Abstract

The post purchase outcome leads to satisfaction or dissatisfaction many times. Dissatisfaction feelings from a purchase by a customer some time passes through complaints. Complaining by dissatisfied consumers provides businesses with an opportunity to learn of problems and take corrective action. Businesses that understand the roots of consumer complaint behavior can develop effective complaint resolution strategy, which in turn may have a positive impact on customer retention, diminish negative word-of-mouth, and improve bottom line performance. Here, through this paper it was tried to explore the various research outcomes by different authors to have a base for further study in consumer complaint behavior.

Key words: customer dissatisfaction, post purchase evaluation, consumer complaint behavior, negative word of mouth, the Consumer Right Act, 'Jago Grahak Jago

INTRODUCTION

Post-purchase behavior involves all the consumers' activities and the experiences that follow the purchase. Usually, after making a purchase, consumers experience post-purchase dissonance. In other words, they regret their purchase decision. The reasons for high post-purchase dissonance can be attractiveness and performance of forgone alternatives, difficult purchase decision, large number of alternatives, etc.

A high level of post-purchase dissonance is negatively related to the level of satisfaction the consumer draws out of product usage. While experiencing post-purchase dissonance, consumers become acutely aware of the marketers' communication. To reduce post-purchase dissonance, consumers may sometimes even return or exchange the product. Marketers, therefore, can use these opportunities to reduce consumers' risk perception by way of good return/exchange policies and reduce their post-purchase dissonance by messages targeted at this segment of their consumers.

In some cases, however, consumers initially use the product but after a period of time fail to do so. Marketers, therefore, should not consider a product purchased as a product consumed. A non-used product is also more likely to affect the repurchase pattern of the consumers negatively. Consumers need to dispose of the products or packaging before, during, or after the use. The issue of disposal is gaining considerable importance for marketers as it directly affects the repurchase pattern of the consumers.

For minimizing the dissatisfaction in consumer the customer – development process can be adopted. It explains about the conversion of suspect to partner for a business, i.e. if a suspect from its pre purchase phase will be converted to a prospect and then a first time customer, after the attainment of satisfaction in post purchase phase that customer can be termed as a repeat customer, client, member, advocate and at the end a partner respectively.

Complaint behavior is assumed to be triggered by feelings of dissatisfaction with a product or service. Secondly, CCB responses are considered to be either behavioral or non-behavioral, behavioral responses being those actions a consumer takes to express some form of dissatisfaction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature reviewed to understand the post purchase complaint behavior in relation to dissatisfaction. A lot of researches have been done regarding consumer post purchase dissatisfaction and consumer complaint behavior. Few research outcomes are discussed here for a brief understanding about the topic.

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The study of consumer complaint behavior in western countries were started long back may be in 1970s or a decade before that. In India the awareness of customer dis-satisfaction and complaint behavior in an organized manner started in 1980s. More research work on customer satisfaction was found comparing study of dis-satisfaction.

However for clarity of studies on complaint behavior the studies done can be categorized in to study on (1) post-purchase behavior, (2) customer dissatisfaction responses and (3) customer complaint behavior.

The consumer behavior can be divided into three stages. They can be pre-purchase behavior, during purchase behavior and post-purchase behavior. In the post-purchase behavior customer evaluates his purchase decision. During the post purchase evaluation many consumers may not be satisfied but if their problems can be handled quickly and satisfactorily they can be termed as happy customers. As it is said that problem unheard properly is problem unsolved.

**POST-PURCHASE BEHAVIOR**

The post-purchase behavior is the behavior shown by the customers after buying the product. Here either customer is satisfied or dissatisfied. But many a times customer goes through cognitive dissonance. If the customer is satisfied then repurchase occurs, which allows the business to generate more profit through customer retention. Problem comes when the customer is dissatisfied, either he stops buying or spreads negative word of mouth, etc.

Mischel (1971), said that frustration occurs when goal-directed behavior is blocked or interrupted before its completion. In as much as consumer behavior is goal-directed, frustration develops when the goal actually attained is something less than the goal sought, or when the goal sought requires more resources (money, time and energy) than the consumer is able, willing or expecting to spend in order to achieve the goal. Frustration will also occur when the means of achieving satisfaction, including the resources as well as the goal-object are reduced or removed. Consequently, frustration can develop in both post purchase and pre purchase situation.

