



ELICITATION AND GENERATION OF A SCRIPT FOR THE ACQUISITION OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES WITHIN A CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING CONTEXT

ABSTRACT

Although the script concept is generally accepted to be a valid construct with wide application in disciplines such as cognitive psychology, little has been done to develop and explore the potential of buying/shopping scripts and to implement the concept in practice since the first initiatives in 1983 and 1989. The main objective of this study was to elicit and organize a script for the acquisition of major household appliances within the consumer decision-making context that could be used as a realistic portrayal of the actual buying process.

In the selection of specific data-collection procedures, prior research and recommendations were taken into consideration (Erasmus, 2002b) to optimize the opportunity to explore data in terms of the properties of a script and to determine how well the results coincide with script theory. An emic, ideographic approach of enquiry was used (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:10, 158) to obtain information spontaneously raised by participants. Multiple data-collection techniques were used to prevent mono-method bias. Less structured techniques were chosen and responses from one data-collection procedure directed the subsequent data-collection procedures. Data-collection was closely interwoven with data analysis to ensure that the type and amount of information collected were useful in terms of a script-elicitation procedure.

The attempt to elicit and generate a script for purchasing major household appliances proved successful. The selection, combination and order of executing the script-elicitation techniques were effective in eliciting the relevant script norms and in generating a script that coincides with the basic properties and structural characteristics of a script. The specific arrangement of script-elicitation techniques is recommended for future research: the written technique succeeded in eliciting all the relevant actions while subsequent techniques were useful to elaborate on specific aspects, to ascertain trustworthiness and authenticity of data and to design visual stimuli for the discrimination procedure. It is recommended that the format and content of the theoretical script be further analyzed for use as a representation of consumer decision-making behaviour for the acquisition of household appliances to the benefit of industry, retail and professionals in the field of consumer science who are actively involved in consumer education and facilitation.

OPSOMMING

Hoewel geskryfte as 'n geldige konstruk in verskeie dissiplines soos kognitiewe sielkunde erken en gebruik word, is min gedoen om die potensiaal van aankoopgeskryfte verder te ontgin sedert die eerste inisiatiewe op hierdie gebied in 1983 en 1989. Die primêre doel van hierdie studie was om 'n geskrif vir die aankoop van groot huishoudelike toerusting binne verbruikersbesluitnemingsverband te ontwikkel wat as 'n meer realistiese voorstelling van die aankoopproses kan dien as wat van tradisionele verbruikersbesluitnemingsmodelle afgelei kan word.

In die keuse van data-insamelingsprosedures is vorige navorsing op hierdie gebied bestudeer (Erasmus, 2002b) sodat data-insamelingsgeleenthede maksimaal benut kon word vir die generering van 'n geskrif wat aan die basiese eienskappe en strukturele vereistes van geskryfte sou voldoen. 'n Emiese, ideografiese navorsingsbenadering is gevolg (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:10, 158). Veelvoudige data-insamelingstegnieke is gebruik om sydigheid te voorkom. Minder gestruktureerde tegnieke het verseker dat inligting wat in een fase ingesamel is, in opvolgende insamelingsgeleenthede benut kon word om maksimum stimulering van denke te verseker. Tegnieke wat gebruik is [en reeds ten opsigte van voordele en gebreke bespreek is (Erasmus, 2002)] is selektief gekombineer. Data is direk na insameling verwerk sodat die resultate in opeenvolgende insamelingsessies in aanmerking geneem kon word om leemtes uit te skakel.

Die poging om 'n geskrif vir die aankoop van groot huishoudelike toerusting binne verbruikersbesluitnemingsverband te genereer, was geslaagd. Die keuse, kombinasie en volgorde van implementering van die onderskeie data-insamelingstegnieke was suksesvol ooreenkomstig die identifikasie van die relevante norme asook in die saamstel van 'n geskrif binne die riglyne wat met betrekking tot die basiese eienskappe en strukturele eienskappe vir geskryfte voorgehou word. Die spesifieke volgorde van tegnieke kan vir soortgelyke studies aanbeveel word: die geskrewe tegniek was suksesvol in terme van die vroeë identifikasie van al die aktiwiteite (elemente), terwyl daaropvolgende tegnieke bygedra het om elemente uit te brei, om betroubaarheid en geldigheid te verseker en om visuele stimuli vir die diskriminerings-tegniek saam te stel.

Daar word aanbeveel dat die formaat en inhoud van die teoretiese geskrif evalueer word vir moontlike gebruik daarvan as 'n voorstelling van reële verbruikersbesluitneming vir die aankoop van huishoudelike toerusting voorhou. Dit sou vir die industrie, kleinhandel en veral professionele persone binne die dissipline van verbruikerswetenskap wat belang het by verbruikersopvoeding en -fasilitering, van praktiese nut wees.

Search words: *household appliances; scripts; event schemata; consumer decision-making; purchasing events; script-elicitation procedures*

INTRODUCTION

Despite the overwhelming impact of technology on household appliances in recent times, an understanding of consumers' choice processes in acquiring appliances is still fragmented and under-researched (Venkatesh, 1985:193). When judged within the framework of a traditional consumer decision-making model, decision-making for purchasing major household appliances - that is typically categorized as a complex, high-risk consumer decision - seems extensive and rather elaborate. A question that comes to mind is whether consumers really undertake extensive deliberation before purchasing household appliances.

Several objections against the use of traditional consumer decision-making models without careful pre-meditation of the context and purpose within which they are used, have been reported (Erasmus, Boshoff & Rousseau, 2001:83-87). Schurr (1986:498) inter alia suggested the possibility of generating and implementing *purchasing scripts* as alternative frameworks of consumer decision-making. In contrast to consumer decision-making models, scripts identify principle actions, the people (actors), their respective roles and the objects involved in a recurring situation/event (Calder & Schurr, 1981 in Speck, Schumann & Thomson, 1988:70; Schurr, 1986:498-501). Another advantage of a script is that it is a schematic portrayal of a consumer's mental representation of a specific event. It thus contains a sequence of actions *from the point of view of the consumer* (Abelson, 1981:715). Scripts consequently have the potential to offer valuable insights into consumer behaviour and to provide professionals in the field of consumer science with valuable guidelines for facilitating consumer behaviour (Lai, 1994:491; Taylor, Cronin & Hansen, 1991:16; Bozinoff, 1982:485).

An attempt to elicit and organize a script that could serve as a realistic portrayal of the process of purchasing major household appliances seems to coincide with recommendations for research in the field of consumer behaviour. The script concept is generally accepted to be a valid construct with wide application (Taylor *et al*, 1991:17) and is used in areas such as cognitive, social, developmental and clinical psychology as well as cognitive anthropology (Rummelhart, 1980 and Abelson, 1976 in Leigh & Rethans, 1983:667; Bartlett, 1932, Bransford & Franks, 1971, Mandler, 1979, Minsky, 1975, Rummelhart & Ortony 1977, Schank & Abelson, 1977 in John & Whitney, 1982:75). Unfortunately, since the introduction of scripts within the domain of consumer behaviour and since the first script-elicitation studies (Whitney & John's *shopping script*, 1983 and Stoltman, Tapp & Lapidus' *examination of shopping scripts* in 1989), little has been done to extend and implement the concept in consumer behaviour studies - especially to explore its potential to

reflect the consumer decision-making process for specific purchasing events such as the purchasing of major household appliances.

Based on previously stated concerns regarding the use of traditional consumer decision-making models to inter alia reflect the consumer decision-making process of purchasing household appliances (Erasmus *et al*, 2001:88), the following research problem was formulated:

Can a script that conforms to the properties and structural characteristics of a script according to basic script theory be elicited and organized within the consumer behaviour context to portray the acquisition of major household appliances?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research objective and sub-objectives

The following *research objective* and *sub-objectives* were formulated:

- To elicit and organize a script for the acquisition of major household appliances within the consumer decision-making context that coincides with the basic properties and structural characteristics of a theoretical script.
- To elicit the relevant script norms for the organization of a script for the acquisition of major household appliances, i.e. to stimulate experienced consumers to spontaneously expose/identify the relevant:
 - person schemata: everybody involved during the decision-making process
 - role schemata: the contribution of participants during the decision-making process, i.e. so-called influencers, decision-makers, et cetera
 - object schemata: the various objects involved in the decision-making process, e.g. information sources, retail outlets
 - decision-making schemata: the actions taken/implemented during the decision-making process.
- To generate a script that coincides with the basic properties and structural characteristics of a script within basic script theory by integrating and ordering the relevant script norms and actions indicated as typical of the event (acquisition of major household appliances).

Conceptual framework and definition of concepts

Following an ideographic approach, no assumptions were made concerning the various elements of decision-making (as reflected in traditional consumer decision-making models) to be expected in a script, the concepts pertaining to the phenomena relevant to the study or their inter-relationship. These were to be elicited during the research process by allowing participants to share their cognitive representations of the event or parts of the event irrespective of any resemblance to traditional consumer decision-making models. Broad non-specific concepts that coincide with the topic of the research and basic script theory were however identified to set the parameters for the study in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Acquisition of household appliances The acquisition of household appliances refers to the decision-making process *from the point where the need to replace an appliance is acknowledged until the appliance is purchased and installed at home*. During the study no assumptions regarding typical/traditional stages of decision-making were made. Instead, participants were asked to reconstruct a purchasing event through various elicitation techniques.

Major household appliances include cooling, cooking, baking and laundry appliances and are in the trade referred to as *white goods*. These are the more expensive household appliances used in kitchens and laundries and are generally considered long-term purchases due to their expected service life. In this particular study, *washing machines* were used as an example of major household appliances because research indicates that washing machines are the most frequently purchased appliances in a household and are seldom purchased without prior deliberation (Cox, Granbois & Summers, 1983:395). Script theory postulates that a script for one event (the acquisition of a washing machine) will eventually be made applicable to a related event (other purchases in the same product category, for example stoves, tumble-driers). A script for the acquisition of washing machines can thus also be interpreted as a script for major household appliances.

Script For the purpose of this discussion a script for the acquisition of major household appliances is referred to as a written portrayal of the purchasing event (for household appliances) as it is reconstructed from the view of experienced consumers. Theoretically, scripts are also known as event schemata. Script content is stored in long-term memory as hypothetical knowledge structures. These schemata are developed through experience and over learning and are retrieved to direct behaviour when consumers are exposed to/confronted with the same or similar situations (Speck *et al*, 1988:70; Bozinoff & Roth, 1983:655,656; Whitney & John, 1983:661).

