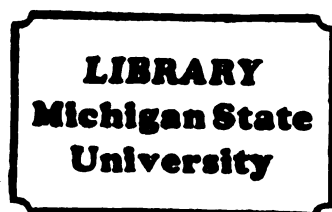


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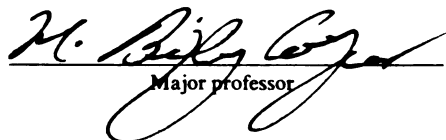
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**VARIATIONS IN CONSUMER POSTPURCHASE
RESPONSES: THE EFFECTS OF SATISFACTION LEVEL
AND COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR**

By

Diane Marie Halstead

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

VARIATIONS IN CONSUMER POSTPURCHASE RESPONSES: THE EFFECTS OF SATISFACTION LEVEL AND COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR

By

Diane Marie Halstead

Marketing researchers and practitioners have long recognized the importance of consumer satisfaction. In numerous empirical studies, consumer satisfaction has been found to be inversely related to complaint behavior. Yet dissatisfaction typically explains only 15 percent of the variation in consumer complaint behavior. Thus, dissatisfaction is not a sufficient condition for complaining to occur. Others have argued that dissatisfaction may not even be a necessary condition. Not all dissatisfied consumers complain, nor are all complainers dissatisfied.

A two-by-two matrix provides the research framework for investigating the effects of satisfaction level and complaining behavior on consumer postpurchase responses. Four groups are represented in the research framework: satisfied noncomplainers, dissatisfied noncomplainers, satisfied complainers, and dissatisfied complainers. An expanded research framework examines postpurchase responses of these four groups and further subdivides the complainer groups into those who are satisfied with complaint response and those who are dissatisfied with complaint response. Differences in the following dependent variables among the consumer groups are examined: retrieved expectations, subjective disconfirmation beliefs, repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth behavior, attitudes toward complaining, future complaint intentions, and various demographic variables.

The research uses a field survey approach in which 404 consumers of a nationally advertised carpet brand were interviewed via telephone regarding various postpurchase responses. The nationwide sample was then divided into the groups described.

The results indicated that higher retrieved expectations and more negative disconfirmation beliefs were reported by dissatisfied consumers and by complainers. Repurchase intentions were highest among those consumers who were originally satisfied with the product, not those who were satisfied with complaint response, contradicting previous research. Customer perceptions of the service received during the complaint handling process significantly predicted their satisfaction with complaint response. In addition, consumers who were satisfied with complaint resolution had significantly more positive attitudes toward complaining than other groups.

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DEDICATION

To Kevin, for your unfailing love and support throughout our marriage. You are truly one in a million.

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer satisfaction has long been a central concern of marketing practitioners and researchers (Kotler 1976). As described early on by Hunt (1977b, p. 459), "Satisfaction is not the pleasurable-ness of the [consumption] experience...it is the evaluation rendered that the experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be." Since Hunt's conceptualization, there appears to be an emerging consensus that the satisfaction formation process is comparative in nature (Oliver 1989). In addition, this process is thought to result in an "emotional response manifested in feelings and is conceptually distinct from cognitive responses, brand affect, and behavioral responses" (Day 1983, p. 113).

Importance of Consumer Satisfaction

The importance of studying consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is largely due to the recognition that consumer satisfaction states are antecedents to many other postpurchase processes including complaining behavior (Bearden 1983; Bearden and Teel 1983; Day 1984; Day and Ash 1979; Day and Landon 1977; Gronhaug and Arndt 1979; Singh 1988), word-of-mouth transmissions (Day and Landon 1977; Richins 1983a, 1983b; Westbrook 1987), brand loyalty (Howard and Sheth 1969; Fornell 1976), and purchase intentions (Howard 1974; LaBarbera and Mazursky 1983; Oliver 1980, 1987). In addition, the identification and management of customer dissatisfaction so that negative effects on a firm are minimized are fundamental objectives of a defensive marketing strategy

(Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987). Defensive marketing is concerned with minimizing customer turnover by reducing customer exit and brand switching. Defensive marketing strategists thus take the position that satisfaction and loyalty can be restored through effective complaint management. Consumer satisfaction information can therefore serve as a feedback mechanism for organizations (Goodman and Malech 1986).

Importance of Complaining Behavior

The study of consumer complaining behavior (CCB) and its consequences is useful for practitioners because it may provide an understanding of the extent of marketplace dissatisfaction. It may also help practitioners design and implement effective customer service programs to alleviate complaints. For researchers, CCB appears to be critical in the explanation and prediction of repurchase intentions and brand loyalty (Day 1984; Richins 1983a). From a macromarketing perspective, the nature and extent of CCB in an industry may affect consumer and social welfare in that they indicate possible reforms needed in the marketplace (Andreasen 1984, 1985).

Despite the fact that unsatisfactory purchases appear to be prevalent (Andreasen and Best 1977; Day and Ash 1979; Day and Bodur 1978), consumers' reactions to dissatisfaction in terms of complaining behavior vary considerably. Frequently, consumers do not take action to alleviate marketplace problems (Andreasen and Best 1977; Warland, Herrmann, and Willits 1975). Failure to complain then prevents the consumer from obtaining redress. Thus, the study of CCB alone may not fully capture the extent of consumer dissatisfaction. Similarly, the study of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction without an examination of possible accompanying complaint activities may mask marketplace problems

which firms could and/or should correct. These limitations indicate a need for a greater integration of consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior research than has occurred to date.

Integrating Consumer Satisfaction and Complaining

Most attempts at an integration of the two research streams have been extensions of existing satisfaction models which incorporate complaining as one consequence of dissatisfaction. That is, satisfaction is assumed to be inversely related to complaint behavior. Singh (1988) goes so far as to state that "without perceptions of dissatisfaction, consumers' responses cannot qualify as CCB" (p. 94). Yet satisfaction/dissatisfaction has been found to explain only about 15 percent of the variation in consumer complaining behavior (Bearden and Teel 1983; Oliver 1987). Consumer dissatisfaction is not a sufficient condition for complaining to occur. Day (1983) presented a number of conditions which may affect complaint propensity including causal attributions and perceived costs and benefits of complaining. Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) argue that dissatisfaction may not even be a necessary condition. They present some evidence that complainers can include satisfied customers who perceive benefits, some fraudulent, to contacting a manufacturer. Thus, not all dissatisfied consumers complain nor are all complainers dissatisfied. There is a need, therefore, to investigate consumers who represent these exceptions.

Purpose and Scope of the Research

Because satisfaction and dissatisfaction can be viewed as mutually exclusive locations on a satisfaction continuum (Oliver 1987) and the act of complaining can be represented as a yes-no activity, the relation

between the two constructs can be easily displayed in the two-by-two table shown in Figure 1-1. The cells of greatest interest are the satisfied complainers and the dissatisfied noncomplainers, though comparisons among all four groups would contribute to the knowledge of consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior. It should be noted that the satisfied/dissatisfied classification refers to the consumer's original satisfaction with the product, not satisfaction after complaining. The two-by-two matrix provides a research framework for investigating the effects of satisfaction level and complaining behavior on consumer postpurchase responses. Specifically, differences in the following dependent variables among each of the four groups represented in Figure 1-1 will be examined:

- (1) Reported expectation levels (prepurchase beliefs about a product's performance);
- (2) Disconfirmation beliefs (the extent to which expectations were met, unmet, or exceeded);
- (3) Repurchase intentions;
- (4) Extent of word-of-mouth behavior;
- (5) Favorability of word-of-mouth transmissions;
- (6) Attitudes toward complaining;
- (7) Future complaint intentions; and
- (8) Demographic/environmental variables (household size and age distribution, pet ownership, gender).

In addition to the dependent variables listed previously, motives for complaining will be examined among satisfied versus dissatisfied complainers. Their postpurchase satisfaction with the organization's complaint response will be investigated as well.

	Complainers	Noncomplainers
Satisfied		
Dissatisfied		

FIGURE 1-1

THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research uses a field survey approach in which consumers of a nationally advertised carpet brand were interviewed via telephone regarding various postpurchase responses. The nationwide sample was then divided into the four groups described previously.

Expected Contribution of the Research

The research grid presented in Figure 1-1 provides a framework for comparing differences across four key consumer groups: satisfied noncomplainers, satisfied complainers, dissatisfied noncomplainers, and dissatisfied complainers. With the exception of Gilly and Gelb (1982) and Oliver (1987), previous research has not explicitly recognized that the act of complaining may interact with a consumer's satisfaction state to significantly impact other postpurchase responses. For example, does the act of complaining formally to a manufacturer affect the nature or

extent of a dissatisfied consumer's word-of-mouth communications? Or, does a satisfied consumer who has not complained have significantly higher repurchase intentions than one who has complained? If so, would this still hold true if the complaint was resolved to the customer's satisfaction? Unlike previous empirical research, this framework recognizes that, in addition to the direct impact of satisfaction and complaining behavior, the interaction of these two constructs may lead to significantly different effects on postpurchase responses.

From a managerial perspective, a firm's vulnerability to negative word-of-mouth and loss of repeat business may be grossly underestimated if complaint rates are used as dissatisfaction indicators (Richins 1983a). A number of studies have challenged the basic assumption that complaint rates fully capture the extent of consumer dissatisfaction (Best and Andreasen 1977; Day and Landon 1976). In reality, the incidence of complaints is often much lower than the incidence of either of the other two responses. For effective customer service and complaint management then, satisfaction and complaining behavior must be investigated in tandem.

A further contribution of the research is the examination of the satisfied complainers group. Despite Jacoby and Jaccard's (1981) recognition of this group's possible existence, no empirical research on this group has been conducted. Indeed, the common view is that a high level of dissatisfaction is a necessary condition for complaining behavior to occur (Day et al. 1981; Singh 1988). This research not only identifies a large number of satisfied complainers for a particular product category, but investigates a number of their postpurchase responses, attitudes, motives, and intentions.

The research also examines several key constructs identified by past researchers as critical to a further understanding of consumer complaint behavior. Specifically, complaint intentions as well as complaining behavior are examined, as recommended by Singh (1988). In addition, the consumer's post-complaint satisfaction level with the organization's complaint response is investigated, as originally proposed by Andreassen (1977). Further research on this construct is necessitated by the conflicting findings of Gilly and Gelb (1982) and Bearden and Oliver (1985). For example, Bearden and Oliver found an inverse relationship between a consumer's monetary costs associated with a complaint and satisfaction with a firm's response. Gilly and Gelb's research did not find this.

Finally, much of the empirical research on consumer satisfaction has been based on experiments rather than field studies. Previous experiments typically involved presenting subjects with fictitious product information or buying scenarios (e.g., Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Tse and Wilton 1988). Results from hypothetical consumption approaches may not extend to real-life consumption situations, however. This research studies actual purchasers of a household product, thus providing a greater degree of external validity.

Organization of the Research

For background, a review of the literature on consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior is presented in Chapter Two. In this review, the theoretical foundation behind satisfaction research is discussed first, followed by a summary of empirical findings. Consumer complaining behavior theory is then presented prior to a discussion of

the empirical results. Chapter Three provides the theoretical support for the hypothesized differences among the four consumer groups shown in Figure 1-1. The methodology for testing these differences is described in Chapter Four, and preliminary results are provided. The main results are given in the Fifth Chapter, followed by a discussion of the findings and their implications. The conclusions are provided in the final chapter which includes an overview of the results, their contributions, the limitations of the research, and suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a broad review of the consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior literature. The chapter is organized in the following manner. First, the concept of consumer satisfaction is defined. This is followed by a categorization of previous research in the area. Then a discussion of the theoretical foundation underlying consumer satisfaction models is presented. Empirical findings are provided as support. The second part of the chapter reviews consumer complaining behavior (CCB) and presents various typologies of the CCB concept. Theoretical and empirical research in the CCB area is then reviewed. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the existing research.

Satisfaction Defined

Despite considerable theoretical and empirical research in the area, the concept of consumer satisfaction is still not well-defined (Oliver 1989). Even in disciplines with long-standing traditions in satisfaction research, the concept has defied exact specification. For example, Locke (1969) summed up the work in job satisfaction by stating that it is "a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one's job and what one perceives it as offering or entailing" (p. 316). Howard and Sheth (1969) then adapted Locke's comparative definition to a consumer context by arguing that satisfaction is "the buyer's cognitive state of being adequately or inadequately rewarded for the sacrifice he has undergone" (p. 145). Both Locke's and the Howard and Sheth definition contain elements of appraisal and comparison.

After a seminal conference on consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Hunt 1977a), Hunt (1977b) summarized the definitions offered by a number of speakers by concluding that satisfaction is an "evaluation rendered that the (product) experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be" (p. 459). Oliver (1981) expanded on Hunt's definition to include the consumer's emotional response to the comparison process. He argued that satisfaction is "an evaluation of the surprise inherent in a product acquisition and/or consumption experience. In essence, it is the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about the consumption experience" (p. 27). Westbrook (1980) defined satisfaction as the "favorability of the individual's subjective evaluation" (p. 49). Fornell (1976) described dissatisfaction as the discontent which evolves as a result of a consumer's expectations not being met (p. 82).

Despite apparent similarities in these definitions, Hunt himself questioned the summary definition he provided: "One has to wonder whether 'satisfaction' is the best word for what (the conference attendees) are talking about" (p. 461). There does appear to be some consensus regarding the evaluative and comparative aspects of the satisfaction concept. Debate about the additional dimensions of satisfaction continues, however.

For example, Leavitt (1977) used the Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) two-factor theory of job satisfaction to hypothesize that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not bipolar opposites of the same construct but are in fact different psychological states. He found no empirical support for the two-factor view, however. Jacoby (1976)

also suggested a parallel between the two-factor content approach presented in job satisfaction research and the effects that might be observed in the context of consumer satisfaction. He suggested that some product factors would, by their presence or absence, either positively or negatively (but not both) affect purchase and/or subsequent behaviors. Cadotte and Turgeon (1988) supported this view empirically, stating that their data suggested "that some attributes could be salient in their potential to cause dissatisfaction while other attributes could be salient in their potential to cause high levels of satisfaction" (p. 74). Thus, despite the widespread belief that satisfaction is unidimensional, some evidence appears to support a multidimensional view.

The study of specific product attribute influences on satisfaction is incomplete according to Oliver (1989), however. He argued that "while this 'attribute-basis' of satisfaction/dissatisfaction is intriguing, it says little about the specific thought processes triggered by the product features. In particular, it fails to identify the mechanism by which performance is converted into a psychological reaction by the consumer" (p. 5).

Also unresolved in the literature is the question of the cognitive versus affective nature of consumer satisfaction. Some researchers have proposed that satisfaction is merely postpurchase attitude (LaTour and Peat 1979; Swan and Combs 1976). Others argue that it is a combination of affective, cognitive, and even conative influences (Pfaff 1977; Westbrook 1980). The prevailing view still seems to be that the satisfaction process results in an affective or emotional response as opposed to a cognition (see Oliver 1989 and Hunt 1977b for a review).

Areas of Previous Satisfaction Research

Most of the consumer satisfaction research to date can be categorized into one of the following areas:

- (1) Survey research assessing incidences of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with various products and services (Ash 1978; Best and Andreasen 1977; Day and Ash 1979; Day and Bodur 1977; Handy 1977; Handy and Pfaff 1975);
- (2) Studies of the relationship between satisfaction and various socioeconomic and demographic characteristics (Ash 1978; Best and Andreasen 1977; Handy 1977; Mason and Himes 1973; Warland, Herrmann and Willits 1975);
- (3) Investigations of the theoretical antecedents of satisfaction (Bearden and Teel 1983; Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Oliver 1980; Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Swan and Trawick 1981; Tse and Wilton 1988; Woodruff, Cadotte, and Jenkins 1983);
- (4) Models linking satisfaction to postpurchase behaviors such as redress-seeking (Bearden and Teel 1983; Day 1980; Oliver 1980, 1987), repurchase (LaBarbera and Mazursky 1983), preference and intention (Oliver and Linda 1981), and word-of-mouth (Richins 1983a; Westbrook 1987); and
- (5) Issues related to the conceptualization and measurement of customer satisfaction (Andreasen 1977; Hunt 1977a; LaTour and Peat 1979; Leavitt 1977; Miller 1977; Pfaff 1972, 1977; Westbrook and Oliver 1981).

In addition to product/service satisfaction, researchers have examined consumer satisfaction with other aspects of the marketing system. Westbrook (1981) studied sources of consumer satisfaction with

retail outlets. Westbrook, Newman, and Taylor (1978) investigated appliance consumers to learn about their satisfactions and dissatisfactions felt during the purchase decision process. Duhaime (1988) examined consumer satisfaction with the distribution system for durable products. Thus, satisfaction/dissatisfaction can occur during any of three stages of consumer behavior: prepurchase (the discovery of need or opportunity and subsequent information search and processing), purchase (product and brand choice), and postpurchase (product consumption and evaluation; Harrell 1986). These studies are few in number, however, compared to those investigating satisfaction with products/services or models of satisfaction formation. Thus, the process underlying consumer satisfaction decisions is the focus of most of the recent literature (e.g., Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Bearden and Teel 1983; LaBarbera and Mazursky 1983; Oliver 1980, 1987; Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Tse and Wilton 1988; Westbrook 1980, 1987; Woodruff, Cadotte, and Jenkins 1983). The theoretical foundation underlying consumer satisfaction models is presented in the following section.

Theoretical Background--Satisfaction

Until recently, consumer behaviorists had no theory of satisfaction. Rather, the postdecision phenomenon known as cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) was thought to provide a sufficient framework for understanding satisfaction. More recent theoretical and empirical works (Bearden and Teel 1983; Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Oliver 1980; Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Swan and Trawick 1981; Tse and Wilton 1988) have made inroads into determining the exact nature and predictors of satisfaction by focusing on consumer expectations and the disconfirmation process.

A substantial amount of this research has been based on Oliver's (1980) seminal work in which he proposed a model integrating the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction. His model expressed consumer satisfaction as a function of expectations and disconfirmation beliefs. Satisfaction, in turn, is believed to influence postpurchase attitude and repurchase intention. Figure 2-1 presents Oliver's model.

Expectations

Expectations have been described as predictions about the future performance of an item (Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell 1968; Howard and Sheth 1969) and prepurchase beliefs about the overall performance or attribute levels of a product (LaTour and Peat 1979; Olson and Dover 1976). They are an integral part of consumer behavior theory and particularly of consumer satisfaction models. Expectations are considered the standard or frame of reference against which product performance is compared (Oliver 1980).

Theoretical support for the role of expectations in the satisfaction formation process is provided by Helson's (1948) adaptation level theory and assimilation/contrast theory (Anderson 1973; Hovland, Harvey, and Sherif 1957; Sherif and Hovland 1961). Expectations are a baseline against which subsequent product evaluations are made. They serve as an adaptation level which "sustains subsequent evaluations in that positive and negative deviations will remain in the general vicinity of one's position. Only large impacts on the adaptation level will change the final tone of the subject's evaluation" (Oliver 1980, p. 461). Similarly, Anderson (1973) proposed that consumer satisfaction judgments will assimilate toward expectation levels unless there is a

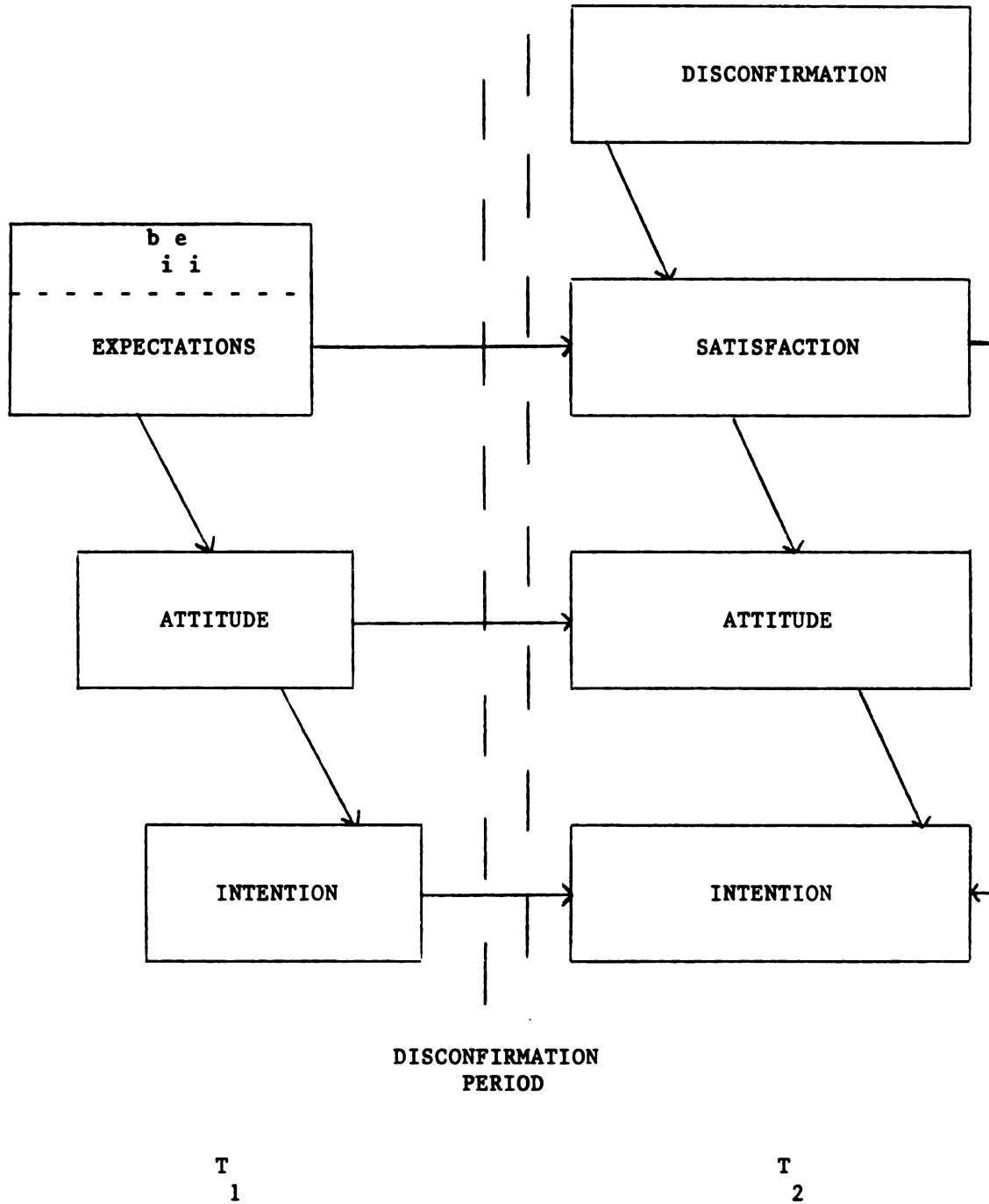


FIGURE 2-1

OLIVER'S (1980) SATISFACTION MODEL

significant expectations-performance discrepancy. Thus, high (low) expectations will lead to high (low) satisfaction.

Both adaptation level and assimilation theories assume an absence of large expectations-performance discrepancies, however. In the case of extreme expectations-outcome disparities, the "surprise effect" or contrast between prior beliefs and performance may cause the consumer to exaggerate or magnify the discrepancy (Anderson 1973). Thus, high (low) expectations could lead to low (high) satisfaction. There has been mixed support for the contrast effect (Cardozo 1965; Oliver 1977; Olshavsky and Miller 1972).

Implicitly the literature has defined expectations as predictive expectations. Miller (1977) as well as Summers and Granbois (1977) have argued that consumers may have different kinds of expectations. Miller identified four types of expectations: (1) the ideal or "wished for" level reflecting what performance "can be"; (2) the expected or predictive level based on what the consumer thinks performance "will be"; (3) the minimum tolerable or the least acceptable level which reflects what the minimum performance "must be"; and (4) the deserved level reflecting what the consumer feels "ought to be" (p. 76-77). Attempts to show that standards other than the expected level are more valid have been unsuccessful, however (Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins 1987; Swan and Martin 1981; Tse and Wilton 1988).

Disconfirmation

Disconfirmation beliefs refer to the consumer's postconsumption perceptions that a product's performance met (confirmation), exceeded (positive disconfirmation), or fell short of (negative disconfirmation) initial expectations (Day and Landon 1977; Swan and Combs 1976).

Confirmation and positive disconfirmation are said to bring about states of satisfaction while dissatisfaction is the result of negative disconfirmation (Day and Landon 1977; Swan and Combs 1976).

