

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MODELING CONSUMERS' RESPONSE TO MARKETPLACE DISSATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The understanding of why dissatisfied consumers respond the way they do is important from theoretical, managerial, and public policy perspectives. Yet research into this post-purchase phenomenon has tended to be somewhat fragmented. We propose a holistic, process oriented model which attempts to integrate the different streams of consumer complaining behavior (CCB) research in a manner largely consistent with previous theoretical and empirical research. Based on this model, several testable hypotheses are developed to guide future CCB research. Furthermore, we analyze past CCB research using the proposed model. This analysis reveals several gaps in the CCB literature that are amenable to empirical investigation by use of the proposed model. In order to guide such empirical investigation, we delineate several avenues for future research into the CCB phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

Following the first conference on consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) and complaining behavior (CCB) in 1976, a surge in both theoretical and empirical research has explored the antecedents of these two conditions. Over the last ten years, a consensus has developed around the confirmation/disconfirmation of expectations paradigm (Barbeau 1985) that integrates comparison level theory (Thibaut and Kelly 1959; Oliver 1980) and assimilation-contrast theory (Sherif and Hovland 1961; Olshavsky and Miller 1972) as the foundation for understanding when and why consumers are satisfied or dissatisfied.

However, less systematic attention has been directed to understanding why consumers respond the way they do once they attain a state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Singh and Howell 1985; Robinson 1979; Folkes 1984). This is particularly true with respect to dissatisfaction.

For instance, while satisfaction is posited to affect future attitudes in a rather direct fashion (Oliver 1980; Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins 1983; LaBarbera and Mazursky 1983), Bearden and Teel (1983) report that such direct effect for dissatisfaction outcomes may not be tenable because of the intervening role of a "complex" behavior: consumer complaint behavior (CCB). When and why do consumers complain? The implications of this question for researchers, practitioners and public policy officials are significant (TARP 1986; Resnik and Harmon 1983; Richins 1983b; Andreasen 1985). Practitioners would find this understanding useful in determining the extent of marketplace dissatisfaction and in division programs to alleviate consumer complaints (Ross and Oliver 1984; TARP 1986). From a theoretical perspective, the study of CCB appears critical in the explanation and predication of consumer repurchase intentions and brand loyalty (Andreasen 1977; Day 1984; Richins 1983b; Engel and Blackwell 1982). Further, from a public policy perspective, the nature and extent of complaint responses in an industry appear to be related to consumer and social welfare (Hirschman 1970; Andreasen 1984; 1985).

Despite its importance, extant research on understanding why consumers complain the way they do has been described as "relatively fragmented" (Richins 1979; p. 30). In a recent study Bearden and Mason (1984) investigated thirteen variables as direct predictors of CCB, and noted that the tested constructs represent only a sub-set of "a myriad of factors that may well affect complaint behavior." (p. 491). Thus several researchers suggest that a theoretical framework that integrates extant CCB research streams is critically needed (Richins 1979; Folkes 1984; Singh and Howell 1985). The purpose of the present paper is to fill this gap in current CCB research.

More specifically, we propose a framework

for modeling consumers' responses to marketplace dissatisfaction that is sufficiently rigorous from a theoretical perspective, yet can also be operationalized for empirical verification. In particular, the proposed framework attempts to bring together the different streams of CCB research in a manner consistent with previous empirical and theoretical work. The resulting CCB model includes expectancy-value judgements and attitude toward the act of complaining in a well specified framework. The model is shown to result in several testable hypotheses about the CCB phenomenon that fill critical gaps in the current literature. Nevertheless, the proposed model should be viewed as a *hypothetical* framework that represents a model that helps integrate past CCB research; thus, no attempt is made to suggest that the model is "true" in any sense of the term. What is critical, however, is that the proposed model is amenable to empirical testing and theoretical refinement so that it can assist in directing future research and in the cumulation of research in the CCB area. We close with a discussion of the implications of our study for researchers and guidelines for programmatic research into the CCB phenomenon. We begin with a brief review the CCB literature.

DISSATISFACTION RESPONSES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Because Singh and Howell (1985) and Robinson (1979) have provided a rather comprehensive review of the CCB literature, we present a focused discussion for purposes of context only. Two perspectives on consumers' responses subsequent to perceived dissatisfaction are suggested: the direct effects and the process conceptualizations (Singh and Howell 1985). In the direct effects perspective, perceived dissatisfaction and evoked responses are directly linked (Bearden and Teel 1983). Two direct effects of dissatisfaction are hypothesized: (a) a direct effect on complaint responses, and (b) a direct and independent effect on future attitudes and intentions.

