

Consumers' attitudes toward consumerism, perceptions of specific product-related variables and consumer complaint intention: A Lesotho perspective

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M Consumer Science (General)

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June 2017

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by

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**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
M Consumer Science (General)**

**In the
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Consumer Science**

University of Pretoria

Supervisor: Dr Suné Donoghue

June 2017

**Maikutlo a baji malebana le boji, tjhadimo ya bona ya diphetoho tse mabapi le dihlahiswa
tse itseng esita le maikemisetso a bona a ho tletleba: Tjhadimo ea Lesotho**

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**Sengolwa sa univesithi se tlisitsweng se kgotsofatsa dipheho tsa boemo ba dikirii
(degree) lefapheng la MConsumer Science (General)
In the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Consumer Science**


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Declaration

I, Limpho Magdalena Molise, declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the Master's Degree in Consumer Science: General, at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other university or tertiary institution.



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Limpho Molise

09/12/16
.....

Date

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Abstract

Although substantial literature could be found on consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and on consumers' dissatisfaction with consumer products in first- and third-world countries (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Orel & Zeren, 2011; Cui, Chan & Joy, 2008; Bhuian, Abdul-Muhmin & Kim, 2001; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990), no empirical studies could be found that relate to consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and complaint intentions concerning dissatisfactory consumer products in a Lesotho context. This points to a void in the knowledge regarding consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and their complaint intentions regarding dissatisfactory consumer products purchased in Lesotho. The aim of this study was to explore and describe consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and their complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product. In addition, the relationship between consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and their complaint intentions, and the relationship between their perceptions of specific product-related variables and their complaint intentions were explored.

A quantitative methodological research approach was used for this study and a descriptive survey design was followed. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were employed in this study. In order to participate in the study respondents had to reside in Maseru, be 25 years or older to have acquired some experience with consumer electronic products. The data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire and a total of 389 usable questionnaires were collected.

Consumer attitudes were measured using an adapted version of Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale. The items pertaining to product-related variables and complaint action were derived from Keng and Liu's (1997) "product attribute scale". The items to measure complaint intention were derived from Singh's (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint responses and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour. Descriptive statistics were used to describe specific observations by presenting data in a manageable form, including frequencies, percentages and tables. Inferential statistics, including factor analysis, chi-square tests and logistic regression, were used to draw inferences from the findings.

Exploratory factor analysis revealed three attitude factors, namely *business and marketing influences*, *government regulation and consumer protection issues*, and *consumer sophistication*. Stepwise logistic regressions to model the influence of the attitude factors,

product-related variables, and demographic variables on complaint intention, revealed that (1) the severity of the product failure was the strongest predictor of word-of-mouth, followed by the consumer sophistication attitude factor and then by frequency of use; that (2) social visibility was the strongest predictor of word-of-mouth, followed by consumer sophistication and then by product failure severity; and that (3) price was the only product-related variable that would influence intention to complain to the retailer. The findings emphasise the need for concerted efforts by role players such as retailers, consumer protection organisations and the government to educate consumers about consumer protection issues in order to foster positive consumer attitudes.

Leha boholo ba dingolwa di fumaneha tse supang maikutlo a Baji hodima boji le ho se kgotsofale ha bona malebana le dihlahiswa dinaheng tse ruileng le tse futsanehileng (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Orel & Zeren, 2011; Cui, Chan & Joy, 2008; Bhuian, Abdul-Muhmin & Kim, 2001; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990), ha hona boithuto bo tshwarehang bo ka fumanehang mabapi le maikutlo a baji hodima boji esita le maikemisetso a bona a ho tletleba mabapi le dihlahiswa tse sa kgotsofatseng tse rekwang naheng ya Lesotho. Hona ho supa kgaello ya tsebo mabapi le maikutlo a baji malebana le boji esita le maikemisetso a bona a ho tletleba mabapi le dihlahiswa tse sa kgotsofatseng tse rekwang naheng ea Lesotho. Sepheyo sa boithuto bona e bile ho fatisisa le ho hlalosa maikutlo a baji malebana le boji, tjhadimo ya bona ya diphetoho tse mabapi le dihlahiswa tse itseng esita le maikemisetso a bona a ho tletleba ho latela ho se kgotsofale ha bona ke sehlahiswa sa eletroniki se rekuweng ho tswa ho morekisi. Hodima moo, kamano dipakeng tsa tjhadimo ya bona ya diphetoho tse mabapi le dihlahiswa hammoho le maikemisetso a bona a ho tletleba li ile tsa fatisiswa.

Mokhwa wa diphuputso ka dipalo-palo o ile wa sebediswa boithutong bona mme moralo wa tlhahlobo e hlalosehang ka nepo wa latelwa. Mefuta e mmedi ya diphuputso e sebedisitswe: e leng moo ho botswang motho e mong le e mong ya ka fumanehang haufinyane (Convenience sampling) le moo ho botswang feela letoto la batho ba nang le thahasello tabeng e fuputswang (snowball sampling) boithutong bona. E le ho nka karolo boithutong bona, babotsuwa ba ne ba lokela hore e be baahi ba Maseru, ba be dilemong tse 25 ho ya hodimo mme ebe batho ba nang le boiphihlelo tshebedisong ya dihlahiswa tsa eletroniki hape ba bile ba kgola meputso e ba dumellang ho reka tsona dihlahiswa tseo tsa eletroniki. Dikarabo tsa diphuputso tsena di batluwe ka mokgoa wa dipampiri tsa dipotso tse neng di tsamaiswa ke mofuputsi ka seqo mme dipampiri tsa dipotso tse 389 di ile tsa bokellwa.

Maikutlo a baji a ile a bekgwa ho sebeliswa mokgwa o loketseng wa sekala sa Barksdale le Darden (1972). Dipotso ho fuputsa mabapi le tjhadimo ea bona malebana le dihlahiswa esita le likgato tsa ho tletleba li nkuwe ho tswa ho Keng le Liu's (1977) "sekala sa boleng ba sehlahiswa". Dipotso ho bekga maikemisetso a ho tletleba di nkuwe ho tswa ho Singh's (1988) "dihlotshwana tse ipapisitseng le tsela eo baji ba hlahisang ditletlebo ka eona" hape ho tswa ho Day le Landon's (1977) "dihlotshwana tse ipapisitseng le boitshwaro ba baji ha ba tletleba. Dipalopalo tse hlalosehang li ile tsa sebediswa ho hlalosa diphihlelo tse itseng ka ho manolla lesedi ka tsela e ka matsohong joaloka makgetlo, diperesente le ditafole. Lipalopalo ka dikgakanyo, ho kenyelletsa litlhahlobo tse ipapisitseng le boleng, liteko tsa chi-square le lipalopalo tse kgutlelang morao, di ile tsa sebediswa ho etsa dikgakanyo hodima diphuputso.

Boithuto bo tebileng mabapi le ditlhahlobo tse ipapisitseng le boleng di sibollotse maikutlo holim'a maemo a mararo e leng: kgwebo le tshusumetso ya mmaraka, taolo ya mmuso le ditaba tse amanang le tshireletseho ya bajji esita le boiphihlelo ba bajji. Ditepe tsa lipalopalo tse khutlelang morao, ho bopa tshusumetso mabapi le maikutlo hodim'a maemo, tihadimo ya diphetoho tse mabapi le dihlahiswa esita le diphetoho tse ipapisitseng le maemo a bophelo ba batho hodim'a maikemisetso a bona a ho tletleba, di sibollotse hore: (1) monyetla o hodimo oa ho senyeha ha sehlahiswa ke ona o hakanyang se buuwang, ho latele boiphihelo ba bajji e be jwale makhetlo a tshebediso ya sehlahiswa, hape (2) ponahalo ho batho ebile kghakanyo e kholo ya se buuwang,ho latele boiphihlelo ba bajji ebe jwale monyetla o hodimo wa ho senyeha ha sehlahiswa, le hore: (3) poreisi e bile yona feela tsela eo tihadimo ya diphetoho tse mabapi le sehlahiswa e neng ekaba le tshusumetso hodim'a maikemisetso a ho tletleba ho morekisi. Diphuputso di sibollotse hore tlhokahalo mabapi le matsapa a kopanetsweng ke bohle ba nang le kobo ya bohadi jwaloka: barekisi, mekgatlo e sireletsang bajji esita le mmuso a ka thusana ho rupela bajji holim'a ditaba tse amanang le tshireletseho ya bajji ho fihlela katleho e tlisang ditholwana tse molemo maikutlong a bajji.

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List of abbreviations

CCB	Consumer complaint behaviour
CI	Consumers International
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPA	Consumer Protection Act
CPP	Consumer Protection Policy
CWO	Consumer Welfare Office
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
MTICM	Ministry of Trade and Industry, Marketing and Cooperatives
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNGCP	United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Chapter 1

Background to the study

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the voice of the consumer has received increasing attention as the marketplace became more competitive and consumers became better educated regarding their consumer rights (Consumers International/CI, 2013). Consumerism – also referred to as “consumer protection”, “the consumer movement” or “consumer activism” – describes the activities of various groups to protect basic consumer rights (Babin & Harris, 2011:300). Although there is immense international support for consumer protection, the notion exists that consumer protection can only exist in first world (developed) countries with ample fiscal resources and expertise to properly act in the interest of consumers. This conception leaves consumers in emerging and transitional economies in a predicament, as these economies indeed generally lack the financial recourses and the required capacity to educate consumers on their rights (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009).

The consumer movement formally emerged in the United States of America when President J.F. Kennedy decided to promote consumerism as part of his electoral campaign. His “Consumer Bill of Rights” promulgated four basic consumer rights, namely the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, and the right to be heard (Nwaizugbo & Ogbunankwor, 2013). This formed the basis of the “United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection” (UNGCP) that was adopted in 1985. The UN added four more rights to those of President Kennedy, namely the right to redress, the right to consumer education, the right to a healthy environment, and the right to have basic needs met. These rights are internationally recognised and form the basis of consumer legislation in many countries around the world (CI, 2013).

The above-mentioned advancement of consumerism highlights the importance of the role of governments in protecting consumer rights by enforcing laws and regulations. Every aspect of marketing is affected and governed by the laws and restrictions of the government (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2007:91). In first world countries, market economies are free from government interference, while in less developed countries consumers still rely on governments for consumer protection (Lysonski, Durvasula & Madhavi, 2012; Kaynak in Darley & Johnson, 1993). However, the protection of consumers in third world countries where there is no or only limited consumer protection, legislation cannot be guaranteed (CI, 2013). Consumers in both

developed and developing countries are often subjected to similar problems regarding consumer affairs (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Faye, McArthur, Sachs & Snow, 2004).

The free exchange of goods between countries has put the Southern African Development Community (SADC) markets under particular stress (CI, 2011). New markets are especially likely to be influenced by poor information and poor consumer awareness (CI, 2011). Inexperienced consumers, who are often exposed to new products such as consumer electronics, can as a result become swamped when making product choices and when experiencing product dissatisfaction (CI, 2013).

Many African countries including South Africa have consumer laws; however, neighbouring countries such as Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland up to very recently have had no such laws (CI, 2013). Fortunately for Lesotho, its Ministry of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing (MTICM) in 2013 approved the first Consumer Protection Policy to improve Lesotho's competitiveness with regard to investors and investment-related issues (MTICM, 2013). The Ministry also undertook to educate, sensitise and monitor compliance with the policy by both traders and consumers to pave the way for the development of a Consumer Protection Act (Lesotho News, 2013).

Lesotho imports about 90% of their consumer products from countries such as South Africa (CIA World Factbook, retrieved 2012-02-28). Basotho consumers now have access to a variety of modern and sophisticated products because of globalisation. Although globalisation has many advantages, there are also disadvantages that may have a huge impact on consumers especially in developing countries (Goldberg & Pavcnik, 2007). Developing countries, where consumers are particularly vulnerable due to lack of proper consumer socialisation concerning their consumer rights, are in many cases the dumping grounds for grey (substandard) products and unsafe goods. It would seem that Lesotho consumers are not adequately protected against profiteering and other objectionable trade practices, and Lesotho consumers are unfortunately vulnerable and often not able to look out for themselves in a competitive market place (Chefa, 2013).

According to Donoghue and De Klerk (2009), one way of protecting the consumer is by establishing a redress environment that would ensure fair redress as well as an understanding and appreciation of the consumer, specifically of the consumer-related variables and product-related variables influencing consumer complaint intention or behaviour. Retailers can therefore play an important role in protecting consumers' rights, specifically the 'right to be heard and to be understood' by encouraging their customers to complain to them and by listening to and acting on complaints in a fair manner (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009; Crié, 2003; Rousseau, 2003:460). However, the protection of consumers' rights implies that all role players should take

responsibility and become involved. Retailers are legally responsible for the protection of their customers' rights, but consumers also need to take responsibility for themselves by engaging in public complaint action, for without complaints retailers will not become aware of consumers' dissatisfaction with products (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006).

In the developing country of Lesotho, where the government is employing a consumer protection policy in order to eventually develop a consumer protection act, research on Basotho consumers' attitudes towards consumerism as well as consumers' complaint intentions concerning dissatisfactory products, specifically consumer electronic products, could be of immense value to policy makers, retailers and consumer protection organisations to facilitate an understanding of the link between attitudes and complaint intentions and to promote consumer protection and ultimately the welfare of consumers.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In a first world context, consumerism is a primary concern for the various consumer protection role players, including the government, consumer protection organisations, business and consumers, and a lot has been done to promote consumerism. In developed countries, consumers demand value for money, and their interests are protected by legislation (Jain & Goel, 2012). Moreover, consumers in developed countries are generally informed about their consumer rights and are therefore empowered to take responsibility for protecting themselves. For example, over the years consumers in many first world countries have exercised their right to express their discontent with specific businesses and industries about consumerism issues, thus contributing to the rise of consumerism that forced marketing and business firms to respond favourably to consumers (Halliru, 2012).

Taking into consideration that market economies in first world countries are advanced and relatively free from government intervention (Bello, Suleiman & Danjuma, 2012; Halliru, 2012; Al-Ghamdi, Sohail & Al Khaldi, 2007), the same cannot be said about third world economies where consumerism is in the early stages of development and consumers primarily rely on the government to protect their rights and interests (Chan & Cui, 2004; Darley & Johnson, 1993). Third world consumers generally have limited education, limited exposure to appropriate consumer information, do not always have access to the appropriate complaint channels when they experience dissatisfaction as a result of the performance failure of consumer products, and generally lack complaint experience (Erasmus, 2013:356; Darley & Johnson, 1993). This implies that far less has been done in a third world context to promote the rights of consumers (Halliru, 2012; Al-Ghamdi *et al.*, 2007; Darley & Johnson, 1993).

Consumers in developing countries are often exploited due to the changes in the marketplace in terms of globalisation and therefore need to be socialised about their consumer rights to allow them to understand their consumer responsibilities and to enable them to make informed consumer decisions (Mokale *et al.* in Clement, 2009; Schuh & Kitson, 2003). For example, knowledgeable consumers would be better able to confront retailers to demand redress and to resolve product issues in cases where they are dissatisfied with any of the consumer electronics they purchased. A market-oriented perspective places emphasis on the importance of providing adequate information to consumers and the contribution this makes to consumer protection (Erasmus, 2013:26; CRASA, 2003).

Although substantial literature could be found on consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and on consumers' dissatisfaction with consumer products and their subsequent complaint intentions or behaviour in first and third world countries (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Orel & Zeren, 2011; Cui, Chan & Joy, 2008; Bhuian, Abdul-Muhmin & Kim, 2001; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990), no empirical studies could be found that relate to consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and complaint intentions concerning dissatisfactory consumer products in a Lesotho context. This points to a void in the knowledge regarding consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and their complaint intentions regarding dissatisfactory consumer products purchased in Lesotho. Thus, in spite of the existence of a consumer protection policy and the efforts by the specific role players to promote consumers' rights, the existing policy does not necessarily address issues pertaining to consumers' attitudes about consumerism. Policy makers who know what consumers think and feel about consumerism issues might be better able to develop consumer protection policies.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION

This study could make a theoretical contribution to the international body of research on consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and to the field of consumer complaint behaviour. The numerous studies on attitudes towards consumerism merely describe respondents' attitudes towards consumerism in a specific context such as the United States (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Bhuian *et al.*, 2001; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990) or in different countries to make cross-national comparisons (Orel & Zeren, 2011; Cui *et al.*, 2008). However, this study explores the effect of consumers' attitude towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and demographic variables on their intention to complain in a developing country (Lesotho) where studies of this nature are still rare. Research focusing on the factors, including consumer-related variables, product-related variables and redress environment

variables, that influence complaint intentions and behaviour, should be an on-going process to gain new insights into improving products and the best possible ways to protect consumers (Donoghue, De Klerk & Isaac, 2012).

Consumer complaint intention does not only manifest in the intention to complain publicly to retailers, but also in the intention to complain to family and friends by means of negative word-of-mouth (WOM) or by means of negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), also called word-of-mouth (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013; Callebaut, 2006, Helm, 2000). Because of the “personal nature” of the communication between the individuals who participate in the different types of negative word-of-mouth, consumers tend to trust the source of the message and therefore the information is considered to be credible (Grewal, Cline & Davies, 2003). Retailers should therefore understand the powerful implications of negative word-of-mouth for their business in the long run, as word-of-mouth could significantly influence product evaluations and purchasing decisions.

The results of this study could also advance current knowledge about the product-related variables influencing consumers’ complaint intentions concerning consumer electronics in a Lesotho context, and could allow consumer electronics retailers to understand consumers’ complaint intentions more effectively and to safeguard consumers’ right to complain. In the end, this will not only benefit the individual consumer in terms of fair treatment and fair redress by retailers, but will also allow retailers to retain customers as active purchasers, increasing marketplace efficiency (Crié, 2003).

According to Bohner and Wanke (2002), actual behaviour is influenced by behavioural intentions and intentions are in turn influenced by attitudes. Therefore, in the context of this study, attitude change could influence complaint intentions, which could in turn influence complaint behaviour in similar situations in the future. By taking the responsibility to complain, consumers are actually contributing to their own consumer protection and, if complaining results in a fair outcome, consumers will probably be more likely to engage in complaint behaviour following dissatisfaction in the future.

The study could have practical significance in terms of the development of consumer protection policies and consumer protection programmes, consumer education and the empowerment of the individual consumer in Lesotho. A sound consumer protection policy that protects the rights of both investors and consumers are more likely to attract investors’ attention (MTICM, 2013). Consumer Protection Policies and ultimately Consumer Protection Acts can only successfully address consumers’ rights, responsibilities and other consumer protection issues when policy makers are aware of consumers’ conceptions about their rights, responsibilities and consumer

protection issues. More specifically, and in the context of this study, the results of the research could help policy makers, consumer protection organisations, and sellers/retailers to better understand consumers' cognitions about consumer protection, their perceptions of product-related variables and their subsequent complaint intentions.

“Society benefits from consumer education because, if consumer marketing performance is improved, gross national satisfaction will be improved and the negative economic effects of inefficient and uneducated consumption will decrease” (Clement, 2009). Consumer education involves an empowering process as it equips consumers with the necessary knowledge and skills to make confident and informed purchasing decisions (Clement, 2009). An empowered consumer will use information and take advantage of the competitive market by being knowledgeable, confident, assertive and self-reliant. Informed consumers are seen to be efficient consumers who can advocate for themselves in their day-to-day consumer affairs. Better information makes better educated and more empowered consumers (BIS, 2011; McGregor, 2005).

1.4 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to explore and describe consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables and their complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product purchased from a retailer. In addition, the effect of consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, of their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and of demographic variables on their intention to complain following their dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product was explored.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were formulated regarding consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and their complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product purchased from a retailer:

Objective 1: To investigate and describe consumers' attitudes towards consumerism

Objective 2: To investigate and describe consumers' complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product

Objective 3: To investigate and describe consumers' perceptions of specific product-related variables pertaining to specific consumer complaint intentions

Objective 4: To investigate and describe the effect of consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and demographic variables on their intention to complain (tell friends and family about the product failure by direct word-of-mouth, tell friends and family about the problem via word-of-mouth, contact the retailer to obtain compensation/redress) following their dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis for this study was consumers who had purchased consumer electronic products (i.e. major household appliances, communication devices, audiovisual products and personal computers) at retailers in Maseru, Lesotho. Consumer electronics are devices containing an electronic circuit board and are intended for everyday use by individuals, most often for entertainment and communication, including major household appliances, communication devices, audiovisual products and personal computers (Hermes, 2014).

To participate, respondents had to:

- reside in Maseru
- be 25 years or older.

A quantitative methodological research approach was used for this study and a descriptive survey design was followed. A non-probability convenience sampling technique and snowball sampling were employed. A total of 450 printed, structured questionnaires were distributed by the researcher through the help of seven trained field workers to respondents that met the criteria outlined above. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: Section A: Demographics; Section B: Attitudes towards consumer rights and protection; Section C: Propensity to complain about a dissatisfactory Consumer Electronic product; Section D: Product-related variables concerning dissatisfactory consumer electronics. Respondents were approached at public organisations and their private homes. Trained field workers collected data according to a quota to ensure that consumers in different geographic areas, different age groups as well as of

different gender were included. Field workers also used snowball sampling by asking respondents to provide the names of other consumers who would be willing to take part in the study. A total of 389 usable questionnaires were collected during the months of October and November 2014.

Consumer attitudes were measured using an adapted version of Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale. The items pertaining to product-related variables and complaint action were derived from Keng and Liu's (1997) "product attribute scale". The items to measure complaint intention were derived from Singh's (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint responses and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour. Descriptive statistics were used to describe specific observations by presenting data in a manageable form, including frequencies, percentages and tables. Inferential statistics, including factor analysis, chi-square tests and logistic regression, were used to draw inferences from the findings.

1.7 PRESENTATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is presented and structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides an overview of relevant literature on consumerism, including the consumerism life cycle pattern of development, the level of consumerism in first world as opposed to third world countries, explanation of consumer rights, implications for role players involved in consumer protection, attitudes towards consumerism where attitudes have been defined from a social cognitive perspective and from a consumer behaviour perspective, consumer complaint behaviour as defined by using Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour, traditional complaint behaviour versus online complaining, as well as factors affecting consumer complaint behaviour. The theoretical perspective employed in this study, i.e. social cognition, is discussed and finally, the conceptual framework is presented and discussed according to the aim as well as the objectives of the study.

