Where do consumers draw the line?
An investigation of deviant consumer behaviour

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

QUT Verified Signature

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on 14th August, 2014

*This thesis is written according to the conventions of the Australian Government Style Manual: For Authors, Editors and Printers’ and referenced in accordance with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed).
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ABSTRACT

Deviant consumer behaviour is an ongoing problem in marketplaces around the globe given it can cause financial, physical, or emotional harm to the organisation, employees, and/or other consumers. Deviant consumer behaviour is behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct (Elliott, Ageton & Canter, 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989). Exploration into deviant consumer behaviour is a growing field of research. To date, however, there is a dearth of research into why individuals engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Daunt & Harris, 2012). The overarching research question guiding this dissertation is:

Why do everyday consumers engage in deviant behaviours?

Using three mixed-method studies, this thesis investigated consumer perceptions of right and wrong, how those subjective perceptions varied across consumers, and the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies.

Study 1 used qualitative in-depth interviews with a card sort activity on 29 consumers to identify salient factors in consumer perceptions of right and wrong, and examined links between those salient factors and the types of justifications individuals used to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. The findings identified eight factors that can influence an individual’s perceptions of right and wrong. Five of the factors were associated with specific types of neutralisation techniques used to justify acceptable perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.
With an understanding of the salient factors present in an individual’s perception of right and wrong, Study 2 then explored how those subjective perceptions varied, to establish the social consensus among 100 consumers using a Best-Worst Scale study with a Balanced Incomplete Block Design. Study 2 ascertained a ranking of ten consumer behaviours based on their perceived acceptability. The findings suggest there is high social consensus on the polar acceptable and unacceptable consumer behaviours, while most deviant consumer behaviours remain questionable – with low social consensus on the behaviour’s acceptability. Study 2 provided two dependent variables for examination in Study 3, (1) a questionable behaviour that reflected low social consensus on the behaviour’s acceptability, and (2) an unacceptable behaviour that reflected high social consensus on the behaviour’s acceptability.

Study 3 then examined the effect of ethical ideology, moral identity, perceived prevalence, perceived outcomes, and perceived risk on a questionable and an unacceptable consumer behaviour. Study 3 was executed using an online survey of 214 consumers. The results found the predictors of questionable and unacceptable behaviours to vary. Hence when social consensus varies in the behaviour’s perceived acceptability, so to do the antecedents to that deviant consumer behaviour. Moreover, the hypothesis that engagement in a questionable behaviour would predict past engagement in, and intention to engage in an unacceptable behaviour was supported. This constituted an escalation in deviant consumer behaviour, a novel concept in the consumer deviance literature.
Combined, the results of the three studies suggest that to effectively deter deviant consumer behaviour, strategies need to be tailored to the types of justifications individuals use to enable them to perform the deviant consumer behaviour while maintaining a positive self-concept. The types of justifications used reflect the factors salient in the individual’s perceptions of right and wrong, and the degree of social consensus of the behaviour’s acceptability. These findings have a range of theoretical implications for deviant consumer behaviour research and implications for practitioners.

**Keywords:**

Consumer behaviour, deviant, escalation, ethical ideology, mixed method, moral identity, neutralisation, self-concept, social consensus.
GLOSSARY

Cognitive dissonance is a psychological discomfort experienced from performing an act that contradicts with one’s underlying values and beliefs (Festinger, 1957).

Deviant consumer behaviour is behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct (Elliott, Ageton & Canter, 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989).

Escalation is a gradual process occurring over time, signified by a progression from acceptable to deviant behaviour, and from “minor, separated episodes” of deviance to “stronger, more frequent episodes” of deviance (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Ronel, 2011, p. 1219; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2009).

Ethical ideology is a system of beliefs or principles that individuals use to guide their judgements of the acceptability of a behaviour, based on the extent to which they accept or reject universal moral rules (Aleassa et al., 2011; Barnett et al., 1996; Forsyth, 1980).

Idealism is the doctrine that universal moral rules exist to determine the inherent goodness or badness of an action (Vitell & Paolillo, 2003).
**Moral identity** is conceptualised as the extent to which moral traits (honesty, kindness, compassion) are a central and relatively stable part of an individual’s self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Hardy, 2006; Vitell et al., 2009; Weaver, 2006).

**Neutralisation techniques** are disengagement tools used to reduce anticipatory or actual cognitive dissonance experienced from performing an act that contradicts with one’s underlying values and beliefs (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Festinger, 1957).

**Relativism** is the doctrine that moral rules exist but are not absolute and therefore, the goodness or badness of an action is determined by its consequences (Vitell & Paolillo, 2003).

**Self-concept** is perceived as an individual’s perception of oneself (Sirgy, 1982).

**Social consensus** refers to the level of agreement about an issue or behaviour (Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007).
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce the dissertation and the unique structure it follows.
1. CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) once said, “Morality, like art, means drawing a line someplace”. This dissertation is focused on investigating where consumers draw their ‘line’ to dictate what they perceive is right and wrong behaviour, the degree of social consensus on where that ‘line’ is drawn, and what predicts engagement in behaviours that cross that ‘line’. The arguments presented in this dissertation are primarily grounded in criminology, psychology, and sociology, with implicit groundings in economics and philosophy. The dissertation draws on the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields of research (see Figure 1) to understand perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour, how variability in those perceptions leads to variability in deviant consumer behaviour performed in the marketplace, and how it can be more effectively deterred through tailored deterrence strategies.

This research is positioned in the realm of descriptive ethics, which is focused on explaining and predicting behaviour, as opposed to normative ethics, which focuses on what individuals should do (O’Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). While the research conducted in this dissertation is in the consumer marketplace, the behaviours under investigation are decontextualised in that no one specific deviant consumer behaviour is examined. Instead, this dissertation investigates a range of decontextualised behaviours that can involve lying, deceit, retaliation, theft, and manipulation (see Appendix A section 4.7.1 for full list).
The purpose of Chapter 1 is to introduce and provide justification for this dissertation. The research rationale is provided (section 1.2), in which the research opportunities and research questions guiding this dissertation are introduced. The research methodology is subsequently presented (section 1.3), followed by a brief summary of the contributions to theory and practice (section 1.4), and an outline of the unique structure of this dissertation (section 1.5). A conclusion is then provided for Chapter 1 (section 1.6).

1.2. Research Rationale

1.2.1. Deviant consumer behaviour and deterrence

Deviant consumer behaviour is an ongoing problem in marketplaces around the globe given it can cause financial, physical, or emotional harm to the organisation,
employees, and other consumers. In this dissertation, deviant consumer behaviour is defined as behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct (Elliott, Ageton & Canter, 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989). Deviant consumer behaviour can be directed towards an organisation’s employees (e.g. verbal abuse), merchandise (e.g. theft- shoplifting, copyright; fraudulent returns), financial assets (e.g. all types of fraud), physical or electronic premises (e.g. vandalism; computer virus), or other consumers (e.g. jumping queues; hostile physical acts) (Fullerton & Punj, 1997; 2004). For instance, in 2013, $AU112 billion was lost globally to fraudulent returns by customers (Jager, 2013). Employees are affected by fraudulent behaviours when they deal with irate or coercive customers returning the items. Other consumers are then affected by it through a ‘honesty tax’ from increased prices, which costs Australian consumers $AU290 per week per household, to compensate the losses the organisation incurs (Jager, 2013).

Investigations into deviant consumer behaviour are driven by the consequences the behaviour causes to the different groups mentioned above. The negative consequences incurred by organisations, employees, or other consumers means organisations need to employ strategies to deter such behaviours in the future, to maintain order in the marketplace. Deterrence strategies are strategies that organisations use to stop consumers from engaging in specific behaviours that cause harm to other customers, employees, or the organisation itself. The research in this dissertation seeks to inform the future development of effective deterrence strategies to reduce the incidence of deviant consumer behaviour.
Traditional deterrence strategies follow the principles of undifferentiated marketing (Kotler, Brown, Adam & Armstrong, 2004) in that all consumers are treated the same and receive the same deterrence message. Deterrence theory is grounded in the classical school of criminology and the “rational choice view of human behaviour” (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1967; Pratt, Cullen, Blevins, Daigle & Madensen, 2006, p. 367). Deterrence theory assumes that individuals weigh up the costs and benefits of a situation, and then make rational decisions based on increasing their pleasure (e.g. benefits) and decreasing their pain or harm (e.g. risk/costs) (Tittle, 1980; Cole, 1989). The lower the levels of deterrence present in the marketplace, the greater the individual’s perceived opportunity to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Tittle, 1980; Cole, 1989). Deterrence strategies tend to focus on appealing to the risk associated with being punished for performing the behaviour or appealing to the individual to uphold the official classification of the behaviour.

First, a deterrence strategy that appeals to the risk associated with being punished for performing the behaviour, is only an effective deterrent if the probability, severity, and swiftness of punishment are all perceived to be high (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Grasmick & Green, 1980). When punishment is lacking, individuals are more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Albers-Miller, 1999). Fullerton and Punj (1997) suggest that traditional deterrence strategies need to overcome “the differing consumer perception[s] of and reactions to the risks of deterrent sanctions” (p. 341).

Second, the deterrence strategy of appealing to the official classification of the behaviour means appealing to consumers to uphold the law, and or an organisation’s policy. A behaviour classified by an official authority (law makers, organisation) as wrong, may be perceived by the individual in a different way, because some
individuals do not internalise the morality on which the laws or organisational policy are based (Cooter, 2000; Hinduja, 2007; Klosko, 1987; 2011; Skinner, 2011), meaning they perceive the law or policy to be unfair, or can justify violating it. A central proposition of this dissertation is that individuals differ in their perceptions of behaviour, as well as their perceptions and reactions to risk as suggested by Fullerton and Punj (1997).

Deterrence strategies that rely on the rational view of human behaviour as typified by the rational choice theory in criminology (Becker, 1968) have been criticised, with suggestions that there are underlying psychological factors that influence human behaviour beyond the rational approach (e.g. Akers, 1990; Garoupa, 2003; Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008; Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Extending on recommendations from Fullerton and Punj (1997) and Strutton, Vitell and Pelton, (1994), it is proposed that deterrence strategies must overcome differences in perceptions and determinants of deviant consumer behaviours. Acknowledging these differences means organisations will need to consider more tailored approaches to deterrence strategies. In other words, there is an opportunity to explore the development of more effective deterrence strategies that counter the reasons why individuals are engaging in deviant consumer behaviour, beyond the current rational approach to deterrence strategies.

**Opportunity 1:** Traditional deterrence strategies can be ineffective for a number of deviant consumer behaviours due to variability in perceptions of right and wrong. (see section 2.9, chapter 2).
1.2.2. Defining deviant consumer behaviour

In the past, deviant consumer behaviour has been conceptualised as a number of different constructs. Common conceptualisations include ‘deviant consumer behaviour’ (Moschis & Cox, 1989), ‘consumer misbehaviour’ (Fisk et al., 2010), ‘dysfunctional customer behaviour’ (Harris & Reynolds, 2003) and ‘aberrant consumer behaviour’ (Fullerton & Punj, 1993). The common components of these conceptualisations include violations of norms, the law, and standards, with some variations focusing on individuals’ intent and harm caused. As mentioned above, in this dissertation the term ‘deviant consumer behaviour’ is used, and is defined as behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct (Elliott et al., 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989). The lack of consensus in academia on defining deviant consumer behaviour is reflected in the types of dependent variables studied within the consumer deviance and consumer ethics literatures (Fisk et al., 2010). The lack of consensus in what constitutes deviant consumer behaviour makes it difficult for incremental contributions to be made in this field of research (Fisk et al., 2010).

Some common behaviours investigated in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields include shoplifting (e.g. Cox, Cox & Moschis, 1990; Tonglet, 2002), fraudulent returns (e.g. Harris, 2010; King & Dennis, 2003, 2006), illegally downloading content (software, music, movies) (e.g. Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008; Freestone & Mitchell, 2004), counterfeit products (e.g. Albers-Miller, 1999), illegitimate customer complaints (e.g. Reynolds & Harris, 2009), and internet auction fraud (Chua, Wareham & Robey, 2007). These discrete behaviours are investigated
over alternatives, as these behaviours are illegal or violate organisational policy, which suggests agreement on the behaviour’s inherent wrongness. While investigations into discrete behaviours provide considerable insight into those specific behaviours, it can result in a limited generalisability to the wider concept of deviant consumer behaviour (Fisk et al., 2010). Moreover, although these more ‘extreme’ and ‘severe’ deviant consumer behaviours are harmful to the victims, the cumulative effect of comparatively ‘minor’ or smaller degrees of deviant consumer behaviour that occur everyday are just as harmful to organisations, employees, and other consumers (Harris & Daunt, 2013; Mazar & Ariely, 2006; Mazar et al., 2008). To better understand the complexities of deviant consumer behaviour, a decontextualised spectrum of behaviours needs to be explored for varying degrees of deviant consumer behaviour. A decontextualised spectrum of behaviours means different types of deviant consumer behaviour from different contexts are examined, ranging from ‘acceptable’ to ‘unacceptable’ (see Appendix A section 4.7.1). It is important to note, however, that this dissertation does not examine pro-social behaviours (e.g. donating blood), as they are deemed outside the scope of understanding deviant consumer behaviour in this research.

Opportunity 2: Examine decontextualised spectrum of deviant consumer behaviours to better understand the complexity of ‘deviant consumer behaviour’ as a concept. (see section 2.2, chapter 2)
1.2.3. Deviant consumer behaviour and the ‘deviance threshold’

Social cognitive theory posits that an individual’s behaviour is governed by their outcome expectations – the belief that enacting a behaviour will result in some benefit for the individual (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Rimal & Real, 2005). Individuals are driven to engage in deviant consumer behaviour for some benefit. However, self-concept maintenance theory suggests individuals will only be able to engage in deviant consumer behaviour that allows them to also maintain a positive self-concept – a perception of oneself (Mazar et al., 2008; Sirgy, 1982). An individual’s perception of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour is likely reflective of their own ‘deviance threshold’. While not explicitly empirically tested, a deviance threshold is a concept proposed in this dissertation to explain how each individual can engage in some degree of deviant consumer behaviour from none, to the most serious form of deviant consumer behaviour – as dictated by the law or an organisational policy. An individual’s deviance threshold indicates the point at which they can no longer engage in a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour, without negatively updating how they perceive themselves (Mazar et al., 2008). For instance, the shift from lying to an organisation to theft may constitute a breach of the individual’s deviance threshold. An individual may be able to maintain a positive view of themselves when lying to an organisation, yet theft may require the individual to negatively update their self-concept to reflect their deviant actions. Given individuals are inherently driven to maintain consistency in their cognitions and behaviours, acting in a way that violates one’s cognitions will likely cause cognitive dissonance (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988; Cheng, Lam & Hsu, 2005; Festinger, 1957). This psychological discomfort will need to be reduced either by the individual not performing the behaviour, or justifying their
actions to maintain consistency between their self-concept and behaviour. Individuals can justify their actions using neutralisation techniques.

1.2.3.1. Justifying deviant consumer behaviour

Neutralisation techniques are disengagement tools used to reduce anticipatory or actual cognitive dissonance experienced from the intention to, or actual performance of, a behaviour that contradicts with one’s self-concept (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Bandura, 1999; Chatzidakis, Hibbert, Mitussis & Smith, 2004; Festinger, 1957; Sykes & Matza, 1957). Sykes and Matza’s (1957) original framework of neutralisation techniques encompasses denial of injury (‘no one is getting hurt’), denial of responsibility (‘I didn’t mean to do it’), denial of victim (‘they deserved it’), condemnation of the condemners (‘they are just as bad as me’), and appeal to higher loyalties (‘it’s for the good of my child’). Where an individual cannot justify their actions, they will be more likely to perceive the behaviour as deviant, and will be less likely to engage in it (McFerran, Aquino & Duffy, 2010). The use of neutralisation techniques enables individuals to maintain a positive self-concept, while they engage in deviant consumer behaviour. The relationship between perceptions of a deviant consumer behaviour and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour has received some attention in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields (e.g. Bonner & O’Higgins, 2010; Harris & Daunt, 2011; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Hinduja, 2007; Morris & Higgins, 2009). The use of neutralisation techniques explains how an individual may perceive a behaviour to be wrong, yet they engage in it anyway. Opportunities exist to continue research in understanding the use of neutralisation techniques (Harris & Dumas, 2009; Vitell, 2003), as there remains limited insight into what informs the use of different techniques. Specifically, opportunities exist to
investigate how underlying factors influencing consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour relate to the type of neutralisation techniques used by the consumer.

Opportunity 3: More knowledge required on the use of neutralisation techniques.
(see section 2.7, chapter 2)

Conceptually, the ‘broader’ the individual’s deviance threshold, the greater an individual’s propensity for deviance as a greater number of behaviours are perceived to be able to be performed, while maintaining a positive self-concept. Comparatively, the ‘narrower’ the deviance threshold, the lower the individual’s propensity for deviant behaviour, as less behaviours are perceived to be able to be performed, before negatively updating their self-concept. In this dissertation it is proposed that an individual’s ethical ideology and moral identity could explain consumer perceptions of right and wrong, influencing the broadness or narrowness of an individual’s deviance threshold.

1.2.3.2. Ethical ideology and moral identity

Ethical ideology is a system of beliefs or principles that individuals use to guide their judgements of the acceptability of a behaviour, based on the extent to which they accept or reject universal moral rules (Aleassa, Pearson & McClurg, 2011; Barnett, Bass & Brown, 1996; Forsyth, 1980). The acceptance or rejection of universal moral rules dictates whether an individual assesses the acceptability of the behaviour based on the consequences, or based on the behaviour itself. Ethical ideology is the schema
individuals use “to understand the world, their expectations of what will happen if they act in different ways and the degree to which they can attain their goals” (Burton, Westen & Kowalski, 2009, p. 428). An individual’s ethical ideology could dictate where the behaviour is positioned within an individual’s deviance threshold – as ‘acceptable’, ‘questionable’ or ‘unacceptable’. An individual’s moral identity then explains the importance of moral traits (e.g. kind, caring, honest, compassionate) in an individual’s self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002). A strong moral identity means behaviours that are inconsistent with what a kind, caring, honest, compassionate person would do, are not performed as they likely violate the deviance threshold (Aquino & Reed, 2002). A strong moral identity then triggers internal sanctions, in which the individual ‘punishes’ their own behaviour (Aquino & Reed, 2002).

However, the limitation of focusing solely on ethical ideology and moral identity to explain perceptions of and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour, is that not all behaviours are considered to have an ethical dimension to them, instead there are other factors an individual draws on to assess the acceptability of a behaviour and predict engagement in that behaviour (Aquino & Reed, 2002; McFerran et al., 2010). While a narrow focus on ethics is relevant for extending knowledge in that field, research in this dissertation seeks to bridge the gap between consumer deviance and consumer ethics research fields. To do so, additional factors informing (a) perceptions of, and (b) engagement in deviant consumer behaviour must be considered, beyond ethical ideology and moral identity.
1.2.3.3. **Classifying behaviours based on acceptability**

The ‘behaviour classification’ stream of research includes investigations seeking to classify behaviours into different categories (e.g. ‘acceptable’, ‘ethically questionable’, ‘wrong’, etc.) based on conceptual dimensions that distinguish them. Common conceptual dimensions suggested for distinguishing between behaviours include: the extent to which the behaviour is regulated (Amine & Gicquel, 2011; Moschis & Cox, 1989), how passive or active the consumer was in the act (Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005), degree of harm involved (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Jones, 1991; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005), whether the behaviour is deceitful or fraudulent (Mitchell & Chan, 2002; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005), reactions by others (Amine & Gicquel, 2011; Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Moschis & Cox, 1989), perceived consequences – undesirability of the consequences, importance of parties involved (Hunt & Vitell, 1986), magnitude and probability of consequences (Jones, 1991), social consensus (Jones, 1991), and proximity to the victim (Jones, 1991). While a number of conceptual suggestions have been made about how consumers distinguish between different behaviour’s degrees of acceptability, there remains a dearth of research into empirically supporting these conceptual suggestions. In other words, there is an opportunity to explore the reasons why behaviour categorisations and judgments are made (Schlegelmilch & Oberseder, 2010). The value in understanding what underpins consumer perceptions is that it provides a foundation of knowledge from which strategies can be developed to deter deviant consumer behaviour. More research is required investigating which of the conceptual dimensions proposed in the literature are salient in consumer perceptions of right and wrong, how these inform the use of neutralisation techniques, and provide insight into how these perceptions can be challenged through deterrence strategies.
Opportunity 4: Limited understanding of why behavioural classifications are made – the factors salient in influencing behaviour classifications by consumers. (see section 2.6.1)

1.2.3.4. Antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour

In consumer deviance research, commonly tested antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour include: personality traits (e.g. Egan & Taylor, 2010), subjective norms and social group influence (e.g. Albers-Miller, 1999; Conger, 1980; Fukukawa, 2002), ethics – ethical ideology, moral obligation (e.g. Fukukawa, 2002; Cronan & Al-Rafiee, 2008), perceived fairness (e.g. Fisk et al., 2010; Fukukawa, 2002), past misbehaviour (e.g. Cronan & Al-Rafiee, 2008; Daunt & Harris, 2011; Harris, 2008), types of products/services offered (e.g. Nunes, Hsee & Weber, 2004), and organisation’s size (e.g. Cox, Cox & Moschis, 1990; Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004; Houston and Gassenheimer, 1987). What has yet to be considered in both the consumer deviance and consumer ethics literatures, is identification and testing of factors salient in consumer perceptions of right and wrong, and how those factors inform engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. There is an opportunity to explore the role of ethical ideology and moral identity alongside these salient factors in consumer perceptions, and how they perform as antecedents to engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.

Opportunity 5: Exploring the role of ethics in underpinning perceptions of and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour, alongside salient factors in consumer definitions of right and wrong. (see section 2.6.3, chapter 2)
1.2.3.5. *Social consensus in perceived acceptability of behaviours*

Where investigations into deviant consumer behaviour become more complex, is in considering the variability of individual perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. In order to effectively deter deviant consumer behaviour, it is important to understand where individuals’ deviance thresholds overlap, and where they differ at a societal level. The extent to which individuals agree on the acceptability of a behaviour – the social consensus – can affect the predictors of enacting different types of deviant consumer behaviour. Past research on social consensus suggests when there is low social consensus on an issue; individuals draw on contextual or psychological factors to guide their actions (Barnett, 2001; Davis et al., 1998; Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). In contrast, when there is high social consensus on an issue, there is less ambiguity on how to behave; meaning individuals are less reliant on contextual or psychological factors to guide their behaviour (Barnett, 2001; Davis et al., 1998; Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). There is an opportunity in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics literature to explore antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour when the social consensus on the behaviour’s acceptability varies, extending on the work of Reynolds and Ceranic (2007). The value in accounting for the effect of social consensus on engagement in deviant consumer behaviour comes in the development of more effective deterrence strategies. The law and policies dictating if behaviour is right or wrong were created to reflect the social consensus on the behaviour’s ‘unacceptability’ (Cooter, 2000). However, as discussed above, sometimes consumers do not agree with the official classification of a behaviour (Cooter, 2000; Hinduja, 2007; Klosko, 1987; 2011; Skinner, 2011) and instead, are likely to draw on other
factors to inform their perceptions of a behaviour. Exploration into alternative factors for informing consumer perceptions of right and wrong can provide insight into potential antecedents to deviant consumer behaviours that have low social consensus in their acceptability. Understanding what predicts engagement in deviant consumer behaviour where there is low social consensus on its inherent acceptability provides insight into how the behaviour can be deterred in the future. Current deterrence strategies assume there is social consensus on a behaviour’s wrongness (Weingast, 1997), so these strategies are likely ineffective when consumers draw on other contextual and psychological factors to guide their actions for low social consensus behaviours. Deterrence strategies need to be developed to challenge consumer perceptions, eventually deterring performance of those behaviours.

**Opportunity 6: Explore antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies on the behaviour’s inherent acceptability.** (see section 2.6.1, chapter 2)

### 1.2.4. Escalations in deviant consumer behaviour

Neutralisation techniques, discussed previously, have been found to facilitate the occurrence, maintenance, and escalation of deviant behaviour (e.g. Bandura 1991a; Barriga, Landau, Stinson II, Liau & Gibbs, 2000; Bonner & O’Higgins, 2010; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Castle & Hensley, 2002; Kazemian, Farrington & LeBlanc, 2009; Strutton et al., 1994; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004; Zyglidopoulos, Fleming & Rothenberg, 2009). Escalation is a gradual process occurring over time, signified by a progression from acceptable to deviant behaviour, and from “minor, separated episodes” of deviance to “stronger, more frequent episodes” of deviance (Laub &
Sampson, 2001; Ronel, 2011, p. 1219; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2009). Research in the consumer deviance literature, has neglected to investigate escalations in deviant consumer behaviour, despite its extensive exploration in other fields investigating deviance (e.g. Argandona, 2003; Ayers et al., 1999; Dean, Bell & Lauchs, 2010; Feld & Straus, 1989, Kazemian et al., 2009; Ronel, 2011; Winstok, 2008; Zyglidopoulos & Fleming, 2008; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2008). For instance, gradual escalation in deviant behaviour is suggested to be responsible for most corporate executive misconduct (Hartson & Sherman, 2012). Executives might begin by misreporting profit earnings, and over time find themselves embezzling millions of dollars (Grant, 2000; Hartson & Sherman, 2012).

A gradual escalation in deviant consumer behaviour can occur over time without conscience thought because the increments in which the behaviour is escalated can be very minor (Gino & Bazerman, 2009; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Escalations in deviant consumer behaviour are important to consider as it can explain how an individual can begin performing greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour. The escalation argument can be explained by the foot-in-the-door effect (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). Individuals are more likely to engage in a greater degree of prosocial behaviour (e.g. donate money), if the individual began by engaging in a smaller degree of prosocial behaviour (e.g. signing a petition) (Burger, 1999; Freedman & Fraser, 1966; Hartson & Sherman, 2012). Engagement in increasing degrees of prosocial behaviour occurs because earlier compliance to the lower degree of prosocial behaviour influenced the individuals’ self-perceptions (Moore & Loewenstein, 2004). An individual’s inherent need for consistency in behaviour and self-perceptions drives the future compliance (Burger, 1999). It could be subsequently
argued that engagement in a smaller degree of deviant consumer behaviour could lead to enactment of greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour in the future.

Tenbrunsel and Messick’s (2004) ‘induction mechanism’ suggests when individuals evaluate the acceptability of a behaviour, they consider (1) the acceptability of past behaviours, and (2) how small or large the difference in acceptability is between the present behaviour and the past behaviour. The shift in perception of what constitutes deviant consumer behaviour could potentially facilitate escalations in deviant consumer behaviour given the new reference point of what is considered to be acceptable (Mazar et al., 2008; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). However, each individual’s deviance threshold inhibits the descent of all consumers into “stronger and more frequent episodes” of deviant consumer behaviour (Ronel, 2011, p. 1219). There is an opportunity to examine the notion of escalations in the context of deviant consumer behaviour.

*Opportunity 7: Opportunity to examine if escalations in deviant consumer behaviour can occur.* (see section 2.8, chapter 2)

1.2.5. **Conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour**

An overlap exists in the parent fields of consumer deviance and consumer ethics research, which allows for the development of a conceptual framework to explore the perceptions of, and engagement in, deviant consumer behaviour. In Chapter 2 (section 2.10), a conceptual framework is developed based on the opportunities identified in the literature, as highlighted throughout this chapter. Using the concept of an
individual’s deviance threshold as a foundation, the conceptual framework seeks to understand how consumers perceive right and wrong, and how factors salient in those perceptions inform the types of neutralisation techniques used. As identified in the literature, there are a number of different factors individuals can place emphasis on when assessing a behaviour’s acceptability that may not reflect what the ‘official classification’ (law or organisational policy) stipulates as right or wrong. The variability in salient factors in consumer perceptions of right and wrong is likely reflective of an individual’s ethical ideology and moral identity, among factors requiring empirical investigation from the behaviour classification stream of research. The inconsistency between how the behaviour is officially classified and how the individual perceives it will likely cause the individual to experience some degree of cognitive dissonance. Neutralisation techniques can be used to reduce this dissonance. However, the types of techniques used to reduce the dissonance will likely reflect the factors salient in an individual’s perception of right and wrong. For instance, if the individual places emphasis on the ‘degree of harm’ caused by performing the behaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Jones, 1991; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005), they could use the ‘denial of injury’ neutralisation technique (Sykes & Matza, 1957) to justify their deviant consumer behaviour. With an understanding of how an individual perceives behaviours, the conceptual framework seeks to assess how individuals’ perceptions of right and wrong vary from one another, and how variability in social consensus of a behaviour’s acceptability affects the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour.

The conceptual framework seeks to address the overarching research question in this dissertation:
“Why do everyday consumers engage in deviant consumer behaviour?”

Everyday consumers are individuals who are not affected by mental illness, abnormal psyche, or addiction, as those conditions are deemed outside the scope of this research. In order to answer the overarching research question, three sub-research questions were developed. Figure 2 illustrates the research questions guiding this dissertation.

Figure 2.

Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do everyday consumers engage in deviant consumer behaviour?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ1</strong> How does a consumer perceive right and wrong?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ2</strong> How do individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong vary among consumers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ3</strong> What are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What must first be understood is (RQ1) how does a consumer perceive right and wrong? Specifically, what factors are salient in consumer perceptions, and how do those salient factors inform the kinds of justifications consumers use to enable to perform deviant consumer behaviours. With an understanding of the individual perceptions of right and wrong, it is important to then examine (RQ2) how do individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong vary among consumers? Insights
from both of these research questions inform the final research question – (RQ3) what are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies? Specifically, what are the determinants of a behaviour with low social consensus in its acceptability, and a behaviour with high social consensus in its acceptability?

To illustrate the specific purpose of this dissertation, Table 1 outlines each of the relevant opportunities identified in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields of research, how the opportunities are addressed in this dissertation, and the research question/s addressing the opportunities.
Table 1.

Purpose of research – research opportunities and research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity identified</th>
<th>How this thesis addresses the opportunity</th>
<th>Research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Traditional deterrence strategies can be ineffective for a number of deviant consumer behaviours due to variability in perceptions of right and wrong.</td>
<td>Identifying differences in consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour provides a foundation from which tailored deterrence strategies can be recommended. Exploring the individual variability in individual consumer perceptions of (and engagement in) deviant consumer behaviour provides a foundation from which tailored deterrence strategies can be recommended.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Examine decontextualised spectrum of deviant consumer behaviours to better understand the complexity of ‘deviant consumer behaviour’ as a concept.</td>
<td>A spectrum of consumer behaviours was examined, including commonly tested behaviours in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics literature, plus additional behaviours identified in this dissertation.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. More knowledge required on the use of neutralisation techniques.</td>
<td>Exploring how salient factors in consumers’ classifications of behaviours can inform the type of justifications used by consumers to increase the perceived permissibility of the behaviour.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Limited understanding of why behavioural classifications are made – the factors salient in influencing behaviour classifications by consumers.</td>
<td>Examining the salient factors in consumer definitions of the three zones in the conceptual framework.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Exploring the role of ethics in underpinning perceptions of and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour, alongside salient factors in consumer definitions of right and wrong.</td>
<td>Test the role of ethical ideology, moral identity, and salient factors identified in the definition of right and wrong (prevalence, outcomes, and risk), in predicting two types of deviant consumer behaviour- (1) questionable behaviour (low social consensus), and (2) unacceptable behaviour (high social consensus).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity identified</td>
<td>How this thesis addresses the opportunity</td>
<td>Research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Explore antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies on the behaviour’s inherent acceptability</td>
<td>Test if antecedents of questionable behaviour (low social consensus) and unacceptable behaviour (high social consensus) differ from one another.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Opportunity to examine if escalations in deviant consumer behaviour can occur.</td>
<td>Test if past engagement in a perceived lower degree of deviant consumer behaviour leads to engagement in, and intentions to engage in greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour to capture escalation.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3. Methodology

The target population of interest for this dissertation encompasses male and female consumers over 18 years of age living in Australia. The broad population is warranted given consumers perform a variety of consumer behaviours throughout their lives (Ward, 1974), and a broad sample provides the best insight into the varying perceptions and behaviours evident in the Australian consumer marketplace. Three studies are conducted in this dissertation to address the three research questions. Study 1 involves qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews exploring how consumers perceive acceptable, questionable, and unacceptable consumer behaviours. A card sort activity is used during the interviews to facilitate the investigation of the underlying factors guiding the respondent’s assessment of right and wrong. Study 1 addresses research question one – (RQ1) How does a consumer perceive right and wrong consumer behaviour? Study 2 involves a Best-Worst Scale study using a Balanced-Incomplete Block Design executed via an online survey. Study 2 ascertains a ranking of consumer behaviours. Once aggregated, the results demonstrate the degree of social consensus on a behaviour’s acceptability. Study 2 addresses research question two – (RQ2) How do individual subjective perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour vary among consumers? Study 3 empirically tests the roles of ethical ideology, moral identity, perceived risk, perceived outcomes, and perceived prevalence, in predicting two types of deviant consumer behaviour- (1) questionable behaviour (low social consensus), and (2) unacceptable behaviour (high social consensus). Study 3 addresses research question three – (RQ3) What are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies?
1.4. Contributions to Theory and Practice

1.4.1. Theoretical implications

This thesis contributes to the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields of research. A framework of deviant consumer behaviour is developed to explore individual’s perceptions of, and engagement in, deviant consumer behaviour. Examination of this framework results in theoretical contributions from each of the three studies. Study 1 provides empirical evidence for the underlying psychological factors influencing perceptions of right and wrong consumer behaviours, which extends directly on the behaviour classification stream of research (e.g. Amine & Gicquel, 2011; Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Jones, 1991; Moschis & Cox, 1989; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005; Wilkes, 1978). Identifying factors salient in consumer perceptions of right and wrong provides an understanding of why some behaviours can be perceived as more acceptable than others. Moreover, greater knowledge was attained on the use of neutralisation techniques as called for by Harris and Dumas (2009) and Vitell (2003). Study 1 findings suggest that the type of neutralisation techniques used, is reflective of the salient factor/s influencing the individual’s perceptions of the behaviour. These findings provide information from which more effective tailored deterrence strategies can be developed and tested.

Study 2 contributes to consumer deviance literature methodologically through the use of a Best-Worst Scale study with a Balanced Incomplete Block Design, which overcomes biases associated with rating scales when comparing behaviours (Daly, Lee, Soutar & Rasmi, 2010). This method enables statistical comparison between behaviours to test for statistically significant differences, which cannot be achieved
using rating scale measures of a behaviour’s perceived acceptability, seriousness, or ethicality, commonly used when investigating deviant consumer behaviours. Theoretically, Study 2 findings contribute by illustrating the variability in individual subjective perceptions of the acceptability of a series of consumer behaviours. Study 2 clearly highlights the discrepancies in perceptions of right and wrong, which then has implications for organisation and policy as current deterrence strategies work on the assumption that there is consensus on a behaviour’s wrongness (Cooter, 2000; Weingast, 1997). As such, reliance on the official classification to guide behaviour is likely ineffective, without combining it with more tailored approaches to deterring ‘questionable’ deviant consumer behaviour (where there is low social consensus on its acceptability).

The findings of Study 3 provide an understanding of the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies. The findings provide support for the inclusion of ethics and other salient factors in consumer definitions of right and wrong to predict deviant consumer behaviour. The findings suggest ‘questionable’ (low consensus) and ‘unacceptable’ (high consensus) deviant consumer behaviours are determined by varying factors, with varying strengths. Perceived risk is not significant in predicting deviant consumer behaviour in this study, suggesting that there are other factors influencing deviant consumer behaviour. Therefore, organisations relying on traditional deterrence mechanisms that appeal to risk are sometimes ineffective. Finally, the escalation hypothesis was supported. The concept of escalating deviant consumer behaviour is a novel contribution to the deviant consumer behaviour literature, despite its extensive exploration in other fields investigating deviance (e.g. Argandona, 2003; Ayers et al., 1999; Dean et al., 2010;
In combination the three studies contribute to the field of consumer deviance by highlighting the need for more work on the development and testing of tailored deterrence strategies that challenge the justifications consumers use to excuse their deviant consumer behaviour.

1.4.2. Practical implications

The research conducted in this dissertation also offers actionable insights for practitioners. The findings provide information to develop strategies to encourage the consumer to perform behaviours the organisation desires, while dissuading deviant consumer behaviours. It is recommended that marketers should take a tailored approach to deterrence. Deterrence strategies need to move away from solely appealing to risk and the official classification of the behaviour, and instead work to negate the neutralisation techniques commonly used to justify deviant consumer behaviour. A number of strategies are recommended including; humanising the organisation to leverage the identifiable victim effect, targeting perceptions of prevalence through the use of social proofs, better illustrating the negative outcomes of a consumer’s deviant act by (a) administering formal sanctions, (b) encouraging social sanctions, and/or (c) promoting self-regulation through internal sanctions, and finally, organisations being transparent about why a policy or consumption constraint is in place to reduce retaliatory deviant consumer behaviour. Taking a tailored approach to deterrence may overcome the limitations of traditional deterrence
strategies that rely on an undifferentiated marketing approach to compliance (Kotler et al., 2004; Fullerton & Punj, 1997).

1.5. Dissertation Structure

The chapters in this dissertation are structured as individual papers with a method chapter linking them. Instead of a traditional literature review, Chapter 2 is presented as a conceptual paper in journal article format. The three studies conducted in this thesis are presented as two empirical papers in journal article format. The final chapter is presented as a commentary paper, in a journal article format. In line with this format, each chapter includes its own reference list and appendices. However, the formatting and referencing styles throughout this thesis have been made consistent with the APA requirements for thesis submission. It should be noted that repetition will be found in the literature reviews throughout this thesis, given the studies stem from similar underlying conceptual arguments, which underpin this dissertation. The individual chapters will be explained in more depth, following Figure 3.
Figure 3.

**Summary of Thesis Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1: Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presents an overview of the research rationale and design.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 2: Conceptual Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presents the conceptual argument underlying this thesis. Written in journal article format for <em>Journal of Marketing Management</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3: Justification of Research Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides justifications for the research paradigm and research methodology employed in this thesis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4: Empirical Paper 1 - Study 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presents, in journal article format, the literature, method, results, contributions, and limitations pertaining to Study 1. Written for <em>European Journal of Marketing</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5: Empirical Paper 2 - Study 2 and 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presents, in journal article format, the literature, method, results, contributions, and limitations pertaining to Study 2 and Study 3. Written for <em>Business Ethics Quarterly</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 6: Commentary Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides a summary discussion of the practical implications of the research, in the format of a commentary paper. Written for the <em>Journal of Consumer Affairs</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 2** is presented in journal article format for the *Journal of Marketing Management*. The paper presents the conceptual arguments of the thesis. A framework of deviant consumer behaviour is developed which explores individual perceptions of, and engagement in, deviant consumer behaviour. Chapter 2 sets up a research agenda for the rest of the dissertation.
Chapter 3 provides a justification for the research design utilised in this thesis. It outlines the paradigm under which the research is conducted, and provides a justification for the methods used in each of the three studies. The specific details on how the studies were executed are provided in Chapters 4 and 5, alongside the relevant study. The ethical considerations pertaining to the research as a whole are discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is presented in a journal article format, written for the European Journal of Marketing. The paper reports Study 1. Study 1 is a qualitative study answering research question one: How does a consumer perceive right and wrong consumer behaviour? Consequently, this chapter will include a short literature review relevant to the study, followed by a discussion of the methods used. The results, limitations, and implications will subsequently be presented.

Chapter 5 is presented in a journal article format, written for Business Ethics Quarterly. The paper presents the outcomes of Study 2 and Study 3. Study 2 quantitatively ascertains a ranking of deviant consumer behaviour, answering research question two: How do individual subjective perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour vary among consumers? Study 3 empirically tests research question three: What are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies? It is important to note that Study 2 of this thesis is referred to as Study 1 in Chapter 5 as it is the first study to appear in the paper. Following from this, Study 3 of this thesis is referred to, as Study 2 in Chapter 5, given it is the second study to be presented in that paper. This chapter will include a short literature review relevant to
the study, followed by a discussion of the methods used. The results, limitations, and implications will subsequently be presented.

Chapter 6 is a commentary paper for the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. The paper provides a commentary on the situation of deviant consumer behaviour and current deterrence strategies in place. Based on the research conducted in this dissertation, tailored deterrence strategies are recommended in this commentary paper as a solution to improving consumer compliance to the law and organisational policy. A discussion is provided on how the recommendations can be implemented in practice, while providing an agenda for future research. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis.

1.6. Conclusion

The purpose of Chapter 1 was to present the rationale for this dissertation, including the research gaps and questions guiding the research. Chapter 1 also outlined the research methodology used to address the research questions. The theoretical and practical implications of the research were subsequently summarised. The unique structure of this thesis was then explained. The next chapter, Chapter 2, will present a conceptual paper providing the theoretical foundation underpinning the research in this dissertation.
1.7. References


CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL PAPER
2. CHAPTER TWO: Conceptual Paper

Written for the Journal of Marketing Management

2.1. Introduction

Deviant consumer behaviour is defined as behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct (Elliott, Ageton & Canter, 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989). Deviant consumer behaviour is an ongoing problem in marketplaces around the globe. Investigations into deviant consumer behaviour are driven by the consequences the behaviour inflicts on a number of groups – organisations, employees, and other consumers. For instance, in 2013, $AU112 billion was lost globally to fraudulent returns by customers (Jager, 2013). Employees are affected by fraudulent behaviours when they deal with irate or coercive customers who are returning the items. Other consumers are then affected by it through a ‘honesty tax’, which costs Australian consumers $AU290 per week per household, to compensate the losses the organisation incurs (Jager, 2013). Exploration into deviant consumer behaviour is a growing field of research in both the product and service environments. To date, however, there is a dearth of research into why individuals engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Daunt & Harris, 2012).