In contrast, proponents of the process approach see perceived dissatisfaction as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for explaining or predicting consumer complaint

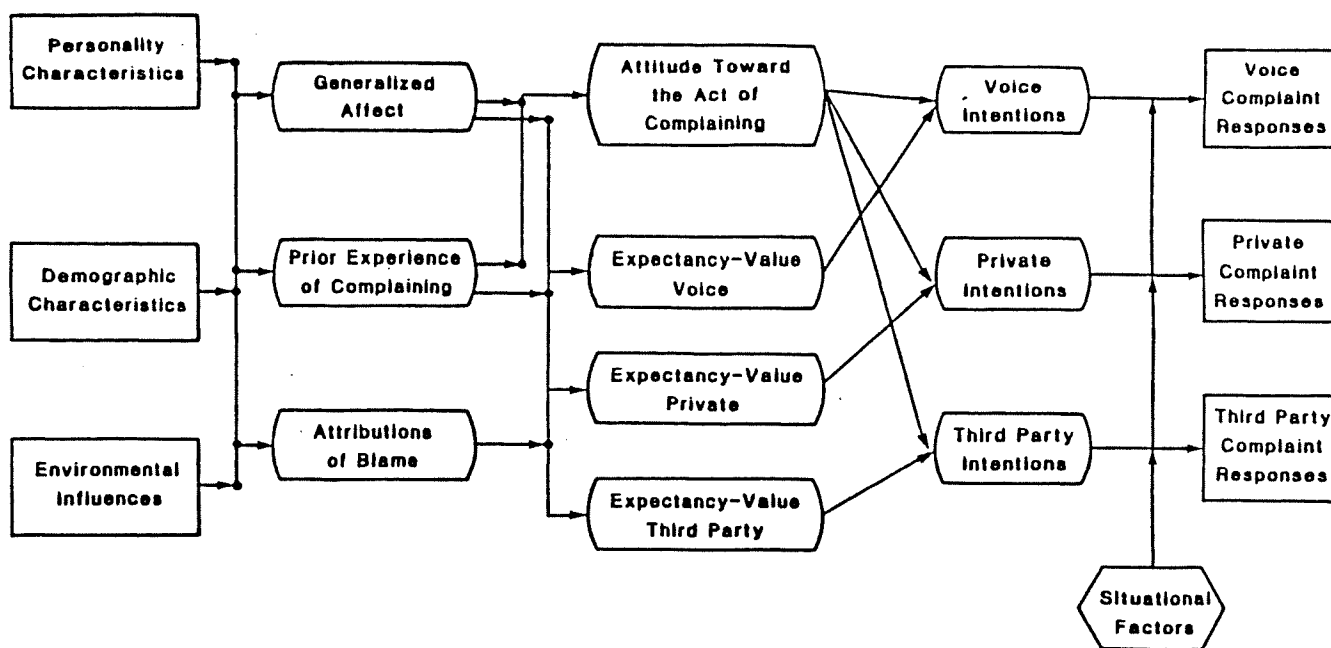
responses (CCB). Perceived dissatisfaction is hypothesized to be an emotional state that motivates consumers to undergo a process (Day 1984). This process results in specific complaint responses (CCB) which are proposed to depend not so much on how strongly the emotions of dissatisfactions are felt but more on consumer perceptions of the attribution of dissatisfactions, costs and benefits involved, expectancy of outcomes, and product importance (Day 1984; Richins 1979).

It is unlikely that the direct effects approach will prove to be satisfactory in explaining post-dissatisfaction responses. First, it is intuitively implausible that complaint responses and their resolution (or lack thereof) would not affect future attitudes and intentions. In other words, the direct effect of dissatisfaction on future attitudes/intentions will most likely be affected by specific complaint responses and the way such complaints are resolved. Second, empirical studies have generally failed to support the direct relationship between dissatisfaction and complaint responses. Bearden and Teel (1983) report that only 15% of the observed variation in complaint reports could be explained with this perspective. They, therefore, conclude that the poor explanation may be because of some model misspecification "due to omission of constructs likely to influence such complex behavior as complaining (e.g., costs and benefits of complaining and individual circumstances)" (p.8).

