

PROFILING COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG ADULTS: A CASE STUDY IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

Yin Ling Adeline Tam

Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning
University Malaysia Sabah
Jalan UMS, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: adetam@ums.edu.my Tel: 6088-320000 ext. 5345

Tung Moi Chiew

Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning
University Malaysia Sabah
Jalan UMS, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia
Email: chiew@ums.edu.my Tel: 6088-320000 ext. 5025

ABSTRACT

This research intends to study the complaint behavior among the young adults in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia when they were dissatisfied with the service(s) provided. The main objective is to investigate the influence of various antecedent factors, i.e. general attitude towards business, sense of justice, perceived likelihood of success in complaining and perceived difficulties of complaining on the young adults' complaint behavior following dissatisfaction faced in services received in the telecommunication industry. The complaint behavior could be classified into public complaint and private complaint as suggested by Day and Landon (1976) and Day (1977). This research also investigated the complaint methods that were commonly taken by young adults to resolve problems with the services they receive from the telecommunication service provider. Survey data was collected via a self-administered questionnaire. Data was analysed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 20. Results showed that sense of justice is significant in influencing both private and public complaint behavior. A higher perceived likelihood of success in complaining, particularly for expressing their feeling and increasing consumer protection, will also encourage consumers to complain directly to the companies. This paper presents valuable information that can assist service managers and marketers in understanding the customer complaint behavior among this age group.

Keywords: Consumer complaint behaviour, dissatisfaction, young adults

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's telecommunications network is more advanced than any other in South-east Asia with the exception of Singapore (Market watch, 2012). Malaysia's mobile phone penetration rate is more than 127.7 per 100 habitants while broadband penetration rate is 62.3 per 100 households in 2011 (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2012). The main network operators are Telekom Malaysia, Maxis, Celcom and Digi Communications. Other network players are include Axiata, Timedotcom, U Mobile, XOX and Redtone. Besides the growing numbers of competitors in the industry, identical services provided also allow customers to exit easily. Retention of customers is thus one of the main concerns in the industry. One approach to retain customers is to make sure that dissatisfied customers are being attended to in order to avoid losing the customers.

The main users of the internet were those ranging in age from 20 to 39 years (48%), pre-teens and students below 19 years old make up 27.3 percent and 40 and above consists of 24.7 percent (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2012). Zulkefly and Baharudin (2009) pointed out that this is not surprising as the younger generations are *digital natives* (i.e., individuals born in the technological era) and will naturally be easily attracted to any technological gadgets. Since most of the users are young adults, this paper will focus on the young consumers between the ages of 19 to 40.

This paper intends to analyse the complaint behaviour of a single age group in the telecommunication industry. This paper will review the consumer behavior of young adults in Sabah, Malaysia. Attitudes and experiences factors among consumers are the main focus in this research in order to investigate how the consumer reacts when they face dissatisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Complaining can be understood as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether subjectively experienced or not, for the purpose of venting emotions or achieving intra-psychic goals, interpersonal goals, or a combination of these (Kowalski, 1996). Crie (2003) defined consumer complaint behavior as consisting of all potential consumer responses to dissatisfaction involved in a purchase encounter. Day (1984) explained that complaining behavior is a function of the intensity of dissatisfaction.

The disconfirmation model developed by Oliver (1980) is widely applied to explain the consumer dissatisfaction by previous researchers (Tronvoll, 2007a). When perceived performance falls short of consumer's expectation, consumers encounter negative disconfirmation. Keng and Liu (1995) articulated that dissatisfaction was caused by negative disconfirmation of purchase

expectations that led to legitimate complaint behavior. According to Michel (2001), dissatisfaction among the servicing industry is defined as the disconfirmation of service expectation caused by service failure; The expectation are determined by factors such as advertising, prior experience, personal needs, word-of-mouth and the image of the service provider (Michel, 2001). Several studies have reported that services entail greater dissatisfaction than products (Best and Andreason, 1977 in Tronvoll, 2007a).