The disconfirmation paradigm recognizes two distinct approaches to the modeling of disconfirmation. Subtractive disconfirmation, derived from comparison level theory (Thibaut and Kelley 1959), is the algebraic difference between a consumer's product performance rating and prepurchase expectations. Subjective disconfirmation is not measured by subtracting expectations from performance, however. Rather, it is conceptualized as a "distinct cognitive state resulting from the comparison process and preceding a satisfaction judgment" (Oliver 1980, p. 460).

The subjective approach has several advantages. First it has been shown empirically to be superior to the subtractive approach in the prediction of satisfaction (Cooper, Cooper, and Duhan 1989; Tse and Wilton 1988). Second, it avoids the problem of confounding through the use of expectations both as an independent construct and in the calculation of disconfirmation. That is, it allows expectations and subjective disconfirmation to be independent and additive predictors of satisfaction (Oliver 1980, 1981).

In summary, the expectations and disconfirmation paradigms have dominated consumer satisfaction research. Attempts to discover additional theoretical antecedents to satisfaction have been modest. Even then, these additional predictor variables have not supplanted expectations or disconfirmation but have served to supplement them. The following section discusses four of these additional satisfaction predictors.

Affective Influences

Westbrook (1980, 1987) proposed that satisfaction would be partly a function of broader affective influences within the consumer in addition to cognitive factors such as expectations and disconfirmation. Isen et al. (1978) found that affective states partially determine the cognitive materials available in memory for stimulus evaluation and decision making. These, in turn, reinforce the prevailing cognitive state. Earlier studies had suggested that moods and certain environmental conditions could influence consumers' judgments of product quality (Axelrod 1963; Dommermuth and Millard 1967).

Westbrook (1980) argued that "a number of distinct sources of affect may influence consumer's product satisfaction/dissatisfaction... such that increasingly positive or favorable affect is linked to higher levels of product satisfaction" (p. 50). Specifically, Westbrook examined the variation in product satisfaction with: (1) optimism and pessimism; (2) overall life satisfaction; (3) generalized consumer discontent; and (4) favorability of mood (in addition to expectations realization). In his 1987 study, Westbrook used Izard's (1977) empirically based taxonomy of affective experience as the basis for his bidimensional conceptualization of affect. He hypothesized that consumers' affective responses to postpurchase processes could be described by separate dimensions of positive and negative affect. Westbrook found that positive affective response was positively related to consumer satisfaction and negative affective response was inversely related to satisfaction for two product categories: automobiles and cable television.

Performance

One of the first studies to examine a separate effect of perceived performance on satisfaction was by Churchill and Surprenant (1982). They proposed that including disconfirmation as an intervening variable affecting satisfaction may not be necessary since the disconfirmation construct may be adequately captured by expectation and perceived performance. They subsequently tested the effects of expectations, performance, and disconfirmation on satisfaction in an experiment involving two types of products--a durable and a nondurable good. For the nondurable good, all three variables were positively related to satisfaction. For the durable good, however, neither disconfirmation nor initial expectations affected subjects' satisfaction. Rather, satisfaction was determined solely by product performance.

Tse and Wilton (1988) extended the work of Churchill and Surprenant by also including performance in the model of satisfaction determinants (in addition to expectations and disconfirmation). They argue that product performance should be incorporated into comprehensive models of satisfaction since the expectations and disconfirmation paradigms do not adequately capture a diversity of consumption experiences. For example, consumers forced into buying an inferior brand (if the preferred brand is unavailable) may not experience disconfirmation of prepurchase expectations, but may nonetheless be dissatisfied because of the brand's inferior performance. Or, triers of new brands who experience negative disconfirmation of high expectations may still be satisfied if the new brand has more of the desired attributes than competing brands (LaTour and Peat 1979).

Tse and Wilton also argue that consumers' consumption motives suggest a direct performance--> satisfaction link. "If learning from experience is an important consumption motive (especially with new products), then whenever a product performs well a consumer is likely to be satisfied, regardless of the levels of the pre-experience comparison standard and disconfirmation" (p. 205). They found significant positive effects of expectations, disconfirmation, and performance on satisfaction.

Attribution

To a lesser extent the notion of causal attributions (Folkes 1984; Richins 1985) has begun to emerge in the satisfaction literature. Attribution theory views consumers as rational information processors whose actions are influenced by their causal inferences. Attribution theory predicts that the perceived reasons for product failure will influence how a consumer responds (Bettman 1979). It is not merely the judgment that the product has failed that determines consumer response. For example, consumers who attribute the cause of product failure to the seller rather than to themselves may express greater dissatisfaction (Oliver and DeSarbo 1988) or engage in various complaining behaviors (Folkes 1984; Folkes, Koletsky, and Graham 1987; Richins 1983a).

Equity

Equity theory suggests that parties to an exchange will feel equitably treated and thus satisfied if the ratio of their outcomes to inputs is in some sense fair (Huppertz, Arenson, and Evans 1978). Thus, satisfaction should increase as a consumer's perceived outcomes increase (relative to those of the exchange partner) and decrease as relative outcomes decrease. Oliver and Swan (1989) examined the role of the

consumer's perceived interpersonal equity in satisfaction with the salesperson. Equity was found to be a direct determinant of satisfaction with various stock market scenarios (Oliver and DeSarbo 1988). Figure 2-2 summarizes the empirical findings on the theoretical antecedents of satisfaction.

Summary of Satisfaction Literature

The preceding review consisted primarily of research on the theoretical antecedents of satisfaction. That is, satisfaction was the dependent variable and the influence of various predictor variables on satisfaction was examined. The expectations and disconfirmation constructs dominate the research on the determinants of satisfaction in that strong effects of both have been found repeatedly. Both have been significant, positive predictors of satisfaction in a variety of research settings involving numerous product categories. These relationships held whether the constructs were manipulated experimentally or measured in a field study. With only a few exceptions, the disconfirmation effect usually has the greatest impact (Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Oliver and Swan 1989). The equity and attribution effects, while significant, so far have been considerably less important in terms of effect size (Oliver and DeSarbo 1988). Performance appears to be a construct emerging in importance in satisfaction research despite significant measurement and multicollinearity problems (Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Tse and Wilton 1988).

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Relation-</u> <u>ship</u>	<u>Product Category</u>	<u>Author/Year</u>
Expectations	+	Flu inoculation	Oliver 1980
	+	Sleepwear	Oliver & Linda 1981
	+	MBA Program	Oliver 1987
	+	Restaurant	Swan & Trawick 1981
	+	Houseplant	Churchill & Surprenant 1982
	+	Auto repair services	Bearden & Teel 1983
	+	Stock market scenario	Oliver & DeSarbo 1988
	+	Miniature record player	Tse & Wilton 1988
Disconfirmation	+	Flu inoculation	Oliver 1980
	+	Sleepwear	Oliver & Linda 1981
	+	MBA Program	Oliver 1987
	+	Restaurant	Swan & Trawick 1981
	+	Houseplant	Churchill & Surprenant 1982
	+	Auto repair services	Bearden & Teel 1983
	+	Stock market scenario	Oliver & DeSarbo 1988
	+	Miniature record player	Tse & Wilton 1988
Performance	+	Video disc player	Churchill & Surprenant 1982
	+	Houseplant	
	+	Stockmarket scenario	Oliver & DeSarbo 1988
	+	Miniature record player	Tse & Wilton 1988
Preusage Attitude	+	Flu inoculation	Oliver 1980
Attribution	+	Stock market scenario	Oliver & DeSarbo 1988
Equity	+	Stock market scenario	Oliver & DeSarbo 1988
	ns	Miniature record player	Tse & Wilton 1988
Positive Affect	+	Automobiles	Westbrook 1980
	+	Cable TV	Westbrook 1987
	+	Automobiles	Westbrook 1987
Negative Affect	-	Cable TV	Westbrook 1987
	-	Automobiles	Westbrook 1987

FIGURE 2-2

SUMMARY OF SATISFACTION ANTECEDENTS

As mentioned previously, however, some researchers have extended consumer satisfaction models to include additional postpurchase variables such as complaining (Bearden and Teel 1983; Oliver 1987), word-of-mouth (Richins 1983a, 1983b; Westbrook 1987), or repurchase intention (Oliver 1980; Oliver and Linda 1981). In these studies, satisfaction served as the independent variable or as a moderator variable. A review of this literature is presented in the following section on consumer complaining behavior.

Complaining Behavior Defined

Consumer complaining behavior (CCB) research suggests that complaint behavior is a complex phenomenon which varies greatly by consumer and situation. Complaints may occur even when no purchase is involved (e.g., complaining about high prices in general or advertising practices), when product performance is not an issue (e.g., complaining about selling tactics or service arrangements), and even when customers are primarily satisfied (e.g., complaining about minor product concerns). As in satisfaction research, multiple definitions and operationalizations of complaining behavior have evolved. Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) defined a consumer complaint as:

an action taken by an individual which involves communicating something negative regarding a product or service to either the firm manufacturing or marketing the product or service, or to some third-party entity (such as the Better Business Bureau or the Federal Trade Commission; p. 5).

Consumer complaints may also be described as "basic" versus "involved" (Jacoby and Jaccard 1981). Basic complaints occur when redress is limited to the value of the product or service (such as a refund or exchange). Involved complaints include compensation beyond the value of the product, as in a suit for damages. It should be noted that Jacoby

and Jaccard's definition of complaining is a narrow one in that it refers only to formal complaints made to a manufacturer, seller, or third-party. Private or informal complaining to family members or friends (word-of-mouth) is not considered complaining under their conceptualization.

CCB Taxonomies

A broader view of complaining behavior is the classification schema originally proposed by Day and Landon (1977). They propose a two-level classification (see Figure 2-3) which distinguishes first a consumer's behavioral (i.e., action) from nonbehavioral (i.e., no action or doing nothing) responses. The second level represents a distinction between public and private action. Public actions include seeking redress or refund from a seller, complaining to a consumer agency, and taking legal action. Private complaining refers to word-of-mouth behavior and boycotting the brand or product.

Day (1980) later suggested another basis for classification at the second level of Day and Landon's taxonomy. He noted that consumers complain to achieve specific objectives and classified behavioral CCB into three categories: (1) redress seeking (to seek a specific remedy(ies) from the seller); (2) complaining (to communicate dissatisfaction for reasons other than seeking remedy--such as to persuade others or affect future behavior); and (3) personal boycott (to discontinue purchase).

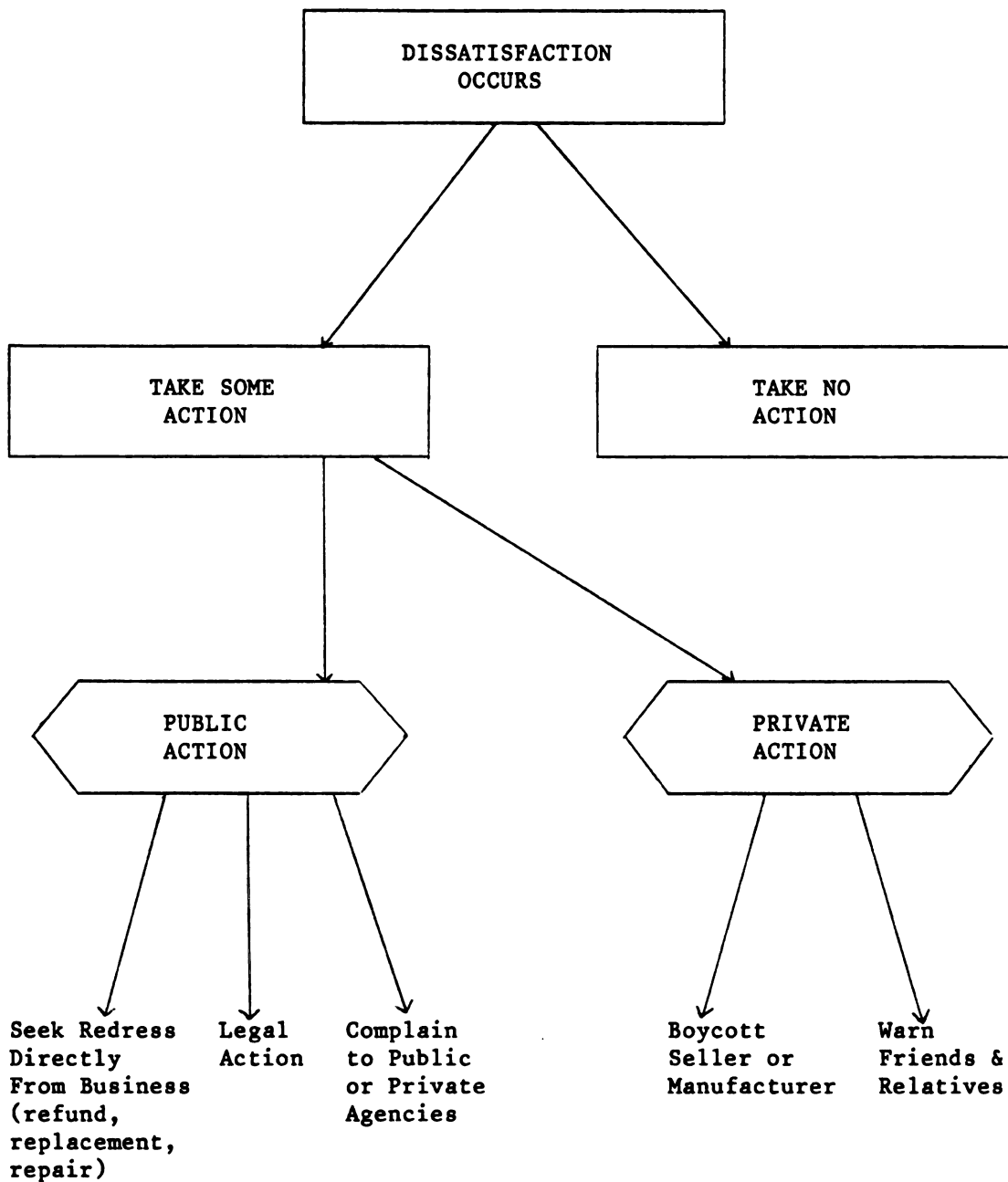


FIGURE 2-3

DAY AND LANDON'S (1977) CCB CLASSIFICATION

Singh (1988) argued that the preceding CCB taxonomies "have entirely different bases for categorization. Further, these bases were developed deductively, that is, they represent the respective researchers' subjective notion of a good classification basis" (p. 96). He then assessed the validity of the current operationalizations and taxonomies using data from four different and independent CCB situations and found that "none was an adequate representation of the empirical observations" (p. 93). The structure he uncovered (see Figure 2-4) revealed that CCB is a three-faceted phenomenon consisting of voice, private, and third party responses.

Singh argues that his three-dimensional view of CCB has the potential to provide better explanations and predictions of CCB. As an example he cites a study by Richins (1983a) on the antecedents and consequences of word-of-mouth complaining behavior. Her data supported the hypothesis that consumers with less positive perceptions of retailer responsiveness to complaints would have a greater likelihood of engaging in word-of-mouth (private CCB) rather than voice CCB. Singh suggests that "this finding is supportive of the contention that in addition to being distinct, the various dimensions of CCB may have different antecedents" (p. 104).

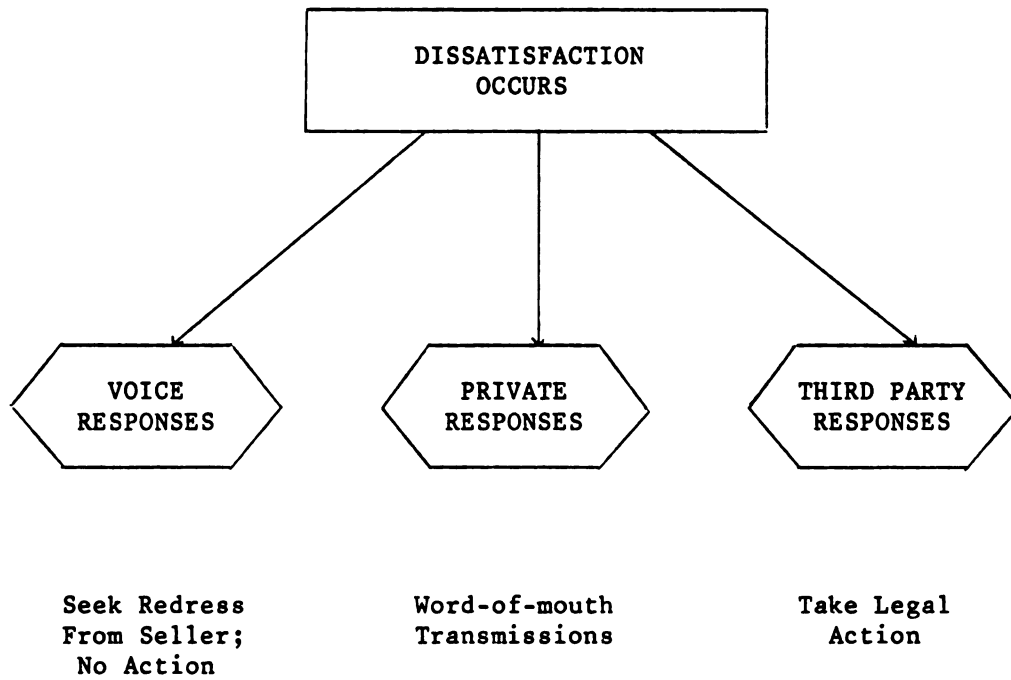


FIGURE 2-4

SINGH'S (1988) PROPOSED TAXONOMY OF CCB

Sources of Consumer Complaints

Consumer complaints are commonly thought of as resulting from some feelings or emotions of perceived dissatisfaction (Day 1984; Singh 1988). In fact, as presented earlier in this review, most of the classifications of CCB assume consumer dissatisfaction as a starting point. Complaints, however, can also come from consumers who are: (1) satisfied users of the product; (2) non-users of the product; and (3) non-purchasers of the product. The reasons underlying these complaints differ among each of these consumer types (Jacoby and Jaccard 1981; see Figure 2-5).

Despite the occurrence of complaints from each of the previous consumer categories, the largest complaint source is the dissatisfied user (Singh 1988). The factors underlying consumer complaining by dissatisfied users are covered in the next section.

Factors Underlying Complaint Behavior

The causes underlying complaints from dissatisfied consumers are complex, but general agreement does exist regarding the three major categories which determine an individual's propensity to complain. They are: market-related factors, consumer-related factors, and situational factors (Day and Landon 1976, 1977; Day et al. 1981; Jacoby and Jaccard 1981).

<u>Satisfied Users</u>	<u>Non-Users</u>	<u>Non-Purchasers</u>
1. For profit or gain or "professional complaining"	1. Purchase product as gift, user complains to purchaser who then complains to a third party	1. Concern that others' product usage is adversely affecting them
2. Concerns regarding future product performance	2. Purchase for other household members	2. Socially concerned for others' welfare
3. Concern for other consumers' welfare	3. Product spoils or becomes obsolete before use	3. Environmental concerns
4. Due to anti-business attitudes	4. Discomfort upon discovery of a poor purchase decision (product's going on sale later)	4. Due to influences of media
5. Due to a "habitual" complaining personality		5. Anti-business or anti-firm attitudes

Source: Adapted from Jacoby and Jaccard (1981)

FIGURE 2-5

REASONS BEHIND COMPLAINTS BY GROUP

Market-Related Factors

At least five variables associated with market-related factors influence whether a consumer complains. These factors are: (a) the reputation of the seller; (b) ease of access; (c) the firm's willingness to provide redress; (d) the customer's perception of the store's intentions; and (e) the number of available sellers. Each factor is discussed next.

a. Reputation of the Seller

In general, a strong reputation for quality and service encourages consumers to seek redress. When a seller's reputation is unknown or weak, consumers are more likely to feel that "they took their chances and lost" (Day and Landon 1977).

b. Ease of Access

Easy access to any firm in the marketing channel will affect whether complaints are made within the channel or to a third party. The consumer is more likely to make a complaint if it can be done at a conveniently located retail outlet or via telephone (Day and Landon 1976).

c. Willingness to Provide Redress

Granbois, Summers, and Frazier (1977) found that a consumer's perception of a store's willingness to provide a remedy (more so than any psychological or sociodemographic factor) is clearly the most significant correlate of complaining behavior. Thus, a firm with a liberal warranty policy or "understanding" customer service department is likely to generate more complaints than one with more stringent warranty or customer service policies.

d. Perception of Firm's Intentions

Consumers who believe that a firm willingly and purposefully deceived them are more likely to complain than those without the same perception (Grabicke 1980). Thus, the circumstances of the sale (e.g., the "hard sell" by a retail salesperson) can increase a consumer's propensity to complain.

e. Number of Available Sellers

A complaint is more likely to be voiced by the consumer if the product or service is available from only one source (Didow and Barksdale 1982).

Consumer-Related Factors

The consumer-related variables affecting complaint propensity include: (a) personality; (b) attitudes; (c) motives; (d) values, (e) level and sources of information; (f) lifestyle; and (g) demographics. Each is discussed below.

a. Personality

According to Wall, Dickey, and Talarzyk (1977) and Fornell and Westbrook (1979), consumers who complain tend to be more self-confident and assertive. Day and Landon (1976) also identified a personality trait they termed "propensity to complain" which suggested that some consumers, regardless of the product or situation, have a higher tendency to complain across all product categories. Few studies have supported these findings empirically, however. Bearden and Teel's 1980 study, for example, did not find a significant, positive relationship between self-confidence and tendency to complain. Personality characteristics such as dogmatism and locus of control are only weakly

related to complaint behavior if at all (Settle and Golden 1974; Zaichkowsky and Liefeld 1977).

b. Attitudes

Consumers' attitudes toward government and business are only somewhat related to the likelihood of complaint behavior (Barnes and Kelloway 1980). Complainers are not proponents of consumer organizations nor do they have more negative attitudes toward business than noncomplainers (Moyer 1985). Consumers with positive attitudes toward complaining have been found to have higher levels of complaint intentions (Bearden and Crockett 1981), self-reported complaint behavior (Richins 1981), and decisions to seek third party redress (Singh 1989).

In addition, attribution theorists have argued that when causes of product failure are attributed externally (to the retailer, manufacturer, or other third party), complaining is more likely. Lawther, Krishnan, and Valle (1979) supported this empirically, finding that the greater the blame for the dissatisfaction placed on someone else, the greater the likelihood of complaint action.

c. Motives

Landon (1977) identified seven motives which might underlie consumer complaining. Consumers complain:

- In order to help themselves;
- In order to help others;
- In order to help the firm;
- In order to get even;
- In order to vent displeasure;
- In order to obtain an apology;
- In order to obtain further information.

d. Values

Consumers are less likely to complain if they perceive that the time spent complaining could be better used doing something else (Feldman 1976). In his analysis of complaint letters, Stokes (1974) indicated that complaining was much more prevalent among individuals with spare time.

e. Level and Sources of Information

Consumers are more likely to complain if they have adequate product information (Wall, Dickey, and Talarzyk 1977) and information on how to lodge complaints (Day and Landon 1976). Complainers also tend to seek more information than noncomplainers (Moyer 1985).

f. Lifestyle

Very limited support has been provided for any kind of lifestyle-complaining relationship. Warland, Herrmann, and Moore (1984) did find a significant correlation between level of community involvement and complaining, but additional variables have been found to be insignificant predictors of complaining.

g. Demographics

A considerable amount of CCB research has focused on the socio-demographic characteristics of complainers. Figure 2-6 highlights the major findings.

Consumer Characteristic	Date	Author(s)
Above-average education	1974	Stokes
	1975	Liefeld et al.
	1977	Gronhaug
	1984	Warland et al.
	1985	Moyer
	1987	Morganosky & Buckley
Above-average income	1975	Liefeld et al.
	1977	Gronhaug
	1984	Warland et al.
	1985	Moyer
	1987	Morganosky & Buckley
Younger (25-45)	1973	Miller
	1975	Liefeld et al.
	1976	Day and Landon
Managerial/Professional occupation	1975	Liefeld et al.
	1977	Gronhaug
	1985	Moyer
Upper class social status	1984	Warland et al.

FIGURE 2-6

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPLAINERS

Although one study (Gaedeke 1972) found that women were more likely than men to complain to government or consumer agencies, gender was not a significant demographic variable in any other research finding. The demographic characteristics of complainers should be interpreted with some caution due to response bias of some of the survey data and the data bases used for analysis. In addition, past research provides evidence that large segments of the population do nothing when dissatisfied, and large segments take only some forms of private action. Thus, only a very small segment as a percentage of the population complains in public ways or takes legal action (Day and Landon 1977). Public or formal complainers are overrepresented in the complaint literature as opposed to dissatisfied consumers who may or may not formally complain, but who may engage in private (word-of-mouth) responses.

