

**An investigation of the interplay of consumers' appraisals, emotions and complaint behaviour concerning dissatisfactory major household appliances in Botswana**

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**An investigation of the interplay of cognitive appraisal, emotions and complaint behaviour concerning dissatisfactory major household appliances in Botswana**

by  
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**Supervisor: Dr S Donoghue  
Co-Supervisor: Prof HM de Klerk**

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*This dissertation is dedicated to all the respondents and the Botswana Government who made this study a success through their shared experiences and the monetary aspect.*



## DECLARATION

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I, Beauty Isaac, hereby declare that the dissertation hereby submitted by me is my own work for a Master's degree in Consumer Science at the University of Pretoria, and has not previously been submitted for a degree at this university or any other university. It is my own work in design and execution and all reference material contained herein has been acknowledged.

.....

**BEAUTY ISAAC**

.....

**DATE**

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## ABSTRACT

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### **An investigation of the interplay of cognitive appraisal, emotions and complaint behaviour concerning dissatisfactory major household appliances in Botswana**

by

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To gain empirical evidence of the nature of major household appliances' performance failures, and of how dissatisfied consumers cognitively appraise product failure and their subsequent experiences in handling the negative event, the study explored by means of a survey the experiences of 200 female consumers in Gaborone, who had experienced dissatisfaction with any major household appliance within a prior four-year recall period. A convenience sampling technique was employed where pre-screened respondents completed a self-administered questionnaire.

The results of the study show that respondents clearly differentiated their expectations concerning the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of their specific appliances. When linking the theory on perceived quality and expectancy disconfirmation, it was discovered that respondents' expectations were disconfirmed due to the performance failure of their specific appliances. The performance failure was perceived in three distinct ways: functional performance failure, symbolic performance failure, and the combined functional and symbolic performance failure, rather than the usual, formal functional performance failure only. Very to extreme dissatisfaction were experienced and the product failure was appraised as stressful, leading to respondents feeling very to extremely stressed. The female respondents attributed blame for the poor performance of their major household appliance more to external sources like retailers/manufacturers than they internalised blame to themselves, the appliance or other people. They also believed that the party they held responsible for the poor performance could have prevented the problem.

Due to the performance failure of their specific appliances, the respondents experienced various emotional responses (e.g. anger, shame, guilt, surprise, sadness and frustration) and of varying intensities. Significantly, more respondents felt very to extremely angry, sad, surprised or frustrated. Respondents did not experience high levels of shame and guilt. These emotions necessitated some coping strategies in the form of complaint actions. Respondents who felt very to extremely angry took formal complaint action (i.e. contacted the retailer to obtain redress). Respondents who experienced frustration significantly engaged more in problem-focused coping. Predominantly, female respondents engaged in problem-focused coping strategies that were confrontational and were aimed at external sources like retailers/manufacturers. Blame for the performance failure of appliances was directed more to retailers/manufacturers than to any other party like the self, other people or the appliance. Hence, a significant difference existed between the various coping strategies and attributing blame to the retailer/manufacturer, where respondents engaged more in problem-focused coping, than in any other coping strategies like emotion-focused or avoidance coping.

These findings have both salient and practical implications especially in Botswana context, which were pointed out to the retailers/manufacturers, educators, consumer protection organisations, policy makers and consumer scientists, to help consumers to function well in the marketplace.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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DECLARATION .....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	II
ABSTRACT .....	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VI
LIST OF TABLES .....	XI
LIST OF FIGURES .....	XIII
LIST OF ADDENDA.....	XIV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	XV
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION .....	1
1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND .....	3
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES.....	4
1.4 UNIT OF ANALYSIS, SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD .....	6
1.5 PRESENTATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION .....	7
CHAPTER 2: PRODUCT EVALUATION AND CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR .....	8
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	8
2.2 PRE-PURCHASE AND POST-PURCHASE EVALUATION OF PRODUCTS .....	8
2.2.1 Pre-purchase evaluation of product performance in terms of the theory on perceived quality .....	9
2.2.2 Post-purchase evaluation of products in terms of the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm.....	10
2.2.2.1 Expectations about product performance .....	11
2.2.2.2 Product performance .....	11
2.2.2.3 Dissatisfaction outcomes.....	13
2.3 CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR (CCB) .....	13
2.3.1 Conceptualising consumer complaint behaviour.....	14
2.3.2 Models of consumer complaint behaviour.....	14
2.3.2.1 Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty typology .....	14
2.3.2.2 Day and Landon's taxonomy of complaint behaviour.....	15

2.4	IMPLICATIONS OF COMPLAINING FOR THE MARKETPLACE.....	17
2.5	CONCLUSION .....	18
CHAPTER 3: COGNITIVE APPRAISAL THEORY – A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE		
FOR RESEARCHING CONSUMERS' EMOTIONS AND COMPLAINT		
BEHAVIOUR .....		
		20
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	20
3.2	COGNITIVE APPRAISAL THEORY EXPLAINED.....	20
3.2.1	The interplay of cognitions and emotional responses .....	21
3.2.1.1	Conceptualising emotions.....	22
3.2.1.2	Emotions and stress .....	22
3.3	COPING STRATEGIES/BEHAVIOURS.....	23
3.4	cognitive appraisal theory in a consumer behaviour context.....	23
3.4.1	Problem-focused coping .....	25
3.4.2	Emotion-focused coping .....	25
3.4.3	Avoidance coping .....	26
3.5	IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY.....	26
3.6	CONCLUSION .....	27
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....		
		29
4.1	INTRODUCTION .....	29
4.2	Conceptual framework, problem statement and objectives .....	29
4.2.1	Conceptual framework.....	29
4.2.2	Problem statement and objectives.....	31
4.3	RESEARCH STRATEGY, APPROACH AND DESIGN.....	33
4.4	SAMPLING PLAN.....	33
4.4.1	Unit of analysis .....	33
4.4.2	Sampling technique and sample size.....	35
4.5	CHOICE DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION OF DATA COLLECTION	
METHODS .....		35
4.5.1	Overview of methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour and	
cognitive appraisals of emotion.....		35
4.5.1.1	Methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour .....	35
4.5.1.2	Methodologies for studying cognitive appraisal theory.....	36
4.5.2	Measuring instrument .....	36
4.5.2.1	The structure of the questionnaire.....	38
4.5.3	Procedures for administering the questionnaire.....	38
4.6	Data analysis.....	39

4.6.1	Coding and capturing of the data.....	39
4.7	OPERATIONALISATION.....	39
4.7.1	Explanation of statistical methods.....	41
4.7.1.1	Principal (exploratory) Factor analysis.....	41
4.7.1.2	Z-Test for equal proportions .....	42
4.7.1.3	Multiple Response analysis .....	42
4.7.1.4	Fisher's exact test.....	42
4.7.1.5	Chi-square significance test.....	42
4.8	Quality of the data .....	43
4.8.1	Validity.....	43
4.8.1.1	Theoretical validity.....	43
4.8.1.2	Measurement validity.....	43
4.8.1.3	Inferential validity.....	44
4.8.2	Reliability issues.....	44
4.8.3	Ethical issues .....	45
4.8.4	Data presentation .....	45
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH RESULTS.....		47
5.1	INTRODUCTION .....	47
5.2	DEMOGRAPHIC AND OTHER DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE.....	47
5.2.1	Demographic characteristics of the sample .....	47
5.2.2	Major household appliances causing the most dissatisfaction .....	50
5.3	RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 1 .....	51
5.3.1	Exploratory factor analysis of the functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions that play a role in female consumers' quality perception of major household appliances.....	52
5.4	RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 2 .....	53
5.4.1	Exploratory factor analysis of functional and/or symbolic performance failure .....	53
5.4.2	Analysis of open question.....	55
5.5	RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 3 .....	57
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS .....		80
6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	80
6.2	FEMALE CONSUMERS' QUALITY PERCEPTIONS OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES IN TERMS OF FUNCTIONAL AND/OR SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS.....	81

6.3	FEMALE CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE FAILURE .....	82
6.3.1	Dissatisfaction resulting from the negative disconfirmation of female consumers' product performance expectations.....	84
6.4	FEMALE CONSUMERS' COGNITIVE APPRAISAL OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE PERFORMANCE FAILURES .....	85
6.4.1	RESPONDENTS' ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE PERFORMANCE FAILURES .....	85
6.4.2	FEMALE CONSUMERS' LEVEL OF STRESS EXPERIENCED CONCERNING THE FUNCTIONAL AND/OR SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FAILURE OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES .....	86
6.4.3	Emotional responses following the appraisal of major appliance performance failures.....	87
6.4.4	Coping strategies, in terms of complaint behaviour actions, concerning the performance failure of major household appliances.....	90
6.4.5	The role of emotions in the coping methods employed concerning the performance failure of major household appliances.....	92
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		98
7.1	INTRODUCTION.....	98
7.2	CONCLUSIONS .....	98
7.2.1	Expectation of product performance (functional and/or symbolic) based on the perceptions of quality of major household appliances .....	98
7.2.2	The nature of the actual product performance failure (functional and/or symbolic) that resulted in dissatisfaction of female consumers with their major household appliances .....	99
7.2.3	The role of cognitive appraisal in dissatisfied female consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances .....	100
7.3	EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH .....	102
7.3.1	Quality of the results.....	102
7.3.1.1	Theoretical validity.....	102
7.3.1.2	Measurement validity.....	102
7.3.1.3	Inferential validity.....	103
7.3.1.4	Reliability .....	103
7.4	CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY.....	104
7.5	IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	105
7.6	SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	109



REFERENCES ..... 110

## LIST OF TABLES

---

TABLE 3.1: COPING STRATEGIES AND COPING METHODS/BEHAVIOURS INVOLVED (Donoghue, 2008) .....	26
TABLE 4.1: QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE .....	38
TABLE 4.2: OPERATIONALISATION IN TERMS OF OBJECTIVES, SUB-OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS AND STATISTICAL METHODS .....	40
TABLE 5.1: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS FACTOR AND THE FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS FACTOR.....	53
TABLE 5.2: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE COMBINED FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FAILURE FACTOR, SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FAILURE FACTOR AND THE FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE FAILURE FACTOR .....	55
TABLE 5.3: DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT HAPPENED/WENT WRONG IN TERMS OF INDICATORS FOR FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PRODUCT PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS .....	56
TABLE 5.4: LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION EXPERIENCED WHEN THE APPLIANCES WERE FAULTY OR PERFORMED POORLY .....	57
TABLE 5.5: INTENSITY OF STRESS EXPERIENCED WHEN THE APPLIANCES WERE FAULTY OR PERFORMED POORLY.....	60
TABLE 5.6: INTENSITY OF EMOTION EXPERIENCED FOLLOWING THE APPLIANCE'S FAULTY OR POOR PERFORMANCE.....	61
TABLE 5.7: ACTIONS TAKEN VERSUS NO ACTION TAKEN.....	63

TABLE 5.8: COPING STRATEGIES IN TERMS OF COPING ACTIONS/BEHAVIOURS .....	64
TABLE 5.9: OTHER REASONS FOR CONTACTING THE RETAILER/ MANUFACTURER THAN SEEKING REDRESS .....	65
TABLE 5.10: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION.....	67
TABLE 5.11: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION.....	70
TABLE 5.12: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION.....	72
TABLE 5.13: COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE .....	75
TABLE 5.14: COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE .....	77
TABLE 5.15: COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE .....	79

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

FIGURE 2.1: THE POST-PURCHASE EVALUATION PROCESS IN TERMS OF THE CONFIRMATION/DISCONFIRMATION PARADIGM (LOUDON & DELLA BITTA, 1993:579) .....	11
FIGURE 2.2: TAXONOMY OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR (DAY & LANDON, 1977:432).....	16
FIGURE 2.3: TAXONOMY OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR RESPONSES (SINGH, 1988:101) .....	17
FIGURE 4.1: SCHEMATIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	30
FIGURE 5.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS .....	48
FIGURE 5.2: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS .....	48
FIGURE 5.3: MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS .....	49
FIGURE 5.4: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY LOCATION AREA IN GABORONE CITY .....	50
FIGURE 5.5: DISTRIBUTION OF THE MOST DISSATISFACTORY APPLIANCES .....	51
FIGURE 5.6: DISTRIBUTION OF ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY .....	58
FIGURE 5.7: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR APPLIANCE FAILURE AND ASSUMED PREVENTION OF THE POOR PERFORMANCE BY PARTY BLAMED.....	59



## LIST OF ADDENDA

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ADDENDUM A: LETTER OF CONSENT .....	124
ADDENDUM B: QUESTIONNAIRE .....	126

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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- CCB** Consumer Complaint Behaviour
- NDP 9** National Development Plan 9 of Botswana
- SADC** Southern African Development Community
- SPSS** Statistical package for social sciences
- PAR** Performance Audit Report

# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

---

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The rapidly changing business landscape in Botswana due to market liberalisation, open market principles and promotion of direct investments, has led to an influx in the number of chain shops, departmental and discount stores. These offer a wide range of products (including major household appliances), especially in cities and towns (*Performance Audit Report, No. 5, 2008*; *National Development Plan 9, 2003*; <http://www.gov.bw/index2>). Hence, sophisticated consumer products, which were commonly used in developed countries, have found their footing in third world, sub-Saharan countries with emerging economies such as Botswana. According to Sigwele (2007:3), the demand for manufactured goods (including major household appliances) is increasing in Botswana, especially as the economy is structurally transforming from being the poorest country at independence in 1966 to a middle-income (emerging) economy with an annual economic growth rate of an average of 6.4%. For the past two years, it has however declined to 4.6% due to the global economic recession (*The National Budget Speech, February 2010*). This is also reflected in the *External Trade Statistics Digest (2008)* and *Botswana External Trade Monthly Digest Report (2010)*, which indicated that machinery and electrical equipment (including major household appliances) was the second largest import category after the foods, beverages and tobacco category, respectively representing 15.8% and 17.5% of all imported goods.

Current trends now show that urban households which have relatively higher incomes and better access to most energy sources have a higher connection rate of electricity at 43%, compared to 18% in rural areas (*Energy Statistics Report, 2008*; *Household Income & Expenditure Survey, 2004*), implying that electrification of urban households is well defined, hence appealing to consumers to acquire sophisticated appliances.

For the purpose of this study, major household appliances would include kitchen and laundry appliances, namely refrigerators, freezers, ovens, stoves, microwave ovens, washing machines, tumble-dryers and dishwashers. These appliances are generally used as time saving devices, to reduce physical workloads and to increase efficiency. However, in addition to the physical benefits provided by these products, they are highly visible and have become social status symbols (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004; Solomon, 2007:14) that indicate improved

socio-economic status and reflect newly acquired lifestyles. Therefore, major electrical household appliances could be said to have both functional and symbolic performance properties (Holtz in Kachale, 2005:2; Donoghue, De Klerk & Ehlers, 2008).

Before purchasing and consuming major electrical household appliances, consumers form expectations regarding the performance of such appliances, based on their perceptions of its perceived quality. For instance, major household appliances are expected to be durable and to perform their tasks excellently, especially due to the high price tag. Uninformed consumers many times judge the quality of the product based on the symbolic or expressive attributes (e.g. price, brand name, style and aesthetics), as these are mostly visible at point of sale rather than the functional or instrumental attributes, which are latent at point of sale until after the use of the product (Swan & Combs, 1976; Brown & Rice, 2001:53). However, many appliances fail to meet consumers' quality expectations during the post-purchase use situation causing consumer dissatisfaction (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). For example, Botswana's Consumer Protection Office's monthly report on the management of consumer complaints (September 2008) indicated that 44.0% of the total number of complaints recorded in the two major cities of Gaborone and Francistown were related to dissatisfactory electrical equipment (including major electrical household appliances).

It is generally accepted in consumer complaint behaviour theory that highly priced, complex products with a relatively long life expectancy generate a higher incidence of formal complaints (Day & Landon, 1977:432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). However, it has been found that relatively fewer formal complaints are made than would be expected from expressed levels of dissatisfaction, implying that complaint statistics do not provide a true reflection of the degree of dissatisfaction that consumers experience (Dolinsky, 1994; Tronvoll, 2007). Additionally, complaint statistics typically report on the kinds of defective products that cause dissatisfaction and the nature of complainants' complaint actions. However, the interpretation of the above-mentioned is meaningless without looking at complainants' cognitions and emotions underlying their complaint behaviour. This is especially relevant to emerging economies with culturally diverse populations, where the meanings that some consumers attach to specific consumption outcomes and their accompanying emotions and behaviours may differ from those of consumers from more sophisticated consumer societies.

Although an enormous amount of research has been done in the respected field of consumer complaint behaviour internationally, and a few studies in South Africa, in particular, on consumers' dissatisfaction and their complaint behaviour concerning product failures, no such studies could be found in Botswana (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Donoghue *et al.*,

2008). In Botswana consumer behaviour research has focused on decision-making, consumer education and purchasing behaviour (Makela & Peters, 2004; Bhatti & Srivastava, 2003; Mberengwa, 2007). Therefore, acknowledging the basic sentiments of consumerism, there is a need for intensive consumer surveys in Botswana focusing on consumers' post-purchase behaviour, specifically their complaint behaviour. By studying consumers' complaint behaviour following their appraisal of the performance failure of major electrical household appliances, retailers/manufacturers will gain a better understanding of consumers' reasoning concerning product performance failure as well as their emotional responses and subsequent consumer complaint behaviour. This will enable them to create more realistic expectations for product performance, to improve products to minimise product dissatisfaction, to handle complaints in a more effective manner and to retain customer loyalty. Additionally, this will aid educators, consumer protection organisations, policy makers and consumer scientists to educate, protect and empower consumers to function well in the marketplace.

## **1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

It is generally accepted by marketing and consumer researchers that individuals consume products and brands for their symbolic properties as much as for the functional benefits (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004:2; Kachale, 2005; Solomon, 2007:14). Before purchasing and consuming products, consumers form expectations regarding the functional and symbolic performance of such products based on their perceptions of perceived quality (Swan & Combs, 1976). According to the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983), consumers will evaluate a product's performance (according to their specific expectations) after or while using it. When product performance does not meet the consumers' expectations (i.e. when a performance failure occurs or when the product performs poorly), negative disconfirmation occurs, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction. According to consumer complaint behaviour theory, consumers may engage in behavioural and non-behavioural responses to resolve dissatisfaction (Singh, 1988; Crié, 2003). As such, consumers may engage in private complaint action (i.e. switching brands or retailers, boycotting the type of product or warning family and friends), and/or public action (i.e. seeking redress directly from the retailer/manufacturer, complaining to the retailer/manufacturer, a public consumer protection agency, a voluntary organisation or the media, or taking legal action against the retailer or manufacturer). Alternatively, consumers may refrain from action by rationalising and forgetting about the problem (Day & Landon, 1977:229-432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995).

In the context of cognitive appraisal theory, a dissatisfying marketplace experience (such as product failure) represents a potentially stressful event to be evaluated via the cognitive appraisal process (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Negative emotions (e.g. anger, worry, disappointment, irritation, guilt and shame) associated with evaluation of product failure, vary according to the attribution of responsibility/accountability for the product failure (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:143-146; Bougie, Pieters & Zeenlenberg, 2003; Mattsson, Lemmink & McColl, 2004). Consumers might engage in three types of coping strategies (i.e. problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping) to deal with the psychological stress and the resulting emotions. These coping strategies are associated with specific consumer complaint behaviour actions. Behavioural options where the consumer deals directly with the dissatisfying experience (i.e. complaining directly to manufacturers and retailers (second parties) and to third parties (i.e., a public consumer protection agency, voluntary organisation, ombudsman or court) are associated with the problem-focused coping strategy. Actions that address the consumer's emotional state and reaction to the problem rather than the dissatisfying experience as such (i.e. telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the stressful experience to gain social support) are associated with the emotion-focused coping strategy. Behaviour that leads to the overall withdrawal from the situation (i.e. taking no action, stopping use of the brand name and stopping support to the retailer where the product was purchased) is associated with avoidance coping (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur, Moschis & Lee, 1999; Forrester & Maute, 2001; Donoghue, 2008).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES**

Bearing the foregoing introduction and justification and theoretical background in mind, the following research problem was formulated:

As an emerging economy, Botswana has experienced rapid changes in its business landscape due to its vibrant economy, trade liberalisation and open markets in the past two decades. This has led to the influx of various businesses with diverse new products such as major household appliances, of which many consumers have limited experience and product knowledge (*Botswana's National Development Plan 9, 2003*; Kachale, 2005; Lebani, 2007; Erasmus & Lebani, 2007; Sigwele, 2007). Consumers who know what to expect of their products in terms of performance might be better able to interpret the causes for product failures, compared to consumers who are not exactly sure of what to expect of their appliance (Shim, 1996; Erasmus, 1998; Kachale, 2005). Due to the high price tags attached to these appliances and their perceived sophistication, it can safely be postulated that consumers form high (and even unrealistic) expectations with regard to functional and/or

symbolic product performance. Nevertheless, it is evidenced in literature and the statistical complaint data by the *Botswana Consumer Protection unit, September 2008* that major household appliances generate higher incidences of complaints (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). It is not known how female consumers in Botswana appraise major household appliance failures, what emotions they experience following their appraisals and the specific coping strategies/ behaviours they employ to deal with the stressful situation. Female consumers are stereotypically considered the caregivers in a household context and the main operators of major household appliances. According to Kring (2000), gender differences influence post-purchase evaluations and behaviour in consumption settings.

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

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Objective 1       | To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions that play a role in female consumers' quality perception of major household appliances  |
| Objective 2       | To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance failure causing female consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major electrical household appliances   |
| Sub-objective 2.1 | To explore and describe female consumers' degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances  |
| Objective 3       | To explore and describe the role of cognitive appraisal in dissatisfied female consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances  |
| Sub-objective 3.1 | To explore and describe dissatisfied female consumers' attribution of responsibility for the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances  |
| Sub-objective 3.2 | To explore and describe female consumers' level of stress experienced concerning the functional/and or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances  |
| Sub-objective 3.3 | To explore and describe the emotions that are elicited in dissatisfied female consumers during the cognitive appraisal process concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances                             |
| Sub-objective 3.4 | To explore and describe the coping strategies in terms of the coping methods/behaviours (consumer complaint responses) that dissatisfied female consumers engage in concerning the functional and/or performance failure of major household appliances |

- Sub-objective 3.5 To explore and describe the relationship between dissatisfied female consumers' emotions that are elicited during the cognitive appraisal process and their complaint behaviour (coping behaviours) concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances
- Sub-objective 3.6 To describe the coping strategies in terms of coping methods/behaviours that dissatisfied female consumers engage in concerning performance failure of major household appliances when blame is attributed to a specific party

#### **1.4 UNIT OF ANALYSIS, SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

The unit of analysis for this study was female consumers older than 21 years of age, who resided in Gaborone, Botswana, and who had experienced dissatisfaction concerning the performance failure of major household appliances.

A convenience sampling technique was employed. A total of 200 self-administered questionnaires were collected. Upon using a screening question to determine whether respondents had experienced dissatisfaction with the performance of their appliances, a self-administered questionnaire was administered to dissatisfied respondents only (Addendum B). The questionnaire was divided into four content sections (Sections A – D) to facilitate the eventual processing of the data. In Section A, respondents had to provide demographic information. In Section B, respondents' expectations for product performance and their evaluation of actual performance (performance failure) in terms of functional and symbolic performance dimensions were determined. Respondents were asked to provide information concerning any of their dissatisfactory major household appliances. Section C dealt with respondents' emotional reactions to actual performance. They were asked to indicate the degree of dissatisfaction, anger, shame, guilt, surprise, sadness, frustration and stress experienced concerning the appliance's faulty or poor performance, by crossing an appropriate number on four-point response scales. Additionally, respondents had to indicate whom they mostly blamed for the product failure and whether the performance failure could have been prevented. Section D dealt with respondents behavioural actions (coping methods/behaviours) taken in response to their dissatisfaction.

## 1.5 PRESENTATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is presented and structured as follows in seven (7) chapters:

- Chapter 1: Background to the study; this chapter gives the reader a comprehensive background of the place of study, the problem statement, as well as the purpose and limitations of the study.
- Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and conceptualisation; a detailed but summarised literature review is given, focusing on consumers' pre-purchase and post-purchase evaluation of products, the theory of perceived quality, product performance, factors influencing consumers' perception of quality, consumer complaint behaviour.
- Chapter 3: Theoretical perspective; the cognitive appraisal theory, which is a road map for the study, is explained, its components articulated and applied to the study. The chapter concludes with the implications for the study.
- Chapter 4: Research methodology; the conceptual framework and objectives of the study are outlined, the problem statement is re-stated, followed by overviews of other researchers that used the same methodology; also the data collection procedures, operationalisation and data analysis are discussed. The chapter concludes with data presentation for the next chapter.
- Chapter 5: Research results; in this chapter, the results of the study are presented in pie charts, histograms, bar charts and tables. The presentation of the research results follows the research objectives sequence, which consequently follows the conceptual framework sequence.
- Chapter 6: Discussion and interpretation of results; the results are discussed in relation to the findings and existing literature, in the sequence of the objectives and sub-objectives.
- Chapter 7: Conclusions, evaluation and recommendations; the chapter gives the conclusions and implications of the findings to consumers, manufacturers, retailers, consumer protection agencies, policy makers and consumer facilitators, and concludes with recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRODUCT EVALUATION AND CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

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#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the theoretical background for the study. It outlines the main concepts for the conceptual framework. The first part deals with the pre-purchase evaluation of products in terms of the theory on perceived product quality and the post-purchase evaluation of product performance in terms of the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm. The second part focuses on the expectations about product performance, product performance, dissatisfaction outcomes and definition of consumer complaint behaviour and models of consumer complaint behaviour. The third part provides the implications of complaining for the marketplace. Lastly, a conclusion is provided.

#### 2.2 PRE-PURCHASE AND POST-PURCHASE EVALUATION OF PRODUCTS

The concepts of perceived quality and consumer satisfaction encompass the comparative process of evaluation of products against some initial expectations and actual product performance (Swan & Combs, 1976; Mooradian & Olver, 1997). Whereas much of perceived quality research on products focuses on criteria resulting in the positive or negative evaluation of a product at point of purchase, consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction studies of products tend to focus on positive or negative evaluation by the consumer following purchase and use (Fiore & Damhorst, 1992; Brown & Rice, 2001:52-53; Soscia, 2007). Many of the same factors used as selection criteria and in the evaluation of quality are the product characteristics requisite to consumer satisfaction. Since perceived quality includes tentative estimations of performance properties, consumers probably use judgements of quality to predict satisfaction following purchase and extended use of the product (Fiore & Damhorst, 1992; Brown & Rice, 2001:48).