Day and Landon (1976) categorized complaint behavior into two-level hierarchical classification with the first level distinguishes action from non-action and the second level distinguishes between private and public actions (Singh, 1990). Actions taken by consumers is not only to complain to seller or the management, but also include warning families and friends, stopping patronage, complaint to mass media and third party, such as consumer council or government (Heung and Lam, 2003; Ndubisi and Tam, 2005). Public actions refers to direct complaint actions to the seller or third party which included seeking redress directly from retailer or manufacturer, and taking legal action, which included verbal complains, write complain letters, write to newspaper or third party (Day and Landon, 1976; Ndubisi and Tam, 2005). While private actions refers to complaints privately through negative Word-of-Mouth to friends and family, the decision not to purchase the service again or boycott store (Bearden, 1983; Bearden and Oliver, 1985; Ndubisi and Tam, 2005). Bearden and Oliver (1985) pointed out that “private action has no effect on firm’s responses, but may reinforce negative attitudes through the process of consensual validation whereby individuals seek confirmation of their feelings by selectively exposing themselves to agreeable others.”

However, complaints do not always stem from dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction does not always lead to a complaints; this suggests that dissatisfaction is a necessary, but not sufficient, cause for customers complaining (Day, 1984; Singh and Pandya, 1991). Day (1984) also argued that the intensity of dissatisfaction is a relatively minor factor in determining the nature of complaint actions. Between 5 and 10 per cent of dissatisfied customers actually lodge a complaint following a bad service experience (Kitapci and Dortyol, 2009). The majority tend to switch silently and make negative word-of-mouth communication (Walsh, Dinnie and Wietman, 2006).

Studies that focused on the demographic variables of complainers found that complainers are younger, higher educated and earn a better income (Day and Landon, 1976; Beardon and Mason, 1984; Heung and Lam, 2003). Age differences were found in the likelihood of having a dissatisfying experience, the demand for complaint actions, and the effects of determinants on complaint behavior (Lee and Ferrer, 1999). Higher level of education was associated with the number of complaints as better-educated people know where and how to complaints (Mayer and Morganosky, 1987). In contrast, Mahayudin, Haron and Fah (2010) reported that education and consumer knowledge are not the significance predictor of complaint behavior.

Nevertheless, some researchers (Gaedeke, 1972; Bolfig, 1989) have found that demographic variables do not predict significantly the difference between complainers and non-complainers. Andreason (1977) argued that if product category and problem type are included in the analysis, no consistent relationship exists between socio-economic characteristics and complaint behavior; Individual with higher incomes are more frequent purchasers of expensive item – which have been found to inspire more complaints (in Tronvoll, 2007a).

Researchers also included personality characteristics of the consumers in the study of complaint behavior. Bearden and Mason (1984) and Mahayudin, *et al.* (2010) noted that assertiveness is positively related to complaint behavior. Mayer and Morganosky (1987) confirmed that consumers who prefer to be different rather than to do things the way other people do, which indicated that the complainer values uniqueness, individuality or a sense of independence.

Tronvoll (2007b) suggested that the motivation or antecedents identified for complaining behavior are categorized in five major factors that are the situational factors (such as the importance of a service or product), customer factors (demographic characteristics, such as age and education level), attitudes and experience with regard to complaining behavior, industry structure and seller/product factors (such as the likelihood of success). This paper is focusing on the attitudes and experience of consumers to study the significant with regard to complaining behavior.

General Attitude towards Business

Attitudes towards businesses represent an individual’s feelings about the marketplace, the behaviour of firms and the consumption of products and services (Singh and Wilkes, 1996). Factors such as the seller’s reputation in terms of quality and service, speed and commitment of the seller’s response to dealing with complaints and the sales pressure exerted by sales personnel all add to the complexity (Keng, Richmond and Han, 1995). In the same vein, Richins and Verhage (1985) pointed out that a positive correlation was found between responsiveness and complaining in their study. Lau and Ng (2001) also found that attitudes towards businesses had a significant effect on Singaporean respondents’ complaint behaviour. In contrast, Barnes and Kelloway (1980) found that attitudes towards businesses did not affect Canadian respondents’ complaint behaviour significantly. Similarly, study done by Phau and Sari (2004) in Indonesia proven that both complainers and non-complainers were found to possess negative attitudes towards businesses, and they did not display significant differences in the complaint behavior. Hence it is hypothesized that:

- H1a: There is a significant relationship between the general attitude towards business (GAB) and the private actions of complaint behavior (PVA).
- H1b: There is a significant relationship between the general attitude towards business (GAB) and the public actions of complaint behavior (PBA).

