# TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE TAXONOMY AND MODEL OF CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR

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## ABSTRACT

The most widely used taxonomy of consumer complaining behaviour (Singh 1988) is limited in two respects: (1) it oversimplifies the key types of complaining behaviour - for example negative word-of-mouth need not just be a private action; and (2) it fails to appreciate that complaining behaviour often has two stages as certain CCB types (such as third party action) may only be entered into once other CCB types have failed to generate a satisfactory level of perceived justice. This paper offers a two-factor taxonomy of CCB which takes into account these issues. Complaint types are classified in terms of whether they are primary or secondary, and in terms of whether they are involved or uninvolved. This paper also offers a comprehensive model of CCB, which builds on the conceptual approach of Blodgett and Granbois (1992) by considering the whole CCB process as having four stages: (1) cognitive reasoning; (2) affective response; (3) triggers of consumer dissatisfaction responses; and (4) affective action. It is argued that there are eight major triggers of which lead to a certain dissatisfaction response (or a set of responses); each trigger being made up of a number of dimensions. The paper concludes by discussing possible directions for future research.

## INTRODUCTION

Singh (1988) conceptualised the phenomenon of consumer complaining behaviour (CCB) as "a set of multiple (behavioural and nonbehavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode" (p94). Work in the area of CCB can be divided into three broad areas: (1) the development and testing of theories of consumer dissatisfaction - which provide the theoretical starting point for complaining behaviour; (2) the study of complaining behaviour types, out of which taxonomies, typologies and models of complaining behaviour have been developed; and (3) the analysis of various triggers of complaining behaviour - which move consumers from the affective response of consumer dissatisfaction to the affective action of complaining behaviour. However, as East (1998a) argues, much of the work conducted on CCB triggers has been piecemeal and "a method is required that covers all the potential causes of complaining so that the relative influence of different factors can be established" (p.401).

Indeed, from a classical Kuhnian perspective, CCB research is still in its infancy (or pre-paradigm stage) where basic classifications, models and approaches are still being debated; and where much empirical evidence appears to contradict earlier research - especially findings relating to CCB triggers. In a recent attempt to address this problem, East (1998a) proposed the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991) as an all-inclusive theoretical tool for the analysis of the bases of consumer complaining. However, the theory does not appear to have worked in practical scenario-driven experiments (East 1998b) and it also neglects certain potential triggers of CCB such as demographics (which, admittedly, have low predictive powers) and perceptions of attribution. Acknowledging the disparate nature of the discipline and the apparent failure to fit an inclusive theory around CCB, this paper consolidates previous theoretical approaches to complaining behaviour through the development of a comprehensive taxonomy and model of CCB - both of which may be used as a basis for future empirical research.

Note that in the discussion of complaining that follows, the analysis assumes a strong link between dissatisfaction and CCB. The starting point for this paper is dissatisfaction with a product or service. Other researchers (such as Kowalski, 1996) rightly argue that some consumers complain not out of dissatisfaction, but in an effort to win concessions from a retailer or manufacturer. However, such consumers are outside the scope of this paper, which focuses on the *genuinely* dissatisfied.

## CONSUMER DISSATISFACTION: A SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The starting point for most models of CCB is consumer dissatisfaction. However, the fact that no one theory of consumer dissatisfaction is universally accepted by academics in the field of complaining behaviour is due to the problem of 'standards' (Woodruff et al. 1991). Dissatisfaction is usually conceptualised as the outcome of a comparison to a standard, although this theory is now being questioned (Yi 1990). If one accepts the comparative approach to dissatisfaction, then a key question in CCB research is: which standard(s) do consumers use to evaluate a purchase? Combining the work of Woodruff et al. (1991) and Erevelles and Leavitt (1992), there are at least six possible theoretical approaches to dissatisfaction: disconfirmation of expectations, attribution, equity, experienced-based norms, perceived performance, response to an ideal, comparison based on promises, and a non-cognitive, affective approach. Of all these theories, the three most widely discussed in the complaining behaviour literature are disconfirmation of expectations, attribution and equity. However, the question still remains as to which theory best works in practice, as Everelles and Leavitt (1992) maintain that consumers may well apply (simultaneously) different standards of comparison.

