dissonance than greedy customers who are forced to file an illegitimate complaint via email.*

> *Hypothesis 3: Greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via telephone have a lower intention to complain illegitimately than greedy customers who are forced to file an illegitimate complaint via email.*

> *Hypothesis 4: Greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via telephone experience more cognitive dissonance than greedy customers who are not forced to file an illegitimate complaint via telephone.*

> *Hypothesis 5: Greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via telephone have a lower intention to complain than greedy customers who are not forced to file an illegitimate complaint via telephone.*

Hypothesis 6: Greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via email experience more cognitive dissonance than greedy customers who are not forced to file an illegitimate complaint via email.

Hypothesis 7: Greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via email have a lower intention to complain than greedy customers who are not forced to file an illegitimate complaint via email.

2.5 Conceptual model

The hypotheses form the following conceptual model, as shown in figure 2. The four neutralization techniques are ranked in order from most used to least used by the greedy customer (Joosten, 2022). This study will investigate if claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement are indeed the most used neutralization techniques used by the greedy customer. The deterrence tactics are also an independent variable to research what the effect is on the dependent variables cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately.
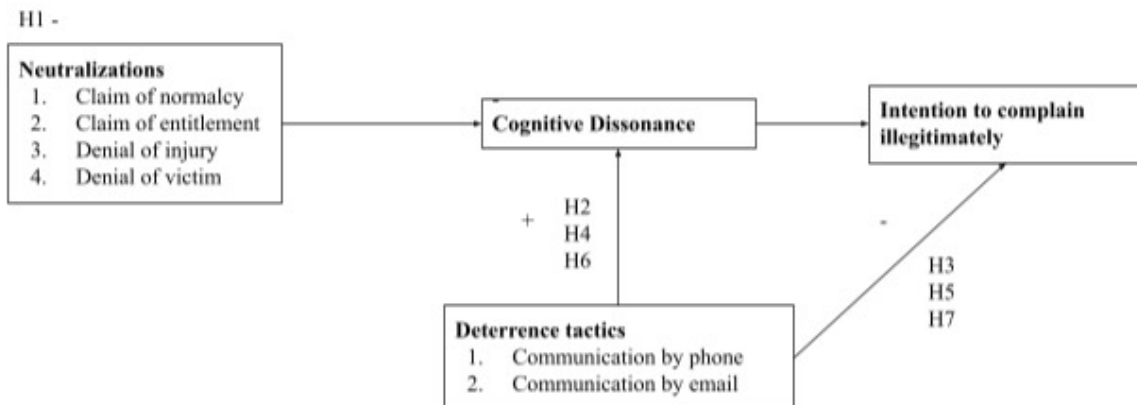
Figure 2: Conceptual model

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, communication technologies as deterrence tactics are discussed. Moreover, insights from the Media richness theory, Social Distance Theory, and the online disinhibition effect are discussed to discover what communication channel affects illegitimate complaining. After that hypotheses are stated. In the next chapter, the research design and methodology for testing the hypotheses are discussed.

Chapter 3 method

The research design and methodology of the study are discussed in this chapter. First, the research design and stimulus materials are provided. After that, the procedure and participants are discussed. Thirdly, the manipulation of control beliefs and the independent and dependent measures are described. After that, the pre-test that is conducted is explained. Lastly, manipulation checks and convergent and discriminant validity are elaborated.

3.1 Research Design

A scenario-based experiment is held to determine the effect of the independent variables on cognitive dissonance and the intention to complain illegitimate. This study tests whether respondents complain less or more illegitimately when forced to use a particular communication channel. The goal of this research is to determine whether there is a link between deterrence tactics and the intention to complain illegitimately. Experiments make it possible to collect data in a controlled environment. Therefore, participants were controlled to act as greedy customers. Thus, the scenario of the experiment put the participants in the shoes of a greedy customer (Kim & Jang, 2014).

Furthermore, intentions shown in a scenario-based experiment are a good indicator of actual behavior (Weyrich et al., 2020). The fact that this experiment was held online, ensured that participants openly express their behavior. This experiment was scenario-based because of the sensitivity that complaining illegitimately is for people. Placing people in a scenario ensures that they do not have to share their own illegitimate complaining behavior. Therefore, the respondents could be more open about the subject. Also, scenario-based experiments are cheap and time-saving, undesirable response biases are avoided, and a greater variation in responses is surrendered (Smith & Bolton, 1998).

The study has a between-subjects design in which three scenarios were compared on how they affect the intention to complain illegitimate. Participants get assigned to only one of the manipulations. One group of participants saw a control manipulation, no deterrence tactic was shown to this group. The second group of participants was manipulated because they had to file their complaints via email. The last group of participants was manipulated because they had to file their complaints via telephone. Afterward, the results for each group were compared to obtain causal estimates (Charness et al., 2012). The results helped to give answers to the main research question.

3.2 Sample

A survey was launched to collect the data. The survey in English and Dutch can be found in Appendix A. Participants were asked to participate in the study voluntarily via online communication channels, such as Whatsapp, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. So, the researcher's network was asked. Also, the survey was distributed on SurveyCircle.com. Convenience sampling was used since anyone who ever bought or rented a product and was willing to fill in the survey was satisfactory. To achieve the biggest possible sample, snowball sampling was also used. With snowball sampling, the respondents are asked to ask their network to complete the survey (Hair et al., 2018). After respondents clicked on the participation link on social media, the experiment opened. The sample of this experiment consists of participants who completed the survey.

