I Can't Always Get What I Want: Low Power, Service Customer (Dis)Engagement and Wellbeing

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Abstract

Purpose – This research examines experiences of low customer power in service interactions and the impact of those experiences on customers' engagement and disengagement towards a firm. It subsequently identifies how such experiences may affect customers' wellbeing.

Design/methodology/approach – We conducted visual elicitation interviews with 30 customers of a range of services. Data were analysed thematically using abductive reasoning.

Findings – Low customer power is influenced by several factors perceived by customers as associated with the firm and/or the context of the customer-firm relationship. Results show that low power drives negative customer engagement and may result in behavioural disengagement. Low customer power, negative engagement and disengagement can have negative implications for customers' eudaimonic (physical and financial) and hedonic wellbeing.

Research limitations/implications – Future studies might explore specific service contexts and power dynamics across service ecosystems and should further analyse the implications of these relationships on firms' strategic organisational responses.

Practical implications – Firms should monitor customer power and explore means of enhancing the wellbeing of their customers through strategies designed to increase customer power, thus reducing negative customer engagement, and avoiding detrimental impact on customer wellbeing.

Originality – This study reframes discussions on low customer power in relation to firms and its impact on firms and customers. It identifies low customer power as a key variable in the study of customer engagement, disengagement, and wellbeing.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Customer power plays a key role in organisational success (Auh *et al.*, 2019). Customers perceiving themselves as powerful in relation to a firm are often more satisfied with their relationship with that firm and more loyal than those who believe they hold insufficient power (Urban, 2005). Customer power is recognised as a key customer need, which should be prioritised to facilitate value co-creation and achieve a competitive organisational advantage (Anker *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, firms often seek to empower customers throughout their customer journey, during diverse interactions that extend beyond transactional purchases (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Harmeling *et al.*, 2017).

Studies of customer power in service contexts have sought to understand drivers of high customer power (e.g., Kucuk and Krishnamurthy, 2007; Labrecque *et al.,* 2013) or a complete absence of *any* power in relation to a firm (Baker *et al.*, 2005). In contrast, *low* customer power (rather than *no* power) in relation to firms has received less scholarly attention. Customers experiencing low power may be unable to achieve their desired service outcomes. Understanding customers' experiences of low power and their impact on customer-firm relationships is therefore important as low power may affect customers' loyalty, satisfaction and perceptions of their role and potential influence within service contexts (Grégoire *et al.,* 2010). In addition, where a customer with low power is subsequently unable to derive their desired value from a service interaction, their wellbeing may suffer (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2020).

In parallel, customer engagement is a construct of interest among marketing scholars due to the potential benefits to firms of having an engaged customer base (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Pansari and Kumar, 2017). A multidimensional construct, customer engagement encompasses cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social components (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Li

et al., 2018), and may be positively or negatively valenced (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). Researchers have acknowledged a predominant focus on the positive forms of engagement (Dessart, 2017; Wirtz *et al.,* 2013) with only more recent studies highlighting the importance of investigating negative engagement and its outcomes for customers and firms (Li *et al.*, 2018; Do *et al.*, 2020; Naumann *et al.,* 2020). Prior research has studied the relationship between high customer power and customer engagement, highlighting that power can drive positive engagement (Füller *et al.,* 2009; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). In contrast, the relationship between low customer power and customer engagement is largely unexplored, though low power has been found to drive negative emotions towards firms (Menon and Bansal, 2007), indicating possible links between low power and negative customer engagement. The related topic of disengagement, where customers cease their engagement (Alexander *et al.,* 2018) with the firm and other actors, also remains under investigated. To address these gaps in knowledge around low customer power and negative customer engagement, this study explores customers' experiences of low power in relation to a focal firm and the effect of these experiences on customer negative engagement, disengagement, and wellbeing.

Via an exploratory qualitative study, we explore customers' experiences within multiple business-to-customer sectors, including retail, hospitality, and financial services. Echoing Hollebeek *et al.* (2022) and Brodie *et al.* (2019), we recognise that customers interact within networks of other actors and therefore explore engagement behaviours directed at the firm (e.g., feedback and complaints) and other actors (e.g., word-of-mouth (WOM) and reviews).

This study thereby contributes to literature on customer power, customer engagement and customer wellbeing. First, we enrich extant knowledge of customer power in marketing contexts by highlighting multiple drivers of low customer power in relation to the firm. Second, we extend the literature on customer engagement by evidencing the effect of low power in

relation to firms on customers' engagement disposition, engagement behaviour and disengagement. Notably, we find that perceptions of low power can lead to negative customer engagement and disengagement, and we put forward an emergent typology of disengagement behaviours, which distinguishes several categories by which customers behaviourally disengage. Third, this study contributes to knowledge of customer wellbeing by identifying low customer power, negative engagement disposition and negative engagement behaviour as plausible causes of reduced customer wellbeing. In doing so, this study advocates for adopting a customer power and engagement lens in the study of customer wellbeing, responding to calls for service research on wellbeing (Ostrom *et al.,* 2021). From a managerial perspective, we highlight how customer perceptions of low power in relation to firms may prove detrimental to customer-firm relationships through the identification of several negative engagement dispositions and behaviours, as well as disengagement behaviours.

The following section reviews literature pertaining to customer power. Subsequently, we discuss customer engagement and disengagement, we highlight links between customer power and customer (dis)engagement, and we review the customer wellbeing literature. Next, the methodology adopted is discussed. Findings relating to the relationship between low customer power, negative engagement, disengagement, and wellbeing are presented, and contributions to theory and practice are discussed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 High and low customer power

Drawing upon Lammers *et al.* (2009), Rucker *et al.* (2012) and Sturm and Antonakis (2015), we define *customer power* as: *customers' perceived ability to exert their will over other actors, resources, and themselves in order to achieve desired outcomes from their interactions.* The

customer power literature delineates between an objective component of power, arising from an individual's ability to access and deploy resources (e.g., money), and a subjective component (Anderson *et al.,* 2013), upon which this study focuses, comprising the power a customer perceives that they hold, irrespective of their available resources. Objective and subjective components may not align. For example, a customer may have extensive resources and, therefore, high objective power, but still perceive low subjective power.