### **2.2.1 Pre-purchase evaluation of product performance in terms of the theory on perceived quality**

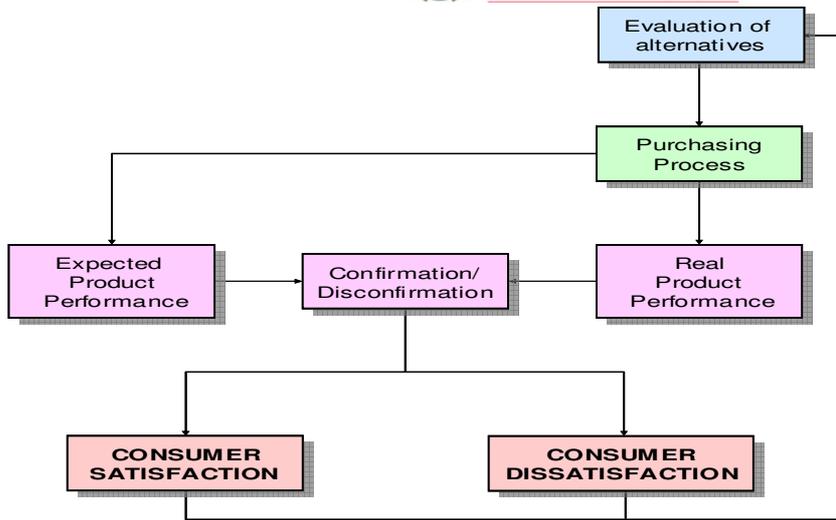
The quality of a product depends on its physical and performance features. Consumers purchase products with specific physical features that they believe will fulfil their performance expectations (Brown & Rice, 2001:47-48). For example, a consumer may choose an appliance made of stainless steel (a physical feature), because stainless steel typically produces lustrous beauty and durability (desirable performance). A product's physical features (intrinsic attributes) provide its tangible (physical) form and composition. Intrinsic attributes cannot be changed without changing the product itself (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Brown & Rice, 2001:48). The intrinsic attributes for major household appliances would inter alia include the power of the motor, the number of programmes, the materials used for manufacturing, the construction and design of the appliance (Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998). The physical features of a product determine its functional and aesthetic performance. Functional performance relates to the utility (usefulness) and durability of the product. Aesthetic performance relates to the appearance (attractiveness) of the product that may also fulfil the user's emotional and cognitive needs, such as wanting to impress others (Brown & Rice, 2001:48-49).

At the point of consumption, most intrinsic attributes can be evaluated and therefore become accessible as quality indicators (Zeithaml in Kassarijian & Robertson, 1991:36). Consumers can easily evaluate a product's aesthetic performance at the point of purchase just by looking at it. However, they cannot always accurately evaluate a product's functional performance at the point of purchase, especially not consumers who have not been socialised in the use of the product (Brown & Rice, 2001:47). For example, consumers do not know how long a washing machine will last until they purchase and use it. They may try to predict functional performance based on the design, materials or construction of the product, especially if they have had experiences with similar products (Erasmus, Makgopa & Kachale, 2005). In situations where the consumer has little or no experience with the product, or when the intrinsic product attributes indicating quality are too difficult for the consumer to evaluate, the consumer relies on extrinsic attributes. (i.e. product-related attributes that do not form part of the physical product itself, and that can be altered without changing the product), such as price, brand name, country of origin, image and reputation of retailer, packaging and level of advertising warranty, as surrogates for intrinsic product attributes (Zeithaml in Kassarijian & Robertson, 1991:36; Forsythe, Presley & Caton, 1996:299; Brown & Rice, 2001:49). Hence, consumers utilise both intrinsic and extrinsic information clues during product evaluation in determining their perception of product quality at the point of purchase (Selnes, 1993; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Makgopa, 2005; Erasmus *et al.*, 2005).

It should however be noted that expensive products and those that are highly visible, in many cases become social symbols that indicate improved socio-economic status and reflect a newly acquired lifestyle (Kachale, 2005; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008). For example, major household appliances may be used as symbols of sophistication, wealth and prestige – implying that consumers may evaluate these products in ways that will enhance their sense of belonging, self-expression and identity (El Aoud & Neeley, 2008). The interactions with others through such “symbols” enable people to predict their own and others’ behaviours, implying that consumers may choose products providing symbolic meanings desirable for themselves and the others in their social and cultural contexts (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Tsai, 2005).

### **2.2.2 Post-purchase evaluation of products in terms of the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm**

Consumer behaviour researchers agree that prior to purchasing and consuming products, consumers form expectations regarding the performance of such products in a particular use-situation. In addition, they believe that after or while using the product, consumers evaluate its perceived performance in terms of their initial expectations regarding the performance of the product. Consumers’ evaluations of the perceived discrepancy between their prior expectations and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption, is generally referred to in the academic community as the disconfirmation of expectation paradigm (Mooradian & Olver, 1997:382; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Soscia, 2007). See Figure 2.1. The term (dis)confirmation can be understood as a (mis)match between the consumer’s level of expectations towards a product and the actual/real performance of the product (Chea & Luo, 2008). Whereas confirmation occurs when a product performs as expected, leading to satisfaction, negative disconfirmation occurs when the actual product performance is below the prior expectations for product performance (i.e. when a performance failure occurs or when the product performs poorly), leading to dissatisfaction.



**FIGURE 2.1: THE POST-PURCHASE EVALUATION PROCESS IN TERMS OF THE CONFIRMATION/DISCONFIRMATION PARADIGM (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:579)**

### 2.2.2.1 Expectations about product performance

When purchasing a product, the consumer makes predictions (forms expectations) concerning its future performance, based on the consumer's perceptions of product quality. Expectations can therefore be defined as beliefs, a pre-conditioned set of predictions about expected/anticipated performance (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008:41). Expectations about product performance (whether functional or symbolic) provide consumers with a platform on which to base their future judgements of actual product performance during or after use. These expectations could be either realistic or unrealistic, depending on personality factors, experience gained with products, and information and knowledge acquired about products (Laufer, 2002).

### 2.2.2.2 Product performance

Expectations about product performance are based on beliefs or pre-existing ideas about what a product's functional (instrumental) and/or symbolic (expressive) performance should be (Laufer, 2002; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008). Whereas functional performance relates to the physical functioning of the product, i.e. the ability of the product to perform its functional or utilitarian purposes, a product's symbolic performance relates to what the product does for, or symbolises to, the consumer, which is derived from the consumer's response to the physical product (Brown & Rice, 2001:38-39; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Donoghue, 2008:18). It is generally accepted by marketing and consumer researchers that individuals consume products and brands for their symbolic properties as much as for the functional

benefits, implying that the roles products play in our lives extend beyond the tasks they perform (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004; Kachale, 2005; Solomon, 2007:14). Hence, the symbolism embedded in many products is often the primary reason for their purchase and use (Solomon, 1983:325; Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:7; Piacentini & Mailer, 2004).

Since the consumer is always in interaction with others (significant others, generalised others and reference groups), conspicuous consumption becomes of the utmost importance, because individuals are normally evaluated and placed in a social nexus to a significant degree by the products that they possess (Solomon, 1983). If a product is conspicuous (socially visible), consumers are likely to use the visibility of the product to symbolically communicate something about themselves to their 'significant others' and reference group others (Hwan-Lee, 1990; Piacentini & Mailer, 2004; Ravasi & Rindova, 2007), such as impressing and winning admiration from those invited into their homes (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:315).

Bearing the above reasoning concerning the functional and symbolic performance features of major household appliances in mind, it follows that performance failure of such appliances manifests in either or both their functional and symbolic performance. Therefore, functional performance failures can be classified into the following categories: unusual product performance in terms of the intended end-use, failure/breakdown of appliance or some component(s) thereof, inconvenience in operating the appliances, inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance, insufficient durability and safety or health risks associated with performance of the appliance. Additionally, the symbolic performance failures of appliances refer to the sensory, emotional and cognitive displeasure or dissatisfaction associated with major household appliances (Donoghue, 2008:255).

One might speculate about the type of performance (functional or symbolic performance) dimension that is more important to consumers as they evaluate product performance. The answer would undoubtedly differ in terms of the product type and the specific consumer group. Whereas evidence from literature hints that for some products, determinant attributes may involve primarily functional performance, both functional and symbolic dimensions may be features for other products (Swan & Combs, 1976; Hawkins, Best & Coney, 2001:641; Hawkins, Mothersbaugh & Best, 2007: 650-651; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008). Donoghue (2008) conducted a study amongst South Africans to explore and describe consumers' perception of the performance failure of selected major electrical household appliances. The results of her study showed that respondents did not differentiate between the functional and symbolic performance failures of appliances. Therefore, consumers' dissatisfaction with their appliances was determined by a combination of functional and symbolic performance.

Bearing in mind that Botswana is an emerging economy, and that many consumers, who have not been properly socialised in using and evaluating major household appliances, may purchase these products not only for functional purposes but also because of their psychological and social significance, an investigation into the type of performance dimensions that play a role in their evaluation of product performance might yield interesting answers.

### **2.2.2.3 Dissatisfaction outcomes**

Post-purchase dissatisfaction, as a consequence of the negative disconfirmation of expectations concerning product performance (i.e. product performance failure), would appear to be an important variable in linking product selection with negative outcomes. The outcomes would be less favourable purchase attitudes, lower or non-existent purchase intentions, negative word-of-mouth, complaining, changes in shopping behaviour such as brand or product switching, and retailer boycotts (Liu & McClure, 2001; Onyiaso, 2007), as well as accompanying strong consumption emotions (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994; Bougie *et al.*, 2003).

## **2.3 CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR (CCB)**

Consumer complaint behaviour has been viewed as a post-purchase evaluation process that occurs in the context of consumers being disappointed or dissatisfied with product performance/service (Criè, 2003; Panther & Farquhar, 2004; Tronvoll, 2007). Yet, complaints do not always stem from dissatisfaction; neither does dissatisfaction always lead to complaints; thus, dissatisfaction is a necessary but not sufficient cause for consumer complaint behaviour (Day in Tronvoll, 2007: 604). According to Kowalski's definition (in Juhl, Thøgersen & Poulsen 2006:2), dissatisfaction is an attitude resulting from disconfirmation of expectations, while complaining is a behavioural expression of the dissatisfaction. On the other hand, Tronvoll (2007) defines complaining as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether subjectively experienced or not, for the purpose of venting emotions or achieving intrapsychic goals, interpersonal goals or both. As a result, consumer complaint behaviour is more complex than just a simple post-purchase evaluation process, and involves other aspects such as in-use evaluation, emotional responses, personality, perceptions of injustice and desire to attribute blame/ responsibility as well as coping potential (Richins in Tronvoll, 2007; Folkes, 1984; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:144) – hence the need for its conceptualisation.

### **2.3.1 Conceptualising consumer complaint behaviour**

Traditionally, studies in consumer complaint behaviour have focused on formal behavioural responses, such as complaints directed at the manufacturer and retailer, or at a public consumer protection agency, a voluntary organisation, ombudsman and/or court, that directly convey an “expression of dissatisfaction” (Singh, 1988; Cri , 2003; Kim, Kim, Im & Shin, 2003; Juhl *et al.*, 2006; Tronvoll, 2007). However, conceptualising consumer complaint behaviour as only formal complaint behaviour is generally considered very restrictive, since the majority of consumers do not report their dissatisfaction and rather engage in hidden activities such as quietly boycotting the retailer, changing brands, boycotting the product type, and engaging in negative word-of-mouth communication (Day & Landon, 1977:432; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Singh, 1988; Panther & Faquhuar, 2004; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008; Swimberghe, Sharma & Flurry, 2009). Furthermore, numerous studies have indeed documented that a common response to consumer dissatisfaction is to “do nothing”. Hence, non-behavioural responses like doing nothing should also be taken into consideration when conceptualising consumer complaint behaviour. Consumer complaint behaviour should therefore be conceptualised as “a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode” (Singh, 1988:84; Liu & McClure, 2001; Cri , 2003).

### **2.3.2 Models of consumer complaint behaviour**

Despite the considerable consensus on conceptual meaning of the consumer complaint behaviour construct, few researchers have offered specific models for dissatisfaction responses, that are valid and useful (Hirschman, 1970:3-4; Day & Landon, 1977:425-437; Singh, 1988:95), while others’ models are questionable (Maute & Forrester, 1993; Richins, 1987 in Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006). Hence, the three models by Hirschman, Day & Landon and Singh, as discussed in this study, are widely used, valid and proven.

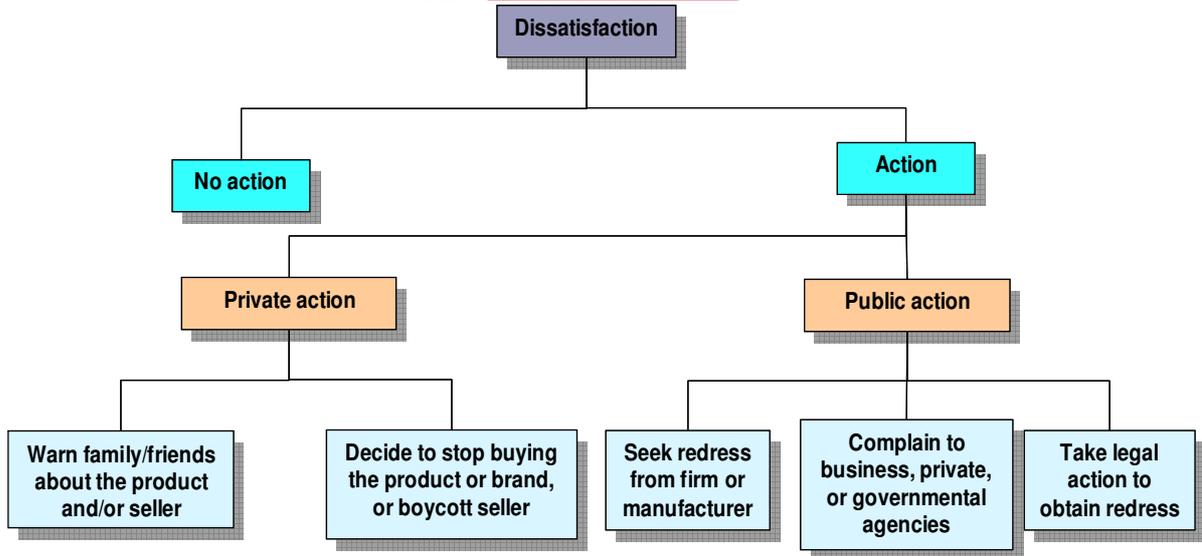
#### **2.3.2.1 Hirschman’s exit, voice and loyalty typology**

Hirschman’s exit, voice and loyalty typology (Hirschman, 1970:3-4) has been used to explain responses to dissatisfaction in a variety of contexts, including political organisations membership, employment relationships, trade unions and interpersonal relationships (Maute & Dube, 1999). Individuals fundamentally have three options when experiencing dissatisfaction with a product/service: they can “exit”, “voice” or “remain loyal” in the hope that things will improve (Hirschman, 1970:29; Heung & Lam, 2003; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Panther & Farquhar, 2004). According to Hirschman (1970:29), “exit” occurs when individuals

“dissociate themselves from the object of their dissatisfaction”. It manifests itself in marketplace relationships and involves ending the relationship when buyers switch brands, suppliers/retailers, or refuse to make further purchases. Alternatively, consumers can “voice” their dissatisfaction – which is an attempt to remedy the situation, change practices, policies and outputs of the organisation from which one buys, by making complaints either directly to sellers/manufacturers and third parties (consumer protection agencies, ombudsman, media) or by protesting to anyone who cares to listen (Hirschman, 1970:30; Maute & Dube, 1999; Panther & Farquhar, 2004). On the other hand, dissatisfied consumers can “remain loyal” by choosing to “suffer in silence”, hoping that things will soon get better (Hirschman, 1970:38).

### **2.3.2.2 Day and Landon’s taxonomy of complaint behaviour**

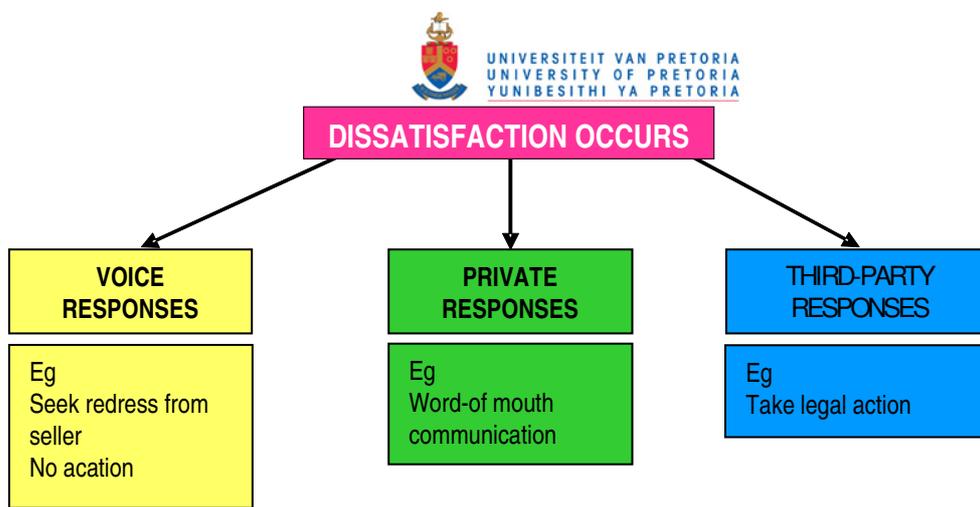
Day and Landon’s (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour (see Figure 2.2), has achieved wide acceptance in consumer complaint behaviour literature (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; La Forge, 1989; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Donoghue, 2008). Dissatisfied consumers can take either action or no action. Action may be either public or private. Public action implies that consumers can engage in seeking redress (seeking a refund, replacement, free repairs etc) directly from retailer/manufacture, taking legal action to obtain redress, and/or complaining to business, private or governmental agencies. Private action includes warning friends and relatives about the faulty product/service, boycotting the type of product and switching brands/retailers. Consumers may take no action, by refraining from action by rationalising and forgetting about the problem (Day & Landon, 1977:429-430; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006). Authors such as Day and Landon (1977) and Broadbridge and Marshall (1995) postulate that complex and expensive products, such as major household appliances, encourage more public complaint action, but that the chances that the consumer will take only private action or do nothing at all, are lower, yet still appear to be substantial.



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

### 2.3.2.3 Singh’s taxonomy of consumer complaint responses

Singh’s taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour responses (see Figure 2.2) is an elaboration and extension of Day and Landon’s two-dimensional conceptualisation (action vs. no action) to a three-dimensional schema that distinguishes various consumer complaint behaviour responses on the basis of the object at which the response is directed (Singh, 1988:105). Singh distinguishes between voice responses, private responses and third-party responses (Singh, 1988; Singh & Wilkes, 1996; Fernandes & Dos Santos, 2007). Voice consumer complaint behaviour is directed at objects that are external to the consumer’s social circle and are directly involved in the dissatisfying exchange (e.g. retailer/manufacturer). The no-action type of response is also included in the voice category because it appears to reflect the consumer’s feelings towards the retailer. Third-party complaint behaviour includes actions that are directed towards external parties who are not directly involved in the dissatisfying experience (e.g. legal agencies, media, and governmental organisations). Finally, the private consumer complaint behaviour category refers to objects that are not external to the consumer’s social circle and are also not directly involved in the dissatisfying experience (e.g. friends and family), including responses such as stopping patronage, and indulging in negative word-of-mouth communications about the offending retailer (Singh, 1988). Although the three-tier structure captures the various responses to dissatisfaction, the object of the consumer complaint response takes on greater importance than the behaviour itself (Maute & Forrester, 1993).



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

Day and Landons' (1977) model was adopted for this study to uncover and explain the multi-dimensionality of the consumer complaint behaviour that consumers engage in when experiencing dissatisfaction concerning the performance (functional/symbolic) of major household appliances. This model was successfully applied in studies focusing on consumers' complaint behaviour concerning dissatisfactory durable products, specifically major household appliances (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Donoghue, 2008).

## **2.4 IMPLICATIONS OF COMPLAINS FOR THE MARKETPLACE**

- "Problems" or dissatisfactions with either product performance or service will always abound in this world; therefore, understanding why dissatisfied consumers complain the way they do is essential from theoretical, managerial and public policy perspective (Tronvoll, 2007; Swimberghe *et al.*, 2009). Though complaints may be viewed negatively, their proper handling may be beneficial as it can sometimes increase long-term satisfaction, heighten customer retention and protect retailers and manufacturers against diffusion of negative word-of-mouth (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006).
- Retailers and manufacturers should therefore maximise ways to capture all possible consumer complaints through both interactive (face to face) and remote control channels (e.g. letter writing, web reporting or on-line complaining through chat rooms), to avoid negative behaviours such as negative word-of-mouth, third parties, boycotts and exit (Ngai, Heung, Wong & Chan, 2007; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009).

This has by far the worst negative impact on businesses in terms of loss of profit and customer loyalty. In other words, retailers and manufactures should not underestimate the impact of hidden or indirect complaints activities (Kim *et al.*, 2003; Tronvoll, 2007).

- Retailers, manufacturers and policy makers should devise effective strategies for handling complaints and for protecting consumers by creating conducive environments for complaints, so that eventually there will be service/product improvements/quality and promotion of consumer rights (Dolinsky, 1994; Ngai *et al.*, 2007; Hansen, Wilke & Zaichkowsky, 2010).
- Retailers and manufacturers should also have an understanding of cross-cultural differences in complaint behaviour (Liu & McClure, 2001; Ngai *et al.*, 2007; Donoghue, 2008).
- Individual consumers need assistance and sensitisation to perform better as consumers or complainers. Hence, consumer facilitators/educators should educate and empower them to stand on their rights and make formal complaints (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009).
- Complaint handling personnel should be trained to understand consumers' reasoning underlying their complaint behaviour, and how to deal with complaints effectively, by following complaint policies and sound complaint-handling ethics. They should also know how to deal with angry consumers by offering sound and sincere apologies for the dissatisfactory encounters (Ngai *et al.*, 2007; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009; Swimberghe *et al.*, 2009).

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

When consumers purchase major household appliances, they have expectations about how these appliances should perform, based on functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions. Since the functional performance of products tend to be latent until after use, consumers tend to rely on the symbolic meaning that these products portray to and about them for the other people in their social and cultural contexts. During or after using the appliance, consumers will evaluate the initial expectations in the light of the actual product performance. Negatively confirmed expectations will result in dissatisfaction and subsequent

complaint behaviour including no action, private action or public action (Singh, 1988; Bougie et al., 2003; Panther & Farquhar, 2004). However, it should be noted that consumers' complaint action could not be directly related to the level of dissatisfaction experienced, implying that other factors might influence consumers' ultimate decision to take action or no action. Consumers' cognitive appraisal of product performance failure and the subsequent emotions that are generated require that the individual has to manage the stressful situation. Therefore, the way in which different consumers interpret performance failures will influence the type of coping actions (in this case, consumer compliant behaviour) they engage in, to resolve the stress. The interpretation of product performance failure is referred to as appraisal in cognitive appraisal theory, which is discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### COGNITIVE APPRAISAL THEORY - A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR RESEARCHING CONSUMERS' EMOTIONS AND COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

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#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study adopted cognitive appraisal theory as theoretical perspective to explain consumers' appraisals, emotions and complaint behaviour following their dissatisfaction with the performance failure of major household appliances. In this chapter, cognitive appraisal theory is explained in terms of its conceptual meaning, the interplay of cognitions and emotional responses in shaping people's behaviour, the conceptualisation of emotions, emotions and stress, the coping strategies that individuals employ to resolve stressful encounters, and its application in a consumer complaint behaviour context. Additionally, the implications of the cognitive appraisal process for the study are indicated.

#### 3.2 COGNITIVE APPRAISAL THEORY EXPLAINED

Cognitive appraisal theory, mostly attributed to the work of Lazarus and his colleagues, has gained wide acceptance in the fields of psychology, sociology and consumer behaviour in understanding people's emotions and behaviour when they are confronted with a stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:19-21; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis & Gruen, 1986; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur *et al.*, 1999; Watson & Spence, 2007). Cognitive appraisal has been described as "a process through which a person evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to his/her well-being, and if so, in what ways" (Folkman *et al.*, 1986:992; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998:176; Chen & Matthews, 2001). Human beings are therefore not passive recipients of information but "active" agents who perceive and comprehend their environment/world (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:143). An encounter with the environment that exceeds or taxes an individual's resources and endangers his/her well-being may result in psychological stress. To determine whether the encounter with the environment is actually stressful the person must engage in cognitive appraisal, which consists of a two-part process, namely primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. During primary appraisal the person determines whether the encounter is primarily harmful or threatening (i.e. evaluates

whether he/she has anything to gain or to lose). The emotional consequences of primary appraisal are relatively primitive, being simple reactions to potential harm or benefit. Secondary appraisal involves an evaluation of what, if anything can be done to overcome or prevent harm or to improve the prospects for benefit (i.e. calculation of one's ability to deal or cope with the problem). However, secondary appraisal involves more than simply deciding, "what things might be done to manage the situation". It is actually a complex evaluative process that takes into account which coping options are available, the likelihood that a given coping mechanism will accomplish what it is supposed to, and the likelihood that one can apply a particular strategy or a set of strategies effectively. In addition, the appraisal of coping options includes an evaluation of the consequences of using a particular strategy. Primary and secondary appraisal may occur simultaneously and interactively, and not necessarily in the order that the connotative meaning of their names imply. These appraisals converge to determine whether the person-environment transaction is stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:31-33; Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Fiske & Taylor, 1991:436-437).

### **3.2.1 The interplay of cognitions and emotional responses**

According to Bagozzi, Gürhan-Canli and Priester (2002:40), and Watson and Spence (2007), cognitive appraisal offers an in-depth way to explain the subtle nuances of emotions which are elicited through thoughtful interpretation of characteristics of events to direct or determine behavioural responses. The cognitive appraisal theory of emotion argues that emotive reactions are often an outcome of cognitive appraisal efforts (Nyer, 1997). That is, specific emotions and their intensity are tied to an appraisal of the event eliciting the emotional response (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). Bagozzi *et al.* (2002:39) note that emotions arise in response to the appraisals one makes for something of relevance to one's well-being. However, different people can have different emotional reactions to the same event or happening. The critical determinant is, however, the resultant judgement and interpretation that arise after comparing an actual state to a desired state. Lazarus (1991:827) notes that two appraisals are particularly crucial at this stage of emotion formation, namely goal relevance and goal congruence. That means that a necessary condition for an emotional response to an event or happening is that a person has a personal stake in it and at the same time judges the event or happening to facilitate or thwart this stake. Negative emotions associated with negative situations include anger, worry, sadness, frustration, irritation, guilt and shame (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:156; Bougie *et al.*, 2003; Mattsson *et al.*, 2004). It is proposed that anger, irritation and frustration result from a negative outcome, which is perceived as controllable by others, whereas guilt and shame result from a negative outcome attributed to internal and controllable factors (Folkes, 1984; Nyer, 1997; Weiner, 2000).

### 3.2.1.1 Conceptualising emotions

Emotions are defined as complex reactions that involve both our bodies and our minds (comprising a class of mental phenomena). These reactions include subjective mental states such as feelings of anger, anxiety and loneliness, or an impulse to act, fight or attack (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994; Chea & Luo, 2008). Therefore, emotion can be conceptualised as a general dimension like positive and negative affect; they can also be looked at as specific emotions (Laros & Steenpkamp, 2005). For instance for this study, some specific emotions were examined at the same general level to determine their association with coping behaviours/methods of dissatisfied consumers following an unpleasant marketplace episode such as product failure.

