

# Angry Customers Don't Come Back, They Get Back: The Experience and Behavioral Implications of Anger and Dissatisfaction in Services

Roger Bougie

Rik Pieters

Marcel Zeelenberg

Tilburg University, The Netherlands

---

*This article investigates the specific experience of anger and dissatisfaction and their effects on customers' behavioral responses to failed service encounters across industries. Study 1 demonstrates that anger and dissatisfaction are qualitatively different emotions with respect to their idiosyncratic experiential content. Study 2 builds on these findings and shows how anger and service encounter dissatisfaction differentially affect customer behavior. It provides empirical support for the contention that anger mediates the relationship between service encounter dissatisfaction and customers' behavioral responses. The findings of Study 2 diverge from previous findings in marketing on the interrelationships between customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, related consumption emotions, and customers' behavioral responses to service failure. The implications of these findings for services marketing theory and practice are delineated.*

**Keywords:** *marketing; consumer behavior; consumption emotions; anger; dissatisfaction*

---

Anger and dissatisfaction are related emotions, which are often experienced after failed service encounters.

Customers may experience both anger and dissatisfaction in response to waiting for service, dealing with unresponsive or impolite employees, and core service failures such as billing errors or poorly executed repair jobs. The resemblance of anger and dissatisfaction is also apparent from the literature. Emotion research describes dissatisfaction as "a negative term, related to anger, hatred, and disgust" (Storm and Storm 1987:811), and marketing literature reports significant correlations between anger and dissatisfaction (e.g., Folkes, Koletsky, and Graham 1987). On the other hand, marketing and emotion literature also suggests that these specific emotions have idiosyncratic behavior and behavioral tendencies associated with them. For instance, research examining customer dissatisfaction finds that customers would rather remain passive than complain when they are dissatisfied (Oliver 1996). In contrast, complaining appears to be a fairly common response to anger (Roseman, Wiest, and Swartz 1994; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor 1987).

However, to date the distinctive experiences of anger and dissatisfaction and their possible diverging effects on customers' responses to a wide range of service failures have not received much research attention. Such research is needed to determine whether there is theoretical and empirical reason to regard anger and dissatisfaction as distinctive emotions and to assess if and how they differentially affect the behavior marketing management is eventually interested in. We report the results of two studies to fill this void.

Study 1 aims to show that anger and dissatisfaction are different emotions. This study, exploratory in nature, makes the following contributions. First, it compares the experience of anger and dissatisfaction and thus provides empirical reasons to regard them as distinctive emotions. Second, this study explicitly focuses on the experience of anger and dissatisfaction in a consumption setting. Thus, findings about the specific phenomenology of anger and dissatisfaction may help marketers to better understand when and why customers engage in particular postconsumption behavioral responses, such as switching, complaining, and negative word of mouth (WOM).

Having established that anger and dissatisfaction are distinct emotions in Study 1, Study 2 tests hypotheses on the specific, independent effects of service encounter dissatisfaction and anger on customers' behavioral responses to service failure. This study contends that while anger has a *direct* effect on customers' behavioral responses to service failure when dissatisfaction is controlled for, service encounter dissatisfaction is not directly related to behavioral responses to service failure when anger is controlled for. Building on previous research that indicates that service encounter dissatisfaction is related to behavioral responses (e.g., Maute and Forrester 1993; Richins 1987; Singh 1988), the present study posits that this effect is *indirect* and mediated by more specific emotions such as anger.

Study 2 aims to contribute to the literature in the following ways. First, building on emotion theory and the findings of Study 1, we aim to show that anger mediates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses. Second, Study 2 investigates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction and anger on customers' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses, whereas prior research that includes both emotions focuses on behavioral intentions. Because behavioral intentions are an imperfect proxy for behavioral responses, the current findings add to the validity of previous research. Third, previous research on the effects of anger on customers' behavioral responses to service failure is service or industry specific, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In the present research, we take on a broad, cross-industry perspective by using retrospective experience sampling as a method. To summarize, this article investigates the following research questions: Is the experiential content of dissatisfaction and anger qualitatively different? What are the independent, direct effects of service encounter dissatisfaction and anger on customers' behavioral responses to service failure? How are service encounter dissatisfaction and anger related, and how do they directly and indirectly affect customers' behavioral responses to failed service encounters?

## STUDY 1: THE EXPERIENCE OF ANGER AND DISSATISFACTION

### Differentiating Emotions by Their Experiential Content

In this study, we intend to show that anger and dissatisfaction are distinct emotions. Recent research aiming to find differences among emotions has mainly focused on appraisal patterns or on experiential content. These two approaches are clearly different from each other. Whereas appraisal theory concentrates on *cognitions associated with the perceived antecedents* of particular emotions, the focal point of the experiential content approach is on a wider range of states that are assumed to be central components of *the emotional experience* itself (Roseman et al. 1994).

Appraisal theory holds that specific emotions are associated with specific patterns of cognitive appraisals. Appraisal refers to the process of judging the significance of an event for personal well-being. To arouse an emotion, an event must be appraised as affecting a person in some way. People may differ in the specific appraisals (or attributions) that are elicited by a particular event, but similar patterns of appraisals typically give rise to the same emotions. For example, anger in response to a service failure arises when customers appraise an event as unfair, with high service provider control over the service failure, and a stable cause of the service failure (Folkes et al. 1987; Ruth, Brunel, and Otnes 2002; Taylor 1994). In addition, anger is associated with appraisals of high goal relevance, goal incongruence, and high coping potential (Nyer 1997b).

An understanding of appraisals is important, since it may help marketers to understand why specific emotions arise. As a result, there is a growing number of conceptual and empirical studies of appraisals in marketing (e.g., Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999; Nyer 1997b; Ruth et al. 2002). In contrast, the experiential content of emotions has been largely neglected in marketing research. Therefore, although much is known about the cognitive antecedents of anger and dissatisfaction, very little is known about their experiential content, that is, what it means to be dissatisfied or angry.

Basic emotion research on experiential content (e.g., Davitz 1969; Roseman et al. 1994; Wallbott and Scherer 1988; Zeelenberg, Van Dijk, Manstead, and Van der Pligt 1998) investigates a wide range of characteristics to differentiate emotions. For instance, Roseman et al. (1994) proposed that emotions can be differentiated in terms of the following five experiential categories: (1) feelings, (2) thoughts, (3) action tendencies, (4) actions, and (5) emotivational goals. Feelings are perceived physical or

mental sensations. Thoughts are ideas, plans, conceptions, or opinions produced by mental activity. Action tendencies are impulses or inclinations to respond with a particular action. Actions include actual behavior that may or may not be purposive. Emotivational goals describe the goals that accompany discrete emotions. Emotivational goals or emotional motives differ from action tendencies in that the latter term refers to specific behavioral responses, whereas the former refers to desired goal states. The following example of the experiential content of regret may further clarify the distinction between the five experiential categories; regret may involve the feeling that one should have known better, thoughts about what a mistake one has made, feeling the tendency to kick oneself, actually doing something differently, and (the emotivational goal) wanting to get a second chance (Zeelenberg et al. 1998).

Although conceptually distinct, cognitive appraisals and emotional experience are related. Specific appraisal outcomes elicit specific emotions with a specific experiential content. In turn, emotional experience is the proximal cause of all that follows, including specific adaptive behavior (Arnold 1960; Lazarus 1991; Plutchik 1980; Roseman et al. 1994). Thus, emotional experience is more directly related to postconsumption behavioral responses than appraisals (or attributions) are. For instance, the emotional motive of fear, wanting to be in a safe place, explains why people run away. Likewise, emotivational goals associated with anger and dissatisfaction may help to predict and explain the impact of these emotions on complaint behavior, negative WOM, and switching. Therefore, we will use the experiential-content approach to investigate whether anger and dissatisfaction are different emotions.

### The Experience of Anger and Dissatisfaction

Study 1 aims to assess specific feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals that differentiate between the experience of anger and dissatisfaction. Consequently, specific predictions for each of these five experiential categories are needed. To conceptualize the experience of anger, we build on extant emotion theory. The conceptualization of the experience of dissatisfaction relies on both theory and on a pilot study that was conducted and detailed below.

Anger is associated with appraising an event as harmful and frustrating. It is aimed at another person, an institution, or the self. A crucial aspect distinguishing anger from other negative emotions is the element of blame or the belief that we have been voluntarily wronged unjustifiably (Averill 1982; Lazarus 1991).

