

## CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter has an exposition of the data analysis and discussion of the findings. The findings are presented according to the objectives and sub-objectives formulated for the study. The data collected from World 1 were systematically constituted and organised according to the objectives and sub-objectives. Firstly, data were coded to identify relevant categories and sub-categories. Some of the categories were already predetermined from relevant theory while various new categories and sub-categories were identified through coding. Secondly, certain themes, relationships and patterns were identified through these categories and sub-categories. These themes, relationships and patterns were described in the discussions. Lastly, the discussions were verified by using relevant or applicable verbatim responses from the participants. The categories and sub-categories that were identified and used are presented in bold and italic font.

The complete verbatim transcriptions of all eight participants are available from the researcher. Some of the verbatim transcriptions that were used to verify the findings were translated from Afrikaans to English. The researcher attempted not to change the meaning of the participants' words in the translation process. The paraphrases or excerpts of the participants' responses are given in inverted commas and in a smaller Arial Narrow font to create contrast between the discussions and the verifying verbatim discussions obtained from the participants.

## **5.2 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1 AND SUB-OBJECTIVES 1 TO 4: TO EXPLORE, DESCRIBE AND GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE THAT EXISTING APPAREL PURCHASING SCRIPTS PLAY IN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S ADOPTION OF THE INTERNET FOR THE PURCHASE OF APPAREL**

To answer the above question the different aspects of the participants' practices that are currently important to them were taken into account. These aspects occurred in participants' general references to certain steps, actions and procedures that they currently follow or use in making decisions in terms of suitable items, evaluation of the stores and assessment of alternatives.

### **5.2.1 Sub-objective 1: What do professional women's existing apparel-purchasing practices look like and what is the nature of their apparel-purchasing scripts?**

It seems as if the participants' apparel purchases have a certain pattern. It usually takes place according to certain steps, actions and procedures, which are established in their scripts or that they are familiar with. In general the apparel-purchase process is different for each participant because they have had different experiences and socialisation in terms of apparel purchasing.

From the findings it was clear that professional women's existing apparel-purchasing practices included a certain process. This process constitutes a number of steps that resemble Sproles and Burns's (1994:267) apparel decision-making processes. The stages or steps from Sproles and Burns's (1994:267) apparel decision-making processes were adapted for the categories used in the data-analysis. These steps are *problem identification, selective search for alternatives, evaluation and assessment of alternatives* and *accepting or*

***rejecting the apparel product.*** For this study each step was used as a category and discussed accordingly.

In addition it was clear that the every stage followed its own pattern and had a a certain structure to it. Specific actions and procedures, such as the identification of a gap or the directed search for suitable apparel items for impending occasions occurred in the various stages. Within each category new, additional sub-categories were identified as these became apparent from analysing the data. These sub-categories of the specific stages are discussed below and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

A schematic visualisation of the various steps, actions and procedures followed and used by participants during their existing apparel practices is presented in **FIGURE 3**. These steps, actions and procedures were identified as the various categories and sub-categories.



**FIGURE 3: EXISTING APPAREL-PURCHASING PRACTICES**

#### 5.2.1.1 Problem identification

It would seem that the problem-identifying stage differs for each participant. Some observations indicating how problem identification affected the purchasing process were: "Sometimes you will find a gap in your wardrobe", "I am very unmotivated to buy clothes unless I have a function on", "if I see something I like I'll buy it", "I will not buy something because I need something specific" and "spontaneous ...if I see something nice I will buy it".

Such remarks were encoded as problem identification. It appears that the problem identification stage for a professional woman is when she perceives a gap in her wardrobe for office-wear or when there is a social occasion looming. Then there would be a determined effort to obtain suitable apparel for the so-called problem, or the purchase of such items on the spur of the moment, or a combination of these approaches. The specific sub-categories created to have a better understanding of these actions and procedures are: ***purposefully search for suitable apparel item to fill an identified gap in wardrobe or for an upcoming occasion and function, on the spur of the moment or impulsively and combined***. These sub-categories are discussed below and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

***Purposefully search for suitable apparel item to fill an identified gap in wardrobe or for an upcoming occasion and function:*** The participants apparently would first identified a gap in their wardrobes in terms of insufficient apparel for office-wear or for a forthcoming event. From that they would then plan their purchases and intentionally seek out suitable apparel.

In cases where the participants attempt to fill gaps in their wardrobes, it appears that, based on previous inventories, they compiled lists of the types of clothing items that they required. Then they would go and look for those items purposefully. The whole process is planned beforehand and does not happen on the spur of the moment.



"... Sometimes you find there's a gap in your wardrobe and you really don't have decent black pants. Then I will go to the shops. Usually I will walk through the stores I usually buy from and I will search specifically/ purposefully." (a)

"... I will first look what I need. Then I decide ... I would like a pair of black pants and say three tops with that ... and then I will go to the shops." (g)

"... I absolutely just buy if I need something. I will not buy just to buy. And because I am not a buying fanatic I always buy with a specific purpose in mind. If I feel there's a gap in my wardrobe I will specifically go and search for that. I won't walk past a shop and decide to buy something ... it is not an impulse thing." (f)

"... I like normally I have something in mind. That's also a major problem if you have something in mind and then you go shopping. The last wedding I went to which was in October I wanted to wear a short dress and I went to Menlyn and the one Friday I shopped the whole day looking for a decent short dress I couldn't find anything." (d)

"... but it's always something that I am more specifically looking for." (d)

"... I try to now get different styles or be more creative. The lady that sold us our house came through to see us three times and she had these, this material (polyester/ spandex, knitted material) but beautiful bright blues and pinks in that with a little blue top and it looked so nice. And then I went to the shops two days later and I thought with this in mind, with these three visions in mind of the lady, I am going to buy some nice bright stuff." (e)

A number of the participants indicated that they would generally buy clothes for events and functions such as weddings, work functions and family occasions. If they did not have suitable items for some forthcoming event, they would then try to obtain it specifically for that event.

"... I am very unmotivated to buy clothes unless I have a function on. Everything in my wardrobe has been bought before something. Like before a thing. Even when I knew we are going out that night and I look in my cupboard and I don't feel like wearing any of these clothes then I would go and buy something. So that's how I brought up my cupboard. I don't every say OK I am going to Menlyn now and shop, unless there is like a wedding or something." (d)

"... for occasion ... then I will go and search for something. I am not the type of person who will buy clothes impulsively." (c)

It could be that these participants either had something specific in mind or were going to look for something suitable for the occasion.

***On the spur of the moment or impulsively:*** A number of the participants were more prone to buy on the spur of the moment or impulsively, rather than plan ahead for what they required. These participants would keep in mind, though, that they had identified specific gaps in their wardrobes, but they did not specifically plan around such gaps. If a piece of apparel draws their attention and they like it, they would buy it spontaneously whether it was needed or not.

"... I buy more impulsively. If I see something I like I will buy it." (b)

"... I buy things I like. If there are 20 things I like I will buy everything. I don't buy because I need something specific. I will make a mental note if I need something but I don't go specifically to buy it. I buy impulsive ... the things I like."(h)

**Combined:** It would appear that some of the participants followed a combination of these procedures when purchasing apparel. Some of them would identify a gap and then intentionally seek to fill it, while on other occasions they would act more impulsively regarding apparel that catches the eye.

"... I would say 50 / 50 sometimes I would walk through shops and then I would see something I find nice and then I would consider trying it on and buying it ... but sometimes you will see there's genuinely a gap or you are too fat for your black pants, then you will search for something specific.

"... I will buy on impulse. I am more an impulse buyer. I will do both. I will go look for something and then I see something else. But shoes are my biggest weakness; it is total impulse and then I never wear them again. I will do both it depends on my mood, totally, if I see something I like I will buy it." (e)

#### 5.2.1.2 Selective search for alternatives

The participants' quest for fitting alternatives was related to the making of selective choices. This was also a procedure that was unique for every participant and it was not necessarily repeated in the same manner every time. It was evident that all the participants generally did their apparel purchasing in traditional (bricks-and-mortar) stores.

"... Usually in a shop ...." (a)

"... I go to shops and then I buy my clothes."(c)

The participants responded in the following ways as to how their quests for alternatives and the eventual choice of suitable store(s) were done: "sizes that will fit me", "items that fit well", "I look for something beautiful", "something that will catch my eye", "I have an account at the shop", "quality products" and "shops I know". Such references were encoded as selective searching for alternatives.

Step by step the participants explained how they would first identify appropriate stores, visit these and then only look for suitable apparel in the selected stores. Aspects of the selective quest for alternatives that lead to satisfaction or



dissatisfaction were thus about selecting suitable providers of suitable merchandise. By means of coding the two sub-categories related to the selection from alternatives were identified to allow a better perspective. The sub-categories, identified from the data analysis, are *search for and choice of suitable store(s)* and *search for suitable apparel products*. The sub-categories are discussed and augmented by relevant extracts from the verbatim responses.

➤ *Search for and choice of suitable store(s)*

It would appear that most of the participants did not plan the choice of stores beforehand in a specific order, but that the participants did have ideas (part of their scripts) about stores where good quality products had previously been bought. These concern: affordable prices, stores providing the correct sizes and also those that suit their taste. They had bought apparel there before with which they were satisfied.

Relevant remarks about their quests and the selection of appropriate store(s) include: "... stuff I like", "...stores that are known to me", "they've got my sizes" and "... I've got an account at the store...". These comments were encoded as quests for and the selection of suitable stores. It is clear that the participants' searching for and choice of suitable store(s) were not done in isolation, but were related to various aspects in terms of the participants' previous experiences (as contained in their apparel-purchasing scripts). It appears as if there were specific aspects that have a role in the search and choice of a suitable store by the participants. These aspects were regarded as sub-categories of the quests by the participants and will be discuss here. The specific sub-categories as identified from the data analysis, used to obtain a better understanding of the choice of appropriate stores, include *prior experience with the store(s)* and *aspects regarding apparel-product*

*offerings.* The sub-categories are discussed below and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

***Prior experience with the store(s):*** An appropriate store was selected based on the participant's previous experience regarding the substantial variety of apparel available, the fact that the store appeals to the participant and other positive aspects. The participants pointed out that they visit stores and opt for those where they previously had found suitable garments, or stores that they know well.

"... There are certain places (shops) that I know have stuff that I generally like."

"... Usually I will walk through the stores I usually buy from and I will search specifically." (a)

"... I walk through and go into the shops that are familiar to me." (c)

"... It depends. If I have to get something specific I'll go to a shopping centre. Walk through all the shop I kind of like. There are a few shops I know I like. Like B..., S..., there's the P... shop those kind of shops." (e)

The choice of an appropriate store could also be done according to the accounts that the participants have with certain stores. Some of the participants preferred to do most of their apparel shopping at one store because they have a clothing account there. As a result of regular purchases at stores where they have their accounts the participants know the sizes available and they are generally satisfied with the fit of garments. If they did not find what they were looking for at that specific store they would only then consider going to another store.

"... At the moment I have an account at T.... So my favourite shop is T.... I only go there. I buy all my clothes from them and only if I really don't find what I want I will go to another shop." (g)

***Aspects regarding apparel product offerings:*** Next to participants' prior experiences with a certain store it seems that the assortment offered by these store(s) of choice also influenced their search for alternatives. This had to do, among others, with size, brand names, fit and specific clothing items that were required. Avoiding a specific store could be because the retailer cannot satisfy the participant's requirements of specific sizes or type of apparel.



"... Size, that is another thing with E... and T... I can never find anything that fits me." (d)

"... I know my set shops. I won't go into like S..., they got very small stuff. I can't fit it. I am a big person. And another thing if you can find longer trousers. P... makes longer trouser then I would get it." (e)

"... If I am searching for something specific especially if it is for a formal occasion or a specific pair of pants then I will go to the shops I know I will get it at." (f)

Some of the participants visited a variety of stores. They didn't have a planned or systematic approach to visiting these stores. It was merely a matter of starting with one and progressing down the order.

"... I visit a broad spectrum of shops. I start at one point and work through. There is not a specific shop that I visit ... I visit all of them." (h)

### ➤ *Search for suitable apparel products*

The second sub-category of the selective search for an alternative procedure was the *search for suitable apparel products*. The manner in which apparel was sought is usually from store to store. It would appear that the participants were not aiming for specific stores during this stage, but rather going from shop to shop hoping to find what they require. As has been pointed out, the participants would also go to stores where they had received suitable garments before. The quest of the participants for suitable apparel was therefore wide and intensive.

"... I usually will go from shop to shop." (b)

"... I walk from shop to shop and look for items that I like and then I'll try every item on until I find something that fits and that I like." (c)

"... I take on the shops. Usually I start with all the big chain stores and then the boutiques." (f)

"... On many occasions I compare what a person can get in the shops. I'll merely go in, buy it and leave again." (f)

"... I like to walk through the entire shop especially if I know the shop and the products." (g)

The following were some observations made by the participants in seeking suitable apparel products: "I will look at the price first", "if I see a beautiful suit for work", "something that catches your eye" and "I look for subdued colours". These remarks were encoded as the participants' quest for suitable apparel products. It would appear that aspects

such as price, aesthetic values and end use possibilities are noticed and considered first in the endeavours of the participants for appropriate apparel. These aspects are also related to the dimensions of apparel and are also relevant in evaluating and judging apparel products (objective 2). The specific sub-objectives that were identified from the data analysis to provide a better understanding of the striving for suitable apparel products include **price**, **aesthetic aspects** and **end use (mix-and-match possibilities, work or casual wear)**.

**Price:** Participants used price as an indication for their initial choice of suitable apparel products. They indicated that they had a fixed price level for certain items and will not consider apparel products that exceed it. In other words, whenever an item draws their attention they will first look at the price before giving it further consideration.

"... Price. I won't pay more than R220 for a pair of pants. I have paid more but then I really like it." (c)

"... if I find something that I really, really like, I sort off like to set my target price before and then I'll go. If I find something that really looks nice and it's like above then it's fine I'll buy it, but so I suppose price is also a criteria and then I suppose if it looks nice."(d)

"... I am more practical – I won't buy a pair of Levi's because I know I can buy 5 pairs of Free for the same price."(d)

"... If I see something I look at the price first. Nowadays clothes are so expensive. I look to see if I can afford it." (g)

**Aesthetic aspects:** An item of apparel that comes to the participant's notice is also an aspect that determines the participant's choice when purchasing apparel. It became evident that specific colours, such as black, cream, navy or rust, usually caught their eye. Most of the participants showed a liking for the classic colours. If they liked the colour and the style they would consider trying on the item.

