

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI[®]

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

77

AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF VOICE COMPLAINT OUTCOMES
AND
POST-RESOLUTION REPURCHASE INTENTIONS

by

Swee Lim Chia

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Business
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1999

UMI Number: 9946151

**Copyright 1999 by
Chia, Swee Lim**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 9946151
Copyright 1999, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Copyright 1999 ©

SWEE L. CHIA

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Business in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Sept 21, 1999 Dwight Rader
Date Chair of Examining Committee

September 23, 1999 [Signature]
Date Executive Officer

Dr. Steven P. Schnaars

Dr. Myung-Soo Lee

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF VOICE COMPLAINT OUTCOMES
AND
POST-RESOLUTION REPURCHASE INTENTIONS

by

Swee Lim Chia

Adviser: David J. Rachman, Ph.D.
Zicklin School of Business,
Baruch College
The City University of New York

This research examined a model of voice complaint outcomes and the relationship to consumer repurchase intentions. This study is based on research in the areas of consumer complaint management, customer loyalty and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Past research has indicated that satisfaction is one of the predictors of customer loyalty and this, in turn, is a correlate of profitability.

While early research efforts have focused on the area of consumer complaint behavior, more recent attention has turned to consumer complaint management. The studies in this area have pointed up the linkages between satisfaction with the consumer complaint resolution outcomes with repurchase intentions and ultimately corporate profitability.

This study undertook to confirm several of the key antecedent variables in linkages identified in previous findings and to empirically test the impact of store handling of consumer complaints on not only store repurchase intention but more specifically brand repurchase intention.

A major contribution of this research is that it examines, for the first time, the specific impact of store customer handling performance on repurchase intention towards both the brand and the store. This finding is significant because it addresses a gap in the literature. This finding also gives manufacturers, who spend a great deal of money creating and maintaining a national brand image, a better understanding of how retailers are independently affecting their brand's image by the manner in which they handle customer complaints at the frontline.

A second contribution of this research is that it empirically tested a panel of antecedent variables of the relationship between store customer complaint handling performance and the customer's satisfaction.

Third, the sample studied here was drawn from actual customers who had experienced a product dissatisfaction adding to the generality of the findings of this research.

Two hundred and ten telephone interviews were conducted from a list of customers with complaints, provided by a major northeastern consumer electronics retail chain,

yielding 61 completed surveys.

Four out of the five hypotheses in the study were supported suggesting that resolution satisfaction is positively related to store repurchase intention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On every long journey, there will be moments of great disappointment and frustration, as well as great moments of joy and triumph. Some of these moments will challenge you to re-think the wisdom of ever starting the journey, and the others will make you press on because certain special people will not let you lose faith in yourself. I have had my share of both, and I would like to take this opportunity here to thank all those who have supported me in this endeavor and in making the completion of this journey a reality.

First of all, I wish to thank a very special person in my wife, May. You have always been my dearest friend and greatest supporter in more ways than one. You never questioned my sanity for choosing this journey, and you never asked from me more than I could give. Your unconditional love and support throughout this experience is more than I deserve. This is at long last finished. And I wish to dedicate this dissertation to you because I believe this is as much your accomplishment as it is mine.

I also wish to thank my dissertation committee, who has given generously of their time, advice, and support. Dr. Steve P. Schnaars, Dr. Myung-Soo Lee and Dr. Edward Wolf

were instrumental in helping me work through the various conceptual and technical steps in completing this manuscript. Their generosity and patience in working with me will always be appreciated.

In particular, I'm very grateful to have a mentor and friend in Dr. David J. Rachman, whose humor and wisdom is unparalleled. Your passion and enthusiasm for life which transcends academic theories and debates is a quality I'd always treasure. Thank you also for the many invaluable insights and counsel shared over too many eclectic meals to recall. I count myself truly fortunate to have known you and your family, and hope that someday I would have the same impact on a student that you have had on me.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Gloria P. Thomas, Executive Officer of the Ph.D. Program at Baruch College, and Ms. Maria Jacobsen and Mr. Douglas Ewing, both from the CUNY Graduate School and University Center, for all their invaluable assistance.

To my many friends at Baruch College, I would like to thank you for your support and friendship. Thoughts of the indomitable Jordan Anger, the always cheerful Ada Perez, the selfless Mary Seto, the unassuming David Wilson, and the generous Dr. Pasquale DiPillo will always warm my heart and cheer my spirits.

I'd also like to thank my friends and colleagues in the

doctoral program, especially Dr. Tami Shultz, Dr. Cesar M. Maloles III and Dr. William D. Reisel. I will always cherish the experiences we shared in the trenches: the laughter, the disappointments, the frustration, and the triumphs. I can always count on your understanding, your support, your help, and your friendship. When things are at its darkest, I can always find solace in that each of you have been there and that "this too shall pass." But more than anything else, you have made this happen by always reminding me that I can do it. That belief and confidence will always be cherished.

There are still others who have contributed to my first steps toward this accomplishment, namely: Dr. Maurice Wogelernter (or "Mr. W" as he is known to his students), Dr. Dorothy G. Dologite and Dr. Robert J. Mockler. In their own special ways, they were one of the first people to inspire me to become interested in being a teacher and a researcher.

I'd also like to thank Judy and Carl Hirsch; Ling and Tim Chia; Jamie and David Hsieh, and Natalia Reisel for their special friendship over the years.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the Chia and the Wong families, for their love and support. In particular, I'd like to thank my brothers and their families who are constant reminders of the importance of family and hard work. I will also treasure my mom and my dad, who in

their unassuming ways always taught me the important things in life.

These are the special people who have, in large and small measure, helped me along this road to reach this milestone. I thank you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	XI
INTRODUCTION	1
GOALS OF THE RESEARCH	1
VALUE OF THE RESEARCH	1
IMPORTANCE OF RETAILING	2
IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	4
IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER RETENTION	8
CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH	11
THE RESEARCH OUTLINE	12
CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW	13
OVERVIEW	15
LEVELS OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOR	24
CORRELATES OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOR	25
CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOR ALTERNATIVES	31
MODELS OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOR	38
CONSUMER COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT	39
SUMMARY	48
CHAPTER 2. A MODEL OF VOICE COMPLAINT OUTCOMES AND REPURCHASE INTENTION	50
PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL	52
2.1 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	55
<i>Speed Perception</i>	55
<i>Competence Perception</i>	55
<i>Fairness Perception</i>	56
2.2 DEPENDENT VARIABLES	56
<i>Resolution Outcome</i>	57
<i>Brand Repurchase Intention</i>	57
<i>Store Repurchase Intention</i>	57
CHAPTER 3. METHODS	59
3.1 SAMPLE	59
3.2 MEASUREMENT	69
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	69
<i>Speed Perception</i>	69
<i>Competence Perception</i>	70
<i>Fairness Perception</i>	70
DEPENDENT VARIABLES	71
<i>Resolution Outcome</i>	71
<i>Brand Repurchase Intention</i>	71
<i>Store Repurchase Intention</i>	72
CONTROL VARIABLES	73

Age.....	73
Cost.....	73
Education.....	73
Income.....	73
3.3 PROCEDURE AND ANALYSES.....	74
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS.....	77
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES.....	82
<i>Speed Perception</i>	82
<i>Competence Perception</i>	82
<i>Fairness Perception</i>	83
DEPENDENT VARIABLES.....	83
<i>Brand Repurchase Intention</i>	83
<i>Store Repurchase Intention</i>	84
SUMMARY OF RESULTS.....	84
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION.....	85
SUMMARY.....	85
FINDINGS.....	85
THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	90
MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS.....	92
LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH.....	94
DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	96
APPENDIX.....	98
REFERENCES.....	101

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
TABLE 1: AGE OF SUBJECTS	60
TABLE 2: COST OF PURCHASE.....	61
TABLE 3: EDUCATION OF SUBJECTS	62
TABLE 4: INCOME OF SUBJECTS	63
TABLE 5: RESPONSE RATE	68
TABLE 6: CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS	78
TABLE 7: DETERMINANTS OF RESOLUTION OUTCOME	79
TABLE 8: DETERMINANTS OF POST-RESOLUTION BRAND BEHAVIOR	80
TABLE 9: DETERMINANTS OF POST-RESOLUTION STORE BEHAVIOR.....	81

LIST OF EXHIBITS

	<u>Page</u>
EXHIBIT 1: WHY LOYAL CUSTOMERS ARE MORE PROFITABLE.....	6
EXHIBIT 2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPLAINING AND REPURCHASE DECISION.....	10
EXHIBIT 3: PROCESSES OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION	14
EXHIBIT 4: EXAMPLES OF SATISFACTORY AND UNSATISFACTORY OUTCOMES AS A FUNCTION OF RETAILER-MANUFACTURER RESPONSE	17
EXHIBIT 5: SATISFACTION AND PERCEIVED PROBLEMS.....	23
EXHIBIT 6: INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPLAINERS	27
EXHIBIT 7: SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	28
EXHIBIT 8: SITUATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	29
EXHIBIT 9: OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINT RESPONSE ALTERNATIVES.....	33
EXHIBIT 10: A TAXONOMY OF CONSUMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOR.....	37
EXHIBIT 11: SUMMARY OF MAJOR POST COMPLAINT STUDIES	41
EXHIBIT 12: SATISFACTION, PATRONAGE AND RETAIL SERVICE	44
EXHIBIT 13: COMPLAINANT REACTION TO COMPANY RESPONSE.....	46
EXHIBIT 14: SATISFACTION AS A MEDIATOR OF ATTITUDE CHANGE	51
EXHIBIT 15: GENERAL RESEARCH MODEL	53
EXHIBIT 16: OPERATIONAL RESEARCH MODEL	54

INTRODUCTION

Goals of the Research

The goal of this research is to examine a model of resolution satisfaction outcomes and their relationship to consumer repurchase intentions. Of interest in this investigation is the testing of three categories of antecedent variables to consumer resolution satisfaction. These antecedents are speed perception of store complaint handling process, competence perception of store complaint handling process, and fairness perception of store complaint handling process.

The second goal of this research is its test of the relationship between resolution satisfaction and repurchase intention. This research is the first to conceptualize repurchase intention along two dimensions: 1) intention to repurchase at the store level and 2) intention to repurchase at the brand level.

To investigate these relationships, 5 hypotheses were posited.

Value of the Research

This research is valuable and timely as retailers and manufacturers face ever increasing pressure from domestic and global competitors. The continuing importance of

product and service quality and customer satisfaction are further reasons for this research. Lastly, the specific interest in customer retention as a business goal is a reason for this research now.

Importance of Retailing

The importance of retailing and its impact on the U.S. economy continues to climb as retail sales have increased from \$243 billion in 1963 to over \$2.2 trillion today (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996). In short, retailing is America's largest industry.

But even so, this raw data fails to show some of the problems that confront the retail industry as retailers compete for consumer dollars. One gets a hint of the problem by examining the employment data in the retail sector. For example, 12 million people were employed in retailing in 1970 while approximately 21 million are employed today. During this same period, manufacturers employed approximately 21 million Americans, which for all practical purposes has been on the decline. This is certainly a reflection of the fact that manufacturing of mass produced items is being done elsewhere.

The most startling employment statistic is the employment of workers in the services industry. Twenty million workers were employed in this industry in 1970.

Today, that number has increased by two and one half times to 50 million people.

The employment figures illustrate several important things about the economy:

1. Manufacturing in the U.S. has been in a state of decline over a long period of time.
2. The service industry has become the mainstay of the U.S. economy.
3. Retail employment is growing at a rate that exceeds the needs of consumers. Since 1963, the number of retail stores has increased by one million. But this only tells part of the story since most stores are much larger than they were in 1963.

Other macro data support this view. For example, per capita retail sales in the economy since 1963 has increased six fold. However when adjusted for constant dollars the numbers go from \$3,777 to \$6,533 (1992) or less than double (Rachman and Fabes 1992; Berner 1996; Cavanaugh 1996).

The conclusion is that as retailing has become more important in the U.S. economy, it is also a far more competitive and challenging industry. Moreover, there are far more firms that not only operate across state borders, but international borders as well, as they compete for the consumer's retail dollar.

Importance of Customer Satisfaction

Even as retailing continues to grow in economic importance with rising competition, the industry is also seeing a combination that is very troubling. Not only are consumers more demanding today than before, the level of customer service at most businesses is often perceived by consumers to be spotty at best. (See Grant 1998 and Steinhauer 1997).

On the one hand, there is ample evidence such as those reported by Johnson (1997) of something that retailers have always known, i.e., that customers love personal attention that translates into remembering customers' names, knowing what they like to buy and even anticipating what they need or might buy next.

On the other hand, there is also evidence such as those reported by Alonzo (1997) that companies are increasingly settling for people with interpersonal skills that were considered unacceptable in the days of higher unemployment according to a Yanklovich Partners survey.

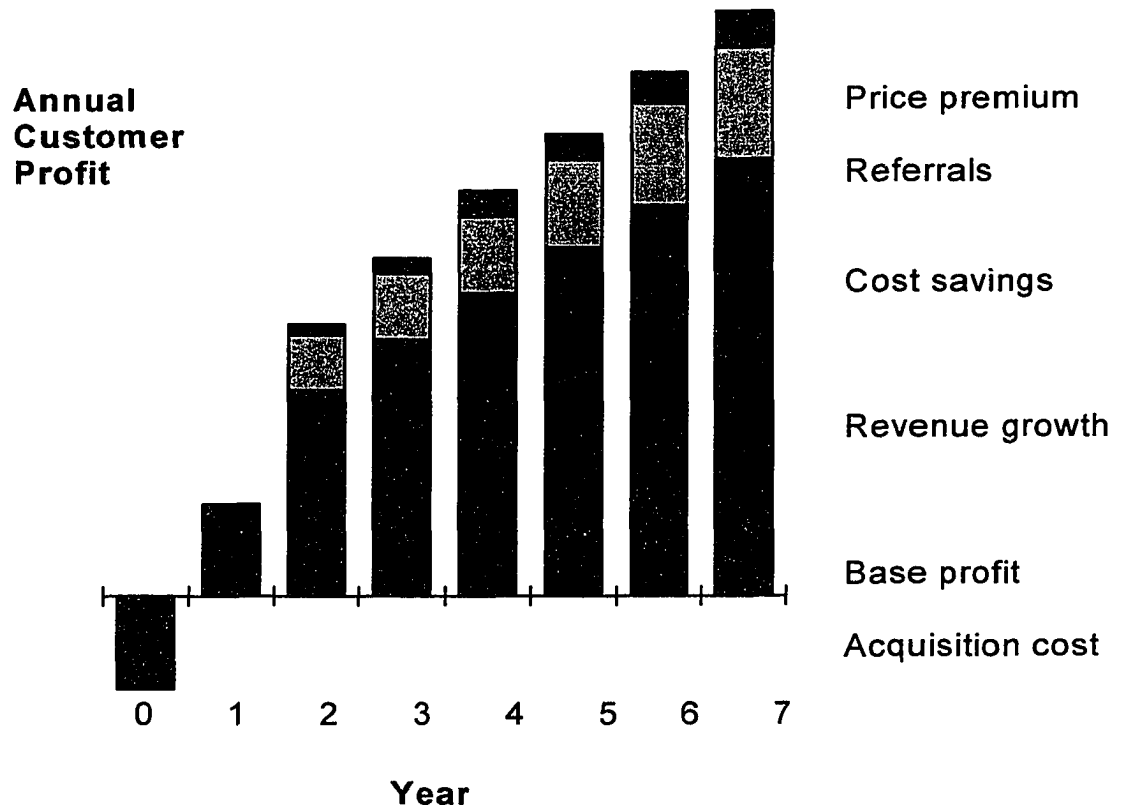
This combination of a more demanding consumer, and the uneven customer service that is being offered is a recipe for many dissatisfied customers. It is therefore not a surprise that this subject has gained the attention and focus of corporate America today. Indeed, they are those who have

labeled the nineties as the "*Decade of the Customer.*" (See Phillips 1990; Jacob 1994; Sellers 1993; Rice 1990; Berlin 1990; Sellers 1990.) Given the intense domestic and international competition, firms have no other choice but to direct more energy and resources to better understand the consumer to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction.

