

Utilising Generative Artificial Intelligence

(GenAI) to assist complainants who speak
English as a Second Language

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Executive Summary

This report, prepared by researchers from the University of Newcastle with funding and review support from the NSW Ombudsman, investigates the role of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in enhancing the complaints management process for consumers who speak English as a Second Language (ESL). The research addresses the challenges faced by ESL consumers, including perceived language discrimination and reduced capability to complain, which can result in underrepresentation in formal complaints processes and inequitable service recovery outcomes.

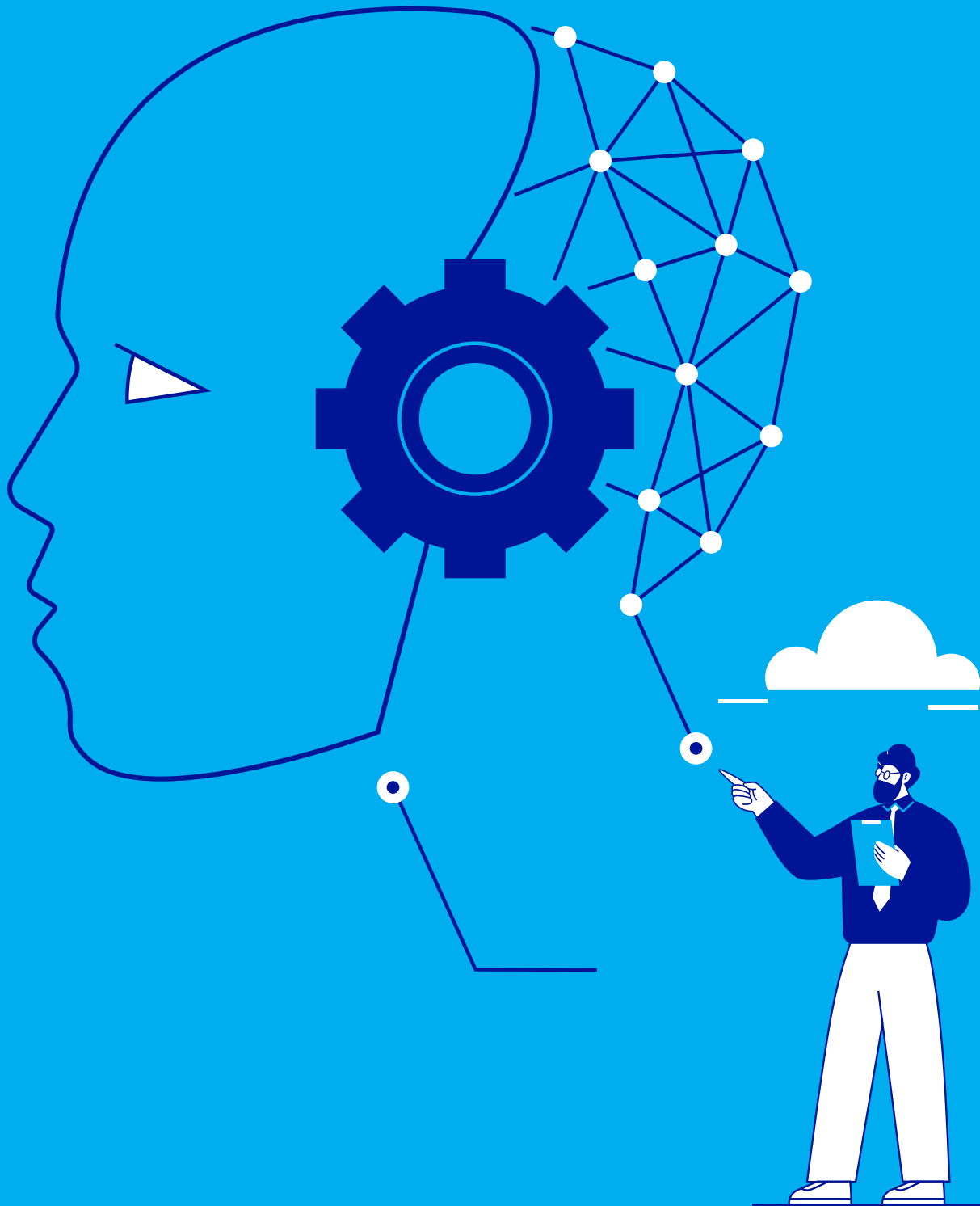
Through four experiments, it is revealed that when presented with a complaint scenario, ESL consumers perceive both a lower likelihood that their complaint will be successfully resolved and a higher likelihood of language discrimination, compared to native English speakers. However, it is found that while language background influences perceived language discrimination it is capability to complain – specifically, a consumer’s belief in their ability to write effective complaints – which explains the relationship between language background and perceived likelihood of a successful complaint.

To test the impact of introducing GenAI as an aid to assist ESL consumers in the complaint-writing process, a real-time complaint portal was developed using a GenAI application programming interface (API). The results show that GenAI-assisted tools increase ESL consumers’ capability to complain and improves perceptions that the complaint will likely be successfully resolved, while also reducing their perception of language discrimination.

An exploratory study was also conducted to examine how complaint handlers responded to GenAI-modified complaints from ESL consumers. Complaint handlers found GenAI-modified complaints to be clearer in identifying issues, easier to understand, and more likely to receive a timely response than ESL-written complaints. However, both GenAI-generated and ESL-written complaints were perceived similarly in terms of success, legitimacy, and completeness. Clarity, legitimacy, and ease of understanding were linked to higher perceived complaint success and quicker responses. Complaints that were comprehensive and included a clear call to action were seen as more successful and legitimate. While language proficiency did not impact complaint handlers’ perception that that could successfully resolve the complaint, native English speakers’ complaints were viewed as more likely to receive a quicker resolution.

This report highlights the critical role that GenAI can play in empowering ESL consumers in service recovery processes, offering a new avenue for addressing consumer inequities through technology. The research findings offer practical insights for service providers and policymakers on the potential of GenAI to mitigate language barriers and enhance service accessibility for ESL consumers, and the broader implications of GenAI for addressing systemic inequities in complaint handling. By directly addressing the barriers that ESL consumers face, this research responds to calls for understanding the potential use of GenAI technologies by service providers to assist ESL consumers.

1. Background and Motivation



Organisations strive to provide service excellency when engaging with consumers. However, not all consumers feel satisfied with their interactions with an organisation. This may lead them to complain. A complaint is a consumer's expression of their dissatisfaction to (or about) an organisation related to its services, products, staff, or handling of a complaint, in circumstances where a response is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required (NSW Ombudsman, 2024; Standards Australia, 2022).

Consumers have a right to complain (Standards Australia, 2022). Complaints come in different formats and channels, such as an oral complaint to staff or a written complaint about the organisation to an external oversight body (Decock & Depraetere 2018; NSW Ombudsman, 2024). Complaints that are handled appropriately can improve an organisation's reputation (Standards Australia, 2022). Successful outcomes can be achieved through an effective complaint management system, which includes providing solutions, addressing problems before they escalate, and increasing customer satisfaction (Commonwealth Ombudsman, 2023, p.5; NSW Ombudsman, 2024; p.18). Meanwhile, a complaint that is poorly managed can negatively impact consumers, the organisation's relationship with consumers, and the organisation's reputation (Commonwealth Ombudsman, 2023; NSW Ombudsman, 2024).

Independent integrity bodies, such as the NSW Ombudsman, seek to ensure that all citizens receive equitable access to fair treatment from the service providers and organisations that serve them. Furthermore, the standard AS 10002:2022 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations provides guidance on how to manage complaints. This includes planning, design, implementation, operation, and improvement of a complaint management system¹. The outcomes of such guidance aim to provide consumers with access to an open, accessible, and responsive complaints process (Standards Australia, 2022).

No two consumers are the same. Consumers have diverse needs shaped by their personal circumstances, abilities, and the nature of their complaint. While some navigate the complaints process with ease, others face greater challenges. This includes individuals with disabilities, those in regional or remote areas, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Standards Australia, 2022, p. 20). These diversities and barriers can place consumers in vulnerable situations where there is an increased risk that they experience harm when dealing with an organisation (International Organization for Standardization, 2018, p. vi). Vulnerability can be exacerbated when consumers, such as ESL speakers, experience limited access to resources or control over interactions (Hill & Sharma 2020; Javor et al., 2023).

The treatment of consumers experiencing vulnerability has become an important aspect of organisational practice. This importance is underscored by ISO 22458 Consumer Vulnerability, which provides guidance for the design and delivery of inclusive service for consumers experiencing vulnerability. Consumer vulnerability is defined as, "A state in which an individual can be placed at risk of harm during their interaction with a service provider due to the presence of personal, situational, and market environment factors" (International Organization for Standardization, 2022; p. 2) Meanwhile, AS 10002:2022 defines consumer vulnerability as a, "State of being especially susceptible to detriment due to circumstances including disability, age, literacy levels, gender, trauma, and stress" (Standards Australia, 2022; p.3).



¹ See Standards Australia, 2022 p. ii.

Organisations are required to strive for positive outcomes when interacting with consumers experiencing vulnerability². Alongside key principles of fairness, impartiality, flexibility, and innovation, organisations should consider areas such as accessibility, inclusive service design, and unreasonable barriers that consumers experiencing vulnerability might experience³. More broadly, organisations are encouraged to identify consumers experiencing vulnerability and provide support to help them make a complaint⁴. This process is iterative, meaning organisations should strive to continually review and evaluate their approach towards inclusivity and practical assistance (Standards Australia, 2022). This shift towards a more proactive approach recognises the role that organisations have in creating situations where consumers experiencing vulnerability can experience harm while also recognising that the organisation can take reasonable actions to prevent or minimise such harm.

One example of consumers experiencing vulnerability exists in the context of a person's language background, such as consumers who speak English as a Second Language (ESL). ESL consumers are often vulnerable to unequal treatment in service settings, frequently facing significant language barriers, particularly when engaging in complex processes, such as lodging complaints about service failures. They can experience difficulties in articulating their dissatisfaction, which can result in avoidance of such interactions altogether, leaving their grievances unaddressed and increasing their experience of vulnerability in service environments (Kim & Mattila, 2011). Given that few disgruntled customers are motivated to complain (NSW Ombudsman, 2024), the perception of barriers or difficulties in the complaints process might further deter consumers from complaining.

Language barriers not only impede communication. They can also expose ESL consumers to the risk of language discrimination. This involves prejudiced treatment based on language proficiency or accent (Wei et al., 2012), often resulting in complainants being treated with impatience or indifference (Ratzmann, 2022). Such biases can lead to feelings of embarrassment, exclusion, and rejection (Wei et al., 2012). Those who have experienced or fear language discrimination are less likely to engage in complaint processes, resulting in inequitable service recovery outcomes (Kim & Mattila, 2011; Spencer & Chen, 2004). Therefore, addressing the challenges faced by ESL consumers in complaint processes is critical for ensuring inclusivity, equity and fairness in service settings.

Furthermore, staff who handle complaints play a crucial role in effective complaint management. Both ISO 22458 and AS 10002:2022 require organisations to empower and support frontline staff, enhancing the ability of staff to respond to consumer complaints, improve outcomes and minimise harm⁵. However, the ability for staff to understand and respond to complaints relies on the complainant's skill in effectively communicating their dissatisfaction and desired resolution (Helmy et al., 2023). Service design often exacerbates this issue by requiring proficiency in the dominant language—English in many global markets—for successful complaint lodging. In English-speaking countries, written or spoken communication is the norm, systematically disadvantaging ESL consumers and leading to inequitable service recovery outcomes (Koc et al., 2023). Limited language literacy can increase a consumer's experience of vulnerability in service interactions (Jayasundara et al., 2020; Yap et al., 2021), as language barriers can prevent ESL consumers from lodging complaints (Kim & Mattila, 2011). This structural disadvantage highlights the need for organisations to ensure flexible, accessible, complaint processes, including multiple communication channels and access to interpreting and translation services (NSW Ombudsman, 2024; Standards Australia, 2020).

² As per Section 4.3.1 of ISO 22458, examples of positive outcomes include treating consumers with fairness and a degree of flexibility, while also supporting them through difficulties.

³ See Sections 4.2, 4.3.1, 5.1 of ISO 22458 and Section 7.1 of AS 10002:2022.

⁴ See Standards Australia 2024, p.12.

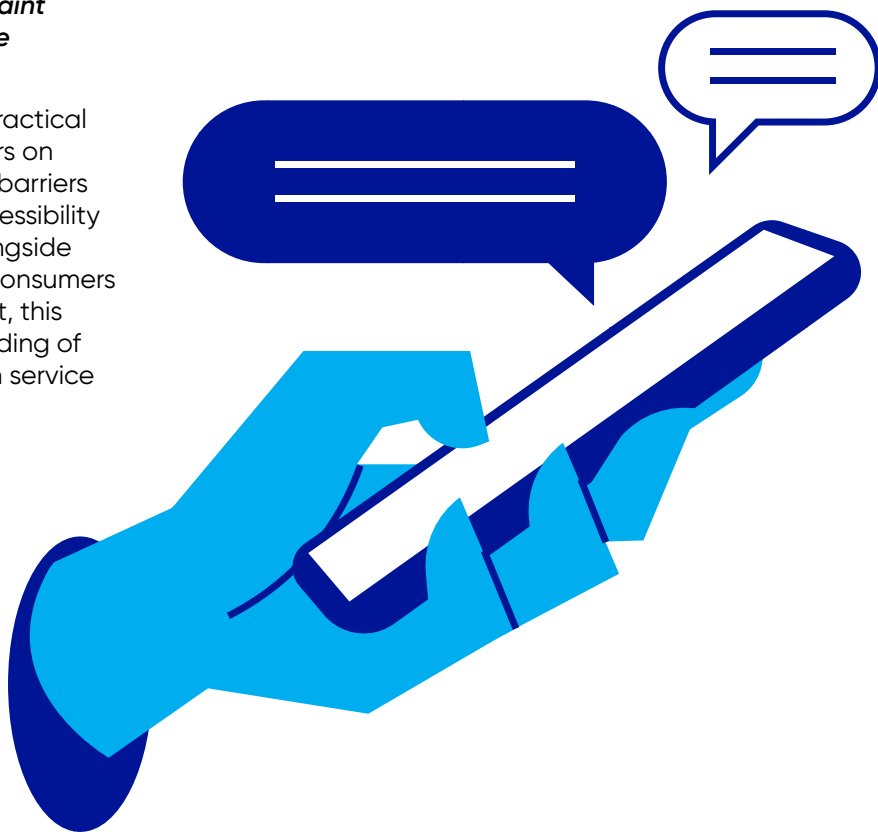
⁵ See International Organization for Standardization, 2022 p. 12 and p. 24; NSW Ombudsman, 2024; Standards Australia 2024, p.33.