"... you see something that will catch your attention. I like subdued colours such as black, navy, cream and colours like that. "(a)

The aesthetic aspects were also related to the attractiveness of the clothing item. From analysing the data it became evident that professional women placed a high premium on the image evoked by their apparel and that the apparel products should suit their various professions. This aspect is discussed in more detail in sub-objective 2.

"... If it is a beautiful suit for work I will look for a nice blouse to wear with it." (g)

**End use (mix-and-match possibilities, work or casual wear):** It would seem as if the participants were comparing the mix-and-match possibilities of apparel products with items in their wardrobes when seeking suitable clothing items. In the evaluation process, some of the participants would be quite willing to buy something if they could also wear it to work. More than one end use was a prerequisite for these participants.

"... I make a comparison in my head .... I try to think if I have something at home that I could wear it with.... and someplace that I could wear it to. Then if I can try it on I would."(b)

"... Yes it will convince me to buy something If I know I can wear it to work as well." (d)

"... I evaluate clothes on work, casual or evening basis." (e)

### 5.2.1.3 Evaluation and assessment of alternatives

As has already been said, the participants' quest for alternatives and the evaluation occur almost simultaneously. The evaluating of alternatives partly occurs during the search for suitable apparel and then finally when an item is tried on. The item is tried on and then the final evaluation is reached and a decision is made whether or not to purchase the item, or, on the other hand, to continue looking. The sub-objectives identified from the data analysis during this stage, in which the alternatives were evaluated and judged, are **try-on procedures, various dimensions of apparel products** (discussed under objective 2) and **postponement of try-on procedures**. These sub-categories will now be discussed and supported with the relevant extracts from responses.



➤ *Try-on procedures*

The participants regarded the trying-on of apparel as an important stage in the whole process of purchasing apparel. The participants aired a few remarks in terms of the trying-on procedure, namely: "I will always try something on", "expensive things I usually try-on", "if I have time I will usually try it-on" and "you have to try-on". These inputs were encoded as trying-on procedures. The specific sub-categories identified from the data analysis to arrive at a better understanding of the trying-on procedures include *related to price and risk perception, part of a routine or set ideas* and *related to time*. The sub-categories will now be discussed and verified by relevant extracts from the verbatim responses.

***Related to price and risk perception:*** The participants pointed out that the more expensive items were the ones that they would try on. They specifically referred to tailored suits that would never be bought before having been tried on.

"... I will usually try-on more expensive goods. It is usually tailored things. You can't wangle it so that it fits better. If you buy it and it's not right then it's wrong."(a)

Some of the participants said that they did not feel comfortable to buy apparel that they had not tried on. They felt that garments are expensive and therefore they have to be sure that the items are right and fit well.

"... It is important to me that it will fit correctly because you spend so much money and clothes are very expensive. I want to make sure."(h)

The trying on of apparel items according to price further relates to the limiting of risk. It was a way in which the participants could lessen their uncertainties. It also had to do with the fear that they may not be able to exchange or return the clothing items, or that the postponement of the trying-on procedure delays the process.

"... I will always try-on. I am too afraid that I won't be able to return it." (h)

"... I used to know a girl who used to would walk into a shop and just buy something according to her sizes and take it home and if it doesn't fit she will take it back. I could never ever do that. It's more than a hassle than anything else to me I would much rather try it on there."(d)

**Part of a routine or set ideas:** It appears that most of the participants tried the clothing item on in the store. Trying on was a personal activity and for most of the participants it was important that they have to be satisfied with the fit of the apparel because they didn't like to return items. For the participants the trying on of apparel formed part of their routine or apparel purchase practise.

"... I will always try-on. Lots of times something looks nice and when you try it on it not nice anymore. So I will always try something on. Always." (c)

"... I usually try it on in the shop. I don't like to take things back ... it definitively has to fit." (f)

The participants also have the concept that they have to try on the garments. It appears that for them it is a fixed idea and originates from their scripts and previous experiences.

"... I will usually go and try it on because you shouldn't buy something you didn't try on."(a)

**Related to time:** In addition, it appears that some of the participants would only try on garments if they had the time to spare. When time was limited, they would take the items on approval and tried them on at home. This aspect was related to the postponement of trying on.

"... If I have time I will usually try it on. If I am in a hurry I will buy it on consignment because usually you can take it back. Then I would usually try it on at home."(g)

### ➤ *Various dimensions of apparel products*

The various dimensions of apparel products that the participants used to evaluate apparel when judging alternatives, as well as when trying on the garments are discussed in further detail in sub-objective 2.

### ➤ *Postponement of try-on procedures*

Although the participants regarded the trying on of apparel as a very important procedure in the evaluating process on occasion they would postpone the trying on process and do the trying on at home. Explanations by participants why the try-on process was delayed until they got home included: "... if I have time", "if I am in a hurry I usually try it on at home" and "it depends on the flexibility of the store". These and similar remarks were encoded as postponement of trying on.

The specific sub-categories identified by means of the data analysis to better follow the postponement of trying on include ***time available*** and ***return and exchange policy of retailer***. The sub-categories are discussed and verified with relevant responses from the participants.

***Time available:*** It appears that a number of the participants did take garments on approval as they prefer to do the trying on at home. This was because of a lack of time and also because the stores have become more flexible. Busy periods, such as at month's end, pressure of time because of workload and the type of lifestyle – all led to a lack of time to try the garments on. If the items did not fit, they would return them at a later stage.

"... Maybe my time became too valuable. If I have time I will usually try on and if I am in a hurry I will buy it and return it at a later stage if it doesn't fit." (a)

"... but lots of times I am in a hurry, especially at the end of the month it is very busy in the shops. Then I will buy it on consignment and take it back later. It all depends on the time of the month. But if it's in the middle of the month and early then I will quickly try on something because it is quiet." (f)

***Return and exchange policy of retailer:*** Although most of the participants tried garments on in the stores to ensure that they comply with their requirements, many still exchanged apparel items. Participants had a negative perception of exchanging apparel: they do not like to do that. In addition, they appear to know what the majority of the stores' policies are concerning exchanges. Apparently



they experienced the policies of the stores as flexible and accommodating. In other words, it has become easier to return or exchange items and the participants didn't really have problems with it. If an item didn't fit, it is merely returned, except if it is required urgently then it is exchanged for something else.

"... I don't like exchanging things but the shops became more flexible and I know that I will always take something back with the ticket still on and with my receipt." (a)

"... I've never done it before but nowadays if I am tired and not in the mood to try something on I will buy 2-3 items without trying it on because you know it is so easy to exchange it. To a certain extent you become more desensitised. It is easier to buy without knowing what it looks like." (a)

"... I will usually just return the items except if I need something urgently." (g)

Some of the other participants had reservations about returning items and would only return it if these were defective. It appears as if they preferred to try the item on in the store and to ensure that it fits before it is bought. The reasons for this being that they were afraid they might not be allowed to exchange it or regard the exchange of items to be time-consuming. One of the participants retained all her receipts until the first laundering of the items. The stores will generally take back articles that do not come up to expectations.

"... No I don't take things back. If there is a defect I will but not otherwise." (b)

"... I keep all my receipts until I have washed it once. I take things back if there is something wrong with it." (f).

One participant said that after having made her purchases she would again try on the garments at home to evaluate the mix-and-match possibilities.

"... usually I will have a fashion show for myself after I bought clothes. Then I will try-on and match the items with clothes in my wardrobe. To see what will fit with what." (h)

#### **5.2.1.4 Accepting or rejecting the apparel product**

In the buying or rejection of the apparel item stage, the participants usually make a decision to purchase the item or rather to seek further for a more suitable one. Aspects related to this stage are the participant's final decision and the manner in which payment will be made. The sub-categories identified from the analysis of

the data are *final decision* and *manner of payment*. A discussion of the sub-categories follow and are verified with relevant verbatim responses.

### ➤ *Final decision*

The final decision of a participant was influenced by the general satisfaction obtained from the product. If they were satisfied that the items fulfil all the judging and evaluating criteria, they would buy the items. These criteria concern the various dimensions of clothing products (see objective 2) such as fit, comfort, correct colour, textile and so forth.

"... If it fits nicely I would see if I have enough money and then buy it." (b)

"... Yes it will convince me to buy something if I know I can wear it to work as well." (d)

"... If I see something that I like I will try it on. It is very important to see if it will look nice on me. Then I will buy it or not - depending on how I like the way it looks on me." (h)

### ➤ *Manner of paying*

Most of the participants didn't have clothing accounts and generally paid with credit cards.

"... I don't have any clothing accounts. I buy with my credit card: it is sort of my universal clothing account." (a)

"... Everything goes on my credit card. I don't wear cash. I also don't have any clothing accounts ... I closed down all of them, it is too much administrative problems. All the shops take your clothes back in any case if you have a receipt. So it is not necessary to worry about all your clothing accounts." (h)

"... And then I always pay by credit card." (e)

Some of the participants did have clothing accounts that they used occasionally to balance their apparel purchases. This occurred mostly at the stores where they bought a lot.

"... That's why I have accounts because some months I will buy nothing and some months a lot. So it balances out. I use my credit card as well. (h)

"... But at this stage I have an account at T... so my favourite shop is T.... I buy all my clothes there...." (g)

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they were familiar and confident with their existing way of doing things.

"...But what other way of shopping is there? I go into the store, look through the racks to see if there's something that I like." (d)

"... If you are used to something specific and it works for you it is difficult to take a step in a different direction." (g)

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If the participants didn't find suitable apparel at the stores where they had clothing accounts, they would rather go somewhere else and pay cash or by credit card.

"... I have an account at E... and T... then I buy on my account; if I have money I will pay cash. I have never used my credit card to buy clothes." (c)

Only one participant, namely (d), always paid cash. She doesn't have any clothing accounts, nor has she ever used her credit card for the purchase of apparel.

"... I only got a credit card last week for the first time, I am not used to using it yet. I am very against it. I have always bought everything with cash. So I am very wary of doing that. Just because I think you can get into trouble, not trouble but into debt. No. I never opened accounts anywhere." (d)

#### 5.2.1.5 The nature of professional women's apparel scripts

It would appear that the scripts have become established in the mindsets of the participants over a long period of time and that is the way in which they direct their apparel purchasing. The participants confirmed that they still buy apparel in conventional stores; that was how they grew up and they didn't know of any other way of shopping.

"...you have been doing it for so many years now and yes you fall into your normal routine of this is how you do it." (a)

"... It's like I tried and tested." (d)

"... and that's probably the problem cause I am very much same-o-same-o." (e)

The established scripts of some of the participants caused them to regard and interpret any other form of purchasing apparel as strange. This was because they were familiar and confident with their existing way of doing things.

"...But what other way of shopping is there? I go into the store, look through the racks to see if there's something that I like." (d)

"... If you are used to something specific and it works for you it is difficult to take a step in a different direction." (g)

It would appear that the scripts of the participants are related to a specific structure. The manner in which the purchasing process is followed by the participants could either be unstructured or structured.

With a more unstructured script the apparel purchasing process didn't necessarily follow a pre-planned structure. There were certain set steps, actions and procedures, but they didn't always follow the same sequence, or were often impulsive and unplanned. The purchases of the participants were irregular and the number of items bought varied from situation to situation, but specific procedures, such as the trying on of clothes, did occur.

"... Very unstructured I have to say. I don't necessarily go in with a plan." (a)

"...I sometimes do try to change. Maybe in that instance I would if I had seen something nice I would have bought it." (e)

"...Usually I just go to look around in shops I am not necessarily looking for something specific. If I do buy, I buy something I like not because I was looking for something specific." (h)

Participants, with more structured scripts, planned their apparel purchases before executing them. Participants proceeded unswervingly to purchase their apparel; especially what the product should look like, its intended purpose and the type of store(s) to be visited.

"... I am very specific. I look for something specific. And it has to be the same as the picture I have in my mind." (b)

"... I absolutely just buy if I need something. I will not buy just to buy. And because I am not a buying fanatic, I always buy with a specific purpose in mind." (f)

"... I don't go shopping on the spur of the moment. I plan it and then I will go and seek specific things." (g)

For some of the participants it would appear that there was a combination of structure and lack of structure in their scripts. They would, for example, sometimes plan their apparel purchases; while at other times do it impulsively.

### 5.2.2 Sub-objective 2: How do professional women experience their existing apparel-purchasing practices?

There is evidence that participants' scripts have an affective dimension. Participants explained how they experienced purchasing apparel. Remarks indicating positive and negative associations for the participants with apparel purchasing include: "if you have time it is a pleasure", "I am not crazy about going shopping", "... the shopping-thing is a relaxation mechanism" and "... to go shopping is an outing". These observations were encoded as experiencing apparel purchases.

It would seem that most of the participants have a positive association about apparel purchasing and that they interpreted it in terms of an outing and relaxation. A few participants, however, did have negative associations as they regarded it as time and energy consuming. The specific sub-category derived from the data analysis and highlighting the positive and negative associations of participants of apparel purchasing include *time and energy involvement*, *relaxing and going on an outing* and *use of the senses*. These sub-categories will be discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

***Time and energy involvement:*** Some of the participants felt that they would experience their apparel purchasing in a positive manner if they had more time at their disposal. The participants found it a positive experience to go to the stores and personally see what is available. Although apparel purchasing has positive connotations, it is still associated with a process that demands time and energy.

"... if you have the time it is a pleasure to buy clothes. It is nice to go and look for yourself. So, if you have the time it is really nice to go and see what's available."(g)

It is especially the participants who work the whole day who may experience the pressure of time and would be aware of time constraints. It would appear that these participants regarded their time as precious and valuable. Time planning and time management now become important. A number of the participants saw



apparel purchasing as time consuming and not a pleasant task. They indicated that they would rather spend their time more pleasurably: for them the purchasing of clothes was out of necessity; only when it was urgent and they needed something specific or there is a gap in the wardrobe. Apparel purchasing had a negative association.

"... I will not go shopping every week: it is not my personality. I would much rather stay at home and spend time with my husband and friends than I would walk around in shops in search for clothes. Because I usually have difficulty finding clothes that fit me, my arms and legs are very long. So I will only buy clothes if I need something." (f)

A few of the participants felt that time pressure were not of such a nature that they lack sufficient opportunity to purchase apparel. For them it was possible to go to the stores at different times to make purchases. They perceived shopping as positive and didn't really experience time constraints.

