

CONSUMER RESPONSE TO NEGATIVE SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Prior research identified many variables that were associated with consumer complaining behaviors. This study focused on whether people who had negative shopping experiences were likely to express their dissatisfaction by completing a customer survey. Two surveys of US adults, one in 2015 and the other in 2022, were analyzed. Roughly one-third of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would complain by completing a satisfaction survey. Demographic variables that previous research suggested could help identify those who would complete the satisfaction survey proved to be of limited value. Several new measures, particularly indicators for Social Desirability Bias (SDB) and impulsivity, were positively related to the complaining behavior. The positive sign on the SDB measure suggests that a social norm may encourage some consumers to complete satisfaction surveys (or at least claim they will respond). Future research on complaints should reexamine previous results and include SDB and impulsivity measures.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, two large surveys were fielded to understand consumer complaining behaviors better. One used the face-to-face survey mode (Grainer et al., 1979), and the other used the telephone mode (Best & Andreasen, 1977). Both reported that many consumers who were dissatisfied with a good or service did not complain about their experience. After reviewing the research, Andreasen (1988, 703) concluded: “When dissatisfaction occurs, about 40 percent of the time, consumers will complain to the seller....” Since these studies, considerable research has examined complaint behaviors. Important factors associated with these behaviors included the overall attitudes toward complaining, the industry involved, and the response method selected by the customer (Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989; Fernandes & Dos Santos, 2008; Singh & Wilkes, 1996; Mattila & Wirtz, 2004). This research will focus on the retail industry and the completion of a customer satisfaction survey to reduce confounding effects.

Consumer attitudes toward complaining often have an important role in complaint research. During interviews, Richins (1982) noted that many consumers questioned whether complaining was appropriate. The author concluded that if a community normalized complaining, people in the community would be more likely to complain. A survey of households in the Netherlands found that complaining norms were associated with the propensity to complain (Richins & Verhage, 1985). Australian students appeared to self-monitor when deciding whether to complain (Bodey & Grace, 2006). Attitudes or norms might suggest that complaining is good because it helps others or that complaining is improper. Besides complaint behaviors, social norms can influence survey responses and create social desirability bias (SDB) (Larson, 2019a). SDB is often more significant in face-to-face and telephone surveys than in surveys answered in private (e.g., SDB in face-to-face surveys: Richman et al., 1999; Heerwegh, 2009; SDB in telephone surveys: Greene, Speizer, & Wiitala, 2008; Maquire, 2009). Therefore, some subjects in the large surveys during the 1970s might have overreported or underreported, complaining to be consistent

with perceived social expectations. Unfortunately, few consumer complaint researchers have considered the effects of SDB.

This study will analyze data from two national surveys of U.S. adults, one in 2015 and the other in 2022, to profile individuals likely to report their dissatisfaction. To reduce complexity, the focus will be narrowed to having negative experiences while shopping and further narrowed to completing a customer satisfaction survey. Besides demographics, a measure to identify and control SDB will be used, and two concepts that have seldom been considered in complaint research (impulsivity and privacy concerns) will be tested. After reviewing the literature and developing hypotheses, this paper will describe the survey methodologies and results. The final sections compare the two surveys and highlight conclusions that may help marketing practitioners and other researchers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on consumer complaints have tested many measures. Researchers included consumer characteristics in their models to control for preference differences and to identify useful associations. Some relationships noted in older studies may have changed. This section will describe previous findings on the associations with consumer characteristics and ten hypotheses to be tested.

Demographics

Most complaint studies included demographics. However, the relationships found were often inconsistent. This research will test seven different demographic measures to learn how household attributes may influence the sharing of information about negative shopping experiences using satisfaction surveys.