The overarching research question guiding this paper is: Why do everyday consumers engage in deviant consumer behaviour? Everyday consumers are those not affected by an abnormal psyche, mental illness, or addiction. These conditions are considered outside the scope of this research. In order to address this overarching research question, this paper seeks to understand consumer perceptions of deviant
consumer behaviour. With an understanding of the salient factors present in an individual’s perception of deviant consumer behaviour, variation between those subjective perceptions must be examined. Finally, to address the overarching research question, the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour must be considered, especially when there is variation in subjective perceptions of a behaviour’s acceptability. Identifying consistencies and discrepancies in individual subjective perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour provides greater insight into the types of deterrence strategies required to deter those behaviours. There is an opportunity to develop a research agenda to answer this overarching research question.

The purpose of answering the research question ‘why do everyday consumers engage in deviant consumer behaviour?’ is to inform the development of more effective deterrence strategies. Effective deterrence strategies play an important role in curbing deviant consumer behaviour. The two bodies of research are drawn on in this paper to develop a research agenda include consumer deviance research and consumer ethics research. This paper proposes that a decontextualised spectrum of behaviours be used in deviant consumer behaviour research, as opposed to focusing solely on illegal actions, or ethically questionable behaviours in the consumer setting, to provide a greater understanding of the complexities of the broad concept of consumer deviance (Fisk et al., 2010).

This paper first presents an overview of the inconsistent conceptualisations of deviant consumer behaviour in the literature, followed by a discussion of the types and consequences of deviant consumer behaviour. Theoretical approaches to
explaining deviant consumer behaviour are presented before examining typologies and frameworks of deviant consumer behaviour. The role of justifications in performance of, and escalations in deviant consumer behaviour are subsequently discussed. The deterrence strategies used to control deviant consumer behaviour are examined, followed by the research agenda to answer the overarching research question and the implications of this research.

2.2. Defining deviant consumer behaviour

Deviant consumer behaviour has been conceptualised as a number of different constructs. The most common conceptualisations include ‘deviant consumer behaviour’, ‘consumer misbehaviour’ ‘dysfunctional customer behaviour’, and ‘aberrant consumer behaviour’. Taking a normative perspective, deviant consumer behaviour has been defined as “undesirable, unacceptable, or dysfunctional [behaviour that] differs from some norm or standard” (Moschis & Cox, 1989, p. 732). This conceptualisation focuses on the role of regulation and norms to distinguish between behaviours. While the presence or absence of regulation provides an absolute definition for deviant and non-deviant behaviours, the distinction between normative and non-normative behaviours is problematic given the number of perspectives society and individuals can have on what constitutes normative behaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 1997a). The conceptualisation of aberrant consumer behaviour, defined as “behaviour in exchange settings which [sic] violates the generally accepted norms of conduct in such situations” (Fullerton & Punj, 1993, p. 570), faces the same limitations of ascertaining the norms of an exchange-setting. Aberrant consumer behaviour was later replaced with the term consumer misbehaviour to “exclusively explore deviant customer behaviours that are both externally-directed and visible”
(Fisk et al., 2010, p. 418), yet the definition remained the same. Dysfunctional customer behaviour takes a more specific focus on services while highlighting the context and intent, defining it as “actions by customers who intentionally or unintentionally, overtly or covertly, act in a manner that, in some way, disrupts otherwise functional service encounters” (Harris & Reynolds, 2003, p. 145). Fullerton and Punj (1997a) caution the use of intent in definitions of deviant consumer behaviour due to the difficulty in delineating the consumer’s intent from their actions. This caution against using intent in the conceptualisation of deviant consumer behaviour also applies to John’s (1984) definition of opportunistic behaviour, which is defined as “the deceit-oriented violation of implicit or explicit promises about one's appropriate or required role behavior” (p. 279). From the consumer ethics field of research, an ethical perspective of deviant consumer behaviour considers if the behaviour is “either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community” (Jones, 1991, p. 367). Given not all behaviours are perceived to have an ethical dimension, incorporating an ethics component into the definition of deviant consumer behaviour would narrow the focus of the research.

In this paper the term ‘deviant consumer behaviour’ is used and is defined as behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct (Elliott, Ageton & Canter, 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989). The broad term and definition allows investigations to capture the complexities of the behaviour being examined, “while still unifying the research under a common concept” of deviant consumer behaviour (Sparks & Pan, 2010, p. 209). This research is taking a norm-focused perspective in defining deviant consumer behaviour. While
this norm-focused approach has its limitations, because of the inherent difficulty in defining what ‘norms’ are, this perspective is consistent with the deterrence theory used in this research, which considers norm-violating behaviour ‘deviant’, requiring deterrence strategies to maintain social order (Cooter, 2000; Gibbs, 1981; Keeffe, 2010).

The lack of consensus in what constitutes deviant consumer behaviour in the literature makes it difficult for incremental contributions to be made in this field of research (Fisk et al., 2010). The lack of consensus on defining deviant consumer behaviour is reflected in the types of behaviours studied in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics literatures.

2.3. Types of deviant consumer behaviour

Most investigations into deviant consumer behaviour focus on behaviours that are illegal, because the illegality of the behaviour suggests there is social consensus on its unacceptability. Some common discrete behaviours investigated include shoplifting (e.g. Cox, Cox & Moschis, 1990), fraudulent returns (e.g. Harris, 2008; King & Dennis, 2003, 2006; King, Dennis, & Wright, 2008), illegally downloading content (software, music, movies) (e.g. Cronan & al-Rafee, 2008), counterfeit products (e.g. Albers-Miller, 1999), lying (e.g. Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008), illegitimate customer complaints (e.g. Reynolds & Harris, 2005), compulsive buying behaviours (e.g. Roberts, 1998), internet auction fraud (Chua, Wareham & Robey, 2007), and consumer vengeance (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). Deviant consumer behaviour, however, is not that narrow and can include varying types and degrees of deviance (Fellesson, Salomonson & Aberg, 2013; Fisk et al., 2010). While these more
‘extreme’ and ‘severe’ deviant consumer behaviours are harmful to the victims, the cumulative effect of comparatively ‘minor’ or smaller degrees of deviant behaviour that occur everyday are just as harmful to organisations, employees, and other consumers (Harris & Daunt, 2013; Mazar & Ariely, 2006; Mazar et al., 2008).

Investigations that go beyond illegal consumer behaviours include impulsive or addictive behaviours, anti-social behaviours, acts of consumer resistance, and ethically questionable behaviours (e.g. Amine & Gicquel, 2011). Both Vitell and Muncy (2005) and Amine and Gicquel (2011) saw the need to expand the view of what constituted deviant consumer behaviour, which led to investigations into behaviours ranging from pro-social to accepted yet tolerated, to illegal behaviours. A broad approach is important, because while investigations into discrete behaviours provide considerable insight into the specific behaviours, it results in a limited generalisability to the broader concept of deviant consumer behaviour (Fisk et al., 2010). While inclusion of pro-social behaviour is valid to examine the extent to which deviant consumer behaviours ‘deviate’ from these pro-social behaviours in perceptions of acceptability, inclusion could also complicate research seeking to generalise findings to the concept of ‘deviant’ consumer behaviour. This research excludes examination into pro-social behaviours, narrowing the focus to the scope of deviant consumer behaviour from ‘acceptable’ to ‘unacceptable’ as suggested by Amine and Gicquel (2011). Research into any type of deviant consumer behaviour is driven by its negative consequences.
2.4. Consequences of deviant consumer behaviour

Deviant consumer behaviour can be directed towards an organisation’s employees (e.g. verbal abuse), merchandise (e.g. theft- shoplifting, copyright; fraudulent returns), financial assets (e.g. all types of fraud), physical or electronic premises (e.g. vandalism; computer virus), or other consumers (e.g. jumping queues; hostile physical acts) (Fullerton & Punj, 1997a; 2004). The target of the deviant consumer behaviour – organisations, employees, and other consumers – may experience financial, psychological, or physical harm (Fisk et al., 2010). More specifically, the effect on organisations can include – financial costs, increased staff turnover, decreasing service quality, decreasing productivity, and economic implications (Fisk et al., 2010). The effect of deviant consumer behaviour on employees can encompass – job stress, burn out, physical harm, job dissatisfaction, decreasing performance (Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005; Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Fisk et al., 2010). Acts of deviant consumer behaviour can also have an effect on other consumers, specifically on the quality of service experience, financial harm, and alterations to their own perceptions, intentions, and behaviour (Fisk et al., 2010, p. 420). Huang, Lin and Wen (2010) found deviant consumer behaviour performed by one consumer could cause other consumers to make unfavourable service evaluations of the organisation, when they perceived the organisation could have intervened to stop the disruption caused by the deviant consumer behaviour.

The individual performing the deviant consumer behaviour can also be affected by his or her own actions. The individual could be punished through legal or social sanctions (e.g. fines and social exclusion, respectively), which could prompt them to cease the behaviour in the future. Alternatively, the punishment could result in the
individual being more meticulous in the execution of deviant consumer behaviour next time, so as not to get punished again. If no punishment is incurred by the individual performing the deviant consumer behaviour, the individual may be more inclined to repeat the behaviour in the future should the need arise again (Burgess & Akers, 1966; Akers & Sellers, 2004). Repeated deviant consumer behaviour is an additional negative consequence of deviant consumer behaviour, adding to those already discussed towards the organisation, employees, and other consumers.

However, as Fisk et al. (2010) point out, there are sometimes positive unintended outcomes from deviant consumer behaviour, such as the reinforcement of societal norms and providing non-deviant consumers with reinforcement for their positive self-concept – an individual’s perception of oneself (Sirgy, 1982). Recent evidence from industry suggests that a positive outcome of deviant consumer behaviour can generate change and improve business models at both organisational and industry levels, to better meet the demands of consumers. For example, in response to significant illegal downloading of music, the music industry responded by offering music for purchase online to be used on multiple technology devices. While positive consequences of deviant consumer behaviour are only applicable to some behaviour, it is still worth noting. Yet the negative impact of deviance continues to drive research in this field.

2.5. Theoretical approaches to explaining deviant consumer behaviour

Social cognitive theory can be used to explain why an individual would engage in deviant consumer behaviour in the first instance. Social cognitive theory posits that an individual’s behaviour is governed by their outcome expectations – the
belief that enacting a behaviour will result in some benefit for the individual (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Rimal & Real, 2005). Individuals are thus driven to engage in deviant consumer behaviour for some benefit. Strain theory suggests the decision to engage in deviant consumer behaviour is usually when conventional behaviours have previously failed in achieving a goal for the consumer (Agnew, 1992). This is evident in Fullerton and Punj’s (2004) macro level motivations for deviant consumer behaviour, under the ‘unfulfilled aspirations’ motive. Unfulfilled aspiration are suggested to influence deviant consumer behaviour as “marketing activities have overstimulated and thus magnified consumers’ desires to the point where misbehavior in order to realize them has become a common phenomenon” (Fullerton & Punj, 1993, p. 572). Anomie – a state of normlessness – arises when there is malintegration between valued cultural ends, as described above, and legitimate societal means to achieve those ends (Merton, 1938; Akers & Sellers, 2004; Akers, 1977), resulting in two possible responses, conformity or innovation. Conformity results in accepting the situation and continuing to strive to achieve those goals within the restricted conventional means (Akers & Sellers, 2004). Innovation is the deviant response in which an individual will strive to achieve their goals via deviant consumer behaviours (Akers & Sellers, 2004). The likelihood of seeking deviant behavioural alternatives is strengthened when the individual has observed others successfully achieving a desired end-state with a deviant behaviour, as supported by observational learning (Bandura, 1977).

Criminology’s social learning theory proposes that deviant behaviour – irrelevant of context – is learned according to the principles of observational learning (discussed above), differential association, and operant conditioning. Fullerton and
Punj (2004) identify differential association as a macro level motive for deviant consumer behaviour. Differential association is a sociological perspective of behaviour suggesting behaviour is learned through social interaction such that individuals learn how to accept, perform, and justify deviant behaviour from the different groups and people an individual associates with (Akers & Jensen, 2010; Sutherland, 1947). The group teaches beliefs, attitudes, and justifications, and is a primary source of behavioural reinforcement. Operant conditioning suggests reinforcement and punishment predict the initiation, maintenance, and succession of deviant behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2004). As most deviant consumer behaviour goes unpunished (Bandura, 1991b), the absence of punishment can be seen as an absent constraint allowing deviant consumer behaviour to occur. However, there are arguments suggesting that moral beliefs are more important in constraining deviant behaviours than reinforcement and punishment (Brauer, 2009).

The absence of moral constraints is proposed as another macro level motive for deviant consumer behaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 2004). The absence of internal sanctions for deviant consumer behaviour can explain why when individuals face the same situation some respond with deviant behaviour, while others do not. An alternative perspective to Fullerton and Punj (2004) in understanding moral constraints and their influence on deviant consumer behaviour is using an individual’s moral identity. Moral identity is the extent to which moral traits are a central and relatively stable part of an individual’s self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Hardy, 2006; Vitell et al., 2009; Weaver, 2006). The moral traits (e.g. kindness, honesty, compassion) were drawn from philosophical virtue theories that Aquino and Reed (2002) suggested would trigger a wider network of related moral traits underlying an
individual’s moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reed & Aquino, 2003; Weaver, 2006). Internalised moral traits work to regulate one’s behaviour by substituting threats of external sanctions with internal self-sanctions (Bandura, 1991a; Grasmick & Green 1981; Spivak, Fukushima, Kelley & Jenson, 2011). Individual’s with a strong moral identity are less tolerant of deviant consumer behaviours, and are less likely to engage in them, because violation of an individual’s moral identity would cause the individual to experience cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Trevino, Weaver & Reynolds, 2006; Weaver, 2006). Cognitive dissonance is one form of self-sanction that an individual with a strong moral identity can administer to regulate his or her own actions. The more central morality is to an individual’s self-concept, the more motivated the individual will be to act in accordance with those traits (Hardy, 2006). Moral identity is “a motivational force that translates cognitions into behaviour because of a desire for self-consistency” (McFerran, Aquino & Duffy, 2010, p. 50). Individuals have an inherent need for consistency between their behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988; Cheng, Lam & Hsu, 2005; Festinger, 1957). Individuals with a weak moral identity are more tolerant of deviant consumer behaviours, and more likely to engage in them as there are no moral traits being violated to cause cognitive dissonance. Individuals with weak moral identities look to the threat of external sanctions to guide their behaviours, as opposed to relying on internal sanctions (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Relying on threats of external sanctions is undesirable in the consumer setting as most deviant consumer behaviour goes undetected (Bandura, 1991b). The lack of detection could be attributed to the difficulty in identifying minor acts of deviant consumer behaviour (e.g. lying), or the organisation not having the resources to detect any type of deviant consumer
behaviour, and the resources to administer formal sanctions (e.g. punishment for fraudulent returns).

Another theoretical approach to understanding deviant consumer behaviour is social distance theory. Social distance theory explains the role external factors can play in explaining deviant consumer behaviour. Captured under Fullerton and Punj’s (2004) macro level motive of deviant consumer behaviour – ‘pathological socialization’, social distance theory posits that "as social distance between buyer and seller increases, so too does the likelihood of untoward behavior” (Fullerton & Punj, 2004, p. 1245 e.g., Houston & Gassenheimer, 1987), such that “consumers are more willing to victimize large rather than small businesses” (Fullerton & Punj, 2004, p. 1245). Similar to the macro level factor of pathological socialization, ones attitude towards big business is reflected in their perceptions of “impersonality, size and social distance” (Fullerton & Punj, 1993, p. 572). The greater the organisation’s size, the greater the perceptions of impersonality thus the greater the probability of deviant consumer behaviour, as the consumer does not feel they are harming the organisation (Fullerton & Punj, 1997b). Deviance towards an organisation can be seen as a ‘faceless crime’ (Cox, Cox & Moschis, 1990). Without an identifiable victim to engender empathy, (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997), there is no perceived victim for a consumer’s deviant behaviour.

Thrill seeking and calculating opportunism can also explain deviant consumer behaviour such that individuals perform deviant consumer behaviour to increase their state of arousal, and or because there is an opportunity to do so (Fullerton & Punj, 2004). Calculating opportunism is argued to be the “single most important reason for
consumer misbehavior” (Fullerton & Punj, 2004, p. 1245). However, calculating opportunism relies on the rational model of human behaviour, which has been criticised, as there are other underlying psychology factors that can explain human behaviour beyond the rational approach (Akers, 1990; Ariely, 2012; Garoupa, 2003; Mazar et al., 2008; Mazar & Ariely, 2006).

Irrelevant of what motivates individual deviant consumer behaviour, self-concept maintenance theory suggests individuals will only be able to engage in deviant consumer behaviour for some benefit, which allows them to also maintain a positive self-concept (Mazar et al., 2008). Individuals may be able to perform minor degrees of deviant consumer behaviour such as lying and cheating, while maintaining a positive view of themselves. Whereas greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour such as stealing, may require the individual to negatively update their self-concept to reflect their behaviour. Negatively updating an individual’s self-concept is contradictory to an individual’s inherent drive to maintain consistency in their beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988; Cheng et al., 2005; Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008; Sanitioso, Kunda, & Fong 1990; Sirgy, 1982).

The point at which an individual can no longer engage in a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour without negatively updating their self-concept is the individual’s ‘deviance threshold’. While not explicitly empirically tested, a deviance threshold is a concept proposed in this paper to explain how each individual can engage in some degree of deviant consumer behaviour from none, to the most serious form of deviant consumer behaviour. Given individuals are inherently driven to maintain consistency in their cognitions and behaviours, acting in a way that violates one’s cognitions will likely cause cognitive dissonance (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988; Cheng et al., 2005;
Festinger, 1957). This psychological discomfort will need to be reduced either by the individual not performing the behaviour, or justifying their actions to maintain consistency between their self-concept and behaviour (discussed 2.7).

While these are the theories underpinning why deviant consumer behaviour may occur, a number of typologies and frameworks have been developed to distinguish between types of deviant consumer behaviours, distinguish between types of consumers, and that propose antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour. Each is discussed below.

2.6. Typologies and frameworks explaining deviant consumer behaviour

2.6.1. Classifications of behaviours

Across the consumer deviance and consumer ethics literatures, there are a number of typologies and frameworks that seek to distinguish between behaviours based on their degree of ethicality, wrongness, or seriousness. While past research has quantitatively examined the extent to which a behaviour is perceived by consumers as ‘wrong’ (e.g. Wilkes, 1978) or ‘unethical’ (e.g. Muncy & Vitell, 1992), there is limited empirical research examining the reasons underpinning these perceptions. In order to understand how perceptions are formed and how behaviours are distinguished from one another, the behavioural classification research is drawn on. In the behaviour classification stream of research, a number of conceptual dimensions are proposed as reasons why behaviours are distinct from one another, yet they remain empirically untested. It is important to understand the reasons underpinning these
categorisations, to guide the development of more specific and tailored deterrence strategies.

Research into consumer deviance began with Wilkes’ (1978) investigation into consumer perceptions of a variety of behaviours, to ascertain how wrong and how serious a behaviour was perceived to be. However, it was not until the 1990s that there was an influx of research into consumer ethics (Schlegelmilch & Oberseder, 2010). Muncy and Vitell (1992) led the behaviour classification stream of research with the development of the Consumer Ethics Scale (CES). The CES was updated by Vitell and Muncy (2005), and is regarded as a well-established framework for assessing consumer ethical judgments (Vitell, 2003). The CES groups behaviours based on the extent to which an individual perceives it to be unethical. Distinction between the behaviour categories in the CES are attributed to three reasons; (1) *how passive or active the consumer was in the act*, (2) whether the behaviour was *deceitful or fraudulent*, and (3) the *degree of harm* involved (Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005). An attempt was made by Vitell, Singhapakdi and Thomas (2001) to elicit qualitative insights into why behaviours were perceived as right and wrong. However, the results were only briefly mentioned and were focused on supporting Vitell et al.’s (2001) arguments for consumers using the teleological perspective to inform their ethical judgments – the belief that the outcome of the behaviour is important, not how the outcome was attained. A dearth of qualitative work in this stream of research on behavioural classifications means we have an extensive descriptive understanding of the complexities of consumer deviance, with limited in-depth insight into the meaning underpinning these empirical results. Only one study known to the author has tested the role of these conceptual dimensions in deviant
consumer behaviour. Mitchell and Chan (2002) found that perceived illegality (deceit/fraud) and severity of consequence (harm caused) both play a role in the enactment of deviant consumer behaviour.

Proposing similar conceptual dimensions as Muncy and Vitell (1992), Fullerton and Punj (2004) suggest behaviours could be perceived as distinct based on (1) the nature of the act, which reflects how ‘passive or active’ the consumer was as proposed by Muncy and Vitell (1992), (2) the type and degree of disruption, which extends on ‘degree of harm’ proposed by Muncy and Vitell (1992), and (3) the reaction(s) by others, which refers to the social and legal sanctions incurred from performing the deviant consumer behaviour, which is consistent with other frameworks from Moschis and Cox (1989) and Amine and Gicquel (2011). Fullerton and Punj’s (2004) typology was developed specifically for the marketing context, yet it remains empirically untested (Keeffe, 2010).

As mentioned above, Moschis and Cox (1989) and Amine and Gicquel (2011) include the role of regulation in distinguishing between behaviours. Moschis and Cox’s (1989) ‘typology of consumer behaviour from society’s perspective’ distinguishes behaviours based on whether they are normative/deviant, and regulated/non-regulated. This subsequently suggests behaviour can fall into one of four groups, rational (non-regulated/normative), mandatory (regulated/normative), negligent (deviant, non-regulated), or criminal/fraudulent (deviant/regulated) (Moschis & Cox, 1989). The presence of regulation as a means to distinguish behaviours has been used in subsequent conceptualisations of deviant consumer behaviour (e.g. Amine & Gicquel, 2011), despite Fullerton and Punj (1997a)
cautioning researchers against defining deviant consumer behaviour by the level of regulation as it is constantly changing. Moschis and Cox’s (1989) typology is also limited by inconsistent definitions of what constitutes ‘normative’ and deviant consumer behaviours. Amine and Gicquel’s (2011) typology of consumer behaviours improves on the limitation of defining what constitutes deviant consumer behaviour suggesting it captures any behaviour that deviates from ‘normative’ behaviours, including tolerated behaviours, pathological behaviours, and illegal behaviours. Pathological behaviours, behaviours resulting from abnormal psyche, mental illness, and addiction are considered outside the scope of this paper. The other three zones of Amine and Gicquel’s (2011) framework suggest there are (1) ‘acceptable’ behaviours that are normative behaviours, (2) ‘questionable’ behaviours that have varying degrees of prevalence in society, either due to slow adoption of the behaviours by the majority (e.g. fair trade or organic food purchasing), or because of variability in the social consensus of the behaviour’s acceptability (e.g. freeganism) and (3) ‘unacceptable’ behaviours that are illegal behaviours. Yet, Amine and Gicquel’s (2011) typology remains limited, like Moschis and Cox (1989) in what constitutes ‘normative’ consumer behaviours.

Normative consumer behaviours are underpinned by norms. Norms are rules or standards agreed upon by more than one member of a group that include sanctions in order to maintain social order (Bierstedt, 1963; DeFleur, D’Antonio & DeFleur, 1977; Gibbs, 1981; Homans, 1961; Morris, 1956; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Definitions of norms allude to being “a shared belief in a social unit as to what conduct ought to be” (Gibbs, 1981, p. 4). In other fields of research; criminology, sociology, and psychology, the term ‘deviant’ behaviour includes any behaviour that deviates from
norms resulting in a consequence of social or legal sanctions (Gibbs, 1981). Social consensus could be used to infer what an individual perceives as ‘normative’ behaviour. Social consensus refers to the level of agreement about an issue or behaviour (Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). The level of agreement in society on a behaviour’s acceptability could be reflected by the perceived popularity of an act and the perceived social approval of the act (Park & Smith, 2007). The social approval of the act, or ‘subjective norms’ reflects if parents, family, and/or friends, would support the individual’s enactment of that behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). As previously mentioned, the group an individual associates with teaches them beliefs, attitudes, justification techniques and is a primary source of behavioural reinforcement, which guides the individual’s perceptions of, and engagement in behaviour (Asch, 1951; Ajzen, 1991; Burgess & Akers, 1966; Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Sutherland, 1947). When an individual does not know how to behave in a particular situation they turn to others to see what is appropriate and what behaviour is being rewarded (Bandura, 1977; Pratt et al., 2010). The varying deviant consumer behaviours evident in the marketplace could reflect the lack of social consensus in the acceptability of certain behaviours. The lack of social consensus makes it difficult to deter those behaviours, as deterrence strategies work on the idea that there is social consensus in the wrongness of the behaviour.

Taking an ethical perspective for distinguishing between behaviours, Hunt and Vitell’s (1986) General Theory of Marketing Ethics suggests individuals will distinguish behaviours based on (1) the perceived consequences of each behaviour alternative, for those involved, (2) the probability of the harm being incurred by those involved, (3) the (un)desirability of the consequence incurred by those involved, and
(4) the importance of each party involved in the behaviour (Allmon, Page & Roberts, 2000; Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Hunt & Vitell 1986). However, only some individuals will consider these factors, namely those individuals associating with a relativism ethical ideology. Ethical ideology is a system of beliefs or principles that individuals use to guide their judgments of the acceptability of a behaviour, based on the extent to which they accept or reject universal moral rules (e.g. lying is always wrong) (Aleassa, Pearson & McClurg, 2011; Barnett, Bass & Brown, 1996; Forsyth, 1980). Individuals associating with the relativism ethical ideology follow the teleological philosophy of ethics. Teleology is from the consequentialist theory of ethics, which focuses on the outcome of an action to determine its acceptability (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). There are two branches of teleology, (1) ethical egoists who are focused on increasing the good outcome for themselves, which in turn constitutes the ‘right’ behaviour, and (2) utilitarians who are focused on promoting the greatest good to the greatest number, which in turn constitutes the ‘right’ behaviour (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). In other words, egoists and utilitarian’s process outcome information in different ways. In Jones’ (1991) moral intensity framework, additional dimensions suggested to distinguish behaviours based on their outcomes include magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, and temporal immediacy. If magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, and temporal immediacy were processed by an egoist, an individual would consider them to reflect the traditional components of risk – severity of punishment, probability of punishment, and swiftness of punishment. This suggests perceptions of risk may influence consumer perceptions of right and wrong. If an individual processes magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, and temporal immediacy as a utilitarian, these factors could be considered in line with the degree, probability, and swiftness of harm incurred by others. A utilitarian approach to
processing those factors, along with Jones’ (1991) concentration of effect factor, provides support for the ‘degree of harm’ dimension suggested by Muncy and Vitell (1992) and Fullerton and Punj (2004) as influencing how behaviours are distinguished. ‘Concentration of effect’ considers the intensity of the harm being caused – does the deviant consumer behaviour affect a small number of people a significant amount, or does it affect a large number of people just a little bit? (Jones, 1991).

Extending on the notion of harm caused to the victim, Jones (1991) also suggests the proximity of victim can influence perceptions of a behaviour. Proximity refers to the ‘nearness’ an individual feels to the victim of a behaviour (Jones, 1991). Social distance is a relevant proximity measure. As explained above, the greater the perceived social distance between the consumer and the organisation, the more likely the consumer will engage in deviant consumer behaviour possibly causing harm to the organisation (Moore & Loewenstein, 2004). Moreover, if an individual has previously experienced being the victim of a particular deviant consumer behaviour, they are more likely to perceive it as unacceptable, based on their ability to empathise with the victim (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997) and the role past experiences has on perceptions of future behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Hunt & Vitell, 1986).

Weighing up the factors individuals may use to distinguish between behaviours would provide the individual with an overall assessment of the perceived outcomes of performing a deviant consumer behaviour. In Burgess and Akers’ (1966) social learning theory from criminology, differential reinforcement captures whether generally good or bad outcomes are likely to result from an individual performing a
behaviour. If the outcomes are perceived to be generally good, the behaviour is more likely to be performed, than if the outcomes were perceived to be generally bad (Akers & Lee, 1996; Burgess & Akers, 1966). Differential reinforcement does not distinguish between an individual assessing the outcome for themselves versus the outcome for others. Egoists, as explained above, will place more emphasis on the outcome from themselves, whereas utilitarians will place more emphasis on the outcome for others (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Yet both arrive at the same evaluation – a general perception of what the outcomes are likely to be if the behaviour was performed. An individual’s perceptions of the outcomes could be informed through experiential learning, in that past behaviour was either rewarded or punished. The actual rewards or punishments from past behaviour then inform future outcome expectations (Akers & Sellers, 2004). Perceptions of the outcomes could also be informed vicariously through observational learning. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory suggests that if an individual observes a model they respect and like, be rewarded for engaging in a particular behaviour, the individual will be more inclined to imitate that behaviour, than had the model been observed to be punished. Whether informed by experiential or vicarious learning, perceived outcomes could inform consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour.

Combining these conceptual dimensions from a number of typologies and frameworks provides a foundation from which consumer perceptions can be empirically tested. Some research has begun to explore the how or why of consumer deviance, however, these investigations are focused on single behaviours such as, ‘deshopping’ (King & Dennis, 2003) and fraudulent returns proclivity (Harris, 2010). There remains an opportunity to examine why individuals perceive behaviours to be
distinct from one another (Schlegelmilch & Oberseder, 2010), as acceptable, questionable, or unacceptable behaviours, and how those subjective perceptions vary across individuals. It is important to understand the reasons underpinning these categorisations, to guide the development of more specific and tailored deterrence strategies. Combining the dimensions suggests there are five themes likely to inform consumer perceptions; official classification of the behaviour, norms, intent, perceived outcomes, and perceived risk. These themes, along with the factors that underpin them, are outlined in Table 1.
Table 1. Summary of conceptual dimensions used to classify behaviours as distinct from one another

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overarching theme</th>
<th>Conceptual Dimensions</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– law &amp; policy</td>
<td>Regulated/Not regulated</td>
<td>(Moschis &amp; Cox, 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deceitful / fraudulent act</td>
<td>(Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal sanctions</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>Normative/deviant</td>
<td>(Moschis &amp; Cox, 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social consensus</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social sanctions</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent</td>
<td>Passive or active the consumer was in the act</td>
<td>(Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nature of the act</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Degree of harm</td>
<td>Degree of harm</td>
<td>(Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type and degree of disruption</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The perceived consequences of each alternative, for those involved</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Probability of harm</td>
<td>The (un)desirability of the consequence incurred by those involved</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Type of harm</td>
<td>The probability of the harm being incurred by those involved</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– How many affected</td>
<td>Concentration of effect</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell 1986; Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Direction of harm (who is the victim)</td>
<td>The importance of each party involved in the behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk</td>
<td>Magnitude of consequences*</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probability of effect*</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporal immediacy*</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* If interpreted as effect on self (egoist) – then this can be interpreted as risk, if interpreted as effect on others (utilitarian) – then these can be interpreted as harm
2.6.2. Classifications of consumers

While the previous section was focused on research that classified behaviours, there is also research in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields that classifies consumers. Consumer typologies have been identified such as ‘jaycustomers’ who are individuals “who act in a thoughtless or abusive way, causing problems for the firm, its employees and other customers” (Lovelock, 2001, p. 73). There are six types of jaycustomers, the thief, the rule breaker, the belligerent, the family fueders, the vandal, and the deadbeat (Lovelock, 2001). Harris and Reynolds (2004) extended on Lovelock’s (2001) work, identifying eight types of deviant consumers based on the kinds of deviant consumer behaviour they engage in; compensation letter writers, undesirable customers, property abusers, service workers, vindictive customers, oral abusers, physical abusers, and sexual predators. Taking a more service-orientated approach to classifying consumers is Bitner, Booms and Mohr (1994, p. 98) who propose problem customers, who are individuals “unwilling to cooperate with the service provider, other customers, industry regulations, and/ or laws”. In a study investigating a taxonomy of consumers, Fullerton, Kerch and Dodge (1996) identified four types of consumers based on their ethical predispositions; permissives, situationists, conformists, and purists. Permissives focus on the gain achieved from unethical behaviours, and have tolerant attitudes that conflict with norms of conduct in a particular setting (Fullerton et al., 1996). Situationists hold a minor disdain towards unethical behaviours, while conformists consider almost all of the unethical practices examined in the study as unacceptable (Fullerton et al., 1996). Finally, puritans believe all unethical behaviour should be “held to strict standards of conduct” (Fullerton et al., 1996, p.10). Fullerton et al. (1996) suggested the need for tailoring messages to each of the consumer
typologies to deter them from engaging in deviant consumer behaviour. However, consumer-typology-focused deterrence strategies could be ineffective because even ‘good’ consumers can still find themselves engaging in some degree of deviant consumer behaviour (Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth & Nye, 1990; Mazar et al., 2008). For instance, in studies investigating cheating behaviour, absolutists (aligned with Fullerton et al.’s (1996) puritans) were still found to cheat (Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth & Nye, 1990). Moreover, in line with the deviance threshold argument under self-concept maintenance theory, individuals can engage in some degree of deviant behaviour for some benefit, while maintaining a positive self-concept (Mazar et al., 2008). In this paper, it is proposed that marketers will be more successful at deterring deviant consumer behaviour by using deterrence strategies attacking the justifications individuals use to excuse a specific behaviour, rather than deterring based on the type of consumer, as any consumer can engage in deviant consumer behaviour.

2.6.3. Antecedents of deviant consumer behaviour

The conceptual dimensions previously proposed in the behaviour classification stream of research (Table 1) identify ways in which a consumer can distinguish between right and wrong behaviours. These then inform consumer perceptions. While those dimensions remain untested in whether they do inform consumer perceptions, there is also limited insight into the connection between these conceptual factors that inform perceptions, and the antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour. An opportunity exists to identify factors salient in consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour, and test how they then perform as antecedents.
Antecedents of deviant consumer behaviour are largely reliant on an overarching framework of deviant consumer behaviour by Fullerton and Punj (1993), which posits that behaviour is driven by psychological characteristics and contextual factors. The psychological characteristics they proposed include demographics, personality traits, unfulfilled aspirations, moral development, social and group influence and antecedent state (Fullerton & Punj, 1993). The contextual factors include antecedent state of the environment (e.g. crowding, disruptive customers), physical environment, the attitude and conduct of the organisation’s employees, the public image of the organisation, types of products/services offered, and the types and level of deterrence or security (Fullerton & Punj, 1993).

Demographic studies in deviant consumer behaviour literature found that deviance reduces with age and education (Egan & Taylor, 2010; Fullerton & Punj, 1997a; Ranaweera, McDougall & Bansal, 2005). Gender was negatively correlated with ethical judgments, such that females judged the deviant consumer behaviours as being less ethical than males, and were less likely to engage in the behaviours than males (McMahon & Cohen, 2009). In a meta-analysis of consumer ethics research, young males were more tolerant of and more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Pan & Sparks, 2012; Vitell, 2003).

Personality traits are frequently studied in relation to behavioural outcomes, specifically an individual’s level of extroversion and neuroticism (Egan & Taylor, 2010; Eysenck, 1977; Fullerton & Punj, 1993, 1997; McCrae & Costa, 1990; Moschis & Cox, 1989; Reynolds & Harris, 2009; Rose & Niedermeyer, 1999). High levels of extroversion, “sociability and agency”, and high level of neuroticism, “emotional
instability and maladjustment”, are associated with enactment of deviant consumer behaviours (Miller & Lynam, 2001, p. 769; Eysenck, 1977; McCrae & Costa, 1990). Egan and Taylor (2010) also identified low levels of agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high levels of openness to experiences, as traits of an individual more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. However, personality traits have been criticised as “simply add[ing] labels that are attached to the observed behaviour without explaining the behaviour” (Akers, 1998, p. 33).

The consumer’s frame of mind, conceptualised as the consumer’s antecedent state, is proposed to influence performance of deviant consumer behaviour. While the consumer’s mood and anxiety level have received limited empirical exploration, Fullerton and Punj (1993) suggest these antecedent states decrease self-control. The role of self-control in predicting deviant behaviour is explained in Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) control theory, which claims self-control to be the primary and only cause of crime and “non-criminal acts analogous to crime” (i.e., excessive drinking and smoking) (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 90). A meta-analysis on the state of ‘control theory’ suggests self-control remains one of the strongest predictors of crime in criminology literature (Pratt & Cullen, 2000, p. 951).

In the consumer ethics research, the most commonly tested individual differences beyond those already discussed include; Machiavellianism; religiosity – intrinsic and extrinsic; and ethical ideology – idealism and relativism (see Pan & Sparks, 2012; Vitell, 2003). From a meta-analysis, individuals who had low religiosity (did not practice religion), were highly relativistic (associated with a teleology approach to ethics), and high in Machiavellianism (manipulative and exploitive) were more
tolerant of unethical consumer practices based on the behaviours tested in the Consumer Ethics Scale (see Pan & Sparks, 2012; Vitell, 2003). In other words, these groups were more likely to perceive unethical behaviours as acceptable, if not justified.

Understanding the role of social group influence on behaviour has been investigated via subjective norms – the perceptions of what others (family, friends, peers) think the individual should do – via the theory of planned behaviour model (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The theory of planned behaviour has also been used to investigate deviant consumer behaviour. The studies found that subjective norms influenced behaviour alongside perceived behavioural control – an individual’s perception of their ability to perform the behaviour, and attitude towards the behaviour (e.g. Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008; Shaw & Shui, 2003). The theory of planned behaviour was also extended on to include perceived fairness (e.g. Fisk et al., 2010; Fukukawa, 2002; Gregoire & Fisher, 2007) and perceptions of justice, which found deviant consumer behaviour was performed in retaliation to a service failure (Yi & Gong, 2008).

Past behaviour has also been examined as an antecedent to future deviant consumer behaviour (e.g. Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008; Daunt & Harris, 2011; Harris, 2008). The actual rewards and punishments incurred by the individual when they engaged in the behaviour goes on to influence the anticipated outcomes for next time the individual goes to engage in the behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2004). Past behaviour has been suggested to influence future behaviour, as it is “a function of prior socialisation, modeling, reinforcement/punishment, and exposure to definitions”
that provides guidance to future behaviour (Akers, 1998, p. 162; see for examples Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Ouellette & Wood, 1998; Cialdini, 1988; Taylor, Ishida & Wallace, 2009; Verplanken, Aarts, van Knippenberg & Moonen, 1998). These perceptions will guide the individual to engage or not engage in the behaviour in the future.

The antecedent state of the environment is a contextual factor similar to the antecedent state of the consumer in that the external environment can provoke a consumer to feel emotions such as anxiety, for example, crowding, poor service from staff, other consumers misbehaving (Fullerton & Punj, 1993), causing them to perform deviant consumer behaviour. In a study investigating the antecedents to the severity of deviant consumer behaviour, Reynolds and Harris (2009) identified the layout and design, atmospheric environment, behaviour of fellow customers, and exterior environment to influence perceptions of inequity of the service, lead to a greater severity of the deviant consumer behaviour being performed.

The types of products/services offered can also influence behaviour as some products and services are more susceptible to deviant consumer behaviour. The cost structure of a product has been found to influence deviant consumer behaviour in an online context, based on a consumer’s willingness to pay. Nunes, Hsee & Weber (2004), distinguished between willingness to pay for high variable cost - low fixed cost products, such as more conventional tangible products, in comparison to low variable cost - high fixed cost products, such as information products. It was found that consumers perceive failure to pay for a high-variable cost product as inflicting greater harm to a seller than failure to pay for a high-fixed cost product (Nunes et al.,
Therefore, consumers are less willing to pay for information products than for conventional tangible products (Nunes et al., 2004). For instance, a heavily researched area of deviant consumer behaviour is in the field of digital piracy. Digital compression technologies have made it possible and easier to distribute many kinds of information products, including movies, computer software, and music to consumers via the Internet, for legal and illegal download. This has made the software, music and movie industries more susceptible to deviant consumer behaviour.

The level of deterrence/security is a contextual factor likely to influence the performance of deviant consumer behaviour whereby the lower the levels of deterrence or security, the greater the individual’s perceived opportunity to act deviantly (Cole, 1989; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Tittle, 1989). Low levels of deterrence and or security can signal low levels of risk in performing the deviant consumer behaviour. Risk is inferred based on the threat of being caught, being severely punished, and punished swiftly. In other words, individuals are successfully deterred or dissuaded from deviant behaviour if legal sanctions are perceived to be severe, certain and applied swiftly (Akers & Sellers, 2004). All three components of risk must be high for the threat of punishment to be effective. Where one approximates zero, the others become ineffective at deterring behaviour (Grasmick & Green 1980, 1981; Moore & Loewenstein, 2004). If the perceived probability of being caught is low, it does not matter to the individual what the punishment is, as it is unlikely to be administered. If the probability of being caught is high, yet the punishment is not severe, then the behaviour will likely be performed (Grasmick & Green 1980). Low perceptions of risk in performing deviant consumer behaviour reduce the legitimacy of the law, organisational policy, or norms dictating the acceptability of a behaviour.
These proposed antecedents to deviant consumer behaviour are broad, yet there remains an opportunity to explore the mechanisms that underpin deviant consumer behaviour (Daunt & Harris, 2012). The consumer ethics literature focuses more on the role of ethics in predicting perceptions of and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. A narrow focus is relevant for extending knowledge in that field, yet it does not account for deviant consumer behaviours that are not considered to have an ethical component to them. The consumer deviance literature is limited in its investigations into the role ethics play in underpinning individuals’ perceptions of right and wrong and how those perceptions link to engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. There is an opportunity to explore the role of ethics alongside factors identified as salient in consumer perceptions of right and wrong when classifying behaviours, and how they perform as antecedents to deviant consumer behaviours.

Another limitation of the antecedent’s literature on deviant consumer behaviour is that they do not take into account the role of justifying one’s behaviour. Across both the deviant consumer behaviour research and the consumer ethics research is an acknowledgment of the gap between knowing a behaviour is wrong, and doing it anyway (Fukukawa & Ennew, 2010). Alternatively, when a behaviour is classified by the law or an organisation’s policy as wrong, yet a consumer performs it anyway, an understanding of justifications becomes important.

