Male consumers' evaluation of apparel assortments in South African speciality stores

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Dissertation

Masters Degree in Consumer Science: Clothing Retail Management

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by

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I dedicate this to God, my family and friends.

DECLARATION

I, Mareli van Belkum, declare that this research study is my own original work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master in Consumer Science: Clothing Retail Management, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research and all reference material in the dissertation has been duly acknowledged.

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Mareli van Belkum

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SUMMARY

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Consumer behaviour and spending habits have changed drastically post-recession. This has affected how retailers conduct their business, driving retailers' focus towards providing customers with the value they require. One way in which retailers can offer such value is through the implementation of advanced product assortment. Product assortments influence consumers' purchasing decisions and their preferences for particular retailers, thereby making it an important factor in retailers' strategy to maintain their success. Retailers' product assortments which focus on male apparel consumers, such as speciality stores, are of particular importance as men represent a lucrative segment of the apparel industry. Speciality stores specialise in specific merchandise such as menswear and develop their apparel assortment to concentrate on certain customers such as male consumers. Although men are becoming more prevalent in retail venues and have taken responsibility for their own apparel shopping, research regarding male apparel consumers and their purchasing behaviour, particularly within the context of South Africa, is scarce. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the product attributes used by male consumers when evaluating apparel product assortment of South African speciality stores.

The evaluation stage of the decision making process formed the basis of this study. Therefore, it was decided that the consumer decision making framework would be best suited as the theoretical framework. Namely, the consumer behaviour model of Hawkins

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and Mothersbaugh (2013) was used to guide the study. During the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process, male consumers will use product attributes they consider important when evaluating the product assortment of speciality stores. Product attributes include intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes and male apparel consumers will employ the use of compensatory decision rules, allowing them to make trade-offs among these attributes.

The study employed an exploratory survey research design which was quantitative in nature. Non-probability sampling methods were used to collect the necessary data for the study. This included convenience and snowball sampling. Respondents completed a structured questionnaire which was developed according to the constructs implemented in the study and administered in a paper based and online electronic form. The sample included 204 male consumers, located in the greater Tshwane area, Gauteng. The majority of the sample were between the ages of 20-29, representing a relatively young sample. Conjoint analysis and exploratory factor analysis was applied to gain insight regarding the product attributes South African male apparel consumers apply when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. The conjoint analysis technique allows consumers to make trade-offs among attributes as they compare one attribute to another while evaluating assortments, thereby providing an indication of their actual preference structure. Cluster analysis was also performed on the conjoint data to provide additional information regarding male consumers' preferences when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. By combining conjoint analysis with cluster analyses, the findings provided valuable information regarding the segmentation and socio-economic factors that may affect consumers' preferences.

The results of the study indicated that South African male consumers employed both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. During the conjoint analysis, brand (extrinsic attribute) was the most important attribute among male consumers when making trade-offs between intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes. Male consumers' preference for brand is an indication of brand consciousness. Style (intrinsic attribute) was the second most preferred attribute, followed by store image (extrinsic attribute). The exploratory factor analysis rendered three factors, labelled "Prestige sensitivity", "Added value" and "Importance of fit". These factors were a further indication of the evaluative criteria male consumers consider important when evaluating and selecting speciality stores' product assortment. The results from the cluster analysis identified a four cluster solution, namely: style guys, cluster origin guys, brand

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loyalist and colour guys. This demonstrates that different consumer groups have distinct preferences when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. The study adds value and insight to current literature regarding male consumer behaviour and their preferences for certain intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. This research can be beneficial to manufacturers, retailers and marketers who seek to enhance their merchandise mix by offering customised product assortments, improve advertising campaigns and ensure well trained sales staff.

Keywords: male consumers, speciality stores, product assortment, intrinsic product attributes, extrinsic product attributes**,** conjoint analysis

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CHAPTER 1: THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

The South African retail landscape has undergone a significant change, brought about by the economic crisis. This change is most evident in consumers' behaviour and their spending habits post-recession, critically affecting the manner in which retailers conduct business. This resulted in retailers becoming more customer-centred and competitive. Retailers' focus on delivering the value required by their customers will be essential to their business practices. Providing such value will be achieved through the development of advanced product assortments which provide both utility and functional features in addition to various advantages and benefits (Raidoo, Serakwane, Richards, Maharaj, Naidoo & Butler, 2011; Strydom, 2015:192).

1.1   GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

Extensive and inescapable uncertainty was brought about with the 2008 global financial crisis and the recession that pursued (PWC, 2012:vi), leaving business landscapes significantly changed (Piercy, Cravens & Lane, 2010:3). Although the world economy is now showing signs of improvement, the resilience in world markets and improved outlook should be considered as a situation in which widespread risk is still persistent (Department of National Treasury, 2013:11).

South Africa did not manage to escape the global downturn totally unharmed (Thomas White International, 2011:2). The global financial crisis had a definite impact on the country (PWC, 2012:vi). The full throttle of the global events were felt by South Africa in 2009, as the gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by 1.3% (PWC, 2012:vi) and the country entered a recession after 17 years of positive GDP growth (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:6). Even though at a slower rate than expected by the 2012 Budget, projections of continued growth for the South African economy is forecasted. GDP growth was anticipated to reach 2.7% in 2013, 3.5% in 2014 and 3.8% in 2015 (Department of National Treasury, 2013:11). Although the impact of the global recession was noticeable in many sectors throughout South Africa, the retail sector managed to prevail against the worst of the recession due to South African consumers' resilience and the emerging middle class's growing spending power (PWC, 2012:1; Thomas White International, 2011:9).

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1.2   ECONOMIC CRISIS EFFECT ON SA RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

The recession of 2008 and 2009 had an evident effect on the retail trade sales as it grew by negative 3.67%, nevertheless, the industry bounced back in 2010 with a recorded trade sales growth of 5.1%. The retail industry's contribution to GDP was predicted to increase from an estimated R106 billion in 2011, representing a 5.6% of GDP, to R122 billion by 2015, reaching a 5.5% of GDP (Department of National Treasury, 2012:36). The thriving retail market, in terms of economic activity, can be attributed to exceedingly ambitious and brand conscious consumers (PWC, 2012:2). An increase in rigorous economic activity has also been able to take place as South Africa's infrastructure has both improved and modernised, (Department of National Treasury, 2012:4). This is evident with the increase in the development of formal retail shopping centres which has transpired (Department of National Treasury, 2012:36). The industry is set to grow even further as major retailers specify their plans to set up additional stores (Department of National Treasury, 2012:36). According to the Gauteng Province Quarterly Bulletin (Department of National Treasury, 2012:36), an encouraging future is anticipated for the retail industry. This is especially true for the South African apparel retail industry (Marketline, 2014:7).

South Africa's retail industry has received a great deal of attention internationally as it joined the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) alliance and as a consequence of the countries emerging economic status, has presented increasing opportunities (Finardi, 2015:1140; Thomas White International, 2011:7). As such, new entrants have found the South African apparel retail industry attractive following its strong growth (Marketline, 2014:16). The possibility of new entrants into the market is high as the barriers to entry are very low and the requirements for capital is also moderately low (Marketline, 2014:13). This can be seen by the number of international brands which have recently arrived in South Africa. These include the Spanish retailer Zara, who arrived late 2011, and the US retailer Gap, with the opening of its first store in the country in March 2012. Specifically the 'fast fashion' approach offered by Zara, which entails the introduction of new styles on a permanent basis, will create challenges for local retailers forcing them to become more efficient. (PWC, 2012:15). New entrants will effortlessly compete with existing players due to consumer's low switching costs and low product differentiation levels, thus creating a strong threat to the South African apparel retail industry (Marketline, 2014:16).

Another disruptive force retailers are faced with, is the alternative to retail, namely the increasing number of pure-play online fashion stores in the marketplace. Online stores are now offered by all major apparel retailers as consumers are becoming more accepting of the internet as a different shopping route (Marketline, 2014:17). Global retailers view an online presence as an extension to their business model and use this as a platform to create opportunity in areas where impressions overseas are substantially limited (Afena Capital, 2012:24). Internationally, online retail is transforming the industry and leading fashion towards continued globalisation (Afena Capital, 2012:24). In terms of South Africa, the growth in internet access has accelerated as a result of a more competitive market (PWC, 2012:3; W&RSeta, 2013:32). The expansion of online retailing is aided by the evident increase in skilled internet users (W&RSeta, 2013:19). Most of the e-commerce market is engaged in non-food goods such as books, music and DVD's (PWC, 2012:22; W&RSeta, 2013:32). Internet retailers are faced with challenges concerned with consumer's willingness to conduct business online as not many people are willing to disclose personal information, such as banking details, over the internet as a result of high levels of fraud risk in credit cards worldwide (W&RSeta, 2012b:143). What has, however, enhanced revenue for store-based retailers with highly informative websites, are customers who verify product availability online and go in-store to complete the purchase (W&RSeta, 2012b:143). Consumer's slow adoption regarding online retailing may be attributed to factors such as the customers wanting to feel the product before purchasing, a lack of proper product knowledge in terms of quality and value for money and the available internet connectivity at household level (W&RSeta, 2012b:144-145).

As a result of the downturn weaker competitors will be eliminated. In the retail industry, the collapse of weaker players will serve as an opportunity to those who are stronger. Weaker competitors are eliminated as they are too distressed to actively defend their positions thereby allowing unrestricted access to their market share. (Piercy *et al.*, 2010:9, 10). Local retailers who have not modernised their offerings will find it difficult to compete in the market when faced with the inevitable entry of foreign retailers (Department of National Treasury, 2012:35) and, although to a lesser extent, online fashion stores.

The level of rivalry within the South African apparel retail industry has nevertheless decreased with the assistance of strong growth in recent years (Marketline, 2014:13) and predictions for further increase in growth levels of the apparel industry is set to follow through to 2018. Clothing revenue was estimated to increase by 14.7% over the period of 2012 to 2016 (PWC, 2012:27). In the year 2013, the South African apparel retail industry

grew by 10.7% with reported total revenue of $7.6 billion (Marketline, 2014:8). Amidst these growth predictions for the apparel retail industry and despite overcoming the global events, the aftermath of the recession has left firms facing an environment in which purchasing and consumer behaviour patterns have changed drastically (Piercy *et al.*, 2010:12; Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:9).

1.3   CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND RETAILERS REACTION TO ECONOMIC CRISIS

With the South African retail landscape undergoing a gradual yet significant shift (W&RSeta, 2012a:74), retailers are in agreement that the largest effect of the global economic crisis in businesses has been on consumer behaviour (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:4). As such, a shift regarding consumer behaviour and spending patterns is evident, both locally and internationally (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:7). Pressure on consumers' wallets has increased and consumers in turn are trading down as they become more price conscious (PWC, 2012:11). The future customers are those who have actually experienced the 2008 to 2009 financial crises and will continue to live with lingering ambivalence (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:4). The South African consumer's spending pattern in the post-recession remains conservative as people hold on to the lessons learnt during the recession. These behavioural changes are said to remain constant into the anticipated future (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:7). As a result, South African retailers now face various challenges including the changing buying habits of their customers (Department of National Treasury, 2012:35). The time has never been more significant than now to understand and know how value is being redefined by customers and the way in which their buying preferences and behaviours are changing.   Gaining the necessary knowledge and information about consumer trends is imperative (Piercy *et al.*, 2010:15). Thus, defining consumer trends and obtaining important insight to aid in future planning are essential issues to which retailers must attend (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:4).

As the recession has forced retailers to respond with different strategies to retain customers (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:11) the level of a company's success will be based on its ability to identify, react and capitalise on changing consumer behaviour (PWC, 2012:vii). The new strategies which will be required must take advantage and deal with the various opportunities, risks and challenges brought about by the economic recovery (Piercy *et al.*, 2010:3). The factors which retailers should consider to maintain long term success include

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ongoing consumer focus, a supply chain which is efficient and conducting business at a low cost (PWC, 2012:vii). It is also essential that executives re-examine their business model fundamentals in preparation of the post-recession. A review of core capabilities ensuring exceptional value, which will be demanded by customers in post-recession, must be implemented (Piercy *et al.*, 2010:3). One of the most significant factors of retail strategy includes product assortment (Simonson, 1999:366) and through the optimisation of product assortment retailers can improve their position in the current economic environment (PWC, 2012:18).

Furthermore, the South African economy is identified as a consumer-driven economy (Thomas White International, 2011:9) and consumer spending has been an important factor in keeping the economic growth positive (PWC, 2012:35), making it crucial for organisations to effectively and efficiently take action where changing consumer behaviours are concerned (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:7). Sufficient quantities of information must be collected by consumer businesses about products, inventory flows and consumer behaviour. Information such as this is processed and used to manage efficient supply chains and ensure quick response to changing consumer behaviour (W&RSeta, 2012a:76). Consequently, attention should be given to the purchasing patterns of consumers in terms of their changing value requirements (Piercy *et al.*, 2010:3), specifically male consumers as they constitute a viable portion of the active economy. Companies must have comprehensive insight into male customer needs, translating such need into a value proposition. It is crucial to a company's competitiveness that the customer value proposition is aligned with the supply chain model (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:9). Therefore successful players in the period of post-recession will be identified by their shift towards value rather than price-based competition (Piercy *et al.,* 2010:17).

1.4   THE MENSWEAR MARKET

The menswear market of South Africa consists of men's active-wear, casual wear, essentials, formal wear, formal wear-occasion and outer wear (Marketline, 2014:7). The male apparel segment rendered revenues of $2.2 billion in 2013 which accounted for 28.2% of the SA industry's aggregate value (Marketline, 2014:7). Although not as lucrative as the women's wear segment, with total revenues of $3.9 billion and contributing 51.4% to the industries overall value (Marketline, 2014:7), the male consumer market is growing rapidly. Otnes and McGrath (2001:111) argue that men are not only becoming more

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prevalent in retail venues, but those who shop have achieved gender role transcendence. Considering male consumers are more involved in the shopping activity, this segment has received very little attention in literature and demands a better understanding of how male apparel consumers behave inside a specific retail environment (Thomas, 2009:1). To maintain relevance in this competitive industry, retailers must differentiate their market offerings. This is especially true for retailers operating in the menswear segment of South Africa.

South African male apparel consumers are not a homogenous market segment (Du Preez, Visser & Zietsman, 2007:16). Torres, Summers and Belleau (2001:205) argue that the menswear industry has dramatically changed due to men's lifestyle changes; environmental changes are redefining what it means to be a man. Du Preez *et al.* (2007:16) found that generation X and Y male apparel consumers are highly media-orientated. Marketing icons and images infiltrate into most forms of media which are constantly displayed to consumers (Marketline, 2014:14). Magazines regarding men's lifestyle are considered as a representative site and mobilising force essential towards cultural shifts in masculinity (Benwell, 2003:7). Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:237) describe a new kind of young male consumer whose behaviour supports the changes in society and the socialisation process. This male consumer is characterised by desires for new fashions and leisure shopping.

As fashion consciousness amongst men is becoming more apparent (Bakewell, Mitchell & Rothwell, 2006:169; Lee, 2001:65; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:341), having the latest fashion in stock is crucial, thereby enhancing consumers overall store satisfaction (Torres *et al.*, 2001:211). Speciality stores are an important channel where consumers can shop for fashion goods (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi & Gill, 2008:307). According to Lewison (1997:852), a speciality store is a retail format specialising in specific merchandise offerings. Speciality stores typically confine their merchandise to limited or narrow product categories e.g., shoes, only menswear or only accessories (Diamond, 2006:5). The focus of speciality stores is geared towards a relatively narrow apparel or goods segment with the objective of attracting a particular target consumer, such as men (Rath *et al.*, 2008:307). The product assortment offered by a speciality store is therefore important with regard to reaching the identified target customer, as well as reaching retailers' various goals and objectives in terms of financial gain (Clodfelter, 2008:250).

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Furthermore, it is important for retailers to gain insight into how male consumers evaluate product assortment as studies have shown that product assortment influences consumers' decisions (Chernev, 2003:151). When evaluating product assortment, consumers make use of different consumer decision rules to help with their decision making. Such decision strategies provide guidelines, making the process less strenuous (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit, 2010:491). Consumers use product attributes, which can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic cues, in product evaluation (Jamal & Goode, 2001:142) and consequently in the evaluation of apparel product assortment. Cues are diagnostic indicators which express certain information regarding the degree of a valued attribute and can therefore be described as information pieces used by consumers to evaluate products (Connolly & Srivastava, 1995:219, 220). When consumers consider sets of product attributes they use compensatory and non-compensatory decision rules (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:366). The compensatory decision rule offers a unique feature giving an assortment the chance to make up for the limitations of its attribute offering (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:367). Consequently it can be argued that in following the compensatory decision rules, South African male consumers use apparel cues (information pieces) to evaluate apparel assortment in speciality stores. It is unclear however which apparel cues, or product attributes, male consumers consider important when evaluating apparel product assortments in speciality stores.

In addition to the fashion consciousness trait, male consumers also seem to be variety seekers (Lee, 2001:66). The enjoyment that male consumers derive from variety seeking is a further indication that they like being up to date with the latest fashion and take pleasure in the shopping activity (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:339). Evidently the variety of an assortment within a store is important as this factor is highly valued by consumers (Boyed & Bahn, 2009; Hoch, Bradlow & Wansink, 1999; Van Herpen & Pieters, 2002). It is therefore argued that the variety within a speciality store will influence male apparel consumer's evaluation of apparel assortments.

Male consumers display qualities of store loyalty and/or brand loyalty and time energy saving (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:341). Consumers become loyal to certain brands because they can depend on that brand to deliver the same features every time (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). The male factors which also demonstrate time saving orientation include 'satisfying', 'time restrictedness' and 'economy seeking' (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:341). When evaluating apparel assortment, the correct product assortment is thus crucial in terms of saving time and store satisfaction. If male consumers know the store carries the

attributes they want, they will patronise the store and make repeat purchases (Torres *et al.,* 2001:211).

A balanced assortment is the ultimate assortment which effectively meets the demands of various customer needs (Kunz, 2010:296), thereby guaranteeing their satisfaction and store patronage. Since retailers' product assortment influences individuals' purchasing decisions (Chernev, 2003:151) and consumers preferences for certain retailers (Chernev & Hamilton, 2009), it is important to gain insight into how male apparel consumers evaluate product assortments within clothing speciality stores when making purchasing decisions. Before a suitable strategy regarding consumer decisions can be developed, it is crucial for firms to determine the following: (a) which evaluative criteria consumers use to assess their products, (b) how the various alternatives concerning each criterion is perceived by consumers and (c) the relative importance consumers attach to each evaluative criteria (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:551). Specifically, it is important for retailers of such stores to understand the value male apparel consumers assign to each attribute in terms of their preferences amongst various intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes, which influences their purchasing decisions (North, De Vos & Kotze, 2003:50). Thus, understanding the target market allows retailers to amend their retail strategies and incorporate the necessary cues, or product attributes, in product assortments (Torres *et al.*, 2001:211).

1.5   RESEARCH PROBLEM

Although male consumers constitute a viable portion of the South African apparel retail industry, they have received little acknowledgement in the literature. Male consumers are an important segment for retailers in terms of rand value and their income contribution to the apparel segment. The revenue generated by the menswear market represents a feasible share of the apparel retail industry (Marketline, 2014:7). Even though women's wear is the money-spinning segment (total revenues of $3.9 billion), the male apparel segment contributed revenues of $2.2 billion in 2013, accounting for roughly 28.2% of the SA industry's total value (Marketline, 2014:7). As men experience time restrictions when doing shopping, they would respond favourably to time saving benefits (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:339,341). Retailers need to implement strategies such as organised retail lines to alleviate men's time pressures (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:236). Empirical data regarding male consumers' behaviour in the retail environment and their preferences for particular

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attributes within the retailer's assortment is insufficient within the South African context. It is important that retailers understand this market segment and acquire the necessary knowledge regarding their shopping behaviour, thereby ensuring proper retail lines are put into place and time is saved whilst doing shopping, thus maintaining this segments future contribution to the apparel industry.

The lack of research regarding this segment can be linked to various factors and traditional beliefs. In the past, retailing efforts have primarily been directed towards female consumers. This may be attributed to the notion that shopping is regarded as a female gender activity (Dholakia, 1999:162). Women are expected to be more immersed in fashion and beauty, as opposed to men who are often judged or ridiculed if they seem too attentive towards their looks or fashion (Kaiser, 1997:66). Such outdated notions may be eliminated with the numerous studies in which ample evidence has emerged, emphasising an increase in male participation regarding activities related to shopping (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004; Dholakia, 1999; Otnes & McGrath, 2001). Changes in social roles, such as more women in the workforce and the feminist movement, have contributed to the changes in shopping behaviour. (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:154). More men are claiming responsibility for their own apparel shopping as opposed to their wives or mothers being given the task (Dholakia, 1999; Rath *et al.,* 2008:307; Torres *et al.,* 2001:205). The evident shift towards gender equality (Rath *et al.*, 2008:230) justifies the apparent need for change in retailer focus. Retailers must obtain sufficient insight regarding South African male apparel consumer's decision-making process in the retail environment.

To date there has been limited research conducted on South African male apparel consumers and their apparel decision-making process. Although there have been various studies on male consumers abroad (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004; Bakewell *et al.,* 2006; Otnes & McGrath, 2001), only a handful has been conducted in South Africa in recent years. Du Preez *et al.* (2007:2) explored the South African male apparel consumers' shopping mall behaviour, lifestyle, shopping orientation and patronage behaviour and Thomas (2009:39) conducted a study on South African brand wearing male consumers and their behaviour in the retail environment. These studies gave some insight into male apparel consumer's decision-making process, however not specifically on male consumers' evaluation of product assortments. It was recommended though, that more studies be done pertaining to this subject to gain a more in-depth understanding of these consumers' purchasing decisions (Thomas, 2009:39).

The product assortment stores offer will have an impact on male consumers' decisions (Chernev, 2006). Product assortment is an important factor which influences consumers' retail choice (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006:236). Speciality stores in particular are significant in that they specialise in specific merchandise and they target particular customers, such as male consumers (Diamond, 2006:5). These stores' apparel assortment is specifically developed to concentrate on certain customers (Weitz & Whitfield, 2010:86). Speciality stores are notably smaller than department stores, enabling shoppers who have time constraints to quickly evaluate the alternatives and complete transactions in little time (Diamond, 2006:6). Furthermore, male consumers will use product attributes or cues, which constitute the product assortment, as evaluative criteria which are considered relevant in their purchasing decisions (Berman & Evans, 2010:204). Consequently, due to the lack of research regarding South African male apparel consumers and their evaluation of speciality stores' product assortment, retailers must gain the necessary knowledge regarding the various factors influencing choice amongst this segment. The following research question was formulated:

Which apparel product attributes do male consumers use to evaluate the apparel product assortment of South African speciality stores?

1.6   JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Apparel retailers in the South African market must adhere to the rapid change in demands of male apparel consumers and they must be aware of the developments that shape public perception and subsequent demand (Marketline, 2014:14). It has been established throughout literature that male decision making styles differ from those of females (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:229; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:342). It is therefore imperative that retailers' focus is extended towards male apparel consumers and their needs. There is an evident gap of information regarding these consumers, especially in South Africa compared to other countries (Thomas, 2009:1). The identification of the value male consumers attach to product attributes could aid apparel marketers and retailers in their understanding of male consumers decision making process, specifically when evaluating product assortments and provide insight into these consumers future actions regarding their apparel purchases in South African speciality stores. Information regarding product assortment is essential as the assortment offered by retailer's has a substantial impact on

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sales and gross margins (Kök, Fisher & Vaidyanathan, 2009:99) and can be used to influence consumer's patronage intentions (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006:238).

