

The dark side of customer interactions: exploring the predictive power of Dark Triad traits on Jay Customer behavior in service industries

Scott Widmier*

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, USA

Prachi Gala

Department of Marketing and Professional Sales, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, USA, and

Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, Johannesburg, South Africa

Nikolaos Iason Koufodontis

University of the Aegean, Mytilene, Greece, and

Michael Serkedakis

Department of Marketing and Professional Sales, Michael J Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, USA

*Corresponding author Scott Widmier swidmier@kennesaw.edu

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to introduce a predictive, trait-based framework to understand Jay Customer behavior in service industries. Building on Social Exchange Theory (SET), it explores how antisocial personality traits – collectively known as the Dark Triad (Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy) – predict deviant customer behavior and how contextual moderators shape this relationship.

Design/methodology/approach: A large-scale survey ($n = 830$) was conducted using validated scales to measure Dark Triad traits, Jay Customer behavior and situational moderators, including boredom, sensation seeking, stress and service context (business vs leisure). Hypotheses were tested using regression analysis.

Findings: Dark Triad traits strongly predict Jay Customer behavior across verbal, physical and financial misconduct. This relationship is significantly moderated by boredom, sensation seeking and leisure service contexts. Contrary to expectations, stress has a direct effect on misbehavior but does not moderate the trait-behavior relationship. The model explains over 63% of the variance in Jay Customer behavior.

Research limitations/implications: This study advances SET by introducing the concept of conditional SET compliance, demonstrating that individuals with antisocial traits strategically violate reciprocity norms, especially under low-cost, high-stimulation conditions. It contributes a novel integration of personality psychology into the service marketing domain.

Practical implications: Findings offer actionable strategies for frontline service management, including personality-informed customer profiling, context-specific service design and early behavioral flagging. Recommendations are offered for employee training and policy customization in leisure versus business environments.

Social implications: Proactively managing disruptive behavior can reduce psychological strain on service employees and enhance service environments for all customers, contributing to improved well-being and operational sustainability.

Originality/value: To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is the first to apply the Dark Triad framework to predict Jay Customer behavior, shifting the focus from descriptive

typologies to a proactive, trait-based model. It extends SET through the concept of conditional compliance and offers practical strategies for managing customer deviance – particularly relevant in the post-pandemic service landscape.

Keywords: Customer Service, Complaints, Customer care, Dysfunctional customers, Customer deviance, Behavioural insight

Introduction

Most people have had service experiences ruined not by the service provider itself but by other customers' actions, such as loud and obnoxious verbal behavior, vandalism of service property, or even abuse aimed towards other customers or service providers. In 1994, Lovelock coined the most often used term in literature: "Jay Customer," after "Jaywalkers" who crossroads in unauthorized places. However, there have been a myriad of other terms, including "deviant consumer behavior" (Moschis and Cox, 1989), "aberrant consumer behavior" (Fullerton and Punj, 1993), "consumer -misbehavior" (Tonglet, 2002), "problem customers" (Bitner *et al.*, 1994), "dysfunctional customer behavior" (Harris and Reynolds, 2004) and "inappropriate behavior" (Strutton *et al.*, 1994).

Post-pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the behaviors classified as Jay Customer by Harris and Reynolds (2004). Retailers have reported a surge in shoplifting incidents, with a 93% increase in the average number of incidents per year in 2023 compared to 2019 (Huffman, 2024). This trend is part of a broader pattern of increased Jay Customer behavior, including shoplifting and other disruptive actions such as fraudulent returns and aggressive behavior toward staff. The National Retail Federation's 2024 report highlights those shoplifting losses grew by 19.4% year-over-year in 2022. Additionally, customer service complaints have hit record levels. The National Customer Rage Survey found that 74% of Americans experienced issues in the consumer marketplace in 2023, up from 66% in 2020 (NBC News, 2023). Fraudulent returns have also become more prevalent, with customers increasingly returning used or stolen items for refunds (Harris and Reynolds, 2004). Moreover, there has been a noticeable rise in aggressive behavior towards retail staff, with more incidents of verbal and physical abuse reported, particularly in the wake of the pandemic (NBC News, 2023). These examples illustrate the trend of increasing Jay Customer behavior in the post-pandemic era, underscoring the need for businesses to adapt their strategies to address this evolving landscape.

Jay Customer behavior not only upsets other customers, ruining their service encounters, but can also negatively impact customer service providers, whose attitudes are crucial to the delivery of services. Given the impact of Jay Customers, it is somewhat surprising that the only way to identify these disruptive customers is through their inappropriate actions, which, to borrow a common colloquium, is akin to "shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted." What is needed is a method by which Jay Customers can be identified BEFORE they have a chance to be disruptive.

While past research, particularly Daunt and Harris (2011), has explored the types and motivations of such behaviors, our study advances this literature by introducing a predictive framework utilizing the *Dark Triad* personality traits, Machiavellianism, Narcissism and

Psychopathy, as dispositional antecedents of Jay Customer behavior. In 2002, Paulhus and Williams combined three notably offensive but non-pathological personality types: Machiavellianism, sub-pathological Narcissism and sub-pathological Psychopathy into the Dark Triad personality. Narcissism is characterized by grandiosity, pride, egotism and a lack of empathy (Kohut, 1977). Machiavellianism is characterized by manipulating and exploiting others, indifference to morality, lack of empathy and a strategic focus on self-interest (Jakobwitz and Egan, 2006). Finally, psychopathy is characterized by continuous antisocial behavior, impulsiveness, selfishness, callous and unemotional traits and remorselessness (Frick and White, 2008). High scores in these traits have been found to statistically increase a person's likelihood of committing crimes, cause social distress and create severe problems for organizations (O'Boyle *et al.*, 2012).

Dark Triad has been used successfully to predict future behavior from relationship choices (Jonason *et al.*, 2012a), workspace perceptions (Jonason *et al.*, 2015), aggression (Jones and Neria, 2015), driving aggression (Burtäverde *et al.*, 2016), violence (Pailing *et al.*, 2014), health behaviors (Malesza and Kaczmarek, 2021), cyberbullying (Goodboy and Martin, 2015), prejudice (Anderson and Cheers, 2018), materialism (Pilch and Górnik-Durose, 2016), workplace deviance (Ellen *et al.*, 2021) and consumer behavior (Blair *et al.*, 2022). Surprisingly, it has not yet been applied to predicting or understanding Jay Customers. A better understanding of the root cause of Jay Customers is the first step in creating solutions to reduce their negative impact on both customers and employees in service encounters.

