

## Motivation for Customer Complaining and Non-Complaining Behaviour Towards Mobile Telecommunication Services

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**Abstract:** The study examines customer's motivation for complaining and non-complaining behaviour towards mobile telecommunication services. The study was a cross-sectional survey involving customers from four mobile telephony operators. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data and it was analysed using SPSS (version 16.0). The findings are that the highest rated motive for complaining is seeking corrective actions, followed by seeking explanation, seeking remedy or redress, seeking apology, expression of emotion or anger and the least motive is seeking compensation or damages. The study also found that, for the reasons for non-complaining, the highest ranked is where it is too late to complain, followed by the perception that nothing will be done about the problem if complained and the least non-complaining motive is fear to complain. Moreover, it was found that age and marital status significantly influence complaining behaviour. Uniquely, the study found rational approach to complaining behaviour in the research context and presents a categorization of factors inducing non-complaining motives. Implications and limitations are discussed. This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of consumer complaining behaviour in the context of telephony industry in developing economies.

**Keywords:** Complaining motives, complaints, consumer behaviour, dissatisfaction, mobile telephony services, non-complaining motives, satisfaction

### INTRODUCTION

Modern business organizations are increasingly becoming customer oriented, as a result they seek to establish long-term business relationship with profitable customers (Kotler and Keller, 2006; Gronroos, 1994; Stone *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, learning about consumer behaviour becomes critically important area for the purpose of developing effective business strategies and tactics towards effective customer relationship management, customer satisfaction and delight and customer loyalty.

Customer Complaint Behaviour (CCB) is one area that has received great deal of attention from practitioners and scholars in the marketing literature. Many past studies have been done to increase understanding of the concept of CCB, its causes and effects on the consumer and the organization (Day, 1977; Day and Landon, 1976; Singh, 1990). One area that has received considerably little attention among scholars is consumers' motives for complaining and non-complaining. The concept of CCB has been defined by Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) as "An action taken by an individual which involves communicating something negative regarding a product or service either to the firm manufacturing or marketing

that product or service or to some third-party organizational entity." According to Mowen (1993), complaint behaviour is any one of a number of actions that is triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode. It is a process which "constitutes a subset of all possible responses to perceived dissatisfaction around a purchase episode, during consumption or during possession of the goods or services" Crie (2003). Thus, in mobile telephony context complaint may be made by customers about the high call charge per minute/seconds, poor network quality, unreliable services, not keeping promises, among other things.

Wysocki *et al.* (2001) noted that "No organization is so perfect in the delivery of superior customer performance that significant levels of dissatisfaction (the source of complaints) do not exist" (p.1). Though, CCB is significantly caused by customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction and that dissatisfied customers are more likely to complain than satisfied customers (Heung and Lam, 2003; Maute and Forrester, 1993; Mowen, 1993), other previous studies have also shown that even some satisfied customers may still complain in order to provide useful feedback to product/service providers on service quality (Liu *et al.*, 2006). Since CCB is inevitable, it becomes

crucial for management of mobile telephony operators to understand the motives for customer complaining and non-complaining behaviour in order to effectively manage it. Understanding complaining and non-complaining motives offer both theoretical and practical significance. First, it will offer scholars the empirical knowledge for the purpose of developing appropriate theories and models for explaining relationships between consumer characteristics and their complaining and non-complaining behaviour. For theories to be generalisable they should be developed on the basis of more empirical cases in different contexts. Second, it will offer practitioners the opportunity to strategise towards effective management of complaints, service recovery and customer relationship. In this regard, customer complaint benefits the firm by preventing customer switching (Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987), giving dissatisfied consumers the chance to vent their unhappiness (Aleong and Kolodinsky, 1990; Kowalski, 1996; Richins, 1983), providing feedback for service improvement and service recovery strategies (Tax and Brown, 1998), preventing negative WOM communication about the service provider to other customers or family (Blodgett *et al.*, 1995), among others.

While some customers may complain, others may not voice their complaint for several reasons (Heung and Lam, 2003). Previous studies have found that the motives for complaining include: seeking redress, seeking apology, seeking for compensation, requesting corrective action and expressing emotional anger (Heung and Lam, 2003). According to Voorhees *et al.* (2006) customers may not complain because of late realization of the failure, consumer loyalty, firm's quality reputation, internal attributions, social factors like busyness and presence of friends, alternative action of brand switching and reduced tip/other compensation. Some dissatisfied customers may 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 nothing will be done even if they do complain (Day *et al.*, 1981; Gursoy *et al.*, 2007; Richins, 1983).