Script norms For any representation to be labeled a script, it has to coincide with certain characteristics and certain properties identified in basic script theory (Abelson, 1981:717). The so-called script norms that characterize scripts in terms of content and structure are the *characters (people)*, their respective *roles*, the *props (objects)* and *actions* that are present in the script in the form of person schemata, role schemata, object schemata and action/decision-making schemata respectively. Their integration and ordering eventually reflects the specific event.

Schemata Schemata are described as stored frameworks (cognitive structures) of knowledge about specific objects or topics in semantic memory (Brown, 1992:787) and can be defined as *abridged, generalized, corrigible organizations of experience that serve as frames of reference for action and perception of similar experiences* (Weick in Schurr, 1986:498). A schema is linked to a specific experience and contains general/generic knowledge about that domain. When one is exposed to any object or situation, a schema is retrieved from long-term memory into working memory to serve as a frame of reference so that one is able to interpret, accept and understand the object/situation (Brown, 1992:787; Hoy, 1991:387).

- **Person schemata** refer to trait-based impressions of specific people who participate in an event including their skills, competencies, and values. A person schema is not situation specific (e.g. husband).
- **Role (relational) schemata** specify the specific contribution of various individuals (actors) throughout the decision-making process, e.g. as influencer or decision-maker. A role schema is situation specific and relational because it defines the probable relations between people and objects in the event and their respective roles.
- **Object schemata** could, within the context of this study, refer to any object used or involved in the event (e.g. information sources). Object schemata are not situation specific.
- **Decision-making schemata** specify all the activities that form part of the event (e.g. evaluation, information seeking).

In a script for the acquisition of major household appliances one or more of person-, object and role schema/ta will always be integrated with a decision-making schema to represent an action/element. All the actions/elements contained in a script are organized/divided into a number of coherent scenes that are sequentially and hierarchically ordered to represent the event schema/script.

PROCEDURE

Theoretical approach

A script-elicitation study is explorative in nature. The research kept to the voluntaristic assumption that consumers are active agents who interact with their environments and consequently gain experience, generate knowledge, beliefs and intentions that affect and direct subsequent consumer behaviour (Hudson & Murray, 1986:344). Experience is thus considered an important prerequisite for participation in a script study.

An emic (seeking to expose cognitive frameworks/schemata that consumers use: an insider view), ideographic approach of enquiry was used (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:10, 158). Ideographic assumptions limit the focus to particular events/actions rather than to generalize the findings to all purchasing events (such as clothing or housing purchases) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:9; Hudson & Murray, 1986:345). An ideographic approach is characterized by a smaller sample and refers to the rigorous analysis of a specific decision-making event through multiple data-collection techniques in an attempt to formulate interpretive statements pertaining to that specific decision-making event (a specific appliance) or to the class of phenomena represented by the event (major household appliances) (Denzin in Corsini, 1994:205). The specific research techniques that were chosen in an attempt to construct an event from the point of view of the consumer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:10) are typical of the post positivist paradigm, namely projective techniques, interviews and focus-group discussions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:9; Hudson & Murray, 1986:345). The implementation of multiple techniques facilitated triangulation.

Sample framework

A prerequisite for inclusion in the script-elicitation study for household appliances was experience in taking or sharing responsibility of purchasing major household appliances for a household over a period of at least five years (Menon & Johar, 1993:108).

Men and women, irrespective of marital status, between the ages of 30 and 60 years who were responsible or co-responsible for their own households were selected to exclude discriminatory issues of gender and marital status and to allow for a more egalitarian approach where husbands and wives share decision tasks (Mano & Davis, 1990:280; Aldershoff, 1985:209; Buss & Schaninger, 1983:439, 440). Middle and higher socio economic levels were targeted to ascertain experience of the purchase situation (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 1999:54-62; Aldershoff, 1985:209).

The approximate value of a residence – whether rented or owned – served as indication of socio economic status (instead of requesting sensitive household income information). Only participants whose housing was valued at more than R250 000 (approximate minimum monthly income per household R10 000) were included to ensure that participants had spending power and consequently relevant buying experience.

Sample Because script contents are generic in nature and will contain the same basic structure for a group of experienced consumers, *volunteers* were recruited for participation in the study. Potential participants were recruited for participation in a so-called *consumer decision-making research project* by approaching them personally or telephonically during working hours at businesses within a radius of ten kilometres from the University of Pretoria where the data-collection sessions were to be held. A convenience sample is defensible since the principal aim of the research is exploratory in nature and individual differences were of no theoretical interest (Bozinoff, 1982:482).

An effort was made to include an even distribution of individuals over different age and socio economic status levels. Participants were not informed of the precise aims of the study: they were asked to participate in a consumer decision-making research project to prevent them from preparing so-called *appropriate* answers (Bozinoff, 1982:485). Upon receiving the instructions on the day of data-collection, they were allowed to withdraw if they wished. Responses were made anonymously but participants submitted personal data separately. They were also asked to indicate their willingness to participate in further stages of the study (Table 6.1).

TABLE 6. 1: PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS FOR THE VARIOUS SCRIPT-ELICITATION STAGES

	Participants per value of homes (as indication of financial status)					Participants										
						Age (years)				Language		Gender		Racial groups		
	R250 000 – R350 000****	>R350 000 – R450 000	>R450 000 – R550 000	>R550 000 – R650 000	>R650 000*****	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 +	Afrikaans	English	Male	Female	White	Black	Coloured
STAGE 1 n=57	13	12	10	10	12	17	19	18	3	30	27	20	37	45	9	3
STAGE 2 n=25	4	6	6	5	4	8	7	9	1	16	9	8	17	17	6	2
STAGE 3* n=22	4	6	4	5	3	7	7	7	1	15	7	7	15	15	5	2
STAGE 4** n=25	3	5	6	6	5	8	8	8	1	17	8	7	18	20	4	1
STAGE 5*** n=18		8	2	4	4	8	4	6	0	14	4	7	11	18		

*same respondents as stage 2

**** approximate minimum monthly income R10 000 per household

** sub group of stage 1

***** approximate monthly income exceeds R24 000 per household

*** sub group of stage 1

Data-collection site

Data-collection stages 1,2,3 and 5 were conducted in a laboratory setting at the University of Pretoria that is situated conveniently for participants coming from various areas. This provided an intellectual atmosphere that is said to be favourable for the activation of data-laden schema (Mouton, 1996:149; Gardner & Raj, 1983:142) and further allows some control over environmental and context effects by excluding interruptions and preventing participants from being influenced by others (Touliatos & Compton, 1988:117).

Data-collection and analysis

The first objective was to focus on the elicitation of the relevant script norms and thereafter to organize the script in accordance with script theory. Because schemata are stored as declarative knowledge in long-term memory and are consequently difficult to retrieve, multiple, less structured data-collection techniques were used (Huberman & Miles, 1994:429). The researcher conducted the data-collection stages personally. A well-trained assistant (in possession of a Master's degree with Consumer Behaviour as a major) assisted with the analysis and interpretation of the data on a continual basis and co-administered the fifth stage, i.e. the focus-groups sessions. It was hoped that the affiliation of both researcher and assistant as lecturers at the University of Pretoria would have a favourable influence on participants in terms of the perceived importance of their contribution towards the outcome of the study (Mouton, 1996:149).

Strategy for data-collection Data-collection was done in five stages. Multiple techniques were designed with the intention to create generous opportunities to elicit a pool of generic and relevant script elements. Data driven (bottom-up) as well as conceptually driven (top-down) strategies were used. This included written and oral techniques; group and individual sessions; reconstruction as well as discrimination techniques (Erasmus, 2002b).

Data analysis was done immediately after every data-collection stage so that results could be used to direct successive data-collection stages (Huberman & Miles, 1994:429).

Data-collection stages and techniques The stages of script-elicitation were implemented in the following order:

Stage 1: Script-elicitation through a concept driven, written reconstruction technique

Data-collection Participants were requested to describe in writing and in their own words and style *how people in general go about replacing a washing machine that has broken down after ten to twelve years of service* (method adapted from Bower, Black & Turner, 1979:177-215). They were asked to reflect on a *replacement purchase*. To clarify *decision-making/purchasing process* and to capture a very specific range of statements the **starting** and **concluding points** of discussion (*Start with.....End with.....*) were clearly indicated. Instructions also required the inclusion of actions, people and objects in the descriptions (Figure 6.1).

① “Please write a detailed list of actions describing what people generally do when they buy a new washing machine to replace an old one that has broken down after ten to twelve years of service”.

☞ *I am interested in the common actions of buying a new washing machine and would like to have a detailed description of **the entire process** of replacing a washing machine, including all **individuals, objects and activities** that are part of, and are involved in the process up to making the final purchase. Please describe the process in as much detail as possible - explaining the role and contribution of each and everybody. Remember to describe the type of interaction that occurs through out.*

② **Start your list with:** Household X wants/decides to buy a new washing machine.....

③ **End your list with:** The washing machine is delivered and installed at home.

④ **Include about 20 actions/events.**

⑤ Describe the activities/events **in the order in which they occur**, mentioning all the **individuals, objects and activities** involved through out, stipulating the **extent** and **type** of **action** and **interaction** that occur.

FIGURE 6.1: INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCRIPT-ELICITATION THROUGH A CONCEPT DRIVEN, WRITTEN RECONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE (STAGE 1)

Participants Sixty individuals were invited to participate in groups of 15 each in four separate sessions. Fifty-eight turned up of which 57 responses could be used (Table 6.1). Reports were written anonymously to make the situation less threatening and in language of choice (Afrikaans or English) to encourage unconstrained response.

Stage 2: Script-elicitation through a concept driven, oral reconstruction technique

Data-collection According to cognitive theory the unconscious nature of schemata in long-term memory makes it difficult to retrieve. Individual interviews provided the opportunity to use a moderately scheduled interview technique based on the results of stage 1 (written reports) but provided the opportunity to interrupt interviewees to elaborate on certain aspects to capture detail that seemed to have been under reported (Touliatos & Compton, 1988:178). A *concept driven/top down approach* was followed and the same instructions to that of stage 1 were used except that responses were oral instead of written. With participants' permission, the interviews were tape-recorded for transcription.

