

# Influence of Demographic Variables on Complaining and Non-Complaining Motives and Responses in Ghana's Mobile Telephony Industry

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## Abstract

The paper explores the influence of customer demographic variables on complaining and non-complaining motives and responses in mobile telecommunication industry in Ghana. The study was a cross-sectional survey involving customers from four mobile telephony operators. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data that were analysed using SPSS (version 16.0). The study found that complaining motives were significantly influenced by only marital status. It also found that non-complaining motives were influenced by marital status and age. Moreover, complaining responses were found to be significantly influenced by gender, marital status and education of consumers. The paper suggests to management and marketing practitioners to consistently collect and examine vital demographic information about their customers in order to understand customers better for effective complaint management and customer loyalty. Implications of the study to marketing theory and practice are discussed, and limitations and directions for future research have been suggested. This paper extends our knowledge of how complaining response and complaining and non-complaining motives could be influenced by some demographic variables, and contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of consumer complaining behaviour in mobile telephony industry in developing country context.

**Keywords:** Complaining motives, Complaining responses, Demographic variables, Ghana, Mobile telephony services, Non-complaining motives

## 1. Introduction

In today's marketplace and marketspace firms are not only concerned about getting customers but also keeping them in a long-term profitable relationship. It, therefore, becomes important for firms to understand consumer behaviour in order to manage their customer expectation, desires and requirements effectively. One of the consumer behaviour areas that have gained considerable attention by business managers and scholars is consumer complaining behaviour (CCB). CCB is an inevitable concept in business operations because, practically, "No organization is so perfect in the delivery of superior customer performance that significant levels of dissatisfaction (the source of complaints) do not exist" (Wysocki, Kepner, and Glasser, 2001, p.1).

It follows, therefore, that service providers in general, and in Ghana's mobile telecom industry (GMTI) in particular, need to recognize the importance of CCB and develop strategies that can effectively manage it in the midst of severe competition in the industry. GMTI has evolutionalised from government owned monopoly to a privatized market from 1994 to date. Between 1994 and 2000. As a result of the deregulation of the sector in 1994, the industry has witnessed increased number of operators and government regulatory agencies. As of the time of the present study (2011), there were six cellular (mobile) phone networks in Ghana, namely: Millicom Ghana Ltd, Vodafone – Ghana, MTN Ghana – Scancom Ghana Ltd, Kasapa Telecom Limited, Zain Ghana and Globacom Ghana. Vodafone Ghana and Zain are the only operators of additional services in fixed-line telephone.

Since previous studies have indicated that customers have different motives for complaining and not complaining in GMTI (Nimako and Mensah, 2012), it becomes critically important for management to understand the role demographic variables could play in CCB. Current trend of research in CCB tends to focus on the determinants of CCB, the relationship between CCB and customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D), influence of demography and complaining behaviour (Crie', 2003; Dacin and Davidow, 1997; Day, 1977; Heung, and Lam, 2003; Huefner, and Hunt, 2000; Jones, McCleary, and Lepisto, 2002), but there is a void in the marketing literature on the influence of demographic variables on complaining responses and motives in general, and in developing country context in particular. This study attempts to fill this void by examining the influence of demographic variables on customer complaining and non-complaining motives and responses in the mobile

telephony service context. This is crucial to enhance understanding of the critical demographic variables that could influence complaining responses and motives.

This study could help scholars to better conceptualise how complaining motives and responses could be traced or attributable to certain demographic variables. It could also offer business management the empirical findings for developing customer relationship management strategies for tracking customer complaining motives by paying particular attention to certain demographic variables, and to determine complaining responses that are characterized by certain demographic variables as a means to understanding consumer behaviour better. It is hoped that this paper will add to the existing literature on CCB in B2C service context in general, and in Ghana's mobile telecommunication industry (GMTI) in particular.

Therefore, the study intends to explore the influence of customer demographic variables on complaining and non-complaining motives and responses. Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

1. To examine whether demographic variables (gender, age, income, education, marital status) have significant influence on complaining and non-complaining motives in GMTI.
2. To examine whether complaining responses differ according to demographic variables (gender, age, income, education, marital status) in GMTI.

The paper continues with a literature review, methodology, analysis of results and discussion, and implications to theory and management.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 The Nature of CCB

According to Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) CCB can be defined as "An action taken by an individual which involves communicating something negative regarding a product or service either to the firm manufacturing or marketing that product or service or to some third-party organizational entity." Mowen (1993) has it that complaint behaviour is any one of a number of actions that is triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode. According to Crie' (2003, p. 62), CCB is "a process which constitutes a subset of all possible responses to perceived dissatisfaction around a purchase episode, during consumption or during possession of the goods or services". These definitions point to the fact that CCB refers to customer responses that indicate their displeasure to the service provider to do something towards improving the service quality and delivery process. Since customers are different, it is expected that they will complain using different responses and with different motives. These motives may be influenced by the customers' demographic characteristics that need to be investigated for effective complaint management in business organisations.