The minimum number of respondents per experimental group is 20 to obtain enough statistical power to acquire significant results. However, more preferable is 30 respondents per group (Hair et el., 2018). In this experiment, three groups were compared. The first group was a control group; here, the respondent saw a message where he was asked to leave the keys of the car and the insurance papers in the dashboard compartment of the vehicle. So, nothing was mentioned about complaints or communication channels. The second group was shown a message that customer complaints could only be submitted by contacting the rental company's service representative by phone only. The last group was shown a message that customer complaints could only be submitted by email. Every respondent had an equal chance of getting a specific message due to the randomization of the respondents. The experiment was conducted with two other master's students so respondents were collected together. Therefore, the impact of other deterrence tactics on cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately was also asked in the survey. However, the same control group is used as the others.

3.3 Procedure

First, the respondents had to read the same narrative that should enable them to put themselves into the scenario. The scenario wants the respondent to picture that they are making up a complaint out of greed. Therefore, the intention of the scenario is that the respondent will think as a greedy customer. The scenario was as follows:

"Imagine you are in the following situation. You haven't had a holiday in 2 years, but now that travel abroad is again possible, you plan to rent a car and drive across Spain. While you discuss your travel plans with friends, they tell you they rented a car last year from a company

in Barcelona to travel across Spain for 2 weeks. They tell you that on one occasion – while they were parked near a gas station- the engine of the car failed to start. They found another driver who of another rented car who was knowledgeable about motor engines and was willing to help. He re-fastened the battery terminals with a wrench and the engine started again. Your friends also tell you that -after their trip- they complained to the rental agency and received a partial refund of the rental costs -no questions asked. You look for information about that rental agency on review websites on the internet (like Tripadvisor.com) and you find many reviews suggesting that this rental agency is indeed very lenient with customer complaints.

While in Spain, you decide to rent a car with the same rental company in Barcelona and -like your friends- try to get a partial refund of your rental costs. You completely make up the complaint. You plan to tell them tomorrow -when you return the motorhome-that the engine refused to start several times during the trip and you yourself had to fix it. Then you would ask for a partial refund."

After the scenario was read, multiple-choice questions were asked. First, the cognitive dissonance was measured to discover whether the scenario aroused cognitive dissonance, another manipulation check. So, the extent to which the respondent felt uneasy about filing an illegitimate complaint was answered. Next, the intention to complain illegitimately was measured to know how sure the respondent is to file the illegitimate complaint. Then, it was asked to rank the neutralization techniques they used most. The manipulation of this experiment is that participants then saw a different message. The first group of respondents was exposed to a message which does not include a deterrence tactic. The message looked as follows:

"Right before you file your complaint with the rental company, you see the following message. Dear customer, do not forget to leave behind the rental car's keys and insurance papers in the dashboard compartment. Without those things, we cannot lend out the car to the next customer. Thank you!"

The second group of participants was exposed to a message with the first deterrence tactic, having to file the complaint via telephone.

"Dear Customer. Please note that all customer complaints should only be made by contacting our service representative by phone. Call 0314789742 and explain your complaint directly and personally to our service representative."

The third group of participants was exposed to a message with the second deterrence tactic, having to file the complaint via email.

"Dear Customer. Please note that all customer complaints should be made by email only by contacting our service representative. Mail to customerservice@rental.es and explain your complaint."

After that, whether the cognitive dissonance and intention to complain were increased was asked. Then, a realism check was conducted to see if the respondent thought that the scenario was realistic. Then, questions were asked as a manipulation check to see if the respondent understood the scenario. Finally, demographic variables such as gender, age, and educational level were asked.

3.4 Measurements

This paragraph shows the materials and measurements used in the experiment. Most variables used in this study are already proven in the literature. Using already existing and proven measurement scales provide valid variables (Hair et al., 2018). The used scales are presented in the next paragraphs.

3.4.1 Neutralization techniques

The neutralization question, as shown in Appendix A checks whether respondents who feel cognitive dissonance use neutralisations that are suited to greedy customers. Four neutralizations used for greedy customers are in a row, and respondents have to rank them on most common usage. With this information, it can be checked if the results of Joosten (2022) are shown again in this study.

3.4.2 Deterrence tactic

Deterrence tactics are shown to see if they will decrease the intention to complain. Every respondent has seen one deterrence tactic, they are randomly distributed. The control group saw a message with no deterrence tactic. The telephone group saw a manipulation message in which the consumer is obliged to file their complaint by telephone. The email group saw a manipulation message in which the consumer is obliged to file their complaint by email. .

3.4.3 Dependent variables

After the manipulation message, the dependent variable cognitive dissonance was measured. Cognitive dissonance is measured twice. First cognitive dissonance was measured as a manipulation check, as mentioned before. Later on, it was tested whether the cognitive dissonance was increased or decreased by the manipulation message. The last measurement is

to measure the dependent variable 'cognitive dissonance'. The same items were used as the first measurement of cognitive dissonance, with six items that are derived from Elliot & Divine (1994). In Appendix A, question 5 shows the items of cognitive dissonance as the dependent variable. However, the increase or decrease was measured instead of measuring the degree of cognitive dissonance. Therefore, the items for cognitive dissonance were answered with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from far less to far more.

The same goes for the intention to complain illegitimately, the increase or decrease of the intention is measured. Thus, the dependent variables cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately are measured as posttest only. Intention to complain illegitimately was also measured both before and after the manipulation message. The items that were used are shown with question 6 in Appendix A. The items for intention to complain illegitimately were also answered with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from far less to far more.

