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Consumer lying behavior in service encounters

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ABSTRACT

Whether they know it or not, firms interact with lying consumers on a daily basis. However, surprisingly little is known about consumer lying behavior and its role in service encounters. Based on two empirical studies of 2,976 consumer lies, the study sought to explore consumer lying behavior by developing and testing a comprehensive conceptual framework encompassing motives for lying, characteristics of the lie, and outcomes for consumers. Study 1 explores and details the components of the conceptual framework, and Study 2 further investigates and tests the relationships between the components of consumer lying behavior and the emotional, behavioral, and financial outcomes for consumers. The findings suggest new policies and how frontline employees might be trained and educated to address consumer lying behavior. The paper concludes by outlining an agenda for future research on lying behavior in service encounters.

1. Introduction

Imagine a consumer who returns a computer that he broke, or a patient who is asked how much alcohol she drinks, or a restaurant patron who does not like the food he ordered. Do we expect these consumers to be completely honest? Many consumers will choose to lie, with potentially significant implications for themselves, the frontline employee, and the firm. Most of us cannot get through the day without telling a lie (Feldman et al., 2002; Turner et al., 1975), but we often overlook the fact that even the smallest lie may ultimately cost us money, as well as affecting our own relationships and the lives of others. Lying is especially common in service encounters, as lies are more easily and frequently told in casual relationships such as those with frontline employees (DePaulo and Kashy, 1998). Ringler (2021) reported that when customers provide feedback to service providers, face-to-face and telephone interactions tend to encourage lying behavior. While lying is often motivated by a desire to avoid the consequences of an honest but hurtful statement, the paradox is that an exposed lie tends to have precisely the consequences that the liar sought to avoid (DePaulo et al., 1996). To date, however, service research has typically neglected the issue of lying in service encounters (Daunt et al., 2010).

What, then, is currently known about consumer lying behavior? It is well established that consumers lie, and that they do so frequently (Anthony & Cowley, 2012; Mazar et al., 2008). Nevertheless, our review of social psychology research on lying behavior and service research on consumer lying behavior reveals major gaps in the literature. First, while previous studies have explored the occurrence and antecedents of lying (and some of its effects) in laboratory settings (Argo et al., 2006; Cowley et al., 2019; Mazar et al., 2008), these studies have typically focused too narrowly on a specific motive or a particular form of lying (e.g., lying about the price of a purchased item). While existing research has yielded important detailed knowledge about the mechanisms of lying behavior in specific situations, there is no comprehensive overview of motives and characteristics of lying behavior in consumer settings. Second, existing research has explored lying largely in terms of outcomes (i.e., regardless of motive) and tends to assume that the respondent lied rather than asking if they actually did. Consequently, little is known about what happens after the consumer has lied—in other words, the consequences of consumer lying behavior. Third, little is known about the mechanisms and boundary conditions of consumer lying behavior—for example, whether there are certain characteristics of lying that help consumers to achieve their desired outcome. The literature is silent about how characteristics of the lie (such as type or content) may influence the outcome of lying. As a result, important questions remain to

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be explored, including why, when, and how often consumers lie; what they lie about; the mechanisms of lying; the outcomes of these lies; and whether lying is always a bad thing.

Rather than framing consumer lying as deviant behavior where consumers "behave badly," the present study considers lying as a natural element of the interaction between frontline employees and consumers in service encounters (see Kapoor et al., 2021). Instead of focusing on a specific situation (e.g., lying about the price of a bought product), we seek to comprehend the phenomenon of consumer lying behavior by addressing the various ways in which it occurs, the different facets of lies, and the various outcomes of lying. The broad perspective of this two-study design enabled us to (1) develop a conceptual framework, (2) test key relationships within that framework, and (3) explore the outcomes of consumer lying behavior for consumers. Based on two empirical studies of 2,976 consumer lies, we propose a research agenda to advance existing understanding of lying behavior in service encounters, including its implications for consumers, frontline employees, and firms. To that end, we reviewed the relevant social psychology, service, and marketing research on lying behavior and linked it to the existing literature on service encounters. Study 1 explored the phenomenon of consumer lying behavior using a qualitative survey based on critical incident technique (CIT) to illuminate the motives, characteristics, and outcomes of consumer lies in service encounters, which in turn enabled us to develop a conceptual framework for consumer lying behavior. In Study 2, we conducted a quantitative survey to test and explore the proposed framework. sing MANCOVA. It served to identify the key relationships in the conceptual model and serve as a starting ground for further empirical research on consumer lying behavior.

The research reported here makes several important contributions to service research. First, by addressing the issue of dishonesty and its implications for the interaction between frontline employee and customer, the present research extends existing conceptualizations of the service encounter (Solomon et al., 1985). Second, by integrating this exploratory analysis with findings from service research (Solomon et al., 1985), social psychology (Ekman, 2009) and marketing (Argo et al., 2006), the proposed conceptual framework captures the motives, characteristics of the lie and outcomes of lying. Third, the present study reveals previously unaddressed motives for lying beyond the pursuit of personal financial gain, including lying to avoid interaction with frontline employees, lying to avoid reprimand from service providers, lying to save effort, and lying to seek revenge. These findings offer an explanation of consumer lying behavior that extends well beyond existing theory. In addition, the study clarifies how consumers' motives for lying and characteristics of the lie affect the emotional, behavioral, and financial outcomes of service encounters. These findings extend current knowledge and emphasize that consumer lying behavior has important implications for consumers as well as for how service firms approach consumer lying behavior in service encounters. The paper concludes with an agenda for future research.

2. The service encounter

As an interaction between consumer and employee, the service encounter (Solomon et al. 1985) is a form of social exchange, in which the parties typically seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs. According to Solomon et al. (1985), interaction is the key to understanding the service encounter as a psychological phenomenon and the ensuing impact on outcomes. Voorhees et al. (2017) defined the core service encounter as "the time interval during which the primary service offering is provided to the customer" (p. 270). Whether visiting a physician, staying at a hotel, or eating in a restaurant, the core service encounter is preceded by a pre-core service encounter and is followed by a post-core service encounter (which may involve making a complaint or posting a review online). Beyond face-to-face interactions in a physical service setting, service encounters may occur online (e.g., chat, consumer forum), over the phone, by mail or email, or even through self-services. (Bitner et al., 2000).

Consumer lying behavior influences this exchange and may in turn influence key performance indicators such as satisfaction and loyalty (Anthony & Cowley, 2012). In any service encounter, each actor deploys a learned set of standardized behaviors to help them to achieve their goal (Solomon et al., 1985). Consumers learn alternative scripts for different service encounters; when an unfavorable or unexpected incident occurs, lying may help them to achieve an outcome that could not be achieved by simply telling the truth. This means that lying can make a consumer more satisfied with the service encounter, which also influence loyalty towards the firm. However, lying to a frontline employee can also make the customer uncomfortable in returning to the service provider, which would lead to lower loyalty towards the firm.

3. Lying behavior

Dishonesty is a broad term; often defined as the lack of honesty (Scott and Jehn 1999), and refers to a lack of honor or integrity, cheating, knavishness, corruption, or treachery. The present study focuses on lying as one form of dishonest behavior, which can be defined as "a deliberate choice to mislead a target without giving any notification of the intent to do so" (Ekman 2009, p. 28). This definition includes any attempt to deceive the target or to give them a misleading impression. According to Ekman (2009), the two main types of lie are *concealment* and *falsification*. Concealment refers to withholding information without really saying anything that is untrue per se (Ekman, 2009); for example, if a patient fails to tell their physician about their alcohol abuse despite its relevance to their ongoing health problems, this can be characterized as a lie because the information is consciously concealed. On the other hand, falsification extends beyond withholding true information to presenting false information as true. Additionally, lying behavior may be *verbal* (talk) or *performed* (action); varying in severity as defined by intent and possible consequences, it ranges from "white lies" that facilitate social interaction (e.g., indicating one's satisfaction with an unsatisfying meal) to serious fraud (e.g., lying about one's identity or financial situation).

While some cases of customer lying can be viewed as deviant behavior, we contend that lying is, more broadly, part of daily life. Harris and Reynolds characterized deviant behavior as "actions by customers who intentionally or unintentionally, overtly or covertly, act in a manner that, in some way, disrupts otherwise functional service encounters" (2003, p. 145), which would include behaviors such as opportunistic claiming (Wirtz & Kum, 2004; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). This stream of research explores what happens when consumers violate social norms or break the law by cheating when making a complaint, returning a product, or making an insurance claim. Some studies have investigated "jay customers"—consumers who generally behave badly or fail to follow the service script (Daunt et al., 2010; Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Harris & Reynolds, 2004), with potential consequences for employees, customers, and firms. Gong et al. (2014) and Reynolds and Harris (2006) have explored how employees should handle these deviant customer behaviors. Kim et al. (2014) reported that customer incivility and aggression are associated with job stress and diminished job satisfaction, and the topic of customer rage has attracted significant research interest (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009; Patterson et al., 2016).