Participants Twenty-five new participants were interviewed during lunch-hour in their offices or after-hours in their homes. An attempt was made to include more or less the same ratio of participants from the various age and socio-economic groups as in stage 1 (Table 6.1).

Stage 3: Elicitation of script sub-actions and role expectations, through a data driven discrimination technique

Data-collection The discrimination technique used (as opposed to the association technique of stages 1 and 2) aimed at the reconstruction of an event, to evoke contextually rich data and to minimize cognitive load (Donoghue, 2000:50; Stoltman, Tapp & Lapidus, 1989:384). Responses to the previous data-collection stages were used to compile a combination of visual stimuli to reflect different scenarios of the decision-making process. Pictures that conveyed realistic but minimal clues (simple clip-art drawings) related to the event (e.g. interaction of individuals in the store) were intended to induce scripts from memory. Some pictures were irrelevant to the event to encourage participants to be selective in their choice of pictures. The pictures were more or less of even size, each on a separate piece of paper with enough space for written commentary.

A pre-test was done by giving 40 pictures to five individuals (who participated in stage 1) for interpretation to determine their reaction, their response times and general comments for possible improvement. Following a data driven strategy where clues were provided, they had to *select a minimum of 15 pictures¹ to construct a scenario depicting the purchasing of a new washing machine*. Pictures had to be arranged in sequence and a written description of what was happening in every scene had to be given. Some of the individuals in the scenes were identified by captions (e.g. salesperson, husband) while the rest had to be identified by the participants (Figure 6.2).

No negative comments about the task were received. The researcher and assistant analyzed and discussed the results and commentary of the pretest and selected 35 pictures for the final procedure.

Participants All 25 participants from the stage 2-elicitation procedure (Table 6.1) were invited for participation to allow for triangulation.

Dear participant

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the third round of my research project on consumer decision-making.

Please use the pictures included in the envelope in the following way:

1. **Choose any number of pictures (but not less than 15)** to compile a "story" that reflect the whole process of how a household will go about to PURCHASE A WASHING MACHINE to replace one that has broken down (Accept that the old machine can definitely not be fixed). **Your pictures must illustrate the process from the moment that the household decides to buy a new machine until the moment that the replacement is delivered and installed at home.**
2. Briefly write down – next to each picture – what is happening in that specific situation, *for example:*

The husband studies newspaper advertisements for prices of various machines

3. Please indicate **WHO** the people are in every situation. Remember that you are describing the situation in general - as you see it! Some of the individuals in the pictures have been identified already. Specify who the others are, *for example*



4. The pictures that are not included in your story, must clearly be marked and put aside, *for example:*
5. Put your pictures in SEQUENCE to specify how the process proceeds from start to finish. There are no correct or incorrect scenarios but please make sure of how you wish to organize the chosen pictures because that will affect the outcome of the study! Pin or staple the pictures (your story) together and put everything back in the envelope.

Thank you for your time.

FIGURE 6.2: INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELICITATION OF SCRIPT SUB-ACTIONS AND ROLE EXPECTATIONS THROUGH A VISUAL PROMPTING TECHNIQUE (STAGE 3)

¹ The average number of statements calculated for the previous data-collection stages

Stage 4: Elicitation of sub-actions and role expectations through a data driven, written reconstruction technique

Script-elicitation procedure Data generated in stages 1 to 3 produced *large chunks of activity* that were useful to identify script norms and key elements and to organize script elements. To overcome a possible neglect of subtle aspects of the decision-making process (Barnes, 1993:63, 64 based on work by Corsaro & Heise, 1990) *clued recall* (Stoltman *et al*, 1989:384; Smith & Houston, 1986:505) was used in the fourth stage. Here participants were confronted with a specific scene of the decision-making process namely *in-store activities* which had to be described in detail (scenes were identified according to results of previous stages). They then had to *specify in writing, all the actions that preceded that scene* (Schurr, 1986:505-507). They finally had to describe the financial decision-making process in detail (Figure 6.3).

Assuming a hierarchical order for script elements, it was expected that although requested and reported out of the *natural order*, the final result of their reports would correspond with their sequential description in the previous elicitation stages. Activities (elements) at the specific level of abstraction could however include more detail due to the nature of the instructions, which encouraged focus on specific aspects. Apart from allowing the opportunity to provide more detail of specific scenes of the event, this technique contributed to confirming the *temporal sequence* of events.

Participants Twenty-five volunteers from the stage 1 sample were recruited for the purpose of triangulation. Because the instructions differed from those in stage 1 and because participants were unaware of the exact objectives of the study, their responses were assumed to be truthful (Table 6.1).

Dear respondent

RESEARCH PROJECT: CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING

Thank you for participating in the fourth phase of this research project. Your inputs are invaluable in terms of the outcome of this study. I therefore highly appreciate the time that you are willing to contribute.

Please take note:

- Your contribution is regarded confidential. Your name will not be attached to your response. I do however need some demographic details to compile a profile of participants. This should be completed on the separate form and handed in please.
- There is no time limit for completion of this exercise. Please write at your own pace.
- There are NO right or wrong answers.
- Your view of HOW CONSUMERS GO ABOUT IN GENERAL is required. Your response therefore not necessarily reflects your own doing.
- Please do not discuss your response with someone else during the session.

REQUEST 1

Please describe in as much detail as possible what happens IN-STORE when consumers are in the process of buying a new washing machine to replace one that has broken down completely after ten to twelve years of service.

Please indicate all the people who are involved in the activities in the store

It is important to discuss the process from the point of **entering the store** until the time that the consumer/s leave

The role of the salesperson must be described in detail to explain when and in what way the salesperson becomes part of the discussion and deliberation process

You need not provide reasons for statements

REQUEST 2

Please describe WHAT consumers do BEFORE they go to the retail store to purchase a new washing machine. It is once again important to indicate WHO are involved and HOW every individual contributes to the process of purchasing the appliance.

REQUEST 3

Please describe a household's **handling of the financial decision** and any activities that surrounds the financial arrangements to purchase a new washing machine. Include a description of

- **Who take/s responsibility for the decision**
- **When it is done**
- **How it affects the decision-making process**

Thank you for your co-operation!

FIGURE 6.3: INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELICITATION OF SUB-ACTIONS & ROLE EXPECTATIONS THROUGH A WRITTEN RECONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE (STAGE 4)

Stage 5: Focus-group discussions

Focus-groups were used as collective brainstorming sessions to evoke active, spontaneous discussions on certain elements of the purchasing process to conclude the script-elicitation process. Focus-group discussions provided opportunity to overcome the possible influence of verbalization difficulties that might have hampered reports during previous script-elicitation stages and to confirm the contents and structure of the final script (Morgan, 1988 in Macun & Posel, 1998:114; Stoltman *et al*, 1989:389). Focus-group discussions further provided an opportunity for triangulation (Macun & Posel, 1998:118-120; Stoltman *et al*, 1989:390). Specific discussions of a limited number of topics (script scenes) were planned (Macun & Posel, 1998:118, 119).

Data-collection A phenomenological approach to focus-group discussions was used to uncover *everyday knowledge* and *everyday language* (as opposed to scientific knowledge) and to expose generality of ideas (McQuarrie & McIntyre, 1988:581). A response-oriented rather than a question-oriented approach was followed (Robson, 1989:29) to encourage free flow of conversation without excessive control and manipulation of discussions. Following a phenomenological approach, participants were encouraged to discuss and debate topics in order to arrive at consensus statements or agreement within the groups. Instead of eliciting additional ideas or thoughts, the intention with the focus-groups was to reflect on data generated in previous stages, to debate issues and to conclude. Conversations were tape-recorded for transcription and particular attention was given to concluding remarks and -statements. The assistant kept note of individuals' participation to encourage participation whenever someone showed reluctance to participate in group discussions.

Participants Two sessions were held with eleven and seven participants respectively. All were from the first data-collection stage sample (Table 6.1) (Payne & Levy, 1975; Well, 1974 in Lautman, 1982:54). Strangers were grouped together in accordance with their financial status and nicknames were used to retain anonymity (Macun & Posel, 1998:124; Fern, 1983:121-125; Cook, 1982:62). To counteract language difficulties, the participants were encouraged to participate in either Afrikaans or English, as all participants understood both languages. Participants were seated around a square table to allow eye contact and for the purpose of uninhibited flow of the discussion (Lautman, 1982:54).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The profiles of the samples of the five script-elicitation stages are reflected in Table 6.1. Data was analyzed immediately after completion of a particular stage to make a concerted effort to capture missing or under reported content during the following stage.

Data was analyzed to

- isolate the relevant script norms and to order the script actions sequentially reflecting the script norms.
- generate the respective script protocols elicited through the various script-elicitation techniques.
- identify main concepts for the purpose of isolating scenes and scene headers.
- evaluate the level of agreement of the script protocols elicited through the various script-elicitation procedures to eventually generate a single theoretical script.

Isolation of script norms and elements and ordering of actions

The data of the first three script-elicitation procedures were used to identify script norms and elements and were eventually integrated. The fourth stage was intended to reflect on a basic characteristic of a script, namely that it possesses a set quality (the ability of an individual to restructure a script in sequential order when it is entered at any level out of the natural order of the script) while stage 5 focus-group discussions served to confirm conclusions and to clarify issues of uncertainty. The results were as follows:

Stage1: Script-elicitation through a concept driven, written reconstruction technique

The responses of 58 individuals (Table 6.1) were edited by the researcher to exclude non-relevant information. The response of one participant was rejected because it reflected a repair scenario and did not include any useful information. Content analysis of the remaining 57 responses was done. Actions and event statements were coded strictly in accordance with and in the order indicated by the participants. Confirming a report by Yoon, Meyers-Levy and Tybout (1990:533), individuals revealed during debriefing that they found it easier to reflect on hypothetical events, than to have anticipated a future purchase. The written reports of stage 1 were ideal as a starting point because they produced detailed and relevant descriptions of the event and also included information on sensitive financial matters that did not spontaneously surface during stage 2.

A total of 42 separate actions were identified from the responses of the 57 participants, ranging from 10 to 21 actions or an average of 15 actions per person. The fact that only 42 separate actions were identified within the group even in this early stage indicated extensive agreement on the type of actions contained in the event. Content analysis and coding was done by the researcher and thereafter independently repeated by a trained assistant. Inter rater reliability was calculated by comparing the interpretation of the responses as follows (Touliatos & Compton, 1988:121, 122):

$$[n / (n+a)] \times 100 = \% \text{ agreement}^2 \Rightarrow [832 / (832 + 23)] \times 100 = 97,3\%$$

(Indicative of a high inter rater reliability for stage 1).

