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Customer complaint behaviour (CCB) in the retail sector: why do customers voice their complaints on Facebook?

Xiang Ying Mei
Ingrid Bagaas
Erling Relling

Inland University of Applied Sciences

Abstract

With the increasing usage of platforms such as Facebook, understanding customer complaint behaviour (CCB) in the context of the social media is imperative for any businesses. Of the two billion users on Facebook, more than half of its users have shared their product-related experiences with others on the platform (Logan, 2014). This paper aims to explore CCB in the context of social media in regards to customers' unfavourable buying experiences in the retail sector. A qualitative research approach and 12 in-depth interviews were conducted. The findings indicate that the respondents' initial contact with the retailer directly resulted in service recovery failures and undesirable outcomes. Such double deviation then leads to frustration and uncertainty of the situation, which furthermore led to the respondents' need to voice their complaint by sharing their unfavourable experiences on Facebook. The main reasons for the respondents to voice their complaints on the platform is to vent frustration, to share their unfavourable experiences, a need to be seen, understood and respected, to seek revenge by damaging the retailer's reputation as well as offering the retailer a chance to improve. A proper way to manage complaints, in which frontline employees can solve the problem before the customers feel the needs to turn to the social media, is crucial. However, once the complaints is voiced on Facebook, it is imperative to respond to the complaints and acknowledge the problem rather than ignoring the situation.

Keywords: Customer complaint behaviour (CCB), electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), double deviation, social media, Facebook, retail-sector

1. Introduction

It is largely agreed by scholars and practitioners alike that customer complaints are good for businesses as they help to identify weaknesses, thereby offering companies opportunities to improve their services and gain customer loyalty (Chou, 2015; Huang, Wu, Chuang, & Lin, 2014; Larivet & Brouard, 2010). While complaint behaviour and service failure recoveries in

general have been studied extensively, there are a paucity of empirical studies focusing on customer complaint behaviour (CCB) in the context of social media (Balaji, Jha, & Royne, 2015). Additionally, further knowledge is needed about why a customer chooses certain complaint actions (Tronvoll, 2012). It has been pointed out that customers who complain on the social media often do so because they want to warn others or to seek revenge, thereby less likely to seek recovery or compensation, as they would post their complaint about an unfavourable experience in the post-consumption stage (Sparks & Browning, 2010). However, there are limited recent empirical studies, which have investigated such claims in details.

Understandably, with the possibilities of what the Internet and social media can offer, customer complaints can be more direct, convenient and effective. The damage is much more extensive than the traditional channels as complaints can reach a much wider audience. The way and speed that businesses respond to complaints on the social media can also affect the level of damages (Grégoire, Salle, & Tripp, 2015). Due to the potential impact that customer complaints on the social media can have on companies' reputations and brands, it is essential to understand why some customers choose to voice their complaints on the social media rather than communicating complaints directly through face-to-face contact, the telephone, postal mails and emails. Customer complaints that are not properly dealt with may evidently have negative impacts on customer satisfaction and loyalty, which in turn lead to negative effects on the companies' revenue (Chuang, Cheng, Chang, & Yang, 2012; Matilla, 2001). As complaints cannot be fully avoided and should be embraced by companies, understanding CCB in the context of social media may thus be beneficial for companies in order to manage their complaint and recovery process more effectively. Based on the current research gaps, this paper aims to contribute to the understanding of CCB in the context of social media in regards to customers' unfavourable buying experiences in the retail sector. Furthermore, two specific research objectives were developed:

- Exploring the reasons why some customers choose to voice their complaints by sharing their unfavourable experiences on Facebook.
- Investigating whether customers believe that voicing their complaints on Facebook would result in more desirable outcomes than in a direct complaint with the retailer.

Since the study requires reflections and opinions of the respondents, a qualitative methodology approach and semi-structured interviews were applied. While customers may voice both favourable and unfavourable experiences on the social media as part of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), this paper focuses on the latter such as customer complaints. In addition, the study concentrates on the respondents' perceptions and their point-of-view of the given situation that they have experienced.