In this day and age, the power lies with the ultimate consumer (W&RSeta, 2012a:75). As the expansion of the retail industry falls into the hands of retailers (Department of National Treasury, 2012:4), they should be aware and understand how these consumers make purchasing decisions in clothing stores (Berman & Evans, 2010:202). A retailer's primary goal is to provide apparel products that meet consumers' expectations (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). To adhere to male consumer's expectations, it is vital retailers understand this target market, thereby enabling them to select the correct merchandise assortment (Torres *et al.*, 2001:211). Since this is an important factor in determining retailers' success, it is surprising that to date, there is little literature regarding South African male apparel consumer's decision making process in retail environments. By offering clothing that consumers prefer, apparel retailers will have a significant effect on consumers' store preference (Paulins & Geistfeld, 2003:382). Thus the merchandise selection consumers find attractive will be a key reason as to why consumers select one store over another (Paulins & Geistfeld, 2003:382). In order to build an efficient assortment, it is important for retailers to evaluate consumer's perception regarding assortments in order to customise the stores offering with the needs and expectations of its customers (Amine & Cadenat, 2003:486). The findings from this research could assist apparel manufacturers and retailers to gain the necessary knowledge and understanding regarding the evaluative criteria employed by male consumers when evaluating product assortments with the intent to purchase. Knowledge such as this is vital to apparel manufacturers and retailers as it will assist in the planning of a more accurate and efficient merchandising mix, thereby enhancing consumer satisfaction.

Consumers have different expectations regarding the merchandise selection for various store types and these expectations have a significant effect on consumer's satisfaction with store selection (Paulins & Geistfeld, 2003:383). Speciality stores focus on certain target markets (Weitz & Whitfield, 2010:94) and the merchandise within these stores is often specifically designed to meet the preferences of speciality store consumers (Moye & Kincade, 2003:69). Consumers consider the merchandise offered within a speciality store as crucial criteria which they use to patronise the store (Gagliano & Hathcote, 1994:65-66). Consumers use compensatory decision rules which enable them to evaluate options in terms of each relevant attribute (Schiffman *et al.,* 2010:491), thus avoiding situations where the entire assortment is eliminated on the basis of one poor attribute. Stores which

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offer an unsatisfactory merchandise mix will fail to retain their customers (Paulins & Geistfeld, 2003:382). Thus, decisions relating to product assortment will have a substantial influence on whether the store communicates the desired image and attracts the identified male consumers in the target market (Clodfelter, 2008:250).

With consumers voting more diligently with their wallets, the effect of lost sales will be as a result of companies who have unsuccessfully maintained their position regarding customer's scrutiny (PWC, 2012: vi). Companies' growth strategies are continuously shaped by the changing dynamics of the local retail environment (PWC, 2012:13). South African retailers constantly have to find ways to survive in this vigorous and driving industry (Department of National Treasury, 2012:35). It is essential that management acts both astutely and vigorously to ensure the survival of the economic recovery in the multifaceted and ever changing post-recession marketplace (Piercy *et al.*, 2010:14). The proposed research will provide necessary information that South African retailers, more specifically clothing speciality stores, require when developing the ultimate product assortment. By establishing this competitive advantage, these retailers will be able to more effectively meet the dynamic needs of the male apparel market and provide an advanced customer experience (Du Preez *et al.*, 2007:2).

Retailers and suppliers must enhance their revenue by capitalising on opportunities that reach new consumers and that increase revenue from existing consumers (W&RSeta, 2012a:76). Innovation is thus crucial for retailers to stay ahead of competitors, thereby achieving success. Consumer businesses must be innovative in a way that focuses on a better notion of value. Hence, it is imperative for companies to re-examine their cost structures, operational effectiveness and efficiency, thereby ensuring sustained relevance (PWC, 2012: vii). The cost of doing business must be lowered to ensure improved competitiveness (Department of National Treasury, 2013:17). Therefore, it is crucial for the apparel industry to have necessary information on product attributes and assortment preferences from a consumer's perspective. Consumer companies who effectively use information to activate change in their business will ensure their top positions and thrive (W&RSeta, 2012a:76), a highly useful strategy for both manufacturers and retailers. A retailer must have a good understanding of the significant value of different product attributes in consumer's minds, thereby resulting in effective product development, assortment planning and market strategies (Zhang, Li, Gong & Wu, 2002:54, 57).

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Furthermore, the value demanded by customers is increasing and retailers' proactive response to the change in consumer behaviour will result in increased sustainability, an enhancement in terms of their competitiveness and an increase in their market share and relevance (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011: 4). Retailers will be able to shift power back up the supply chain if they effectively compete on factors other than price, thereby enabling the creation of consumer loyalty (W&RSeta, 2012a:75). Correspondingly, it has become more difficult for retailers of the more fragmented apparel market to increase prices without it consequently having an effect on their trade volumes. As such retailers are aiming to improve their margins through pre-eminent efficiencies and reduced operating costs (W&RSeta, 2012a:26). Thus, retailers must establish the best way in which their products and services can capture value (Raidoo *et al.*, 2011:4). As such, the merchandising decisions pertaining to clothing speciality stores will have a central effect on retailers overall performance. It is therefore essential that the proper product assortment is in place, enabling retailers to reach their objectives (Berman & Evans, 2010:384).

Finally, although rivalry in the apparel retail industry is assessed as moderate, which can be attributed to the rapid change in fashions and strong market performance over the last five years which has helped to improve rivalry (Marketline, 2014:18), some challenges do exist. One of the challenges facing South African apparel retailer's is that of offshore entrants, particularly in their capabilities to successfully implement fast fashion retailing and create fierce awareness in fashion and another is online retailing. Whilst these challenges may not present an immediate threat to the industry, they do signify change in current dynamics (Afena Capital, 2012:25-26). To counteract any competition from substitute threats and to ensure their continued existence, retailers must differentiate their products or formats and provide their customers with irrefutable reasons to buy (PWC, 2012:vii). Additionally, having the proper product assortment in place is also important considering consumers are given more power and choice as competition increases. They are becoming more vocal when comparing products, prices and customer experiences both online and in-store thanks to the age of Internet and social media (PWC, 2012:vi).

1.7   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this study is to explore and describe the product attributes used by male consumers to evaluate apparel product assortment of South African speciality stores.

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Specific objectives of the study are:

- To explore and describe the importance of price, brand and fit regarding male consumers' preferences for speciality stores.
- To explore and describe the relative importance of intrinsic attributes (colour, style, perceived quality) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.
- To explore and describe the relative importance of extrinsic attributes (store image, brand/ retail store, country of origin) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.
- To determine and rank/rate the relative important attributes used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.
- To identify and describe clusters of male consumers regarding their preferences for product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment.

1.8   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1.1 encompasses the conceptual framework for the study.
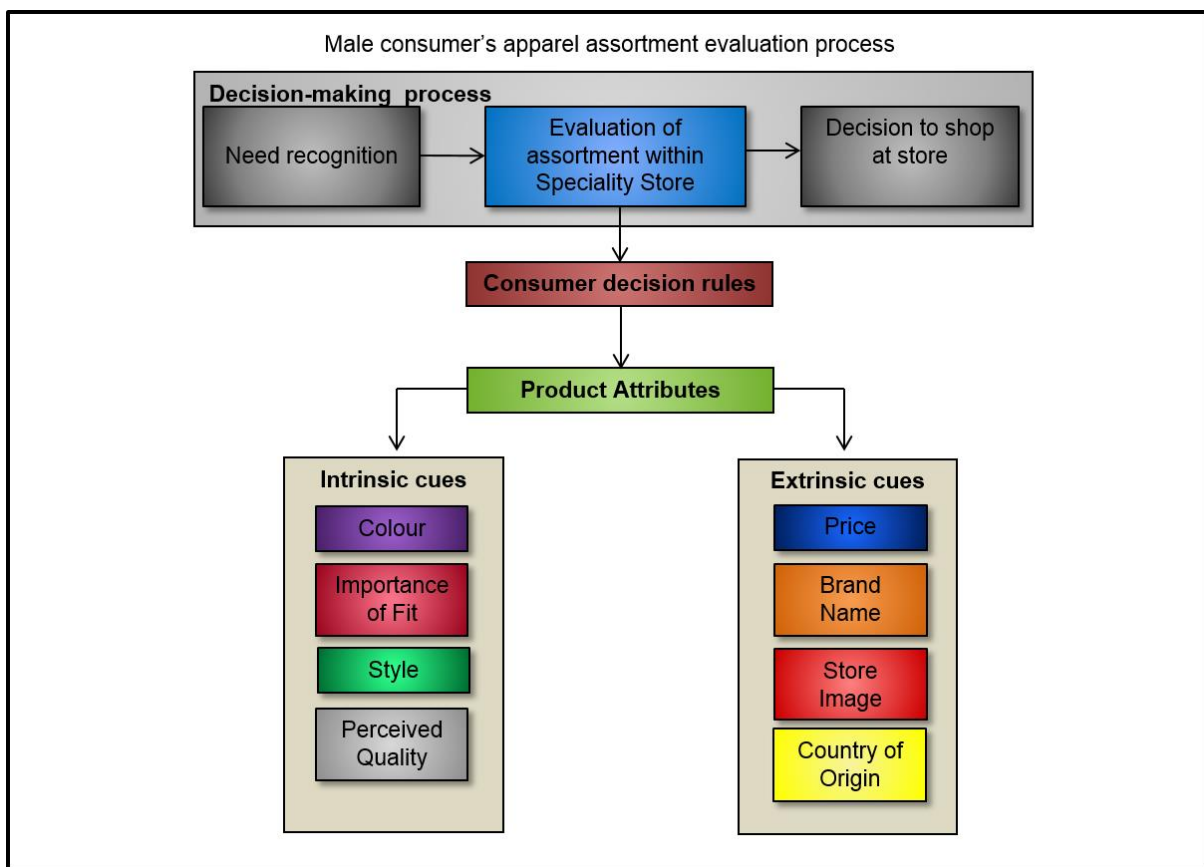
FIGURE 1.1:   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

The consumer decision making process encompasses a sequential and repetitive series of psychological and physical activities (Cant, Brink & Brijball, 2006:193). This process consists of various steps consumers undergo before making a purchase. These steps include recognising a problem, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, choosing a product and the outcome after it has been chosen (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:352). For the present study the evaluation of alternatives is of particular importance. During the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process, male apparel consumers will employ compensatory decision rules allowing them to make trade-offs amongst attributes (Blythe, 2008:272). Product attributes, which form part of product assortment, influence male apparel consumers' purchasing decisions during the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process (Berman & Evans, 2010: 204). Product attributes can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes, which are cues used to communicate various aspects of the product (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:144, 149). The

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intrinsic product attributes, which cannot be altered without changing the physical garment, incorporated in this study include style, size and colour. The extrinsic product attributes, which can be altered without changing the garment, include brand, price, retail store and country of origin (Brown & Rice, 2014:70-71). Both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes are antecedents of quality as they are important in the perception of quality (Chowdhury & Andaleeb, 2007:35, 48; Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:144, 149). Consumers use both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes in product evaluation (Jamal & Goode, 2001:143, 150). Compensatory decision rules enable male consumers to evaluate the product assortment in terms of each attribute and assign a specific weight to each assortment establishing a potential purchase choice (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:491). As consumers allocate different weights/utility to various intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes (Berman & Evans, 2010:204) consumers are able to form preferences amongst speciality store assortments, evidently influencing their decision to shop at specific speciality stores.

The overall purpose of this study was to explore and describe the product attributes used by male consumers to evaluate apparel product assortment of South African speciality stores. An exploratory survey research design will thus be followed (Fouché & Delport, 2011:109) to gain insight into the phenomenon and area that has, to date, not been extensively studied (Struwig & Stead, 2001). To address the need for more information about the topic of interest (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze & Patel, 2011:6) conjoint analysis was used in the present study. The conjoint analysis technique asks respondents to rank-order or rate their preferences (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010:268) regarding product assortments.

1.9   USE OF CONJOINT ANALYSIS IN THE STUDY

The conjoint analysis approach is a multivariate technique in which consumers' decisions are realistically depicted as trade-offs amongst multiple attributes (Hair *et al.*, 2010:261, 266). The conjoint analysis method can be used to measure the importance attached to evaluative criteria (product attributes). This approach presents consumers with a set of products or product descriptions wherein the evaluative criteria differ (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:552). Consumers are given a simplified task to select a small number of attributes on which they base their judgement (Huber, 2005:8). This technique enables retailers to gain a better understanding of how individuals develop preferences for products and services (Hair *et al.*, 2010:262, 266), hence the study can provide apparel

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retailers of speciality stores with valuable insight regarding male consumer's preferences in terms of product attributes and hence product assortments.

1.10   DEFINITION OF TERMS

Male consumers: Male apparel consumers in South Africa are not a homogenous market segment (Du Preez *et al.*, 2007:16). Male consumers are fashion conscious (Bakewell *et al.*, 2006:169; Lee, 2001:65; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:341) and variety seekers (Lee, 2001:66).

Product assortment: Product assortment is the number of different product items stocked within each product line (Lewison, 1997:46).

Product attributes: Product assortment consists of product attributes such as colour, style, size, etc., which is a set of parameters used by retailers to effectively communicate with their identified target customers (Donofrio, 2011). Product attributes include intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes which are used as cues to communicate various aspects of the product and which consumers use as precursors regarding their perception of quality (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:144, 149).

Intrinsic product attributes: Intrinsic cues (e.g., colour, style, perceived quality) are described as product attributes which are intrinsic to the product and cannot be changed without altering the physical characteristics of the actual product (Olson & Jacoby, 1972).

Extrinsic product attributes: Extrinsic cues refer to the products attributes which are considered non-physical and when altered the physical product remains unchanged (e.g., brand, price and country of origin) (Olson & Jacoby, 1972).

Speciality store: A speciality store is a retail format that specializes in specific merchandise offerings (Lewison, 1997:852). These retailers limit their offering to a single product classification. They may carry a narrow offering of fashion merchandise such as shoes, or a more diverse fashion range such as menswear (Diamond, 2006:5).

Conjoint analysis: Conjoint analysis is a multivariate technique used to understand consumer's reaction and evaluations towards predetermined attribute combinations and how individuals develop preferences for products and services (Hair *et al.*, 2010:262, 266).

1.11   PRESENTATION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: The study in perspective

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter. This chapter provides an overview and summary of the research problem, justification and research objectives. It includes the various factors which influence the South African apparel retail industry and highlights some main concepts of the study including male consumers, product assortment, and product attributes.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The overview of the theoretical framework which was used in the study is provided in this chapter. The consumer behaviour model of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013) was used as a basis to explore male consumer's decision making within speciality stores and the criteria they use to evaluate product assortments.

Chapter 3: Literature review

An overview of important concepts which is based on previous literature is offered within Chapter 3. The main concepts include male consumers, product assortments, product attributes, intrinsic product attributes and extrinsic product attributes.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 4 is comprised of the description and justification of the research methodology. A detailed description and justification of the research design, strategy and approach is given. This chapter discusses and explains the quantitative data collection techniques, sampling procedures, the unit of analysis and data analysis.

Chapter 5: Results and discussions

This chapter consists of the findings of the research study. In accordance with the objectives and conceptual framework developed for the study, the findings are described, discussed and interpreted.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and implications

This is the last chapter of the dissertation. It includes the conclusion which was derived from the main findings. Implication for retailers of speciality store, retail offerings, marketing strategies and male consumer behaviour are offered. It also provides the practical implications of the findings, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

1.12   CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the context for the study and given attention to the South African retail industry and the changing consumer behaviour as a result of the global economic crisis. It has particularly focused on the importance of implementing a proper product assortment as a crucial retail strategy due to the shift in consumer behaviour and the impact an appropriate assortment has on retailers overall performance This is especially true for retailers operating in the apparel sector as the sector has displayed strong growth levels in recent years, making it imperative for these retailers to differentiate their merchandise offerings to maintain relevance in the industry. The importance of male consumers as a lucrative segment in the apparel industry has also been highlighted along with the clear gap of literature regarding their purchasing behaviour in the South African apparel industry.

Chapter 2, discusses the consumer decision making framework as a theoretical framework to the study. It highlights the cognitive thought processes regarding the consumer decision making process, with specific focus on the evaluation process.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter discusses the theoretical perspective employed for this study, namely Hawkins and Mothersbaugh's (2013) consumer behaviour model, focusing on the alternative evaluation and selection stage. Relevant theory pertaining to males' apparel decision-making process is also presented in this chapter.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK USED FOR THE STUDY

As the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process constitutes the focal point of this research, it was decided the consumer decision making framework would be best suited as theoretical framework. The consumer behaviour model of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013) was used to guide the study. Models provide a framework for analysing consumer behaviour and thus the process of consumer decision making (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:18). Consumer decision making can be viewed as a rational process wherein consumers systematically combine information regarding attributes to make logical decisions (Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2013:222). Consumers use their cognitive structures, formed from new and existing knowledge regarding a specific product and stored in an individual's memory, to assist in their evident behaviour towards a product, including purchasing decisions (Christensen & Olson, 2002:478; Marks & Olson, 1981:145). As consumers evaluate products, they use specific criteria which signify product attributes considered important in their purchasing decisions (Berman & Evans, 2010:204; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:489). This in turn influences their evaluation of product assortments offered by retailers such as speciality stores.

The overall purpose of this study is to gain insight regarding male apparel consumer's preference and use of product attributes when evaluating product assortment, within speciality stores. As the research constitutes a significant focus toward consumer decision making, the first component of the chapter deals with the key aspects of consumer behaviour theory and consumer decision making models. Consumer behaviour discipline focuses on the various processes employed by individuals, groups, or organisations to select, use and discard products, services, experiences or ideas to satisfy needs (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:6). The proposed framework offers insight into the factors that exert an influence on male apparel consumer evaluation of alternatives within speciality

stores' product assortment. The main concepts included in the problem statement and objectives form the foundation of the theoretical perspective and conceptual framework, of which the latter is discussed in this chapter.

2.2   CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR THEORY

Consumer behaviour is defined as "*the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs*" (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen, 2012:2). These actions, which consumers engage in, are referred to as processes employed by the consumer (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:6). The discipline also includes the impact that such processes exert on consumers and society (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:6) and is considered an ongoing system (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:3). Consumer behaviour theory was deemed a suitable fit for the study as it focuses on how decisions are made to spend accessible resources, such as time, money and effort, on consumption related items. This includes questions pertaining to the what, why, when and where of the product purchase. It also includes how regularly individuals buy the product and use it, how they evaluate products after purchasing, the influence these evaluations have on future purchases and how they dispose of it (Schiffman *et al.,* 2012:2). To assist in answering these questions, which are central to consumer behaviour, is the development of consumer decision models that try to define the processes consumers go through whilst making a purchase (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:18).

2.3   CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING MODELS

Consumer models are general views or perspectives which describe the reasons behind an individual's behaviour (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:36, 480). The consumer decision model is a theoretical framework applied to define the processes consumers undergo before, during and after making a purchasing decision. It is a manner in which a concept, its causes and consequent effects can be described. Examining consumer actions, with regard to cause and effect, helps to pre-empt consumer actions and perhaps even influence them (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:18). One of the general views or perspectives regarding how and why individuals behave a certain way includes the cognitive view which focuses on the processes of information seeking and evaluation of information by consumers (Schiffman

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et al., 2010:481), the latter forming the focus of the study. According to Hoyer *et al.* (2013:222), cognitive decision making models present the procedures consumers use to combine information regarding attributes to make rational decisions.

As the consumer decision making process forms the basis of the current research, the consumer behaviour model of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:24) was selected as the framework from which to analyse male consumer behaviour. This conceptual model represents the broad structure and process of consumer behaviour through its portrayal of applicable notions regarding the nature of consumer behaviour. It includes a description of the various influences (internal and external) that affect the decision process, as well as the individuals' self-concepts and lifestyle, thus resulting in the processes which lead to purchasing behaviour (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24). The model depicted in **Figure 2.1** is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

2.4   CONSUMER DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK
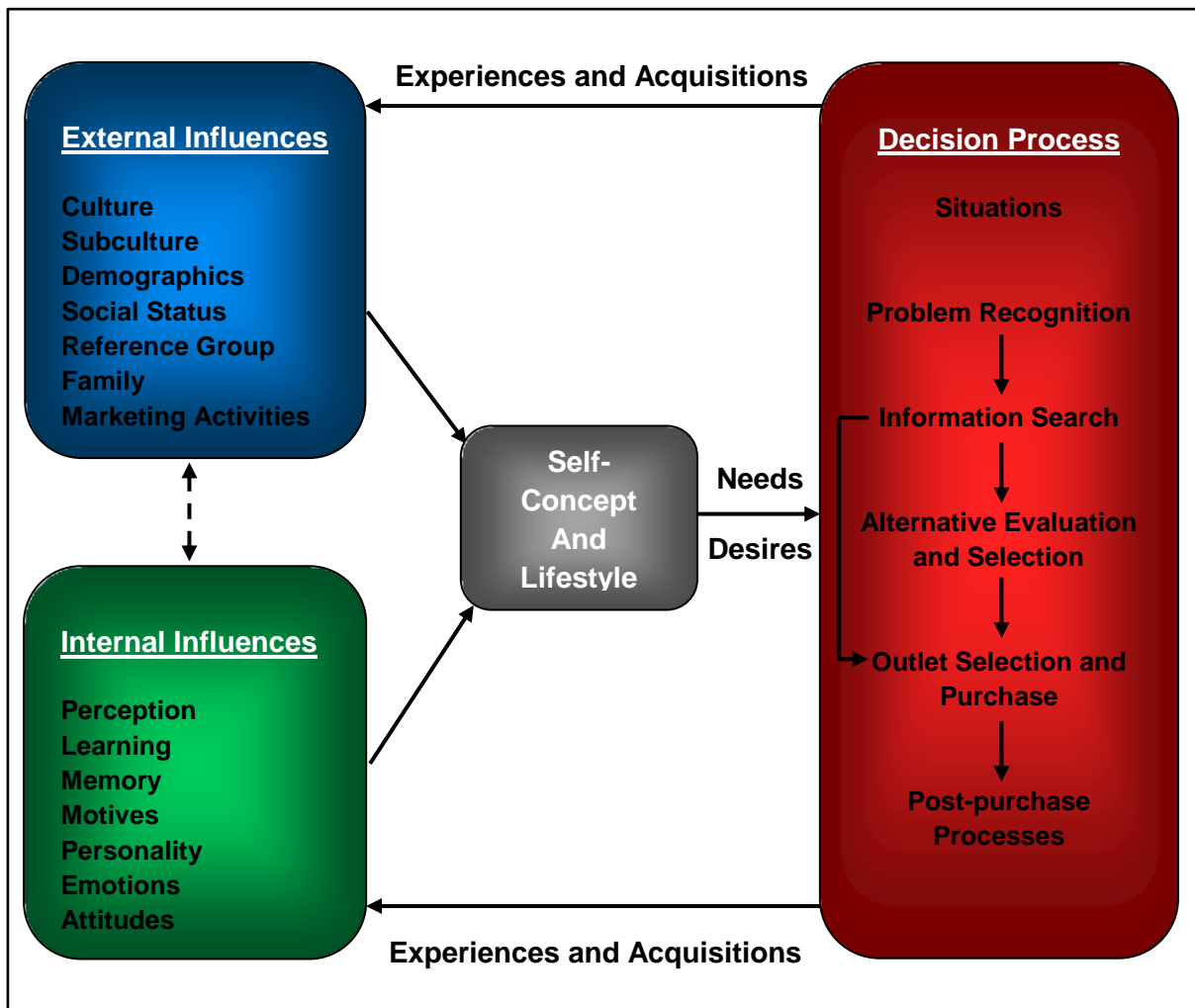
FIGURE 2.1:   OVERALL MODEL OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR (HAWKINS & MOTHERSBAUGH, 2013:25)

From the above model of consumer behaviour, it is clear various influences result in individuals' development of self-concepts and subsequent lifestyles, which inevitably generate certain needs and desires and are often satisfied through consumption practices (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24). When it comes to satisfying these needs and wants consumers are usually faced with crucial decisions. These include decisions regarding the products or brands that will fulfil their needs and where to purchase such items (Lusche, Dunne & Carver, 2011:100). The degree of effort applied to each purchasing decision varies among consumers, as some purchasing decisions are more important than others (Solomon, 2007:305). There are three levels of consumer decision-making that can be determined on a scale regarding the effort applied by consumers in decision making situations. This scale extends from very high to very low effort. The levels include

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extensive problem solving (very high), limited problem solving and routine response behaviour (very low) (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64).