3.4.5 Realism check

A realism check is assessed to test if the respondents thought the scenario was realistic. After the respondents read the scenario, three questions were asked to check the realism. The first item asked if something similar could happen with a five-point Likert scale from very unlikely to very likely. The second item tests if respondents find the situation very unrealistic or very realistic on a five-point Likert scale. The third item measured if the respondent can imagine themselves in the situation, and answered on a five-point Likert scale from very difficult to very easy. The items are adapted from the research of Maxham (2001); Goodwin & Ross (1992).

3.4.6 Manipulation check

To check if the respondent is aware of the greediness of the complaint in the scenario, a manipulation check is assessed as shown in Appendix A. A greedy customer who files an illegitimate complaint will exaggerate the complaint, make up the complaint, and plans the complaint beforehand. To check if the respondent understands the scenario, three items are asked. These items are self-invented and do not come from previous research. However, the newly operationalized items are based on the theory of Joosten (2022) about greedy customers who complain illegitimately. The items were answered using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from absolutely not to absolutely.

Another manipulation check is done, as shown in Appendix A. To know if the respondents paid attention to the survey, it was asked what message they had seen. So, it is checked if the manipulation message (control, telephone, or email) the respondent had seen, matched with what the respondent thought they had seen.

A third manipulation check is executed with the first question about cognitive dissonance. The extent of feeling uneasy about filing the illegitimate complaint is measured after reading the scenario. Elliot & Devine (1994) made items that measure the dimensions of discomfort (uncomfortable, uneasy, bothered), negative self (annoyed with self), and embarrassment (embarrassed and ashamed with self). The items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale from completely disagree to completely agree. The expectation is that greedy customers score high on cognitive dissonance even before the manipulation message because the scenario will make them feel uncomfortable. This question is therefore also seen as a manipulation check, to see if the respondent understands the scenario well.

3.5 Pre-test

To test the survey for errors and inconsistencies, a pre-test is conducted. A group of 30 people was asked to fill in the survey before it was published for everyone. The respondents of the pre-test noticed an important error. First, the respondents were asked twice the level of cognitive dissonance, before and after the manipulation message. Also, the respondents were asked the intention to complain illegitimately before the manipulation message and after the manipulation message on a 5-point Likert scale from completely disagree to completely agree. The error occurs when a respondent completely agrees both the first and second time. Then, no increase or decrease is measured. Therefore, the second time that cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately were measured the 5-point Likert scale is changed to a range from far less to far more. Thereby, the difference in cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately is measured more conveniently. There were no other issues that arose with the pre-test.

3.6 Data analysis

When the data is collected, the data analysis of the results begins. For the data analysis, the program IBM SPSS Statistics 27 will be used. First, the data will be cleaned. After that, the manipulation and realism checks are tested. Finally, a multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) will be performed. Because there are two dependent variables and the mean

differences of the experimental groups are tested for these variables MANOVA-analysis is best suited (Field, 2017). The analysis will test the hypotheses which will result in hands-on advice for firms, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

3.7 Research ethics

This experiment is anonymous, the identities of the participants are not known, and personally, identifiable data is not collected. All participants are asked to participate voluntarily and are free to quit the experiment when wanted without explanation. The results of the study are confidentially held, and the results are accurately represented. So, all rights of the participants are protected, scientific integrity is maintained, and research validity is enhanced (Hair et al., 2018).

4. Data analysis and results

Results of the data analysis are discussed in this chapter. At first, the sample will be described, then the reliability analysis and manipulation checks are assessed. Finally, the hypothesis will be tested using MANOVA.

4.1 Missing Data

In total, the scenario-based experiment gathered 365 participants. There is a lot of missing data. Primarily because respondents opened the survey and clicked away while reading the scenario. Also, many respondents dropped out during the survey. From the 365 respondents, 214 people completed all questions up until the demographic questions. Up until the demographic questions are most important for the analysis since those questions measure the results to test the hypotheses. So, 151 participants were unable to complete the entire survey which is 41,7% of the total participants. According to Hair et al. (2018), the percentage of missing data should not exceed 10%, therefore the missing data had to be deleted. As discussed before, data was collected with two other Master's students who tested other manipulation messages. The data of these messages are not relevant for this research, therefore those cases are also deleted. In the end, 123 respondents remained. The participants in this group are quite evenly distributed over the three manipulation messages. As 39 respondents ended up in the control group, 43 had the message that forced the customer to call their complaints, and 41 respondents ended up in the email group. Among the 123 participants, 94 were women (76,4%), 28 were men (22,8%), and one respondent did not classify themselves as men/woman (0.8%). The average age was 35,12 years, ranging from 16 to 78 years with a standard deviation of 16,412. Most respondents are highly educated, HBO (44,7%) and WO bachelor or master (32,5%). Table 1 shows the demographics of the total sample and the distribution of the separate experimental groups.