The problem of this study has two stances. On one hand, many past studies in CCB in the African context in general and Ghana in particular are very scanty. Much of the empirical research on CCB focused on American, European and Asian consumers (Bunker and Bradley, 2007; Heung and Lam, 2003; Huefner and Hunt, 2000; Johnston, 1998; Lerman, 2006; Liu and McClure, 2001; Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). Therefore, a study on consumer complaining motives in Ghana would increase the body of knowledge in consumer complaining behaviour within the developing country context.

On the other hand, as a result of increased education on their rights as consumers towards service providers in

Ghana, they are able to complain for different reasons. Others may as well not complain. Given the widespread customer dissatisfaction in the Ghana's Mobile Telephony Industry (GMTI) (Gyasi and Azumah, 2009; Frempong and Henten, 2004), the consumers' ability to complain and the consequences of losing customers in the face of increased competition in GMTI, it becomes critically important for mobile telephony operators to understand the motive for customer complaining and non-complaining behaviour in mobile telecommunication marketplace and the influence of demographic variables on complaining behaviour. Therefore, the objectives of the study are threefold:

- To examine motives for complaining and non-complaining behaviour in GMTI.
- To examine the influence of demographic variables on complaining behaviour.
- To examine whether Frequency of Complaining (FOC) is associated with Overall Customer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction (OCS/D).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research context and population:** Ghana's telephony industry has evolutionalised from government owned monopoly to a privatized market from 1994 to date. Between 1994 and 2000, as a result of the deregulation of the sector in 1994 the industry has witnessed increased number of operators and government regulatory agencies. As of the time of the present study there were six cellular (mobile) phone networks in Ghana, namely: Millicom Ghana Ltd, Vodafone-Ghana, MTN Ghana-Scancom Ghana Ltd, Kasapa Telecom Limited, Zain Ghana and Globacom Ghana. Vodafone Ghana and Zain are the only operators of additional services in fixed-line telephone.

The study population was individual mobile telecom subscribers across four major mobile networks in Ghana: MTN, Tigo, Zain (now Airtel Ghana), Vodafone.

**Sampling:** The study involved cross-sectional survey design conducted in Ghana during latter part of 2011. The four companies were chosen purposively because they are the four leading companies in market share and also it was easy reaching their customers for the study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select a sample of 120 customers from each company, totalling a sample of 480 customers. In selecting the sample, conscious effort was made to include only subscribers/customers who have used the services of the companies for the past twelve months. The survey yielded a total response rate of 86.3%, comprising 22.5% (108) for MTN, 19.6% (94) for Tigo, 24.4% (117) for Vodafone and 19.8% (95) for Zain network.

**Data collection:** A self-administered, structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents in a larger study. It had only closed-ended question items and consisted of sections for customer satisfaction and complaining attitudes, complaining channels and the respondents' characteristics. Part of the questionnaire required the respondents to indicate whether they have ever complained or not, whether they have ever been dissatisfied with the services of their companies or not using "Yes" and "No" responses. Satisfaction was measured on a five-point Likert scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied (1-5) and frequency of complaining was measured on a five-point scale ranging from neutral, once a while, often, very often to always. Again, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to statements about the motives for complaining and non-complaining behaviour that were derived from the study of Heung and Lam (2003). The questionnaire was pre-tested, refined and finally administered to the target sample through personal contact by researchers. Informed Consent information was attached to each questionnaire.

**Methods of data analysis:** Data were analysed using SPSS (version 16.0) for descriptive statistics, cross tabulation, chi-square tests and Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA that is more robust and suitable for analyzing differences between sub-groups involving categorical dependent variables.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

**Respondents' characteristics:** The characteristics of the respondents for the study are presented in Table 1 for

Table 1: Respondents' characteristics

		Total sample = 414	
Demographic variable	Category	No.	%
Gender	male	237	57.2
	female	117	42.8
Age	below 25	123	29.7
	25-35	189	45.7
	36-45	74	17.9
	46-55	27	6.5
	56+	1	0.2
Education level	SHS	58	14
	post SHS	34	8.2
	tertiary	315	76.1
	other	7	1.7
Income (GH¢)	below 100	82	19.8
	101-500	204	49.3
	501-1000	70	16.9
	1001-1500	15	3.6
	above 1500	11	2.7
	non-income earners	32	7.7
Marital status	married	149	36
	single	257	62.1
	other	8	1.9

each sub-group of the population. Generally, it shows that, in terms of gender, there were slightly more males (57.2%) than females (42.8%). Most of them were below the ages of 35, followed by those in the ages between 36 and 45 years and few were above 45 years. In terms of education, most of them had tertiary education, followed by those with pre-tertiary, Senior High School (SHS) and Post-SHS, while few had other types of education. For income, most of the respondents earned up to GH¢500, followed by those who earned between GH¢500 and GH¢1000, 3% earned above GH¢1,500 while about 8% were non-income earners. In terms of marital status, about 62% of them were single, about 36% were married while the rest were in other marital categories.