Gender. Previous research on complaints reported mixed results for the influence of gender. Preferences for how complaints are handled tend to vary by gender (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2003). Kolodinsky (1992; 1993) found that women made significantly more complaints about services than men. However, men tended to complain more than women, according to a survey in one city, an analysis of complaints at a hotel, and an examination of complaints in finance (Parker et al., 1993; Manickas & Shea, 1997; Hogarth & English, 2002). Fox (2008) did not find gender to have significant effects on public complaints. Lee and Soberon-Ferrer (1999) did not find gender to be significant for complaints by the elderly or the rest of the population. This study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, women will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Race. Raval (2020) found lower complaint rates in geographies with significant minority populations. Andreasen (1988) reported fewer complaints from Spanish-American individuals. Lee and Soberon-Ferrer (1999) found race to be a significant factor for predicting complaints by the elderly, but not for the rest of their sample. Hogarth and English (2002) reported more complaints from nonwhites. Therefore, given the mixed results, this research suggests the following:

H2: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, whites will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Age. The results for age were also mixed. Several studies focused on complaints by people over age 65 and found that the elderly were less likely to complain (e.g., Lee & Soberon-Ferrer, 1999; Bernhardt, 1981). However, if adjustments were made to the number of purchases, their complaint rate might be similar to other age groups. The typical Canadian who wrote a complaint letter to a government or consumer service agency was middle-aged (Liefeld et al., 1975). Horgarth and English (2002) had similar findings for financial complaints in the US. Studies about complaints regarding services and public complaints found positive relationships with age (Kolodinsky, 1992; Fox, 2008). However, Morganosky and Buckley (1987), Parker, Funkhouser, and Chatterjee (1993), Kolodinsky (1993), and Lee and Soberon-Ferrer (1999) did not find significant effects from age and others found a negative relationship between age and complaining (Warland et al., 1984; Bearden & Mason, 1984; Andreassen, 1988; Fails & Francis, 1996). This study proposes a positive relationship and the following hypothesis:

H3: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, age will be positively associated with the likelihood of completing a customer satisfaction survey.*

Marital Status. Four studies were found that included marital status in their models. Lee and Soberon-Ferrer (1999) claimed that widowed people complained more than married people. Kolodinsky (1992) and Horgarth et al. (2001) also concluded that married individuals complained less. Among Canadian complaint letter writers, divorced, separated, and married individuals complained more, while widowed and single individuals complained less (Liefeld et al., 1975). These conflicting results lead to the following hypothesis:

H4: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, single, divorced, separated, and widowed shoppers will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Education. Several studies found positive relationships between complaining and education (e.g., Best & Andreassen 1977; Warland et al., 1984; Morganosky & Buckley, 1987; Horgarth & English, 2002). Complainers in Canada tended to be better educated (Liefeld et al., 1975). However, Kolodinsky (1992), Parker, Funkhouser, and Chatterjee (1993), and Lee and Soberon-Ferrer (1999) reported that education was not linked with complaints and Kolodinsky (1993) found a negative relationship. Given these findings, this study proposes a positive relationship and the following hypothesis:

H5: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, subjects with more education will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Presence of Children. The presence of children can have several effects on customer attitudes. For example, restaurant customers with children under the age of 18 equated satisfaction with speedy service (Wildes & Seo, 2001). One study reported a positive link between the presence of children and complaints (Kolodinsky, 1992). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H6: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, households with children will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Income. The final demographic measure also produced mixed results in prior studies. Canadians with higher incomes tended to complain more (Liefeld et al., 1975). Complainers in the U.S. usually had higher incomes (Bearden & Mason, 1984; Bearden & Oliver, 1985; Moganosky & Buckley, 1987; Andreasen, 1988; Fails & Francis, 1996; Hogarth & English, 2002). However, other studies found that complaining was not associated with higher incomes (e.g., Warland et al., 1984; Parker et al., 1993; Kolodinsky, 1993; Lee & Soberon-Ferrer, 1999; Fox, 2008). Kolodinsky (1992) found that households with higher incomes complained less about services. This leads to a hypothesized positive relationship:

H7: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, subjects with higher incomes will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Other Consumer Characteristics