This research tests the link between the Dark Triad personality and Jay Customer service behaviors. In addition, it will give a further understanding of this relationship by looking at the moderating impact of other factors of boredom, sensation seeking, stress and business versus leisure on Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior. By integrating this framework with Social Exchange Theory (SET), which posits that individuals weigh costs and benefits before acting, we argue that customers high in Dark Triad traits are less likely to adhere to SET norms and are more likely to engage in behavior that prioritizes self-interest at the expense of others. The research question we seek to answer is: can Dark Triad personality predict Jay Customer behavior, and is this relationship moderated by boredom, sensation seeking, stress and business versus leisure?

Our work builds on but differs significantly from previous research on Jay Customer behavior in several key ways. First, while previous research, such as Daunt and Harris (2011), offered an important foundation for understanding Jay Customer behavior, our study introduces the Dark Triad personality framework, which has not previously been applied in this context. This allows us to explore how Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy, traits known for norm-violating and antisocial tendencies, predict disruptive customer actions. Second, we expand the existing model by incorporating four novel moderators: boredom, sensation seeking, stress and travel context (leisure vs business). These variables provide a dynamic understanding of when and why misbehavior is likely to occur, offering insights beyond static trait-based explanations. Third, we integrate psychological theory with SET, proposing that individuals high in Dark Triad traits violate SET norms, particularly when contextual moderators reduce perceived social costs. This theoretical lens offers a fresh perspective on customer deviance, positioning it as trait-driven and situationally reinforced. Finally, we base our findings on a large and diverse sample of 830 respondents, significantly enhancing the

robustness and generalizability of our results. Together, these contributions advance both theoretical and practical understanding of Jay Customer behavior in service industries.

We find that the Dark Triad does predict Jay Customer behavior in the services sector. Boredom, sensation seeking and leisure services (over the business) strengthen this relationship. Our conceptual model is shown in [Figure 1](#).

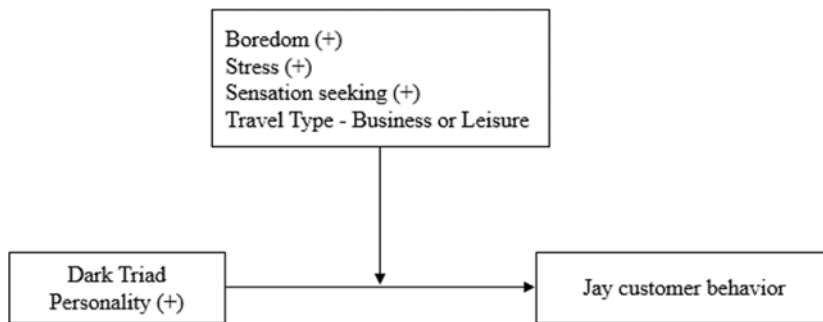


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Note(s): Alt Text: A conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between Dark Triad Personality and Jay Customer Behavior, with four moderators influencing this relationship: Boredom (+), Stress (+), Sensation Seeking (+) and Travel Type (Business or Leisure). Arrows indicate a positive association between Dark Triad traits and Jay Customer Behavior, as well as the moderating effects of the listed factors

Source: Author’s own work

Literature background

Social Exchange Theory

SET provides a robust lens for understanding interpersonal behavior within service encounters by positing that individuals base their interactions on the rational evaluation of potential costs and benefits ([Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005](#); [Cook et al., 2013](#)). In service settings, customers are assumed to adhere to a norm of reciprocity, where courteous behavior is expected in exchange for fair treatment, respect or satisfactory service outcomes ([Yi and Gong, 2008](#)). When individuals perceive that the benefits of engaging in a particular behavior outweigh the associated costs, be they financial, social or reputational, they are more likely to engage in that behavior.

This framework has been extensively applied to explain positive customer behaviors such as loyalty, word-of-mouth and complaint intentions ([Yi and Gong, 2008](#)) and dysfunctional behaviors when customers perceive violations in fairness or equity ([Daunt and Harris, 2014](#)). However, a key assumption of SET is that individuals are generally motivated by social norms and fairness considerations. Our research challenges this assumption by introducing the idea that certain personality traits, particularly those associated with the Dark Triad, predispose individuals to reject or strategically exploit SET norms for personal gain.

Customers high in Machiavellianism may calculate exchanges solely for instrumental advantage, ignoring ethical boundaries and fairness considerations ([Jakobwitz and Egan,](#)

2006). Narcissistic customers, driven by entitlement and a desire for admiration, may perceive disproportionate benefits as their right, thus violating the reciprocity expected in service exchanges (Ahn, 2024). Psychopathic individuals, characterized by impulsivity and lack of empathy (Forsyth *et al.*, 2012; Keem *et al.*, 2018), may disregard the costs their behavior imposes on others, prioritizing immediate gratification over long-term relational value.

We extend SET by introducing the concept of conditional SET compliance, wherein contextual factors moderate the likelihood of norm-violating behavior. For instance, leisure settings may reduce perceived consequences, while boredom or sensation-seeking may amplify the perceived benefits of misbehavior. Stress, although directly related to deviant actions, may not significantly change cost-benefit appraisals for individuals already predisposed to antisocial behavior. Integrating dispositional and situational variables into SET contributes to a more nuanced understanding of consumer misbehavior. Rather than assuming customers always act rationally within social norms, our model recognizes that some individuals are structurally inclined to act against them, especially under certain circumstances. By embedding the Dark Triad within SET, we provide a richer explanatory framework for predicting and managing Jay Customer behavior.

Jay Customer research

Aggression and violence are common phenomena in Jay Customer behavior in the service industry (Rose and Neidermeyer, 1999). Aggressive behavior can be threatening or rude towards the staff, employees or other customers. Nelms (1998) reported one case wherein the flight attendant was attacked by a passenger upset due to a delayed flight. Such extreme behavior can result in a company's monetary loss, employee psychological strain, or, in rare cases, even homicide (Rose and Neidermeyer, 1999). Other less aggressive behaviors, which can also be considered Jay Customer behavior, include knowingly registering inauthentic complaints, sometimes to negotiate desired outcomes. Such complaints, which may be considered unreasonable, result in reduced employee tolerance. Per one American survey, service employees suffer from customer aggression ten times daily (Grandey *et al.*, 2004). A total of 82% of frontline employees have been subjected to aggressive customer behavior annually, and 54% reported their lives to be "significantly affected."

Jay Customer behaviors lead to increased operations costs, further impacting business profits (Covert, 2007). Harris and Reynolds (2004) found that such behavior can have long-term psychological effects on service providers, including feelings of degradation, humiliation and subjugation, stress disorders, anxiety, sleeplessness, fear, frustration, anger, hatred and irritation. Service employees often react highly negatively to misbehaving customers (Frey-Cordes *et al.*, 2020), thus further diminishing the service quality. Under certain circumstances, employees may even take a retaliatory "revenge" stance (Bedi and Schat, 2017).

