TV-SHOPPING IN SCANDINAVIA: CONSUMER SATISFACTION, DISSATISFACTION AND COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

TV-shopping is a new distribution channel in Scandinavia, still waiting for a breakthrough in the market for goods and services. This paper focuses on consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the products distributed through TV-shopping, and the consumers' experiences with TV-shopping as a distribution channel. Our study shows that 1/3 of the TV-shoppers are dissatisfied with the purchase, and this is a high dissatisfaction level. However, this is almost entirely because of the low quality of products sold through TV-shopping. The problems related to the distribution process are viewed as small compared with problems connected with product quality. Only 5% of the dissatisfied consumers do actually complain to the TV-shopping company or return the product. This indicates that consumers don't think it is worth while to complain or that they don't look at TV-shopping as a serious distribution channel. Consumers are taking part in a lottery, and although the low quality is not expected, they are not surprised. They did not win the first prize.

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior with TV-shopping in two different ways. TV-shopping is a new distribution channel in Scandinavia, and we are concerned about consumers' experiences with TV-shopping both as a distribution channel and consumers evaluations with products sold through this channel.

In the broad field of research in consumer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and complaining behavior most of the studies are focused on consumer satisfaction on the individual level (Ölander 1988). The main questions put forward concern consumers satisfaction with specific products and services. Studies are trying to explain the differences in consumer satisfaction and complaining behavior related to different products and services, and to explain variances in the satisfaction level and complaining activity among different consumer groups (Hunt 1988, Andreasen 1988).

Some studies are concerned about more macro-oriented questions within the framework developed in the classical article by Renoux (Renoux 1973). In this article Renoux distinguishes between *macro-marketing system dissatisfaction* and *micro-marketing system dissatisfaction*. He develops three dimensions in consumers' satisfaction/dissatisfaction: *shopping system dissatisfaction, buying system dissatisfaction* and *consuming system dissatisfaction*. The main stream in consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction research has been the consuming system dissatisfaction. These studies focus on consumers' evaluations of specific good and services. On the other hand shopping system dissatisfaction involves accessibility and availability of products and retail outlets and buying system dissatisfaction arises when the consumers encounters situations which waste their time, energy and money, or bothers them in other ways (Renoux 1973: 56-61).

Tauber argues that consumer satisfaction with the distribution system and the retail system often is more important than consumer satisfaction/ dissatisfaction with specific products (Tauber 1972). According to this statement, studies of shopping system satisfaction and buying system satisfaction have played a natural, but minor, part of the research in CS/D&CB during the last twenty years. When Hunt was making his contribution to the frontier in consumer research in the field of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, he included CS/D with different stages in the consuming process or levels in the channel of distribution among the main topics (Hunt 1988).

In his factor-analysis of consumer satisfaction with supermarkets Maddox found 6 factors related to overall consumer satisfaction, concerning the shopping system satisfaction and buying system satisfaction (Maddox 1977), and Swan found that non-product qualities are very important for consumers evaluations of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with retail stores (Swan 1977). More recent studies focus on various other non-product qualities such as queuing (East 1989, East et. al 1991, Dubè-Rioux et. al 1989), rainchecks (Kelly et. al 1989, 1991), and advertising (Stø and Glefjell 1992).

An important contribution to this tradition is Westbrook's study of "Sources of Retail Satisfaction (Westbrook 1981). He categorized consumer experiences into two broad types:

- experiences related to being in the store itself and dealing with the organization
- experiences related to consuming the product and services obtained from the retailer

When you ask consumers about their experiences its is difficult to distinguish consumer dissatisfaction with products from dissatisfaction with the shopping or retail system. But this is, however, an important distinction, as far as both consumers' and businesses' interests are concerned. Consumers can choose or quit products, brands, shops and supermarkets for many different reasons. The success or failure of new distribution channels can depend upon consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the channel, or with the product distributed by this channel. These two dimensions are reflected in the focus of this paper: satisfaction with the TV-shopping, and satisfaction with the products sold by TV-shopping. We will put forward the following questions:

1. To what extent are Scandinavian consumers satisfied with TV-shopping as a distribution channel?
2. To what extent are consumers satisfied with the products distributed by TV-shopping?
3. To what extent do dissatisfied consumers complain?

Let us first have a look at the volume of TV-shopping in the Nordic countries, how this distribution channel is organized, and what kind of products are sold by TV-shopping.

