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Customers who misbehave: Identifying restaurant guests “acting out” via asymmetric case models

Abstract

This study uncovers the impact of combined dark triad personality traits, firm’s power, and customer demographic characteristics. It uses a sample of 263 restaurant customers. The findings include customer configurations indicating misbehavior and non-misbehavior cases. From a theoretical perspective, the study questions the philosophy of customer sovereignty and applies asymmetric case-based modeling to identify configurations indicating misbehavior customers and non-misbehavior customers. Strategy implications: from a managerial perspective and to tackle misbehavior, firms should use coercive power (e.g., suing customers who misbehave), reward power (e.g., recognition and flattery when customers behave properly), and referent power (e.g., enforcing customers’ affective attachment).

Keywords: asymmetry; case; customer misbehavior; hospitality; restaurant; tourism

1. Introduction

Customers' misbehavior refers to behavioral acts by consumers that violate the generally accepted norms of conduct in consumption situations (Fullerton and Punj, 2004). "Acting out" is synonymous to "misbehavior" that in general usage refers to performing an action that is considered bad, anti-social, and/or generally offensive. The 2021 covid-19 "air rage epidemic" (Korducki, 2021) includes multiple examples of passengers misbehaving before and after boarding their flights.

"This is happening every day now," says Sara Nelson, the president of the U.S. national flight attendants' union and a 25-year flight attendant. In September 2021, Nelson was one of four aviation industry leaders to testify before the US House, pleading that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Justice (DoJ) enshrine a permanent "zero tolerance" policy for abusive passengers, and pursue criminal prosecution for those who fail to stay in line. Nelson reported that the FAA had logged 4,284 unruly passenger reports since January. At this rate, she continued, 2021 was poised to produce a higher passenger misconduct incident count "than the entire history of commercial aviation." (Korducki, 2021)

Astonishingly, such acts by customers are pervasive (Felleson and Salomonson, 2020), common in a wide range of service occupations, and frequently a part of service employees' daily predicaments (Schaefers *et al.*, 2016).

Customers' misbehavior can be "direct misbehavior" (i.e., when the employees and other customers are present) or "indirect misbehavior" (i.e., when the employees and other customers are absent) and includes some behaviors like "verbal or physical abuse" and "cutting the queue" (Schaefers *et al.*, 2016, pp. 3-4). Both in theory and practice, differentiating misbehavior from consumer cheating behavior and shoplifting is beneficial. Indeed, "shoplifting" is defined as the act of "steal[ing] from all types of businesses" (e.g., supermarkets and drug stores) for personal motives and is more economically harmful and refers to a more serious and criminal conduct than misbehavior (Korgaonkar *et al.*, 2020). "Cheating" refers to "a form of behavior that accrues

benefits to the self while violating accepted standards or rules” (Viglia et al., 2019, pp. 1039-1040) (e.g., online piracy, illegal download, and insurance fraud) tempted by profits (compensation, free use, and economic gain) (Viglia et al., 2019; Wirtz and Kum, 2004).

Customers’ misbehaviors can have profound negative effects on other fellow customers, frontline employees, and the organization (Alola *et al.*, 2019; Madupalli and Poddar, 2014). Observing customers misbehaving, fellow customers are likely to be dissatisfied and may leave the service setting or may even intervene in or replicate such behaviors (Harris and Daunt, 2013). With regards to frontline employees, customers’ misbehavior can have adverse consequences in the short and long-term (Cheng et al., 2020). Serving uncivil, abusive, and aggressive customers leads to employees’ absenteeism, dissatisfaction, turnover intentions (Cheng *et al.*, 2020; Harris and Reynolds, 2003), exhaustion (Boukis *et al.*, 2020), disengagement (Alola *et al.*, 2019; Karatepe and Ehsani, 2012), and, even, dysfunctional behaviors (Balaji *et al.*, 2020). These insights led Harris and Daunt (2013, p. 289) to conclude that “poorly behaving customers are sufficiently endemic that the consequences of their behavior are both direct and indirect and therefore must be considered as a management issue that requires strategic and tactical attention.” Although customers’ misbehavior is pervasive and has negative effects, many gaps exist in our knowledge about these customers. First, little is known about the antecedents of customers’ misbehavior, as Zhan *et al.* (2021) stress, who note that research over-focuses on the consequences of misbehavior.

Second, comparatively few studies examine empirically the separate contributions of individual factors (such as personality and demographic variables) on customers’ misbehavior. However, Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson (2007) argue that misbehavior is explainable largely by a combination of individual factors while Daunt and Harris (2011, p. 295) conclude that “personality traits impact the motives for misbehavior”. Extensive literature reviews (Fisk *et al.*,

2010), exploratory studies (Daunt and Harris, 2011), and empirical studies (Zhan et al., 2021) demonstrate that individual factors predict customers' misbehavior. In this vein, the “dark triad traits” represent a well-established framework that encapsulates the three most relevant malevolent personality traits that generate antisocial behaviors (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). These malevolent dark triad personality traits are: subclinical narcissism (hereafter “narcissism”), Machiavellianism, and subclinical psychopathy (hereafter “psychopathy”), which can all be studied at the sub-clinical (normal) level, because they can occur in the general population (and as a serious mental illnesses, at a clinically-abnormal level) (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). Marketing scholars only recently began to address the dark personality traits (Boddy and Croft, 2016) of customers with respect to their sense of unethicity and misbehaviors (Karampournioti *et al.*, 2018). However, and in line with Furnham *et al.* (2013, p. 199), we argue that existing studies suffer from “construct creep” by focusing on a single [or two] construct[s], which limits the ability to explore misbehavior from an interactionist and holistic view (Harrison *et al.*, 2018).

Third, to date, research that has suggested strategies that encourage firms to take steps to minimize customers' misbehavior is much rarer (Dootson *et al.*, 2018). We assume that firms are capable of using their sources of power to reduce customers' misbehavior in an attempt to fill this research gap, based on customer sovereignty research (Balaji *et al.*, 2020; Choi *et al.*, 2014), and, more specifically, on the model of power (Raven, 2008; Hofmann *et al.*, 2017). The philosophy of customer sovereignty generates “an unequal power mechanism between service employees and customers” (Choi *et al.*, 2014, p. 273), encouraging customers to misbehave (Bacile, 2020; Korczynski and Bishop, 2008). This situation makes the firm's power relevant for reducing customers' misbehavior (Balaji *et al.*, 2020). For example, if firms remain silent when customers mistreat their employees, such customers are likely to think that this signals the powerlessness of the firm and their misbehavior will then become more frequent, and even severe (Baker and Kim,

2020). In this vein, Grégoire *et al.* (2010, p. 754) demonstrate that, “to avoid such behaviors, firms have to insure they are not at a disadvantage in their power relationship with customers”, and can use their power “to modify a target’s attitudes and behaviors ... to their advantage” (Grégoire *et al.*, 2010, p. 744). This indicates that when the firm has power over its customers, the incidents of customers’ misbehavior are reduced (Baker and Kim, 2020; Balaji *et al.*, 2020; Grégoire *et al.*, 2010).

