

Consumer complaint behavior

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Consumer's Complaint Behavior between Indonesian and Non-Indonesian in the Hotel

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ABSTRACT: Complaint management is an essential element of hotel business success. Handling customer complaints effectively could result in a future referral or loyalty behavior. Therefore, understanding the customer's complaint behavior will help the hotel operator to create a strategy for maintaining their customer. This paper divided guest's complaint behavior into four categories. They are voice responses, private responses that consist of negative word-of-mouth and exit, third party responses, and taking no action (inertia). These behaviors are related to Hofstede's culture dimension that consists of 6 dimensions. The authors examined complaint behavior of Indonesian and non-Indonesian, in this case, Asian and Western, and evaluated the significant differences between those three groups of guests. Five-scale Likert questionnaires were distributed to 100 Indonesian, 75 Asian, and 75 Western. Then the data was analyzed using One-Way ANOVA. The findings showed that Indonesian and Western guests tend to have voice responses complaint behavior, they complaint directly to the hotel. Whereas Asian guests were more likely to have negative word-of-mouth behavior, they will share their bad experience to family and friends. In addition, there is a significant difference for voice, word-of-mouth, and inertia, while no significant difference for exit and third-party complaint behavior. The difference in voice responses behavior could be seen in Indonesian and Asian customers, while the difference in word-of-mouth and inertia behavior were shown between Indonesian and Asian, also Asian and Western group of customers. This study provides new insight about cross culture complaint behavior.

KEYWORDS: Complaint behavior, voice, negative word-of-mouth, exit, third party, inertia

1 INTRODUCTION

In hotel industry, maintaining service quality and customer satisfaction is the essential factor. When service failure occurs, inevitably followed by consumer dissatisfaction, the effective handling of complaints becomes central to the recovery of service satisfaction (Jahandideh et al. 2014). Therefore, the ability to understand the customer complaint behavior is critical for hotels to improve customer loyalty. Several studies showed that complaint behaviors are vary between customer cultural background (Ekiz & Au 2011, Sann, Lai & Liaw 2020). Hofstede identified six dimensions of culture, which are power distance, masculinity – femininity, individualism – collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence - restraint (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Previous studies found that collectivistic society are less likely to complain than individualistic culture and that society which is high in uncertainty avoidance are less interested in engaging in negative WOM. For example, Asian customers are more likely to spread negative word of mouths and tend to take no action due to face issue and conflict avoidance (Kim, Wang & Mattila 2010, Chan, Tang & Sou 2017). Moreover, the same behavior was reflected in culture with a higher emphasis on power distance and hierarchy which is less likely to complain if they feel less powerful than the management (Jahandideh, et al. 2014).

Indonesian outbound departures increasing rapidly from 2013 to 2017. By 2021, the ratio of outbound trips to households in Indonesia was predicted to reach 15.4 percent, nowhere near that of neighboring Malaysia and Singapore. Moreover, Indonesian spent around 8.3 billion U.S. dollars during their outbound travels in 2017 (Hirschmann, 2019). This information proved that Indonesian travelers will become potential market in the nearest future. However, there is limited study about their complaint behavior compare to the other countries. Therefore, this study aims to identify the complaint behavior of Indonesian guests and compare it with non-Indonesian (Asian and Western guests). This will enrich the cross-cultural understanding of hotel consumer complaint behavior.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Consumer's Complaint Behavior

In the service industries, such as hotel, the staffs have a responsibility to provide satisfied service to customers otherwise the customers will be dissatisfied and do a complaint. In doing complaint, the customers have a certain complaint behavior. Complaint behavior can be defined as an action or reaction taken by an individual which involves communicating something negative because of dissatisfaction from unwanted situations during the purchase and the use of a service or good (Istanbulluoglu, Leek & Szmigin 2017, Ergun & Kitapci 2018).

