

# THE INFLUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION AND PERCEPTION OF MARKETING FACTORS ON CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR: A STUDY OF MALAYSIAN CONSUMERS

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© Ontario International Development Agency. ISSN 1923-6654 (print)  
ISSN 1923-6662 (online). Available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the motivation for seeking redress from the firms and the third party complaint process, especially from the Malaysian consumers' perspective. About 840 complainers were interviewed in the shopping malls, National Consumer Complaint Centre and the Tribunal for Consumer Claims in Malaysia. The structural equation model is proposed and tested by using multiple indicators of unobserved constructs. The study reveals that the consumer's complaint intention is predicted by the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies and the importance of the product; complaint action is influenced by the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies, perception on business practices and responsiveness to complaint, and complaint intention. Additionally, the current research found that complaint intention mediated the relationship between the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies, the importance of product and complaint intention.

**Keywords:** Consumer Complaint Behaviour, Knowledge of Consumer Rights, Third Party Complaint Agency, Structural Equation Model.

## I. INTRODUCTION

If consumers experience dissatisfaction with products or services and are unable to obtain satisfaction from sellers or manufacturers, they may turn for help to a variety of consumer complaint agencies. Therefore, a third party can be the next step for consumers to improve their satisfaction if they still

dissatisfied with the company's response. Few consumers actually complain directly to the manufacturer or service provider, so businesses may be unaware of consumer complaint actions (Day, Grabicke, Schaetzel, and Stauchbach, 1981; Stephens and Gwinner 1998). Franklin (1992) believes that 'consumer complaints' is correlated with demands for more government regulation and intervention in the market place. From a managerial perspective, complaints represent potentially valuable information in guiding marketing strategy. Further, from a public policy perspective, complaints may aid the development and targeting of consumer protection and market regulatory programmes (Fornell and Westbrook, 1979). Hence, complaints can provide an alert to the distribution channel of the government regulation that needs correction in the business, and gives the company an opportunity to convince the customer to continue patronising their stores and buying their products.

Thus, in the market place, effective complaint management must be a priority for every business, as the complaining behaviour provides companies with a chance to remedy the dissatisfaction and, ultimately, to retain loyal customers (Franklin, 1992; Davidow and Dacin, 1997).

Balasubramaniam (1984) suggests that consumer protection may comprise policies and actions involving government intervention to ensure that all consumers obtain what they really want. The increasing demand for consumer protection is a modern phenomenon, and

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efforts are being made by governments to obtain greater enforcement from laws, however, these laws are not considered as particularly helpful to consumers for matters pertaining to trade descriptions (Financial services, housing, food, etc), door-to-door sales, distance selling, and safety of particular product; consumers should be provided more protection by statutes (Rachagan, 1998). Thus, several Asian countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Papua-New Guinea, have enacted statutes specifically titled as "Consumer Protection Acts/Codes" for consumers to solve specific problems. Most research on consumer complaint behaviour is conducted in the U.S. (e.g. Bearden and Mason, 1984; Day, 1984; Davidow and Dacin, 1997), Canada (e.g. Barnes and Kelloway, 1980; Lau and Ng, 2001), and European countries such as Norway (e.g. Gronhaug and Arndt, 1980), the Netherlands (Morel, Poiesz and Wilke, 1997) and the U.K. (Crosier and Erdogan, 2001). Based on the different cultural settings, complaint issues in Asian countries are insufficient (e.g. Phau and Sari, 2004; Keng, Richmond and Han, 1995; Lau and Ng, 2001). Thus, to understand complaint behaviour and consumer orientation in the marketing system of Asian consumers is extremely important for their survival.