Jay Customers also negatively impact fellow customers (Furrer *et al.*, 2023). This can cause negative attitudes towards service providers (Okan and Elmadag, 2020), creating a domino effect of complaining behavior (Srivastava *et al.*, 2022). The bottom line is that this results in increased financial costs, employee workloads, training costs, employee turnover, property damage and legal costs (Lee and Gong, 2024). The financial cost can also be personal for the

employees, e.g. reduction in tips, as evidence from service employees suggests ([Medler-Liraz, 2020](#)).

There have been calls for more research on Jay Customer behavior and how one can reduce it ([Fisk et al., 2010](#)). There have been multiple works on antecedents that lead to such Jay Customer behavior, including the psychological traits, the demographics of the customer and the group influence ([C. Harris and Daunt, 2013](#)). Past research demonstrates that agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability significantly and negatively correlate with unethical internet behaviors in university students ([Karim et al., 2009](#)). Web appendix (WA1, WA2 and WA3) demonstrates the detailed literature review on antecedents of Jay Customers. While prior research has explored the relationship between consumer misbehavior and the Big Five personality traits, the Dark Triad framework offers a more targeted lens by directly capturing norm-violating, antisocial and exploitative tendencies – making it especially well-suited to predict Jay Customer behavior.

Dark Triad personality

Despite the growing literature on consumer misbehavior, few studies have examined the role of personality traits that are explicitly antisocial or norm-violating. The Dark Triad offers a focused framework for understanding how chronic tendencies toward manipulation, entitlement and emotional coldness may predispose individuals to engage in Jay Customer behavior. Unlike broader trait models, the Dark Triad provides direct insights into behaviors that disrupt service experiences for employees and fellow customers alike.

The Dark Triad personality by [Paulhus and Williams \(2002\)](#) is the cluster of three socially undesirable, malevolent personality traits known for “transgressive and norm-violating behavior”: narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy ([Muris et al., 2017](#), p. 183). Narcissism is characterized by grandiosity, pride, egotism and a lack of empathy. High levels can lead to feelings of entitlement and superiority, haughty behavior and a lack of empathy and concern ([Jakobwitz and Egan, 2006](#)). Machiavellianism is characterized by the manipulation and exploitation of others, an absence of morality, unemotional callousness and a higher level of self-interest than normal ([Frick and White, 2008](#)). People high in Machiavellianism not only want to succeed, but they also want to do so at the expense of (or at least without regard to) others ([Klimstra et al., 2020](#)). Psychopathy is characterized by continuous antisocial behavior, impulsiveness, selfishness, callous and unemotional traits and remorselessness ([Forsyth et al., 2012](#); [Keem et al., 2018](#)). People high in psychopathy have persistent anti-social behavior, impaired empathy, impaired remorse and are bold and disinhibited.

While these traits are conceptually distinct, their overlap creates a unique risk profile that makes individuals more likely to exploit service interactions, disregard norms and engage in disruptive behavior, even in the absence of provocation. People scoring high on all three traits have the Dark Triad personality and are more likely to commit crimes, cause social distress and create severe problems for organizations ([Lacey, 2009](#)). They also tend to be less compassionate, agreeable, less empathetic, less satisfied with their lives and less likely to believe others are good ([Kaufman et al., 2019](#)).

Research has extensively linked the Dark Triad personality to various forms of antisocial behavior, including customer misbehavior. For instance, individuals with Dark Triad traits are significantly more likely to engage in frequent and fraudulent refund claims for food delivery services (Orhan and Collisson, 2022). They are also associated with manipulating others using excessive charm, physical appearance and physical threats (Jonason *et al.*, 2012b). Additionally, the Dark Triad has been tied to internet trolling behavior (Buckels *et al.*, 2014), theft (Lyons and Jonason, 2015) and online fraud (Harrison *et al.*, 2018).

Despite growing research on the antecedents of Jay Customer behavior, the current literature has not fully leveraged frameworks that explicitly account for antisocial personality traits. The Dark Triad framework addresses this gap by identifying a specific cluster of maladaptive personality traits, Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy, that predispose individuals to exploit others, dismiss social norms and engage in aggressive or manipulative behavior. Our study makes a unique contribution by applying this personality framework directly to customer misbehavior in service contexts. Web Appendix (WA4) summarizes the literature on the Dark Triad personality's impact on service employees in the hospitality sector. Although Dark Triad traits may seem abstract or clinically oriented, they manifest in everyday behaviors such as verbal aggression, entitlement and manipulation, making them highly relevant to service contexts where front-line interactions are emotionally charged and unpredictable.

Research hypotheses

Impact of Dark Triad on Jay Customers

According to Ahn (2024), people with the Dark Triad personality are hard to please, so their dissatisfaction extends beyond rage and revenge. They are known to submit negative online reviews and have angry interactions with the front-line service employees. This behavior is built deeply into their makeup. Based on SET, the behavior that entails an interaction is based on evaluating costs and benefit analyses. Specifically, Jay Customer behavior is expected from the Machiavellian personality due to their extreme need to control the external environment, irrespective of ethical outcomes and behavior. Individuals high in Machiavellianism may seek power and control in various aspects of their lives, including their interactions as customers (Aldousari and Ickes, 2021). Based on SET, for Machiavellian consumers, the benefit of manipulating the system to gain an advantage (like financial savings or rewards) outweighs the ethical cost. This could manifest in demanding behavior, manipulation and an inclination to exploit situations for personal gain (Jakobwitz and Egan, 2006).

Narcissists and their Jay Customer behavior are further justified by their expectation of excessive self-love and attention-seeking behavior. Narcissistic traits feel a sense of entitlement among individuals, leading to demanding customer behaviors. Narcissists may prioritize their needs and desires, expecting special treatment and reacting negatively when expectations are unmet (Ahn, 2024). As per SET, for narcissist traits, the special treatment that they expect from their dominating behavior outweighs the reputational damage that would be a result of their Jay Customer demonstration.

Psychopaths, known for their trolling behavior due to their lack of empathy and anti-social traits, tend to treat service employees badly. Psychopathic traits, characterized by impulsivity and a lack of empathy, might lead individuals to engage in impulsive and disruptive customer behaviors without consideration for the impact on others, specifically on service providers. (Keem *et al.*, 2018; Forsyth *et al.*, 2012). Psychopaths also outweigh their immediate gratification of the misbehavior compared to the long-term costs of legal consequences.

These three traits intertwine and feed on each other in the Dark Triad personality, magnifying the antisocial behaviors prevalent in past research on this unique personality (Lacy, 2009). The Dark Triad Personality results in controlling, attention-seeking and lack of empathic behavior, eventually leading to Jay Customer behavior. From the perspective of SET, individuals with Dark Triad traits are predisposed to maximize personal gain without regard for the social costs or consequences typically considered in service interactions. Their behavior reflects a systematic departure from reciprocal exchange norms, positioning them as likely violators of established service expectations. Thus:

H1. Dark Triad personality is positively related to Jay Customer behavior.

