

Demographic Characteristics of Complainers and Non-Complainers: A Study on Malaysian Mobile Phone Services Industry's Consumers

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ABSTRACT

This study revealed the results of the demographic variables for complainer and non-complainer in the mobile phone services industry. A total of 285 complainers and 230 non-complainers of mobile phone users in Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya were selected as respondents by using mall-intercept approach. This descriptive study used frequency and percentage to show the results. The results were used in profiling the complainer and non-complainer. The mixed results showed that the complainers were found using the post-paid plan, married, working in the public or private sector and high monthly usage. Other demographic variables such as gender, age, monthly income, ethnicity and financier for monthly bill payment the results were similar for both groups.

KEYWORDS: Consumer Complaint Behavior, Complainer, Non-Complainer.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, many managers believe that complaint helps improve the hindrance that is unknown to the organization. Consequently, organizations are providing various types of channels for their customers to complain. On top of the complaint channels provided by the service provider, mobile phone users in Malaysia are free to complain to third parties such as Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Consumer Forum of Malaysia (CFM), National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC), Consumer Associations in Malaysia, government agencies such as Ministry of Domestic Trade Co-operatives and Consumerism, political leaders or mass media. However, the statistics show that it was only 5,868 complaints were recorded in 2014 [1]. This number of complaints are extremely small as compared to 44,999,000 Malaysian mobile phone subscribers in 2014 [2]. Thus, it creates curiosity of what is actually transpiring to the consumer complaint behavior in this industry. Although many studies have been conducted on consumer complaint behavior, the results are inconsistent.

In reviewing the literature on consumer complaint behavior, demographically consumers who chose to complain were found to be mixed results. Some studies found that complainers are those in the higher income [3, 4, 5], female [6, 7, 8] and young [9, 10]. Nevertheless, there were also studies found complainers are in the lower income category [11], male [12, 5, 11, 13] and old [12, 11]. In terms of marital status, study has proven that single person tends to complain more [14] though not many studies in the literature has included marital status in the demographic variables. In this study, marital status, race and employment status were included in the demographic variables. Therefore the main objective of this paper is to prove that complainers specifically in the mobile phone services industry are females, younger in age, married and have higher education and income. Secondly, this paper will also highlight other important variables in mobile phone services such as number of subscription, name of service provider subscribed, name of prime service provider subscribed, plan of service, length of use, monthly usage, financier, issues or problems with regard to complaining, reason for complaining and reason for not complaining. Above all, this paper will be able to distinguish the characteristics of the complainers and the non-complainers which can be used by various parties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Complaint Behavior (CCB)

CCB can be construed as the act of the consumer's response to dissatisfaction with regard to purchased products or services. In many decades, CCB has gone through various explanations and definitions from various researchers. CCB has been classified as two-level of hierarchical actions due to dissatisfaction [15], divided it into four actions namely complain personally to someone, do nothing, boycott the store or product or go through intermediaries [3], communicating something negative regarding a product or service to either the company or to third-party entity [16], switching, making a complaint to the seller and telling the experience to others [17], 1983) voice, private and third party [18], retaliation, grudge-holding and avoidance [19] public and private for behavioral response [20] and public complaint soft action (PCSA), public complaint extreme action (PCEA), private complaint soft action (PVSA) and private complaint extreme action (PVEA) [21].

Following [7], complainers are those who had voiced their dissatisfaction to the service provider or any other agencies accountable to take complaints either orally or in writing in order to seek redress, apology, compensation, requesting corrective action and expressing emotional anger. On the other hand, the non-complainers are those who did not complain due to various reasons although they had experienced dissatisfaction with the services provided. Customers may not complain because of the late realization of the failure, loyalty to service provider, risk of service provider's reputation, internal attributions, busy and opted for alternative action of brand switching [22]. There are also dissatisfied customers do not complain directly to the service provider, primarily because it is not worth the time and effort or they do not know where or how to complain and where they believe that the most sad part is nothing will be done even if they do complain [23, 17, 24].

METHODOLOGY

Scale and Measurement

In this study, questionnaires were used to gather the data. However, this paper only discusses information gathered in section I which consisted of the demographic variables. Prior to attempting all the questions in the questionnaire, respondents were required to answer a question to know whether the respondent has made any complaint to the service provider or any agencies that are accountable for consumers' complaints either orally or in writing. This question needed a monosyllabic answer "Yes" or "No" to categorize the respondents into complainers and non-complainers.

Procedures

The respondents were the consumers of mobile phone services from all service providers available in Malaysia namely Maxis, DiGi, Celcom and U-mobile residing in the states of Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. Respondents from these states were chosen based on the fact that the total number of subscribers represents 30.2% of the total subscribers in 2014 [25]. Besides, they would also be able to represent those from other states in terms of culture and values because the population in these locations comes from various states in Malaysia. Thus, the selection ensures the representativeness of the sample. Using a mall-intercept approach twelve shopping malls in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya were selected as the centers for data collection activity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 285 mobile phone service users identified as complainers and 230 users identified as non-complainers. The demographic variables involved in the study were no of subscription, name of service provider, name of prime service provider, plan of service, length of use, gender, age, marital status, race, academic qualification, employment status, monthly income, monthly usage and financier. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Variables	Description	Complainer (285)		Non-Complainer (230)	
		Frequencies	%	Frequencies	%
No of subscription	1	174	61.1	145	63.0
	2	101	35.4	81	35.2
	3	10	3.5	4	1.7
Name of service provider	CELCOM	153	53.7	87	37.8
	DiGi	69	24.2	66	28.7
	Maxis	155	54.4	147	63.9
	U Mobile	21	7.4	13	5.7