A wide range of studies that focus on diverse aspects of emotion phenomenology provide data for the experiential

content of anger (e.g., Averill 1982; Berkowitz 1990; Davitz 1969; Deffenbacher, Oetting, Lynch, and Morris 1996; Frijda 1986; Roseman et al. 1994). From this literature, we gleaned the following experiential qualities of anger (categories are italicized). People associate anger with *feelings* "as if they would explode" and "of being overwhelmed by their emotions." Typical *thoughts* associated with anger are "thinking of violence towards others" and "thinking of how unfair something is." Anger is associated with *action tendencies* such as "feel like behaving aggressively" and "letting go." *Actions* that are characteristic for anger are "saying something nasty" and "complaining." Finally, typical *emotivational goals* are "wanting to hurt someone" and "wanting to get back at someone." Table 1 provides an overview of predicted anger items.

In contrast to the experience of anger, relatively little is known about the experience of dissatisfaction, even though many emotion theorists (e.g., Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988; Scherer 1984; Shaver et al. 1987; Watson and Tellegen 1985; Weiner 1986) identify satisfaction and dissatisfaction as emotions. Emotion literature conceptualizes dissatisfaction as a "distress" emotion (Ortony et al. 1988), which occurs when an event is perceived as unpleasant or obstructive to goals or needs (Scherer 1984; Weiner 1986). That is, dissatisfaction is considered to be a relatively undifferentiated emotion that is nonspecific in the sense that it is a general, valenced reaction to a negative event. For instance, Weiner (1986) depicted dissatisfaction as an outcome-dependent emotion because it is associated with the undesirability of an event, but not with its cause.

In marketing, service encounter dissatisfaction is "distinguished from attitude, overall service satisfaction, and quality based on this narrower, more focused definition" (Bitner and Hubbert 1994:74). Marketers have been offering various definitions of service encounter satisfaction and dissatisfaction. For instance, Oliver (1996) defined satisfaction as "the customer's fulfillment response. It is the judgment that a . . . service . . . provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment" (p. 13). Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky (1996), on the other hand, defined satisfaction as "the emotional reaction to a product or service experience" (p. 17). These two definitions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction reflect the distinct views of the two main theoretical traditions in conceptualizing satisfaction and dissatisfaction: either as a judgment that is the result of positive and negative emotions, over and above the effect of cognitive antecedents (Mano and Oliver 1993; Oliver 1996; Westbrook 1987), or as a consumption emotion (Day 1983; Hunt 1991; Spreng et al. 1988). Nyer (1997a, 1998) provided ample evidence to show that satisfaction (and by implication dissatisfaction) is an

**TABLE 1**  
**Partial Correlation Coefficients of Anger and Dissatisfaction and Response Items: Study 1 (N = 120)**

<i>Experiential Content Item</i>	<i>Anger</i>		<i>Dissatisfaction</i>	
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>p-Value</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>p-Value</i>
Feelings				
<i>Have a feeling like you'd explode?</i>	.628	.000	.150	.104
Have a feeling of unfulfillment?	.062	.504	.238	.009
<i>Have a feeling of being overwhelmed by your emotions?</i>	.447	.000	-.019	.834
Have an undecided feeling?	.231	.012	-.080	.387
Thoughts				
<i>Think of violence toward others?</i>	.378	.000	-.040	.666
Think of what you had missed out on?	.060	.515	.184	.046
<i>Think how unfair the situation was?</i>	.440	.000	.018	.848
Think about how to act on the situation?	.251	.006	.032	.734
Action tendencies				
<i>Feel like behaving aggressively?</i>	.437	.000	.064	.491
Feel like waiting for the right moment to take action?	.001	.989	.050	.591
<i>Feel like letting yourself go?</i>	.389	.000	.051	.584
Feel like devoting your attention to something else?	-.062	.502	-.045	.626
Actions				
<i>Say something nasty?</i>	.339	.000	.138	.135
Reflect on what happened?	.439	.000	.136	.141
<i>Complain about what happened?</i>	.262	.004	.127	.169
Make a deliberate judgment how to act?	.055	.553	.242	.008
Emotivational goals				
<i>Want to get back at someone?</i>	.330	.000	-.010	.915
Want to find out what would be the best way to deal with the event?	.230	.012	.015	.869
<i>Want to hurt someone?</i>	.257	.005	-.013	.888
Want to find out who or what is responsible for the event?	.071	.444	.260	.004

NOTE: Italicized items were intended to measure the experience of *anger*, and the remaining items were intended to measure dissatisfaction. Parameters are partial correlation coefficients, with significance levels of *t*-value. Coefficients and *p*-values in italics indicate that the significant relationship is in accordance with the predictions.

emotion. Like emotion research, research in marketing has mainly concentrated on cognitions (or appraisals) associated with dissatisfaction. Cognitions of negative disconfirmation, the underfulfillment of needs, and inequity are associated with customer dissatisfaction (e.g., Mano and Oliver 1993; Oliver 1996, 2000). Such cognitions, associated with the unexpected, negative outcome of an event, bring about tendencies to seek the source or cause of the negative event (Hastie 1984; Weiner 1986).

From these characterizations in marketing and emotion literature we derived the following predictions about the experiential qualities of dissatisfaction. Dissatisfied people have *feelings* "of unfulfillment," *thoughts* "of what they had missed out on," and the *emotivational goal* to "want to find out who or what is responsible for the event."

We conducted a pilot study to provide further details about the experiential content of dissatisfaction. A sample of 36 female and 31 male students from Tilburg University (with a median age of 21 years) were asked to recount a specific service consumption event that made them experience intense dissatisfaction. The participants were asked to remember an event that was as authentic as possible and to bring back as much of the actual experience as they

possibly could. Then they were asked to describe the experience in an open-ended format. Finally, by means of five open-ended questions, participants were asked to describe the feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals they had. Three judges, blind to the hypothesis of this study, independently converted participants' answers into response items, compared their formulations, and resolved disagreements by discussion. Repeatedly mentioned answers were converted into the following response items: for *feelings*, "having an undecided feeling"; for *thoughts*, "think about how to act upon the situation"; for *action tendencies*, "feel like waiting for the right moment to take action," "feel like devoting your attention to something else" for *actions*, "reflect on what happened" and "make a deliberate judgment about how to act"; and for *emotivational goals*, "want to find out what would be the best way to deal with the event." Table 1 provides an overview of predicted dissatisfaction items.

In sum, the literature review and the pilot test suggest that anger and dissatisfaction differ on each of the five response types (thoughts, feelings, action tendencies, actions, and goals) that are assumed to be the central components of an emotional experience. In line with these

findings, we expect that anger and dissatisfaction are distinct emotions with an idiosyncratic experiential content. That is, we posit the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* Anger and dissatisfaction have a different experiential content with distinctive feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals.

## Method

**Procedure.** One hundred and twenty 2nd-year students (63 male and 57 female students) of International Business Studies at Tilburg University participated as a part of their course requirements. Their age ranged from 18 to 27 years, with a median of 19 years. We used retrospective experience sampling as a method. In retrospective experience sampling, a participant is asked to describe his or her experience in response to an autobiographical episode. Next, the participant is asked open- and close-ended questions about this episode. This approach is frequently used in emotion research (Frijda, Kuipers, and Ter Schure 1989; Roseman, Antoniou, and Jose 1996; Zeelenberg and Pieters in press), and it is strongly related to critical incidents research. A noteworthy difference between both methods is that in critical incidents research, usually the autobiographical episodes are focused on, whereas in experience sampling, the experiences are typically followed by response scales, which are subjected to standard testing. Combinations of both methods have been applied recently (e.g., Ruth et al. 2002).

The procedure we used is very similar to the procedure employed by Roseman et al. (1994), who chose it to reduce the risk of collecting data on emotion language rather than on emotion states. Instead of asking participants about, for example, the thoughts they believe to be associated with anger, we asked them to report the thoughts they had when they were angry. Participants who are engaged in such a recall procedure spontaneously make emotion faces and expressions for the emotion they are recalling (Matelesta and Izard 1984). This indicates that not merely emotion language but emotion experience is assessed by this technique.

To sample a wide range of experiences loaded with anger and dissatisfaction, we used two instructions for recalling a negative experience with a service organization. Half of the participants read the anger instruction, and the other half read the dissatisfaction instruction. The exact anger instruction is provided in the appendix. Apart from the focus on anger or dissatisfaction, both versions of the questionnaire were identical. Participants were assigned at random to each instruction.

**Measures.** Participants were encouraged to reexperience their negative service experience step-by-step. Then, they were asked to describe the event as accurately as pos-

sible. Next, we asked how long ago the event had happened. Then, closed-ended questions were asked about the intensity of dissatisfaction and anger. These questions were answered on a 9-point scale with end points labeled *not at all* (1) and *very much* (9). Following Roseman et al. (1994), we then asked participants about the particular feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals proposed for either anger or dissatisfaction. Each experiential category (feelings, thoughts, action tendencies, actions, emotivational goals) contained four items in random order (two items measuring predicted responses per emotion). Ratings ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). Each item was preceded by the stem "During the event, to what extent did you . . .," followed by the items shown in Table 1.