Based on Ngai, et al (2007), Kim, Wang & Mattila (2010), Jahandideh et al. (2014), Istanbulluoglu, Leek & Szmigin (2017), and Chan, Tang & Sou (2017), there are four complaint behaviors namely voice, private, third party, and inertia. Voice means the consumer directly reporting their dissatisfaction to the management (Ergun & Kitapci 2018); Private responses, it can be divided into two kinds of responses, exit and negative word-of-mouth. Exit means the consumer stops buying from the company (Ergun & Kitapci 2018). Negative word-of-mouth means that consumer tell to their friends and relatives who are not directly encounter the negative experience; Third-party responses, involved external objects, but these are aimed at organizations that are not directly involved in the dissatisfying transaction, such as media, consumer agencies or legal firms; And inertia (taking no action), the consumer will not complaint to the firm and will not do anything even though they are dissatisfied with the service provided. The consumer has the opinion that it is not worth it to do the complaint, there is no value between the effort and the result of complaining.

2.2 Culture

Hofstede (in Ergun & Kitapci 2018) defines culture as the various aspects of life in the world such as good and bad, reality and fake, beautiful and ugly as well as the roles played. Reisinger and Turner (in Jahandideh et al. 2014) said that culture refers to a stable and dominant cultural character of a community shared by most of its individuals and remaining constant for long periods of time

Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) came up with six dimensions of culture, namely power distance, masculinity – femininity, individualism – collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence - restraint. Power distance talks about the members of a community handles inequalities among people. Masculinity – femininity refers to a society that emphasizes masculine or feminine behavior; The example of masculine behavior is achievement, heroism, firmness, the way of getting money and material asset, and feminine behavior is helping other, cooperation, modesty, place relationship with people before money, not showing off, and concern for the quality of life. Individualism – collectivism, individualism when individuals are expected to make decision by themselves and to take care of only themselves and their nuclear families, the extent to which people feel independent. On the contrary, in collectivism society, individuals are part of a cohesive group and are expected to work and be rewarded as a group. Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which people uncomfortable with uncertain situations; the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. It has nothing to do with risk avoidance nor with following rules. Long-term orientation deals with change. In a long-term oriented culture, the world is always change and preparing for the future is a must. They foster pragmatic values oriented toward rewards, including persistence, saving, and capacity for adaption. In a short-term oriented culture, society prefer to maintain traditions and norms while viewing changes with suspicion. The values promoted are related to steadiness, respect for tradition, reservation of one's face, reciprocation and carry out social obligations. Indulgence – restraint, indulgence related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for society that regulated by strict social norms.

2.3 Culture and Consumer's Complaint Behavior

According to Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010), culture is the main factor influences consumer's complaint behavior. It is important for manager of a company to understand the cultural background of their guests to determine the relationship between a consumer's behavior and the stage of purchasing, and their given cultural characteristics. Ngai et al. (2007) said that consumers in different cultures demonstrate different types of complaint behavior and intentions.

Huang, Huang & Wu (1996) and Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006) said that hotel guests from a country with high power distance are more tolerance to unsatisfactory goods and services and think it is a fact of life and are less prone to complain. It is supported by Ngai et al. (2007) and Chan, Tang & Sou (2017), Asian guests that usually have a higher power distance, are rarely to complain to hotel management than non-Asian

guests. On the contrary, Ergun & Kitapci (2018) found that the tendency of individuals to report their dissatisfaction to the hotel management was found to be high in societies where power distance is high, while these societies are also involved in more word-of-mouth communication. Consumers at the low end of the hierarchical steps are called “weak consumers” and these consumers do not expect the staff to offer sensitive service to them. As a result, these consumers regard the staff offering a service as strong and specialized in their jobs and, therefore, they choose for no action even if they are dissatisfied. On the contrary, with the power acquired from their hierarchical positions, consumers at the upper end of the hierarchical steps tend to show public action behavior by reporting their dissatisfaction to the hotel management or initiating legal action and reporting their complaints. Asian guests, who are accustomed to a higher power distance, were more likely to complain to hotel management than non-Asian guests.

