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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
CCB	Consumer complaint behaviour
CS/D	Consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction
K-W one-way ANOVA	KruskaI-Wallis one-way analysis of variance
LSM	Living Standards Measure
SAARF	South African Research Foundation

LIST OF ADDENDA

CHAPTER 1 THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the advantages of a modern economy is that the marketplace can provide the consumer with an adequate choice of goods as well as the likelihood of satisfaction with that choice. In an ideal world, all products would be delivered flawless. However, sometimes products happen to be not so perfect, necessitating the promotion of consumers' rights to develop a consumer-oriented culture.

Researchers in consumer behaviour have been studying consumer responses to dissatisfactory consumption experiences for many years. In fact, the topic of consumer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and complaining behaviour is one of the most studied issues in the field of consumer behaviour. So much so, that many international conferences have been held and academic articles been published in scientific journals on this issue. Additionally, a bibliography has been compiled containing numerous articles, written in English and other languages, on the topic of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and complaining behaviour (Perkins, 1993). Despite the immense international interest in the topic of consumer dissatisfaction and complaining behaviour, not much research about dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour in general and, in particular, consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances could be found in the South African context. Nonetheless, Rousseau's (2003a:446-471) research and writings have contributed to researchers' understanding of consumers' post-purchase behaviour, particularly complaint behaviour. Additionally, Rousseau's (1988) study on consumers' and retailers' perceptions of product failure identified household appliances as a major category of failure.

Since the fist democratic election in South Africa in 1994, the socio-economic and consumer environment has changed drastically in South Africa due to the new socio-political dispensation. For example, many black people, who previously lived in smaller towns and/or belonged to the lower socio-economic groups, have moved to urban areas and big cities where they now have the financial means and opportunity to choose between various products and services. Additionally, credit is generally more available to these urban households, giving these consumers the opportunity to purchase durable and expensive

goods such as major electrical household appliances (Research Surveys, 2006; Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007). Studies by the University of Cape Town's Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing and Research Surveys describe the emerging black middle class as the "Black Diamonds", and estimate that the buying power of this group is R 130bn (about $ 19bn) per year – almost a quarter of South Africa's total consumer spending power of R 600bn. Like most newly rich people anywhere, the Black Diamond is a conspicuous consumer – cars, clothes, televisions sets, sound systems and household appliances top their list of desired and necessary objects. Black buyers are more brand conscious than their white counterparts and favour symbols of style and wealth (The Black Diamonds 2007 – on the move, 2007).

Considering numerous letters of complaint in the consumer columns of major South African newspapers as well as online letters to consumer complaint websites (such as hellopeter.co.za), it is clear that South African consumers experience a considerable amount of problems with the performance of their major electrical household appliances. Additionally, consumer bodies such as the South African National Consumer Union and various provincial consumer counsels deal with numerous consumer complaints concerning major electrical household appliances on a regular basis. For the purpose of this study, major electrical household appliances would include kitchen and laundry appliances, namely refrigerators, freezers, ovens, stoves, dishwashers, microwave ovens, washing machines and tumble dryers. These energy- and time-saving devices are important products without which many households would not be able to function effectively. Moreover, these appliances are generally expensive, complex and expected to be durable. It is therefore of the utmost importance that consumers should be satisfied with their choice, and if not, that manufacturers and retailers should know the reasons for their dissatisfaction.

A knowledge void exists concerning South African dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour regarding major electrical household appliances. Manufactures and retailers are often not aware of the performance failures that consumers experience concerning their major electrical household appliances since many people do not communicate their dissatisfactions to them. However, unless and until retailers and manufacturers fully comprehend their customers' complaint behaviour, their reasons for engaging in specific complaint behaviour and the reasoning behind their behaviour (cognitive processes), they will not recognise the link between complaint handling and customer loyalty and profits. Loyal customers are increasingly regarded as the backbone of any business, since it is less expensive to retain existing customers than to attain new ones (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2001; Kim, Kim, Im & Shin, 2003). Retailers can control their redress policies and handling of customer complaints to improve their service quality and their customers' in-store shopping

experience, which in turn will strengthen customer loyalty (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2001, 2003; Goodman, 2006). By addressing complaints about product failures, manufacturers also get the opportunity to correct product problems, improve the quality of existing merchandise and identify new consumer needs. From a consumerism point of view, manufacturers and retailers should encourage consumers to complain to them about product failures and should at the same time recognise that they are legally responsible for the protection of their customers' rights, in this context, specifically the "right to be heard" (Crié, 2003; Rousseau, 2003a:447, 454).

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Consumers purchase a product for its functional performance (i.e. physical performance, durability, ease of use and ease of care) and/or its symbolic performance (i.e. what the product does for, or symbolises to, the consumer in a socio-psychological sense) (Belk in Clarke, Micken & Hart, 2002). Donoghue and Erasmus (1999) confirmed that consumers buy major electrical household appliances not only for functional, but also for symbolic purposes. Additionally, Mehlwana (1999:9) stated that appliances are closely associated with lifestyle.

Consumers experience dissatisfaction when their appliances perform noticeably below their expectations for product performance (i.e. when a performance failure occurs or when the product performs poorly in terms of the functional and/or symbolic performance dimension). Traditional thinking concerning the disconfirmation of expectations only recognises a direct link from disconfirmation to satisfaction/dissatisfaction, that connotes a disconfirmation-driven satisfaction response (Woodruff, Cadotte & Jenkins, 1983; Oliver, 1989). However, evidence suggests that disconfirmation does not lead directly to satisfaction/dissatisfaction, but instead results in a search for the cause of the disconfirmation (Oliver, 1989; Manrai & Gardner, 1991). Therefore, the disconfirmation of expectations acts as an important causal agent for generating attributional processing. In other words, events that do not conform to expectations, are thought to trigger the search for an explanation or reason for the event (Laufer, 2002). Attribution search is more likely to follow a negative and unexpected event (failure, in this context) than success (Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992; Weiner, 2000). In a consumer behaviour context, product failure is the kind of negative and unexpected event that has been shown to bring about causal search (Weiner in Folkes, 1990; Hunt, Smith & Kernan in O'Malley & Tech, 1996; Weiner, 2000; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Specifically, consumers want to find out why products meet or do not meet their expectations. There is ample evidence that the principle of causal attribution differs across cultures (Weiner, 1986:73-75; Au, Hui & Leung, 2001; Laufer, 2002; Poon, Hui & Au, 2004). This raises the

question whether other demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, household monthly income) might also play a role in causal attributional processing.

Consumers could attribute the product's failure to themselves (internal locus) or to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or situation or in the product itself (external locus). The outcome of the purchase-use situation could also be attributed to something temporary (unstable) or something that is likely to occur each time the product is purchased or used (stable) (Williams, 1982:502; Folkes, 1990; Weiner, 2000). When product failure is stable, people would probably expect the product to fail if they purchase it again in the future. Conversely, when product failure is caused by unstable reasons, consumers would probably be less certain of future product failure and would therefore purchase or use the same product again (Folkes, 1984; Weiner, 2000). Additionally, both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer can either have volitional control over an outcome or be under certain uncontrollable constraints. Consumers' perceptions of attributions in terms of the locus, stability and controllability dimension, as explicated by Weiner in his attributional theory, generate differentiated affective reactions. For example, when retailers are thought to have control over the cause of product failure, consumers feel angry and desire revenge more than when they are believed to lack control (Folkes, 1984; Folkes, Koletsky & Graham, 1987; Folkes, 1990). Finally, the affective reactions (generated by causal attributions and their underlying properties of locus, stability and controllability) and expectations for future product failure are thought to determine consumers' behaviour (Weiner, 1986:161-164; Folkes, 1988; Laufer, 2002).

Consumer responses to dissatisfaction are generally referred to as "consumer complaint behaviour" (Singh, 1988:94-95; Maute & Forrester, 1993:220; Mattsson, Lemmink & McColl, 2004:942). Once dissatisfaction occurs, consumers may engage in behavioural and non-behavioural responses to resolve it (Day & Landon, 1977:429-432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). As such, consumers may engage in private actions (e.g. switching brands or retailers, boycotting the type of product or warning family and friends) and/or engage in public action (e.g. seeking redress directly from the retailer or manufacturer, complaining to the retailer or manufacturer, a public consumer protection agency, a voluntary organisation or the media, or taking legal action against the retailer or manufacturer). Alternatively, consumers may refrain from taking action by rationalising and forgetting about the product failure (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2001:642; Crié, 2003).

Many studies indicate that the incidence and likelihood of complaining are determined by consumer-related variables (e.g. demographics, personality factors, attitudes, personal values, culture, knowledge and experience as a consumer and causal attributions for product

failure (Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002; Blodgett, Hill & Bakir, 2006; Bodey & Grace, 2006; Velázquez, Contri, Saura & Blasco, 2006; Tronvoll, 2007). Additionally, product-specific variables (e.g. product category, type of product failure, severity of the product failure, cost of the product, durability), and redress environment variables (perceptions of the retailer's responsiveness to customer complaints and the consumer's perceived trouble involved in making a complaint, the psychological cost of complaining) are linked to consumer complaint behaviour (Kincade, Giddings & Chen-Yu, 1998; Huppertz, 2003; Kau & Loh, 2006).

Very little, if anything, is known about the influence of demographic characteristics (gender, age, level of education, level of income and culture) on the complaint behaviour of South African consumers experiencing dissatisfaction with the performance of their major electrical household appliances. Since 1994, many black people have been integrated into the middle and upper living standard categories due to political integration and improved economic conditions. Compared to the past, the rising middle class now has more spending power to, among other things, purchase durable products such as major electrical household appliances. Concerning product-specific variables, specifically the severity of the product failure, some dissatisfactions, such as complete product breakdown or safety hazards of a defective product, are considered serious and are thus more likely to result in complaint action compared to dissatisfaction that are relatively minor (Barnes & Kelloway, 1980; Richins & Verhage, 1985). Consumers' reasons for engaging in particular complaint action(s) (or no action, for that matter) generally correspond with consumer-related variables, product-specific variables and redress environment variables. Consumers' reasons for specific complaint actions suggest specific problematic areas that retailers, manufacturers and marketers can improve on to make strategic and tactical decisions.

Complaints, as an outcome of dissatisfaction, are in many cases perceived in a negative manner. However, consumer complaints should be considered very useful forms of consumer-initiated market information (Nyer, 2000). Retailers and manufacturers can only become aware of product shortcomings and remedy the problem when consumers directly communicate their dissatisfaction to them (Huppertz, 2003; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Bodey & Grace, 2006), while consumer scientists can only assist unhappy consumers when they know how they think and why they are complaining.

It would be the ideal to study all of the above-mentioned factors to fully explain consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances. It would, however, probably be unfair to expect of one single research project to investigate the influence of all these factors. For the purpose of this study, three lines of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and complaint behaviour research are integrated,

namely the expectancy disconfirmation model (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983) (satisfaction/dissatisfaction research), Weiner's (1986) causal dimensions (attribution theory), and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour (complaint behaviour theory), to contribute to our understanding of consumers' complaint behaviour concerning their dissatisfaction with major electrical household appliances. Additionally, consumer-related variables and product-specific variables that may impinge on consumers' complaint behaviour are incorporated, as these factors have shown to be important variables influencing consumer complaint behaviour.

Complaint data viewed in a vacuum is hard to interpret, but when it is linked to data on consumers' cognitions and emotions, and other consumer-related variables and product-specific variables, it becomes a powerful tool to understand consumers' complaint behaviour. Hence, the integration of the above-mentioned theories.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Bearing the foregoing introduction and theoretical background in mind, the following conceptual framework for this study is proposed in Figure 1.1.

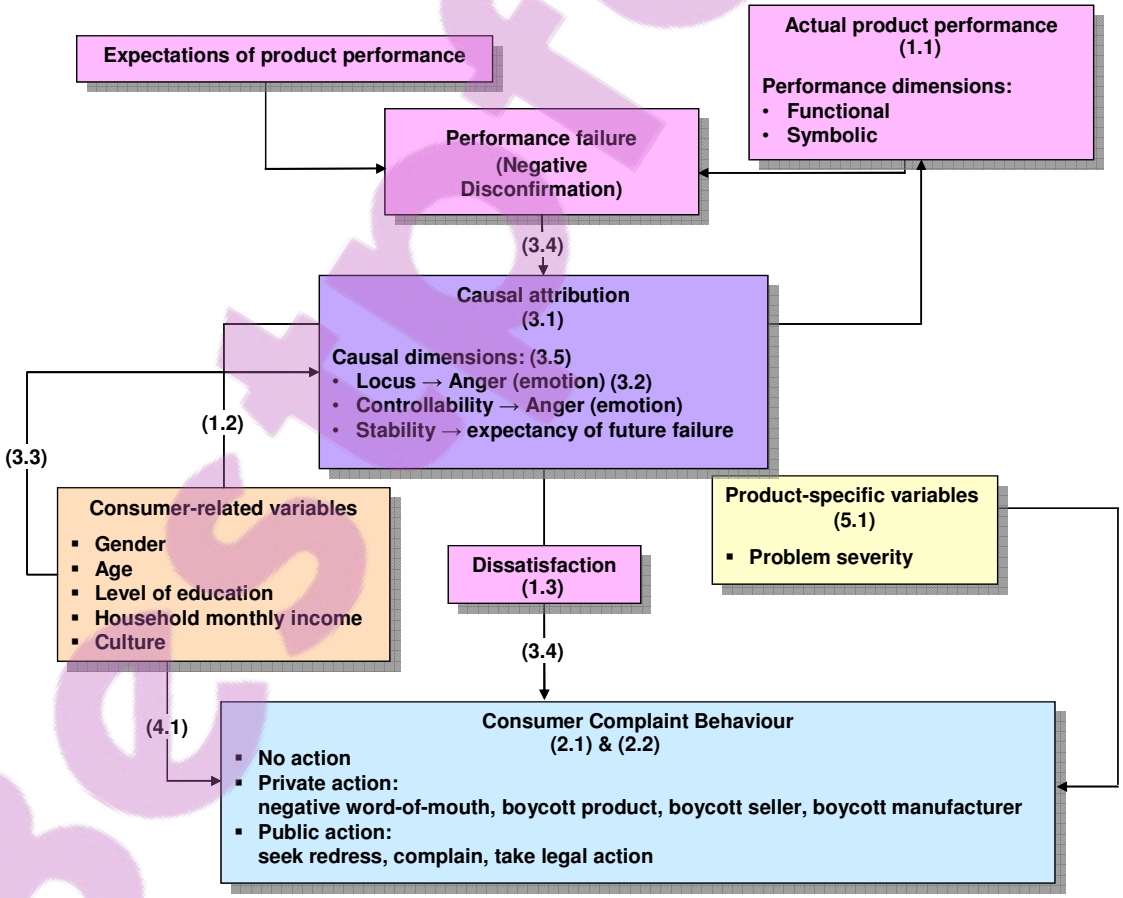

FIGURE 1.1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF DISSATISFIED CONSUMERS' COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR CONCERNING THE PERFORMANCE FAILURE OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES WITH CONSIDERATION OF ATTRIBUTIONAL PROCESSING, CONSUMER-RELATED VARIABLES AND PRODUCT-SPECIFIC VARIABLES

The conceptual framework provides a schematic view of the reasoning behind the formulation of the problem and objectives for this study, which are described in the following paragraphs.

Before purchasing and consuming major household appliances, consumers form expectations regarding the performance of such appliances in a particular use situation. After or while using an appliance item, consumers evaluate its perceived performance in terms of their initial expectations regarding the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of the appliance. Whereas functional performance refers inter alia to durability, ease of use, ease of care and physical performance (how well the appliance does what it is supposed to do), symbolic performance refers to a "psychological" level of performance that is derived from the consumer's response to the physical product (Swan & Combs, 1976:26; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:641; Erasmus, Makgopa & Kachale, 2005). Consumers' evaluation of the functional and symbolic performance of products unquestionably varies in terms of consumer characteristics (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) (Brown & Rice, 1998:46-47; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:641). When the appliance's performance does not meet the consumer's expectations (i.e. when a performance failure occurs or when the product performs poorly), negative disconfirmation occurs, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction.

However, feelings of dissatisfaction are mediated by attributional reasoning, i.e. the cognitive process of wanting to find out why a negative outcome or event occurred. The perceived causes (attributions) for the product's failure and its dimensional quality (in terms of Weiner's (1986) locus, stability and controllability), influence consumers' reaction in terms of their emotions (the level of anger experienced in response to the product failure) and complaint behaviour. Additionally, the dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions may be influenced by demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture).

Once dissatisfaction occurs, the consumer may engage in behavioural and non-behavioural responses to resolve it (Day & Landon, 1977:229-432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). Three major options are available to consumers who are dissatisfied with their purchase: no action, private action or public action. Consumers may refrain from action by rationalising and forgetting about the problem. Consumers may engage in private actions such as switching brands or retailers, boycotting the type of product or warning family and friends. Or, consumers may engage in public action such as seeking redress (i.e. a refund, an exchange or free repairs and replacement of defective parts – depending on the nature of the product and particular circumstances) directly from the retailer or manufacturer, complaining to the

retailer or manufacturer, a public consumer protection agency, a voluntary organisation or the media, or taking legal action against the retailer or manufacturer.

However, consumer-related factors and product-specific factors are likely to affect the consumer's complaint behaviour. Consumer-related variables refer to characteristics that are associated or determined primarily by consumers. Demographic factors (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture), as consumer-related variables, influence consumers' complaint behaviour. In this study, product-specific variables refer specifically to the severity of the problem (product failure).

According to Mouton and Marais (1990:39-55), Mouton (1996:91-106), Fouché and De Vos (2005a:103-110) and Leedy and Ormrod (2005:47-50), three factors determine the manner in which research problems are formulated: the unit of analysis, the type of research goal and the research approach.

The research problem was stated formally as follows in terms of the unit of analysis, research goal and approach:

To explore and describe the role of specific consumer-related variables, product-specific variables, and causal attribution in dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of selected major electrical household appliances.

A quantitative methodological research approach was selected for this study.

The research objectives and sub-objectives were formulated as follows:

Objective 1: To explore the nature of the performance failure that caused consumers to be dissatisfied with major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 1.1 To explore the functional/symbolic performance failure causing consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 1.2 To describe the association between demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, household monthly income and culture) and the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 1.3	To describe consumers' degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of household appliances
Objective 2:	To describe the nature of, and the reasons for, dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 2.1	To describe the types of consumer complaint behaviour responses that dissatisfied consumers engage in concerning their dissatisfaction with the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 2.2	To describe dissatisfied consumers' reasons for engaging in consumer complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

It should be noted that sub-objective 2 is placed here, since the interpretation of objectives 3 (specifically sub-objective 3.4 and 3.5), 4 and 5 are dependent on the interpretation of objective 2.

Objective 3:	To describe the relationship between causal attribution and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.1	To describe dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.2	To describe the causal dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.3	To describe the association between the dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture)

Sub-objective 3.4	To describe the association between the causal dimensions (i.e. locus, stability and controllability) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.5	To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers' anger reactions concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and consumer complaint behaviour
Objective 4:	To describe the relationship between specific consumer-related variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 4.1	To describe the relationship between demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, household monthly income and culture) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Objective 5:	To describe the relationship between product-specific variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 5.1	To describe dissatisfied consumers' perceptions of the severity of the performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 5.2	To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers' perception of the severity of the functional/symbolic performance failure concerning major electrical household appliances and their consumer complaint behaviour

The unit of analysis for this study was consumers who had recently purchased major electrical household appliances (within prior four-year period) and who could recall an unsatisfactory experience concerning the performance of one major electrical household appliance item. Additionally, respondents had to be older than 25 years of age, had to reside in the Tshwane metropolitan area (city of Pretoria) in South Africa, and had to belong to the Living Standards Measurement levels 5 to 10. The South African Research Foundation

(SAARF) devised the Living Standards Measure (LSM) to measure social class, or living standard, regardless of race, income or education. Instead of approaching social class from the perspective of obvious demographic differences, the LSM measures the population on a continuum from LSM levels 1 to 10, in terms of ownership of certain durable goods, access to services and the like. LSM groups 5 to 10 have access to electricity and have the capacity to own major electrical household appliances (Du Plessis, 2003:87-100; SAARF Universal LSM Descriptors, August 2004). At the time of the research, the *SAARF Universal LSM Descriptors* of August 2004 was used to categorise the sample into the different income brackets. Since then, a newer LSM edition has been published with different values for the various income levels and other parameters.

For this study, attributes for the demographic variables were clarified as: gender (male/female), age (25-30 years, 31-45 years, 46-55 years and 56-83 years), level of education (Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less, Grade 12 and additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) and Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification), level of income (R2 000-R5 000, R5 001-R10 000, and R10 001 or more per month) and culture (black/Caucasian).

1.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A convenience sampling technique was employed, but sample members were selected on the basis of the above-mentioned pre-specified criteria. Two hundred and sixteen respondents participated in the study. Upon using a screening question to determine whether respondents had experienced dissatisfaction with the performance of their appliances, a self-administered questionnaire was administered to dissatisfied respondents only (Addendum A). The questionnaire was divided into three content sections (Sections A – C) to facilitate the eventual processing of the data. In Section A, respondents had to provide demographic information. In Section B, respondents were asked to provide information concerning their dissatisfaction with the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances, their attributions for the specific performance failures, their degree of dissatisfaction and anger experienced and their perceptions of the severity of the product problem. Respondents had to rate their own attributions, subjectively, in terms of an adapted version of Russell's Causal Dimension scale (1982), to determine the causal dimensional characteristics of their attributions. Section C dealt with respondents' behavioural and non-behavioural actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction and their reasons for the specific action taken. The nature of the dissatisfaction response (complaint behaviour) was investigated by exploring the type of action taken, using Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour.

1.5 PRESENTATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 2 provides an overview of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction theory in terms of the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm, consumers' expectations about product performance and the dimensions of product performance. Consumer complaint behaviour is defined and models of consumer complaint behaviour as well as the factors affecting consumers' complaint actions are discussed. Additionally, the implications of complaining are indicated for the different parties involved, that is, the retailer, manufacturer and the individual consumer. It is also indicated how objectives 1, 2, 4 and 5 address the theory.

Chapter 3 focuses on attribution theory and its application in consumer behaviour, specifically consumers' reactions to attributions following experiences of product failure. Attribution theory is discussed in terms of its conceptual meaning, the different micro-theories of attribution theorists, the contribution of these exponents to social psychology, in general, as well as the applicability of their theories to consumer behaviour in particular. Weiner's (1986) attributional theory is discussed to provide a background for understanding consumers' behavioural reactions to their causal inferences (attributions) concerning product failure experiences. Examples of consumers' attributions for the failure of durable products are provided. By implication, the rationale for using attribution theory as a theoretical perspective for studying consumers' behaviour following product failure, is indicated. It is also indicated how objective 3 addresses the theory.

In **Chapter 4** the research methodology that was employed in this study is discussed. Firstly, the conceptual framework is presented and explicated to set the stage for the phenomena being studied. Next, the research problem and resultant objectives and sub-objectives are stated formally. In the ensuing sections the research strategy, research design, and sampling plan are described. Additionally, the data collection technique for this study is discussed in terms of the respective methodologies for researching consumers' complaint behaviour and causal attributions, since these methodologies influenced the methodology chosen for this study. The analysis of the data is discussed in terms of the coding and capturing of the data, the operationalisation of measurements and the explanation of the statistical methods respectively. Then, the quality of the data is analysed in terms of its validity and reliability.

In **Chapter 5** the sample is firstly described in terms of demographic characteristics since that is considered to be the starting point for the analysis of the data. Next, the frequency distribution of the types of major electrical household appliances causing the most dissatisfaction, the (frequency distribution and implications of) purchase dates and brand names of dissatisfactory appliances are discussed. Moreover, the raw data is

reported/analysed according to the objectives and sub-objectives (formulated for this study) to obtain answers for the research question decided on for this research project. Consequently, the research findings are not necessarily discussed in the order of the questionnaire.

In **Chapter 6** an explanation is provided of the types of major electrical household appliances that caused the most dissatisfaction for respondents. Additionally, the results of this study are interpreted.

In **Chapter 7** the conclusions are presented, the research is evaluated and the implications and recommendations are discussed. Additionally, some suggestions for future research are provided.

CHAPTER 2 POST-PURCHASE CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to purchasing and consuming a product, consumers form expectations of its performance in a particular use situation. After or while using a product, consumers will evaluate its performance according to their specific expectations. When a product does not perform up to expectation (i.e. performance is lower than expected), consumers will experience dissatisfaction, which in turn will manifest in negative behavioural outcomes. One of the most direct and meaningful ways through which consumers can express their dissatisfaction to manufacturers and retailers is through complaining. Simply put, "a complaint is a statement about expectations that have not been met" (Barlow & Møller, 1996:11). Complaint behaviour should however not only be thought of as direct or formal complaining to retailers and manufacturers. Consumers can also communicate their dissatisfaction about products in much more indirect/hidden ways such as less-favourable purchase attitudes, lower or non-existent purchase intentions, negative word-of-mouth, changes in shopping behaviour such as brand or product switching and retailer boycotts – all of which are detrimental to the retailer or manufacturer's business.

Linking with the above reasoning, consumer scientists have developed taxonomies/models for consumer complaint behaviour to direct research concerning consumers' complaint behaviour. A number of factors influence the complaint path that consumers eventually take to respond to their dissatisfaction. These factors relate to why consumers engage in specific complaint actions and are therefore important to bear in mind when researching the specific behavioural outcomes taken.

Formal complaints are generally perceived in a negative manner, being expressions from consumers about dissatisfactory experiences. Actually, a complaint might be a result of a faulty product or service, or of a consumer not knowing how to use the product properly (Sanes, 1993). However, complaints reveal problems that, in many cases, are significant and deserve the attention of retailers and manufacturers. Additionally, complaints can inform retailers and manufacturers about the consumers' existing needs and provide the opportunity for discussing future needs (Sanes, 1993). Viewed in this manner, complaining may be very useful for retailers

and manufacturers in discovering and correcting product problems, increasing consumer satisfaction, retaining the consumer as an active purchaser and increasing marketplace efficiency, rather than simply pacifying unhappy consumers or providing an excuse and/or appropriate form of redress (Plymire, 1991; Hill, Baer & Morgan, 2000; Hogarth & English, 2002; Consumer Alert, 2003; Crié, 2003). Consequently, consumer complaints can be considered to be very useful forms of consumer-initiated market information that can be used to make strategic and tactical decisions (Barlow & Møller, 1996:1-4; Nyer, 2000).

Bearing the above in mind, the focus of this chapter is to present an overview of the existent literature concerning consumer complaint behaviour. The first part deals with consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction theory in terms of the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm, expectations about product performance and the dimensions of product performance as the conceptual background for studying consumers' complaining behaviour. The second part focuses on the conceptual definition of consumer complaint behaviour, models of consumer complaint behaviour and the factors affecting consumers' complaint actions. The third part examines the implications of complaining for the different parties involved, that is, the retailer, manufacturer and the individual consumer. The conclusion highlights that complaint behaviour is a "signal" which retailers/manufacturers should take into account for their own and their customers' sake. Additionally it is also indicated how some of the objectives for this study address the theory.

2.2 THE EXPECTANCY DISCONFIRMATION PARADIGM

Most researchers describe the consumption evaluation process as a confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm whereby consumers compare their initial expectations for product performance with perceived product performance and notice whether a difference (expectancy disconfirmation) exists (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Francken, 1983; Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Day, 1984; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). Refer to Figure 2.1. Whereas confirmation occurs when a product performs as expected, contributing to satisfaction or indifference (neutral feelings), positive or negative disconfirmation arises from discrepancies between prior expectations and actual performance, respectively leading to satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Swan & Combs, 1976; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992; Spreng, MacKenzie & Olshavsky, 1996; Chen-Yu, Williams & Kincade, 1999; Steward in Ndubisi & Ling, 2006). Consumers' post-purchase evaluation of products acts as feedback to their experience and serves to influence future decisions concerning suitable alternatives to buy (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:579).

According to Broadbridge and Marshall (1995), the duration of the consumption evaluation process is however dependent on the type of product. For example, consumers can decide immediately whether they are happy or unhappy with inexpensive and quickly consumed products such as perishable food items. In contrast, items that are used over longer periods beyond the immediate post-purchase stage such as durable products, take longer to evaluate. Thus, the consumers' assessment of their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the actual performance of household appliances is an evolving process.

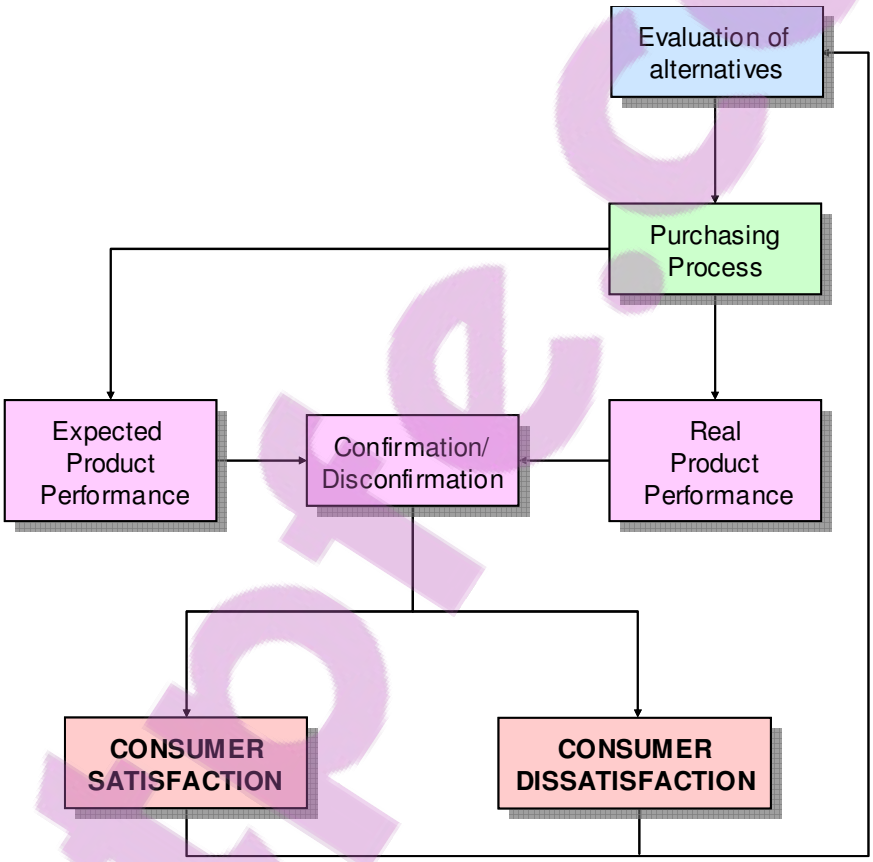

FIGURE 2.1 THE POST-PURCHASE EVALUATION PROCESS IN TERMS OF THE CONFIRMATION/DISCONFIRMATION PARADIGM (LOUDON & DELLA BITTA, 1993:579)

Considering the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm, consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction therefore results from a type of comparison process (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Chen-Yu *et al.*, 1999; Giese & Cote, 2000; Desmeules, 2002). It is presumably the magnitude of the disconfirmation effect that generates satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Barber & Venkatraman, 1986). Therefore, the distinction between disconfirmation and satisfaction/dissatisfaction is that disconfirmation is a cognitive response, while

satisfaction/dissatisfaction is an affective response (an emotion) (Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). The post-purchase evaluation process thus involves cognitive activities as well as an affective or emotional component. Therefore, researchers should acknowledge that the cognitive dimension of post-purchase evaluation and consumers' emotional experiences in connection with product ownership and usage are valuable constructs to consider when studying post-purchase behaviour (Westbrook, 1987; Dubé & Schmitt, 1991; Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:580; Giese & Cote, 2000; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:641).

The traditional disconfirmation of expectations paradigm has been widely used in marketing literature to explain how consumers reach decisions concerning their satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). The paradigm recognises a direct link from disconfirmation to satisfaction/dissatisfaction, which connotes a disconfirmation-driven satisfaction response (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Oliver, 1989). However, evidence suggests that the disconfirmation of expectations does not lead directly to consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and, that the effects of disconfirmation are mediated by attributional processing (Oliver, 1989; Manrai & Gardner, 1991) (i.e. causal attributions for disconfirmation mediate consumer satisfaction) (Laufer, 2002). Refer to Chapter 3 for a discussion about causal attribution and its place concerning dissatisfied consumers' post-purchase behaviour.

2.2.1 Expectations about product performance

Whether a particular item was purchased because of its presumed superior functional performance or because of some other reason, consumers have some level of expected performance in mind, ranging from quite low to quite high, that it should provide (Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:639). Expectations are therefore defined as beliefs or predictions about a product's expected performance, and reflect "anticipated performance" or "what performance will (probably) be" (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Miller in Tse & Wilton, 1988; Laufer, 2002). Expectations are based upon prior experience with the product, word-of-mouth endorsements/criticisms and/or the marketing efforts of companies (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Solomon, 1996:325, Laufer, 2002). Thus, in addition to the experience factor, various personality and situational factors may affect the consumer's expectations of a product's performance (Day, 1977).

In the majority of studies using the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm, expectations are theorised as the standard or baseline for evaluating the quality of product performance (Cadotte, Woodruff & Jenkins, 1987; Chen-Yu *et al.*, 1999; Fournier & Mick, 1999). Woodruff *et al.* (1983)

suggests that consumers often have experiences beyond those products that they have actually purchased and used (i.e. experiences with various products and brands within the product class and comparable use situations) which may cause consumers to form different kinds of norms or standards, instead of expectations, that can be used to evaluate perceived product performance. However, these norms are constrained by the consumer's experiences with real products and brands and are therefore unlikely to be unachievable ideals. Expanding the base of experiences to include other products means that consumers will probably go through a sequence of judgements leading to the choice of a standard for evaluating perceived product performance (Woodruff *et al*., 1983). Whereas the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm limits comparison to experience with one product, the experience-based norm approach takes into consideration consumers' past experience. Therefore, expectations and experience-based norms are used frequently as the point of reference (standard of comparison) against which product performance is evaluated (Woodruff *et al*., 1983; Spreng *et al*., 1996; Chen-Yu *et al*., 1999).

2.2.2 Product performance

Since performance expectations and actual performance are major factors in the evaluation process, and are related, it is essential to understand the dimensions of product performance. Expectations about product performance relate to both the instrumental (functional) and the expressive (symbolic) performance dimensions of the product (Swan & Combs, 1976; Brown & Rice, 1998:42; Hawkins *et al*., 2001:641). Instrumental performance relates to the physical functioning of the products, i.e. the ability of the product to perform its functional, utilitarian or physical purposes. For example, proper product performance is vital to the evaluation of a dishwasher or any other major electrical household appliances for that matter. Depending on the type of product, functional performance refers inter alia to durability, ease of use, ease of care and physical performance (how well the product does what it is supposed to do). Conversely, a product's expressive or symbolic performance relates to a "psychological level of performance", such as what the product does for, or symbolises to the consumer, which are not direct properties of the physical product, but are derived from the consumer's response to the physical product (Swan & Combs, 1976:26; Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Brown & Rice, 1998:38-39; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Hawkins *et al*., 2001:641; Erasmus *et al*., 2005). Products have been known to provide symbolic meaning beyond their functional utility (Sheth, Newman & Gross, 1991:161; Hyatt, 1992; Belk in Clarke *et el*., 2002). Therefore, products are considered symbols by which people convey something about themselves, to themselves and to others (Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999; Govers & Schoormans, 2005). The essence of a product, then, becomes not the physical product itself, but the relation between the product, its owner and the

rest of society (Hyatt, 1992). This is especially applicable to conspicuous products that might be intended for aesthetic satisfaction and image-enhancement performance. "If a product consumption is conspicuous in public and is socially visible, consumers are likely to use the visibility of the product to communicate symbolically something about themselves to the 'significant others' in the consumption situation" (Lee, 1990:387; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Therefore, major electrical household appliances may fulfil the consumer's emotional needs such as impressing and winning admiration from those invited into their homes (Sheth *et al.*, 1991:19; Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:315).

The question arises whether the functional or the symbolic product performance dimension is more significant to consumers as they evaluate product performance. The answer to this question would undoubtedly differ in terms of the type of product and specific consumer group. Whereas evidence from the literature hints that for some products, determinant attributes may involve primarily instrumental performance, both instrumental and expressive dimensions may be features for other products (Swan & Combs, 1976; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:641). Swan and Combs (1976) examined the relationship between expectations, performance and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. In particular, they investigated the effect of the instrumental (physical) and the expressive (non-material, psychological) dimensions of product performance, in this case the product clothing, on consumers' experience of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Findings concerning the instrumental and expressive performance suggested that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are linked to qualitatively different kinds of performance results. Satisfactory clothing items tended to be associated with expressive performance results and dissatisfactory items tended to be associated with instrumental performances results. It was concluded that satisfactory clothing items may involve both expressive and instrumental outcomes, while dissatisfactory items were likely to involve more instrumental than expressive outcomes. Swan and Combs (1976) developed and applied their concept of *consumer satisfaction as related to the expressive and instrumental dimensions of product performance* to clothing products only – implying that the applicability of the concept to other products, such as major electrical household appliances, needs to be empirically tested.

2.2.3 Satisfaction/dissatisfaction

Consumer behaviour researchers have proposed that satisfaction/dissatisfaction depends not on the absolute level of performance of various attributes, but rather on how the actual performance compares with the expected performance (Sheth, Mittal, & Newman, 1999:549). Post-consumption consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/CD) can be theoretically described as the

consumer's response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations (or some other norm of performance) and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption (Day, 1984; Tse & Wilton, 1988). Differently stated, consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (CS/D) is conceptualised as a positive/negative feeling (emotion), in response to, or following, a specific consumption experience (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Day, 1984; Westbrook, 1987; Swan & Oliver, 1989; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998, Brijball, 2000). Favourably evaluated outcomes (when product performance exceeds expectations) are associated with emotions such as happiness, pleasure or delight, and unfavourably evaluated outcomes (when product performance fails to live up to expectations) with unhappiness, frustration, anger or regret (Westbrook & Oliver, 1981; Woodruff *et al.*, 1983).

The notion of satisfaction/dissatisfaction implies some degree of conation, in that the consumer is more or less inclined to repeat the behaviour in question, given recurrence of the situation in which it was initially performed (Westbrook & Oliver, 1981). Consumer satisfaction, as a consequence of the purchase/consumption experience, would appear to be an important variable in linking product selection with other post-purchase outcomes including favourable post-purchase attitudes, positive word-of-mouth, higher purchase intentions and consumer loyalty. In contrast, the study of post-purchase dissatisfaction is equally important because of its close linkages with negative outcomes such as less favourable purchase attitudes, lower or non-existent purchase intentions, negative word-of-mouth, complaining, and changes in shopping behaviour such as brand or product switching and retailer boycotts (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Morganosky & Buckley, 1987; Oliver, 1987; Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:581; Somasundaram, 1993; Chen-Yu *et al.*, 1999; Brijball, 2000; Onyeaso, 2007).

2.3 CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

Consumer responses to dissatisfaction are generally referred to as "consumer complaint behaviour" (CCB) (Singh, 1988:94-95; Maute & Forrester, 1993:220; Mattsson *et al.*, 2004:942). Once dissatisfaction occurs, consumers may engage in behavioural and non-behavioural responses to resolve it (Day & Landon, 1977:229-432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995).

2.3.1 Conceptualising consumer complaint behaviour

Traditionally, studies of consumer complaint behaviour have focused on behavioural responses, that is, those consumer actions that directly convey an "expression of dissatisfaction" (Landon, 1980:337; Singh, 1988:94). These behaviours include complaints directed at manufacturers and

retailers (second parties) and complaints to third parties (i.e., a public consumer protection agency, voluntary organisation, ombudsman or court) (Singh, 1988; Halstead & Dröge, 1991).

However, conceptualising consumer complaint behaviour as formal complaint behaviour only is generally considered to be exceedingly restrictive (Singh, 1988; Halstead & Dröge, 1991). Generally, it has been found that relatively fewer formal complaints are made than would be expected from expressed levels of dissatisfaction (Barnes & Kelloway, 1980; Ash in Oliver, 1987; Dolinsky, 1994; Tronvoll, 2007). Additionally, a large majority of dissatisfied consumers never complain to the retailer, manufacturer or a third party (Day & Ash, 1979; Tronvoll, 2007). Therefore, since we can safely assume that retailers, manufacturers and third parties receive complaints or requests for redress from an unrepresentative sample of the total population of consumers who have experienced dissatisfaction, complaint statistics grossly understate the frequency of dissatisfaction (Day & Landon, 1976; Landon, 1980; Day, Grabicke, & Schaetzle Staubach,1981).

Contrary to formal complaints, which are evident to retailers and manufacturers, the typical dissatisfied consumer could take part in a variety of “hidden” or indirect activities including boycotting the retailer, changing brands, boycotting the product type, and engaging in adverse word-of-mouth “marketing” (Day *et al.,* 1981; Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989). Studies show that dissatisfied consumers will typically tell eight to ten people about their problem (Plymire, 1991; Sanes, 1993; Halstead, 2002). Consequently, far larger numbers of unknown dissatisfied consumers respond in covert ways that never come to the retailer or manufacturer’s attention (Day *et al.*, 1981).

Furthermore, numerous studies have indeed documented that a common response to consumer dissatisfaction is to “do nothing”. Non-behavioural responses should be considered legitimate forms of consumer complaining, despite the passive nature thereof (Singh, 1988; Halstead & Dröge, 1991). The inclusion of non-behavioural responses as forms of consumer complaining, appears not only to be justified but also necessary to comprehend the process underlying the consumer complaint behaviour response (Singh, 1988; Crié, 2003).

Consumer complaint behaviour responses may therefore be considered to be either behavioural or non-behavioural (Singh, 1988; Morel, Poiesz & Wilke, 1997). Singh (1988:94) in particular argues that consumer complaint behaviour should be conceptualised as “a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by the perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode”.

2.3.2 Models of consumer complaint behaviour

While there is considerable consensus about the conceptual meaning of the consumer complaint behaviour construct, only a few researchers have offered specific models for dissatisfaction responses, some of which seem valid and useful (Hirschman, 1970; Day & Landon, 1977; Singh, 1988; Crié, 2003), while others are questionable (Maute & Forrester, 1993; Morel *et al*., 1997).

2.3.2.1 Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty typology

Hirschman's (1970) three-dimensional exit, voice and loyalty classification was initially used to describe peoples' dissatisfaction responses in interpersonal, organisational and employment contexts. Maute and Forrester's (1993) study offers strong empirical support for the validity of Hirschman's classification of dissatisfaction responses, not only for describing dissatisfaction responses in interpersonal, organisational and employment contexts, but also in buyer-retailer relationships. Kim *et al*. (2003) used Hirschman's framework as the conceptual foundation for their model to study the effect of attitude and perception on consumer complaint intention. Exit occurs when people "disassociate themselves from the object of their dissatisfaction and manifests itself in buyer-retailer relationships when consumers switch brands or service providers, reduce their consumption or refuse to make further purchases of a product" (Maute & Forrester, 1993:222. Voice implies that the dissatisfied consumer, in some way, verbally communicates the dissatisfaction to friends, manufacturers, retailers and consumer organisations. Lastly, a customer may choose not to act, thereby remaining loyal. Hirschman notes, however, that even though loyal consumers are inclined to respond to their dissatisfaction passively, it does not imply that they experience positive feelings towards the retailer or manufacturer (Hirschman, 1970:4, 30, 38; Maute & Forrester, 1993; Bolton & Bronkhorst, 1995; Mattsson *et al*., 2004). Hunt (1991) borrowed from Hirschman's typology to describe three dissatisfaction outcomes. Voice and exit coincided with Hirschman's typology, and retaliation was added as a third.

2.3.2.2 Day and Landon's taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour

Day and Landon's (1976) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, as shown in Figure 2.2, has achieved wide acceptance in consumer complaint behaviour literature (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995).

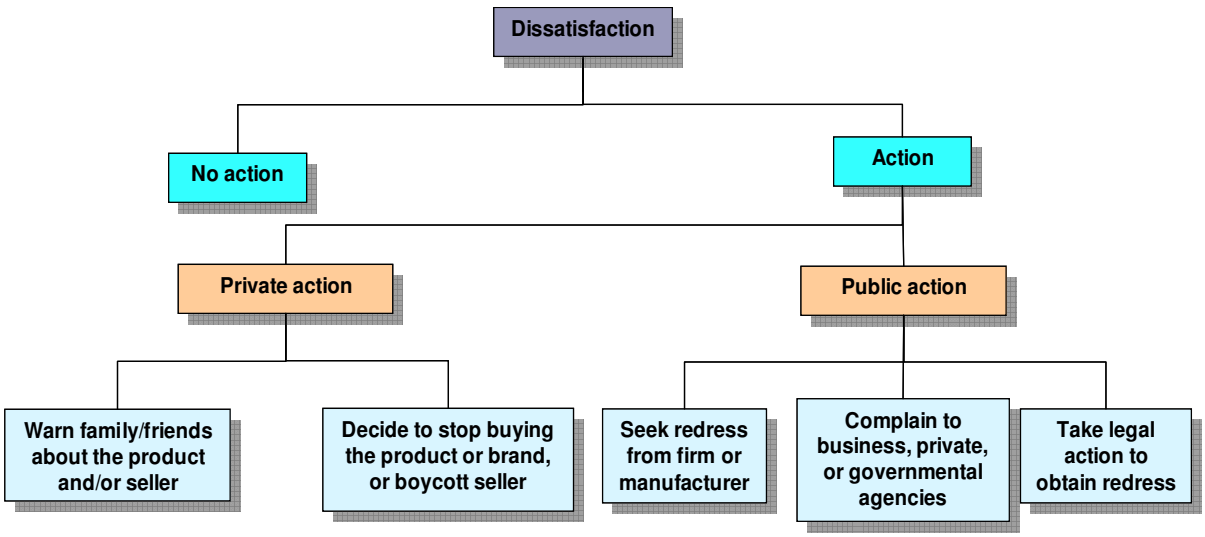

FIGURE 2.2: A TAXONOMY OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR (Day & Landon, 1977:432)

Figure 2.2 shows that under Day and Landon's taxonomy, three major options are available to consumers who are dissatisfied with their purchase: no action, private action or public action. Consumers may refrain from action by rationalising and forgetting about the problem. Consumers may engage in private actions such as warning family and friends about the product and/or seller, boycotting the type of product and switching brands or retailers. Additionally, consumers may engage in public action such as seeking redress (i.e. a refund, an exchange or free repairs and replacement of defective parts, depending on the nature of the product and particular circumstances) directly from the retailer or manufacturer, complaining to the retailer or manufacturer, complaining to a public consumer protection agency, complaining to a voluntary organisation or the media, or taking legal action against the retailer or manufacturer (Day & Landon, 1977:229-432; Day & Bodur, 1978; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Phau & Sari, 2004). Obviously, combinations of private and public actions may occur.

The primary decision is, however, whether to take some form of action or no action at all. Whereas the first-level distinction between action and no action logically follows from the conceptualisation of consumer complaint behaviour, Day and Landon (1976) seem to justify the public/private dichotomy (the second level of distinction) on the grounds of the nature and importance of the product which is causing the dissatisfaction, together with the evaluation of the effort required and perceived outcome of the action. They hypothesise that complex and expensive products, such as major electrical household appliances, encourage more action to be taken publicly but feel that "the chances that the consumer will do nothing at all or only take private action are lower but still appear to be substantial" (Day & Landon, 1977:432; Maute & Forrester, 1993; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Crié, 2003). Action

is thus more likely to be taken for expensive products such as household durables, cars, and clothing than for inexpensive and unimportant products (Solomon, 1996:326).

Day and Landon's taxonomy does not only describe the behavioural alternatives that dissatisfied consumers have, but also propose factors that influence choice among these alternatives (Day & Landon, 1977:433-435; Morel *et al.*, 1997). Their model of consumer complaint behaviour has achieved wide acceptance in consumer complaint behaviour literature. It was used as the base model for Broadbridge and Marshall's (1995) research to investigate levels of post-purchase dissatisfaction with electrical goods, and to explore the consumers' complaint action undertaken. Electrical goods were conceptualised as including food appliances, cleaning appliances, kitchen appliances, audio appliance, visual appliances, general household items and personal care items. Their study focused on consumers' dissatisfaction with *inter alia* product faults, advertising, damages (losses), credit finance, shop service, repairs and delivery. The findings show that for all types of electrical appliances, the product (as opposed to service) was initially reported as the greatest source of consumer dissatisfaction. Furthermore, consumer dissatisfaction was intensified as consumers sought redress, owing to poor customer service levels of electrical retailers. The main product problem area was found to be cleaning appliances.

2.3.2.3 Singh's taxonomy of consumer complaint responses

Singh (1988) developed a three-dimensional typology that distinguishes various consumer complaint behaviour responses on the basis of the object at which the response is directed. (Refer to Figure 2.3).

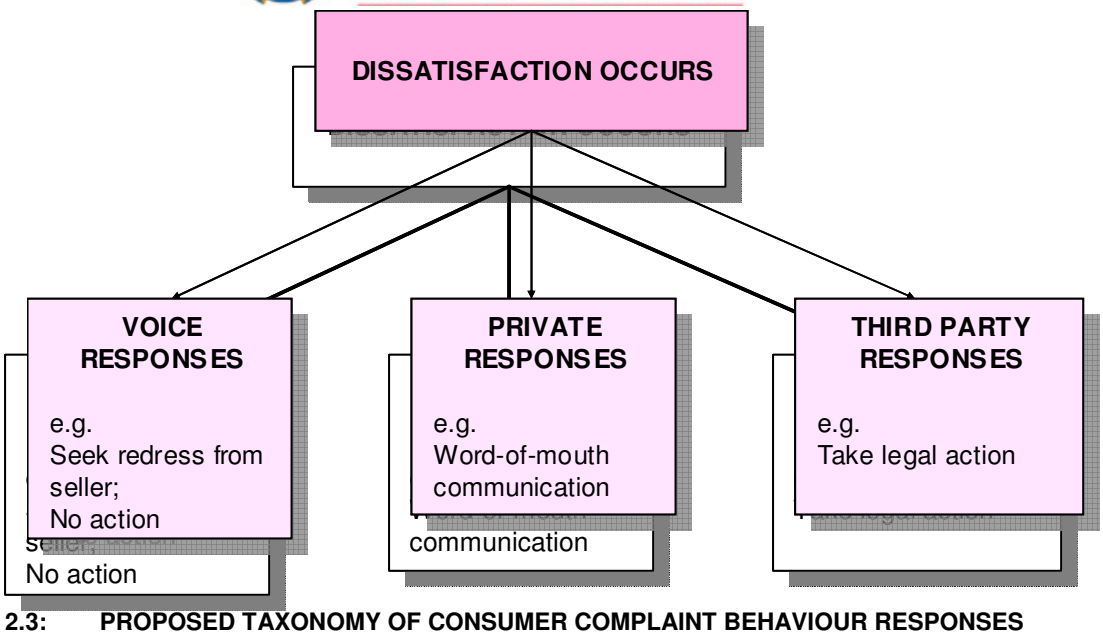

FIGURE 2.3: PROPOSED TAXONOMY OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR RESPONSES (Singh, 1988:101)

The criterion for classification is based on identifying the object at which the consumer complaint behaviour responses are directed. According to Singh (1988), voice consumer complaint behaviour is directed at objects that are external to the consumer's social circle and are directly involved in the dissatisfying experience (e.g. retailer, manufacturer). Non-behavioural responses are also included in this category. Similar to voice consumer complaint behaviour, third party consumer complaint behaviour includes objects that are external to the consumer but are not directly involved in the dissatisfactory transaction (e.g. consumer agencies, legal agencies and newspapers). The private consumer complaint behaviour category includes objects that are not external to the consumer's social circle and are not directly involved in the dissatisfying experience (e.g. family, friends). Thus the external/not external and involved/not involved criteria are used to categorise consumer complaint behaviour action into the proposed categories of the taxonomy (Singh, 1988). While Singh's classification achieved statistically significant improvements relative to the hierarchical typologies proposed by Day and Landon, several aspects of the classification raise questions about the extent to which the classification captures the structure of the consumer complaint behaviour construct. In Singh's typology, the object of the consumer complaint behaviour response takes on greater importance than the behaviour itself (Maute & Forrester, 1993).

For the purpose of this research, Day and Landon's taxonomy serves as base model to investigate the specific consumer's complaint actions taken in response to his/her dissatisfaction with major electrical household appliances. In the proposed conceptual framework guiding this

study, Day and Landon's taxonomy is integrated with Weiner's (1986) causal attributional dimensions (the latter being an intervening variable between the disconfirmation process and consumers' dissatisfaction), and other factors mediating consumers' complaint behaviour concerning their dissatisfaction with major electrical household appliances. Refer to Chapter 4 for the integrated conceptual framework.

2.3.3 Factors affecting consumer complaint behaviour

Consumer complaint behaviour is presumably triggered by feelings of dissatisfaction with a product (Singh, 1988; Morel *et al.*, 1997; Halstead, 2002). Although theoretical and empirical support exists for an inverse satisfaction-complaining relationship, dissatisfaction has been found to explain only a small percentage of complaining behaviour (Day, 1984; Oliver 1987; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Singh & Pandya, 1991; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). This implies that dissatisfaction is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for complaining behaviour (Day *et al.*, 1981; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992, Tronvoll, 2007). Thus, although many researchers would agree with the central concept that dissatisfaction is a fundamental determinant for complaining behaviour (Singh, 1988; Morel *et al.*, 1997; Crié, 2003; Ndubisi & Ling, 2006; Onyeaso, 2007), most would qualify this proposition to include additional variables beyond satisfaction to fully explain consumer complaint behaviour (Day, 1984; Jacoby & Jaccard in Oliver, 1987; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Halstead, 2002).

Many factors influence dissatisfied consumers' decision whether to engage in action (specifically the type of complaint action that might be taken) or no action (Day *et al.*, 1981; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). The complaining behaviour of consumers is not simply a matter of perceived satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product or service (Day & Landon, 1976). It involves many other factors such as the demographic and psychological characteristics of individual consumers as well as various situational factors related to the product itself, or to the time, place and circumstance of purchase and use (Day & Landon, 1976:268; Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

Therefore, the division of influencing factors into consumer-related variables, product-specific variables and redress environment variables aids researchers in understanding the process by which consumers determine what, if any, action will be taken after experiencing dissatisfaction (Day & Landon, 1977; Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989).

Because one of the main objectives of consumer complaint behaviour research is to determine which type of complaining behaviour(s) will be undertaken, and why, these three factors will each be discussed in detail.

2.3.3.1 Consumer-related variables

Consumer-related variables refer to characteristics that are associated with or determined primarily by consumers (i.e. individual factors). Consumer characteristics which may affect complaining behaviour decisions include among other things: demographics (Bearden & Oliver, 1985; Bolfing, 1989; Ndubisi & Ling, 2006; Tronvoll, 2007), personality factors (Bolfing, 1989; Sheth *et al*., 1999:551; Sharma & Marshall, 2005; Bodey & Grace, 2006), attitudes (Richins, 1982; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Kim *et al*., 2003; Velázquez *et al*., 2006), personal values (Keng & Liu, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Liu & McClure, 2001), culture (Day *et al*., 1981; Richins, 1987; Au *et al.,* 2001; Blodgett *et al*., 2006), knowledge and experience as consumers (Singh, 1990a; Somasundaram, 1993; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995), and causal attributions for product failure (Folkes, 1990:143-158; Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002).

The incidence and likelihood of complaining has been found to vary based on individual consumer demographic characteristics (Dolinsky, 1994; Phau & Sari, 2004). Complainers tend to hold professional jobs, earn higher incomes, are well educated and younger than non-complainers. Some authors, however, dispute this and have proposed that the “elderly, poor and individuals low in education do not necessarily react more passively to perceived dissatisfaction” (Grønhaug & Zaltman, 1981; Singh, 1990b; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995:11; Crié, 2003; Ndubisi & Ling, 2006; Tronvoll, 2007). Nevertheless, in general, findings have been fairly consistent with regard to age, income, education and profession as possible determinants of consumers’ propensity to complain (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995).

