

An Empirical Study on Cross-Cultural Consumer Complaint Behaviors via Social Media

Raymond R. Liu
Professor of Marketing
College of Management
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd
Boston, MA, USA

Guang-Xin Xie
Assistant Professor of Marketing
College of Management
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd
Boston, MA, USA

Abstract

Because of the importance of consumer complaint behavior (CCB) in consumer post-purchase management and long term customer relationship management and the increasingly globalized economy and business world, some researchers explore the cross-cultural CCB (CCCCB) issues. Today, social media has become widely available. With the growing popularity of social media platforms and mobile communication devices, consumer complaint behaviors have evolved significantly over the past ten years. It is clear to us that the online mechanism is changing how we communicate and therefore the ways of CCB as well as CCCCCB. However, how and why consumers from different countries/cultures use social media to make complaints remains largely unknown in the literature.

This study develops and tests a model of CCB via social media and its antecedents. The model is tested by CCB respondents from different cultures (i.e., collectivistic and individualistic cultures). First, based on the CCB literature review and a three-step qualitative research process, we develop a model of CCB via social media and its antecedents and a set of hypotheses. Then we develop the measurement scale to include the CCB's via social media and the existing CCB measurement scales. And then, we collect data from the US (N = 430) and China (N = 450) to test the model and the hypotheses on cross-cultural CCB. China and the US are selected as the sampling countries because they not only have the most social media users (CINNIC 2014; Internet World Stats 2014), but also represent arguably distinctive cultures: collectivistic (China) and individualistic (USA) cultures. Furthermore, we use EFA, CFA (LISREL), and multivariate statistics methods to test methods to test the model and the cross-cultural CCB hypotheses. Because of the cross-cultural nature of the study, we also conduct measurement invariance tests. Based on our data analysis with data from the US and China, we find that the model and hypotheses are all supported. Data from China and the US shows that 1) the traditional CCB

taxonomy is embedded into the new CCB taxonomy; 2) Consumers in a collectivistic culture are more likely to engage in social media CCB but less likely in voice CCB than those in an individualistic culture; 3) Social media CCB is positively associated with perceived benefit (for self and others); 4) Social media CCB is positively associated with the time consumers spent on social media; and 5) Social media CCB is negatively associated with consumers' age. Finally, we discuss the theoretical contributions and managerial implications, the limitations of the study, and directions for future research.