## Results and Discussion

**Negative service experiences.** Participants reported a wide variety of negative service experiences. Reported service failures fell in the categories of personal transportation (by train, bus, airplane, or taxi), telecommunication, stores, restaurants, education, banking and insurance, repair and utility services, travel agencies, and local government. On average, the negative events that participants reported had happened 2 months before, with no significant differences in the two versions of the questionnaire.

**The intensity of anger and dissatisfaction.** The mean intensity of dissatisfaction was 8.01, and the mean intensity of anger was 7.18, both on a 9-point scale. An independent samples *t*-test indicated that there were no significant differences in the intensity of dissatisfaction,  $t(118) = 1.77$ , *ns*, among the anger and dissatisfaction instruction. Likewise, there were no significant differences in anger among the anger and dissatisfaction instruction,  $t(118) = .85$ , *ns*. This is desirable since the objective of the two instructions was to collect a wide variety of experiences and not to differentiate in the intensity of the emotions.

The correlation of dissatisfaction and anger was .252 ( $p < .006$ ). A further inspection of the relationship of anger and dissatisfaction revealed that 11.7% of the highly dissatisfied consumers (with a score of 6 to 9 on a 9-point scale) was not (very) angry (score 1 to 4 on a 9-point scale), whereas all the highly angry consumers were also highly dissatisfied. This finding suggests that anger and dissatisfaction do not always co-occur.

**Anger and dissatisfaction are distinctive emotions.** Study 1 was designed to establish if anger and dissatisfaction about a specific service failure differ in their experiential content. Partial correlation analysis was used to examine the strength of the relationship between the experiential content items and anger and dissatisfaction, respectively. This allowed us to assess the association between the experiential content items and one specific

emotion, while controlling for the other emotion. The results are summarized in Table 1.

In support of our hypothesis that the experiential content of anger and dissatisfaction is different, 14 experiential content items correlated significantly with the correct emotion, and not with the other emotion. That is, all experiential content items that were intended to measure the experience of anger significantly correlated with anger, and four experiential content items that were intended to measure the experience of dissatisfaction significantly correlated with dissatisfaction. For instance, a feeling like one would explode was significantly correlated with anger ( $r = .628, p < .001$ ), but not with dissatisfaction ( $r = .150, p < .104$ ). In contrast, a feeling of unfulfillment was significantly correlated with dissatisfaction ( $r = .238, p < .009$ ), but not with anger ( $r = .062, p < .504$ ). None of the experiential content items correlated significantly with both anger and dissatisfaction. The findings in Table 1 support the hypothesis that the five experiential content categories discriminate between anger and dissatisfaction.

*Experiencing anger and dissatisfaction.* As indicated in Table 1, 14 out of 20 predicted differences in the experience of anger and dissatisfaction were supported. In recalled experiences of anger, consumers had a feeling like they would explode and that they were overtaken by their emotions. Customers were thinking of violence and of how unfair the situation was. Whereas they felt like letting go and behaving aggressively, they actually complained and said something nasty. Angry customers wanted to get back at the organization and wanted to hurt someone. In line with our predictions, all these items did not correlate with dissatisfaction. These findings emphasize how anger involves confronting and hurting (the business of) the service provider. Anger evidently serves to (try to) discourage the service provider from doing what causes the customer's anger and to recover the service failure.

Some results were not in line with our predictions. Four experiential content items predicted for dissatisfaction correlated significantly with anger (but not with dissatisfaction). This suggests that we may have misspecified these distinctive properties for dissatisfaction. Angry consumers reported that they had an undecided feeling, reflected on what had happened, had thoughts about how to act on the situation, and finally wanted to find out what would be the best way to deal with the event. A possible explanation for the significant relation between anger and 'having thoughts about how to act upon the situation' and 'want to find out what would be the best way to deal with the event' lies in angry customers' repression of innate aggressive tendencies and their search for alternative ways to respond to the situation (cf. Averill 1982).

In line with our predictions, dissatisfied customers had a feeling of unfulfillment, thought about what they had missed out on, made a deliberate judgment of how to act,

and wanted to find out who or what is responsible for the event. These items did not correlate with anger. These findings converge with conceptualizations of dissatisfaction in emotion theory, suggesting that dissatisfaction is the customer's general, valenced reaction to a negative event. Our findings indicate that dissatisfaction signals that the outcome of a service encounter is not as good as it was supposed to be. Also, dissatisfied customers attempt to understand why the service failure has occurred. Thus, dissatisfaction may serve to encourage customers to find out what has happened and to examine who or what is responsible for the service failure. The information arising from this causal search may allow customers to effectively manage the situation.

To summarize, Study 1 shows that anger and dissatisfaction systematically differ in their experiential content. Anger and dissatisfaction have distinctive thoughts, feelings, action tendencies, actions, and emotivational goals. Although they are conceptually related emotions, they have clearly distinct experiential profiles. The idiosyncratic experiential profiles of anger and dissatisfaction suggest that both emotions might have distinctive effects on customers' behavioral responses to service failure. Moreover, the finding that anger and dissatisfaction do not always co-occur illustrates that an empirical examination of the effects of these specific emotions on customers' behavioral responses to service failure is meaningful. Study 2, discussed next, was designed to investigate the interrelationships between service encounter dissatisfaction, anger, and customers' behavioral responses to service failure in further detail.

## STUDY 2: THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER AND DISSATISFACTION

Study 2 investigates the direct effects of service encounter dissatisfaction and anger on customers' behavioral responses to service failure in a field setting. In addition, since both the findings of Study 1 and prior research suggest that the interrelationships between customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, anger, and customers' responses may be more complex than anger and dissatisfaction having indirect effects on customers' responses, other models merit being tested. Specifically, in this study, we also test (1) whether anger mediates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' responses, (2) whether service encounter dissatisfaction mediates the effect of anger on customers' responses, and (3) whether anger moderates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' responses to service failure. The reasons for selecting these particular models are discussed next. In the model tests, we control for relevant covariates (switching costs and complaint success likelihood) that might potentially bias our results.



## Behavioral Responses to Anger and Dissatisfaction

In this study, we investigate the effects of anger and dissatisfaction on negative WOM, complaint behavior, third-party complaining, and switching. Negative WOM entails telling friends and other members of one's social network about a negative service encounter and advising them not to acquire the services of the organization involved. Complaint behavior refers to consumer-initiated communications to the service provider to obtain remedy or restitution for problems in particular market transactions. Third-party complaint behavior is directed toward objects that are external to the consumer's social circle and not directly related to the dissatisfying experience, such as newspapers and legal agencies (Singh 1988). Switching refers not only to the actual termination of the relationship but also to the commitment to stay with the service provider (Oliver 1996).

Numerous studies on the effect of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses to service failure indicate that service encounter dissatisfaction is a significant predictor of negative WOM, complaint behavior, third-party complaining, and switching (e.g., Maute and Forrester 1993; Richins 1987; Singh 1988). However, few studies have investigated the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' responses while controlling for anger. Since anger is related to dissatisfaction (e.g., Folkes et al. 1987), estimations of the impact of dissatisfaction on customers' responses may be biased when anger is not controlled for. The few studies that assess the impact of dissatisfaction while controlling for anger provide mixed evidence on the effect of dissatisfaction on customers' responses. Whereas Dubé and Maute (1996) found that dissatisfaction is related to behavioral intentions, Díaz and Ruíz (2002) found that dissatisfaction is unrelated to behavioral intentions while controlling for anger. In view of these diverging findings, possibly caused by the use of different measures, more research is needed to understand the impact of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses while controlling for anger.

The findings of Study 1 provide reasons to believe that service encounter dissatisfaction is unrelated to customers' behavioral responses to service failure when anger is controlled for. Recall that Study 1 shows that dissatisfaction is a relatively undifferentiated, outcome-dependent emotion and that dissatisfied customers attempt to find out why the service failure has occurred. As a result of this information-seeking response, customers may hold the service provider, themselves, or uncontrollable circumstances responsible for the service failure. Prior research indicates that when a service failure is attributable to the customer, firms are not expected to provide remedy or restitution. Also, when customers blame themselves for a

service failure, they are less likely to tell others about the negative event. In contrast, when a service failure is attributable to the service provider, customers are more likely to engage in complaint behavior and negative WOM (Folkes 1988; Richins 1983). Since the information about who or what is responsible can still identify either the service provider, the self, or uncontrollable circumstances as responsible for the service failure, we expect no clear correlation between service encounter dissatisfaction and customers' behavioral responses to service failure. That is, the experience of dissatisfaction per se may be insufficient to motivate customers to engage in complaint behavior, negative WOM, or switching. We hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 2a:* Service encounter dissatisfaction is unrelated to customers' behavioral responses to service failure when anger is controlled for.