"... Something I enjoy is that I can go on off-peak hours to the shops. This makes my experience a little bit more positive but if I had to work from 9 to 6 every day and could only go shopping on weekends then it would be a different issue. I do have a lot of time. On weekends I like to go shopping and to see what is in the shops." (h)

"...No, I do have a lot of time. Like I said, on Saturdays and stuff like that I will go, but I am not impressed with Menlyn at all because I can never find anything there." (d)

It seems as if some of the participants viewed apparel purchasing as positive because it occurs less regularly and it was associated with positive experiences. Some of the participants had a negative perception of products such as groceries that have to be procured every week or month. It would appear that the routine of acquiring these products is associated with inconvenience, time consuming and generally boring and tiresome.

"... I don't go and walk around Pick 'n Pay. I don't like shopping for groceries I hate it. I can do so much more with my time." (e)

**Relaxing and going on an outing:** For some of the participants apparel purchasing was associated with a positive experience such as relaxation. For them shopping for apparel was very positive and not inconvenient.

"... At this stage the nice part of shopping for clothes is to hang around in the malls." (a)

"... For me the shopping thing is a relaxing mechanism. It is not an effort for me to go shopping. It is nice. I enjoy going through everything." (h)

"... It is not a inconvenience for me to go and buy clothes from time to time." (h)

For some of the participants the purchasing of apparel was associated with a positive action such as going on an outing and a way of spending time with the family.

"... I always went alone but now with the baby, I take her and my husband. Usually it is an outing. For me it is very enjoyable." (b)

"... You actually go shopping as an outing. It is nice to walk around to see other things. It is not so much just about buying clothes, it is also to walk around." (d)

"... It is nice to get out. You don't want do everything from your house." (g)

"... You make an outing of it. It is more of an outing than shopping." (h)

**Use of the senses:** For some of the participants the purchase of apparel brought all their senses into play. Through the use of all their senses they experienced it as a positive process.

"... I am crazy about shopping for clothes. I think for me it's a nicer environment than sitting at your computer and looking at pictures. You can see people and meet someone for coffee." (h)

"... I think it will be easier for men to buy clothes on the Internet because they know what they want. Women ... we want to look around, fit and touch everything. This is a big problem for the Internet and women because women like shopping more than men do. Women still like the shopping thing." (h)

"... You actually go shopping.... To walk around to see other things." (d)

### **5.2.3 Sub-objective 3: What are the perceptions professional women have of the Internet in general and in particular for the purchase of apparel?**

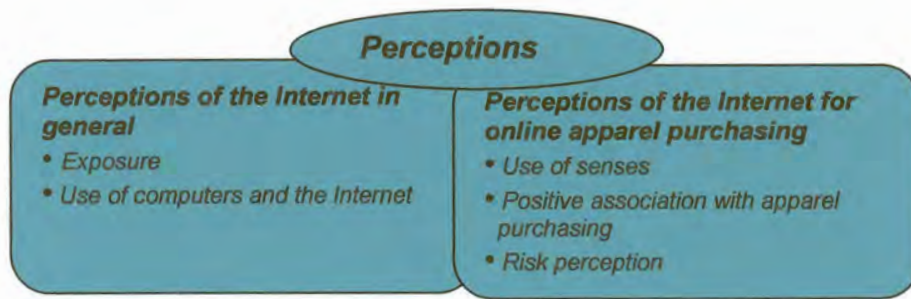
Participants were asked what they thought in general about the Internet as well as using the Internet for the purchase of apparel. The participants' perception of the Internet related to what they had read, heard, and experienced themselves – in general and in particular for the purchase of apparel and other products.

The participants' perception of the Internet and the use of the Internet for online purchases of apparel were encoded in two categories. The two sub-categories



identified from the analysis of the data are *perceptions of the Internet in general* and *perceptions of the Internet for online apparel purchasing*. The sub-categories will be discussed and supported by relevant responses from the participants.

A schematic visualisation of the various categories and sub-categories identified regarding the participants' perceptions of the Internet in general and their perceptions of the Internet for online apparel purchasing is presented subsequently in **FIGURE 4**.



**FIGURE 4: PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTERNET IN GENERAL AND THE INTERNET FOR ONLINE APPAREL PURCHASING**

#### 5.2.3.1 Perceptions of the Internet in general

The specific sub-categories identified from the data analysis to highlight the participants' positive and negative perceptions of the Internet include *exposure* and *use of computers and the Internet*. These aspects are also related to what the participants already knew or had experienced and heard and read about the Internet. The sub-categories will now be discussed and supported by extracts from the verbatim responses.



### ➤ *Exposure*

It did appear that the negative perceptions, held by some of the participants, of the Internet were the result of their limited exposure to that medium. The fact that purchasing via the Internet was still relatively unknown to them would play a role in their negative perceptions. It has become apparent that a number of the participants had not any real experience with the Internet. Their exposure in terms of computers and the Internet was through other people. Negative perceptions would be the result of limited knowledge and use of computers and the Internet.

"... I think the unfamiliarity, the fact that you are not used to it: that's the big thing the unfamiliarity." (a)

"... I have to be honest; I don't know computers all that well. It is not as if I am on the Internet the entire day. Until now I just looked when my husband worked on the Internet. I am afraid I wouldn't have enough knowledge and know what to do." (b)

Despite their lack of knowledge about the Internet, participants had the opinion that the experience of others with the Internet could change their own views about it.

"... I think the best advertising method is by word-of-mouth. If you get someone that had a positive experience it just reinforces the positive idea that is being conveyed." (a)

Some of the participants had a positive perception of the Internet even though they have had little exposure of it. For example, one participant explained that she felt very positive about the Internet although she never had a real need to make use of it, except for information searches and e-mail.

"... I think the Internet is great. I never really needed it but when I did my thesis at university I used the Internet to do all my research. Now that we are going on holiday I am using it a lot as well." (c).

"... I like it. I think it is part of development, of technology. When I was pregnant I registered on an American web site that sent me information about the development of the baby every week." (g)

## ➤ *Use of computers and the Internet*

The frequency with which participants made use of the Internet differs from one person to the other. Some used it much more than others and it would also appear that those with experience used it with much more confidence.

"... I will use the Internet maybe once or twice every two weeks. We have banking facilities here. There is definitely room for improvement... I am a very bad Internet user, I usually use it for e-mailing and a little bit of medical searches but that is it." (a)

"... Yes. I am getting in the last few months I have started more on the Internet but only in the last few months." (e)

"... Lately quite often, at least 3-4 times a week." (h)

Most of the participants used the Internet for e-mail, searching for information, for Internet banking facilities and for reading the newspapers. Some of the participants also used the Internet to plan vacations.

"... I read the newspaper every day; banking online and I check my e-mail that's all. "

"... we just recently bought a house and I did quite a lot of searching for that on the Internet. I am probably logged on all day if I am writing reports and I get bored I will go and look but it's normally updating the news. I use Vodacom SMS's sometimes. Just look what the last sites are that I visited. The Pietermaritzburg newspaper, the Independent newspaper, SA reunited, and the web mail because I have another e-mail address."

"... for instance like we want to go on holiday to Kenya, Tanzania, the Serengeti and that probably in 2004 like I went on and started searching but got bored because it is all this proper certified tour guide things. If there is something specific I will go on and look." (d)

"... I prefer Internet banking. So I do that and if I am looking for holidays or web site pages or something. I am into photography and to go on workshops I'll look on the Internet. So I use it for that." (e)

"... For banking and if you want to read about something interesting and I register through the Internet. That's about it." (g)

"... I use the Internet for banking, when I want to go away for a weekend: that type of thing – camping sites. I am not comfortable yet in spending money on the Internet." (h)

Some of the participants used the Internet for purchasing and the items bought included books, sunglasses, monthly groceries, perfume and CDs.

"... I have bought books and sunglasses over the Internet. With the sunglasses we went to a shop and tried some on to see which pair fits the best and then we ordered the ones we liked." (b)

"... Yes I have bought from Exclusive Books. I bought a book last week. That is the first time I have done it. You are like getting me at a time that I am just starting. They haven't delivered it yet, but it was very, very easy. It was quick. Oh and I do P... and W... online. They deliver once a month; both of them." (e)

"...I use it for banking, buying books. I bought photography books from America and the food and W.... And then those web sites for holidays and accommodation, RCI that sort of stuff I've used it. And that's about all. Not really for any buying anything else." (e)

Some of the participants viewed purchasing through the Internet as something that they still had to get used to.

"... It is something that I still need to get used to. If you done it once it gets easier." (h)

Positive experiences by participants with the Internet were the result of purchases.

"... I haven't had any bad experiences with buying on the Internet. Clothes I don't buy generally on the Internet but other articles like perfume, after shave, and monthly groceries." (f)

Below is a summarised table of the participants' use of the Internet

**TABLE 3: PARTICIPANTS' USE OF THE INTERNET**

Participants	E-mail	E- banking	Information search	Purchases	Other
A	X	X	X	Books	
B	-	-	X	Books & sun glasses	
C	X	-	X	-	
D	X	-	X	-	
E	X	X	X	Books & monthly groceries	
F	X	X	X	Books, CD's, perfume & monthly groceries	
G	X	X	X	-	Registered for a course
H	X	X	X	-	

#### 5.2.3.2 Perceptions of the Internet for online apparel purchasing

The specific sub-categories identified from the analysing the data to get a better understanding of the participants' positive and negative perceptions about the Internet include *use of the senses*, *positive association with apparel purchasing* and *risk perception*. These sub-categories have to do with what the participants already know or have experienced and heard or read about the



Internet and apparel purchases. The sub-categories will be discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

#### ➤ *Use of the senses*

The use by the participants of their senses in the apparel purchasing process via the Internet played another important role in the participants' perception of using the Internet for the purchase of apparel. Because some of the participants were incapable of using their senses they had a negative perception of apparel purchasing via the Internet.

"... I want to feel the textile against my skin. That's important to me. It is difficult for me to make those purchases over the Internet. Maybe it will become easier later on. You don't know if the picture you see is really what you want. Clothes are all about feeling and appearance it is not like a can of food that you know exactly what you want. So that makes everything a little bit difficult." (f)

"... I think it is easier to buy in a shop than on the Internet where you are stuck with something you can't feel or see it three-dimensionally or try it on. In the shop you can immediately see if something will fit nicely or if the colour is wrong." (h)

#### ➤ *Positive association with apparel purchasing*

Some participants had a negative perception about apparel purchasing over the Internet because it was a joyous excursion for them to go and buy clothing. In general they experienced apparel purchasing as positive, but the Internet did not provide them with enough reason to try it out.

"... The Internet is not for everyone – some people still like to shop, while others hate it." (d)

"... I am trying to think of a reason to buy on the Internet. The thing is going shopping is not necessarily an inconvenience for me. I stay 5 minutes from Menlyn and because they stay open so late it is not an issue anymore. There isn't anything that entices me to buy on the Internet, not even books." (h)

### ➤ *Risk perception*

In addition some of the participants felt that a new practice, such as purchasing apparel via the Internet, was separated from the purchasing processes that they were accustomed with. This added to their feeling of uncertainty. It would appear that the participants experienced their existing apparel purchases as positive and the unfamiliarity of apparel purchasing via the Internet as negative.

"... I think anything that is new and removed from the norm you are used to can be scary." (a)

"... I think the things I know. That's why I stay with it. With something like clothes, I know I'll go to a shop and walk out with the clothes I bought ... then they are happy because I paid and I am happy because I have got my clothes. There aren't any issues of I give them money and in a week's time I receive my clothes. Maybe that's the barrier that I still need to overcome... to see if they will actually bring my things to me." (h)

"... It is a bit like catalogues, I am a bit scared because you never know if it will fit and how it will look." (e)

Although a number of the participants used the Internet regularly and were familiar with it, they still had risk perceptions about using the Internet for apparel purchasing. Such participants indicated that they still prefer to obtain their apparel from brick-and-mortar stores because, with the Internet, they were not able to feel or try on the items.

"... That's a big thing for me with the Internet... I won't buy something if I didn't try it on first. I would like to see the material. On the Internet you can't really see what the material looks like." (c)

"... I don't think I will go so far as to say I will buy clothes on a regular basis over the Internet. Although I know at W... you can buy clothes over the Internet but I am still a bit scared." (f)

"... I am on the Internet at least 3 to 4 times a week but I am not totally ready to spend money on the Internet." (h)

#### **5.2.4 Sub-objective 4: What are the expectations of professional women of apparel purchasing on the Internet?**

The expectations participants have flow from their scripts and have to do with what the participants expect from the Internet as medium for the purchase of apparel. By making use of a stimulating technique the participants were required to visit web sites of apparel retailers.

It would appear as if the participants' knowledge of and previous experience with the Internet and their existing apparel purchases manifested in their expectations about apparel purchases over the Internet. The expectations of the participants regarding apparel purchases over the Internet became apparent in two forms. First, these were expressed in phrases connected with aspects that they could usually expect in a traditional store and which they then convert to the Internet. Remarks were made about aspects such as: 'there are so few clothes that you can see', 'on a doll', 'I would like to see it on a person', 'say what type of material it is' and 'it doesn't look like in the stores'. Secondly, what they expected about the functions and elements from the Internet or an apparel web site was voiced as: 'site it is a bit busy', 'one of them don't have everything', 'a try-on function', 'it is too confusing for me' and 'not on standard'.

These responses were encoded into two categories that have to do with the participants' expectations of the Internet as a medium for purchasing apparel. The two sub-categories thus identified from the analysis of the data are *expectations regarding traditional store(s) and apparel as a product category* and *expectations regarding the Internet and apparel web sites*. Within each category specific sub-categories have been created to better describe specific aspects.

A schematic visualisation of the various categories and sub-categories identified regarding the expectations the participants have in terms of adopting the Internet for online apparel purchasing is presented in **FIGURE 5**.



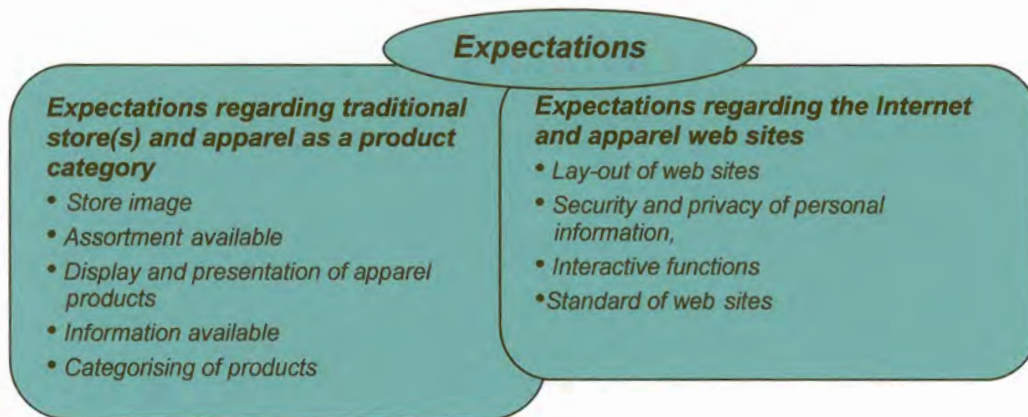


FIGURE 5: EXPECTATIONS OF ONLINE APPAREL PURCHASING

#### 5.2.4.1 Expectations regarding traditional store(s) and apparel as a product category

The specific sub-categories related to participants' expectations of traditional store(s) and apparel as product categories were identified to have a better understanding of the responses. The sub-categories include **store image**, **assortment available**, **display and presentation of apparel products**, **information available**, and **categorising of products**. The sub-categories are discussed and supported by relevant responses.