Sense of Justice

Socially responsible people tend to complain as they believe others will gain benefits from the complaint (Lau and Ng, 2001). According to Tronvoll (2007a), those who complain were also likely to be politically active and to be involved in local community organization. It reflected that complainers are concern with the benefits of other people. Phau and Sari (2004) suggested that complainers had a higher sense of justice than complainers. Blodgett, Granbois and Walters (1993) pointed out that complainants who perceived that justice had been served were less likely to engage in negative word-of-mouth behavior. Thus, it is anticipated that:

- H2a: There is a significant relationship between the sense of justice (SOJ) and the private actions of complaint behaviour (PVA).
H2b: There is a significant relationship between the sense of justice (SOJ) and the public actions of complaint behaviour (PBA).

Likelihood of Success in Complaining

Bearden and Mason (1984) suggested that consumers complain when there is a reasonable chance of obtaining redress. Consumers appear to complain largely when they believe their efforts are likely to meet with success (Jacoby and Jaccard, 1981). Richins (1983) extended this premise to include both willingness to respond and the extent to which the retailer or manufacturer makes the complaint handling mechanism available. He supported that the more negative a consumer's perceptions of retailer responsiveness to consumer complaints, the more likely that individual is to engage in negative word-of-mouth. Blodgett, *et al.* (1993) also found that complainants who initially perceived little likelihood of successful redress were more likely to have engage in negative word-of-mouth than complaints who initially perceived a high likelihood of success. In other words, if an individual believes attempt to achieve remedy through marketing channels will be either unsuccessful or require extensive effort, it is conceivable that a less risky and less effortful response, telling others about the dissatisfaction, will be undertaken. However, Oh (2003) found no significant relationship between an individual's expectation of the likelihood of success of complaining and complaint behavior (i.e. exit, negative word-of-mouth, direct voice and indirect voice).

- H3a: There is a significant relationship between the likelihood of success in complaining (LSC) and the private actions of complaint behaviour (PVA).
H3b: There is a significant relationship between the likelihood of success in complaining (LSC) and the public actions of complaint behaviour (PBA).

Difficulty of Complaining

Difficulty of complaining refers to the difficulty of seeking rectification by complaining or worthlessness of complaining (Singh 1990). Beardon and Mason (1984) suggested that the perceived benefits and costs of complaining (even beyond consideration of the product or service expenditures involved) have been shown to be critical components of the complaining process. Oh (2003) pointed out the library users who think complaining requires a lot of time and effort are more likely to give negative word-of-mouth to others about the service or the library. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

- H4a: There is a significant relationship between the difficulty of complaining (DOC) and the private actions of complaint behaviour (PVA).
H4b: There is a significant relationship between the difficulty of complaining (DOC) and the public actions of complaint behaviour (PBA).

Gender

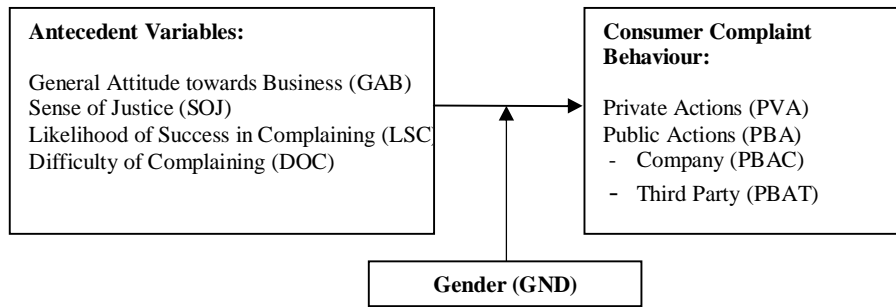
Previous researches (Heung and Lam, 2003; Keng, *et al.*, 1995) pointed out that female are tend to complaint more than male counterpart. Findings by Manikas and Shea (1997) found contradicting result that male customers complained more than the female. In a study done in Selangor, Malaysia, Mahayudin, *et al.* (2010) found that female prefer passive complaint approach but male would prefer the active complaint approach. Mensah and Nimako (2012) concluded that gender may not influence the complaining behaviour and also the motives for complaining and non-complaining, especially in the mobile telephony industry in Ghana. However, male customers were more likely to complain to the mass media and consumer groups than female customers. Based on the previous researches, the following hypotheses are presented:

- H5: Gender moderates the relationship between antecedent variables (i.e. a. general attitude towards business, b. sense of justice, c. likelihood of success in complaining and d. difficulty of complaining) and the private actions of complaint behaviour (PVA).
H6: Gender moderates the relationship between antecedent variables (i.e. a. general attitude towards business, b. sense of justice, c. likelihood of success in complaining and d. difficulty of complaining) and the public actions of complaint behaviour (PBA).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research built on the work of Day and Landon (1976) and Day (1977), categorized consumer complaint behavior into two levels, public and private complaint behaviours. The research framework focused on the impacts of antecedent variables on the complaint behaviours and the moderating impacts of gender (in Figure 1).

Figure 1: The conceptual framework



This self-administered questionnaire was posted on-line using the online survey tool, Survey Gizmo. Students and graduates from Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Technology Mara (Sabah branch) and Institute Sinaran were invited to answer the questions online. The questionnaires consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of item statements to measure the general attitude towards business, perceived likelihood of success in complaining, sense of justice and difficulty of complaining. The measurements for attitude towards business and sense of justice were adapted from Keng and Liu (1997). The ten items to measure likelihood of success in complaining and difficulty of complaining were adapted from Suki (2010), Day (1984) and Richins (1979, in Oh, 2003). The next part measured whether respondents face any dissatisfaction with the product or service provided in the last 12 months and whether they took any complaint actions after the dissatisfaction experience. The questions were adapted from Day and Landon (1976), Ndubisi and Tam (2006) and Keng and Liu (1997). In first two parts, a five-point Likert scale was used for data collection with 1 = “strongly disagreed” and 5 = “strongly agreed”. The last part included questions to determine the demographic profiles of respondents.

ANALYSIS

A total of 251 respondents attempted the questionnaire but only 196 respondents completed the questionnaire. 72 samples were filtered out as they were not or not sure whether they had encounter any dissatisfaction with the products or services provided for the past twelve months. Samples used in this analysis were 129 only. Data were analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Version 20. The construct validity of measures was tested using exploratory factor analysis (with Varimax orthogonal rotation method). The internal consistency reliability for the scales was also assessed with the Cronbach’s alpha. Multiple regression analysis was then conducted to check the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

FINDINGS

Of the 196 respondents, 129 (66%) felt dissatisfied with the product/service provided indicating that the dissatisfaction rate was relatively high among the customers. Table 1 summaries the demographic profile of the 129 respondents. Female respondents were 70 percent compare to 30 percent of male respondents. Most of the respondents (79%) were young adults between 21-25 years old. Most of the respondents were Native (60.2%) and followed by Chinese (32.6%). Up to 35 percent of the respondents used the same product/service for one to two years, followed by 26.4 percent of respondents who used the same product/service for more than four years.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	39	30.2
	Female	90	69.8
Age	16-20	25	19.4
	21-25	102	79.1
	26-35	2	1.6
Race	Native	77	60.2
	Chinese	42	32.6
	Indian	2	1.6
	Other	8	6.2
Usage Period	Less than 1 year	34	26.4
	1-2 year	45	34.9
	3-4 year	16	12.4
	More than 4 year	34	26.4

All the items for the four independent variables and two dependent variables were analysed using factor analysis. For the independent variables, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .722 and the Barlett’s Test was significant at 0.000. Five components were extracted, which explained 67 percent of the variances in the data. Six items were dropped and factor loadings of all the items below were above 0.6 with Eigenvalue over 1.

The likelihood of success in complaining factor was load into two components, which reflected that respondents perceived the likelihood of success in getting complaint cost recovery and compensation is significantly different from the likelihood of success in letting the company knows their feeling and getting higher consumer protection from third party. Thus, in the following study the likelihood of success 1 will represent the likelihood of success in getting cost recovery and compensation, while the likelihood of success 2 represents the likelihood of success in expressing their feeling and increasing consumer protection.