	Control group	Telephone group	Email group	Total
Gender Female Male Other	26 (66.7%) 13 (33.3%) 0 (0.0%)	36 (83.7%) 6 (14.0%) 1 (2.3%)	9 (22.0%) 32 (87.0%) 0 (0.0%)	28 (22.8%) 94 (76.4%) 1 (0.8%)
Age 16-25	18 (46.2%)	19 (44.2%)	23 (56.1%)	60 (48.8%)

26-35	4 (10.3%)	11 (25.6%)	3 (7.3%)	18 (14.6%)
36-45	4 (10.3%)	4 (9.3%)	1 (2.4%)	9 (7.3%)
46-55	4 (10.3%)	4 (9.3%)	7 (17.1%)	15 (12.2%)
56-65	8 (20.5%)	4 (9.3%)	5 (12.2%)	17 (13.8%)
65+	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.3%)	2 (4.9%)	4 (3.3%)
Education level Secondary school MBO HBO University	2 (5.1%) 4 (10.3%) 21 (53.8%) 12 (30.8%)	5 (11.6%) 5 (11.6%) 18 (41.9%) 15 (34.9%)	3 (7.3%) 9 (22.0%) 16 (39.0%) 13 (31.7%)	10 (8.1%) 18 (14.6%) 55 (44.7%) 40 (32.5%)
Total number of observations	N=39	N=43	N=41	N=123

Table 1: Sample statistics

4.2 Manipulation checks

First, a manipulation check is executed with the first question about cognitive dissonance. For these items, there is a previously used scale from Elliot & Devine (1994) so only the reliability check was conducted. The Cronbach's Alpha was very good (.942, 6 items). Because of the reliability, no items had to be deleted. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from completely disagree to completely agree. The mean value of the first measurement of cognitive dissonance was 4.3. This indicates that the cognitive dissonance is high after reading the scenario. So, even before the manipulation message, the respondents felt cognitive dissonance because the scenario made them feel uncomfortable.

The next manipulation check was if the respondents paid attention to the survey. For this, the respondents were asked what message they had seen. So, it is checked if the manipulation message (control, telephone, or email) the respondent had seen, matched with what the respondent thought they had seen. Out of the 123 respondents, 12 respondents answered this question wrong. 6 participants in the email group, 3 respondents in the telephone group, and 3 respondents in the control group answered the question wrong. If these cases were deleted, the statistical power was decreased. Also, biases may occur when these responses are deleted (Hair et al., 2018). So, it was decided not to delete these cases.

A greedy customer who files an illegitimate complaint will exaggerate the complaint, make up the complaint, and plans the complaint beforehand. To check if the respondent understands the scenario, three items were asked to measure the cognitive dissonance after reading the scenario. These items were self-invented and based on the theory of Joosten (2022) and were not conducted from previous research. The manipulation check items are

reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha is sufficient (.648, 3 items). The value increases when the item that questions if the complaint is planned was deleted (.731, 2 items). However, three items to measure the manipulation check are minimal and it was a little increase. So no item was deleted. The items were answered using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from absolutely not to absolutely. The mean value of this variable was 4.2. Therefore, the manipulation check has been successful.

4.3 Realism check

To check if respondents thought that the scenario is realistic, a realism check was conducted. After the respondents read the scenario, three questions were asked to check the realism. The items are adapted from the research of Maxham (2001); Goodwin & Ross (1992). The three items that belong to the realism check are checked to be reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha of realism check was sufficient (.655, 3 items). This value is not satisfactory since it is not above .70 but it is still significant (Hair et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the value was not increased if an item was deleted. So no item was deleted. The mean value of the variable with the three items combined was 2.37. Therefore, it could be stated that participants found it hard to place themselves in the shoes of the greedy customer on a 5-point Likert scale from unrealistic to realistic. However, the first item asked if something similar could happen with a five-point Likert scale from very unlikely to very likely. The mean value of this item alone is 1.55. The second item tests if respondents find the situation very unrealistic or very realistic on a five-point Likert scale. The mean value of this item alone is 3.16. The third item measured if the respondent can imagine themselves in the situation, and answered on a five-point Likert scale from very difficult to very easy. The mean value of this item alone is 2.39. So, respondents can not imagine themselves in the situation and respondents do not think something similar can happen to them. Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents do not see this scenario happen to themselves. However, respondents do think the scenario itself is realistic so it is realistic that the scenario happens to someone else. This is suitable for such a loaded topic as lying and complaining illegitimately (Hair et al., 2018).

4.4 Neutralization check

The neutralization question checked whether respondents who feel cognitive dissonance use neutralisations that suit greedy customers. Four neutralizations used for greedy customers are

in a row, and respondents have to rank them on most common usage. It was tested whether greedy customers do indeed use the claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement more than denial of injury and denial of the victim as neutralization techniques. This was done with Kendall's W test to see if there is a clear rank of the neutralizations used (Hair et al., 2018). Place one represents the most used neutralization. Results show that claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement are most used and there is consistency in the manner in which participants have ranked the neutralizations ($\chi = 88.980$, p < .001). Results also show that 24.1% ($\eta_p^2 = .241$) of variability in the ranks was accounted for by the type of neutralization that was used. So, 75.9% of the variability is not accounted for. As shown in Table 2, claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement are used more than the other two neutralization techniques that are not used by greedy customers. However, denial of injury scores quite close to claim of entitlement which is remarkable. Claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement were close which explained the high percentage of variability which is not accounted for. Results show that claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement is on top, and denial of injury and denial of the victim are at the bottom. *So, hypothesis 1 is supported.*

Neutralization technique	Mean score
Claim of normalcy	1.97
Claim of entitlement	2.11
Denial of injury	2.55
Denial of victim	3.37

Table 2: Mean scores per neutralization technique

4.5 Reliability analysis dependent variables

As previously discussed, for the dependent variables scales from previous research were used. To check whether a scale produces consistent results when the measurements are repeated, a reliability analysis was executed. The reliability was determined by obtaining the proportion of systematic variation in a scale. The association between the scores from different administrations of the scale was determined. When the association in the reliability analysis is high, the scale yields consistent results and is reliable. Generally, a Cronbach's Alpha above .60 is sufficient and has a good value of around .80 (Hair et al., 2018). For cognitive dissonance, after the deterrence tactic the Cronbach's Alpha is high (.960, 6 items). So, all six items are highly correlated with each other and therefore no items are deleted. Then, the six items are

combined into a cognitive dissonance measure by taking the average values. The mean value is 3.38, which shows that the cognitive dissonance of the respondents had increased after the manipulation message.