Huang, Guang & Wu (1996) and Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006) found that hotel guests from a masculinity society want to get things straight, resulting in more complaints to the management and third parties. On the contrary, hotel guests from a feminine society are less likely to complain. For individualistic – collectivist point of view, consumers from an individualistic country are expected to report their dissatisfaction to the hotel or to a third party than individuals from a collectivist society, who are more engaged in private responses such as warning friends and relatives. When experience dissatisfaction, consumers in an individualistic society are more likely to voice their complaints than those in a collectivist culture. Regarding the individualistic – collectivist society, Ngai et al. (2007) and Chan, Tang & Sou (2017) said that Asian guests from collectivist cultures think that voice a complaint is disturbing compared with guests from individualistic cultures or non-Asian guests. Other support comes from Ergun & Kitapci (2018), individualist cultures were more willing to voice their dissatisfaction and try to find solutions to their complaints, the individuals adopt an honest and direct communication style.

In addition, Huang, Huang & Wu (1996) and Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006) mentioned that hotel guests from high uncertainty avoidance country might avoid complaining to the hotel or to a third party. On the other hand, guests from a low uncertainty avoidance, have a high tolerance for uncertainty and open conflict and should be more likely to complain to the hotel or a third party. These findings are supported by Ngai, et al (2007) and Chan, Tang & Sou (2017), Asian guests with a higher uncertainty avoidance, tend to be more fearful of losing face when making a complaint than non-Asian guests. Asian guests, who have a high tendency to want to avoid uncertainties, tend to be more resistant to change, more fearful of failure, and less likely to take risks. Therefore, they will choose not to complain if they do not know how and where to complain, or to whom they should complain. Consumers included in the uncertainty avoidance dimension preferred private action in the case of dissatisfaction. These guests are also more willing to share their dissatisfaction with others through negative word-of-mouth communication and leave the hotel (Ergun & Kitapci, 2018). However, most of the non-Asian guests responded that they would try their best to find a way to complain when dissatisfied with a hotel’s services, even if they were not familiar with the channels to complain (Ngai et al, 2007). Based on long-term oriented dimension, Ergun & Kitapci (2018) said that the long-term oriented societies were more likely to tolerate bad service than short-term oriented people. Thus, it can be concluded that the short-term oriented societies are more likely to complain than the long-term oriented societies.

Jahandideh et al. (2014) found that Asian consumers respond less actively to dissatisfaction and are less likely to complain to management. They are more engaged in private complaining action such as negative word-of-mouth to friends and family members. Asian guests are rarely to bring complaints to a hotel for fear of losing face. In general, Asian consumers do not complain to the hotel or to the third party since they think that it disrupts the social order, and after having a bad experience in a hotel, they think they should warn their relatives and friends about their experience and the hotel.

Related to Indonesian culture, Hofstede (2020) mentioned that Indonesia has high power distance that makes communication is indirect and negative feedback hidden. Indonesia is collectivist and femininity country. Indonesia is less masculine compared to some other Asian countries like Japan, China, and India. Indonesia has low uncertainty avoidance, Indonesian will not show negative emotion or anger externally. Other, Indonesia has high long-term orientation and restraint culture.

3 METHODS

The survey was held on-site at Juanda international airport, Surabaya, Indonesia. Potential participants were asked to answer several selection criteria before they start to fill-in the questionnaire. The respondents are at least 17 years old and have been stayed in hotel in the last one year. 100 Indonesian guests, 75 Asian guests and 75 Western guests were participated in this study.