People do not only differ in their emotional patterns. Those living in different cultures display emotional patterns that reflect their unique cultural outlook (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:189-194; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Tsai, 2005). Emotions are both biologically and culturally shaped, i.e. people are born with some patterns of emotions genetically, while on the other hand the rules and societal expectations regulate and control how emotions may be expressed. For instance, some cultures discourage anger and its expression while others approve its expression and are dominated by it. Culture influences appraisal by defining the significance of what is happening to a person's well-being, thus in turn determines the emotion that will be aroused and how it should be controlled and expressed. For example, in collectivistic cultures (e.g. Asians, Africans) people tend to express private emotions like shame, guilt and less aggressive confrontational negative emotions, while in individualistic cultures (Western people) it is acceptable to express radical emotions like anger or irritation (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:189-190; Tsai, 2005; Wang, 2006; Ngai *et al.*, 2007)

### 3.2.1.2 Emotions and stress

Stress is defined as a natural response to life's demands or environmental demands on a biological, social or psychological system, which is analogous to the load that a bridge has to carry (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:220; Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Chaudhuri, 2006). Hence, situations or events that bring strain or demands to consumers are considered stressful, especially if there is an element of harm or a threat to one's well-being, and stress normally triggers negative emotions such as anger, fear, guilt, shame, jealousy, anxiety and sadness (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Smith & Bolton, 2002; Bougie *et al.*, 2003; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). Some people, when experiencing stressful encounters, may be less resilient and may have an emotional breakdown if effective coping strategies are not employed, as the person tries to manage harms, threats and challenges to their well-being or personal stake.

### 3.3 COPING STRATEGIES/BEHAVIOURS

Encounters with the environment that are appraised as stressful require coping action. Coping is the process through which the individual manages the demands of the person-environment relationship that are appraised as stressful and the emotion they generate (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:19; Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Accordingly, coping strategies are behavioural and cognitive attempts aimed at managing stressful situational demands (Mathur *et al.*, 1999). Lazarus and Folkman (1984:21,141) have identified two types of coping strategies, namely problem-focused coping (coping efforts that are directed at managing or altering the problem causing the stress) and emotion-focused coping (coping efforts that are directed at regulating the emotional response to the problem). Whereas researchers such as Lazarus and Folkman (1984:21,151) considered avoidance as a type of emotional coping, others have argued that avoidance coping should be considered a separate coping strategy (Mathur *et al.*, 1999). Avoidance coping implies that the person simply leaves the situation (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:159; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998:175; Mick & Fournier, 1998; Bagozzi *et al.*, 2002:41-42). However, in order to engage in coping strategies, the individual needs to know who is responsible for the specific stressful event (i.e. who had control over the stimulus event: oneself, someone else or circumstances – also known as agency) (Friske & Taylor, 1991:437; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Watson & Spence, 2007). Coping potential reflects an evaluation by the individual of the potential for, and the consequences of, engaging in a coping strategy (Scherer in Nyer, 1997).

### 3.4 COGNITIVE APPRAISAL THEORY IN A CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CONTEXT

Stephens and Gwinner (1998) propose that dissatisfying marketplace experiences (service and product failures) serve as the potentially stressful event that will be evaluated via the cognitive appraisal process. The expression *dissatisfying marketplace experience* refers to those consumption events in which consumers' performance perceptions compare negatively to some standard (e.g. pre-purchase expectations, desires, experience-based norms) and therefore are evaluated as dissatisfying (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). In a consumer behaviour context, specifically with regard to product performance failure, the specific emotions that result from cognitive appraisal vary according to the attribution of responsibility/accountability for the stressful situation. Negative emotions associated with negative consumption situations include anger, worry, disappointment, frustration, irritation, guilt and shame (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:156; Bougie *et al.*, 2003; Mattsson *et al.*, 2004). It is proposed that anger results from a negative outcome (in this case product failure), which is

perceived as controllable by others, whereas guilt and shame result from a negative outcome attributed to internal and controllable factors (Folkes, 1984; Nyer, 1997; Weiner, 2000).

Different emotions tend to be associated with different patterns of behaviour, implying that different emotions call for very different coping strategies (Nyer, 1997; Bagozzi *et al.*, 2002:39; Watson & Spence, 2007). For example, two consumers, one experiencing guilt (due to an internally controllable attribution), and the other experiencing anger (due to an externally controllable attribution), following the same kind of undesirable situation (product failure), can be expected to behave very differently. The angry consumer may complain and engage in negative word-of-mouth, and the consumer who feels guilty is less likely to do so. Additionally, when consumers know who is to blame for the product failure, they will have a target for coping action (i.e. they will know what type of complaint action to take to deal with the stressful situation) (Lazarus in Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Forrester & Maute, 2001). For example, when a product failure is company-related (external attribution), the consumer is more inclined to complain to the retailer to obtain a refund and/or apology, and to engage in negative word-of-mouth about the product, than when the reason is consumer-related (internal attribution) (Swanson & Kelley, 2001; Laufer, 2002; Laufer & Gillespie, 2004). A number of studies have found that the greater the number of internal attributions (i.e. when the consumer admits that the product or retailer is not at fault), the more likely consumers are to do nothing when dissatisfied (Laufer, 2002). With regard to the new and often unsophisticated consumer who has not been properly socialised concerning the use of products, the result is, however, in many cases a confused consumer who does not know whom to blame for the problem (product failure), and consequently also does not know what type of coping strategy to engage in.

In the context of the cognitive appraisal theory, consumers' complaint behaviour is considered to be coping methods/behaviours. With regard to product performance failure, specific coping methods/behaviours associated with each of the three general coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance) have been identified (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur *et al.*, 1999; Forrester & Maute, 2001; Donoghue, 2008). Empirical findings related to coping styles suggest that consumers may rely on more than one form of coping when managing stressful encounters (such as product failures) (Lazarus, 1991; Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:152-154). In the following sections, the general coping strategies with specific coping behaviours/methods are discussed.

### **3.4.1 Problem-focused coping**

In a consumer complaint behaviour context, problem-focused coping involves that the consumer deals squarely with the problem by taking action or by making plans to take action. The focus of such a coping strategy is external, as it is aimed at the other party. Direct action consists of voicing displeasure to the offending party (in this case, the retailer or manufacturer) in the form of face-to-face, phone or mail-based complaint contact(s), in order to obtain redress (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mattila & Wirtz, 2004). Additionally, consumers contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, or contact a consumer protection organisation, a legal representative, and/or the media (newspapers, magazines, or a consumer complaint website). To exert their rights as consumers and to object after efforts to obtain redress/compensation for the product had failed, they deal with the problem by taking direct action, implying a problem-focused coping strategy (Donoghue, 2008; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). Problem-focused coping takes place when consumers have appraised the situation as harmful/threatening to their well-being and perceive themselves as having strong coping potential. Coping potential reflects an evaluation by the individual of the potential for, and the consequences of, engaging in a coping activity by assessing their capacity to cope/deal with the negative outcome, and evaluating the benefits/harm associated with the coping mechanism considered (Lazarus, 1991; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Chen & Matthews, 2001; Watson & Spence, 2007).

### **3.4.2 Emotion-focused coping**

In contrast to problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping strategies are directed inward. In this way, individuals attempt to regulate their mental response to the problem in order to feel better. Instead of doing something about the event, they remain silent (do not contact the offending party), and they may engage in one of any several self-deceptions such as denial, self-blame, self-control, and seeking social support from family, friends and acquaintances (Lazarus, 1991:830; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:156-158). Seeking social support means explaining the marketplace problem to another person to obtain informational, emotional or tangible support (Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998). Consumers who perceive themselves as having low coping potential may engage in emotion-focused coping.

### 3.4.3 Avoidance coping

When engaging in avoidance coping, people do not deceive themselves by repositioning the event in a positive light or blaming themselves. Instead, they simply avoid the matter (i.e. they do nothing at all), or leave the situation (i.e. switch between brands and stop supporting the retailers concerned) (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:159; Mick & Fournier, 1998).

Specific coping methods/behaviours associated with each of the three general coping strategies have been identified in a complaint behaviour context (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mattila & Wirtz, 2004; Donoghue, 2008). Refer to Table 3.1.

**TABLE 3.1: COPING STRATEGIES AND COPING METHODS/BEHAVIOURS INVOLVED (Donoghue, 2008)**

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

### 3.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

Consumers usually form high expectations about product performance during purchase. When the product's actual performance does not meet their expectations, due to performance failure, the higher the perception of harm/ threat to their well-being, and the greater the stress. This may lead to negative actions that could affect re-purchase and customer loyalty, leading to loss of profits. Hence, consumer educators and consumer protection organisations should provide consumers with more information about the operation, maintenance and care of appliances to reduce possible stressful situations. Knowledgeable consumers will be better able to form realistic expectations of product performance. The perception of quality of major household appliance and the expectations for their performance may be unrealistically high for first-time users of major household appliances, as it is a new experience for them; therefore, retailers and manufacturers should have an understanding of cross-cultural differences in how consumers perceive product

quality. Complaints-handling personnel should additionally know how to deal with stressed consumers by being empathetic and understanding their situation helping them effectively (Kim *et al.*, 2003; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009).

By studying consumers' complaint behaviour, following their appraisal of the performance failure of major household appliances, policy makers, retailers, manufacturers may gain a better understanding of consumers' reasoning and emotional responses directing their behaviour, and may therefore be better able to handle dissatisfied consumers' complaints effectively. For instance, retailers and complaint handling personnel have to be trained to deal with emotionally aroused customers effectively.

It is important that retailers, manufacturers and consumer facilitators understand consumers' reasoning in a stressful situation and the coping mechanisms they choose (either problem-focused, emotion-focused or avoidance coping), as negative word-of-mouth behaviour (emotion-focused) would be detrimental to their businesses. Boycotts of either product or retailer (avoidance coping) may also lead to low profits because of reduced customer loyalty (Tronvoll, 2007). Equally, those consumers who engage in problem-focused coping by venting their displeasure or seeking redress, may disrupt business proceedings through their outbursts, which may result in lower sales. Therefore, managers and sales personnel should understand how to handle stressed and emotional consumers by responding promptly to complaints in the most amicable way to cool them down to rationality (Donoghue, 2008). Consumer facilitators should encourage stressed consumers to express their emotions in a positive way, as suppressed emotions may be detrimental to the well-being of both parties (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:253).

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

Consumers appraise a dissatisfactory marketplace episode such as product performance failure as stressful or harmful to their well-being (Chen & Matthews, 2001). This evaluation consists of primary and secondary appraisals, which result in emotive reactions and coping mechanisms respectively (Baggozi *et al.*, 2002). Negative emotions like anger, sadness, worry, frustration, guilt and shame are associated with negative situations which are considered threats to the personal stake. Aroused emotions tend to influence the coping strategies to cope with the stressful event. Consumers who had appraised product performance failure as stressful and are emotionally aroused may engage in one or more coping mechanisms, namely problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping or avoidance coping. Specific coping methods/behaviours associated with each of the three

general coping strategies have been identified in a complaint behaviour context (refer to Table 3.1).

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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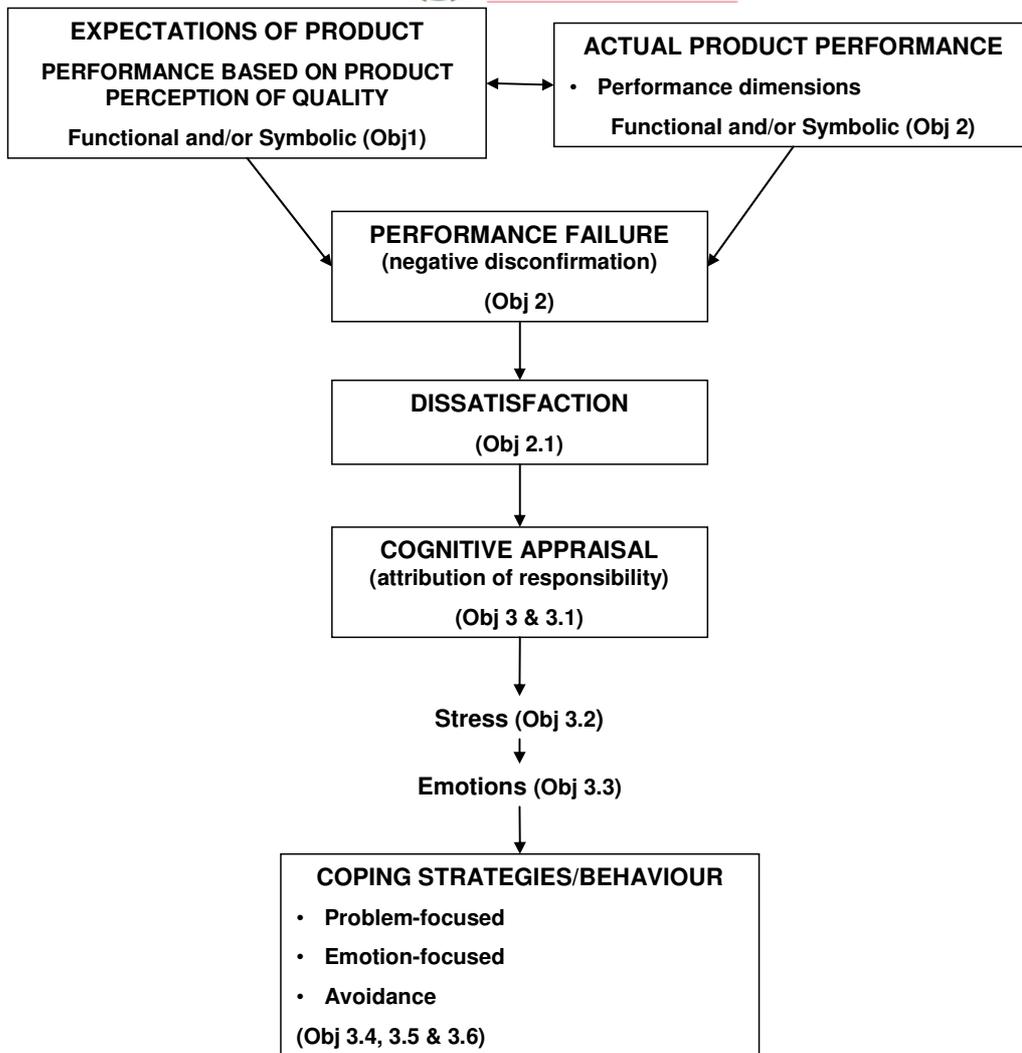
#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter firstly presents the conceptual framework. Next, the research problem, research objectives and sub-objectives are stated formally, followed by a description of the research strategy, the research design and the sampling plan. An overview of research methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour and cognitive appraisals are provided, since these methodologies serve as background for the methodology chosen for this study. The analysis of the data is discussed in terms of the coding and capturing of the data, the operationalisation of measurements, and the explanation of the statistical methods. Then, the quality of the data is discussed in terms of its validity and reliability. Ethical issues pertaining to this research are also discussed. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the data.

#### 4.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

##### 4.2.1 Conceptual framework

This study proposes a schematic conceptual framework (as illustrated in Figure 4.1) to gain an understanding of consumers' appraisals of product performance failures and their emotional and behavioural responses as an outcome of the cognitive appraisal process.



**FIGURE 4.1: SCHEMATIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework (Figure 4.1) proposes that consumers evaluate the actual functional and symbolic performance of major electrical appliances in terms of their expectations for product performance, which are based on perceptions of product quality. The product performance dimension that plays a role in consumers' evaluation of product quality probably guides their evaluation of the actual performance of their appliances. However, the significance of the performance dimensions might vary according to the specific evaluation process involved (i.e. particular performance dimensions may play specific roles during the pre-purchase versus the post-purchase evaluation of products). When the appliance's performance does not meet the consumer's expectations (i.e. when a performance failure occurs or when the product performs poorly), negative disconfirmation occurs, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction.

According to appraisal theory, if an event like product performance failure is appraised as stressful, negative emotions (e.g. anger, shame, surprise, frustration and guilt) are usually elicited, which normally necessitates specific coping strategies/behaviours. Negative emotions associated with evaluation of product failures vary according to the attribution of responsibility/accountability for such failures. Consumers might engage in three types of coping strategies (i.e. problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping) to deal with the psychological stress and the resulting emotions. These coping strategies are associated with specific consumer complaint behaviour actions.

Bearing consumer complaint behaviour theory in mind, consumers may engage in behavioural and non-behavioural responses to resolve dissatisfaction. As such, consumers may engage in private complaint action (i.e. switching brands or retailers, boycotting the type of product or warning family and friends) and/or public action (i.e. seeking redress directly from the retailer/manufacturer, complaining to the retailer/manufacturer, a public consumer protection agency, a voluntary organisation or the media, or taking legal action against the retailer or manufacturer). Alternatively, consumers may refrain from action by rationalising and forgetting about the problem (Day & Landon, 1977:429-432; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995). Behavioural options where the consumer deals directly with the dissatisfying experience (i.e. directly complaining to manufacturers and retailers (second parties) and to third parties (i.e. a public consumer protection agency, voluntary organisation, ombudsman or court) are associated with problem-focused coping strategy. Actions that address the consumer's emotional state and reaction to the problem rather than the dissatisfying experience as such (i.e. telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the stressful experience to gain social support) are associated with an emotion-focused coping strategy. Behaviour that leads to the overall withdrawal from the situation (i.e. taking no action, stopping use of the brand name and stopping support to the retailer where the product was purchased) are associated with avoidance coping.

It should be noted that people might rely on more than one form of coping strategy when managing psychological stress and the resultant emotions caused by the performance failure of major household appliances.

#### **4.2.2 Problem statement and objectives**

The influx of various businesses in Botswana with diverse new products like major household appliances, of which many consumers have limited experience, the price tags attached to these appliances and their perceived sophistication, have resulted in acquisition of these appliances by female consumers. It can safely be postulated that consumers will form high

and unrealistic expectations with regard to functional and/or symbolic product performance. They will have experienced some dissatisfaction with their appliances, as evidenced in literature that major household appliances are not exempt from performance failure and that they generate higher incidences of complaints (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995), also according to the statistical complaint data by the Botswana Consumer Protection unit. It is not known how female consumers in Botswana (Gaborone) appraise the performance failure of major household appliances, nor the resulting emotional responses or the coping strategies/behaviours they employ in the stressful situation. Female consumers are stereotypically considered the caregivers in a household context and the main operators of major household appliances. According to Kring (2000), gender differences influence post-purchase evaluations and behaviour in consumption settings.

In order to address the problem, the researcher formulated objectives and sub-objectives to help manage and order the results of the study in a comprehensive and sequential manner.

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

- Objective 1** To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions that play a role in female consumers' quality perception of major household appliances
- Objective 2** To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance failure causing female consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major electrical household appliances
- Sub-objective 2.1** To explore and describe female consumers' degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances
- Objective 3** To explore and describe the role of cognitive appraisal in dissatisfied female consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances
- Sub-objective 3.1** To explore and describe dissatisfied female consumers' attribution of responsibility for the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances
- Sub-objective 3.2** To explore and describe female consumers' level of stress experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances
- Sub-objective 3.3** To explore and describe the emotions that are elicited in dissatisfied female consumers during the cognitive appraisal process concerning

the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

**Sub-objective 3.4** To explore and describe the coping strategies in terms of the coping methods/behaviours (consumer complaint responses) that dissatisfied female consumers engage in concerning the functional and/or performance failure of major household appliances

**Sub-objective 3.5** To explore and describe the relationship between dissatisfied female consumers' emotions that are elicited during the cognitive appraisal process and their complaint behaviour (coping behaviours) concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

**Sub-objective 3.6** To describe the coping strategies in terms of coping methods/behaviours that dissatisfied female consumers engage in concerning performance failure of major household appliances when blame is attributed to a specific party

### **4.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY, APPROACH AND DESIGN**

The research objectives for this study included exploration and description. A quantitative methodological research paradigm was used for this study. A quantitative-descriptive (survey) design, as plan or blueprint for the investigation, was followed (Fouché & De Vos, 2005b:133, 143; Leedey & Ormrod, 2005:183). The type of research design can also be classified as cross-sectional approach, meaning that the observations were made at one time and not over an extended period as is the case with longitudinal research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:92, 105). The study is empirical in nature, i.e. it made use of primary data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:78).

### **4.4 SAMPLING PLAN**

#### **4.4.1 Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis for this study was female consumers older than 21 years of age, who resided in Gaborone, Botswana, and who have experienced dissatisfaction concerning the performance failure of major household appliances.

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

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

Respondents had to use their own appliances to have gained experience with their appliances. A four-year recall period was proposed, since consumers' dissatisfaction with durable major household appliances might manifest over a period of time and not necessarily immediately, as in the case of non-durable products such as food items. Additionally, consumers had to have experienced dissatisfaction with the performance of their appliances, (whether they engaged in consumer complaint behaviour or not), since satisfied consumers would certainly not have engaged in consumer complaint behaviour (Day, Grabicke, Schaetzle & Staubach, 1981:83).

- Respondents had to be older than 21 years.

It was assumed that by the age of 21 years the average person would be earning enough income to purchase and subsequently operate his/her appliances. Female consumers are stereotypically considered to be the caregivers in a household context and the main operators of major household appliances. According to Kring (2000), gender differences influence post-purchase evaluations and behaviour in consumption settings. Research recognises gender as a moderating factor in a number of consumption events, and hence as having a bearing on how people react to or handle marketplace episodes (Garret, Meyers & West, 1997; Kalamas, Laroche & Markdessian, 2008). According to Kring (2000), gender differences influence post-purchase evaluations and behaviour in consumption settings, based on the social role theory, which predicts that gender and emotional differences are similar to those in social behaviour, namely that males and females hold different roles in society, hence they behave differently though they may experience similar emotions (Kalamas *et al.*, 2008). For instance, though both males and females may experience anger due to a dissatisfying experience like product failure, females tend to report incidents with more fear than males, while male consumers tend to verbally assault or display their emotions more than female consumers, who tend to cry often (Kalamas *et al.*, 2008).

- Respondents had to reside in any location in Gaborone city.

According to Botswana's Consumer Protection Unit's monthly reports for September 2008 and March 2009, more complaints regarding electrical equipment, including major household appliances, were received in Gaborone city than in any other location (PAR, NO. 5, 2008).

The economically active working class mostly resides in Gaborone due to the provision of improved life amenities (such as the electrification of households) and ample job opportunities there.

#### **4.4.2 Sampling technique and sample size**

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used in this study. The use of convenience sampling may represent an efficient and effective means of obtaining the required information, especially in an exploratory situation where there is a pressing need to get an inexpensive approximation of true value (McDaniel & Gates, 2004:285). The researcher and two trained fieldworkers approached respondents who met the outlined criteria (see paragraph 4.4.1) to participate in the survey. Two hundred and thirteen (213) female respondents were recruited in Gaborone from malls, workplaces, social gatherings and public places. The questionnaire was pilot-tested before final administration to respondents. Only 200 questionnaires were usable, while 13 were discarded due to incompleteness.

### **4.5 CHOICE DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

#### **4.5.1 Overview of methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour and cognitive appraisals of emotion**

##### **4.5.1.1 Methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour**

Most empirical studies focusing on consumers' compliant behaviour use a survey design to report on consumers' dissatisfaction with products or services, and the subsequent complaint actions taken by them (Dolinsky, 1994; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Kincade *et al.*, 1998; Liu & McClure, 2001; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Panther & Farquhar, 2004; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Tronvoll, 2007; Donoghue 2008; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008; Ngai *et al.*, 2007; Hansen *et al.*, 2010). Self-administered questionnaires are normally used based on consumers' recall of a past experience that they remember most clearly (in this case, product dissatisfaction and the type of complaint action taken) – otherwise known as the Critical Incident Technique (Kelley, Hoffman & Davis, 1993; Singh & Wilkes, 1996).

When using experimental designs respondents are exposed to imaginary dissatisfaction situations and are then expected to express their intentions to engage in complaint behaviour. However, instead of measuring consumers' true complaint behaviour, consumers' intentions to engage in specific complaint behaviour are determined (Nyer, 1997; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Sharma & Marshall, 2005). Retrospective measurements, as opposed to simulation or role-playing methodologies and experimental manipulation, are most often used because they appear relevant to those who take part in them and reflect "real life" reactions (Brown & Beltramini, 1989; Weiner, 2000; Dunning, O'Cass & Pecotich, 2004).

#### **4.5.1.2 Methodologies for studying cognitive appraisal theory**

Cognitive appraisal processes have been empirically demonstrated in various contexts such as psychology, sociology and consumer behaviour (Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005; Smith & Bolton, 2002). Experimental research designs are often employed to study consumers' cognitive appraisals, emotions and behaviour, by manipulating specific variables (e.g. the elements of the primary appraisals – goal relevance, goal congruence and goal content). However, the manipulations of such variables are difficult to achieve in laboratory-based experimental research and respondents may not be able to fully project them into imaginary situations, implying that their responses then do not reflect real-life experience (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

Stephens and Gwinner (1998) suggest that, in order to fruitfully explore consumers' cognitive appraisals, data should be collected from individuals at the time when they experience displeasure with their actual purchases (i.e. the phenomenon should be studied in the field as it happens), implying that studies using a survey research design should be employed. Studies conducted by Mick and Fournier (1998), Laros and Steenkamp (2005), Bougie *et al.* (2003), Bonifield and Cole (2007), Chea and Luo (2008) and Demir *et al.* (2009) successfully used a survey design in studying consumers' cognitive appraisals, and their resultant emotions and behaviours. Respondents were asked to recall a particular negative consumption event (product or service failure), and their dissatisfactions, emotions and behaviours to reflect real-life experiences.

#### **4.5.2 Measuring instrument**

A structured questionnaire (see Addendum B) was constructed and used for this survey, based on a thorough literature review concerning various theories and theoretical constructs applicable to the problem of this research. Conceptions from perceived product quality and consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction theory in terms of the confirmation/disconfirmation

paradigm, and complaint behaviour theory, particularly Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour, served as the conceptual background for studying consumers' perceptions of product performance failure and their actual complaint behaviour. Cognitive appraisal theory was studied to contribute toward a clearer understanding of consumers' emotional and behavioural responses following their appraisals of product performance failures.

The questionnaire was divided into four content sections (Sections A – D) to facilitate the eventual processing of the data:

**Section A:** Demographic information – age, level of education, monthly household income and residential area, to facilitate the demographic description of the sample.

**Section B:** Product performance expectations and actual product performance – from a list of appliances provided, respondents had to choose an appliance item that had caused them most dissatisfaction within the last four years. A Likert-type scale, adapted from a previous study of Donoghue (2008), was used to determine the type of performance failure (functional or symbolic) that had caused the dissatisfaction. This scale was adapted to determine respondents' performance expectations (functional or symbolic) before or when purchasing appliances. (The expectation scale was positioned before the performance failure scale in the questionnaire). The fourth question was open-ended where the respondents were to unambiguously state the actual fault of the appliance. Respondents had to describe the type of product failure (i.e. unambiguously state the actual fault that occurred) in an open-ended question.

**Section C:** Female consumers' reactions to actual performance – respondents were asked to indicate the degree of dissatisfaction, anger, shame, guilt, surprise, sadness, frustration and stress experienced concerning the appliance's faulty or poor performance, by crossing an appropriate number on four-point response scales. Respondents had to indicate whom they mostly blamed for the product failure and whether they felt the performance failure could have been prevented.