The same goes for the intention to complain illegitimately, the increase or decrease of the intention is measured as a dependent variable. Intention to complain illegitimately had a high Cronbach's Alpha (.962, 3 items). The mean value for this variable was 2.4. This showed that the intention to complain illegitimately had decreased after the manipulation message. After these checks, variables are made and the rest of the analysis can continue.

4.6 Assumptions

As the conceptual model has two dependent variables and two independent variables, a multivariate analysis of variance is conducted. However, first, the assumptions for MANOVA have to be met. The experimental units are independent and randomly chosen as the manipulation messages were shown at random and a between-subjects design was used (Hair et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be stated that the first assumption was met.

Thereafter, the assumption of homogeneity, if the covariances are equal for all experimental groups, is tested. The probability level of Levene's Test of Equality for cognitive dissonance after the deterrence tactic was $F(2, 120) = 10.375$, $p<.001$. Meaning that for cognitive dissonance there is heterogeneity. So, for cognitive dissonance minimal one group differs. The probability level of Levene's Test of Equality for intention to complain illegitimately after the deterrence tactic was $F(2, 120) = .754$, $p= .473$. So, for the intention to complain illegitimately there is homogeneity and groups are equal. The probability level of the Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was $F(6, 344115.220)=2.861$, $p=0.009$. So, the covariance differs per group. Therefore, the homogeneity was partially violated. However, this is less of a problem because the group sizes of this experiment are equal.

The next assumption tests if the dependent variables were normally distributed. The normality is tested with the Skewness and Kurtosis values of cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately. As shown in Table 3, both variables score between -3 and 3 on the Skewness and Kurtosis. Therefore, the normality of the dependent variables was established (Hair et al., 2018).

	Skewness	Kurtosis
Cognitive dissonance	.558	-.343

Intention to complain illegitimately	-.333	-.828

Table 3: Normality measurements for the dependent variables

Finally, multicollinearity between the dependent variables had to be checked. There was a significant correlation between cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately (r=-.682, p<.001). The cutoff used was (-).8 or (-).9, so if the Pearson's R-value would have been greater than .8 or less than -.8, the variables would have been multicollinear. Since that is not the case, there is no multicollinearity between the dependent variables. However, there has to be enough of a relationship between the two variables, so it is not just the absence of multicollinearity that was looked at. There should also be a relationship that meets a certain level, generally above .2 or lower than -.2. So, here -.682 is acceptable and so there is no multicollinearity but there is a relationship.

4.7 MANOVA

Since the assumptions were tested, the MANOVA was conducted. The MANOVA is performed with cognitive dissonance and intention to complain illegitimately as dependent variables. The independent variable is the deterrence tactic that the respondent saw as a manipulation message. A distribution is made between the different messages which results in different groups. For this distinguishment in groups, dummies were made. To use these as one independent variable, the dummies were combined into one categorical variable with values 1 (control group), 2 (telephone), 3 (email). Then the MANOVA was executed.

All assumptions were met except for the assumption of homogeneity. Thus, the Pillai's Trace statistic is used for the analysis (Hair et al., 2018). The null hypothesis of the MANOVA was rejected, p=.004 of Pillai's Trace. This means that the deterrence tactics have a significant effect on cognitive dissonance and intention to complain about illegitimate.

Then, the test of between-subjects effects showed that the deterrence tactic had a significant effect on cognitive dissonance (F=7.985, p<.001). Namely, 11.7% of the variation in the mean scores for cognitive dissonance can be explained by the independent variable. The independent variable had also a significant effect on the intention to complain illegitimately (F=4.420, p=0.014). For the intention to complain illegitimately, 6.9% of the variation in the mean scores could be explained by the independent variable.

Furthermore, a post-hoc analysis was conducted. Since homogeneity cannot be assumed for cognitive dissonance, for that dependent variable the Games-Howell post-hoc was used (Hair et al., 2018). This test showed that telephone and email differed significantly on the measure for cognitive dissonance (p=.006). Respondents that saw the message that they had to file complaints via email experienced less cognitive dissonance than the respondents who saw the message that they had to file complaints via telephone (MD= .62460). The telephone and email groups also differed significantly on the measure for intention to complain illegitimately (p=.066). The respondents who saw the message that they had to file their complaints via email experienced more intention to complain illegitimately than respondents who had to file their complaint via telephone (MD=-44356). *So, hypotheses 2 and 3 are supported.* On the measure for cognitive dissonance, the control group and telephone differed significantly (p=.002). Respondents who saw the message that they had to file complaints via telephone experienced more cognitive dissonance compared to participants who saw the control message without a deterrence tactic (MD= -.58676). The control group and telephone group also differed significantly on the measure for intention to complain illegitimately (p=.017). The group who

had to file their complaint via telephone experienced lower intention to complain illegitimately than the controlgroup (MD=.51381). *This means that hypotheses 4 and 5 are supported.* However, email does not significantly differ from the control group on the measure for cognitive dissonance (p=.969) or on the measure for intention to complain illegitimately (p=.925). Therefore, hypotheses 6 and 7 are not supported.