While standards such as ISO 22458 and AS 10002:2022 have been established, more action and understanding is needed to address the implications for complainants experiencing vulnerability. For example, there have been advancements in GenAI to expedite complaint processing for organisations (Cheng & Jiang, 2022; Crollic et al., 2022; Hennebold et al., 2022; Koc et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023; Tian 2024). While research has focused on GenAI as a tool for organisations to handle complaints more efficiently, there is limited insight into how it can support ESL speakers in navigating complaint processes. This presents an opportunity to explore how GenAI can support ESL consumers by improving their experience in the complaint process, thereby promoting greater equity in service recovery. Specifically, there is potential to explore how Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) can be leveraged to mitigate the challenges faced by ESL consumers, such as perceived language discrimination and difficulty in communicating with an organisation.

This report outlines the findings of a research project conducted by University of Newcastle researchers in collaboration with the NSW Ombudsman, investigating how GenAI can support ESL consumers and complaint handlers in the complaint resolution process. The research seeks to answer the following question:

Can GenAI assist ESL consumers, and complaint handlers responding to ESL consumers, in the complaint process?

The outcomes of this research can offer practical insights for service providers and policymakers on the potential of GenAI to mitigate language barriers and improve service systems to enhance accessibility for consumers experiencing vulnerability. Alongside advancing the NSW Ombudsman's vision of consumers receiving the right services and fair treatment, this research project contributes to an understanding of how GenAI can address systemic inequities in service design and complaint handling.



2. Project Objectives



There are two aims of this research project, which seek to improve the accessibility and equity of complaint processes for consumers who speak ESL, while also advancing the NSW Ombudsman's vision of realising the goal that all consumers receive the right services and fair treatment. The primary aim is to investigate how GenAI can support ESL consumers by enhancing their ability to lodge complaints. It is theorised that GenAI can be leveraged to mitigate the challenges ESL consumers face, such as perceived language discrimination and low perceived capability to complain. It is hoped that the outcomes of this research will provide insights into how GenAI can be used to improve equity, accessibility and inclusiveness within organisations' complaint processes. Given the important role that complaint handlers play in providing equitable complaint outcomes for consumers, the second aim of the research is to examine the effects of GenAI technology on complaint handlers' perception of: the clarity of the complaints, the legitimacy of the complaints, and their ability to respond to the complaints.

2.1 THE RESEARCH TEAM

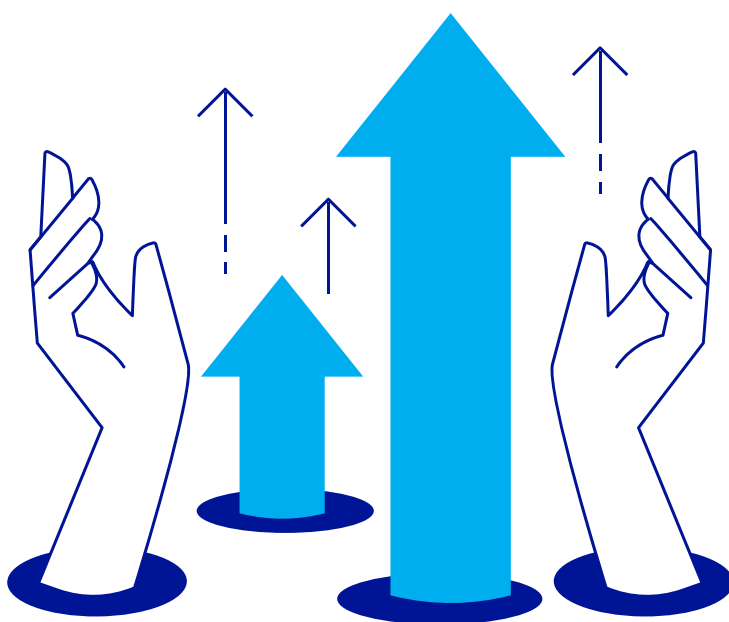
The project was undertaken by a research team from the University of Newcastle, Australia. The research team was led by Dr Christine Armstrong with the assistance of Associate Professor Alicia Kulczynski, Dr Margurite Hook, Dr Moji Barari, Dr Bin Li, and Jeremy Niass.

Dr Armstrong was a member of the team for a UoN interdisciplinary study into the return on investment of effective complaint management, working with the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals (SOCAP) and a number of private and public organisations/departments, including the NSW Ombudsman. Associate Professor Kulczynski is an accomplished researcher with a track record of producing high-quality research on consumer response, marketing communication, and branding. Dr. Hook has led and contributed to several research projects, including studies on the metaverse and mobile devices, highlighting her research leadership. Dr. Barari offers valuable industry insights with his background in banking marketing and data science, enhancing the team's GenAI and machine learning capabilities. Dr Li is a senior lecturer in the School of Law and Justice and has extensive experience in collaborating with industry partners. He is a Board Member of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals ('SOCAP Australia') and

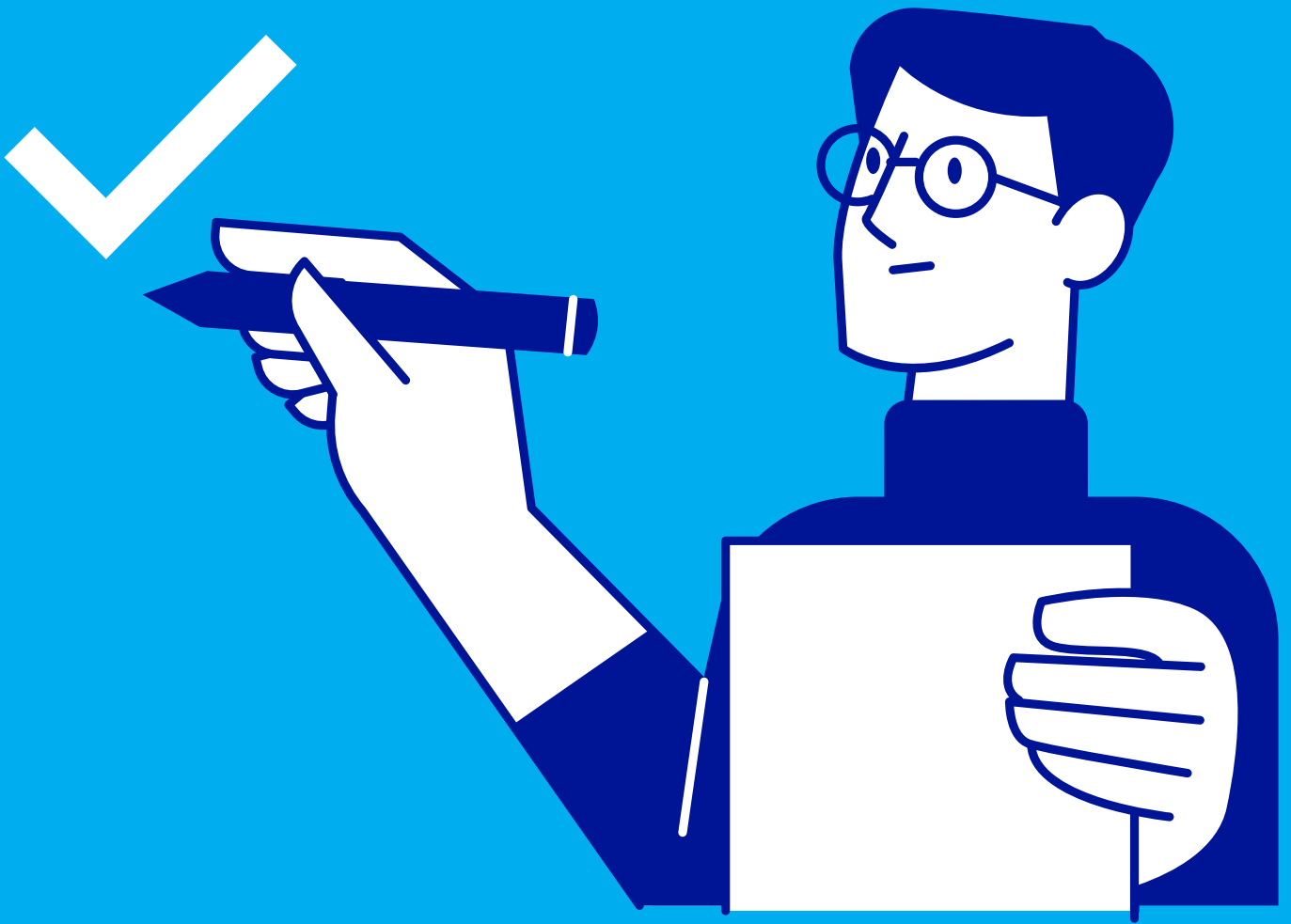
a certified complaints handling professional. Jeremy Niass is a research assistant and has been involved in research projects across the accounting, marketing, and economics disciplines.

2.2 REPORT STRUCTURE

The remainder of the report is as follows. Section Three reviews the relevant literature and presents the conceptual framework for the research. Section Four outlines the research design, detailing four experiments that examine how GenAI can assist ESL consumers in writing complaints and how complaint handlers respond to GenAI-modified complaints. Section Five presents the results of the experiments, followed by Section Six, which discusses their implications for organisations and policymakers. Finally, Section Seven concludes the report by addressing the study's limitations and offering directions for future research.



3. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework



To guide the research project on how GenAI can support ESL consumers in the complaint process, a literature review was conducted through which several academic studies and concepts were examined to gain a greater understanding of the following areas:

- **ESL complaint behaviour.**
- **Language discrimination.**
- **Capability to complain.**
- **GenAI.**
- **Complaint handler perceptions.**

3.1 ESL COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

Making a complaint can be challenging for any consumer, but it can feel especially daunting for people who speak English as a second language (Maiz-Arévalo & Méndez-García, 2023). ESL complainants often face linguistic limitations that can hinder their ability to effectively express their dissatisfaction (Liao et al., 2023). Such barriers can lead to feelings of embarrassment, fear, and anxiety, prompting avoidance behaviours in the face of service failure (Kim & Mattila, 2011). Complaining can induce further feelings of stress and anxiety due to the fear of negative social consequences or judgements, particularly if complaint handlers or observers view the complainants' behaviour unfavourably (Armstrong et al., 2021). As a result, many ESL consumers opt to avoid the complaint process altogether, perceiving their limited language skills as preventing them from being able to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Given that complaining can be challenging for any consumer, alongside additional factors such as limited language proficiency/linguistic ability and cultural considerations, it is reasonable to suggest that ESL consumers have lower confidence in the likelihood that their complaint will be successfully resolved when compared to English as a Native Language (ENL) consumers. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

Research Question 1: Do ESL complainants perceive a lower likelihood of having their complaint successfully resolved, compared to ENL complainants?

3.2 LANGUAGE DISCRIMINATION

In service settings, non-native speakers can feel disadvantaged due to their linguistic limitations and concerns about being discriminated against based on their language skills or accent (Liao et al., 2023). For ESL consumers, their language ability can become a visible social marker, making them more vulnerable to language-based discrimination (Malik & Paswan, 2023). In English-speaking countries, language discrimination occurs when individuals are treated unfairly because English is their second language or because they speak with an accent (Wei et al., 2012)⁶.

Within service contexts, language-based discrimination can manifest in several ways, such as service providers avoiding ESL consumers or treating them with impatience, rudeness, or indifference (Wei et al., 2012). In complaint scenarios, the fear of language discrimination not only limits ESL consumers' access to justice but can also negatively impact their mental health (Liao et al., 2023). Such discrimination can evoke feelings of embarrassment, exclusion, and rejection (Wei et al., 2012), leaving the consumer feeling "put down" or treated as though they are inferior (Lee & Ahn, 2011).

While the effects of racial discrimination on consumers have been widely studied⁷, language discrimination has received less attention. This is concerning, given that it may be equally harmful to the mental health of individuals as racial discrimination (Liao et al., 2023). To an observer, language discrimination can be subtle, making it harder to detect and regulate than racial discrimination (Ng, 2007)⁸.

From a complaint management perspective, language discrimination may limit an ESL consumer's access to complaint processes and satisfactory outcomes due to the cognitive biases of complaint handlers (Ratzmann, 2022). Language discrimination may reduce the likelihood of ESL consumers to file complaints, as individuals who experience or fear language discrimination are less likely to use such services (Wei et al., 2012). The self-doubt experienced by people affected by language discrimination (Peng et al., 2022) can further diminish their propensity to complain, as they may anticipate a lower likelihood of success. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

⁶ Further to this, there are a variety of communication styles that could also be considered. For example, people might communicate in a way that is direct or indirect, linear or circular, or intellectual or restrained (NSW Ombudsman, 2021). These communication styles can potentially shape interactions, including in situations with people who are ENL, which can lead to complainants of all backgrounds experiencing limitations in their English language capability.

⁷ See Wei, Wang, and Ku 2012; Yoo, Gee, and Takeuchi 2009.

⁸ It is important to highlight that language barriers may impede complaint handlers' ability to effectively process a complaint, without the intention of discriminating on the basis of language.

Research Question 2: How does perceived language discrimination influence an ESL complainant's perception of the likelihood that their complaint will be successfully resolved?

3.3 CAPABILITY TO COMPLAIN

Capability to complain refers to an individual's belief or confidence in their ability to complain⁹. It pertains to specific tasks in the complaint process, rather than the ability to complain itself (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). For example, a person might have a high capability to complain through verbal communication but have a low capability to complain through written communication (Tam, 2019).

A consumer's belief in their ability to make a complaint is important, because their intention to complain is largely driven by their self-confidence (Maíz-Arévalo & Méndez-García 2023; Oney & Aghaei, 2024). As consumers can experience vulnerability in situations beyond their control, capability to complain is relevant because it reflects a sense of control over one's behaviour and environment¹⁰. Confidence and a sense of control are closely intertwined: when individuals believe they have control over a situation, they are more likely to trust in their ability to influence outcomes, thereby increasing their confidence (Bearden et al., 2001). Interventions aimed at improving perceived complaint capability may be key to enhancing ESL consumers' confidence that their complaints will be addressed effectively.