Fornell and Wernerfelt (1987); Kelley et al. (1993); Reichheld (1993); Reichheld and Sasser Jr. (1990) derived that perceived service failures experienced by customers are a major concern for the service provider because of the potential influence of the service outcome.

Various alternatives courses of action are available to consumers who have experienced dissatisfaction, ranging from doing nothing to suing a seller or manufacturer for millions of dollars in damages. The conceptual framework utilized in the study has been described by Day and Landon (1977). The dissatisfied consumers’ options can be classified as follows:

1. Take no action at all- forget the experience
2. Take some form of private action:
   a. Change brand or supplier
   b. Stop using the product class
   c. Warn family or friends
3. Take some form of public action:
   a. See redress directly from the seller or manufacturer
   b. Take legal action against the seller or manufacturer
   c. Register a complaint with: the seller or manufacturer, a public consumer protection agency, or a private consumer organization.

Singh (1990) proposed the typology in the following manner.
DISSATISFACTION RESPONSES
The dissatisfaction experience may not always trigger a behavioral response by consumer. Majority of dissatisfied consumers during their post purchase evaluation do nothing.
“CCB, then, is conceptualized as a set of multiple (behavioral & non behavioral) responses, some or all of which triggered by perceive dissatisfaction with a purchase episode” (Singh 1988).
Stokes (1974) found that individuals do exactly the same purchase situations may vary from a high degree of satisfaction to extreme dissatisfaction. Likewise, different individuals experiencing a similar degree of dissatisfaction will vary with respect to their behavior & with respect to the kind of action taken is triggered.
Mason and Himes (1973) found the tendency for a household to express dissatisfaction with an appliance to be positively related to the size of the household. It was not related to educational level of the head of the house hold or marital status.
Singh (1991) argued that providers recognize the extend of customer dissatisfaction in the market place and the handling of service recovery as key indicators of customer loyalty, discontent and welfare.
Richins (1983) observed that the company’s reputation can also suffer damage from negative word of mouth among dissatisfied customers. It is often asserted that lack of feedback from dissatisfied customers represents a loss of potential and current customers.
Dissatisfaction is one of the factors that drive customers' decision to reduce repurchase decision (Yunfan, Yaobin & Wang 2012).

COMPLAINT BEHAVIOR
Customers who have complaint to an organization and had their complaint satisfactorily resolved tell an average of five people about the good treatment they received (Karl and Zemke 1985).
Building on suggestions offered by Day and Bodur (1978) and Day and Landon (1977), used the ‘No action – Private action – public action’ scheme for classifying complaint behavior as a basis for formulating questions for a 600 household survey on frequency of dissatisfaction, reasons for dissatisfaction, and post- dissatisfaction responses for a variety of consumer services.
Consumer complaint behavior is, therefore, one stage in the consumer’s experience with a purchase of a product or service. The CCB stage begins when the consumer has evaluated a consumption experience and ends when he has completed all behavioral & non-behavioral responses to the experience (Day 1980).
A well documented finding in the consumer complaint is that a majority of dissatisfied consumers do not voice their complaint to an organization (TARP 1986).

In the past, the complaints received by consumer protection agencies have served as a surrogate measure for the general population’s consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with products and services. There are however, two significant problems with this practice. First, only a small percentage of such complaints ever reach governmental agencies or consumer advocacy organizations (Andreasen and Best 1977; Best and Andreasen 1976; and Day and Bodur 1978). Second the literature suggests that complaints do not constitute a representative sample of those problems experienced by the consumer population at large (Best and Andreasen 1976; and Warland et al. 1975).

People with time on their hands and highly educated, articulated people go for public actions (Stokes 1974).

The most startling figures has been reported in an A.C. Nielsen study, in which it appeared that only packaged good complained to the manufacturer. More people complained to the retailers but almost 70% did not complain at all (Day and Landon 1976) have reported similar results, besides effects such as exclusion from the buyer’s evoked set and negative word of mouth.