Deviant behavior refers to an action or behavior that violates social norms beyond the general limits of social tolerance (Clinard, 1962), including both informal norms and formally enacted rules. While some lies are of this kind, others (e.g., white lies) are generally accepted by society and can even enhance the consumer-frontline employee interaction, as in the case of undeserved compliments. While accepting that some of these lies may theoretically be described as deviant behavior, we contend that this fails to capture the full extent of the phenomenon. For that reason, we use the term *consumer lying behavior* to encompass the whole range of lies told by consumers in service encounters.

3.1. Existing knowledge about lying behavior

In social psychology, lying is understood as an everyday occurrence rather than as an extraordinary or unusual event (DePaulo et al., 1996); that is, we tell a lie (with certain characteristics) for a specific reason (motive) to achieve a certain outcome or goal (DePaulo et al. 1996). First, we lie for a reason—that is, all lies have a *motive* (Ekman 2009), which for present purposes can be defined as the need to behave or act in a certain way to fulfill a wish or achieve a goal (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Second, a lie has certain *characteristics* that can be viewed as facets of the deception that are purposefully designed to create a false impression (DePaulo et al., 1996). Finally, lies have *outcomes* that benefit either the liar or the target of the lie. According to Mazar et al. (2008), the outcomes of lying may include both economic and psychological benefits as part of a cost-benefit perspective.

In the following, we discuss existing knowledge on the mechanisms of lying behavior. For each part, the discussion starts by what is known in social psychology and then specifically addresses what is known in the service marketing literature. Importantly, few studies of lying behavior have focused explicitly on *consumer* contexts or service encounters; some noteworthy exceptions are summarized in Table 1.

3.1.1. Motives for lying

People lie for multiple reasons. While cognitive psychology has investigated what happens in the brain when people lie (Garrett et al. 2016), others have asked why people lie at all. Classical economic models like *homo economicus* assume that human behavior is rational and that people lie consciously and deliberately in a trade-off between expected benefits and costs (Gneezy, 2005). By implication, people are assumed to lie when it is favorable to do so, regardless of any consequences for the other party. It includes lying for monetary or nonmonetary benefit but does not adequately explain the mechanisms of all types of lies.

The impression management literature suggests that lying is a necessary and natural part of human behavior (Baumeister, 1982). Adopting this view, Turner et al. (1975) argued that "it is doubtful that social relationships could be established, maintained, and nurtured if such 'whole truth and nothing but the truth' discourse characterized human behavior" (p. 70). Some social interaction theorists take a similar view; for example, Goffman (1974) used the metaphor of *acting* to explain human social behavior as impression management. The central idea is that, on entering a social situation, the individual engages in certain behaviors to present themselves in a way that avoids discomfort for themselves or for others. In so doing, they communicate some elements of information and withhold others; for example, DePaulo et al. (1996) suggested that people might lie to cast themselves in a more positive light, to feel better about themselves, or to protect themselves from negative outcomes such as embarrassment or disapproval.

In the marketing literature, most studies of consumer lying behavior have focused narrowly on one specific motive. Drawing on economic theory and social psychology, Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008) performed a series of laboratory experiments that showed that people will cheat if given an opportunity to do so, although the degree of their dishonesty was relatively low. While those experiments did not focus explicitly on customer-employee interactions, they confirmed that people tend to lie in order to profit (as predicted by economic theory) but not to the extent of spoiling their positive self-image (as predicted by social psychology). Adopting a similar approach, Andrade and Ho (2009) used a version of the standard dictator game to investigate how people tend to strategically modify expression of their current emotional state to improve their finances. They found, for instance, that respondents deliberately exaggerated expressions of anger when negotiating in order to improve their potential outcome. Ringler (2021) investigated the extent of consumer white lies when providing feedback to service providers and showed that white lies inflate the memory of the customer experience. Drawing on exchange theory, Horne et al. (2007) explored the extent of lying behavior when disclosing personal information in an online survey. They found that 25% of the submitted self-

Table 1
Studies of Consumer Lying Behavior.

Authors	Theoretical Perspective	Independent Variables	Mediators/Moderators	Dependent Variables
Sengupta, Dahl, and Gorn (2002)	Social psychology	Impression management	Expensive brand, social status	Acknowledgement of discount
Argo, White, and Dahl (2006)	Social comparison theory	Comparison of target relevance Performance attainability	Social comparison context, comparison discrepancy, comparison direction, nature of the information (social vs. objective)	Lying intention
Horne, Norberg, and Ekin (2007)	Exchange theory	Cost-benefit evaluations	None	Degree of concealment of information
Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008)	Economic theory, self-maintenance	Categorization malleability Attention to standards (reminders of morality)	None	Degree of exaggeration of performance
Andrade and Ho (2009)	Social interaction theory, self-impression theory	Affective information Gaming emotions	Proposers' perceptions of receiver	Gaming emotions Financial offer
Anthony and Cowley (2012)	Cognitive psychology	Outcome, message strategy, outcome valence	Outcome Outcome expectations Outcome preparedness Message strategy	Outcome satisfaction
Argo and Shiv (2012)	Cognitive psychology	Opportunity to lie	Dissonance and negative affect Salience of the norms of honesty, certainty Affect certainty Source certainty	Willingness to help Intended donation amount Tipping intention Payment intention Intended word of mouth
Cowley et al. (2019)	Cognitive psychology	Consequentiality	Induced arousal Attention narrowing Past experience	Deception memory/ retrieval accuracy
Ringler (2021)	Communication modes	Feedback modality	Attitude, Attitude construction	Storage in long-term memory
[This study]	Synthesis of theory from psychology and marketing	Motives for lying Content of lie Stage of the service encounter Type of lie Beneficiary of the lie Severity of lie	Content of lie Stage of the service encounter Type of lie	Emotional outcome Behavioral outcome Financial outcome

reported information was false; when asked about their motives for lying, respondents typically set the perceived cost of disclosure against any potential benefits.

3.1.2. Characteristics of lies

The characteristics of a lie include how the individual chooses to lie and what they choose to lie about. Knowledge about the characteristics of lying remains limited, both in the psychology literature and in the context of service encounters. However, social psychologists have addressed the question of who benefits from the lie; in general, the beneficiary is the party for whom the lie increases the payoff, which may be the person telling the lie or the person to whom the lie is told (Gneezy, 2005). On that basis, lying can be broadly divided into two categories: (1) self-benefit lying (advantaging the person telling the lie in monetary or immaterial terms, or protecting their public or private self); and (2) other-benefit lying (advantaging someone else) (Meltzer, 2003). Other-benefit lying may be motivated for example by a desire to be polite, to spare someone's feelings, or to ensure that social interactions run smoothly (Lupoli et al., 2017). While DePaulo et al. (1996) reported that people mostly tell lies for their own benefit, DePaulo and Kashy (1998) found that lying to friends and family is disproportionately other-oriented or altruistic.

Marketing research has typically focused on the specific characteristics of lying that relate to the consumption experience. Drawing on impression management theory, Sengupta et al. (2002) investigated lying in the context of how much the consumer paid for a product. In a scenario-based experiment, they found that consumers lied to varying degrees to other consumers about the cost of their purchase, depending on product expense and recipient status. Argo et al. (2006) reported increased intention to lie to other consumers to protect the self when social comparison information is viewed as threatening. Notably, however, none of these studies investigated the characteristics of lies in service encounters.

3.1.3. Outcomes of lying behavior

Both psychology and marketing research have little to say about the outcomes of lying. Although a few studies refer to cognitive (Shu & Gino, 2012), emotional (DePaulo et al., 1996), and attitudinal (Anthony & Cowley 2012; Argo & Shiv, 2012) outcomes, none of these (to the best of our knowledge) addressed behavioral outcomes. In general, most previous studies address the effects of lying on the liar; they conclude that lying is cognitively complex and has negative effects on memory (Shu & Gino, 2012); that it can lead to stress and negative emotions (DePaulo et al., 1996; Garrett et al., 2016); and that it can trigger negative feelings about one's worth (Meltzer, 2003). Other emotional consequences of lying include feelings of guilt or discomfort (Klass, 1978; Shaffer, 1975), although these emotions tend to fade over time (Garrett et al., 2016). The few studies that explore how lying affects others report a negative impact on trust (e.g., Meltzer, 2003). However, Levine and Schweitzer (2015) found that prosocial lies (e.g., thanking someone for an unwelcome gift) may increase trust in certain circumstances. As none of these studies related directly to consumer contexts, little is known about the outcomes of consumer lying behavior for the individual or the firm.

In the marketing literature, Anthony and Cowley (2012) investigated whether telling a lie to gain a material benefit in a fictional service encounter would influence consumer satisfaction. They reported a polarized effect; people were more satisfied if their lie resulted in a successful outcome and were more dissatisfied than truth-tellers if the outcome proved unsuccessful. As lying is cognitively demanding, consumers were unprepared for the outcome, leading to more polarized evaluations. More recently, Cowley et al. (2019) investigated how well consumers remembered their lies; their results suggest that more arousing lies are riskier to tell but less likely to be forgotten. In a study of the effects of telling a white lie following a negative event, Argo and Shiv (2012) found that participants who told lies that violated the expected norm of honesty experienced cognitive dissonance and negative affect.

