

## Complaint Behavior of Taiwanese Consumers: An Empirical Study

This paper relies upon in-depth interviews to explore complaint behavior of Taiwanese consumers. The results indicate that complainers usually started with negative word-of-mouth communications. Some of them may take a further step to make complaints to companies. Dissatisfied consumers may simultaneously adopt several responses to make complaints.

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### Consumers' Complaint Models

After testing several models concerning consumer complaint behavior, Singh (1988) concludes that these taxonomies and operational definitions are not acceptable illustrations of observed responses of consumer complaint behavior. Consequently, a new taxonomy of consumer complaint behavior is proposed by Singh (1988). This taxonomy classifies consumer complaint behavior into three categories: 1. voice responses ; 2. private responses; 3. third party responses. Singh (1988) further indicates that provided evidence seems sufficient to prove that these three dimensions of consumer complaint behavior are distinctive and have discriminant validity. Research treating consumer complaint behavior as a heterogeneous and multi-dimensional phenomenon seems better in explaining consumer complaint behavior.

Although previous classification of consumer complaints seems inclusive, few attempts have been made to discover the relationships between these dimensions. Because understanding of possible responses dissatisfied consumers may have is critical in designing compensation skills, and these consumers may adopt several responses jointly (instead of just one), an examination of the sequence of likely responses cannot be ignored and deserves further study.

### Sequences of Consumers' Complaints

The data indicate that, for those who take voice actions, complaints usually start with negative word-of-mouth communications. Some of them may take a further step to make complaints to companies. They may stop negative word-of-mouth communications if the firm provided satisfactory compensations. However, poor attitudes of firms'

complaint handling agents usually sent these consumers to the Consumer Foundation of Taiwan (CFT), a private third party which advocates consumer protection in Taiwan. Consumers' complaints usually stopped here in the CFT, unless acceptable results cannot be derived. Under this condition, although it did not happen very often, complaints were brought to the court and consumers may form a consumer group with other victims to fight for their own rights. Although causes of consumer complaints varied, those due to misleading advertising contributed primarily to consumer complaints.

To reduce consumers' complaints or turn complaints into constructive suggestions, firms have to provide quality products/services, improve their relationships with customers and earn trust from customers. Furthermore, firms making complaint channels open and demonstrating sincerity of providing remedy can usually regain trust from customers.

### Endnotes

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### References

- Singh, Jagdip (1988). Consumer Complaint Intentions and Behavior: Definitional and Taxonomical Issues. *Journal of Marketing* (pp. 93-107).