Moderating effect of stress

The transaction model of stress and coping, proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), is based on the central tenet, which suggests that an individual experiencing stress will trigger a process of assessment, which will test the degree of a threat compared to their well-being. Given that the well-being of the Dark Triad personality is very interconnected with that of manipulation, self-centeredness and unethical behaviors, based on the transactional model, experiencing stress will amplify that feeling. When a customer with the Dark Triad personality is in contact with the staff personnel, it looks for well-being in such manipulative behavior. If they go through stress, they are threatened with their own need for well-being, thus amplifying Jay Customer behavior. Stress has been found to play a significant role in expressing the Dark Triad traits (Nübold *et al.*, 2022; Richardson and Boag 2016). Sliter *et al.* (2015) argue that stress is one of the main reasons for “showing as well as experiencing negative behaviors in the workplace.”

While SET posits that individuals weigh costs and benefits before acting, stress may distort these evaluations. For individuals already prone to norm-violating behavior, owing to Dark Triad traits, heightened stress may exacerbate tendencies toward impulsivity and disregard for long-term consequences. Thus:

H2. The Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior relationship strengthens when the individuals are also high in stress.

Moderating effect of sensation seeking

Sensation seeking is “the search for experiences and feelings that are varied, novel, complex and intense, and as the readiness to take physical, social, legal and financial risks for the sake of such experiences” (Zuckerman, 2009). Past research has found that the major motivation behind consumer misconduct is the factor of sensation seeking (Kallis and Vanier, 1985; Katz,

1984; Lofland,1969; Newcomb and McGee,1991). Yousaf *et al.* (2023) argue that there is a clear link between specific Dark Triad traits of tourists and different types of sensation seeking.

Sensation seeking influences perceived benefits by increasing the appeal of stimulation and risk. When paired with Dark Triad traits, which reduce sensitivity to social costs, this can tip the cost-benefit calculus toward more deviant behaviors, especially in service contexts that offer opportunities for thrill-seeking. Thus:

H3. The Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior relationship strengthens when the individuals are also high in sensation seeking.

Moderating effect of boredom

Boredom can directly affect Jay Customer behavior based on past research linking it to uncivil and counterproductive work behavior among employees (Bruursema *et al.*, 2011; Walker 2009). However, boredom can also have a moderating impact on the Dark Triad personality and Jay Customer behavior. People with Dark Triad personality traits are more prone to boredom and more likely to resort to negative coping styles, including anti-social behaviors such as incivility towards others just for fun (Yang *et al.*, 2022). Boredom has also been shown as a moderator between Narcissism and corruption, with the link being strong when boredom was high and disappearing when boredom was low (Gu *et al.*, 2021). Boredom represents a contextual trigger that diminishes the perceived costs of acting out by increasing the desire for stimulation. This emotional state may erode restraint and promote norm violations in individuals with Dark Triad traits, further destabilizing the service exchange process. Thus:

*H4.*The Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior relationship strengthens when the individuals are also high in boredom.

Moderating effect of business versus leisure (case of travel)

Business versus leisure impacts Jay's Customer behavior, with business services inhibiting illegitimate customer complaining behavior as opposed to leisure travel (Huang *et al.*, 2014). This is also based on SET; the context and motivations of business and leisure services create different perceived benefits and costs, expectations of reciprocity and fairness and levels of trust and commitment. For example, during business travel, a Dark Triad personality may seek a high professional exchange since the cost of misbehavior may outweigh the benefits of maintaining their reputation and professional goal. On the other hand, leisure travelers may feel less constrained by social norms and weigh immediate gratification higher, leading to a higher propensity for disruptive behavior.

SET suggests that context shapes how individuals evaluate consequences. Leisure environments often lower perceived risks and elevate immediate rewards, making them fertile ground for misbehavior among individuals with antisocial tendencies. In contrast, business settings may elevate reputational and professional costs, suppressing these tendencies. Thus:

H5. The Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior relationship is stronger for leisure than for business.

Method

Hospitality-related services were the context used in this study for four reasons. First, the hospitality industry involves frequent and direct interactions between customers and service providers, often in real-time and face-to-face, making it a prime setting for observing customer behaviors (Daunt and Harris, 2011). Second, services in the hospitality industry are intangible and can vary significantly based on customer interactions, making them more susceptible to the negative impacts of misbehavior such as verbal abuse or unreasonable demands (Huang and Miao, 2016). Third, employees in the hospitality sector often engage in emotional labor, managing their emotions to provide excellent service, making them more susceptible to the negative impacts of customer misbehaviors (Booyens *et al.*, 2022). Fourth, customer misbehavior can have significant consequences for hospitality businesses, affecting employee morale, service quality and overall customer satisfaction, making it an ideal service to investigate mitigating factors (Daunt and Harris, 2011).

A survey was created and administered to a final sample of 830 people using the Qualtrics panel. Our sample consisted of people aged 18–65, with the criteria of having used hospitality services at least once and being full-time employees. Respondents who did not complete the survey and those who failed survey attention checks were screened out by the vendor team, resulting in complete and clean responses. Using a large ($n = 830$), diverse panel increases the external validity of our findings. Our respondents spanned a range of service interactions and demographic backgrounds, providing a more generalizable view of customer behavior across hospitality segments. Details of the sample demographics are shown in Table 1.

Respondents first filled out scales designed to measure their Dark Triad personality, sensation-seeking proclivities, general boredom and general stress level using all established scales. For each type of service they participated in, business and leisure, they were asked how often they engaged in Jay Customer Behavior using an established scale. We controlled social desirability bias using a clear statement of anonymity of responses, including not collecting any identifying information as recommended by past research (Ong and Weise, 2000; Durmaz *et al.*, 2020).

Table 1 Sample demographics for the study

Age	%	Income	%	Education	%	Marital status	%
Under 30	20.2	<25k	2.5	Some HS	0.4	Married	62.8
30–40	48.5	25k–49k	13.3	HS or GED	12.2	Partnered	7.9
40–50	20.9	50k–74k	18.8	Some college	17.1	Widowed	2.9
50–60	10.2	75k–99k	17.1	Associates	11.0	Separated	11.8
60+	0.2	100k–150k	27.2	Bachelors	29.7	Single	14.5
		150k +	20.4	Graduate	29.5		
		Did not say	0.7		0.1		

Source(s): Authors' own work

Measures

The dependent measure, Jay Customer Behavior, was measured using a 9-item scale created by [Daunt and Harris \(2011\)](#). Dark Triad personality was measured using the Dirty Dozen 12-item scale created by [Jonason and Webster \(2010\)](#). Sensation Seeking was measured on an 8-item scale ([Hoyle et al., 2002](#)). Stress was measured on an 11-item scale, which measured an individual's proclivity towards being stressed ([Cohen et al., 1983](#)). Boredom was measured using a 29-item multidimensional state boredom scale created by [Fahlman et al. \(2013\)](#). Additional measures included business versus leisure, a binary variable and standard income and age demographic measures. The measures, scale items and references are shown in [Table 2](#). As the same method was used to measure both the dependent and independent measures, we used Harman's single-factor test for common method variance. We examined the unrotated factor analysis matrix and found no extracted factors accounted for more than 50% of the variance (our highest was 38%), indicating no common method variance.