Accordingly, the present study explores how customers’ dark triad traits, demographics, and firms’ power can affect customer misbehavior as enablers and inhibitors. Misbehavior is explainable mainly by a combination of individual factors (Baker and Kim, 2020; Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson, 2007), and thus a holistic view is necessary (Harrison *et al.*, 2018) to capture interdependencies between those factors. The authors’ literature research supports the conclusion that the present study is the first to use asymmetric case-based models for theoretical and empirical testing of customers who misbehave and who does not misbehave with high accuracy.

The value of asymmetric case configurational methods such as fuzzy-set configuration comparative analysis (fsQCA) lies in its abilities to capture configurational causes that identify consumer misbehavior cases, rather than variable directional relationship (VDR), symmetric, net effects. Theory and empirical analyses by VDR symmetric net effects (i.e., traditional development and testing of null hypothesis significance tests (NHST)) have severe limitations (reviewed by Woodside, 2019) even though their use has been pervasive in prior literature (e.g., Frasquet and Miquel-Romero, 2021; Jin *et al.*, 2021; Sun, 2021). In this regard, the present study’s design aims to respond to calls for the use of other statistical methods to supply a more in-depth understanding of the complexity of customers’ misbehavior (e.g., Jin *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, “the fuzzy set QCA methodology allows assessing several alternative causal recipes concurrently ... instead of considering the unique influence of each variable on the outcome,

fsQCA examines how causal conditions (independent conditions) combine into several configurations entailing equifinality, thus conducing to the same outcome (dependent condition)” (Duarte and Pinho, 2019, p. 141). More specifically, fsQCA: (1) “explores how antecedent factors combine to produce multiple alternative paths that can successfully lead to misbehavior,” (2) “assumes causal asymmetry to identify the paths that explain the negation [here non-misbehavior],” “which are likely to be different from the ones that explain it [here misbehavior],” (3) “can explore how an individual factor in a configuration can contribute positively or negatively to the continuance intention [here misbehavior] due to the presence or absence of the other antecedent factors in the configuration,” and (4) “can provide a more accurate understanding of the complex reality associated with” misbehavior (Jahanmir *et al.*, 2020, p. 226). Using a configuration lens, this study develops meaningful insights into predicting and explaining customers’ misbehavior and to overcoming the methodological/design limitations of previous studies.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Dark triad personality traits

The dark triad personality traits encapsulate the three most toxic and malevolent traits, namely: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. In support, Campbell *et al.* (2009, p. 132) state that these dark personality traits “share a number of features, such as social malevolence and tendencies toward self-promotion, coldness, aggressiveness, and duplicity.” O’Boyle *et al.* (2012, p. 557) state that such traits “are manifestations of an agentic but exploitative social strategy that motivates striving for personal goals but undermines the balance of social exchange in interpersonal relations.”

Narcissism refers to “the pursuit of gratification from vanity or egotistic admiration of one’s own attributes” (Muris *et al.*, 2017, p. 184). As such, narcissism is characterized by

fascination and obsession with one's self and disproportionate feelings of superiority (Vernon *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, narcissism centers on arrogance, dominance, exhibitionism, and devaluation of others (Karampournioti *et al.*, 2018). Machiavellianism refers to the use of "cold and manipulative behaviors along with insincerity and callousness" (Campbell *et al.*, 2009, p. 132). Machiavellians can lie, betray, and manipulate vulnerable others to maximize their own self-interest (Zheng *et al.*, 2017). Psychopathy "refers to a sense of high impulsivity, low remorse, and thrill-seeking" (Vernon *et al.*, 2008, p. 446). Persons with high levels of psychopathy lack conscience and empathy, but show long-term aggressiveness and engage in exploitative and antisocial behaviors (Muris *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, they ignore moral standards and are prone to hurting, cheating, and deceiving others (Glenn *et al.*, 2009).

According to O'Boyle *et al.* (2012), the social exchange theory suggests that social relationships which are often built on the principals of fair exchange (e.g., reciprocal trust) provide theoretical rationale to explain why dark triad personality traits are linked to the dysfunction in interpersonal relations. This is because individuals with such dark personality traits tend "to overlook obligations and reciprocity, and their lack of emotional commitment to others' work likely undermine the binding influence of interpersonal relationships" (O'Boyle *et al.*, 2012, p. 559). Specifically, narcissists feel that they outclass the employees who serve them, while Machiavellians consider others as vulnerable and malleable (Rauthman, 2012), and "psychopaths' show insensitivity to others, which means that they are less likely to act in ways that will please others or minimize others' suffering" (O'Boyle *et al.*, 2012, p. 559).

Existing studies provide a strong evidence for the role of dark triad personality traits in predicting ruthless, egocentric, manipulative, anti-social, and deviant behaviors (Paulhus and Williams, 2002; Harrison *et al.*, 2018), and are linked to aggression and societally undesirable (Paulhus and Williams, 2002) and unethical behaviors (Karampournioti *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, these three aversive personality traits stimulate unethical consumption (Shen and Dickson, 2001), aggressiveness (Paulhus and Williams, 2002), and customers' moral disengagement and improper attitudes (Karampournioti *et al.*, 2018), among others. Hence, based on the above theoretical discussion and empirical evidence, there are strong arguments to expect that narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy are all conducive to customers' misbehavior.

2.2. Firms' power

Several academics point out that the increase in customers' misbehavior is primarily due to the philosophy of customer sovereignty that marketers have always claimed (Rouquet and Suquet, 2020). Indeed, traditional marketing norms, such as "the customer is king," oblige employees to always "suppress inner feelings of anger and respond with a smile and fulfill customer needs even without the desire to do so" (Madupalli and Poddar, 2014, p. 246). From this perspective, the supremacy of customer sovereignty generates an unequal power between firms' employees and customers (Baker and Kim, 2020). As a result, this situation empowers customers excessively (Madupalli and Poddar, 2014) and allows them "more freedom to express anger" (Choi *et al.*, 2014, p. 273). As such, customers' misbehavior may be viewable as "an outcome of a reconfiguration of social mores around customer sovereignty" (Korczynski and Evans, 2013, p. 84). This view leads academicians to recommend that firms should use their resources to restore a more balanced power with customers (Baker and Kim, 2020; Bove and Robertson, 2005; Rouquet and Suquet, 2020; Hofmann *et al.*, 2017).