### 2.2 Motives and Responses for complaining and non-complaining

Customers exhibit different complaining and non-complaining motives and responses. Some customers may voice complain, while others may not (Heung and Lam, 2003). It has been found in previous studies that some customers may complain or voice their complaints in order to seeking redress, seeking apology, seeking for compensation, requesting corrective action, and expressing emotional anger (Heung and Lam, 2003). On the other hand, other customers may not complain because of late realization of the failure, consumer loyalty, risk of firm's reputation, internal attributions, social factors like busyness and presence of friends, alternative action of brand switching, and reduced tip/other compensation (Voorhees, Brady and Horowitz, 2006). Some dissatisfied customers may not complain directly to the service provider, primarily because it is not worth the time and effort, or they do not know where or how to complain, and where they believe that nothing will be done even if they do complain (Day, Grabicke, Schaetzle and Staubach 1981; Gursoy, McCleary and Lepsito, 2007; Richins, 1983).

In their complaining behaviour, some customers will choose a number of complaining responses ranging from complaining in person, writing to the service provider, complaining to social groups to complaining to the public and mass media. Singh (1990) conceptualised three main classification of complaining responses that exist among customers (see Fig.1).

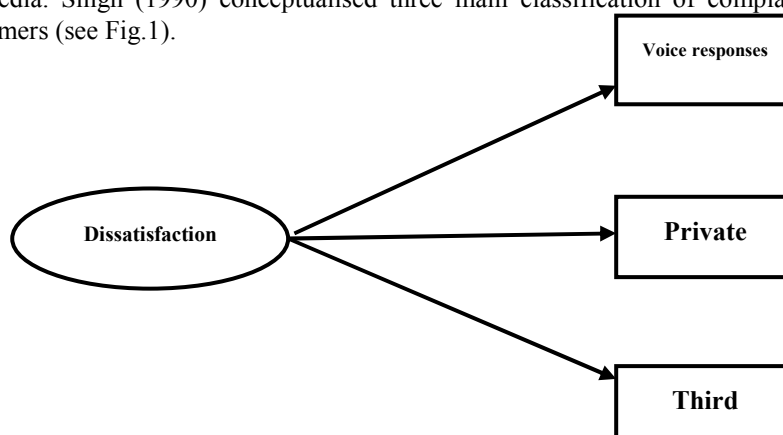


Figure 1 Singh's (1990) Taxonomy of Consumer Complaint Behaviour Responses, Source: Singh's (1990)

According to the author, the three main complaining responses that customers exhibit are voice, private and third party response. Voice responses refer to those responses by which customers visibly communicate their complaints to the service provider such as writing on a complaint card and giving it to the service provider, complaining in person, complaining by writing letters, among others. These customers voice their complaints probably to seek redress, seek apology, seek for compensation, request corrective action, or express emotional anger (Heung and Lam, 2003).

Private responses refer to complaints made to the consumers' social groups, other than the service provider. In other words, some consumers may not voice out their complaints to the service provider at all (Day and Landon, 1976; Singh, 1990); rather they resort to complaining about the services or service provider to friends, family, peers and other social groups. In such a case, such customers may discourage or warn their social groups about the services of a particular service provider. According to Blodgett, Wakefield, and Barnes (1995), 77% of all non-complainers engaged in negative Word-of-Mouth (WOM), whereas only 48% of complainers engaged in negative WOM. The likely reasons for not complaining directly to the service provider, primarily are that they do not know where or how to complain, and where they believe that nothing will be done even if they do complain (Day, Grabcike, Schaetzle & Staubach 1981; Gursoy *et al.* 2007). Third-party responses refer to complaints made to publics like government agencies, consumer organizations or the general public through principally the mass media. Such complaints are likely to have impact on corporate image and reputation and have the capacity to draw attention of the service provider quickly to resolve or manage the complaint situation immediately.

Recent studies suggest that consumers may take a variety of different private and third-party actions (Nimako, 2012a), may choose to blame sellers and manufacturers for their unsatisfactory product or service, or choose to boycott sellers and manufacturers by ceasing to use their products or services and spread negative information about their products or services (Singh and Wilkes, 1996).