##### ➤ **Store image**

It would seem that the participants expect the image of an e-store to resemble that of the brick-and-mortar store. Furthermore, it was apparent that the participants were comparing stores with web sites, especially in terms of the image, message, type of apparel and manner of presentation.

"... It doesn't look at all like a store. It is a bit wilder than in a shop. The shop always looks more formal. It is very different." (b)

".... It looks very modern. I like it. It also looks like the advertisements you get through the mail." (g)

The participants also expected the purchasing process to proceed as in a conventional store; in other words that the stages, actions and procedures should be quite similar.

"... You can also pay with your credit card. That's not bad. I don't want to register. (a)

#### ➤ *Assortment available*

The participants expected that the variety of apparel products, available via the Internet, would be the same as in the traditional store. Most participants would like to have seen a larger variety of clothing products on the Internet. One of the participants, namely (h), said that she at least expected all the promotional items of the stores' brochures to be displayed on the Internet.

"...Why do they have so few clothes to show us? See something like it...if it were something that I like, I would've bought it. It is not a very large variety. I would've liked lots more formal clothes, but now there is only T-shirt. And underwear! It's really difficult. You feel if you'd rather not buy anything." (b)

"... OK, it is almost like a catalogue. But why do they have so few things under each one?" (d)

"... I would say in the first place, everything you have in the brochures that you send to the customers also has to be available on the Internet, because that is where you did do fifty percent of your marketing and if somebody sees something that he or she liked, then you don't have hassles to get hold of it. So I would say it definitely has to be there." (h)

#### ➤ *Display and presentation of apparel products*

The participants preferred that the presentation of items should be realistic and clear, otherwise it was not possible for them to form a mental picture of the items. Furthermore, it would appear that the participants expected similar visual presentation procedures as they would have in conventional stores and on television. The visual presentations of apparel products were important for the participants and they expected that it would be the same as in traditional stores. In other words they wanted to see the apparel either on a store mannequin or on a real person.

"... Don't they have pictures of the clothes?" (a)



"... It doesn't look nice if the clothes just lie like that. It looks nicer where the models has it on." (b)

"... I would say on a mannequin; no, only not as flat. I want to see what it looks like when it is on. It needn't necessarily be a model, it could be a dummy, such as in store displays." (c)

"...It also depends how they display the clothes; whether they show it on a model or if they merely show a shirt like that. I would like to see it on a person. And I would enjoy it because I'm not very creative like other people myself – 'wear this blouse with that suit'. On the model, almost like in an advertisement." (g)

"... Here's an example, I see this picture of a blouse on the Internet and I order it and it isn't the correct texture or material. I've got these whims; I have to have a specific texture or a specific colour; and the Internet can't always tell you." (b)

### ➤ *Information available*

The participants expected specific information to be available. The kind of information that they would like to have was the same that they usually got from the labels such as the composition of the textile, the price of the item and care instructions. It does seem that providing such details would lessen the participants' perceived risks.

"...In this picture there is basically the price, the sizes of the clothing they have in stock and the type of material. The information is sufficient, even for me who knows nothing." (b)

"...Now this is nice, it tells you the different sizes." (c)

"...I like it when they tell what material it is, then you even learn something." (g)

"... Sizes have to be given because how do you know which sizes are available." (g)

### ➤ *Categorising of products*

Participants expected apparel products to be categorised in the same way on the web pages as in the stores. This would seem to make their shopping procedure easier. This also agrees with the need of participants to group similar products together and make their purchasing simpler.

"... This T...s' web site isn't very good. The one of W...s looks much better: it is more structured and you can look under every category to see what they have. That is to be preferred. That is what I like. They show you what the pants look like and what it costs. Now this is very nice and the stuff isn't too expensive either; it even shows the available colours." (c)



"... F... is good, but it's a pity that there are no categories. W... is good because they've got categories for everything with lots information besides to me, T... is the worst of the lot." (c)

"... This is something about the web site that I don't like, the fact that everything isn't categorised together. This makes it difficult. And they say: 'Jewellery and Cosmetics', but they include underwear. I would've liked that to be a different category." (f)

"... To see what pants they've got. [Dresses the doll. ] Now that's really nice. The only thing is they don't have these in categories. Yes, it's a problem because I really don't look like that. I wouldn't be able to see how the pants fit over my backside or my legs." (h)

#### 5.2.4.2 Expectations regarding the Internet and apparel web sites

The specific sub-categories about the expectations of participants of the Internet and/or apparel web sites were identified to understand the comments better. The sub-categories include *layout of web sites*, *security and privacy of personal information*, *interactive functions* and *standard of web sites*. The sub-categories are discussed and supported by relevant verbatim responses.

##### ➤ *Layout of web sites*

The participants expected the web page to be simple and user-friendly; they didn't want the layout to be confusing.

"... If I had to analyse W... site it is a bit busy. You know what also puts me off from buying on the Internet is – you see a picture but in reality it doesn't look the same." (d)

"... If I were to design a new site it would give more attention to detail because you can't design a site that lags behind the others. It's all about competition; if you're there for the money your site has to be the best and the most with-it." (g)

"... To me this is too confusing. This is just too much. Maybe I'm not used to the Internet, but this is more than I can bear."

"... I don't like the layout of F.... One can see three items at the most at a time. I would like to see that they have red pants and blue pants and all the tops that you can wear with them. It is all very confusing; here are shoes in between...they should rather be in a category of their own." (g)

### ➤ *Security and privacy of personal information*

The participants expected the web sites to be safe and that their personal information will be protected. Some of the participants that are concerned, due to the crime situation in South Africa, that their information can be obtained (see financial and physical risks), but others hold that their information is in any case available in many other places. The participants with accounts found it convenient that they could change personal data online.

"... I'll do it. I'm neutral. I'm not scared to do it. You can change your personal data – that's nice. Here you can provide feedback about the service. Here they say that delivery is done within 24 hours; now that's fast. When I buy something, I wear it directly; I'm not going to wait another week! I try it out immediately. If you want to exchange it, you'll have to go to the store." (g)

### ➤ *Interactive functions*

Participants preferred more interactive functions on the web sites. Functions such as trying on, colour changes and video clips as well as the ability to compare prices and products were mentioned by the participants.

"... That is OK, but I would have preferred pictures of the clothes. The only reason why I would use it is for instance I'm looking for a black skirt, then I can go and see which black skirts are available at T..., E..., and W... and what the prices are. That is all that I would use it for. I would still go to the stores to try it on first." (a)

"... A try-on function. Maybe a search engine type of thing where you type in what you want, jean or skirt and it searches it for you and show all the black skirts it could find." (d)

"... That would be quite nice if you had like a search –thing. Say for instance you want evening wear then according to types you can compare. It is a bit difficult because you can only see half the screen. No I don't like that it is categorised into designers." (d)

"... If I were to design such a web site I would've had a large variety of clothing apparel and I would've divided the screen and then I might've had in place of a picture – when you click on an item you would get a video clip of a 'runway' and a model modelling the item: giving you an idea what it looks like, whether long, short or whatever. One would be better able to sell it if you dolly it up more and make it more funky." (h)



➤ *Standard of web sites*

There were participants that felt that the standard of South African web sites were not yet satisfactory. It would appear that the web sites in South Africa did not satisfy their expectations at all.

"... Each one of them has got something I like. I find it strange that none of them contains everything. It is very straightforward things you want to know. When you're looking for something, like what type of material is it. Now that would be easy to add." (h)

"... I am certain that they are not yet at the standard that they should be. I don't think they make it attractive enough that you would like to buy something. To me there was nothing so outstanding that I felt I had to have it. In fact, they haven't advanced as much as the stores, because in the stores you can feel and see. Therefore their presentations should in fact be better than in the store to make sales. And all that trouble I can't see." (h)

"... I don't like the South African web sites much – many of them have a lot of gaps. I think they've progressed a lot in America and England in terms of mail orders and sales over the Internet. So I'd rather look there first, but I'm a bit wary about South Africa. We aren't yet geared for it; we're still too complacent about what we should be getting in the stores. For me it is important that I can order a smart blouse for work, but which I can't get here now." (f)

Some of the participants felt that online apparel purchasing was not made attractive enough for them. It would appear that some of the participants did not experience difficulties with the technical use of the web sites.

"... The thing is, they have to give you so much more to get the thing sold, because everything you require is already in the stores. So in a sense you've got to take the trouble to get it on the Internet. It is outside your reference framework, so you'll have to change. And to do that changeover well, they'll have to provide you with something better than going to the shops." (h)

### 5.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2 AND SUB-OBJECTIVES 5 AND 6: TO EXPLORE, DESCRIBE AND GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE THAT THE DIMENSIONS (PHYSICAL AND PERFORMANCE PROPERTIES) OF APPAREL PRODUCTS PLAY AND HOW THESE ARE EVALUATED IN THE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S ADOPTION OF THE INTERNET FOR THE PURCHASE OF APPAREL

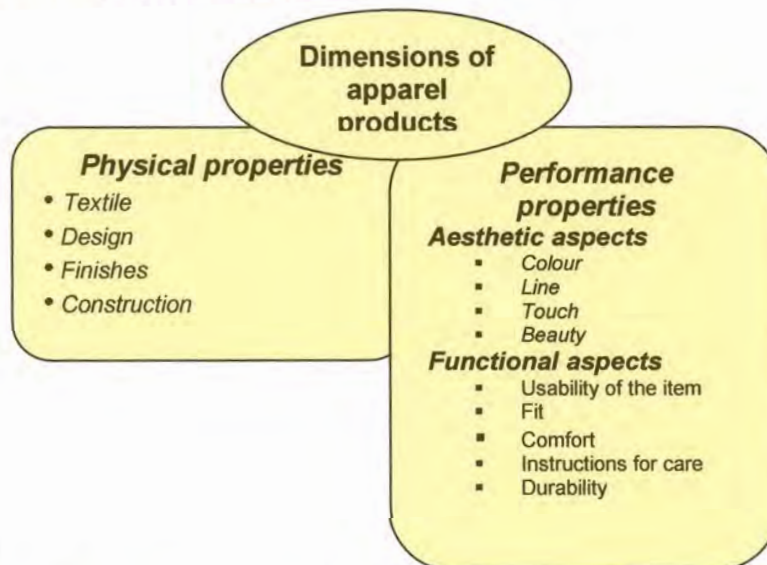
As there is a difference in the participants' evaluation and judgement of apparel, it is important to note what dimensions of apparel professional women use when



evaluating the apparel they are purchasing. In this way it is possible to determine its role in their acceptance of the Internet for the purchase of apparel. From the results it was clear that professional women used the specific dimensions of apparel in their evaluation and judgement of apparel. These aspects are also incorporated in the scripts of consumers and could have a role in the acceptance of the Internet by professional women. For the purposes of this study the dimensions of apparel have been regarded and discussed as specific categories. According to Brown and Rice (1998:38) the dimensions used by professional women in evaluating and judging apparel consist of ***physical properties*** and ***performance properties (aesthetic aspects and functional aspects)***.

Additional sub-categories, under each of these categories, have been identified from the data analysis. These sub-categories of the specific dimensions of apparel are discussed and verified from relevant verbatim responses.

A schematic representation of the categories and sub-categories, identified in terms of the dimensions of apparel, is shown in **FIGURE 6**.



**FIGURE 6: THE DIMENSIONS OF APPAREL PRODUCTS**

### 5.3.1 Sub-objective 5: What role does the evaluation of the physical properties of apparel products play in professional women's adoption of the Internet for the purchasing of apparel?

#### 5.3.1.1 Physical properties

The physical properties of apparel comprise of aspects such as the design, textiles, and construction of the item. The specific sub-categories related to the evaluation of the physical properties of apparel were created using existing categories from existing theory (Brown & Rice, 1998:38). The sub-categories include **textile**, **design**, **finishes** and **construction**. These sub-categories are discussed below and supported by relevant verbatim responses.

##### ➤ **Textile**

It appears that the participants first of all evaluated the textile of the apparel item after having identified the item as a possible suitable purchase among the alternatives.

"... Yes, the first thing that I do is to feel the material; I scrunch it because I hate creases, I hate clothes that are crumpled." (a)

"... The first thing is I walk up and I feel the material." (e)

Most of the participants evaluated the textile to ascertain whether it is crease resistant – they preferred crease free or crease resistant textiles. They also felt the item to determine the quality of the textile.

"... Textile quality...I feel it when I am in the store. On Internet this is one of the major drawbacks, one has to rely on the reputation of the store you are purchasing the goods from." (e)

"... I usually look for something that doesn't crease. I don't go much for something like viscose material, because you get viscose that is closely woven and doesn't really breathe and it crumples a lot." (f)

"... I don't like stuff like this viscose material because it creases so much." (g)



Some of the participants preferred crease-free textiles because of their time saving qualities.

"... it saves me time. I'm the one for comfort. The first thing I do is to feel the material. I squeeze it in my hand to see whether it creases. I stay away from stuff that contains too much viscose, linen. that kind of thing; although it is cool, it creases relatively easily." (a)

It is the general opinion of the participants that apparel products, which did not crease, lend a more professional appearance.

"... Our work environment is hot and if one had been sitting down for a while you look all rumpled up at the end of the day, and I don't like that. I've got cotton shirts and the shops have the prettiest linen things, but it looks as if you were dragged from the laundry basket." (a)

"... I usually look at the composition of the material and if I notice it contains something that doesn't allow it to breathe, then I wouldn't buy it. I go especially for clothes that breathe, because you go from the office into the car which is unbelievably hot and then again into an air-conditioned building." (f)

"... Not always, but most of the clothes I purchase do not wrinkle. They barely need ironing." (g)

"... For example, I'll never buy clothes of cotton because they wrinkle too easily. You can't look neat in cotton. So, there are certain things I won't do." (h)

The manner in which the participants evaluated the textile/material of a clothing item was by 'scrunching' it (i.e. by squeezing it in the hand). In this way they could determine to what extent it would crease.