Anger is "one of the most powerful emotions, if we consider its profound impact on social relations as well as effects on the person experiencing this emotion" (Lazarus 1991:217). It is related to aggression and hostile behavior (Averill 1982; Berkowitz 1990). Consequently, anger may be a powerful predictor of customers' behavioral responses to failed service encounters, over and above the effect of dissatisfaction. A considerable amount of empirical evidence suggests that anger may be related to customers' responses to service failure. Prior research on the effect of anger on customers' behavioral intentions shows that when anger increases, customers are more likely to complain and to engage in negative WOM and less likely to repurchase the product or service (Folkes et al. 1987; Nyer 1997b). Other research suggests that anger is a significant predictor of complaint intentions and intentions to engage in negative WOM, even when satisfaction is controlled for (Díaz and Ruíz 2002; Dubé and Maute 1996). In line with these findings, we propose that anger has a significant direct effect on customers' responses to service failure when dissatisfaction is controlled for. The findings of Study 1 provide additional support for this contention. Study 1 shows that angry customers are motivated to say something nasty and to complain. Moreover, angry customers have several possibilities to attain the goals of getting back at the service provider and hurting business, including negative WOM, legal action, and switching. Thus, prior research and the findings of Study 1 indicate the following:

*Hypothesis 2b:* Anger is positively related to customers' behavioral responses to service failure when dissatisfaction is controlled for.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b relate to the direct, independent effects of anger and service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses to failed service encounters. However, there are reasons to expect more complex

interrelationships between anger, service encounter dissatisfaction, and customers' responses. Building on emotion theory and the findings of Study 1, we propose that service encounter dissatisfaction is antecedent to, and necessary for, anger. In other words, we expect that anger mediates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses to failed service encounters.

Recall that Study 1 shows that anger and dissatisfaction produce a whole repertoire of different responses aimed at restoring the disturbed relationship with the situation. The findings on the emotional experience of dissatisfaction are in line with conceptualizations of dissatisfaction as an outcome-dependent emotion that is associated with the undesirability of an event, but not with its cause (cf. Ortony et al. 1988; Weiner 1986). The findings of Study 1 demonstrate that dissatisfaction signals that the service encounter was not as good as it was supposed to be and that it triggers an information-seeking response. The information arising from this information-seeking response may clarify who or what is to blame for the service failure. Consequently, other, more differentiated emotions such as anger may arise. If customers hold the service provider responsible for the service failure, anger may arise. Likewise, guilt and shame may arise if customers hold themselves responsible for the service failure, and sadness may result if customers hold circumstances beyond anyone's control responsible for the service failure (cf. Roseman et al. 1996). That service encounter dissatisfaction is an antecedent of more differentiated emotions such as anger is in line with the reasoning of some emotion theorists such as Scherer (1982) and Weiner (1986). For instance, Weiner argued that

following the outcome of an event, there is initially a general positive or negative reaction (a "primitive" emotion) based on the perceived success or failure of that outcome (the "primary" appraisal). . . . Following the appraisal of the outcome, a causal ascription will be sought if that outcome was unexpected and/or important. A different set of emotions is then generated by the chosen attributions. (P. 121)

This suggests a temporal sequence in which cognitions may enter into the emotion process consecutively to further refine and differentiate the emotion experience. In sum, we propose that service encounter dissatisfaction is necessary for, and antecedent to, anger. The combination of this last proposition, Hypothesis 2a, and Hypothesis 2b results in the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3: Anger mediates the relationship between service encounter dissatisfaction and customers' behavioral responses to service failure.*

*Alternative conceptualizations of the relationship between anger and dissatisfaction.* In addition to a model

with anger as a mediator of the relationship between dissatisfaction and behavioral responses, various alternative possibilities exist to model the interrelationships between dissatisfaction, anger, and customers' responses. On the basis of prior research findings and the findings of Study 1, we offer two possible alternative models: (1) a model with service encounter dissatisfaction as a mediator of the relationship between anger and customers' responses and (2) a model with anger as a moderator of the relationship between service encounter dissatisfaction and customers' responses. Both alternative models are discussed next.

In a seminal study on the effects of positive and negative affect on satisfaction and customers' responses to service failure, Westbrook (1987) showed that satisfaction is a partial mediator of negative affect (involving anger, disgust, and contempt) on complaint behavior and WOM. Since then, the common view in marketing is that specific emotions like anger, sadness, and regret contribute to customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (e.g., Mano and Oliver 1993; Oliver 2000). However, note that Westbrook (1987) measured anger at a lower level of abstraction (a particular service encounter) than dissatisfaction (accumulated satisfaction with a service provider or summary satisfaction). In contrast, in the present research, anger and dissatisfaction are measured at the same level of abstraction (i.e., they have the same object, namely, the service encounter). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is not necessarily in disagreement with the findings of Westbrook. Nevertheless, since other authors building on Westbrook's study have argued that positive and negative emotions are "clearly antecedent to, and necessary for satisfaction" (measured at the same level of abstraction) (Mano and Oliver 1993:454), we test an alternative model in which service encounter dissatisfaction mediates the effect of anger on customers' behavioral responses.

A second alternative model is that anger might moderate the effect of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses. Study 1 provides some support for such a model. Recall that Study 1 showed that angry customers were dissatisfied, but that dissatisfied customers were not necessarily angry. This finding is in line with the contention that anger mediates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on behavioral responses (Hypothesis 3). However, this finding may also suggest that service encounter dissatisfaction and anger interact in their effect on customers' behavioral responses to service failure. In this case, there would be no temporal sequence between dissatisfaction and anger: dissatisfaction would be the result of the customer's *focus* on the negative event, whereas anger would result from a *focus* on both the negative event and the blameworthiness of the service provider's actions (whether a customer on any particular occasion focuses on the event or on both the event and the blameworthiness is a separate issue; cf. Ortony et al. 1988). Thus, anger is presumed to moderate the relationship between service



encounter dissatisfaction and customers' behavioral responses. That is, the relationship between dissatisfaction and behavioral responses would be stronger among the more angry customers. To examine this relationship, we test a second alternative model in which anger moderates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses to service failure.

*Covariates in the model.* While the variables of key interest are anger and dissatisfaction, in our analyses, we control for variables that might potentially bias our results: complaint success likelihood and switching costs. Higher levels of complaint success likelihood are associated with higher levels of complaint behavior (Singh and Wilkes 1996). Switching costs are negatively associated with actual switching (Ping 1993). Switching costs and complaint success likelihood are possibly related to anger. That is, higher switching costs and lower levels of complaint success likelihood may increase the feelings of frustration that angry customers already have. Therefore, not including these related variables in the model might bias estimations of the impact of anger and dissatisfaction on behavioral responses.

## Method

*Participants and procedure.* A sample of 146 undergraduate psychology students from Tilburg University participated in this study as a part of a course requirement. One hundred and eight female students and 38 male students, ranging in age from 18 to 32 years, with a median age of 20 years, were asked to recall an earlier negative experience with a service organization. Retrospective experience sampling was used to collect a wide variety of negative experiences with service organizations. There were two instructions, one focusing on anger, the other on dissatisfaction.

*Measures.* Service encounter dissatisfaction and anger were measured with 7-point, multi-item scales adapted from previous studies (Crosby and Stephens 1987; Izard 1977). The scales were introduced with the following question: "How did you feel about your service experience on this particular occasion?" Complaint success likelihood (Singh 1988), with end points labeled *very unlikely* and *very likely*, and switching costs (Ping 1993), with end points anchored by *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*, were also assessed on 7-point scales. Scales measuring customers' behavioral responses closely followed existing scales measuring reactions to service failure. Negative WOM (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman 1996), complaint behavior (Swan and Oliver 1989), third-party complaint behavior (Singh 1988), and switching (Oliver 1996) were assessed by having participants indicate on a 7-point scale, anchored by *not at all* and *very much*, the degree to which they engaged in such behavior. Scale items and

reliabilities are presented in Table 2. Note that the reliability coefficients of dissatisfaction ( $\alpha = .692$ ) and negative WOM ( $\alpha = .690$ ) have a relatively low, yet acceptable, value.

## Results

*Negative service experiences.* Participants reported negative experiences with a wide variety of service providers. Their responses can be categorized as bad experiences with (virtual) stores, personal transport, bars and restaurants, telecommunication, banking and insurance, hospitals and physicians, entertainment and hospitality, (local) government and the police, repair and utility services, property owners, driving schools, and travel agencies. On average, participants reported events that had happened 2 months before, with no significant differences between the two versions of the questionnaire.

