

EMERGING CONSUMERS' APPRAISALS, EMOTIONS AND COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR CONCERNING PRODUCT PERFORMANCE FAILURE

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OPSOMMING

Die artikel handel oor die interaksie tussen opkomende kollektivistiese verbruikers se blaamattribusies, emosies en hanteringsstrategieë voortspruitend uit hulle beoordeling van produkmislukking (*product failure*). Die oorkoepelende doel is om opkomende verbruikers van Afrika se kognitiewe beoordelings, emosies, en klagte-gedrag met betrekking tot groot huishoudelike toerusting te verken en te beskryf. Data is in 2009 ingesamel deur 'n kruisseksionele opname onder vroueverbruikers woonagtig in Gaborone, Botswana, wat ontevrede was met die werksverrigting van hulle groot huishoudelike toestelle. Daar is van geriefsteekproefneming gebruik gemaak, wat 200 bruikbare vraelyste opgelewer het. Verbruikersklagte-gedragteorie (*consumer complaint behaviour theory*) en kognitiewe beoordelingsteorie (*cognitive appraisal theory*) dien as teoretiese agtergrond vir die studie. Die resultate van die studie toon dat vroueverbruikers intense emosies soos woede, skaamte, verbasing, hartseer en frustrasie ervaar wanneer die vervaardiger en kleinhandelaar vir produkmislukking blameer word. Die studie dui op die groot rol wat emosies speel in verbruikers se hanteringsstrategieë (klagte-gedrag). Daar bestaan verwantskappe tussen die intensiteit van die onderskeie emosies van woede, hartseer, skaamte en frustrasie en die probleemgerigte en emosiegerigte hanteringsstrategieë. Implikasies vir bemakingstrategieë en

klagte-hantering in opkomende ekonomieë is uitgelig.

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INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that an understanding of dissatisfied consumers' cognitions and emotions is necessary in order for researchers to shed some light on consumers' complaint behaviour (Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). This is especially relevant to emerging economies with culturally diverse populations, where consumers' interpretation of specific consumption outcomes, and their accompanying emotions and behaviours, may differ from those of consumers from more sophisticated consumer societies. In many multicultural societies, such as South Africa, consumer protection agencies and consumer scientists do not necessarily have a deepened understanding of consumers' cognitions, emotions and behaviour to facilitate consumer socialisation and consumer protection on all social levels. The new South African Consumer Protection Act, that came into effect in April 2011, acknowledges the diversity of the people of South Africa and that the interests of all consumers should be protected, by implication their consumer cognitions, emotions and behaviours (South African Consumer Protection Act 2008).

Most research on consumer complaint behaviour (CCB) has, however, a strong Western, and specifically a US or European orientation. This raises questions concerning the universality of the results and their applicability to developing countries, or countries from a non-Western origin (Laufer, 2002). Many studies have demonstrated cross-cultural differences in consumer behaviour, specifically with regard to complaint behaviour (Au *et al*, 2001; Hui & Au, 2001; Blodgett *et al*, 2006). Comparisons have, for example, been made between Western and Eastern consumers' complaint behaviours (Hui & Au, 2001; Poon *et al*, 2004). Recent research (Crié, 2003; Velazquez *et al*, 2006) revealed that there are many antecedents to complaint behaviour that act as mediating variables in

CCB, including consumers' appraisal of the unfortunate situation and the emotions that accompany these appraisals. Unfortunately very little previous research has concentrated on how emerging consumers from Africa appraise dissatisfactory marketplace situations, their emotions that arise in response to these appraisals, as well as how they cope with these negative events.

Botswana is an emerging African country with a strong collectivistic orientation (Isaac, 2010:84). Sophisticated consumer products which are commonly used in developed countries, have found their footing in most third-world, sub-Saharan countries with emerging economies, including Botswana. According to Sigwele (2007:3), the demand for manufactured goods (including major household appliances) is increasing in Botswana and many international appliance manufacturers and retailers now do business in Botswana. For the purpose of this study, major electrical household appliances would include kitchen and laundry appliances, namely refrigerators, freezers, ovens, stoves, dishwashers, microwave ovens, washing machines and tumble dryers. These appliances are generally used as time-saving devices, to reduce physical workloads and to increase efficiency (Sonnenberg *et al*, 2011). However, in addition to the physical benefits provided by these products, they are visually conspicuous commodities and have, in many cases, become social status symbols (Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999; Donoghue *et al*, 2008; Erasmus *et al*, 2011) that indicate improved socio-economic status and reflect newly acquired lifestyles (Mehlwana, 1999:9; Du Plessis, 2003:87-90). Unfortunately many consumers from developing countries have limited experience in the consumption of many of these modern, sophisticated appliances. They often have unrealistic expectations concerning product performance, resulting in high levels of dissatisfaction when performance failures occur (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). Consumers who

know what to expect of their products in terms of performance will generally be better able to interpret the causes for product failures, than consumers who are not exactly sure what to expect (Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). Due to the high price tags attached to these appliances and their perceived sophistication, it can safely be postulated that unsophisticated consumers, in many cases, form high (and even unrealistic) expectations with regard to product performance. This is reflected in the statistical complaint data by the Botswana Consumer Protection Unit, September 2008, which indicates that electrical equipment, including major household appliances, generated a higher incidence of formal complaints, compared to inexpensive and non-durable products. However, these statistics typically report on the kinds of defective products that cause dissatisfaction and unfortunately do not report on how consumers appraise appliance failures, what emotions they experience following their appraisals, or the specific coping strategies/behaviours they employ to deal with the stressful situation.