2. Literature review

2.1 Consumer Complaint Behaviour (CCB) in the retail sector

The growing competition in the retail sector along with changes in customer behaviour and information communication technologies indicate that companies are more than ever concerned with managing customer complaints (Dinçer & Alrawadieh, 2017; Grewal, Krishnan, Levy, & Munger, 2010). There are many suggestions of why customers complain, but a common understanding is that CCB occurs when the customer is dissatisfied (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). However, such argument may be too simplistic, as dissatisfaction may not necessarily lead to complaints and complaints do not always occur from dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1997). In addition, individuals may deal with dissatisfaction differently and the choice of action is depending on the cost and benefit factors, which is further discussed. Thøgersen, Juhl, and Poulsen (2009) further clarify that a customer may choose to complain when an acquired product or service is defected or contains a deficiency. Previous studies also stress that the likelihood for a customer to complain is dependent on the situation such as the constructs of ease of complaining (Richins, 1987; Tax & Brown, 1998; Thøgersen et al., 2009), including chances of success in complaining and complaint self-efficacy (McKee, Simmers, & Licata, 2006; Susskind, 2000). Additionally, other personal factors such as previous experiences as well as demographic characteristics (Jacoby & Jaccard, 1981; Kowalski, 1996; Singh & Wilkes, 1996) will also have impacts. The motives of customer complaint may consist of material reasons such as demanding compensation or refund (Heung & Lam, 2003; Thøgersen et al., 2009) and psychological factors such as asking for an apology, searching for an explanation and expressing emotional anger (Heung & Lam, 2003).

Singh (1988, p. 94) defines CCB as "a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode". One of the first models of CCB was developed by Hirschman (1970), which indicates

that customers have three choices when comes to complaint behaviour including exit, voice and loyalty. Exit involves exiting or ending the relationship with the vendor, voice consist of complaints to the seller or a third party, and lastly loyal customers do nothing as in no action. Day and Landon (1977) further developed a model to explain the different actions that customers can take when they are dissatisfied. These include no action or action in form of private complaints such as complaining to other customers, friends and acquaintances or public complaints including complaining to a public service provider or on public forums. Similarly, Singh (1988) introduced a three dimensional approach including private voice consisting of WOM for instance, third party response such as seeking legal actions with consumer protection organisations, and voice response, which is either no action or seeking compensation directly from the seller. Crié (2003) on the other hand argues the difference between action and response where public complaints can be categorised as response while action can be behavioural such as seeking legal action, return the item and request for repair. Additionally, non-behavioural action include no action, with or without modification of the attitude and lastly forget or forgive (Crié, 2003).

While various models both conceptual and empirical have been developed in the last decades, they are similar in that they are largely static by focusing on the outcome only. Hence, the traditional models of CCB do not explain the complexity of it. According to Tronvoll (2012), based on a service-dominant logic (SDL) point-of-view, customer complaints should not only be regarded as a post-purchase behaviour, but rather as a phenomenological and unfavourable service experience. SDL involves how value is created and that a product does not have any value until it is being used or consumed by the customer (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). As dissatisfaction alone cannot explain CCB, it should rather be "viewed as a process that emerges if a negative incident triggers an unfavourable service experience" (Tronvoll, 2012, p. 290). Customers often have an expectation of desired experience, CCB will then occur when such expectation is not met. Based on this assumption, Tronvoll (2012) developed a dynamic model of CCB. The model illustrates three types of CCB; 1) communicate the complaint either verbal or non-verbal, 2) action, which can be active or passive, or 3) the choice of no action. The choice of action suggests that a customer's decision is dependent on the cost to complain from the customer's point of view. If the customer believes that the likelihood of a successful request for compensation exceeds the cost of complaint, the customer will choose to take action by complaining. On the other hand, if the cost of the complaint exceeds the benefit, the customer

often chooses no action (Day, Grabicke, Schaetzle, & Staubach, 1981). With the power and speed of the Internet and social media, there are undoubtedly some additional challenges when managing CCB.

2.2 CCB in the context of social media

A customer's decision to complain is influenced by many factors as discussed above. These factors may also influence which channel the customer choose to voice the complaints (Robertson, 2012).As discussed, customers would choose a complaint channel due to its perceived ease of use as well as the likelihood to gain a desired outcome and their confidence in using the channel (Matilla & Wirtz, 2004). With the increase use of social media and the significant impact that social media has on spreading news and experiences, Grégoire et al. (2015) argue that a type of Wild West environment has been created where angry customers can take the law into their own hands. When customers feel that businesses have treated them badly, they are willing to take action such as negative e-WOM, hoping to damage the retailer's reputation (Tripp & Gregoire, 2011). The growth of social media in the recent years has thus given customers the opportunity to talk with hundreds, even thousands of other customers around the world in a very short period of time (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer, 2012; Tripp & Gregoire, 2011). In a study by Pozza (2014), it was discovered that customers would choose social media such as Facebook as a channel to voice their complaints primarily due to dissatisfaction with other channels as the problem remained unsolved or desirable outcomes were not gained. This is then followed by social motivations such as recommendation by friends and family as a preferred complaint channel, and the ability to connect with other customers to share their unfavourable experiences (Pozza, 2014).

