

Web Appendix

In this file, we have compiled some additional material to help readers assess the rigor of our research process and the validity of our findings. These elements were left out of the main body of the paper because of space limitation.

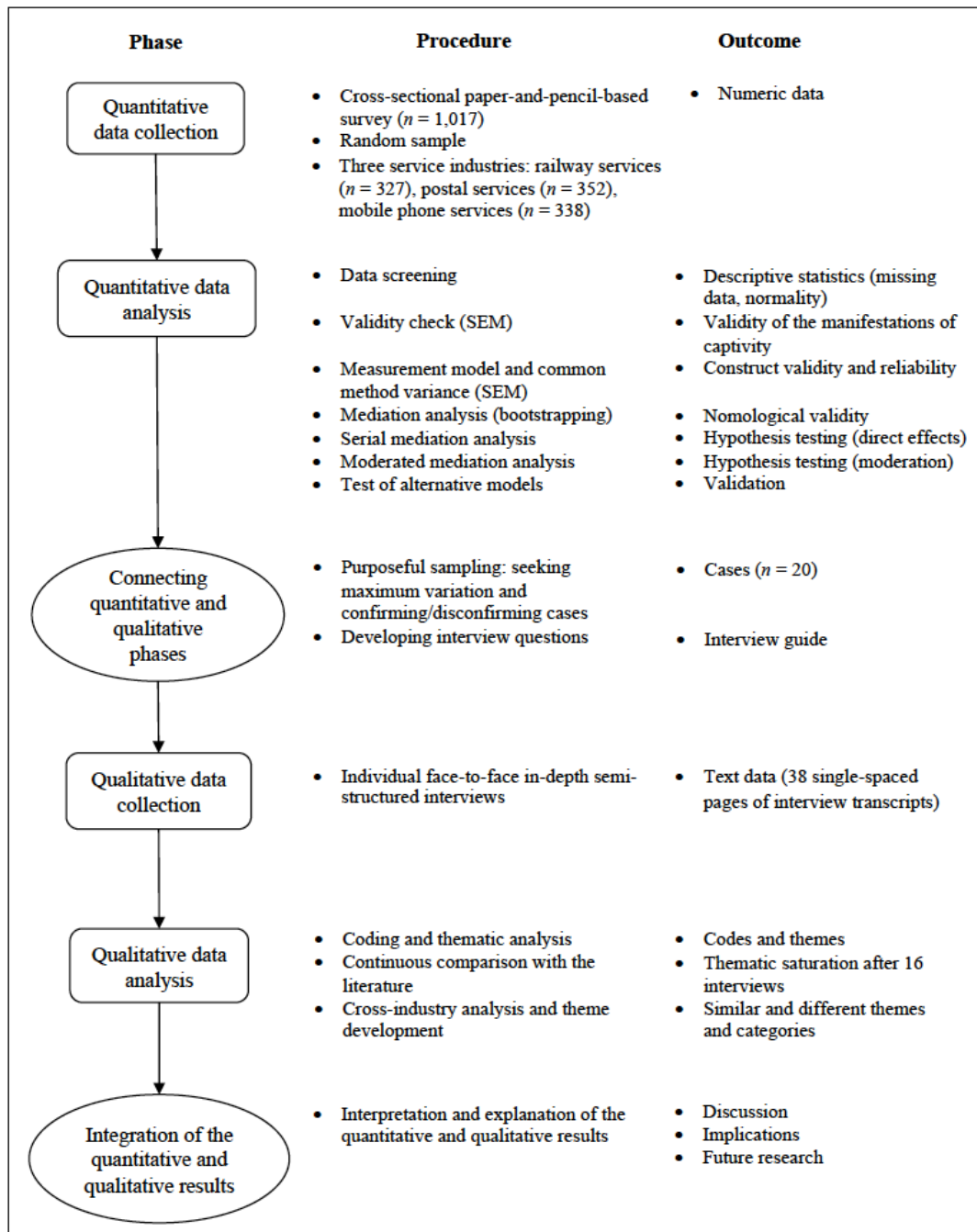
Table of content

A1. Mixed-methods sequential design.....	2
A2. Questionnaire-based survey items.....	3
A3. Measurement of price unfairness perceptions.....	5
A4. Validation of the manifestations of customer captivity	7
A5. Common method variance	9
A6. Alternative models	10
A7. Qualitative study informants	19
A8. Coding scheme	20
A9. Characteristics and manifestations of customer captivity.....	23
References	27

A1. Mixed-methods sequential design

Adapted from Ivankova *et al.* (2006), Figure A1 graphically depicts the mixed-methods sequential design used in our study. It describes the sequence of the research process, along with the different procedures and main outcomes of each stage.

Figure A1. Mixed-methods sequential design



A2. Questionnaire-based survey items

Most of the items used in the survey were adapted from existing scales, some were specifically developed for this study. Table A2 presents the items used in the analysis.

