

**Effective replies to negative online comments considering customers'  
motivations - Comparison between Japanese and Thai-**

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## **Abstract**

Dealing effectively with negative word-of-mouths(WOMs) at viral sites posted by consumers has gained increasing importance in recent marketing efforts. While several cultural differences exist in the customer complaints behavior, the responses may also differ on the basis of the customers' nationalities. The purpose of this study is to figure out the appropriate responses for dissatisfied consumers considering their cultural differences and the type and strength of the motivation for posting negative WOMs by conducting a survey in two Asian markets: Japan and Thailand.

The results show that supplier's response is effectiveness in customers' psychological evaluations. However, the expected degree of empathy contained in the replies varies with the kind of motivation customers have while sharing their views on social platforms. In addition, the differences between Japanese and Thai customers on the basis of their psychological evaluation and the effect of empathic responses given by the supplier have been discussed with the argument that the ways of expressing their dissatisfaction and the responses for them are shaped by customers' cultural backgrounds.

**Keywords:** negative word-of-mouth, consumer complaint, international comparison

## **Introduction**

As globalization continues, suppliers have to sell their products or services in the global market and consider the post-purchase behavior of customers from various countries or regions. While cultural differences in the complaint behavior and in their appropriate responses are often discussed in consumer research, there is little verification about such issues among Asian countries. There are studies concerning complaints, which indicate that when customers receive appropriate responses to their complaints from the supplier after a service failure, they tend to feel greater satisfaction, develop strong company loyalty, and tend to strengthen repurchase intention, than if they have not had such a bad experience (Smith et al., 1999; MaxhamIII, 2001; Hocutt et al., 2006). Thus, suppliers should deal with the customers' dissatisfaction properly.

However, customers are gradually changing the way to express their dissatisfaction with the services they have purchased. While the number of customers who directly file complaints with the supplier or with a third-party organization has been declining, more people are expressing their dissatisfaction on viral websites or through social-networking services (SNS). Therefore, posting of negative reviews is the topic of this study, which is based on customer motivation to merely express their dissatisfaction, or a desire to share their feelings with other consumers. Based on these reasons, we can surmise that these customers do not really expect direct responses from the supplier to their complaints. In other words, types of response expected for negative reviews differ according to a consumer's background or motivation.

One way to deal with such customer complaints is to post a message responding to negative reviews on websites such as "Trip Advisor" and "Yelp". According to a Trip Advisor's survey, hotels who have responded to negative reviews online tend to have more customer reviews, increase customer engagements, and receive more reservations, than those have not (Trip Adviser, 2014). Besides, MEDALLIAN reports that website viewers tend to have a better impression of hotels that provide a heartfelt response to negative reviews (MEDALLIAN, 2015). Regarding the psychology of consumers who provide negative reviews, there are reports concerning the impact that negative reviews may have on the writers' positive attitudes toward the service and their behavior after purchase (Ando, 2013), and the impact that empathizers may have on the writers of negative reviews (Sensui, 2015). On the other hand, while there are some studies regarding the content of suppliers' responses (Osawa et al., 2010), there have not been fully discussed on how service suppliers should deal with negative reviews on viral websites.

Based on these facts, we reported that effective response to negative reviews varies depending on the customer's motivation for posting the review (Kogure et al., 2016). With regard to complaint behavior, it has been pointed out that customers' traits influence the

occurrence of complaints (Kuroiwa, 2004). This means that an appropriate response may also differ by the characteristics of customers, such as their nationality. From this viewpoint, the behavior of customers from Japan and Thailand (who share similar cultures but have different ways of expressing their emotions) was compared in this study.

### **Theoretical background**

Culture provides the framework for social interactions, social rules, customer expectations, and the fact that consumer behavior tends to vary from culture to culture (Pucik et al., 1986). Particularly, according to previous studies, it is a well-known fact that Asian countries differ from Western countries in terms of communication and perception of service quality (Mattila, 1999). Asian countries have cultural similarities in the context of characteristics of communication (Hall, 1984) and power distance (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1991) that reflect social hierarchies. Because of this characteristic, service employees who are regarded as of lower social status are required to provide consumers with high levels of service (Mattila, 1999). This makes Asian consumers have high expectations and thus tend to complain as well.