A coding form that included all the concepts and actions mentioned by the participants was designed. Actions were transferred *in the specific order as these were identified* onto the coding form for statistical analysis. Frequencies were calculated for each action. Because of the low frequency of certain actions (11 actions were mentioned by less than 10% of the participants) and because some of the action statements were closely related, actions were clustered into related categories in accordance with concepts relevant within consumer decision-making theory. This is compatible with script theory that postulates that scripts contain *generic action statements* rather than detailed descriptions of an event. The 42 actions were thus clustered into generic statements, which reduced the number of actions to 20 (Table 6.2).

TABLE 6.2: EXAMPLES OF CLUSTERED ACTION STATEMENTS

Actions mentioned by participants	Initial interpretation	Clustered category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> odecides whether the same brand as the previous one will be purchased o It has to be decided what the household needs first, for example the capacity needed and where the machine will be installed o Everybody has certain preferences that influences the type of machine purchased, for example if you are used to a top loader..... o It is not necessary to look at so many models because one knows beforehand which are more reliable 	Preference Requirements Preference, experience Attitude; Experience	Needs assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> odecides who is going to pay for the machine o ...one has to determine how much you are prepared to spend o first a budget must be decided on o .. and if it is going to be purchased on HP or paid for in cash o One goes to the bank or Buying Association (Pretorium Trust) to arrange for credit facilities 	Payment strategy Budgeting Budgeting Method of payment Financial arrangements	Financial decision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Prices of different stores are compared o One has to compare the services provided by different stores o The advantages and disadvantages of various products have to be considered..... o Makes a shortlist to compare products... 	Compare prices Compare stores Compare products Compare products per shortlist	Evaluation

Responses were however coded in terms of the original 42 statements and in terms of their respective positions as mentioned (in sequential order). The mean positions of the generic statements (clusters of the original statements) (Table 6.2) were then calculated positioning them in sequential order in the script protocol. The script protocol for stage 1 (Table 6.3) indicates the mean position of every generic action as well as the frequency of mention from which main concepts and the strength of actions were determined.

² n: number of agreements; a: number of disagreements

TABLE 6.3: RESULTS: STAGE 1 (CONCEPT DRIVEN, WRITTEN RECONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE)

Mean position	Variable (action)	n = 57	%	Std dev	P-value*
3.6	Use of non personal information: written form	24	42	2.31869	0.4678
4.1	Needs assessment	38	67	2.50064	0.0567
4.5	Use of personal information sources: friends, family	33	58	3.61715	0.1037
5.5	Use of personal information: phoning stores	33	58	2.41370	0.1815
5.6	Store visits: to acquire product information	50	89	2.62752	0.9767
5.7	Store visits: to compare products	35	61	3.12431	0.5036
5.8	Store visits: to compare prices	29	51	3.28040	0.4137
6.4	Use of non personal information: product specifications	20	35	3.21130	0.9388
6.65	Financial decisions	44	77	3.51655	0.8230
6.7	Making a shortlist of suitable alternatives	17	30	2.99509	0.0647
7.7	Evaluation of alternatives	24	42	3.65263	0.5044
7.8	Store visits: to compare retailer benefits	29	51	2.68903	0.9122
9.9	Final decision: product	53	93	2.96802	0.1499
10.2	Final decision: store	29	51	3.86980	0.2482
10.6	Store visit: to confirm decision	8	14	2.38671	**
12.0	Purchasing action	57	100	2.96100	0.7973
13.2	Delivery	54	95	2.92277	0.4797
13.3	Reconsider decision	6	10	2.33809	**
13.7	Study the manual	7	12	2.98408	**
14.2	Installation of appliance	49	86	2.98792	0.4183

* These figures indicate the p-value for the two halves of the sample that were compared through the Mann-Whitney rank sum test for internal consistency (Discussion follows later)

** No calculations due to low response (n<15)

The stage 1 protocol provides a clear indication of *decision-making schemata* (e.g. *store visits*; *price comparisons*) and *object schemata* (e.g. *non-personal information sources*; *retail stores*) but does not indicate *role schemata* satisfactorily (e.g. *friends as influencers*). Despite clear instructions, participants did not provide enough information on the *person-* or the *role schemata*. The missing data on role schemata was calculated at between $n = 44$ and $n = 56$ for the respective actions. It was decided to actively resolve this shortcoming during the following stages.

To determine the trustworthiness of data, the sample ($n = 57$) was randomly divided into two halves ($n = 29$; $n = 28$). Data was compared using the Mann-Whitney rank sum test as if they were two independent groups (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 1994:594). No significant difference in responses and position of mention could be found for any one of the actions mentioned by the two halves of the sample ($p \leq 0,05$) (Table 6.3), which indicated trustworthy responses.

Stage 2: Script-elicitation through a concept driven, oral reconstruction technique

The recorded interviews with 25 new volunteers (Table 6.1) were transcribed. Content analysis and coding was done in the same way as for stage 1. No new actions to those extracted during stage 1 were added which confirmed the potential of a written technique to elicit detailed descriptions. The same coding schedule as for stage 1 was used. Inter rater reliability for the interpretation of the researcher and assistant after comparing all 25 responses in the same manner as for stage 1 was

calculated at 97,4% - an indication of high inter rater reliability. Table 6.4 reflects the script protocol for stage 2.

TABLE 6.4: RESULTS: STAGE 2 (CONCEPT DRIVEN, ORAL RECONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE)

Mean position	Variable	n=25	%	Std dev	P-value**
2.3	Needs assessment	23	92	1.32995	0.0037
2.8	Use of personal information sources: friends, family	15	60	2.18714	0.0955
3.8	Use of non personal information: written form	17	68	1.61165	0.3306
6.0	Use of personal information: phoning stores	11	44	3.00874	0.7546
6.5	Store visit: to compare products	17	68	2.80886	0.2585
6.7	Store visit: to acquire product information	24	96	3.03660	0.1387
6.9	Store visit: to compare prices	10	40	1.96920	0.1020
7.4	Evaluation of alternatives	5	20	2.19089	0.7927
7.5	Financial decisions	24	96	3.46096	0.3959
8.0	Final decision: store	8	32	2.82842	0.1321
8.3	Store visits: to compare retailer benefits	13	53	2.28708	0.5934
8.5	Making a shortlist of suitable alternatives	4	16	2.38047	0.2056
8.8	Store visit: to confirm decision	4	16	2.21735	0.1651
9.6	Final decision: product	23	92	2.03914	0.6199
11.4	Purchasing action	25	100	2.49799	0.3885
12.4	Delivery	25	100	2.51793	0.2692
13.4	Installation of appliance	25	100	2.51793	0.2687
13.9	Study the manual	19	76	3.13534	0.4468
17.0	Reconsider decision	1	4	-	0.1266
	Use of non personal information: product specific	0	0	-	

** These figures indicate the p-value for the stage 1 and stage 2 data that were compared through the Mann-Whitney rank sum test for consistency (Discussion follows later)

The Mann-Whitney rank sum test for two independent groups was used to determine whether the stage 1 and stage 2 techniques succeeded in inducing the same information from memory. For all but one variable (NEEDS ASSESSMENT) no significant difference in the mean positions of the various script actions in the script protocols for the two studies could be found ($p \leq 0,05$) (Table 6.4). The fact that the mention of NEEDS ASSESSMENT differed for the two procedures (see also Table 6.7) may be ascribed to the fact that stage 1 depended upon independent reconstruction of the event while interviews provided the opportunity to interrupt participants and to ask them to elaborate on certain aspects. This probably served as a reminder of actions under reported in stage 1. Participants did however have more time to think during stage 1, which means that the stage 1 data could possibly be a better reflection of the actual sequence of actions. It must further be emphasized that the mean positions of needs assessment and actions related to information search are relatively close to each other in stages 1 and 2 which means that related actions could be closely interwoven in a real life situation.

A better response in terms of role actions was achieved. Results of stages 2 to 4 with respect to role actions are reflected in Table 6.7 and are discussed concurrently.

Stage 3: Elicitation of script sub-actions and role expectations, through a data driven discrimination technique

In terms of role actions, this technique eventually provided more detail than stage 2 (Table 6.7), probably because the technique served as a reminder of experience that did not surface spontaneously during any of the previous stages (Bone & Ellen, 1990:449). The use of a discrimination technique after having implemented reconstruction techniques in stages 1 and 2, addressed a shortcoming of those techniques: they depended on independent reconstruction of the event, which makes it difficult to retrieve information from long-term memory (Bower *et al*, 1979:213).

Only 22 of the 25 invited participants arrived for the data-collection session. Because of the intention to compare the results of stages 2 and 3 (the same sample, but different techniques) to determine the trustworthiness of responses, no new participants were included.