Table A2. Survey items

Variable	Items	Railway services	Postal services	Mobile phone services
		Loadings	Loadings	Loadings
Perceived service quality (SERVPERF) Cronin and Taylor (1992), Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> (1988)	• Employees adopt a reassuring attitude when I experience a problem	.737	.775	.798
	• The company inspire confidence	.735	.687	.813
	• When the company commits to something, it keeps its promises*	—	—	—
	• The service is provided as promised*	—	—	—
	• The information provided is precise	.502	.708	.790
	• Employees deliver the service in a timely manner	.747	.755	.802
	• Employees are available to answer my individual requests	.788	.766	.748
	• Employees are willing to help me if needed	.827	.853	.837
	• The company indicates precisely when the service will be delivered*	—	—	—
	• Employees are polite	.724	.666	.669
	• I feel safe*	—	—	—
	• I can trust the employees	.816	.722	.750
	• Employees get adequate support to do their job well*	—	—	—
	• The operating hours are convenient for the customers*	—	—	—
	• Employees understand my needs as a customer*	—	—	—
	• Employees pay a special attention to me	.658	.797	.671
	• Employees are committed to act with the best interest of the customers at heart	.757	.774	.729
• Employees give me individual attention	.661	.781	.760	
• The equipment is in good state*	—	—	—	
• Employees are well dressed and appear neat*	—	—	—	
• Facilities are visually appealing*	—	—	—	
• The appearance of the facilities is in keeping with the type of services provided*	—	—	—	
Satisfaction Sabadie (2003)	• I am more often disappointed than happy with the services provided by X (reversed)	.762	.746	.712
	• I am dissatisfied with the overall services provided by X (reversed)	.845	.740	.763
	• Overall, I am displeased with the services provided by X (reversed)	.904	.903	.828
	• In comparison with what I expect, I am disappointed with the services from X (reversed)	.853	.876	.799
Negative word of mouth Sabadie (2003)	• I advise my family and friends against the services from X	.689	.568	.365
	• I tend to criticize the services from X	.767	.752	.809
	• I speak about the services from X to my family and friends as a bad public service	.918	.904	.871
	• I tend to depreciate the services from X	.868	.813	.814
	• I most often say negative things to my family and friends about the services from X	.865	.832	.879

Captivity perception This study	• I feel like I can choose between different providers, therefore I feel like I have the choice (reversed)	.622	.518	.590
	• I feel obliged to use this company	.818	.816	.879
	• It seems difficult to switch providers	.683	.662	.618
Price unfairness perception This study	What do you think about the services of YOUR provider?	—	—	—
	• I find the prices charged for the services of X too expensive	—	—	—
Captivity emotions Izard (1977)	How do you feel about your captive relationship with [service company X]?			
	• This makes me angry	.796	.795	.765
	• This disappoints me	.722	.865	.774
	• This annoys me	.787	.796	.783
	• This makes me feel like I am being held hostage	.860	.803	.761
	• This saddens me*	—	—	—
	• I do not mind*	—	—	—
	• I am fine with this*	—	—	—
• This makes me happy*	—	—	—	

* These items were not used in the analysis.

A3. Measurement of price unfairness perceptions

During the review process, concerns were raised about the face validity of the item we used to measure price unfairness perceptions “I find the prices charged for the services [of service provider] too expensive.” The concern was principally about the meaning of the item: In a captivity situation, does “too expensive” means “unfair?” We suspect that the concern might probably be due to a language issue. The item, along with the overall questionnaire, was originally developed in French and was also pre-tested with French-speaking Swiss informants to ensure that it conveyed the intended meaning. The findings of the pre-test indicated that in a captivity context, a service that is said to be too expensive was perceived as unfairly too expensive. However, we understand that this interpretation could be questioned. Therefore, to assess the face validity of the item, we conducted an additional qualitative study to specifically examine the meaning of this item with 20 French-speaking Swiss informants. The informants were users of, at least, one of the three studied services and were selected to be as similar as possible of those of the original survey and were asked to describe how they understand the item.

The findings of this study reveal that in a captivity context, when asked about a service being “too expensive,” French-speaking Swiss customers perceive the price as too expensive compared to what they receive and because service providers could use their dominant position to overcharge captive customers to increase their profits, which they perceive as unfair. Several informants explain that when interpreting this item, they relate price to the quality of service they received, such as: “*The prices of the Swiss railways are too expensive, unfair in regard to the service received*” (R3) and “*We are resigned, so we take it [even if too expensive], ... it is not fair because the price is not worth the quality and means deployed*” (R10). Informants also explained that in the case of a captivity situation, they do not think service providers act fairly in terms of prices and therefore a price which is perceived as too high is also perceived as unfair: “*When I am*

at the post office to send parcels and think it is too expensive, I have no other choice, so I do it. It is unfair because we do not know what justifies these prices” (R4) and “There is no competition so no points of comparison, for me it is too expensive because the company takes too much profit [...] it is unfair because most of the time the margin they take is not justified” (R5). Customers indeed perceive unfairness related to expensive prices that “are not always justified [...] because [providers] do not clearly explain what it is you are paying for” (R13). Those informants who considered the price in regard to their income still perceived the price as unfair compared to what they thought they should be paying for the service: “In Switzerland we generally have the income to pay for it, but it still makes no sense to pay that much [...] in general the price does not reflect the quality [of the service]” (R2). Moreover, some informants also stated that even if they would be satisfied with the quality of service, they still perceive the expensive price as unfair when it exceeds the amount they expect to pay for the service: “The service quality [of the Swiss railways] is good, but I still think it is [the price] unfairly excessive [...] it comes back to my perception of what I think I should be paying for this service” (R1).

In addition to the qualitative interpretation of the item, we also asked informants to evaluate the prices of one of the three services included in the study (informants could choose either railway, post, or mobile phone services) and if they thought the prices were unfair. These two items were measured on 9-point Likert scales. A Spearman’s rank correlation was then computed to assess the degree of association between the items “too expensive” and “unfair.” We obtained a r_s of .813 ($n = 20$) with a p -value smaller than .001, which provides support for a strong association between the two items. Together, these results provide empirical support for the face validity of the item used to measure price unfairness perceptions.