With the disconfirmation of expectations paradigm (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982:229-432; Bearden & Teel, 1983), Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of complaint behaviour and the cognitive appraisal theory developed by Lazarus and colleagues (Folkman *et al*, 1986; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994) as theoretical approach, the purpose of this research was to explore and describe the appraisals, emotions and complaint behaviour of the emerging consumers of Botswana concerning major household appliance performance failures. Results should benefit consumer scientists, consumer protection companies, redress offices and government officials who do not necessarily have an understanding of these consumers' appraisals, emotions and behaviours following unsatisfactory marketplace experiences.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Conceptualising consumer complaint behaviour

The traditional disconfirmation of expectations paradigm has been widely used in marketing and CCB literature to explain how consumers reach decisions concerning their satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Bearden & Teel, 1983). This paradigm proposes that consumers reach satisfaction decisions by comparing product or service performance with prior expectations about how the product or service would, or should, perform (Laufer, 2002). When performance perceptions do not meet expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Giese & Cote, 2000; Steward in Ndubisi & Ling, 2006; Tronvoll, 2007). One of the most widely acknowledged definitions of CCB is that of Singh (1988:94), who defines CCB as "a set of multiple (behavioural and non-behavioural) responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode". One of the most direct and meaningful ways in which consumers can express their dissatisfaction to manufacturers and retailers is through complaining.

Although dissatisfaction is a determinant for complaint behaviour, it is, however, widely accepted that dissatisfaction is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for complaint behaviour to occur, and that there are other determinant variables, including consumer-related variables, product-specific variables and redress environment variables (Halstead & Dröge, 1991; Crié, 2003; Velazquez *et al*, 2006; Donoghue & De Klerk, 2009). Consumer-related variables that have been proposed as antecedents to complaint behaviour include among other things: demographics (Ndubisi & Ling, 2006; Tronvoll, 2007), personality factors (Bodey & Grace,

2006), attitudes (Kim *et al*, 2003; Velázquez *et al*, 2006), personal values (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Liu & McClure, 2001), culture (Au *et al*, 2001), knowledge and experience as consumers (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995), causal attributions for product failure (Weiner, 2000; Laufer, 2002), and specifically with regard to this study, cognitive appraisal as the key element in the evaluation of consumer threat and harm (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998), and psychosocial factors, such as the emotions that the consumer experiences (Crié, 2003; Fernandes & Dos Santos, 2007). Product-specific variables related to complaint behaviour include: the nature or type of product (product category), the cost of the product (Kincade *et al*, 1998; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998), durability (Day & Landon, 1977:434; Kincade *et al*, 1998), the importance of the product to the consumer (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998), the dissatisfaction with the product (Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989), and the severity of the dissatisfaction or problems caused by the dissatisfaction (Goodwin & Spiggle, 1989; Donoghue, 2008:202). Factors in the redress environment that affect consumers' reactivity and complaining sensitivity include perceptions of the retailer's responsiveness to customer complaints (i.e. the retailer's willingness to provide a remedy for the dissatisfaction should a consumer complain) and the consumer's perceived trouble (inconvenience) involved in making a complaint (Maute & Forrester, 1993; Huppertz, 2003).

Under Day and Landon's (1977:432) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, three major options are available to consumers who are dissatisfied with their purchase: private action and/or public action, or no action. As such, consumers may engage in private actions (e.g. switching brands or retailers, or warning family and friends) and/or engage in public action such as seeking redress (i.e. a refund, an exchange or free repairs and replacement of defective parts) directly from the retailer or manufacturer, or contacting a third party (i.e. consumer

protection organisations, media and legal representatives). Obviously, combinations of private and public actions may occur. Alternatively, consumers may refrain from taking action by rationalising and forgetting about the product failure (Crié, 2003).

Stephens and Gwinner (1998) and Crié (2003) noted that CCB should not be seen as one immediate act, but rather as a process where the consumer has to appraise the specific situation in order to estimate how much influence the situation has on his/her well-being, after which a decision has to be made with regard to possible actions to be taken. CCB is therefore not only about the consumer's specific behaviour, but also involves the consumer's cognitions.

Cognitive appraisal theory in a CCB context

The cognitive appraisal theory developed by Lazarus and his colleagues has gained wide acceptance in the fields of psychology, sociology and consumer behaviour in understanding people's cognitions, emotions and behaviour when they are confronted with a stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:vi-viii; Folkman *et al*, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Nyer, 1997; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur *et al*, 1999; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004; Duhachek & Iacobucci, 2005; Watson & Spence, 2007). Cognitive appraisal is "a process through which the person evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to his/her well-being, and if so, in what ways" (Folkman *et al*, 1986; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). An encounter with the environment that exceeds or taxes an individual's resources and endangers his/her well-being may result in psychological stress. Cognitive appraisal consists of a two-part process: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. During primary appraisal the person determines whether the encounter is primarily harmful or threatening. Secondary appraisal

involves an evaluation of what, if anything, can be done to overcome or prevent harm or to improve the prospects for benefit. It is actually a complex evaluative process that takes into account which coping options are available, the likelihood that a given coping mechanism will accomplish what it is supposed to, and the likelihood that a particular strategy or set of strategies can be applied effectively. In addition, the appraisal of coping options includes an evaluation of the consequences of using a particular strategy. These appraisals converge to determine whether the person-environment transaction is stressful (Folkman *et al*, 1986; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:143-145; Fiske & Taylor, 2008:334-335).

Appraisal theorists further maintain that emotions arise in response to the appraisals that one makes of something of relevance to one's well-being. Lazarus and Lazarus (1994:215) noted that emotions and cognitions cannot be separated, and that, "if human emotions were not dependent on reasoning or thought, we could never make sense of anyone's emotions. If we know someone's emotional state, we should be able to reason backward to the conditions that must have been responsible – namely, goals, beliefs and appraisals...". It is important to note that it is not the specific event or circumstances that produce the emotion, but the unique appraisal by the person assessing the impact of the event on his/her personal well-being. Lazarus (1991) noted that emotions have implications for acting and goal attainment. He identified coping responses as important mechanisms in this regard. When a person experiences a negative emotion (anger, sadness, fear, etc.) after an event has been appraised as harmful for personal well-being, that person is in a state of disequilibrium and needs to return to a normal state by engaging in coping strategies.

