

In situations of asymmetric information certificates are a way for service providers to signal service quality to their customers. Referring to the experimental literature concerning corporate social responsibility, certified products and services additionally increase customers' willingness to pay. We argue that the chance to earn higher sales revenue with certificates in place tempts the service provider to employ certificates even if the service quality is below minimum service quality required to obtain the certificate in the first place. In environments such as the OTF market with complex services and additional asymmetric information about the service quality between service suppliers and service providers, this misuse of certificates is supposed to be even more pronounced.

In this talk we will present an experimental design which allows us to study the extent of the misuse of certificates. In particular, we are able to investigate whether such behaviour can be explained by the fact that service providers a) misperceive the quality of the composed service, b) overestimate their own contribution to the service quality of the composed service, or c) commit conscious fraud.