**Motives for complaining:** Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis of complaining motives of the respondents for total sample and for each sub-group. According to Table 2, generally, most of the respondents would seek corrective actions, which is the highest ranked motive for complaining with mean of 3.84. This is followed by seeking explanation (mean = 3.62) and seeking remedy/redress as the three important complaining motives. Seeking apology (mean = 2.91) and expressing of emotions or anger (mean = 2.86) appear to be less important complaining motives. The least important complaining motive is seeking compensation or damages. Thus, most Ghanaian customers of the mobile network operators would rather seek corrective actions or at least some apology than to express emotions or anger or seek compensation.

With respect to the individual networks, according to Table 2, seeking corrective actions was rated the highest complaining motive for each of the networks, except Tigo. Seeking explanation was rated the second highest for MTN, it was rated third for Vodafone and Zain and rated first for Tigo network. For seeking remedy complaining motive, it was rated second for Vodafone and Zain networks, but was rated third for MTN and Tigo networks. Seeking apology was rated the fourth complaining motive for every network, except Zain. Expressing emotions or anger as complaining motive received the fifth rating by customers of each of the networks, except Zain, where it received fourth rating. Finally, seeking compensation or damages was the least rated complaining motive for each of the mobile networks with the exception of Zain, where it was rated fifth.

**Motives for non-complaining:** Table 3 presents the results of non-complaining motives by the respondents of the four mobile telecom companies.

Generally speaking, irrespective of specific companies, the reasons for non-complaining behaviour from Table 3 indicate that the highest rated non-complaining motive is realisation that it is too late after

Table 2: Motives for complaining

Complaining Motives	Ranking (R) of Means() in ascending order									
	All networks n = 414		Vodafone n = 117		Tigo n = 94		MTN n = 108		Zain n = 95	
	$\bar{x}^*$	R	$\bar{x}$	R	$\bar{x}$	R	$\bar{x}$	R	$\bar{x}$	R
Seek corrective actions	3.84	1	3.96	1	3.48	2	4.08	1	3.78	1
Seek explanation	3.62	2	3.59	3	3.51	1	3.89	2	3.47	3
Seek remedy / redress	3.56	3	3.63	2	3.37	3	3.59	3	3.62	2
Seek apology	2.91	4	2.82	4	3.04	4	3.30	4	2.45	6
To express emotions or anger.	2.86	5	2.72	5	2.85	5	3.24	5	2.65	4
Seek compensation (damages)	2.59	6	2.55	6	2.52	6	2.80	6	2.47	5

Scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree)

Table 3: Motives for non-complaining

Non-complaining Motives	Ranking (R) of Means() in ascending order									
	All networks n = 414		Vodafone n = 117		Tigo n = 94		MTN n = 108		Zain n = 95	
	$\bar{x}^*$	R	$\bar{x}$	R	$\bar{x}$	R	$\bar{x}$	R	$\bar{x}$	R
Too late to complain after noticing the problem	2.73	1	2.77	1	2.65	2	2.81	2	2.71	1
Nothing would be done about the problem if complained	2.72	2	2.64	2	2.71	1	3.00	1	2.48	2
Customer is busy and does not get time to make complaints.	2.50	3	2.56	3	2.62	3	2.56	3	2.23	5
Customer does not know where or how to make the complaint	2.41	4	2.38	4	2.53	4	2.39	4	2.33	4
Customer is the loyal to the Company.	2.28	5	1.95	5	2.49	5	1.95	5	2.34	3
It will affect Company's reputation	2.08	6	1.93	6	2.39	6	1.94	6	2.07	6
Feels shy to complain.	1.92	7	1.91	7	2.15	7	1.91	7	1.89	7
Afraid to complain (fear).	1.78	8	1.80	8	2.05	8	1.80	8	1.71	8

Scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree)

noticing the problem, with a mean of 2.73. This is followed by the motive that nothing would be done about the problem if complained, with a mean of 2.72.