### Disconfirmation of Expectations and Attribution Theory

The most widely accepted theory of consumer dissatisfaction is that of disconfirmation of expectations. If perceived quality is lower than expectations, then negative disconfirmation is said to be the resultant cognitive state, with consumer dissatisfaction conceptualised as the resultant affective state. Disconfirmation, as an all-embracing theory of consumer dissatisfaction, has come under criticism (Erevelles and Leavitt 1992), as it has been argued that disconfirmation, in all circumstances, may not be enough to cause dissatisfaction. Folkes and Kotsos (1986) argue that a consumer's perception of the attribution of product or service failure will moderate feelings of dissatisfaction. If the cause of disconfirmation is

externally attributed (i.e. not caused by the consumer), then the consumer is justified in feeling dissatisfied. However, if the disconfirmation is internally caused (i.e. the fault of the consumer) - for example, if instructions were not followed - then dissatisfaction ought not to be directed at the retailer, or the manufacturer, involved. In other words, if negative disconfirmation is externally attributed, a consumer is not justified in engaging in complaining behaviour.

### Equity Theory

An alternative perspective of consumer dissatisfaction is provided by proponents of equity theory - such as Tse (1990) and Lapidus and Pinkerton (1995). Equity theory is concerned with the balance, and perceived fairness, of the inputs and outputs of a particular transaction. From the perspective of either side, there are three possible outcomes of a given transaction as prescribed by equity theory: (1) equity, (2) positive inequity, (3) negative inequity. Equity is the case where inputs and outputs of either side are perceived to be of an equal degree. Inequity exists where one side in the transaction is perceived to have gained the upper hand. Positive inequity is the case where, from your point of view, you have gained more from the transaction, either in terms of inputs or outputs, than the other side. Negative inequity is the case where the other side is perceived to have gained more than you. From an equity perspective, consumer dissatisfaction is the result of negative inequity, where the consumer perceives to have gained less from a transaction than the seller. A complaining behaviour is, therefore, likely if dissatisfaction is caused by negative inequity.

### Alternative Approaches to Dissatisfaction

**Experienced-Based Norms.** A further standard used as a reference point in the interpretation of consumer dissatisfaction is experienced-based norms (see Woodruff et al. 1983). Disconfirmation is said to be the result of a comparison of the most current purchase with a past purchase - either of the same brand or a different brand in the same product class. In an empirical study by Cadotte et al. (1987), both the product-based and the brand-based norms were

considered stronger explanations of consumer satisfaction than the disconfirmation-of-expectations approach.

**Comparison to an Ideal.** A question that is increasingly raised in the consumer dissatisfaction literature is: how realistic are consumers in forming their expectations? This issue was first raised by Miller (1977) in his categorisation of expectation standards. Do consumers expect a product to perform to a minimum tolerable standard, or to an 'adequate' level or to its apotheosis? The degree of expectation will obviously have an impact on the degree of (dis)satisfaction felt. Consumer dissatisfaction is increasingly probable the more the standard of expectations moves from the minimum tolerable level to the ideal.

**Comparison to Promises Made by the Seller.** Woodruff et al. (1991) argue that dissatisfaction may result from a disparity between what a seller promises (in terms of advertising, personal selling, packaging etc.) and the perceived quality of the purchase.

**Perceived Performance.** It is argued by some that, in reality, the rational, cognitive approach to consumer dissatisfaction implicit in the disconfirmation, attribution and equity interpretations do not hold true (Churchill and Surprenant 1982). Instead, it is asserted that (dis)satisfaction is caused simply by the perceived performance of the product or service irrespective of prior expectations. The idea that (dis)satisfaction is an affective response to the perceived 'goodness' or 'badness' of the purchase was also supported by the findings of Tse and Wilton (1988).