### 2.7. Justifying deviant consumer behaviour

Neutralisation techniques are disengagement tools used to reduce cognitive dissonance experienced from performing a behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957;
Cognitive dissonance is a psychological discomfort experienced from performing an act that contradicts with one’s underlying values and beliefs (Festinger, 1957). Neutralisation techniques are required to resolve the conflict between wanting to perform a deviant consumer behaviour for some benefit, while not having to negatively update their self-concept (Mazar et al., 2008). The original framework of neutralisation techniques encompasses denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Investigations have expanded on these original techniques and proposed defense of necessity (Minor, 1981), claim of entitlement (Coleman, 1994; McGregor, 2008), normal practice (Coleman, 1994; Henry, 1990), claim of relative acceptability (Henry & Eaton, 1989), metaphor of ledger (Klockers, 1974), and justification by comparison (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003).

‘Denial of responsibility’ is used when the individual deflects responsibility for the outcome of a behaviour, to the external environment (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Individuals using this neutralisation technique perceive themselves as being acted upon, rather than acting on their own accord (Sykes & Matza, 1957). This evidently creates disengagement between an individual and their actions. While denial of responsibility argues ‘I didn’t mean to do it’, Minor’s (1981) defense of necessity argues ‘I had no other choice but to do it’, the act was necessary to achieve a goal (Harris & Daunt, 2011). The ‘claim of entitlement’ technique, originally proposed by Coleman (1994) in white-collar crime, was suggested by McGregor (2008) to also be evident in the consumer context. McGregor (2008) suggested ‘claim of entitlement’ is used to justify enactment of a behaviour and the right to benefit from enacting said
behaviour. However, McGregor’s (2008) arguments were unsupported by empirical data.

‘Denial of injury’ is used when the individual perceives their behaviour is not harming others. Hence, the individual assesses the wrongfulness of an action, by the level of injury or harm resulting from the behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Another technique used to similarly deflate the negative consequences incurred by the victim is ‘claim of relative acceptability’ (Henry & Eaton, 1989), arguing there are ‘much worse individuals than me’ (Harris & Daunt, 2011). The ‘claim of relative acceptability’ is limited to interpersonal comparisons. In contrast, the technique ‘justification by comparison’ judges behaviours against one another (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003). Behaviours are rationalised as being ‘acceptable’ in comparison to more serious forms of deviant consumer behaviour that exist for anyone to perform. The ‘metaphor of the ledger’ technique is alternatively used to make comparisons between behaviours the individual themselves actually performs (Klockers, 1974). The ‘metaphor of the ledger’ technique suggests behaviours can be deemed ‘acceptable’ on the basis that the individual’s overall ‘good’ behaviour offsets their deviant actions. This means individuals can use their ‘good behaviour’ as a ‘credit’ for ‘bad behaviour’.

‘Denial of victim’ is a technique commonly employed when responsibility has been taken, and injury has been acknowledged; yet the individual perceives the injury to be justified- “a rightful retaliation or punishment” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). However, the victim could also be ‘unknown’ or ‘physically absent’ to the individual (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Internet-related misbehaviours are seen as a victimless crime
(Freestone & Mitchell, 2004), as the absence of an identifiable victim makes it difficult for the consumer to feel empathetic (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997), failing to inhibit enactment of the deviant consumer behaviour.

‘Condemnation of the condemners’ is a neutralisation technique used by an individual to shift attention to those condemning the individual’s behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957). This technique is commonly used in the public arena; opposing groups who attack the wrongfulness of the others’ behaviours to deflect from their own questionable behaviours. The technique works on the premise that it is unfair to condemn one person, without condemning all the individuals who engaged in deviant consumer behaviours (Coleman, 1994). A similar perspective is offered by the neutralisation technique ‘normal practice’, an extension of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) framework, which rationalises a behaviour is acceptable if it is prevalent in society – ‘everybody else is doing it’ (Coleman, 1994; Henry, 1990). As normative behaviours are suggested to reflect the popularity and social approval of an act (Park & Smith, 2007), the use of ‘normal practice’ seeks to remove the presence of cognitive dissonance by arguing their actions are ‘normative’ not ‘deviant’. The final neutralisation technique of ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ is used to justify upholding a norm of a small sub group of society at the cost of violating a wider societal norm (Sykes & Matza, 1957). A parent acting to protect their child at the expense of breaking the law would use this neutralisation technique, holding their loyalty to their child as higher than their loyalty to obeying the law (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

These techniques enable performance of deviant consumer behaviour by distorting the link between the individual’s actions and the consequences they cause (Bandura,
Disengagement from the consequences of one’s actions could cause an individual to engage in a behaviour originally considered to be unacceptable, without much distress (Bandura, 1991a; Bandura, 1999; Mazar et al., 2008). Past behaviour can then be used as a benchmark for future behaviour (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). “Even when a behaviour rarely occurs, it may have a particularly valued outcome that the actor will remember” (Watson, Berkley, Madapulli & Zeng, 2009, p. 417). As deviant consumer behaviour occurs, the individual can develop an increased “sense of permissibility for deviant conduct” (Dean, Bell & Lauchs, 2010, p. 206). Some investigation has begun on the idea of resetting one’s perceptions of right and wrong back to its original state, after a deviant act is performed (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2009). This research suggests that providing ‘moral reminders’ to individuals, increases the saliency of an individual’s own moral standards, if only temporarily, to reduce their engagement in deviant acts (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino et al., 2009). The resetting manipulation would keep the deviant consumer behaviour classified as ‘deviant’ in the mind of the individual, as opposed to shifting it to be perceived as an ‘acceptable’ behaviour. To date, such resetting manipulations are not readily available in the consumer context therefore preventing this resetting process. Hence, individuals are likely to use past deviant consumer behaviour as a benchmark for future behaviour (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004).

Opportunities to continue research into the use of neutralisation techniques still exist (Harris & Daunt, 2011; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Hinduja, 2007; Morris & Higgins, 2009; Vitell, 2003). Specifically, insight into what informs the type of neutralisation techniques being used in a given context or pertaining to a specific
behaviour is needed to deepen our understanding of how to more effectively challenge these justifications to deter deviant consumer behaviour. The author argues the underlying factors influencing consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour are likely to inform the type of neutralisation techniques used, a different perspective from existing research, which has investigated the type of neutralisation technique used relevant to the behaviour under examination (Harris & Daunt, 2011; Hinduja, 2007; Morris & Higgins, 2009) and the timing of its use (Harris & Dumas, 2009). By taking a different perspective it means convergence of the results could lead to greater generalisability of the knowledge on using neutralisation techniques, or identify gaps in our knowledge.

Across a number of fields of research including criminology, psychology, management, and marketing, neutralisation techniques have been suggested to facilitate the occurrence, maintenance, and escalation of deviant behaviour (e.g. Bandura 1991a; Barriga, Landau, Stinson II, Liau & Gibbs, 2000; Bonner & O’Higgins, 2010; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Castle & Hensley, 2002; Kazemian, Ferrington & Le Blanc 2009; Strutton, Vitell & Pelton, 1994; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2009). Despite extensive work in other fields (e.g. Argandona, 2003; Ayers et al., 1999; Dean et al., 2010; Feld & Straus, 1989, Kazemian et al., 2009; Ronel, 2011; Winstok, 2008; Zyglidopoulos & Fleming, 2008; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2008), escalation remains unexplored in consumption behaviours.
2.8. Escalation in deviant consumer behaviour

Escalation represents a progression from acceptable to deviant behaviour, and from “minor, separated episodes” of deviance to “stronger, more frequent episodes” of deviance (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Ronel, 2011, p. 1219; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2009). In organisational deviance, gradual escalation is suggested to be responsible for most corporate executive misconduct (Hartson & Sherman, 2012). Executives begin by misreporting profit earnings, and over time find themselves embezzling millions of dollars (Grant, 2000; Hartson & Sherman, 2012).

Escalation in deviance is thought to arise from consumers’ desire to achieve an outcome – in line with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). Escalations can be a conscious decision to engage in a deviant consumer behaviour beyond one’s deviance threshold. However, escalation could also be a less conscious process, such that the individual’s behaviour changes without them realising. A gradual escalation in deviant consumer behaviour can occur over time without conscience thought because the increments in which the behaviour is escalated can be very minor (Gino & Bazerman, 2009; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Deviant behaviour is defined in absolute terms by the ‘official classification’ of the behaviour – what the law or organisational policy stipulates – yet deviant behaviour is perceived in subjective terms by the individual, so escalation can occur in absolute terms, yet the individual may not be consciously aware that their behaviour is escalating.

Escalations in deviant consumer behaviour are important to consider as it can explain how an individual can get to that greater degree of deviant consumer
behaviour. Consumers engaging in fare evasion on public transport may have had experience taking advantage of, or lying to organisations in the past. This proposition works under the assumption that going from no deviant consumer behaviour to a perceived greater degree of deviant behaviour is a significant shift in behaviour; yet going from a minor degree of deviant consumer behaviour to a perceived greater degree of deviant behavior is a more gradual shift in behaviour. Gradual shifts in behaviour can be explained by the foot-in-the-door effect (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). Individuals are more likely to engage in a greater degree of prosocial behaviour (e.g. donate money), if the individual began by engaging in a smaller degree of prosocial behaviour (e.g. signing a petition) (Burger, 1999; Freedman & Fraser, 1966; Hartson & Sherman, 2012). Engagement in increasing degrees of prosocial behaviour occurs because earlier compliance to the lower degree of prosocial behaviour influenced the individuals’ self-perceptions (Moore & Loewenstein, 2004). An individual’s inherent need for consistency in behaviours and self-perceptions drives the future compliance (Burger, 1999). Further, individuals are more accepting of paying higher prices on goods, when the prices began low but increased gradually over time (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Basset & Miller, 1978). To apply this explanation to deviant consumer behaviour, the role of neutralisation techniques is used.

The ability of the individual to use neutralisation techniques to justify their deviant consumer behaviour, reduces any dissonance associated with performing the behaviour, thereby increasing the perceived acceptability of the act and the individual’s commitment to the ‘unconventional norm’ (Minor, 1981; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Escalations in deviant consumer behaviour are then facilitated by the individual’s commitment to the acceptability of the previously enacted, and lower
degree of, deviant consumer behaviour (Hartson & Sherman, 2012). The shift in perceptions of what constitutes deviant consumer behaviour facilitates escalations given the new benchmark of what is acceptable (Mazar et al., 2008; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Benchmarking behaviour is an important concept as individuals can drift in and out of deviant consumer behaviour (Matza, 1964). When individuals return to a situation where deviance is perceived to be an option, they return with a perception of what is acceptable or justifiable based on their past actions (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). The shift in perceived permissibility of a behaviour, enables behaviours once thought to constitute minor deviant consumer behaviour, to be seen as acceptable if not justified, while behaviours constituting major deviant consumer behaviour may begin to seem only marginally deviant by comparison (Bandura, 1991a). Tenbrunsel and Messick (2004) propose an ‘induction mechanism’ that suggests when individuals evaluate the acceptability of a behaviour, the individual considers the acceptability of past behaviours, and how small or large the difference in acceptability is, between the present behaviour and the past behaviour.

Escalation can occur gradually within the individual’s deviance threshold. For most individuals, however, there comes a point at which they cannot justify a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour, as the magnitude of dissonance would be so large (Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008). If an individual were to engage in a behaviour beyond their own personal deviance threshold, they would need to negatively update how they perceive themselves, which goes against an individuals strive to maintain a positive self-concept (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988; Cheng et al., 2005; Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008; Sanitoso et al., 1990; Sirgy, 1982). Minor gradual shifts in deviant consumer behaviour, however, may not be significant enough
to warrant updating one’s self-concept. Evidence of different deviance thresholds is found in Milgram’s (1974) obedience experiments involving participants administering electric shocks. Participants were found to vary in when they wanted to opt out and refuse to administer any more electric shocks. Participants opted out when they perceived that one more increase in voltage of the electric shock administered to the victim would have “qualitatively different consequences for the victim, and a qualitatively different meaning” for the individual administering the shock (Gilbert, 1981, p. 693). It is at this point the individual could no longer justify their actions, while maintaining a positive self-concept. Escalations, and individual instances of deviant consumer behaviour are controlled through deterrence strategies.

2.9. Deterrence strategies to control deviant consumer behaviour

Traditional deterrence strategies follow the principles of undifferentiated marketing in that all consumers are treated the same, and receive the same deterrence message (Kotler, Brown, Adam & Armstrong, 2004). Deterrence theory is grounded in the classical school of criminology and the “rational choice view of human behaviour” (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1967; Pratt, Cullen, Blevins, Daigle & Madensen, 2006, p. 367). It assumes that individuals weigh up the costs and benefits of a situation, and individuals then make rational decisions based on increasing their pleasure (e.g. benefits) and decreasing their pain or harm (e.g. risk/costs) (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1967; Pratt et al., 2006). The lower the levels of deterrence present, the greater the individual’s perceived opportunity to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Tittle, 1980; Cole, 1989).
Deterrence theory proposes a two-step approach to controlling behaviour. First, the punishment of current offenders seeks to deter the general public (non-offenders) from offending themselves, based on fear of punishment (Akers & Sellers, 2004), leveraging the effect of vicarious learning as proposed by Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory. Second, the convicted and punished offenders refrain from reoffending as a result of the punishment incurred, leveraging the effect of operant conditioning where punishment results in ceasing a behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2004). However, there is evidence to suggest punishment does not always reduce reoffending (Freeman, Liossis & David, 2006). Moreover, the issue with deterrence theory in the consumer context is that most deviant consumer behaviour goes undetected (Bandura, 1991b). Either, organisations do not have systems in place to detect and punish deviant consumer behaviour, or the deviant consumer behaviour is violating a norm backed by social sanctions and third parties fail to administer the social sanctions. The absence of social pressure to comply with norms is likely to result in deviant consumer behaviour being performed (Siponen, Pahnila & Mahmood, 2010).

Deterrence theory relies on the assumption that there is social consensus on the acceptability of a behaviour, and that the law and organisational policy reflect those views (Weingast, 1997). As such, deterrence strategies tend to focus on appealing to the official classification of the behaviour, or the risk associated with the behaviour. The law and an organisation’s policy dictate the ‘official classification’ of a behaviour. Appealing to the official classification of the behaviour means appeals to consumers to uphold the law, and or an organisation’s policy. The limitation of this approach is that although a behaviour is classified by an official authority (law
makers, organisation) as wrong, individuals may perceive the behaviour in a different way. This is because some individuals do not internalise the morality on which the laws or organisational policy are based (Cooter, 2000; Hinduja, 2007; Klosko, 1987; 2011; Skinner, 2011), meaning they perceive the law or policy to be unfair, or can justify violating it, and are thus more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Agnew, 1992; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Fisk et al., 2010; Fukukawa, 2002; Fullerton & Punj, 1997; 2004; Gregoire & Fisher, 2007; Yi and Gong, 2008). This means that deterrence strategies appealing to individuals to uphold the official classification of the behaviour are largely ineffective for those who are likely to violate it. Deterrence strategies appealing to individuals to uphold the official classification of the behaviour are likely reinforcing the beliefs of individuals who are less likely to violate it in the first instance. Individuals who focus more on the official classification of behaviour to guide their perceptions and behaviour are likely associated with the idealism ethical ideology. Idealism is the doctrine that universal moral rules exist to determine the inherent goodness or badness of an action (Vitell & Paolillo, 2003). Individuals associating with idealism follow the deontological approach to ethics, which focuses on the inherent acceptability of the behaviour itself, to determine if it should be performed (Forsyth, O’Boyle Jnr & McDaniel, 2008). Deontology proposes that individuals are duty bound to certain behaviours as they constitute the right thing to do (Kant, [1785] 2002). Critics of the deontological philosophy of ethics argue that universal moral rules guiding deontologists’ behaviours can only exist in their most specific form because with each new situation a new contributing factor ultimately discounts the rule (Prinz, 2008; Shafer-Landau, 1997). The criticisms of the deontological approach to ethics suggest individuals largely favour a more consequentialist approach to processing the environmental factors and past
experiences when assessing the ethicality of a behaviour (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Idealist, or not, the compliance to the official classification of a behaviour reflects the extent to which the individual internalises the morality on which the law or organisational policy is based, and they do not perceive the official classification to be unfair (Cooter, 2000; Hinduja, 2007; Klosko, 1987; 2011; Skinner, 2011).

Deterrence strategies that make appeals to the risk associated with the behaviour are based on the assumption that deviant consumer behaviour is inversely related to the perceived risk of punishment (Freeman et al., 2006). However, appeals to risk only work as a deterrent, if the probability, severity, and swiftness of punishment are all perceived to be high (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Grasmick & Green, 1980). As discussed in section 2.6.3 (p. 68), where one of those three factors approximates zero, the other two factors become redundant (Grasmick & Green, 1980). Therefore, in order for deterrence to be effective, perceived certainty of apprehension must be high, perceived severity of punishment should be proportionate to the deviant consumer behaviour, and the punishment must be perceived to be enacted swiftly (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Grasmick & Green, 1980; Beccaria, 1963). When perceived punishment is lacking, individuals are more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Albers-Miller, 1999).

These deterrence strategies rely on the rational view of human behaviour as typified by the rational choice theory in criminology (Becker, 1968). However, the effectiveness of this approach to understanding human behaviour has been criticised, with suggestions that there are underlying psychological factors that influence human behaviour beyond the rational approach (Akers, 1990; Ariely, 2012; Garoupa, 2003;
Mazar et al., 2008; Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Moreover, the strategies discussed above assume the individual agrees that the behaviour is wrong. When the deterrence strategy presents a message that contradicts an individuals’ perception of the behaviour, the individual is likely to ignore the message to avoid experiencing any cognitive dissonance – a psychological discomfort (Festinger, 1957). This avoidance of messages suggests that Mitchell and Chan’s (2002) recommendation that organisations should overtly stress the wrongness of the deviant consumer behaviour to deter consumers from performing it may be ineffective.

Fullerton and Punj (1997) suggest that traditional deterrence techniques need to overcome “the differing consumer perception[s] of and reactions to the risks of deterrent sanctions” (p. 341). Moreover, Strutton et al. (1994) made a general recommendation for the use of tailored messages for effective deterrence. Yet more than a decade after these recommendations, there remains a dearth of investigations examining how to best develop these tailored deterrence strategies. In this paper, it is proposed that consumers differ in more than just their perceptions of risk, but also their perceptions of the acceptability of the behaviour itself. Extending on the recommendations of Fullerton and Punj (1997) and Strutton et al. (1994), it is proposed that deterrence strategies must overcome variations in perceptions of the acceptability of deviant consumer behaviour, and differences in the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour. Acknowledging differences in perceptions of, and determinants of, a deviant consumer behaviour means organisations will need to consider more tailored approaches to deterrence strategies.
2.10. Research agenda, conceptual frameworks, and implications

An overlap exists in the parent fields of consumer deviance and consumer ethics, which allows for the opportunity to develop a series of conceptual frameworks to explore the perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. The conceptual frameworks proposes how consumers perceive right and wrong, how salient factors in those perceptions inform types of neutralisation techniques used, how individuals’ perceptions vary from one another, and the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies. To reiterate, the overarching question is:

“Why do everyday consumers engage in deviant consumer behaviour?”

Three sub-research questions were developed to aid in answering the overarching research question:

RQ1 How does a consumer perceive right and wrong?
RQ2 How do individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong vary among consumers?
RQ3 What are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies?

Building the conceptual framework – RQ1

Explorations into how consumers perceive right and wrong are driven by the limited understanding of why behavioural classifications are made, hence the need to identify factors salient in influencing behaviour classifications by consumers. While
descriptive research can quantify the extent to which a behaviour is perceived as right, wrong, unethical, or severe, RQ1 explores why such perceptions exist. Building on the work of a number of scholars across the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Jones, 1991; Moschis & Cox, 1989; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005), a framework is developed for future testing, explaining the factors underpinning consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour. The first aim of RQ1 is thus to identify salient factors in consumer perceptions of right and wrong. The second aim of RQ1 is to explore if the salient factors in consumer perceptions inform the type of neutralisation techniques used to justify deviant consumer behaviour. This approach to examining neutralisation techniques takes a different perspective from existing research (Harris & Daunt, 2011; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Hinduja, 2007; Morris & Higgins, 2009). Taking a different perspective means convergence of the results could lead to greater generalisability of the knowledge on using neutralisation techniques, or identify gaps in our knowledge.

Addressing RQ1 provides information on how to overcome the ineffective traditional deterrence strategies due to the variability in perceptions of right and wrong. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour, with a specific focus on RQ1.
Figure 1 illustrates that there are a number of factors influencing consumer perceptions of right and wrong, underpinning their classifications of behaviour. Official classification is how the law and organisational policy classify the behaviour as right or wrong. Norms can be perceived as the ‘unofficial classification’ of the behaviour. “Law and social norms have complementary strengths as means of social control” (Cooter, 2000, p. 21). However, norms are not always clear or agreed upon across groups, making it a less concrete factor distinguishing behaviours from right and wrong. The other factors listed in Figure 1 are those identified in the literature as conceptual dimensions that distinguish behaviour based on ethicality or acceptability including; intent, perceived outcomes, and perceived risk. Whichever factor an individual places emphasis on will lead them to perceive a behaviour as ‘acceptable’, ‘questionable’, or ‘unacceptable’. As an individual can still classify a behaviour as unacceptable, yet engage in it anyway (Bonner & O’Higgins, 2010; Neale & Fullerton, 2010), exploring how these salient factors inform the types of neutralisation
techniques used is important. Deterrence strategies can then be tailored to challenge the justifications made, to change perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour.

With individuals placing varying degrees of important on a varying number of factors, informing varying types of neutralisation techniques, a future research opportunity exists to examine the extent to which individual subjective definitions of right and wrong vary across society, which is the purpose of RQ2.

*Building the conceptual framework – RQ2*

Examining the extent of social consensus in individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong will provide evidence for discrepancies in societal level perceptions, which has implications for how deviant consumer behaviour is policed. The official classification of a behaviour (law or policy) relies on the assumption there is social consensus in the behaviour’s wrongness (Weingast, 1997). If there is low social consensus in how consumers perceive right and wrong, then this will provide additional support for the argument that more tailored approaches to deterrence need to be explored in the consumer setting. When there is low social consensus on a behaviour’s acceptability, individuals draw on psychological and contextual factors to guide their perceptions and actions (Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). When there is high social consensus, the individual need not draw on these factors, suggesting there are different determinants of behaviour for behaviours with different degrees of social consensus. Social consensus implies a ‘normative conclusion’ about a behaviour (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). In order to test determinants of behaviours with different degrees of social consensus, RQ2 seeks to identify behaviours that have
varying degrees of social consensus. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour, with a specific focus on RQ2.

Figure 2.

*Conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour – RQ2*

![Diagram of conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour]

*Building the conceptual framework – RQ3*

Examining the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies is driven by the need to better understand the role of ethics in underpinning perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour alongside salient factors in consumer perceptions of right and wrong. The first aim of RQ3 is to ascertain if the predictors of deviant consumer behaviour vary when social consensus varies. A second aim of RQ3 is to explore if engagement in a lower degree of deviant consumer behaviour – dictated by low social consensus in its acceptability – leads to an escalation in deviant consumer behaviour – dictated by intention to engage in a deviant behaviour with high social consensus on its ‘wrongness’. The factors significant in predicting engagement in, and escalations in deviant consumer
behaviour are what need to be challenged by deterrence strategies to reduce incidences of deviance in the marketplace. Figure 3 illustrates the conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour, with a specific focus on RQ3.

Figure 3.

**Conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour – RQ3**

2.11. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to conceptually investigate deviant consumer behaviour based on research conducted in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields. Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature by developing a conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour. The frameworks propose a broad approach to understanding deviant consumer behaviour and acknowledge that ethics will only sometimes play a role in influencing perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. In this paper a research agenda is presented to test the conceptual frameworks. Specifically, a series of factors suggested to influence consumer perceptions of right and wrong are proposed, which are also argued to
inform the types of neutralisation techniques used. This addresses the need to understand the factors that underpin how behaviours are classified, and what types of neutralisation techniques are used. The need to capture discrepancies in individuals’ definitions of right and wrong is argued, as variations in social consensus make it more difficult for organisations to deter deviant consumer behaviours using deterrence mechanisms that assume consensus. Moreover, different determinants of deviant consumer behaviour may exist depending on the level of social consensus on the behaviour’s acceptability. Identifying the determinants of a questionable (low social consensus) and unacceptable (high social consensus) behaviour will provide greater insight into the complexities of deviant consumer behaviour. In conclusion, for marketers to develop more effective deterrence strategies for deviant consumer behaviour, a greater understanding is required of individuals’ subjective perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour, the variability in those definitions between individuals, and the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour.
2.12. References


CHAPTER 3: METHOD CHAPTER

Linking chapter between the conceptual paper (chapter 2) and the empirical papers (chapters 4 and 5)
3. CHAPTER THREE: Justification Of The Research Design

3.1. Introduction

This thesis aims to address the overarching research question: Why do everyday consumers engage in deviant consumer behaviour? Everyday consumers are those not affected by an abnormal psyche, mental illness, or addiction. These conditions are considered outside the scope of this research. In order to address this overarching research question, the first issue to consider is how individual consumers perceive deviant consumer behaviour. With an understanding of the salient factors present in an individual’s perception of deviant consumer behaviour, it is imperative to explore how those subjective perceptions vary among individuals. Identifying consistencies and discrepancies in individual subjective perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour, provides greater insight into the types of deterrence strategies required to deter those behaviours. Finally, to address the overarching research question, the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour must be considered, when social consensus varies. The following chapter presents the justification of the research design employed to address this overarching research question. The research presented in this dissertation is decontextualised. In other words, conducting research on just one behaviour can be limiting in the generalisability of insights to the wider concept of deviant consumer behaviour. To better understand the complexities of deviant consumer behaviour, a broad decontextualised spectrum of behaviours is examined.

First, the philosophical paradigm underpinning this research is discussed (section 3.2), followed by a discussion of the target population of interest (section 3.3). The overall research program is subsequently presented, explaining the role of the three
studies in this dissertation (section 3.4). A justification of the research methodologies used to execute each of the three studies is then presented (sections 3.4.1-3.4.3). For each individual study the data collection technique, sampling, and data analysis procedures will be justified. However, these sections do not discuss how the research methods were specifically implemented as this information is provided in the subsequent chapters (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), which delineate the method and limitations of each of the three studies, their findings and the implications of those findings in a journal article format. Finally, the ethical considerations (section 3.5) pertaining to the research as a whole are outlined, before providing a conclusion to the chapter (section 3.6).

3.2. Philosophical Assumptions

This dissertation follows the realism paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Ontologically, realism assumes that there is a single independent reality, “even if it is only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible” (Healy & Perry 2000, p. 120). Each perception examined under the realism paradigm is thought to provide a ‘window’ to the single independent reality beyond those perceptions (Healy & Perry 2000). A triangulation of multiple perceptions must be examined to understand it (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry, Reige & Brown, 1998). Triangulation is important to capture the regularities and discontinuities of human behaviour (Tourish, 2013). The realism ontology combines beliefs of the positivism ontology, which believes that there is one reality that is real and comprehensible (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry et al., 1998), and the constructivism ontology, which believes that reality is constructed at the individual level with no “single unitary reality” (Krauss, 2005, p. 760).
Research under the realism paradigm is collected with a modified objectivist epistemology (Healy & Perry, 2000; Krauss, 2005; Perry et al., 1998). The modified objectivist epistemological approach means the researcher gathers knowledge from neither a purely objective nor subjective stance as characterised by positivist and constructivist paradigms, respectively (Perry et al., 1998). Where appropriate, the researcher immerses himself or herself into a phenomenon or context to understand it (Krauss, 2005) and at other times, the researcher gathers knowledge from outside, looking in, without interaction with the phenomenon being studied (Healy & Perry, 2000). It is understood that not all knowledge can be attained, as some interpretations of reality are more accurate than others, yet each respondent’s account collectively moves towards a more reliable understanding of reality (Tourish, 2013).

The ontology and epistemology of the realism paradigm suggest a mixed methodology is appropriate for gathering information about a phenomenon (Healy & Perry, 2000; Krauss, 2005). Specifically, in-depth interviews and statistical analysis are considered acceptable methodologies within the realism paradigm (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010; Krauss, 2005). Qualitative research enables the researcher to be immersed into a phenomenon, while enabling them to take a subjective approach to gathering and interpreting information. To complement the qualitative research, quantitative research then enables the researcher to objectively gather knowledge about a phenomenon. Triangulating the qualitative and quantitative results enables the researcher to apprehend a more comprehensive understanding of reality (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry et al., 1998). A mixed-method approach has thus been employed in this thesis in line with the realism paradigm.
The realism paradigm is constrained by the environment in which the phenomenon is explored (Sobh & Perry, 2006). Instead of making causal claims, research under the realism paradigm seeks to attain a ‘family of answers’ that converges on a phenomenon from different perspectives (Sobh & Perry, 2006). As the research conducted in this dissertation examines perceptions of morality, law, and ethics, what is ‘right’ in one situation, may be deemed ‘wrong’ in another, contingent on the environment. As such, the research in this dissertation collects insights from a range of participants, using a number of methods to attain that ‘family of answers’ about the topic under investigation. The realism paradigm is appropriate for this research as “it recognizes the limits human perception and social relations place on our appreciation of reality, and that our perceptions of the social world are inherently value laden” (Tourish, 2013, p. 181). As such, the realism paradigm is an appropriate paradigm for conducting research in the marketing field (Healy & Perry, 2000).

3.3. Target Population

Individuals engage in a variety of consumer behaviours throughout their lives as they take on different consumer roles (Ward, 1974). The Australian marketplace consists of a range of consumers, with varying behaviours and perceptions. Characteristics such as gender, age, level of education, cultural background, and occupation, have been found to influence perceptions and performance of right and wrong consumer behaviours (see Fullerton, Kerch & Dodge, 1996; Freestone & Mitchell, 2004; Genereux & McLeod, 1995; McMahon & Cohen, 2009; Page & Ridgeway, 2001; Moschis & Churchill Jnr, 1978; Vitell & Paolillo, 2003). Therefore, in order to reflect the mix of behaviours and perspectives in the marketplace, the
target population is broad, consisting of male and female consumers over 18 years of age living in Australia. The unit of analysis in this study is the individual consumer.

### 3.4. Overall Research Program

A mixed-method approach has been employed for this thesis. A mixed methodology enables the researcher to gain a more complete understanding of the research problem, by offering by in-depth and descriptive insight into the research topic (Bryman, 2008). Three studies were conducted under the mixed method design. Study 1 was qualitative and executed in the form of in-depth interviews with a card sort activity, which answered RQ1 *how do consumers perceive right and wrong?* Study 2 and 3 were both quantitative studies executed in the form of online surveys, subsequently answering RQ2 *How do individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong vary among consumers?* and RQ3 *What are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies?*. The role of the three studies in this dissertation to empirically explore the conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour developed in Chapter 2 is illustrated in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Overview of studies for this dissertation

RQ1: How does a consumer perceive right and wrong?

(a) Define acceptable, questionable, unacceptable behaviour zones of the framework.

(b) Explore if definitions link to the type of neutralisation technique used to engage in behaviours found in the questionable and unacceptable zones of the framework.

RQ2: How do individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong vary among consumers?

(a) Rank a broad spectrum of consumer behaviours across the acceptable, questionable, and unacceptable zones of the framework.

RQ3: What are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies?

(a) Investigate role of ethical ideology and moral identity in predicting engagement in a questionable, and unacceptable behaviours.

(b) Investigate the effect of ethical ideology, moral identity, perceived risk, perceived prevalence, and perceived outcomes, on questionable and unacceptable behaviours.

(c) Investigate the relationship between engagement in a questionable and engagement in an unacceptable behaviour, to test escalation.
3.4.1. Study 1: How consumers perceive right and wrong

The research objective of Study 1 was to explore how consumers perceive acceptable, questionable, or unacceptable consumer behaviours, and why. Given the purpose of Study 1 is to explore the reasons why consumers perceive certain behaviours to be right and wrong, qualitative research was deemed an appropriate approach. Qualitative research is used as an effective method to generate ideas (Zikmund, D’Alessandro, Winzar, Lowe & Babin, 2014) and explore underlying reasons about a topic of interest (Malhotra, Hall, Shaw & Oppenheim, 2004). The qualitative research is executed using interviews with a card sort activity.

Interviews as the data collection method. Interviews gather deep, vivid, and nuanced information that is “rich in thematic detail” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 129). In the deviant consumer behaviour literature, interviews have been used to gather in-depth information about the execution and motivation of a variety of deviant consumer behaviours (e.g. King & Dennis, 2003; Harris, 2010; Harris & Daunt, 2011; Harris & Dumas, 2009). In line with research in the field of deviant consumer behaviour, interviews were chosen for Study 1 to gain insight from each respondent about their perceptions of what constitutes acceptable, questionable, and unacceptable consumer behaviours (Harris & Dumas, 2009; Taylor, Ishida & Wallace, 2009; Zikmund, Ward, Lowe, Winzar & Babin, 2011). In-depth interviews were chosen in preference to focus groups due to the sensitive nature of exploring perceptions of right and wrong. One-on-one interviews can provide participants with privacy, confidentiality, and a judgment-free attitude from the researcher, which is not
guaranteed from a focus group (Wellings, Branigan & Mitchell, 2000). Face-to-face interviews were chosen over telephone interviews, as the face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to record observations of surface reactions and subconscious motivations of the respondent, which was required in the card sort activity (Zikmund et al., 2011; Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001). However, the disadvantage of face-to-face interviews is that the respondent was not anonymous, which could cause issues such as social desirability bias (Cavana et al., 2001). Social desirability bias was mitigated following Harris’ (2010) recommendations by guaranteeing informant anonymity and confidentiality during the interview, transcription, and analysis processes. Moreover, in line with QUT Ethics Guidelines, respondents were assured the data was made unidentifiable, and any identifiable information such as the consent forms was kept in a secured location.

The in-depth interviews followed a semi-structured format in which a pre-tested interview guide was used (Zikmund et al., 2011). This semi-structured approach enabled expansion upon the preperceived questions guiding the interview, through follow-up and probing questions (Cavana et al., 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). While interviews do not produce generalisable results, the purpose of Study 1, as with most qualitative research, was to attain an in-depth understanding of individuals’ perceptions about the perceived acceptability of a variety of behaviours, which in turn provides definitions for the three zones (acceptable, questionable, unacceptable) proposed in the conceptual framework of consumer deviance developed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The more abstract the phenomena being explored, the more useful qualitative research is in narrowing down what is required for empirical investigation.
(Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To facilitate the exploration of right and wrong in the interviews, a card sort activity was used.

**Card sort activity.** Card sorting is a simplistic categorisation task used in this study as an exploratory tool (Fincher & Tenenberg, 2005; Rugg & McGeorge, 2005). Specifically, a closed card sort process was used in which the respondents were constrained to sort behaviours into three pre-selected categories; ‘acceptable’, ‘questionable’, and ‘unacceptable’ behaviours (Fincher & Tenenberg, 2005), to reflect the framework developed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Card sorts are grounded in Kelly’s (1955) Personal Construct Theory, which argues “different people categorise the world differently, but with enough commonality to let us understand each other but enough differences to make us individuals” (Upchurch, Rugg & Kitchenham, 2001, p. 85). The categorisations that the respondents made during the card sort reflect their “internal mental representation” of right and wrong behaviours (Fincher & Tenenberg, 2005, p. 90). A card sort was chosen over other sorting methods because of its simplistic nature, which enabled it to be used as a facilitative tool during the interviews. Using interviews with a card sort activity is consistent with the realism paradigm in that ontological truth may need to be obtained through a triangulation of individual perceptions of reality (Maiden & Hare, 1998).

**Sample and sampling procedure.** In line with the target population of interest (refer to section 3.2.2), the sample for Study 1 consisted of males and females over the age of 18 years living in Australia. A non-probability sampling technique was employed. Specifically, a purposive non-probability sampling technique was used to
ensure a broad range of views was collected, as reflected in the Australian
marketplace. Non-probability sampling was also used for time efficiency and cost
effectiveness (Zikmund et al., 2011). The sample size of 29 was deemed appropriate
as data saturation was reached; hence no new information was obtained at that point
(Kvale, 1996; Ritchie, 2003). Small sample sizes in qualitative research are
appropriate for the purpose of obtaining rich in-depth information about a
phenomenon (Kvale, 1996; Ritchie, 2003; Zikmund et al., 2011). Further, incidence
or prevalence is not of concern in qualitative research, as it is in quantitative research,
thus a small sample is appropriate (Ritchie, 2003).

**Thematic analysis of interviews.** Thematic analysis was used to analyse the
interview data via Nvivo v9.2 software, following recommendations of Braun and
Clarke (2006) and Saldaña (2009). Thematic analysis involves “identifying,
analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).
The six-step process involved in thematic analysis is illustrated in Figure 2.
Specifically, the data is first coded, which leads to the development of overarching
themes and categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive and deductive coding
techniques were used throughout the coding process to distinguish between existing
ideas and new theoretical contributions (Saldaña, 2009). A theme is subsequently
created to capture important ideas in the data pertaining to the research question, “and
represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun &
Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The themes identified in the analysis reflect the underlying
factors influencing a respondent’s perception of right and wrong consumer
behaviours. Thematic analysis was chosen over alternative analytical techniques, as it
is not grounded in a specific research paradigm, such as grounded theory or
constructivism, making it a viable analysis technique under the realism paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While the interpretative power of thematic analysis is limited to describing the data, this limitation is overcome by using established theoretical frameworks to support claims made in analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While inter-rater reliability was not tested, despite being a common process in thematic analysis (Marks & Yardley, 2004), the credibility of the findings was assessed through discussions with respondents during, and accessible respondents after, the interviews to ensure the researcher’s interpretations accurately reflected the respondents’ ideas surrounding the phenomena studied (Clissett, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). No inconsistencies were identified in assessing the credibility of the coding and findings.

Figure 2.

*Stages of thematic analysis*

1. Familiarising yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

(adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

**Card sort analysis.** The card sort activity was used in an exploratory nature to facilitate the discussion of abstract concepts of right and wrong during the interview. A simplistic analysis was conducted on the card sort to identify the distribution of
behaviours within each category, acceptable, questionable, and unacceptable behaviour. Identifying the distribution across the three categories was sufficient for identifying behaviours for testing in Study 2, which required a list of consumer behaviours that ranged from acceptable to unacceptable (Rugg & McGeorge, 2005). Following Rugg and McGeorge’s (2005) recommendations, the simplistic analysis procedure of identifying the distribution of behaviours, enabled the researcher to identify ‘significant absences’. Behaviours that were predicted to appear in one category, but were absent from it were noted for future investigation in Study 2. For example, ‘illegally downloading TV shows’ appeared in the acceptable category not the predicted unacceptable category. How respondents’ classified behaviours was manually recorded during the interview, and later entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The respondents’ classifications were collated to see the frequencies in which behaviours appeared in each category – acceptable, questionable, and unacceptable. A list was made to assess the preliminary ranking of behaviours based on the number of times they appeared in three categories (see Appendix A). The purpose of analysing the card sort data was to provide preliminary insight for Study 2, which aimed to empirically ascertain a ranking of consumer behaviours from most acceptable to least acceptable as perceived by the consumer.

### 3.4.2. Study 2: Ranking consumer behaviours

Study 2 involved measuring the perceived degrees of deviance of a sub-set of consumer behaviours, examined in Study 1, to ultimately obtain a ranking of consumer behaviours from most acceptable to least acceptable. Study 2 addressed research question two. Quantitative research was required, instead of qualitative research, to empirically test the differences between the behaviours being
investigated. The purpose of this study was to identify consumer behaviours that were the most distinct, thus maximally different, on the underlying dimension of ‘degree of deviance’ (Auger, Devinney & Louviere, 2007; Daly, Lee, Soutar & Rasmi, 2010; Marley & Louviere, 2005). A Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) study using a Balanced Incomplete Block Design (BIBD) was deemed the most appropriate design to measure the degree of deviance as perceived by the respondent. The role of Study 2 in this dissertation was illustrated in Figure 1.

**Best-Worst Scale using a Balanced Incomplete Block Design:** The BWS method is a “powerful method in consumer behaviour research” that overcomes biases associated with rating scales when comparing objects, such as behaviours, attributes, or other items of interests (Daly et al., 2010; Yu, Sun, Goodman, Chen & Ma, 2009, p. 156). Rating scales work under the assumption that respondents use the same evaluation rules, and that numerical scores have the same meaning for each respondent (Louviere, Lings, Islam, Gudergan & Flynn, 2013; Zikmund et al., 2014). However, these assumptions are not always true, as individuals can interpret the ratings in different ways, or be affected by “cultural differences and/or verbal ambiguities with labels” (Louviere et al., 2013, p. 292). Moreover, in studies that are seeking to ascertain rankings based on perceived ethicality or acceptability in comparison to other behaviours, the use of rating scales (e.g. 7-point Likert scales) results in only marginal differences in mean ratings (Louviere et al, 2013). A BWS can overcome the issue of only capturing marginal differences in mean ratings by enabling respondents to objectively evaluate how deviant a behaviour is perceived to be, in comparison to other behaviours, as opposed to obtaining an objective score of deviance of each individual behaviour (Zikmund et al., 2014). This comparative
an approach to assessing behaviour is reflective of real life whereby consumers perceive
behavioural options available to them, and they choose how to behave from a set of
alternatives. However, a disadvantage of using BWS studies is respondents finding
the task cognitively taxing and time consuming, as they have to think more about the
questions. Yet, the increased attention could possibly result in more reliable answers
(Zikmund et al., 2014).

A BIBD was used to dictate the structure of the BWS study. Using a BIBD allows
the BWS to be designed in a way that reduces the number of questions a respondent
needs to complete. This is advantageous, as alternative choice-based methods such as
paired comparisons, require “large numbers of choice questions to estimate
preferences for objects” (Louviere et al., 2013, p. 292). The BIBD formula that Study
2 followed was: $v = 10$, $k = 3$, $b = 30$, $r = 9$, $\lambda = 2$ (see Figure 3). This BIBD formula
was chosen over other possibilities as it allowed the maximum number of behaviours
($v = 10$) to be ranked, in a manageable number of questions ($b = 30$) before respondent
fatigue occurred. The ten behaviours being tested were presented in groups of three ($k
= 3$), each behaviour appeared a total of nine times in the survey ($r = 9$), and each
behaviour was compared to one another twice ($\lambda = 2$).
Figure 3.

