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Dissatisfaction Attributions and Complaining Behavior Of Public Library Users

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Abstract: This study investigates the dissatisfaction attributions and complaining behavior of public library users. This paper analyses a survey of ninety-nine randomly selected public library users in the Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia. Data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The survey revealed that public library users in the Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia, who believe that service failure is due to the negligence of library staff and perceive the service of the library to be free, are more likely to complain to a third party. Loyal users also prefer to complain to a third party about their dissatisfaction. Some users complain directly to the personnel or person in charge of the department or chief librarian at the time of dissatisfaction. Users' complaints can be a powerful resource for the library management to use in making strategic and tactical decisions that could prevent them from switching services or performing actions such as abandoning the library and no longer using library services.

Keywords - *Complaints, Consumer Behavior, Library, Public, Malaysia*

1. Introduction

Crie (2003) defined consumer complaint behavior as consisting of all potential consumer responses to dissatisfaction involved in a purchase encounter. The source of the dissatisfaction could originate before, during, or after the purchase of a product or service. Consumer dissatisfaction can originate from several aspects of the consumption process (Bearden and Oliver, 1985; Crie, 2003; Day and Landon, 1977). Aside from dissatisfaction with the product or service itself, consumers can become displeased with customer service, delivery, store atmosphere, warranty, or repairs, among other aspects of the consumer experience.

Day (1980) determined that there are three motivations for consumer complaint behavior, including redress seeking, complaining, and personal boycott. While redress seeking involves attempts to acquire remedies either directly or indirectly from the seller, complaining refers to the desire to simply convey dissatisfaction. The complaining motive may include a desire to affect the future behavior of the seller or the intention to dissuade other consumers from purchasing from the seller. Finally, personal boycott involves an individual decision to privately end the use of the dissatisfying product, service, seller, or brand.

When customers decide to complain, they have previously passed through two distinct, even if interrelated, steps already identified by Hirschman (1970):
1) they value positively the balance between costs and benefits. Both costs and benefits are not only economic, but also psychological (Andreasen, 1988). The perceived benefit may not be great enough to lead a consumer to complain, even if considerable

dissatisfaction exists. On the contrary, a consumer can complain even with a low level of dissatisfaction if the perceived benefit is remarkable (Landon, 1977, p. 32), and
2) they view the complaining action as worthwhile because they positively esteem the likelihood of obtaining a favourable solution.

The Oh (2003) study of Korean public library users indicated that feedback information (from customers or users) can help the library satisfy users. Thus, complaints can function as positive feedback to solve problems or improve performance in library and information centers. Library is currently competing with mega-bookstores, document delivery services, online information services or other information-related industries and companies. This intense competition has increased the need of the library to study customer complaints and the resulting behaviors (complaining behavior) to better deliver services. It is expected that the library will maintain its user friendly services to the end of satisfying users. Hitherto, there are still unsatisfied users. Thus, this study investigates the complaining behavior (complaint responses) of public library users in the Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Singh (1988) stated that there are three types of complaining behavior found when dissatisfaction occurs: 1) Voice responses (seeking redress from the seller or no action), 2) Private responses (word-of-mouth communication); and 3) Third-party responses (implementing legal action). Correspondingly, Oh (2003) stated that the complaining behaviors of public library users were divided into the categories of exit, negative word of mouth, voice, and third-party complaints.

1) Exit (or repatriate intentions): a vow or expressed intention to never again patronize the offending library.
2) Negative word of mouth: telling others about ones dissatisfaction (i.e., complaints about the library and/or the service to friends and/or relatives).
3) Direct voice: complaints registered directly with the library at the time of dissatisfaction.
4) Indirect voice: complaints registered indirectly with the library using complaint cards, e-mail, etc.
5) Third-party complaints: formal complaints directed toward agencies not directly involved in the exchange relationship, that is, other than the library itself.

There are many relevant factors that affect the complaining behavior of the public library users that include: attitude toward complaining, likelihood of success, difficulty of complaining, service importance, external attribution, loyalty, and perception of free service (tested as a variable of consumer complaining behavior for nonprofit organization).