As increased capability to complain can positively influence various attitudes and behaviours (e.g., McKee et al., 2006), this suggests that complainants with higher capability to complain could be more likely to believe their complaint will be successfully resolved. Although ESL consumers may fear that language discrimination could negatively impact the outcome of their complaints (Peng et al., 2022), it is possible that their belief in their ability to navigate the complaint process – their capability to complain – will affect their perception of being able to make a complaint. Thus, the following research question is proposed:

Research Question 3: Does an ESL complainant's perceived capability to complain outweigh perceived language discrimination when it comes perceived likelihood of a successful complaint?

3.4 COMPLAINTS AND GENAI

In human-based processing, individuals often rely on intuition, past experience, and heuristics (or 'rules-of-thumb') to expedite decision-making (Colson, 2019). While these approaches can offer time efficiencies within a complaint management system, they can also compromise objectivity. For example, complaint management policies and procedures promote fair, consistent treatment of complainants, but individual complaint handlers inevitably exercise some level of discretion during interpersonal interactions, which can lead to informal, unequal treatment of ESL individuals (Preuss et al., 2022; Ratzmann, 2022). To avoid potential biases or communication difficulties with service providers, ESL consumers often prefer technology-mediated channels over face-to-face interactions (Malik & Paswan, 2023). ESL consumers might opt for text messaging instead of phone calls, fearing that their linguistic limitations could hinder effective communication or that their accent might expose them to language discrimination (Malik & Paswan, 2023; Liao et al., 2023).

GenAI can support consumers experiencing vulnerability by offering accessible, interactive, and dynamic experiences that assist them in navigating service processes and promoting equity in service contexts (Hermann et al., 2023). The AID framework (Hermann et al., 2023) highlights GenAI's Accessible, Interactive, and Dynamic functions to assist consumers experiencing vulnerability. This framework underscores the ability of GenAI to facilitate communication, provide real-time feedback, and dynamically adjust to the needs of the consumer. Evolutions in GenAI have led to advanced service technologies such as GenAI, which have the capability to process and interpret complex human languages and generate original responses, often using advanced neural networks to analyse prompts and create content (Lim et al., 2023). Unlike traditional conversational AI, which is limited to pre-programmed responses, GenAI can produce new and contextually appropriate outputs, making it far more versatile¹¹.

⁹ In the academic literature, capability to complain is referred to as "self-efficacy". Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their skills and capabilities to perform a specific task (Bandura, 1997). To make the term "self-efficacy" more accessible for readers outside academia, it is referred to as "capability to complain" in this report.

¹⁰ See Baker, Gentry, and Rittenburg 2005; Brennan et al. 2017; Strizhakova and Tsarenko 2010.

¹¹ For instance, while Google Translate provides real-time translations, it cannot create original responses, which is a key feature of GenAI technologies like OpenAI's ChatGPT and DALL-E (Lim et al., 2023).

While AI has been used by organisations to process complaints more efficiently, it is reasonable to suggest that GenAI can also be valuable for use by ESL consumers during the process of making a complaint. GenAI can potentially mitigate the disadvantages that ESL consumers face by enhancing their ability to communicate their complaints effectively. Its ability to generate human-like text offers a novel solution to empower ESL complainants by making communication more accessible, reducing the linguistic barriers that can prevent them from seeking redress and more broadly reducing language-based inequities in service recovery (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Hermann et al., 2023). For example, GenAI can help ESL consumers by correcting linguistic and grammatical errors and improving the clarity of their communication (Tian, 2024), which could result in more effective complaints that increase ESL consumers' confidence and their capability to complain. Furthermore, heightened negative emotions often arise due to service failures, with emotional responses being key drivers of complaint behaviour (Balaji et al., 2017; Li et al., 2023; Tronvoll, 2011). GenAI's ability to conduct sentiment analysis and detect both the emotions and nuances behind consumer language (Tian, 2024) further positions it as an ideal tool for assisting ESL consumers in crafting effective complaints¹².

By improving their ability to complete the task of composing a complaint, GenAI can empower ESL consumers to believe in their ability to successfully navigate the complaint process. ESL complainants are likely to have heightened expectations that their complaint will be properly understood and resolved by complaint handlers. To explore how complainants can be assisted by GenAI, the following research question is proposed:

Research Question 4: Can using a GenAI tool to assist in writing a complaint influence an ESL complainant's perception of their capability to complain? Does this, in turn, influence an ESL complainant's perceived likelihood of having their complaint successfully resolved?

3.5 COMPLAINT HANDLER PERCEPTIONS

Providing complaint handlers with adequate information from complainants is crucial for effective complaint management. Clear and comprehensive information helps in the accurate assessment of complaints and the planning of responses, which are integral to achieving positive outcomes¹³. Guidance on how complaint handlers can be better resourced to effectively manage complaints is provided in AS 10002:2022, with an emphasis on ensuring complaint staff have access to clear and simple information from consumers, to facilitate communication and aid timely resolution¹⁴.

AI-mediated communication (AIMC) extends the field of computer-mediated communication by influencing human-to-human communication through AI (Hancock et al., 2020; Hohenstein & Jung, 2020). Given that AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants have been shown to improve quality and efficiency of communication in online customer service settings (Ateef et al., 2024), it is proposed that the use of GenAI in mediating the communication between complaint and complaint handler will also provide positive impacts, including complaint handlers' perception of the clarity of the complaints, legitimacy, and ability to respond to the complaints.

3.5.1 CLARITY

The use of GenAI to modify, augment and/or generate interpersonal communication is widely considered to improve the clarity of messages between humans (Hancock et al., 2020; Hohenstein & Jung, 2020). Clarifying a consumer's complaint, so that their reasons for dissatisfaction and their desired resolution is unambiguous, is essential for effective complaint handling (Helmy et al., 2023). The 'Effective Complaint Management Guidelines' outline that agencies and organisations should assist consumers in improving their clarity by providing consumers with instructions on the specific details required for the complaint to be assessed (NSW Ombudsman, 2024). Such clarity, comprehensibility, and information provided in a complaint can significantly influence a complaint handler's ability to address any issues effectively and efficiently (Helmy et al., 2023).

¹² While there is potential for AI to have a positive impact on ESL consumers when navigating the complaint process, there are potential limitations or drawbacks. For example, GenAI can raise concerns around algorithmic bias, privacy, and data security. GenAI can also produce output which is inaccurate or non-sensical, known as 'hallucinations' (Sigala et al., 2024). Furthermore, if they are improperly designed or trained, AI systems can replicate or amplify existing biases (Challen et al. 2019). Please refer to the limitations discussed in Sections 7.4 and 7.5 for further analysis.

¹³ See Commonwealth Ombudsman (2023), "Better Practice Complaint Handling Guide."

¹⁴ See Section 5.2.5 of AS 10002:2022.

3.5.2 LEGITIMACY

The complaint handler's interpretation of the complaint through both its perceived legitimacy and the lens of the organisation's policy are key factors in the inferences they make and how they respond to the complaint (Wang et al., 2012). A complaint handler's perception of the legitimacy of a complaint is important, as perceived legitimacy has been linked to an increased likelihood that the complaint handler will resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction (Khantimirov & Karande, 2018)¹⁵.

Employees often rely on peripheral cues and internal characteristics, rather than just the content of the complaint itself, to evaluate legitimacy (Khantimirov & Karande, 2018). Cues, such as linguistic and cultural cues evident in the complaint of an ESL consumer, may expose the consumer to language discrimination (Kim & Mattila, 2011), which may impact legitimacy perceptions.

Multiple other factors can impact the perceived legitimacy of a complaint and the willingness of a staff member to resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction. Examples include accent, emotions, interaction style (such as being aggressive), appearance, or perceived levels of trustworthiness (Kim & Baker, 2019; Khantimirova & Karandeb, 2018; Krapfel, 1988; Wang et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2013). The outcomes of such factors could shape how the complaint handler perceives and responds to the complaint. The complaint could be handled in a more effortful manner if it is perceived as being legitimate and clear, while the complaint handler's perceptions of the legitimacy of the complaint, and their willingness to comply with it, is reduced if the complaint is not clear or easy to understand (Khantimirova & Karandeb, 2018; Krapfel, 1988; Wang et al., 2012).

3.5.3 ABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THE COMPLAINT

The timely response and satisfactory resolution of a complaint is crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction and trust (Helmy et al., 2023). A timely response ensures that customers feel their concerns are being taken seriously and addressed promptly, which helps in mitigating any negative emotions. Additionally, a satisfactory resolution not only resolves the immediate issue but also reinforces the customer's confidence in the organisation's commitment to service quality and customer care (Helmy et al., 2023).

An GenAI-assisted complaint that clearly outlines the issue and specifies the complainant's desired resolution—whether compensation, an apology, or service improvement—is expected to enhance the complaint handler's ability to (i) effectively address the complaint and (ii) provide a timely response.

GenAI has the potential to shape the perceptions of complaint legitimacy by improving the clarity of the complaint by presenting the information in a more structured, grammatically correct and comprehensive manner. Given that the quality and comprehensiveness of information within a complaint is essential for effective complaint resolution, it is argued that complaint outcomes, such as likelihood of complaint resolution and timeliness of resolution, will be positively impacted. To explore this relationship, the following research question is posed:

Research Question 5: How does GenAI-assisted complaint writing impact complaint handlers' perceptions of a complaint's clarity, legitimacy, and their ability to effectively address the complaint?

¹⁵ Examples of illegitimate complaints includes opportunistic complaint behaviour (Huang & Miao, 2016). Certain industries are more prone to illegitimate complaints, particularly when a high level of customer service is expected, such as hospitality (Huang & Miao, 2016). Furthermore, the reputational cost of mishandling illegitimate complaints can be compounded for organisations that operate in competitive industries (Khantimirova & Karandeb, 2018).

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

ESL consumers often face linguistic limitations that hinder their ability to effectively express dissatisfaction, leading to feelings of embarrassment, fear, and anxiety. These barriers can prompt avoidance behaviours in the face of service failures (Maíz-Arévalo & Méndez-García, 2023; Liao et al., 2023; Kim & Mattila, 2011).

Non-native speakers often feel disadvantaged due to linguistic limitations and concerns about language-based discrimination. This can manifest as impatience, rudeness, or indifference from service providers, negatively impacting mental health and leading to feelings of exclusion and rejection (Liao et al., 2023; Malik & Paswan, 2023; Wei et al., 2012).

Capability to complain refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to complain, which is crucial for their intention to complain. Interventions aimed at improving perceived complaint capability can enhance ESL consumers' confidence that their complaints will be addressed effectively (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Bearden et al., 2001).

GenAI can support ESL consumers by offering accessible, interactive, and dynamic experiences that assist in navigating service processes. GenAI can enhance communication by correcting linguistic errors and improving clarity, thereby empowering ESL complainants and reducing language-based inequities in service recovery (Hermann et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2023).

AI-mediated communication (AIMC) can enhance human-to-human communication, and AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants have been shown to improve communication quality and efficiency in customer service (Ateef et al., 2024). Thus, it follows that the use of GenAI to mediate communication between complainants and handlers may positively impact the clarity of complaints, perceived legitimacy, and the ability of complaint handlers to respond effectively.



4. Research Design



To examine how GenAI can support ESL consumers in filing complaints, we conducted both primary and secondary research. Secondary research involved reviewing publicly available reports and academic literature to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by ESL consumers and the role of GenAI in complaint processes. Primary research consisted of four experiments that compared ENL versus ESL complaint behaviour, the impact of GenAI on complaint-writing, and how complaint handlers respond to GenAI-assisted complaints. The following list provides a summary of each study, with Figure 1 detailing a conceptual overview of the research design. Further details of each study are provided later in this section.

- **Study 1 is based on Research Question 1. It examines whether there is a connection between a complainant's language background (ESL vs. ENL) and their perception of the likelihood that their complaint will be successfully resolved.**
- **Study 2 is based on Research Questions 2 and 3. It investigates the role of perceived language discrimination and the capability to complain in explaining the relationship between complainants' language background (ESL vs. ENL) and their perceived likelihood of a successful complaint.**
- **Study 3 is based on Research Question 4 and is divided into two parts. Study 3a examines whether ESL and ENL consumers differ in their likelihood to choose GenAI assistance for writing their complaints. Study 3b explores how GenAI influences a complainant's capability to complain in the context of complainants' language background (ESL vs. ENL) and the perceived likelihood of a successful complaint.**
- **Study 4 is based on Research Question 5 and investigates the ability of GenAI to aid complaint handlers in responding to ESL complainants.**

Research participants with English as their native language were recruited online from the UK, USA, and Australia. These countries were selected as they are predominantly English-speaking countries while also being multicultural societies. Consumers with English as a second language were recruited from all available non-English speaking countries, with Native Language any language other than English, and English as a second language.

In each study, additional demographic information, including age, gender, and language background, was also collected (see Appendix A for details).

As the primary research involved human participants, the research team obtained ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Newcastle College of Human and Social Futures (reference number H-2023-0435) in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*.

4.1 STUDY 1 – THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE BACKGROUND ON PERCEPTIONS OF COMPLAINT SUCCESS

Study 1 aimed to establish a connection between complainants' language background (ESL vs. ENL) and perceived likelihood of a successful complaint. It was predicted that ESL complainants would have lower perceptions of success likelihood compared to ENL complainants when writing complaints, informing Research Question 1.

200 participants (100 ESL and 100 ENL) were recruited online. ESL participants were sourced from all available non-English speaking countries and were screened based on their native language being any language other than English. ENL consumers were identified as participants from the UK, USA, and Australia who had selected English as their native language in the pre-screening process.

Participants were presented with a scenario describing a significant service failure during a routine transaction. They were asked to imagine renewing their driver's license at a customer service centre. Despite being informed via the customer service hotline that the process would take approximately 20 minutes, participants experienced a delay of four hours, causing them to miss work. After reading the scenario, participants were instructed to write a complaint detailing their dissatisfaction with the experience and to specify what resolution or outcome they expected from the complaint. Importantly, participants were explicitly told not to use GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT, when crafting their complaint.

Once the complaint was submitted, participants rated their perceptions of the likelihood of a successful outcome from their complaint on three seven-point Likert scales¹⁶.

¹⁶ Jin 2010; Cronbach's $\alpha = .764$.

4.2 STUDY 2 – EXPLANATORY ROLE OF PERCEIVED LANGUAGE DISCRIMINATION AND CAPABILITY TO COMPLAIN

Study 2 investigated the role of perceived language discrimination and capability to complain in explaining the relationship between complainants' language background (ESL vs. ENL) and their perceived likelihood of a successful complaint. It was predicted that perceived language discrimination would partly explain why ESL complainants have lower perceptions of complaint success likelihood, and capability to complain will more strongly explain this relationship, informing Research Questions 2 and 3.