TV-SHOPPING IN SCANDINAVIA - AN OVERVIEW

Throughout the second half of the 1980's Scandinavia experienced a substantial growth in commercial television via cable and satellite. The national broadcast networks in Norway, Denmark and Sweden are now forced to compete with 10-20 paneuropean and scandinavian commercial TV channels. Scandinavian consumers are now daily exposed to television advertising, especially those who are living in the big cities. But as we are getting used to advertisers telling us to go to the store to buy their products, we are facing another group of advertisers who have altered television to be their actual store. Viewers are told to order their products directly by dialing a number.

The first early Scandinavian acquaintance with television shopping started around 1987 with short commercials on Sky Channel and Super Channel broadcast from England. But television shopping had its actual breakthrough in Scandinavia in 1989 when the Scandinavian TV channel ScanSat TV3 launched its first commercials with direct sale of products. This channel is owned by a Swedish media corporation and covers today approximately 3 million households in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The advertiser of these commercials, a company called TV-SHOP stationed in Malmø in Sweden, is owned by the same media corporation as TV3. The close kinship relation between the TV channel and the television shop company, has obviously given TV-SHOP a competitive advantage. Today the company controls 80% of the television shop market in Scandinavia. The remaining 20% are a few small television shop companies, mostly in Norway and Sweden. But the competition in the television shop market demands a substantial amount of capital to invest in the production of commercials and to buy air time on different TV channels. TV-SHOP got a flying start and now broadcasts its commercials through 14-15 TV channels in central and northern Europe. During their short company history they have sold approx. 500 different products. Sales revenues for 1991 amounted to 100 million Swedish crowns ($17 million), for 1992 they expect a 100% increase in sales.

Until recently the market has been concentrated in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Last autumn 1992 Finland started with television shop commercials on their national TV channel, Kolmoistelevisio, Finnish TV3. Because of the low coverage of the paneuropean channels in Finland, the majority of Finnish consumers are now being exposed to television shop commercials for the first time.

The television shopping market is expanding quickly, but compared with the sales volume of traditional mail order it is rather modest. In Norway the sales volume of traditional mail order amounted to 3.5 billion crowns ($500 million) in 1991. For the same year the total sales volume for television shopping in Norway amounted to 60 million Norwegian crowns. It is obvious that television shopping in Scandinavia has come to stay, but how successful this distribution channel is going to be in the future is rather unsure. The introduction phase of television shopping in Scandinavia will surely last for a few more years.

Success depends, of course, on the infrastructure of this distribution channel. In Scandinavia today this infrastructure is rather limited. There are, for instance, few Scandinavian commercialized TV channels who cover large segments of the households. Some of the channels offer television shop advertisers air time on a percent-of-sale condition. But this requires that the TV channels have enough air time to sell, which is not the case. The big advertisers are the most profitable and therefore the most preferred buyers of air time. A couple of Scandinavian TV channels have even rejected to transmit television shop commercials because they are incompatible with their image. These are basic limitations to a quick growth in Scandinavian television shopping.

During the past two years the international aspect of this marketing in Scandinavia has become more distinctive. The big television shop company, TV-SHOP started to import American sales programs and transmit them to the Scandinavian television audience. This "americanization" of television shopping in Scandinavia has, of course, important implications concerning the whole concept of this distribution channel. The sales programs reflect sales methods quite unfamiliar to Scandinavians. From the rather slow, educational presentation of products in the earliest Scandinavian produced television shop commercials, we are now faced with sales programs containing a mixture of information and entertainment. The format of many television shop programs resemble talk shows or game shows on television. The product is demonstrated or presented by a host in a studio with a most benevolent audience. Emotional arguments dominate the presentation of the products in many of the programs, especially transmitted through numerous testimonials. The testifiers praise the products assigning them almost magical features, features which have transformed their lives to something new and better.

To assign the products magical functions depends much on the fact that television shop products are usually available only on television, when the campaign is running. The real proof lies with the buyer, whose experiences we will discuss in the next section of this article.

The majority of the television shop products symbolize both something old and something new. A very popular television shop product in Scandinavia is music with records, cassettes and cd's. The records contain often old pop or rock songs, from the 50's or 60's, wrapped in new covers. Another popular product category are kitchen gadgets. An example are kitchen knives that stay sharp eternally, or the steam iron that can iron your clothes straight on the hanger or in your wardrobe. Other examples are the beauty cream that make you look 10-20 years younger, or the tooth polish that whitens your teeth. All of these examples show that the products in fact are old and well-known. The manufacturers of these products have only added a new feature or function or just repacked an old product. Until now television shopping in Scandinavia seems to be an ideal channel for small inventors with a little bit of creativity and fantasy turn old products into new and sensational ones. As the main messages of the commercials bear the promise of a better, richer and happier life for those who dial the number on the screen, this can turn out to be an offer that is hard to resist. To answer our foregoing questions we conducted a survey among Norwegian TV-shoppers.