In Chapter 3 the research methodology that was employed in this study is discussed. First, the research approach and design are presented. Then the sampling plan is discussed in terms of unit of analysis, sampling procedures, sampling technique and sample size. The methodologies for studying consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and complaint intentions are outlined. The measuring instrument, data collection procedures and data analysis are explained. The operationalisation in terms of objectives, concepts, dimensions, indicators and statistical methods is presented. An explanation of the statistical methods used is presented and the

quality of data in terms of validity and reliability is outlined; finally, the ethical issues are discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the results, analysis and interpretation according to the objectives of the study. The analysis begins with a description of the demographic and other characteristics of the sample, followed by the analysis and interpretation of the results in the order of the objectives of the study. Tables were included in this chapter to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 5 provides the conclusions of the study. The research is also evaluated and the implications and recommendations for retailers/government/consumer organisations are discussed. Suggestions for future research are also provided.

The questionnaire is included in **Addendum A**.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that consumerism in Lesotho is still in its infancy stage, the government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing launched the first Consumer Protection Policy (CPP) in 2013 (*Lesotho News*, 2013). This policy constitutes an important tool which in the long term could improve the protection of consumers and enhance economic growth, as investors are more interested in countries where there are clear and stable policies that protect them as well as the consumers (*Lesotho News*, 2013). With regard to consumer protection, the mission of this policy is to protect and promote consumer rights by educating consumer on their rights and to provide means of redress against exploitation by suppliers of services and goods (MTICM, 2013).

This chapter focuses on the concepts of consumerism, attitudes towards consumerism, consumer complaint behaviour and consumer complaint intentions. Firstly, consumerism is defined, followed by a discussion of the consumerism life cycle pattern of development, the differences in consumerism between first and third world countries, and consumerism in the Lesotho context. In addition, consumer rights are explained and the implications for role players involved in consumer protection are outlined. Secondly, attitudes are defined from both a social cognitive perspective and a consumer behaviour perspective. Thirdly, consumer complaint behaviour and consumer complaint intentions are defined and the differences between traditional complaint behaviour and online complaining are discussed. Next, the factors that influence complaint intentions and consumer complaint behaviour are also discussed. Lastly, the conceptual framework is presented and discussed according to the aim as well as the objectives of the study.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISING CONSUMERISM

2.2.1 Consumerism defined

The term *consumerism* has two meanings. The first meaning relates to consumers' pre-occupation with acquiring goods (Erasmus, 2013:355; Rousseau, 2003:447). The second meaning refers to "the efforts of independent individuals and organizations, government and business to protect the rights of consumers in the exchange process" (Erasmus, 2013:355; Jain

& Goel, 2012; Parumasur & Lombard, 2012:60; Rousseau, 2003:447). For the purpose of this study, the second meaning applies.

Within the second conceptualisation, consumerism is therefore primarily concerned with the protection of the consumers' rights, and ultimately with preventing unfair treatment of consumers with regard to marketing activities (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012). According to Wilkie and Moore (1999), consumerism is based on the major economic imperfections and asymmetric power relations between organisations and consumers, while Barksdale and Darden (1972) suggested that consumerism results when organisations do not apply the marketing concept. In essence, consumerism is all about ensuring a shift in power from producers to consumers, which could be organised by the citizens themselves for their own protection or where necessary, by the government through legislation (Halliru, 2012).

2.2.2 Consumerism life cycle pattern of development

Darley and Johnson (1993) suggest that the progression of consumerism in a country follows a typical life cycle pattern of development, and that countries can be represented in this life cycle according to the amount of information available to consumers and the degree to which legislation is in place to protect consumers as well as governments' involvement in supporting consumer protection (Donoghue, Van Oordt & Strydom, 2016a; Erasmus, 2013:357; Halliru, 2012; Darley & Johnson, 1993).

According to Erasmus (2013:357), the consumerism life cycle has four phases. The first phase is the crusading phase where consumers have no redress options available and have limited protection against exploitation which drives them towards voicing their complaints. The second phase is the population movement, as is commonly seen in developing countries. In this phase, groups of consumers with similar interests start to voice their concerns. The third phase is the organisational or managerial phase where organisations are formed in order to act on behalf of consumer groups. The last phase is the bureaucratic phase and is mostly characterised by arrogant consumers whose commands are so extreme that they cause friction between consumers and the industry. This last phase is common in developed countries such as the United States of America (Erasmus, 2013:357; Darley & Johnson, 1993).

It should however be noted that, although some findings lend some support to the life cycle concept of consumerism development, many studies could not confirm the existence of such a life cycle and therefore reject the hypothesis that countries could be typified according to their consumer information and protection legislation and also by their governments' involvement and support of these efforts. (Cui, Lui, Chan & Joy, 2012).

2.2.3 Consumerism in a first world versus a third world context

According to Lysonski *et al.* (2012), consumerism started in America with President J.F. Kennedy's speech in 1962 calling for the protection of consumer rights, which led to the passage of the Bill of Consumer Rights in the USA in 1962. This progression served as a morale booster to the consumer movement and has influenced regulation in the USA since then (Bello, Suleiman & Danjuma, 2012; Al-Ghamdi *et al.*, 2007). In addition, the consumers' continual expression of discontent with unscrupulous business activities augmented the growth of consumerism and as a result, marketing and business firms in most developed countries were forced to respond favourably and to adopt better ways of delivering goods and services to consumers (Bello *et al.*, 2012; Halliru, 2012).

Consumers in first world countries are generally better educated and able to fend for themselves. The consumer movement in first world countries has developed with great force, partly because their market economies are advanced and free of government interference and consumer legislation and consumer protection organisations are well established (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Chan & Cui, 2004; Kaynak in Darley & Johnson, 1993; Bharadway, Thirunarayana & Varadarajan, 1991). These countries are typically at the bureaucratic phase on the consumerism life cycle where consumers are generally more aware of their rights, tend to be more satisfied with consumer products and services, are not likely to request extra government regulation (Chan & Cui, 2004), and tend to publically support the notion of consumer protection (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Kaynak in Darley & Johnson, 1993).

In contrast, consumerism is often not a primary concern in most third world countries, where the focus is typically on the crusading phase of the consumerism life cycle pattern (Chan & Cui, 2004). Consumers in developing countries are usually considered vulnerable due to the lack of adequate consumer protection, consumer education, and provision of information about consumer legislation (Erasmus, 2013:356; Darley & Johnson, 1993:37), which explains why consumers tend to be more dissatisfied with their market/purchase experiences, tend to struggle to protect themselves in competitive markets, and expect more government intervention (Chan & Cui, 2004). Moreover, consumers are often exploited by retailers, and consumer complaints are often not settled in a fair manner. It is therefore clear that consumer education is needed to empower consumers to become more knowledgeable and consequently more cautious in the marketplace, and that governments should intervene via legislation and efficient enforcement in protecting consumers in developing countries (Donoghue *et al.*, 2016a).

The findings of a recent study by Consumers International (CI) showed that the principal mechanism for the governance of consumer protection in various countries is the Consumer

Protection Act (CPA), and to a lesser degree the existence of a national policy on consumer protection. The results indicated that high-income and medium-income countries are more inclined to have CPAs, while CPAs are much less prevalent in low-income countries. A corresponding pattern emerged when these results were categorised in terms of geographical region, with Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) reporting the lowest prevalence of CPAs (CI, 2013). Many African countries have enacted consumer laws since 1996. While South Africa boasts one of the most progressive consumer laws, neighbouring countries like Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland have none (CI, 2013). However, consumer protection legislation is not a guarantee of consumer protection (CI, 2013).

Consumers worldwide indicate that legislation is often badly implemented (CI, 2013). Consumers in developed and developing countries often experience similar problems concerning consumer affairs, including among others access to adequate information to empower consumers to make informed choices, availability of effective consumer redress mechanisms, misleading marketing practices and protection of consumers against potentially hazardous products to their health and safety (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Faye, McArthur, Sachs & Snow, 2004). The promotion of consumers' rights in specifically third world countries would be a daunting task due to consumers' ignorance concerning their rights, a lack of proper consumer education as well as a lack of governmental support towards protecting consumer rights (Halliru, 2012).

Most of the research on consumerism and marketing activities has focused on developed rather than less developed countries (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Darley & Johnson, 1993). However, various studies have been conducted to make cross-national comparisons of consumers' attitudes toward marketing. For example, Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Consumer Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale has been widely used in first world contexts and to a limited extent in third world contexts to study consumers' perceptions of the marketing system and its operation (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Bhuian *et al.*, 2001; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990). The majority of these studies only described consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, but these attitudes were not linked to consumer complaint intentions and complaint behaviour. Gaski and Etzel (1986) adapted the Barksdale-Darden scale to develop the "Index of Consumer Sentiment toward Marketing" (ICSM), which was adopted in many subsequent studies. Fornell, Johnston, Anderson, Cha & Bryant (1996) later extended the Barksdale-Darden scale to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), which has since been widely adapted by researchers in many other countries (Cui *et al.*, 2008).

Barksdale *et al.* (1982) placed six countries including Australia, Canada, Israel, Norway, the UK, and the US, on a life cycle of consumerism development from crusading, popular movement,

organisational to bureaucracy stages. Despite the different levels of consumerism development, Barksdale *et al.* (1982) found that consumers from these countries had rather similar attitudes toward marketing, thus suggesting a weak relationship between the life cycle of consumerism development and attitudes toward marketing. In a cross-national study conducted in China and Canada, Cui *et al.* (2008) also found that contrary to the respective countries' position in the consumerism life cycle, Chinese consumers had more positive attitudes toward marketing and a higher level of satisfaction than their Canadian counterparts. However, while Chinese consumers were less likely to complain or to engage in negative word-of-mouth, they were more supportive of government regulations and public resolution such as complaining to the media – probably due to their collectivistic nature (Cui *et al.*, 2008). Collectivistic societies such as Chinese societies tend to put greater emphasis on harmonious relationships and tend to be less critical of marketing; consumers in individualistic societies such as the United States and Canada tend to express their dissatisfaction and anger externally and are hence more likely to express their dissatisfaction with the marketing institution (Donoghue, Strydom, Andrews, Pentecost & De Klerk, 2016; Poon, Hui & Au, 2004). Cui *et al.* (2008) suggested that the cross-cultural variations in consumer attitudes may reflect the differences in cultural values (i.e. individualism) and the role of government institutions between the two countries. However, it should be noted that findings on the effects of socio-cultural values on consumer attitudes toward marketing across countries have been inconclusive (Cui *et al.*, 2008).

In an African context, Nkamnebe, Idoko and Kalu's (2009) study on the role of relevant stakeholders in protecting the rights of Nigerian consumers, showed that consumers did not resort to litigation against sellers for infringement of their consumer rights, possibly because these consumers were not aware of consumer protection laws. Nkamnebe *et al.* (2009), among others, proposed intensified consumer education as a strategic choice for enlightenment and empowerment. Bello *et al.* (2012) also conducted a study on perspectives on consumerism and consumer protection action in Nigeria, and their findings revealed that the level of consumer awareness in Nigeria is low despite the existence of the law (CPA), and that Nigerian consumers are still confronted with low quality goods and services, lack of information and limited choices in the market (Bello *et al.*, 2012). Back in the 1970s, Onah (1979) also studied consumerism in a Nigerian context by examining the efforts of consumers, government, and independent institutions to protect consumers from unscrupulous business activities driven by the profit motive. Darley and Johnson (1993) compared marketing and consumerism issues in developing countries in Africa (Kenya and Nigeria) and in Asia (India and Singapore). Their findings suggest that there were differences among the nations, but that some degree of consumer discontent appeared in all of them, and that there was public support for more government regulation.

2.2.4 Consumerism in the Lesotho context

Lesotho is a member of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) in which tariffs have been lifted on the trade of goods between member countries, which also include Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland. These countries are part of a common currency and exchange control area known as the Rand Monetary Area that uses the South African rand as the common currency (Asonuma, Debrun & Masson, 2012). Lesotho's trade vision for 2020 is to achieve a pre-eminent position in the sub-region and in Africa, as an investment destination of choice, and to be competitive in the multilateral trading system while maintaining the highest consumer protection standards (World Trade Organisation/WTO, 2009). One of the supporting objectives would be to legislate, promulgate, and enforce appropriate consumer protection legislation in order to protect the interests of the consumers and create greater awareness of their rights (WTO, 2009; Lesotho National Vision 2020 Document, 1996).

Although there is currently no consumer protection act in Lesotho, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing (MTICM) recently formulated and launched the first consumer protection policy to improve Lesotho's competitiveness with regard to investors and investment-related issues, as investors are more interested in countries where there are clear and stable policies that protect them as well as the consumers. The Lesotho cabinet approved the policy in October 2013 and the ministry is now faced with the task to educate, sensitise and monitor compliance with the policy by both traders and consumers (*Lesotho News*, 2014). In 2000, the government of Lesotho also adopted a privatisation policy to liberalise the telecommunications sector concerning the promotion of competition within the telecommunication sector, protection of consumer rights etc. (Lesotho National Vision 2020 Document, 1996).

Lesotho has consumer protection organisations such as the Consumer Protection Association and the Consumer Welfare Office (CWO), who deal with consumer disputes to ensure that consumers are protected. In addition, Lesotho consumers have access to the commercial court when their rights are violated (MTICM, 2013). However, although certain measures are in place to protect consumers, and the efforts of consumer protection organisations are commendable, neither the government nor the existing consumer organisations have yet established a consumer education programme to address the growing concerns of consumers in Lesotho. The need for consumer protection in terms of the right to education, the right to be heard and the right to a fair redress therefore cannot be overstated (MTICM, 2013).

Lesotho's progress in moving from a predominantly subsistence-oriented economy to a lower-middle income, diversified economy exporting natural resources and manufacturing goods, has

brought higher, more secure incomes to a significant portion of the population. Although the country is still among the "Low Human Development" countries (ranking 155 of 192) as classified by the UNDP (Food and Agricultural Organization/FAO, 2010), Lesotho holds one of the highest literacy rates in Africa (CIA World Factbook, retrieved 2012-02-28; FAO, 2010), which implies that a large segment of the population will probably have the cognitive capacity to be socialised in terms of consumer protection issues and to accept their consumer protection responsibilities. However, the majority of consumers are unfortunately vulnerable due to asymmetries of information and poor consumer awareness and are therefore not able to fend for themselves with regard to their consumer protection, implying a need for government intervention.

Organised retail formats such as shopping malls now exist in Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho, and are still on the increase. Consumers can now shop at either Pioneer Mall or Maseru Mall where there are a number of retailers who sell a variety of household appliances, consumer electronics, home-ware, food and clothing. Nowadays consumers increasingly purchase their commodities at these malls rather than from the retailers in the neighbouring country of South Africa because of the wide product assortment and this also saves them time and energy to travel (Chefa, 2013).

Although a typical Lesotho household would devote the highest percentage of their total income on food, followed by clothing, it has been indicated that almost 10% of their total spending is devoted to household appliances and other consumer electronics due to their increased spending power (Central Bank of Lesotho, 2012). This trend is not unique to Lesotho, as the demand for consumer electronics has escalated worldwide due to consumers' increased spending power (Hermes, 2014; McCully, 2011; Hatch, Becker & Van Zyl, 2011). However, increased product usage coincides with the possibility to be dissatisfied as a result of product failures.

Consumer electronics are devices containing an electronic circuit board which are intended for everyday use by individuals, most often for entertainment and communication, and include major household appliances, communication devices, audiovisual products and personal computers (Van Oordt, 2015:143; Hermes, 2014). Consumer electronics have become important to consumers as some are time and energy saving and reduce the physical workloads, while others enable fast and easy communication. Consumer electronics are supposed to be durable and hence they are usually expensive, and are often purchased for the social significance associated with ownership in addition to their functional utility (Brobeck & Mayer, 2015:98; Solomon, Russell-Bennett & Previte, 2012:248; Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2009:33; Phau & Sari, 2004). Moreover, these products might also be

important as an identity extension as they have become social status symbols for consumers (Erasmus *et al.*, 2011; Belk in Clarke *et al.*, 2002). For these reasons, it is clear why it is important that consumers need to be satisfied with their products.

In countries where consumers have ample knowledge of their consumer rights and where they know the avenues to pursue when they need redress, consumers would be more likely to complain or engage in actual complaint behaviour when they experience product failures/dissatisfaction, unlike in Lesotho where consumerism is less developed and most consumers are reluctant to complain as they do not know the proper complaint channels to follow (Chefa, 2013; CI, 2013; MTICM, 2013). However, it should be mentioned that major Lesotho retailers' redress policies stipulate that major consumer products are guaranteed for up to a year and minor products for up to six months. Consumers can also insist on redress if they experience product problems within the guarantee/warranty period (Interview conducted with Ms M. Kobeli, shop assistant of a major retailer, on 2014-03-25).

Similar to other regions in Africa, there have been increased liberalisation of exchanges and the opening of trade borders in Southern Africa, which has put the Southern African Development Community (SADC) markets under particular stress (CI, 2011). Inexperienced consumers who are constantly bombarded with new products such as consumer electronics, can therefore easily become overwhelmed when making product choices and when experiencing product dissatisfaction (CI, 2013).

2.2.5 Explanation of consumer rights

The role and influence of consumers in the marketplace became important when President J.F. Kennedy chose to drive his presidential campaign by promoting consumerism during the 1960s in the USA. After his election in 1962, the following four basic consumer rights became the central point of discussion in the American marketplace, and this has had significant implications for the rest of the world:

- the right to choose (consumers must be able to select from a variety of environmentally friendly and fairly priced products and services offered, with an assurance of satisfactory quality at convenient places)
- the right to be informed (consumers have the right to be given all the information they require about the product, or to be given the facts needed to make an informed choice, and to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising)
- the right to be heard (somebody must listen, i.e. the retailer or anybody involved when the consumer is not satisfied with a purchase) and to have government policies that constitute consumer interests/concerns

- the right to safety (to be protected against unsafe products, hazardous production processes and services) Consumers also have the right to physical safety while purchasing) (Erasmus, 2013:355; Nwaizugbo & Ogbunankwor, 2013).

According to CI (2013), the United Nations later added the following four rights to those of President Kennedy:

- the right to redress (when consumers are sold an inferior product, they have the right to go back to the retailer and demand a replacement or refund, i.e. to receive a fair settlement of complaint, including compensation for unsatisfactory products either by repairing or refunding)
- the right to consumer education (to have the information/knowledge of their basic consumer rights and responsibilities and how to act on them, and to obtain the knowledge and skills required to make informed and confident decisions about goods and services)
- the right to a healthy environment (consumers have the right to a healthy and safe physical environment that will enhance the quality of life, and to have market environments that are non-threatening to consumers as well as to live and work in an environment that is non-threatening to the wellbeing of present and future generations)
- the right to satisfaction of basic needs (to have access to basic, essential goods and services: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education)

These rights have become internationally recognised and now form the basis of consumer legislation in many countries around the world (CI, 2013).

Educating consumers about their consumer rights can change their attitudes toward consumerism in a positive way and increase their complaint intentions and behaviour; this will benefit manufacturers/retailers as they will get feedback about the performance of their products and remedy defects where necessary (Van Oordt, 2015:83, 98).

2.2.6 Implication for role players involved in consumer protection

Consumers are an important part of any economy and hence need to be protected (Amunkete, 2013). Governments, ministries of trade and industry, consumer protection organisations, retailers/manufacturers and consumers themselves each has a role to play in consumer protection. The government should play its role by establishing consumer protection legislation (consumer protection act) so as to ensure that consumers are well protected. In the absence of a guiding legislation framework, the ministry of trade and industry's consumer protection division and consumer protection organisations should play a role in protecting consumers by raising consumer awareness, i.e. informing consumers about their rights through brochures and

pamphlets as well as by dealing with complaints or consumer disputes, monitoring prices, ensuring product choice and competitive pricing (Amunkete, 2013).

Retailers and manufacturers should play a role by first creating realistic expectations for product performance in order to avoid creating false expectations regarding product performance, and should provide more consumer friendly information about the operation, maintenance and care of products (consumer electronics) to consumers through marketing and advertising (Laufer, 2002). Retailers and manufacturers should also provide useful information about consumer rights and should actually encourage dissatisfied consumers to take formal complaint action; this will not only make retailers/manufacturers aware of any product shortcomings but will also resolve the problem when consumers complain directly to them (Bodey & Grace, 2006). Finally, retailers/manufacturers should have complaint policies and strategies and sound complaint handling ethics in place (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009).

Consumers should also play a role in their own protection by understanding their responsibilities as consumers and by accepting their personal responsibility, commitment and involvement in their buying and consumption decisions. Consumers should also take action, that is, they should complain and follow the proper complaint procedures when they are dissatisfied with a product (Erasmus, 2013:370). However, consumers can only fulfil these responsibilities if they are properly socialised, implying that consumers should get proper consumer education and consumer socialisation from the government and consumer protection organisations.

2.3 CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONSUMERISM

In this section attitudes are first defined from a social cognitive perspective and then applied in terms of consumer behaviour.

2.3.1 Attitudes from a social cognitive perspective

Social psychologists define attitudes as “responses that locate objects of thought on dimensions of judgment” (Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue, 2014). Ferguson and Fukukura (2012) define attitude as “the psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour”. Fazio, Chen, McDonel & Sherman (1982) define attitude from a socio-cognitive perspective as “a positive or negative summary evaluation of the corresponding stimulus”. All these definitions basically imply that attitudes are evaluations and that they can be positive, negative or even neutral.

Attitudes are important because they help individuals to understand and explain the environment/world around them (knowledge function) (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:209); they also help individuals gain rewards (utilitarian function) (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:208). Moreover, attitudes reveal something about oneself to others (value expressive function), and finally, they can serve an ego defensive function which involves self-protection (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:208; Augoustinos *et al.*, 2014). Baron and Byrne (2004) also emphasise that attitudes are important because they help people to organise and evaluate information, to express central values or beliefs, to build and maintain self-esteem, and are also useful in predicting behaviour. However, it is important to note that attitudes are expressed through behaviour and that attitudes may serve more than one function and may be expressed for various reasons at different times (Asiegbu, Powei & Iruka, 2012).