211 participants (106 ESL and 105 ENL) were recruited online and screened as per Study 1. Participants were presented with a scenario involving a disappointing online pizza delivery experience. They were asked to imagine being regular customers of an online pizza shop and recently placing an order for a pepperoni pizza. To enhance the realism of the scenario, participants were shown two images: one of a delicious-looking pepperoni pizza generously covered in pepperoni, which matched the description on the website, and another of the actual pizza they received – a highly unappealing pizza with sparse cheese, no pepperoni, and a slightly mouldy appearance. Participants were then instructed to write a complaint to the pizza shop, expressing their dissatisfaction and specifying the resolution they wanted. As with Study 1, participants were explicitly told not to use GenAI tools such as ChatGPT when composing their complaint.

After writing their complaint, participants rated the perceived likelihood of a successful outcome on three seven-point Likert scales¹⁷. They were also assessed on perceived language discrimination, measured on seven seven-point Likert scales¹⁸, and capability to complain, measured on five seven-point Likert scales¹⁹.

4.3 STUDY 3A – LANGUAGE BACKGROUND AND GENAI USE

Study 3a examined whether ESL and ENL consumers differ in their likelihood to choose GenAI assistance for writing their complaints. It was predicted that a higher proportion of ESL consumers would opt

to use GenAI to improve their complaints, informing Research Question 4.

200 participants (99 ESL and 101 ENL) were recruited online and screened as per Studies 1 and 2. Participants were presented with a service failure scenario in which they placed an online order for a toy intended as a gift for a child. The toy was advertised as colourful, soft, and safe for children, with no small parts. To reinforce the situation, participants were shown two images: one image of the toy they saw online that matched the description, and another image of the actual toy that was delivered – featuring many small parts, making it unsuitable and potentially dangerous for children. Participants were then instructed to write a complaint to the toy shop, outlining their dissatisfaction with the misleading product and specifying the resolution they wanted. Participants were again explicitly told not to use GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT, when crafting their complaint.

After submitting their complaint, participants were asked whether they would like to use a GenAI tool to improve their complaint, with a yes/no response option provided. If they selected 'No,' they were informed "No problem! Our survey is almost complete, please answer the last few questions" before proceeding to the remaining survey items. If they selected 'Yes,' they were told, "Great! We are not quite finished yet, but your intention to use it is helpful to us. Our survey is almost complete, please answer the last few questions" before completing the remaining survey items.

4.4 STUDY 3B – THE EFFECT OF GENAI

Study 3b investigated how the use of GenAI impacts the relationship between complainants' language background (ESL vs. ENL) and their perceived likelihood of a successful complaint. Specifically, this study examined whether GenAI enhances capability to complain, which subsequently leads to a higher perceived likelihood of success, particularly for ESL complainants. In this framework, GenAI serves as a key factor in boosting capability to complain, which explains the relationship between language background and perceived success, further informing Research Question 4.

400 participants were recruited using the Prolific platform and were screened as per prior studies. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Language Background: ESL vs. ENL) x 2 (GenAI: non-GenAI assisted vs. GenAI-assisted) between-subjects design. Participants were screened following procedures in the previously mentioned

¹⁷ Cronbach's $\alpha = .724$.

¹⁸ Wei, Wang, and Ku, 2012; Cronbach's $\alpha = .960$.

¹⁹ Strizhakova and Tsarenko, 2010; Cronbach's $\alpha = .856$.

studies, and then randomly assigned to either a non-GenAI assisted or GenAI-assisted condition.

To enhance realism and simulate an actual consumer complaint process, a purpose-built, web-based complaint portal was developed. With the assistance of a professional software developer, the portal was integrated with an OpenAI Application Processing Interface (API) to offer real-time GenAI support. Participants were directed to the portal, where they could write their complaints rather than engaging with hypothetical scenarios. The API used a pre-developed and reverse-engineered prompt to generate GenAI-assisted versions of these complaints. This approach allowed participants to experience a process closer to real-world consumer interactions (see Figure 3).

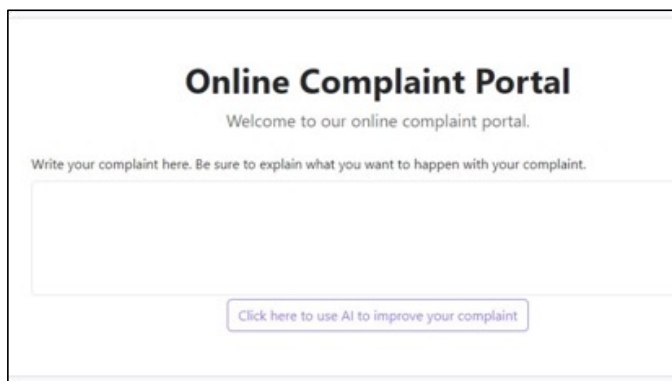


Figure 3 – The Consumer Complaint Portal utilizing the OpenAI API

A critical aspect of integrating GenAI into the online complaint portal was developing a prompt that effectively transformed consumer complaints into a clear, professional format. The process involved iterative refinement and reverse engineering to craft a prompt that would provide users with improved complaints, while avoiding common issues such as verbosity, inconsistent formatting, or unnecessary requests for information such as the name of the receiver or details about the complainant. The initial prompt focused on instructing the GenAI to make the complaint clear, professional, and concise. It guided the model to include key information such as the issue, product discrepancy, and desired resolution. However, this first iteration often produced inconsistent

responses with varying levels of verbosity and formality. In some cases the model included made-up details, unnecessary details such as personal names, excessive closing remarks, or highly formal salutations such as "Dear Sir/Madam" or "Sincerely, [Your Name]." Additionally, while the prompt aimed for brevity, the lack of structural guidelines led to unpredictable formats across different outputs. Some complaints would include subject lines, while others would not, and certain responses introduced sections that were not in line with typical complaint structures, leading to a lack of uniformity.

To address these issues, reverse engineering played a pivotal role in the prompt refinement process. By analysing outputs from earlier versions, we identified patterns that led to overly formal or inconsistent responses. These patterns included the addition of superfluous elements, such as placeholders for personal or business names, and requests for information that the complainant would not necessarily provide in an online complaint portal (for example, the receiver's name or specific closing signatures). This reverse engineering approach allowed us to refine the prompt by incorporating clearer instructions that would result in more consistent outputs. Through multiple iterations, we shifted the focus towards maintaining balance—professionalism, clarity, and a streamlined structure that would work for both long and short complaints. By testing each revision, we adjusted elements of the prompt to eliminate ambiguity and variability in format.

The final version of the prompt was carefully crafted to ensure a consistent structure and tone across all outputs and successfully balanced professionalism with conciseness. (Please see Appendix B for the Final Prompt.) The instructions ensured that even short, straightforward complaints were handled efficiently without unnecessary verbosity or overly formal language. The reverse-engineering process was key in achieving this balance, allowing us to tailor the prompt

to different complaint lengths and complexities while ensuring consistency in the output.

Participants were presented with a service failure scenario in which they purchased climbing rope from an online retailer, only to discover a disclaimer in the small print stating 'not suitable for climbing'. They were then asked to compose a complaint to the online store. Participants in the GenAI-assisted condition followed a link to the online consumer complaint portal, where they wrote their complaint. After writing their complaint, they clicked the "Use AI to improve my complaint" button, which automatically generated a revised version of their complaint. Participants could see both their original and GenAI-assisted complaints on the screen and then clicked 'Save and Return to Survey' (see Appendix D for an example of an ESL complaint and GenAI API output). After writing their complaint, participants completed questions concerning perceived likelihood of a successful complaint²⁰, and capability to complain²¹.

4.5 STUDY 4 – ABILITY OF GENAI TO AI COMPLAINT HANDLERS

Study 4 aimed to provide insights into the benefits of GenAI in aiding complaint handlers when they are dealing with ESL complainants. It examined whether GenAI enhances a complaint handler's confidence that they can resolve the complaint. Furthermore, the ability for GenAI to increase the clarity and perceived legitimacy of the complaint was also examined, given

that such factors could impact the likelihood that a complaint is successfully resolved.

95 complaint handlers were recruited from the Society of Consumers Affairs Professionals (SOCAP) Australia's membership base, the professional networks of the research team, and a sponsored LinkedIn post created to target complaint handlers. Participants worked in a range of industries and were selected if their role involved handling consumer complaints. Participants were randomly assigned to two scenarios, one that was GenAI assisted and one that had no GenAI assistance, with both scenarios based on complaints made by ESL complainants.

Participants were presented with a situation where they were complaint handler for a hotel and had to deal with an online complaint from a hotel guest. After reading the complaint, participants rated the likelihood that they could resolve the complaint²². They were also asked to rate their response regarding:

- **The clarity of the complaint.**
- **The legitimacy of the complaint.**
- **Whether the complaint included a clear call to action.**
- **The thoroughness of the information provided in the complaint.**
- **Whether they thought the complainant was ESL.**

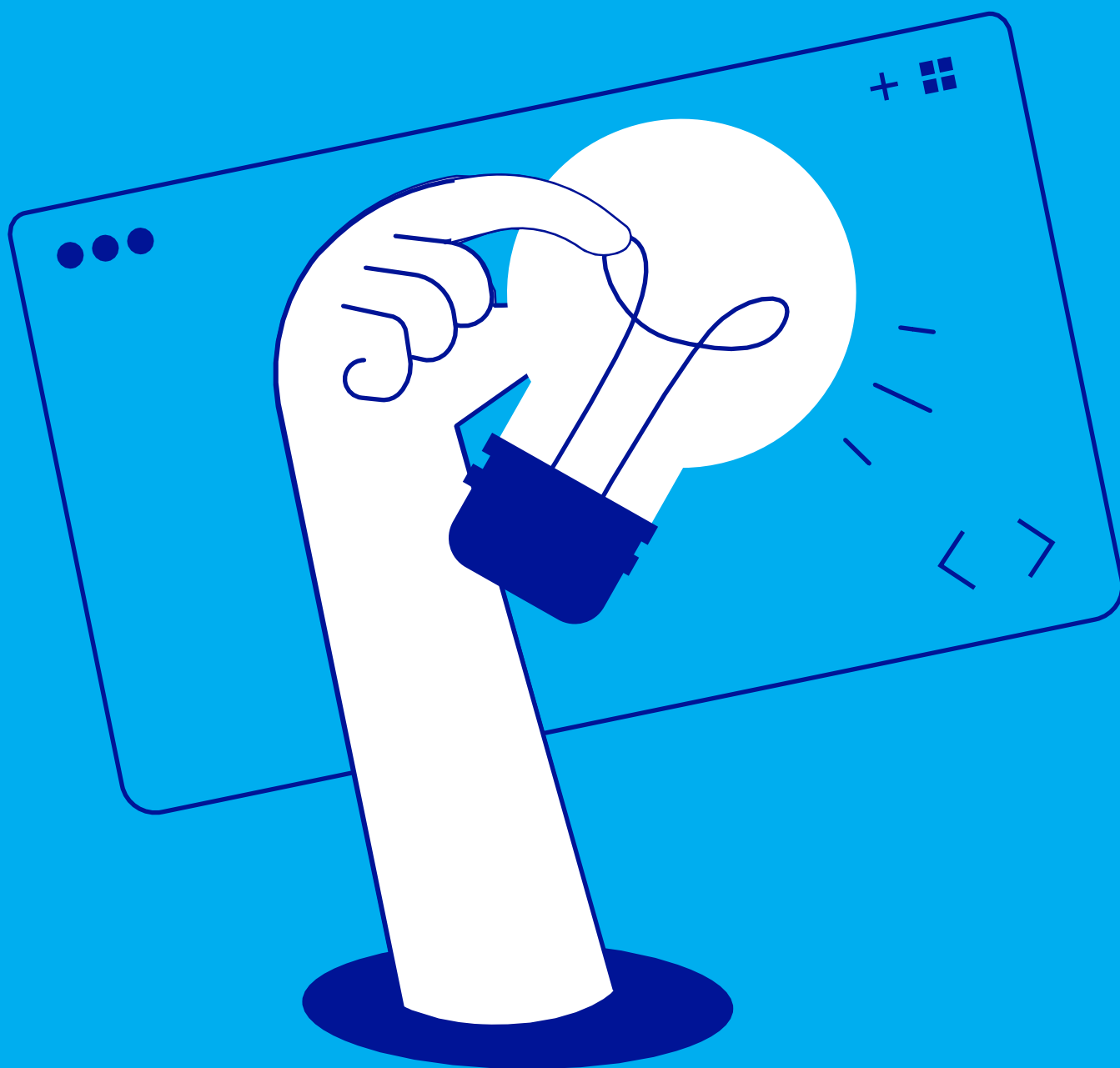


²⁰ Cronbach's $\alpha = .759$.

²¹ Cronbach's $\alpha = .895$.

²² Participants rated the likelihood on three seven-point Likert scales (which were adapted from the Perceived Likelihood of Successful Complaint scales used in the previous studies).