Situation-Related Factors

The third factor influencing propensity to complain is the situation. Situational factors can be organized into three categories: (a) the product; (b) the social climate; and (c) the importance of the situation.

a. The Product

Consumer complaining is more likely to occur when the product is: expensive, durable, and easily returned or repaired (Day and Landon 1976, 1977).

b. The Social Climate

In 1977, Landon reported that social norms were changing, making it more acceptable for consumers to complain. As a result of increasing

"public consciousness," complaint behavior was increasing. This issue has not been reexamined since, however.

c. The Importance of the Situation

The "importance" of a particular purchase situation may be defined in many ways. It could mean the monetary loss associated with product failure. It could represent the perceived importance of the product to a consumer's daily life (such as automobiles), or it could simply mean a consumer has very high expectations for the product. Regardless of the conceptualization used, however, Landon (1977) argued:

To predict complaining behavior, the importance of the dissatisfaction should be included. If a consumer purchases a ball point pen...and the product does not perform as expected, the consumer may very well not complain even if dissatisfied. It is important to note that the level of dissatisfaction may be the same as with an expensive product, but the importance of that level of dissatisfaction is different (p. 33).

As shown by the preceding discussion of complaint propensity indicators, many complex and interdependent variables affect consumers' complaint tendencies. Thus, considerable research and theory development in the consumer complaining behavior area are still needed. It should be noted that, due to the nature of many CCB studies (which specifically address consumer complaint actions as opposed to dissatisfaction), the percentage of respondents which report complaining behavior is often overstated. Although unsatisfactory purchases are prevalent (Andreasen and Best reported in 1977 that as many as 20 percent of purchase experiences result in some dissatisfaction), reaction to dissatisfaction in terms of complaining behavior varies considerably. Figure 2-7 highlights the results of the dissatisfaction study of consumer durables conducted by Day and Ash (1979). Included in the "Housing and Home Furnishings" classification was a product category

Reasons for Being Dissatisfied	Total Mentions	Named Most Important
The quality of materials was inferior.	75.0%*	45.5%
The quality of workmanship was inferior.	56.3	9.1
The product had drawbacks that I was not told about when I bought it.	31.3	9.1
The cost of using the product is higher than I was led to believe.	0	0
The item that was delivered was different than the one I bought.	0	0
The product was damaged when delivered.	18.8	9.1
I had to wait a long time before the product was delivered.	12.5	9.1
The product was misrepresented to me by the salesman.	0	0
The product was misrepresented in advertisements.	6.3	0
The credit terms were misrepresented to me.	0	0
The warranty did not cover all of the things that went wrong.	18.9	9.1
Repairs or services under the warranty were unsatisfactory.	18.8	0
The dealer misrepresented his ability to provide parts and service for the product.	6.3	0
I was tricked by a salesman into buying a more expensive model than I needed.	0	0
The price that was charged was higher than what I had agreed to pay.	6.3	9.1
The product is unsafe.	6.3	0
The product is bad for the environment.	0	0
The product wastes energy resources.	6.3	0
The instructions for using and taking care of the product were incomplete or impossible to read.	6.3	0

*Based on 16 instances of reported dissatisfaction involving a total of 31 mentions. Source: Day and Ash (1979), p. 443.

FIGURE 2-7

REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION

relevant to this study: floor coverings. Consumers' primary reasons for dissatisfaction with this category were inferior quality of materials, inferior quality of workmanship, and unexpected drawbacks to the product.

Frequently, consumers simply do not take any action to alleviate marketplace problems. Some of the major findings are shown below in Figure 2-8.

<u>Finding</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Author(s)</u>
49.6% reported no action taken in extreme cases of dissatisfaction for non durables; 29.4% for durables; 23.2% for services	1978	Day & Bodur
Over 50% of all non-price purchase difficulties precipitated no action.	1977	Andreassen & Best
Over half of all dissatisfied consumers took no direct action.	1975	Warland et al.

FIGURE 2-8

FREQUENCY OF NONCOMPLAINING

These findings suggest that understanding consumers' reasons for not publicly complaining (or engaging in private complaining behaviors such as word-of-mouth) is as important in the overall study of consumer satisfaction and CCB as understanding their public or voice complaining behaviors. Previous research has found that consumers often take no public action because they: (1) think it won't accomplish anything; (2) think it's not worth the time and effort; and 3) don't know where or how to obtain redress (Day and Ash 1979; TARP 1979).

Postcomplaining Satisfaction

In attempts to further integrate consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior research, several researchers have suggested that postcomplaining satisfaction research be conducted (Andreasen 1977; Bearden and Oliver 1985). They suggest that the choice of public versus private complaining will influence the consumer's final satisfaction level. Bearden and Oliver hypothesized that public complaint behavior (third party-directed) facilitates satisfaction because it provides the consumer with an opportunity to obtain problem resolution. An inverse relationship between private complaint behavior and satisfaction was hypothesized and found. Gilly and Gelb (1982) argued that "the degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the complaint response combines with previous satisfaction/dissatisfaction concerning the product to produce some final consumer degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the total purchase outcome" (p. 323). Gilly and Gelb also found partial support for a positive relationship between satisfaction with complaint response and brand repurchase. The degree of satisfaction after complaining also varied directly with the percentage of monetary loss reimbursed and the quickness of complaint resolution.

Word-of-Mouth Behavior

Word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior has received considerably less attention than either consumer satisfaction or other forms of complaining behavior and is often subsumed under the opinion leadership research. When applied to dissatisfaction, however, the opinion leadership findings have several disadvantages. First, most research has considered only positive and not negative WOM. Second, it involves informing others of new rather than existing products. Finally, those

engaging in negative WOM activities may not actually be opinion leaders (Richins 1983a). Since some researchers have found that consumers seem to place more weight on negative information in making evaluations (see Lutz 1975 and Wright 1974), clearly more research on negative WOM and its relationships to satisfaction and complaining behavior is needed.

Positive WOM has been demonstrated in several studies to be more important than advertising in product selection decisions by consumers (Goodman and Malech 1986; TARP 1979). In one of the first formal studies, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) found that WOM was the most important source of influence in the purchase of household goods and food products. It was seven times as effective as newspapers and magazines, four times as effective as personal selling, and twice as effective as radio advertising in influencing consumers to switch brands. Arndt (1967) showed that respondents who received positive WOM about a new food product were much more likely to purchase it compared to those who received negative WOM.

As noted by Brown and Reingen (1987), however, more recent published research is rare (e.g., Richins 1983a). In addition, negative WOM behavior has been given only limited attention. Yet research for the Coca-Cola Company (TARP 1981) has found that at least twice as many people hear about a customer's unhappy experience as hear about a satisfactory one. Westbrook (1987) also found a weak negative relationship between satisfaction and WOM. A seminal study by Richins (1983a) found WOM behavior to be related to several complaining, dissatisfaction, and marketplace variables. She found the tendency to engage in negative WOM behavior positively related to: problem

severity, external attributions of blame, and negative perceptions of retailer responsiveness.

Word-of-mouth responses to satisfaction/dissatisfaction are considered private actions according to both Day and Landon's (1977) original CCB taxonomy and Singh's (1988) more recent classification schema. Consumer complaining behavior is generally conceptualized as a set of multiple responses, however, in which some combination of public and private actions is often taken. Thus, negative WOM behavior may occur in addition to other forms of complaining behavior rather than in place of it. Further research is therefore needed to examine the extent and nature of both negative and positive WOM transmissions as related to consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and public complaining.

Summary of CCB Literature

The existing CCB research assumes dissatisfaction as a starting point for any form of complaining behavior (private, voice, or third party responses). Yet dissatisfaction alone may not lead to complaining since many other factors contribute to complaint propensity (e.g., product, consumer, and situational factors). At the same time, Jacoby and Jaccard (1981) have argued that complaining from satisfied consumers may occur. Few researchers have specifically investigated this group, however.

In addition, while the existing CCB research recognizes that a consumer's negative WOM communication and lack of repurchase are forms of complaining behavior (i.e., private), it has also been argued that each of these represents independent dimensions of CCB. Each of these may also meet different objectives of the consumer. Complaining to a retailer or manufacturer and obtaining redress may provide the consumer

with greater monetary value or other benefits (e.g., a replacement product that is brand new). Or it may simply provide the consumer with the opportunity to vent his or her displeasure. Privately complaining to others may also allow this venting, but may not provide any monetary value. Thus, the choice of one complaining behavior may eventually impact other forms of complaining behavior in which the consumer may engage. Or, it may affect the consumer's attitude toward future complaining. It may even affect his or her perception of the product itself, or cause the consumer to revise his original expectations about the product.

These effects may be further complicated by considering the consumer's initial satisfaction level. Greater dissatisfaction may lead to greater negative WOM (TARP 1981). If the consumer also engages in public complaining in order to obtain problem resolution, however, might not the effect of the consumer's dissatisfaction on the negative WOM be lessened somewhat? This and other questions have gone unanswered in the current satisfaction and complaining behavior research. Chapter Three which follows addresses these research questions by providing theoretical support for several hypothesized relationships between consumer satisfaction, public complaining, private complaining, attitudes, and other postpurchase responses.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The research hypotheses which follow are organized in the following manner. First, the research framework presented in Chapter One is reintroduced in order to provide the theoretical structure behind the hypotheses. The hypotheses are organized by dependent variable and are presented in the following order: (1) retrieved expectations; (2) subjective disconfirmation beliefs; (3) repurchase intentions; (4) extent of word-of-mouth behavior; (5) favorability of word-of-mouth transmissions; (6) attitudes toward complaining; (7) future complaining intentions; and (8) demographic/environmental variables. For the complaining groups only, hypotheses regarding satisfaction with complaint handling are included as well.

The Research Framework Revisited

Chapter One introduced a two-by-two matrix of customer groups in which original satisfaction level (i.e., with the product) and incidence of complaining behavior serve as dichotomous independent variables. Four consumer groups are represented by the research matrix: satisfied complainers, satisfied noncomplainers, dissatisfied complainers, and dissatisfied noncomplainers. It should be noted that the complainers represented in this research framework consist of formal or public complainers (i.e., those engaging in a voice response according to Singh's typology). These consumers have complained to the manufacturer about their product. Noncomplainers are those consumers who have not made any kind of complaint to the manufacturer. Thus, word-of-mouth or private complaining responses are not explicitly represented in the framework. Word-of-mouth responses will be examined separately as a

dependent variable. Figure 3-1 shows these groups as originally presented in Figure 1-1, outlining two of the groups' (satisfied complainers and dissatisfied noncomplainers) reasons behind their "counterintuitive" behavior. It highlights why satisfied complainers and dissatisfied noncomplainers might exist despite considerable theoretical and empirical research supporting an inverse relationship between satisfaction and complaining (Bearden and Teel 1983; Day and Landon 1977; Oliver 1980, 1987; Westbrook 1987). The research hypotheses which follow propose additional differences in postpurchase responses among the four groups.

	Complainers	Noncomplainers
Satisfied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note minor product concerns - For profit/gain - Concerns about future product performance 	
Dissatisfied		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not worth time or effort - Don't know how or where to complain - Won't accomplish anything

Adapted from Jacoby and Jaccard (1981), Day and Ash (1979), and TARP (1979).

FIGURE 3-1

THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK REVISITED

Retrieved Versus Prior Expectations

The expectations construct as conceptualized in previous research referred to consumers' prepurchase beliefs about the overall performance or attribute levels of a product (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Bearden and Teel 1983; LaTour and Peat 1979; Oliver 1980, 1987; Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Tse and Wilton 1988). As such, the measurement of expectations must be performed before the shopping experience and actual product usage occur. In reality, however, many of the studies defined expectations as a prepurchase construct but measured them in retrospect (e.g., "When you first visited the restaurant, how long did you expect to have to wait to be seated?" (Swan 1988). This approach introduces a possible interaction between actual outcomes and prior expectations. Oliver (1981) in particular strongly cautions against this type of measure, but admits that for some aspects of the satisfaction process, "anticipatory expectations will be difficult to achieve because individual identities cannot be known a priori (e.g., complainers) or because the measurement process itself may influence the probability of the occurrence of behaviors (e.g., if all shoppers were queried about the outcomes of complaining behavior before they knew whether they would have cause for a complaint)" (p. 39). Oliver notes that expectations are best measured ex post in these cases, and does so himself in one study (Oliver 1987). Figure 3-2 summarizes the major studies which investigated the expectations-satisfaction relationship and highlights those which measured expectations retrospectively.

Study & Year	Product Category	Research Design ¹	Expec. Measure	Expec. Type ²	Empirical Findings
Bearden & Teel 1983	auto repair services	L survey	sum of attrib.	Pre	Exp. and Satis. pos. related
Churchill & Surprenant 1982	plant	exper.	attrib. & global	Pre*	Exp. and Satis. pos. related
	videodisc player				Exp. and Satis. not sig. related
Duhaime 1988	car dealers	CS survey	attrib. x impor.	Ret	Exp. and Satis. pos. related for satisfied group, neg. related for dissatisfied.
Kennedy & Thirkell 1988	auto-mobiles	CS survey	attrib. x impor.	Ret	Exp. and Satis. pos. related for satisfied group, neg. related for dissatisfied.
Oliver 1980	flu inoculation program	L survey	attrib. x eval.	Pre	Exp. and Satis. pos. related
Olvier 1987	MBA program	CS survey	attrib. & global	Ret	Exp. and Satis. pos. related

¹ L survey = longitudinal survey, CS survey = cross-sectional survey

² Pre = prepurchase expectations used, Ret = retrieved expectations used

* Subjects did not actually use or purchase the product. Visual inspection only.

** Expectations measured before dining, but only after a restaurant visit.

FIGURE 3-2

SUMMARY OF EXPECTATION STUDIES

Study & Year	Product Category	Research Design ¹	Expec. Measure	Expec. Type ²	Empirical Findings
Oliver & Linda 1981	sleep-wear	mall intercept exper.	attrib.	Pre*	Exp. and Satis. pos. related
Oliver & DeSarbo 1988	stock market scenarios	exper.	hi/low	Pre*	Exp. and Satis. pos. related
Swan 1988	restaurant food/service	L survey	sum of attrib.	Pre	No relationship between Exp. and Sat.
Swan & Combs 1976	clothing	CS survey	sum of attrib.	Ret	Exp. and Satis. neg. related
Swan & Trawick 1981	restaurant food	L survey	attrib. x eval.	Pre**	Exp. and Satis. pos. related
Tse & Wilton 1988	miniature record player	exper.	favor/unfavor	Pre*	Predictive Exp. and Satis. pos. related, Ideal Exp. and Satis. neg. related
Westbrook 1987	cable TV	CS survey	global x eval.	Ret	Exp. and Satis. pos. related
	automobiles		likelihood of benefits, problems		Exp. of benefits and Satis. pos. related, Exp. of problems and Satis. inversely related

FIGURE 3-2 (cont.)

Of primary concern in those studies using postpurchase measures of expectations are the conclusions and implications drawn from the results. The authors generally go no further than to note the methodological limitations of their expectations measure, yet continue to espouse empirical support for a positive prepurchase expectations-satisfaction relationship. This may not be the case for a retrieved expectations-satisfaction relationship, however. That is, rather than measuring the impact of prepurchase expectations on consumer satisfaction, they have actually measured the impact of satisfaction level (and even subsequent complaining behaviors) on what consumers remember their original expectations to be. Retrieved expectations are those expectations which the consumer reports he or she had about the product originally. They are, therefore, subject to a considerable amount of memory loss or perceptual distortion. Both of these problems may be further exaggerated when either the time between purchase and the measurement of expectations is considerable or the consumer engages in a significant amount of postpurchase complaining behavior.

The concept of retrieved expectations has considerable usefulness, however, if treated as a true postpurchase construct. First, in the area of complaint management, knowledge of the consumer's actual prior expectations may be far less important than the consumer's current or retrieved expectations since the consumer's customer service expectations will be based on their more recent experiences (e.g., past complaint attempts) and memories of the product experience. Regardless of the level of expectations the consumer actually held originally, the consumer is likely to base most postpurchase behavior on the level remembered (or created) after product consumption. It could be argued

that some expectations are created after purchase, not remembered from before purchase. This might occur when consumers are unfamiliar with product attributes until actual usage or when product expectations are vague or non-specific. Marketers attempting to redress complaints must therefore be aware that, due to negative consumption experiences, complainers may no longer compare performance to what prior expectations actually were but rather to what retrieved (or created) expectations currently are.

Second, the distinction between actual and retrieved expectations may provide an explanation for the limited empirical support found for contrast theory in the satisfaction determination process. Contrast theory proposes that if the discrepancy between prior expectations and performance is large, a contrast or magnification effect dominates, causing the discrepancy to be perceived as larger than it actually is. This contrast would then lead to greater dissatisfaction (Anderson 1973). LaTour and Peat (1979) noted, however, that "a contrast effect for postconsumption beliefs about the performance of a product on an attribute has never been demonstrated" (p. 433). Many later studies (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Bearden and Teel 1983; Oliver 1980; Tse and Wilton 1988; Westbrook 1987) also failed to find contrast effects. LaTour and Peat discarded the contrast effect evidence found in Swan and Combs (1976) study because their study was based on recall of satisfying and dissatisfying purchases, thus leading to possible "retrospective distortion of expectations" (p. 433). Similarly, Duhaime (1988) and Kennedy and Thirkell (1988) both found evidence supporting the contrast hypothesis (an inverse expectations-satisfaction relationship) when expectations were measured retrospectively (i.e., when retrieved

expectations were used). Thus, the contrast effect may have been dismissed as a viable theoretical explanation because of previous emphasis on prepurchase expectations. The manifestation of the contrast effect may be evident only in terms of retrieved or created expectations.

Finally, retrieved expectations rather than actual prior expectations may play a greater role in the determination of consumers' postpurchase processes such as attitudes and intentions simply because retrieved expectations are temporally closer to these judgments (i.e., a recency effect occurs). Thus, the study of retrieved rather than prepurchase expectations may be more relevant in many instances.

The research hypotheses regarding the mean levels of retrieved expectations of the four groups represented in the research framework are presented next.

Retrieved Expectations Hypotheses

As discussed previously, contrast effects would account for a negative relationship between satisfaction and retrieved expectations. That is, dissatisfied consumers will report significantly higher retrieved expectations than satisfied consumers. Kennedy and Thirkell (1988) and Duhaime (1988) both support this empirically. The "contrast" is said to occur because of the magnification of the perceived discrepancy between original expectations and subsequent performance. Yet any magnification of expectations that occurs after consumption automatically makes actual prior expectations obsolete. Since dissatisfied consumers by definition perceive larger expectations-performance discrepancies than satisfied consumers, the contrast effect is more likely to occur among dissatisfied consumers. One way in which

the discrepancy can be magnified is for consumers to justify their reported dissatisfaction levels by retrospectively raising their expectation levels and reporting higher retrieved expectations. Thus:

H1: The retrieved expectation levels of dissatisfied consumers will be significantly higher than the retrieved expectation levels of satisfied consumers.

The main effect of (dis)satisfaction on retrieved expectations is illustrated below in Figure 3-3.

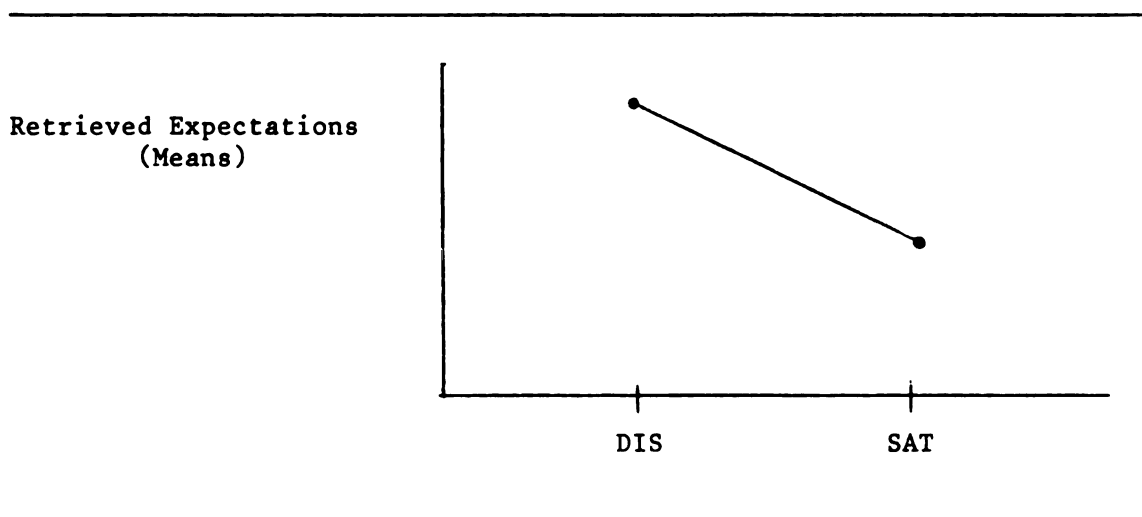


FIGURE 3-3

MAIN EFFECT: SATISFACTION

In addition, a main effect of complaining behavior is hypothesized. That is, complainers as a group are also more likely to report higher expectations after usage since they may feel a need to justify their formal complaining behavior. Even satisfied complainers may report high retrieved expectations (although not as high as dissatisfied complainers) since their complaining behavior may be viewed as unusual given their reported satisfaction level. Thus, H2 is as follows:

H2: The retrieved expectation levels of complainers will be significantly higher than the retrieved expectation levels of noncomplainers.

This hypothesis is illustrated in Figure 3-4.

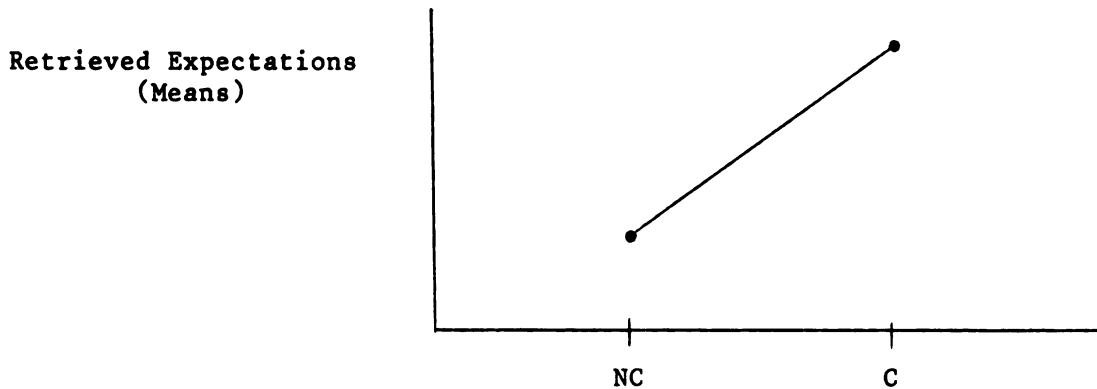


FIGURE 3-4

MAIN EFFECT: COMPLAINING

The preceding hypotheses raise the question of a possible interaction effect of satisfaction and complaining. Who will have higher retrieved expectations, satisfied complainers or dissatisfied non-complainers? Given the preceding discussion, both groups would be expected to have lower retrieved expectations than dissatisfied complainers, but higher expectation levels than satisfied noncomplainers. It is hypothesized that the complaining effect will dominate (i.e., satisfied complainers will have higher retrieved expectations than dissatisfied noncomplainers) because the act of formal complaining requires greater time, effort, and cognitive and affective processing than the mere recognition and reporting of a

(dis)satisfaction level (Andreassen 1977). Because of this, the consumers will feel a greater need to justify/explain their behavior or reduce internal dissonance (Festinger 1957). Thus:

H3: The retrieved expectation levels of satisfied complainers will be significantly higher than the retrieved expectation levels of dissatisfied noncomplainers.

The preceding hypotheses can be summarized in the following manner. Let RE represent consumers' mean level of retrieved expectations. Let the following subscripts apply to each of the following four groups:

sc = satisfied complainers
 dc = dissatisfied complainers
 snc = satisfied noncomplainers
 dnc = dissatisfied noncomplainers

Hypotheses H1 - H3 together state that:

$$RE_{dc} > RE_{sc} > RE_{dnc} > RE_{snc}$$

This is shown graphically in Figure 3-5 which summarizes the three hypotheses regarding consumers' retrieved expectation levels.