### *2.3 Demography and Complaining behaviour*

Previous studies have indicated that gender may influence complaining and non-complaining behaviour; other results on gender influence controvert the findings of Manikas and Shea (1997). While some past studies (e.g.: Day and Landon, 1976; Han, Keng and Richmond, 1995; Heung and Lam, 2003; Volkov, Harker and Harker, 2002.) have found that demographic factors such as age, gender and education level play a very important role in CCB and are good predictors of certain CCB, other previous studies suggest that there is no consensus on the influence of age, income and education on CCB (Boote, 1998; Broadbridge and Marshall, 1995; Hogarth, English and Sharma, 2001; Kau, Richmond and Han, 1995).

There is no empirical evidence, as far as the researchers know, regarding the influence of demographic characteristics on the kind of complaining responses consumers are likely to exhibit and on the kind of motives for complaining they are likely to have. Findings in these areas will have implications for marketing theory and practice. In view of the above, the study would attempt to examine the influence of customer demographic variables on complaining and non-complaining motives and responses.

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1 Population and Sampling*

This study was part of a larger study on CCB in Ghana's mobile telephony industry (GMTI) that was conducted in 2011. The study population consisted of individual subscribers across four major mobile networks in Ghana: MTN, Tigo, Zain (now Airtel Ghana), Vodafone. These companies were chosen purposively because they were the four leading companies in market share, and also it was easy reaching their customers for the study. A convenient sampling technique was used to select a sample of 120 customers from each company, totalling a sample of 480 customers. In selecting the sample, conscious effort was made to include only subscribers/customers who have used the services of the companies for at least the past twelve months.

### *3.2 Data collection and Analysis Procedures*

A self-administered, structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents in a larger study. It had only closed-ended question items and consisted of sections for customer satisfaction and complaining motives, complaining channels/responses, and the respondents' characteristics. Part of the questionnaire required the respondents to indicate whether they have ever complained or not, whether they have ever been dissatisfied with the services of their companies or not using "Yes" and "No" responses. Satisfaction was measured on a five-point Likert scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied (1-5) and frequency of complaining was measured on a five-point scale ranging from neutral, once a while, often, very often to always. Again, respondents were

asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement to 21 statements, of which seven related to complaining responses and 14 related to motives for complaining and non-complaining based on the work of Heung and Lam (2003).

The questionnaire was pre- tested, refined to suit the research context and finally administered to the target sample through personal contact by researchers. Informed Consent information was attached to each questionnaire. A total usable response rate of 86.3% was obtained for analysis. Data were analysed using SPSS (version 16.0) for descriptive statistics, cross tabulation, chi-square tests, and Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA that is more robust and suitable for analyzing differences between sub-groups involving categorical dependent variables.

#### 4. Analysis of Results

##### 4.1 Respondents' characteristics

The characteristics of the respondents for the study are presented in Table 1 for each sub-group of the population. Generally, it shows that, in terms of gender, there were slightly more males (57.2%) than females (42.8%). Most of them were below the ages of 35, followed by those in the ages between 36 and 45 years and few were above 45 years. In terms of education, most of them had tertiary education, followed by those with pre-tertiary, Senior High School (SHS) and Post-SHS, while few had other types of education. For monthly income, most of the respondents earned up to GH¢500, followed by those who earned between GH¢500 and GH¢1000, 3% earned above GH¢1,500 while about 8% were non-income earners. In terms of marital status, about 62% of them were single, about 36% were married while the rest were in other marital categories.

##### 4.2 Demographic variables and complaining and non-complaining motives and responses

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA testing the influence of demographic variables on complaining motives, non-complaining motives and complaining responses are presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4. Generally, the tables depict the number of sub-groups within each variable, the mean ranks of each sub-category, the chi-square ( $X^2$ ), degrees of freedom (df) and significance of the mean differences for discussion.

**Table 1. Respondents' characteristics**

Demographic variable	Category	No.	%
Gender	Male	237	57.2
	Female	117	42.8
Age	Below 25	123	29.7
	25-35	189	45.7
	36-45	74	17.9
	46-55	27	6.5
	56+	1	0.2
	Education Level	SHS	58
	Post SHS	34	8.2
	Tertiary	315	76.1
	Other	7	1.7
Income (GH¢)	Below 100	82	19.8
	101-500	204	49.3
	501-1000	70	16.9
	1001-1500	15	3.6
	Above 1500	11	2.7
	Non-income earners	32	7.7
Marital Status	Married	149	36
	Single	257	62.1
	Other	8	1.9

n = 414

##### 4.3 Demographic variables and complaining motives

According to Table 2, it appears that gender does not influence any of the complaining motives of the respondents since mean rank differences between male and females are not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, male and females do not differ in their motives for complaining towards mobile telephony services in GMTI.