"...I scrunch it because I hate wrinkles." (a)

"...It is nice because you can feel the material; you can see what it looks like." (b)

"...I feel the thing and I squeeze it like this [participant takes a handful of material in her fist. " (g)

"...I scrunch it; I feel it." (h)

Some of the participants linked quality to the type of textile and weave structure of which the apparel item was made.

"... And also the type of material whether it will get snagged, because it isn't nice when roughly woven things snag easily." (a)

"... M & S's, which is W... here is good quality material. You can feel their stuff. But this is a T-shirt from M & S I've had it for ages it washes well. If you use cheap material and it's got too much cotton in it, it creases as well and because you were not able to feel it you don't know." (e)

"... I am very particular about the type of material that I wear. It must be soft, but it shouldn't be so thin that after being worn once or twice it cannot be used anymore – especially with something like chiffon." (h)

"... I feel it, gauging the thickness...for example the material, I see it is bulky and also the way it hangs. In terms of the material itself: the way it is woven. I don't know much about it, but funnily enough the things I buy do keep." (g)



### ➤ *Design*

It would appear that most of the participants preferred classical styles or designs. These styles were, according to the participants, also more suitable for their type of employment and it suits their professions.

"... I like simple cuts [fashion / set] and classical cuts. I'll never buy things that are necessarily in fashion...now I go and buy it. I'm not that kind of person. I'll only buy a thing when I really like it, whether it is in fashion or not. And I do like the classical styles. I like tailored suits; classical stuff that I know I'll be able to wear again." (c)

"... I would rather buy and wear something with a much more defined classical line than go for a fashionable item. My profession is also of such a nature: I'm a professional businesswoman, for that reason I cannot arrive at a director of a large company with these offbeat clothes. I usually wear classical clothes, even my casual wear is in the classical style." (f)

### ➤ *Finishes*

Aspects to which the participants also gave attention were the finishing of the apparel, such as beading and motifs. By carefully inspecting the item the participants would determine whether the item is well made, whether there weren't any loose threads or whether the material has snagged.

"...Clothes with beading – you can already see things coming undone. Then I leave it. And things that snag. That is one thing about which I'm very particular...especially these knitted fabrics, you can even see in the shop that they have snagged." (a)

"...If it has a motif or embroidery or has something stuck to it." (f)

### ➤ *Construction*

For the participants it was important to judge the construction of the apparel product – especially the more expensive and tailored outfits. Aspects that were noted include the neatness of the construction, whether the seams and the hems are straight and there are no loose threads dangling. When evaluating the construction the apparel product was turned inside out and inspected all-over.

"... But I look especially how it is made; specifically the buttonholes; how the hems were done and how the seams were stitched; I look at things like that. I even look whether the buttons on a shirt, or the detailing, whether that is in a straight line. I also turn the garment inside out. With pants I test that the zips work well because such things break

and they cannot easily be replaced. And with the finer type of clothing how it was stitched and how the garment was made. Whether threads are hanging out or neatly tucked away." (f)

"... When I buy a suit I would usually buy a tailored suit. I take note of the material and the finish; whether it is neat, are the seams straight, you know, those things. I think the first thing is the finish, when you look at the seams. Although I don't inspect each and every seam, that is the general idea. You can immediately see when something is crooked." (h)

All the above physical characteristics of apparel products concern, in the last instance, the quality of the apparel products. It would appear that quality was an important aspect for the participants. Some of the participants associated apparel that is lined with good quality. Again, this aspect was evaluated manually.

"... Yes, there has to be a certain quality. These days you don't often get something that is lined; a lined skirt, like this one. You don't see this generally, and even less one that fits well." (a)

"... Usually when I buy a suit I buy one that is lined because for me it adds to the quality and it looks neater. But in general I evaluate quality on the basis of neatness; how neatly the garment fits." (h)

Some of the participants were prepared to pay more for good quality apparel products. The participants then linked the quality of the specific apparel item to its price.

"... In the first place, quality: I don't mind to pay a bit more for good quality. I'm not very concerned about brand names, but when you feel the clothes and you notice how it was made then you can realise whether it is a good product or not. For me it is all about the quality of the material." (f)

"... The higher the price, the better the quality." (g)

One of the participants indicated that she judged the quality according to the reputation of the store, the texture of the material and the price.

"... I evaluate quality by the reputation of the shop firstly, then by feel of material and then by price." (e)

### **5.3.2 Sub-objective 6: What role does the evaluation of the performance properties (aesthetics and functional aspects) of apparel products play in professional women's adoption of the Internet for the purchase of apparel?**

### 5.3.2.1 Performance properties

The performance properties pertain to the degree the items satisfy the needs of the consumer. More specifically this concerns the aesthetic and functional aspects of the garment.

The specific sub-categories related to the evaluation of the performance properties of apparel were created using existing categories from existing theory (Brown & Rice, 1998:38). The sub-categories include *aesthetic aspects* and *functional aspects*. *Aesthetic aspects* were further categorised as *colour, line, touch, and beauty*. *Functional aspects* were categorised as *usability of the item, fit, comfort, instructions for care* and *durability*. These sub-categories are discussed below and supported by relevant verbatim responses.

#### ➤ *Aesthetic aspects*

The aesthetic aspects of apparel refer to its attractiveness. This can be divided into sensory, emotional and cognitive qualities. Formal aspects refer to the design principles used in the garment such as line, colour, texture, balance, form and proportion. The formal aspects of the apparel product can be detected sensorial. Emotional and cognitive qualities refer rather to the satisfaction of consumers' social needs, such as impressing others or acceptance by others and the consumers' social-cognitive needs, such as creating an own reality (Brown & Rice, 1998:38-39). *Aesthetic aspects*, as sub-category of performance properties, were further categorised as *colour, line, touch, and beauty*. These sub-categories are to be discussed and verified by relevant verbatim responses.



**Colour:** Some of the participants regarded colour as an important aspect when evaluating apparel products. Usually it was the colour of the item that got the attention of the participant.

"... and then the colour. The colour is important. Cream, white beige, I am trying to get into more colours because colours are coming in. I don't like yellow. The colour and the feel. Basic colours. A little top can be a bright top and then you wear a black suit with it one flower and stuff like that." (e)

"... Colour is very important for me because I'm somebody who loves colour. Usually colourful things attract my attention. So I'm somebody who goes for it." (h)

It was also evident that specific colours caught the participants' eyes.

"... Oh, I do love those subdued colours – black, navy, cream - you know; or rusty or such type of things and... It has to be semi-comfortable and, yes, basically I go by what I see, if something looks nice, I'll try it on." (a)

It would appear that the apparel's colour was related to the end use of the item. The participants pointed out that they would not consider an item that did not fit in with the contents of their existing wardrobes. Some of the participants indicated that they use the colour of the apparel product to determine whether it is suitable as a work outfit. Specific colours appear to be more suited as work garments such as black, navy and cream, while bright colours are less suitable.

"... I wear a lot of black at work because it looks very formal, and navy for the same reason, as well as shades of blue, cream and brown; the most of them. No, I won't wear a bright pink top to work. Maybe if I know that I'll be only in the office the whole day and don't have to deal with clients, yes, then maybe I'll wear something like it...but there's nothing like that in my wardrobe." (e)

**Line:** Some of the participants' preferred simple lines that can be worn more than one season.

"...I like simple lines that are classical that I will be able to wear for more than one season. It is that type of thing that I reflect with my dress." (f)

**Touch:** Touching or feeling the texture of the textile relates to the participants' physical evaluation of apparel. The feeling aroused in the hand of the participant by the textile was detected sensorial and influenced their physical and aesthetic evaluation of the material.

"...The feeling of the material as well. You can, when you have two items next to each other, you can feel which one is more durable."

**Beauty:** Because apparel products contain a personal element, it would appear that the participants were aware of the aesthetic and functional aspects when appraising apparel products. It was important for the participants that the apparel products should possess aesthetic value. According to the participants the apparel had to meet their cognitive, emotional and aesthetic requirements.

"... I most certainly go for the aesthetic as well, and not only for the practical. I try to reconcile the two. For most women there is a bit of emotion included: you do want to look beautiful." (a)

"... I've really got smart clothes in my wardrobe. I really like to dress myself. I enjoy putting on all those nice clothes...very professional...classy. It depends on what you buy, when you buy it, and for what you buy it." (h)

If an apparel product was really pretty for the participants, they would pay little or no attention to the physical aspects.

"... I don't look at how it is made. I see whether it looks pretty and whether I like the material. I want to look beautiful. A person just looks better cared for if they wear different clothes every day." (g)

It would appear as if the beauty of the apparel product was associated with various aspects such as colour and style.

"... Actually for me it's very important what others think how it looks on me. That's why I'll get a friend to hear what she thinks about it." (c)

"... The colour has to be beautiful. The cut has to be beautiful. I like classical styles." (g)

"... I'm not really worried about whether it is a Polo suit or not. If it is a nice suit, I'll buy it, but I don't go after any specific brand name. If it coincidentally happens to be a brand name, I'll buy it, but if not, it doesn't bother me. Yes, some people only buy products with brand names, I'm only concerned about how it looks." (h)

"... I didn't merely buy it just because it's in fashion, I bought it because I liked it."

### ➤ **Functional aspects**

Functional aspects refer to the fit, comfort; care instructions, durability and end use of the apparel product (Brown & Rice, 1998:38-39). This concerns conforming the garment to the consumer's body (Kadolph, 1998:545). **Functional aspects** as sub-category of **performance properties** were further subdivided in **usability of the item, fit, comfort, instructions for care, and durability**. These sub-categories are discussed and supported by relevant verbatim responses.



***Usability of the item (versatility, matching, appropriateness and utility):***

The end use of the apparel item concerns its mix-and-match possibilities, usefulness for the end use and its effectiveness for multipurpose application. Some participants showed an inclination for apparel that may be used for more than one purpose: items ought to be mixed and matched with other clothing items in their wardrobes. For that reason they tend to buy loose items and not necessarily suits. They also differentiated between work clothes and casual wear in terms of the style (formal or informal) as well as in terms of the textiles (T-shirt material as opposed to more formal textiles).

"... I look at it from the angle for what am I going to use it for? If it is more formal, I'll use it for work. Garments from T-shirt material...more comfortable...pants with a drawstring are more for leisure. I determine it according to the style and then I think with what I could possibly match it. I tend to mix-and-match quite a lot. I seldom buy a suit...or I match something in the shop...but I don't break up a set. One realises that you can interpret something according to your taste." (a)

"... I see what I need it for; also how formal or informal it is." (c)

"... It is important for me to buy something that I know that I can wear with something else. I wouldn't buy a pink top because I know I've nothing to wear it with, or I've only got one pair of pants to wear it with. I like to buy garments that I can wear with a lot of other things." (c)

Some participants preferred to buy complete outfits, which already satisfy their mix-and-match requirements.

"... I buy complete outfits. If I see a suit that I like, I'll make sure that I have a blouse as well as shoes that go with it. If necessary, I'll buy a whole outfit. I don't really like mix-and-match." (g)

"... To be practical is also very important to me. I won't buy something that is not practical although I might find it beautiful. I must be able wear it to work, to church, at home, to a wedding...then I'll buy it. I won't easily buy something to wear once." (c)

Some of the participants did not decide beforehand what they were going to use the clothing items for, they only decided that when viewing their existing wardrobes.

"... For work; more formal styles. What I usually do when I buy clothes I would have a fashion parade and decide what goes with what. And then for the occasion I will decide I would wear it. I don't really go to get something for a specific purpose. I'll buy it because I like it. Then I'll decide this thing looked well with that, for example this [indicating blouse] and I thought it would go well with black pants and now I wear them together." (h)

The image that the participants wished to convey was part of the end use of their apparel. From the nature of the participants' specific professions it would appear



that the participants had specific ideas of the image that they wished to communicate and how their clothing items should look like, especially in terms of their image as professional women. The participants felt that classical styles appear to be more capable and professional.

"... Generally I buy more functional garments for work. But I think the surrounding emotional aspects do influence what you buy and then, of course, what you decide to wear on a day." (a)

"... For work: formal, professional; informal: neat but still professional in case I have to meet a client." (f)

"... I feel, especially in the profession I'm in, you have to make a distinction to indicate to people that you are competent, otherwise nobody will treat you seriously. I sort of try to create a certain image at work that is why my clothes for work and clothes for special occasions are not quite the same." (g)

"... Clothes for work have to be very formal, neat and classy." (h)

"... I normally wear suits to work, like a proper jacket with a skirt or a trouser. I always use to wear stockings and court shoes not sandals." (e)

**Fit:** The fit of the apparel product was another very important aspect. The participants evaluated the fit of an item by trying it on in the fitting room or at home (see sub-objective 1).

"... Obviously it has to fit right. If it doesn't fit there is no point in buying it. If it fits really nicely and it is very expensive I will see, but I wouldn't even try it on then. If I walk into a shop and see jeans for R500 I am not going to try them on, there's just no point. So actually maybe price is the first thing that I would look at."

It appears as if the participants preferred apparel products that were shaped, have a good cut, allow them to feel comfortable and fit them well. The participants placed fit in relation to their bodies. The participants referred to sections of the body that should not be accentuated by the apparel or, on the other hand, that the apparel product must flatter the figure. Apparel items that fitted well were a very important aspect for the participants.

"... I prefer something that fits well, especially around the middle. But for work you have to be careful that you look professional. Now that I'm chubbier I tend to stay away from tighter items. But I do like something to be well formed, not baggy. That is the thing about a good cut that fits well and has the right form, but doesn't give the impression that you've squeezed yourself into something." (a)

"... It is important that it fits well..." (c)

"... It shouldn't wrinkle or have folds. It has to fit well. If it is a loose blouse, it may hang loose, but if it is a tailored suit it has to fit my body. It has to be tight where required without folding or bulging. You must also feel comfortable in it. Occasionally in the shop, when a pair of pants fit very tightly, I would sit down to feel whether they are comfortable. That you can't evaluate on the Internet, but if you've got a model, you can fit it on her."

"...It has to compliment my figure: that is the most important. It also depends on the fashion. I don't like a fold around the waist; the pants have to look as if they were made for you." (g)

"... Good fit entails, tailoring, and the clothing being long enough at the arms or legs."