**Balanced Incomplete Block Design**

\[ v = 10, k = 3, b = 30, r = 9, \lambda = 2 \]

\[
(1, 2, 3), (1, 2, 4), (1, 3, 5), (1, 4, 6), (1, 5, 7), (1, 6, 8), (1, 7, 9), (1, 8, 10), (1, 9, 10), (2, 3, 6), (2, 4, 10), (2, 5, 8), (2, 5, 9), (2, 6, 7), (2, 7, 9), (2, 8, 10), (3, 4, 7), (3, 4, 8), (3, 5, 6), (3, 7, 10), (3, 8, 9), (3, 9, 10), (4, 5, 9), (4, 5, 10), (4, 6, 9), (4, 7, 8), (5, 6, 10), (5, 7, 8), (6, 7, 10), (6, 8, 9)
\]

(Sourced from Rasch & Herrendörfer, 1986, p. 171)

**Surveys as the data collection method.** Study 2 was executed using a survey, as they are an efficient, cost effective, and an accurate method of quantitatively assessing information about a population of interest (Zikmund et al., 2014). An online survey was deemed the most appropriate survey collection technique as it provides access to a greater number of people at a lower cost than other survey techniques (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Online surveys also have the advantage of being completed at a time convenient for the respondent (Zikmund et al., 2014). Further, the online survey enables the greatest level of anonymity for the respondent, as a researcher is not involved either by telephone or in person (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). The absence of the researcher to ensure anonymity is required for Study 2 as it is investigating a sensitive topic of deviant consumer behaviour. A lack of anonymity could result in social desirability bias in which the respondent feels either consciously or unconsciously compelled to answer in a socially desirable way (Zikmund et al., 2014). Any privacy or security concerns associated with online surveys were mitigated by following the QUT Ethics Guidelines, which involved informing
participants about the purpose of the study and use of their information, and storing the unidentifiable data on a secure QUT server.

**Sample and sampling procedure.** In line with the target population of interest (refer to section 3.2.2), the sample for Study 2 consisted of males and females over the age of 18 years, living in Australia. Respondents were recruited via email, Facebook, and Twitter using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience and snowball sampling. Non-probability sampling was used for time and cost effectiveness, at the expense of the generalisability of the results (Zikmund et al., 2011). Convenience sampling was used in the first instance, then respondents were asked to refer others to the study. A total sample size of 100 was collected, which is in line with other BWS BIBD studies (Daly et al., 2010; Louviere & Flynn, 2010; Marley & Pihlens, 2012).

**Simple summary statistics and ANOVA.** Following Louviere and Flynn’s (2010) recommendations, the data were first examined using simple summary statistics. The simple summary statistics involved assessing best-worst frequencies to obtain a ranking of consumer behaviours (Louviere & Flynn, 2010). A ratio scale was also calculated based on the square root of the best/worst scores, to establish the extent to which a behaviour was perceived as more or less deviant than another behaviour (Zikmund et al., 2014). The simple summary statistics approach is deemed appropriate as it obtains approximately the same outcome as Multinomial Logit analysis, a more complicated analysis sometimes conducted on BWS BIBD data (Auger et al., 2007; Marley & Louviere, 2005). After the simple summary statistics, a
one way within subjects (repeated measures) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The ANOVA was conducted to test if the ranked behaviours were significantly different from one another, following recommendations from Allen & Bennett (2012) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2006). Being able to assess if the behaviours are significantly different from one another demonstrates that even though a behaviour is ranked 3rd, while another is ranked 4th, both behaviours may not be statistically significantly different from one another. This has implications for assessing how the behaviours tested, fall within and across the three zones (acceptable, questionable, unacceptable) suggested in the conceptual framework of deviant consumer behaviour, as clusters of behaviours could appear that are not significantly different from one another (Louviere et al., 2013).

3.4.3. Study 3: Determinants of deviant consumer behaviour

The purpose of Study 3 was to test the roles of ethical ideology, moral identity, and salient factors identified in the definition of right and wrong (prevalence, outcomes, and risk), in predicting two types of deviant consumer behaviour- (1) questionable behaviour, and (2) unacceptable behaviour. Quantitative research was required, instead of qualitative research, to empirically test the relationships between the constructs, using pre-existing validated measures. The aim was to address research question three.

Surveys as the data collection method. Online surveys were used to collect data for Study 3. As explained in detail above for Study 2, an online survey provides easier access to a wider number of people at a lower cost than other quantitative research
techniques (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Moreover, the online survey offers the greatest level of anonymity, which is required for Study 3 as respondents disclose their deviant consumer behaviours. Even with guaranteed anonymity, social desirability bias is likely to occur when completing questions about sensitive topics, such as ethics, and self-reported deviant consumer behaviour. To address this issue, social desirability bias measures were included in the survey to empirically assess the presence of the bias in the data. Pre-existing and validated scales were used to measure the constructs being tested.

**Sample and sampling procedure.** In line with the target population of this thesis (refer to section 3.2.2), the sample for Study 3 consisted of males and females over the age of 18 years old living in Australia. A non-probability sampling procedure was used for the same reasons delineated in section 3.2.5. A sample size of 215 respondents was collected from the MyOpinions Research Panel, with a useable sample size of 214. A univariate outlier was deleted when cleaning the data. The sample size is appropriate for the analysis techniques required (Allen & Bennett, 2012).

**Analysis.** The data was analysed using hierarchical multiple regression analyses via SPSS. The hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to determine (1) the moderating relationship between moral identity and ethical ideology, (2) the relationship between ethical ideology, moral identity, perceived outcomes, perceived risk, perceived prevalence, and deviant consumer behaviour (questionable and unacceptable) and (3) the relationship between past behaviour and behaviour intention.
in the escalation process. A summary of the research program for this dissertation is provided in Table 1.

Table 1.

Research Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>Study 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers RQ1: <em>RQ1: How does a consumer perceive right and wrong?</em></td>
<td>Answers RQ2: <em>RQ2: How do individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong vary among consumers?</em></td>
<td>Answers RQ3: <em>RQ3: What are the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with a card sort activity</td>
<td>Best-Worst Scaling study with a Balanced Incomplete Block Design via an online survey</td>
<td>Online survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sample</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sample</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 males and females living in Australia over 18 years of age</td>
<td>100 males and females living in Australia over 18 years of age</td>
<td>214 males and females living in Australia over 18 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic analysis using Nvivo</td>
<td>Simple summary statistics and ANOVAs in SPSS</td>
<td>Hierarchical multiple regression analyses in SPSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limitations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limitations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limitations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalisability issues, subjectivity, geographically restricted</td>
<td>Generalisability issues, Australian-only sample</td>
<td>Generalisability issues, Australian-only sample</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5. Ethical Considerations

Research in this thesis has been conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans, as outlined by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) guidelines. The QUT Research Ethics Committee reviewed each study and granted ethical clearance: Study 1 (Approval Number 1200000219), Study 2 (Approval Number 1200000519), Study 3 (Approval Number 1300000479).

The key ethical issues associated with this research included privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Cavana et al., 2001; Neuman, 2006). To address these issues, respondent information sheets were provided to all respondents across all three studies, outlining the aim, requirements, and outcomes of each study. The respondents were also informed of the security measures being used to protect the information collected in each study. Respondents in Study 1 signed official QUT consent forms, and respondents in Study 2 and Study 3 implied their consent when they submitted a completed online survey as noted on page one of the online survey. Respondents were free to cease participation at any point during the interview and the online surveys. The respondents were not identified in the interview transcripts and were assigned numbers to ensure privacy during the transcription and analysis. Real names were kept on a separate document that remains secured in accordance with QUT ethical guidelines, to ensure confidentiality was achieved. No directly identifiable information was collected during the online surveys, in Study 2 and 3, to ensure anonymity. None of the respondents withdrew their consent. The results of the study
are accurately reported and de-identified data is available for the purpose of replication.

3.6. Conclusion

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to provide a justification for the research design employed in this thesis. Chapter 3 has outlined the research paradigm under which this thesis has been executed, and provided a justification for the use of a mixed methodology. Justifications have also been provided for each of the three studies’ data collection, sampling, and analysis techniques. The next chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, will present two papers written as a result of these three studies. Chapter 4 is a paper based on Study 1, while Chapter 5 is a paper based on Study 2 and 3. Both Chapters 4 and 5 are formatted as journal articles. Chapter 6 is a commentary paper on the issue of deviant consumer behaviour and how the practical recommendations from these three studies can be implemented to reduce incidences of deviant consumer behaviour in the marketplace.
3.7. References


### 3.8. Appendix

#### 3.8.1. Appendix A: Card sort results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Number of times it appeared in a category</th>
<th>Accept/Reject Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Questionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Using the 4 cents fuel voucher from the grocery store to buy petrol</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
<td>Taping a movie off the television</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Buying movie tickets online to jump the queue at the cinemas</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Only buying products from companies if you are part of their loyalty programs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
<td>Spending over an hour trying on different t-shirts and not purchasing any</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010</td>
<td>Claim a purchase price is better at a competing retailer in order to get a discount</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Wilkes, 1978</td>
<td>Tasting grapes in a supermarket and not buying any</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Creating a fake US iTunes account to access and pay for content not available in Australia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
<td>Returning merchandise to a store by claiming it was a gift when it was not</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Number of times it appeared in a category</td>
<td>Accept/Reject Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Questionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
<td>Illegally downloading TV shows from the internet for free, for personal consumption</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Creating a fake account on social networking site</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Wilkes, 1978</td>
<td>Using an expired coupon for merchandise</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010; Wilkes, 1978</td>
<td>Return used goods for a refund</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004</td>
<td>Purchasing organs for transplant over the internet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010</td>
<td>Lying about a child's age in order to get a lower price</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Saying there are only 2 people staying in a holiday apartment when there are really 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010; Wilkes, 1978</td>
<td>Not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004</td>
<td>Cutting in front of someone in a queue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992</td>
<td>Breaking a bottle of salad dressing in a supermarket and</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Number of times it appeared in a category</td>
<td>Accept/Reject Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Questionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>doing nothing about it</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
<td>Taking someone's vegetarian meal at a conference</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010</td>
<td>Giving misleading price information to a clerk for an un-priced item</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Wilkes, 1978</td>
<td>Reporting a lost item as 'stolen' to an insurance company to collect the money</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Evading fare on public transport</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study</td>
<td>Intentionally taking someone else's takeaway order</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Wilkes, 1978</td>
<td>Drinking a can of soda in a supermarket without paying for it</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Wilkes, 1978</td>
<td>Changing price-tags on merchandise in a retail store</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study; Wilkes, 1978 (shoplifting)</td>
<td>Not claiming an item when buying groceries through the self-checkout</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Number of times it appeared in a category</td>
<td>Accept/Reject Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable  Questionable  Unacceptable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004</td>
<td>Impersonating someone else by using their credit card to purchase goods on the internet without permission</td>
<td>0 0% 0</td>
<td>29 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004</td>
<td>Using stolen credit cards to order goods over the internet</td>
<td>0 0% 0</td>
<td>29 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prevalence was based on participant perceptions*
CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL PAPER – Study 1

(Qualitative)
4. CHAPTER FOUR: Empirical Paper – Study 1

Written for the European Journal of Marketing

4.1. Introduction

Deviant consumer behaviour – behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct – is an ongoing problem in marketplaces around the globe (Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Moschis & Cox, 1989). In 2013, $AU112 billion was lost globally to fraudulent returns by customers (Jager, 2013). In a consumer environment, deviant consumer behaviours can be directed towards employees, an organisation’s merchandise, financial assets, physical or digital environment, or other consumers (Fullerton & Punj, 1997; 2004). Investigations into deviant consumer behaviour are driven by the consequences the behaviour causes. While there is growing evidence for increases in deviant consumer behaviour in the marketplace (Harris & Daunt, 2013), there remains a dearth of research into the reasons underpinning deviant consumer behaviour, in comparison to investigations into ‘non-deviant’ consumption behaviours (Daunt & Harris, 2012).

Deterrence strategies play an important role in curbing deviant consumer behaviour. Deterrence strategies are strategies that organisations use to stop consumers from engaging in specific behaviours that cause harm to other customers, employees, or the organisation itself. Traditional deterrence strategies work under the assumption there is social consensus on the behaviour’s wrongness, and that perceptions of risk of punishment for engaging in deviant consumer behaviour are consistent, and high (Fullerton & Punj, 1997; Weingast, 1997). However, evidence suggests individuals vary in their perceptions of the risks of deterrent sanctions therefore, inhibiting the effectiveness of undifferentiated deterrence strategies.
(Fullerton & Punj, 1997; Strutton, Vitell & Pelton, 1994). A fundamental proposition underpinning this paper is that consumers differ in more than their perceptions of risk, but also their perceptions of the acceptability of the behaviour itself. Therefore, this study explores differences in individuals’ perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour.

Scholars in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics research fields have proposed a number of ways to classify deviant consumer behaviours. These include classifying behaviour based on the stage of consumption (Grove, Vitell & Strutton, 1989), the direction of deviance (Fullerton & Punj, 2004), classifying types of consumers based on their propensity for deviance (Fullerton et al., 1996), and the type of deviance the consumer engages in (Harris & Reynolds, 2004). While this research provides significant insight into the fields of consumer deviance and consumer ethics, this paper is focused on understanding how consumers distinguish between behaviours based on the behaviour’s acceptability. Previous research has quantitatively examined the extent to which consumers perceive a behaviour as ‘wrong’ (e.g. Wilkes, 1978) or ‘unethical’ (e.g. Muncy & Vitell, 1992) yet has not examined the reasons underpinning these perceptions. This paper seeks to extend on these descriptive studies by exploring why consumers make these behavioural classifications (e.g. very serious, somewhat unethical). Empirical support is sought for conceptual dimensions previously proposed in the literature as explaining how consumers distinguish between behaviours. The value in understanding what underpins consumer perceptions is that it provides a foundation of knowledge from which strategies can be developed to deter instances of deviant consumer behaviour.
Building on the work of a number of scholars across the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Jones, 1991; Moschis & Cox, 1989; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005) a framework is developed and tested explaining the factors underpinning consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour. A key proposition put forward is that individuals will perceive behaviours on a spectrum from ‘acceptable’ to ‘questionable’ to ‘unacceptable’. Definitions of the spectrum, and factors salient in consumer perceptions will then be identified in a qualitative study to understand how consumers perceive right and wrong. Identifying salient factors in consumer perceptions is the first aim of this paper.

The second aim of this paper is to explore how factors salient in consumer perceptions, inform the types of neutralisation techniques consumers use to justify their perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. Neutralisation techniques are disengagement tools used to reduce anticipatory or actual cognitive dissonance experienced from performing an act that contradicts with one’s underlying values and beliefs (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Festinger, 1957). Past research has examined the temporal use of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralisation techniques, and which behaviours they are most likely used for (see for example Harris & Dumas, 2009; Hinduja, 2007; Morris & Higgins, 2009). Extending on the work of Harris and Dumas (2009), this research examines how consumer perceptions of behaviour acceptability inform the use of neutralisation techniques to excuse deviant consumer behaviour, to build a greater knowledge base on the use neutralisation techniques (Vitell, 2003). The use of neutralisation techniques can help explain the gap between perceptions and behaviour (Neale & Fullerton, 2010), in other words, explaining how
an individual can perceive a behaviour as wrong yet perform it anyway (Bonner & O’Higgins, 2009).

To achieve the two aims outlined above, the paper is structured as follows. A literature review of deterrence theory, behavioural classification research, and neutralisation techniques is presented, followed by a conceptual framework guiding the research. The research design employed in this paper is subsequently discussed. The results of the semi-structured interviews are presented, with eight factors identified as informing a consumer’s definition of right and wrong. Five of those eight factors are then linked to a type of justification used to alter perceptions of, and allow engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. The paper concludes with a summary of the theoretical and practical implications of this research, and the limitations and future research opportunities.

4.2. Literature Review

4.2.1. Deterrence strategies

Deterrence theory is grounded in the classical school of criminology and the “rational choice view of human behaviour” (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1967; Pratt, Cullen, Blevins, Daigle & Madensen, 2006, p. 367). Deterrence theory assumes that individuals weigh up the costs and benefits of a situation, and individuals then make rational decisions based on increasing their pleasure (e.g. benefits) and decreasing their pain or harm (e.g. risk/costs) (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1967; Pratt et al., 2006). The lower the levels of deterrence present, the greater the individual’s perceived opportunity to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Tittle, 1980; Cole, 1989).
Deterrence theory relies on the assumption that there is social consensus on the acceptability of a behaviour, and that the law and organisational policy reflect those views (Weingast, 1997). As such, deterrence strategies tend to focus on appealing to the official classification of the behaviour, or the risk associated with the behaviour. The law and an organisation’s policy dictate the ‘official classification’ of a behaviour. Appealing to the official classification of the behaviour means appeals to consumers to uphold the law, and or an organisation’s policy. The limitation of this approach is that although a behaviour is classified by an official authority (law makers, organisation) as wrong, individuals may be perceived the behaviour in a different way. This is because some individuals do not internalise the morality on which the laws or organisational policy are based (Cooter, 2000; Hinduja, 2007; Klosko, 1987; 2011; Skinner, 2011), meaning they perceive the law or policy to be unfair, or can justify violating it, and are thus more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Agnew, 1992; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Fisk et al., 2010; Fukukawa, 2002; Fullerton & Punj, 1997; 2004; Gregoire & Fisher, 2007; Yi & Gong, 2008). This means that deterrence strategies appealing to individuals to uphold the official classification of the behaviour are largely ineffective for those who are likely to violate it. Deterrence strategies appealing to individuals to uphold the official classification of the behaviour are likely reinforcing the beliefs of individuals who are less likely to violate it in the first instance. These individuals are likely to already internalise the morality on which the law or organisational policy is based, and they do not perceive the official classification to be unfair (Cooter, 2000; Hinduja, 2007; Klosko, 1987; 2011; Skinner, 2011).
Deterrence strategies that make appeals to the risk associated with the behaviour are based on the assumption that deviant consumer behaviour is inversely related to the perceived risk of punishment (Freeman, Liossis & David, 2006). However, appeals to risk only work as a deterrent, if the probability, severity, and swiftness of punishment are all perceived to be high (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Grasmick & Green, 1980). Where one of those three factors approximates zero, the other two factors become redundant (Grasmick & Green, 1980). Therefore, in order for deterrence to be effective, perceived certainty of apprehension must be high, perceived severity of punishment should be proportionate to the deviant consumer behaviour, and the punishment must be perceived to be enacted swiftly (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Grasmick & Green, 1980; Beccaria, 1963). When perceived punishment is lacking, individuals are more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (Albers-Miller, 1999).

These deterrence strategies rely on the rational view of human behaviour as typified by the rational choice theory in criminology (Becker, 1968). However, the effectiveness of this approach to understanding human behaviour has been criticised, with suggestions that there are underlying psychological factors that influence human behaviour beyond the rational approach (Akers, 1990; Ariely, 2012; Garoupa, 2003; Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008; Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Moreover, the strategies discussed above assume the individual agrees that the behaviour is wrong. However, Mitchell and Chan’s (2002) suggestion that organisations should overtly stress the wrongness of the deviant consumer behaviour to deter consumers from performing it may be ineffective. When the deterrence strategy presents a message that contradicts an individuals’ perception of the behaviour, the individual is likely to ignore the
message to avoid experiencing any cognitive dissonance – a psychological discomfort (Festinger, 1957).

Fullerton and Punj (1997) suggest that traditional deterrence techniques need to overcome “the differing consumer perception[s] of and reactions to the risks of deterrent sanctions” (p. 341). Moreover, Strutton et al. (1994) made a general recommendation for the use of tailored messages for effective deterrence. Yet more than a decade after these recommendations, there remains a dearth of investigations examining how to best develop these tailored deterrence strategies. In this paper, it is proposed that consumers differ in more than just their perceptions of risk, but also their perceptions of the acceptability of the behaviour itself. Extending on the recommendations of Fullerton and Punj (1997) and Strutton et al. (1994), it is proposed that deterrence strategies must overcome variations in perceptions of the acceptability of deviant consumer behaviour. Investigating these differences will provide insight into how consumers distinguish between behaviours, which is valuable in informing the development of tailored deterrence strategies.

4.2.2. Distinguishing between behaviours

Research into consumer deviance began with Wilkes’ (1978) investigation into consumer perceptions of a variety of behaviours, to ascertain how wrong and how serious a behaviour was perceived to be. However, it was not until the 1990s that there was an influx of research into consumer ethics (Schlegelmilch and Oberseder, 2010). Muncy and Vitell (1992) led the consumer ethics stream of research with the development of the Consumer Ethics Scale (CES). The CES was updated by Vitell
and Muncy (2005), and is regarded as a well-established framework for assessing consumer ethical judgments (Vitell, 2003). The CES groups behaviours based on the extent to which an individual perceives it to be unethical. Distinction between the behaviour categories in the CES are attributed to three reasons; (1) how passive or active the consumer was in the act, (2) whether the behaviour was deceitful or fraudulent, and (3) the degree of harm involved (Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005). An attempt was made by Vitell, Singhapakdi and Thomas (2001) to elicit qualitative insights into why behaviours were perceived as right and wrong. However, the results were only briefly mentioned and were focused on supporting Vitell et al.’s (2001) arguments for consumers using the teleological perspective to inform their ethical judgments – the belief that the outcome of the behaviour is important, not how the outcome was attained – when assessing the ethicality of a behaviour.

A dearth of qualitative work in this stream of research on behavioural classifications means we have an extensive descriptive understanding of the complexities of consumer deviance, with limited in-depth insight into the meaning underpinning these empirical results. Only one study known to the author has tested the role of these conceptual dimensions in deviant consumer behaviour. Mitchell and Chan (2002) found that perceived illegality (deceit/fraud) and severity of consequence (harm caused) both play a role in the enactment of deviant consumer behaviour.

Proposing similar conceptual dimensions as Muncy and Vitell (1992), Fullerton and Punj (2004) suggest behaviours could be perceived as distinct based on (1) the nature of the act, which reflects how ‘passive or active’ the consumer was as
proposed by Muncy and Vitell (1992), (2) the type and degree of disruption, which extends on ‘degree of harm’ proposed by Muncy and Vitell (1992), and (3) the reaction(s) by others, which refers to the social and legal sanctions incurred from performing the deviant consumer behaviour, which is consistent with other frameworks from Moschis and Cox (1989) and Amine and Gicquel (2011). Fullerton and Punj’s (2004) typology was developed specifically for the marketing context, yet it remains empirically untested (Keeffe, 2010).

As mentioned above, Moschis and Cox (1989) and Amine and Gicquel (2011) include the role of regulation in distinguishing between behaviours. Moschis and Cox’s (1989) ‘typology of consumer behaviour from society’s perspective’ distinguishes behaviours based on whether they are normative/deviant, and regulated/non-regulated. This subsequently suggests behaviour can fall into one of four groups, rational (non-regulated/normative), mandatory (regulated/normative), negligent (deviant, non-regulated), or criminal/fraudulent (deviant/regulated) (Moschis & Cox, 1989). The presence of regulation as a means to distinguish behaviours has been used in subsequent conceptualisations of deviant consumer behaviour (e.g. Amine & Gicquel, 2011), despite Fullerton and Punj (1997a) cautioning researchers against defining deviant consumer behaviour by the level of regulation as it is constantly changing. Moschis and Cox’s (1989) typology is also limited by inconsistent definitions of what constitutes ‘normative’ and deviant consumer behaviours. Amine and Gicquel’s (2011) typology of consumer behaviours improves on the limitation of defining what constitutes deviant consumer behaviour suggesting it captures any behaviour that deviates from ‘normative’ behaviours, including tolerated behaviours, pathological behaviours, and illegal behaviours.
Normative consumer behaviours are underpinned by norms. Norms are rules or standards agreed upon by more than one member of a group that include sanctions in order to maintain social order (Bierstedt, 1963; DeFleur, D’Antonio & DeFleur, 1977; Gibbs, 1981; Homans, 1961; Morris, 1956; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Definitions of norms allude to being “a shared belief in a social unit as to what conduct ought to be” (Gibbs, 1981, p. 4). In other fields of research; criminology, sociology, and psychology, the term ‘deviant’ behaviour includes any behaviour that deviates from norms resulting in a consequence of social or legal sanctions (Gibbs, 1981). Social consensus could be used to infer what an individual perceives as ‘normative’ behaviour. Social consensus refers to the level of agreement about an issue or behaviour (Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). The level of agreement in society on a behaviour’s acceptability could be reflected by the perceived popularity of an act and the perceived social approval of the act (Park & Smith, 2007). The social approval of the act, or ‘subjective norms’ reflects if parents, family, and/or
friends, would support the individual’s enactment of that behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The group that an individual associates with, teaches them beliefs, attitudes, justification techniques and is a primary source of behavioural reinforcement, which guides the individual’s perceptions of, and engagement in behaviour (Asch, 1951; Ajzen, 1991; Burgess & Akers, 1966; Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Sutherland, 1947). When an individual does not know how to behave in a particular situation they turn to others to see what is appropriate and what behaviour is being rewarded (Bandura, 1977; Pratt et al., 2010). The varying deviant consumer behaviours evident in the marketplace could reflect the lack of social consensus in the acceptability of certain behaviours. The lack of social consensus makes it difficult to deter those behaviours, as deterrence strategies work on the idea that there is social consensus in the wrongness of the behaviour.

Taking an ethical perspective for distinguishing between behaviours, Hunt and Vitell’s (1986) General Theory of Marketing Ethics suggests individuals will distinguish behaviours based on (1) the perceived consequences of each behaviour alternative, for those involved, (2) the probability of the harm being incurred by those involved, (3) the (un)desirability of the consequence incurred by those involved, and (4) the importance of each party involved in the behaviour (Allmon, Page & Roberts, 2000; Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Hunt & Vitell 1986). However, only some individuals will consider these factors, namely those individuals associating with a relativism ethical ideology. Ethical ideology is a system of beliefs or principles that individuals use to guide their judgments of the acceptability of a behaviour, based on the extent to which they accept or reject universal moral rules (Aleassa, Pearson & McClurg, 2011; Barnett, Bass & Brown, 1996; Forsyth, 1980). Individuals associating with the
relativism ethical ideology follow the teleological philosophy of ethics. Teleology is from the consequentialist theory of ethics, which focuses on the outcome of an action to determine its acceptability (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). There are two branches of teleology, (1) ethical egoists who are focused on increasing the good outcome for the individual, which in turn constitutes the ‘right’ behaviour, and (2) utilitarians who are focused on promoting the greatest good to the greatest number, which in turn constitutes the ‘right’ behaviour (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). In other words, egoists and utilitarian’s process outcome information in different ways. In Jones’ (1991) moral intensity framework, additional dimensions suggested to distinguish behaviours based on their outcomes include magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, and temporal immediacy. If magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, and temporal immediacy were processed by an egoist, an individual would consider them to reflect the traditional components of risk – severity of punishment, probability of punishment, and swiftness of punishment, which, as aforementioned, underpin traditional deterrence strategies. This suggests perceptions of risk may influence consumer perceptions of right and wrong. If an individual processes magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, and temporal immediacy as a utilitarian, these factors could be considered in line with the degree, probability, and swiftness of harm incurred by others. A utilitarian approach to processing those factors, along with Jones’ (1991) concentration of effect factor, provides support for the ‘degree of harm’ dimension suggested by Muncy and Vitell (1992) and Fullerton and Punj (2004) as influencing how behaviours are distinguished. Concentration of effect considers the intensity of the harm being caused – does the deviant consumer behaviour affect a small number of people a significant amount, or does it affect a large number of people just a little bit? (Jones, 1991).
Extending on the notion of harm caused to the victim, Jones (1991) also suggests the proximity of victim can influence perceptions of a behaviour. *Proximity* refers to the ‘nearness’ an individual feels to the victim of a behaviour (Jones, 1991). Social distance is a relevant proximity measure, such that the greater the perceived social distance between the consumer and the organisation, the more likely the consumer will engage in deviant consumer behaviour possibly causing harm to the organisation (Moore & Loewenstein, 2004). Moreover, if an individual has previously experienced being the victim of a particular deviant consumer behaviour, they are more likely to perceive it as unacceptable, given their ability to empathise with the victim (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997) and the role past experiences has on perceptions of future behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Hunt & Vitell, 1986).

Weighing up the factors individuals may use to distinguish between behaviours would provide the individual with an overall assessment of the perceived outcomes of performing a deviant consumer behaviour. In Burgess and Akers’ (1966) social learning theory from criminology, differential reinforcement captures whether generally good or bad outcomes are likely to result from an individual performing a behaviour. If the outcomes are perceived to be generally good, the behaviour is more likely to be performed, than if the outcomes were perceived to be generally bad (Akers & Lee, 1996; Burgess & Akers, 1966). Differential reinforcement does not distinguish between an individual assessing the outcome for themselves versus the outcome for others. Egoists, as explained above, will place more emphasis on the outcome from themselves, whereas the utilitarian will place more emphasis on the outcome for others (Hunt & Vitell. 1986). Yet both arrive at the same outcome – a
general perception of what the outcomes are likely to be if the behaviour was performed. An individual’s perceptions of the outcomes could be informed through experiential learning, in that past behaviour was either rewarded or punished. The actual rewards or punishments from past behaviour then inform future outcome expectations (Akers & Sellers, 2004). Perceptions of the outcomes could also be informed vicariously through observational learning. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory suggests that if an individual observes a model they respect and like, be rewarded for engaging in a particular behaviour, the individual will be more inclined to imitate that behaviour, than had the model been observed to be punished. Whether informed by experiential or vicarious learning, perceived outcomes could inform consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour.

Combining these conceptual dimensions from a number of typologies and frameworks provides a foundation from which consumer perceptions can be empirically tested. Some research has begun to explore the how or why of consumer deviance, however, these investigations are focused on single behaviours such as, ‘deshopping’ (King & Dennis, 2003) and fraudulent returns proclivity (Harris, 2010). There remains an opportunity to examine why individuals perceive behaviours to be distinct from one another (Schlegelmilch & Oberseder, 2010), as acceptable, questionable, or unacceptable behaviours, and how those subjective perceptions vary across individuals. Understanding the reasons underpinning these categorisations is important as it guides the development of more specific and tailored deterrence strategies. Combining the dimensions suggests there are five themes likely to inform consumer perceptions; official classification of the behaviour, norms, intent,
perceived outcomes, and perceived risk. These themes, along with the factors that underpin them, are outlined in Table 1.
Table 1. Summary of conceptual dimensions used to classify behaviours as distinct from one another

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overarching theme</th>
<th>Conceptual Dimensions</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official Classification</td>
<td>- Regulated/Not regulated</td>
<td>(Moschis &amp; Cox, 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– law &amp; policy</td>
<td>- Deceitful / fraudulent act</td>
<td>(Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Legal sanctions</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>- Normative/deviant</td>
<td>(Moschis &amp; Cox, 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social consensus</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social sanctions</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent</td>
<td>- Passive or active the consumer was in the act</td>
<td>(Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Nature of the act</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Outcomes</td>
<td>- Degree of harm</td>
<td>(Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Type and degree of disruption</td>
<td>(Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The perceived consequences of each alternative, for those involved</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The (un)desirability of the consequence incurred by those involved</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The probability of the harm being incurred by those involved</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The importance of each party involved in the behaviour</td>
<td>(Hunt &amp; Vitell 1986; Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Proximity</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk</td>
<td>- Magnitude of consequences*</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Probability of effect*</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Temporal immediacy*</td>
<td>(Jones, 1991)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* If interpreted as effect on self (egoist) – then this can be interpreted as risk, if interpreted as effect on others (utilitarian) – then these can be interpreted as harm.
Fullerton et al. (1996) suggested the need for tailoring messages to consumer
typologies to deter them from engaging in deviant consumer behaviour. However,
c consumer-typology-focused deterrence strategies could be ineffective because even
‘good’ consumers can still find themselves engaging in some degree of deviant
consumer behaviour (e.g. Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth & Nye, 1990; Mazar et al.,
2008). In this paper, it is proposed that marketers will be more successful at deterring
deviant consumer behaviour by using deterrence strategies attacking the justifications
individuals use to excuse a specific behaviour, rather than deterring based on the type
of consumer, as any consumer can engage in deviant consumer behaviour. The types
of justifications individuals use are proposed in this paper to reflect the salient factors
in the consumer’s perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour.

4.2.3. Neutralisation techniques

Across a number of fields of research, including criminology, psychology,
management, and marketing, neutralisation techniques have been suggested to
facilitate the occurrence, maintenance, and escalation of deviant behaviour (e.g.
Bandura, 1991a; Barriga, Landau, Stinson II, Liao & Gibbs, 2000; Bonner &
O’Higgins, 2010; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Kazemian, Farrington & Le Blanc, 2009;
Strutton et al., 1994; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004; Zyglidopoulos, Fleming &
Rothenberg, 2009). Neutralisation techniques are disengagement tools used to reduce
cognitive dissonance experienced from performing a behaviour (Sykes & Matza,
1957; Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance is a psychological discomfort
experienced from performing an act that contradicts with one’s underlying values and
beliefs (Festinger, 1957). Neutralisation techniques are required to resolve the conflict
between wanting to perform deviant consumer behaviour for some benefit, while not
having to negatively update their self-concept – perception of oneself (Mazar et al., 2008). The original framework of neutralisation techniques encompasses denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Investigations have expanded on these original techniques and proposed defense of necessity (Minor, 1981), claim of entitlement (Coleman, 1994; McGregor, 2008), normal practice (Coleman, 1994; Henry, 1990), claim of relative acceptability (Henry & Eaton, 1989), metaphor of ledger (Klockers, 1974), and justification by comparison (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003).

‘Denial of responsibility’ is used when the individual deflects responsibility for the outcome of a behaviour, to the external environment (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Individuals using this neutralisation technique perceive themselves as being acted upon, rather than acting on their own accord (Sykes & Matza, 1957). This evidently creates disengagement between an individual and their actions. While denial of responsibility argues ‘I didn’t mean to do it’, defense of necessity argues ‘I had no other choice but to do it’, the act was necessary to achieve a goal (Harris & Daunt, 2011; Minor, 1981).

The ‘claim of entitlement’ technique, originally proposed by Coleman (1994) in his book on white-collar crime, was suggested by McGregor (2008) to also be evident in the consumer context. McGregor (2008) suggested ‘claim of entitlement’ is used to justify enactment of a behaviour and the right to benefit from enacting said behaviour. However, McGregor’s (2008) arguments were unsupported by empirical data and provide an opportunity to find evidence for it in the consumer context.
‘Denial of injury’ is used when the individual perceives their behaviour is not harming others. Hence, the individual assesses the wrongfulness of an action, by the level of injury or harm resulting from the behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Another technique used to similarly deflate the negative consequences incurred by the victim is ‘claim of relative acceptability’ (Henry & Eaton, 1989), arguing there are ‘much worse individuals than me’ (Harris & Daunt, 2011). The ‘claim of relative acceptability’ is limited to interpersonal comparisons. In contrast, the technique ‘justification by comparison’ judges behaviours against one another (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003). Behaviours are rationalised as being ‘acceptable’ in comparison to more serious forms of deviant consumer behaviour that exists for anyone to perform. The ‘metaphor of the ledger’ technique is alternatively used to make comparisons between behaviours the individual themselves actually performs (Klockers, 1974). The ‘metaphor of the ledger’ technique suggests behaviours can be deemed ‘acceptable’ on the basis that the individual’s overall ‘good’ behaviour offsets their deviant actions. This means individuals can use their ‘good behaviour’ as a ‘credit’ for ‘bad behaviour’.

‘Denial of victim’ is a technique commonly employed when responsibility has been taken, and injury has been acknowledged; yet the individual perceives the injury to be justified- “a rightful retaliation or punishment” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). However, the victim could also be ‘unknown’ or ‘physically absent’ to the individual (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Internet-related misbehaviours are seen as a victimless crime (Freestone & Mitchell, 2004), as the absence of an identifiable victim makes it difficult for the consumer to feel empathetic (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997), failing to inhibit enactment of the deviant consumer behaviour.
‘Condemnation of the condemners’ is a neutralisation technique used by an individual to shift attention to those condemning the individual’s behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957). This technique is commonly used in the public arena; opposing groups who attack the wrongfulness of the others’ behaviours to deflect from their own questionable behaviours. The technique works on the premise that it is unfair to condemn one person, without condemning all the individuals who engaged in deviant consumer behaviours (Coleman, 1994). A similar perspective is offered by the neutralisation technique ‘normal practice’, an extension of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) framework, which rationalises a behaviour is acceptable if it is prevalent in society – ‘everybody else is doing it’ (Coleman, 1994; Henry, 1990). As normative behaviours are suggested to reflect the popularity and social approval of an act (Park & Smith, 2007), the use of ‘normal practice’ seeks to remove the presence of cognitive dissonance by arguing their actions are ‘normative’ not ‘deviant’. The final neutralisation technique of ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ is used to justify upholding a norm of a small sub group of society at the cost of violating a wider societal norm (Sykes & Matza, 1957). A parent acting to protect their child at the expense of breaking the law would use this neutralisation technique, holding their loyalty to their child as higher than their loyalty to obeying the law (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

These techniques enable performance of deviant consumer behaviour by distorting the link between the individual’s actions and the consequences they cause (Bandura, 1999; Bandura, 1991a; Bandura, 1991b). Disengagement from the consequences of one’s actions could cause an individual to engage in a behaviour originally considered to be unacceptable, without much distress (Bandura, 1991a; Bandura, 1999; Mazar et al., 2008). Past behaviour can then be used as a benchmark for future behaviour.
(Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). “Even when a behaviour rarely occurs, it may have a particularly valued outcome that the actor will remember” (Watson, Berkley, Madapulli & Zeng, 2009, p. 417). As deviant consumer behaviour occurs, the individual can develop an increased “sense of permissibility for deviant conduct” (Dean, Bell & Lauchs, 2010, p. 206). Some investigation has begun on the idea of resetting one’s perceptions of right and wrong back to its original state, after a deviant act is performed (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2009). This research suggests that providing ‘moral reminders’ to individuals, increases the saliency of an individual’s own moral standards, if only temporarily, to reduce their engagement in deviant acts (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino et al., 2009). The resetting manipulation would keep the deviant consumer behaviour classified as ‘deviant’ in the mind of the individual, as opposed to shifting it to be perceived as an ‘acceptable’ behaviour. To date, such resetting manipulations are not readily available in the consumer context therefore preventing this resetting process. Hence, individuals are likely to use past deviant consumer behaviour as a benchmark for future behaviour (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004).

Opportunities to continue research into the use of neutralisation techniques still exist (Harris & Daunt, 2011; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Hinduja, 2007; Morris & Higgins, 2009; Vitell, 2003). Specifically, insight into what informs the type of neutralisation techniques being used in a given context or pertaining to a specific behaviour is needed to deepen our understanding of how to more effectively challenge these justifications to deter deviant consumer behaviour. A key proposition put forward in this paper is that the underlying factors influencing consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour are likely to inform the type of
neutralisation techniques used, a different perspective from existing research, which has investigated the type of neutralisation technique used relevant to the behaviour under examination (Harris & Daunt, 2011; Hinduja, 2007; Morris & Higgins, 2009) and the timing of its use (Harris & Dumas, 2009). Taking a different perspective means convergence of the results could lead to greater generalisability of the knowledge on using neutralisation techniques, or identify gaps in our knowledge.

4.2.4. Perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour framework

The framework developed in this paper identifies factors likely to inform consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour (Figure 1). The framework builds on work of scholars in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields of research, which have conceptually proposed reasons why consumer distinguish between behaviours (see Table 1). Individuals perceive behaviours as acceptable, questionable, or unacceptable, or somewhere between those classifications, depending on which factors are most salient in consumer perceptions. Conceptual dimensions that distinguish behaviour based on acceptability include official classification, norms, intent, perceived outcomes, and perceived risk (see Table 1 for sources).
Each individual is thought to place varying degrees of importance on a varying number of factors, in their assessment of acceptability. As individuals make their assessment of the behaviour, they may experience cognitive dissonance if factors salient in their perceptions are inconsistent with the official classification of the behaviour. As previously discussed, the dissonance could be reduced using neutralisation techniques. However, not all individuals will feel they can neutralise the dissonance (McFerran, Aquino & Duffy, 2010), and in some instances the magnitude of the dissonance may be too large, such that the individual can no longer ignore it, and must thus classify the behaviour as unacceptable (Mazar et al., 2008). If neutralisation techniques are used successfully to reduce dissonance, then the behaviour could be perceived as acceptable, if not questionable, despite contradicting the ‘unacceptable’ official classification of the behaviour. The neutralisation technique used subsequently reflects the salient factor/s in consumer perceptions.
4.3. Method

4.3.1. Research design and methodology

In order to explore consumers’ subjective distinctions between right and wrong behaviours, and to gain insight into why these distinctions are made, in-depth interviews were conducted with a card sort activity. The purpose of conducting interviews is to gather deep, detailed, “vivid, and nuanced” information that is “rich in thematic detail” about the phenomenon being investigated (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 129). Interviews are commonly used to explore complex issues such as perceptions of right and wrong (Harris & Dumas, 2009; Taylor, Ishida & Wallace, 2009; Zikmund, Ward, Lowe, Winzar & Babin, 2011). Moreover, interviews are an appropriate technique to gather information about sensitive or ethically questionable topics, which are explored in this study (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2006). To facilitate the exploration of the abstract concepts of right and wrong, a card sort activity was used. Card sorting is a simplistic categorisation task that can be used as an exploratory tool (Fincher & Tenenberg, 2005; Rugg & McGeorge, 2005). In this study, the categorisations that the respondents made during the card sort activity are suggested to reflect their “internal mental representation” of right and wrong behaviours (Fincher & Tenenberg, 2005, p. 90). Moreover, assessing more than one behaviour means individuals can make comparative judgments as they do in real life. Every day people are faced with behavioural options including the perceived acceptable behaviours and the perceived deviant behaviours and they make a choice on how to behave. To better understand the complexities of deviant consumer behaviour, a broad spectrum of behaviours needs to be explored to capture the range of deviant consumer behaviours evident in the marketplace (Fisk et al., 2010; Fullerton & Punj, 1993). The interviews were conducted face-to-face to allow the researcher to record observations of surface
reactions and subconscious motivations of the respondent (Zikmund et al., 2011; Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001). For instance, during the card sort activity the researcher was able to observe and note behaviours that the respondent spent longer deliberating over, which the researcher then focused on exploring during the interview.