2.1 Attitude toward Complaining

This variable refers to an individual's disposition to rectify the problem when he or she is dissatisfied with a product or service (Blodgett, Wakefield, and Barnes, 1995, p. 34). Complainers tend to have more prior experience of complaining, have a more positive attitude toward complaining, are more self-confident and more assertive'' (Singh, 1990b, p. 62). For Researchers have found a relationship between attitude toward complaining and complaint responses (Bearden & Mason, 1984; Day, 1984; Richins, 1982). Richins (1982) suggested that individuals with more positive attitudes toward complaining possess a greater propensity to complain and reported undertaking more complaint

actions. Singh (1990b) divided the attitude into personal norm and societal benefits and found that personal norm had a positive effect on private action (negative word-of-mouth). Hence, it is postulated that

H1a: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's personal norms concerning complaining and exit.

H1b: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's personal norms concerning complaining and negative word-of-mouth.

H1c: There are statistically significant relationships between an individual's positive attitude toward complaining (personal norm and societal benefits) and direct and indirect voices.

H1d: There are statistically significant relationships between an individual's positive attitude toward complaining (personal norm and societal benefits) and indirect voices.

2.2 Likelihood of Success

Likelihood of success refers to the perceived probability that the retailer (the library) will rectify the problem without protest (Blodgett and Granbois, 1992, p. 99). Granbois, Summers, and Frazier (1977) suggested that consumers appeared to complain largely when they believed their efforts were likely to meet with success. Singh (1990a) also suggested that a greater possibility of successful complaints was associated with lower levels of exit and negative word-of-mouth responses and that, in medical service, a higher probability of successful complaint also appeared to result in a higher incidence of voice. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2a: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's expectation of the likelihood of success of complaining and exit.

H2b: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's expectation of the likelihood of success of complaining and negative word-of-mouth.

H2c: There are statistically significant relationships between an individual's expectation of the likelihood of success of complaining and direct voices.

2.3 Difficulty of Complaining

Research on ''difficulty of seeking redress/complaining'' (Day, 1984, p. 498), or worthwhileness of complaining (Singh, 1990a, p. 4), found that it had a significant effect on complaining behavior. Richins (1983) suggested that the more negative a consumer's perceptions of retailer responsiveness to consumer complaints, the more likely that individual was to engage in negative word-of-mouth. Singh (1990a) suggested that the more the consumer perceived that complaining was worthwhile, the greater the tendency to engage in voice responses. Hence, the following hypotheses are presented:

H3a: There are statistically significant relationships between an individual's perceptions of difficulty of complaining and exit.

H3b: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's perceptions of difficulty of complaining and negative word-of-mouth.

H3c: There are statistically significant relationships between an individual's perceptions of difficulty of complaining and direct voices.

2.4 Service Importance

Service importance refers to the relative worth an individual places on a product or service (Blodgett *et al.*, 1995, p. 34; Oh, 2003, p.48). Many researchers since Hirschman

(1970) have posited that product or service importance was a significant determinant of complaining behavior (Day & Ash, 1979; Granbois et al., 1977; Singh, 1990a). This means that the more the consumers thought the product or service were important to them, the more they would complain. From Kraft (1977, p. 80), it is postulated that:

H4: There are statistically significant relationships between an individual's perception of the importance of the service and direct voices.

2.5 External Attribution

Attribution theory predicted that the perceived reason for a service failure influenced the level of consumer satisfaction (Hocutt, Chakraborty, & Mowen, 1997). Three causal dimensions were suggested in attribution theory. Stability refers to whether the service failure is likely to occur very often. Controllability is whether the service failure could have been avoided. Locus of control refers to whether the failure is the fault of the user or the service provider. Among these three, the locus dimension appears to be related to external attribution. That is, if a consumer realizes that a service failure is caused by the service provider, he or she is more likely to complain than if the failure is his or her own fault (Folkes, 1984a; Folkes, 1984b; Hocutt et al., 1997; Krishnan & Valle, 1979). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H5a: There is a statistically significant relationship between external attribution and exit.

H5b: There is a statistically significant relationship between external attribution and negative word-of-mouth.

H5c: There are statistically significant relationships between external attribution and direct voices.

H5d: There is a statistically significant relationship between external attribution and third-party complaints.

2.6 Loyalty

Loyal customers would be more likely to complain (seek rectification) and less likely to exit and give negative word-of-mouth reports when dissatisfied with a product (Hirschman, 1970). Because of their psychological attachment to a store, loyal customers should be more likely to give the seller a second chance. It is therefore hypothesized that

H6: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's loyalty to the library and third-party complaints.

2.7 Perception of Free Use

Basically, the public library provides free services (services without payment) for their client. Therefore, it is expected that there is a different complaining behavior between "free service" users and commercial service users (Oh, 2003). From this assumption, it is hypothesized that

H7a: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's perception of free use and indirect voices.