However, according to marital status (Table 2), the results show significant differences in complaining motives among the sub-groups. The table shows that respondents differ on three complaining motives, namely: seeking explanation ( $X^2 = 10.393$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ), seeking compensation ( $X^2 = 6.507$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ), and seeking apology ( $X^2 = 15.559$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Specifically, single respondents are more likely to seek explanation (mean rank = 221.49) than the married (mean rank = 183.16) and those in other marital categories (mean = 211.44). Again, respondents in other marital category including the separated, divorced and widowed are more likely to seek compensation (mean rank = 286.25) than single (unmarried) respondents (mean rank = 213.23) and married respondents (mean rank = 193.39). Moreover, other marital categories including the separated, divorced, widowed respondents are more likely to seek apology (mean rank = 324.81) than single respondents (mean rank = 217.19) and married respondents (mean rank = 184.49) in their complaining motives. Put together, it appears that those with single marital status, whether unmarried or divorced, separated or widowed tend to complain for the motive of seeking compensation, explanation and apology more than their married counterparts.

In terms of age (Table 3), the results show that there are no significant differences among the complaining motives of different age groups ( $p > 0.05$ ). In terms of income and education (Table 4), there appears to be no significant differences among the complaining motives of high and low income earners and education sub-groups.

**Table 2. Influence of gender and marital status on complaining responses and motives**

Item	Gender			Marital status							
	X <sup>2</sup>	d	p	Male (rk)	Female (rk)	X <sup>2</sup>	d	P	Married (rk)	Single (rk)	Others (rk)
Seeking remedy	0.518	1	0.472	211.03	202.77	2.162	2	0.206	194.26	214.55	227.75
Seeking correction	2.458	1	0.117	215.12	197.30	4.531	2	0.104	191.55	216.40	218.56
Seeking explanation	2.332	1	0.127	214.99	197.47	10.393	2	0.006*	183.16	221.49	211.44
Seeking compensation	0.117	1	0.732	205.81	209.76	6.507	2	0.039*	193.39	213.23	286.25
Seeking apology	0.97	1	0.755	205.95	209.58	15.559	2	0.000*	184.49	217.19	324.81
Express emotions/anger	0.375	1	0.540	210.54	203.43	5.810	2	0.055	189.03	217.88	218.06
<b>Non-Complaining motive</b>											
Too late to complain	0.056	1	0.813	208.67	205.93	3.487	2	0.175	194.43	213.90	245.12
Customer is loyal	2.873	1	0.090	199.29	218.50	0.383	2	0.826	208.90	208.98	230.12
Risk of firm's reputation	0.118	1	0.731	205.86	209.69	1.726	2	0.422	200.66	210.21	247.69
Feeling shy	1.263	1	0.261	202.28	214.49	1.029	2	0.598	305.39	207.54	245.69
Fear to complain	0.101	1	0.751	206.06	209.43	0.161	2	0.923	206.28	207.77	221.62
Busyness to complain	0.027	1	0.870	208.31	206.42	3.158	2	0.206	220.85	199.63	211.88
Not knowing where/how	0.547	1	0.459	211.14	202.63	2.763	2	0.251	199.02	210.72	261.88
That nothing will be done	0.349	1	0.555	204.57	211.43	9.219	2	0.010*	189.63	215.09	296.56
<b>Complaining response</b>											
In person	0.432	1	0.511	210.74	203.16	0.982	2	0.612	214.22	203.16	221.88
Discourage family	2.924	1	0.087	216.01	196.11	4.047	2	0.132	196.09	212.19	269.95
Mass media	7.738	1	0.005*	221.27	189.06	3.498	2	0.174	205.46	206.31	283.75
Consumer group	8.908	1	0.003*	222.34	186.63	3.942	2	0.139	194.65	213.37	258.19
Writing complaint letters	1.356	1	0.244	213.27	199.78	0.491	2	0.782	209.34	205.63	233.19
Stop using firm's services	2.289	1	0.130	215.01	197.45	8.321	2	0.016*	195.75	211.01	313.50
Writing on complaint card	0.107	1	0.744	209.12	205.33	4.795	2	0.091	211.98	202.31	290.75

P-value – significant at 0.05; Male (n = 237) Female (n = 177), Married (n = 149) Single (n = 257), Other (n = 8)