*The intensity of anger and dissatisfaction.* The mean intensity of dissatisfaction was 5.93, and 5.01 for anger, measured on 7-point scales. There were no significant differences in the intensity of both dissatisfaction and anger between the two instructions. The correlation between anger and dissatisfaction was .510 ( $p < .001$ ). Replicating our findings from Study 1, 15.8 percent of the very dissatisfied consumers were not (very) angry, whereas all of the very angry consumers were also very dissatisfied.

*Discriminant validity of anger and dissatisfaction constructs.* Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the discriminant validity of the anger and dissatisfaction constructs. The analyses indicated that the overall fit of a two-factor structure (with the anger items loading on anger and the dissatisfaction items loading on dissatisfaction) fitted the data well ( $p = .416$ , root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .001). The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = .985), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI = .954), and Normed Fit Index (NFI = .985) all exceeded the recommended value of .900. On the other hand, a rival one-factor model (with all the items loading on one latent variable) did not fit the data well ( $p < .001$ , RMSEA = .139). The GFI (.935), AGFI (.830), and NFI (.930) were all lower than in the two-factor model. A chi-square difference test showed that the two-factor model clearly outperformed the one-factor model. The chi-square for the two-factor model was 24.18 lower than the chi-square for the rival, one-factor model, while using 1 degree of freedom, a significantly better fit, even at  $p = .01$ . These results provide empirical support for the contention that anger and dissatisfaction are distinctive constructs.

*Direct effects of anger and dissatisfaction on behavioral responses.* To examine the direct effect of service encounter dissatisfaction, anger, and the covariates on different behavioral responses, we performed seemingly

**TABLE 2**  
**Scale Item Measures: Study 2**

---

Anger ( $\alpha = .921$ )
Enraged
Angry
Mad
Dissatisfaction ( $\alpha = .692$ )
Dissatisfied
Displeased
Discontented
Negative Word of Mouth ( $\alpha = .690$ )
Say negative things about the service provider to other people
Recommend the service provider to someone who seeks your advice (–)
Discourage friends and relatives to do business with the service provider
Complaint Behavior ( $\alpha = .903$ )
Complain to the service provider about the service quality
Ask the service provider to take care of the problem
Complain to the service provider about the way I was treated
Discuss the problem with the service provider
Third-Party Complaint Behavior ( $\alpha = .805$ )
Complain to a consumer agency and ask them to make the service provider take care of the problem
Write a letter to a local newspaper about your bad experience
Report to a consumer agency so that they can warn other consumers
Take some legal action against the service provider
Switching ( $\alpha = .860$ )
I use the services of this service provider because it is the best choice for me
To me, the service quality this service provider offers is higher than the service quality of other service providers
I have grown to like this service provider more than other service providers in this category
This service provider is my preferred service provider in this category
I have acquired the services of this organization less frequently than before
I have switched to a competitor of the service organization
I will not acquire services of this organization anymore in the future
I intend to switch to a competitor of the service organization in the future
Complaint Success Likelihood ( $\alpha = .733$ )
At the moment of the service failure, how likely was it that the service provider would . . .
take appropriate action to take care of your problem if you would report the incident?
solve your problem and give better service to you in the future if you would report the incident?
be more careful in the future and everyone would benefit if you would report the incident?
Switching Costs ( $\alpha = .921$ )
All things considered, I would lose a lot in changing service providers
Generally speaking, the costs in time, effort, and grief to switch service providers would be high
It is very easy to switch service providers (–)

---

NOTE: (–) indicates that items were reverse coded.

unrelated regression (SUR) analysis using the program Stata 7.0 (StataCorp 1999). SUR was used because the error terms of the equations are possibly correlated. Treating the equations as a collection of separate relationships will be suboptimal when drawing inferences about the model's parameters (Srivastava and Giles 1987).

The data were analyzed in two steps. In Step 1, we examined the effect of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses without including anger as a predictor in any of the models. This allowed us to compare our results with previous studies on the effect of dissatisfaction on behavioral responses that did not include anger as a predictor variable. In Step 2, anger was entered as a predictor. At this point, we examined the relative effects of

dissatisfaction and anger on customers' behavioral responses. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 3.

The results of the Step 1 regressions were largely in line with previous research (e.g., Maute and Forrester 1993; Richins 1987; Singh 1988). Service encounter dissatisfaction was a significant predictor of switching, negative WOM, and complaint behavior. The effect of dissatisfaction on third-party complaint behavior was not significant. Complaint success likelihood had a positive effect on complaining, whereas switching costs had a negative effect on switching.

Hypothesis 2a was partially supported. In the Step 2 model, where we controlled for anger, dissatisfaction was

**TABLE 3**  
**Impact of Anger, Dissatisfaction, and Covariates on**  
**Customers' Behavioral Responses to Service Failure: Study 2 (N = 146)**

	Switching		Complaining		Negative Word of Mouth		Third-Party Complaining	
	Coefficient	p-Value	Coefficient	p-Value	Coefficient	p-Value	Coefficient	p-Value
Step 1 model: not including anger								
Constant	3.081	.054	7.373	.001	7.638	<.001	1.854	.003
Covariates								
Switching costs	-.673	<.001	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Complaint success likelihood	NA	NA	.545	<.001	NA	NA	NA	NA
Predictor								
Dissatisfaction	.726	<.001	.554	.006	.311	<.001	.088	.112
Step 2 model: including anger								
Constant	.809	.387	3.212	.093	6.350	<.001	1.258	.043
Covariates								
Switching costs	-.701	<.001	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Complaint success likelihood	NA	NA	.585	<.001	NA	NA	NA	NA
Predictors								
Dissatisfaction	.456	.019	.054	.409	.158	.082	.010	.452
Anger	.278	.008	.546	<.001	.157	<.001	.085	.025
Step 2 model: fit								
R <sup>2</sup> (p-value)	.490 (<.001)		.218 (<.001)		.185 (<.001)		.036 (.067)	
ΔR <sup>2</sup> (Step 2 – Step 1)	.032		.102		.041		.035	

NOTE: Parameters are unstandardized regression weights, with significance levels of *t*-values. One-sided tests. NA = not applicable.

no longer a significant predictor of complaint behavior and negative WOM. The impact of dissatisfaction on switching decreased but remained significant.

Hypotheses 2b was supported for all behavioral responses. The Step 2 analyses revealed that anger was a significant predictor of switching, complaining, third-party complaining, and negative WOM, over and above the effect of dissatisfaction. *F* tests indicated that the models that included anger were significantly superior to models that did not include anger as a predictor for switching,  $F(1, 143) = 8.97, p < .01$ , complaining,  $F(1, 143) = 18.65, p < .01$ , negative WOM,  $F(1, 144) = 7.24, p < .001$ , and third-party complaining,  $F(1, 144) = 5.23, p < .05$ .

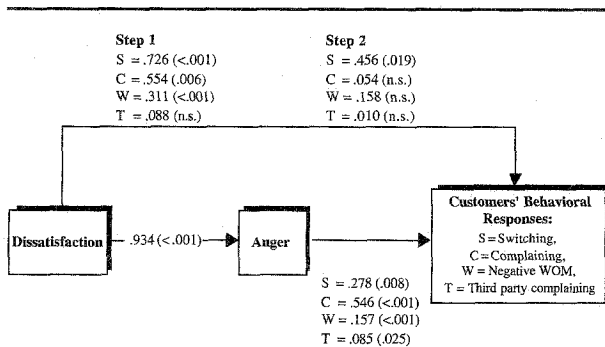
In summary, the foregoing analyses reveal that service encounter dissatisfaction is not directly related to complaint behavior, negative WOM, and third-party complaint behavior when anger is accounted for. In contrast, anger is a significant predictor of customers' behavioral responses to service failure when service encounter dissatisfaction is accounted for. Next, we will proceed with a more detailed examination of the interrelationships between service encounter dissatisfaction, anger, and customers' behavioral responses.

*Anger as a mediator of the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on behavioral responses.* To test the hypothesis that anger mediates the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on customers' responses (Hypothesis 3), three regression models were estimated, following Baron

and Kenny (1986): *Model 1*, regressing anger on dissatisfaction; *Model 2*, regressing customers' responses on dissatisfaction; and *Model 3*, regressing customers' responses on both anger and dissatisfaction. Separate coefficients for each equation were estimated and tested. To establish mediation, the following conditions must hold: dissatisfaction must affect anger, dissatisfaction must be shown to affect customers' responses in Model 2, and anger must affect customers' responses in Model 3 (while controlling for dissatisfaction). If these conditions all hold in the predicted direction, then the effect of dissatisfaction on customers' responses must be less in Model 3 than in Model 2. Perfect mediation holds if dissatisfaction has no effect when the effect of anger is controlled for (Model 3).