However, regarding the way of expressing one's emotion, Asian countries differ from each other. Culture is one of the factors which influence complaints behavior (Ngai et al., 2007). Japan is considered to have cultural tightness, where people are afraid to be criticized or to act inappropriately (Triandis, 2004). The Japanese tend to avoid expressing their emotions directly. It is thus unlikely for Japanese consumers to seem overly enthusiastic about good services or make bald allegations against poor services. In contrast, according to Wongsaming (2016a), Thai people tend to lay weight on claiming their own detriment when expressing their dissatisfaction. Besides, due to being heavily influenced by Buddhism, people from Thailand believe that they should accept things as they are and not change the situation when they face a service failure (Patterson, 2001).

Meanwhile, regarding "social sharing of emotion", Rime et al. (1991) showed that the kind of emotions experienced differ culturally in unpleasant situations, and suggested that social sharing may be a cultural phenomenon in some aspects. Social sharing of emotion is an action through which people try to recover from unpleasant emotions by telling their experiences to other people (Rime et al., 1991). Posting their negative WOM can be regarded as a kind of social sharing of emotion (see Berger, J (2014) for reviews).

When it comes to such social sharing, people are not satisfied only by sharing their emotion. They expect to receive a justification from the other (Wetzer et al., 2007) and demand emotional involvement (by expressing empathy or consoling them) from the listener (Rime, 2009). Thus, consumers who post negative WOMs expect a response from the suppliers. However, the satisfaction after sharing their emotion ranges according to the level of one's desire for emotional dependence (Hasegawa et al., 2014), suggesting that consumers who share their emotions do not necessarily expect listeners to respond emotionally. Instead, what they expect depends on the psychology of each consumer. For this reason, an effective action in soothing people's anger may also depend on their personal and cultural factors.

In this paper, we have elaborated the effect of replies to consumers who share their emotion from the perspective of social sharing of emotion. Rime et al. (1992) noted that there are five factors that make people share their emotions: clarifying experience, organizing experience into rule of logical thinking, restoration of beliefs, searching for social support, understanding and acceptance. Based on their study, Kawase (1997) examined the five factors of social sharing of emotion by conducting a survey and revealed that two factors will be the main motivation behind the social sharing of anger: one is the "restoration of beliefs," which attempts to reduce the cognitive dissonance of one's beliefs threatened by an expected or arbitrary event; the other is "understanding and acceptance," which is a desire to be understood and accepted emotionally to a state that has been privately experienced by people around one. When consumers share their emotions with the motivation of "understanding and acceptance," they expect a reply from the supplier. By contrast, consumers who share their emotions with the motivation of "restoration of beliefs" may feel displeasure on receiving replies, because they do not expect to receive emotional reactions and only want to diffuse

their negative emotion personally by expressing their emotion.

However, from the perspective of cultural difference, what will be the apt response for consumers who make complaints in each country? Thai people tend to aggressively deal with the problem when they receive complaints, while Japanese make it a priority to apologize or show their consideration for whoever made the complaint rather than providing a solution (Wongsaming, 2016b). Thus, Thai people would want to receive reactions more than Japanese, since they believe in expressing their emotions to others, unlike the Japanese.

Therefore, based on the four hypotheses listed below, Study1 will analyze the effectiveness of a supplier's response in influencing how consumers feel about the service and how the response may be affected by the type and strength of the customer's motivation of WOM and the customer's nationality.

H1: When a consumer posts a negative review on a viral website, the presence or absence of the supplier's response influences the consumer's psychological evaluation of the supplier's services and response.

H2: The effectiveness of H1 changes depending on the customer's nationality. Thai people would give receiving replies a better evaluation than the Japanese.

H3: Consumers who share their emotions with the motivation of "understanding and acceptance" would expect to receive a response from suppliers as compared to consumers who share with the motivation of "restoration of beliefs."

H4: Consumers with a higher sense of motivation toward "social sharing of emotion" will be satisfied with receiving a response than those with a lower sense of motivation.

## Study 1

### Survey overview

In this study, we selected service goods as the target of research from two aspects. Service goods has the difficulty to maintain same quality at all times, and quality evaluation tends to be easily affected by individuals' subjective opinions (Komiyaji, 2010). In particular, we selected hotels considering that there are many viral websites that allow operators to respond to negative reviews. As part of the instructions presented to the participants to this experiment, we used negative reviews posted on viral websites concerning actual hotels and created hypothetical scenario in which customer found that the service rendered to them left them feeling dissatisfied. We then selected the following scenario in which the degree of consumers' discontent matched the negative reviews on viral websites (according to Kogure et al. (2016)).