Coping strategies, therefore, are the cognitive and behavioural attempts undertaken by the

individual to manage the demands of the stressful situation (Nyer, 1997; Mathur *et al*, 1999). Lazarus and Folkman (1984:151-153) identified two types of coping strategies, namely problem-focused coping (coping efforts that are directed at managing or altering the problem causing the stress) and emotion-focused coping (coping efforts that are directed at regulating the emotional response to the problem). Whereas researchers such as Lazarus and Folkman (1984:150-152) considered avoidance as a type of emotional coping, others argued that avoidance coping should be considered a separate coping strategy (Mathur *et al*, 1999). Avoidance coping implies that the person simply leaves the situation (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:159; Mick & Fournier, 1998; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Bagozzi *et al*, 2002:41-42). However, in order to engage in coping strategies, the individual needs to know who is to blame for the specific stressful event (i.e. who is responsible for the event: oneself, someone else or circumstances) (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Watson & Spence, 2007; Fiske & Taylor, 2008:335). Nyer (1997) called this *attribution*, referring to the person responsible for and having control over the event and outcome. Watson and Spence (2007:496) proposed a broad definition of agency that encompasses both the agent ("who or what had control over the stimulus event") and their perceived control over the event being appraised. Accordingly, blame can only be attributed to the agent if the agent is perceived as being responsible for, and being in control of, the event (Nyer, 1997).

Stephens and Gwinner (1998) suggest that a dissatisfying marketplace experience serves as the potentially stressful event that will be evaluated via the cognitive appraisal process. In a consumer behaviour context, specifically with regard to product performance failure, the specific emotions that result from cognitive appraisal vary according to the attribution of responsibility/accountability for the stressful situation. It is proposed that anger results from a

negative outcome (in this case product failure) attributed to external and controllable factors, whereas guilt and shame result from a negative outcome attributed to internal and controllable factors (Folkes, 1984; Nyer, 1997; Weiner, 2000).

In the context of the cognitive appraisal theory, consumers' complaint behaviour is considered to be coping behaviour (Nyer, 1997). With regard to product performance failure, specific coping behaviours associated with each of the three general coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance) have been identified (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur *et al*, 1999; Forrester & Maute, 2001; Donoghue, 2008:182). Empirical findings related to coping styles suggest that consumers may rely on more than one form of coping when managing stressful encounters (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). For example, consumers employ the problem-focused coping strategy when they deal squarely with the problem by taking direct action or by making plans to take action. The focus of such a coping strategy is external, aimed at the other party. In contrast to problem-focused coping, the emotion-focused coping strategy is directed inward. In this way, individuals attempt to regulate their mental response to the problem in order to feel better. Instead of doing something about the problem, they "keep quiet" (do not contact the offending party) and engage in any one of several self-deceptions such as denial or self-blame. If emotion-focused coping is successful, the unhappy situation still exists, but the way the individual thinks about it has changed. People who engage in avoidance do not deceive themselves by repositioning the event in a positive light or telling themselves that they are to blame; instead, they simply avoid or leave the situation (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Mathur *et al*, 1999; Forrester & Maute, 2001). For example, consumers typically do not take any complaint action concerning product failures when product guarantees had expired, and

when they believe that complaining is not worth their time and effort and that they would not achieve any resolution (Broadbridge & Marshall, 1995; Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Donoghue, 2008:33, 205).

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey was performed in 2009 amongst female consumers, older than 21 years, who resided in Gaborone, Botswana, and who had experienced dissatisfaction concerning the performance failure of a major household appliance item (i.e. kitchen and laundry appliances) within a prior four-year recall period. A non-probability, convenience sampling technique was employed, which generated 200 usable responses. Upon using a screening question, a self-administered questionnaire was administered to dissatisfied respondents only.

The questionnaire measured respondents' blame attributions and perceptions of controllability, emotions experienced and coping strategies employed following appraisals of appliance performance failures. Respondents were asked to recall an appliance performance failure and to indicate, from a list provided, the party whom they blamed most for the appliance's performance failure, and whether they believed that this party could have prevented/controlled this failure.

The six emotions measured in this study were anger, shame, guilt, surprise, sadness and frustration. Respondents were asked to indicate the intensity of each of the respective emotions that they experienced on 4-point unipolar scales (e.g. 1 = not angry at all; 4 = extremely angry).

Since specific coping behaviours associated with each of the three general coping strategies have been identified in a complaint behaviour context (Stephens & Gwinner, 1998; Wirtz &

Mattila, 2004; Donoghue, 2008:173-174), the respondents' behavioural and non-behavioural actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction were determined and categorised in terms of the different types of coping strategies. Behaviours associated with problem-focused coping included: contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, contacting the retailer/manufacturer for reasons other than seeking redress, contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer, contacting a consumer protection department, writing a letter to the media or a consumer complaint website, and contacting a legal representative. Behaviours associated with emotion-focused coping included telling friends, family and/or acquaintances about the stressful experience. Behaviours associated with avoidance coping included: taking no action, switching to a different brand name and not patronising the retailer where the product was purchased anymore (Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). To determine the specific coping strategies that respondents engaged in, their behavioural and non-behavioural complaint actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction were determined first and then categorised in terms of the different types of coping strategies. Respondents' complaint behaviour was measured by using Day and Landon's (1977) taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour: respondents had to consider a list of actual actions taken in response to their dissatisfaction, and indicate what actions, if any, were taken (multiple response questions). A nominal (yes/no) scale was used to classify the answer to each type of action taken. The response option for no action vs. action included: "Did you take any action?". The response options for private action included: "Did you tell your friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience?", "Did you decide to use another brand name?", "Did you stop supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased?". The response options for public action included: "Did you contact the retailer/manufacturer to

obtain redress (repairs/replacement/refund)?", "Did you contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress?", "Did you contact a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer?", "Did you contact a consumer protection organisation/department?", "Did you write a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website?" and "Did you contact a legal representative?".