Consumers’ personality traits and psychological characteristics also play an important role in complaining behaviour. Consumers differ in self-confidence and in their degree of aggressiveness or submissiveness. Complainers have been found to be more assertive, self-confident and in personal control of their life experiences (internal control) relative to non-complainers (Bolfing, 1989; Singh, 1990a; Sheth *et al*., 1999:551; Bodey & Grace, 2006). However, it should be pointed out that researchers have found that most demographic variables and underlying personality traits provide very little explanatory power in explaining differences in consumer complaining behaviour (Richins, 1987; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Goodwin and Spiggle (1989:217) propose that a consumer’s self-definition as a

complainer may also affect complaining decisions. In making a complaint, the consumer needs to take on the role-identity of "complainer". People are reluctant to include this identity as part of the "self" because they tend to disassociate themselves strongly from negative identities (McCall & Simmons in Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989:217). This might explain why people often do not like to complain or do not take part in complaint activities.

Several studies support the role of attitudes toward complaining as direct positive antecedents of either complaining intentions or complaining behaviour (Richins, 1982; Day, 1984; Halstead & Dröge, 1991). Singh in Halstead and Dröge (1991:11) indicated that the normative dimension of attitude ("I should complain") positively and significantly influenced consumers' intention to seek redress. Consumers who have a favourable attitude toward complaining will be more likely to seek redress from the retailer (Singh, 1990b; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Kincade *et al.*, 1998; Velázquez *et al.*, 2006). Consumers' attitudes toward business, government, consumer organisations and complaining have been studied in order to predict complaining behaviour, but the results have been mixed (Barnes & Kelloway, 1980; Halstead & Dröge, 1991).

Keng and Liu (1997) investigated the relationship between personal values and complaint behaviour in an Asian setting. Respondents made a selection from a list of values according to which they were categorised as self-oriented or as group-oriented. Group-oriented consumers resorted to private action, while their self-oriented counterparts were more prepared to opt for public actions.

Research has indicated that consumers in different cultures have different complaint behaviours and intentions (Day *et al.*, 1981; Richins, 1987; Au *et al.*, 2001; Liu & McClure, 2001). Liu and McClure's (2001) study empirically confirmed that when dissatisfied, consumers in a collectivistic culture (South Korean consumers) are less likely to engage in voice behaviour but are more likely to engage in private behaviour than those in an individualist culture (US consumers). Cross-cultural differences might explain variation in the relationship between word-of-mouth and product problem variables for American and Dutch Consumers (Richins, 1983, 1987; Crié, 2003).

Different motivations for purchase and different experiences in the past can affect both the evaluations and post-purchase behaviour of the consumer (Day, 1977, 1984). The consumer with considerable experience in purchasing and using many products or services will have had an opportunity to learn the key dimensions of performance of an item and develop a basis for forming specific prior expectations of performance and for evaluating actual performance. The

inexperienced consumer, on the other hand, will presumably perform more poorly both as a buyer and as an evaluator (Day, 1977). Singh (1990b) found that prior experiences provide part of the descriptors for predicting redress behaviour, specifically complaint behaviour. In general, complainers tend to have more prior experience of complaining compared to non-complainers. Knowledge of unfair practices, consumer rights and where and how to make complaints has been found to co-vary positively with complaining behaviour (Singh, 1990b). The more knowledgeable consumer is less likely to have an unsatisfactory experience, and is more likely to be able to resolve it on his/her own or to obtain redress with relatively little friction (Day & Landon, 1977:434). The less knowledgeable and more inexperienced consumer will be less able to judge product performance and evaluate the goods and services that he/she uses. In addition, such a consumer will be unfamiliar with procedures for seeking redress and registering complaints (Day & Landon, 1976; Day, 1977; Barnes & Kelloway, 1980).

The role of attributional processing in consumer complaint behaviour has been studied by numerous researchers (Folkes, 1990:143-158; Weiner, 2000; Au *et al*., 2001; Laufer, 2002). To lead to consumer complaint behaviour, the consumer has to identify the party responsible for his/her dissatisfaction during a given consumption episode (Crié, 2003). Since particular attention is given to attribution theory and its application to consumer complaint behaviour in this study, it is only mentioned in this section, as a comprehensive discussion follows in the section about attribution theory. (Refer to Chapter 3).

Very little, if anything, is known about the influence of these characteristics on the complaint behaviour of consumers of major electrical household appliances, and it is therefore proposed that all these factors be included in a comprehensive conceptual framework. It would, however, probably be unfair to expect of one single research project to investigate the influence of all the aforementioned factors; they should rather be categorised as demographics, personality factors and others.

2.3.3.2 Product-specific variables

Product-specific variables have been shown to be factors in predicting post-purchase behaviour of some products and consumer services (Singh, 1991; Kincade *et al*., 1998). Product-specific variables related to complaint behaviour include: the nature or type of product (product category) (Kincade *et al*., 1998), cost of the product (Gilly & Gelb, 1982; Kincade *et al*., 1998; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998), durability (Day & Landon, 1977:434; Kincade *et al*., 1998), importance of the product to the consumer (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Sheth *et al.,* 1999:550), dissatisfaction

with the product (Day & Bodur, 1978; Bearden & Teel, 1983; Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989), the type of product failure (Kincade *et al.*, 1998), and severity of the dissatisfaction or problems caused by the dissatisfaction (Richins, 1987; Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989).

Broadbridge and Marshall's (1995) study illustrated that for appliances product-specific factors had a great influence on whether a dissatisfied consumer sought redress, complained publicly and/or privately, or did nothing. Major appliances generated a high ratio of public to private complaints. The nature, complexity, life expectancy and price of the product were factors causing a high public action ratio. Smaller, inexpensive electrical goods generated the fewest complaints.

It is generally accepted in consumer complaint behaviour theory that highly priced, complex products with a relatively long life expectancy generate a higher incidence of public complaints (Day & Landon, 1977:432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). Broadbridge and Marshall's (1995) and Kincade *et al.*'s (1998) research respectively confirmed that redress-seeking action occurred more frequently as the cost of electrical appliances and apparel increased.

More attempts to seek redress were noted in studies of durable goods and services than for non-durable items (Denier in Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Kincade *et al.*, 1998). "Redress for a durable product may be considered worth it in contrast to a return trip to complain about a product with a short life expectancy" (Kincade *et al.*, 1998). Grønhaug (1977) observed great variations in consumers' propensity to complain across a variety of durables (textiles, cars) and non-durables (groceries), with products high in perceived risk receiving the most complaints.

The functional and symbolic performance dimensions of products (already discussed in par. 2.2.2 above) relate to the type of product failure. Kincade *et al.* (1998:84) defined product failure as "the failure of the product to maintain the desired quality after purchase". Differently stated, product failure occurs when actual product performance is worse than the consumers' initial expectations. For analysis, Kincade *et al.* (1998) grouped apparel failures into functional performance failures and symbolic performance failures. This classification may be even more applicable to expensive, durable and conspicuous products such as major electrical household appliances.

Some dissatisfactions are relatively minor and may not justify the effort to make a complaint (Maute & Forrester, 1993). However, some, such as complete product breakdown or safety hazards of a defective product, are more serious and thus more likely to result in complaint

action (Barnes & Kelloway, 1980; Richins & Verhage, 1985). The decision on how to respond to an unsatisfactory product thus appears to be partly determined by the severity of the problem.

Not all dissatisfaction is salient (i.e. bothersome to costumers). Generally, small gaps (discrepancies) between performance and expectations are ignored; moreover, even substantial gaps are not likely to be noticed if the product or service is unimportant. Thus, the importance of the product or service and the degree of the performance-expectations gap determine dissatisfaction salience, which in turn determines the likelihood of consumer complaints (Sheth *et al.*, 1999:550).

Product-related variables, specifically the severity of the problem (product failure) will be addressed in this study. In the South African marketing environment, where there exists a major knowledge void regarding consumers' satisfaction with their choice of major electrical household appliances, it is of the utmost importance that consumers' complaint behaviour regarding the product performance failure should be studied.

2.3.3.3 Redress environment variables

Redress environment variables refer to factors that are controlled or primarily influenced by retailers (Richins & Verhage, 1985; Goodwin & Ross, 1990; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Dolinsky, 1994). Factors in the redress environment that affect consumer complaint behaviour include perceptions of the retailer's responsiveness to customer complaints (i.e. the retailer's willingness to provide a remedy for the dissatisfaction should a consumer complain) and the consumer's perceived trouble (inconvenience) involved in making a complaint (Gilly & Gelb, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983; Richins, 1983; Maute & Forrester, 1993; Huppertz, 2003). Other variables subsumed under the latter include the psychological cost of complaining, time lost (Dolinsky, 1994) and the monetary cost of complaining (Richins, 1982; Day, 1984; Bearden & Oliver, 1985).

Consumers' evaluation of retailers' responsiveness to their complaint in terms of the fairness of the redress offered (i.e. the amount of the refund or exchange offered) and the fairness of the procedures used in settling complaints (i.e. how speedily retailers responded, whether retailers responded in a respectful manner, whether consumers could provide their perspective of what happened or went wrong) (collectively called "perceived justice/fairness"), will largely determine whether that consumer will engage in consumer complaint behaviour (Goodwin & Ross, 1990; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Sheth *et al.*, 1999:551; Kau & Loh, 2006). It is important to note that

consumers are more likely to voice their complaints when there is a more positive perception of the retailer's responsiveness to consumer complaints (Richins, 1983; Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:581; Sheth *et al.*, 1999:550). When consumers doubt that retailers will respond to complaints, consumers might consider complaining to be a waste of effort (Sheth *et al.*, 1999:550). Additionally, retailers with well-known reputations for providing fair redress often encourage consumers to complain (Halstead & Dröge, 1991). Linking with "retailer responsiveness", the likelihood of success construct refers to the perceived probability that the retailer will remedy the problem without protest (Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). Several researchers have found the likelihood of success construct to be one of the more important determinants of complaining behaviour (Richins, 1983, 1987; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). Consumers who perceive the probability of success to be high are more likely to voice their complaints, while consumers who perceive the probability of success to be lower are more likely to take their custom elsewhere and/or engage in negative word-of-mouth behaviour (Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). Richins (1983) concluded that the perceived likelihood of success and trouble involved in making a complaint correlated with negative word-of-mouth as choice of complaint behaviour.

Several factors relate to a consumer's estimate of the probability of success (Day *et al.*, 1981; Richins, 1983). The nature of the product causing the dissatisfaction undoubtedly affects consumers' expectations of restitution. Whereas small appliances are usually replaced or refunded, major electrical appliances are usually repaired rather than replaced if they are faulty (Richins, 1983). Previous experience in seeking redress will also be valuable to a consumer in estimating the probability of success in a new situation. Past experience in buying and using the product is also helpful in determining the probability of success of a complaint action (especially in the absence of previous complaining experience or knowledge of a store's reputation), because the consumer will very well understand what the problem is, how it can be remedied and what the seller's or manufacturer's responsibility is (Day *et al.*, 1981).

Factors related directly to the trouble involved in making complaints include: making a special trip to the retailer to complain, the time and effort in filling out forms, difficulty finding complaint procedures and mechanisms (Richins, 1983). If the complaint handling mechanism for the unsatisfactory product does not cause the consumer to go through a great deal of inconvenience, the likelihood of formal complaining may be increased (Richins & Verhage, 1985; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Dolinsky, 1994; Huppertz, 2003). Richins (1982) indicated that objective costs or trouble involved in formal complaining influence people's feelings toward

complaining. Formal complaining involves trouble, time and occasionally monetary costs. The greater the perceived cost, the lower the likelihood for complaining.

Psychological costs (contributing to the inconvenience) that might discourage formal complaint action include: being treated rudely or unpleasantly, being blamed for unsatisfactory performance, having to bother someone in making the complaint, and possibly being embarrassed while complaining (Day *et al.*, 1981; Richins, 1983). Halstead and Dröge (1991) noted that some consumers loathe being perceived as a nuisance or as troublemakers, and that this could inhibit them from engaging in formal complaint behaviour. Negative affect or unpleasant feelings experienced by some consumers during the complaining process (e.g. embarrassment or annoyance) are actually consumer-related factors (Halstead & Dröge, 1991), but since retailers have control over the manner in which they treat their customers ("the customer is always right") and therefore may influence their customers' (in)convenience experienced during the complaining process, it is included in this discussion.

Although the focus of this study is not on redress environment variables as such, it is, however, important to note that these variables can be applied to explain why particular consumer complaint actions were taken or not.

2.3.4 Reasons why consumers do not complain

Reasons why dissatisfied consumers do not complain include consumers' perceptions that complaining would not be worth their time and effort (implying that the costs of taking action would exceed the value of any likely result) (Day *et al.*, 1981; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:642; Kim *et al.*, 2003). Some consumers simply do not know where and how to complain. Other possible explanations include the emotional difficulties that individuals encounter when complaining and the cultural inappropriateness of doing so. Most people find it very difficult to share their feelings with others (to reveal a part of their emotional self) when complaining. Furthermore, it has been suggested that organisations typically do not encourage customer feedback or complaints (Plymire, 1991; Dolinsky, 1994). Additionally, many consumers do not complain because they are afraid of retribution (the retailer/manufacture will counterattack (Kim *et al.*, 2003; Goodman, 2006). In many cases, complaint channels are not easy to use. According to Hawkins *et al.* (2001:642), it is however important to note that when no action is taken, the consumer's attitude toward the retailer or brand is likely to be less positive than before.

2.4 IMPLICATIONS OF COMPLAINING FOR THE MARKET PLACE AND INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER

Consumers' complaints are destructive to business when retailers are not aware of them. This can be the result of consumers themselves not communicating their dissatisfaction directly to retailers, or of retailers not listening to the complaints. Without consumers' feedback, retailers are unaware of product or service shortcomings (Sanes, 1993) – knowledge that would have compelled retailers to identify quality differences and to remedy problems (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Manufacturers' and retailers' resistance to listening and responding to consumer complaints increases the likelihood that consumers will complain in private (i.e. negative word-of-mouth to family and friends) and to third parties (ombudsmen, local consumer agencies, trade associations etc.) (McAlister & Erffmeyer, 2003). Negative word-of-mouth communications are generally considered detrimental to retailers and manufacturers (Halstead, 2002; Rousseau, 2003a:461) since it can damage the company's reputation (Richins, 1983; Clopton, Stoddard & Clay, 2001), resulting in the loss of potential and existing consumers (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998:172), as well as negatively affecting the company's revenue (Sanes, 1993; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). By simply listening to complaints, brand loyalty can be greatly enhanced. The important issue at hand is to encourage dissatisfied consumers to complain to retailers and manufacturers, rather than to engage in negative word-of-mouth or complain to third parties about their product problems (Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:583; Kim *et al*., 2003).

Companies discourage complaints when they do not provide convenient opportunities for complaining and when shop assistants display negative attitudes toward complainers (e.g. do not respond to consumer complaints in a courteous manner) (Sheth *et al*., 1999:552). Furthermore, repatronage is less likely if the complaint is unsuccessfully redressed (Sheth *et al*., 1999:551; Nyer, 2000; Clopton *et al*., 2001). The reason for this is that, in addition to the dissatisfaction due to product failure, consumers experience further dissatisfaction due to the psychological blocks put on them by retailers and manufacturers when the latter turn a "deaf ear". When perceived justice seems not to have occurred, the hostility on the part of the consumer increases (Barlow & Møller, 1996:11; Sheth *et al*., 1999:551).

The ability to handle consumer complaints effectively is an important strategic consideration for consumer-orientated companies (Hill *et al*., 2000). So important, in fact, that Hill *et al*. (2000) argue for systematic training programmes that will enhance employees' ability to handle complaints. Such training programmes require of companies to understand both the content and

the delivery of the complaint and employees' responses. Similarly, Broadbridge and Marshall (1995) maintain that the need for retailers to understand consumers' complaint behaviour and respond to it effectively, remains an increasingly important issue in the provision of the retail service offering.

Formal or registered complaints frequently bring about apologies and assurances of regret. These assurances can serve the dual purpose of restoring faith in the service provider while informing consumers or educating them about the service process. This, in turn, helps consumers in making judgements that will preserve future exchanges and relationships (Hill *et al.*, 2000).

Efficient complaining furthermore has important implications for the individual consumer. Apart from the possibility of obtaining redress, the act of complaining in itself also has various psychological benefits (Bennet, 1997; Nyer, 2000). Depending on the psychological make-up of the individual, complaint action might be viewed as an opportunity to vent anger or frustration, to prevent the retailer or manufacturer from selling a bad product (policing the marketplace), to elude a sense of guilt for not complaining and to assert one's rights as a consumer, or as an unpleasant and degrading hassle (Day *et al.*, 1981; Bennet, 1997; Nyer, 1997). Thus, being able to register a complaint, to have it investigated and receive feedback on that investigation is an important mechanism for protecting and empowering consumers (Hogarth & English, 2002).

By providing a medium for dissatisfied consumers to complain, companies have the opportunity to resolve problems (whether they are company or consumer induced), provide explanations and/or appropriate forms of redress, increase consumer satisfaction, retain consumers as active purchasers and increase marketplace efficiency (Sanes, 1993; Consumer Alert, 2003; Hogarth & English, 2002; Huppertz, 2003; Kim *et al.,* 2003). However, this requires that consumers must communicate to retailers and manufacturers in the first place to prevent them not noticing the problem.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Bearing the above discussion on the implications of complaining for the retailer and the consumer, in mind, it is not difficult to comprehend why Barlow and Møller (1996:2) use the metaphor of "complaints as gifts" and Sanes (1993:78) considers complaints as "hidden treasures". Complaints should thus be thought of in a positive light, i.e. as important feedback mechanisms, and not as "to quibble, to moan and groan, to give someone a hard time, or to find

fault" (Barlow & Møller, 1996:2). Additionally, people are more likely to talk about negative experiences to their friends than they are to boast about positive outcomes (Solomon, 1996:326; Halstead, 2002). Therefore, retailers and manufacturers should encourage consumers to complain to them and provide information about products that do not meet their needs. Barlow and Møller (1996:2) further state that the time has come for all businesses to think of complaints handling as a strategic tool and a marketing asset, rather than an annoyance. It is therefore essential that the management of consumer-orientated companies understand the value of paying attention to and dealing with consumer complaints (Sheth *et al.*, 1999:552; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Goodman, 2006). Implementing fair policies concerning redress procedures and companies' appropriate reaction to complaints are legitimate and ethical acts toward the consumer (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2001, 2003; Crié, 2003).

More consumer research focusing on post-purchase expectations, levels of dissatisfaction, complaint behaviour and factors affecting complaining behaviour concerning expensive household durables, such as major electrical household appliances, should be executed to enable the development of strategies to effectively address these issues. These strategies will help to prevent potential consumer problems due to dissatisfaction with product performance since retailers and manufactures can improve existing products upon learning about product problems. In addition, marketers will also be able to identify new consumer needs (Rousseau, 2003a:463). The study of complaining behaviour is priceless since it provides understanding and insight about retailers' and manufacturers' business and the consumers who support or otherwise avoid their business. Consumers who care enough to complain are more valuable to a manufacturer or retailer than non-complainers who simply walk out and take their business to a competitor. When consumers leave quietly and take part in hidden complaint actions, retailers and manufacturers will never know why and will therefore never get the opportunity to resolve problems (Crié, 2003; Bodey & Grace, 2006).

In retrospect, the literature on consumer complaint behaviour serves as background to further an understanding of the functional and symbolic performance failures of major electrical household appliances (Objective 1), consumers' accompanying dissatisfactions (Objective 1), the nature of their subsequent complaining behaviour (Objective 2), and their reasons for engaging in particular complaint actions (Objective 2). Additionally, it provides the background knowledge for studying the relationships between consumer-related variables (i.e. demographics) and consumer complaint behaviour (Objective 4), and between product-related variables (specifically the severity of the product failure) and consumer complaint behaviour (Objective 5).

CHAPTER 3 ATTRIBUTION THEORY – A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR RESEARCHING CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to the disconfirmation paradigm, satisfaction/dissatisfaction is a direct consequence of the disconfirmation process. However, evidence suggests that the disconfirmation of expectations does not lead directly to consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and, that the effects of disconfirmation are mediated by attributional processing (Oliver, 1989; Manrai & Gardner, 1991; Laufer, 2002). In view of attribution theory, people are constantly searching for reasons to explain why an event turned out the way it did. Weiner's (1986) attributional theory of achievement motivation describes basic dimensions that people use to understand their success and failure: internal or external locus, stability over time and controllability. Weiner's attributional analysis of achievement behaviour is the most comprehensive theoretical model about the influences of attributions on cognitive processes, affect and behaviour (Försterling, 2001:109). Weiner's (1986) model incorporates a cognition-emotion-action process. In a consumer behaviour context, consumers' assignment of causal inferences for product failure and their interpretation of the dimensional quality of perceived causes influence their emotions and subsequent complaint behaviour.

Attribution theory addresses how cognition and emotion together influence people's behaviour (Folkes, 1984; Weiner, 2000). An understanding of dissatisfied consumers' cognitions and emotions are necessary in order for researchers to shed light on consumers' complaint behaviour. Hence, Weiner's (1986) attribution theory is integrated with conceptions concerning consumer behaviour to develop a theoretical basis for studying consumers' complaint behaviour concerning their dissatisfaction with the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances.

This chapter focuses on attribution theory and its application in consumer behaviour, specifically consumers' reactions to attributions following product failure experiences. The first part of this chapter introduces social cognition and its application to the field of consumer behaviour. In the second part, attribution theory, as a macro-theory, is discussed in terms of its conceptual

meaning, the different micro-theories of attribution theorists, in particular those of Heider, Jones and Davis, Kelley, Bem, Schachter and Weiner, the contribution of these exponents to social psychology, in general, as well as the applicability of their theories to consumer behaviour. In part three, Weiner's (1986) attributional theory is discussed to provide a background for understanding consumers' behavioural reactions to their causal inferences (attributions) concerning product failure experiences. In part four, examples of consumers' attributions for the failure of durable products are provided. In the conclusion, the rationale for using attribution theory as a theoretical perspective for studying consumers' behaviour following product failure, is indicated. Additionally, it is indicated how some of the objectives for this study address the theory. It should be noted here that the methodologies for studying causal attributions and causal dimensions are examined in Chapter 4.

3.2 SOCIAL COGNITION AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Social cognition can be described as a psychological discipline that concerns itself with the study of how individuals categorise social stimuli, make inferences about themselves and the objects and persons around them, and respond to their social environment (Sirgy, 1983:3, 7). Researchers in social cognition therefore study the cognitive psychological processes that are the bases for the perceptions and cognitions individuals use to make judgements about people (Davis & Lennon, 1991). The scientific paradigm of social cognition has developed from a number of theories in social psychology that shared one common element – a cognitive orientation. Attribution theory, which explains the perceived causality of social behaviour in terms of cognitive rules or implications, falls under the general theory of social cognition (Sirgy, 1983:3; Lennon & Davis, 1989). As in other cognitive approaches, the central focus of attribution research lies in the investigation of thoughts or cognitions. Accordingly, researchers in the field of attribution investigate how individuals select, process, store, recall and evaluate information and how the information is then used to draw causal inferences (Försterling, 2001:10).

Since attribution theory can be applied to a wide array of social interaction phenomena, it is considered one of the fundamental paradigms in social psychology (Swanson & Kelley, 2001). It is therefore not strange that the original research on attribution was carried out within social psychology (Hewstone, 1989:11; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:22-56). Attribution theory is, however, not only of use and interest to social psychologists, but to those in other branches of psychology and related disciplines as well. Attribution theory, as such, has been used by researchers in disciplines of psychology (i.e. experimental, personality, motivation, clinical, organisational and education psychology) and in applied fields of psychology (such as clothing, marketing and

consumer behaviour) to offer theoretical guidance and explanation for their work (Lennon & Davis, 1989; Weiner, 2000; Försterling, 2001:8; Swanson & Kelley, 2001; Laufer & Gillespie, 2004; Tsiros, Mittal & Ross, 2004:476; Darmon, 2005; Johnson, 2006). Weiner (2000) notes that, with a few exceptions, the concepts of attribution theory have found limited application in the field of consumer behaviour (i.e. the theory has been rarely used fir theory testing) and argues that consumer behaviour provides an important breeding ground for attributional thinking to take place.

During the last few years, the use of attribution theory in consumer behaviour has been found useful in explaining consumers' post-purchase behaviour (Laufer, 2002). Empirical evidence has demonstrated that attributions that are formed after a negative consumption experience, influence consumers' behavioural reactions to that experience (Forrester & Maute, 2001; Poon, *et al.,* 2004). Studies have concentrated on post-purchase issues such as customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, complaint behaviour, word-of-mouth behaviour, redress seeking, and future purchase intentions (Folkes, 1984; Folkes, 1988; Somasundaram, 1993; Laufer, 2002; Bitner in Poon *et al*., 2004; Tsiros *et al*., 2004). Attribution theory has been used more in dissatisfaction and complaining behaviour models than in satisfaction models as such (Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992). Consumer behaviour researchers are interested in consumers' attributions toward things or objects, because products can readily be thought of as "things" or objects. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:265-267). It is in the area of judging product performance that consumers are more likely to form product attributions. Specifically, they want to find out why a product meets or does not meet their expectations. Consumers could attribute the product's failure (or successful performance) to the product itself, to themselves, to other people or situations, or to some combinations of these factors (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:265-267).

3.3. ATTRIBUTION THEORY

In the following section, attribution is discussed as part of social perception/cognition. Additionally, six different theoretical traditions that form the backbone of attribution theory are discussed in terms of their role in social psychology as well as their applicability in consumer behaviour research.

3.3.1 Attribution as part of social perception/cognition

Every day, people encounter events or situations that require explanation (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:22; Försterling, 2001:4). They often ask questions pertaining to why certain things

happened to them. Part of their perceptual process is aimed at interpreting the reasons for events (Williams, 1982:70-71). Under circumstances where events are considered to be insignificant, the attribution process may be almost automatic. However, there are many circumstances in which causal analyses are more intentional, deliberate and time-consuming (Weiner, 1985; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:22). After all, people typically do not ask why they did well in an examination, or why they received warm greetings from a friend, but rather why they failed and why they received rejection from a friend (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:22; Weiner, 2000). Individuals are more likely to engage in attributional reasoning when they are surprised or threatened by unexpected or negative events that undermine their beliefs and expectations (Weiner, 1986:121,127; Hewstone, 1989:45; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:22; O'Malley & Tech, 1996; Bougie, Pieters & Zeelenberg, 2003). Therefore, attributions can also be considered as cognitive schemata that are only consciously examined when unexpected (schema-inconsistent) events happen (Försterling, 2001:18). Consequently, deviation from a normal course of events acts as a condition for causal reasoning (Einhorn & Hogarth in Hewstone, 1989).

The underlying causes of the things people observe are very important if they are to understand and predict the environment accurately, make valuable decisions and possibly control behaviour and events (Mizerski, Golden & Kernan, 1979; Williams, 1982:70; Kelley in Fiske & Taylor, 1991:23; Försterling, 2001:11-12). Causal analysis, that is, the attempt to identify what factors gave rise to what outcomes, is central to explaining events and consequently, to social cognition in general (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:22). The systematic study of the perception of causality is identified by the term "attribution theory" (Kelley & Michela, 1980:458; Williams, 1982:70).

Attribution theory is a collection of diverse theoretical and empirical contributions that focus upon the universal concern with explanation – why a particular event, or state or outcome has occurred and the consequences of phenomenal causality (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:23; Weiner, 2000; Darmon, 2005). As Kelley defines it in Mizerski *et al*. (1979:123): "Attribution theory is a theory about how ordinary people make causal explanations, about how they answer questions beginning with "why?". It deals with how the social perceiver gathers information and how it is combined to arrive at causal judgment for an event on the basis of either their own behaviour or the behaviour of others (Folkes, 1988; Jones in Hewstone, 1989:37; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:23; Kelley in O'Malley & Tech, 1996; Försterling, 2001:I; Jones, 2006). Zaltman and Wallendorf in Williams (1982:70) note that these judgements do not necessarily deal with the "true" cause of things but rather with what a perceiver interprets the cause to be. Thus, attribution theorists are not concerned with the actual causes of behaviour, but focus more on the perceived causes of behaviour. They assume that there are systematic processes by which attributions (causal

cognitions) are made and that the attributions that people arrive at, influence subsequent behaviour and emotional reactions (Folkes, 1988; Davis & Lennon, 1991; Försterling, 2001:3; Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2003).

Psychologists differentiate between attribution theory and attributional theories (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:23; Försterling, 2001:8) (see Figure 3.1).

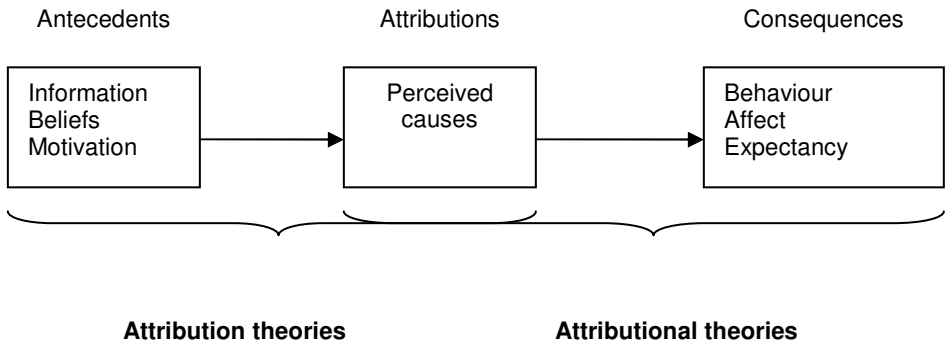

FIGURE 3.1: THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF ATTRIBUTION CONCEPTIONS (KELLEY & MICHELA, 1980:459)

Whereas attribution theory and research study the antecedent conditions that lead to different causal explanations (i.e. how the perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events), attributional theories investigate the psychological consequences of causal attributions (the influence that attributions exert on e.g. emotions and behaviours). Attribution theory is concerned with the generic causal principles that people employ that might be used in a wide variety of domains. Attributional theories, on the other hand, are concerned with the specific causal attribution process that people employ in a particular life domain (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:23; Försterling, 2001:8). Attribution research involves the systematic assessment or manipulation of antecedents. There is no interest in consequences beyond the attributions themselves, and they (the attributions) are generally measured directly by verbal report. With attributional studies, perceived causes (i.e. causes that are not necessarily the "true" causes of things) are assessed or manipulated and their effects on various behaviours, feelings and intentions are measured (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Folkes, 1988). Whereas each type of research has its own focus, many studies have examined both. However, both types of research have in common an interest in the causal explanations given for events by ordinary people (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Folkes, 1988).

While the behaviourist movement, which had excluded cognitive variables in their models of behaviour, maintained that cognitions cannot be observed directly and therefore cannot be

studied scientifically, the determinants and consequences of cognitive processes lie at the heart of attribution/al theories (Försterling, 2001:3).

3.3.2 Theories of attribution

The following discussion elaborates on the six different theoretical traditions that form the basis of what is now termed attribution theory: Heider's theory of naïve psychology, Jones and Davis' correspondent inference theory, Kelley's work on co-variation, Bem's work on self-perception, Schachter's theory of emotional lability and Weiner's attributional theory (Sirgy, 1883:4; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:24; Swanson & Kelley, 2001). The original research on attribution theory was carried out by social psychologists, but the concepts of the theory have found application in consumer behaviour (Williams, 1982:70).

Previously, the theories of Heider, Jones and Davis and Kelley were generally considered as the "major attribution theories" (Mizerski *et al*., 1979) or "classic versions of attribution theory" (Davis & Lennon, 1991), all of which are general models of causal inference. Later on, additional attributional formulations were developed by Schachter, Bem and Weiner. Schachter and Bem's respective theories extended attribution ideas into the sphere of self-perception. Weiner's attributional theories of achievement and helping have been useful in identifying a set of focal dimensions along which attributions may be inferred, and in integrating attributional dimensions with emotional responses (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:41). Finally, there are essentially three areas of study within the realm of attribution theory: person perception, self-perception and event or object perception (Mizerski *et al.,* 1979:123; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:265-267).

3.3.2.1 Overview of Heider's theory of naïve psychology

Heider viewed people as "naïve psychologists" (untrained observers) with an innate need to make sense of the action of others or to assign causality for behavioural events (Hewstone, 1989:12; Davis & Lennon, 1991). Heider argued that, in order to explain events, people need to make some kind of inference about either the person or the environment (Lennon & Davis, 1989). He therefore proposed that there are two ways to explain the causes of events. Firstly, internal attributions, where the causes are attributed to factors within the individual (personal factors, e.g. ability, effort, intention), and secondly, external attributions, where the individual attributes the cause to the environment or situation (task-related factors, luck) (Folkes, 1988; Lennon & Davis, 1989; Laufer, 2002). This distinction between personal and situational causes is fundamental to attribution theory and research on the structure of perceived causality

(Hewstone, 1989:30). Heider's work did have some influence on the attribution theorising of Jones and Davis and Kelley (Hewstone, 1989:15; Lennon & Davis, 1989) and opened the way for Weiner's extensive research on attributions for success and failure (Hewstone, 1989:14). He is therefore unquestionably considered to be the founder of contemporary attribution theory (Hewstone, 1989:5; Ployhart & Harold, 2004). Much of Heider's pioneering work concerning the basic concepts of attribution for person-perception has been applied by behaviour and marketing researchers to investigate the role of internal and external locus attributions in people's behaviour (Richins, 1983; Folkes, 1984; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Swanson & Kelley, 2001:52).

3.3.2.2 Jones and Davis's correspondence of inference theory

Jones and Davis's model of attributional processes examines how the social perceiver makes attributions about the causes of other people's behaviour (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:26). According to their theory of correspondent inference, the goal of the attribution process is to make correspondent inferences about another person: to reach the conclusion that the observed behaviour and the intention that produced it correspond to some underlying stable personality characteristic/quality within the person, i.e., a disposition. Differently stated, correspondent inference refers to the perceiver's judgement that the actor's behaviour is caused by, or corresponds to, a particular trait that remains fairly stable over time. A simple example of such an inference is to ascribe someone's hostile behaviour to the trait hostility. Thus, underlying dispositions are directly revealed in behaviour (Folkes, 1988; Lennon & Davis, 1989; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:26-27). Dispositional attributions, however, often take the form of ascribing a set of "broad" traits to the individual, despite the inadequate empirical evidence for their existence (Jones & Nisbett in Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989). Knowing the dispositional attributes of other people presumably enables one both to understand and to predict their behaviour (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:27). According to Jones and Davis, individuals focus their attention on certain types of actions – those most likely to be informative – when obtaining information about other people, for making attributions. Firstly, people only consider behaviours when that behaviour occurs by choice, while behaviours that were constrained and forced on the person in question tend to be ignored. Secondly, people pay attention to actions that produce non-common or distinctive effects, i.e. outcomes that would not be produced by any other outcome. Behaviour that is considered consistent with social roles or prior exceptions will be ignored. Finally, people pay more attention to actions that are low in social desirability than to actions that are high on this dimension (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:32; Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2000:93-94). Correspondence Inference Theory has proved to be most useful as a rational baseline model against which actual attributions could be compared, although it has declined as a primary focus

of research (Hewstone, 1989:20). Jones and Davis's theory has stimulated relatively little research both within and outside of consumer behaviour (Kamins & Assael in Folkes, 1988).

3.3.2.3 Kelley's co-variance model

Kelley developed the co-variation model of how individuals form causal inference when they have access to multiple instances of similar events. In trying to understand the cause of some effect, people observe its co-variation with various potential causes and attribute the effect to the cause with which it most closely co-varies. Co-variation is the observed co-occurrence of two events (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:33, 55). Differently stated, the cause of any outcome is likely to be found in the temporal sequence with the outcome (Davis & Lennon, 1991). Thus, people attribute an effect to something that varies when the outcome varies – it is present when the outcome is present and absent when the outcome is absent (Lennon & Davis, 1989). For example, if a person gets cross every time he/she is confronted with a specific situation, a high co-variation exists. However, if a person gets cross only sometimes when he/she is confronted with a specific situation and also sometimes when he/she is not confronted with the specific situation, a low co-variation exists. According to Kelley, people assess co-variation information across three dimensions relevant to the entity whose behaviour they are trying to explain (Mizerski *et al*., 1979; Lennon & Davis, 1989; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:55; Kelley in Baron *et al*., 2000:95). In this context, an entity refers to another person or a thing. Firstly, consensus refers to the commonality of the event, the extent to which other persons react in the same manner to some stimulus or event as the person under consideration does. High consensus means others receive the same treatment; low consensus means the event is specific to the person. Secondly, consistency refers to the stability of the event – the extent to which the person reacts to this stimulus or event in the same way on other occasions. High consistency means the event occurs regularly when the person or situation is present; low consistency means the event occurs infrequently. Thirdly, distinctiveness refers to the uniqueness of the event – the extent to which the person reacts in the same manner to other, different stimuli or events. High distinctiveness means the event is specific to the situation; low distinctiveness means that the event occurs in many situations (Kelley in Baron *et al*., 2000:95; Ployhart & Harold, 2004). According to this model, the combination of these three sources of information must lead to a specific attribution. Kelley's theory suggests that individuals are most likely to attribute another person's behaviour to internal causes under conditions in which consensus and distinctiveness are low but consistency is high. In contrast, people are most likely to attribute another person's behaviour to external causes under condition in which consensus, consistency and distinctiveness are all high. Finally, individuals usually attribute behaviour to a combination of these factors under

conditions in which consensus is low but consistency and distinctiveness are high (Baron *et al.*, 2000:95). When multiple instances of similar events do not exist, i.e., only a single occurrence of an event is known to a perceiver, the co-variation principle cannot be employed and other strategies of causal inference (such as the discounting principle and complex causal schemas that tie patterns of causes to patterns of effects) must be employed (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:55). The co-variation model's value is not as a descriptive model of attribution formation, but as a normative model of what people should do under ideal, controlled circumstances (Ployhart, & Harold, 2004). In this context, "normative" implies that the combination of the co-variation information must lead to a specific attribution. A significant part of the research relating attributions to consumer behaviour has been rather loosely based on the theory developed by Kelley, such as the work by Settle and associates (Krishnan & Valle, 1979; Mizerski *et al.*, 1979). Later research, partly based on the attribution theory principles of Kelley and Weiner, includes O'Malley and Tech's (1996) conceptual framework of consumer attributions of product failures to channel members (i.e., parties who are responsible for the quality of the product such as the retailer and the manufacturer).

3.3.2.4 Bem's self-perception theory

Just as people endeavour to explain the behaviour of others, they attempt to understand and attribute causes for their own actions. According to Bem's self perception theory, the process of self-perception is similar to the process of the perception of others. Since people like to be perceived by themselves and others as rational beings, they often try to explain their own attitudes and internal states, such as emotions, in part by inferring them from the observation of their own behaviour and the circumstances in which the behaviour occurs (Bem in Lennon & Davis, 1989; Bem in Fiske & Taylor, 1991:45-46). Furthermore, people infer their attitudes and other internal states in much the same way as they make attributions about other people's attitudes and internal states (Lennon & Davis, 1989; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:45). Bem's research suggests that individuals form attributional biases, whereby success is perceived as being due to one's owns ability/efforts, and failures are perceived as being due to external factors (Norberg & Dholakia, 2004). Bem's work in self-perception is readily adaptable to Kelley's co-variance paradigm and increases its usefulness to consumer research (Mizerski *et al.*, 1979:126). In terms of consumer behaviour, self-perception theory suggests that attitudes develop as consumers look at and make judgements about their own behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:265).

3.3.2.5 Schachter's theory of emotional lability

Schachter's work is notable for extending attribution ideas to self-perception, especially the self-perception of emotion. Schachter's theory of emotion suggests that people label feelings of arousal in accordance with external information. Misattribution of arousal to neutral cases can reduce emotional reactions. Schachter's theory of emotional lability examines attributions for emotional states. He argued that internal physiological cues are often ambiguous and consequently may be labelled as consistent with any of several emotions or sources of arousal. Support for the emotional lability argument, however, is mixed (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:55).

3.3.2.6 Weiner's attributional theory

Weiner's work on attribution theory is notable, primarily for developing the dimensions of attributional experience, integrating attribution with emotional processes and enlightening the attributional and affective experience that underlie achievement behaviour and other concrete domains of experience (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:55-56). Weiner classified Heider's internal-external distinctions as the "locus of causality". Weiner further elaborated on Heider's seminal concepts by developing an improved multi-dimensional approach to the structure of perceived causality (i.e. causal dimensions) – he emphasised other dimensions or properties of causality (Folkes, 1988; Hewstone, 1989:32-33; Weiner, 1990:6; Försterling, 2001:111; Swanson & Kelley, 2001). Weiner's attributional theory of achievement motivation, describes basic dimensions that people use to understand their success and failure: internal or external locus, stability over time and controllability. These dimensions in turn provoke basic emotions, as well as expectations for future outcomes. Together these emotions and expectations guide behaviour (Weiner, 1986:164; Folkes, 1988; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:429). Although Weiner's work was developed initially to explain achievement behaviour and later extended into a more general theory of human motivation (Folkes, 1988), several researchers in other domains have successfully applied these dimensions in their analyses of different situations (Weiner in Folkes, 1984; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:54, 56). According to Weiner in Oliver (1989), his framework is intended to be perfectly general and not limited to specific contexts. Weiner's categorisation schema of causes has attracted the attention of consumer researchers (Bebko, 2001) and has been applied to various consumer behaviour studies to shed some light on a variety of consumer behaviour issues (Folkes, 1984; Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2003). Research on product or service failure and attributions examined both product defects and service encounter problems (O'Malley & Tech, 1996). Folkes and her colleagues clearly established the utility of Weiner's attribution framework in the context of product failure and satisfaction (Folkes, 1984; Manrai & Gardner,

1991). They also demonstrated that buyer-seller conflict, due to opposing views about causes of product failure, could be interpreted in terms of the multiple consequences of attributions for product failure (Folkes, 1990:143-159). Drawing on Weiner's theory, Swanson and Kelley (2001) examined how the allocation of causality and the length of the specific actions taken in response to a service failure, affect post-recovery perceptions of service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions for word-of-mouth and repurchase. Bebko (2001) assessed consumers' level of attribution to determine which service providers are more likely to be blamed for service problems. Poon *et al*. (2004) explored cross-national variation in consumers' formation and consequences of attributions on dissatisfying service encounters. Attributional concepts have proven to be applicable to other issues of importance to consumer researchers, for example, Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal (2003) used Weiner's attributional theory to understand consumers' perception of fairness of price increases by examining the fairness perception based on two attributional dimensions – locus and controllability.

Early attribution theory was purely cognitive, that is, locus of causality or causal responsibility was the result of a logical inference process performed on information concerning the actor and his/her behaviour (Kelley in Laufer, 2002). A trend emerging since the Mizerski *et al*. (1979) review, but with roots in early attributional investigations, is research with emphasis on how causal inferences for an outcome influence the type of affective reaction to that outcome. "Neo-attribution theory takes into account certain non-cognitive biases" (Laufer, 2002:314). Weiner, for instance, linked emotional responses to outcomes and attributions. His model incorporates a cognition-emotion-action process. He also suggests that different outcomes, attributions and emotions lead to different behavioural consequences (Weiner, 1986:162; Folkes, 1988; Laufer, 2002; Jones, 2006).

There is no unified body of knowledge that neatly fits into one specific attribution theory. There are many types of attribution theorists and theories. Nevertheless, some central problems guide the thoughts of all investigators in this field (Weiner, 1992:230). The question without doubt arises as to which one of the attribution theories is the right one. The answer is that all of them have some validity, but under different circumstances and for different phenomena. Each theory has made a unique contribution, and each seems to offer insights about specific attributional problems. Despite the best efforts to compare and contrast the theories, relatively little has emerged in the way of theoretical refinement. The theories adopt different viewpoints rather than different hypotheses or stands on fundamental issues (Hewstone, 1989:29; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:40-41).

The above discussion serves to put Weiner's theory into context with the other theories of attribution.

3.4 WEINER'S ATTRIBUTIONAL THEORY IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Since Weiner's attributional theory serves as the theoretical perspective guiding this research, an overview of his theory in social psychology is provided. Additionally, his theory is explained in more depth regarding its applicability to the field of consumer behaviour, specifically post-purchase behaviour.

3.4.1 An overview of Weiner's theory in social psychology

Weiner asserted that there were two key factors in eliciting attributions: unexpected (vs. expected) events and non-attainment (attainment) of a goal (loss, defeat or failure) (Weiner, 1985; Hewstone, 1989:45). Oliver and DeSarbo (1988) propose that outcomes that can be interpreted as successes or failures (e.g. good and bad) elicit causality inferences along three dimensions, namely of (1) locus, (2) stability, and (3) controllability. Locus refers to the familiar location of a cause internal or external to the person; stability refers to the temporal nature of a cause, varying from stable (permanent) to unstable (temporary), and controllability refers to the degree of volitional influence that can be exerted over a cause. Each of these dimensions is perceived as a bipolar continuum. Causes can therefore theoretically be classified within one of eight cells (2 locus levels x 2 stability levels x 2 controllability levels) (Folkes, 1984; Weiner, 1986:50; Hewstone, 1989:33; Oliver, 1989; Weiner, 2000).

Weiner's influential taxonomy for causal attributions allows one to classify phenotypically different causal attributions (e.g. lack of ability, or lack of effort, or illness) according to their genotypical similarities (i.e., that they reside within the person) (Weiner, 1986:17, 44-45; Försterling, 2001:110-111). Weiner also argues that, despite the large number of perceived causes for any one event, the specific type of cause attributed to an event is less important than its latent dimensionality, as expressed through the causal dimensions (Weiner, 1986:121; Ployhart & Harold, 2004). Russell's research (1982) helped to validate this point. He asked individuals to indicate the most likely cause for some event and then rate that cause in terms of the locus, stability and controllability dimensions. The dimensions tend to predict outcomes better than the specific causes noted.

Specific combinations of causal attributions are known to result in regular patterns of causal thinking. For example, internal, stable and controllable causes are typically ascribed to effort while external, unstable and uncontrollable ascriptions are frequently attributed to luck (Weiner, 1986:128; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Oliver, 1989). Weiner has argued that how we think (ascribe causes) can influence how we feel, but also that some emotions can be elicited without intervening thought processes. At the same time, although he does not rule out the influence of emotional states on cognitive processes, Weiner sees the link from cognition to emotion as more typical (Weiner, 1986; Hewstone, 1989:67). (Refer to Figure 3.2).

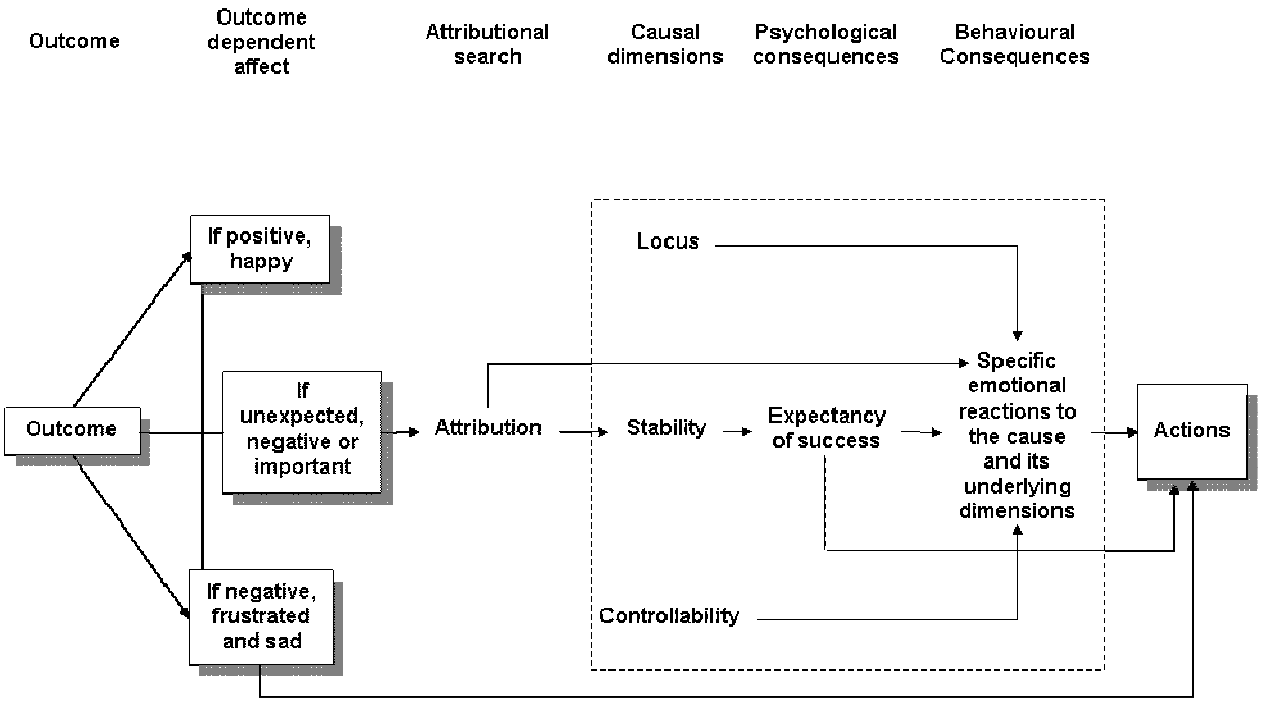

FIGURE 3.2: AN ATTRIBUTIONAL THEORY OF MOTIVATION AND EMOTION (Weiner, 1986:240)

In addition to the cognitive aspects of his model, emotion plays an important part since emotions guide behaviour (Weiner, 1986:117-154; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:429; Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002). The emotion process begins with the interpretation of an event as a success or failure (i.e., the environment is evaluated as “good or bad”), referred to as the “primary appraisal” (Weiner, 1986:121, 127). The outcome of an event initially results in a generally positive or negative affective reaction (a “primitive” emotion) (Weiner, 1986:121, 127). These emotions include, “happy”, following success, and “frustrated” or “sad” following failure outcomes; they are labelled “outcome dependent”, for they are determined by the attainment or non-attainment of a desired goal, and not on causal attributions given for the outcome. This first stage sequence is followed by “secondary appraisal” involving attributions for the outcome (for instance, effort or luck) if that

outcome was negative, unexpected or important (Weiner, 1986:127). These attributions result in a different set of emotions that are attribution dependent and not outcome dependent (Weiner, 1986:121; Hewstone, 1989:67; Oliver, 1989; Laufer, 2002). For instance, failure ascribed to "low ability" should give rise to the feeling of incompetence, whereas failure ascribed to bad luck should lead to the emotion of surprise. Finally, the individual determines the dimensional quality of the attribution (e.g., internal, controllable and stable) of which specific combinations are related to a set of feelings. For example, internal, stable, and controllable causes are typically ascribed to effort while external, unstable and uncontrollable ascriptions are often attributed to luck (Oliver, 1989).

One can illustrate that specific emotions follow from specific causal attributions (Neumann, 2000). Success and failure due to internal causes are anticipated to respectively result in greater or lower self-esteem (pride) than do external attributions (Weiner, 1986:121; Försterling, 2001:117). Anger follows from a negative outcome that is perceived as controllable by others, whereas gratitude follows from a positive outcome attributed to external and controllable factors. Guilt is the emotion probably experienced by one who causes negative outcomes for others or one's self, when those factors are controllable. Pity results from another person's negative outcome attributed to external factors that are seen as uncontrollable (Weiner, 1986:135; Hewstone, 1989:67-68; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:429; Neumann, 2000). Uncontrollable causes are linked with shame (embarrassment, humiliation). The quality of emotions is determined by locus and controllability factors, whereas the stability factor tends to intensify them. If a cause is seen as stable, the resulting affect will be more pronounced than if the cause is unstable (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:52).

Weiner argues that the dimension of stability determines which influence a causal attribution will exert on the formation of expectancies following success and failures (expectancy change). It is postulated that stable attributions for success should increase the expectancy of being successful at a subsequent similar task to a larger extent than variable attributions. In the same manner, stable attributions for failure decrease expectancies for future success more than the attribution of failure to variable causes. It is also assumed that the mediating influences of stable versus variable attributions are independent of the locus of control dimensions (Försterling, 2001:112). Stability may also relate to future-oriented emotions such as hopelessness or anxiety. Failure attributed to stable factors implies the (fearful) anticipation that it will recur in future, whereas attribution of failure to variable causes could give rise to "hope" for the future (Försterling, 2001:117).

However, it should be noted that research has pinpointed a number of persistent attribution fallacies (biases) that people employ in the attribution process (Folkes, 1988; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:93). The question of how consumers arrive at attributions and why certain patterns occur may be important from an attribution theory point of view. An awareness of biases in terms of attributional theory may be useful in explaining the consequences of attributional thought. Important attribution errors include, inter alia, the fundamental attribution error, the actor/observer effect and self-serving attributional bias (Baron *et al*., 2000:99-104). The fundamental attribution error claims that people over-attribute the behaviour of others to dispositional qualities rather than to situational factors. The actor/observer effect implies divergent attributions for actors' and observers' behaviour, i.e. situational attributions for actors' behaviours, and dispositional attributions for observers' behaviours. Self-serving attributional bias refers to people's preference to take credit for good outcomes and to attribute bad ones to external factors (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:67, 93; Försterling, 2001:103-105).

To summarise, Weiner's model incorporates a cognition-emotion-action process. (Due to the complexity of Weiner's model, the reader is again referred to Figure 3.2) The appraisal of an outcome as a success or failure leads to outcome-dependent emotions. Next, attributions are made that give rise to attribution-dependent emotions. The dimensional quality of the attributions in turn provokes dimension-dependent emotions and expectations for future outcomes. The differentiated affective reactions are presumed to coexist with the initial general emotional response (Weiner, 1986:127; Neumann, 2000; Weiner, 2000). Finally, these emotions and expectations are presumed to determine action (Weiner, 1986:164; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:429; Jones, 2006). Weiner suggests that different outcomes, attributions, and emotions lead to different behavioural consequences (Weiner, 1986:161-164; Folkes, 1988; Laufer, 2002; Norberg & Dholakia, 2004).

3.4.2 Weiner's attributional theory in consumer behaviour

The disconfirmation of expectations paradigm has been widely used in marketing literature to explain how consumers reach dissatisfaction decisions (Oliver, 1980; Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). The concept underlying the disconfirmation of expectation paradigm is that consumers reach satisfaction decisions by comparing product or service performance with prior expectations about how the product or service would or should perform (Laufer, 2002). Disconfirmation results from discrepancies between prior expectations and actual performance (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982). When performance fails to meet expectations, dissatisfaction results (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). The traditional

expectancy disconfirmation model only recognises a direct link from disconfirmation to satisfaction, which connotes a disconfirmation-driven satisfaction response (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983:296; Oliver, 1989). Evidence suggests that disconfirmation does not lead directly to satisfaction but instead results in a search for the cause of the disconfirmation (Oliver, 1989:2).

Therefore, the disconfirmation of expectations acts as an important causal agent for generating attributional processing (Pyznski & Greenberg in Laufer, 2002). In other words, events that do not conform to expectations, are thought to trigger the search for an explanation for the event (Laufer, 2002). In a consumer behaviour context, attributions arise when a consumer evaluates the extent to which the initial product performance corresponds to his/her level of expectation concerning that product, followed by an attempt to find an explanation for the cause of the outcome (Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002). As mentioned earlier, an attributional search is more likely to follow failure (dissatisfaction) than success (satisfaction) (Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992; Weiner, 2000; Norberg & Dholakia, 2004). Unsatisfactory goods or non-attainment of personal goals are more likely to elicit attributions than do positive experiences (Weiner, 2000). Considering attribution theory, consumers are viewed as rational processors of information who look for reasons to explain why a purchase outcome turned out the way it did (Folkes, 1984; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992). Product failure is the kind of negative and unexpected event that has been shown to prompt (bring about) causal search (Folkes, 1990:144; O'Malley & Tech, 1996; Weiner, 2000; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004).