Critical evaluation of the process conceptualization is hampered by a lack of systematic empirical and theoretical work utilizing their perspective (Day 1984; Folkes 1984). Several promising but largely unconnected streams of CCB process research have emerged (Richins 1979; Singh and Howell 1985). A brief overview of these streams is appropriate here.

The first of these streams identifies various personality and demographic variables as predictors of complaint responses (Richins 1983a; Fornell and Westbrook 1979; Bearden and Crockett 1981). While statistically significant correlations have been found, Gronhaug and Zaltman (1981) show that such results may be artifacts of the extent of marketplace activity. The second stream investigates psychological variables such as consumer alienation from the marketplace

Figure 1
The Proposed Model of CCB Process and It's Outcomes



and attitude toward the act of complaining (Allison 1978; Lundstrom and Lamont 1976; Bearden and Mason 1983; Richins 1982). A strong attitude-intention relationship is reported, but the attitude-behavior link is generally weak. The third stream attempts to understand the CCB process from an economic theory perspective based primarily on Hirschman's (1970) framework (Fornell and Didow 1980; Andreassen 1984, 1985). Dissatisfaction responses are viewed as outcomes of a decision-making process that involves individual level variables (e.g., perceived heterogeneity of offerings, likely success of complaint responses, etc.) (see Andreassen 1985), as well as industry level characteristics (e.g., number of competitors, breadth of distribution) (Fornell and Didow 1980; Fornell and Robinson 1983). Although CCB researchers have paid much less attention to this stream, reported results explain 20-50% of the variation in complaint responses (Fornell and Didow 1980; Fornell and Robinson 1983). In the last research stream, consumers' perceptions of who is to be "blamed"

for the cause of dissatisfaction (self/seller) and its associated characteristics (stability and controllability) are explored as predictors of evoked complaint responses (Folkes 1984, Folkes and Kotsos 1986). The attributional model proposed by Weiner (1980) affords a framework for most such studies. Empirical support for this approach is mixed (Krishnan and Valle 1979; Valle and Wallendorf 1977; Folkes 1984; Richins 1983a), but is comparable to or better than the direct effects model.

Although the various CCB streams appear useful in understanding CCB processes, the issues pertaining to how the different approaches relate to each other has remained largely unexplored. The specific purpose of this paper is to propose a process model that ties together the different perspectives in a manner consistent with previous empirical and theoretical work. In so doing, we show that the proposed model is useful in analyzing previous findings and provides impetus for future research.

THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR MODELING MARKETPLACE DISSATISFACTION

The model displayed in Figure 1 addresses the situation that follows a post-purchase dissatisfaction based on the process conceptualization. The perception of dissatisfaction triggers the whole process. If an individual does not perceive some dissatisfaction, subsequent elements of the model do not come into play. Why some situations are perceived to be dissatisfying is probably explained by perceived negative disconfirmation of expectations (Oliver 1980; Bearden and Teel 1983). The model accepts that different individuals may perceive different amounts of dissatisfaction in very similar episodes. However, it is proposed that the level of dissatisfaction has no direct impact on the nature and kind of complaint responses chosen by the individual (Day 1984; Richins 1983b). Rather, the dissatisfaction level is hypothesized to moderate the effects of proposed antecedents on complaint intentions. Its specific effect and related hypotheses are examined later.

Complaint Response Variables

The proposed framework inputs perceived dissatisfaction and yields specific complaint responses. The type of probable complaint responses could range from no action to legal actions (Day, et. al. 1981). Furthermore, consumers most likely engage in multiple complaint responses for a given dissatisfaction episode such as complain to the retailer and talk to friends and relatives about the bad experience. Because of this multiplicity of outcomes, the issue of the dimensionality and conceptualization of the CCB construct is critical from the perspective of models that attempt to explain CCB. In other words, the proposed CCB process model would need to specify antecedents at the level of individual dimension(s) of CCB.