In line with prior research, the present study focuses on the main sources of power in service settings, which are: coercive power, reward power, and referent power (Hofmann *et al.*, 2017; Hurni *et al.*, 2021). Coercive power refers to the "threat of punishment," reward power to the "promise of monetary or non-monetary compensation," and referent power is "based on the target's identification with the influencing agent" (Bove and Robertson, 2005, p. 86). These

sources of power regulate relations between agents and targets including customers and firms (Balaji *et al.*, 2020; Paulhus and Williams, 2002). In terms of customers' misbehavior, Grégoire *et al.* (2010) proposes that these sources of power are based on the premise that powerful firms can generate benign fears among their customers and reduce instances of customers' misbehavior. Thus, "to avoid such behaviors, firms have to ensure they are not at a disadvantage in their power relationship with customers" (Grégoire *et al.*, 2010, p. 754).

In this sense, firms can use power to ensure that customers, especially problematic ones, comply with appropriate standards of conduct (Baker and Kim, 2020; Bove and Robertson, 2005; Hofmann *et al.*, 2017). When the firm uses power, customers "resist the temptation of engaging in unethical behaviors" as they could suffer the negative consequences if they do so (Harrison *et al.*, 2018, p. 55). Accordingly, customers may be afraid of being sued (coercive power), or of losing all the rewards, incentives, and privileges (reward power) that they enjoy or that they have already earned (Balaji *et al.*, 2020; Bove and Robertson, 2005; Dootson *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, when customers identify strongly with their firm (referent power), they are less likely to misbehave (Balaji *et al.*, 2020; Matheus *et al.*, 2017).

2.3. Customer demographics

Prior literature (e.g., Fisk *et al.*, 2010) emphasizes the importance of integrating demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, and income) as antecedents of misbehavior. However, this literature reports mixed results regarding their effects. Concerning age, some studies (Daunt and Harris, 2011) find that young people are more likely to misbehave, while other studies (Schlueter *et al.*, 1989) find that older people are prone to misbehavior. This inconsistency is also found regarding gender, as both females and males are found to engage in unethical behavior (Daunt and Harris, 2011). Furthermore, some studies show that people with higher levels of education engage in misbehavior (Schlueter *et al.*, 1989), while others conclude that people with lower

levels of education behave badly (Daunt and Harris, 2011). Regarding income, some studies demonstrate that low-income people misbehave (Kallis and Vanier, 1985), while others assume that misbehavior can be perpetrated by high-income people (Fullerton and Punj, 2004).

2.4. Complexity theory

In line with the complexity theory, prior literature is “necessary, but insufficient” (Olya *et al.*, 2019, p. 198) to explain the complexity of customer misbehavior (Leischnig and Woodside, 2019). “Complexity theory embraces the notions of: conjunction, that is, multiple causal factors work together to produce an outcome; equifinality, that is, alternative pathways to the same outcome likely exist; and asymmetry, that is, single causal factors that relate to an outcome in one configuration may be irrelevant” (Leischnig and Woodside, 2019, p. 714). Following Park *et al.* (2017, p. 657), the present study posits that “for social science research topics [including misbehavior] in which concepts are not all clear or knowledge is fragmented and inconsistent, this approach [i.e., configuration approach] is particularly useful, and the configuration approach ... particularly suits such topics”. They further explain that the findings’ inconsistencies of previous literature regarding misbehavior (e.g., Daunt and Harris (2011)), resulting from the use of “traditional research approach that adopts deductive theory testing with correlation-based analyses”, is likely to be overcome by, rather, applying the configuration approach (Jin *et al.*, 2020; Taheri *et al.*, 2020). In this vein, previous literature assumes that misbehavior is a complex phenomenon (Fisk *et al.*, 2010) and is the result of complementary and interactive antecedents (Jin *et al.*, 2020). In other words, configurational causes lead to misbehavior (Jin *et al.*, 2020; Taheri *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, prior literature (e.g., Fisk *et al.*, 2010; Jin *et al.*, 2020; Taheri *et al.*, 2020) demonstrates that a configuration approach (including demographics and dark triad among other factors) more successfully explains customers’ misbehavior than traditional methods (see Appendix A). Accordingly, customers’ misbehavior cases occur from several and different

combination of factors (i.e., the dark triad personality traits, firm's power, and demographics). In addition, the set of combinations that identify customer who misbehave "is not simply the mirror opposite of the models that identify customers high in non-misbehavior (Olya *et al.*, 2019, p. 201). FsQCA is deemed appropriate in identifying and interpreting the complex antecedents that include conditions rather than independent and dependent variables since it "seeks patterns of elements that lead to a specific outcome rather than simply identifying correlations among independent and dependent variables," "enables the reduction of elements for each pattern; thus, configurations only include necessary and sufficient conditions" (Mikalef and Pateli, 2017, p. 6).

2.5. Theory of who does and does not misbehave

The present study contributes to advancing the literature by shedding light on the configurational causes of customers who misbehave. Thus, the present study's theory includes the following propositions (Pi) and empirical examination of the statements. Figure 1 displays the configuration paradigm that explains misbehavior.

Please insert Figure 1 here.

Proposition 1a: The dark triad personality traits including narcissism (N), Machiavellianism (M), and psychopathy (P) *conjunctively* are not necessary, but the statement is sufficient for identifying customers high in misbehavior. P1b: The configuration of the negations of the three dark triads accurately identifies customers high in not misbehaving. P1a and P1b represents a complex antecedent condition that predicts that cases having cases having high scores in the all three single conditions in the model all (or nearly all) have high scores in the misbehavior outcome. Using Boolean algebra notations, models 1 and 2 represent P1a and P1b:

$$(\text{Narcissism} \bullet \text{Machiavellianism} \bullet \text{Psychopathy}) \rightarrow \text{Misbehavior (H)} \quad (1)$$

$$(\sim \text{Narcissism} \bullet \sim \text{Machiavellianism} \bullet \sim \text{Psychopathy}) \rightarrow \sim \text{Misbehavior} (\sim \text{H}) \quad (2).$$