In today's competitive environment, customer satisfaction is one of the underlying goals in gaining a competitive advantage. But while this goal is often espoused in academic and theoretical discussions, in reality it is far less successfully carried out.

Research indicates that satisfied consumers are more likely to make repeat purchases and to buy more in future transactions than dissatisfied customers (Reichheld 1996; Albrecht and Zemke 1985; Zemke and Shaaf 1989; Bearden and Teel 1983). Various studies also estimate that the cost of attracting new customers can be as much as five times that of servicing existing ones (See Exhibit 1).

EXHIBIT 1: Why Loyal Customers Are More Profitable



Source: Reichheld, Frederick F., (1996), The Loyalty Effect

Satisfied customers are also more likely to reinforce a firm's image by way of positive word-of-mouth communication with family and friends regarding their experiences. In short, the importance of customer satisfaction to marketers, i.e., in their potential impact on loyalty, word-of-mouth, repeat purchase behavior and profit, is evident from these and many other studies.

Verdisco (1997) argues that customer satisfaction is a high-priority item on every successful retailer's list. In his research, he has found that the single most important thing that mass retailers can do is focus on their customers.

The study of customer satisfaction, which falls in the area of post-purchase outcomes in consumer behavior, has been extensively explored in the past three decades (see Yi 1990 for an extensive review). In addition to customer satisfaction, an equally important area of interest in this stream of research, is consumer complaint behavior (CCB).

The study of CCB is important because research suggests that the average firm loses about 20 percent of its customers because of dissatisfaction with the firm's service (Timn 1990). While consumers in this highly competitive global marketplace are increasingly expecting and demanding higher quality service, research seems to indicate that they often

perceive existing levels of service to be inadequate (Rosentein 1988).

In summary, the two most commonly studied post-purchase outcomes are: (1) customer satisfaction and (2) consumer complaint behavior (CCB). Most of the more recent research efforts have been directed at customer satisfaction, but the importance of understanding CCB and managing it more efficiently continues to be just as relevant today as it was nearly 30 years ago.

Importance of Customer Retention

Interest in customer retention has also grown tremendously in recent years. Reichheld (1996) observes that many major corporations operate as if they have given up on customer loyalty, as they now lose - and have to replace - half their customers every five years.

In the current climate of aggressive fights for market share in maturing markets with shrinking profits, marketers have become ever more vigilant in trying to hold on to their existing customers as well as trying to win new ones (See Blattberg and Deighton 1996). Indeed, in some cases, holding on to existing customers may be even more profitable than trying to win new ones (TARP 1979, 1986). According to these Technical Assistance Research Program (TARP) surveys conducted by the government, it is easier and five times

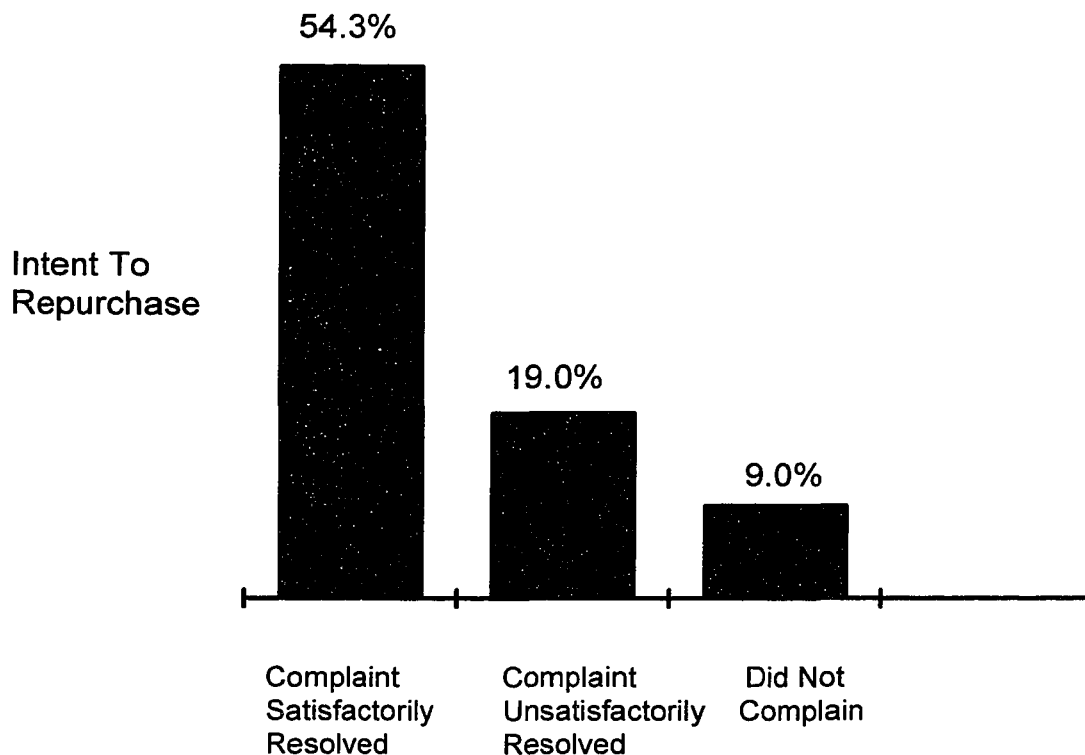
cheaper to keep an existing customer than to recruit a new one (See Exhibit 2).

Given the importance and relevance of CCB, a review of the CCB research reveals a large number of studies have examined: (1) who complains (i.e., what are the characteristics that will predict complainers from non-complainers) and (2) how dissatisfied consumers complain (i.e., public or private). Despite the advances in identifying personal and situational antecedents that may influence CCB, research in this area is still limited in some respects.

In particular, complaint resolution is a critical dimension of customer retention. Research is needed that can further clarify causes of resolution outcomes and how resolution outcomes influence repurchase intention.

Exhibit 2: Relationship Between Complaining and Repurchase Decision

Relationship Between Complaining and Decision to Repurchase the Offending Product or Service: More Serious Consumer Problem Resulting in Potential Financial Loss or More Than \$100 (TARP 1986)



- Complainants reported higher brand loyalty than noncomplainants.
- Dissatisfied complainants reported higher brand loyalty than noncomplainants.
- Satisfied complainants reported higher brand loyalty than dissatisfied complainants.

Contributions of the Research

This research makes several important contributions at both the conceptual and practical levels. The first contribution of this research is its test of three antecedents to resolution satisfaction. This test has been explored in prior literature (Gilly and Gelb 1982, Goodwin and Ross 1992, Gilly 1987) and sought to offer confirmation of existing evidence.

The second contribution of this research is the testing of the relationship between resolution satisfaction and two outcome variables: 1) brand repurchase intention and 2) store repurchase intention. This is the first research to examine the repurchase intention across two dimensions: (1) the intention towards the brand or (2) the intention towards the store. Prior treatments of the intention construct have been general.

From a practical perspective, the rationale for this test is obvious. If resolution satisfaction is differentially related to brand repurchase intention versus store repurchase intention, then differential strategies at both the manufacturing and retail levels need to be devised. Manufacturers, for example, will want to know that careful brand name development and good will are not squandered by poor resolution handling practices at the retail level. If

brands are found to suffer, then manufacturers, it could be argued, should opt to place their brands in better retail outlets. If on the other hand, stores see consumers take their business elsewhere after experiencing their store's resolution process, then stores might opt for better training programs to stem the flight of customers. Clearly then, research that may shed light on these important practical issues is of discernable value.

The Research Outline

This research proceeded as follows: Chapter 1 surveys the literature which addresses customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The literature demonstrates how the process of customer satisfaction may be explained in terms of customer complaint behavior, profits, customer retention, and repurchase intention. Chapter 2 presents a model of resolution satisfaction outcomes on repurchase intention. Chapter 2 fully explicates the model to be tested in this research and 5 hypotheses are presented. Chapter 3 presents the research design and methods. Chapter 4 presents the research results and Chapter 5 discusses the results and offers summary conclusions with respect to the findings and how the findings contribute to theory and to practice.

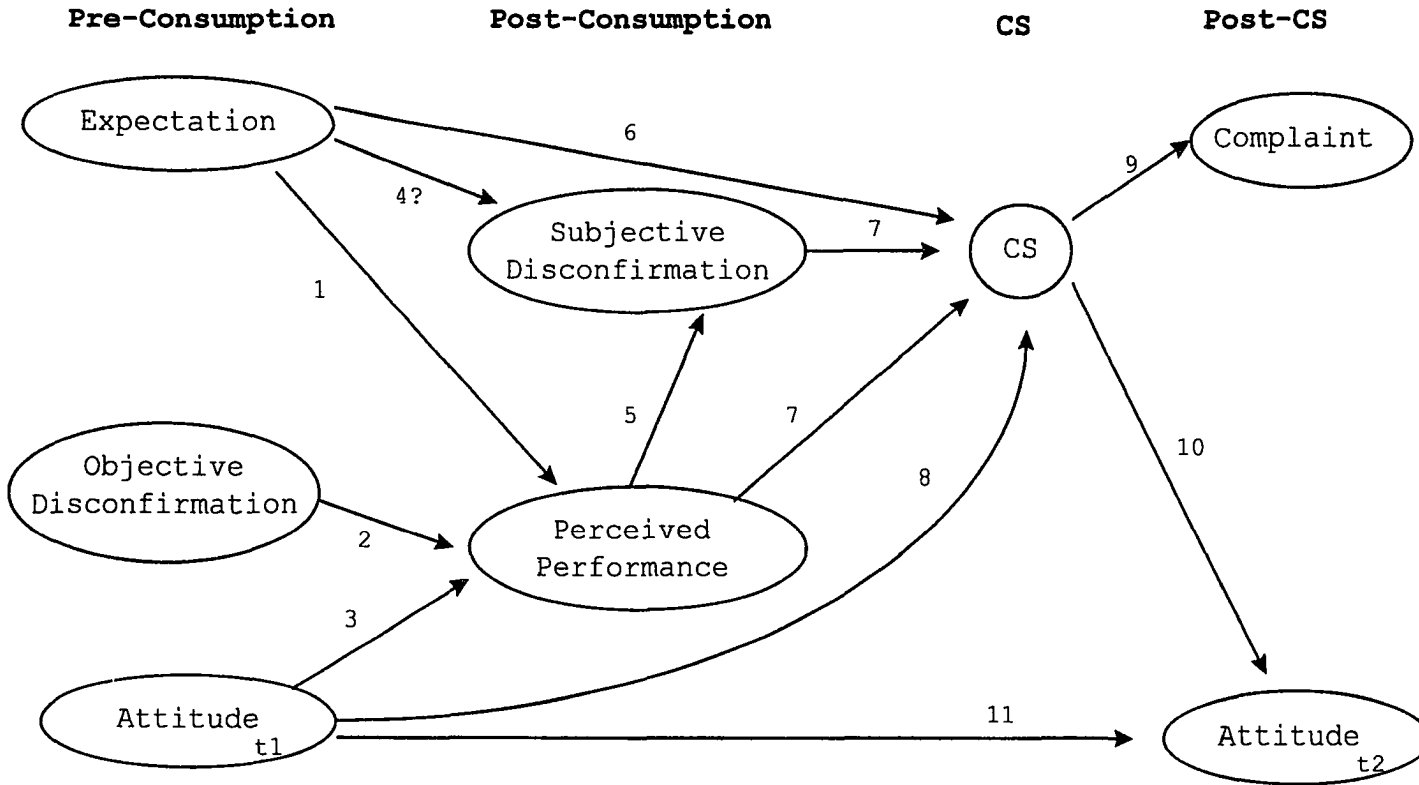
CHAPTER 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literatures that have either addressed the topic of consumer complaint behavior or satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

The processes of consumer satisfaction (CS) is an area of research that continues to receive attention (See Exhibit 3). First and foremost, there is considerable recognition that consumer satisfaction is an antecedent to many post-purchase processes. Further, the relationship between customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, repurchase intention, and profitability is one that has a significant amount of research support (see Bearden 1983, Bearden and Teel 1983, Day 1984, Day and Ash 1979, Day and Landon 1977, Singh 1988, Fornell 1976, Howard 1974, LaBarbera and Mazursky 1983).

On a theoretical level, the processes of CS assume four stages. The first stage is Pre-Consumption, followed by Post-CS. The confirmation-disconfirmation paradigm used in consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction research that is described in this model is one which has found acceptance in many studies (Yi 1990).

Exhibit 3: Processes of Consumer Satisfaction



1, 2, and 3 are investigated in studies of product performance.

6, 7, and 8 are investigated in studies of antecedents of CS.

9, and 10 are investigated in studies of consequences of CS.

? indicates the existence of mixed findings about the path (for example, 4 is found by Churchill and Surprenant (1982), but not by Oliver 1980a)).

Post-purchase outcomes in consumer behavior have been studied extensively over the past two decades (see Yi 1990 for an extensive review). The two most commonly studied outcomes are customer satisfaction and consumer complaint behavior, with recent research effort being focused upon customer satisfaction.

Within the consumer complaint behavior literature, most studies have looked at who complains (personal characteristics); what moderates the propensity to complain (individual, structural and situational characteristics); and how they complain (taxonomies and typologies of response styles, e.g., Andreasen 1988 and Singh 1990).

While these studies have added considerably to the understanding of consumer dissatisfaction and consumer complaint behavior specifically, one area within the consumer complaint management literature that has not been explored is the re-conceptualization of the repurchase intention to test for brand effects as well as store effects.

Overview

Customer satisfaction is a basic goal in all of marketing. Satisfied consumers are likely to repeat their purchase more so than dissatisfied consumers. Consumers who are satisfied are expected to require less future sales effort and/or promotion. They are also more likely to convey

positive word-of-mouth of their purchasing or consuming experiences to friends and family. With so much riding on consumer satisfaction, one can argue that understanding what influences consumer dissatisfaction can be equally important as what influences consumer satisfaction (see Reichheld 1996, Zemke and Schaaf 1989).