Table 2 Measures

Scale	# of items	Source
Jay customer	9	Daunt and Harris (2012)
Dark triad (dirty dozen)	12	Jonason and Webster (2010)
Sensation seeking	8	Hoyle et al. (2002)
Stress	11	Cohen and Williamson (1983)
Boredom	29	Fahlman et al. (2013)
Travel type	1	1 = Leisure; 2 = Business
Demographics	Income and age	They were collected as per the standard measure

Source(s): Authors' own work

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run on the Dirty Dozen Dark Triad and Jay Customer scales, and the results are shown in [Table 3](#). While the Dirty Dozen scale is used to measure the Dark Triad personality, it is not intended to be a shortened measure for narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy individually ([Jonason et al., 2013](#); [Schreiber and Marcus, 2020](#)). The Dirty Dozen was chosen for its brevity and practicality, making it more feasible for application in real-world service contexts such as pre-screening, behavioral flagging or psychometric-based loyalty segmentation. Although not diagnostic, the tool is a useful indicator of behavioral risk profiles relevant to frontline service strategy.

Table 3 CFA analysis for dirty dozen and Jay Customer scales

	Dirty dozen scale				Jay Customer		
	Mach	Narc	Psych		Physical abuse	Theft/ vandal	Verbal abuse
DDM1	0.885			JCPA1	0.972		
DDM2	0.881			JCPA2	0.971		
DDM3	0.788			JCTV1		0.877	
DDM4	0.818			JCTV2		0.931	
DDN1		0.794		JCTV3		0.943	
DDN2		0.86		JCTV4		0.922	
DDN3		0.86		JCVA1			0.909
DDN4		0.88		JCVA2			0.898
DDP1			0.796	JCVA3			0.934
DDP2			0.75				
DDP3			0.844				
DDP4			0.802				
<i>Fit indices</i>							
Cronbach_A	0.866	0.871	0.810	Cronbach_A	0.941	0.938	0.901
rho_a	0.881	0.908	0.713	rho_a	0.941	0.941	0.909
rho_b	0.874	0.912	0.721	rho_b	0.971	0.956	0.938
AVE	0.815	0.875	0.638	AVE	0.944	0.844	0.835
<i>Discriminant</i>							
DDM	0.844			JCPA	0.972		
DDN	0.721	0.849		JCTV	0.935	0.918	
DDP	0.750	0.844	0.799	JCVA	0.921	0.936	0.914
Source(s): Authors' own work							

Previous research has also treated the [Daunt and Harris \(2011\)](#) scale as unidimensional, though an inspection of the items revealed the possibility of different dimensions. The CFA for the Dirty Dozen revealed good loadings of the items on the three underlying personalities of Machiavellianism (0.885, 0.881, 0.818, 0.788), narcissism (0.880, 0.860, 0.860, 0.794) and psychopathy (0.844, 0.802, 0.796, 0.750). These loadings correlate to the loadings found in previous research utilizing the Dirty Dozen scale. The CFA revealed good loadings for possible sub-dimensions of Jay Customer behaviors related to verbal abuse (0.953, 0.827, 0.804), theft and vandalism (0.935, 0.922, 0.886, 0.800) and physical abuse (0.960, 0.925). These loadings support the [Daunt and Harris \(2011\)](#) scale, capturing different dimensions of Jay Customer behavior.

Results

Each scale was summed and then centered, creating a z-score transformation. The interaction terms were generated by multiplying the Dark Triad z score with sensation seeking, boredom, stress and travel purpose (business or leisure). The correlations and descriptive statistics are shown in [Table 4](#).

The hypotheses were tested using linear stepwise regression in IBM SPSS Statistics with an entry of $F < .05$ and exit of $F > 0.10$. Linear regression was chosen because of its advantages of flexibility, robust nature and simplicity for testing and predicting relationships between variables ([Montgomery et al., 2021](#)). The final model consisted of four independent variables and four significant interaction terms at the 0.05 level ($F = 161.588$) and predicted 63.5% of the variance (R square 0.633). Multicollinearity was not found to be an issue, as all our variance inflation factors were less than 5.00, and 3.941 was the highest VIF (Kennedy, 2003). Demographic covariates included age, gender, marital status, education, income and employment status. Of these covariates, the only significant variables were age ($t = -2.161$, $p = 0.031$) and income (5.888, $p < 0.001$), with income being directly related and age being inversely related to Jay Customer tendencies. All other demographics tested nonsignificant and were not included in the model. The model summaries, coefficients and VIF are reported in [Table 5](#).

Table 4 Correlations and descriptive statistics

	Jay customer	Dark Triad	Boredom	Sensation seeking	Stress	Travel type	Means	SD
Jay customer	–						34.89	17.53
Dark triad	0.672**	–					14.57	9.56
Boredom	0.534**	0.534**	–				95.92	45.69
Sensation seeking	0.426**	0.505**	0.287**	–			35.41	10.46
Stress	0.542**	0.541**	0.578**	0.389**	–		31.90	6.74
Travel type	–0.235**	–0.245**	–0.048	–0.176**	–0.199**	–	1.66	0.506

Note(s): **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 5 Model summary and model coefficients

Model	Stepwise regression model summary					Final model coefficients			
	Adjusted R-squared	R-squared change	F change	Sig. F change	Variables added	Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
1	0.451	0.451	682.324	<0.001	Dark triad	0.341	8.159	<0.001	3.983
2	0.533	0.083	146.847	<0.001	Dark triad × Sensation seeking	0.200	6.779	<0.001	1.981
3	0.560	0.028	52.661	<0.001	Boredom	0.242	8.410	<0.001	1.880
4	0.591	0.031	63.350	<0.001	Dark triad × Boredom	0.201	6.941	<0.001	1.904
5	0.616	0.025	54.251	<0.001	Income	0.135	5.888	<0.001	1.197
6	0.625	0.010	21.330	<0.001	Dark triad × Trip type	–0.144	–4.292	<0.001	2.545
7	0.632	0.007	15.151	<0.001	Sensation seeking	0.081	3.070	0.002	1.590
8	0.634	0.002	5.581	0.018	Stress	0.062	2.170	0.030	1.846
9	0.635	0.002	4.670	0.031	Age	–0.048	–2.161	0.031	1.113

Note(s): **The interaction between Dark Triad and stress did not make the entry rule in the entry rule of $F < 0.05$ in the stepwise regression. Thus, it was reported as being non-significant and did not make it to the final model. The nonsignificant variables were dropped from the above table, though their t -values may be reported in the paper when needed

Source(s): Authors' own work

H1 predicted a significant direct relationship between Dark Triad and Jay Customer. This hypothesis was supported with the highest *t* statistic of 8.159 ($p < 0.001$). The Dark Triad personality is an excellent predictor of Jay Customer behavior with an R-squared of .341. Although not hypothesized, other significant variables included boredom ($t = 8.410$, $p < 0.001$), sensation seeking ($t = 3.070$, $p = 0.002$) and stress ($t = 2.170$, $p < 0.03$). The Dark Triad traits alone accounted for over 34% of the variance in Jay Customer behavior ($R^2 = 0.341$), suggesting that personality factors are not only statistically significant but highly consequential in predicting deviant customer actions in service settings.