In the context of Weiner's (1986:121, 127) attributional theory, a consumer will first evaluate the product outcome/event as "good for me" or "bad for me" (i.e. a success or failure). It is proposed that this primary evaluation will result in a primary affect (e.g., the general state of happiness/sadness in response to the goodness or badness of the product event/outcome). The consumer will then search for the cause of the product's success or failure (secondary appraisal) by making an attribution, which will result in attribution-dependent emotions (Oliver, 1989). Ultimately, the specific cause will be positioned on a causal dimension leading to dimension-dependent emotions and expectations for future product success or failure. Causal attributions and their underlying dimension of locus, stability and controllability generate differentiated affective reactions which are thought to coexist with the initial primary affect generated by the goodness or badness of the product experience. Consequently, general affective reactions linked to (product) outcome become further differentiated as more complex attributional thinking is incorporated into the process (Weiner, 2000). These emotions and expectations are thought to determine the consumer's behaviour.

Consistent with Weiner, Oliver (1989) proposes that, based on the integration of general affective reaction and differentiated emotions, a summary judgement is formed which represents the common satisfied/dissatisfied response. Differently stated, attribution processing is viewed as affecting satisfaction through distinct emotions in addition to primary evaluation, which also affects satisfaction/dissatisfaction through primary affect (Dubé & Schmitt, 1991; Manrai & Gardner, 1991). Attribution theory predicts that the perceived reason for a product's failure influences how the consumer responds (Folkes, 1984).

Consumers infer reasons for why a product performs well or badly and these reasons influence how they respond (Curren & Folkes, 1987:32; Somasundaram, 1993). It is not merely the judgement that the product has failed that determines consumer response (Folkes, 1984). Weiner's causal dimensions (locus, stability and controllability) have been linked to a variety of attributional consequences (emphasising distinctions among various behaviours, affects, expectancies and intentions) following product failure (Curren & Folkes, 1987:32-36; Folkes, 1990:150-155; Weiner, 1990:10; Ployhart & Harold, 2004).

Locus In a consumer behaviour setting, the locus dimension refers to whether the consumer believes that the cause for the event (success or failure with a product or the purchase outcome) can be attributed either to the consumer (internal) or to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or situation or product itself (external) (Jones & Nisbett in Williams, 1982:50; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992; Bitner in Oliver, 1993; Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002).

A consumer who feels dissatisfied because he/she did not follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing a dishwasher (internal attribution) will react differently than one who feels that the manufacturer is accountable for the defective dishwasher (external attribution). A person who believes he/she received a bad product because of his/her inability to deal efficiently in the marketplace is making an internal attribution. Similarly, someone who feels dissatisfied because he/she did not spend enough time shopping is attributing the cause to him-/herself. On the other hand, the person who blames a "bad" product on the nature of the manufacturing company (Krishnan & Valle, 1979) or the product per se ("This computer is not user-friendly") (Weiner, 2000), is making an external attribution. Thus, locus of causality is based on who is seen to be responsible for a given action (Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2003). According to Blodgett and Granbois' (1992) integrated conceptual model of consumer complaining, this variable should actually be referred to as attribution of blame.

Locus influences beliefs about who should solve problems: problems arising from consumers' actions should be solved by consumers, whereas problems arising from companies' (retailers or manufacturers) actions should be solved by companies (Folkes, 1988, 1990). Similarly, locus influences whether consumers believe a company should provide restitution and redress (such as a refund or a replacement) and an apology for product failure. When a product failure is externally attributed, consumers feel that they deserve a refund and apology more than when it is internally attributed (Folkes, 1984, 1988, 1990; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992; Laufer, 2002; Laufer & Gillespie, 2004). Locus is also related to consumer communications about negative outcomes. When the reason for a consumer's dissatisfaction is company-related, the consumer is more inclined to complain to the retailer and engage in negative word-of-mouth about the product than when the reason is consumer-related (Richins, 1983; Curren & Folkes, 1987:33, 39; Swanson & Kelley, 2001). Additionally, external attributions may cause consumers to experience anger toward the company and they may consequently desire to do it harm. A number of studies have found that the greater the number of internal attributions (i.e. when the consumer admits that the product or retailer is not at fault), the more likely consumers are to do nothing when dissatisfied (Laufer, 2002:315).

Stability The stability dimension refers to whether the cause of the event is perceived as relatively permanent or unchanging (temporarily fluctuating) over time (Folkes, 1984; Laufer, 2002; Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2003). In a consumer behaviour context, the stability dimension refers to whether the outcome of the purchase-use situation can be attributed to something temporary (unstable) or something that is likely to occur each time the product is purchased or used (stable) (Williams, 1982:502; Folkes, 1990:155). For instance, when a washing machine stops because of a power failure once in a while, the cause is considered to be unstable, and when the machine stops because of an inherent defect the cause is considered to be stable.

Most of the previous studies of this dimension have been in the context of product failure (Laufer, 2002). The stability dimension signals whether the same problem can be expected in the future or whether the event was perceived as a coincidence and not likely to recur in the future (Laufer, 2002). When product failure is stable, people would expect the product to fail if they purchased it again in the future. Conversely, when product failure is caused by unstable reasons, consumers would be less certain of future product failure (Folkes, 1984). If the attribution is unstable, the consumer will view it as a once-off problem (Williams, 1982:503).

The stability dimension also influences the type of redress preferred when a product fails (Folkes, 1988; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992). Compared with unstable reasons, stable attributions lead consumers to more strongly prefer refunds, rather than replacement of the failed product (Folkes, 1984; Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2003). Preference for refunds as opposed to replacement increases when products are perceived to fail for company-related reasons as opposed to consumer-related reasons. Consumers are thought to be more likely to warn their friends against purchasing a product when they expect future product failure, than when they are uncertain about future product performance (Curren & Folkes, 1987:35; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). Curren and Folkes (1987:40-41) demonstrated that stable causes significantly increased the desire to warn friends but had little influence on desire to complain to companies. Consumers are equally likely to complain to a company about product failure whether the cause is stable or unstable. Stability also influences intention to repurchase. Inferring a stable cause leads to less desire to repurchase a product than does inferring an unstable cause. Additionally, consumers will probably vow to never again patronise that retailer and might even warn their friends about the retailer so that they may not experience the same type of problem (Folkes *et al.*, 1987; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Crié, 2003).

Controllability Both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer can either have volitional control over an outcome or be under certain uncontrollable constraints (Folkes, 1984; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992). This dimension reflects the power available to the different role-players to alter the outcome (Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002). The question is whether any of them has control over the factors that caused the situation to occur (Laufer, 2002).

Research has primarily examined how consumer' perceptions of retailers' control over a problem (external locus) influence their responses to product failure (Folkes, 1990:152). If consumers attribute the cause of the problem to an external, uncontrollable cause, they will probably assign less blame to other entities such as the manufacturer or retailer. However, when failures are viewed as controllable, blame is targeted to the entity perceived as having had control (Laufer, 2002:315). When retailers are thought to have control over the cause of product failure, consumers feel angry and desire revenge more than when they are believed to lack control (Folkes, 1984; Folkes *et al.*, 1987; Folkes, 1990:152). Anger intensifies as outcome importance increases and hence consumers will be more likely to complain to the company and/or public/private third parties, and to distance themselves from the company, refuse to repurchase the company's product and warn others against product purchase as opposed to uncontrollable, external product failures (Folkes *et al.*, 1987; Folkes, 1988; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Swanson & Kelley, 2001). Telling others about product failure enables the individual to vent his/her anger,

to gain social support for the validity of these negative feelings and may allow the consumer some means of retaliation by discouraging others from purchasing the product (Curren & Folkes, 1990:153).

It should be noted here that consequences of attributions are sometimes linked to a single causal dimension; for other consequences, more dimensions are involved (Curren & Folkes, 1987; Folkes, 1988).

3.5 CONSUMERS' ATTRIBUTIONS FOR THE FAILURE OF DURABLE PRODUCTS

Day and Ash (1979) obtained data on consumers' dissatisfaction with durable products (including household appliances), their reasons for being dissatisfied and the nature and extent of any subsequent complaining behaviour. The most frequently cited reason for dissatisfaction with household appliances was that the "quality of the materials was inferior". A fair number of respondents indicated that the "quality of the workmanship was inferior". The study showed that respondents who reported dissatisfaction with durable products tended to be more concerned about product quality and product performance issues than with issues related to marketing practices. The reasons provided for dissatisfaction (from an inventory of possible reasons) were all external to respondents (i.e. related to the product as such, to its manufacturers and retailers). However, no provision was made for failure due to mistakes on the part of the end-consumer using the appliance (i.e. human error).

Rousseau (1988) requested respondents to read through five scenarios of product failure (including cars, clothing, electrical appliances, furniture and roof construction), and then to indicate the most likely cause of product failure, the most likely party responsible for the failure and the best way of avoiding similar incidents. Causes of failure included, inter alia, material weakness, mechanical/technical inefficiency and human error (i.e. incorrect operation of machine by user). Compared to Day and Ash's (1979) study, Rousseau's (1988) study included mistakes on the part of the person operating the appliance to the list of possible causes of product failure.

A limited amount of research could be found concerning the reasons for the failure of durable products. In many scientific articles, respondents were asked to think of a product failure and to describe the specific incident. However, in the discussion of the results it is merely mentioned that the respondents described a variety of failures (Richins, 1983; Folkes, 1984; Curren & Folkes, 1987). The focuses of these articles were not on the attributions as such, but rather on

the causal dimensions thereof (Curren & Folkes, 1987). Additionally, researchers examine theories and propose conceptual models and hypotheses to study the effect of specific variables on attributions for product failure (Manrai & Gardner, 1991; Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002; Crié, 2003), but research concerning the actual causes for the failure of specific product durables and consumer perceptions of these causes is still lacking. Research concerning the causes for product failure could be conducted by employing straightforward market surveys, but the research results will still be detached from research concerning causal reasoning. In order to gain an understanding of consumers' complaint behaviour concerning specific products, marketing and consumer behaviour specialists need to design research strategies where respondents' causal attributions for specific product failures are integrated with consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the specific products.

3.6 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

Psychologists consider attributions to be important because they are the foundations of further judgements, emotional reactions, and behaviour (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:54). As attribution theory is concerned with phenomena from "everyday life", this approach has also been labelled the "psychology of the man in the street" (Försterling, 2001:4). Since attribution theories address everyday common-sense phenomena, attribution research is not concerned with phenomena of questionable ecological validity that might only occur in rare laboratory situations or in selected clinical groups. On the contrary, attribution theory is concerned with the processes that make our everyday circumstance understandable, predictable, and controllable (Försterling, 2001:40). Hence, the insights of attribution research are applicable to a wide variety of domains, including the field of consumer behaviour (Weiner, 2000; Försterling, 2001:109).

Attribution theory plays a central role in explaining consumers' perceptions of the causes of events, especially unexpected, negative or important events (such as the failure of a product) and their subsequent response to product failure (Folkes, 1984; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992; Försterling, 2001:11). Most consumers attempt to explain the causes of such events by simply asking why an outcome was unsatisfying, whether it will happen again, and who is to be held responsible (Weiner, 2000). According to Weiner (2000), attributions intervene and exert their influence after a product-related outcome and prior to the next choice. Causal attributions are posited to play a mediating role between disconfirmation perceptions resulting from product outcomes and specific emotions thought to accompany attribution judgements (Oliver, 1989). Attribution theory addresses how thinking and emotion together influence consumers' behaviour (Folkes, 1984; Weiner, 2000).

Weiner's attributional analysis of achievement behaviour is the most comprehensive theoretical model about the influences of attributions on cognitive processes, affect, and behaviour (Försterling, 2001:109). Weiner postulates that there is a sequence involving three steps in which increasingly complex cognitive interpretations give rise to increasingly complex emotional reaction following an outcome (Weiner, 1986:121; Försterling, 2001:117-118). Weiner's attributional theory articulated a dimensional structure for understanding causal inference (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:24).

Although it is impossible to cover all the publications on attribution research in consumer behaviour in this chapter, it is clear that a significant amount of empirical research has been done about the topic. Attribution concepts are no longer only examined in psychology journals but in consumer journals and related academic journals as well (Folkes, 1988; Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002; Poon *et al.,* 2004; Tsiros *et al*., 2004; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). Consumers' cognitive and affective reactions to product failure are central to understanding post-purchase behaviour (Manrai & Gardner, 1991). Attribution theory provides a map of the relationship between specific thoughts about product failure and specific complaining behaviour (Folkes, 1984). One can only agree with Folkes (1988) and Weiner (2000) that attribution theory is a rich and well-developed approach that has a great deal to say about a wide range of consumer behaviour issues. Attribution theory therefore offers a lot to consumer researchers, even though it has a long history and some might be of the opinion that its time has passed.

The theoretical overview provided in this chapter, presents a good background for studying the link between causal attribution and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances (Objective 3). Specific insight gained will assist the reader in investigating dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the performance failure of major household appliances (Sub-objective 3.1), the causal dimensional characteristics of their attributions (Sub-objective 3.2), the association between the dimensional characteristics of attributions and demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) (Sub-objective 3.3), the association between the causal dimensions and consumers' complaint behaviour (Sub-objective 3.4), and the relationship between consumers' anger and their complaint behaviour (Sub-objective 3.5).

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the methods, techniques and procedures that were employed in the process of implementing the research design (research plan) are discussed in detail. Firstly, the conceptual framework is presented and explicated to set the stage for the phenomena being studied. Next, the research problem and resultant objectives and sub-objectives are stated formally. In the ensuing sections, the research strategy, research design and sampling plan are described. Additionally, the data collection technique for this study is discussed in terms of the respective methodologies for researching consumers' complaint behaviour and causal attributions, since these methodologies serve as background for the methodology chosen for this study. The analysis of the data is discussed in terms of the coding and capturing of the data, the operationalisation of measurements and the explanation of the statistical methods respectively. Then, the quality of the data is discussed in terms of its validity and reliability. Finally, the manner in which the data is presented is indicated.

4.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

4.2.1 Conceptual framework

This study proposes a conceptual framework of the consumer's complaint behaviour following dissatisfaction due to a performance failure of a major electrical household appliance item. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, this framework integrates three lines of CS/D and complaint behaviour research, namely the expectancy disconfirmation model (satisfaction research) (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983), Weiner's (1986) causal dimensions (attribution theory), and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour. Additionally, consumer-related variables and product-specific variables that may impinge on consumers' complaint behaviour (complaint behaviour theory) are included in the framework. Figure 1.1 (Chapter 1, par. 1.3) is provided once more, and then explained, to facilitate the reader's understanding of the interrelationships between the respective concepts.

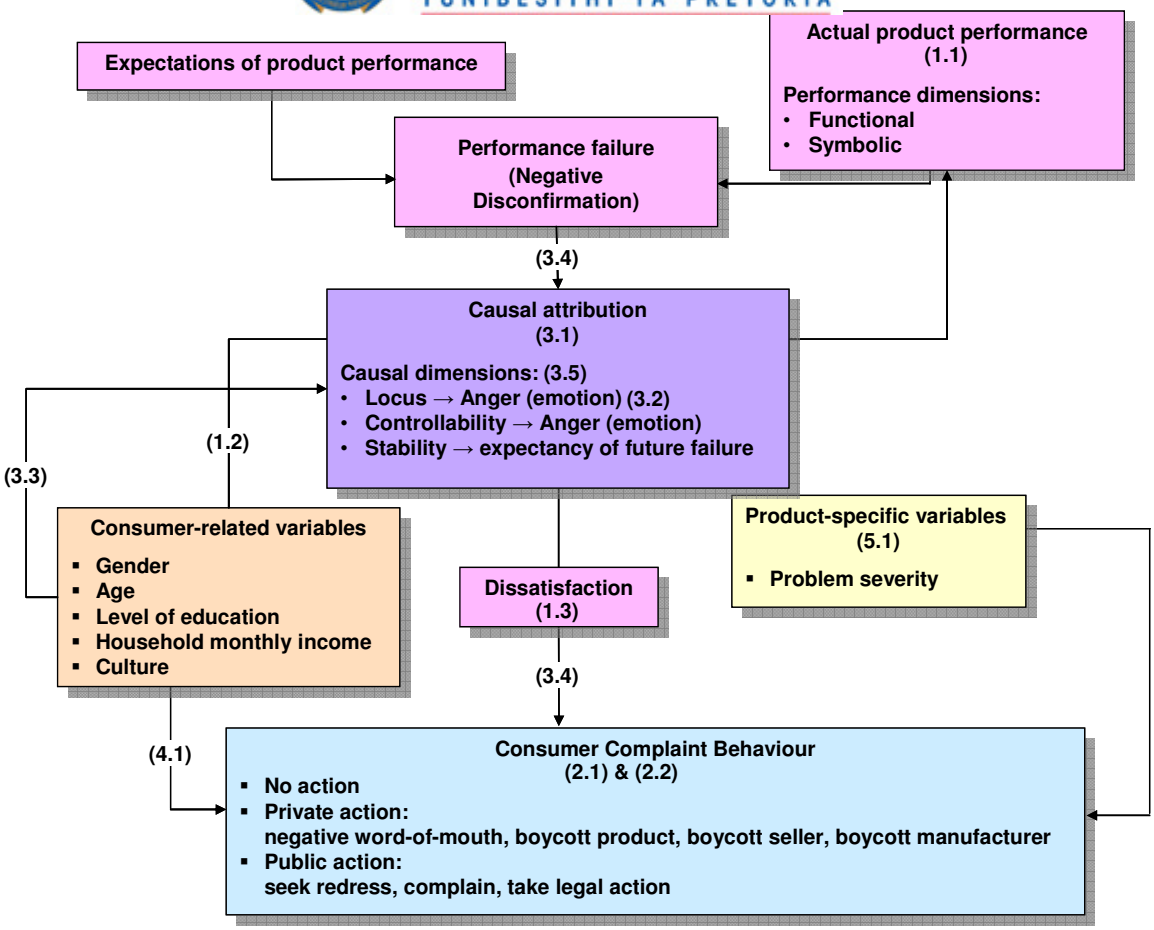

FIGURE 1.1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF DISSATISFIED CONSUMERS' COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR CONCERNING THE PERFORMANCE FAILURE OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES WITH CONSIDERATION OF ATTRIBUTIONAL PROCESSING, CONSUMER-RELATED VARIABLES & PRODUCT-SPECIFIC VARIABLES

It is clear from Figure 1.1 that, prior to purchasing and consuming major electrical household appliances, consumers form expectations regarding its performance in a particular use situation. After or while using an appliance item, consumers evaluate its perceived performance in terms of their initial expectations regarding the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of the appliance. Whereas functional performance refers inter alia to durability, ease of use, ease of care and physical performance (how well the appliance does what it is supposed to do), symbolic performance refers to a "psychological" level of performance that is derived from the consumer's response to the physical product (Swan & Combs, 1976:26; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:641; Erasmus, Makgopa & Kachale, 2005). Consumers' evaluation of the functional and symbolic performance of products unquestionably varies in terms of consumer characteristics (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) (Brown & Rice, 1998:46-47; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001:641). When the appliance's performance does not meet the consumer's expectations (i.e. when a performance failure occurs or when the product performs poorly), negative disconfirmation occurs, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction.

However, feelings of dissatisfaction are mediated by attributional reasoning, i.e. the cognitive process of wanting to find out why a negative outcome or event occurred. The perceived cause (attributions) for the product's failure and its dimensional quality (in terms of Weiner's (1986) locus, stability and controllability), influence consumers' reaction in terms of their emotions (the level of anger experienced in response to the product failure) and behaviours. Additionally, the dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions may be influenced by demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture).

Consumer responses to dissatisfaction are generally referred to as "consumer complaint behaviour" (Singh, 1988:93; Maute & Forrester, 1993:220). Once dissatisfaction occurs the consumer may engage in behavioural and non-behavioural responses to resolve it (Day & Landon, 1977:229-432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). Three major options are available to consumers who are dissatisfied with their purchase: no action, private action or public action. Consumers may refrain from action by rationalising and forgetting about the problem. Consumers may engage in private actions such as switching brands or retailers, boycotting the type of product or warning family and friends. Or, consumers may engage in public action such as seeking redress (i.e. a refund, an exchange or free repairs and replacement of defective parts – depending on the nature of the product and particular circumstances) directly from the retailer or manufacturer, complaining to the retailer or manufacturer, a public consumer protection agency, a voluntary organisation or the media, or taking legal action against the retailer or manufacturer.

However, consumer-related factors and product-specific factors are likely to affect the consumer's complaint behaviour. Consumer-related variables refer to characteristics that are associated or determined primarily by consumers. Demographic factors (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture), as consumer-related variables, influence consumers' complaint behaviour. Product-specific variables, specifically the severity of the problem (product failure) will be addressed in this study. For the purpose of this study, the type of product failure (functional/symbolic) is not subsumed under product-specific variables (as explained in terms of complaint behaviour theory, Chapter 2, par. 2.3.3.2). With regard to the expectancy disconfirmation model (satisfaction/dissatisfaction literature), the type of product failure is considered to be part of the performance failure concept.

4.2.2 Problem statement and objectives

The research problem was stated formally in terms of the unit of analysis, research goal and approach, as follows:

To explore and describe the role of specific consumer-related variables, product-specific variables, and causal attribution in dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of selected major electrical household appliances.

The main research problem was divided into subcomponents, which were stated in the form of objectives and sub-objectives. By looking at the main problem in terms of its component parts, the researcher gains a broader perspective of the research problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:51-53). "The subcomponents describes the scope of the work and, taken together, defines the entire problem to be tackled as summarised in the main problem" (Walliman, 2005:34).

The following research objectives and sub-objective were formulated for this study:

Objective 1:	To explore the nature of the performance failure that caused consumers to be dissatisfied with major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 1.1	To explore the functional/symbolic performance failure causing consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 1.2	To describe the association between demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, household monthly income and culture) and the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 1.3	To describe consumers' degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of household appliances
Objective 2:	To describe the nature of, and the reasons for, dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 2.1	To describe the types of consumer complaint behaviour responses that dissatisfied consumers engage in concerning their dissatisfaction with the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 2.2	To describe dissatisfied consumers' reasons for engaging in consumer complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Objective 3:	To describe the relationship between causal attribution and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.1	To describe dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.2	To describe the causal dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.3	To describe the association between the dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture)
Sub-objective 3.4	To describe the association between the causal dimensions (i.e. locus, stability and controllability) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances
Sub-objective 3.5	To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers' anger reactions concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of

major electrical household appliances and consumer complaint behaviour

Objective 4: To describe the relationship between specific consumer-related variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 4.1 To describe the relationship between demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, household monthly income and culture) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Objective 5: To describe the relationship between product-specific variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 5.1 To describe dissatisfied consumers' perceptions of the severity of the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 5.2 To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers' perception of the severity of the functional/symbolic performance failure concerning major electrical household appliances and their consumer complaint behaviour

4.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY, APPROACH AND DESIGN

The research objectives for this study included exploration and description. Exploratory research enables the researcher to gain insight into the research topic, to explicate central concepts and constructs and to develop methods to be employed in the study. Descriptive research allows the researcher to measure and report the frequency with which specific variables occur in the sample to present a picture of the details of a situation or relationship (Mouton, 1996:102; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:xxvi, 79-81; Fouché & De Vos, 2005a:106).

A quantitative methodological research approach was used for this study. The quantitative approach is epistemologically rooted in positivism (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:49; Fouché & Delport, 2005a:75). Quantitative research utilises deductive logic. The research starts with an

abstract idea, followed by a measurement procedure, and ends with empirical data (precise numerical information), capable of being analysed by statistical methods or other computational methods, representing the abstract ideas (Neumann, 2000; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:49; Walliman, 2005:322). Therefore, quantitative research is highly formalised, and explicitly controlled, with a range that is exactly defined and that is relatively close to the physical sciences (Mouton & Marais, 1990:155-156; Fouché & Delport, 2005a:73).

The quantitative approach entails specific methods of sampling, data collection methods and methods of data-analysis. However, the selection of methods, and their application, are always dependent on the objectives of the research, the nature of the phenomena being investigated and the underlying theory or expectations of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:49).

Research design refers to “those groups of small worked-out formulas from which prospective researchers can select or develop one or more that are suitable for their specific research goals and objectives” (Fouché & De Vos, 2005b:133, 143). A quantitative-descriptive (survey) design, as plan or blueprint for the investigation, was followed (Fouché & De Vos, 2005b:133, 143). The type of research design can also be classified as empirical, using primary data (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:78).

The research is cross-sectional, meaning that the observations were made at one time and not over an extended period as is the case with longitudinal research (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:92, 105).

4.4 SAMPLING PLAN

4.4.1 The unit of analysis

The units of analysis for this study were consumers older than 25 years of age, who resided in the greater Pretoria area, who belonged to the Living Standards Measure (LSM) groups 5 to 10 and who had experienced dissatisfaction concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances.

For inclusion in the study, respondents had to meet specific criteria. Each of these criteria is justified in the following paragraphs:

- Respondents must have purchased major electrical appliances during a prior four-year recall period and must have experienced dissatisfaction concerning the performance of an appliance item as such.

Respondents had to use their own appliances to have gained experience with their appliances. Consumers' dissatisfaction with durable major electrical household appliances might manifest over a period of time and not necessarily immediately as in the case with non-durable products such as food items. Respondents should have purchased their appliance between 2002 and 2006. It should be noted that product warranties play a role in consumers' complaint behaviour – most of today's appliances have warranties of one to two years. (People whose warranties had just expired might still engage in formal complaint behaviour, as they might believe that retailers or manufacturers would react to their complaints to clear their names and to uphold their positive reputations. People whose appliances fail long after the warranty period might consider it as wear and tear – part of the ordinary course of events). Additionally, consumers had to have experienced dissatisfaction with the performance of their appliances, whether they engaged in consumer complaint behaviour or not, whereas satisfied consumers would undeniably not have engaged in consumer complaint behaviour (Day *et al*., 1981:83).

- Respondents had to be older than 25 years.

It was assumed that the average person would, by the age of 25 years, be earning enough income to purchase and subsequently operate his/her appliances.

- Respondents had to belong to the Living Standards Measure (LSM) groups 5 to 10.

The South African Research Foundation (SAARF) devised the Living Standards Measure (LSM) to measure social class, or living standard, regardless of race, income or education. Instead of approaching social class from the perspective of obvious demographic differences, the LSM measures the population on a continuum from LSM level 1 to 10, in terms of ownership of certain durable goods, access to services and the like. For LSM levels 5 to 10, characteristics include (in ascending order): access to electricity, ownership of durables such as major electrical household appliances, educational levels varying from schooling up to Matric/Grade 12 to higher education, and average monthly household incomes ranging from R2 000 to R10 000 or higher (i.e. middle-class to top income brackets). LSM groups 5 to 10 have access to electricity and have the capacity to own major electrical appliances (Du Plessis, 2003:87-100; SAARF Universal LSM Descriptors, August 2004). At the time of the research, the *SAARF Universal LSM Descriptors* of August 2004

was used to categorise the sample into the different income brackets. Since then, a revised LSM edition has been published with different values for the various income levels and other parameters.

- Respondents had to reside in the greater Pretoria municipal area.

Since members from the different LSM groups might stay in the same suburbs, regardless of the living standard, it was decided that respondents could reside in any of the suburbs of the Pretoria area.

4.4.2 Sample selection and sample size

A convenience sampling technique was employed, but sample members were selected on the basis of the pre-specified criteria mentioned in paragraph 4.3.1. Categories were determined for gender, age, culture, level of education and average monthly household income of the target population. For this study, attributes for the demographic variables were clarified as: gender (male/female), age (25-30 years, 31-45 years, 46-55 years and 56-83 years), level of education (Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less, Grade 12 and additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) and Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification), level of income (R2 000-R5 000, R5 001-R10 000, and R10 001 or more) and culture (black/Caucasian). Additionally, respondents had to reside in residential areas of the Tshwane metropolitan area (city of Pretoria). A list indicating such residential areas was obtained from Space-Time Research Pty Ltd (1993-2004) to verify that respondents resided in the Tshwane metropolitan area. In this study the absolute minimum number of responses required for the factor analysis was determined at 100, according to the rule of 100 (the number of respondents should be larger than 5 times the number of variables, or 100) (Hatcher in *Statistic Solutions, Inc: factor analysis*).

4.5 CHOICE DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION OF DATA COLLECTION METHOD

4.5.1 Overview of methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour, causal attributions and causal dimensions

The respective methodologies for researching consumers' complaint behaviour, causal attributions and causal dimensions are provided, since these methodologies serve as background to the methodology chosen for this study.

4.5.1.1 Methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour

In general, the empirical studies of consumers' complaint behaviour employ a survey methodology to report on consumers' dissatisfaction with various products/services, their reasons for being dissatisfied, the nature and extent of their complaint actions, their reasons for taking particular complaint actions and factors influencing their complaint behaviour. Self-administered questionnaires are typically administered to collect data (Day & Bodur, 1978; Richins; 1983, 1987; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Singh & Wilkes, 1996; Keng & Liu, 1997; Kincade *et al*., 1998; Liu & McClure, 2001). The population of interest concerns consumers who have experienced dissatisfaction with products and/or services, since dissatisfaction precedes complaint behaviour. It is therefore of no value to collect information concerning the failure of appliances from satisfied consumers because they will certainly not have taken part in consumer complaint behaviour (Day *et al*., 1981).

In most research, data is collected using a questionnaire format where the description of a critical incident forms the basis for coding the responses. The Critical Incident Technique requires of respondents to recall a specific product experience that they remember most clearly (Kelley, Hoffman & Davis, 1993; Singh & Wilkes, 1996) Even though memory decay may be a potential source of bias in respondents' responses, retrospective measurements are regularly employed, as opposed to simulation or role-playing methodologies and experimental manipulation, because they appear relevant to those who take part in them and reflect "real life" reactions (Brown & Beltramini, 1989; Weiner, 2000; Dunning, O'Cass & Pecotich, 2004).

Usually a time limitation is placed on the dissatisfactory experience, in the sense that respondents must have experienced dissatisfaction within a specific period, such as within the last six months or the last two years. The time dimension obviously depends on attributes such as the type of product (for example, clothing versus appliances), product price, and the length of ownership (in some cases, problems may not appear until the product has been used for an extensive period of time) (Richins, 1983).

An appropriate screening question is normally asked to determine whether respondents qualify for inclusion in the study or not (Day *et al*., 1981; Bloomington in Singh & Pandya, 1991; Dunning *et al*., 2004). Alternatively, a covering letter can inform respondents of the criteria for inclusion in the study upon which respondents must decide whether they meet those requirements and wish to complete the questionnaire.

Recognised complaint behaviour models such as Hirschman's (1970) typology of exit, voice and loyalty, Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour and Singh's (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint response options can be used to classify responses and to guide the presentation results (Singh, 1991; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995).

Richins (1983, 1987) administered questionnaires to samples of middle- to upper-class adult male and female consumers to investigate their responses to dissatisfaction. In all of these studies, respondents were pre-screened, and only those who had experienced dissatisfaction with either a clothing item or a small or large appliance within the prior six months, were included.

Broadbridge and Marshall's (1995) survey investigated consumers' levels of post-purchase dissatisfaction with electrical goods and their specific complaint behaviour action undertaken. Dissatisfied consumers were asked about the source of their dissatisfaction and the main problem they had encountered. The questionnaire explored post-dissatisfaction responses by using Day and Landons' (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour.

In addition to investigating consumers' true complaint behaviour by employing memory recall techniques, consumers' intentions to engage in specific complaint behaviour can also be measured. In such a context, respondents are exposed to imaginary dissatisfaction situations where they are then expected to express their intentions to engage in complaint behaviour (Nyer, 1997; Kim *et al*., 2003; Sharma & Marshall, 2005).

4.5.1.2 Methodologies for studying causal attributions

Methodologies that have been used to collect information concerning respondents' causal attributions involve the Critical Incident Technique and experimental procedures (Weiner, 2000).

In a product failure context, the Critical Incident Technique requires respondents to recall the most recent incident of a certain type of product failure and the attributions inferred (Krishnan & Valle, 1979; Richins, 1983; Curren & Folkes, 1987; Swanson & Kelly, 2001). This technique focuses on the description of an autobiographical episode that is followed by questions to elicit the attributor's reasons for the specific incident. Among the weaknesses of the Critical Incident Technique are memory distortions (as already discussed under par. 4.5.1.1), the difficulties in combining accounts of different participants and the possibility that some causes would occur too infrequently for statistical analysis (since causes cannot be

manipulated). Yet, this approach has face validity and ecological validity (Weiner, 2000). According to Vallerand and Richer in Fiske and Taylor, (1991:53), studies that examine causal attributions in real situations, where the researcher asks respondents to reconstruct their past successes and failures, provide converging support for the validity of Weiners' model.

The experimental methodology, to determine relationships between causal dimensions and consumer responses, is often employed for the control it provides. It allows for the manipulation of all eight types of causes (2 locus levels x 2 stability levels x 2 controllability levels) so that the full spectrum of causes can be examined, as opposed to the aforementioned naturalist methodology. (Refer to Chapter 3, par. 3.4.1). Scenarios describing the same product failing for eight different reasons (where the reasons for hypothetical product failure vary orthogonally) are presented to subjects, whereafter they must describe the behaviour that they would want to engage in (Folkes, 1984; Curren & Folkes, 1987; Folkes 1990; Jones, 2006). Some researchers do not accept simulational or role-playing methodologies, arguing that they lack ecological validity and bring the variable of interest to the experimenter to the fore, while the data do not reflect "real life" reactions in those situations (Weiner, 2000). Research is thus limited due to the artificiality thereof and the fact that intentions are measured as opposed to actual behaviour (Curren & Folkes, 1987). On the other hand, these methodologies permit examination of the variables of most concern and often allow the best theory testing by enabling the investigator to gather all the responses needed (Weiner, 2000).

4.5.1.3 Methodologies for studying causal dimensions

Following the real-life or experimenter-manipulated outcome (as discussed in par. 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.2), subjects are asked about their causality. Product failure causes can be determined by using a free response format, with subjects generating their own causal inferences, or a list of causes can be provided where the likelihood of causes influencing the outcome can be rated on some kind of scale (Weiner, 1985).

Research in the domains of achievement and affiliation has determined that one way to predict behaviour for attributions is to first classify causes on the basis of the underlying properties (Folkes, 1984). In the traditional attribution paradigm, an essential step involves the translation of causal attributions, made by the subjects, into causal dimensions by the researcher, assuming that the researcher can accurately interpret the subjects' causal attributions (Russell, 1982). This translation of the cause into causal dimensions is based on the theoretical meaning of the cause (Russell, McAuley & Tarico, 1987). However,

attributional statements are often ambiguous, and even when clearly stated, may be interpreted quite differently by the attributor and the researcher, since the placement of a causal attribution in terms of causal dimensions may vary greatly from person to person, as well as from situation to situation (Russell, 1982). An appropriate technique to prevent such incorrect classification of causal attributions into causal dimensions (called "fundamental attribution researcher error") is Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale (see Table 4.1), by means of which the investigator directly assesses how the attributor perceives ascribed causes. This measurement requires subjects to rate their own attributions, subjectively, on nine semantic differential statements, three for each of Weiner's dimensions (locus, stability and controllability) (Russell *et al*., 1987; Hewstone, 1989:33-34; Swanson & Kelly, 2001). Findings suggest that direct assessment of causal dimensions based on the attributor's perception of the causal attribution may represent a more valid procedure for assessing causal dimensions (Russell *et al*., 1987; Swanson & Kelly, 2001; Ployhart & Harold, 2004). Based on Russell *et al*.'s (1987) findings, Ployhart and Harold (2004) suggested that attributions should be measured in terms of the individual's assessment of the attribution dimensions using Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale.

Russell's Causal Dimension Scale is designed for settings in which the investigator is assessing both the respondent's causal explanation for an event and the respondent's perception of the causes he/she has stated. (Russell *et al*., 1987; Hewstone, 1989:33-34; Ployhart & Harold, 2004). Refer to Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1: THE CAUSAL DIMENSION SCALE (Russell, 1982:1143)

Think about the reason you have written above. The items below concern your impression or opinions of this cause or causes of your outcome. Circle one number for each of the following scales:			
1	Is the cause(s) something that: Reflects an aspect of yourself	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Reflects an aspect of the situation
2	Is the cause(s): Controllable by you or other people	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Uncontrollable by you or other people
3	Is the cause(s) something that is: Permanent	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Temporary
4	Is the cause(s) something: Intended by you or other people	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Unintended by you or other people
5	Is the cause(s) something that is: Outside of you	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Inside of you
6	Is the cause(s) something that is: Variable over time	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Stable over time
7	Is the cause(s): Something about you	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Something about others
8	Is the cause(s) something that is: Changeable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Unchanging
9	Is the cause(s) something for which: No one is responsible	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Someone is responsible
Note: A total score for each of the three subclasses is arrived at by adding the responses to the individual items as follows: (1) locus of causality – Items, 1, 5 and 7; (2) stability – items 3, 6 and 8; (3) controllability – items 2, 4 and 9. High scores on these subscales indicate that the cause is perceived as internal, stable and controllable.			

Russell (1982) conducted research to test the reliability and validity of the Causal Dimension Scale. The results of his studies confirmed that all three subscales were reliable and valid. Additionally, Weiner (1986:112) states that Russell's scale has the properties of an acceptable psychometric instrument.

Folkes (1984) examined the relationships between causal dimensions and consumer complaining reactions. The first study used the Critical Incident Technique. Respondents were asked to recall the most recent incidence or a certain type of product failure and to explain why they think the product failed. This was followed by three open-ended questions designed to elicit perception of the locus, stability and controllability of the cause. Ratings of causal locus, stability and controllability were made by judges on three 9-point scales derived from Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale, whereafter dimensional scores were correlated with consumer reactions. It should be noted that judges classified the causes and not the respondents themselves. In the second study, an experimental methodology was employed. Respondents were presented with hypothetical product failures and they were asked to indicate how the consumer (in the scenario) would respond by placing checks on a 9-point scale.

Swanson and Kelly (2001) employed an experimental methodology to examine how the allocation of causality and the length of the service recovery process influence post-recovery

consumer perceptions of service quality, customers' satisfaction and behavioural intentions for word-of-mouth and repurchase. They used a fifteen-item modified Causal Dimension Scale to assess respondents' perceptions of a particular situation in terms of the locus, stability and controllability dimension. Due to the enlarged locus dimension utilised in their study, the locus scale items were adopted to capture customer perceptions of attributions for the self (i.e., for the customer), the service employee and the service firm. For each of the locus dimensions, respondents were asked whether 1) taking action was something that was "Outside" or "Inside" of "You", "The Employee", or "The Firm"; 2) taking action was something about "Others" or "You", the "The Employee", or "The Firm"; and whether 3) the action taken reflected "The Situation" or "You", "The Employee", or "The Firm". Control was assessed by asking whether the outcome of a scenario was 1) "Intended" or "Unintended", 2) "Controllable" or "Uncontrollable, and whether 3) "Someone was responsible" or "No One was Responsible". Stability items asked subjects whether the action taken in a particular scenario was perceived as 1) "Permanent" or Temporary", 2) "Stable or Unstable", and 3) "Unchanging or Changing".

Wirtz and Mattila (2004) adapted Russell's scale to measure consumers' service failure attributions. Stability and controllability (the two dimensions of interest) were each measured via a two-item, seven-point, bipolar scale. In both cases, respondents rated the causes for service failure themselves. From the foregoing description of previous research about consumers' attributions and product/service failures, it is clear that Russell's Causal Dimension Scale can be adapted, in terms of its administering and wording, to suit the context of the specific study.

Research in the domains of achievement and affiliation has determined that one way to predict behaviour for attributions is to first classify causes on the basis of the underlying properties (Folkes, 1984). Most empirical studies of product failure apply Weiner's (1986) three-dimensional schema in understanding consumers' post-purchase behaviour following product failure (i.e. how consumers infer causes for product failure and how these attributions impact on behaviour*)* (Folkes, 1984, 1988; Laufer, 2002). While researchers have analysed all three causal dimensions and consumers' reactions to attributions based on those dimensions, there has been research that has examined the effect of only one or two of these dimensions (Krishnan & Valle, 1979; Richins, 1983; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988; Erevelles & Leavitt, 1992; Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2003).

In this study, respondents were asked to rate their own attributions (i.e. reasons) for the appliances' failure subjectively on an adapted version of Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale to facilitate the researcher's assessment of the dimensional quality of respondents'

causes (attributions). Refer to Table 4.2 or to the questionnaire (Addendum A – Section B, Question 9).

TABLE 4.2: ADAPTED VERSION OF RUSSELL'S CAUSAL DIMENSION SCALE

Copy the cause that you have selected or written in question 8 (Section B) in the space provided.			
The statements below concern your impression or opinion of the cause for the failure or poor performance of the appliance. Use the cause that you have written in the space above and cross (X) **ONE** shaded number for **each of the following statements**. (The number 1 being closest to the statement on the left and 9 being closest to the statement of the right)			
The cause of the product failure:			
1	was due to circumstances or other peoples' action (reflected on the situation)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	was due to my own action (reflected on myself)
2	was uncontrollable by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	was controllable by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)
3	is temporary	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	is permanent
4	was unintended by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	was intended by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)
5	was outside of me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	was inside of me
6	is variable over time	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	is stable over time
7	was something about others (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	was something about me
8	is changeable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	is unchanging
9	was something for which no one is responsible	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	was something for which someone is responsible (me, the manufacturer or somebody else)
Note: A total score for each of the three subclasses is arrived at by summing the responses to the individual items as follows: (1) locus – Items, 1, 5, and 7; (2) stability – items 3, 6 and 8; (3) controllability – items 2, 4 and 9. High scores on these subscales indicate that the cause is perceived as internal, stable and controllable			

The three items for locus, the three items for stability and the three items for controllability were summated respectively to obtain a combined score (out of 27) for each respective dimension.

It should be noted that the pairs of statements of some of the original semantic differential items (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7), and accompanying scaling categories (1 to 9), were reversed to allow the rating scales, of all 9 items, to run in the same direction (i.e. from 1 to 9). This was done to create a visually appealing causal dimension scale with number one being the closest to the statement on the left and 9 being closest to the statement of the right. The interpretation of the data was not influenced by these changes.

The meaning of the scores is indicated in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3: MEANING OF SCORES

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the locus dimension indicates that causes were perceived as external, implying that the cause for the product failure could be attributed either to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or the situation. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as internal, implying that the cause for product failure could be attributed to the consumer. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively external (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively internal (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27). A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the stability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as unstable, implying that people should be less certain of future product failure if they purchase it again in the future. (If the attribution is unstable, consumers will view it as a once-off problem. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as stable, implying that people should expect the product to fail if they purchase it again in the future. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively unstable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively stable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27). A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the controllability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as uncontrollable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer could not control the product failure. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as controllable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer had control over the product failure. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively uncontrollable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively controllable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

4.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

Based on the above discussion about the methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour, causal attributions and causal dimensions (par. 4.5.1), a self-administered questionnaire was designed to obtain information from consumers who experienced dissatisfaction with the performance of their major electrical household appliances. (Refer to Addendum A.) An adapted version of Russell's Causal Dimension Scale was included in the questionnaire to translate respondents' causal attributions for product failure into causal dimensions. (Refer to Table 4.2 or Addendum A, Section B – question 9.)

4.6.1 Structure of questionnaire

The questionnaire was compiled after an in-depth review of the literature concerning various theories and theoretical constructs applicable to the problem of this research. Consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction theory in terms of the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm, consumers' expectations about product performance and the dimensions of product performance, serve as the conceptual background for studying consumers' complaining behaviour. Complaint behaviour theory concerning the models of consumer complaint behaviour, particularly Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour, and consumer-related variables and product-specific variables that may impinge on consumers' complaint behaviour were examined. Attribution theory, concerning Weiner's (1986) attributional theory in social psychology, in general, as well as its application to consumer behaviour, was studied to contribute to a clearer understanding of consumers' behavioural reactions to their causal inferences (attributions) concerning product failure experiences. In addition, Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale was studied.

Whereas various empirical studies and academic literature exist concerning consumers' perceptions of the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of products such as clothing, the information about the performance failure dimensions of major electrical household appliances is very limited. Donoghue and Erasmus (1999) confirmed that consumers buy major electrical household appliances not only for functional but also for symbolic purposes. Additionally, Mehlwana (1999) stated that appliances are closely associated with lifestyle.

Therefore, additional sources of information were investigated to aid the researcher in designing questionnaire items for the dimensions of product performance. Written information, including newspaper complaint letters and online letters to consumer complaint websites, was explored to become acquainted with the type of product problems that consumers experienced concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances. Complaint letters, published between 2001 and 2006, concerning consumer's dissatisfaction with the performance of their major electrical household appliances, were considered. These letters are respectively available on a local (Afrikaans) newspaper's website (*Beeld*) and Internet websites such as consumeraffairs.com (http://www.consumeraffairs.com). Owners' manuals (instruction leaflets) of top appliance manufacturers were studied to become aware of the special features that these manufactures lay claim to, and so identify possible examples of performance failures that consumers might encounter. These claims were adapted to suggest product performance failures.

After exploration of the additional sources of information, it was decided that the performance failure of major electrical household appliances manifests in their functional and symbolic performance failure. For the purpose of this study, functional performance failures can be classified into the following categories: unusual product performance in terms of the intended end-use, failure/breakdown of appliance or some component(s) thereof, inconvenience in operating the appliances, inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance, insufficient durability and safety or health risks associated with performance of the appliance. The symbolic performance failures of appliances refer to the sensory, emotional and cognitive displeasure or dissatisfaction associated with major electrical household appliances. Refer to Addendum B (Tables 1 to 9) for the distinctive performance failure dimensions, with quotations and examples from the complaint letters and owners manuals concerning these performance failures.

Exploratory research thus enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of major electrical household appliances

and to explicate these concepts. Through exploration, the researcher learned what would be the right questions to ask and the most meaningful ways to pose questions in the larger survey *(*Mariampolski, 2001:23; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:80).

The questionnaire was divided into three content sections (Sections A – C) to facilitate the eventual processing of the data. In Section A, respondents had to provide demographic information (i.e., gender, age, level of education, monthly household income, residential area; cultural group).

In Section B, respondents were asked to provide information concerning their dissatisfaction with the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and their attributions for the specific performance failures. Respondents had to select an appliance item from a list of appliances provided, that caused them most dissatisfaction within the last four years. Respondents had to describe the type of product failure (i.e. what went wrong) in an open-ended question. Additionally, a Likert-type scale, with multiple indicators of the constructs, was used to determine the type of performance failure (functional or symbolic) that caused the dissatisfaction. Respondents were then asked to respectively indicate the degree of dissatisfaction and anger experienced concerning the appliance's faulty or poor performance, by crossing an appropriate number on a four-point dissatisfaction response scale and a four-point anger response scale. Respondents' perception of the severity of the product problem was also determined on a four-point severity response scale. (A four-point response scale (implying an even as opposed to an odd number of responses) was used, since a "neutral" or "neither/nor" response option was considered to be irrelevant. Additionally, the four-point response scale forced respondents to choose between response options).

Two additional questions were added in this section. Firstly, respondents were asked to indicate the brand names of their dissatisfactory appliances to facilitate memory recall. Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate the purchase date of the dissatisfactory appliances to facilitate memory recall and to verify that the appliances were not older than four years.

In terms of respondents' attributions for the specific performance failures, they had to select what they believe was the most important cause for the performance failure or poor performance of the appliance, from a list provided by the researcher. Additionally, an open response item was added to ensure that all the possible causes that respondents could think of were included in case none of the causes provided, applied. They were then asked to rate

their own attributions, subjectively, in terms of an adapted version of Russell's Causal Dimension scale, to determine the causal dimensional characteristics of their attributions.

Finally, Section C dealt with respondents' behavioural and non-behavioural actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction and their reasons for the specific action taken. The nature of the dissatisfaction response (complaint behaviour) was investigated by exploring the type of action taken, using Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour. Respondents had to consider a list of actual actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction, by indicating what actions, if any, were taken. A nominal scale ("yes" or "no") was used to classify the answer to each type of action taken. Respondents then selected the reason(s) for the particular complaint action(s) taken, from a list provided by the researcher. An open-ended response option was also included, for each type of action taken, to ensure that all possible reasons were included.

The structure of the questionnaire is portrayed in Table 4.4 in terms of the different sections of the questionnaire, the specific aspects measured and the question numbering according to which different aspects were measured.

TABLE 4.4: THE STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION	ASPECTS MEASURED	QUESTION NUMBERING
A	Demographic aspects	
	Gender	Question 1
	Age	Question 2
	Level of education	Question 3
	Monthly household income	Question 4
	Residential area	Question 5
	Cultural group	Question 6
B	Dissatisfactory appliance	Question 1
	Purchase date	Question 2
	Brand name	Question 3
	Type of performance failure (functional or symbolic)	Questions 4.1, 4.2
	Degree of problem severity experienced	Question 5
	Degree of anger experienced	Question 6
C	Consumer complaint actions	
	Type of behavioural and non-behavioural actions	Questions 1 - 10
	Reasons for actions	Questions 1 - 10

A variety of response systems (question types) were used in order to provide more flexibility in the design of items and to make the questionnaire more interesting (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:233; Delport, 2005:174). Open-ended questions were especially relevant for the exploration of variables that were relatively unknown to the researcher such as consumers'

description of the performance failure (i.e. what went wrong). Open-ended questions permitted respondents to clarify their responses and to express themselves. In contrast, closed-ended questions were used where the number of possible responses were limited and where response options were relatively well known, implying that all the relevant response options to questions were determined in advance. Scaled questions and statements were used to obtain information about more subjective aspects such respondents' perceptions of the degree of dissatisfaction or anger experienced concerning the performance failure of a major electrical household appliance or the severity of the performance failure encountered (Delport, 2005:177). Russell's Causal Dimension Scale provided a composite measurement of the causal dimensions for respondents' attributions for product failure. Follow-up questions, with closed response options, were used to obtain more information about respondents' response to dichotomous questions (Yes/No response options for questions concerning complaint behaviour actions) (Delport, 2005:174-178).

The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter stating the purpose of the research, criteria for selection, how long it would take the respondents to complete the questionnaire, assurance of anonymity and a plea for the respondent's co-operation (Delport, 2005:170). The covering letter was written in easy and unambiguous everyday language to ensure people's easy comprehension of what was expected from them and to improve response rates. The questionnaire was first compiled in English and thereafter translated into Afrikaans in order to accommodate consumers in both language groups.

The questionnaire was carefully planned to include only those questions that were important to collect all the relevant information (Delport, 2005:170). The questionnaire consisted of 11 pages. While all the respondents had to respond to all the questions in Sections A and B, they only had to answer the applicable questions in the last section. Therefore, respondents who took no complaint action only answered 6 pages of the questionnaire, whilst those who took action only selected the relevant questions from the remaining pages 7 to 11.

4.6.2 Procedures for administering the questionnaire

The questionnaire was tested on people having characteristics similar to those of the target group of respondents (Strydom, 2005:206). Only after the necessary modifications concerning the usage of language and the sequence of questions were made, the questionnaire was presented to the full sample of respondents.

Fieldworkers were trained to aid the researcher in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. They included students and employees from a local retailer. The latter group

of fieldworkers were remunerated for their efforts. Fieldworkers delivered questionnaires by hand to individual respondents after ascertaining whether the respondents complied with the criteria set for inclusion in the study. Fieldworkers collected the questionnaires personally to check for the completeness of the questionnaire and whether questions were answered according to the instructions (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:258-259).

A total number of 216 questionnaires was collected between February and April 2006.

4.7 DATA-ANALYSIS

4.7.1 Coding and capturing of the data

Open-ended responses were written down and placed in categories as identified during the exploration of literature. During the construction of the questionnaire, coding categories were developed for the closed-ended questions and scaled questions to facilitate the processing of the data. Open-ended and closed-ended responses were edge-coded after all questionnaires had been returned. Edge-coding means that codes were written in the appropriate spaces provided in the outside margin of each page of the questionnaire, for the different attributes of variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:415). The edge-coded questionnaires were used for data capturing.

The data was captured by the data-capturing division of the University of Pretoria.

The data was captured by the data-capturing division of the University of Pretoria. SAS and BMDP (statistical software packages) were used for data analysis.

To prevent data-processing error, two types of data “cleaning” were done, namely possible-code cleaning and contingency cleaning. Processed data was checked to ensure that only those codes assigned to particular attributes – possible codes – appeared in the data file (possible-code cleaning). Contingency cleaning was done to confirm that only those cases that should have data on a particular variable actually had such data (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:39-52; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:417-418). Data errors due to incorrect coding and reading errors were rectified.

4.7.2 Operationalisation

Table 4.5 indicates the objectives and subsequent sub-objectives for this study, along with the questions and the types of statistical measurements used.

TABLE 4.5: OPERATIONALISATION IN TERMS OF OBJECTIVES AND SUB-OBJECTIVE, QUESTIONS AND STATISTICAL METHODS

OBJECTIVES AND SUB-OBJECTIVES	QUESTIONS (V = Variable)	STATISTICAL METHODS
Objective 1 **To explore the nature of the performance failure that caused consumers to be dissatisfied with major electrical household appliances**		
Sub-objective 1.1 To explore the functional/symbolic performance failure causing consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major electrical household appliances	Section B: Question 4.1 - 4.2 (V11-V13 +V14-V23)	Frequency tables (SAS) Factor analysis (reliability for each factor was determined with Cronbach's alpha) (BMDP)
Sub-objective 1.2 To describe the association between demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) and the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section A: Questions 1 - 4, 6 (V2 - V5, V7) Section B: Question 4.2 (V14-V23)	ANOVA (p-value significant on 5% level) (SAS)
Sub-objective 1.3 To describe consumers' degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section B: Question 7 (V26)	Frequency analysis (SAS) z-test for equal proportions (p-value significant on 5% level)
Objective 2 **To describe the nature of, and the reasons for, dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances**		
Sub-objective 2.1 To describe the types of consumer complaint behaviour responses that dissatisfied consumers engage in concerning their dissatisfaction with the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section C: Question 1 - 10 (V37, V46, V52, V58, V64, V72 V79, V86, V93, V101)	Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis (SAS)
Sub-objective 2.2 To describe dissatisfied consumer's reasons for engaging in consumer complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section C: Question 1 -10 (V38-V45, V47-V51, V53-V57, V59-V63, V65-V70, V73-V78, V80-V84, V87-V91, V94-V99, V102-V107)	Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis (SAS) z-test for equal proportions (p-value significant on 5% level)
Objective 3 **To describe the relationship between causal attribution and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances**		
Sub-objective 3.1 To describe dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section B: Question 8 (V27)	Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis (SAS)

OBJECTIVES AND SUB-OBJECTIVES	QUESTIONS (V = Variable)	STATISTICAL METHODS
Sub-objective 3.2 To describe the causal dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section B: Question 9 (V28-V36) Section A: Questions 1 - 4, 6 (V2 - V5, V7)	Uni-variate analysis (SAS) Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) one-way ANOVA (p-value significant on 5% level) (BMDP)
Sub-objective 3.3 To describe the association between the dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture)	Section B: Question 9 (V28-V36)	K-W one-way ANOVA (p-value significant on 5% level) (BMDP)
Sub-objective 3.4 To describe the association between the causal dimensions (i.e. locus, stability and controllability) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section B: Question 9 (V28-V36) Section C: Question 1 -10 (V37, V46, V52, V58, V64, V72, V79, V86, V93, V101)	K-W one-way ANOVA (p-value significant on 5% level) (BMDP)
Sub-objective 3.5 To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers' anger reactions concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and consumer complaint behaviour	Section B: Question 6 (V25) Section C: Question 1 – 10 (V37, V46, V52, V58, V64, V72, V79, V86, V 3, V101)	z-test for equal proportions Chi-square test (p-value significant on 5% level)
Objective 4 **To describe the relationship between specific consumer-related variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances**		
Sub-objective 4.1 To describe the relationship between demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section A: Questions 1 - 4, 6 (V2 - V5, V7) Section C: Questions 1 - 10 (V37, V46, V52, V58, V64, V72, V79, V86, V93, V101)	Chi-square test (p-value significant on 5% level)
Objective 5 **To describe the relationship between product-specific variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances**		
Sub-objective 5.1 To describe dissatisfied consumers' perceptions of the severity of the performance failure of major electrical household appliances	Section B: Question 5 (V24)	Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis (SAS) z-test for equal proportions (p-value significant on 5% level)
Sub-objective 5.2 To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers' perception of the severity of the functional/symbolic performance failure concerning major electrical household appliances and their consumer complaint behaviour	Section B: Question 5 (V24) Section C: Question 1 - 10 (V37, V46, V52, V58, V64, V72, V79, V86, V93, V101)	Chi-square test (p-value significant on 5% level)

4.7.3 Explanation of statistical methods

The statistical methods are explained in the sequence indicated in Table 4.5. However, no explanation is provided for the calculation of frequencies and frequencies analysis as it is considered to be self-explanatory. At this point, it should be noted that the 5% level of significance was used throughout this study. This means that the probability of wrongly rejecting the null hypothesis should be less than 5%. The p-value was used to decide whether to accept or reject the statistical hypothesis (Trochim, 2005:207).