In the first regression model (Model 1), dissatisfaction was a significant predictor of anger (unstandardized coefficient = .934, *SE* = .137, *p*-value < .001). The Step 1 regressions (Model 2) as depicted in Table 3 indicated that dissatisfaction affected switching, complaint behavior, and negative WOM. The effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on third-party complaining was not significant. Anger was a significant predictor of switching, complaint behavior, and negative WOM when dissatisfaction was controlled for (Model 3). The effect of dissatisfaction on all these responses was less in the Step 2 model than in the Step 1 model. Thus, all conditions for mediation were met, for switching, complaint behavior, and negative WOM. The results of the mediational analyses are summarized in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Mediational Effects of Anger on Customers'**  
**Behavioral Responses: Study 2**



NOTE: Parameters are unstandardized regression weights, with *p*-values in parentheses. Step 1 = effect of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses; Step 2 = effect of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses while controlling for anger.

We performed follow-up analyses to test for the indirect effect of dissatisfaction on these responses via anger. Baron and Kenny (1986) provided an approximate significance test for the indirect effect of dissatisfaction on customers' responses. The path from dissatisfaction to anger is denoted as *a* and its standard error *s<sub>a</sub>*; the path from anger to behavioral responses is denoted as *b* and its standard error *s<sub>b</sub>*. The product *ab* is the estimate of the indirect effect of dissatisfaction on behavioral responses through anger. The standard error of *ab* is:

$$SE_{ab} = \sqrt{b^2 s_a^2 + a^2 s_b^2 + s_a^2 s_b^2}$$

The ratio  $ab/SE_{ab}$  can be interpreted as a *z* statistic. Indirect effects of dissatisfaction on behavioral responses were significant for switching (2.27, *p* < .05), for complaint behavior (3.66, *p* < .01), and negative WOM (2.44, *p* < .05).

In summary, the foregoing analyses suggest that the effects of service encounter dissatisfaction on complaint behavior and negative WOM are completely mediated by anger, whereas the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on switching is partially mediated by anger. Service encounter dissatisfaction was unrelated to third-party complaining. Thus, one of the steps to establish that anger mediates between service encounter dissatisfaction and third-party complaining was not met.

**Test of alternative models.** The conditions for mediation were not met in any of the alternative models with service encounter dissatisfaction as a mediator of the effect of anger on customers' responses. Recall that the Step 2 analyses (Table 3) indicated that dissatisfaction was unrelated to complaint behavior, third-party complaining, and negative WOM when anger was controlled for. Therefore, one

of the conditions to establish that dissatisfaction mediates the effect of anger on complaint behavior, third-party complaining, and negative WOM was not met—the mediator does not affect the outcome variable. As for the model with dissatisfaction as a mediator of the effect of anger on switching, a significance test of the indirect effect of anger on switching yielded an insignificant result (1.16, *ns*). This result indicates that the mediated effect equals zero in the population. To summarize, no support is found for an alternative model with dissatisfaction as a mediator of the effect of anger on customers' behavioral responses to service failure.

Next, we tested the second alternative model with anger as a moderator of the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on behavioral responses. Moderated regression analysis (Sharma, Durand, and Gur-Arie, 1981) was used to test a model with anger as a moderator of the effect of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses to service failure. Three regression equations were examined for equality of the regression coefficients: Model A, with dissatisfaction as a predictor of behavioral responses; Model B, with dissatisfaction and anger as predictors; Model C, with dissatisfaction, anger, and an Anger × Dissatisfaction interaction term as predictors of behavioral responses.

For anger to be a pure moderator on behavioral responses, Model A and Model B should not be different from each other but they should be different from Model C, with the latter model having the best fit. For anger to be classified as a quasi-moderator, Models A, B, and C should be different from each other (cf. Sharma et al. 1981).

Recall that the Step 2 regressions (with dissatisfaction and anger as predictors) were significantly superior to the Step 1 regressions (with dissatisfaction as a predictor) for all the behavioral responses. Thus, Models A and B are different from each other. In contrast, Model C (with dissatisfaction, anger, and an Anger × Dissatisfaction interaction term as predictors) was *not* superior to model B for switching,  $F(1, 142) = -1.54$ , *ns*, complaining,  $F(1, 142) = 2.64$ , *ns*, and negative WOM,  $F(1, 143) = -.32$ , *ns*. Since dissatisfaction had no significant effect on third-party complaining (in either Model 1 or Model 2), Model C was not tested for this specific postconsumption response. These findings indicate that anger does not moderate the effect of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses to service failure.

Jointly, the analyses lend support for the proposition that anger mediates the relationship between service encounter dissatisfaction and customers' responses to service failure. Anger was found to be a full mediator for complaint behavior and negative WOM, and a partial mediator for switching. No support was found for an alternative model with service encounter dissatisfaction as a

mediator of the effect of anger on customers' responses or for a model with anger as a moderator of the relationship between service encounter dissatisfaction and customers' responses.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Two studies explored the experience and consequences of anger and dissatisfaction in response to failed service encounters. Study 1 showed that anger and dissatisfaction have an idiosyncratic experiential content, indicating that they are qualitatively different emotions. As we predicted, in recalled experiences of anger, customers had a feeling that they would explode and that they were overtaken by their emotions. Angry customers were thinking of violence and how unfair the situation was. Whereas they felt like letting themselves go and behaving aggressively, they actually complained and said something nasty. They wanted to get back at the organization and wanted to hurt someone. In contrast, dissatisfied customers had a feeling of unfulfillment, thought about what they had missed out on, made a deliberate judgment of how to act, and wanted to find out who or what was responsible for the event.

In sum, dissatisfaction signals that a service encounter was not as good as it was supposed to be and triggers an information-seeking response. Thus, dissatisfied customers may attempt to find out why the service failure has occurred. Angry customers have already identified who or what is responsible for a service failure (Folkes et al. 1987; Ruth et al. 2002). Anger may serve to discourage the service provider from doing what causes the anger and to recover the service failure.

The results of Study 1 build on prior research (Ruth et al. 2002), showing that anger is associated with appraisals of high service provider control over the failed service encounter. For instance, note that angry customers want to hurt someone and want to get back at someone, suggesting that they hold someone else (i.e., the service provider) accountable for the service failure. Like this, the findings of Study 1 relate to, but go beyond, appraisals by providing information on a wide range of specific responses associated with the experience of anger and dissatisfaction.

As hypothesized, the analyses of Study 2 revealed that dissatisfaction was not directly related to complaint behavior, negative WOM, and third-party complaining. In contrast, and also in support of our hypotheses, anger was a significant predictor of customers' behavioral responses to service failure. Accordingly, the results of Study 2 indicate that focusing on specific emotions increases insights into the behavior that customers engage in after a service failure. In a recent study, Zeelenberg and Pieters (in press) found differential effects of regret and disappointment on customers' behavioral responses. We extend these find-

ings by revealing distinctive effects of anger and dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses to service failure. The results of Study 2 support the proposition of Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer (1999) that

the implications of emotional reactions in purchase situations on complaint behaviors, word-of-mouth communication, repurchase, and related actions may differ for various positive and negative emotions and be of more relevance than reactions to satisfaction or dissatisfaction, per se. (P. 201)

The findings of Study 2 build on this by showing that anger is a full mediator of the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on negative WOM and complaint behavior and a partial mediator of the effect of service encounter dissatisfaction on switching. Our findings appear to be in contrast with earlier work, where customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction mediate the relationship between specific emotions (such as anger, shame, and guilt) and behavioral responses (Westbrook 1987). Thus, it is appropriate to examine this study more closely to reconcile its findings with our own. Westbrook (1987) argued that "as a *global* [italics added] evaluative judgment about product usage/consumption, . . . satisfaction judgments logically should be determined at least in part by the occurrence of product related affective responses" (p. 260). He also pointed out that "past affective responses may be available to exert effects on the evaluative processes yielding satisfaction judgments" (p. 260). This demonstrates that Westbrook referred to *summary* satisfaction, the customer's overall satisfaction with a firm. On the other hand, affective responses (like anger) relate to one *specific service encounter* or transaction. Thus, the object of satisfaction is more general than the object of affective responses like anger. For instance, Westbrook reported that for cable pay television (one of the two product categories studied), anger was typically associated with service interruptions, installation problems, and billing errors. In such a case, indeed *summary* satisfaction (the consumer's overall feelings toward the service provider) may be a (partial) mediator of the effect of *transaction specific* negative affects (involving anger, disgust, and contempt) on complaint behavior and WOM. In our study, dissatisfaction and anger were both measured at the level of the service encounter. The findings of Study 2 suggest that when they are both measured at the level of the service encounter (and thus at the same level), anger mediates the effect of dissatisfaction on customers' behavioral responses. Of course, future research is needed to further test the extent to which the mediational effects of specific emotions depend on their level of abstraction.