**Affective/Emotional Approach to Consumer Dissatisfaction.** There is a school of thought which asserts that cognitive elements of consumer dissatisfaction are overly stressed in the literature (Yi 1990). It has been argued that dissatisfaction is an affective or emotional state which can, or perhaps even does, bypass any cognitive process of evaluation. The implicit assumption in the cognitive approaches to dissatisfaction (such as disconfirmation of expectations) is that if dissatisfaction occurs, consumers will know precisely what caused it - because a cognitive process of evaluation has been undertaken before the affective state of dissatisfaction is reached. What these cognitive approaches ignore is that consumers may feel dissatisfied without knowing the precise reasons why. In other words, a negative affective response to a purchase may come before a cognitive evaluation - especially if a further purchase is required in the future.

## TYPES OF CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR

If consumer dissatisfaction can be defined as an affective response to some form of negative cognitive reasoning following a purchase (or a purchase situation), then complaining behaviour can be interpreted as affective action. Hirschman (1970), widely regarded as the founder of the study of consumer complaining behaviour, argued that there are three possible responses to a worsening of quality in firms, organisations and states: exit, voice and loyalty. Although loyalty - meaning taking no action and remaining with the firm - is not often discussed in the complaining behaviour literature, exit and voice are well established as two of the four cornerstones of complaining behaviour along with negative word-of-mouth and third party action (Singh 1988). However, recent thinking suggests that it is over-simplistic to conceptualise complaining behaviour as a four-dimensional phenomenon (Huefner and Hunt 1994). Retaliation, grudgeholding and avoidance have also been discussed as complaining behaviours in their own right (Hunt and Hunt 1990).

### Exit, Voice, Negative Word of Mouth and Third Party Action

The four most widely discussed complaining behaviours are exit, voice, negative word-of-mouth and third party action. Exit refers to a consumer who decides not to buy a product or service again, not to shop at a particular retailer or not to buy from a particular manufacturer again (or some combination of the above). Voice is an attempt to seek redress from the retailer or manufacturer involved (which can be either written or oral). The communication of dissatisfaction to family and

friends is classified as negative word-of-mouth - which is often in the form of a warning not to buy a certain product or to buy from a certain outlet. Third party action is the act of involving an outside agency to deal with a dissatisfying episode - such as a consumer group or a legal representative.

## Retaliation, Avoidance and Grudgeholding

Huefner and Hunt (1994) put forward three further consumer complaining behaviours: retaliation, avoidance and grudgeholding. Retaliation is the process of 'getting even' with the seller; a form of revenge. Possible manifestations of retaliation, put forward by the authors, include destruction of products and equipment, theft, negative word-of-mouth in the store itself and disruption (such as putting items in the store in the wrong place). Both avoidance and grudgeholding are forms of extended exit. The problem with the current conceptualisation of exit is that it has no time-frame attached. Different consumers may exit for different lengths of time: some may return to buying the product after a week and some may never buy the product again. According to Huefner and Hunt, exit is a short-term phenomenon, whereas avoidance is more medium-term in a deliberate attempt to 'punish' the firm. Grudgeholding is much more extreme and can last years, if not decades.

A further problem with the term 'exit' (which becomes apparent during empirical research) is that there are four types of exit. A dissatisfied consumer can stop buying the brand, or can stop buying a particular product type (regardless of producer), or can stop buying from a particular retailer or manufacturer. These types of exit can develop over time into avoidance and grudgeholding. More empirical research is needed to establish the boundaries between types of extended exit. Exit-retailer and exit-manufacturer are more intense forms of exit than exit-brand as they involve a boycott of an entire range of products, not just one particular brand.