Table 2: Factor analysis of independent variables

	Loading Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
GAB 2	.823				
GAB 7	.758				
GAB 3	.691				
GAB 6	.632				
SOJ 2		.818			
SOJ 1		.801			
SOJ 3		.603			
LSC 3			.837		
LSC 2			.784		
DOC 1				.785	
DOC 2				.747	
DOC 4				.622	
LSC 4					.842
LSC 5					.732
Eigenvalues	3.496	1.885	1.610	1.413	1.009
Percent of Variance explained	17.286	30.526	43.494	55.589	67.240
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	.722				
Barlett's Test Sig.	.000				
Total Variance Explained	67.240				

Table 3: Factor analysis of dependent variables

	Loading Component		
	1	2	3
PVA 1	.804		
PVA 2	.798		
PVA 4	.702		
PVA 3	.644		
PBA 8		.818	
PBA 7		.808	
PBA 6		.768	
PBA 5			.864
PBA 1			.808
Eigenvalues	2.711	1.794	1.439
Percent of Variance explained	24.862	23.261	17.920
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	.682		
Barlett's Test Sig.	.000		
Total Variance Explained	66.043		

Factor analysis for the two dependent variables had a KMO value of .682 and Barlett's Test was also significant at 0.000. Four items dropped and three components were extracted which accounted for 66 percent of the total variance. Public actions were also loaded into two components indicating that respondents perceived that complaint to company was obviously different from complaint to third independent parties such as authority and mass media. The results of factor analysis for both independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 2 and 3 respectively. Public actions (company) and public action (third party) were used to represent the complaint to company and complaint to third independent parties respectively.

Table 4: Descriptive and reliability results of variables

Variables	Items drop	No. of items	Descriptive		Cronbach's Alpha
			Mean	SD	
Independent Variables:					
GAB	3	4	3.49	.70	.78
SOJ	-	3	3.81	.65	.67
LOS 1	1	2	2.95	.77	.68
LOS 2	-	2	3.76	.73	.69
DOC	2	3	3.48	.64	.60
Dependent Variables:					

PVA	1	4	3.26	.73	.74
PBAT	2	3	2.50	.74	.75
PBAC	1	2	3.74	.79	.65

The descriptive and reliability results of the variables are shown in Table 4. The mean for sense of justice was the highest amount of the variables and was followed by the likelihood of success 2. Likelihood of success 1 had the lowest mean at 2.95 indicating that complainers assumed that the likelihood in getting costs recovery or compensation is low. Among the dependent variables, public actions (company) had the highest mean (3.74), followed by private action (3.26). Public actions (third party) had the lowest mean, 2.50 showed that respondents disagreed with taking public actions via third party. The Cronbach's alpha results were between 0.65 and 0.78 indicated that the scales are accepted. However, the scales for difficulty of complaining were accepted with caution as the alpha is equal to 0.60.

The multiple regression analysis was then employed to test the hypotheses. The assumptions of the regression (i.e. autocorrelation, normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity and linearity of independent variables) were verified before making any interpretation of the statistical results. Table 5 shows the results of regression analysis used to assess the relationship between the antecedent variables and complaint behavior. The results showed that the antecedent variables contributed significantly at the 1 percent significant level. The antecedent variables were able to explain 23.4 percent of the variations in public action (third party), 22.1 percent of the variations in private action and 14.9 percent of the variations in public action (company).

General attitudes towards business did not significantly associate with the complaint behaviour. Thus, hypotheses H1a and H1b were rejected. The results of general attitudes towards business are in line with the study found by Phau and Sari (2004) in Indonesia. The identical result between Indonesian and Malaysian consumers reflected the similarity in cultural background of both countries.

Sense of justice was significantly associated with private action ($p = .000$, $\beta = .472$), public action (third party) ($p = .033$, $\beta = .192$) and public action (company) ($p = .033$, $\beta = .203$). It meant that customers with a higher sense of justice are more likely to complain privately to their friends and family and publicly to the company or third parties. Therefore, both hypotheses H2a and H2b were supported. The findings are consistent with the study by Lau and Ng (2001) and Phau and Sari (2004).

There were significant relationship between perceived likelihood of success 1 and public action (third party) ($p = .000$, $\beta = .487$) at 1 percent significant level. The likelihood of success 1 was strongly associated with public action than sense of justice. Thus, customers who perceived a higher likelihood of success in getting costs recovery or compensation will resort to third party(s). Perceived likelihood of success 2 had significant relationship with public action (company) ($p = .039$, $\beta = 2.091$). This indicated that customers with a higher perceived likelihood of success in expressing their feeling and increasing consumer protection will tend to complain to the company. Hypothesis H3b were partially supported but H3a were rejected.