**Table 3. Influence of age on complaining responses and motives**

Item	Age (years)			<25 (mean rank)	25-35 (mean rank)	36-45 (mean rank)	45-55 (mean rank)	56+ (mean rank)
	X <sup>2</sup>	df	p					
<b>Complaining motive</b>								
Seeking remedy	3.210	4	0.523	218.27	204.77	193.07	220.30	122.00
Seeking correction	4.690	4	0.321	213.72	214.00	186.81	194.44	96.50
Seeking explanation	3.182	4	0.528	219.87	205.45	193.25	207.85	119.00
Seeking compensation	6.517	4	0.164	214.91	202.84	220.41	166.02	342.50
Seeking apology	4.782	4	0.310	211.88	209.21	210.45	163.76	309.00
Express emotions/anger	3.720	4	0.445	215.39	210.73	188.18	197.96	313.00
<b>Non-Complaining motive</b>								
Too late to complain	5.752	4	0.218	205.72	209.95	218.46	163.72	333.50
Customer is loyal	17.770	4	0.001*	205.37	202.22	243.46	148.59	397.90
Risk of firm's reputation	15.776	4	0.003*	217.26	194.85	238.56	160.50	369.00
Feeling shy	14.642	4	0.006*	212.22	195.79	242.30	168.06	330.50
Fear to complain	13.469	4	0.009*	214.61	198.52	234.03	160.11	347.50
Busyness to complain	12.374	4	0.015*	188.05	202.56	244.08	226.37	265.00
Not knowing where/how	10.685	4	0.030*	216.05	200.00	231.14	153.08	273.50
That nothing will be done	8.362	4	0.079	220.55	202.46	213.07	161.69	379.00
<b>Complaining response</b>								
In person	2.569	4	0.632	216.60	199.08	207.68	223.76	276.50
Discourage family	2.856	4	0.582	213.07	210.71	199.05	179.67	292.50
Mass media	8.621	4	0.071	211.68	201.81	229.86	162.24	336.00
Consumer group	8.218	4	0.084	208.63	212.88	212.18	148.15	309.00
Writing complaint letters	4.360	4	0.359	201.07	201.77	228.19	215.70	328.00
Stop using firm's services	4.016	4	0.404	218.90	203.77	209.92	172.87	266.00
Writing on complaint card	5.494	4	0.240	191.78	208.77	228.41	208.94	316.00

P-value – significant at 0.05; Age sub-groups: <25 (n = 123), 25-35 (n = 189), 36-45 (n = 74), 45-55 (n = 27), 56+ (n = 1)

**Table 4. Influence of income and education on complaining responses and motives**

Item	Income (GH¢)					Education				
	X <sup>2</sup>	Df	P	Low (mean rank)	High (mean rank)	X <sup>2</sup>	Df	p	Low (mean rank)	High (mean rank)
<b>Complaining motive</b>										
Seeking remedy	0.192	1	0.662	206.14	212.02	0.354	1	0.552	213.53	205.61
Seeking correction	0.266	1	0.606	295.91	212.78	1.152	1	0.283	196.74	210.88
Seeking explanation	0.004	1	0.951	207.69	206.87	0.055	1	0.815	205.13	208.25
Seeking compensation	0.000	1	0.994	207.52	207.42	0.081	1	0.776	210.40	206.59
Seeking apology	2.165	1	0.141	212.15	192.09	0.001	1	0.982	207.74	207.43
Express emotions/anger	0.002	1	0.967	207.37	207.94	0.002	1	0.967	207.93	207.37
<b>Non-Complaining motive</b>										
Too late to complain	0.253	1	0.615	209.08	202.26	0.142	1	0.707	203.66	208.71
Customer is loyal	0.034	1	0.854	206.93	209.38	0.005	1	0.945	208.19	207.28
Risk of firm's reputation	0.914	1	0.339	201.40	197.90	0.336	1	0.562	213.21	205.70
Feeling shy	2.922	1	0.087	212.55	190.77	0.932	1	0.334	216.76	204.59
Fear to complain	1.197	1	0.274	210.66	197.04	1.554	1	0.213	219.18	203.83
Busyness to complain	0.846	1	0.358	204.61	217.06	0.779	1	0.377	198.51	210.33
Not knowing where/how	0.384	1	0.535	205.56	213.92	0.481	1	0.488	200.46	209.71
That nothing will be done	0.005	1	0.946	207.29	208.21	0.058	1	0.810	205.04	208.27
<b>Complaining response</b>										
In person	0.541	1	0.462	209.81	199.86	0.294	1	0.588	201.98	209.23
Discourage family	0.074	1	0.786	206.64	210.34	0.037	1	0.847	205.52	208.12
Mass media	0.178	1	0.673	208.83	203.10	4.412	1	0.036*	186.84	214.24
Consumer group	2.600	1	0.107	202.40	224.39	3.600	1	0.058	188.03	213.62
Writing complaint letters	0.608	1	0.435	205.34	215.64	0.270	1	0.603	202.19	209.17
Stop using firm's services	0.003	1	0.955	207.68	206.91	3.309	1	0.069	188.86	213.36
Writing on complaint card	2.221	1	0.136	202.80	223.60	5.044	1	0.025*	184.52	214.72