The questionnaire was prepared in Indonesian and English language. It was divided into two sections, which are the respondent profile and complaint behavior. Scenario approach was used to measure complaint behavior. Respondents were faced with a case of service failure in hotel, and they were required to visualize

this experience and responded the questions naturally as if it really happens. The response questions were adapted from Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006); Butelli (2007); Kim, Wang & Mattila (2010) consists of (1) four indicators as the measurements of voice response, (2) five indicators as the measurements of private response, (3) three indicators as the measurements of third-party responses, (4) five indicators as the measurements of taking no action (Inertia). The grading score of the service failure response were using the five Likert scale method, with anchors “strongly disagree” as 1 to “strongly agree” as 5. The data was analyzed using descriptive analysis such as mean and standard deviation to describe their behavior. Moreover, one-way ANOVA was used to examine the behavior differences between those group and LSD post-hoc test was conducted to describe the details.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Most respondents were between 17 – 25 years old and travel for holiday purpose. In terms of country of origin, there were 100 Indonesian people, 75 Asian people, and 75 Western people. For Asian, most participants were from Malaysia (10.8%), and for Western, most participants were from Australia (10.8%). Most participants were travelling with family (62.4%).

Related to complaint behavior of Indonesian, Asian and Western people, it can be seen on table 1 that Indonesian and Western people are more on voice responses and Asian people are more on private responses, in this case, negative word-of-mouth. Based on analysis of variance, there were significant differences for voice, word-of-mouth, and inertia responses.

Table 1. Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA)

Complaint Behavior	Citizenship	Mean	F	Sig	Notes
<i>Voice</i>	Indonesian	3.47	3.32	0.038	Significant
	Asian	3.19			
	Western	3.24			
<i>Word of Mouth</i>	Indonesian	3.05	4.72	0.010	Significant
	Asian	3.36			
	Western	2.94			
<i>Exit</i>	Indonesian	2.78	1.08	0.340	Not Significant
	Asian	2.67			
	Western	2.57			
<i>Third Party</i>	Indonesian	1.79	0.27	0.762	Not Significant
	Asian	1.87			
	Western	1.87			
<i>Inertia</i>	Indonesian	2.08	24.48	0.000	Significant
	Asian	2.92			
	Western	2.11			

Based on Hofstede (2020), Indonesia is high power distance, collectivist, femininity, long-term orientation, restraint, and low uncertainty avoidance societies. By having these characteristics, the complaint behavior of Indonesian people should be indirect and hide negative feedback to maintain good relationship, adaptive, and not to show negative emotion and anger externally. According to Huang, Huang & Wu (2015), Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006), Ngai, et al (2007), and Chan, Tang & Sou (2017), a country with larger power distance are less likely to complain to hotel management. However, the finding of the research is in contrast, Indonesian people are more on voice responses means that they will complain directly to hotel management. This finding is supported by Ergun & Kitapci (2018), the societies where power distance is high have the tendency to report their dissatisfaction to the hotel management while these societies are also involved in more word-of-

mouth communication. Indonesian people are more on voice responses since most respondents are 17 – 25 years old or in Z generation. The Z generations have the tendency to be individualistic, means that more likely to complain, and communicate virtually by online platform. By online platform, these generations are free to express their feelings and ideas spontaneously including complain to hotel management through hotel website.

It is shown that Asian people are more on negative word-of-mouth responses than voice responses. Mostly, Asian countries are high in power distance, collectivist, and femininity societies. According to Huang, Huang & Wu (1996) and Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006), hotel guests from femininity societies are less likely to complain. Moreover, hotel guests in a collectivist culture are more likely to express private responses compare to individualistic country that adopt an honest and direct communication style (Ergun & Kitapci, 2018). Most of respondents are Malaysian people that has very high-power distance and long-term relationship. Huang, Huang & Wu (1996), Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006), Ngai, et al (2007) and Chan, Tang & Sou (2017) mentioned that Asian guests with high power distance are less likely to complain to hotel management. Jahandideh et al. (2014) said that Asian guests are more likely to engage in private responses such as negative word-of-mouth to friends and families. They are less likely to complain to the hotel after having bad experience since they think that it disrupts the social order or harmonious relationship and fear of losing face. Related to long-term relationship, Ergun & Kitapci (2018) found that short-term oriented are more likely to complain that the long-term oriented societies.