## TAXONOMIES OF CONSUMER COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR

Of all the numerous attempts to classify the

various types of CCB discussed in section 3 - see, for example, Day (1980); Bearden and Teel (1983); and Singh (1988) - the most accepted in the literature appears to be that of the latter. Singh (1988) took three of the key dimensions of complaining behaviour - voice, negative word-of-mouth and third party action - and classified them in terms of two dichotomies based on the object toward which the complaining behaviours are directed: internal/external and involved/ uninvolved. The internal/external construct refers to whether or not the complaining behaviour is directed towards the dissatisfied consumer's social circle (i.e. internally directed) such as negative word-of-mouth, or directed outside the social circle (i.e. externally directed) such as voice. The involved/uninvolved construct is concerned with whether the object towards which the complaining behaviour is directed is involved in the dissatisfying experience. Voice would be classed as involved, whereas third party action would be considered uninvolved - because, for example, a legal representative did not directly cause the dissatisfying episode.

Out of this two-factor analysis of complaining behaviour, Singh developed a three-dimensional taxonomy. Singh tentatively argued that the complaining behaviour of 'no action' (which is referred to by Hirschman (1970) as 'loyalty') should be treated as a 'voice response' because - according to Singh's rationalisation - taking no action appears "to reflect feelings toward the seller" (p104). Singh's taxonomy is presented in Figure 1.

## Perceived Justice and The Primary/Secondary Approach to Complaining Behaviour

The taxonomy given in Figure 1 does not accurately reflect many current ideas in consumer complaining behaviour. It is argued by many academics that complaining behaviour is a sequential process. Exit, negative word of mouth and, especially, third party action may only be entered into after voice has been used, and in circumstances when the consumer has not received a satisfactory level of 'perceived justice' (Blodgett and Granbois, 1992). Negative word-of-mouth, third party action and exit may only be used, therefore, if voice has failed. This sequential

dimension presupposes a primary/secondary classification of complaining behaviour whereby, using the traditional four types of CCB, voice is seen as a primary behaviour, negative word-of-mouth and exit may be either primary or secondary, and third party action is a secondary CCB. One could also classify retaliation, avoidance and grudgeholding as secondary complaining behaviours.

**Figure 1**
**Singh's (1988) Taxonomy of Consumer**
**Complaining Behaviour**

| Voice Responses | Private Responses | Third Party Action |
|---|---|---|
| Redress seeking (voice) | Warn family and friends (negative word of mouth) | Legal action |
| No action (loyalty) | Exit | Complain to consumer organisation |

Perceived justice is an important concept in complaining behaviour research, as it is a moderator: it represents a standard by which a voiced complaint is assessed by the dissatisfied consumer (Blodgett and Granbois 1992; Blodgett and Tax 1993; and Blodgett 1994). As in the case with the analysis of dissatisfaction, the examination of perceived justice by a dissatisfied consumer is based around the concept of disconfirmation of expectations. If redress exceeds expectations, the result is positive disconfirmation and an affective state of perceived justice. If the consumer is satisfied with the level of perceived justice, then the dissatisfying episode is said to be closed, and, therefore, secondary complaining behaviours such as third party action and retaliation are not embarked upon. If redress falls short of expectations, then negative disconfirmation is the resultant cognition and perceived *injustice* is the resultant affective state.

There are three dimensions of perceived justice, any of which can contribute to a consumer's perception of (dis)satisfaction with the outcome of a dissatisfying episode: distributive,

procedural and interactional (Goodwin and Ross 1990; Blodgett and Tax 1993; and Blodgett 1994). Distributive justice is the perceived fairness of the tangible outcome. Interactive justice refers to the quality or fairness of interpersonal treatment during the conflict resolution stage. Finally, procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of procedures and criteria used by decision-makers during conflict resolution. The dissatisfied consumer needs to feel that the decision reached is impartial and unbiased.