According to Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008), customer complaints on the social media can bring both challenges and opportunities for companies. An opportunity will be lower costs for accessing and exchanging information while a challenge can be anonymity in conversations, which allows people to communicate statements that can be both misleading and taken out of context (Litvin et al., 2008). In addition to the common motives for customer complaints as discussed, Sparks and Browning (2010) argue that customers who complain online have somewhat different or additional motives as they were mostly concerned with expressing their

dissatisfaction of an unfavourable experience by wanting to warn other customers. Furthermore, unfair handling of the initiate complaint that results in double deviation, which is further discussed in the following section, is also one of the key motives for complaints voiced on the social media. While double deviation may occur regardless of the usage of social media as a channel for complaints and not all customers who complain online are the victims of double deviation, a large number of complaints voiced on the social media such as Facebook are in fact followed by the occurrence of double deviation (Balaji et al., 2015; Tripp & Gregoire, 2011).

2.3 Double deviation occurrence in the retail sector

As discussed, double deviation may occur when the company fails to manage CCB properly. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990, p. 80) define double deviation as "perceived inappropriate or inadequate response to a service failure in the service delivery system". Should a customer choose to voice his or her complaint due to an unfavourable experience, it is important that such CCB is properly managed. Otherwise, it will lead to a failed service recovery and customer dissatisfaction for the second time. Edvardsson, Tronvoll, and Höykinpuro (2011) argue that a failed recovery will often worsen the situation, because the service process has now gone wrong for the second time. It may also be that the company even after a second complaint fails to correct the error, and delivers another failed service recovery to the customer. This then leads to triple deviation and the customer may choose to leave the company for good (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Grégoire et al., 2015).

In regards to the retail sector, while the exchange of ownership is present in the retail sector as opposed to service sectors, customer service is still an important differentiator across the retail sector. Martinelli (2009) explains that retailers are increasingly enlarging their value proposition beyond core-products by releasing themselves from the traditional approach based solely on products to the new one based on service offerings. Furthermore, Crié (2003) argues that it is the retailer that is most affected by CCB, not the manufacturer. As frontline employees in retail firms are often the primary contact customers have, such contact has thus strong implication in a term of managing CCB (de Jong & De Ruyter, 2004; Netemeyer & Maxham, 2007). Many customers are often dissatisfied with how companies' frontline employees deal with complaints and the vast majority businesses do not use the learning opportunities that complaints bring with them (Tax & Brown, 1998). This evidently leads to the occurrence of double or triple deviation.

3. Methodology

A qualitative methodology based on an inductive, explorative and phenomenological approach was selected for this study. Such approach was selected as studies of CCB in the context of social media remain scare (Balaji et al., 2015). In addition, the researchers sought to explore the reasons why certain complaint actions were chosen and to look through the eyes of the respondents by using an inductive approach to understand their actions and opinions in their social context (Mehmetoglu, 2004).

3.1 Data collection and method

Data was collected using semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Johannessen, Tufte, and Christoffersen (2010) argue that such approach are best suited when the researchers want the respondents to express him or herself freely by sharing their experiences and reconstructing the event. The interview guide was formed on the basis on themes and topics derived from the literature. The interview questions sought to explore the respondents' relationship with the retailer prior to the occurrence of the unfavourable experience, the nature of the complaint, the respondents' experience of such unfavourable experience and how they believe the complaint was managed by the retailer, their motivation for choosing Facebook as a complaint channel and what they desired to achieve as outcome.

The sample was selected in multiple phases. The qualitative nature of the study indicates that generalisability was not relevant as it rather sought to find as much varied information as possible (Mehmetoglu, 2004; Patton, 2015). Firstly, the researchers aimed to include customers' unfavourable experiences with various types of retailers and products, ranging from electronics, cosmetics and food. Hence, a random selection of well-known retailers, which offer these products, were selected by visiting their public Facebook pages in order to locate customers who have voiced their complaints publically. For the purpose of this study and based on Tronvoll (2012)'s understanding of CCB, it was assumed that customers voice their complaints due to an unfavourable experience. Secondly, the researchers analysed multiple posts considered as complaints on Facebook, which included the following criteria:

(1) The respondents (complainants) must have experienced a negative situation that led to an unfavourable experience while the purchase itself may have been completed online or in store.