4.7.3.1 Factor analysis

Factor analysis refers to a range of techniques that aim to describe a larger number of variables by means of a smaller set of composite variables (so-called “factors”) and to aid with the interpretation of the data (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:216; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:472-475). For the purpose of this study, common factor analysis was applicable. Common factor analysis focuses on the common variance shared among the original variables and seeks to identify underlying dimensions (known as “common factors”). To the extent that subsets among original variables reflect a common core (i.e. are measuring the same underlying construct), the derived dimensions should be meaningful and interpretable. The original variables can then be described in terms of the common underlying dimensions. Common factor analysis is particularly useful in the context of measurement development, as it enables an assessement of the dimensionality of a multi-item scale (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:216). In this study, oblique rotation (i.e. direct quartimin rotation) was used. A Scree test was used to determine the number of factors to be extracted. The decision rule for including or excluding items from factors was .03. Cronbach’s alpha is the most common estimate of the internal consistency or reliability of items in a scale. A widely accepted assumption in the social science is that alpha should be .70 or higher for a set of items to be considered a scale (Statistics Solutions: Factor Analysis).

4.7.3.2 Z-Test for equal proportions

In this study, the z-test was used to evaluate equality of proportions.

4.7.3.3 Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Analysis of variance is used to analyse the association between categorically independent variables and the respective continuous dependent variables. An ANOVA tests the difference between the means of two or more groups/populations (Statistics Solutions: ANOVA). In this study, an ANOVA was performed to determine the association between demographic variables and the score on the factor identified in the factor analysis.

4.7.3.4 Chi-square significance test

The chi-square test is probably the most widely used nonparametric test of significance for nominal data. Chi-square is also useful in cases of one-sample analyses, two independent samples or *k* independent samples.

4.7.3.5 Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The K-W one-way ANOVA is used to compare an ordinal variable across three or more independent groups. Note that in statistical terms, the different groups are considered to be different samples of respondents. The relatively small sample size of some of the groups justifies the use of the K-W one-way ANOVA.

In this study, the K-W one-way ANOVA test was performed to compare the mean scores for Russell's Locus, Stability and Controllability dimensions (as the ordinal variable) across the different groups of respondents who selected a particular reason for the product failure (the independent groups). The K-W one-way ANOVA test was also used to compare the mean scores for uni-variate analysis of Russell's Locus, Stability and Controllability dimensions (as the ordinal variable) across the different groups of respondents for the different categories of demographic variables (the independent groups). Additionally, the K-W one-way ANOVA test was performed to compare the mean scores for Russell's Locus, Stability and Controllability dimensions (as the ordinal variable) across the different groups of respondents who engaged in particular complaint action(s) or not (i.e. the "yes" vs. the "no" groups of respondents for the different complaint actions) (the independent groups).

4.8 QUALITY OF THE DATA

4.8.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a specific measurement accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:122). Validity can be regarded as a criterion that is applicable in the whole research process, i.e. conceptualisation, operationalisation, sampling, data-collection and the analysis and interpretation of data (Mouton, 1996:109-111). In terms of Mouton's (1996:111-112) validity framework, the dimensions of validity include: theoretical validity, measurement validity and inferential validity. The validity of measurements (measurement validity) can be determined by using standard yardsticks including face validity, content validity and construct validity (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:122-124; Delport, 2005:160-162).

4.8.1.1 Theoretical validity

Methodological strategies, such as doing a thorough literature review and defining concepts in a clear manner, were employed to guarantee the theoretical validity of concepts (Mouton, 1996:111). A thorough review of the literature was done to become acquainted with established theories that have been successfully applied in similar research. The expectancy disconfirmation model (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983), Weiner's (1986) attribution theory and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour were integrated into a theoretical framework to guide the research. Weiner's (1986) attributional analysis of achievement behaviour was chosen above other attributional theories, since it is the most comprehensive theoretical model about the influences of attributions on cognitive processes, affect and behaviour. Additionally, Weiner's work has guided the theoretical analysis and empirical investigation of various phenomena with an attribution framework (Folkes, 1984, 1988; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:54, 56; Försterling, 2001:109). Day and Landon's taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour has achieved wide acceptance in research on consumer complaint behaviour and has been used as base model for many complaint behaviour studies (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). Consumers' reasons for engaging in the particular complaint actions were obtained from the relevant literature. The central concepts of consumer dissatisfaction, attributional processing, and consumer complaint behaviour were clarified and unambiguously explicated in terms of theoretical definitions found in the literature.

4.8.1.2 Measurement validity

During the process of operationalisation, a measuring instrument is developed. The predominant epistemological criterion is measurement validity. The dimensions of measurement validity include face validity, content validity and construct validity. Other methodological strategies such as scale validation and pilot testing can be employed to ensure the measurement validity of the measuring instrument (Mouton, 1996:110, 111).

Face validity does not refer to "what an instrument actually measures but rather to what it appears to measure". Although face validity is not technically a form of validation, it is a desirable characteristic of a measuring instrument (Delport, 2005:161). In the case of the questionnaire, the indicators were structured so that they appeared to be relevant measurements of the variables. The questions clearly related to the performance failure of major electrical household appliances, attributions for product failures, causal dimensions and consumer complaint behaviour.

Content validity is concerned with the representivity or sampling adequacy of the content (topics or items) of an instrument. One has to determine whether the instrument contains an adequate sample of items representing the concept and whether the instrument really measures the specific concept (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:123; Delport, 2005:161). Concerning this study, the denotations of the central concepts were accurate indicators of the connotations of concepts. Additionally, the items in the questionnaire related to the sub-objectives of the study.

Construct validity refers to the extent to which a measuring instrument successfully measures the relevant construct and not something else (Mouton, 1996:128). Construct validity is concerned with the meaning of the instrument, i.e. what it is measuring and why it operates the way it does (Delport, 2005:161). Threats to construct validity include "inadequate pre-operational explication of constructs" and "mono-operation bias" (Mouton, 1996:128). To establish construct validity, the meaning of the construct must be understood and the proposition that the theory makes about the relationships between this and other constructs must be identified (Delport, 2005:161). The constructs for this study were precisely explicated as already discussed in the paragraph of theoretical validity. Additionally, multiple indicators were used to measure the constructs (of performance failure and causal dimension) to prevent mono-operation bias.

Previous studies have verified the validity of Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale as a measuring instrument (scale validation).

The questionnaire was also pilot-tested (Mouton, 1996:111).

4.8.1.3 Inferential validity

Inferential validity is related to the analysis and interpretation of the data. In this study, appropriate statistical techniques were used for specific levels of measurement. Inferences were drawn according to the principles of statistical inference. Conclusions (as the outcome of the analysis and data-interpretation) followed logically from the empirical evidence (Mouton, 1996:111).

4.8.2 Reliability

In general, reliability refers to the extent to which independent administration of the same instrument consistently yields the same results under comparable situations. "Reliability is primarily concerned not with *what* is being measured but with *how well* it is being measured" (Delport, 2005:163). Techniques to develop the reliability of measurements include: the use of established measurements and the training of fieldworkers (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:123). Potential sources of error that could result in the production of unreliable data include: researcher effects, participant effects and measuring instrument effects (Mouton & Marais, 1990:91; Mouton, 1996:144-155). In the context of this study, the term *researcher* refers to the researcher per se and the fieldworkers. The term *participants* refers to the respondents.

Russell's Causal Dimension Scale, which has proven to be a reliable and acceptable psychometric instrument (Weiner, 1986:112-114), was used to allow respondents to translate their causal attributions for the failure or poor performance of appliances into causal dimensions themselves. This was done to avoid what Russell called the "fundamental attribution research error", whereby attributions made by the subject are "translated" into causal dimensions by the researcher (Russell, 1982; Folkes, 1984; Russell *et al.*, 1987; Hewstone, 1989:33-34, 184). This prevented the researcher from making biased classifications of causes into causal dimensions, and so contributed to the reliability of the data (Mouton, 1996:111, 151-152).

Although respondents' memory decay, as a type of participant effect, posed a source of error in terms of the reliability of the data collected, the Critical Incident Technique was still used because its advantages outweighed the possible disadvantages (Mouton, 1996:153).

To prevent respondent bias, in terms of role selection effects, it was stated in the covering letter that the researcher was only interested in respondents' opinions and experiences and that there were no right or wrong answers to questions. Respondents were also assured of their anonymity (Mouton, 1996:153-54, 157).

The questionnaire was constructed bearing in mind the principles of questionnaire construction to counter the effect of measurement instrument effects on the reliability of the data (Mouton & Marais, 1990:91). The questionnaire used a variety of response systems or question types, and an adapted version of Russell's Causal Dimension Scale to obtain the desired information. In the Likert-type scale (to determine the different types of performance failures) and the adapted version of Russell's Causal Dimension Scale, multiple indicators of variables were used, contributing to the reliability of the data (Delport, 2005:163).

Fieldworkers were trained and were given clear instructions concerning the aims of the study (Mouton, 1996:159) to ensure the reliability of data.

4.9 DATA PRESENTATION

The raw data was statistically analysed. The data conversion is available in hard copy (researcher's files) as well as an electronic copy at the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria.

The results of the study are presented in Chapter 5. Firstly, the results are described in terms of the demographic variables relevant for this study. Additionally, data that do not necessarily form part of the objectives for this study, including the type of appliances causing the most dissatisfaction, the brand names and purchase dates of dissatisfactory appliances are also reported on. Next, the results for the objectives and sub-objectives are described. The sequence of the presentation follows from objectives 1 to 5. This means that the data is not presented in the particular sequence of the conceptual framework nor of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of quantitative data analysis is to reduce (i.e. categorise, order, manipulate and summarise) data to an intelligible and interpretable form, so that the relations of research problems can be studied, tested and conclusions can be drawn (Kruger, De Vos, Fouché & Venter, 2005:218). For the purpose of the analysis of the data for this study, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics were used to describe specific observations by presenting quantitative data in a manageable form (such as in tables and graphs, and the calculation of numerical summaries such as frequencies, averages, medians, percentages and ranges). Inferential statistics were used to move beyond the mere description of specific observations in the sense that it (descriptive statistics) was used to make inferences about the population from which the sample observations were drawn (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:64-65; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:458).

In this chapter, the data is analysed according to the objectives and sub-objectives to obtain answers to the research problem decided on for this research project. This implies that the research results are not necessarily discussed in the sequence of the conceptual framework or that of the questionnaire. The analysis starts with a description of the demographic characteristics and other descriptive characteristics of the sample. Next, the analysis of the objectives and sub-objectives follows.

For the purpose of this study, the data is expressed in terms of frequencies and percentages where respondents had to select only one response option from a list of response options provided by the researcher. However, it should be noted that the data is expressed in terms of the number of responses obtained where respondents had to select more (multiple) responses from the list provided. All the percentages are shown to two decimal places in the graphical representations and the text.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND OTHER DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

In the ensuing sections, the sample is firstly described in terms of demographic characteristics and secondly in terms of other descriptive characteristics that did not necessarily form part of the objectives for the study, but were included in the questionnaire. The demographic characteristics refer to objective characteristics, including gender, age, level of education, monthly household income, cultural grouping and residential area. The other descriptive characteristics include the type of major electrical household appliances causing the most dissatisfaction, brand names of dissatisfactory appliances and purchase dates of appliances.

5.2.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender, age, level of education, monthly household income, cultural grouping and residential area.

Figure 5.1 shows the gender distribution of respondents.

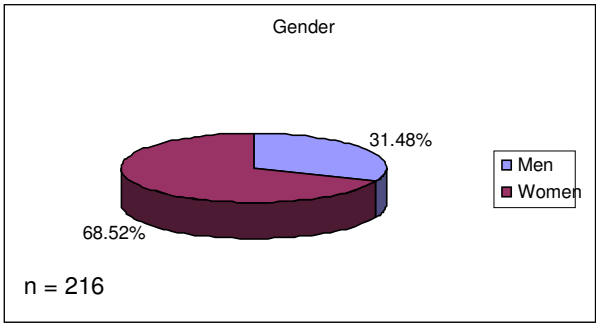

FIGURE 5.1: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY GENDER

It is clear that about two thirds of the respondents (68.52%) were female, while nearly a third of respondents (31.48%) were male.

The age distribution of respondents is given in Figure 5.2.

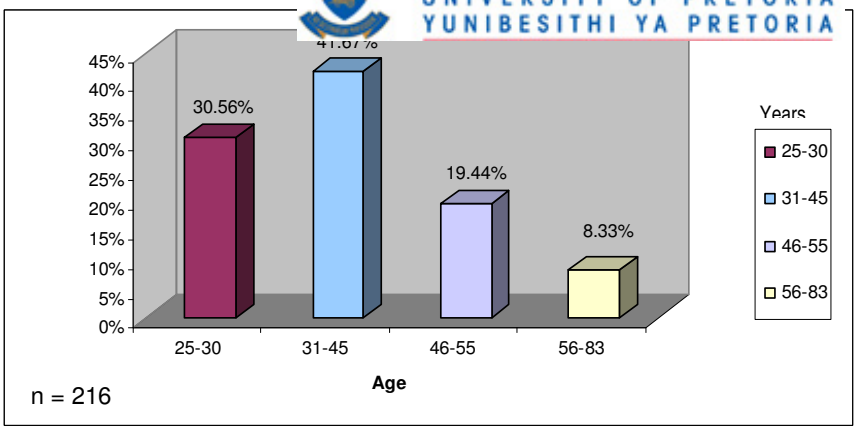

FIGURE 5.2: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY AGE

A total of 30.56% of the respondents were 25-30 years of age and 41.67% of the respondents were 31-45 years old. Whereas a total of 19.44% of the respondents were 46-55 years old, 8.33% of the respondents were 56-83 years of age. When one combines the age category of 25-30 years with the category of 31-45 years, it is evident that the majority or 72.23% [30.56% + 41.67%] of the respondents belonged to this particular group. When one combines the age category of 46-55 years with the category of 56-83 years, it is clear that 27.77% [19.44% +8.33%] of the respondents fell in this specific age group.

Figure 5.3 shows the highest level of education of respondents.

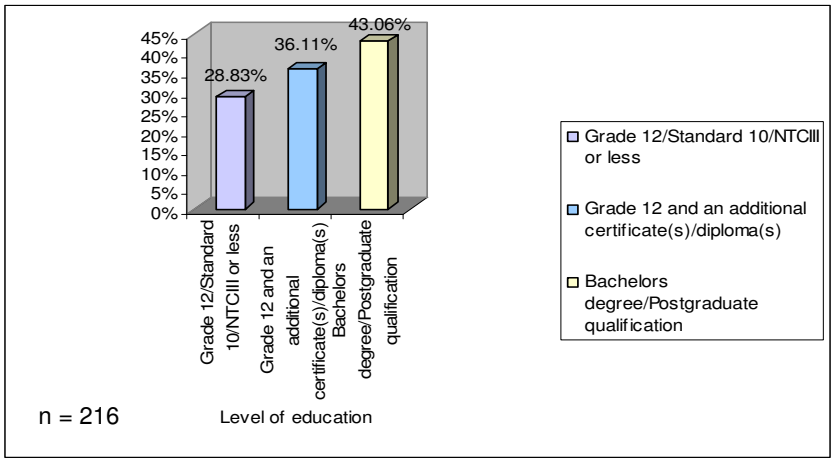

FIGURE 5.3: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Whereas a total of 20.83% of the respondents' highest level of education was Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less, 36.11% of the respondents had Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s). A total of 43.06% of the sample held either a Bachelors degree or a post-graduate qualification.

The monthly household income of respondents is shown in Figure 5.4.

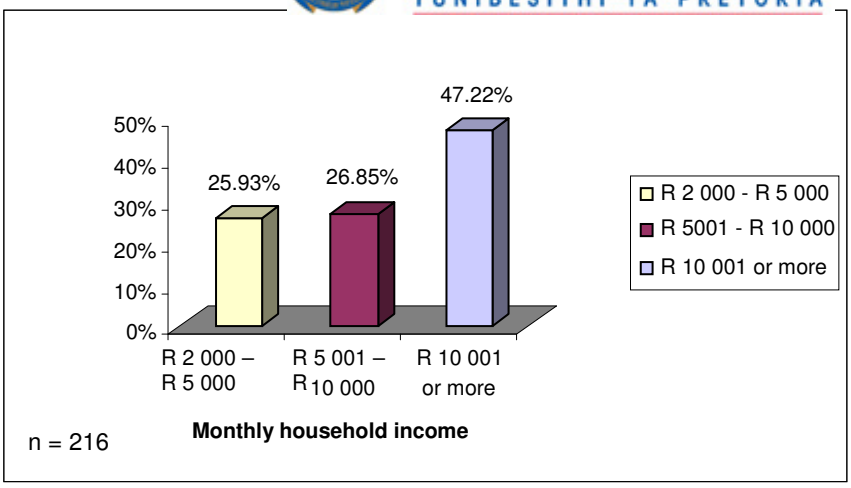

FIGURE 5.4: MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION

It is clear that 25.93% and 26.85% of the respondents fell in the monthly household income categories of R 2 000 – R 5 000 and R 5 001 – R 10 000 respectively. A total of 47.22% of the respondents belonged to the monthly household income category of R 10 001 or more.

Figure 5.5 indicates the cultural group distribution of the respondents. It is important to note that the number of responses from the Indian (2 respondents) and Coloured (4 respondents) groupings was combined with the number of responses from the White (144 respondents) grouping to facilitate statistical calculations. (Generally, white, Indian and coloured South Africans still have a higher level of education compared to black South Africans). The combined group was labelled “Caucasian”, while the other major cultural grouping was labelled “Black” (66 respondents).

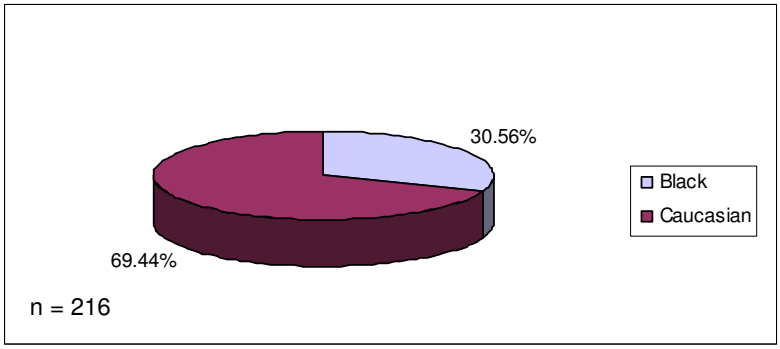

FIGURE 5.5 DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY CULTURAL GROUP

About two thirds of the respondents (69.44%) were Caucasian, while nearly a third of the respondents (30.56%) were black.

Table 5.1 shows the distribution of respondents’ residential areas. Information in this regard is supplied for the sake of completeness and to confirm that the respondents lived in the

greater Pretoria area (Tshwane). No further statistical analysis was conducted concerning the respondents' residential areas.

TABLE 5.1: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY SUBURB

Suburb	Frequency	Percentage
Akasia	1	0.46
Arcadia	11	5.09
Attridgeville	7	3.24
Brooklyn	5	2.31
Centurion	20	9.26
De Wilgers	2	0.93
Doornpoort	1	0.46
Doringkloof	1	0.46
Ekklesia	1	0.46
Elarduspark	1	0.46
Faerie Glen	10	4.63
Ga-rankuwa	4	1.85
Garsfontein	3	1.39
Gesina	1	0.46
Groenkloof	3	1.39
Hammanskraal	1	0.46
Hatfield	8	3.70
Hercules	1	0.46
Irene	1	0.46
Lotus Gardens	1	0.46
Lynnwood	6	2.78
Lynnwood Glen	5	2.31
Lynnwood Ridge	2	0.93
Lyttelton	2	0.93
Mabopane	4	1.85
Magalieskruin	1	0.46
Mamelodi	15	6.94
Menlo Park	6	2.78
Montana Park	1	0.46
Montana Park exts	2	0.93
Moreletapark	6	2.78
Muckleneuk	1	0.46
Murryfield	2	0.93
Newlands	5	2.31
Pretoria CBD	4	1.85
Pretoria North	9	4.17
Queenswood	3	1.39
Rietfontein	3	1.39
Rietondale	4	1.85
Rietvalleirand	1	0.46
Rooihuiskraal	4	1.85
Rosslyn	1	0.46
Salvokop	1	0.46
Saulsville	3	1.39
Silverton	2	0.93
Sinoville	3	1.39
Soshanguve	8	3.70
Synnyside	11	5.09
Valhalla	1	0.46
Villieria	1	0.46
Wapadrand	2	0.93
Waterkloof	6	2.78
Waterkloof Ridge	1	0.46
Waverley	2	0.93
Weavind Park	2	0.93
Wonderboom South	2	0.93
Woodhill	1	0.46
Total	216	100.00

In this study, respondents were selected in the pre-determined categories for gender, age, culture, level of education and average monthly household income of the target population. (Refer to Chapter 4, par. 4.4.2.) Additionally, respondents resided in various residential areas

of the Tshwane metropolitan area (city of Pretoria). It was decided that a sample size of 200 should be sufficient for analysing the data with the proposed techniques. (Refer to Chapter 4, par. 4.4.2.) Finally, 216 sample elements (respondents) were obtained.

5.2.2 Other descriptive characteristics

Respondents were asked to name only one major electrical household appliance that has caused them the most dissatisfaction during the last four years (Question 1, Section B – Addendum A). The results appear in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2: MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES, PURCHASED WITHIN THE LAST 4 YEARS, CAUSING THE MOST DISSATISFACTION

Major electrical household appliances	Frequency	Percentage
Refrigerator	38	17.59
Freezer	11	5.09
Combination fridge-freezer	15	6.94
Built-in oven	7	3.24
Built-in stove	12	5.56
Free-standing stove (plates plus oven combination)	23	10.65
Microwave oven	48	22.22
Washing machine: front loader	15	6.94
Washing machine: top loader	26	12.04
Tumble dryer	6	2.78
Dishwasher	15	6.94
Total	216	100.00

n = 216

It is evident from Table 5.2 that 22.22% of the respondents were the most dissatisfied with their microwave ovens, followed by 17.59% of the respondents with their refrigerators. When categorising the appliances in product classes, the following patterns emerged in terms of the categories of appliances causing the most dissatisfaction for the sample: cooling appliances 29.62% [refrigerators (17.59%) + freezers (5.09%) + combination fridge-freezers (6.94%)], microwave ovens 22.22%, laundry appliances 21.76% [front loading washing machines (6.94%) + top loading washing machines (12.04) + tumble dryers (2.78%)], cooking and baking appliances 19.45% [built-in ovens (3.24%) + built-in stoves (5.56%) + free-standing stoves (10.65%)] and dishwashers 6.94%.

Respondents were asked to indicate the purchase dates of appliances to allow the researcher to verify whether they (the respondents) complied with the prerequisite

concerning the purchase dates of appliances (Question 2, Section B – Addendum A). The results appear in Table 5.3.

TABLE 5.3: THE PURCHASE DATES OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES WITHIN THE LAST 4 YEARS

Purchase date	Frequency	Percentage
2002	69	31.95
2003	55	25.46
2004	44	20.37
2005+	48	22.22
Total	216	100.00

n = 216

Most of the appliances were purchased in 2002 (31.95%), compared to 25.46% in 2003, 20.37% in 2004 and 22.22% in 2005.

Respondents were not explicitly asked to indicate when they experienced dissatisfaction with their appliances. However, it is clear that 22.22% of the respondents experienced dissatisfaction with their major electrical household appliances in 2005 (implying that dissatisfaction was experienced within the first year of purchase). This obviously only provides a partial view of the number of respondents who experienced dissatisfaction during the first year of purchase, since the response format of the question does not allow one to determine when dissatisfaction was experienced for the remainder of the respondents. Nevertheless, it is quite alarming that such a high percentage of respondents experienced dissatisfaction with their appliances so soon after purchase, since appliances are supposed to operate faultlessly for much longer (i.e. they are regarded as consumer durables). For example, the lifespan for refrigerators has been estimated at 12-14 years, washing machines at 7-10 years, and microwave ovens at 8-10 years (Cooper, 1994).

Consumers' assessment of their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the actual performance of household appliances thus requires time compared to the immediate assessment of products that are quickly consumed (such as food items) (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). "Perhaps due to the complexity of appliances, problems may not appear until the product has been used for a period of time" (Richins, 1982).

It is also important to note that major electrical household appliances have product warranties, usually covering from one to two years, which might influence consumers' complaint behaviour as already mentioned in Chapter 4 under paragraph 4.5.1.

Respondents were also asked to name the brand name of the dissatisfactory appliance. The results are provided in Table 5.4.

TABLE 5.4: BRAND NAMES OF DISSATISFACTORY APPLIANCES

Brand name	Frequency	Percentage
Aim	9	4.19
AEG	5	2.33
Bauer	5	2.33
Bosch	9	4.19
Daewoo	1	0.47
Defy	51	23.72
Delongi	1	0.47
Fridge master	2	0.93
Fuchs-ware	1	0.47
Indesit	2	0.93
Kelvinator	24	11.16
LG	43	20.00
Microstar	1	0.47
Miele	1	0.47
Muller	2	0.93
Nu tec	1	0.47
Samsung	17	7.91
Sharp	7	3.26
Siemens	2	0.93
Singer	1	0.47
Speed Queen	23	10.70
Stay cool	2	0.93
Westpoint	3	1.40
Whirlpool (including KIC)	1	0.47
Uncertain	1	0.47
Total	215	100.00

n = 216 Frequency missing = 1

Table 5.4 shows that the majority (23.72%) of the respondents experienced the most dissatisfaction with appliances from Defy, followed by 20.00% of the respondents with LG. A total of 11.06% and 10.70% of the respondents were respectively the most dissatisfied with Kelvinator and Speed Queen. For the rest of the brand names mentioned by respondents, the response rate varied between 0.47% and 7.91%, creating the impression that the respondents were much less dissatisfied with these brand names compared to Defy and LG, and to a lesser degree with Kelvinator and Speed Queen. It should be noted that brand names such as LG, Defy, Kelvinator and Speed Queen are generally very popular amongst the South African public. Additionally, appliance manufacturers provide comprehensive product ranges for these particular brands compared to some of the lesser-known brands. Thus, it might be that predominantly more respondents mainly purchased well-known appliances that they trust (Defy followed by LG, Kelvinator, Speed Queen), falsely creating the notion that the respondents were more dissatisfied with these brand names compared to the other brand names indicated in Table 5.4.

5.3 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 1

Objective 1: To explore the nature of the performance failure that caused consumers to be dissatisfied with major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 1.1 To explore the functional/symbolic performance failure causing consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major electrical household appliances

5.3.1 Analysis of open question

Respondents were asked to describe what happened/went wrong concerning the performance failure of their major electrical household appliances in the form of an open-ended question (Question 4.1, Section B – Addendum A). The responses were analysed in terms of the different performance dimensions listed in Addendum A. Consequently, the data is expressed in terms of the number of responses obtained (whereas 216 respondents answered the question, 317 responses were obtained concerning the different performance dimensions). Information in this regard appears in Table 5.5.

TABLE 5.5: DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT HAPPENED/WENT WRONG IN TERMS OF INDICATORS FOR FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PRODUCT PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS

Performance dimensions	Indicators	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 317
Functional Performance	Unusual performance/ functioning in terms of intended end-use	167	52.68
	Failure/breakdown of appliance or some component(s) thereof	87	27.44
	Inconvenience in operating the appliances (physical discomfort, waste of time and energy etc.)	20	6.31
	Inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance	6	1.89
	Insufficient durability	31	9.87
Symbolic performance	Lack of sensory pleasure, or sensory dissatisfaction	1	0.32
	Lack of an emotionally pleasurable experience / emotional dissatisfaction	5	1.58
	Total responses	317	100.00

n = 216

n1 = total number of responses

Proportionately more responses were obtained for the functional performance dimension compared to the symbolic performance dimension, indicating more problems concerning the functional performance of major electrical household appliances compared to the symbolic performance thereof. Unusual product performance/functioning in terms of the intended end-

use (52.68 % of the responses) and failure/breakdown of the appliance or some component(s) thereof (27.44% of the responses) were the two major functional product performance categories experienced. Relatively few responses indicated inconvenience experienced in operating (6.31%) and maintaining/caring (1.89%) for dissatisfactory appliances. Only 9.87% responses were obtained for insufficient durability. Hardly any responses (1.90%) were obtained for product problems relating to the symbolic performance of appliances.

The open question was asked to facilitate respondents' recollection of what went wrong concerning the performance failure of their major electrical household appliances. The answer to this question is essential as it forms the basis for respondents' responses to questions 4.1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

5.3.2 Exploratory factor analysis of functional/symbolic performance failure

Exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine whether respondents perceived the functional and symbolic performance failure (dimensions) of major electrical household appliances differently.

Factor analysis is a data reduction technique for identifying the internal structure of a set of variables. Common factor analysis focuses explicitly on the interrelationships among the original variables and seeks to describe them in terms of a common underlying dimension; thus, the focus is on explaining the patterns of relationships among the original variables by means of a factor structure (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:216; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:472-475).

After exploration of the literature concerning product failure, it was decided that the performance failure of major electrical household appliances manifests in functional and symbolic performance dimensions. Bearing this in mind, ten items (statements/variables) concerning the functional and symbolic performance of major electrical household appliances, were compiled. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with these (ten) statements by using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = "definitely agree", 2 = "agree", 3 = "uncertain", 4 = "disagree" and 5 = "definitely disagree") (Question 4.2, Section B – Addendum A).

Responses to the 10 items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis using direct Quartimin Rotation to weed out those variables that fail to show high correlations. Whereas high factor loadings imply that items load highly on a factor/s, providing the most meaning to

the factor solution, low factor loadings imply that items do not load highly on a factor/s. It was expected that the variables of "the appliance broke down", "the appliance did not operate properly", "the appliance was a dud (unusual example of a poor product) from the start", "the appliance did not provide user convenience" and "the appliance required more maintenance and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition" would load highly in terms of functional product performance, and that the variables of "the appliance no longer reflected the image/identity I associated with my personal style", "the appliance no longer made me feel good about myself", "I did not enjoy using the appliance any longer", "the appliance no longer impressed me" and "the appliance no longer impressed other people" would load highly in terms of symbolic product performance factor. However, contrary to expectations, a Scree test suggested that only one factor could be extracted (labelled the combined functional and symbolic performance factor). To enhance the reliability of the scale, two items with low loadings (i.e. "the appliance broke down" and "the appliance did not operate properly") were eliminated (i.e. not included) when calculating the Cronbach's alpha. The resulting factor loadings, for the combined functional and symbolic performance factor, after the two items with low loadings were deleted, are indicated in Table 5.6.

TABLE 5.6: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE COMBINED FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FACTOR

Items	Factor loadings
The appliance was a dud (unusual example of a poor product) from the start	0.437
The appliance did not provide user convenience	0.384
The appliance required more maintenance and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition	0.467
The appliance no longer reflected the image/identity I associated with my personal style	0.705
The appliance no longer made me feel good about myself	0.645
I did not enjoy using the appliance any longer	0.698
The appliance no longer impressed me	0.739
The appliance no longer impressed other people	0.665

Percentage variance explained 36.82

Cronbach's alpha 0.8131

The Cronbach's alpha for the combined functional and symbolic factors is 0.81, which is good considering that 0.70 is the generally accepted cut-off value for being acceptable (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997:91).

The results of the factor analysis show that respondents did not differentiate between the functional and symbolic performance failures of appliances. Therefore, both the functional and symbolic failures were considered important in consumers' evaluation of the performance of their dissatisfactory appliances.

Sub-objective 1.2 To describe the association between demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) and the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

5.3.3. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine the association between demographic variables and the score on the combined functional and symbolic performance factor

As already discussed, the factor analysis concerning the respondents' perception of the functional and symbolic performance of appliances, resulted in a combined factor, that is, the combined functional and symbolic performance factor. (Refer to par. 5.3.2)

To investigate the association between the independent variables (gender, age, highest level of education, monthly household income and cultural group) and the dependent variable (score on the combined functional and symbolic performance factor), an ANOVA was performed. An ANOVA tests the difference between the means of two or more groups/populations. The results are shown in Table 5.7.

A score out of 5 was determined to indicate respondents' level of agreement/disagreement with the 8 statements (items) concerning the appliances performance in terms of the combined functional and symbolic factor (1 = "definitely agree", 2 = "agree", 3 = "uncertain", 4 = "disagree" and 5 = "definitely disagree") (Question 4.2, Section B – Addendum A). The ratings of the 8 items in the scale were added and divided by 8 for an average score.

TABLE 5.7: ANOVA TO DETERMINE THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND THE SCORE ON THE COMBINED FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FACTOR

Variables	Groups	n	Combined functional and symbolic performance factor		
			Mean	Std dev	p-value ANOVA
Gender	Male	68	2.84	0.76	0.0098*
	Female	148	2.60	0.85	
Age categories	25-30 years	66	2.68	0.82	0.9974
	31-45 years	90	2.67	0.90	
	46-55 years	42	2.64	0.81	
	56-83 years	18	2.75	0.62	
Highest level of education	Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less	45	2.31	0.79	0.0599
	Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s)	78	2.66	0.82	
	Bachelors degree or a Postgraduate qualification	93	2.86	0.81	
Monthly household income	R 2 000 – R 5 000	56	2.38	0.79	0.9523
	R 5 001 – R 10 000	58	2.59	0.82	
	R 10 001 or more	102	2.88	0.81	
Cultural group	Black	66	2.25	0.72	0.0001*
	Caucasian	150	2.86	0.81	

A mean score of 1 indicates that respondents definitely agreed that the appliance's combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation for product performance.

A mean score of 2 indicates that the respondents agreed that the appliance's combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation for product performance.

A mean score of 3 indicates that respondents are uncertain whether the appliance's combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation for product performance.

A mean score of 4 indicates that respondents disagreed that the appliance's combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation (i.e. performed according to expectation).

A mean score of 5 indicates that respondents definitely disagreed that the appliance's combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation (i.e. definitely performed according to expectation).

Mean value and standard deviation for the total group (n = 216) is 2.67 and 0.83 respectively.

* Significant on the 5% level

In the following discussion, the combined functional and symbolic performance of respondents' appliances is compared with their initial expectations for product performance. (Refer to Chapter 2, par. 2.2.) It should be noted that respondents' initial expectations for product performance were not measured formally in this study. However, previous research findings concerning consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, in general, are unambiguously

clear that consumers evaluate product performance according to their specific expectations for product performance (Barlow & Møller, 1996). The latter would also apply to this study.

The total group of respondents (n = 216) was uncertain about the combined functional and symbolic performance failure of their appliances (mean value = 2.67), implying that they were undecided whether their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance.

Men were relatively uncertain about the combined functional and symbolic performance failure of their appliances (mean value = 2.84), implying that they were undecided whether their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance. Females were less uncertain about their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance failure (mean value = 2.60), implying that they were less undecided; for them, their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation for product performance. Considering the results of the ANOVA, a significant difference exists between males and females regarding their post-purchase evaluation of their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance in terms of their initial expectations concerning product performance (p-value = 0.0098). (Females were significantly more certain about their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance failure than men).

The respondents from the 65 to 83 years age group were relatively uncertain about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances (mean value = 2.75), implying that they were undecided whether their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance. The respondents from the 25 to 30 years age, 31 to 45 years age group, and 46 to 55 years age group, were less uncertain about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances (respective mean values: 2.68, 2.67 and 2.64), implying that these age groups were less undecided whether their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance. However, no significant differences exist between the various age groups regarding their evaluation of their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance in terms of their initial expectations concerning product performance respectively (p-value = 0.9974).

The respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group agreed about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances (mean value = 2.31), implying that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation for product performance. The respondents from the Grade 12 and an

additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group were less certain about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances (respective mean values: 2.66 and 2.86), implying that they were undecided whether their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectation(s) for product performance. However, no significant differences exist between the, level of education groups regarding their evaluation of their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance in terms of their initial expectations concerning product performance respectively (p-values = 0.0599).

The respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group agreed about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances (mean value = 2.38), implying that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than expected. The respondents from the R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group and the R 10 001 or more household income group were less certain about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances (respective mean values: 2.59 and 2.88), implying that they were undecided whether their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance. However, no significant differences exist between the various monthly household income groups regarding their evaluation of their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance in terms of their initial expectations concerning product performance respectively (p-value = 0.9523).

The black respondents agreed about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances, implying that their appliance's combined functional and symbolic performance was lower than their initial expectation for product performance (mean value = 2.25). The Caucasians were relatively uncertain concerning the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances (mean value = 2.86), implying that they were undecided whether their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance. A significant difference exist between the blacks and the Caucasians regarding their evaluation of their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance in terms of their initial expectations concerning product performance (p-value = 0.0001). (Black respondents were mere certain about the combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances than Caucasian respondents).

Sub-objective 1.3 To describe consumers' degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of household appliances

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of dissatisfaction experienced when their appliances performed faulty or poorly (Question 7, Section B – Addendum A). The results are summarised in Table 5.8.

TABLE 5.8: LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION EXPERIENCED WHEN THE APPLIANCES PERFORMED FAULTY OR POORLY

Level of dissatisfaction experienced	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage n = 215	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Slightly dissatisfied	13	6.05	23.72	0.0001*
Moderately dissatisfied	38	17.67		
Very dissatisfied	112	52.09	76.28	
Extremely dissatisfied	52	24.19		
Total	215	100.00	100.00	

n = 216 Frequency missing = 1

* Significant on the 5% level

A total of 6.05% of the respondents were slightly dissatisfied and 17.67% of the respondents were moderately dissatisfied with the faulty/poor performance of their specific appliances. It is clear that 52.09% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 24.19% of the respondents experienced extreme dissatisfaction concerning the faulty/poor performance of their specific appliances. When combining the categories of slightly dissatisfied with moderately dissatisfied (6.05% + 17.67%) and very dissatisfied with extremely dissatisfied (52.09% + 24.19%), it is evident that 23.72% and 76.28% respondents fell within these two larger categories respectively. The results of the z-test for equal proportions indicate that a significant difference exists between these proportions (p-value = 0.0001) (refer to Table 5.8). Significantly more respondents were very to extremely dissatisfied compared to the respondents who were slightly to moderately dissatisfied. The majority of the respondents' (76.28%) level of dissatisfaction varied between very to extremely dissatisfied, creating the expectation that respondents would engage in formal complaint action in addition to private complaint action. The literature on complaint behaviour confirms, however, that complaint action is not necessarily determined by the level of dissatisfaction experienced, but that other intermediate factors also have a major role to play (Singh, 1988; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Morel *et al.,* 1997).

5.4 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 2

Objective 2: To describe the nature of, and the reasons for, dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 2.1 To describe the types of consumer complaint behaviour responses that dissatisfied consumers engage in concerning their dissatisfaction with the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Respondents were asked whether they took any action (i.e. talked to friends and family, used another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer, contacted the retailer/manufacturer/a repair service/a consumer protection organisation, wrote a complaint letter and/or contacted a legal representative), or no action at all (Question 1, Section C – Addendum A). The results are shown in Table 5.9.

TABLE 5.9: ACTIONS TAKEN VERSUS NO ACTION TAKEN

Action/no action	Frequency	Percentage
Took action	173	80.09
Took no action	43	19.91
Total	216	100.00

n = 216

Concerning the action versus no action response options, the results indicate that 80.09% of the respondents took action, and 19.91% respondents did not take any action.

Where respondents took action (n = 173), they were also asked to indicate the type of actions that they engaged in terms of Day and Landon's (1977) private and public action categories. Questions 2 to 10, Section C (Addendum A) determined whether respondents took part in private action (i.e. talked to friends and family, used another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer) and/or public action (i.e. contacting the retailer/manufacturer/a repair service/a consumer protection organisation, writing a complaint letter and/or contacting a legal representative) or not. For each of these questions, respondents had to indicate "yes" or "no".

The results for the types of public action and private action appear in Table 5.10.

TABLE 5.10: ACTIONS TAKEN IN TERMS OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ACTION CATEGORIES

Types of private and/or public action taken	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 520	Total responses	Percentage n1 = 520	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Private action					
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	154	29.62	293	56.35	0.0036*
Decided to use another brand name	80	15.38			
Stopped supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased	59	11.35			
Public action					
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs/a replacement/a refund)	110	21.15	227	43.65	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	56	10.77			
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	55	10.58			
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	3	0.58			
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	2	0.38			
Contacted a legal representative	1	0.19			
Total	520	100.00	520	100.00	

n = 173 (number of respondents who took action)
n1 = total number of responses

* Significant on the 5% level

While 173 respondents did take action, the number of responses is shown as 520, since respondents could select more than one response option.

It is evident from Table 5.10 that the respondents were mostly inclined to tell their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the faulty/poor appliance. One hundred and fifty four (154) of the 173 respondents (29.62% of the responses) indicated that they engaged in negative word-of-mouth concerning the faulty/poor appliance. It is, however, also clear that 110 of the 173 respondents (21.15% of the responses) decided to seek redress by contacting the retailer/manufacturer. Eighty (80) of the 173 respondents (15.38% of the responses) decided to use another brand name, and 59 of the 173 respondents (11.35% of the responses) stopped supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased. Fifty six (56) of the 173 (10.77% of the responses) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, and 55 of the 173 respondents (10.58% of the responses) contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer. Hardly any

respondents contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative.

When grouping the indicators for private action and public action respectively, 56.35% of the 520 responses indicate that private (hidden) action was taken, and 43.64% of the 520 responses indicate that public action was taken (refer to Table 5.10). The result of the z-test for equal proportions suggests that significant differences exist between the number of responses for private versus public action ($p = 0.0036$). Respondents took significantly more private action (Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, Decided to use another brand name, Stopped supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased) than public action. Respondents who took public action, rather contacted retailers/manufacturers to obtain redress or to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, and to a lesser degree contacted repair services, than to take more formal public action such as contacting a consumer protection organisation/department, writing a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website, or contacting a legal representative.

Sub-objective 2.2 To describe dissatisfied consumers' reasons for engaging in consumer complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Where respondents indicated "yes" to taking no action or taking part in private and/or public actions, they were asked to provide the reasons for the particular action/s (Questions 1 to 10, Section C [follow-up questions] – Addendum A). Respondents had to cross as many response options as applicable and to provide other reasons if they were relevant.

By looking at the cognitive and emotional qualities underlying the reasons for consumers' complaint behaviour, one can determine whether the particular complaint actions were driven by mainly cognitive reasoning, emotional reasoning, or a combination of both types of reasoning. Reasoning (ways of thinking) in this sense refers to mental processes.

In the following paragraphs, consumers' reasons for engaging in particular complaint actions are described. Information in this regard appears in Tables 5.11-5.12, 5.14, 5.16, 5.18-5.19, 5.21-5.24. Additionally, these reasons are explained in terms of the cognitive and emotional types of reasoning underlying these reasons. Where sufficient responses were obtained, z-tests for equal proportions were performed (where applicable) to determine whether significant differences exist between the emotional versus the cognitive types of reasoning employed. Information in this regard appears in Tables 5.13, 5.15, 5.17, and 5.20.

Table 5.11 indicates respondents' reasons for not taking any action (Question 1, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.11: REASONS FOR NOT TAKING ANY ACTION

Reasons for no action	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 62
I did not think it was worth the time and effort/hassle to take action	26	41.94
I did not think I could get anyone to do anything about it	1	1.61
I wanted to do something about it but never got around to it	10	16.13
I did not know what I could do about it	6	9.68
I did not know where I could get help	1	1.61
The appliance's guarantee had expired	15	24.19
I thought the same problem would surface again even if the faulty component were to be replaced	1	1.61
I thought the problem would go away once I treated it in the correct manner	2	3.23
Total	62	100.00

n = 43
n1 = total number of responses

While 43 respondents did not take any action, 62 responses were obtained since respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. It is clear that 41.94% responses were obtained for "I did not think it was worth the time and effort/hassle to take action" and 24.19% responses were obtained for "the appliance's guarantee had expired". A total of 16.13% responses were obtained for "I wanted to do something but never got around it" and 9.68% responses were obtained for "I did not know what I could do about it". Only 1.61% responses was obtained for "I did not know where I could get help" and for "I did not think I could get anyone to do anything about it", respectively. Where respondents could provide their own reasons, only 1.61% responses were obtained for "I thought the same problem would surface again even if the faulty component were to be replaced". Additionally, only 3.23% responses were obtained for "I thought the problem would go away once I treated the appliance in the correct manner".

The reasons for taking no action were directed by cognitive reasoning only. It should be noted that respondents could provide other reasons when applicable, but no additional reasons related to emotional reasoning were provided.

Table 5.12 shows respondents' reasons for telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (Question 2, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.12: REASONS FOR TELLING FRIENDS, FAMILY AND/OR ACQUAINTANCES ABOUT THE BAD EXPERIENCE

Reasons for negative word-of-mouth	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 234
To warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer	73	31.20
To feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer	81	34.62
To get rid of my anger/frustration	67	38.63
To see what their opinion was about taking further action	4	1.71
To warn them to strictly follow the appliance's prescribed instructions	4	1.71
To find out if any of them have had a similar problem	5	2.14
Total	234	100.00

n = 154
n1 = total number of responses

While a total of 154 respondents told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, 234 responses were obtained since respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. It is clear that 34.62% responses were obtained for wanting "to feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer". A total of 38.63% responses were obtained for wanting "to get rid of my anger/frustration" and 31.20% responses were obtained for wanting "to warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer". Where respondents could provide their own reasons, only 1.71% responses were obtained for wanting "to see what their opinion was about taking further action", and wanting "to warn them to strictly follow the appliance's prescribed instructions", respectively. Only 2.14% responses were obtained for wanting "to find out if any of them have had a similar problem".

Table 5.13 shows the comparison of respondents' reasons for telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience in terms of the type of reasoning employed.

TABLE 5.13: COMPARISON OF REASONS FOR TELLING FRIENDS, FAMILY AND/OR ACQUAINTANCES ABOUT THE BAD EXPERIENCE IN TERMS OF THE TYPE OF REASONING EMPLOYED

Type of reasoning	Reasons for negative word-of-mouth	Number of responses	Total responses	Percentage n1 = 234	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Emotional reasoning	To feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer	81	148	63.25	< 0.0001*
	To get rid of my anger/frustration	67			
Cognitive reasoning	To warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer	73	86	36.75	
	To see what their opinion was about taking further action	4			
	To warn them to strictly follow the appliance's prescribed instructions	4			
	To find out if any of them have had a similar problem	5			
	Total	234	234	100.00	

n = 154
n1 = total number of responses
* Significant on the 5% level

The reasons "to feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer" and "to get rid of my anger/frustration" can be considered to be emotional reasoning. The remainder of the reasons can be considered to be cognitive reasoning. The reasons for telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience were directed by both cognitive and emotional types of reasoning. However, emotional reasoning was significantly more often employed compared to cognitive reasoning, as indicated by results of the z-test for equal proportions ($p < 0.0001$).

Table 5.14 shows respondents' reasons for using another brand name (Question 3, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.14: REASONS FOR USING ANOTHER BRAND NAME

Reasons for using another brand name	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 91
I considered the brand name not reliable anymore	76	83.52
To get rid of my anger/frustration	6	6.59
To punish/hurt the manufacturer	7	7.69
To choose a user-friendly product	1	1.10
I could afford a more expensive brand name	1	1.10
Total	91	100.00

n = 80 n1 = total number of responses

Although a total of 80 respondents decided to use another brand name, 91 responses were obtained since respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. A majority of 83.52% responses were obtained for "I considered brand name not reliable anymore". Only 6.59% responses were obtained for wanting "to get rid of my anger/frustration" and just 7.69% responses were obtained for wanting "to punish/hurt the manufacturer". Where respondents could provide their own reasons for using another brand name, only 1.10% responses were obtained for wanting to "choose a user-friendly product" and for "I could afford a more expensive brand name", respectively.

Table 5.15 shows the comparison of respondents' reasons for using another brand name in terms of the type of reasoning employed.

TABLE 5.15: COMPARISON OF REASONS FOR USING ANOTHER BRAND NAME IN TERMS OF THE TYPE OF REASONING EMPLOYED

Type of reasoning	Reasons for using another brand name	Number of responses	Total responses	Percentage n1 = 91	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Emotional reasoning	To get rid of my anger/frustration	6	13	14.29	<0.0001*
	To punish/hurt the manufacturer	7			
Cognitive reasoning	I considered the brand name not reliable anymore	76	78	85.71	
	To choose a user-friendly product	1			
	I could afford a more expensive brand name	1			
	Total	91	91	100.00	

n = 80
n1 = total number of responses

* Significant on the 5 % level

The reasons "to punish/hurt the manufacturer" and "to get rid of my anger/frustration" are considered to be emotional reasoning. The remainder of the reasons are considered to be cognitive reasoning. The reasons for using another brand name were directed by both cognitive and emotional reasoning. However, cognitive reasoning was significantly more often employed compared to emotional reasoning, as indicated by the results of the z-test for equal proportions ($p < 0.0001$).

Table 5.16 indicates respondents' reasons for not supporting the retailer (Question 4, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.16: REASONS FOR NOT SUPPORTING THE RETAILER

Reasons for not supporting the retailer	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 62
To punish/hurt the retailer	4	6.45
To get rid of my anger/frustration	4	6.45
Because I felt that I could not trust the retailer anymore	54	87.103
Total	62	100.00

n = 59
n1 = total number of responses

A total of 59 respondents no longer supported the retailer, but 62 responses were obtained since respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. A majority of 87.10% responses were obtained for "I felt that I could no longer trust the retailer". Only 6.45% responses were obtained for wanting "to punish/hurt the retailer" and for wanting "to get rid of my anger/frustration" respectively.

Table 5.17 shows the comparison of respondents' reasons for not supporting the retailer in terms of the type of reasoning employed.

TABLE 5.17: COMPARISON OF REASONS FOR NOT SUPPORTING THE RETAILER IN TERMS OF THE TYPE OF REASONING EMPLOYED

Type of reasoning	Reasons for not supporting the retailer	Number of responses	Total responses	Percentage n1 = 62	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Emotional reasoning	To punish/hurt the retailer	4	8	12.90	< 0.0001*
	To get rid of my anger/frustration	4			
Cognitive reasoning	Because I felt that I could not trust the retailer anymore	54	54	87.10	
	Total	62	62	100.00	

n = 59
n1 = total number of responses

* Significant on the 5 % level

The reasons "to punish/hurt the manufacturer" and "to get rid of my anger/frustration" are considered to be emotional reasoning. The remainder of the reasons are considered to be cognitive reasoning. The reasons for not supporting the retailer were directed by both cognitive and emotional reasoning. However, cognitive reasoning was significantly more often employed compared to emotional reasoning, as indicated by the results of the z-test for equal proportions ($p < 0.0001$).

Table 5.18 shows respondents' reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs/a replacement/a refund) (Question 5, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.18: REASONS FOR CONTACTING THE RETAILER/MANUFACTURER TO OBTAIN REDRESS (REPAIRS/A REPLACEMENT/A REFUND)

Reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 165
The appliance was still under guarantee	83	50.30
The appliance's guarantee had expired and I expected the appliance to last longer	15	9.09
The appliance did not provide value for money	27	16.36
The household could not function properly without the appliance	40	24.24
Total	165	100.00

n = 110
n1 = total number of responses

A total of 110 respondents contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, but 165 responses were obtained as respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. Table 5.18 shows that 50.30% responses were obtained for "the appliance was still under guarantee". A total of 24.24% responses were obtained for "the household could not function properly without the appliance" and 16.36% responses were obtained for "the appliances did not provide value for money". Only 9.09% responses were obtained for "the appliance's guarantee had expired and I expected the appliance to last longer".

The reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain are directed by cognitive reasoning only. It should be noted that respondents could provide other reasons when applicable, but no additional reasons were provided.

Table 5.19 shows respondents' reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (Question 6, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.19: REASONS FOR CONTACTING THE RETAILER/MANUFACTURER TO COMPLAIN FOR REASONS OTHER THAN SEEKING REDRESS

Reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 88
To make an objection after my effort to obtain redress/compensation for the appliance failed	19	21.59
To get rid of my anger/frustration	10	11.36
To stand up for my rights as a consumer	37	42.05
To get an apology from the retailer/manufacturer	20	22.73
To get assistance concerning the after-sale service division (after-sale guarantee service)	1	1.14
To make the manufacturer aware about such an incident so that he can prevent it from happening again	1	1.14
Total	88	100.00

n = 56
n1 = total number of responses

Although a total of 56 respondents contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, 88 responses were obtained since respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. A total of 42.05% responses were obtained for wanting “to stand up for my rights as a consumer”. Only 22.73% responses were obtained for wanting “to get an apology from the retailer”, and 21.59% 88 responses were obtained for wanting “to make an objection after my effort to obtain redress/compensation for the appliance failed”. Only 11.39% responses were obtained for wanting “to get rid of my anger/frustration”. Where respondents could indicate other reasons, only 1.14% responses was obtained for wanting “to get assistance concerning the after-sale service division” and wanting “to make the manufacturer aware about the specific incident so that they can prevent it from happening again” respectively.

Table 5.20 shows the comparison of respondents’ reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress in terms of the type of reasoning employed.

TABLE 5.20: COMPARISON OF REASONS FOR CONTACTING THE RETAILER/MANUFACTURER TO COMPLAIN FOR REASONS OTHER THAN SEEKING REDRESS IN TERMS OF THE TYPE OF REASONING EMPLOYED

Type of reasoning	Reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	Number of responses	Total responses	Percentage n1 = 88	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Emotional reasoning	To get rid of my anger/frustration	10	10	11.36	< 0.0001*
Cognitive reasoning	To make an objection after my effort to obtain redress/compensation for the appliance failed	19	78	88.64	
	To stand up for my rights as a consumer	37			
	To get an apology from the retailer/manufacturer	20			
	To get assistance concerning the after-sale service division (after-sale guarantee service)	1			
	To make the manufacturer aware about such an incident so that he can prevent it from happening again	1			
	Total	88	88	100.00	

n = 56
n1 = total number of responses

* Significant on the 5 % level

The reason “to get rid of my anger/frustration” is considered to be emotional reasoning. The remainder of the reasons are considered to be cognitive reasoning, although emotionally laden, since the aim was to confront the specific party involved. The reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress for the appliance were directed by cognitive and emotional reasoning. However, cognitive reasoning was significantly more often employed compared to emotional reasoning, as indicated by the results of the z-test for equal proportions ($p < 0.0001$).