DATA AND METHOD

The sample of respondents to our study was obtained from two television shop company's customer lists, the big, Swedish company, TV-SHOP, and a small, Norwegian television shop company, called Tele-salg. By the time the survey was conducted, TV-SHOP had registered about 700 000 Scandinavian customers, Tele-salg had registered altogether 11,000 customers. 826

respondents were interviewed by telephone with a questionnaire containing 26 questions. The length of conversation was stipulated to 10 minutes. Quite surprised we discovered that 18% of the respondents claimed they had not purchased anything on television, in spite of that they were listed in the customer list. Some possible explanations to this could be that these respondents were old customers who had shopped before 1991, or that family members or friends had used their names when ordering the goods. Cash on delivery is the most common form of payment in television shopping in Scandinavia. Nevertheless, we got a net result of 678 television shoppers in our sample.

The TV-shoppers are asked what kind of products they have bought, and if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their purchase(s). The dissatisfied shoppers were asked about the reason for their dissatisfaction and what they have done with their dissatisfaction. Those who have taken no action are asked about the main reason for not complaining. We also ask the satisfied shoppers about the degree and the main reason for their satisfaction.

The demographic characteristics of the television shopper in this study were compared with Norwegian population statistics from the Central Bureau of Statistics in Norway. In this perspective our television shopper seems to be male, age between 35 and 44, university or college educated. He is a white-collar employee, manager or self-employed with a total household income around 300-400 000 crowns ($35 000). The shoppers in this survey surely represent the middle class in Norway.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION

Although we are still waiting for the breakthrough of television shopping in Scandinavia, the sales volume is growing steadily each year. To a certain extent consumers are finding TV-shopping convenient. An important question here is what kind of experiences people have in buying through television? With this question in mind we asked consumers about their general evaluation with TV-shopping and the their concrete experiences with certain products bought through TV-shopping. What kind of product is bought by TV-shopping, to what extent are consumers satisfied with the distribution channel and with the product bought through this channel.

The Norwegian television shop company who participated in this survey launched a big campaign to introduce the kitchen knife set during 1991. This explains the high number of purchases of this knife set. The Swedish company, TV-SHOP, claims that records are one of their most purchased products, which Table 1 verifies. Many have also purchased the stain remover. As we mentioned earlier most of these products symbolize both old and new product characteristics. The records are a collection of old pop or rock songs with new covers. The painting set contains pencils and rolls which, according to the advertiser, do not drip. Crystal Earth is a kind of earth substitute for living-room plants. The earth substitute retains the water so the plant more or less can take care of itself.

Table 1
A List of Products and Number of Purchases Through Television

Products	Purchases
Kitchen knife set	257
Records	219
Stain remover	108
Car equipment	87
Paint set	79
Kitchen utensil	71
Excersise equipment	69
Cosmetics	38
Teeth whitener	22
Crystal Earth	9
Embroidery	8
N=	967

The list contains particular products, not product categories. It is not possible to interpret the number of purchases as an indication of popularity. The number of purchases will obviously depend on how long the sales campaign has run.

Let us continue to look at the satisfaction-level of Scandinavian *TV-shoppers*. In Table 2 59% of the television shoppers (N=678) in our survey were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their purchase(s). Most of them say they are fairly satisfied. On the other hand 34% were dissatisfied. A minor group, 7% of the television shoppers, were neutral.

Table 2
Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Among Scandinavian TV-Shoppers
Percent

Very satisfied	27
Fairly satisfied	32
Neutral	7
Dissatisfied, once	29
Dissatisfied, several times	5
Sum	100 (N=678)

Our next table shows the relation between product groups and the level of satisfaction/ dissatisfaction for seven products, Table 3. The products in the table are ranged according to the degree of dissatisfaction. The teeth whitener, cosmetics, crystal earth and the embroidery are excluded from the table because of their low number of purchases.

Table 3
Percentage Satisfied and Dissatisfied Purchases Related to the Purchased Products

Product	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	
Stain remover	40	12	48	100
Paint set	30	27	43	100
Kitchen-knife set	60	7	33	100
Exercise equipment	46	19	35	100
Car equipment	47	19	34	100
Kitchen utensil	80	4	16	100
Records, cassettes	84	5	11	100

Significance: $P<0.001$ (Chi-Square), N = 447

In this table we have only included consumers who have bought one product from the TV-shop. If consumers have bought more that one product, it is not possible in our study to give multiple answers to the question of satisfaction, and consumers can be dissatisfied with one product and satisfied with another.

