

A Pilot Study about the Effect of Mood on Consumer Complaining Behavior

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Extensive Summary

Consumer complaining behavior (CCB) is a complex phenomenon that depends on various personal and situational factors. Previous studies have examined the impact of personal factors such as age, gender, personality, and the impact of situational factors such as the importance of the product for the consumer and the responsiveness of the firm to customer complaints (Singh, 1990). However, perceived brand value, mood, and consumer interaction styles, which are assertiveness and aggressiveness, have been relatively less studied in the context of CCB. Hoping to fill a gap in the literature, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect of mood on CCB and do the pilot testing of the proposed conceptual framework, which includes perceived brand value, perceived risk, mood, and consumer interaction style constructs as antecedents of CCB. Moreover, existing studies have generally focused on mood as a consequence of a service failure or a complaint situation, so conceptualizing mood as an antecedent of CCB contributes to the novelty of this study (Svari et al., 2011; Petzer et al., 2012; Choraria 2013).

Richins (1983) has defined assertiveness and aggressiveness as two types of consumer interaction styles that shape the behavior of consumers in the marketplace. Assertive consumers who can seek redress or resist requests for compliance politely and comfortably, and aggressive consumers who can engage in aggressive manners such as raising their voices or speaking impolitely to sales representatives, are more likely to voice their complaints about a product or service (Richins, 1987; Phau & Sari, 2004). In this context; the first two hypotheses of the study are formed as follows.

H₁: Assertiveness positively influences CCB.

H₂: Aggressiveness positively influences CCB.

The second construct of the research model is perceived brand value, which can be defined as the balance and relationship between the value and cost of using a product, regarding multi-dimensional aspects such as functional, economic, and social outcomes of the consumption (Zeithaml, 1988; He & Li, 2008). A high level of perceived brand value increases expectations from the consumption experience, so perceived brand value is influential on satisfaction, consumers' evaluations of the brand, and intentions to complain (Westbrook, 1980; Ndubisi & Ling, 2006). Consumers are more likely to complain about a product if perceived brand value is high (Phau & Sari, 2004). So,

H₃: Consumers are more likely to complain about products that have a high perceived brand value.

Mood, which is a persistent and low-intensive emotional state that cannot be easily associated with a specific stimulus, influences consumers' perceptions (Forgas, 1995; Kumar, 1997; Er, 2012). Negative mood influences consumers' perception of quality and satisfaction about a product (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004; White, 2006). Negative mood can trigger anger, and negative-mood consumers are more likely to complain in case of a product and service failure, so mood influences the impact of consumer interaction styles on CCB. Therefore, the hypotheses are constructed as follows.

H₄: Mood moderates the effect of consumer interaction styles on CCB.

H₅: Mood moderates the effect of perceived brand value on CCB.

Consumers perceive a risk regarding their consumption if there is an uncertainty about the product or service, or they think that their expectations cannot be satisfied (Dowling and Staelin, 1994). Consumers are more likely to complain about a product if consumers' perceived risk is high, so the hypotheses are as follows.

H₆: Perceived risk moderates the effect of consumer interaction styles on CCB.

H₇: Perceived risk moderates the effect of perceived brand value on CCB.

The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

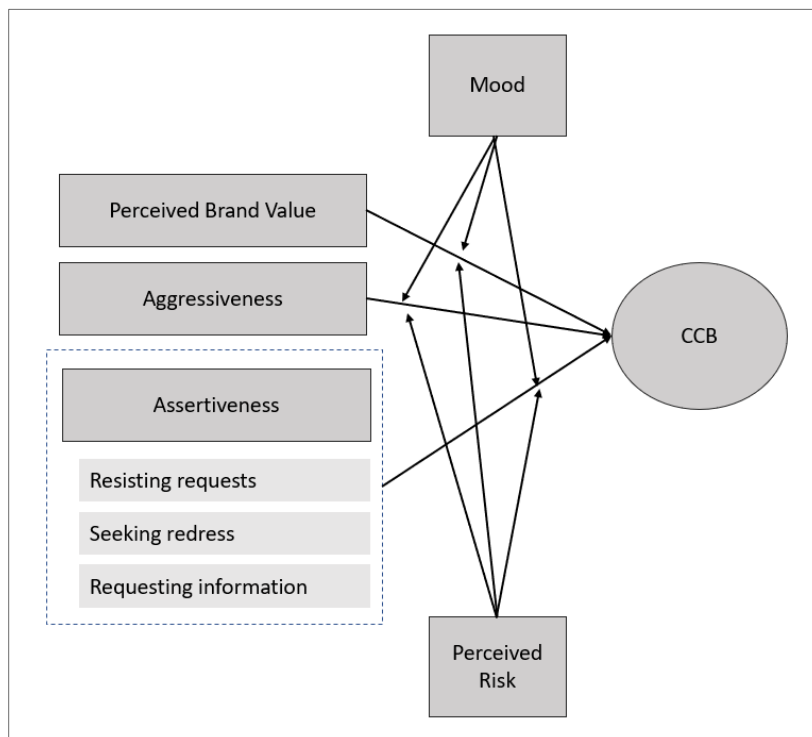


Figure 1: The Research Model

The research model is tested by a pilot study, which consists of 4 surveys that are applied within a 2x2 between-subjects factorial design. Mood (negative-positive) and perceived brand value (high-low) levels are manipulated, and 4 online questionnaires are forwarded to different groups of participants via snowball sampling method. 118 valid surveys are collected.

Since the dependent variable, which is the complaint response estimate, is binary, the complaint response estimates of “*I-would complain*” and “*0-would not complain*” are analyzed with discriminant analysis, by separating data according to mood. According to the results of the discriminant analysis, the complaint behavior of participants did not differ according to mood. In other words, when data is divided into two groups in terms of mood, i.e. mood good or bad, the complaint response estimate did not differ significantly among groups. Other statistical analysis results showed that perceived risk, aggressiveness, and resisting requests for compliance have positive effect on CCB. Consumers who are in a negative mood and perceive high brand value are slightly more likely to complain, but the difference is not statistically significant.

This pilot study is an initial test of the proposed conceptual framework. The insignificant effect of mood can be interpreted as a consequence of the limited sample size, because literature suggests that mood changes the perception of individuals (Ekman & Davidson, 1994). Another limitation of the study is using a nominal scale for CCB, which has restricted the options of statistical analysis. Conducting future research by using different products or services in the experimental design can be suggested. Future studies can focus on the proposed conceptual framework by using a larger sample size and a metric scale to measure CCB.