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CUSTOMER OPPORTUNISM AFTER SERVICE FAILURES: INSIGHTS FROM THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to apply the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to opportunistic claiming and investigate the role of attitudinal and perceived control determinants in triggering the intention to make opportunistic claims. Machiavellianism and customer alienation reflect attitudes, and the difficulty of invoking the service guarantee provided by the provider reflects perceived behavioral control.

Methodology: An experimental design with scenarios was developed using the third person technique. Such an approach reduces potential social desirability concerns from direct interviewing and provides an objective criterion to compare fraudulent claiming against legitimate complaints. Scenarios were administered to an online consumer panel to generate a more generalizable sample.

Findings: Customer alienation as well as its interaction with ease of invoking the guarantee influences opportunistic claiming. Customer alienation exerts a greater influence on opportunistic claiming when guarantees are easy to invoke but has no influence when they are hard to invoke.

Machiavellianism positively influences the intention to claim opportunistically; however, its effect does not vary with the ease of invoking the guarantee.

Conclusion: *The current research addresses a lack of theoretical foundation in investigating opportunistic behavior in the services context by applying the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Managers can influence the “perceived control” component of the theory by making guarantees easier or harder to invoke. When managers make guarantees easy to invoke, customer alienation exerts a greater influence on opportunistic claiming. However, making guarantees easier to invoke does not impact the effect of Machiavellianism on opportunism.*

Keywords:

Opportunistic Claiming, Theory of Planned Behavior, Customer Alienation, Machiavellianism, Service Guarantees, Perceived Behavioral Control, Consumer Behavior, Fraudulent Claims