At the extensive problem solving level, consumers require a significant amount of information to develop a set of criteria from which to evaluate particular brands (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64). Such information is collected from memory (internal search) in addition to outside sources (external search). Depending on the significance of the decision, consumers will meticulously evaluate each product alternative and consider the attributes of each brand at a time (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:355). This level of problem solving is commonly applied to product purchases that are expensive, important and entail long term commitments, such as buying a car or a house (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64).

At the limited problem solving level, the consumer has already determined the essential criteria for evaluating the product category along with the various brands it consists of. Though, consumers' preferences for particular brands have not completely been established and consumers are refining their search as they look for further information (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64). Consumers employ limited problem solving when they have a strong preference for either a brand or a store (Lusche *et al.*, 2011:103). At this level, consumers do not rigorously evaluate each alternative but rather employ simple decision rules to make a selection between the various alternatives (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:355). Decisions at this level occur when buying an updated version of a product previously purchased (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64), such as replacing old clothing.

Routine response behaviour refers to the decision making level where consumers have dealt with the product category before and hold an extensive criteria set which they use when evaluating the brands under consideration (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64). This decision making level is also known as habitual decision making and involves decisions made with minimal conscious effort by consumers. Decisions are made automatically without conscious control (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:355). These decisions are essentially based on routine and include purchases such as toothpaste or hand soap (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64). Consumers rely on past experience to assist with their decision making and they have a strong preference in mind concerning which brands to buy and the retailer to purchase it from (Lusche *et al.*, 2011:102).

The consumer decision making process cannot be observed as it is a cognitive process comprising of mental activities that identify what actions must be carried out to satisfy a

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need (Cant *et al.*, 2006:193). The cognitive view, also known as the 'problem solving' view, depicts consumers as thinking or rational problem solvers. This view describes consumers who are actively looking for information and trying to make satisfactory decisions (Schiffman *et al.,* 2012:67; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:481). However, instead of regarding decision makers as rational beings, it has become evident that as individuals make decisions they possess a range of strategies. The effort necessary to make a decision is evaluated by consumers, followed by a chosen strategy most appropriate in relation to the degree of effort required. This is described as constructive processing (Solomon, 2007:306). The choices consumers make result in some form of consequence or outcome (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:64).

Within the cognitive view, consumers process information which leads to the development of preferences and essentially the intent to purchase (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:481). Consumers are influenced by various factors when making purchasing decisions. The combination of these factors shape consumers' behaviour and thus consumer decision making (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:36, 481). The influences or factors depicted in the model interact with one another and are expressed as external, representing sociological and demographical influences and internal, representing psychological and physical influences (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24).

2.4.1   External influences

External influences play a significant role during the decision making process. These are social influences which can have an impact using immediate families or peer groups or even larger scale influences such as the culture and sub-culture in which individuals live (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:21). Men wear clothing to fit certain cultural ideals, including wanting to look taller or appear slim but not too slim. Depending on how well it suits the ideal at the time, clothing features are used to alter and control their body appearance, such as colour, texture, pattern, fit and size (Frith & Gleeson, 2004:45).

Schiffman *et al.* (2010:483-484) divide external influences into a firm's marketing efforts and sociocultural environment. Marketing activities are direct efforts by companies to communicate, inform and persuade consumers to make purchases and utilise products. Marketing efforts include specific marketing mix strategies such as the actual product, promotions, pricing policies and distribution channels (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:483). Alexis, Haines and Simon (in Sproles & Burns, 1994:271-273) found that at the point of purchase

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consumers used marketing activity influences such as recalling whether they had seen the product advertised.

Consumers are also heavily influenced by the socio-cultural environment, consisting of various non-commercial influences. Socio-cultural inputs include the influence of family and friends and other significant factors such as social class, culture and subculture that are internalised and affect how consumers evaluate products and either accept or discard products (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:484). In terms of apparel purchases, consumers employ information connected to their friend's experiences with similar styles of clothing, the impression friends made with those styles and the social approval of the styles. These external influences apply to social evaluation (Alexis *et al.* in Sproles & Burns, 1994:271-273). As such, at the point of purchase, which includes information search, comparing products and making decisions (Sproles & Burns, 1994:267), male consumers may make use of external influences such as sociocultural influences and marketing activities during their evaluation of product assortments within speciality stores. These external factors serve as information cues utilised by male consumers in the apparel purchasing decision (Kinley, Conrad & Brown, 2000).

2.4.2   Internal influences

The internal influences comprise of perception, learning, memory, motives, personality, emotions and attitudes (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:25). Perception refers to the manner in which individuals both receive and attach meaning to stimuli (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:25). Perception is described as the manner in which individuals view the world around them (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:159). An individual's learning process continuously develops as the content or structure of their long term memory changes (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:25). External influences, such as family and peers, affect learning (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:25).

Motivation is the reasoning behind certain behaviour (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:248) and is based on needs and goals (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:196). Consumer motivation describes their urge to satisfy both physiological and psychological needs and wants by means of acquiring and using products and services (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:248). The process of consumer motivation can be simple or complex. Complex motives include the desire for status (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:248). Status consumption is positively related to clothing involvement due to the fact that the product category indicates status (Goldsmith, Flynn &

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Clark, 2012:113). The display of luxury brand labels produce enhanced perceptions of an individual's status and wealth and this leads to preferential treatment in social interactions (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011:345). The product attributes which male consumers consider during the evaluation stage of the decision making process may be used to communicate status and aid in achieving beneficial social outcomes.

Personality is the manner in which an individual typically responds to similar situations in which they find themselves (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:25, Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:149). Emotions are powerful and somewhat uncontrolled feelings that influence behaviour (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:25). Lastly, attitude is the persistent association of motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes regarding aspects of the environment. Internal and external factors affect our attitudes (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:26).

2.4.3   Self-concept

Self-concept is described as the totality of a person's thoughts and feelings regarding themselves (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:26; Kaiser, 1997:147) and refers to a consumer's view regarding their personal identity, including both the private and public self, as well as the actual and ideal self (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:248). Consumers may be affiliated with an object to the point that it is used by a person to maintain their self-concept (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:142). Therefore, clothing can be used to reinforce an individual's identity (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:142).

The reflected self assists in characterising an individual's self-concept. Products such as clothing help to establish self-perception and place consumer's in particular social roles (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:142). As such appearance and dress cues are used to make deductions about others and vice versa, including deductions about their level of attention seeking or their social role (Johnson, Schofield & Yurchisin, 2002:134). Dress is purposefully used to acquire positive outcomes relating to career progressions, communicating desirable impressions to important people and enhancing self-perception and/or performance (Kang, Sklar & Johnson, 2011:422). Consumers who have an interest in utilising brands to express their self-concept, identify clothing brands which adequately do so. Furthermore, consumers will demonstrate loyalty towards such brands until they no longer express the individual's self-concept in a successful way (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2012:113).

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2.4.4 Lifestyle

Lifestyle refers to how an individual lives and include the products they buy, how they use them and what their thoughts and feeling are about the products (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:26). Lifestyles are the overall image a person has of themselves. This is a consequence of the culture they live in and the various situations and experiences that constitute their everyday lives. Individuals' lifestyles are due to conscious and unconscious decisions (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:26).

Consumer lifestyle can be described by a number of characteristics (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:178). Firstly, lifestyle is considered a group phenomenon in that a person's lifestyle is affected by various factors such as social group participation and relationships with others (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:178). Secondly, lifestyle affects numerous facets of behaviour. An individual's lifestyle holds them to specific consistent behaviour (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:178). Thirdly, individuals' lifestyles suggests a fundamental life interest (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:179). Lastly, sociologically relevant variable results in a variation of lifestyle among individuals. These sociological variables include age, gender, ethnicity, social class and various other factors (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:179).

Lifestyle pertains to a sequence of consumption activities which portray individuals' decisions regarding how they spend time and money (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:267). Men's lifestyles have changed which has resulted in major changes in the menswear industry (Torres *et al.*, 2001:205). Men have become more prone to do their own shopping compared to the past (Rath *et al.,* 2008:307). Consumption behaviour, such as clothing consumption, is used to assist in the judgements individuals make concerning other people's social identity (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:142). Consumers choose the set of products, services and activities that define them and create social identities which are communicated to others (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:266-267). During the evaluation stage, as consumers are deciding what purchases to make, they choose attributes significant to them (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:489) in order to portray a social identity.

2.4.5 Consumer decision making stages

During the consumer decision making process male consumers will undergo a series of steps before they purchase an item (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:352). The various stages or steps of this decision making process includes problem recognition, information search,

the evaluation and selection of alternatives, outlet selection and purchase, the use and disposition of the product or service and finally the purchase evaluation (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:27). Consumers' needs and desires may prompt one or more stages of the consumer decision process. These needs and desires interact with the particular situations consumers are faced with and this activates the consumer decision process. As the process is continuous, the consumer's internal and external characteristics are again affected as well as the experiences and purchases which stem from it (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24-27).

2.4.5.1 Need recognition

Need recognition, or problem recognition, is the first stage in the decision making process and occurs when a consumer encounters a problem (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:484). A problem can appear in two ways. Firstly, the downward movement regarding the quality of the consumer's actual state, thus resulting in need recognition. Secondly, the ideal state of consumer's can move upward and the consumer recognises an opportunity. One way or another, a divide between consumer's actual and ideal state takes place (Solomon, 2007:308). The difference between the desired and actual state stimulates and triggers the decision process (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:494).

Consumers action as a result of the recognised problem is directly associated with the importance of the problem to the consumer, the circumstances and the dissatisfaction or inconvenience which stems from the problem (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:494). Consequently, not all consumers will engage in the same degree of problem-solving activity. Two factors will influence consumers need to resolve a specific problem, namely, the extent of the difference between the consumer's desired and actual state and the level of importance regarding the problem (Lusche *et al.*, 2011:102).

2.4.5.2 Search for information

After consumers have identified a problem and maintained that a possible product solution exists within the marketplace, they will partake in problem solving activities which involve two steps. The first includes the information gathering stage, or information search, where consumers pro-actively collect information. The second step includes the evaluation of alternatives (Lusche *et al.*, 2011:103), discussed in more detail in the following section. The pre-purchase or information search occurs once a need has been identified and satisfying the need can be accomplished through the purchase and consumption of a particular product (Schiffman et al., 2010:485).

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The process of searching for information involves consumers' investigation of their surroundings for suitable information to make satisfactory decisions (Solomon, 2007:309). Consumer decisions are often based on both past experiences (internal sources of information) and marketing and non-commercial information (external sources of information) (Schiffman *et al.,* 2010:485). Past experiences may be stored in consumer's long term memory, providing the necessary information to assist them with the current decision. If there are no prior experiences, the consumer may have to do a general search of the outside environment for usable information on which the choice can be based (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:485). Alternatively, instead of searching the market place for definite information, consumers may take pleasure in simply browsing for entertainment purposes, or they just like to stay updated on what's taking place in the market. Consumers are thus engaging in an "ongoing search" (Solomon, 2007:309).

2.4.5.3 Evaluation of alternatives

The evaluation stage of the decision making process forms the basis of this study. Schiffman *et al.* (2010:478) describe a decision as "the selection of an option from two or more alternative choices." Therefore, for a decision to take place there must be a choice of available alternatives. When an individual is faced with a choice among available alternatives they have to undergo an evaluation of these alternatives before making a decision (Berman & Evans, 2010:204). During the purchasing decision a lot of effort is directed towards the stage in which a choice from the available alternatives must be made (Solomon, 2007:317). The evaluative criteria utilised by consumers during this stage are usually related with desired benefits the product may provide (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:549). The idea that a vast amount of consumer behaviour is centred on goal orientation is consistent with the problem solving view (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:481).Thus as men use clothing for various reasons, including the of use clothing to both enhance their bodies and manage their appearance (Frith & Gleeson, 2004) and to portray various messages such as social status and financial wellbeing (Lee, 2001:71), it may stand to reason that male consumers would seek suitable product attributes offered within product assortment (evaluative criteria) to satisfy such needs (benefits) thereby achieving their goals.

The evaluative criteria employed by consumers when judging alternatives represent the different dimensions, features or benefits consumers consider when faced with a specific problem (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:548). Solomon and Rabolt (2004:365) describe evaluative criteria as 'the dimensions used to judge the merits of competing options,' which

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includes the goods or service attributes considered relevant when making a decision (Berman & Evans, 2010:204). Standards are set for these characteristics and each alternative is rated according to its capacity in meeting the standards (Berman & Evans, 2010:204). Determinant attributes are those actually used by consumers to differentiate among choices (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:365). The type, number and importance concerning evaluative criteria can vary (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:549). The evaluation of alternative choices stage can be broken down into three phases/steps (Lusche *et al.*, 2011:103-104). The various steps, consumer action and relevant descriptions are summarised in **Table 2.1**.

TABLE 2.1:   STAGES IN THE EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Stage	Consumer action	Description
Step 1	A set of attributes are developed on which purchase will be based.	A set of attributes are the features of the store, its products and services including price, product quality and brand. Consumers typically use general information sources such as pre-existing knowledge, advertisements, discussions with friends and family members, magazines and online sources.
Step 2	Consideration set is reduced to a more manageable number of attributes.	Consumers gather more specific information to reduce their list. This may include store visits or online browsing.
Step 3	Direct comparison of key attributes of the alternative.	Active search for information takes place such as determining actual prices.

Solomon and Rabolt (2004:352) state that although many apparel decisions are attempted in a rational way, where individuals consider evaluative criteria and choose amongst viable alternatives, apparel products which are perceived as fashion do not always allow for such a rational approach. In terms of the South African male consumers' searching and evaluating behaviour in the retail environment, when men notice an item, they think about and evaluate the clothing item both visually and physically (Thomas, 2009:2). In Jacobs and De Klerk (2010:260), the sensory evaluation of clothing was a significant practice during the evaluation of alternatives. Being able to see and feel the apparel product is important and there is an expectation that interactive functions will be present, allowing for the evaluation of various product attributes such as colours, sizes and textiles. Thus, when males evaluate apparel assortments they would most likely want to try on the products, see things such as price clearly, touch the product to feel the textiles and so forth.

Consumers use two types of information during the evaluation of alternatives. These include particular brands considered by consumers from which they will base their selection on, also known as their evoked set, and the evaluation criteria they will use for each brand. Selecting a brand from the array of possibilities aids in the simplification of the decision making process (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:488). Consumers' evoked set refers to brands consumers are aware of and consider when making purchasing decisions within a specific product category. This is also known as the consideration set (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:488; Solomon, 2007:318). The evoked set contains only a few brand alternatives that consumers are familiar with, able to recall and find satisfactory (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:488; Solomon, 2007:318). Consumers' evoked set is separate from their inept and inert set of alternatives (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:488). Consumers' inert set constitutes brands they are aware of and consider in a neutral manner. The inept set contains brands consumers are aware of but regard negatively (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:513). They are thought of as unacceptable and therefore not included in the purchase consideration (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:488).

As consumers evaluate the product alternatives that represent their evoked set, the criteria utilised are generally indicated with regard to significant product attributes (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010: 489). Consumers' decisions regarding which attributes to use is the result of procedural learning, which involves a series of cognitive steps, undertaken by an individual before making a choice. During the cognitive steps consumers identify important attributes and recall the differences amongst competing brands with regards to certain attributes (Solomon, 2007:322). Marks and Olson (1981:146) state the existing cognitive structures that people hold should wield a significant effect on their cognitive processes as well as the evident behaviour which occurs as a result. In terms of the cognitive view, individuals are information processors whose thoughts guide their actions (Passer, Smith, Holt, Bremner, Sutherland & Vliek, 2009:16). Consequently, brand labels are perceived by individuals as costly signals that bring about enhancement in status as they are in effect considered costly to acquire (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011:349) and consumers are led by status consumption (action), which causes them to recognise clothing brands which signal status in addition to patronising those brands (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2012:113). As such, male consumers will employ cognitive steps during the evaluation stage which may result in the choosing of brands within the product assortment which portray status.

When evaluating or choosing products, consumers base their evaluation on various attributes or cues concerning the product under consideration (Jin, Park & Ryu, 2010:182;

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Connolly & Srivastava, 1995:219). When forming perceptions about products, individuals make use of cues. This is perceived as complex information processing and involves making deductions about products from the arrangement of available cues (Burnkrant, 1978:725). Clothing cues have certain traits or characteristics attributed to them (Kaiser, 1997:251) and are used as stimuli which provide cues or information pieces that individuals use to form impressions (Kaiser, 1997:33). Furthermore, utilising products' observable attributes to infer hidden dimensions is a shortcut often employed by consumers. The visible feature of the product functions as a signal or cue which represents an underlying quality of some sort (Solomon, 2007:324). Cues reduce anticipated identification cost of the various options within an assortment, thus making the decision making process less taxing and improving product assortment evaluation (Van Herpen & Pieters, 2007:77).

Once male consumers' attention has been captured, evaluation criteria such as price, quality, colour, style and fit is considered (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:352). Evaluative criteria can also include aspects such as the tangible cost and performance of a product or service and intangible costs such as style, prestige, feelings generated and brand image (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:549). Depending on the task, consumers will apply the necessary amount of cognitive effort. If a meticulous rational approach is required, the necessary brain power will be employed. Alternatively, consumers may seek shortcuts or utilise responses which have been learned thus "automating" their choices (Solomon, 2007:306). The mental shortcuts, also known as heuristics, that consumers use to aid them in their purchasing decisions lead to quicker decisions (Solomon, 2007:323). Heuristics are described as shortcut decision rules, including compensatory and non-compensatory decision rules, created by consumers (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:481). These consumer decision rules make complex decisions less challenging by providing strategies or routines to the process (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:491).

2.4.5.4 Consumer decision making strategies

Within the consumer decision making process, consumers use different decision rules developed over time (Blythe, 2008:271) when making a selection among products and hence product assortments. Decision rules, also referred to as heuristics, decision strategies and information processing strategies (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:491), can be divided into two categories namely, compensatory and non-compensatory and are used to assist in the evaluation of available options (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:491).

Non-compensatory decision rules are described as absolute (Blythe, 2008:272) and simple decision rules (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:366). If an assortment does not meet the decision rule for a specific attribute, this cannot be compensated for by its strength in a different attribute (Blythe, 2008:272). All options that do not meet the basic standard set by consumers will simply be eliminated (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:366). As consumers compare products within an assortment, they will select the product or brand, from amongst the options, which is the best in terms of the attribute they consider the most important. In the case where two or more products are considered equally good on the same attribute, consumers will compare the second most important attribute. This selection process carries on until only one attribute is left (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:366).

In contrast to the non-compensatory decision rule, the compensatory decision rule allows a positive evaluation of a product assortment on one attribute to balance out a negative evaluation on another attribute (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:491). This decision rule encompasses consumers' evaluations of options in terms of each relevant attribute and calculates a weighted score for each option. The calculated score indicates the options relative merit as a potential purchase choice (Schiffman *et al.,* 2010:491). Consumers who employ compensatory rules tend to be more involved in the purchase and are willing to exert the effort to consider the entire picture in a more exact way (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:367). As weakness in one area can be compensated for in another, compensatory decision strategies allow for trade-offs (Blythe, 2008:272). In terms of the present study, consumer's positive evaluation regarding the perceived quality of apparel within the product assortment may offset an unsatisfactory evaluation in terms of the price of the apparel.

2.4.5.5 Outlet selection and purchasing decision

The process of selecting a retail outlet occurs before, during and after the search for information and brand selection (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:574). When selecting a specific retail store, consumers compare alternative stores using evaluative criteria, which include store image, store brands, retail advertising, the location and size of the store (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:583). Store image is a consumer's perception of all the attributes related to a retailer (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:583). Brands present a vital component of retail stores as it is a key determinant of which stores consumers will patronise (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:574). Alternatively, retail stores provide brands' with access to the customers they wish to target, therefore also playing a vital role for brands (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:574).

Consumers must complete the transaction after the brand and retail store has been selected, which involves purchasing the product (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:600). Consumers partake in three types of purchasing behaviour. The first is a trial purchase which involves the purchasing of a product or brand for the first time. This is an exploratory phase of the purchasing behaviour. The second type of purchase is a repeat purchase and this kind of behaviour can be associated with brand loyalty. Lastly, in the case of durable goods, consumers may opt for long term purchases (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:497).

The actual purchase should be made easier by firms and include tactics such as regulating the time spent in the checkout line or more complex strategies such as computerised credit checks to reduce credit clearance (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:600). As the purchasing step is the last contact consumers have with the retailer on that occasion, it is important to leave final impressions. Store personnel must be efficient, helpful, pleasant and friendly during this step. (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:600). Sales personnel should be trained to emphasise certain apparel attributes when providing consumers with sales assistance, thereby enhancing consumer satisfaction (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:469). Insight regarding the product attributes male consumers consider important during the evaluation of product assortment could assist manufacturers and retailers to improve their training strategies for sales associates.

2.4.5.6 Post purchase processes

Once the purchasing activity has taken place a number of processes pursue. These include the use, evaluation, sometimes satisfaction and consumer response associated with consumer's satisfaction, which can include patronage behaviour and positive word of mouth (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:612). During the use and evaluation stage after the transaction has taken place, consumers form lasting impressions regarding the performance of the product and thus their confidence in the purchasing decision. The impression formed will expectedly have a definite influence on future purchasing decisions (Lusche *et al.,* 2011:105). If consumers are partaking in a trial purchase they will evaluate the product performance with respect to their expectation, resulting in three potential outcomes. The first outcome involves the product's actual performance meeting consumers' expectation, which results in a neutral feeling towards the product. Secondly, the product's performance surpasses consumers' expectations, causing positive disconfirmation of expectation, leading to satisfaction. Lastly, the product's performance is below expectations. This gives rise to negative disconfirmation of expectations and consumer dissatisfaction (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:498).

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If consumers are dissatisfied with the products' performance, post-purchase resentment can result (Lusche *et al.,* 2011:105). Dissatisfaction with the product during the evaluation stage may result in complaining behaviour, loss of loyalty, brand switching and negative word of mouth. Firms must react pro-actively towards product and service failures. It is important for firms to employ suitable action regarding such problems, representing a key way in which the negative effect can be reversed or eliminated (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:612). Marketers must have an understanding regarding consumer expectations and the degree to which purchases satisfy consumers, thus either enhancing consumer's satisfaction or moderating their dissatisfaction (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:110). The gap between consumer's expectation and performance concerning a product can be narrowed by aligning product benefits to consumer needs (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:110). In order to provide value to customers, research must be undertaken to help marketers understand certain consumer groups within the marketplace so that product-specific strategies can be developed (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2010:18). The empirical evidence regarding consumers' preferences for apparel could also assist retailers in the planning of a more effective merchandise mix, resulting in consumer satisfaction (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:469).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter explained and discussed the consumer decision making framework as a suitable theoretical framework for the study and interpreted the role it may have in male consumer's evaluation of product assortment within speciality stores. This framework was used to link the various aspects of clothing and human behaviour with the use of the basic principles of consumer behaviour. Furthermore the chapter provided insight into the consumer decision making model and specifically the evaluation stage of the decision making process, which is a focal point in the cognitive view.