#### 《Scenario》

I went on an overnight trip with my friend during the spring break. We stayed at a hotel that we had never stayed in before. It was located near the railway station. The atmosphere of the building was good. Staff members were friendly. They were courteous when we checked in at the front desk. The assigned room was clean, and its atmosphere was calming. However, it was disappointing that the heater hardly worked when we turned it on to warm the room since it was a chilly day.

### Survey methodology

We conducted an online survey targeting 440 Japanese men and women and 206 Thai men and women in their 30s. We first presented them with the above scenarios and asked them to imagine that they were in this situation. We then asked them to write reviews and asked their motivation of social sharing of emotion. The respondents were divided into two groups. Respondents of one group were given a response, while respondents of the other group were not given any response. We created hypothetical responses to these complaints with a reference to Osawa et al. (2010). We gave them these responses and assessed their willingness to forgive the supplier with regard to the cause of their discontentment, their level of satisfaction with these responses, their level of satisfaction with the service, and their repurchase intention. We used a four-item measurement for the level of "Understanding and

acceptance”, a five-item measurement for the level of “Restoration of beliefs” (Table1) (Kawase, 1997), three-item measurement for the level of forgiveness (Yelena et al., 2015), a one-item measurement for both, the level of satisfaction with the responses and the level of satisfaction with the service and a four-item measurement for repurchase intention (Nakawzawa, 1994). For each measurement, a seven-point Likert scale was used.

Table 1: The measurement for motivation of social sharing of emotion (Kawase,1997)

| “Understanding and acceptance”  | “Restoration of beliefs”                       |
|---------------------------------|--|
| I want to understand my emotion | I want to feel well                            |
| I want someone to agree with me | I want to vanish my anxious                    |
| I want to listen to my emotion  | I want to distract myself                      |
| I want to tell that I am right  | I want to put myself in a better frame of mind |
|                                 | I want to restrain my passion                  |

## Results

Of the 646people (not-responded group n=324, responded group n=322, Japanese n=440, Thai n=206), an analysis was conducted on 581people (non-response group n=285, response group n=296, Japanese n=379, Thai n=202) after excluding 65 who provided incomplete answers. Respondents were classified into the following according to their strength of motivation of social sharing of emotion: “higher motivation group” (top 30% of strength of motivation) and “lower motivation group” (bottom 30%). (Table 2)

First, we conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of three factors: whether the response was or not, the participant’s nationality, and the “Understanding and acceptance” motivation. No interactions were observed among these three factors. However, the main effect of existence of response was confirmed (Table 3): The group that received an response showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness( $F(1,343)=15.002$ ,  $p<.001$ ), satisfaction with the response ( $F(1,343)=3.645$ ,  $p<.10$ ) and satisfaction with the service( $F(1,343)=2.904$ ,  $p<.10$ ) than the NOT received the response. Also the main effect of nationality was confirmed (Table 4): The Thai showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,343)=10.357$ ,  $p<.001$ ), satisfaction with the response ( $F(1,343)=61.858$ ,  $p<.001$ ), satisfaction with the service ( $F(1,343)=27.218$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and repurchase intention( $F(1,343)=47.010$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than the Japanese. Besides, the main effect of “understanding and acceptance” was confirmed: The “lower motivation group” showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,343)=12.640$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than the “higher motivation group”.

Table 2: Classified according to strength of motivation behind social sharing of emotion

|              | Understanding and acceptance |      | Restoration of beliefs |      |              |
|--------------|------------------------------|------|------------------------|------|--------------|
|              | Japanese                     | Thai | Japanese               | Thai |              |
| Higher group | 115                          | 62   | 127                    | 68   | Higher group |
| Lower group  | 118                          | 56   | 118                    | 63   | Lower group  |

Table 3: Main effect of existence of response

|                                | non response | response | F      | p        |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|----------|
| Forgiveness                    | 4.522        | 5.077    | 15.002 | 0.000*** |
| Satisfaction with the response | 4.903        | 5.173    | 3.645  | 0.057+   |
| Satisfaction with the service  | 4.627        | 4.871    | 2.904  | 0.089+   |
| Repurchase intention           | 4.460        | 4.366    | 0.469  | 0.494    |

\*\*\* $p<.001$ , \*\* $p<.010$ , \* $p<.050$ , +  $p<.100$

Table 4: Main effect of nationality

|                                | Japanese | Thai  | F      | p        |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|--------|----------|
| Forgiveness                    | 4.569    | 5.030 | 10.357 | 0.001*** |
| Satisfaction with the response | 4.482    | 5.594 | 61.858 | 0.000*** |
| Satisfaction with the service  | 4.376    | 5.123 | 27.218 | 0.000*** |
| Repurchase intention           | 3.941    | 4.885 | 47.010 | 0.000*** |