A4. Validation of the manifestations of customer captivity

In order to validate the two manifestations of customer captivity, we computed a structural model using AMOS 26, with customer captivity as the independent variable and captivity emotions and price unfairness perceptions as dependent variables. We allowed the two manifestations of customer captivity to co-vary.

The tests of the models indicate satisfactory fit indices, in support of the model for all three industry samples (Table A4). The normed chi-square values are 1.995, 1.986, and .978 for railway, postal, and mobile phone services, respectively. The RMSEA values are .055 [90% CI: .028; .082] for railway services, .053 [90% CI: .027; .078] for postal services, and .000 [90% CI: .000; .047] for mobile phone services. Then for railway services, the fit indices are .970 (NNFI) and .981 (CFI); for postal services, these values are .974 (NNFI) and .993 (CFI); and for mobile phone services, they are .999 (NNFI) and .999 (CFI).

Furthermore, the structural coefficients are significant and in the expected directions. The standardized regression coefficients are .396 for captivity emotions and .181 for price unfairness perceptions for railway services; they are .359 for captivity emotions and .222 for price unfairness perceptions for railway services, and .538 for captivity emotions and .185 for price unfairness perceptions for mobile phone services. These results provide empirical support for the two manifestations of customer captivity.

Table A4. Model Fit Indices

Model	χ^2	df	<i>p</i> -value	χ^2 /df	RMSEA [90% CI]	NNFI	CFI
Railway services (<i>n</i> = 327)	35.919	18	.007	1.995	.055 [.028; .082]	.970	.981
Postal services (<i>n</i> = 352)	35.741	18	.008	1.986	.053 [.027; .078]	.974	.993
Mobile phone services (<i>n</i> = 338)	17.603	18	.482	.978	.000 [.000; .047]	.999	.999

Notes: df = degrees of freedom, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, CI = confidence interval, NNFI = non-normed fit index, and CFI = confirmatory fit index.

A5. Common method variance

As is true for any self-reported data, there is the potential for common method variance (CMV). Beyond the preventive measures taken to reduce its likelihood, we conducted two tests to determine the extent of CMV in the data (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). First, a Harman one-factor test was conducted on all the items used to measure perceived service quality, satisfaction, NWOM, and captivity emotions. Results reveal that, across the three industry samples, the items loaded on four factors, with the first factor accounting for between 40.3% and 42.7% of the total variance in the items, which indicates that CMV does not explain the majority of the covariance between the measures. Second, to confirm these results, the unmeasured latent method factor technique was used (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Based on this technique, the path coefficients of a measurement model with a method factor is compared to those of a model without the method factor (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Results from these analyses indicate that while the method factor did improve model fit in the three industry samples, the loadings of the initial models remain significant and have less than $|.2|$ difference between the models. This suggests that CMV is not a pervasive problem.

A6. Alternative Models

To further provide a richer discussion of our results, we also considered four alternative models.

First, we ran moderated serial mediation models (Hayes, 2018, Model 92) with captivity emotions as the independent variable, perceived service quality and satisfaction as mediators, price unfairness perceptions, and NWOM as dependent variables (see Table A6a to c, panels 1).

Compared to the moderated mediation models with captivity emotions as a control variable, these models add the interactions between price unfairness perceptions and captivity emotions.

Bootstrapping results reveal that these interactions have no significant effects in any of the service industries, with the sole exception of the interaction effect of price unfairness perceptions on the relationship between captivity emotions and satisfaction in the mobile phone industry ($-.035$ [95% CI: $-.065$; $-.006$]). In addition, for the three industry samples, the *R*-squared pertaining to railway, postal, and mobile phone services are as follows: for perceived service quality .112, .188, and .135; for satisfaction, .377, .266, and .324, and for NWOM, .557, .574, and .483. These results do not provide any additional explanatory power compared to the moderated mediation models. Thus, as the moderated serial mediation models are less parsimonious than the moderated mediation models with captivity emotions as a control variable, we retain the later models as the definite models.

Second, to assess the relevance of using captivity emotions and price unfairness perceptions as two manifestations of customer captivity, we tested moderated mediation models with perceived service quality as the independent variable, satisfaction as the mediator, customer captivity as the moderator, and NWOM as the dependent variable (Hayes, 2018, model 59). The bootstrapping results indicate direct negative effects of customer captivity on perceived quality for the railway ($-.107$ [95% CI: $-.166$; $-.049$]), postal ($-.090$ [95% CI: $-.151$; $-.029$]), and mobile phone services ($-.170$ [95% CI: $-.237$; $-.103$]). Customer captivity also has negative direct effects

on satisfaction for mobile phone services only: $-.176$ [95% CI: $-.250$; $-.102$]. Results also indicate positive direct effects of customer captivity on NWOM: $.093$ [95% CI: $.026$; $.159$] for railway services, $.112$ [95% CI: $.047$; $.177$] for postal services, and $.115$ [95% CI: $.046$; $.185$] for mobile phone services (see Table A6a to c, panels 2). For the three industry samples, the *R*-squared pertaining to railway, postal, and mobile phone services are as follows: for perceived service quality $.038$, $.023$, and $.066$; for satisfaction, $.248$, $.187$, and $.288$, and for NWOM, $.458$, $.523$, and $.455$.