Table 2
Overview of studies and sample characteristics.

		Study 1	Study 2
Purpose		To develop a conceptual framework for consumer lying behavior	Testing the conceptual framework
Method		Critical Incident Technique	Survey
Data		Qualitative	Quantitative
Context		Random sample of U.S. consumers	Random sample of U.S. consumers
Analysis		Content analysis	MANCOVA
Sample size (n)		988	1988
Gender	Male	387	889
	Female	601	1099
Age	18–24	52	254
	25–34	182	334
	35–44	183	515
	45–54	204	224
	55–64	239	279
	65–74	103	310
	75–84	20	63
	85 or older	5	9
Had lied	Yes	578	1988
	No	410	0
Contexts	Retail	242	665
	Restaurant	177	442
	Medical	35	261
	Financial	18	92
	Automobile	15	54
	IT services		140
	Beauty salon		66
	Other	22	268

To reduce this unpleasantness, participants indicated a willingness to engage in actions favoring the target of the lie.

4. Overview of studies

To address the gaps in the existing literature, we conducted two empirical studies of consumer lying behavior. In study 1, we developed a conceptual framework to account for the motives, characteristics, and potential outcomes of lying in service encounters. As previous research has focused narrowly on specific situations, the aim was to identify the relevant components of consumer lying behavior in a range of service encounters. Study 2 tested the key relationships within the conceptual framework and examined the relationship between motives, characteristics of lies, and outcomes of lying for the consumer. Table 2 presents an overview of the two studies.

5. Study 1: Towards a conceptual framework for consumer lying behavior

5.1. Method

To disclose the underlying structures of consumer lying behavior, we used the critical incident technique (CIT) (Gremler, 2004), which is well established and widely used in service research. CIT specifies a set of procedures for collecting, analyzing, and classifying observations of human behavior according to psychological principles in order to facilitate practical problem solving (Flanagan, 1954). One advantage of this method is that it collects data from the respondent's perspective (Keaveney, 1995), which makes it especially useful when exploring understudied or novel topics (Bitner et al., 1990). In addition, CIT facilitates the development of hypotheses and conceptual structures for further research (Gremler, 2004). CIT is essentially a method of classification, based on content analysis of "incidents" or stories; to capture consumer lying behavior, we adopted Bitner et al.'s definition of an incident as an "observable human activity that is complete enough in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act" (1990, p. 73).

5.1.1. Procedure and respondents

Using an open qualitative survey design, we collected instances of lying from 988 U.S. consumers aged 18 and over. Participants were recruited from an online panel provided by Qualtrics and were offered a small monetary incentive to participate. To ensure a broad range of service encounters, we did not focus on any specific industry. Before distribution, the survey was pre-tested on 100 respondents, and we made minor adjustments to the wording of some items on the basis of those results. Following a brief introduction that included a definition of lying, respondents were asked if they had ever lied in a service encounter. Those who indicated that they had never lied were then asked to complete a short version of the questionnaire that included examples of lies. There were no significant gender differences in terms of who had lied ($\chi^2_{1df} = 0.007$, $p = .935$). Those who indicated that they had lied were asked to describe a recent lie (within the previous three months) in more detail. Respondents then answered a series of follow-up questions about why they lied, what they lied about, and the outcome of their lie (see web appendix W1). In total, 578 consumers reported having lied during a service encounter and described their lie. Of these, 69 failed to provide sufficient detail to support categorization and were eliminated from the analysis, leaving us with a final sample of 509 consumers recollection of lying behavior. Of these, 39% were men. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 85+, and the median age span was 55–64 years. Respondents admitted to lying once or twice on average over the previous month.

5.1.2. Analysis

After collecting the data, we read all the consumer lies to gain an overview before developing a classification system based on the established procedures for content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Reading one lie at a time to extract the relevant information, we employed overarching categories that included motive, characteristics, and potential outcomes of the lie (for a full list, see Table 3). After coding all lies for motive, we then coded them again for their characteristics, continuing until the seven overarching categories had been addressed. This process of inductive analysis involved repeated

Table 3
Results: Study 1.

	Code	Explanation	Count (%)	Illustrative Example	α
Motive	Social	Lying to avoid awkward situation or to avoid hurting someone's feelings	149 (29)	[Restaurant] "I didn't want to hurt the waitress's feelings."	0.94
	Avoid interaction	Lying to avoid interaction with frontline employee	104 (21)	[Furniture store] "I did not want the salesperson to hover over us while we were searching for couches."	
	Material	Lying to gain a material or immaterial benefit	96 (19)	[Car repair] "I simply wanted to save more money. I was being greedy."	
	Save effort	Lying to avoid extra effort or save time	71 (14)	[Restaurant] "I just did not have the time and wanted to avoid the hassle of complaining to the manager."	
	Self-presentation	Lying to present oneself in a certain way	48 (9)	[Sports store] "I lied to make myself seem more impressive to the salesperson, even though I'm sure they don't care."	
	Avoid reprimand	Lying to avoid reprimand	29 (6)	[Doctor's office] "I was trying to avoid a lecture about how I would never get better if I didn't walk a little each day."	
	Revenge	Lying to get even	9 (2)	[Fast-food restaurant] "This employee publicly humiliated me, and I wanted recourse."	
Stage	Pre-core	Lies in the first interaction with frontline employee	121 (24)	[Grocery store] "An employee asked me if they could help me find anything […] I said no thank you, I'm fine. In reality, I was looking for something in particular."	0.82
	Core	Lies during the core service	270 (53)	"I was at the doctor's office getting a physical. The doctor was pressing on my stomach and asked if it was painful. I said no, but it was."	
	Post-core	Lies after the service (e.g., return, complaint)	116 (23)	"I returned a printer cartridge that was opened because it didn't fit the printer, and I told the woman it was unopened."	
Content of lie	Consumer	Lies about own behavior	256 (50)	"I told a consumer service call center that I had called four times when, in fact, I had only called one time."	0.96
	Product/service	Lies about features of the product/service	252 (50)	"I said the food was fine when really it was not very good."	
Beneficiary	Self	Lies told to benefit oneself	397 (78)	[Dentist office] "I lied because I wanted the [WiFi] password to entertain myself at their office while I waited."	0.88
	Other	Lies told to benefit someone else	111 (22)	"I did not want to embarrass the hairdresser or make her feel bad."	
Type	Fabrication	Fabricated a story	301 (59)	[Hairdresser] "I made up a reason for being late for my appointment."	0.91
	Concealment	Concealed relevant information	207 (41)	[Bank] "I just did not tell them that my husband and I actually separated a month ago."	
Severity		Severity of the lie		Lies ranged from everyday lies such lying about food preferences to insurance fraud or lying to get a certain medicine.	
Outcome of lie	Emotional	Consumer had positive or negative emotional response	242 (48)	"It made me feel good that I could get a smile from the server and maybe made her feel a little better."	0.89
	Behavioral	Consumer changed behavior	106 (21)	"We decided to not return to this place to eat after this incident."	
	Financial	Consumer received a material (e.g., monetary) or immaterial (e.g., quicker service) benefit	106 (21)	[Furniture store] "Got a discount on the price."	
	No outcome	Consumer reported no outcome	54 (10)		

careful reading and sorting of the lies into groups and categories based on similarities among respondents' descriptions (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Using an iterative process, we analyzed one lie at a time, reading each in full to detect similarities related to each overarching category (see Table 3) and specifying relevant subcategories. Based on the initial labels, two researchers discussed a random sample of 100 lies and grouped them into subcategories of each overarching category. The subcategories were modified, combined, and further divided until the items they contained resembled each other more than the items in any other subcategory. After agreeing subcategory labels, conditions, and boundaries, we sorted a subset of items into the defined subcategories to ensure their consistency; where necessary, we returned to the second step and again refined the subcategories. Finally, to test inter-judge reliability, two researchers independently sorted a subset of 100 items from the overarching categories into the subcategories; the process returned a value of 0.90, ranging from 0.82 to 0.96 for the individual categories (see Table 3). Once an acceptable level of similarity was reached, a third reviewer assigned all lies to the appropriate subcategories.

5.2. Results and discussion

Our findings confirm that consumer lying behavior occurs across all service contexts, including retail, restaurant, medical, financial, and automotive. When asked a direct question, about 50% of respondents in the sample admitted to lying in service encounters; when provided with examples of lying behavior, as many as 92% admitted to having lied in a recent service encounter. In short, lying is a broader theoretical concept than previous accounts assume, as there are several underlying motives, characteristics, and outcomes that have not been addressed in previous research. In the next section, we ground our conceptual framework in the results from Study 1, encompassing the motives, characteristics (stage, content, beneficiary, type and severity), and outcomes of consumer lying behavior. Further details of the results and subcategories can be found in Table 3.