Table 5.21 shows respondents’ reasons for contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (Question 7, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.21: REASONS FOR CONTACTING A REPAIR SERVICE OTHER THAN THAT SUPPLIED BY THE RETAILER OR MANUFACTURER

Reasons for contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 81
The appliance's guarantee had expired and the retailer/manufacturer was not responsible for the appliance anymore	30	37.04
The household could not function properly without the appliance	31	38.27
The repair service was less expensive than the retailer/manufacturer's service	16	19.75
Too much trouble to go back to the retailer or manufacturer	4	4.94
Total	81	100.00

n = 55
n1 = total number of responses

A total of 55 respondents contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, but 81 responses were obtained as respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. A total of 38.27% responses were obtained for "the household could not function properly without the appliance". A total of 37.04% responses were obtained for "the appliance's guarantee had expired and the retailer/manufacturer was not responsible for the appliance anymore". Additionally, 19.75% responses were obtained for "the repair service was less expensive than the retailer/manufacturer's service". Where other reasons were supplied, only 4.94% responses were obtained for "too much trouble to go back to the retailer or manufacturer".

The reasons for contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer are directed by cognitive reasoning only. It should be noted that respondents could provide other reasons when applicable, but no additional reasons related to emotional reasoning were provided.

Table 5.22 shows respondents' reasons for contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (Question 8, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.22: REASONS FOR CONTACTING A CONSUMER PROTECTION ORGANISATION/DEPARTMENT

Reasons for contacting a consumer protection organisation/department	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 4
To seek assistance in obtaining redress (refund, replacement, repairs) for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed	2	50.00
To stand up for my rights as a consumer	2	50.00
To get rid of my anger/frustration	0	0.00
Total	4	100.00

n = 3
n1 = total number of responses

Only three respondents contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, but four responses were obtained because respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. Only two out of four responses were obtained for wanting to “seek assistance in obtaining redress for appliances from retailers or manufacturers since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed” and wanting “to stand up for my rights as a consumer” respectively. No responses were obtained for wanting to “get rid of my anger/frustration”.

The reasons for contacting a consumer protection organisation/department” are directed by cognitive reasoning only. It should be noted that respondents could provide other reasons when applicable, but no additional reasons were provided. Since no responses were obtained for emotional reasoning, no calculations were performed to determine whether significant differences exist between cognitive versus emotional reasoning.

Table 5.23 shows respondents’ reasons for writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website (Question 9, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.23: REASONS FOR WRITING A LETTER TO THE PRESS (NEWSPAPER, MAGAZINE ETC.) OR TO A CONSUMER COMPLAINT WEBSITE

Reasons for writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc) or to a consumer complaint website	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 3
To seek assistance in obtaining redress (refund, replacement, repairs) for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed	0	0.00
To stand up for my rights as a consumer	0	0.00
To warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer	1	33.33
To get rid of my anger/frustration	2	66.67
Total	3	100.00

n = 2
n1 = total number of responses

Although only two respondents wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, three responses were obtained since respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. Only one out of three responses was obtained for wanting "to warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer" and only two responses were obtained for wanting "to get rid of my anger/frustration". No responses were obtained for wanting "to seek assistance in obtaining redress for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed" and for wanting "to stand up for my rights as a consumer".

The reasons "to get rid of my anger/frustration" and "to warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer" are considered to be emotional and cognitive reasoning respectively. Since negligible numbers of responses were obtained for writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, no calculations were performed to determine whether significant differences exist between cognitive versus emotional reasoning.

Table 5.24 shows respondents' reasons for contacting a legal representative (Question 10, Section C [follow-up question] – Addendum A).

TABLE 5.24: REASONS FOR CONTACTING A LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

Reasons for contacting a legal representative	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 2
To seek assistance in obtaining redress (refund, replacement, repairs) for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed	0	0.00
To stand up for my rights as a consumer	1	50.00
To warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer	0	0.00
To get rid of my anger/frustration	1	50.00
Total	2	100.00

n = 1
n1 = total number of responses

Only one respondent contacted a legal representative, but two responses were obtained as respondents could select as many reasons as applicable. One response was obtained for wanting “to stand up for my rights as a consumer” and one for wanting “to get rid of my anger/frustration”. No responses were obtained for wanting “to seek assistance in obtaining redress for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed” or for wanting “to warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer”.

The reasons “to get rid of my anger/frustration” and “to stand up for my rights as a consumer” are considered emotional and cognitive reasoning respectively. Since only one response was obtained for contacting a legal representative, no calculations were performed to determine whether significant differences exist between cognitive versus emotional reasoning.

5.5 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 3

Objective 3: To describe the relationship between causal attribution and dissatisfied consumers’ complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 3.1 To describe dissatisfied consumers’ attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Respondents were asked to provide the most important cause (from a list of causes provided) for the appliance’s failure or poor performance, or to provide another cause if none

of the given causes applied (Question 8, Section B – Addendum A). The results are summarised in Table 5.25.

TABLE 5.25: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CAUSE FOR THE APPLIANCES' FAILURE OR POOR PERFORMANCE

Most important cause for the appliances' failure or poor performance	Frequency	Percentage
The purchaser of the appliance did not do enough research before purchasing it	14	6.51
The manufacturer provided an appliance with poor styling and design features	34	15.81
Flaws/defects are inevitable with complicated appliances	47	21.86
The manufacturer used inferior materials/finishes (trimmings)	33	15.35
The person operating the appliance mistreated (abused) it	5	2.33
The person operating the appliance did not know how to use it	4	1.86
The manufacturer provided poor workmanship	68	31.63
The person operating the appliance did not follow the prescribe operating instructions	5	2.33
Other reasons	5	2.33
Total	215	100

n = 215
Frequency missing = 1

A total of 31.63% of the respondents selected poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer as the most important cause for the appliances' failure or poor performance. A total of 21.86% of the respondents indicated the inevitability of flaws and defects with complicated appliances as the most important cause for the appliances' failure or poor performance. A total of 15.81% and a total of 15.35% of the respondents attributed the failure/poor performance of their appliances to the provision of poor styling and design features and the manufacturer's use of inferior materials/finishes (trimmings) respectively. Thus, 84.65 % (31.63% + 21.86% +15.81% +15.35%) of the respondents attributed the failure or poor performance of the appliance to causes that are related to the manufacturer. A total of 6.51% of the respondents did not do enough research before purchasing the appliance, 2.33% mistreated (abused) the appliance, and 1.86% did not know how to use their appliances properly. Thus, 13.03% (6.51% + 2.33% +2.33 + 1.86%) of the respondents attributed product failure to the person operating the appliance (human error). Only 2.33 % of the respondents attributed the cause of product failure to other causes.

The majority of the respondents (84.65 %) held manufactures responsible for the failure/poor performance of appliances as compared to human error (13.03%) and other reasons (2.33%), which might be indicative of self-serving attributional bias (i.e. an attribution fallacy where people take preference to attribute bad outcomes (in this case product failures) to external factors (manufacturers)).

Sub-objective 3.2 To describe the causal dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

The respondents were asked to rate their own attributions (i.e. reasons) for the appliances' failure subjectively on an adapted version of Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale to facilitate the researcher's assessment of the dimensional quality of respondents' causes (attributions) (Question 9, Section B – Addendum). The three items for locus, the three items for stability and the three items for controllability were summated respectively to obtain a combined score (out of 27) for each respective dimension. Refer to Russell's Causal Dimension Scale (Chapter 4, Table 4.1) and the adapted version of Russell's scale (Addendum A, Question 9). Next, a uni-variate analysis for the locus, stability and controllability dimensions was performed. The results appear in Table 5.26.

TABLE 5.26: UNI-VARIATE ANALYSIS FOR LOCUS, STABILITY, CONTROLLABILITY

Causal dimensions					
Locus		Stability		Controllability	
n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
216	8.02	215 *	13.63	216	14.86

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the locus dimension indicates that causes were perceived as external, implying that the cause for the product failure could be attributed either to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or the situation. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as internal, implying that the cause for product failure could be attributed to the consumer. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively external (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively internal (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the stability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as unstable, implying that people should be less certain of future product failure if they purchase it again in the future. (If the attribution is unstable, consumers will view it as a once-off problem. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as stable, implying that people should expect the product to fail if they purchase it again in the future. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively unstable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively stable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the controllability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as uncontrollable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer could not control the product failure. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as controllable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer had control over the product failure. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively uncontrollable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively controllable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

* Frequency missing = 1

The mean scores for the locus dimension (8.02), stability dimension (13.63) and controllability dimension (14.86) indicate that the respondents perceived the combined causes as external to themselves, relatively stable and relatively controllable.

The Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to compare the mean scores for Russell's Locus, Stability and Controllability dimensions (as the ordinal variable) across the different groups of respondents who selected a particular reason for the product failure (the independent groups). The relatively small sample size of some of the groups justified the use of the K-W one-way ANOVA test. Note that, in statistical terms, the different groups are considered to be different samples of respondents. The responses for the reasons: "the person operating the appliance mistreated (abused) it", "the person operating the appliance did not know how to use it" and "the person operating the appliance did not follow the prescribed operating instructions" were combined to facilitate statistical calculations (i.e. to ensure sufficient cell (sample) size). The combined reasons were labelled "the person operating the appliance mistreated (abused) it". The reasons "the appliance became out of fashion" and "other reasons" had insufficient cell sizes and were therefore excluded from statistical testing. Six independent groups (samples) were thus compared.

The dimensional quality of respondents' attributions for product failures as well as the results of the K-W one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 5.27. The discussion of the results follows in the same order.

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TABLE 5.27: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE PERCEIVED CAUSE(S) FOR PRODUCT FAILURE AND THE SCORES FOR THE LOCUS, STABILITY AND CONTROLLABILITY DIMENSIONS

Perceived cause for product failure	n	Causal dimensions								
		Locus			Stability			Controllability		
		Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA
The purchaser of the appliance did not do enough research before purchasing it	14	12.64 [c]	5.62	<0.0001 *	16.21	6.25	0.0416*	14.50 [ab]	4.62	0.0021*
The manufacturer provided an appliance with poor styling and design features	34	9.08 [bc]	3.72		14.47	4.62		15.70 [b]	5.13	
Flaws/defects are inevitable with complicated appliances	47	7.25 [ab]	3.51		11.82	4.82		12.46 [a]	4.35	
The manufacturer used inferior materials/finishes (trimmings)	33	7.30 [ab]	4.35		14.69	7.09		16.27 [b]	5.67	
The person operating the appliance mistreated (abused) it	14	14.78 [c]	6.86		12.07	4.87		18.00 [b]	5.20	
The manufacturer provided poor workmanship	68	5.89 [a]	3.26		13.42	6.23		15.25 [b]	4.57	

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the locus dimension indicates that causes were perceived as external, implying that the cause for the product failure could be attributed either to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or the situation. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as internal, implying that the cause for product failure could be attributed to the consumer. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively external (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively internal (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the stability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as unstable, implying that people should be less certain of future product failure if they purchase it again in the future. (If the attribution is unstable, consumers will view it as a once-off problem. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as stable, implying that people should expect the product to fail if they purchase it again in the future. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively unstable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively stable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the controllability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as uncontrollable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer could not control the product failure. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as controllable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer had control over the product failure. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively uncontrollable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively controllable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

Means with different superscripts differ significantly on the 5% level
n = 210

5.5.1 The dimensional quality of respondents' attributions for product failure

When comparing the specific causes for the failure of the appliances in terms of their dimensional quality (refer to Table 5.27), it is clear that the group of respondents who:
- attributed the failure of the appliance to the purchaser's lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance, considered the cause as relatively external (12.64), relatively stable (16.21) and relatively controllable (14.5);
- believed that the main cause for the failure of the appliances was due to the manufacturer's poor styling and design features, considered the cause as external (9.08), relatively stable (14.47) and relatively controllable (15.70);
- attributed product failures to the inevitability of product flaws en defects considered it as external (7.25), relatively unstable (11.82) and relatively uncontrollable (12.46);
- blamed appliance failures on manufacturers' use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings), regarded the cause as external (7.30), relatively stable (14.69) and relatively controllable (16.27);
- believed that the cause for appliance failures was due to their own abuse of the appliance, considered it relatively internal (14.78), relatively unstable (12.07) and relatively controllable (18.00); and
- attributed the appliance's failure to the manufacturer's poor workmanship, considered the cause external (5.89), relatively unstable (13.42) and relatively controllable (15.52).

5.5.2 Results of the K-W one-way ANOVA concerning the association between the perceived cause(s) for product failure and the scores for the locus, stability and controllability dimensions

According to the K-W one-way ANOVA, significant differences exist between the various groups regarding their perception of locus ($p = < 0.0001$), stability ($p = 0.0416$) and controllability ($p = 0.0021$) respectively (see Table 5.27).

In the case of the locus dimensions, significant differences exist between:
- poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer (5.89) and the abuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it (14.78), and the purchaser's lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance (12.64);

(Differently stated, the two means for the "inevitability of product flaws and defects with complicated appliances" (7.25) and "the manufacturer's use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings)" (7.30) (labelled ^{ab}) did not differ significantly form each other nor form "poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer" (5.89), which was labelled with an ^{a}, and other causes with a ^{bc} (the manufacturer's provision of poor styling and design features (9.08), as

well as form the two means that are identified wit a [c] (the abuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it (14.78) and the purchaser's lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance (12.64).

Poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer was perceived as more external (5.89) compared to causes due to the consumer's "wrongdoing", specifically the purchaser's lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance (14.78) and the abuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it (12.64), which were perceived as less external (i.e. relatively internal).

In the case of the stability dimension, significant differences exist between the different causes. However, the differences between the tied ranks are very small. This implies that the respondents evaluated all the causes for product failure similarly as far as the stability dimension was concerned. That is, all scores fell within the region of 10-17 out of 27 (i.e. between relatively unstable and relatively stable). The inevitability of product flaws and defects with complicated appliances (11.82), the abuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it (12.07), and poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer (13.42), were perceived as relatively unstable. The manufacturer's poor styling and design features (14.47), the manufacturer's use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings) (14.69), and the purchaser's lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance (16.21), were perceived as relatively stable.

In the case of the controllability dimension, significant differences exist between:

- the inevitability of product flaws and defects with complicated appliances (12.46) and poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer (15.25), the abuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it (18.00), the manufacturer's use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings) (16.27) and the manufacturer's poor styling and design features (15.70)
  (Differently stated, the inevitability of product flaws and defects with complicated appliances (which was labelled with an [a]) differs from all those causes that contain only a [b] superscript but not the cause that has an [ab] superscript)

The respondents perceived the inevitability of product flaws and defects with complicated appliances (12.46) as relatively uncontrollable. Poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer (15.25), the manufacturer's provision of poor styling and design features (15.70), the manufacturer's use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings) (16.27) and the abuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it (18.00), were all perceived as relatively controllable.

Sub-objective 3.3 To describe the association between the dimensional characteristics of dissatisfied consumers' attributions for the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture)

The K-W one-way ANOVA test was performed to compare the mean scores for uni-variate analysis of Russell's Locus, Stability and Controllability dimensions across the different groups of respondents for the different categories of demographic variables. The results are shown in Table 5.28.

5.5.3 Results of the K-W one-way ANOVA concerning the uni-variate analysis for the locus, stability and controllability and demographic variables

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TABLE 5.28: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE THE UNI-VARIATE ANALYSIS FOR THE LOCUS, STABILITY AND CONTROLLABILITY AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Demographic variables		n	Causal dimensions								
			Locus			Stability			Controllability		
			Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA
Gender	Male	68	7.80	4.89	0.3607	13.07	6.03	0.2591	14.07	5.12	0.1042
	Female	148	8.12	4.66		13.89	5.83		15.22	5.17	
Age	25-30 years	66	8.09	3.80	0.6719	14.15	5.66	0.6949	14.39	4.76	0.8490
	31-45 years	90	8.48	5.31		13.58	6.18		14.63	5.26	
	46-55 years	42	7.66	4.60		13.52	5.88		15.92	5.69	
	56-83 years	18	6.33	4.81		12.22	5.50		15.22	4.97	
Level of education	Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less	45	9.57	5.19	0.2956	13.40	5.52	0.7320	16.35	5.78	0.0874
	Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s)	78	7.42	4.80		14.07	6.31		14.00	5.58	
	Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification	93	7.78	4.29		13.37	5.75		14.86	4.33	
Monthly household income	R 2 000 – R 5 000	56	10.14	5.08	0.3393	13.41	5.19	0.2352	15.16	5.47	0.3718
	R 5 001 – R 10 000	58	7.68	4.05		15.05	6.07		14.58	4.72	
	R 10 001 or more	102	7.05	4.54		12.94	6.07		14.85	5.28	
Culture	Black	66	10.07	4.96	0.0139*	14.13	5.29	0.6102	15.62	4.98	0.0344*
	Caucasian	150	7.12	4.33		13.41	6.14		14.52	5.23	

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the locus dimension indicates that causes were perceived as external, implying that the cause for the product failure could be attributed either to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or the situation. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as internal, implying that the cause for product failure could be attributed to the consumer. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively external (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively internal (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the stability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as unstable, implying that people should be less certain of future product failure if they purchase it again in the future. (If the attribution is unstable, consumers will view it as a once-off problem. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as stable, implying that people should expect the product to fail if they purchase it again in the future. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively unstable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively stable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the controllability dimension indicates that causes were perceived as uncontrollable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer could not control the product failure. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that causes were perceived as controllable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer had control over the product failure. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the cause was perceived as relatively uncontrollable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively controllable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

* Significant on 5% level

The male group attributed the cause for product failure either to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or the situation (i.e. externally) (locus = 7.80), and perceived the cause as relatively stable (stability = 13.07) and relatively controllable by both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer (controllability = 14.07). However, a similar pattern emerged for female group (locus = 8.12, stability = 13.89, controllability = 15.22). No significant differences exist between these groups with regard to the locus (p = 0.3607), stability (p = 0.2591) and controllability dimensions (p = 0.1042).

The respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group considered the cause for the product failure as external (locus = 8.09), perceived the cause as relatively stable (stability =14.15) and relatively controllable (control = 14.39). A similar pattern emerged for the respondents from the 31 to 45 years age group (locus = 8.48, stability = 13.58, controllability = 14.63) and the 46 to 55 years age group (locus = 7.66, stability = 13.52, controllability = 15.92) respectively. The respondents from the 56 to 83 years age group perceived the cause as more external (locus = 6.33), relatively unstable (stability = 12.22) and relatively controllable (15.22). However, no significant differences exist between these groups with regard to the locus (p = 0.6719), stability (p = 0.6949) and controllability dimensions (p = 0.8490).

The respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less group considered the cause for the product failure as relatively external (locus = 9.57), perceived the cause as relatively unstable (stability = 13.40) and relatively controllable (control = 16.35). The respondents from the Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (locus = 7.42, stability =14.07, controllability = 14.00) and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group (locus = 7.78, stability =13.37, controllability = 14.86) considered the cause for product failure similarly (i.e. external, relatively unstable to relatively stable and relatively controllable). However, no significant differences exist between these groups with regard to the locus (p = 0.2956), stability (p = 0.7320) and controllability dimensions (p = 0.0847).

The respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group considered the cause for the product failure as relatively external (locus = 10.14), perceived the cause as relatively unstable (stability = 13.41) and relatively controllable (control = 15.16). The respondents from the R 5 001 – R 10 000 monthly household income group (locus = 7.68, stability =15.05, controllability = 14.58) and the R 10 001 or more household income group (locus = 7.05, stability =12.94, controllability = 14.85) considered the cause for product failure similarly (i.e. external, relatively unstable to relatively stable and relatively controllable). No significant differences exist between these groups with regard to the locus (p = 0.3393), stability (p = 0.2352) and controllability dimensions (p = 0.3718).

The black group considered the cause for product failure as relatively external (locus = 10.07), and relatively stable (stability = 14.13) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.62). However, the Caucasian group perceived the cause for product failure as external (locus = 7.12) relatively stable (stability =13.41) and less relatively controllable (controllability = 14.52). Significant differences exist between these groups with regard to the locus (p = 0.0139), and controllability dimensions (p = 0.0344) respectively, but no significant difference exists between these groups concerning stability (p = 0.6102). (The black group considered the cause for product failure as less external and more controllable compared to the Caucasian group).

To conclude, with the exception of culture, the demographic variables seemed to have little significant impact on how respondents attributed causes for product failure.

Sub-objective 3.4 To describe the association between the causal dimensions (i.e. locus, stability and controllability) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

The K-W one-way ANOVA test was performed to compare the mean scores for Russell's Locus, Stability and Controllability dimensions across the different groups of respondents who engaged in particular complaint action(s) or not (i.e. the "yes" vs. the "no" groups of respondents for the different complaint actions). Note that, in statistical terms, the different groups are considered to be different samples of respondents. The results are shown in Table 5.29.

5.5.4 Results of the K-W one-way ANOVA concerning and the scores for the locus, stability and controllability dimensions and the types of complaint action

TABLE 5.29: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION AND THE SCORES FOR THE LOCUS, STABILITY AND CONTROLLABILITY DIMENSIONS

Variables (Types of complaint action)	**Groups**	**Causal dimensions**								
		Locus			Stability			Controllability		
		Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA
Took action	Yes (n = 173)	7.98	4.58	0.8648	13.43	5.84	0.4063	15.08	5.09	0.1675
	No (n = 42)	8.18	5.30		14.45	6.12		13.97	5.44	
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes (n = 154)	8.31	4.62	0.0045*	13.61	5.76	0.1766	15.22	5.09	0.4557
	No (n = 19)	5.31	3.30		11.94	6.41		13.89	5.14	
Decided to use another brand name	Yes (n = 80)	8.42	4.58	0.1709	14.86	5.36	0.0014*	15.52	4.94	0.5792
	No (n = 93)	7.61	4.58		12.20	5.98		14.69	5.22	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes (n = 59)	8.93	4.54	0.0374*	14.88	4.78	0.0047*	15.49	4.91	0.4886
	No (n = 114)	7.50	4.55		12.68	6.21		14.86	5.20	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes (n = 110)	7.90	4.81	0.4563	12.89	5.78	0.1022	15.09	5.2	0.9118
	No (n = 63)	8.14	4.20		14.38	5.87		15.06	4.80	

Variables (Types of complaint action)	**Groups**	**Causal dimensions**								
		Locus			Stability			Controllability		
		Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA	Mean	Std Dev	p-value K-W one-way ANOVA
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes (n = 56)	9.41	4.04	0.0005*	14.66	5.33	0.0371*	15.82	4.57	0.4156
	No (n = 117)	7.30	4.69		12.84	6.00		14.72	5.31	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes (n = 55)	8.80	4.52	0.0582	11.92	5.08	0.0263*	14.43	4.58	0.2862
	No (n = 118)	7.61	4.58		14.13	6.05		15.38	5.24	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes (n = 3)	9.33	6.50	**	18.33	9.04	**	14.00	3.60	**
	No (n = 170)	7.96	4.57		13.34	5.77		15.10	5.12	
Wrote letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes (n = 2)	11.50	6.36	**	14.00	7.07	**	17.00	1.41	**
	No (n = 171)	7.94	4.57		13.42	5.85		15.05	5.12	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes (n = 1)	16.00	**	**	9.00	**	**	18.00	**	**
	No (n = 172)	7.94	4.56		13.45	5.85		15.06	5.10	

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the locus dimension indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the locus dimension as external, implying that the cause for the product failure could be attributed either to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or the situation. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the locus dimensions as internal, implying that the cause for product failure could be attributed to the consumer. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the locus dimension as relatively external (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively internal (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the stability dimension indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the stability dimension as unstable, implying that people should be less certain of future product failure if they purchase it again in the future. (If the attribution is unstable, consumers will view it as a once-off problem.) Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the stability dimension as stable, implying that people should expect the product to fail if they purchase it again in the future. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the stability dimension as relatively unstable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively stable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

A low score (i.e. 3-9 out of 27) on the controllability dimension indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the controllability dimension as uncontrollable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer could not control the product failure. Conversely, a high score (i.e. 19-27 out of 27) indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the controllability dimension as controllable, implying that both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer had control over the product failure. A score between 10-18 out of 27 indicates that the respondents who engaged in particular complaint actions considered the controllability dimension as relatively uncontrollable (10-13.5 out of 27) to relatively controllable (i.e. 13.6-18 out of 27).

* Significant on 5% level
** No calculations due to low response rate

The group who took action believed that the cause for the product failure could be attributed either to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or the situation (i.e. externally) (locus = 7.98), and perceived the cause as relatively unstable (stability = 13.43) and relatively controllable by both the consumer and other parties such as the manufacturer or retailer (controllability = 15.08). However, a similar pattern emerged for the group who did not take any action (locus = 8.18, stability = 14.45, controllability = 13.97). No significant differences exist between these groups with regard to the locus ($p = 0.8648$), stability ($p = 0.4063$) and controllability dimensions ($p = 0.1675$). (Since no significant differences exist between the stability dimensions for both groups of respondents, the respondents' perception of the stability dimension is considered to be relatively unstable to relatively stable.)

The group who told their friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience rated the cause for the product failure as external (locus = 8.31), perceived the cause as relatively stable (stability = 13.61) and relatively controllable (control = 15.22). The group who did not tell their friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience perceived the cause as even more external (locus = 5.31), relatively unstable (stability = 11.94) and relatively controllable (13.89). No significant differences exist between these groups with regard to stability ($p = 0.1766$) and controllability ($p = 0.4557$) respectively, but a significant difference exists between these groups with regard to locus ($p = 0.0045$). (Since no significant differences exist between the stability dimensions for both groups of respondents, the respondents' perception of the stability dimension is considered to be relatively unstable to relatively stable.)

The group who decided to use another brand name considered the cause as external (locus = 8.42), relatively stable (stability = 14.86) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.52). A similar pattern emerged for the group who did not decide to use another brand name in terms of locus (7.61) and controllability (14.69) of the cause, but they considered the cause to be relatively unstable (12.20). No significant differences exist between these groups with regard to locus ($p = 0.1709$) and controllability ($p = 0.5792$) respectively, but a significant difference exists between these groups with regard to stability ($p = 0.0014$).

The group who stopped supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased perceived the cause as external (locus = 8.93), relatively stable (stability = 14.88) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.49). However, the group who continued supporting the retailer perceived the cause as more external (locus = 7.50), relatively unstable (stability = 12.68) and relatively controllable (controllability = 14.86). Significant differences exist between these groups concerning the locus ($p = 0.0374$) and the stability dimensions ($p = 0.0047$) respectively, and no

significant difference exists between these groups concerning the controllability dimension (p = 0.4886).

The group who contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress perceived the cause as external (locus =7.90), relatively unstable (stability = 12.89) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.09). The group who did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, and stopped supporting the retailer, ranked the cause for product failure similarly (locus = 8.14, stability = 14.38, controllability = 15.06). No significant differences exist between these groups concerning the respective causal dimensions (i.e. locus (p = 0.4563), stability (p = 0.1022) and controllability (p = 0.9118). (Since, no significant differences exist between the stability dimensions for both groups of respondents, the respondents' perception of the stability dimension is considered to be relatively unstable to relatively stable.)

The group who contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, perceived the cause as external (locus = 9.41), relatively stable (stability =14.66) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.82). However, the group who did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, perceived the cause as more external (locus = 7.30) and relatively unstable (stability = 12.84). Additionally, they considered the controllability dimension similarly compared to the group who contacted the retailer/manufacturer for other reasons than seeking redress (i.e. relatively controllable (control = 14.72). Significant differences exist between these groups concerning locus (p = 0.005) and stability respectively (p = 0.0371), but no significant difference exists between these groups concerning controllability (p = 0.4156).

The respondents who contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer perceived the cause as external (locus = 8.80), relatively unstable (stability = 11.92) and relatively controllable (controllability = 14.43). The group who did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer perceived the cause as external (locus = 7.61), relatively stable (stability = 14.13) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.38). No significant differences exist between these groups concerning locus (p = 0.0582) and controllability (p = 0.2862) respectively, but a significant difference exists between these groups concerning stability (p = 0.0263).

In the next paragraph, respondents' perception of the dimensional quality of the causes for product failure are described only for the groups who did not engage in more formal complaint action (i.e. did not contact a consumer protection organization/department, did not write a letter

to the press or a consumer complaint website, and did not contact a legal representative), since ample responses were obtained for these particular response options. Due to the insufficient cell size for the groups who did engage in more formal complaint action, no statistical calculations were performed to determine whether significant differences exist between the groups (i.e. those who engaged in formal complaint action versus those who did not engage in more formal complaint action) concerning the locus, stability and controllability dimensions.

The group who did not contact a consumer protection organisation/department perceived the cause for the failure of the appliance as external (locus = 7.96), relatively unstable (stability = 13.34) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.10). The group who did not write a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, considered the cause for the failure of the appliance as external (locus = 7.94), relatively unstable (stability = 13.42) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.05). Additionally, the group who did not contact a legal representative, considered the cause for product failure as external (locus = 7.94), relatively unstable (stability = 13.45) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.06).

The different groups perceived the cause for product failure similarly concerning the locus, stability and controllability dimensions when engaging or not engaging in the specific complaint actions. The different groups mostly perceived the causes for product failure as external, relatively unstable to relatively stable and relatively uncontrollable to relatively controllable. Failure attributed to stable factors implies the (fearful) anticipation that products will fail again in future, whereas attribution of product failure to variable causes could give rise to “hope” for the future (i.e. product failures are not likely to recur in the future (Försterling, 2001:117; Laufer, 2002). The respondents in this study were, however, relatively undecided about the way in which they perceived causes in terms of the stability and controllability dimensions (i.e. responses varied between 11.92 and 15.65), which explains the respondents’ passivity about taking complaint action. The attribution of failure to external causes, as such, was not sufficient to impel complaint action. This corresponds with Weiner’s assumption that the stability of the cause, rather than its locus determines expectancy shifts (variability in expectations for future product failure or success) (Weiner, 1986:85; Försterling, 2001:112). The groups who decided to use another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased, and contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress perceived the cause for product failure as more stable compared to the groups who did not engage in the above actions.

Sub-objective 3.5 To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers' anger reactions concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances and consumer complaint behaviour

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of anger experienced when their appliances performed faulty or poorly (Question 5, Section B – Addendum A). The results are summarised in Table 5.30.

TABLE 5.30: LEVEL OF ANGER EXPERIENCED FOLLOWING THE APPLIANCE'S FAULTY OR POOR PERFORMANCE

Level of anger experienced	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage n = 216	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Not angry at all	19	8.84	48.37	0.6331
Reasonably angry	85	39.53		
Very angry	72	33.49	51.63	
Extremely angry	39	18.14		
Total	215	100.00	100.00	

n = 216
Frequency missing = 1

A total of 8.84% respondents did not experience any anger at all, while 39.53% respondents were reasonably angry. A total of 33.49% respondents were very angry, and 18.49% respondents were extremely angry. The z-test for equal proportions indicates that the proportion for the "not angry at all" to the "reasonably angry" category, compared to the "very angry" to "extremely angry" category, is 48.37% to 51.63%. No significant difference exists between these proportions (p-value = 0.6331) – implying that the proportions are distributed evenly.

Table 5.31 shows the relationships between the levels of anger experienced and the different types of complaint action.

TABLE 5.31 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE LEVELS OF ANGER EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION

Types of complaint action		Level of anger experienced (Percentage)		p-value Chi²-test
		Not angry at all to Reasonably angry	Very angry to Extremely angry	
Took action (n = 216)	Yes	72.12	88.29	0.0033*
	No	27.88	11.71	
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	82.67	93.88	0.0264*
	No	17.33	6.12	
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	33.33	56.12	0.0035*
	No	66.67	43.88	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	24.00	41.84	0.0157*
	No	76.00	58.16	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	60.00	66.33	0.4276
	No	40.00	33.67	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	18.67	42.86	<0.0001*
	No	81.33	57.14	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes	33.33	30.61	0.7434
	No	66.67	69.39	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	1.33	2.04	1.0000
	No	98.67	97.96	
Wrote letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	2.67	0.00	0.1865
	No	97.33	100.00	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	1.33	0.00	0.4335
	No	98.67	100.00	

* Significant on the 5% level of significance
n = 173 except for "took action"

A larger proportion of the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry, (88.29%) took action compared to those who varied between no anger to reasonable anger (72.12%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and taking complaint action (p-value = 0.0033). (The respondents who were very angry to extremely angry significantly more took action compared to those who varied between no anger to reasonable anger). Proportionately more of the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry (93.88%) told their friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to those who experienced no anger to reasonable anger (82.67%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and telling friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.0246). (The respondents who were very angry to extremely angry significantly more told their friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to those who varied between no anger to reasonable anger). Proportionately more of the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry (56.12%) decided to use another brand name, compared to those who were not angry at all to reasonably angry (33.33%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and

deciding to use another brand name (p-value = 0.0035). (The respondents who were very angry to extremely angry significantly more decided to use another brand name, compared to those who varied between no anger to reasonable anger). A smaller proportion of the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry (58.16%) continued supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased, compared to those who were not angry to reasonably angry (76.00%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.0157). (Respondents who were very angry to extremely angry significantly less stopped supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased, compared to those who were not angry to reasonably angry). Fairly equal proportions of respondents who experienced very to extreme anger (66.33%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, compared to those who experienced no anger to reasonable anger (60.00%). No significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.4276). A smaller proportion (57.14%) of the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the respondents who varied between not angry to reasonably angry (81.33%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (p-value < 0.0001). (Respondent who were very angry to extremely angry significantly more did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the respondents who varied between not angry to reasonably angry). Fairly equal proportions of respondents who were very angry to extremely angry (69.39%) contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, compared to those who experienced no anger to reasonable anger (66.67%). No significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.7434). Nearly none of the respondents in the groups who were very angry to extremely angry and no anger to reasonable anger respectively, contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between the level of anger experienced and the following types of complaint actions respectively: contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value = 1.0000), writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.1865) and/or contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.4335).

It appears that respondents who were very to extremely angry were, with one exception, more likely to take private actions than they were to take public complaint action.

5.6 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 4

Objective 4: To describe the relationship between specific consumer-related variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 4.1 To describe the relationship between demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of major electrical household appliances

In the following section, the relationships between the demographic variables (gender, age, highest level of education, monthly household income, and culture) and taking action (action vs. no action) will be described first. Next, the respective relationships between the demographic variables and the different types of complaint action (i.e. talking to friends and family, using another brand name, stop supporting the retailer, contacting the retailer/manufacturer/a repair service/a consumer protection organisation, writing a complaint letter and/or contacting a legal representative) will be described.

5.6.1 Respective relationships between demographic variables and taking action (action vs. no action)

Table 5.32 shows the relationships between the different gender-, age-, highest level of education-, monthly household income-, and culture groups, and action versus no action respectively.

TABLE 5.32: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT GENDER- , AGE-, LEVEL OF EDUCATION-, MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME- AND CULTURE GROUPS AND ACTION VS. NO-ACTION

Demographics		Did you take any action? (percentage)		p-value Chi²-test
		Yes	No	
Gender	Male	79.41	20.59	0.8651
	Female	80.41	19.59	
Age	25-30 years	77.27	22.73	0.5402
	31-45 years	84.44	15.56	
	46-55 years	78.57	21.43	
	56-83 years	72.22	27.78	
Level of education	Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less	86.67	13.33	0.4217
	Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s)	76.92	23.08	
	Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification	79.57	20.43	
Monthly household income	R 2 000 – R 5 000	82.14	17.86	0.9050
	R 5 001 – R 10 000	79.31	20.69	
	R 10 001 or more	79.41	20.59	
Culture	Black	80.30	19.70	0.9590
	Caucasian	80.00	20.00	

* Significant on the 5% level
n = 216

Table 5.32 shows that proportionately more women (80.41) took action compared to the male respondents (79.41%). However, the results of the chi-square tests indicate that no significant relationship exist between gender and taking action (p-value = 0.8651). Proportionately more respondents from the 31 to 45 years age group (84.44%) took action compared to the respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group (77.27%), the 46 to 55 years age group (78.57%) and the 56 to 83 years age group (72.22%). No significant relationship exists between age and taking action (p-value = 0.5402). Proportionately more respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group (86.67%) took action compared to the respondents from the Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (76.92%) and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group (79.57%). No significant relationship exists between level of education and taking action (p-value = 0.4217). Fairly equal proportions of respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group (82.14%), the R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group (79.41%) and the R 10 001 or more household income group (79.41%) took action. No significant relationship exists between monthly household income and taking action (p-value = 0.9050). Equal proportions of both the black (80.30%) and Caucasian respondents (80.00%) took action. No significant relationship exists between culture and taking action respectively (p-value = 0.9590). This implies that the demographic profile of respondents who did take action versus respondents who did not take action does not differ.

5.6.2 Respective relationships between demographic variables and the different types of complaint action

Tables 5.33 and 5.34 show the relationships between the different gender, age and level of education groups and the different types of private and public complaint actions, and the different household monthly income and culture groups with the different types of private and public complaint action respectively.

TABLE 5.33: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT GENDER GROUPS, AGE GROUPS AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION GROUPS AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC COMPLAINT ACTION

Types of complaint action		Gender (%)		p-value Chi²-test	Age (%)				p-value Chi²-test	Level of Education (%)			p-value Chi²-test
		Male	Female		25-30 years	31-45 years	46-55 years	56-83 years		Grade 12/ Standard 10/NTCIII or less	Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/ diploma(s)	Bachelors degree/ Postgraduate qualification	
		(n = 54)	(n = 119)		(n = 51)	(n = 76)	(n = 33)	(n = 13)		(n = 39)	(n = 60)	(n =74)	
Private action													
Told your friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	87.04	89.92	0.5747	96.08	88.16	84.85	76.92	0.1584	87.18	91.67	87.84	0.7510
	No	12.96	10.08		3.92	11.84	15.15	23.08		12.82	8.33	12.16	
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	38.89	49.58	0.1913	54.90	50.00	33.33	23.08	0.0723	35.90	56.67	43.24	0.1018
	No	61.11	50.42		45.10	50.00	66.67	76.92		64.10	43.33	56.76	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	38.89	31.93	0.3712	41.18	38.16	24.24	7.69	0.0671	35.90	36.67	31.08	0.7664
	No	61.11	68.07		58.82	61.84	75.76	92.31		64.10	63.33	68.92	
Public action													
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	66.67	62.18	0.5703	62.75	68.42	54.55	61.54	0.5784	61.54	70.00	59.46	0.4315
	No	33.33	37.82		37.25	31.58	45.45	38.46		38.46	30.00	40.54	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	33.33	31.93	0.8552	41.18	34.21	21.21	15.38	0.1378	30.77	38.33	28.38	0.4587
	No	66.67	68.07		58.82	65.79	78.79	84.62		69.23	61.67	71.62	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes	37.04	29.41	0.3183	41.18	25.00	27.27	46.15	0.1553	33.33	21.67	39.19	0.0932
	No	62.96	70.59		58.82	75.00	72.73	53.85		66.67	78.33	60.81	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation /department	Yes	1.85	1.68	0.9363	3.92	1.32	0.00	0.00	0.5083	0.00	1.67	2.70	0.5777
	No	98.15	98.32		96.08	98.68	100.00	100.00		100.00	97.30	97.30	
Wrote letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	0.00	1.68	0.3380	3.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.1839	0.00	0.00	2.70	0.2583
	No	100.00	98.32		96.08	100.00	100.00	100.00		100.00	100.00	97.30	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	0.00	0.84	0.4993	1.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.4925	0.00	0.00	1.35	0.5103
	No	100.00	99.16		98.04	100.00	100.00	100.00		100.00	100.00	98.65	

n = 173

* Significant on the 5% level

5.6.2.1 Relationships between gender and the different types of private and public complaint action

Table 5.33 indicates that fairly equal proportions of respondents from the male (87.04%) and female groups (89.92%) told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. Considering the results of the chi-square tests, no significant relationship exists between gender and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.5747). Proportionately more respondents from the male group (61.11%) did not switch between brand names compared to the respondents from the female group (50.42%).No significant relationship exists between gender and using another brand name (p-value = 0.1913). Fairly equal proportions of respondents from the male (61.11%) and female groups (68.07%) continued supporting the retailer where the product was purchased. No significant relationship exists between gender and stop supporting the retailer where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.3712). Fairly equal proportions of respondents from the male (66.67%) and female groups (62.18%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress. No significant relationship exists between gender and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.5703). Fairly equal proportions of respondents from the male (66.67%) and female groups (68.07%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress. No significant relationship exists between gender and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (p-value = 0.8552). Proportionately fewer respondents from the male group (62.96%) did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer compared to the respondents from the female group (70.59%). No significant relationship exists between gender and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.3183). Nearly none of the respondents from the different gender groups contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between gender and contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value = 0.9363), writing a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.3380), and contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.4993).

It is important to note that women and men did not differ, nor did members of the different age groups or education groups in the types of complaint actions they took. There were no significant relationships between the demographic variables of gender, age, level of education, monthly household income culture and the types of complaint actions they took.

5.6.2.2 Relationships between age and the different types of private and public complaint action

Table 5.33 shows that proportionately more respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group (96.08%), the 31 to 45 years age group (88.16%) and the 46 to 55 years age group (84.85%) told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the faulty/poor appliance compared to the 56 to 83 years age group (76.92%). However, considering the results of the chi-square tests, no significant relationship exists between age and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.1584). Proportionately more respondents from the 56 to 83 years age group (76.92%) and the 46 to 55 years age group (66.67%) did not use other brand names compared to the respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group (45.10%) and the 31 to 45 years age group (50.00%). No significant relationship exists between age and using another brand name (p-value = 0.0723). Proportionately more respondents from the 56 to 83 years age group (92.31%) and the 46 to 55 years age group (75.76%) continued supporting the retailer from which the product was purchased compared to the respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group (58.82%) and the 31 to 45 years age group (61.84%). However, no significant relationship exists between age and stop supporting the retailer where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.0671). Proportionately more respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group (68.42%), the 31 to 45 years age group (61.84%) and the 56 to 83 years age group (61.54%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress compared to the respondents from the 46 to 55 years age group (54.55%). No significant relationship exists between age and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.5784). Proportionately more respondents from the 56 to 83 years age group (84.62%) and the 46 to 55 years age group (78.79%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group (58.82%) and the 31 to 45 years age group (65.79%). No significant relationship exists between age and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (p-value = 0.1378). Proportionately fewer respondents from the 25 to 30 years age group (58.82%) and the 56 to 83 years age group (53.85%) did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer compared to the respondents from the 31 to 45 years age group (75.00%) and the 46 to 55 years age group (72.73%). No significant relationship exists between age and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.1553). Nearly none of the respondents from the different age groups contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between age and contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value =

0.5083), writing a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.1839), and contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.4925).

5.6.2.3 Relationships between level of education and the different types of private and public complaint action

Table 5.33 indicates that fairly equal proportions of respondents from the Grade 12/ Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group (87.18%), Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (91.67%) and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group (87.84%) told their friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience. However, considering the results of the chi-square tests, no significant relationship exists between level of education and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.7510). Proportionately more respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group (64.10%), and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group (56.76%) decided to use another brand name compared to the Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (43.33%). No significant relationship exists between level of education and using another brand name (p-value = 0.1018). Fairly equal proportions of respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group (64.10%), Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (63.33%) and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group (68.92%) continued supporting the retailer where the product was purchased. No significant relationship exists between level of education and stop supporting the retailer from which the product was purchased (p-value = 0.7664). Proportionately more respondents from the Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (70.00%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress compared to the respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group (64.54%), and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group (59.46%). No significant relationship exists between level of education and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.4315). Proportionately more respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group (69.23%), and the Bachelors degree/Postgraduate qualification group (71.62%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (61.67%). No significant relationship exists between level of education and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (p-value = 0.4587). Proportionately fewer respondents from the Grade 12/Standard 10 group/NTCIII or less group (66.67%), and the Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s) group (78.33%) did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, compared to the respondents from the Bachelors

degree/Postgraduate qualification group (60.81%). No significant relationship exists between level of education and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.0932). Nearly none of the respondents from the different level of education groups contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between level of education contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value = 0.5777), writing a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.2583), and contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.5103).

TABLE 5.34 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME GROUPS AND CULTURE GROUPS WITH THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC COMPLAINT ACTION

Types of complaint action		Monthly household income (%)			p-value Chi²-test	Culture (%)		p-value Chi²-test
		R 2 000 – R 5 000 (n = 46)	R 5 001 – R 10 000 (n = 46)	R 10 001 or more (n = 81)		Black (n =53)	Caucasian (n =120)	
Private action								
Told your friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	91.30	91.30	86.42	0.5912	90.57	88.33	0.6650
	No	8.70	8.70	13.58		9.43	11.67	
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	54.35	45.65	41.98	0.4034	66.04	37.50	0.0005*
	No	45.65	54.35	58.02		33.96	62.50	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	50.00	43.45	19.75	0.0007*	58.49	23.33	0.0001*
	No	50.00	56.52	80.25		41.51	76.67	
Public action								
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	67.39	71.74	56.79	0.1995	77.36	57.50	0.0123*
	No	32.61	28.26	43.21		22.64	42.50	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	50.00	36.96	19.75	0.0016*	60.38	20.00	0.0001*
	No	50.00	63.04	80.25		39.62	80.00	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes	36.96	34.78	27.16	0.4591	39.62	28.33	0.1416
	No	63.04	65.22	72.84		60.38	71.67	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	0.00	4.35	1.23	0.2498	1.89	1.67	0.9186
	No	100.00	95.65	98.77		98.11	98.33	
Wrote letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	2.17	0.00	1.23	0.6190	0.00	1.67	0.3445
	No	97.83	100. 00	98.77		100.00	98.33	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	0.00	0.00	1.23	0.5648	0.00	0.83	0.5051
	No	100.00	100.00	98.77		100.00	99.17	

n = 173
* Significant on the 5% level

5.6.2.4 Relationships between household monthly income and the different types of private and public complaint action

Table 5.34 shows that 91.30% of the respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group, 91.30% % respondent from the R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group and 86.42% of the respondents from the R 10 001 or more household income group told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. Considering the results of the chi-square tests, no significant relationship exists between monthly household income and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.5912). Fairly equal proportions of respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group (45.65%), R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group (54.35%) and R 10 001 or more household income group (58.02%) did not switch between brand names. No significant relationship exists between monthly household income and using another brand name (0.4034). Proportionately more respondents from the R 10 001 or more household income group (80.25%) continued supporting the retailers from whom the appliances were initially purchased, compared to respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group (50.00%) and R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group (56.62%) respectively. A significant relationship exists between monthly household income and stopping support to retailers (p = 0.0007). (Respondent from the R 10 001 or more household income group significantly more continued supporting the retailers from whom the appliances were initially purchased, compared to respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group and R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group respectively). A smaller proportion of respondents from the R 10 001 or more household income group (56.79%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, compared to the respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group (67.39%) and the R 5 001 – R 10 000 monthly household income group (71.74%). No significant relationship exists between monthly household income and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.1995). Proportionately more respondents from the R 10 001 or more household income group (80.25%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress compared to the respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group (50.00%) and the R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group (63.04%). A significant relationship exists between monthly household income and contacting retailers/manufacturers to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (p = 0.0016) respectively. (Respondents from the R 10 001 or more household income group (80.25%) significantly more did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress compared to the respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group and the R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group). Fairly equal proportions of

respondents from the R 2 000 – R 5 000 household income group (63.04%), R 5 001 – R 10 000 household income group (65.22%) and R 10 001 or more household income group (72.84%) did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer. No significant relationship exists between monthly household income and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.4591). Nearly none of the respondents from the different household income groups contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between monthly household income and contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (0.2498), writing a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.6190), and contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.5648).

5.6.2.5 Relationships between culture and the different types of private and public complaint action

Table 5.34 shows that 90.57% of the respondents from the black group and 88.33% of the respondents from the Caucasian (88.33%) group told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. Considering the results of the chi-square tests, no significant relationship exists between cultural group and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.6650). Proportionately more respondents from the black group (66.04%) decided to use another brand name compared to the respondents from the Caucasian group (37.50%). A significant relationship exists between cultural group and using another brand name (p-value = 0.0005). (Black respondents significantly more decided to use another brand name compared to the Caucasian respondents). Proportionately more respondents from the Caucasian respondents (76.67%) continued supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased, compared to the respondents from the black group (41.51%). A significant relationship exists between cultural group and stopping support to the retailer from whom the product was purchased (p-value = 0.0001). (Caucasian respondents (76.67%) significantly more continued supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased, compared to black respondents). Proportionately more respondents from the black group (77.36%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, compared to the Caucasian respondents (57.50%). A significant relationship exists between cultural group and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.0123). (Black respondents significantly more contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, compared to the Caucasian respondents). Proportionately more respondents from the black group (60.38%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the

respondents from the Caucasian group (20.00%). A significant relationship exists between cultural group and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (p-value = 0.0001). (Black respondents significantly more contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to Caucasian respondents. Proportionately more respondents from the Caucasian group (71.67%) did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, compared to the respondents from the black group (60.38%). No significant relationship exists between culture and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.1416). Nearly none of the respondents from the Caucasian or black groups contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between culture and the following types of complaint actions respectively:, contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.1416); contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value = 0.9186), writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.3445), and contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.5051).

5.7 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 5

Objective 5: To describe the relationship between product-specific variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Sub-objective 5.1 To describe dissatisfied consumers' perceptions of the severity of the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Respondents were asked to indicate the severity of their appliance's faulty or poor performance (Question 5, Section B – Addendum A). The results are summarised in Table 5.35.

TABLE 5.35: THE SEVERITY OF THE APPLIANCE'S FAULTY OR POOR PERFORMANCE

Severity of faulty or poor performance	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage n = 216	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Not severe at all	24	11.11	50.46	0.8918
Somewhat severe	85	39.35		
Very severe	71	32.87	49.54	
Extremely severe	36	16.67		
Total	216	100.00	100.00	

n = 216

A total of 11.11% of the respondents considered the performance failure as not severe at all and 39.35% considered the performance failure as somewhat severe. A total of 32.87% of the respondents considered the performance failure as very severe and 16.67% considered it as extremely severe. The z-test for equal proportions indicates that the proportion of respondents for the “not severe at all” to “somewhat severe” categories, compared to the proportion of respondents for the “very severe” to “extremely severe” categories is 50.46% to 49.54%. No significant difference exists between these proportions (p-value = 0.8918), implying that the proportions are distributed evenly.

Sub-objective 5.2 To describe the relationship between dissatisfied consumers’ perception of the severity of the functional/symbolic performance failure concerning major electrical household appliances and their consumer complaint behaviour

Table 5.36 shows the relationships between the perceived levels of severity of performance failure and the different types of complaint action.

TABLE 5.36: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PERCEIVED LEVELS OF SEVERITY OF PERFORMANCE FAILURE AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION

Types of complaint action		Perceived levels of severity (Percentage)		p-value Chi²-test
		Not severe at all to somewhat severe	Very severe to extremely severe	
Took action (n = 216)	Yes	70.64	89.72	<0.0001*
	No	29.36	10.28	
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	87.01	90.63	0.4730
	No	12.99	9.38	
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	35.06	55.21	0.0094*
	No	64.94	44.79	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	23.38	42.71	0.0097*
	No	76.62	57.29	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	61.04	65.63	0.6336
	No	38.96	34.38	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	31.17	33.33	0.8703
	No	68.83	66.67	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes	28.57	34.38	0.5114
	No	71.43	65.63	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	1.30	2.08	1.0000
	No	98.70	97.92	
Wrote letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	2.60	0.00	0.1967
	No	97.40	100.00	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	1.30	0.00	0.4451
	No	98.70	100.00	

n = 173 except for "took action"
* Significant on the 5% level

A larger proportion of the respondents who perceived the severity of the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe (89.72%) took action, compared to those who perceived the severity of the performance failure as not severe at all to somewhat severe (70.64%). A significant relationship exists between perceived levels of the severity of performance failure and taking complaint action (p-value < 0.0001). (Those respondents who considered the performance failure to be more severe significantly more took action than those who found the performance failure less severe). A total of 87.01% of respondents who perceived the severity of the performance failure as not severe at all to somewhat severe and a total of 90.63% of the respondents who perceived the severity of the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe, told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. No significant relationship exists between the perceived levels of the severity of performance failure and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.4730). Proportionately more respondents who perceived the severity of the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe (55.21%) used another brand name, compared to those who perceived the severity of the performance failure as not severe at all to somewhat severe (35.06%). A significant relationship exists between perceived levels of severity of performance failure and using another brand name (p-value =

0.0094). (Those respondents who considered the performance failure to be more severe significantly more used another brand name than those who found the performance failure less severe). A larger proportion of the respondents who perceived the severity of the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe (42.71%) stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased compared to those who perceived the severity of the performance failure as not severe at all to somewhat severe (23.38%). A significant relationship exists between perceived levels of severity of performance failure and stop supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased (p-value = 0.0097). (Those respondents who considered the performance failure to be more severe significantly more stopped supporting the retailer than those who found the performance failure less severe). Fairly equal proportions of respondents who perceived the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe (65.63%) and as not severe at all to somewhat severe (61.04%), contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress. No significant relationship exists between the perceived levels of the severity of the performance failure and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.6336). Fairly equal proportions of respondents who perceived the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe (66.67%) and not severe at all to somewhat severe (68.83%), did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress. No significant relationship exists between the perceived levels of the severity of the product failure and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (p-value = 0.8703). Fairly equal proportions of respondents who perceived the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe (65.63%) and as not severe at all to somewhat severe (71.43%), did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer. No significant relationship exists between the perceived levels of severity contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0.5114). Nearly none of the respondents in the groups who perceived the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe and not severe at all to somewhat severe respectively, contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between the perceived levels of severity and contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value = 1.0000), writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.1967), and contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.4451) respectively.

Those respondents who felt that the appliance's faulty or poor performance was very or extremely severe were more likely than those with less extreme ratings to take action , use another brand or stop supporting the retailer where the product was purchased. In contrast, for all other complaint actions, the level of severity did not impact action.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Both the functional and symbolic product performance dimensions were considered to be important in the respondents' evaluation of the performance failure of their appliances. Additionally, based on the results of the factor analysis, the respondents did not differentiate between the different concepts. Gender and culture played distinctive roles in the respondents' perception of the degree to which their appliances performed to their expectations. The female and black groups were significantly more certain that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance, compared to the male and Caucasian groups, respectively.

Over 80% of the respondents mainly attributed the failure of major household appliances to the manufacturers' "wrong-doing" (i.e. the manufacturer provided an appliance with poor styling and design features, used inferior materials/finishes (trimmings), or provided poor workmanship), compared to human error (13.03%), and other reasons (2.33%). The uni-variate analysis for the respective causal dimensions (i.e. locus, stability and controllability) indicate that the respondents perceived the causes for product failure as external (i.e., respondents mainly blamed manufacturers for product failure), relatively stable (i.e., uncertain about recurring product failure in the future) and relatively controllable (i.e., the respondents were relatively undecided about who had control over the factors that caused product failure). Significant differences exist between black and Caucasian respondents' perceptions of the cause for product failure in terms of the locus and controllability dimensions. Whereas the black group considered the cause for product failure to be relatively external and relatively controllable, the Caucasian group perceived the cause for product failure as external and relatively less controllable. (Therefore, the black group considered the cause for product failure less external and more controllable than did the white respondents). Both groups considered the cause for product failure to be relatively stable.

