

The Influence of Consumer Complaint Behaviour on Relationship Quality among Malaysian Mobile Phone Services Subscribers: Complainers Versus Non-Complainers

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Abstract: Mobile phone service subscribers in Malaysia have been increasing tremendously. However, the number of complaints received with regard to mobile phone services is small as compared to the number of subscribers. Evidently complaining is one of the consumer behaviours which provides significant impact to organisations as well as to complainers or consumers. Studies on Consumer Complaining Behaviour (CCB) are continuously carried out due to its importance. Although, CCB has extensively been studied in various countries and industries, limited studies are found investigating the relationship between CCB and relationship quality. Therefore, this study was conducted to reduce the existing research gap by concentrating on the Malaysian mobile phone services industry. A total of 550 of mobile phone users consisting of complainers and non-complainers from two selected states in Malaysia were selected as respondents. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to analyze the data, the GOF, AVE, CR and convergent validity values confirmed the measurement model of the CCB dimensions which consist of public complaint soft action, public complaint extreme action, private complaint soft action and private complaint extreme action for complainers and non-complainers, respectively. The structural model revealed mixed results of the relationships between the exogenous and endogenous variables. The results provide the indicator of the relationship quality between service providers and consumers. As the mobile phone services industry involves a huge number of Malaysian population this issue should become the focal point to the parties concerned in protecting the consumers.

Key words: Consumer complaint behaviour, public complaint, private complaint, convergent, endogenous variables

INTRODUCTION

Indisputably, telecommunication technology helps businesses to grow more rapidly while contributing to the economic development. As a result of the availability of telecommunication technology, mobile phone becomes more imperative in daily life (Yang and Lay, 2011). In Malaysia, the number of mobile phone users overcomes the fixed line telephone users as a means to communicate with their family members, friends, peers and business partners (Zulkefly and Baharudin, 2009). It was highlighted that in 2012, the number of subscribers of mobile phone services in Malaysia was 41,325,000 where as the number of Malaysian population was 29,517,000 (citizen) and 2,520,000 (non-citizen). This great number of

subscribers of mobile phone signifies that they deserve to be protected and their monthly share of wallet to service providers is worthwhile. Customers' complaints and feedback are useful tools to determine whether the services rendered meet their expectations and simultaneously their dissatisfaction/problem can be identified. Complaining will direct service providers to perform a service recovery action and consequently, the customer will justify that service recovery meets his/her requirement.

Most organisations are providing channels for customers to lodge their complaints. A survey on the service providers' websites discovers that none of the mobile phone service providers in Malaysia neglected this aspect. Consumers are free to lodge their complaints

through several ways; namely, over the counter/face to face, phone calls and SMS or online means. Besides the complaint channels provided by the service provider, mobile phone users in Malaysia are free to forward their complaints to third parties such as Communication and Multimedia Consumer Forum of Malaysia (CFM) and the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), the National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC), any other consumer associations in Malaysia, government agencies such as ministry of domestic trade co-operatives and consumerism, political leaders or the mass media.

Although, the amount of mobile phone subscribers has exceeded the number of Malaysian population, only 2,879 lodged their complaints. The small percentage (0.007%) of complainers indicates that many consumers choose private actions when encountering dissatisfaction as if they have low confidence toward the service providers. Therefore, this study was under taken to examine the relationship between consumer complaint behavior and relationship quality. Relationship quality serves as the dependent variable due to the fact that high relationship quality indicates "the customer is able to rely on the service provider's integrity and has confidence in the service provider's future performance because the level of past performance is consistently satisfactory" (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). Hence, relationship quality is imperative to ensure that the transaction between the consumer and the service provider provides significant value to both parties.

Literature review

Consumer complaint behaviour: The conceptualised model of CCB was suggested by Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty as a consequence of customer response to dissatisfaction. Day and Landon (1977) further proposed a two-level hierarchical classification of actions due to dissatisfaction which describes complaint behaviour. According to Warland *et al.* (1975) disappointed consumers would choose four types of actions; namely, complain personally to somebody do nothing stay away from the store or refuse to use the product or go through intermediaries. Jaccoby and Jaccard (1981) described the action made by these disappointed consumers as telling something negative regarding a product or service to either the organisation or to some third-party entity. Crie (2003) portrayed CCB as a process that represents a subset of all possible reactions to perceived dissatisfaction around purchase episode during consumption or during possession of the goods or services.