Several researchers have attempted to address the preceding issue. Day and Landon (1977) proposed a two-dimensional conceptualization consisting of public (e.g., voicing complaints) and private (e.g., word-of-mouth) responses. In contrast, Day (1980) posits three dimensions for

CCB based on the purpose of complaining; redress seeking (e.g., refund), complaining (e.g., other than redress seeking) and personal boycott (e.g., exit from exchange relationship). Finally, Bearden and Teel (1983) suggested a one-dimensional, Guttman operationalization for the complaint response construct. More recent research, however, suggests that these conceptualizations are unsatisfactory representations of empirical complaint responses across different situations (Singh 1988). Singh's results show that complaint responses can be appropriately conceptualized as consisting of three distinct dimensions: (1) voice responses, including actions directed toward the seller (i.e., retailer and/or manufacturer); (2) private responses, that is, actions involving informal word-of-mouth communication to friends and relatives and stopping patronage of the dissatisfying product/seller (i.e., exit); and (3) third party responses, including actions directed toward external agencies such as the Better Business Bureau and legal options (see Singh 1988 for a formalization of this taxonomy). Following these results, the dependent outcome construct, CCB, is conceptualized as tri-dimensional. The purpose of the proposed model is then to explicate the antecedents for each of the three dimensions of CCB.

Complaint Intentions

Consistent with general theories in consumer behavior (e.g., Engel and Blackwell 1982; Howard and Sheth 1969), complaint intentions are postulated to be direct antecedents of specific consumer responses. Specifically, complaint intentions is conceptualized as the likelihood that a particular complaint response would be chosen as a consumer's response to marketplace dissatisfaction. However, because the three complaint response dimensions are found to be distinct (Singh 1988), it is logical to deduce that complaining intentions is also a multi-dimensional construct. Consequently, the model in Figure 1 posits three distinct dimensions of complaint intentions: (1) voice, (2) private and (3) third party intentions. Additionally, intentions are proposed to have a one-to-one correspondence with consumer response, within but *not* across CCB dimensions. That is, voice intentions are thought

to influence voice responses *only*, and do not effect private or third party responses. Likewise, private and third party *intentions* are posited to only effect private and third party *responses* respectively. Like Richins (1982), however, we believe that situational variables (e.g., time and location of seller) may sometimes result in complaint responses that are inconsistent with intentions.

Two Routes to Complaint Intentions

Based on CCB research, two routes to complaint intentions are proposed. One route represents the psychological perspective that an individual's attitude toward the act of complaining has a direct impact on his/her CCB intentions (Richins 1982; Day 1980; Bearden and Crockett 1981). This attitude construct is conceptualized as an overall affect towards "goodness" or "badness" of complaining to sellers *per se*, and is not specific to a given episode of dissatisfaction. This conceptualization agrees with Richins (1982). Because significant variation in complaint responses has been consistently observed across industries (Best and Andreasen 1977; Day and Ash 1979; Robinson 1979), it is postulated that consumers' affect toward the act of complaining is industry specific. In other words, perceptions of goodness/badness of complaining to sellers may vary across the type of sellers (i.e., industries). The more positive the attitude, the greater the likelihood of engaging in complaint responses and vice versa. In general, attitude toward the act of complaining is a multi-faceted construct (Richins 1982). Furthermore, since the attitude construct is conceptualized as overall affect, a direct and independent path from attitude toward the act of complaining to each of three dimensions of complaint intentions is hypothesized (see Figure 1). No direct effect on complaint responses is posited, however.

The second route to intentions represents the economic framework of Hirschman (1970). Before the related concepts are introduced, it is appropriate to draw a clear distinction between complaint responses and their consequences. The CCB responses represent consumer actions (e.g., voice) that may be instrumental in realizing some desired consequences (e.g., refund). Thus,

complaint responses are the means toward some desired ends (consequences). In operationalizing Hirschman's theory, two related concepts are introduced: (1) an evaluation of the "probability of a consequence" or expectancy, and (2) a judgement as to the "value of a consequence" for the various complaint responses. Like Granbois, Summers and Frazier (1977), we postulate expectancy to imply an individual's subjective, prior probability of the instrumentality for each of the potential response options. Based on Day (1984) and Richins (1979) the "value" construct is conceptualized as the subjective evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with each outcome (e.g., redress) that result from each of the alternative complaint responses (e.g., voice). The model proposes a multiplicative rule for combining expectancy and value of a consequence corresponding to individual complaint responses, although other information processing rules are also plausible.