4.3.2. Sample

Twenty-nine consumers were interviewed at which point theoretical saturation was reached, in which no new information was presented (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). See Table 2 for sample characteristics. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Respondents were chosen with regards to demographic criteria of age and gender, which have been found to influence perceptions of consumer behaviour (see Genereux & McLeod, 1995; McMahon & Cohen, 2009; Moschis & Churchill Jr, 1978). The heterogeneity of the sample reflects the differences in beliefs in the consumer marketplace. However, only individuals living in Australia were allowed to participate, to ensure their views reflected the views found in an Australian marketplace. As the purpose of the research was to explore general definitions of right and wrong consumer behaviours, there was no need to restrict the sample to individuals who had experience performing ‘deviant consumer behaviours’.
4.3.3. Interview Procedure

Interviews lasted an average of 50 minutes and were conducted at locations convenient to the respondent. As per Merton, Fiske and Kendall’s (1990) recommendations, the interviews were audio recorded, which enabled transcription of the interviews by a professional transcriber. The researcher conducted all of the interviews and wrote notes through the data collection period to reflect on respondent insights, following Saladaña (2009) recommendations. An interview guide was used to provide structure to the interview process. However, follow-up and probing questions were asked, enabling the researcher to expand upon the predefined questions guiding the interview (Cavanaugh et al., 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, there was potential for social desirability bias. The bias was mitigated following Harris’ (2010) recommendations by guaranteeing informant anonymity and confidentiality. Each of the six steps conducted in the interview process will now be discussed.

Step 1: Selecting the card sort behaviours. Thirty (30) behaviours were chosen for the card sort activity used in the interview. To choose the behaviours, a selection

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**Table 2.**

*Sample Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
of the most commonly researched consumer behaviours were taken from the literature (see Freestone & Mitchell, 2004; Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Mitchell & Chan, 2002; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Neale & Fullerton, 2010; Wilkes, 1978), while some behaviours were selected by the lead author to reflect more salient consumer issues in the current market place, as called for by Neale and Fullerton (2010). The lead author informally surveyed a convenience sample of consumers over 18 years of age, living in Australia, to ascertain what questionable or unacceptable consumer behaviours they are aware of in the marketplace. Behaviours chosen for inclusion in the study from the informal survey were selected based on their perceived degree of prevalence in the marketplace so that respondents were more likely to be familiar with the behaviour, either vicariously or experientially. Thirty were chosen as the maximum number of behaviours to sort before respondent fatigue occurred. See Appendix A for the 30 behaviours used in this study.

**Step 2: Card sort activity.** At the beginning of the interview, respondents were first asked to undertake a closed card sort activity. The closed card sort activity involved sorting 30 consumer behaviours, written on cards, into three pre-established categories- (1) acceptable behaviour, (2) questionable behaviour, and (3) unacceptable behaviour. The categorisations were made depending on how the respondent perceived the specific behaviour. The card sort activity facilitated the rest of the interview.

**Step 3: The interview – broadly defining the categories.** Respondents were then asked how they perceived each of the behaviour categories - acceptable, questionable,
and unacceptable. The behaviours that had been placed under each category heading were subsequently used as examples to ascertain how the respondent adhered to or contradicted their classification of that behaviour with their definition of the category in which the behaviour was placed. Questioning how a respondent classified the behaviour provided information about how the respondent learned a behaviour was acceptable, questionable, or unacceptable; and what specific factors influenced the classification of a particular behaviour, addressing the first aim of this research.

**Step 4: The interview – ranking and discussing unacceptable behaviours.**

Respondents were then asked to rank *only* the behaviours they had classified as ‘unacceptable’, from most unacceptable to least unacceptable. The respondents were then asked to explain why they had ranked the behaviours in that way. This provided specific insight into the criteria consumers use to distinguish between deviant consumer behaviours, and how they justified their perceptions of varying degrees of deviant consumer behaviour. The objectives of this activity were to first, identify factors informing perceptions of acceptability and then explore the role of neutralisation techniques.

**Step 5: The interview – hypotheticals to encourage and deter deviant consumer behaviour.** Respondents were presented with hypothetical scenarios in which a person ‘Sam’ or ‘Alex’ said they were going to engage in a behaviour selected by the interviewer. Gender-neutral names were used to avoid any gender biases. The respondent needed to (1) encourage ‘Sam’ to engage in the behaviour and then subsequently (2) deter ‘Sam’ from engaging in it. Using a third-person technique
allowed the respondent to transfer his or her own attitudes towards the third-person to explain that person’s behaviour (Zikmund et al., 2011). This activity was run on approximately five behaviours, with one or two behaviours sourced from the respondent’s questionable behaviour category and the remaining behaviours sourced from the respondent’s unacceptable behaviour category. Where possible, the same behaviours were picked for this activity across respondents (e.g. not claiming an item at a self-checkout at the grocery store), however, there were instances where unique behaviours warranted exploration as they had yet to be categorised by other respondents in that manner (e.g. illegal downloading of TV shows from the Internet for free). The ‘encourage/deter’ activity addressed the second aim of the research, providing greater insight into how consumers justified perceived questionable and unacceptable behaviours. Moreover, the third-person technique revealed the factors that respondents use to encourage and deter themselves from engaging in questionable and unacceptable consumer behaviours. Finally, the activity highlighted different respondents’ abilities to justify varying degrees of deviant consumer behaviour through neutralisation techniques, with some finding the activity more difficult than others. Evidence of variations in individuals’ abilities to justify deviant consumer behaviour reflects past research (Detert, Treviño, & Sweitzer, 2008; Duffy, Aquino, Tepper & O’Leary-Kelly, 2006; McFerran et al., 2010).

**Step 6: The interview – hypotheticals to explain deviance.** The interview concluded with a comparative exercise. The final activity sought to understand what it would take to cease and or deter deviant consumer behaviour. Respondents were asked to invent a hypothetical scenario of why ‘Sam’ is engaging in the behaviour the respondent had identified as the most unacceptable in the behaviour ranking exercise
(step 4). As all the respondents had ranked “Using stolen credit cards to purchase goods from the Internet” as the most unacceptable behaviour, this behaviour was used for the final activity for all respondents. Respondents were first asked to describe ‘Sam’s’ situation and ‘Sam’ as a person. Following this discussion, respondents were told that ‘Alex’ was in the same situation as ‘Sam’, yet ‘Alex’ wasn’t “Using stolen credit cards to purchase goods from the Internet”. Respondents were asked what was unique about ‘Alex’ in comparison to ‘Sam’. This activity addressed both aims of the research by identifying factors informing perceptions of acceptability, but also to explore the role of neutralisation techniques. The analysis procedure will now be discussed.

4.3.4. Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A theme was subsequently created to capture important ideas in the data pertaining to the research question, “and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The purpose of the thematic analysis process was to provide a rich and nuanced description of the data as opposed to identifying latent themes within the data. Themes were identified based on the prevalence of responses consistent in their underlying premise, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). However, the importance of a theme should not be determined by the number of quotes captured within it, but on its relevance to the overarching research question. The themes identified in the analysis reflect the underlying factors influencing a respondent’s perception of right and wrong consumer behaviours. Thematic analysis was chosen over alternative analytical techniques, as it
is not grounded in a specific research paradigm, such as grounded theory or constructivism, making it a viable analysis technique under the realism paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Inductive and deductive coding techniques were used throughout the coding process to distinguish between new and existing ideas about individual perceptions of consumer behaviours (Saldaña, 2009). Following recommendations from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Saldaña (2009), several coding processes were used to execute the inductive and deductive coding techniques. Provisional coding was initially used to identify constructs previously found in the literature, and those relevant to the research question and objectives guiding the study (Saldaña, 2009). Open coding was subsequently used to identify new ideas about perceptions of consumer behaviours (Saldaña, 2009).

The thematic analysis process was managed using Nvivo 9.2 software. Storing the data in Nvivo 9.2 allowed for easy retrieval of coded text for the identified themes. Relationships between the codes were explored using the modeling function in Nvivo 9.2, to address the secondary objective of this research – linking salient factors in consumer perceptions to the neutralisation technique used.

The thematic analysis was undertaken by the researcher, which means inter-rater reliability was not tested, despite being a common process in thematic analysis (Marks & Yardley, 2004). The credibility of the findings was assessed through discussions with all respondents during, and accessible respondents after, the
interviews to ensure the researcher’s interpretations accurately reflected the respondents’ ideas surrounding the phenomena studied (Clissett, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). No inconsistencies were identified in assessing the credibility of the coding and findings.

4.4. Results and Discussion

The aims of this research were to first identify factors salient in consumer perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour, and second, to explore how those salient factors inform the neutralisation techniques used to justify deviant consumer behaviour. To address the aims of this research, eight factors were identified as informing consumer perceptions: official classification, perceived risk, norms, intent, perceived outcomes, past experiences as victim, moral identity, and perceived fairness (Figure 2). These findings support and extend on the conceptual dimensions suggested in the literature review, to influence categorisations of behaviour (Amine & Gicquel, 2011; Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Jones, 1991; Moschis & Cox, 1989; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Wilkes, 1978; Vitell & Muncy, 2005). Figure 2 reiterates what was proposed in the conceptual framework and adds three additional factors that were identified in the analysis (in bold italics) to inform consumer definitions – past experiences as victim, moral identity, and perceived fairness. The neutralisation techniques that were evident in the data are also outlined in Figure 2.
The findings suggest there are a number of factors that can influence an individual’s perceptions of right and wrong. Sometimes those factors are associated with specific types of neutralisation techniques used to justify acceptable perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. Table 3 illustrates the factors identified as potentially salient in consumer definitions of right and wrong, and the corresponding neutralisation technique, where applicable.
Table 3.

Factors informing definitions with corresponding neutralisation techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor informing perceptions of right and wrong</th>
<th>Associated neutralisation technique</th>
<th>Source of neutralisation technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official classification*</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived risk</td>
<td>Justification by comparison</td>
<td>Cromwell &amp; Thurman, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I won’t get caught’</td>
<td>Not an official technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>Normal practice</td>
<td>Coleman, 1994; Henry, 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent</td>
<td>Appeal to higher loyalties</td>
<td>Sykes &amp; Matza, 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defense of necessity</td>
<td>Minor, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justification by comparison</td>
<td>Cromwell &amp; Thurman, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Direction of harm</td>
<td>Denial of victim</td>
<td>Sykes &amp; Matza, 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Degree of harm</td>
<td>Denial of injury</td>
<td>Sykes &amp; Matza, 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past experiences as victim</td>
<td>‘Treat others as you wish to be treated’</td>
<td>These factors offered justifications ‘against’ rather than ‘for’ deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral identity</td>
<td>‘Not what a good person does’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived fairness</td>
<td>Condemnation of the condemners</td>
<td>Sykes &amp; Matza, 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Claim of entitlement</td>
<td>Coleman, 1994; McGregor, 2008</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Justifications used to deviate from the official classification of the behaviour depend on which of the other factors is most salient in their perceptions, e.g. if ‘direction of harm’ is most salient, then the individual will likely use the denial of victim technique.

Generally, the findings suggest ‘acceptable behaviour’ is any behaviour that is consistent with the law and organisational policy, is prevalent in society, does not cause harm to the individual or others, there is no victim, and the individual can easily defend their actions. Conversely, ‘unacceptable behaviour’ is any behaviour that violates the law and organisational policy, is not prevalent in society, does cause harm to the individual or others, there is a victim, and the individual cannot easily defend their actions. When exploring the factors outlined below, it was apparent how these
broad generalisations of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviours varied among individuals depending on what factor was revealed as salient in informing their perceptions. Moreover, the neutralisation techniques associated with each factor were used to frame the behaviour as ‘acceptable’ – justifications that suggest to the participant that the behaviour is prevalent in society, does not cause harm to them or others, or there is no victim. The ease of justifying one’s perceptions and behaviours make deviant consumer behaviour seem questionable, if not acceptable. Each of the factors will be explained, along with how the factor influenced the type of neutralisation techniques used.

4.4.1. Official classification

Current deterrence strategies in the marketplace either make appeals based on upholding the law or organisational policy, or stress the severity of the punishment associated with performing a deviant act. The interviews suggested this approach was not the most effective approach to deterrence, as the official classification and perceived risk (discussed later) associated with the behaviour were not the only salient factors in perceiving right and wrong. This study found that if a behaviour was consistent with the law and organisational policy it was perceived as acceptable, however, not all behaviours violating the official classification were perceived as unacceptable behaviours. Reasons for deviating from the official classification depended on the salient factor in the consumer’s perceptions. For instance, violation of hotel policy by lying about how many people were staying in a hotel room was considered acceptable when the extra guests were unintended guest (discussed in ‘intent’ section). This conflict was a strong theme evident in most respondents:
I put it in questionable because I know it’s the wrong thing to do, but I can rationalise it in certain circumstances. (#14)

It’s interesting …we’re clearly defining this as being illegal, and one of the criteria that I, myself use, was this whole concept of legal. I guess at some point I’m applying then also…the situation where I’m trying to find out what happened off this particular TV show, what was the outcome, who won the whatever it was or something, right, so you can search on the internet, find somebody illegally has taped and posted that show, I’m not trying to make any profit out of it, I’m not trying to benefit in any way, apart from gaining the knowledge of. And so I guess, in my mind, I’m rationalising and saying…I think that that’s acceptable. (#7)

If consumers perceive the official classifications of behaviours to be guidelines that one can deviate from, it will be less effective at controlling deviant consumer behaviour. A respondent clearly articulates the sentiment of the interview respondents regarding the role of the law in perceptions of a behaviour’s acceptability:

It’s [the law is] almost like implicit …in how you think what is right and what is wrong… the start starting ground, that…probably categorises stuff straight away, and then —you can deviate from that or apply to that depending on the context. (#10)

For example:

Anything that breaks the law or breaks society’s expectations to me is unacceptable and I’m very clear on that. What’s questionable would be things that are a bit grey, but anything that breaks the law is unacceptable. But some things in society, maybe see, if I parked my car here and I know it expires in three hours, what should be unacceptable to me is that anything after three hours I should just go and pay for, but sometimes you run a bit late and you get an extra half an hour out of it but I don’t pay for that. Really I should pay for the extra half hour ‘cause I got an extra half hour but I wouldn’t but neither would anyone else. (#25)

The extent to which individuals place emphasis on the official classification of the behaviour dictates how important it is in their own subjective perceptions of right and wrong. However, unless official classification is backed by formal punishment, it
could become less significant in guiding perceptions of and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. This is explored further in the perceived risk section below.

**4.4.2. Perceived risk**

Perceived risk has to do with an individual’s perceptions of the probability of being caught, the severity of punishment, and swiftness of punishment. The swiftness of punishment was not evident in the findings, which is consistent with research into perceptions of risk in criminology that finds swiftness of punishment as ‘immaterial’ in predicting deviant behaviour (Nagin & Pogarsky, 2001). Probability and severity of punishment is, however, evident in the interview data. The perception of risk infers how important the official classification of a behaviour is, in guiding an individual’s perceptions of and engagement in behaviour. If violation of the official classification of a behaviour were backed by punishment, then the individual would perceive it to be high risk and would subsequently classify the behaviour as ‘unacceptable’:

I’d say the consequences are very serious and if they were to get caught, which there’s a good chance they will, because of the credit card companies themselves, the policies they have in place and procedures, you will almost certainly get caught. (#1)

Probably the easiest deterrent would be “if you get caught, it's a crime and you’ll be charged, the police will be involved, is it really worth it? Do you understand that.” You know, the police aren’t going to say “oh mate, you shouldn’t have done that” they’re just going to arrest you for stealing. So that would be, that’s the old, that’s the basic deterrent, that you’re going to get caught and there’ll be a penalty. (#19)

However, consistent with existing research that most deviant consumer behaviour goes undetected (Bandura, 1991b), perceptions of risk were usually low among respondents. The low perceptions of risk for deviant consumer behaviour in the
marketplace could undermine the official classification of the behaviour, making individuals perceive the behaviour as ‘acceptable’, or at least ‘questionable’:

I would think that they could get away with that because there’s nobody coming round to check, so it’s on their conscious whether they bring four, six or what other people they want. (#2)

A lot of people get away with stuff by lying anyway…It’s quite easy, not a lot of chance of getting caught. The punishment may not even be enough to warrant not doing it, at least for the first time anyway…there’s a good chance he’ll get away with it…the punishment for doing something like that would be a lot less than if you went and robbed a grocery store. (#23)

The comment above ‘if you went and robbed a grocery store’ is making a comparison between consequences of different types of behaviours. The ‘justification by comparison’ neutralisation technique compares behaviours against one another (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003), suggesting a behaviour can be acceptable if the behaviour is not as bad as alternatives.

While severity of punishment was discussed in the quotes above, the probability of punishment was the most prominent concern for the respondents. If they did not perceive they would get caught, the severity of the punishment was irrelevant, consistent with the theoretical propositions of the concept ‘perceived risk’ (Grasmick & Green, 1980). While not an official neutralisation technique, the low perceived probability of being caught seemed to be used as a justification for why a behaviour could be perceived as acceptable, and why it could be performed:

They’ve just got ridiculous rules…it’s something in their written policies but they never look at it. They never use it anyway. (#4)

Even though technically you are stealing it, well, breach of copyright, but chances of you getting caught are nil so to most people that’s probably why most people do it. (#23)
4.4.3. Norms

Norms were found to reflect a combination of an individual’s perceived prevalence of the behaviour, an individual’s subjective norms, and the social consensus of a behaviour’s acceptability. If a behaviour was perceived to be prevalent, it was perceived to be acceptable. Conflict arose when a respondent perceived the prevalence of a behaviour to contradict the behaviour’s official classification, shifting the behaviour from being perceived as ‘unacceptable’ to ‘questionable’. Discrepancies between perceived norms and the official classification of the behaviour makes it difficult for order to be maintained in the marketplace:

I think that’s with grapes I think it’s just okay, because you don’t want to buy something that’s good or bad, and that’s probably the one kind of fruit that’s there that’s, that you can do that with. Like you’re not going to bite an apple or you’re not going to, grapes are just easy um, so I think it’s acceptable because everyone else does it. (#13)

If it [illegal downloading] is terribly illegal, well, I guess it’s questionable behaviour in a sense that you can get prosecuted for doing it, but I think it’s such a prevalent thing nowadays … so in that sense it’s questionable. (#6)

Where social support was perceived for a behaviour, the respondent felt comfortable encouraging others to perform that behaviour. This was evident in the interviews when respondents were asked to ‘encourage’ and ‘deter’ a third party ‘Sam’ from engaging in a specific behaviour:

… trying to encourage someone to do it would be easier than trying to discourage because I think there’s the kind of societal view that hey everyone does it. (#9)

… most people would class it as acceptable, even though it’s illegal… I think it’s just become the norm. (#23)
Support from family and friends also indicated what an individual deemed ‘normative’ behaviour. If people an individual associates with support a behaviour, enactment of that behaviour will not likely incur a social sanction – some kind of punishment – and could possibly be rewarded. If a behaviour is not supported by the people an individual associates with, it will likely be back by social sanctions, which indicates the behaviour deviates from the norm and should be perceived as ‘questionable’ or ‘unacceptable’. Respondents articulated a theme recognising the role family and friends played in the enactment of deviant consumer behaviour:

‘cause like my lawyer friends would just be like “that’s [not claiming an item at the self-checkout] unacceptable, like, I can’t be hanging around someone who does that”. (#4)

They’re [family and friends] very judgmental. They would definitely have a reaction. They’d probably call me out on it, for sure. Yeah and probably, you know, very, literally actually question what I was doing and why I was doing it. (#13)

Our findings support past research that perceived norms are used to classify behaviours as acceptable or unacceptable, but they can also be used as the justification of deviant consumer behaviour (Davis, Johnson and Ohmer, 1998) through the use neutralisation technique ‘normal practice’ (Coleman, 1994; Henry, 1990) – ‘there’s the kind of societal view that hey everyone does it’ (#9), ‘acceptable because everyone else does it’ (#13), ‘I think it’s such a prevalent thing nowadays… so in that sense it’s questionable’ (#6). The respondents below discuss ‘normal practice’ in more depth:

[Claiming a purchase price that is out of competing retail in order to get a discount] Well acceptability because, you know, I think it’s kind of a norm now that you go around and you have a look at all prices before you engage in a purchase just to make sure you’re getting a
good deal, so I think that’s kind of become a norm behaviour and I think it’s quite acceptable to do that. (#16)

[Tasting grapes] I might wonder in my own head whether they were sampling them for the purpose of purchasing but I probably wouldn’t make a judgement about them, I usually like to think that people are nice and good people and would probably work along the same lines that I would, so um, yeah I don’t think I’ve ever seen someone actively like tasting the grapes without sort of looking like they were going to buy them, so yeah, for me it’s a normal behaviour I think, yeah. (#18)

4.4.4. Intent

Intent refers to the intent of the individual engaging in the behaviour. Evidence of intent informing perceptions of right and wrong is consistent with Muncy and Vitell’s (1992) assumption that how passive or active the consumer is in performing the behaviour can influence the individual’s classification of the behaviour. While it is difficult to delineate consumer intent (Keeffe, 2010), when the intent was made clear during the interview, respondents perceived intentional behaviours such as “intentionally taking someone else’s takeaway order” as ‘unacceptable’, in comparison to “taking someone’s vegetarian meal at a conference” where the intent was unknown, which was perceived as ‘questionable’. A respondent offers another example:

If someone was doing this [claiming an item as ‘stolen’ to an insurance company to collect the money] all the time and they were claiming large amounts of money then I would probably feel more justified in putting it in the unacceptable pile because…they’re looking to make a profit from it. (#15)

[Saying there are 2 people in your hotel room when really there are 4] If you deliberately set out to, you enter a contract and then you have every intention in the world to get around it then that’s not the right thing to do, but under certain circumstances like things that aren’t planned or it’s unsafe for say friends to go off then it may be strictly, well it is, it’s a breach of contract but it’s not a planned thing and I wouldn’t lose any sleep over it. (#19)
Not planning to act deviantly towards an organisation, as suggested above ‘unplanned…unsafe for friends to go’ is reflective of the denial of responsibility neutralisation technique in that they didn’t mean to engage in deviant consumer behaviour, it just happened. A similar argument is made for the use of the denial of responsibility technique when the intent of behaviour was an honest mistake. If a behaviour, such as “not claiming an item at the self-checkout” was a ‘mistake’ then the behaviour was perceived as ‘questionable’. Respondents perceived coming back to the store to rectify the mistake as acceptable, and doing nothing to rectify the mistake as unacceptable. A respondent explains another example for how intent can change perceptions of a behaviour, with regards to evading fare on public transport:

Just my circumstance that I hadn’t done it on purpose, I wasn’t trying to evade the fare. But I dropped my GoCard on the floor in the bedroom. So of course I get onto the citycat, the guys locking it all up so I can’t go in and say look I haven’t got it. I actually went and I said “look I’ve dropped my GoCard at home, not realising it until I’ve got on”, and the woman was okay cause I was upfront and I—‘cause I had no money on me either. So I was upfront, I was honest with her and she said “well that’s fine”, she said, “something may happen at the other end but you just need to explain to them what you have explained to me.” Because I said to them all you have do is ask me to provide you with statement and see I use my GoCard every day. So that’s why I put it as a questionable it’s—I wasn’t really evading the fare but sometime shit happens and you know. (#12)

Premeditated and negative intent makes an individual perceive a behaviour as ‘unacceptable’ in comparison to honest mistakes or good intentions. When exploring the behaviour ‘buying organs for transplant over the internet’, the neutralisation technique ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ was used to justify saving the life of someone you love:

If this was a family member, if it was a situation where I could find out where the organs were coming from and that people weren’t, you
know, being harvested … then I think you can make a case for it that this would be acceptable behaviour given the circumstances. (#14)

However, when respondents contemplated where the organs were coming from, and if people were harmed or killed to get them, then there was no justification and the behaviour was deemed ‘unacceptable’:

… you should question if they were a legitimate donor… that would be an important point to consider if it was an acceptable behaviour or not. If the person feel like there’s legitimately no other choice but to sell their organs to get by, …and if I think there’s got to be a social response to that and I wouldn’t really condone that behaviour, , in that particular case. But if …someone’s deceased and there’s an opportunity to purchase an organ…I don’t really see anything wrong with that as long as it’s legal. But if it’s from a disadvantaged sector or someone that didn’t feel like they have any other choice but to, like they feel that they’re backed into a corner, I think that’s where the moral standards have to start coming in. (#18)

‘Good intentions’ were also discussed in the interviews. When discussing ‘creating a fake US iTunes account to access and pay for content not available in Australia’, respondents believed this behaviour was acceptable (despite being illegal), because the company still received payment. Respondents argued their intentions were good because they were finding a way to pay the company, while still getting access to the content they wanted:

I know a lot of people who have done that and I think that’s fine because even though you’re lying, you’re not stealing anything and you can’t actually buy it here. If you had the option to buy it here, even if it was a little more expensive, I would say that’s the right thing to do, but seeing as they haven’t made the option available I see that [creating a fake US iTunes account to access and pay for content not available in Australia] as acceptable. (#5)

There’s still an intention to pay for what it is that you’re receiving.. It’s still unacceptable because it’s you know, it’s contravening…but the policies and the laws that are underpinning but in going through the transaction you’re still paying for it. (#18)
How I look at it is...you want access to content, so you’re actually going to be paying for it...it’s not like you’re trying to falsify something so you don’t pay at all. You are willing to pay, you just can’t access it, so under that context I think that’s fine. (#28)

The quotes above also demonstrate the neutralisation technique defense of necessity because respondents say they had no alternative – ‘seeing as they haven’t made it an option at all’ (#5). Also, the justification by comparison technique is used as the behaviour is deemed more acceptable than alternatives – ‘not like you’re trying to falsify something so you don’t pay at all’ (#28).

4.4.5. Perceived outcomes

Perceived outcomes are conceptualised as a function of the degree of harm, how many affected, probability of harm, type of harm, and the direction of harm (Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Jones, 1991; Muncy & Vitell, 1992; Vitell & Muncy, 2005). The dimensions evident in this research were direction and degree of harm.

(a) Direction of harm

Deviant consumer behaviour can be directed towards an individual (employee, other consumers), or an organisation. When deviant consumer behaviour is directed towards an individual, the behaviour is more likely to be perceived as ‘unacceptable’, then if deviant consumer behaviour was directed towards the organisation. A respondent discusses this distinction:
You tend to think that organisations can handle it more, like maybe they’ve got some funding set aside to handle things that you might do … individual people don’t generally have any kind of protection against that. And then there’s just the perception I suppose that companies don’t really have a human face…It’s being able to personally identify people that magnifies everything. (#5)

The distinction between individuals and organisations is explained by the identifiable victim effect, such that the more identifiable the victim the less likely deviant acts will be directed towards them, due to the identifiable victim’s ability to engender empathy from the individual committing the deviant act (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997). However, Jones’ (1991) proximity dimension goes a step further than just identifying the victim, and stresses the importance of how ‘close’ the individual feels to the victim. A respondent reflects on the behaviour ‘not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates a bill in your favour’, highlighting support for the proximity dimension:

That could be my child, that’s how I look at it. Because of the repercussion on that person if they don’t get the till right at the end of day…most people that serve us are young children—I wouldn’t like it to happen to my daughter, so I’m not going to do it to somebody else’s child, I couldn’t do it. (#12)

I’ve actually been in a situation many years ago where McDonalds who are not exactly short of a few dollars…and a girl there obviously part-time, gave me change for I think $50 instead of $10 or $20, and I thought, no, I gave it back because it’s a lot of difference and that particular person would be accountable at the end of the day on her till, and she’s only part-time, you wouldn’t do it…I would give that money back, but if you kept it, that would be very questionable behaviour. (#6)

If the victim is not identifiable or specific, individuals will perceive no harm is being caused, thereby facilitating their deviant actions (Small & Loewenstein, 2003). While there is a distinction between individual and organisational victims, there is
also a distinction between small and large organisations. Consumers are more willing to victimise large rather than small organisations (Fullerton & Punj, 2004). The greater the organisation’s size, the greater the perceptions of impersonality, thus the greater the probability of deviant consumer behaviour, as the consumer does not feel they are harming the organisation (Fullerton & Punj, 1997). Deviant consumer behaviour towards a large organisation can be seen as a ‘faceless crime’ (Cox, Cox & Moschis, 1990). When exploring insurance fraud, a respondent reflects on the distinction between two types of organisational victims:

Insurance is another interesting, see I'd be really tempted to kind of, “yeah, just do it [commit insurance fraud].” Insurance company oh, they take too much money anyway. You probably won't get any chance to get anything back, you know, this is a chance to get something back from the money that you've paid… it’s not that big of a deal that I'd go, if it was like a small family based, not a multinational, high profit company then I'd probably go, “oh I don’t think it’s right, you know, the insurance company,” hypothetically speaking, “the insurance company’s owned by this family and, you know, they really need the money to be competitive...I don’t think you should do that.” (#24)

Using stolen credit cards to order goods over the internet…if it’s a small business, they can’t necessarily afford it, and the credit card companies don’t necessarily reimburse those businesses for the losses…I’ve had direct experience with them in the past where we sold stuff to someone in the US and it turned out to be a stolen credit card and Visa never refunded the money to the company, they said that’s just a business risk that you take on. (#18)

The neutralisation technique of denial of victim was evident for the factor ‘direction of harm’, with respondents arguing that the organisation ‘deserved’ or could ‘afford’ the harm the deviant consumer behaviour caused:

Well look at the size of the store, look what they’re charging, look at the profits, excessive profits they’re making, possibly like X and Y [two large grocery chain stores] are doing it in a way that’s unacceptable as a duopoly so people will convince themselves that it’s acceptable to hit back. (#1)
[Lying about why you’re returning an item] I guess if it was somewhere like X or Y [two large national chain department stores]…it’s not really going to hurt them as opposed to obviously returning it to like a boutique store…I mean these small businesses are trying to make a profit like they don’t, it’s not like a big company where they can afford to maybe, oh, someone’s doing that, okay well let’s hope it doesn’t happen again, let’s not lose out that much but it’s obviously a much more smaller business would notice that as opposed to a larger business. (#13)

(b) Degree of harm

Degree of harm had to do with how much harm the individual perceived the behaviour would cause to others. The harm discussed in the interviews was largely monetary, however, there are many other types of harm that can occur as a result of deviant consumer behaviour include emotional, and physical. The greater the perceived harm, the more likely the respondent would perceive the behaviour as unacceptable:

[Impersonating someone else by using their credit card to purchase goods, without their permission]…you’re using someone else’s money. You didn’t earn that money so you don’t deserve to spend it and the fact that like I just, I don’t know, I kind of sit there and go what goes through someone’s head to make them think that that’s acceptable? Like I really do, you sit there and you go, you know, it’s wrong on so many levels, you didn’t earn that money, it’s fraud, you know, and I know it happened to a few people and it’s cost them so much and like, you know, they can’t pay their kids school fees …I just find it really inconsiderate and really unacceptable. (#9)

Yeah well, you know, [drinking a soda in the grocery store and not paying for it] a can of soda it’s about three bucks so you deprive the supermarket of three dollars and it’s not that big of a deal. Depending on the [public transport] fare, it could be two or three dollars as well, so that’s not that big of a theft… Then you’ve got this dress or a power tool, and I don’t know about power tools or dresses but from my understanding dresses are at least a hundred dollars and power tools same [that’s unacceptable]. (#3)
Respondents had arbitrary definitions for what constituted enough harm to classify a behaviour as ‘unacceptable’, and to stop the individual from engaging in it. The variability in what respondents perceived as an ‘acceptable’ level of harm reflects their varying points of tolerance for deviant consumer behaviour:

If you’re going to a movie, um and that’s only a $5 thing…but then if you’re going to lie to save like $200 to go to a theme park, then it’s like maybe…I shouldn’t even be considering that activity, I should just be doing something else, rather than trying to lie to do it. (#10)

It would depend on how much we’re talking about. If we’re talking about, the value of a main course meal at $25 bucks, and I’ve realised, in an appropriate time frame, when we can easily point that out… I probably wouldn’t be rushing back in to point out that we were supposed to pay them another $2.50. (#7)

If somebody has miscalculated by a few dollars, you might not worry about it. If it was a substantial amount, say if the other bill was $100 and they charged $50, okay then, you probably would worry about it. (#6)

For most individuals there comes a point – a deviance threshold – at which they cannot justify engaging in a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour, as the magnitude of dissonance would be so large (Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008). If an individual were to engage in a behaviour beyond their own personal deviance threshold, they would need to negatively update how they perceive themselves, which goes against an individual’s strive to maintain a positive self-concept (Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008). Moreover, a behaviour beyond an individual’s deviance threshold cannot be categorised as anything but ‘unacceptable’.
The factor ‘degree of harm’ was associated with the neutralisation technique of denial of injury, in which respondents argued that no one is being hurt by the individual’s deviant consumer behaviour:

Trying to get in to see the Mona Lisa and the Louvre or something like that if I can save a couple of bucks by claiming that she’s a little bit younger then it wasn’t going to be any skin off anybody’s nose particularly with thousands of people there a day. (#11)

Well what if you got the dress and you wore it out and you really did keep it in pristine condition and the tags on it and you really didn’t need to use it again? I think as long as you kept the tags on it and you kept it in good condition and you haven’t done anything to it then, yep, I mean if no one knows then I don’t think that’s really that harmful. (#13)

The more negative the perceived outcomes, based on the degree and direction of the harm, the more likely the individual would perceive the behaviour to be ‘unacceptable’. This is consistent with previous research (e.g. Barnett, 2001).

### 4.4.6. Past experiences as victim

Past experiences refers to an individual’s vicarious or actual experience as a victim of deviant consumer behaviour. Understanding how familiar individuals are with the behaviours being examined is called for in the literature as familiarity can influence perceptions of behaviours (Vitell et al., 2001). Evidence of the past experiences supports the dimensions proposed by Hunt and Vitell (1986) and the proximity dimension from Jones (1991). Respondents who had experience being the victim in the past, were less tolerant of the behaviour, and classified it as unacceptable. A respondent reflects on their experiences in retail and ‘claiming a purchase price is better at a competing retailer in order to get a discount’.
I’ve been on the other side of that proposition, I’ve been the person doing the selling and you can usually tell when it’s happening just from body language and those sorts of things, and I’d usually just tell them, “fine, go to the other shop and get it, you know, call them on their bluff… it is unacceptable and when I was in that position of selling, I wouldn’t compromise on it knowing that they knew, if they’re not going to do their leg work, it’s their responsibility to if they want a cheaper price and a bargain. (#18)

Moreover, instances where the individual perceived a close proximity to the victim, and thus understood the harm resulting from the behaviour, also classified the behaviour as ‘unacceptable’. A respondent explains proximity to the victim for the behaviour ‘claiming a lost item as stolen to claim insurance’:

Oh, (a) my husband works for an insurance company, (b) I know some people who have done that and I just think it’s the wrong thing to do and they’ve done it several times on several different occasions as well. Not just are you giving misleading information or false information to insurance companies and it really ticks me off because that impacts on my insurance premium. So I know that even though it might be good at the time when you’re getting a new video camera or whatever, but that impacts on everybody else, and it’s lying as well and I’m not a big fan of lying. But it impacts on everybody else’s insurance premiums as well for something that you’ve done wrong. It’s not that anybody else has stolen your whatever, it’s that you’ve misplaced it somewhere. (#17)

Past experiences did not promote the use of a neutralisation technique to excuse deviant consumer behaviour. Instead, it promoted use of the universal moral rule – ‘treat others as you wish to be treated’ to guide their perceptions of and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.
4.4.7. Moral identity

The concept of moral identity was identified in the data as influencing respondents’ perceptions of a behaviour’s acceptability. Moral identity refers to the extent to which moral traits are a central and relatively stable part of an individual’s self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002). The more salient moral traits (e.g. honesty, kindness, caring, compassion) are in how an individual perceives himself or herself, the more likely those traits will guide an individual’s definition of right and wrong. If engaging in a behaviour would violate an individual’s moral identity, then the behaviour was perceived to be unacceptable as it caused the individual to experience cognitive dissonance. Respondents explain their definition of ‘unacceptable’ behaviour:

Not what a good citizens, not what good people in a community do. (#10)

On the inside of it I knew I was breaking my own values and core beliefs in what was right and wrong, so there was discomfort from that. (#18)

Just generally anything that would make you feel guilty … and feeling the need to … find some justifiable reason for it. (#29)

Finding support for the effect of moral traits on perceptions of behaviour through self-regulation (‘guilty’, ‘discomfort’) adds to empirical support for the notion of increasing saliency of moral traits to decrease deviance in the consumer setting (Gino et al., 2009; Mazar et al., 2008; Shu et al., 2012).

In the interviews, an activity was run to explore why when two people face the same situation, one responds with deviant behaviour while the other does not. Respondents unanimously agreed the individual’s morality was the key distinguishing
factor between them. Specifically, the saliency of an individual’s moral standards
determined the likelihood of an individual performing a deviant consumer behaviour:

They’ve much stronger boundaries and moral compass than the other people. (#27)

Stronger moral compass. Determined to get through something without resorting to the easiest means or the illegal means. (#8)

I think the difference is between their moral compass or their principles that it is unacceptable to go any further than that. (#1)

These views suggest moral identity could dictate an individual’s threshold for deviant behaviour, and that in this situation ‘Alex’ has a more restrictive deviance threshold than ‘Sam’, as ‘Sam’ is the one engaging in the greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour [credit card fraud]. Moral identity is identified here as an individual difference that will influence how an individual perceives right and wrong behaviours. If an individual places emphasis on their moral identity in their definition of right and wrong, they are likely to be less tolerant of deviant consumer behaviour, and less likely to engage in it (Aquino & Reed, 2002).

4.4.8. Perceived fairness

Perceived fairness refers to how fair an individual perceives a consumption situation to be, usually dictated by law, organisational policy, or the organisation’s conduct. This includes, but is not limited to, pricing, consumption constraints, and service quality. When a law, policy, or situation is perceived to be unfair, retaliatory deviant consumer behaviours are perceived to be ‘acceptable’. Agnew’s (1992) strain theory, suggests that an individual is more likely to react with deviant consumer
behaviour when the individual perceives a situation to be unfair. In that situation, an individual could seek deviant consumer behaviour alternatives, when conforming or normative behaviour fails to achieve the individuals’ goals. When discussing the behaviour ‘not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour’, it was perceived as ‘acceptable’ or ‘questionable’ if the service had been poor:

If we’ve had terrible service, if the food’s been late and people haven’t been friendly…then you’re not providing essentially what you said you would, so I’ll claim a silent compensation for something like that [not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour]. (#18)

An alternative example of perceiving a deviant consumer behaviour to be acceptable when there is poor service:

[Intentionally taking someone else’s takeaway order] Well if they’re staying Steve, Steve, Steve over and over again, well where the hell’s Steve, if he’s not going to come get his coffee, you already paid for the same coffee, I’m just going to take Steve’s coffee so, you know, same kind of coffee, Steve where are you, you’re an idiot for paying for something and going away. I’m just going to take it ‘cause I’m in a rush. (#3)

A lack of transparency in organisational policies can lead individuals to perceive the policies as unfair. When asked about ‘saying there are two people staying in a hotel room, when really there are four’, a respondent explains their need for transparency:

I would make a judgment myself as to why that [hotel policy] has been stipulated, why only two people could stay in there, and I’d make my judgment on that. If I felt there was no real reason why they should stipulate that, then I’d be quite happy to have four people going in there [but saying there are only 2]. (#1)
[Using an unexpired coupon to buy merchandise] In my mind I sort of rationalise and think, well, if the retailer made this offer to you, you know, let me buy something five bucks cheaper than it might have otherwise been. Sure I can understand they’ve put an expiry date to it, but, if I’m a day or two days late, um, I sort of feel like I’m being penalised ‘cause I didn’t want to purchase it in their time frame, in the retailers time frame. Clearly, if they could sell me a widget yesterday for five bucks cheaper, then they could sell me the same widget for five bucks and there’re still making money on it, or whatever. Um, and again, I know I myself have done it where you didn’t actually realise that a coupon was expired, and you showed up to go buy pizzas and you’ve realised, oh hell, I didn’t realised this expired last week. Oh, well I’ll fudge it and try and get away with it. It’s the same Dominos is still making money out of this, so yeah. (#7)

Above is an example of a ‘claim of entitlement’ neutralisation technique whereby the individual feels they have the right to get what they want, when they want it, and how they want it – ‘I’m being penalised ‘cause I didn’t want to purchase it in their time frame’ (#7). Another example of ‘claim of entitlement’ is offered below:

For me there’s a fairness thing…I don’t understand why content isn’t available in Australia from Apple and from that perspective I’m sort of thinking well hang on, why are we being treated unfairly by Apple. We should have access to that just like at the moment why are we paying exorbitant prices for goods when our dollar is better than the United States and it happens to be cheaper over there, like significantly cheaper. (#11)

When constraints are placed on an individual’s consumption, the individual may not feel they had the right to choose their behaviours freely (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Bassett & Miller, 1978). This can prompt the use of the ‘condemnation of the condemners’ neutralisation technique – transferring focus away from their own actions, to the actions of the organisation as explained below:

Because they just charge astronomical prices, they are actually—there’re not forcing you, but you’re going to do it if it means that your child has that opportunity to see a film…it’s not about beating the company, but it’s just showing them that…if you drop your prices
people wouldn’t do these things. You know, work with the people make it easier and more desirable…make the movie tickets slightly cheaper so that everybody can go to the movies. (#12)

Well, you need to look at the TV show, whether it’s been aired in Australia or your local area, um, if it’s not going to be released within a day or two, well why am I any different from a person who can view it live? So why should I be treated as a second class citizen to this other person?...it’s not my fault that you haven’t aired within an appropriate time, I want to view this program. I’m happy to sit through the ads but you need to get yourself in order, so, because if company policy hasn’t kept up to the demand, well, you’re going to lose out on a monetary value. It’s not directly monetary value but your advertisers know who’s watching what. (#3)

Organisations facing this issue must seek to understand why the individual feels justified in their actions and must respond by either being transparent about the reasons behind the perceived unfair policy, or adjusting their business model to better meet the demands of their consumers.