H7b: There is a statistically significant relationship between an individual's perception of free use and third-party complaints.

3. Methodology

A self-administered questionnaire was completed by 99 adult users/patrons of the Labuan Public Library, located in the Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia. They were randomly selected and met the criteria of having experienced dissatisfaction with the library's service and/or its staff during the past twelve months. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree, to 5 - strongly agree, was used for all variables of complaining behavior except the last item of loyalty to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements related to the stimulus objects. Measurement of items was presented in Appendix 1. Perception of free use was measured by four items developed by Oh (2003). Attitude toward complaining consisted of five items about personal norms and three items about societal benefits. These items were borrowed from Day (1984), Richins (1982), Singh (1990b), and Oh (2003) and revised for university library context. Difficulty of complaining was measured by five items adapted from Day (1984, p. 498) and Richins (1979, p. 32). Likelihood of success was measured by four items adapted from Day (1984, p. 498) and Richins (1979, p. 32). Service importance was measured by three items also adapted from Day (1984, p. 498). Attribution was measured by two items, external and internal attribution. Internal attribution was measured to examine its correlation to external attribution. Loyalty was measured by the following three items: attitude about loyalty, period of use (how long the user has use the library), and frequency (how often the user uses the library). Period of use and frequency were measured to examine their relationship with attitude about loyalty. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analyses via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 17.0 for windows, with the aim of studying the relationships between the external variables on both independent variables and the dependent variable.

4. Results and Discussions

Of the 99 participants, 45 were male (45.5%) and 54 were female (54.5%), 48 participants (48.5%) were between the age of 15 and 20, 37 (37.4%) participants were between the age of 21 and 25. For the level of education, 36 participants (36.4%) were SPM/O-Level holders, forty-five participants (45.45%) held higher qualifications, up to Degree level.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	45	45.5
	Female	54	54.5
Age	<15	1	1.0
	15-20	48	48.5
	21-25	37	37.4
	26-30	4	4.0
	>30	9	9.1
Level of Education	SPM/O-Level	36	36.4
	STPM/A-Level	15	15.2
	Diploma	4	4.0
	Degree	36	36.4
	Others	8	8.1

4.1 Test of Reliability

The analysis of reliability is done so as to determine the level of reliability of the data gained from the research. It aims to help the researchers to determine whether the data collected are reliable or not. Cronbach α's were computed as a measure for construct reliability. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), the nearer the value of reliability to 1.00, the more reliable the result would be. A value of reliability less than 0.7 is assumed to be weak while a reliability value in the range of 0.70 up to 1.00 is accepted. Moreover, the value which is more than 0.80 is assumed to be strong. Table 2 infers that the values for all of the variables involved are above 0.7, thus they are all accepted as reliable.

4.2 Correlation Analysis of Variables

Pearson correlations were calculated to identify the correlation between the variables. Since each construct in the questionnaire was measured by multiple items the average score of the multi-items for each construct was calculated. The score was then used for correlation and regression analysis (Wang and Benbasat, 2007). As cited in Wong and Hiew (2005) the correlation coefficient value (r) range from 0.10 to 0.29 is considered weak, from 0.30 to 0.49 is considered medium and from 0.50 to 1.0 is considered strong. However, according to Field (2005), the correlation coefficient should not go beyond 0.8 to avoid multicollinearity. Since the highest correlation coefficient is 0.629, which is less than 0.8, there is no multicollinearity problem in this research (Appendix 1).

Influences of the Antecedent Variables on Complaint Responses

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between complaint responses (Exit, Negative word-of-mouth, Direct voice, Indirect voice, Third-party complaints) and their antecedents (Personal norms, Societal benefits, Perception of free use, Difficulty of complaining, Likelihood of success, Service importance, External attribution, Loyalty). The significant level was set at 0.05.