	IV (I)	*IV (J)*	*Mean difference (I-J)*	*Sig.*
CD2	Control	Telephone	-.58676	.002
		Email	.03784	.969
	Telephone	Control	-	-
		Email	.62460	.006
	Email	Control	-	-
		Telephone	-	-
ITC2	Control	Telephone	.51381	.017
		Email	.07025	.925
	Telephone	Control	-	-
		Email	-.44356	.066
	Email	Control	-	-
		Telephone	-	-

Table 4: Games-Howell post-hoc analysis

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusion

Normally, customers complain when they are dissatisfied with products or services. However, there are not only justified and honest complaints. Illegitimate complaints are exaggerated, made up or the firm is wrongly blamed (Joosten, 2022). There are different types of illegitimate complainants, the greedy customer however costs firms the most time and money. Therefore, the aim of this study is to deter illegitimate complaints. Neutralizations are used by greedy customers as excuses for their behavior. Neutralizations have a negative effect on cognitive dissonance, deterrence tactics try to limit this effect. Deterrence tactics bring back cognitive dissonance that was decreased because of the neutralizations. As a result, the chances of deviant behavior like illegitimate complaining decrease. In this study, the greedy customer is forced to file their complaints via email and telephone as deterrence tactics. Results show that greedy customers who have to file their complaints via telephone will feel more cognitive dissonance and will experience less intention to complain illegitimately than greedy customers who have to file their complaints via telephone. Also, greedy customers who have to file complaints via telephone will experience more cognitive dissonance and will experience less intention to complain illegitimately compared to when greedy customers are not forced to file their complaints via a certain communication channel. However, it can not be stated that greedy customers experience less or more cognitive dissonance or less or more intention to complain illegitimately when they are forced to email their complaints compared to when the greedy customer is not forced to use a certain communication channel. So, it is proven which communication channel is most effective in deterring illegitimate complaining: the telephone.

5.2 Managerial implications

As mentioned before, the telephone is the most effective communication channel in deterring illegitimate complaining and increasing cognitive dissonance. Therefore, the hands-on advice for managers is to retrain customer service agents to handle complaints well and quickly via telephone. By doing so, illegitimate complaints from greedy customers will increase because the cognitive dissonance is increased. This results in time and money savings for firms. However, an important side-note is that these results may not be applicable for other types of illegitimate complaints. Therefore, other research is needed to discover what communication channels can deter the illegitimate behavior of other types of complainers.

The Cronbach's alpha of the dependent variables are above .90. This value is very high and means that items may have been left out. Because of fewer questions that are similar, this might have led to fewer missing values. Also, because of the large number of missing values, a relatively small sample is used in this study. To increase the potential respondents' willingness to complete the survey incentives should have been used, like gift cards. In addition, it is necessary to examine whether the relationship between a company and its customers changes if the consumer is required to file a complaint by telephone. This needs further investigation because customers who legitimately complain should not think badly of the company because of undue mistrust. In addition, research into other types of complainers is necessary because they also cost time and money for firms (Joosten, 2022).

5.4 Discussion

Different manipulation checks checked if the respondents understand the scenario. A greedy customer who files an illegitimate complaint will exaggerate the complaint, make up the complaint, and plans the complaint beforehand. The manipulation check was successful, meaning that the respondents understood the scenario. The cognitive dissonance is high after reading the scenario. So, even before the manipulation message, the scenario made them feel uncomfortable.

For the realism check, respondents can not imagine themselves in the situation and respondents do not think something similar can happen to them. Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents do not see this scenario happen to themselves. However, respondents do think the scenario itself is realistic so it is realistic that the scenario happens to someone else. This is suitable for such a loaded topic as lying and complaining illegitimately.

The neutralization question checked whether respondents who feel cognitive dissonance use neutralizations that suit greedy customers. Results show that claim of normalcy and claim of entitlement are most used and there is consistency in the manner in which participants have ranked the neutralizations. So, hypothesis 1 is supported. Therefore, the results of the study of Joosten (2022) are supported again in this research.

Results show that greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via telephone experience more cognitive dissonance and less intention to complain than greedy customers who are forced to file an illegitimate complaint via email. So, hypotheses 2 and 3 are supported. Results also show that greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via

telephone experience more cognitive dissonance and a lower intention to complain than greedy customers who are not forced to file an illegitimate complaint via telephone. So, hypotheses 4 and 5 are supported. As discussed, Hancock et al. (2004) showed that lying behavior occurred the least in email, followed by instant messaging and face-to-face, and most frequently on the telephone. Also, according to MRT, lying was the least common in email, followed by instant messaging and telephone. On the other hand, showed The Social Distance Theory that users are least likely to deceive using face-to-face, followed by telephone, and finally email. The Social Distance Theory is therefore corresponding with the results of this research. The Online Disinhibition Effect from Suler (2004) states that because telephone as a communication channel is synchron, people will choose to lie not frequently on telephone. This effect from Suler (2004) is also supported by the results of this study.

However, there is no significant evidence to state that greedy customers who are forced to file a complaint via email experience more or less cognitive dissonance and a lower or higher intention to complain than greedy customers who are not forced to file an illegitimate complaint via email. So, hypotheses 6 and 7 are not supported. Dootson et al. (2018) found that deterrence tactics will influence the cognitive dissonance and intention to complain which is partially supported by the results of this research. Telephone as a deterrence tactic does have an impact on cognitive dissonance and intention to complain but email does not show a significant influence.