	Others	4	1.4	4	1.7
Prime service provider	CELCOM	125	43.9	72	31.4
	DiGi	40	14.0	47	20.5
	Maxis	118	41.4	108	47.2
	U Mobile	2	0.7	2	0.9
Plan of service	Prepaid	130	45.6	147	63
	Post-paid	155	54.4	85	37
Length of use		M = 84.9	SD = 49.7	M = 78.0	SD = 43.4
Gender	Male	141	49.5	102	44.3
	Female	144	50.5	128	55.7
Age		M = 31.5	SD = 9.1	M = 31.2	SD = 10.5
Marital status	Married	151	53.0	108	47
	Single	131	46.0	119	51.7
	Others	3	1.0	3	1.3
Race	Malays	211	74.0	121	52.6
	Chinese	47	16.5	73	31.7
	Indian	17	6.0	28	12.2
	Others	10	3.5	8	3.5
Academic qualifications	PhD	3	1.1	2	0.9
	Master	16	5.6	16	7.0
	Bachelor	83	29.1	63	27.4
	Diploma	60	21.1	41	17.8
	STPM	34	11.9	42	18.3
	SPM	82	28.8	57	24.8
	Others	7	2.5	5	2.2
Employment status	Government	100	35.1	82	35.7
	Private	103	36.1	65	28.3
	Own business	11	3.9	5	2.2
	Retiree	3	1.1	3	1.3
	Housewife	3	1.1	4	1.7
	Student	63	22.1	70	30.4
	Unemployed	1	0.4	0	0
	Others	1	0.4	1	0.4
Monthly income	No income	55	19.3	68	29.8
	< RM2000	80	28.1	4	1.8
	RM2000-RM3000	53	18.6	49	21.5
	RM3001-RM4000	42	14.7	31	13.6
	RM4001-RM5000	21	7.4	15	6.6
	RM5001-RM6000	16	5.6	12	5.3
	RM6001-RM7000	6	2.1	1	0.4
	> RM7000	12	4.2	10	4.4
Monthly usage		M = 112.7	SD = 90.2	M = 85.6	SD = 72.0
Financier	Self	228	80.0	184	80.0
	Parents	17	6.0	9	3.9
	Partner	26	9.1	35	15.2
	Others	34	11.9	29	12.6

Complainer

The results show a sizeable number of respondents (35.4%) subscribed to two service providers and were using CELCOM as their preferred service provider. Most of them were using post-paid mobile phone services, although in 2012 MCMC reported that the number of pre-paid users was almost five times higher than the post-paid user [25]. The possible reason for this difference could be most of the respondents in this study were employed by the public sector (35.1%) and private sector as these types of employment may require them to use the phone for many reasons, they would rather use the post-paid plan to avoid service disruption due to short of credits. The average length of usage for complainers was 84.9 months, which is almost 7 years which indicates their loyalty. They are female and the result is consistent with some of the previous studies [26, 7, 8]. They were young (average 31.5 years), married, Malays, academically profound, working in public and private sector and not from higher income. However, the findings are inconsistent with the findings in the literature which stated that consumers chose to complain were found to be the higher income [4, 3]. Besides that, on average complainers were using RM112.70 per month and paid their own bills. In 2009, MCMC reported that 81.9% of the mobile phone users spend less than RM100 per month [27]. However, due to limited data on the average monthly mobile phone services expenses in the current year, it is incomprehensible to construe whether the expenses has increased or otherwise.

Non-Complainer

Similarly, the results also show a sizeable number of non-complainers (35.4%) subscribed to two service provider. However, Maxis was their preferred service provider using the pre-paid plan and their length of usage was 78 months or 7.5 years. Besides, statistics show that more users were subscribing the pre-paid plan [25] which has fewer problems with billing-the top reason for customers lodged their complaints in 2013 [8]. Similarly, the non-complainers were female, young (average age 31.2 years) but single. They were married, Malays, academically profound but mostly students (higher learning institution) and the private sector employees, not from the high income, average monthly usage was RM85.6, and paid their own bills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In comparing the results between the complainers and the non-complainers, only a few variables are found to be different. Although CELCOM is the most preferred service provider for complainers or non-complainers, the non-complainers preferred Maxis as their prime service provider. In terms of service plan, the complainers are more inclined to choose the post-paid plan whereas the non-complainer preferred the pre-paid plan although the difference is not significant. Complainers are married, working in the public or private sector and high monthly usage.

Evidently, both complainers and non-complainers can be considered as loyal customers because the lengths of their usage on the selected service provider are 84.9 months for complainers and 78 months for non-complainers although slightly higher results on the complainer. The results of other demographic variables such as gender, age, academic qualification, monthly income, ethnicity and financial sponsor for monthly bill are obscure because both datasets reveal similar results.

It is recommended that future researcher conduct a similar study in different services such as banking, transportation, accommodation and restaurant to confirm the results. As this study used convenient sampling although the mall-intercept approach was used to select the respondent in order to minimize bias, it is recommended that simple random be used for the generalization of the results. Besides that, other statistical method such as T-Test can be considered to confirm the results of both groups-complainer and non-complainer.

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