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.010, \*p<.050

Next, we conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of three factors: whether the response was or not, the participant’s nationality, and the “restoration of beliefs” motivation. No interactions were observed among these three factors. However, significant interaction effect was found between nationality and “Restoration of beliefs” in forgiveness ( $F(1,368)=16.447$ ,  $p<.001$ ), so we conducted a simple main effect test (Bonferroni method) (Figure1). The Thai showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,368)=34.263$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than Japanese with respect to “higher motivation group”. Besides, with respect to Japan, “lower motivation group” showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,368)=57.792$ ,  $p<.01$ ) than “higher motivation group”. The main effect of existence of response was confirmed (Table5): The group that received an response showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,368)=20.275$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and satisfaction with the service ( $F(1,368)=4.146$ ,  $p<.05$ ) than the NOT received the response. Also the main effect of nationality was confirmed (Table6): Thai showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,368)=16.521$ ,  $p<.001$ ), satisfaction with the response ( $F(1,368)=71.959$ ,  $p<.001$ ), satisfaction with the service ( $F(1,368)=39.558$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and repurchase intention ( $F(1,368)=66.464$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than Japanese. Besides, the main effect of “Restoration of beliefs” was confirmed: “lower motivation group” showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,368)=24.224$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and satisfaction with the response ( $F(1,368)=4.143$ ,  $p<.05$ ) than the “higher motivation group”. Finally, to test H3, higher group of each motivation are analyzed: whether the response was or not and type of motivation. No interactions were observed among these factors. However, the main effect of existence of response was confirmed. The group that received an response showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness ( $F(1,126)=5.866$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

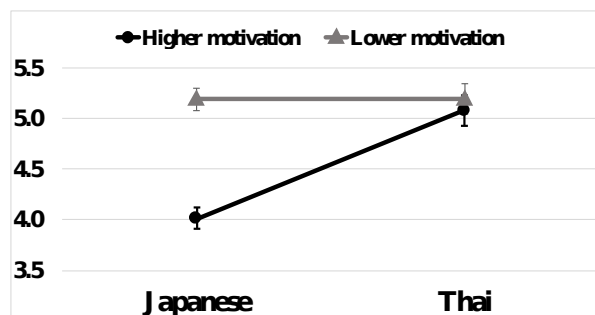


Figure 1: Level of satisfaction with the supplier’s response

\* The error bar indicates a standard margin of error

Table 5: Main effect of existence of response

|                                | non response | response | F      | p        |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|----------|
| Forgiveness                    | 4.575        | 5.166    | 20.275 | 0.000*** |
| Satisfaction with the response | 4.939        | 5.129    | 2.051  | 0.153    |
| Satisfaction with the service  | 4.684        | 4.952    | 4.146  | 0.042*   |
| Repurchase intention           | 4.347        | 4.410    | 0.216  | 0.640    |

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.010, \*p<.050

Table 6: Main effect of nationality

|                                | Japanese | Thai  | F      | p        |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|--------|----------|
| Forgiveness                    | 4.604    | 5.138 | 16.521 | 0.000*** |
| Satisfaction with the response | 4.472    | 5.596 | 71.959 | 0.000*** |
| Satisfaction with the service  | 4.404    | 5.232 | 39.558 | 0.000*** |
| Repurchase intention           | 3.834    | 4.923 | 66.464 | 0.000*** |

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.010, \*p<.050

The results show that the supplier's response is effective in the customer's psychological evaluation of the supplier's services and is consistent with H1 and a few other prior studies (Strauss, 2001; Takagi, 2012). Concerning the influence of difference of nationality, H2 is supported by the results and is consistent with Rime et al. (1991). Thai people feel significantly positive than Japanese in this study and are likely to be satisfied, express forgiveness, and have a high level of repurchase intention after receiving a response from the supplier. This may be because their cultural characteristic is that of a loosely structured society (Triandis, 1995). In loosely structured societies, people tend to avoid spinning into anarchy; its members easily forgive and have very short-term memories of others' mistakes and misdemeanors (Patterson, 2001). In addition, there are some suggestions in terms of the motivation behind the social sharing of emotion: (1) Strength of motivation in social sharing of emotion may influence the effect of a response, which supports H4. It suggests that consumers who share their emotions with a high motivation would tend not to be satisfied with a service or response from the supplier than consumers who share their emotions with lower motivation. (2) The difference in the type of social sharing of emotion does not affect the effect of response, so the result does not support H3 and our prior research (Kogure et al., 2016). It suggests that consumers' psychological evaluation depends on the strength of motivation rather than the type of motivation. The reason for such results is that when people post negative WOM, they (both "understanding and acceptance" and "restoration of beliefs") want to share their emotion and receive a response.