Behavioural responses due to dissatisfaction can be divided into two groups; namely, public and private

actions. For public action, consumers may complaint, take legal action and return the item or request for repair to the sellers, manufacturers, service providers, official organisations and associations while word of mouth, staying away or leaving are examples of private action targeting family members, associates and relatives. Heung and Lam (2003) described public actions as asking for redress directly, requesting refund from the seller, complaining to the media, instigating legal actions and bringing direct complaint actions to the firms or consumer agencies. Many researchers describe private actions as switching brands and firms, boycotting a firm's products, stop from patronizing the company and engaging in negative word of mouth communications to associates and relatives (Broadbridge and Marshall, 1995; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Tronvoll, 2011). Obviously, the literature establishes CCB as a set of multiple responses that are activated by perceived dissatisfaction towards service providers.

Researchers are on the common agreement that the out comes of dissatisfaction comprise public action, private action and no action (Day and Landon, 1977; Crie, 2003; Matilla and Wirtz, 2004; Phau and Sari, 2004, Ndubisi and Ling, 2006), voice, private and third party (Singh, 1988), switching, bringing the grievance to the seller and informing the experience to others and retaliation, grudge-holding and avoidance (Hunt and Hunt, 1990). Borrowing Crie (2003)'s taxonomy on the response of dissatisfaction, our prior investigation revealed that CCB comprises Public Complaint Soft Action (PCSA), Public Complaint Extreme Action (PCEA), Private Complaint Soft Action (PVSA) and Private Complaint Extreme Action (PVEA) for complainers and private complaint soft action (PVSA) and Private Complaint Extreme Action (PVEA) for non-complainer Rahman *et al.* (2015). In the present study, we resolve to investigate the links of these consumer complaint behaviours (PCSA, PCEA, PVSA and PVEA) with the relationship quality for complainers and non-complainers.

Relationship quality: Various definitions of relationship quality exist. Some authors defined relationship quality as an overall evaluation of the strength of a relationship (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; De Wulf *et al.*, 2001), concerning the service provider's integrity and ability to reduce uncertainty (Crosby *et al.*, 1990), salesperson's integrity with the customer's confidence in the salesperson's future performance (Crosby *et al.*, 1990) and the extent of suitability of a relationship to fulfil the needs of customers linked with that relationship (Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997). Holmlund and Strandvik, (1999) recommended that relationship quality in business relationships can be investigated either from the buyer's

or the seller's perspectives or by combining their perceptions. Holmlund (2001) also described perceived relationship quality as a combined cognitive evaluation of business interactions by significant people that encompasses a judgment with possible alternative exchanges.

Some researchers have theorised the relationship quality as a higher-order construct (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; De Wulf *et al.*, 2001). A higher-order construct is a latent variable, in which the indicators are latent variables. Obviously, there is no consensus on the dimensions that make up the relationship quality. However, satisfaction, trust and commitment have been accentuated as the important indicators of relationship quality (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997; De Wulf *et al.*, 2001). In a business setting, specific dimensions derived from buyer-seller relationships are added. For example, in an export-import industry, four dimensions of relationship quality; specifically, amount of information sharing, communication quality, long term orientation and satisfaction with the relationship were added (Lages *et al.*, 2005). Other researchers include minimal opportunism, customer orientation (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Berry and Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991) and ethical profile (Hunt *et al.*, 1989) in their studies.

In this study, relationship quality serves as the dependent variable and it was borrowed from Roberts *et al.* (2003). The dimensions comprise trust in partner's honesty, trust in partner's benevolence, commitment, satisfaction and affective conflict. The rationale for borrowing Robert's model is that the dimensions are suitable in measuring relationship quality in services industry. The investigation on the relationship quality is paramount for the benefits of consumers and service providers. From the service provider's perspective, Cohen (2004) suggested that companies should focus on relationship building where learning and performance enhancement are given due attention so that the industry can truly add value to ensure improved business outcomes. From the consumers' perspective, high level of satisfaction can be materialised through collaboration between the involved parties (Chumpitaz and Paparoidamis, 2004).