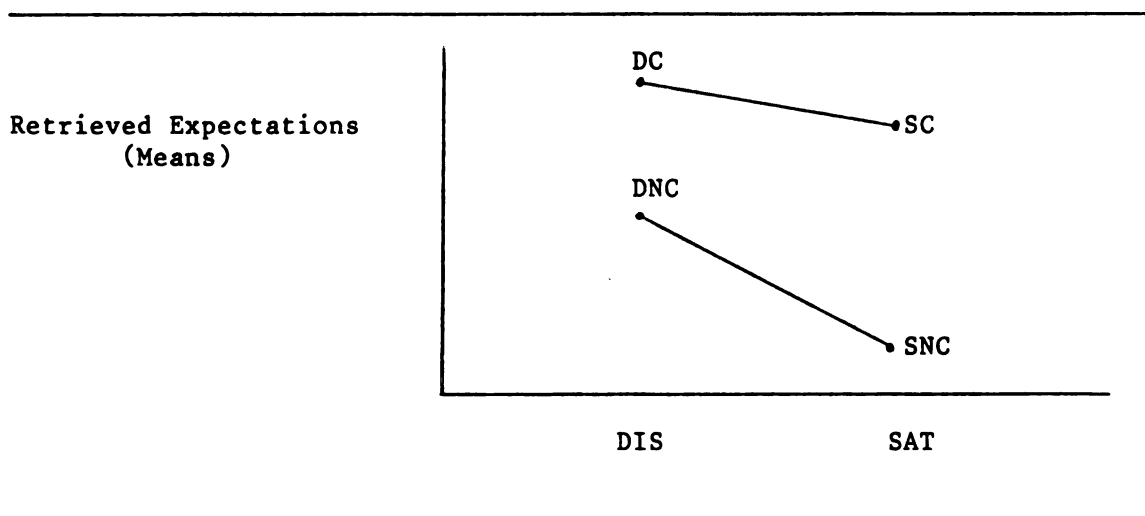


FIGURE 3-5

SUMMARY OF EXPECTATIONS HYPOTHESES

Subjective Disconfirmation Hypotheses

As discussed previously, consumer satisfaction is said to be a positive function of a consumer's disconfirmation beliefs. Confirmation and positive disconfirmation of expectations leads to satisfaction while negative disconfirmation results in dissatisfaction (Day and Landon 1977; Swan and Combs 1976). Subjective disconfirmation beliefs are the consumers' overall summary judgments of whether or not their expectations were met rather than the algebraic subtraction of expectation levels from performance ratings. Oliver (1980) noted that this conceptualization allows other cognitions to enter into the consumers' subjective belief judgments, thus capturing a more complete summary of disconfirmation beliefs than the subtractive technique.

The research hypotheses regarding the four consumer groups under investigation are as follows. First, as supported in previous empirical research (see Figure 2-2), satisfied consumers are likely to have higher levels of disconfirmation (i.e., more positive) than dissatisfied consumers. In addition, noncomplainers are likely to have more positive levels of disconfirmation than complainers (Day and Landon 1977; Oliver 1987). Thus, consumers who are dissatisfied and complained formally are likely to have the lowest disconfirmation beliefs while satisfied noncomplainers should have the highest levels.

An interaction between (dis)satisfaction and complaining is also likely. Satisfied complainers are hypothesized to have higher disconfirmation beliefs than dissatisfied noncomplainers for the following reasons. Despite the fact that satisfied complainers experience some level of disconfirmation (or they are not likely to complain at all), the level is not likely to be very low (i.e.,

negative) since they did in fact report satisfaction. Thus, the disconfirmation probably relates to an aspect of the product's performance which is either less important to them or which was previously unconsidered. An alternative explanation is that the product's performance, while disappointing in some way, still exceeds the performance of the consumer's previous product purchase in the category or what the consumer expects in general from the product category. The research hypotheses regarding subjective disconfirmation beliefs are:

- H4: The subjective disconfirmation beliefs of dissatisfied consumers will be significantly lower (more negative) than the subjective disconfirmation beliefs of satisfied consumers.
- H5: The subjective disconfirmation beliefs of complainers will be significantly lower (more negative) than the subjective disconfirmation beliefs of noncomplainers.
- H6: The subjective disconfirmation beliefs of satisfied complainers will be significantly higher (more positive) than the subjective disconfirmation beliefs of dissatisfied noncomplainers.

These research hypotheses can be summarized as:

$$SDB_{dc} < SDB_{dnc} < SDB_{sc} < SDB_{snc}$$

where SDB = the mean level of subjective disconfirmation beliefs. This is depicted graphically in Figure 3-6.

Subjective Disconfirmation
Beliefs (Means)

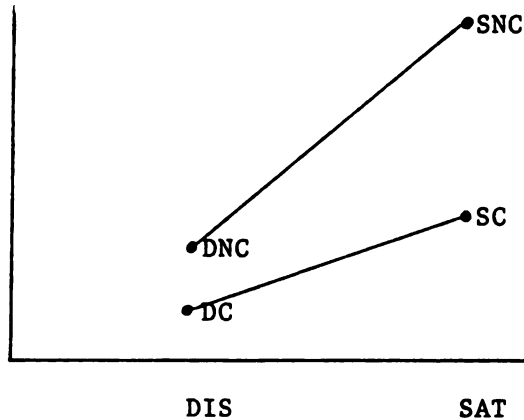


FIGURE 3-6

SUMMARY OF DISCONFIRMATION HYPOTHESES

Repurchase Intention Hypotheses

Early consumer behavior models provided the theoretical foundation which conceptually linked consumers' repurchase intentions to their levels of satisfaction (Howard and Sheth 1969; Howard 1974). Later empirical research supported a positive relationship between satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Oliver and Linda 1981; Oliver 1980, 1987; Swan 1988). The following research hypothesis is therefore proposed:

- H7: The repurchase intention levels of satisfied consumers will be significantly higher than the repurchase intention levels of dissatisfied consumers.

The arguments are not as clearcut for the complainer/noncomplainer groups, however. While it may seem logical that noncomplainers would have higher repurchase intentions than complainers, some research has found complaining consumers to have even higher levels of repurchase intentions than satisfied noncomplainers if they are satisfied with how

their complaints were resolved (Gilly and Gelb 1982). Even complaining customers who do not have their complaints resolved have been found to have higher repurchase intentions than noncomplainers (TARP 1979). This finding was true whether the complaints were minor (\$1-\$5 losses) or major (over \$100). Thus, formal complaining seems to provide consumers with more than just the opportunity to obtain redress. It allows them to articulate dissatisfaction, obtain information, and/or even place blame. These actions alone may relieve the dissonance created by the original cause of the complaint. Complaining as a dissonance-releasing activity has been recognized by several researchers (Gilly and Gelb 1982; Oliver 1987; Singh 1988). Here, it is expected to impact consumer repurchase intentions in the following way:

H8: The repurchase intention levels of complainers will be significantly higher than the repurchase intention levels of noncomplainers.

Whether or not satisfied noncomplainers have higher repurchase intentions than dissatisfied complainers will depend on the consumer's satisfaction with complaint response. That is, a dissatisfied consumer who complains but has the complaint resolved satisfactorily will have higher repurchase intentions than satisfied noncomplainers. A dissatisfied complainer's repurchase intentions will be lower than a satisfied noncomplainers if the complainer is dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled. Thus:

H9: The repurchase intention levels of satisfied noncomplainers will be significantly higher than the repurchase intentions of dissatisfied complainers who are also dissatisfied with how their complaints are resolved.

H10: The repurchase intention levels of satisfied noncomplainers will be significantly lower than the repurchase intentions of dissatisfied complainers who are satisfied with how their complaints are resolved.

Despite the TARP (1979) evidence that complainers have higher repurchase intentions even when complaints are unresolved, H9 is proposed because of the high cost of the product category in this study (carpeting) compared to the costs of the products in the TARP study. In addition, because carpeting is such an integral part of a consumer's home furnishings and is used daily, dissatisfaction with complaint resolution will probably counteract any "relief" the consumer might feel after complaining.

The same pattern should hold for those consumers who are originally satisfied with the product but still complained. Those that complained and had their complaints satisfactorily resolved should have the highest repurchase intention levels of all groups because they achieved satisfaction at two levels: after product purchase/consumption and after complaining. In addition, they had the dissonance-releasing complaint activity to relieve them of any other doubts or tensions. Satisfied complainers who were dissatisfied with how their complaints were handled, however, are likely to have lower repurchase intentions than satisfied consumers who choose not to complain. In this case, the dissatisfaction from the complaining experience again counteracts any relief from the complaining activity, and the recency of the unsatisfactory resolution will dominate. Thus:

- H11: The repurchase intention levels of satisfied noncomplainers will be significantly higher than the repurchase intentions of satisfied complainers who are dissatisfied with how their complaints are resolved.
- H12: The repurchase intention levels of dissatisfied noncomplainers will be the lowest of all consumer groups.
- H13: The repurchase intention levels of satisfied complainers who are satisfied with how their complaints are resolved will be the highest of all consumer groups.

In summary, with the additional consideration of a consumer's (dis)satisfaction with an organization's complaint response, six rather than four consumer groups are possible since complainers may be further subdivided into those that are satisfied and those that are dissatisfied with how their complaints are handled. This is illustrated in Figure 3-7 in which the complaining group is further subdivided. The abbreviation SAT_{ch} refers to satisfaction with complaint handling and DIS_{ch} refers to dissatisfaction with the complaint process. The numbers in each grid refer to the expected pattern of effects on consumers' repurchase intention levels (1 = highest level of purchase intentions, 6 = lowest level of intentions).

	Complainers	Noncomplainers				
Satisfied	<table><tr><td>SAT_{ch}</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>DIS_{ch}</td><td>4</td></tr></table>	SAT _{ch}	1	DIS _{ch}	4	3
	SAT _{ch}	1				
DIS _{ch}	4					
Dissatisfied	<table><tr><td>SAT_{ch}</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>DIS_{ch}</td><td>5</td></tr></table>	SAT _{ch}	2	DIS _{ch}	5	6
	SAT _{ch}	2				
DIS _{ch}	5					

FIGURE 3-7

SUMMARY OF REPURCHASE INTENTION HYPOTHESES

Extent of Word-of-Mouth Behavior Hypotheses

Word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior refers to the act of telling at least one friend, acquaintance, or family member about a satisfactory or unsatisfactory product experience. This conceptualization follows that of Richins (1983a). The extent of WOM behavior refers to the number of people the consumer tells about the consumption experience. WOM can also be viewed as being either favorable or unfavorable depending on the nature or valence of the transmissions (this construct is discussed in the following section).

Many of the studies in the (dis)satisfaction literature examined negative WOM activities rather than positive WOM (see Cadotte and Turgeon 1988 for one exception). Most of those have been limited to reporting the incidence of this behavior. Diener and Greyser (1978), for example, found that 34 percent of those dissatisfied with a personal care product told others about their dissatisfaction. Richins (1983b) found that 85 percent of the respondents in a study of consumers who had experienced dissatisfaction with a clothing purchase engaged in negative WOM, telling an average of just more than five people.

In 1981, the U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs conducted a survey of people who had corresponded with the Coca-Cola Company regarding an inquiry or complaint in order to measure the extent of WOM communications (TARP 1981). It was found that customers who felt their complaints had not been satisfactorily resolved typically told nine or ten others about their dissatisfaction. If the complainants were minimally satisfied with the company's response, however, only four or five people were told about the initial bad experience. The 85 percent

who were completely happy with the company's response told four or five people how well things were handled.

The accumulated research indicates that the extent of WOM behavior of dissatisfied consumers exceeds that of satisfied consumers. Thus:

H14: The extent of WOM behavior of dissatisfied consumers will be significantly greater than the extent of WOM behavior of satisfied consumers.

The consideration of consumers' WOM behavior in conjunction with more formal complaining behavior poses the following research question: Does WOM communication serve as a substitute for formal complaining (thus decreasing among complainers), or does it supplement the public complaining process (leading to increased WOM activity among complainers)? Richins (1983a) found that a majority of dissatisfied consumers participate in WOM as opposed to either taking no action or registering a formal complaint, indicating a "substitution" effect among dissatisfied consumers. Several studies indicating the extreme lack of formal complaining among consumers despite widespread dissatisfaction also point to a possible substitution effect (e.g., Best and Andreasen 1977; Day and Landon 1976). Richins (1983a) summarized this by noting that most researchers accept that the incidence of complaints is much lower than the incidence of negative WOM.

At the same time, a "supplementary" effect would not be surprising given the similarity in some of the underlying dimensions of formal complaining and negative WOM. Of prime importance is that both behaviors may have dissatisfaction as one antecedent. Both are also overt behavioral responses intended to exert some influence on others. In the case of complaining, it may be to obtain a refund. Negative WOM may be communicated in order to dissuade others from buying the same

brand. Thus, a minimum level of time, mental and verbal effort, and commitment are required for both (as compared to no response). Finally formal complaining may lead to greater WOM behavior simply because the consumer's total product experience has been expanded. That is, the consumer has more to talk about than just initial product consumption. The customer may now tell others of a firm's service policies, the friendliness of the staff, or perhaps of the detailed warranty knowledge they gained. The complaining process itself may also become part of the WOM communication. Thus, a supplementary rather than a substitution effect is proposed, leading to the following research hypotheses:

- H15: The extent of WOM behavior of complainers will be significantly greater than the extent of WOM behavior of noncomplainers.
- H16: The extent of WOM behavior of satisfied complainers will be significantly greater than the extent of WOM behavior of dissatisfied noncomplainers.

Hypotheses H14-H16 are depicted graphically in Figure 3-8.

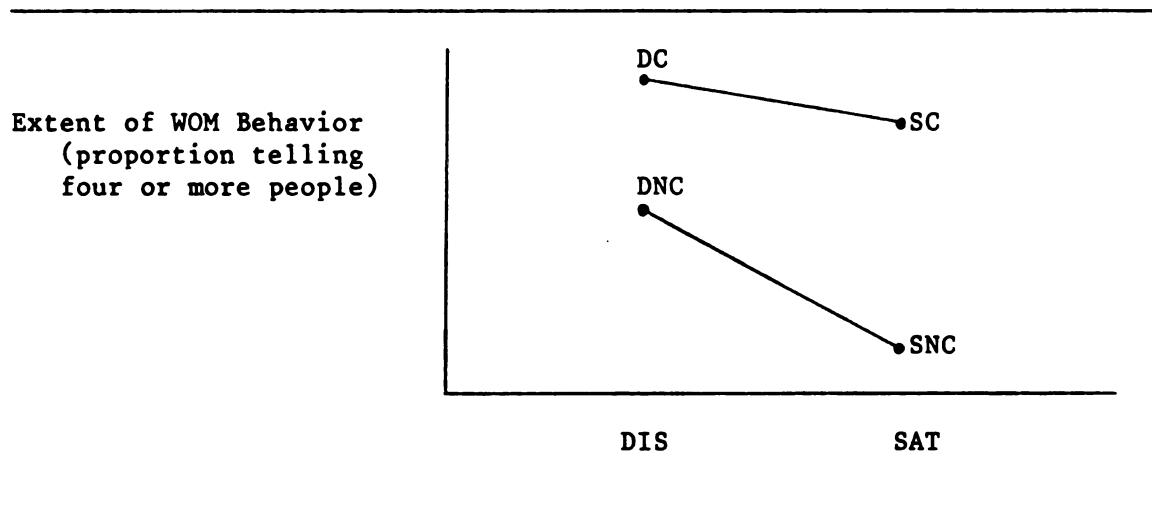


FIGURE 3-8

SUMMARY OF EXTENT OF WOM HYPOTHESES

The extent of WOM behavior among complainers is also likely to be affected by the consumer's satisfaction with complaint response. Satisfactory complaint handling may decrease the extent of WOM behavior while unsatisfactory complaint handling may lead to an increase in WOM. This increase may be due to several factors. First, consumers may feel a greater desire to "get back at" firms that do not resolve their complaints satisfactorily by negatively influencing other consumers. Second, an unresolved or dissatisfactorily resolved complaint may be so frustrating that the consumer engages in WOM behavior in order to relieve the tension or dissatisfaction caused by the lack of problem resolution (similar to the "venting" that occurs during complaining). Thus:

H17: The extent of WOM behavior of all complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint resolution will be significantly greater than the extent of WOM behavior of all complainers who are satisfied with their complaint resolution.

At the same time, the extent of WOM behavior among all complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint handling will vary depending on their original reported satisfaction level. If they were originally dissatisfied with the product, they are likely to engage in greater WOM than those who were originally satisfied, even though both groups were dissatisfied with the complaint resolution. This is due to the compounding of the dissatisfaction effect which occurs at two levels--initially and after complaining. Thus:

H18: The extent of WOM behavior of dissatisfied complainers who are then dissatisfied with how their complaints are resolved will be significantly greater than the extent of WOM behavior of satisfied complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint resolution.

The same argument should not hold among complainers who are satisfied with complaint response, however. Several researchers have noted that satisfactory complaint resolutions engender very strong customer loyalty (Morris 1988; Richins 1983a, 1983b; TARP 1979) and may help consumers dismiss or forget their original dissatisfaction (Gilly and Gelb 1982; Morris 1988). Thus, it is proposed that the satisfactory complaint resolution erases the damaging effects of the original dissatisfaction felt by one of the groups, leading to no significant differences in the extent of WOM behavior among two complaining groups: satisfied complainers who are satisfied with their complaint resolution and dissatisfied complainers who are satisfied with their complaint resolution. Thus:

H19: The extent of WOM behavior of satisfied complainers who are satisfied with their complaint resolution will not be significantly different from the extent of WOM behavior of dissatisfied complainers who are satisfied with complaint response.

Favorability of WOM Behavior Hypotheses

Negative WOM appears to be more powerful than positive WOM, particularly in terms of its impact on other postpurchase variables such as purchase behavior (Morris 1988). For example, Arndt (1967) found that only 54 percent of consumers exposed to favorable WOM bought a product while 82 percent of those who had heard unfavorable comments did not buy it. Given the greater extent and effects of negative WOM communication, therefore, the valence of WOM communication must be investigated in addition to the amount.

WOM favorability refers to the valence of the WOM comments consumers make to others about their product experience. It is logical that dissatisfied consumers are more likely to engage in negative WOM

whereas satisfied consumers will engage in more favorable WOM. Complainers are also more likely to engage in more negative WOM communication. Not only may many complainers be dissatisfied, but even satisfied complainers may be upset about the complaining process itself. Thus, of the four groups represented in the research framework, dissatisfied complainers should engage in the most negative communication (more negative in terms of content) while satisfied noncomplainers make the most favorable (in terms of content) comments. Of the two remaining groups, dissatisfied noncomplainers should engage in more negative WOM behavior than satisfied complainers because they are more likely to be frustrated by their product experience than satisfied complainers. That is, they experienced dissatisfaction yet did not have the emotional release or outlet that complaining can provide. Thus:

H20: The WOM communication of dissatisfied consumers will be less favorable than the WOM communication of satisfied consumers.

H21: The WOM communication of complainers will be less favorable than the WOM communication of noncomplainers.

H22: The WOM communication of dissatisfied noncomplainers will be less favorable than the WOM communication of satisfied complainers.

These hypotheses are shown below in Figure 3-9.

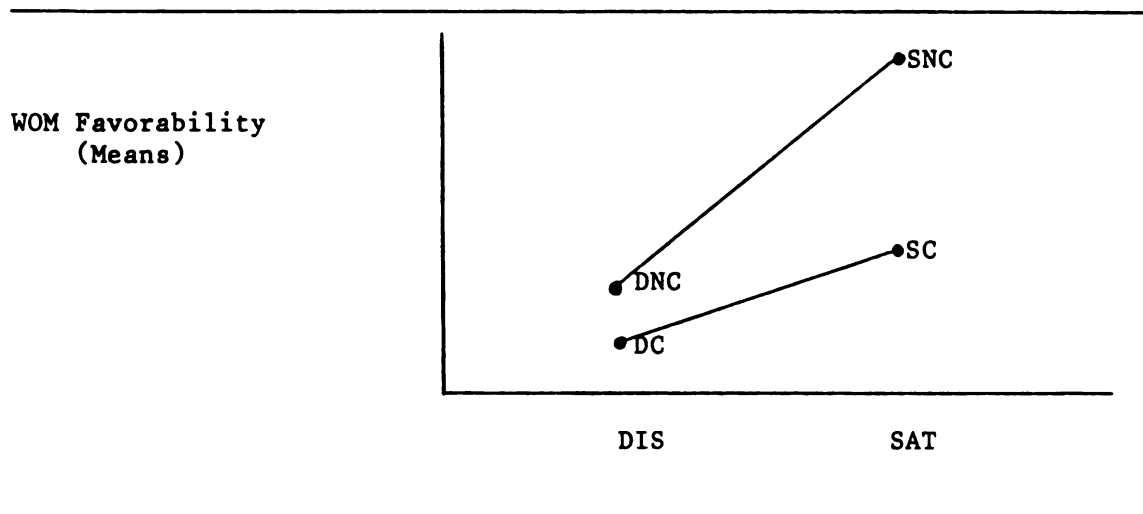


FIGURE 3-9

SUMMARY OF WOM FAVORABILITY HYPOTHESES

The WOM negativity of dissatisfied complainers may be lessened somewhat by a positive complaining experience, however. As previously discussed, satisfaction with complaint handling may serve to decrease the negative effects of unsatisfactory experiences. Accordingly:

H23: The WOM communication of complainers who are satisfied with complaint resolution will be significantly more favorable than the WOM communication of complainers who are dissatisfied with how their complaints are resolved.

H24: The WOM communication of complainers who are satisfied with complaint resolution will be significantly more favorable than the WOM communication of noncomplainers who were originally satisfied with the product.

H24 may occur for two reasons. First, WOM favorability will increase among those satisfied with the complaint handling process because the negative effects of any original dissatisfaction will be reduced (i.e., the number of negative comments will decrease). Second, satisfaction with the complaint process itself may lead to more favorable comments.

Both of these should reduce the overall ratio of negative/positive comments.

Finally, the WOM favorability among complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint handling will vary depending on their original satisfaction level. Those who are originally dissatisfied with the product will engage in more negative WOM communication than those who were originally satisfied, even though both groups were dissatisfied with complaint resolution. This rationale follows that of H18 which discusses the compounding effect of consumer dissatisfaction at two levels. Thus:

H25: The WOM communication of dissatisfied complainers who are dissatisfied with how their complaints are resolved will be significantly less favorable than the WOM communication of satisfied complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint resolution.

Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution Hypothesis

As indicated by many of the preceding research hypotheses, a consumer's (dis)satisfaction with complaint resolution is of obvious importance in satisfaction and CCB research due to its relationship with other postpurchase variables. This construct also has critical managerial implications. The long-term effectiveness of a customer service and complaint management program may depend on managers knowing: (1) what determines (dis)satisfaction with complaint resolution; (2) how to influence it; and (3) what its likely effects are. The hypotheses regarding repurchase intention, extent of WOM behavior, and WOM favorability address the third question. The final research hypotheses in this section will address (1) and (2) above by proposing two theoretical determinants of satisfaction with complaint resolution.

Despite Andreassen's (1977) call for more research on satisfaction with complaint resolution (particularly sellers' complaint handling mechanisms), very little research has been conducted on the antecedents of complaint handling satisfaction. Gilly and Gelb (1982) did find that a consumer's satisfaction with complaint resolution may be a result of the percentage of monetary loss reimbursed and service performance (operationalized as quickness of complaint resolution). This study proposes two antecedents of complaint handling satisfaction: (1) the magnitude of reimbursement; and (2) positive service disconfirmation (that the customer service received during the complaint handling process was better than expected). The following research hypothesis is therefore proposed:

- H26: Consumer satisfaction with complaint resolution will be a positive function of customer service disconfirmation and the magnitude of complaint reimbursement.

Attitudes Toward Complaining Hypotheses

Consumers' attitudes toward complaining behavior are likely to be influenced by their direct experiences making formal complaints (Allport 1935). Unsatisfactory complaining experiences may lead consumers to believe that complaining in general is ineffectual or a waste of time. Or such experiences may negatively impact their attitudes toward complaining only for that product category. Even attitudes toward the industry involved may be affected by consumers' complaining experiences.

This study examines consumer attitudes toward complaining as a function of their product experiences and resulting complaining behaviors. Specifically, differences in the following attitudes are investigated among several of the groups represented in the research framework: (1) attitudes toward complaining about carpeting; (2)

attitudes toward complaining behavior in general; and (3) attitudes toward carpet manufacturers.

Complainers are hypothesized to have more positive attitudes toward both complaining actions--carpet complaining and general complaining--than noncomplainers. This is supported by consistency and balance theories (Harrell 1986) which state that consumers need to achieve consistency in their lives with respect to their attitudes and behaviors (in this case, harmony between their previous complaining behavior and their reported attitudes about complaining). Their complaining experiences may reinforce existing attitudes or force them to form new attitudes, but the attitudes toward complaining should be more positive simply as a result of going through the complaining process. Some of this may be due to rationalization on the part of the consumer (i.e., "I complained about my carpet so it must be an appropriate or positive activity"). Accordingly:

H27: The attitudes of complainers toward complaining behavior in general will be significantly more positive than the attitudes of noncomplainers.