TABLE 6.5: RESULTS: STAGE 3 (DATA DRIVEN DISCRIMINATION TECHNIQUE)

Mean position	Variable	n=22	%	Std dev	P-value*	P-value**
2.3	Needs assessment	20	91	1.61632	1.0000	0.0047
3.1	Use of non personal information: written form	19	86	1.52369	0.7500	0.9803
4.2	Use of personal information sources: friends, family	14	64	3.06096	0.2500	0.2500
5.2	Use of personal information: phoning stores	14	64	3.22081	0.5156	0.5444
6.6	Store visit: to compare prices	9	41	3.12694	1.0000	0.8426
7.0	Store visit: to acquire product information	22	100	2.97205	0.6277	0.0500
7.1	Evaluation of alternatives	7	32	1.68560	1.0000	0.6665
7.5	Store visit: to compare products	14	64	2.29548	0.1322	0.1175
8.1	Financial decisions	20	91	1.68560	0.9622	0.0999
8.2	Making a shortlist of suitable alternatives	5	23	1.94079	1.0000	0.2033
8.3	Store visits: to compare retailer benefits	11	50	2.62937	0.5313	0.6262
9.1	Final decision: store	9	41	2.57120	0.3750	0.4573
9.5	Store visit: to confirm decision	4	18	2.38047	1.0000	0.3390
11.1	Final decision: product	19	86	2.27238	0.0740	0.1109
12.0	Purchasing action	22	100	2.15824	0.3136	0.7039
13.3	Delivery	22	100	2.14213	0.2390	0.7336
14.4	Study the manual	13	59	2.32875	0.4747	0.2755
14.5	Installation of appliance	22	100	1.97001	0.0886	0.4947
-	Use of non-personal information: product specific	0	0			
-	Reconsider decision	0	0			

* These figures indicate the p-value for the data of stages 2 and 3 that were compared through the Wilcoxon rank sum test for consistency ($p \leq 0,05$) (Discussion follows later)

** These figures indicate the p-value for the data of stages 1 and 3 that were compared through the Mann-Whitney rank sum test for consistency (Discussion follows later)

Trustworthiness of data was determined using the Mann Whitney rank sum test to compare the data of stages 1 and 3 (two independent groups). For all but one variable (NEEDS ASSESSMENT), there were no significant differences in the responses in terms of the actions mentioned or the ordering of actions in the two script protocols ($p \leq 0,05$) (Table 6.5). The fact that the mention of NEEDS ASSESSMENT differed for the two techniques (see also Table 6.10) may be ascribed to the

fact that stage 1 depended upon independent reconstruction of the event, while the stage 3 procedure depended upon discrimination. Participants could therefore have been reminded of actions through the pictures provided in stage 3. With reduced cognitive effort to reconstruct the event from memory, it was possible that the participants could focus more clearly on identifying actions and arranging them in sequential order. Therefore the results of stage 3 probably reflected the event more accurately. This was confirmed by a comparison between the results of stages 2 and 3 where no significant difference in the results could be found (Table 6.10). Once again the mean positions of needs assessment and information search are very close which probably indicates a close interaction of relevant actions during the event.

Responses of stages 2 and 3 (the same sample) were compared using the Wilcoxon rank sum test (Steyn *et al*, 1994:594). No significant differences in the positions of actions for the two script protocols (excluding subgroups that were too small to merit statistical comparison) ($p \leq 0,05$) (Table 6.6) indicate trustworthy data.

Stage 4: Determining the set quality of the script through a data driven, written reconstruction technique

Three tasks were completed during this stage.

- Written reports of *in-store activities* were analyzed and coded in the order mentioned by the participants. No new concepts or actions to those indicated in stage 1 came to the fore.
- Participants' descriptions of actions pertaining to the event *prior to entering the store* were analyzed and coded, using the same coding schedule as for stages 1 to 3.
- Participants' reports of activities relating to financial matters were analyzed and coded. No new concepts or actions were identified to those indicated in stage 1. Descriptions referring to financial decisions in either the first or second task were elaborated in terms of more specific descriptions given during this task.

Data analysis and coding of responses to the first and second tasks (*in-store activities*; activities prior to entering the store) were done. Results of the two tasks were integrated in terms of their actual sequential order in the script. Results of the third task (*financial decision-making*) were analyzed and coded and the results were used to elaborate a respondent's mention of financial decision-making in the integrated version of the previous tasks. The stage 4 results only provided data up to the point where consumers left the store. The protocol for stage 4 thus only represents part of the script. Stage 4 results are therefore compared with the stage 1 to 3 versions in terms of face value rather than through statistical analysis.

TABLE 6.6: RESULTS: STAGE 4 (DATA DRIVEN, WRITTEN RECONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE)**

MEAN POSITION	VARIABLE	N=25	%
2.0526	use of non personal information: written form	19	76
2.8409	needs assessment	22	88
3.0455	use of personal information: phoning stores	11	44
3.6429	use of personal information sources: friends, family	7	28
5.0000	making a shortlist of suitable alternatives	3	12
5.8333	evaluation of alternatives	12	48
6.0000	final decision: store	1	4
6.1111	use of non-personal information: product specific	9	36
7.4783	store visit: to acquire product information	23	92
7.5714	store visit: to compare prices	14	56
7.9000	store visit: to compare products	25	100
8.1267	financial decisions	25	100
10.0000	store visit: to confirm decision	1	4
11.3333	final decision: product	3	12
11.9333	store visits: to compare retailer benefits	15	60
12.2400	purchasing action	25	100

** Only actions indicated by n>6 were considered in the final discussion

Needs assessment and *information search* were, as in the case of stages 1 to 3, identified as taking place prior to store visits and in the same sequence as mentioned in stage 1. This occurred during both of the written techniques where participants had enough time to think about their responses. In-store activities coincided with those of previous stages although higher frequencies of actions were reported. This is ascribed to the fact that participants had to focus on specific scenes, which probably induced better reconstruction from long-term memory. In-store activity, due to its apparent significance in all of the stages, became a topic of discussion in the focus-group discussions. Table 6.10 reflects results of stages 1 to 4 to facilitate a comparison of the respective script protocols that were used to generate and motivate the eventual empirical and theoretical script for the acquisition of major household appliances.

Elicitation of role schemata

The various script-elicitation techniques used were not equally successful in eliciting role schemata. This aspect was for example neglected in the stage 1 elicitation technique, probably because participants wrote their reports on blank sheets of paper. The design of a report sheet with column indications to remind participants to specify all of the schemata for every action required is recommended for future studies. During stage 2 an effort was made to induce responses by reminding interviewees to specify role behaviour. The projective technique used in stage 3 explicitly expected of participants to identify all individuals in selected pictures and to specify their actions throughout the event. Stage 4 did not produce a full script and from responses it could be concluded that respondents paid more attention to action statements and neglected role actions (the same problem that occurred during the stage 1 written technique). Once again a specially designed report sheet with columns is recommended for future studies.

Table 6.7 reflects the responses of participants concerning role behaviour during the various decision-making actions. Finally it would appear that not many persons are involved in a household's decision-making and acquisition of a new appliance. Apart from the involvement of husbands and wives, friends and salespeople seem to make contributions during the pre-purchase stages of information seeking while salespeople seem to be influential in-store.

Role actions indicated in stages 2 to 4 and summarized in Table 6.6 had to be interpreted on face value due to the small samples and disappointingly low responses for some of the actions. The format of the instructions for stage 3 where participants had to identify the individuals in the pictures and had to describe their actions was accepted as more successful in identifying role actions than any of the techniques used in the other stages of data-collection. A discussion of role actions was identified as a priority discussion topic for the focus-group sessions.

Decision-making action	Individual	Frequency	Percentage	Comments
Information seeking	Wife	10	100%	
	Husband	0	0%	
In-store	Wife	10	100%	
	Husband	0	0%	
Purchase decision	Wife	10	100%	
	Husband	0	0%	
Delivery	Wife	10	100%	
	Husband	0	0%	
Post-purchase	Wife	10	100%	
	Husband	0	0%	

TABLE 6.7: RESULTS STAGES 2 TO 5: INDICATION OF ROLE ACTIONS

Actions	Stage 2 (n=25)	Stage 3 (n=22)	Stage 4 (n=25)	Stage 5 Consensus remarks during focus- group discussions (see Table 8)	Conclusion reached
Needs assessment	Husband 0 Wife 10 Jointly 9 DNC* 6	Husband 0 Wife 4 Jointly 12 DNC.... 6	Husband 0 Wife 2 Jointly 19 DNC 4	The wife has definite ideas of what she wants Men do have a say..... Husbands and wives decide together	Joint** assessment, or handled by the wife
Use of promotional material (non-personal): written form	Husband 2 Wife 5 Jointly 5 DNC 13	Husband 0 Wife 11 Jointly 7 DNC 4	Husband 0 Wife 5 Jointly 14 DNC 6	Men and women read advertisements in newspapers and magazines. Women usually make a bigger effort to get product information from various sources....they read all kinds of advertisements	Performed jointly or by the wife
Use of non-formal information sources (personal): friends, family	Husband 2 Wife 9 Jointly 2 DNC 12	Husband 2 Wife 13 Jointly 2 DNC 5	Husband 0 Wife 1 Jointly 6 DNC 18	Women usually make a bigger effort to get product information from various sources....they phone their friends Women like to talk to their friends about the purchases	Generally by the wife or jointly
Use of non-formal information sources (personal); phone calls to stores	Husband 1 Wife 8 Jointly 1 Missing 15	Husband 3 Wife 9 Jointly 2 DNC 8	Husband 0 Wife 2 Jointly 8 DNC 15	... women would phone different stores... Maybe men do not make such an effort to collect information from various sources because they don't have the time	Generally by the wife or jointly
Use salesperson's advice (in-store)	Yes 20 DNC 5	Yes 18 DNC 4	Yes 24 DNC 1	We look around first and then talk to the salespeople Some stores have excellent salespeople but we hate to be pressurized so we only ask for their opinion after we have looked at the products ourselves	Jointly, seldom the husband alone
Store visits to: <i>compare prices;</i> <i>get product information;</i> <i>compare products;</i> <i>compare retailers;</i> <i>confirm decision</i>	Husband 1 Wife 7 Jointly 14 DNC 3	Husband 1 Wife 4 Jointly 15 With friend 1 DNC 1	Husband 0 Wife 0 Jointly 23 DNC 2	Men consider different characteristics..... They must go along to the store to look at more technical things. Men do make an input.... especially by accompanying their wives to stores. Men do go along to stores because they also pay for the appliances.	Jointly, seldom the husband alone
Financial decisions	Husband 6 Wife 2 Jointly 12 DNC 5	Husband 4 Wife 4 Jointly 12 DNC 2	Husband 0 Wife 0 Jointly 23 DNC 2	..this is a big decision with a lot of money involved therefore men have to be consulted from the beginning. Husbands and wives have to discuss financial matters to decide who will pay for the product.	Predominantly joint deliberations and decisions
Final decision: Store	Husband 0 Wife 6 Jointly 12 DNC 7	Husband 1 Wife 2 Jointly 15 DNC 4	Husband 5 Wife 0 Jointly 19 DNC 1	Men do go along to stores because they also pay for the appliances.	Generally a joint decision
Final decision: Product	Husband 0 Wife 6 Jointly 12 DNC 7	Husband 1 Wife 2 Jointly 15 DNC 4	Husband 0 Wife 1 Jointly 13 DNC 11	Men must be involved in case something goes wrong with the product later...	Generally a joint decision
Purchase transaction	Husband 2 Wife 3 Jointly 6 DNC 14	Husband 0 Wife 5 Jointly 14 DNC 3		Husbands and wives have to discuss financial matters to decide who will pay for the product.	Generally jointly or performed by the wife
Delivery	Self 1 Retailer 9 DNC 15	Self 0 Retailer 22 DNC 0		Stores must be able to deliver the appliances Delivery should be part of the deal....	Generally done by the retailer
Study the manual	Husband 0 Wife 10 Jointly 8 DNC 7	Husband 0 Wife 8 Jointly 5 DNC 9		Manuals are usually very complicated. Men might read the manuals to see how the installation should be done... Wives are more concerned about what the manuals say.....	By the wife or jointly
Installation of appliance	Self 10 Technician 7 DNC 8	Self 7 Technician 9 DNC 6		Some men are very handy, so they do it themselves... We usually get a technician to do the installation.... It all depends what you buy....some appliances can easily be installed by the husbands and others not	Either self or by technician

* DNC: did not complete

**"joint": husband and wife

Stage 5: Focus-group discussions

Data was transcribed and the contents were analyzed. Concluding statements of discussion topics are summarized in Table 6.8.