5. Research Findings

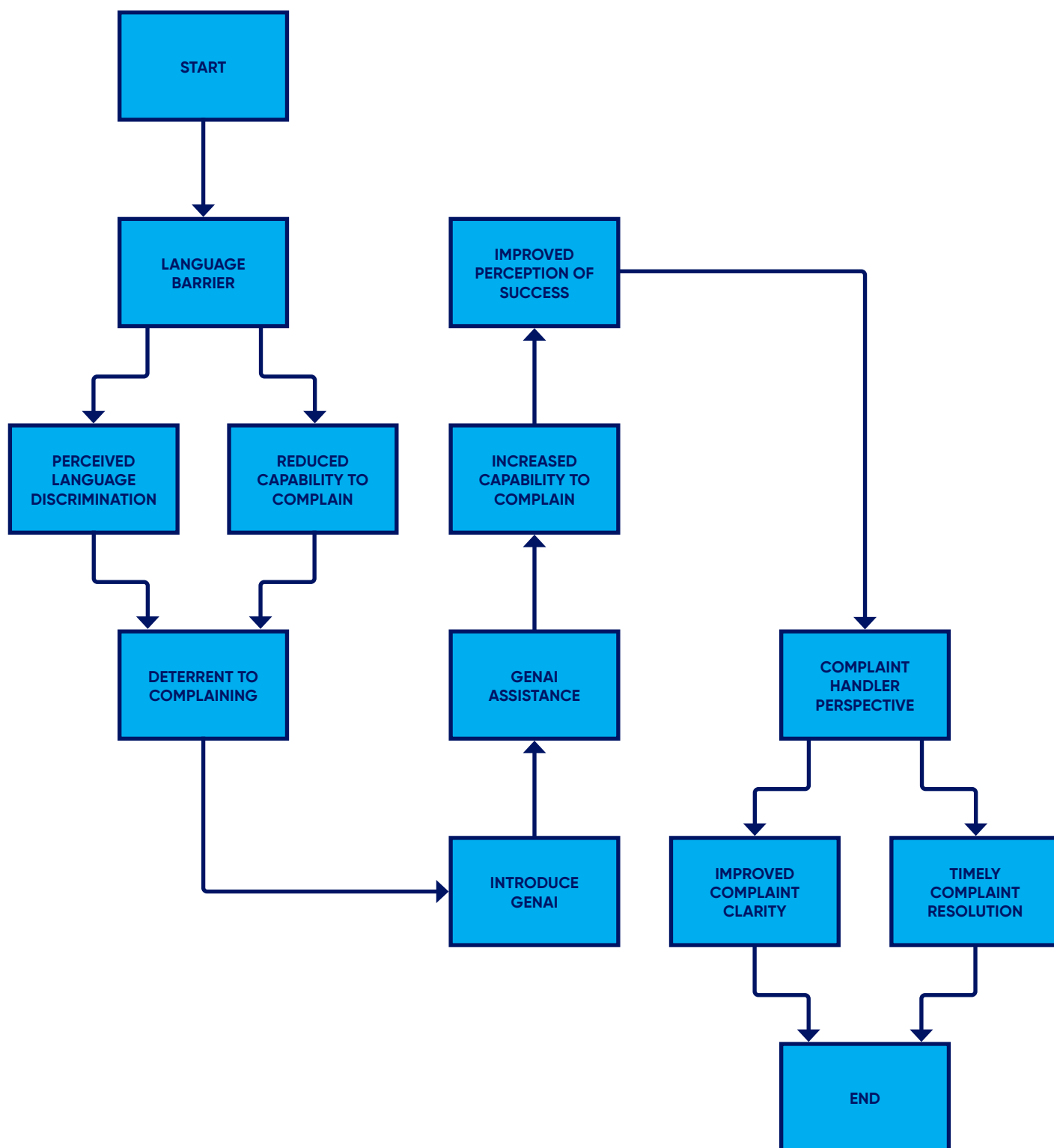


As discussed in Section 3, the literature review revealed the following four questions that required additional research:

- **Research Question 1: Do ESL complainants perceive a lower likelihood of having their complaint successfully resolved, compared to ENL complainants?**
- **Research Question 2: How does perceived language discrimination influence an ESL complainant's perception of the likelihood that their complaint will be successfully resolved?**
- **Research Question 3: Does an ESL complainant's perceived capability to complain outweigh perceived language discrimination when it comes to perceived likelihood of a successful complaint?**
- **Research Question 4: Can using a GenAI tool, to assist in writing a complaint, influence an ESL complainant's perception of their capability to complain? Does this, in turn, influence an ESL complainant's perceived likelihood of having their complaint successfully resolved?**
- **Research Question 5: How does GenAI-assisted complaint writing impact complaint handlers' perceptions of a complaint's clarity, legitimacy, and their ability to effectively address the complaint?**

The results from the five studies indicate that GenAI-assisted tools can increase ESL consumers' capability to complain and improve their perceived likelihood of making a successful complaint. In respect of behaviour, ESL consumers perceived a lower likelihood of making a successful complaint when compared to ENL consumers. While language background influences perceived language discrimination, there is no significant effect of perceived language discrimination within the context of a complainants' language background and their view of the likelihood of making a successful complaint. Instead, capability to complain is more significant than perceived language discrimination when it comes to a consumer's view of the likelihood of making a successful complaint. In respect of complaint handlers, the results for Research Question 5 show that using GenAI to assist in writing a complaint influenced how a complaint handler perceives the clarity of the complaint and the speed with which they can resolve the complaint, but it did not assist the complaint handler in how they perceived the legitimacy of the complaint or their ability to resolve to the complaint. The research findings are illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page.



Figure 2: ESL Consumer Complaint Process with GenAI Assistance

STUDY 1 – THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE BACKGROUND ON COMPLAINANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMPLAINT SUCCESS

The results for Study 1 indicate that the perception of the likelihood of a successful complaint differed between ESL and ENL complainants²³. ESL participants perceived a lower likelihood of making a successful complaint when compared to ENL participants.

STUDY 2 – EXPLANATORY ROLE OF PERCEIVED LANGUAGE DISCRIMINATION AND CAPABILITY TO COMPLAIN

The results for Study 2 revealed a difference in perceived language discrimination²⁴ and capability to complain²⁵ between ESL and ENL complainants. ESL complainants perceived a higher likelihood of language discrimination and a lower perceived capability to complain. Further analysis²⁶ showed that the relationship between language background and perceived likelihood of successful complaint was explained by perceived capability to complain²⁷, and not language discrimination²⁸.

The results indicate that language background was an important factor in a person's capability to complain²⁹. Furthermore, capability to complain significantly predicted the perceived likelihood of a successful complaint³⁰. Although language background increased perceptions of language discrimination³¹, perceptions of language discrimination did not influence perceived likelihood of a successful complaint³². Therefore, the relationship between language background and perceived likelihood of

successful complaint is only influenced by a person's capability to complain.

The evidence suggests that perceived language discrimination is not an important factor in the context of a complainants' language background and their view of the likelihood of making a successful complaint. An ESL complainant's perceived capability to complain is more important than perceived language discrimination when it comes to the perceived likelihood making a successful complaint.

STUDY 3A – LANGUAGE BACKGROUND AND GENAI USE

For Study 3A, the results indicate that the majority of ESL and ENL participants were likely to choose the GenAI tool to help improve their complaint³³. However, a higher proportion of ESL participants (90.9%) chose to use the GenAI tool³⁴ compared to 81.2% of ENL participants³⁵.

STUDY 3B – THE EFFECT OF GENAI

The results for Study 3B indicate that GenAI significantly increased the ESL complainants' capability to complain³⁶. There was no significant difference in ENL complainants' capability to complain³⁷. Furthermore, GenAI significantly increased the perceived likelihood of a successful complaint³⁸ for ESL complainants, while for ENL complainants there was no significant difference in their perceived likelihood of a successful complaint.³⁹

²³ ANOVA $F(1, 198) = 9.39, p = .026, \eta^2 = .025, \text{MESL} = 3.84, \text{SD} = 1.24; \text{MENL} = 4.28, \text{SD} = 1.48$.

²⁴ $F(1, 207) = 111.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .349; \text{MESL} = 2.48, \text{SD} = .934; \text{MENL} = 1.33, \text{SD} = .598$.

²⁵ $F(1, 207) = 34.25, p < .001, \eta^2 = .141; \text{MESL} = 5.01, \text{SD} = .703; \text{MENL} = 5.64, \text{SD} = .860$. The results for Study 2 reveal that ESL complainants perceived a lower likelihood of making a successful complaint when compared to ENL complainants ANOVA $F(1,207) = 11.06, p = .001, \eta^2 = .050; \text{MESL} = 5.06, \text{SD} = .867; \text{MENL} = 5.48, \text{SD} = .964$. These results are consistent with Study 1.

²⁶ Mediation analysis with 10,000 bootstrap samples (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes 2017).

²⁷ $\beta = -.196, 95\% \text{CI} = -.321 \text{ to } -.091$.

²⁸ $\beta = -.020, 95\% \text{CI} = -.202 \text{ to } .183$.

²⁹ $\beta = -.633, t = -5.85, p < .001$.

³⁰ $\beta = .310, t = 3.83, p < .001$.

³¹ Simple mediation analysis ($\beta = 1.144, t = 10.58, p < .001$).

³² $\beta = -.099, t = -1.23, p = .223$.

³³ A Wald test for one-sample proportions.

³⁴ $Z = -1.98, p = .048$.

³⁵ $95\% \text{CI} = -.191 \text{ to } .000$.

³⁶ $F(1, 396) = 16.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .039; \text{MAIESL} = 5.73, \text{SD} = 1.00; \text{MNonAIESL} = 5.12, \text{SD} = .977$.

³⁷ $F(1, 396) = 976, p < .331, \eta^2 = .002; \text{MAIESL} = 5.65, \text{SD} = 1.32; \text{MNonAIESL} = 5.51, \text{SD} = .968$.

³⁸ $F(1, 396) = 16.37, p < .001, \eta^2 = .040; \text{MAIESL} = 5.28, \text{SD} = .878; \text{MNonAIESL} = 4.60, \text{SD} = 1.39$.

³⁹ $F(1, 396) = .354, p < .552, \eta^2 = .001; \text{MAIESL} = 5.10, \text{SD} = .124; \text{MNonAIESL} = 5.00, \text{SD} = 1.19$.

Additional analysis in the context of language background, GenAI, and capability to complain was conducted⁴⁰. There was a significant interaction between language background and GenAI on both a person's capability to complain⁴¹ and their perceived likelihood of making a successful complaint⁴². See Appendix E for main effects. The effect of GenAI⁴³ on the perceived likelihood of a successful complaint was only explained by heightened perceptions of capability to complain for ESL consumers⁴⁴. In contrast, capability to complain did not explain the relationship between language background and perceived likelihood of successful complaint for ENL consumers⁴⁵.

For ESL complainants, GenAI was effective in increasing their perception of capability to complain and their perceived likelihood of making a successful complaint. No increase was observed for ENL consumers, indicating that their capability to complain and perceived likelihood of making successful complaint remained unchanged when using GenAI.

STUDY 4 – ABILITY OF GENAI TO AID COMPLAINT HANDLERS

The findings from Study 4 indicate that GenAI-assisted complaints were rated higher in clarity⁴⁶, ease of understanding⁴⁷, and likelihood of a timely response⁴⁸. However, GenAI assistance did not lead to differences in perceptions of complaint legitimacy⁴⁹ or the likelihood that the complaint handler could respond to the complaint⁵⁰. Both GenAI-assisted and ESL-written complaints were viewed similarly in these respects.

The correlation analysis highlights the key factors that shape perceptions of complaint success and timely response likelihood. Complaints rated higher in clarity were strongly associated with higher perceived success, reinforcing the importance of straightforward and concise communication in complaint writing⁵¹. Similarly, complaints that were seen as legitimate—those based on justified concerns or valid claims—were more likely to be considered successful⁵². Including all required information also played a key role, as complaints that provided comprehensive details to support the issue were more likely to be seen as having a higher chance of resolution⁵³.

Additional factors also contributed to perceptions of success. Complaints that were easy to understand were more likely to be rated as successful⁵⁴. Additionally, when complaints included a clear call to action, such as specifying the desired resolution (e.g., a refund, replacement, or apology), they were seen as more likely to succeed⁵⁵.

The likelihood of a timely response was also strongly influenced by complaint characteristics. Clear⁵⁶ and easy-to-understand⁵⁷ complaints were more likely to be perceived as receiving a prompt response. Complaints viewed as legitimate were also seen as more likely to be addressed quickly⁵⁸. However, language proficiency perceptions played a role in response time. Complaints written by customers perceived as native English speakers were rated as more likely to receive a prompt response⁵⁹, while complaints from those perceived as non-native English speakers (ESL consumers) were associated with a lower likelihood of a quick response⁶⁰.

Perceptions of legitimacy were strongly linked to clarity. Complaints that provided comprehensive details were more likely to be viewed as legitimate⁶¹, as were those that included a clear call to action⁶². This suggests that structuring a complaint effectively—by clearly outlining the issue and specifying the desired resolution—can enhance perceptions of both legitimacy and success.

⁴⁰ Similar to Study 2, the results show that capability to complain was an important factor in a person's perception of being able to make a successful complaint.

⁴¹ ANOVA $F(1, 396) = 4.61, p = .032, \eta^2 = .012$.

⁴² ANOVA $F(1, 396) = 5.95, p = .015, \eta^2 = .015$.

⁴³ The conditional effect of GenAI was tested and a moderated mediation was observed ($\beta = .108, 95\% \text{ CI} = .012 \text{ to } .243$).

⁴⁴ $\beta = -.092, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.189 \text{ to } -.023$.

⁴⁵ $\beta = .017, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.059 \text{ to } .183$.

⁴⁶ $Z = -4.599, p < 0.001$

⁴⁷ $Z = -4.299, p < 0.001$.

⁴⁸ $Z = -2.407, p = 0.016$.

⁴⁹ $Z = -1.697, p = 0.090$.

⁵⁰ $Z = -0.817, p = 0.414$.

⁵¹ $r = 0.500, p < 0.001$.

⁵² $r = 0.539, p < 0.001$.

⁵³ $r = 0.460, p < 0.001$

⁵⁴ $r = 0.315, p = 0.002$

⁵⁵ $r = 0.315, p < 0.001$.

⁵⁶ $r = 0.395, p < 0.001$.

⁵⁷ $r = 0.444, p < 0.001$.

⁵⁸ $r = 0.458, p < 0.001$.

⁵⁹ $r = 0.290, p = 0.004$

⁶⁰ $r = -0.280, p = 0.006$.

⁶¹ $r = 0.623, p < 0.001$.

⁶² $r = 0.493, p < 0.001$.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Language barriers have been suggested to act as a significant deterrent for ESL consumers who wish to lodge a complaint⁶³. The findings of the four studies build on this foundation by showing that perceived language discrimination – where consumers anticipate biased treatment due to their language proficiency or accent (Liao et al., 2023) – is only part of the problem. More critically, while ESL consumers may be deterred from complaining due to fears of language discrimination⁶⁴, ESL consumers experience reduced capability to complain when it comes to composing complaints, which emerged as an important factor in their perceived likelihood of success.

Introducing GenAI into the complaint process represents a potential solution to these challenges. The findings show that when ESL consumers receive assistance from GenAI their capability to complain increases, leading to improved perceptions of making a successful complaint. Importantly, GenAI offers a dual benefit to ESL consumers experiencing vulnerability: it provides them with practical assistance to craft more effective complaints while reducing the emotional burden associated with language barriers. From the perspective of a complaint handler, this research suggests that GenAI assistance may improve complaint clarity and comprehensiveness and facilitate more timely complaint resolutions.