Attitudes originate from social life through people's everyday interactions and communications with others, which may imply that attitudes are shaped by our experiences and, as people gain more experience, attitudes are likely to change as well. Attitudes are shaped by social feedback from valued and respected people. According to Baron and Byrne (2004), attitudes are learned through social learning and through social comparison. However, attitudes can change as a result of new experience or following some persuasive communication (Augoustinos *et al.*, 2014). Tesser and Shaffer (1990) also noted that attitudes can be changed through repeated exposure to an unfamiliar stimulus, resulting in a positive attitude towards the stimulus.

2.3.2 Attitudes from a consumer behaviour perspective

There are several definitions from a consumer behaviour perspective for consumer attitudes; however, according to Mpinganjira (2013:128), the most widely used definition of attitudes is that of psychologist Gordon Allport who defined attitude as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object”. Consumer attitudes have the following characteristics:

- Firstly, attitudes are object specific, which implies that consumers could have attitudes towards anything tangible (e.g. products, prices, consumers), and non-tangible (e.g. services, ideas) (Allen, Hung Ng & Wilson, 2002).
- Secondly, attitudes are learnt through experience (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:203; Mpinganjira, 2013:128; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:246; Banyte, Joksaite & Virvilaite, 2007).
- Thirdly, attitudes predispose people to respond in specific ways (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:246; Banyte *et al.*, 2007), and in the context of this study, specifically influence people's consumer complaint behaviour.

- Finally, attitudes are enduring, implying that the response to an attitude object is consistent unless something happens or is done to change an existing attitude (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:203; Mpinganjira, 2013:128; Cacioppo, Petty & Crites, 1994).

According to most researchers, attitudes can be understood by looking at the three main components of attitudes, namely: affective, cognitive and behavioural components. The affective component involves evaluative feelings people have towards attitude objects which may be favourable or unfavourable. The cognitive component on the other hand, has to do with the individual's knowledge and perceptions towards attributes of an attitude object, which are expressed in the form of beliefs. It should be noted that beliefs can either be associated with product attributes or product benefits, and that these beliefs may be based on what consumers perceive to be the truth about the products (Mpinganjira, 2013:129-131). Beliefs are therefore important in influencing behaviour. The behavioural component involves intentions to act, and the actual behaviour of consumers reflects these intentions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2009:244).

According to Mpinganjira (2013:136), consumer attitudes serve various functions, namely a "utilitarian function which directs consumers towards products that provide benefits, [a] value expressive function which directs consumers towards products that say something about themselves and their life values, [an] ego defensive function which directs consumers towards products that help protect their self-image, and [a] knowledge function which directs consumers towards useful information".

2.3.3 Attitudes toward consumerism

Consumer attitudes are an integral part of the marketing environment that managers need to scan to understand potential forces that could restrict marketing activities, yet few studies have examined consumers' attitudes towards consumerism in developing countries (Chaubey, Kala & Gupta, 2012). Two scales have been used in research to measure attitudes towards marketing and consumerism, namely Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale and Gaski and Etzel's (1986) "Index of Consumer Sentiment Toward Marketing".

Barksdale and Darden (1972) first explored their research on consumer attitudes towards marketing in the USA and replicated their study for several years in the 1970s. Barksdale and Darden (1972) presented a battery of items, i.e. 40 items to assess consumer attitudes towards marketing and business, as well as consumer reactions to business policies and practices. The topics addressed by their scale included philosophy of business, product quality, advertising,

other marketing activities, consumer responsibilities, consumerism issues, and government regulation – representing consumer protection issues that consumers in all parts of the world experience.

The results of Barksdale and Darden's (1972) study that was conducted in America revealed that respondents had more confidence in the government enforcement than in voluntary business efforts to meet consumer expectations (Barksdale & Darden, 1972). Furthermore, the results also showed that most U.S. respondents (70%) thought that most manufacturers did not handle consumer complaints well. Orel and Zeren (2011) used the Barksdale and Darden (1972) scale to study and compare attitudes towards consumerism in two developing countries, namely Poland and Turkey. Orel and Zeren (2011) *inter alia* determined that both Polish and Turkish respondents doubted whether their respective marketing systems operated more efficiently than those of other countries, and that Turkish respondents appeared to be more positive about the government's role in protecting consumer interests than Polish respondents. Moreover, it was found that there were no statistically significant differences between both samples' attitudes towards product quality and consumer problems and responsibilities (Orel & Zeren, 2011). Moreover, it was found that there were no statistically significant differences between both samples' attitudes towards product quality and consumer problems and responsibilities (Orel & Zeren, 2011).

It should be noted that Barksdale and Darden (1972) were the first in the development of issues related to consumers' attitudes towards marketing practices and they only measured consumer attitudes toward the four marketing-mix variables: product, price, place and promotion. Gaski and Etzel (1986) presented a new measure to track more effectively and reliably how well marketers were doing with the general public. This new measure assessed consumer sentiment, modified the Barksdale and Darden (1972) scale and built the "Index of Consumer Sentiment toward Marketing". Gaski and Etzel's (1986) scale measures consumer sentiment towards marketing via attitudes towards the four major elements of marketing practice, namely product, price, promotion and personal selling/retailing (Fernandes & Pimenta, 2013; Lawson & Todd, 2003).

According to Cui *et al.* (2008), consumers in developed countries such as Europe and North America have a more positive attitude towards marketing but weaker consumerism sentiment, because these countries already have strong institutions for protecting consumer rights. Consumers in these countries are generally satisfied with the existing conditions and require less government regulation (Cui *et al.*, 2008). In less developed countries where consumerism development is still at its infancy stage, consumers tend to have stronger consumerism sentiment and less positive attitudes toward marketing (Cui *et al.*, 2008). Fernandes and

Pimenta (2013) conducted a research study with the purpose to better understand the behaviour of the Portuguese consumer sentiment index toward a marketing-mix in a crisis context. For the purpose of their study, Fernandes and Pimenta (2013) used an instrument translated and validated by the “Index of Consumer Sentiment toward Marketing” proposed by Gaski and Etzel (1986). The results of their study indicated the Portuguese consumer sentiment index toward marketing-mix to be weakly positive which could have been a result of the present economic and financial context in that country (Fernandes & Pimenta, 2013).

Consumers’ attitudes towards marketing activities are important from both a theoretical and a managerial viewpoint (Gaski & Etzel, 1986). As consumer attitudes significantly affect their behavioural responses to marketing activities, knowledge of consumers’ attitudes toward marketing has been used in economic forecasts and found to be linked to several key macroeconomic variables (Chopin & Darrat, 2000). An understanding of consumers’ views about the marketing system in which they participate and information about consumers’ satisfaction from the interaction of consumers with the marketers during the consumption process are vital on the part of marketers for successful marketing (Gaski & Etzel, 1986). Such information can also help in devising effective strategies for companies as well as developing regulations by government agencies to protect consumers’ interests (Chan & Ciu, 2002).

2.4 CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

Consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is a result of the confirmation/disconfirmation of the consumers’ expectations (Erasmus, 2013:338; Tronvoll, 2007). A valid way to cope with product dissatisfaction is to engage in consumer complaint behaviour. Consumer complaint behaviour refers to “a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by the perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode” (Singh, 1988:94). Under Day and Landon’s (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, consumers have three options when they are dissatisfied with their purchases; these are taking no action, public action and private action. No action implies that consumers rationalise the problem and simply forget about it.

One of the most direct and meaningful ways in which consumers can convey their dissatisfaction to retailers and manufacturers is through complaining (Crie, 2003). Direct complaining should be encouraged because it gives retailers and manufactures a chance to recover and retain consumers (Robertson, Mc Quilken & Kandampully, 2012). Consumers can also complain in other public ways by complaining to third parties such as consumer protection organisations, lawyers or the media. In addition, consumers can also engage in more hidden or

private complaint actions such as complaining to family and friends and stop supporting retailers (Isaac, 2010; Donoghue, 2008; Day & Landon, 1977).

On the other hand, complaint *intentions* refers to consumers' willingness to complain when dissatisfied with products purchased, whereas complaint *behaviour* refers to the actual action that consumers engage in when complaining about a dissatisfactory consumption experience (Kamunda, 2013; Richins, 1983). Complaint intentions include willingness to tell family and friends about a dissatisfactory experience by verbal communication or via internet, willingness to contact the retailer to obtain redress, willingness to contact a consumer protection organisation, willingness to contact a legal representative as well as willingness to write to a consumer complaint website (Kamunda, 2013; Richins, 1983). Some consumers are more likely to seek redress than others, and such consumers are said to be high in propensity to complain (European Commission, 2009; Richins & Verhage, 1985).

One of the outcomes of satisfaction/dissatisfaction is intention to engage in behaviour. When consumers purchase products, and for the purpose of this study, specifically consumer electronics, they have certain expectations about such product's performance. If their expectations are then not met as in the case of product failure, they become dissatisfied and may have intentions to complain or may actually engage in complaint behaviour (Metehan & Yasemin, 2011; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Huang, 2003). Consumers who are willing to complain will probably confront retailers about their product dissatisfactions, whereas, those with a negative attitude towards complaining will probably switch retailers and/or products/brand (Fernandes & Santos, 2008; Yuksel, Kilinc, Yuksel, 2004).

Very little is known about why consumers react to similar dissatisfying situations in different ways, and how they decide whether to complain or not (Sharma, Marshall, Reday & Na, 2010). Some researchers have explored differences in customer characteristics between complainers and non-complainers, such as attitude towards complaining, perceived control and self-efficacy, consumer politeness, and the tendency to seek redress (Sharma *et al.*, 2010).

2.4.1 Traditional complaint behaviour versus online complaint behaviour

Traditionally consumers who experience dissatisfaction with products complain to the frontline personnel or to the manager, either directly (face-to-face or over the phone) or indirectly by writing. However, some dissatisfied consumers would do nothing but inform friends and family about their experience (Sparks & Browning, 2010). Traditional formal public complaint behaviour entails face-to-face verbal/oral communication between complaint handling staff and consumers, and traditional word-of-mouth activities involve unhappy consumers telling friends,

relatives and colleagues about their experiences (Sparks & Browning, 2010; Callebaut, 2006). With traditional word-of-mouth, retailers do not become aware of customers' dissatisfaction and cannot do anything about it, and that damages the reputation of companies (Cheung & Thadani, 2010).

Due to the problems that dissatisfied consumers experience in offline purchase environments many consumers often decide to complain on social media (i.e. on websites and online applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking) and cross-platform messaging applications (such as Whatsapp), and as a result, traditional word-of-mouth is fading as an era of "word-of-mouse emerges" (Lee & Cude, 2012; Callebaut, 2006). The Internet provides new ways for consumers to air their grievances in the form of online complaint forums, and thereby plays a crucial role in fostering consumer articulation of their concerns and complaints against companies (Lee & Cude, 2012). The Internet provides consumers with an anonymous and easily accessible channel for negative word-of-mouth (Sparks & Browning, 2010). Word-of-mouse communication refers to "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual and former customers about a product or a company via the internet" (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Consumers can post their opinions, comments and reviews of products on social networking sites (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). In particular, dissatisfied consumers can complain online at low cost and regardless of time and distance (Lee & Cude, 2012). Word-of-mouse makes companies aware of what consumers think of their products (Callebaut, 2006).

Word-of-mouse differs from word-of-mouth in that word-of-mouse information does not travel from person to person but travels to numerous persons, and most of the text-based information presented on the internet is archived and thus would be available for an indefinite period of time (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Secondly, word-of-mouse communications are more observable than traditional word-of-mouth because their presentation format, persistence and quantity have made them more observable (Lee, Park & Han, 2008). Finally, word-of-mouse information available online is more lengthy and detailed as opposed to information from traditional contacts in the offline world (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). In fact, the electronic nature of word-of-mouse eliminates the chance to judge the credibility of the dissatisfied consumer's message (Cheung & Thadani, 2010).

2.4.2 Factors affecting consumer complaint behaviour

Consumer complaint behaviour studies indicate that the consumers' responses to dissatisfaction are in most cases influenced by individual characteristics, product-related variables as well as redress-related variables.

2.4.2.1 Individual characteristics

Individual characteristics such as “demographics, personality factors, attitudes, personal values, culture, knowledge and experience as consumers, as well as the emotions that the consumer experiences” were found to influence consumer complaint behaviour (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:27; Donoghue *et al.*, 2012; Sharma *et al.*, 2010). For example, higher levels of education can be associated with higher levels of complaint intentions (Metehan & Yasemin, 2011; Crie, 2003). Consumers who are less assertive and conservative tend to have lower self-confidence and are less inclined to engage in public complaint behaviour than assertive and more liberal consumers (Sharma *et al.* 2010). Individuals with more positive attitudes towards complaining are more likely to complain and to undertake complaint action (Petzer & Mostert, 2012; Richins, 1982). Consumers from different cultures have different complaint behaviours as culture shapes attitudes and behaviour. For example, collectivists (Eastern cultures) tend not to confront retailers directly because they are sensitive to conflict and losing face, whereas individualists (Western cultures) tend to confront retailers directly (Nayeem, 2012; Samli, 1995). Also, complainers tend to have more prior experience of complaining compared to non-complainers (Rizwan, Behzad, Ali, Khan & Khan, 2013; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006).

The importance of the study of consumer attitudes has been highlighted because of the influence that attitudes have on consumer intentions or consumer behaviour. Various studies have been conducted on consumers’ attitudes towards complaining and the relationship between their attitudes towards complaining and their complaint intentions and complaint behaviour (Phau & Baird, 2008; Phau & Sari, 2004; Yuksel *et al.*, 2004; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Richins, 1982). Richins and Verhage (1985) showed that situational factors are better predictors of consumer complaints than general attitudes towards complaining. Kim, Kim, Im and Shin (2003) found empirical support for their hypothesis that complaint intention is positively influenced by increases in favourable attitudes towards complaining. Yuksel *et al.* (2004) found a moderate relationship between customers’ attitudes towards complaining and their complaint behaviour. Richins (1982) found a significant relationship between attitudes towards complaining and intentions to complain. However, in attitude research in general, the relationship between attitude towards complaining and actual complaining behaviour was weak.

Consumers’ attitudes towards business, government, consumer organisations and complaining have been studied in a variety of contexts to predict complaining behaviour, but the results have been mixed (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Orel & Zeren, 2011; Cui *et al.*, 2008; Bhuian *et al.*, 2001; Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Barksdale *et al.*, 1982; Barnes & Kelloway, 1980). In the South African context, Van Oordt (2015) found that attitudes towards consumerism did not play a significant

role in consumer complaint behaviour concerning consumer electronics. According to Fishbein and Ajzen's attitude towards intention and behaviour model, intention is much better predicted by attitude than behaviour is (Knabe, 2012:2). In a CCB context, this is problematic as retailers and other role players can only address consumers' product dissatisfactions when the latter actually engage in complaint behaviour. On the positive side, research has shown that attitudes can change over time (Mpinganjira, 2013:146-147).

2.4.2.2 Product-related variables

Product-related variables have been shown to predict post-purchase behaviour, specifically whether consumers will engage in private or public complaint behaviour (Donoghue *et al.*, 2012). Product-related factors influencing consumer complaint intentions and behaviour include the type of product, the product benefits or the product's importance, the price of a product, its social visibility, durability, frequency of use, the cause of product failure and the severity of the product problem (Donoghue *et al.*, 2012; Sharma *et al.*, 2010).

According to Parumasur and Lombard (2014:24), "price is often used as a measure of quality", implying that dissatisfied consumers may be more likely to complain to retailers about expensive products such as household durables (including consumer electronics and major household appliances) and cars, than about inexpensive and less important products (Brobeck & Mayer, 2015:98; Phau & Sari, 2004; Crie, 2003; Solomon, 1996; Richins, 1987). Highly priced products are often expected to be durable. Consumers may therefore make a more concerted effort to engage in public action (i.e. seek redress) and private complaint action when they are dissatisfied with expensive and durable products than with inexpensive and non-durable ones (Brobeck & Mayer, 2015:98; Phau & Sari, 2004).

The severity of the product problem is positively related to complaint intentions as well as to complaint behaviour (Donoghue, 2008; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2006; Richins, 1983). The decision on how to respond to an unsatisfactory product therefore seems to be partially determined by the severity of the problem.

With regard to social visibility, Solomon *et al.* (2009:33) noted that consumers do not only purchase products for their functionality but also for what they mean, implying that consumers probably buy products for their social significance. Schiffman and Kanuk (2007:315) and Sonnenberg, Erasmus and Donoghue *et al.* (2011) also indicated that products can provide symbolic meaning in addition to their functional utility, meaning that such products convey something about the owners to both themselves and their "significant others". Producers of goods with high social visibility therefore need to be particularly careful in design and quality

control to prevent dissatisfaction from occurring. Consumers are more likely to complain about visually conspicuous products than inconspicuous ones (Donoghue, 2008; Richins, 1987). It has further been shown that the more involved a consumer is with a product, that is, the more frequently a consumer uses a product, the more likely the consumer will be willing to complain about a dissatisfactory product experience (Sharma *et al.*, 2010; Phau & Sari, 2004; Lau & Ng, 2001; Keng & Liu, 1997).

2.4.2.3 Redress-related variables

Finally, redress-related variables relate to consumers' perceptions of the retailer's responsiveness to customer complaints and the perceived convenience of the complaint handling mechanism (Donoghue *et al.*, 2012). Consumers' cognitions are affected by prior experiences such as the manner in which a retailer has responded to a complaint. The consumer's perception of the fairness of the redress offered and the fairness of the processes used to resolve the complaint may also influence a consumer's decision to engage in CCB (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2013). Some consumers may not act on dissatisfaction due to the effort and time involved in complaining, the fear of not being understood, or not knowing where and how to complain (Hoyer, Maclinnis & Pieters, 2013:281; Crie, 2003). Consumers are more likely to engage in formal complaint behaviour if the complaint handling mechanism for the unsatisfactory product or service does not cause the consumer to go through a great deal of trouble and if the perceived monetary and psychological costs are low (Richins, 1983; Donoghue, 2008:32-33).

For the purpose of this study, the focus was on individual characteristics, specifically consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and on specific product-related variables, e.g. price, social visibility, durability, frequency of use and severity of product failure/problem. Hence, the redress-environment variables are only mentioned and not discussed in this section.

2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Considering the above-mentioned literature background to this study and the research problem stated in Chapter 1, the following conceptual framework, research aim and objectives are proposed.

2.5.1 Conceptual framework

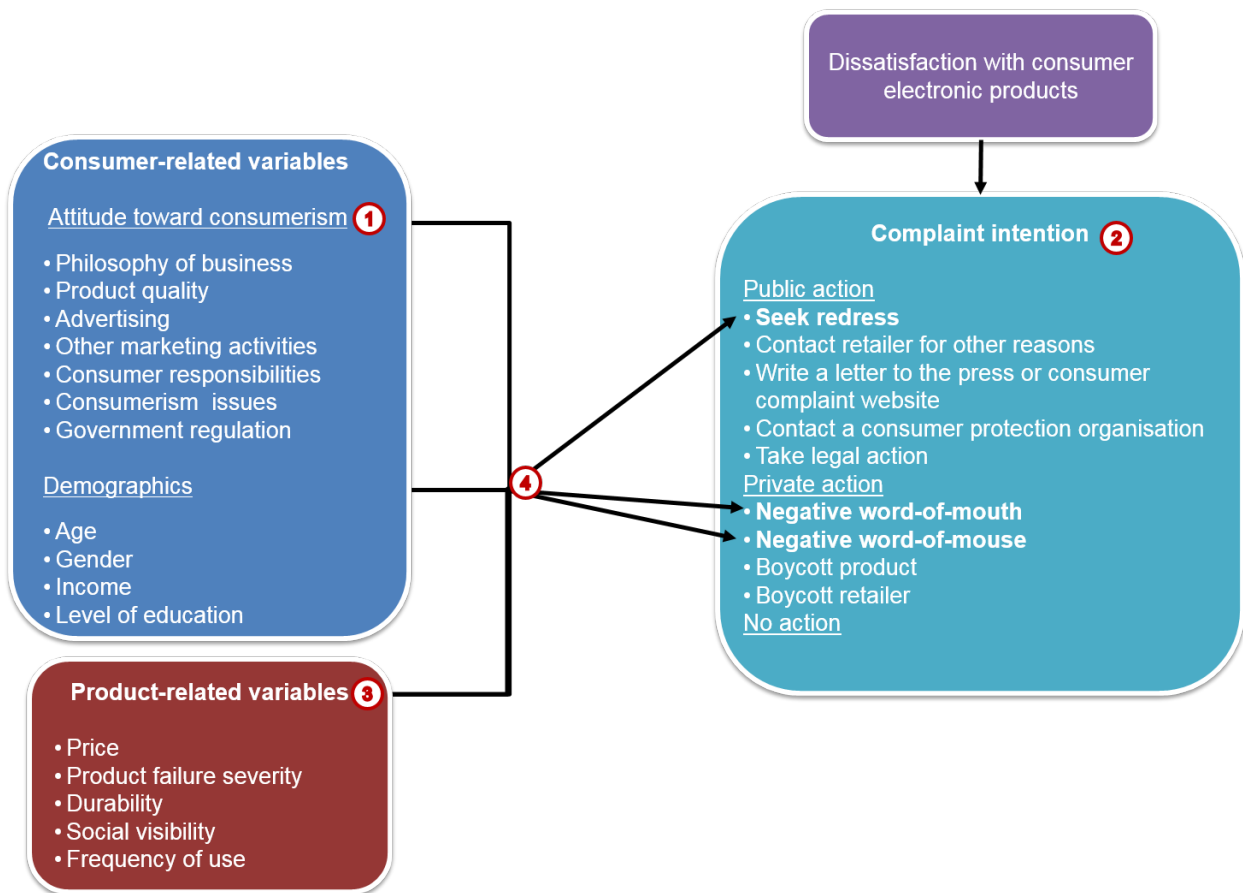


FIGURE 2.1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.1 shows that consumer dissatisfaction precedes complaint intentions, i.e. intention to engage in private and/or public action or no action. Consumers who are dissatisfied with their consumer electronic products may intend to complain privately by means of traditional negative word-of-mouth, negative “word-of-mouse”, boycotting the product, or by boycotting the retailer. Dissatisfied consumer may also intend to take public action, manifesting in the intention to seek redress from the retailer/manufacturer, to complain to the retailer/manufacturer for reasons other than to seek redress, to contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, to contact a consumer protection organisation, to contact a legal representative or to write a letter to the press or to a complaints website. In addition, dissatisfied consumers may also intend not to take any action.