Unlike the attitude construct, the expectancy-value construct is not only industry-specific, but is also posited to be episode specific. That is, different expectancies and/or value evaluations may result depending on the characteristics of the specific dissatisfaction experience. It is reasonable to expect that the expectancy-value (EV) construct, like complaint responses, would also be tri-dimensional. More specifically we propose (1) EV-Voice (EV judgements of consequences resulting from voice responses), (2) EV-Private, (EV judgement of consequences resulting from private responses), and (3) EV-Third (EV judgement of consequences resulting from third party responses) (see Figure 1). On the expectation that the three complaint dimensions will be distinct and possess divergent validity, it is hypothesized that EV judgements would have one-to-one correspondence with complaint intentions within a dimension, but *not* across dimensions. That is, EV-Voice is posited to affect voice intentions directly, but not private and third party intentions. Similar hypotheses follow for EV-Private and EV-Third party. No direct effects on complaint responses are hypothesized, however.

The evaluation of expectancy-value judgements is sometimes a complex cognitive process requiring both a high degree of involvement in the process and allocation of information processing

capacity (cf. to attitudinal route). It is possible then that some individuals in some situations will choose to engage in expectancy-value judgements before determining what complaint responses to engage in (cf. a "rational" consumer), while the same individuals in other situations may choose to use attitude toward the act of complaining as the sole basis of their complaint responses. In still other situations, both routes may be operative. Specific hypotheses about which route is complaint under what conditions are discussed below.

Generalized Affect, Prior Experience and Attributions of Blame

Consistent with the recommendation of Westbrook (1980), the construct of generalized affect pertaining to consumption activities is postulated to be an antecedent to the attitude construct. Generalized affect represents an individual's global feelings about the marketplace, the behavior of firms and businesses, and the consumption of products and services. Andreasen's (1985) results indicate that such global feelings may vary across industries/product categories. Like Day (1980), the model suggests that consumer discontent (Lundstrom and Lamont 1976) and consumer alienation from the marketplace (Allison 1978) are two potential operationalizations of generalized affect. In addition, it is apparent that an individual's attitude toward the marketplace would influence what he/she expects of the seller in exchange interactions. For this reason, a direct positive path from generalized affect to expectancy value judgements is hypothesized.

Research by Folkes (1984) among others suggests that the consumer's probability of a consequence (e.g., obtaining a refund) is affected by whether self or seller is blamed for the dissatisfaction. That is, external (i.e., seller) attributions would most likely result in higher expectancies of seller responsiveness. Similarly, attributions of stability (temporary/permanent) and controllability (volitional/nonvolitional) for product dissatisfaction are hypothesized to affect expectancies of various CCB responses in a manner suggested by Folkes (1984). For instance, volitional attributions are hypothesized to affect voice expectancies negatively. Because private

and third party expectancies have heretofore not been investigated, hypotheses regarding these constructs are conjectural. For example, volitional attributions are expected to affect private and third party expectancies positively since consumers may perceive voicing to the seller as less fruitful and thus may consider other avenues for communicating this dissatisfaction (see TARP 1986). Further, attributions are conceptualized as episode specific (Folkes 1984). For this reason, a path from the attribution construct to the non-episode specific attitude construct is not hypothesized.

The effects of prior experience are supported by learning theories. The nature (good/bad) and the extent (frequent/infrequent) of previous complaining experiences become assimilated into an individual's attitude toward the act of complaining. Such processes are explained by assimilation-contrast theory (Sherif and Hovland 1961). Further, such prior experiences affect an individual's cognitions about, for instance, how a retailer/manufacturer would probably respond to voiced complaints, and the cost/benefits involved in such responses. Similar effects are hypothesized for private and third party responses. Adaptation level theory (Helson 1959) affords a theoretical framework to propose the preceding affects.

Exogenous Variables

Three major exogenous variables are specified in the CCB process model: demographic, personality and environmental characteristics. Because none of these variables are defined as specific to dissatisfaction or complaint responses, they are positioned farthest from the outcome variables and are hypothesized to affect directly only the immediately following variables. Earlier CCB research suggests several demographic factors that may be useful in this context, notably education, income, age and occupation (Robinson 1979). Following these studies, it is hypothesized that consumers who are better educated, earn higher incomes, are younger and occupy professional jobs would tend to have (a) more positive attitudes towards businesses, and (b) greater experience in complaining. Similarly, several personality variables appear useful for

further investigation in regard to the proposed CCB process model, specifically aggressiveness, assertiveness, self-confidence, locus of control, dogmatism and self-monitoring (Singh and Howell 1985; Robinson 1979; Richins 1983a).