Existing business-to-customer (B2C) marketing literature predominately focuses on high customer power, resulting in part from technology proliferation and the resultant growth in connectivity and interaction between actors (Labrecque *et al.*, 2013). In contrast, the B2C literature offers little in the way of definition of low power, which we differentiate from potentially enduring states of *no power* (*powerlessness* characterised by an absence of *any* power) arising from a lack of resources which might result from legal barriers to service access (Baker *et al.,* 2005). However, discussions of low power within the business-to-business (B2B) marketing literature draw upon person-to-person (P2P) and social exchange theories to highlight that power is relational. Specifically, parties connected by co-dependent relationships have power relative to each other (Emerson, 1962; Zolkiewski *et al*., 2008; Lacoste and Johnsen, 2015). Low power is, therefore, a relative construct (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959, Blau, 2017) resulting from perceived power imbalance (Molm, 1990). Extending this logic to the B2C domain implies that customers assess their power levels in relation to other actors and that their perceived level of power varies from one relationship to another (Galinsky *et al.*, 2008). We therefore adopt the following definition of *low power*, derived from our definition of power (Lammers *et al.*, 2009; Rucker *et al.,* 2012; Sturm and Antonakis, 2015), which reflects the relational nature of the low power construct:

Low power is a context specific perception whereby, despite customers possessing key resources (e.g., money, education, access to services), they perceive power asymmetries

in which they are unable to exert their will over other focal actors, resources, and themselves in order to achieve the desired outcomes from their interactions.

We focus here on customers' perceptions of the power they hold in relation to a firm, regardless of their available resources, where the firm is the actor against whose power the customer compares their own (hereafter referred to as 'customer power').

The dominant narrative around high customer power highlights benefits to customers of increasing power. For example, high customer power can lead to improved customer decision-making (Wathieu *et al.*, 2002; Auh *et al.*, 2019), enhanced self-expression, creativity, positive emotions, and increased preference for action (Guinote, 2017). Research has also identified benefits to firms of high customer power, such as co-designed offerings, positive service appraisals and better customer insights (Fuchs and Schreier, 2011; Sembada *et al.*, 2016; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). As a result, studies have sought to understand the drivers of high customer power, identifying factors such as high status (Fiske and Berdahl, 2007) and access to information (Labrecque *et al.*, 2013) as variables that might be exploited by firms wishing to increase power among their customers.

In contrast, empirical studies of the drivers of, and outcomes for, customers and firms of low customer power remain limited. The social psychology literature posits that personality traits and group variables (e.g., social status and class) determine low power (Keltner *et al.*, 2003) and identifies negative outcomes for customers with low power, in the form of negative emotions (Langner and Keltner, 2008; Conway *et al.*, 1999). Moreover, social psychology scholars have shown that low power results in an increased likelihood to avoid social interactions and engage in behaviours with others (Keltner *et al.*, 2003). Thus, low power among customers may be detrimental to organisations. However, these insights are limited by the focus within these studies on the objective components of power.

2.2 Customer engagement and disengagement

Customer engagement is commonly described as an iterative process reflecting customers' dispositions and behaviours during interactions with other connected actors (for example, a firm) (Chandler and Lusch, 2015; Brodie et al., 2019). The term 'disposition' encompasses the emotional and cognitive dimensions of customer engagement; that is, a customer's feelings or thoughts about a particular firm, or about their interactions with (or relating to) that firm. Customer engagement is observable through various customer engagement behaviours, which affect the firm or the customer-firm relationship. Engagement behaviours include those directed at the firm, such as purchase transactions, providing feedback, co-developing a service or product offering, or reading company-related marketing material (Kumar et al., 2010; 2019; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Meire et al., 2019). In addition, as customer engagement is inherently social due to the presence of other connected actors, such as those within social networks, engagement behaviours may also be directed at actors other than the firm (e.g., WOM, helping other customers) (Brodie et al., 2019; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Verleye et al., 2014).

Engagement dispositions and behaviours may be characterised as having a positive or negative valence (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). That is, customers may think and feel favourably or unfavourably towards the firm (or their interactions with the firm) and may behave in ways that are supportive of, or damaging to, the firm or to the customer-firm relationship (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). To date, customer engagement literature has focused on drivers of positive engagement dispositions and behaviours, such as customer personality traits (Islam et al., 2017), customer loyalty (Fehrer et al., 2018), satisfaction, trust, commitment towards the brand (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2019), firm initiatives and the degree of market competition (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Contrastingly, negative customer engagement is underexplored (Dessart, 2017). Whilst engagement research discusses drivers of negative

engagement, such as customers' irritation towards brand community members (Heinonen, 2018), there have been calls for further studies of the drivers of negative engagement dispositions and behaviours (Heinonen, 2018; Do *et al.*, 2020).

Relatedly, customer disengagement has also received less research interest (Do *et al.*, 2020; Naumann *et al.*, 2017a; Bowden *et al.*, 2015). Customer disengagement is a process (Do *et al.*, 2020) whereby a previously engaged customer emotionally and behaviourally distances themselves from a firm (Naumann *et al.*, 2017a; Viswanathan *et al.*, 2017), effectively withdrawing from firm-related interactions (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). Disengagement may be temporary where, for example, a customer needs to focus their engagement efforts on alternative service contexts (due, for instance, to limited resources or role conflict) (Alexander *et al.,* 2018). Or, disengagement may be permanent, marking the conclusion of a customer's engagement with a particular firm (Bowden *et al.*, 2015).

A small body of empirical works has explored the drivers of customer disengagement behaviours, identifying poor service quality (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2017), core service failure, relational attribute failure (where, for instance, a key member of staff leaves a firm) (Bowden *et al.*, 2015) and market-based factors (such as identifying a cheaper or more convenient service provider) as antecedents of customer disengagement behaviour. Empirical studies of customer disengagement behaviour are limited, though research has highlighted customers physically separating themselves from the service process (Do *et al.*, 2020), discontinuing service usage (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2017), and becoming unresponsive to a service firm, ultimately becoming estranged within the customer-firm relationship (Naumann *et al.*, 2017a). To date, however, disengagement behaviours related to actors other than the firm, have not been explored. Moreover, while studies have highlighted the potentially damaging impact of negative customer engagement behaviours on firms (Alexander *et al.*, 2018), the impact of negative engagement behaviours on customers remains underexplored (Heinonen, 2018).