Considering the problem statement of the present research, the formulated objectives are:

- To explore and describe the importance of price, brand and fit regarding male consumers' preferences for speciality stores.
- To explore and describe the relative importance of intrinsic attributes (colour, style, perceived quality) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.

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- To explore and describe the relative importance of extrinsic attributes (store image, brand/ retail store, country of origin) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.

- To determine and rank/rate the relative important attributes used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.

- To identify and describe clusters of male consumers regarding their preferences for product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment.

Chapter 3 will provide a comprehensive review of the literature whilst observing the main concepts of the study. It will discuss the behaviour and driving factors of male apparel consumers' purchasing decisions. This chapter will also offer an in-depth review of product assortment which encompasses various product attributes used by consumers as criteria when evaluating product assortments of speciality store. A conceptual framework will then be presented which encapsulates the various concepts from the literature review and the theoretical perspective.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter encompasses an overview of previous literature and arguments pertaining to male consumers, product assortment and the significant product attributes which constitute the product assortment and affect male apparel consumer's evaluation of product assortment within speciality stores of South Africa. The aim is to deliver an extensive background and justification for the objectives developed for the study and offer insight regarding South African male apparel consumer evaluation of product assortment within speciality stores. Key concepts from the theoretical framework and literature review are presented in a conceptual framework.

3.1   MALE CONSUMERS

Clothing is an indispensable item and consumers' choice is influenced by factors such as fashion and a desire to signal social value (Kaiser, 1997:289, 301, 326; Marketline, 2014:13). A study by Lee (2001:71), found men choose clothing which portrays symbolic value and use the image associated with the clothing to communicate social and economic success to others. This idea is shared by Otnes and McGrath (2001:131), who state that men wanting to attain status may communicate their own achievement by using the success of elite stores and brands to their advantage. Consequently, status is an achievement outcome which men strive for in the market place. Male apparel consumers also use dress to further communicate and shape their identities (Kaiser, 1997:186; Kang *et al.*, 2011:423). Dress can purposefully be used to acquire positive outcomes relating to career progression, communicating desirable impressions to important people and enhancing self-perception and/or performance (Kang *et al.,* 2011:422). Male individuals perceive that most men use dress as a way to communicate one's individuality (Lee, 2001:65) and South African male apparel consumers use branded clothing to communicate wealth (Thomas, 2009:33).

In addition to the above, Otnes and McGrath (2001:111) argue that men who shop have achieved gender role transcendence. Gender role transcendent men are believed to shop with an achievement orientation objective in mind, thereby satisfying traditional beliefs of masculine ideals. This includes achieving shopping success in which men view shopping as a competition, where they 'defeat' retailers who acquire profits from high mark-ups

(Otnes & McGrath, 2001:128, 129). It can be argued that South African male consumers may be reluctant to purchase at certain stores if they feel they are being deceived by retailers in terms of factors such as price or quality.

Fashion consciousness amongst men is becoming more apparent. Respondents, in a study conducted by Lee (2001:65), indicated that in this day and age, men are much more fashion conscious compared to the past. A study on UK Generation Y male consumers also found that although behaviour, such as fashion adoption and regular shopping, is not necessarily displayed there are high levels of fashion awareness amongst these consumers (Bakewell *et al.*, 2006:169). A fashion seeking trait found amongst male consumers also signals they are becoming more aware of fashion. Evidently, a unique fashion consciousness trait was not established, which indicated men are reluctant to pay premium prices for products (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:341). Consequently, it can be said that male apparel consumers in South Africa may use fashion styles as a key factor in their selection criteria when evaluating product assortments in clothing speciality stores. However, if they feel the price is not acceptable they may cease their purchasing intentions.

There are those men who still avoid the perceived stigma associated with crossing the boundaries of heterosexual, masculine consumption (Zayer & Neier, 2011:88). A stereotype which emerged from perceptions of men's shopping behaviour is 'fear of the feminine.' This stereotype captures male consumer's evident aversion to buying any products that have feminine connotations (Otnes & McGrath, 2001:117). A distinct 'anti-fashion' dimension can be found amongst younger male consumers. It is imperative, therefore, that whilst men achieve being fashionable they uphold certain gender role norms (Bakewell *et al.*, 2006:177). Many men are classified as actively fashion/brand uninterested in the male decision-making style groups. Men overcome notions of emasculation or association with 'feminine' activities by reducing the involvement and time spent on shopping (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:234, 235). As men make decisions in retail formats, they are influenced by the product assortment offered by retailers (Chernev, 2003:151; Chernev, 2006).

3.2   PRODUCT ASSORTMENT

Product assortment is the number of different product items stocked within each product line (Lewison, 1997:46). The product assortment offered by a store starts with crucial decisions regarding the merchandise. The selection of merchandise is based on careful analysis of the stores goals and objectives, the types of products offered, past sales records, the type of consumer and their needs and other internal/external factors which may affect sales (Clodfelter, 2008:250). A comprehensive and detailed assortment plan is important to maintain a balanced assortment which refers to a suitable breadth and depth. This ensures the stores offering effectively matches the needs of customer demands to guarantee their satisfaction and avoid markdowns due to excess inventory (Clodfelter, 2008:250, 252). Assortment planning involves the decision regarding specific quantities and characteristics of the products that will be purchased regarding specific factors such as brand, colour and sizes etc. (Clodfelter, 2008:250). Retailers can plan their merchandising mix more effectively and improve their customer satisfaction with the facilitation of empirical data on apparel consumers' preferences (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:469).

Bickle (2011:219) refers to merchandise breadth as the number of product lines carried or the number of brands carried within a product classification and merchandise depth as the number of units within one product category. The breadth can be depicted as narrow, broad, or in the middle of the two offerings. A narrow breadth describes a store which offers only one, or a few brands, within a product category, allowing the store to offer more styles, colours, sizes and materials. A broad breadth is a store which offers various brands in a product category, thereby allowing the retailer to appeal to a larger market (Clodfelter, 2008:251). The depth of an assortment refers to the amount of choices offered within each brand or product classification. A narrow and deep assortment plan refers to a large number of stocks with few product categories or brands. Alternatively, a broad and shallow assortment plan refers to wide stock breadth and little depth. An example of this would be a men's clothing store which offers several brands of shirts, with a selected number of colours (Clodfelter, 2008:252), or a retailer carrying various brands but not all styles within the offered brands (Bickle, 2011:220). Both a narrow and deep and a broad and shallow assortment offering is usually associated with speciality stores (Diamond, 2006:5; Rath *et al.,* 2008:307). This is because speciality retailers fine tune their assortment offerings to reach a specific target segment (Weitz & Whitfield, 2010:86).

The study by Chernev (2006:50) found consistency with the theory that the impact of decision focus on choice among assortments can be attributed to the hierarchical nature of the choice process, in that consumers' selection of an assortment is often independent from their choice of a product from the selected assortment. An individual's decision process is moderated by the degree to which they have articulated attribute preferences or ideal points. Making a decision in larger assortments may be perceived as more complicated by individuals without articulated preferences than those with (Chernev, 2003:151). An appropriate assortment which meets male apparel consumers' needs, will ultimately lead to store patronage. Various factors of product assortment which will influence consumers' purchasing decisions include how consumers evaluate the assortment, the variety of assortment and assortment size.

3.2.1 Evaluation of product assortment

Van Herpen and Pieters (2007:77) state that when evaluating product assortments, consumers anticipate acquiring identification costs to reduce identity uncertainty. Their findings indicate that anticipated identification costs and decision making costs, of which both are relevant in evaluating a choice set, are distinct and lowering anticipated identification costs raises assortment evaluation (Van Herpen & Pieters, 2007:77, 78, 86). Chernev (2005:748) argues that feature complementarity plays an important role in consumers' product evaluation and moderates the impact of assortment on choice. Assortments in which options are differentiated by non-complementary features are more likely to be associated with probability of purchase than those differentiated by complementary features (Chernev, 2005:748).

3.2.2 Variety of assortments

Various authors have emphasised the importance of variety of assortments within a store, as this factor is highly valued by consumers. Research such as that of Hoch *et al.* (1999:527), has focused on understanding the variety perception process as they provide a basic framework for thinking about variety. Their major findings include the factors which drive variety perception, allowing retailers to design more efficient, lower cost assortments without having to reduce variety and future store visits (Hoch *et al.*, 1999:527). Van Herpen and Pieters (2002:331) extend the assortment variety model proposed by Hoch *et al.* (1999) as they conceptualise assortment variety from an attribute-based perspective, as opposed to the product-based approach. This offers an alternative viewpoint for

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assortment variety. The study shows the attribute-based measures connect with specific aspects of assortment variety and offers the best description for consumers' perceptions of variety. The attribute measure involves consumers who examine attributes across products in an assortment. The attribute-based measures are less sensitive to the size of an assortment compared to that of the product-based measures. Further, assortment size may not necessarily be a good alternative for perceived assortment variety (Van Herpen & Pieters, 2002:331). Consumers may desire more variety in high risk situations, such as a range of colours or style, especially when it affects consumers' decision making (Boyed & Bahn, 2009:295). Some consumers opt for the variety offered by larger assortments (Chernev, 2006:50). Sela, Berger and Liu (2009:942) propose that accessible justification will moderate the effect of variety on choice.

3.2.3   The influence of assortment size

Various research streams have focused on how assortment size affects sale performance (Cadeaux & Tan, 2007:365; Chernev & Hamilton, 2009:410; Sela *et al.*, 2009:941) and that it can have an important influence on consumers' type of option choice (Sela *et al.*, 2009:941). Assortment size has a positive impact on brand choice in the case of alignable assortment as individuals are only required to make within-attribute trade-offs. An alignable assortment can be defined as the alternatives which vary along a single, compensatory dimension (Gourville & Soman, 2005:383). In terms of apparel, an alignable assortment may consist of otherwise identical clothing items that vary in terms of colour and sizes offered. Conversely, in a non-alignable assortment, an increase in assortment can serve as a disadvantage to consumers as they are affected by over-choice (Gourville & Soman, 2005:382). A non-alignable assortment can be defined as the alternatives which vary along multiple, non-compensatory dimensions. These include alternatives where one desirable feature is attached to one alternative, while another is attached to a second alternative and a trade-off occurs as gaining one desirable feature means forfeiting another (Gourville & Soman, 2005:383). The findings of Cadeaux and Tan (2007:368) support the conclusion that assortment size has a positive impact on category sales in that an increase in category assortment size increases category sales. Individuals with articulated ideal points are more likely to prefer larger assortments than those without articulated attribute preferences (Chernev, 2003:151).

The positive impacts of large assortments are that they assist consumers in achieving decision making certainty. The amount of information a consumer is able to process from

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such large assortments assists them in managing the uncertainty associated with making the purchase decision in risky situations. Large assortments are able to provide consumers with stimulation, thereby enhancing assortment attractiveness (Boyed & Bahn, 2009:289). When retailers provide large assortments, consumers are solicited to undertake cognitive processing (Boyed & Bahn, 2009:295). In terms of benefit, larger assortments offer greater variety of options, which in turn increases the probability of a better fit between consumer preferences and the available choice alternatives (Chernev & Hamilton, 2009:411).

Smaller assortments are more preferred as option attractiveness increases. This is because consumers try to minimise the cost benefit trade off associated with selecting a particular assortment. In terms of cost, larger assortments are associated with greater cognitive effort in evaluating the choice alternative and greater difficulty in making the choice (Chernev & Hamilton, 2009:411). When choosing from larger assortments, consumers are often less confident compared to a smaller assortment. When the subsequent product-choice task is salient to consumers they are more likely to prefer smaller assortments (Chernev, 2006:50). This allows consumers to avoid complex decisions when making a choice from larger assortments. Van Herpen and Pieters (2002:340) suggest that an attribute-based approach to an assortment variety may examine which attributes and attribute combinations are most meaningful in terms of their influence on consumer's perception of variety and perhaps on purchase decisions.

3.3   PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

Product assortment consists of product attributes such as colour, style, size etc. which is a set of parameters used by retailers to effectively communicate with their identified target customers. With these parameters in place, planners are able to facilitate the ultimate product assortment in a store (Donofrio, 2011). As consumers consider a product purchase, they are inclined to compare and find distinctions between products which differ from one another in terms of their varying attribute combinations (North *et al.*, 2003:41). Product attributes include intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes which are used as cues to communicate various aspects of the product and which consumers use as precursors regarding their perception of quality (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:144,149). Similarly, in the study conducted by Chowdhury and Andaleeb (2007:33), it is postulated that consumer-perceived quality is assembled by various intrinsic and extrinsic cues. The authors argue

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that product attributes should be emphasised to communicate information to customers regarding the quality of products (Chowdhury & Andaleeb, 2007:50).

3.3.1 Intrinsic product attributes

Intrinsic cues are described as product attributes which are intrinsic to the product and cannot be changed without altering the physical characteristics of the actual product (Brown & Rice, 2014:70; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). This includes the physical features of a garment which represent the tangible form and composition such as design, fabric, construction and finishes. It also includes performance features such as fashion, colour, shape, appearance, fit, care, comfort and durability (Brown & Rice, 2014:69-70; Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:460). The standards and benefits apparel items fulfil and provide to consumers are established by the performance features of the items (Brown & Rice, 2014:70). The garment's performance features are comprised of aesthetic performance and functional performance (Brown & Rice, 20014:70; Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:460).

More specifically, the intrinsic cues of aesthetic criteria have the most significant effect on consumers' garment selections during the trial phase in the dressing room and consequently the garment purchase. The aesthetic criteria, also known as visual criteria, involve the direct observation of garments structural features such as style, colour/pattern, fabric and appearance (Eckman, Damhorst & Kadolph, 1990:19). In the research conducted by Zhang *et al.* (2002:53, 57), regarding the importance of product attributes of casual wear for Chinese consumers, the five most important attributes also involved intrinsic criteria including fit, comfort, style, colour and workmanship. Furthermore, the respondents in the study by Hugo and Van Aardt (2012:460) employed intrinsic apparel attributes to a large degree in terms of the evaluative criteria applied in the assessment of quality. The functional performance aspects, particularly durability, comfort and fit, were considered to be the most important when evaluating apparel quality and was regarded more important than aesthetic attributes such as colour (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:469).

Since consumers' preference for apparel items may be as a result of the collective impact of product attributes including price, quality, style and brand (North *et al.*, 2003:41) the intrinsic product attribute such as colour, importance of fit, style and perceived quality may be of particular interest in the evaluation of a speciality store's product assortment.

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3.3.1.1 Colour

Colour is used to accentuate a product and give it a unique identity, thereby differentiating it from other products. Findings from Hugo and Van Aardt (2012:465) show that the most essential requirement in terms of colour is that it should enhance personal features. With regards to the characteristics of a garment, colour is a powerful stimulus to which a customer reacts as it grabs their attention whilst shopping (Keiser & Garner, 2003:105; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:309). According to Keiser and Garner (2003:105), accurate colour forecasting is of vital importance for the continued existence of a retailer in the fashion industry. The correct interpretation of colour forecasting must be applied to the relevant consumer groups and target market of a firm. The seasonal colour palette is an important decision when developing the product process and will ultimately lead to the seasonal colour story; all styles in the apparel line will originate from this seasonal colour story. Eckman *et al.* (1990:19) found consumers who made clothing purchases, largely used colour as a positive criterion when evaluating apparel. South African male consumers do seek preferences in terms of colour while physically evaluating the clothing product (Thomas, 2009:37). Consequently, it can be argued that it is vital for speciality retailers to stock the correct colours, being one of the determinant attributes used by male apparel consumers when evaluating product assortments.

3.3.1.2 Fit

Fit is described as "how well the garment conforms to the three-dimensional human body" (Brown & Rice, 2014:212). When planning the products that will be offered in the merchandising mix, a company must decide on the size range of the merchandise to be produced. Sizing refers to the body measurements of a size group, which is reflected by specific categories in which individuals of a particular body type are assigned to. Sizing systems are used to ensure garment sizing is consistent across styles and product offerings, thereby meeting customer expectations. It is the responsibility of the apparel product developer to determine an appropriate sizing system for the specific needs of the firms target customer (Keiser & Garner, 2003:301).

Sizing for men's wear is usually more consistent than that of women's wear due to lower fluctuation rates amongst men's styles. Two reasons for this is that men do not always shop for themselves and so there is a strong dependence on sizing labels and manufacturers are more accurate in the original measurements, as alterations are usually included in the price of men's garments (Keiser & Garner, 2003:312). According to Zhang

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et al. (2002:57) it is important that a garment's size, alongside style and colour, must be correct to ensure good fit and overall comfort.

The importance of garment fit has been documented in various studies throughout the literature. Eckman *et al.* (1990:18) found in the performance and quality categories of their study that subjects displayed considerable concern in terms of performance, particularly fit. The respondents in the study conducted by Hugo and Van Aardt (2012:466) regarded all the criteria relating to good fit as essential. These included various aspects of which overall fit of the garment was considered the most important. Zhang *et al.* (2002:57) also found fit to be the most important attribute amongst consumers. This illustrates the need for well-fitted garments when consumers make purchasing decisions, for both casual and formal wear. In terms of the South African context, male apparel consumers prefer to firstly search for their specific fit when a clothing item has attracted their attention (Thomas, 2009:37).

3.3.1.3 Style

A style is the term used for the various subdivisions within fashion (Packard, Winters & Axelrod, 1983:9). It is a set of intrinsic attributes combined in a specific manner which differentiates it from others in its category (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:6). High fashion style is a look that is popular at the present time and if the specific look or fashion trend continues to be fashionable for a period of time, it translates into a classic style (Brannon, 2010:14, 61).

Zhang *et al.* (2002:57) state that instead of just following fashion trends, consumers want to find styles which specifically suit them. According to Swinker and Hines (2006:221), if a clothing item does not represent a current popular style that looks good and makes the consumer feel good it will not be regarded as a high quality item. In the study conducted by Min, Overby and Im (2012:423, 428), the association between style attributes and desired psychological and social consequences was significant. It was also found that there was no significant association between style and functional consequences. An outcome such as this is considered feasible since functional consequences are essentially utilitarian rather than symbolic. According to Rosenau and Wilson (2006:30), the style of a garment must meet a customer's fashion needs at a price they are prepared to pay. A retailer must offer a variety of unique and attractive styles and have a comprehensive understanding of the style needs of their target customers. This will ensure their customers will be able to relate to the specific styles in order to make a purchase decision.

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In the study conducted by Birtwistle (2001:173, 264), style was one of the factors which had a strong influence on store choice of UK specialist menswear. Although style was the most important apparel product attribute for South African women when making purchasing decisions (North *et al.*, 2003:50), the influence of style on South African male consumers' purchasing decision is unclear, especially concerning specialist menswear retailers. Styling was also found to be an important criterion in the study conducted by Eckman *et al.* (1990:18), being one of the garment features mentioned most often by purchasers and non-purchasers of clothing. This included both positive and negative responses related to styling. Thus, whether the style of clothing has a positive or negative effect on consumers purchasing decision, it is evident it has an impact on the evaluation of apparel.

North *et al.* (2003:50) concluded that there exists a relationship between age and style. As South African male apparel consumers show an interest in clothing which represents the latest fashion trends (Thomas, 2009:31) it can be argued that various styles offered by speciality stores will have an influence on both older and younger South African male apparel consumers' evaluation of product assortment.

3.3.1.4 Perceived quality

One of the essential factors in the production, marketing, buying and selling of ready-to-wear apparel is that of quality (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). Quality is defined by the International Organization for Standards (ISO) as "the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs" (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). Hugo and Van Aardt (2012:461) define quality as "the ability of a product to meet consumers' needs and satisfy their demands, or as the total set of attributes which contribute to the consumer's expectations." Consumers' perception of clothing quality is multidimensional in nature (Swinker & Hines, 2006:221), hence achieving success in the apparel industry is dependent on the ability not only to recognise levels of quality but to identify how quality standards can be met (Brown & Rice, 2014:68).

Many recent studies document the importance of quality in the purchasing decision. Swinker and Hines (2006:218, 221) set out to examine how consumers evaluate the quality of clothing. The study assessed the kinds of informational cues used by consumers during this evaluation process and how consumers expect high quality garments to perform. The majority of respondents specified that quality was important when making decisions in the purchasing of clothing (Swinker & Hines, 2006:222). Similarly, Collins-

Dodd and Lindley (2003:349) found quality to be one of the most important determinants of store selection. In terms of the effect of specific types of attributes on desired consumption consequences, the authors Min *et al.* (2012:425, 428) found perceived quality was significantly associated with desired functional and social consequence. However, the association between perceived quality and desired psychological consequences was not significant. In the study conducted by Chowdhury and Andaleeb (2007:33, 47), a positive and significant direct effect of perceived product attributes on perceived quality was established when consumers in Bangladesh, a developing country, dealt with high-involvement products such as computers. The authors state that consumers' positive perception of product attributes will result in a positive effect on consumer's evaluation of perceived product quality.

Various manufacturers, retailers and marketers use quality as a method to distinguish their offerings from other competitors. Consumers' perception of quality and the way in which these perceptions influence decision making are vital issues regarding consumer behaviour (Swinker & Hines, 2006:218). Thus, the apparel industry continuously seeks to produce quality garments that satisfy consumer's expectations (Brown & Rice, 2014:85). Hugo and Van Aardt (2012:460) state that a good indication regarding the considerations marketers and retailers should keep in mind to satisfy their customers, is the criteria applied by fashion consumers when assessing apparel products' quality during the decision making process. Companies who possess key knowledge concerning product quality are able to equip their management and employees to present products that meet their target markets needs and wants (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). Without sufficient knowledge regarding the dimension of fashion and technological quality applied by consumers when making decisions, marketers may incorrectly place their attention on product attributes that are insignificant to consumers (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:460).

Companies who distinguish themselves as quality conscious must produce products that satisfy consumers' wants and needs, consequently increasing business growth as satisfied customers make repeat purchases (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). Swinker and Hines (2006:218) argue that additional information with regards to establishing the factors that influence consumer perceptions of clothing quality is required. As such apparel companies must provide the necessary attention to quality, thereby maintaining and building their businesses (Brown & Rice, 2014:68).

3.3.2 Extrinsic cues

Extrinsic cues refer to the product attributes which are considered non-physical and when altered the physical product remains unchanged (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). These are related to the product, but do not form part of the physical product itself; they are external to the product (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:147; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). These include the price of the garment, image and reputation of the manufacturer, brand name, country of origin, image and reputation of the retailer, hangers, hang tags and packaging (Brown & Rice, 2014:71). Extrinsic cues are described as peripheral cues, whereas intrinsic cues are described as central cues (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:157). Both intrinsic and extrinsic cues influence quality evaluations (Brown & Rice, 2014:71; Fiore & Damhorst, 1992:175). Intrinsic rather than extrinsic cues have generally been perceived to be the more accurate indicators of brand quality as their effect upon judgement of quality is more powerful than that of extrinsic cues (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). This is confirmed by Eckman *et al.* (1990:14) who found, across 21 studies concerning consumer evaluation of apparel products, that the majority of the studies identified intrinsic characteristics more important than extrinsic factors. This was also true for their own study, as consumers utilised intrinsic criteria more often than extrinsic criteria when evaluating clothing. The applicable extrinsic product attributes included are price, brand name, retail store image and country of origin.