H28: The attitudes of complainers toward complaining about carpeting will be significantly more positive than the attitudes of noncomplainers.

Attitudes toward carpet manufacturers are not likely to be affected by complaining behavior alone, however. As noted by several researchers (Ajzen and Fishbein 1977; Loken 1983), attitudes toward objects (carpet manufacturers) are quite different from attitudes toward actions (complaining). Variables affecting consumers' attitudes toward an act do not necessarily affect their attitudes toward the product (Loken 1983). Attitudes toward carpet manufacturers are likely to vary according to the consumer's satisfaction level with the complaint

handling process, however. Those satisfied with how their complaints were handled should have more positive attitudes toward carpet manufacturers than those who were dissatisfied with their complaint response (a "halo" effect occurs). In addition, those satisfied with complaint resolution should also have more positive attitudes toward complaining about carpets and complaining in general. That is, these consumers are likely to extend their positive complaining experience to complaining about the product category and complaining in general. The following research hypotheses are therefore proposed:

- H29: The attitudes toward carpet manufacturers of complainers who are satisfied with complaint resolution will be significantly more positive than those of complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint resolution.
- H30: The attitudes toward complaining in general of complainers who are satisfied with complaint resolution will be significantly more positive than those of complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint resolution.
- H31: The attitudes toward complaining about carpeting of complainers who are satisfied with complaint resolution will be significantly more positive than those of complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint resolution.

Future Complaint Intentions Hypotheses

Consumers who have complained about their carpet may be more likely to have higher intentions toward future carpet complaining. Just as the probability of selecting the same brand increases with the number of repeat purchases (Jones 1970), so might the probability of complaining increase over time among those who have already complained. The following research hypotheses examine whether or not past complaining behavior can predict long-term complaint intentions.

- H32: Complainers are significantly more likely to report future carpet complaining intentions than noncomplainers (if a problem occurred).

- H33: Complainers who are satisfied with how their complaints were resolved are significantly more likely to report future carpet complaining intentions than complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint resolution.

Demographic/Environmental Hypotheses

A significant amount of CCB research has explored the demographic, psychographic, and personality characteristics of complainers in attempts to develop a profile of the typical complainer. Similarly, satisfaction researchers have attempted to discover whether some consumers are habitually more satisfied (or dissatisfied) than others regardless of product performance. To date, the very mixed results in both instances have led researchers to explore other variables to explain differences in satisfaction levels or complaining behavior (see Chapter Two, especially Figure 2-6, for a review of these studies). Given these nonsignificant or mixed results, there is no a priori theoretical justification for demographic differences to exist among the four groups represented in the research matrix. At the same time, due to the product category involved, some household variables might be expected to differ among some of the groups. For example, households with more people might be expected to incur more carpet problems than smaller households (i.e., staining, soiling, wear and tear) simply because of increased household traffic. This might lead to a greater need for complaining in order to resolve these problems. Thus, an increased incidence of product performance problems should lead to increased complaining. In addition, pet ownership might also lead to a greater incidence of complaining due to the increased possibility of pet accidents and stains. Thus:

H34: Larger households will be significantly more likely to complain than smaller households.

H35: Households with pets will be significantly more likely to complain than non-pet households.

Expected Contribution of the Research Hypotheses

This section discusses the specific contribution of each research hypothesis. Those hypotheses which are confirmatory in nature (i.e., replications of previous research) versus those which are entirely new contributions are identified.

The retrieved expectations hypotheses (H1 - H3) are new contributions to the consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior literature for two reasons. First, the hypothesized relationships in H1 and H2 are in the opposite direction from those typically predicted in consumer expectations research (inverse relationships were hypothesized here). This is due to the conceptualization and measurement of expectations in this research as retrieved or created expectations. Because they are measured after consumption, these expectations are conceptually distinct from prepurchase expectations. Although Figure 3-2 highlights several studies in which retrieved expectations were used, the researchers in these studies did not recognize their expectations measures as such. That is, their theoretical foundation, hypotheses, results, and conclusions were all discussed in terms of prepurchase expectations only. This research attempts to address this confusion by explicitly recognizing: (1) the difference between prepurchase and retrieved expectations, and (2) the importance of retrieved expectations as a postpurchase construct (see the section on Retrieved Versus Prior Expectations in this chapter). Implications of differing levels of retrieved expectations among various consumer groups are also presented.

The first two hypotheses on subjective disconfirmation beliefs (H4 and H5) are replications of previous research (see Figure 2-2 for a summary of studies which investigated disconfirmation). H6 is untested in existing research, however, and recognizes the interaction of satisfaction level and complaining behavior. LaTour and Peat (1979) argued that satisfaction can occur even when product performance fails to meet expectations if a product outperforms other products in the category. In an analogous fashion, this hypothesis proposes that positive disconfirmation can occur even among complaining consumers.

The repurchase intention hypotheses (H7 - H13) represent a combination of confirmatory and exploratory (as yet untested) hypotheses. H7 and H8 are based on past research. H8 needs further testing, however, due to its counterintuitive nature (complainers will have higher repurchase intentions than noncomplainers) and conflicting findings. Some research (TARP 1979) found H8 to be true regardless of the nature of the complaint resolution. Others (e.g., Gilly and Gelb 1982) found this to be dependent upon the consumer's satisfaction with complaint resolution. H9 - H13 are all new contributions to the CCB research since they investigated repurchase intentions of six distinct consumer groups (see Figure 3-7) which have not been examined previously. Although the effect of satisfaction with complaint response on repurchase intention has been studied, no one has compared levels among the groups identified in the research matrix.

The research hypotheses on the extent of WOM behavior (H14 - H19) follow a similar pattern as those on repurchase intention. H14 seeks to confirm Richins' (1983a) and others' research on the greater WOM of dissatisfied consumers (versus satisfied consumers). H15 - H19 are new

hypotheses which test whether WOM communication serves to supplement or substitute for formal/public complaining. No researcher has examined this issue despite its importance to marketing managers in determining the long-term effects of dissatisfaction and complaining.

The WOM favorability hypotheses (H20 - H25) as a group are a combination of confirmatory and exploratory hypotheses. H20 and H21 are confirmatory, but H22 - H25 represent new contributions. Previous research assumed that the valence of WOM transmissions of complainers was negative (e.g., Richins 1983a), but did not recognize the positive effect that the complaint handling procedure could have on WOM favorability.

H26 seeks to confirm Gilly and Gelb's (1982) research on the antecedents of satisfaction with complaint resolution. The operationalization of service performance used here differs from Gilly and Gelb's, however, in that an overall measure of service disconfirmation is used rather than a single attribute-based measure.

The research hypotheses on attitudes toward complaining are new contributions with the exception of the first hypothesis (H27) which was investigated by Richins (1981). The remaining attitude hypotheses (H28 - H31) are either product category-specific (and therefore new) or consider satisfaction with complaint resolution as a mediating variable (unlike past research).

The future complaint intentions hypotheses follow a similar pattern as the attitude hypotheses in that the first hypothesis (H32) replicates Richins (1981) and Bearden and Crockett (1981). The following hypothesis (H33) has not been tested previously, however.

The demographic/environmental hypotheses are new only in that they are product-category specific. Other demographic and/or environmental characteristics of complainers have been investigated (see Figure 2-6), but household size and pet ownership have not been explicitly studied.

Figure 3-10 summarizes the 35 research hypotheses presented in this chapter. It highlights those hypotheses which are based solely on past research (confirmatory) versus those which are new contributions to the satisfaction and complaining behavior research (exploratory).

Research Hypothesis		Expected Contribution
H1	RE - D > RE - S	Exploratory
H2	RE - C > RE - NC	Exploratory
H3	RE - SC > RE - DNC	Exploratory
H4	SDB - D < SDB - S	Confirmatory
H5	SDB - C < SDB - NC	Confirmatory
H6	SDB - SC > SDB - DNC	Exploratory
H7	RPI - S > RPI - D	Confirmatory
H8	RPI - C > RPI - NC	Confirmatory
H9	RPI - SNC > RPI - DC/DIScr	Exploratory
H10	RPI - SNC < RPI - DC/SATcr	Exploratory
H11	RPI - SNC > RPI - SC/DIScr	Exploratory
H12	RPI - DNC < All Other Groups	Exploratory
H13	RPI - SC/SATcr > All Other Groups	Exploratory
H14	WOM - D > WOM - S	Confirmatory
H15	WOM - C > WOM - NC	Exploratory
H16	WOM - SC > WOM - DNC	Exploratory
H17	WOM - C/DIScr > WOM - C/SATcr	Exploratory
H18	WOM - DC/DIScr > WOM - SC/DIScr	Exploratory
H19	WOM - SC/SATcr = WOM - DC/SATcr	Exploratory
H20	WOMF - D < WOMF - S	Confirmatory
H21	WOMF - C < WOMF - NC	Confirmatory
H22	WOMF - DNC < WOMF - SC	Exploratory
H23	WOMF - C/SATcr > WOMF - C/DIScr	Exploratory
H24	WOMF - C/SATcr > WOMF - SNC	Exploratory
H25	WOMF - DC/DIScr < WOMF - SC/DIScr	Exploratory
H26	CSD + MCR = SATcr	Confirmatory
H27	ACG - C > ACG - NC	Confirmatory
H28	ACC - C > ACC - NC	Exploratory
H29	ACM - C/SATcr > ACM - C/DIScr	Exploratory
H30	ACG - C/SATcr > ACG - C/DIScr	Exploratory
H31	ACC - C/SATcr > ACC - C/DIScr	Exploratory
H32	FCI - C > FCI - NC	Confirmatory
H33	FCI - C/SATcr > FCI - C/DIScr	Exploratory
H34	HHS - C > HHS - NC	Exploratory
H35	HPET CB > HNPET CB	Exploratory

FIGURE 3-10

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

FIGURE 3-10 (cont'd.)

Note:

Notations after hyphens indicate the consumer group being compared.

D	=	Dissatisfied Consumers
S	=	Satisfied Consumers
C	=	Complainers
NC	=	Noncomplainers
DNC	=	Dissatisfied Noncomplainers
SNC	=	Satisfied Noncomplainers
SC	=	Satisfied Complainers
DC	=	Dissatisfied Complainers

Notations before hyphens refer to the dependent variable of interest.

RE	=	Retrieved Expectations
SDB	=	Subjective Disconfirmation Beliefs
RPI	=	Repurchase Intentions
WOM	=	Extent Of WOM
WOMF	=	Favorability Of WOM
CSD	=	Customer Service Disconfirmation
MCR	=	Magnitude Of Complaint Reimbursement
SATcr	=	Satisfaction With Complaint Resolution
ACG	=	Attitudes Toward Complaining in General
ACC	=	Attitudes Toward Complaining About Carpet
ACM	=	Attitudes Toward Carpet Manufacturers
FCI	=	Future Complaint Intentions
HHS	=	Household Size
HHPET	=	Households With Pets
HHNOPET	=	Households Without Pets
CB	=	Complaining Behavior

METHODOLOGY AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

This chapter discusses the methodology for testing the research hypotheses presented in Chapter Three and provides preliminary results. The chapter is organized in the following manner. First, the sample is discussed and the procedure for classifying respondents into the four research groups is explained. Then the research instrument and accompanying measures are presented. This is followed by a summary of the data analysis techniques to be used to test each hypothesis. Finally, the following preliminary results are provided: (1) sample sizes for each research group; (2) mean satisfaction levels per groups; and (3) reliability measures.

Sample and Procedure

Swan and Combs (1976) recommended that "a large-scale survey of users of a type of product, with a focus on both satisfied and dissatisfied users and the salient outcomes" (p. 33) be conducted in order to yield specific information on a number of satisfaction issues. They identified a number of practical applications for such information including: (1) uncovering areas of product improvement; (2) generating ideas for promotional strategy; and (3) developing guidelines for product warranties. This research goes beyond Swan and Combs' recommendation by including a large number of noncomplaining and complaining consumers in the survey as well. A field survey approach is used which focuses on satisfied complainers, satisfied noncomplainers, dissatisfied complainers, and dissatisfied noncomplainers of a national carpet brand. Various postpurchase behaviors and attitudes of each

group are examined as a function of their satisfaction level and complaining behavior.

Data were collected during October-November of 1987. The sampling frame consisted of new owners of a nationally advertised carpet brand who had purchased their carpeting prior to June 1987. This allowed adequate time for customers' postpurchase attitudes, behaviors, and cognitive responses to develop. The household members most responsible for selecting carpet for the home were interviewed via telephone by an independent marketing research firm. Four hundred and five interviews were conducted nationwide, each lasting approximately 15 minutes. Four hundred and four interviews were acceptable and used in the data analysis. Males comprised 22.5 percent of the sample; females comprised 77.5 percent.

Stratified random sampling was conducted within three distinct customer segments. Segment I consisted of customers who had no formal complaints on file with the carpet fiber manufacturer (Noncomplainers). Segment II consisted of those customers who complained about a problem with their carpet and had the problem resolved (Complainers, group 1). Segment III was comprised of customers who complained and eventually had their new carpets replaced under warranty due to quality defects (Complainers, group 2). All three groups were identified via warranty cards sent in to the manufacturer. The warranty card return rate as reported by the research sponsor was 25 percent. Table 4-1 provides descriptive statistics for these customer segments.

TABLE 4-1
SAMPLE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Segment	N	Mean Satisfaction*	Std. Dev.
I	208 (51%)	3.78	.82
II	92 (23%)	2.47	1.09
III	104 (26%)	1.70	.54

*On a 4-point scale where 4 = "very satisfied"

These three segments were identified and randomly sampled for several reasons. First, the research objectives made it necessary to sample a sufficient number of both satisfied and dissatisfied consumers as well as complainers and noncomplainers. Second, since noncomplaining consumers are often underrepresented in CCB research and within many firms' customer service information bases (Andreassen 1977), sampling a large proportion of noncomplaining consumers was deemed necessary as well. Of particular importance were dissatisfied consumers who don't complain and satisfied consumers who do complain since these two groups represent the "exceptions" in the satisfaction literature and have not been widely studied. Finally, since both voice (public) and private (WOM) complaining behaviors are of interest based on the research objectives, a large number of both complaining and noncomplaining consumers was needed.

To form the four groups represented in the research framework, the following procedure was employed. The two complaining segments (Segment II and III) were combined to form the Complainers group. Satisfied and dissatisfied consumers were identified according to their survey

responses to the question, "Overall, how satisfied are you with your original (brand name inserted) carpet?" Those who reported being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied were combined to form the Satisfied consumer group. Those who were very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied were combined to form the Dissatisfied group. Noncomplainers were identified from company files via warranty cards, and had no complaints/inquiries on record with the manufacturer.

The Research Instrument

The questionnaire was initially developed based on focus group interviews and previous proprietary research of the research sponsor. Prior to finalization, the questionnaire was pretested on twenty existing carpet customers. Only minor revisions were made in question wording. To minimize order effects, the order in which sub-parts of multiple-part questions were presented was varied. The final questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

Measures

Retrieved Expectations

The retrieved expectations construct was operationalized as the sum of three product attribute expectations, each measured on a 4-point scale ranging from "definitely would not expect" to "definitely would expect." The attributes were carpet plushness, durability, and stain resistance. They were selected on the basis of focus group results and previous proprietary research which indicated that carpet consumers consider these three attributes most important when selecting and evaluating carpet. Support for an attribute-based measure of expectations can be found in Bearden and Teel (1983).

Subjective Disconfirmation Beliefs

Subjective disconfirmation was measured by two indicators. The first index was the sum of three items, each measuring an attribute reflecting product disconfirmation. Oliver (1980) recommended that attribute-specific measures of disconfirmation be used rather than overall scales. Each attribute was measured on a 3-point "not as good as expected" to "better than expected" scale (Gilly 1987; Oliver 1987). The attributes measured were the same as those for expectations. The second measure of overall subjective disconfirmation was service disconfirmation. It consisted of a 2-item service attribute measure which included warranty and retailer service. The scale was identical to that for product disconfirmation.

Repurchase Intention

The repurchase intention construct was operationalized as a 4-point "definitely will not buy again" to "definitely will buy again" scale in which a higher value indicates a higher level of repurchase intention. This operationalization follows that of Gilly and Gelb (1982) and Gilly (1987) in which 4-point scales were used for all bipolar scales. The use of 4-point scales for this and several other variables also forced consumers to make choices rather than checking "neutral" positions (i.e., "fencesitters" were eliminated).

Extent of WOM Behavior

The WOM communication response was defined as the act of telling at least one family member or friend about the consumption experience, and 87 percent of the total sample did so. The extent of consumers' word-of-mouth behavior was measured as the reported number of friends or

family members with whom the respondent discussed the carpet brand (one, two, three, or four or more people told were the possible responses).

Favorability of WOM Behavior

Those consumers engaging in WOM communication were asked to indicate the average valence of their WOM transmissions using a 5-point bipolar scale ranging from "very negative" to "very positive." The midpoint indicated that the average of all WOM was neutral.

Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution

This construct was measured on a 4-point bipolar scale ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied" (Gilly 1987; Gilly and Gelb 1982). Consumers were asked how satisfied they were with how their complaint was handled. Like the original satisfaction level, this variable was dichotomized into two groups for all hypotheses except H26. Those who were very and somewhat dissatisfied were classified as dissatisfied, while those who were very and somewhat satisfied were classified as satisfied with complaint resolution. For H26, satisfaction with complaint resolution served as the dependent variable in a multiple regression analysis. Thus, the original 4-point bipolar scale was used without dichotomization in order to keep the measurement level on an interval scale.

Customer Service Disconfirmation

Customer service disconfirmation refers to the consumers' disconfirmation beliefs regarding the service received from the carpet fiber manufacturer's customer service department after a complaint was made (via telephone or letter). This is not the same as the second indicator for overall subjective disconfirmation (labelled service disconfirmation) which measures disconfirmation beliefs related to

product warranty and retailer service. The customer service disconfirmation construct was measured on a 3-point "not as good as expected" to "better than expected" scale as used by Oliver (1980, 1987).

Magnitude of Complaint Reimbursement

Customers were asked in an open-ended question how their particular complaint was actually handled. This provided measures of complaint reimbursement magnitude which formed a 3-point Guttman scale in which 1 = minimal monetary value (e.g., cleaning instructions given), 2 = moderate monetary value (e.g., free steam cleaning provided), and 3 = large monetary value (e.g., carpet replacement). Each consumer who complained followed the same customer service procedures initially, but some complainers were moved to the next level(s) under certain conditions. Thus, those consumers whose carpets were eventually replaced went through each of the preceding two customer service levels prior to replacement. Company records were used to verify all replacement customers, but measurement of the other two levels of complaint reimbursement (instructions and steam cleaning) relied on complainers' self-reports.

Attitudes

Respondents were provided with a series of statements about the following: carpet manufactures, complaining about carpeting, and complaining in general. Five-point Likert scales were used in which they were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with each statement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The statements are discussed below.

1. Attitudes about Carpet Manufacturers

Two items were used to indicate consumers' attitudes toward carpet manufacturers:

"Carpet manufacturers don't care about problems people have with their carpeting once it's installed;" and

"Carpet warranties protect manufacturers more than consumers."

Both items were reverse-scored so that agreement indicated a negative attitude toward carpet manufacturers (a higher value would therefore indicate a more positive attitude and a lower value would indicate a negative attitude). The Chronbach's alpha for this item was 0.833.

2. Attitudes Toward Complaining about Carpeting

Consumers' attitudes toward complaining about carpet were indicated by four attitude statements:

"Fewer people complain about carpet purchases than about other household items;"

"Most people are stuck with their carpet if it gets stained;"

"I would feel justified to complain about carpet problems even without a warranty;" and

"Carpeting isn't a product people complain about."

These items indicate how likely or how appropriate respondents think it is to complain about the product category. Chronbach's alpha for the items was only 0.649, indicating marginal reliability.

3. Attitudes Toward Complaining in General

Three items were used to indicate consumers' attitudes toward the act of complaining in general (i.e., across product category or circumstance). The items included were from question 22 on Appendix A, items 22i - 22p. These items included the following:

"I'm uncomfortable when returning a product;"

"I dislike making any kind of complaint;" and

"I don't think complaining is an appropriate activity under any circumstances."

Again, reverse-scoring was used when necessary so that higher values indicated more positive attitudes toward complaining. The Chronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.782.

Future Complaint Intentions

Respondents were asked to report if they were likely to complain about their carpeting if a problem developed. They indicated with a yes/no response to six different time frames--if a problem occurred: (1) up to three months after installation; (2) up to six months after installation; (3) up to one year; (4) up to three years; (5) up to five years; and (6) more than five years after installation.

Household Size

Respondents reported the total number of people living in the household (including themselves) in an open-ended question.

Pet Ownership

Pet ownership was operationalized as a dichotomous variable in which subjects indicated whether or not they owned any pets (yes/no).

Data Analysis

Figure 4-1 provides a summary of the data analysis techniques which will be used to test the hypotheses presented in Chapter Three. Many of the hypotheses will be tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) since the independent variables (satisfaction level and complaining behavior) are categorical and many of the dependent variables (e.g., repurchase intention, retrieved expectations) are continuous. For those hypotheses involving only two groups, t-tests can be used. Additional analyses are

	Measurement Level of:		
Research Hypothesis	Independent Variable(s)	Dependent Variable	Statistical Test
<u>Retrvd. Expecs.</u>			
H1	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H2	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H3	Nominal	Ratio	T-test*
<u>Subj. Disconf.</u>			
H4	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H5	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H6	Nominal	Ratio	T-test*
<u>Repchase. Int.</u>			
H7	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
N8	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H9	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H10	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H11	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H12	Nominal	Ratio	Anova
H13	Nominal	Ratio	Anova
<u>Extent of WOM</u>			
H14	Nominal	Ordinal	χ^2
H15	Nominal	Ordinal	χ^2
H16	Nominal	Ordinal	χ^2
H17	Nominal	Ordinal	χ^2
H18	Nominal	Ordinal	χ^2
H19	Nominal	Ordinal	χ^2
<u>WOM Favorability</u>			
H20	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H21	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H22	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H23	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H24	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H25	Nominal	Ratio	T-test*
<u>Sat. w/ Comp. Res.</u>			
H26	Ordinal/ Interval	Interval	Multiple Regression
<u>Attitudes</u>			
H27	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H28	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H29	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H30	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H31	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
H32	Nominal	Ratio	T-test
<u>Future Comp. Int.</u>			
H33	Nominal	Nominal	χ^2
H34	Nominal	Nominal	χ^2
<u>Demo/Environ.</u>			
H35	Ratio	Nominal	χ^2
H36	Nominal	Nominal	χ^2

* Anova and multiple-range tests were also used.

FIGURE 4-1

SUMMARY OF DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

indicated in Figure 4-1. It should be noted that, while not all possible comparisons were made across the four research groups in the formal hypotheses, the data analysis will investigate differences across all groups.

Preliminary Results

Figure 4-2 indicates the size of each of the four groups represented in the research framework. Of particular concern is the small sample size of the dissatisfied noncomplainers group. However, this result may not be surprising given the following factors. First, the product category is one in which complaining is more likely to occur than for other products due to its extremely high cost, durability, and importance to the consumer's daily life. As Chapter Two indicated, complaint propensity among consumers increases under these conditions. Second, this carpet brand was supported by an extremely heavy advertising and promotional campaign in which consumer expectations for the stain-resistant qualities of the brand were built up to a very high level. Third, consumers were encouraged at several levels to contact the carpet fiber manufacturer (the warrantor) in the event of problems. Point-of-sale materials, warranty cards, and retail salespersons all provided a quick, simple, and costless way for consumers to complain--a toll-free customer service number provided by the carpet fiber manufacturer. Finally, many dissatisfied consumers may have complained only at the retail level, thus reducing the number of dissatisfied noncomplainers at the manufacturer level.

It should be noted that the low number of dissatisfied noncomplainers contradicts previous findings in which the number of

dissatisfied noncomplainers was often the largest group (Best and Andreasen 1977; Day and Ash 1979; Day and Bodur 1977). In addition to the reasons cited above, the difference may be due in part to differences in sampling methods employed. Previous research often identified large numbers of dissatisfied consumers first, then queried them about their complaining behaviors. In addition, consumers were often asked to cite numerous instances across several product categories when they were dissatisfied and did not complain. This method may be subject to bias due to consumers' memory loss since consumers were often asked to recall these instances for an entire year (e.g., Day and Ash 1979; Day and Bodur 1977). This research surveys satisfaction and CCB for one specific brand over a limited time frame.