The third most important non-complaining motive is the lack of time on the part of the customer to complain as a result of their busyness, with mean of 2.50. The fourth ranked important motive is that the customers do not know where or how to make the complaint, with mean rating of 2.41. This is followed by the fifth rated non-complaining motive, which is that customers do not complain because they are loyal to the company, with mean of 2.28. The sixth motive revealed is that customers do not complain because they feel it will damage the company's reputation; this has a low mean of 2.08. The seventh ranked motive is feeling shy to complain, with a low mean of 1.92, while the least rated motive for non-complaining is fear to complain to the company, with mean rank of 1.78.

With respect to the individual networks, according to Table 3, realisation that it is too late after noticing the problem was rated the highest for Vodafone and Zain and was rated second highest for MTN and Tigo networks. Each of the companies received similar rankings of sixth, seventh and least ranking for the following non-complaining motives respectively: reason that complaining will damage the company's reputation,

feeling shy to complain and fearing to complain to the company.

**Frequency of complaining and overall satisfaction:**

Table 4 shows the frequency of complaining and overall satisfaction of the respondents. It indicates that for respondents who experience overall dissatisfaction, 30.4% of them complain once a while, 66.6% of them complain often, while 68.7 and 69.3% complain very often and always, respectively. For the respondents who experience overall satisfaction, 58% of them complain once a while, 20% of them complain often, while 25 and 23.1% complain very often and always respectively. These results tend to suggest that the more customers complain the more they are likely to experience overall dissatisfaction towards the service provider.

As to whether the relationship between frequency of complaining and overall satisfaction is significant, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA in Table 4 shows that frequency of complaining significantly affects overall satisfaction ( $\chi^2 = 28.512$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Specifically, the more customers complain the more overall satisfaction reduces and overall dissatisfaction increases accordingly.

**Analysis of demographic variables on complainers and non-complainers:** The results of data analysis for the

Table 4: Overall customer satisfaction and frequency of complaining

	Frequency of complaining								Significant difference between networks (*p<0.05)		
	once a while means = 122.32		often mean = 71.60		very often mean = 78.20		always mean = 76.50				
Overall satisfaction	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Value (X <sup>2</sup> )	df	Asymp. Sig.*
Very dissatisfied	8	5.2	10	33.3	9	28.1	8	30.8			
Dissatisfied	29	25.2	10	33.3	13	40.6	10	38.5			
Neutral	13	11.3	4	13.3	2	6.2	2	7.7			
Satisfied	54	47.0	6	20.0	6	18.8	4	15.4			
Very satisfied	13	11.3	0	0	2	6.2	2	7.7			
Total	115	100	30	100	40	100	26	100			
x <sup>2</sup> tests											
Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA (Overall Satisfaction (OS) and Frequency of Complaining (FOC))									34.547	4	0.000*
Significant at 0.05											

Table 5: Chi-square test for gender difference among complainers and non-complainers

Gender	Complainers		Non-complainers		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig.*
	No.	%	No.	%			
Male	112	59.6	125	55.3			
Female	76	40.4	101	44.7			
Total	188	100	226	100			
x <sup>2</sup> tests							
Pearson x <sup>2</sup>					0.763	1	0.382
Likelihood ratio					0.764	1	0.382
Linear-by-linear association					0.761	1	0.383
p<0.05; n: 108							

Table 6: Chi-square tests for age difference among complainers and non-complainers

Age (years) Categories	Complainers		Non-complainers		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig.*
	No.	%	No.	%			
Below 25	66	35.1	57	25.2			
25-35	84	44.7	105	46.5			
36-45	27	14.4	47	20.8			
46-55	11	5.9	16	7.1			
56+	0	0	1	0.4			
Total	188	100	226	100			
x <sup>2</sup> tests							
Pearson x <sup>2</sup>					6.893	4	0.142
Likelihood ratio					7.295	4	0.121
Linear-by-linear association					5.459	1	0.019*
p<0.05; n: 108							

influence of demographic variables (gender, age, education, income and marital status are presented and analysed using the Chi-square tests and Cross-tabulation.

**Analysis of gender on complainers and non-complainers:** Table 5 indicates that while about 60% of the complainers are males 40% of them are females, while among the non-complainers there were 55% males and 45% females respectively.

As to whether complainers and non-complainers differ according to gender, the table indicates insignificant p-values (p>0.05), which means that there is no significant difference between complainers and non-complainers according to their gender groups.