Past research has, over the years, focused on three main areas: (1) satisfaction with exchanges and its determinants; (2) responses to dissatisfaction and their determinants; and (3) institutional responses to voiced dissatisfaction (Best 1981). Exhibit 4 shows an example of the types of retailer/manufacturer response to consumer complaints that were perceived to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory outcomes in those early studies.

Exhibit 4: Examples of Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory Outcomes as a Function of Retailer-Manufacturer Response

Satisfactory Outcomes	Unsatisfactory Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Item repaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seller or Manufacturer denies responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Item replaced or service performed again	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nothing was done
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money refunded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problem has recurred
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money partially refunded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bought new item
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seller or manufacturer adopted suggestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paid for repair
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respondent states that result is satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respondent states that result is unsatisfactory

In the context of consumer complaint behavior specifically, the basic questions that researchers have looked at are: who complains (i.e., what are the characteristics that will predict complainers from non-complainers) and how dissatisfied consumers complain (i.e., public or private).

This overwhelming shift in research interest from consumer complaint behavior to customer satisfaction may be due, in part, to the belief that marketers need only focus on how to make consumers satisfied. But as researchers focus their efforts on customer satisfaction and debate the validity between a two-factor satisfaction/dissatisfaction construct and a single factor construct with the continuum being satisfied and dissatisfied, more attention on the dissatisfaction dimension seems warranted (see Spreng 1992; Spreng and Dixon 1992).

Complaining is something we all engage in, some more than others. The act of complaining can generally be defined as "expressing discontent, dissatisfaction, protest, resentment or regret." In a consumer marketing context, it is useful to distinguish between complaining expressed as a matter of habit from complaining that has specific goals in mind. For example, when we complain about the weather or the ineptness of our favorite baseball team, we really have no

realistic expectation of altering or changing the undesirable state of affairs.

These "noninstrumental" complaints are often expressed to let off steam or vent frustration, or, it may be done in the hope of eliciting sympathy. On the other hand, "instrumental complaints" are expressed with the complainant fully expecting to achieve some goal or redress through their action (Alicke, et al. 1992). This research will focus on instrumental complaints.

This research also assumes that consumer complaint behavior is based primarily on valid grievances. The number of consumers who may make fraudulent complaints is expected to represent only a very small fraction of those who complain.

Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) defined consumer complaining as an "action taken by an individual which involves communicating something negative regarding a product or service to either the firm manufacturing or marketing that product or service, or to some third-party organizational entity." This definition, however, does not take into account the possibility of complaint behavior that is essentially a non-action.

Singh (1990), however, makes the distinction between "complaint action" and "complaint response." He argues that complaint action implies a specific directed behavior while

complaint response implies all plausible reactions, which includes non-action. Consumer complaint behavior is defined in this research as "a set of complaint responses that one or more consumers might utilize to deal with a particular dissatisfying situation."

Consumer complaint behavior is often hypothesized to be directly proportional to the degree of dissatisfaction (Bearden and Teel 1983). This is, however, by no means a one-to-one effect. Typically consumer dissatisfaction has been found to explain only about 15 percent of the variation in consumer complaint behavior. This points up the view that there are other factors such as consumer characteristics, consumer perceptions of the attribution of dissatisfaction, expectancy of outcomes, costs involved, and product type, among others that also influences complaint behavior (see Day 1984; Singh and Howell 1985). This partly explains why there is a fairly large proportion of dissatisfied consumers who do not complain (Best and Andreasen 1977).

In a more recent study, Singh and Pandya (1991) found that while consumer dissatisfaction has a non-linear relationship with exit and negative word-of-mouth types of consumer complaint behavior (CCB), the relationship tended to relate linearly between voice behaviors and consumer dissatisfaction.

The study of consumer complaint behavior has important

implications in marketing because unresolved complaints and consumer dissatisfaction affects brand switches or store boycotts (Day et. al. 1981). Newman and Werbel (1973), for example, concluded that dissatisfied consumers were less likely to repurchase a brand than satisfied consumers. Another study found that between 30 percent to more than 90 percent of dissatisfied consumers did not intend to repurchase a brand (Technical Assistance Research Programs 1979).

Consumers with unresolved complaints are also more likely to engage in negative-word-of-mouth. Richins (1983) found that dissatisfied consumers were more likely to engage in negative word-of-mouth when the problem was perceived to be severe, or the retailer's responsiveness to complaints was negatively perceived, or the blame is retailer-attributed. There is also some evidence that consumers are more likely to engage in negative word-of-mouth in view of a dissatisfactory experience rather than a satisfactory one (TARP 1981).

Warland, Herrmann and Willts (1975) suggests that dissatisfied consumers who choose not to complain may be "a frustrated and even possibly an alienated group of consumers." Alienated consumers may in turn direct their anger toward the marketing system.

Conversely, a greater understanding of consumer complaint behavior is likely to lead to the development of

more effective consumer complaint management strategies, and thereby lead to higher consumer satisfaction (Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987).

The study of consumer complaint behavior seems particularly important to retailers because the first line of consumer complaint tends to be retail establishments. The negative effects of consumer complaints on retailers have also been well documented (e.g., Etzel and Silverman 1981).

According to Andreasen and Best (1977), one in five shopping experiences results in consumer dissatisfaction with something other than price. These dissatisfactions were found to vary across purchase categories, with some of the highest rates of complaints coming from autos, auto repairs, toys and mail order. The study, however, found that less than half of these perceived problems led to complaints. Those that do complain, overwhelmingly complain to the manufacturer or retailer as opposed to a third-party. And finally, one in three of the complaints ended with an unsatisfactory resolution. This makes it all the more important for marketers to understand the complaining process and the determinants of complaining a great deal better (See Exhibit 5).

**Exhibit 5: Satisfaction and Perceived Problems
By Purchase Category**

Purchase Category	Non-Price Problems
Car Repair	21.5%
Appliance Repair	19.9%
Mail Order Goods	19.4%
Home Repair	18.6%
Toys	15.9%
Cars	13.8%
Clothing	13.2%
Furniture	11.2%
Tape Recorders, Stereos	11.0%
Cameras	10.5%
Television Sets	9.7%
Radios	5.1%
Tools	4.2%

Exhibit adapted from Andreasen and Best (1977), p. 95

Levels of Consumer Complaint Behavior

One of the identifiable problems in the consumer complaint behavior literature is the noticeable variation in the definition of negative evaluation (Andreasen 1988). In many cases, the study of dissatisfaction and complaint behavior goes well beyond the performance of goods and services. They sometimes focus on specific aspects of market transaction, such as pricing, advertising, or sales-force misrepresentation, among others. Most researchers have, however, focused on dissatisfaction and complaint behavior of goods and services.

The broadest classification of the consumer complaint behavior literature makes three distinctions: (1) shopping system dissatisfaction (occurs during the pre-purchase stage); (2) buying system dissatisfaction (occurs during the purchasing); and (3) consuming system dissatisfaction (occurs after the purchase). The majority of consumer complaint behavior studies have focused on consuming system dissatisfaction.

Day and Landon (1977) observe that one of the problems in consumer complaint behavior studies is the tendency to view consumer dissatisfaction as an overall measure of post-purchase reaction to a product or service. They point out that consumers frequently do complain about a very specific aspect of a shopping, purchasing, or consuming process. In

some cases, more than one of the consumer purchasing processes can go wrong leading to consumer dissatisfaction.

Few studies have looked at consumer complaint behavior between non-store and store, and with non-store retailing gaining in importance, a greater emphasis in this particular direction may also be interesting.

Correlates of Consumer Complaint Behavior

Past research has been interested in what are the correlates of consumer complaint behavior. Some of these variables include: the importance of the product, product involvement and time, demographics (e.g., age, education, income), psychographics (e.g., self-confidence, aggressiveness), one's perceived likelihood of success, one's attitude towards complaining, prior complaining experience, attribution style, and industry structure (See Exhibit 6).

Many researchers have analyzed consumer complaint behavior in terms of demographics (e.g., Miller 1970; Liefeld, Edgecombe and Wolfe 1975; Pfaff and Blivice 1977, See Exhibit 7). But the contribution of demographics in explaining consumer complaint behavior has been found to be relatively minor (Warland, Herrmann and Moore 1984).

Others have looked at consumer complaint behavior in terms of both personal and situational characteristics (e.g., Moyer 1985; Bearden and Crockett 1981; Wall, Dickey

and Talarzyk 1979, See Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 6: Individual Characteristics of Complainers

Consumer Characteristics	Study
Positive attitude towards complaining	Richins (1980) Richins (1982)
Positive prior complaining experience	Gronhaug & Zaltman (1981)
High consumer alienation	Warland et al. (1975)
High assertiveness	Richins (1983)
High self-confidence	Bearden, Oliver, & Crockett (1980) Bearden (1983)
High personal confidence	Bearden (1983)
High consumer knowledge	Day (1978)
Negative perception of time	Day (1984)

**Exhibit 7: Sociodemographic Characteristics
of Complainers**

Consumer Characteristic	Study
Above average education	Stokes (1974)
	Liefeld et al. (1975)
	Warland et al. (1984)
	Moyer (1985)
	Morganosky & Buckley (1987)
Above average income	Liefeld et al. (1975)
	Warland et al. (1984)
	Moyer (1985)
	Morganosky & Buckley (1987)
Younger (25-45)	Miller (1973)
	Liefeld et al. (1975)
	Day and Landon (1976)
Managerial/Professional occupation	Liefeld et al. (1975)
	Moyer (1985)
Upper-class social status	Warland et al. (1984)

**Exhibit 8: Situational Characteristics
of the Dissatisfaction**

Situational Characteristics	Study
The purchase was expensive	Oster (1980) Richins and Verhage (1985)
The problem was expensive	TARP (1979)
The problem involved the loss of use of the product	Kraft (1977) Granbois et al. (1977)
The complaint handler is perceived to be likely to make a favorable response	Fornell & Didow (1980) Singh (1988)
The problem was manifest rather than a matter of judgment	Best (1981)
The negative disparity between performance-expectations was large	Bearden & Teel (1983)
The blame for the problem could be attributed to the seller rather than the customer	Folkes (1984)
The problem involved a seller to whom the consumer was not particularly loyal	Solnick & Hemenway (1992)

Some researchers have suggested that the consumer complaint process takes place in three stages. It begins with: (1) the perception of the problem, (2) the voicing of the complaint, and (3) the resolution of the complaint. This assumes consumers are able to discern problems when the facts of a particular transaction might actually be difficult to determine. Problems may also change over time, and individuals may be disinclined to acknowledge consumer troubles. Another problem with this model is the assumption that the voicing of a complaint is the only action under consideration when keeping quiet about a perceived problem might well be an equally viable alternative.

McClure and Kiecker (1992) empirically examined four factors in attempting to explain differences in individuals' propensity to complain. These are: (1) industry characteristics (degree of concentration), (2) situational characteristics (problem severity and problem attribution), (3) demographic characteristics (income, education, age, gender), and (4) psychographic characteristics (assertiveness). Unlike previous studies in this area, McClure and Kiecker (1992) used scenarios as opposed to asking individuals to recall a dissatisfying experience and answering questions regarding the experience. The study, which used an analysis of covariance, provided support of hypotheses regarding problem severity, problem attribution,

and assertiveness.

In an exploratory study, Martin (1991) hypothesized that consumer knowledge and/or familiarity should affect consumer complaint behavior. She concluded that novice complainers tend to be non-complainers or ineffective complainers. Novice complainers also have a lesser ability to generalize in novel complaining situations. On the other hand, expert complainers not only have a greater tendency to complain, but they also exhibit a far greater flexibility to deal with many different obstacles that may occur in the complaint process.

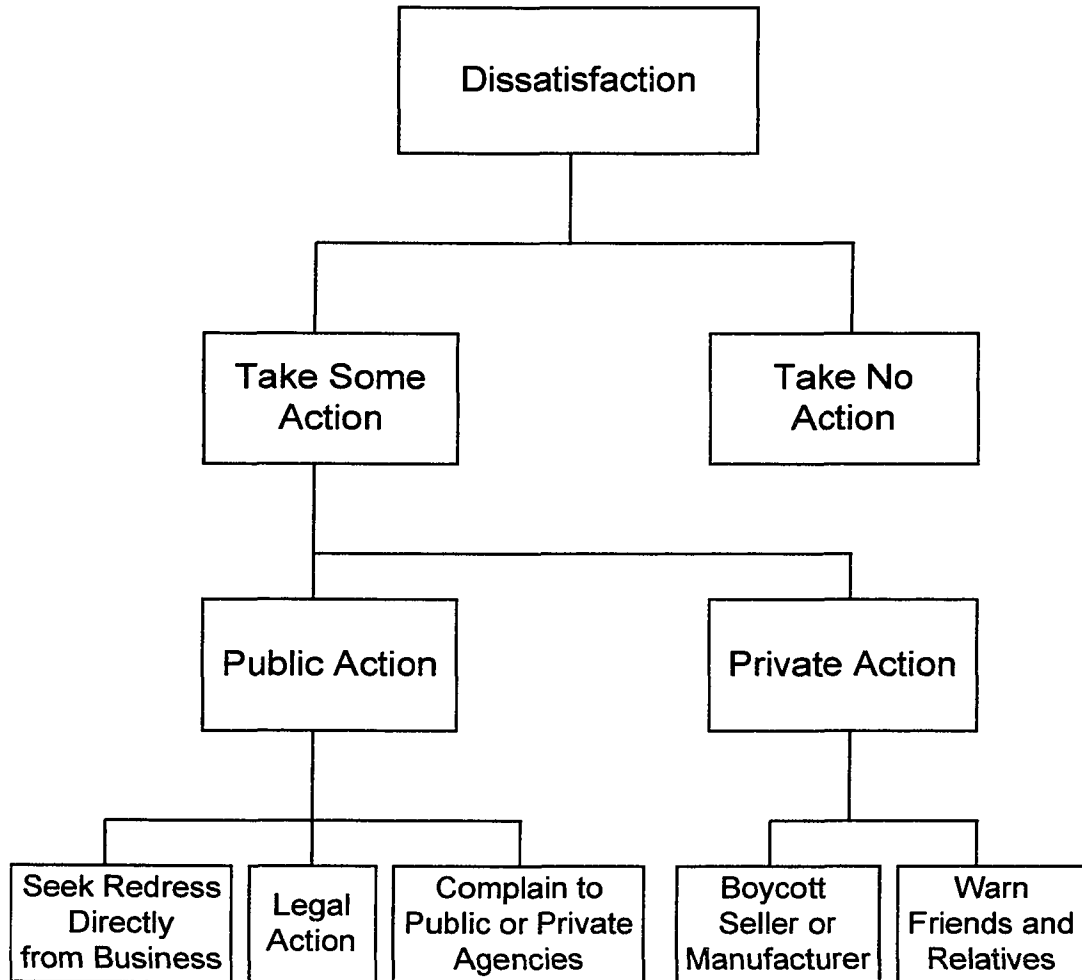
Consumer Complaint Behavior Alternatives

Hirschman (1970) suggested that a dissatisfied consumer has three response options, i.e., exit, voice, or loyalty. Consumers may exit by switching brands or ceasing to purchase altogether. In voice, consumers may express their dissatisfaction directly to the seller or some other party (friends, family or third-party). Loyalty, in this case, does not imply that the consumer has positive feelings towards the seller. Instead, Hirschman uses it to describe consumers who remains "loyal" out of lack of a better choice.