**The Impact of Perceived Justice on CCB Classification**

If we accept the primary/secondary approach to CCB types, and the central role that voice plays, this impacts upon how the phenomena are to be classified. It is, however, as discussed above, a distortion of reality to simply suggest that voice comes first, and all other CCB types are dependent on perceptions of justice relating to it. This is because: (1) other CCB types may be engaged in concurrently with voice; and (2) other CCB types may be used instead of voice. Therefore, it seems essential, in taxonomical terms, to sub-divide negative word-of-mouth and exit in relation to whether they occurred before (or alongside), or after, a voiced complaint. Separated by the concept of a 'redress boundary' (i.e. perceived justice arising from voice) are *pre*-redress negative word-of-mouth and *pre*-redress exit on the one hand, and *post*-redress negative word-of-mouth and *post*-redress exit on the other.

Third party action, retaliation, avoidance and grudgeholding are considered as solely secondary (i.e. post-redress) actions as they are most likely to occur as a result of a low level of perceived justice. Also included as secondary CCBs are voice, public negative word-of-mouth and post-redress exit behaviours.

> Voicing may occur more than once. A reply from a firm may result in a low level of perceived justice, thus prompting the dissatisfied consumer to voice again, usually to an employee higher in rank.

> Negative word-of-mouth is divided in terms of whether it is private (i.e. directed towards

people within the dissatisfied consumer's social circle) or public (i.e. directed to people outside the consumer's social network). Negative word-of-mouth is often private in the first instance - where the dissatisfaction is communicated just to close family relations and to friends. However, if the redress is not considered just, then negative word-of-mouth may become public - for example, by writing to a newspaper.

Exit behaviours considered as solely secondary CCB types (i.e. post-voice) are exit-retailer, and exit-manufacturer. Exit-brand and exit-product-category may be both primary and secondary CCBs.

## A Two-Factor Taxonomy of Consumer Complaining Behaviour

As well as dividing CCB into primary and secondary actions, the taxonomy below includes the involved/uninvolved basis of classification as used by Singh (1988). The three involved CCB types (where the dissatisfied consumer has direct

contact with the firm) are primary and secondary voiced complaints, and retaliation. All other complaining types are considered uninvolved (where the dissatisfied consumer has either no, or indirect, contact with the firm). The taxonomy is presented in diagrammatic form in Figure 2. Note that avoidance and grudgeholding are shown in parentheses because they are extended forms of the four types of exit behaviour.

Note also that the taxonomy uses the term 'consumer dissatisfaction responses' (CDRs) rather than 'complaining behaviour' so that 'no action' and 'no further action' can be included in the classification as responses to dissatisfaction in their own right. The problem with previous classification attempts was that the complaining behaviour type of 'no action' seemed to fit somewhat artificially into the categorisation. In Singh's (1988) taxonomy, no action was included within voiced responses. The problem stems from having to consider no action as a behavioural rather than a non-behavioural response. In the introduction to this paper, complaining behaviour is referred to a "set of multiple behavioural and non-behavioural responses [to] ....dissatisfaction"

### Figure 2
### A Two-Factor Taxonomy of Consumer Dissatisfaction Responses

| | | Type | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Uninvolved | Involved |
| Level | Primary<br><br>Redress | 1. Exit-brand/product category<br>2. Private negative word of mouth<br>3. No Action | 1. Primary voiced complaint |
| | Boundary<br><br><br><br>Secondary | 1. Post-redress exit behaviour (brand/product category/retailer/ manufacturer)<br>(2. Avoidance)<br>(3. Grudgeholding)<br>4. Post-redress private negative word of mouth<br>5. Public negative word of mouth<br>6. Third party action<br>7. No further action | 1. Secondary voiced complaint<br>2. Retaliation |

(Singh, 1988 p.94). This definition is, in a sense, contradictory as a behaviour is said to include *non-behavioural* responses (such as taking no action). In order to get around this problem, it is suggested that the term 'complaining behaviour' be replaced with the term 'consumer dissatisfaction responses'.