In contrast, difficulty of complaining did not significantly associate with the complaint behaviour. Hypotheses H4a and H4b were rejected. These results are in contrast with the results of other researchers.

Table 5: Influence of the antecedent variables on consumer complaint behaviour

Independent Variables	PVA			PBAT			PBAC		
	Std. Coefct. Beta	t	Sig.	Std. Coefct. Beta	t	Sig.	Std. Coefct. Beta	t	Sig.
GAB	-.046	-.507	.613	-.015	-.173	.863	.170	1.803	.074
SOJ	.472	5.266	.000*	.192	2.157	.033**	.203	2.160	.033**
LOS 1	.058	.658	.512	.487	5.584	.000*	.010	.109	.913
LOS 2	-.027	-.290	.772	-.109	-1.188	.237	.202	2.091	.039**
DOC	.159	1.957	.053	.010	.125	.901	-.011	-.133	.894
Adjusted R ²	.221			.234			.149		
F	8.051			8.565			5.333		
Sig. F	.000			.000			.000		

Note: * denotes a significant value as $p < 0.01$.
** denotes a significant value as $p < 0.05$.

The results of moderated regression analysis of gender as a moderator on the relationship between antecedent variables on private actions are shown in Table 6. In Step 2, the F change was not significant, indicating that the moderating variable, gender, is not related to either the criterion or predictor variable. Gender only moderated the relationship between likelihood of success 2 and private action ($p = .020$). Perceived likelihood to success in expressing their feeling and increasing consumer protection leads to a high level of private complaint for female than the male complainers. Hypothesis H5c was partially accepted, while other hypotheses H5a, H5b and H5d were rejected.

Table 6: Moderating effects of gender on private actions

	Private Actions			
	Step 2		Step 3	
	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.
GAB	-.056	.538	.022	.839
SOJ	.458	.000*	.344	.007*
LOS 1	.068	.443	.078	.471
LOS 2	-.040	.663	.149	.206
DOC	.161	.048**	.152	.130
GND	-.112	.169	.704	.366
GABxGND			-.375	.443
SOJxGND			.531	.285
LOS 1xGND			.308	.426
LOS 2xGND			-1.315	.020**
DOCxGND			.040	.923
Adjusted R ²	.227		.251	
Sig. F Change	.169		.130	

Note: * denotes a significant value as p<0.01.
** denotes a significant value as p<0.05.

Table 7: Moderating effects of gender on public actions

	Public Actions (Third Party)				Public Actions (Company)			
	Step 2		Step 3		Step 2		Step 3	
	Std. Coefct. Beta	Sig.	Std. Coefct. Beta	Sig.	Std. Coefct. Beta	Sig.	Std. Coefct. Beta	Sig.
GAB	-.005	.957	-.078	.473	.165	.085	.108	.310
SOJ	.207	.022**	.151	.227	.195	.041**	.587	.000*
LOS 1	.477	.000*	.481	.000*	.015	.871	-.121	.253
LOS 2	-.094	.306	-.048	.680	.195	.048**	-.143	.215
DOC	.007	.930	.093	.355	-.010	.908	.021	.827
GND	.120	.140	-.307	.693	-.058	.502	.281	.712
GABxGND			.839	.087			-.087	.855
SOJxGND			.607	.221			-2.089	.000*
LOS 1xGND			.272	.482			.068	.858
LOS 2xGND			-.774	.167			2.041	.000*
DOCxGND			-.517	.217			-.275	.502
Adjusted R ²	.241		.253		.145		.285	
Sig. F Change	.140		.239		.502		.000	

Note: * denotes a significant value as p<0.01.
** denotes a significant value as p<0.05.