### Study 2

In Study1, we found that responding to consumers who share their emotion is effective in shaping their psychological evaluation towards their products or services. So, what kind of message would be effective in appeasing dissatisfied consumers?

Sensui(2015) and Kogure et al. (2016) have indicated that an empathetic message is effective in handling consumers who post negative reviews. The effectiveness of an empathetic message has been identified as a HEAT skill that is necessary for dealing with complaints (Nakamori et al., 1999). Its positive effect has also been confirmed when it comes to appeasing people in interpersonal relationships (Rogers, 1975; Burleson, 1994). Even so, there have also been reports that empathetic messages are not necessarily effective in every situation that the effectiveness of an empathetic message depends on the relationship between the sender and the recipient (Genjida et al., 2007). Also, the effectiveness of an empathetic response differs depending on the customer's motivation for posting negative reviews (Kogure et al., 2016).

From these prior research, when consumers share their emotions with the motivation of “understanding and acceptance,” they may expect an empathetic reply from the supplier. By contrast, consumers who share their emotions with the motivation of “restoration of beliefs” may feel displeasure on receiving empathetic replies, because they do not expect to receive emotional reactions and only want to diffuse their negative emotion personally by expressing their emotion.

Therefore, Study2 will examine how the effectiveness of a supplier’s empathetic response may be affected by the consumer’s nationality and the type and strength of a consumer’s motivation of WOM.

H5: When a consumer posts a negative review on a viral website, the presence or absence of empathy in the supplier’s response influences the consumer’s psychological evaluation of the supplier’s services.

H6: The effectiveness of H5 differs depending on the customer’s nationality. Thai people would give better evaluation on receiving empathetic replies than the Japanese.

H7: Consumers who share their emotions with the motivation of “understanding and acceptance” would expect to receive empathetic responses from suppliers unlike those who share with the motivation of “restoration of beliefs”.

H8: Consumers with higher strength of motivation of social sharing of emotion will be satisfied with receiving empathetic responses than those with lower strength of motivation.

### **Survey overview**

We conducted an online survey targeting 441 Japanese men and women and 199 Thai men and women in their 30s. The procedure of Study2 was the same as study1. The respondents were divided into two groups. One group was given an un-empathetic response, while the other was given an empathetic response. We created hypothetical responses to these complaints with a reference to Osawa et al. (2010). We gave them these responses and assessed their willingness to forgive the supplier with regard to the cause of their discontentment, their level of satisfaction with these responses, their level of satisfaction with the service, and their repurchase intention. We used measurements which is used in study1.

#### **Empathetic Response:**

Hello. Thank you for staying here.

We are terribly sorry about the trouble caused because of the air conditioner while you were on your valuable trip. We understand the discomfort you went through, especially since the weather has been extremely cold. We will make sure such things do not happen again in the future. We are looking forward to welcoming you here again.

Best Regards.

#### **Un-empathetic Response:**

Hello. Thank you for staying here.

We are sorry about the failing of the air conditioner. We would like to inform you that you can rent a fan heater at the reception when you feel cold, but we have not inform you accordingly, we’re extremely sorry about that. We will prevent such things from happening in the future. We are looking forward to welcoming you here again.

Best Regards.

### **Results**

Of the 640 people (un-empathetic response group n=322, empathetic response group n=318, Japanese n=441, Thai n=199), an analysis was conducted on 578 people (un-empathetic response group n=296, empathetic response group n=282, Japanese n=386, Thai n=192) after excluding 62 who provided incomplete answers. Then, we classified respondents according to their strength of motivation of social sharing of emotion as Study1 (Table7).