As regards the implications of the current findings, we do not believe that our results indicate that the traditional



approach to model the impact of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction and related consumption emotions should be abandoned. Undoubtedly, the appropriate level of abstraction of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction and related emotions depends on the research questions of a study. However, we do believe that in future research it is important to be explicit about the level of abstraction at which customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction and related consumption emotions are conceptualized and measured. This may further clarify the interrelationships between various levels of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, consumption emotions, and behavioral responses to service failure. Our results indicate that when measured in response to a specific event, anger and dissatisfaction are different emotions, with dissatisfaction being antecedent to, and necessary for, anger.

### Managerial Implications

The present study has several managerial implications. Satisfaction surveys are commonly used by organizations to determine the extent to which their customers are satisfied and the extent to which this influences customer behavior. We found that transaction-specific dissatisfaction is not directly related to complaint behavior, negative WOM, and third-party complaint behavior, whereas anger is a significant predictor of customers' behavioral responses to service failure. Because a dissatisfied customer is not necessarily angry, it is important to measure specific emotions in postpurchase customer surveys. Measuring only dissatisfaction, even at its most extreme levels, may not be sufficient to explain and predict customers' behavioral responses. Measuring different specific emotions should enable management to make better predictions about customer behavior and eventually about service profitability.

Note that dissatisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of switching, even when anger was accounted for. This finding suggests that in some cases, mere service failures and associated feelings of unfulfillment may be sufficient reasons for customers to switch from one service provider to another.

The results of this research show that anger is a significant predictor of switching, complaint behavior, negative WOM, and third-party complaining. Our findings support the intuitive notion that service providers should try to keep customers from getting angry. However, the intangible and inseparable nature of services will inevitably bring about anger at one time or another, despite the best intentions of the service providers. In such circumstances, managing the emotions of angry customers and the behavior that is instigated by them becomes crucial.

Whereas most dissatisfied customers generally do not bother to complain, angry customers exhibit a whole repertoire of different responses aimed at discouraging the

service provider from doing what causes one's anger, or to recover the service failure. The wide variety of specific courses on dealing with angry customers suggests (see, e.g., [www.justsell.com](http://www.justsell.com), [www.mtctraining.com](http://www.mtctraining.com), [www.salesvantage.com](http://www.salesvantage.com)) that marketing management is very sensitive to this issue. Training service staff to recognize and cope with anger in customers may be profitable for service organizations for several reasons.

Service organizations may benefit from *recognizing* angry customers' responses, since this may be an important first step in improving their performance, as it provides them with the opportunity to respond directly. Moreover, angry customers may express their feelings in negative, (verbally) aggressive ways. Developing skills to *cope* with angry customers' responses may help service staff to remain in control of themselves and the situation. Managerial literature about dealing with angry customers emphasizes the importance of acknowledging what the angry customer is saying and feeling, before acting on what the customer is complaining about and resolving the problem (e.g., Riley 2002). It is critical that *service recovery efforts* are forceful and effective. As angry consumers are emotionally heavily involved in the service, they are often more satisfied or dissatisfied with service recovery efforts than with the service failure itself. In consequence, failed service recoveries are a major source of switching (e.g., Smith and Bolton 2002).

### Limitations and Future Research

Our research has two important limitations, which may both stimulate future research. We will first address these limitations. Next we will present additional avenues for future research.

The use of retrospective experience sampling may have inflated the explained variance in our models due to self-generated validity (Feldman and Lynch 1988). Moreover, the use of retrospective experience sampling may be a limitation of both studies because actual consumer information processing may differ from the recollection of processing. Despite a potential bias in recall, we chose this method because in real life, consumer decisions are often also memory based. Memory data are the basis for many behavioral responses, as consumers are more likely to relate to memories of their prior experiences than to the actual experience itself. Moreover, retrospective experience sampling allows for the collection of data across a wide variety of service events in a structured way, which adds to the external validity of the findings. For these reasons, retrospective experience sampling has been successfully applied in basic and applied emotion research. Still, work in which (mild) forms of anger are experimentally induced is needed to determine the exact chains of causality as investigated in Study 2.

The use of students as participants may be a second limitation of both studies. The range of service experiences of students may be relatively small. Therefore, concerns regarding the generalizability of the findings to other service experiences and/or events are justified. On the other hand, anger is not induced by an event itself but by the appraisal of an event. Therefore, we do not expect that the likelihood that students may have reported a smaller range of experiences than other consumers affects the external validity of our findings. Future research can further elucidate this issue. The use of students as participants may also have led to an age-related phenomenology of anger and/or age-related responses to anger. It appears that older people report lower anger and that age and life course differences in work and family status, social and personal circumstances influence the relationship between age and anger (Schieman 1999). Future research is needed to validate our findings across a wider sample base.

A third area for future research concerns the experiential content of emotions. Our results show that the experiential content of emotions may help marketers to differentiate and conceptualize emotions. Moreover, the experiential qualities of emotions are evidently helpful in developing hypotheses on the behavioral consequences of specific emotions. Therefore, more research on the experiential content of consumption emotions is needed.

Specifically, future research on indicators for the five response types of dissatisfaction may further our knowledge on the phenomenology of this emotion. Although a number of predicted responses for dissatisfaction were supported, other predictions were not.

Fourth, in this research, we have used insights in the experience of anger and dissatisfaction to develop hypotheses on the direct and indirect effects of these emotions on behavioral responses to service failure. In Study 1, we have chosen the experiential content approach to differentiate emotions, since emotional experience is the proximal cause of (customer) behavior. The results of Study 1 were used to develop hypotheses for Study 2. However, appraisal outcomes (or attribution outcomes) as antecedents of emotional experience may also be (indirectly) related to customers' behavioral responses. Therefore, future research on the chain of events (appraisal → emotional experience → behavioral responses) that make up the emotion process may further advance the insights into consumer behavior. Interestingly, to date, even basic emotion research has not examined this sequence empirically.

Finally, we find that anger is a significant predictor of customers' behavioral responses over and above the effect of dissatisfaction. Whereas there has been ample research on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, our knowledge of anger is still rather limited. Prior research provides important insights into the antecedents and consequences of anger in consumption settings. For consumer behavior theory, it is important to gain further insight into the ways

that consumers cope with anger during the service encounter and into the consequences of this behavior. Results from such research efforts may help service organizations to respond adequately to one of the most powerful emotions. The importance of such research is underlined by the findings of the present study that indicate that angry customers do not come back but get back.

## APPENDIX

### Anger Instruction: Study 1

This study is part of a larger project on the emotions that people experience. The questionnaire is about a *consumption experience* with a service organization that made you feel the emotion *anger*. Service organizations do things for you in exchange for money. Examples of service organizations are restaurants, cafés, travel agencies, shoemakers, banks, airlines, and public transport companies. Supermarkets, department stores, bakeries, and other retailers are also service organizations because they help you to choose from a variety of products. Other examples of service organizations are schools, hospitals, the police, and telecommunication companies. This listing can be expanded endlessly.

The questionnaire has several parts that will be introduced on every occasion. There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your personal opinion. All information will be treated strictly confidential and will be processed anonymously.

We now ask you to recount a specific consumption experience with a service organization that made you feel intense *anger*. In a moment, we will ask you to describe the experience and after that to answer some questions about the experience. Try to remember an experience that is as authentic as possible. Try to bring back as much of the actual feeling as you possibly can. This may work best if you first think about the experience, then write down the highlights, and then try to reexperience it with as much real feeling and intensity as when it first actually happened.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank Jorna Leenheer and three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on previous drafts of this article.

## REFERENCES

- Arnold, M. B. 1960. *Emotion and Personality*. Vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Averill, J. R. 1982. *Anger and Aggression: An Essay on Emotion*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Bagozzi, R. P., M. Gopinath, and P. U. Nyer. 1999. "The Role of Emotions in Marketing." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 27:184-206.
- Baron, R. M. and D. A. Kenny. 1986. "The Moderator-Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51:1173-1182.