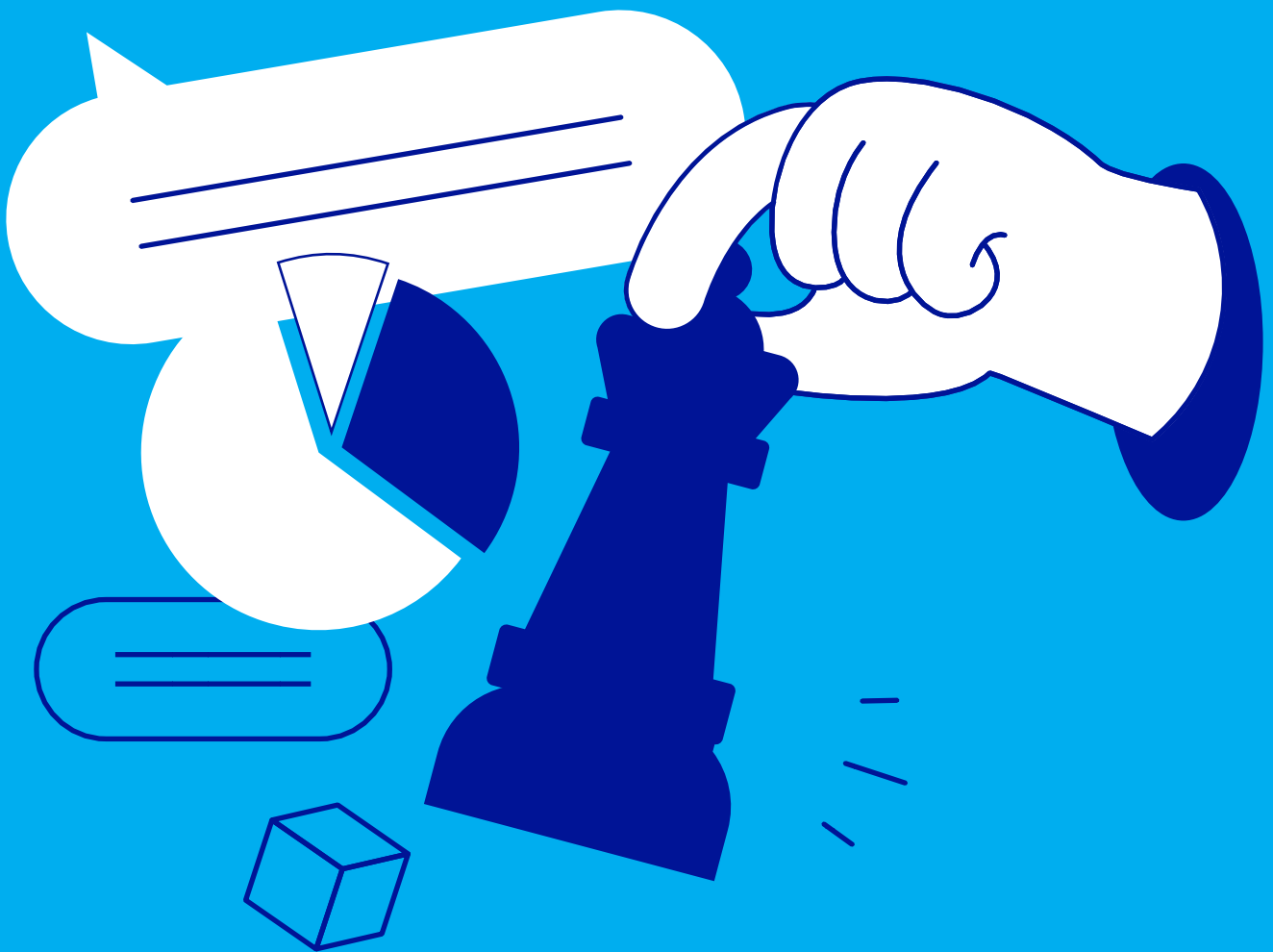
The studies reveal that while GenAI substantially enhances the experience of ESL consumers, it does not significantly impact ENL consumers. (In spite of this outcome, however, ENL participants did overwhelmingly indicate that they would choose to use GenAI-assistance for writing complaints.) This suggests that GenAI assistance is more beneficial for consumers experiencing vulnerability, positioning GenAI as a tool for reducing inequities in service settings. By empowering consumers experiencing vulnerability in a way that does not require them to learn new skills or adjust to unfamiliar processes, GenAI offers an inclusive solution that has broader implications for other consumer segments.



⁶³ Kim and Matilla 2011; Spencer and Chen 2004.

⁶⁴ Kim and Mattila 2011; Spencer and Chen 2004.

6. Government and Organisational Implications



This report has provided insight into how GenAI can influence the behaviour and perceptions of ESL consumers. It contributes to the theoretical frameworks that consider the unique challenges faced by ESL consumers in accessing justice and fair treatment in service settings. The results have also revealed implications and opportunities for both government and private-sector organisations.

From a policy perspective, government regulatory bodies could encourage the use of GenAI tools in industries where consumers experiencing vulnerability face significant barriers. Policymakers could work with consumer advocacy groups and service providers to ensure that GenAI tools are designed with accessibility and inclusivity in mind. Governments could incentivize the adoption of these tools by offering grants or subsidies for companies that implement GenAI-driven complaint systems to empower consumers, particularly in sectors where populations experiencing vulnerability are overrepresented. These policy recommendations align with broader societal goals of promoting equity, fairness, and accessibility in consumer interactions, while also addressing key principles outlined in AS 10002:2022 and ISO 22458⁶⁵.

From an organisational perspective, AS 10002:2022 and ISO 22458 requires organisations to monitor their complaint management systems to ensure they operate effectively and improve outcomes for consumers⁶⁶. For example, organisations should encourage innovation in complaint management development (Standards Australia, 2022). This research provides actionable insights into how organisations can reduce the effects of perceived language discrimination and improve the complaint process for consumers experiencing vulnerability through using GenAI. It provides evidence that capability to complain can be improved through GenAI interventions and that, while discrimination remains a concern, technology offers a practical solution that enhances consumers' confidence in their abilities while mitigating the adverse effects of these biases in written complaint processes. In respect of continual improvement, the research findings provide valuable insights that incorporate the technological innovation of GenAI, with such research providing information that can be considered an input that organisations could consider under Section 9.6.2 of AS 10002:2022.

6.1 ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF ESL CONSUMERS

Addressing the challenges ESL consumers face in complaint processes is critical for ensuring inclusivity and equity in service settings. By demonstrating that ESL consumers experience heightened difficulties in accessing service recovery processes due to perceived discrimination and diminished capability to complain, this research adds to the understanding of how situational vulnerability manifests and affects consumer behaviour in service contexts (Baker et al., 2005).

While language discrimination can deter ESL consumers from engaging in the complaint process, the results show that perceived discrimination is not the main factor deterring ESL consumers from making complaints. Instead, the capability to complain – specifically, the consumer's belief in their ability to navigate the complaint process – is a more powerful factor than perceived language discrimination when it comes to an ESL consumers' perceived likelihood of a making successful complaint. This insight challenges traditional models that prioritize external barriers (such as discrimination) and instead emphasizes the internal, psychological barriers faced by consumers experiencing vulnerability (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, this improved understanding of vulnerability emphasizes the importance of internal, psychological factors in shaping consumer perceptions of fairness and success, shifting the focus from external and uncontrollable factors to more actionable individual-level interventions.

The introduction of capability to complain as a focal point for intervention provides a new direction for vulnerability research, particularly in how technology can be used to strengthen consumer confidence and reduce vulnerability. This is of both theoretical and practical significance, given that improving a complainant's capability to complain with GenAI is relatively straightforward, as it involves providing clear guidance, positive reinforcement, and actionable steps – which GenAI can deliver consistently across contexts. Addressing feelings of language discrimination, however, requires navigating complex emotions and cultural nuances that are more challenging for GenAI to handle effectively. Additionally, language discrimination often involves systemic issues that go beyond the capabilities of GenAI to resolve.

⁶⁵ See Section 7.1 and Appendix D.1 of AS 10002:2022 and Sections 4.2 and 4.3.1 of ISO 22458.

⁶⁶ This includes assessing whether the organisation is addressing the vulnerabilities of consumers and enhancing the complaints process by taking corrective and preventative action to reduce potential consumer harm.

6.2 INSIGHTS INTO THE USE OF GENAI AS A COMPLAINT TOOL

This research extends the understanding of GenAI applications. Beyond processing complaints, the findings reveal how GenAI can empower consumers, particularly those facing language barriers. The studies focus on the consumer side as opposed to the firm/service organisation side, showing how GenAI tools can improve the consumer's experience by increasing their capability to complain and reducing the perceived impact of language discrimination.

The results provide empirical evidence that GenAI can be a critical tool for promoting equity in service settings. The ability of GenAI to assist ESL consumers with drafting complaints reduces their linguistic disadvantages, thereby supporting their ability to achieve equitable outcomes. This research demonstrates that GenAI's potential goes beyond operational efficiency to include fostering consumer empowerment and addressing systemic vulnerabilities in service design. Via the introduction of a GenAI-assisted complaint portal, it is demonstrated that GenAI can increase a consumer's capability to write a complaint.

6.3 ADOPTING GENAI TOOLS TO EMPOWER CONSUMERS EXPERIENCING VULNERABILITY

An important implication of this report is the role GenAI can play in creating more inclusive complaint processes for consumers experiencing vulnerability. For service providers, especially those in industries that serve high volumes of ESL consumers, such as telecommunications, healthcare, and banking, GenAI tools can significantly improve the accessibility and equity of their service recovery processes. By providing ESL consumers with real-time assistance in composing complaints, service providers can increase consumer satisfaction and reduce the disparities in complaint outcomes that disproportionately affect groups experiencing vulnerability.

This report provides a roadmap for how GenAI can be integrated into customer-facing technologies to enhance customer interaction and service. Service providers could consider embedding GenAI-powered tools into customer service platforms, not just as a convenience feature, but as an equity-driven initiative aimed at reducing systemic disadvantages.

6.4 REDESIGNING SERVICE RECOVERY SYSTEMS WITH INCLUSIVITY IN MIND

Organisations are required to improve outcomes for consumers experiencing vulnerability through adopting an inclusive service design approach (International Organization for Standardization, 2018). As per Section 5.1 of ISO 22458, such guidelines for designing an inclusive service include accessibility, consumer co-design and research. The findings suggest that integrating GenAI tools such as GenAI into these systems could play a critical role in equalising the complaint process for ESL consumers, who often feel discouraged from lodging complaints due to their linguistic limitations. As demonstrated in this report, technology can reduce the negative impact of these limitations, helping service providers to offer more equitable and effective solutions.

Furthermore, frontline staff are a key element in the complaints process. ISO 22458 and AS 10002:2022 highlight the importance of empowering staff to handle complaints, including providing staff with appropriate training and resources to identify and support consumers experiencing vulnerability⁶⁷. The implications of this research could be further enhanced if organisations trained their customer service teams to complement GenAI tools, ensuring that the human element of service recovery is not lost. For example, customer service teams could be equipped to engage empathetically with consumers experiencing vulnerability, leveraging GenAI outputs to deliver more personalized and equitable resolutions. This approach would align with broader goals of equity and inclusivity in customer service, addressing systemic barriers while maintaining high-quality human interaction⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ See International Organization for Standardization, 2018 p.24 and Standards Australia, 2022 p.10.

⁶⁸ Furthermore, diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives could result to staff with ESL being responsible for handling complaints, leading to a human-based (or "non-AI") solution that helps mitigate the risk of language discrimination. Such staff could directly relate to ESL complainants as they themselves have lived experience of being ESL. Such D&I initiatives are present at the NSW Ombudsman, with 26.8% of their workforce being composed of people whose first language spoken as a child was not English (NSW Ombudsman, 2024).

7. Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research



While each the four studies have found evidence that can be useful for policymakers and organisations, a key element of all research projects is the presence of study limitations. Broadly speaking, examples of study limitations include the sampling approach, presence of biases, and generalisation of results. Such limitations do not reduce the usefulness of the findings or their implications. However, discussing such limitations is important as they can provide avenues for consideration and additional research. There are seven key limitations that arise from the studies, which may provide scope for future research.

7.1 CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC GENERALIZABILITY

This report focuses on ESL consumers in English-speaking countries. However, the challenges consumers face can vary significantly across different cultural and linguistic environments. In multilingual countries or regions where English is not the dominant language, the nature of vulnerability in consumer environments and the effectiveness of GenAI tools may differ. Future research could explore how GenAI can be adapted for use in different linguistic contexts, such as non-English speaking markets or multilingual service environments where consumers speak several local languages. This could provide insights into whether GenAI's language assistance features are universally applicable or need to be tailored to specific linguistic and cultural nuances.

Another area for research involves testing the role of capability to complain and perceived likelihood of complaint success based on the language used to write the complaint, such as Spanish or Mandarin Chinese. GenAI's ability to translate foreign languages into English might reduce barriers for non-native speakers and increase their confidence in submitting complaints in their native language. Future studies could compare the effects of writing complaints in one's native language versus English, focusing on how this impacts capability to complain and perceived likelihood of success. Understanding these dynamics will provide further insights into how GenAI-driven language translation can be leveraged to support diverse consumer groups in different linguistic environments.

Additionally, cultural factors influence complaint behaviour, as demonstrated by research showing that consumers from collectivist cultures are less likely to

engage in direct complaint behaviours compared to those from individualist cultures (Eshraghi & Shahrokhi, 2016; Liu & McClure, 2001). Future studies could investigate how GenAI's effectiveness is shaped by these cultural differences, particularly in regions where indirect communication styles are more prevalent. By understanding the relationship between cultural norms and GenAI usage, organisations can further customize GenAI solutions for different consumer groups.

7.2 OTHER FORMS OF VULNERABILITY IN CONSUMER ENVIRONMENTS

While this report focuses on ESL consumers, a consumer's experience of vulnerability in service contexts can arise from various other factors, including age, disability, socio-economic status, or digital illiteracy (Brennan et al., 2017; Hill & Sharma, 2020). Furthermore, consumers can experience vulnerability through multiple factors, such as an ESL consumer having a disability. Future research could explore how GenAI and similar technologies can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse groups experiencing vulnerability. For instance, individuals with visual or cognitive impairments might require GenAI tools that are accessible through alternative interfaces, such as voice-to-text features or simplified navigation. Similarly, elderly consumers who may be less familiar with digital tools could benefit from GenAI systems designed with user-friendly interfaces and minimal technological complexity.

By broadening the scope of inquiry to include multiple types of groups experiencing vulnerability, future research can assess the full potential of GenAI technologies in enhancing equity in service recovery. This would contribute to a more holistic understanding of a consumer's experience of vulnerability in service contexts / vulnerability in consumer environments while offering actionable insights into how GenAI tools can be customised for different consumer segments.