**Section D:** Coping methods/behaviours – respondents had to consider a list of actual actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction, by indicating what actions, if any, were taken. A nominal scale ("yes" or "no") was used to classify the answer to each type of action taken by respondents. An open-ended question was used to determine respondents' reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than redress.

A covering letter (see Addendum A) stating the purpose of the research, criteria for selection, how long it would take the respondents to complete the questionnaire, assurance of anonymity and a plea for the respondent's cooperation (Delpont, 2005:170), accompanied the questionnaire. The covering letter was written in easy and unambiguous, everyday language to ensure people's easy comprehension of what was expected from them and to improve response rates. The questionnaire was available in English only, as it is the official language used in Botswana. Both open-ended and closed questions were included.

#### 4.5.2.1 The structure of the questionnaire

The structure of the questionnaire is portrayed in Table 4.1 in terms of the different sections of the questionnaire, the specific aspects measured and the question numbering according to which different aspects were measured.

**TABLE 4.1: QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE**

SECTION	ASPECTS MEASURED	QUESTION NUMBERING
A	Demographic data Age Level of education Monthly household income Location in Gaborone	Question 1 Question 2 Question 3 Question 4
B	Dissatisfactory appliance Expected product performance Actual product performance Open-ended question: description of actual fault	Question 1 Question 2 Question 3 Question 4
C	Level of dissatisfaction Party mostly blamed Prevention of product failure Emotional responses	Question 1 Question 2 Question 3 Questions 4.1- 4.7
D	Consumer complaint actions Specific action taken	Questions 1-10

#### 4.5.3 Procedures for administering the questionnaire

A printed structured questionnaire was administered by the researcher through the help of three (3) trained fieldworkers, who were given clear instructions on how to collect the data from respondents. For validation purposes, i.e. to ascertain that interviews were conducted as specified (McDaniel & Gates, 2004:321), the fieldworkers were remunerated for only those questionnaires which were correctly completed. Fieldworkers were also trained in the objectives and purpose of the study. Female consumers who met the set criteria were approached in public areas, malls, workplaces or their homes, and given a questionnaire to complete. Where desired, the researcher or trained fieldworkers helped complete the

questionnaire for the respondent; however, it was ensured that responses were not influenced in any way for data reliability purposes. Most of the questionnaires were collected after 24 hours, while others were collected the same day. Two hundred (200) questionnaires were correctly completed and were used for analysis of data.

An incentive was provided: respondents entered a lucky draw voluntarily, where two lucky winners stood a chance to win a voucher to purchase any item at any Woolworths retail shop in Gaborone, Botswana. Respondents entered their contact numbers only for the purpose of the draw on a separate paper that was provided. The data collection was conducted during the months of June through August 2009.

## **4.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the data is discussed in terms of the quantification of the data collected through administering the self-administered questionnaires.

### **4.6.1 Coding and capturing of the data**

Open-ended and closed questions were edge-coded. Edge-coding means that codes were allocated to each question in the questionnaire and written in the appropriate space provided on the right-hand side, where there was a column for official use. The open-ended responses were written down on a separate paper and appropriately consolidated into separate comprehensible categories with numeric codes assigned. The edge-coded questionnaires were used for data capturing. The data-capturing division of the University of Pretoria captured the data by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and SAS program. Data cleaning was done through checking the allocated codes in the questionnaires to determine whether they were correctly captured to eliminate data processing error. Data errors due to incorrect coding and reading errors were rectified through contingency cleaning. The data was then ready for analysis.

## **4.7 OPERATIONALISATION**

Table 4.2 indicates the objectives and concomitant sub-objectives for this study, along with the questions and the types of statistical measurements used.

**TABLE 4.2: OPERATIONALISATION IN TERMS OF OBJECTIVES, SUB-OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS AND STATISTICAL METHODS**

OBJECTIVES AND SUB-OBJECTIVES	QUESTIONS (V = Variable)	STATISTICAL METHODS
<p><b>Objective 1</b> To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions that play a role in female consumers' quality perception of major household appliances</p>	<p>Section B: Question 2 (V7-V17)</p>	<p>Exploratory factor analysis</p>
<p><b>Objective 2</b> To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance failure causing female consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major electrical household appliances</p> <p><b>Sub-objective 2.1</b> To explore and describe female consumers' degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances</p>	<p>Section B: Question 3 (V18-V28) Question: 4 (V29)</p> <p>Section C: Question 1 (V30)</p>	<p>Exploratory factor analysis Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis</p> <p>Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis Z-test for equal proportions (p-value significant on 5% level)</p>
<p><b>Objective 3</b> To explore and describe the role of cognitive appraisal in dissatisfied female consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances</p> <p><b>Sub-objective 3.1</b> To explore and describe dissatisfied female consumers' attribution of responsibility for the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances</p> <p><b>Sub-objective 3.2</b> To explore and describe female consumers' level of stress experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances</p> <p><b>Sub-objective 3.3</b> To explore and describe the emotions that are elicited in dissatisfied female consumers during the cognitive appraisal process concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances</p> <p><b>Sub-objective 3.4</b> To explore and describe the coping strategies in terms of the coping methods/behaviours (consumer complaint responses) that dissatisfied female consumers engage in concerning the functional and/or performance failure of major household appliances</p> <p><b>Sub-objective 3.5</b> To explore and describe the relationship between dissatisfied female consumers' emotions that are elicited during the cognitive appraisal process and their complaint behaviour (coping behaviours) concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances</p> <p><b>Sub-objective 3.6</b> To describe the coping strategies in terms of coping methods/behaviours that dissatisfied female consumers engage in concerning performance failure of major household appliances when blame is attributed to a specific party</p>	<p>Section C: Question 2 (V31)</p> <p>Section C: Question 4.7, V39</p> <p>Section C: Question: 4 (4.1-4.6) (V33-V38)</p> <p>Section D: Questions 1-10 (V40-V50)</p> <p>Section C: Question: 4 (4.1-4.6) (V33-V38) and Section D: Questions 1-10 (V40-V50)</p> <p>Section C: Question 2 (V31) and Section D: Questions 1-10, (V40-V50)</p>	<p>Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis (SAS)</p> <p>Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis Z-test for equal proportion (p-value significant on 5% level)</p> <p>Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis (SAS) Chi-square test for equal proportions (p-value significant on 5% level)</p> <p>Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis (SAS)</p> <p>Chi-square test (p-value significant on 5% level) Fisher's exact test</p> <p>Chi-square test for equal proportions (p-value significant on 5% level)</p>

#### **4.7.1 Explanation of statistical methods**

Statistical methods used in the analysis are discussed as they appear in the operationalisation table. However, no explanation is provided for the calculation of frequencies and frequencies analysis as it is considered self-explanatory.

##### **4.7.1.1 Exploratory Factor analysis**

Exploratory Factor analysis examines the correlations among a number of variables and identifies clusters of highly interrelated variables that reflect underlying themes or factors within the data to aid with data interpretation (Salkind, 1997:197; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:274; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:472). The strength of factor analysis is that it allows the researcher to examine sets of variables and understand the close relationship between them. Principal Factor analysis was done on variables V7-V17 (expectations of product performance, see Addendum A – questionnaire) and on V18-V28 (actual performance of appliance). This statistical analysis was performed to identify the orderly simplification of large numbers of intercorrelated measures to a few representative constructs or factors (Ho, 2006:203). The eigenvalue criterion was used to determine the number of initial unrotated factors to be extracted. Only factors with eigenvalues of 1 or greater are considered significant, while factors with values less than 1 are discarded. Eigenvalue is a ratio between the common (shared) variance and the specific (unique) variance explained by a specific factor extracted. There was no question which was discarded in this study where principal factor analysis was concerned, hence implying that the statistical eigenvalues were very significant. Orthogonal and oblique rotation using the varimax approach. The varimax rotation approach has achieved widespread use, as it seems to give the clearest separation of factors (Ho, 2006:206).

The factors to be determined for this study were functional and/or symbolic. In interpreting factors, the size of the factor loadings (correlation coefficient between variables and the factors they represent) helps in interpretation. As a rule, variables with large loadings indicate that they are representative of the factor, and vice versa. In deciding what is small or large, a rule of thumb suggests that factor loadings higher than  $\pm 0.33$  are considered to meet the minimal level of practical significance (Ho, 2006:207). Therefore, a factor loading of 0.33 denotes approximately 10% of the variable's total variance accounted for by the factor.

#### **4.7.1.2 Z-Test for equal proportions**

In this study, the z-test was used and applied to test the equality of proportions of variables with only two proportions; where more than two proportions were involved, a chi-square test for equal proportions was used.

#### **4.7.1.3 Multiple Response analysis**

Multiple response analysis allows the researcher to analyse research questions that can have more than one response (Ho, 2006:200). To perform a frequency run with multiple response data involved combining variables into groups. The multiple response method where each variable had a value representing the actual fault of an appliance by the responses given by the respondents, was used on open-ended questions V29 and V46.

#### **4.7.1.4 Fisher's exact test**

Fisher's exact test is a statistical significance test used in the analysis of contingency tables where sample sizes are small. It is so called because the significance of the deviation from the null hypothesis can be calculated exactly, rather than relying on approximation that comes exact in the limit as the sample grows to infinity, as with many statistical tests. The test is useful for categorical data resulting from classifying objects in two different ways; it is used to examine the significance of the association between the two kinds of classification (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). The p-value from the test is computed as if the margins of the table are fixed. With large samples, a chi-square test can be used. The usual rule of thumb is that the chi-square test is not suitable when the expected value in any of the cells of the table, given the margins, is below 10. The Fisher's exact test of significance may be used instead of the chi-square test in 2-by-2 tables, particularly for small samples. It tests the probability of getting a table as strong as the observed or stronger simply due to the chance of sampling, where the "strong" is defined by the proportion of cases on the diagonal with the most cases (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). The Fisher's exact test of significance was used side by side with the chi-square test in this study, to test for associations between dissatisfied female consumers' emotions and coping behaviours.

#### **4.7.1.5 Chi-square significance test**

The chi-square test is probably the most used non-parametric test of significance for nominal data. It shows an association between variables to determine how closely observed frequencies match the expected frequencies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:274; Babbie & Mouton,

2001:481). If the p-value is greater than 0.05 the statistical null hypothesis cannot be rejected, hence there will be no association between variables; for example, action taken and stress level – as was the case in this study. The p-value refers to the exact probability of getting a computed test statistic that was largely due to chance (McDaniel & Gates, 2004:353). Thus the smaller the p-value, the smaller the probability that the observed result occurred by chance.

## **4.8 QUALITY OF THE DATA**

The quality of the study was ensured by considering the validity and reliability of measurements

### **4.8.1 Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which a specific measurement accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:122; McDaniel & Gates, 2004:202; Zikmund, 2003:301-302). The dimensions of validity include theoretical validity, measurement validity and inferential validity.

#### **4.8.1.1 Theoretical validity**

A thorough review of the literature was done to become acquainted with the theory on perceived quality, the expectancy disconfirmation model (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983), Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, and cognitive appraisal theory, to guide the formulation of a conceptual framework and research for this study. The central concepts for this study were explicated in terms of theoretical definitions found in the literature.

#### **4.8.1.2 Measurement validity**

The validity of measurements (measurement validity) can be determined by using standard yardsticks, including content validity and construct validity (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:122-124; Delport, 2005:160-162).

**Content validity** is concerned with the representivity or sampling adequacy of the content (topics or items) of an instrument. One has to determine whether the instrument contains an adequate sample of items representing the concept, and whether the instrument really

measures the specific concept (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:123; Delport, 2005:161). In this study, the denotations of the central concepts were accurate indicators of the connotations of the concepts. In addition, the items in the questionnaire related to the sub-objectives of the study.

To establish **construct validity**, the meaning of the construct must be understood and the proposition that the theory makes about the relationships between this and other constructs has to be identified (Delport, 2005:161). The constructs for this study were precisely explicated, as already discussed in the paragraph on theoretical validity. Additionally, multiple indicators were used to measure the constructs of performance failure to prevent mono-operation bias. Donoghue (2008) successfully used the performance failure scale.

#### **4.8.1.3 Inferential validity**

As may be derived from inferential statistics, inferential validity is a measure that ensures that statistical inferences about a larger population from a small population are valid (Leedey & Ormrod, 2005:252). It is achieved by statistical tests like chi-square tests and Fisher's exact test during analysis to ensure level of significance, level of association or correlation between variables. For example, the said tests were used to determine the level of significant association between emotions and coping methods/behaviours.

#### **4.8.2 Reliability issues**

- Reliability refers to the degree to which measurements are free from random error and therefore yield consistent results (Zikmund, 2003:300; McDaniel & Gates, 2004:200). To ensure the reliability of measurements, Donoghue's (2008) scale to determine the type of performance failure (functional and/or symbolic) was adapted and used in this study. The scale has proved to be reliable.
- The questionnaire was constructed bearing in mind the principles of questionnaire construction to counter the effect of measurement instrument effects on the reliability of the data (Mouton & Marais, 1990:91). The questionnaire used a variety of response systems or question types, to obtain the desired information (Delport, 2005:163).
- The study leaders and a professional statistician ensured that the questions were relevant, understandable and easy to complete by checking the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire was pre-tested before finally being administered for the actual survey.

- Fieldworkers were trained in how to collect information from respondents and were given clear instructions concerning the aims of the study (the purpose of the study was made known to respondents by means of a covering letter).

#### **4.8.3 Ethical issues**

According to Strydom (2005:57), “ethics are a set of moral principles which are widely accepted and offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards respondents, other researchers, students and sponsors”. The following ethical requirements were adhered to for this research:

- The researcher ensured that the objectives of the study were well communicated to the respondents.
- Informed consent was sought from respondents to participate in the study willingly.
- No pressure or coercion was used on respondents; they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.
- The researcher ensured that the information provided by respondents was treated with the utmost confidentiality and privacy; respondents did not write their names to link them with the data (De Vos, 2005:61).
- Fieldworkers were adequately trained in administering questionnaires. When a respondent needed assistance to complete the questionnaire, value judgements on the information provided or gestures that could mislead the respondent were avoided.
- The study was conducted under the guidance of the supervisors.
- The Ethics Committee (Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Pretoria) approved the research proposal.
- As required by the Department of Consumer Science, University of Pretoria, the research findings were compiled and released in the form of a written report, with as much accuracy and objectively as possible for use in publications and referencing.

#### **4.8.4 Data presentation**

Raw data was captured and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and SAS program. The data conversion is available in hard copy and electronically at the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 5. First, the results are described in terms of the demographic variables relevant for this study. Next, the results are presented and described in the sequence of the



objectives and sub-objectives. This means that the data is not presented in the particular sequence of the questionnaire.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESEARCH RESULTS

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#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the study in terms of the objectives and sub-objectives to address the problem that was under investigation. The analysis starts with a description of the demographic characteristics (age, educational level, monthly household income and location) and other descriptive characteristics of the sample. Next, an analysis of the objectives and sub-objectives follows. For the purpose of the analysis of the data for this study, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. However, two presentations on demographic data (age, educational level, monthly household income and location) were first needed to describe the respondents' characteristics. The gender of the respondents is not included as the study focused on female consumers only. The aspect of the appliance that caused the most dissatisfaction does not form part of the core objectives, but it was essential, as it aided respondents in describing their behaviours and the emotions they experienced vividly with reference to the appliance that gave them problems. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages (used to one decimal point), graphs, pie charts, tables and statistical tests (i.e. the chi-square test, Fisher's exact test and the z-test) were used to present the data in a manageable form. Inferential statistics such as exploratory factor analysis were also used. The number of analysed questionnaires is indicated as  $n$ , and only valid percentages are reported, excluding the missing responses (if any) in a question. A total of 213 questionnaires were collected, of which only 200 were usable.

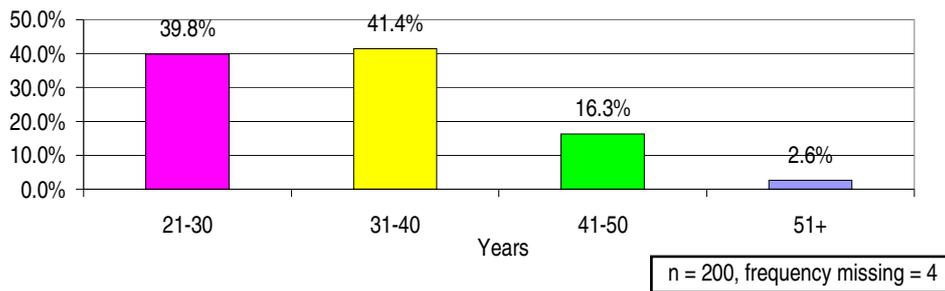
#### 5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND OTHER DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

##### 5.2.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Female respondents were asked to indicate their age, level of education, monthly household income and residential area.

Figure 5.1 shows the age distribution of respondents.

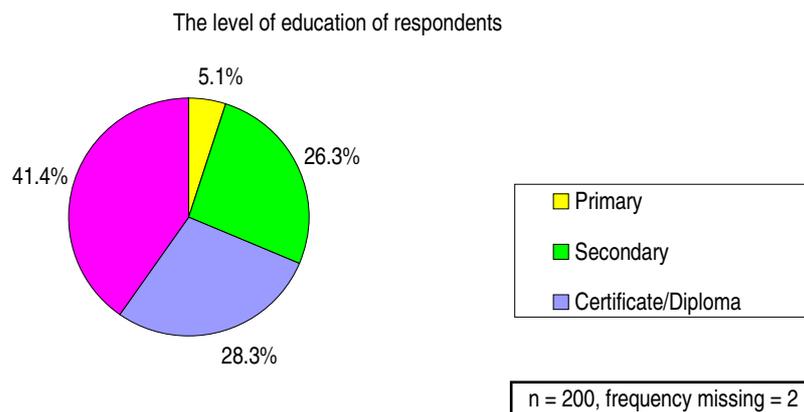
Age distribution of respondents



**FIGURE 5.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**

The ages of respondents were grouped into age groups or categories, as indicated in Figure 5.1. A total of 39.8% of the respondents were 21-30 years of age and 41.3% of the respondents were 31-40 years old. Whereas 16.3% of the respondents were 41-50 years old, 2.6% of the respondents were 51 years and older. When one combines the age category of 21-30 years with the category of 31-40 years, it is evident that the majority, or 81.1% (39.8% + 41.3%) of the respondents belonged to this particular group. When one combines the age category of 41-50 years with the category of 51 years and older, it is clear that 18.9% (16.3% + 2.6%) of the respondents fell in the age group of “over 40”.

Figure 5.2 shows the highest level of education of respondents.

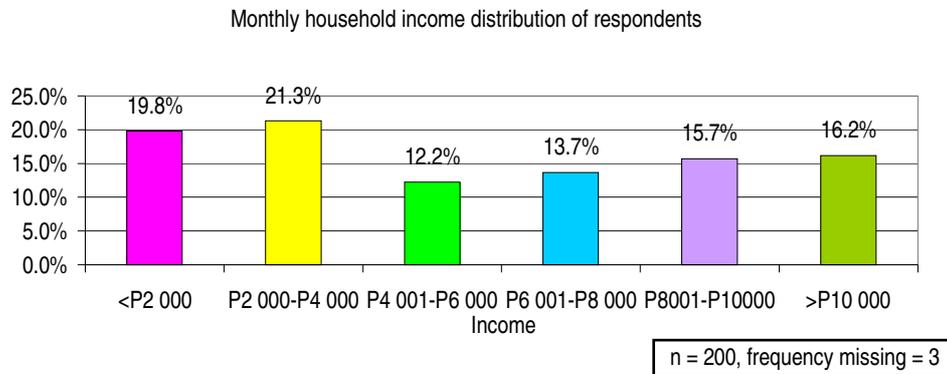


**FIGURE 5.2: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS**

The respondents were quite highly educated, as depicted in Figure 5.2. A total of 41.4% of the respondents had obtained either a Bachelors degree or a postgraduate degree, 28.3% of

the respondents obtained a diploma or a certificate, and 26.3% and 5.1% of the respondent obtained secondary and primary educational schooling respectively.

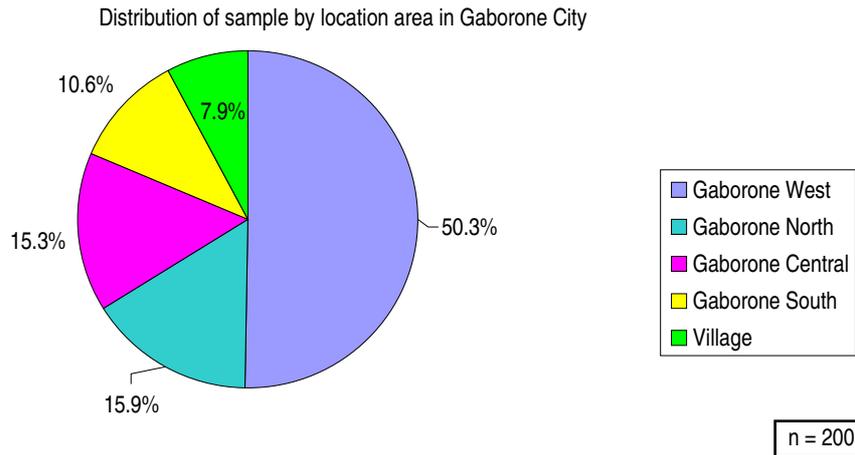
The monthly household income of respondents is shown in Figure 5.3.



**FIGURE 5.3: MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**

Figure 5.3 shows that 21.3% of the respondents fell in the monthly income category of P2001-P4000 (R2601-R5200), followed by 19.8% respondents who earned less than P2000 (R2600). In the higher income categories, 16.2% of the respondents earned more than P10000 (R13000), 15.7% earned P8001-P10000 (R10401-R13000), 13.7% earned P6001-P8000 (R7801-R10400) and 13.2% earned P4001-P6000 (R5201-R7800).

Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of respondents' residential areas. Information in this regard was collected to confirm that the respondents lived in any area of Gaborone city.



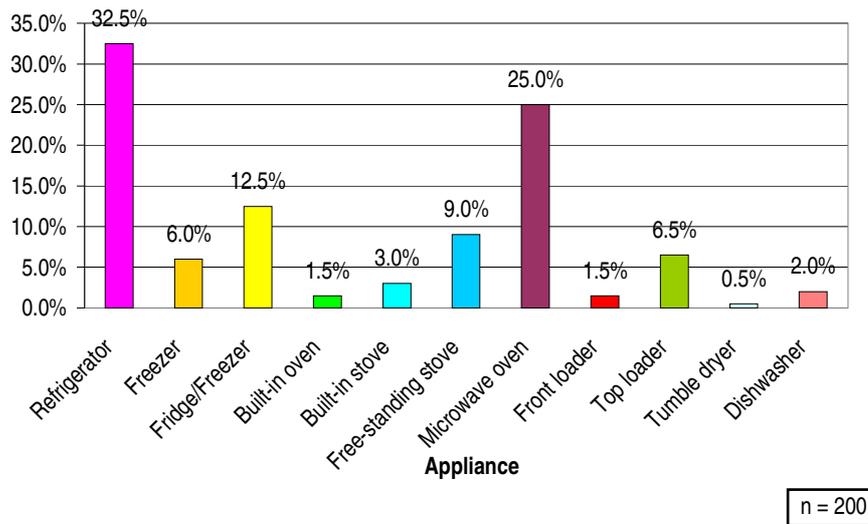
**FIGURE 5.4: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BY LOCATION AREA IN GABORONE CITY**

The respondents had to reside in any area of Gaborone city. In total, 41 location areas were reported, which were then grouped into five groupings to describe the data. The groupings consisted of Gaborone-West (G-West), Gaborone-North, Gaborone Central, Gaborone-South and Village. Most respondents came from Gaborone-West (50.3%), which is a large location with varied social classes ranging from medium- to high-income earners. The researcher resided in this area; thus it was within easy proximity for data collection. A total of 15.9% of the respondents resided in Gaborone-North, followed by 15.3% in Gaborone Central, which consists largely of workplaces and a few residential areas. Only 10.6% and 7.9% of respondents resided in Gaborone-South and Village respectively.

### 5.2.2 Major household appliances causing the most dissatisfaction

Information about the dissatisfactory appliances was collected although this did not form part of the core objectives of the study. However, it was essential to collect the information as it aided respondents in memory recall to describe their expectations of the product performance, their evaluation of the actual product performance, their resultant emotions and the coping strategies (complaint behaviours) employed following the product dissatisfaction. Respondents were asked to select from a list of given major household appliances, one appliance that caused them the most dissatisfaction.

**Distribution of the most dissatisfactory appliances**



**FIGURE 5.5: DISTRIBUTION OF THE MOST DISSATISFACTORY APPLIANCES**

It can be deduced from Figure 5.5 that 32.5% of the respondents were the most dissatisfied with their refrigerators, followed by 25.0% of the respondents with their microwave ovens. The semi-arid climate in Botswana necessitates having refrigerators to keep food fresh and cool, implying that refrigerators will be high in demand. When categorising the appliances in product classes, the following patterns emerged in terms of the categories of appliances causing the most dissatisfaction for the sample of consumers: cooling appliances 51.0% [refrigerators (32.5%) + freezers (6.0%) + combination fridge-freezers (12.5%)]; microwave ovens 25.0%; cooking and baking appliances 13.5% [built-in ovens (1.5%) + built-in stoves (3.0%) + free-standing stoves (9.0%)]; laundry appliances 8.5% [front loading washing machines (1.5%) and top loading washing machines (6.5%) + tumble-dryers (0.5%)], and dishwashers 2%.

### 5.3 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 1

In the following sections, the results are presented in terms of the objectives and sub-objectives for the study to address the problem under investigation:

**Objective 1:** To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions that play a role in female consumers' quality perception of major household appliances

### **5.3.1 Exploratory factor analysis of the functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions that play a role in female consumers' quality perception of major household appliances**

After exploration of the literature concerning consumers' expectations about product quality, it was concluded that the consumers' expectations for the appliance's performance before purchasing or using it may manifest in "functional and symbolic performance expectations dimensions". Bearing this in mind, 11 items (statements/variables) concerning the consumers' expectations for functional and symbolic performance of major electrical household appliances, were compiled. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with these (11) statements by using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = "definitely agree", 2 = "agree", 3 = "uncertain", 4 = "disagree" and 5 = "definitely disagree") (Question 2, Section B – Addendum A).

An exploratory factor analysis (principal factor analysis) was done on variables V7-V17 (Question 2, Section B – Addendum A) to reduce the data dimensions and to obtain the minimum number of factors needed to represent the original data (Ho, 2006:206). Two factors or dimensions were identified or retained by the minimum eigenvalue criterion, and were labelled the functional performance expectations factor and the symbolic performance expectations factor. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was performed on the 11 variables. An overall Cronbach alpha of 0.831 indicated a very good overall reliability of the 11 variables. No statements/items were removed from the analysis.

An orthogonal factor rotation (Varimax) was done to facilitate the interpretation of the factors, which assumed that the factors were independent. The rotated factor pattern showed that variables 12 to 17 loaded high on factor 1 (symbolic performance expectations factor), and that variables 7 to 11 loaded high on factor 2 (functional performance expectations factor).