First, we conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of three factors: whether the response was empathetic or not, the participant's nationality, and the level of "understanding and acceptance" motivation. No interactions were observed among these three factors. However, significant interaction effect was found between existence of empathy and "understanding and acceptance" in forgiveness ( $F(1,299)=4.606, p<.05$ ) and satisfaction with the response ( $F(1,299)=4.245, p<.05$ ), so we conducted a simple main effect test (Bonferroni method) (Figure 2&3). The group that received an empathetic response showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness than the group that received an un-empathetic response with respect to "higher motivation group" ( $F(1,299)=5.014, p<.05$ ). Besides, with respect to the group that received an un-empathetic response, "lower motivation group" showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness than "higher motivation group" ( $F(1,299)=4.550, p<.05$ ).

Table 7 Classified according to strength of motivation behind social sharing of emotion

|              | Understanding and acceptance |      | Restoration of beliefs |      |              |
|--------------|------------------------------|------|------------------------|------|--------------|
|              | Japanese                     | Thai | Japanese               | Thai |              |
| Higher group | 98                           | 51   | 129                    | 61   | Higher group |
| Lower group  | 99                           | 59   | 126                    | 59   | Lower group  |

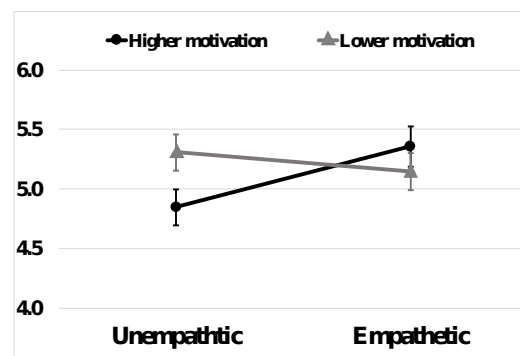


Figure 2: Level of forgiveness

\* The error bar indicates a standard margin of error



Figure 3: Level of satisfaction with the response

\* The error bar indicates a standard margin of error

Table 8 Main effect of nationality

|                                | Japanese | Thai  | F      | p        |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|--------|----------|
| Forgiveness                    | 4.926    | 5.401 | 9.103  | 0.003**  |
| Satisfaction with the response | 4.580    | 5.791 | 57.685 | 0.000*** |
| Satisfaction with the service  | 4.483    | 5.307 | 31.474 | 0.000*** |
| Repurchase intention           | 3.992    | 4.839 | 32.733 | 0.000*** |

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.010

With respect to the group that received an empathetic response, “higher motivation group” showed higher level of satisfaction with the response than “lower motivation group”(F(1,299)=7.871, p<.01).Also the main effect of nationality was confirmed(Table8): The Thai showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness(F(1,299) =9.103, p<.05), satisfaction with the response (F(1,299)=57.685, p<.001), satisfaction with the service(F(1,299)=31.474, p<.001) and repurchase intention (F(1,299)=32.733, p<.001) than the Japanese.

Next, we conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of three factors: whether the response was empathetic or not, the participant’s nationality, and the “restoration of beliefs” motivation. No interactions were observed among these three factors. However, significant interaction effect was found between existence of empathy and “restoration of beliefs” in satisfaction with the response (F(1,367) =3.171, p<.10), so we conducted a simple main effect test (Bonferroni method)(Figure4). The group that received an empathetic response showed a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the response (F(1,367)=3.621, p<.10) than the group that received an un-empathetic response with respect to “higher motivation group” . Besides, with respect to the group that received an un-empathetic response, “lower motivation group” showed a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the response (F(1,367)=5.442, p<.05) than “higher motivation group” . Besides, significant interaction effect was found between nationality and “restoration of beliefs” in forgiveness (F(1,367) =4.952, p<.05), so we conducted a simple main effect test (Bonferroni method)(Figure5). The Thai showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness (F(1,367)=15.893, p<.001) than Japanese with respect to “higher motivation group” . Besides, with respect to Japanese, “lower motivation group” showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness (F(1,367) =28.099, p<.001) than “higher motivation group” . Also the main effect of nationality was confirmed(Table9): The Thai showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness (F(1,367) =11.452, p<.001), satisfaction with the response (F(1,367)=65.789, p<.001), satisfaction with the service (F(1,367)=38.379, p<.001) and repurchase intention (F(1,367)= 58.131, p<.001) than the Japanese. Besides, the main effect of “restoration of beliefs” is confirmed in forgiveness (F(1,367)=14.005, p<.05), “lower motivation group” showed a significantly higher level of forgiveness than “higher motivation group” .

Finally, to test H7, higher group of each motivation are analyzed. We conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of two factors: whether the response was empathetic or not and type of motivation. No interactions were observed among these factors.