The mid-level dot (“•”) represents the Boolean logical AND operation and the sideways tilde symbol (“~”) represents negation. These models represent “computing with words” (Zadeh, 1996) as well as Boolean algebra statements. Stating model 1 via computing with words reads as follows, “Cases having high (e.g., ≥ 0.95) membership scores—across all three personality traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy—have high (e.g., ≥ 0.95) membership scores for misbehavior. Model 1 is testable using log functions of membership scores (i.e., calibrated scores ranging from 0.00 to 1.00—after computing the calibrated score of the raw values for the three personality trait variables for each case), the complex antecedent conditional score is computed to be equal to the lowest score across the three conditions; misbehavior is a dichotomized calibrated condition (0.00 for male and 1.00 for female) in the present study). For example, assume “Linda” is case 1 and Linda’s calibrate scores equal 0.97, 0.95, and 0.66 respectively for narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Linda’ overall membership score for the full complex antecedent statement is 0.66—representing the maximum overlap of her membership score across the three antecedent condition. Consequently, Linda does not have “full membership” in the complex statement if 0.95 is set prior as the base requirement for full membership. Single and complex antecedent conditions are viewable correctly as screening algorithms created to identify cases inside the membership limits of the algorithm statement and screen out cases that fail to do so. Certainly, a number of cases screened out may have full membership in the outcome condition but this point is irrelevant to the issue: does the screening algorithm correctly identify only cases having the outcome condition (e.g., among twenty cases meeting the membership requirements of the screening statement, nineteen exhibit the outcome condition). Typically, asymmetric case-based modelers in human resources (e.g., McClelland, 1998) and consumer research report high (e.g., accuracy odds of 5-to-1 or higher) but not 100 percent predictive accuracies.

Proposition 2a: Configurations of three firms' power including coercive power (C), reward power (R), and referent power (E), are not necessary, but they are sufficient for identifying customers *low* in misbehavior (model 3). P2b: the configuration of the negations of these three firm powers are not necessary but taken together is sufficient to accurately identify customers H in misbehaving (model 4).

$$(C \bullet R \bullet E) \rightarrow \sim \text{Misbehavior} (\sim H) \quad (3)$$

$$(\sim C \bullet \sim R \bullet \sim E) \rightarrow \text{Misbehavior} (H) \quad (4).$$

Proposition 3a: Configurations of demographic characteristics including age (A), gender (female=1, male=0), education (D) and income (I), are not necessary, but they are sufficient for identifying customers high in misbehavior. P3b: Configurations of demographic characteristics, including age, gender, education and income, are not necessary, but they are sufficient for identifying customers low in misbehaving. Specifically, model 5 specifies young ($\sim A$) males ($\sim F$) with low education ($\sim D$) and low income ($\sim I$) as cases that are high in misbehavior. In reality, empirical support for model 5 is likely to be too low in accuracy (low consistency index) since the majority of cases (i.e., humans) represented by this complex antecedent condition are likely to be low in misbehavior ($\sim H$). However, a prior research study (Woodside, 2008) reports young males having low education and low income as a complex antecedent condition accurately identifying cases engaging in one category of misbehaving (road rage)—possibly due to young males with low education and low income acting out due to higher frequency of experiencing frustration in experiences in life (e.g., job application rejection, police harassment, and family arguments) than cases in alternative demographic configurations. Model 6 expresses the perspective that older females with high education and high income are “pillars of the community”—they follow the rules that every context calls for. The following Boolean algebra statements express models 5 and 6:

$$(\sim F \sim A \bullet \sim D \bullet \sim I) \rightarrow \text{Misbehavior (H)} \quad (5)$$

$$(F \bullet A \bullet D \bullet I) \rightarrow \text{Not misbehavior } (\sim H) \quad (6).$$

Proposition 4a: A few configurations of dark personality traits, firms' power, and demographic characteristics identify customers high in misbehavior. P4b: other configurations that include negations of dark personality triads, firms' power, and demographics identify customers high in not misbehavior. Based on building a combination of all three subsets of prior complex conditions, model 7 is one specific complex statement predicting cases high in misbehavior and model 8 is one specific complex statement predicting cases low in misbehavior.

$$\text{Narcissism} \bullet \text{Machiavellianism} \bullet \text{Psychopathy} \bullet \sim C \bullet \sim R \bullet \sim E \bullet \sim F \sim A \bullet \sim D \bullet \sim I \rightarrow H \quad (7)$$

$$\sim \text{Narcissism} \bullet \sim \text{Machiavellianism} \bullet \sim \text{Psychopathy} \bullet C \bullet R \bullet E \bullet F \bullet A \bullet D \bullet I \rightarrow \sim H \quad (8).$$

Models 7 and 8 are example expressions of Zadeh's (1996) "computing with words." Reading from left-to-right, model 7 states that young males with low income and low education who perceive a firm to have low powers, and who are high in the dark triad personality traits commit misbehaviors. Model 8 states that older females with high income and high education who recognize the firm to have high powers, and among whom the dark triad personality traits are absent, do not commit misbehavior. Note that including several conditions in these two case identifying screens severely limits the number of cases with high scores on the X-axis (i.e. few cases fit in the screen) but the odds are very high that all cases remaining in the screen have high outcome scores (i.e., misbehavior on no misbehavior, respectively).

P5a: A few configurations of demographic conditions identify cases high in the dark triad psychological configuration. P5b: A few other configurations of demographic conditions identify cases high in the negation of the dark triad psychological configuration. Model 9 represents one demographic screen indicating individuals with high scores for the complex outcome configuration of high scores in narcissism (N) AND Machiavellianism (M) AND psychopathy

(P). Model 10 represents one demographic model indicating individuals with low scores across all three dark triad personality traits.

$$\text{Male} \bullet \sim \text{Age} \bullet \sim \text{Education} \bullet \sim \text{Income} \rightarrow \text{N} \bullet \text{M} \bullet \text{P} \quad (9)$$

$$\text{Female} \bullet \text{Age} \bullet \text{Education} \bullet \text{Income} \rightarrow \sim \text{N} \bullet \sim \text{M} \bullet \sim \text{P} \quad (10)$$

Finally, P6a and P6b include the same two complex-antecedent demographic conditions indicating complex firm power outcomes. P6a: A few configurations of demographic conditions identify cases expressing the low firm power configuration. P6b: A few other configurations of demographic configurations identify cases expressing the negation of the high firm power configuration. As John Mellencamp (1983) describes in his “Authority Song,” “I fight authority, authority always wins,” Model 11 states that young males with low education and low income perceive low firm power conjunctively across reward, referent and coercive powers. Model 12 states that older females with high education and high income perceive high scores across the same three firm powers.

$$\text{Male} \bullet \sim \text{Age} \bullet \sim \text{Education} \bullet \sim \text{Income} \rightarrow \sim \text{R} \bullet \sim \text{E} \bullet \sim \text{C} \quad (11)$$

$$\text{Female} \bullet \text{Age} \bullet \text{Education} \bullet \text{Income} \rightarrow \text{R} \bullet \text{E} \bullet \text{C} \quad (12)$$