5.2.1. Motives

The findings of Study 1 confirm that consumers lie for different reasons, several of which have not previously been addressed in the marketing literature. In total, we identified seven distinct motives: (1) social reasons; (2) to avoid interaction; (3) material benefit; (4) to save effort; (5) self-presentation; (6) to avoid reprimand; and (7) revenge.

Social reasons included sparing the feelings of a frontline employee or another consumer or avoiding a socially awkward situation. Although this motive has previously been mentioned in marketing research, the focus was on a particular situation following a service failure (Argo & Shiv, 2012). In the present study, social reasons included the desire to avoid offending an employee—for example, by saying "the food was great" even when this was untrue. In another case, a consumer agreed to try on a dress suggested by the frontline employee even though she knew she would not like it. Another consumer bought a makeup set because she did not want to disappoint the frontline employee who recommended it. Similarly, a consumer who had witnessed another customer's rudeness lied to compensate for the other's behavior and make the frontline employee feel good.

Some consumers lied simply *to avoid interaction* with frontline employees; again, this is a common motive that marketing research has not addressed, typically involving consumers who say they are "not looking for anything in particular" (even though they are) when approached by a frontline employee because they do not want to be interrupted while shopping. Other consumers lied to avoid interaction by saying they had already acquired the service or product that the frontline employee was trying to sell; another reported reason was to avoid help in the dressing room. In general, customers who avoid interaction simply want to be left alone.

Consumers who lied to gain a *material benefit* were typically attempting to return a product on spurious grounds—for instance, by claiming that the product was "broken when I opened it" even though they had broken it themselves. Others tried to buy a cheaper ticket by lying about their age (or their child's age) or sought a discount by claiming that there was something wrong with their meal. In addition to financial gain as a motive for consumer lying (e.g., Andrade & Ho, 2009; Mazar et al., 2008), efforts to secure non-monetary benefits included lying to a doctor about symptoms to obtain a particular medication.

Consumers who lied to *save effort* typically did so to avoid having to complain about a bad service experience, filling in a form, or asking for help. Rather than lying for material benefit, the customer simply wants to avoid hassle or save time. This motive, which has not previously been addressed in the marketing literature, differs from avoiding interaction; rather than seeking to escape the service encounter itself, the consumer lies to accelerate the process or avoid the effort of complaining.

In the present study, instances of lying for reasons of *self-presentation* (see for example Argo et al., 2006) included an individual who failed to admit to a doctor how much they drank because they wanted to create a good impression. Similarly, one consumer who was buying new running shoes lied to a frontline employee about how much they exercised in order to appear more active. Other consumers lied to a frontline employee about their true size or age.

A new motive revealed by our study is lying to *avoid reprimand*. For example, one individual admitted telling their dentist "I floss every day" in order to avoid a lecture; others told their doctor they were exercising regularly to avoid arguing about an agreed treatment plan. Some restaurant consumers admitted their reluctance to send back their meal because they feared that the chef might "do something to my food" as a punishment for being difficult.

Lying for *revenge* included complaining about bad service to punish a frontline employee: "I was just so angry that day that I think they deserved to be lied to." In such cases, customers may seek to harm a frontline employee or a firm that they believe has harmed them. Similar things occur online, as for instance when consumers exaggerate in reviews following a service failure. However, while the issue of revenge is referred to in general terms in the marketing literature, it is not typically identified as a motive for consumer lying behavior.

5.2.2. Characteristics of lies in service encounters

Although the service literature does not address the timing of lies, we found that consumers lied at all *stages* of the service encounter. Some lied during the pre-core service encounter or on first contact—for example, when a frontline employee greeted them at the entrance and asked if they were looking for anything. They also lied during the core service encounter—for example, when indicating how many times a week they run—and in the post-core service encounter when returning a product or claiming a service failure.

Previous marketing studies have also neglected the issue of *content*—what consumers actually lie about. Interestingly, we found that customers lied repeatedly about themselves and the features or quality of a product or service, which are the two main subcategories of content. Regarding themselves, consumers lied about their reasons for being late for an appointment, or about their age, habits, or personal traits. Lies about a product or service centered on features that they claimed did not work as they should, poor service, and/or the price of the product or service. Sometimes, the opposite applied; many customers said that an employee "did an excellent job" when he or she did not.

In line with previous research on the *beneficiary* of consumer lies (DePaulo et al., 1996), we found that consumers most often lied to benefit themselves. This issue has been addressed in the psychology literature (Gneezy, 2005) but not specifically in relation to consumers. In fact, more often than we expected, consumers lied to benefit someone else, such as a frontline employee, another consumer, or a family member or friend.

Regarding the *types of lie* that consumers tell, our findings align with the evidence about lying in general (Ekman, 2009). We found that

Table 4
Reliability and Validity: Study 2.

	M	SD	rho_A	CR	AVE	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1.Behavioral outcome	*3.69*	*1.64*	0879	0.897	0.686	.829[b]				
2.Consumer ethics	*7.92*	*1.26*	0.968	0.932	0.519	-0.105/.081[a]	0.721			
3.Emotional outcome	*3.94*	*1.54*	0.839	0.925	0.860	-0.583/0.676	0.085/0.095	0.927		
4.Financial outcome	*3.17*	*1.70*	0.827	0.858	0.673	0.342/0.423	-0.169/0.148	-0.290/0.339	0.821	
5.Severity	*3.84*	*1.64*	0.712	0.870	0.770	0.388/0.480	-0.088/0.079	-0.429/0.558	0.330/0.430	0.877

a) Correlation/HTMT.
b) Square root of AVE on the diagonal in the correlation matrix.

consumers both fabricate stories and conceal relevant information during service encounters, the former being more common among the respondents in our sample.

Interestingly, we also found that the *severity of the lie* varied both across consumers and within the lies told by a given consumer. For example, one respondent reported lies that ranged from those he told on a daily basis (e.g., saying that he "found everything OK" when he did not) to lies with severe consequences, such as omitting to mention his alcohol problems to a physician despite being aware of the relevance of this information for diagnosis and treatment.

5.2.3. Outcomes of lying

Although previous research has rarely addressed the outcomes of consumer lying behavior, our findings revealed a surprisingly wide range of outcomes in three broad categories: emotional, behavioral, and financial. *Emotional* outcomes encompassed a wide range of negative and positive feelings; social psychologists have investigated some emotional outcomes of lying in general, such as feeling guilty (Klass 1978; Shaffer 1975) but not in service settings. In the present study, participants characterized lying in service encounters as highly emotional, using more than 150 different words to describe those emotions. Most referred to negative emotions such as "[I] felt guilty," "I got really mad," "[I] felt disappointed," "I was annoyed," "[I] felt anxious," or "I was so frustrated." Positive emotional words included "[I] felt happy," "[I] was excited," and "[I felt] exhilarated." Some consumers were more neutral, describing emotional outcomes in terms such as "OK," "felt a bit bad but not that much," or "felt fine about it."

Respondents also reported *behavioral outcomes*, which again have not been explicitly addressed in previous research on consumer lying behavior. We captured various examples of consumers who changed their behavior as a result of their lies—by leaving the store, switching service providers, or "never going back." Other behavioral changes included exercising more, flossing more, or avoiding a certain frontline employee. There were also reports of unexpected behavior changes such as buying an item that the consumer had not planned to or did not want to buy.

Finally, as mentioned in previous research (e.g., Anthony & Cowley, 2012; Mazar et al., 2008), consumers have reported positive *financial outcomes* of lying. In our study, participants reported both negative and positive financial outcomes of lying. Positive financial outcomes included securing a refund for product damage that was the consumer's own fault; complaining about a service to secure a refund without a proper reason; and lying to get a discount on a product that the consumer had damaged while in the store. Negative financial outcomes included buying a sweater that the consumer "did not really want" to avoid disappointing a frontline employee and giving a tip that did not reflect the server's performance.

5.3. Consumer lying behavior: A conceptual framework

Study 1 identified a range of overarching categories and subcategories of lying behavior. While some of the categories have been to some extent addressed in previous research, others have not and especially there is no knowledge about their effects on outcomes in a service encounter. It was further revealed that the motives for consumer lying behavior are more diverse than what has been accounted for by previous research and that existing theoretical explanations built on classical economic models and impression management are not sufficient to explain the range of lying behavior identified in Study 1. There is a need to detail the key components of consumer lying behavior, their relationships, and their relations to outcomes. Since existing knowledge is not sufficient to explain the range of consumer lying behavior, our intention is to capture the key components in a conceptual framework and use it to guide researchers in further studying consumer lying behavior. We do not provide specific hypotheses regarding the mechanisms of consumer lying behavior, since existing knowledge cannot explain the detailed mechanisms for all types of lies. Instead, we see the identification of key relationships as the main contributions with the conceptual framework.