Relationship of consumer complaint behaviour and relationship quality: This research hypothesizes that there is a connection between CCB and relationship quality. In order to attest the hypothesis, firstly CCB is described as communication similar to other studies (Alicke *et al.*, 1992; Shapiro and Nieman 2006). The rationale is, complaining is a process of interaction between consumers and service providers. Subsequently,

researchers have utilised communication as the antecedent to relationship quality (Selses, 1998; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Ndubisi, 2007), communication barriers (Menon *et al.*, 1996), initiating communication (Leuthesser, 1997), effective communication (Goodman and Dion, 2001; Sanzo *et al.*, 2003) two way communication (Bennett and Barkensjo, 2005) and communication quality. Likewise, if consumer complaint is viewed as behaviour, prior studies have established significant connection between behaviour and relationship quality (Lagace *et al.*, 1991) ethical behaviour and relational selling behaviour (Boles *et al.*, 2000; Ling and Ding, 2006). Secondly, the relationships between CCB and the relationship quality are confirmed by referring to the dimensions of relationship quality. Studies have proven that there is a relationship between complaint and trust (Ball *et al.*, 2004, 2006) complaint and satisfaction (Nyer, 2000; Nyer and Gopinath, 2005) and complaint and commitment (Nyer and Gopinath, 2005; Bunker, 2008). From this review, the link between CCB and relationship quality was hypothesized.

As this study concerns complainers and non-complainers, separate hypotheses for both types of consumers were highlighted. The non-complainers are defined as consumers who do not complain directly to the service providers or any other third party. According to Rahman *et al.* (2015), CCB is measured as Public Complaint Soft Action (PCSA), Public Complaint Extreme Action (PCEA), Private Complaint Soft Action (PVSA) and Private Complaint Extreme Action (PVEA) for complainers and Private Complaint Soft Action (PVSA) and Private Complaint Extreme Action (PVEA) for non-complainers. Thus, the hypotheses for complainers are as follows:

- HC_1 = PCSA significantly influences relationship quality
- HC_2 = PCEA significantly influences relationship quality
- HC_3 = PVSA significantly influences relationship quality
- HC_4 = PVEA does not significantly influence relationship quality
- HNC_3 = PVSA significantly influences relationship quality
- HNC_4 = PVEA does not significantly influence relationship quality

The present study hypothesized that the extreme actions (HC_4 and HNC_4) which indicate a halt in patronising the service provider will not have a significant relationship with relationship quality. The coding for the Hypotheses (H) is added with 'C' and 'NC' to differentiate complainers and non-complainers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Variables and measurement: The questionnaire consists of questions examining the consumers' complaint behaviour (exogenous variable) and relationship quality (endogenous variable). Part 1 consists a question that requires a monosyllabic answer "Yes" or "No" to categorise respondents into complainers or non-complainers as well as questions seeking the respondent's demographic information. Part 2 consists of sixteen statements to measure the respondent's complaint behaviour. Three statements were meant to measure public complaint soft action, four for public complaint extreme action, six for private complaint soft action and three for private complaint extreme action. All items were adapted from previous studies (Liu *et al.*, 2001; Ndubisi and Ling, 2006; Malhotra *et al.*, 2006; Rahman *et al.*, 2015). Finally, Part 3 which consist of fifteen statements meant to measure relationship quality dimensions; namely, trust in partner's honesty (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Ramsey and Sohi, 1997; Roberts *et al.*, 2003, Rahman *et al.*, 2015), trust in partner's benevolence (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Ramsey and Sohi, 1997; Rahman *et al.*, 2015), affective commitment (1993; Kumar *et al.*, 1995; Rahman *et al.*, 2015) and satisfaction (Lee and Lin, 1996; Roberts *et al.*, 2003, Rahman *et al.*, 2015). The responses for all items were recorded based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Since the present study focuses on the behavioural actions of the respondents, the statements to measure CCB start with "For the problem that I have encountered with my service provider, I always" signifying that all responses must be based on the actual experience. The scores for all items were summed up to derive the mean score of a particular variable. The questionnaire was prepared in English and it was translated into Malay language by professional translators. It was re-confirmed to ensure that the translation is accurate before it can be utilised.