(2) The respondents must have posted a complaint on retailer's public Facebook page, with a very detailed description or explanation of why they experienced the unfavourable experience. The respondents may also have posted their experiences on their private Facebook page, but it is not possible for the researchers to attain such information if the private accounts are limited to friends and acquaintances.

(3) It must be possible to contact the complainants to invite them for an interview. For instance, anonymous posts or posts made with obvious fake Facebook accounts were excluded.

It was generally difficult to recruit respondents for interviews. The researchers reached out to several potential respondents through Facebook. While some politely declined, others did not provide any response, which was expected. Within the available timeframe, 12 respondents were recruited in the study in total and the interviews were conducted by both face-to-face and telephone interviews, depending on the suitability of the respondents. The interviews lasted between 30 min to one hour. Although telephone interviews carry some weaknesses as they provide a poorer basis for analysing non-verbal expressions such as body language, this was compensated by asking more follow-up questions. All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder, which facilitated the data analysis stage. The respondents were aware of such process and they could terminate the interview at any given time.

Facebook was chosen as social media platform in this study. Although social media platforms differ in cultures and architectures (Smith, Fischer, & Chen, 2012), Facebook is one of the most used platforms with an estimated two billion active users monthly. Importantly, more than half of Facebook users have shared their product-related experiences with others on the platform (Logan, 2014). To understand the nature of the respondents' complaints, a list is provided in table 1 along with the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Respondent	Age	Gender	Nature of complaint
1	18-29	F	Spelling mistakes on the packaging of a chocolate bar with fairy-tale stories.

2	18-29	M	Unfavourable experience due to purchase of a telephone device.
3	18-29	M	Repair takes too long.
4	18-29	F	Found mould in a bag of bread buns.
5	18-29	M	Purchased a defected gaming console.
6	45-60	F	Unfavourable experience due to purchase of a telephone device.
7	45-60	M	Felt cheated when purchased a GPS with different specifications than initially ordered.
8	45-60	F	Declined exchange of a cosmetic product, which was expired.
9	30-44	M	Problems in regards to returning a defected television device.
10	30-44	F	Purchased flat soft drinks.
11	18-29	M	Recently purchased a new washing machine that sudden stopped working.
12	18-29	M	Retailer failed to deliver a pre-ordered game as promised per release date.

Due to the difficulties in recruiting participants, the researchers did not differentiate the various product categories such as high and low value products as the basis of the complaint. All of the 12 respondents had made their purchase in store. Another common factor was that they all had experienced double deviation and failed service recovery. It can be assumed that the recruited respondents felt that their unfavourable experiences were important and thus could have been more inclined to participate in the study to express their frustration. Although this may have caused a bias in the section process and the result, the findings are useful in understanding CCB in the context of social media, as customer complaints on Facebook are dominated by customers who have experienced double deviation (Balaji et al., 2015; Tripp & Gregoire, 2011).

3.2 Data analysis

As with any qualitative studies, the large amount of collected data had to be analysed and categorised into manageable themes and codes. Johannessen et al. (2010) point out that in contrary to the analysis of quantitative data, it is important that those who collect the data also analyse and interpret them, which is the case in this study. Theories, hypotheses and understanding are important starting points for the analysis work, which is extremely important as qualitative data must be interpreted (Patton, 2015). The interpretation also depends on the skills of the researchers. The data analysis was done in two stages; 1) organising the data by themes, and 2) analysing and interpreting the data. While the interview questions were theory driven, the thematic analysis approach applied was data driven. Subsequently, the themes that emerge from the data include; to vent frustration, to share their experiences, to seek

understanding and respect, to seek revenge and damage the retailer, and want to offer the retailer a chance to improve. Additionally, in order to guarantee respondents' anonymity, none of the original complaints or a content analysis of the original comments posted on Facebook was added to the discussion of the results. While the original or true reason of the complaint could be found in the original comments, such comments could easily reveal the respondents' identity should the comments be searched on the Internet.