Based on previous studies, this report provides a basic framework for seeking redress to show the main determinant factors that influence the ultimate decision to complain to the firms, third party agencies and take court action through the intention variable. The purpose of this study is to investigate the motivation for seeking redress from the firms and the third party complaint process, especially from the Malaysian consumers' perspective.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In fact, the intention can change over time based on the individual's provisional nature. Human behaviour can be considered under volitional control since the individual is prepared to exert maximum effort. Thus, intention can affect human actions, and the relation between intention and action can be seen as the goals and plans that guide behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). Singh (1988) proposes a two-stage strategy explaining that consumers usually engage in multiple complaint behaviour. The first step is consumer complaint intentions. He reports the unique dimensions that support consumer complaint behaviour responses due to the relative intensity of the different consumer complaint behaviour options (i.e. intentions). It should not simply be based on the behaviour that they did/did not engage in. In the second step, consumer complaint behaviour is explained as consumers taking action for their dissatisfaction for an independent situation. Kim,

Kim, Im and Shin (2003) also argue that consumer complaint intention is an outcome of the consumer's attitude perspectives, rather than complaint behaviour, as they noted that intention is much better predicted and explained by attitude than behaviour. Thus, complaint intention plays the mediating role to explain the consumer's attitude and complaint action in this study. According to the previous studies, the current study attempts to investigate how the variables, such as the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies, perception of business practices and responsiveness to complaints and the importance of the product, influence the complaint intention and complaint action.

### Knowledge of Consumer Rights and Consumer Agencies

Referring to social behaviour, Ajzen (1985) suggests that information that is recognized by the individuals will ultimately influence their further behaviour; Ormrod (1999) proposes that reinforcement responses only increase while the learner is aware of the connection. Singh and Wilkes (1996) suggest that an individual's learning about mechanisms and options of complaining affect consumer complaint behaviour, such as knowledge of unfair practices, consumer rights, and complaint channels. Agbonifoh and Edoreh (1986) argue that market imperfections are one of the market factors that make consumers feel helpless when they face discontent. Hence, consumer protection is one of the reactions to change the consumer's helplessness. Guiding the consumers to enjoy their rights and the awareness of the existence of regulations and provisions becomes important when they encounter frustration or depression about the dissatisfied products or services (Agbonifoh and Edoreh, 1986). Thus, awareness of consumer's rights and consumer protection agencies is important for consumers making the decision to redress their dissatisfaction to firms or third party. Moyer (1985) found that complainers with relatively good information concerning their consumer rights and who are more aware of possible help from third parties are more active in seeking information and more likely to express their dissatisfaction to sellers. Day (1984) suggests that consumer's knowledge about where to complain affects the consumer's complaint behaviour. Based on Haefner and Leckenby (1975), and Tipper (1997), in the current study, knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies is defined as the individual awareness and understanding of consumer rights and consumer protection agencies in Malaysia.

An individual's knowledge or information is the basis for influence on human behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). Day and Landon (1976) suggest that consumers who are less knowledgeable will rarely seek redress for their

discontent with products or services. Moyer (1985) found that complainers who seek more information and have more interest in the consumer protection laws are more active in expressing their dissatisfaction to sellers. Tipper (1997) found that knowledge of consumer rights has a significant positive influence on third party redress. It can be viewed that American consumers with more knowledge about consumer rights are more inclined to utilize federal agencies and legal action as their third party redress options than other consumers. Ajzen (1985, 1991) suggests that intention can be used as a mediating variable between the information variable and specific action. Referring to the limited previous literature, the hypotheses on knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies with complaint behaviour can be stated as follows:

Hypothesis 1a: Consumers with more knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies are more likely to have high complaint intention.

Hypothesis 1b: Consumers with more knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies are more likely to take complaint action.

Hypothesis 1c: Complaint intention will mediate the relationship between knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies and complaint action.