**Analysis of age groups on complainers and non-complainers:** Table 6 indicates that 35.1% of the complainers are below 25 years, 44.7% are between 25

and 35, while 14.4% are between ages 36 and 45 and 5.9% are between 46 and 55 years, respectively. Again, it indicates that 25.2% of non-complainers are below 25, 46.5% of them are between 25 and 35 years, 20.8% are between 36 and 45 years, while 7.1 and 0.4% are between ages 46 and 55 years and above 56 years, respectively.

As to whether complainers and non-complainers differ according to age, the table indicates insignificant p-value for Pearson Chi-square test and Likelihood Ratio (p>0.05) but significant Linear by Linear Association (p<0.05), which means that there seems to be significant difference between complainers and non-complainers according to their age groups.

**Analysis of education levels on complainers and non-complainers:** Table 7 indicates that 14.9% of the complainers have SHS education, 5.9% have post SHS education, 78.2% have tertiary education and 1.1% had

Table 7: Chi-square tests for education differences in complainers and non-complainers

Education categories	Complainers		Non-complainers		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig.*
	No.	%	No.	%			
SHS	28	14.9	30	13.3			
Post-SHS	11	5.9	23	10.2			
Tertiary	14						
Other	7	78.2	168	74.3			
Total	2	1.1	5	2.2			
x <sup>2</sup> tests	18						
Pearson x <sup>2</sup>	8	100	226	100	3.532	3	0.317
Likelihood ratio					3.633	3	0.304
Linear-by-linear Association					0.225	1	0.636

p<0.05; n: 108

Table 8: Chi-square tests for income differences in complainers and non-complainers

Income (GH¢) categories	Complainers		Non-complainers		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig.*
	No.	%	No.	%			
Below 100	40	21.3	42	18.6			
100-500	93	49.5	111	49.1			
50-1000	31	16.5	39	17.3			
1001-1500	6	3.2	9	4.0			
1501 and above	3	1.6	8	3.5			
Non-income earners	15	8.0	17	7.5			
Total	18						
x <sup>2</sup> tests	8	100	226	100			
Pearson x <sup>2</sup>					2.079	5	0.838
Likelihood ratio					2.150	5	0.828
Linear-by-linear Association					0.465	1	0.495

p<0.05; n: 108

Table 9: Chi-square tests for income differences in complainers and non-complainers

Marital status categories	Complainers		Non-complainers		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig.*
	No.	%	No.	%			
Single	12						
Married	9	68.6	128	56.6			
Others	55	29.3	94	41.6			
Total	4	2.1	4	1.8			
x <sup>2</sup> tests	18						
Pearson x <sup>2</sup>	8	100	226	100	6.781	2	0.034
Likelihood ratio					6.839	2	0.033
Linear-by-linear Association					6.269	1	0.012

p<0.05; n: 108

other education categories. On the other hand, it indicates that 13.3% of non-complainers have SHS education, 10.2% have post SHS education, 74.3% of them have Tertiary education and 2.2% had other forms of education.

As to whether complainers and non-complainers differ according to education, the table indicates insignificant p-values (p>0.05), which means that there is no significant difference between complainers and non-complainers according to their education levels in GMTI.

**Analysis of income levels on complainers and non-complainers:** Table 8 indicates that 21.3% of the complainers earned below GH¢100, 49.5% earned between GH¢101 and 500, while 16.5% earned between

GH¢ 501 and 1000 and 3.2 and 1.6% earned between GH¢ 1001 and 1500 and above GH¢1500, respectively. (8.0%) of complainers were non-income earners. Again, it indicates that 18.6 of non-complainers earned below GH¢100, 49.1% of them earned between GH¢101 and 500, 17.3% earned between GH¢ 501 and 1000, while 4.0 and 3.5% earned between GH¢ 1001 and 1500 and above GH¢1500, respectively. (7.5%) of non-complainers were non-income earners.

As to whether complainers and non-complainers differ according to income, the table indicates insignificant p-values (p>0.05), which means that there is no significant difference between complainers and non-complainers according to their income levels.

**Analysis of marital status on complainers and non-complainers:** Table 9 indicates that 68.6% of the complainers were single, 29.3% were married and 2.1% were of other marital status. For the non-complainers, it indicates that 56.6% of them were single, 41.6% were married and 1.8% of them were in other marital status.