Procedures: The population elements of the study comprise users of mobile phone services from all service providers; namely, Maxis Berhad (known as Maxis), DiGi Telecommunication Sdn. Bhd. (known as DiGi), Celcom Axiata Berhad (known as Celcom) and U-mobile in Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. They were chosen for the reason that the total number of users from these places constitute 28.6% (1,945,143) of the total users in Malaysia. In addition, the respondents can stand for those from other states in terms of culture and values because the population at these places originated from various states in Malaysia. Thus, the sampling decision

ensures the representativeness of samples. Using a mall-intercept approach and depiction of mall by Guy (1998) and Ibrahim and Ng (2002), twelve shopping malls in Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor were chosen to be included in the study.

Validity and reliability: The validity of the models was confirmed via Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA) using AMOS Version 21. CFA is utilised to verify the factor structure of observed variables. It permits the confirmation of the hypothesis with regard to the relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent construct. CFA is also utilised to explore statistical relationships among the items of each factor as well as to substantiate its unidimensionality. Unidimensionality is an assumption underlying the calculation of reliability and it is verified when the indicator of a construct has an acceptable fit on a single-factor (one-dimensional) (Hair *et al.*, 2009). This study accomplished the unidimensionality testing before evaluating the reliability and validity of each construct as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1982) and Hair *et al.* (2009). The unidimensional measurement model is more practical as it presents a more precise test of convergent and discriminate validity of factor measurement (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

The goodness of fit measures are crucial to ascertain how well the model best represents the data which manifests the underlying theory (Ho, 2006). With the intention to overcome the multivariate effect, the consideration of non-normality and at least one index from each of the index categories from absolute fit, incremental fit and parsimonious fit, the fit indices of Root Mean Squared Error Approximation (RMSEA), normed Chi-square (χ^2/df), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was ensured in the study (Hair *et al.*, 2009). With the purpose of establishing the model fit, the respective cut-off points of the indices have to be satisfied: $RMSEA \leq 0.08$, $\chi^2/df \leq 5.0$ and TLI, NFI, CFI ≥ 0.90 . The results of CFA show a good fit between the data and the model with $\chi^2 = 638.781$, $df = 291$, $\chi^2/df = 2.195$, TLI = 0.926, NFI = .894, CFI = 0.938, PNFI = 0.741 and RMSEA = 0.069 for complainers whereas for non-complainers the values are $\chi^2 = 201.174$, $df = 104$, $\chi^2/df = 1.934$, TLI = 0.963, NFI = 0.944, CFI = 0.972, PNFI = 0.722 and RMSEA = 0.065. The results indicate that the testing of the structural model is permitted. Prior to that, the construct validity (standardized factor loadings and internal consistencies) and convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE) were verified to ascertain the robustness of the model.

Table 1: The result of construct reliability and average variance extracted

Construct	Items	Complainer			
		Standardized loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	CR	AVE
Soft public action	CCB1	0.60	0.72	0.71	0.59
	CCB2	0.87			
	CCB3	0.80			
Extreme public action	CCB4	0.86	0.73	0.76	0.58
	CCB5	0.70			
	CCB6	0.77			
Soft private action	CCB7	0.71	0.89	0.91	0.77
	CCB8	0.61			
	CCB11	0.88			
Extreme private action	CCB12	0.97	0.77	0.76	0.69
	CCB13	0.99			
	CCB15	0.98			
Trust in partner's honesty	RQ2	0.97	0.89	0.86	0.82
Trust in partner's benevolence	RQ3	0.84			
Affective commitment	RQ5	0.92			
Satisfaction	RQ6	0.87	0.86	0.82	0.68
	RQ7	0.72			
	RQ8	0.91			
Non-complainer Soft private action	RQ9	0.84	0.97	0.97	0.93
	RQ10	0.93			
	RQ11	0.99			
Extreme private action	RQ12	0.94	0.91	0.89	0.74
	CCB9	0.67			
	CCB10	0.95			
Trust in partner's honesty	CCB11	0.97	0.78	0.70	0.64
	CCB13	0.81			
	CCB15	0.75			
Affective commitment	CCB16	0.85	0.90	0.88	0.76
	RQ1	0.85			
	RQ2	0.93			
Satisfaction	RQ3	0.83	0.82	0.87	0.82
	RQ5	0.89			
	RQ6	0.91			
Non-complainer Soft private action	RQ7	0.77	0.89	0.86	0.74
	RQ8	0.89			
	RQ9	0.91			
Extreme private action	RQ10	0.95	0.97	0.97	0.93
	RQ11	1.00			
	RQ12	0.94			

Table 1 shows the standardized factor loadings for all the items which exceed the recommended value of 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2009). Composite reliability values which depict the degree to which the construct indicators reflect the latent construct, are in the range of 0.67-0.96 for complainers and 0.78-0.97 for non-complainers. The results exceed the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2009), 0.6 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value which reflects the overall amount of variance in the indicators as accounted for by the latent construct are in the range of 0.58 to 0.91 for complainers and 0.64-0.93 for non-complainers, exceed the recommended value of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2009).

