

How Mature Consumers Handle Unpleasant Experience in the Market?

Sharifah A. Haron, Universiti Putra Malaysia
Laily Paim, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Abstract

The Malaysian market is "graying" as the number of ageing population significantly increases. In other words, the proportion of mature consumers is getting bigger. Unfortunately, elderly or mature consumers are frequently depicted as vulnerable consumers. Thus, this paper attempts to gauge the resiliency of Malaysian mature consumers with respect to protecting themselves. Specifically, the objectives of this paper are to assess elderly consumer knowledge and market skills, to analyze unpleasant experiences that they encountered in the market and to examine their reaction(s) to such experiences. The study was conducted in Kuala Lumpur/Petaling Jaya, Kuantan, Pulau Pinang, Johor Baharu, Kota Bharu, Melaka, Alor Setar and Ipoh. Data was collected using questionnaire-based interview by trained enumerators. A total of 1356 respondents were interviewed although only 387 respondents answered the segment relevant to this study. Generally, the elderly consumer's knowledge was poor, although they were quite assertive consumers. The most frequently cited problems were being overcharged, problems when dealing with direct sellers, frauds and/or misleading advertisements. A large percentage of elderly solved their problems by dealing with sellers or manufacturers of that product, although a significant percentage chose to do nothing about their problems or that they do

no know who they should turn to solve their problems.

Introduction

The life expectancy among Malaysians has increased due to better health facilities and nutrition. In 1990, the life expectancy among women was 70.3 and 68.8 among men, however, by 2001, it has increased to 75.2 and 73.5 respectively (Economic Planning Unit, 2002). Thus, the number of population aged 65 and above is growing from 658,500 (3.7%) in 1990 to 1,008,200 (4.1%) in 2002. It is projected that the number of elderly aged 60 and above will reach 3.2 million by year 2020 (Economic Planning Unit, 2002). As the size of elderly consumer segment becomes larger, it gets the attention of the marketers. Thus, according to Green and Walniak (1991), changes in the size of the consumer segment are just as important as changes in income.

Unfortunately, elderly consumers are especially vulnerable to unfair deals and deceptions in the market (AARP, 1999; Graycar and James, 2001). Their susceptibility to such practices was further compounded by their likelihood of having lower income and education compared to that of other consumer groups. Thus, it may hinder them in seeking redress should they encounter unpleasant experience in the market.

In dealing with frustration towards