The results in Study2 show that a supplier’s empathetic response is effective in leading to a customer’s psychological evaluation of the services, which supports H5 and is consistent with prior studies (Sensui, 2015; Kogure et al., 2016; Rogers, 1975; Burlson, 1994). Concerning international comparison, H6 is supported by the results and is consistent with Rime et al. (1991). Thai people significantly feel more positive on receiving empathetic responses than Japanese as also seen in Study1, which is also consistent with Triandis (1995). In addition to this, there are some suggestions in the aspect of the motivation of social sharing of emotion: First is the strength of motivation of social sharing of emotion influence on the effect of empathetic response, which supports H8. Consumers who share their emotions with a high level of motivation of “understanding and acceptance” tend to not be satisfied with the services or response from the supplier as compared to consumers whose motivation is lower.

However, when they receive the empathetic response, lower motivated consumers remain dissatisfied while higher motivated consumers are satisfied. Second is the difference in the type of social sharing of emotion isn't have much influence on the effect of empathetic response, which does not support H7 and our prior research (Kogure et al., 2016). It suggests that consumers' psychological evaluation depends on the strength of motivation rather than type of motivation. The reason for such results is that when people post negative WOMs, they (both "understanding and acceptance" and "restoration of beliefs") want to share their emotion and receive an empathetic response.

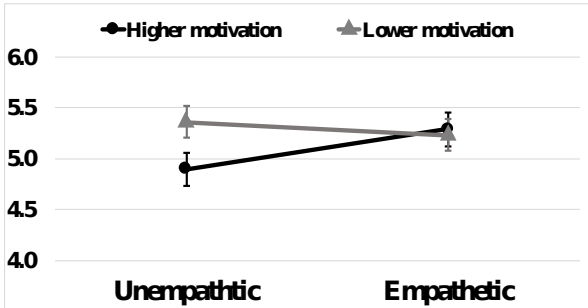


Figure 4: Level of satisfaction with the response

\* The error bar indicates a standard margin of error

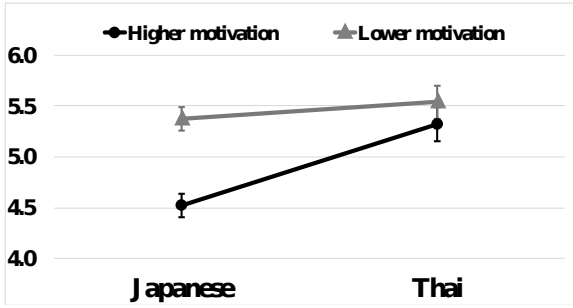


Figure 5: Level of forgiveness

\* The error bar indicates a standard margin of error

Table 9 Main effect of nationality

|                                | Japanese | Thai  | F      | p        |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|--------|----------|
| Forgiveness                    | 4.946    | 5.429 | 11.452 | 0.001*** |
| Satisfaction with the response | 4.598    | 5.792 | 65.789 | 0.000*** |
| Satisfaction with the service  | 4.523    | 5.372 | 38.379 | 0.000*** |
| Repurchase intention           | 3.916    | 4.982 | 58.131 | 0.000*** |

\*\*\*p<.001

**Discussion**

The results of the two surveys in this paper provide three findings. First, there are cultural differences in the effectiveness of a supplier's responses. The cultural differences are found in three aspects: (1) characteristics of complaint behavior, (2) motivation of social sharing of emotion, and (3) the manner of posting negative WOMs.

Regarding the first point (the difference in the characteristics of complaints behavior), 45.6% of Japanese respondents and only 33.2% of Thai respondents answered that they do not do anything when they have experienced service failure at a hotel. This implies that the Japanese tend to put up with service failure unlike Thai people, who tend not to suppress

their complaints when they are dissatisfied. The result is consistent with Sopitvutiwong (2013), which suggested that expressing dissatisfaction is important for maintaining a good relationship, so Thai people express their dissatisfaction actively. Because of this characteristic, Thai people can calm their anger easily, allowing them to develop their psychological evaluation. On the other hand, the Japanese find it difficult to calm their anger because they usually do not express their dissatisfaction as frequently as Thai people do, and thus end up giving fewer psychological evaluations.

Concerning the second point (cultural differences in the motivation of social sharing of emotion), it can be noted that Thai people’s motivation was higher than Japanese in most questions regarding their motivation behind social sharing of emotion. This suggests that Thai people want to share their emotion with others. In spite, the question “I want to distract myself” was the only exception indicating that Thai people share their emotion for the purpose of expressing their emotions rather than distracting themselves.