We developed a conceptual framework that captures the three key components of consumer lying behavior: (1) motives, (2) characteristics of the lie, and (3) outcomes (see Fig. 1). The underlying logic is that the outcome of lying in a service encounter is influenced by the motive for lying and the characteristics of the lie (DePaulo et al., 1996), which we identified as the stage of the service encounter at which the lie is told, the content of the lie, the beneficiary of the lie, the type of lie, and the severity of the lie (stage, content, beneficiary, type of lie, and severity). For the consumer, the outcome of lying has three dimensions: emotional, behavioral, and financial. Based on the results of Study 1 and existing knowledge of consumer lying behavior, the conceptual framework is shown in Fig. 1, highlighting the relationships tested in Study 2.

According to the conceptual framework, the motive for lying influences the outcome. This key relationship has not previously been investigated. Rather than comparing different motives, previous research has focused on lies involving a specific motive (e.g., material gain, self-presentation). However, Study 1 indicated that different motives for lying lead to different consumer outcomes; while some motives seem strongly linked to emotional outcomes, others are clearly associated with financial or behavioral outcomes.

Second, the conceptual framework suggests that the outcome of a lie is influenced by its characteristics (stage, content, beneficiary, type of lie, and severity). The effects of these characteristics on the outcome have rarely (if ever) been investigated. Previous marketing studies have focused mainly on the beneficiary of the lie while neglecting other characteristics. Based on the explorative analysis in Study 1, we contend that a lie's characteristics will affect its outcome.

Third, the conceptual framework argues that the characteristics of the lie do not work in isolation influencing the outcome of the lie, i.e., there are interaction effects of the lying characteristics. This suggests that certain characteristics of the lie will enhance the main effects of other characteristics, leading to larger emotional, behavioral, and financial outcomes. Based on the findings of Study 1, we would expect falsification (making up a story) to have a greater effect on the outcome at certain stages of the service encounter. For example, if such a lie is told in the pre-core service encounter, this will set the tone for the social exchange between customer and employee, so exerting a greater influence on the outcome.

Finally, the conceptual framework suggests that other variables can

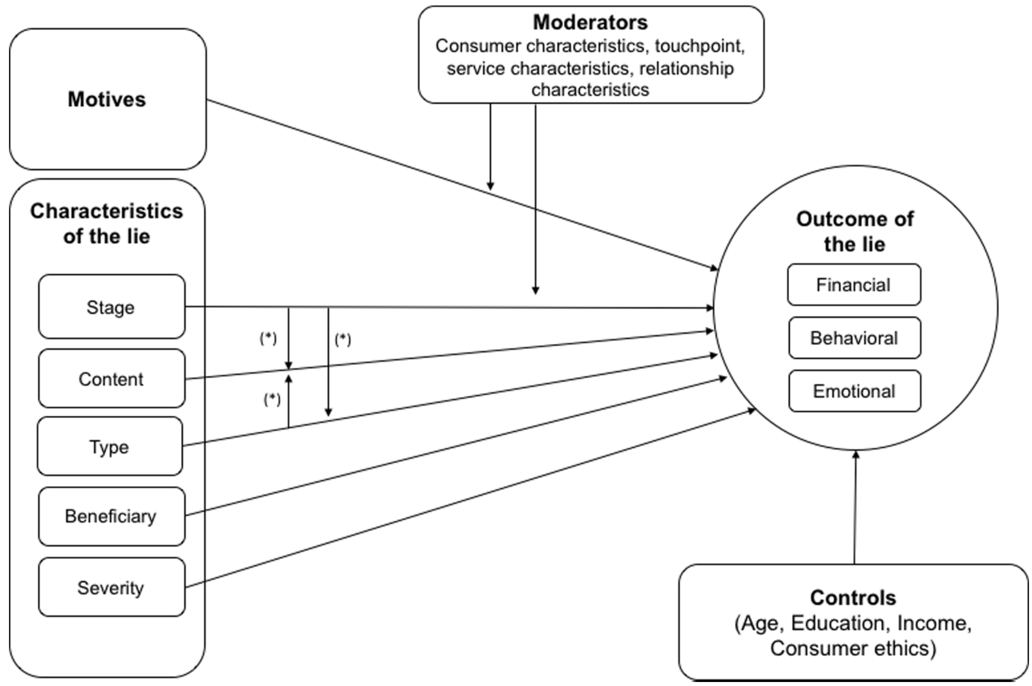

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework: Consumer lying behavior. * *These interactions among characteristics of the lie are tested in Study 2 (Stage × Content, Stage × Type, Type × Content).*

influence the outcome of the lie, including age, income, education, and consumer ethics (for further details, see Study 2). The conceptual framework also includes potential moderators that include consumer characteristics, touchpoints, service characteristics, and relationship characteristics. These were identified in the critical incidents in Study 1 in the recollections of the lies. The importance of potential moderators is further discussed in the research agenda.

6. Study 2: Testing the conceptual framework

To test the conceptual model, we performed a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) to investigate the relationships between motives, characteristics, and outcomes.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Procedure and respondents

The sample comprised 2,200 U.S. consumers aged 18 years or more from an online panel provided by Qualtrics; again, they received a small monetary incentive for participating. As in Study 1, respondents were asked whether they had ever lied in a service encounter; if they had, they were asked to describe a recent incident (within the previous three months) in more detail. As we were targeting only consumers who had lied, these descriptions were screened, and if the lie was not complete or did not concern a service encounter, the response was disregarded. In total, 200 responses were disregarded, and 12 respondents failed to finish the survey, leaving us with a final sample of 1,988 complete observations (see Table 2).

As the purpose of this study was to investigate the different motives for consumer lying behavior, we used a stratified sampling procedure to facilitate comparison by capturing more lies involving *revenge*, which were rare in Study 1. This process involved several steps. First, we asked consumers who had initially admitted to lying in a service encounter to specify their motive. *Revenge* was listed first because Study 1 identified it as the least common motive for lying. If a respondent indicated that they had lied for this reason, they were asked a series of follow-up questions (for details, see web appendix W1); if not, they proceeded to the next motive in randomized order, and so on. If they did not identify any of the listed motives as their own, they were asked to indicate their reason for lying and were again asked the same follow-up questions. This strategy yielded the following fairly uniform distribution of motives for lying: social reasons (n = 288); avoid interaction (n = 316); material benefit (n = 262); save effort (n = 288); self-presentation (n = 298); avoid reprimand (n = 294); and revenge (n = 242). The median age span was 35–44 years (range 18–85+). On average, customers admitted to lying once or twice in the previous month.

6.1.2. Measures

Several constructs in the conceptual framework were measured as categorical variables. Among these, motive was operationalized as a seven-level categorical variable (one for each motive); other categorical variables included type of lie (two levels), beneficiary (two levels), stage of service encounter (three levels), and content of lie (two levels). As lying behavior varies in severity —from lying about having a good day to lying about having a deadly disease—we measured severity using two items adapted from the Dysfunctional Customer Behavior Severity scale (Harris & Reynolds, 2004). In Study 2, we measured the emotional, behavioral, and financial outcomes of each lie as multi-item constructs on a seven-point Likert scale. Measures of financial and behavioral outcomes were based on McMillen and Fisher (1998), and two items adapted from the Mood Short Form (MSF) scale (Peterson & Sauber, 1999) captured emotional outcomes, focusing on negative affect (Argo & Shiv, 2012). To control for common method bias, we used the Consumer Ethics scale (Vitell & Muncy, 2005); additional control variables included gender, education, income, and age (see Table 5). All items used in Study 2 are listed in the Appendix.

6.1.3. Reliability and validity

To explore the reliability and validity of the constructs in the conceptual model, we employed PLS using SmartPLS 3.2.7 (Ringle et al., 2015). Because categorical variables should be used with caution in PLS (Hair et al., 2012), we estimated the conceptual model without categorical variables and then exported the latent variables before testing the full model using MANCOVA. In practice, this means that we tested

Table 5
Results: Study 2.