Day and Landon (1977) suggest that dissatisfied consumers who feel dissatisfied with a product or service can take either private or public action. Under private

action, dissatisfied consumers can engage in negative word-of-mouth, make brand switches, or boycott the product (See Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9: Overview of Complaint Response Alternatives
(Day and Landon 1977)



In terms of public alternatives, Day and Landon (1977) list three choices of actions. Dissatisfied consumers can ask for redress by contacting the seller and/or manufacturer directly. They can also initiate legal action. Or they can complain to business, private, or governmental agencies as a means of seeking assistance in obtaining redress.

In a separate study, Day and Landon (1976) found that the majority of dissatisfied consumers chose public actions in which they complained directly to the manufacturer or marketer, this being in contrast to contacting agencies or individuals outside of the channel of distribution.

Intuitively, one would conclude that these alternatives are not mutually exclusive. But most studies, however, suggest that dissatisfied consumers make more or less clear and distinct choices.

Day and Landon (1977) suggest that three sets of factors affect the choice of alternative actions dissatisfied consumers take, namely (1) marketing aspects, (2) consumer factors and (3) circumstantial factors. Marketing-related factors include the seller's reputation for quality and service (strong reputation might elicit greater likelihood of complaining; weak reputation might elicit stronger intensity in complaining), the nature of the circumstances of the sale ("hard sell" might elicit greater likelihood of complaining), and the responsiveness of the marketing channel in providing

redress to dissatisfied consumers (higher responsiveness, lower degree of antagonism).

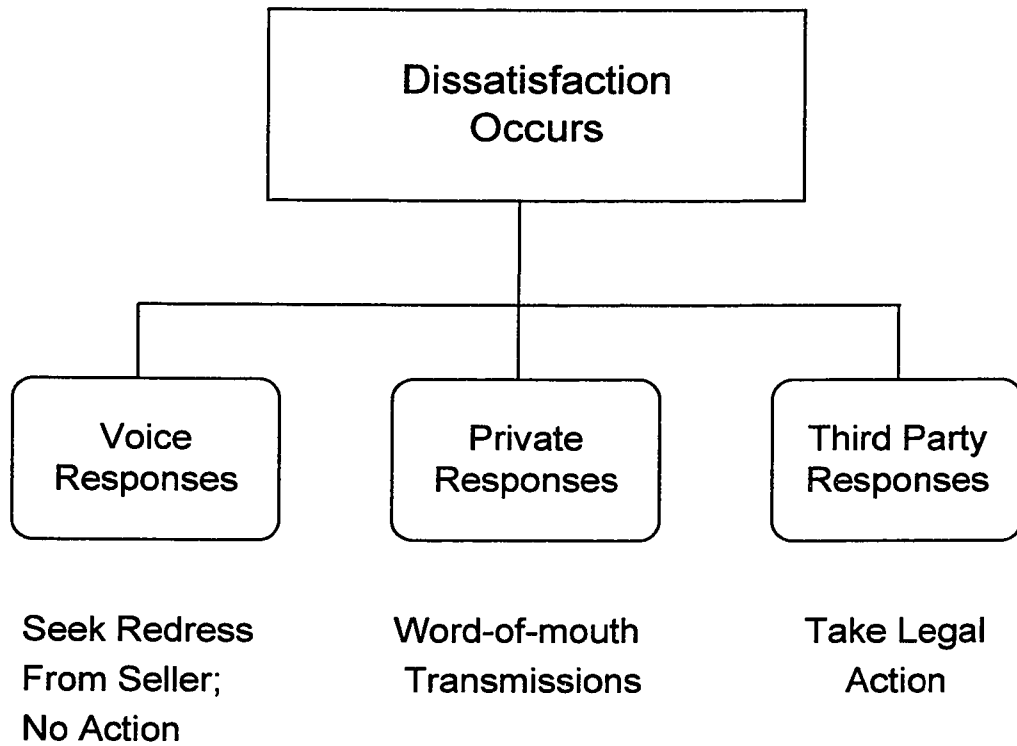
Secondly, consumer factors such as personality and attitudinal and lifestyle variables can affect whether a person will seek redress and complain and affect the type of action to be taken. Stokes (1974), in a study of people who wrote complaint letters, found complainants to be highly educated, have higher incomes, be younger than average, tend to have negative attitudes toward business, and tend to be political liberals. Individuals who are aggressive and have greater amounts of leisure time are also more likely to complain.

Circumstantial factors such as the importance of the product, the cost of the product, the ease with which redress may be obtained, the degree of public consciousness with respect to the item, and the past behavior of friends or significant others with similar problems are other factors that influence the choice of alternative actions.

Singh (1988; 1990) suggests that there are three underlying dimensions to consumer responses to perceived dissatisfaction (See Exhibit 10). The dimensions are: (1) voice (which includes all responses directed at seller/retailer); (2) private (which includes all negative word-of-mouth to friends and relatives); and (3) third-party (which includes any group or individuals not directly

involved in the transaction, e.g., regulatory agencies).

Exhibit 10: A Taxonomy of Consumer Complaint Behavior
(Singh 1988)



Models of Consumer Complaint Behavior

Andreassen (1988) suggests that consumer complaint behavior is likely to be driven by one of four models:

(1) The cost-benefit model holds that dissatisfied consumers are assumed to objectively evaluate the extent of the dissatisfaction, the cost-benefit comparison of what it would take to complain, and the probability of success. This model assumes that the decision to complain rests solely on the individual consumer and that the consumer is able to cognitively and objectively determine the costs and benefits, the probability of success.

(2) The personality model assumes that the responses of dissatisfied consumers are driven more by the kinds of people they are, (e.g., their aggressiveness, their attributional style, their self-confidence, their attitude towards consumerism) than the cost-benefit evaluation of the particular transaction. This again assumes that the seller or manufacturer has little to do with the propensity to complain.

(3) The learning model assumes that consumers base their complaint behavior on prior experience. Consumers who met with success in the past, as opposed to consumers who failed to meet with success, are more likely to complain again regardless of what triggered the initial propensity to

complain. There appears to be little empirical research to support this model.

(4) The resource (restraint) model assumes that the propensity to complain is based not so much on the characteristics of the consumers as the specific structural impediments or enhancements that the seller or manufacturer might have put in place to either discourage or encourage consumer complaint behavior. In other words, dissatisfied consumers complain because they are able to do so; not because they have merely a desire to do so. Some of the impediments to complaining are: the individual's health, income, and information.

Day and Landon (1977) noted that operational measures for (1) the importance of obtaining redress, (2) the effort required in seeking redress, (3) the individual's propensity to complain, and (4) the circumstantial variables, must be developed before a predictive model of post-dissatisfaction can be developed and tested.

Consumer Complaint Management

Interest in consumer complaint management is on the rise. Instead of viewing complaints as an irritation, commercial organizations are now starting to regard consumer complaints as opportunities to achieve higher customer satisfaction (See Exhibit 11 for a list of major post-

complaint studies).

Exhibit 11: Summary of Major Post Complaint Studies

Adapted from Gilly (1987)

Products	Complaint Response Satisfaction	Study
<u>Complaint Letters</u>		
Consumer Package Goods	70 % answered in a "presumably satisfactory manner	Kendall and Russ (1975)
Consumer Products	80 % of complaint letter writers were satisfied with response received	Pearson (1976)
Consumer Products	50 % of those receiving response were satisfied; 27% of all letter writers were satisfied	Resnick et al. (1977)
<u>Surveys</u>		
Consumer Products	30-81% of complainants were satisfied with the response received depending on product	Andreasen & Best (1977)
Energy Company	50% satisfied if complaint about non-monetary problem; 79% satisfied if complaint about monetary loss	Gilly and Gelb (1982)
Clothing	40% satisfied with retailer response; 85% satisfied with manufacturer response	Kelly (1979)
Hotel	Mean of 3.1 on a 5 point satisfaction scale	Lewis (1982)
Consumer Products	23% who complained were satisfied completely with the response; additional 20 percent found the solution to be acceptable	TARP (1979)
<u>Experiments</u>		
Shoes	Respondents recommended manufacturer's actual response 30-70 % of the time	Dwyer & Dornoff (1981)
Building Materials	Consumers believe manufacturers' response would be satisfactory 71% of the time	Resnick & Harmon (1983)

Research by the TARP (1979) suggests that the importance of effective consumer complaint management is that it should prevent complaint escalation to third parties (e.g., the Better Business Bureau, the media, etc.) or to higher levels within the company (e.g., the vice president, president, etc.). The reason for this is that such escalation tends to raise the cost for resolving the complaints. Furthermore, research has also shown that dissatisfied complainants are twice as likely to convey their unhappiness compared to satisfied complainants. This negative word-of-mouth will no doubt add to the overall cost of the original complaint.

Since overall post-purchase feelings affect repurchase intention (Engel, Blackwell and Kollat 1991), some relationship can be expected between feelings about complaint response and the likelihood of repurchase. Indeed, there is evidence that dissatisfied consumers with satisfactory complaint resolutions are more brand loyal than non-complainers or dissatisfied complainers.

With greater emphasis being placed on improving complaint management in recent years, satisfaction with complaint resolution appears now to be rising somewhat.

According to Fornell and Wernerfelt (1988), strategies that reduce consumer turnover or patronage switching can be lucrative. This is particularly true for mature and/or stagnating industries where the cost of generating a new

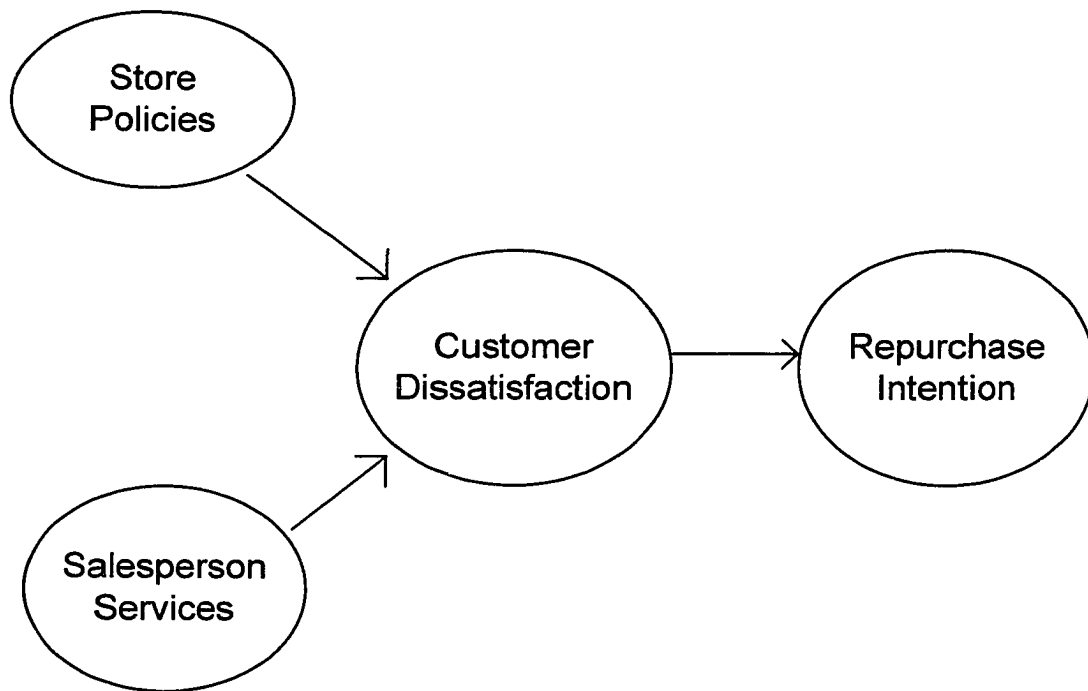
customer is high relative to the cost of retaining a current customer. They cite the example of Volvo, the Swedish automobile manufacturer, which estimates that its cost of generating a new customer is three times the cost of retaining a present customer.

Fornell and Wernerfelt (1988) define complaint management as a firm's systematic efforts in facilitating the voicing of complaints in order that consumers may receive varying levels of compensation which may exceed basic warranties or guarantees.

Their research suggests that complaint management is an effective tool for customer retention since it can increase the consumer's expected utility from the purchase. Generally, consumer complaint management is more effective, the greater the number of competitors and the higher the quality elasticity of demand.

In a study looking at satisfaction and patronage in retail services, Stanforth (1993) found that both the store policies and salesperson service impacted on customer dissatisfaction and repurchase intention (See Exhibit 12).

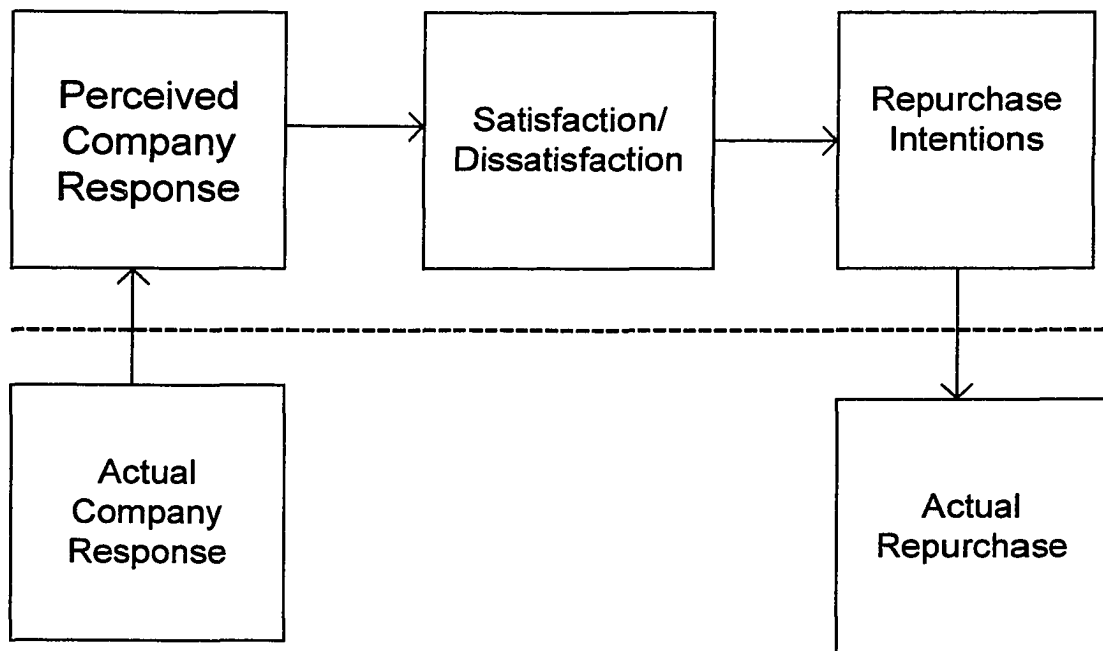
Exhibit 12: Satisfaction, Patronage and Retail Service
(Stanforth 1993)



Gilly (1987) proposed a model of post-complaint processes where perceived complaint response (speed perception and competence perception) affects repurchase intentions and actual repurchase. Satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the perceived response is the intervening variable. This model suggests that marketers cannot be solely concerned with their actual response, but also with the way in which their response is perceived by the consumer (See Exhibit 13).