Third, the bootstrapping results of the moderated mediation models indicate a significant conditioning effect of customer captivity on the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction for mobile phone services ($.087$ [95% CI: $.038$; $.136$]), but not for railway and postal services; no significant moderating effects of customer captivity on the relationship between perceived service quality and NWOM for any of the three services and significant moderating effects of customer captivity on the relationship between satisfaction and NWOM for railway services ($-.067$ [95% CI: $-.109$; $-.026$]), and postal services ($-.082$ [95% CI: $-.120$; $-.044$]), but not for mobile phone services (see Table A6a to c, panels 3). For the three industry samples, the *R*-squared pertaining to railway, postal, and mobile phone services are as follows: for satisfaction, $.248$, $.188$, and $.312$, and for NWOM, $.478$, $.553$, and $.456$.

Together, these results show that customer captivity has both direct and conditioning effects on the baseline models in the three services, however, the explanatory powers of the models are smaller compared to the explanatory powers of the models with captivity emotions and price unfairness perceptions, providing support for the relevance of disentangling the effects of these two manifestations.

Fourth, to determine if it is relevant to account for the moderating effects of price unfairness perceptions, we tested direct effects only models with price unfairness perceptions as the

independent variable, perceived service quality and satisfaction as the mediators, and NWOM as the dependent variable (Hayes, 2018, Model 6). The bootstrapping results indicate negative direct effects of price unfairness perceptions on perceived quality for the railway ($-.092$ [95% CI: $-.162$; $-.021$]), postal ($-.171$ [95% CI: $-.221$; $-.121$]), and mobile phone services ($-.150$ [95% CI: $-.213$; $-.086$]). Price unfairness perceptions has direct negative effects on satisfaction for railway services: $-.185$ [95% CI: $-.287$; $-.083$], postal services: $-.150$ [95% CI: $-.228$; $-.072$], and mobile phone services: $-.144$ [95% CI: $-.215$; $-.074$]. Results also indicate positive direct effects of price unfairness perceptions on NWOM for the railway services only: $.120$ [95% CI: $.041$; $.200$] (see Table A6a to c, panels 4). For the three industry samples, the *R*-squared pertaining to railway, postal, and mobile phone services are as follows: for perceived service quality $.020$, $.116$, and $.060$; for satisfaction, $.270$, $.214$, and $.276$, and for NWOM, $.460$, $.508$, and $.439$.

These results show that across the three services, price unfairness directly affects perceived service quality, satisfaction, and NWOM, however, the explanatory powers of the models are smaller compared to the explanatory powers of the moderated mediation models that include the conditioning effects of price unfairness perceptions.

Table A6a. Alternative Models: Railway Services

Railway services	Service quality		Satisfaction		Negative word of mouth	
	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI
1. Moderate Serial Mediation Model						
Captivity emotions	-.169*** (.029)	-.226, -.111	-.303*** (.043)	-.388, -.218	.239*** (.035)	.171, .307
Service quality	—	—	.607*** (.078)	.455, .760	-.222*** (.064)	-.348, -.096
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.334*** (.042)	-.416, -.252
Price unfairness perceptions	-.037 (.036)	-.108, .033	-.099* (.050)	-.198, .000	.093* (.038)	.018, .167
Price unfairness perceptions × Captivity emotions	-.013 (.018)	-.022, .049	.014 (.027)	-.039, .068	-.001 (.022)	-.043, .044
Price unfairness perceptions × Service quality	—	—	.089* (.041)	.008, .171	-.013 (.033)	-.077, .051
Price unfairness perceptions × Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.083*** (.024)	-.131, -.034
	$R^2 = .112$ $F_{(3, 323)} = 13.599, p < .001$		$R^2 = .377$ $F_{(5, 321)} = 38.912, p < .001$		$R^2 = .557$ $F_{(7, 319)} = 57.262, p < .001$	
2. Customer captivity's direct effect only						
Customer captivity	-.107*** (.030)	-.166, -.049	-.072 (.045)	-.160, .016	.093** (.034)	.026, .159
Service quality	—	—	.790*** (.082)	.629, .950	-.273*** (.070)	-.410, -.136
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.470*** (.042)	-.552, -.388
	$R^2 = .038$ $F_{(1, 325)} = 12.116, p < .001$		$R^2 = .248$ $F_{(2, 324)} = 53.779, p < .001$		$R^2 = .458$ $F_{(3, 323)} = 90.816, p < .001$	

3. Moderated mediation model with customer captivity							
Customer captivity	—	—	-.073 (.045)	-.161, .016	.104** (.033)	.039, .170	
Service quality	—	—	.789*** (.082)	.628, .950	-.276*** (.069)	-.411, -.141	
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.456*** (.041)	-.537, -.374	
Customer captivity × Service quality	—	—	.005 (.040)	-.073, .083	-.001 (.033)	-.064, .066	
Customer captivity × Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.067** (.021)	-.109, -.026	
			$R^2 = .248$ $F_{(3, 323)} = 35.416, p < .001$		$R^2 = .478$ $F_{(5, 322)} = 58.857, p < .001$		
4. Price unfairness perceptions' direct effect only							
Price unfairness perceptions	-.092* (.036)	-.162, -.021	-.185*** (.052)	-.287, -.083	.120** (.040)	.041, .200	
Service quality	—	—	.776*** (.080)	.619, .933	-.291*** (.070)	-.427, -.156	
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.456*** (.042)	-.539, -.373	
			$R^2 = .020$ $F_{(1, 325)} = 6.541, p < .05$		$R^2 = .270$ $F_{(2, 324)} = 59.888, p < .001$		$R^2 = .460$ $F_{(3, 323)} = 91.630, p < .001$