The conceptual framework proposes that consumer complaint intentions, specifically an intention to engage in direct negative word-of-mouth, word-of-mouse, or to contact the retailer to obtain redress, are influenced by consumer-related variables, in this case, consumers’ attitudes towards consumerism and consumer demographics, and product-related variables, which in this

case would be the price of the product, the severity of the product failure, durability of the product, social visibility of the product, and frequency of use of the product. Attitudes towards consumerism manifests in the following dimensions: philosophy of business, product quality, advertising, other marketing activities, consumer responsibilities, consumerism issues; and government regulation.

Please note that to facilitate the readability of the document, the numbers used in the conceptual framework relate to the numbering of the objectives for the study.

2.5.2 Research aim

As very little is known about Lesotho consumers' attitudes toward consumerism and their reactions to performance failures of consumer electronic products, the aim of this study was to explore and describe Lesotho consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables and their complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product. In addition, the effect of consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, of their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and of demographic variables on their intention to complain following their dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product was explored.

2.5.3 Research objectives

The following objectives were formulated for this study:

Objectives concerning consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, perceptions of specific product-related variables and complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product

Objective 1: To investigate and describe consumers' attitudes towards consumerism

Objective 2: To investigate and describe consumers' complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product

Objective 3: To investigate and describe consumers' perceptions of specific product-related variables pertaining to specific consumer complaint intentions

Objective 4: To investigate and describe the effect of consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and demographic variables on their intention to complain (tell friends and family about the product failure by direct word-of-mouth, tell friends and family about the problem via word-of-mouth, contact the retailer to obtain compensation/redress) following their dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product.

2.6 CONCLUSION

For the purpose of this study consumerism refers to “the efforts of independent individuals and organizations, government and business to protect the rights of consumers in the exchange process” (Erasmus, 2013:355; Jain & Goel, 2012; Parumasur & Lombard, 2012:60; Rousseau, 2003:447). Consumerism in a country follows a typical life cycle pattern of development and countries can be represented in this life cycle according to the amount of information available to consumers and the degree to which legislation is in place to protect consumers, as well as governments' involvement in supporting consumer protection (Erasmus, 2013:357; Halliru, 2012; Darley & Johnson, 1993). There are various differences in consumerism between first and third world countries. Consumers in first world countries do not rely on the government for the protection of their rights, unlike consumers in third world countries, because there are organisations in first world countries which take the responsibility to protect consumers (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012). Also, consumers in first world countries are better educated about their consumer rights hence are able to fend for themselves in the market place, unlike consumers in third world countries who lack adequate consumer education (Erasmus, 2013:356; Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Kaynak in Darley & Johnson, 1993; Darley & Johnson, 1993:37).

Eight consumer rights which have specific implications for retailers and manufacturers have been identified by the UN, and they form the basis of the CPA internationally. They are as follows (CI, 2013):

- the right to choose
- the right to be informed
- the right to be heard
- the right to safety
- the right to redress
- the right to consumer education
- the right to a healthy environment
- the right to satisfaction of basic needs

Consumers' attitudes as well as a number of specific product-related variables influence both traditional and online consumer complaint intentions and complaint behaviour. Attitudes are seen as evaluations which can be measured and which can be either positive or negative (Ferguson & Fukukura, 2012:3; Fazio *et al.*, 1982:340). Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale is the most widely used scale to measure consumers' attitudes towards marketing and consumerism. Product-related variables e.g. type of product, product benefits, price of a product, product's importance, social visibility, durability, frequency of use, the cause of product failure and the severity of the product problem have also been found to be influencing complaint intentions and complaint behaviour (Donoghue *et al.*, 2012; Sharma *et al.*, 2010). Under Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, consumers have three options when they are dissatisfied with their purchases; these are taking no action, public action and private action.

Chapter 3

Research design and methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research design and methodology for this study. The research design provides the overall approach used to conduct the study, while the methodology focuses on the “research process and the kind of tools and procedures used” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:74; Mouton, 2001:49).

The methodology section of this chapter discusses the methodologies for studying both consumers’ attitudes towards consumerism and complaint intentions; the sampling plan in terms of unit of analysis, sampling procedures, sampling technique and sample size; the measuring instrument, data collection procedures, the procedures used in capturing and editing the data, the operationalisation, data analysis, and the quality of the data in terms of validity, reliability and ethics.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative methodological research approach was used for this study as the primary concern was with gathering and working with data that is structured and that could be represented numerically. Quantitative data is typically gathered when a positivist epistemological approach is taken and data is collected that can be statistically analysed (Matthews & Ross 2010:142). A descriptive survey design, as blueprint for the investigation, was followed (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:133, 142; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:183). Surveys are appropriate for research questions about self-reported beliefs or behaviours (Neuman, 2007:167). The type of research design could also be classified as cross-sectional and empirical, using primary data (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:78; Mouton, 2001:152). A cross-sectional research design includes more than one case, collects data at one particular time and includes within its research participants groups of people or cases that can be compared (Matthews & Ross, 2010:121).

The research objectives for this study included exploration and description. Exploratory research enables the researcher to gain insight into the research topic, to explicate central concepts and constructs and to develop methods to be employed in the study. Exploratory research addresses the “what” questions (Davis, 2014:75; Neuman, 2007:16). In the context of

the study, exploratory research was undertaken to provide some insight into Lesotho consumers' attitude towards consumerism and their reactions to performance failures of consumer electronic products, as very little is known about the topic. Descriptive research allows the researcher to measure and report the frequency with which specific variables occur in the sample to present a picture of the details of a situation, social setting or relationship; it focuses on "how?" and "who?" questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:106; Babbie & Mouton, 2002:26, 79-81). A descriptive study presents a picture of types of people or social activities (Davis, 2014:76; Neuman, 2007:16). In this study, descriptive research was conducted to describe: 1) the dimensions of consumers' attitudes toward consumerism, and 2) consumers' complaint intentions in terms of specific product-related variables.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 Overview of methodologies available

The respective methodologies for researching consumers' attitudes towards consumerism and consumer complaint intentions and behaviour are provided, since these methodologies serve as background to the methodology chosen for this study.

3.3.1.1 Methodologies for studying consumers' attitudes towards consumerism

The empirical studies on consumers' attitudes towards consumerism generally employ a survey methodology. Questionnaires are typically used to collect data.

Two scales have mainly been used in research to measure attitudes towards marketing and consumerism, namely Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale and Gaski and Etzel's (1986) "Index of Consumer Sentiment Toward Marketing". Barksdale and Darden (1972) first explored their research on consumer attitudes towards marketing in the USA and replicated their study in various first and third world contexts. Barksdale and Darden (1972) then presented a battery of items (i.e. 40 items) to assess consumer attitudes towards marketing and business, as well as consumer reactions to business policies and practices. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 represented "strongly agree" and 5 represented "strongly disagree". Barksdale and Darden (1972) reported on the percentage responses for each of the five agreement categories for all 40 items and grouped the statements into the following categories: philosophy of business, product quality, advertising, other marketing activities, consumer responsibilities, consumerism, and government regulation – all of which are important dimensions in understanding

consumers' views towards marketing and consumerism. Direct evidence of validity for the items was not reported for this exploratory study. However, a number of authors have used all or parts of the items included in the Barksdale and Darden (1972) inventory of consumer attitude items, providing support for the usefulness of the scale (Darley & Johnson, 1993, Varadarajan, Bharadwaj, & Thirunarayana, 1994).

Varadarajan *et al.* (1994) provide evidence of factor reliabilities and corrected item-to-total correlations within factors. The survey used in their research is an adaptation of the questionnaire originally used by Barksdale and Darden (1972) and those used in follow-ups to the Barksdale and Darden research. For example, coefficient alpha estimates of internal consistency reliability for factors employing the original seven labels range from 0.53 to 0.72. In contrast, Lysonski *et al.* (2012) were unable to show a factor structure along the seven dimensions identified by Barksdale and Darden (1972), after performing factor analyses on 39 items to examine the dimensionality of the consumerism measure. In the South African context, Van Oordt (2015) first performed confirmatory factor analysis, yielding poor fit statistics, followed by exploratory factor analysis without yielding new, clear, logical factors to explore South African consumers' (specifically Tshwane consumers') attitudes toward consumerism. However, despite suspicion about the validity and reliability of Barksdale and Darden's (1972) scale, it is simple and easy to complete hence it has been widely used by researchers in developed and developing countries to measure consumers' attitudes towards marketing and consumerism (Chaubey *et al.*, 2012; Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Orel & Zeren, 2011; Cui *et al.*, 2008; Lysonski *et al.*, 2003; Darley & Johnson, 1993; Bharadwaj, Thirunarayana & Varadarajan, 1991; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990; Labarbera & Laser, 1980).

Gaski and Etzel's (1986) scale measures consumer sentiment towards marketing via attitudes towards the four major elements of marketing practice, namely product, price, promotion and personal selling/retailing (Lawson & Todd, 2003).

Barksdale and Darden's (1972) scale is the most widely used scale to measure consumers' attitudes towards marketing, with support for its usefulness (Orel & Zeren, 2011), hence the researcher's decision to use the scale in this study.

3.3.1.2 Methodologies for studying consumer complaint behaviour and intentions

Most studies on consumers' complaint behaviour, their reasons for taking particular complaint actions, and the factors influencing their complaint behaviour employ a survey methodology (Liu & McClure, 2001; Kincade *et al.*, 2005). A self-administered questionnaire format, where the description of a critical incident forms the basis for coding the responses, are typically used for

data collection through convenience sampling (Donoghue *et al.*, 2016b; Van Oordt, 2015:46-47; Dunning, O’Cass & Pecotich, 2004; Singh & Wilkes, 1996). The critical incident technique requires of respondents to think of occasions on which they had dealt with the subject of the research, for example their dissatisfaction with a specific product, and to describe what happened, for example to describe/indicate their consumer complaint behaviour. The critical incident technique aims to understand respondents’ interpretation of their lived experienced (Ellinger & Watkins in Fisher, Buglear, Lowry, Mutch & Tansley, 2010:192), implying that respondents need to report on their actual thoughts and feelings.

An appropriate screening question is normally asked to determine whether respondents qualify for inclusion in the study or not (Dunning *et al.*, 2004; Bloomington in Singh & Pandya, 1991; Day *et al.*, 1981). As dissatisfaction is a prerequisite for consumer complaint behaviour (Singh, 1988), it is essential that dissatisfied consumers be included in the study when the purpose of the study is to measure consumer complaint behaviour.

Recognised complaint behaviour models such as Hirschman’s (1970) typology of exit, voice and loyalty, Day and Landon’s (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour and Singh’s (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint response options can be used to classify responses and to guide the presentation of results (Donoghue 2008:69; Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Singh & Pandya, 1991).

In addition to investigating consumers’ actual complaint behaviour by employing memory recall techniques, consumers’ intentions to engage in specific complaint behaviour can also be measured. In such a context, respondents are exposed to an imaginary situation where they must describe the behaviour that they would want to engage in, typically on a Likert-type scale, with anchors “very unlikely” and “very likely” (Azam, Javed, Arif, Rukhsar, Muzaffar, Kanjoo, Nawaz & Ali, 2013; Rizwan, Behzad, Ali, Khan & Khan, 2013; Jones, 2006; Sharma & Marshall, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Liu & McClure, 2001). Hypothetical questions ask people what they would do in a particular circumstance (Fisher *et al.*, 2010:216) and, in the context of this study, what they would do when they were dissatisfied with a specific product. Hypothetical questions are without constraint (Fisher *et al.*, 2010:216) and would allow respondents to participate in the study without actually having been dissatisfied with specific products. This would facilitate the collection of the questionnaires as it would be easier for the researcher and field workers to get hold of respondents since dissatisfaction with product performance is then no longer a prerequisite for inclusion in the study. However, one should realise that the findings of the research are limited to the intention data which do not reflect “real life” reactions (Weiner, 2000), as intentions are measured as opposed to actual behaviour.

Both a survey design and experimental methodologies are suitable for the conducting of research to determine respondents' behavioural intentions (Sharma & Marshall, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2003; Weiner, 2000).

3.3.2 Sampling plan

3.3.2.1 Unit of analysis

In this study, the research was conducted at the micro-level – focusing on the individual as a “social actor” (Matthews & Ross, 2010:114). The unit of analysis for this study was consumers who had purchased consumer electronic products at retailers in Maseru, Lesotho's capital; Lesotho accounts for around half of the total urban population (Bureau of Statistics/BOS, 2009). Consumer electronics are devices containing an electronic circuit board which are intended for everyday use by individuals, most often for entertainment and communication, and include major household appliances, communication devices, audiovisual products and personal computers (Van Oordt, 2015:10; Hermes, 2014).

In order to participate in the study, respondents had to:

- reside in Maseru
- be 25 years or older.

3.3.2.2 Sampling technique and sample size

Due to time and resource (monetary) constraints, non-probability convenience sampling that is suitable for a cross-sectional survey research design (Matthews & Ross, 2010:164) was employed. Respondents who resided in Maseru and who were 25 years of age or older were approached by the researcher and seven trained field workers at public organisations such as schools, places of work and their private homes on the basis of convenience or ease of access. It was assumed that by the age of 25 years, the average person would have acquired some experience with consumer electronic products as it has been indicated that a typical Lesotho household would devote almost 10% of their total spending to household appliances and other consumer electronics due to their increased spending power (Central Bank of Lesotho, 2012). The field workers were also told to collect data according to a quota in order to ensure that consumers in different geographic areas of Maseru, different age groups, different gender groups and different income groups were included, proportionate to their representation in the population (i.e. all the consumers, older than 25 who resided in Maseru, Lesotho). The different categories for the demographic variables were clarified as: gender (male/female), age (25 years and above), level of education (lower than Grade 12/COSC, Grade 12/COSC, Grade 12/COSC

plus Degree/Diploma and Postgraduate qualification), level of income (less than R5 000, R5 000–R9 999, R10 000–R14 999, R15 000–R24 999 and R25 000 or more), and village of residence in Maseru. Field workers also used snowball sampling by asking respondents to provide the names of other consumers who might be interested in participating in the research. Snowball sampling makes use of referrals to increase the sample size (Pascoe, 2014:143).

The researcher intended to collect as many data as possible, but due to time and monetary constraints the sample size was set at 350 respondents. A total of 389 usable questionnaires were collected between October to November 2014. The number of respondents also allowed the researcher to perform relevant statistical tests (factor analysis and logistic regression).

3.3.3 Measuring instrument

The measuring instrument for this study consisted of a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire measured respondents' demographic characteristics, attitudes towards consumerism, propensity to complain about a hypothetical consumer electronic product failure, and propensity to engage in specific complaint behaviour based on product-related variables concerning dissatisfactory consumer electronics.

The structured questionnaire was compiled based on the literature review and previous methodologies for studying consumer attitudes and consumer complaint intentions.

A survey researcher conceptualises and operationalises variables as questions. (See Table 3.1 for the operationalisation of the variables.) The researcher writes and rewrites questions for clarity and completeness, and organises the questions on the questionnaire based on the research question, the respondents and the type of survey (Neuman, 2006:168).

The questionnaire was divided into four sections (sections A–D):

In Section A, respondents had to provide demographic information (i.e. gender, age, highest level of education, total monthly household income and residential place/village) to enable the researcher to describe the sample. Closed-ended questions were used to determine the respondents' gender, level of education and monthly household income. Open-ended questions were used to determine respondents' age and where they resided in Maseru, Lesotho.

Section B measured consumers' attitudes towards consumerism based on Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale. As mentioned already, Barksdale and Darden (1972) operationalised attitudes towards consumerism and marketing in

terms of philosophy of business, product quality, advertising, other marketing activities, consumer responsibilities, consumerism and government regulation. For the purpose of the present study, Barksdale and Darden's (1972) original scale that consisted of 40 Likert-type statements was adapted by removing two items deemed not applicable in the Lesotho context, namely "The American marketing system operates more efficiently than those of other countries" and "Ralph Nader and the work he has done on behalf of consumers has been an important force in changing the practices of business". The original Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In the present study however, to make the responses more intuitive, "strongly agree" was coded as 5 and "strongly disagree" was coded as 1.

Section C measured respondents' propensity to complain about a hypothetical consumer electronic product failure. For the purpose of this research, Singh's (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint response options and Day and Landon' (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour served as the base models to investigate the consumers' complaint intentions in response to their dissatisfaction with consumer electronic products. Singh (1988) measured both consumer complaint behaviour and intentions to clarify conceptual and taxonomical issues. Singh (1988) measured consumer complaint behaviour by asking respondents to recall their various complaint behaviours and to indicate their actions taken on a dichotomous (yes/no) scale of 5 items. Singh (1988) also measured respondents' consumer complaint behaviour intentions with 10 items anchored by "most likely" and "least likely" in a Likert-type scale. Day and Landon's (1977) scale requests respondents to consider a list of actual actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction, and indicate what actions, if any, were taken (e.g. did they partake in any actions? Who did they take action with?). A dichotomous (yes/no) scale are used to classify the answer to each type of action taken.

In the present study, respondents had to imagine that they had recently purchased a consumer electronic product from a retailer and after using it for a while, they realised that they were not satisfied with the product's performance/functioning (e.g. the product broke down, did not operate properly, or was a dud). An open-ended question was asked where respondents had to name the type of consumer electronic product they were thinking of to help them to visualise the situation. Respondents were then asked to indicate their complaint intentions on 11 items anchored by most likely/least likely in a Likert-type scale (coded 1 through 5) about the dissatisfactory product mentioned in the open-ended question. The items were derived from Singh's (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint responses and Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour. The wording of Day and Landon's items were adapted to reflect intentions and not actual behaviour.

Section D measured consumers' specific complaint intentions based on product-related variables concerning the dissatisfactory consumer electronic product. Respondents were asked to indicate whether specific product-related variables (price, social visibility, durability, frequency of use and severity of product failure) would affect the type of action that they would likely take if they were dissatisfied with the product. Respondents had to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with their propensity/tendency to engage in specific complaint intentions based on the above-mentioned product-related variables. Their specific complaint intentions related to:

- telling friends and family about the dissatisfactory product via oral/verbal communication (i.e. direct word-of-mouth by face-to-face communication or telephonic communication)
- telling friends and family about the dissatisfactory product via text messaging/the internet/a social network (e.g. word-of-mouth by virtual communication)
- complaining to a retailer/seller/service provider about the dissatisfactory product

The items pertaining to product-related variables and complaint action were derived from Keng and Liu's (1997) "product attribute scale" with one item each for price, frequency of use, durability and social visibility. For example, "the higher the price the more likely I am to" complain. A 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly) was used. In the present study, the researcher added one more item to determine whether the severity of the product failure would influence complaint action, as previous research has shown that problem severity impacts on consumer complaint intentions and behaviour (Van Oordt, 2015). In the end, five items were duplicated to measure whether product-related variables affected the intentions to engage in word-of-mouth (5 items), word-of-mouth (5 items), and to complain to a retailer/seller/service provider (5 items). These wording of the items were adapted to suit the specific complaint intentions at hand.

3.3.4 Pilot testing the measuring instrument

The questionnaire was pre-tested on seven respondents who had similar demographic characteristics to those who finally took part in the study. The researcher asked the respondents whether the questions were clear and explored their interpretations to determine whether the intended meaning was clear. A few language errors were corrected, and the questionnaires were then printed and distributed during the months of October and November of 2014.

3.3.5 Data collection

The 450 questionnaires were printed and distributed during the months of October and November of 2014.

Seven field workers, including family and friends, were trained in the administering of the questionnaire to eliminate error. The field workers emphasised that participation was voluntary and assured the respondents of their anonymity and that the information provided by them would be kept confidential (Salkind, 2012:86-88; Strydom, 2011:116-119; Neuman, 2006:57-58). The importance of responding to all the questions in the questionnaire was also emphasised to the respondents. The field workers used convenience sampling to select respondents for this study. Respondents were also selected by means of snowball sampling. The researcher and the field workers distributed and collected the questionnaires at public organisations such as schools, places of work, etc. Field workers also visited prospective respondents' homes to drop off questionnaires and to collect the completed forms. Revisits were made for questionnaire collection where necessary. Permission was obtained from the organisations and the respondents living in private homes before distributing the questionnaires. Field workers explained the questionnaire to the respondents where needed, but intentional effort was made to ensure that responses were not influenced in any way. Field workers collected the questionnaires personally to check for the completeness of the questionnaire and whether questions were answered according to the instructions (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:258-259).

A cover letter that accompanied the questionnaire indicated the purpose of the research, outlined the criteria for participation in the study, and provided a guarantee of the respondents' anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were requested to answer the questions carefully and to provide their honest opinion. The cover letter also provided space for the respondents' signature to show their consent for participation, an indication of the time required to complete the questionnaire and the researcher's cell phone number. The questionnaire consisted of six (6) printed pages and was available in English only, as it is the official language used in Lesotho.

An incentive in the form of a packet of peanuts and sweets were offered to the respondents upon completion of the questionnaire as a token of the researcher's appreciation for their participation in the research. Although 450 questionnaires were distributed, only 389 usable questionnaires were collected. Data collection was undertaken from October to November 2014. The field workers were remunerated for their efforts.

3.3.6 Operationalisation

Table 3.1 shows the operationalisation in terms of objectives, concepts, dimension, scales or indicators, where applicable, and statistical methods.