2.3 Links between power and (dis)engagement

A few studies have highlighted links between customer power and customer engagement valence. High customer power is established as a precursor to positive engagement dispositions (Menon and Bansal, 2007) and behaviours (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). For example, firms ceding power to customers observe more active contributions from customers in service co-development (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). Similarly, a small body of works (e.g., Jiang *et al.*, 2014; Sembada *et al.*, 2016; Akhavannasab *et al.*, 2018) have explored the relationship between customer power and negative customer engagement. Low customer power has been shown to drive negative customer emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, and irritation) during service interactions (Menon and Bansal, 2017; Naumann *et al.,* 2017a). However, these studies provide partial insight as they focus on single aspects of the engagement construct.

To date, research has not explored customer power as a driver of customer disengagement, although within the social psychology literature, low power has been associated with avoidance and a decreased likelihood to behaviourally engage in interactions with others (Keltner *et al.*, 2003; Cho and Keltner, 2020). Additionally, service marketing research has highlighted how customer perceptions of injustice can trigger customer disengagement behaviour (Buttle and Burton, 2001; Do *et al.,* 2020), intuitively supporting a link between low customer power and customer disengagement. Further research is thus required to explore effects of low power on customer engagement valence and disengagement.

2.4 Customer wellbeing

Customer wellbeing is multidimensional, possessing objective and subjective components. Objective wellbeing includes factors such as living conditions and income, and subjective wellbeing refers to a person's overall evaluation of their life (Dodge *et al.*, 2012). Subjective

wellbeing can be understood in *eudaimonic* and *hedonic* terms. *Eudaimonic wellbeing* is defined as achieving one's potential and possessing capabilities to attain a high quality of life, and comprises factors such as literacy, health, access to services and social inclusion (Anderson *et al.*, 2013). Prior studies of eudaimonic wellbeing have delineated financial wellbeing as an outcome of individuals' financial freedom and security (Brüggen *et al.*, 2017; Guo *et al.*, 2013), while other works explored physical wellbeing which relates to individuals' perceived physical condition (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2017; Tuzovic *et al.*, 2021). *Hedonic wellbeing*, in contrast, is defined as an individual's happiness and pleasure in life, and the extent to which they can avoid fear, stress and tension (Anderson *et al.*, 2013). The wellbeing literature adopts a systemic perspective where wellbeing at individual (e.g., customer) and collective (e.g. societal, communities) levels are intertwined (Anderson *et al.*, 2013).

Achieving and maintaining suitable levels of customer wellbeing are important goals among individuals, organisations, and governments. A desire for wellbeing is expected to continue to motivate consumption (Mintel, 2020). Consequently, firms design initiatives to promote individual and societal wellbeing and generate positive brand image (Karpen and Conduit, 2020), and governments monitor societal wellbeing as a key indicator (Office of National Statistics, 2019). Transformative service research (TSR) stresses the impact of service interactions on customers' wellbeing (Anderson *et al.*, 2013). However, recent calls for studies on customer proactivity in wellbeing (Ostrom *et al.*, 2021) highlight the currently limited knowledge of customer roles in enhancing their wellbeing when interacting with service providers. Thus, exploring the relationship between customer engagement in service interactions and resultant wellbeing will contribute to this dialogue.

To date, the relationship between customer engagement and customer wellbeing is unclear. Some studies indicate that positive customer engagement drives customers' subjective wellbeing (Prentice and Loureiro, 2018; Henkens *et al.*, 2021; Eberhardt *et al.*, 2021; McColl-

Kennedy *et al.*, 2017). In contrast, others have found that customers' positive service co-developing engagement behaviours may not always enhance wellbeing (Guo *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, stress associated with negative engagement towards a firm has been found to affect an individual's overall quality of life, suggesting that negative engagement has potentially detrimental effects on wellbeing (Naumann *et al.*, 2017b). However, such studies adopted inconsistent engagement and wellbeing conceptualisations, or provided partial insights by focusing on specific types of engagement behaviours and wellbeing. There is, therefore, an opportunity to contribute to the dialogue on wellbeing and explore links between negative engagement and wellbeing.

The abilities to participate freely within markets and to consume goods and services as desired, are important contributors to wellbeing (Pavia and Mason, 2004; Visconti, 2016). Intuitively, customers with low power who feel restricted in their abilities to participate in the manner they desire, or unable to derive the desired outcome from their service interactions, may experience reduced wellbeing (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2020). Research has, however, typically focused on customers described as 'powerless' (Baker *et al.*, 2005). We therefore seek to expand current understanding of the relationship between customer power and wellbeing by studying scenarios in which customers have access to key resources but nonetheless perceive low (rather than no) power in relation to a firm.

3. METHODOLOGY

We conducted visual elicitation interviews, characterised by the use of visual stimuli (e.g., photographs or pictures) during interviews to derive rich insights (Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002). The interviews adopted a semi-structured format as the interviewer aimed to discuss participants' experiences of service interactions, while pictures served as visual prompts to elicit and deepen discussions of specific scenarios (Harper, 2002). Benefits of visual elicitation

interviews include accessing deep and abstract perceptions, heightened engagement of participants (Donoghue, 2000), and increased credibility and consistency of data on psychological constructs (Harper, 2002). Use of visual stimuli is also considered useful in the study of socially undesirable perceptions (Johnson and Weller, 2011), such as those pertaining to low power and reduced wellbeing, as they create a comfortable space to share those perceptions via a third-person narrative.

The researchers selected eight pictures from online sources to represent customer power, interactions with firms, interactions with other actors relating to firms, positive and negative customer engagement, and disengagement. Table I highlights the constructs illustrated by each picture along with a brief explanation of how each picture relates to the construct it was intended to represent. In selecting the pictures, the research team discussed the images in depth to ensure an agreed interpretation of what each picture intended to illustrate (Creswell and Miller, 2000). To further ensure credibility of findings, the pictures and intended interpretations were reviewed and verified by an independent academic and a group of consumers not involved in the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Ethical approval for the research was sought and granted via the third author's institution, and entailed careful consideration of informed consent, confidentiality, data management and storage. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted to validate the use of the selected pictures as prompts. Outcomes were discussed in detail with pilot participants in a process of *member-checking* to check for consistent picture interpretations aligned with those of the researchers (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

-- Insert Table I about here –

A purposive sample of 30 interview participants (15 females, 15 males, aged from 19 to 62) who frequently interact via online and offline channels with a variety of product and service firms after the point of purchase, was recruited from across the UK. Table II provides details of participants, and the service industry sectors they discussed. Our recruitment criteria did not include a minimum level of educational achievement yet most of our participants had gained a master's degree (or above). Our sample therefore comprised individuals whose perceptions of power were unrestricted by any educational limitations (Rucker and Galinsky, 2007).