An oblique rotation was also done to see whether the factors were correlated. The two factors had a low correlation of  $r = 0.3716$ . Therefore, the value of  $r^2 = (0.3716)^2 \times 100 = 13.81\%$ . This implies that 13.81% of the variation in the one factor can be explained by the other factor. The factor loadings for the two rotation methods were approximately the same, except for variable 10 ("the appliance should not require more upkeep (maintenance) and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition"). Variable 10 loaded on the functional performance expectations factor (factor 2), with a loading of 0.45, and on the symbolic performance expectations factor (factor 1), with a loading of 0.24. The resulting factor loadings, for both the functional performance expectations factor and symbolic performance expectations factor, are indicated in Table 5.1.

**TABLE 5.1: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS FACTOR AND THE FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS FACTOR**

Variables	Factor loadings	
	Symbolic performance expectations factor	Functional performance expectations factor
The appliance should operate properly in terms of its intended end-use.		0.67056
The appliance should be durable (last long).		0.67310
The appliance should be easy to work with.		0.78360
The appliance should not require more upkeep (maintenance) and care, compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition.	0.23722	0.44559
The appliance should be safe to use (no health risks).		0.67767
The appliance should be beautiful/attractive.	0.66580	
The appliance should reflect the image/identity I associate with my personal style.	0.64561	
The appliance should make me feel good about myself.	0.74742	
I should enjoy using the appliance (using the appliance should be an emotionally pleasurable experience).	0.56019	
I should think highly of the appliance (it should impress me).	0.70609	
The appliance should make others think highly of me (it should impress others).	0.80797	

Percentage variance explained 99.9

Cronbach's alpha 0.831

Rotation method: varimax on an orthogonal transformation matrix

Only factor loadings with practical significance were recorded in the table against the variables and performance dimensions they represented.

## 5.4 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 2

**Objective 2** To explore the functional and/or symbolic performance failure causing consumers' dissatisfaction concerning major household appliances

### 5.4.1 Exploratory factor analysis of functional and/or symbolic performance failure

Exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine the performance failure dimensions that caused consumers' dissatisfaction with their major household appliances. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with 11 statements concerning the functional and symbolic performance failure of their appliances, by using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = "definitely agree", 2 = "agree", 3 = "uncertain", 4 = "disagree" and 5 = "definitely disagree") (Question 3, Section B – Addendum B).

An exploratory analysis (principal factor analysis) was done on variables V18-V28 (Question 3, Section B – Addendum B). Three factors or dimensions were identified or retained by the minimum eigenvalue criterion, namely the functional performance failure factor, the symbolic performance failure factor and the combined functional and symbolic performance failure factor. Cronbach’s alpha was done on the 11 variables. An overall Cronbach alpha of 0.873 indicated a very good overall reliability of the 11 variables. No statements were removed from the analysis.

An oblique factor rotation was chosen instead of an orthogonal rotation because the rotated factor pattern matrix showed that a few variables loaded on two or three factors simultaneously. Variables V20, V22, V23 and V24 loaded high on factor 1 (combined functional and symbolic performance failure factor), variables V25 to V28 loaded high on factor 2 (symbolic performance failure factor), while variables V18, V19 and V21 loaded high on factor 3 (functional performance failure factor).

The correlations between the three factors were moderately high. The correlations between the combined functional and symbolic performance failure factor (factor 1) and the symbolic performance failure factor (factor 2) was 0.66051, and the correlation between factor 1 and the functional performance failure factor (factor 3) was 0.53299, confirming that these factors are dependent.

However, it should be noted that V21 (“the appliance required more upkeep (maintenance) and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition”) loaded on the combined functional and symbolic performance failure factor (factor 1) with a loading of 0.40, and the functional performance failure factor (factor 3) with a loading of 0.39. The resulting factor loadings for the respective performance failure factors are indicated in Table 5.2.

**TABLE 5.2: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE COMBINED FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FAILURE FACTOR, SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE FAILURE FACTOR AND THE FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE FAILURE FACTOR**

Variables	Factor loadings		
	Combined functional and symbolic performance failure factor	Symbolic performance failure factor	Functional performance failure factor
The appliance did not operate properly in terms of its intended end-use.			0.81993
The appliance was not durable (did not last long).			0.51617
The appliance was not easy to work with.	0.74385		
The appliance required more upkeep (maintenance) and care, compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition.	0.40227		0.39951
The appliance was not safe to use (caused health risks).	0.70956		
The appliance was no longer beautiful/attractive.	0.77191		
The appliance no longer reflected the image/identity I associated with my personal style.	0.71842		
The appliance no longer made me feel good about myself.		0.65596	
I did not enjoy using the appliance any longer (using the appliance had no emotionally pleasurable experience).		0.43948	
The appliance no longer made me think highly of myself (did not impress me anymore).		0.98123	
The appliance no longer made others think highly of me (did not impress others).		0.77532	

Percentage variance explained 88.07

Cronbach's alpha 0.873

Rotation method: Harris-Kaiser on an oblique transformation matrix

Only factor loadings with practical significance were recorded in the table against the variables and performance dimensions they represented.

#### 5.4.2 Analysis of open question

Respondents were asked to describe what happened/went wrong (i.e. describe the actual fault) concerning the performance failure of their major electrical household appliances, in the form of an open-ended question (Question 4, Section B – Addendum B). The responses of the actual faults were then written down and grouped into categories identified when conducting the literature review. Multiple responses were obtained, implying that the responses could be grouped into more than one category. The results are shown in Table 5.3.

**TABLE 5.3: DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT HAPPENED/WENT WRONG IN TERMS OF INDICATORS FOR FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC PRODUCT PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS**

Performance dimensions	Indicators	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 168
Functional Performance	Unusual (unsuccessful) performance/functioning in terms of intended end-use (not working as intended)	111	66.0
	Inconvenience in operating the appliances (physical discomfort, waste of time etc.)	26	15.5
	Inconvenience/difficulty in the maintenance and care of the appliance	7	4.2
	Insufficient durability	14	8.3
	Health hazards	7	4.2
Symbolic performance	Lack of sensory pleasure	2	1.2
	Lack of an emotionally pleasurable experience	1	0.6
Total responses		168	100.0

n = 200

Frequency missing = 32

Proportionately more responses were obtained for the functional performance dimension compared to the symbolic performance dimension, indicating more problems with the functional performance of major electrical household appliances than with the symbolic performance thereof. Unusual product performance/functioning in terms of the intended end-use (66.0% of the responses) were the major functional product performance problem experienced. (This category included responses relating to “unsuccessful (improper) product performance”, implying the failure/breakdown of the appliance or some component(s) thereof. However, the category was labelled “unusual performance/functioning in terms of intended end-use (not working as intended)” as this was considered to be inclusive of product failures/breakdowns). Relatively few responses were obtained for insufficient durability (8.3%). Only a few responses indicated inconvenience experienced in maintaining/caring (4.2%) for dissatisfactory appliances, failure/breakdown of appliance or some component(s) thereof (15.5%), and health hazards (4.2%). Hardly any responses (1.2% and 0.6%) were obtained for product problems relating to the symbolic performance of appliances.

**Sub-objective 2.1** To explore and describe female consumers’ degree of dissatisfaction experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of dissatisfaction experienced when their appliances were faulty or performed poorly (Question 1, Section C – Addendum B). The results are summarised in Table 5.4.

**TABLE 5.4: LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION EXPERIENCED WHEN THE APPLIANCES WERE FAULTY OR PERFORMED POORLY**

Level of dissatisfaction experienced	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage n = 197	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Slightly dissatisfied	18	9.3	31.6	< 0.0001*
Moderately dissatisfied	43	22.3		
Very dissatisfied	82	42.5	68.4	
Extremely dissatisfied	50	25.9		
Total	193	100.00	100.00	

n = 200

Frequency missing = 7

\* Significant on the 5% level of significance

A total of 9.3% of the respondents were slightly dissatisfied and 22.3% of the respondents were moderately dissatisfied with the faulty/poor performance of their specific appliances. It is clear that 42.5% of the respondents were very dissatisfied and 25.9% of the respondents experienced extreme dissatisfaction concerning the faulty/poor performance of their specific appliances. When combining the categories of slightly dissatisfied with moderately dissatisfied (9.3% + 22.3%) and very dissatisfied with extremely dissatisfied (42.5% + 25.9%), it is evident that 31.6% and 68.4% respondents fell within these two larger categories respectively. The results of the z-test for equal proportions indicate a significant difference between these proportions (p-value < 0.0001) (refer to Table 5.4). Significantly more respondents were very dissatisfied to extremely dissatisfied, compared to the respondents who were slightly to moderately dissatisfied.

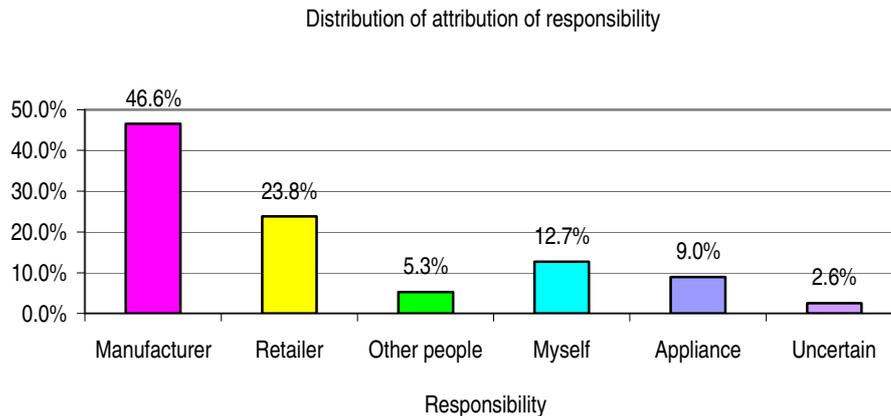
## 5.5 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 3

**Objective 3** To explore and describe the role of cognitive appraisal in dissatisfied consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

**Sub-objective 3.1** To explore and describe dissatisfied consumers' attribution of responsibility for the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

Respondents were asked to indicate the party, from a list of parties provided, whom they mostly blamed (held responsible) for the appliance’s performance failure (poor performance), or to provide another party, if none of the given parties applied (Question 2, Section C – Addendum A).

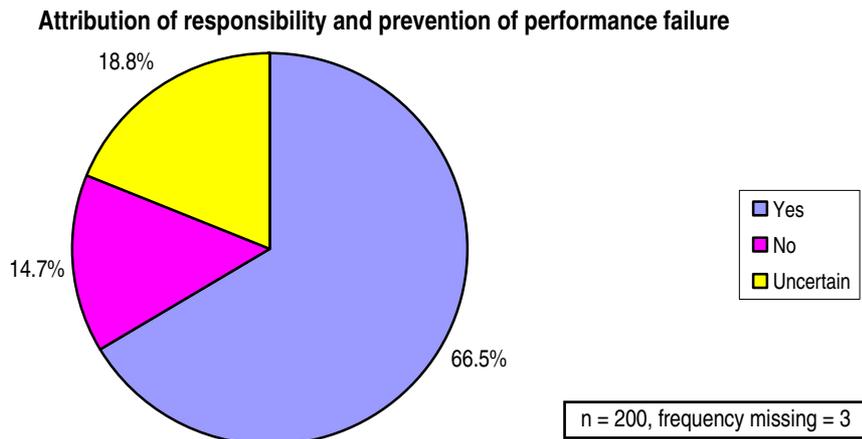
The results are shown in Figure 5.6.



**FIGURE 5.6: DISTRIBUTION OF ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY**

As depicted in Figure 5.6, 46.6% of the respondents blamed the manufacturer for the appliance’s performance failure, followed by 23.8% of the respondents, who blamed the retailer. Very few respondents blamed the appliance itself for the problem failure (9.0%), and only 5.3% of the respondents blamed other people (such as the person who purchased the appliance or the person who operated the appliance). (All of these attributions can be regarded as external to the person/respondent.) Only 12.7% of the respondents blamed themselves for the performance failure, implying that the causes for product failure were perceived as internal to the person. A total of 2.6% of the respondents were uncertain about whom to blame for the product failure.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the party responsible for the appliance’s failure (poor performance) could have prevented the failure (poor performance) (Question 3, Section C – Addendum B). (This question was not formally part of the objectives for this study but it was expected that the answers obtained would help to explain respondents’ emotional and behavioural responses (Nyer, 1997). The results are shown in Figure 5.7.



**FIGURE 5.7: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR APPLIANCE FAILURE AND ASSUMED PREVENTION OF THE POOR PERFORMANCE BY PARTY BLAMED**

From the diagram, it is clear that respondents believed or rather assumed that the party they blamed for the poor product performance or the product failure, could have prevented the poor performance. The previous figure (5.6) revealed that respondents blamed the manufacturer and the retailer the most for the performance failure of their appliances. A total of 66.5% of the respondents indicated that the party they considered responsible could have prevented the problem, while 18.8% were uncertain as to whether the party responsible could have prevented the poor performance of the appliance. A total of 14.7% of the respondents did not believe that the party they blamed for the poor performance of the appliance could have prevented the performance failure.

**Sub-objective 3.2** To explore and describe female consumers' level of stress experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

The cognitive appraisal theory of emotion argues that stressful appraisal outcomes (psychological stress) elicit negative emotions such as anger and guilt (Chaudhuri, 2006:109-112). Therefore, the appraisal of the performance failure of major household appliances will result in psychological stress, which in turn will result in negative emotions necessitating specific coping strategies in the form of consumer complaint behaviour.

Respondents were asked to indicate the intensity of the stress that they experienced due to the appliance's poor/faulty performance. The results are summarised in Table 5.5.

**TABLE 5.5: INTENSITY OF STRESS EXPERIENCED WHEN THE APPLIANCES WERE FAULTLY OR PERFORMED POORLY**

Level of stress experienced	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage n = 198	p-value z-test for equal proportions
Slightly stressed	35	17.7	39.9	0.0045*
Moderately stressed	44	22.2		
Very stressed	69	34.8	60.1	
Extremely stressed	50	25.3		
Total	198	100.00	100.00	

n = 200

Frequency missing = 2

\* Significant on the 5% level of significance

Table 5.5 shows that 60.1% of the respondents were very to extremely stressed when their major household appliance were faulty or performed poorly. A total of 39% of the respondents were slightly to moderately stressed about the poor or faulty performance of the appliance item. The results of the z-test for equal proportions indicate a significant difference between these proportions (p-value = 0.0045) (refer to Table 5.5). Significantly, more respondents were very to extremely stressed compared to the respondents who were slightly to moderately stressed.

**Sub-objective 3.3** To explore and describe the emotions that are elicited in dissatisfied female consumers during the cognitive appraisal process concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

Respondents were asked to indicate the intensity of the emotions (i.e. anger, shame, guilt, surprise, sadness and frustration) that they experienced due to the appliance's poor/faulty performance. The results are summarised in Table 5.6.



**TABLE 5.6: INTENSITY OF EMOTION EXPERIENCED FOLLOWING THE APPLIANCE'S FAULTY OR POOR PERFORMANCE**

Type of emotion	Intensity of emotion	Frequency	Percentage	Total percentage	p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test for equal proportions
Anger	Not angry at all	14	7.0	7.0	< 0.0001*
	Reasonably angry	76	38.0	38.0	
	Very angry	72	36.0	55.0	
	Extremely angry	38	19.0		
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	
Shame	Not ashamed at all	68	34.5	34.5	0.0586
	Reasonably ashamed	51	25.9	25.9	
	Very ashamed	51	25.9	39.6	
	Extremely ashamed	27	13.7		
	Total	197	100.0	100.0	
Guilt	Not guilty at all	115	58.1	58.1	< 0.0001*
	Reasonably guilty	36	18.2	18.2	
	Very guilty	34	17.2	23.7	
	Extremely guilty	13	6.6		
	Total	198	100.0	100.0	
Surprise	Not surprised at all	15	7.6	7.6	< 0.0001*
	Reasonably surprised	41	20.8	20.8	
	Very surprised	102	51.8	71.6	
	Extremely surprised	39	19.8		
	Total	197	100.0	100.0	
Sadness	Not sad at all	16	8.1	8.1	< 0.0001*
	Reasonably sad	60	30.3	30.3	
	Very sad	75	37.9	61.6	
	Extremely sad	47	23.7		
	Total	198	100.0	100.0	
Frustration	Not frustrated at all	10	5.1	5.1	< 0.0001*
	Reasonably frustrated	52	26.3	26.3	
	Very frustrated	87	43.9	68.6	
	Extremely frustrated	49	24.7		
	Total	198	100.0	100.0	

n = 200

Frequency missing: shame = 3, guilt = 2, surprise = 3, sadness = 2, frustration = 2

\* Significant on 5% level of significance

Table 5.6 shows that a total of 7.0% respondents did not experience any anger at all, while 38% respondents were reasonably angry. 55.0% respondents varied between very angry and extremely angry. The chi-square test for equal proportions indicates a significant difference between these proportions (p-value < 0.0001). Significantly, more respondents were very to extremely angry, compared to the respondents who were reasonably angry or not angry at all.

A total of 34.5% of the respondents were not ashamed at all, while 25.9% respondents were reasonably ashamed. A total of 25.9% respondents were very ashamed, and 13.7% were extremely ashamed following the appliance's faulty or poor performance. The proportion of

the “not ashamed at all” category compared to the “reasonably ashamed” category and the “very to extremely ashamed” category is 34.5%, 25.9% and 39.6% respectively. The chi-square test for equal proportions indicates no significant differences between these proportions ( $p$ -value = 0.0586) – implying that the proportions are distributed evenly.

Table 5.6 shows that 58.1% of the respondents did not feel guilty at all, while 18.2% respondents felt reasonably guilty. 17.2% respondents felt very guilty and 6.6% felt extremely guilty following the appliance’s faulty or poor performance. The chi-square test for equal proportions indicates significant differences between the proportions of “not guilty at all” (58.1), “reasonably guilty” (18.2) and “very to extremely guilty” (23.7) category, implying that significantly more respondents did not feel guilty compared to the respondents who felt reasonably guilty and those who varied between very and extremely guilty.

A total of 7.6% respondents were not surprised at all, while 20.8% respondents were reasonably surprised. 71.6% respondents varied between very and extremely surprised. The chi-square test for equal proportions indicates a significant difference between these proportions ( $p$ -value < 0.0001) (refer to Table 5.6). Significantly, more respondents were very to extremely surprised compared to the respondents who were reasonably surprised or not surprised at all.

A total of 8.1% respondents did not experience sadness at all, while 30.3% respondents were reasonably sad. A total of 61.6% respondents varied between very and extremely sad. The chi-square test for equal proportions indicates a significant difference between these proportions ( $p$ -value < 0.0001) (refer to Table 5.6). Significantly, more respondents were very to extremely sad compared to the respondents who were reasonably sad or not sad at all.

A total of 5.1% of respondents were not frustrated at all, while 26.3% respondents were reasonably frustrated. A total of 68.6% respondents varied between very to extremely frustrated. The chi-square test for equal proportions indicates a significant difference between these proportions ( $p$ -value < 0.0001). Significantly, more respondents were very to extremely frustrated compared to the respondents who were reasonably frustrated or not frustrated at all.

The majority of the respondents felt very to extremely frustrated (68.6%), sad (61.6%) and surprised (71.6%), while a significant proportion of respondents felt very to extremely angry (55.0%). Most of the respondents did not feel guilty (58.1) following the appliance’s faulty or poor performance.

**Sub-objective 3.4** To explore and describe the coping strategies in terms of the coping methods/behaviours (consumer complaint responses) that dissatisfied female consumers engage in concerning the functional and/or performance failure of major household appliances

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

The results are shown in Table 5.7.

**TABLE 5.7: ACTIONS TAKEN VERSUS NO ACTION TAKEN**

Action/no action	Frequency	Percentage
Took action	157	80.1
Took no action	39	19.9
Total	196	100.00

n = 200

Frequency missing = 4

Concerning the action versus no-action response options, the results indicate that 80.1% of the respondents took action, and 19.9% respondents did not take any action. Where respondents took action (n = 157), they were also asked to indicate the type of actions that they engaged in, in terms of Day and Landon’s (1977) private and public action categories. Questions 2 to 10, Section D (Addendum B) determined whether respondents took part in private action (i.e. talked to friends and family, used another brand name, stopped supporting the retailer) and/or public action (i.e. contacting the retailer/manufacturer/a repair service/a consumer protection organisation, writing a complaint letter and/or contacting a legal representative), or not. For each of these questions, respondents had to indicate “yes” or “no”. To describe the results, the respective complaint actions were categorised in terms of the different types of coping strategies (i.e. problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance coping). (Refer to Chapter 3, Table 3.1.)

**TABLE 5.8: COPING STRATEGIES IN TERSM OF COPING ACTIONS/BEHAVIOURS**

Types of private and/or public action taken	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 607	Total responses	Percentage n1 = 607	p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test – testing for equal proportions
<b>Emotion-focused coping</b>					<b>&lt; 0.0001</b>
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	153	25.2	153	25.2	
<b>Avoidance coping</b>					
Decided to use another brand name	93	15.3	211	33.4	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased	71	11.7			
Took no action	39	6.4			
<b>Problem-focused coping</b>					
Contacted the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress (repairs/a replacement/a refund)	113	18.6	251	41.4	
Contacted the retailer/manufacture to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	52	8.6			
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	62	10.2			
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	11	1.8			
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	8	1.3			
Contacted a legal representative	5	0.8			
<b>Total</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>100.00</b>			<b>607</b>

n = 157 (except for “took no action”, n = 39)

n1 = total number of responses,

\* Significant on the 5% level of significance

Table 5.8 shows that dissatisfied consumers did engage in some or other form of coping behaviours/methods. When the chi-square test for equal proportions was performed, there was a significant difference between the coping strategies of emotion-focused coping, avoidance coping and problem-focused coping, where the p-value was less than 0.0001. Proportionately, 25.2% of 607 responses indicated emotion-focused coping where they told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. A total of 33.4% of 607 responses engaged in avoidance coping, which means they took no action (6.4% of 211 responses), changed brand name (15.3% of 211 responses), and stopped patronising the retailer where the appliance was purchased (11.7% of 211 responses). Most respondents, with a total of 41.4% of 607 responses, engaged in problem-focused coping strategies. They contacted the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress (repairs, refunds, replacements) (18.6% of 251 responses), contacted the retailer/manufacture to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (8.6% of 251 responses), contacted a repair service other than the one

supplied by the retailer/manufacturer (10.2% of 251 responses), contacted a consumer protection organisation/department (1.8% of 251 responses), wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine) or to a consumer complaint website (1.3% of 251 responses), and contacted a legal representative (0.8% of 251 responses).

Where respondents indicated “yes” to contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, they were asked to provide the reasons for their actions in the form of an open-ended question (Question 6.1, Section D [follow-up question] – Addendum B).

Table 5.9 summarises the respondents’ reasons for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress.

**TABLE 5.9: OTHER REASONS FOR CONTACTING THE RETAILER/ MANUFACTURER THAN SEEKING REDRESS**

Reasons	Number of responses	Percentage n1 = 14
To alert retailer/manufacturer of poor product quality	4	28.7
To warn retailer about poor brand names	3	21.4
To make retailer aware that their product was not user-friendly	2	14.3
To report manufacturer to retailer	1	7.1
To complain to retailer/manufacturer about unrealistic marketing strategies	2	14.3
To complain about delays in assisting people with redress issues	1	7.1
To remind retailer of breach of promise about product durability	1	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100.0</b>

n = 57

n1 = total number of responses

A total of 57 respondents contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress; however, only 14 responses were obtained concerning the reasons for their actions. A total of four out of 14 responses were obtained for wanting to “alert the retailer/manufacturer for poor product quality”, while three out of 14 responses were obtained for wanting to “complain to retailers about ‘poor’ brand names”. Only two out of 14 responses were obtained for wanting to “make the retailer aware that the product is not user-friendly”. Only one out of 14 responses were obtained for wanting to “report the manufacturer to the retailer”, wanting to “complain to retailers/manufacturers about unrealistic marketing strategies”, “wanting to complain about delays in assisting people with redress issues”, and wanting to remind the retailer of breach of promise about product durability respectively.

**Sub-objective 3.5** To explore and describe the relationship between dissatisfied female consumers' emotions that are elicited during the cognitive appraisal process and their complaint behaviour (coping behaviours) concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances

Tables 5.10 to 5.12 show the relationships between the dissatisfied consumers' emotions that were elicited during the cognitive appraisal process and their complaint behaviour (coping behaviours) concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances.

**TABLE 5.10: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION**

Coping methods/behaviours in terms of types of complaint action		Type of emotion experienced							
		Level of anger experienced (Percentage)			p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test <sup>1</sup> Fisher's exact test <sup>2</sup>	Level of shame experienced (Percentage)			p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test <sup>1</sup> Fisher's exact test <sup>2</sup>
		Not angry at all	Reasonably angry	Very to extremely angry		Not ashamed at all	Reasonably ashamed	Very to extremely ashamed	
<b>Emotion-focused coping</b>									
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	71.4	100.0	97.8	0.0052* <sup>2</sup>	92.6	100.0	100.0	0.0165* <sup>2</sup>
	No	28.6	0.0	2.2		7.4	0.0	0.0	
<b>Avoidance coping</b>									
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	57.1	51.7	64.4	0.2889 <sup>2</sup>	55.6	56.8	65.6	0.4842 <sup>1</sup>
	No	42.9	48.3	35.6		44.4	43.2	34.4	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	42.9	35.0	52.2	0.1113 <sup>2</sup>	37.0	40.5	56.3	0.0864 <sup>1</sup>
	No	57.1	65.0	47.8		63.0	59.5	43.8	
Took no action (n = 200)	Yes	46.1	20.0	16.7	0.0422* <sup>1</sup>	16.9	26.0	17.9	0.4225 <sup>1</sup>
	No	53.9	80.0	83.3		83.1	74.0	82.1	
<b>Problem-focused coping</b>									
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	28.6	69.5	77.8	0.0159* <sup>1</sup>	69.8	75.7	73.4	0.8164 <sup>1</sup>
	No	71.4	30.5	22.2		30.2	24.3	26.6	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	0.0	33.3	36.0	0.2485 <sup>2</sup>	16.7	40.5	43.6	0.0052* <sup>1</sup>
	No	100	66.7	64.0		83.3	59.5	56.5	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes	85.7	45.0	33.0	0.0125* <sup>2</sup>	38.9	48.7	35.5	0.4256 <sup>1</sup>
	No	14.3	55.0	67.1		61.1	51.4	64.5	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	0.0	8.3	6.7	0.8446 <sup>2</sup>	3.8	10.8	7.9	0.4107 <sup>2</sup>
	No	100.0	91.7	93.3		96.2	89.2	92.1	
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	0.0	3.3	6.7	0.6398 <sup>2</sup>	3.7	2.7	7.9	0.4688 <sup>2</sup>
	No	100.0	96.7	93.3		96.3	97.0	92.1	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	0.0	5.0	2.3	0.5185 <sup>2</sup>	0.0	5.4	4.8	0.2481 <sup>2</sup>
	No	100.0	95.0	97.8		100.0	94.6	95.2	

n = 157 except for "took no action"

\* Significant on the 5% level of significance

Proportionately more of the respondents who were not angry at all (46.1%) did not take any complaint action, compared to those who were reasonably angry (20.0%) and those who were very to extremely angry (16.7%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and taking no complaint action ( $p$ -value = 0.0422). No significant relationships exist between the level of anger experienced and deciding to use another brand name ( $p$ -value = 0.2889) and stopping support to the retailer where the product was purchased ( $p$ -value = 0.1113).