Many other measures have been associated with complaining. Some these variables were: politeness (Lerman, 2006), assertiveness (Slama & Williams, 1991; Tosun et al., 2022), confidence (Fernandes & Dos Santos, 2008), personal power (Li, 2019; Popelnukha, 2020), ambitious (Rogers & Williams, 1990), perceived control, competence, blame (Bodey & Grace, 2006; Cho et al., 2002; Dunn & Dahl, 2012), technology savviness, trust in brands (Soares et al., 2017), brand image (Kim & Boo, 2011), aggressiveness, altruism (Souiden et al., 2019), class (Andreasen & Manning, 1990), loyalty to the firm (Jones et al., 2002), personality (Harris & Mowen, 2001; Bodey & Grace, 2006; Berry et al., 2014), prior experience complaining (Huppertz, 2014), price sensitivity, locus of control (Gursoy et al., 2007), the perceived cost of complaining (Bolkan, 2015), and activity in the community (Warland et al., 1984). Using a Dutch sample, Richins and Verhage (1985) found that situational variables, such as the convenience of making complaints and the retailer's responsiveness, influenced the link between general attitudes toward complaining and self-reported complaint behaviors. Hunt (1993) emphasized emotion as more important than cognition for explaining complaints. This research will test three "non-cognitive" measures that have rarely been considered in complaint research.

Social Desirability Bias (SDB). People may underreport some activities, including their consumption of alcohol and tobacco, and may overreport things like seat belt use and having a library card (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Social desirability bias (SDB) occurs when many subjects change their responses for impression management (to look better to others), self-deception (to feel good about themselves), or identity definition (Larson, 2019a). Scales have been developed to quantify the likelihood that an individual adjusts their responses to be consistent with social norms. Malafi (1991) concluded that social influences are involved in the decision to complain, specifically informal communications with family and friends. However, SDB includes the impact of social norms, not just communications with others. Because SDB scores have not been included in complaint studies, there is no guidance about whether people tend to overstate or understate their complaining behavior to be consistent with social expectations. Early research suggested that people hesitated to complain. Therefore, a negative relationship and the following hypothesis are suggested:

H8: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, shoppers with lower SDB scores will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Impulsivity. Two studies included impulsivity measures in their analyses. In a study of South Korean sportswear shoppers, Choi and Bum (2020) noted differences in the impulsivity and complaints of online and offline customers. However, they did not try to predict complaining behaviors. Sharma et al. (2010) asked Singapore, South Korea, and U.S. students to react to different scenarios. They included a three-item scale to measure impulsiveness and found positive relationships between impulsivity and the intent to complain in each country. This study will use a longer, more complete scale to test the following hypothesis:

H9: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, more impulsive consumers will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

Privacy Concerns. Among the various response options consumers have for complaining, completing a customer satisfaction survey is one of the least studied. Han and Anderson (2021) studied the responses to surveys distributed to all hotel guests a few days after they left. They suggested that a company's response to a survey will influence customer satisfaction and willingness to complete future surveys. A study on what adults in India and students in Thailand wrote on customer satisfaction surveys found that if interactions with the company were expected, the subjects changed their survey responses (Mukherjee et al., 2021). These results suggest that customers consider what companies may do with their survey responses.

Some consumers might hesitate to complete a survey if they are more concerned about privacy. Companies often ask for information such as address, phone number, and email address in surveys. If consumers are uncertain how a firm may use their responses, privacy concerns may limit participation. This negative relationship will be tested with the following hypothesis:

H10: *After experiencing a negative shopping experience, subjects with lower privacy concerns will be more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.*

One note should be mentioned to conclude this literature review. Culture is believed to influence complaining behaviors (e.g., individualism versus collectivism, Watkins & Liu, 1996). This would suggest that relationships identified with a sample of consumers in one country may not be true for other countries. Some of the studies cited earlier were conducted outside the US. Table 1 shows the demographic results from nine other international studies on complaining behavior. As expected, there were some differences in the findings. Only a few studies discussed variations between countries (e.g., Richins & Verhage, 1985; Sharma et al., 2010; Kaur & Sharma, 2015). There is a need for more cross-cultural research on complaining behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Qualtrics, a professional marketing research company, distributed two anonymous, online surveys to panels of U.S. adults in October 2015 and July 2022. Both surveys were advertised for adults aged 25 to 65, did not include demographic quotas, and used attention screen questions to improve sample quality (Abbey & Meloy, 2017). Besides the demographic questions, subjects responded to the surveys using 7-point Likert scales. The dependent measure for the analysis was derived from the following statement: "I am likely to fill out customer satisfaction surveys after a

negative shopping experience.” The “top-two-box” responses (e.g., agree and strongly agree) will form the dependent variables in binary logistic regressions. Relationships will be identified with variables that significantly change the probability of subjects providing “top-two-box” responses.