Chi-square tests for equal proportions and Chi-square significance tests were performed (p -value significant at 5%).

RESULTS

Demographic information

The sample was divided into four age categories, i.e. young consumers between 21 and 30 years of age (39,8%), a group of 31-40 years of age (41,3%); a group of 41-50 years of age (16,3%), and a group of 50 years and older (2,6%). Four levels of education were distinguished: 5,1% and 26,3% of the respondents had obtained primary and secondary educational schooling respectively, 28,3% had obtained either a certificate or a diploma, and 41,4% had obtained either a Bachelor degree or a postgraduate degree. Various total monthly household income categories were distinguished: 19,9% of the respondents earned less than P2000, 21,3% earned P2001-P4000, 13,2% earned P4001-P6000, 13,7% earned P6001-P8000, 15,7% earned P8001-P10000, and 16,2% of the respondents earned more than P10000 (see Table 1). According to the latest survey, the mean monthly household income of the target group was: P5 659,90; the mean monthly household income for the Botswana population was P2 425; and the mean household incomes per household for cities/towns was P3 961

(Botswana Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), 2002/2003). (Approximate exchange rate: Pula (BWP) per US dollar: 7,16 (2009) (*The World Fact Book*, 2009).)

Attribution of blame

The results reveal that the majority of the respondents (70,4%) blamed manufacturers and

retailers for the appliances' performance failure, compared to their own (12,7%) or other people's (5,3%) or the appliance's (9,0%) wrongdoing, or other reasons (2,6%). A total of 66,5% of the respondents indicated that the party held responsible could have prevented the problem, 14,7% believed the contrary, and 18,8% were uncertain (see Table 2).

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Age in years	n	%	Education level	n	%	Total monthly household income	n	%
21-30	78	39,8	Primary	10	5,1	< P2000	39	19,9
31-40	81	41,3	Secondary	52	26,3	P2001-P4000	42	21,3
41-50	32	16,3	Certificate/diploma	56	28,3	P4001-P6000	26	13,2
> 50	5	2,6	Bachelor/postgraduate degree	80	40,3	P6001-P8000	27	13,7
						P8001-P10 000	31	15,7
						> P10 000	32	16,2
Total	196	100	Total	198	100	Total	197	100

n = 200

Missing values: age in years = 4, education level = 2, total monthly household income = 3

TABLE 2: BLAME ATTRIBUTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF CONTROLLABILITY CONCERNING APPLIANCE FAILURES

Who did you blame for the appliance failure?	Frequency	%
The manufacturer	92	46,6
The retailer	47	23,8
Other people	10	5,3
Myself	25	12,7
The appliance item	18	9,0
Other parties	5	2,6
Total	197	100

n = 200, missing values = 3

Do you believe that the party to blame for the appliance failure could have prevented it?	Frequency	%
Yes	131	66,5
No	29	14,7
Uncertain	37	18,8
Total	197	100

n = 200, missing values = 3

TABLE 3: INTENSITY OF EMOTION EXPERIENCED FOLLOWING APPLIANCE FAILURES

Type of emotion	Intensity of emotion	Frequency	%	Total percentage	p-value Chi ² -test for equal proportions
Anger	Not angry at all	14	7,0	7,0	< 0,0001*
	Reasonably angry	76	38,0	38,0	
	Very angry	72	36,0	55,0	
	Extremely angry	38	19,0		
	Total	200	100	100	
Shame	Not ashamed at all	68	34,5	34,5	0,0586
	Reasonably ashamed	51	25,9	25,9	
	Very ashamed	51	25,9	39,6	
	Extremely ashamed	27	13,7		
	Total	197	100	100	
Guilt	Not guilty at all	115	58,1	58,1	< 0,0001*
	Reasonably guilty	36	18,2	18,2	
	Very guilty	34	17,1	23,7	
	Extremely guilty	13	6,6		
	Total	198	100	100	
Surprise	Not surprised at all	15	7,6	7,6	< 0,0001*
	Reasonably surprised	41	20,8	20,8	
	Very surprised	102	51,8	71,6	
	Extremely surprised	39	19,8		
	Total	197	100	100	
Sadness	Not sad at all	16	8,1	8,1	< 0,0001*
	Reasonably sad	60	30,3	30,3	
	Very sad	75	37,9	61,6	
	Extremely sad	47	23,7		
	Total	198	100	100	
Frustration	Not frustrated at all	10	5,1	5,1	< 0,0001*
	Reasonably frustrated	52	26,3	26,3	
	Very frustrated	87	43,9	68,6	
	Extremely frustrated	49	24,7		
	Total	198	100	100	

n = 200

Missing values: shame = 3, guilt = 2, surprise = 3, sadness = 2, frustration = 2

* p-value: significant at p < 0,05

Intensity of emotions

The results further revealed that the intensity of the emotions experienced, varied. Significantly more respondents (55,0%) were very to extremely angry, very to extremely surprised (71,7%), very to extremely sad (61,6%), and very to extremely frustrated (68,6%) concerning appliance failures, compared to those who experienced reasonable levels of emotion or none of the emotions concerned (all p-values < 0,0001). In addition, significantly more respondents did not feel guilty at all (58,1%), compared to those who felt reasonably guilty (18,2%) or very to extremely guilty (23,7%) (p-

value < 0,0001) (Table 3). Taking into account the fact that most of the respondents blamed the manufacturer and retailer for the product failure and felt that *they* could have prevented the problem, one could have predicted the high levels of surprise, frustration and sadness that most of the respondents experienced. One would, however, also have expected higher levels of anger. In addition, although only 12,7% of the respondents blamed themselves for the product failure, almost 40,0% felt very to extremely ashamed about the product failure, and almost a quarter experienced emotions of guilt.