Using the formula suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Construct Reliability (CR) are calculated to prove the

Table 2: Discriminant validity of constructs for complainers

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
PCSA	0.586							
PCEA	0.167	0.582						
PVSA	0.138	0.474	0.767					
PVEA	0.044	0.316	0.599	0.691				
TiPH	0.119	0.014	-0.299	-0.167	0.823			
TiPB	0.170	0.050	-0.248	-0.095	0.792	0.802		
AfCM	-0.004	0.088	-0.065	-0.058	0.515	0.553	0.684	
SAT	0.115	-0.006	-0.302	-0.105	0.683	0.688	0.598	0.910

Table 3: Discriminant validity of constructs for non-complainers

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
PVSA	0.740					
PVEA	0.560	0.640				
TiPB	0.095	0.052	0.820			
TiPH	0.077	0.007	0.749	0.760		
AfCM	0.204	0.050	0.651	0.569	0.740	
SAT	0.090	-0.085	0.689	0.670	0.735	0.930

Diagonals are the square root of the AVE; the off-diagonals are the correlations

reliability of the construct. Construct validity demonstrates how well the results obtained from the use of the measure fit the theories (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Construct validity can be established through convergent and discriminant validity. Discriminant validity can be proven by comparing the correlations between constructs and the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for a given construct. As shown in Table 2 and 3, the correlations for each construct were less than the square root of the average variance extracted by the indicator gauging that construct, denoting sufficient discriminant validity. In summary, the measurement model demonstrates sufficient convergent and discriminant validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic background of respondents: Referring to Table 4, this study involves 285 mobile phone services users identified as complainers and 230 as non-complainers from the state of Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya in Malaysia. Demographic information from the sample shows that 141 male respondents (49.5%) and 144 female respondents (50.5%) represent complainers where as 102 male (44.3%) and 128 (55.7%) represent non-complainers. The majority of the respondents aged between 21-30 year old were represented by complainers (49.6%) and non-complainers (43.5%). In terms of marital status, married respondents were slightly higher (53.0%) for complainers as compared to non-complainers (51.7%). Although, majority of the respondents were subscribing to one service provider, a substantial percentage of the respondents for both complainers (35.4%) and non-complainers (35.4%) subscribed two mobile phone services.

Table 4: Demographic background of respondents

Variables	Valid percent	
	Complainer	Non-complainer
Gender		
Male	49.5	44.3
Female	50.5	55.7
Number of mobile phone services		
One	61.1	63.0
Two	35.4	35.3
Three	3.5	1.7
Age (years)		
<20	4.6	14.3
21-30	49.6	43.5
31-40	28.5	23.0
41-50	14.8	13.0
>51	2.5	6.1
Marital status		
Married	53.0	47.0
Single	46.0	51.7
Others	1.1	1.3
Race		
Malay	74.0	52.6
Chinese	16.5	31.7
Indian	6.0	12.2
Others	3.5	1.3
Academic qualification		
PhD	1.1	0.9
Master's degree	5.6	7.0
Bachelor's degree	29.1	27.4
Diploma	21.1	17.8
STPM	11.9	18.3
SPM	28.8	24.8
PMR	0.7	1.7
Others	1.8	2.2
Employment status		
Government sector	35.1	35.7
Private sector	36.1	28.3
Own business	3.9	2.2
Retiree	1.1	1.3
Housewife	1.1	1.7
Students	22.1	30.4
Unemployed	0.4	0.0
Others	0.4	0.4
Gross monthly income		
No income	19.3	29.8
< RM2000	28.1	18.4
RM2001-RM3000	18.6	21.5
RM3001-RM4000	14.7	13.6
RM4001-RM5000	7.4	6.6
RM5001-RM6000	5.6	5.3
RM6001-RM7000	2.1	.4
>RM7001	4.2	4.4
Plan		
Pre paid	45.6	63.0
Post paid	54.4	35.2
Average monthly usage cost		
>RM50	30.3	50.0
RM51-RM100	34.9	31.1
RM101-RM150	16.9	6.1
RM151-RM200	11.6	8.3
RM201-RM250	2.5	0.9
<RM251	3.9	3.5