- Berkowitz, L. 1990. "On the Formation of Anger and Aggression: A Cognitive-Neoassociationistic Analysis." *American Psychologist* 45:494-503.
- Bitner, M. J. and A. R. Hubbert. 1994. "Encounter Satisfaction Versus Overall Satisfaction Versus Quality: The Customer's Voice." In *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice*. Eds. R. T. Rust and R. L. Oliver. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 72-94.
- Crosby, L. A. and N. Stephens. 1987. "Effects of Relationship Marketing on Satisfaction, Retention, and Prices in the Life Insurance Industry." *Journal of Marketing Research* 24:404-411.
- Davitz, J. R. 1969. *The Language of Emotion*. New York: Academic Press.
- Day, R. L. 1983. "The Next Step: Commonly Accepted Constructs for Satisfaction Research." In *International Fare in Consumer Satisfaction and Complaining Behavior*. Eds. R. L. Day and K. H. Hunt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 113-117.
- Deffenbacher, J. L., E. R. Oetting, R. S. Lynch, and C. D. Morris. 1996. "The Expression of Anger and Its Consequences." *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 34:575-590.
- Díaz, A. B. C. and F. J. M. Rufz. 2002. "The Consumer's Reaction to Delays in Service." *International Journal of Service Industry Management* 13:118-140.
- Dubé, L. and M. Maute. 1996. "The Antecedents of Brand Switching, Brand Loyalty and Verbal Responses to Service Failure." *Advances in Services Marketing and Management* 5:127-151.
- Feldman, J. M. and J. G. Lynch Jr. 1988. "Self-Generated Validity and Other Effects of Measurement on Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 73:431-435.
- Folkes, V. S. 1988. "Recent Attribution Research in Consumer Behavior: A Review and New Directions." *Journal of Consumer Research* 14:548-565.
- , S. Koletsky, and J. L. Graham. 1987. "A Field Study of Causal Inferences and Consumer Reaction: The View From the Airport." *Journal of Consumer Research* 13:534-539.
- Frijda, N. H. 1986. *The Emotions*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- , P. Kuipers, and E. Ter Schure. 1989. "Relations Among Emotion, Appraisal, and Emotional Action Readiness." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57:212-228.
- Hastie, R. 1984. "Causes and Effects of Causal Attribution." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46:44-56.
- Hunt, H. K. 1991. "Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior." *Journal of Social Issues* 47:107-117.
- Izard, C. E. 1977. *Human Emotions*. New York: Plenum.
- Lazarus, R. S. 1991. *Emotion and Adaptation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Mano, H. and R. L. Oliver. 1993. "Assessing the Dimensionality and Structure of the Consumption Experience: Evaluation, Feeling, and Satisfaction." *Journal of Consumer Research* 20:451-466.
- Matelesta, C. and C. Izard. 1984. "The Facial Expression of Emotion: Young, Middle-Aged, and Older Adult Expressions." In *Emotion in Adult Development*. Eds. C. Matelesta and C. Izard. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 253-273.
- Maute, M. and W. R. Forrester Jr. 1993. "The Structure and Determinants of Complaint Intentions and Behavior." *Journal of Economic Psychology* 14:219-247.
- Nyer, P. U. 1997a. "Modeling the Cognitive Antecedents of Post-Consumption Emotions." *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior* 10:80-90.
- . 1997b. "A Study of the Relationships Between Cognitive Appraisals and Consumption Emotions." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 25:296-304.
- . 1998. "The Effects of Satisfaction and Consumption Emotion on Actual Purchasing Behavior." *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior* 11:62-68.
- Oliver, R. L. 1996. *Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- . 2000. "Customer Satisfaction With Service." In *Handbook of Services Marketing and Management*. Eds. D. Iacobucci and T. Swartz. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 247-254.
- Ortony, A., G. L. Clore, and A. Collins. 1988. *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ping, R. A., Jr. 1993. "The Effects of Satisfaction and Structural Constraints on Retailer Exiting, Voice, Loyalty, Opportunism, and Neglect." *Journal of Retailing* 69:320-352.
- Plutchik, R. 1980. *Emotion: A Psychoevolutionary Synthesis*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Richins, M. L. 1983. "Negative Word-of-Mouth by Dissatisfied Consumers: A Pilot Study." *Journal of Marketing* 47:68-78.
- . 1987. "A Multivariate Analysis of Responses to Dissatisfaction." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 15:24-31.
- Riley, T. 2002. *C.H.A.R.M. School: Lessons in Customer Hostility and Rage Management*. Santa Cruz, CA: Applied Psychology Press.
- Roseman, I. J., C. M. S. Wiest, and T. S. Swartz. 1994. "Phenomenology, Behaviors, and Goals Differentiate Discrete Emotions." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67:206-211.
- , A. A. Antoniou, and P. E. Jose. 1996. "Appraisal Determinants of Emotions: Constructing a More Accurate and Comprehensive Theory." *Cognition and Emotion* 10:241-277.
- Ruth, J. A., F. F. Brunel, and C. C. Otnes. 2002. "Linking Thoughts to Feelings: Investigating Cognitive Appraisals and Consumption Emotions in a Mixed Emotions Context." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 30:44-58.
- Scherer, K. R. 1982. "Emotion as a Process: Function, Origin and Regulation." *Social Science Information* 21:555-570.
- . 1984. "Emotion as a Multi-Component Process." In *Review of Personality and Social Psychology: Vol. 5. Emotions, Relationships, and Health*. Ed. P. Shaver. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 37-63.
- Schieman, S. 1999. "Age and Anger." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 40:273-289.
- Sharma, S., R. M. Durand, and O. Gur-Arie. 1981. "Identification and Analysis of Moderator Variables." *Journal of Marketing Research* 18:291-300.
- Shaver, P., J. Schwartz, D. Kirson, and C. O'Connor. 1987. "Emotion Knowledge: Further Exploration of the Prototype Approach." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52:1061-1086.
- Singh, J. 1988. "Consumer Complaint Intentions and Behavior: Definitional and Taxonomical Issues." *Journal of Marketing* 52:93-107.
- and R. E. Wilkes. 1996. "When Consumers Complain: A Path Analysis of the Key Antecedents of Consumer Complaint Response Estimates." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 24:350-365.
- Smith, A. K. and R. N. Bolton. 2002. "The Effect of Customers' Emotional Responses to Service Failures on Their Recovery Effort Evaluations and Satisfaction Judgments." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 30:5-23.
- Spreng, R. A., S. B. MacKenzie, and R. W. Olshavsky. 1996. "A Reexamination of the Determinants of Consumer Satisfaction." *Journal of Marketing* 60:15-32.
- Srivastava, V. K. and D. E. A. Giles. 1987. *Seemingly Unrelated Regression Equations Models: Estimation and Inference*. New York: Dekker.
- StataCorp. 1999. *Stata Statistical Software: Release 6.0*. College Station, TX: Stata Corporation.
- Storm, C. and T. Storm. 1987. "A Taxonomic Study of the Vocabulary of Emotions." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 53:805-816.
- Swan, J. E. and R. L. Oliver. 1989. "Postpurchase Communications by Consumers." *Journal of Retailing* 65:516-533.
- Taylor, S. 1994. "Waiting for Service: The Relationship Between Delays and Evaluations of Service." *Journal of Marketing* 58:56-69.
- Wallbott, H. G. and K. R. Scherer. 1988. "How Universal and Specific Is Emotional Experience? Evidence From 27 Countries on Five Continents." In *Facets of Emotion: Recent Research*. Ed. K. R. Scherer. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 31-56.
- Watson, D. and A. Tellegen. 1985. "Toward a Consensual Structure of Mood." *Psychological Bulletin* 98:219-235.
- Weiner, B. 1986. *An Attributional Theory of Motivation and Emotion*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Westbrook, R. A. 1987. "Product/Consumption-Based Affective Responses and Postpurchase Processes." *Journal of Marketing Research* 24:258-270.

- Zeelenberg, M. and R. Pieters. In press. "Beyond Valence in Customer Dissatisfaction: Behavioral Responses to Regret and Disappointment in Failed Services." *Journal of Business Research*.
- , W. W. Van Dijk, A. S. R. Manstead, and J. Van der Pligt. 1998. "The Experience of Regret and Disappointment." *Cognition and Emotion* 12:221-230.
- Zeithaml, V. A., L. L. Berry, and A. Parasuraman. 1996. "The Behavioral Consequences of Service Quality." *Journal of Marketing* 60:31-46.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Roger Bougie** (J.R.G.Bougie@uvt.nl) is an assistant professor of marketing at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. His research interests are emotions and their impact on consumer behavior, and consumer decision making.

**Rik Pieters** is a professor of marketing at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. His research interests are emotions in consumer behavior, visual attention and memory, and social networks. His work has appeared in, among others, the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the *Journal of Economic Literature*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Marketing Science*.

**Marcel Zeelenberg** is a professor of social psychology at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. His research interest is in anticipated emotions and actual emotional experiences and their impact on behavioral decision making. His work has appeared in, among others, the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