7.3 CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE AND TRUST IN AI

While this report demonstrates the potential of GenAI to improve ESL consumer's capability to complain, acceptance and trust in GenAI tools remains underexplored. Consumers might have concerns about using GenAI in personal or sensitive contexts, such as complaint handling, especially when it comes to issues

such as data privacy⁶⁹, algorithmic transparency, and the risk of GenAI neglecting customers' uniqueness. Future research could examine how different consumer groups perceive GenAI-based services, particularly among populations experiencing vulnerability who might feel alienated from traditional service systems. This research could be examined through the lens of standards such as ISO/IEC TR 24028:2020 – Information technology – Artificial intelligence – Overview of trustworthiness in artificial intelligence.

Investigating factors such as perceived fairness, trust, and the emotional responses to GenAI-assisted interactions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumers' acceptance of GenAI. Such research could be extended to address consumers' perceptions of privacy when using GenAI for sensitive tasks, such as lodging complaints. Consumers experiencing vulnerability, particularly those who have experienced discrimination or marginalization, might be more cautious about sharing personal information with GenAI systems. Understanding how consumers weigh the trade-offs between the benefits of GenAI assistance and concerns over privacy is essential for developing GenAI tools that are effective and trusted.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies could assess whether prolonged exposure to GenAI tools in service recovery improves consumer trust and comfort over time. For consumers experiencing vulnerability who may have experienced discrimination or exclusion in past interactions, understanding how trust in GenAI evolves could inform the design of GenAI systems that prioritise transparency and consumer empowerment.

7.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND BIAS IN GENAI

While GenAI offers the potential to reduce vulnerability in service settings, it also raises important ethical concerns, particularly around accuracy of outputs, algorithmic bias, privacy, and data security. There is evidence that GenAI systems can replicate or amplify existing biases if they are not properly designed or trained (Challen et al., 2019). For example, if the training data for GenAI systems disproportionately represents certain groups, it may unintentionally prioritise the language patterns or complaint styles of those groups over others, leading to inequitable treatment. Future research could critically examine the ethical implications of GenAI

in service recovery, particularly in the context of consumers experiencing vulnerability. This includes exploring how GenAI systems are trained, how their outputs are evaluated, how they handle sensitive data, and whether GenAI systems introduce new forms of exclusion or bias. To ensure ethical GenAI implementation, there should be an emphasis on transparency, accountability, and ongoing monitoring of GenAI's performance generally, as well as across different demographic groups.

7.5 THE ROLE OF HUMAN INTERACTION IN GENAI-ASSISTED SYSTEMS

While GenAI can significantly enhance the complaint process for consumers experiencing vulnerability, it is important to consider the continuing role of human interaction in GenAI-assisted systems. Many consumers prefer human contact, particularly in complex or emotionally charged situations (Balaji et al., 2017). For groups experiencing vulnerability, the combination of GenAI-driven assistance and empathetic human service interactions may be the most effective approach. Future research could explore hybrid service models that integrate GenAI assistance with human oversight. For example, GenAI could assist with the technical aspects of complaint writing while human service officers provide personalized follow-up and emotional support. Investigating how GenAI and humans service officers can work together to deliver efficiency and empathy could offer insights into designing service recovery processes that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of consumers experiencing vulnerability.

7.6 CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS AND OUTCOMES OF COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

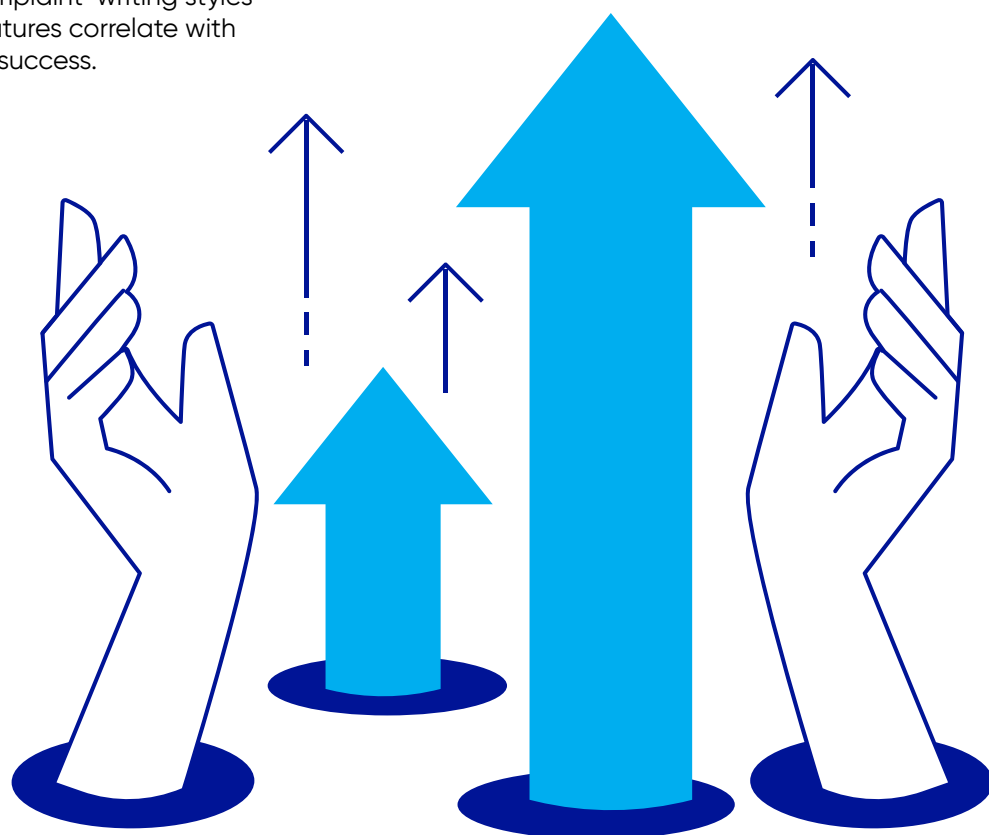
While the findings from the studies provide valuable insights into how ESL consumers and complaint handlers perceive the effectiveness of complaints, the research primarily focuses on perceived likelihood of a successful complaint rather than actual complaint outcomes. Controlled experiments allow for the isolation of key variables, but they do not capture whether the complaints ultimately lead to favourable resolutions, compensation, or service improvements.

⁶⁹ Data security and privacy could be key issues when consumers interact with GenAI services, and this will require consideration by organisations. For example, Section 5.2.4 of AS 10002:2022 requires that personally identifiable information be used in compliance with relevant privacy laws and ethical obligations (Standards Australia, 2022). Meanwhile, Section 6.4.3 of ISO 22458 requires that, when personal information is recorded, organisations need to ensure that data is secure and that software is assessed for privacy risks (International Organization for Standardization, 2018).

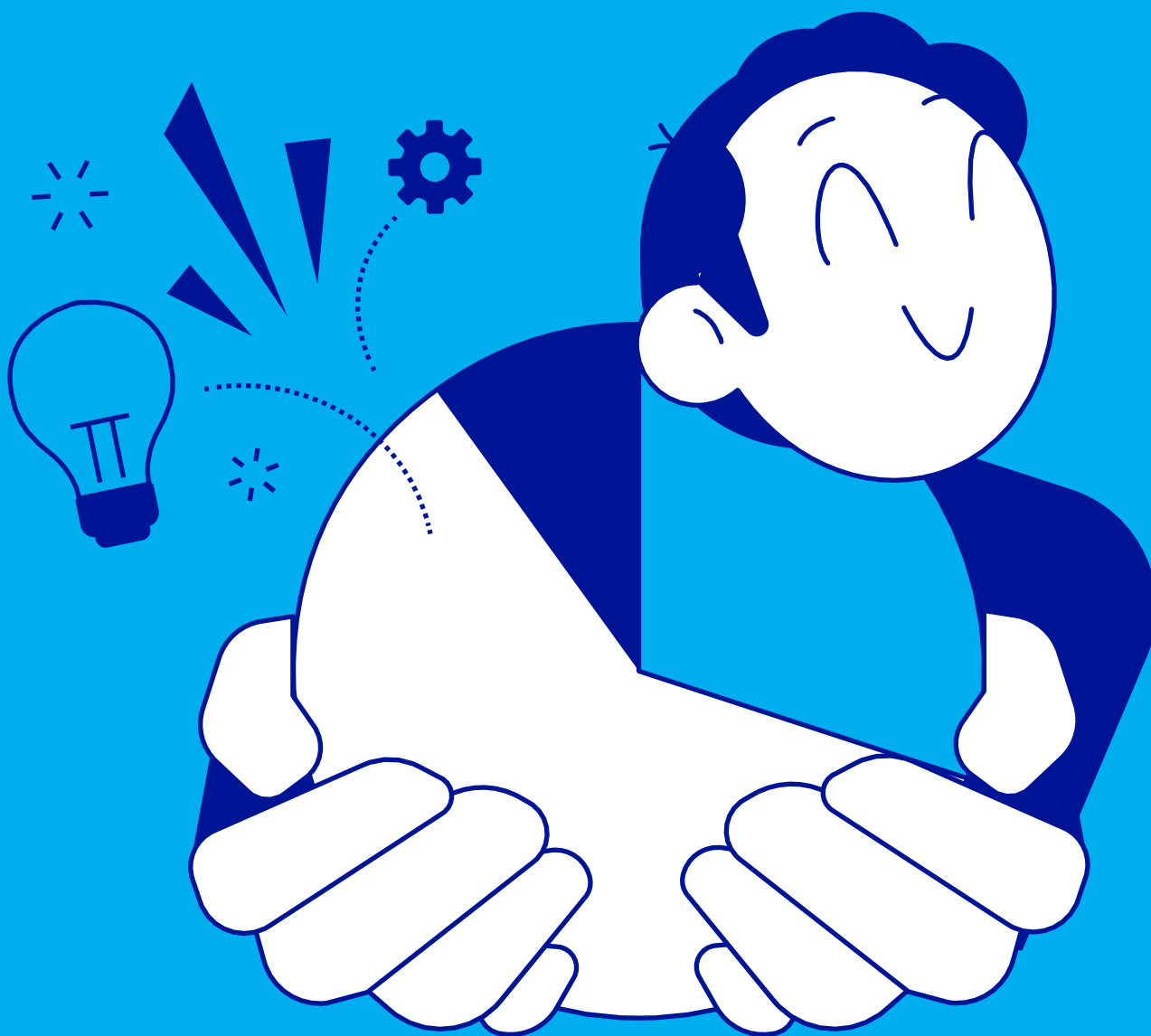
Future research should examine real-world complaint outcomes by tracking how complaints—both ESL-written and GenAI-assisted—are handled by organisations and whether they result in tangible resolutions. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into whether greater clarity, legitimacy, and completeness in complaints actually translate into higher resolution rates or improved consumer satisfaction. Additionally, field experiments involving actual complaint submissions to businesses or regulatory bodies could offer a more comprehensive evaluation of the impact of GenAI on consumer complaint success.

7.7 CHANGES IN COMPLAINT LENGTH DUE TO GENAI INTERVENTIONS

The complaint dataset collected in this research, which includes ESL- and ENL-written complaints as well as GenAI-assisted complaints, presents an opportunity for further analysis. Future studies could employ text analysis, linguistic comparisons, and sentiment analysis to identify differences in how ESL and ENL consumers structure complaints, the types of issues they raise, and the effectiveness of GenAI modifications in improving clarity and persuasiveness. This could provide deeper insights into how GenAI alters complaint-writing styles and whether certain linguistic features correlate with higher perceived legitimacy and success.



8. Conclusion



This report underscores the transformative potential of GenAI in enhancing the complaints management process for ESL consumers and the complaint handlers who seek to serve them. The practical implications of this research are significant for service providers and policymakers. Implementing GenAI can bridge language barriers, ensuring that ESL consumers are better represented in formal complaints processes and receive fairer service recovery outcomes. This research highlights the broader potential of GenAI technologies to address systemic inequities, offering a promising avenue for empowering consumers experiencing vulnerability and enhancing overall service accessibility.

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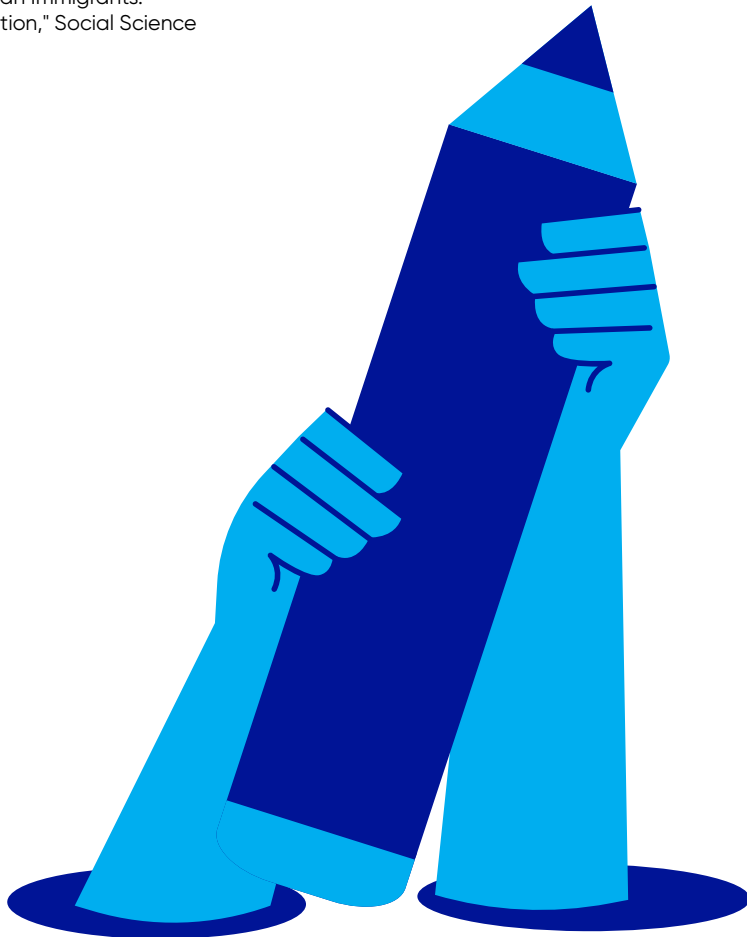
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10. Appendices



APPENDIX A – DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Study 1 – The Influence of Language Background on Perceptions of Complaint Success