Environmental influences include effects due to the nature of the industry whose product/service is involved in the dissatisfaction, the general economic climate, and the type of business conditions in the consumers' geographic area, among other factors. Studies by Fornell and Didow (1980) and Fornell and Robinson (1983) have explored the impact of such factors. Specifically these studies show that the nature of industry (i.e., number of competing firms) and distribution breadth (wide or narrow) effects the complaint responses and consumers' perceptions of responses that would yield fruitful outcomes. The proposed model posits that such factors influence attitudinal, expectancy-value and response variables only indirectly through their effect on consumers' global effect toward that industry, attributions of blame and prior experience of complaining with that industry.

The Moderating Role of Dissatisfaction

Because expectancy-value judgements (cognitive) and attitudes (affective) are two routes to CCB intentions, it is appropriate to assess whether the proposed model can predict the dominant route (if any) in a specific dissatisfaction situation. Since a general model that incorporates the various perspectives has not been investigated, no conceptual or empirical answer is suggested by previous literature.

Bagozzi's (1983) pre-purchase intentions typology affords some theoretical guidelines. His typology specifies conditions when expectancy-value judgements, attitudes or both would be the predominant modes of pre-purchase intentions. This specification is based on the criteria of product involvement and prior knowledge (or learning). For instance, Bagozzi (1983) suggests a cognitive response model is operative when the product involvement is either medium or high, and prior learning is low. When prior learning is high two possibilities are proposed: for high involvement, the predominant mode is affective response model, but for medium

levels of involvement, both affective and cognitive routes are operative. The concept of product involvement is generally related to the extent of effort expended in the particular purchase activity. The corresponding concept in the CCB process is the level of dissatisfaction, since it represents the amount of effort that will be expended in the complaint decision-making process (Richins 1983b). The concept of prior knowledge is akin to the prior experience of complaining construct in CCB processes. Figure 2 presents a typology for CCB process following Bagozzi's (1983) proposals.

Figure 2
The Moderating Role of Dissatisfaction and Prior Experiences in the CCB Process

		Prior Experience of Complaining	
		Low	High
Level of Dissatisfaction	Low	Impulse Behavior	Habits
	Medium	Expectancy-Value Judgements	Both: Attitudes and Expectancy-Value Judgments
	High	Expectancy-Value Judgements	Attitude Toward the Act of Complaining

Interpretation of Figure 2 is straightforward. For instance, when the level of dissatisfaction is either medium or high, and the consumer has had no previous complaint experience, the predominant mode of the CCB process is hypothesized as the expectancy-value judgements. This hypothesis can be defended on two grounds. First, lower levels of prior experience slow the formation of attitude toward the act of complaining. This is particularly true since previous research suggests that the attitude construct may vary with type of sellers (or industries) involved. Second, high dissatisfaction levels provide the necessary motivation for a careful evaluation of the potential actions for

seeking redress. This suggests an expectancy-value mode of decision processes. Similarly, for substantial prior knowledge and learning about making complaints, the tendency is to adopt the attitude route for CCB responses for high levels of dissatisfactions; when this level is only moderate, both routes may be operative. For low levels of dissatisfactions, motivation to expend effort in CCB process is lacking; thus the predominant mode is either impulse complaint response or an entirely habitual response depending on the level of prior knowledge and learning. Clearly, these hypotheses are tentative and open to empirical investigation.

EVALUATION OF THE PROPOSED MODEL AND ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS

It is *not* the intention of the authors to suggest that the proposed model is "correct" or "true" in some sense. Rather, our modest aim is to propose a model that (1) brings together several different research streams into a single framework that is theoretically defensible, (2) is amenable to development of empirically testable hypotheses, and (3) sheds interesting insights into the CCB phenomenon. In order to underscore these points, we first analyze previous CCB research findings using the proposed model and stress the point that the proposed framework offers interesting insights into the CCB phenomenon. Thereafter, we develop several hypotheses suggested by the proposed model that can be subjected to empirical investigation. Finally, we close with some guidelines for future CCB researchers.

Analyzing Previous CCB Research Using the Proposed Model

A study by Warland, Hermann and Willits (1975), on consumer complaints exemplifies research findings in the area of consumer complaint behavior. Respondents were asked to recall their most recent, salient, negative experiences in the marketplace and to report their reactions to that experience. The authors conclude that "two types of dissatisfied consumers have emerged on the basis of [their] refined definition: the dissatisfied consumer activists (Upset-Action

Group) and the dissatisfied passive consumers (Upset-No Action Group)."