TABLE 6.8: CONCLUDING STATEMENTS OF FOCUS-GROUPS**

Topic	Responses
Information search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Promotional material is the only source of information one has apart from what you know by experience and what friends tell you o Advertisements only include prices, capacity, guarantees..... o Information is scarce: there is little to go by o Where does one go to get product information? o Brand name is an important thing.... o The latest technology has become very complicated.....brand names can be used to guide the purchase if you do not know the appliances well o Men and women look for different characteristics that is why both go to the stores to investigate the options o Friends' recommendations can be trusted because it is based on experience o Everything one needs to know is found in the stores. I know of no other source that provides consumer information o Salespeople cannot be trusted. They only sell to earn commission o Some salespeople know the appliances but most of them are useless o Salesmen are supposed to assist with information but they are not always well informed themselves o Some stores have excellent salespeople but we hate to be pressurized so we only ask for their opinion after we have looked at the products ourselves o Advertisements really only provide the basic information like price, dimensions and guarantees. One then has to go to stores to see what the appliances really look like and what is available o If you already know what type of appliance you need, does one need really more than to know what the appliance costs and how long it is guaranteed? o There is no written information available in-stores. All manuals are sealed in the packaging of appliances o Most of the information is eventually found in the store by looking at the displays o Retailers and industry should definitely pay more attention to the service provided in retail stores o I would never have thought to contact the SABS for information o I do use the internet but have never thought of using Consumer Help Lines supplied by industry o Can one really ask the SABS for assistance? I would feel like I am wasting their time o Stores are the most important sources of information o I do not know why people bother to look for information because there is very little. It is much better to go to the store to look at the various models and brand names o It does not take long to make a decision once you are in the store
Role actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Appliances are very expensive. I do not think that a woman should make such a decision by herself o Men consider different characteristics. They must go along to the store so that they can look at more technical things o Men do make an input, especially by accompanying their wives to stores o Men do go along to stores because they also pay for the appliances o Wives make more inputs before they go to the store. After all they will be using the machines o Men are definitely involved in the decision as to what to purchase but their wives will have more say in the final purchase o Men are as much involved in household purchases as their wives because their money is involved o Men must be involved in case something goes wrong with the product later... o Men and women look for different characteristics that is why both go to the stores to investigate the options o Husbands and wives have to discuss financial matters to decide who will pay for the product o Appliances are very expensive, that's why husbands and wives have to discuss the financial implications of a purchase before any decision is made o They will definitely discuss the matter before buying anything.....appliances are very expensive these days o Women will discuss the financial implications with their husbands even when they earn their own money... o This is a big decision with a lot of money involved therefore men have to be consulted from the beginning o Men are involved but women will have more influence over the final decision o Women like to talk to their friends about the purchases because they can be trusted o Of course friends can be trusted when they recommend something. Remember, one won't ask anyone for their opinion o Men and women read advertisements in newspapers and magazines... o Women usually make a bigger effort to get product information from various sources. They phone stores, read all kinds of advertisements and would phone different stores... o Maybe men do not make such an effort to collect information from various sources because they don't have the time

In-store activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Salespeople are in the game for the commission. That is why one has to look at the products on your own before calling them for assistance o In-store displays are the most important source of information. That is why it is important to go to a big store o There is very little written information in-stores that can be used. One usually has to rely on the appearance and trusted brand names to decide what to buy o Brand names are used to select the products that you eventually choose from...and price of course o Once you've seen the appliances you know what you want o It is better to look around on your own first before you talk to the salespeople o It is senseless to go back and forth....if you've seen the products in the store, you are ready to make a choice o Salespeople must not pressurize me o Salespeople are not very helpful o Salespeople should be better trained to do their jobs. Some know very little about the products they are supposed to sell... o It is important to choose a reliable store. They usually have more competent salespeople and will provide better after sales service
Financial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Affordability is most important. It is no use looking at everything if you can not afford it o Financial decisions are most important in terms of what can be afforded and whether the purchase can be made o Finances determine everything. If an appliance breaks, it is a nightmare because so much money is involved o Financial aspects form a major part of the decision-making process. In the end everything is determined by availability of money o One has to look at all the options first before one can discuss finances. How will you otherwise know how much it will cost? o Unless financial matters are cleared out, one cannot decide anything o Money determines everything. If you can't pay, it is no use. That is why husbands and wives have to do it together o One knows more or less what can be afforded before you go to the stores but it is only when you have seen what is available that you really know the implications o One has to decide how you are going to pay: on hire purchase or cash or what ever. It all depends when the disaster strikes o Financial arrangements with the bank can only be made once you have been to the store to know how much money is involved o Sometimes the husbands pay and sometimes the wives pay. It all depends....
Needs assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The wife has definite ideas of what she wants o Wives know what is needed because they use the machines o Wives usually know what they want ... o Men do have a say because they are more technically orientated... o Husbands and wives decide together because of the consequences involved....what do women know about plumbing requirements and so on? o It all depends who is going to use the machine but in the end the wife has more say o One has to decide what the household needs before you go to the store o I think that when you look at advertisements, brochures and so on, you already have some idea of what you like and what you prefer o It is difficult to search for information if you don't know what you are looking for..... o One definitely looks at appliances in terms of your requirements.....won't consider front loaders if you prefer a top loading machine

** In the words of the participants

ORGANIZATION OF SCRIPT PROTOCOLS

Identification of strength of actions

In accordance with previous script studies (Bozinoff, 1982:483; Bower *et al*, 1979:181), the *density of grouping of frequencies* was used to differentiate and categorize the *strength* of actions in the various script protocols. Consequently all actions mentioned at frequencies below 25% were eliminated from the script protocol as being less prominent. All other actions were categorized using the parameters in Table 6.9. Script protocols were then re-written in the relevant style to make individual actions more easily discernable in terms of their prominence/strength in the *empirical* script protocols (a practice generally used in script studies).

TABLE 6.9: PARAMETERS FOR INDICATION OF ACTION STRENGTHS IN THE SCRIPT PROTOCOLS

Indicative style of presentation	Frequency (%)
<i>action</i>	25-39
action	40-59
<i>ACTION</i>	60-74
ACTION	75+

Empirical script protocols for stages 1 to 4

Table 6.10 reflects an integrated version of the results of stages 1 to 4, rewritten in terms of strength of actions (Table 6.9) to enable a comparison of data.

TABLE 6.10: PRELIMINARY EMPIRICAL SCRIPT PROTOCOLS FOR STAGES 1 TO 4**

Adapted script protocol: Stage 1 (Table 6.3) (concept driven, written reconstruction technique)	Adapted script protocol: Stage 2 (Table 6.4) (concept driven, oral reconstruction technique)	Adapted script protocol: Stage 3 (Table 6.5) (data driven discrimination technique)	Results: Stage 4 (Table 6.6) (concept driven, written reconstruction technique)
1. use of non personal information: written form			1. USE OF NON PERSONAL INFORMATION: WRITTEN FORM
2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT	1. NEEDS ASSESSMENT	1. NEEDS ASSESSMENT	2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT
3. use of personal information sources: friends, family	2. USE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES: FRIENDS, FAMILY		
	3. USE OF NON PERSONAL INFORMATION: WRITTEN FORM	2. USE OF NON PERSONAL INFORMATION: WRITTEN FORM	
		3. USE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES: FRIENDS, FAMILY	
4. use of personal information: phoning stores	4. use of personal information: phoning stores	4. USE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES: PHONING STORES	3. Use of personal information: phoning stores
			4. Use of personal information sources: friends, family
			5. Evaluation of alternatives
			6. Use of non-personal information: product specific
	5. STORE VISIT: TO COMPARE PRODUCTS		
		5. store visit: to compare prices	
5. STORE VISITS: TO ACQUIRE PRODUCT INFORMATION	6. STORE VISITS: TO ACQUIRE PRODUCT INFORMATION	6. STORE VISITS: TO ACQUIRE PRODUCT INFORMATION	7. STORE VISITS: TO ACQUIRE PRODUCT INFORMATION
	7. store visit: to compare prices		
		7. evaluation of alternatives	8. store visit: to compare prices
6. STORE VISIT: TO COMPARE PRODUCTS		8. STORE VISIT: TO COMPARE PRODUCTS	9. STORE VISIT: TO COMPARE PRODUCTS
7. Store visit: to compare prices			
8. use of non personal information: product specifications			
9. FINANCIAL DECISIONS	8. FINANCIAL DECISIONS	9. FINANCIAL DECISIONS	10. FINANCIAL DECISIONS
	9. final decision: store		
10. making a shortlist of suitable alternatives			
11. evaluation of alternatives			
12. store visits: to compare retailer benefits	10. store visits: to compare retailer benefits	10. store visits: to compare retailer benefits	11. STORE VISITS: TO COMPARE RETAILER BENEFITS
		11. final decision: store	
13. FINAL DECISION: PRODUCT	11. FINAL DECISION: PRODUCT	12. FINAL DECISION: PRODUCT	
14. final decision: store			
15. PURCHASING ACTION	12. PURCHASING ACTION	13. PURCHASING ACTION	12. PURCHASING ACTION
16. DELIVERY	13. DELIVERY	14. DELIVERY	
		15. study the manual	
17. INSTALLATION	14. INSTALLATION	16. INSTALLATION	
	15. STUDY THE MANUAL		

** Empirical script norms illuminate the properties of a script in terms of script concepts and their ordering indicating action strengths

Organization of a single empirical script protocol

To generate a single script for the event, the level of agreement of the various script protocols had to be determined first. The respective positions of actions in the four script protocols were compared using the Mann Whitney rank sum test for the two halves of stage 1, to compare stages 1 and 2, and to compare stages 1 and 3 (Tables 6.3; 6.4; 6.5). The Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare stages 2 and 3 (Table 6.5). The only action that differs significantly in terms of its mean position in the various script protocols is *needs assessment* in terms of its position in the stage 1 protocol versus the protocols for stages 2 and 3. Possible reasons for the difference could be that during stage 1, participants concentrated on describing the event in terms of all the relevant actions (written technique). When participants were however confronted with stimuli (based on the responses of stages 1 and 2) and were requested to interpret and arrange them in sequential order (stage 3), *needs assessment* was prominently indicated to be the first action taken. Although stage 4 confirms the stage 1 order, the nature of the task in stage 4 and the method of sequential ordering (the researcher integrated responses of participants after their description of separate scenes where the intention was to elicit more detailed description of scenes in the event) might cast some doubt on the exact position of the element under discussion. It was decided to place *needs assessment* in the first position based on stage 3 responses as well as consensus statements of focus-groups (Table 6.8). No significant difference in the mean position of any of the other actions was found (stages 1 to 3). The strength of actions was determined by comparing the various script protocols on face value.

