

University of Pretoria etd – Retief, A (2007)

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ONLINE GUIDE FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF  
APPAREL TEXTILE QUALITY**

**Ardina Retief** (née De Klerk)

**Thesis**

**PhD Cons Sc (Clothing Management)**

**Supervisor: Prof HM de Klerk**

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by

**Ardina Retief** (née De Klerk)

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**PhD in Consumer Science (Clothing Management)**

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**Department of Consumer Science**

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**Supervisor: Prof HM de Klerk**

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# **S**UMMARY

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## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ONLINE GUIDE FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF APPAREL TEXTILE QUALITY**

by

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Supervisor: Prof HM de Klerk  
Department: Consumer Science  
Degree: PhD in Consumer Science: Clothing Management

In this study the objective is firstly to determine which quality cues adult female consumers use when purchasing apparel for formal and casual daywear. The second objective is to use this information to develop an online guide for apparel consumers. As no South African apparel retail website currently supplies more than sizing and care related information, this study could fill the need for more textile information that could serve as a guide when consumers purchase garments on the Internet.

Although studies concerning the Internet as new shopping environment and the Internet consumer are on the increase, only a few studies have been specifically aimed at the problems that online apparel consumers encounter regarding the disadvantages of not being able to actually see, touch / handle or try on the garment before making the decision to buy (Beck, 2002; Fiore & Jin, 2003, Sasaki, Ikeda & Shimizu, 2004).

A need also exists for empirical research on the South African Internet apparel consumer as, with one exception (Jacobs, 2003), the studies referred to were planned and executed in America, Asia and, to a lesser extent, in a European context. Another important issue in the South African context is that very little textile information is supplied in any retail environment. Consumers often have only a very limited textile knowledge, which is usually based on experience. By developing and implementing a consumer guide, consumers could be educated to demand more accurate and informative textile labelling to help them when making purchase decisions.

This research is descriptive as an attempt is made to describe and understand behaviour, tendencies, and situations. It is exploratory as it aims to obtain insight into a relatively new area of study, namely the online consumer of textile products. The last phase of the study can be seen as applied evaluation research as the testing of the effectiveness of the quality assessment guide is the ultimate goal of the research.

A social-cognitive perspective was used in the study. Consumer decision-making theory and script theory are both used to explain consumer behaviour in the new Internet environment.

Career women took part in the study. A quantitative research style was used. For both the first and final phases of the study structured questionnaires were used and the snowball sampling technique was used as primary sampling method. The responses to the questionnaires were coded, captured and analysed.

From the results it is apparent that South African career women lack general textile knowledge and seldom have the ability to relate physical fibre and fabric properties to performance properties. They therefore often act on their emotions

during apparel assessment and purchasing. The results underline the importance of supplying textile information to facilitate decision-making. Results from the final phase of the study indicate that by supplying information the online consumer is able to make more confident decisions.

The study makes a valuable contribution to understanding consumer behaviour, especially in a South African context. The results contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the Internet apparel consumer.

# **S**AMEVATTING

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## **DIE ONTWIKKELING VAN 'N AANLYN GIDS VIR DIE BEOORDELING VAN KLEDINGTEKSTIELKWALITEIT**

deur

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Die doel van die studie was eerstens om te bepaal watter kwaliteitsaanduiders deur volwasse vroulike verbruikers gebruik word tydens die aankoop van bo-klere vir formele en informele dagdrag. 'n Tweede doelwit was om die inligting, verkry uit die eerste fase van die studie, te gebruik vir die ontwikkeling van 'n aanlyn gids vir kledingverbruikers. Aangesien geen Suid-Afrikaanse kleding kleinhandelwebwerf meer as net die grootte van klere-items en versorgings-instruksies verskaf nie, kan hierdie studie die behoefte aan meer tekstielinligting bevredig en ook as gids dien vir kleinhandelaars wanneer hulle hul webwerwe ontwerp.

Alhoewel studies wat handel oor die Internet as nuwe koopomgewing en die Internetverbruiker aan die toeneem is, is slegs enkele studies gerig op die probleem wat aanlyn kledingverbruikers ondervind weens die feit dat die kledingstuk nie werklik gesien, aangeraak of aangepas kan word voor die aankoopbesluit geneem word nie (Beck, 2002; Fiore & Jin, 2003, Sasaki, Ikeda & Shimizu, 2004).

Daar bestaan ook 'n behoefte aan empiriese navorsing oor Suid-Afrikaanse Internet kledingverbruikers, aangesien die studies, op een uitsondering na (Jacobs, 2003), in die VSA, Asië en, tot 'n mindere mate, in Europa beplan en uitgevoer is. Nog 'n belangrike aspek in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks is dat baie min tekstielinligting in enige kleinhandelomgewing aan die verbruiker verskaf word. Verbruikers het dikwels 'n gebrekkige tekstielkennis en die beperkte kennis wat sommige wel het, is dikwels op ondervinding baseer. Die ontwikkeling en implementering van 'n verbruikersgids kan 'n bydrae maak tot die opvoeding van verbruikers om meer eise te stel vir akkurate en omvattende tekstieletikettering om hulle te help met die besluitnemingsproses.

Hierdie navorsing is beskrywend, aangesien 'n poging aangewend word om gedrag, neigings en situasies te beskryf en te verstaan. Dit is verkennend omdat daar gepoog is om insig in 'n relatief nuwe studie-gebied, naamlik die aanlyn verbruiker van tekstielprodukte, te verkry. Die laaste fase van die studie kan as toegepaste en evalueringsnavorsing beskou word, aangesien die uittoets van die effektiwiteit van die gids die uiteindelijke doel is.

'n Sosiaal-kognitiewe perspektief is in die studie gebruik. Verbruikersbesluitnemingsteorie en geskrif(teks)-teorie is beide gebruik om verbruikersgedrag in die nuwe Internet-omgewing te verduidelik.

Beroepsvroue is by die studie betrek. 'n Kwantitatiewe navorsingstyl is gebruik. Vir beide die eerste en finale fases van die studie is gestruktureerde vraelyste en die sneeubal steekproefnemingstegniek is as primêre metode gebruik. Die response op die vraelyste is gekodeer, vasgelê en geanaliseer.

Die resultate toon dat Suid-Afrikaanse beroepsvroue 'n gebrek het aan algemene tekstielkennis en selde die vermoë besit om die verband tussen die fisiese vesel- en kledstofeienskappe met die gedragseienskappe in verband te bring. Hulle steun op



hul emosies tydens die beoordeling en aankoop van kledingprodukte. Die resultate onderstreep die belangrikheid van die verskaffing van tekstielinligting om besluitneming te fasiliteer. Die resultate van die finale fase dui daarop dat, indien voldoende inligting aan die aanlyn verbruiker verskaf word, hulle met meer selfvertroue besluite kan neem.

Die studie maak 'n waardevolle bydrae tot 'n beter begrip van verbruikersgedrag, veral in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die resultate dra by tot die teoretiese kennis oor die Internet kledingverbruiker.

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