Proportionately more of the respondents who were reasonably angry (100.0%) and very to extremely angry (97.8%) told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to those who experienced no anger (71.4%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience ( $p$ -value = 0.0052).

Proportionately more of the respondents who were very to extremely angry (77.8%) contacted the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress, compared to those who were reasonably angry (69.5%) and those who experienced no anger (28.6%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and contacting the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress ( $p$ -value = 0.0159). Proportionately more respondents who were not angry (85.7%) contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, compared to those who were reasonably angry (45.0%) and very to extremely angry (33.0%). A significant relationship exists between the level of anger experienced and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, and contacting the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress ( $p$ -value = 0.0125). No significant relationships exist between the level of anger experienced and contacting the retailer/manufacture to complain for other reasons than seeking redress ( $p$ -value = 0.2458)

Very few of the respondents experiencing the various levels of anger contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between the level of anger experienced and the following types of complaint actions respectively: contacting a consumer protection organisation/department ( $p$ -value = 0.8446), writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website ( $p$ -value = 0.6398), and/or contacting a legal representative ( $p$ -value = 0.5185).

More respondents who were very to extremely ashamed (100.0%) and reasonably ashamed (100%) told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to respondents who were not ashamed at all (92.6%). A significant relationship exists between shame and telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience ( $p$ -value = 0.0165). Proportionately more respondents who were not ashamed at all (83.3%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to those who were very to extremely ashamed (56.5%) and reasonably ashamed (59.5%). A significant relationship exists between shame and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress ( $p$ -value = 0.0052). There were no statistically significant relationships between shame and other complaint actions such as using another brand name ( $p$ -value = 0.4842), stopping support to the retailer where the product was purchased (0.0864), taking no action ( $p$ -value = 0.4225), contacting a repair service other than that supplied by retailer/manufacturer ( $p$ -value = 0.1467), contacting a consumer protection organisation ( $p$ -value = 0.4107), writing a letter to the press ( $p$  = 0.4688), and contacting a legal representative ( $p$ -value = 0.2481).

**TABLE 5.11: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION**

Coping methods/behaviours in terms of types of complaint action		Type of emotion experienced							
		Level of guilt experienced (Percentage)			p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test <sup>1</sup> Fisher's exact test <sup>2</sup>	Level of surprise experienced (Percentage)			p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test <sup>1</sup> Fisher's exact test <sup>2</sup>
		Not guilty at all	Reasonably guilty	Very to extremely guilty		Not surprised at all	Reasonably surprised	Very to extremely surprised	
<b>Emotion-focused coping</b>									
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	95.6	100.0	100.0	0.3603 <sup>2</sup>	90.1	100.0	97.4	0.3809 <sup>2</sup>
	No	4.4	0.0	0.0		9.1	0.0	2.6	
<b>Avoidance coping</b>									
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	58.2	44.0	72.5	0.0685 <sup>1</sup>	54.6	57.1	59.8	0.9216 <sup>1</sup>
	No	41.7	56.0	27.5		45.4	42.9	40.2	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	40.7	40.0	60.0	0.1025 <sup>1</sup>	18.2	35.7	49.6	0.0757 <sup>1</sup>
	No	59.3	60.0	40.0		81.8	64.3	50.4	
Took no action (n = 200)	Yes	18.8	28.6	14.9	0.2864 <sup>1</sup>	21.4	30.0	16.4	0.1596 <sup>1</sup>
	No	81.3	71.4	85.1		78.6	70.0	83.6	
<b>Problem-focused coping</b>									
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	73.3	72.0	72.5	0.9890 <sup>1</sup>	54.6	67.9	75.9	0.2526 <sup>1</sup>
	No	26.7	28.0	27.5		45.4	32.1	24.1	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	31.1	33.3	40.0	0.6124 <sup>1</sup>	9.1	25.0	38.3	0.0823 <sup>1</sup>
	No	68.9	66.7	60.0		90.9	75.0	61.7	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes	41.1	41.7	35.0	0.7856 <sup>1</sup>	36.4	64.3	33.9	0.0127* <sup>1</sup>
	No	58.9	58.3	65.0		63.6	35.7	66.1	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/ department	Yes	9.0	8.0	2.5	0.4590 <sup>2</sup>	10.0	7.1	6.9	0.8565 <sup>2</sup>
	No	91.0	92.0	97.5		90.0	92.9	93.1	
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	7.8	0.0	2.5	0.3450 <sup>2</sup>	0.0	7.1	5.2	0.8101 <sup>2</sup>
	No	92.2	100.0	97.5		100.0	92.9	94.8	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	4.4	4.0	0.0	0.4425 <sup>2</sup>	9.1	7.1	1.7	0.1217 <sup>2</sup>
	No	95.6	96.0	100.0		90.9	92.9	98.3	

n = 157 except for "took no action"

\* Significant on the 5% level of significance

There were no statistically significant relationships between the various levels of guilt experienced and the different types of complaint actions such as telling friends, families and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.3603), deciding to use another brand name (p-value = 0.0685), stopping support to the retailer where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.1025) and taking no action (p-value = 0.2864), contacting retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.9890), contacting retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (p-value = 0.6124), and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer (0.7856).

No one contacted a consumer protection organisation (p-value = 0.4590), wrote a letter to the press (p-value = 0.3450) or contacted a legal representative (p-value = 0.4425). Very few respondents who experienced various levels of guilt engaged in the afore-mentioned complaint actions.

Proportionately more respondents who were reasonably surprised (64.3%) contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer, compared to respondents who were very to extremely surprised (33.9%) and those who were not surprised at all (36.4%). A significant relationship exists between the levels of surprise and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer (p-value = 0.0127). No significant relationships exist between the level of surprise experienced and the following types of complaint actions: telling friends, families and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.3809), deciding to use another brand name (p-value = 0.9216), stopping support to the retailer where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.0757), and taking no action (p-value = 0.1596), contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.2526), contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (p-value = 0.0823) contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value = 0.8565), writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.8101), and/or contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.1217).

N.B! If 50% of the cells had expected counts of less than 5, the chi-square test value was not valid, and a Fisher's exact test value was used instead.

**TABLE 5.12: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION**

Coping methods/behaviours in terms of types of complaint action		Type of emotion experienced							
		Level of sadness experienced (Percentage)			p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test <sup>1</sup> Fisher's exact test <sup>2</sup>	Level of frustration experienced (Percentage)			p-value Chi <sup>2</sup> -test <sup>1</sup> Fisher's exact test <sup>2</sup>
		Not sad at all	Reasonably sad	Very to extremely sad		Not frustrated at all	Reasonably frustrated	Very to extremely frustrated	
<b>Emotion-focused coping</b>									
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	83.3	97.8	99.0	0.0313 * <sup>2</sup>	75.0	100.0	98.2	0.0176* <sup>2</sup>
	No	16.7	2.2	1.0		25.0	0.0	1.8	
<b>Avoidance coping</b>									
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	50.0	60.9	59.2	0.7908 <sup>1</sup>	50.0	57.1	60.2	0.8376 <sup>2</sup>
	No	50.0	39.1	40.8		50.0	42.9	39.8	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	41.7	28.3	53.1	0.0199 * <sup>1</sup>	37.5	34.3	48.7	0.3121 <sup>2</sup>
	No	58.3	71.7	46.9		62.5	65.7	51.3	
Took no action (n = 200)	Yes	25.0	17.9	19.7	0.8169	20.0	27.1	16.9	0.31171
	No	75.0	82.1	80.3		80.0	72.9	83.1	
<b>Problem-focused coping</b>									
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	58.3	65.2	78.3	0.1273 <sup>1</sup>	37.5	62.9	78.6	0.0130 * <sup>1</sup>
	No	41.7	34.8	21.7		62.5	37.1	21.4	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	16.7	30.4	37.5	0.3019 <sup>1</sup>	12.5	17.1	40.5	0.0164* <sup>1</sup>
	No	83.3	69.6	62.5		87.5	82.9	59.5	
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer	Yes	66.7	52.2	30.2	0.0059 * <sup>1</sup>	62.5	45.7	36.0	0.2183 <sup>2</sup>
	No	33.3	47.8	69.8		37.5	54.3	64.0	
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	9.1	4.4	8.3	0.5912 <sup>2</sup>	14.3	2.9	8.0	0.3079 <sup>2</sup>
	No	90.9	95.6	91.7		85.7	97.1	92.0	
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	8.3	2.2	6.2	0.3327 <sup>2</sup>	0.0	2.9	6.3	0.7930 <sup>2</sup>
	No	91.7	97.8	93.8		100.0	97.1	93.7	
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	0.0	4.4	3.1	0.7718 <sup>2</sup>	12.5	2.9	2.7	0.3026 <sup>2</sup>
	No	100.0	95.6	96.9		87.5	97.1	97.3	

n = 157 except for "took no action"

\* Significant on the 5% level of significance

More respondents who were very to extremely sad (99.0%) and reasonably sad (82.1%) told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to respondents who were not sad at all (16.7%). A significant relationship exists between the levels of sadness and complaint action where respondents told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.0313). Proportionately more respondents who were not sad at all (58.3%) and were reasonably sad (71.7%), kept on supporting the retailer where the product was purchased, compared to the respondents who were very to extremely sad (46.9%). More of the respondents who stopped supporting the retailer, were very to extremely sad (53.1%) than those respondents who kept on supporting the retailer. A significant relationship exists between the levels of sadness experienced and the complaint action of stopping support to retailer/manufacture where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.0199). Proportionately more respondents who were not sad at all (66.7%) and who were reasonably sad (52.2%), contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, compared to the respondents who were very to extremely sad. A significant relationship also exists between the level of sadness experienced and the complaint action of contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacture (p-value = 0.0059).

No significant relationships exist between the level of sadness experienced and the following types of complaint actions respectively: decided to use another brand name (p-value = 0.7908); contacting a retailer/manufacture to obtain redress (p-value = 0.1273); contacted the retailer/manufacture to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (p-value = 0.3019); contacting a consumer protection organisation/department (p-value = 0.5912); writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website (p-value = 0.3327); and/or contacting a legal representative (p-value = 0.7718).

Proportionately more respondents who experienced reasonable frustration (100.0%) and very to extreme frustration (98.2%) told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to the respondents who were not frustrated at all (75%). A significant relationship exists between the level of frustration and this complaint action (p-value = 0.0176). No relationship exists between the level of frustration and the complaint actions of deciding to use another brand name (p-value = 0.8376) and stopping support to the retailer/manufacture where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.3121). Proportionately more respondents who experienced very to extreme frustration (78.6%) and reasonable frustration (62.9%) contacted the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress, compared to a smaller proportion of respondents (37.5%) who were not frustrated at all. A significant relationship exists between the level of frustration and contacting the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress (p-value = 0.0130). Proportionately more respondents who were not

frustrated at all (12.5%) or reasonably frustrated (17.1%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, compared to respondents who felt very to extremely frustration (40.5%). A significant relationship exists between the level of frustration and not contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress ( $p$ -value = 0.0164).

No significant relationship exists between the level of frustration experienced and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer ( $p$ -value = 0.2.183). Nearly none of the respondents in the groups who were very frustrated to extremely frustrated and not frustrated to reasonably frustrated respectively, contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website, or contacted a legal representative. No significant relationships exist between the level of frustration experienced and the following types of complaint actions respectively: contacting a consumer protection organisation/department ( $p$ -value = 0.3079), writing a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website ( $p$ -value = 0.7930) and/or contacting a legal representative ( $p$ -value = 0.3026).

### **RESULTS FOR SUB-OBJECTIVE 3.6**

**Sub- objective 3.6:** To describe the coping strategies in terms of coping methods/behaviours that dissatisfied consumers engage in concerning performance failure of major household appliances when blame is attributed to specific parties

A chi-square test for equal proportions was done to determine whether significant differences existed between the specific parties blamed by respondents for the product performance failure of major household appliances and the type of coping strategies they engaged in to cope with the stressful event. These results are presented in Tables 5.13 to 5.15.

**TABLE 5.13: COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE**

COPING STRATEGIES	PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE					p-value chi-test for equal proportions	Other people				p-value chi-test for equal proportions
	Manufacturer/Retailer				Other people						
	no of responses "yes"	% age n1 = 444	Total response	% age n1 = 444		no of responses "yes"	% age n1 = 27	Total responses	% age n1 = 27		
<b>Emotion-focused coping</b>					* < 0.0001					0.3679	
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	109	24.6	109	24.6		6	22.2	6	22.2		
<b>Avoidance coping</b>											
Decided to use another brand name	67	15.1	140	31.5		4	14.8	12	44.4		
Stopped supporting the retailer where appliance was purchased	54	12.2				4	14.8				
Took no action	19	4.3				4	14.8				
<b>Problem-focused Coping</b>											
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs, replacement refund)	86	19.4	195	43.9		3	11.1	9	33.3		
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	42	9.5				2	7.4				
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer	45	10.1				4	14.8				
Contacted a consumer protection organisation	10	2.2				0	0				
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.)	8	1.8				0	0				
Contacted a legal representative	4	0.9				0	0				
<b>Total</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>100</b>			<b>444</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>			<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>

n = 131 (missing values = 22)

n1 = total number of responses

\* significant on the 5% level of significance

n = 10 (missing values = 5)

Proportionately, more responses (43.9% of 444) indicated that respondents who attributed blame to the manufacturer/retailer engaged more in problem-focused coping compared to the responses for the avoidance coping strategy (31.5% of 444 responses) and the emotion-focused strategy (24.6% of 444 responses). A significant difference exists between the various coping strategies and attributing blame to the manufacturer/retailer ( $p$ -value < 0.0001). Respondents who engaged in problem-focused coping, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (19.4% of 444 responses), contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (9.5% of 444 responses), or contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer (10.1% of 444 responses). Almost none of the respondents who blamed the manufacturer contacted a consumer protection organisation (2.2% of 444 responses), wrote a letter to the press (1.8% of 444 responses) or sought legal representation (0.9% of 444 responses). Respondents who engaged in the avoidance coping strategy, stopped using the brand name (15.1% of 444 responses), stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased (12.2% of 444 responses) or took no action (4.3% of 444 responses). Respondents who blamed the retailer/manufacturer and who engaged in emotion-focused coping told their friends, family and acquaintances about the bad experience (24.6% of 444 responses).

There was no significant difference between the coping strategies when the blame was attributed to other people ( $p$ -value = 0.3679). Where respondents engaged in problem-focused coping, they contacted the retailer to obtain redress (11% of 27 responses), contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (7.4% of 27 responses), or contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer (14.8% of 27 responses). None of the respondents who blamed other people for the product's poor performance contacted a consumer protection organisation/department, wrote a letter to the press or sought legal representation.

**TABLE 5.14: COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE**

PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE												
COPING STRATEGIES	One self					Appliance						
	no of responses "yes"	% age n1 = 50	Total response	% age n1 = 50	p-value chi-test for equal proportions	no of responses "yes"	% age n1 = 47	Total responses	% age n1 = 47	p-value chi-test for equal proportions		
<b>Emotion-focused coping</b>						0.2618						0.6675
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	13	26.0	13	26.0	13		27.7	13	27.7			
<b>Avoidance coping</b>												
Decided to use another brand name	7	14.0	22	44.0	9		19.1	18	38.3			
Stopped supporting the retailer where appliance was purchased	5	10.0			6		12.8					
Took no action	10	20.0			3		6.4					
<b>Problem-focused coping</b>												
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress(repairs, replacement refund)	8	16.0	15	30.0	10		21.3	16	34.0			
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	1	2.0			3		6.4					
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/ manufacturer	4	8.0			3		6.4					
Contacted a consumer protection organisation	1	2.0			0	0.0						
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.)	0	0.0			0	0.0						
Contacted a legal representative	1	2.0			0	0.0						
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>			<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>			<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>

n = 23 (missing values = 11)

n1 = total number of responses

\* significant on the 5% level of significance

n = 16 (missing values = 5)

No significant difference exists between the coping strategies and attributing blame to oneself ( $p$ -value = 0.2618). Respondents who attributed blame to themselves engaged in avoidance coping. They stopped using the brand name (14% of 50 responses) and stopped patronising the retailer/manufacturer where the product was purchased (10% of 50 responses). Respondents who engaged in problem-focused coping, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (16% of 50 responses), or contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer (2.0% of 50 responses). Respondents who engaged in emotion-focused coping told friends and family about the bad experience (26.0% of 50 responses).

When the appliance itself is 'blamed' for the poor performance (refer to Table 5.14), no significant difference exists between the coping strategies of problem-focused, emotion-focused or avoidance coping ( $p$ -value = 0.6675). Proportionately 38.3% of the 47 responses indicated avoidance coping, while 34.0% of the 47 responses indicated problem-focused coping and 27.7% of the 47 responses indicated emotion-focused coping, telling their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. The respondents who engaged in problem-focused coping, contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (21.3% of 47 responses), while none contacted a consumer protection organisation, wrote a letter to the press or contacted a legal representative.

**TABLE 5.15: COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO PARTY BLAMED FOR PPRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE**

PARTY BLAMED FOR PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE						
COPING STRATEGIES	Uncertain			% age n1 = 14	p-value chi-test for equal proportions	
	no of responses "yes"	% age n1 = 14	Total responses			
<b>Emotion-focused coping</b>						
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	4	28.6	4	28.6	0.7515	
<b>Avoidance coping</b>						
Decided to use another brand name	3	21.4	6	42.8		
Stopped supporting the retailer where appliance was purchased	2	14.3				
Took no action	1	7.1				
<b>Problem-focused coping</b>						
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs, replacement refund)	1	7.1	4	28.6		
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	0	0				
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer	3	21.4				
Contacted a consumer protection organisation	0	0				
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.)	0	0				
Contacted a legal representative	0	0				
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>		

n = 5 (missing values = 1)

n1 = total number of responses

\* Significant on the 5% level of significance

No significant difference exists between the coping strategies when respondents were uncertain about who to blame for the product's poor performance (p-value = 0.7515). Of those respondents who engaged in avoidance coping, only three out of six responses were obtained for deciding to use another brand name, two out of six responses were obtained for stopping support to the retailer/manufacturer where the product was purchased, and one out of six responses for taking no action. Of those respondents who engaged in problem-focused coping, three out of four responses were obtained for contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer, and one out of four responses were obtained for contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress. Only four responses of emotion-focused coping were obtained.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

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#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the study are discussed and interpreted in terms of existing literature and previous research concerning the research topic to give insight into the intrinsic meaning of the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:287). The research findings are related to the original research problem by exploring and describing the functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions that play a role in female consumers' perception of the quality of major household appliances, their perception of performance failures (i.e. the nature of the performance failure), and the role of cognitive appraisal in their complaint behaviour.

The discussion and interpretation follows a sequence of broad topics derived from the conceptual framework. The first topic deals with female consumers' quality perception of major household appliances in terms of functional and/or symbolic performance dimensions. The second topic deals with female consumers' perceptions of major household appliance failure. The third topic focuses on the cognitive appraisal process that female consumers engage in when they evaluate performance failures. This section is discussed in terms of female consumers' attribution of responsibility for the performance failure of major household appliances, the level of stress experienced concerning the performance failure of major household appliances, the emotions that are elicited during the cognitive appraisal process, the coping behaviours (compliant behaviour) that female consumers engage in to deal with performance failures. Additionally, the respective relationships between dissatisfied female consumers' emotions and their complaint behaviour (coping behaviours) concerning the performance failure of major household appliances, and between female consumers' attribution of responsibility and their choice of coping behaviours/methods are discussed.

## **6.2 FEMALE CONSUMERS' QUALITY PERCEPTIONS OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES IN TERMS OF FUNCTIONAL AND/OR SYMBOLIC PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS**

Before purchasing and consuming major household appliances, consumers form expectations about product performance. According to the theory on perceived quality, consumers purchase products with specific physical features that they believe will fulfil their performance expectations (Brown & Rice, 2001:47). According to Soscia (2007), consumers choose specific products to pursue specific goals, which could relate to product usability and/or the symbolic meaning provided to the consumer. Additionally, it is widely recognised by researchers studying symbolic consumption, that individuals consume products (e.g. major household appliances) for their symbolic properties as much as for their functional benefits (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004; Solomon, 2007:14; Solomon, 1983). Major household appliances are conspicuous (socially visible) products that embody a system of meanings through which we express ourselves and communicate to others (Wattanasuwan, 2005).

The results of the factor analysis show that respondents clearly differentiated their expectations between the functional and the symbolic performance dimension of major household appliances. Functional performance expectations relate to functional performance attributes such as the appliance's proper operation in terms of its intended end-use, sufficient durability, easy operation (user-friendliness), trouble-free maintenance and care, and adequate safety. Symbolic performance expectations relate to symbolic performance attributes such as the appliance's pleasing appearance, the appliance's portrayal of an image associated with the user's personal style, the user's enjoyment (pleasure) experienced when using the appliance, the user's admiration (regard) of the appliance and other peoples' admiration of the user due to appliance ownership. However, it should be noted that in this study, expectations about trouble-free maintenance and care were also linked to symbolic performance expectations. This implies that expectations about maintenance and care may be associated with functional performance attributes such as durability, user-friendliness, safety and keeping the appliance in a working condition, as well as with symbolic performance attributes such as maintaining or improving the appliance's appearance, portraying an image associated with the user's personal style, furthering the user's enjoyment experienced when using the appliance, boosting the user's admiration (regard) of the appliance and boosting other people's admiration of the user too. For example, an appliance item that requires more maintenance and care than necessary might not impress the users' significant and relevant others (i.e. cause social embarrassment), nor would it satisfy its utilitarian functions.

### 6.3 FEMALE CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE FAILURE

In light of the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm, the functional and/or symbolic performance expectations that respondents have concerning major household appliances give them a platform on which to base their judgements/evaluation of the actual performance of their appliances. Consumers compare the perceived product performance with their initial expectations (or some prior standard) about product performance and notice whether a difference (expectancy disconfirmation) exists (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Francken, 1983). Negative disconfirmation occurs when the product's performance is less than consumers' prior expectations (e.g. when a product failure occurs), contributing to dissatisfaction (Mooradian & Olver, 1997; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Soscia, 2007).

Considering the results of the open-ended question (respondents had to describe what actually went wrong during use of their major household appliances), respondents reported functional performance failures, such as unusual performance/functioning in terms of intended use (not working as intended) (66.0% of the responses), inconvenience in operating appliances (physical discomfort, waste of time ) (15.5% of the responses), inconvenience in maintenance and care of the appliance (4.2% of the responses), insufficient durability (8.3% of the responses), and health hazards (4.2% of the response). They also experienced symbolic performance failures; including a lack of sensory pleasure (1.2% of the responses) and a lack of emotional pleasurable experience (0.6% of the responses) (refer to Chapter 5, par. 5.4.2). It therefore appears that the performance failure of major household appliances could almost exclusively be associated with the functional performance attributes.

However, the results of the factor analysis show (Chapter 5, par. 5.3.2) that respondents differentiated between actual product performance (i.e. performance failures) in three ways. The functional performance failure factor relates to the improper operation of the appliance in terms of its end-use, insufficient durability and increased maintenance and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition. These aspects can be regarded true functional performance failure attributes (i.e. attributes that relate to the utility of the appliance). The symbolic performance failure factor relates to ill feelings about the self due to the appliance's failure, the user's displeasure experienced when using the appliance, the user's disregard of the appliance and other people's disapproval (disregard) of the user due to the appliance failure. These aspects can be regarded as true symbolic attributes (i.e. attributes that relate to a psychological level of performance, such as what the product does for, or symbolises to the consumer), which are derived from the consumer's response to the physical product. The combined functional and symbolic performance factor relates to the difficulty in operating the

appliances (i.e. non-user-friendliness), unsafeness of appliances, the unappealing appearance of appliances, the inability of the appliance to portray the image/identity that the user associates with his/her personal style. This construct (the combined functional and symbolic performance factor) reflect the combined (integrated) functional and symbolic utility, implying that respondents do not differentiate between formal functional and symbolic performance dimensions when evaluating the respective performance failures. Thus, failures are not seen as either functional or symbolic, but as a combination of the two constructs.

However, it should be noted that maintenance and care could be linked to both the functional performance failure dimension and the combined functional and symbolic performance failure dimension. This implies that performance failures concerning maintenance and care may be associated with functional performance failures concerning the operation of the appliance in terms of its end-use and durability issues, as well as combined functional/symbolic performance failures concerning the appliance's user-friendliness, safety, and the ability of the appliance to portray the image/identity that the user associates with his/her personal style.

Respondents' differentiation between the respective performance dimensions, when judging product performance, implies that they did not only evaluate product performance in terms of the functional performance dimension (as implied by the open question), but that other dimensions also played a role in their reasoning about the performance failure of appliances. When comparing the factor analysis and the open-ended multiple response analysis, it is clear that female consumers had particular expectations about the functional and symbolic performance of appliances. These expectations relate to the formal functional and symbolic performance attributes that are proposed in the literature about the functional and symbolic product performance dimensions (Swan & Combs, 1976; Venkatesh, 1985; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Brown & Rice, 2001:47-48; Erasmus *et al.*, 2005). However, when an appliance failure occurs the performance failure is perceived in terms of functional performance failure dimensions, symbolic performance failure dimensions and combined functional and symbolic dimensions.

It should be noted that the study only included female respondents, implying that consumer related variables, in this case demographics, specifically gender, could guide consumers' initial perception of product quality before purchasing and consuming products and their interpretation of product performance failures upon using products. Since females generally use major electrical household appliances more often than males, they might gain more knowledge and experience with major electrical household appliances and will therefore have more definite/explicit expectations about their appliances' product performance than

males, and will be better able to determine whether these products perform according to expectation (Donoghue, 2008:161). Donoghue's (2008) study showed that gender and culture play significant roles in consumers' perception of the degree to which their appliances perform to their expectations. Female and black consumers were more certain that their appliances' performance was less than their initial expectations for product performance, compared to the male and Caucasian consumers. However, one should not forget that female consumers from emerging economies like Botswana might have unrealistically high product performance expectations concerning sophisticated products (i.e. major household appliances) due to their relative low exposure to these products, compared to female consumers from sophisticated economies.

### **6.3.1 Dissatisfaction resulting from the negative disconfirmation of female consumers' product performance expectations**

When product performance does not meet the consumers' initial expectations (i.e. when an appliance failure occurs or when an appliance performs poorly) negative disconfirmation occurs, leading to dissatisfaction. Therefore, dissatisfaction is an emotional response to the evaluation of the perceived gap/discrepancy between initial expectations and the actual product performance after its use (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Mooradian & Olver, 1997; Erasmus & Donoghue, 1998; Brijball, 2000; Panther & Farquhar, 2004; Phau & Sari, 2004; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008). In this study, significantly more respondents were very to extremely dissatisfied (68.4%) with their appliances, compared to the respondents who were slightly to moderately dissatisfied (31.6%).

From an expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm point of view, one could argue that the higher the expectations consumers have about product performance when acquiring products, the higher the likelihood of dissatisfaction when those expectations are not met (Swan & Combs, 1976; Soscia, 2007). The demand for manufactured products, cars and electronic equipments (like major household appliances) is increasing in Botswana (Sigwele, 2007). In many cases, female consumers are first-time users of appliances, implying that their perceptions of quality and expectations for performance might be unrealistically high. Retailers and manufacturers should therefore have an understanding of the importance of realistic expectations about product performance in consumers' perception, or product quality and their interpretation of performance failures.