Social desirability bias (SDB) scales try to identify which people adjust their answers to be consistent with social norms. This 16-item Stöber (2001) SDB scale, used in this study, includes statements such as “During arguments, I always stay objective and matter-of-fact” to identify people who are more likely to provide biased responses. Many studies have employed this scale [e.g., an evaluation of programs to reduce dating violence on a college campus (Peterson et al., 2018) and an examination of individual reactions while confined with a team during a simulated trip to Mars (Basner et al., 2014)]. Responses of strongly agree or agree (i.e., top-two-box or bottom-two-box, if reverse-scaled) are totaled to create a score for each subject that ranges from 0 to 16. Larson (2019a) recommended using a logistic transformation so that small changes near the bottom or top of the score’s range would have less impact than changes near the middle. People with low scores are likely to provide unbiased responses and those with high measures probably provide biased responses to questions associated with social norms. Small shifts in the variable at the low or high end should indicate less of a bias change than similar shifts in the middle of the range.

The Hausman (2000) impulsive behavior scale was included in the surveys to test for links with impulsiveness. This 14-item scale has been included in many models [e.g., preferences for humanely-raised meat (Larson, 2019b)] and is designed to collapse into two measures: hedonic buying and impulsive trait. Other researchers have confirmed that hedonic buying is associated with impulsive behaviors (e.g., Chih et al. 2012; Gultekin & Ozer, 2012). Consumers with high hedonic buying scores tend to enjoy shopping and make impulsive decisions.

When considering the effects of privacy, it is important to consider different types of privacy concerns (Larson 2024). The Smith, Milberg, and Burke (1996) scale, a common approach to measure privacy concerns, was designed to measure several privacy dimensions. This scale has been described as one of the most influential and reliable (Preibusch, 2013; Smith et al., 2011). The factors formed from the scale items will identify whether privacy concerns influence the likelihood of customer satisfaction survey completion.

RESULTS

October 2015 Survey

After Qualtrics cleaned the data (e.g., dropped straight-line responses), they provided 647 responses from the October 2015 survey. The questionnaire did not require respondents to answer the household income question and did not restrict the answers to what year they were born. As a result, 42 respondents were dropped because they did not answer the income question or were too far outside the 25 to 65 age range, reducing the sample size to 605. The demographic profile of the respondents, shown in Table 2, was fairly similar to the U.S. population, except that nonwhites were underrepresented. The proportion of respondents who gave a “top-two-box” response to the fill-out-a-satisfaction-survey question was 31 percent. Note that this was similar to prior findings about complaint rates when people are dissatisfied.

Table 1
Selected International Studies on Complaining Behavior

Country Sample	Dependent Variable	Significant Demographic Measures	Insignificant Demographic Measures	Source
Singapore (Mall Intercept)	Public Complaining	Gender Age + Education + Income + Race	Marital Status	Keng, Richmond, & Han, 1995
Hong Kong (Restaurant Intercept)	Complaint Behaviors	Gender Age - Education +	none	Heung & Lam, 2003
Hong Kong Restaurants	Complaint Behaviors	Age - Education + Income +	Gender	Lam & Tang, 2003
Indonesia (Mall Intercept)	Complaints after Unsatisfactory Purchase Experience	Age - Income + Education +	Gender	Phau & Sari, 2004
China	Online Complaint Behaviors	Age - Education + Income +	Gender	Liu & Zhang, 2007
Norway	Complaints to Government Organization	Income - Household Size -	Gender Age Education Marital Status	Tronvoll, 2007
Portugal	Complaints about Telecommunications	Age -	none	Soares et al., 2017
Saudi Arabia	Online Complaint Behaviors	Age - Education +	Gender	Badghish & Shagagi, 2023
India	Complaint Behaviors	Education + Income +	Gender	Kumar & Kaur, 2023