P-value – significant at 0.05, Low income (n = 318), High income (n = 96), Low education (n = 99), High education (n = 315)



#### 4.4 Demographic variables and non-complaining motives

According to Table 2, it appears that gender does not influence any of the identified non-complaining motives of the respondents since mean differences between males and females are not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, males and females do not differ in their motives for non-complaining towards mobile telephony services in GMTI.

However, according to marital status (Table 2), there seems to be significant differences among single and married respondents in the non-complaining motive that nothing will be done if complained. Respondents differ on only one non-complaining motive, being that nothing will be done if complained ( $X^2 = 9.219$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ). Specifically, other marital categories including the separated, divorced, widowed respondents are more unlikely to complain because they believe that nothing will be done by the service provider if complained (mean rank = 296.56) than single respondents (mean rank = 215.09) and married respondents (mean rank = 189.63).

In terms of age (Table 3), it appears that there are significant differences in non-complaining motives among different age groups ( $p > 0.05$ ). The reason that customers do not complain because of their loyalty to the firm is significantly influenced by respondents' age difference ( $X^2 = 17.770$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Specifically, older customers are more unlikely to complain because of their loyalty to the firm (mean rank = 397.90) than younger customers (mean rank = 202.22). Again, age significantly influences the non-complaining motive that firm's reputation may be affected if complained ( $X^2 = 15.776$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). Specifically, older customers are more unlikely to voice their complaints to avoid hurting the firm's reputation (369.00) than younger customers (mean rank = 194.85). Also age influences the non-complaining reason of feeling shy to complain ( $X^2 = 14.642$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ); older respondents are more likely to feel shy to complain (mean ranks = 242.30; 330.50) than younger respondents (mean ranks = 212.22; 195.79). Moreover, age influences the non-complaining reason of fear to complain ( $X^2 = 13.469$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ), and that matured and aged respondents are more likely to fear to complain (mean ranks = 347.50; 234.03) than younger respondents (mean ranks = 214.61; 198.52). Furthermore, age influences the non-complaining reason of customer being too busy to complain ( $X^2 = 12.374$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ); matured and aged respondents are more likely to be too busy to complain (mean ranks = 265.00; 244.08) than younger respondents (mean rank = 188.05; 202.56). Finally, age influences the non-complaining reason of ignorance of how and where to complain ( $X^2 = 10.685$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ); matured and aged respondents are more likely to be ignorant of where and how to complain (mean ranks = 273.50; 231.14) than younger respondents (mean ranks = 216.05; 200.00).

Summarily, it could be deduced that more matured and aged respondents are more unlikely to voice their complaints than younger respondents due to loyalty, risk of firm's reputation, shyness, busyness, ignorance of where and how to complain. Inferring from this, younger respondents tend to complain more than older respondents.

In terms of income and education (Table 4), there appears to be no significant differences in non-complaining motives of respondents in high and low income and education sub-groups.

#### 4.5 Demographic variables and complaining responses/channels

According to Table 2, it appears that gender influences two of the identified complaining responses ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, males and females differ in complaining to the mass media ( $X^2 = 7.738$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ) and complaining to consumer group ( $X^2 = 8.908$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). Specifically, males are more likely to complain through the mass media (mean rank = 221.27) than their female counterparts (mean rank = 189.06). Again, males are more likely to complain to consumer groups (mean rank = 222.34) than their female counterparts (mean rank = 186.63). Thus, generally, male customers are more likely to complain to the mass media and consumer groups than female customers.

In terms of marital status (Table 2), there seems to be significant difference in the complaining response of stopping to use the firm's services ( $X^2 = 8.321$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ). Specifically, other marital categories including the separated, divorced, widowed respondents are more unlikely to exhibit the complaining response of stopping to use the firm's services (mean rank = 313.50) than single respondents (mean rank = 211.01) and married respondents (mean rank = 195.75).