## THE TRIGGERS OF CONSUMER DISSATISFACTION RESPONSES

What, therefore, triggers how consumers react to dissatisfaction? This question has attracted a great deal of academic attention in recent years, where researchers have attempted to isolate one factor (or a number of factors) which affect how consumers react. Dissatisfaction is not thought to be a sufficient trigger by itself to cause a complaint, because, as studies have shown in both the US (Andreasen and Best 1977, TARP 1979) and the UK (Office of Fair Trading 1986), only about one in five dissatisfied consumers actually complain to the organisation concerned. Why is this the case? Recently, Kowalski (1996) conceptualised the issue in terms of thresholds: consumers have both a dissatisfaction and a complaining threshold. Consumers may be dissatisfied easily (i.e. they have a low dissatisfaction threshold) but may be reluctant to complain because they have a high complaining threshold. As the TARP and Office of Fair Trading studies demonstrate, there must be factors at work which act as a barrier to voiced complaining behaviour; factors which, it can be argued, trigger non-voiced complaining behaviour (i.e. exit and/or private negative word-of-mouth, or no action) These triggers, when taken together, will influence a consumer's complaining threshold - which may well vary with different dissatisfying experiences. Through a literature review, eight triggers have been identified; each being made up of a number of dimensions. These triggers can be seen as an extension of Andreasen's (1988) theory that CCB is caused by some interaction of four sets of factors: costs and benefits, personality, learning and restraints. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail the research findings pertaining to each trigger, the dimensions of each trigger will briefly be considered below.

### Situation

The situational triggers of CDRs refer to the specifics of the dissatisfying episode. Those situational triggers which have been previously examined include: product/service importance (Blodgett and Granbois 1992); level of involvement (Godwin et al. 1995); dissatisfaction intensity, (Prakash 1991); perceived costs and benefits of engaging in a particular CDR (Singh and Wilkes 1996); product/service cost (Kolodinsky 1993); product/service type (Singh 1990); and the practical causes of dissatisfaction - such as product recalls, service delays, and specific product characteristics (Standop 1991; Feinberg et al. 1996).

### Attribution

There are two dimensions of attribution theory which are considered triggers of CDRs: perceptions of controllability and stability (Blodgett and Granbois 1992; and Singh and Wilkes 1996). Controllability refers to whether or not the dissatisfied consumer perceives that the company involved could have prevented the dissatisfying episode from occurring, and stability refers to the dissatisfied consumer's perception of whether the product/service failure is short or long term.

### Demographics

Demographic factors linked to propensity to complain include age (Fails and Francis 1996); gender (Parker et al. 1993); income (Fails and Francis 1996); educational level (Kolodinsky and Aleong 1990); rural/urban location of dissatisfied consumer (Liefield 1980); impact of having young children (Kolodinsky 1993); and the cost-sensitivity of the dissatisfied consumer (Parker et al. 1993).

### Psychographics

Psychographic triggers of CDRs which have been examined include assertiveness/level of confidence and aggression (Richins 1983); attitude to, and past experience of, complaining, (Singh and Wilkes 1996); willingness to engage in uncomfortable situations (Tesser and Rosen 1975);

level of consumerism (Slama et al. 1993); personal values (Rogers et al. 1992); and locus of control (i.e. a belief in fatalism) (Foxman et al. 1990).

### Company/Consumer Relationship

This trigger relates to such factors as degree of loyalty felt by the dissatisfied consumer to the company (Blodgett and Granbois 1992); company size (Kolodinsky and Aleong 1990); and the degree of interaction between company and consumer (Fornell and Didow 1980).

### Marketplace/Consumer Relationship

It is argued that the market structure within which the company involved in the dissatisfying episode operates will have an effect on whether or not a consumer voices after a dissatisfying episode (Singh and Wilkes 1996).

### Cultural Factors

This trigger is concerned with the issue of nationality: do consumers in some countries have a higher propensity to complain than consumers in other countries? (Andreasen and Best 1977, Raven and Foxman 1994).