H2 through 5 all deal with the interaction between Dark Triad personality and Stress (*H2*), Sensation Seeking (*H3*), Boredom (*H4*) and Travel Type (*H5*). *H2* was not supported, with the interaction between Dark Triad and Stress being non-significant ($t = 1.403$, $p = 0.161$). There is no interaction between Dark Triad and Stress, but Stress does have a significant direct impact on Jay Customer behavior. The lack of significant interaction between Stress and Dark Triad traits suggests that stress may act as a general situational trigger for misbehavior rather than amplifying the impact of dispositional antisocial tendencies.

H3 was supported by the interaction between Dark Triad and Sensation Seeking being directly related to Jay Customer behavior ($t = 6.770$, $p < 0.001$). Sensation Seeking increased the relationship between Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior. *H4* was supported by the interaction between Dark Triad and Boredom being directly related to Jay Customer behavior ($t = 6.941$, $p < 0.001$). Boredom increased the relationship between Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior. *H5* was supported by the significant interaction between Dark Triad and Trip Type ($t = -4.292$, $p < 0.001$). The link between Dark Triad and Jay Customer behavior was higher for leisure than business travel. Among the control variables, age was inversely related to misbehavior, suggesting younger consumers may require greater oversight or engagement. Higher income was positively associated with Jay behavior, raising questions about entitlement effects among affluent customers. [Table 6](#) summarizes the hypotheses proposed as well as the results.

Table 6 Moderating effects

Moderator	Direct effect	Interaction	Hypothesis	Supported?
Stress	2.170*	1.403	<i>H2</i>	Not supported
Sensation seeking	3.070*	6.770**	<i>H3</i>	Supported
Boredom	8.410**	6.941**	<i>H4</i>	Supported
Travel Type (Business – 1)	1.046	-4.292**	<i>H5</i>	Supported

Note(s): *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed); **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 7 Additional analyses

DV	M1				M2				M3			
	Verbal abuse				Theft/Vandalism				Verbal abuse			
<i>R</i> -squared	0.572				0.585				0.562			
f stat	94				99				90			
Sig	<0.001				<0.001				<0.001			
IV	STD B	T	Sig.	VIF	STD B	T	Sig.	VIF	STD B	T	Sig.	VIF
DT	0.243	5.381	<0.001	3.968	0.260	5.852	<0.001	3.968	0.280	6.134	<0.001	3.968
Stress	0.127	4.090	<0.001	1.890	0.077	2.503	0.013	1.890	0.090	2.867	0.004	1.890
SS	0.053	1.873	0.061	1.540	0.075	2.726	0.007	1.540	0.090	3.084	0.002	1.540
Brdm	0.263	8.470	<0.001	1.882	0.188	6.149	<0.001	1.882	0.180	5.723	<0.001	1.882
<i>Interaction</i>												
× stress	0.067	1.686	0.092	3.118	0.104	2.648	0.008	3.118	0.098	2.412	0.016	3.118
× SS	0.123	3.948	<0.001	1.898	0.199	6.483	<0.001	1.898	0.189	5.999	<0.001	1.898
× brdm	0.123	3.394	<0.001	2.564	103.000	2.892	0.004	2.564	0.081	2.217	0.027	2.564
× TT	-0.030	-1.979	-0.049	2.803	-0.035	-1.993	0.035	2.803	-0.150	-1.998	0.020	2.803
<i>Control</i>												
Edu	0.012	0.428	0.669	1.609	0.040	1.401	0.161	1.609	0.045	1.553	0.121	1.609
Age	-0.036	-1.497	0.135	1.129	-0.050	-2.119	0.034	1.129	-0.046	-1.911	0.056	1.129
Income	0.069	2.241	0.025	1.876	0.111	3.627	<0.001	1.876	0.099	3.144	0.002	1.876
Married	-0.060	-2.258	0.024	1.362	-0.072	-2.778	0.006	1.362	-0.056	-2.113	0.035	1.362

Source(s): Authors' own work

Additional analyses

Additional analyses were run to explore a more in-depth relationship between the Dark Triad Personality and different aspects of Jay Customer behavior. The results of stepwise regressions on the Jay Customer and Dark Triad personality sub-dimensions are shown in [Table 7](#). The first three regression analyses tested the effects of Dark Triad personality and its moderators on sub-dimensions of Jay Customer:

1. Verbal abuse (VA);
2. Theft and vandalism; and
3. Physical abuse (PA) ([Daunt and Harris, 2011](#)).

All three models had very similar results, and the previous regression analysis done with the Jay Customer scale combined further confirmed our analyses of the Dark Triad on Jay Customer behavior. Verbal Abuse (R^2 0.619, F 171, $p < 0.001$), Theft and Vandalism (R^2 0.619, F 171, $p < 0.001$) and Physical Abuse (R^2 0.619, F 171, $p < 0.001$) were all significantly predicted by Dark Triad Personality, Boredom, Sensation Seeking, Stress, travel type and our interactions. Once again, all our hypotheses, except for hypothesis 2, were supported. While stress had a significant direct effect, it failed to moderate the relationship between Dark Triad personality and Jay Customer behavior. The only other difference is in the control variables, as Age does not significantly affect Theft and Vandalism behavior. It does have a significant, if weak, relationship with both Verbal and Physical abuse.

These results support our central proposition that personality traits, moderated by contextual cues, drive customer deviance. In the following section, we discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of these findings.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for our theoretical model linking Dark Triad traits to Jay Customer behavior, as moderated by key contextual variables. Consistent with SET, individuals with higher levels of Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy demonstrated a diminished adherence to normative social rules, particularly in contexts that minimized perceived social costs or heightened personal rewards. This supports our conceptualization of “conditional SET compliance” and advances understanding of when and why customers deviate from expected behavior in service interactions.