In terms of the cognitive appraisal process, dissatisfaction heightens the incidence and magnitude of emotional responses and consequent behaviours (e.g. coping strategies/methods) (Maute & Dube, 1999), because of the cognitive appraisal efforts that

the consumers go through to find out why a negative outcome occurred (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). This discussion covered objective 2 and sub-objective 2.1.

## **6.4 FEMALE CONSUMERS' COGNITIVE APPRAISAL OF MAJOR HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE PERFORMANCE FAILURES**

### **6.4.1 Respondents' attribution of responsibility for major household appliance performance failures**

The results of sub-objective 3.1 (Chapter 5, par. 5.5) indicated that respondents mostly blamed manufacturers and retailers (47.9%) for the performance failure of their appliances; very few respondents blamed the appliance itself (9.0%) or other people for the problem failure (all of which can be regarded to be external to the person, implying external attributions for product failure) (87.3%). Only 12.7% of the respondents blamed themselves for the appliance failure, implying internal attributions. Most respondents (66.5%) believed that the party they blamed for the performance failure could have prevented the problem. Previous research has shown that consumers who attribute blame of product failures to external sources are likely to engage in "radical behaviours" and "emotions of protest" to demonstrate their displeasure (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:145-147; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Bonifield & Cole, 2007). However, cultural or individual characteristics and other factors may influence the kind and intensity of emotions aroused and the consequent coping behaviours (Tsai, 2005). For instance, from a cultural point of view, collectivistic cultures (e.g. Asians and Africans) tend to hold an interdependent view of the self that emphasises connectedness with others in their social context. Collectivists may be inclined to internalise blame for negative events and to express private emotions like shame and guilt in order to maintain relationships (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:189-191; Wang, 2006). In contrast, individualistic cultures (e.g. Westerners – Europeans, Americans) tend to hold a view of the self that emphasises independence and they value internal attributes and the uniqueness of the individual. Individualists may be inclined to attribute blame to external sources for negative events and may possibly express radical emotions like anger/irritation (Wang, 2006; Donoghue, 2008). Collectivistic cultures may rather be concerned about others' reactions and may moderate their emotions and behaviour according to what is considered socially acceptable (Wang, 2006).

However, irrespective of the cultural orientation that can be generally associated with collectivists (in this case Africans, specifically the Batswana) who possibly will attribute blame internally as suggested in the literature (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:189-191; Wang, 2006), the

results of this study indicated that most of the respondents did not attribute blame to themselves. They mainly attributed blame to outside sources (i.e. manufacturers and retailers). This might be indicative of an attribution fallacy, better known as “self-serving attribution bias” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991:67, 93; Försterling, 2001:103-105), which proposes that people are inclined to attribute bad outcomes (in this case product failures) to external factors rather than to their own transgressions. However, other mitigating factors including gender, age and level of education could also play a role in people’s attribution of blame (Tsai, 2005). This study consisted of female respondents who were mostly between 21 and 40 years of age and fairly well educated. Another factor could be that of the high price tags attached to major household appliances. The literature concerning product quality suggests that consumers make purchasing decisions based on price. They tend to perceive highly priced products to be of higher quality and may therefore form high (and in many cases, unrealistic) expectations of product performance (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Brown & Rice, 2001:50; Phau & Sari, 2004). Hence, when they experience faulty performance of the product, they may tend to blame external sources all the more, as they may perceive the weight of the financial loss (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

#### **6.4.2 Female consumers’ level of stress experienced concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances**

According to Soscia (2007), people purchase products because they expect to pursue a goal. In the context of this study the goal relates to proper and effective product performance in terms of functional performance dimensions, symbolic performance dimensions and possible combinations of these dimensions. Therefore, female consumers who do not reach their goals (when product performance failure occurs) will experience dissatisfaction and negative emotions that are associated with the appraisal of the negative event. Cognitively, the event (performance failure) is appraised as involving a personal stake, which is possibly deemed threatening/harmful to the individual’s well-being (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:142-143; Nyer, 1997; Chen & Matthews, 2001). The results of the factor analysis (Chapter 5, par. 5.3.2) show that respondents differentiated between actual product performance (i.e. performance failure) in three ways: functional performance failures, symbolic performance failures, and a combination of functional and symbolic performance failures. The respective performance failures can be appraised as stressful (i.e. threatening to the consumer’s well-being). In the context of this study, true functional performance failures (i.e. failures that are associated with the utility of the appliance) may cause stress when female consumers believe that these failures will contribute to time losses, more household work and financial losses. True symbolic performance failures (i.e. failures that are associated with what the product does for, or symbolises to, the consumer on a deeper

level) may cause stress when female consumers are highly ego-involved in the situation. For example, female consumers who believe that significant others will think less of them because of product failures, might experience feelings of social embarrassment. Combined functional and symbolic performance failures (failures that are not exclusively perceived on either the functional or the symbolic level, but rather in combination) may cause stress when female consumers experience difficulty in operating appliances, when they consider appliances to be unsafe, when the appearance of appliances are unappealing, and when appliances no longer portray the image/identity that they associate with their personal style.

In this study, significantly more respondents were very to extremely stressed (60.1%) due to the performance failure of their appliances, while 39.9% were slightly to moderately stressed. This concurs with literature that states that the appraisal of negative events like performance failure of major household appliances will result in psychological stress (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Chaudhuri, 2006:119-121).

When a marketplace problem like product performance failure is appraised as stressful to the consumer's well-being (i.e. when product performance failures cause social embarrassment, financial loss, waste of time etc.), it generates negative emotions which are thought to be spurred on by the attribution of blame/responsibility (Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

#### **6.4.3 Emotional responses following the appraisal of major appliance performance failures**

The cognitive appraisal theory of emotion argues that specific emotive reactions and their intensity are tied to an appraisal of an event as harmful or threatening to the individual's well-being. These emotional responses may channel consequent coping behaviours. Negative emotions (e.g. anger, shame, guilt, sadness, worry, surprise, frustration and fear) are aroused when negative events like product performance failure are encountered (Westbrook, 1987; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:156; Smith & Bolton, 2002; O'Shaugnessy & O'Shaugnessy, 2003; Bougie *et al.*, 2003; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). The respondents in this study experienced anger, shame, guilt, sadness, surprise and frustration with varying intensities following appliance failures (see Chapter 5, par. 5.5).

##### **Anger**

In this study significantly more respondents were very to extremely angry (55.0%) compared to the respondents who were reasonably angry (38.0%) or not angry at all (7.0%)(refer too Chapter 5, Table 5.6). Female consumers who attribute blame for the product performance

failure to external parties and who believe that these parties could have prevented the problem, tend to be angrier than those who attribute blame to internal sources (Folkes, 1984; Soscia, 2007). The level of dissatisfaction may influence the anger intensity: the higher the level of dissatisfaction, the higher the likelihood of more anger experienced (Bougie *et al.*, 2003; Kalamas *et al.*, 2008). Angry consumers are likely to engage in retaliatory behaviours and less likely to engage in conciliatory negotiations with the blameworthy other (Bonifield & Cole, 2007).

### **Shame**

Shame is experienced when the self is the central object of the negative evaluation (Mattila & Wirtz, 2004; Soscia, 2007). In a product performance failure context, a female consumer will experience shame when the performance failure can be attributed to herself (e.g. when the consumer lacks operational knowledge of an appliance or is careless in using the appliance (Folkes, 1984; Weiner, 2000; Donoghue, 2008). Shame is an internal voice, which tells us that we have not lived up to the perceived ideals, and is normally associated with private pain (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:41-42). Here the likelihood of being associated with avoidance or emotion-focused coping is high (White & Yu, 2005).

In this study, no significant difference existed between the various shame proportions, implying that equal numbers of respondents were not ashamed at all, reasonably ashamed or very to extremely ashamed. The majority of the respondents blamed other external parties for the appliance failures. One would therefore expect that fewer people would experience shame since they were not to blame for the failures. Yet, they did experience shame, which may be indicative of the important role that symbolic performance may play in female consumers' judgement of product performance failures.

### **Guilt**

People feel guilty when they feel that they have transgressed in some way or have done something wrong and believe that they are responsible for the wrongdoing or problem (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:76-80; Watson & Spence, 2007). People who experience guilt may think that they could have done something to prevent the problem (Soscia, 2007). In this study, significantly more respondents did not feel guilty (58.1%), compared to the respondents who felt reasonably guilty (18.2%) and those who varied between very and extremely guilty (23.7%) (refer to Chapter 5, Table 5.6). The majority of the respondents blamed the manufacturer/retailer for the performance failure of their major household appliances as opposed to blaming themselves, hence did not feel responsible for the problem nor that they could have prevented it. As a result, they felt low intensities of guilt (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Watson & Spence, 2007; Soscia, 2007).

### **Surprise**

Surprise is experienced when there is a high amount of uncertainty or unexpected events (Chaudhuri, 2006:100). For instance, female consumers may expect that major household appliances would function effectively and excellently (functional, symbolic or both performance dimensions), due to the high price tags attached to them and perhaps the perceived quality (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Phau & Sari, 2004). If performance failure occurs, it is an unexpected outcome that brings about negative surprise, which is associated with an unpleasant outcome (Soscia, 2007; Watson & Spence, 2007). Significantly, more respondents were very to extremely surprised (71.6%), compared to the respondents who were reasonably surprised (20.8%) or not surprised at all (7.6%).

### **Sadness**

The overall meaning of sadness is a feeling of irrevocable loss (Demir *et al.*, 2009). People who experience sadness tend to have feelings of inadequacy, helplessness and lack of control over the situation or event, may become inactive and withdrawn, and may inherently appraise themselves as having low coping potential (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:75-85; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). This implies that respondents who are uncertain about whom to blame for the poor performance or failure of their specific appliances, and uncertain as to whether the problem was preventable, are likely to experience bouts of sadness. From the results (see Table 5.6), significantly more respondents were very to extremely sad (61.6%), compared to the respondents who were reasonably sad (30.3%) or not sad at all (8.1%). Other factors like perceived financial loss, social embarrassment and waste of time due to the performance failure relate to the high intensity of sadness experienced by respondents (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Chaudhuri, 2006:99-100).

### **Frustration**

Frustration is more likely to be experienced if consumers attribute blame to external sources and believe that the party responsible could have prevented the problem (Watson & Spence, 2007; Demir *et al.*, 2009). Significantly more respondents were very to extremely frustrated (68.6%), compared to the respondents who were reasonably frustrated (26.3%) or not frustrated at all (5.1%).

#### **6.4.4 Coping strategies, in terms of complaint behaviour actions, concerning the performance failure of major household appliances**

Female consumers who are dissatisfied and experience negative emotions tend to be concerned with prospects and options for coping, what they will do in response to the stressful event (performance failure). If they have a high potential to cope and foresee the benefits of engaging in the coping mechanism to be chosen, they tend to choose one or more of the coping strategies to deal with the stressful event (Lazarus, 1991; Nyer, 1997; Mick & Fournier, 1998; Watson & Spence, 2007). In this study, 80.1% of the respondents indicated that they took action, while 19.9% took no action (refer to Table 5.7). Negative events, or in this case dissatisfying marketplace experiences (like product performance failure), when appraised as stressful require coping action (in this case complaint behaviour) (Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

Coping strategies and coping methods/behaviours have been identified in the complaint behaviour context (refer to Table 3.1 in Chapter 3). According to complaint behaviour theory, it must be noted that complaint behaviour consists of action (formal and private complaint action) and no action. Therefore, taking no action is also a type of complaint action, despite the passive nature thereof (Day & Landon, 1977:432; Day *et al.*, 1981; Singh, 1988; Donoghue, 2008). Previous research identified three coping strategies that dissatisfied consumers may engage in to cope with stressful situations: problem-focused coping (associated with public action in CCB), emotion-focused coping (associated with private action in CCB) and avoidance coping (associated with no action and private action in CCB) (Lazarus, 1991; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mattila & Wirtz, 2004; Donoghue, 2008). In this study, significantly more responses were obtained for the problem-focused coping strategy (41.4% of 607 responses), compared to responses for avoidance coping (33.4% of 607 responses) and emotion-focused coping (25.2% of 607 responses). In the context of the problem-focused coping strategy, the respondents mainly contacted the retailer to obtain redress (refunds, replacement, repairs). Fewer responses were obtained for contacting the retailer/manufacture to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, or for contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacture. Insignificant responses were obtained for contacting a consumer protection organisation, writing a letter to the press or seeking legal representation.

Consumers who engage in problem-focused coping consider themselves to have high and strong coping potential (Lazarus, 1991; Nyer, 1997; Chen & Matthews, 2001). They are assertive as they are able to deal squarely with the problem by directly acting on the environment (the other party) as they seek to hasten the righting of the wrong done to them

(Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:153; Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Watson & Spence, 2007). In a consumer complaint behaviour context, it is associated with public action where they are more likely driven by wanting to vent their displeasure and be compensated one way or the other (Singh & Wilkes, 1996; Phau & Sari, 2004).

Avoidance coping involves using another brand name, stopping support to the retailer/manufacturer where the product was purchased, and taking no action. Very few responses were obtained for no action, implying that very few respondents probably reasoned that complaining is “not worth the effort” and “would not achieve any resolution” (Day & Bodur, 1978; Day & Ash, 1979; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

Respondents who engage in avoidance coping, simply leave the situation or try as much as possible to forget the problem and may consider themselves to have low coping potential (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:159; Mick & Fournier, 1998). However, they may be more likely driven by wanting to silently get even with the stressful event and aim at some punitive ways (Phau & Sari, 2004) like stopping patronage of both the brand and the retailer/manufacturer where the product was purchased.

The respondents who engaged in emotion-focused coping told their friends, families and/or acquaintances about the bad experience. Female consumers who employ emotion-focused coping attempt to regulate their mental responses to the problem (product performance failure) in order to feel better and may have low coping potential. They are characteristically seeking social and emotional support from their significant, relevant and reference group others with whom they are always in interaction (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:156; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:315). Dissatisfied female consumers may engage in negative word-of-mouth about their dissatisfactory experiences to obtain emotional as well as moral support and to inherently harm the retailer/manufacturers’ business prospects (Selnes, 1993; Donoghue, 2008; Donoghue *et al.*, 2008).

Previous research has shown that consumer complaint behaviour is a complex, explicit expression of dissatisfaction, influenced by a multiplicity of factors like culture, socialisation, attribution of blame, demographics and emotional responses (Day & Landon, 1977:427; Singh, 1988; Criè, 2003; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006). For instance, Phau and Sari’s (2004) findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between CCB and education and income. That is, if consumers are mostly educated and earning income they are likely to engage in complaint action that are more oriented to problem-focused coping (public action) or emotion-focused coping (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006). The results for this study tended to confirm these findings, as respondents were quite

educated, earned income and engaged mostly in problem-focused coping. Some researchers had earlier hinted that female consumers were more likely to complain (Garret *et al.*, 1997; Phau & Sari, 2004). However, this study consisted of female respondents only, and findings can therefore be applied to females only.

Respondents who indicated that they complained to the retailer/manufacturer for reasons other than seeking redress detailed their reasons as was shown in Table 5.9 in Chapter 5.

It may be drawn that, though the responses indicated might not be substantially adequate to inform and convince the retailer/ manufacturer about the complaint/dissatisfaction atmosphere on the ground concerning their major household appliances. They revealed a willingness on respondents' part to voice their opinions to the retailer/manufacturer as well as vent their anger and frustrations, as is characteristic of consumers who have experienced prime emotions of protest like anger and frustration (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:13; Kalamas *et al.*, 2008).

#### **6.4.5 The role of emotions in the coping methods employed concerning the performance failure of major household appliances**

The literature suggests that the emotions elicited in consumers who had appraised an event (product performance failure) as harmful to their well-being affect their post-consumption behaviours to cope with the situation (Frijda, 1986:297; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Brijball, 2000; Watson & Spence, 2007). From the results of this study, interesting relationships between the elicited emotions and the coping behaviours were identified when chi-square tests were performed (see Chapter 5, Tables 5.10 to 5.12).

##### *Anger and coping behaviours/methods (complaint actions)*

A significant relationship existed between the levels of anger experienced and taking no action. Proportionately more respondents who experienced reasonable anger and very to extreme anger took some complaint action, compared to those who were not angry at all. Concerning the no-action response, more respondents who were not angry at all took no action, compared to those who were reasonably angry or very to extremely angry. Angry respondents told their friends, family and /or acquaintances about the bad experiences, hence there was a significant relationship between the levels of anger and this complaint action (p-value = 0.0052). No significant relationships existed between anger levels and stopping patronage of both the brand name and the retailer/manufacturer where the product was purchased. However, a significant relationship existed between anger levels and contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0.0159), implying that

respondents who were very to extremely angry sought compensation (refunds, replacements, repairs). There was a significant relationship between anger levels and respondents' contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacture (p-value = 0.0125). The findings indicate that respondents who experienced the varying levels of anger took some formal complaint action as they contacted the retailer/manufacture to seek redress and contacted a repair service not supplied by the retailer (examples of problem-focused coping). They did not substantially engage in avoidance coping but rather employed emotion-focused coping, perhaps to find solace from friends, family and/or acquaintances. The results are found to be consistent with the literature that consumers who experience anger are likely to take radical, confrontational methods towards the party they hold responsible for the performance failure (Day & Landon, 1977:430-434; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:13-14; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Bougie *et al.*, 2003; Bonifield & Cole, 2007).

#### *Shame and coping behaviours/ methods*

Respondents who experienced shame engaged more in the emotion-focused coping of telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, where a significant relationship existed (p-value = 0.0165). Interestingly, as would be expected, consumers who experience emotions of shame are prone to engage in avoidance coping, as suggested by Mattila and Wirtz (2004). The results of this study did not support the above reasoning as there was no significant relationship between the levels of shame and coping methods associated with avoidance coping like stopping patronage of brand name and retailer/manufacture where appliance was purchased and taking no action. However, to ease their "pain" they significantly contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacture and sought social support from friends and family. Nevertheless, the results tend to be in agreement with some previous research which posit that shame is normally associated with private pain (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:76) and the likelihood of being associated with emotion-focused coping (White & Yu, 2005). There were no significant relationships between the levels of shame and other coping behaviours. This could be as a result of the fact that only 12.7% of the respondents attributed blame for the performance failure to themselves; most blamed external sources.

#### *Guilt and coping behaviours/methods*

The results on the elicited emotions and their intensity (Chapter 5, par. 5.5) indicate that very few respondents experienced feelings of guilt. As a result, no statistical relationship existed between levels of guilt and any of the coping methods/behaviours; hence this emotion could not be found to have influenced any of the coping methods/behaviours. It could have been overridden by another salient emotion such as anger, since the respondents did not feel

responsible for the problem, nor that they could have prevented it; consequently, they felt low intensities of guilt (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Watson & Spence, 2007; Soscia, 2007).

#### *Surprise and coping behaviours/methods*

There were no significant relationships between the levels of surprise and the following coping behaviours: told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, stopped supporting the retailer/manufacture where the product was purchased, decided to use another brand name, sought redress from the retailer/manufacture, and contacted the retailer/manufacture to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, contacted a consumer protection organisation, wrote a letter to the press and sought legal representation. Still, a significant relationship existed between the levels of surprise and the coping behaviour of contacting a repair service other than that provided by the retailer/manufacture (p-value = 0.0127). This implies that, though performance failure was an unexpected outcome, the respondents took it upon themselves to remedy the situation.

#### *Sadness and coping behaviours /methods*

The results indicate that respondents who experienced very to extreme sadness told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.0313), stopped patronage of the retailer/manufacture where the product was purchased (p-value = 0.0199), and contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacture (p-value = 0.0059). The results are consistent with the literature, which indicates that consumers who experienced sadness felt an irrevocable loss (financial loss, waste of time, social embarrassment), hence they resorted to emotion-focused and avoidance coping (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:75-85; Chaudhuri, 2006:100). Due to their feeling of helplessness and inadequacy they might appraise themselves as having low coping potential; thus when they engaged in a form of problem-focused coping it was the less confrontational one of contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacture. This trend has negative implications for retailers and manufacturers in terms of customer loyalty and profits. The respondents felt sad, engaged in negative word-of-mouth by telling their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, and they avoided contact with the retailer/manufacture – thus retailers are not aware of how many sad customers have stopped patronage of their stores and engaged in diffused negative behaviours about the products they sell.

#### *Frustration and coping methods/behaviours*

Significant relationships existed between the levels of frustration and the coping methods of telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0.0176), contacting the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress (p-value = 0.0130), and contacting the

retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress ( $p$ -value = 0.0164). Thus, respondents who felt very to extremely frustrated engaged in problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. No significant relationship was determined between the levels of frustration and avoidance coping (stopping patronage of brand name, of the retailer/manufacturer, taking no action). These findings confirm existing literature which points out that consumers who experience frustration are likely to engage in retaliatory behaviours and less likely to engage in conciliatory negotiations with the blameworthy other (Bonifield & Cole, 2007).

It is interesting to note that the respondents who experienced prime emotions of protest like anger and, frustration, as well as those who felt lesser protest emotions like shame, surprise and sadness, still told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience – an example of emotion-focused coping. This implies that most respondents were concerned with their social standing which, symbolically, the major household appliances were acquired to enhance; hence, when performance failure occurred they sought emotional/social support from their significant, relevant and “reference group” others, so as to mend their perceived wounded ego (Lazarus, 1991). Hence, in a way agreeing with Phau & Sari’s (2004) findings, which indicated that many more dissatisfied consumers tend to change brands and suppliers, and to tell their friends, families and/or acquaintances about the bad experiences, than voicing their complaints to the parties concerned.

#### **6.4.6 Coping strategies/methods in terms of attributions of blame for product performance failure**

Research has shown that female consumers are more likely to complain when blame for an unsatisfactory event (e.g. product performance failure) is attributed to the retailer/manufacturer than when blame is attributed to the self (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Phau & Sari, 2004; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Kalamas *et al.*, 2008). The results of this study indicate that in more of the responses obtained blame was attributed to external sources like retailers and manufacturers (70.4%) than was directed inward to themselves (12.7%) (see Chapter 5, Figure 5.6). When chi-square tests for equal proportions were performed to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the parties blamed for the product performance failure and the coping methods chosen, interesting facts came to light.

### *Retailer/manufacture blamed and coping strategies/methods*

There was a significant difference between the coping strategies chosen and attributing blame to the retailer or manufacturer ( $p$ -value =  $< 0.0001$ ). Proportionately, more responses were obtained for the problem-focused coping (43.9%), where respondents contacted the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress (19.4% of the responses), contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (10.1% of responses), and contacted the retailer/manufacture to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (9.5% of responses). Very few respondents contacted a consumer protection organisation, wrote a letter to the press or sought legal action (see Table 5.13). The results are consistent with the literature, which posits that when attribution of responsibility is directed to external sources like retailer/manufacturers, consumers tend to engage in radical public complaint actions to vent their anger and to obtain redress (Day & Landon, 1977:429-430; Day *et al.*, 1981; Folkes, 1984; Singh, 1988; Singh & Wilkes, 1996; Nyer, 1997; Donoghue, 2008).

A total of 31.5% responses were obtained for avoidance coping when respondents blamed the retailer/manufacture for the performance failure. They significantly stopped using the brand name (15.1%), stopped supporting the retailer/manufacture where the product was purchased (12.2%), and only 4.3% took no action. This implies that some respondents, though they blamed the retailer/manufacture, did not employ confrontational or retaliatory behaviours but resorted to conciliatory and subtle actions, which may be due to their perceived low and weak coping potential (Lazarus, 1991; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998).

Proportionately, 24.6% of the responses were emotion-focused coping: respondents told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, inherently diffusing negative word-of-mouth and soliciting for emotional and social support. Categorically most respondents who blamed the retailer/manufacture engaged more in problem-focused coping, thus confirming previous findings that consumers of durable products like major household appliances who experience performance failure are likely to engage in public-oriented complaint actions (Day & Landon, 1977:425-432-; Singh, 1988; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Donoghue, 2008). Nevertheless, other coping strategies like emotion-focused and avoidance coping appeared substantial.

### *Other people blamed and coping strategies/methods*

There was no significant difference between coping strategies when blame was directed to other people (e.g. the person who purchased or used the appliance), perhaps significant others who may have recommended the appliance to them.

*Self, appliance and “other parties” (where respondents did not know who to blame) blamed and coping strategies/methods*

From the results (see Tables 5.14 to 5.15), no statistically significant differences existed between the parties (i.e. the self, the appliance and other parties) blamed and the respective coping strategies. The numbers of proportions were equal, implying that all three types of coping were employed in the same proportions.

Problem-focused coping takes place when consumers have appraised the situation as harmful/threatening to their well-being and perceive themselves as having strong coping potential. Coping potential reflects an evaluation by the individual of the potential for, and the consequences of, engaging in a coping activity by assessing their capacity to cope/deal with the negative outcome and evaluate the benefits/harm associated with the coping mechanism considered (Lazarus, 1991; Nyer, 1997; Watson & Spence, 2007; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Chen & Matthews, 2001:102). Female consumers who perceive themselves as having low coping potential may engage in emotion-focused coping. The respondents appeared to have appraised themselves as having low coping potential, especially when attribution of blame was not resolutely linked to the performance failure. If one does not know who to blame one cannot rectify the product problem. If you go to the retailer, you will expect redress – if you have high coping potential; but low coping potential implies that the consumer will not get any benefits by engaging in problem-focused complaint action. In addition, respondents also engaged in negative word-of-mouth to feel better (also low coping potential).

It is clear from the results that respondents employed behaviours that were more radical and action-oriented when blame was attributed to the retailer/manufacturer than when blame was attributed to any other party. This means that attribution of responsibility/blame was also instrumental in influencing and shaping the kind of coping behaviours employed in relation to other factors like intensity of emotions, level of dissatisfaction and the overall appraisal process to cope with the stressful event. The conclusions drawn from this study are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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

#### 7.2 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are presented in the sequence of the objectives for this study (thus reflecting the conceptual framework of this study). However, sub-objectives 3.1 to 3.6 are integrated. It should be noted at this point that due to the convenience sampling technique, the findings of the study could not be generalised to the entire population of Botswana because the results are limited to a sample of female respondents in Gaborone, which was the place of the study. The sample consisted of 200 female consumers aged between 21 and 60 years who had experienced dissatisfaction with any major household appliances within a recall period of four years. The majority (81.1%) of the respondents were aged between 21 and 40 years. The sample was well educated; about 41.4% of the respondents had obtained either a bachelor's degree or a postgraduate degree. Half of the respondents resided in Gaborone-West, an upcoming affluent location and earned some income. However, besides the afore-mentioned limitation of ungeneralisability of the results due to the convenience sampling technique, this study has significant practical implications especially for Botswana that should be regarded as important.