-- Insert Table II about here --

Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and provided with details of what participation would entail, along with a brief explanation of low power as per our definition in Section 2.1. Interviews were designed to resemble a conversation as far as possible: we developed and used a semi-structured discussion guide which ensured the constructs of interest (low power, negative engagement, disengagement, and wellbeing) were explored. Following an abductive approach (King, 2004), we drew from existing conceptualisations of engagement (Brodie *et al.,* 2011) and wellbeing (Anderson *et al.,* 2013) in the literature to develop the interview questions. All interviews began the same way as participants were shown the opening picture (see Table I) and asked to generate stories about service interactions ("What do you think is happening in this scenario?"). This served to initiate discussion of potential service scenarios and effectively set the scene for further, deeper discussions of low customer power and negative engagement in service settings. This was followed by questions relating to participants experiences of interactions with firms, with a particular focus on power drivers (Keltner *et al.,* 2003; Labrecque *et al.,* 2013), (dis)engagement (Brodie *et al.,* 2011), and wellbeing (Anderson *et al.,* 2013). The other pictures were introduced in turn as prompts to

guide the discussions and introduce constructs of interest (Smith and Woodward, 1999). An example of questions we asked is: "Can you describe what you see in this picture?"; "Does it remind you of any events which happened to you?". Interviews focused on engagement occurring beyond initial purchase (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). To ensure a participant-led approach and avoid sector bias, discussions were not limited to any particular service sector and participants were encouraged to share all relevant experiences.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Following the recommendations of Miles and Huberman (1994) and King (2004), thematic data analysis was conducted. We first grouped illustrative quotes with similar meanings into first order codes pertaining to the constructs of interest in this study. Next, we grouped the emerging first order codes into higher order codes. We generated some higher order codes inductively from the data, while also referring to the template established a priori from the engagement, power and wellbeing literature using an iterative abductive process (King, 2004; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). We then looked for relationships between power, engagement, disengagement, and wellbeing. To increase the dependability of findings, a two-stage intercoder check process was conducted based on discussions and percentage of agreement, which resulted in a revised, agreed set of codes. In the first stage, two scholars not involved in the study independently coded one full transcript. Their coding was compared against that of the research team, resulting in 96.9% (coder 1) and 91.2% (coder 2) agreement. Coding differences were discussed with the relevant coder, leading to some minor changes to coding. In the second stage, portions of text from another transcript were given to two further independent coders to allocate to pre-existing codes. Stage 2 resulted in 83.3% agreement against our coding, thus indicating high consistency (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4. FINDINGS

Findings yielded four main themes, relating to the relationships between low customer power in relation to a firm during service interactions, and (1) engagement dispositions, (2) engagement behaviours, (3) disengagement, and (4) customer wellbeing outcomes. First, we identify several drivers of low customer power and explore how low customer power affects engagement disposition and behaviours. Next, we highlight participants' disengagement in low power situations and put forward an emergent typology of disengagement behaviours. We then identify reduced wellbeing outcomes of negative engagement associated with low power. Figure I illustrates the main themes highlighted from data analysis.

-- Insert Figure I about here --

4.1 Drivers of low customer power

Participants described several drivers of low power in relation to a firm, which we categorise as *firm* and *contextual drivers*. *Firm drivers* are characteristics perceived by customers as pertaining to the company. These include market leader or monopoly status (e.g., being the sole provider of a rail route). Participants reported that market leaders hold a large market share, have resourceful capacities, and dictate market trends. Other firm drivers (see Figure I) include poor customer care, a firm-centric ethos, a lack of personalisation during service interactions, slow or generic responses, service employees' unresponsiveness to customer requests, or a tendency to send unsolicited marketing communication to customers. Participant 18, for example, described low power in relation to a firm which refused to address his requests, and lacked personalisation in their interactions. Participant 18's use of the phrase *"did not help me feel that I would get what I wanted"* highlights his perceptions of low power:

> *"It was all procedures and policies and whatever I said, the [IT maintenance company] had a default reply, which did not help me feel that I would get what I wanted." (Participant 18)*

We identify three *contextual drivers* of low power which pertain to the specific firm-customer relationship (see Figure I). Specifically, where participants perceive high switching costs (e.g., in service contracts) as limiting their ability to transfer to an alternative provider, low power results. Moreover, some participants stated that a lack of legal protection or limited support from independent third parties (e.g., regulators) resulted in low power. Contextual drivers also include low levels of customer knowledge regarding a particular product or process, specific company policies, alternative providers, and pricing trends within a market. When information asymmetry is present and customers feel they have less knowledge than firms of specific matters, customers tend to view the firm as the more powerful actor, as participant 2 described:

> *"The flight was seven hours delayed… I felt low power because I did not understand how to ask for compensation." (Participant 2)*

4.2 Low customer power as a driver of negative customer engagement disposition

Data analysis highlighted negative cognitive and emotional engagement dispositions among participants experiencing low power. Negative cognitive engagement manifests as negative thoughts about the firm. For example, participants believed that some firms, which are sole service providers or market leaders, are inefficient, indifferent to customer's needs, complacent about their relationships with customers and *"only care about getting money"* (participant 17). Participant 29 noted:

> *"Bus companies give me the impression that they know they are a monopoly, and so they do not care [about their customers' feedback]." (Participant 29)*

Participant 29's appraisal of bus companies as 'not caring' signals her negative cognitive engagement disposition. Negative cognitive engagement dispositions also arise where firm policies limit the extent to which a service can be personalised to customer needs (a firm driver of low power), and where unduly complicated service contracts are used by firms to restrict

customer switching (a contextual driver of low power). In these scenarios, participants described thinking of these firms as 'manipulative' (participant 29) and 'cheating' their customers (participant 17), with one participant (participant 27) describing a belief that the company providing her software subscription was 'tricking her' as the cancelation rules were not explicitly laid out in her contract. Participant 2 voiced that when she lacked knowledge about an airline's refund policy (a contextual driver of low power), she experienced low power and subsequently thought that the airline was unlikely to provide a refund.