### **Perception of Business Practices and Responsiveness to Complaint**

Keng, Richmond and Han (1995) determine that market factors should influence consumer complaint behaviour, such as a business's reputation for quality and service, and the responsiveness of the business to complaints. Moyer (1985) found that complainers hold negative expectations concerning an organization's responsiveness to their complaints, they feel that third party actions are on behalf of the consumer. Granbois, Summers and Frazier (1977) delineate that consumer's perception about a firm's willingness to provide redress has the most significant correlation with complaint behaviour. Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) discuss that marketing channel factors affect consumer complaint behaviour. Richins (1982) points out that the efficacy of complaining and the retailers' willingness to solve complaints can be a major factor in consumers' complaint behaviour. If the customer responsiveness or firm-related failure from firms or business causes the individual dissatisfaction, consumers are more likely to tell others about their unhappiness since they tend to perceive the firm to be at fault, and consumers may feel angry and desire to hurt the firm's business (Lau and Ng, 2001). Crie (2003) suggests that buyer's and seller's interaction frequency plays a part in the preference for verbal complaint action. Based on the previous literature review, the reputation of the business practice and the

retailers' willingness to address complaints causes consumer's dissatisfaction and may influence the consumers' complaint behaviour (Richins, 1982; Keng, Richmond and Han, 1995; Phau and Sari, 2004; Lau and Ng, 2001; Crie, 2003; Liu and McClure, 2001; Weiser, 1995). In the current study, perception of business practices and responsiveness to complaints can be defined as the consumer's perception about firm's practices and firm's responsiveness to their complaint (Keng, Richmond and Han., 1995).

To examine the complaint intention, Richins (1982) found that if consumers perceive that a business is willing to remedy the complaint they are more likely to make a complaint, they feel that complaining is worth the effort. Regarding predicting complaint action from business practices and responsiveness to complaints, Richins (1982) found that if complainers believe that business responsiveness is low, they are more likely to take complaint action. Phau and Sari (2004) found that Indonesian complainers have a negative perception concerning business practice and responsiveness to complaint. Referring to third party complaint actions, Tipper (1997) found that American consumers with a negative feeling about business practice and responsiveness to complaint are more likely to address their complaint to the Better Business Bureau, Consumer Agency, State Attorney General's Office, Federal Agency and take legal action. Ajzen (1985, 1991) suggests that intention can be used as a mediating variable between the attitudinal (perceivable) variable and specific action. Thus, the hypothesis in this study proposes that:

Hypothesis 2a: Consumers with a positive perception of business practice and responsiveness to complaint will be more likely to have high complaint intention.

Hypothesis 2b: Consumers with a negative perception of business practice and responsiveness to complaint will be more likely to take complaint action.

Hypothesis 2c: Complaint intention will mediate the relationship between the perception of business practice and responsiveness to complaint and complaint action.

### **Importance of Product**

Generally, consumers tend to perceive that high quality products or services have a high price and if the quality of the product or service is below their expectation they will be discontent. Day (1977) suggests that the higher the price of the products or services, the higher the expectation will be performed, and luxury products can influence the consumers' status. Keng, Richmond and Han (1995) define the consumers' perception of the importance of the product as the price of the product, how socially visible the product is, and the durability and frequency

of using the product, all of which may influence complaint behaviour. Therefore, the importance of the product can affect consumer complaint behaviour (Keng, Richmond and Han, 1995; Phau and Sari, 2004). In the present study, the importance of the product can be defined as the price of product, used frequently, socially visible and used for a long period.

Day (1977) found that if the actual performance of the product or service dilutes the consumer's status, they will be more likely to make a complaint. Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) argue that consumers with higher information regarding their dissatisfaction are more likely to take complaint action. Phau and Sari (2004) found that products that reflect the consumer's status, or are used frequently, or over a long period of time, and expensive unsatisfactory products, affect the consumer's complaint action for Indonesian consumers. Keng, Richmond and Han (1995) found that if the price of the product is high, the more socially visible the product, or the quality of the product is defective, consumers are more likely to take complaint action. Ajzen (1985, 1991) suggests that intention can be used as a mediating variable between the attitudinal (perceivable) variable and specific action. Thus, the hypothesis is stated as the following in the current study:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Consumers with a perception that the unsatisfactory product is expensive, is used frequently, seen by others and is used for a long period of time, are more likely to have high complaint intention.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Consumers with a perception that the product is expensive, is used frequently, seen by others and is used for a long period of time, are more likely to take complaint action.