Table A6b. Alternative Models: Postal Services

Postal services	Service quality		Satisfaction		Negative word of mouth	
	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI
1. Moderate Serial Mediation Model						
Captivity emotions	-.155*** (.028)	-.210, -.100	-.213*** (.044)	-.298, -.127	.218*** (.033)	.153, .282
Service quality	—	—	.462*** (.080)	.304, .621	-.170** (.062)	-.291, -.048
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.514*** (.040)	-.592, -.336
Price unfairness perceptions	-.123*** (.026)	-.174, -.033	-.096* (.041)	-.177, -.016	-.011 (.030)	-.070, .048
Price unfairness perceptions × Captivity emotions	-.008 (.011)	-.015, .030	.002 (.018)	-.034, .038	-.007 (.014)	-.034, .020
Price unfairness perceptions × Service quality	—	—	-.025 (.035)	-.094, .043	.008 (.027)	-.046, .062
Price unfairness perceptions × Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.051** (.017)	-.084, -.018
	$R^2 = .188$ $F_{(3, 348)} = 26.811, p < .001$		$R^2 = .266$ $F_{(5, 346)} = 25.141, p < .001$		$R^2 = .574$ $F_{(7, 344)} = 66.417, p < .001$	
2. Customer captivity's direct effect only						
Customer captivity	-.090* (.031)	-.151, -.029	-.062 (.045)	-.151, -.027	.112*** (.033)	.047, .177
Service quality	—	—	.653*** (.077)	.503, .804	-.212*** (.062)	-.333, -.091
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.591*** (.039)	-.668, -.514
	$R^2 = .023$ $F_{(1, 350)} = 8.399, p < .01$		$R^2 = .187$ $F_{(2, 349)} = 40.095, p < .001$		$R^2 = .523$ $F_{(3, 348)} = 127.294, p < .001$	

3. Moderated mediation model with customer captivity

Customer captivity	—	—	-.067 (.077)	-.157, .024	.125** (.033)	.067, .189
Service quality	—	—	.653*** (.077)	.503, .804	-.227*** (.060)	-.345, -.110
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.564*** (.038)	-.640, -.489
Customer captivity × Service quality	—	—	.021 (.037)	-.053, .094	-.013 (.029)	-.070, .044
Customer captivity × Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.082*** (.019)	-.120, -.044
			$R^2 = .188$ $F_{(3, 348)} = 26.780, p < .001$		$R^2 = .553$ $F_{(5, 346)} = 85.654, p < .001$	

4. Price unfairness perceptions' direct effect only

Price unfairness perceptions	-.171*** (.025)	-.221, -.121	-.150*** (.040)	-.228, -.072	.017 (.031)	-.043, .077
Service quality	—	—	.568*** (.079)	.412, .723	-.226*** (.064)	-.353, -.100
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.597*** (.040)	-.676, -.517
			$R^2 = .116$ $F_{(1, 350)} = 46.000, p < .001$		$R^2 = .214$ $F_{(2, 349)} = 47.634, p < .001$	
					$R^2 = .508$ $F_{(3, 348)} = 119.737, p < .001$	

Table A6c. Alternative Models: Mobile Phone Services

Mobile phone services	Service quality		Satisfaction		Negative word of mouth	
	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI	Coeff. (s.e.)	95% CI
1. Moderate Serial Mediation Model						
Captivity emotions	-.160*** (.030)	-.119, -.138	-.126*** (.034)	-.193, -.059	.108*** (.032)	.046, .171
Service quality	—	—	.459*** (.060)	.341, .576	-.367*** (.059)	-.484, -.251
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.367*** (.051)	-.467, -.267
Price unfairness perceptions	-.110*** (.032)	-.173, -.046	-.120*** (.035)	-.189, -.051	.035 (.033)	-.030, .100
Price unfairness perceptions × Captivity emotions	-.009 (.014)	-.036, .018	-.035* (.015)	-.065, -.006	-.006 (.014)	-.033, .021
Price unfairness perceptions × Service quality	—	—	.032 (.029)	-.024, .088	-.075* (.029)	-.133, -.018
Price unfairness perceptions × Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.030 (.023)	-.076, .015
		$R^2 = .135$	$R^2 = .324$		$R^2 = .483$	
		$F_{(3, 334)} = 17.352, p < .001$	$F_{(5, 332)} = 31.848, p < .001$		$F_{(7, 330)} = 44.038, p < .001$	
2. Customer captivity's direct effect only						
Customer captivity	-.170*** (.034)	-.237, -.103	-.176*** (.038)	-.250, -.102	.115** (.035)	.046, .185
Service quality	—	—	.525*** (.058)	.410, .639	-.409*** (.059)	-.526, -.293
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.399*** (.050)	-.497, -.301
		$R^2 = .066$	$R^2 = .288$		$R^2 = .455$	
		$F_{(1, 336)} = 25.017, p < .001$	$F_{(2, 335)} = 67.594, p < .001$		$F_{(3, 334)} = 92.800, p < .001$	

3. Moderated mediation model with customer captivity

Customer captivity	—	—	-.168*** (.037)	-.241, -.095	.113** (.036)	.043, .183
Service quality	—	—	.480*** (.059)	.365, .595	-.408*** (.060)	-.525, -.291
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.382*** (.053)	-.486, -.278
Customer captivity × Service quality	—	—	.087*** (.025)	.038, .136	-.004 (.028)	-.051, .058
Customer captivity × Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.019 (.022)	-.061, -.024
			$R^2 = .312$ $F_{(3, 334)} = 50.569, p < .001$		$R^2 = .456$ $F_{(5, 332)} = 55.677, p < .001$	