3.3.2.1 Price

The price of a product is an extrinsic cue (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:147) used to indicate the quality and amount that must be paid for a product (Kunz, 2010:151). Retailers set the price of their merchandise at specific levels. This aims to reflect the store's strategy to appeal and attract a specific target market (Packard *et al.*, 1983:195). Min *et al.* (2012:430) state price has the potential to convey psychological, social and functional importance to consumers. Those in the apparel industry are affected by the need to acquire an appropriate balance between quality and price (Brown & Rice, 2014:68).

The price and quality of a product has various effects on perceived value for money (North *et al.*, 2003:43). An implied association exists between price and quality wherein customers are inclined to have higher quality expectations for products which are more expensive (Brown & Rice, 2014:73-74). This is evident in the study conducted by Chowdhury and Andaleeb (2007:49), where, although the relationship between perceived price and quality perception was not very strong, the association did provide indication that in third world countries a high quality position is in accordance with high price position

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despite other variables being present. Together with these findings, it is also important to note that price is not always consistent with customers' expectations when used as an indication of the inherent quality or value which customers attach to a product (Kunz, 2010:151). According to Olson and Jacoby (1972), price has been found to be an important factor when considering a purchase decision amongst brands, but it is not an especially accurate indicator of brand quality. Swinker and Hines (2006:221) emphasise the fact that even though respondent's strongly agreed regarding the significance of price during the evaluation of garment quality, they did not agree that garments with higher price signify higher quality compared to lower priced garments.

The importance of price in the decision making process has been inconsistent across the literature. Brown and Rice (2014:71) state consumers pay a lot of attention to this extrinsic cue and Swinker and Hines (2006:221) found, in terms of informational cues used in the evaluation of clothing quality, the extrinsic cue utilised the most was that of price. Price was also found to be the second most important attribute in the study conducted by North *et al.* (2003:50). Conversely, Zhang *et al.* (2002:57) identified price as the sixth most important attribute considered by Chinese consumers concerning casual wear. Chowdhury and Andaleeb (2007:33) found price was considered as the least important factor when consumers formed perceptions of quality when dealing with high-involvement products such as computers. In the study conducted by Eckman *et al.* (1990:21), female customers who shopped in speciality stores did not consider price as a serious concern when making garment purchasing decisions, one of the reasons being customer's may have pre-selected the stores based on their expected acceptability of price ranges. Findings from Thomas (2009:36) indicate that South African male consumers will only purchase a clothing item if they believe the price is acceptable or if they have the means to afford the item. The study also found that male consumers are willing to pay more for brand name clothing (Thomas, 2009:36), which could be due to the fact they believe brand names are better quality, therefore offer value for money (Thomas, 2009:1, 31).

3.3.2.2 Brand

Branding is the process by which a firm builds a product image and uses a label to communicate that image. The label instantly articulates the implied value of the brand to the customer (Keiser & Garner, 2003:78). Brand name products develop a reputation or image in the minds of the consumer, which results in information that is used by consumers in the pre-purchase decision making process (North *et al.,* 2003:42). Consumers react to the image of a brand as it involves the way the company

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communicates the qualities and essence of a product (Rath *et al.,* 2008:22). One of the methods used by product developers to enhance brand image is through the identification of product attributes demanded by customers (Keiser & Garner, 2003:78). In terms of South African male consumers, brand name clothing is perceived as better quality items, offers better value for money, compliments them in terms of appearance and fit and represents the latest fashion trends (Thomas, 2009:31, 32). Brand names are therefore an important extrinsic attribute in the selection criteria when South African male apparel consumers have to evaluate the product assortment within a speciality store.

The brand represents the strategic instrument for all firms. Using brand strategies in an appropriate manner provides businesses with a significant valuable asset (Malinowska-Olszowy, 2005:8). Branding sets out to increase a firm's market share, retain current customers and attract new ones. Companies gain competitive advantage and outperform their competition through innovative brand development (Keiser & Garner, 2003:79). Retailers can increase the market share of their brands using pricing as a competitive strategy (Oubiña, Rubio & Yagüe, 2007:1026). Brand strategies can be applied to products that already exist in the market and to firms who wish to enter the market and create awareness of its presence to possible customers (Malinowska-Olszowy, 2005:9).

There are various types of brands, namely: private brands, national brands and designer brands (Forsythe, 1991:1). Speciality stores can include manufacturing brands and private brands in their assortment (Keiser & Garner, 2003:421). Private labelled products are heavily relied on by speciality stores to operate their business (Moye & Kincade, 2003:69). In the case of store brands, the retailer is the brand and all the items the retailer carries are the store's own brand, including retailers such as Timberland, Polo and Diesel. Brands such as these provide attractive profit margins to retailers and become a significant attribute if they are developed correctly (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:585). By carrying entirely their own assortment of private label merchandise, store brand businesses are able to differentiate themselves in the marketplace by achieving product exclusivity (Keiser & Garner, 2003:82). The image of store brands vary and they are distinctively associated with the specific position of each store (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003:350). Store brands are closely related to store image (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:585) and this distinct association between store brands and store image can provide significant prospects for retail differentiation (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003:345). Store brands can be used by retailers to build loyalty through the production of exclusive products that are in line with their total store image (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003:351).

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3.3.2.3 Retail store and store image

Lewison (1997:850) defines a retailer as "Any business establishment that directs its marketing efforts toward the final consumer for the purpose of selling goods or services." Speciality store retailers target consumers by offering merchandise which they 'specialise' in, thereby becoming 'focused merchandisers' (Lewison, 1997:46). Speciality stores are an important channel where consumers can shop for fashion goods (Rath *et al.*, 2008:307). They vary in terms of size, in that they may be a small business occupying only one or a few locations or industry giants which own a large number of units (Diamond, 2006:6). These stores restrict their merchandise to one class and are geared towards a relatively narrow apparel or goods segment with the objective of attracting a particular target consumer (Rath *et al.*, 2008:307). Speciality stores may also be broad, such as apparel shops which sell a variety of items comprising of clothing and accessories, or they may be narrow and exclusively manage one product classification, such as a shoe store that focuses primarily on footwear (Diamond, 2006:5). There are some speciality stores which limit their offering to various lifestyle categories including active sportswear or career wear, or to a specific price range or age category (Rath *et al.*, 2008:307).

Speciality stores are often differentiated by their distinct individual service as customers receive personalised service from staff members who are knowledgeable in their merchandise offering (Diamond, 2006:6). Eckman *et al.* (1990:13) investigated the criteria considered by female consumers while making purchasing decisions in speciality stores. Results indicated the most important criteria for apparel assessment related to aesthetics. Colour/pattern, styling and fabric were the most prominent influencing factors when selecting garments from the racks. Fit, style and appearance are the attributes essential in determining the rejection or adoption of garments (Eckman *et al.*, 1990:13). It is important that such a study be replicated onto male apparel consumers as well, thereby determining which attributes they prefer when using selection criteria to evaluate the product assortment in specific speciality stores.

A retail store, such as a speciality store, may be considered as having a 'personality' which includes many different factors (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:446). Store image is the consumer's perception of all the attributes related to a retailer (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:583). Consumers use specific attributes such as quality, reputation and price to form perceptions of store images (Thompson & Chen, 1998:170). Store image dimensions are essential to consumers' perception and should be administered in such a way that it creates an encouraging store image (Du Preez & Van Der Vyver, 2010:22). The image of

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some stores is clearly defined, whilst others blend into one another, resulting in customers failing to notice them given there is nothing distinct about them (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:446). If retailers wish to establish opportunities to differentiate and position themselves and sell profitable store brands they must develop, nourish and sustain their store image (Semeijn, Van Riel & Ambrosini, 2004:256). Therefore, to ensure retailers of a secured optimal investment, the deliberate management of store image should take place (Du Preez & Van Der Vyver, 2010:23). Retailers can potentially increase the satisfaction of their customers by prioritising the attributes customers perceive as most important (Birtwistle, Clarke & Freathy, 1999:9)

According to Du Preez and Van Der Vyver (2010:11), there is a necessity for additional scientific knowledge regarding the variables that influence apparel shopping behaviour; particularly those in terms of store image. Semeijn *et al.* (2004:255) and Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2003:351) found the image of a store can be regarded as a significant predictor of a consumer's attitude towards and evaluation of store brands. Retailers must realise that consumers attach a great deal of significance to store image (Du Preez & Van Der Vyver, 2010:22), as it has an effect on both consumer loyalty and retailer success (Birtwistle *et al.*, 1999:1). Store image should receive the necessary amount of attention since it contributes to the complete consumer experience (Du Preez & Van Der Vyver, 2010:22).

Additionally the features within a store characteristically work simultaneously to create an overall impression (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:446). Store image signifies retailers' most important communication, in terms of market positioning, with their target customer, thus making it essential (Birtwistle *et al.*, 1999:13). Du Preez and Van Der Vyver (2010:23) also state that as the image of a store shapes consumer perception of a store and its identity, it forms a crucial element in the communication of marketing and corporate identity. Birtwistle *et al.* (1999:14) indicate a relationship exists between overall store-image perception and financial performance, subsequently suggesting a link between image, store loyalty and performance. Consequently, retailers must maintain an appropriate store image, thus potentially increasing sales. As such, retailers' awareness of the significance of store image dimensions is critical in building a market share, which is prominent and meaningful in the intensely competitive environment of apparel retail (Du Preez & Van Der Vyver, 2010:23). Furthermore, evaluating consumers' attitudes regarding store image helps to establish an understanding of the manner in which companies can increase the capacity of the retailing mix (Birtwistle *et al.*, 1999:14).

3.3.2.4 Country of origin

Consumers can choose products which originate from a wide range of countries. The knowledge that a product has been made overseas either has a positive or a negative effect. Products from industrialised countries compared to developing countries are usually rated better (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:370). Some consumers perceive price, colour, quality, style and other attributes, used as evaluative criteria, more important than country of origin. It has been found that older consumers, compared to younger ones, are more concerned about country of origin (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:371). Moore and Carpenter (2008:334) found the older age group, compared to their younger counterparts, perceived country-of-origin quality cue to be more significant in apparel purchasing decisions.

The findings from Chowdhury and Andaleeb (2007:47) indicate that perceived country of origin directly affects perceived quality in a positive and significant way. More specifically, when consumers have a positive perception of a country's image this would positively influence the assessment of perceived quality regarding a product. Country of origin image has a distinct and positive effect on consumers' purchasing intentions. The effect between country of origin image and purchasing intention is also interactive; the country of origin image results in an evidently positive effect on consumers' purchasing intentions as the product involvement increases (Lin & Chen, 2006:260).

Some apparel products may constitute more than one country of origin (Ha-Brookshire, 2012:19). Information regarding both the country of manufacturing and the country of parts, influences consumers purchasing decision. Research has found that when exposed to different sets of country of parts and country of manufacturing of apparel products, consumers may determine different prices or values of each different product and alter their purchasing preferences (Ha-Brookshire, 2012:29). Instead of just knowing where the products are manufactured, consumers may also want to know where the parts, or raw material, came from. Consequently, consumers can make more informed decisions when purchasing (Ha-Brookshire, 2012:31). The South African apparel industry is greatly dependent on imported material and employs only some locally sourced material (PWC, 2012:27). Research in this regard is imperative so retailers can know whether South African consumers prefer locally made clothing items or those which are imported. A case of ethnocentrism, which is the occurrence of individuals preferring products or people from their own country (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:370), which is a worthwhile consideration in product assortment planning, may be apparent amongst South African male apparel consumers.

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3.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 3.1 describes male consumers' evaluation of product assortments within speciality stores.
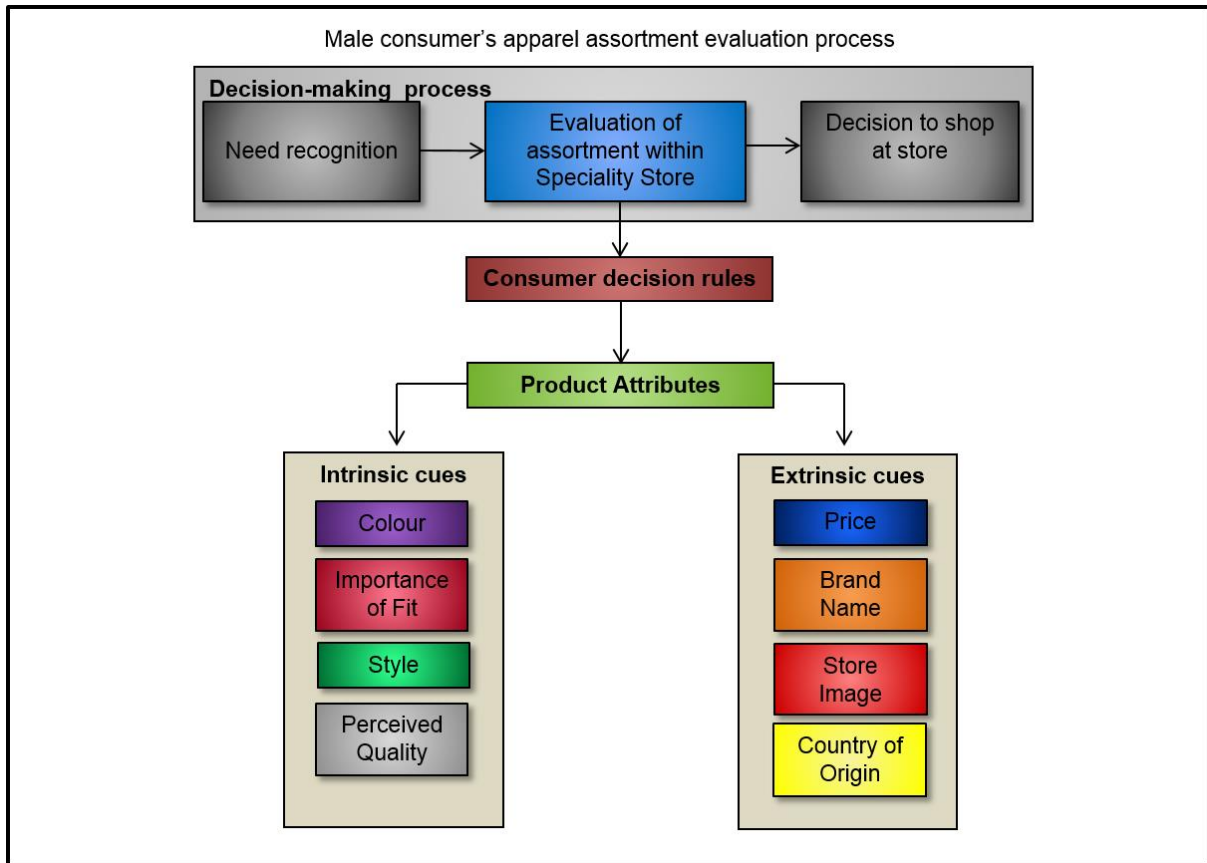

FIGURE 3.1: MALE CONSUMERS' APPAREL ASSORTMENT EVALUATION PROCESS IN SPECIALITY STORES

Need recognition is the first stage in the decision making process and occurs when a consumer encounters a problem (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:484). The recognition of a problem occurs with consumers' realisation of the considerable difference between their current state of affairs and their desired or ideal state of affairs. As such the consumer identifies a problem that must be solved (Lusche *et al.*, 2011:101; Solomon, 2007:308). The problem solving stage includes two steps, namely the active gathering or searching for information and the evaluation of alternatives. Both of these steps take place in order to reduce various risks, including financial, safety and social risks (Lusche *et al.,* 2011:102). During the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process, male apparel consumers will employ the use of compensatory decision rules allowing them to make trade-offs among attributes (Blythe, 2008:272). Product attributes, which form part of

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product assortment, influence male apparel consumers' purchasing decisions during the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process (Berman & Evans, 2010:204). Product attributes can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes, which are cues used to communicate various aspects of the product (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:144, 149). The intrinsic product attributes, which cannot be altered without changing the physical garment, incorporated in this study include style, size and colour. The extrinsic product attributes, which can be altered without changing the garment, include brand, price, retail store and country of origin (Brown & Rice, 2014:69-71). Both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes are antecedents of quality as they are important in the perception of quality (Chowdhury & Andaleeb, 2007:35, 48; Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:144, 149). Consumers use both intrinsic and extrinsic cues in product evaluation (Jamal & Goode, 2001:143, 150). Male apparel consumers will use their cognitive structures as a reference point when evaluating and rating the product attributes within the assortment offered by clothing speciality stores. Compensatory decision rules enable male consumers to evaluate the product assortment in terms of each attribute and assign a specific weight to each assortment establishing a potential purchase choice (Schiffman *et al.,* 2010:491). As consumers allocate different weights/utility to various intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes (Berman & Evans, 2010:204) consumers are able to form preferences amongst speciality store assortments, evidently influencing their decision to shop at specific speciality stores.

Keeping in mind the problem statement and review of the literature, the following objectives were formulated:

- To explore and describe the importance of price, brand and fit regarding male consumers' preferences for speciality stores.
- To explore and describe the relative importance of intrinsic attributes (colour, style, perceived quality) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.
- To explore and describe the relative importance of extrinsic attributes (store image, brand/ retail store, country of origin) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.
- To determine and rank/rate the relative important attributes used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.
- To identify and describe clusters of male consumers regarding their preferences for product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a thorough review of the literature regarding the main concepts of the study. These included male consumers and their behaviour in the retail environment and product assortment which constitutes the various intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes. The chapter highlights the critical need to investigate the criteria applied by South African consumers when evaluating apparel with the intention of purchasing (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:461). A conceptual framework was developed from the conceptualisation of the literature review and theoretical framework, including the decision making process, the evaluation stage of the decision making process, the decision rules employed by male consumers and the intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes which male consumers may incorporate as evaluative criteria when evaluating the product assortments of speciality stores.

CHAPTER 4 provides a detailed description of the research methodology. The research design, development of the instrument, pre-testing of the instrument, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis and ethics of the present research are discussed and evaluated. The course of action taken to ensure the objectivity and quality of the study, in terms of validity and reliability, is also highlighted.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 contains the various sections concerning the methodology of the present study. The methodology describes how the study was conducted (Salkind, 2012:275) while addressing the study objectives. The following sections were included: (a) the research design and approach; (b) the development of the measuring instrument which involved conjoint analysis; (c) the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the various constructs; (d) the sample and sampling technique; (e) the data collection procedure; (f) the data analysis; (g) the quality issues of the data such as the validity and reliability; (g) the consideration of ethical issues.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is considered the "plan or "blueprint" regarding the methods that will be employed by the researcher to carry out the study (Mouton, 2001:55). Selecting a suitable research design is a vital step in a study. This ensures the facilitation of findings, comparisons and conclusions which are valid (Kumar, 2014:39). The overall purpose of this study was to explore and describe the cues used by South African male consumers to evaluate apparel product assortment of speciality stores. Given the purpose of the study, a survey research design was followed to acquire understanding into how male apparel consumers evaluate product assortments within speciality stores, specifically focusing on their preferences regarding product attributes (evaluative criteria).

Exploratory research was used to gain new insight into the phenomenon and area which, to date, has not been extensively studied (Babbie, 2007:88-89; Struwig & Stead, 2001:7) as more information regarding the specific field of interest is required (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). The survey design in this study, which is quantitative in nature (Mouton, 2001:152), allows the researcher to acquire information about the characteristics, opinions, attitudes or previous experiences of one or more groups of people (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:187) and to summarise the findings through statistical analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:182). For the purpose of this study, it will shed some light on male apparel consumers and their behaviour in clothing speciality stores.

Quantitative research examines the extent or numbers of single or multiple variables applied in the study. The aim of quantitative research includes the establishment, confirmation or validation of relationships and the development of conclusions that contributes to present theories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:94, 95). Quantitative research allows for replication by other researchers, facilitating verification and reassurance (Kumar, 2014:133). To address the need for more information about the topic of interest (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95), conjoint analysis, a technique which requires respondents to rank or rate their preferences (Hair *et al.,* 2010), was used in the present study. In this study, respondents were required to rank intrinsic and extrinsic apparel attributes regarding product assortments.

The study was cross-sectional, which provided information on the phenomena at a single point in time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:186), making the study less expensive to conduct and minimising the dropout rate by respondents (Salkind, 2012:253). Thus the evaluation criteria applied by male apparel consumers when evaluating the product assortments within speciality stores was measured at a certain point in time. The cross sectional study design is most appropriate when trying to gather information regarding the prevalence of a phenomenon, certain situation or problem, or an attitude or issue in which a cross section of the population is considered for investigation. A cross sectional study is valuable in gaining a comprehensive representation as it is applicable at the time of the study (Kumar, 2014:134).

4.2   INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of the study was to gain insight regarding the product attributes or product cues South African male consumers employ when evaluating the product assortments of speciality stores. When the objective of a study is to model choices, conjoint analysis can be used as the methodology for developing the data collection instrument (Mazzocchi, 2008:347). The conjoint analysis technique is considered most appropriate when trying to understand how consumers react to and evaluate predetermined attribute combinations which signify possible products or services (Hair *et al.,* 2010:262). Conjoint analysis sets out to establish the features most preferred by respondents. Enquiries are made concerning consumers' preferences and from those choices, deductions are made regarding consumers' value systems (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:466). As such, male

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consumers can offer significant estimations of their preferences when they judge objects which include a combination of attributes (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266).

4.2.1   Conjoint analysis overview

Conjoint analysis has had an overwhelming influence on the way research is conducted in various areas of business, specifically in terms of product positioning and new product development (Huber, 2005:1). The conjoint analysis method deals with consumers daily decisions (Green, Krieger & Wind, 2001:S57). Accordingly, it is fitting to regard conjoint as an imitation of choice behaviour (Huber, 2005:10).

Conjoint analysis is described as a multivariate technique used to understand how preferences are developed by respondents for various kinds of objects which include products, services and even ideas (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266). The meaning of conjoint is: "to join or become joined together" (Huber, 2005:1). According to Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:467), the word "conjoint" has to do with the idea that the relative value of things, which cannot be measured if taken individually, can be measured if considered jointly. Conjoint analysis is derived from the basic principle that the value of an object, whether it is real or hypothetical, is evaluated by consumers by means of combining the individual amounts of value presented by each attribute (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266).

Conjoint analysis involves consumers making judgements regarding their preference for certain products or brands. These products and brands signify a systematic combination of attributes (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:465-466). Consumers make decisions and encounter options that simultaneously differ across various attributes (Green *et al.,* 2001:S57). Conjoint analysis provides the researcher with a technique which gives insight regarding both the preferences for each attribute and attribute levels (Hair *et al.,* 2010:262). Conjoint analysis also results in better evaluation between the importance of attributes and creates a more suitable context for the research as consumers can make greater distinctions when directly comparing products and thus product assortments (Orme, 2010:20). Values are assigned to the various levels of all the attributes which illustrate the opinions of consumers (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:467). Consequently, with the use of conjoint analysis, the researcher is equipped with considerable understanding about the structure of consumer preferences (Hair *et al.,* 2010:262). This is accomplished with a notable amount of realism still maintained (Hair *et al.,* 2010:262).

Conjoint analysis measures trade-offs aimed at analysing survey responses regarding consumer preferences and their purchasing intentions (Green *et al.*, 2001:S57). In the real world, consumers are not always offered the best option in terms of what they want to buy. As such, they are faced with demanding trade-offs and compromises. When difficult trade-offs have to be made by survey respondents, much the same as buyers, the true value of product alternatives is revealed. Respondents are asked to respond to those product specifications which are specific and representational instead of generic terms. The findings, which develop from the survey are significant and managerially applicable (Orme, 2010:20). Conjoint analysis is not limited to product evaluations. It can be employed at any time when a choice among multi-attribute alternatives is made. When making multi-attribute alternative decisions, the actions typically involve trading off a component of one thing in order to get more benefits of another component. The trade-offs consumers are willing to make are emulated by the conjoint analysis technique (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:475).