The strong link between Dark Triad personality and Jay Customer behavior links the literature on Dark Triad to the literature on Jay Customer, providing many possible solutions to reducing the negative impact of this type of behavior in services, both for customers and employees. While there has not been enough research on the impact of the Dark Triad personality in services, including tourism, there has been research on the Dark Triad personality in other aspects with similar findings. For example, researchers have demonstrated the impact of the Dark Triad personality and its effects on workplace incivility, job satisfaction, counterproductive work behavior and negative experiences among customers and service employees ([Zhuang et al., 2022](#)), resulting in significant costs. This result aligns with our findings that Dark Triad customers find pleasure in their misbehavior in the services industry.

The moderating factors further underscore the importance of context in amplifying or suppressing the influence of personality traits. Sensation seeking emerged as a significant enhancer of the relationship between Dark Triad traits and Jay Customer behavior, suggesting that thrill-seeking intensifies the appeal of misbehavior. Similarly, boredom played a crucial role by reducing situational restraint and facilitating deviance among those predisposed to it. The moderating effect of travel context highlighted the increased risk of customer misbehavior in leisure settings, where social oversight and perceived consequences may be lower. Conversely, the lack of a moderating effect for stress suggests that while it independently contributes to misbehavior, it does not necessarily heighten trait-driven tendencies.

The consistency of findings across all three dimensions of Jay Customer behavior – verbal abuse, theft/vandalism and physical aggression– further supports the robustness of the Dark Triad framework. This suggests that the predictive power of these traits is not confined to a specific form of misbehavior but rather spans multiple disruptive behaviors relevant to service contexts.

The total variance explained ($R^2 = 0.633$) indicates substantial predictive utility for frontline service strategy, customer segmentation and risk assessment. That a single trait cluster accounts for over one-third of customer misbehavior underscores the managerial urgency of understanding dispositional risks in customer interactions.

This research contributes to a more predictive, psychologically grounded understanding of customer misbehavior. By demonstrating when and how specific personality traits manifest in service settings, we provide both scholars and managers with tools to anticipate, contextualize and, ultimately, manage disruptive customer behavior more effectively. Future work can build on these findings to explore real-time behavioral monitoring, cross-cultural personality effects or trait-based service customization.

Theoretical contribution

This study makes several important contributions to the literature on Jay Customer behavior and services marketing. First, it moves beyond descriptive typologies of customer misbehavior (e.g. [Daunt and Harris, 2011](#)) by introducing a predictive, trait-based framework. Specifically, we demonstrate that the Dark Triad personality traits – Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy – are significant dispositional predictors of Jay Customer behavior, offering a psychologically grounded and scalable approach to identifying high-risk individuals in service contexts.

Second, we integrate this personality-based approach within SET, proposing that individuals high in these traits are less likely to comply with normative expectations of fairness, reciprocity and cooperation. We introduce the concept of conditional SET compliance to describe how the expression of norm-violating behavior is influenced not only by personality but also by contextual moderators. This integration contributes to service theory by extending SET to account for personality-driven boundary conditions.

Third, we contribute to the development of a dynamic, theory-driven model by incorporating four moderators – boredom, sensation seeking, stress and travel context – that condition the expression of trait-driven misbehavior. These moderators have been underexplored in the literature and reflect real-world service conditions that can exacerbate or buffer antisocial behavior. This adds theoretical nuance to SET by highlighting when and why certain customers deviate from expected norms.

Fourth, our study introduces the Dark Triad framework into the services marketing literature, a novel application that extends the domain of customer behavior research into the realm of personality psychology and norm violation. In doing so, we address calls to further examine the “dark side” of customer behavior using individual-level predictors and contribute to a more interdisciplinary perspective in service research.

Fifth, our findings validate the explanatory reach of the Dark Triad across multiple dimensions of Jay Customer behavior, including verbal abuse, theft/vandalism and physical aggression. The consistent predictive value across these behavioral forms reinforces the robustness of the trait-based approach.

Sixth, by using a trait-based framework, our findings offer indirect contributions to understanding and managing customer behavior that may stem from neurodivergent traits. While the Dark Triad is distinct from clinical neurodiversity, our approach highlights the importance of recognizing stable dispositional factors that can manifest as behavioral challenges in service settings. This perspective encourages service firms to balance enforcement with empathy, creating space for more inclusive and psychologically informed service strategies.

Finally, our empirical model, supported by a large and diverse sample ($n = 830$), explains a substantial proportion of variance in Jay Customer behavior ($R^2 = 0.633$). This degree of predictive power provides a valuable foundation for future theoretical and empirical exploration while also offering actionable insights for practitioners managing service encounters.

Collectively, our research offers a comprehensive, theoretically anchored and practically meaningful extension to the literature on customer misbehavior in service environments.

Managerial implications

Customer profiling and behavioral flagging

This study provides actionable insights for service managers seeking to proactively identify, mitigate and respond to Jay Customer behavior. A key implication lies in the predictive value of dispositional traits – specifically the Dark Triad – which are not directly observable but can be inferred from behavioral patterns. While service firms may not assess personality traits explicitly, customer profiling through digital footprints, service histories and behavioral markers (e.g. repeated complaints, verbal aggression, entitlement language) can act as viable proxies for high-risk individuals. These indicators allow for preemptive identification of customers who may pose elevated risks to frontline employees and brand experience.

Context-aware service design

Another critical implication relates to the design and delivery of services in different contexts. Given that boredom and sensation seeking amplify deviant tendencies, especially among individuals with Dark Triad traits, service firms should invest in dynamic, engaging and interactive environments that reduce idle time and elevate customer engagement. This is particularly vital in leisure-oriented contexts, where social oversight is reduced, and customers may perceive fewer consequences for misbehavior. Creating immersive experiences, offering tailored itineraries or using gamified service flows may help redirect sensation-seeking impulses in constructive directions.

Frontline employee training

Frontline employee training also emerges as a necessary priority. Staff must be equipped to recognize the early signs of norm-violating behavior and respond effectively without escalating the interaction. This could include scenario-based training, emotional regulation tactics and real-time support tools to help service personnel handle aggressive or manipulative customers.

Context-specific policy development

Finally, firms should develop context-specific service policies. For example, policies in leisure settings may need to include greater staff coverage, enhanced monitoring or clear consequence frameworks for disruptive behavior. In contrast, business-focused services may rely more on professional norms and contractual enforcement. Customizing policies based on service setting, customer base and interaction intensity enhances both fairness and effectiveness in mitigating Jay Customer behavior.

By translating the predictive and conditional nature of customer misbehavior into strategic touchpoints across service design, customer management and employee operations, firms can better protect their employees and brand while improving customer experiences.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between Dark Triad personality traits and Jay Customer behavior, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, using self-report measures, although well-established and taken from past literature, may introduce social desirability bias. Past studies have shown that self-reporting can demonstrate more social desirability bias than real-time data collection ([Berry et al., 2012](#)). While we controlled this to a certain extent using the proven practice of anonymity of response, we urge future researchers to capture real-time data by observing Jay Customer behavior in a natural setting.