Over 76% of the respondents in this study were very to extremely dissatisfied, while nearly a quarter of the respondents experienced slight to moderate dissatisfaction. Despite the high level of dissatisfaction, nearly 20% of the respondents did not take any action at all. The respondents who took action, took private action (i.e. complained to family and friends, decided to use another brand name and stopped supporting the retailer), and complained publicly to retailers and/or took their appliance to independent repair services. Respondents

were more likely to take part in private than public complaint behaviour. Almost none of the respondents engaged in formal complaint behaviour.

The main reason for not taking any action was respondents' perception that complaining was not worth their time and effort. The main reasons for telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience were "to feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer" and "to get rid of my anger/frustration" (i.e. to gain social support). The main reason for switching brands related to the perceived unreliability of the brand name concerned. Similarly, the respondents stopped supporting retailers because they felt that they could no longer trust them. Respondents contacted retailers/manufacturers mainly to obtain redress when/while their appliances were still covered by their guarantees. The respondents who contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress wanted to assert themselves ("stand up for their rights as consumers" and wanted to "make an objection after their effort to obtain redress/compensation for the appliance had failed"). Respondents mainly contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer because their appliance guarantees had expired.

Contradicting expectation, the group of respondents who did not engage in negative word-of-mouth, considered the cause for product failure as more external compared to those who did engage in negative word-of-mouth. However, both groups considered the cause for the product failure as relatively controllable and relatively unstable.

Both the group of respondents who decided to use another brand name and the group who did not, considered the cause for the product failure as external and as relatively controllable. The group who used another brand name considered the cause for product failure to be more stable compared to group who did not use another brand name.

Contrary to expectation, the group of respondents who stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased believed that the cause for product failure less external and more stable than the respondents who did not stop supporting the retailer. However, both these groups considered the cause for the product failure as relatively controllable.

Both the group of respondents who contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress and the group who did not, considered the cause for product failure to be external and relatively controllable. Both theses groups considered the stability dimensions as relatively stable.

Contrary to expectation, the group of respondents who did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, considered the cause for product failure to be more external and more unstable compared to the group who did contact the retailer/manufacturer. However, both these groups of respondents considered the product failure to be relatively controllable.

Both the groups of respondents who contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer and those who did not, considered the product failure to be external and relatively controllable. However, the group of respondents who did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, considered the cause for product failure to be more stable compared to the group who contacted a repair service.

Respondents who were very angry to extremely angry significantly more took complaint action, told friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience, decided to use another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased, and contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress than respondents who were not angry at all to reasonably angry.

No significant relationships were found between gender, age and level of education on the one hand, and the different types of complaint action on the other – confirming that the demographic variables (i.e. gender, age and level of education) for respondents engaging in the different types of private and public complaint action, do not differ (Singh 1990a, 1990b; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). However, respondents from the lower income groups were significantly more inclined to stop supporting retailers, and to contact retailers/manufacturers to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, compared to respondents from upscale income groups. Additionally, black respondents significantly more decided to use another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer, complained to retailers and manufacture to obtain redress and complained for other reasons than obtaining redress – compared to the Caucasian respondents.

Those respondents who considered the performance failure to be more severe were more likely to take action, use another brand name and stop supporting the retailer than those who found the performance failure less severe - thus confirming previous research.

In chapter 6 the research results of this study are discussed and interpreted against the theories and research that were chosen as conceptual background for this study.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of data implies that the broader meaning and the implication of the research results as well as their congruence or lack of congruence with the results of other researchers are sought (Kruger *et al.,* 2005:218). Whereas the conceptual definition of interpretation includes both "the search for meaning" and "the search for implication", this chapter only focuses on the meaning of the research results. The implication of the results is dealt with in Chapter 7.

The purpose of this study was to explain consumers' complaint behaviour against the theoretical background, and to explore and describe the role of specific consumer-related variables, product specific variables, and causal attribution in dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance of major electrical household appliances.

In this chapter the research results are discussed and interpreted against the viewpoints of the theories that were chosen as conceptual background for this research, the work of previous researchers and other theories deemed necessary for the interpretation of the results.

The discussion and interpretation is presented in a specific sequence. The first part deals with consumers' perceptions of major electrical household appliance failure. The second part focuses on consumers' attributions for the performance failure of major electrical household appliances. The third part deals with consumers' dissatisfaction with the performance of major electrical household appliances. The fourth part focuses on consumers' complaint behaviour regarding major electrical household appliances. Finally, the last part deals with the role of attribution, product-specific and consumer-specific variables in consumers' complaint behaviour.

6.2 CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE FAILURE

It is clear from the results that respondents experienced problems with all types of major electrical household appliances included in this research. According to the Income and Expenditure of Households Survey of 2000 (Gauteng area: including the Witwatersrand, Pretoria, Centurion and Akasia), 33% of the participating households' expenditure on appliances was made on refrigerators, deep freezers and refrigerator/deep freezer combinations (as a category) compared to 15% on stoves and ovens (including microwave ovens) (as a category), 15% on washing machines, dishwashers and tumble dryers (as a category), 5% on vacuum cleaners, polishers and carpet cleaners and 32% on small electrical appliance and non-electrical appliances (as a collective category).

The above-mentioned survey shows that refrigerators and the other cooling appliances constitute a very large part of consumers' expenditure compared to the other categories of appliances. This might explain why 17.59% of the respondents in this study had experienced problems with their refrigerators. In general, microwave ovens are less expensive than stoves and ovens (Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007), which may cause higher purchase figures for microwave ovens, and may explain why 22% of the respondents under consideration experienced dissatisfaction with their microwave ovens compared to 19.45% of the respondents who experienced dissatisfaction with their ovens and stoves (as a collective category) (refer to Chapter 5, par. 5.2.2). In many households, refrigerators, freezers, microwave ovens, stoves, ovens and washing machines are considered to be high priority appliances without which many people would not be able to function properly. According to Kachale (2005:26-32), less essential appliances such as dishwashers and tumble dryers are considered to be luxury appliances and are not purchased as often as the other essential appliances (see also Erasmus *et al.*, 2005; Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007). This might explain why the respondents in this study experienced fewer product problems with dishwashers and tumble dryers as compared to other (more essential) appliances.

The literature about product failure distinguishes between functional performance dimensions (i.e. physical performance, durability, ease of use and ease of care) and symbolic performance dimensions (i.e. what the product does for, or symbolises to, the consumer in a psychological sense). Evidence from the literature hints that for some products (i.e. utilitarian products such as laundry soap), determinant attributes may involve primarily instrumental performance, while both instrumental and expressive dimensions may be features for products where other people judge

consumers based on basis of what they purchase, such as clothing, major appliances, furniture and cars (Swan & Combs, 1976; Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999; Belk in Clark *et al.,* 2000; Hawkins *et al*., 2001:641). Considering the results of this study, specifically the results of the open question (*Describe what happened/went wrong*) (Chapter 5, par. 5.3.1), it appears that performance failure of major household appliances could be mainly associated with the functional performance failure dimension, with more than 52% of the responses indicating ”unusual performance/functioning in terms of intended end-use”. One would expect that consumers' dissatisfaction with household appliances would be determined mainly by the functional performance failures and to a lesser degree by symbolic failures, since the major function of these products are “to perform their job well to save time and energy”. However, from the results of the exploratory factor analysis (Chapter 5, par. 5.3.2) - looking deeper than the surface (results of the open questions), it is evident that the respondents did not actually differentiate between the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of dissatisfactory major household appliances. The respondents actually considered the functional and symbolic performance failure dimensions collectively when reasoning about the performance failure of their appliances.

Consistent with the assumptions of script theory (Bozinoff & Roth, 1983; Brown, 1992) and the research of Erasmus, Boshoff and Rousseau (2002), the results of this study, among other things, imply that the respondents not only have a specific script (event schema) concerning the acquisition of major electrical household appliances (from the assessment of needs to the purchase process, delivery and installation of major appliances), but also concerning the post-purchase evaluation of appliance performance (from the evaluation of actual product performance in terms of existing expectations to engaging in consumer complaint behaviour). In this case, the respondents did not differentiate between functional and symbolic performance when they experienced dissatisfaction with the performance of their appliances, and most probably also had not differentiated between these factors when they initially evaluated the products during the purchase decision.

Whether a particular item is purchased because of its presumed superior functional performance or because of some other reason, consumers have some level of expected performance in mind, ranging from quite low to quite high, that it should provide (Hawkins *et al*., 2001:639). Expectations are based upon prior experience with the product, word-of-mouth endorsements/criticisms and/or the marketing efforts of companies (Woodruff *et al*., 1983; Solomon, 1996:325; Laufer, 2002). When a product does not live up to the consumer's expectations, the consumer will experience disconfirmation. The traditional disconfirmation of

expectations paradigm recognises a direct link from disconfirmation to satisfaction/dissatisfaction. With attribution theory and the work of previous researchers in mind, it was, however, reasoned in this research that disconfirmation of expectations does not lead directly to consumer dissatisfaction, and that the effects of disconfirmation are mediated by attributional processing. However, disconfirmation is a prerequisite for attributional processing and satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

The mean score of 2.67 (which is more than 2.5) indicates that the respondents were not completely sure that the appliance's combined functional and symbolic performance was less than the initial expectations (See Chapter 5, Table 5.7). This may imply that they either did not have clear expectations with regard to how the appliance should perform (i.e. what the product should do for them), or did not know how to evaluate appliance performance. Research evidence suggests that product experience is important for customer satisfaction. Consumers who have no prior product experience are relatively easy to satisfy, but with increasing experience it becomes more difficult to satisfy them. Then, when they reach a certain level of experience, satisfaction again becomes easier to obtain. At this point, consumers are regarded as "experts" because they generate more realistic expectations (Engeset *et al.* in Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2006:331). When inexperienced consumers buy major electrical household appliances they may tend to focus only on a small number of product features and on non-functional attributes, such as brand name and price to distinguish among alternatives. Additionally, they are more likely to rely on the opinions of others, who in many cases lack product experience. When interpreting marketing communications of companies, such as advertisements, they may be more impressed by the sheer amount of technical information presented in an advertisement than by the actual significance of the claims made (Erasmus *et al.*, 2005; Urbany *et al.* in Solomon *et al.*, 2006:270-271).

Consumers with considerable experience in purchasing and using any product will have had an opportunity to acquire knowledge about the basic aspects of the product's performance and develop a basis for forming specific prior expectations of performance and for evaluating actual performance (Day, 1984). Therefore, experienced and knowledgeable consumers will be better able to discern when a product's performance does not match prior expectations for that product (Sujan in Somasundaram, 1993). On the other hand, inexperienced and less knowledgeable consumers may struggle to determine whether product performance fails to meet expectations (Day & Landon, 1976; Day, 1977).

Contradicting the above-mentioned reasoning, younger respondents, respondents with a lower level of education (both of which are generally considered to be less experienced and knowledgeable about the performance of appliances) and respondents with a lower income (from this study) were more certain that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less (but not definitely less) than their initial expectations compared to their older counterparts, respondents with a higher level of education and respondents with higher incomes. However, there is no statistical significant evidence that age, level of education and level of monthly household income played significant roles in respondents' perceptions of the degree to which their appliance's performed to their expectations (see Chapter 5, Table 5.7).

Nevertheless, gender and culture played distinctive roles in the respondents' perception of the degree to which their appliances' performed to their expectations. Females were significantly more certain that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance compared to males (see Chapter 5, Table 5.7). This may imply that the female respondents had definite/explicit expectations about their appliances' product performance and/or knew how to evaluate product performance (i.e., determine whether the product performed according to expectation or not) compared to the male respondents. In many cases the general division of household labour among South African couples is still drawn along traditional lines, implying that females and males perform stereotypical household tasks that are associated with their specific gender roles. Since females generally use major electrical household appliances more often than males, it can be safely argued that the female respondents might have gained more knowledge and experience with major electrical household appliances and were therefore better able than their male counterparts to determine whether these products performed according to expectations.

Due to their continual consumption of major appliances during the old and new political dispensation, Caucasian consumers, in the LSM groups 5 to 10, can generally be regarded as "more experienced and knowledgeable", therefore, having "realistic" expectations concerning product performance, However, the results of this study show that Caucasian respondents were significantly more uncertain that their appliances' combined functional performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance compared to the black respondents (see Chapter 5, Table 5.7). Since blacks have gained access to the higher socio-economic classes within the last few years, they probably have been exposed to a variety of marketing efforts of companies, have gained experience with the major electrical household appliances that they own and increasingly have become more sophisticated compared to the past (Research Surveys, 2006; Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007). However, they may still need to catch up

with the more experienced Caucasian consumers who may have more realistic expectations for product performance. It is therefore postulated that the differences in Caucasian and black respondents' perception of the degree to which their appliances performed to their expectations are related to the reality of their expectations, which are based on their product knowledge and personal experience with products.

From an expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm point of view, one could argue that females and black respondents would therefore probably be more dissatisfied and inclined to complain more compared to male and Caucasian respondents respectively. Against the viewpoints of attribution theory and the reasoning in this research, such a link can, however, not be made (see Chapter 3, par. 3.4.2).

To bring the above interpretation in perspective with the sub-objectives, it should be noted that the interpretation relates to sub-objectives 1.1 and 1.2.

6.3 CONSUMERS' ATTRIBUTIONS FOR THE PERFORMANCE FAILURE OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

In the disconfirmation paradigm, satisfaction/dissatisfaction is a direct consequence of the disconfirmation process. However, in attribution theory, people are seen as constantly searching for reasons to explain why an event turned out the way it did. The underlying causes for a specific event or outcome are very important if they are to understand and predict the environment accurately, make valuable decisions and possibly control behaviour and events (Mizerski, Golden & Kernan, 1979; Williams, 1982:70; Kelley in Fiske & Taylor, 1991:23; Försterling, 2001:11-12). In this study the question that comes to mind is: what role does causal attribution play in consumers' explanation of their appliances' performance failure? The answer to this question lies in investigating consumers' perceptions of the causes (attributions) for the performance failure of their appliances, the dimensional quality (i.e. locus, stability and controllability) of the perceived causes, as well as the differences between specific demographic groups concerning the dimensional quality of perceived causes. Additionally, an investigation into the dimensional quality of perceived causes for product failure forms the foundation for the explanation of consumers' emotions (anger) experienced in response to the product failure.

Studies on consumers' dissatisfaction with durable products (including household appliances), their reasons for being dissatisfied and their subsequent complaint behaviour showed that the respondents provided reasons that were primarily external to themselves (i.e. related to the

products as such, the manufacturers and the retailers) (Day & Ash, 1979; Rousseau, 1988; Broadbridge and Marshall, 1995). In this study, the majority (84.65%) of the respondents mainly attributed the failure of major household appliances to the manufacturers' "wrong-doing" (i.e. the manufacturer provided an appliance with poor styling and design features, used inferior materials/finishes (trimmings), or provided poor workmanship) compared to human error (13.03%), and other reasons (2.33%), confirming the results of previous studies (see Chapter 5, Table 5.25). This might be indicative of people's inclination to attribute bad outcomes (in this case product failures) to external factors (manufacturers) rather than to their own transgressions (i.e. the person operating the appliance did not know how to use it, mistreated (abused) it or did not follow the prescribed operating instructions). The latter attribution fallacy is better known as "self-serving attributional bias" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:67, 93; Försterling, 2001:103-105). From an attribution theory point of view, it is important to note that people's attributions for negative events (in this case product failures) do not necessarily deal with the true causes of things but rather with their perceptions of what the causes for the negative events are (Williams, 1982:70). This is an important notion, since people's behaviour is influenced by their perceptions of the truth rather than by reality per se.

Weiner's influential taxonomy for causal attributions allows the researcher to "group qualitatively distinct causes as the same or different" (Weiner, 1986:17, 44-46; Försterling, 2001:110-111). Theoretically it is possible to classify the causes for negative outcomes within one of eight cells (2 locus levels x 2 stability levels x 2 controllability levels) (Hewstone, 1989:33; Folkes, 1984; Weiner, 1986:50; Oliver, 1989; Weiner, 2000) (refer to Chapter 3, par 3.4.1). In this study, respondents' perceived causes for appliance failures were classified on the basis of Weiner's locus x stability x controllability classification scheme. However, Table 6.1 shows that only four of the eight cells in terms of the locus x stability x controllability were relevant to this study. It should be noted that the researcher provided the respondents with a list of causes from which they had to select what they believed was the most important cause for the performance failure or poor performance of their appliances. No additional causes were provided by the respondents.

TABLE 6.1: PERCEIVED CAUSES OF PRODUCT FAILURE ON THE BASIS OF LOCUS X STABILITY X CONTROLLABILITY CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

Classification in terms of dimensions	Causes for product failure
Internal-stable-controllable	N/A
Internal-stable-uncontrollable	N/A
Internal-unstable-controllable	The person operating the appliance mistreated (abused) it
Internal-unstable-uncontrollable	N/A
External-stable-controllable	The purchaser of the appliance did not do enough research before purchasing it The manufacturer provided an appliance with poor styling and design features Manufacturers' use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings)
External-stable-uncontrollable	N/A
External-unstable-controllable	The manufacturer provided poor workmanship
External-unstable-uncontrollable	Flaws/defects are inevitable with complicated appliances

The above classification makes sense for all the causes of product failure with the exception of the causes "The purchaser of the appliance did not do enough research before purchasing it" and "The manufacturer provided poor workmanship". This could be explained by the notion that attribution theory does not necessarily deal with the true causes of things but with what a person perceives the cause to be (Williams, 1982:69). Respondents might find it difficult to acknowledge their own mistakes and might therefore rather perceive their lack of doing research as external when they, for instance, reason that they are not to blame for doing too little research, but that some external factor is to be blamed. This might be indicative of peoples' preference to attribute bad outcomes (in this case product failures) to external factors rather than to themselves. A respondent thinking that manufacturers are in control of their workmanship, might believe that poor workmanship is caused by the manufacturers' unwillingness to provide good workmanship, implying that the reasons for poor workmanship were factors within the manufacturers' power.

Weiner suggests that, despite the large number of perceived causes for any one event, the specific type of cause attributed to an event is less important than its latent dimensionality (Weiner, 1986:121; Ployhart & Harold, 2004). In a product failure context, this implies that although there may be many different causes for product failure, the causes as such are less important than the way in which consumers perceive the dimensionality of these causes. Thus the causes for product failure will not determine the specific complaint action taken but rather the

dimensionality of those causes (Curren & Folkes, 1987; Folkes, 1988, 1990:150-155; Ployhart & Harold, 2004).

The uni-variate analysis for the locus dimension (mean score of 8.02 out of 27) indicates that the respondents perceived the causes for product failure as external (see Chapter 5, Table 5.26), implying that respondents mainly blamed manufacturers for product failure. When explaining respondents' perception of the locus for causes, it is important to bear in mind that the attribution process may be influenced by persistent errors. People generally find it difficult to accept responsibility for failure and therefore might attribute causes for failure rather to external factors than internal factors (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:67, 93; Försterling, 2001:103-105). As such, research suggests that people are likely to blame others for a product failure (Phau & Sari, 2004). In this study, the prevalence of external locus might be due to respondents' preference for attributing product failures to external factors rather than internal factors (self-serving attributional bias).

Table 5.27 (Chapter 5) indicates that the respondents interpreted the locus dimension differently for the particular causes. Poor workmanship (mean score of 5.89 out of 27), the inevitability of product flaws (mean score 7.25 out of 27) and defects, the manufacturer's use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings) (mean scores of 7.30 out of 27) and the manufacturer's provision of poor styling and design features (mean score of 9.08 out of 27) were respectively evaluated as external (i.e. consumers believed that the cause of the product failure could be attributed to the manufacturer or some outside agent in the environment or situation or product). However, when one compares the above-mentioned mean scores (on the index of 1 to 9 out of 27), it is evident that respondents considered the manufacturer's provision of poor styling and design features to be less external compared to the other causes. Concrete concepts i.e., "poor workmanship" (as a category) and "product flaws" and "inferior materials and finishes" (as a category) are considered to be more external than "poor styling and design features" (as a category). This difference may be due to the fact that people may struggle to define the concept of "poor styling and design features" (i.e., it may be regarded as abstract or vague). The lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance (mean score of 12.64 out of 27) and the abuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it (mean score of 14.78 out of 27) were both evaluated as relatively external. This contradicts logical reasoning. The lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance and the abuse of the appliance are usually considered to be internal attributions, since consumers themselves are responsible for these causes of product failure. These mean scores might indicate that respondents were biased in attributing these causes of product failure (i.e. respondents denied their own responsibility for product failure by perceiving causes that would normally be considered to be internal, as external).

The uni-variate analysis for the stability dimension (mean score of 13.63 out of 27) indicates that the respondents perceived the causes as relatively stable (i.e. a mean score of 13.63 which falls within the range (index) of 10 to 18 out of 27) (see Chapter 5, Table 5.26). The stability dimension signals whether the same problem can be expected in the future or whether the event was perceived as a coincidence and not likely to recur in the future (Laufer, 2002). Failure attributed to stable factors implies the (fearful) anticipation that it will recur in future, meaning that consumers could be more certain of future product failure (Folkes, 1984). In this case, however, respondents were relatively undecided concerning the stability dimension (i.e., uncertain about recurring product failure in the future), which might explain consumers' passivity regarding formal complaint behaviour. Additionally, Table 5.27 (Chapter 5) indicates that the respondents evaluated all the causes for product failure similarly as far as the stability dimension was concerned.

The controllability dimension reflects the power available to the different role-players to alter the outcome (Laufer, 2002; Weiner, 2000). The uni-variate analysis for the controllability dimension (mean score of 14.86 out of 27) indicates that the respondents perceived the causes as relatively controllable (i.e. a mean score of 14.86 that falls within the range of 10 to 18 out of 27) (see Chapter 5, Table 5.26). It seems therefore that respondents were relatively undecided about who had control over the factors that caused the product failure. Table 5.27 (Chapter 5) shows that the respondents interpreted the controllability dimension differently for particular causes. The inevitability of product flaws and defects was evaluated as relatively uncontrollable (mean score of 12.46 out of 27) (i.e. consumers believed that retailers and manufacturers did not really have control over flaws and defects). The abuse of appliance (i.e. misuse of the appliance on the part of the person operating it) was evaluated as relatively controllable with a score of 18.00 out of 27 (i.e. the highest score located closest to the 19 to 27 benchmark (index). The respondents considered this particular cause to be more controllable compared to the purchaser's lack of research prior to purchasing the appliance (mean score of 14.50 out of 27). Poor workmanship on the part of the manufacturer (mean score of 15.25 out of 27), the manufacturer's provision of poor styling and design features (mean score of 15.70 out of 27) and the manufacturer's use of inferior materials and finishes (trimmings) (mean score of 16.27 out of 27) were considered to be fairly controllable.

Recently, a number of articles suggested that consumer segments assess blame differently in situations where products are considered to be defective or dangerous (i.e. product harm crisis) (Laufer, Silver & Meyer, 2005). For example, Laufer and Gillespie (2004) found differences in blame attributions between men and women. Women blamed a company more than men did for

a product harm crisis because they felt more personally vulnerable. Laufer *et al*. (2005) proposed a conceptual model to study differences between older and younger consumers' attributions of blame for a product harm crisis. They suggested that older consumers are less impacted by fundamental attribution error in certain situations and are also less likely to infer controllability. Studies in psychology also suggest that blame attributions can differ across consumers in different countries (Weiner, 1986:73-75; Au *et al*., 2001; Laufer, 2002; Poon *et al.,* 2004). In a consumer context, Laufer (2002) suggests that consumers in individualistic societies may be more likely to attribute product failures to a company, whereas consumers in collectivistic societies may rather consider situational factors than simply blame the company.

No significant differences exist between respondents' perceptions of the cause for product failure in terms of the locus, stability and controllability dimensions and gender, age, level of education and monthly household income respectively. Generally, respondents from the different gender, age, level of education and monthly household income groups considered the cause for product failure to be external, relatively unstable to relatively stable and relatively controllable (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.28). However, a significant difference exists between black and Caucasian respondents' perceptions of the cause for product failure in terms of the locus and controllability dimensions. Whereas the black group considered the cause for product failure to be relatively external (locus = 10.07) and relatively controllable (controllability = 15.62), the Caucasian group perceived the cause for product failure as external (locus = 7.12) and relatively less controllable (controllability = 14.52). No significant difference exists between black and Caucasian respondents' perception of the stability of the cause for product failure. Both groups considered the cause for product failure to be relatively stable (blacks: stability = 14.13, Caucasians: stability = 13.41) (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.28). There is ample evidence that the principle of causal attribution differs across cultures (Weiner, 1986:73-75; Au *et al.,* 2001; Laufer, 2002; Poon *et al.,* 2004). Considering previous research results, the differences in black and Caucasian respondents' attributions for blame can be explained in terms of the individualistic/collectivistic dimensions of culture. Additionally, Weiner suggested that blame is related to the locus and controllability dimensions and these two dimensions of attributions lead to an overall judgement of culpability (Laufer *et al*., 2005).

People in individualistic cultures exhibit a tendency to be more concerned with their own needs, goals, interests, achievements and success. Self-reliance, self-interest, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-fulfilment are prevalent manifestations of individualism, implying a rejection of dependency on others. Therefore, individualists stress the uniqueness of the individual (i.e. think in terms of "I") and attribute success to individual effort rather than to group efforts (Chelminski,

2001; Hofstede in Liu & McClure, 2001). On the other hand, people in collectivistic cultures tend to emphasise sharing ideas for the good of the group, feeling of involvement in other lives, fitting in the group and behaving according to the social norms that are designed to maintain social harmony among the members of the in-group (i.e. think in terms of "we") (Chelminski, 2001; Hofstede in Liu & McClure, 2001). From a cross-cultural point of view, black and Caucasian cultures are traditionally regarded as collectivistic (i.e., group-oriented) and individualistic (i.e., self-oriented) societies respectively. Most of the South African black people subscribe to a mixture of African and Western values while most of the South African Caucasian people subscribe to Western values (Rousseau, 2003b:41). The principle underlying the African collective will is the concept of *ubuntu,* a term describing societal/community supportiveness and cohesion (Mbigi & Maree in Rousseau, 2003b:401).

In this study, Caucasians (individualists) blamed manufacturers significantly more for product failures (locus = 7.12) compared to the blacks (collectivists) (locus = 10.07) (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.28). Since individualists attribute success to their own efforts, they might explain failures (specifically product failures) in terms of factors external to them. Another possible reason for cross-cultural differences in attribution styles is related to differences in level of locus of control (Laufer, 2002). When failures are viewed as controllable, blame is targeted to the entity perceived as having had control (Laufer, 2002). Cross-cultural research has shown that Westerners (individualists) and Orientals (collectivists) differ in their sense of control. Westerners believe that reward is dependent upon one's behaviour or contingent upon forces within one's control (i.e. success and achievement is related to one's own effort), implying that when attributing causes for failure to external parties, they may also believe that failures are within those parties' control). Orientals believe that events are predetermined by fate, which may lead them to believe that they or other parties have less control over events such as product failure (Slowikowski & Jarratt 1997; Lowe & Corkindale, 1998; Laufer, 2002; Poon *et al.*, 2004). However, in this study, the black respondents considered the cause for product failure to be relatively controllable (control = 15.62) and the Caucasians perceived the cause as relatively less controllable (control = 14.52). (A significant difference exists concerning race and consumers' perception of the controllability dimension.) The Black respondents believed that manufacturers were more in control of product failures compared to the Caucasian respondents' belief in this regard. This implies that cross-cultural comparisons of similarities and differences concerning black and Caucasian respondents' perceptions of the causes for product failure in terms of both the locus and controllability dimension, might shed some light on their judgements of culpability and their subsequent complaint behaviour.

Consumers experience both dissatisfaction and anger in response to product failures. Bougie *et al.* (2003) indicate that anger and dissatisfaction are different emotions, with dissatisfaction being antecedent to, and necessary for, anger. From an attribution theory point of view, consumers' interpretation of the dimensional quality of perceived causes for product failure forms the foundation for the explanation of their emotions experienced in response to the product failure. Differently stated, specific emotions follow from specific causal attributions for product failure (Neumann, 2000). Weiner (1986) argues that the precise emotion felt is partly dependent on the attribution that the consumer makes about who is responsible. Weiner proposes that anger results from the external attribution of a negative outcome, whereas guilt results from the internal attribution of a negative outcome. Additionally, anger follows from a negative outcome (in this case product failure) that is perceived as controllable by others. Folkes *et al.,* (1987:539) and Folkes (1990:152) explain that consumers who believe that manufacturers/retailers have control over the cause of product failure, will feel angry and desire revenge more than when they believe them to lack control.

Cognitive appraisal theory, mostly attributed to the work of Lazarus and his colleagues, has gained wide acceptance in the fields of psychology, sociology and consumer behaviour – in understanding peoples' behaviour when they are confronted with a stressful situation (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:152-159; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur, Moschis & Lee, 1999). Cognitive appraisal has been described as "a process through which the person evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to his/her well-being, and if so, in what ways" (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:143-145; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). The cognitive appraisal theory of emotion argues that emotive reactions are often an outcome of cognitive appraisal efforts. That is, specific emotions and their intensity are tied to an appraisal of the event eliciting the emotional response (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). In a consumer behaviour context, specifically product failure, the specific emotions that result from cognitive appraisal vary according to the attributions of responsibility (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Forrester & Maute, 2001). Negative emotions associated with negative consumption events include anger, worry, irritation, depression and disappointment (Westbrook, 1987; Mattsson *et al*., 2004). Westbrook (1987) found that complaint behaviour appears to be directly related to affects involving anger, hate, disgust and contempt.

The respondents in this study mainly perceived the causes for product failure to be external to themselves. However, the respondents were relatively undecided as far as the controllability and stability dimensions of the causes for product failure were concerned. This implies that they were not certain whether the manufacturers could control the cause for product failure (i.e. they did

not know whether the manufacturers could be held responsible for the product failure), nor did they know whether the product failure could be attributed to something temporary/unstable (a failure that occurs only once in a while) or to something that is likely to occur each time the product is purchased or used (stable). Respondents' uncertainty concerning the manufacturers' power to control product failures may explain why nearly one half of the respondents experienced no anger to reasonable anger and the other half were very angry to extremely angry respectively. Respondents who are uncertain about the manufacturers' power to control product failures, might probably experience less anger compared to respondents who are certain about the manufacturers' power to control product failures. Since the respondents were in effect not very angry about the product failure it can be expected that they will not truly engage in formal complaint action. From an attribution theory perspective, the quality of emotions is determined by locus and controllability factors, whereas the stability factor tends to intensify them (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:52). For example, if a cause is seen as stable, the resulting affect will be more pronounced than if the cause is unstable (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:52). In this study, the cause for product failure was considered to be relatively stable, implying that the resulting anger would be less pronounced if the cause were considered to be stable.

The above interpretation relates to sub-objectives 3.1 to 3.3 and 3.5 (partially).

6.4 CONSUMERS' DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

Prior to purchasing and consuming a product, consumers form expectations of its performance in a particular use situation. After or while using a product, consumers will evaluate its performance according to their specific expectations. In terms of the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm, consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction results from a type of comparison process (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Chen-Yu *et al.*, 1999; Giese & Cote, 2000; Desmeules, 2002). Consumer dissatisfaction is therefore conceptualised as a negative feeling (emotion), in response to, or following, a specific consumption experience (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Day, 1984; Westbrook, 1987; Swan & Oliver, 1989; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998). The post-purchase evaluation of dissatisfactory major electrical household appliances thus involves cognitive activities (disconfirmation) as well as an affective or emotional component (dissatisfaction). The confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm proposes that dissatisfaction is a direct outcome of disconfirmation. However, evidence suggests that consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is mediated by causal attributions for disconfirmation (product failure) (Oliver, 1989; Manrai & Gardner, 1991; Laufer, 2002).

Only the consumer can decide whether he/she is dissatisfied. A consumer's level of dissatisfaction experienced may vary for several reasons. A significant majority (76.28%) of the respondents in this study were very dissatisfied to extremely dissatisfied, while nearly a quarter (23.72%) of the respondents experienced slight to moderate dissatisfaction (see Chapter 5, Table 5.8). Well-informed consumers may have more dissatisfactory product experiences simply because they know what to expect and are more likely to spot a problem. Knowledgeable consumers are able to better discern when a product's performance does not match prior expectations for that product (Somasundaram, 1993), as might be the case with consumers who belong to the LSM groups 5 to 10 who theoretically have gained experience concerning the operation of major electrical household appliances and therefore have acquired knowledge accordingly. Alternatively, certain consumers may not recognise their dissatisfaction with poor product performance because of ignorance or inexperience. It is also possible that consumers might experience dissatisfaction due to unrealistic expectations about product performance, as might be the case with the newly emerging middle class (i.e. respondents who had previously been economically disadvantaged and have now gained access to the LSM groups 5 to 10) (see par. 6.2).

The respondents' relatively high levels of dissatisfaction experienced, create the impression that a fair amount of respondents would certainly engage in complaint action, specifically formal complaint action (see Chapter 5, Table 5.8). The respondents who took action, took private action (i.e. complained to family and friends, decided to use another brand name and stopped supporting the retailer), and complained publicly to retailers and/or took their appliance to independent repair services. However, almost no responses were obtained for contacting a consumer protection organisation/department, writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacting a legal representative (see Chapter 5, Table 5.10). Additionally, despite the high level of dissatisfaction experienced, nearly 20% of the respondents did not take any action at all (see Chapter 5, Table 5.9). This study therefore confirms the general supposition that relatively fewer formal complaints are made than would be expected from expressed levels of dissatisfaction (Barnes & Kelloway, 1980; Ash in Oliver, 1987; Dolinsky, 1994; Tronvoll, 2007). Although consumer complaint behaviour is presumably triggered by feelings of dissatisfaction with a product (Singh, 1988; Morel *et al.*, 1997; Halstead, 2002), dissatisfaction has been found to explain only a small percentage of complaining behaviour (Day, 1984; Oliver 1987; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Singh & Pandya, 1991; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). This implies that consumers' complaint action is not merely a matter of the perceived degree of dissatisfaction with their appliances only, but that additional variables beyond satisfaction also have a role to play.

The foregoing interpretation relates to sub-objective 1.3.

6.5 CONSUMERS' COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR CONCERNING THE PERFORMANCE FAILURE OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

Once dissatisfaction occurs, consumers may engage in behavioural and non-behavioural responses to resolve it (Day & Landon, 1977:229-432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). Consumers may refrain from action by rationalising and forgetting about the problem. Consumers may engage in private actions such as warning family and friends about the product and/or seller, boycotting the type of product, and switching brands or retailers. Additionally, consumers may engage in public action such as seeking redress (i.e. a refund, an exchange or free repairs and replacement of defective parts, depending on the nature of the product and the particular circumstances) directly from the retailer or manufacturer, complaining to the retailer or manufacturer, complaining to a public consumer protection agency, complaining to a voluntary organisation or the media, or taking legal action against the retailer or manufacturer (Day & Landon, 1977:229-432; Day & Bodur, 1978; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Phau & Sari, 2004). Obviously, combinations of private and public actions may occur.

A significantly lower public to private complaint ratio (44:56) for major electrical household appliances was obtained in this study, which contradicts Broadbridge and Marshall's (1995) findings where a higher public to private complaint ratio (57:43) for electrical goods was obtained (see Chapter 5, Table 5.10). Concerning public action, the respondents in this study mainly engaged in seeking redress from retailers/manufactures and avoided more formal complaint action such as contacting a consumer protection organisation/department or writing a letter – activities which would require more effort and inconvenience. These findings are fairly consistent with those of Broadbridge and Marshall (1995). However, it is alarming that hardly any respondents engaged in more formal public action, as forums/authorities for formal complaint action do exist. Additionally, nearly 20% of the respondents did not take any action at all, implying that the respondents were more passive compared to Broadbridge and Marshall's results, where a no-action response rate of 10% was found. The majority of the responses were obtained for engaging in negative word-of-mouth complaining (private complaint action), which does not require a great deal of effort as such, but may be quite damaging to retailers and manufacturers, who are unaware of such actions.

Bearing cognitive appraisal theory in mind, the appraisal of stressful environmental encounters (such as product failures) allows consumers to select appropriate strategies for coping with the

resultant psychological stress (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Bagozzi, Gopinath, Nyer, 1999; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). However, in order to engage in coping strategies, the individual needs to know who is responsible for the specific stressful event (product failure) (Lazarus in Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Coping strategies, including problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping or avoidance coping, involve both behavioural and cognitive attempts aimed at managing psychosocial stress. While many authors have considered avoidance as a type of emotional coping, others have argued that it is a separate coping style (Mathur *et al*., 1999). A problem-focused strategy is one in which a consumer deals squarely with the problem by taking direct action or by making plans to take action. The focus of such a coping strategy is external, aimed at the other party. In a consumer complaint behaviour context, direct action consists of voicing displeasure to the offending party (Lazarus & DeLongis in Stephens & Gwinner, 1998) in the form of face-to-face, phone or mail-based complaint contact(s). Problem-focused coping takes place when consumers feel harm or threat to their personal well-being, but also perceive themselves as having strong coping potential. Coping potential reflects an evaluation by the individual of the potential for, and the consequences of, engaging in a coping activity (Scherer in Nyer, 1997). In contrast to problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping strategies are directed inward. In this way, individuals attempt to regulate their mental response to the problem in order to feel better. Instead of doing something about the problem, they remain “silent” (do not contact the offending party) and engage in any one of several self-deceptions such as denial or self-blame. If emotion-focused coping is successful, the unhappy situation still exists, but people’s thinking about is has changed. Several coping tactics such as self-blame, self-control, denial and seeking social support are emotion-focused. Seeking social support means explaining the marketplace problem to another person to obtain informational, emotional, or tangible support (Folkman in Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Consumers who perceive themselves as having low coping potential and do not feel that the balance of power in the marketplace incident favours them, are likely to engage in emotion-focused coping strategies. When engaging in avoidance coping, people do not deceive themselves by repositioning the event in a positive light or telling themselves that they are to blame. Instead, they simply leave the situation. Empirical findings related to coping styles suggest that people may rely on more than one form of coping when managing stressful encounters. Specific coping methods/behaviours associated with each of the three general coping strategies have been identified (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur *et al.,* 1999; Forrester & Maute, 2001). Refer to Table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2: COPING STRATEGIES AND COPING METHODS INVOLVED

Coping strategies	Coping methods
Problem-focused coping	Contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress Contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress for the appliance Contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer Contacting a consumer protection organisation/department Writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website Contacting a legal representative
Emotion-focused coping	Telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience
Avoidance coping	Taking no action Stop using the brand name Stop supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased

In the context of the cognitive appraisal theory, consumers' complaint behaviour is considered to be coping methods/behaviours. By looking at the cognitive and emotional qualities underlying the reasons for consumers' complaint behaviour, one can determine whether the particular complaint actions were mainly driven by cognitive reasoning, emotional reasoning or a combination of both. Reasoning (ways of thinking) in this sense refers to mental processes. Additionally, insight gained in the cognitive and emotional qualities underlying the reasons for consumers' complaint behaviour, can assist the reader in understanding consumers' choice of specific coping strategies.

In the following paragraphs, cognitive appraisal theory serves as background for explaining respondents' reasons for engaging in particular complaint action. Respondents' reasons for engaging in complaint behaviour are explained in terms of the cognitive and emotional types of reasoning underlying the different coping methods/behaviours (types of consumer complaint actions).

In this study, the main reason for not taking any action was respondents' perceptions that complaining was not worth their time and effort, corroborating Broadbridge and Marshall's (1995) findings. Another reason for not taking action was the expiry of product guarantees. Only 24.19% of the responses were obtained for "the appliance's guarantee had expired", implying that 65.12% (28 of the 43) respondents were not prepared to take action, even though their appliances were still under guarantee (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.11). This might indicate respondents' negative perceptions concerning their retailers'/manufacturers' responsiveness to complaints (willingness to handle complaints and provide corrective action). (The question whether appliances were still under guarantee when the respondents took no action, was not explicitly asked in the questionnaire since it was listed as one of the possible reasons for not taking action.) Choosing the coping method "taking no action" (associated with the coping strategy of avoidance) was directed by cognitive reasoning only, implying that emotional reasoning did not play a role in the decision to take no action. It should be noted that respondents could provide other reasons when applicable, but no additional reasons related to emotional reasoning were provided. When consumers choose an avoidance coping strategy they typically reason that complaining is "not worth the effort" and "would not achieve any resolution" (Day & Bodur, 1978; Day & Ash, 1979; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

In this study, the main reasons for telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience involved "to feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer" and "to get rid of my anger/frustration". These reasons are associated with the emotion-focused coping strategy where social support is sought to obtain informational and emotional support (i.e. to feel better about the self or the situation). The dissatisfactory situation still exists, but one's thinking about it has changed (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Emotional reasoning therefore greatly influenced consumers' decision to gain social support compared to cognitive reasoning. Although reasons such as "warning other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer", "finding out what their opinion is about taking further action", "warning them to strictly follow the appliance's prescribed instructions" and "finding out whether any of them have had a similar problem" are considered cognitive reasoning, imparting such information can contribute to consumers' gaining social support. Consumers will engage in negative word-of-mouth primarily to gain social support, thereby venting their anger, but also causing irreparable harm to retailers and manufacturers.

In this study, the main reason for switching brands related to the perceived unreliability of the brand name concerned. This reason is associated with the avoidance coping strategy where consumers "simply leave the situation" by not using the brand name anymore. Avoidance coping

is more common in markets that are highly competitive and in which brand switching is easy (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Cognitive reasoning greatly influenced consumers' decision to use another brand name, as compared to emotional reasoning.

Similarly, the respondents stopped supporting retailers because they felt that they could no longer trust them. This particular reason is associated with the avoidance coping strategy where consumers "simply leave the situation" and they "do not return to the retailer with whom they are dissatisfied". Cognitive reasoning therefore influenced consumers' decision to stop supporting the retailer much more than emotional reasoning.

Respondents mainly contacted retailers/manufacturers to obtain redress when/while their appliances were still covered by their guarantees (83 out of the 165 responses were obtained for "the appliance was still under guarantee") (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.18). Only a few responses (15 out of 165) were obtained for "the appliance's guarantee had expired and I expected the appliance to last longer". One would expect that more consumers would try to obtain redress when their guarantees had only expired recently, since appliances are expensive, are supposed to be of high quality and to be durable. Another obvious explanation for contacting retailers/manufacturers to obtain redress included that households could not function properly without their specific appliances. Additionally respondents felt that their appliances no longer provided value for money. All of these reasons are associated with the problem-focused coping strategy where a consumer deals with the problem by taking direct action such as confronting the retailer face-to-face (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). The reasons for the coping method "contacting retailers/manufacturers to obtain redress" were directed by cognitive reasoning only, implying that emotional reasoning did not play a role in the decision to obtain redress from retailers/manufacturers.

The respondents who contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress wanted to "stand up for their rights as consumers" and wanted to "make an objection after their effort to obtain redress/compensation for the appliance had failed". These reasons are associated with the problem-focused coping strategy where consumers deal with the problem by taking direct action such as confronting the retailer (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Additionally, these reasons are the result of cognitive reasoning, where the focus is on asserting oneself. There were only a few responses for the reason "to get rid of my anger/frustration" and "to get an apology from the retailer", which are considered to be emotional reasoning, as the purpose is to feel better about oneself or the situation.

Respondents mainly contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer because their appliance guarantees had expired, implying that the respondents believed that retailers/manufacturers were no longer responsible for their appliance. This might be indicative of consumers' unnecessarily negative perceptions of retailers'/manufacturers' responsiveness to complaints. Other reasons included that their households could not function properly without their specific appliances, that the repair service was less expensive than the retailer/manufacturer's service, or that it was too much trouble to go back to the retailer or manufacturer. The physical inconvenience of not having the appliance, the inconvenience involved in taking the appliance to the retailer/manufacturer and the lower repair costs made it worth going to the alternate repair service. All of these reasons are associated with the problem-focused coping strategy where a consumer deals with the problem by taking direct action. These reasons were directed by cognitive reasoning only, implying that emotional reasoning did not play a role in the decision to contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer.

It is interesting to note that proportionally more responses were obtained for "the household could not function properly" when contacting an independent repair service (40 out of 110) compared to contacting the retailer for repairs (31 out of 55) (refer to Chapter 5, Tables 5.18 and 5.21). This might be indicative of the consumers' frame of mind when they took their appliances to a repair service other than the retailer's repair division – meaning that consumers who took their appliances to independent repair services, were more desperate to resolve the product problem/failure as compared to consumers who went to the retailer's repair division.

The reasons for engaging in third-party complaints are not explained since very few responses were obtained for this complaint action. What is of significance, is the fact that very few respondents engaged in third-party complaint behaviour.

From the above discussion it is clear that both the problem-focused coping strategy (employing coping behaviours/methods such as contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer) and the avoidance coping strategy (employing coping behaviours/methods such as taking no action, switching brands, no longer supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased) were significantly more influenced by cognitive reasoning than emotional reasoning. The emotion-focused strategy (employing the coping method of "telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience") was significantly more influenced by emotional reasoning such as

wanting “to feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer" and wanting “to get rid of my anger/frustration” compared to cognitive reasoning. It is understandable that one would feel better after talking to significant others who might provide informational, emotional or tangible support (Folkman in Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

It should be noted that people may rely on more than one form of coping strategy when managing stressful encounters. For example, consumers may directly contact the retailer/manufacturer (behaviours associated with the problem-focused coping strategy), engage in negative word-of-mouth communication (i.e. seeking social support from friends and family) (emotion-focused coping strategy) and switch brands (avoidance coping) to deal with the psychological stress caused by the performance failure of a major electrical household appliance.

The above interpretation relates to sub-objectives 2.1 and 2.2.

6.6 THE ROLE OF ATTRIBUTION, CONSUMER-SPECIFIC VARIABLES AND PRODUCT-SPECIFIC VARIABLES IN CONSUMERS’ COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

From a causal attribution point of view, consumers’ interpretation of the dimensional quality of perceived causes for product failure forms the foundation for the explanation of consumers’ level of anger experienced in response to the product failure as well as their subsequent consumer complaint behaviour. However, it should be noted that complaint behaviour cannot be explained in terms of the locus, stability and controllability dimensions individually, but rather by looking at the causal dimensions collectively. In addition it was reasoned that the attribution, consumer-specific variables and product-specific variables play a role in consumers’ complaint behaviour. The following discussion is therefore structured in terms of the role of attribution, consumer-specific variables and product-specific variables in consumers’ complaint behaviour.

6.6.1 The role of attribution in consumers’ complaint behaviour

In the following paragraphs, the respondents’ perception of the dimensional quality of the cause(s) for product failure are discussed to facilitate the explanation of the different types of complaint action: took action, told friends, family and/ or acquaintances about the bad experience, decided to use another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, contacted a repair

service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer on the one hand, and not engaging in any of these respective actions on the other hand. The mean scores for the different causal dimensions (i.e. locus, stability and controllability) concerning more formal complaint action (i.e. contacting a consumer protection organisation/department, writing a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website, or contacting a legal representative) are discussed in terms of consumer complaint behaviour theory. However, the differences between the respondents who engaged in more formal complaint action and those who did not, as far as the different causal dimensions are concerned, are not described since very few respondents engaged in these respective actions compared to those who did not.

Additionally, consumer complaint actions are also explained in terms of respondents' perception of the dimensional quality of the cause(s) for product failure and their level of anger experienced. According to attribution theory, anger follows from a negative outcome that is perceived as controllable by others. In terms of cognitive appraisal theory, the specific emotions that result from cognitive appraisal vary according to the attributions of responsibility (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Forrester & Maute, 2001). Without knowing or deciding who is responsible, consumers will not be able to engage in coping actions such as taking complaint action, telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, using another brand name, stopping support to the retailer where the product was purchased, contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer, contacting a consumer protection organisation/department, writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, and/or contacting a legal representative. Refer to par. 6.3 for a discussion on respondents' perception of the causes for product failure in terms of the causal dimensions.

Both the groups of respondents who took action and those who did not, perceived the causes for product failure as external (i.e. the cause for product failure was attributed to the manufacturer, retailer or some outside agent in the environment or situation), and also as relatively stable and relatively controllable (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.29). Since the respondents perceived the causes for product failure as external, it could be argued that they considered manufacturers to be responsible for the product failure (see Chapter 5, Table 5.29). Laufer (2002) and Försterling (2001:117) argue that failure attributed to stable factors implies the (fearful) anticipation that products will fail again in future, whereas attribution of product failure to variable causes could give rise to "hope" for the future (i.e. product failures are not deemed likely to recur in the future). Additionally, when consumers believe that external parties (i.e. manufacturers) have control over

the cause of product failure, they feel angry and desire revenge more than when manufacturers are believed to lack control (Folkes, 1984; Folkes *et al*., 1987; Folkes, 1990:152). Although the respondents considered the controllability dimension to be relatively controllable, a significantly larger proportion of the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry, (88.29%) took action compared to those who varied between no anger to reasonable anger (72.12%) (see Chapter, Table 5.31). This study therefore confirms that those respondents who experienced higher levels of anger were more likely to take action than those with lower levels of anger.

Both the groups of respondents who talked to their friends, family and/or acquaintances and those who did not, considered the cause for the product failure as external (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.29). Contrary to expectation, the group of respondents who did not engage in negative word-of-mouth, considered the cause for product failure as more external compared to those who did engage in negative word-of-mouth. (A significant difference exists between the stability dimensions for both these groups of respondents.) The product satisfaction literature reveals that consumers are more inclined to engage in negative word-of-mouth communications with other people about product failure when the cause for product failure is perceived as controlled by manufacturers/retailers than when product failure is perceived as not controlled by these parties (Curren & Folkes, 1987; Folkes, 1988). However, in this study, both groups of respondents perceived the cause for product failure as relatively controllable. Inferring a stable cause might cause people to warn their friends about the retailer so that they do not experience the same type of problem (Folkes *et al*., 1987; Blodgett & Granbois, 1992). Also, both groups perceived the cause for product failure as relatively unstable. Although the respondents considered the controllability dimension to be relatively controllable, proportionately more respondents who were very to extremely angry told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to the respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.31). It is important to note that respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger and those who were very angry to extremely angry, mainly engaged in negative word-of-mouth compared to the other types of complaint action (see Chapter 5, Table 5.31 & Table 5.10). Respondents engaged in negative word-of-mouth mainly to obtain emotional support concerning the performance failure of appliances (i.e. to vent their anger, and to gain social validation of their negative feelings).

Both the groups of respondents who decided to use another brand name and those who did not, considered the cause for the product failure as external and as relatively controllable. However, the group of respondents who used another brand name considered the cause for product failure to be relatively stable compared to the group who did not use another brand name, and

who considered the cause for the product failure to be relatively unstable (see Chapter 5, Table 5.29). (A significant difference exists between these groups with regard to stability ($p = 0.0014$).) This implies that respondents who perceived causes as stable expected the product failure to recur in future and therefore used another brand name to prevent the same failure from happening again. Corresponding with expectation, proportionately more respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger continued to use brand names of the dissatisfactory appliance compared to the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry (see Chapter 5, Table 5.31). According to Blodgett and Granbois (1992) and Swanson and Kelly (2001), anger intensifies as outcome importance increases, and hence consumers will be more likely to refuse to repurchase the company's product and will distance themselves from the company.

Contrary to expectation, the group of respondents who stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased considered the cause for product failure to be less external compared to those who continued supporting the retailer. They also perceived the cause for product failure to be relatively stable compared to the group of respondents who continued supporting the retailer (who perceived the cause for the product failure as relatively unstable) – thus confirming expectation. (Significant relationships exist between these groups and the locus and stability dimensions respectively.) The respondents who perceived the cause for product failure to be relatively stable, expected the product to fail again in the future and therefore took their custom elsewhere to prevent the same failure from happening again. However, both these groups considered the cause for the product failure as relatively controllable (see Chapter 5, Table 5.29). Corresponding with expectation, proportionately more respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger continued to support the retailer where the product was purchased compared to the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry (see Chapter 5, Table 5.31).

The fact that relatively few respondents who were very angry to extremely angry, switched brand names and retailers, points to their carelessness concerning these respective actions. It might be due to the perception that they would not benefit from "punishing the retailer/manufacturer".

Both the group of respondents who contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress and the group who did not, considered the cause for product failure to be external and relatively controllable. Additionally, no significant differences existed between the stability dimensions for both groups of respondents – the stability dimension is considered to be relatively stable (see Chapter 5, Table 5.29). Contrary to expectation, fairly equal proportions of respondents who

experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger and those who felt very angry to extremely angry, contacted the retailer for redress (see Chapter 5, Table 5.31). This might be due to the fact that many of the respondents' appliances were still under guarantee or had just expired (see Chapter 5, Table 5.18).

Contrary to expectation, the group of respondents who did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, considered the cause for product failure to be more external and relatively unstable compared to the group who did contact the retailer/manufacturer for other reasons than seeking redress, and who perceived the cause as external and relatively stable. (Significant differences exist concerning the stability and locus dimensions respectively.) However, both these groups of respondents considered the product failure to be relatively controllable (see Chapter 5, Table 5.29). The respondents who contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, were more certain of future product failure compared to those who did not contact the retailer or manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress. This might imply that the respondents who complained to retailers/manufacturers for other reasons than obtaining redress, might have considered it worth the trouble to complain about products that they believe will fail anyway. For example, it is worthwhile to make an objection after one's effort to obtain redress/compensation for the appliance failed, to stand up for one's rights as a consumer or to get an apology from the retailer/manufacturer (see Chapter 5, Table 5.19). Additionally, significantly more respondents who felt very angry to extremely angry, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger (see Chapter 5, Table 5.31). However, it is alarming that so few respondents took part in this particular action that has the potential to empower them.

Both the group of respondents who contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer and the group who did not, considered the product failure to be external and relatively controllable. However, a significant difference exists between these groups concerning the stability dimension .The group of respondents who did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, considered the cause for product failure to be relatively stable compared to the group who contacted a repair service and who considered the cause for the product failure to be relatively unstable (see Chapter 5, Table 5.29). As pointed out earlier, in the context of attribution theory, attributions for product failures concerning stable factors implies the anticipation that products will fail again in future and attributions of product failure to variable causes could give rise to "hope" for the future (i.e. product failures are not deemed likely to recur in the future) (Försterling, 2001:117; Laufer,

2002). This implies that the group who did not contact a repair service might have expected their products to fail in the future in any case, and felt that it would be useless to repair their products. The respondents who attributed the cause for product failure to relatively unstable causes might have expected that future product failures are likely not to recur, but due to reasons such as the expiration of product guarantees, they had to take the appliance to other repair services (see Chapter 5, Table 5.21). Fairly equal proportions of respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger and who felt very angry to extremely angry, did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (see Chapter 5, Table 5.31). From an attribution theory perspective, the quality of emotions is determined by locus and controllability factors, whereas the stability factor tends to intensify them (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:52). In this case, the cause for product failure was considered to be external and only relatively controllable and relatively stable. When a cause is seen as stable, the resulting affect will be more pronounced than if the cause is unstable (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:52). However, in this case, the resulting anger might be less obvious since the cause for product failure were considered to be relatively unstable or relatively stable (and not stable as such) by the respective groups of respondents.

Nearly none of the respondents engaged in formal complaint action (i.e. contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative). These respondents perceived the cause for the product failure to be external and were relatively undecided about the stability and controllability dimensions concerning the cause for product failure (see Chapter 5, Table 5.29). This implies that they were uncertain whether to expect future product failures or whether the product failure should be considered to be a once-off product failure, and whether the manufacturer/retailer had control over the problem failure or not. Additionally, anger did not play a significant role in these consumers' participation in formal complaint action. This may explain respondents passivity concerning engaging in formal complaining. However, one cannot ignore the notion that consumers might feel that it will be useless to complain formally since nothing will be gained.

The above interpretation relates to sub-objectives 3.4 and 3.5.