Utility is an economic concept which forms the fundamental theory of conjoint analysis. Utility assumes that every individual has an explicit preference set for a collection of products and thus attributes. An individual's method of decision making sets out to maximise the degree of satisfaction resulting from their consumption, in other words the utility level. This theory allows the researcher to examine numerous individuals and gain insight into their preferences (Mazzocchi, 2008:347). Utility is described as a judgement of preferences which is both subjective and distinct to each individual. Utility is considered the most integral concept in conjoint analysis and forms the conceptual foundation for determining value (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266). There are three basic conjoint methodologies which can be employed in a study. Once the basic attributes, which the utility of the product or service is comprised of, have been determined one of the three methodologies should be chosen to conduct the study. The three methodologies include traditional conjoint, adaptive conjoint and choice-based conjoint (Hair *et al.,* 2010:278). Traditional conjoint analysis was selected as the methodology for the present study. This was based on the key characteristics of the research, including the number of attributes employed, the level of analysis, the choice task requirements and consumers' permitted model of choice (Hair *et al.,* 2010:278). The traditional conjoint methodology is most suitable when the number of attributes utilised in the study is less than 10. Respondents evaluate full profiles which serve as a stimuli encompassing selected levels from each attribute. Findings from each individual are solicited and a basic model of consumer choice is applicable (Hair *et al.,* 2010:283).

As conjoint analysis involves initial evaluation of an overall product (stimulus), thus a product assortment, to make deductions regarding the preferences of product attributes, it is described as a decompositional method (Mazzocchi, 2008:348). In contrast, compositional multivariate models (e.g. regression and discriminant analyses) derive overall preference evaluations from evaluations of separate attributes by individual respondents. This technique combines (composes) individual attribute evaluations into an overall evaluation (Hair *et al.,* 2010:263, 566). With the use of consumers' overall evaluations regarding a set of pre-determined alternatives, signifying different attribute levels, conjoint analysis decomposes consumers' preference structures with the evaluation of preference parameters including part-worths, importance weights and ideal points (Green & Srinivasan, 1990:4). Hair *et al.* (2010:272) also explain that with the development of the stimulus, the values of each attribute, which represent the independent variable, were already specified by the researcher. As such, the values attached to each attribute can be broken down with the use of conjoint analysis by employing the overall preference measure. **Table 4.1** describes the key terms applied in conjoint analysis, thus providing insight regarding the concepts and terminology used within this technique.

TABLE 4.1:   KEY TERMS IN CONJOINT ANALYSIS

Key Terms	Definitions of key terms
Factor	Independent variables which can be referred to as attributes in conjoint analysis. Factors are non-metric in conjoint analysis. Factors include colour and brand (Hair *et al.,* 2010:264; Mazzocchi, 2008:348).
Part-worth	These involve consumers' evaluations of overall preference or utility associated with each factor and the various levels describing that factor (Hair *et al.,* 2010:265).
Utility	The subjective preference evaluation of an individual respondent which represents the integrated value or worth of a specific object or product. The arrangement of part-worth estimates constitutes the utility in conjoint analysis (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266).
Level	These are specific non-metric values that factors can assume such as blue, red and yellow which represent colour. Factors can be described by two or more levels (Hair *et al.,* 2010:265; Mazzocchi, 2008:348).
Preference structure	This represents each factor's relative importance and the effect of factors' individual levels on utility (Hair *et al.,* 2010:265).
Conjoint task	The method for collecting respondents' judgements with regard to each stimulus in the conjoint design. Respondents are asked by the researcher to complete a task that is realistic in which a decision is made between a set of objects (Hair *et al.,* 2010:263, 267).
Relative attribute importance	The relative importance or value attached to each attribute by respondents (Orme, 2010:79).
Stimulus/ Profile	A detailed set of levels which respondents evaluate. This is also called a treatment and it includes one level per factor (Hair *et al.,* 2010:265).

4.2.2 Basic steps in conjoint analysis design

When conducting a conjoint study there are various vital decisions which must be undertaken. According to Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:470-474), there are six critical steps in making decisions. These steps are summarised in **Table 4.2** and discussed below pertaining to the present study.

TABLE 4.2:   STEPS IN DEVELOPING A CONJOINT ANALYSIS DESIGN (IACOBUCCI & CHURCHILL, 2010:470)

Step /Stage	Description of step
Step 1: Selecting attributes	Selecting the attributes of product assortments within speciality stores.
Step 2: Determine attribute levels	Determine attribute levels for each factor. Each attribute, known as factors, is characterised by various attribute levels, known as features.
Step 3: Determine attribute combinations	Making a decision regarding the particular combinations of attributes that will be applied.
Step 4: Select form of presentation of stimuli and nature of judgements	Selecting the format (single concept profile or pairwise full profile) in which the stimuli (attributes and levels) will be presented to the respondents and the type of judgements they will be required to make.
Step 5: Decide on aggregation of judgements	Decide if responses from individual consumer will be aggregated.
Step 6: Select analysis technique	Select the technique the analyses of the input data will undergo.

Step 1: Selecting the attributes of product assortments within speciality stores

In conjoint analysis, respondents are requested to make decisions between alternative potential products, thus product assortments, which are characterised by an arrangement of attributes (Mazzocchi, 2008:347). By making these decisions, survey respondents indicate their preferences for hypothetical product concepts (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:2).

As such, the first stage in the conjoint analysis design is making a decision regarding the attributes which will be utilised when assembling the stimuli. It is important to note that in any particular conjoint study, only a certain number among the array of attributes which could be used are used. It is vital therefore that the selection of attributes is accurately done (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:470). All attributes which may create or detract from the general utility of the product or service should be included. This allows accurate representation of respondents' judgement process. To ensure that respondent's judgements are not distorted and that the experiment is valid, it is vital that both positive

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and negative factors are considered in the study. Consequently, characteristics that make the product both attractive, such as high quality, and unattractive, such as high price, should be included (Hair *et al.,* 2010:276).

To ensure both the selection of attributes and the representation of respondents' judgements were correct, the attributes employed in the study were selected by the researcher through a detailed review of the literature and a focus group discussion thereby enhancing the content validity of the study. Focus group interviews are structured methods of information collection and were used in this study to assist in the conjoint analysis design. The purpose of a focus group sets out to establish ideas as opposed to measuring the extensiveness or dominance of several opinions within the population (Struwig & Stead, 2001:7-8). Accordingly the focus group provided insight and clarification concerning the attributes chosen by the researcher. Male respondents indicated the relevance of each attribute employed in the study to ensure the length and complexity of the questionnaire was appropriate with regards to the number of conjoint tasks respondents were faced with. The male respondents were also requested to verify whether the attributes were communicable, realistic, clear and understandable.

A typical conjoint analysis study employs an average number of six or seven attributes (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:470). For the present study, this comprised intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes which formed the key factors of the product assortment within speciality stores and represent the evaluative criteria potentially used by South African male apparel consumers when evaluating such product assortments. The intrinsic attributes or factors used in the conjoint tasks included colour, style and perceived quality, whilst the extrinsic attributes included country of origin, store image and retail store choice (brand). More than six or seven attributes may leave respondents with questions that are too difficult to handle and the number of questions respondents are faced with may become too large. Too many attributes may result in respondents being overloaded and confused (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:3). The attributes which were eventually selected for inclusion in the conjoint tasks were colour, style and perceived quality (intrinsic attributes) and country of origin and retail store (extrinsic attributes). To reduce respondents' confusion and information overload, separate scales were used to measure the importance of fit (intrinsic attribute), price, and retail brand (extrinsic attribute). **Table 4.3** depicts the attributes selected for the conjoint study and therefore employed in the conjoint tasks, and those attributes which employed separate item scales.

TABLE 4.3:   SUMMARY OF PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES WITHIN SPECIALITY STORES' PRODUCT ASSORTMENT

	Intrinsic product attributes	**Extrinsic product attributes**
Product attributes employed in the conjoint task	Colour	Country of origin
	Style	Store image
	Perceived quality	Retail store choice
Product attributes measured on separate item scales	Importance of fit	Price
		Brand

Step 2: Determine attribute levels for each factor

The second step entails the specification of certain levels for each of the attributes (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:470). Each attribute, also referred to as factors, is characterised by various attribute levels, known as features (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:2). The researcher strives for significant assessments concerning the utility of the attribute levels (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:470) and utility is presumed to be based on the values attached to each attribute level (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266); the attribute levels represent potential values for that attribute. The researcher is then able to utilise the values and identify a product with regards to the set of factors it comprises and the levels for each factor (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266). The amount of levels employed for every attribute has a direct effect on the amount of stimuli respondents will be required to judge. This will affect the responsibility each respondent is faced with when judging the stimuli. Such a responsibility, or burden, should be minimised in support of the respondent and to ensure data quality is maintained (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:470).

As factors and levels are operationalised they must be both communicable and actionable. Firstly, to ensure respondents can realistically evaluate the attributes and their levels, they must be communicated without difficulty. If the respondents do not fully comprehend the attribute and its levels, then the results will misrepresent the respondents' preference structure. Secondly, factors and their various levels must be actionable in that they must easily be put into practice. Respondents must be able to make trade-offs amongst attributes and therefore attribute levels in which comparisons concerning attributes are made to evaluate stimuli. Furthermore, it is critical that levels are accurately defined (Hair *et al.,* 2010:279). To achieve these objectives, the focus group contributed to the identification of the attribute levels, thus making sure that the nature of all levels employed would be clear and easily understandable, in addition to being accurately implemented. To further ensure the levels were actionable, definitions of the attribute levels were provided in the questionnaire to reduce the chance of any uncertainty regarding the nature of the

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levels which constitute the conjoint tasks. Insight regarding the level definitions was also achieved by means of the focus group, as they confirmed all the definitions were clear and comprehensible.

Furthermore, the decision of which attribute levels to include in the study was affected by the attribute level's influence on consumer choice. A review of literature assisted in the identification and selection of the specific attribute levels employed in the conjoint task and these were also operationalised. The male focus group also provided clarity in terms of the relevance of the levels in actual life situations. Thus, the levels chosen for the study were parallel to those found in real life situation, enhancing respondent's believability in the task and increasing the validity of respondent's preference judgements (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:471). Respondents respond to different combinations of attribute levels with different degrees of preference (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266). As such, male consumers will prefer certain attribute level combinations over other combinations as they attach more significance to certain attributes in their preference structure. **Table 4.4** illustrates the levels selected for each product attribute.

TABLE 4.4:   SUMMARY OF PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES AND THE RELEVANT ATTRIBUTE LEVELS

Attribute	Attribute Level	Level Number
Brand	Levi's	Level 1
	Guess	Level 2
	Markham	Level 3
	Polo	Level 4
	Diesel	Level 5
	Truworths Man	Level 6
Colour	Bright Colours	Level 1
	Seasonal Colours	Level 2
	Earth Tones	Level 3
	Neutrals	Level 4
Style	Classic Style	Level 1
	Trendy Style	Level 2
	Casual Style	Level 3
	Active/Sports-Wear	Level 4
Country of Origin	Made in South Africa	Level 1
	Made in China	Level 2
	Made in Europe	Level 3
	Combination of local and international manufacturers	Level 4
Perceived Quality	Durability	Level 1
	Easily Maintainable	Level 2
	Colour Fast	Level 3
	Well Made	Level 4
Store Image	Quality Image	Level 1
	Fashionable Image	Level 2
	Exclusive Image	Level 3
	Value for Money Image	Level 4
	Prestige Image	Level 5

Once the attribute levels were identified and established as communicable and actionable and definitions for each attribute level were determined, a choice set matrix was developed to illustrate the various attributes, representing the dimensions of a cue and levels or indicators of each cue. To avoid any misconception regarding the descriptions of the attribute levels, images (in **Addendum A**) were designed by the researcher and a graphic designer for each level. These images were verified by the supervisor and with the assistance of the focus group, they were deemed as appropriately describing the attributes and their levels. These were implemented in the conjoint set matrix to provide the respondents with visual pictures of the various attribute levels that would ultimately be employed in the conjoint tasks. The conjoint set matrix served as input for the Sawtooth software to create the conjoint profiles. **Table 4.5** illustrates the conjoint matrix in which the product attributes are described by their various levels, constituting the product assortment within speciality stores. For example, attribute 1 (brand) is described by level 1 (Levi's),

level 2 (Guess), level 3 (Markham), level 4 (Polo), level 5 (Diesel) and level 6 (Truworths Man).

TABLE 4.5:   CONJOINT MATRIX WITH ASSORTMENT ATTRIBUTES AND LEVELS

Level	Attribute 1 Brand	Attribute 2 Colour	Attribute 3 Style	Attribute 4 Country of Origin	Attribute 5 Perceived Quality	Attribute 6 Store Image
Level 1	Levi's	Bright Colours	Classic Style	Made in South Africa	Durable	Quality Image
Level 2	Guess	Seasonal Colours	Trendy Style	Made in China	Easily Maintainable	Fashionable Image
Level 3	Markham	Earth Tones	Casual Style	Made in Europe	Colour Fast	Exclusive Image
Level 4	Polo	Neutrals	Active/ Sports-Wear	Combination	Well Made	Value for Money Image
Level 5	Diesel					Prestige Image
Level 6	Truworths Man					

Step 3: Determine attribute combinations

This step involves making a decision regarding the particular combinations of attributes that will be applied. In essence, this refers to what the full set of stimuli (profiles) will look like (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:471). Stimuli are a set of real or hypothetical objects arranged or combined by specified levels of each attribute. The stimuli or combinations are shown to respondents who make overall evaluations. (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006:465). The specified attribute and levels illustrated in the conjoint set matrix in **Table 4.5** were used to create such stimuli and employed in the conjoint tasks of the questionnaire.

The stimuli or profiles that were included in the questionnaire were developed by a software program, namely Sawtooth Software ©, which was provided by the research consulting company, Consulta. More specifically, the CVA System, which forms a component of Sawtooth Software's SMRT system or "Sawtooth Software Market Research Tools" system, was utilised to create the stimuli or profiles. Conjoint Value Analysis (CVA) system is a complete conjoint software package used for traditional full-profile conjoint analysis. (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:2). The term "full profile" can be described as product concepts that are characterised with regards to all the attributes used in the study (Hair *et al.,* 2010:264; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:3).

As such, hypothetical product assortment profiles (product concepts) were presented to respondents and included various combinations of all the attributes; that is, the CVA system developed full profiles which included all the attributes described in the conjoint set matrix. These included retail store (brand), colour, style, country of origin, perceived quality and store image. The various levels specified for each attribute varied within the profile combination. **Figure 4.1** describes the relationship between a profile and its attributes and levels as it applies to the present study.

Levels		Attributes		Profile Combination	
Level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 of Brand	→	Attribute 1: Brand		Level 1	Levi's
Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 of Colour	→	Attribute 2: Colour		Level 1	Bright Colours
Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 of Style	→	Attribute 3: Style	→	Level 3	Casual Styles
Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 of Country of Origin	→	Attribute 4: Country of Origin		Level 3	Made in Europe
Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 of Perceived Quality	→	Attribute 5: Perceived Quality		Level 1	Durability
Level 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 of Store Image	→	Attribute 6: Store Image		Level 5	Prestige Image

FIGURE 4.1:   RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFILES, ATTRIBUTES AND LEVELS IN CONJOINT ANALYSIS (ADAPTED FROM VAN ZYL, 2008)

Step 4: Select form of presentation of stimuli and nature of judgements

The fourth step is concerned with selecting the presentation form of the stimuli shown to respondents and the type of judgements respondents will be asked to make (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:473). The CVA software tool generates either single concept profile designs or pairwise full profile designs which are presented to respondents (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:3). Of these two designs, the pairwise full profile approach was employed in the study. This approach employs pairs represented as profiles with multiple

attributes (Hair *et al.,* 2006:495) and consumers make use of multiple attributes during the evaluation stage (Connolly & Srivastava, 1995:219). The pairwise full profile presentation method requests respondents to make comparisons between two product concepts or profiles (Hair *et al.,* 2010:288; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:4). In terms of the description of the judgements which will be obtained from respondents, the two most frequently used approaches measure each alternative in terms of respondents' allocated preferences or their intention to purchase the alternative. These include ranking-ordering alternatives and rating scales (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:474). The measure of preference selected for the present study was a rating scale. This involved obtaining a rating of respondent preferences for one of the hypothetical product assortment concepts over the other, using a metric scale (Hair *et al.,* 2010:291, 292). Respondents were asked to rate the pairwise full profile designs on a 9 point rating scale where 1 indicated a strong preference for the left option and 9 indicated a strong preference for the right option (See **Figure 4.2**).

FIGURE 4.2:   PAIR-WISE FULL PROFILES

Pairwise questions enable respondents to make comparative evaluations concerning the respective adequacy of competing products (Orme & King, 1998:6). Although pairwise presentation may be more difficult for a respondent, as it requires grasping two concepts instead of only one, there are advantages to the format. The comparative description of the pairwise task allows for finer distinctions between products with varying features, such as those found in product assortment, and provides more information than the single concept presentation (Orme, 2010:20; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:3). It is important to

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note that only the relative difference regarding respondents' preferences for attribute levels is established through the pairwise method (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:4), consequently, only relative information is gained from respondents when using pairwise ratings (Orme & King, 1998:7).

Rating scales, as preference measures, have various advantages; they are considered to be less time consuming and provide convenient use to respondents. Additionally, administering and analysing them is also believed to be easy (Hair *et al.,* 2010:292; Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:474). The rating method allows respondents' judgements to be made independently. Respondents are presented with each alternative and accordingly asked to rate their preferences or purchasing intention, thus specifying their preference level with regards to each stimulus (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:474).

As the CVA design is generated, the arrangement of attribute levels (which represent the profile) are specified and presented in each of the conjoint questions. CVA produces a collection of possible conjoint questions from which the ultimate design is chosen (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:7). Conjoint questions are constructed by randomly selecting a pair of levels from every one of the allowed pairs that have been shown the least number of times (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:7). Not one pair of levels is repeated before all the allowed pairs have been presented, which ensures each pair of levels is presented an equal amount of times. Levels from each attribute are just as probable to be presented with any level from another attribute (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:7). Based on this, a final set of 27 questions were compiled for the study. With CVA approach, all respondents received the same set of questions. (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:8).

CVA software utilises D-efficiency measures to determine the goodness of the design in terms of the orthogonality and balance in relation to an optimal design (Hair *et al.,* 2010:291; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:8). An orthogonal design implies zero correlations between pairs (levels) of attributes. Balance occurs when the levels within attributes are presented to respondents an equal number of times. Orthogonal and balanced designs are considered optimally efficient (Hair *et al.,* 2010:289; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:7). However, it may not be possible to create perfectly balanced, orthogonal design in the real world, thus the CVA method produces designs of significant quality that are well-balanced and "nearly-orthogonal" (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:7). The D-efficiency for the study was 0.925 which is considered satisfactory.

Step 5: Decide on aggregation of judgements

Step 5 involves making the decision whether or not responses from individual respondents will be aggregated. If they are aggregated, how will this be done (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:474)?

Conjoint analysis attempts to determine the utilities consumers assign to the levels of each attribute (Malhotra, 2010:701). Utilities or part-worths reflect the value or worth consumers place on each attribute level (Hair *et al.,* 2010:265, 266). Respondents are requested to indicate their preferences for the hypothetical product concepts or assortment profiles, which consist of specific attributes and their relevant levels. The consequent data collected enables CVA's calculation routines to assess every respondent's part-worth utility values for each of the attribute levels (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:2). In terms of the particular sample, the researcher must make a decision as to whether the data will be analysed at the individual level or at the aggregate level (Malhotra, 2010:706). The researcher has a number of options to analyse the data. Namely, the utilities can be derived for each level of each attribute for individual respondents. The results from all the respondents can be grouped together and estimated into one utility function. Lastly, the researcher can define homogenous segments of respondents with similar preferences (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:474). For the present research, the conjoint data was analysed at the aggregate level, thus the average attribute importance and the utility values of the attribute levels were calculated using the responses of the entire sample.

Step 6: Select analysis technique

The last step is the selection of the technique to be used to analyse the input data. This decision depends mainly on the method used to acquire the input judgements (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:474). CVA's calculation routines analyse the conjoint data and calculate respondents' part worth utility values. CVA provides two standard statistical methods to calculate respondent's utilities; "Ordinary Least Squares" (OLS) regression and "monotone" (non-metric) regression. The OLS routine is suitable for conjoint data which is ratings-based and the monotone routine is suitable for conjoint data which is rankings-based (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:3). In the present study, respondents were required to compare one product assortment concept to another, thus rating-based data was used as opposed to ranked data. OLS linear regression was therefore used to calculate the part-worth utilities of the attribute levels, which represent the strength of respondents' preference for particular product assortment features (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:2, 17).

4.2.3   Operationalisation

To establish whether the theoretical concepts of the study do exist in terms of real life situations, it was necessary to develop distinct definitions to provide essential operational instructions for the study, namely the operational definitions (Walliman, 2011:130). Operational definitions associate abstract concepts with specific distinguishable items in the social world by clearly identifying the valid indicators of the variables (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:34).

By operationally defining a construct, meaning is allocated to the construct through the identification of activities (operations) necessary to measure it (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:34). Once the main concepts in the study were operationally defined, indication was given regarding the type of data that was required to be collected and analysed. This also indicated the possible scales that should be employed in the study (Walliman, 2011:130). From the theory, relevant apparel attributes were identified for inclusion in the conjoint analysis choice set. All the attributes were conceptualised and broken down into dimensions and indicators for each cue. **Table 4.6** summarises the constructs that were employed in the study.

TABLE 4.6: CONCEPTUALISATION AND OPERATIONALISATION OF OBJECTIVES

Objectives	Conceptualisation Construct	Dimensions and Indicators	Number of items	Examples of adapted items	Measurement scales (sources)
Objective 1: To explore and describe the importance of price, brand and fit regarding male consumers' preferences for speciality stores.	**Extrinsic cues:** Product attributes which are considered non-physical and when altered the physical product remains unchanged (Lantos, 2010; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). These are related to the product but do not form part of the physical product itself; they are external to the product (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:147; Olson & Jacoby, 1972).	**Retail store choice** -Truworths Man -Timberland -Uzzi -Guess -Levis -Diesel -Markham -Polo -V+King -Other	1	From the **speciality stores below**, please choose the **ONE** which you most frequently visit.	Question adapted from Moore and Carpenter (2006).
		Price -Price Reliance Schema	4	**The speciality store which I have chosen is my favourite because...** 1. I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores. 2. The price of their clothing is high which means it is better quality. 3. I can tell the quality of the clothing just by looking at the price. 4. I think they offer value for money.	Questions adapted from Lee and Lou (1995) and Lichtenstein, Ridgway and Netemeyer (1993), using a 6 point scale ranging from 6=very strongly agree to 1=very strongly disagree.
		-Prestige Sensitivity	6	**Price-Prestige Sensitivity Statements:** **The speciality store which I have chosen is my favourite because...** 1. People notice when you buy the most expensive brand of clothing. 2. Buying a high priced brand makes me feel good about myself. 3. Buying the most expensive brand of clothing makes me feel classy. 4. I enjoy the prestige of buying a high priced brand. 5. It says something to people when you buy the high priced version of a product. 6. I purchase the most expensive brand of a product just because I know other people will notice.	6 point scale adapted from Moore and Carpenter (2006) and questions adapted from Lichtenstein *et al.* (1993), ranging from 6=very strongly agree to 1=very strongly disagree.