"... I evaluate good fit by seeing if it looks nice on me. This is very personal as an item of clothing may fit you well but not be your style. Some like a top to fit very tight and others don't (like myself)." (e)

"... Pants shouldn't 'bubble' at the thighs. It is very important that it suits your figure, but should also hide the defects." (f)

"... Should not be too tight, but, on the other hand, neither should it fall down. It shouldn't pull or sit crookedly. It has to fit around the middle; not too tight around the hips. Pants have to be long enough. The skirt's length is also important – neither too long or too short; just a little above the knee, then it is just right. Blouses shouldn't pull tight over my back, or pull or tug around the upper arms or the chest. A jacket should also have enough play at the back that you can move your arms and the sleeves have to be long enough. It has to be shaped around the middle...the middle has to be accentuated, otherwise I look like a large lump." (h)

**For some of the participants it was very important to try on pants to determine the fit.**

"... But it is easier to try something on at the top. Pants you just have to try on to make sure; yes, because often it is that stretch material and you can't easily determine whether it fits snugly, or hangs loose." (b)

"... I'm very worried about pants. I don't just buy any pair of pants. My pants have to be long all the way, but shouldn't be tight around the feet they have to be bell-shaped. I'm very concerned about pants, if it doesn't fit, I don't buy it." (c)

"... You know, if you've got a good mental picture, then it should be easy; it's usually only the length that is a problem. One can always shorten a pair of pants, but you can't make them longer: now that forces you only to buy clothes at certain shops. At this stage I can only buy pants at places like Q... or P... because I know their pants are long enough or they have wide hems for me to take out and lengthen the pants. I would, for example, never buy pants at W... if they aren't marked according to leg length." (f)

**The participants would take pains in evaluating their apparel for work because they have to wear it the whole day and they have to feel comfortable in it and it has to let them feel professional.**

"... The shoulders of tailored jackets shouldn't droop to the front or to the back because then it isn't tailored anymore. Nor should an item be too tight or too loose; it has to fit neatly, then it is comfortable. It isn't whether it is too short or too long, it is whether it is too narrow or too wide. It is either always falling down or fits very tightly and you are uncomfortable the livelong day. And also something such as a low neckline, especially because we work in a man's world one feels uncomfortable wearing it." (f)

"... I think it is easier because with formal clothes such as clothes for work, for example a suit, with a tailored suit you'll be much more fussy and you'll say: 'I want this and this and this, but with leisurewear one is much more casual when you shop. You are much more relaxed when you buy casual wear.'" (f)

**Comfort:** It appears that comfort was another important characteristic for the participants. According to the participants comfort includes aspects such as that



the garment should not be too tight, skirts should not be too short and that they should feel relaxed in their clothes. Evaluating the comfort usually occurred during the trying on stage (see sub-objective 1) and this required that the person tried the item on physically. Comfort relates to the fit of the apparel item. According to the participants a comfortable item has to be the correct size and that they shouldn't constantly be aware of the item.

"... Something that you can forget when you've put it on. It has to be the right size; it can't be too small because then it'll pinch you. Nor should it be too large because then you don't feel at your best – when something doesn't fit stylishly. It shouldn't hurt. I have to feel comfortable in it and be able to do the daily tasks without feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious in the clothes. It ought to provide you with self-esteem; when you can carry on with the work without being constantly concerned about what you're wearing." (a)

"... Neither too tight nor too loose. It has to feel comfortable and I must be able to move freely in it. I must also look nice for myself in it. If it doesn't look pretty I wouldn't buy it. I do like a pair of black pants or beige...pants of that type and it shouldn't come up too high either. It should be below my navel." (c)

"... It depends on what I am wearing, for work clothes I like to feel smart but also comfortable as you wear those clothes all day. For an evening, maybe more sexy, and you can put up with a little less comfort for this." (e)

How the textile feels on their skin also determined how the participants evaluated the comfort of an apparel item. Some textiles were experienced as uncomfortable as it caused physical discomfort (i.e. too hot, too cold or too scratchy) or emotional discomfort because of wrinkles, which give an unprofessional appearance.

"... Too much synthetic material that doesn't breathe. The natural fibres of course crease more. I always like cotton mixed with a bit of polyester: it just takes the edge off the wrinkles. Something that wrinkles is also a bother because you are aware that you're not looking as nice as when you got dressed that morning." (a)

"... Comfort means not having clothes too tight and having a nice material touching your skin. Some items of clothing look nice but are not as nice a material." (e)

"... This swish-swish material, it's rather like plastic. I'll never wear it. It is mostly wool that can be scratchy – it is something to take into account when you work long hours and you can't be up all day scratching." (f)

**Instructions for care:** It appears that the participants preferred items that do not require a lot of care. If they find an apparel product exceptionally appealing, they will buy it even if it requires additional care. The care for the textile was also important in terms of saving time (see the paragraph *Textile*, p. 138).

"...But it should be wearable and the care has to be straightforward. I often look at the labels." (a)



"... The skirt has to be washed by hand; I'm not very taken with it, but I find it most attractive." (g)

**Durability:** It seems that the participants felt the textile contributed in determining the durability of an apparel item. They also pointed out that they expect that more expensive items would be more durable.

"... To determine what materials are available and to discover the composition of the material, whether it is durable material or not. And when you hold it up to the light, whether it shines through or not; because then you know it won't last long." (f)

"... I think the type of material lends itself to you determining whether it will last. You buy some articles, thinking these have only to last one season and that's fine. Some things that have to last longer – I don't know. I don't directly look at quality; it is usually the other way. When I'm put off by something. It'll put me off if a hem is undone or if a button is working itself loose: then I won't buy that item." (h)

## 5.4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3 AND SUB-OBJECTIVES 7 TO 9: TO EXPLORE, DESCRIBE AND GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE THAT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INNOVATION NAMELY PERCEIVED RISKS, RELATIVE ADVANTAGES AND COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING APPAREL-PURCHASING PRACTISES PLAY IN PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S ADOPTION OF THE INTERNET FOR THE PURCHASE OF APPAREL

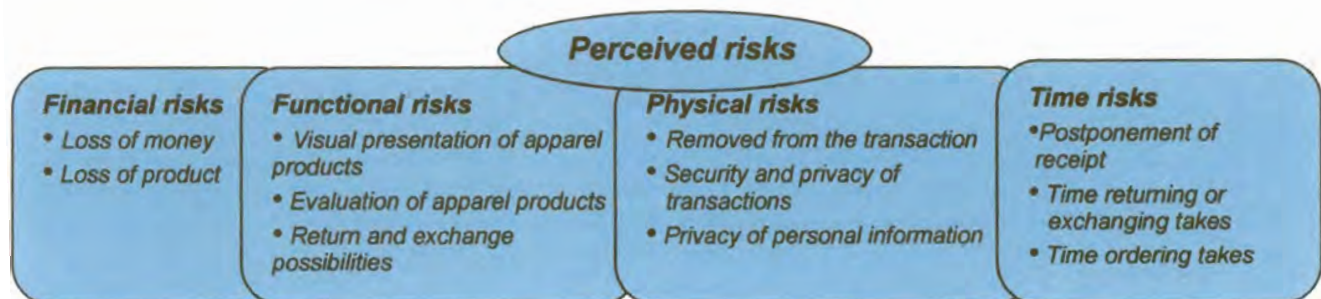
### 5.4.1 Sub-objective 7: What are the perceived risks professional women associate with the adoption of the Internet for the purchase of apparel?

The uncertainty consumers experience when the consequences of purchasing decisions cannot be predicted is regarded as risk perception or perceptual bias. Risk perception does not necessarily relate to reality, but with the uncertainty experienced by the consumer. Their uncertainties bear upon the purchasing

facilities (the use of credit cards), the impossibility to evaluate the clothing item or the delay in receiving the product.

The perceived risks consumers experience are adapted from Schiffman and Kanuk (2000:153) as well as Sproles and Burns (1994:202) the perceived risks are *financial, functional, physical, and time*. For the purposes of this study the above were used as specific categories and discussed as such. In each category further sub-categories were identified as these became apparent when an analysis was made of the data obtained for the present study. These sub-categories of the specific types of risks were categorised, discussed and verified by relevant verbatim responses.

A schematic visualisation of the various categories and sub-categories identified regarding the risks perceived by the participants in adopting the Internet for online apparel purchasing is presented in **FIGURE 7**.



**FIGURE 7: PERCEIVED RISKS**

#### **5.4.1.1 Financial risks**

During the interviews the participants referred to the financial risks that they experienced or associated with the Internet as a purchasing medium. Their responses include the following: "...I don't feel too happy about spending money on the Internet", "I



don't think I'll put my credit card on the Internet" and "A bit afraid; there are always things are always getting lost". These remarks were identified and encoded as financial risks. The specific sub-categories created for such financial risks are *loss of money* and *loss of product*. The sub-categories are discussed below and supported by relevant verbatim responses.

### ➤ *Loss of money*

The participants experienced financial risks in terms of purchases via the Internet. Some of the participants hold that spending money on the Internet has specific negative connotations, such as 'it is unsafe' or 'one will lose one's money' or 'the product or maybe both'. Some voiced the opinion that with extended use of the Internet for purchases they will consider a safer option such as buying on account or using a debit card. They felt that this is a better way to manage their losses.

"... I think that if it does become apparent that there are problems or if I do experience problems I'll change to a debit card. The problem with a debit card is that you always have to have enough money on the card otherwise they can't process the transaction. But you manage your losses better in this way. I'll consider this when my purchases via the Internet is appreciably more, but at this stage I have only one transaction a month on the Internet." (f)

"... I'm not very comfortable yet about spending money on the Internet." (h)

The loss of money, because of the lack of security, also plays a role in terms of financial risk. The participants experienced the high crime figures in South Africa as negative and that is given as a reason why they would rather not take financial risks on the Internet. Therefore they would preferred to buy on account or use a debit card to circumvent the deficient security.

"... If I buy on the Internet I would rather buy on an account that would be a safer option for me." (a)

"... I honestly don't think I will put my credit card on the Internet.." (d)

In addition the participants regarded the purchase of apparel products as a costly expenditure. This made it difficult for some participants to make a decision over the Internet. The loss of money or the product or both resulted in a perception of financial risk.



"... As usual, a difficult decision or if something is rather expensive. If you have to dish out the money at least it has to be the correct item and that can play a role on the Internet. There's this significant distance between you and that object you're buying so that might keep me back.

"... And it depends whether it is cheaper." (b)

#### ➤ *Loss of product*

Some of the participants voiced the concern that postal services in South Africa were not reliable and that they felt that products would get lost in the post.

"... I am a little bit scared that my things will get lost through the mail. And the other thing is you don't know how long you are going to have to wait for it." (b)

One participant, who regularly purchases groceries and perfume over the Internet, reported no risk in terms of product loss because of the available follow-facilities and the good service from the various delivery sections.

"... Not really because with present day's delivery you've got follow-facilities and with this you can at any time determine where the item is. I order my perfume through the Internet and it has always arrived here. I wouldn't buy it if it were to come through the ordinary mail. If it is handled by a delivery service then I'll buy. You know that you're getting good service and they take the responsibility in case of loss." (d)

After the stimulus technique session had been completed some of the participants were less scared and were prepared to pay with their credit cards. This could have been the result of exposure and knowledge gained.

"... If I think about it E... wasn't so bad I will pay with my credit card if I want to buy something in the future." (b)

#### 5.4.1.2 Functional risks

Through the combination of sub-objectives 1 and 2 it was clear that most of the participants evaluate an apparel item first by touching it and then evaluating it on the body by trying it on. The physical evaluation of the apparel was an important procedure for the participants in reaching a final decision. The inability of the participants to evaluate apparel could give rise to uncertainty in terms of the performance properties of the product or a lack thereof.

Some of the remarks made by the participants about the functional risks they have experienced or that they associate with the Internet as a purchasing medium include: “a picture doesn’t always look like the real thing”, “sometimes you don’t know how the material feels”, “you can’t really touch it” and “how do I try it on“. These responses were identified and encoded as functional risks. The specific sub-categories underlying these reactions of the participants include *visual presentation of apparel products*, *evaluation of apparel products*, *return and exchange possibilities*. The sub-categories will be discussed below and verified with applicable verbatim responses.

#### ➤ *Visual presentation of apparel products*

Because the participants could only visually evaluate apparel over the Internet it might mean that they experienced the process as negative. They said that a visual representation of apparel could be misleading and could lead to dissatisfaction when the ordered item did not fulfil their expectations.

“... For me the fear would be in...an item looks fantastic in a picture or on the shelf and then you try it on and it simply looks awful on you. So, you know, it’ll put me a bit off to order clothes over the Internet.” (a)

“... For me a picture isn’t always like the real thing. The photo always looks different to me.” (b)

“... From the picture you don’t know whether that is the thing you really want. That makes it a bit difficult.” (f)

“... You see the price and you see what it looks like. It is possible that you order something and then it isn’t what you’d expected.” (g)

#### ➤ *Evaluation of apparel products*

**Touch:** The participants also felt that because they could only evaluate the apparel product visually they were precluded from making any other form of assessment such as touch, trying it on, evaluating it on the body, general handling of the item and evaluating the quality.

“... I really enjoy going into a shop. Books are a different story; you know you want that specific book. You clearly identify what you want. The same with sunglasses: I knew the precise shape, the colour, everything. This is easier



than with clothes; you place your order and that is what you get, but with clothes...you've got the picture in front of you, but you don't know the texture of the material or how it'll fit you. It is a bit difficult because you don't really know what you're getting...and also the sizes and the material and textures. You know, I like to feel the material." (b)

"...I think that will be it. I would like to see what the material looks like. You can't really see what the material looks like over the Internet." (c)

"... Yes the fit and the quality. The main thing will be the material. Because what they do is they use cheap material then because you can't feel it. And you can tell if it is good material." (e)

"... Mere visuals aren't a problem because with Internet sales you can see what the item looks like. It has more to do with feeling, and the composition of the material and how does the material feel, how does it feel on your skin. What does it look like on you?" (f)

"... Maybe if you know what kind of material it is and how it feels, then you'll be better able to attach a sense of feel to it. Unhappily, I'm an auditor and if I don't have an opportunity to feel the material then I wouldn't know of what material it is made. If somebody told you it was a viscose and cotton mixture: do you know what it feels like? This is a large part of the reason why I don't buy clothes over the Internet. If somebody informed me that it was a one hundred percent cotton shirt then I know precisely what it is going to feel like." (f)

"... You can't really touch it. That would bother me a lot; you can't feel whether it's thick or thin, or whether it'll get wrinkled. I would first do research about the type of material. I wouldn't buy anything if I didn't know what material it was." (g)

"... I think it is easier to buy in this way than buying on the Internet where you're confronted with something you can't touch; you can't a three-dimensional view; and you can't try it on. But in a shop you can immediately realise but the fit is wrong or the colour isn't really you." (h)

The participants experienced the physical evaluation of apparel as problematic, especially handling and feeling the material. The participants perceived it as negative that they were not able to determine whether the material would crease, or get the feel of the material against their skin and were not able to handle the apparel product. The participants indicated that they would not buy an apparel item if they were not familiar with the textile.