6.6.2 The role of consumer-specific variables in consumers' complaint behaviour

In the following paragraphs, the relationships between demographic variables (i.e. gender, age, level of education, monthly household income and culture) and consumers' complaint behaviour are discussed.

No significant disparities existed concerning the demographic profile (i.e. gender, age, highest level of education, monthly household income, culture) of complainers (those who took complaint action) versus non-complainers (those who did not take complaint action) (see Chapter 5, Table 5.32). Broadbridge and Marshall (1995) also endeavoured to determine whether any demographic differences were apparent between complainers and non-complainers. Their survey could also not determine a profile for complainers versus non-complainers.

Despite the earlier prediction that female respondents might be more inclined to engage in complaint action (compared to their male counterparts), based on the fact that they were more certain that the actual combined functional and symbolic performance of their appliances was less than their initial expectation (compared to men's uncertainty in this regard) (refer to par. 6.2), no significant relationship was found between gender and the different types of complaint action. Additionally, no significant relationships existed between age and level of education on the one hand, and the different types of complaint action on the other (see Chapter 5, Table 5.33), confirming that the demographic variables (i.e. gender, age and level of education) for respondents engaging in the different types of private and public complaint action, do not differ (Singh 1990a, 1990b; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995).

In this study, respondents from the lower income groups were significantly more inclined to stop supporting retailers, and to contact retailers/manufacturers to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, compared to respondents from upscale income groups (see Chapter 5, Table 5.34) – contradicting previous research findings. Past results indicate that complainers tend to be the most financially successful segments in the marketplace (Singh, 1990b; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). The results of this study, however, showed that respondents with lower incomes did not necessarily react more passively in terms of their complaining behaviour compared to their "upscale" counterparts who are supposed to "take more overt complaint action when dissatisfied" (Warland *et al.* in Grønhaug & Gilly, 1991). Major electrical household appliances are expensive and essential products; therefore respondents in lower socio-economic groups might consider complaining worth the trouble since they are struggling to make

ends meet on their hard-earned money. Low-income respondents might also decide to take their business to the competition once their trust in a retailer has been betrayed. Additionally, no significant relationships were found between level of income and the rest of the private and public complaint actions.

Cross-cultural research has shown that collectivists tend not to express their emotions outwardly, and if negative emotions are expressed, they are likely to be discussed in intimate social settings (Markus & Kitayama in Liu & McClure, 2001). In this study, both the black (collectivists) and the Caucasian (individualists) respondents told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (see Chapter 5, Table 5.34), confirming research showing that there is a considerable incidence rate of negative word-of-mouth among dissatisfied consumers (Richins, 1983, 1987; Chelminski, 2001). However, the black respondents did not engage in negative word-of-mouth significantly more than the white respondents, as suggested by cross-cultural theory. In a collectivistic culture, dissatisfied consumers are more likely to engage in other private actions such as switching brands and taking their custom elsewhere ("exit") than those in an individualistic culture (Liu & McClure, 2001). In this study, a significantly larger proportion of black respondents decided to use another brand name and stopped supporting the retailer, confirming previous studies in this respect (Liu & McClure, 2001).

Additionally, black respondents were more inclined to complain to retailers and manufactures to obtain redress and to complain for other reasons than obtaining redress compared to the Caucasian respondents (see Chapter 5, Table 5.34), implying that black respondents were much more actively involved in their complaint behaviour concerning major electrical household appliances than Caucasian respondents. These results contradict Liu and McClure's (2001) findings which empirically confirmed that dissatisfied consumers in a collectivistic culture (South Korean consumers) were less likely to complain to retailers and manufacturers and were more likely to engage in private behaviour than those in an individualistic culture (US consumers). This contradiction can be explained in terms of the different value orientations guiding the behaviour of black and Caucasian cultures respectively. These days, most of the South African black people subscribe to a mixture of African and Western values while most of the South African Caucasian people subscribe to Western values (Mbigi & Maree in Rousseau, 2003b: 401). Thus, in addition to the black respondents' collective will (yearning for societal supportiveness and cohesion), they may be increasingly adopting Western (individualistic) values and may therefore tend to exhibit higher levels of assertiveness and confidence. So, black respondents may be more inclined to complain to retailers and manufactures to obtain redress or to complain for

reasons other than obtaining redress compared to the Caucasian respondents, for instance, to safeguard their fellow black "comrades" against certain product problems with appliances. One should also bear in mind that South African consumers are in general more aware of their consumer rights due to campaigns that have been launched since 1994 to empower consumers, which might augment the collectivist view to protect others from a negative experience and the individualist view to asserts one's rights. Nearly none of the respondents from both racial groups engaged in formal complaint behaviour. Additionally, no significant difference exists between the two racial groups in terms of formal complaint behaviour (see Chapter 5, Table 5.34), confirming Liu and McClure's (2001) results.

The finding of this study concerning culture and complaint behaviour, confirms that "the issues surrounding culture and its effects on complaint behaviour are interesting, and are far from settled" (Blodgett *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, a need exists for research to provide richer insights regarding cross-cultural complaint behaviour. People's cultural orientation needs to be measured to examine the mechanism of cultural influence on complaining behaviour (Chelminski, 2001). This might be especially true of countries such as South Africa, where different cultural groupings live together and have the potential to acculturate.

The above interpretation relates to sub-objective 3.2.

6.6.3 The role of product-specific variables in consumers' complaint behaviour

In this study, 50% of the respondents experienced the severity of the performance failures of major electrical household appliances as varying between not severe to somewhat severe, and the other half experienced the severity of the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe (see Chapter 5, Table 5.35).

Proportionately more respondents who perceived the severity of the problem as very severe to extremely severe took action as compared to the respondents who perceived the problem as somewhat severe to not severe at all (see Chapter 5, Table 5.36) This implies that the more serious the problem was perceived to be, the more likely consumers were to take action, confirming previous research (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:581; Richins, 1983).

The majority of respondents in both of the above groups told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about their bad experience (see Chapter 5, Table 5.36). Therefore, regardless the degree of severity that consumers would ascribe to their problem, they remain likely to

engage in negative word-of-mouth. This contradicts Richins' (1983) findings that negative word-of-mouth increases when product problems causing the dissatisfaction are perceived as more severe (see also Chelminski, 2001). (Richins' (1983) study pertained to clothing items or small or large appliances as product categories.) Confirming expectation, proportionately more respondents who perceived the severity of the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe decided to use another brand name and stopped to support the retailer where the product was purchased, compared to the respondents who perceived the performance failure somewhat severe to not severe at all. Fairly equal proportions of respondents who perceived the performance failure as very severe to extremely severe and not severe at all to somewhat severe contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress and did not contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer. Irrespective of respondents' perception of the severity of the performance failure, nearly none of the respondents engaged in formal complaint behaviour (see Chapter 5, Table 5.36).

The results of this study, concerning severity of performance failure and complaint behaviour, confirm that respondents' decision to take complaint action (as opposed to not taking action), use another brand name and stop supporting the retailer are determined by respondents' perception of the severity of the product failure causing the dissatisfaction. However, consumers' participation in negative word-of-mouth was not determined by their perception of the severity of the product failure causing the dissatisfaction. Additionally, respondents' decision to contact the retailer for redress, not to complain for other reasons than seeking redress and not to engage in formal complaint behaviour was not determined by their perceptions of the severity of the product failure. This may help to explain respondents' general passivity concerning public complaint action (especially formal complaint behaviour).

The above interpretation relates to sub-objectives 5.1 and 5.2.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The respondents considered the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of their appliances collectively when reasoning about the specific performance failure (i.e., they did not actually differentiate between the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of dissatisfactory major household appliances). The female and black groups were significantly more certain that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance, compared to the male and Caucasian groups

respectively. These differences between the respective groups can be explained in terms of the reality of their expectations, which were based on their product knowledge and personal experience with such products. The majority of the respondents mainly attributed the failure of major household appliances to the manufacturers' "wrong-doing" compared to human error and other reasons. The latter finding can be partly explained in terms of self-serving attributional bias – people tend to attribute bad outcomes (in this case product failures) to external factors (manufacturers) rather than to their own faults. The respondents perceived the causes for product failure as external, relatively stable and relatively controllable. Significant differences were found between black and Caucasian respondents' perceptions of the cause for product failure in terms of the locus and controllability dimensions. Whereas the black group considered the cause for product failure to be relatively external and relatively controllable, the Caucasian group perceived the cause for product failure as external and relatively less controllable. Both groups considered the cause for product failure to be relatively stable. Significant differences exist between black and Caucasian respondents' confidence that their appliances' performance was less than expected as well as their perceptions of who should be held accountable for the failure and of the controllability of the failure.

Despite the high level of dissatisfaction, nearly 20% of the respondents did not take any action at all. The respondents who took action, took private action (i.e. complained to family and friends, decided to use another brand name and stopped supporting the retailer), complained publicly to retailers and/or took their appliance to independent repair services. Almost none of the respondents engaged in formal complaint behaviour. The respondents engaged in negative word-of-mouth to gain social support (informational, emotional, or tangible support). The main reason for switching brands related to the perceived unreliability of the brand name concerned. Similarly, the respondents stopped supporting retailers because they felt that they could no longer trust them. The latter avoidance actions were mainly spurred by cognitive reasoning. The respondents who contacted retailers/manufacturers to obtain redress or complain for other reasons, and those who contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, dealt with the problem by taking direct action. These problem-focused tactics were also driven in the main by cognitive reasoning. The main reason for not taking any action was respondents' perceptions that complaining was not worth their time and effort. The no action response was mainly based on cognitive reasoning.

In some cases, significant differences were found between the groups of respondents who engaged in a particular complaint action and those who did not concerning the respondents perception of the locus, stability and controllability dimensions of the perceived cause for product

failure. Although some of the differences are surprising, it should be noted that the differences lie in relative terms (i.e. the mean score for a specific dimension fell within the range of 10 to 18 out of 27 – implying a relative quality). For example, distinctions were made between relatively external and relatively internal, relatively stable and relatively unstable, relatively controllable and relatively uncontrollable. Implying that respondents were fairly uncertain (undecided) concerning the dimension in question compared to the other extremes of the continuum (i.e. external vs. internal, stable vs. unstable, controllable vs. uncontrollable). The respondents perceived the causes for product failure as external, relatively stable and relatively controllable. This may explain why respondents did not actively engage in formal complaint action.

No significant relationships existed between gender, age and level of education on the one hand, and the different types of complaint action on the other, confirming that the demographic variables (i.e. gender, age and level of education) for respondents engaging in the different types of private and public complaint action, do not differ (Singh 1990a, 1990b; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). However, respondents from the lower income groups were more inclined to stop supporting retailers, and to contact retailers/manufacturers to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, compared to respondents from upscale income groups. Additionally, a significantly larger proportion of black respondents decided to use another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer, complained to retailers and manufactures to obtain redress and complained for other reasons than obtaining redress – compared to the Caucasian respondents. When consumers attribute a product failure to an external, uncontrollable cause, they will probably assign less blame to other entities such as the manufacturer or retailer. However, when failures are viewed as controllable, blame is targeted to the entity perceived as having had control (Laufer, 2002). The interplay between the locus and controllability dimensions might augment respondents' perception of blame for the product failure and their subsequent complaint behaviour. The latter assumption might explain why black respondents engaged more actively in the above-mentioned complaint actions compared to the Caucasian respondents. It is therefore argued that comparisons of different cultures' perceptions of the causes for product failure, in terms of both the locus and controllability dimensions, might broaden our understanding of their judgements of culpability and their subsequent complaint behaviour. Additionally, the individualism-collectivism construct for describing and comparing cultures, as well as the influence of acculturation should be considered.

From an attribution theory perspective, the quality of emotions is determined by locus and controllability factors, whereas the stability factor tends to intensify them (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:52). For example, if a cause is seen as stable, the resulting affect will be more pronounced

than if the cause is seen as unstable (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:52). The respondents in this study mainly perceived the causes for product failure to be external to themselves. However, the respondents were relatively undecided as far as the controllability and stability dimensions were concerned. When consumers believe that manufacturers/ retailers have control over the cause of product failure, they will feel angry and desire revenge more than when they believe those parties to lack control. Although the respondents considered the controllability dimension to be relatively controllable, a significantly larger proportion of the respondents who were very angry to extremely angry, (88.29%) took action, compared to those who varied between no anger and reasonable anger (72.12%). This study therefore confirms that, the higher the level of anger experienced, the more likely consumers are to take action as opposed to no action, to switch brand names and to stop supporting retailers (private action), and also to contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress. Irrespective of the level of anger experienced, the respondents engaged in negative word-of-mouth, causing irreparable harm to retailers and manufacturers. Contrary to expectation, fairly equal proportions of respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger and those who felt very angry to extremely angry, contacted the retailer for redress. This might be due to the fact that many of the respondents' appliances were still under guarantee or had just expired. Additionally, significantly more respondents who felt very angry to extremely angry, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable levels of anger. Additionally, anger did not play a significant role in the respondents' participation in formal complaint action. Although half of the respondents indicated that they were very angry to extremely angry, they were uncertain concerning the manufacturers' power to control product failure – which may explain their passivity concerning engaging in formal complaint behaviour. In the context of cognitive appraisal theory, consumers might not employ the problem-focused complaining, in this case formal complaint action, when they believe that they have low coping potential (i.e., respondents might believe that it is worthless to complain formally, as nothing will be gained).

People employ different complaint actions in an effort to cope with a stressful situation (i.e., product failure) and the resultant anger. In the context of Day and Landon's (1976) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour and cognitive appraisal theory, the respondents engaged in private complaint action by means of emotion-focused coping (told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience) and avoidance-focused coping (stopped using the brand name and stopped supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased). The respondents also employed public complaint action through problem-focused coping (contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for

reasons other than seeking redress, contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer). Additionally the respondents who did not engage in complaint action (took no action) coped with the product by avoidance behaviour.

The results of this study, concerning the severity of the product failure and respondents' complaint behaviour, confirm that respondents' decision to take complaint action (as opposed to not taking action), use another brand name and no longer support the retailer, were determined by their perception of the severity of the product failure causing dissatisfaction. However, consumers' participation in negative word-of-mouth was not determined by their perception of the severity of the product failure causing dissatisfaction. Additionally, respondents' decision to contact the retailer for redress, not to complain for other reasons than seeking redress and not to engage in formal complaint behaviour was not determined by their perceptions of the severity of the product failure. This may help to explain respondents' general passivity concerning public complaint action (especially formal complaint behaviour).

Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the study, an evaluation of the study, its contribution to the theory, recommendations, implications of the results of the study, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study, an evaluation of the study, its contribution to the theory, and the relevant implications and recommendations. Additionally, some suggestions for future research are provided.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are presented in the sequences of the research objectives for this study (refer to Chapter 1, par 1.3 and Chapter 4, par. 4.2.2). It should be noted at this point that due to the convenience sampling technique, the results of the study are limited to the specific sample, which means that the findings cannot be generalised to the larger South African population. The sample consisted of consumers who had recently purchased major household appliances (within the prior four-year period) and who could recall an unsatisfactory experience concerning the performance of such appliance. Nearly 70.00% of the respondents were female, while nearly 30.00% were male. The majority (72.23%) of the respondents were 25-45 years of age, while 27.77% were 46-83 years old. Whereas a total of 20.83% of the respondents' highest level of education was Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII or less, 36.11% of the respondents had Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)/diploma(s). A total of 43.06% of the sample held either a Bachelors degree or a post-graduate qualification. A total of 25.93% and 26.85% of the respondents fell in the monthly household income categories of R 2 000 – R 5 000 and R 5 001 – R 10 000 respectively. A total of 47.22% of the respondents belonged to the monthly household income category of R 10 001 or more. About two thirds of the respondents (69.44%) were Caucasian, while nearly a third of the respondents (30.56%) were black. Despite the afore-mentioned limitation (caused by the convenience sampling technique), this does not mean that the implications of this study should be regarded as of no significance.

7.2.1 The nature of the performance failure that caused consumers to be dissatisfied with major electrical household appliances

A combination of functional and symbolic performance failures seems to direct consumers' complaint behaviour concerning dissatisfactory major household appliances. The consumers in this study did not differentiate between the two dimensions, but considered them jointly when they evaluated the performance of their appliances.

Gender and culture apparently play significant roles in consumers' perception of the degree to which their appliances perform to their expectations. Female and black consumers in the study were more certain that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance, compared to the male and Caucasian consumers in the study.

Proportionately more respondents were very dissatisfied to extremely dissatisfied with the actual performance of their major electrical household appliances, compared to the respondents who were slightly to moderately dissatisfied with the actual performance of their major electrical household appliances.

7.2.2 The nature of, and the reasons for, dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

Despite the high level of dissatisfaction that the respondents experienced concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances, a notable number of respondents did not take any complaint action at all. Those who took action, engaged in private (hidden or indirect) action (i.e. complained to family and friends, used another brand name and stopped supporting the retailer), and complained publicly to retailers and/or took their appliance to independent repair services. Despite their high levels of dissatisfaction, respondents tended not to engage in formal complaint behaviour.

Respondents engaged in negative word-of-mouth to gain social support (informational, emotional, or tangible support) concerning their dissatisfaction with the performance failure of their major electrical appliances. The main reason for switching brands relates to the perceived unreliability of the brand name concerned. They stopped supporting retailers because they felt that they could no longer trust them. Such avoidance actions are mainly spurred by cognitive reasoning. Respondents who contacted retailers/manufacturers to obtain redress or who

complained for other reasons, and those who contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, dealt with the problem by taking direct action. Such problem-focused tactics are also mainly driven by cognitive reasoning. The main reason for not taking any action involved respondents' perceptions that complaining was not worth their time and effort. The no-action response is therefore mainly impelled by cognitive reasoning.

7.2.3 The relationship between causal attribution and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

The respondents mainly attributed the cause for product failure to factors external to themselves, such as the manufacturers' "wrong-doing" ("the manufacturer provided poor workmanship"), compared to human error and other reasons. Although they perceived the cause for product failure as external, they were ambivalent in their perception of the stability and control dimensions (i.e. they were uncertain about whether their appliances would fail if they were to purchase the same appliances in the future, and about whether retailers and manufacturers really have control over product failures).

Black and Caucasian respondents' perceptions of the cause for product failure differed in terms of the locus and controllability dimensions. Whereas the black consumers considered the cause for product failure to be relatively external and relatively controllable, the Caucasian consumers perceived the cause for product failure as external and relatively less controllable. Both Caucasians and blacks considered the cause for product failure to be relatively stable.

In some cases, there were significant differences between respondents who engaged in a particular complaint action and those who did not, as far as their perception of the locus, stability and controllability dimensions of the perceived cause for product failure were concerned. Although some of the differences are surprising, it should be noted that the differences lie in relative terms as opposed to absolute terms, explaining why consumers do not actively engage in formal complaint action. The respondents who did not engage in negative word-of-mouth considered the cause for product failure to be more external, compared to the respondents who did engage in negative word-of-mouth. However, both these groups considered the cause for product failure to be relatively unstable and relatively controllable. Both the group of respondents who decided to use another brand name and the group who did not, considered the cause for the product failure as external and as relatively controllable. However, the group of respondents who switched to another brand name considered the cause for product failure to be relatively

stable, compared to the group who did not use another brand name, and who considered the cause for the product failure to be relatively unstable. Contrary to expectation, the group of respondents who stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased considered the cause for product failure to be less external, compared to those who continued supporting the retailer. They also perceived the cause for product failure to be relatively stable compared to the group of respondents who continued supporting the retailer (and who perceived the cause for the product failure as relatively unstable) – thus confirming expectations. However, both these groups considered the cause for the product failure as relatively controllable. Contrary to expectation, the group of respondents who did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, considered the cause for product failure to be more external and relatively unstable compared to the group who did contact the retailer/manufacturer for other reasons than seeking redress, and who perceived the cause as external and relatively stable. However, both these groups of respondents considered the product failure to be relatively controllable. These findings concerning the above-mentioned complaint actions imply that, although respondents perceived the locus dimensions to be external (whether it is external or more or less external), and the controllability dimensions to be relatively controllable, they expected future product failures. These expectations impelled their complaint behaviour.

The interplay between the locus and controllability dimensions might have augmented respondents' perception of blame for the product failure and their subsequent complaint behaviour. Anger was a significant predictor of negative word-of-mouth behaviour. Those respondents who experienced higher the levels of anger experienced were more likely to take action as opposed to no action, switch brand names and stop supporting retailers (private action), and to contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to those with lower levels of anger. Irrespective of the levels of anger experienced, respondents contacted retailers for redress. Additionally, anger did not play a significant role in the respondents' participation in formal complaint action. In the context of cognitive appraisal theory, consumers might not employ the problem-focused complaining, in this case formal complaint action, when they believe that they have low coping potential (i.e., respondent might believe that it is worthless to complain formally (i.e. nothing will be gained).

7.2.4 The relationship between specific consumer-related variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

No significant relationships exist between gender, age and level of education on the one hand, and the different types of complaint action on the other. However, in the study, consumers from the lower income groups were more inclined to stop supporting retailers, and to contact retailers/manufacturers to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, compared to respondents from upscale income groups. Additionally, black respondents were more inclined to use another brand name, stop supporting the retailer, complain to retailers and manufactures to obtain redress and to complain for other reasons than obtaining redress, compared to the Caucasian respondents. The interplay between the locus and controllability dimensions might have augmented respondents' perception of blame for the product failure and their subsequent complaint behaviour. Black respondents engaged more actively in the above-mentioned complaint actions, compared to the Caucasian respondents.

7.2.5 The relationship between product-specific variables and dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the performance failure of major electrical household appliances

The respondents who perceived the performance failure as very severe to extremely sever were more likely to take action (as opposed to not taking action), use another brand name and stop supporting the retailer than respondents who varied between not severe to somewhat severe. Irrespective of their perception of the severity of the performance failure hey tended to engage in negative word-of-mouth communications, and to contact the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress. Additionally, respondents' decision to contact the retailer for redress, not to complain for other reasons than seeking redress and not to engage in formal complaint behaviour, were not determined by their perceptions of the severity of the performance failure. This may help to explain respondents' general passivity concerning public complaint action (especially formal complaint behaviour).

7.3 EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH

7.3.1 Quality of the results

In the next section the quality of the data is discussed in terms of its validity and reliability. In terms of Mouton's (1996:111-112) validity framework, the dimensions of validity include: theoretical validity, measurement validity and inferential validity. The validity of measurements (measurement validity) can be determined by using standard yardsticks including face validity, content validity and construct validity (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:122-124; Delport, 2005:160-162). "Reliability is primarily concerned not with *what* is being measured but with *how well* it is being measured" (Delport, 2005:163).

7.3.1.1 Theoretical validity

A thorough review of the literature was done to become acquainted with established theories that have been successfully applied in similar research. The expectancy disconfirmation model (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983), Weiner's (1986) attribution theory and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, all of which are established theories, were integrated into a theoretical framework to guide this research. Consumers' reasons for engaging in particular complaint actions were obtained from the relevant literature. Additionally, the central concepts of consumer dissatisfaction, attributional processing, and consumer complaint behaviour were clarified and unambiguously explicated in terms of theoretical definitions found in the literature.

Additional sources of written information (newspaper complaint letters, online letters to consumer complaint websites and product instruction leaflets) were explored, enabling the researcher to gain a better understanding of the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of major electrical household appliances and to explicate these concepts. Through exploration, the researcher learned what would be the right questions to ask and the most meaningful ways to pose questions in the larger survey.

In this study a self-administered questionnaire was administered to collect data. The respondents were pre-screened, and only those who had experienced dissatisfaction with a major electrical household appliance item within the prior four years, were included in this study. Respondents' description of an autobiographical episode (in this case a description of the performance failure of a major electrical household appliance item), followed by questions to

elicit the attributor's reasons for the specific incident (i.e. the product failure), formed the basis for coding the responses. Although respondents' memory decay may pose a source of error in terms of the reliability of the data collected, the above-mentioned Critical Incident Technique was still used because the technique reflects "real-life" reactions (respondents report on real product failures compared to experimental studies where possible causes for product failure are manipulated by the researcher).

7.3.1.2 Measurement validity

During the process of operationalisation, a measuring instrument is developed. The predominant epistemological criterion is measurement validity. The dimensions of measurement validity include face validity, content validity and construct validity. Other methodological strategies, such as scale validation and pilot testing, can be employed to ensure the measurement validity of the measuring instrument (Mouton, 1996:110, 111).

Although **face validity** is not technically a form of validation, it is a desirable characteristic of a measuring instrument (Delport, 2005:161). In the case of the questionnaire, the indicators were structured in such a way that they were clearly relevant measurements of the variables. The questions clearly related to the performance failure of major electrical household appliances, attributions for product failures, causal dimensions and consumer complaint behaviour.

The denotations of the central concepts were accurate indicators of the connotations of concepts. Additionally, the items in the questionnaire related to the sub-objectives of the study (contributing to **content validity**).

The constructs for this study were precisely explicated, as already discussed in the paragraph on theoretical validity, thus contributing to **construct validity**. Multiple indicators were used to measure the constructs (of performance failure and causal dimension) to prevent mono-operation bias. Previous studies have verified the validity of Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale as a measuring instrument (scale validation). Additionally, the questionnaire was pilot-tested.

The study leaders aided the researcher in evaluating the face validity, content validity and construct validity of the measuring instruments.

7.3.1.3 Inferential validity

In this study, appropriate statistical techniques were used for specific levels of measurement. Inferences were drawn according to the principles of statistical inference. Conclusions (as the outcome of the analysis and data-interpretation) followed logically from the empirical evidence.

7.3.1.4 Reliability

Techniques to develop the reliability of measurements include: the use of established measurements and the training of fieldworkers (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:123). In this study, an adapted version of Russell's Causal Dimension Scale was used to allow respondents to translate their causal attributions for the failure or poor performance of appliances into causal dimensions themselves. This was done to avoid what Russell called the "fundamental attribution research error", whereby attributions made by the subject are "translated" into causal dimensions by the researcher (Russell, 1982; Folkes, 1984; Russell *et al*., 1987; Hewstone, 1989:33-34, 184). This prevented the researcher from making biased classifications of causes into causal dimensions, and so contributed to the reliability of the data. (Previous studies have verified the validity of Russell's (1982) Causal Dimension Scale as a measuring instrument.) In the Likert-type scale (to determine the different types of performance failures) and the adapted version of Russell's Causal Dimension Scale, multiple indicators of variables were used, contributing to the reliability of the data. Fieldworkers were trained and were given clear instructions concerning the aims of the study to ensure the reliability of data.

To prevent respondent bias, it was stated in the covering letter that the researcher was only interested in respondents' opinions and experiences and that there were no right or wrong answers to questions. Respondents were also assured of their anonymity.

Due to the convenience sampling technique, the results of the study are limited to the specific sample, which means that the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population. However, this limitation does not mean that the implications of this study should be considered to have no value. The implications of this study can open up new avenues for further research. Additionally, manufacturers and retailers could benefit concerning their management of complaint handling strategies (refer to par 7.4). Bearing in mind the statistical techniques for the analysis of the data, the sample size of 200 was considered to be sufficient.

7.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY

This study made theoretical contributions to the field. For specific products (such as clothing) the constructs of functional and symbolic performance failures can be regarded as separate constructs (i.e. consumers differentiate between functional and symbolic product clothing failures) (see Chapter 2, par 2.2.2). However, as far as major electrical household appliances are concerned, the constructs of functional and symbolic performance failures can not be regarded as individual constructs, but should be regarded as a combined construct when explaining appliance failures. Therefore, from a theoretical point of view, consumers' dissatisfaction with their appliances is determined by a combination of (both) functional and symbolic performance results – thus contributing to the knowledge (theory building) about the topic.

Female and black respondents were more certain that their appliances' combined functional and symbolic performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance, compared to the male and Caucasian respondents. Since consumers expectations with appliances would inter alia be based on the previous experience with, and knowledge of, the appliances, the role of consumers' product related socialisation cannot be ignored. Experienced and knowledgeable consumers will be better able to form realistic expectations concerning product performance and will be better able to discern when a product's performance does not match prior expectations for that product (as may be the case for South African female consumers who are still the main operators of major electrical household appliances). On the other hand, inexperienced and less knowledgeable consumers may struggle to form realistic expectations for product performance and may therefore struggle to determine whether product performance fails to meet expectations (as may be the case for upcoming black South Africans).

This study describes respondents' dissatisfaction with the performance failure of their major electrical household appliances in terms of the product failure categories (cooling appliances were considered to be a major product failure category) and the types of performance failures (combined functional and symbolic performance failure), thus contributing to statistics concerning dissatisfactory major electrical household appliances. However, the interpretation of the above-mentioned is meaningless without looking at respondents' cognitions and emotions underlying their complaint behaviour. Therefore, respondents' attributions for product failure were studied in terms of their interpretation of the underlying causal dimensions of locus, stability and controllability to explain their cognitions and emotions impelling their complaint behaviour.

Product failures were mainly attributed to external factors (i.e. the retailers' wrong-doing) compared to human error, confirming the influencing role of self-serving attributional bias in consumers' interpretation of product failures.

Consumers' perception of causes in terms of the locus, stability and controllability causal dimensions influences their emotions, their expectations for future product failure and their consumer complaint behaviour. Black respondents perceived the cause for product failure as relatively controllable and relatively external, compared to Caucasian respondents, who perceived the cause for product failure as external and relatively less controllable. Both groups of respondents perceived the cause for product failure as relatively stable, implying that they possibly will expect future failure for the product if it is purchased and used again. Black consumers were more inclined to switch brand names, to stop supporting the retailer and to contact the retailer for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Black consumers seem to be generally more brand conscious than Caucasian consumers and favour symbols of style and wealth (The Black Diamonds 2007 – on the move, 2007). In today's consumerist society, luxury brands are often purchased – not only for the feeling of sophistication, but also for the need to impress other people. Black consumers (i.e. the "Black diamonds") are increasingly becoming wealthier and sophisticated, and are adopting Western (individualistic) values. They therefore tend to exhibit higher levels of assertiveness and confidence, and radiate a sense of being in control. Although the different household monthly income groups did not perceive the locus, stability and controllability differently, proportionately more lower-end income respondents stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased and contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to the higher-end income groups. It may be that these lower-income consumers are more selective since they simply cannot afford to buy products and brands that might fail and need to be replaced.

Despite the high levels of dissatisfaction experienced, respondents did not engage in formal complaint behaviour, implying that other factors need to be examined to study consumers' complaint behaviour. Respondents' relative uncertainty concerning the locus and controllability dimensions for product failure explain why fairly equal proportions of the respondents experienced no anger to reasonable anger, and were very angry to extremely angry respectively. The interplay between the locus and controllability dimensions probably augments respondents' perception of blame for the product failure and their level of anger experienced,

driving their subsequent complaint behaviour. Respondents who were very angry to extremely angry tended to take action (as opposed to no action), engaged in negative word-of-mouth behaviour, switched brands, stopped supporting retailers where the product was purchased, and contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to respondents who experienced no anger to reasonable anger. However, these levels of anger did not spur formal complaint action – partly explaining consumers' general passivity concerning formal complaint action.

The more severe that respondents perceive the product failure to be, the more likely they were to use other brand names and to take their custom elsewhere. Irrespective of respondents' perception of the severity of the product failure, nearly none of the respondents engaged in formal complaint behaviour – partly explaining consumers' passivity concerning formal complaint action.

This study integrated the expectancy disconfirmation model (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983) (satisfaction/dissatisfaction research), Weiner's (1986) causal dimensions (attribution theory), and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour (complaint behaviour theory), to contribute to researchers' understanding of consumers' complaint behaviour in respect of their dissatisfaction with major household appliances. Additionally, the moderating role of consumer-related variables (demographics) and a product-specific variable (the severity of the product failure) were also studied. The above-mentioned theories, and specific concepts from these theories, were integrated to provide a comprehensive framework for the study of consumers' complaint behaviour.

Additionally, cognitive appraisal theory was used to explain consumers' complaint behaviour in terms of specific coping methods/behaviours. The cognitive and emotional qualities underlying consumers' reasons for their complaint behaviour were studied to determine whether the particular complaint actions were mainly driven by cognitive reasoning, emotional reasoning or a combination of both. By studying the cognitive and emotional qualities underlying the reasons for consumers' complaint behaviour, researchers can gain a better understanding of consumers' choice of specific coping strategies.

Additionally, the differences between the complaint behaviour of Caucasians and blacks were explained in terms of the individualistic/collectivistic dimensions of culture as well as the role of consumer socialisation in their expectations of product performance.

Consumers' complaint behaviour concerning their dissatisfaction with major electrical household appliances is multifaceted. A myriad of factors need to be integrated in a conceptual framework, instead of focusing on a combination of a few factors, to ensure a good understanding of the interaction between the factors influencing South African consumers' complaint behaviour.

7.5 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has practical implications for manufacturers, retailers and policy makers, as well as for consumer scientists who take responsibility for the education of consumers.

The general conception is that consumers expect their major electrical household appliances "to perform their job well to save time and energy". However, consumers do not complain about functional performance failures only. Marketing analysts, retailers, manufactures and complaint handling personnel should be attentive to the fact that consumers do not differentiate between the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of product performance when evaluating the actual performance of appliances – consumers actually use these qualitatively different kinds of performance dimensions in combination. This has implications for the effective handling of complaints in the sense that complaint handling personnel should see complaints through the eyes of customers (i.e. as a combination of functional and symbolic performance failures) to improve their understanding of the customers' dissatisfaction.

Since consumers' expectations are partially based on the marketing efforts of companies, companies' promotional efforts concerning the performance of appliances should be realistic, in order to avoid creating false expectations concerning the anticipated benefits to be derived directly from the products themselves (i.e. functional utility), and/or other benefits resulting from the purchase and use of appliances (i.e. what the product does for, or symbolises to, the consumer). More information about the operation, maintenance and care of appliances should be provided to consumers via in-store marketing and advertising materials. Consumers who know what to expect of their appliance in terms of its functional and symbolic performance might also be more inclined to actively engage in complaint behaviour, compared to those who are not exactly sure what to expect. This will give retailers and manufacturers the opportunity to resolve consumers' product dissatisfactions.

Due to self-serving attributional bias, some people might prefer to attribute bad outcomes (in this case, product failure) to external factors (manufacturers) rather than to their own transgressions. Consumers do not have control over such biases, but manufacturers and retailers can play a

role in handling this kind of predisposition. Manufacturers and retailers should be aware of consumers' perceived causes for product failure and the latent dimensionality (locus, stability and controllability) of those causes. However, manufacturers and retailers are generally unaware of consumers' mental reasoning concerning the causes of appliance failures because they cannot "read their customers' minds"; this is especially true when consumers do not formally complain to manufacturers and retailers. In addition to the provision of honest advertising regarding products' performance to create realistic expectations for product performance, manufacturers should continuously improve the quality of their appliances. When consumers have realistic "standards" against which they can evaluate the performance of their appliances, they will be better able to interpret the causal dimensions underlying their understanding of product failures. This will allow them to attribute failures to the responsible parties and to engage in complaint action accordingly.

Good business practice requires that retailers and complaint handling employees should adhere to the notion that "the customer is always right". However, people's perceptions of what they believe the causes are for product failure are sometimes far removed from the truth. Therefore, the customer might not always be right, since some consumers unintentionally over-attribute causes of product failure to external parties (manufacturers), and some consumers are not always honest about the reasons for product failures. Retailers and complaint handling employees should be aware of these inconsistencies to facilitate their comprehension of consumers' dissatisfaction and anger when their products fail, even when retailers or manufacturer are not the responsible parties. This has implications for the formulation of complaint handling programmes to assist retailers and complaint handling employees. Complaint handling personnel should be trained to understand consumers' reasoning underlying their complaint behaviour and to deal with complaints effectively.

The problem-focused coping strategy results when consumers feel harm or threat to their personal well-being but also perceive themselves as having strong coping potential (Nyer, 1997). Dissatisfied consumers in this category will contact external parties (retailers and manufacturers) in the form of face-to-face, phone or mail-based complaint interactions. Behaviour associated with this strategy (contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer) is mainly based on cognitive reasoning (rational thoughts directing direct action), as opposed to emotional reasoning (although anger is present). In this context, rational reasoning refers to thoughts that focus on the decision that action needs to be taken to alleviate product dissatisfaction (e.g. "the

appliance failed but is still under guarantee," "the appliance's guarantee has expired, but it should have lasted longer", "the household cannot function properly without the appliance", "the brand name is not reliable any more"). The emotion-focused coping strategy results when consumers perceive themselves as having low coping potential. These consumers will seek social support from significant others (such as family and friends) to feel less angry and less frustrated. Seeking social support is primarily determined by emotional reasoning (cognitive efforts to feel better about the situation), but consumers may also employ rational reasoning (such as "warning other people about the brand name/manufacturer/retailer") in order to gain social support. Consumers employ negative word-of-mouth to their advantage, but it is very damaging to the company's reputation and results in the loss of potential and existing customers, and thus impacts on the company's revenue. Consumers who employ the coping strategy of avoidance will either take no action (do nothing at all in response to their dissatisfaction) or take their custom to the competition and/or switch brands. These actions are mainly regulated by cognitive reasoning (e.g. "I did not think it was worth the time and effort/hassle to take action", "the appliance's guarantee had expired"). When managing stressful situations, specifically product failure, consumers may engage in problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping simultaneously.

By looking at the coping strategies (in terms of the related behaviours and cognitions) that consumers employ in reducing the stress caused by product failures, researchers can gain valuable insights into the reasons for consumers' particular complaint behaviour. Although consumers' cognitions for complaint behaviour are not obvious to retailers and manufacturers, who are only confronted with the particular complaint behaviours, an understanding of consumers' reasoning prior to engaging in particular complaint actions might contribute to the improvement of organisational strategies to convince consumers to engage in overt and direct voicing of their dissatisfaction rather than in covert actions. Since consumers' coping behaviours and cognitions are spurred by attributions of blame and anger, explicit action should be taken to deal with such attributions of blame and anger. This implies that staff should be trained to deal with upset customers in a friendly and prompt manner to prevent their customers from experiencing more anger and spreading more negative word-of-mouth.

Since word-of-mouth communication usually occurs through sources that consumers view as more accessible and perceived as being more credible (i.e. family, friends, reference groups), it is thought to have a very powerful influence on consumers' evaluations – more than information received through commercial sources (i.e. advertisements and in-store marketing) (Laczniak, DeCarlo & Ramaswami, 2001). Although retailers and manufacturers cannot prevent their

customers from engaging in negative word-of-mouth communications, their complaint handling services should be so effective as to prevent their customers from experiencing more anger and spreading more negative word-of-mouth.

Consumers' general uncertainty about their perceptions of the causes for product failure in terms of the stability and controllability dimensions might explain their general passivity and unwillingness to engage in formal complaint behaviour (i.e. complaints to third parties). A complete change of attitude for both consumers and retailers/manufacturers is needed in this regard. To encourage consumers to complain, retailers and manufacturers should provide consumers with ample information regarding their consumer rights, which inter alia include the right to be informed, the right to be heard, the right to redress and the right to consumer education. Information about consumers' rights is often supplied by independent parties such as consumer protection organisations. It is, however, high time for retailers to collaborate with these organisations to provide consumers with the relevant information, whether in the form of in-store educational programmes or informative pamphlets and DVDs. Consumer protection organisations, retailers and manufacturers should therefore empower consumers by actively promoting consumers' rights.

An understanding of cross-cultural differences in complaint behaviour could be helpful to retailers, manufactures, consumer organisations, and government agencies. South African marketers, retailers and manufacturers should use *ubuntu* to their best advantage by encouraging the multicultural society of South Africa to actively participate in public (formal) complaint behaviour (i.e. complain to retailers/manufacturers instead of taking part in private responses that never get to their attention). An understanding of consumer complaint behaviour can help to develop effective complaint resolution strategies, which may help to retain customers instead of losing them to the competition, and may reduce the likelihood of damaging covert responses. Bearing in mind the influence of the emerging upcoming middle class, specifically the "Black Diamonds", and the fact that all consumers have the right to complain about unsatisfactory products, research about product failures, consumer dissatisfaction and consumers' subsequent complaint behaviour is of vital importance. In the South African context, more studies about the correlation between culture and various consumer related, product related and redress-environment related variables concerning consumers' dissatisfaction with products will be of immense value, since the disparity between collectivistic (Afro-centric) and individualistic (Euro-centric) societies remains one of the major barriers between cultural groups. Additionally, researchers, retailers and manufacturers need to realise that the process of

acculturation in the New South Africa has important implications for the development of marketing strategies to assist and empower consumers and to retain loyal consumers.

Minor product failures can cause just as much harm as more serious product failures in terms of negative word-of-mouth. Therefore, manufacturers should maintain high standards of quality control and retailers should sell high quality products to enhance positive word-of-mouth, since no appliances are exempt from product failure. Higher levels of performance failure severity are associated with consumers' decision to use other brand names and to stop supporting the retailer from whom the product was purchased. Consumers might not engage in formal complaint actions because they are not prepared to go through the trouble of engaging in formal complaint action, implying passivity on their part. Additionally, consumers' low coping potential concerning third-party complaint action might have a role to play (i.e. consumers might believe that it is worthless to complain formally nothing will be gained). Consumer protection organisations and the media (newspapers, magazines, television, radio) should encourage consumers to complain about product failures to facilitate the improvement of product quality and to change consumers' passive mindsets to those of consumers that are standing up for their rights – a force to be heard and to be reckoned with!

Both retailers and manufacturers should be aware of, and above all, not underestimate, the impact of hidden or indirect complaint activities such as engaging in adverse word-of-mouth marketing, boycotting the retailer and switching brands. Consumers should be encouraged to take part in direct complaint action, requiring that complaint policies and strategies be in place. Although many retailers and manufacturers do have complaint policies and strategies of some kind, many members of their staff do not know how to manage consumers' complaints effectively. This implies that staff members need to be informed about complaint and return policies (especially policies concerning product warranties) and trained in effective handling of complaints. However, before staff can handle complaints, they should first gain proper product knowledge to facilitate them in recognising product problems. This remains a very big challenge in South Africa, since many employees sell products that they have never owned or used themselves. Retailers and manufacturers should encourage consumers to provide them with feedback; in fact, they should make it easier for consumers to complain. Companies should provide their mailing address, website address, contact numbers, toll-free numbers and an invitation to provide feedback, in all publicly viewed material, including promotional communications, packaging, invoices etc. Information leaflets and in-store communication via sales assistants should be provided concerning return policies and after-sales repair service to enable consumers to follow the correct route for complaint action. Customer service centres

should be clearly visible so that people may know where to go when they want to complain. In this day and age, retailers and manufacturers should have appropriate websites to allow consumers to complain on-line and to enquire about corrective action. The successful implementation of the above measures will increase consumers' coping potential and might prevent them from following hidden complaint actions or, even worse, engaging in third-party complaints (i.e. contacting newspapers, legal advisors or consumer councils).

In many instances, businesses/organisations do have all of these strategies in place, but the will to actively resolve complaints is lacking. It is stressed again that staff over the whole spectrum (including sales assistants, customer service staff, complaint handling staff, managers etc.) should be encouraged to practise good complaint handling ethics in order to increase customer satisfaction, to prevent customers from taking their business to the competition or, to prevent customers from going to third parties, and especially to stop them from spreading additional negative word-of-mouth. This can only work when the whole team is committed to effective complaint handling. Complaint handling employees should understand that dissatisfied and angry consumers usually want some form of restitution (e.g. price reduction or free repair service). Even though the provision of restitution is not always possible, the least that retailers and manufacturers could do is to provide a sincere apology and explain that corrective action has been taken to ensure that the same product problem will not recur (provided that this is the truth).

Dissatisfaction is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for consumers' complaining behaviour concerning the functional/symbolic performance failure of their major household appliances. Many factors influence the process by which dissatisfied consumers determine what, if any, action will be taken. Therefore, influencing factors (i.e. consumer-related variables, product-specific variables and redress environment variables) should be studied to aid researchers in understanding consumers' level of dissatisfaction experienced as well as their subsequent complaint behaviour, which may not necessarily be related to the level of dissatisfaction experienced. Additionally, complaint handling staff should be made aware that consumers' complaint behaviour involves more that just their level of dissatisfaction experienced. Complaint handling staff should be trained to deal with different types of consumers' dissatisfaction effectively. This implies that they should be able to deal with consumers with different levels of sophistication, in the correct manner, to avoid further dissatisfaction and frustration.

Thus, although retailers and manufacturers usually consider consumers' complaints in a negative light and want to eliminate them, retailers and manufacturers should rather encourage consumers to provide them with feedback concerning their dissatisfaction with products. This would enable them to remedy product problems, increase consumer satisfaction and retain loyal customers.

Consumer protection organisations should remind manufacturers and retailers about their social responsibility towards consumers. The different role-players should join hands to persuade consumers to actively exercise their right to complain, and so help to create a "culture of complaining" instead of a "spirit of passivity" concerning their dissatisfaction with the performance of their major electrical household appliances.

7.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study touched on the role that culture plays in consumers' complaint behaviour concerning their dissatisfaction with major household appliances. Studies have shown that people's experience of emotions differ in individualistic and collectivistic societies. In individualistic societies, people are more likely to experience ego-focused emotions such as anger and frustration, and the intensity of these emotions is likely to be higher compared to people from collectivistic societies (Laufer, 2002). This suggests that consumers from different cultural backgrounds might attribute causes for product failures differently (i.e. their perception of the dimensionality of causes might differ), and might therefore cope differently with product failures. Bearing this in mind, South Africa's multi-cultural context provides a rich canvas for investigating the behaviour – especially the complaint behaviour – of differing cultures. Future consumer behaviour studies should look at consumers' culture, cognitions and emotions to fully understand the roots of their complaint behaviour. People's cultural orientation need to be measured to examine the mechanism of cultural influence on complaining behaviour (Chelminski, 2001). This might be especially true of countries such as South Africa, where different cultural groupings live together and have the potential to acculturate.

One cannot study consumer complaint behaviour without looking at the object of their dissatisfaction (in this sense, dissatisfactory products). People buy products not only for functional but also for symbolic purposes. This study only investigated and described consumers' complaint behaviour concerning major household appliances. Other product industries (selling status symbols such as cars, clothing and furniture) could certainly benefit

from similar research into their customers' complaint behaviour concerning their dissatisfactory products.

It should be noted that in this case, the role of other individual characteristics such as consumers' personality traits and psychological characteristics (psychographics) in complaining behaviour was not taken into account. However, (depending on time and monetary constraints and the objectives of the research), these aspects should also be studied to get a comprehensive view of the role of consumer-related variables in consumers' complaint action versus non-complaint action.

Since a fair amount of consumers contact retailers/manufacturers for redress, especially when their major electrical household appliances are still under guarantee, the role of redress environment factors (i.e. factors that are controlled or primarily influenced by retailers) should be studied to explain consumers' reasons for their behaviour. Additionally these factors should be studied to explain why some consumers do not contact retailers/manufacturers for redress. The interplay between consumer-related factors, pertaining to the psychological costs involved in making complaints, and redress environment variables should also be studied.

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ADDENDUM A: QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH/AFRIKAANS VERSION)

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

University of Pretoria
Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
http://www.up.ac.za
Natural and Agricultural Sciences
1 December 2005

Dear respondent,

Often people are dissatisfied with products that do not meet their expectations. Currently I am busy with a PhD study about consumers' reactions to their dissatisfaction concerning major electrical kitchen appliances. Some people experience major dissatisfaction with their appliances, while others are not completely satisfied. No matter how insignificant your dissatisfaction, your inputs in the study will be valuable, as it may aid manufacturers and retailers in discovering and correcting product problems to keep consumers satisfied.

To be part of this study, you must have **purchased a major electrical kitchen appliance item in the last four years** and have experienced **dissatisfaction with the product itself**. (Please note that this only includes problems or unhappiness with the product itself. Problems or unhappiness because of poor shop service, delivery, installation and advertising falls outside the scope of this study). Additionally, you must live in the **Pretoria region (Tshwane)**.

Although the questionnaire has 11 pages, you only need to answer the questions relevant to you. Thus, answering the questionnaire will only take **fifteen minutes of your time**. There are no right or wrong answers; I am only interested in **your opinion and experience**.

Your response will be treated anonymously; no personal information can be linked back to you. Furthermore, none of your personal information will be made known to any one.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to participate in this study. If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the study, please feel free to contact me at the e-mail address or telephone number below.

Kind regards

Suné Viljoen
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Department of Consumer Science
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(012) 420-2488 (office)

Study leaders: **Prof HM De Klerk (Department of Consumer Science, UP)**
Dr L Ehlers (Department of Marketing, UP)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondent number

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

For official use only

V1 [ ][ ][ ] 1-3

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BY CROSSING (X) THE RELEVANT BOX OR WRITING YOUR ANSWER IN THE GIVEN SPACE

Section A

1 What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2

V2 [ ] 4

2 How old are you?

[ ]

V3 [ ][ ] 5-6

3 What is your **highest** level of education?

Grade 11/Standard 9/NTCII or less	1
Grade 12/Standard 10/NTCIII	2
Grade 12 and an additional certificate(s)	3
Grade 12 and an additional diploma(s)	4
Bachelors degree	5
Post graduate qualification	6

V4 [ ] 7

4 What is your **household's monthly income** before tax deduction?

R 2 000 – R 5 000	1
R 5 001 – R 10 000	2
R 10 001 or more	3

V5 [ ] 8

5 In which suburb of the Pretoria area (Tshwane) do you live?

[ ]

V6 [ ][ ] 9-10

6 What is your cultural group?

Asian	1
Black	2
Coloured	3
Indian	4
White	5
Other (specify):	

V7 [ ] 11

Section B

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

1 Which **ONE** of the following **electrical household kitchen appliances** that you have purchased within the last four years has caused you the **most dissatisfaction**?

Refrigerator	1
Freezer	2
Combination fridge-freezer	3
Built-in oven	4
Built-in stove	5
Free-standing stove (plates plus oven combination)	6
Microwave oven	7
Washing machine: front loader	8
Washing machine: top loader	9
Tumble dryer	10
Dishwasher	11

V8 [ ][ ] 12-13

2 When did you purchase the appliance that you chose in question 1 (SectionB)?

Month:	**Year:**

V9 [ ] 14

3 What is the **brand name** of the dissatisfactory appliance that you chose in question 1 (Section B)?

Aim	1
AEG	2
Bosch	3
Bauer	4
Defy	5
Kelvinator	6
LG	7
Miele	8
Samsung	9
Siemens	10
Speed Queen	11
Whirlpool (including KIC)	12
Other (specify):	

V10 [ ][ ] 15-16

4.1 Describe what happened/went wrong.

	V11			17-18
	V12			19-20
	V13			21-22

4.2 Indicate the degree to which you **agree/disagree** with **each of the following statements** regarding the appliance's performance failure mentioned in question 4.1 (Section B).

	Definitely agree 1	Agree 2	Uncertain 3	Disagree 4	Definitely disagree 5			
The appliance broke down.						V14		23
The appliance did not operate properly.						V15		24
The appliance was a dud (example of a poor product) from the start.						V16		25
The appliance did not provide user convenience.						V17		26
The appliance required more maintenance and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition.						V18		27
The appliance no longer reflected the image/identity I associated with my personal style.						V19		28
The appliance no longer made me feel good about myself.						V20		29
I did not enjoy using the appliance any longer.						V21		30
The appliance no longer impressed me.						V22		31
The appliance no longer impressed other people.						V23		32

5 How severe (serious) was the appliance's faulty or poor performance mentioned in question 4.1 (Section B)?

Not severe at all	Somewhat severe	Very severe	Extremely severe
1	2	3	4

V24 ☐ 33

6 How angry were you, following the appliance's faulty or poor performance mentioned in question 4.1 (Section B)?

Not angry at all	Reasonably angry	Very angry	Extremely angry
1	2	3	4

V25 ☐ 34

7 How dissatisfied were you when the appliance performed faulty or poorly?

Slightly dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
1	2	3	4

V26 ☐ 35

8 Why did the appliance fail/perform poorly? Cross (**X**) the **<u>most important cause</u>** ***or*** provide another cause, if none of the given causes applies. (Only mark **ONE** cause).

The purchaser of the appliance did not do enough research before purchasing it.	1
The manufacturer provided an appliance with poor styling and design features.	2
Flaws/defects are inevitable with complicated appliances.	3
The manufacturer used inferior materials/finishes (trimmings).	4
The person operating the appliance mistreated (abused) it.	5
The person operating the appliance did not know how to use it properly.	6
The manufacturer provided poor workmanship.	7
The person using the appliance did not follow the prescribed operating instructions.	8
The appliance became out of fashion.	9
Other (specify):	

V27 ☐☐ 36-37

9 Copy the cause that you have selected or written in question 8 (Section B) in the space provided.

The statements below concern your impression or opinion of the cause for the failure or poor performance of the appliance. Use the cause that you have written in the space above and cross (X) **ONE** shaded number for **each of the following statements**. (The number 1 being closest to the statement on the left and 9 being closest to the statement of the right).

The cause of the product failure:

was due to circumstances or other peoples' action (reflected on the situation)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was due to my own action (reflected on myself)	V28		38
was uncontrollable by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was controllable by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	V29		39
is temporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	is permanent	V30		40
was unintended by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was intended by myself or other people (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	V31		41
was outside of me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was inside of me	V32		42
is variable over time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	is stable over time	V33		43
was something about others (the retailer, manufacturer or someone else)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was something about me	V34		44
is changeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	is unchanging	V35		45
was something for which no one is responsible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was something for which someone is responsible (me, the manufacturer or somebody else)	V36		46

Section C

This section involves your actions taken in response to your dissatisfaction and your reasons for each specific action.

1 Did you take any action? (Action refers to talking to friends and family, using another brand name, stopping your support of the retailer, contacting the retailer/manufacturer/a repair service/a consumer protection organisation, writing a complaint letter and/or contacting a legal representative).

YES	NO
1	2

V37 [ ] 47

If **NO,** cross the applicable reason(s) for not taking any action. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

I did not think it was worth the time and effort/hassle to take action.	1	V38 [ ]	48
I did not think I could get anyone to do anything about it.	2	V39 [ ]	49
I wanted to do something about it but never got around to it.	3	V40 [ ]	50
I did not know what I could do about it.	4	V41 [ ]	51
I did not know where I could get help.	5	V42 [ ]	52
The appliance's guarantee had expired.	6	V43 [ ]	53
Other reason(s):		V44 [ ] [ ]	54-55
		V45 [ ] [ ]	56-57

If YES, please answer questions 2 –10 (Section C).

2 Did you tell your friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience?

YES	NO
1	2

V46 ☐ 58

If **YES**, cross the reason(s) for telling your family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

To warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer.	1	V47 ☐	59
To feel less disappointed, since the appliance was expensive and supposed to last longer.	2	V48 ☐	60
To get rid of my anger/frustration.	3	V49 ☐	61
Other reason(s):		V50 ☐☐	62-63
		V51 ☐☐	64-65

3 Did you decide to use a brand name other than the one you were dissatisfied with?

YES	NO
1	2

V52 ☐ 66

If **YES**, cross the reason(s) for your decision to use another brand name. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

Because I considered the brand name not reliable anymore.	1	V53 ☐	67
To get rid of my anger/frustration.	2	V54 ☐	68
To punish/hurt the manufacturer.	3	V55 ☐	69
Other reason(s):		V56 ☐☐	70-71
		V57 ☐☐	72-73

4 Did you stop supporting the [illegible]urchased?

YES	NO
1	2

V58 [ ] 74

If **YES**, cross the applicable reason(s) for stopping your support of the retailer**. Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

Because I felt that I could not trust the retailer anymore.	1	V59 [ ]	75
To punish/hurt the retailer.	2	V60 [ ]	76
To get rid of my anger/frustration.	3	V61 [ ]	77
Other reason(s):		V62 [ ] [ ]	78-79
		V63 [ ] [ ]	80-81

5 Did you contact the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs/a replacement/a refund)?

YES	NO
1	2

V64 [ ] 82

If **YES**, cross the reason(s) for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress**. Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

The appliance was still under guarantee.	1	V65 [ ]	83
The appliance's guarantee had expired and I expected the appliance to last longer.	2	V66 [ ]	84
The appliance did not provide value for money.	3	V67 [ ]	85
The household could not function properly without the appliance.	4	V68 [ ]	86
Other reason(s):		V69 [ ] [ ]	87-88
		V70 [ ] [ ]	89-90

5.1 Was the appliance still under guarantee when you contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs/a replacement/a refund)?