Table 2: Values of Reliability

Variable	N of Item	Alpha
(1) Exit	2	0.943
(2) Negative word of mouth	2	0.911
(3) Direct Voice	2	0.948
(4) Indirect Voice	2	0.951
(5) Third-party Complaints	2	0.974
(6) Personal norms	6	0.752
(7) Societal Benefits	2	0.962
(8) Perception of Free Use	4	0.855
(9) Difficulty of Complaining	5	0.768
(10) Likelihood of Success	4	0.872
(11) Service Importance	3	0.885
(12) Attribution	2	0.934
(13) Loyalty	2	0.975

Influences on Exit

The act of exiting signifies a user-initiated break in the relationship between the user and the library as the service provider of the dissatisfying consumption event. Table 3 demonstrates that a significant relationship exists between personal norms and exit

(p<0.05, β= 0.254). Thus, H1a is supported. This shows that users, due to personal norms, will stop using the library's services when they are not satisfied with the services offered. H2a (Likelihood of success), H3a (Difficulty of complaining), and H5a (External attribution) are not supported as the significance value is greater than 0.05. However, Oh's (2003) study on the complaining behavior of public library users in South Korea shows that external attribution is the only independent variable that had a statistically significant relationship with exit.

Table 3: Influence of the Antecedent Variables on Exit

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig. F
(Constant)	2.103	.775		2.713	.008	.038	1.977	104
Personal norms	.330	.140	.254	2.361	.020*			
Difficulty of complaining	.110	.110	.102	1.000	.320			
Likelihood of success	-.052	.134	-.040	-.386	.700			
External attribution	-.133	.134	-.105	-.993	.323			

Note: * denotes a significant value as p<0.05

Influences on Negative Word-of-Mouth

Table 4 confirms that 'personal norms' is the only independent variable that had a significant relationship with negative word-of-mouth (p<0.05, β= 0.255). Hence, H1b is supported. This shows that public library users are too embarrassed to complain, regardless of how bad the service was. They also find that complaining about anything to anyone is distasteful. This is similar to public library users in South Korea (Oh, 2003). Other hypotheses such as H2b (Likelihood of success), H3b (Difficulty of complaining), and H5b (External attribution) are not supported, p>0.05. Inconsistent result was found in Oh's (2003) study where there is a relationship between external attribution and difficulty of complaining with negative word-of-mouth.

Table 4: Influence of the Antecedent Variables on Negative Word-of-Mouth

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig. F
(Constant)	1.685	.752		2.241	.027	.055	2.423	.054
Personal Norms	.374	.149	.255	2.518	.014*			
Difficulty of Complaining	.183	.110	.168	1.667	.099			
Likelihood of Success	-.029	.127	-.022	-.225	.823			
External Attribution	-.186	.131	-.147	-1.414	.161			

Note: * denotes a significant value as p<0.05

Influences on Direct Voice

As infers in Table 5, there is a significant relationship between likelihood of success and direct voice (p<0.05, β= 0.448). Hence, H2c is supported. This signifies that users will complain directly to the staff, those in charge of the department or the chief librarian about a service failure which they think can be corrected or improved by lodging a complaint. Users who think that their complaining is likely to succeed are most likely to voice their complaint directly. On the other hand, H1c (Personal norms), H3c (Difficulty of complaining), H4 (Service importance), and H5c (External attribution) are not supported as its significant value is greater than 0.05. This result is different from Oh's (2003) study.

Table 5: Influence of the Antecedent Variables on Direct Voice

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Adjusted		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	R Square	F	Sig. F
(Constant)	.441	.780		.565	.573	.188	5.526	.000
Personal Norms	.213	.156	.135	1.365	.176			
Difficulty of Complaining	.093	.109	.080	.854	.395			
Likelihood of Success	.617	.127	.448	4.876	.000*			
Service Importance	-.103	.137	-.074	-.752	.454			
External Attribution	.048	.131	.035	.365	.716			

Note: * denotes a significant value as p<0.05

Influences on Indirect Voice

Table 6 corroborates that there is no significant relationship between any independent variables and indirect voice. Thus, H1d and H7a are not supported. This means that the perception of free use and personal norms of the public library users will not influence the users in the Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia, to complain indirectly to authorities using complaining cards, e-mail, etc. They are less likely to complain to the library management as they prefer to complain indirectly to their friends and relatives or another third party instead. This is because library users, even though dissatisfied, will not expect the same level of service from a free service as they would from a for-profit organization. Oh's (2003) study, however, shows inverse results where a significant relationship subsists between perception of free use and indirect voice.