**Try-on:** The trying on and physical evaluation of apparel were more negative aspects experienced by the participants. The trying on of the apparel item has a bearing on the evaluation of the quality of the product, its construction, various sizes, fit, appearance and comfort.

"... Yes, I mean, if you can't see a thing with your own eyes like that. You can't see what the stitches look like; what is the quality of the material; is it a wrinkle type of material: if you haven't got it in front of you I would be really hesitant in such a case." (a)



"... That you can't try on the clothes yourself. I've never considered buying clothes over the Internet. Clothes are a bit problematic because a person doesn't always know...especially the sizes...will this fit you?" (b)

"... For me this is quite serious; I wouldn't buy a thing I haven't tried on." (c)

"... I normally would try it on in any case. But the thing is you can't really say: I will go in and try it on rather and buy it in a shop. But I can see it here. (d)

"... That's a main thing the fit." (e)

"... My query is: 'How do I try it on?' Clothes is a lot about the feel and appearance, it is not like a tin of food...you want that brand...and you want this...it makes it all quite difficult." (f)

"... You can't try it on." (g)

"... I don't know, personally I don't think that I'll ever buy clothes over the Internet. For the good reason that I want to try it on. I think that that is the main reason why I see it as a no-no; why I regard it as negative. Something such as toothpaste where you know what you want is really easier. Clothes still have got that – it first has to look good on you before you can decide whether you want it." (h)

**Use of the senses:** Some of the participants felt that they could not make use of all their senses. It would appear that the participants thought that it was easier to purchase an item in a shop than over the Internet because you have the opportunity to do a thorough evaluation and base your decision on that.

"... Yes, I think the main issue is the uncertainty if you don't have it in front of you. You know: quality. You ask yourself: is this thing well made? Do you get value for what you paid...when you don't see the item physically in front of you." (a)

"... Yes, it's risky; you can't feel the material, nor can you try it on. You can't use all your senses, except seeing it." (g)

"... From the nature of the matter, because I know precisely what I want. That is really one of the drawbacks as far as clothes go – because you first want to experience it, be sure that that is what you want." (h)

### ➤ *Return and exchange possibilities*

The trying on of apparel goes hand-in-hand with exchange. Because they did not have an opportunity to try on the item before it is bought the participants were worried that they would not be able to exchange it if it does not fit upon receipt or that the exchange procedure would take even longer.

"... The ever-present fear is that if you buy something over the Internet and it doesn't suit you and you exchange it, say, for another number, but that doesn't mean that this other number is going to work either. Maybe it is just the cut that doesn't suit you. So that will still be why I would object to buy there."

"... Say for example that you're not satisfied with the product, how easy will it be to exchange it? You see if I buy something from W... and I find it doesn't work, then I know the procedure – it is easy to have the thing exchanged. That is what worries me." (a)

"... And what problems will I have about giving it back? It would be that kind of problems." (f)

#### 5.4.1.3 Physical risks

Specific physical risks were voiced about aspects that could possibly lead to any form of harm or prejudice related to the Internet as a channel for apparel purchasing. Regarding the aspects about the physical risks that could lead to specific loss or insecurity of the transaction, their personal details or the Internet the participants responded as follows: "We have so much crime in our country" and "You always feel a little bit exposed". These and similar remarks were encoded as physical risks. Specific sub-categories, relating to physical risks, were identified to better expound such reactions. The sub-categories include *removed from the transaction, security and privacy of transactions* and *privacy of personal information*. The sub-categories are discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

##### ➤ *Removed from the transaction*

Some of the participants regarded it as a risk that the exchange of money and receipt of the product did not immediately take place and this could lead to loss for the consumer. The Internet creates the impression, so it is felt, that the participant is distanced from her money because she is not present and in control in the handling of her credit card or cash.

"... Maybe it goes back to the distrust that people have about consumer aspects of the Internet and when they buy a thing over the Internet whether they'll ever receive it. If you don't immediately complete a transaction of money and getting the item then you're never sure that you will get it." (a)

"... I think that maybe I would have preferred it if operated where you put it on a card / account like at T..., so that it isn't directly linked to your bank; that you put it on your card and then you merely do a transfer to your card. I don't even know whether it is more or less safer; you feel so far removed from your money." (h)



➤ *Security and privacy of transactions*

Some of the participants were not really comfortable to make use of their credit cards over the Internet, but this was not seen as a significant risk. The participants were concerned about the security of the transaction and wary to provide personal details over the Internet. It would appear that the participants who had little exposure to and information about the Internet were more concerned than those who have previously made purchases over the Internet or use it regularly. The participants gave the high crime rate in South Africa as the reason why they were reluctant to supply credit card numbers and personal details over the Internet.

"... I also think we've got a lot of fraud in our country and that people are reluctant to give your credit card number over the Internet. There are many persons and articles dissuading you...that you shouldn't provide your personal details." (a)

"... It is a matter of exposure; it'll still take a few years. We're unfortunate to be in a country with a lot of fraud and petty crime; and every day on the news there is one or other scam of people asking money for products and services that are never provided." (a)

"... And all the other things that I don't like about the Internet...of the type of purchases...that you have to provide the number of your credit card...you really feel exposed." (a)

"... I'm still a bit wary...now that you're sitting here and, yes, I'm rather scared. If one were to buy with a debit card because then you don't have to provide the number of your credit card." (b)

"... I don't know whether I'd like to put my credit card on the Internet." (c)

"... I honestly don't think I will put my credit card on the Internet." (d)

➤ *Privacy of personal information*

It appears that some of the participants did not care to give their e-mail addresses over the Internet. Some participants were reluctant to give their e-mail address. Part of their reluctance stemmed from the fear that they might be inundated with junk mail and that their privacy might be invaded.

"... There are things for which I don't easily provide the number of my credit card. Yes...OK...but ID numbers and credit card numbers...it makes me scary." (a)

Some of the participants weren't uncomfortable to engage in a transaction or to provide their credit card numbers or personal details over the Internet. They felt that these were already available in various other places. The protection of their privacy was not the main concern for these participants.

"... There isn't really information that they can get except for what I buy. Your address and telephone number is on it but Pick 'n Pay have a policy that they don't give it out to others. Now, if that were to worry me, you see, my details are on the office database and anyone that hacks our server would be able to get it." (f)

"... No, that doesn't bother me. If it were as simple as all that, then the banks wouldn't have encouraged you to do business over the Internet. I don't consider that it is an issue anymore, that thing about 'all your data on the Internet'. In any case, your details are available everywhere." (g)

#### 5.4.1.4 Time risks

The participants mentioned specific time risks that could play a role in their adoption of the Internet for apparel purchasing. The time risks, as remarked upon by the participants, concerned the time it takes for the product to be delivered, or the participant's time taken up in ordering and exchanging the products. The remarks that were made, include: "if you need something urgently it won't work", "it is so much effort to send something back", "how long will you wait before you receive it" and "sometimes it takes long to loc-on". These remarks were encoded as time risks. Specific sub-categories, related to time risks, were identified as they provide a better understanding of the matter. These sub-categories include *postponement of receipt*, *time taken in returning or exchanging* and *time taken to order and have it delivered*. The sub-categories are discussed and verified with applicable verbatim responses.

##### ➤ *Postponement of receipt*

It appears that the participants did not necessarily find that purchasing apparel over the Internet as a timesaver. Part of the risk was the delay in receiving the goods. Some of the participants were of the opinion that they would like to take immediate possession of the items especially if these were urgently required for



an occasion. In addition, participants still had reservations about receiving apparel by mail. They had the perception that the postal service in South Africa is unreliable and that delivery would take longer than expected.

"... If you require something urgently it won't work because you want to wear it immediately. Obviously there has to be a time factor." (a)

"... And I would want it quite quickly as well. Start to wear it." (d)

### ➤ *Time taken in returning or exchanging*

The participants felt that an additional time risk was the time taken to exchange and return apparel items bought over the Internet. This was regarded as time potentially wasted. One of the participants said that the procedure could be quite costly with regard to the high costs of postage.

"... Yes, except if they say that if doesn't fit I may take it back, but it'll still be effort. I work opposite a centre: I can easily go there and try something on in a jiffy." (c)

"... It's more a hassle than anything else to me I would much rather try it on there." (d)

"... What am I to do if the things don't fit? The procedure that I'll have to go through to send it back and then getting my money back and to do all that follow-up. I think that might just put a damper on the idea of shopping over the Internet. Who says I'm not going to buy something from England, then I have to return it and all the expense to send it back. Or I might have bought something from the Cape and how do I get there...I'll have to incur the costs...because if I just ordinarily go and buy it at Menlyn, I can quickly go and exchange it on the way to a client or something like that. Killing two birds with one stone." (f)

"... The other thing is: when I buy on the Internet and it doesn't quite fit as it should, it is such a lot of 'schlep' to send it back. I'm very negative about this as far as clothes go. I'm still a long way from that reality. This is the major thing because when you buy something now and it doesn't fit as it should, you'll have to go through the whole effort to send it back and get your refunds and all that hassle." (h)

"... If were to go into a shop and I select ten items to try on I would, probably, buy one of them; and I selected those ten because I liked them and the only reason I didn't buy them was that they didn't fit right. So if I work with those statistics I'm going to send a lot of things here and there." (h)

### ➤ *Time taken to order and have it delivered*

The participants said that at times the ordering procedure was quite time consuming. This aspect does not necessarily only occur with the purchase of apparel, but could occur in terms of any other interaction with the Internet. The

time taken to place an order is an additional time risk that the participants experience. With apparel items they immediately want it in their possession and want to start wearing it.

"... That is the other thing how they deliver the items...that they deliver it directly at my front door. Because that is the idea: you must get it at your home." (a)

"... When you see something and you buy it...now you don't know how long you'll have to wait for what you've ordered." (b)

"... You know I then might as well just go and buy it. I would rather sit in my office and order it and have it delivered to the house and then if it's wrong, have it picked up from the house. That's called being very lazy but that's how it is. Otherwise it is quicker for me to go to Menlyn or to a shop." (e)

"... Sometimes it takes long to log on; it also depends on the time of day that you do it. I've noticed that when you work after hours that that problem is settled." (g)

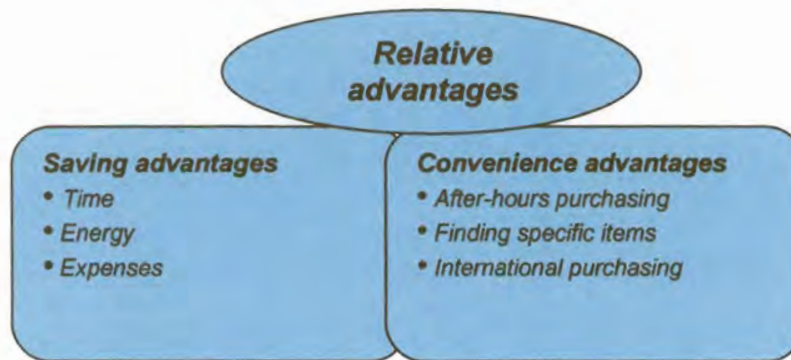
#### 5.4.2 Sub-objective 8: What relative advantages do professional women perceive when purchasing apparel via the Internet?

From the findings and specific risks experienced by the participants it was clear that the participants experienced specific uncertainties about accepting the Internet for their apparel purchasing. However, the participants also perceived certain advantages in using the Internet for apparel purchases and these were voiced as: "It is nice if there is something that you're specifically looking for", 'hopefully on the Internet you would be able to just get your size anyway', "It saves time: you don't have to hunt around for hours in the shops...it's very easy: you sit back in your chair and look at everything", "You can buy at any time" and "You're not limited to South African shops".

These responses were encoded as relative advantages. Specific sub-categories, connected to relative advantages, were identified as highlighting these responses. The sub-categories include *saving advantages and convenience advantages*. *Saving advantages* were further categorised as *time, energy and expenses*. *Convenience advantages* were further categorised as *after-hours purchasing, finding specific items, price comparisons, and international purchasing*. The sub-categories are discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.



A schematic visualisation of the various categories and sub-categories identified regarding the perceived relative advantages of adopting the Internet for online apparel purchasing is displayed in **FIGURE 8**.



**FIGURE 8: RELATIVE ADVANTAGES**

#### 5.4.2.1 Saving advantages

**Saving advantages** were further categorised as *time*, *energy*, and *expenses*. The sub-categories will be discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

##### ➤ *Time*

It would appear that the expectations of the participants, in terms of relative advantages, is related to saving of time and costs as well as saving of trouble and effort. The participants felt that the Internet has an advantage when a person required something specific and by using the Internet it may be easier to obtain the required item. The participants also regarded using the Internet as an advantage when they already knew the required size and were familiar with the specific store and its apparel products.

"... The Internet-bank makes things more easy...the fact that you can do it from your own home...it saves time. That is of course one of the main benefits that arrived with the Internet, it saves you time from doing menial jobs that aren't nice." (a)

"... I will use this web site just to save time ... to see what pants they've got and how much it costs." (c)

"... More about the fact that you can only walk through Menlyn so many times and you'd see everything. And it takes you probably more time than it would." (d)

"... It saves time 100%." (e)

"... Advantages would be it saves time, but then you wouldn't really as much browse. You would be buying specific. Is like if I buy groceries at Pick 'n Pay. I don't impulse buy. You won't impulse buy so much. Unless there's this really nice web site that you would like to spend a lot of time on. And then the return policy and the delivery is very convenient and the short time." (e)

"... On occasions it does happen that you haven't got the time and you've got this function over the weekend then it is fantastic you go on the computer and look and they send it to me. The only thing is: Is it going to fit you? Then you have to go back to the shop and return it, but what I'll do then I'll order a number of items to be on the safe side, for me it is this time thing when I'm in a hurry and then the Internet is a godsend." (g)

### ➤ **Energy**

It further appears that participants in general felt that the Internet not only saves time in terms of apparel purchases but also energy. They felt that the Internet was also helpful in dealing quickly with tedious tasks such as paying accounts or buying groceries. For one participant the relative advantages of the Internet appeared to outweigh the perceived risks. The advantages were not necessarily in terms of apparel purchases, but more in terms of routine purchases and the purchasing of products where the consumer knows what brand is required such as perfume.