	Complainers	Noncomplainers	
Satisfied	72	203	275
Dissatisfied	124	5	129
	196	208	

FIGURE 4-2

SAMPLE SIZES

Mean satisfaction levels of each of the four research groups are presented in Figure 4-3. Satisfied consumers were those responding "3" (somewhat satisfied) or "4" (very satisfied) while dissatisfied consumers were those responding "1" (very dissatisfied) or "2" (somewhat dissatisfied).

	Complainers	Noncomplainers
Satisfied	3.46	3.83
Dissatisfied	1.24	1.80

FIGURE 4-3

MEAN SATISFACTION LEVELS

Since several of the hypotheses involve a further subdivision of complainers (into those who are satisfied with complaint resolution and those who are dissatisfied), sample sizes for the expanded six-group matrix are shown in Figure 4-4.

	Complainers	Noncomplainers
Satisfied	SAT _{cr} 59	203
	DIS _{cr} 10	
Dissatisfied	SAT _{cr} 89	5
	DIS _{cr} 33	

FIGURE 4-4

SAMPLE SIZES OF SUB-SEGMENTS

In addition, mean satisfaction levels (original product satisfaction) for the six groups are presented in Figure 4-5.

	Complainers	Noncomplainers
Satisfied	SAT _{cr} 3.61	3.83
	DIS _{cr} 3.00	
Dissatisfied	SAT _{cr} 1.26	1.80
	DIS _{cr} 1.18	

FIGURE 4-5

MEAN SATISFACTION LEVEL OF SUB-SEGMENTS

Chapter Five, which follows, discusses the specific data analyses conducted and presents the main results. A discussion of the results and their implications is provided in Chapter Six. Limitations of the research and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

MAIN RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of statistical tests of each research hypothesis. The results are presented in the same order in which the hypotheses were discussed in Chapter Three. Thus, results are shown for hypotheses on: (1) retrieved expectations; (2) subjective disconfirmation beliefs; (3) repurchase intentions; (4) extent of WOM behavior; (5) favorability of WOM behavior; (6) satisfaction with complaint resolution; (7) attitudes toward complaining; (8) future complaint intentions; and (9) demographic/environmental characteristics.

Retrieved Expectations Results

T-test results of the retrieved expectation hypotheses (H1 - H3) are shown in Table 5-1. As the table shows, H1 is supported in that dissatisfied consumers did report significantly higher retrieved expectation levels than satisfied consumers ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test). H2 stated that complainers would have significantly higher retrieved expectation levels than noncomplaining consumers. This hypothesis was also supported ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test). Thus, retrieved expectation levels increase as satisfaction decreases. Retrieved expectations were also higher among complainers (when compared to noncomplainers).

H3 stated that the retrieved expectation levels of satisfied complainers would be significantly higher than those of dissatisfied noncomplainers. Table 5-1 shows that this hypothesis is not supported since the means were not significantly different ($p = 0.22$ for a one-tail test). It was argued that the complaining effect would dominate because of the greater cognitive and physical effort required by the

TABLE 5-1

T-TEST RESULTS: RETRIEVED EXPECTATIONS

Consumer Group	Mean*(sd)	T	df	P-value
H1:				
Dissatisfied Consumers	10.78 (1.45)	4.61	402	0.0001
Satisfied Consumers	10.03 (1.53)			
H2:				
Noncomplainers	9.98 (1.54)	-3.96	402	0.0001
Complainers	10.58 (1.49)			
H3:				
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	10.80 (1.79)	-0.79	74	0.22
Satisfied Complainers	10.24 (1.53)			

*Maximum Scale Value Possible: 12

complaining process. The divided sum-of-squares (SS) results show that the complaining effect did not dominate ($F = 1.62$, $p = 0.20$). It appears that the dissatisfaction effect and the complaining effect (both of which contribute to higher retrieved expectation levels) cancel each other out, resulting in a nonsignificant difference in the two means. It should be noted that, despite the significant differences in mean expectation levels among the aforementioned groups, expectation levels appear to be uniformly high across all the groups presented in Table 5-1. No mean is lower than around ten (9.98 for noncomplainers is the lowest) out of a possible maximum value of 12. This is most likely due to the extensive consumer advertising and retail promotion campaign which emphasized the superior (in fact revolutionary) quality of the new carpet brand. This is discussed further in Chapter Six. It should further be noted that, due to the small size of the dissatisfied noncomplainers group ($N = 5$), the interpretation of the results of H3 should be made with some caution.

The retrieved expectations of the four groups represented in the research framework are compared using ANOVA in Table 5-2. Because the Tukey test is the recommended multiple range test for unequal cell sizes (SAS 1985), Tukey groupings are shown here. Duncan's method is sometimes considered superior to Tukey's because of its greater power (Carmer and Swanson 1973). In every case, however, the Tukey and Duncan results were identical with respect to the grouping of means. Often, the Scheffe results were the same as Tukey's and Duncan's as well. Exceptions to this pattern are noted.

TABLE 5-2
ANOVA RESULTS: RETRIEVED EXPECTATIONS

<u>ANOVA SS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>P-value</u>
52.50	7.70	3, 400	0.0001

<u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Mean*</u>	<u>Grouping**</u>
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	10.80	A
Dissatisfied Complainers	10.77	A
Satisfied Complainers	10.24	B
Satisfied Noncomplainers	9.96	B

* Maximum Scale Value Possible: 12

** Means with the same letter are not significantly different at alpha = 0.05 according to Scheffe's, Tukey's and Duncan's Multiple Range Tests.

Although no specific research hypotheses were proposed regarding all four groups, an ordering of the means from highest to lowest was suggested in Figure 3-5 which showed that:

$$RE_{dc} > RE_{sc} > RE_{dnc} > RE_{snc}$$

The multiple range tests show that this order was not supported. The retrieved expectations of both dissatisfied complainers and dissatisfied noncomplainers were almost equal. They were significantly different from both satisfied groups, however ($\alpha = 0.05$). The retrieved expectations of satisfied complainers and satisfied noncomplainers were not significantly different.

Subjective Disconfirmation Beliefs Results

Results of the subjective disconfirmation beliefs hypotheses (H4 - H6) are shown in Table 5-3. H4 stated that the subjective disconfirmation beliefs of dissatisfied consumers would be significantly lower (i.e., more negative) than those of satisfied consumers. The table shows that this hypothesis is supported ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test). H5 is also supported in that disconfirmation was also lower among complainers when compared to noncomplainers ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test). Thus, subjective disconfirmation beliefs decrease as satisfaction decreases and when formal complaining occurs. H6 argued that the disconfirmation beliefs of satisfied complainers will be significantly higher (i.e., more positive) than those of dissatisfied noncomplainers. H6 was supported ($p = 0.02$ for a one-tail test). Thus, complainers report significantly more positive disconfirmation beliefs than noncomplainers if their original satisfaction level with the product was fairly high. Again, due to the small size of the dissatisfied noncomplainers group, the support for H6 must be qualified somewhat. The use of T-tests with small sample sizes raises the issue of normality of the population. A normal population must be assumed whenever T is used unless sample size is large ($n > 30$). If n is very

TABLE 5-3

T-TEST RESULTS: SUBJECTIVE DISCONFIRMATION BELIEFS

Consumer Group	Mean*(sd)	T	df	P-value
H4:				
Dissatisfied Consumers	7.77 (2.49)	-9.25	402	0.0001
Satisfied Consumers	10.40 (2.75)			
H5:				
Noncomplainers	10.49 (2.83)	7.01	402	0.0001
Complainers	8.56 (2.71)			
H6:				
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	7.60 (1.52)	2.06	74	0.02
Satisfied Complainers	9.93 (2.49)			

*Maximum Scale Value Possible: 15

small, however, the T distribution will be very flat compared with the normal curve, and a T-test may be inappropriate (Blalock 1979).

The subjective disconfirmation belief means among all four groups in the research matrix are shown in Table 5-4. The ANOVA and accompanying multiple range tests show that the ordering suggested in Figure 3-6 ($SDB_{dc} < SDB_{dnc} < SDB_{sc} < SDB_{snc}$) was not supported. While dissatisfied consumers did have significantly lower disconfirmation beliefs than satisfied consumers, no differences were found within the satisfied and dissatisfied groups. The actual ordering of the means was:

$$SDB_{dnc} < SDB_{dc} < SDB_{sc} < SDB_{snc}$$

Thus, the order of the disconfirmation beliefs of the dissatisfied group was reversed (dissatisfied noncomplainers had lower beliefs than dissatisfied complainers).

TABLE 5-4

ANOVA RESULTS: SUBJECTIVE DISCONFIRMATION BELIEFS

<u>ANOVA SS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>P-value</u>
629.88	29.62	3, 400	0.0001

<u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Mean*</u>	<u>Grouping**</u>
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	7.60	A
Dissatisfied Complainers	7.77	A
Satisfied Complainers	9.93	B
Satisfied Noncomplainers	10.56	B

* Maximum Scale Value Possible: 15

** Means with the same letter are not significantly different at alpha = 0.05 according to all three Multiple Range Tests.

Repurchase Intention Results

T-test results of the first two hypotheses on repurchase intention (H7 and H8) are presented in Table 5-5. As the table shows, repurchase intentions of satisfied consumers were significantly higher than the intentions of dissatisfied consumers ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test), supporting H7. H8 was not supported in that the repurchase intentions of complainers were significantly lower than those of noncomplainers. Thus, H8 was not only unsupported but the difference was significant in the opposite direction. This result contradicts previous research which found that complainers had higher repurchase intentions than noncomplainers (e.g., TARP 1979) This finding may be a result of the high cost and durability of the product in this study (carpeting). Having to complain about an expensive purchase may trigger more negative

TABLE 5-5

T-TEST RESULTS: REPURCHASE INTENTION

Consumer Group	Mean*(sd)	T	df	P-value
H7:				
Dissatisfied Consumers	2.01 (1.29)	-10.36	400	0.0001
Satisfied Consumers	3.29 (0.80)			
H8:				
Noncomplainers	3.38 (0.77)	9.26	400	0.0001
Complainers	2.38 (1.27)			
*Maximum Scale Value Possible: 4				

feelings about subsequent purchases than complaining about less expensive products. Since this explanation cannot be directly tested with the data from this study, this must addressed in future research.

A second alternative explanation may be the severity of the problem experienced by the complaining customer. Since over half of all complaining customers were replacement customers (whose original carpets had substantial quality defects), the repurchase intentions of complainers may have been lowered considerably by this sub-segment. To test this explanation, the complainers group (N = 196) was segmented into Replacement (N = 104) and Nonreplacements (N = 92) complainers. The results are shown in Table 5-6. Since the mean repurchase intention level of Replacement complainers is higher than the repurchase intentions of the Nonreplacement complainers (although not significantly higher), the "problem severity" explanation must also be rejected.

TABLE 5-6

T-TEST RESULTS: REPLACEMENTS VS. NONREPLACEMENTS

Consumer Group	Mean*(sd)	T	df	P-value
Replacement Complainers	2.44 (1.38)	-0.74	191	0.23
Nonreplacement Complainers	2.31 (1.14)			

*Maximum Scale Value Possible: 4

A third explanation might be the outcomes of consumers' complaints. As argued in H9 - H13, consumers who think their complaints were addressed unsatisfactorily may vary significantly in their repurchase intentions from either noncomplainers or from those who are satisfied with complaint resolution. This explanation is tested in H9 - H11 with a series of T-tests (Table 5-7) and in H12 and H13 with ANOVA (Table 5-8). H9 and H11 involve tests of two means while H12 and H13 compare means of multiple groups. The ANOVA and accompanying multiple range tests which follow the T-test results also provide a summary of repurchase intention means of the six groups represented in the extended research framework.

H9 stated that the repurchase intentions of satisfied noncomplainers would be significantly higher than those of dissatisfied complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint response. Table 5-7 shows that the means are significantly different in the hypothesized direction ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test), so H9 is supported. H10 was not supported, however. The repurchase intentions of satisfied noncomplainers were significantly higher than those of dissatisfied complainers who were satisfied with complaint resolution, not lower as

TABLE 5-7

T-TEST RESULTS: REPURCHASE INTENTION AND SAT_{cr}

Consumer Group*	Mean**(sd)	T	df	P-value
H9:				
Satisfied Noncomplainers	3.41 (0.69)	10.23	36.5	0.0001
Dissatisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	1.45 (1.06)			
H10:				
Satisfied Noncomplainers	3.41 (0.69)	7.61	107.4	0.0001
Dissatisfied Complainers/Sat _{cr}	2.29 (1.30)			
H11:				
Satisfied Noncomplainers	3.41 (0.69)	4.06	212.0	0.0001
Satisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	2.50 (0.71)			

*Sat_{cr} = Satisfied with Complaint Response; Dis_{cr} = Dissatisfied with Complaint Response.

**Maximum Scale Value Possible: 4

proposed in H10 ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test). H10 was unsupported and is in fact significant in the opposite direction. Thus, a dissatisfied complainer's satisfaction with complaint response does not counteract the negative effect of the original product dissatisfaction level. H11 stated that the repurchase intention levels of satisfied noncomplainers would be significantly higher than the repurchase intentions of satisfied complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint resolution. This was supported ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test).

The results of the ANOVA tests of H12 and H13 are shown in Table 5-8. H12 stated that the repurchase intentions of dissatisfied noncomplainers would be the lowest of all consumer groups. The highest repurchase intentions were hypothesized to be from the satisfied complainers who were also satisfied with how their complaints were resolved (H13). The ANOVA results show that the means are significantly different among the six groups represented in the extended research

TABLE 5-8

ANOVA RESULTS: REPURCHASE INTENTION

<u>ANOVA SS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>P-value</u>
171.88	38.76	5, 392	0.0001

Consumer Group	Mean*	Grouping**		
H12 and H13:				
Satisfied Noncomplainers	3.41	A		
Satisfied Complainers/Sat _{cr}	3.02	A	B	
Satisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	2.50		B	C
Dissatisfied Complainers/Sat _{cr}	2.29			C
Dissatisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	1.45			D
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	1.20			D

* Maximum Scale Value Possible: 4

** Means with the same letter are not significantly different at alpha = 0.05 according to all Multiple Range Tests.

framework, i.e., when satisfaction with complaint response is considered ($p = 0.0001$). Not all groups are significantly different from every other group, however, as indicated by the results of Duncan's, Tukey's, and Scheffe's multiple range tests. H12 was supported in that the repurchase intentions of dissatisfied noncomplainers were the lowest of all six groups. The mean of 1.2 was significantly lower than four of the remaining five groups ($\alpha = 0.05$), but was not significantly lower than the mean repurchase intentions of one group - dissatisfied complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint response ($M = 1.45$). Thus, the support for H12 is partially limited due to this nonsignificant finding. The results must also be interpreted with some

caution given the small sample size of the dissatisfied noncomplainers group ($N = 5$).

H13 must be rejected since the repurchase intentions of satisfied complainers who were satisfied with complaint response were not significantly different from two groups - satisfied noncomplainers and satisfied complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint resolution. The repurchase intentions of satisfied complainers who were satisfied with complaint resolution were significantly higher only when compared to the three dissatisfied consumer groups.

The divided SS results for the satisfaction effect indicate that a consumer's original product satisfaction level drives repurchase intention ($F = 38.01$, $P = 0.0001$). Support is provided in the ordering of the means in which the repurchase intentions of all three satisfied consumer groups exceeded those of the dissatisfied groups. Among satisfied consumers who complain, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with complaint response did not lead to significant differences in repurchase intention levels. Among dissatisfied complainers, however, satisfaction with complaint response led to significantly higher repurchase intentions. Thus, the effect of a consumer's (dis)satisfaction with complaint response on repurchase intentions appears to depend on the consumer's original product satisfaction judgment.

Extent of WOM Behavior Results

Results of the X^2 tests of the extent of WOM behavior hypotheses (H14 - H19) are shown in Tables 5-9 (H14 - H16) and 5-11 (H17 - H19). X^2 tests were used because the WOM extent variable was ordinal in nature (1, 2, 3, and 4 or more people told were the possible responses). H14 stated that the extent of WOM behavior of dissatisfied consumers would

be significantly greater than the extent of WOM behavior of satisfied consumers. Table 5-9 shows support for H14. For example, almost 93 percent of all dissatisfied consumers engaging in WOM behavior told four or more people about their carpet experience whereas only 74 percent of the satisfied consumers told four or more. In addition, dissatisfied consumers were much less likely than satisfied consumers to tell only one, two, or three people. As the X^2 test indicates, the difference in the WOM frequency distributions was significant ($p < 0.001$).

H15 was also supported in that the X^2 test indicates a significant difference in the frequency distribution ($p < 0.001$). Complainers were much more likely to tell four or more persons (90.8 percent) than noncomplainers (69.3 percent). In addition, complainers were much less likely than noncomplainers to tell only one, two, or three people about their experiences. For example, only 3.8 percent of all complainers told two people whereas almost 12 percent of noncomplainers told only two people. H16 was rejected, however, since satisfied complainers did not engage in significantly greater WOM behavior than dissatisfied noncomplainers. That is, no significant difference in the frequency distribution was found ($p = 0.53$). As mentioned earlier, this result must be interpreted with some caution due to the small number of dissatisfied noncomplainers. In addition, several of the response categories had to be combined to ensure that almost 80 percent of the cells had expected frequencies of five. This resulted in a less than meaningful X^2 test since only two categories of WOM behavior were compared.

TABLE 5-9

 χ^2 RESULTS: EXTENT OF WOM

Frequency Row % Expected Frequency Cell χ^2	<u>Number of People Told</u>			
<u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4 or more</u>
H14:				
Dissatisfied Consumers	1 (.8%) 3.2 1.48	3 (2.4%) 9.1 4.12	5 (4.1%) 11.6 3.75	114 (92.7%) 99.1 2.24
Satisfied Consumers	8 (3.5%) 5.8 0.801	23 (10.1%) 16.9 2.23	28 (12.3%) 21.4 2.03	168 (74.0%) 182.9 1.21
$\chi^2 = 17.88, 3 \text{ df}, p < 0.001$				
H15:				
Complainers	2 (1.1%) 4.7 1.58	7 (3.8%) 13.7 3.25	8 (4.4%) 17.3 5.04	167 (90.8%) 148.3 2.37
Noncomplainers	7 (4.2%) 4.8 1.75	19 (11.5%) 12.3 3.61	25 (15.1%) 15.7 5.54	115 (69.3%) 133.7 2.63
$\chi^2 = 25.81, 3 \text{ df}, p < 0.001$				
H16:			<u>1-3</u>	<u>4 or more</u>
Satisfied Complainers			9 (13.8%) 9.4 0.125	56 (86.1%) 55.6 0.003
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers			1 (20.0%) 0.5 1.88	4 (80.0%) 4.5 0.20
$\chi^2 = 2.21, 3 \text{ df}, p = 0.53$				

Table 5-10 compares the WOM behavior of all four groups in the research framework. The table shows the frequency and proportion of each group who told one, two, three, or four or more persons about their carpet experience. As indicated by the X^2 test, the differences in the frequency distributions of the four consumer groups were significant ($p < 0.02$).

TABLE 5-10
 X^2 RESULTS: EXTENT OF WOM - FOUR GROUPS

Frequency Row %	Number of People Told		
Consumer Group	1 or 2	3	4 or more
Satisfied Noncomplainer	26 (16.0%)	24 (14.8%)	112 (69.0%)
Satisfied Complainer	5 (7.7%)	4 (6.2%)	56 (86.1%)
Dissatisfied Complainer	6 (5.1%)	4 (3.7%)	108 (92.3%)
Dissatisfied Noncomplainer	0	1 (20.0%)	4 (80.0%)
$X^2 = 9.84, 3 \text{ df}, p < 0.02$			

Thus, the order (from highest to lowest) of the proportions of each group telling four or more people is as follows:

$$WOM_{dc} > WOM_{sc} > WOM_{dnc} > WOM_{snc}$$

H17 - H19 (see Table 5-11) examine the WOM behavior of complaining groups only. To ensure that at least 80 percent of the cells had expected frequencies of five or more (thus allowing a valid X^2 test), two of the responses ("one" and "two" persons told) were combined to test H17 - H19. H17 stated that complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint resolution would engage in greater WOM than complainers who

TABLE 5-11

 χ^2 RESULTS: EXTENT OF WOM - COMPLAINERS

Frequency Row % Expected Frequency Cell χ^2	<u>Number of People Told</u>		
<u>Complainer Group</u>	<u>1 or 2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4 or more</u>
H17:			
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	3 (7.0%) 5.2 1.53	2 (4.7%) 1.9 0.004	38 (88.3%) 35.9 0.022
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	6 (4.4%) 6.8 0.49	6 (4.4%) 6.1 0.001	125 (91.2%) 124.1 0.007
$\chi^2 = 2.05, 2 \text{ df}, p = 0.36$			
H18:			
Dissatisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	1 (3.0%) 2.3 0.74	1 (3.0%) 1.5 0.18	31 (94.0%) 29.2 0.116
Satisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	2 (20.0%) 0.7 2.43	1 (10.0%) 0.5 0.62	7 (70.0%) 8.8 0.38
$\chi^2 = 4.47, 2 \text{ df}, p = 0.10$			
H19:			
Satisfied Complainers/Sat _{cr}	3 (5.7%) 2.3 0.19	3 (5.7%) 2.3 0.19	47 (88.6%) 48.4 0.03
Dissatisfied Complainers/Sat _{cr}	3 (3.6%) 3.7 0.12	3 (3.6%) 3.7 0.12	78 (92.8%) 76.6 0.02
$\chi^2 = .65, 2 \text{ df}, p = 0.81$			

were satisfied with their complaint outcome. This hypothesis was not supported ($p = 0.36$). Both groups of complainers appeared to engage in an equally high level of WOM behavior when the proportion telling four or more is examined (88.3 percent and 91.2 percent for the two groups, respectively).

H18 was marginally supported in that dissatisfied complainers engaged in greater WOM than satisfied complainers when both groups were dissatisfied with complaint response ($p = 0.10$). When these same groups (i.e., satisfied and dissatisfied complainers) were satisfied with how their complaints were resolved, however, no significant differences in the extent of their WOM behavior occurred ($p = 0.81$). Thus, H19 is supported. It should be noted that the 4-point scale used to measure extent of WOM behavior may have resulted in the clumping of responses (particularly in the "4 or more" category) which may limit somewhat the conclusions drawn. In addition, despite combining response categories, more than 20 percent of the cells had expected frequencies less than five, indicating that chi-square may not be a valid test. While this does not present a problem for H19 (because it was not supported), the marginal support for H18 must be qualified. This is discussed further in Chapter Six.

WOM Favorability Results

T-test results of the WOM favorability hypotheses (H20 - H25) are shown in Table 5-12 (H20 - H22), Table 5-13 (H23 - H25), and Table 5-14 (H20 - H25 combined). H20 stated that the WOM communication of dissatisfied consumers would be significantly less favorable than the WOM communication of satisfied consumers. Table 5-12 shows support for H20 ($p = 0.0001$, one tail). H21 was also supported in that the mean

favorability of the WOM transmissions of complainers was significantly lower than that of noncomplainers ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test). H22 proposed that the WOM communication of dissatisfied noncomplainers would be less favorable than the WOM communication of satisfied complainers. This hypothesis was also supported ($p = 0.006$ for a one-tail test), although the small sample size of the dissatisfied noncomplainers group limits this finding somewhat.

TABLE 5-12

T-TEST RESULTS: WOM FAVORABILITY

Consumer Group	Mean*(sd)	T	df**	P-value
H20:				
Dissatisfied Consumers	2.57 (1.33)	-13.56	177.3	0.0001
Satisfied Consumers	4.36 (0.84)			
H21:				
Noncomplainers	4.50 (0.69)	12.52	274.5	0.0001
Complainers	3.04 (1.41)			
H22:				
Satisfied Complainers	3.89 (1.11)	2.45	68.0	0.006
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	2.50 (1.01)			

*Maximum Scale Value Possible: 5

**Equality of variances was examined through an F test resulting in non-integer degrees of freedom with unequal variances.

The results of the hypotheses comparing WOM favorability of the complaining groups are shown in Table 5-13. H23 was supported in that the WOM communication of complainers who were satisfied with complaint resolution was significantly more favorable than the WOM communication of complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint response ($p = 0.0001$ for a one-tail test). H24 must be rejected, however, since the T-test results were significant but in the opposite direction. The WOM transmissions of satisfied noncomplainers were significantly more

favorable than those of complainers who were satisfied with complaint response ($p = 0.0001$, one-tail). In fact, satisfied noncomplainers engaged in the most favorable (in terms of content) WOM communication of all groups ($M = 4.55$). Finally, H25 is supported in that the WOM communication of dissatisfied complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint response was significantly less favorable than that of satisfied complainers who were also dissatisfied with complaint response ($p = 0.0001$, one-tail).