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Appendix A - Survey

Beste meneer/mevrouw,

Hartelijk dank voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek! Wij zijn Lies, Lars en Anna Bo, masterstudenten van de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. Voor onze scriptie doen wij - onder begeleiding van onze docent Dr. Herm Joosten - onderzoek naar het klaaggedrag van consumenten. In dit onderzoek vragen we u om zich te verplaatsen in een denkbeeldige situatie waarin u een klacht gaat indienen bij een ondernemer. Het is dus een scenario, een verzonnen verhaal, en we vragen u te denken en te doen alsof u de hoofdpersoon in dat verhaal bent. En de vragen daarna te beantwoorden alsof u het zelf meemaakt. Het kan zijn dat u deze situatie in het echt nooit zult meemaken. Dat is voor het onderzoek niet erg. Wij vragen u om zich gewoon in te leven in het verhaal. Deze enquête is volledig anoniem, wij gebruiken de gegevens uitsluitend voor dit onderzoek en deelname is uiteraard geheel vrijwillig. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden, omdat het gaat om uw mening. De enquête zal ongeveer 10 minuten duren. Als u vragen of opmerkingen heeft kunt u ons of onze begeleidende docent mailen. De mailadressen staan hieronder Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw deelname! U helpt ons en de wetenschap een stap verder!

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Lars Hiemstra

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Scenario:

Stel u voor dat u in deze situatie zit. Probeer u zo goed mogelijk in te leven. U bent al 2 jaar niet op vakantie geweest, maar nu reizen naar het buitenland weer mogelijk is, bent u van plan een auto te huren en door Spanje te rijden. Terwijl u uw reisplannen met vrienden bespreekt, vertellen ze u dat ze vorig jaar een auto hebben gehuurd bij een bedrijf in Barcelona om 2 weken door Spanje te reizen. Ze vertellen u dat - terwijl ze bij een tankstation stonden - de motor van de auto een keer niet wilde starten. Ze vonden echter een bestuurder van een andere huurauto met verstand van auto's die wilde helpen. Hij maakte de accupolen weer goed vast en toen startte de auto weer. Uw vrienden vertellen u ook dat ze -

40

na hun reis- een klacht hebben ingediend bij het autoverhuurbedrijf en een gedeeltelijke terugbetaling van de huurkosten hebben gekregen. Het autoverhuurbedrijf deed helemaal niet moeilijk. U gaat zoeken naar informatie over dat verhuurbedrijf op beoordelingswebsites op internet (zoals Tripadvisor.com) en u vindt inderdaad veel reviews die suggereren dat dit verhuurbedrijf inderdaad heel gemakkelijk is met klachten van klanten. U bent nu in Spanje en u heeft een auto gehuurd bij datzelfde autoverhuurbedrijf. En u gaat proberen om - net als uw vrienden - uw huurkosten gedeeltelijk terug te krijgen door een klacht in te dienen. De klacht is helemaal verzonnen. U bent van plan om ze morgen - als u de auto terugbrengt - te vertellen dat de motor meerdere keren weigerde te starten tijdens de reis en dat u het zelf moest repareren. Dan gaat u vragen om een korting op de huurprijs van de auto.

Q1 Hoe zou u zich voelen als u om korting zou vragen naar aanleiding van een verzonnen klacht?

Antwoorden: 1 = helemaal oneens; 2 = oneens; 3 = neutraal; 4 = Eens; 5 =

helemaal eens.

1. Ik zou me ongemakkelijk voelen als ik om een terugbetaling zou vragen

2. Ik zou me bezwaard voelen als ik om een terug betaling zou vragen

3. Ik zou er moeite mee hebben om geld terug te vragen

4. Ik zou me ergeren aan mezelf als ik om een terugbetaling zou vragen

5. Ik zou me generen als ik om een terugbetaling zou vragen

Q2 Hoe zeker bent u ervan dat u de claim door gaat zetten en daadwerkelijk indient?

Antwoorden: 1 = helemaal oneens; 2 = oneens; 3 = neutraal; 4 = Eens; 5 =

helemaal eens.

7. Ik ga deze klacht zeker indienen

8. Ik ben er van overtuigd dat ik deze klacht ga indienen

9. Het staat voor mij vast dat ik deze klacht ga indienen

---

10. Hoe hoog is het kortingspercentage dat u gaat vragen van de autoverhuurder? Geef een percentage van de autohuurkosten door een getal in te vullen tussen de 0 en 100.

Veel mensen proberen hun gedrag voor zichzelf en anderen te rechtvaardigen. Welke rechtvaardiging is het meest op u van toepassing in het eerder genoemde scenario waarin u een onterechte klacht gaat indienen?

Zet de rechtvaardigingen in volgorde van belang, waarbij 1 = meest van toepassing en 4 = minst van toepassing.

11. Iedereen overdrijft wel eens

12. Ik mag ook wel eens een meevallertje hebben

13. Het autoverhuurbedrijf verdient het door wat ze gedaan hebben

14 Het autoverhuurbedrijf ondervindt geen schade door mijn onterechte claim

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De verschillende berichten die de participanten kunnen krijgen:

Vlak voordat u uw claim indient bij het verhuurbedrijf, ziet u de volgende boodschap:

(controlegroep)

"Geachte klant. Vergeet niet de sleutels van uw huurauto en de verzekeringspapieren en handleiding in het dashboard compartiment achter te laten. Zonder die zaken kunnen we de camper niet aan de volgende klant verhuren. Dank u!"