TABLE 3.1: OPERATIONALISATION

Objectives	Dimensions	Questions (V = Variable)	Statistical methods
Objective 1 To investigate and describe consumers' attitudes towards consumerism	Consumers' attitudes towards consumerism (adapted from Barksdale & Darden, 1972) Philosophy of business Product quality Advertising Other marketing activities Consumer responsibilities Consumerism Government regulation	Section B: Question 1 (V6-V43) (V6, V13, V20, V27, V33) (V7, V14, V21, V28, V34, V37, V42) (V8, V15, V22, V39) (V9, V16, V23, V32) (V10, V17, V24, V29, V35, V38, V41, V43) (V11, V18, V25, V30, V36, V40) (V12, V19, V26, V31)	Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis Exploratory factor analysis
Objective 2 To investigate and describe consumers' complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product	Private action Public action No action	Section C: Questions 1 & 2 (V44-V55)	Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis
Objective 3 To investigate and describe consumers' perceptions of specific product-related variables pertaining to specific consumer complaint intentions	Price. Durability frequency of use social visibility severity of the product problem	Section D: Questions 1-3 (V56-V71)	Calculation of frequencies and frequency analysis Chi-square test (p-value significant on 5% level)
Objective 4 To investigate and describe the effect of consumers' attitudes towards consumerism , their perceptions of specific product-related variables , and demographic variables on their intention to complain (tell friends and family about the product failure by direct word-of-mouth, tell friends and family about the problem via word-of-mouth, contact the retailer to obtain compensation/redress) following their dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product		See Chapter 4, section 4.6 for a detailed explanation of the relevant variables	Logistic regression

Please note that the relevant concepts for objectives 1-4 are boldfaced.

3.3.7 Coding and capturing of the data

The questionnaire was designed to include coding categories. Completed questionnaires were edge-coded by the researcher and the field workers (who were supervised by the researcher). Edge coding is done when codes are written in the spaces provided on the outside margin of each page of the questionnaire for each variable (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:415). The edge-coded questionnaires were then used for data capturing at the Department of Statistics, University of Pretoria, to transfer the information from the questionnaires to a format for statistical analysis.

3.3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis refers to “the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data”, i.e. reducing raw data to an understandable and interpretable form (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011:397). A statistician and a research consultant of the Department of Statistics (University of Pretoria) were consulted to assist with the analysis of the data. After the data was captured by the Statistics Department and checked for coding errors, it was analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:325). Descriptive statistics help to describe, show or summarise data in a meaningful way. Descriptive statistics include means, percentages and frequencies that are presented in tables and graphs to describe a sample’s characteristics (Salkind, 2012:162-164). Inferential statistics are generally used to make inferences about the population from which the sample was drawn (Babbie & Mouton, 2002:458; Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:64-65).

Although the data from non-probability sampling cannot be regarded as statistically generalisable to the larger population, because the way the sample is collected does not give every member of the population an equal chance of being included (Matthews & Ross, 2010:166; Pascoe, 2014:137), this does not prevent researchers from using inferential statistical analysis to explain the data for the specific sample. The characteristics of a non-probability sample can in some cases be compared with those of the total population, especially if comparable data of the population, for example local census data, are available (Matthews & Ross, 2010:166).

In this study inferential statistics included exploratory factor analysis, the chi-square significance test and logistic regression.

3.3.8.1 *Explanation of statistical methods*

- *Factor analysis*

Factor analysis is based on the notion that measurable and observable variables can be reduced to fewer latent variables that share a common variance and are unobservable, which is known as reducing dimensionality. These unobservable factors are not directly measured but are essentially hypothetical constructs that are used to represent variables. Factor analysis allows the researcher to focus on some key factors rather than having to consider too many variables that may be trivial, and so factor analysis is useful for placing variables into meaningful categories (Yong & Pearce, 2013). Two types of factor analysis exist, namely exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:216).

For the purpose of this study, exploratory factor analysis was applicable, as Lesotho consumers' attitudes toward consumerisms have not yet been explored in a consumer complaint behaviour context. Exploratory factor analysis is used when a researcher wants to discover the number of factors influencing variables and to analyse which variables 'go together' (Yong & Pearce, 2013). Exploratory factor analysis focuses on the shared variance of the original variables and it identifies the underlying dimensions (common factors). The common underlying dimensions, which should be meaningful and interpretable, are then used to describe the original variables (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000:216).

- *Chi-square significance test*

The chi-square test can be used to assess whether the differences between the mean values of two samples is statistically significant (Matthews & Ross, 2010:363; Mazzocchi, 2008:339). It can be used to compare variables that are nominal or ordinal. In this study the chi-square test was used to test the association between categorical variables.

- *Logistic regression*

Logistic regression is a popular statistical method of analysing datasets in which there are one or more independent variables that determine an outcome. The outcome is measured with a dichotomous variable (i.e. a variable in which there are only two possible outcomes). In other words, Logistic regression comprises a special class of regression methods for research with dichotomous outcomes (Chao-Ying & Tak-Shing, 2002). Logistic regression is suitable for studying the correlation between a categorical or qualitative outcome variable and one or more predictor variables (Chao-Ying & Tak-Shing, 2002).

3.3.9 Quality of the study

3.3.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which what was being measured was actually measured (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:250). The different types of validity and how they were established are discussed below.

- *Theoretical validity*

To ensure theoretical validity, a thorough literature review was conducted and a well-structured theoretical framework was compiled from various sources to confirm broad categories of concepts of the study. Concepts were also clearly defined to guarantee their validity (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:250).

- *Content validity*

Content validity can be achieved when a scale's content logically appears to reflect what the researcher had intended to measure (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:250). To ensure content validity, the scale items were obtained from existing scales. Items pertaining to attitudes toward consumerism were obtained from Barksdale and Darden's (1972) "Consumer Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale; items pertaining to complaint intentions were derived from Sing's (1988) taxonomy of consumer complaint responses and Day and Landon' (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour; and items pertaining to the effect of product-related variables on complaint intention were obtained from Keng and Liu's (1997) "product attribute scale".

The literature review on the topics of consumerism, attitudes toward consumerism, consumer complaint intentions and behaviour, and product-related variables influencing complaint behaviour provided an adequate theoretical background for the research to be performed.

The questionnaire was edited by a professional language editor to ensure that lay people would understand the meaning of the wording of the questionnaire, bearing in mind theoretical jargon. The questionnaire was scrutinised by the study supervisor and a statistician. A pilot study was conducted to identify problems with questions and to clarify constructs (Salkind, 2012:124).

- *Criterion validity*

Criterion validity can be said to apply to the study when what has been measured correlates with other standard measures of similar constructs or to some established criterion (Salkind, 2012:125; Zikmund & Babin, 2010:250). The established scale, "Attitudes towards Marketing

and Consumerism” by Barksdale and Darden (1972) was adapted for this study. The original scale was developed in 1972; however, some studies have since employed this scale, e.g. Lysonski *et al.* (2012:537) and Bharadway *et al.* (1991:17) in an Indian context, and Orel and Zeren (2011) in a Polish and Turkish context.

3.3.9.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree to which a measure is free from random error and therefore yields consistent results (Salkind, 2012:115). To ensure reliability:

- 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 scale items used in the questionnaire were also derived from established scales that have proven to be reliable.
- Field workers were trained and given pertinent instructions concerning the aims of the study as required by Babbie and Mouton (2002).

3.10 Ethical issues

According to Walliman (2011:240), social research needs to be very sensitive about issues around ethical behaviour. Research ethics refers to the “moral principle guiding research, from its inception through to completion and publication of results and beyond” (The Economic and Social Research Council in Matthews & Ross, 2010:71). A researcher who acts with integrity adheres to ethical principles to conduct research in a responsible way (Louw, 2014:262). In the present study, the researcher acquainted herself with the theoretical background and relevant methodologies to study consumers’ attitudes toward consumerism and consumer complaint intentions, and obtained sufficient skills to conduct a legitimate survey. The research was designed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality.

The University of Pretoria’s Research Ethics Committee (Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences) approved the proposal and the questionnaire for the research. This raised the researcher’s awareness of the detail of the research process.

To adhere to ethical requirements, the questionnaire included a cover letter containing the following information (Matthews & Ross, 2010:73-75; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:101-102) to ensure that an ethical process was followed:

- A brief description of the objectives of the study to encourage people to participate in the research
- A description of the practical implications for respondents (i.e. the respondents' duties in terms of participation and the duration of the questionnaire)
- An indication that participation is voluntary
- A guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality
- The researcher's name and contact details, should the respondents have further questions or wish to withdraw
- A place for the participant to sign the letter, indicating agreement to participate
- Details of the supervisor, name and affiliation, to confirm the researcher's "authority" to conduct the research.

The researcher and field workers treated the respondents with dignity and assured them that they could refuse to participate at any time. The respondents gave their "informed consent" to participate in the research. The researcher and field workers also assured the respondents that the confidentiality of the data will be protected.

The respondents were not at risk of any physical harm as no medical or physical experiments were conducted on them. The data was collected in the safety of the respondents' work places and private houses.

The research findings were interpreted and reported in an accurate, objective and honest manner (Louw, 2014:269) and will be published in the form of a dissertation as well as research articles.

3.4 SUMMARY

The research design and methodology presented in this chapter explain the overall approach used to conduct the study as well as the research process and the kind of tools and procedures used. A quantitative-descriptive (survey) design, as plan or blueprint for the investigation, was followed (Fouché & De Vos, 2005b:133, 143). The study was mainly exploratory and descriptive.

The unit of analysis for this study, consumers who resided in Maseru and who were 25 years of age or older, were approached by the researcher and seven trained field workers at public organisations such as schools, places of work and their private homes on the basis of convenience or ease of access. The field workers collected data according to a quota to ensure

that consumers of different age groups, gender groups, income groups and different geographic areas of Maseru were included. A total of 389 useable questionnaires were collected from male and female consumers in Maseru, Lesotho between the months of October and November 2014.

The measuring instrument for this study consisted of a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire measured respondents' demographic characteristics, attitudes towards consumerism, propensity to complain about a hypothetical consumer electronic product failure, and propensity to engage in specific complaint behaviours. The questionnaire was pre-tested on seven respondents who had similar demographic characteristics to those who finally took part in the study. The completed questionnaires were edge-coded by the researcher and the field workers (who were supervised by the researcher). The edge-coded questionnaires were then used for data capturing at the Department of Statistics, University of Pretoria. Data was analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics, the latter included exploratory factor analysis, the chi-square significance test and logistic regression.

Measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the results were indicated. Important ethical issues were addressed to ensure that the research was conducted in a responsible manner

Chapter 4

Research results, analysis and interpretation

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data obtained from the questionnaires is presented and interpreted according to the objectives of the study. The analysis begins with the description of the demographic characteristics and other descriptive characteristics of the sample, followed by the analysis of the objectives.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe specific observations by presenting data in a manageable form (such as frequencies, percentages and tables). Inferential statistics, including exploratory factor analysis, Chi-square tests and logistic regression, were used to make inferences from the findings (Salkind, 2012:177).

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC AND OTHER DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The demographic and other descriptive characteristics of the sample are provided in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Demographic characteristics	Groups	n	%
Gender	Male	180	46.3
	Female	209	53.7
Age categories	25–29 years	98	25.2
	30–49 years	240	61.7
	> 50 years	51	13.1
Highest level of education	< grade 12/COSC	16	4.1
	Grade 12/COSC	40	10.3
	Grade 12/COSC plus degree/diploma	254	65.3
	Postgraduate qualification	79	20.3
Monthly household income	< R5000	113	29.1
	R5000–R9999	125	32.1
	R10 000–R14 999	86	22.1
	R15 000–R24 999	38	9.8
	> R25 000	27	6.9
Village of residence in Maseru	Central	143	36.8
	North	13	3.3
	East	38	9.8
	South	100	25.7
	West	95	24.4

4.2.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Table 4.1 shows that the sample consisted of slightly more females (53.7%) than males (46.3%). This is fairly consistent with the final 2006 census results, which revealed that the Lesotho population constituted 51.4% females and 48.6% males (Bureau of Statistics/BOS, 2009).

For the purpose of this study, respondents had to be 25 years or older to participate. The ages of the respondents varied between 25 years and 77 years. For the sake of analysis, the ages were categorised into three age groups as indicated in Table 4.1. It can be noted that the majority (61.7%) of the respondents was between the ages of 30 and 49 years, 25.2% of the respondents were between the ages of 25 to 29 years, while 13.1% of the respondents were older than 50 years.

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education. According to Table 4.1 above, 4.1% of the respondents had education lower than grade 12/COSC, 10.3% had grade 12/COSC, 65.3% were diploma and degree holders, and 20.3% of them had postgraduate qualifications. The majority (85.6%) of the respondents therefore had obtained tertiary training.

In terms of monthly household income, 29.1% of the respondents earned a monthly household income of less than R5 000, 32.1% earned between R5 000 and R9 999, 22.1% earned between R10 000 and R14 999, 9.8% earned between R15 000 and R24 999, and 6.9% of the respondents earned R25 000 and more. The sample therefore consisted of 29.1% low-income earning consumers (< R5 000), 54.2% middle-income earners (R5 000–R14 999) and 16.7% high-income earning consumers (R15 000 ≥ R25 000) (BOS, 2008). Despite the fact that the majority of the sample were literate, it seems that the majority of the sample were in the middle-income earning group because Lesotho is an emerging economy which is still struggling to meet the basic needs of consumers (CIA World Factbook, 2008, retrieved 2012-02-28).

Finally, respondents had to indicate their village of residence in Maseru to verify that they were recruited across the city and not in a confined area only. In order to summarise this data, a district (Maseru) map was obtained from the Land Administration Authority to categorise the villages into the Central, Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western areas of Maseru. According to Table 4.1 above, the majority (36.8%) of the respondents resided in the Central areas of Maseru.

4.2.2 Other descriptive characteristics of the sample

Respondents were asked to imagine that they had recently purchased a consumer electronic product from a retailer and, after a while of using it, realised that they were not satisfied with the product's performance/functioning. Respondents had to name one type of product they were thinking of in an open-ended question (Question 1, Section C). The respondents' responses were divided into four categories that is, major household appliances, communication devices, audiovisual products and personal computers. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2: CONSUMER ELECTRONIC PRODUCT THAT WOULD CAUSE MOST DISSATISFACTION

Consumer Electronic Product Category	Frequency	Percentage
Communication devices e.g. cellphones, smart phones etc.	142	36.5%
Audiovisual products e.g. televisions, radios, DVD players etc.	106	27.3%
Major household appliances e.g. kitchen and laundry appliances including stoves, washing machines, refrigerators etc.	97	24.9%
Personal computers e.g. desktops, laptops, tablets etc.	44	11.3%
Total	389	100%

n = 389

Table 4.2 shows that 36.5% of the respondents imagined that they would be dissatisfied with communication devices, followed by 27.3% who thought that they would be dissatisfied with audiovisual products, 24.9% who thought that they would be dissatisfied with major household appliances, and only 11.3% who thought that they would be dissatisfied with personal computers.

Since 2002, the ownership of communication devices in sub-Saharan African countries has increased rapidly, with South Africa having the highest level of ownership, followed by Lesotho (Pew Research Centre, 2015). This may explain why most of the respondents in this study imagined that they would be dissatisfied with a communication device. Major household appliances are regarded as essential durables and are mainly purchased with specific functional purposes in mind, i.e. to save time, to reduce workloads and to increase efficiency (Sonnenberg, Erasmus & Donoghue, 2011), while audiovisual products provide some form of entertainment for consumers. Personal computers may be regarded as essential durables for higher-income groups, while lower-income groups generally cannot afford personal computers (AMPS, 2009); this may explain why fewer respondents imagined that they would be dissatisfied with computers.

The fact that more respondents in the study would be dissatisfied with communication devices, audiovisual products and major household appliances than with personal computers could

indicate that the respondents probably experienced problems with these products in the past, confirming the notion that increased ownership of a particular product category coincides with an increased probability of experiencing product dissatisfaction (Van Oordt, 2015:65). Erasmus, Donoghue and Dobbstein (2014) also established that purchasing electronic goods such as television sets is similar in complexity to purchasing major household appliances, while purchasing an electronically complex product such as a cellphone is significantly less complex than purchasing major household appliances, and purchasing of a computer is significantly more complex compared to purchasing major household appliances.

4.3 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 1

Objective 1: To investigate and describe consumers' attitudes towards consumerism

4.3.1 Descriptive analysis of consumers' attitudes towards consumerism

The original Barksdale and Darden (1972) "Attitudes towards Marketing and Consumerism" scale measured respondents' responses to Likert-type statements anchored by 1 "strongly agree" and 5 "strongly disagree". However, for the purpose of this study, the numbering or the response anchors were reversed in the questionnaire. Respondents were therefore asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree".

In Tables 4.3-4.9 the results are grouped according to the seven attitude categories originally used by Barksdale and Darden (1972), including philosophy of business, product quality, advertising, other marketing activities, consumer responsibilities, consumerism, and government regulation. Each attitudes category with statements and responses are presented in a separate table and then discussed.

At this point the reader should note that: (1) the neutral responses for any particular statement are difficult to interpret because they may indicate that respondents did not understand the question, refused to form an opinion about the issue being measured, or did not possess enough knowledge of the subject to have an opinions (Krosnick & Presser, 2010; Barksdale and Darden, 1972); (2) the "strongly agree" and "agree" response options as well as the "strongly disagree" and "disagree" response options were consolidated to facilitate the interpretation of the data; and (3) disagreement with negative statements indicates a positive attitude.

TABLE 4.3: PHILOSOPHY OF BUSINESS ATTITUDE CATEGORY AND ITEMS

Items	Level of agreement Number of responses (%)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Most retailers/manufacturers operate on the philosophy that “the consumer is always right”.	163 (41.9)	99 (25.5)	127 (32.6)
“Let the buyer beware” is still the guiding philosophy of most retailers/manufacturers.	160 (41.1)	135 (34.7)	94 (24.2)
Competition between different retailers/manufacturers ensures that consumers pay fair prices.	71 (18.2)	88 (22.6)	230 (59.2)
Retailers/manufacturers seldom neglect their responsibilities to the consumer.	115 (29.6)	111 (28.5)	163 (41.9)
Most retailers/manufacturers are more interested in making profits than serving consumers.	54 (13.9)	55 (14.1)	280 (72.0)

Table 4.3 shows that in the philosophy of business category, only 32.6% of the respondents believed that most retailers/manufacturers operate on the philosophy that “the consumer is always right”, while 41.9% stated the opposing view. In addition, only 41.1% disagreed that “let the buyer beware is still the guiding philosophy of most retailers/manufacturers”, while 24.2% agreed with the statement, and 34.7% were neutral. These responses suggest that respondents did not believe that retailers/manufacturers place the consumers’ interests before all other business interests. On the positive side, the majority of the respondents (59.2%) believed that competition between different retailers/manufacturers ensures that consumers pay fair prices, suggesting a wide-spread belief that the free enterprise system operates in the interests of consumers. According to the *Economic and Financial Affairs* (2013), the various retailers in the malls in Maseru, Lesotho, offer a variety of different branded products including consumer electronics, ensuring good prices for products since the various brands are competing for market share (*Economic and Financial Affairs*, 2013). However, 72.0% of the respondents also believed that retailers/manufacturers are more interested in making profits than serving consumers. Only 41.9% of the respondents believed that retailers seldom neglect their responsibilities to the consumer, while 70.4% stated the opposite or were neutral, reflecting a negative attitude.

TABLE 4.4: PRODUCT QUALITY ATTITUDE CATEGORY AND ITEMS

Items	Level of agreement Number of responses (%)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
In general, manufacturers make an effort to design products to fit the needs of the consumer.	58 (14.9)	88 (22.6)	243 (62.5)
Over the past few years, the quality of most products has not improved.	209 (53.7)	73 (18.8)	107 (27.5)
From the consumer's point of view, style changes are not as important as improvements in product quality.	71 (18.3)	76 (19.5)	242 (62.2)
Manufacturers deliberately design products which will wear out as quickly as possible.	111 (28.5)	116 (29.8)	162 (41.6)
Retailers/manufacturers often withhold important product improvements from the market in order to protect their own interests.	57 (14.6)	131 (33.7)	201 (51.7)
The wide variety of competing products makes buying decisions more difficult.	140 (36.0)	63 (16.2)	186 (47.8)
For most products, the differences between competing brands are insignificant and unimportant to consumers.	189 (48.6)	90 (23.1)	110 (28.3)

With regard to product quality, Table 4.4 shows that the majority of the respondents (62.5%) agreed that in general manufacturers make an effort to design products to fit the needs of the consumers, which should be reassuring to manufacturers. At the same time, only 53.7% disagreed that the quality of most products has not improved over the past several years. A total of 62.2% agreed that style changes are not as important as improvements in product quality, which could imply that consumers value quality more than style changes. However, 41.6% of the respondents agreed that manufacturers deliberately design products which will wear out as quickly as possible, with 29.8% indicating uncertainty, and 51.7% agreed that retailers/manufacturers often withhold important product improvements from the market in order to protect their own interests, with 33.7% indicating uncertainty. A total of 47.8% of the respondents agreed that the wide variety of competing products makes buying decisions more difficult, while 36% disagreed. At the same time, 48.6% did not believe that for most products, the differences between competing brands are insignificant and unimportant to consumers, while 28.3% believed the opposite, and 23.9% were neutral. This probably shows that consumers felt that an assortment of products makes it difficult for them to make proper buying decisions as they probably become overwhelmed by “over-choice” (Erasmus, 2013:18), but they also value differences among competing brands.