+ indicates positive relationship, - indicates negative relationship

Table 2
Survey Sample Profiles

Demographic Measures	Proportion of Oct. 2015 Sample	Proportion of July 2022 Sample
Female	0.68	0.72
Nonwhite	0.15	0.45
Age 35 to 44	0.21	0.29
Age 45 to 54	0.25	0.21
Age 55 and Higher	0.36	0.28
Single/Divorced/Separated/Widowed	0.39	0.50
Some College (including 2 Year Degree)	0.42	0.44
College Graduate (4 Year Degree or More)	0.33	0.26
Presence of Children	0.36	0.41
Income of \$40,000 to \$79,999	0.34	0.31
Income of \$80,000 to \$119,999	0.17	0.10
Income of \$120,000 or More	0.07	0.08
Social Desirability Bias Score (Range 0 to 16)	6.79	7.25
I am likely to fill out customer satisfaction surveys after a negative shopping experience – Strongly Disagree (1)	0.03	0.05
Disagree (2)	0.08	0.12
Somewhat Disagree (3)	0.14	0.10
Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	0.18	0.20
Somewhat Agree (5)	0.26	0.20
Agree (6)	0.20	0.19
I am likely to fill out customer satisfaction surveys after a negative shopping experience – Strongly Agree (7)	0.11	0.14
Sample Size	605	1399

The first step in the analysis is to construct measures from the scales. The average SDB score for this survey was 6.79. These scores were transformed into a measure that ranged between 0 and 1. The 14-item Hausman (2000) impulsive behavior scale, shown in Table 3, collapsed to two factors after principal component analysis (using the eigenvalue greater than 1 criterion). After Varimax

rotation, the two factors, hedonic buying, and impulsive trait, were similar to Hausman's original work. The reliability of this scale, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was considered excellent (George & Mallery, 2003).

This survey also included eight of the 15 items from the Smith et al. (1996) privacy scale. To shorten the survey, items with high factor scores were selected from Smith's research. Table 4 shows that the items collapsed into three privacy concern factors: company actions, information collection, and accuracy/errors. The reliability of the scales was acceptable.

A binary logistic regression was used to identify items related to the likelihood that people would complete a customer satisfaction survey after negative shopping experiences. The first columns on the left in Table 5 show the regression results with the demographic variables. The three age groups all had negative signs, but only one was significantly different from the behavior of the omitted 25- to 34-year-old group. All three income classes were significant and positive, consistent with the hypothesized relationship, suggesting that as income increased, people were more likely to complete a customer satisfaction survey.

The next columns in Table 5 show the results after the SDB measure was included. It was interesting to note that the coefficient magnitudes for the age groups increased and all three were significant at the 90% confidence level. The three income classes had smaller coefficients but continued to be positive and significant. The SDB measure also was positive and significant, suggesting that some people overstated their likelihood of completing the survey to be consistent with social norms.

The last columns in Table 5 show the results when the impulsivity and privacy concern measures were added. The magnitudes of the age and income coefficients decreased while both impulsive behavior factors and two of the three privacy concern factors were positive and significant. Only two of the three income categories and two of the three age categories were significant at the 90 percent confidence level. The age and education categories had negative signs, the opposite of what was predicted. The positive coefficients for the impulsive and two of the three privacy concern factors suggest that impulsive people and those with high privacy concerns may be more likely to complete the surveys. The SDB measure continued to have a significant, positive coefficient.

July 2022 Survey

Qualtrics provided 1405 responses from the July 2022 survey. This survey added restrictions (e.g., income responses were required), and only six respondents were dropped for being outside of the target age range. The demographic profile of the respondents, shown in Table 2, was fairly similar to the U.S. population, except that females were overrepresented. The average SDB score was higher in this survey, 7.25. The proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they would fill out a satisfaction survey was 33 percent.

The principal component analysis of the Hausman scale, shown in Table 3, generated factors that were similar to the results for October 2015 with one exception. One item, "I go shopping to watch other people," did not seem to fit this factor structure. Agreement with this item was lower than in the 2015 survey. The question of whether this reflects a structural change in shopping motivations could be addressed by other researchers.