Table 7 shows that moderated regression analysis of gender as a moderator on the relationship between antecedent variables on public actions (third party and company). Gender did not moderate the relationship between antecedent variables and public action (third party). The F changes were found not significant in step 2. However, gender did moderate the effect of antecedent variables on public actions (company) with a significant F change, p = .000. Gender moderated the relationship between sense of justice and public action (company) ($\beta = -2.089$, p = .000) and between likelihood of success 2 and private action ($\beta = 2.041$, p = .000). The impact of sense of justice on public action to company is stronger for female than for males complainers. If the perceived likelihood to success in expressing their feeling and increasing consumer protection is low, females will tend to take public action to complain to the company. In contrary, male complaints will have a higher probability to complain to the company when the likelihood of success in expressing their feeling and increasing consumer protection is high. Thus, the hypotheses H6b and H6c were partially accepted but hypotheses H6a and H6d were rejected.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Consumers' complaint provided essential information to help improve the quality of services provided by telecommunication companies and build customer loyalty. Up to 66 percent of the respondents felt dissatisfied with the product/service provided indicating that the dissatisfaction rate was relatively high and further actions by the service provider are needed to improve the services provided, which include the complaint handling process. It is obvious that customers prefer to complain directly to the company than to the family and friends. Thus, improving the complaint handling process will indeed help to improve customers' satisfaction and reduce defection.

Sense of justice was found to be prominent in explaining both private and public complaint action. Consumers who are concern with the rights and benefits of other consumers will be more vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction. Therefore, the telecommunication company must try to encourage consumers to complain directly to them by giving consumers a positive

impression that their complaints will benefit others and help improve the quality of products and services provided. Moreover, a higher perceived likelihood of success in complaining, particularly for expressing their feeling and increasing consumer protection, will also encourage the consumers to complain directly to the companies. The findings imply that the companies not only have to provide convenient ways for consumers to complain directly to them but also making sure that consumers know the process to complain is easy and not costly.

The study is limited to the young adults in Kota Kinabalu. Future research could include larger samples from the whole of Malaysia. Cultural factors are excluded in this study, it is likely that customers complaint behavior is influenced by the cultural background of the customers, thus the impact of cultural factors could be included in the next study. Besides, future research could investigate other variables in order to examine their relationship in depth such as product attribute and severity of dissatisfaction.

REFERENCES

- _____ (2012). *Pocket Book of Statistic*, Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission.
- _____ "Market Watch 2012: IT and Telecommunications in Malaysia", The Malaysia-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Andreasen A. R. (1977) Consumer dissatisfaction as a measure of market performance. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 1, 311-322.
- Barnes, J. G. and Kelloway, K. R. (1980). Consumerists: complaining behavior and attitudes toward social and consumer issues. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 7, 1, 329-334.
- Bearden, W.O. (1983). Profiling consumers who register complaints against auto repair services. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 17, 315-335.
- Bearden, W.O. and Mason, J. B. (1984). An investigation of influences on consumer complaint reports, *Advances in Consumer Research*, 11, 490-495.
- Bearden, W.O. and Oliver R. L. (1985). The role of public and private complaining in satisfaction with problem resolution. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 19, 222-240.
- Best, A. and Andreason, A. R. (1977). Consumer response to unsatisfactory purchases: a survey of perceiving defeats, voicing complaints and obtaining redress. *Law & Society*, 11, 490-495.
- Blodgett, J. G., Granbois, D. H. and Walters, R. G. (1993). The effects of perceived justice on complainants' negative word-of-mouth behavior and repatronage intentions. *Journal of Retailing*, 69, 4, 399-428.
- Bolfing, C. P. (1989). How do consumers express dissatisfaction and what can service marketers do about it? *Journal of Service Marketing*, 3, 5, 5-23.
- Crie, D. (2003). Consumers' complaint behavior. Taxonomy, typology and determinants: Towards a unified ontology. *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 11, 1, 60-79.
- Day, R. L. (1977). Extending the concept of consumer satisfaction. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 4, 1, 149-154.
- Day, R. L. (1984). Modeling choices among alternative responses to dissatisfaction. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 11, 496-499.
- Day, R. L. and Landon, E. I. (1976). Collecting comprehensive consumer complaining data by survey research. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 3, 263-268.
- Gaedeke, R. M. (1972). Filing and disposition of consumer complaints: Some empirical evidence. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 6, 1, 45-56.
- Heung V. C. S. and Lam, T. (2003). Customer complaint behaviour towards hotel restaurant services. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15/5, 283-289.
- Jacoby, J and Jaccard, J. J. (1981). The Sources, Meaning, and Validity of Consumer Complaint Behavior: A Psychological Analysis. *Journal of Retailing*, 57, 4-24.
- Keng, A.K., Richmond, D. and Han, S. (1995) Determinants of consumer complaint behavior: A study of Singapore consumers. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 8, 2, 59-76.
- Keng, K. A. and Liu, S. (1997). Personal value and complaint behavior: The case of Singapore consumers. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 4, 2, 89-97.
- Kitapci, O. and Dortyol, I. T. (2009). The differences in customer complaint behavior between loyal customers and first comers in the retail banking industry: The case of Turkish customers. *Management Research News*, 32, 10, 932-941.
- Kowalski, R. M. (1996). Complaints and complaining: functions, antecedents, and consequences. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119, 179-196.
- Lau, G. T. and Ng, S. (2001). Individual and situational factors influencing negative word of mouth behavior. *Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration*, 18, 3, 163-178.
- Lee, J. and Soberon-Ferrer, H. (1999). An empirical analysis of elderly consumers' complaining behavior. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 27, 341-371.
- Mahayudin, N. H. M, Haron, S. A. and Fah, B. C. Y. (2010). Unpleasant market experience and consumer complaint behavior. *Asian Social Science*, 6, 5, 63-69.
- Maniska, P. A. and Shea, L. J. (1997). Hotel complaint behavior and resolution: A content analysis. *Journal of Travel Research*, 36, 2, 68-73.
- Mayer, H. and Morganosky, M. A. (1987) Complaint behavior: Analysis by demographics, lifestyle and consumer value. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 14, 1, 223-226.
- Mensah, A. F. and Nimako, S. G. (2012). Influence of demographic variables on complaining and non-complaining motives and responses in Ghana's Mobile telephony industry. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4, 12, 27-37.
- Michel, S. (2001). Analysing service failures and recoveries: A process approach. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 12, 1, 20-33.