TABLE 4.5: ADVERTISING ATTITUDE CATEGORY AND ITEMS

Items	Level of agreement Number of responses (%)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Retailers/manufacturers' advertisements are reliable sources of information about the quality and performance of products.	165 (42.4)	107 (27.5)	117 (30.1)
Generally, advertised products are more reliable than unadvertised ones.	144 (37.0)	111 (28.5)	134 (34.5)
Retailers/manufacturers' advertisements usually present a true picture of the products advertised.	214 (55.0)	96 (24.7)	79 (20.3)
Most product advertising is believable.	108 (27.7)	98 (25.2)	183 (47.1)

Table 4.5 shows the responses to statements about advertising. Only 47.1% of the respondents believed that “most product advertising is believable”, while many respondents did not believe that “advertisements usually present a true picture of the products advertised” (55.0%), and that “advertisements are reliable sources of information about the quality and performance of products” (42.4%). More respondents (37%) did not believe that advertised products are more reliable than unadvertised ones”; however 34.5% of the respondents agreed with the statement and 28.5% were neutral, implying that respondents did not have confidence in advertised products. Consumers’ general negative attitude towards advertising should be alarming to retailers/manufacturers, as consumers often rely on advertisements to provide important and truthful information about products (Kumar & Raju, 2013). This implies that retailers/manufacturers should be cautious when using advertising as a tool to influence consumers’ expectations and ultimately their purchasing intentions (Chi *et al.*, 2011). In general, when consumers believe that a company’s business practices, such as their advertising, are trustworthy, they will react more favourably toward the brands the company markets (Babin & Harris, 2011:130). However, the opposite is true, when consumers believe that advertising is exaggerated and therefore not credible (Kumar & Raju, 2013).

TABLE 4.6: OTHER MARKETING ACTIVITIES ATTITUDE CATEGORY AND ITEMS

Items	Level of agreement Number of responses (%)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Generally speaking, the products required by the average family are easily available at convenient places.	95 (24.4)	70 (18.0)	224 (57.6)
In general, the quality of repair and maintenance service provided by retailers/manufacturers is getting better.	104 (26.7)	116 (29.8)	169 (43.5)
The competitions that retailers/manufacturers sponsor to encourage people to buy their products are usually dishonest.	130 (33.4)	152 (39.1)	107 (27.5)
Generally, product guarantees are backed by the manufacturers who make them.	53 (13.6)	130 (33.4)	206 (53.0)

Respondents’ attitudes toward other marketing activities of retailers/manufacturers are summarised in Table 4.6. A total of 57.6% of the respondents agreed that products required by the average family are easily available at convenient places. Only 43.5% were positive that the quality of repair and maintenance service provided by retailers is getting better, while 53.0%

believed that product guarantees are backed by manufacturers. The respondents were fairly undecided with regard to retailer/manufacturers' backing of product guarantees, quality of repairs and maintenance services, and ethics in sponsoring competition, implying that they possibly lack experience with these matters.

TABLE 4.7: CONSUMER RESPONSIBILITIES ATTITUDE CATEGORY AND ITEMS

Items	Level of agreement Number of responses (%)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The problems that consumers experience are less serious now than in the past.	151 (38.8)	81 (20.8)	157 (40.4)
The information needed to become a well-informed consumer is readily available to most people.	219 (56.3)	72 (18.5)	98 (25.2)
The average consumer is willing to pay higher prices for products that are more environment-friendly.	122 (31.4)	109 (28.0)	158 (40.6)
The problems that a consumer experiences are relatively unimportant when compared to the other issues faced by the average family.	163 (41.9)	148 (38.0)	78 (20.1)
Many of the mistakes that consumers make in buying products are the result of their own carelessness or ignorance.	148 (38.0)	80 (20.6)	161 (41.4)
Consumers often try to take advantage of retailers/manufacturers by making claims that are impossible to justify.	198 (50.9)	106 (27.2)	85 (21.9)
Concern for the environment does influence the product choices made by most consumers.	128 (32.9)	96 (24.7)	165 (42.4)
For most types of products, consumers do find it worth the trouble to shop around to find the best buy.	53 (13.6)	62 (15.9)	274 (70.4)

The statements in Table 4.7 measured the importance of consumer problems and consumers' perceptions of their responsibilities pertaining to their consumer rights. Almost the same number of respondents agreed (40.4%) and disagreed (38.8%) that the problems that consumers experience are less serious now than in the past. While 41.9% of the respondents disagreed that the problems that a consumer experiences are "relatively unimportant when compared to the other issues faced by the average family", nearly 40% were neutral. Although many respondents believe that the problems of consumers should receive attention by business, government and consumer groups, many are ignorant about the problems that consumers experience.

The majority of the respondents (70.4%) agreed that respondents find it worth the trouble to shop around to find the best buy, while half of the respondents disagreed that consumers try to take advantage of retailers by making false claims, compared to those who were undecided and agreed. Only 42.4% of the respondents agreed that concern for the environment influences their product choices, echoed by 40.6% of the respondents who were willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products, reflecting a negative attitude towards environmental concerns. More than half of the respondents disagreed that the information needed to become a well-informed consumer is readily available, possibly implying that the respondents perceived

themselves to be vulnerable and therefore need to be provided with information to become more knowledgeable about their consumer rights and responsibilities (Halliru, 2012).

TABLE 4.8: CONSUMERISM ATTITUDE CATEGORY AND ITEMS

Items	Level of agreement Number of responses (%)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Retailers/manufacturers seem to take consumers' complaints now more seriously than they did in the past.	121 (31.1)	104 (26.7)	164 (42.2)
When consumers have problems with products they have purchased, it is usually easy to get the matter rectified.	201 (51.7)	92 (23.6)	96 (24.7)
Most retailers/companies make a sincere effort to handle/settle complaints fairly.	146 (37.5)	114 (29.3)	129 (33.2)
From the consumer's viewpoint, the procedures followed by most retailers/manufacturers in handling complaints and settling grievances of consumers are satisfactory.	197 (50.6)	116 (29.8)	76 (19.5)
The protection of consumer rights has not been an important factor in changing business practices and procedures.	91 (23.4)	74 (19.0)	224 (57.6)
The exploitation of consumers by business firms deserves more attention than it is receiving.	27 (6.9)	86 (22.1)	276 (71.0)

The statements in Table 4.8 relate to the alleged exploitation of consumers. The majority (71%) of the respondents believed that exploitation of consumers by business firms deserves more attention, indicating a stronger positive attitude towards efforts to stop exploitation of consumers. At the same time, 57.6% of the respondents agreed that the protection of consumer rights has not been an important factor in changing business practices and procedures. In the Lesotho context this could mean that consumers believe that they are being exploited and that not enough has been done to promote their rights as consumers.

The respondents were not very positive about retailers'/manufacturers' complaint handling. Only 42.2% of the respondents agreed that retailers seem to take consumers' complaints now more seriously than they did in the past. Half of the respondents disagreed that retailers/manufacturers' handling of consumer complaints and settling of grievances are satisfactory, and that it is easy to get product problems rectified, while 29.8% and 23.6% respectively indicated uncertainty about this. While 37.5% of the respondents disagreed that most retailers/manufacturers make a sincere effort to handle/settle complaints fairly, 29.3% were neutral on this.

TABLE 4.9: GOVERNMENT REGULATION ATTITUDE CATEGORY AND ITEMS

Items	Level of agreement Number of responses (%)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The government should test competing brands of products and make the results of these tests available to consumers.	38 (9.8)	45 (11.5)	306 (78.7)
The government should set minimum standards of quality for all products sold to consumers.	30 (7.7)	27 (6.9)	332 (85.3)
The government should exercise more responsibility for regulating the advertising, sales and marketing activities of manufacturers.	43 (11.1)	43 (11.1)	303 (77.8)
Governmental consumer protection organisations are not needed to protect and promote the interests of consumers.	298 (76.6)	43 (11.1)	48 (12.3)

Respondents' attitudes toward government regulation are summarised in Table 4.9. Within the category of attitude to government regulation, the majority of the respondents agreed that "the government should test competing brands of products and make the results of these tests available to consumers" (78.7%), that the government should set minimum standards of quality for all products sold to consumers (85.3%), and that the government should exercise more responsibility for regulating the advertising, sales and marketing activities of manufacturers (77.8%); 76.6% disagreed that governmental consumer protection organisations are not needed to protect and promote the interests of consumers. This indicates a positive attitude towards government regulation. Respondents' strong agreement with the above-mentioned items indicate that consumers believe that the government should regulate consumer protection to promote and protect the interests of consumers, confirming research findings that consumers in developing countries primarily rely on the government for consumer protection (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012; Barksdale & Darden, 1972).

Compared to the other attitude categories, respondents had the strongest positive attitude towards government regulation. Respondents were also the least undecided about the items measuring attitudes toward government regulation, with the neutral responses varying between 6.9% and 11.5%. However, the strong positive attitude towards government regulation does not mean that consumers understand that government intervention will not necessarily solve all consumer problems and cannot guarantee consumer protection.

Tables 4.3–4.9 show that the neutral responses varied between 11.1% and 39.1.3%. This could indicate that respondents found it difficult to articulate their attitude towards specific consumerism categories as measured on the scale, probably because they are not knowledgeable about consumerism issues. This could also point to respondents' carelessness or apathy. Consumers in third-world countries probably do not actively participate in complaint action, compared to consumers in more developed countries such as America, where consumers are much more aware of their consumer rights and are able to take a strong stance

on consumerism issues (Van Oordt, 2015:81; Donoghue, 2008:207, 209; Chelminski & Coulture, 2007).

4.3.2 Exploratory factor analysis concerning consumers' attitudes towards consumerism

Consumers' attitudes were further explored by subjecting the means for the individual attitude statement to exploratory factor analysis and a principle axis factoring extraction method with varimax rotation. Three factors were retained based on Kaiser's criterion. Factor 1 included 19 items pertaining to consumers' perceptions of retailers'/manufacturers' efforts/commitment to treating consumers fairly, factor 2 contained 9 items pertaining to the government's role in protecting consumers, and factor 3 contained 10 items relating to consumers' concerns about consumer protection (the marketplace). However, the factor solution was not acceptable due to unacceptably low Cronbach alphas. .

In an effort to increase the Cronbach alphas for the respective factors and to obtain an interpretable factor structure, 17 items were deleted and exploratory factor analysis using Varimax rotation was conducted. From the factor analysis, three factors were extracted. The three factors explained 45.8% of the variance in the data.

According to a rule of thumb, using an alpha of 0.1, a rotated factor loading for a sample size of at least 300 would need to be at least 0.32 to be considered statistically significant (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). The cut-off point for a statistically meaningful rotated factor loading was determined at 0.32. None of the items had double loadings. None of the items were reverse coded as it did not impact significantly on the Cronbach alphas for the respective factors.

Table 4.10 shows the rotated factor loadings, the means, the standard deviation, the final Eigen values >1 , the percentage of variation explained, and the Cronbach alphas associated with the respective factors.

TABLE 4.10: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONSUMERISM

Items	Mean ^a	Standard deviation	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Retailers/manufacturers seem to take consumers' complaints now more seriously than they did in the past.	3.0	1.1	0.697	0.110	0.250
In general manufacturers make an effort to design products to fit the needs of the consumer.	3.5	0.9	0.660	0.281	0.090
Retailers/manufacturers advertisements are reliable sources of information about the quality and performance of products.	2.8	1.1	0.636	0.058	0.183
In general the quality of repair and maintenance service provided by retailers/manufacturers is getting better.	3.1	0.9	0.597	0.165	0.214
The problems that consumers experience are less serious now than in the past.	2.9	1.1	0.591	0.131	0.156
Most retailers/manufacturers operate on the philosophy that "the consumer is always right".	2.8	1.2	0.590	0.040	0.201
Generally speaking, the products required by the average family are easily available at convenient places.	3.4	1.0	0.559	0.369	0.070
Retailers/manufacturers advertisements usually present a true picture of the products advertised.	2.5	1.0	0.491	-0.011	0.289
The government should set minimum standards of quality for all products sold to consumers.	4.3	1.0	0.316	0.729	-0.069
The exploitation of consumers by business firms deserves more attention than it is receiving.	3.9	0.9	0.194	0.695	-0.070
The government should exercise more responsibility for regulating the advertising, sales and marketing activities of manufacturers.	4.0	1.0	0.209	0.685	-0.014
Most retailers/manufacturers are more interested in making profits than serving consumers.	2.0	1.1	0.046	0.643	0.174
The government should test competing brands of products and make the results of these tests available to consumers.	4.1	1.0	0.171	0.643	-0.005
The competitions that retailers/manufacturers sponsor to encourage people to buy their products are usually dishonest.	3.0	0.9	-0.229	0.562	0.365
Manufacturers deliberately design products which will wear out as quickly as possible.	2.7	1.1	-0.263	0.533	0.422
When consumers have problems with products they have purchased, it is usually easy to get the matter rectified.	2.5	1.1	0.302	-0.023	0.609
From the consumer's viewpoint, the procedures followed by most retailers/manufacturers in handling complaints and settling grievances of consumers are satisfactory.	2.5	1.0	0.325	-0.087	0.577
Most retailers/companies make a sincere effort to handle/settle complaints fairly.	2.8	1.0	0.447	-0.006	0.536
The problems that a consumer experiences are relatively unimportant when compared to the other issues faced by the average family.	2.7	1.0	0.134	0.322	0.505
The information needed to become a well-informed consumer is readily available for most people.	2.5	1.1	0.432	0.018	0.471
The average consumer is willing to pay higher prices for products that are more environment-friendly.	3.1	1.1	0.295	0.134	0.465
Eigen values			5.751	2.563	1.298
Cronbach alpha			0.8	0.8	0.7
% variance explained			27.4	12.2	6.2
Overall mean			3.1	3.8	2.8
Overall standard deviation			0.7	0.6	0.6

^a Mean: maximum 5 (strongly agree); minimum 1 (strongly disagree)

The first factor, which comprised eight (8) items, accounted for 27.4% of the variance. This factor was labelled *business and marketing influences*. Business and marketing influences are external to the individual, and result from direct contact between the consumer and firms, either at a store or through personal selling, sales promotions and advertising. These influences could also stem from past experiences with a product or service (Rousseau, 2003:110-111). The items “most retailers/manufacturers operate on the philosophy that the consumer is right”, “retailers/manufacturers seem to take consumers’ complaints now more seriously than in the past” and “in general the quality of repair and maintenance service provided by retailers/manufacturers is getting better” pertain to consumers’ attitude towards store policy as a dimension of the in-store shopping experience (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2003). Store policies, including a fair system for handling of complaints and a fair policy of returns and exchanges of products, form part of the controllable elements of the in-store shopping experience, i.e. the elements that the retailer can control to encourage or inhibit consumers in their contact with a retailer (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2003). In a service recovery context, the latter mentioned items also pertain to the procedural justice dimension, i.e. consumers’ assessment of the fairness of the procedures in resolving complaints, stemming from justice theory for assessing the effectiveness of service recovery procedures (Dayan, Al-Tamimi & Elhadji, 2007; Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005; Blodgett, Hill & Tax, 1997). The items “in general manufacturers make an effort to design products to fit the needs of the consumer” and “generally speaking, the products required by the average family are easily available at convenient places” also represent elements to be controlled by retailers. Retailers can control the quality of the products that they stock and the location of their stores to make the shopping experience more favourable for consumers. The items “retailers/manufacturers’ advertisements are reliable sources of information about quality and performance of products” and “retailers’ advertisements usually present a true picture of the products advertised” reflect the importance of marketing communication, in this case, advertisements, between the retailer and the consumer to influence attitudes and behaviour. The item “the problems that consumers experience are less serious now than in the past” probably relate to problems that consumer experience in the external business and marketing environment.

Of the seven (7) items composing the second factor, three items pertain to the government’s role in protecting consumers, including setting standards of product quality, exercising more responsibility for regulating advertising, and testing competing brands of products and providing result to consumers. The rest of the items pertain to business’ exploitation of consumers, including attention to business firms’ exploitation of consumers, retailers’ sponsoring of dishonest competitions to encourage consumers to purchase products, retailers’ interest in making profits rather than serving customers, and the latter items present valid concerns faced

by consumers. The factor accounts for 12.2% of the variance. The factor is labelled *government regulation and consumer protection issues*.

The third factor, comprising six (6) items, accounts for 6.2% of the variance. Three of the six items pertain to consumer sophistication, including availability of information to become well-informed consumers, willingness to pay higher prices for products that are more environment-friendly, and the relative unimportance of consumer issues compared to the other issues faced by the average family. Consumer sophistication is the result of one's involvement, attitudes, behaviour, motivation, personality, experience with and knowledge about products, and exposure to environmental factors (Liu & McClure, 2001). Sophisticated consumers possess and utilise the abilities necessary to make an informed consumer decision. Sophisticated consumers are usually more knowledgeable and have more past-purchase and consumption experiences concerning specific products and services than less sophisticated consumers. More sophisticated consumers are better able to scan internal and external information sources to make sound product decisions. They are also more open to novel ideas, to search for information about new products and services, and to try new products than less sophisticated consumers would be (Liu & McClure, 2001). The rest of the items pertain to consumers' satisfaction with retailers' complaint handling, including their perceptions of retailers' sincere effort to settle complaints fairly, of consumers' ease to get matters rectified (complaints resolved), and of retailers' satisfactory complaint handling procedures. Studies have shown that sophisticated consumers are better at judging products and are more satisfied with their purchases, while less sophisticated consumers are generally not aware of their consumer rights and do not have the necessary knowledge to pursue redress when they are dissatisfied (Erasmus, 2013; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). The factor is labelled *consumer sophistication*.

For the purpose of the interpretations of the means (M), the following applied:

$M \leq 1.5$, strongly disagree

$M = 1.5\text{--}2.5$, disagree

$M = 2.6\text{--}3.5$, neutral

$M = 3.6\text{--}4.5$, agree

$M \geq 4.5$, strongly agree

In terms of *government regulation and consumer protection issues*, means > 3.9 indicate that respondents agreed that the government should play a role in their consumer protection, i.e. the government should test competing brand of products, set minimum standards of quality, and regulate advertising, sales and marketing activities, and should see to it that business firms do not exploit consumers. Respondents were positive towards government protection. In terms of

business and marketing influences and *consumer sophistication*, means between 2.5 and 3.5 indicate that the respondents were undecided.

4.4 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 2

Objective 2: To investigate and describe consumers' complaint intentions following their dissatisfaction with a hypothetical performance failure of a consumer electronic product

Respondents were asked to indicate their propensity/tendency to complain about the dissatisfactory product which they mentioned in Question 1 of Section C (Addendum A). Propensity to complain was measured on a most likely/least likely Likert-type scale coded 1 through 5. It is important to note that the "extremely unlikely" and "unlikely" response options as well as the "likely" and "extremely likely" response options were consolidated to facilitate interpretation of the data. Refer to Table 4.11 for the consolidated frequencies and percentages concerning consumers' propensity to complain about a consumer electronic product.

TABLE 4.11: INTENTION TO COMPLAIN ABOUT A CONSUMER ELECTRONIC PRODUCT

Item Would you...	Likelihood of complaining Number of responses (%)		
	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely
Forget about the situation and do nothing?	307 (78.9)	31 (8.0)	51 (13.1)
Tell friends, family and/or acquaintances directly about the product failure/problem by oral/verbal communication (i.e. direct word-of-mouth by means of face to face communication or telephone communication)?	34 (8.7)	52 (13.4)	303 (77.9)
Tell your friends and family about the problem via text messaging/the internet/a social network (e.g. word-of-mouth by means of virtual communication)?	104 (26.7)	39 (10.0)	246 (63.2)
Switch to another brand name other than the one you were dissatisfied with?	57 (14.7)	47 (12.1)	285 (73.2)
Stop buying from the retailer where the product was purchased?	79 (20.3)	66 (17.0)	244 (62.7)
Contact the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (e.g. repairs/a replacement/a refund)?	74 (19.0)	40 (10.3)	275 (70.7)
Contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than to seek redress (e.g. repairs/a replacement/a refund)?	174 (44.7)	49 (12.6)	166 (42.7)
Contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer?	214 (55.0)	65 (16.7)	110 (28.3)
Contact a consumer protection organisation?	204 (52.4)	51 (13.1)	134 (34.5)
Contact a legal representative?	237 (60.9)	71 (18.3)	81 (20.8)
Write a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website?	263 (67.6)	39 (10.0)	87 (22.4)

Table 4.11 shows that the majority of the respondents (78.9%) would probably not forget about the situation and do nothing, which implies that they intended to take some form of action. With

regard to private complaint intention, more than three quarters of the respondents (77.9%) intended to tell friends, family and acquaintances directly about the product failure/problem by means of oral/verbal communication, while almost two thirds (63.2%) intended to tell friends and family about the problem via text messaging. In addition, 73.2% intended to switch to another brand name other than the one they were dissatisfied with, and 62.7% would stop buying from the retailer where the product was purchased. Private complaint action is problematic for retailers and manufacturers as consumers voice their dissatisfaction and anger to their significant others whom they trust, and not to the parties who should address the issues to prevent further dissatisfaction (Robertson *et al.*, 2012; Malhotra, Oly-Ndubisi & Agarwal, 2008). Private action could also damage a business's reputation and could deter potential customers from purchasing products (Robertson *et al.*, 2012; Malhotra, Oly-Ndubisi & Agarwal, 2008; Kau & Loh, 2006).

Concerning public complaint intention towards second parties, the majority of the respondents (70.7%) intended to contact the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, while only 28.3% intended to contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer, and 42.7% intended to contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than to seek redress. This finding could indicate that Basotho consumers trust that retailers would resolve their dissatisfaction with products by repairing/replacing such products.

With regard to public complaint intention towards third parties, more than half of the respondents were not likely to contact a consumer protection organisation or a legal representative, and more than two thirds were not likely to write a letter to the press or to a consumer complaint website. In the South African context, Donoghue *et al.* (2012) and Van Oordt (2015) respectively indicated that negligibly few consumers actively contacted third parties to complain about appliance failures and consumer electronic product failures. Similarly, Donoghue *et al.* (2006; 2012) found that almost none of the respondents contacted third parties to complain about appliance failures. All of the above-mentioned studies suggested that consumers were very passive regarding taking third-party action. One should however note that Donoghue *et al.* (2006; 2012) measured respondents' actual complaint behaviour and not their intention to complain. The current study shows that respondents would rather take private action and complain to the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress than to engage in public action towards third parties. Consumers usually complain to retailers/manufacturers when they perceive them to be fair in terms of the redress offered, the procedures followed in dealing with complaints, and the treatment interaction (Kim, Wang & Matilla, 2010). Despite the respondents' negative attitude towards retailers' complaint handling and their distrust in business practices (see Table 4.11), they were more likely to contact retailers. This could be due to the nature of the product – consumer electronics are usually expensive and are supposed to be durable.