**Hypothesis 3c:** Complaint intention will mediate the relationship between the importance of the product and complaint action.

### Complaint Intention and Complaint Action

In both the TRA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and TPB (Ajzen, 1991) models, the intention construct is considered as the mediation role between the beliefs and the behaviour. Godin and Kok (1996) define the intention as "the expressed motivation to perform some behaviour or achieve some goal" (p. 94). Ajzen (1991) suggests that intention can be referred to the amount of effort a person exerts to engage in actual behaviour. Ajzen and Driver (1992) argue that intention can be assumed to "capture the motivational factors that influence behaviour, it is indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behaviour" (p. 208). Hence, the more an individual intends to carry out, the more likely he or she will do. Ajzen (2001) suggests that intention plays "an

important role in guiding human action" and it can "perform a goal-directed behaviour" in a specific context (p. 47).

Ajzen and Driver (1992) suggest strong intentions of individuals to engage in behaviour or to achieve their behavioural goals. Hurbes and Ajzen (2001) found that intention contributes significantly and gives a positive prediction of hunting behaviour. Singh (1988) found that consumers with private and third party complaint intention are actually more engaged in private and third party actions. Richins (1982) also suggests that a propensity to complain is significantly related with actual behaviour. Therefore, the stronger intentions from consumers to engage in complaint actions, the more successful they are predicted. The proposition between complaint intention and complaint actions shows as following:

**Hypothesis 4:** Consumers with a higher intention of seeking redress for complaining are more likely to take action on their complaints.

In accordance with previous studies, this study prefers to treat each factor as separate concepts that can influence the consumer's intention and actions in the research framework (see Fig. 1).

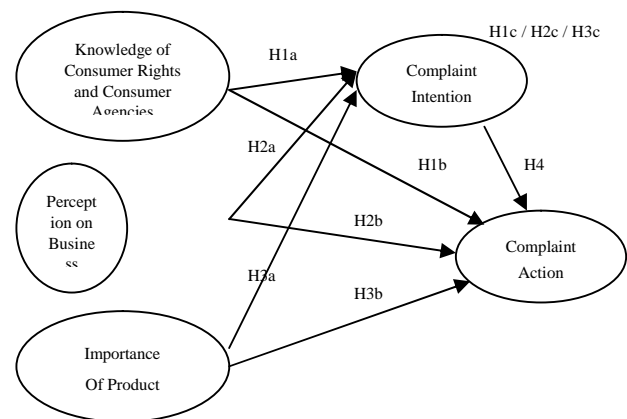


Fig. 1 the Research Framework

### III. METHODS OF THE STUDY

The data in this research was collected by a survey involving self-administered questionnaires. The population and sample were Malaysian citizens residing in Kuala Lumpur, Peninsular Malaysia. To provide an adequate level of confidence, this present research used 700 as the target sample size. In order to

capture this targeted sample size of respondents, 1,200 respondents in three shopping malls, the Tribunal for Consumer Claims in Kuala Lumpur and the National Consumer Complaints Centre were intercepted and requested to participate in the study from February 2007 to the end of April 2007. Finally, a total of 834 survey questionnaires were found to be usable in this study.