Exhibit 13: Complainant Reaction to Company Response
(Gilly 1987)

The Consumer



The Company

Kelly (1979) noted that when consumers complained to the retailer, 40 percent indicated they would either be very unlikely or certainly not buy from the store again. For consumers who complained to manufacturers, 17 percent indicated they would be unlikely or certainly not buy the brands again.

Most studies in consumer complaint behavior focus on the complainant and the nature of the complaint. The studies are mostly not generalizable with the complaint behavior-dependent variable typically oversimplified and limited to analysis of demographics correlates. (Robinson 1978)

Fornell and Westbrook (1984) explored the tendency of firms to downplay and ignore consumer complaints. They argue that as firms receive more consumer complaints, the more isolated its complaint handling becomes from management decision making. The more isolated complaint handling becomes, the more consumer complaints the firm will receive. This distancing of management, in turn, reduces complaint responsiveness and ultimately has the affect of increasing consumer complaints.

Since overall post-purchase feelings affect repurchase intention (Engel, Blackwell and Kollat 1991), some relationship can be expected between feelings about complaint response and the likelihood of repurchase. Indeed, there is evidence that dissatisfied consumers with satisfactory

complaint resolutions are more brand-loyal than non-complainers or dissatisfied complainers (Halstead and Page 1992).

Summary

The study of consumer complaint behavior adds an important dimension to the understanding of post-purchase outcomes, i.e., consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Consumers who fail to complain or have their complaints resolved in an unsatisfactory manner are more likely to switch or engage in negative word-of-mouth regarding a firm's products or services. Conversely, consumers who express their complaints and have their dissatisfaction resolved satisfactorily are more likely to be loyal and require less "selling" in future transactions.

Complaints can be instrumental (where redress is expected) or non-instrumental (where redress is not expected). Since marketers can do little to influence the outcomes of non-instrumental complaints, the only complaints that will be examined here will be instrumental complaints.

Consumer complaint behavior is defined as a set of complaint responses that one or more consumers might utilize to deal with a particular dissatisfying situation.

Most consumer complaint studies focus on correlates of complaining. These correlates include demographics,

individual, situational and structural variables.

Consumers with dissatisfying experiences usually have more than one complaint response available to them. These alternatives can be variously classified as voice, exit, and loyal or public, private and third-party. The complaint alternatives adopted here will be the latter.

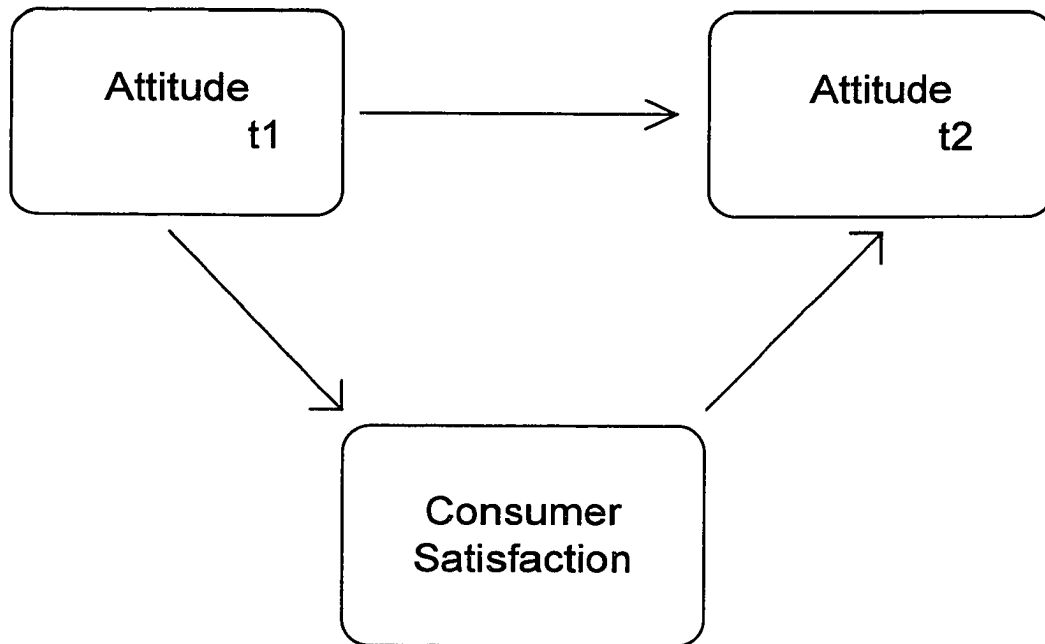
More recent studies have turned to understanding the process of complaint management as defensive marketing strategy aimed at increasing a firm's ability to retain customers over time (Reichheld 1996, Rust and Zahorik 1993).

It is clear from the above mentioned review of the complaint behavior and complaint management process that customer retention is of vital importance. The literature has reflected ample attention to what the consumer intends with regard to store repurchase but little attention has been given to looking at whether or not separate affects can be obtained at the brand level. Thus, we need to know more about whether the complaint handling process can predict differential results for store versus brand repurchase intentions. This issue has been identified as one that merits empirical attention that can help both to strengthen theoretical development and to assist the business community in properly responding to consumers in the complaint handling process. The following chapter outlines the research model that is empirically tested herein.

CHAPTER 2. A MODEL OF VOICE COMPLAINT OUTCOMES AND REPURCHASE INTENTION

Exhibit 14 shows the linkage that consumer satisfaction is a mediator of attitude change as reported by Yi (1990). In addition, various other studies, including those in Chapter 1, indicate that adequate problem/complaint resolution - or "service recovery" - leads to *increased* (not merely retained) customer loyalty. In an ABA Banking Journal (1997) study, results of a customer satisfaction survey reported that those issues most highly correlated with overall satisfaction involve problem/complaint management. Handling problems efficiently, paying attention to questions or concerns, and resolving problems on the phone are of great importance to retail bank customers.

Exhibit 14: Satisfaction as a Mediator of Attitude Change
(Yi 1990)

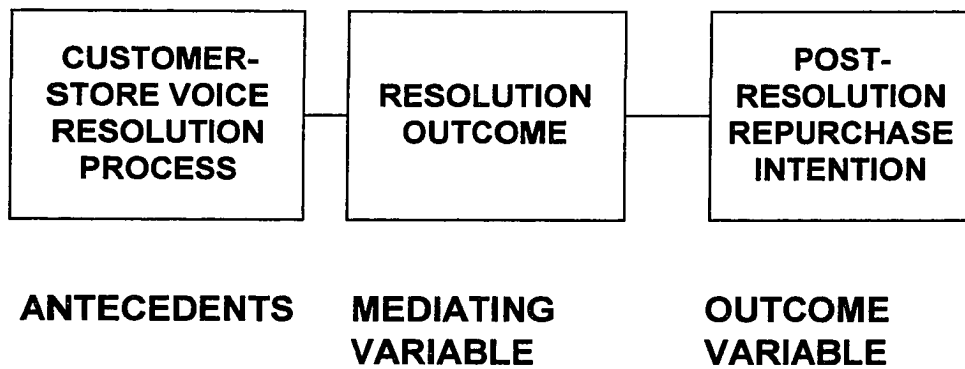


These studies and those identified under the consumer complaint management literature (such as Fornell and Wernerfelt 1988) are the basis of the general research model of *Complaint Resolution Outcomes and Repurchase Intentions* illustrated in Exhibit 15.

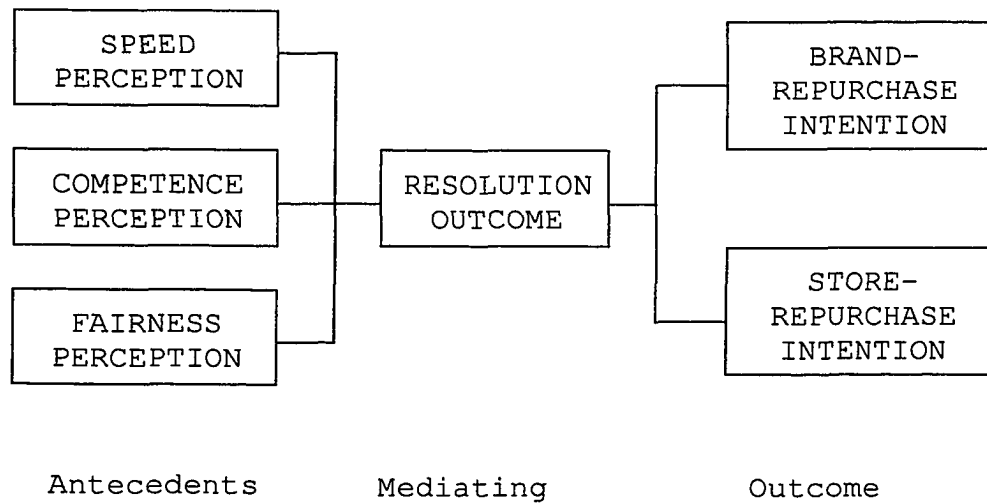
Proposed Research Model

Exhibit 15 shows a research model of the antecedents and outcome of post-resolution repurchase intention. In Exhibit 16, three panels of variables are tested as antecedents of post-resolution repurchase intention. These are speed perception, competence perception, and fairness perception. The outcome variables are conceptualized as brand-repurchase intention and store-repurchase intention.

**Exhibit 15: General Research Model
of Complaint Resolution Outcomes and Repurchase Intentions**



**Exhibit 16: Operational Research Model
of Complaint Resolution Outcomes and Repurchase Intentions**



2.1 Independent Variables

As described in Exhibit 16, the three independent variables in the proposed model are perceptions of speed, competence, and fairness.

Speed Perception

Various studies have found that the speed (or how promptly) in which a consumer complaint is handled or resolved satisfactorily has an impact on the consumer's satisfaction with the resolution outcome (See Gilly 1987; Kendall and Russ 1975; Brock 1974; Fenvesy 1972).

Hypothesis 1: Perception of speed in the resolution handling is positively related to the resolution outcome.

Competence Perception

The complaining customer's perception of the competence of the person handling the complaint has also been found to have some impact on the consumer's satisfaction with the resolution outcome. That is, the more the person handling the complaint appears to be someone who is knowledgeable in their job and professional at what he or she does, the more likely will the complaining consumer ascribe a higher

satisfaction to the resolution process and outcome (See Stanforth 1993).

Hypothesis 2: Perception of competence in the resolution handling is positively related to the resolution outcome.

Fairness Perception

Goodwin and Ross (1992) found that consumer responses to service failures may be influenced by perceptions of procedural and interactional fairness. According to them, this procedural fairness can be conceptualized as the consumer's opportunity to present information and express feelings or "voice" and also whether they were shown some tangible response such as an apology from the firm.

Hypothesis 3: Perception of fairness in the resolution handling is positively related to the resolution outcome.

2.2 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables are the resolution outcome of the complaint handling process, and the brand and store repurchase intention.

Resolution Outcome

Gilly (1987) has identified the antecedent variables in Exhibit 16 as those which would impact on the resolution outcome of a consumer complaint. This resolution outcome can be conceptualized as dichotomous, namely: satisfied or dissatisfied. The expectation is that the antecedent variables will positively impact resolution outcome.

Brand Repurchase Intention

Numerous studies have suggested that resolution outcome will impact on the post-resolution repurchase intention (See Kelly 1979; Lewis 1982; Gilly and Gelb 1982). Some of these studies explain this phenomenon in terms of consistency theory (See Festinger 1957), whereby it would only make sense for a consumer to have a much more positive attitude toward a brand that he or she was happy with. Conversely, a consumer is likely to feel less positive toward a brand that has not performed as expected.

Hypothesis 4: The resolution outcome is positively related to the brand repurchase intention.

Store Repurchase Intention

In the same way as it impacts brand repurchase intention, resolution outcome is similarly expected to impact store repurchase intention. That is, a complaining

customer who was satisfied with the resolution outcome will be more likely to have a positive attitude toward the store, and is more likely to shop at the store again, or to recommend the store to someone else. Conversely, if a complaining consumer is dissatisfied with the resolution outcome, then he or she will be less likely to choose to shop at that store again, or even recommend that store to someone else.

Hypothesis 5: The resolution outcome is positively related to the store repurchase intention.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

This chapter will discuss the sample, measurement tools, and the procedures and analyses used in this study.

3.1 Sample

This research sampled 61 consumers of electronic equipment in the greater New York area comprising the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. The participants were selected in cooperation with a major electronics retailer that kept detailed records of complaints filed by its customers. The retailer provided a list of its customers that had voiced complaints related to the purchase of electronic equipment within the 1996-1997 time frame. The researcher obtained a total of 400 names from the retailer and from those, 61 individuals agreed to participate in the research. The respondents ranged in age from under 21 years of age (3 percent) to over sixty years of age (8 percent), see Table 1. The cost of the items purchased was generally more than \$100 (91 percent), see Table 2. Table 3 provides a profile of the educational levels of the participants and Table 4 provides a distribution of the incomes of the participants.

Table 1: Age of Subjects**(n = 61)**

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Cumulative Percent</u>
Under 21	2	3.3	3.3
21-39	33	54.1	57.4
40-59	21	34.4	91.8
60+	5	8.2	100.0

Table 2: Cost of Purchase
(n = 61)

<u>Cost</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Cumulative Percent</u>
More than \$100	56	91.8	91.8
Less than \$100	5	8.2	100.0

Table 3: Education of Subjects
(n = 61)

Highest Degree	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Some High School	0	0.0	0.0
High School	9	14.8	14.8
Some College	15	24.6	39.3
College Graduate	25	41.0	80.3
Some Graduate School	2	3.3	83.6
Graduate	10	16.4	100.0

Table 4: Income of Subjects
(n = 61)

<u>Income</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Cumulative Percent</u>
Under \$25,000	13	21.3	21.3
\$25,000-\$49,999	14	23.0	56.3
\$50,000-\$75,000	10	16.4	77.1
Over \$75,000	11	18.0	100.0

The sample used in this study was a purposive (judgment) sample of customers from a major electronic retailer in the Northeast. This retailer was solicited because it had an extensive customer service department that enabled it to collect a variety of consumer information on the subjects, the exact nature of their complaints, and their transaction history throughout the course of the complaint.

Furthermore, this was a judgment sample because only cases which involved "defective merchandise of small electronics" over a six-month period were selected from all cases that were on file with the retailer. The reason for restricting the eligible cases to only these customers was because of the nature of the study, which was to examine the post complaint-resolution attitude of consumers at both the store and brand-level.