### Social Factors

This trigger is concerned with the influence or persuasion of other people (i.e. the degree of responsiveness to peer pressure) (Malafi et al. 1993; and Slama and Celuch 1994).

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: MODELS OF THE COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR PROCESS

A number of theoretical models of complaining behaviour have been developed which seek to integrate work on both dissatisfaction, and taxonomies and triggers of complaining behaviour (see for example Day 1984; Nantel 1985; Blodgett and Granbois 1992; and Singh and Wilkes 1991). Of all these models, that of Blodgett and Granbois is the most comprehensive, and is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**
**Blodgett and Granbois' (1992) Conceptual Model of Consumer Complaining Behaviour**
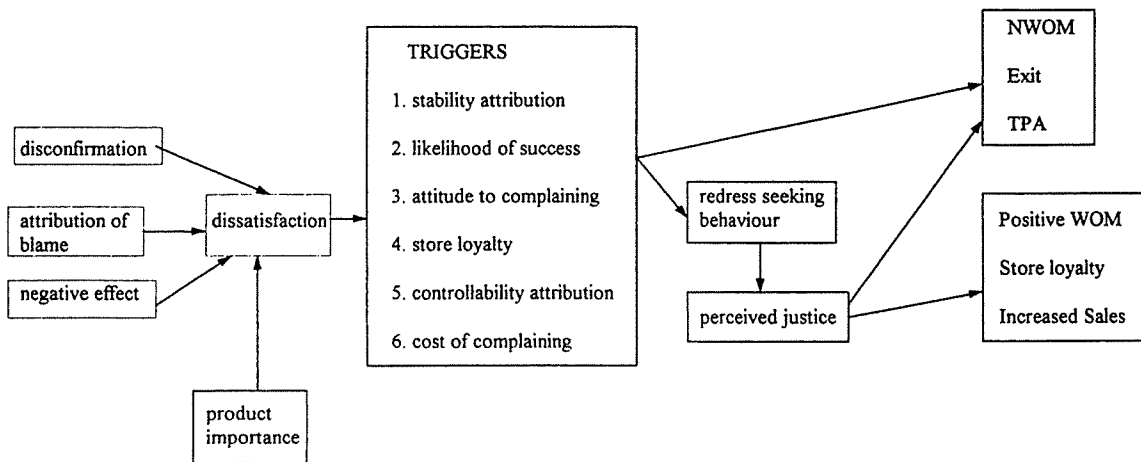


NWOM = negative word of mouth
WOM = word of mouth
TPA = third party action

**Figure 4**
**A Four-Stage Conceptual Model of COnsumer Dissatisfaction Responses**
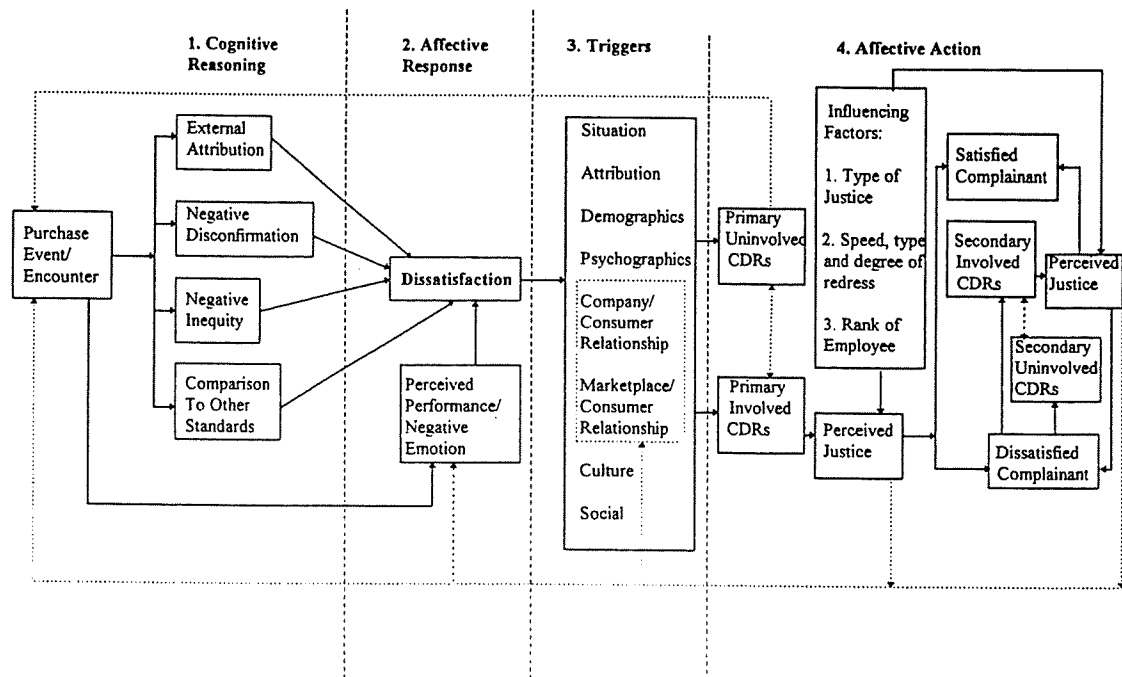