Negative emotional disposition occurs in the form of feelings such as unhappiness, frustration, annoyance, anger and even hatred towards the firm. Participants described negative emotional engagement dispositions due to low power. For example, participant 6 received incorrect information about a country's entry requirements from a travel agency. This low level of knowledge (a contextual driver of low power) resulted in disrupted travel plans and a feeling of unhappiness, signalling negative engagement disposition. Furthermore, dealing with a company that is perceived as having a firm-centric ethos (a firm driver of low power) may result in a negative emotional disposition as evidenced by participant 11:

> *"How you are treated [by customer service] affects your levels of anger and frustration towards the company." (Participant 11)*

Additionally, participant 5 recounted an experience with a technology retailer whereby he was met with procedures and long waiting times during the replacement of a faulty laptop. When querying the progress of his repair and requesting that it be expedited, he was met with a generic and unhelpful answer from customer service (a firm driver of low power) which resulted in hatred towards the company:

> *"They said: 'this is our procedure; this is how things are'. In my case I felt there was nothing I could do here... I hated the company." (Participant 5)*

4.3 Low customer power as a driver of negative engagement behaviours

Evidence of engagement behaviours resulting from low power during service interactions emerged. We describe these behaviours as negative as they are unfavourable actions towards the focal company (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; De Villiers, 2015). Negative engagement behaviours include complaints directed at the firm, negative (online and offline) WOM, formal appeals to independent regulators, and seeking information and advice from independent consumer rights groups or legal representatives about how to resolve disputes with firms.

Complaints and appeals occur when a company does not adequately consider customers' needs (a firm driver of low power), thus creating barriers to customers' goal achievement. To illustrate, participant 23 recounted low power during depersonalised interactions with his bank. This led to him to making complaints:

> *"Recent trends in banking include the removal of branches and cashiers. In that situation, I felt low power... I complained to the branch manager." (Participant 23)*

Participants also complained to firms in the event of unresponsiveness (a firm driver of low power); for example, an insurance firm's failure to amend a policy despite participant 11's request. Where firms were viewed as unresponsive to direct requests, participants' engagement behaviours included evoking firms' own processes to gain a response. For instance, participant 15 described using a parking company's formal appeals process in response to receiving a parking ticket:

> *"I got a parking ticket while I was picking up my parcel. I felt that I had low power as I knew that they would not bother removing the parking charge if I complained… so I appealed [against the parking charge]." (Participant 15)*

Participant 15's belief that the firm would be unresponsive to (i.e., 'not bother' with) his potential request (a firm driver of low power) suggests low power leading to his negative engagement behaviour. Furthermore, negative WOM is another type of engagement behaviour discussed: Participant 14 experienced low power after signing a contract with a cleaning service

provider requiring upfront payment of fees (a contextual driver of low power), and then receiving poor service. As she believed that a direct complaint with the service provider would not help her recover her advance payment (as she had signed a contract and therefore faced high switching costs and lacked legal protection), she resorted to negative online WOM directed at other (prospective) customers:

> *"I did not have power because I already paid whatever amount [the cleaning service provider] asked for. I have lost power already because we had that kind of agreement that they would come and clean... the only thing I could do is to review them badly."* (Participant 14)

A further engagement behaviour is interacting with third parties such as independent advice groups and industry regulators and seeking advice to address low levels of knowledge (a contextual driver of low power). For example, participant 2 approached an independent organisation for information about her right to receive a hotel booking refund and participant 29 shared experience of seeking impartial, expert advice to check if she could obtain compensation following unacceptable service from her landlord:

> *"I called Citizens Advice, and they told me that I could claim something under the Consumer Act. They told me to call the landlord and tell him that."* (Participant 29)

4.4 Low power as a driver of behavioural disengagement

In addition to negative engagement behaviours in contexts of low power, participants frequently discussed behavioural disengagement, whereby they deliberately distanced themselves from a specific firm-related interaction or behaviour. Many participants described more incidences of disengagement than negative engagement behaviour, suggesting that low power is more likely to drive disengagement than engagement. Different disengagement behaviours were described, which we categorise as *disengagement-by-action* and *disengagement-by-inaction*. Moreover, we distinguish between disengagement from

interactions with the firm, and disengagement from interactions with other actors relating to the firm. Table III illustrates this typology.

Disengagement-by-action occurs when customers purposefully withdraw from current interactions with a firm or from ongoing interactions with other actors relating to the firm. Disengagement-by-action from interactions with the firm results from low power and the resultant negative cognitive and emotional engagement dispositions. For instance, as illustrated in Table III, participant 3's use of the phrase *"irritating and annoying"* when receiving unsolicited emails (firm driver of low power) suggests that behavioural disengagement was preceded by a negative emotional engagement disposition. As Table III also illustrates, participant 15 disengaged-by-action from interactions with the firm when he left the service environment of a car dealership due to the staff member's unresponsiveness to his requests (a driver of low power), and resultant negative cognitive engagement disposition (he thought that there was no point in speaking to the staff member). Disengagement-by-action from interactions with other actors about the firm also occurs in response to experiences of low power and resultant negative engagement dispositions. For example, as shown in Table III, participant 25 refused to discuss his telecom service provider with other people because he thought of the firm as *"awful"* due to their lack of customer care (low power driver).

Disengagement-by-inaction occurs where customers deliberately do not enact possible engagement behaviours directed at the firm (*disengagement-by-inaction from interactions with the firm*) or other actors (*disengagement-by-inaction from interactions with other actors about the firm*). Disengagement-by-inaction from interactions with the firm results from low power and resultant negative cognitive and emotional engagement dispositions. For example,

participant 29's decision not to complain to a technology firm (see Table III) was driven by low power due to the firm's poor responsiveness (a firm driver of low power) and a subsequent negative emotional engagement disposition (*"it is pointless"*). Participants also described disengagement-by-inaction from interactions with the firm by discontinuing established engagement behaviours. For example, participant 24 had made several complaints to his higher education institution, but due to low power (*"nothing was done"*) and a resultant negative cognitive disposition (*"I accepted the fact they will not respond"),* he stopped interacting with the service provider in this manner.

Disengagement-by-inaction from interactions with other actors about the firm also occurs in response to experiences of low power and resultant negative engagement dispositions. For example, as Table III shows, participant 11 refused to recommend her internet provider to her friends due to their low level of customer care (a low power driver) and her belief that the firm does "*not listen to their customers*" (a negative cognitive engagement disposition).