Main concepts and elements within a group of related elements were analyzed to determine the **scene headers**. A scene eventually incorporates all related elements (actions mentioned by more than 25% of participants).

Concepts identified in the initial procedure before a reduction of data from 42 to 20 statements were integrated with basic action statements to enable a more comprehensive expression of some **actions/elements** (Example: *Needs assessment* was rewritten as *needs assessment in terms of requirements, preferences and experience based knowledge*) inclusive of person, object, decision-making and role schemata. The latter was obtained from responses during stages 2 to 4 as summarized in Table 6.7.

Figure 6.4 represents the integrated empirical script for the acquisition of major household appliances as elicited through multiple techniques and taking into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of the various elicitation techniques.

Scene 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN TERMS OF EXPERIENCE, PREFERENCES AND ATTITUDES IS DONE JOINTLY BY HUSBAND AND WIFE OR BY THE WIFE

Scene 2: INFORMATION SEARCH

WRITTEN INFORMATION SOURCES, MAINLY PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL SUCH AS ADVERTISEMENTS ARE USED JOINTLY BY HUSBAND AND WIFE OR BY THE WIFE;

PERSONAL INFORMATION, MAINLY RECOMMENDATIONS OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY, BASED ON EXPERIENCE IS GENERALLY OBTAINED BY THE WIFE OR JOINTLY;

Telephone enquiries are made to several stores (salespeople), mainly by the wife or jointly

Product specific information such as technical information is gathered mainly by husbands

Scene 3: STORE VISITS

STORES ARE VISITED JOINTLY BY HUSBAND AND WIFE:

TO LOOK AT IN-STORE DISPLAYS AS MAIN SOURCES OF PRODUCT INFORMATION WITH ASSISTANCE OF SALESPEOPLE

TO COMPARE PRODUCTS IN TERMS OF THE HOUSEHOLD'S NEEDS, PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

To obtain price information by looking at in-store displays

To investigate product specifications by consulting appliance manuals (mainly by the husband)

Scene 4: FINANCIAL DECISIONS

FINANCIAL DECISIONS, INCLUDING AFFORDABILITY, MEANS OF PAYMENT, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYMENT AS WELL AS FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE GENERALLY DELIBERATED JOINTLY BY HUSBAND AND WIFE IN-STORE OR AT HOME

Scene 5: EVALUATION

A shortlist of suitable alternatives is made jointly by husband and wife;⁴

Evaluation of product alternatives⁵ is done jointly by husband and wife in-store, or at home;

Stores are compared jointly by both spouses in terms of benefits offered

Scene 6: CHOICE

Final decision of where to purchase the appliance is made jointly by husband and wife

A PRODUCT IS CHOSEN JOINTLY BY HUSBAND AND WIFE

Scene 7: PURCHASING

THE PURCHASE TRANSACTION IS EITHER DONE JOINTLY OR BY THE SPOUSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYMENT

Scene 8: DELIVERY

DELIVERY IS GENERALLY DONE/ORGANISED BY THE RETAILER

Scene 9: INSTALLATION

The appliance manual is generally studied mainly by the wife, but may also be consulted by the husband if he installs the appliance himself

INSTALLATION IS DONE EITHER BY A TECHNICIAN OR THE HUSBAND

FIGURE 6.4: INTEGRATED EMPIRICAL SCRIPT FOR THE ACQUISITION OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

⁴ Making a shortlist was prominently mentioned by between 25-39% of participants and was therefore included in the script. This action probably did not feature in the stage 3 discrimination task because it is difficult to reflect this action through a drawing.

⁵ The same argument as the previous one can be used for evaluation of alternatives (indicated by 40-59% of participants)

Theoretical script

Following the rules for the presentation of a script (Weisberg, 1980:55; Bower *et al*, 1979:179), Table 6.11 represents the theoretical script for the acquisition of household appliances within a consumer decision-making context.

Discussion of the script

Scene 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Indicated as the first action jointly taken by husband and wife, this scene represents the deliberation of household needs such as the dimensions and capacity needed. It further entails a consideration of individual factors such as experience with previous appliances and preferences in terms of style, design and brand names. The focus-group discussions confirmed that husbands rarely if ever take sole responsibility for so-called white goods because it is still perceived to be a woman's prerogative to state what is needed. Focus-groups mentioned that financial aspects (affordability) could be part of the discussion of needs in the initial scene although active discussions usually flow from store visits when consumers have had the opportunity to investigate all options.

Scene 2: INFORMATION SEARCH

Information search prior to store visits is done in terms of the needs identified in scene 1 and is generally limited to non-formal information, mostly promotional in kind such as advertisements in newspapers and free mail. This is supplemented with personal information from friends and family who act as influencers and share their experiences. Phone calls are also made to different stores for salespeople's recommendations. Information search is generally done jointly or by the wife and include enquiring about brand reputations, performance characteristics, product features, prices and after sales service. Sometimes husbands enquire about technical aspects such as electrical consumption. During focus-group discussions it became clear that consumers are ignorant of formal sources of information such as the SABS and Consumer Help Lines supplied by industry via Internet services. Participants agreed that they did not know how and where to get information apart from those in newspapers and popular magazines and found those to reflect mainly price, capacity, brand name and guarantee related information. They further had consensus that friends' advice is more reliable and reported salespeople to be mostly incompetent in assisting consumers. Their role in the decision-making event could therefore be described as informative (in terms of providing some of the information that could not be found elsewhere).

The mean positions of actions in scenes 1 and 2 are relatively close together in all of the script protocols, which indicate that these scenes could in fact be closely interlinked.

TABLE 6.11: THEORETICAL SCRIPT FOR THE ACQUISITION OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

TITLE: PURCHASING SCRIPT FOR MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES	
Person schemata: Consumer (male, female); Friends; Family; Salesperson; Cashier	Roles: Consumer; Sales person; Advisor; Technician; Delivery man;
Object schemata: Advertisements; Appliances; Stores; Store display; Instruction manuals; Money; Credit cards; Sales documents; Telephone; Guarantees	
Entry condition: Household needs an appliance Consumer has money	Outcomes: Consumer owns new appliance Consumer has less money Retailer (sales person) has made a sale
SCENE	SCENE ELEMENTS IN TERMS OF STRENGTH OF ACTION
Scene 1 NEEDS ASSESSMENT	Needs assessment in terms of experience, preferences and attitudes is done jointly by husband and wife or by the wife
Scene 2 INFORMATION SEARCH	Written information sources, mainly promotional material such as advertisements are used jointly by husband and wife or by the wife; Personal information, mainly recommendations of friends and family, based on experience is generally obtained by the wife or jointly; Telephone enquiries are made to several stores (salespeople), mainly by the wife or jointly Product specific information such as technical information is gathered mainly by husbands
Scene 3: STORE VISIT	Stores are visited jointly by husband and wife: To look at in-store displays as main sources of product information with assistance of salespeople To compare products in terms of the household's needs, personal knowledge and experience To obtain price information by looking at in-store displays To investigate product specifications by consulting appliance manuals (mainly by the husband)
Scene 4 FINANCIAL DECISIONS	Financial decisions, including affordability, means of payment, who is responsible for payment as well as financial arrangements are generally deliberated jointly by husband and wife in-store or at home
Scene 5: EVALUATION	A shortlist of suitable alternatives is made jointly by husband and wife, Evaluation of product alternatives is done jointly by husband and wife in-store or at home; Stores are compared jointly by both spouses in terms of benefits offered
Scene 6: CHOICE	Final decision of where to purchase the appliance is made jointly by husband and wife A product is chosen jointly by husband and wife
Scene 7: PURCHASE	The purchase transaction is either handled jointly or by the spouse responsible for payment
Scene 8: DELIVERY	Delivery is generally done/organized by the retailer
Scene 9: INSTALLATION	The appliance manual is generally studied mainly by the wife, but may also be consulted by the husband if he installs the appliance himself Installation is done either by a technician or the husband

Scene 3: STORE VISITS

Store visits were mentioned as being very important during the focus-group discussions due to the limited availability of product information to guide decision-making. Consumers also indicated that they do not know of other information sources that could be used and therefore strongly depended on store visits for information. Store visits seem to be a joint effort by husband and wife. Store visits are made to compare prices, to compare appliances in terms of household needs and to enquire about product specifications. Although consumers consider the role of salespeople in the provision of product information very important, it was agreed that salespeople seldom meet the expectations in terms of competence. Their persuasive skills are doubted. At this point retailers and industry were blamed for neglecting this service to consumers.

Scene 4: FINANCIAL DECISIONS

Financial decisions were described as including a discussion of affordability (price limitations), how to pay for the appliance (cash, hire purchase etc), who is to pay for the purchase (husband, wife or jointly) and arranging the financing at a financial institution. Financial decision-making was mentioned prominently after the store visits as a joint action wherein both spouses are involved. More intense discussions of financial decision-making in stage 4 and during the focus-group discussions, indicated finances to be a prominent determinant during the decision-making process due to the amount of money involved and the fact that consumers often have to arrange credit facilities to enable the purchase. Apart from the store visit, deliberation of finances was considered the most important stage of the event. From the arrangement of actions and scenes, it can be deduced that financial discussions are made in terms of needs and information acquired through the store visits and other sources and that the outcome of financial deliberations direct evaluation and choice processes.