"Geachte klant. Houd er rekening mee dat we alle klachten van klanten grondig onderzoeken. Onze ervaren klachtenafdeling gaat er prat op elke poging tot fraude op te sporen. We zullen alle misleidende claims rapporteren en publiceren"

(dreigen met hoge pakkans)

"Geachte klant. Houd er rekening mee dat we alle klachten van klanten grondig onderzoeken. Onze ervaren klachtenafdeling gaat er prat op elke poging tot fraude op te sporen. We zullen alle misleidende claims rapporteren en publiceren"

(dreigen met hoge straf)

"Geachte klant, Houd er rekening mee dat we overdreven en verzonnen klachten aan de politie melden. Zulke klachten worden bestraft met een boete van 5000 euro of 3 maanden gevangenisstraf"

(Channel phone)

"Geachte klant. Houd er rekening mee dat alle klachten van klanten alleen moeten worden ingediend door **telefonisch contact** op te nemen met onze servicevertegenwoordiger. Bel 0314789742 en leg uw klacht direct en persoonlijk uit aan onze servicemedewerker. "

(Channel mail) s

"Geachte klant. Houd er rekening mee dat alle klachten van klanten uitsluitend **via e-mail** moeten worden ingediend door contact op te nemen met onze servicevertegenwoordiger. Mail naar customerservice@rental.es en licht uw klacht toe."

Hoe zou u zich na het zien van de extra boodschap (ten opzichte van hiervoor) voelen als u om korting zou vragen naar aanleiding van een verzonnen klacht?

Antwoorden: 1 = veel minder; 2 = minder; 3 = gelijk; 4 = meer; 5 =

veel meer.

6. Ik zou me ongemakkelijk voelen als ik om een terugbetaling zou vragen

7. Ik zou me bezwaard voelen als ik om een terug betaling zou vragen

8. Ik zou er moeite mee hebben om geld terug te vragen

9. Ik zou me ergeren aan mezelf als ik om een terugbetaling zou vragen

10. Ik zou me generen als ik om een terugbetaling zou vragen

Hoe zeker bent u er na het zien van de extra boodschap (ten opzichte van hiervoor) van dat u de claim door gaat zetten en daadwerkelijk indient NA het lezen van de boodschap?

Antwoorden: 1 = veel minder; 2 = minder; 3 = gelijk; 4 = meer; 5 =

veel meer.

. Ik ga deze klacht zeker indienen

8. Ik ben er van overtuigd dat ik deze klacht ga indienen

9. Het staat voor mij vast dat ik deze klacht ga indienen

---

10. Hoe hoog is het kortingspercentage dat u gaat vragen van de autoverhuurder? Geef een percentage van de autohuurkosten door een getal in te vullen tussen de 0 en 100.

Vragen over het beschreven scenario

Antwoorden: 1 = helemaal niet; 2 = niet; 3 = neutraal; 4 = wel; 5 =

helemaal wel.

28. In hoeverre is uw klacht overdreven? (ofwel erger voorgesteld dan het daadwerkelijk was)

29. In hoeverre heeft u de klacht verzonnen

30. In hoeverre was de klacht van tevoren gepland?

Weet u nog waarover het bericht ging dat u las voordat u een claim indiende?

Een antwoordmogelijkheid

0. controlegroep. Het bericht vroeg de klant om sleutels en papieren in het dashboard achter te laten

1. Social proof: Het bericht wees op het feit dat de klanten van de autoverhuurder eerlijk zijn.

2. Transparancy rules Het bericht wees erop dat verzonnen klachten de klantovereenkomst en Spaanse wetgeving schenden

3. Educating customers Het bericht wees erop dat verzonnen en overdreven klachten het bedrijf, werknemers en klanten veel schade kunnen berokkenen

4. Humanize organization Het bericht wees erop dat de autoverhuurbedrijf een familiebedrijf is waarmee een gezin haar brood verdient

5. Formal sanctions dreigen met hoge pakkans. Het bericht wees erop dat de kans om betrapt te worden groot is omdat alle klachten grondig onderzocht worden

6. Formal sanctions dreigen met hoge straf. Het bericht wees erop dat klanten die betrapt worden op onterecht klagen een hoge straf krijgen

7. Moral triggers. Het bericht wees erop dat men er vanuit gaat dat u eerlijk bent en alleen klaagt als dat terecht is.

8. Channel phone. Het bericht wees erop dat klachten alleen kunnen worden ingediend via de telefoon

9. Channel mail. Het bericht wees erop dat klachten alleen kunnen worden ingediend via email

Tenslotte nog een paar algemene vragen over wie u bent

[Leeftijd]

32. Wat is uw leeftijd? (Vul leeftijd in jaren in)

_____

 [Geslacht]

33. Wat is uw geslacht?

o Man

o Vrouw

o Anders/

0 wil niet zeggen

[Opleiding]

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

o Lagere school/basisonderwijs

o Voortgezet onderwijs

o MBO

o HBO

o WO

Dit waren de vragen. We willen nogmaals benadrukken dat de gegevens uitsluitend voor dit onderzoek gebruikt zullen worden en anonimiteit verzekerd is.

Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking! Indien u geïnteresseerd bent in de resultaten van het onderzoek of anderzijds vragen heeft kunt u een e-mail sturen naar lies.denotter@ru.nl