4.5 Customers' low power and negative engagement lead to reduced wellbeing

Participants described how negative customer engagement dispositions and behaviours resulting from low power had a detrimental impact on their wellbeing. To illustrate this, we analysed and present lengthier vignette cases of two participants (21 and 23), reflecting the complexity and providing deeper understanding of relationships between constructs (Eldh *et al.,* 2020).

Participant 21: A failed insurance claim leading to reduced wellbeing

Participant 21 described how her experiences of low power in relation to her insurance provider (perceived by the participant to be a market leader with low level of customer-centricity) when

pursuing a claim, and her subsequent negative engagement dispositions and behaviours, led to reduced financial, physical and hedonic wellbeing:

> *"I feel low power towards big powerful companies. I was basically trying to take out life insurance and then later make a claim on it, and it took years. My insurance company were totally overpowering me while I tried to claim ill health retirement. They were using all kind of policies and loopholes which means they weren't interested in my case, although I had a special mention in my contract covering critical illness... I felt angry and cheated. It was relentless. I thought I was going to have to go to court. I complained and tried to go to an independent regulator for advice."* (Participant 21)

Participant 21's use of the phrase *"angry and cheated"* highlights her negative emotional and cognitive engagement disposition that resulted from her low power in relation to the insurance firm. As she described, her negative engagement behaviours comprised complaining to the firm and seeking advice from an independent party about how to force the company to pay her claim.

Participant 21 went on to describe how her experience of low power had a negative impact on her financial wellbeing as she perceived a large financial risk of going to court against a resourceful powerful company:

> *"My complaints toward the company are a good example of how you don't always have the resources or the money to protect yourself by taking the company to court... there was a powerful company who were trying to find loopholes."* (Participant 21)

Moreover, participant 21's negative engagement behaviours had a detrimental impact on her physical wellbeing (*"I felt exhausted by the end of this difficult complaints process"*) and her negative engagement dispositions contributed to reduced hedonic wellbeing as they left her *"generally feeling very negative and low"*.

Reduced hedonic wellbeing was also highlighted by other participants who reported high stress levels when firms did not respond appropriately to negative engagement behaviours, such as complaints. Reduced financial wellbeing was similarly highlighted by other participants who experienced low power and negative engagement behaviours after discussing

advance payment schedules with firms, then finding themselves unable to recoup their payments or cancel contracts after numerous complaints.

Participant 23: The lack of a 'personal touch' result in reduced wellbeing

For participant 23, the trend within the banking sector of closing branches, transferring services online and automating interactions is detrimental to his hedonic wellbeing. He described low power due to his bank failing to deliver a personalised service (a firm driver of low power) that met his need for face-to-face contact. He also discussed the high costs of switching (a contextual low power driver) which would involve searching for prospective banks, reading their terms and conditions, checking online reviews and interacting with them to gain information about their services:

> *"Recent trends in banking include the removal of branches and cashiers. In that situation, I felt low power. They keep asking me to go online and fill out forms and I do not think they listen to us. Normally if you have a choice you go to a competitor but in reality, for the major banks there is no difference. They all are closing branches. They are all minimising the number of cashiers and cash desks. Plus, it takes time to search for other ones, ask others and read about the different offers they give to their customers... I complained to the branch manager. Despite vocal complaints [about the removal of bank branches], nothing gets done." (Participant 23)*

He reported negative engagement dispositions ("*I do not think they listen to us*") and resultant negative engagement behaviour (making repeated *"vocal complaints"* to the branch manager where *"nothing gets done"*). Participant 23 ultimately described a continuous absence of positive affect and high levels of stress which characterise reduced hedonic wellbeing (Ryff, 1989; Anderson *et al.*, 2003):

> *"If I have a problem, it is better to get it off my chest and speak to somebody in customer service. When I talk to a human being, I feel less negative then when using live chat. It adds a personal touch to the interaction... With less of these in my daily life and having to continuously complain, I found myself very emotionally stressed." (Participant 23)*

Moreover, participant 23 noted: "*I feel I am not fully aware of what the bank offers or any changes which happen*", suggesting he is unable to fully benefit from the wide range of services offered exclusively online by the bank. Participant 23's unwillingness to access some online banking services prevents him from benefitting from effective service delivery and accomplishing his goals, and hence reduces his eudaimonic wellbeing (Anderson and Ostrom, 2015).

5.   DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This study enriches dialogue on drivers of low customer power in relation to firms by demonstrating that low power can be driven by specific characteristics, perceived by customers as associated with firms and with the context of the firm-customer relationship. Previous marketing studies and typologies of power drivers (e.g., Kucuk and Krishnamurthy, 2007; Labrecque *et al.,* 2013) focus either on drivers of high customer power (e.g., Brodie *et al.*, 2019) or on vulnerable customers lacking any power (Hill and Sharma, 2020). We extend those discussions and evidence that the study of customer power should be reframed to include a focus on relative low power states where customers possess or have access to resources but still experience power asymmetries in specific service interactions and associated negative outcomes.

In response to calls for further research on negative engagement, we have illuminated the negative impact of low customer power on customer engagement disposition and engagement behaviours. Our findings thus contribute to discussions on the antecedents of negative engagement and show how low customer power in relation to the firm drives negative engagement dispositions (characterised by negative thoughts and emotions toward the firm

and/or customers' interactions with the firm). In doing so, we generate a more detailed description of customers' negative engagement dispositions in service interactions. We highlight how other actors influence customer engagement through the identified contextual drivers of low power in relation to the firm (e.g., other customers who do not share information, or organisations which do not enforce legal protection). We also identify negative engagement behaviours which can be detrimental to firms and show how specific low power drivers drive these behaviours.

In addition, we contribute to the nascent dialogue on customer disengagement (Alexander *et al.,* 2018) by illustrating how disengagement behaviours are driven by low power and can negatively impact firms. Previous research identified specific behavioural disengagement from interactions with the firm (Naumann *et al.*, 2017a) and discussed disengagement behaviours resulting from customers being engaged with other contexts (Chandler and Lusch, 2015; Alexander *et al.,* 2018). We extend these discussions and propose a comprehensive, empirically derived typology of disengagement behaviours driven by states of low customer power. We differentiate between disengagement-by-action and disengagement-by-inaction, and between disengagement from interactions with the firm itself and disengagement resulting from interactions with other related actors. Findings highlighted that certain disengagement behaviours, such as unfollowing marketing communications and terminating WOM with other customers, may represent the cessation of previous engagement behaviours. Therefore, in deriving this typology, we enhance knowledge regarding the potential transition between customer engagement and customer disengagement over time (Alexander *et al.,* 2018).