2.6. Technical note on theory-method development

More than one model beyond each of the twelve appearing in this section may be viable in predicting the specific outcomes accurately. For example, young males with low education and low income are unlikely to be the one demographic segment perceiving firms to have low power. The twelve models explicated here are viewable as potentially models that (will) work accurately based theory and findings from prior studies. Additional models may work as well or better in predicting the same outcomes as the twelve models in this section. For example, using three discrete levels for age, education, and income, and two discrete levels for gender, 54 discrete models are expressible for the four demographic variables. McClelland (1998) demonstrates

constructing discrete, case-based, combinatory, individual competency models that predict effective leaders accurately—while variable directional relationship models constructed using multiple regression models did not. McClelland (1998) advocates building case-based algorithms (models) by converting continuous variables into quintiles and screening cases by the top (Q5) quintiles across different competencies. (e.g., achievement orientation, analytical thinking, flexibility, and initiative). Thus, McClelland's (1998) modeling method might identify 10 executives among 200 that have Q5 scores across all of seven competencies and he predicts that all (or nearly all) of these executives have outstanding management performances.

The present study uses this top and/or bottom Q5 and Q1 discrete (screening) modeling method as well as discrete screening using 100 levels rather than quintiles via a discrete screening software program (i.e., fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis, “fsQCA”, Ragin, 2008). Modeling by quintiles includes modeling outcomes by quintiles as well as antecedent conditions (e.g., quintiles of cases are computed by cases' misbehavior scores in the present study. Thus, in McClelland's (1998) study the prediction would be made that all or nearly all executives having scores in the top quintiles across seven competencies are in the top quintile for management performance. Using both methods improves clarity of interpreting the findings—using fsQCA is a more “fine-grained” discrete screening but foundationally the same as screening using algorithms of two or more Q5 quintiles of discretized continuous variables..

3. Data and methods

3.1. Sample and data collection

Data were collected using a mall intercept survey in which interviewers randomly intercepted respondents in a well-known shopping mall in France. Mall intercept survey method was used, as it is relatively inexpensive method of collecting accurate data in a face-to-face manner (El-Manstrly, 2016). Data were collected over a variety of days (weekdays and

weekends) and at varying times of day and during the evening to ensure variability within respondents. The participants were randomly solicited to participate in the study after they had completed their shopping and were assured that the data would only be used for academic purposes. We targeted the restaurant sector, since restaurant frontline employees have high levels of public contact and are in general the major victims of customers' misbehavior (Baker and Kim, 2020; Boukis *et al.*, 2020; Han *et al.*, 2016; Medler-Liraz, 2020). In total, 263 usable surveys were collected. As Table 1 shows, 53.6% of the respondents were female, 80.6% were 30 years or older, 78% had a university degree, and 57% earned less than 20,000 Euros.

Please insert Table 1 here.

3.2. Measurement scale

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with a set of statements on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 "strongly disagree", to 7 "strongly agree. An index (score) for each construct was calculated by averaging the corresponding items. Four items (see Appendix B) adapted from Jonason and Webster (2010) were used for each of the following psychological dimensions: *narcissism* ($\alpha = 0.98$), *Machiavellianism* ($\alpha = 0.93$), and *psychopathy* ($\alpha = 0.89$). Coercive power ($\alpha = 0.84$) and referent power ($\alpha = 0.86$) were measured using three items each of which was adapted from (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1990). Reward power ($\alpha = 0.89$) was measured using three items adapted from (Imai, 1993). The outcome variable was customer misbehavior, which was measured using an open ended question adapted from (Grégoire *et al.*, 2010) and (Daunt and Harris, 2011). Participants were also categorized in terms of calibrated scores for gender, age, level of education, and annual income.

3.3. Scale reliability and validity

The findings of the reliability evaluation (Appendix B) indicate that both internal reliability and composite reliability (CR) have been achieved. The value of Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), thus achieving internal reliability. The value of CR for all constructs is greater than 0.6, and thus CR was achieved at the required level. In addition, the value of average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs is greater than 0.50. All items are statistically significant, and the value of AVE is greater than 0.5, thereby achieving convergent validity. The correlation between all constructs is less than 0.85 (Table 2), and the square root of AVE for the construct is higher than the values in its row or column, thereby achieving discriminant validity. The Harman's single factor test was used to verify the presence of common method variance that threatens validity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The Bartlett test of sphericity is satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 7067.2$, $p < 0.000$), and therefore the data were adequate to be analyzed. Six factors with an eigenvalue of > 1.0 account for 80% of the variance. Subsequently, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, restricting the number of factors to one without rotation (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The extracted factor explains only 38% of the variance, and accordingly the bias of the mono-method is not an issue. Furthermore, this analysis measures the predictive validity of facilitating and inhibiting configurations by cross-validation of two holdout random subsamples (Woodside *et al.*, 2013; Wu *et al.*, 2014). Consistency and raw coverage are very similar between the two subsamples and between the subsamples and the configurations.

Please insert Table 2 here.

4. Findings

4.1. Configurational analysis (fsQCA)

According to Ragin (2008, p. 113), “estimation techniques designed for linear-additive models often come up short when assigned the task of estimating complex interaction effects”. Thus, the key issue in fsQCA is not to find the strongest independent variable but how different conditions combine, and whether or not there are multiple configurations capable of producing the same outcome. This was confirmed by Veríssimo (2018) study of usage intensity of mobile medical apps, whereby the logistic regression method could not uncover multiple combinations of conditions leading to the same outcome, as fsQCA did. In the same vein, Gligor and Bozkurt (2020) argued that multiple regression analysis does not account for asymmetric cases and thus cannot provide a comprehensive explanation of the relationship between variables on its own.

FsQCA uses Boolean algebra to create comparisons between case-based antecedent and outcome configurations. Cases are condition combinations, rather than observations, with the effect being multi-conditional and conjunctural. FsQCA is thus more centered on pattern-finding than on confirming or disconfirming hypotheses (Ragin and Bradshaw, 1991; Souiden et al., 2020). FsQCA identifies the causal combinations, which is a drawback of conventional statistical methods that focus on the net effects of independent variables on a dependent variable (Souiden et al., 2020; Fiss, 2011). The complexity is minimized by defining a small number of conditions that are necessary, sufficient, both, or none (Jin et al., 2020).