"Upset-Action" consumers are younger, better educated, earn higher incomes, participate more in groups and are more politically committed than the "Upset-No Action" consumers. Does this imply that some types of consumers use different processes for arriving at CCB than another "type?" Are demographic and personality variables "good" predictors of CCB outcomes?

The proposed model identifies two sources of variance in complaint behaviors: (a) differences in attitude toward the act of complaining, and (b) differences in expectancy-value judgements. Therefore, two consumers could arrive at the *same decision* of CCB intentions and yet could have *different* attitudes and expectancy-value judgements. Similarly, two consumers with almost *similar* attitudes toward the act of complaining could have *different* CCB intentions because of differences in their expectancy-value judgements. Interesting questions can be posed in the study of Warland, *et al.* (1975). Do consumers in the "Upset-Action" group have similar attitudes and expectancy-value judgements? Are the "Upset-No Action" consumers different from "Upset-Action" due to attitudes or to expectancy-value judgements? Do "Upset-Action" groups have stable attitudes toward the act of complaining and/or expectancy-value judgements across dissatisfaction episodes? Unfortunately, these kinds of issues were not investigated. Nevertheless, the proposed model suggests that these kinds of issues must be explored if we wish to test the hypothesis that a well defined "Upset-Action" group of consumers exists.

Some recent CCB studies do use higher level predictors (compared to demographics, personality, etc.) such as attitude towards the act of complaining, expectations of seller responsiveness, attribution of blame, etc. These studies are still limited in their contribution to the understanding of the CCB process for two reasons: (a) they do not investigate major predictors representing the four streams of research in *one* study; and (b) they do not account for inter-relationships *among* the predictors. For instance, Folkes (1984) focused on causal attributions, Richins (1983a) on retailer responsiveness, problem severity and attributions

(omitting attitude toward the act of complaining), and Bearden and Mason (1983) on attitudes, affective feelings and intentions (omitting expectancy-value judgements). While these studies demonstrate empirical corroboration of individual predictors, several issues remain unanswered. In *which* situations is predictor x (e.g., attitude toward the act of complaining) more important than predictor y (e.g., expectancy-value judgements), or, are they similar in strength? Do different product/service dissatisfactions effect the *relative importance* of predictors? Are direct effects of some predictors (e.g., attributions, prior experience) less significant than their indirect effects, that is, through other predictors (e.g., expectancy-value judgements)? These issues were not investigated, perhaps due to a lack of a conceptual model that incorporates the different predictors. Our model of CCB processes, however, suggests that such issues must be investigated if we are to understand the "why" of CCB.

Key Hypotheses

In order to facilitate a systematic investigations of the proposed model, we sought to specify the key hypotheses suggested by the framework in Figures 1 and 2. These hypotheses are listed in Table 1. Hypotheses H_1 through H_4 relate to the effects of expectancy value judgements and attitude toward the act of complaining on CCB intentions. Specifically, while hypotheses H_1 and H_2 focus on the *direct* effects of these predictors, hypotheses H_3 and H_4 posit conditions for their *relative* effects. Hypothesis H_5 examines the role of prior experience, H_6 of attributions of blame, and H_7 concerns itself with the effects of consumer alienation from the marketplace and consumer discontent. The role of demographic and personality factors is captured by hypothesis H_8 . Finally, hypothesis H_9 evaluates the potency of the proposed model over that of a "direct" effects model utilized by Bearden and Teel (1983).

Not unlike other behavioral models, the empirical testing of the preceding hypotheses will pose some problems (e.g., in measurement, research design). However, these problems appear tractable to usual research procedures and programmatic research in this area can be mapped.

In order to guide such programmatic research, we provide several guidelines for future researchers.