Table 6: Influence of the Antecedent Variables on Indirect Voice

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Adjusted		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	R Square	F	Sig. F
(Constant)	2.607	.694		3.758	.000	-.006	.711	.494
Personal Norms	-.017	.155	-.012	-.113	.911			
Perception of Free Use	.206	.175	.123	1.179	.241			

Influences on Third-party Complaints

Next, Table 7 shows that a significant relationship exists between the perception of free use (p<0.05, β= 0.205), external attribution (p<0.05, β= 0.226), loyalty (p<0.05, β= -0.208) and third-party complaints. Hence, H5d, H6, H7b are supported. This shows that users who attribute service failure to the library and/or its staff, users who perceive the service to be free and even loyal users of the library are likely to complain to a third party. Users' faithfulness to the library depends upon the expectation that their future experiences will be satisfactory. This result is partially similar to Oh's (2003) study where perception of free use and loyalty were supported whereas external attribution was not.

Table 7: Influence of the Antecedent Variables on Third-party Complaints

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Adjusted		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	R Square	F	Sig. F
(Constant)	1.477	.609		2.425	.017	.120	5.436	.002
Perception of Free Use	.318	.154	.205	2.062	.042*			
External Attribution	.302	.131	.226	2.305	.023*			
Loyalty	-.205	.095	-.208	-2.159	.033*			

Note: * denotes a significant value as p<0.05

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In an increasingly demanding environment, users complain because they are dissatisfied with the services rendered such as time and effort required to fill out form, difficulty finding complaint procedures, being treated rudely, and having to hassle someone. Nevertheless, complaints can function as valuable feedback that helps to solve problems or improve the quality of services, including library services. Particularly, public librarians can use feedback from customer complaints to improve current operations and service quality to better satisfy the needs of users. Put simply, this study signified that public library users in the Federal Territory of Labuan, Malaysia, who believe that the presence of service failure is due to the negligence of the library staff and perceive the service of the library to be free, are most likely to complain to a third party. In the same way, loyal library users in the Federal Territory of Labuan also prefer to complain to a third party about their dissatisfaction. However, there are still users who make complaints directly to the personnel or person in charge of the department or chief librarian at the time of dissatisfaction if they believe the service which they received was unsatisfactory and can be corrected or improved by making a complaint.

Knowledge of consumer complaining behavior and complaint handling can be useful in determining ways to increase customer commitment to the library, build customer loyalty, and finally, satisfy customers. This study shows that library users in the Federal Territory of Labuan, even if dissatisfied with the service, are reluctant to complain because they perceive the service to be free. On the other hand, if their dissatisfaction with the service is caused by the library or its staff, they might complain to a third party. Loyal users are also less likely to report a complaint to the authorities but to a third party only. Librarians can unveil their users' needs and preferences through daily observations and should be ready to change and improve after receiving complaints from the users, thus moving toward the goal of serving them effectively and efficiently.

It is vital to change the traditional negative views about complaint behavior. Therefore, public library management should encourage their users to voice their needs and complaints directly or indirectly to the library, in turn library staff should be more accepting of their customers' complaints. Knowing its customers is the library's first step in securing a competitive advantage. Users' complaints can be a powerful source of information that can help the library management to make strategic and tactical decisions that could prevent them from switching services or performing an action such as exit from the library, and no longer utilizing the services. Future research could be based on investigating other variables in order to examine their relationships in depth such as severity of dissatisfaction and distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Further research into perception of free use is necessary because it seems to be an important variable in explaining behavior toward nonprofit organizations, especially public libraries.

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Appendix 1: Correlations Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
(1) Exit	1												
(2) Negative word of mouth	.432(**)	1											
(3) Direct Voice	.185	.198(*)	1										
(4) Indirect Voice	.025	.110	.417(**)	1									
(5) Third-party Complaints	.237(*)	.201(*)	.432(**)	.153	1								
(6) Personal norms	.243(*)	-.068	.023	.018	.302(**)	1							
(7) Societal Benefits	.076	.179	.304(**)	.131	.193	-.027	1						
(8) Perception of free use	.241(*)	.233(*)	.122	.120	.223(*)	.243(*)	.484(**)	1					
(9) Difficulty of Complaining	.087	.155	.122	.220(*)	.000	.044	.099	.080	1				
(10) Likelihood of Success	-.113	-.025	.448(**)	.214(*)	.203(*)	-.276(**)	.338(**)	-.005	.062	1			
(11) Service Importance	.156	.086	.027	.182	.307(**)	.075	.110	.343(**)	.066	.096	1		
(12) Attribution	-.023	-.050	.110	.157	.281(**)	.250(*)	.190	.240(*)	.220(*)	.083	.173	1	
(13) Loyalty	.000	-.076	-.119	-.073	-.180	.010	.171	.172	.190	-.026	-.077	-.029	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).