There are three drawbacks to Blodgett and Granbois' model. Firstly, the complaining behaviour types of retaliation, grudgeholding and avoidance are not included. Secondly, the model does not include all possible complaining behaviour triggers such as demographic influences (e.g. age or gender), psychographic influences (such as aggression and attitude to complaining), alienation from the marketplace, and cultural and · social influences. Thirdly, the model does not include all possible theoretical approaches to dissatisfaction: it only includes disconfirmation and attribution, together with a somewhat vague concept the authors call "negative effect".

In the light of these comments, a further model of complaining behaviour is now proposed which includes all the triggers of CDRs discussed earlier, as well as all possible responses to dissatisfaction which have been discussed in the complaining behaviour literature. The model uses the taxonomical approach shown in Figure 2, which classes complaining behaviour types in terms of two dichotomies: involved/uninvolved and primary/secondary. Note that all the triggers are treated equally - i.e. none are considered as

moderating influences as this is very difficult to prove empirically. Also note the inclusion of factors that affect the dissatisfied consumer's perception of justice. It is argued that factors other than procedural, interactional and distributive justice impact on whether or not a dissatisfied consumer takes a complaint further. Other factors which must be taken into account are the speed of redress, the degree of redress sought, the type of redress sought (e.g. monetary or an apology), and the rank of the employee dealing with the voiced complaint. Note that the model includes "buying behaviour" and feedback loops (as indicated by the dotted lines) which are to signify that consumers do not buy in a vacuum: both past complaining and purchase experiences affect future buying behaviour. It may well be the case that, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer of this paper, a single dissatisfying experience with a product or service may be dismissed as an isolated incident, but a repetition over time (i.e. a cumulative experience) might well trigger a complaining behaviour. Therefore, a repetition of the problem may result in a more intense affective response. Clearly the temporal dimension of CCB is an area

ripe for future conceptual and empirical research. It is also shown on the model, through dotted lines that past levels of perceived justice will have an impact on future company/consumer, and marketplace/consumer, relationships. The four stages of the model are marked by vertical dashed lines.

## CONCLUSION

Through a review of the current literature on complaining behaviour, this paper offers a comprehensive taxonomy and model of consumer dissatisfaction responses. The next step will involve the empirical testing of the model in order to assess its validity. As East (1998b) makes clear, we are still some way off from assessing the relative weight of each trigger of consumer dissatisfaction responses. Once we have established that, we can then assess how important are the triggers' various dimensions. Singh's study (1990) of a selection of the triggers of CDRs explained 55% of variance of consumers' complaining behaviour. It is hoped that by applying the taxonomy and model presented here, future research may be able to explain a great deal more of the variance in consumer complaining behaviour than has previously been reported in the literature.

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