Hypothesis testing: The result of the final structural model show very minimal changes in the goodness of fit as compared to the CFA model. The result show a good fit between the data and the model in Fig.1. with $\chi^2 = 448.568$, $df = 218$, $\chi^2/df = 2.058$, CFI = 0.950, TLI = 0.942, NFI = 0.908, PNFI = 0.783 and RMSEA = 0.065 for complainers, where as for non-complainers the values were $\chi^2 = 230.764$, $df = 112$, $\chi^2/df = 2.060$, CFI = 0.966, NFI = 0.936, TLI = 0.958, PNFI = 0.771 and RMSEA = 0.070. Thus, the result indicates that the hypothesised model satisfactorily describes the sample data. The models and result of structural model are shown in Fig.1 and 2 and Table 5.

Among respondents, complainers and non-complainers are not much different in terms of studied variables except that single respondents (46%) complain less as compared to married respondents (53%). On racial status, the Malays (74%) made the highest number of complaints as compared to other races. Other factors, such as income, education level and age are discovered to have consistent influence on complaints (Kolodinsky and Aleong, 1990; Volkov *et al.*, 2002). In line with the previous studies, consumers who decided to complain are discovered to be relatively younger, earning higher income and more educated (Singh, 1989; Warland *et al.*, 1975). The plausible reason for the younger consumers to complain more actively could be due to the channel provided for complaining now a days that are more technologically advanced and appropriate for the technology savvy generation.

This study has also demonstrated that there are relationships between consumer complaint behaviour and relationship quality. However, complainers who are categorised under the category of Public Complaint Soft Action (PCSA) and Public Complaint Extreme Action (PCEA) have positive significant relationship with relationship quality, whereas the Private Complaint Soft Action (PVSA) customers have negative significant relationship with relationship quality. Surprisingly, the results denote that non-complainers who are grouped under the category of Private Complaint Soft Action (PVSA) have positive significant relationship with relationship quality. The results signify that complaining to the service provider or any other organisation in charge of consumer complaints does not give big impact to the consumers. This proves that although in CCB, dissatisfied customers are more likely to complain than satisfied customers (Mowen, 1993; Heung and Lam, 2003), some satisfied customers may still complain to provide useful feedback to service providers