The constructs used in the questionnaire were derived from previous research based on the literature review. The questionnaires were produced in three languages – English, Chinese and Malay. The final research questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part included 7 statements to measure the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies variables, which were adapted from Haefner and Leckenby (1975), and Tipper (1997). A 7 point Likert-scale from 1 = very poor to 7 = excellent were used in this section. The next section concerned 10 statements on the respondent's perception of business practice and responsiveness to the complaint variable, which were adopted from Kim, et al. (2003) and 4 statements on the importance of product variable, which were adopted from Phau and Sari (2004). Seven point Likert-scales from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree were used in the second part. Another 10 statements of the complaint actions that consumers intended to take were adopted from Singh (1988). Seven point Likert-scales from 1 = very unlikely to 7 = very likely were used to measure the complaint intention variable in part three. The last part included 5 statements which measured the complaint actions that consumers had taken (Yes/No) by using the Guttman scale, this variable was adopted from Singh (1988).

#### IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

As discussed in the study of Garver and Mentzer (1999), the Structural Equation Model (SEM) is a powerful technique that combines the measurement model (confirmatory factor analysis) and the structural model (path analysis) into a simultaneous statistical test and provides a measurement theory and a structural theory (Hair, et al., 2006). In this report, the SEM was used as the main statistical analysis tool to purify the measurement items and AMOS 5.0 was used for testing the hypothesis relationship.

##### Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988), and Hair, et al. (2006), the first assessment should be any structural model that exists with an acceptable goodness-of-fit. Thus, it could begin by fitting a CFA model that includes covariance between all pairs of latent factors. In this paper, the overall fit for the base

measurement model were poor – GFI=0.886, AGFI=0.861, TLI=0.873, CFI=0.884, RMSEA=0.057 and CMIN/DF=2.693. In order to improve the model fit indices, items PBR4, PBR7, KNLEG2, KNLEG3, and KNLEG4 were deleted from the base model due to the lower factor loading and high modification indices. After deletion, the overall fit for final the measurement model in the calibration sample was excellent, with GFI=0.928, AGFI=0.913, TLI=0.917, CFI=0.927, RMSEA=0.045 and CMIN/DF=2.693.

##### Testing the Hypotheses

Once an acceptable measurement model is available, the structural model evaluation should be able to start. The results of the structural model show that the model achieved a good level of fit,  $\chi^2 = 902.067$ ,  $\chi^2 / df = 2.693$ , GFI = 0.928, AGFI = 0.913, TLI = 0.917, CFI = 0.927, RMSEA = 0.045. The result also reported that 13.6 per cent of the variance associated with complaint intention was accounted for by its three predictors: knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies, perception on business practices and responsiveness to complaint and importance of product. Accordingly, it was determined that 35.3 percent of the variation in complaint action was accounted for by its four predictors including complaint intention.

##### Testing the Hypotheses on the Complaint Intention

Examining the relationship between the independent variables and the complaint intention, Hypothesis 1a, (see Table 1) regarding the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies on the complaint intention, was supported ( $P = 0.000$ ,  $\beta = 0.295$ ). It explained that if consumers with more knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies, they would be more likely to make complaints. This result approved the suggestion from Day and Landon (1976). The result did not support Hypothesis 2a (see Table 1) about the perception on business practices and responsiveness to complaint ( $p = 0.370$ ,  $\beta = 0.039$ ). This means that consumers' perception on business practices and responsiveness to complaints has no significant relationship with the complaint intention. This result was consistent with the study of Halstead and Droge (1991). Referring to Hypothesis 3a (see Table 1), the results show that the importance of product significantly influences the complaint intention ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $\beta = 0.219$ ). This result indicates that if consumers perceive that the product is expensive, is used frequently, is seen by others and is used for a long period of time, they are more likely to intend to make a complaint. This result is proved in the study of Day (1977).