DEMOGRAPHIC	VALUE
PARTICIPANT – ESL	100
PARTICIPANT – ENL	100
GENDER – MALE	106
GENDER – FEMALE	90
GENDER – NON-BINARY	3
GENDER – PREFER NOT TO SAY	1
AVERAGE AGE	32.85
AGE – STANDARD DEVIATION	11.99

Study 3A – Language Background and GenAI Use

DEMOGRAPHIC	VALUE
PARTICIPANT – ESL	99
PARTICIPANT – ENL	101
GENDER – MALE	107
GENDER – FEMALE	91
GENDER – NON-BINARY	1
GENDER – PREFER NOT TO SAY	1
AVERAGE AGE	32.21
AGE – STANDARD DEVIATION	10.91

Study 2 – Explanatory Role of Perceived Language Discrimination and Capability to Complain

DEMOGRAPHIC	VALUE
PARTICIPANT – ESL	106
PARTICIPANT – ENL	105
GENDER – MALE	103
GENDER – FEMALE	102
GENDER – NON-BINARY	5
GENDER – PREFER NOT TO SAY	1
AVERAGE AGE	33.15
AGE – STANDARD DEVIATION	10.60

Study 3B – The Effect of Generative GenAI

DEMOGRAPHIC	VALUE
PARTICIPANT – ESL	200
PARTICIPANT – ENL	200
GENDER – MALE	225
GENDER – FEMALE	164
GENDER – NON-BINARY	7
GENDER – PREFER NOT TO SAY	4
AVERAGE AGE	31.36
AGE – STANDARD DEVIATION	9.86

Study 4 – Ability of GenAI to Aid Complaint Handlers

DEMOGRAPHIC	VALUE
PARTICIPANT – ESL	47
PARTICIPANT – ENL	48
GENDER – MALE	33
GENDER – FEMALE	60
GENDER – PREFER NOT TO SAY	2
EXPERIENCE – LESS THAN 1 YEAR	32.85
EXPERIENCE – 1 – 3 YEARS	11.99
EXPERIENCE – 3 – 5 YEARS	13
EXPERIENCE – 5 – 10 YEARS	28
EXPERIENCE – OVER 10 YEARS	28
AVERAGE AGE	44.87
AGE – STANDARD DEVIATION	10.96

APPENDIX B – FINAL PROMPT

Please revise the following customer complaint to be clear, professional, and concise for an online complaint portal. Use only the information provided in the original complaint, ensuring it includes key details such as the issue and the desired resolution. Avoid adding any new details or placeholders for specific business information. Format the complaint as follows: Subject: [Brief description of the issue], Start with a greeting (e.g., "Dear Customer Service,"). Clearly state the issue with the order. Mention the specific problem (e.g., missing pepperoni). Describe any additional relevant details (e.g., appearance of the pizza). Politely request a resolution to the issue. Thank the recipient for their attention. Use a closing phrase (e.g., "Sincerely,") followed by "[Your Name]". Ensure the language is formal, courteous, and straightforward. Do not use headings or section titles in the body of the response.

APPENDIX C – MEASURES

Perceived Likelihood of Successful Complaint – adapted from Jin 2010:

Based on the complaint you wrote:

1. The company will do something about it, like giving me my money back or saying sorry.
2. The company will do something about it and do better next time.
3. The company will do something about it, do better next time, and it will help other customers too.

(7-point Likert Scales, Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree)

Language Discrimination – adapted from Wei, Wang, and Ku 2012:

Based on the complaint you wrote:

1. I think the company will not talk to me because of my English.
2. People won't talk to me because of my English.
3. I don't think the company will listen to me because of my English.
4. The company will think I don't know much because of my English.
5. The company will look down on me because of my English.
6. The company will reject me because of my English.
7. The company will be annoyed by my English.

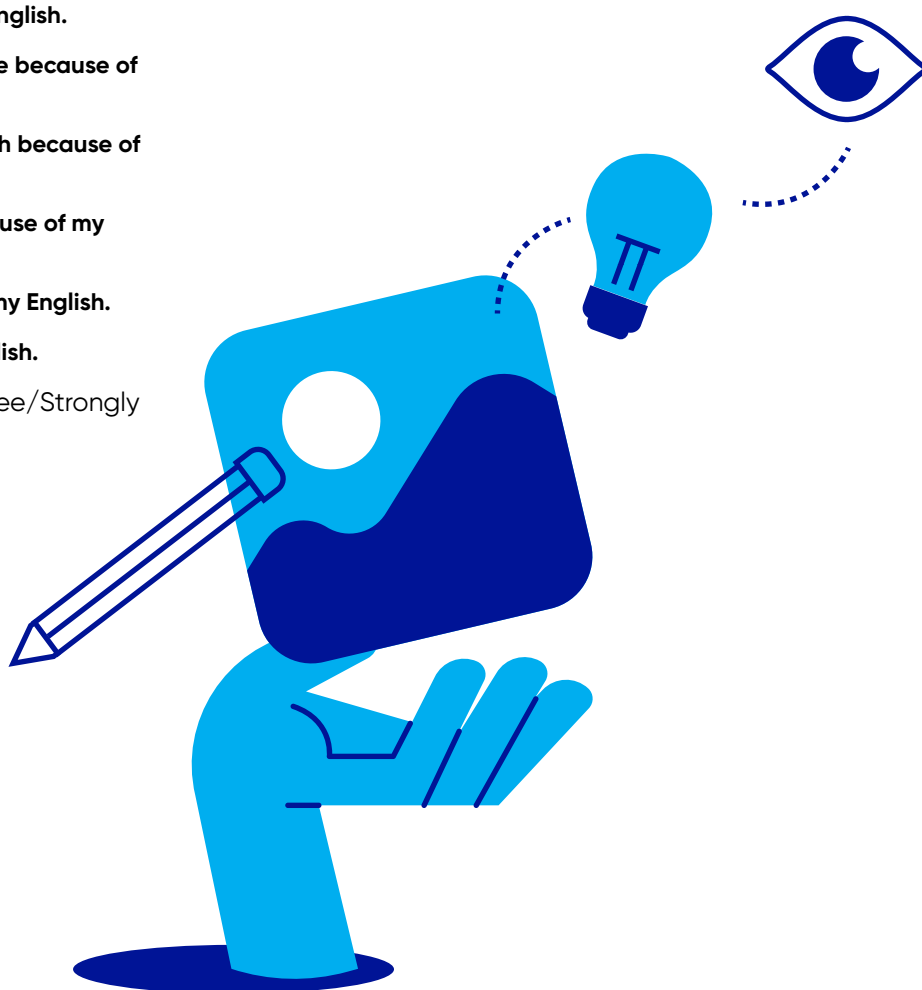
(7-point Likert Scales, Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree)

Capability to complain – adapted from Tsarenko and Strizhakova 2010:

Thinking about the complaint you wrote:

1. I was sure I could write a good customer complaint
2. I was sure I could clearly express my concerns in the complaint
3. Writing a customer complaint is something I can do well
4. I expect no problems in clearly explaining my issues in the complaint
5. I am confident that I am as good as, or better than, my peers at writing complaints

(7-point Likert Scales, Strongly Disagree/Strongly Agree)



APPENDIX D – FIGURE 4

Study 4 – Ability of GenAI to Aid Complaint Handlers

Original ESL Consumer Complaint #1 – Shorter Complaint

Hello I want to return product on picture is a man who is claimbning. And on the packeg is write is not for claimbning. This picture is missundersand

GenAI API Generated Complaint #1 – Shorter Complaint

Subject: Misleading Product Advertisement

Dear Customer Service,

I recently purchased a product that was advertised with an image of a man climbing. However, the packaging states that the product is not suitable for climbing. This inconsistency is misleading, and I would like to return the item.

Please advise on how to proceed with the return process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

Original ESL Consumer Complaint #2 – Longer Complaint

Hello today i visited your store and noticed that one of your products has false advertisement, a rope that clearly shows an image of a person climbing but in very small letters almost unreadable it says not for climbing, thats completly inadmissible, how can you sell a rope that is not good for climbing with a clear image of someone climbing and with very samll letters warning that it is not for climbing! i would like to propose that this product should be discontinued.

GenAI API Generated Complaint #2 – Longer Complaint

Subject: Misleading Advertisement on Rope Product

Dear Customer Service,

I recently visited your store and noticed a misleading advertisement on one of your products. The rope packaging displays an image of a person climbing, but in very small, nearly unreadable text, it states that the rope is not suitable for climbing. This discrepancy is concerning, as it could mislead customers into purchasing the product for an unsuitable purpose.

I kindly request that you review this issue and consider discontinuing the product to prevent any potential harm or confusion for customers.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

APPENDIX E – STATISTICAL RESULTS

Table 1: ANOVA Results – Language Background and GenAI on Capability to complain and Perceptions of Complaint Success

	CAPABILITY TO COMPLAIN		PERCEIVED LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLAINT	
	M	SD	M	SD
<i>Main Effects</i>				
LANGUAGE BACKGROUND				
English Second Language (ESL)	5.42	1.03	4.94	1.21
English Native Language (ENL)	5.58	1.16	5.05	1.21
GENAI				
NON-GENAI-ASSISTED	5.31	.99	4.80	1.31
GENAI-ASSISTED	5.69	1.68	5.19	1.07
<i>Interaction Effect</i>				
ESL				
NON-GENAI-ASSISTED	5.11	.98	4.60	1.39
GENAI-ASSISTED	5.73	1.00	5.28	.88
ENL				
NON-GENAI-ASSISTED	5.51	.97	5.00	1.19
GENAI-ASSISTED	5.65	1.32	5.10	1.24

Table 2: Regression Results – Language Background and GenAI Assistance

	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Dependent variable: Capability to complain (Model 1)</i>			
Language Background (X)	-.390	-2.56	.011
GenAI Assistance (W)	-.314	-.923	.357
X x W	.462	2.15	.032
<i>Dependent variable: PLSC (Model 2)</i>			
Language Background (X)	-.305	-1.84	.067
Capability to complain (M)	.235	4.32	< .001

APPENDIX F – EXAMPLE SURVEY

Hello!

In this survey, you will be asked to read a complaint and answer some associated questions.

It will take approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire.
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project.
However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point.

Thank you very much for your time and support.

If you want to read more about this research, please read the [PIS here](#).

You are a complaint handler for a hotel. Recently, you received the following online complaint:

I'm writing this message to complaint my disappointed experienced with your hotel and your staff's customer service and attitude. I was living in the room 399 and experienced flooded bathroom at last night. Instead offer me compensation for this negative experience, the staff blamed me for filling the bath too high. I'm expacting to receive a reasonable explantion for the staff attitude and an official apologise from the staff and hotel. Looking forward to hearing from your reply.
Contact Email: w978@gmail.com
Contact Phone Number: 0321680547

• Based ONLY on the complaint provided above, and with no further contact with the customer, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to with the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I could do something to resolve this complaint, like compensating the customer or offering an apology.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could do something to resolve this complaint, and ensure the company does better next time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could do something to resolve this complaint and ensure the company does better next time so that other customers do not face the same problem in future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

• Based ONLY on the complaint provided above, and with no further contact with the customer, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to with the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The customer has written a good customer complaint	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX F – EXAMPLE SURVEY

The customer has clearly expressed their concerns in the complaint.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing a complaint is something the customer can do well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The customer has no problems in clearly explaining their issues in the complaint.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The customer can be confident that they are as good as, or better than, their peers at writing complaints.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

• **Recall the complaint provided to you:**

I'm writing this message to complaint my disappointed experienced with your hotel and your staff's customer service and attitude. I was living in the room 399 and experienced flooded bathroom at last night. Instead offer me compensation for this negative experience, the staff blamed me for filling the bath too high. I'm expecting to receive a reasonable explanation for the staff attitude and an official apologise from the staff and hotel. Looking forward to hearing from your reply.

Contact Email: w978@gmail.com

Contact Phone Number: 0321680547

Based ONLY on the complaint provided above, and with no further contact with the customer, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to with the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe this is a legitimate complaint	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe this complaint warrants a response	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe this complaint is authentic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe this complaint is real	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

• **Based on the complaint provided, please indicate the extent to which the complaint is:**

Not easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Easy to understand
Not immediately understandable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Immediately understandable
Unclear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clear
Not concise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Concise

• **Based on the complaint provided, please indicate the extent to which the complaint:**

Will NOT likely generate a timely response	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Will likely generate a timely response
Does NOT provide a clear call to action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Provides a clear call to action
Does NOT make me feel sympathetic to the customer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Makes me feel sympathetic to the customer

• **Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statement:**

SOCAP_Survey - 2



APPENDIX F – EXAMPLE SURVEY

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Slightly Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Slightly Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Based on the complaint provided, all the information required to resolve the complaint has been included

• Please specify what information is missing from the complaint:

• Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to the following statement:

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Slightly Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Slightly Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

If I were the complaint handler for the provided complaint, I would be able to resolve it

• Please explain why you would be unable to resolve the complaint:

• Please explain how you would resolve the complaint:

• Recall the complaint provided to you:

I'm writing this message to complaint my disappointed experienced with your hotel and your staff's customer service and attitude. I was living in the room 399 and experienced flooded bathroom at last night. Instead offer me compensation for this negative experience, the staff blamed me for filling the bath too high. I'm expacting to receive a reasonable explanation for the staff attitude and an official apologise from the staff and hotel. Looking forward to hearing from your reply.

Contact Email: w978@gmail.com

Contact Phone Number: 0321680547

Based ONLY on the complaint provided above, and with no further contact with the customer, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to with the following:

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Slightly Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Slightly Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

It is likely that the customer speaks English as a Second Language

The customer is likely a native English speaker

SOCAP_Survey - 2

?

QuestionPro

APPENDIX F – EXAMPLE SURVEY

1

• Please answer the following:

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Slightly Unlikely	Unsure	Slightly Likely	Likely	Very Likely
Do you think Artificial Intelligence was used to write this complaint?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

• Which of the following best describes your role in complaint management?

☐ Frontline Complaint Handler

☐ Manager of Complaint Handlers

☐ Specialist in Escalated Complaints

☐ Other (please specify):

• How many years have you worked in a complaints related role?

☐ Less than 1 year

☐ 1 - 3 years

☐ 3 - 5 years

☐ 5 - 10 years

☐ Greater than 10 years

• How do you identify?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-Binary

☐ Prefer not to say


☐ Prefer to self describe

Enter your response here

• When it comes to complaint handling, in which industry have you gained most of your experience?

• What is your age?

SOCAP_Survey - 2

 QuestionPro



UTILISING GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (GENAI)
TO ASSIST COMPLAINANTS WHO SPEAK ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE



 **Ombudsman**
New South Wales