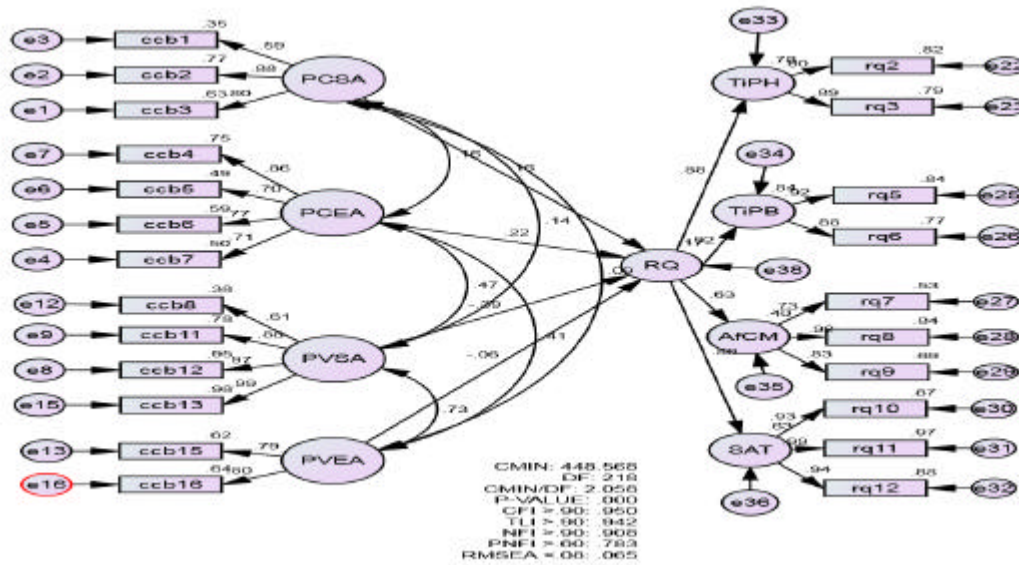


Fig. 1: Structural model for complainers

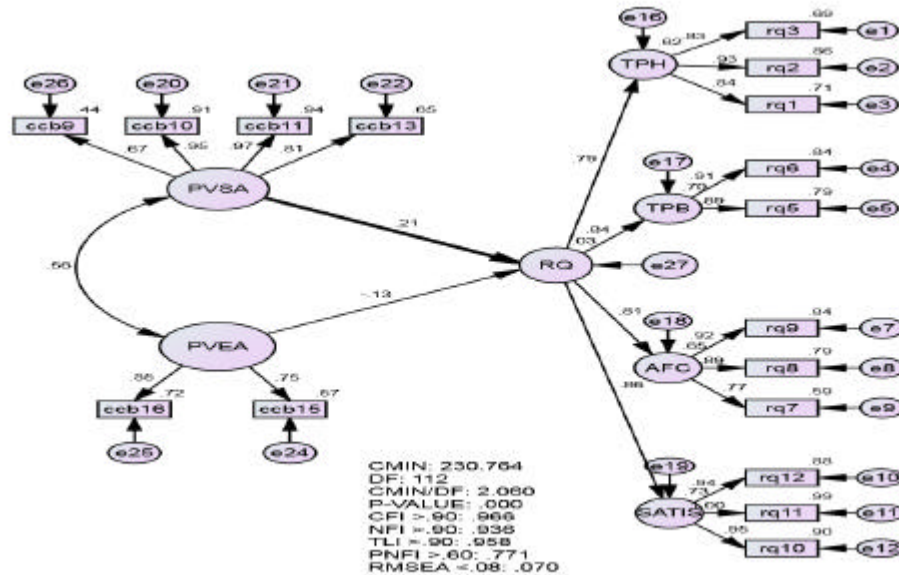


Fig. 2: Structural model for non-complainers

Table 5: The effects of consumer complaint behaviour on relationship quality

Structural relationship	Unstandardised parameter estimate	SE	t-value	Standardised parameter estimate	Supported
Complainers					
PCSA-RQ	0.202	0.061	2.339*	0.164	Yes
PCEA-RQ	0.143	0.076	2.683**	0.218	Yes
PVSA-RQ	-0.223	0.064	-3.479***	-0.391	Yes
PVEA-RQ	-0.043	0.081	-0.529	-0.063	Yes
Non-complainers					
PVSA-RQ	0.096	0.043	2.206*	0.209	Yes
PVEA-RQ	-0.064	0.052	-1.242	-0.128	Yes

*, **, ***Significant at p = 0.05; 0.01; 0.001

on service quality (Liu *et al.*, 2006). Likewise, consumers may seek on going relationships with service providers to lessen the perceived risks associated with the consumption of service such as intangibility and credence factors (Henning-Thurau and Klee, 1997; Wong and Sohal, 2002).

However, both complainers and non-complainers revealed that extreme action resulted in negative non-significant relationship. Extreme actions are reflected in customers' decisions to use other products or services. This indicates that customers opted for this behaviour stop patronising the company for their own reasons.

CONCLUSION

The study has proven the relationships between consumer complaint behaviour and relationship quality for complainers and non-complainers although not all actions in CCB are significant. The negative relationship between soft private action and relationship quality denotes that negative actions in soft private action such as word of mouth have negative effects on the relationship between consumers and service providers. This unhealthy situation does not benefit service providers because negative issues conveyed through word-of-mouth cannot be improved. Notably, behavioural action in extreme private action includes discontinuing the services or using services from other service providers. It conveys a message that the relationship between the consumer and the service provider is no longer necessary. This is an important note to service providers to check on the quality of their products or services. The results of this study provide significant implication to service providers to improve their services for long term business sustainability especially when the mobile phone services industry involves a huge number of Malaysian populations and this issue should become the focal point to the parties concerned in protecting the consumers. For the consumers, the results highlight the importance of complaining in order to continuously enjoy excellent services from service providers so that their monthly contribution is worthy.

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