4. Result and Discussion

The results indicate that all of the respondents chose to voice their complaint on Facebook because they all had experienced double deviation and gained undesirable outcomes due to failed service recoveries. In addition, before choosing to voice their complaints on Facebook, all respondents believed that their complaints were important and reasonable to proceed further. The findings are summarised in figure 1 and further discussed in the following sections.
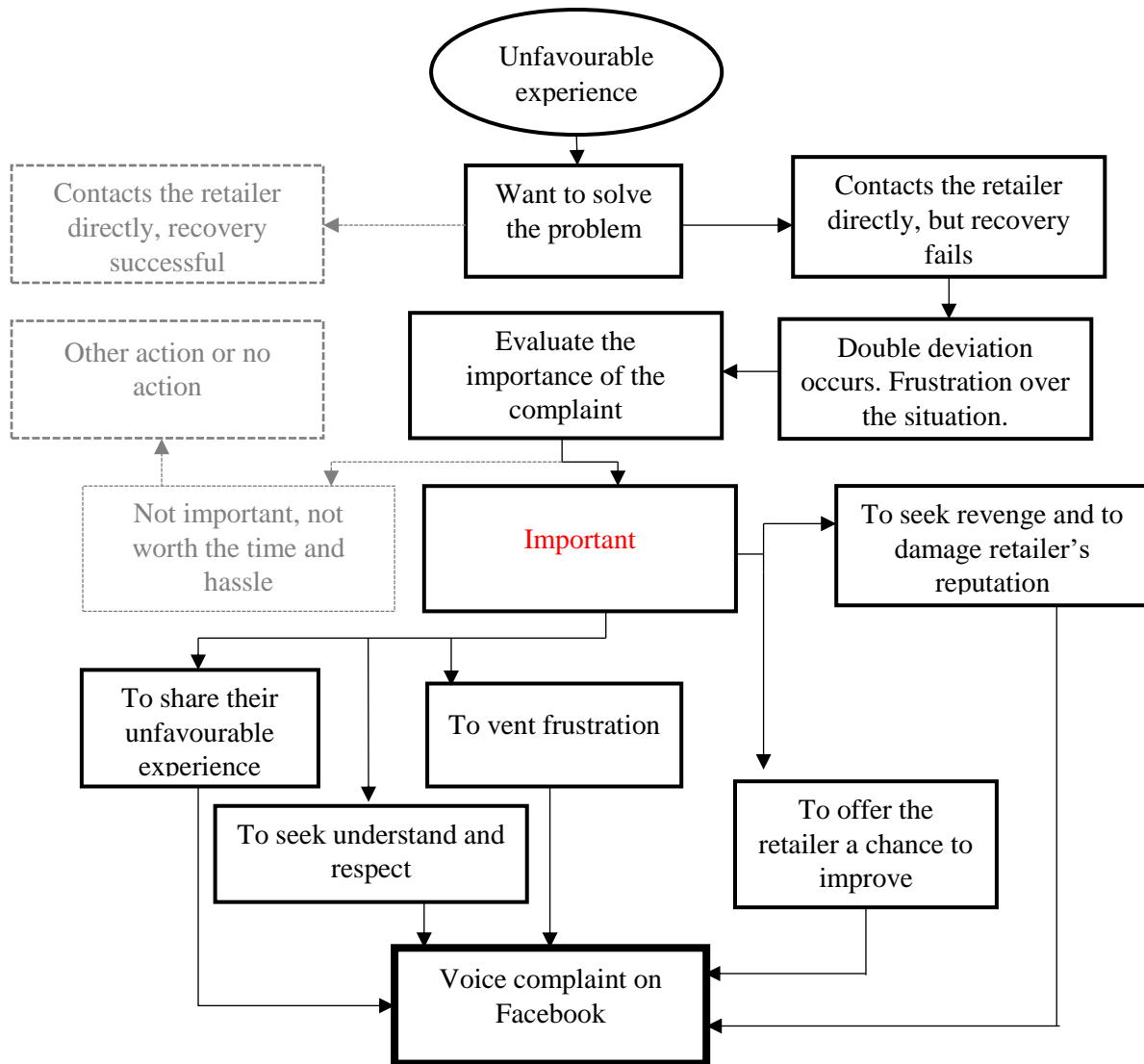
Figure 1. The reasons why respondents voice their complaints on Facebook

4.1 To went frustration

One common and obvious reason for customers to voice their complaints in general is to seek compensation (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Stone, 2011). However, Grégoire et al. (2015) argue that many customers who voice their complaints on Facebook do not seek compensation. This is because they have already sought compensation by contacting the retailer directly and they were not satisfied with the outcomes, as the service recovery had failed and double deviation occurred. For instance, several respondents expressed that they were very irritated and frustrated by the situation in which they experienced at the time.