The neutral responses for the types of complaint intentions varied between 8% and 18.3%, while the neutral responses for the attitude categories varied between 11.1% and 39.1.3% (see Table 4.11), possibly implying that the respondents were better able to express themselves in terms of their complaint intention than their attitudes towards the respective consumerism categories.

4.5 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 3

Objective 3: To investigate and describe consumers' perceptions of specific product-related variables pertaining to specific consumer complaint intentions

The specific product-related variables for this study included price, social visibility, durability, frequency of use and product failure severity. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements about the specific product-related variable concerning their propensity/tendency to tell friends and family about the dissatisfactory product via oral/verbal communication (i.e. direct word-of-mouth by means of face-to-face communication or telephone communication), to tell friends and family about the dissatisfactory product via text messaging/the internet/a social network (e.g. "word-of-mouth" by means of virtual communication), or to complain to a retailer/seller/service provider about the dissatisfactory product.

In the ensuing section the differences in the likelihood to complain to the specific parties across all of the product-related variables (Table 4.12), and next, the difference in likelihood to complain to specific parties across specific product-related variables (Table 4.13) are described. It should be noted that the "strongly agree" and "agree" response options as well as "strongly disagree" and "disagree" response options were consolidated to facilitate the interpretation of the findings.

TABLE 4.12: DIFFERENCES IN THE LIKELIHOOD TO COMPLAIN TO SPECIFIC PARTIES ACROSS ALL OF THE PRODUCT-RELATED VARIABLES

	Propensity to complain action to specific parties											
	Direct word-of-mouth towards family and friends				Word-of-mouth towards family and friends				Complain to a retailer/seller/service/provider			
	Level of agreement	n	Total %	P-value Chi ² -test for equal proportions	Level of agreement	n	Total %	P-value Chi ² -test for equal proportions	Level of agreement	n	Total %	P-value Chi ² -test for equal proportions
Price	Disagree	51	13.1	< 0.0001	Disagree	73	18.8	0.0026	Disagree	44	11.3	< 0.0001
	Neutral	50	12.9		Neutral	62	15.9		Neutral	44	11.3	
	Agree	288	74		Agree	254	65.3		Agree	301	77.4	
Social visibility	Disagree	59	15.2	< 0.0001	Disagree	87	22.4	0.0026	Disagree	81	20.8	< 0.0001
	Neutral	68	17.5		Neutral	68	17.5		Neutral	71	18.3	
	Agree	262	67.3		Agree	234	60.1		Agree	237	60.9	
Durability	Disagree	35	9.0	< 0.0001	Disagree	64	16.5	0.0026	Disagree	37	9.5	< 0.0001
	Neutral	39	10.0		Neutral	44	11.3		Neutral	42	10.8	
	Agree	315	81.0		Agree	281	72.2		Agree	310	79.7	
Frequency of use	Disagree	36	9.2	< 0.0001	Disagree	63	16.2	0.0026	Disagree	40	10.3	< 0.0001
	Neutral	52	13.4		Neutral	60	15.4		Neutral	49	12.6	
	Agree	301	77.4		Agree	266	68.4		Agree	300	77.1	
Severity of problem	Disagree	22	5.6	< 0.0001	Disagree	56	14.4	0.0026	Disagree	29	7.5	< 0.0001
	Neutral	39	10.0		Neutral	45	11.6		Neutral	37	9.5	
	Agree	328	84.4		Agree	288	74.0		Agree	323	83.0	

*Significant P-value below 0.01

Concerning propensity to directly tell friends and family about the dissatisfactory product, the results confirm that consumers are more likely to complain when the price of the product is high (74.0%) (Brobeck & Mayer, 2015:98; Phau & Sari, 2004), when the product is meant to be durable (81.0%), when the product is used frequently (77.4%), and when the severity of the problem is high (84.4%) (Hoyer *et al.*, 2012:281; Phau & Sari, 2004). (See Table 4.12.) The results therefore confirm that price is indeed important to consumers and that consumers are more likely to complain about expensive (consumer electronic) products than about inexpensive ones (Brobeck & Mayer, 2015:98; Phau & Sari, 2004). The fact that the respondents would be more likely to complain to friends and family if the product is socially visible possibly confirms that respondents do not only purchase and use consumer electronic products for their functionality, but also for their social significance (Solomon *et al.*, 2012:248; Solomon *et al.*, 2009:33). However, it should be noted that compared to the other product-related variables, fewer respondents (67.3%) agreed that social visibility would impact on their propensity to directly complain to family and friends, possibly indicating that social visibility plays a lesser role in intention to engage in word-of-mouth. All in all, the majority of the respondents agreed with all of the statements pertaining to product-related variables and propensity to engage in direct negative word-of-mouth.

With regard to the product-related variables and the propensity to tell friends and family about the dissatisfactory product via social media, the majority of the respondents agreed with all of the items, but to a lesser degree than with the items for direct word-of-mouth. The results confirm that consumers are more likely to complain to family and friends via social media, the higher the price (65.3%), social visibility (60.1%), durability (72.2%), frequency of use (68.4%) and the severity of the problem (74.0%) (Brobeck & Mayer, 2015:98; Hoyer *et al.*, 2012:281; Solomon *et al.*, 2012: 248; Solomon *et al.*, 2009:33; Phau & Sari, 2004).

The results also confirm that consumers are more likely to complain to retailer/seller/service provider about the dissatisfactory product, the higher the price (77.4%), social visibility (60.9%), durability (79.7%), frequency of use (77.1%), and the severity of the problem (83.0%) (Brobeck & Mayer, 2015:98; Hoyer *et al.*, 2012:281; Solomon *et al.*, 2012: 248; Solomon *et al.*, 2009:33; Phau & Sari, 2004).

The frequency distributions of the specific product-related variables differ with regard to propensity to engage in direct word-of-mouth, to engage in word-of-mouth or to complain to a retailers/seller/service provider. With regard to agreement to engage in direct word-of-mouth, the severity of the product failure ranked the highest (84%), followed by durability (81.0%), then price (74%) and frequency of use (77.4%) in equal proportions, and lastly social visibility (67.3%). The exact same pattern emerged when comparing product-related variables with

agreement to complain to retailers. With regard to agreement to engage in word-of-mouth, the severity of the product failure again ranked the highest (74%), followed by durability (72.2%), and then frequency of use (68.4%), and price (65.3%), and lastly social visibility (60.1%). Overall, it seems that the response pattern for agreement to complain via word-of-mouth and to complain to retailers were very similar with regard to the various product-related variables. It also appears that higher levels of problem severity, price, durability, and frequency of use could be linked to intention to engage in the specific complaint actions. However, fewer respondents were inclined to engage in the respective complaint actions due to social visibility, implying that the social significance of the product could play a less significant role in complaint action versus the price and the other product-related variables. The severity of the product problem, durability and the frequency of use all relate to the functionality of the product (Donoghue *et al.*, 2008), which is for most consumers the main reason for purchasing complex products such as major household appliances (Sonnenberg *et al.*, 2011) and in this study, consumer electronic products. Sonnenberg *et al.* (2011) and Erasmus *et al.* (2011) associated price (affordability) with functionality and durability rather than with status-related factors.

In the South African context, Donoghue (2008) and Van Oordt (2015:94) could not confirm a relationship between consumers' perception of the severity of the performance failures, for respectively major household appliance and consumer electronic products, and complaint behaviour, specifically word-of-mouth and contacting retailers to complain. However, one should note that in both studies respondents' actual behaviour was measured and not their intentions, as was the case for this study.

TABLE 4.13: DIFFERENCE IN LIKELIHOOD TO COMPLAIN TO SPECIFIC PARTIES ACROSS SPECIFIC PRODUCT-RELATED VARIABLES

Product-related variables	Propensity to complain to specific parties									P-value Chi ² -test for equal proportions
	Direct word-of-mouth to family and friends			Word-of-mouth to family and friends			Complain to a retailer/seller/service provider			
	Level of agreement	n	%	Level of agreement	n	%	Level of agreement	n	%	
Price	Disagree	51	13.1	Disagree	73	18.8	Disagree	44	11.3	0.0036*
	Neutral	50	12.9	Neutral	62	15.9	Neutral	44	11.3	
	Agree	288	74.0	Agree	254	65.3	Agree	301	74.4	
Social visibility	Disagree	59	15.2	Disagree	87	22.4	Disagree	81	20.8	0.1005
	Neutral	68	17.5	Neutral	68	17.5	Neutral	71	18.3	
	Agree	262	67.3	Agree	234	60.1	Agree	237	60.9	
Durability	Disagree	35	9.0	Disagree	64	16.5	Disagree	37	9.5	0.0069*
	Neutral	39	10.0	Neutral	44	11.3	Neutral	42	10.8	
	Agree	315	81.0	Agree	281	72.2	Agree	310	79.7	
Frequency of use	Disagree	36	9.2	Disagree	63	16.2	Disagree	40	10.3	0.0107*
	Neutral	52	13.4	Neutral	60	15.4	Neutral	49	12.6	
	Agree	301	77.4	Agree	266	68.4	Agree	300	77.1	
Severity of problem	Disagree	22	5.6	Disagree	56	14.4	Disagree	29	7.5	< 0.0001*
	Neutral	39	10.0	Neutral	45	11.6	Neutral	37	9.5	
	Agree	328	84.4	Agree	288	74.0	Agree	323	83	

*Significant P-value below 0.01

Table 4.13 shows the distribution of specific product-related variables across the propensity to complain via direct word-of-mouth, via word-of-mouth, and by contacting a retailer, seller or service provider. Significantly more respondents agreed that, the higher the price of consumer electronics (p-value = 0.0036), they would be more likely to engage in direct word-of-mouth (74%) or contact retailers (74.4%), than to contact friends and family via word-of-mouth (65.3%). Given the developing context of Lesotho, some consumers might find it difficult to pay for internet access to engage in word-of-mouth, and some consumers, especially older consumers, might not be that techno wise compared to the younger generation, which may possibly explain why the respondents were less inclined to complain via word-of-mouth (UNESCO, 2006:10-14).

Similar frequency distributions emerged for durability by propensity to complain to the specific parties, frequency of use by propensity to complain to the specific parties, and severity of the problem by propensity to complain to the specific parties. No significant differences existed between social visibility and likelihood to complain to the specific parties. (Irrespective of the level of agreement with social visibility, respondents were equally likely to complain via word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth or by contacting retailers.)

It therefore seems that the higher the price, the durability, the social visibility or the frequency of use, the more likely consumers are to take part in word-of-mouth and to contact the retailer to complain, compared to taking part in word-of-mouth, implying that these product-related

variables are important determinants of complaint intention. However, no relationship exists between social visibility and the likelihood to complain to specific parties, probably implying that social significance is less important to consumers when they intend to complain about consumer electronic products.

Erasmus *et al.* (2011) concluded that in the context of an emerging economy, consumers across all socio-demographic categories seemed concerned about certain status-related factors when judging major household appliances; and that typical aspiring consumer groups, i.e. younger consumers and those with higher education levels, were significantly more concerned about the “impressiveness” of appliances. However, one should note that Erasmus *et al.*'s (2011) study showed that social significance played a role in consumers' pre-purchase evaluation of appliances, whereas the results of the study at hand showed the opposite in a post-purchase context (i.e. social significance on its own did not play a role in consumers' complaint intention about appliances).

4.6 RESULTS OF OBJECTIVE 4

Objective 4: To investigate and describe the effect of consumers' attitude towards consumerism, their perceptions of specific product-related variables, and demographic variables on their intention to complain (tell friends and family about the product failure by direct word-of-mouth, tell friends and family about the problem via word-of-mouth, contact the retailer to obtain compensation/redress) following their dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product.

Stepwise logistic regressions were used to model the influence of the dimensions of attitude, product-related variables and demographic variables on complaint intention. Logistic regression was used, due to having a non-metric dependent variable with two groups and several metric and non-metric independent variables. This statistical approach provides a suitable alternative to other multivariate analyses since it does not necessitate strict assumptions of multivariate normality and equal variance-covariance matrices across groups (Mazzocchi, 2008:339; Akinci *et al.*, 2007).

Only the complaint intentions of word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth, and contacting the retailer to obtain redress served as the dependent variables for the respective logistic regressions, as the items pertaining to the product-related variables were measured in terms of these actions. In each case, the dependent variables were recoded as follows: extremely unlikely and unlikely were coded as unlikely, neutral was excluded as a category, and likely and extremely likely were coded as likely. Indicator variables were created for all categorical predictors as indicated

in Table 4.14. The scores for the continuous independent attitude variables (factors 1–3) were treated as covariates. Each of the product-related variables was recoded as follows: strongly disagree and disagree were recoded as disagree, neutral was retained as a category, and agree and strongly agree were coded as agree. Refer to Table 4.14 for the outlay of the data set, i.e. the type of variables, meaning of variables, categories and data type of variable, for the respective logistic regression on complaint intention.

TABLE 4.14: OUTLAY OF THE DATASET PER LOGISTIC REGRESSION

Type of variable	Meaning of variable	Categories	Indicator variables	Date type of variable	
Dependent variable	Word-of-mouth	unlikely	0	Categorical nominal	
		likely	1		
	Word-of-mouse	unlikely	0	Categorical nominal	
		likely	1		
	Contact retailer to obtain redress	unlikely	0	Categorical nominal	
		likely	1		
Independent variable	Gender	Male	0	Categorical nominal	
		Female	1		
	Age	25–29 years	0	Categorical ordinal	
		30–49 years	1		
		50+	2		
	Level of education	High school education and lower	0	Categorical ordinal	
		Tertiary education	1		
	Income	Less than R5 000	0	Categorical ordinal	
		R5 000–R9 999	1		
		R10 000–R14 999	2		
		R15 000–R24 000	3		
		R25+	4		
	Attitude	Attitude Factor 1 - business and marketing influences			Numerical continuous
		Attitude Factor 2 - government regulation and consumer protection issues			
		Attitude Factor 3 - consumer sophistication			
	Product price	Disagree	0	Categorical nominal	
		Neutral	1		
		Agree	2		
	Social visibility	Disagree	1	Categorical nominal	
		Neutral	2		
		Agree	3		
Durability	Disagree	1	Categorical nominal		
	Neutral	2			
	Agree	3			
Frequency of use	Disagree	1	Categorical nominal		
	Neutral	2			
	Agree	3			
Product failure severity	Disagree	1	Categorical nominal		
	Neutral	2			
	Agree	3			

The results show a good fit for all of the logistic models. Overall the model for word-of-mouth is able to predict correctly 92.9% of the cases, the model for word-of-mouth 87.8% of the cases, and the model for contacting the retailer to obtain redress 79% of the cases.

Table 4.15 shows the estimated coefficients, the odds ratio and the relative confidence interval for the respective logistic models.

TABLE 4.15: ESTIMATED COEFFICIENTS, THE ODDS RATIO AND THE RELATIVE CONFIDENCE INTERVALS FOR THE RESPECTIVE LOGISTIC MODELS

Logistic regressions	Step	Predictor variables	Coefficients B	S.E.	Wald	df	Significance (P-value)	Exp(B) (Odds Ratio)
Word-of-mouth	3 ^c	Consumer sophistication	1.600	0.711	5.065	1	0.024*	4.954
		Frequency of use			6.355	2	0.042*	
		Frequency of use (1 = disagree)	-2.153	1.012	4.529	1	0.033*	0.116
		Frequency of use (2 = neutral)	0.969	1.500	0.417	1	0.518	2.635
		Product failure severity			8.670	2	0.013*	
		Product failure severity (1 = disagree)	-2.630	1.162	5.127	1	0.024	0.072
		Product failure severity (2) Neutral?	-4.310	1.686	6.539	1	0.011	0.013
		Product failure severity (3 = agree)	0					1
		Constant	-0.497	1.563	0.101	1	0.750	0.608
^c Variable(s) entered on step 3: Frequency of use								
Word-of-mouth	3 ^c	Consumer sophistication	0.949	0.395	5.770	1	0.016*	2.583
		Social visibility			8.811	2	0.012*	
		Social visibility (1 = disagree)	-1.613	0.640	6.348	1	0.012	0.199
		Social visibility (2 = neutral)	-1.405	0.616	5.203	1	0.023	0.245
		Product failure severity			6.529	2	0.038*	
		Product failure severity (1 = disagree)	-1.633	0.639	6.528	1	0.011	0.195
		Product failure severity (2 = neutral)	-0.406	0.710	0.327	1	0.567	0.666
		Product failure severity (3 = agree)	0					1
		Constant	-0.598	1.012	0.350	1	0.554	0.550
^c Variable(s) entered on step 3: Product failure severity								
Complaining to the retailer to obtain redress	1 ^a	Price			7.727	2	0.021*	
		Price (1 = disagree)	-1.646	0.600	7.523	1	0.006	0.193
		Price (2 = neutral)	-0.665	0.730	0.831	1	0.362	0.514
		Price (3 = agree)	0					1
		Constant	1.646	0.273	36.354	1	0.000	5.187
^a Variable(s) entered on step 1: Price								

*Covariates or factors overall significant (P-value below 0.05)

The final logit model for word-of-mouth shows that consumer sophistication, frequency of use and severity of product failure are significant in predicting the likelihood to engage in word-of-mouth. Product failure severity (p-value = 0.013) is the strongest predictor of word-of-mouth, followed by Attitude factor 3 (p-value = 0.024), and then by frequency of use (p-value = 0.042). The odds ratio indicates the change in the odds of the event of interest (a nominal outcome) associated with a unit increase in the explanatory variable (Mazzocchi, 2008:343). Respondents who were neutral and those who disagreed that a higher level of product failure severity could

be associated with complaining were less likely to engage in word-of-mouth than respondents who agreed. (A high level of perceived product failure severity is more likely to affect intention to engage in word-of-mouth than a neutral perception or a low level of perceived product failure severity.) Respondents with a positive attitude in terms of the consumer sophistication dimension of attitude, were more inclined to contact friends and family to complain than those who had a neutral or negative attitude. Respondents who were neutral and those who disagreed that a higher frequency of product usage could be associated with word-of-mouth were less likely to do so compared to those who agreed. (A high level of perceived frequency of use is more likely to affect intention to engage in word-of-mouth than a neutral perception or a low level of perceived frequency of use.)

The final logit model for word-of-mouth shows that Attitude factor 3, social visibility and product failure severity are significant in predicting likelihood to engage in word-of-mouth. Social visibility is the strongest predictor of word-of-mouth (p-value = 0.012), followed by Attitude factor 3 (p-value = 0.016) and then by product failure severity (p-value = 0.038). Considering the odds ratio, respondents who were neutral and those who disagreed that a higher level of product social visibility could be associated with word-of-mouth, were less likely to complain via word-of-mouth than those who agreed. (A high level of perceived product social visibility is more likely to affect intention to engage in word-of-mouth than a neutral perception or a low level of perceived product social visibility). The same reasoning applies to perceptions of product failure, in that a high level of product failure severity is more likely to affect intention to engage in word-of-mouth. In addition, a positive attitude in terms of the consumer sophistication dimension of attitude is more likely to affect word-of-mouth. The higher the score for consumer sophistication, the more likely will respondents engage in word-of-mouth.

The logit model for contacting the retailer to obtain redress shows that only price is significant. Price is therefore a strong predictor (p-value = 0.021) of this type of action. Respondents who were neutral and those who disagreed that a higher price could be associated with complaining to retailers, were less likely to complain to retailers than those who agreed. A high level of perceived price is therefore more likely to affect intention to complain to retailers.

It should be noted that for objective 3, the Chi-square test described only the differences in complaint intention to specific parties based on all five product-related variables, or based on one specific product-related variable at a time, whereas for objective 4 the logistic regression looked at the effect of various independent variables (attitude, product-related variables demographics) on complaint intention.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided an overview of the results of the study according to the specified objectives. The results were interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Exploratory factor analysis revealed three attitude factors, namely *business and marketing influences*, *government regulation and consumer protection issues*, and *consumer sophistication*. Stepwise logistic regressions to model the influence of the attitude factors, product-related variables, and demographic variables on complaint intention, revealed that (1) the severity of the product failure was the strongest predictor of word-of-mouth, followed by the consumer sophistication attitude factor and then by frequency of use; that (2) social visibility was the strongest predictor of word-of-mouth, followed by consumer sophistication and then by product failure severity; and that (3) price was the only product-related variable that would influence intention to complain to the retailer.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the conclusions of the study, the implications and recommendations for retailers, as well as suggestions for future research.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1 Consumers' attitudes toward consumerism

The respondents' attitudes were grouped according to the attitude categories originally used by Barksdale and Darden (1972), which are: philosophy of business, product quality, advertising, other marketing activities, consumer responsibilities, consumerism, and government regulation. Overall the results suggest that the respondents had a negative attitude towards philosophy of business. The results also reveal that the respondents become overwhelmed when faced with buying decisions due to a wide variety of products available in the shops. Moreover, the results of the study suggest that respondents also had a negative attitude towards advertising and towards other marketing activities done by retailers to encourage customers to buy their products. The analysis regarding respondents' attitudes towards consumer responsibility indicated that respondents believed that they do not have access to the information needed to become well-informed consumers. The results further showed that consumers are experiencing serious problems in the marketplace and hence need protection against exploitation by retailers. Finally, the results indicated that respondents rely on the government for intervention, which is typical of consumers in developing countries (Lysonski *et al.*, 2012). Considering the above-mentioned results, it is clear that as far as Basotho consumers are concerned, consumerism is indeed in its infancy in the country of Lesotho.

Exploratory factor analysis to reduce the items for the attitude categories to fewer representative constructs or factors, revealed three factors, namely *business and marketing influences* that included items pertaining to consumers' perceptions of retailers'/manufacturers' efforts or commitment to treat consumers fairly; *government regulation and consumer protection issues* that contained items pertaining to the government's role in protecting consumers and to business' exploitation of consumers; and *consumer sophistication* that contained items relating to consumers' ability to make informed decisions in the marketplace and judging retailer's'

complaint handling efforts. Sophisticated consumers who are more knowledgeable about their consumer rights will be better able to judge products and will be more likely to take appropriate action when they experience dissatisfaction with consumer electronic products purchased from retailers.