In terms of age and income from Table 3 and 4 respectively, it appears that there are no significant differences among the complaining responses of different age and income groups ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, in terms of education (Table 4), there appears to be some significant differences among the complaining responses of high and low education sub-groups in terms of complaining through the mass media ( $X^2 = 4.412$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.036$ ) and complaining by writing on a complaint card to the service provider's customer service centre ( $X^2 = 5.044$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ). Specifically, respondents with higher education are able to complain through the mass media (mean rank = 214.24) than respondents with lower education (mean rank = 186.84). Similarly, respondents with higher education are able to complain by writing on a complaint card to the firm (mean rank = 214.72) than respondents with lower education (mean rank = 184.52).

## 5. Discussion of Findings

### 5.1 *Influence of Gender*

The study found that gender does not significantly influence complaining and non-complaining motives. While some studies found that gender influences CCB generally (e.g. Manikas and Shea, 1997), more recent studies showed contrary results (e.g. Nimako and Mensah, 2012). This study strongly provides some indications that gender may not influence the motives for complaining and non-complaining. Thus, it could be concluded that gender may not influence not only complaining behaviour generally, but also the motives for complaining and non-complaining, especially in the mobile telephony industry in Ghana.

Though gender may provide useful basis for handling customer complaints, it is difficult to trace any significant differences in reasons for customer complaining behaviour based on their gender characteristics. It may not be of any considerable marketing value to use gender characteristics to explain the underlying motives for complaining and non-complaining behaviour since male and female seem to have significantly similar motives for complaining and non-complaining behaviour.

However, in terms of complaining response/channels used, the study found that generally, male customers are more likely to complain to the mass media and consumer groups than female customers. These results imply that males are typically associated with complaining by using public responses than females in the light of the framework of Singh (1990). The use of public responses may require some considerable level of courage and assertiveness that appear to be associated with masculine personality. This may strongly explain why more male customers tend to complain through the mass media and consumer group than female customers towards mobile telephony services in GMTI.

### 5.2 *Influence of Marital Status*

The study found that, generally, marital status significantly influences some complaining and non-complaining motives. Nimako and Mensah (2012) found that marital status significantly influences complaining behaviour. The present study indicates that marital status could also influence some of the reasons why customers complain or not complain.

With respect to complaining motives, marital status significantly influences some complaining motives. Specifically, respondents with single marital status, whether unmarried or divorced, separated or widowed tend to complain more than the married for motives such as seeking compensation, explanation and apology from service providers in the GMTI. One possible explanation is that customers with single marital status tend to have more time to complain than the married customers. Thus, seeking for compensation, explanation and apology could be associated with customers who have single marital status more than those who are married.

With respect to non-complaining motives, respondents with other marital status such as divorced, separated and widowed tend to be more reluctant to complain than the single and married respondents for the only motive that nothing will be done by service provider if complained. If separated, divorced and widowed customers do not complain, the main reason is likely to be that they believe nothing will be done by the firm if they complain. Thus, non-complaining motive that nothing will be done if complained could be associated with customers who have marital status other than single and married.

With regards to complaining response, the study found that other marital category including the separated, divorced and widowed respondents are more likely to refrain from using the firm's services than single respondents if dissatisfied. Combining results from the non-complaining motive and complaining response of customers with other marital status, we could infer that, logically, in certain service encounter situations where such customers perceive that nothing will be done if they complain, they would not complain at all. Such customers with "the-nothing-will-be-done" motive are likely to refrain from using that particular mobile telecom service. This confirms previous studies that customer may switch service providers where service providers ignore or do not attend effectively to their complaints (Keaveney, 1995). According to previous studies non-complainers may not only resort to negative Word-of-Mouth (WOM) communication (Blodgett et al., 1995), but also discourage social groups from using the firm's services and could easily switch to a competitor service provider (Keaveney, 1995).

### 5.3 *Influence of Age*

Previous studies have found that age could influence complaining behaviour (Heung and Lam, 2003; Nimako and Mensah, 2012), and that older respondents are less likely to complain than younger ones (Nimako and Mensah, 2012). This study found, however, that age may not necessarily influence complaining responses and the motives for voicing complaints; rather it could significantly influence the motives for non-complaining. The results show that older customers are less likely to complain than younger customers due to reasons such as loyalty to firm, risk of firm's reputation, feeling shy to complain, fear, busyness and ignorance of where and how to complain. One possible explanation is that older people in Ghana tend to be too busy to make time to lodge complaints, and appear to be more empathetic and considerate in reporting institutions for certain mistakes and faults. Younger people tend to voice their complaints without feeling shy or thinking that such complaints could



affect the reputation of the service provider.

#### *5.4 Influence of Income*

A recent study (Nimako and Mensah, 2012) showed that income may not influence complaining behaviour among complainers and non-complainers. The present study has also shown that income of the respondents did not significantly influence the motive for complaining and non-complaining, as well as the kind of channel used in complaining. One possible explanation is that it does not really cost in Ghana to register any formal or informal complaints to make it difficult for different income groups to complain.