TABLE 4: COPING STRATEGIES IN TERMS OF COMPLAINT ACTIONS

Coping strategies & CCB	Number of responses	% n1 = 607	Total responses	% n1 = 607	p-value Chi ² -test for equal proportions
Emotion-focused coping					< 0,0001*
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	153	25,2	153	25,2	
Avoidance coping					
Decided to use another brand name	93	15,3	211	33,4	
Stopped supporting the retailer where the appliance was purchased	71	11,7			
Took no action (n = 39)	39	6,4			
Problem-focused coping					
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs/a replacement/a refund)	113	18,6	251	41,4	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	52	8,6			
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer	62	10,2			
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	11	1,8			
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	8	1,3			
Contacted a legal representative	5	0,9			
Total	607	100	607	100	

n = 157 (missing values = 4), except for "took no action", n = 39

n1 = total number of responses

Chi²-test calculated on the total responses across the coping strategies

* p-value: significant at p < 0,05

Coping strategies

With regard to the coping strategies, it was clear that proportionately more respondents engaged in problem-focused coping (41,4%), compared to those who engaged in emotion-focused coping (25,2%) or avoidance coping (33,4%) (p-value < 0,0001) (see Table 4). Respondents who engaged in problem-focused coping contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (18,6%), contacted the retailer/manufacturer for reasons other than seeking redress (8,6%), contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer (10,2%), or contacted a third party (3,9%). Respondents who engaged in emotion-focused coping told their friends, family and/or

acquaintances about the bad experience (25,2%), and those who engaged in avoidance coping switched brands (15,3%), stopped patronising the retailer (11,7%) or took no action (6,4%). It should, however, be noted that, although the largest proportion of respondents engaged in problem-focused coping, only 27,2% (18,6% plus 8,6%) actually contacted the retailer or manufacturer to obtain redress or for other reasons than seeking redress.

In addition, more respondents engaged in problem-focused coping (44,8%) (by seeking redress (19,4%), contacting the retailer/manufacturer for other reasons than seeking redress (9,4%), contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer

TABLE 5: COPING STRATEGIES WHERE RETAILERS/MANUFACTURERS WERE PERCEIVED AS BEING IN CONTROL OF THE APPLIANCE FAILURE

Coping strategies & CCB	Number of Responses	% n1 = 350	Total response	% n1 = 350	p-value Chi ² -test for equal proportions
Emotion-focused coping					< 0,0001*
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	86	24,6	86	24,6	
Avoidance coping					
Decided to use another brand name	51	14,6	107	30,6	
Stopped supporting the retailer where appliance was purchased	43	12,3			
Took no action (n = 13)	13	3,7			
Problem-focused coping					
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (repairs, replacement, refund)	68	19,4	157	44,8	
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress	33	9,4			
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer	38	10,9			
Contacted a consumer protection organisation	9	2,6			
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	6	1,7			
Contacted a legal representative	3	0,8			
Total	350	100	350	100	

n = 88, except for "took no action", n = 13

n1 = total number of responses

Chi²-test calculated on the total responses across the coping strategies

* p-value: significant at p < 0,05

(10,9%), and contacting third parties (5,1%)), than in avoidance coping (30,6%) or emotion-focused coping (24,6%), when they attributed blame to the retailer/manufacturer and also believed that the problem was controllable (p -value < 0.0001) (see Table 5). It should, however, be noted that only 28,8% (19,4% plus 9,4%) of those who engaged in problem-focused coping, actually contacted the retailer/manufacturer. No significant differences existed between the various coping strategies when respondents believed that the retailer/manufacturer could not control the problem or when they were uncertain concerning the level of control that could be exercised. Irrespective of the perceived level of controllability, no significant difference existed where blame was attributed to the other parties (other people, the self or the appliance, or where respondents did not know whom to blame) and the different coping strategies.

Relationship between intensity of emotions and complaint actions

Significant relationships existed between the intensity of the emotions experienced and the different complaint actions taken (refer to Tables 6-8). Concerning anger (Table 6), proportionately more respondents who were very to extremely angry or reasonably angry, told their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience and contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, compared to those who experienced no anger at all. Proportionately more respondents who were not angry at all (85,7%) contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer, compared to those who were reasonably angry (45,0%) or very to extremely angry (33,0%). In addition, proportionately more respondents who were not angry at all (46,1%) did not take any complaint action, compared to those who were reasonably angry (20,0%) and those who were very to extremely angry (16,7%). Significant relationships existed

between the level of anger and telling friends and family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p -value = 0,0052), contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p -value = 0,0159), contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p -value = 0,0125), and taking no action (p -value = 0,0422).

With regard to shame (Table 6), all of the respondents who were very to extremely ashamed (100%) and reasonably ashamed (100%) told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to respondents who were not ashamed at all (92,6%). In addition, proportionately more respondents who were not ashamed at all (83,3%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress, compared to those who were very to extremely ashamed (56,5%) or reasonably ashamed (59,5%). Significant relationships existed between the level of shame and telling friends and family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p -value = 0,0165), and not contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress (p -value = 0,0052).