4. Price unfairness perceptions' direct effect only

Price unfairness perceptions	-.150*** (.032)	-.213, -.086	-.144*** (.036)	-.215, -.074	.032 (.034)	-.034, .098
Service quality	—	—	.539*** (.058)	.424, .654	-.426*** (.060)	-.543, -.308
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	-.429*** (.050)	-.527, -.517
			$R^2 = .060$ $F_{(1, 336)} = 21.283, p < .001$		$R^2 = .276$ $F_{(2, 335)} = 63.859, p < .001$	
					$R^2 = .439$ $F_{(3, 334)} = 87.026, p < .001$	

A7. Qualitative study informants

Table A7 provides the characteristics of the 20 informants interviewed in the qualitative study.

Table A7. Characteristics of the informants

Informant	Initials	Age	Gender	Service
1.	C.R.	30–34	Female	Mobile Phone
2.	M.D.	30–34	Male	Mobile Phone
3.	T.B.	35–39	Female	Mobile Phone
4.	D.M.	35–39	Male	Mobile Phone
5.	H.K.	55–59	Female	Mobile Phone
6.	M.P.	60–64	Female	Mobile Phone
7.	B.L.	70–74	Male	Mobile Phone
8.	R.B.	75–79	Female	Mobile Phone
9.	S.P.	25–29	Male	Railways
10.	S.R.	25–29	Male	Railways
11.	S.M.	25–29	Male	Railways
12.	J.B.	35–40	Female	Railways
13.	A.T.	40–44	Female	Railways
14.	D.I.	45–49	Male	Railways
15.	P.L.	65–69	Male	Railways
16.	C.P.	30–34	Female	Post
17.	M.B.	30–34	Female	Post
18.	P.C.	30–34	Male	Post
19.	B.H.	50–55	Female	Post
20.	L.M.	65–70	Female	Post

A8. Coding scheme

Table A8 details the coding scheme resulting from this multistep iterative coding process and provide illustrative quotes from the interviews.

Table A8. Coding scheme

	Second-order themes	First-order codes	Illustrative quotes
Customer captivity	Conditions for customer captivity	<i>Perceived need</i>	<p>We are being held hostage because everybody uses it (mobile phone) and it costs so much (B.L. – phone).</p> <p>For my business trips to Geneva or Zurich, I don't have any other option than to use the Swiss railway company (P.L. – railways).</p> <p>I have a lot of things delivered by the Post. I would say that I order 80% of my purchases that are not food-related online. Anyway, I expect deliveries many times per week [...] I am captive from the Post...like a prisoner (C.P. – post).</p>
		<i>Lack of available alternatives</i>	<p>With the Swiss railways, I totally [felt captive]. This was because, on some routes, you could only take the train, there were no other available alternative (S.P. – railways).</p> <p>The Post is the only option [...] when things go wrong, I would like to have another alternative. (M.B. – post).</p> <p>You don't have that much options. You have to go to the Post for some things. You have to use the Swiss railways. And also, for your monthly phone plan, you are kind of stuck between three or four providers (A.T. – post, railways, phone).</p>
	No choice	<i>No choice</i>	<p>I realized I had made a mistake [...] I had no choice [...] for a period of 12 or 24 months [...] I felt helpless because of the terms of my contract (D.M. – phone).</p> <p>I realized after a few months that I was not necessarily using it [mobile data and other conditions included in contract]. At that time, I was forced to stay with them until the end of my contract (D.M. – phone).</p> <p>They [telecom operator] didn't offer any solution because for them there was no problem. [...] I felt like I couldn't do anything as I had no control over what could happen (T.B. – phone).</p>
Manifestations of captivity	Captivity emotions	Frustration	<p><i>Frustration because no choice</i></p> <p>How frustrated I was. I was even more frustrated because I couldn't use another railways company. I had a bad experience. But I thought, it wasn't because I didn't have the choice to change services that it gave the right to (the railway company) to treat me like that (S.M. – railways).</p> <p><i>Frustration because no control</i></p> <p>I felt captive from the postal delivery schedules, which were very often incorrectly announced. I was literally held captive at home, like a prisoner [...] I felt a lot of frustration, I had no control, I had no alternatives (C.P. – post).</p> <p><i>Frustration and feeling vulnerable</i></p> <p>I didn't have any other options. [...], you felt as if you were [...] frustrated and vulnerable too (H.K. – phone).</p>
		Helplessness	<i>Helplessness because no possible change</i>