Table 1: Hypotheses Test on Complaint Intention

			$\beta$	S.E	C.R.	P	Support
H1a	CI	<- KNLEG	0.295	0.018	5.715	0.000*	Yes
H2a	CI	<- PBR	0.039	0.071	0.897	0.370	No
H3a	CI	<- IP	0.219	0.032	3.429	0.000*	Yes

\*:  $p < 0.001$

### Testing the Hypotheses on the Complaint Action

To test the hypotheses on the complaint action, Hypothesis 1b (see Table 2), regarding the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies on the complaint actions, was supported ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $\beta = 1.25$ ). It could be explained that consumers with more knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies are more likely to take complaint action. Referring to hypothesis 2b (see Table 2), the perception on business practices and responsiveness to complaint showed a negative marginally influence on the complaint action due to  $p = 0.000$ ,  $\beta = -0.063$ . This result is consistent with the findings from Richins (1982) and Tipper (1997). It could be explained that Malaysian consumers with a negative feeling about business practice and responsiveness to complaint are more likely to take complaint action against the firms or the third party. Testing hypothesis 3b (see Table 2), the importance of product showed a negative significant relationship with complaint action to the firms or the third parties ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $\beta = -0.211$ ). This result does not support the hypothesis due to the negative relationship between the importance of product and the complaint action. Regarding the relationship between complaint intention and complaint action, the results (see Table 2) support hypothesis 4 ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $\beta = 0.552$ ). This means that once the complainers have a strong intention to seek redress, they will definitely take action to get further satisfaction on their dissatisfied products or services from the third parties or the businesses. These results confirm the suggestion of Ajzen (1985, 1991) and Singh (1988).

Table 2: Hypothesis Test on Complaint Action

			$\beta$	S.E	C.R.	P	Support
H1b	CA	<- KNLEG	0.125	0.008	2.980	0.003*	Yes
H2b	CA	<- PBR	-0.063	0.029	-1.829	0.067 <sup>m</sup>	Yes
H3b	CA	<- IP	-0.211	0.012	-4.575	0.000*	No
H4	CA	<- CI	0.552	0.041	6.883	0.000*	Yes

\*:  $p < 0.001$ ;

<sup>m</sup>: marginally significant

### Testing Hypotheses on Mediating Effect

A mediating effect is created when a third variable/construct intervenes between two other related constructs that explain how or why each predictor variable influences the criterion. Testing the mediation effects, Hair, Black, Barbin, Anderson, Tatham (2006) suggest that if the indirect effect of the

variable is higher than 0.08, it indicates a mediating effect. If the p-value of the independent variable and mediating variable, mediating variable and dependent variable, independent variable and dependent variable, are significant, partial mediation will be proved; if the p-values of the independent variable and mediating variable, mediating variable and dependent variable, are significant, full mediation will be proved. Table 3 shows the hypotheses on the mediation effect in this study.

Regarding Hypothesis 1c, the finding in Table 3 shows that the indirect effect of the knowledge of consumer rights and complaint agencies on the complaint actions was 0.163, which was higher than 0.08, and the p-value for knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies and complaint intention, complaint intention and complaint action, knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies and complaint action were all significant. Thus, complaint intention fully mediated the relationship between the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies and the complaint action. Following the same procedure, the indirect effect of the perception on business practices and responsiveness to complaint showed 0.022 ( $< 0.08$ ), thus, Hypothesis 2c was not supported. Referring to hypothesis 3c, the indirect effect was 0.121 (higher than 0.08) thereby showing a mediating effect. Based on the p-value of the direct effect (importance of product and complaint intention), this study found that complaint intention had full mediation on the relationship between importance of product and complaint action. Thus, H3c was supported.

Table 3: Direct and Indirect Effect on the Mediation Variable

	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Hypothesis Supported	Type of Mediation
H1c: KNLEG→CA	0.125	0.163	0.288	Yes	Partial Mediation
H2c: PBR→CA	-0.063	0.022	-0.041	No	-
H3c: IP→CA	-0.211	0.121	-0.090	Yes	Full Mediation

## V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Most previous studies in the consumer complaint behaviour have focused on the two-group typology, which consists of complainers and non-complainers (Kim, Kim, Im and Shin, 2003, Keng, Richmond and Han, 1995; Phau and Sari, 2004). This study offers a broader classification, which are consumers making complaints to the firms and third parties. The framework in the present paper has provided valuable information concerning the consumer's motivation for seeking redress based on the consumers' understanding of consumer rights and consumer

protection, market factor and importance of product or services and level of dissatisfaction. Hopefully, the development of this model provides a basis for future research on exploring consumer complaint behaviour.