YES	NO
1	2

V71 [ ] 91

6 Did you contact the retailer/manufacturer other than seeking redress (repairs/a replacement/a refund) for the appliance?

YES	NO			
1	2	V72		92

If **YES**, cross the reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress for the appliance. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

To make an objection after my effort to obtain redress/compensation for the appliance failed.	1	V73		93
To get rid of my anger/frustration.	2	V74		94
To stand up for my rights as a consumer.	3	V75		95
To get an apology from the retailer/manufacturer.	4	V76		96
Other reason(s):		V77		97-98
		V78		99-100

7 Did you contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer?

YES	NO			
1	2	V79		101

If **YES**, cross the reason(s) for contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

The appliance's guarantee had expired and the retailer/manufacturer was not responsible for the appliance anymore	1	V80		102
The household could not function properly without the appliance.	2	V81		103
The repair service was less expensive than the retailer/manufacturer's service.	3	V82		104
Other reason(s):		V83		105-106
		V84		107-108

7.1 Was the appliance still under guarantee when you contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer?

YES	NO			
1	2	V85		109

8 Did you contact a consumer protection organisation/department?

YES	NO
1	2

V86 [ ] 110

If **YES**, **cross** the reason(s) for contacting a consumer protection organisation/department. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

To seek assistance in obtaining redress (refund, replacement, repairs) for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed.	1	V87	[ ]	111
To stand up for my rights as a consumer.	2	V88	[ ]	112
To get rid of may anger/frustration.	3	V89	[ ]	113
Other reason(s):		V90	[ ]	114-115
		V91	[ ]	116-117

8.1 Was the appliance still under guarantee when you contacted a consumer protection organisation/department?

YES	NO
1	2

V92 [ ] 118

9 Did you write letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc) or a consumer complaint website?

YES	NO
1	2

V93 [ ] 119

If **YES**, cross the reason(s) for writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc) or a consumer complaint website. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

To seek assistance in obtaining redress (refund, replacement, repairs) for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed.	1	V94	[ ]	120
To stand up for my rights as a consumer.	2	V95	[ ]	121
To warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer.	3	V96	[ ]	122
To get rid of may anger/frustration.	4	V97	[ ]	123
Other reason(s):		V98	[ ]	124 - 125
		V99	[ ]	126-127

9.1 Was the appliance still under guarantee when you wrote letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc) or a consumer complaint website?

YES	NO
1	2

V100 [ ] 128

10 Did you contact legal representative?

YES	NO
1	2

V101 [ ] 129

If **YES**, cross (x) the reason(s) for contacting a legal representative. **Cross (x) as many blocks as apply *and* provide other reasons if relevant.**

To seek assistance in obtaining redress (refund, replacement, repairs) for the appliance from the retailer or manufacturer since my direct efforts to obtain redress failed.	1	V102 [ ]	130
To stand up for my rights as a consumer.	2	V103 [ ]	131
To warn other people against the brand name/manufacturer/retailer.	3	V104 [ ]	132
To get rid of may anger/frustration.	4	V105 [ ]	133
Other reason(s):		V106 [ ][ ]	134-135
		V107 [ ][ ]	136-137

10.1 Was the appliance still under guarantee when you contacted a legal representative?

YES	NO
1	2

V108 [ ] 138

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study!!

--o00o--

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Universiteit van Pretoria
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http://www.up.ac.za
Natuur- en
Landbouwetenskappe
1 Desember 2005

Beste respondent,

Dit gebeur dikwels dat mense ontevrede is met produkte wat nie aan hulle verwagtinge voldoen nie. Ek is tans besig met 'n PhD-studie oor verbruikers se reaksies oor hulle ontevredenheid met groot elektriese kombuistoerusting. Sommige mense is baie ontevrede met hulle toerusting terwyl ander nie heeltemal tevrede is nie. Al beskou u u insette as gering, sal u deelname baie waardevol wees, aangesien dit vervaardigers en kleinhandelaars kan help om van produkprobleme bewus te raak en om dit reg te stel om verbruikerstevredenheid te verseker.

Om deel te neem aan die studie moes u **ontevrede gewees het met groot elektriese huishoudelike kombuistoerusting wat u oor die afgelope vier jaar aangekoop het**. (Let asseblief daarop dat u probleme of ongelukkigheid moes ervaar het met die produk opsigself. Probleme of ongelukkigheid weens swak winkeldiens, aflewering, installasie en advertering val buite die omvang van die studie). Verder, moet u ook in die **Pretoria area (Tshwane)** woonagtig wees.

Die vraelys bestaan uit 11 bladsye, maar u hoef net die toepaslike vrae te beantwoord. Die voltooiing van die vraelys behoort nie langer as vyftien minute te neem nie. Daar is nie regte of verkeerde antwoorde nie, ek stel slegs belang in u opinie en ondervinding.

U terugvoer sal anoniem hanteer word en geen persoonlike inligting kan met 'n bepaalde persoon in verband gebring word nie. Voorts sal geen persoonlike inligting bekend gemaak word nie.

Dankie vir u bereidwilligheid om aan die studie deel te neem. Kontak my gerus by die onderstaande e-posadres of telefoonnommer indien u enige navrae het oor die vraelys of die studie.

Vriendelike groete

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VRAELYS

Respondentnommer

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Vir amptelike gebruik

V1 [ ][ ][ ] 1-3

BEANTWOORD DIE VRAE DEUR 'N KRUISIE (X) IN DIE TOEPASLIKE BLOKKIE TE TREK OF DIE GEGEWE SPASIE TE VOLTOOI

Afdeling A

1 Wat is u geslag?

Manlik	1
Vroulik	2

V2 [ ] 4

2 Hoe oud is u?

[ ]

V3 [ ] 5-6

3 Wat is u **hoogste** kwalifikasie?

Graad 11/Standerd 9/NTCII of minder	1
Graad 12/Standerd 10/NTCIII	2
Graad 12 en 'n verdere sertifikaat/e	3
Graad 12 en 'n verdere diploma/s	4
Baccalaureus graad	5
Nagraadse kwalifikasie	6

V4 [ ] 7

4 Wat is u **huishouding** se **maandelikse inkomste** voor belastingaftrekkings?

R 2 000 – R 5 000	1
R 5 001 – R 10 000	2
R 10 001 of meer	3

V5 [ ] 8

5 In watter woonbuurt van die Pretoria-area (Tshwane) woon u?

[ ]

V6 [ ] 9-10

6 Aan watter kulturele groep behoort u?

Asiër	
Indiër	
Kleurling	
Swart	
Wit	
Ander (spesifiseer):	

V7 [ ] 11

Afdeling B

1 Watter **EEN** van die volgende **elektriese huishoudelike kombuistoerusting**, wat u oor die afgelope vier jaar gekoop het, het die **meeste ontevredenheid** meegebring?

Yskas	1
Vrieskas	2
Kombinasie yskas-vrieskas	3
Ingeboude oonde	4
Ingeboude stoof	5
Vrystaande stoof (plate-en-oondkombinasie)	6
Mikrogolfoond	7
Wasmasjien: voorlaaier	8
Wasmasjien: bolaaier	9
Tuimeldroër	10
Skottelgoedwasser	11

V8 [ ][ ] 12-13

2 Wanneer is die toerusting, wat u in vraag 1 (Afdeling B) gekies het, aangekoop?

Maand:	**Jaar:**

V9 [ ] 14

3 Wat is die **handelsnaam** van die toerusing wat u in vraag 1 (Afdeling B) gekies het?

Aim	1
AEG	2
Bosch	3
Bauer	4
Defy	5
Kelvinator	6
LG	7
Miele	8
Samsung	9
Siemens	10
Speed Queen	11
Whirlpool (insluitende KIC)	12
Ander (spesifiseer):	

V10 [ ][ ] 15-16

4.1 Beskryf wat gebeur het of verkeerd gelaap het.

	V11			17-18
	V12			19-20
	V13			21-22

4.2 Dui die mate aan waartoe u **saamstem/verskil** met **elkeen van die volgende stellings** oor die mislukking van die toerusting, soos aangedui in vraag 4.1 (Afdeling B)

	Stem beslis saam 1	Stem saam 2	Onseker 3	Verskil 4	Verskil beslis 5			
Die toerusting het gebreek.						V14		23
Die toerusting het nie reg gewerk nie.						V15		24
Die toerusting was van die begin af 'n mislukking (*dud*) (voorbeeld van 'n swak produk).						V16		25
Die toerusting het nie gebruikersgerief verskaf nie.						V17		26
Die toerusting het meer instandhouding en versorging benodig as soortgelyke toerusting in 'n foutlose toestand.						V18		27
Die toerusting het nie meer die beeld/identiteit wat ek met my persoonlike styl assosieer, gereflekteer nie.						V19		28
Die toerusting het my nie meer goed laat voel oor myself nie.						V20		29
Ek het dit nie meer geniet om die toerusting te gebruik nie.						V21		30
Die toerusting het my nie meer beïndruk nie.						V22		31
Die toerusting het ander mense nie meer beïndruk nie.						V23		32

5 Hoe ernstig was die foutiewe of swak werksverrigting (funksionering) van die toerusting soos aangedui in vraag 4.1 (Afdeling B)?

Geensins ernstig	Ietwat ernstig	Baie ernstig	Uiters ernstig
1	2	3	4

V24 ☐ 33

6 Hoe kwaad was u toe die toerusting foutiewelik of swak gefunksioneer het soos aangedui in vraag 4.1(Afdeling B)?

Geensins kwaad	Redelik kwaad	Baie kwaad	Uiters kwaad
1	2	3	4

V25 ☐ 34

7 Hoe ontevrede was u toe die toerusting foutiewelik of swak gefunksioneer het?

Effens ontevrede	Matig ontevrede	Baie ontevrede	Uiters ontevrede
1	2	3	4

V26 ☐ 35

8 Waarom het die toerusting foutiewelik of swak gefunksioneer? Merk (X) die **mees belangrike oorsaak** ***of*** voorsien 'n ander oorsaak indien geeneen van die oorsake van toepassing is nie. (Merk slegs **EEN** oorsaak).

Die aankoper van die toerusting het nie genoeg navorsing gedoen voor die toerusting gekoop is nie.	1
Die vervaardiger het toerusting gelewer met swak stylerings- en ontwerpkenmerke.	2
Produkfoute/defekte is onvermydelik by komplekse toerusting.	3
Die vervaardiger het swak materiale/afwerkings (*trimmings*) gebruik.	4
Die gebruiker van die toerusting het dit misbruik.	5
Die gebruiker van die toerusting het nie geweet hoe om dit behoorlik te gebruik nie.	6
Die vervaardiger het swak vakmanskap gelewer.	7
Die gebruiker van die toerusting het nie die voorgeskrewe gebruiksinstruksies gevolg nie.	8
Die toerusting het uit die mode geraak.	9
Ander (spesifiseer):	

V27 ☐☐ 36-37

9 Skryf die oorsaak wat jy in vraag 8 (Afdeling B) gekies het, of geskryf het, in die gegewe spasie.

Die onderstaande stellings het te doen met u indruk of opinie ten op sigte van die oorsaak vir die mislukking of swak werksverrigting (funksionering) van die toerusting. Gebruik die oorsaak wat u in die boonste blokkie geskryf het en trek 'n kruisie (X) op **EEN** van die toepaslike syfers (in 'n grys blokkie) vir **elk van die volgende stellings**. (Waar 1 die meeste ooreenstem met die stelling aan die linkerkant en 9 die meeste ooreenstem met die stelling aan die regterkant).

Die oorsaak van die mislukking van die produk:

was as gevolg van omstandighede of ander mense se aksies (dui op die situasie)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was as gevolg van my eie aksies (dui op myself)	V28	38
was nie beheerbaar deur myself of ander mense (die kleinhandelaar, vervaardiger of iemand anders) nie	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was beheerbaar deur myself of ander mense (die kleinhandelaar, vervaardiger of iemand anders)	V29	39
is tydelik	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	is permanent	V30	40
was nie opsetlik my of ander mense (die kleinhandelaar, vervaardiger of iemand anders) se bedoeling nie	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was opsetlik my of ander mense (die kleinhandelaar, vervaardiger of iemand anders) se bedoeling	V31	41
het te doen met dinge buite myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	het te doen met dinge binne myself	V32	42
kan oor tyd varieer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	is stabiel oor tyd	V33	43
het te doen met iets oor ander mense (die kleinhandelaar, vervaardiger of iemand anders)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	het te doen met iets oor myself	V34	44
is iets wat kan verander	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	is iets wat nie kan verander nie	V35	45
was iets waarvoor niemand verantwoordelik is nie	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	was iets waarvoor iemand (ek, die kleinhandelaar, vervaardiger of iemand anders) verantwoordelik is	V36	46

Afdeling C

Hierdie afdeling behels die aksies wat u geneem het in antwoord op u ontevredenheid met die toerusting en die redes vir die spesifieke aksies.

1 Het u enige aksie geneem? (Aksie verwys na die praat met vriende of familie, die gebruik van 'n ander handelsnaam, die staking van die ondersteuning aan die handelaar, die kontakmaking met 'n handelaar/vervaardiger/'n hersteldiens/'n verbruikersbeskermings-organisasie, die skryf van 'n brief om te kla en/of die kontakmaking met 'n regsverteenwoordiger).

JA	NEE
1	2

V37 [ ] 47

Indien **NEE,** merk die rede(s) waarom u geen aksie geneem het nie**. Merk (X) die toepaslike blokkie(s) *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Ek nie gedink dat dit die tyd of die moeite werd sou wees om aksie te neem nie.	1	V38	[ ]	48
Ek het nie gedink dat ek iemand in die hande sou kry wat iets omtrent die saak kon doen nie.	2	V39	[ ]	49
Ek wou iets doen, maar ek het nooit so ver gekom nie.	3	V40	[ ]	50
Ek het nie geweet wat ek daaromtrent kon doen nie.	4	V41	[ ]	51
Ek het nie geweet waar om hulp te kry nie.	5	V42	[ ]	52
Die toerusting se waarborg het verval.	6	V43	[ ]	53
Ander rede(s):		V44	[ ] [ ]	54-55
		V45	[ ] [ ]	56-57

Indien JA, antwoord asseblief vrae 2 - 10 (Afdeling C)

2 Het u met u vriende, familie of kennisse oor u slegte ondervinding gepraat?

JA	NEE
1	2

V46 [ ] 58

Indien **JA,** merk die rede(s) waarom u met u vriende, familie of kennisse oor die slegte ondervinding gepraat het. **Merk (X) die toepaslike blokkie(s) *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Om ander mense teen die handelsnaam/vervaardiger/kleinhandelaar te waarsku.	1	V47 [ ]	59
Om minder teleurgesteld te voel aangesien die toerusting duur was en langer moes hou.	2	V48 [ ]	60
Om van my woede/frustrasie ontslae te raak.	3	V49 [ ]	61
Ander rede(s):		V50 [ ][ ]	62-63
		V51 [ ][ ]	64-65

3 Het u besluit om 'n handelsnaam anders as die een waarmee u ontevrede was, te gebruik?

JA	NEE
1	2

V52 [ ] 66

Indien **JA,** merk die rede(s) waarom u besluit het om 'n ander handelsnaam te gebruik. **Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Ek het gedink dat die handelsnaam nie meer betroubaar is nie.	1	V53 [ ]	67
Om van my woede/frustrasie ontslae te raak.	2	V54 [ ]	68
Om die vervaardiger te straf/skade aan te doen.	3	V55 [ ]	69
Ander rede(s):		V56 [ ][ ]	70-71
		V57 [ ][ ]	72-73

4 Het u opgehou om die kleinhandelaar, by wie die toerusting gekoop is, te ondersteun?

JA	NEE			
1	2	V58		74

Indien **JA**, merk die rede(s) waarom u opgehou het om die kleinhandelaar, by wie die toerusting gekoop is, te ondersteun? **Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Ek het gevoel dat ek die kleinhandelaar nie meer kon vertrou nie.	1	V59		75
Om die vervaardiger te straf/skade aan te doen.	2	V60		76
Om van my woede/frustrasie ontslae te raak.	3	V61		77
Ander rede(s):		V62		78-79
		V63		80-81

5 Het u die kleinhandelaar/vervaardiger gekontak om vergoeding (herstelwerk/'n plaasvervanger/'n terugbetaling) te eis?

JA	NEE			
1	2	V64		82

Indien **JA**, merk die rede(s) waarom u die kleinhandelaar/vervaardiger gekontak het om vergoeding te eis? **Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Die toerusting was steeds onder waarborg.	1	V65		83
Die toerusting se waarborg het verval en ek het verwag dat dit langer sou hou.	2	V66		84
Die toerusting het nie waarde vir geld gebied nie.	3	V67		85
Die huishouding kon nie behoorlik sonder die toerusting funksioneer nie.	4	V68		86
Ander rede(s):		V69		87-88
		V70		89-90

5.1 Was die toerusting nog onder waarborg toe u die kleinhandelaar/vervaardiger gekontak het om vergoeding (herstelwerk/'n plaasvervanger/'n terugbetaling) te eis?

JA	NEE			
1	2	V71		91

6 Het u die kleinhandelaar/verv… …edes as om vergoeding (herstelwerk/'n plaasvervanger/'n terugbetaling) te bekom?

JA	NEE			
1	2	V72		92

Indien **JA**, merk die rede(s) waarom u die kleinhandelaar/vervaardiger gekontak het om te kla oor ander redes as om vergoeding te bekom. **Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Om beswaar te maak nadat my pogings om vergoeding/kompensasie te bekom, misluk het.	1	V73			93
Om van my woede/frustrasie onstlae te raak.	2	V74			94
Om vir my regte as verbruiker op te kom.	3	V75			95
Om 'n verskoning (apologie) van die kleinhandelaar/vervaardiger te verkry.	4	V76			96
Ander rede(s):		V77			97-98
		V78			99-100

7 Het u 'n hersteldiens, anders as dié wat deur die handelaar of vervaardiger voorsien word, gekontak?

JA	NEE			
1	2	V79		101

Indien **JA**, merk die rede(s) waarom u 'n hersteldiens, anders as dié wat deur die handelaar of vervaardiger voorsien word, gekontak het. **Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Die toerusting se waarborg het verval en die kleinhandelaar/vervaardiger kon nie meer verantwoordelik vir die toerusting gehou word nie.	1	V80			102
Die huishouding kon nie behoorlik sonder die toerusting funksioneer nie.	2	V81			103
Die hersteldiens was goedkoper as dié van die kleinhandelaar/vervaardiger.	3	V82			104
Ander rede(s):		V83			105-106
		V84			107-108

7.1 Was die toerusting nog onder waarborg toe u die hersteldiens, anders as dié wat deur die handelaar of vervaardiger voorsien word, gekontak het?

JA	NEE			
1	2	V85		109

8 Het u 'n verbruikersbeskerm :?

JA	NEE
1	2

V86 ☐ 110

Indien **JA**, merk die rede(s) waarom u 'n verbruikersbeskermingsorganisasie/-departement gekontak het. **Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Om bystand te bekom vir die verkryging van vergoeding (herstelwerk/'n plaasvervanger/'n terugbetaling) aangesien my direkte pogings om vergoeding, vir die toerusting, van die kleinhandelaar en vervaardiger te kry, misluk het.	1	V87 ☐	111
Om vir my regte as verbruiker op te kom.	2	V88 ☐	112
Om van my woede/frustrasie ontslae te raak.	3	V89 ☐	113
Ander rede(s):		V90 ☐☐	114-115
		V91 ☐☐	116-117

8.1 Was die toerusting nog onder waarborg toe u 'n verbruikersbeskermings-organisasie/-department gekontak het?

JA	NEE
1	2

V92 ☐ 118

9 Het u 'n brief aan die pers ('n koerant, tydskrif ens.) of 'n webwerf vir verbruikersklagtes geskryf?

JA	NEE
1	**2**

V93 ☐ 119

Indien **JA**, merk die rede(s) waarom u 'n brief aan die pers ('n koerant, tydskrif ens.) of 'n webwerf vir verbruikersklagtes geskryf het. **Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.**

Om bystand te bekom vir die verkryging van vergoeding (herstelwerk/'n plaasvervanger/'n terugbetaling) aangesien my direkte pogings om vergoeding, vir die toerusting, van die kleinhandelaar en vervaardiger te kry, misluk het.	1	V94 ☐	120
Om vir my regte as verbruiker op te kom.	2	V95 ☐	121
Om ander mense teen die handelsnaam/vervaardiger/kleinhandelaar te waarsku.	3	V96 ☐	122
Om van my woede/frustrasie ontslae te raak.	4	V97 ☐	123
Ander rede(s):		V98 ☐☐	124-125
		V99 ☐☐	126-127

9.1 Was die toerusting nog onder waarborg toe u 'n brief aan die pers ('n koerant, tydskrif ens.) of 'n webwerf vir verbruikersklagtes geskryf het?

JA	NEE
1	2

V100 ☐ 128

10 Het u 'n regsverteenwoordiger gekontak?

JA	NEE
1	2

V101 ☐ 129

Indien **JA**, merk die rede(s) waarom u 'n regsverteenwoordiger gekontak het.
Merk (X) soveel blokkies wat van toepassing is *en* voorsien ander redes indien van toepassing.

Om bystand te bekom vir die verkryging van vergoeding (herstelwerk/'n plaasvervanger/'n terugbetaling) aangesien my direkte pogings om vergoeding, vir die toerusting, van die kleinhandelaar en vervaardiger te kry, misluk het.	1	V102 ☐	130
Om vir my regte as verbruiker op te kom.	2	V103 ☐	131
Om ander mense teen die handelsnaam/vervaardiger/kleinhandelaar te waarsku.	3	V104 ☐	132
Om van my woede/frustrasie ontslae te raak.	4	V105 ☐	133
Ander rede(s):		V106 ☐☐	134-135
		V107 ☐☐	136-137

10.1 Was die toerusting nog onder waarborg toe u 'n regsverteenwoordiger gekontak het?

JA	NEE
1	2

V108 ☐ 138

Baie dankie dat u bereid was om aan die studie deel te neem!!

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ADDENDUM B: THE FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FAILURE OF MAJOR ELECTRICAL HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES FOLLOWING THE EXPLORATION OF VARIOUS SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1 INTRODUCTION

People buy and use products not only for functional (instrumental) purposes, but also for the symbolic (expressive) performance they provide. The physical features (formal qualities) of products determine their performance – whether functional or symbolic. Physical features refer to the perceived features of the structural composition of the objects, specifically the design (colour and shape), materials and finishes and the construction of products (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:6; Brown & Rice, 1998:36). For example, the materials and finishes used in the manufacturing of an appliance will influence its maintenance and care (functional performance) and aesthetic appearance (symbolic performance).

Functional performance relates to the physical functioning of products (Swan & Combs, 1976), i.e. the ability of products to perform their functional, utilitarian or physical purposes. The proper functional performance of an appliance in terms of its end-use is vital to the evaluation thereof. The utilitarian qualities of products are instrumental in attaining the proper functional performance required and relate to the physical performance (i.e. how well the product does what it is supposed to do), safety, durability, ease of use and ease of care of products (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:58-61; Brown & Rice, 1998:39; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Hawkins, *et al.*, 2001:641; Erasmus *et al.*, 2005).

Conversely, expressive (symbolic) performance relates to the pleasurable experiences (satisfaction, contentment, enjoyment, happiness, gratification) that products provide. Pleasurable experiences can be described as aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic experience results from the appreciation of the non-instrumental or non-utilitarian qualities of products that are rewarding and pleasurable in and of themselves (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:12). Pleasure comes from stimulating the senses, emotion (expressing feelings of the soul) and mind. Therefore, aesthetic experience consists of sensory, emotional and cognitive pleasure or satisfaction (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:25). Hence, it is not unusual that Fiore and Kimle (1997:4) define aesthetic experience as the “sensitive selection or appreciation of formal, expressive or symbolic qualities of the product, providing non-instrumental benefits that result in pleasure or satisfaction”. For example, a consumer may experience satisfaction in the appreciation of the aesthetic appearance (the colour and styling) of an appliance. Just as pleasure results from stimulating the body, pleasure can come from arousing emotion as well as expressing feelings of the soul (spirit) (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:16). Formal product features

can therefore also convey or induce emotion. Expressive qualities may represent the emotions of the owner of an appliance and evoke emotion in the appreciation thereof. Cognitive pleasure or satisfaction results from mental activity. This activity consists of understanding and creating content or symbolic meaning. Cognitive pleasure comes from representing one's own internal reality. For example, when a consumer concludes that the products that he/she has purchased and own, are typical of a specific social group, cognitive pleasure may result as a function of the cognitive activity involved (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:45). Aesthetic satisfaction and image-enhancement performance (i.e. when a product fulfils the consumer's emotional needs, such as wanting to impress or be accepted by others) are therefore not direct properties of the physical product, but are derived from consumer response to attributes of the physical product, and are therefore expressive dimensions (Swan & Combs, 1976; Brown & Rice, 1998:37; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Hawkins *et al*., 2001:641; Erasmus *et al*., 2005). Consumers' perceptions of, for example, status and social acceptance play a vital role in this context (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:68*).* Therefore, expressive or symbolic performance relates to a "psychological" level of performance, that is the consumer's response to the product (Swan & Combs, 1976).

The existent literature concerning the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of products was examined. Complaint websites and a local newspaper were studied to become acquainted with the type of product problems that consumers experienced concerning the performance failure of major household appliances. Owners' manuals (instruction leaflets) of the top appliance manufacturers were studied to become aware of the special features that these manufactures lay claim to, to identify possible examples of performance failures that consumers might experience. These claims were adapted to suggest product performance failures.

After exploration of the above-mentioned sources of information, it was decided that the performance failure of major household appliances manifests in functional and symbolic performance failure. For the purpose of this study, functional performance failures refer to the following categories: unusual product performance in terms of the intended end-use, failure/breakdown of appliance or some component(s) thereof, inconvenience in operating the appliances, inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance, insufficient durability and safety or health risks associated with the performance of the appliance. The symbolic performance failures of appliances refer to the sensory, emotional and cognitive displeasure or dissatisfaction associated with major household appliances.

In the following section, quotations and examples of the functional and symbolic performance failures of major household appliances are provided in terms of the distinctive categories.

Note that the quotations are provided in the language medium used for publication (i.e. Afrikaans for Afrikaans documents, English for English documents). Additionally, translated quotations (from Afrikaans into English) and are printed in italic.

2 PERFORMANCE FAILURES

2.1 Functional performance failures

Functional performance failures denote: unusual product performance in terms of the intended end-use, failure/breakdown of appliance or some component(s) thereof, inconvenience in operating the appliances, inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance, insufficient durability and safety or health risks associated with performance of the appliance. Tables 1 to 6 provide examples of consumers' complaints concerning the functional performance failures of major household appliances in terms of the functional performance failure categories.

2.1.1 Unusual performance/functioning in terms of intended end-use

TABLE 1: UNUSUAL PERFORMANCE/FUNCTIONING IN TERMS OF INTENDED END-USE

No.	Quotations of unusual product performance/functioning
1	"Sy .... was van die begin af nie gelukkig nie omdat die masjien **nie skoon gewas het nie**." (Maandag 17 Mei 2004 bl. 14, Beeld) *She was unhappy form the beginning, as the **machine did not wash properly.***
2	"Sy het 'n skottelgoedwasser ... wat die **krag uitskop wanneer sy dit aanskakel** ... dit het **nie die wassiklus voltoo**i nie en die **seepdeurtjie wou nie meer oopmaak nie**." (Maandag 1 Desember 2003 bl. 12, Beeld) *The dishwasher … **caused the power to trip** … **it did not complete the washing cycle** and **the door for the soap container did not want to open**.*
3	"Die **knoppe het afgeval**, die **oond het nie reg gewerk nie** en jy **moes die stoof by die hoofskakelaar afskakel**. ... Hy het solank die dele van die stoof gebruik wat nog gewerk het, totdat dit begin vanjaar 'n **snaakse geluid gemaak** het en glad nie meer wou werk nie." (Met dié stoof kan gin mens kook nie (Maandag 21 Maart 2005 bl. 15 Beeld) *The **controls fell off**, the **oven did not function properly** and one had to **switch the oven off at the main switch**. … He could only use the parts of the oven that was still working. At the beginning of the year it started making a **strange sound** and eventually it did not function at all.*
4	"... die masjien (het) op die tuimelprogram **vasgehaak** en ek moes die **muurprop uittrek om dit te stop**. Daarna wou dit nie meer **draai nie en nadat ek die water gedreineer het**, wou dit nie **ophou dreineer voordat ek die muurprop uitgetrek het nie**". (Herstelkoste van wasmasjien betaal. Maandag 11 April 2005 bl. 18,Beeld) *The cycle of the tumble dryer **jammed** and one had **to release the plug form the power point**. … **It did not want to rotate**. **The dryer did not want to stop draining water until the plug was removed from the power point.***
5	"Ek het ... gemerk die **plastiekstroke rondom die deure het gekraak**." (Game ruil yskas goedgunstiglik om. Maandag 9 Mei 2005 bl. 14, Beeld)

	*I noticed that the **plastic strips surrounding the door cracked**.*
6	"Al drie (tegnici) het saamgestem dat die probleem by die **yskas se gas lê**." (Klant kry oplaas nuwe yskas Maandag 30 Mei 2005 bl. 18, Beeld) *All three technicians agreed that the problem lies with the **refrigerator's gas**.*
7	"On 02/04/2005 I bought a LG Fridge/Freezer. During May 2005 I noticed that the **rubber door seals (gaskets) were torn** at the corners. Both fridge and freezer doors were like this". http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=53995
8	"I purchased a Bosch Freezer cash in January this year and had to report it twice to Bosch to **refill the gas**, the freezer is only 8 months old and should not be out of gas for the 2nd time in less then one year." http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=42524
9	"I have Bosch Fridge/Freezer combo that I purchased at Game Stores (Cresta) in December 2004. The freezer started **losing temperature and defrosted** - the freezer is under warranty". http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=39487
10	"In Nov 2004 I purchased a Samsung Big Wash. Since purchase I have not had any problems until two weeks ago. The **rubber sealer had a tear in it**, and this caused the **water to pour from the door**. My washing machine is still under warranty!!" http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=41979
11	"I bought a small dishwasher on 2005-01-02. I was quite impressed with the product at first but this soon faded as **the unit kept on pumping water in and then out again** and **did not initiate the cleaning cycle.**" http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=45988
12	"I have purchased a Bauer door fridge/freezer on the 20th of May 2005 to the value of R4999.00 (Cash I may add). … After 6 months, the door of the fridge starts **squeaking like I've had it for years**. And yet it's not even six months old. Is this the kind of product you sell to your customer?" http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=47849
13	"I am very disappointed in a new stainless steel stove from whirlpool I bought, after 1 week **all the numbers that indicates the heat of the plates came off**, even the **red light cover came loose**, do you people call this quality, I don't think so!" http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=54150
14	"I purchased a new dishwasher … After using it for approx 1 month; I noticed the **interior tub turned pink.** I washed another load of dishes, hoping that it would go away but it didn't. … I think that the **plastic used in the tub is inferior** …" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html **(**Kathryn of East Islip NY - 5/23/04)
15	"We have a Whirlpool dishwasher … **that we purchased just 2 years ago. We had major problems with it right away. It made horrific noises** at various times of the wash cycle …it is supposed to be the "Quiet Partner!" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html **(**Mary of Pasadena CA - 12/23/03)
16	"We bought this dishwasher on 3/13/02 … (it) **never gets the dishes cleaned. There is food on dishes when completed** …" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html (Shirley of Carmichael CA - 5/15/03)
17	"We have a 2 year old Whirlpool slip-in range. The door **will not stay shut tight enough to seal and the light in the oven stays on** most of the time." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_ranges.html (Ken of Delray Beach FL - 01/23/06)
18	"I purchased a side-by-side refrigerator. ... One year later, **the interior wall of the refrigerator has about 40 hairline cracks in it**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_refrigerators.html (Maureen of Norcross GA - 03/29/06).
19	"(The washing machine) **leaked & did not perform properly**. … I didn't want to incur any additional damage to our floors. The machine cannot be used since it **damages clothing**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_washing_machine.html (Rosa of West Covina CA - 11/4/03)
20	"I bought a GE microwave (Stainless steel finish) from a local GE appliance dealer about 14 months ago. The white **paint over the cooking tray inside has started peeling and falling in food**". http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Sanjay of San Jose CA - 01/25/06).

21	" … before this I had a Panasonic microwave which we used for almost 15 years but needed to buy a new one to match our new kitchen appliances. Now I can not heat anything without a cover for **fear of the falling paint**." Buying GE microwave has been one of the worse mistakes I made." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Thomas of Park City KY - 01/16/06)
22	"The ice turner in my GE refrigerator rusted and now the **ice has rust in it**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_refrigerators.htm (Bryan of River Vale NJ -01/25/06)
23	"If you own a stainless steel fridge from Whirlpool, take a quick look at your corners of each door. **If you can see the "orange/yellow" filling of the fridge**, you've been had. … If you're going to spend $$$ on a stainless steel fridge, be sure to look at the corners correctly." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_refrigerators.html. (Robin of Lasalle, Quebec - 10/18/03)
24	"I have a 3-year-old refrigerator … the **doors are starting to rust. The paint is flaking off**. … The bare door had not been properly prepped in the manufacturing process to hold paint." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_refrigerators.html (Terrance of Mililani HI - 8/2/03)
25	"We purchased a Whirlpool Refrigerator … on 08/06/01. The **liner of the interior wall began to crack**. It doesn't take a genius to figure out it is **defective material**. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_refrigerators.html (Maria of Modesto CA -6/16/03)
26	"In December 2003 we purchased a Washer & Dryer (Quiet Plus Ultimate Care II). … and from day one the washer **has been anything but quiet plus. It sounds as if it is going to tear the house down**. It is so noisy and yes it is balanced well". http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_washing_machine.html (**Beverly of Pace FL - 9/11/05)**
27	"For as machine that displays its energy efficiency so proudly, how efficient **is it if it needs to be run again**, with no dishes, to clean it? This takes up time, **water, and electricity to heat that water**. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html (Kathryn of NY - 5/23/04**)**

2.1.2 Failure/breakdown of appliance or some component(s) thereof

TABLE 2: FAILURE/BREAKDOWN OF APPLIANCE OR SOME COMPONENT(S) THEREOF

No.	Quotations of the failure/breakdown of appliance items or some component(s) thereof
1	"Ek het die wasmasjien teen Junie verlede jaar klaar betaal. In September het die masjien **gebreek** ..." (Herstelkoste van wasmasjien betaal. Maandag 11 April 2005 bl. 18, Beeld) *"The outstanding amount owing on the machine was settled at June last year. The machine **broke down** in September…"*
2	In die eerste jaar het die yskas drie keer **gebreek** .... " (Klant kry oplaas nuwe yskas Maandag 30 Mei 2005 bl. 18, Beeld) *In the first year, the fridge **broke down** several times …*
3	In Augustus verlede jaar het die masjien begin **vassteek** ..." (Maandag 17 Mei 2004 bl. 14, Beeld) *In August last year, the machine started **jamming** …*
4	"... die yskas het heeltemal **opgehou werk** en die hele huis het na gas geruik." (Yskas 'waai om die hoek' Maandag 11 Julie 2005 bl. 14, Beeld) *The refrigerator **stopped functioning** and the house smelled like gas.*
5	"I have purchased a Bauer door fridge/freezer on the 20th of May 2005 to the value of R4999.00 (Cash I may add). Three Months down the line, and the **handle of the door breaks."** http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=47849
6	"I purchased a Whirlpool dishwasher November 2004. I utilised it once a week. 5 months later **it broke**." http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=40953
7	"At the end of April 2005, I bought a LG dishwasher. …On the 5th of September, **one of the wheels broke on the dish rack**. The dishwasher is still under guarantee …" http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=42802

8	"I bought a brand new LG refrigerator from Stax Dunkeld 13 days ago. The day after purchase I reported that the **thermostat was faulty** " http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=57439#
9	"In Feb. 2001 we purchased a new Whirlpool self-cleaning slide-in electric range …. In May, 2002 the stove **wouldn't work** and we were told we needed to **replace t**he control board …" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_ranges.html (Jane of Kailua-Kona HI - 3/19/04)
10	"The GE microwave oven … started to shoot sparks and make a "hot electronics" smell. … The result will be our having to spend more money in order to replace or **fix a defective product** that is dangerous in **its malfunction**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Malachi of Corinth NY - 11/11/04
11	"The control panel in the whirlpool **has gone out twice** now and acts crazy". http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_ranges.html (Janice of Aptos CA - 09/17/05)
12	"I bought a Whirlpool Range … about two years ago. When I installed it, the control panel would **not work** right. Had to **replace** the control panel. Three weeks ago, the oven **would not work**. You guess it, the control panel again. This time, it cost me around two hundred dollars out my pocket to **replace it**". http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_ranges.html (Edward of North Wilkesboro NC - 2/10/04).
13	"Since purchasing (the washing machine" (the Calypso model) I have had to **replace it four times**…" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_washing_machine.html (Rosa of West Covina CA - 11/4/03).
14	"Microwave oven - Only three years old and we have had the following problem: **Magnetron went ou**t after just one year of use." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Thomas of Park City KY - 01/16/06)
15	"On July 27th 2005 I purchased a GE microwave oven. On Dec. Five months later the microwave **stopped working.** A new microwave should last longer than 5 months". http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Virginia of Trenton NJ - 01/05/06)
16	"I purchased a GE microwave model JE1140BL on 2-6-01. I paid $129.99. The magnetron **went out** 10-26-02. Shouldn't this product **last** more than 21 months?" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Jessica of Zanesville OH - 11/8/032)
17	"The refrigerators' water valve (not filter) where the water line comes in, **breaks** consistently every 8-14 months costing around $200 to fix each time." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_refrigerators.htm (Bryan of River Vale NJ - 01/25/06)
18	"I bought a Defy front loader washing machine. The Machine had a two years guarantee. … Before I could use the machine for a year, It started **malfunctioning"**. http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=38629

2.1.3 Inconvenience in operating the appliances (physical discomfort, waste of time and energy etc.)

TABLE 3: INCONVENIENCE IN OPERATING THE APPLIANCES (PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT, WASTE OF TIME AND ENERGY ETC.)

No.	Inconvenience in the operation of appliances (physical discomfort, waste of time and energy etc.)
1	**"Aangesien hy bietjie moeg geraak het om een keer per maand sy yskas en vrieskas te ontvries en skoon te maak**, het Mnr. Deon Boshoff van Pretoria besluit om 'n dubbeldeur-yskas/vrieskas by Game te koop wat veronderstel was om self die ontvrieswerk te doen." (Vrieskas wil nie self ontvries nie 17 Januarie 2005 bl. 13, Beeld). *Since Mr Deon **Boshoff got tired of defrosting his fridge once a month**, he decided to purchase a double door fridge/freezer combination (form Game Stores) that defrost itself.*
2	"**Moet ek nou die res van my lewe sukkel** met 'n wringer wat kort-kort nie werk nie?" wou sy weet. (Omruil-belofte eindelik ten uitvoer gebring Maandag 7 Maart 2005 bl. 16 Beeld) *"Do I have to live with a wringer that regularly does not work properly?"*

3	In my opinion**, I should not have to wash the dishwasher after a load of dishes**. . This is its job. It is supposed to **save me work, not create more**. For as machine that displays its energy efficiency so proudly, how efficient is it if it needs to be run again, with no dishes, to clean it? This takes up time, water, and electricity to heat that water. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html (Kathryn of East Islip NY - 5/23/04)
4	Appliances shelves and containers **were not versatile and not easy to use** (Adapted from AEG manual: 4)
5	The appliance item **did not offer greater convenience and flexibility** (Adapted from AEG manual:2)
6	The non-tip drawers was not strong and it was **not is easy to remove** heavy frozen foods (Adapted from AEG manual:4)
7	I was **difficult to use the "easy-to-use push" button** control system to select the applicable programme (Adapted from AEG manual:8)
8	The appliance **was not simple and easy to use** – you are "**guaranteed simple operation and intuitive use**" …"combines latest technology with ease of use and convenience" (Adapted from Miele - Built in appliances)

2.1.4 Inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance

TABLE 4: INCONVENIENCE/DIFFICULTY IN THE MAINTENANCE AND CARE OF THE APPLIANCE

No.	Quotations or examples of inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance
1	" ...**allerhande skoonmaakmiddels (wat) aanbeveel (is), het nie gewerk** (vir die metaalverkleuring) **nie** ... Hulle beveel aan dat die stoofplaat vooraf warm gemaak moet word om die middel die beste te laat werk." (Stoofplaat toe glad nie só vlekvry nie. Maandag 28 Maart 2005 bl. 12, Beeld *A **variety of recommended cleaning agents could not remove the metal discolouration**. It is recommended that the hob must be pre-heated to boost the cleaning agents' function.*
2	"Aangesien hy bietjie moeg geraak het om een keer per maand sy yskas en vrieskas te ontvries en skoon te maak, het mnr. Deon Boshoff van Pretoria besluit om 'n dubbeldeur-yskas/vrieskas by Game te koop **wat veronderstel was om self die ontvrieswerk te doen**." (Vrieskas wil nie self ontvries nie 17 Januarie 2005 bl. 13, Beeld) *Since Mr Deon Boshoff got tired of defrosting his fridge once a month, he decided to purchase a double door fridge/freezer combination (form Game Stores) **that defrost itself**.*
3	"In my opinion**, I should not have to wash the dishwasher after a load of dishes**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html (Kathryn of East Islip NY - 5/23/04)

2.1.5 Insufficient durability

TABLE 5: INSUFFICIENT DURABILITY

No.	Quotations or examples of insufficient durability
1	"Ek hoop julle kan help, want ek is nou raadop met die dubbelbalie-wasmasjien van Defy wat **ek twee jaar gelede gekoop het**," het mev. Patricia Faurie van Witbank geskryf. (Omruil-belofte eindelik ten uitvoer gebring Maandag 7 Maart 2005 bl. 16 Beeld) *I hope you can help me, because I am fed up with my twin tub washing machine that I purchased from Defy Appliances **two years ago**.*
2	"Ek het die stoof **eers in April verlede jaar** laat magnetron en **van die begin af** het dit probleme gegee. Die knoppe het afgeval, die oond het nie reg gewerk nie en jy moes die stoof by die hoofskakelaar afskakel. ... Hy het solank die dele van die stoof gebruik wat nog gewerk het**, totdat dit begin vanjaar** 'n snaakse geluid gemaak het en glad nie meer wou werk nie." (Met dié stoof kan g'n mens kook nie Maandag 21 Maart 2005 bl. 15 Beeld) *I purchased the stove **in April last year** and I experienced problems **from day one**. The controls fell off, the oven did not function properly and one had to switch the oven off at the main switch. … he could only use the parts of the*

	oven that was still working. ***At the beginning of the year*** *it started making a strange sound and eventually it did not function at all.*
3	"Die yskas wat sy by Furniture City gekoop het, se waterbottel loop al **van die eerste dag af** heeltemal uit as jy 'n glas water wil skink en al het die vervaardiger al vyf keer uitgekom om dit reg te maak, gebeur dit steeds, het me. Karen Coetser van Johannesburg geskryf." (Maandag 28 Maart 2005 bl. 12, Beeld) *The water bottle of the refrigerator drained itself* ***from the day of purchase****. Even though the manufacturer was called out five times to repair it, it still leaks.*
4	Mnr. P. Smit van Pretoria het kom raad vra oor die Kelvinator stoofblad van vlekvrye staal wat hy **begin verlede jaar gekoop het**, wat verkleur het. Hy is ontevrede oor die fabriek se antwoord omdat die stoof **vir twee jaar gewaarborg** is. (Stoofplaat toe glad nie só vlekvry nie. Maandag 28 Maart 2005 bl. 12, Beeld) *The stainless steel stove top that Mr P Smit purchased* ***last year****, discoloured. He was dissatisfied with the manufacturer's explanation, as the stove carries* ***a two year guarantee****.*
5	"Die yskas **was nog nie 'n jaar oud nie** toe begin dit al klonte ys ... ek kan nie glo dat yskaste gebou word om net meer **as twee jaar** te hou nie," (Vrieskas wil nie self ontvries nie 17 Januarie 2005 bl. 13, Beeld) *"The refrigerator was* ***only in use for one year*** *when it started making lumps of ice. I can not understand why a refrigerator is manufactured to last* ***only two years****".*
6	"Mnr. M. Pienaar …kla oor die Speed Queen wasmasjien wat hy **in Mei verlede jaar** by Game gekoop het. …". Verbruikersforum Ina Opperman *Mr M Pienaar is complaining about the Speed Queen washing machine that he purchased at Game stores in* ***May, last*** *year.*
7	"**Binne twee weke** het sy by die handelaar gaan kla omdat die yskas water gelek het" (Defy se hoofkantoor ruil yskas dadelik om Maandag 12 Julie 2004 bl. 18, Beeld) *She complained at the dealer (****within two weeks****) that the refrigerator was leaking.*
8	"Ek **het 'n paar dae nadat ek die yskas gekoop het**, gemerk die plastiekstroke rondom die deure het gekraak" . (Game ruil yskas goedgunstiglik om. Maandag 9 Mei 2005 bl. 14 , Beeld) *I noticed that the plastic strips surrounding the door cracked* ***after a couple of days of purchase****.*
9	"Mnr. W.M. Venter ... (se) Defy yskas, wat hy **in Maart verlede jaar** gekoop het, (het) skielik in **September** nie meer koud geword het nie". (Toe ons kla, daag nuwe yskas op Maandag 19 April 2004 bl. 14, Beeld) *Mr W.M. Venter's Defy refrigerator that he purchased* ***in March last year****, suddenly failed to refrigerate in September.*
10	"Ek het ('n yskas) gekoop om ten **minste 20 jaar te hou**, maar **na 'n maand** het ek agtergekom die yskas ruik na gom". (Yskas wat bly stink en stink ... Maandag 31 Januarie 2005 bl. 20, Beeld) *I purchased a refrigerator* ***to last me for the next twenty years****,* ***but after one month*** *it started smelling like glue.*
11	"I purchased a **new** dishwasher … After using it for **approx 1 month**; I noticed the interior tub turned pink. I washed another load of dishes, hoping that it would go away but it didn't. … I think that the plastic used in the tub is inferior. This should not be this porous new**. I could understand it in an older appliance, but not at this stage. My previous machine was 16 years old, and was as white when I discarded it as the day I bought it**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html (Kathryn of East Islip NY – 5/23/04).
12	"The dishwasher we had before **lasted 12 years and then died**. We have only had this **one little over a year** …" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_dishwashers.html (Shirley of Carmichael CA - 5/15/03).
13	"On July 27th 2005 I purchased a GE microwave oven. On Dec. **Five months later** the microwave stopped working. **A new microwave should last longer than 5 months**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Virginia of Trenton NJ – 01/05/06

14	**"… Also the microwave should last more then a year**!" http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Korry of Nashville TN – 11/21/03)
15	"I purchased a GE microwave model JE1140BL on 2-6-01. I paid $129.99. The magnetron went out 10-26-02. **Shouldn't this product last more than 21 months?"** http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Jessica of Zanesville OH – 11/8/032)

2.1.6 Safety or health risks associated with the appliance

TABLE 6: SAFETY OR HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE APPLIANCE

No.	Quotations or examples of safety or health risks associated with the appliance
1	"I am having the same problem with my GE microwave that others are having: A **huge popping noise** and **sparking occurs partway through the cycle**. This evening I was using it, and a **plastic cover inside the microwave caught on fire and melted**. This is **unsafe**, and it seems to me that if this is happening to more than one of their units, GE should be recalling these units as they are **defective and dangerous**." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Jamie of Buffalo NY)
2	"I purchased a Whirlpool flat-top convection oven, model GR450 LXH in April 2003. The oven first started **sparking out the back** about a month after purchasing it. I thought it was a light bulb burning out but a few weeks later **the oven turned on by itself and it got dangerously hot** -- you could feel the heat and could smell wires burning." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_ranges.html (David of New Ipswich NH - 12/18/03).
3	"Sy vrieskas ... (het) 'n mens **'n elektriese skok gegee as jy daaraan raak**." (Vrieskas wat skok, werk nou weer reg Maandag 22 Maart 2004 bl. 12, Beeld) *When I touched his refrigerator,* ***it gave me an electric shock****.*
4	We had purchased a GE microwave … in June 2004. In December 2005 the microwave **caught fire while cooking mashed potatoes for 30 seconds**. **The plastic at the top of the inside of the microwave had started to melt and caught on fire**. Flames came out of the front and almost burnt our ceiling but the fire department arrived to put the fire out. They examined the microwave and documented in their fire report that the cause was due to a **defective microwave part**. It was an extremely scary situation and I fear of what could have happened to our family had we not been in the kitchen when the fire started. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (R of Des Plaines IL - 01/05/06)
5	I went to use my microwave to heat up a bowl of canned corn to go with dinner. I put it on for 2 minutes and the next thing I know my kitchen is filling up with **SMOKE and the smell of BURNING PLASTIC**. We called the fire dept, and they removed it from the wall, and **yes the wires inside the microwave had caught on fire**. It was very scary. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Judy of Fort lawn SC – 2/1/05)
6	"The GE microwave oven … **started to shoot sparks and make a "hot electronics" smell**. … The result will be our having to spend more money in order to replace or **fix a defective product** that is **dangerous in** its malfunction." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Malachi of Corinth NY - 11/11/04)

2.2 Symbolic performance failures

Symbolic performance failures represent: lack of sensory pleasure or sensory dissatisfaction, lack of an emotionally pleasurable experience (emotional dissatisfaction), lack of cognitive pleasure (cognitive dissatisfaction). Tables 7 to 9 provide examples of consumers' complaints concerning the symbolic performance failures of major household appliances in terms of the symbolic performance failure categories.

2.2.1 Lack of sensory pleasure or sensory dissatisfaction

TABLE 7: LACK OF SENSORY PLEASURE OR SENSORY DISSATISFACTION

No.	Quotations or examples of lack of sensory pleasure or sensory dissatisfaction
1	"Mnr. P. Smit van Pretoria het kom raad vra oor die Kelvinator stoofblad van vlekvrye staal wat hy begin verlede jaar gekoop het, **wat verkleur het**. ... "Ek het gedink dit lyk na metaalverkleuring ... die stoofplaat verkleur terwyl dit gebruik word, as 'n stoofplaat aan gelos word sonder 'n kastrol op of wanneer 'n pot wat groter as die plaat is, gebruik word" (Stoofplaat toe glad nie só vlekvry nie. Maandag 28 Maart 2005 bl. 12, Beeld) *The stainless steel stove top that Mr P Smit purchased last year, discoloured. The discolouration occurred when the plate was in use, when the plate was left on (without a pot) and when a bigger pot than the plate was used.*
2	Stainless steel fridge. You buy them because they **look nice right**? But what does Whirlpool say to you when all of their fridges from my resellers (30+) have a defect in the "crease" on the top corners of each of the fridge door and freezer doors? http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_refrigerators.html (Robin of Lasalle, Quebec - 10/18/03)
3	The appliance's appearance (i.e. fancy colours, shapes, curves, lines or textures.) did not fulfil my requirements any longer.
4	The appliance's appearance/ look did not interest me anymore. (or did not appeal to me anymore)
5	" … before this I had a Panasonic microwave which we used for almost 15 years but needed to buy a new **one to match our new kitchen appliances**. … Buying GE microwave has been one of the worse mistakes I made. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Thomas of Park City KY (01/16/06)
6	The appliance was no longer acceptable to me because other people's appliances (were more eye appealing) **looked more attractive** than mine did.
7	The appliance item no longer had the **fashion/style** trends that I desired

2.2.2 Lack of an emotionally pleasurable experience (emotional dissatisfaction)

TABLE 8: LACK OF AN EMOTIONALLY PLEASURABLE EXPERIENCE (EMOTIONAL DISSATISFACTION)

No.	Quotations or examples of lack of an emotionally pleasurable experience/ emotional dissatisfaction
1	"Sy .... was van die begin af **nie gelukkig nie** omdat die masjien nie skoon gewas het nie." (Maandag 17 Mei 2004 bl. 14, Beeld) *She was **unhappy** form the beginning, as the machine did not wash properly.*
2	"Nadat ek die wasmasjien by Whirlpool gekoop het, het ek **net plesier daarmee gehad, tot middel April** toe ek die tegnikus gebel het wat voorheen aan my wasmasjien gewerk het om dit te kom herstel". Masjien toe vervang deur nuwe Maandag 30 Mei 2005 bl. 18, Beeld) *The machine that I bought from Whirlpool **gave me great satisfaction until middle April** when it broke down. I had to phone a technician to repair it..*
3	"**As die wasmasjien nie werk nie, is die hele huis onderstebo** en dit is presies waarom me. Ada Landman van Randfontein kom kla het" (Masjien toe vervang deur nuwe Maandag 30 Mei 2005 bl. 18, Beeld) *The **household is upside down** when the washing machine is not functioning.*

4	**"I am very disappointed** in a new stainless steel stove from whirlpool I bought, after one week all the numbers that indicates the heat of the plates came off, even the red light cover came loose, do you people call this quality, I don't think so!" http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=54150
5	"I bought a Whirlpool Range (GY396LXGB2) about two years ago. When I installed it, the control panel would not work right. Had to replace the control panel. Three weeks ago, the oven would not work. You guess it, the control panel again. This time, it cost me around two hundred dollars out my pocket to replace it. **I can't stand much more of this.** What ever happen to the saying -- They're built to last." http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_ranges.html (Edward of North Wilkesboro NC - 2/10/04)
6	"Where is Quality Control? Now it is March, 2004 and the clock and timer won't work. I was told that I needed a new CONTROL BOARD! **I am so disgusted** with the workmanship on this machine! http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_ranges.html (Jane of Kailua-Kona HI - 3/19/04)
7	"(The washing machine) sounds as if it is going to tear the house down. It is so noisy and yes it is balanced well. I would like something done to either fix the problem or a new washer. **We simply cannot use it in this condition any longer**. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/whirlpool_washing_machine.html (Beverly of Pace FL - 9/11/05)
8	I bought a small dishwasher on 2005-01-02**. I was quite impressed with the product at first but this soon faded** as the unit kept on pumping water in and then out again and did not initiate the cleaning cycle." http://www.hellopeter.com/details.asp?id=45988
9	I **did not enjoy** using the appliance item anymore
10	The appliance item no longer had **the fashion/style trends that I desired** (sensory dissatisfaction can contribute to emotional displeasure)

2.2.3 Lack of cognitive pleasure (cognitive dissatisfaction)

TABLE 9: LACK OF COGNITIVE PLEASURE (COGNITIVE DISSATISFACTION)

No.	Quotations or examples of lack of cognitive pleasure/ cognitive dissatisfaction
1	The appliance was no longer acceptable to me because **other people's** appliances (were more eye appealing) looked more attractive **than mine** did.
2	**The appliance item no longer had the fashion/style trends that I desired** (*sensory dissatisfaction and cognitive displeasure goes hand in hand where people compare themselves to other people and conclude there appliance are not in vogue any more).*
3	" … before this I had a Panasonic microwave which we used for almost 15 years but needed to buy a new **one to match our new kitchen appliances**. … Buying GE microwave has been one of the worse mistakes I made.. http://www.consumeraffairs.com/homeowners/ge_microwaves.html (Thomas of Park City KY (01/16/06)
4	The appliance no longer **reflected the image/identity I wanted**.
5	Other people (friends/family) were **not particularly impressed with the appliance's image**.