4.5. Conclusion and Implications

This research was driven by two aims; first, to identify factors salient in consumer perceptions of right and wrong, and second, to understand how those salient factors inform the types of neutralisation techniques consumers use to justify deviant consumer behaviour. The theoretical contributions for each aim of research are discussed, followed by the practical implications and future research opportunities.

In addressing the first aim of the paper, this research contributes to the behaviour classification stream of research by examining the conceptual dimensions suggested to distinguish behaviours. While descriptive research can quantify the extent to which
a behaviour is perceived as right, wrong, unethical, or severe, this research explains why such perceptions exist. Building on conceptual work in the fields of consumer deviance and consumer ethics, this paper finds empirical support for, and extends on conceptual dimensions suggested to explain how consumers distinguish between behaviours. While official classification (regulation: law, policy), norms, perceived risk, intent, and perceived outcomes were suggested in the literature as distinguishing between behaviours, additional evidence was found for past experience as the victim, moral identity, and perceived fairness. Overall, perceived prevalence, perceived outcomes, and perceived risk were the most prominent themes in the data. Without rich understanding of why consumers make these behavioural classifications, marketing strategies used to deter deviant consumer behaviours remain based on traditional deterrence mechanisms appealing to risk and the need to uphold the law and organisational policies. Deterrence strategies that appeal to risk and how a behaviour is officially classified are seemingly ineffective given consumer perceptions of right and wrong may encompass more than just the risk and official classification of the behaviour. Instead, there are other factors consumers could consider when assessing behaviours, which could translate into performance of the deviant consumer behaviour. The value in understanding the underlying factors influencing perceptions lies in the development of more effective deterrence strategies for deviant consumer behaviour (Garoupa, 2003; Mazar & Ariely, 2006; Mazar et al., 2008).

In addressing the second aim of this paper, the factor an individual places most emphasis on in their perception of right and wrong will likely infer the type of neutralisation technique they use. This neutralisation technique then enables them to
perform a deviant consumer behaviour. Our research adds to work on the conditions in which neutralisation techniques are employed and how consumers use them (Harris & Daunt, 2011; Harris & Dumas, 2009; Vitell, 2003). Adopting a different perspective to understanding the use of these techniques means convergence of the results can lead to greater generalisability of the knowledge on using neutralisation techniques, and identify gaps in our knowledge. The interviews found evidence of ‘justification by comparison’, ‘normal’ practice’, ‘appeal to higher loyalties’, ‘defense of necessity’, ‘denial of victim’, ‘denial of injury’, ‘condemnation of the condemners’, and ‘claim of entitlement’ neutralisation techniques. While ‘claim of entitlement’ has previously been tested in regards to white-collar crime, it was conceptually proposed (McGregor, 2008) yet empirically untested in the consumer context. This research extends on McGregor’s (2008) work finding evidence for consumer use of the ‘claim of entitlement’ neutralisation technique.

Another justification identified in the data, although not an ‘official’ neutralisation technique, was the argument ‘I won’t get caught’, associated with the low perceptions of risk for most deviant consumer behaviours. As traditional deterrence strategies rely on high perceptions of risk, future research needs to be undertaken to determine how these low perceptions can be altered. Moreover, the technique ‘justification by comparison’ was evident across two factors – perceived risk and intent. Evidence across more than one factor suggests a deterrence strategy tailored to countering the argument ‘it’s not as bad as X’, will be effective for individuals who place emphasis on risk and/or intent in their perceptions of right and wrong. Future research would benefit from quantifying the extent and strength of the relationships between these factors in consumer perceptions, and neutralisation technique used.
This research also offers actionable insights for practitioners through more informed strategies to encourage the consumer to perform behaviours the organisation desires, while deterring unacceptable behaviours. A more tailored approach to deterrence is recommended, to target the factors prominent in consumer perceptions of right and wrong. For instance, designing a campaign to humanise a large organisations and leverage the identifiable victim effect, such that putting a ‘face’ to an organisation makes it more difficult for the consumer to justify deviant acts at the expense of the organisation. Thus, the denial of victim technique is challenged, as the victim is made known. A step further would be to make the harm incurred by the organisation visible to the consumer, to further deter deviant acts. Such an approach aids to reduce the social distance between the consumer and the organisation being harmed, and challenge the perceived positive outcomes of performing the deviant act.

Moreover, perceptions of prevalence should be factored into deterrence strategies through the use of social proofs to challenge the ‘normal practice’ justification. Social proofs persuade individuals to perform a behaviour the organisation wants, by suggesting the group an individual associates with or aspires to be a part of, also engages in that behaviour (Goldstein, Cialdini and Griskevicius, 2008). However, the behaviour being promoted must be engaged in by the majority, otherwise the strategy ends up promoting the undesirable behaviour (Cialdini et al. 2006). Similar strategies have been used to encourage voter turnout and promote environmentally friendly behaviours (Goldstein et al., 2008; Gerber & Rogers, 2009). An opportunity exists to test this in the deviant consumer behaviour context.
Emphasis on self-regulation when organisations create deterrence strategies is recommended reflecting the effect moral identity on perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour. To access self-regulation, organisations need to activate an individual’s objective self-awareness of their own moral traits, which can be done by increasing the saliency of moral traits as explored in work by Mazar et al. (2008) and Shu et al. (2012). Increasing the saliency of moral values, even temporarily, can reduce the likelihood of deviant consumer behaviour (Mazar et al., 2008). The legitimacy of each of these managerial recommendations would be strengthened if this research were empirically tested for generalisability.

While the research provides rich insights about a phenomenon, it is limited in the generalisability of findings (Zikmund et al., 2011). Overcoming this limitation would require empirical validation of the results. An opportunity now exists to combine the factors identified in this study with existing insights into the types of consumers who have more favourable beliefs towards deviant consumer, to generalise the findings of what factors are being used. For instance, future research could empirically quantify the weightings high Machiavellian, low religiosity, high relativistic, young males place on the factors identified in this study, as this group has been found to be more tolerant of deviant consumer behaviour (Pan & Sparks, 2012; Vitell, 2003). Understanding what factors this group places emphasis on will provide marketers with information to develop more informed deterrence strategies, targeted at the justification techniques used by those who are more tolerant towards deviant consumer behaviour.
A cross culture approach to assessing the weightings of factors would address another limitation of this study, namely the culturally homogenous sample consisting of Australian consumers. Accounting for cultural differences would further improve the generalisability of this study. As we know from previous research in this field, there are variations in perceptions of right and wrong due to culture (Pan & Sparks, 2012; Vitell, 2003). Another future research opportunity could involve developing and testing the effectiveness of a variety of interventions that challenge the neutralisation techniques commonly used for varying types of deviance, as it would enable identification of more effective deterrence mechanisms. However, this could be done following empirical research that generalises these findings.

With individuals placing varying degrees of important on a varying number of factors, informing varying types of neutralisation techniques, a future research opportunity exists to examine the extent to which individual subjective definitions of right and wrong vary across society. Examining the extent of social consensus on deviant consumer behaviour will provide evidence for discrepancies in societal level perceptions, which has implications for how deviant consumer behaviour is policed. The official classification of a behaviour (law or policy) relies on the assumption there is social consensus in the behaviour’s wrongness. If there is low social consensus in how consumers perceive right and wrong, then this will provide additional support for the argument that more tailored approaches to deterrence need to be explored in the consumer setting.
In conclusion, the study provides evidence for factors informing consumer perceptions of right and wrong, and how those perceptions relate to neutralisation techniques. Deterrence strategies cannot continue to rely on the rational approach to deterrence and instead organisations must consider the value in tailoring deterrence messages to the justifications consumers use to excuse their perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.
4.6. References


Klosko, G. (2011). Non-riotous behaviour [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from [http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b014pw7g](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b014pw7g)


## 4.7. Appendix

### 4.7.1. Appendix A: Card Sort Behaviours for Study 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the 4 cents fuel voucher from the grocery store to buy petrol</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taping a movie off the television</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying movie tickets online to jump the queue at the cinemas</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only buying products from companies if you are part of their loyalty programs</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending over an hour trying on different t-shirts and not purchasing any</td>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim a purchase price is better at a competing retailer in order to get a discount</td>
<td>Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasting grapes in a supermarket and not buying any</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Wilkes, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a fake US iTunes account to access and pay for content not available in Australia</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning merchandise to a store by claiming it was a gift when it was not</td>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegally downloading TV shows from the internet for free, for personal consumption</td>
<td>Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a fake account on social networking site</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using an expired coupon for merchandise</td>
<td>Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Wilkes, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return used goods for a refund</td>
<td>Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010; Wilkes, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing organs for transplant over the internet</td>
<td>Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying about a child's age in order to get a lower price</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying there are only 2 people staying in a holiday apartment when there are really 4</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010; Wilkes, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting in front of someone in a queue</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking a bottle of salad dressing in a supermarket and doing nothing about it</td>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking someone's vegetarian meal at a conference</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving misleading price information to a clerk for an un-priced item</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reporting a lost item as 'stolen' to an insurance company to collect the money</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Neale &amp; Fullerton, 2010</td>
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<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buying items for single use, and then returning them</td>
<td>Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Wilkes, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evading fare on public transport</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally taking someone else's takeaway order</td>
<td><em>This study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking a can of soda in a supermarket without paying for it</td>
<td>Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Vitell &amp; Muncy, 2005; Wilkes, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing price-tags on merchandise in a retail store</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Fullerton &amp; Punj, 2004; Muncy &amp; Vitell, 1992; Wilkes, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not claiming an item when buying groceries through the self-checkout</td>
<td><em>This study</em>; Wilkes, 1978 (shoplifting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonating someone else by using their credit card to purchase goods on the internet without permission</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using stolen credit cards to order goods over the internet</td>
<td>Mitchell &amp; Chan, 2002; Freestone &amp; Mitchell, 2004</td>
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CHAPTER 5: EMPIRICAL PAPER – Study 2 and Study 3

(Quantitative)
5. CHAPTER FIVE: Empirical Paper – Study 2 and Study 3  

Written for Business Ethics Quarterly

5.1. Introduction

Deviant consumer behaviour is perceived as behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct (Elliott, Ageton & Canter, 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989). Deviant consumer behaviour can be directed towards an organisation’s employees (e.g. verbal abuse), merchandise (e.g. theft-shoplifting, copyright; fraudulent returns), financial assets (e.g. all types of fraud), physical or electronic premises (e.g. vandalism; computer virus), or other consumers (e.g. jumping queues; hostile physical acts) (Fullerton & Punj, 1997; 2004). Deviant consumer behaviour is an ongoing problem in marketplaces around the globe. In 2013, $AU112 billion was lost globally to fraudulent returns by customers (Jager, 2013). Employees are affected by fraudulent behaviours when they deal with irate or coercive customers who are returning the items. Other consumers are then affected by it through a ‘honesty tax’, which costs Australian consumers $AU290 and US consumers $AU296 per week per household, to compensate the losses the organisation incurs (Jager, 2013). Investigations into deviant consumer behaviour are driven by the consequences the behaviour inflicts on a number of groups. Effective deterrence strategies play an important role in curbing this behaviour.

Traditional deterrence strategies follow the principles of undifferentiated marketing in that all consumers are treated the same, and receive the same deterrence message (Kotler, Brown, Adam & Armstrong, 2004). Grounded in the classical school of criminology and the “rational choice view of human behaviour” (Pratt,
Cullen, Blevins, Daigle & Madensen, 2006, p. 367) deterrence theory assumes that individuals weigh up the costs and benefits of a behaviour, and then make rational decisions based on increasing their pleasure (e.g. benefits) and decreasing their pain or harm (e.g. risk/costs) (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1967). The lower the levels of deterrence present, the greater the individual’s perceived opportunity to misbehave (Tittle, 1980; Cole, 1989). The effectiveness of this approach to understanding human behaviour has been criticised, with suggestions that there are underlying psychological factors that influence human behaviour beyond the rational approach (Akers, 1990; Ariely, 2012; Garoupa, 2003; Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008; Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Fullerton and Punj (1997) suggest that traditional deterrence techniques need to overcome “the differing consumer perception[s] of and reactions to the risks of deterrent sanctions” (p. 341). In this paper, it is proposed that consumers differ in more than just their perceptions of risk, but also their perceptions of the acceptability of the behaviour itself. Extending on the recommendations of Fullerton and Punj (1997) and Strutton, Vitell and Pelton, (1994), it is proposed that deterrence strategies must overcome differences in perceptions of the acceptability of deviant consumer behaviour, and differences in the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour.

Acknowledging differences in determinants of a behaviour means organisations will need to consider more tailored approaches to deterrence strategies.

The purpose of this paper is three fold. First, Study 1 will examine variability in the social consensus of the inherent acceptability of ten consumer behaviours, taken from previous research (see Appendix A section 3.8.1). Social consensus of the ten consumer behaviour’s inherent acceptability will be captured in using a Best-Worst Scale study with a balanced incomplete block design. Second, Study 2 will examine
the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour, for a questionable behaviour (low social consensus) and an unacceptable behaviour (high social consensus), as identified in Study 1. Third, Study 2 will also investigate if an individual’s engagement in a questionable behaviour predicts their engagement in an unacceptable behaviour, constituting an escalation towards a perceived greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour. Study 2 will be executed using a survey to test hypotheses developed in the literature section of this paper.

This paper is structured as follows. First a literature review will discuss the concepts of escalation, moral identity, ethical ideology, perceived outcomes, perceived risk, and perceived prevalence, and how they relate to deviant consumer behaviour. The method and results of Study 1 will be discussed followed by the method and results of Study 2. Finally, the paper will present the theoretical and practical implications of this research, followed by the limitations and future research opportunities.

5.2. Literature Review

5.2.1. Engaging in deviant consumer behaviour

Social cognitive theory posits that an individual’s behaviour is governed by their outcome expectations – the belief that enacting a behaviour will result in some benefit for the individual (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Rimal & Real, 2005). Individuals are driven to engage in deviant consumer behaviour for some benefit. However, self-concept maintenance theory suggests individuals will only be able to engage in deviant consumer behaviour that allows them to also maintain a positive self-concept (Mazar et al., 2008). Self-concept is an individual’s perception of oneself (Sirgy, 1982).
Individuals may be able to perform minor degrees of deviant consumer behaviour such as lying and cheating, while maintaining a positive view of themselves. Whereas greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour such as stealing, may require the individual to negatively update their self-concept to reflect their bad behaviour. Negatively updating an individual’s self-concept is contradictory to an individual’s inherent drive to maintain consistency in their beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988; Cheng, Lam & Hsu, 2005; Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008; Sanitioso, Kunda, & Fong 1990; Sirgy, 1982). The point at which an individual can no longer engage in a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour without negatively updating their self-concept is the individual’s deviance threshold. Movement from non-deviant consumer behaviour towards the deviance threshold can constitute an escalation in deviant consumer behaviour.

5.2.2. Escalation in deviant consumer behaviour

Deviant behaviour is defined in absolute terms by ‘official classification’ yet perceived in subjective terms so escalation can occur in absolute terms, yet the individual may not be consciously aware that their deviance is escalating.

Escalation is a gradual process occurring over time, signified by a progression from acceptable to deviant behaviour, and from “minor, separated episodes” of deviance to “stronger, more frequent episodes” of deviance (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Ronel, 2011, p. 1219; Zyglidopoulos, Fleming & Rothenberg, 2009). Research in the consumer deviance literature has neglected to investigate escalations of deviant consumer behaviour, despite its extensive exploration in other fields investigating
deviance (e.g. Argandona, 2003; Ayers et al., 1999; Dean, Bell & Lauchs, 2010; Feld & Straus, 1989, Kazemian, Farrington & Le Blanc, 2009; Ronel, 2011; Winstok, 2008; Zyglidopoulos & Fleming, 2008; Zyglidopoulos et al., 2008). For instance, gradual escalation in deviant behaviour is suggested to be responsible for most corporate executive misconduct (Hartson & Sherman, 2012). Executives might begin by misreporting profit earnings, and over time find themselves embezzling millions of dollars (Grant, 2000; Hartson & Sherman, 2012).

An individual is driven to escalate their deviant consumer behaviour to achieve some desired outcome - in line with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986), or when a behaviour no longer achieves enough of what an individual desires (Agnew, 1992). The decision to seek deviant alternatives in the face of failing to achieve goal is supported by Agnew’s (1992) General Strain Theory, an extension of work by Merton (1938), which proposes that individuals could engage in illegitimate (deviant) behaviours to achieve something that they have previously failed to achieve using conventional (non-deviant) behaviours. The likelihood of seeking behavioural alternatives is strengthened when the individual has observed others successfully achieving a desired end-state with the escalated behaviour (Bandura, 1977). However, escalations in deviant consumer behaviour could be a less conscious process, such that the individual’s behaviour changes without them realising. A gradual escalation in deviant consumer behaviour can occur over time without conscience thought because the increments in which the behaviour is escalated can be very minor (Gino & Bazerman, 2009; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004).
Escalations in deviant consumer behaviour are important to consider as it can explain how an individual can get to that greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour. Consumers engaging in fare evasion on public transport may have had experience taking advantage of, or lying to organisations in the past. It is proposed in this paper that stopping minor acts of deviant consumer behaviour such as lying, could indirectly reduce the number of fare evaders, because it is proposed a relationship between minor degrees of deviant consumer behaviour and greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour. This proposition works under the assumption that going from no deviant consumer behaviour to a perceived greater degree of deviant behaviour is a significant shift in behaviour, yet going from a minor degree of deviant consumer behaviour to a perceived greater degree of deviant behavior is a more gradual shift in behaviour. This assumption is explained by the foot-in-the-door effect (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). Individuals are more likely to engage in a greater degree of prosocial behaviour (e.g. donate money), if the individual began by engaging in a smaller degree of prosocial behaviour (e.g. signing a petition) (Burger, 1999; Freedman & Fraser, 1966; Hartson & Sherman, 2012). Engagement in increasing degrees of prosocial behaviour occurs because earlier compliance to the lower degree of prosocial behaviour influenced the individuals’ self-perceptions (Moore & Loewenstein, 2004). An individual’s inherent need for consistency in behaviours and self-perceptions drives the future compliance (Burger, 1999). Further, individuals are more accepting of paying higher prices on goods, when the prices began low but increased gradually over time (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Basset & Miller, 1978). To apply this explanation to deviant consumer behaviour, the role of neutralisation techniques need to examined.
The ability of the individual to use neutralisation techniques to justify their deviant consumer behaviour, reduces any dissonance associated with performing the behaviour, thereby increasing the perceived acceptability of the act and the individual’s commitment to the ‘unconventional norm’ (Minor, 1981; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Neutralisation techniques are disengagement tools used to reduce actual or anticipatory dissonance associated with performing an act that is inconsistent with ones beliefs (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Escalations in deviant consumer behaviour are then facilitated by the individual’s commitment to the acceptability of the previously enacted, and lower degree of, deviant consumer behaviour (Hartson & Sherman, 2012). The shift in perceptions of what constitutes deviant consumer behaviour facilitates escalations given the new benchmark of what is acceptable (Mazar et al., 2008; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). Benchmarking behaviour is an important concept as individuals can drift in and out of deviant consumer behaviour (Matza, 1964). When individuals return to a situation where deviance is perceived to be an option, they return with a perception of what is acceptable or justifiable based on their past actions (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004). “Even when a behaviour rarely occurs, it may have a particularly valued outcome that the actor will remember” (Watson, Berkley, Madapulli & Zeng 2009, p. 417). As deviant consumer behaviour occurs, the individual can develop an increased “sense of permissibility for deviant conduct” (Dean et al., 2010, p. 206). The shift in perceived permissibility of a behaviour, enables behaviours once thought to constitute minor deviant consumer behaviour, to be seen as acceptable if not justified, while behaviours constituting major deviant consumer behaviour may begin to seem only marginally deviant by comparison (Bandura, 1991a). Tenbrunsel & Messick (2004) propose an ‘induction mechanism’ that suggests when individuals evaluate the acceptability of a behaviour,
the individual considers the acceptability of past behaviours, and how small or large the
difference in acceptability is, between the present behaviour and the past
behaviour.

Escalation in deviant consumer behaviour is facilitated when there is no perceived harm being incurred by the individual performing the act as evident in Milgram’s (1963; 1965a, 1965b, 1974) obedience experiments involving participants administering electric shocks. When the victim’s response was unknown, the gradual increase in voltage of electric shocks administered by the participants continued to the maximum amount. When the victim’s response was made known to the participants, the gradual increases in voltage of electric shocks administered were less than the original study (Gilbert, 1981). Jones’ (1991) factor of ‘proximity’ supports this outcome whereby the ‘closer’ the individual is to the victim, the less likely they are to cause harm to them. It is hypothesised that:

1. An individual will be more likely to intend to engage in a perceived greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour (unacceptable behaviour), if they have previously engaged in perceived minor degrees of deviant consumer behaviour (questionable behaviour).

For most individuals there comes a point – a deviance threshold – at which they cannot justify a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour, as the magnitude of dissonance would be so large (Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008). If an individual were to engage in a behaviour beyond their own personal deviance threshold, they would need to negatively update how they perceive themselves, which goes against an individuals strive to maintain a positive self-concept (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988;
Cheng et al., 2005; Festinger, 1957; Mazar et al., 2008; Sanitioso et al., 1990; Sirgy, 1982). Using Milgram’s (1974) obedience experiments, participants were found to vary in when they wanted to opt out and refuse to administer any more electric shocks. Participants opted out when they perceived that one more increase in voltage of the electric shock administered to the victim would have “qualitatively different consequences for the victim, and a qualitatively different meaning” for the individual administering the shock (Gilbert, 1981, p. 693). It is at this point the individual could no longer justify their actions, while maintaining a positive self-concept. In this paper, moral identity is suggested to influence where an individual’s deviance threshold is.

5.2.3. Moral identity

Moral identity is the extent to which moral traits are a central and relatively stable part of an individual’s self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Hardy, 2006; Vitell et al., 2009; Weaver, 2006). The moral traits (e.g. kindness, honesty, compassion) were drawn from philosophical virtue theories that Aquino and Reed (2002) suggested would trigger a wider network of related moral traits underlying an individual’s moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reed & Aquino, 2003; Weaver, 2006). The individual’s deviance threshold is the point at which an individual can no longer justify that a ‘honest, kind, caring’ person would perform such a behaviour. Internalised moral traits work to regulate one’s behaviour by substituting threats of external sanctions with internal self-sanctions (Bandura, 1991a; Grasmick & Green 1981; Spivak, Fukushima, Kelley & Jenson, 2011). Individuals who have a strong moral identity, in which moral traits are very salient in the individual’s self-concept, will have a more restrictive deviance threshold than an individual with a weak moral identity, in which moral traits are not salient in the individual’s self-concept. A more
restrictive deviance threshold means individual’s with a strong moral identity are less tolerant of deviant consumer behaviours, and are less likely to engage in them, because violation of an individual’s moral identity would cause the individual to experience cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Trevino, Weaver & Reynolds, 2006; Weaver, 2006). Cognitive dissonance is one form of self-sanction that an individual with a strong moral identity can administer to regulate his or her own actions. A less restrictive deviance threshold means the individual with a weak moral identity is more tolerant of deviant consumer behaviours, and more likely to engage in them because there are no moral traits being violated to cause cognitive dissonance. Individuals with weak moral identities look to the threat of external sanctions to guide their behaviours, as opposed to relying on internal sanctions (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Relying on threats of external sanctions is undesirable in the consumer setting as most deviant consumer behaviour goes undetected (Bandura, 1991b). The lack of detection is attributed to the difficulty in identifying minor acts of deviant consumer behaviour (e.g. lying), or the organisation not having the resources to detect any type of deviant consumer behaviour, and the resources to administer formal sanctions (e.g. punishment for fraudulent returns).

The more central morality is to an individual’s self-concept, the more motivated the individual will be to act in accordance with those traits (Hardy, 2006). Moral identity is “a motivational force that translates cognitions into behaviour because of a desire for self-consistency” (McFerran, Aquinio & Duffy, 2010, p. 50). Individuals have an inherent need for consistency between their behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs (Blasi, 1983; Cialdini, 1988; Cheng et al., 2005; Festinger, 1957). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:
2. *Moral identity will negatively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.*

In the consumer ethics literature, moral identity is just one antecedent examined to explain deviant consumer behaviour. Ethical ideology is one of the most commonly examined antecedents to perceptions of, and engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.

### 5.2.4. Ethical ideology

Ethical ideology is a system of beliefs or principles that individuals use to guide their judgments of the acceptability of a behaviour, based on the extent to which they accept or reject universal moral rules (Aleassa, Pearson & McClurg, 2011; Barnett, Bass & Brown, 1996; Forsyth, 1980). An individual can associate with an idealistic ethical ideology, or a relativistic ethical ideology. Idealism is the doctrine that universal moral rules exist to determine the inherent goodness or badness of an action (Vitell & Paolillo, 2003). Individuals associating with idealism follow the deontological approach to ethics, which focuses on the inherent acceptability of the behaviour itself, to determine if it should be performed (Forsyth, O’Boyle & McDaniel, 2008). Deontology proposes that individuals are duty bound to certain behaviours as they constitute the right thing to do (Kant, [1785] 2002). Critics of the deontological philosophy of ethics argue that universal moral rules guiding deontologists’ behaviours can only exist in their most specific form because with each new situation a new contributing factor ultimately discounts the rule (Prinz, 2008; Shafer-Landau, 1997). The criticisms of the deontological approach to ethics suggest
individuals largely favour a more consequentialist approach to processing the environmental factors and past experiences when assessing the ethicality of a behaviour (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Individuals associating with relativism follow the teleological philosophy of ethics. Teleology is from the consequentialist theory of ethics, which focuses on the outcome of an action to determine its inherent acceptability (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). There are two branches of teleology, (1) ethical egoists who are focused on increasing the good outcome for the individual, which in turn constitutes the ‘right’ behaviour, and (2) utilitarians who are focused on promoting the greatest good to the greatest number, which in turn constitutes the ‘right’ behaviour (Hunt & Vitell, 1986).

Individuals associating with the relativism ethical ideology have been found to be more tolerant of, and more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour (e.g. Aleassa et al., 2011; Allmon, Page & Roberts, 2000; Barnett et al., 1996; Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth & O’Boyle Jr, 2011; Forsyth, O’Boyle & McDaniel, 2008; Vitell & Paolillo, 2003). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:


Past research has found that to better explain behaviour, both moral identity and ethical ideology need to be specified in the model, as antecedents to behaviour (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Vitell, 2009). Moral identity is proposed to be a “motivational force that translates peoples’ moral cognitions into behaviour because of a desire for self-consistency” (McFerran et al., 2010, p. 50). Consistent with past research, moral identity is proposed to moderate the relationship between ethical ideology and
behaviour (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). In other words, moral identity is proposed to weaken the relativism – deviant consumer behaviour relationship, and strengthen the idealism – deviant consumer behaviour relationship. It is hypothesized that:

4. **Moral identity will have a weakening effect on the positive relationship between individuals associating with high levels of relativism, and deviant consumer behaviour.**

5. **Moral identity will have a strengthening effect on the negative relationship between individuals associating with high levels of idealism, and deviant consumer behaviour.**

The ability of moral identity to weaken the relativism – deviant consumer behaviour relationship provides further support for investigations into novel ways to trigger an individual’s moral identity to reduce the individual’s propensity for deviant consumer behaviour (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2009; Shu, Mazar, Gino, Ariely & Bazerman, 2012). Exploring the moderating relationship also answers ongoing calls to extend knowledge on the connection between how individuals perceive their moral identity, approach moral reasoning, and their susceptibility to deviant consumer behaviour, which are ongoing research requirements in the moral psychology and philosophy fields (Hardy, 2006; Trevino et al., 2006). Figure 1 illustrates the relationships being investigated.
The limitation of only including ethical ideology and moral identity in a model explaining deviant consumer behaviour is that it assumes all deviant consumer behaviours have an ethical dimension to them, which is not always the case. If an individual does not perceive a deviant consumer behaviour to involve an ethical dilemma, then the model becomes insufficient at predicting deviant consumer behaviour. To address this limitation, additional factors have been identified as likely to predict behaviour, beyond the ethical ideology and moral identity constructs.

5.2.5. Perceived outcomes

In Hunt and Vitell’s (1986) general theory of marketing ethics, individuals associating with a relativistic ideology were proposed to process past experiences and environment factors to guide their assessment of behaviour. Following the teleological philosophy of ethics, relativists are suggested to focus on (1) the perceived consequences of each behaviour alternative, for those involved, (2) the probability of the harm being incurred by those involved, (3) the (un)desirability of the consequence incurred by those involved, and (4) the importance of each party
involved in the behaviour (Allmon et al., 2000; Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Hunt & Vitell 1986). Weighing up these four factors would provide the individual with an overall assessment of the perceived outcomes of performing a deviant consumer behaviour. In Burgess and Akers (1966) social learning theory from criminology, differential reinforcement captures whether generally good or bad outcomes are likely to result from an individual performing a behaviour. If the outcomes are perceived to be generally good, the behaviour is more likely to be performed, than if the outcomes were perceived to be generally bad (Akers & Lee, 1996; Burgess & Akers, 1966). Differential reinforcement does not distinguish between an individual assessing the outcome for themselves versus the outcome for others. Egoists, as explained above, will place more emphasis on the outcome from themselves, whereas the utilitarian will place more emphasis on the outcome for others (Hunt & Vitell 1986). Yet both arrive at the same outcome – a general perception of what the outcomes are likely to be if the behaviour was performed. An individual’s perceptions of the outcomes could be informed through experiential learning, in that past behaviour was either rewarded or punished. The actual rewards or punishments from past behaviour then inform future outcome expectations (Akers & Sellers, 2004). Perceptions of the outcomes could also be informed vicariously through observational learning. Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory suggests that if an individual observes a model they respect and like, be rewarded for engaging in a particular behaviour, the individual will be more inclined to imitate that behaviour, than had the model been observed to be punished. Whether informed by experiential or vicarious learning, generally positive perceived outcomes are proposed to predict performance of deviant consumer behaviour. It is hypothesized that:

5.2.6. **Perceived risk**

How risky a behaviour is depends on the probability of being caught, the severity of the punishment, and the swiftness of the punishment being administered (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Grasmick & Green, 1980). All three components of risk must be high for the threat of punishment to be effective. Where one approximates zero, the others become ineffective at deterring behaviour (Grasmick & Green 1980, 1981; Moore & Loewenstein, 2004). If the perceived probability of being caught is low, it does not matter to the individual what the punishment is – it is unlikely to be administered. If the probability of being caught is high, yet the punishment is not severe, then the behaviour will likely to performed. It is hypothesized that:

7. *Perceived risk will negatively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.*

The threat of punishment from external bodies (organisation, other consumers) is what individual’s with weak moral identities are influenced by, to guide their behaviour. As mentioned before, the absence of perceived high risk in the consumer setting, means individuals with weak moral identities, do no perceive inhibitors to their deviant consumer behaviours. Risk is also a signal of the effectiveness of the official classification of a behaviour as a deterrence tool. The official classification of behaviour is how the law and or an organisational policy categorises a behaviour – either acceptable or unacceptable. Previous research (*Chapter 4*) suggests that perceptions of risk infer how important and effective the official classification is in
guiding individuals’ behaviours. If violation of the official classification of a behaviour were backed by likely, proportionate, and swift punishment, then the individual would perceive the behaviour to be high risk and would subsequently classify it as ‘unacceptable’ behaviour – consistent with the official classification of the behaviour. The low perceptions of risk for deviant consumer behaviour in the marketplace suggest the official classification is less effective in deterring those behaviours. Providing an organisation with falsified information is a violation of the organisation’s policy, yet if the behaviour is not backed by high perceptions of risk, then the organisation’s policy becomes less effective in guiding the individual’s behaviour. The role of risk is important to understand when developing effective deterrence strategies, because the low perceived risk renders traditional deterrence strategies that appeal to the risk of punishment, ineffective.

5.2.7. Perceived prevalence

The influence of others on an individual’s behaviour is another factor being considered to predict deviant consumer behaviour, alongside ethical ideology, moral identity, perceived outcomes, and perceived risk. The influence of others on an individual’s behaviour is extensively studied in criminology and sociology literature pertaining to misconduct, criminal behaviour and deviant behaviour, which drove investigations into the effect of social influence on deviant consumer behaviour (Albers-Miller, 1999; Conger, 1980; Gellerman, 1986). Social group influence on an individual’s behaviour is reflected in Sutherland’s (1947) differential association theory. The central proposition of differential association theory is that behaviour is learned through social interaction (Sutherland, 1947). The groups an individual associates with teaches them beliefs, attitudes, justification techniques, and are a
primary source of behavioural reinforcement, which guides the individual’s behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Asch, 1951; Burgess & Akers, 1966; Fullerton & Punj, 2004; Sutherland, 1947). “An opinion, a belief, an attitude is ‘correct’, ‘valid’, and ‘proper’ to the extent that it is anchored in a group of people with similar beliefs, attitudes and opinions” (Festinger, 1950, p. 272).

Individuals look to others to guide their actions, based on the perceived popularity of an act and the perceived social approval of the act (Park & Smith, 2007). When an individual does not know how to behave in a particular situation they turn to others to see what is appropriate and what behaviour is being rewarded (Bandura, 1977; Pratt et al., 2010). Ambiguity in how to behave, or what constitutes acceptable behaviour can occur when the official classification of the behaviour, based on law or policy, does not reflect the perceived prevalence of the behaviour. If an illegal behaviour is perceived to be prevalent in society, then some individual’s may perceive this as an opportunity to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. It is hypothesised that:

8. Perceived prevalence will positively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.

Discrepancies between the official classification of a behaviour and the perceived prevalence of the behaviour occur when there is a lack of social consensus on the inherent acceptability of the behaviour (Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). In situations where the social consensus is high, there is less ambiguity on how one should behave, which reduces an individual’s need to refer to contextual or psychological factors to guide their behaviour (Barnett, 2001; Davis, Johnson & Ohmer, 1998; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). Instances in which the social consensus of
a behaviour’s acceptability is low, there is more ambiguity in how to behave, meaning individuals are more likely to draw on contextual or factors, or their ethical ideology to guide their behaviour (Barnett, 2001; Davis et al., 1998; Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). It is proposed that a deviant consumer behaviour with low social consensus on its inherent acceptability will be determined by factors of risk, outcomes, prevalence, and relativism. These factors are drawn on to assess if the lack of social consensus is in fact providing an opportunity to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. In contrast, it is proposed that a deviant consumer behaviour with high social consensus on its inherent acceptability will be negatively determined by idealism, and moral identity. These factors are likely to reflect internalisation of the morality on which the law and organisational policy is based, thereby influencing enactment of deviant consumer behaviour (Cooter, 2000; Hinduja, 2007; Klosko, 1987; 2011; Skinner, 2011).

9. Perceived outcomes, risk, and prevalence will have a stronger effect on the questionable behaviour (low social consensus), than the unacceptable behaviour (high social consensus).

5.2.8. Past behaviour and behaviour intentions

Past behaviour was also proposed as an antecedent to future deviant consumer behaviour (e.g. Cronan & Al-Rafee, 2008; Daunt & Harris, 2011; Harris, 2008). The actual rewards and punishments incurred by the individual when they engaged in the behaviour goes on to influence the anticipated outcomes for next time the individual goes to engage in the behaviour (Akers & Sellers, 2004). Past behaviour has been suggested to influence future behaviour, as it is “a function of prior socialisation, modeling, reinforcement/punishment, and exposure to definitions” that provides
guidance to future behaviour (Akers, 1998, p. 162; see for examples Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Ouellette & Wood, 1998; Cialdini, 1988; Taylor, Ishida & Wallace, 2009; Verplanken, Aarts, van Knippenberg & Moonen, 1998), it’s these perceptions that will guide the individual to engage or not engage in the behaviour in the future. It is hypothesised that:

10. *Past behaviour will positively predict behaviour intentions.*

Figure 2 illustrates the relationships being tested. The model will be run on both *past* behaviour and behaviour *intentions* to capture differences in predictors if individuals had not yet performed the behaviour but were intending to do so. The relationship between past behaviour and behaviour intentions is also examined. Moreover, the model will be run on both a questionable behaviour - low social consensus on its inherent acceptability, and an unacceptable behaviour – high social consensus on its inherent acceptability. Differences in predictors of the two types of behaviours suggest not all deviant consumer behaviours can be deterred using the same strategies.
5.2.9. Summary

The three aims of this research are to examine variability in the social consensus of a behaviour’s inherent acceptability, to assess the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour, and test the escalation thesis. Study 1 examines the social consensus on the inherent acceptability of ten behaviours taken from a previous study (Chapter 4). Study 1 is executed using a Best-Worst Scale study with a balanced incomplete block design, to ascertain a ranking of behaviours from most acceptable to most unacceptable. The results of Study 1 then inform the behaviours to test as...
dependent variables in Study 2. Behaviours with (1) low and (2) high social consensus on their inherent acceptability are selected for testing. Study 2 then tests hypotheses pertaining to determinants of and escalations in deviant consumer behaviour. Study 2 is executed with an online survey. The method and results for Study 1 will now be presented, followed by the method and results for Study 2. A general discussion is then presented, combining the results of both studies, to answer the aims guiding this research.

5.3. Method – Study 1

5.3.1. Participants

The sample for this study is consumers over 18 years of age living in Australia. The broad sample captures the mix of behaviours and perspectives in the marketplace as individuals engage in a variety of consumer behaviours throughout their lives as they take on different consumer roles (Ward, 1974) and characteristics such as gender, age, level of education, cultural background, and occupation, have been found to influence perceptions and performance of right and wrong consumer behaviours (see Fullerton, Kerch & Dodge, 1996; Freestone & Mitchell, 2004; Genereux & McLeod, 1995; McMahon & Cohen, 2009; Page & Ridgeway, 2001; Moschis & Churchill Jnr, 1978; Vitell & Paolillo, 2003). Participants were recruited using a non-probability sampling techniques of convenience and snowballing, for time and cost efficiencies, at the expense of the generalisability of the results (Zikmund, Ward, Lowe & Babin, 2011). Convenience sampling was used in the first instance by promoting the survey on Facebook, Twitter, and sending it via email. Then snowball sampling was used whereby respondents were asked to refer others to the study.
total sample size of 100 was collected, which is in line with other BWS BIBD studies (Daly, Lee, Soutar & Ramsey, 2010; Louviere & Flynn, 2010; Marley & Pihlens, 2012). Of these participants, 69% were female and 31% male. The sample was skewed to consumers under 49 years old, with 51% of the sample aged 18-29 years old, 37% aged 30-49 years old, and 12% aged 50+ years old. Ninety per cent of the sample had Australian nationality, however, all participants were living in Australia during the time the survey was live, as required to reflect the Australian consumer marketplace (October 4th, 2012 to December 6th, 2012).

5.3.2. Best-Worst Scale using Balanced Incomplete Block Design

The BWS method is a “powerful method in consumer behaviour research” that overcomes biases associated with rating scales when comparing objects, such as behaviours, attributes, or other items of interests (Daly et al., 2010; Yu, Sun, Goodman, Chen & Ma, 2009, p. 156). Rating scales work under the assumption that respondents use the same evaluation rules, and that numerical scores have the same meaning for each respondent (Louviere, Lings, Islam, Gudergan & Flynn, 2013; Zikmund, D’Alessandro, Winzar, Lowe & Babin, 2014). However, these assumptions are not always true, as individuals can interpret the ratings in different ways, or be affected by “cultural differences and/or verbal ambiguities with labels” (Louviere et al., 2013, p. 292). Moreover, in studies that are seeking to ascertain rankings based on perceived ethicality or acceptability in comparison to other behaviours, the use of rating scales results in only marginal differences in mean ratings (Louviere et al, 2013). A BWS can overcome the issue of only capturing marginal differences in mean ratings by enabling respondents to objectively evaluate how acceptable a behaviour is perceived to be, in comparison to other behaviours, as opposed to
obtaining an objective score of acceptability of each individual behaviour (Zikmund et al., 2014). A disadvantage of using BWS studies is respondents finding the task cognitively taxing and time consuming, as they have to think more about the questions. Yet, the increased attention could possibly result in more reliable answers (Zikmund et al., 2014). In this dissertation a BWS design was deemed an appropriate method to rank consumer behaviours based on their perceived acceptability in comparison to alternatives.

The BWS ranking is achieved by respondents identifying the two extremes; the most acceptable and most unacceptable behaviours out of a subset of available alternatives (Daly et al., 2010; Louviere & Flynn, 2010; Marley & Pihlens, 2012). In selecting the two behaviours from a subset of alternatives, it captures the two “extremes of an underlying latent dimension of interest”, in this case, the degree of deviance (Louviere & Flynn, 2010, p. 276). The best–worst behaviour pair chosen by a respondent is the pair perceived to be the farthest apart in their degree of deviance (Louviere & Islam, 2008).

A BIBD was used to dictate the structure of the BWS study. Using a BIBD allows the BWS to be designed in a way that reduces the number of questions a respondent needs to complete. This is advantageous, as alternative choice-based methods such as paired comparisons, require “large numbers of choice questions to estimate preferences for objects” (Louviere et al., 2013, p. 292). The BIBD formula that Study 1 followed was: \( v =10, k = 3, b = 30, r = 9, \lambda = 2 \) (See Figure 3). This BIBD formula was chosen over other possibilities as it allowed the maximum number of behaviours
(\(v = 10\)) to be ranked, in a manageable number of questions (\(b = 30\)) before respondent fatigue occurred. The ten behaviours being tested were presented in groups of three (\(k = 3\)), each behaviour appeared a total of nine times in the survey (\(r = 9\)), and each behaviour was compared to one another twice (\(\lambda = 2\)).