As to whether complainers and non-complainers differ according to marital status, the table indicates significant p-values ( $p > 0.05$ ), which means that there is significant difference between complainers and non-complainers according to their marital status.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Complaining motives:** Generally, most of the respondents would seek corrective actions, which is the highest ranked motive for complaining with mean of 3.84. This is followed by seeking explanation (mean = 3.62) and seeking remedy/redress as the three important complaining motives. Seeking apology (mean = 2.91) and expressing of emotions or anger (mean = 2.86) appear to be less important complaining motives. The least important complaining motive is seeking compensation or damages. Thus, most Ghanaian mobile network customers would rather seek corrective actions or at least some apology than to express emotions or anger or seek compensation. With respect to the individual networks, there were a few differences in the ranking of complaining motives as explained under Table 2.

These findings are similar to those of Heung and Lam (2003) who found that, seeking corrective actions was the highest ranked complaining motive by the customers in Hong Kong hotel restaurant services. Seeking corrective actions received the same highest ranking in their study. Apart from seeking redress which was the least important complaining motivation found in Heung and Lam (2003) which was the third highest rated motivation for complaining among customers in GMTI, all the other factors had almost the same ranking as in Hong-Kong hotel restaurant services.

The findings on customer complaining motives in GMTI depict a kind of rational approach to complaining (Fig. 1).

From the top of Fig. 1, generally, customers would start complaining with the intention of seeking corrective actions. If that fails, then they are likely to seek further amicable explanation from the company. If no explanation is given or that the explanation is not satisfactory, the next logical step the customers are likely to take is to seek for remedy or redress from the company for its inability to provide corrective actions or satisfactory explanations. If that also fails, most customers of GMTI would likely seek and expect an apology from the service provider for all the inconveniences caused them in the service failure and service recovery failures. If the apology is not satisfactory or not rendered at all, then the customers are very likely to express emotions and anger. If the problem still persists at this level, then most of the customers would finally

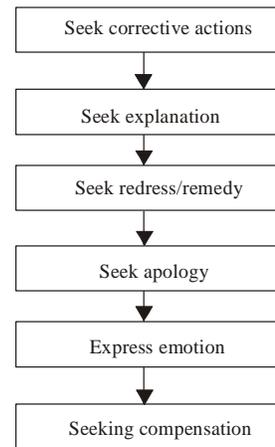


Fig. 1: Rational approach to complaining in GMTI

resort to seeking compensation or some public action from the mass media, consumer association groups and government regulatory bodies as a last resort. This might explain why taking a complaint to a third-party or public action (Day *et al.*, 1981; Gursoy *et al.*, 2007) such as a consumer association and sending the complaint to the mass media received the least rating in CCB response in this study. Thus, the customers, most importantly, want immediate corrective action and redress to solve their problems quickly in GMTI.

**Non-complaining motives:** Generally speaking, the results show that irrespective of specific companies, the reasons for non-complaining behaviour indicates that the highest rated non-complaining motive is realisation that it is too late after noticing the problem, followed by the motive that nothing would be done about the problem if complained, the lack of time on the part of the customer to complain as a result of their busyness, the customers do not know where or how to make the complaint, this is followed by the fifth rated non-complaining motive, which is that customers do not complain because they are loyal to the company, the sixth motive revealed is that customers do not complain because they feel it will damage the company's reputation, the seventh ranked motive is feeling shy to complain, while the least rated motive for non-complaining is fear to complain to the company.

With respect to the individual networks, according to Table 3, there were a great deal of similarities among the non-complaining motives among customers of the four mobile companies, especially for three non-complaining motives: reason that complaining will damage the company's reputation, feeling shy to complain and fearing to complain to the company.

A critical examination of the non-complaining motives reveals that non-complaining motives could be categorized into situation-induced, personality-induced, loyalty-induced and firm-induced as depicted in Fig. 2.

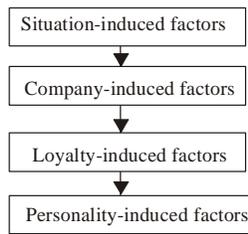


Fig. 2: Derived factors inducing non-complaining motives

The situation-induced factors include too late to complain and busyness on the part of the customer. The personality induced factors include fear and shyness to complain. Loyalty-induced factors include customer being loyal and customer thinking that the firm's reputation may be affected by their complaints; thus, loyalty to firm may cause customers to feel reluctant to complain. Then, company-induced factors include the company not doing anything about customer complaints and not educating customers on how and where to make complaints. The findings indicate that situational and company-induced factors are prominent in explaining why customers do not voice their complaints to the organization. This is followed by loyalty-induced factors and then personality-induced factors.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies (Gursoy *et al.*, 2007) that customers may not complain when they realize that it is too late, or that nothing will be done if complained, busyness of customer, or they do not know where and how to complain. This is because it requires some cost or sacrifices to make time and effort to complain; this affects the propensity to complain. Due to the complexity of the cost involved in complaining some customers will choose not to complain at all (*ibid*).