Regarding the third point (difference in the manner of posting negative WOMs), it can be seen Thai people tend to use jokes or ironies to express their problems or feelings. For example, they will say things such as, “Now, as soon as possible, I want to use cooling powder,” or “The room was very cool, so I was sweating a lot!” The result is also consistent with the findings of Wongsaming (2016a) and Somchanakit (2013). The finding implies that Thai people speak ironically with the intention of avoiding discord with someone.

The second finding suggests that the strength of motivation of social sharing of emotion affects the customer’s psychological evaluation. Consumers whose motivation of sharing is high tend to evaluate lower than those whose sharing motivation is low. It is implied that highly motivated consumers tend to be dissatisfied with the service or the supplier because their involvement with service is strong. Moreover, we found that the impact of empathetic responses are affected by the strength of motivation. Consumers with a higher “understanding and acceptance” motivation tend to not be satisfied with the services or responses from the supplier.

The third observation was the gender differences with respect to the effectiveness of the supplier’s empathetic response. We found a significant interaction effect between three factors (whether the response was empathetic, the participant’s nationality, and participant’s gender) in the satisfaction with the response ( $F(1,570)=3.146, p<.10$ ). Conducting a simple main effect test (Bonferroni method) (Figure 6), with respect to Thai men, the group that received an un-empathetic response showed a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the response than the group that received an empathetic response ( $F(1,570)=3.182, p<.10$ ). This finding is consistent with Choi et al.(1998), which noted that men tend to suppress negative emotions more often in a situation where certain decorum may be required.

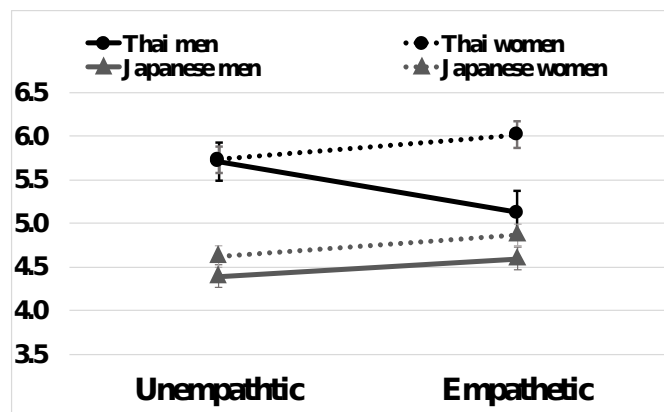


Figure 6: Level of satisfaction with the response

\* The error bar indicates a standard margin of error

### Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined how the customer’s nationality and the strength and type of motivation of social sharing of emotion may figure in, with respect to the psychological

impact that absence of response and suppliers' empathetic response may have on consumers who write negative reviews. Our study has confirmed that supplier's reply and empathetic response are effective to consumer's psychological evaluate. Also, nationality, strength of motivation, and types of motivation influenced to consumers' evaluation to the service.

Here is a summary of our discussion regarding the impact that the type of social sharing of emotion may have on the effectiveness of the supplier's response. The supplier should reply to consumers who post negative WOMs to deal with their dissatisfaction, but the apt responses differ according to the cultural background of the consumer. Although further verification is required for how the mechanism influences the cultural difference on consumers' psychological evaluation, this result suggests that the differing norms and cultural background of complaints behavior or expressing dissatisfaction between the two countries may also affect their psychological evaluations.

It can also be noted that an empathetic response had a positive impact in the case of Japanese and Thai women but in the case of Thai men, an empathetic response had a more negative impact on consumers' psychological evaluations. This result seems to be related to Thai people's way of handling problems. It has been observed that Thai people proactively solve the problem rather than being concerned about the victims when they cause a problem (Sopitvutiwong, 2013). From this cultural characteristic, we can explain the results that Thai people expect a specific solution than being shown empathy. This means that the supplier would have to include some element other than empathy in their response to Thai men. The results also indicated that sending an empathetic response to people who belong to a culture which prioritizes the need to provide a solution leads to lower psychological evaluations than sending an un-empathetic response. However, further discussion is required on this point.

This study shows how the motivation behind a customer's WOMs and his/her nationality has an effect on their psychological evaluations of the supplier and how the suppliers should handle their complaints. However, further research will be needed with respect to the kind of service failure and consumer's attitude for the service, which we have not addressed here. It is also important to prove how responding to dissatisfied consumers affects the observers of the communication between a consumer and a supplier.

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