4.2. Calibration

The first step in fsQCA is calibration. Each case is described in each causal solution by its degree of membership which explains customer misbehavior. As Woodside (2013) proposes, the initial seven-point Likert scale values of narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, reward power,

coercive power, and referent power are all calibrated into a fuzzy-set scale. This study uses three calibration anchors for continuous fuzzy sets: the original value covering 5% of the data values is set as the point of full non-membership (fuzzy score = 0.05), the original value covering 50% of the values is set as the crossover point (fuzzy score = 0.50), and the original value covering 95% of the values is set as the point of full membership (fuzzy score = 0.95). Table 3 presents the calibration rules and Table 4 shows the original values for narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, reward power, coercive power, and referent power of the three points. In addition, customer misbehavior (dichotomous variable) is coded as 0 for “non-misbehavior”, and as 1 for “misbehavior”. The four independent dichotomous variables measure age (coded as 0 for 18-29 years of age, and 1 for 30 or more years of age), gender (coded as 0 for males, and 1 for females), education (coded as 0 for high school, and 1 for university), and income (coded as 0 for less than 20,000 euros per annum, and 1 for equal or more than 20,000 euros per annum).

Please insert Tables 3 and 4 here.

4.3. Analysis of necessary conditions for customers' misbehavior

The second stage in the application of fsQCA is the necessity analysis that defines those factors that are considered necessary for customers to express a high degree of misbehavior. Consistency is similar to the significance test, which indicates the degree to which a configuration is needed to guarantee a result. Ragin (2006) argues that a condition is deemed necessary if the score of consistency exceeds the threshold of 0.90, and the coverage exceeds the threshold of 0.50. Table 2 shows that the dark triad traits correlate positively with each other. This finding is in line with the dark triad assumptions (Paulhus and Williams, 2002; Harrison *et al.*, 2018). Interestingly, Machiavellianism and psychopathy correlate negatively with reward, coercive, and referent powers, which suggests that Machiavellian and psychopath customers are less likely to accept

firms' power to restore unbalanced relational exchange. The necessity analysis (Table 5) shows that no single condition has a consistency level above 0.90 and a coverage higher than 0.50, which would judge the condition as necessary (Ragin, 2006). Furthermore, non-occurrence of misbehavior consistency scores of 0.19 to 0.81 were observed. Therefore, individual conditions are neither necessary for causing misbehavior, nor the absence of misbehavior.

Please insert Table 5 here.

4.4. Analysis of sufficient conditions for customers' misbehavior

The last phase of the fsQCA is the sufficiency analysis, which involves three steps: construction, preparation, and analysis (Fiss, 2011). First, a truth table of all logically possible causal combinations of the ten conditions is constructed. Based on the pre-calibrated membership scores set, each observation is assigned to a specific configuration in the truth table. Second, the truth table is reduced to meaningful configurations. Based on the frequency of cases, some will be listed as important, and others as negligible. This requires the selection of the frequency threshold, referring to the number of cases in each row, and specifying the minimum number of configurations to be examined. A frequency threshold of three cases was used in this analysis. In addition, a consistency cut-off value of 0.75 was established (Ragin, 2008) and hence the conditions above the consistency cut-off are sufficient for the outcome, whereas the configurations below are considered to be insufficient. Third, the fsQCA program aims to obtain a reduced set of logic statements defining the underlying causal patterns. Table 6 provides intermediate solutions, which is easier to achieve than the complex solutions, with key combinations connected with misbehavior of the consumer. Table 6 shows configurations that surpass the cut-off value of 0.75. Conditions in configurations can be core or peripheral. Core conditions are those that are part of both parsimonious and intermediate solutions, while

peripheral conditions that the parsimonious solution excludes, and thus only exist in the intermediate solution (Fiss, 2011). Two configurations could lead to misbehavior. In Solution 1a, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, the absence of reward, coercive, and referent powers, and lower income are identified as core conditions. The absence of narcissism, females, older adults, and university degree are peripheral conditions in this configuration. Finally, Solution 1b reveals that besides Machiavellianism, psychopathy, the absence of reward, coercive, and referent powers, higher income and lower education become core conditions. Notably, narcissism, age, and gender are peripheral conditions.

4.5. Analysis of absence of customers' misbehavior

Schneider and Wagemann (2010) and Woodside (2014) recommend analyzing the outcome and the negation of the outcome. Therefore, we run fsQCA to shed some lights on new layers of analysis in order to uncover the antecedents of misbehavior, as well non-misbehavior (Das and Jebarajakirthy, 2020; Olya and Akhshik, 2019; Pappas, 2018; Woodside, 2014). The fsQCA analysis was conducted with the absence of misbehavior as the outcome variable, coded as 0 if customers show low levels of misbehavior, and coded 1 in all other cases. Applying the same cut-off values (consistency: 0.75; frequency: 3) a distinct pattern of solutions was found for non-misbehavior. Table 6 shows three configurations of non-misbehavior causal conditions. For Conditions 2a and 2b, the absence of narcissism and absence of Machiavellianism, lower income, plus reward and coercive powers are core conditions. Psychopathy, age, gender and education represent peripheral conditions in these configurations. In Solution 2c, the absence of Machiavellianism, narcissism, the presence of the three firm's reward powers, and higher income are all core conditions, while the absence of psychopathy, older adults, females, and higher education are peripheral conditions. This research shows confirmation of causal asymmetry (Fiss,

2011). Accordingly, explanations of the occurrence of misbehavior do not automatically offer insight into non-misbehavior.

Please insert Table 6 here.

The fsQCA software is capable of generating configurations (recipes) automatically by testing all possible combinations and selecting combinations that provide high consistencies--analogous to using stepwise regression in multiple regression analysis. The findings in Table 6 demonstrate this approach. However, though the findings can be informative abductively, the "let the software generate the findings" is atheoretical that is insufficient for advancing theory construction and testing. Thus, the present study substantiates the necessity of developing the theory-to-algorithms-to-empiricism approach. The next subsection and the findings in Table 7 present the empirical results of theory development deductively in this study as Figure 1 summarizes--before data analysis. Armstrong's (2008) strident recommendation on using stepwise regression has relevance to this perspective; Armstrong (2012) recommends never to run stepwise regressions.

4.6. Findings for the six propositions and twelve models

Table 7 presents the findings for the six propositions and the twelve models that Figure 1 summarizes. The findings support all four of the study's principal propositions—P1a, P1b, P2a, and P2b. Cases high in all dark triad personality traits are cases high in misbehavior (P1a). The cases with low membership scores in all dark triad traits are cases low in misbehavior (P1b). All cases high in perceived firm power are cases low in misbehavior (P2a). All cases low in perceived firm power are cases high in misbehavior (P2b). Figures 2, 3, and 4 are XY plots for the three dark triad personality traits and misbehavior and high as well as low firm power cases.

Please insert Table 7 here.

Please insert Figure 2 here.

Please insert Figure 3 here.

Please insert Figure 4 here.