Scene 5: EVALUATION

Identified as a less prominent scene than any of the others in terms of the strength of actions mentioned, this is a predominantly shared task where husbands and wives compare, discuss and deliberate the product options and store benefits (such as discounts, delivery and installation) either in-store or at home after the store visits. During focus-group discussions it became clear that consumers do not really experience an evaluation stage: the process should perhaps rather be described as a search for the suitable appliance that includes evaluation along the way instead of a separate stage of evaluation where options are compared and eliminated (evaluation shopping). The fact that all action statements referring to evaluation were mentioned by fewer than 64% of participants, confirm this conclusion. During the focus-group discussions it was concluded that scenes 3, 4 and 5 could take place in-store.

Scene 6: CHOICE

The final choice of product (mentioned by 75% and more of the participants) is generally done jointly by husband and wife. Focus-groups agreed that men often dominate the decision in terms of the amount of money to be spent and technical aspects involved. Women's opinions seem to be stronger in terms of the type of appliance preferred. This coincided with what was indicated during needs assessment. This scene may also include "choice of store", i.e. to select the retailer that offers more benefits.

Scene 7: PURCHASE

The final purchase is generally made jointly or by the spouse who takes responsibility for payment. This confirms a more egalitarian approach to financial decisions in modern households in general.

Scene 8: DELIVERY

The majority indicated the delivery to be the responsibility or a service provided by the retailer and some even indicated the delivery as a pre-condition of store patronage.

Scene 9: INSTALLATION

The installation is done by either the consumer (husband) or the retailer, depending on whether the consumer is able to do it. In the clued recall procedure more than half of the participants mentioned "study of the manual" before installation (probably by those who installed the appliances themselves). Those who mentioned it after installation, were probably those who had the appliances installed by a technician.

From the empirical script it can be concluded that:

An individual with a less-developed script will probably conclude with the more prominent/stronger actions mentioned by 75% and more of respondents, namely:

NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

STORE VISIT TO ACQUIRE INFORMATION;

FINANCIAL DECISIONS;

FINAL DECISION PRODUCT;

PURCHASING;

DELIVERY;

INSTALLATION

These are generally referred to as actions that form the *common core* of the script (Bozinoff, 1982:483).

Someone with a more developed script will have more actions included in the protocol, namely:

- USE OF NON-FORMAL WRITTEN INFORMATION SOURCES (ADVERTISEMENTS, ETC);
- USE OF NON-FORMAL PERSONAL INFORMATION SOURCES (ASKING FRIENDS, PHONING STORES);
- COMPARISON OF PRODUCTS

More experienced consumers will include even more actions, namely:

- visits to different stores to compare retailer benefits;**
- compilation of a shortlist of alternatives;**

use of formal information namely product specifications

CONCLUSION

Any new script that is elicited and generated has to be evaluated and discussed in terms of the basic properties and structural characteristics of a script to determine whether the script can be accepted and acknowledged for further use within the theoretical framework of a discipline. The script generated for the acquisition of major household appliances was thus evaluated.

Properties of the script

In terms of the basic properties of a script (Bower *et al*, 1979 in Bozinoff & Roth, 1983:656 as discussed in Erasmus, 2002), the following can be concluded:

Action statements were elicited in a very uniform and logical way in all four stages of the script-elicitation procedure despite the difference in techniques used to reconstruct the particular purchasing event. The level of agreement calculated for the various scripts confirm a remarkable resemblance. For all but one action (needs assessment), there was no significant difference in the order of the action statements (elements) of the four groups of data (two halves of stage 1; stage 2; stage 3) when they were compared with one another ($p \leq 0.05$). The logical order of the action statements in the final script should also be noted. Keeping in mind that participants were allowed to react spontaneously with minimum guidance as to what were to be included in their reports, the end results strongly indicate the existence of script knowledge in memory. Despite differences in the various elicitation techniques in terms of approach and application, there was little fluctuation in content when the results of the various stages were compared. In fact, after implementation of the written elicitation technique in stage 1, no additional action statements were added as a result of the other techniques that were used. The number of action statements identified during the first three stages shows minor difference (17, 15 and 16 statements respectively) (Table 6.10).

Script norms (person, object, decision-making schemata) for the specific event were easily identifiable except for the elicitation of role schemata that posed some practical problems. This can be ascribed to the unstructured way of script-elicitation, which probably resulted in participants' forgetting to specify roles during their description of actions of the event. Participants had no problem in identifying role actions during stages 3 and 5 when they were very specifically reminded to elaborate. The same script norms were evoked through all of the first three script-elicitation techniques and a specific order of actions/scenes was thereafter determined. Except for one action, needs assessment, that was indicated a second action in stage 1, there were no significant differences in the positions of activities in the various script protocols ($p \leq 0,05$) found for the various elicitation procedures.

Action sequences were spontaneously **grouped into scenes/elements** (Table 6.10) where the more prominent/stronger actions could be used to specify scene headers. Weaker activities were in fact activities that depended upon the stronger actions for occurring (e.g. *make a shortlist of alternatives* as part of the scene *evaluation of alternatives*). Scenes in the final script form a logical order considering the five basic steps of consumer decision-making (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:444). Main concepts were easily discernible and when analyzed on their own can be regarded as actions *that always take place* (Den Uyl & Van Oostendorp, 1980:278).

Script elements were organized in a common order: no significant difference in the position of activities, thus the order in the script protocols in the first three script protocols ($p \leq 0,05$) were found. A final integrated script protocol could be reached without major effort. This aspect was put to test in the fourth script-elicitation procedure, and once again, participants had no problem to reconstruct elements of the event (either before or after the specified scene) in the same order as before (Table 6.10).

From the data generated, it can be concluded that - although not conscious of scripted activities - participants succeeded in reconstructing the acquisition process of household appliances in a very uniform, ordered way, when encouraged to do so. Some elicitation techniques did evoke more detail (in written procedures participants often included detail such as poor assistance of salespeople, delivery problems and detail surrounding financial arrangements) (Bozinoff & Roth, 1983:656). Despite the fact that a few participants acted hesitantly when they received their instructions when introduced to script-elicitation sessions and indicated that they needed time to think before they responded, they were very co-operative, produced valuable responses and were very willing to take part in follow-up procedures.

Structural characteristics of a script

When judging the structural characteristics of the script (Bower *et al*, 1979 in Bozinoff & Roth, 1983:656 as discussed in Erasmus, 2002), the following can be concluded:

Only **generic actions** are contained in the script: this can be concluded from the limited number of scenes and activities in the final script as well as the fact that the activities as formulated and indicated are very basic in nature.

The script **possesses a set quality**: when confronted with a single scene in the fourth script-elicitation stage, participants experienced no problem to complete the script even though the level of abstraction they were confronted with, was somewhere near the middle of the script.

A strong **temporal sequence** of script activities was identified through the correlation of the sequence of actions/scenes in the different script-elicitation procedures. This was confirmed in the focus-group discussions: participants found it unthinkable to go to the store without deliberating household needs and found it absolutely necessary to organize finances before making a final decision regarding the product.

A **hierarchical structure** was evident (Smith & Houston, 1986:504). Elements of the script protocols were almost spontaneously grouped into scenes in a very logical order that showed some resemblance to the basic flow of stages of a consumer decision-making process. No problem was experienced in identifying scene headers or to group and arrange scene actions of variable strength that interconnected as logic elements of a specific scene.

Based on the level of agreement of the responses elicited during the various stages, the script-elicitation procedure can be regarded successful in eliciting a script for the specific event. With reference to the script norms, it can be concluded that the relevant person, object and decision-making schemata were elicited and indicated without hesitation. More attention should however be given to the elicitation of role schemata. Script elements were eventually arranged in a logical sequential order. Because of the level of agreement between the various script protocols (stages 1 to 4) the generation of the final script was based on logical conclusions. This qualifies the script for the acquisition of major household appliances as a so-called strong script (Bozinoff & Roth, 1983:656) where actions are clearly specified and arranged in the minds of experienced consumers.

The attempt to elicit and generate a purchasing script, more specifically a script for obtaining major household appliances within the consumer decision-making context, proved successful. The selection, combination and order of performing the various script-elicitation techniques proved to

be successful in eliciting the relevant schemata and in generating a script that adheres to the basic properties and structural characteristics of a script. More attention should however be given to the elicitation of role schemata during stages 1 and 4 by providing a specially designed sheet instead of blank paper. This particular study fortunately - as a result of the selection and specific ordering of script-elicitation techniques - provided the opportunity to remedy problems during subsequent stages. The stage 3 discrimination technique and the consequent focus-group discussions were used to clarify uncertainties regarding role schemata.

Although - in retrospect - it was determined that all the relevant script actions were already identified in stage 1, the successive stages were necessary for triangulation purposes and to elicit role schemata, which did not surface clearly during stages 1 and 2. The specific order of script-elicitation techniques is recommended for future research. Leigh and Rethans' (1983:669) observation that the process will eventually determine the length of the script is hereby confirmed: the written technique succeeded in eliciting all the relevant actions while consequent techniques were useful to elaborate on specific aspects and to design visual stimuli for discrimination purposes. Although the stage 4-elicitation procedure did not change or contribute additional information to the information that had already been generated through the preceding procedures, it did confirm the reconstruction of action sequences from any entry level in the script to confirm the structural characteristics of a script. The focus-group discussions were vibrant and supported the information collected during the previous stages. It was found to be a satisfactory technique to discuss and debate role behavior.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the format and content of the script be considered as a representation of the purchasing event and may be used to anticipate or reflect consumer decision-making behaviour for the acquisition of major household appliances. The fact that a script represents the portrayal of the event from the view of the consumer, provides the opportunity to

- identify areas of concern (limited use of objective information due to unavailability, ignorance; in-store facilities) that need to be addressed to improve the process as well as the outcome of decisions,
- properly structure and make available product information in the form and format that address consumers' - both men and women - needs,
- sensitize retail towards consumers' needs so that in-store activities could be used as a more satisfactory purchasing experience,
- direct promotional effort sensibly and effectively to educate, inform and limit uncertainty and doubt,
- design educational programmes that would in the long and short term result in more responsible consumer decision-making behaviour.

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