This research found that Western people are more to voice responses, they will directly report their dissatisfaction to hotel management. In general, Western people are individualistic, low power distance, masculinity, high in uncertainty avoidance, short-term oriented, and indulgence. Based on Huang, Huang & Wu (1996), Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel (2006), country with low power distance are prone to complain. Others, hotel guests from a high masculinity society are more likely to get things straight that result in more complaints to the hotel management. Hotel guests from individualistic country are expected to complain or voice their complaint to the hotel than individuals from collectivist country. These findings are supported by Ngai, et al (2007) and Chan, Tang & Sou (2017), societies with low power distance are likely to complain to hotel management than Asian guests. Regarding individualistic and long-term oriented, there is support from Ergun & Kitapci (2018). Individualist societies were more willing to voice their dissatisfaction and try to find solution to their complaints, hotel guests from individualist country prefer to ask for compensation for bad service rather than admitting it or sharing it with others. Short-term oriented country is more likely to complain than the long-term oriented country. Related to uncertainty avoidance, Huang, Huang & Wu (1996) and Yuksel, Kili & Yuksel (2006) said that hotel guests from a high uncertainty avoidance country, mostly Western country, might avoid complaining to the hotel. This statement is in contrast with the result of the research that Western people are more likely to voice their complaint. It can happen since the most of respondents are from Australia that is in middle uncertainty avoidance. Australian people are more dominant for low power distance, short-term orientation, individualistic, masculinity, and indulgence. Indulgence means that Australian people travel for holiday purpose so that they place more importance on leisure time and spend money as they wish (Hofstede, 2020), they will complain to hotel management to get nice holiday and worth their money.

Since there were significant difference for voice, word-of-mouth, and inertia, LSD post-hoc test was done. There was significant difference between Indonesian and Asian people for voice responses since in this case, the Asian people are dominated by Malaysian people that has high power distance, and most of Asian people has high uncertainty avoidance compare to Indonesian (Hofstede, 2020). These make Indonesian people are more on voice responses than Asian in general. There was significant difference between Indonesian and Asian, and between Asian and Western for word-of-mouth and inertia responses. Based on Hofstede (2020), Western people are dominant in low power distance, individualistic, masculinity, short-term orientation and indulgence. This makes western people are more on voice responses than word-of-mouth and inertia compare to Asian people. It can be seen from table 1 that mean of inertia of Western people is lowest than Asian people. For Indonesian and Asian people, Indonesian people tend to have voice responses compare to Asian people who like to have negative word-of-mouth and inertia responses. Asian people choose to tell their friends and families or do nothing since there is no value between the effort and the result of complaining.

5 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This study offers an essential finding for broadening our understanding on consumers' complaint behavior, which can serve as guidelines for hotel management. The findings enriching literature on service quality by examining differences in complaining behaviors across distinct cultural background. Using a scenario about service failure without any recovery action, this study attempted to examine significant differences in behaviors of hotel guests among Indonesian, Asian and Western. Indonesian guests more like to complain directly to hotel management, like Western guests who tend to have voice response, whereas Asian guests are more likely to engage in private responses such as negative word-of-mouth to friends and families.

The practical implications of complaint behavior differences across cultures are obvious. Hotel managers can enhance their frontline staff knowledge about how they should customize their service to the guests from different cultural background. Several studies admitted that language barrier plays important role in the failure of communicating customer's dissatisfaction (Chan, Tang & Sou 2017, Jahandideh et al. 2014, Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel 2006). Therefore, hotels may encourage their employees to pay more attention on the customers' expression of complaint and develop easier ways for these customers to communicate their dissatisfaction with the hotel management rather than elsewhere (Yuksel, Kilinc & Yuksel, 2006). Furthermore, this research has limitations on small sample size and the measurement of complaint behavior. Guests may react differently when they face different cases in the real situation. Therefore, further research could use different approach such as observation or interview to have deeply understanding of customer complaint behavior. Regardless of its limitation, this study confirmed that differences in customer complaint behavior are exist among different nationalities.

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