The findings include weak to no support for the propositions involving young males with low education and low income and the outcome conditions appearing in Figure 1. This finding support the viewpoint that misbehaviors are not identifiable reliably as members of this configuration. The findings do support P5b—older females, high in education and income, have low scores in the dark triad personality traits. The findings support the perspective that demographic screens influence memberships .

The use of “fuzzy statements” (i.e., computing with words and using Boolean algebra computations) of complex antecedent conditions permits the construction of several alternative possible antecedents that are likely to occur (e.g., old male, high education and high income) as well as others that are unlikely to occur (e.g., young male with high income and high education with high received power scores). The same perspective applies to combining the dark triads with demographic screens—young male with high income and high education and low in the dark triad of personality traits is possible to construct but unlikely to include any cases in its membership. Such analyses permits the identification and deep study of anomaly configuration, for example, older females having high education and high income who have high membership scores in the dark triad personality traits and who exhibit frequent misbehaviors. Rumult’s (2011, pp. 247-248)) wisdom in the context of organizational behavior applies as well to customer behavior, “An anomaly is a fact that doesn’t fit received wisdom ... an anomaly marks

an opportunity to learn something very valuable. In science, anomalies are the frontier, where the action is". Adopting the complexity turn to constructing and empirically testing theory using asymmetric case-based fuzzy logic fits is a step particularly worth-taking for effective study of anomalies in customers' misbehaviors.

5. Discussion

The results show that solutions 1a and 1b indicate that customers who score high on Machiavellianism and psychopathy whether they have low income (for solution 1a) or high income but low education (for solution 1b) and who interact with restaurants that are characterized by low levels of power (reward power, coercive power, and referent power) are likely to misbehave. In the absence of firm's power in controlling misbehavior, these social predators feel confident in violating normal rules given that their opportunism and impulsivity attributes are reinforced with financial resources or educational attainment. Under conditions of negation of firm' power, such resources allow them to act in a deviant way. These findings highlight the relevancy of Machiavellianism and psychopathy, as two core dark triad traits, in combination with the absence of firm's power as favorable recipes for the occurrences of customer misbehavior. Furthermore, the configurational analysis confirms the role of education (solution 1a) and income (solution 1b) as social status markers in shaping misbehavior. Indeed, the latter is carried out by Machiavellians and psychopaths of higher social status vis-à-vis individuals of lower social status such as the workers in the restaurant sector. In this vein, Korczynski and Evans (2013) show that frequent customer misbehavior associates with the imbalance between employees' vulnerable position (due to the precarity of their jobs, on the one hand, and customer sovereignty, on the other hand) and customers' high social status.

With respect to non-misbehavior, all solutions 2a, 2b, and 2c concern firms that use their power (although solution 2a concerns firms with high reward power and coercive power but low referent power). Specifically, the three sources of power promote non-misbehavior with narcissists who have high income (solution 2c). This is explainable by the role of power in regulating the relations between customers and firms in line with Balaji et al. (2020). For example, Grégoire et al. (2010) demonstrate that the legitimacy of power is based on the premise that powerful firms can generate benign outcomes among customers including reducing their misbehavior. Indeed customers strive to avoid firms punishment (coercive power), gain rewards (reward power), and identify to strong brand and community (reference power) (Brilliant et al., 2018; Schaefer et al., 2015).

The findings partially support prior literature on the dark triad personality traits. In fact, only Machiavellianism and psychopathy (not narcissism) are the most toxic and malevolent traits that lead to misbehavior (both in the absence of power). In line with O'Boyle et al. (2012, pp. 557-559) who argue that such traits "are manifestations of an agentic but exploitative social strategy that ... undermines the balance of social exchange in interpersonal relations" tend "to overlook obligations and reciprocity, and their lack of emotional commitment to others' work likely undermine the binding influence of interpersonal relationships". Indeed, Machiavellians can betray and manipulate (Zheng et al., 2017) and psychopaths lack conscience and empathy but express aggressiveness (Muris et al., 2017). Both traits push people to hurt and deceive others (Glenn et al., 2009). The fact that narcissists do not behave badly (even in the absence of power for solutions 1a and 1b) is an interesting result. Because they are mostly concerned with how they are perceived by others, narcissists may imagine scenarios that could damage their ego and social image (so precious to them), such as when other customers or employees see them

behaving badly. Solution 3c elaborates this perspective. Narcissists are less likely to misbehave when reward power, coercive power, and reference power are present.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study advances previous research on the drivers of customers' misbehavior by uncovering the impact of combined dark triad personality traits, firm's power, and demographic characteristics.

We contribute to theory in several ways. First, we highlight the pivotal role of dark personality traits and demographics as crucial factors associated with customers' misbehavior and contribute to existing limited research on their effects on customers' misbehavior (Leischnig and Woodside, 2019) in a holistic way (Bai *et al.*, 2019). Our research demonstrate the alternative configurations of dark personality traits, firms' power, and demographic characteristics that predict customers' misbehavior. In this regard, our research is the first study to present the combination of individual and firm's factors that enable or inhibit the development of customers' misbehavior.

Second, we contribute to extant theory through explaining how the dark triad traits can shape customers' misbehavior. When customers have dark triad traits (i.e., disproportionate feelings of superiority, desire to manipulate others, and high impulsiveness), they legitimate their misbehavior (Korczynski and Evans, 2013). We provide evidence that the combination of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism accurately identifies who misbehaves. In this regard, we extend the theoretical landscape of dark triad traits to the context of customer-firm toxic relationships.

Third, we extend existing theoretical focuses through introducing the role of firms' power as a strategy to reduce misbehavior due to customer sovereignty (Bai *et al.*, 2019). Our insights

support the view that customers are not “always right” and can behave in a socially unacceptable manner (Fellsson and Salomonson, 2020). In the eyes of the customers, the philosophy of customer sovereignty can justify and legitimate misbehavior (Grandey *et al.*, 2004; Rouquet and Suquet, 2020). Thus, customer sovereignty, as a double-edged sword philosophy, can encourage customers to misbehave. In this sense, our study strongly supports the view of Korczynski and Bishop (2008) and Rouquet and Suquet (2020), who assume that customers’ misbehavior is an outcome of customer sovereignty, rather than a result of the breakdown of social mores. In line with Leischnig and Woodside (2019, p. 713), we assume that “the optimistic view that all consumers behave in such a way [i.e., always behaving ethically], however may be viewed as wishful thinking”. This perspective is consistent with Grégoire *et al.* (2010, p. 754), who state that lack of firm’s power is the force that leads to customers’ misbehavior and to “avoid such behaviors, firms have to insure they are not at a disadvantage in their power relationship with customers”. Thus, we tackle a sensitive topic in the marketing discipline that concerns the intricate relationships between customers and firms. To counteract the power imbalance (source of customers’ misbehavior) caused by the philosophy of customer sovereignty, firms should use their coercive power, reward power, and referent power. In sum, firms should exhibit their powers to re-establish the balance of power between them and their customers (Habel *et al.*, 2017) in order to neutralize customers’ misbehavior.