##### **7.2.1 Expectation of product performance (functional and/or symbolic) based on the perceptions of quality of major household appliances**

Respondents from this study had clearly differentiated their expectations concerning both the functional and symbolic performance of their major household appliances. Functional performance expectations relate to functional performance attributes such as the appliance's proper operation in terms of its intended end-use, sufficient durability, easy operation (user-

friendliness), trouble-free maintenance and care, and adequate safety. Symbolic performance expectations relate to symbolic performance attributes such as the appliance's pleasing appearance, the appliance's portrayal of an image associated with the user's personal style, the user's enjoyment (pleasure) experienced when using the appliance, the user's admiration (regard) for the appliance and other people's admiration of the user due to her appliance ownership. Expectations about maintenance and care are associated with functional performance attributes such as durability, user-friendliness, safety and keeping the appliance in a working condition, as well as symbolic performance attributes such as, maintaining or improving the appliance's appearance, portraying an image associated with the user's personal style, furthering the user's enjoyment, boosting the user's admiration of the appliance and boosting other people's admiration of the user too.

### **7.2.2 The nature of the actual product performance failure (functional and/or symbolic) that resulted in dissatisfaction of female consumers with their major household appliances**

Respondents' expectations about product performance were disconfirmed when their major household appliances failed or performed poorly. The most problematic appliances were refrigerators, followed by microwave ovens, fridges/freezers, free-standing stoves and top-loader washing machines. The results of the open-ended question, where respondents had to indicate, "what went wrong", showed that the performance failure of major household appliances could almost exclusively be associated with the functional performance dimension. However, the results of the exploratory factor analysis showed that respondents differentiated between a functional performance failure dimension, a symbolic performance failure dimension and a combined functional & symbolic performance failure dimension when evaluating appliances' performance failures. This implies that respondents used three different performance failure dimensions and not only the functional failure dimensions when reasoning about the performance failure of their specific appliances. Interestingly, maintenance and care could be linked to both the functional and the combined functional and symbolic performance dimensions.

Significantly more respondents were very to extremely dissatisfied with their appliance performance, implying that the actual performance of products were much worse than their initial expectations for product performance.

### **7.2.3 The role of cognitive appraisal in dissatisfied female consumers' complaint behaviour concerning the functional and/or symbolic performance failure of major household appliances**

The majority of the respondents attributed blame for the product failure to the retailer/manufacturer (i.e. external sources), and not to internal sources like the self. Most respondents believed that the party they attributed blame to for the performance failure could have prevented the problem.

Product performance failures of major household appliances may cause stress when consumers believe that these failures will contribute to time losses, more household work and financial losses, and when they appraise product failures as threatening/harmful to their ego (e.g. threatening their social standing with significant, relevant and reference group others). Proportionally more respondents were very to extremely stressed by the product performance failure encountered, compared to those who experienced slight to moderate stress.

The respondents experienced negative emotions like anger, guilt, shame, sadness, surprise and frustrations with varying intensities. Proportionately more respondents were very to extremely angry, compared to those who were reasonably angry or not angry at all. No significant differences existed between the various shame proportions. In addition, most respondents did not feel guilty at all, compared to those who felt reasonably guilty or very to extremely guilty. (Respondents who blame external parties for the product problem might feel that they are not responsible for the problem and therefore experience low intensities of guilt). However, more respondents were very to extremely surprised compared to those who experienced reasonable surprise or no surprise at all, suggesting that respondents had specific expectations about product performance. Furthermore, significantly more respondents felt very to extremely sad and very to extremely frustrated than those who were reasonably sad or not sad at all and those who were reasonably frustrated or not frustrated at all, respectively.

Respondents engaged significantly more in the problem-focused coping strategy (41.4% of the responses) (which can be associated with public action, in this case contacting the retailer/manufacturer to seek redress, contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer), than the avoidance coping strategy (33.4%) or the emotion-focused strategy (25.2%). Avoidance coping included actions such as boycotting the brand name, boycotting the retailer/manufacturer where the product was purchased and taking no

action. Emotion-focused coping involved telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience to seek emotional and social support. However, when looking at the respective complaint actions in terms of Day and Landons' (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, it is clear that the respondents still spread negative word-of-mouth about the performance failure though they mostly engaged in public-oriented complaint actions.

When blame was attributed to the retailer/manufacturer, significantly more respondents engaged in problem-focused coping (by seeking redress, complaining to the retailer/manufacturer for other reasons than seeking redress, and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer), compared to avoidance coping and emotion-focused coping. No significant differences existed when blame was attributed to other people, the self, the appliance or when respondents did not know whom to blame, on the one hand, and the different coping strategies on the other hand.

A significant relationship existed between levels of anger and taking complaint actions. In fact, respondents who felt very to extremely angry took formal complaint action (i.e. contacted the retailer to obtain redress), which is more confrontational, and public-oriented (thus problem-focused) coping. They did not substantially engage in avoidance coping but rather employed emotion-focused coping, which is private action. In other words, though respondents employed confrontational and radical behaviours towards the retailer/manufacturer when very angry, they still sought solace from their friends, family and/or acquaintances by spreading negative word-of-mouth. On the other hand, emotions of shame were related to emotion-focused coping. With regard to emotions of guilt, no statistically significant relationship existed between levels of guilt and coping strategies – most probably because respondents did not internalise blame for the performance failure of their specific appliances. Whilst those who experienced emotions of surprise, though they generally engaged in problem-focused coping, it was a restrained coping method where they took it upon themselves to remedy the problem by contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer.

On another note, respondents who were saddened due to the performance failure of their specific appliances, significantly resorted to emotion-focused coping and avoidance coping. Furthermore, respondents who felt very to extremely frustrated, significantly engaged in problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. No significant relationship existed between the levels of frustrations and the avoidance coping method. The findings interestingly revealed that the respondents who experienced prime emotions of protest (anger, frustrations) as well as those who experienced less protest emotions (shame, sadness, guilt,

surprise), all spread negative word-of-mouth to friends, family and/or acquaintances. Thus they tried to mend their perceived wounded egos and disturbed social standing that symbolically was shaped and enhanced by their specific appliances.

## **7.3 EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH**

### **7.3.1 Quality of the results**

In the following section, the quality of the results is discussed in terms of its validity and reliability to substantiate that measurements measured the concepts used in this study accurately and that the measurements were as free from error and bias as possible, hence the consistent results. The validity of the results is discussed in terms of the theoretical, measurement (content & construct) and inferential validity.

#### **7.3.1.1 Theoretical validity**

A thorough review of the literature was done to become acquainted with established theories that have been successfully applied in similar researches – theories such as the theory on perceived quality and the expectancy disconfirmation model (Churchill & Suprenat, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983). Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour and cognitive appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:143-151) were meticulously studied and applied. The central concepts for this study were explicated in terms of the theoretical definitions obtained from the literature.

In this study, the respondents were pre-screened, and only those who had experienced dissatisfaction with their major household appliances during a prior four-year recall period were included in the study, if they so consented. Although respondents' memory decay may pose a source of error in terms of the reliability of the data collected, the above-mentioned Critical Incident Technique was used to allow respondents to report on real product failures compared to experimental studies where possible causes for product failure are manipulated by the researcher.

#### **7.3.1.2 Measurement validity**

The validity of the measurements were determined by using standard yardsticks including content and construct validity as described by Babbie and Mouton (2001) and Delport (2005). Hence, the denotations of the central concepts were accurate indicators of the connotations

of the concepts. Additionally, the items/contents of the questionnaire related to the objectives and sub-objectives of the study, thus contributing to its **content validity**. Additionally, the Supervisors and a statistician aided the researcher in evaluating the face validity, content validity and construct validity of the questionnaire before it was administered to respondents.

The constructs for this study were precisely explicated, as already discussed in the paragraph on theoretical validity. Additionally, multiple indicators were used to measure the constructs of performance failure to prevent mono-operation bias. The questionnaire was pilot-tested, and corrections or adjustments were made where necessary before final administration. Furthermore, the validity of the constructs, especially of performance failure, were ascertained by the results of the exploratory factor analysis by an overall Cronbach alpha of 0.87, which indicated a very good overall reliability of the variables used.

### **7.3.1.3 Inferential validity**

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

### **7.3.1.4 Reliability**

Techniques to develop the reliability of measurements include the use of established measurements and the training of fieldworkers (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:123). To ensure reliability of measurements in this study, reliable scales were used, especially to determine the type of performance failure. The scale was adapted from Donoghue's (2008) scale. Additionally, the Cronbach alpha value proved the reliability of the items/variables of the scale. Moreover, the measuring instrument (a self-administered questionnaire) was constructed meticulously, bearing in mind the principles of questionnaire construction. The Supervisors and a statistician checked the instrument for relevance, applicability and clarity of contents/items before its administration to respondents. Additionally, the questionnaire was pilot-tested beforehand.

Fieldworkers were trained and given clear instructions on how to administer the questionnaire to willing respondents who met the criteria set for inclusion in the study. A consent letter was provided to respondents, which gave insight into the aims and purpose of the study; however, respondents could at any time withdraw from the study. The respondents were guaranteed of the anonymity and confidentiality of their experiences and the opinions

they provided, that is, their names were not in any way linked to the data nor the publication of the results.

Considering that a convenience sampling technique was used in this study, the findings are not generalisable to the larger population of Botswana, but are limited to the specific sample. However, this does not imply that the results are of no value as they have remarkable and practical implications for policy makers, retailers, manufacturers, consumers themselves, consumer scientists and consumer protection organisations. A sample size of 200 was considered sufficient to employ all the statistical techniques for the data-analysis.

#### **7.4 CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY**

Consumers purchase products with specific physical features that they believe will fulfil their performance expectations (Brown & Rice, 2001:47); however, the findings of this study showed that respondents had clearly differentiated their expectations concerning the functional and symbolic performance dimensions of their major household appliances. Some studies (Swan & Combs, 1976; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Donoghue, 2008) imply that products such as major household appliances – as a new phenomenon, especially in emerging economies – may result in consumers having unrealistic expectations of their appliances' performance. However, in the light of the theory of perceived quality and expectancy disconfirmation paradigm, it emerged that the female respondents in this study had clearly differentiated between the functional and symbolic performance expectations of their appliances. When evaluating product performance failure, three dimensions surfaced: functional performance failure, symbolic performance failure, and the combined functional and symbolic performance failure (refer to Chapter 6, par. 6.3). Therefore, female respondents' dissatisfaction with their appliances was determined in respect of the above-mentioned dimensions – thus, contributing to theory building about the topic.

It is noteworthy that expectations about trouble-free maintenance and care of appliances though associated with formal functional performance attributes (Brown & Rice, 2001:48; Donoghue, 2008). In this study, the female respondents linked such expectations to symbolic attributes as well; they thus inherently interpreted the performance failure associated with such expectations in the functional and the combined functional and symbolic performance failure dimensions. The study thus contributed to the body of knowledge on the linkage of product performance expectations and actual product performance.

As far as poor performance was concerned, the most problematic major household appliances were cooling appliances (refrigerators, freezers, fridge-freezers), followed by microwave ovens and free-standing stoves. This contributed to the statistics that could guide in policy formulation by policy makers and reviews of manufacturing procedures by manufacturers/retailers that will improve the products' performance.

The cognitive appraisal theory, applied to consumer behaviour theory, brought to light that the high level of dissatisfaction experienced due to appliance performance failure heightened the level of stress fuelled by the attribution of blame which was directed at external sources (especially the retailers/manufacturers). This channelled the prime emotions of protest (anger, frustrations), which led to respondents engaging mostly in problem-focused coping (public-oriented complaint actions) than in any other coping strategies. However, those who were saddened by the negative event engaged more in emotion-focused coping (private complaint action) and avoidance coping (took no action). Emotions of shame were related to emotion-focused coping. Looking more in detail, these findings added to the body of knowledge on how female consumers perceive product performance failure, how they interpret/appraise it and the consequent complaint behaviours precipitated by the emotional responses, thus opening avenues for future studies with regard to the role of individual characteristics, gender and cultural influences in consumers' reasoning, and their emotional responses and coping mechanisms.

## **7.5 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study has practical implications for retailers/manufacturers, consumer protection organisations and policy makers, as well as for consumer scientists who take responsibility for the education of consumers to function well in the marketplace.

From a consumer socialisation point of view, knowledge and experience help consumers to be confident in the marketplace, making informed buyer decisions with less hassle in choosing and using sophisticated products like household appliances (Erasmus, 1998; Kachale, 2005; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:333-334). On the other hand, the lack thereof results in unrealistic quality expectations and eventually stressful consumption that normally breeds dissatisfaction. Although the respondents in this study had clear quality expectations concerning the functional and symbolic performance, their expectations might have been unrealistically high due to a lack of experience and knowledge concerning the operation of sophisticated appliances. Therefore, experience with and knowledge of the product class

may therefore be an important determinant of how a consumer would judge product quality (Selnes, 1993).

Consumer protection organisations and consumer educators/facilitators should provide consumers with more information about the selection, operation, maintenance and care of appliances. Knowledgeable consumers will be better able to form realistic expectations concerning product performance and will be better able to discern when a product's performance does not match prior expectations for that product; (Shim, 1996; Erasmus, 1998; Kachale, 2005; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:160). Retailers/manufacturers should use realistic and truthful marketing strategies that reflect the reasonable performance of appliances. Furthermore, retailers may employ experienced sales personnel to offer demonstrations on the use of major household appliances to willing customers. Policy makers could institute policies that mete out penalties for unrealistic marketing strategies that are aimed at unscrupulously robbing innocent consumers of their hard-earned cash but do not reflect the actual product performances.

Respondents differentiated between product performance failure dimensions in three distinct ways (functional, symbolic and combined functional and symbolic performance). The poor performance of their specific appliances resulted in a high level of dissatisfaction (68.4% proportionately). This has negative implications for the trust and loyalty of consumers toward the brand name, product, and also toward the retailer/manufacturer themselves, which may inherently lead to failed business sales and low customer retention. Hence, to build the trust of consumers, retailers/manufacturers must cultivate sound, friendly and effective redress environments by encouraging their sales personnel to be friendly and welcoming to dissatisfied consumers (Donoghue, 2008; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009).

In addition, retailers/manufacturers may employ fieldworkers who may occasionally obtain feedback from their customers about their appliances' performance by maintaining a working clientele database (Hansen *et al.*, 2010). Policy makers should come up with sound quality standards to be observed by manufacturers and retailers when producing or ordering appliances. On the other hand, consumer scientists/educators should equally educate consumers about standards, thereby empowering them on quality issues. Consumers should also follow the instruction manual carefully to enhance the life of their appliances and thereby reducing their own potential level of dissatisfaction.

The findings of this study revealed that performance failure of major household appliances was appraised as "harmful" to the respondents' well-being, and thus resulted in a high level of psychological stress (60.1% proportionately) (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Lazarus &

Lazarus, 1994:221-225). Female consumers' interpretation of appliances' performance failure dimensions might differ from individual to individual and from culture to culture, implying that retailers and manufacturers should have an understanding of cross-cultural differences in how female consumers perceive and react to product performance failure.

Respondents mostly blamed the retailer/manufacturer for the performance failure of their specific appliances. Furthermore, they believed that the party they mostly blamed was capable of preventing the poor performance of their specific appliances. According to literature (Nyer, 1997; Weiner, 2000; Chaudhuri, 2006:119-121), the psychological stress experienced fuelled by the attribution of blame especially towards external sources, results in negative emotions (e.g. anger, frustration, shame, guilt, sadness). Therefore, retailers/manufacturers and their personnel should be well prepared to deal with stressed-out consumers who may display emotional outbursts. Hence, retailers/manufacturers should employ qualified personnel who are able to identify stressed and emotionally charged consumers.

It is said that emotions are always true, real, fast, catchy and memorable. As a result there cannot be any doubt about the existence of emotions when a negative event (such as performance failure) is experienced (Chaudhuri, 2006:27). These virtues have implications on retailers, manufacturers and marketers. They should understand the emotional responses of consumers as an imperative to effective complaints handling. Consumer facilitators should on the other hand, encourage stressed consumers to express their emotions in a positive way, as suppressed emotions may be detrimental to the well-being of both parties (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:156) as well as strain the buyer-seller relationship through misdirected actions due to emotional outbursts leading, to loss in business and health risks.

Despite the likelihood that negative consumption events arouse negative emotions whose intensity signal a strong need for coping mechanism to be employed (Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:152-153; Mattila & Wirtz, 2004), individual and cultural differences may still regulate how such emotions are aroused and controlled. Different emotions can have different behavioural consequences (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Tsai, 2005; Wang, 2006), implying that retailers and manufacturers should have an understanding of cross-cultural differences in how female consumers perceive quality of products and how they react to performance failures that may occur (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Ngai *et al.*, 2007). As a result, consumer facilitators should workshop consumers on stress management and empower them to make formal complaints rationally and through proper channels.

The psychological stress experienced by respondents whose specific appliances performed poorly, heightened by the high level of dissatisfaction, the attribution of blame to external sources and the negative emotions elicited, necessitates coping strategies to cope with the performance failure. The results showed that 80.1% of respondents took some complaint actions, compared to 19.9% who took no action. However, this does not necessarily imply that respondents who took action engaged significantly in formal complaints as this was revealed through low responses on some formal actions like contacting a consumer protection organisation or legal representation, despite the chances that they might not have been satisfied with the complaint outcome. It appeared that respondents mostly sought redress from the retailer/manufacture (maybe because products were still under guarantee) and contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacture (maybe because product guarantees had lapsed). Retailers/manufacturers should be aware that dissatisfied consumers may resort to other subtle private and punitive coping mechanisms such as boycotts (brand name, product, and retailer) and spread of negative word-of-mouth about their experiences. This may be detrimental to their businesses as it may undermine their image, leading to loss of profits and customers (Schoefer & Ennew, 2005; Ngai *et al.*, 2007; Donoghue, 2008). Retailers and manufacturers should therefore maximise ways to capture all possible consumer complaints through both interactive (face to face) and remote control channels (e.g. letter writing, web reporting or on-line complaining through chat rooms). In other words, retailers and manufactures should not underestimate the impact of hidden or indirect complaints activities (Day & Landon, 1977:433; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009).

Consumer protection departments should review their complaint mediation strategies to see whether they effectively assist or encourage dissatisfied consumers to visit them. Hence, educational campaigns about consumer protection departments' role should be intensified. Complaint handling personnel should be trained to understand female consumers' reasoning underlying their complaint behaviour, how to deal with complaints effectively by following complaint policies and sound complaint handling ethics (Kim *et al.*, 2003; Donoghue, 2008). They should know how to deal with emotional consumers by offering sound and sincere apologies for the dissatisfying encounters. Additionally, policy makers should devise effective strategies for handling complaints and for protecting consumers by creating environments conducive to complaints, so that eventually there will be quality service/products and improvement in consumer rights.

## 7.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused only on female consumers' appraisals of performance failure of major household appliances, the resultant emotional responses and consequent complaint behaviour. Therefore, a future study could compare both males and females to capture any differences or similarities in the appraisal patterns, emotional responses and coping behaviours/methods embarked on.

Another study could look especially at the cultural/ecological effects on complaint actions and elicited emotions following a dissatisfying market event (product performance failure) in both rural and urban female consumers and the level of satisfaction following a coping method/behaviour.

The current research used a quantitative research methodology and convenience sampling; hence, another study could use a qualitative research methodology through a purposive sampling to uncover the emotional responses of dissatisfied female consumers and their motivations to embark on the coping methods they embarked on, following the performance failure of their major household appliances. Furthermore, a different theory like Symbolic Interactionism and the Theory of Reasoned Action could be used, as it may shed more light onto why consumers buy the appliances they buy.

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## ADDENDUM A

### LETTER OF CONSENT

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### LETTER OF CONSENT



Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences  
Department of Consumer Science  
1<sup>st</sup> June 2009

#### Dear respondent

We normally buy household appliances (e.g. kitchen & laundry appliances) with expectations that they will function/operate/function well. However, more often than not, people are dissatisfied with products, which do not meet their expectations. Currently I am busy with a Masters Degree study on Consumers' appraisals of performance failure of major household appliances. The study's aim is to find out how consumers react to dissatisfactions with performance failure of their appliances and the actions they take. The information can be useful for consumers, retailers and policy makers to improve consumer facilitation and effective ways of dealing with complaints.

The information you provide will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity. Hence your honest opinions and experiences are very important for this study. The questionnaire will take plus minus 10 minutes to complete.

To be part of this study you must answer “**yes**” to EACH one of the following questions:

Did you purchase/own a **major household electrical appliance** item in the last four years?

Did you experience **dissatisfaction** with the product itself? (Please note that this includes problems or unhappiness with the product itself, NOT with poor shop service, installation, delivery or advertising.)

Do you live in any area/location in **Gaborone city**?

If you answered, “**yes**” to all three of the above questions and are willing to participate in the survey, please sign this form without disclosing other details that can link you to the data, to show your consent of participation.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to participate in this study. If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the study, you are welcome to contact me at the numbers below.

Kind regards

Beauty Isaac

E-mail: isaacbeti@yahoo.co.uk; cell: +26 77 441 9099 (Botswana), +27 729 712 816 (South Africa)

Study leaders:           Dr S. Donoghue (Department of Consumer Science, UP)  
                                  Prof HM. de Klerk (Department of Consumer Science, UP)



# ADDENDUM B

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondent number:

**ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BY CROSSING(X) IN THE RELEVANT BOX OR WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE GIVEN SPACE**

**Section A: Demographic information of respondents**

- How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years
- What is your highest level of education?

Primary	1
Junior Secondary	2
Senior Secondary	3
Post-secondary certificate	4
Post-secondary diploma	5
Bachelor's Degree	6
Postgraduate qualification	7

- What is your household's monthly income before tax deduction?

Less than P 2 000	1
P 2 000 - P 4 000	2
P 4 001 - P 6 000	3
P 6 001 - P 8 000	4
P 8 001 - P10 000	5
P 10 001 or more	6

- In which area/location of Gaborone do you live?

**For official use only**

V1

V2

V3

V4

V5

**Section B: Product performance expectations & Actual performance**

For official use only

1. Which ONE of the following electrical household appliance that you have purchased within the last four years has caused you the **most dissatisfaction concerning appliance operation/performance?**

V6

Refrigerator	1
Freezer	2
Combination fridge-freezer	3
Built-in oven	4
Built-in stove	5
Free-standing stove (plates plus oven combination)	6
Microwave oven	7
Washing machine: front loader	8
Washing machine: top loader	9
Tumble-dryer	10
Dishwasher	11

2. Before/when you bought the appliance item that you chose in question 1 (section B), you had specific ideas concerning its future performance/operation/functioning.

Indicate the degree to which you **agree/disagree** with **each of the following statements** regarding your expectations for the appliance's performance before/when you bought it.

	Definitely agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Definitely disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
The appliance should operate properly in terms of its intended end-use.					
The appliance should be durable (last for a long time).					
The appliance should be easy to work with.					
The appliance should not require more upkeep (maintenance) and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition.					
The appliance should be safe to use (it should not cause safety/health risks).					
The appliance should be beautiful/attractive.					
The appliance should reflect the image/identity I associate with my personal style.					
The appliance should make me feel good about myself.					
I should enjoy using the appliance (using the appliance should be an emotionally pleasurable experience).					
I should think highly of the appliance (it should impress me).					
The appliance should make others think highly of me (impress others).					

V7

V8

V9

V10

V11

V12

V13

V14

V15

V16

V17

3. Generally during/when you use the appliance you begin to discover its real performance/operation/functioning ability.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements regarding the appliance's faulty or poor performance.

	Definitely agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Definitely disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
The appliance did not operate properly in terms of its intended end-use.					
The appliance was not durable enough (did not last long enough).					
The appliance was not easy to work with.					
The appliance required more upkeep (maintenance) and care compared to similar appliances in a faultless condition.					
The appliance was not safe to use (the appliance caused a safety or health risk).					
The appliance was no longer beautiful/attractive.					
The appliance no longer reflected the image/identity I associated with my personal style.					
The appliance no longer made me feel good about myself.					
I did not enjoy using the appliance any longer.					
The appliance no longer made me think highly of myself (impressed me).					
The appliance no longer made other people think highly of me (impress others).					

V18

V19

V20

V21

V22

V23

V24

V25

V26

V27

V28

V29

4. Please describe the actual fault (i.e. what went wrong) with the appliance item that you have chosen in question 1 (Section B).

**Section C: Consumers' reactions to actual product performance**

1. Indicate your overall level of dissatisfaction with the appliances performance.

V30

Slightly dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
1	2	3	4

2. Cross (X) the party whom you mostly blamed (held responsible) for the appliance's performance failure (poor performance) or provide another party, if none of the given options applies. (Mark **only one** party.)

V31

The manufacturer (e.g. provided poor workmanship, used inferior materials, provided an appliance with poor styling and design features)	1
The retailer (stocked poor quality appliance, shop assistants did not provide adequate information on appliance)	2
Other people (e.g. the person who purchased the appliance did not do enough research before purchasing it; the person who operated the appliance abused it)	3
Myself (e.g. I did not do enough research before purchasing it; I did not know how to operate the appliance)	4
The appliance item (e.g. flaws/defects are inevitable with complicated appliances, the appliance became out of fashion)	5
Other (specify)	6

3. Do you think that the party responsible for the appliance's failure (poor performance) could have prevented the failure (poor performance)?

V32

Yes	No	Uncertain
1	2	3

4. Please indicate, for each one of the descriptions below, how you felt about the appliance's poor/faulty performance. Mark the option which best describes your reaction with a cross (X).

4.1

Not angry at all	Reasonably angry	Very angry	Extremely angry
1	2	3	4

V33

4.2

Not ashamed at all	Reasonably ashamed	Very ashamed	Extremely ashamed
1	2	3	4

V34

4.3

Not guilty at all	Reasonably guilty	Very guilty	Extremely guilty
1	2	3	4

V35



For official use only

4.4	Not surprised at all	Reasonably surprised	Very surprised	Extremely surprised
	1	2	3	4

V36

4.5	Not sad at all	Reasonably sad	Very sad	Extremely sad
	1	2	3	4

V37

4.6	Not frustrated at all	Reasonably frustrated	Very frustrated	Extremely frustrated
	1	2	3	4

V38

4.7	Slightly stressed	Moderately stressed	Very stressed	Extremely stressed
	1	2	3	4

V39

**Section D: Coping methods/behaviours**

**This section involves your actions taken in response to your dissatisfaction with the appliance's faulty or poor performance. (Mark with a cross (x) in the relevant boxes.)**

1. Did you take action? (Action refers to talking to friends and family, using another brand name, stopping your support of the retailer, contacting the retailer/manufacture/a repair shop/a consumer protection organisation, writing a complaint letter and/or contacting a legal representative.)

Yes	No
1	2

V40

**If YES, please answer questions 2 - 11 (Section D)**

2. Did you tell your friends/family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience?

Yes	No
1	2

V41

3. Did you decide to use a brand name other than the one you were dissatisfied with?

Yes	No
1	2

V42

4. Did you stop supporting the retailer from which the appliance was purchased?

Yes	No
1	2

V43

5. Did you contact the retailer/manufacture to obtain redress (repairs/refund or a replacement)?

Yes	No
1	2

V44

6. Did you contact the retailer/manufacture to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (repairs/replacement/refund)?

Yes	No
1	2

V45

- 6.1 If yes, what were the reasons?

V46



For official use only

7. Did you contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer?

V47

Yes	No
1	2

8. Did you contact a consumer protection organisation/department?

V48

Yes	No
1	2

9. Did you write a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc) or a consumer complaint website?

V49

Yes	No
1	2

10. Did you contact a legal representative (law firm)?

V50

Yes	No
1	2

**Thank you for taking time to participate in this study!!**