Table 3
Factor Scores for Impulsive Behavior Scale After Varimax Rotation

Items from the Hausman (2000) Impulsive Behavior Scale	October 2015		July 2022	
	Hedonic Buying Factor	Impulsive Trait Factor	Hedonic Buying Factor	Impulsive Trait Factor
Shopping satisfies my sense of curiosity	0.871	0.185	0.801	0.164
I feel like I'm exploring new worlds when I shop	0.858	0.168	0.773	0.132
I like to shop for the novelty of it	0.842	0.261	0.735	0.287
Shopping offers new experiences	0.814	0.071	0.747	0.115
I go shopping to be entertained	0.803	0.288	0.745	0.248
I get a real high from shopping	0.806	0.296	0.727	0.269
I go shopping to watch other people	0.363	0.289	0.296	0.249
I often buy things without thinking	0.190	0.835	0.132	0.837
“Buy now, think about it later” describes me	0.173	0.800	0.234	0.701
Sometimes I'm a bit reckless about what I buy	0.098	0.802	0.069	0.773
I often buy things spontaneously	0.264	0.784	0.255	0.759
“Just do it” describes the way I buy things	0.223	0.707	0.323	0.686
Sometimes I feel like buying things on the spur of the moment	0.175	0.680	0.190	0.656
If I see something I want, I buy it	0.248	0.640	0.362	0.441
Cronbach's Alpha	0.913		0.891	

Bold Indicates the Largest Score for an Item

This survey included all 15 items from the Smith privacy scale, shown in Table 6. Principal component analysis, along with Varimax rotation, produced three factors. These factors were given the same names as the factors in the prior survey. Scale reliability, measured with Cronbach's alpha, was considered very good.

The results of the binary logistic regressions are shown in Table 7. All the age categories had negative coefficients, but only the 55-and-higher age group was significant at the 95 percent confidence level. The estimated effects for the income and education categories were not statistically significant. The addition of the SDB measure affected the coefficients in the age categories. Two of the age classes were significant and negative at the 95 percent level. The SDB coefficient was significant and positive, opposite the sign suggested in H8. Adding the impulsive behavior and privacy concern factors in the third step reduced the coefficient magnitudes for many demographics, like in the prior analysis. The age, education, and income measures failed to have the hypothesized effects in this model. The positive coefficients on the impulsive behavior and privacy concern factors suggest that impulsive individuals were more likely to complete a

customer satisfaction survey and that individuals with higher privacy concerns in the areas of company actions and accuracy/errors were more likely to complete the survey.

Table 4
Factor Scores for Privacy Concern Scale After Varimax Rotation (2015 Data)

Selected Items from Smith et al. (1996) Privacy Scale	Company Actions Factor	Information Collection Factor	Accuracy/ Errors Factor
Computer databases that contain personal information should be protected from unauthorized access – no matter how much it costs	0.807	0.086	0.089
Companies should never share personal information with other companies unless it has been authorized by the individuals who provided the information	0.769	0.230	0.145
Companies should take more steps to make sure that unauthorized people cannot access personal information in their computers	0.769	0.178	0.257
Companies should never sell the personal information in their computer databases to other companies	0.643	0.167	0.129
It bothers me to give personal information to so many companies	0.216	0.865	0.071
When companies ask me for personal information, I sometimes think twice before providing it	0.201	0.844	0.163
Companies should take more steps to make sure that the personal information in their files is accurate	0.227	0.014	0.835
Companies should have better procedures to correct errors in personal information	0.141	0.223	0.816
Cronbach’s Alpha	0.799		

Bold Indicates the Largest Score for an Item

Table 5
Binary Logistic Regression Results for Top-Two-Box Complaints (2015 Data)

	Demographics		Demographics+SDB		Full Model	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Female	0.141	0.198	0.126	0.203	0.064	0.214
Nonwhite	0.076	0.272	-0.095	0.279	-0.312	0.293
Age 35 to 44	-0.797***	0.298	-0.928***	0.306	-0.859***	0.317
Age 45 to 54	-0.466	0.284	-0.645**	0.293	-0.514*	0.310
Age 55 and Higher	-0.282	0.270	-0.495*	0.280	-0.324	0.300
Single/Divorced/Separated/ Widowed	-0.113	0.211	-0.156	0.215	-0.134	0.220
Some College (including 2 Year Degree)	-0.448*	0.233	-0.375	0.239	-0.392	0.245
College Grad (4 Year Degree or More)	-0.429*	0.260	-0.300	0.267	-0.112	0.276
Presence of Children	0.122	0.216	0.089	0.219	0.043	0.229
Income of \$40,000 to \$79,999	0.481**	0.228	0.471**	0.233	0.366	0.239
Income of \$80,000 to \$119,999	0.837***	0.295	0.752**	0.300	0.673**	0.310
Income of \$120,000 or More	1.137***	0.376	1.048***	0.383	0.776*	0.400
Transposed Social Desirability Bias Index			1.171***	0.238	0.854***	0.259
Hedonic Consumption Factor					0.226**	0.103
Impulsive Trait Factor					0.272***	0.098
Company Actions Factor					0.304***	0.115
Information Collection Factor					0.115	0.096
Accuracy/ Errors Factor					0.344***	0.107
Constant	-0.644*	0.369	-1.102***	0.391	-1.015**	0.405
Nagelkerke R Square	0.062		0.118		0.185	