**Frequency of complaining and overall satisfaction:** The result shows that frequency of complaining significantly affects overall satisfaction ( $X^2 = 34.547$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Specifically, the less customers complain the higher their overall satisfaction and more they complain the more they experience overall dissatisfaction accordingly. One possible explanation is that the more customers complain without any meaningful response from the service provider to resolve the complaint, the more likely they are to experience overall dissatisfaction about the service provider. Again, where customers complain and their complaints are successfully addressed by the firm, the more likely they are to experience overall satisfaction for the service provider. Thus, even though, complaining may not necessarily influence overall satisfaction of customers (Jacoby and Jaccard, 1981; Mowen, 1993), the frequency of complaining will

significantly influence overall satisfaction of customers. This implies that managers should put in measures to manage recurring complaints by customers.

**Influence of demographic variables on complaining behaviour:** The results of the study show that gender, education and income have no significant influence on the complainers and non-complainers in GMTI. The result on gender influence controverts the findings of Manikas and Shea (1997) who found that gender may influence complaining and non-complaining behaviour.

However, age ( $x^2 = 5.459$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ) and marital status ( $x^2 = 6.781$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.034$ ) appear to have significant influence on complaining behaviour. Specifically, more older and married respondents are less likely to complain than younger and single respondents. These findings are congruent with other findings by many scholars. For examples, Boote (1998), Broadbridge and Marshall (1995), Hogarth *et al.* (2001) and Kau *et al.* (1995) agree to some extent that there is no consensus on the influence of age, income and education on CCB.

However, some past studies (Day and Landon, 1976; Han *et al.*, 1995; Heung and Lam, 2003; Volkov *et al.*, 2002) have found that demographic factors such as age, gender and education level play a very important role in CCB and are good predictors of certain CCB. They maintain that people with a higher level of education file complaints more frequently because better-educated people know where and how to file complaints.

**Implications to theory and practice:** The present study has important implications to marketing theory and practice. First, to marketing theory, the study contributes to the literature by being one of the first to explore complaining and non-complaining motives among customers in the mobile telephony context. Again, the findings that gender, education and income do not influence complaining behaviour add to the marketing debate on the contribution of demographic variables in CCB. Moreover, the findings that marital status and age appear to significantly influence complaining behaviour are unique and contribute to understanding that married and older customers tend to be less likely to complain as compared to their single and younger counterparts in developing countries in general and in GMTI in particular. Furthermore, the study uniquely contributes to marketing theory by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between overall satisfaction and frequency of complaining and found that overall satisfaction could be significantly influenced by the frequency of customer complaints. Thus, the more customers complain the more overall dissatisfied they become with a service provider.

To business and marketing practitioners, on the basis of the findings, the following are some of the implications

and recommendations that could be useful in complaint management:

**Complaints should be welcome and encouraged:** Since the study revealed customers are eager to voice their complaints to the company for corrective actions and explanations, it is recommended that management should encourage customers to complain by communicating to the customers that complaint is a reward the customer gives the company and not a trouble. Again, customers who complain can be given gifts/awards like, free call time, free credits for recharging and periodic recognition at company award ceremonies, free drinks, among others. These are also ways of enhancing feedback and communication between customers and management and increasing willingness to complain among dissatisfied non-complainers.

**Need to establish adequate formal complaint avenues:** This study found that an essential reason for non-complaining behaviour is the customers not knowing where and how to complain. therefore, it is recommended that management should communicate effectively to customers about complain procedures and provide various formal complaint avenues such as professional comment cards and/or feedback forms, suggest box and adequate customer service personnel to handle many customers complaints at a time in order to reduce waiting time, effective toll free numbers/calls to register legitimate complaints by busy customers and to overcome the situation where customers do not complain because they feel it is too late to complain after noticing the problem.

**Emphasise immediate complaint resolution and service recovery:** Based on the finding that most important reason for complaining to the company is to seek corrective actions, followed by seeking explanation, then seeking remedy/redress and apology, it implies that management should emphasise immediate complaint resolution in GMTI. In this regard, it is recommended that customer complaints resolution should not be delayed at all; it should be addressed immediately by correcting the problems first. Management should always endeavour to explain and apologize, with the aim of winning the customer's loyalty to the company.