- Morganosky, M. A. and Buckley, H. M. (1987). Complaint Behavior: Analysis By Demographics, Lifestyle, and Consumer Values. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 14, 223-226.
- Ndubisi, N. O. and Tam, Y. L. (2006). Complaint behaviour of Malaysian consumers. *Management Research News*, 29, 1/2, 65-76.
- Oh, D. G. (2003). Complaining behavior of public library users in South Korea. *Library & Information Science Research*, 25, 43-62.
- Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17, 460-469.
- Phau, I. and Sari, R. P. (2004). Engaging in complaint behavior: An Indonesian perspective. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 22, 4, 407-426.
- Richins, M. (1979). Consumer complaining process: A comprehensive model. In R. L. Day & H. Keith (Eds), *New dimensions of consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior*, 30-34, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Richins, M. (1983). Negative word-of-mouth by dissatisfied consumers: A pilot study. *Journal of Marketing*, 47, 68-78.
- Richins, M. and Verhage, V. J. (1985). Seeking redress for consumer dissatisfaction. The role attitudes and situational factors. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 18, 1, 29-44
- Singh, J. (1990) Voice, exit and negative word-of-mouth behaviours: An investigation across three service categories. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 18, 1, 1-15.
- Singh, J. and Pandya, S. (1991) Exploring the effects of consumers' dissatisfaction level on complaint behaviour. *European Journal of Marketing*, 25, 7-21.
- Singh, J. and Wilkes, R. E. (1996). When consumers complain: A path analysis of the key antecedents of consumer complaint response estimates. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 24, 4, 350-365.
- Suki, N. M. (2010). Dissatisfaction attributions and complaining behavior of public library user. *Information Management and Business Review*, 1, 1, 28-39.
- Tronvoll, B. (2007a). Complainer characteristics when exit is closed. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 18, 1, 25-51.
- Tronvoll, B. (2007b). Customer complaint behaviour from the perspective of the service-dominant logic of marketing. *Managing Service Quality*, 17, 6, 601-620.
- Walsh, G., Dinnie K. and Wietman, K. P. (2006). How do corporate reputation and customer satisfaction impact customer defection? A study of private energy customers in Germany. *Journal of Service Marketing*, 20, 6, 412-420.
- Williams, T. D., Drake, M. F. and Moran, J. D. (1993). Complaint behaviour, price paid and the store patronized. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 21, 5, 3-9.
- Yap, Justin. 'Next step for the telco industry in Malaysia', theborneopost.com. Posted on September 4, 2011, Sunday.
- Zulkefly, S. N. and Baharudin, R. (2009). Mobile phone use amongst students in a university in Malaysia: Its correlates and relationship to psychological health. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 37, 2, 206-218.