	Anger / Being upset	<i>Anger</i> <i>Being upset</i>	We couldn't do anything as long as the contract was not finished. [...] I was angry, because it was unfair to pay 150 CHF extra when everything (service) was not working (R.M. – phone). it (captive situation) puts me in a position that makes me upset (B.L. – phone).
	Indifference	<i>Indifference</i> <i>Detachment</i>	Knowing that there was no competitor that provided the same service, I felt quite indifferent (D.I. – railways). I didn't get upset if I had to go to the post office. It was like taking the garbage out. Something you didn't like to do, but you have to (P.C. – post).
	Stress	<i>Stress because no possible action and feeling of being taken advantage of</i>	It was stressful because I really felt like I couldn't do anything about it (captive situation) and I felt being taken advantage of (T.B. – phone).
	Feeling of being held hostage	<i>Feeling of being held hostage because of high prices and need for service</i>	We are being held hostage because everybody uses it (mobile phone) and it costs so much (B.L. – phone).
	Price unfairness perceptions	Overpriced service <i>Feeling of being taken advantage of because of high prices</i> <i>Feeling of being held hostage because of high prices</i> <i>Feeling upset because of high prices compared to service quality</i>	They know it, and they don't adapt their prices. They maintain their [high] prices because they know that [we are living] in villages, in the countryside. You feel that you are being taken advantage of (H.K. – phone). We are being held hostage [...] because it costs so much. It's upsetting. It is 3 to 4 times more expensive than in other European countries (B.L. – phone). People like me, who commute every day, we are quite upset with the Swiss railways because the prices are expensive [...] and there are many delays, cancellations and other problems like that (D.I. – railways). I thought it was too expensive in regard to the quality of service, but I'm not able to change anything (S.P. – railways).
Coping with captivity	Complaining	<i>Complaining</i>	[I wrote] to customer service, I said [...] this was really appalling that you payed this amount of money and you even made the effort of booking in advance, you tried to be on time, [...] and still you always ended up having an issue. So, I gave them an earful [...] I didn't think my voice was heard because I never got a reply (A.T. – railways). I called customer service several times, they took note and said they understood [my situation] but that they could do nothing more. We made a joint complaint [...]” (C.P. – postal services).
	Resignation	<i>Resignation</i>	We had to stay. Even if we found something else cheaper, we couldn't just cancel [the subscription] like that. [...] sometimes I told myself that I'm the one who chose it. So, I had to take responsibility (C.R. – phone). I thought it was too expensive in regard to the quality of service, but I'm not able to change anything” (S.P. – railways).
	Emotional support seeking NWOM	<i>NWOM</i>	Immediately after that trip, I shared this negative experience with my parents, [...] I wanted to externalize my frustration, formalize it so I wouldn't keep it inside (S.M. – railways).

			<p>I was frustrated, and I found the situation revolting. So, it (sharing the experience) made me feel good to talk about it, so that people understood my situation (T.B. – phone).</p> <p>[I shared this experience] not for revenge], but as I was captive from the telecom company. I had no way to punish them! [...] it was nice to talk about it with friends and say words you would have liked to say to the service provider (M.D. – phone).</p>
Outcomes of NWOM	Reducing captivity feelings	<i>Releasing negative emotions</i>	I was angry and stressed, I knew that my wife was waiting for me. Being able to criticize the service with my wife helped me mitigate the situation (S.R. – railways).
		<i>Regaining control</i>	As it was an injustice, I didn't want it to happen to me or to others. [From this perspective], sharing my experience allowed me to feel as I was regaining control, yes clearly. [...] And I felt relieved. Liberated is the word (M.D. – phone).
		<i>Reinforcing social ties</i>	I felt more understood. Even if friends didn't understand the technical problem, at least they understood the human problem and my frustration. [...] It didn't solve my problem, but it helped to get this frustration out by sharing it with someone (M.D. – phone). So, I felt better because I was not alone, at least not the only one who got screwed (C.R. – phone).

A9. Characteristics and manifestations of customer captivity

Prior to addressing informants' coping behaviors and their effectiveness, the interviews started with opening questions related to the characteristics and manifestations of customers' captivity. These opening questions were meant to help informants remember their affective state in captivity situations. From a methodological point of view, the answers to these questions are useful to better understand customers' feelings of captivity, as well as price unfairness perceptions and captivity emotions, as two manifestations of customer captivity. Findings confirm that customers feel captive because they do not have the possibility to leave the service relationship, due to a perceived need for the service and a lack of alternatives. Then, customer captivity manifests itself through the perceptions of unfair pricing practices and negative emotions induced by captivity. In addition, the data also provide face validity for the items used in the questionnaire-based survey to measure customer captivity, price unfairness perceptions, and captivity emotions, but also allow for a deeper understanding of these complex phenomena, notably in the range of captivity emotions and how prices are perceived as too expensive and unfair in captivity settings.

The characteristics of customers captivity

How do captive customers perceive their captivity? The analysis of the interview data reveals that the perception of captivity is reflected through three related themes: (1) a perceived need for the services, (2) a lack of alternatives and (3), feelings of not having any choice.

Perceived need. Informants revealed that they feel dependent on the provider for obtaining the service they need, as stated by this railway user: “*For my business trips to Geneva or Zurich, I don't have any other option than to use the Swiss railway company*” (P.L. – railways). This other customer elaborated on her need for postal services: “*I have a lot of things delivered by the Post. I would say that I order 80% of my purchases that are not food-related online. Anyway, I expect deliveries many times per week [...] I am captive from the Post...like a prisoner*” (C.P. – post). In

other situations, for example in the case of mobile phone services, customers feel the need to use the service to keep up with other people, as *everybody uses it* (B.L. – phone).

Lack of alternatives. Informants also related their captivity feelings to the lack of available alternative providers to obtain the service they needed, such as: “*On some routes, you could only take the train, there were no other available alternative*” (S.P. – railways) or “*The post is the only option [...] when things go wrong, I would like to have another alternative*” (M.B. – post).