Although a third party complaint agency is one approach to assist organizations handling the dissatisfaction with consumers together, it is unfortunate that many organizations never realize the importance of complaint handling. Consequently, for improving a complaint handling management programme, business, policy makers in governments and consumer organizations must understand how these factors influence complaint behaviour, and develop strategies for influencing variables and complaint behaviour as follows.

According to the knowledge of consumer rights and consumer agencies, it contributed an important value to predict consumer complaint behaviour. The practical implication for policy makers in governments or consumer organisations is that they should provide more approaches to educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities as consumer education concerns the necessary skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding to become an effective consumer (Brennan and Ritters, 2004). This education can help consumers to obtain the skills and knowledge needed to make adjustments to their choices and improve the consumer's confidence to take action in their life. Thus, consumer education along with effective regulations and access to good quality advice and information from government or consumer organisations are essential components against the irresponsibility or unethical business in the marketplace.

Referring to the market factor, the results show that consumer's perception of business practice and responsiveness to complaints is not an important factor in examining the complaint action. Thus, as business managers and executives, they should realize the importance of complaint handling. Organizations can educate consumers by focusing the complaint process on removing the fear of confrontation and intimidation factors. Firms can offer some compensation to the disgruntled consumer and should not complain about the extra effort or cost involved, and consider each customer as a prospective buyer when they make a complaint. For consumers who perceive a higher cost of complaining when they are unable to contact the organization, the company can offer a generic booklet that is distributed to consumers explaining how to effectively get in touch with the organizations to increase consumer confidence and purchase intention (TARP, 1986). Businesses may encourage consumers to make a complaint by adopting strategies that shift the blame away from the consumers, such as by

replacing the product or service with which they are dissatisfied for free. Therefore, the way of complaint handling can develop a good image for the firms and help enhance marketing effectiveness in the long run.

Keng, Richmond and Han (1995) found that complainers are more likely to resort to complaint action if the price of the product is high or the quality of the product is defective than the non-complainers. This research found that consumers intended to making complaints if they feel dissatisfied with the product or the product was expensive, was used frequently, seen by others and was used for a long period of time. Thus, the firms should pay special attention to complaints concerning expensive durable products; the seller should be trained to handle complaints well, and the firm should not raise consumer's expectations on the products.

However, certain limitations of the study should be noted. First, the findings are limited to the specific sample. The restriction of the sample frame to the National Consumer Complaint Centre and the Tribunal for Consumer Claims in Kuala Lumpur minimizes the generalizability of the results. Further studies are needed to examine the proposed framework in a broader range that might include other third party complaint agencies, such as the Consumers Association and the Tribunal for Consumer Claims in other states.

Second, people from different ethnic groups may have different attitudes regarding complaints. This study provides a sample with people by ethnicity based on the Malaysian population distribution of 50:30:20 (Malays: Chinese: Indians). This study comprises 395 Malay respondents, 313 Chinese and 126 Indian respondents. As the Indian group only consisted of 126 respondents, this sample size is not an adequate estimation to predict each of the three complaining groups, which are complaints through the firms, National Consumer Complaint Centre and Tribunal for Consumer Claims Malaysia, because the sample size was less than 150 as suggested by Hair, et al. (2006). Therefore, for future studies the researcher suggests using multi-group analysis with SEM to predict the attitudinal differences on complaint behaviour based on the different ethnicity.

Third, the sample respondents were selected on the complaints in the companies, National Consumers Complaint Centre and Tribunal for Consumer Claims Malaysia. This study only examines these three groups of complainers together but does not test the influences of the three groups separately. Thus, the researcher suggests that future studies can investigate how various factors may influence different types of complaint action differently.

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