Concerning guilt and complaint action (Table 7), no statistically significant relationships were found between the various levels of guilt experienced and the different types of complaint action. This might be due to the fact that most respondents attributed blame for the product failure to the retailer/manufacturer and therefore did not feel guilty. With regard to surprise (Table 7), proportionately more respondents who were reasonably surprised (64,3%) contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer, compared to respondents who were very to extremely surprised (33,9%) and those who were not surprised at all (36,4%). A significant relationship existed between the levels of surprise and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/

TABLE 6: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION

Coping methods/behaviours in terms of types of complaint action	Type and intensity of emotion experienced								p-value
	Level of anger experienced (no of responses/%)				Level of shame experienced (no of responses/%)				
	Not angry at all	Reasonably angry	Very to extremely angry	p-value	Not ashamed at all	Reasonably ashamed	Very to extremely ashamed	p-value	
Emotion-focused coping									
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	5/71,4	60/100	88/97,8	50/92,6	37/100	64/100	0,0052*2	0,0165*2
	No	2/28,6	0/0	2/2,2	4/7,4	0/0	0/0		
Avoidance coping									
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	4/57,1	31/51,7	58/64,4	30/55,6	21/56,8	42/65,6	0,2889 ²	0,4842 ¹
	No	3/42,9	29/48,3	32/35,6	24/44,4	16/43,2	22/34,4		
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	3/42,9	21/35,0	47/52,2	20/37,0	15/40,5	36/56,3	0,1113 ²	0,0864 ¹
	No	4/57,1	39/65,0	43/47,8	34/63,0	22/59,5	28/43,8		
Took no action (n = 200)	Yes	6/46,1	15/20,0	18/16,7	11/16,9	13/26,0	14/17,9	0,0422* ¹	0,4225 ¹
	No	7/53,9	60/80,0	90/83,3	54/83,1	37/74,0	64/82,1		
Problem-focused coping									
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	2/28,6	41/69,5	70/77,8	37/69,8	28/75,7	47/73,4	0,0159* ¹	0,8164 ¹
	No	5/71,4	18/30,5	20/22,2	16/30,2	9/24,3	17/26,6		
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	0/0	20/33,3	32/36,0	9/16,7	15/40,5	27/43,6	0,2485 ²	0,0052* ¹
	No	6/100	40/66,7	57/64,0	45/83,3	22/59,5	35/56,5		
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer	Yes	6/85,7	27/45,0	29/33,0	21/38,9	18/48,6	22/35,5	0,0125* ²	0,4256 ¹
	No	1/14,3	33/55,0	59/67,1	33/61,1	19/51,4	40/64,5		
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	0/0	5/8,3	6/6,7	2/3,8	4/10,8	5/7,9	0,8446 ²	0,4107 ²
	No	6/100	55/91,7	83/93,3	51/96,2	33/89,2	58/92,1		
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	0/0	2/3,3	6/6,7	2/3,7	1/2,7	5/7,9	0,6398 ²	0,4688 ²
	No	7/100	58/96,7	83/93,3	52/96,3	36/97,3	58/92,1		
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	0/0	3/5,0	2/2,2	0/0	2/5,4	3/4,8	0,5185 ²	0,2481 ²
	No	7/100	57/95,0	87/97,8	54/100	35/94,6	60/95,2		

n = 157, except for "took no action", n = 200

¹ Chi²-test² Fisher's exact testChi²-test and Fisher's exact test calculated on the total responses across the coping methods/behaviours and intensity of emotion experienced

* p-value: significant at p < 0,05

TABLE 7: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION

Coping methods/behaviours in terms of types of complaint action	Type and intensity of emotion experienced											
	Level of anger experienced (no of responses/%)					p-value	Level of shame experienced (no of responses/%)					p-value
	Not angry at all	Reasonably angry	Very to extremely angry	Not ashamed at all	Reasonably ashamed		Very to extremely ashamed					
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Emotion-focused coping												
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	87/95,6	25/100	40/100	0,3603 ²	10/90,1	28/100	114/97,4	0,3809 ²			
	No	4/4,4	0/0	0/0		1/9,1	0/0	3/2,6				
Avoidance coping												
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	53/58,2	11/44,0	29/72,5	0,0685 ¹	6/54,6	16/57,1	70/59,8	0,9216 ¹			
	No	38/41,8	14/56,0	11/27,5		5/45,4	12/42,9	47/40,2				
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	37/40,7	10/40,0	24/60,0	0,1025 ¹	2/18,2	10/35,7	58/49,6	0,0757 ¹			
	No	54/59,3	15/60,0	16/40,0		9/81,8	18/64,3	59/50,4				
Took no action (n = 200)	Yes	21/18,8	10/28,6	7/14,9	0,2864 ¹	3/21,4	12/30,0	23/16,4	0,1596 ¹			
	No	91/81,3	25/71,4	40/85,1		11/78,6	28/70,0	117/83,6				
Problem-focused coping												
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	66/73,3	18/72,0	29/72,5	0,9890 ¹	6/54,6	19/67,9	88/75,9	0,2526 ¹			
	No	24/26,7	7/28,0	11/27,5		5/45,4	9/32,1	28/24,1				
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	28/31,1	8/33,3	16/40,0	0,6124 ¹	1/9,1	7/25,0	44/38,3	0,0052 ^{*1}			
	No	62/68,9	16/66,7	24/60,0		10/90,9	21/75,0	71/61,7				
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer	Yes	37/41,1	10/41,7	14/35,0	0,7856 ¹	4/36,4	18/64,3	39/33,9	0,0127 ^{*1}			
	No	53/58,9	14/58,3	26/65,0		7/63,6	10/35,7	76/66,1				
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	8/9,0	2/8,0	1/2,5	0,4590 ²	1/10,0	2/7,1	8/6,9	0,8565 ²			
	No	81/91,0	23/92,0	39/97,5		9/90,0	26/92,9	108/93,1				
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	7/7,8	0/0	1/2,5	0,3450 ²	0/0	2/7,1	6/5,2	0,8101 ²			
	No	83/92,2	25/100	39/97,5		11/100	26/92,9	110/94,8				
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	4/4,4	1/4,0	0/0	0,4425 ²	1/9,1	2/7,1	2/1,7	0,1217 ²			
	No	86/95,6	24/96,0	40/100		10/90,9	26/92,9	114/98,3				

n = 157, except for "took no action", n = 200

¹ Chi²-test² Fisher's exact testChi²-test and Fisher's exact test calculated on the total responses across the coping methods/behaviours and intensity of emotion experienced

* p-value: significant at p < 0,05

TABLE 8: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INTENSITY OF EMOTIONS EXPERIENCED AND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPLAINT ACTION