Many studied on the characteristics of consumer complaints have examined only demographic information, although with consistent results. Liefeld et al (1975), studied consumers who wrote letters of complaint to a government or consumer agency and found them to be younger and better educated, to have higher family incomes, from managerial/professional households, and more likely to be married or divorced. Mason and Himes (1973) found the tendency for a household to express dissatisfaction with an appliance to be positively related to the size of the household. It was not related to educational level of the head of the household or marital status. Best and Andreasen (1977) suggest that consumers with low SES and low interest in consumer affairs are less likely to complain and in fact are less likely to perceive a problem exists. However, Gaedeke (1972), in a survey of state consumer production offices, argued that complaints were a heterogeneous group comprised of all social classes, age groups and geographical area. Wall et al, (1977) found the best predictors of a consumer’s propensity to complain were personal characteristics and internal influences.

Empirical studies on consumer complaint behavior have focused mainly on determining the incidence of consumer complaining and its variation across demographic groups (Liefeld et al. 1975). They have also being attempts to relate complaint behavior to consumer perceptions of unfair selling practices (Kraft 1977). While progress has been made in identifying selected relationships, it is evident that much remains to be learned about the determinants of consumer complaining.

According to the survey done by Liefeld et al (1975), the extent of over-representation of middle aged, well educated, high income, managerial/professional and married consumers in the authorship and frequency of writing letters of complaint to government and consumer service agencies greatly exceeds conservatively estimated response bias.

Studies on complaining behavior found two basic findings; one is that a majority of dissatisfied consumers do not voice their complaints; another is that chose who do complain exhibit distinct socio-economic and demographic characteristics (Robinson 1978).

Andersen (1988), suggest three reasons for why dissatisfied consumers do not complain:

1. A cost/ benefit analysis shows small benefits or large costs
2. Consumers were discouraged from complaining by others,
3. An intervening factor caused a delay or the prevention of action.

In view of the limited occurrence of complaints directed to firms, several authors postulate that complaining behavior should actually be encouraged by firms (Plymire 1991, Vavra 1992), especially when private complaining (e.g., negative word-of-mouth) is more prevalent than direct actions toward a company.

According to a study by Rajeev Kumar (2010) the human element of service delivery creates many opportunities for failure. There are various sub-stages of the purchase stage of mobile buying process and
various complaint responses at each sub-stage. Research results reveal complaint is caused mainly due to reaction trigger irrespective of buying sub-stage of purchase and situational trigger has least impact. From the above findings by many researchers it is evident that consumers in their post purchase evaluation seeks value. If the expected value has not been delivered to them by the marketer they get dissatisfaction. Many a time the consumers undergo dissonance. Once the consumer experiences dissatisfaction, he responds to it. The response could be taking public action, taking private action or taking no action. All these can be tasted taking an industry in Indian scenario and how Indian consumers are different in their response after experiencing dissatisfaction than other consumers can be understood.

CONCLUSION
It is evident from the studies researches that customer is important but most important is customer satisfaction. If any customer is dissatisfied the reason of dissatisfaction has to be redressed first. In competitive markets customer retention is the key for success and companies cannot take the risk of negative word of mouth from dissatisfied customers.
The Indian consumer market is expanding in a greater pace. The Indian market is one of the most attractive and challenging market in the world. With its fast changing nature the Indian consumers also have changed to cope up with. The Indian consumers comprise of different socioeconomic strata, regions and classes. Rising incomes, multiple income households, exposure to international lifestyles and media, easier financial credit and an upbeat economy are enhancing aspirations and consumption.
The Indian consumption patterns are slowly converging with global norms. The Indian consumer is now spending more on consumer durables, apparel, entertainment, vacations and lifestyle related activities. Entertainment, clothing and restaurant dining are categories that have been witnessing a maximum rise in consumer spending since 2002. Few key reasons for the increased consumption could be the stretching of the middle class, double income, substantial increase in their disposable income, double income with one or no child, credit facilities, media revolution, and variety in choices. Hence, the service market has gained a lot of importance.
In India the consumer alertness came very late. The Consumer Right Act 1986 has given the consumers a supreme power to fight for their rights. With the consumers’ right education program ‘Jago Grahak Jago’ the consumers are now more aware and educated for the value they must get.
Creating value with customer satisfaction is the main motto of any organization. Hence considering the Indian growing market and informed consumers I feel it is highly required to have an empirical research on consumer complaint behavior, the reasons of complaint and strategies to resolve the complaint effectively and efficiently.

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