"... You don't have to go into shops and spent hours searching." (b)

"... I imagine it'll be convenient for groceries when one first start doing it. As soon as one starts doing it and you get used to it and it is convenient you'll do it more often." (h)

### ➤ **Expenses**

Some of the participants were of the opinion that buying over the Internet was cheaper than making use of conventional stores. The savings, in terms of price, would compensate for the potential risks, risks that they in any case would have had doing shopping in the conventional manner.

"... Prices can also be cheaper." (b)



#### 5.4.2.2 Convenience advantages

*Convenience advantages* were further categorised as *convenience*, *after-hours purchasing*, *finding specific items* and *international purchasing*. The sub-categories will be discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

##### ➤ *Convenience*

Some of the participants regarded the convenience of using the Internet as a relative advantage. The fact that they could do their purchasing from the comfort of their homes as well as the convenience of shopping in such a manner because of time constraints due to work pressure was also seen as an advantage.

"... This winter we were very busy; most evenings arrived home at seven, half past seven...and you had bought these pants and you know it looks nice and, really, you would like more of them...then I would... If you basically know the product or the range and require more of those or in a different colour, or you know a certain line and you know you look well in a certain size." (a)

"... You can sit in your chair and look at everything." (c)

"...When you only have to buy a pair of stockings and maybe something else – to go to the stores then. I'm thinking about the convenience. They can come and deliver it." (f)

"...So, it is very easy. It takes 48 hours then you have it – wherever you are." (f)

Some of the participants found buying routine things, such as groceries, over the Internet as very convenient.

"...I didn't have sufficient time to go to the shops. For a long time now I wanted to try it. I easily feel claustrophobic, so I don't like a lot of people around me. And if you go and buy groceries at the end of the month then the shelves are bare. Then I decided it is easier to sit in my office and quickly place my order and have it delivered at home. And I also calculated that if I went to the grocers I myself had to take the item from the shelf, place it in the trolley, take it from the trolley, place it on the counter, from the counter back into the trolley, from the trolley into the car and from my car into the cupboard. What a lot of effort for which I haven't always got the time. Then I started buying over the Internet and I find it convenient. I place my order from my office and my groceries get delivered at home if my domestic is there. And she packs away everything for me. It is all about convenience." (f)

### ➤ *After-hours purchasing*

The participants also indicated that another advantage of the Internet was that they were able to do their purchasing at any time of the day, especially in the evenings when they had more time available.

"... You can buy anytime." (b)

"... What is nice about the Internet, you can shop for clothes after-hours even when the shops are closed. I think it is ideal for the professional woman. In the evenings when your children are asleep and your husband is sleeping you can quickly go and see what is available. You don't have to contend with a lot of people." (g)

### ➤ *Finding specific items*

The participants regarded the potential of the Internet to trace specific apparel items as a relative advantage; especially when they could not find what they were looking for in the store then it would be an advantage to look for it via the Internet.

"... And if you then, for example, can go on the Internet and you've got the serial number of something specific that you need and you look whether you can find it somewhere; now that would be wonderfully handy." (a)

"... I often see something that would look quite nice but then they don't have it in my size so hopefully on the Internet you would be able to just get your size anyway and order it or whatever. I saw something nice, I think it was at T... in Menlyn and it wasn't in my size so I said to them do you have it in my size and she said no do you want me to try another branch and by that stage I said no. I just want to try it on if it doesn't fit. It is not there and there now don't worry looking for it." (d)

"... The only thing I can think of is when you're really looking for something specific, then it'll be easier to get. I remember I once saw a dress that I wanted in a T... brochure. I went to the shop and I couldn't get it there. I think if you can do something like that. If you enter on the Internet and you notice something you can buy it immediately." (h)

### ➤ *International purchasing*

Some of the participants had access to international web sites and regarded the possible purchases from those as an advantage.

"... I think what makes shopping on the Internet so nice is that you are not limited to the South African shops. If something is available on the Internet you can easily buy it." (f)



#### 5.4.3 Sub-objective 9: How do professional women evaluate the compatibility of the Internet as an apparel-purchasing medium, with regards to their existing apparel practices?

The compatibility of the Internet as medium for purchasing apparel with the participants existing practises manifested in references made by them regarding similarities, differences, and possible solutions in the future. These references were coded in terms of the compatibility of the Internet. It seem as if the compatibility of the Internet as medium for apparel purchasing exists out of three categories. These categories are *incompatible*, *future compatibility* and *compatible*. Under each category various sub-categories were identified and coded. The sub-categories will be discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

A schematic visualisation of the various categories and sub-categories identified regarding the compatibility perceived by the participants regarding the adoption of the Internet for online apparel purchasing is displayed in **FIGURE 9**.



**FIGURE 9: COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING APPAREL-PURCHASING PRACTICES**

#### 5.4.3.1 Incompatibility

*Incompatibility* was further categorised as *significance of physical evaluation* and *risk perception*. The sub-categories will be discussed and verified with relevant verbatim responses.

##### ➤ *Significance of physical evaluation*

Some of the participants indicated that they would never make a final decision on the Internet because they felt a need to physically evaluate the apparel items. They cited trying on and getting the feel of the material as very important aspects when making a selection. They said that they would use the Internet to determine what items are available in the stores, but they would not use the Internet to make their final decision to purchase apparel.

"... I would never make my final decision on the Internet. I was wearing of using it because I never known about it. If you tell me what sites to look on I will go look. But what I imagine I will do is, look what is there and if I like something go to the store and buy it." (d)

"... But I would definitely, now that I have been introduced to this, look on here first to see what stuff is in the shops. But still I so often see things and think this is what I've been looking for and then you try it on and it doesn't look nice."

##### ➤ *Risk perception*

It seem as if the participants would reject the Internet for online apparel purchasing if they weren't able to incorporate this with their existing scripts, they weren't willing to absorb the risks associated with online apparel purchasing and the relative advantages were not enough to convince them other wise.

"...But I still think that I wouldn't buy from the Internet. I value the item too highly not to try it on. I wouldn't even take an item from the shop without trying it on first. Perhaps I'm just afraid of the risk, I want to know the thing fits and that it is something I want. I think it is because I'm a difficult shopper...I don't just buy on the spur of the moment. It takes a considerable time before I find a thing that fits...what I like...and that looks nice. I make certain while I'm in the store. I think that is what'll keep me from shopping over the Internet."



It would appear that the participants could reconcile the use of the Internet by searching for suitable alternatives, comparing prices and determining fashion trends, but they were still hesitant about making a final decision to go completely for the Internet as a means of doing their apparel shopping.

"...I'll compare prices but then I'll still go to the shop and try it on and then buy it. I'll definitely look [on the Internet], it'll save me trouble to hunt around in the shops, but I wouldn't buy." (c)

#### 5.4.3.2 Future compatibility

*Future compatibility* was further categorised as more *future time constraint*, *change in lifestyle* and *familiarity with stores, products and exchange policies*. The sub-categories are discussed subsequently and verified with relevant verbatim.

##### ➤ *Future time constraint*

It would appear that some of the participants found the Internet reconcilable with their existing apparel purchasing especially at times when they experience significant time constraints and when their working hours were of such a nature that it would be difficult for them to go to the stores to go and buy apparel.

"... I would do the same as now, I will go and look but I wouldn't buy. Maybe if I worked 10 hours a day, 7 days a week I would opt to buy online. But I like to go shopping – it's an outing."

##### ➤ *Change in lifestyle*

Some of the participants did say that in future they would consider purchasing over the Internet, especially when their lifestyle were to change and were of such a nature that they could not go to the stores anymore: for example if they have children and are therefore less mobile. In cases such as these they would find the use of the Internet convenient.

"... At present one is quite mobile; our time is your own; you've got a lot more freedom. But I think that as soon as your life becomes complicated, you know, with children, when you're tied down then I would more easily buy clothes over the Internet and accept the risk that it might not fit. And if I have some time I'll go and exchange it, but there is the possibility that it might work." (a)

"... I'll definitely consider it: to buy over the Internet. I'll start by buying one item first just to see how it works out. I think I'll do it systematically that way. I think I'll try it and depending on the result I'll do it again. If it goes well, I'll carry on. I think it's ideal for the professional woman." (g)

### ➤ *Familiarity with stores, products and exchange policies*

It appears that the knowledge that the participants have of the type of products and sizes available at a specific store would convince them to accept the Internet for apparel purchasing in the future. The participants experienced fewer risks and were prepared to purchase apparel via the Internet if they knew the store's approach as to the sizes in stock, type of products, quality and exchange policies.

"... But the W... web site...I think I'll definitely buy within the next two to three years as my life becomes more complicated. And with clothes...it would be interesting to see what they add to the basics. When you consider that you already buy groceries, then it should be quite easy to buy a pair of socks or stockings as well." (a)

"... I do think that I'd buy clothes from T... over the Internet, because I know their sizes and it's going to fit me. The only thing I'm not sure about is how I'm going to exchange things." (g)

Participants felt that they would be prepared to incorporate Internet purchases with their existing apparel purchases if it was guaranteed that the return or exchange of items could be done easily.

"...It's difficult...you'd like some kind of guarantee about the quality and about the type...whether you can exchange it when you're not satisfied, and that the process would be easy. Well, yes, the fact that you can't see the clothes physically somewhere...most probably there'll be a picture on the Internet. For me that would be the most important." (a)

#### 5.4.3.3 Compatible

*Compatibility* was further categorised as more *willing to take the risk and relative advantages*. The sub-categories are discussed subsequently and verified with relevant verbatim.



### ➤ *Willing to take the risk*

Some of the participants could reconcile the Internet with their existing apparel purchasing procedures. They were prepared to take the risk and began by buying apparel selectively over the Internet. They would first buy from a South African store before considering international e-stores.

"... It's a gamble, but I'm going to try it. I would like to go on LL Bean, especially because you can enter your measurements. I've considered maybe to order a cardigan or a jersey set for myself for this winter. I noticed that they had them when I was on the web site just now." (f)

"... Do you know? I'm going to try it and see how it works. From our discussions I've realized what I'm looking at. At the end of the day you're looking at the material...the composition, washing instructions...and LL Bean they are wonderful...they show all these things. I'm going to try it and see how it works. I'm prepared to take the chance...now that I've discovered what wonderful web sites there are. I won't make my first purchases from London; I'll do it locally and see what problems I might run into before attempting it overseas. The other day I accidentally entered Woolworth's web site and discovered that you can now even buy clothes and I thought to myself I ought to try this...so, I've already had the idea of buying some things over the Internet." (f)

### ➤ *Relative advantages*

The preponderance of the relative advantages was sufficient for some of the participants to convince them to make use of the Internet for their purchases. The advantages include the saving of time and effort. References by friends are also experienced positively and reaffirm the relative advantages.

"... I said to myself: 'Let me try it, if I'm lucky then it makes it all so much easier for me', because, as I've said, there aren't really such type of clothes for businesswomen in South Africa. We're still very informal, we're not yet geared for the corporate style. And I saw wonderful things on LL Bean. What I also...so, they've got very beautiful chino's for women, which makes it easy when we've got an informal function or for casual business because the men wear chino's...so you can wear it as well. I'm really going to try it, I just need an opportunity to go and look again to set up my profile." (f)

"... But I haven't had the opportunity to go back and see whether I'd like to order anything, but one of our friends told us he gets his shirts for work from England and that we should all buy together to save on postage. So we're all going to buy things together. I am going to try on my friend's work blouse so we can determine...because we are much of the same size...whether I like it. Then I'm going to order myself a few blouses and for Paul some work shirts. You apparently don't need to iron the shirts...you merely wash them and hang them out, because the domestics iron them till they shine on the seams and the collars. We're going to try it and see how it works. It's a bit more expensive but worth the trouble." (f)

#### 5.4.3.4 Compatibility of types of apparel

The types of apparel that the participants were willing to purchase over the Internet, if they were to consider using the Internet for this purpose, varied amongst the participants. It seems as if the participants were not keen on purchasing pants over the Internet, as the trying on of such items are important. In addition it appears as if the participants would rather consider loose-fitting garments, such as training outfits and sleepwear, because the trying on and fit is less of a consideration. The table below provides the types of clothing that participants would consider to purchase over the Internet as well as the apparel products that they would never consider to purchase in this manner.

**TABLE 4: TYPES OF APPAREL PRODUCTS THAT PARTICIPANTS WILL OR WILL NOT PURCHASE OVER THE INTERNET**

	Will purchase over the Internet	Will not purchase over the Internet
<b>Lingerie and sleepwear</b>	<p>"...Something less expensive and more routine stuff. T-shirts and underwear. But I would be nervous to buy expensive and more specialised work clothes." (a)</p> <p>"... Sleepwear I will buy because it doesn't have to fit perfectly." (h)</p>	<p>"... I don't think I will even buy underwear over the Internet." (c)</p> <p>"...I think underwear." (f)</p>
<b>Formal and specialised wear</b>	<p>"...I can't imagine that someone can buy formal clothes like that jacket suit over the Internet. But a basic thing especially if you know your size at a specific store..."(a)</p> <p>"... I will not buy an evening dress over the Internet but basic stuff such as golf shirts or T-shirts I will." (f)</p>	
<b>Work, casual and outer wear</b>	<p>"...I have to say jeans. I am used to W...s jeans. Maybe that is why I would do it." (f)</p> <p>"... Something like a skirt or a blouse because I am fairly sure about my size." (b)</p>	<p>"... Things like pants I would not likely buy over the Internet because I know I have to fit it on first." (b)</p>



<b>For other members of the household</b>	<p>"... My husbands golf shirts would be the easiest for me to buy because a golf shirt looks like a golf shirt." (f)</p> <p>"...I would order kids clothes and I would buy for my husband. I know his size and I know his stuff fit perfectly." (b)</p> <p>"... men's shirts are all-over the same. If he needs a white shirt then it is easy. You don't get to many variations." (g)</p>
<b>Other</b>	<p>"... I will buy accessories such as handbags and hats."</p>
<b>Sports and active wear</b>	<p>".... I would rather buy exercise clothes because the fit is easier than a dress or jeans that have to fit right.</p>

#### 5.4 CONCLUSION

The interpretations and conclusions of the findings are presented in **CHAPTER 6**. Integrated interpretations and conclusions and implications of the findings regarding all the participants were made according to the schematic conceptual framework developed for the study.