	A. Controls									B. Main Effects									C. Full Model								
	Multivariate Results			Univariate Results						Multivariate Results			Univariate Results						Multivariate Results			Univariate Results					
				Financial		Behavioral		Emotional					Financial		Behavioral		Emotional					Financial		Behavioral		Emotional	
	Wilks's λ	F	η2	F	η2	F	η2	F	η2	Wilks's λ	F	η2	F	η2	F	η2	F	η2	Wilks's λ	F	η2	F	η2	F	η2	F	η2
Characteristics																											
Motive										0.89	11.0**	0.038	24.2**	0.08	4.6**	0.016	4.8**	0.017	0.90	10.4**	0.036	22.7**	0.076	4.2**	0.015	4.8**	0.017
Beneficiary										0.98	13.6**	0.024	34.4**	0.02	1.9 ^{ns}	0.001	0.0 ^{ns}	0	0.98	12.9**	0.023	30.5**	0.018	3.1 ^{ns}	0.002	0.01 ^{ns}	0
Stage										0.98	4.9**	0.009	13.2**	0.016	1.7 ^{ns}	0.002	0.4 ^{ns}	0	0.99	3.8**	0.007	8.0**	0.009	1.9 ^{ns}	0.002	0.6 ^{ns}	0.001
Content										0.96	20.9**	0.036	60.0**	0.035	6.4**	0.004	6.5**	0.004	0.99	8.4**	0.015	24.1**	0.014	3.9**	0.002	1.5 ^{ns}	0.001
Type										0.96	20.8**	0.036	49.6**	0.029	23.0**	0.014	7.8**	0.005	0.97	16.0**	0.028	38.1**	0.022	17.9**	0.011	5.1**	0.003
Stage × Content																			0.99	4.1**	0.007	9.8**	0.012	0.27 ^{ns}	0	3.3*	0.004
Stage × Type																			0.99	2.8**	0.005	1.0 ^{ns}	0.001	4.6**	0.005	1.9 ^{ns}	0.002
Content × Type																			0.99	6.4**	0.011	19.0**	0.011	1.4 ^{ns}	0.001	1.2 ^{ns}	0.001
Covariates																											
Severity										0.81	127.8**	0.187	98.9**	0.056	203.8**	0.109	272.7**	0.14	0.82	122.2**	0.181	90.5**	0.052	203.8**	0.109	256.0**	0.133
Controls																											
Code of ethics	0.98	11.3**	0.017	0.81 ^{ns}	0	13.4**	0.007	32.9**	0.016	0.99	7.8**	0.014	0.95 ^{ns}	0.001	7.3**	0.004	22.9**	0.014	0.99	7.3**	0.013	0.5 ^{ns}	0	6.9**	0.004	21.2**	0.013
Income	0.99	16.0**	0.024	30.4**	0.015	29.2**	0.014	14.7**	0.007	0.99	1.8 ^{ns}	0.003	2.6 ^{ns}	0.002	3.8**	0.002	0.77 ^{ns}	0	0.99	1.3 ^{ns}	0.002	1.6 ^{ns}	0.001	2.9 ^{ns}	0.002	0.5 ^{ns}	0
Age	0.94	45.6**	0.065	70.2**	0.034	64.7**	0.032	87.0**	0.042	0.96	25.5**	0.044	34.5**	0.02	33.4**	0.02	44.6**	0.026	0.96	24.2**	0.042	32.2**	0.019	30.8**	0.018	43.0**	0.025
Education	0.97	20.2**	0.03	24.1**	0.012	49.2**	0.024	22.4**	0.011	0.97	15.7**	0.027	15.9**	0.009	37.8**	0.022	13.6**	0.008	0.97	16.2**	0.028	16.2**	0.01	39.1**	0.023	13.6**	0.008

$^{**}p < .01$; $^{*}p < 0.0.5$; ns = non significant.

reliability and validity using a model in which severity led to financial, behavioral and emotional outcomes. Using PLS enabled us to test for common method bias and endogeneity, following the recommendations of Hulland et al. (2018) and Hult et al. (2018).

Based on Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria, measures of severity and financial, behavioral, and emotional outcomes of lying exhibited adequate reliability, convergence validity, and discriminant validity. Investigation of construct cross-loadings confirmed that all items loaded highest on their associated constructs. Bootstrapping (500 samples) indicated that all HTMT values were below 1. Taken together, these results indicate good discriminant validity (see Table 4).

6.1.4. *Common method bias*

To address concerns about common method bias, we guaranteed respondent confidentiality and ran several pilots to test the questionnaire design and to reduce item ambiguity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Following Hulland et al. (2018), we also investigated common method bias using the Muncy-Vitell Consumer Ethics scale (see Table W2 in Appendix). We favored this construct rather than the recommended measure of social desirability (Hulland et al., 2018) because operationalization of the latter overlapped with severity of the lie. Comparison of the estimated path model with and without the Muncy-Vitell Consumer Ethics scale revealed no notable differences, and all paths maintained their direction and statistical significance, indicating that common method bias is not a major issue here.

6.1.5. *Endogeneity*

To address endogeneity, we included several control variables, notably demographic variables such as gender, age, income, and education. Some of these control variables returned statistically significant results, but the conceptualized paths maintained their size and statistical significance. The analyses in Table 5 include statistically significant control variables. To test further for endogeneity, we followed the procedure specified by Hult et al. (2018), using the Gaussian Copula (GC) approach and the R-code provided. This addresses endogeneity by modeling the endogenous regressor directly and the error term by means of a copula. To begin, we performed the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors correction on the standardized composite scores of severity and lying outcomes (financial, behavioral and emotional) as provided by the PLS path model estimation. The p-value was below 0.05, indicating that none of the constructs had normally distributed scores and allowing us to treat them as endogenous in the Gaussian copula analysis. Next, we generated three separate regression equations, including the copulas. None of the three Gaussian copulas for severity was significant ($p < 0.1$), indicating that endogeneity issues should not affect the results of Study 2.

6.2. *Results and discussion*

The general linear model MANCOVA used to test the conceptual model of consumer lying behavior adjusts for interactions between covariates and independent variables. In particular, we were interested in how motives and characteristics of the lie might influence the various outcomes. Three interactions were included when testing the conceptual framework: (a) content and stage, (b) type and stage, and (c) content and type. We would have liked to test a larger selection of interactions, but the fact that certain lies do not occur naturally at all stages of the service encounter meant that we could only test the interactions among three key variables (stage, content, and type).

Before proceeding with the MANCOVA, we assessed the distribution of data, homogeneity of regression, and homogeneity of variances. These tests confirmed the multivariate normal distribution of the data. As the tests for homogeneity of regression coefficients indicated that the effect of severity on outcome was the same across different motives, content, and stages, it was included as a covariate. Finally, as Levene's test for homogeneity of variances of the dependent variables showed violations ($p < .05$) for financial outcomes, we used a log transformation to eliminate these violations and reran all models. As MANCOVA is robust to moderate violations of this assumption (Phillips et al., 1999), performing the analyses with and without transformation of financial outcomes had no substantial influence on the results, and we have chosen to report the results for the non-transformed variable.

After controlling for consumer ethics, income, age, and education, the MANCOVA results confirm that motive, beneficiary, stage of service encounter, content of lie, type of lie, and severity all significantly affected the outcome for consumers. We also included two-way interactions between stage of service encounter, content of the lie, and type of lie. The MANCOVA results indicate significant effects in the case of motive (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.90$, $F = 10.4$, $p < .01$); beneficiary (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.98$, $F = 12.9$, $p < .01$); stage of service encounter (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.99$, $F = 3.8$, $p < .01$); content of lie (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.99$, $F = 8.4$, $p < .01$); and type of lie (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.97$, $F = 16.0$, $p < .01$); and for the interaction between content and stage (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.99$, $F = 4.1$, $p < .01$), type and stage (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.99$, $F = 2.8$, $p < .01$), and content and type (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.99$, $F = 6.4$, $p < .01$) across the three outcomes of consumer lying behavior. Severity of the lie (Wilks's $\lambda = 0.82$, $= 122.2$, $p < .01$) had a significant effect across multiple dependent variables. In addition, the eta-squared statistic was calculated as a measure of effect size. (Eta-squared represents the percentage of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables.) To gain a better understanding of the differences between lies that differ in terms of motive and characteristics, we performed pairwise comparison tests for the different outcomes of lying. Multivariate and univariate results are shown in Table 5, and Fig. 2 displays the statistically significant interactions in graphical form. The pairwise comparisons for each construct are discussed below.

Motives. The MANCOVA results indicate that motives have strong explanatory power for the three outcomes of lying. Eta-squared values indicate that motives have higher explanatory power for financial outcomes than for behavioral or emotional outcomes. The largest financial outcomes are associated with lying for material benefits ($M_{financial} = 4.03$) and lying for revenge ($M_{financial} = 3.5$). The most notable behavioral outcomes are motivated by revenge ($M_{behavioral} = 4.30$), indicating that service encounters driven by revenge are quite intense, with serious consequences for both consumers and frontline employees. Lies motivated by material benefits ($M_{emotional} = 4.13$) and revenge ($M_{emotional} = 4.10$) are associated with the strongest emotional outcomes while social lies ($M_{emotional} = 3.83$) and lies to avoid interaction are associated with the weakest emotional outcomes ($M_{emotional} = 3.91$).

Content. The MANCOVA results indicate that the content of the lie affects financial and behavioral outcomes. In particular, lying about oneself in a service encounter results in lower financial outcomes ($M_{self} = 2.91$; $M_{other} = 3.27$) and behavioral outcomes ($M_{self} = 3.72$; $M_{other} = 3.84$) than lying about the service itself. The content of the lie has no significant effect on emotional outcome.

Stage of service encounter. The MANCOVA results indicate that the stage of the service encounter at which lying occurs influences financial and emotional outcomes. In particular, the financial outcome is larger when the lie is told at the pre-core stage ($M_{pre\text{-}core} = 3.31$) as compared to other stages ($M_{core} = 3.00$ and $M_{post\text{-}core} = 2.97$). The pattern is similar for emotional outcomes, ($M_{pre\text{-}core} = 4.20$, $M_{core} = 3.76$, and $M_{post\text{-}core} = 3.87$).