Fourth, we contribute to the breadth of existing conceptions by adopting complexity theory. This helps to understand how the multiple combinations of dark triad traits, firms’ power, and demographics affect customers’ misbehavior. Our results demonstrate that none of the dark triad traits, firms’ power, and demographics are necessary conditions on their own to predict customers’ misbehavior. Although traditional techniques such as symmetric tests, net effects, and regression-based models contribute to a large extent to the comprehension of customers’

misbehavior, they are limited in their scope and can be misleading, as they cannot account for the complexity of such phenomenon (Leischnig and Woodside, 2019). Furthermore, traditional statistical techniques “build on the assumption that a change on a predictor variable will lead to the same change on the outcome variable and focusing on observed net effects do not apply to all the cases in a dataset, as most relationships in real life are not symmetric” (Pappas *et al.*, p. 649). For example, assuming that males (or females) are likely to misbehave because they are males (or females) is unrealistic (Olya *et al.*, 2019). Thus, we adopt a more “realistic and accurate” approach by identifying the combined ingredients that affect customers’ misbehavior. This approach can explain the mixed results that are reported in previous literature regarding. Our results show that customers’ misbehavior is better predicted by configurations of the dark triad traits, firms’ power and demographics.

5.2. Managerial implications

Our study provides valuable managerial implications. By questioning the philosophy of customer sovereignty and identifying the configurations of dark triad traits, firms’ power, and demographics, firms can predict customers’ misbehavior and, especially, know how to act to reduce it. In line with previous studies (Fisk and Neville, 2011), firms can diminish customers’ dark triad traits by designing service rules, policies, and programs to alleviate their misbehavior. First, as a proactive strategy, they should explicitly make customers aware of instances of unwelcome behaviors (Habel *et al.*, 2017). In addition, customers can sign charters specifying their rights and duties (Fisk *et al.*, 2010). Another tactic is to use coercive power. Firms should “oblige” customers to do what they might not normally do. Accordingly, firms should increase customers’ fears about the negative consequences (e.g., taking legal actions) of misbehavior. Indeed, coercive power deters the banalization and increase of customers’ misbehavior and

destabilizes the concept of customer sovereignty. Moreover, they should enroll their employees in conflict resolution training (e.g., role-playing) to learn how to react effectively, quickly, and decisively to incidents of mistreatment. Training could help the employees to be more aware of the boundaries that should not be transgressed by customers, and to understand that the ideology of customer sovereignty should not be abused to increase the customers' dominance over them. This is in line with Glikson *et al.* (2019, p. 235), who assume that "the customer is important but not necessary always right". In addition, Grégoire *et al.* (2010, p. 754) propose some tactics in this regard, such as: i) managers and employees should make customers more aware that the firm can counteract their misbehavior, ii) companies can expel customers who misbehave (even if they are "big customers"), and iii) "for the most aggressive direct revenge acts, such as those that involve destruction of a firm's property, firms could even sue for damages. A few publicized lawsuits against aggressive customers could deter and send a message to other "would-be" abusive customers". Furthermore, managers need to provide tangible rewards to their customers (that do not misbehave) as extrinsic motivation, in order to neutralize their misbehavior. Rewards can also be intangible, such as recognition, flattery, and showing more attention when customers behave properly. In line with the social exchange perspective, customers "feel compelled to reciprocate" rewards and incentives, by decreasing their misbehaviors (Whiteside and Barclay, 2013, p. 256). When firms establish rules and incentives, customers are expected to anticipate and rationally calculate the consequences of these sanctions and rewards and probably reduce their misbehavior to avoid pain or gain benefits. A third strategy refers to the use of referent power to alleviate customers' misbehaviors. Indeed, customers' sense of belonging and identification with the firm, as well as the internalization of common values obviate episodes of misbehaviors. Firm's image and reputation are important managerial tools to exercise referent

power over customers. The development and enforcement of customers' commitment, affective attachment, loyalty, and even love can all deter customers' misbehavior.

7. Limitations and future avenues

Along with its originality, our study has some limitations. First, this study is based on quantitative analysis and thus future studies should integrate qualitative design to explain in more depth the phenomenon of customers' misbehavior (Yueh *et al.*, 2016). In addition, it would be worthwhile to focus on a specific type of misbehavior and to address other drivers and situations in which dark triad and firms' power may be less (or more) relevant. For example, customers may behave inappropriately when under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In addition, anonymity when using the Internet can stimulate customers' misbehavior such as illegal downloading (Lowry *et al.*, 2016) or customer-to-customer toxic interactions (Bacile, 2020). Moreover, longitudinal designs could provide a better understanding of the variability over time of those configurational causes of both misbehavior and non-misbehavior.

One interesting direction of research is to replicate our study using the distinction of Schaefers et al. (2016) between "direct misbehavior" (i.e., when the employees and other customers are present) or "indirect misbehavior" (i.e., when the employees and other customers are absent). Indeed, future studies can investigate whether the presence/absence of other customers or employees can lead customers to misbehave. In this vein, misbehavior contagiousness (i.e., seeing other customers misbehave) can push customers to misbehave (Schaefers et al., 2016). Although our focus on the restaurant sector is deemed appropriate, we hope that further research will our factors in different contexts such as education, health, and transportation or by considering the hedonic vs. utilitarian aspects of these contexts. Moreover, our study can be tested in other instances such as shoplifting, characterized by the "presence of

suitable targets”, “absence of capable guardians”, and “motivated offenders”, according to the routine activity theory and where the firm’s power can be less dissuasive (Korgaonkar et al., 2020). Also, it would be worthwhile to engage additional elements such as religiosity, as it can help reduce misbehavior (Baazeem, 2016). Another interesting topic is to apply the archetype theory (Jung, 1959)¹. “Archetypes represent personifications of behaviors — characters who embody behavior patterns. An archetype is an internal mental model of a typical, generic story character to which an observer might resonate emotionally” (Pera et al., 2016, p. 45). In the marketing literature, archetypal approaches helps brands and firms guide their strategies (Woodside et al., 2008, 2010, 2013, 2018). In this vein, we believe that archetypal approach can be used to guide firms in their strategies to reduce customers’ misbehavior. Stated differently, how archetypes (e.g., ruler, caregiver, and hero) reduce or augment customers’ misbehavior.

¹ The authors thank an anonymous reviewer for this idea

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