Moreover, our findings advance current understanding of factors influencing customer wellbeing by highlighting that low power and associated negative engagement have negative implications for customers' wellbeing. Specifically, we highlight that low power and negative

engagement may have adverse effects on customers' hedonic and eudaimonic (financial, physical) wellbeing. We thus evidence the role of customer power and engagement in shaping distinct types of wellbeing. Furthermore, by demonstrating that reduced wellbeing may be an indirect consequence of low power, we respond to the recent call by Ostrom *et al.* (2021) for studies into the changing nature of customer experience and the impact of unintended consequences.

5.2 Managerial contributions

We advocate firms to engage in power management, whereby customer power is monitored with the aim of achieving a balance between customer and other stakeholder power that is beneficial for both customers and firms. Firms should recognise the importance of firm drivers of low customer power and thus design strategies to alleviate the negative effect of such drivers. For example, firms may analyse textual customer feedback through text mining (Ordenes *et al.,* 2014) and identify customers' power level in relation to firms. Firms with a monopoly or a market leader status could promote customer-centric messages in their dialogue with customers (for example highlighting how the voice of the customer informs their service), and therefore reduce the negative effect of low customer power on how customers engage with firms and with other actors about the firm. Additionally, firms may provide a more personalised and flexible service delivery (especially for contractual services) as this could enhance customer power. Firms should also recognise that customer power is shaped by contextual factors influenced by other actors. Therefore, firms could collaborate closely with these actors (e.g., third-party regulators dealing with complaints about the firm) to ensure active contact between those actors and customers. Firms might, for instance, provide online platforms to facilitate communication and knowledge sharing between these actors and customers, thus enhancing customer power.

We recommend firms consider customer power as an important variable in designing engagement marketing practices and use marketing analytics to assess whether negative engagement or disengagement is driven by low customer power. Firms could also evaluate if complaints stem from firm drivers of low power which are within their control, such as unsolicited marketing communications and slow response times. This may reduce the risk of negative engagement dispositions towards the firm and the associated detrimental impact on the customer-firm relationship. Moreover, as some negative engagement behaviours driven by low power are directed at third-party actors (in the case of appeals and seeking information), firms may strive to achieve an elevated level of coordination with those actors to ensure a positive resolution of these negative behaviours.

It is crucial for firms to reframe the management of disengagement behaviours by moving away from the traditional dyadic view and monitoring customer disengagement within networks. As such, they can be proactive in responding to customer-to-consumer interactions that may potentially lead to disengagement. Findings on disengagement highlight importance to service providers of addressing customers' initial negative engagement behaviours as an inadequate response might result in disengagement. However, some customer feedback may be difficult to act on as it may require time and resources beyond the capacities of an organisation due to processes and system decisions (as the case of banks moving core client requests to online channels), thus other measures may be taken by the firm to acknowledge or offer other resolutions to these behaviours.

Firms could acknowledge their active role in enhancing their customers' wellbeing through influencing customers' relative level of power and the adequate management of subsequent negative engagement. For example, firms may want to combine a mix of human and automated touchpoints to improve service access for some customers. Thus, firms could strive, as part of their resolution process, to reframe their priorities towards enhancing the

wellbeing of their customers through power management or seek to shift their negative engagement and disengagement into positive engagement through the management of negative engagement behaviours.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH

This study adopted an exploratory approach and therefore results could be validated using scenario-based or field experiments testing causal relationships between constructs. Longitudinal designs would also be appropriate to study shifts between negative engagement and disengagement over time (or their coexistence). Future research could incorporate visual stimuli collected by participants to derive richer insights on low customer power in times of crises, offsetting limitations associated with participants' interpreting pictures selected by researchers.

Participants were free to discuss any service sector to avoid industry-led bias, resulting in difficulties in identifying sector-specific power perceptions, customer engagement and wellbeing outcomes. Future research could, therefore, explore these constructs in specific contexts. In particular, results highlight that experiences of low customer power are common for industries perceived as monopolised. Therefore, inquiries into such contexts might shed light on how such industries might strategically reframe their practices to increase customer power and mitigate negative effects on customer engagement. We adopted a customer-centric focus to explore perceived drivers of power, therefore future studies might adopt a firm's perspective to identify additional drivers. Additionally, this study did not adopt a systemic actor perspective in the study of (dis)engagement and wellbeing, therefore future research could adopt a service ecosystem lens, thus contributing to the understanding of *actor* wellbeing.

Results highlighting reduced wellbeing in low power contexts could be complemented by a channel-specific study unpacking the effect of technology on wellbeing. Future research

could investigate how companies could facilitate coping mechanisms and tailor their usage of automated interactions for customers who might have technology-related anxiety with the aim of empowering them, enhancing their engagement, and avoiding any detrimental impact on their wellbeing. Studies might also explore the relationship between customer power, customer engagement and other forms of wellbeing, such as social wellbeing. As this study focused on behavioural disengagement, future research could explore cognitive and emotional disengagement.