Again, the finding that customers do not complain because nothing will be done by the service providers implies that management should establish, in addition to immediate complaint resolutions, effective service recovery strategies to address core service failures in order to assure customers of the firm's ability to consistently deliver quality service that meets their expectations. Thus, effective complaint resolution and service recovery strategies could help overcome the

second most important reason for non-complaining behaviour which is customers' perception that nothing would be done about the problem if complaint is even made.

**Need to focus on customer satisfaction and delight:** Since it is found in this study that frequency of complaining affects customers overall satisfaction in GMTI, it implies that management should put in measures to enhance and sustain customer satisfaction. This could reduce the level of unresolved customer complaints and reduce negative word-of-mouth which some dissatisfied customers may resort to. In this regard, it is recommended that marketing management should increase commitment to satisfying customers and reducing dissatisfaction of the customers by improving upon their service quality to meet and exceed customer's expectation to achieving customer delight. Again, marketing management of the company should also endeavour to deliver on their promises to the customers and avoid embarking on excessive promotional activities that raise customer expectation too high to be met by the company. Also frequent customer satisfaction surveys should be conducted periodically to uncover relevant dimensions of service quality that customers are not satisfied with.

**Need to pay attention to marital and age differences among customers:** The study found that younger and unmarried customers tend to complain more than older and married customers, therefore, management should pay attention and be sensitive to these age and marital status differences in complaint handling approaches.

**Need to develop complaint management policies:** Since complaining is an important issue in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty, it implies that purposeful attempt should be made by management to manage customer complaints. It is recommended that complaint handling policies and procedures should be developed by the companies and well received by employees. The objective of the policies and procedures is to enhance employee understanding of the importance of customer satisfaction and customer service recovery and the requisite skills and procedures for handling customer complaints. These policies and procedures should be documented and included in employee handbooks and copies displayed in eye-catching areas in the company.

**The need for customer complaint training programmes:** According to Drucker (1945), every worker, whether a labourer or professional, is a marketer in the organisation since employees determine the moment of truth. A firm's ability to manage customer complaints depends to a large extent on the quality of

staff in terms of their knowledge and skills in handling customers' complaints. It is recommended that there should be periodic training of staff of the companies in effective and best practices in customer complaint management processes and procedures. Complaint management training programmes are principally useful in developing the right mindset for employees regarding the nature of customer complaints, how to encourage and handle different complaints by different customers, especially the chronic complainers.

**Need to motivate staff:** Complaint Management requires not only competence on the part of the employees but also on the motivation given by management to its employees (Kotler and Keller, 2006). In most service encounter employees attitudes and emotions affect their performance in the service encounter and handling customer complaints (Kotler and Keller, 2006; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007). Therefore, it is recommended that recognition should be given to employees who are able to seek, correct and anticipate mistakes. These employees could turn complainers into product/service evangelists. Therefore, such employees could be motivated by giving company pins, sponsorship for education abroad, training and development programmes as a means of promoting professional behaviour in employees in handling customer complaints.

#### LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study used a self-administered structured questionnaire in a survey. Future research should examine the phenomenon using qualitative approach like interviews, focus group discussions and other projective techniques and compare the results. Again, the study is limited to only mobile firms in the telecommunication industry in developing country context. Future research should extend the study of motivation for complaining and non-complaining behaviour in other industry contexts and compare the results to provide more empirical support to the findings in this study.

Furthermore, this study examined the influence of demographic variables among complainers and non-complainers. It would be useful to examine in detail the influence of demographic variables on complaining and non-complaining motives and responses in future studies. This could address specific theoretical and practical implications for effective management of different customer groups with different complaining and non-complaining motives and responses. Future research is also needed to examine the impact of cultural and psychographic characteristics of respondents on their complaining and non-complaining motives and response/channel.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, customers may complain or not complain for a number of reasons. This study found that the most important complaining motives are seeking corrective action, explanation and remedy. The most important non-complaining motives are situation-induced and company-induced factors. Age and marital status influence complaining behaviour. The study is relevant to marketing theory and practices and it offers suggestions to management and marketing practitioners, especially in the mobile telecommunication industry. Generalizations based on the findings of this study are limited and might not be applicable to every firm and industry context. Future research is recommended in the area of examining the impact of demographic, cultural and psychographic factors on consumer complaining and non-complaining motives and responses.

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