Beneficiary. The MANCOVA results indicate that the financial outcome is affected by who benefits from the lie. In particular, lying to benefit oneself results in a larger financial outcome ($M_{self} = 3.36$; $M_{other} = 2.83$) than lying for someone else's benefit. However, there are no differences in behavioral and emotional outcomes for lies involving different beneficiaries.

Type. The MANCOVA results suggest that fabrication has a greater effect on all outcomes than lying by withholding information. In particular, fabrication leads to stronger financial, behavioral, and emotional outcomes ($M_{fabrication} = 3.36$, 3.99, and 4.09, respectively), as compared to withholding information ($M_{witholding} = 2.83$, 3.58, and 3.80, respectively).

Interaction effect: content and stage of service encounter. The MANCOVA results indicate that the financial outcome of lying about a specific content differs with stage of the service encounter ($F = 9.8$; $p < .01$). In general, lying about the service in the pre-core service encounter achieves a larger financial outcome than lying in the later stages of the service encounter. In contrast, lying about oneself in the post-core service encounter achieves a larger financial outcome (see Fig. 2c and 2d). Emotional outcomes ($F = 3.3$; $p < .05$), are larger in the case of lies about the service than lies about oneself, but this difference disappears in the later stages of the service encounter. This is an important finding, as it reveals a boundary condition for the mechanisms of lying behavior. There were no statistically significant interaction effects for behavioral outcomes.

Interaction effect: type and stage of service encounter. The MANCOVA results indicate that the interaction between type of lie and stage of the service encounter influences behavioral outcome ($F = 4.6$; $p < .01$). In the core service encounter, a lie based on fabrication has a larger effect on behavioral outcome than concealment (see Fig. 2a). This is an important finding, as it demonstrates a link between how a lie is told and stage of the service encounter. There were no statistically significant interaction effects for financial and emotional outcomes.

Interaction effect: type and content. Finally, the MANCOVA results suggest that the financial outcome of lying about a specific content differs according to the type of lie ($F = 19.0$; $p < .01$). In particular, it seems that the content of the lie matters for fabrication but not for concealment (see Fig. 2b). This means that a lie based on fabrication about the service has the highest financial outcome.

6.3. *Implications for the proposed conceptual framework*

Study 2 confirms the internal and external validity of the proposed conceptual framework and provides initial empirical support suggesting that consumer lying behavior occurs in and have implications for service encounters. The key contribution of Study 2 is that the outcomes of lying differ according to motive, what is lied about, how, who benefits, the severity of the lie, and when the lie is told. The main effects of the key constructs are supported; the results also show that the model's explanatory power is highest for financial outcomes, and that certain motives (material benefit, revenge) and characteristics such as falsification and lying to benefit oneself lead to larger financial outcomes.

These results support that the characteristics of consumer lying behavior work together to produce larger effects on emotional, behavioral, and financial outcomes. Of the nine tested interaction effects, four were statistically significant. The results also show that the interaction effects are not confined to a particular outcome but that different combinations of lying characteristics reduce or heighten the different outcomes of lying behavior. In particular, the effect of the lie's content is magnified by how it is told; that is, a lie based on fabrication about the service leads to a higher financial outcome. The effect of the lie's content is influenced by when it is told; that is, a lie told in the pre-core service encounter leads to a higher emotional and financial outcome. This is consistent with existing research on service encounters, where the pre-core service encounter is suggested to have a larger influence on the customer experience than the core service encounter (Voorhees et al., 2017). In addition, it is important to note that the characteristics of the lie did not enhance the effects on behavioral outcomes, i.e. combinations of lie characteristics did not make a customer leave a service encounter faster or more often. The identification of such boundary conditions is a key step in increasing the understanding of the detailed mechanisms of consumer lying behavior.

7. General discussion

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to conceptualize

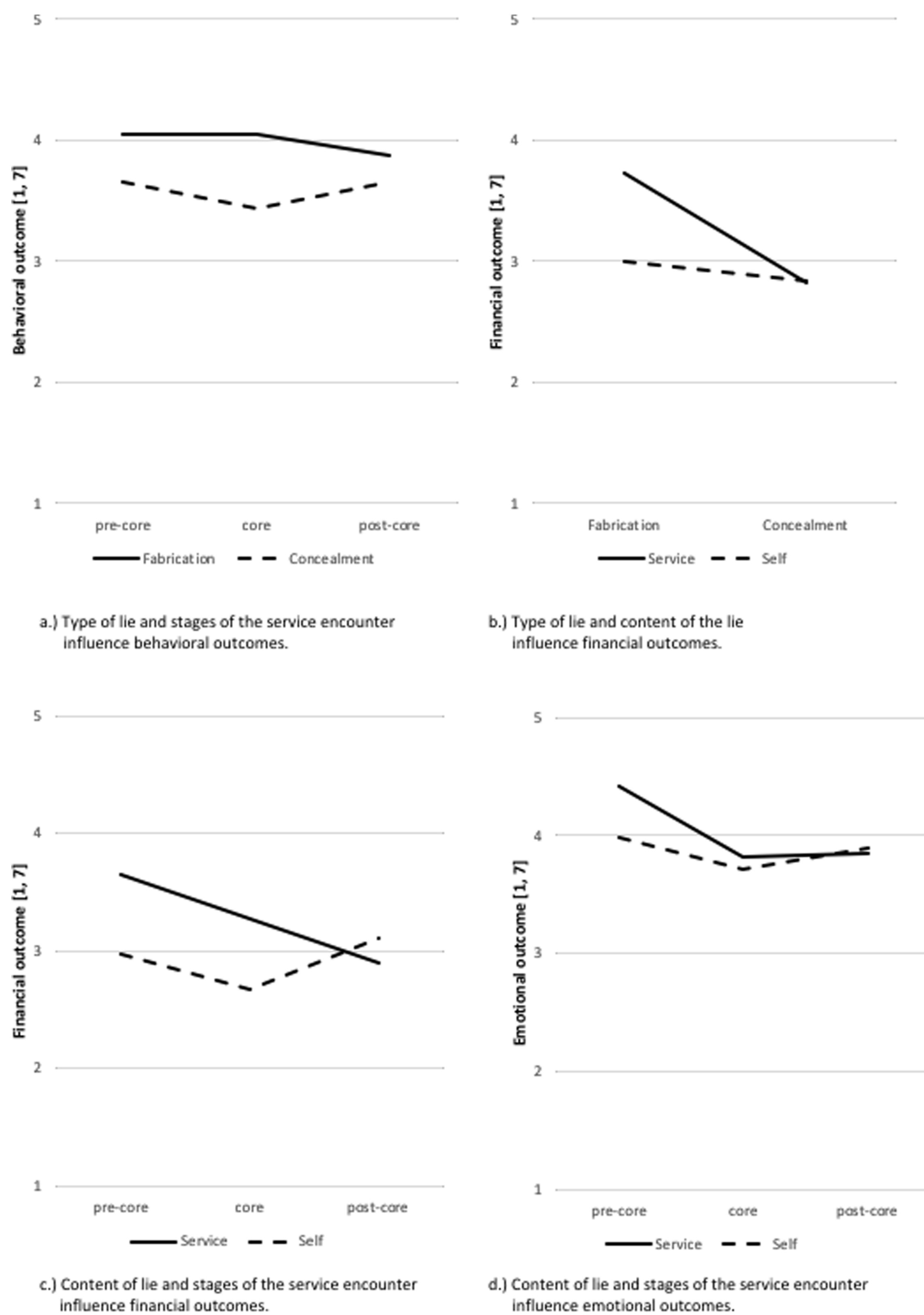

Fig. 2. Key interaction effects. Note: For each outcome, the interaction effects are significant at $p < .05$.

consumer lying behavior across diverse service contexts. Drawing on more than 2,976 consumer lies, the two studies explore why, when, and what consumers lie about and clarify the outcomes of consumer lying behavior. The proposed conceptual framework represents a first step toward embedding consumer lying behavior in theoretical models of the service encounter.

7.1. Theoretical implications

This research advances theory in several important ways: (1) by discussing dishonesty in service encounters; (2) by developing and testing a conceptual framework that reveals the mechanisms of consumer lying behavior; (3) by identifying new motives for consumer lying behavior; and (4) by establishing the outcomes of lying.

The role of dishonesty in service encounters. Theoretical conceptualizations of service encounters are generally based on the idea that interactions between frontline employees and consumers are truthful (Solomon et al., 1985) and follow certain service scripts. Conceptualizations of deviant customer behavior such as opportunistic claiming (Wirtz & Kum, 2004; Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010) and customer rage (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009; Patterson et al., 2016) have extended the boundaries of service research. However, conceptual and empirical investigations of consumer lying behavior suggest that service encounters are often dishonest, even when consumers do not behave in a deviant manner. If lying is common in service encounters, theoretical models must capture this behavior, and further research is needed to guide managers and frontline employees in developing and deploying service strategies and scripts to counter this behavior.