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Objectives	Conceptualisation Construct	Dimensions and Indicators	Number of items	Examples of adapted items	Measurement scales (sources)
Objective 1: To explore and describe the importance of price, brand and fit regarding male consumers' preferences for speciality stores.	**Extrinsic cues:** Product attributes which are considered non-physical and when altered the physical product remains unchanged (Lantos, 2010; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). These are related to the product but do not form part of the physical product itself; they are external to the product (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:147; Olson & Jacoby, 1972).	**Brand** -Dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour	9	Brand selection criteria: **The speciality store which I have chosen is my favourite because...** 1. I make my purchase according to my favourite brand, regardless of price (loyalty). 2. They offer brands that have a good reputation (reputation/social identification). 3. The brands they carry are in line with my lifestyle (personal identification). 4. They offer my usual brand which I like to stick with as it saves me time (time). 5. They offer my choice of brand that I largely base on price (price). 6. Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand (quality). 7. The brands from these stores say something about me as a person (image/social symbol). 8. The brands from these stores communicate a satisfying image or status (status). 9. I think others make judgments about me by the kinds of products and brands I buy (prestige).	Questions adapted from Wood (2004); Del Río, Vázquez and Iglesias (2001) and Lichtenstein *et al.* (1993), using a 6 point Likert scale ranging from 6=very strongly agree to 1=very strongly disagree.
	Intrinsic cues: Product attributes which are intrinsic to the product and cannot be changed without altering the physical characteristics of the actual product (Lantos, 2010; Olson & Jacoby, 1972).	**Importance of fit** -Criteria pertaining to good fit	6	Importance of fit within speciality stores: 1. Shirt neck fits comfortably without gaping (being too loose). 2. The shoulders and chest of jackets and other upper body garments fit smoothly and comfortably, sleeve length is appropriate for arm length. 3. In terms of both formal and casual trousers, the waist falls at natural waist or desired waist level. 4. The pants inseam measurement is correct (the seam of a trouser leg that runs from the crotch down to the bottom of the leg). 5. Size of figure corresponds with label size. 6. Good overall fit.	5 point scale adapted from Hugo and Van Aardt (2012) and Brown and Rice (2014), ranging from 5 (very important) to 1 (unimportant).

Objectives	Conceptualisation Construct	Dimensions and Indicators	Number of items	Examples of adapted items	Measurement scales (sources)
Objective 2a: To explore and describe the relative importance of intrinsic attributes (colour, style, perceived quality) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.	**Intrinsic cues:** Product attributes which are intrinsic to the product and cannot be changed without altering the physical characteristics of the actual product (Lantos, 2010; Olson & Jacoby, 1972).	**Colour** -Bright colours -Seasonal colours -Earth tones -Neutrals **Style** -Classic style -Trendy style -Casual style -Active/ Sports-wear **Perceived Quality** -Durability -Easily maintainable -Colour fast -Well made (Construction)	27 conjoint tasks	When evaluating product assortment within speciality stores which of the following product assortment offerings do you prefer?	A variety of pair-wise assortment scenarios were created and measured/ rated on a 9-point scale adapted from Sawtooth Software Inc. (2002), where 1=strongly prefer left option and 9=strongly prefer right option.
Objective 2b: To explore and describe the relative importance of extrinsic attributes (store image, brand/ retail store, country of origin) used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.	**Extrinsic cues:** Product attributes which are considered non-physical and when altered the physical product remains unchanged (Lantos, 2010; Olson & Jacoby, 1972). These are related to the product but do not form part of the physical product itself; they are external to the product (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:147; Olson & Jacoby, 1972).	**Brand** Levi's Guess Markham Polo Diesel Truworths Man **Country of origin** -Made in South Africa -Made in China -Made in Europe -Combination of local and international manufacturers **Store Image** -Quality image -Fashionable image -Exclusive image -Value for money image -Prestige image	27 conjoint tasks	When evaluating product assortment within speciality stores which of the following product assortment offerings do you prefer?	A variety of pair-wise assortment scenarios were created and measured/ rated on a 9-point scale adapted from Sawtooth Software Inc. (2002), where 1=strongly prefer left option and 9=strongly prefer right option.

Objectives	Conceptualisation Construct	Number of items	Examples of adapted items	Measurement scales (sources)
Objective 3: To determine and rank/rate the relative important attributes used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores.	Product attributes, which form part of product assortment influences male apparel consumers purchasing decision during the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process (Berman & Evans, 2010:204). Product attributes can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes which are cues used to communicate various aspects of the product (Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993:144, 149). Consumers use both intrinsic and extrinsic cues in product evaluation (Jamal & Goode, 2001:143, 150).	57	See questions regarding attributes (Question 1-57). Analysis of results in terms of importance of attributes.	See the scales adapted and concepts measured for questions 1-57 and **Table 4.7**.

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4.3 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

4.3.1 Sample

In quantitative research, the function of sampling is to derive conclusions about the sample population, keeping the focus of the investigation in mind (Kumar, 2014:228). Men represent a significant target group for retailers (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006:1297) and although the male apparel market segment is one that is growing, there is a shortage of research in the field of consumer behaviour with regards to this topic (Du Preez *et al.*, 2007:2; Lee, Ibrahim & Hsueh-Shan, 2005:324). A study conducted by Bakewell *et al.* (2006:169, 177), which highlights male fashion consciousness, suggests that men have become more aware, confident and demanding, thus they require and deserve retail formats which are in line with their different ways of thinking and behaviour towards fashion. Unfortunately, most of the research that has been conducted on South African male consumers is of a syndicated nature, making it inaccessible to academia and practitioners (Du Preez *et al.*, 2007:16). As South African male apparel consumers hold a unique set of needs and wants (Du Preez *et al.*, 2007:16) they were identified as the unit of analysis (members of the population).

The sample included South African male consumers, between the ages of 20 and 80, located in the greater Tshwane area, Gauteng. These consumers had to be economically active in that they contribute to the goods and services of the country (Statistics South Africa, 2015:xxv). Consumers who from part of the upper end of the LSM scale have clear aspirational drive to increase spending, especially for status purchases (PWC, 2012:12) consequently, these males form part of the active economy and contribute to retailer's revenue. Zhang *et al.* (2002:53) found that both geographic and demographic factors influenced the importance of product attributes of casual wear for certain consumers. Demographic information was also collected by Du Preez *et al.* (2007:9) to create profiles for South African male apparel consumers. This demographic information included age, the populations group and income, amongst other aspects. For the present study, demographic characteristics such as respondents' age, income, ethnicity and location formed the basis of the inclusion criteria, ensuring the correct sample was selected.

Speciality stores will appeal to male apparel consumers who are becoming more fashion conscious (Bakewell *et al.*, 2006:169; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:341) and consider the quality of clothing as a high priority for which they are willing to pay more (Thomas, 2009:35-36).

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This is attributed to the fact that the retail format of speciality stores cater to differentiated life-style segments who seek fashion, prestige and quality and who are willing to pay for merchandise in the middle and upper-middle price ranges (Jarnow, Judelle & Guerreiro, 1981:398). The correct merchandise offering leads to consumer store satisfaction (Clodfelter, 2008:250, 252), which results in returning to the store and making repeat purchases (Torres *et al.,* 2001:211). The South African male apparel stores which may benefit from the correct merchandise offerings include Truworths Man, Timberland, Uzzi, Guess, Levis, Diesel, Markham, Polo and V+King.

A suitable sample size is based on how homogeneous or heterogeneous the members of the population are with regards to the features of the research topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:214). The size of the sample and the degree of variation within the sampling population also influences the validity regarding the inferences drawn from a sample. Firstly, a large enough sample size provides findings that are more accurate. Secondly, a sampling population that is homogenous with regard to the features employed in the study, for a specified sample size, allows for more accurate sampling (Kumar, 2014:233). Since the CVA system, which is a conjoint software package, was applied in the study a sample size of 200 respondents was considered appropriate. The CVA system is considered a suitable technique when dealing with relatively small sample sizes (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:14). By employing relatively smaller samples, the CVA system is able to stabilise the analysis of results (Orme, 2014:7). According to Struwig and Stead (2001:119) a sample size of 150 to 200 is an adequate reflection of the population if the sampling process is properly executed. Keeping the purpose of the study, using a sample size of 200 respondents provided the researcher with reliable and accurate data analysis, thus contributing to a deeper understanding concerning the preferences of South African male apparel consumers. With the use of a questionnaire, data was collected from male consumers over a period of 6 months in 2013 and 2014.

4.3.2   Sampling technique

A non-probability sampling design was employed to collect the necessary data for the study. This method of sampling involves several members of the population having little or even no chance of being sampled (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:211). Non-probability samples are more economical with regards to time and financial expenses (Welman & Kruger, 2001:62). **Section 4.4.3** will provide a detailed account of the procedure used to gain access to the sample.

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Convenience and snowball sampling were the techniques employed to conduct the non-probability sampling. Although the convenience sampling method is not always representative of the entire population, it is chosen as respondents are easily accessible (Salkind, 2012:103-104; Struwig & Stead, 2001:111), thereby making it easy to reach participants in the initial stage of the study. The snowball sampling method is suitable for investigating a somewhat unknown phenomenon (Strydom, 2011b:233), such as male apparel consumers' evaluation of product assortments within speciality stores. The snowball technique involves the selection of a sample using networks and is considered valuable when doing research concerning decision making within a group (Kumar, 2014:244-245). As such, the determined male apparel consumers were contacted for the use of a snowball sampling technique and asked to identify other representatives from the same population group for inclusion in the sample (Welman & Kruger, 2001:63). To ensure a sufficient number of participants from the same population was included, the researcher requested that each participant supply five names and contact details of members from the same population (Strydom, 2011b:233).

4.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Quantitative research involves identifying a number of variables the researcher plans to study and data is collected specifically related to those variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:96) with the use of adequately structured data collection procedures (Struwig & Stead, 2001:4). In terms of quantitative study designs, the data collection methods are more clear and distinctive (Kumar, 2014:133). For the present study the researcher used a structured questionnaire, administered in a paper based form and an online electronic form, as the primary data collection method. The questionnaire is an extremely flexible instrument when employed as the method of data collection and must be appropriately used to accomplish the specific requirements of a study (Walliman, 2011:190). A questionnaire sets out to realise the fundamental objective of acquiring facts and opinions regarding the phenomenon from individuals who are acquainted with the specific topic (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:186).

4.4.1 Conjoint analysis questionnaire

The structured self-administered questionnaire was developed based on existing scales and conjoint analysis. The pairwise full profile presentations generated by CVA software

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can be administered through paper and computer-based questionnaires (Orme & King, 1998:5; Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:14). The questionnaire constructed for the present study contained 57 questions to assist in the determination of the specific factors (attributes) and the levels for each factor a male consumer may consider when evaluating speciality stores product assortment. The questionnaire is included in **Addendum A**.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections, namely:

- **Section A:** This section comprised the consent form in which the purpose of the research was explained and the name and contact details of the researcher were given to the respondent should they have any questions or concerns regarding the study. The respondents provided their consent to ensure they were partaking in the study of their own free will.

- **Section B:** This section included a list of definitions accompanied by relevant images regarding the specified product attribute levels used in the conjoint tasks to ensure respondents were clear about the terms used throughout the questionnaire.

- **Section C:** This section consisted of the hypothetical conjoint tasks which were presented to respondents as pairwise full profiles. Each profile contained attribute levels of intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes.

- **Section D:** This section included product attribute questions which were not applied in the conjoint tasks such as price and brand questions based on retail store choice, and the importance of fit criteria.

- **Section E:** This section consisted of various demographic questions about respondents to ensure all-inclusive criteria were adhered to.

The specific composition of the questionnaire is presented in **Table 4.7** which describes the various questions included in the questionnaire in addition to the concepts that were measured.

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TABLE 4.7:   COMPOSITION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Concept measured	Section of the questionnaire	Number of questions
Conjoint tasks measuring the preference for specific product attributes within product assortment of speciality stores.	Question 1-8, 11-16, 37-44, 51-55	27
Retail store choice	Question 17	1
Price reliance schema	Question 18, 21, 26, 31	4
Price-prestige sensitivity	Question 19, 22, 24, 27, 34, 36	6
Brand dimensions	Question 20, 23, 25, 28-30, 32-33, 35	9
Importance of fit criteria	Question 45-50	6
Demographic data	Question 9-10, 56-57	4

The questionnaire included 27 conjoint tasks or questions in which respondents were forced to make trade-offs among attributes, where the task was simplified as they selected a small number of attributes on which to base their judgement (Huber, 2005:8). This section formed the foundation of the questionnaire. The conjoint tasks requested that respondents compare two profiles, indicating their preference for one profile over the other, on a 9 point preference rating scale where 1 indicated a strong preference for the left option and 9 indicated a strong preference for the right option, thereby allowing the evaluation of certain behaviour on a continuum (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:189).

An excessive number of conjoint questions may leave respondents feeling fatigued or uninterested resulting in data of unsatisfactory quality (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:7). To moderate respondent fatigue and information overload, the conjoint tasks were alternated between other scale items in the questionnaire. As shown in **Table 4.7**, the questionnaire incorporated 9 brand questions (which related to the dimension of brand purchasing behaviour) and 10 questions were allocated to price (which included 4 price reliance schema questions and 6 prestige sensitivity questions). The brand and price questions were grouped together in the same table in the questionnaire and measured on a 6 point Likert scale ranging from 6-very strongly agree to 1-very strongly disagree (see **Addendum A**). One question involved respondents' retail store choice, which formed the bases of the brand and price questions. Six questions pertaining to the importance of fit were measured on a 5 point scale ranging from 5-very important to 1-unimportant. Four questions addressed general demographic information such as age, income, ethnicity and respondents place of residence.

4.4.2   Pretesting of the instrument

A pilot study was conducted in which the newly developed questionnaire was pre-tested on a small number of people to warrant the correction of any errors immediately at minimal cost (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:195; Walliman, 2011:191). Pilot testing typically performs two objectives, namely a) to enhance both the face and content validity of the measuring instrument and b) to determine the time it would take respondents to complete the questionnaire (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:195). It is also vital that the CVA conjoint design is pre-tested to determine the ideal number of questions to ask respondents and to establish whether the questionnaire is too difficult (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:6-7). It is important that the pilot study was tested on individuals who correspond to the proposed sample so that any problems concerning comprehension or other causes of confusion could arise (Walliman, 2011:191). Potential respondents were also given the pilot to complete in order to evaluate whether the reading levels of the questionnaire were appropriate (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:195).

The pilot study was conducted using six respondents who were asked to provide feedback regarding various aspects of the questionnaire, including the length of the questionnaire, whether the instructions were clear and understandable and any other concerns that the respondents had. By reducing error, the reliability of the instrument is increased (Salkind, 2012:118), in particular, the reliability of the measurement instrument is enhanced through the implementation of a pre-test or pilot study, eliminating any items that are unclear and minimising the degree of difficulty of the questionnaire (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:177; Salkind, 2012:118). Validity of the measurement instrument is described as the degree to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:92). Validity encompasses two parts, namely that the instrument actually measures the concept under consideration, and that the concept is measured accurately (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:173). Thus, the clarity of the concepts from the questionnaire were examined with the purpose of enhancing the validity of the measurement instrument. By ensuring the measurement instrument applied has acceptable levels of reliability and validity before implementing the study, valid and reliable data can be achieved (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:172). All six respondents who took part in the pilot study fell within the inclusive criteria set of the relevant sample, revealing possible concerns with regard to comprehension of the final questionnaire. The respondents indicated the questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete, which was deemed an appropriate time frame. The problems that emerged from the pilot study included grammatical errors, language

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errors and clarity of instructions. After all the errors were identified and rectified it was established that the number of questions and the difficulty level of the questionnaire was feasible, thus rendering the questionnaire suitable to be administered to the intended sample. It was also clarified that the various attribute levels and corresponding images employed in the conjoint tasks, as well as the other concepts being measured, were clear and understandable.

4.4.3   Data collection

The online form of the questionnaire was distributed via e-mail by means of a free online survey website. Once the questionnaire was constructed and launched, using the free online website, a link was issued by the website which provided direct access to the full colour version of the questionnaire. Male consumers, who complied with the inclusion criteria, were identified and approached. These male consumers were contacted via social networks and informants who provided the researcher with possible respondents' cell-phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Once contacted, the men were informed about the purpose of the study and asked if they wished to partake in the study. If they were willing, an e-mail with the link was sent to those prospective participants to complete the electronic questionnaire. Respondents initially contacted were then asked to provide additional contact details of any other possible respondents who fit the same inclusion criteria to which the questionnaire could be sent. Some respondents did report back that the last page of the questionnaire did not load, inhibiting them in submitting the questionnaire. This could have been due to slow internet connection speed which consequently caused a low response rate for the online questionnaire.

A paper based questionnaire was also developed to gain the necessary number of responses. These questionnaires were self-administered, or individually administered, to specifically identified respondents and involved the respondents completing the questionnaire on their own. The researcher was available if the respondent experienced any problems (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:188). Fieldworkers also delivered the paper-based questionnaire by hand and collected them at a later stage, allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire in their own time. The fieldworkers were students from the University of Pretoria. They were provided a checklist with the inclusion criteria of the sample, ensuring that the correct sample was approached. The inclusion criteria described the sample in terms of gender (only men), their age restriction (between 20 and 80 years) and location (men residing in the greater Tshwane area, Gauteng). The fieldworkers were

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paid for each questionnaire collected. Hand delivering questionnaires increases response rates due to personal contact and respondents are not bothered at inconvenient times as the questionnaires are simply distributed; the disadvantages include high costs and the geographical area that can be covered is not very large (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:188). For the present study, the fieldworkers were compensated for each questionnaire collected and the size of the geographical area that could be covered was not a concern as the sample only comprised male consumers located in the greater Tshwane area.

To ensure the ethical soundness of the conjoint questionnaire, a consent letter was included in which participants were informed beforehand about the potential impact of the research, allowing them to withdraw from the investigation if they wished to. A place for the participant to sign was also included, indicating they had read and agreed to participate and that they understood the purpose of the study (Salkind, 2012:89). Respondents were given the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the questionnaire before actual completion of it. If respondent required assistance in the completion of the questionnaire, the researcher did so without influencing or intimidating the respondent in any way to ensure reliability of the study. Data was collected over a period of 6 months. At the end of this time a total number of 259 questionnaires were received from respondents of which 204 were usable.

With regards to the reliability and validity of results, there is no significant benefit of computerised over paper-based full profile method. However, the added advantage of using the computerised method may stem from survey developments and data collection costs (Orme & King, 1998:5). Some of the key advantages and disadvantages of using online surveys are highlighted below.

The advantages of using the Internet as the primary data collection approach include short response time and the researcher has control over the sample without any involvement in the survey (Ilieva, Baron & Healey, 2002:373). Once the questionnaire is submitted, respondents' answers are directly entered into the researcher's computer, enabling real time data capturing and data analysis. The short turnaround of results saves both time and resources with regard to the data entry process (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:251; Ilieva *et al.*, 2002:373; Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013:227). With very low financial requirements (Ilieva *et al.*, 2002:373) the Internet, as the primary data collection method, is inexpensive (Klein, Nihalani & Krishnan, 2010:1). Confidential answers are secured quickly

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and cost effectively as numerous administrative costs, including costs of paper, postage and data entry, are eliminated (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:225). The Internet provides a sense of anonymity, which encourages respondents to answer sensitive questions honestly (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:251; Zikmund *et al.,* 2013:228). Using the Internet as the primary data collection method enables the contacting of a lot more people within a shorter time period (Klein *et al.,* 2010:1; Zikmund *et al.,* 2013:225). Internet surveys can be accessed at anytime from anywhere, making it easy to contact respondents who are hard to reach or busy and who would not normally participate in another research project (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:251; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:277). As Internet questionnaires can be visually stimulating and interactive, respondents may be more willing to co-operate and devote time answering questions if colour, sound and animation are incorporated into the questionnaire (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:251; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:225). The online website software may be programmed to discard improper data entry, such as respondents incorrectly checking two answers when the instructions require only one answer, which is often the case for paper-based questionnaires (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:227).

There are also various disadvantages of using the Internet as a primary data collection method. Recruitment of a suitable sample can be expensive and time consuming as no contact list is provided (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:251) and both technical and research skills are required to carry out an Internet survey (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:251). Although research is more compatible with various browsers, the technology isn't flawless (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:251). Downloading high resolution files is problematic with low speed Internet connection (low bandwidth) (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:226). Some individuals do not have access to the Internet and even with access, not everyone has the same level of technology. Without powerful computers and software, individuals may not be able to access advanced features encoded into Internet questionnaires (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:226). Additionally, some individuals may lack computer skills, making it difficult to navigate through and provide answers to the online questionnaire (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:226).

4.5   DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis was conducted with the assistance of the marketing research firm Consulta Research (Pty) Ltd, located in Centurion, Gauteng, South Africa. This included

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an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the separate item scales incorporated in the questionnaire (**Section D** in the questionnaire). The EFA was generated using DELL Statistica version 12 and will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 5. The researcher applied SPSS version 19 to obtain further descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha for each of the constructs (factors) which emerged from the EFA, which will also be discussed in Chapter 5. **Addendum B** presents the descriptive statistics for the various constructs (factors). This included the minimum, maximum, means and standard deviation for each item associated with each construct (factor) and the overall mean and standard deviation of each construct (factor). **Addendum B** also illustrates the Cronbach's alpha for each of the constructs. The Cronbach's alpha (α) indicates the internal reliability of the measurement scales (Mazzocchi, 2008:10).

The analysis of the conjoint data was also conducted by the marketing research firm Consulta Research (Pty) Ltd. The conjoint data was generated using Sawtooth Software SSI Web v6.6.2. This determined the utility values for each attribute level and the attribute's relative importance.

The data analysis method applied in conjoint studies depends on two factors, namely the nature of the scale used for the dependent variable (preference) and the chosen level of data aggregation (Rao, 2014:79). If responses are measured on an interval scale (ratings data), ordinal least squares regression methods are called for (Rao, 2014:79). CVA's ordinary least squares (OLS) routine was the calculation routine applied to analyse the conjoint data and calculate utilities. OLS is appropriate under the assumption that data are "scaled at the interval level." This means the data was scaled so that the actual differences between items being measured were communicated by the arithmetic differences in their values (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:11). The results obtained from the conjoint analysis procedure are assessed for accuracy at two levels, namely the disaggregate level (individual-level) and the aggregate level. The main objective in both cases is to determine how consistently the model predicts the respondents' preference evaluations (Hair *et al.,* 2010:298). In line with the purpose of the present study, the average attribute importance and utility values for the attribute levels were analysed on an aggregate level.

The R-square statistic, also known as the coefficient of determination, is an output of regression analysis. R-square indicates how effectively the model fits the data within the sample (Mazzocchi, 2008:181). Thus, R-square is a measure of goodness-of-fit (Mazzocchi, 2008:384). A goodness-of-fit measure determines the quality of the estimated

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model. This is done by comparing actual values of the dependent variable(s) with values predicted by the estimated model (Hair *et al.*, 2010:298). R-square is a squared correlation index, signifying the amount of variance concerning the optimally scaled data that can be accounted for by the multidimensional scaling procedure (Malhotra, 2010:691). The coefficient of determination (R^2) ranges between 0 and 1. A high value of R^2 indicates a greater explanatory power regarding the regression equation, therefore the better the prediction of the dependent variable (Hair *et al.*, 2010:156). Higher values of R-square are preferable, although values of 0.6 or better are acceptable (Malhotra, 2010:697). For the present study, the average R-squared goodness-of-fit measure was 0.904, indicating a good fit.

