

The customer is often not right. The prevalence, types, drivers and timing of illegitimate complaining.

Herm Joosten

Institute for Management Research / Radboud University

Csilla Horvath

Institute for Management Research, Radboud University, The Netherlands

Cite as:

Joosten Herm, Horvath Csilla (2020), The customer is often not right. The prevalence, types, drivers and timing of illegitimate complaining.. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 49th, (62654)

Paper from the 49th Annual EMAC Conference, Budapest, May 26-29, 2020.



The customer is often not right. The prevalence, types, drivers and timing of illegitimate complaining.

Abstract

Main goals –This study investigates the prevalence, types, drivers and timing of illegitimate complaining based on a unique dataset of 325 real-life complaint cases assessed by a team of independent industry-, legal- and academic experts. This approach provides us with unbiased and rich insights into this sensitive issue, and as such, this is the first study to objectively estimate the prevalence of illegitimate complaints. **Findings** –The results suggest that a majority of complaints is unfounded, but not dishonest. The study introduces 4 new types of illegitimate complaints, 8 drivers and 2 moderators of illegitimate complaining. **Conclusions** - Researchers and practitioners should not conflate unfounded with dishonest complaints. Given the extent of illegitimate complaining, prevention is paramount by asking (customer) and providing (firm) relevant information about products and services.

Keywords: *illegitimate complaining; service recovery; multiple-case study*

Track: Services Marketing