Although the majority of consumers are satisfied with their purchases by TV-shopping, Tables 2 and 3 show a relatively high degree of dissatisfaction. In Table 2, 34% of the television shoppers reported dissatisfaction with their purchase, and 5% had even been dissatisfied several times. Compared with other studies of dissatisfaction, this is a high dissatisfaction level (Andreasen and Best 1977, Andreasen, 1988). In the Andreasen and Best study the average problem rate is 20%, varying from 9% with cosmetics to 35% with cars repairs. In our study some of the products, stain remover and paint set, have more then 1/3 of the TV-shoppers are dissatisfied with the purchase, and for the rest of them 1/4 are dissatisfied. The only exception is record and cassettes where as many as 76% are satisfied and only 6% are dissatisfied.

What actually were the reasons for this dissatisfaction? Below we present a table which gives a picture of the problems TV-shoppers link to the purchase (Table 4). The respondents were allowed to state more than one problem to the purchase. The result shows, with no doubt, that the biggest problem is bad quality. 67% found the quality of the product unsatisfactory. The kitchen-knife set, paint set and stain remover seems rather disappointing in the eyes of the shoppers. 7% found the total price (product price + shipping and handling) to be higher than expected. Only 3% found the delivery process to be too slow, and only 2% reported that the product did not arrive at all. 8% had problems with defect products, 10% reported other problems. None of the dissatisfied television shoppers reported problems getting a refund when returning the products. As we shall see later, only 5% of the dissatisfied returned the product.

That the delivery of the goods seem to be a minor problem is an interesting result, considering that television shopping in Europe implicates a huge transaction of goods across national borders. Consumers do not think that the delivery takes too long time and they usually receive the product they ordered.

The table shows that the problems are not restricted to the product, but 82% are dissatisfied with questions related to price and quality of the product and only 5% to conditions concerning the distribution process. Bad quality seems to be the main problem. Unfortunately, we do not know anything of the nature of this problem.

COMPLAINING ACTIVITY AMONG THE DISSATISFIED TELEVISION SHOPPER

When consumers are dissatisfied with6

Table 4
Number of Dissatisfied Television Shoppers Assigned to Each Product with One or More Reported Problems Connected to the Purchase
N=194 (%)

	Bad quality	Total price higher than expected	Delivery takes too long	Product never arrived	Defect products	Other problem	Total
Kitchen utensil	8	1				3	12
Kitchen-knife set	41	8	2	1	4	3	59
Paint set	18				2		20
Records, cassettes	3		2	2	3	4	14
Crystal earth	5	1			1		7
Teeth whitener	1		1	1			3
Stain-remover	32	2			2	1	37
Car equipment	9					4	13
Excersise equipment	6	2			3	3	14
Cosmetics	7					1	8
Sum (%)	130 (67)	14 (7)	5 (3)	4 (2)	15 (8)	19 (10)	187

products, services or condition related to the distribution process, they can act in many different ways. First of all they can take *no action* at all. Secondly, consumer can *voice* the purchase to seller, producer, legal authorities or warn family or friends. Finally, they can choose different *exit* possibilities, they can quit brands, products, store and suppliers (Hirschman 1970, Andreasen 1988) What kind of action is taken by the television shoppers when they are dissatisfied with their purchases? Table 4 will reveal their complaining strategy. In this table we have concentrated on those who reported dissatisfaction only once. The table shows that the overall majority of the dissatisfied shoppers (69%) take no action. 10% of the dissatisfied warned their family and friends from buying on television. Only 6% of the dissatisfied choose to complain to the seller, and only 5% returned the product. Also here the respondents had the opportunity to give more than one answer.

Table 5
The Dissatisfied Shoppers Choice of Complaining Strategy
N=194

	Inaction	Warning family and friends	Complaining to seller	Returning product	Total
Kitchen utensil	8	1	1	2	12
Kitchen-knife set	43	5	4	3	55
Paint set	17	2	1		20
Records, cassettes	9	1		1	11
Crystal Earth	3		2		5
Teeth whitener	2				2
Stain remover	25	6	3	1	35
Car equipment	10		1	1	12
Exercise equipment	12	2			14
Cosmetics	4	2		1	7
Sum	133 (69%)	19 (10%)	12 (6%)	9 (5%)	173

This is very low complaining activity compared with other Scandinavian studies (Grønhaug and Stø 1984, Stø and Glefjell 1990, Thorelli 1977). In his overview of the complaining literature Andreasen has found that approximate 40% of the dissatisfied consumers take some action, although the complaining level varies enormous from one study to another (Andreasen 1988:675). This low complaining activity needs an explanation.