#### *5.5 Influence of Education*

Previous studies have found that highly educated customers are more likely to complain than less educated customers (Heung and Lam, 2003). Recent findings of Nimako and Mensah (2012) indicated somewhat contrary evidence, that education did not influence complaining behaviour in general in the context of Ghana's mobile telecom market. The present study provides some useful results to clarify the influence of education. It shows that though education did not significantly influence the motivation for complaining and non-complaining among the respondents, it significantly influenced the kind of channel or response used for complaining, especially complaining by writing on a complaint card, and complaining through the mass media. Thus, findings indicate that highly educated people are more likely to complain through the mass media and by writing to the service provider on a complaint card.

This is probably because educated customers appear to be more knowledgeable about their rights as consumers, know how and where to complain, and are more able to formally communicate their complaints in writing to service providers and the mass media than the less educated consumers as noted by Heung and Lam (2003). Again, it is probably because they know the implications of complaining to the public and how that can attract the quick attention of service provider for immediate response to their complaints.

### **6. Implications to Theory and Practice**

This paper offers important implications to marketing theory and practice. To marketing theory, one major contribution of this paper is that it is one of the first to provide empirical evidence that demographic variables could influence consumer complaining responses and their motivation for complaining and non-complaining in mobile telephony industry in developing country context. The study adds to existing literature on complaining behaviour with the following new findings: complaining motives could be significantly influenced by marital status; non-complaining motives could be significantly influenced by marital status and age; complaining response could be significantly influenced by gender, marital status and education of consumers.

To marketing practitioners, the findings provide the following implications for complaint management. First, since the study found that complaining motives were significantly influenced by marital status, management could trace customers' motives for complaining by their marital status. In this regard, management of mobile telephony firms, especially in Ghana, should consistently examine the marital status of their consumers to identify and group them appropriately into singles, married and others such as widowed, divorced and separated. Based on this, management should understand that customers with single marital status are more likely to complain in order to seek explanation, compensation and apology than married consumers. Therefore, with this knowledge, staff should be trained to provide useful explanation and render polite apology or compensate, where necessary, such single consumers who complain to the firm.

Second, since the study found that non-complaining motives were found to be influenced by marital status and age, management of mobile telephony firms, especially in Ghana, should understand that their customers who are single and older are more unlikely to complain where they believe that nothing will be done if they complain. This category of consumers is more likely to stop using the firm's service and eventually switch to competitor service providers (Bloggett, 1995; Gursoy, et al., 2007; Nimako, 2012b). It is recommended that management and staff should encourage single and older customers to voice their complaints to the firm, and should be more sensitive to their complaints and make purposeful attempt to address and resolve the complaints promptly.

Thirdly, since the study found that complaining response is significantly influenced by gender, marital status and education of consumers, management of mobile telecom firms, especially in Ghana, should understand that consumers' attitude and response to complaining could be attributable to their gender, marital status and education background. In this regard, staff should be more sensitive to demographic influence in attempting to resolve the problems and complaints of customers who are males, single and highly educated as these groups are more likely and capable of using third party means such as the mass media and consumer associations to complain. Using such third party responses may be detrimental to the firm's reputation and image (Singh, 1990). Management should increase customer education to facilitate their knowledge of products, their rights, and how to register complaints more effectively to the benefit of the firm.

## 7. Limitations and Future research

The study is limited to the telecommunication industry in developing country context. Future research should extend the study to other industry contexts, and compare the results to provide more empirical support to the findings in this study. Moreover, the present study used a self-administered structured questionnaire in a cross-sectional survey. Future research should examine the phenomenon using qualitative approaches like interviews, focus group discussions and other projective techniques, and compare the results. Furthermore, this study focused on demographic variables only, future research should examine the influence of cultural and psychographic factors on motivation for complaining and non-complaining in service environment.

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study examined the influence of demographic variables on consumer complaining channels/response and on their motivation for complaining and non-complaining in the context of GMTI. Through a cross-sectional survey in the GMTI, it was found that complaining motives were found to be significantly influenced by only marital status. Non-complaining motives were found to be influenced by marital status and age. Complaining response is significantly influenced by gender, marital status and education of consumers.

The study is relevant to marketing theory and practices. It suggests to management and marketing practitioners to consistently collect and examine vital demographic information about their customers in order to understand their complaining response, and motivation for complaining and non-complaining. Generalizations based on the findings of this study are limited and might not be applicable to every firm and industry context. Future research directions have been suggested.

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