Coping methods/behaviours in terms of types of complaint action	Type and intensity of emotion experienced											
	Level of anger experienced (no of responses/%)					p-value	Level of shame experienced (no of responses/%)					p-value
	Not angry at all	Reasonably angry	Very to extremely angry	Not ashamed at all	Reasonably ashamed		Very to extremely ashamed					
Emotion-focused coping												
Told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience	Yes	10/83,3	45/97,8	97/99,0	0,0313 ²	6/75,0	35/100	111/98,2	0,0176 ²			
	No	2/16,7	1/2,2	1/1,0		2/25,0	0/0	2/1,8				
Avoidance coping												
Decided to use another brand name	Yes	6/50,0	28/60,9	58/59,2	0,7908 ¹	4/50,0	20/57,1	68/60,2	0,8376 ²			
	No	6/50,0	18/39,1	40/40,8		4/50,0	15/42,9	45/39,8				
Stopped supporting the retailer where the product was purchased	Yes	5/41,7	13/28,3	52/53,1	0,0199 ¹	3/37,5	12/34,3	55/48,7	0,3121 ²			
	No	7/58,3	33/71,7	46/46,9		5/62,5	23/65,7	58/51,3				
Took no action (n = 200)	Yes	4/25,0	10/17,9	24/19,7	0,8169 ¹	2/20,0	13/27,1	23/16,9	0,31171			
	No	12/75,0	46/82,1	98/80,3		8/80,0	35/72,9	113/83,1				
Problem-focused coping												
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress	Yes	7/58,3	30/65,2	76/78,3	0,1273 ¹	3/37,5	22/62,9	88/78,6	0,0130 ¹			
	No	5/41,7	16/34,8	21/21,7		5/62,5	13/37,1	24/21,4				
Contacted the retailer/manufacturer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress	Yes	2/16,7	14/30,4	36/37,5	0,3019 ¹	1/12,5	6/17,1	45/40,5	0,0164 ¹			
	No	10/83,3	32/69,6	60/62,5		7/87,5	29/82,9	66/59,5				
Contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer	Yes	8/66,7	24/52,2	29/30,2	0,0059 ¹	5/62,5	16/45,7	40/36,0	0,2183 ²			
	No	4/33,3	22/47,8	67/69,8		3/37,5	19/54,3	71/64,0				
Contacted a consumer protection organisation/department	Yes	1/9,1	2/4,4	8/8,3	0,5912 ²	1/14,3	1/2,9	9/8,0	0,3079 ²			
	No	10/90,9	44/95,6	89/91,7		6/85,7	34/97,1	103/92,0				
Wrote a letter to the press (newspaper, magazine etc.) or to a consumer complaint website	Yes	1/8,3	1/2,2	6/6,2	0,3327 ²	0/0	1/2,9	7/6,3	0,7930 ²			
	No	11/91,7	45/97,8	91/93,8		8/100	34/97,1	105/93,7				
Contacted a legal representative	Yes	0/0	2/4,4	3/3,1	0,7718 ²	1/12,5	1/2,9	3/2,7	0,3026 ²			
	No	12/100	44/95,6	94/96,9		7/87,5	34/97,1	109/97,3				

n = 157, except for "took no action", n = 200

¹ Chi²-test² Fisher's exact testChi²-test and Fisher's exact test calculated on the total responses across the coping methods/behaviours and intensity of emotion experienced

* p-value: significant at p < 0,05

manufacturer (p-value = 0,0127).

Concerning sadness (Table 8), more respondents who felt very to extremely sad (99%) or reasonably sad (97,8%), told friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to respondents who were not sad at all (83,3%). Proportionately more respondents who were not sad at all (58,3%) or were reasonably sad (71,7%), continued supporting the retailer where the product was purchased, compared to those who were very to extremely sad (46,9%). In addition, proportionately more respondents who were not sad at all (66,7%) or were reasonably sad (52,2%), contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer, compared to those who were very to extremely sad (30,2%). Significant relationships existed between the level of sadness and telling friends and family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0,0313), supporting the retailer where the product was purchased (p-value = 0,0199), and contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer or manufacturer (p-value = 0,0059).

With regard to frustration (Table 8), more respondents who experienced reasonable frustration (100%) and felt very to extremely frustrated (98,2%) decided to tell their friends, family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience, compared to the respondents who were not frustrated at all (75%). Proportionately more respondents who felt very to extremely frustrated (78,6%) or experienced reasonable frustration (62,9%) contacted the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress, compared to a smaller proportion of respondents (37,5%) who were not frustrated at all. Proportionately more respondents who were not frustrated at all (87,5%) or felt reasonably frustrated (82,9%) did not contact the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress, compared to respondents who felt very to extremely frustrated (59,5%). Significant relationships existed be-

tween the level of frustration and telling friends and family and/or acquaintances about the bad experience (p-value = 0,0176), contacting the retailer/manufacturer to obtain redress (p-value = 0,0130), and not contacting the retailer/manufacturer to complain for reasons other than seeking redress (p-value = 0,0164).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The consumers in this study mostly attributed blame for the product's failure to retailers and manufacturers and were mostly very to extremely angry, frustrated, sad and surprised, did not feel guilty at all and experienced no or low levels of shame. The strongest emotions that the consumers in this study experienced were surprise, sadness and frustration, while lower levels of guilt and shame were experienced – most probably because most of them blamed the retailers and manufacturers for the product problem and not themselves. One would therefore expect that more of them would experience high levels of anger. However, only 55% indicated that they felt very to extremely angry. Previous studies have found that, although consumers from African origin experience the basic emotion of anger, following a negative service encounter, they particularly experienced sadness for being let down or not being valued (Furrer et al, 2000; Smith, 2006). Consumers in this study experienced higher levels of sadness, frustration and surprise than of anger.