Since the retailer in question receives from several hundreds to several thousands of calls a day, depending on the season, for a variety of reasons from calls inquiring about store hours and directions to product defects and poor customer service, it was necessary to restrict the cases to those that involved product defects, and only those that were small enough for the consumer to take back to the store if necessary. Based on information from the contact person at the customer service department of the store, it was

determined that the 400 cases made available for this study represented almost the entire universe of such cases that were available.

One could argue that to increase the number of cases beyond the 400 that were available would have meant that cases chosen would have to date further back than the six months that were used in selecting these cases. Such a situation may introduce greater error into the study rather than improving the quality of it since the consumer's recall beyond a six-month would be less reliable.

Incrementally, there could also be negligible benefit since it can be expected that a proportionally higher number of respondents may not recall the exact transaction and would have to disqualify themselves from the study.

This sample was utilized for a number of reasons. First, the detailed records of the company provided a check with the information provided during the data collection procedure. This helped to ensure the integrity of the responses and to improve the quality of the data.

Second, this group of electronic purchasers was pre-identified as having voiced complaints and would therefore offer greater likelihood of generating sufficient responses for the research focus.

Third, the distinction between store and brand can easily be deciphered with respect to electronic equipment

purchases.

The sample size was set by guidelines set forth in two sources. Because the research analysis drew heavily upon the use of multiple regression and correlation, one method of setting sample size is to collect a set amount of subjects per independent variable (Neter, Wasserman, and Kutner 1990). Since as many as seven independent variables were to be used, the sample required should be between 42 and 70 subjects. Software computed Power analysis was also used (Borenstein, Cohen, Rothstein, and Pollack 1992). The software showed that a sample size of 50 would provide a power of .90 with an alpha of .05.

Out of a name list of 400 customers provided by the retailer, 210 "live contacts" were made through the telephone. Non "live contacts" are defined as those calls which reach telephone answering machines, wrong numbers, disconnected numbers, or those who have moved (see Tuckel and Shukkers 1997). Of the 210 "live contacts," 61 surveys were completed. These 61 usable responses were those that were given by individuals who remembered the complaint and the electronic equipment in question. Those who did not remember the complaint were disqualified and were not analyzed in this research. Those who refused were also not included for obvious reasons. The final response rate for this research was 29.0 percent (see Table 5).

According to a study by Weeks, Kulka and Pierson (1987), the average response rate for telephone interviews conducted on weekday evenings, as in this case, is between 27 and 31 percent. The response rate in this study falls in between this range.

Table 5: Response Rate

<u>Subjects Solicited</u>	<u>Contact Rate</u>	<u>Completion Rate</u>
400	52.5% (n=210)	29.0% (n=61)

Contact rate refers to the proportion of eligible respondents that yielded a "live contact"; *completion rate* refers to the number of completed interviews divided by the number of completed interviews and refusals. (Tuckel and Shukers 1997)

Breakdown of Non "Live Contacts" (n=190)

Reached telephone answering machines	134
Wrong numbers	9
Numbers disconnected	12
Moved	8
Unable to locate number for respondents	27

3.2 Measurement

The nature of this research was to collect data via telephone survey. Owing to the sensitive nature of calling homes and given the over-abundant use of the telephone for home solicitation purposes, it was believed that the objective of this research would best be served if the instrument exercised the utmost form of brevity. Therefore, item count was carefully assessed and all means of producing an efficient measure of the research variables were undertaken. To assist in recognizing the need for assurances of validity, each variable was measured using no less than two items.

Independent Variables

The three independent variables tested in this model are: perception of speed, perception of competence, and perception of fairness.

Speed Perception

Speed perception was measured on a five-point Likert type scale that was anchored with strongly agree and strongly disagree. A sixth response category (Don't know) was offered for respondents who were not sure of how to answer the question. Two items were used to measure speed perception. One item, for example, read "Your complaint was resolved promptly?" Both items were scored and summed to

form a composite score for speed perception. The procedure followed during the analysis was to utilize the summed items as the single indicator of speed perception.

Competence Perception

Competence perception was also measured on a five-point Likert type scale that was anchored with strongly agree and strongly disagree. A sixth response category (Don't know) was offered for respondents who were not sure of how to answer the question. Two items were used to measure competence perception. One item, for example, read "Your complaint was handled in a professional manner?" Both items were scored and summed to form a composite score for competence perception. The procedure followed during the analysis was to utilize the summed items as the single indicator of competence perception.

Fairness Perception

Fairness perception was measured on a five-point Likert type scale that was anchored with strongly agree and strongly disagree. A sixth response category (Don't know) was offered for respondents who were not sure of how to answer the question. Two items were used to measure fairness perception. One item, for example, read "The store seems willing to handle returns and exchanges?" Both items

were scored and summed to form a composite score for fairness perception. The procedure followed during the analysis was to utilize the summed items as the single indicator of fairness perception.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables are resolution outcome, brand repurchase intention, and store repurchase intention.

Resolution Outcome

Resolution outcome was measured on a five-point Likert type scale that was anchored with strongly agree and strongly disagree. A sixth response category (Don't know) was offered for respondents who were not sure of how to answer the question. Two items were used to measure resolution outcome. One item, for example, read "The solution offered by the store was satisfactory?" Both items were scored and summed to form a composite score for resolution outcome. The procedure followed during the analysis was to utilize the summed items as the single indicator of resolution outcome.

Brand Repurchase Intention

Brand repurchase intention was measured on a five-point Likert type scale that was anchored with strongly agree and

strongly disagree. A sixth response category (Don't know) was offered for respondents who were not sure of how to answer the question. Two items were used to measure brand repurchase intention. One item, for example, read "In the future, how likely is it that you would buy this same brand again?" Both items were scored and summed to form a composite score for brand repurchase intention. The procedure followed during the analysis was to utilize the summed items as the single indicator of brand repurchase intention.

Store Repurchase Intention

Store repurchase intention was measured on a five-point Likert type scale that was anchored with strongly agree and strongly disagree. A sixth response category (Don't know) was offered for respondents who were not sure of how to answer the question. Two items were used to measure store repurchase intention. One item, for example, read "In the future, how likely is it that you would shop at this store?" Both items were scored and summed to form a composite score for store repurchase intention. The procedure followed during the analysis was to utilize the summed items as the single indicator of store repurchase intention.

Control Variables

The control variables that were included in this research are: Age, cost, education, and income.

Age

Age was measured by asking the subject if "you are" (1) under 21, (2) 21 to 39, (3) 40 to 59, or (4) 60 or over.

Cost

Cost was measured by asking the subject "Did the item in question cost: (1) more than \$100, (2) less than \$100.

Education

Education was measured by asking the subjects to answer "what is the highest level of education you have completed?" The response categories were (1) some high school, (2) high school graduate, (3) some college, (4) college graduate, (5) some graduate school, (6) graduate degree. Respondents were requested to state their highest degree obtained.

Income

Income was measured by asking the subjects to answer "Is your annual household income:" (1) under \$25,000, (2) between \$25,000 and \$49,999, (3) between \$50,000 and \$75,000, (4) over \$75,000?

3.3 Procedure and Analyses

This research utilized a telephone survey procedure following a structured interview format (See Appendix).

Respondents were phoned at their homes predominantly during evening hours when many were believed likely to have returned home from work. Those who failed to answer their phones during evening hours were called at other times beginning in the morning and afternoon hours.

The subjects were not given any advance notice that their participation was to be solicited. Whenever the phone was answered, respondents were asked for by name. The interviewer immediately identified himself and stated the purpose of the call using the following structured script in all cases:

"We are most interested in your experience if you made a consumer electronic purchase that required the use of either store or manufacturer customer service recently. The following is a brief questionnaire that surveys you on what happened, and the nature of your experience while dealing with either the store or the manufacturer. There is no right or wrong answer. We are interested in only your opinions. Since a limited number of people are being surveyed, your answers are very important. But be assured that your responses are

totally confidential”.

Data collected during the telephone interviews were entered into a data file using SPSS for Windows. Statistical analyses were performed on the data as an empirical test of the research hypotheses.

The analyses commenced with descriptive statistics for the categorical variables such as demographics and the main variables of the research as well.

Correlation analyses were carried out to establish the degree of inter-relationship among the research's variables and to add evidence supporting or refuting the proposed hypotheses.

Finally, hierarchical regression analysis was utilized to search for empirical support of relationships between independent and dependent variables as specified in the research model. The choice of hierarchical regression was guided by the need for a powerful analytic tool that can define relationships after controlling for spurious relationships. In addition, the data that was collected was largely interval, however, some of the data was also categorical. Hierarchical regression is noted for its ability to handle different types of data simultaneously without negatively influencing the interpretation of the results.

Separate regression analyses were performed to test for

each of the hypothesized relationships between independent and dependent variables.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The analyses that were employed to statistically test the five hypotheses of this research were correlation analysis (See Table 6) and hierarchical multiple regression (See Tables 7 through 9). While the entire research offered correlational evidence of relationships posited in the research model and no causal relationships were formally tested, the evidence may be generally interpreted so as to infer some degree of causality. More formal tests of causal relationships would obviously be warranted.

Table 6: Correlation Coefficients
(n = 61)

<u>Variables</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Age									
2 Cost	-.119								
3 Education	.121	.191							
4 Income	.164	.164	.141						
5 Speed Perception	.153	-.172	-.166	-.064					
6 Competence Perception	-.082	-.195	-.169	-.165	.618 ^b				
7 Fairness Perception	-.038	-.087	-.041	-.304 ^a	-.456 ^b	.562 ^b			
8 Resolution Outcome	-.039	.024	-.183	.024	.630 ^b	.730 ^b	.674 ^b		
9 Brand Behavior	.039	.006	.095	-.045	.152	.208	.378 ^b	.242	
10 Store Behavior	-.031	-.023	-.309 ^a	-.243	.521 ^b	.718 ^b	.603 ^b	.696 ^b	.266 ^a

a= p < .05 (2-tailed)

b= p < .01 (2-tailed)

**Table 7: Determinants of Resolution Outcome
(n = 47)**

Variable	Steps	
	1	2
<u>Control Variables</u>		
Age	.017	-.008
Cost	.086	.173 ^a
Education	-.136	-.194 ^a
Income	.025	.243 ^a
<u>Independent Variables</u>		
Speed Perception		.185*
Competence Perception		.433 ^c
Fairness Perception		.442 ^c
ΔR^2 =		.712
R ² =	.02	.736
ΔF =		
F =	.264	15.931 ^c

* = $p < .10$
a = $p < .05$
b = $p < .01$
c = $p < .001$

Standardized Regression coefficients are reported.
Test of Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

**Table 8: Determinants of Post-Resolution Brand Behavior
(n = 45)**

Variable	Steps	
	1	2
<u>Control Variables</u>		
Age	.067	.062
Cost	-.039	-.061
Education	.003	.038
Income	-.057	-.063
<u>Independent Variables</u>		
Resolution Outcome		.260
ΔR^2	=	.066
R^2	=	.008
ΔF	=	.074
F	=	.090
*	=	p < .10
a	=	p < .05
b	=	p < .01
c	=	p < .001

Standardized Regression coefficients are reported.
Test of Hypothesis 4.

**Table 9: Determinants of Post-Resolution Store Behavior
(n = 45)**

Variable	Steps	
	1	2
<u>Control Variables</u>		
Age	.097	.062
Cost	.112	.065
Education	-.178	.057
Income	-.249	-.266 ^a
<u>Independent Variables</u>		
Resolution Outcome		.639 ^c
ΔR^2 =		.393
R^2 =	.10	.493
ΔF =		
F =	1.144	7.788 ^c

* = p < .10
a = p < .05
b = p < .01
c = p < .001

Standardized Regression coefficients are reported.
Test of Hypothesis 5.

The results of the research will now be reported in order, beginning with hypothesis 1 and concluding with hypothesis 5. The results begins with the first three hypotheses that examine the empirical relationships between the independent variables (speed perception, competence perception, and fairness perception) and resolution outcome.

Independent Variables

Speed Perception

Hypothesis 1: Perception of speed in the resolution handling process is positively related to the resolution outcome.

Correlation analysis (Table 6) showed clear evidence to support hypothesis 1 ($r = .63$, $p < .01$). Subsequent hierarchical regression analysis (Table 7), which controlled for age, cost, education, and income, also supported hypothesis 1, albeit less significantly (Beta = .185, $p < .10$, significant). The evidence, therefore, supports hypothesis 1.

Competence Perception

Hypothesis 2: Perception of competence in the resolution process is positively related to the resolution outcome.

Correlation analysis (Table 6) again revealed evidence to support hypothesis 2 ($r = .73$, $p < .01$). The

controlled for age, cost, education, and income, also supported hypothesis 2, (Beta = .433, $p < .001$, significant).

Fairness Perception

Hypothesis 3: Perception of fairness in the resolution process is positively related to the resolution outcome.

Correlation analysis (Table 6) again revealed evidence to support hypothesis 3 ($r = .674$, $p < .01$). The hierarchical regression analysis (Table 7), which also controlled for age, cost, education, and income, supported hypothesis 3, (Beta = .442, $p < .001$, significant). Hypothesis 3 was also, therefore, supported by the evidence.

Dependent Variables

Brand Repurchase Intention

Hypothesis 4: The resolution outcome is positively related to the brand repurchase intention.

Correlation analysis (Table 6) did not support hypothesis 4 ($r = .243$, non-significant). The hierarchical regression analysis (Table 8), which again controlled for age, cost, education, and income, also failed to support hypothesis 4, (Beta = .26, non-significant). Hypothesis 4 was, therefore, not supported by any of evidence produced by the analytic

procedures.

Store Repurchase Intention

Hypothesis 5: The resolution outcome is positively related to the store repurchase intention.

Correlation analysis (Table 6) offered evidence to support hypothesis 5 ($r = .696$, $p < .01$). The hierarchical regression analysis (Table 9), which again controlled for age, cost, education, and income, also supported hypothesis 5, ($\text{Beta} = .639$, $p < .001$, significant). Hypothesis 5, therefore, was supported by the evidence.

Summary of Results

The results of this research provide support for four out of five hypotheses (hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 5). Only the relationship between resolution outcome and brand behavior (hypothesis 4) failed to receive evidence of support. The implications of these results are addressed in the discussion section which follows.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this research was to empirically examine the linkage between consumer complaint handling and the repurchase intention of the consumer towards the store and the brand. In addition, this research also sought to confirm some of the prior research regarding the antecedents of consumer satisfaction which are part of the consumer complaint handling process. This is especially relevant given the numerous reports and studies that a large percentage of U.S. consumers are less than happy with various products and the level of customer service they are receiving. There is also ample evidence that satisfied consumers are more likely to be loyal, and they in turn will contribute to the profitability of the retailers and manufacturers.

Findings

Four of the five hypotheses tested in this study were supported. The only hypothesis that did not find support was Hypothesis 4, which is that the resolution outcome is positively related to the brand repurchase intention.

Hypothesis 1

In Hypothesis 1, perception of the speed or promptness in the resolution handling process is found to be positively related to the resolution outcome. This finding is consistent with earlier studies by Gilly (1987) and Kendall and Russ (1975) among others. Given what we know of the phenomenon of "poverty of time," where consumers are frequently pressed for time to do all the things they would like to do, it is natural that consumers are going to be more demanding of stores to service them in a prompt manner, whether it be in the purchasing process or the complaint handling process. It follows that stores which are able to serve their customers promptly will be evaluated more positively.