Table 1
Research Hypotheses Suggested by the
CCB Process Model

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- H_1 : The higher the expectancy-value judgements for each of the various courses of complaining actions, the stronger the intentions to engage in complaining behavior.
 - H_2 : The more positive the attitude towards the act of complaining, the greater the tendency to engage in complaining actions when faced with a dissatisfying experience.
 - H_3 : For moderate to high levels of dissatisfaction, the greater the prior knowledge and experience in complaining, the stronger the relationship between expectancy-value judgements and intentions.
 - H_4 : Similarly, for moderate to high levels of dissatisfaction, the lower the prior experience and knowledge in making complaints, the weaker the relationship between expectancy-value judgements and intentions to complain.
 - H_5 : For lower levels of dissatisfaction, the intentions to engage in complaining behavior are dependent either only on prior experiences (i.e., habits) or on impulse reactions.
 - H_6 : The greater the dissatisfaction attributed to the members of the distribution channel, rather than the consumer (external attributions), the higher the expectancy-value judgements perceived by consumers. These attributions have no direct effect on the intentions to complain but only affect intentions to complain indirectly through expectancy-value judgements.
 - H_7 : The feelings of alienation from the marketplace and consumer discontent have only indirect effects on intentions to engage in complaining behavior. This indirect effect is through attitude towards the act of complaining.
 - H_8 : The demographic variables of age, sex, income and social class have no direct effects on intentions to engage in complaining behavior but have indirect effect through the constructs of expectancy-value judgements and attitude towards that act of complaining.
 - H_9 : The variance explained in the intentions to engage in complaining behavior by the process model of expectancy-value judgements and attitudes is higher than that explained by the degree of dissatisfaction alone.
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Guidelines for Testing the Proposed Model

We discuss conceptual, measurement and research design issues in order to provide specific guidelines to future researchers for testing the proposed model.

Conceptual Issues. Several conceptual issues need to be examined in a systematic manner. Perhaps the most important issue involves the complexity/usefulness tradeoff. The proposed framework, though very testable, is relatively complex. Other competing models (e.g., Day 1984) are comparatively less complex. Is the additional complexity useful in the explanation and prediction of responses to consumer dissatisfaction? Future empirical investigations would help to answer this question. However, even if the proposed model is empirically supported, the issue would have to be examined from a conceptual standpoint as well. As suggested by Leong (1985) two criteria can be established. First, the proposed model should be evaluated against the null hypotheses of the "direct" effects model as well as the individual streams of research (e.g., psychological, economic, etc.). Such a procedure would provide a stronger test of the model's usefulness than the normal procedure for setting up the null hypothesis as a "no effects" model. Second, if the null hypothesis is rejected by future empirical investigations (in favor of the proposed model), a "good-enough" criterion (see Leong 1985) is also needed for evaluating the benefits of complexity. This includes not only the issues relating to hypothesis-testing (such as proposed by Leong) but also the *increase* in the level of explanation. Specifically, future empirical investigations should not be limited to the overall fit of the model, but also examine the relative effects of various predictors (e.g., hypotheses H_3 and H_4) and the moderating role of dissatisfaction (Figure 2). If these specific hypotheses are also supported, understanding of consumer dissatisfaction would be greatly increased.

Measurement Issues. Several guidelines can be laid down for the operationalization of the constructs used in the proposed model. First, some constructs such as the attitude toward the act of complaining, dissatisfaction, etc., have been

previously developed and employed in CCB research and therefore can be used directly. Other constructs, such as prior experience, expectancy value judgements, etc., can be adapted from similar concepts developed in the area of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) and/or consumer behavior. While many of the constructs would not pose great difficulty, certain problems do exist.

One problem involves the complaint actions construct. Most previous studies in marketing have attempted to understand consumer responses to marketplace dissatisfaction by positing the dependent construct to be either a unidimensional, homogeneous concept (Bearden and Teel 1983) or of an unspecified dimensionality (Day 1984; Richins 1983b). Recently, it has been suggested that the CCB construct may in fact possess three distinct dimensions: voice, private and third party responses (Singh 1988). Within this context, it is substantively important to delineate the antecedents for each of the proposed dimensions of CCB. Obviously, if such antecedents do not differ (in nature and size) across dimensions, the suggested CCB taxonomy (Singh 1988) may be less relevant to a systematic understanding of the processes that underlie CCB. In this situation, future research would need to explore other ways to categorize the CCB phenomenon.

Research Design Issues. Both longitudinal and cross-sectional designs would have to be employed to systematically investigate the proposed model. Initially, the individual components of the model could be tested, such as a submodel that predicts CCB intentions. Perhaps, cross-sectional designs would be a reasonable starting point to empirically investigate the "goodness" of the individual components. The initial step might also aid in improving the individual models. Following this, the complete model of CCB processes could be tested. The investigation of the complete model would involve measurement of initial dissatisfaction, the process individuals go through, the complaint actions they take, and the resulting final satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Considering the time-related sequence-of-effects involved, a longitudinal design would perhaps be more desirable. The two-step approach to the empirical investigation would hopefully allow a programmatic way of testing the

proposed theory.

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