> I think it [frustration] was the triggering factor that I actually put it [complaint post] online, but I also wanted to post it to tell the world about it [R3].

> So, I just wanted to replace the product. It was just that. Just to get in touch [with the company] and say 'hi, this has happened. Can't you please help me out here?' [R5].

> My goal was to vent some frustration, just to get some feedback. That was it [R12]!

Supported by Grégoire et al. (2015), Sparks and Browning (2010), customers would resort to the social media to vent their frustration after being offended or ignored by the retailer as they were beyond seeking compensation. This could be described as a part of physiological factors such as expressing emotional anger (Heung & Lam, 2003). Thus, the findings suggest that while the initial complaint directly with the retailer was to seek compensation, the respondents sought other outcomes when they decided to voice their complaint on Facebook. Another example is a respondent who bought an expired cosmetic product and she was not satisfied with the response she received from the retailer when she voiced her complaint directly.

> They [the retailer] regretted that the mascara was dry, but they had so little sales so they could not guarantee that everything was perfect with this product. The product was not something they sold most of [R8].

According to the respondent, this was the only answer she received from the frontline employee. She did not receive any compensation or apologies, which caused her frustration and thus chose to voice her complaint on Facebook. This indicates that the means frontline employees deal with complaints plays a key role in affecting customers' further complaint actions (Heskett, Sasser jr, & Schlesinger, 2003; Schneider & Bowen, 1995). In another similar incident, the respondent felt that she did not get any results when voiced her complaint to the retailer directly and the complaint was just "brushed off" by the frontline employees. Thus, the respondent turned to Facebook, hoping to gain the retailer's attention. After voiced out on Facebook, she

received some form of compensation, although that was not her initial motive and was subsequently positively surprised.

> It was really nice! I mean I wouldn't stop buying the product because of the misspellings, but it was very nice, and it made sure that I got an even better impression of the company. That they care about their customers by providing such a positive experience. And I don't think I would have gotten the same treatment from other companies…it feels like that they actually care about me and it feels very good [R1]!

It is thus evident while compensation may have been the initial goal when the complaint was firstly voiced directly with the retailer, frustration is why complaints actually ended up on Facebook and the social media due to double or triple deviation.

4.2 To share their unfavourable experiences

While frustration is one of the key triggering factors, it is usually in the context of another motive. In this case, it was a desire to share the experience with the world while wanting to warn others served as another underlying motive. Others in this case can include strangers and not necessarily only friends and acquaintances. According to Gelb and Sundaram (2002, p. 22), a key difference between face-to-face communication and e-WOM that it is "dominated by those willing to volunteer facts, opinions, warnings, and experiences to strangers". People who wish to share and warn strangers about their experiences generally dominates e-WOM (Gelb & Sundaram, 2002). For instance, a respondent who invested 15000 NOK on a new computer discovered that it had a faulty. As it was still under the warranty, the product was returned to the retailer for repair. After three months, the retailer claimed that it had been repaired; however, the faulty was still present. It was then returned for repair once again and was kept by the retailer for another four months. Subsequently, the respondent chose to voice his complaint on Facebook to share his unfavourable experience and to warn others:

> I think it's terrible when the core products of this business, which are electronics I suppose, are not up to today's standard! And I bought one pretty good PC! When it doesn't keep up to what it should be, then others should hear about it. That they shouldn't go to that retailer to buy it! I wanted

to tell what I'd experienced, and in this way to show others, what they can expect if they go to the same company. I don't wish anyone to buy a product where it has been in service for a total of nine months during the first 12 months [R3].

Other respondents also pointed out similar reasons:

I just felt cheated...So to get publicity so that others would know that even if they've experienced them [the retailer] as straight and honest before, they are not always like that [R7]!

Yes to warn other, at the same time I was frustrated then [R9].

According to Edvardsson et al. (2011), in the era of social media, customers are no longer just passive users, but are actively involved in creating and sharing content online. Previously, customers would seek advices about products and retailers from friends and acquaintances, but now they are looking for information from others, who they may not know from before (Gelb & Sundaram, 2002). Interestingly, despite being frustrated by the situation, the respondents pointed out that they were aware to formulate their posts or complaints carefully in order to be perceived as more serious by other users on Facebook. Hence, while sharing their experiences and wanting to warn others may be genuine reasons to voice their complaints on Facebook, it was also to seek understanding, support and respect from both others and the retailer, which is further explored.