5.2.2 Consumers' complaint intentions following dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product

The results of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents intended to take some form of action concerning their dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product. The respondents were fairly certain of their complaint intentions to complain privately and to obtain redress from the retailer, as reflected by the high frequencies obtained for the likely response option, and the relative low frequencies for the uncertain response option for the specific complaint actions. While almost 75% of the respondents intended to tell their friends and family directly about the dissatisfactory product problem/failure by verbal communication, nearly two thirds intended to do so via text messaging, possibly indicating that word-of-mouth is gaining popularity amongst Lesotho consumers. The heightened intention to complain online possibly relates to the growing demand for consumer electronics such as laptops and cellphones in Lesotho (Pew Research Centre, 2015). Concerning the other more traditional types of private complaint action, Basotho consumers are likely to switch to another brand name or retailer following product dissatisfaction.

Respondents would also contact retailers to obtain redress rather than complain to third parties such as consumer protection organisations and legal representatives. Though it is likely that consumers would contact retailers to obtain some form of restitution if product failures are severe, and if products are under guarantee, the low likelihood to contact third parties to complain could indicate consumers' passivity towards third parties.

One should note that this study measured consumers' complaint intentions as opposed to actual behaviour, limiting the findings of the study due to the artificiality thereof.

5.2.3 Consumers' perceptions of specific product-related variables pertaining to their complaint intentions

The conclusions for this section only relate to the specific product-related variables for this study, which included price, social visibility, durability, frequency of use, and severity of product failure. The results of the Chi-square tests revealed that the respondents intended to engage in direct negative word-of-mouth if the product problem was severe enough. With regard to

product-related variables and the propensity to tell friends and family about the dissatisfactory product via social media, the severity of the product failure would still influence the respondents' propensity to complain. Finally, the respondents would still be more likely to complain to the retailer/seller/service provider about the dissatisfactory product if the product failure was severe. Severity of product failure is hence an important product-related variable that will influence their complaint intention.

However, it should be noted that generally the results of the study revealed that the price of the product, social visibility, durability, frequency of use and severity of product problem are important product-related variables influencing consumers' intention to engage in both private and public complaint action.

5.2.4 The effect of consumers' attitudes towards consumerism, perceptions of specific product-related variables, and demographic variables on intention to complain following dissatisfaction with a consumer electronic product

The logistic regression on intention to engage in word-of-mouth shows that consumer sophistication, perceived frequency of use and perceived severity of the product failure had an effect on intention to engage in word-of-mouth. Therefore, consumers are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth when they are positive with respect to consumer sophistication, a specific dimension of attitude, when consumer electronics are used more frequently and when the product performance failure is severe. The other attitude factors (business and marketing influences, government regulation and consumer protection issues, demographic variables and the rest of the product-related variables) did not have an effect on word-of-mouth complaint intention. Consumer sophistication has to do with the consumers' knowledge which is influential on attitudes. Consumers who are informed about consumerism issues and have the necessary consumer skills to function in the marketplace will be better able to make informed consumer decisions. Also, sophisticated consumers have more post-purchase and consumption experiences concerning specific products, are generally aware of their consumer rights, and will probably engage in negative word-of-mouth when they are dissatisfied with products (Erasmus, 2013; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). Consumers are also more likely to engage in direct word-of-mouth when the product is used often and when the product failure is severe, reflecting functional utility (Donoghue, De Klerk & Ehlers, 2008).

Regarding word-of-mouth, the logistic regression shows that consumer sophistication, perceived social visibility and perceived severity of the product failure had an effect on word-of-mouth intention. It therefore appears that consumers do not only purchase consumer electronics for their functionality but also to communicate symbolic meaning to their significant

others and friends/peer group in order to satisfy their ego needs (Erasmus *et al.*, 2011; Belk in Clarke *et al.*, 2002). Social visibility may also play a role in consumers' word-of-mouth intentions due to the social significance of consumer electronic products. Consumers may feel less embarrassed and have less of a bruised ego when telling friends and family about the product failure via word-of-mouth than when telling them directly about the problem. By engaging in word-of-mouth, consumers can reach numerous consumers to vent their anger and to get even (Lee, Park & Han, 2008).

In this study, consumer sophistication and perceptions of product failure severity play a role in intention to engage in word-of-mouth or word-of-mouth, but it is the social visibility of the consumer product that spurs the intention to complain via word-of-mouth. It also seems that intention to complain via word-of-mouth is related to functional utility, while the symbolic significance of the product may also play a role in word-of-mouth.

Finally, with regard to complaining to the retailer, price was the only influencing variable; this implies that when consumers purchase expensive consumer electronic products they expect quality and durability. Therefore, if products fail to perform satisfactorily consumers would probably complain to get a fair outcome (redress), something tangible, returns or repairs.

Van Oordt's (2015) study suggests that other factors than consumers' attitudes toward consumerism influence their decisions to engage in consumer complaint behaviour. The results of the current study confirm that specific consumer-related variables, in this case consumer sophistication as a dimension of attitudes toward consumerism, and specific product-related variables influence intention to engage in word-of-mouth or word-of-mouth, while only price – a product-related variable – influenced intention to complain to retailers. It should, however, be noted that Van Oordt (2015) explored consumers' actual complaint behaviour and not their complaint intentions.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION ORGANISATIONS, POLICY MAKERS, CONSUMERS, THE GOVERNMENT AND RETAILERS

Consumer education is important in equipping consumers with the necessary knowledge about their consumer rights to improve their decision making in the marketplace. Hence, consumer protection organisations as well as the government of Lesotho should design consumer education programmes that will equip consumers with the necessary knowledge and skills to make confident, informed and correct purchasing decisions. If consumers possess the necessary knowledge on consumer rights their attitudes are likely to be influenced, i.e. they

would have favourable attitudes toward the philosophy of business, product quality, advertising, other marketing activities, consumer responsibilities, consumerism and government regulation, and they will be better able to fend for themselves in the marketplace – as has been found in the study. The protection of consumer rights should be an important factor in changing business practices and procedures.

Moreover, retailers/manufacturers too should inform their customers about their rights before they make final purchasing decisions of consumer electronic products, by explaining to their customers about the use of the products they intend to purchase and the redress/refund/exchange policies available to them so that they can make well-informed decisions. This will in turn influence consumers' attitude toward philosophy of business.

From the results it is clear that dissatisfied respondents/consumers would take some form of action. In this study it has been revealed that they would engage in private action as well as complaining directly to the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress. The government of Lesotho and the existing consumer protection organisations in Lesotho should therefore design programmes that will educate consumers about appropriate complaint channels that will not harm the reputation of retailers/manufacturers; instead, channels that would rather enable retailers/manufacturers to rectify product flaws. Retailers should also create a redress environment that would ensure fair redress as well as an understanding and appreciation of the consumer by listening to their complaints and following fair redress policies and procedures in handling such complaints. Consumers too should enquire about available redress policies from retailers before they make final decisions regarding purchasing consumer electronic products.

When considering the role of only product-related variables on consumer complaint intention (objective 3) it is clear that price, social visibility, durability, frequency of use and severity of product problem/failure have been found to influence consumers' tendency to complain to friends and family about the dissatisfactory consumer electronic products by word-of-mouth, word-of-mouse and by complaining directly to the retailer. In particular, the severity of the product problem/failure was found to be the only variable that would influence their intention to complain via word-of-mouth, social media/word-of-mouse and complaining directly to the retailer. This implies that retailers/manufacturers should minimize product flaws by having their consumer electronic products checked for functionality and approved before they are put up in the stores for customers to buy. Retailers/manufacturers should also have exchange/redress policies which will allow consumers to return the failed products and have them exchanged or that will allow for a refund when product failures are severe. Consumers should also ask for consumer electronic products to be checked by retailers/manufacturers for functionality immediately upon payment/purchasing, before they take them home for use.

However, it should be noted that for objective 3, the Chi-square test determined only the differences in complaint intention to specific parties based on all five product-related variables, or based on one specific product-related variable at a time, whereas for objective 4 the logistic regressions modelled the effect of various independent variables (attitude, product-related variables, demographics) on complaint intention. As a result, the findings for objective 3 are limited in terms of the analyses techniques, but objective 4 gives a more comprehensive view of the variables influencing complaint intention.

Since the results of the study have revealed that consumers are more likely to engage in word-of-mouth when they are positive towards the consumer sophistication dimension of attitude, when consumer electronics are used more frequently, and when the product failure is severe, it implies that only consumers who have some knowledge of consumer rights are the ones likely to have intentions to complain by engaging in word-of-mouth. This further emphasises the need for consumer education because it is through word-of-mouth that retailers become aware of product flaws and are able to correct them. Therefore, the government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Marketing and Cooperatives as well as the existing consumer protection organisations should design and make available education programmes to consumers which will enlighten consumers about consumerism issues and that education will in turn influence consumers' attitudes.

Engaging in word-of-mouth as a result of dissatisfaction (i.e. complaining to friends and family) can be dangerous to retailers as negative word-of-mouth may harm the reputation of retailers whose products did not satisfy consumers, hence retailers should also play a role in educating consumers by providing the information they may need to make informed purchasing decisions as well as about their rights as consumers. Provision of such information by retailers may encourage consumers to complain directly to them instead of engaging in negative word-of-mouth when they experience dissatisfaction.

The fact that four product-related variables (frequency of use, severity of product failure, perceived social visibility, and price) have been revealed to have an effect on consumer complaint intention either via word-of-mouth, word-of-mouse or by complaining directly to the retailer, implies that consumer electronics are indeed important/useful to consumers, hence retailers should address complaints in a manner that would satisfy consumers, i.e. they should deal with consumer disputes fairly by establishing clear redress policies.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

The study employed convenience sampling, therefore posing a limitation in terms of the generalisability of the findings. Having said this, one should bear in mind that a random sample of the general population would be unlikely to result in a significant number of respondents with dissatisfactory experiences. The study focused only on a specific product category, which is consumer electronics. The study also, focused only on specific product-related variables that could influence complaint intention (price, durability, frequency of use, social visibility and severity of product problem). Finally, in this study respondents had to react to a hypothetical performance failure scenario, to measure consumers' behavioural intentions. Although such hypothetical scenarios may appear relevant to those who take part in them and reflect "real life" reactions, and respondents need not recall a previous situation, actual behaviour is not measured.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although not part of the objectives of this study, inferential statistics could be used to determine the relationships between demographic variables and consumers' attitudes, demographics and complaint intention, and demographics and product-related variables. This could be done in a follow-up article to be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

This study could also be replicated with consumers who actually experienced dissatisfaction and complained about consumer electronic products, to determine consumers' actual consumer complaint behaviour, implying the use of retrospective measures.

The theoretical framework and methodology employed in this study could be replicated in other emerging contexts consisting of consumers with differing cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, to explore the role of various consumer-related variables, product-related variables and redress environment variables, and also consumers' complaint intentions and behaviour when they experience dissatisfaction with products such as consumer electronics, food or clothing items. Studies about lower income consumers' perceptions of their consumer rights and complaint behaviour/intention could generate valuable theoretical and empirical findings in emerging economies where many lower income consumers are usually disadvantaged, not only in terms of their disposable income and living conditions but also their lack of knowledge and experience to make informed purchasing decisions. Such studies would acquire a qualitative approach, using data collection procedures such as focus groups, individual in-depth interviews and projective techniques, to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' thoughts, intentions and actions.

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Addendum A

Questionnaire



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

Department of Consumer Science

1 September 2014

Dear respondent

We normally purchase consumer electronic products such as major household appliances (kitchen and laundry appliances), communication devices (cellphones, smart phones etc.), audiovisual products (televisions etc.) and personal computers (desktop computers, laptops, tablets etc.), with the expectation that they will operate flawlessly. However, often these products do not operate as we expect because of defects, poor product performance and/or breakage.

Consumers often feel helpless because they do not know what their consumer rights and responsibilities are. An understanding of consumer views about the marketing system in which consumers participate and their behaviour following their dissatisfaction with products would be of immense value to policy makers, consumer protection organisations, and sellers/retailers. Such information could also aid in developing training programmes to help consumers to make informed decisions in terms of their consumer rights.

I am currently busy with my Master's degree in Consumer Science at the University of Pretoria. My research project aims to get some insight on consumers' views of their consumer rights and their behaviour following their dissatisfaction with consumer electronic products.

In order to participate in this survey, respondents must reside in Maseru and must be older than 25 years.

If you meet the criteria outlined above 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: _____

Your anonymity will be respected and your information will therefore be treated as strictly confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer the questions carefully and give your honest opinion throughout. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

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 on the number below.

Kind regards

Limpho Molise
Cell number: 58998442

Supervisor: Dr S. Donoghue (Department of Consumer Science, UP)

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Respondent Number:

V0

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

Section A: Demographics

1. What is your gender?

Male	Female
1	2

V1

2. How old are you?

years

V2

3. What is your highest level of education?

Lower than Grade 12/COSC	1
Grade 12/COSC	2
Grade 12/COSC + degree/diploma	3
Postgraduate qualification	4

V3

4. What is your approximate total monthly household income?

Less than R5 000	1
R5 000–R9 999	2
R10 000–R14 999	3
R15 000–R24 999	4
R25 000 or more	5

V4

5. In which village of Maseru do you reside?

V5

Section B: Attitudes towards consumer rights and protection

1. Please indicate the degree to which you disagree/agree with each of the following statements concerning your attitudes towards consumer rights and protection.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most retailers/manufacturers operate on the philosophy that "the consumer is always right".	1	2	3	4	5
In general, manufacturers make an effort to design products to fit the needs of the consumer.	1	2	3	4	5
Retailers/manufacturers' advertisements are reliable sources of information about the quality and performance of products.	1	2	3	4	5
Generally speaking, the products required by the average family are easily available at convenient places.	1	2	3	4	5
The problems that consumers experience are less serious now than in the past.	1	2	3	4	5
Retailers/manufacturers seem to take consumers' complaints now more seriously than they did in the past.	1	2	3	4	5
The government should test competing brands of products and make the results of these tests available to consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
"Let the buyer beware" is still the guiding philosophy of most retailers/manufacturers.	1	2	3	4	5

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Section B 1 – Continued

Please indicate the degree to which you disagree/agree with each of the following statements concerning your attitudes towards consumer rights and protection.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Over the past few years, the quality of most products has not improved.	1	2	3	4	5
Generally, advertised products are more reliable than unadvertised ones.	1	2	3	4	5
In general, the quality of repair and maintenance service provided by retailers/manufacturers is getting better.	1	2	3	4	5
The information needed to become a well-informed consumer is readily available to most people.	1	2	3	4	5
When consumers have problems with products they have purchased, it is usually easy to get the matter rectified.	1	2	3	4	5
The government should set minimum standards of quality for all products sold to consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
Competition between different retailers/manufacturers ensures that consumers pay fair prices.	1	2	3	4	5
From the consumer's point of view, style changes are not as important as improvements in product quality.	1	2	3	4	5
Retailers/manufacturers' advertisements usually present a true picture of the products advertised.	1	2	3	4	5
The competitions that retailers/manufacturers sponsor to encourage people to buy their products are usually dishonest.	1	2	3	4	5
The average consumer is willing to pay higher prices for products that are more environment-friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
Most retailers/companies make a sincere effort to handle/settle complaints fairly.	1	2	3	4	5
The government should exercise more responsibility for regulating the advertising, sales and marketing activities of manufacturers.	1	2	3	4	5
Retailers/manufacturers seldom neglect their responsibilities to the consumer.	1	2	3	4	5
Manufacturers deliberately design products which will wear out as quickly as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
The problems that a consumer experiences are relatively unimportant when compared to the other issues faced by the average family.	1	2	3	4	5
From the consumer's viewpoint, the procedures followed by most retailers/manufacturers in handling complaints and settling grievances of consumers are satisfactory.	1	2	3	4	5
Governmental consumer protection organisations are not needed to protect and promote the interests of consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
Generally, product guarantees are backed by the manufacturers who make them.	1	2	3	4	5
Most retailers/manufacturers are more interested in making profits than serving consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
Retailers/manufacturers often withhold important product improvements from the market in order to protect their own interests.	1	2	3	4	5
Many of the mistakes that consumers make in buying products are the result of their own carelessness or ignorance.	1	2	3	4	5
The protection of consumer rights has not been an important factor in changing business practices and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
The wide variety of competing products makes buying decisions more difficult.	1	2	3	4	5

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Section B 1 – Continued

Please indicate the degree to which you disagree/agree with each of the following statements concerning your attitudes towards consumer rights and protection.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Consumers often try to take advantage of retailers/Manufacturers by making claims that are impossible to justify.	1	2	3	4	5
Most product advertising is believable.	1	2	3	4	5
The exploitation of consumers by business firms deserves more attention than it is receiving.	1	2	3	4	5
Concern for the environment does influence the product choices made by most consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
For most products, the differences between competing brands are insignificant and unimportant to consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
For most types of products, consumers do find it worth the trouble to shop around to find the best buy.	1	2	3	4	5

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Section C: Propensity to complain about a CE product

Consumer electronics (CE) refers to any device containing an electronic circuit board that is intended for everyday use by consumers. Consumer electronics include major household appliances (kitchen and laundry appliances, refrigerators, freezers, ovens, stoves, dishwashers, microwave ovens, washing machines and tumble dryers), communication devices (cell phones, smart phones etc.), audiovisual products (televisions and related products: DVD players, Bluray players, etc.), personal computers (desktop computers, laptops, tablets or hand-held PC's (palmtops)).

Imagine that you have recently purchased a consumer electronic product from a retailer. After using it for a while, you realise that you are not satisfied with the product's performance/functioning (for example the product broke down, did not operate properly, or was a dud).

1. Name the type of product that you are thinking of (e.g. microwave oven, television, cell phone etc.). (Please name only one product.)

V44

2. Please read the following list of statements and indicate your propensity/tendency to complain about the dissatisfactory product mentioned in question 1 of this section.

Would you ...

	Extremely Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely
Forget about the situation and do nothing?	1	2	3	4	5
Tell friends, family and/or acquaintances directly about the product failure/problem by oral/verbal communication (i.e. direct word of mouth by means of face to face communication or telephone communication)?	1	2	3	4	5
Tell your friends and family about the problem via text messaging/the internet/a social network (e.g. "word of mouse" by means of virtual communication)?	1	2	3	4	5
Switch to another a brand name other than the one you were dissatisfied with?	1	2	3	4	5
Stop buying from the retailer where the product was purchased?	1	2	3	4	5
Contact the retailer/manufacturer to obtain compensation/redress (e.g. repairs/a replacement/a refund)?	1	2	3	4	5
Contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than to seek compensation/redress (e.g. repairs/a replacement/a refund)?	1	2	3	4	5
Contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer?	1	2	3	4	5

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Section C 2 – Continued

Please read the following list of statements and indicate your propensity/tendency to complain about the dissatisfactory product mentioned in question 1 of this section.

Would you ...

	Extremely Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Extremely Likely
Contact a consumer protection organisation?	1	2	3	4	5
Contact a legal representative?	1	2	3	4	5
Write a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website?	1	2	3	4	5

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 V55
Section D: Product-related variables concerning dissatisfactory consumer electronics

Please answer the following questions related to the dissatisfactory consumer electronic product that you have indicated in Section C.

- Please read the following list of statements and indicate the degree to which you **agree or disagree** with each of the statements concerning your propensity/tendency to **tell friends and family** about the dissatisfactory product **via oral/verbal communication** (i.e. direct word of mouth by means of face to face communication or telephone communication).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The higher the price of the product, the more likely I am to tell my friends and family about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
If the faulty product is often seen by my friends, I am more likely to complain.	1	2	3	4	5
If the product was meant to be used for a long time, I am more likely to complain if is faulty.	1	2	3	4	5
The more frequently I have to use the product, the more likely I am to tell my friends about the product problem.	1	2	3	4	5
The more serious the product failure/product problem, the more likely I am to tell my friends and family about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
- Please read the following list of statements and indicate the degree to which you **agree or disagree** with each of the statements concerning your propensity/tendency to **tell friends and family** about the dissatisfactory product **via text messaging/the internet/a social network** (e.g. "word of mouse" by means of virtual communication).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The higher the price of the product, the more likely I am to tell my friends and family about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
If the faulty product is often seen by my friends, I am more likely to complain.	1	2	3	4	5
If the product was meant to be used for a long time, I am more likely to complain if is faulty.	1	2	3	4	5
The more frequently I have to use the product, the more likely I am to tell my friends about the product problem.	1	2	3	4	5
The more serious the product failure/product problem, the more likely I am to tell my friends and family about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
- Please read the following list of statements and indicate the degree to which you **agree or disagree** with each of the statements concerning your propensity/tendency to **complain to a retailer/seller/service provider** about the dissatisfactory product.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The higher the price of the product, the more likely I am to complain to a retailer/seller/service provider .	1	2	3	4	5

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 V61

 V62

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Section D 3 – Continued

Please read the following list of statements and indicate the degree to which you **agree or disagree** with each of the statements concerning your propensity/tendency to **complain to a retailer/seller/service provider** about the dissatisfactory product.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The higher the price of the product, the more likely I am to tell my friends and family about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
If the faulty product is often seen by my friends, I am more likely to complain <i>to a retailer/seller/service provider</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
If the product was meant to be used for a long time, I am more likely to complain <i>to a retailer/seller/service provider</i> if is faulty.	1	2	3	4	5
The more frequently I have to use the product, the more likely I am to complain <i>to a retailer/seller/service provider</i> if it is faulty.	1	2	3	4	5
The more serious the product failure/product problem, the more likely I am to complain <i>to a retailer/seller/service provider</i> .	1	2	3	4	5

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

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Addendum B *Ethics letter*



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

06 October 2014
Dr S Donoghue
Department of Consumer Science
University of Pretoria
Pretoria
0002

Dear Dr Donoghue

EC140919-082 Consumers' attitudes toward consumerism, perceptions of specific product related variables and consumer complaint intention: A Lesotho perspective

Your application conforms to the requirements of the NAS Ethics Committee

Kind regards



Prof NH Casey
Chairman: Ethics Committee