TABLE 5-13

T-TEST RESULTS: WOM FAVORABILITY - COMPLAINERS

Consumer Group	Mean*(sd)	T	df	P-value
H23:				
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	2.23 (1.19)	-4.50	180	0.0001
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	3.29 (1.37)			
H24:				
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	3.29 (1.37)	-10.10	183	0.0001
Satisfied Noncomplainers	4.55 (0.60)			
H25:				
Dissatisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	1.88 (1.05)	-4.17	41	0.0001
Satisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	3.40 (0.84)			

*Maximum Scale Value Possible: 5

Further insight on the valence of consumers' WOM transmissions can be gained by examining the results of an ANOVA and multiple range tests comparing WOM favorability means among the four groups represented in the research framework and among the six groups in the extended framework. Table 5-14 and Table 5-15 provide these results.

Table 5-14 shows that the ordering of means suggested by Figure 3-9 is only partially supported. Satisfied noncomplainers had the most favorable levels of WOM communication, followed by satisfied

TABLE 5-14

ANOVA RESULTS: WOM FAVORABILITY - FOUR GROUPS

<u>ANOVA SS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>P-value</u>
208.55	41.71	5, 341	0.0001

<u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Mean*</u>	<u>Grouping**</u>
Satisfied Noncomplainers	4.55	A
Satisfied Complainers	3.92	A
Dissatisfied Complainers	2.56	B
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	2.50	B

* Maximum Scale Value Possible: 5

** Means with the same letter are not significantly different at alpha = 0.05 according to Duncan's and Tukey's Multiple Range Tests.

complainers, dissatisfied complainers, and dissatisfied noncomplainers. The differences between all means were not significant, however, according to Duncan's and Tukey's multiple range tests (alpha = 0.05). That is, WOM favorability appears to be driven more by consumers' satisfaction levels rather than their complaining behavior when all four combinations are investigated. This is supported by the divided SS results for the satisfaction effect (F = 39.6, P = 0.0001) and two observations. First, there was no significant difference among satisfied complainers and satisfied noncomplainers nor between dissatisfied complainers and noncomplainers. Second, significant differences did exist between satisfied complainers and dissatisfied complainers as well as between satisfied noncomplainers and dissatisfied noncomplainers.

When all six groups in the extended research framework are compared (see Table 5-15), a similar pattern is seen in that the most favorable WOM communication came from consumers who were originally satisfied with the product, whether they complained or not. This order follows the order seen among consumers' repurchase intentions (Table 5-8). When the three dissatisfied consumer groups are examined, however, one difference exists. The least favorable WOM was from dissatisfied complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint response. This mean was the lowest of all six groups and was significantly different from the next highest group (dissatisfied noncomplainers). The order of the means for these two groups was reversed when repurchase intentions served as the dependent variable. Thus, the damage incurred by a firm from dissatisfied complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint response

TABLE 5-15

ANOVA RESULTS: WOM FAVORABILITY - SIX GROUPS

<u>ANOVA SS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>P-value</u>
303.56	65.5	5, 341	0.0001

<u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Mean*</u>	<u>Grouping**</u>			
Satisfied Noncomplainers	4.55	A			
Satisfied Complainers/Sat _{cr}	4.02	A	B		
Satisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	3.40		B	C	
Dissatisfied Complainers/Sat _{cr}	2.82			C	D
Dissatisfied Noncomplainers	2.50				D
Dissatisfied Complainers/Dis _{cr}	1.88				E

* Maximum Scale Value Possible: 5

** Means with the same letter are not significantly different at alpha = 0.05 according to Duncan's and Tukey's Multiple Range Tests.

appears to be greatest first in terms of the negativity of their WOM comments, then by their lower repurchase intentions. This may be due to the fact that this group has "twice" the number of unsatisfactory experiences to discuss with others (original dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction after complaining). The small number of dissatisfied noncomplainers limits this conclusion somewhat, however.

Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution Results

Multiple regression results for H26 are shown in Table 5-16. H26 proposed that satisfaction with complaint response would be a positive function of two variables: customer service disconfirmation and the magnitude of complaint reimbursement. H26 is only partially supported since only one of the two independent variables was a significant predictor of satisfaction with complaint resolution. Customer service disconfirmation was a significant, positive predictor of complainers' satisfaction with complaint outcomes ($p = 0.0001$). Since the magnitude of complaint reimbursement did not contribute significantly to the model ($p = 0.976$), the 41 percent of explained variation in satisfaction with complaint response was accounted for almost entirely by the customer service variable.

TABLE 5-16

MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS: COMPLAINT SATISFACTION

H26:			
<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Customer Service Disconfirmation	0.696	69.47	0.0001
Magnitude of Complaint Reimbursement	0.006		0.976
$R^2 = 0.41$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.40$ ($p = 0.0001$)			
df = 2, 202			

Attitudes Toward Complaining Results

T-test results of the attitude hypotheses (H27 - H31) are shown in Table 5-17 (H27 - H28) and Table 5-18 (H29 - H31). As Table 5-17 shows, H27 is not supported because noncomplainers had significantly more positive attitudes toward complaining than complainers ($p = 0.09$ for a one-tail test). H27 argued that complainers would have more positive attitudes. This result may be due to differences in the experiences of the complaining consumers. That is, complainers who were satisfied with complaint response would probably have more positive attitudes than those who were dissatisfied with how their complaints were handled. The aggregation of these two groups may have masked a significant positive effect of the complaining experience. See Table 5-18 for the results of a T-test in which these two complaining groups were separated. These groups did differ significantly in their attitudes once satisfaction with complaint response was considered.

TABLE 5-17

T-TEST RESULTS: ATTITUDES

Consumer Group	Mean (sd)	T	df ¹	P-value
H27:				
<u>Attitudes - Complaining*</u>				
Noncomplainers	11.32 (2.82)	1.35	402	0.09
Complainers	10.93 (2.97)			
H28:				
<u>Attitudes - Carpet Complaining**</u>				
Noncomplainers	12.93 (2.77)	-2.02	402	0.02
Complainers	13.49 (2.85)			
<u>Attitudes - Carpet Manufacturers***</u>				
Noncomplainers	6.67 (1.91)	-0.94	381.3	0.35
Complainers	6.86 (2.26)			

Maximum Scale Value: * = 15; ** = 20; *** = 10.

1: Unequal variances.

H28 is supported. Complainers had significantly more positive attitudes toward complaining about carpeting than noncomplainers ($p = 0.02$, one-tail). Although no specific research hypothesis was proposed, it was argued in Chapter Three that attitudes toward carpet manufacturers were not likely to be affected by complaining behavior. This was tested and the results are shown in the bottom of Table 5-17. The T-test supports this position since the attitudes toward carpet manufacturers of complainers and noncomplainers were not significantly different ($p = 0.35$ for a two-tail test).

Table 5-18 shows the differences in the attitudes between two complaining groups - those who were satisfied with complaint response and those who were dissatisfied with complaint results. H29, H30, and H31 are all supported in that complainers who were satisfied with complaint response had significantly more positive attitudes toward

TABLE 5-18

T-TEST RESULTS: ATTITUDES - COMPLAINERS

Consumer Group	Mean (sd)	T	df	P-value
H29:				
<u>Attitudes - Carpet Manufacturers*</u>				
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	5.02 (2.21)	-6.56	189	0.0001
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	7.36 (2.01)			
H30:				
<u>Attitudes - Complaining**</u>				
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	10.23 (3.06)	-1.77	189	0.038
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	11.14 (2.93)			
H31:				
<u>Attitudes - Carpet Complaining***</u>				
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	11.88 (2.77)	-4.31	189	0.0001
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	13.94 (2.75)			
Maximum Scale Value: * = 10; ** = 15; *** = 20.				

carpet manufacturers (H29, $p = 0.0001$), complaining in general (H30, $p = 0.038$), and complaining about carpeting (H31, $p = 0.0001$). All three were one-tailed tests.

Future Complaint Intentions Results

H32 predicted that complainers would be significantly more likely than noncomplainers to report future carpet complaining intentions. Since intentions were measured for several different time periods (likelihood of complaining if a problem developed up to three months, six months, one year, three years, five years, and more than five years), a complete test of this hypothesis required X^2 tests for each time frame. Although only one X^2 test for H32 is shown here (Table 5-19), all six showed the same pattern - no significant differences in future carpet complaining likelihood among complainers and noncomplainers at any point in time. Table 5-19 shows a representative X^2 test for the time frame of one year. The remaining tables are provided in Appendix B.

TABLE 5-19

X^2 RESULTS: COMPLAINT INTENTIONS - H32

H32: Consumer Group	Likelihood of Complaining Up to One Year (Row %)	
	Yes	No
Noncomplainers	182 (92.9%)	14 (7.1%)
Complainers	177 (92.2%)	15 (7.8%)

$X^2 = 0.06$, 1 df, $p = 0.802$

H33 predicted that complainers who were satisfied with how their complaints were resolved would be significantly more likely to report future carpet complaining intentions than complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint resolution. Like H32, H33 was not supported in that no significant differences were found in the future complaining intentions of either complaining group at any time frame. A representative X^2 test is provided in Table 5-20 which covers the time period of one year. The nonsignificant remaining X^2 tests can be found in Appendix C.

TABLE 5-20

 X^2 RESULTS: COMPLAINT INTENTIONS - H33

H33: <u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Likelihood of Complaining Up to One Year (Row %)</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	41 (95.3%)	2 (4.7%)
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	133 (91.7%)	12 (8.3%)
$X^2 = 0.63, 1 \text{ df}, p = 0.43$		

Demographic/Environmental Results

H34 stated that larger households would be significantly more likely to complain than smaller households. Table 5-21 presents the results of a X^2 test comparing household size among the complainers and noncomplainers. As the table indicates, H34 is supported in that the larger household sizes are associated with a larger percentage of complaining customers. That is, 75 percent of the households with seven

or more people were complaining households. In addition, over 63 percent of all households with five or six people were complaining households. Further support for H34 is provided by a one-tail test of the household size means. Complainers had an average of 3.6 persons per household versus 3.2 for noncomplainers ($T = -2.56$, 384 df, $p = 0.005$).

TABLE 5-21

 χ^2 RESULTS: HOUSEHOLD SIZE

H34: Consumer Group	Household Size (Col. %)			
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7+
Noncomplainers	70 (56.4%)	110 (53.9%)	25 (36.7%)	2 (25.0%)
Complainers	54 (43.5%)	94 (46.1%)	43 (63.2%)	6 (75.0%)

$\chi^2 = 11.5$, 3 df, $p = 0.01$

H35 predicted that households with pets would be significantly more likely to complain than non-pet households. H35 is not supported. The results of a χ^2 test are shown in Table 5-22.

TABLE 5-22

 χ^2 RESULTS: PET OWNERSHIP

H35: <u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Pet Ownership (Col. %)</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Noncomplainers	117 (49.8%)	91 (55.2%)
Complainers	118 (50.2%)	73 (44.8%)

$\chi^2 = 1.31, 1 \text{ df}, p = 0.36$

Summary of Results

This section briefly summarizes the results presented in this chapter. In addition, comparisons to previous findings are made and conflicting results are discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary of research findings (Figure 5-1) which indicates which research hypotheses were rejected/supported.

The retrieved expectations hypotheses support the idea that consumers' postpurchase memories of product expectations vary significantly among satisfied versus dissatisfied consumers and among complainers versus noncomplainers. Higher retrieved expectations were reported by dissatisfied consumers and by complainers. Thus, negative postpurchase evaluations and experiences (i.e., complaining) do affect consumers' cognitive judgments. It could be argued that the dissatisfied consumers and the complaining customers actually had higher prepurchase expectations than either satisfied or noncomplaining consumers. Thus, reporting higher retrieved expectations would not provide support for contrast theory since no perceptual distortion could

have occurred (i.e., both prepurchase and retrieved expectations of these groups were very high). This explanation is unlikely, however, since the prevailing view in satisfaction research is that higher repurchase expectations are antecedent to high levels of satisfaction, not dissatisfaction (Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Oliver 1980, 1981; Tse and Wilton 1988). Thus, the retrieved expectations concept appears to have some validity and should be subjected to future research.

The subjective disconfirmation hypotheses support previous theoretical and empirical research in that both satisfied and noncomplaining consumers reported higher subjective disconfirmation beliefs than dissatisfied or complaining consumers. In addition, satisfied complainers reported significantly higher disconfirmation beliefs than dissatisfied noncomplainers. Thus, despite their complaining behavior, if consumers are essentially satisfied with the original product, more positive postpurchase evaluations (e.g., disconfirmation) will be made.

The results of the repurchase intention hypotheses indicated several differences from existing empirical research. First, complainers did not have higher repurchase intention levels than noncomplainers as found in previous studies (e.g., TARP 1979). Thus, the dissonance relieving function of complaining does not appear to have overcome the negative complaining experience as originally theorized by several researchers (Bearden and Oliver 1985; Gilly and Gelb 1982; Oliver 1987; Singh 1988). Second, the role of consumer satisfaction with complaint resolution does not appear to dominate consumers' postpurchase evaluations (especially repurchase intentions) as argued by several researchers (e.g., Gilly and Gelb 1982, 1987; TARP 1981). That

is, consumers' satisfaction with complaint response does not counteract the negative effects of a high level of dissatisfaction with the product. This is supported by the results of H10 and H13. The rejection of H13 in particular directly contradicts Gilly and Gelb's (1982) finding that the repurchase intentions of complainers are significantly higher if satisfaction with complaint response is high. H13 found that the repurchase intentions of three groups were not significantly different: satisfied noncomplainers, satisfied complainers who are satisfied with complaint response, and satisfied complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint response. Satisfaction with complaint response did differentiate among dissatisfied consumers, however, in that higher satisfaction with complaint resolution did lead to significantly higher repurchase intentions.

The WOM behavior hypotheses supported previous research in that dissatisfied consumers do engage in greater WOM behavior (Richins 1983a; TARP 1981). In addition, the WOM communication of complainers was significantly greater than the WOM of noncomplainers. Of the four groups represented in the research framework, the greatest amount of WOM communication was from dissatisfied complainers, followed by satisfied complainers, dissatisfied noncomplainers, and satisfied noncomplainers. Thus, the complaining effect appears to dominate the extent of WOM behavior. This may be because the complaining experience increases the consumer's total product consumption experience, thus providing the consumer with more things to discuss. Satisfaction with complaint response did impact the level of WOM communication among complainers, however. When satisfied and dissatisfied complainers were satisfied with complaint response, no significant differences in WOM extent

occurred. When satisfied and dissatisfied complainers were dissatisfied with complaint resolution, the dissatisfied complainers engaged in greater WOM. Effective management of consumer complaints can give firms a "second chance" and help decrease the amount of WOM of complainers. Since the WOM favorability results indicate that the WOM of complainers is significantly less favorable than that of noncomplainers, increasing satisfaction with complaint response can have a double impact: (1) decreasing the amount of WOM behavior among complainers, and (2) increasing the favorability of WOM of some complainers. Overall, the WOM transmissions were most favorable among satisfied noncomplainers, followed by satisfied complainers, dissatisfied complainers, and dissatisfied noncomplainers. The order of the dissatisfied groups changes when satisfaction with complaint resolution is considered, however. Dissatisfied complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint response have the least favorable WOM communication, significantly lower than the WOM communication of even dissatisfied noncomplainers.

The satisfaction with complaint resolution results indicate that customers' perceptions of the service received during the complaint handling process significantly positively predict their satisfaction with complaint response. This finding only partially supports Gilly and Gelb's (1982) research. Gilly and Gelb also found that the monetary losses/gains associated with complaining (similar to the magnitude of complaint reimbursement measure used here) significantly predicted satisfaction with complaint response. This research did not support their finding. It may be that the measure used here was not sensitive enough (a 3-point Guttman scale was used). Alternatively, consumers receiving smaller complaint reimbursements may be just as satisfied with

complaint resolution as consumers receiving larger reimbursements if the reimbursement received was equal to or greater than their reimbursement expectations. Reimbursement and other service-related expectations are an important area for future research.

The results of the hypotheses on attitudes toward complaining, attitudes toward carpet complaining, and attitudes toward carpet manufacturers can be summarized as follows. Complainers' attitudes toward complaining were not more positive than those of noncomplainers, even when the complainers were satisfied with complaint response. Complainers did have significantly more positive attitudes toward complaining about carpeting than noncomplainers, however, indicating that complaining attitudes are probably product-specific. When compared to complainers who are dissatisfied with complaint response, complainers who were satisfied with complaint resolution had significantly more positive attitudes toward all three: (1) complaining in general, (2) complaining about carpet, and (3) carpet manufacturers. Thus, satisfying complainers with effective complaint management can have positive halo effects for the firm and even on complaining behavior in general.

The results of the complaining intentions hypotheses indicated no significant differences in future carpet complaining intentions among several groups: (1) complainers versus noncomplainers, and (2) complainers who were satisfied with complaint response versus complainers who were dissatisfied with complaint resolution. Across the board, future carpet complaining intentions appear to be uniformly high across several time frames (even after five years).

The demographic/environmental results show that only household size varied significantly among complainers and noncomplainers. Pet ownership and complaining behavior were not related.

Figure 5-1 summarizes the research findings by indicating which hypotheses were rejected or accepted.

Research Hypothesis		Finding
H1	RE - D > RE - S	Supported
H2	RE - C > RE - NC	Supported
H3	RE - SC > RE - DNC	Rejected
H4	SDB - D < SDB - S	Supported
H5	SDB - C < SDB - NC	Supported
H6	SDB - SC > SDB - DNC	Supported
H7	RPI - S > RPI - D	Supported
H8	RPI - C > RPI - NC	Rejected
H9	RPI - SNC > RPI - DC/DIScr	Supported
H10	RPI - SNC < RPI - DC/SATcr	Rejected
H11	RPI - SNC > RPI - SC/DIScr	Supported
H12	RPI - DNC < All Other Groups	Partially Supported
H13	RPI - SC/SATcr > All Other Groups	Rejected
H14	WOM - D > WOM - S	Supported
H15	WOM - C > WOM - NC	Supported
H16	WOM - SC > WOM - DNC	Rejected
H17	WOM - C/DIScr > WOM - C/SATcr	Rejected
H18	WOM - DC/DIScr > WOM - SC/DIScr	Partially Supported
H19	WOM - SC/SATcr = WOM - DC/SATcr	Supported
H20	WOMF - D < WOMF - S	Supported
H21	WOMF - C < WOMF - NC	Supported
H22	WOMF - DNC < WOMF - SC	Supported
H23	WOMF - C/SATcr > WOMF - C/DIScr	Supported
H24	WOMF - C/SATcr > WOMF - SNC	Rejected
H25	WOMF - DC/DIScr < WOMF - SC/DIScr	Supported
H26	CSD + MCR = SATcr	Partially Supported
H27	ACG - C > ACG - NC	Rejected
H28	ACC - C > ACC - NC	Supported
H29	ACM - C/SATcr > ACM - C/DIScr	Supported
H30	ACG - C/SATcr > ACG - C/DIScr	Supported
H31	ACC - C/SATcr > ACC - C/DIScr	Supported
H32	FCI - C > FCI - NC	Rejected
H33	FCI - C/SATcr > FCI - C/DIScr	Rejected
H34	HHS - C > HHS - NC	Supported
H35	HHPET CB > HHNOPET CB	Rejected

FIGURE 5-1

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

FIGURE 5-1 (cont'd.).

Note:

Notations after hyphens indicate the consumer group being compared.

D	=	Dissatisfied Consumers
S	=	Satisfied Consumers
C	=	Complainers
NC	=	Noncomplainers
DNC	=	Dissatisfied Noncomplainers
SNC	=	Satisfied Noncomplainers
SC	=	Satisfied Complainers
DC	=	Dissatisfied Complainers

Notations before hyphens refer to the dependent variable of interest:

RE	=	Retrieved Expectations
SDB	=	Subjective Disconfirmation Beliefs
RPI	=	Repurchase Intentions
WOM	=	Extent Of WOM
WOMF	=	Favorability Of WOM
CSD	=	Customer Service Disconfirmation
MCR	=	Magnitude Of Complaint Reimbursement
SATcr	=	Satisfaction With Complaint Resolution
ACG	=	Attitudes Toward Complaining in General
ACC	=	Attitudes Toward Complaining About Carpet
ACM	=	Attitudes Toward Carpet Manufacturers
FCI	=	Future Complaint Intentions
HHS	=	Household Size
HHPET	=	Households With Pets
HHNOPET	=	Households Without Pets
CB	=	Complaining Behavior

DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into three major sections. First, limitations of the research are discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the managerial implications of the results. In the third section, suggestions for future research on consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior are provided.

Limitations

Several limitations must be noted when the results of this research are evaluated. A major limitation is the size of the dissatisfied noncomplainers group ($N = 5$). Since many of the research hypotheses involved comparisons with this group, the findings must be interpreted with some caution. Specifically, five of the 35 hypotheses were affected: H3 (retrieved expectations), H6 (subjective disconfirmation beliefs), H12 (repurchase intention), H16 (extent of WOM behavior), and H22 (favorability of WOM). From a practical standpoint, the value of the T-test (used in all the hypotheses listed above with the exception of H16 which used a X^2 test) is in situations where one has small samples and where a normal population can be assumed (Blalock 1979). Of course, it is also when samples are small that the exact nature of the population is in doubt. On the positive side, for the two hypotheses in this group which were completely supported, finding significant differences when n is small can lend greater credibility to the findings since usually only large sample sizes typically lead to significant effects (Sawyer and Ball 1981).

A second limitation is the use of 4-point scales for several of the major constructs including satisfaction, repurchase intention, and

satisfaction with complaint resolution. While some support exists for the use of 4-point scales in satisfaction and complaining behavior research (see Churchill and Surprenant 1982; Gilly and Gelb 1982, 1987), some lack of variability in these measurements may have occurred. This is less of a problem with the measures such as retrieved expectations or subjective disconfirmation beliefs which were sums of either 4-point or 3-point scales.

Other measurement limitations must be noted as well. The use of an ordinal scale for one of the independent variables in the multiple regression analysis which tested H26 (magnitude of complaint reimbursement) is problematic. The Guttman scale constructed for this variable appears to be theoretically stronger than an ordinal scale, but does not fully satisfy the strict requirements for an interval scale. Although the distances between individuals along the continuum are not equal, they are at least known. Blalock (1979) discussed the use of ordinal measures in regression analysis and noted that "mounting evidence suggests that, practically speaking, it will usually make little difference with respect to one's conclusions" (p. 444).

The categorization of the extent of WOM responses prevented the use of more powerful analyses (e.g., ANOVA or T-tests). In addition, the "clumping" of responses in the "three" and "four or more" responses limited the conclusions somewhat.

A third limitation of the research is the use of a cross-sectional research design for what has traditionally been conceptualized as a process--satisfaction formation. In addition, the complaining behaviors measured in this study are also events that occurred over several points in time. Thus, common methods variance may have been a limiting factor.

In addition, any conclusions that imply a causal ordering must be tempered with caution.

Finally, the lack of any product performance measures is a limitation given recent empirical evidence (e.g., Tse and Wilton 1988) that the expectations and disconfirmation paradigms should be expanded to include direct influences from perceived performance. This is not a major limitation, however, given the research framework used in this study in which satisfaction is viewed as an independent rather than a dependent variable. Whether or not perceived performance has a significant effect on the dependent variables in this study such as WOM behavior or WOM favorability is a subject for future research.

Despite these limitations, several positive aspects of the study and the data should be noted. First, the study involved a real product purchased by real consumers and used in real-life situations. Furthermore, the study addressed complaining behavior which was verified through the use of company files rather than self-reports of complaining behavior. Finally, the sample sub-segments of Noncomplainers, Complainers, and Replacements provided great variability in several of the dependent variables, thus increasing the validity of the results.