* indicates P<0.10

** indicates P<0.05 and **Bold**

*** indicates P<0.01 and **Bold**

Table 6
Factor Scores for Privacy Concern Scale After Varimax Rotation (2022 Data)

Items from Smith et al. (1996) Privacy Scale	Company Actions Factor	Information Collection Factor	Accuracy/Errors Factor
Companies should never share personal information with other companies unless it has been authorized by the individuals who provided the information	0.770	0.113	0.206
When people give personal information to a company for some reason, the company should never use the information for any other reason	0.733	0.167	0.205
Companies should not use personal information for any purpose unless it has been authorized by the individuals who provided the information	0.723	0.131	0.068
Companies should take more steps to make sure that unauthorized people cannot access personal information in their computers	0.683	0.222	0.276
Companies should never sell the personal information in their computer databases to other companies	0.663	0.210	0.082
Companies should devote more time and effort to preventing unauthorized access to personal information	0.645	0.149	0.266
Computer databases that contain personal information should be protected from unauthorized access – no matter how much it costs.	0.636	0.163	0.298
It bothers me to give personal information to so many companies	0.234	0.811	0.100
It usually bothers me when companies ask me for personal information	0.029	0.769	0.019
I'm concerned that companies are collecting too much personal information about me	0.233	0.762	0.146
When companies ask me for personal information, I sometimes think twice before providing it	0.319	0.652	0.209
All the personal information in computer databases should be double-checked for accuracy—no matter how much the cost	0.053	0.072	0.785
Companies should take more steps to make sure that the personal information in their files is accurate	0.225	0.076	0.743
Companies should devote more time and effort to verifying the accuracy of the personal information in their databases	0.382	0.164	0.699
Companies should have better procedures to correct errors in personal information	0.426	0.179	0.620
Cronbach's Alpha	0.886		

Bold Indicates the Largest Score for an Item

Table 7
Binary Logistic Regression Results for Top-Two-Box Complaints (2022 Data)

	Demographics		Demographics+SDB		Full Model	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Female	0.241*	0.132	0.228*	0.134	0.201	0.138
Nonwhite	0.193*	0.117	0.096	0.119	0.041	0.124
Age 35 to 44	-0.181	0.157	-0.207	0.159	-0.225	0.165
Age 45 to 54	-0.322*	0.175	-0.376**	0.178	-0.287	0.185
Age 55 and Higher	-0.510***	0.174	-0.623***	0.177	-0.468**	0.188
Single/Divorced/Separated/ Widowed	-0.064	0.121	-0.068	0.122	-0.066	0.126
Some College (including 2 Year Degree)	0.166	0.139	0.138	0.141	0.114	0.145
College Grad (4 Year Degree or More)	0.020	0.167	0.036	0.169	0.014	0.174
Presence of Children	0.152	0.128	0.134	0.130	0.097	0.133
Income of \$40,000 to \$79,999	-0.159	0.134	-0.177	0.136	-0.214	0.140
Income of \$80,000 to \$119,999	0.123	0.202	0.205	0.205	0.090	0.211
Income of \$120,000 or More	-0.211	0.235	-0.207	0.238	-0.205	0.246
Transposed Social Desirability Bias Index			0.863***	0.143	0.651***	0.158
Hedonic Consumption Factor					0.276***	0.064
Impulsive Trait Factor					0.250***	0.061
Company Actions Factor					0.151**	0.065
Information Collection Factor					0.049	0.059
Accuracy/ Errors Factor					0.261***	0.066
Constant	-0.766***	0.211	-1.097***	0.221	-0.985***	0.231
Nagelkerke R Square	0.027		0.063		0.123	