No choice. Data show that the feeling of not having any choice is a key sentiment of captive customers and the most frequently mentioned, either because of having no control over the situation, as a mobile phone customer explained: “*They [telecom operator] didn’t offer any solution because for them there was no problem [...] I felt like I couldn’t do anything as I had no control over what could happen*” (T.B. – phone), In other cases, customers feel that they do not have any choice because they are forced to stay in their service relationship. Informants described their impression of being captive using expressions such as *being stuck* (A.T. – railways) and *being forced to stay* (C.R. – phone) with the same provider. Some informants felt they made a mistake in choosing a specific service provider and once their choice was made, there was no way back, no exit, they were unable to leave: “*I realized after a few months that I was not necessarily using it [mobile data and other conditions included in contract]. At that time, I was forced to stay with them until the end of my contract*” (D.M. – phone).

Manifestations of customer captivity

The interview data also provide face validity for the two manifestations of customer captivity: captivity emotions and price unfairness perceptions.

Captivity emotions. Customer captivity negatively impact customers’ affective state. During the interviews, informants expressed that when they feel captive, they are subject to a

range of negative emotions and feelings such as: (1) frustration, (2) helplessness, (3) anger and being upset, (4) indifference, (5) stress, and (6) feeling of being held hostage. Frustration is the negative emotion the most frequently mentioned by the informants in relation to their feelings of captivity, and more specifically with the perception of not having any choice, as mentioned by this railway customer: *“How frustrated I was. I was even more frustrated because I couldn’t use another railway company. I had a bad experience. But I thought, it wasn’t because I didn’t have the choice to change services that it gave the right to (the railway company) treat me like that”* (S.M. – railways). Data also shows that customers tend to feel frustrated when they consider the situation to be out of their control: *“I felt captive from the postal delivery schedules, which were very often incorrectly announced. I was literally held captive at home, like a prisoner [...] I felt a lot of frustration, I had no control, I had no alternatives”* (C.P. – post). This frustration is also related to a feeling of vulnerability, as in the case of this mobile phone user: *“I didn’t have any other options. [...], you felt as if you were [...] frustrated and vulnerable too.”* (H.K. – phone). *Helplessness* is an emotion which includes both the feelings of powerlessness and dependency. When the feelings of captivity persist, such that customers believe the adverse situation could not be changed in the future, they feel helpless, as expressed by this railway customer: *“There was no way to change things. I had a feeling of helplessness.”* (S.P. – railways). Contrary to frustration, only few informants expressed *anger* or *being upset* with respect to their feeling of captivity. Anger is more likely to occur when there is a service failure attributed to the service provider, which exacerbates the feeling of captivity: *“We couldn’t do anything as long as the contract was not finished. [...] I was angry, because it was unfair to pay 150 CHF extra when everything (service) was not working.”* (R.M. –phone). Moreover, for some customers, *“[the feeling of captivity] wasn’t something extremely strong, except in the cases of a service failure.”* (S.M. – railways). Stress is closely linked with the feeling of having no power over the captivity situation,

as revealed by this telecommunication service customer: *“It was stressful because I really felt like I couldn't do anything about it (captive situation) and I felt being taken advantage of”* (T.B. – phone). Finally, some informants described their feeling of *being held hostage* because of their need for the service and price unfairness perceptions: *“We are being held hostage because everybody use it (mobile phone) and it costs so much”* (B.L. – phone).

Price unfairness perceptions. Captivity feelings are often associated with impressions of price unfairness, as stated by a railway customer: *“With the Swiss railways, I totally [felt captive]. This was because, on some routes, you could only take the train, there were no other available alternative. [...] I thought it was too expensive in regard to the quality of service, but I'm not able to change anything”* (S.P. – railways). Customers feel that they must stay with their current service provider despite high prices and sometimes poor-quality service, because they do not have any attractive alternative and do not have control over the situation, as a train user explained: *“People like me, who commute every day, we are quite upset with the Swiss railways because the prices are expensive [...] and there are many delays, cancellations and other problems like that”* (D.I. – railways). Some informants also expressed their feelings of being taken advantage of by their service provider. This perception is notably driven by their belief that, in a captivity situation, services are opportunistically overpriced. One respondent felt that her mobile operator was benefiting from being the only functioning option for people living in remote areas, which led to the feeling of being taken advantage of: *“They know it, and they don't adapt their prices. They maintain their [high] prices because they know that [we are living] in villages, in the countryside. You feel that you are being taken advantage of.”* (H.K. – phone). Some informants perceived captivity as a power asymmetry in favor of service providers, which allowed them to *increase prices* (I.D. – railways) and *reduce the quality of service* (M.D. – phone).

References

- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014), *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cronin Jr, J.J. and Taylor, S.A. (1992), “Measuring service quality: a reexamination and extension”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 56 No. 3, pp. 55–68.
- Fliess, S. and Volkers, M. (2020), “Trapped in a service encounter: exploring customer lock-in and its effect on well-being and coping responses during service encounters”, *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 79–114.
- Hayes, F. (2018), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*, Second edition. New York, NY, London, Guilford Press.
- Ivankova, N.V., Creswell, J.W. and Stick, S.L. (2006). “Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: from theory to practice”, *Field Methods*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 3–20.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1988), “SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality”, *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 64 No. 1, pp. 12–40.
- Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Lee, J.Y. and Podsakoff, N.P. (2003), “Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 88 No. 5, pp. 879–903.
- Rayburn, S.W. (2015), “Consumers’ captive service experiences: it’s YOU and ME”, *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 15/16, pp. 806–825.
- Sabadie, W. (2003), “Conceptualisation et mesure de la qualité perçue d’un service public [Conceptualization and measure of the perceived quality of a public service]”, *Recherche et Applications en Marketing (French Edition)*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 1–24. (in French).