Managerial Implications

The implications for managers of the research findings presented here are summarized as follows. First, marketing and advertising managers must exercise caution with respect to the creation of prepurchase expectations and the management of retrieved expectations. Advertising which creates high product expectations will contribute to consumer satisfaction only when backed by product performance which meets those expectations. When consumers perceive that performance does

not meet their expectations, dissatisfaction and possibly complaining behavior can occur. This is supported theoretically and empirically by past research (Howard and Sheth 1969; LaTour and Peat 1979; Oliver 1980, 1981). Should dissatisfaction and/or formal complaining result, managers must be aware of the distortion of consumers' prepurchase beliefs that may occur. Consumers' negative postpurchase experiences can influence their memories of prepurchase events or cognitions. Thus, customer service managers must be aware of the possible exaggerations and/or counterarguments that consumers may make either during the complaining process or when future service encounters occur. Consumers may not believe future advertising claims or salespersons' assurances if they have been dissatisfied in the past or have had to complain in any way. Furthermore, the level of consumers' retrieved expectations should be of most concern to service and complaint managers since these expectations are most likely to be the standard or frame of reference against which future purchase decisions are made.

Second, marketing managers cannot ignore or discount the importance of consumers' original product satisfaction levels. Even the most effective complaint management program cannot make up for a product that disappoints consumers. This is seen in the trends of several of the dependent variables such as repurchase intention and WOM favorability. The pattern of the means of these variables indicates that both repurchase intentions and favorability of WOM communication depend primarily on consumers being satisfied with the original product first. Only when consumers are dissatisfied with the product can the organization's complaint response make a difference. This indicates two things for managers: (1) managerial emphasis and resources should still

be directed toward identifying and satisfying consumer needs in order to ensure consumer satisfaction at the product level, and (2) customer service representatives should attempt to qualify complaining customers with respect to their original (dis)satisfaction level. This way, customer service personnel have some indication of the level of service that may be necessary to ensure that the customer is satisfied with complaint resolution. In addition, it is the dissatisfied consumer's (dis)satisfaction with complaint response that represents the critical "swing" in loyalty. Above all else, it should be noted that dissatisfied consumers who are dissatisfied with the firm's complaint resolution will engage in the most negative WOM and have the lowest repurchase intentions. Thus, follow-up customer service and complaint management efforts will be necessary to track and hopefully correct unsatisfactory complaint handling.

It should be noted that the findings on repurchase intention, while seemingly intuitive, contradict previous research. Prior research found that a complainer's satisfaction with complaint resolution could counteract the negative effects of complaining and engender even higher levels of repurchase intentions than noncomplainers (Gilly and Gelb 1982; TARP 1979). The results presented here indicate that, at least for carpet consumers, satisfaction with complaint response does not cancel the negative effects of an unsatisfactory product experience.

Third, managers must acknowledge the existence of consumers who complain despite their overall satisfaction with a product. Satisfied complainers appear to be particularly pervasive in this research (N = 72). This is likely due to the high cost of the product category. Despite feeling satisfied with their purchase, consumers may feel a much

stronger vested interest in the product and warranty terms because of their financial investment. This may lead to complaints about minor details or less important product attributes. Managers must respond adequately to these complainers despite the seeming unimportance of their complaints/requests in order to reassure these consumers about their investment. In addition, some consumers may be "testing" the firm and its warranty policies. Given the results of the attitude hypotheses, satisfactory responses to these consumers can favorably enhance consumers' attitudes toward the firm in addition to their attitudes about complaining.

It is possible that many of the satisfied complainers reported satisfaction with their carpet (despite performance which fell short of expectations) because the carpet brand offered substantial and highly visible benefits over other brands in the industry at that time. That is, this brand was such an improvement over previous offerings, especially with respect to stain-resistance, that even complaining customers felt satisfied.

An alternative explanation is the consideration of consumers' affective responses in conjunction with their level of confirmation/disconfirmation. Recent theoretical work by Oliver (1989) has proposed that the emotional responses which accompany consumers' positive disconfirmation (e.g., surprise, joy, pleasure) intensify the satisfactory experience. Oliver has expanded the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm to include emotional responses by arguing that performance exceeding expectations can lead to strong feelings of joy or pleasure. Similarly, negative disconfirmation can lead to negative emotional responses such as disgust or remorse. Satisfied complainers

may have experienced confirmation or positive disconfirmation, but may not have experienced any intense positive emotions. They may not have thought they received anything "extra" or "special" because they did have to complain about something.

Finally, managers should interpret with caution the results of this and existing customer satisfaction and complaining behavior research for the following reason: many of the effects found in this study and others appear to be product-category specific. That is, the role of satisfaction with complaint resolution may engender greater customer loyalty than even original product satisfaction (e.g., Gilly and Gelb 1982; TARP 1979) only when the product is unimportant or inexpensive. The conflicting findings noted in the Summary of Results section (particularly those on repurchase intention) may be explained by the fact that the product used for this study was a very expensive and durable consumer good. Any positive effects of a consumer's complaining experience might be completely negated by the worry, time, and trouble of complaining about such an expensive item. Consumers may feel they should not have to complain about such expensive goods simply because they did pay so much to begin with. That is, consumers may perceive that expensive goods carry an implicit assurance that they will be "complaint free," at least for a while. Thus, the nature and importance of the product may not only impact a consumer's propensity to complain (as highlighted in Chapter Two), but may also affect postpurchase intentions and responses after complaining.

Directions for Future Research

As implied above, no conclusions can be made about the generalizability of the results of this study beyond the product category studied. Whether the same results would have been obtained for other products or services (particularly for less expensive or low involvement products) is a question still to be addressed. An important area for future research is to examine differences in consumers' postpurchase and post-complaining responses for various product categories.

Another area needing further research is the concept of retrieved expectations. In particular, the independence of prepurchase and retrieved expectations should be investigated. This would require a longitudinal study in which consumers' true prepurchase product and service expectations could be tapped prior to any purchase and consumption experience. In addition, retrieved expectations may actually be modified several times--after purchase and use, after initial (dis)satisfaction judgment, after complaining, and even beyond. Thus, several study waves would be necessary to truly capture the concept of changing expectations. Of course, the same type of study is needed for a further understanding of the satisfaction formation process as well. Comparisons of prior versus retrieved expectation levels should be made among several types of consumers including satisfied versus dissatisfied, complainers versus noncomplainers, and perhaps among consumers with varying levels of exposure to promotional messages. A causal sequence such as the following should therefore be examined:

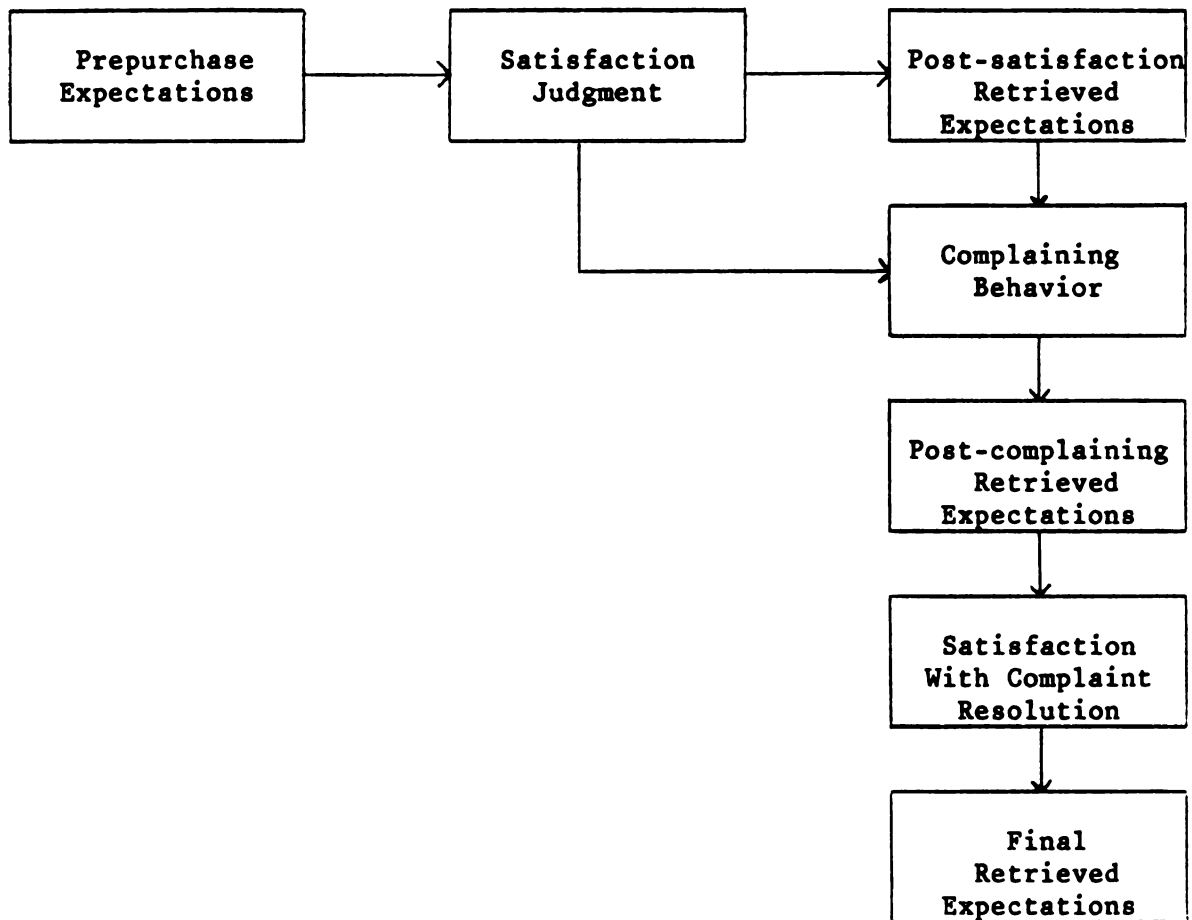


FIGURE 5-2

PROPOSED LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

The relationships between each level of retrieved expectations should be investigated in addition to the relationships with other theoretical constructs.

Research is also needed on additional constructs affecting consumer satisfaction. For example, it seems likely that a consumer's satisfaction with complaint response may be affected by the level or type of effort involved when making the complaint. This might include the consumer's time spent making the complaint (total time spent as well as number of attempts made), any monetary costs associated with complaining (e.g., mileage to and from a retail outlet), and even psychological costs such as emotional discomfort associated with complaining. The role of affective response in the overall determination of product satisfaction needs further examination as well. Westbrook (1987) noted that the temporal ordering of cognitive versus affective responses (in relation to satisfaction formation) is still undetermined.

A differentiation of theoretical constructs is also needed. In particular, the theoretical differences (and similarities) between attitude and satisfaction need investigation. Is satisfaction a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components? Or is it primarily affective? Do normative influences help determine satisfaction judgments in the same way they affect attitude and behavioral intentions? Does satisfaction "decay" into overall product attitude, or is there something unique about satisfactory/unsatisfactory experiences? How are prepurchase expectations and product attitudes related? In short, the attitude and satisfaction constructs need clearer conceptualization and/or differentiation.

In the area of complaining behavior, a more complete typology of complaints is needed than has previously been offered. The three-dimensional typology of Singh (1988) serves as a starting point, but additional dimensions such as type of complaint (e.g., serious versus frivolous), motive for complaint (e.g., to "sound off" versus to obtain financial redress), and level of customer effort involved (e.g., substantial, moderate, or light) may help marketers understand complainers better. In particular, further subdivisions of complaining behavior may help indicate service levels needed for various complaining types. A sample typology of formal complaining behavior (i.e., Singh's 1988 voice response) is shown in Figure 5-3.

	Complaint Type	Customer Motive	Customer Effort
"Serious"	Cost of product and consumer involvement level high	Product refund or replacement plus "extra" incentives	Significant effort and several service encounters needed
"Moderate"	Either cost of product or consumer involvement high	Product refund or replacement only	More than one service encounter needed to resolve complaint
"Light"	Cost of product and consumer involvement low	Less than full refund or replacement value	One-time request with immediate resolution

FIGURE 5-3

TYPOLOGY OF VOICE RESPONSES

Further research should be conducted on WOM behavior as well. Most of the existing satisfaction and CCB research has focused on the WOM behavior of dissatisfied consumers. This study revealed that complainers engaged in greater WOM than noncomplainers, indicating that the WOM behavior of various complaining customers should be examined in addition to those who are dissatisfied.

Finally, the postpurchase processes of both satisfied complainers and dissatisfied noncomplainers need additional investigation (dissatisfied noncomplainers in particular since the sample size of this group was so small). This research supports the fact that these groups do exist and that their responses do vary when compared to other groups. Of particular interest would be the affective responses of these groups since this appears to be a logical mediating variable in the dissatisfaction -- complaining behavior relationship.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. One of the brands of carpeting you mentioned owning was _____.
Overall, how satisfied are you with your _____ carpeting?
Are you (READ CHOICES & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER):

Very satisfied	4	➤ (ASK Q.2 THEN Q.3a)
Somewhat satisfied	3	
Somewhat dissatisfied	2	➤ (ASK Q.3a THEN Q.2)
Very dissatisfied	1	

2. What, (if anything) do you like about your _____ carpet?
What else? (CLARIFY.)

- 3a. What, (if anything) don't you like about your _____ carpet?
What else? (CLARIFY.)

- 3b. The next time you need carpeting, how likely will you be to buy
_____ carpeting again? Will you (READ CHOICES & CIRCLE ONE
ANSWER):

Definitely buy it	4
Probably buy it	3
Probably not buy it	2
Definitely not buy it	1
(DO NOT READ) -- Don't Know	v

4. I'm going to read some characteristics. Please tell me how important each of the characteristics is to you in purchasing a carpet. Would you say that (START WITH X'D STATEMENT & CONTINUE UNTIL ALL ARE RATED) is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important?

<u>Start Here</u>	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not Very Important</u>	<u>Not At All Important</u>
_____ Will resist stains	4	3	2	1
_____ Will last a long time	4	3	2	1
_____ Will maintain its plushness	4	3	2	1
_____ Will resist soil	4	3	2	1
_____ Will resist odors	4	3	2	1
_____ Will not require special cleaning procedures	4	3	2	1

5. The day you purchased your _____ carpeting, how did you expect the carpeting would perform in terms of these same characteristics? Did you feel that your _____ carpeting definitely would, probably would, probably would not or definitely would not (READ X'D CHARACTERISTIC. CONTINUE UNTIL ALL HAVE BEEN RATED):

<u>Start Here</u>	<u>Definitely Would</u>	<u>Probably Would</u>	<u>Probably Not</u>	<u>Definitely Not</u>	<u>DK (Do Not Read)</u>
() Resist stains	4	3	2	1	v
() Last a long time	4	3	2	1	v
() Maintain its plushness	4	3	2	1	v
() Resist soil	4	3	2	1	v
() Resist odors	4	3	2	1	v
() require special cleaning procedures	4	3	2	1	v

- 6a. How does the _____ carpeting and the service provided compare to what you had expected on each of these characteristics? Is _____ carpeting better than you expected, the same as you expected or not as good as you expected for (READ X'D CHARACTERISTIC & CONTINUE UNTIL EACH HAS BEEN RATED):

<u>Start Here</u>	<u>Better Than</u>	<u>Same As</u>	<u>Not As Good As</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
() Appearance	3	2	1	v
() Durability	3	2	1	v
() Stain resistance	3	2	1	v
() Warranty	3	2	1	v
() Service received from store	3	2	1	v

- 6b. If you used _____, was the service (READ ALTERNATIVES AND CIRCLE ONE ANSWER) you expected?

Better than	1
The same as	2
Not as good as	3
(DO NOT READ) -- Didn't use	4

- 6c. If you contacted _____ customer service department was the service you received (READ ALTERNATIVES AND CIRCLE ONE ANSWER) you expected?

Better than	1
The same as	2
Not as good as	3
(DO NOT READ) -- Didn't contact	4

7. Do you know whether the _____ carpeting you bought has (START WITH X'D STATEMENT AND CIRCLE YES OR NO FOR EACH):

<u>Start Here</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>
() A 5 year warranty against food and beverage stains	1	2	v
() A toll free customer service number for problems	1	2	v
() A free professional steam cleaning for legitimate cleaning problems	1	2	v
() A free carpet replacement for a legitimate permanent staining problem	1	2	v
() An anti static guarantee	1	2	v
() A warranty against all pet stains	1	2	v

8. How did you first learn about _____ carpeting? (DO NOT READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY.)

Saw/heard advertising for _____	1
From family/friends	2
Knew about _____ carpets before	3
From a carpet salesperson(s)	4
Other (SPECIFY)	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

9. Since buying your _____ carpeting, have you talked about it to any family members or friends?

YES 1 (CONTINUE)

No 2 (SKIP TO Q.13)

10. With how many different family members or friends did you discuss your _____ carpeting?

One	1
Two	2
Three	3
Four or more	4

11. Overall, was what you said about _____ (READ LIST & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER)?

Very positive	5	} (SKIP TO Q.13)
Positive	4	
Both positive and negative	3	} (CONTINUE)
Negative	2	
Very negative	1	

12. What did you tell them about _____ that was negative?

13. (Aside from what you've already mentioned) Since buying your _____ have you had any (other) problems with it?

YES 1 (CONTINUE)

No 2 (SKIP TO Q.21)

14. What problems did you have with your _____ carpeting? (PROBE & CLARIFY.)

15. Did you complain about this to anyone?

YES 1 (CONTINUE)

No 2 (SKIP TO Q.20)

16. To whom did you complain? (DO NOT READ LIST & CIRCLE ANSWERS(S) GIVEN).

Friends/family
Carpet store/dealer
Producer/manufacture
Mass media

1 (SKIP TO Q.20)
2
3 (CONTINUE)
4

17. What did you hope to achieve by complaining? (DO NOT READ LIST AND CIRCLE ANSWERS GIVEN.)

A complete refund 1
A partial refund 2
A new carpet 3
An apology from the store/dealer 4
A free steam cleaning 5
Other (SPECIFY)

18. How was your complaint actually handled? (PROBE & CLARIFY.)

19. How satisfied were you with the way your complaint was handled? Were you (READ CHOICES & CIRCLE ONE ANSWER):

Very satisfied 4
Somewhat satisfied 3
Somewhat dissatisfied 2
Very dissatisfied 1

INTERVIEWER: CHECK RESPONSE TO Q.16. IF CARPET STORE/DEALER OR MANUFACTURER MENTIONED (CODE 2 OR 3), SKIP TO Q.21. OTHERWISE, CONTINUE.

20. Why did you not take your problem to the store where you bought it, to the manufacturer or to someone who could help you?

- 21a. If you had your carpeting installed for up to 3 months would you complain to the manufacturer or retailer if a problem developed?

YES 1 (CONTINUE) No 2 (SKIP TO Q.22)

- 21b. If you had your carpeting installed for up to 6 months would you complain to the manufacturer or retailer if a problem developed?

YES 1 (CONTINUE) No 2 (SKIP TO Q.22)

- 21c. If you had your carpeting installed for up to 1 year would you complain to the manufacturer or retailer if a problem developed?

YES 1 (CONTINUE) No 2 (SKIP TO Q.22)

- 21d. If you had your carpeting installed for up to 3 years would you complain to the manufacturer or retailer if a problem developed?

YES 1 (CONTINUE) No 2 (SKIP TO Q.22)

- 21e. If you had your carpeting installed for up to 5 years would you complain to the manufacturer or retailer if a problem developed?

YES 1 (CONTINUE) No 2 (SKIP TO Q.22)

- 21f. If you had your carpeting installed for more than 5 years would you complain to the manufacturer or retailer if a problem developed?

YES 1 (CONTINUE) No 2 (CONTINUE)

22. Using a scale from 1 to 5 where "1" means strongly disagree and "5" means strongly agree, what number best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement that I read. (START WITH X'D STATEMENT AND CIRCLE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH.)

<u>Start</u> <u>Here</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree nor</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u> <u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
(a) Most people will complain about their carpet right after they purchase it rather than later.	5	4	3	2	1
(b) My carpet retailer will provide help if I complain.	5	4	3	2	1
(c) Fewer people complain about carpet purchases than about other household items.	5	4	3	2	1
(d) Carpet manufacturers don't care about problems people have with their carpeting once it's installed.	5	4	3	2	1
(e) Most people are stuck with their carpet if it gets stained.	5	4	3	2	1
(f) I would feel justified to complain about carpet problems even without a warranty.	5	4	3	2	1
(g) Carpet warranties protect manufacturers more than consumers.	5	4	3	2	1
(h) Carpet isn't a product people complain about.	5	4	3	2	1
(i) I think people who complain about poor service are nuisances.	5	4	3	2	1
(j) Most people are too afraid to make a fuss so they don't complain much.	5	4	3	2	1

22. Continued:

<u>Start Here</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree Somewhat</u>	<u>Agree nor Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree Somewhat</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
(k) I don't think complain- ing is an appropriate activity under any circumstances.	5	4	3	2	1
(l) People who complain about products or services are wasting their time.	5	4	3	2	1
(m) I'm uncomfortable when returning a product.	5	4	3	2	1
(n) I believe I should complain and have my problem resolved.	5	4	3	2	1
(o) I dislike making any kind of a complaint.	5	4	3	2	1
(p) I would probably not complain about a product if I thought I'd made a poor choice to begin with.	5	4	3	2	1

DEMOGRAPHICS

Just to help us classify your answers . . .

A. Including yourself, how many people live in your household? (CIRCLE ONE ANSWER.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 or more

B. Of these, how many are . . . (READ GROUPS & RECORD ONE ANSWER FOR EACH):

Under 6 years _____

6-12 years _____

13-17 years _____

18 years & over _____

Total _____

C. Do you own any pets?

YES 1 (CONTINUE)

No 2 (CONTINUE)

D. What kind of pets do you own? (RECORD ALL MENTIONS IN COL. Q.D.)
Any Others?

ASK Q.E. FOR EACH PET CIRCLED IN COL. Q.D.

E. Is you (INSERT TYPE OF PET) allowed indoors on the carpeting?
(RECORD YES OR NO IN COL. Q.E.)

	<u>COL. Q.D.</u>	<u>COL. Q.E.</u>	
	<u>Pets Owned</u>	<u>Pets Allowed on Carpeting</u>	
		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Dog	1	1	2
Cat	2	1	2
Other (SPECIFY)			
_____	_____	1	2
_____	_____	1	2
_____	_____	1	2

NAME _____ PHONE () _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

INTERVIEWER _____ DATE _____

REPLICATE # _____ PAGE # _____

APPENDIX B

 χ^2 RESULTS: COMPLAINT INTENTIONS

<u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Likelihood of Complaining</u>	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>Up to 3 Months</u> Noncomplainers	205 (98.6%)	3 (1.4%)
Complainers	194 (99.5%)	1 (0.5%)
$\chi^2 = 0.89, df = 1, p = 0.35$		
<u>Up to 6 Months</u> Noncomplainers	196 (95.6%)	9 (4.4%)
Complainers	192 (98.9%)	2 (1.1%)
$\chi^2 = 1.71, df = 1, p = 0.21$		
<u>Up to 3 Years</u> Noncomplainers	119 (65.7%)	62 (34.3%)
Complainers	125 (71.0%)	51 (29.0%)
$\chi^2 = 1.15, df = 1, p = 0.32$		
<u>Up to 5 Years</u> Noncomplainers	90 (76.3%)	28 (23.7%)
Complainers	101 (81.5%)	23 (18.5%)
$\chi^2 = 1.08, df = 1, p = 0.31$		
<u>More than 5 Years</u> Noncomplainers	43 (46.7%)	49 (53.3%)
Complainers	40 (38.5%)	64 (61.5%)
$\chi^2 = 1.96, df = 1, p = 0.17$		

APPENDIX C

 χ^2 RESULTS: COMPLAINT INTENTIONS - COMPLAINERS

<u>Consumer Group</u>	<u>Likelihood of Complaining</u>		
	<u>DK</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>Up to 3 Months</u>			
Complainers/Dis _{cr}		43 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Complainers/Sat _{cr}		147 (99.0%)	1 (1.0%)
$\chi^2 = 0.29$, df = 1, p = 0.59			
<u>Up to 6 Months</u>			
Complainers/Dis _{cr}		43 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Complainers/Sat _{cr}		145 (98.6%)	2 (1.4%)
$\chi^2 = 0.59$, df = 1, p = 0.44			
<u>Up to 3 Years</u>			
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	0 (0.0%)	26 (63.4%)	15 (36.6%)
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	1 (.75%)	96 (72.2%)	36 (27.1%)
$\chi^2 = 1.62$, df = 2, p = 0.45			
<u>Up to 5 Years</u>			
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	0 (0.0%)	20 (76.9%)	6 (23.1%)
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	2 (2.0%)	80 (82.5%)	15 (15.5%)
$\chi^2 = 1.31$, df = 2, p = 0.52			
<u>More than 5 Years</u>			
Complainers/Dis _{cr}	0 (0.0%)	7 (35.0%)	13 (65.0%)
Complainers/Sat _{cr}	3 (3.6%)	30 (36.1%)	40 (60.3%)
$\chi^2 = 0.79$, df = 2, p = 0.63			

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