4.3 To seek understanding and respect

According to Dwyer et al. (1987) and Stone (2011), listening and understanding the customers are important in order to manage CCB. Several respondents in this study expressed that they were angry and did not feel that the retailer has "seen" them. Hence, believing that voicing their unfavourable experiences on Facebook was the last solution that they had in order to seek understanding and respect from the retailer due to the failed attempt to resolve the complaints directly. Had the retailer and its frontline employees listened and shown understanding of the initial complaint, such double deviation could have been avoided in the first place. As stated:

> I really wanted to be seen by the retailer, that they actually see the situation!
> Before I felt a little overlooked because I was sent between several managers
> and that took time! So I hoped that I would have been taken a little more
> seriously [R2].

This is also explained by Heung and Lam (2003) as psychological factors such as asking for an apology and searching for an explanation from the retailer. However, before gaining understanding and respect from the retailer, it was important to seek support from others. Seeking understanding and respect from others may serve as a way for the respondents to gain certainty, confidence and acknowledgement to continue the fight with the retailer. Stone (2011) argues that support from others could provide an extra voice for the complainants and thus strengthen their rights on the complaint. Among the respondents, it was also discovered that some would firstly voice the complaint on their own private Facebook wall in order to seek response and acknowledgement. Once they received support and acknowledgement from others, the respondents would be more confident in voicing the complaint on the retailer's public Facebook page. In this way, they can also reduce the risk of losing face among others and the retailer by being labelled as unreasonable. Uncertainty is the key reason in this case, and the respondents wanted to ensure that their claims were sound. (Buttle, 1998; Shiu, Walsh, Hassan, & Shaw, 2011). For instance, the respondents pointed out that voicing their unfavourable experiences on Facebook gave them a sense of certainty knowing that others agree with them:

> It was great that others acknowledged that this was indeed a problem and
> that the retailer should correct it. So it was somewhat important to get some
> likes [R5].

Generally, complaints on a retailer's public Facebook page are important for the retailers, as they are able to see the complaints or problems, in comparison to private complaints among friends and acquaintances. Nevertheless, if complaints are not dealt promptly, others can join the conversation and the retailer may lose control over the situation (Balaji et al., 2015; Grégoire et al., 2015). In addition, respondents also stated it might be easy for retailers just to "brush off" the complaint when they make direct contact. Hence, believing that voicing a complaint on Facebook would result in desirable outcomes as discussed, because they may have the

advantage of asking others to pressure the retailer to act before the complaint gets out of the hand. Such findings are concurred by Balaji et al. (2015) and Grégoire et al. (2015).

4.4 To seek revenge or damage reputation

Many respondents expressed such frustration about their unfavourable experiences with the retailer that they chose to voice their unfavourable experiences on Facebook as an attempt to seek revenge by damaging the retailer's reputation deliberately. Although respondents were careful in the usage of the word "hate", several respondents pointed out that they were more than simply frustrated over the situation.

> Posting such a comment on Facebook might give the company an even
> worse reputation and it feels good! So be it, what should I call it, a sort of
> revenge then. And I think maybe that's the main reason [R2].

> People are reading it and hopefully, it can mean lost revenue for them.
> You never know, there may be a person asking if he should choose this
> retailer or not, and then they might lose him [as a customer] [R3].

In several studies in the service sectors such as the hotel industry, Matilla, Mount (2003), Sparks and Browning (2010) discovered that customers voice their complaints on Facebook because they want to damage the company's reputation and brand. Similar findings are also evident in this study. As discussed, this is also described by Grégoire et al. (2015) as a form of Wild West situation where customers take the laws into their own hands. Some respondents were not active users of social media; however, they felt that they needed to turn to Facebook in order to seek revenge.

> I'm not an active user of Facebook, but it was the frustration to pay
> almost 2500 NOK for something I initially didn't wanna spend that much
> on. This was the only thing I could do...How can a regular customer be
> treated in such a way [R7]?

Thus, anger beyond frustration seems to be the main reason why the respondents chose to voice their complaints on Facebook for seeking revenge. Crié (2003) argues that anger and frustration,

which lead to customers seeking revenge, occur when the goal is not achieved and erupted and when the customers did not receive desirable outcomes as expected during the initial direct complaint. Hence, some respondents believed a retailer's damaged reputation as result of the complaints on Facebook, is a desirable outcome.