Second, our study focuses on one specific antecedent of Jay Customer behavior – the Dark Triad Personality of the customer – along with the traits of sensation seeking, boredom and stress that amplify Jay Customer behavior. While these factors are significant, other antecedents, such as attitudes, aspirations and psychological dispositions ([Katz, 1988](#)), should

also be explored. Additionally, demographic variables and broader environmental characteristics, such as the service provider's environment, can influence Jay Customer behavior and should be included in future studies.

Third, while the Dirty Dozen scale is a concise measure of the Dark Triad personality, it does not capture the full complexity of narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy individually. Future research should consider using more comprehensive scales to assess each trait separately, despite the potential burden on participants (Carter *et al.*, 2015). This approach will provide a more nuanced understanding of how each trait contributes to Jay Customer behavior.

Past research has also shown that variables other than psychology, such as demographics, can make 1 a Jay Customer (Fullerton and Punj, 1993). Characteristics of the service provider's broader environment can also have an impact (Cunningham *et al.*, 2006; Li and Dimitratos, 2014; Dubiel and Mukherji, 2022). For example, in the case of tourism, destination-related macro-factors, including micro-factors such as the servicescape of each service provider, can also have a direct or moderating effect on Jay Customer behavior when combined with other known variables.

Finally, testing Jay Customer behavior in other service sectors, such as retail, restaurants and resorts, may provide deeper insights into which settings trigger this behavior the most. Future research can explore solutions to these behaviors in different settings, potentially eradicating such behaviors.

Recommendations for future research

Recommendations for future research

This study significantly advances the literature on Jay Customer behavior by introducing the Dark Triad personality traits as predictive antecedents within a SET framework. While the current findings are robust and revealing, several important avenues remain open for future exploration.

First, future studies should replicate and extend our model in alternative service contexts beyond hospitality, such as retail, health care or public services, where Jay Customer behavior may manifest differently. These comparative investigations could uncover sector-specific triggers and enable more tailored mitigation strategies. Second, while the Dirty Dozen scale provided efficiency and conceptual clarity, future work could explore the use of more granular and multidimensional assessments of the Dark Triad, such as the Short Dark Triad (SD3) or longer inventories. This would help parse out the unique behavioral contributions of Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy in more detail, potentially illuminating trait-specific intervention points.

Third, longitudinal and experimental designs would enable deeper insights into the causal pathways between personality traits and misbehavior. Future research might investigate how Jay Customer tendencies evolve over repeated service interactions, how they respond to various organizational interventions, or whether they diminish with age or experience.

Fourth, more work is needed to examine contextual moderators beyond those tested here. While our study identified boredom, sensation seeking and travel type as significant, future research should consider environmental factors such as crowding, anonymity, perceived surveillance or digital versus in-person service channels. Such moderators may further explain when and why norm-violating behaviors are expressed.

Fifth, building on our novel application of the Dark Triad to Jay Customer behavior, we suggest future research explore the distinction – and possible overlap– between Dark Triad traits and neurodivergent characteristics. While the Dark Triad is distinctly antisocial and exploitative, some behaviors associated with neurodivergence (e.g. impulsivity, social rule deviation, sensory overload responses) may superficially resemble disruptive customer behavior. Future research could clarify these boundaries and contribute to the development of inclusive, compassionate service strategies that avoid pathologizing neurodivergent customers. Sixth, there is significant potential in leveraging artificial intelligence and real-time behavioral analytics to anticipate and intervene in potential Jay Customer incidents. Research can examine how sentiment analysis, service usage patterns or behavioral flags can be ethically and effectively deployed in dynamic service settings.

Finally, an important avenue involves developing and evaluating frontline training programs that incorporate psychological insight into trait-based risk factors. Understanding how to recognize, de-escalate and redirect high-risk customer behaviors through targeted communication, engagement tactics and service recovery strategies would be an essential application of this line of research. In sum, this study lays the foundation for a richer, more proactive understanding of customer deviance. Future investigations can build on these contributions to create psychologically informed, inclusive and effective service strategies that balance customer accommodation with employee well-being and operational resilience.

Conclusion

This study offers a timely and distinctive contribution to the services marketing literature by addressing a gap in understanding how stable, antisocial personality traits predict customer misbehavior. While prior research has largely emphasized contextual explanations or reactive strategies, our work introduces a proactive, trait-based model grounded in personality psychology and integrated with SET. This approach shifts the conversation in services marketing from describing what misbehavior looks like to explaining who engages in it and under what circumstances. a timely and distinctive contribution to services marketing by introducing the Dark Triad personality traits as key predictors of Jay Customer behavior. Unlike previous research that emphasized contextual triggers, our work presents a proactive, theory-driven framework that explains who is likely to behave disruptively – and under what conditions.

By linking these traits to SET through the concept of conditional SET compliance, we show how stable dispositions interact with situational factors such as boredom, sensation seeking and travel context to drive misbehavior. This integration provides a dynamic and psychologically grounded lens for understanding customer deviance. Our validated, high-predictive model – based on a large and diverse sample – offers both scholarly and managerial value. It opens new paths for customer risk profiling, service training strategies and inclusive

design practices. We also highlight the need to distinguish Dark Triad behavior from neurodivergence, calling for ethically informed approaches to service management.

In sum, this research extends theoretical boundaries and equips service providers with tools to anticipate and manage the darker aspects of customer behavior in increasingly complex environments.

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About the authors

Scott Widmier is an Associate Professor of Marketing at the Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University. He specializes in marketing strategy, international marketing and sales management. Widmier has published extensively in reputable journals and has a significant number of citations to his work. His research interests include the effects of incentives and personality on salesperson's customer orientation and the integration of technology into personal selling. Scott Widmier is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: swidmier@kennesaw.edu

Prachi Gala is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University. Her research focuses on marketing strategy, corporate governance and the impact of disruptive technologies on consumer behavior. Gala has published numerous articles in high-impact journals and has been cited extensively. Her work explores the intersection of marketing and technology, including the role of artificial intelligence in the banking industry.

Nikolaos Iason Koufodontis is a faculty member at the School of Business, University of the Aegean, Greece. His research interests include tourism management, information technology and regional development. Koufodontis has contributed to various studies on the impact of ICTs on regional development and the role of universities in regional growth. He has published in several international journals and conferences.

Michael Serkedakis is a retired Lecturer in Marketing and Professional Sales at the Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University. With a background in marketing and professional sales, he has taught various courses and contributed to the academic community through his teaching and mentorship. Serkedakis is known for his engaging teaching style and dedication to student success.