A conceptual framework for consumer lying behavior. In contrast to the narrow conceptualizations of consumer lying in previous research, the broader perspective adopted here revisits the mechanisms of lying behavior in service encounters. Building on existing theory, we developed a conceptual framework that addresses motive, characteristics of the lie, and outcomes for consumers. Drawing on social psychology, service and marketing research, this novel framework addresses fundamental questions about *why* consumers lie, *how* they lie, *what* they lie about, and *when* they lie. It becomes clear that lying is not just something that "bad" consumers do to take advantage of service providers; rather, all consumers lie quite regularly, and this makes it an important issue for researchers and managers alike. The proposed framework provides for a fuller understanding of lying behavior in cases of opportunistic claiming (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010) and among jay customers (Harris & Reynolds, 2004).

Linking motives, characteristics, and outcomes of lies also illuminates the mechanisms of consumer lying behavior. Although previous research has touched on some of those mechanisms (e.g., Cowley et al., 2019: Mazar et al., 2008), there is no complete account of these behaviors in service encounters. In contrast to previous research (Anthony & Cowley, 2012; Argo & Shiv, 2012), we explored a range of motives for lying and characteristics of the lie and showed that both matter. Additionally, we identified interesting and important boundary conditions that highlight the complexity of consumer lying behavior beyond the issues addressed in previous studies. We confirmed that while fabrication has a more significant financial outcome when the content of the lie relates to the service itself, the information concealed does not affect financial outcome. Interestingly, the impact of content depends on when the lie is told; for example, lies told about the service in the pre-core service encounter have greater financial outcomes than lies about oneself, but this difference disappears in the post-core service encounter. These findings enhance current conceptualizations of consumer lying behavior and enable firms to develop strategic approaches implemented in service scripts (Solomon et al., 1985) for dealing with lying consumers and helping employees to detect and respond to lies as a recurring phenomenon in service encounters.

The importance of motive in consumer lying behavior. In addition to economic motives for lying (Mazar et al., 2008), previous research has touched on social motives (Argo & Shiv, 2012) and self-presentation (Argo et al., 2006; Mazar et al., 2008; Sengupta et al., 2002). The proposed framework shows that consumers lie for previously unexplored motives and extends current theory by identifying four new additional motives for consumer lying behavior, two of which are forms of avoidance behavior: *avoiding interaction* and *avoiding reprimand*. These motives have significant implications for firms in terms of missed sales (avoiding service encounters) or provision of the wrong service (avoiding reprimand). In addition, these motives invite alternative theoretical explanations of lying behavior, such as Russell's model of affect (Russell, 1980) and implicit theory research (Dweck et al., 1995). The present research also identifies *saving effort* and *revenge* as motives for consumer lying; both have been addressed in the marketing literature (e.g., Grégoire et al., 2009) but not as motives for consumer lying behavior. In testing the proposed conceptual framework, Study 2 highlighted the key role of motives, which account for a large proportion of the variance in financial, behavioral, and emotional outcomes. This suggests that frontline employees and firms must take different actions to deal with different motives for lying.

Outcomes of consumer lying behavior. We found that consumer lying behavior has consequences for consumers as well as firms. While most previous studies have focused on the lie itself (i.e., whether one lies or not) as an outcome measure (e.g., Argo et al., 2006; Horne et al., 2007), the present research investigated the financial, behavioral, and emotional outcomes for the consumer. In this regard, severity and motive exerted the largest influence on outcome while type of lie, content of the lie, beneficiary, and stage of the service encounter also influenced financial outcome.

In line with existing research on deviant consumer behavior (Wirtz & McColl-Kennedy, 2010; Grégoire et al., 2018, Fombelle et al., 2020), we found that lies can have negative financial outcomes for the firm—that is, consumers can gain financially by lying. Surprisingly, we also found that lies could impact negatively on consumers—for example, by requiring them to tip excessively in restaurants or buy products they do not really want. Beyond financial outcomes, lying can also have significant positive or negative emotional and behavioral outcomes such as changing service provider). This shows that consumer lying behavior is costly for firms, that is, compensating consumers for products they have broken themselves, for providing the wrong service and opportunity costs for lost sales.

7.2. Managerial implications

As frontline employees must deal on a daily basis with consumer lying behavior and its consequences, the present findings have several implications for service providers. For instance, 92% of the consumers in Study 1 admitted lying in service encounters and reported gains ranging from \$1 (by lying to a grocery store) to \$3,000 (by lying to a bank). Negative financial outcomes for the consumer ranged from \$5 (paying for a bad meal at a restaurant) to \$150 (buying products to escape an awkward sales situation). Once firms understand that consumer lying is commonplace and costly, they can begin to support frontline employees to address these behaviors. The various motives for lying offer a useful starting point for such a discussion, as these have differing implications for the frontline employee and the firm.

Given that customers often believe it is necessary to lie to get what they perceive as fair service, managing such lies depends in part on being able to determine when to reward a lie (by letting it pass) and when to expose lying consumers. In relation to dishonesty, Mazar and Ariely (2006) argued that it is more important to increase the probability of being exposed as a liar than to increase the magnitude of the punishment. For each type of lie and magnitude of financial outcome, a firm must decide whether and how to expose the consumer as a liar.

It follows that strategies for addressing consumer lying behavior must be incorporated in the service scripts used to train frontline employees. For instance, it is important to understand that when a consumer lies for social reasons, this often leads to a pleasant service encounter and should be ignored unless the lie is disguising poor service quality (e.g., a bad chef, a bullying server, noisy guests), which impacts adversely on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Consumer lies motivated by a desire to avoid reprimand or interaction with frontline employees can also have major implications for both firms and consumers. Even consumers who might benefit from such an interaction may just want to be left alone; from a managerial perspective, this means that frontline employees are missing opportunities to provide information or help that would enable the customer to purchase the right product or additional services, leading in turn to lost sales.

8. A research agenda for consumer lying behavior

The proposed research agenda addresses key areas that test and extend the logic of the conceptual framework shown in Fig. 1. While the key constructs and relationships have been articulated and tested here, further conceptual and empirical work is needed to clarify the mechanisms and boundary conditions of consumer lying behavior.

8.1. Identifying and testing moderators

Further research is needed to clarify the mechanisms of consumer lying behavior. Study 1 revealed several potential moderators that can influence relationships among the motives, characteristics, and outcomes of a lie—for example, consumer characteristics such as norms of honesty and whether lying is planned or spontaneous. Other relevant moderators include touchpoints (physical or online), characteristics of the service (such as company size), and the strength of the relationship between consumers and frontline employees.

8.2. The case of severe lies

The present study was limited by the sample and investigated only self-reported lies in everyday service encounters. Mazar et al. (2008) found that while most consumers lie, their lies tend to be less severe. In a minority of cases, however, consumers' lies may have more serious consequences for the consumer, the frontline employee, and the firm, and understanding these more severe lies will require a different research methodology that takes account of ethical and moral issues.

8.3. Scale development

To fully understand consumer lying behavior, one must be able to measure it. Existing research commonly assumes that a customer has lied without knowing it to be so. While no existing scale captures consumer lying behavior, there are alternative paths; for example, as in service sweethearting (Brady, Voorhees, and Brusco 2012), consumer lying behavior can be measured in terms of frequency or conceptualized as a higher-order construct such as consumer ethics (Vitell and Muncy 2005). Scale development is needed to fully illuminate the interplay between consumer lying behavior and established marketing constructs.

8.4. Outcomes of consumer lying behavior in service encounters

In addressing perceived rather than intended outcomes of consumer lying behavior (see for example Argo et al., 2006), the present study represents a significant advance on previous research. Nevertheless, further research is needed to measure the objective outcomes of consumer lying behavior, using separate data sources for lies and outcomes. In particular, the present findings indicate that it may be useful to further explore the financial outcomes of lying, preferably in large field experiments involving both frontline employees and consumers, at all stages of the service encounter. The findings of Study 1 indicate that lying is a highly emotional matter, and further work is needed to measure individual emotions more precisely. Objective measures can advance our understanding of consumer emotions and the extent to which they influence lying behavior in service encounters.

8.5. Cultural and context in consumer lying behavior in service encounters

What is considered acceptable—and, by implication, what is considered a lie—differs across cultures. In some cultures, honor is more important than honesty; in others, honesty is the ideal. Contextual factors, including industry effects, are also relevant here; for example, people may anticipate some element of lying at a car dealership but not at a physician's office. The present research was conducted in the U.S.; as the nature and outcomes of consumer lying are likely to differ elsewhere, future research should explore these behaviors in a global context.

8.6. Strategies for managing consumer lying behavior

It seems important to investigate how employees deal with consumer lying behavior in terms of available strategies and their consequences for consumers, frontline employees, and firms. For example, is it better for employees to expose lying consumers or give in to their demands? The effectiveness of the managerial strategies identified here should be evaluated in field experiments.

8.7. Employee lying behavior

Finally, as service encounters involve interactions between consumers and frontline employees, future research should also explore whether frontline employees themselves lie to consumers during service encounters and how consumers react to these lies. In this regard, it also seems important to determine whether firms differ in terms of prevailing norms of honesty and whether some firms encourage their employees to lie to consumers.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supplementary material

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