

# Contagious Effects of Customer Misbehavior in Access-Based Services

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## Why did we select this research?

How contagious is bad behaviour in access-based services? Does picking up a messy vehicle from zipcar, for example, mean the next driver will also behave badly? This study by Schaefer et al. finds that misbehaviour does spiral out, but also puts forward evidence-based strategies to curb bad conduct.

## Key findings

- Bad behaviour is contagious in access-based services.
- Greater brand strength and lower anonymity of the accessed product's owner curb contagion.
- An increase in the communal identification among customers reverses the contagious effect, with customers more likely to remove signs of previous users' misbehaviour.

Access-based services, in which consumers have short-term access to a good while legal ownership remains with the service provider (e.g., car sharing), are by nature more prone to customer misbehaviour. Through two online experiments, Schaefers et al. show that instances of bad conduct can be spread throughout the customer group, driven by a perception of lowered social norms. However, their results also suggest that misbehaviour can be effectively contained by investing in well-respected product brands, establishing more personal relationship with customers, and, most importantly, increasing communal identification among customers.

## Reference

Schaefers, T., Wittkowski, K., Benoit, S., & Ferraro, R. (2016). Contagious effects of customer misbehavior in access-based services. *Journal of Service Research*, 19(1), 3-21. Retrieved from:

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