4.5 To offer the retailer a chance to improve

Despite the frustration about the unfavourable experiences, the findings also indicate that not all of the respondents wanted to hurt the retailer. Some respondents pointed out that they voiced the complaints because they wanted to offer the retailer a chance to improve.

> I hope it has an effect that creates changes in a business that does so much bullshit. The more people who give notice, the more it'll come out in the public, the more pressure it'll put on that business, and the more chances for them to be willing to change [R2].

> I didn't make the comment to say 'hi, I hate your shop'. It was more like 'hi, I hate your shop because I experienced this.' But I don't hate the retailer, because if I do I can just go somewhere else. I don't hate the retailer, I just hate the situation [R3].

For these respondents, it appears that they were more frustrated about the retailer handling the situation poorly, rather than the outcome being negative for respondents themselves. According to Berry, Wall, and Carbone (2006), valid complaints from customers can give companies valuable feedback. As some of the respondents stressed that they actually chose to complain because they wanted the business to change, it is therefore important for retailers to facilitate complaints by encouraging customers to voice their complaints directly, rather than just spreading negative e-WOM on the social media. Subsequently, a proper service recovery system with well-trained frontline employees must be present. One of the respondents even expressed that she did not believe that gaining understanding from others was important. The most important thing was to get the retailer to realise that there is a problem, which the retailer can fix.

> That's why I did it [voiced complaint on Facebook]. They must become
> aware that there's a problem. It's important that they become aware that
> there's actually a problem [R1].

For some respondents, they actually believed that it is part of their responsibility as customers to inform the retailer about their unfavourable experiences in an effort to improve the company. It should also be noted that these respondents, who do not believe that seeking support and understanding from others were important, were confident about their complaints and they were not afraid to voice their opinions publically. According to Crié (2003), a verbal response from a customer is also a constructive response, which should lead to improvement in a company's practices and guidelines.

5. Conclusion and implications

Although CCB and service recoveries are important issues, many businesses are still often completely hopeless at dealing with complaints (Crié, 2003), which is also illustrated in the findings of this paper. Understanding the reasons why some customers choose to publically voice their complaints on the social media allows managers in the retail sector to better understand CCB in order to provide proper ways to manage complaints. The findings suggest that while some reasons are focused on the respondents themselves, other motives are driven by the consequences for the retailer. For instance, frustration is discovered as a key triggering factor leading to the respondents feeling the need to be seen, heard and respected when they voice their complaints. Moreover, although some respondents may turn to seek revenge by damaging the retailer's reputation deliberately, a situation, which the retailer must seek to avoid due to the damaging effect of the social media, others simply wanted to offer the retailer a chance to improve. Evidently, respondents believed that desirable outcomes would be achieved as a result when they voice their unfavourable experiences on Facebook, as they were beyond the point of merely seeking compensation. In fact for many respondents, turning to Facebook were regarded as a last solution to gain any response or acknowledgement from the retailer. The findings further emphasise the important role of the frontline employees when handling CCB, as in many cases double deviation and complaints on social media may have been avoided had the situation been properly managed in the first place. Thus, having a proper system to manage CCB may limit customers' needs to vent their frustration on the social media. Ideally, complaints should be dealt with before customers feel the need to voice their unfavourable

experiences on the social media. In reality however, complaints cannot be completely avoided and unfavourable situations will undoubtedly occur. Once unfavourable experiences are shared on Facebook, it is imperative that the retailer acknowledge the complaint or the problem rather than ignoring the situation as some respondents simply want to be seen and understood. Moreover, retailers should appreciate that some customers want the retailers to improve and thus make the necessary improvements to accommodate the request.

Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that all complaints on the social media are the results of double or triple deviation despite this being the case in this study. Similarly, not all failed service recoveries will result in customers voicing their unfavourable experiences on the social media. Hence, further studies are needed with more and a wide range of respondents, purchase manner and product categories as well as possibly a quantitative approach to investigate the correction between the various motives. As the customers' perception of the potential audience reach can influence their choice of social media platform (Balaji et al., 2015), future studies should also examine the nature of CCB on various social media platforms. While this empirical study is limited to the context of the retail sector and Facebook as a communication channel, some of the results may still transfer to other social media platforms and context.

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