Figure 3.

**Balanced Incomplete Block Design**

\[
\begin{align*}
\nu = 10, \ k = 3, \ b = 30, \ r = 9, \ \lambda = 2 \\
(1, 2, 3), (1, 2, 4), (1, 3, 5), (1, 4, 6), (1, 5, 7), (1, 6, 8), (1, 7, 9), (1, 8, 10), (1, 9, 10), (2, 3, 6), (2, 4, 10), (2, 5, 8), (2, 5, 9), (2, 6, 7), (2, 7, 9), (2, 8, 10), (3, 4, 7), (3, 4, 8), (3, 5, 6), (3, 7, 10), (3, 8, 9), (3, 9, 10), (4, 5, 9), (4, 5, 10), (4, 6, 9), (4, 7, 8), (5, 6, 10), (5, 7, 8), (6, 7, 10), (6, 8, 9)
\end{align*}
\]

(Sourced from Rasch & Herrendörfer, 1986, p. 171)

The BWS study using a BIBD was executed as an online survey. An online survey was deemed the most appropriate survey collection technique as it provides greater access to a greater number of people at a lower cost than other survey techniques (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). Online surveys also have the advantage of being completed at a time convenient to the respondent (Zikmund et al., 2014). Further, the online survey enables the greatest level of anonymity for the respondent, as a researcher is not involved either by telephone or in person (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). The absence of the researcher to ensure anonymity is required for Study 1 as it is investigating a sensitive topic of deviant consumer behaviour.
The respondents were asked 30 BWS questions. The ten behaviours used in this study were selected based on their varying degrees of perceived acceptability from a previous study conducted by the authors (Chapter 4). The ten behaviours were randomly assigned numbers, which dictated when they appeared in the survey based on the randomised BIBD. In the execution of the study, the blocks identified in Figure 3 (i.e. the questions) were randomised such that behaviour did not appear nine times in a row. Randomisation was required to overcome potential order effects associated with similar items (Tourangeau, Singer & Presser, 2003). However, all respondents did receive the same ordering and grouping of behaviours as each other.

5.4. Results – Study 1

5.4.1. Simple summary statistics

Following Louviere and Flynn (2010), the data were initially analysed using simple summary statistics. The results are outlined in Table 1. Totals were calculated for the number of times a behaviour was identified as the ‘most acceptable’ and ‘most unacceptable’ over all the comparison sets (Louviere & Islam, 2008). The data were subsequently ranked by allocating a value ‘+1’ to the behaviours identified as ‘most acceptable’, and a value of ‘-1’ to the behaviours identified as ‘most unacceptable’ (Louviere & Flynn, 2010). This is based on the assumption that the ‘most acceptable’ estimates are equal to the minus ‘most unacceptable’ estimates (Louviere & Flynn, 2010).
Table 1.

*Ranked Consumer Behaviours- Most acceptable to least acceptable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked Behaviours</th>
<th>Total Best</th>
<th>Total Worst</th>
<th>Best-Worst</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Normalised</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Using the 4 cents fuel voucher from the grocery store to buy petrol</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Creating a fake US iTunes account to access and pay for content not available in Australia</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>69.67</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Returning merchandise to a store by claiming it was a gift when it was not</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Saying there are only 2 people staying in a holiday apartment when there are really 4</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>61.49</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Illegally downloading TV shows from the internet for free, for personal consumption</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>60.12</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Lying about a child’s age in order to get a lower price</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>56.84</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>50.63</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Evading fare on public transport</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>-284</td>
<td>-2.84</td>
<td>34.51</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Reporting a lost item as ‘stolen’ to an insurance company to collect the money</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>-593</td>
<td>-5.93</td>
<td>16.06</td>
<td>6.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Using stolen credit cards to order goods over the Internet</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>-862</td>
<td>-8.62</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In accordance with the BIBD used in this study, each behaviour appeared nine times, therefore, behaviour preferences are measured on a scale bounded by ‘-9’ to ‘+9’ as reported in the rank column of Table 1. The more times a behaviour appeared as ‘most acceptable’, the closer it appeared to the ‘+9’ boundary at the ‘acceptable’ end of the degree of deviance ranking (Yu et al., 2009). Similarly, the more times a behaviour appeared as ‘most unacceptable’, the closer it appeared to the ‘-9’ boundary at the ‘unacceptable’ end of the degree of deviance ranking. The best-minus-worst totals of the behaviours were subsequently calculated to ascertain their ranking (Cohen, 2009). The consumer behaviours were ranked from 1-10 in Table 1. The data was also normalised onto a scale 0-100. To normalise the data onto a scale 0-100, the following formula was followed:

\[
\text{New value} = \frac{((\text{OldValue} - \text{OldMin}) \times \text{NewRange})}{\text{OldRange}} + \text{NewMin}
\]

For example, the new value for *lying about a child’s age*:

\[
\text{New value} = \frac{((0.9 - 0.862) \times 100)}{(8.13 - 8.62)} + 0
\]

\[
\text{New value} = 56.84
\]

To ascertain the degree to which a behaviour was perceived as more/less deviant, the new range (0-100 scale) was divided by the normalised number. Table 1 illustrates that insurance fraud (6.32) is perceived as four times more deviant as returning an item to a store and saying it was a gift, when it was not (1.56). Moreover, fare evasion (2.9) is twice as wrong as creating a fake U.S. iTunes account to access and pay for content not available in Australia (1.44). The perceived degrees of acceptability
between behaviours ranked 2 – 7 are marginal. This is further highlighted by the standard deviations. The standard deviations outlined Table 1 indicate that the polar acceptable and unacceptable behaviours had smaller standard deviations (σ = 1.08 – 2.96), suggesting less variability in perceptions of acceptability. Comparatively, the behaviours ranked in-between had higher standard deviations, suggesting greater variability in perceptions of acceptability (σ = 3.58 – 3.74). Greater variability suggests a lack of social consensus in a behaviour’s perceived acceptability. To test if the ranked behaviours were significantly different from one another, a one way within subjects (repeated measures) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

5.4.2. One-way within subjects (repeated measures) ANOVA

To ascertain if statistically significant differences exist between the behaviours ranked, an ANOVA was conducted. Being able to assess if the behaviours are significantly different from one another demonstrates that even though a behaviour is ranked 3rd, while another is ranked 4th, both behaviours may not be statistically significantly different from one another. This has implications for assessing how consumers perceive behaviours, as acceptable, questionable, or unacceptable. To conduct the ANOVA using SPSS, the best and worst counts for each behaviour were calculated for the nine times each behaviour appeared in the survey as per the BIBD. Then, a best-worst variable was computed for each of the ten behaviours, which calculated the best minus worst counts. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was used to compare 100 consumers’ ratings of the ten different consumer behaviours. The Mauchly’s test of sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated (χ² = 284.626, p <.000), therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Huynh-Feldt estimates of sphericity (epsilon = 0.777) following Tabachnick and
Fidell (2006) recommendations. The results show that the best-worst scores of the ten behaviours differed significantly, $F(6.991, 692.121) = 205.494$, $p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.675$. Pairwise comparisons revealed seven groups of behaviours as significantly different from one another ($p < 0.005$) (Allen & Bennett, 2012). Table 2 illustrates the groups and behaviours identified as significantly different from one another.
Table 2.

*Groups identified as significantly different from one another*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Group 5</th>
<th>Group 6</th>
<th>Group 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the 4 cents fuel voucher from the grocery store to buy petrol</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a fake US iTunes account to access and pay for content not available in Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning merchandise to a store by claiming it was a gift when it was not</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying there are only 2 people staying in a holiday apartment when there are really 4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegally downloading TV shows from the internet for free, for personal consumption</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying about a child’s age in order to get a lower price</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evading fare on public transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting a lost item as ‘stolen’ to an insurance company to collect the money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using stolen credit cards to order goods over the internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The groups are identified in the columns of Table 2. While the seven groups are statistically significantly different from one another, where more than one behaviour appears in a group it means those behaviours are not significantly different from one another. For example, ‘lying about a child’s age in order to get a lower price’ and ‘not saying anything when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour’ are not significant different from one another despite lying about a child’s age being ranked as more acceptable. However, both of those behaviours are significantly different from ‘evading fare on public transport’.

Following on from the standard deviations discussed in section 5.4.1, polar acceptable and unacceptable behaviours are identified with groups 1, 5, 6, and 7; with greater variability in perceptions of other consumer behaviours found in groups 2, 3, and 4. These findings reflect the variability in social consensus of a behaviour’s inherent acceptability. Variability in social consensus makes it difficult for organisations to deter these behaviours, because deterrence strategies currently rely on the assumption that there is social consensus on the inherent acceptability of the behaviour being deterred. To better understand how determinants of deviant consumer behaviour differ when the social consensus of the behaviour’s acceptability differs, Study 2 examines two dependent variables – one questionable (low social consensus), and one unacceptable (high social consensus) behaviour.

Using the results from Study 1, the behaviours selected as dependent variables for investigation in Study 2 include (1) illegally downloading TV shows from the Internet for free, for personal consumption, as the questionable behaviour with low social
consensus over its inherent acceptability, and (2) evading fare on public transport, the unacceptable behaviour with high social consensus over its inherent acceptability. These two behaviours were selected from Study 1 over alternatives as they both share common underlying characteristics, which aids in reducing confounding variables for this current study. Both illegal downloading and fare evasion are acts against large organisations, which are perceived to be profitable (Chapter 4). Moreover, both behaviours involve some social distance between the consumer and the organisation being harmed. Both behaviours are commonly justified by individuals using the same neutralisation techniques of denial of injury ("no one is getting hurt by me doing this") and denial of responsibility ("it’s not my fault, the organisation should be doing X to prevent me from doing this") (Sykes & Matza, 1957) (Chapter 4). However, it should also be noted that fare evasion is likely to be perceived as more deviant than illegal downloading for the following reasons. Fare evasion is likely perceived to be more risky, in that the probability of being caught is perceived to be higher than illegal downloading, despite the actual punishment of illegal downloading being more severe (Chapter 4). The act of fare evasion is also likely to result in mostly bad outcomes as fare evasion has been experientially or vicariously learned to result in a fine, in comparison to the lack of punishment for illegal downloading. The method and results for Study 2 will now be presented, followed by a discussion of the results of this paper as a whole.

5.5. Method – Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to test the hypotheses presented in this paper, using dependent variables from Study 1 – illegally downloading TV shows from the
Internet for personal consumption, and evading fare on public transport. The method used for Study 2 will now be discussed.

5.5.1. Participants

The sample for Study 2 consisted of males and females over the age of 18 years old living in Australia. A non-probability sampling procedure was used for the same reasons delineated in section 5.3.1. The sample was sourced from a market research panel, MyOpinions, and consisted of 215 participants. One respondent was deleted after being identified as selecting ‘7’ repeatedly on the survey. A useable sample size of 214 respondents remained. The sample size is appropriate for the analysis techniques required (Allen & Bennett, 2012). The sample was 52% females and 48% males. The age and gender frequencies are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3.

Sample characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-74</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.2. Measures

Independent Variables

*Ethical ideology* was measured using Forsyth’s (1980) Ethics Position Questionnaire. The 20-item questionnaire measured the two dimensions of idealism (items 1-10) and relativism (items 11-20) that underpin an individual’s ethical ideology. A factor analysis recommended the removal of two cross-loading items on the relativism scale, items 9 and 10. Therefore, the relativism scale used in this study consisted of items 11-18, while the idealism scale used the original items 1-10 of the ethical ideology scale. The Cronbach’s alpha for the idealism dimension was $\alpha = .927$ and $\alpha = .869$ for the relativism dimension. The mean for idealism was 5.812, with a standard deviation of 1.107. The mean for relativism was 4.513, with a standard deviation of 1.285.

*Moral identity* was measured using Aquino and Reed’s (2002) 10-item moral identity scale to measure the two dimensions of moral identity: internalisation (items 1, 2, 4, 7, 10) and symbolisation (items 3, 5, 6, 8, 9). Only the internalisation scale was used in analysis, as it captured the information of interest to this study. All respondents were presented with a list of nine personal characteristics that are typically perceived as describing a moral individual including “Caring, Compassionate, Fair, Friendly, Generous, Helpful, Hardworking, Honest, Kind” (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Respondents were then asked to visualise a person who might have those characteristics and were subsequently asked to answer a series of statements such as “It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics”. Using a 7-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate their
level of agreement with the statements, which ranged from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (7). A factor analysis recommended the removal of two reverse-coded items 4 and item 7 due to cross loading, which frequently occurs with reverse coded items (Allen & Bennett, 2012). The moral identity measure used in this study consisted only of items 1, 2, and 10 of the original scale. The Cronbach’s alpha for the internalisation dimension was $\alpha = .798$. Mean scale scores were computed whereby higher scores indicated higher levels of moral identity. The mean for the moral identity scale was 5.936 with a standard deviation of 1.051. A total of 63% of the respondents associated with a strong moral identity (> 5.963) and 38% associated with a weak moral identity (< 5.936).

Perceived risk was measured using an adaption of Grasmick and Green’s (1980) perceived probability of being caught and perceived severity of punishment measures. Swiftness of punishment was not measured, as past research (Chapter 4) did not identify celerity of punishment as a salient factor in consumer definitions of right and wrong. The two measures of perceived probability and perceived severity of punishment were treated independently. To capture perceived probability of being caught, respondents were asked to “Estimate the chance you would be caught if you did [insert behaviour]? ” and were required to answer on a 7-point Likert scale from very unlikely (1) to very likely (7). To capture perceived severity of punishment, respondents were instructed to “Think about the punishment you would likely incur from [insert behaviour]. Indicate how big a problem that punishment would create for your life.” This question was also answered on a 7-point Likert scale from no problem at all (1) to a very big problem (7).
Perceived outcomes were measured using an adaption of Akers and Lee’s (1996) differential reinforcement scale. Respondents were asked “Overall the outcomes of doing this behaviour is likely to result in” and were given a 7-point Likert scale from (1) mainly bad outcomes, to (4) about as much good as bad outcomes, to (7) mainly good outcomes.

Perceived prevalence was captured using a one-item measure of “How many Australians do you think [do this behaviour]?” measured on a 7-point Likert scale of none (1) to all (7), as adapted from Moodie, MacKintosh, Brown and Hastings (2008).

Dependent variables

Two behaviours were tested, which represented an increase in degrees of deviant consumer behaviour. An individual’s initial propensity for deviance and the likelihood of escalation towards a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour was measured using past behaviour and intentions measures for both of these behaviours. Past engagement in illegal downloading and intentions to fare evade constitutes an intention to escalate their behaviour. Measures for both past behaviour and intentions will now be explained.

Past behaviour was measured using an adaption of Perugini and Bagozzi’s (2001) past behaviour scale capturing frequency and recency of the behaviour. On a 7-point Likert scale, respondents indicated the frequency in which they had done a behaviour in the past year, and in the past four weeks. The Cronbach’s alpha for past behaviour for illegal downloading and fare evasion were $\alpha = .926$ and $\alpha = .919$ respectively. The
mean score for past illegal downloading behaviour was 1.916 with a standard deviation of 1.643, and the mean score for past fare evasion was 1.154 with a standard deviation of .577.

*Intentions* were measured using an adaption of Perugini and Bagozzi’s (2001) behaviour intention scale. On a 7-point Likert scale, respondents indicated the likelihood of them planning to, intending to, and likelihood of actually doing the behaviour during the next four weeks. The Cronbach’s alpha for behaviour intentions for illegal downloading and fare evasion were $\alpha = .998$ and $\alpha = .967$, respectively. Mean scale scores were computed whereby higher scores indicated a higher intention to perform the behaviour in the future. The mean score for illegal downloading intentions was 1.863 with a standard deviation of 1.661, and the mean score for fare evasion intentions was 1.109 with a standard deviation of .517.

*Covariate*

The study is controlling for social desirability bias given the sensitive nature of the topics being explored (Zikmund et al., 2011). Social desirability bias was measured using a short-form version of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, as validated by Reynolds (1982). The scale consists of 13 items such as “There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right”. Respondents were required to answer by selecting True or False. The results were scored following Crowne-Marlowe (1960) recommendations. The Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = .736$. Social desirability bias had a small effect on some of
the constructs in the data, but not enough to compromise the interpretation of the results (see Appendix A).

5.5.3. Procedure

An online survey was conducted to collect the data. All respondents were provided with a participant information sheet, which explained details of the study and stipulated that submitting their survey inferred consent to participate. A screening question was asked to establish the respondent did live in Australia, which was required to ensure the results reflected the behaviours in the Australian marketplace, the focus of this research. Respondents were then asked to complete questions pertaining to their ethical ideology, moral identity, and social desirability. Gender and age were subsequently asked to break up the independent and dependent variable measures. Then respondents were then reminded of the confidentiality of the results before proceeding to the questions capturing their engagement in the dependent variables, and questions about the perceived risk, perceived outcomes, and perceived prevalence of each of the dependent variables. A dummy question was included to capture the respondents’ engagement in an acceptable behaviour – Using a 4 cents fuel voucher from the grocery store to buy petrol. Including this question further increased the amount of time between the independent variable measures and the dependent variable measures in an attempt to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). The survey used pre-existing and validated scales, some of which were adapted to reflect the dependent variables being examined. The results of Study 2 analysis will now be discussed.
5.6. Results – Study 2

In order to test the hypotheses developed in this paper hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted. Before reporting the results the assumption tests will now be reported.

5.6.1. Assumption Testing

There are five core assumptions for conducting multiple regression analyses, including case predictor ratio, normality, outliers, multicollinearity, and normality, linearity, and homogeneity of residuals. Each will now be discussed and are summarised in Table 4.

\textit{N (cases): k (predictors) ratio:} Assumes that the sample size is large enough to produce medium effect sizes for the test being run. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) suggest the sample size should fall between \(50 + 8k\) and \(104 + k\), whereby \(k\) = number of predictors. The sample size of \(n = 214\) exceeds this requirement, supporting this assumption.

\textit{Normality:} Assumes the variables are normally distributed. The assumptions of normality were violated for each of the variables as indicated by the skew and kurtosis measures outlined in Appendix B.

\textit{Outliers:} Assumes that the data is free from both univariate and multivariate outliers. As previously discussed in section 5.5.1, a univariate outlier was removed.
from the data. To test for multivariate outliers, the Mahalanobis distance was detected for each of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The Mahalanobis distance exceeded the critical $\chi^2$ for $df = 2$ (at $\alpha = .001$) of 13.82 for eight respondents in the hierarchical multiple regression analysis testing escalation, thereby violating the outlier assumption. Moreover, the Mahalanobis distance exceeded the critical $\chi^2$ for $df = 6$ (at $\alpha = .001$) of 22.5 and the critical $\chi^2$ for $df = 5$ (at $\alpha = .001$) of 20.5 for the same two respondents in the regressions testing (1) ethical ideology and covariates’ and (2) moral identity and covariates’ effects on deviance, respectively. Hence, the outlier assumption was violated. The outliers identified in the hierarchical MRAs were removed and the results of the hierarchical MRAs were compared to those including the outliers. As there was no difference between the results, the outliers were ignored, and remained included in the dataset following Allen and Bennett (2012) recommendations.

**Multicollinearity**: Assumes that the data is not strongly correlated. Multicollinearity was tested using the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics produced in each of the hierarchical MRAs. Each of the Tolerance statistics were > 0.1 and the VIF statistics were all < 10, hence this assumption was supported. The variables were not multicollinear. See Appendix C for a correlations matrix.

**Normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity**: Assumes that the residual values are normally distributed, represent a linear relationship, and are homogenous across all the predicted variables. Inspection of the normal probability plots of standardised residuals as well as the scatterplot of standardised residuals against standardised
predicted values for each hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicated that the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of residuals were violated. Despite a negative linear pattern appearing in the scatterplots, there was still evidence of deviation from the line. Given the topic of investigation was deviant consumer behaviour; these violations were likely to occur.

Table 4.

Summary of assumptions supported (S) and violated (V)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.k Ratio</th>
<th>Normality of variables</th>
<th>Outliers</th>
<th>Multicollinearity</th>
<th>Normality, linearity, homoscedasticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EI, MI</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escalation</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI, MI, PO, PR, PP</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: EI = ethical ideology, MI = moral identity, PO = perceived outcomes, PR = perceived risk, PP = perceived prevalence

5.6.2. Moral identity and ethical ideology

Moral Identity

To test the hypothesis that moral identity predicted deviant consumer behaviour, a bivariate regression was run for both dependent variables. Moral identity significantly negatively predicted engagement in past illegal downloading \( R^2 = 0.029, F (1, 213) = 7.386, \beta = -.183, p = .007 \), intentions to illegally download \( R^2 = 0.031, F (1, 213) = 7.834, \beta = -.189, p = .006 \), past fare evasion behaviour \( R^2 = 0.127, F (1, 213) = \)
31.926, $\beta = -.362$, $p = .000$), and intentions to fare evade ($R^2 = .126$, $F (1, 213) = 31.639, \beta = -.360, p = .000$). Hypothesis 2 was supported.

**Relativism**

To test the hypothesis that relativism predicted deviant consumer behaviour, a bivariate regression was run for both dependent variables. Relativism did not significantly explain variation in past illegal downloading ($R^2 = 0.011$, $F (1, 213) = 3.271, \beta = 0.123, p = .072$), intentions to illegally download ($R^2 = 0.010$, $F (1, 213) = 3.111, \beta = 0.120, p = .079$), past fare evasion behaviour ($R^2 = 0.012$, $F (1, 213) = 3.591, \beta = -.129, p = .059$), and intentions to fare evade ($R^2 = 0.004$, $F (1, 213) = 1.750, \beta = -.090, p = .187$). Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

**Relativism and Moral Identity**

In combination, the ethical ideology dimension of relativism, and moral identity accounted for a significant 5% of the variance in past illegal downloading behaviour, $R^2 = 0.050$, adjusted $R^2 = .041$, $F (2, 211) = 5.602, p = .004$, a significant 5.5% of the variance in intentions to illegally download, $R^2 = 0.055$, adjusted $R^2 = .046$, $F (2, 211) = 6.136, p = .003$, a significant 9.9% of the variance in past fare evasion, $R^2 = 0.099$, adjusted $R^2 = .091$, $F (2, 211) = 11.613, p = .000$, and a significant 9.4% of the variance in intentions to fare evade, $R^2 = .094$, adjusted $R^2 = .085$, $F (2, 211) = 10.920, p = .000$. Moral identity significantly moderated the relativism – deviant consumer behaviour relationship, for all four dependent variables. Unstandardised ($B$) and standardised ($\beta$) regression coefficients, and squared semi-partial (or ‘part’)}
correlations ($sr^2$) for each predictor on each step of the hierarchical MRA are reported in Table 5. Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 5.

*Interaction between relativism and moral identity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$ [95% CI]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Relativism</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>-.405</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.505</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Relativism</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>-.434</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Relativism</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>-.619</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Relativism</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.631</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DV = 1 – past illegal downloading, 2 – intentions to illegally download, 3 – past fare evasion, 4 – intentions to fare evade.

*Idealism and Moral Identity*

In combination, the ethical ideology dimension of idealism, and moral identity accounted for a significant 4.7% of the variance in past illegal downloading behaviour, $R^2 = 0.047$, adjusted $R^2 = .037$, $F(2, 211) = 5.149, p = .007$, a significant 5% of the variance in intentions to illegally download, $R^2 = 0.050$, adjusted $R^2 = .041$, $F(2, 211) = 5.581, p = .004$, a significant 11.9% of the variance in past fare evasion, $R^2 = 0.119$, adjusted $R^2 = .110$, $F(2, 211) = 14.183, p = .000$, and a significant 10.8% of the variance in intentions to fare evade, $R^2 = 0.108$, adjusted $R^2 = .099$, $F(2, 211) = 12.712, p = .000$. Moral identity significantly moderated the idealism – deviant
consumer behaviour relationship, for all four dependent variables. Unstandardised ($B$) and standardised ($\beta$) regression coefficients, and squared semi-partial (or ‘part’) correlations ($sr^2$) for each predictor on each step of the hierarchical MRA are reported in Table 6. Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Table 6.

*Interaction between idealism and moral identity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$ [95% CI]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Idealism</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>-.290</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.422</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Idealism</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>-.308</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Idealism</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>-.378</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Identity x Idealism</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>-.369</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DV = 1 – past illegal downloading, 2 – intentions to illegally download, 3 – past fare evasion, 4 – intentions to fare evade.

**Summary:** Relativism did not significantly predict deviant consumer behaviour by itself, but when moral identity was added to the equation, relativism did significantly predict each of the dependent variables (see Table 5). Moral identity negatively predicted deviant consumer behaviour, and moral identity moderated the relativism – deviant consumer behaviour relationship (weakened it), and the idealism – deviant consumer behaviour relationship (strengthened it). Support for the interaction effect between moral identity and ethical ideology suggests an individual is less likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour, irrelevant of their ethical ideology, if the
saliency of moral traits (e.g. honesty) is increased. In combination these results support hypotheses 2, 4, and 5. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

5.6.3. Escalation

To test the hypothesis that engagement in some degree of deviant consumer behaviour will increase the individual’s likelihood of engaging in greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour in the future, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis (MRA) was conducted. On step 1 of the hierarchical MRA, past illegal downloading behaviour accounted for a significant 6.9% of the variance in intentions to fare evade on public transport, $R^2 = 0.069$, $F (1, 212) = 15.762, p = .000$. On step 2, past fare evasion behaviour was added to the regression equation, and accounted for an additional 67.7% of the variance in intentions to fare evade on public transport, $\Delta R^2 = 0.677, \Delta F (1, 211) = 563.400, p = .000$. In combination, past illegal downloading and past fare evasion behaviour explained 74.6% of the variance in intentions to fare evade on public transport, $R^2 = 0.746$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.744$, $F (2, 211) = 310.488, p = .000$. By Cohen’s (1988) conventions, a combined effect of this magnitude can be considered very large ($f^2 = 2.93$). Unstandardised ($B$) and standardised ($\beta$) regression coefficients, and squared semi-partial (or ‘part’) correlations ($sr^2$) for each predictor on each step of the hierarchical MRA are reported in Table 7.
Table 7.

**Escalation in deviant consumer behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$ [95% CI]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past illegal downloading behaviour</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past illegal downloading behaviour</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past fare evasion behaviour</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td>.844</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*DV = Intentions to fare evade

**Summary:** Engagement in past questionable behaviour predicted an individual’s intention to engage in an unacceptable behaviour, when accounting for past engagement in the acceptable behaviour. This result supports hypothesis 1.

**5.6.4. Determinants of deviant consumer behaviour**

To test the effects of ethical ideology, moral identity, perceived outcomes, perceived risk, and perceived prevalence on deviant consumer behaviour, hierarchical multiple regression analyses (MRA) were conducted. Entering the ethical ideology and moral identity constructs first, demonstrates their effect on deviant consumer behaviour. Entering perceived outcomes, perceived risk, and perceived prevalence second, highlights the limitation of only focusing on ethics when examining deviant consumer behaviour.
5.6.4.1. Past illegal downloading

On step 1 of the hierarchical MRA, ethical ideology (idealism and relativism) and moral identity accounted for a significant 6.6% of the variance in past illegal downloading behaviour, $R^2 = 0.066$, $F (3, 210) = 4.941$, $p = .002$. On step 2, risk (probability and severity), outcomes, and prevalence, were added to the regression equation, and accounted for an additional 30% of the variance in past illegal downloading behaviour, $\Delta R^2 = 0.299$, $\Delta F (4, 206) = 24.233$, $p = .000$. In combination, the independent variables explained 36.5% of the variance in past illegal downloading behaviour, $R^2 = 0.365$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.343$, $F (7, 206) = 16.902$, $p = .000$. By Cohen’s (1988) conventions, a combined effect of this magnitude can be considered large ($f^2 = .575$). Unstandardised ($B$) and standardised ($\beta$) regression coefficients, and squared semi-partial (or ‘part’) correlations ($sr^2$) for each predictor on each step of the hierarchical MRA are reported in Table 8.
Table 8.

Determinants of past questionable behaviour (past illegal downloading behaviour)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$ [95% CI]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>-.191</td>
<td>-.128</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral identity</td>
<td>-.216</td>
<td>-.138</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>-.106</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>-.184</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk (probability)</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk (severity)</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Outcomes</td>
<td>.372</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Prevalence</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.4.2. Intentions to illegally download

On step 1 of the hierarchical MRA, ethical ideology (idealism and relativism) and moral identity accounted for a significant 6.7% of the variance in intentions to illegally download, $R^2 = 0.067$, $F (3, 210) = 5.044$, $p = .002$. On step 2, risk (probability and severity), outcomes, and prevalence, were added to the regression equation, and accounted for an additional 25.7% of the variance in intentions to illegally download, $\Delta R^2 = 0.257$, $\Delta F (4, 206) = 19.588$, $p = .000$. In combination, the independent variables explained 32.4% of the variance in intentions to illegally download, $R^2 = 0.324$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.301$, $F (7, 206) = 14.121$, $p = .000$. By Cohen’s (1988) conventions, a combined effect of this magnitude can be considered large ($f^2 = .479$). Unstandardised ($B$) and standardised ($\beta$) regression coefficients, and squared
semi-partial (or ‘part’) correlations ($sr^2$) for each predictor on each step of the hierarchical MRA are reported in Table 9.

Table 9.

**Determinants of questionable behaviour intentions (intentions to illegally download)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$ [95% CI]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>-.193</td>
<td>-.128</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral identity</td>
<td>-.227</td>
<td>-.143</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>-.114</td>
<td>-.076</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>-.193</td>
<td>-.122</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk (probability)</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk (severity)</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Outcomes</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Prevalence</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To test the hypothesis that past behaviour predicted behaviour intentions, a bivariate regression was run. Past illegal downloading behaviour accounted for 92.5% of the variance in intentions to illegally download $R^2 = 0.925$, $F (1, 213) = 2612.45$, $p = .000$. Past illegal downloading positively significantly predicted intentions to illegally download ($\beta = 0.962$, $p = .000$). Hypothesis 10 was supported.

**Summary:** For questionable behaviour where there is low social consensus on its inherent acceptability, relativism was the only significant predictor. When perceived
outcomes, perceived risk, and perceived prevalence were added, only perceived outcomes and perceived prevalence were significant predictors of past engagement in and intentions to engage in questionable behaviour. The similarity in predictors and strength of predictors for past behaviour and behaviour intentions is explained by the strong positive relationship between past behaviour and behaviour intentions. These results for the questionable behaviour support hypotheses 6, 8 and 10. Hypothesis 7 was not supported for the questionable behaviour.

5.6.4.3. Past fare evasion

On step 1 of the hierarchical MRA, ethical ideology (idealism and relativism) and moral identity accounted for a significant 15.2% of the variance in past fare evasion, \( R^2 = 0.152, F(3, 210) = 12.519, p = .000 \). On step 2, risk (probability and severity), outcomes, and prevalence, were added to the regression equation, and accounted for an additional 3.2% of the variance in past fare evasion, \( \Delta R^2 = 0.032, \Delta F(4, 206) = 2.051, p = .089 \). In combination, the independent variables explained 18.4% of the variance in past fare evasion, \( R^2 = 0.184, \) adjusted \( R^2 = 0.156, F(7, 206) = 6.644, p = .000 \). By Cohen’s (1988) conventions, a combined effect of this magnitude can be considered medium-large (\( f^2 = .225 \)). Unstandardised (\( B \)) and standardised (\( \beta \)) regression coefficients, and squared semi-partial (or ‘part’) correlations (\( sr^2 \)) for each predictor on each step of the hierarchical MRA are reported in Table 10.
Table 10.

**Determinants of past unacceptable behaviour (past fare evasion)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( B ) [95% CI]</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>( sr^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>-.127</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>.279</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral identity</td>
<td>-.161</td>
<td>-.294</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>-.121</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.078</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Identity</td>
<td>-.144</td>
<td>-.262</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk (probability)</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Risk (severity)</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.453</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Outcomes</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Prevalence</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**5.6.4.4. Intentions to fare evade**

On step 1 of the hierarchical MRA, ethical ideology (idealism and relativism) and moral identity accounted for a significant 14.3% of the variance in intentions to fare evade, \( R^2 = 0.143, F (3, 210) = 11.661, p = .000 \). On step 2, risk (probability and severity), outcomes, and prevalence, were added to the regression equation, and accounted for an additional 3.1% of the variance in intentions to fare evade, \( \Delta R^2 = 0.031, \Delta F (4, 206) = 1.939, p = .105 \). In combination, the independent variables explained 17.4% of the variance in intentions to fare evade, \( R^2 = 0.174, \) adjusted \( R^2 = 0.146, F (7, 206) = 6.195, p = .000 \). By Cohen’s (1988) conventions, a combined effect of this magnitude can be considered medium-large (\( f^2 = .211 \)). Unstandardised (\( B \)) and standardised (\( \beta \)) regression coefficients, and squared semi-partial (or ‘part’)}
correlations ($sr^2$) for each predictor on each step of the hierarchical MRA are reported in Table 11.

Table 11.

_Determinants of unacceptable behaviour intentions (intentions to fare evade)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$ [95% CI]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral identity</td>
<td>-.149</td>
<td>-.302</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.119</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.010</td>
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<td>-.049</td>
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<td>.002</td>
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<td>Moral Identity</td>
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<td>-.259</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.048</td>
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<td>Perceived Prevalence</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</table>

To test the hypothesis that past behaviour predicted future behaviour, a bivariate regression was run. Past fare evasion behaviour accounted for 74% of the variance in intentions to fare evade $R^2 = 0.74$, $F (1, 213) = 52.55$, $p = .000$. Past fare evasion behaviour positively significantly predicted intentions to fare evade ($\beta = 0.816$, $p = .000$). An additional bivariate regression was run to assess if engagement in illegal downloading predicted engagement in past fare evasion. Past illegal downloading behaviour accounted for 4.5% of the variance in past fare evasion behaviour $R^2 =$
0.045, \( F (1, 213) = 28.59, p = .001 \). Engagement in illegal downloading positively significantly predicted engagement in past fare evasion (\( \beta = 0.223, p = .001 \)).

**Summary:** For unacceptable behaviour where there is high social consensus on its inherent acceptability, only moral identity was significant in predicting past behaviour and behaviour intentions. When perceived outcomes, perceived risk, and perceived prevalence were added, only moral identity and perceived outcomes were significant predictors of past engagement in and intentions to engage in unacceptable behaviour. These results for the unacceptable behaviour support hypotheses 6, 8 and 10. Hypothesis 7 was not supported for the unacceptable behaviour. Moreover, the strength of the significant predictors of questionable behaviour was greater than the strength of the significant predictors of unacceptable behaviour (see Appendix D). This result supports hypothesis 9.

### 5.7. Discussion

The purpose of this paper was three fold. First, Study 1 examined variability in the social consensus of the inherent acceptability of ten consumer behaviours, taken from previous research (*see Chapter 4*). Social consensus of the ten consumer behaviour’s inherent acceptability was captured using a Best-Worst Scale study with a balanced incomplete block design. Second, Study 2 examined the determinants of deviant consumer behaviour, for a questionable behaviour (low social consensus) and an unacceptable behaviour (high social consensus), as identified in Study 1. Third, Study 2 also investigated if an individual’s engagement in a questionable behaviour predicted their engagement in an unacceptable behaviour, constituting an escalation
towards a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour. Study 2 was executed using a survey to test the hypotheses developed in the literature section of this paper.

The findings from Study 1 highlighted the discrepancies in perceptions of right and wrong behaviours. A lack of social consensus on the inherent acceptability of behaviours makes it difficult for organisations to deter these behaviours, because deterrence strategies currently rely on the assumption that there is social consensus on the inherent acceptability of the behaviour being deterred. In Study 2, the hypotheses supported and not-supported are highlighted in Table 12.
Table 12.

Hypotheses supported and not supported

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Supported / Not supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  An individual will be more likely to intend to engage in a perceived greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour (unacceptable behaviour), if they have previously engaged in perceived minor degrees of deviant consumer behaviour (questionable behaviour).</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Moral identity will negatively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Relativism will positively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Moral identity will have a weakening effect on the positive relationship between individuals associating with high levels of relativism, and deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Moral identity will have a strengthening effect on the negative relationship between individuals associating with high levels of idealism, and deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Perceived outcomes will positively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Perceived risk will negatively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Perceived prevalence will positively predict engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Perceived outcomes, risk, and prevalence will have a stronger effect on the questionable behaviour (low social consensus), than the unacceptable behaviour (high social consensus)</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Past behaviour will positively predict behaviour intentions.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethical ideology and moral identity

Moral identity was found to weaken the positive relationship between relativism and deviant consumer behaviour, such that a high moral identity made an individual
associating with high levels of relativism less likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. The interaction suggests support for deterrence strategies seeking to raise the saliency of moral traits to decrease engagement in deviant consumer behaviour by individuals associating with relativism.

Escalation

Support was found for the escalation hypothesis in that engagement in a lower degree of deviant consumer behaviour explained variation in an individual’s intentions to engage in a greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour in the future. Specifically, an individual’s past engagement in illegal downloading predicted an individual’s intention to evade fare on public transport, when accounting for an individual’s past fare evasion behaviour. This suggests attempts to deter lower degrees of deviant consumer behaviour could have a trickle down effect on deterring engagement in greater degrees of deviant consumer behaviour.

Determinants of deviant consumer behaviour

Both ethical ideology and moral identity were still found to contribute to explaining variation in deviant consumer behaviour when examined with perceived risk, perceived outcomes, and perceived prevalence. However, for illegal downloading, the lower degree of deviant consumer behaviour, the perceived outcomes and perceived prevalence of the behaviour were stronger predictors of past behaviour and intentions. These results suggest illegal downloading is possibly not perceived to be a moral or ethical issue. Moreover, the lower levels of consensus on the acceptability of this behaviour as identified in Study 1 could suggest that
individuals are likely to turn to others to guide their behaviour, evident by the presence of perceived prevalence. Further, the outcomes were perceived to be mostly positive from illegal downloading, hence the behaviour was more likely to have been enacted and more likely to be performed in the future.

For the greater degree of deviant consumer behaviour, fare evasion, perceived outcomes was the strongest predictor of past behaviour and intentions. Only moral identity and perceived outcomes were significant in predicting fare evasion behaviour. The results suggest when there is consensus on a behaviour's inherent acceptability as identified in Study 1, the behaviour cannot be categorised as anything other than wrong, and engagement in such a behaviour would require the individual to negatively update their self-concept. With moral identity as the predictor over the ethical ideologies idealism and relativism, it could suggest that engagement in fare evasion relied on the amount of internal sanctions likely to be administered to punish an individual’s behaviour for engagement in a behaviour where there is high social consensus on its acceptability. Doing so would require the individual to negatively update their self-concept. Moreover, performing an outright wrong behaviour contradicts with behaviour an ‘honest’ person would execute as informed by an individual’s moral identity. Where the outcomes are perceived to be mostly negative from fare evasion on public transport, the behaviour was less likely to be enacted and less likely to be performed in the future.

In examining determinants of deviant consumer behaviour, perceived risk - including perceive probability and severity of punishment, was not significant in
predicting engagement in deviant consumer behaviour. These findings support arguments that deterrence strategies need to focus on alternative factors influencing engagement in deviant consumer behaviour.

This research offers a number of theoretical and practical implications, which will now be discussed, followed by a discussion of the limitations and opportunities for future research.

5.8. Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

Implications

This research contributes to a greater understanding of the complexities of deviant consumer behaviour. A methodological contribution was made in Study 1 through the use of a BWS study with a BIBD, which is a method that overcomes biases associated with rating scales when comparing behaviours (Daly et al., 2010). This method enabled statistical comparison between behaviours to highlight inconsistencies in social consensus of the behaviour’s acceptability. This method is more rigorous in assessing the perceived acceptability of behaviour than the use of rating scales commonly used in consumer deviance and consumer ethics research. A theoretical contribution was also made in Study 1 by quantifying the variability in societal perceptions over the inherent acceptability of ten consumer behaviours. Identifying consistencies and discrepancies in individual subjective perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour, provides greater insight into the types of deterrence strategies required to deter those behaviours. Study 1 also provided Study 2 with dependent variables to test (1) if differences exist in the determinants of questionable (low social
consensus) and unacceptable (high social consensus) consumer behaviours and (2) if escalations in deviant consumer behaviour exist.

The findings of Study 2 add to the deviant consumer behaviour literature by providing an understanding of the role of ethical ideology and moral identity in impeding and facilitating an individual’s engagement in, and intention to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. The moderating role of moral identity on the ethical ideology – behaviour relationship is supported by previous research (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). The relationship between ethical ideology and moral identity has begun to receive attention in the literature (Aquino & Reed, 2002; McFerran et al., 2010; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007; Vitell, 2009). The ability of moral identity to weaken the relativism – deviant consumer behaviour relationship provides further support for investigations into novel ways to trigger an individual’s moral identity to reduce the individual’s propensity for deviant consumer behaviour (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino et al., 2009; Shu et al., 2012). The findings in this research answer calls to extend knowledge on the connection between how individuals perceive their moral identity, approach moral reasoning, and their susceptibility to deviant consumer behaviour, which are ongoing research requirements in the moral psychology and philosophy fields (Hardy, 2006; Trevino et al., 2006).