* indicates P<0.10; ** indicates P<0.05 and **Bold**; *** indicates P<0.01 and **Bold**

DISCUSSION

Across the two surveys, some consistencies were noted. Measures for females, nonwhites, unmarried, people with more education, and households with children were not significantly associated with the likelihood of agreeing or strongly agreeing to complete the survey (i.e., the top-two-box options). This means H1, H2, H4, H5, and H6 are not supported. The age results had some differences. With the 2015 data, those aged 35 to 44 were the least likely to complete the

customer survey, while with the 2022 data, those aged 55 to 65 were the least likely to complete the survey. The signs were also the opposite of what was predicted, so H3 was not supported. In the 2015 data, higher incomes boosted the likelihood of completing the survey (although when impulsive behavior and privacy concern factors were added, the coefficient sizes tended to decrease). In the 2022 data, some income categories had different signs from 2015, and none of the categories were significant. Therefore, H7 only had weak support. Perhaps preferences have changed, and higher-income people may be slightly less likely to complete satisfaction surveys. SDB was positive and significant in both regressions, which was the opposite of expectations. People who were sensitive to social norms said they would complete the survey. The two impulsive behavior factors were also positive and significant in both datasets. Therefore, H9 was supported. Although the results for two privacy concern factors were consistent and significant in both regressions, their signs were the opposite of expectations, failing to support H10. Greater privacy concerns in two categories appeared to increase the willingness to complete the survey.

CONCLUSIONS

Although it is possible that some social norms may continue to discourage people from most complaining behaviors, the positive coefficients on the SDB measure suggest that norms also may encourage some dissatisfied shoppers to complete customer satisfaction surveys. This does not imply that nearly all customers who had negative experiences will complain. About 25 percent of the respondents in both surveys somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that they would complete a satisfaction survey (Table 2). These results suggest that future complaint research, especially face-to-face and telephone surveys studies, should include SDB controls. People with impulsive behavior tendencies who enjoy shopping or have general impulsive traits may be more likely to complete the surveys. This could influence the mix of respondents that marketing practitioners have when they examine their customer satisfaction surveys. Impulsivity is another measure that should be added to future research.

Most of the relationships between demographics and complaining that other studies suggested did not appear to be linked with completing a survey after a negative shopping experience. For the age variables, there appeared to be a shift between 2015 and 2022 in which group was the least likely to complain. For income measures, a positive association was noted in 2015, with higher income people being more willing to complete a survey. However, no relationship for income was noted in 2022. These changes might reflect structural shifts in complaint behaviors and could also shift the mix of people who respond to satisfaction surveys. Future research could examine this further.

The results for privacy concerns were unexpected. On one hand, the positive coefficients could suggest to companies that customers who respond to their surveys may have high privacy concerns. Therefore, companies must keep the survey responses private and not disappoint customers in how the data is used. On the other hand, the privacy concern variables may be a proxy of other measures. Future research should examine whether privacy concerns influence complaint behaviors or simply represent the effects of some omitted variables.

Like most studies, this research is not without limitations. The survey samples differed from the U.S. population; nonwhites were underrepresented in one survey, and women were overrepresented in the other survey. Focusing on dissatisfied shoppers and one response method (i.e., customer satisfaction survey) along with a survey instead of field research may limit the ability to generalize the results. Some of the cited works analyzed actual complaints, not survey responses, which would explain some differences. The fits of the regressions, based on the

Nagelkerke R square measure, were rather low, suggesting that important variables were omitted. Other researchers could test additional measures (e.g., politeness, assertiveness, confidence, etc.), consider interactions between the variables, and explore relationships in other industries and countries.

Overall, since at least the 1970s, it has been assumed that many consumers hesitate to complain and that demographics can help identify those who are more likely to complain. This study suggests that a social norm may encourage some people to express dissatisfaction by completing a customer survey and that associations noted in prior studies may have changed. Perhaps structural changes shifted complaining behavior relationships. Future complaint research should consider additional variables (e.g., SDB, impulsiveness, and perhaps privacy concerns) and should reexamine some prior findings.

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