What this finding also points out is that stores need to examine more closely their overall consumer complaint handling process to determine if there are aspects of it which can be expedited. For example, a store might be wise to ensure that telephone calls or in-person calls to the consumer complaint or consumer service department are responded to within an acceptable time. The store might also want to set up store policies to govern the complaint handling process to ensure that complaints will be resolved within a certain pre-set time frame, and if not, the consumer will be given a full refund or some similar

resolution.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2, where perception of competence in the resolution handling is positively related to the resolution outcome, was also supported in this study. This finding is consistent with those by Stanforth (1993) and TARP (1986) which found that the perceived knowledge and professionalism of customer service representatives will impact on the consumer's evaluation of the service. The implication here is that stores need to invest in training their customer service staff to better handle consumer complaints. This is especially critical in the retail industry where employee turnover is relatively high, and employee compensation of those who have the most direct contact with the customer, and in this case, a customer who is irate and unhappy, are the same ones that have to "represent" the store in resolving the complaint to the customer's satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3

This study also found support for Hypothesis 3 which is a test of whether perception of fairness in the resolution handling process is positively related to the resolution outcome. The finding here is that consumers who perceive that their complaint has been handled in a fair and

equitable manner will be more positive with the resolution outcome as suggested by Goodwin and Ross (1992).

With greater emphasis on consumer rights, and greater consumer awareness of their rights, it can be expected that consumers will be much more demanding of stores to "hear them out," and provide them with customer service representatives who are trained in handling customers, and providing customers with the opportunity to vent or express their dissatisfaction.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4, which is a test of whether the resolution outcome is positively related to brand repurchase intention, is the only hypothesis that was not supported in this study. This finding, albeit a negative one, is the most important one in this study in that there is now empirical evidence that consumers are either unable or unwilling to assign blame to the brand or manufacturer even when they were clearly unhappy with the performance of the product. This finding is of significant interest to manufacturers of national brands in that they might be more aggressive in expanding their distribution outlet strategy to place their products in more stores as opposed to selected stores. Manufacturers might also place greater emphasis on their national advertising campaigns to develop a distinct brand

image of their product, including its quality and performance, and its warranty policies, if appropriate.

Hypothesis 5

The fifth and final hypothesis, which tested whether resolution outcome is positively related to store repurchase intention, is supported in this study. This finding is something we would expect from consistency theory, where it follows that consumers who are satisfied with the resolution outcome would be more likely to shop the store again, or to recommend the store to someone else. This finding is significant for retailers as it seems to suggest that consumers, for whatever reasons, are more likely to hold the stores accountable for their purchase, even when it can be determined that the source of the initial dissatisfaction is a product defect.

That is to say, retailers would be wise to take their consumer complaint and consumer service functions much more seriously and not simply abrogate that responsibility to the manufacturers even when the complaint is product-related. This calls into question the return policy of stores which direct customers to contact the manufacturers for resolution when there is a product defect. This finding would seem to indicate that consumers are more likely to rely on the retailer to act as the intermediary between them and the

manufacturer through the entire purchasing process, from the purchase stage to the post-purchase stage.

Theoretical Implications

This study is based on the research that exists in the area of consumer complaint management, customer loyalty and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Past research has indicated that satisfaction is one of the predictors of customer loyalty, and this in turn is a correlate of profitability. While there is some research that has called into question the strength and the specifics of these relationships, there is more than ample evidence demonstrating the overall soundness of these assumptions.

While there has been a relatively large amount of research activity that has focused on the area and nature of consumer complaint behavior, as outlined in the literature review chapter, much less research has looked into the area of consumer complaint management. The studies in this area have pointed to the linkages between satisfaction with the consumer complaint resolution outcomes with repurchase intentions. This study undertook to confirm some of the antecedent variables in the linkages found in these past findings and to empirically test the impact of store handling of consumer complaints on not only store repurchase intention but more specifically upon brand repurchase

intention.

One of the contributions of this research is that it has empirically tested in a single model some of the more pertinent antecedent variables of the relationship between store customer complaint handling performance and the customer's satisfaction. The fact that this sample is drawn from actual customers that had experienced a product dissatisfaction as opposed to other studies that have relied on either student samples or scenarios adds persuasiveness to the generality of these findings.

A second contribution of this study is that this research has, for the first time, empirically examined the specific impact of store customer handling performance on both repurchase intention toward the brand and store. This finding is significant in that it gives us new evidence to better understand the consumer complaining behavior process and the role of the retailer on not only their own future, but the future of national brands. This gives manufacturers who spend millions of dollars creating and maintaining a national brand a better understanding of how the retailers are independently affecting their brand's value by the manner in which they handle customer complaints at the frontline.

Managerial Implications

A consumer electronic chain was selected as the basis for this study because it is a segment of the retail industry which is highly competitive, and the products involved are mostly durable goods that are also commonly characterized as shopping goods. This retail sector provides us with the type of marketplace in which we can safely assume that consumers have a reasonable amount of retailer options to turn to and easy access to the national brands for which the implications of this research were targeted.

The fact that these products are durable goods and can be classified as shopping goods implies that consumers are more likely to evaluate the brands in a rational manner in terms of the best possible value a particular brand will offer as opposed to basing their purchasing decisions or intentions on other intangibles that cannot be verified.

The particular sample of customers that was provided for this study was also significant in that these are actual customer complaint cases that has been logged by the firm in question. The researcher was provided with access to the actual case logs detailing the nature of the complaint, the product that gave rise to the dissatisfaction, the cost of the product, and the resolution outcome offered to the complaining customer. The list of customers that became the

basis of the telephone interviews that were conducted over a three month period included customers with a specific product dissatisfaction. Customers who agreed to participate in this study were asked a series of questions to assess their evaluation of the firm's customer complaint handling performance. They were also asked their level of satisfaction with the complaint resolution outcome and subsequently their repurchase intention toward the store and the brand in question.

Retailers are unique in that they are the point of closest contact with the final customer. Studies have shown that the majority of initial complaints, when a customer chooses to voice that complaint, have been directed at the point of purchase (TARP 1979). This suggests that the study will have much greater validity since we will capture a much greater spectrum of voice complaints as opposed to looking at complaints that are targeted at the manufacturers (which is much narrower).

One of the overall managerial implications of this study is that retailers need to recognize that the manner in which they handle consumer complaints will have a direct impact on store re-patronage, where all things are equal. Retailers also need to recognize that they can impact consumer perception of their consumer complaint handling process by setting up clear store policies to govern the

complaint handling process to ensure that complaints will be resolved in a timely manner, that the staff is adequately trained and knowledgeable, and that the complaint resolution process is fair and open. Retailers also need to recognize that consumers are more likely to hold them accountable even when the primary complaint has to do with a product defect and cannot be dismissed as the responsibility of the manufacturer.

Managerial implications for manufacturers are that they should be more aggressive in expanding their distribution outlet strategy to place their products in more stores as opposed to selected stores. Manufacturers might also place greater emphasis on their national advertising campaigns to develop a distinct brand image of their product, including its quality and performance, and its warranty policies, if appropriate. National manufacturers should continue to promote their customer service and warranty services to reinforce the national brand image, but also recognize that consumers will more likely than not, direct their complaints to the retailers first.

Limitations of the Research

This research has a number of limitations that affect how much we can generalize the findings. One of the limitation is the sample size. While the strength of this

sample is that actual customers who experienced and voiced dissatisfaction were surveyed, the use of telephone surveys practically limited the sample size to some degree. The final sample size of 61 was adequate in terms of the research design, but one can probably argue that we could have benefited from a larger sample.

Still on the subject of the sample, this study could also be strengthened if we were to extend the sample to more than one industry to account for possible industry-specific effects. It has been noted in Chapter 1 that there are studies which suggest industry characteristics, such as the size and the degree of competition, will affect the findings of consumer complaint behavior.

Another limitation of this study is the possible bias of self-selection that is typical of survey research. The possibility of self-selection bias will of course cast some doubt on the causal relationships that are identified in this study (Sekaran 1984).

There are, of course, also the usual memory effects that are common to such survey design studies that might have contaminated the respondents' recollection of their complaining experience with the store in question.

Directions for Future Research

One possible area of future research is to extend this study to examine different combinations of products and types of stores, e.g., discount stores, department stores, warehouse stores, etc. This could be highly beneficial to national manufacturers as they try to determine the optimal distribution outlets they should use for their brands and what they could expect when using different types of retail outlets.

Other possible areas of future research would include looking at the possible differences of these linkages between national brands and private brands. National brands are obviously supported by the manufacturers themselves while private brands, a growing segment, are supported solely by the stores themselves. The extent to which complaining customers might differentiate between the store handling performance on national versus private brands might affect the manner in which stores promote their private brands.

Conclusion

This study examined a model of voice complaint outcomes and the relationship to consumer repurchase intentions. The first contribution of this study is the confirmation of the antecedent variables, namely: speed perception, competence perception, and fairness perception that were found to be significantly related to resolution outcome.

The second and more significant contribution of this study is that we now have developed some evidence that consumers seem to take a more simplistic view of repurchase intention toward the store even when they have a product dissatisfaction. This is an important finding in that such a dual conceptualization of repurchase intention at the brand and at the store level is something that has not been previously addressed in the literature.

APPENDIX

BARUCH COLLEGE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR STUDY

We are most interested in your experience if you made a *consumer electronic purchase that required the use of either store or manufacturer customer service* recently. The following is a brief questionnaire that surveys you on what happened, and the nature of your experience while dealing with either the store or the manufacturer. There is no right or wrong answer. We are interested in only your opinions. Since a limited number of people are being surveyed, your answers are very important. But be assured that your responses are totally confidential.

1. Do you recall contacting either a store or manufacturer for customer service recently?

___ If no, discontinue.

If yes, please indicate whether you contacted the:

Store ___ or the Manufacturer ___

2. Can you briefly describe the reason for your contacting the store? [Be specific]

Was your contact:

a. In-person? ___

b. By Phone? ___

c. By Mail? ___

3. How many times did you contact the store, either by phone or in person, in your attempt to resolve your problem?

4. Is the problem now resolved, or is it still pending?

___ Resolved ___ Pending (or Open)

5. Did the item in question cost more than \$100?

More than \$100 Less than \$100

I'd like to now ask you about your experience in dealing with the store. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by checking the appropriate boxes:

STRONGLY AGREE (SA)

AGREE (A)

NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE (ND)

DISAGREE (D)

STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD)

DON'T KNOW (DK)

6. Your complaint was resolved promptly.

SA (1) A (2) ND (3) D (4) SD (5) DK (6)

7. Your complaint was handled in a professional manner.

SA (1) A (2) ND (3) D (4) SD (5) DK (6)

8. The staff who handled your complaint seems knowledgeable in their job.

SA (1) A (2) ND (3) D (4) SD (5) DK (6)

9. The store seems willing to handle returns and exchanges.

SA (1) A (2) ND (3) D (4) SD (5) DK (6)

10. The store has an open and accessible complaint handling process.

SA (1) A (2) ND (3) D (4) SD (5) DK (6)

11. The solution offered by the store was satisfactory.

SA (1) A (2) ND (3) D (4) SD (5) DK (6)

12. The overall manner in which your complaint was handled by the store was satisfactory.

SA (1) A (2) ND (3) D (4) SD (5) DK (6)

Let me now get your opinion on a few more questions. In the same way, please indicate how likely or unlikely you will take the following actions:

VERY LIKELY (VL)
SOMEWHAT LIKELY (SL)
NEUTRAL (N)

SOMEWHAT UNLIKELY (SU)
VERY UNLIKELY (VU)

13. In the future, how likely is it that you would shop at the store?

VL (1) SL (2) N (3) SU (4) VU (5)

14. In the future, how likely is it that you would recommend the store to others?

VL (1) SL (2) N (3) SU (4) VU (5)

15. In the future, how likely is it that you would buy this same brand again?

VL (1) SL (2) N (3) SU (4) VU (5)

16. In the future, how likely is it that you would recommend this same brand to others?

VL (1) SL (2) N (3) SU (4) VU (5)

We are just about done. In order to help us classify your answers, I'd like to now ask you a few questions about yourself.

17. Are you: Under 21 40-59
 21-39 Over 60

18. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some high school
 High school graduate
 Some college
 College graduate
 Some graduate school
 Graduate degree

19. Is your annual household income:

Under \$25,000
 Between \$25,000 and \$49,999
 Between \$50,000 and \$75,000
 Over \$75,000

20. Can you kindly recall the name of the store you had a problem with? The brand?

Store: _____ Brand: _____

This concludes our survey. We'd like to thank you very much for taking the time to participate in his study.

REFERENCES

- Albrecht, Karl and Ron Zemke (1995). Service America, Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin.
- Alicke, Mark D., James C. Braun, Jeffery E. Glor, M.L. Klotz, John Magee, Heather Sederholm, Robin Siegel (1992), "Complaining Behavior in Social Interaction," Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18, 3 (June), 286-295.
- Alonzo, Vincent (1997), "Consumer complaints rise with employment rate," Incentive, Vol. 171, 9 (Sep), 10.
- Andreasen, Alan R. (1988), "Consumer Complaints and Redress: What We Know and What We Don't Know," in E. Scott Maynes, ed., Research in the Consumer Interest: The Frontier, 675-722.
- Andreasen, Alan R. and Arthur Best (1977), "Consumer Complain: Does Business Respond?" Harvard Business Review, 55, 4 (July-Aug), 93-101.
- Anonymous (1997). "What's most important to customer satisfaction?," ABA Banking Journal, Vol. 89, 9, September 1997, pp. 73-74.
- Bearden, William O. (1983). "Profiling Consumers Who register Complaints Against Auto Repair Services," Journal of Consumer Affairs, 17 (Winter), 315-24.
- Bearden, W.O. and Richard L. Oliver (1985), "The Role of Public and Private Complaining in Satisfaction with Problem Resolution," Journal of Consumer Affairs, 19 (Winter), 222-240.
- Bearden, William O. and Jesse E. Teel (1983). "Selected Determinants of Consumer Satisfaction and Complaint Reports," Journal of Marketing Research, 20 (Feb), 21-8.
- Bearden, W.O. and M. Crockett (1981). "Self-Monitoring, Norms, and Attitudes as Influences on Consumer Complaining," Journal of Business Research, 9, 255-266.
- Bearden, W.O., Richard L. Oliver and Melissa Crockett (1980). "A Path Model of Complaining Behavior," Marketing in the 1980s: Changes and Challenges, Chicago, IL: AMA, 101-104.