The variation in determinants of deviant consumer behaviour for questionable and unacceptable behaviours is a valuable contribution to the fields of consumer deviance and consumer ethics. It is difficult to deter behaviours that lack social consensus on their inherent acceptability as deterrence strategies assume there is social consensus on the inherent acceptability of the behaviour. The law and organisational policies are
created under the assumption there is social consensus on the inherent acceptability of the act (Cooter, 2000). The law and organisational policy are in place to reduce the ambiguity of how individuals should behave (Davis et al., 1998). Thus, deterrence strategies that make appeals to uphold the law and organisational policy are only effective for the ‘unacceptable’ behaviours where there is high social consensus on the inherent acceptability of that behaviour. The findings presented in this paper suggest potential variations in what predicts low social consensus and high social consensus behaviours, and how those predictors can also vary in strength. Deterrence strategies should be tailored around these variations. For instance, questionable behaviours that lack social consensus are more reliant on the prevalence of the behaviour – what others are doing, and the perceived outcomes of the behaviour – whether the individual perceives performing the deviant consumer behaviour will result in generally good outcomes. Deterrence strategies that challenge the perceptions of prevalence and outcomes will be more effective than deterrence strategies that rely solely on appeals to upholding the law and organisational policy.

The inclusion of determinants from both the consumer deviance and consumer ethics bodies of literature provides a broader understanding of the deviant consumer behaviour concept. This study addresses the limitation of focusing solely on the effect of ethics in predicting deviant consumer behaviour as not all behaviours are considered to have an ethical dimension to them. Finally, finding support for the concept of escalating deviant consumer behaviour is a novel contribution to the deviant consumer behaviour literature, despite its extensive exploration in other fields investigating deviant behaviour (e.g. Argandona, 2003; Ayers et al., 1999; Dean et al., 2010; Feld & Straus, 1989, Kazemian, et al., 2009; Ronel, 2011; Winstok, 2008;
Zygliopoulos & Fleming, 2008; Zygliopoulos, et al., 2008). Support for the escalation hypothesis allows for future research into escalations of deviant consumer behaviour.

A number of practical implications for marketers seeking to deter deviant consumer behaviour also evolved from the study. Taking a tailored approach to deterrence means marketers stop relying on the traditional model of rational behaviour, suggesting individuals weigh up the costs and benefits of a situation, and instead accept alternative explanations for behaviour such as an individual’s drive to maintain their self-concept, and how that can still sometimes allow for deviant consumer behaviour to be performed. Findings showed perceptions of risk were not significant in any of the tests, suggesting that risk is not always a factor in a consumer’s decision to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. Factors prevailing over perceived risk were perceived outcomes and perceived prevalence. Marketers need to consider how to better demonstrate the outcomes of a consumer’s deviant act, to illustrate the negative outcomes. This could be achieved through actual punishment of the behaviour, to decrease the temporal distance between an individual’s deviant consumer behaviour and the negative consequences caused (Moore & Lowenstein, 2004). Another strategy could target perceptions of prevalence through the use of social proofs. Social proofs are tools used to persuade individuals to perform a behaviour the organisation wants, by suggesting the group an individual associates with or aspires to be apart of, also engages in that behaviour (Goldstein, Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2008).
Further, understanding the role of moral identity and ethical ideology in predicting behaviour aids in the development of more informed deterrence messages. For instance marketers could focus on promoting self-regulation. To access self-regulation, marketers need to activate an individual’s objective self-awareness of their own moral standards, which can be done by increasing the saliency of moral values as explored in work by Mazar et al. (2008), Gino et al. (2009), and Shu et al., (2012). Increasing the saliency of moral values, even temporarily, can reduce the likelihood of deviant consumer behaviour (Mazar et al., 2008).

**Limitations and future research opportunities**

As only a small number of the sample self-reported deviant consumer behaviour and intentions to perform deviant consumer behaviour, the effect sizes must be interpreted with caution. This limitation could be overcome by testing more than two dependent variables. For instance, using more behaviours from Study 1, such that if a respondent reports engagement in behaviours 1, 2, and or 3 it constitutes engagement in a questionable behaviour, while reporting engagement in behaviours 4, 5, and or 6 constitutes engagement in an unacceptable behaviour. This was difficult to execute in our study given the lack of statistically significant differences between the behaviours tested in Study 1. In other words, most behaviours were in the questionable category, and were not significantly different from one another.

Another limitation is that the individual’s need to illegally download TV shows was not asked in the survey. This means that a respondent may not illegally download TV shows due to absence of need or interest in doing so, not because of the predictors being tested. Replicating this study with a younger sample might capture more self-
reported illegal downloading behaviour as found in previous research (e.g. Aleassa et al., 2011; Danaher, Dhanasobhon, Smith & Telang, 2010; Hinduja, 2007). An individual’s use of public transport was asked in the survey, however, when the tests controlled for ‘use’, standardised betas tended to exceed 1. This could be due to the low levels of self-reported fare evasion behaviour and intentions to fare evade. Statistics show that fare evasion costs Australian taxpayers millions of dollars; $21 million in New South Wales (NSW Audit Office, 2006), $25 million in Queensland (Ironside, 2013), and $74 million in Victoria (Harris, 2013), which suggests the behaviour is more prevalent than what was captured in this sample.

The culturally homogenous sample was another limitation of this research. While the focus of this research was on Australian consumers, culture has been found to influence perceptions and behaviour in the consumer context (Al-Khatib, Dobie & Vitell, 1995; Rawwas, 2001). Therefore, future research would benefit from replicating the studies across different sample groups in other cultures. Moreover, escalation was tested cross-sectionally. To improve testing of escalation, a longitudinal study could be conducted to monitor changes in behaviour over time, as escalation tends to occur over time. Then the roles of ethical ideology, moral identity, and other factors in the escalation process could be tested.

A final limitation of Study 2 was not accounting for personality types that answer ethical-type questions in a socially desirable way as suggested by Paulhus (1991). Future research would benefit from examining the effect of personality on socially
desirable responding styles in comparison to the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability bias measures.

Other opportunities for future research exist beyond what has already been mentioned. Experiments testing the effectiveness of a variety of deterrence mechanisms in a consumer context, using the information found in this research as triggers would provide useful insight for marketers on the types of campaigns or mechanisms that need to be in place. Moreover, it is important to explore how an organisation can activate an individual’s moral identity, consistently or temporarily, to benefit from the internal self-sanction mechanism, guiding an individual to perform non-deviant consumer behaviours (Bandura, 1999; Mazar et al., 2008). In a series of experiments, Shu et al. (2012) found that signing a declaration of honesty at the beginning of an insurance form, as opposed to the end of the form, reduced the amount of cheating on the insurance form. However, finding novel ways to trigger morality that do not ultimately become ignored like Terms and Conditions Statements, will require further investigations.

This research has examined the determinants of two types of deviant consumer behaviour – questionable and unacceptable, and explored the concept of escalating deviant consumer behaviour. In doing so, this research has added to the understanding of the complexities of deviant consumer behaviour across the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields of research.
5.9. References


Klosko, G. (Composer). (2011). Non-riotous behaviour [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from [http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b014pw7g](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b014pw7g)


Park, H. S., & Smith, S.W. (2007). Distinctiveness and Influence of Subjective Norms, Personal Descriptive and Injunctive Norms, and Societal Descriptive...


Shu, L. L., Mazar, N., Gino, F., Ariely, D., & Bazerman, M. H. (2012). Signing at the beginning makes ethics salient and decreases dishonest self-reports in
comparison to signing at the end. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 109*(38), 15197-15200.


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# 5.10. Appendix

## 5.10.1. Appendix A: Social Desirability Bias

### Social desirability bias – Questionable behaviour

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### Social desirability bias – Unacceptable behaviour

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### Social desirability bias – Moral identity and ethical ideology

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## 5.10.2. Appendix B: Skew and Kurtosis

### Skew and Kurtosis – Questionable behaviour

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### Skew and Kurtosis – Unacceptable behaviour

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### Skew and Kurtosis – Moral identity and ethical ideology

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5.10.3. Appendix C: Correlations Matrix

Correlations matrix

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<td></td>
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<td>5. Intentions to illegally download</td>
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<td>-.189**</td>
<td>.962**</td>
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<td>6. Past fare evasion</td>
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<td>.226**</td>
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*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.10.4. Appendix D: Strength of predictors based on social consensus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Questionable (intentions)</th>
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*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
CHAPTER 6: COMMENTARY PAPER
6. CHAPTER SIX: Commentary Paper
Written as a commentary paper for the Journal of Consumer Affairs

6.1. Introduction

Deviant consumer behaviour – behaviour that is against the law, a regulation, or violates the generally accepted norms of conduct – is an ongoing problem in marketplaces around the globe (Elliott, Ageton & Canter, 1979; Fullerton & Punj, 1993; Gibbs, 1981; Kaplan & Lin, 2000; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Moschis & Cox, 1989). Deviant consumer behaviour can be directed towards an organisation’s employees (e.g. verbal abuse), merchandise (e.g. theft- shoplifting, copyright; fraudulent returns), financial assets (e.g. all types of fraud), physical or electronic premises (e.g. vandalism; computer virus), or other consumers (e.g. jumping queues; hostile physical acts) (Fullerton & Punj, 1997; 2004). Deterrence strategies play an important role in curbing deviant consumer behaviour. Deterrence strategies are strategies that organisations use to stop consumers from engaging in specific behaviours that cause harm to other customers, employees, or the organisation itself. However, traditional deterrence strategies used in the consumer context rely on the assumption that individuals are rational beings and will always weigh up the costs and benefits of a situation (Cole, 1989; Pratt, Cullen, Blevins, Daigle & Madensen, 2006; Tittle, 1980). This rational approach has been criticised, as there are other underlying psychological factors that underpin behaviour (e.g. Akers, 1990; Garoupa, 2003; Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008; Mazar & Ariely, 2006). This article presents a commentary deterring deviant consumer behaviour – can everyday consumers engaging in deviant consumer behaviour be deterred? Currently, consumer deviance and consumer ethics research has been focused on understanding why consumers
engage in deviant consumer behaviour, while, understandably, less focus has been placed on understanding how to deter it.

In this commentary, the financial costs of deviant consumer behaviour are examined at a global level with evidence from a number of countries, followed by a discussion of research conducted in this field by the author. Research findings are used to argue the need for a more tailored approach to deterrence strategies that account for variations in what consumers perceive as right and wrong, and attack the justifications people use to enable them to perform deviant consumer behaviours. A selection of deterrence strategies is recommended for organisations to implement. However, issues with failed implementation are discussed as most academic research does not clearly specify how organisations can implement these changes along with quantifying the economic benefits of doing so. As such, a brief future research agenda is presented to guide research projects in the area of deterrence in consumer deviance and consumer ethics literature.

6.2. Costs of deviant consumer behaviour

The financial costs of deviant consumer behaviour are evident around the globe. In the US, fraudulent returns were estimated to have cost retailers $US8.76 billion, of which $US3.39 billion was during the holiday season alone (Essential Retail, 2013). Moreover, 62.1% of the US retailers surveyed reported having been victims of ‘de-shopping’ – the act of returning a non-defective used item for a refund, or returning a used item after one use (Essential Retail, 2013). US retailers believe the current polices in place to deter consumers from committing fraudulent returns are only ‘somewhat’ effective (Essential Retail, 2013). The large UK department store Marks
and Spencer responded to the same ‘de-shopping’ practices by setting up dedicated returns desks to ensure consistency in applying store return-policies (Economist, 2012). The returns desks were also set up away the cash registers to reduce the effectiveness of irate screaming customers trying to coerce the employee to process the return, causing great distress to the employee and surrounding customers (Economist, 2012). The effectiveness of this strategy is yet to be reported. In Australia, customer theft accounted for 45% of the losses incurred by organisations, costing the retail industry $AU1.86 billion in 2012-2013 (Jager, 2013). While this is only a small percentage compared to the “$112 billion lost globally” to customer theft, Australian households were found to “have the second highest ‘honesty tax’ in the world”, at $AU290 per year, per household to offset the losses retailers incur from customer theft (Jager, 2013, ¶4). The US, in contrast, has the highest honesty tax costing $AU296 per year, per household (Jager, 2013).

‘Supermarket grazing’ is another deviant consumer behaviour organisations could face whereby consumers eat food in the grocery store that is not eventually paid for, (e.g. grapes). A grocery store in New Zealand quantified the effect of ‘supermarket grazing’ and estimated financial losses of $NZ200-$NZ300 to the store, every week (Butterfield, 2011). Extrapolated out for the year, and for each grocery store, the financial loss becomes more significant. To some individuals, however, they perceive the behaviour as acceptable ‘it’s just 1-2 grapes, no harm done’.

Beyond the context of the retail industry, Accenture (2013) estimates the insurance industry in Europe loses €8-12 billion annually due to fraudulent insurance claims.
Insurance fraud also harms other insurance customers through the increased premiums they need to pay to offset the cost of fraudulent claims, similar to the ‘honesty tax’ mentioned above. Europe is also affected by the deviant consumer behaviour of fare evasion on public transport. In London, commuters evading fares cost the city £210 million (National Fraud Authority, 2013), while fare evaders in France cost the state-owned railway €300 million in 2013 (GlobalPost, 2013). The US is not far behind with fare evasion in New York City costing the Metropolitan Transport Authority $US100 million a year (Hinds, 2012). While Australia is no stranger to fare evaders, the effect is less in comparison to those listed above, with fare evasion on public transport costing Australian states between $AU21 - $AU74 million each year (Harris, 2013; Ironside, 2013; NSW Audit Office, 2006). The act of fare evasion not only costs governments or organisations in charge of public transport, but also other commuters who in-turn pay higher fares to offset the growing cost of fare evasion.

These examples only cover a few of the many types of deviant consumer behaviours evident around the globe. While the impact of illegal behaviours is easy to quantify, as data is collected on the incidence of those behaviours occurring, it is difficult to quantify the effect of deviant, yet not illegal consumer behaviours such as lying (Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Although these more ‘extreme’ and ‘severe’ deviant consumer behaviours are harmful to the victims, the cumulative effect of comparatively ‘minor’ or smaller degrees of deviant behaviour that occur everyday are just as harmful to organisations, employees, and other consumers (Harris & Daunt, 2013; Mazar & Ariely, 2006; Mazar et al., 2008). The consequences of deviant
consumer behaviour drive the need for understanding and developing deterrence strategies.

6.3. Research on deviant consumer behaviour

6.3.1. How do consumers perceive right and wrong behaviours?

In a series of qualitative interviews with Australian consumers examining consumer perceptions of right and wrong, a behaviour was deemed acceptable if the behaviour is consistent with the law and organisational policy, is prevalent in society, does not cause harm to the individual or others, there is no victim, and the individual can easily defend their actions. In contrast a behaviour was deemed unacceptable if the behaviour violates the law and organisational policy, is not prevalent in society, does cause harm to the individual or others, there is a victim, and the individual cannot easily defend their actions. However, the complexity in consumer perceptions was evident when ‘unacceptable’ behaviours were justified as being ‘acceptable’ using neutralisation techniques. Neutralisation techniques are disengagement tools used to reduce anticipatory or actual cognitive dissonance experienced from the intention to, or actual performance of, a behaviour that contradicts with one’s self-concept (Akers & Sellers, 2004; Bandura, 1999; Chatzidakis, Hibbert, Mitussis & Smith, 2004; Festinger, 1957; Sykes & Matza, 1957). The neutralisation techniques commonly used in the interviews were normal practice (‘everyone is doing it’), appeal to higher loyalties (‘not what a good person would do’), defense of necessity (‘I had no other choice’), denial of victim (‘they deserved the harm’), denial of injury (‘no one is getting hurt’), justification by comparison (‘not as bad as alternatives’), condemnation of condemners (‘they are as bad as me’), and claim of entitlement (‘I
have a right to get what I want’). In the interviews, the factors identified as influencing consumer perceptions included official classification of the behaviour (the law or organisational policy), perceived risk, norms, intent, perceived outcomes, past experiences as the victim, moral identity, and perceived fairness. Individuals can place varying degrees of importance on a varying number of these factors to assess the acceptability of a behaviour. Some examples of the complexity of consumer perceptions evident in the data are examined below.

Despite the law and organisational policies stipulating a behaviour as wrong, individuals in the interviews deviated from that and developed their own perceptions of right and wrong behaviours. For instance, some consumers create fake US iTunes accounts to access and pay for content not available in Australia as a means of circumventing consumption constraints on accessing entertainment goods. Creating a fake US iTunes account was perceived as acceptable consumer behaviour, as it mimics a traditional business transaction – the organisation receives payment and the consumer receives the product. However, this behaviour is in breach of Apple’s organisational policy and arguably violates some international laws. Yet it remains the more acceptable behaviour in comparison to illegally downloading TV shows from the Internet for free for personal consumption, which is an example of copyright infringement. Some consumers, however, saw illegal downloading as a justifiable action, making it perceived as ‘questionable’ if not, ‘acceptable’. The behaviour is seen as a retaliatory response to the perceived unfair constraints placed on their consumption of entertainment goods. Fairness in the literature suggests when a consumer perceives a situation to be unfair they are more likely to respond with deviant behaviour (Agnew, 1992; Fisk et al., 2010; Fukukawa, 2002; Fullerton &
Punj, 1997; 2004; Gregoire & Fisher, 2007; Yi & Gong, 2008). Having a retaliatory behaviour perceived as ‘questionable’ if not ‘acceptable’ contradicts the findings that deviant consumer behaviour that is ‘intentionally’ performed is considered unacceptable. Retaliation in response to perceived unfair situations seems to complicate the effect ‘intent’ has on perceptions of deviant consumer behaviour.

The prevalence of a behaviour seemed to infer the acceptability of a deviant consumer behaviour as prevalent behaviour was suggested to reflect the ‘norm’. Individuals look to others to guide their actions, based on the perceived popularity of an act and the perceived social approval of the act (Park & Smith, 2007). When an individual does not know how to behave in a particular situation they turn to others to see what is appropriate and what behaviour is being rewarded (Bandura, 1977). Conflict arose when a respondent perceived the prevalence of a behaviour to contradict the behaviour’s official classification – what the law or organisational policy stipulated as wrong, shifting the behaviour from being perceived as ‘unacceptable’ to ‘questionable’. Discrepancies between perceived prevalence and the official classification of the behaviour makes it difficult for order to be maintained in the marketplace, as they draw on the justification of ‘normal practice’ (‘but everyone is doing it, so it can’t be wrong’). Support from family and friends also indicated what an individual deemed ‘normative’ behaviour. Subjective norms reflect if parents, family, and/or friends, would support the individual’s enactment of that behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The group an individual associates with teaches beliefs, attitudes, and justification techniques, and is a primary source of behavioural reinforcement, which guides the individual’s behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). If people an individual associates with support a behaviour, enactment of that behaviour
will not likely incur a social sanction – some kind of punishment – and could possibly be rewarded. If the people an individual associates with does not support a behaviour, it will likely be back by social sanctions, which indicates the behaviour deviates from the norm and should be perceived as ‘questionable’ or ‘unacceptable’.

The type of harm largely considered in the interviews was monetary, and individuals had arbitrary definitions for what constituted ‘too much monetary harm’ as a result of deviant consumer behaviour. The degree of harm was considered alongside the direction of the harm – the individual (employee or other consumer), a small organisation, or a large organisation. Consistent with existing research in the field, the more identifiable the victim the more unacceptable the behaviour was perceived to be (Dootson, Neale & Fullerton, 2014). The distinction between individuals and organisations is explained by the identifiable victim effect, such that the more identifiable the victim the less likely deviant acts will be directed towards them, due to the identifiable victim’s ability to engender empathy from the individual committing the deviant act (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997). However, Jones’ (1991) proximity dimension goes a step further than just identifying the victim, and stresses the importance of how ‘close’ the individual feels to the victim. If an individual has had experience as the victim of deviant consumer behaviour, they are more likely to feel ‘close’ to the victim as perceive that behaviour as ‘unacceptable’. If the victim is not identifiable, or specific, individuals will perceive no harm is being caused, thereby facilitating their deviant actions (Small & Loewenstein, 2003). While there is a distinction between individual and organisational victims, there is also a distinction between small and large organisations. Consumers are more willing to victimise large rather than small organisations (Fullerton & Punj, 2004). The greater the
organisation’s size, the greater the perceptions of impersonality, thus the greater the probability of deviant consumer behaviour, as the consumer does not feel they are harming the organisation (Fullerton & Punj, 1997). Deviant consumer behaviour towards a large organisation can be seen as a ‘faceless crime’ (Cox, Cox & Moschis, 1990). Combining the degree and direction of harm further complicated perceptions of right and wrong among consumers in the interviews.

Moral identity was identified in the interviews as influencing consumer perceptions in that if a behaviour contradicted an individual’s view of themselves as an honest, kind, caring, compassionate person, then the behaviour was perceived as ‘unacceptable’. The role of individuals’ morals was also seen as the primary reason why when two individuals face the same situation, only one individual does not engage in a serious type of deviant consumer behaviour. The stronger an individual’s morals, the less likely they will perceive a deviant consumer behaviour to be acceptable, and less likely they will engage in deviant consumer behaviour. Some investigation has begun on the idea of resetting one’s perceptions of right and wrong back to its original state, after a deviant act is performed (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2009). This research suggests that providing ‘moral reminders’ to individuals, increases the saliency of an individual’s own moral standards, if only temporarily, to reduce their engagement in deviant acts (Mazar et al., 2008; Gino et al., 2009). Resetting manipulation would keep the deviant consumer behaviour classified as ‘deviant’ in the mind of the individual, as opposed to shifting it to be perceived as an ‘acceptable’ behaviour. To date, such resetting manipulations are not readily available in the consumer context therefore preventing this resetting process.
Hence, individuals are likely to use past deviant consumer behaviour as a benchmark for future behaviour (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004).

These are just some examples of the complexities underpinning consumer perceptions from a qualitative study conducted by the author. With individuals placing varying degrees of importance on a varying number of factors in their perceptions, it becomes difficult to police deviant actions as everyone has a different view on what is right and wrong, and for different reasons. Currently, deterrence strategies work under the assumption that the behaviour being deterred is agreed upon as being ‘unacceptable’ via law or organisational policy. However, if there is disagreement on the behaviour’s perceived acceptability, a lack of consensus can lead to opportunities for consumers to justify their deviant actions. Another study examined the degree of social consensus on behaviour acceptability.

6.3.2. How do individual subjective perceptions of right and wrong vary among consumers?

A quantitative best-worst scale study using a balanced incomplete block design investigated the extent to which individual perceptions of right and wrong varied, to ascertain the social consensus on a behaviour’s acceptability. The findings suggest that as a society, we agree on the polar acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, yet everything in between remains questionable. Questionable behaviours are behaviours where there is disagreement in society on whether the action is acceptable or unacceptable.
While polar unacceptable behaviours can be deterred following existing deterrence strategies because there is consensus on its unacceptability, questionable behaviours may require more tailored deterrence strategies. Past research on social consensus suggests when there is low social consensus on an issue; individuals draw on a number of contextual or psychological factors to guide their actions (Barnett, 2001; Davis, Johnson & Ohmer, 1998; Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). In contrast, when there is high social consensus on an issue, there is less ambiguity on how to behave; meaning individuals are less reliant on contextual or psychological factors to guide their behaviour (Barnett, 2001; Davis et al., 1998; Jones, 1991; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). Tailored deterrence strategies could seek to deter behaviours based on the justification an individual uses to perform the behaviour that the law or an organisational policy deems as unacceptable, yet society has low consensus on its unacceptability. A study was conducted to examine the predictors of deviant consumer behaviour when the social consensus varied.

6.3.3. What predicts engagement in deviant consumer behaviour when social consensus varies?

In a study investigating the predictors of deviant consumer behaviour when the social consensus varied, the findings demonstrated that there were different predictors for low social consensus behaviours and high social consensus behaviours. A low social consensus behaviour was predicted by the perceived prevalence and the perceive outcomes of the behaviour, which is consistent with the notion of individuals looking to others to guide their actions when ambiguity ensues, and that behaviour is performed to achieve ‘generally good’ outcomes. A high social consensus behaviour was predicted by perceived outcomes and moral identity, which suggests that
engaging in the behaviour comes down to having a weak moral identity – no self-sanctions, and the outcomes are expected to be ‘generally good’, despite the behaviour being agreed upon as being wrong. Moreover, the study found that engagement in a ‘questionable’ (low social consensus) behaviour was strongly associated with, and predicted intention to engage in, an ‘unacceptable’ (high social consensus) behaviour. This could suggest that curbing some deviant consumer behaviour could have a flow on effect of curbing other types, if not greater degrees, of deviant consumer behaviour.

6.4. Deterrence Strategies: Currently In Literature and Recommendations

In consumer deviance research, Fullerton and Punj (1997, 2004) suggest two approaches to deterrence – education and deterrence through perceived risk. Education includes persuasive promotional messages to encourage consumers to ‘unlearn’ their deviant behaviour and increase the role of moral constraints. An educational approach to controlling consumer actions is grounded in control theory from criminology, which suggests when individuals are bonded to the values of a broader society it reduces instances of deviance (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004). Education is suggested to shape attitudes towards deviance in the hope that it triggers the use of informal sanctions, whereby consumers punish other consumers for their deviant behaviour (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004). An education-based approach is suggested to be ‘moderately’ effective for deviant consumer behaviour that is performed ‘occasionally’, or is motivated by ‘thrill-seeking’, or where the individual holds negative attitudes towards the organisation (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004). However, education-based approaches are suggested to have ‘low’ effectiveness for behaviours motivated by ‘unfulfilled aspirations’ – the need to fulfill goals they
cannot meet by following the law, the absence of moral constraints, provocative situational factors which lead to low self-control, or for repeat offenders (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004).

In contrast, deterrence through perceived risk seeks to control behaviour through the increased threat of punishment by making the ‘costs’ of deviant consumer behaviour higher than the ‘benefits’ (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004). In other words, Fullerton and Punj (1997, 2004) were proposing a risk-based approach to deterrence as grounded in the rational-choice view of human behaviour. A risk-based approach to deterrence is suggested to be ‘moderately’ effective for behaviours motivated by the absence of moral constraints – replacing self-sanctions with external sanctions, unfulfilled aspirations – whereby the cost of deviance is too high, provocative situational factors that lead to low self-control – removal of factors reduces provocation, and for the occasional offenders (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004). Risk-based deterrence strategies are suggested to have ‘low’ effectiveness for behaviours motivated by negative attitudes towards the organisation – the deterrent reinforces negative beliefs, and for ‘thrill seekers’ (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004). However, the risk-approach to deterrence relies on a rational approach to control behaviour, which is limited, as there are other underlying psychological factors that drive human behaviour (e.g. Akers, 1990; Garoupa, 2003; Mazar et al., 2008; Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Moreover, in a study conducted by the author, perceptions of risk did not predict deviant consumer behaviour, which supports the premise that most deviant consumer behaviour goes undetected (Bandura, 1991b).
All of these strategies – education and risk-based, require empirical examination through field-testing to ascertain effectiveness and quantify reductions in deviant consumer behaviour. This section will review the existing recommendations for deterrence strategies to dissuade deviant consumer behaviour, and will propose some new strategies based on the research conducted by the author.

Identifying the victim and the harm caused

One method of deterrence could be educating the public that deviant consumer behaviour is not victimless wrong doing (Fullerton & Punj, 1997, 2004). This recommendation is consistent with research conducted by the author, which sees value in humanising the victim organisation. There are two factors at play, individuals (1) fail to see the organisation as a victim, and (2) are unclear on the specific harm their deviant consumer behaviour causes. In order to address these two factors through deterrence strategies, it is recommended that the organisation be humanised, and individuals be educated about the harm caused to the victim. Consumers that victimise organisations, justify their deviant consumer behaviour using the following neutralisation techniques; “I have no other choice” – defense of necessity, “it’s their own fault, they deserve it” – denial of victim, “they have plenty of money, they aren’t being hurt by my behaviour” – denial of injury. These justifications can be challenged through humanisation. Humanising the organisation seeks to reduce the social distance between the consumer committing the deviant act and the organisation being harmed, thereby reducing deviant consumer behaviour (Cox et al., 1990; Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997). Putting a ‘face’ to an organisation makes it more difficult for the consumer to justify performing deviant consumer behaviour at the expense of the organisation because it leverages the identifiable victim effect. Identifiable victims
engender a greater empathic response, making an individual more willing to engage in behaviour that will reduce the harm inflicted on the victim (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997; Kogut & Ritov, 2005). Deviant consumer behaviour is reduced when the individual performing the behaviour can see the harm they are causing a specified victim (Small & Loewenstein, 2003). Such an approach needs to be developed and tested.

Humanising the organisation may be a difficult strategy for very large, profitable organisations as the perceived social distance between the consumer and the organisation is significant. To attempt to overcome this issue, the humanising recommendation would need to be used in conjunction with educating consumers about the harm caused to the victim to change perceived outcomes. Individuals who are more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour are focused on the benefit they gain from performing the behaviour, as opposed to acknowledging the negative outcome incurred by others as a result of the individual’s actions (Forsyth, 1980). Therefore, there is a need for organisations to increase awareness of the outcomes deviant consumer behaviour causes. Implementing information campaigns that go alongside the humanisation strategy could more clearly highlight the harm caused to others by the individual committing the deviant consumer behaviour. Such an approach attempts to challenge consumers’ denial of injury justification. However, raising awareness of the negative effects of deviant consumer behaviour may not be enough to effectively deter these behaviours being performed. Instead, sanctions may need to be administered.
Administration of formal and social sanctions

Organisations may need to implement systems that monitor and punish consumers for engaging in deviant consumer behaviour. While following a risk-based approach to deterrence is criticised above, it could be effective if it were used among a suite of deterrence strategies recommended here. Punishing consumers for engaging in deviant consumer behaviour is useful as it informs their ‘anticipated outcomes’ should they contemplate repeating the behaviour in the future. However, punishment will only be an effective deterrent for future deviant consumer behaviour if the punishment is administered close to when the deviant consumer behaviour is performed. The greater the temporal distance between the behaviour being performed and the punishment, the easier it is for the individual committing the deviant act to discount the consequences of their behaviour, and follow through with the deviant act (Zyglidopoulos & Fleming, 2008).

Punishment from the organisation is one type of sanction, yet organisations can also educate consumers in a way that promotes administration of social sanctions by other consumers, such as social judgment. The threat of ‘social judgment’ was used in a campaign by Queensland Rail (QR), in which acceptable train etiquette was promoted in a series of cartoon strips. In each cartoon a person was shown to be performing a behaviour QR deemed acceptable, and that person was then deemed a “good-guy” or “good-girl” (see Appendix A). Fullerton and Punj (1997, 2004) proposed portraying deviant consumer behaviour as repulsive, supported by criminology’s labeling theory, suggesting that the individual would see themselves as repulsive if they engage in repulsive actions (Macionis & Gerber, 2010). However,
given the broad range of deviant consumer behaviours that exist, it is unclear how this would effectively apply to all behaviours or how it would be implemented.

Punishment – formal or social – is difficult to administer when it requires deterring difficult-to-detect behaviours such as lying. In that instance, it might be more appropriate to trigger internal sanctions to punish individuals’ deviant behaviours.

*Increasing saliency of moral traits to trigger self-sanctions*

Fullerton and Punj (1997, 2004) argue that educating consumers on the moral impropriety of deviant consumer behaviour will reinforce existing moral beliefs and strengthen restraints on deviant consumer behaviour. The act of self-regulation involves individuals administering internal sanctions (e.g. guilt, shame, self-depreciation), to punish or deter themselves from engaging in a behaviour. The goal of this recommendation is to encourage justifications of “it’s just not the right thing to do”. Individuals who rely on internal self-sanctions to guide their behaviour are less likely to engage in deviant acts (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Increasing the saliency of moral values, even temporarily, can reduce the likelihood of deviant consumer behaviour (Mazar et al., 2008). Marketers could seek to activate an individual’s self-awareness of their own moral standards in an attempt to promote self-sanctions. The effect of increasing an individual’s awareness of his or her own moral standards has been explored previously (Aquino et al., 2009; Gino et al., 2009; Mazar et al., 2008; Shu, Mazar, Gino, Ariely & Bazerman, 2012). After asking a group to recall the Ten Commandments, before they completed a series of maths quizzes, students were found to be less likely to cheat on the maths quizzes than individuals who were not asked to recite the Ten Commandments. However, this specific method of increasing the saliency of moral standards is unlikely to be implemented in a consumer context.
Finding novel ways to trigger morality in the consumer setting in a manner that does not ultimately become ignored like Terms and Conditions Statements will require further investigations. An example of triggering self-regulation that is appropriate for the consumer context, yet has failed to be implemented by organisations is ‘signing at the top’. Shu et al. (2012) remodeled an insurance claim form and put the honour declaration (“I declare that I have carefully examined the return and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it is correct and complete”) at the beginning of the form for customers to sign, as opposed to having customers signing it at the end of the form after the possible lies have been told. The altered form saw a reduction in lying on insurance claims. Despite this empirical evidence, the insurance company involved in the experiment did not make permanent changes to the forms (Shu et al., 2012).

A counter argument to the use of moral triggers to regulate behaviour is that individuals can use their ‘good behaviour’ as a ‘credit’ for ‘bad behaviour’. In a series of experiments, individuals’ “past good deeds favour[ed] a positive self-perception that creates [moral] licensing effects, leading people to engage in behaviour that is less likely to be moral” (Branas-Garza, Bucheli, Paz Espinosa & Garcia-Munoz, 2013, p. 199). The idea of using good behaviour to offset bad behaviour is supported by the neutralisation technique ‘metaphor of the ledger’, which is used to make comparisons between behaviours the individual themselves actually performs (Klockers, 1974).
Social proofs to dissuade deviant behaviour

Marketers could consider adopting the use of social proofs, should it be appropriate for the kind of deviant consumer behaviour the organisation is exposed to. Social proofs are a technique used to persuade individuals to perform a behaviour the organisation wants, by suggesting the group an individual associates with or aspires to be apart of, also engages in that behaviour (Goldstein, Cialdini and Griskevicius, 2008). Individuals are persuaded through appeals to what behaviour ‘should’ or ‘ought’ to be performed in a given situation. However, marketers can only apply this strategy if the behaviour they want the individual to perform, is in fact the norm, and is engaged in by the majority (Cialdini et al. 2006; Schultz et al. 2007). Social proofs counter arguments of the perceived prevalence of the deviant act, rendering the justification of ‘normal practice’ invalid. This strategy will be most effective if prevalence is salient in consumer perceptions of right and wrong, and there is low social consensus on right and wrong.

Social proofs work most effectively when individuals are made aware that people similar to them, in the situation the individual now faces, responded with a particular behaviour (Goldstein et al., 2008). Successful social proofs are also positively worded (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). A positive social proof would highlight prevalence of a desirable behaviour. Negative social proofs have been found to increase bad behaviour as individuals felt comfortable knowing other consumers were also engaging in the same deviant consumer behaviour as them (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). Successful implementation of this strategy has been used to encourage voter turnout in the U.S., where voting is not compulsory. Individuals were told that people like them, living in their State, their city, and on their street had voted or intended to
vote, prompting the individual to feel compelled to following the in-group behaviour. Social proofs have also been effective in research experiments investigating environmentally friendly behaviours (Goldstein et al., 2008; Gerber & Rogers, 2009). An experiment sought to increase guest compliance to the hotel policy of reusing towels multiple times before cleaners replaced them. Inside each room a series of messages were placed, ranging from “Save the environment” to “75% of the guest who stayed in this room reused their towels… help save the environment.” The most effective message was the latter, which highlighted normative behaviour of guests who stayed in that room. The more specific the message is, and the more closely related the message is to the individual’s situation, the more effective it will be in altering that individual’s behaviour. There is an opportunity to test the use of social proofs in dissuading deviant consumer behaviour, in contrast to its existing use in promoting pro-social behaviours.

Transparency and adaptation in business models

The final recommendation is primarily for organisations faced with retaliatory deviant consumer behaviour resulting from perceived unfair organisational policies, laws, and consumption situations. Where policies, laws, or consumption situations are perceived to be unfair, consumers are more likely to engage in deviant consumer behaviour. Unfair laws or policies could be high pricing or constraints on access to goods and services, while unfair consumption situations could be poor customer service or service quality. Consumers tend to justify retaliatory behaviour using the ‘defense of necessity’ technique to argue that the unfair policy or law is forcing the individual to perform deviant consumer behaviour to get what they want, and ‘condemnation of the condemners’ technique suggesting the organisation is doing the
wrong thing by constraining consumption, or providing bad service, so they are just as bad as the consumer. Moreover, in today’s society consumers believe they should get what they want, when they want it, and how they want it – evidence of the ‘claim of entitlement’ justification technique. Marketers of organisations facing the issue of retaliatory deviant consumer behaviour have two options, (1) be transparent about reasons behind the perceived unfair policy, law, or situation, or (2) change the business model, policy, or law. Marketers can seek to be transparent about the reasons behind the perceived unfair policy, law, or situation to challenge the perceptions of fairness. It is also recommended marketers in this situation seek to reward compliance, possibly by making the consumer perceive more value in complying with restrictions, than deviating from them. Alternatively, the organisation could change their business model to better meet the demands of consumers. Changing organisational policies to better meet the demands of consumers is complicated, as laws may be in place guiding their policies. The issue of needing to change policies and laws to better meet consumer demands has recently received attention from the Australian Federal Government, with an enquiry investigating the fairness of IT pricing for software and digital entertainment goods. The Government recommended amendments to laws and regulations requiring organisations to meet consumer demands by removing the constraints in place such as geo-blocking constraints (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications, 2013). Other outcomes of the enquiry requested organisations to reassess their geo-based pricing policies that create arbitrage situations for consumers (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications, 2013). Such recommendations are likely to result in a reduction in deviant consumer behaviour, given the deviant acts associated with the perceived
unfair organisational policies and laws will soon be legal. Providing same day access at comparative prices, in a digital format attempts to challenge the ‘defense of necessity’, ‘condemnation of the condemners’, and ‘claim of entitlement’ justifications.

6.5. Failure to implement and future research

Failure of industry to implement strategies recommended in academia is an ongoing issue (e.g. Pike, 2003; Di Tommaso & Schweitzer, 2010). In the context on deviant consumer behaviour, there are a number of reasons why organisations may not implement the deterrence recommendations made in academia in which the economical cost is a primary concern. For instance, despite ongoing recommendations for organisations to improve security systems to prevent fraudulent behaviours and security breaches “[l]arge retailers and grocery stores … have resisted toughening standards on the ground that some solutions would be costly to implement or result in slower transaction times that could frustrate customers and sales” (Zetter, 2014). In an exploratory study investigating shoplifting, the retailer managers surveyed said inaction to persecute shoplifters was attributed to the “time and costs involved in prosecuting shoplifters” and the belief that “no severe punishment would be obtained” (Lin, Hastings & Martin, 1994, p. 27). Moreover, the use of high-tech security as a preventative measure against shoplifting was sometimes seen as an expensive practice that provides a false sense of security for the organisation and drives customers away from the store (Lin et al., 1994). Instead, customer service is recommended as a mechanism to reduce shoplifting (Leaver, 1993; Lin et al., 1994). Yet due to the high-staff turnover in retail, the additional training costs to improve theft reduction through customer service are rarely spent (Lin et al., 1994). Moreover, with the cost of
security based deterrence increasing, it leaves smaller organisations, unable to afford the technology, more susceptible to deviance (Leaver, 1993). This evidence provides support for alternative methods of deterrence, but also highlights the need for more up to date information on the issue of deterrence.

The strategies discussed in this paper have varying degrees of empirical support, if any, and limited information about implementation and the economic benefits of doing so. In order to make implementable recommendations in academia for industry, there is a need to demonstrate the quantifiable economic benefits of implementation, and how it could affect and be integrated with existing systems and processes. Future research would benefit from field-testing deterrence strategies alongside existing systems and processes, and quantifying the value in implementing the deterrence strategy. Suggestions for future research include but are not limited to testing strategies discussed in this paper:

- The value in administering formal sanctions – punishment of deviant consumer behaviour (more likely applicable to more severe and observable types of deviance)
- Using strategies that encourage social sanctions (potentially through the use of labeling)
- The use of moral reminders to trigger self-regulation in offline and online contexts, and testing ways to maintain long-term effectiveness of this strategy in both contexts
- Using social proofs to dissuade deviant consumer behaviour (in contrast to existing work on promoting pro-social behaviours)
- Testing the value in transparency in reducing retaliatory deviant consumer behaviour as it challenges perceptions of fairness

Additional areas for future research in deterring deviant consumer behaviour:

- Testing interventions with self-service technologies
  - Reducing theft and product misspecifications at the grocery store self-checkout (Dootson, Neale & Fullerton, 2014)
- Nudging techniques to alter behaviour without persuasion
  - Altering services to restrict customers in how they use the service through (e.g.) store layout, restrictions on Apps, product licensing restricting use of competitor products (Devenish & Royer, 2014)
- The use of message compliance techniques in persuasion campaigns to educate and deter behaviours
  - A number of techniques have been used in classroom and health contexts to influence behaviour (Kellerman & Cole, 1994; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Whitehead et al., 2000)

As investigations in the consumer deviance and consumer ethics fields into deviant consumer behaviour continue to expand, there is value in using that knowledge to create tailored deterrence strategies to prevent these actions from occurring.
6.6. Conclusions

The tailored deterrence strategies recommended in this paper can also be used to deter (1) organisational deviance such as white-collar crime, employee theft; (2) dangerous driving behaviour, including drink driving and speeding; and (3) academic dishonesty in (a) higher education and (b) within academia; to name a few. Each of these fields is affected by varying subjective individual assessments of right and wrong, making traditional mass deterrence techniques less effective. The problem remains that organisations sometimes resist changes to deterrence or security standards as these changes might be costly to implement and could potentially negatively impact on the perceived service quality of their business (Zetter, 2014). Future research needs to develop, test, and quantify the success of implementing these deterrence techniques, to better highlight the advantages of changing current strategies.
6.7. References


Barnett 2001


Tenbrunsel and Messick 2004


6.8. Appendix

6.8.1. Appendix A: Queensland Rail ‘Etiquette Campaign’

Amy sees Paul. 
She leaves the allocated space free.
“Thank you,” says Paul.

Shannon waits for others to get off the train.
She doesn’t push past.
Nice manners Shannon.

Train etiquette.
Super simple stuff.

John sees Mary. John stands up.
Mary sits down.
How considerate.

Train etiquette.
Super simple stuff.

Jim sits on the train.
His feet are on the floor.
Not on the seat.
Good on you Jim.

Train etiquette.
Super simple stuff.