Irrespective of the party blamed, only about a quarter of the respondents contacted the retailer or manufacturer directly for seeking redress or for other reasons than seeking redress, leaving the retailer and manufacturer in the dark and in no position to address the problem or the consumer's emotions. Furthermore, in almost two-thirds of the cases, consumers engaged in avoidance and emotion-focused coping behaviours by taking no action, switching brands, not

patronising the retailer anymore, and telling friends about the problem – all actions that are detrimental to the retailer or manufacturer's business. A similar pattern emerged when blame attributed to the retailer and manufacturer was related to the various coping strategies.

The results of this study point to the strong power of emotions in consumers' choice of complaint behaviours. Significant relationships existed between 'very to extreme' levels of anger, sadness, shame and frustration on the one hand, and telling friends and family about the bad experience on the other. When blame is attributed to retailers, consumers experience anger and they may consequently desire to do the retailers harm by engaging in negative word-of-mouth (Folkes, 1984; Laufer, 2002; Laufer & Gillespie, 2004). Anger is in many cases the result of a damaged ego, and one way to cope with it is to retaliate by warning others about the problem, in this case the retailer or brand. Telling others about the product's failure will not solve the problem, but could lower the intensity of the consumer's emotions. In some situations it might also be useful to cope with shame by acknowledging and discussing it with other people – in this case family and friends (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:162).

Significant relationships also existed between 'very to extreme' levels of anger and of frustration and contacting the retailer or manufacturer to obtain redress. When a product failure is externally attributed, consumers feel that they deserve a refund and apology more than when it is internally attributed, and they may therefore be more inclined to complain to the retailer (Folkes, 1984; Laufer, 2002; Laufer & Gillespie, 2004). It therefore makes sense to deal squarely with the problem by contacting the retailer directly if one experiences high levels of these emotions. Unfortunately only a very small proportion of the respondents chose this type of problem-focused coping behaviour. Hui and Au (2001) and Swaidan *et al* (2003) point out that

collectivists, like many African people, are well-known for their reluctance to get into conflict with other people – in this case contacting the retailer or manufacturer for redress. Frijda (1986:176) noted that people in many cases cope with shame by withdrawing from the situation – in this case by avoiding the retailer or the brand. It is therefore not strange that the majority of the respondents who experienced reasonable to extreme levels of shame did not contact the retailer to complain for other reasons than seeking redress. In addition, more respondents who were not angry at all contacted a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer/manufacturer, compared to those who were reasonably angry or very to extremely angry, displaying less confrontational, problem-focused coping action. The reason for this might be that they considered the product performance failure to be less severe.

Sadness is a very personal emotion that centres around a loss or expectations that did not realise and where the person does not attribute the blame towards the self, but sees the problem as stable and uncontrollable (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994:77-78). In this study, more respondents who were reasonably sad or not sad at all were prepared to continue supporting the retailers, compared to those who were very to extremely sad. In addition, more respondents who were reasonably sad dealt with it by contacting a repair service other than that supplied by the retailer, displaying less confrontational problem-focused coping behaviour.

Negative emotions that arise in response to consumers' appraisals of appliance failures serve to motivate specific consumer complaint behaviours to deal with the stressful situation. Consumers rely on more than one form of coping when managing product failures. As such, consumers who engage in problem-focused coping deal with the problem by complaining directly to manufacturers and retailers and/or to third parties. These consum-

ers consider themselves to have strong coping potential and may therefore assert their rights as consumers; they believe that complaining is worth the trouble. Unfortunately, in many cases consumers choose to rely on emotion-focused or avoidance coping strategies such as telling others about the problem or boycotting the retailer or brand.

Consumer protection offices and officials who are responsible for protecting consumers should keep in mind that managing complaints is not only about repaying the customer, but also about managing the whole process, including addressing unhappy consumers' high levels of, in many cases, negative emotions. Sirgy and Lee (2006) noted that a high level of complaint behaviour represents a lower level of consumer well-being, where consumer well-being is defined as "... the varied experiences that consumers have with the marketplace" (Sirgy & Lee, 2006:29). This includes not only the purchasing of goods and services, but also the preparation of the goods for family use, the maintenance of the goods and the disposal of the goods. Consumers and cultures, however, differ with regard to how they appraise certain events and also with regard to the emotions that they experience and their ways to cope with a negative market experience. Specifically collectivistic consumers, who feel more negative toward complaining, may also experience the process of complaining per se, as more stressful. In cases where they then do complain, but are unable to get redress, they will experience even higher levels of frustration and shame. One major difference between individualists and collectivists is that collectivists connect to others based on who one is, while individualists pay more attention to what one does or has done. 'Face' (defined by Goffman (1955:213) as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself") is generally more important to collectivists than to individualists, leading to the tendency amongst collectivists not to complain. Government officials and consumer

protection agencies should implement strategies that would encourage collectivistic consumers to complain in such a way that these consumers still feel that they have prestige and social status, or strategies that would be 'face-giving' (Au *et al*, 2001; Hui & Au, 2001).

It is further an undeniable fact that in African countries, the development of consumerism (protection of consumer rights) is still far behind that of Western countries. In many cases consumers are not aware of their rights (e.g. many are not aware that it is possible to seek compensation for financial or physical damages due to product failure). Retailers' complaint policies and procedures should be available to consumers so as to inform the customer about their attitude towards complaining as well as their ability to solve a specific problem.

This study has some limitations and consequent opportunities for future research. The study focused only on female consumers' appraisals of performance failure of major household appliances, their resultant emotional responses and consequent complaint behaviour. Future studies could compare both males and females to capture any differences or similarities in the appraisal patterns, emotional responses and coping behaviours/methods embarked on. This might have implications for the effective handling of consumers' complaints and the emotions driving their complaints. This study also did not investigate consumers' reasons for engaging in a particular complaint action. Future studies could therefore emphasise consumers' secondary appraisals in terms of their reasons for engaging in a specific complaint action. That could shed some light on the interplay between cognitions and emotions that facilitates specific behavioural responses to cope with stress caused by product failure and negative consumption experiences.

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