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Table I: Description and interpretation of pictures provided to participants

Construct elicited	Picture	Brief description or interpretation
Customer power and engagement	Opening picture	Two people facing one another and exhibiting negative facial expressions. Their physical sizes are digitally altered: one is minimised (representing low power and power asymmetries) while the other is maximised (representing high power)
Customer engagement	2	A group of individuals using their technological devices and showing positive and negative facial expressions
	3	A group of individuals exhibiting positive facial expression and giving verbal feedback
Customer disengagement	4	An individual facing away from the camera with the palm of their hand held, signalling disengagement from a marketing interaction
Customer power asymmetries	5	Picture text highlighting that some customers are more informed than others
	6	A customer attempting to physically push a firm representative to the ground
	7	A group of individuals fist bumping each other, suggesting their greater power compared to other customers
	8	Individuals raising technological devices in their hands, representing online power

Table II: Summary of sample characteristics

Participant number	Age	Gender	Level of educational qualification	Current employment	Sectors discussed
1	27	Female	Master's degree	Full-time	Healthcare, retail, real estate, technology
2	25	Female	Master's degree	In education	Retail, hospitality, transportation, technology
3	32	Female	Master's degree	In education	Retail, banking, travel, utilities
4	27	Male	Bachelor's degree	Full-time	Retail, hospitality, technology, transportation, technology
5	42	Male	Master's degree	In education	Travel, hospitality, retail, sports, technology, transportation
6	55	Male	Master's degree	Full-time	Technology, retail, utilities, hospitality, travel
7	54	Female	Bachelor's degree	Full-time	Hospitality, technology, pension, healthcare
8	56	Female	Bachelor's degree	Retired	Retail, healthcare, technology
9	19	Female	School Level Qualification	In education	Education, technology, retail
10	39	Male	Master's degree	Full-time	Retail, technology, hospitality
11	54	Female	Master's degree	Part-time	Transportation, utilities, retail, technology, healthcare, insurance, telecom
12	49	Male	Master's degree	Part-time	Retail, hospitality, technology
13	31	Male	Bachelor's degree	Full-time	Retail, transportation, banking, technology, education, hospitality
14	30	Female	Master's degree	In education	Retail, hospitality, cleaning services, technology
15	52	Male	Master's degree	Full-time	Technology, postal service, parking, utilities, retail, hospitality, transportation
16	52	Male	Bachelor's degree	Full-time	Retail, technology, hospitality, utilities
17	29	Female	Master's degree	In education	Technology, retail, hospitality
18	32	Male	Master's degree	In education	Retail, technology, education
19	45	Female	Master's degree	In education	Retail, utilities, tourism
20	36	Female	Doctorate degree	Full-time	Technology, transportation, technology, utilities
21	46	Female	Bachelor's degree	Retired	Insurance, technology, tourism, utilities, healthcare
22	52	Male	Bachelor's degree	Full-time	Utilities, hospitality, retail, telecom
23	62	Male	Doctorate degree	Retired	Banking, technology, transportation
24	25	Male	Bachelor's degree	In education	Hospitality, retail, technology, education
25	46	Male	Bachelor's degree	Full-time	Retail, transportation, hospitality, utilities, telecom
26	33	Male	Master's degree	Part-time	Transportation, retail, hospitality
27	21	Female	School Level Qualification	In education	Retail, technology
28	30	Female	Doctorate degree	None	Retail, education
29	28	Female	Master's degree	In education	Real estate, technology, banking, transportation
30	34	Male	Master's degree	In education	Transportation, retail

Table III: Typology of disengagement behaviours resulting from low customer power

Disengagement behaviour category	Examples of disengagement from interactions with the firm	Examples of disengagement from interactions with other actors about the firm
Disengagement-by-action (the act of withdrawing from current firm-related interactions or engagement behaviours)	Unsubscribe from marketing communication (e.g., email newsletter, marketing texts): *"I feel low power when companies send me emails which I never requested. It is very irritating and annoying … So, I unsubscribed from [my utility company's] emails." (Participant 3)*	Terminating conversations about the firm with other customers: *"We feel very small compared to the power of my telecom company's big customer base and I feel they do not care about us. They always give short abrupt responses when they deal with us. The company is just awful. And my response about it to other people asking what we think of our provider is very similar to the way the company treats me. I close that conversation down." (Participant 25)*
	Unfollowing marketing communications or company pages on social media: *"I used to follow the brand on social media but after this incident [with customer service], I unfollowed their [official] profile when I saw posts about their new collection." (Participant 14)*	Unsubscribing from notifications about a comment thread on social media: *"The retailer refused to honour my refund, so I had low power… I was no longer interested in what other people were replying to my negative post about this, so I unsubscribed from all notifications." (Participant 9)*
	Leaving the (online or offline) service environment: *"I was trying to request some specifications to my new car… These were car salesman tactics. We just got up and walked out from the dealership... I walked away [from the interaction]. When you know you are going to lose a battle, you do not bother getting into the fight." (Participant 15)*	Unfollowing actors associated with the brand on social media: *"The retailer refused to honour my refund, so I had low power... I also stopped following influencers [associated with the brand] as I did not want to see content anymore after they refused my refund." (Participant 9)*
Disengagement-by-inaction (the purposeful avoidance of possible engagement behaviours)	Not sharing solicited feedback with the firm: *"I do not respond to customer surveys as I do not think my response would make a difference to this big retailer." (Participant 4)*	Not sharing WOM about a firm with other customers: *"I do not talk to anybody about [my experience with the bus company] because there aren't any other options to choose from." (Participant 5)*
	Not sharing unsolicited feedback with the firm: *"Sometimes I do not complain [about a lack of customer care] when I feel that I have low power because it is pointless, it is not going to change anything." (Participant 29)*	Not recommending a firm to other customers: *"I would not recommend my internet company to my friends as they lack customer care and do not listen to their customers." (Participant 11)*
	Not contacting the firm for service resolution: *"No matter how many times I raised it [to my university], no matter how many people complained, nothing was done... I just accepted the fact that they will not respond [to the complaint], moved on and stopped complaining." (Participant 24)*	

Figure I: Customer engagement, disengagement, and wellbeing in low power service contexts

Firm drivers

Market leader status
Monopoly status
Low level of customer-centricity
Lack of personalisation
Slow response times
Unresponsive service employees
Unsolicited marketing communications

Negative customer engagement disposition
Negative cognitive engagement (e.g., firm perceived as uncaring, manipulative, and cheating)
Negative emotional engagement (e.g., unhappiness, frustration, annoyance, and hatred)

Negative customer engagement behaviour
Complaint
Negative WOM
Appeal to third-parties
Seeking advice from third-parties

Low customer power in relation to the firm
(as defined in Section 2.1)

Customer disengagement (impact for the firm)

By action (e.g., unsubscribing from/unfollowing marketing communications and actors associated with the firm, terminating conversations, leaving the service environment)
By inaction (e.g., not sharing solicited or unsolicited feedback, not contacting the firm, not sharing WOM or recommendations)

Contextual drivers

High switching costs
Lack of legal protection
Low levels of knowledge

Customer reduced wellbeing (impact for customers)

Financial wellbeing
Physical wellbeing
Hedonic wellbeing
Inability and unwillingness to make use of the service