- Berlin, Rosalind Klein (1990), "Meet the World's Toughest Customers," Fortune, December 3, 44-45.
- Berner, Robert (1996). "Retailers Keep Expanding Amid Glut of Stores," Wall Street Journal, May 28, A, 21:3.
- Best, Arthur (1981). When Consumers Complain. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Best, Arthur and Alan R. Andreasen (1977). "Consumer Responses to Unsatisfactory Purchases: A Survey of Perceived Defects, Voicing Complaints, and Obtaining Redress," Law and Society Review, 11 (Spring), 701-42.
- Blattberg, Robert and John Deighton (1996). "Manage Marketing by the Customer Equity Test," Harvard Business Review, July-August, 136-144.
- Borenstein, Michael, Cohen, Jacob, Rothstein, Hannah R., Pollack, Simcha (1992). "A Visual Approach to Statistical Power Analysis on the Microcomputer," Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers, 24, 565-572.
- Brock, Luther A. (1974). "Don't Bug the Customer," Sales Management, Vol. 113, 5 (September 9), 48-49.
- Cavanaugh, Tim (1996). "Mall Crawl Palls," American Demographics, September, 14-16.
- Day, G.S. (1978). "Are Consumers Satisfied?," in D.A. Aaker and G.S. Day, eds., Consumerism: Search for the Consumer Interest, 3d ed., New York: Free Press, 406-417.
- Day, Ralph L. (1984). "Modeling Choices Among Alternative Responses to Dissatisfaction," in T.C. Kinnear (ed.), Advances in Consumer Research, 11, Ann Arbor, MI: Association for consumer Research, 496-499.
- Day, Ralph L., K. Grabicke, T. Schaetzle and F. Staubach (1981). "The Hidden Agenda of Consumer Complaining," Journal of Retailing, 57, 86-106.

- Day, Ralph L. and Steven B. Ash (1979). "Comparison of Patterns of Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior for Durables, Nondurables and Services," New Dimensions of Consumer Satisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Proceedings of the 3rd Annual CS/D&CB Conference, Ralph L. Day and H. Keith Hunt, eds., 190-195.
- Day, Ralph L. and E. Laird Landon (1977). "Toward a Theory of Consumer Complaining Behavior," in Consumer and Industrial Buying Behavior, Arch Woodside, Jagdish Sheth and Peter Benett, eds., Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 425-37.
- Day, Ralph L. and E. Laird Landon Jr. (1976). "Collecting Comprehensive Consumer Complaint Data by Survey Research," in Advances in Consumer Research, Vol. 3, Beverlee B. Anderson (ed.), Ann Arbor, MI: ACR, 263-68.
- Dwyer, F. Robert and Ronald J. Dornoff (1981). "The Congruency of Manufacturer Redress Actions and Consumer Redress Norms and Expectations," The Changing Marketing Environment: The Theories and Applications, Educators' Conference Proceedings, AMA, Kenneth L. Bernhardt, et. al., eds., 162-165.
- Engel, James, Roger Blackwell and David Kollat (1991), Consumer Behavior, New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Etzel, Michael J., and Bernard I. Silverman (1981), "A Managerial Perspective on Directions for Retail Customer Dissatisfaction Research," Journal of Retailing, 57 (Fall), 124-36.
- Fenvessy, Stanley J. (1974). "Importance of Fulfillment in Keeping Customers Happy," Direct Marketing, Vol. 36, 11 (March), 62-68.
- Festinger, Leon (1975). A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Folkes, Valerie (1984). "Consumer Reaction to Product Failure: An Attributional Approach," Journal of Consumer Research, 10 (March), 698-409.
- Fornell, Claes and Briger Wernerfelt (1988). "A Model for Customer Complaint Management," Marketing Science, 7 (Summer), 287-98.

- Fornell, Claes and Briger Wernerfelt (1987). "Defensive Marketing Strategy by Customer Complaint Management: A Theoretical Analysis," Journal of Marketing Research, 24 (November), 337-46.
- Fornell, Claes and Robert A. Westbrook (1984). "The Vicious Circle of Consumer Complaints," Journal of Marketing, 48 (Summer), 68-78.
- Fornell, Claes and Nicholas M. Didow (1980), "Economic Constraints on Consumer Complaining Behavior," in Advances in Consumer Research, Vol. 8, 318-323.
- Fornell, C. (1976), "Consumer Input for Marketing Decisions-A Study of Corporate Departments for Consumer Affairs," New York: Praeger.
- Fortune (1995). "After all you've done for your customers, why are they still not happy." December 11, 178-182.
- Gilly, Mary C. (1987). "Postcomplaint Processes: From Organizational Response to Repurchase Behavior," Journal of Consumer Affairs, 21, 2 (Winter), 293-313.
- Gilly, Mary C. and Betsy D. Gelb (1982), "Post-Purchase Consumer Processes and the Complaining Consumer," Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 9 (December), 323-328.
- Goodwin, C. and Ross, I. (1992). "Consumer Responses to Service Failures: Influence of Procedural and Interactional Fairness Perceptions," Journal of Business Research, Vol. 25, 2, 149-163.
- Grant, Linda (1999). "Now Are You Satisfied?," Fortune, February 16, 161-166.
- Gronhaug, Kjell and Gerald Zaltman (1981). "Complainers and Non-Complainers Revisited: Another Look at the Data," Journal of Economic Psychology, Vol. 1, 2, 121-134.
- Halstead, Diane and T.J. Page (1992). "The effects of satisfaction and complaining behavior on consumer repurchase intentions," Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Complaining Behavior, Vol. 5, 1-11.
- Hirschman, Albert O. (1970). Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Howard, John A. (1974). "The Structure of Buyer Behavior," in Consumer Behavior: Theory and Application, John V. Farley, John A. Howard, and L. Winston Ring, eds. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 9-32.
- Jacob, Raul (1994). Fortune (1994), "Why Some Customers are More Equal than Others," September 9, 1994, 215-224.
- Jacoby, J. and J.J. Jaccard (1981). "The sources, meaning, and validity of Consumer Complaint Behavior: A Psychological Analysis," Journal of Retailing, 57, 4-24.
- Johnson, Jane (1997). "Keeping it personal," Discount Merchandiser, Vol. 37, 9 (Sep), 98.
- Kelly, J. Patrick (1979), "Consumer Expectations of Complaint Handling by Manufacturers and Retailers of Clothing Products," New Dimensions of Consumer satisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Proceedings of the 3rd Annual CS/D & CB Conference, Ralph Day, ed., Bloomington: Indiana University, School of Business, 79-84.
- Kendall, C.L., and Frederick A. Russ (1975). "Warranty and Complaint Policies: An Opportunity for Marketing Management," Journal of Marketing, Vol. 39, No. 2 (April), 36-43.
- Kraft, Frederic B. (1977), "Characteristics of Consumer Complainers and Complaint and Repatronage Behavior," in Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Complaining Behavior, Ralph Day (ed.), Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 79-84.
- LaBarbera, Priscilla A. and David Mazursky (1983), "A Longitudinal Assessment of Consumer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction: The Dynamic Aspect of the Cognitive Process," Journal of Marketing Research, 20 (November), 393-404.
- Lewis, Robert C. (1982). "Consumers Complain-What Happens When Business Responds?" in Consumer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior Conference Proceedings, Ralph Day and Keith Hunt, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University, 88-94.
- Liefeld, J.P., F.H.C. Edgecombe, and L. Wolfe (1975). "Demographic Characteristics of Canadian Consumer Complainers," The Journal of Consumer Affairs, 9, 73-

80.

- Martin, Ingrid (1991). "Expert-Novice Differences in Complaint Scripts," in Advances in Consumer Research, Vol. 18, 225-231.
- McClure, Nancy Ryan and Pamela Kiecker (1992), "Explaining Differences in Individuals' Propensity to Complain," in Enhancing Knowledge Development in Marketing, Vol. 3, Robert P. Leone and V. Kumar (eds.), Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, 79-84.
- Miller, J.A. (1970). "Who is the Discontented Consumer," Combined Proceedings, Chicago, IL: AMA, 486-490.
- Morganosky, Michelle Ann and Hilda Meyer Buckley (1986). "Complaint Behavior: Analysis by Demographics, Lifestyle and Consumer Values," in Advances in Consumer Research, Vol. XIV, Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, eds., Association for Consumer Research, Provo, UT, 223-26.
- Moyer, M.S. (1985). "Characteristics of Consumer Complainants: Implications for Marketing and Public Policy," Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, 3, 67-84.
- Neter, John, William Wasserman, and Michael H. Kutner (1990). Applied Linear Statistical Models: Regression, Analysis of Variance, and Experimental Designs. Third Edition, Homewood, IL: Irwin.
- Newman, Joseph W. and Richard A. Werbel (1973). "Multivariate Analysis of Brand Loyalty for Major Household Appliances," Journal of Marketing Research, 42 (November), 404-49.
- Oster, Sharon (1980). "The Determinants of Consumer Complaints," Review of Economics and Statistics, Vol. 62, 4 (Nov), 603-609.
- Pearson, Michael M. (1976). "A Note on Business Replies to Consumer Letters of Praise and Complaint," Journal of Business Research (February), 61-67.
- Pfaff, M. and S. Blivice (1977). "Socioeconomic Correlates of Consumer and Citizen Dissatisfaction and Activism," in Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Complaining Behavior, Ralph L. Day, ed., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 115-123.

- Phillips, Steven (1990). "King Customer," Business Week, March 12, 88-94.
- Rachman, David and Keith J. Fabes (1992). "The Decline of the Traditional American Department Store", Journal of Marketing Channels, Volume 1 (3), pp.43, 44.
- Reichheld, Frederick F. (1996). The Loyalty Effect: The Hidden Force Behind Growth, Profits, and Lasting Value, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rice, Faye (1990). "How to Deal with Tougher Customers," Fortune, December 3, 38-48.
- Richins, Marsha L. and Bronislaw J. Verhage (1985), "Seeking Redress for Consumer Dissatisfaction: The Role of Attitudes and Situational Factors," Journal of Consumer Policy, Vol. 8, 1 (March), 29-44.
- Richins, Marsha (1983). "Negative Word-of-Mouth by Dissatisfied Consumers: A Pilot Study," Journal of Marketing, 47 (Winter), 68-78.
- Richins, Marsha (1982). "An Investigation of Consumer Attitudes Toward Complaining," in Advances in Consumer Research, Vol. 9, Andrew Mitchell, ed., Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, 502-506.
- Richins, Marsha (1980). "Consumer Perceptions of the Costs and Benefits Associated with Complaining," in Refining Concepts and Measures of Consumer Satisfaction and Complaining Behavior, H. Keith Hunt and Ralph L. Day, eds., Bloomington, Indiana University, School of Business, Division of Research, 196-201.
- Robinson, L.M. (1978). "Consumer Complaint Behavior: A Review with Implications for Further Research," in New Dimensions of Consumer Satisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Ralph L. Day and H. Keith Hunt (eds.), Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 41-50.
- Rosentein, J. (1988). "Top Consumer Complaint: Account Errors," American Banker, November 1, pp. 1, 14-15.
- Rust, Roland T. and Zahorik, Anthony J. (1993). "Customer Satisfaction, Customer Retention, and Market Share," Journal of Retailing, Vol. 69, 2 (Summer) 193-215.
- Sellers, Patricia (1993). "Keeping the Buyers You Have," Patricia Sellers, Fortune, Special Issue Autumn/Winter, 56-28.

- Sellers, Patricia (1990c). "What Customers Really Want," Fortune, June 4, 58-68.
- Sekaran, U. (1984). Research Methods for Managers: A Skill-building Approach, New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Singh, Jagdip and Shefali Pandya (1991). "Exploring the Effects of Consumers' Dissatisfaction Level on Complaint Behaviors," European Journal of Marketing, 25, 9, 7-21.
- Singh, Jadip (1990). "A Typology of Consumer Dissatisfaction Response Styles," Journal of Retailing, Vol. 66, 1 (Spring), 57-99.
- Singh, Jagdip (1988). "Consumer Complaint Intentions and Behavior: Definitional and Taxonomical Issues," Journal of Marketing, 52 (Jan), 93-107.
- Singh, J. & Howell, R.D (1985). "Consumer Complaining Behavior: A Review and Prospectus," in Ralph Day and Keith Hunt (eds.), Proceedings of the Conference on Consumer Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Bloomington: Indiana University, 41-49.
- Solnick, Sara J. and David Hemenway (1992). "Complaints and Disenrollment at a Health Maintenance Organization," Journal of Consumer Affairs, 26 (1), 90-103.
- Spreng, Richard A. (1992), "A Comprehensive Model of the Consumer Satisfaction Formation Process," unpublished dissertation, Indiana University.
- Spreng, Richard A. and Andrea L. Dixon (1992), "Alternative Comparison Standards in the Formation of Consumer Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction," in Enhancing Knowledge Development in Marketing, Vol. 3, Robert P. Leone and V. Kumar (eds.), Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, 85-91.
- Stanforth, M. (1993). "Customer Expectations and Management Event Schemata: Satisfaction, Patronage and Retail Store Service, Unpublished dissertation, Ohio State University.
- Steinhauer, Jennifer (1997). "Whatever Happened To Customer Service," New York Times, March 4, D1.

- Stokes, Raymond C. (1974). "Consumer Complaints and Consumer Dissatisfaction," The Food and Drug Law Institute, Phoenix, AZ, April.
- Technical Assistance Research Programs (1986). Consumer Complaint Handling in America: An Update Study," Contract HHS-100-84-0065, Washington, D.C.
- Technical Assistance Research Programs (1981). Measuring the Grapevine--Consumer Response and Word of Mouth. Atlanta: The Coca-Cola Company.
- Technical Assistance Research Programs (1979). Consumer Complaint Handling in America: Summary of Findings and Recommendations. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs.
- Timn, R. (1990). "Use the Profit Power of Customer Service," Executive Excellence, Vol. 20, February, 27-29.
- Tuckel, Peter and Shukers, Trish (1997). "The Answering Machine Dilemma: Does Leaving a Message Improve Response Rates," Magazine of Management & Applications, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 4+.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996), Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1996 (116th Edition), Washington, D.C.
- Verdisco, Bob (1997). "It's the customer, stupid!," Discount Store News, Vol. 36, 19, October 6, 16.
- Wall, M., L.E. Dickey and W.W. Talarzyk (1977). "Predicting and Profiling Consumer Satisfaction and Propensity to Complain," in Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Ralph L. Day, ed., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 91-101.
- Warland, Rex H., Robert O. Herrmann and Dan E. Moore (1984), "Consumer Complaining and Community Involvement: An Exploration of Their Theoretical and Empirical Linkages," Journal of Consumer Affairs, 18, 1 (Summer), 64-78.
- Warland, Rex H., Robert O. Herrmann and Jane Willits (1975). "Dissatisfied Consumers: Who Gets Upset and Who Takes Action," Journal of Consumer Affairs, 9 (Winter), 148-63.

- Weeks, M.F., Richard A. Kulka and Stephanie A. Pierson (1987). "Optimal Call Scheduling For a Telephone Survey," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 51, pp. 540-549.
- Yi, Youjae (1990), "A Critical Review of Consumer Satisfaction," in Review of Marketing 1990, Valerie A. Zeithaml, ed., Chicago, IL: AMA, 68-123.
- Zemke, Ron and Dick Schaaf (1989), The Service Edge: 101 Companies that Profit from Customer Care, NY, NY: New American Library.