We asked why the shoppers decided to take no action. Nearly half of them (49%) answered that the most important reason was that complaining was too time-consuming. This means that the economic costs of complaining are perceived to be too great. It takes time and effort to wrap the product, find the return address, fill out forms and travel to the post office to mail it. Only 8 respondents reported low product price as the main reason for not taking any action. But low product price could also be an calculated factor in the television shopper's time budget. The price is not worth the time and effort returning the product.

Nearly 25% of those who did not take any action thought they would not achieve much complaining to the seller. Maybe the dissatisfied shoppers had lost confidence in the seller. They probably think that it is no use asking for a new product. It would probably be just as bad. Or maybe the shopper thinks their reason for dissatisfaction would be perceived as trivial and insignificant. Here we touch upon emotional costs of taking action. The shopper fears probably that the reason for the dissatisfaction is not grave enough according to some kind of objective standard, and therefore find it unpleasant to risk a rejection from the seller.

Very few put forth emotional reasons for not taking action. Only 5 respondents answered that it is personally unpleasant to complain and another 5 answered that they only had themselves to blame. It seems like the material costs of taking action counts more than the emotional.

About 8% of dissatisfied who did not take action, answered that their main reason for not complaining was a perceived natural risk in buying through this distribution channel. This seems to reflect a kind of expectation that one can not expect to "win" all the time. It is part of the "game" to lose.

Games and entertainment is actually what characterizes most of the television shop commercials. And there is of course the possibility that participation in the games and entertainment in the commercials represent the entire meaning of shopping on television. The products themselves are secondary. In this respect, complaining about the product makes no sense.

In spite of dissatisfaction with the purchases on television, would the shoppers in our survey like to shop again? Table 5 show the answers of the satisfied and dissatisfied television shoppers.

A big majority of the satisfied television shoppers would like to shop again. 53% of the dissatisfied shoppers would like to shop more, 35% have decided not to, and 12% are unsure. That somewhat over half of the dissatisfied shoppers want to shop more indicates that many of these shoppers still have confidence in this fairly new distribution channel. That one or two of the purchases have produced disappointment and dissatisfaction does not necessarily mean that the shoppers reject the distribution channel as such. The dissatisfied shoppers may interpret the purchase as a result of bad luck. Much depends, of course, on the nature of the problem.

Table 6
Repurchase through TV-shopping
Percent

Repurchase	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Yes	90	53
No	4	36
Do not know	6	11
Sum	100	100
	(N=401)	(N=214)

Significance: $p < 0.001$

CONCLUSION

In Scandinavia TV-shopping is a new way to distribute goods and services from producers and importers to consumers. This study shows that TV-shopping, so far, has not been a success in the Scandinavian market, even though the leading TV-shopping company has made a reasonable profit over the last two years. But, as we have shown, the selection of goods is very narrow in TV-shopping, compared with American experiences, and consumers to a large degree are dissatisfied with their purchases.

In our study 1/3 of the TV-shoppers are dissatisfied consumers, varying from 7% with the cd/cassettes/LP to 40% with the stain-remover. This is a high dissatisfaction level, compared with other studies of dissatisfaction. But it is worth noting that this is not a dissatisfaction with the distribution channel, but with the products sold through this channel. Only 5% of the dissatisfied consumers are dissatisfied with the delivery routine in TV-shopping, or other aspects in connection with the distribution process.

The main reason for this high level of dissatisfaction is the low quality of the goods sold through TV-shopping. As much as 67% of the dissatisfied consumers are dissatisfied with the quality, 7% with the price of the goods and 8% because of product failure. No distribution channel or retailer can be happy with such results.

The complaining activity is very low, only 6% of the dissatisfied consumers voiced to the TV-shopping companies, and 5% returned the product. This is also low, compared with other studies. Half of the dissatisfied consumers say that it take to much time to complain, and 1/4 that it is not worth while. Consumers don't like the products, they don't trust the channel and don't want to complain. They only want to forget the purchase.

This study indicates that the future of TV-shopping in Scandinavia is dependent on the product profile and product quality of goods and services sold by this channel. TV-shopping as a new channel has possibilities to develop into a serious distribution channel but if, and only if, the quality of the products is improved and the selection of goods are widened.

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