Conjoint analysis sets out to determine both the relative importance consumers assign to significant attributes and the values (utilities) consumers assign to the attribute levels (Malhotra, 2010:701). The analysis provides insight regarding consumers' preferences for each attribute (Hair *et al.*, 2010:262) and the value or worth consumers place on the levels of each attribute, representing the attribute level utility values (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266). This showcases how respondents may react to different combinations of attribute levels (product assortment profiles) (Hair *et al.,* 2010:266). The interpretation of the part-worth estimates, or utilities, are carried out in a relative perspective (one part-worth versus another) rather than evaluating absolute values (the actual amount of change in the dependent measure) (Hair *et al.*, 2010:297).

Lastly, cluster analysis was performed on the conjoint data obtained from **Section C** in the questionnaire. Cluster analysis is a method whereby individuals or objects are grouped into clusters so that individuals within the same cluster are more similar to one another than those in other clusters. Cluster analysis aims to maximise the homogeneity of individuals within the clusters while also maximising the heterogeneity between clusters (Hair *et al.*, 2010:505). The clustering procedure chosen for the study determined how the clusters would be formed (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011:243). The study employed a *k*-means clustering procedure, which is a non-hierarchical clustering algorithm which functions by partitioning observations into a user-specified number of clusters. Observations are then iteratively reassigned until clusters are distinct (Hair *et al.*, 2010:507). The *k*-means clustering approach was applied repeatedly and although cluster solutions of five, four, three and two clusters were considered, the four cluster model was deemed most appropriate for the study.

4.6   QUALITY OF DATA

4.6.1   Validity issues

Struwig and Stead (2001:136) define validity as "The extent to which a research design is scientifically sound or appropriately conducted." Before conducting the research, the appropriateness of the research design was first verified by the supervisor and approved by the research committee.

Theoretic validity involves a common agreement between the researcher and the participants about the concepts or theory used to refer to the description of the phenomena (Struwig & Stead, 2001:144). The concepts of the study were validated with a vigorous review of the relevant literature and a well-structured theoretic framework. Each concept was defined and discussed accordingly. The literature review provided an overview of other studies findings pertaining to similar objectives and the potential contribution that this study will have on various research streams.

Content validity establishes whether the instrument measures the concept we assume it is supposed to measure and whether the instrument provides an adequate sample of items that represent the concept being measured (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:173). Measures to prevent error, in terms of content validity, included a review of both the literature and of the questionnaire by the supervisor. A pre-test was conducted to ensure relevancy of the variables and that participants had a clear understanding of the instructions of the questionnaire. It also aided in the accurate operationalisation and conceptualisation of constructs.

According to Salkind (2012:125), construct validity is the extent to which the findings are associated with an underlying set of related variables. The practical components of the test scores are related to a basic theory or model of behaviour. A pre-test was conducted to determine if the items/performance of the test reflected the contents of the construct or set of related variables and to establish the effective operationalisation and conceptualisation of constructs.

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4.6.2   Reliability issues

Reliability is described as consistency of performance over time; results are dependable, stable and trustworthy (Salkind, 2012:115). When an instrument measures the same thing more than once and results in the same outcomes, reliability occurs (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:177). Reliability was established in the following manner:

- The study leader checked the questionnaire to ensure that all questions were relevant, comprehensible and easy to complete.

- A pre-test was conducted before the final questionnaire was administered.

- The privacy of the respondents was assured thereby rendering truthful responses as possible.

- Respondents were not forced or intimidated to take part in the study.

- The researcher respected the rights of the respondent if they wished to withdraw from the study at any time.

- A cover letter was used to clearly state the purpose of the study to prospective respondents.

4.7   ETHICAL ISSUES

The following principles ensured that individuals participating in the research were treated appropriately and in a dignified manner (Salkind, 2012:85).

- Participants were protected, within all possible limits, from deception, emotional harm and physical discomfort that may have been experienced by partaking in the study. This was done in the following ways:
  - When the researcher had direct contact with respondents during the data collection procedure an effort was made not to influence or intimidate the respondents in any way.
  - Details about the participant which they may have perceived as unbecoming, such as low income, was kept anonymous by the researcher (Strydom, 2011a:115). There was no identifiable way of knowing who each questionnaire belonged to as respondents were not required to provide their names in the questionnaire.
  - The participant's right to privacy was protected and all data was handled in a confidential manner (Strydom, 2011a:119-120). Only the researcher, supervisor and fieldworkers had access to the completed questionnaires in the data gathering

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stage. Only the researcher, supervisor and Consulta, the research company, had access to respondents' information during data analysis.

- An informed consent letter was administered with the online and paper based questionnaire to each participant who participated in the research (Salkind, 2012:86). This ensured the full knowledge and cooperation of the subjects (Strydom, 2011a:118). This form provided the following:
  - An invitation to partake in the study (Salkind, 2012:87) and a complete description of the investigation in a clear and understandable language (Strydom, 2011a:118), thereby reducing any confusion with regards to the context of the study.
  - Who the researcher was (Salkind, 2012:89).
  - The approximate time it would take to complete the questionnaire, depending on the results from the pre-test.
  - A confidentiality clause assuring that all data collected during data gathering and data analysis would be maintained in the most confidential way possible.
  - Notification to respondents with regards to a withdrawal from the research at any time for any reason (Salkind, 2012:89). Voluntary involvement of participants was assured at all times and under no circumstance was any participant coerced to take part in the study (Salkind, 2012:86; Strydom, 2011a:116).
  - The contact details of the researcher, including the researcher's telephone number and email address, was provided in the consent letter in case the respondents had any questions pertaining to the study (Salkind, 2012:89). With regards to the online survey, the consent letter was included in the actual email and a link to the online questionnaire was placed at the end of the letter.

- The structured questionnaire consisted of questions of an appropriate degree of comprehension (Salkind, 2012:118). This was confirmed with the help of the focus group, as they indicated whether the questionnaire was clear and understandable.

- Standardised conditions were ensured when participants completed the questionnaire during the data collection procedure (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:177). All participants who took part in the study adhered to the inclusion criteria set for the sample.

- The study was administered under the supervision and guidance of the study leaders and carried out with competence and honesty and an adequately skilled researcher (Strydom, 2011a:123).

- The findings of the study were compiled and released in the most accurate and objective way, in the form of a written report (Strydom, 2011a:126). This complied with the requirements of the University of Pretoria - Department of Consumer Science.

4.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter described the research methodology applied and the approach in which the study was conducted, was outlined in sufficient detail. With the focus on the research objectives, the study set out to establish the systematic, controlled, valid and rigorous exploration and description (Kumar, 2014:39) of the product attributes most preferred by South African male apparel consumers when evaluating the product assortment within speciality stores. This was achieved through the use of different methods, techniques and procedures identified in this chapter, which were justified and explained. **Chapter 5** will present the results in line with the objectives formulated for the study.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 presents the results of the study, obtained from the self-administered questionnaire. The results are analysed, explained and summarised to provide comprehensive insight regarding the research problem. The questionnaire was designed to explore the four main objectives of the study concerning male consumers' evaluation of speciality stores' product assortment. The results are organised and presented according to the set objectives of the study. This chapter includes: 1) the demographic profile of the sample where the sample and its main characteristics are considered, 2) the exploratory factor analysis, 3) the results from the conjoint analysis, 4) cluster analysis and 5) concluding remarks for the chapter and what the following chapter encompasses.

5.1   DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Demographics are described as essential statistics, which assess the characteristics evident within a population (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:44; Solomon, 2007:10). Male consumers' evaluation of speciality stores' product assortment are affected by demographic characteristics. Consumer demographics have a direct impact on consumption behaviour and influence various qualities of individuals, including their personal values and how they make decisions (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:110). Demographic data is crucial as it adds meaning to findings (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:44) and presents the most accessible and cost effective way of classifying target markets (Rousseau, 2007:235). Dividing a population in terms of demographic information is the most frequently used basis for segmenting consumer markets (Mpinganjira, 2013:278; Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:44). Markets are sectioned according to demographic aspects such as individuals' age, gender, ethnicity and income (Mpinganjira, 2013:278). As such, the demographic factors that were considered relevant to the present study were used to describe the sample profile and included age, income and ethnicity or population group.

The sample for the present study included South African male consumers. A total of 204 usable questionnaires (n = 204) were collected from male respondents who reside in the greater Tshwane metropolitan area, Gauteng. The average age of the men who participated in the study was 34, with the minimum age being 23 and the maximum age being 78. The overall demographic profile of the male consumer sample is summarised in

Table 5.1. As the study employed a non-probability sampling design, the researcher was unable to predict or ensure that every element of the population would be represented in the sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:211).

TABLE 5.1:   DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Variables	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Age (n = 204)		
20-29 years	108	53%
30-39 years	41	20%
40-49 years	23	11%
50 or more	32	16%
Population Groups (n = 204)		
Caucasian (White)	137	67%
Black (African)	40	20%
Indian	20	10%
Coloured	4	2%
Mixed Race	2	1%
Asian	1	0%
Income (n = 204)		
Between R10 001-R20 000	71	34.80%
Between R20 001-R30 000	42	20.59%
Between R30 001-R40 000	37	18.14%
Between R40 001-R50 000	20	9.80%
More than R50 001	34	16.67%

An all-male sample was specifically selected for this study. Research regarding male consumers and their apparel decision making process, specifically their evaluation of product assortment, is lacking within the South African context. Changes in social roles, such as women's entry and advances in the workplace, have brought about changes in shopping behaviour (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:154). Male consumers have become more involved in their own apparel shopping, instead of handing the task to their mothers or wives (Rath *et al.*, 2008). Men represent an important shopping group and their decision making styles are likely to differ to that of women (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:223). As male and female consumer decision-making behaviour varies, gender may influence consumers' approaches to obtaining products (Mitchell & Walsh, 2004). For instance, Mitchell and Walsh (2004) found consumer decision-making factors such as brand consciousness common to both men and women, whereas novelty-fashion consciousness was a factor only applicable to female consumers and time restrictedness was a factor only found for men.

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5.1.1 Age

Age is considered one of the most critical factors that influence consumer behaviour in the market place (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:415). The participants were asked to indicate their age at their last birthday. To meet the inclusion criteria for the sample and be allowed to participate in the study, males had to be between the ages of 20 and 80. Consumers of specific age groups have different sets of needs and wants, and products are developed to target those customers who comprise particular age groups (Mpinganjira, 2013:278). Consumers of the same age group are inclined to have a similar set of values and common cultural experiences (Solomon, 2007:10).
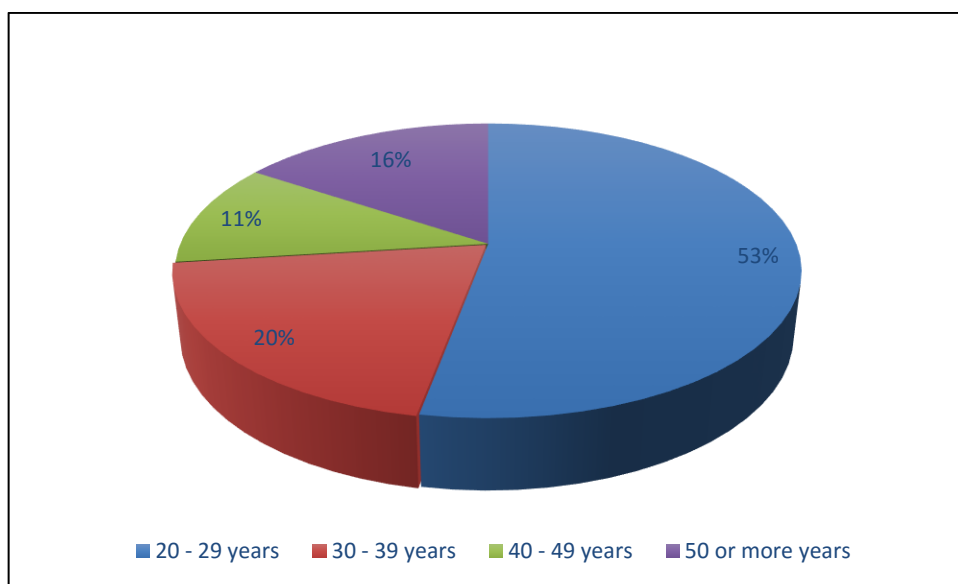
FIGURE 5.1:   AGE CATEGORIES OF THE SAMPLE (n = 204)

The samples ages were grouped into four age bands with 10 year intervals as illustrated in **Figure 5.1**. The segment that constituted more than a half of the sample was between the ages of 20-29 years (53%; n = 108), indicating the sample constituted a predominantly young group of male consumers. The remaining age categories included the category 30-39 years, contributing to 20% (n = 41), the age category 40-49 years represented the smallest part of the sample with 11% (n = 23) and 50 years and older contributed to 16% (n = 32). The snowball sampling technique employed in the study may have resulted in the relatively young male sample since the sample was selected using the male respondents' networks as they identified other representatives from the same population.

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5.1.2   Population groups

South Africa is known as the Rainbow Nation as the country presents an ethnically and racially diverse population (Mpinganjira, 2013:279). South Africa consists of several ethnic sub-cultures which encompass various racial groups. Statistics South Africa has identified four key ethnic groups within the country, those being Black African, White, Indian or Asian and Coloured (Maree, 2013:199). Ethnic groups are sets of individuals who have similar traits and customs as a result of the specific culture into which the individuals were born (Lindquist & Sirgy, 2006:400). Consequently, individuals from the same ethnic groups may engage in similar behaviour when evaluating the various product assortment elements within speciality stores.
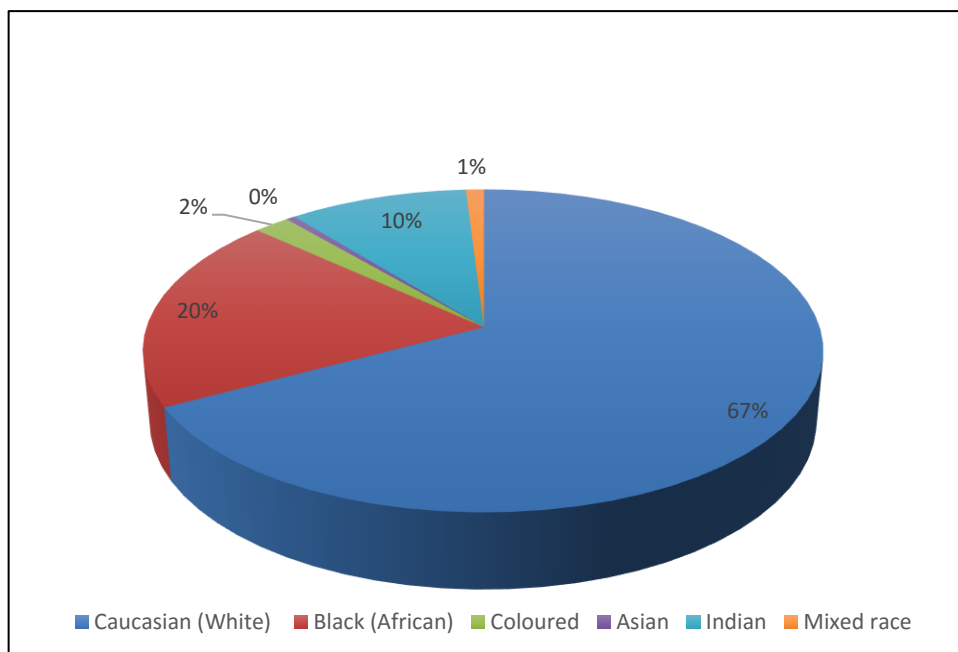
FIGURE 5.2:   POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE (n = 204)

The ethnic or population groups represented in the sample are illustrated in **Figure 5.2**. The largest population group in the sample was that of the Caucasian (White) group with 67% (n = 137). The remaining population groups were Black (African) (20%; n = 40), followed by the Indian group representing 10% (n = 20); the Coloured group with 2% (n = 4) and Mixed Race group with 1% (n = 2) represented the lowest number of respondents respectively. In line with the 2011 Census data, the demographics in terms of the City of Tshwane are strongly slanted toward the White and Black population groups (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

5.1.3 Income level of the sample

A consumer's income level provides a good indication of what they are able to afford (Mpinganjira, 2013:279). Income also represents a significant factor for differentiating various market segments (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:47). The distribution of wealth within a population provides an indication of which groups possess the largest buying power and market potential (Solomon, 2007:11). Individuals of the same social class tend to have more or less of an equal income and social status in the community (Solomon, 2007:11).
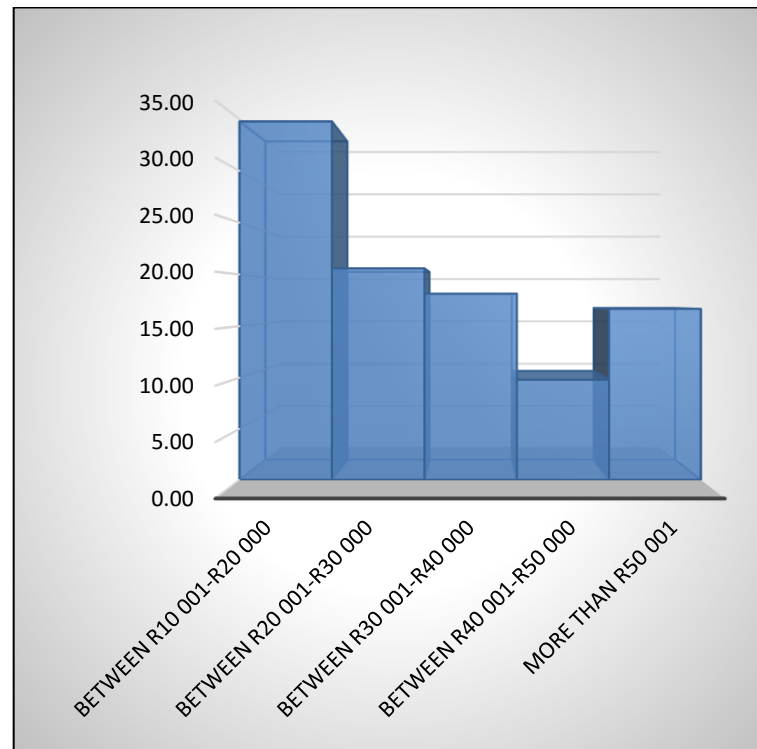
FIGURE 5.3:   INCOME DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE (n = 204)

Respondents were requested to indicate their total monthly income before tax deductions. As seen from **Figure 5.3**, 34.8% (n = 71) of the respondents indicated their approximate monthly income was between R10 001-R20 000. The second highest income category (20.59%; n = 42) comprised respondents earning between R20 001-R30 000 per month. The remaining income categories were R30 001-R40 000 (18.14%; n = 37), followed by more than R50 001 (16.67%; n = 34) and R40 001-R50 000 (9.8%; n = 20).

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5.2 INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES USED IN THE EVALUATION OF PRODUCT ASSORTMENT

This section presents and discusses the results according to first four objectives set for the study. The overall objective of the study was to explore and describe the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes used by male consumers when evaluating apparel product assortment of speciality stores. The study employed exploratory factor analysis and conjoint analysis to establish male consumers' preference for specific intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes within an apparel assortment.

5.2.1 Results and interpretation of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

This section deals with the first objective of the study, namely, the importance of price, brand and fit regarding male consumer's preferences for speciality stores. To reduce respondents' fatigue whilst completing the questionnaire, other item scales concerning these product attributes were incorporated. These item scales measured constructs not included in the conjoint analysis and comprised questions relating to price (a prestige sensitivity item scale and price reliance item scale), brand questions relating to dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour, and a fit criteria item scale (See **Addendum A**). Since scales were adapted for the purpose of the present study, an explorative factor analysis was performed to retain relevant constructs.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is an exploratory technique applied to develop theory (Henson & Roberts, 2006:395). EFA is beneficial for academic research in reducing items into distinct dimensions or factors (Hooper, 2012:1). This technique allows the researcher to identify unobservable, yet underlying factors concerning the observed data (Mazzocchi, 2008:221). The implementation of the exploratory factor analysis included the application of various steps, namely a factor extraction method, a factor retention method, a rotation method and lastly, interpreting and labelling the various factors (Taherdoost, Sahibuddin & Jalaliyoon, 2014:380). DELL Statistica (version 12) was used to perform the exploratory factor analysis. Principal component analysis (PCA) was the factor extraction method applied. The decision regarding the number of factors to retain was based on the eigenvalues from the principal component analysis. The present study used factors with eigenvalues above 1. To retain attributes within a factor, loadings across all factors were considered in terms of where the attribute was most suited. Factor loadings with more than 0.6 belonged to a single factor. Loadings below that threshold were viewed in terms of

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their cross-loadings on different factors and a decision was made where the attribute fits best. Orthogonal (varimax) rotation was implemented in the factor rotation phase. It is important to note that the number of significant loadings on each row of the factor matrix must be minimised. The objective is that each variable (item) associates with only one factor as factors cannot be distinct and represent separate concepts when they share variables. Variables with more than one significant loading, or cross-loadings, were also considered for deletion (Hair *et al.*, 2010:119).

The initial factor analysis rendered five factors. Two items were omitted as one loaded onto two factors (*"The brands from these stores communicate a satisfying image or status"*) and the other item loaded onto a single factor (*"They offer my choice of brand that I largely base on price"*). After elimination of these items, three factors emerged from the final EFA and provided a viable solution. Although certain brand and price items loaded onto other factors, they were nonetheless indicative of their respective label. A meticulous analysis of the three identified factors and their respective items permitted the classification of suitable factor labels. Factors were labelled Factor 1: Prestige sensitivity; Factor 2: Importance of fit; Factor 3: Added value. **Table 5.2** illustrates the content of the various factors.

TABLE 5.2: RESULTS OF THE EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (n = 204)

Variable/ Items	Factor Loadings (Varimax normalised) Extraction: Principal components (Marked loadings are >.700000)		
	Factor 1 (PS)	Factor 2 (IOF)	Factor 3 (AV)
Buying a high priced brand makes me feel good about myself	0.822	-0.105	0.155
I enjoy the prestige of buying a high priced brand	0.821	-0.034	0.231
Buying the most expensive brand of clothing makes me feel classy	0.814	-0.036	0.174
It says something to people when you buy the high priced version of a product	0.778	-0.056	0.083
I purchase the most expensive brand of a product just because I know other people will notice	0.763	-0.011	0.024
People notice when you buy the most expensive brand of clothing	0.740	-0.164	0.042
I think others make judgments about me by the kinds of products and brands I buy	0.726	0.023	0.156
The price of their clothing is high which means it is better quality	0.709	-0.151	0.288
I can tell the quality of the clothing just by looking at the price	0.705	-0.161	0.219
The brands from these stores say something about me as a person	0.694	0.160	0.219
The shoulders and chest of jackets and other upper body garments fit smoothly and comfortably, sleeve length is appropriate for arm length	-0.138	0.768	0.079
The pants inseam measurement is correct (the seam of a trouser leg that runs from the crotch down to the bottom of the leg)	-0.044	0.731	0.069
In terms of both formal and casual trousers, the waist falls at natural waist or desired waist level	-0.088	0.725	0.108
Good overall fit	-0.164	0.700	0.089
Shirt neck fits comfortably without gaping (being too loose)	0.038	0.637	0.034
Size of figure corresponds with label size	0.034	0.602	-0.065
I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores	0.232	0.094	0.715
They offer my usual brand which I like to stick with as it saves me time	0.208	0.013	0.713
The brands they carry are in line with my lifestyle	0.192	0.054	0.678
I think they offer value for money	0.093	0.001	0.655
I can buy my favourite brands from there, regardless of price	0.375	-0.222	0.641
Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand	0.020	0.136	0.580
They offer brands that have a good reputation	0.079	0.098	0.529
% Variance explained	**6.114**	**3.121**	**3.297**
Prp.Totl (54.5%)	**0.265**	**0.135**	**0.143**
Mean	**3.421**	**4.229**	**4.325**
Standard deviation	**1.327**	**0.843**	**1.063**
Cronbach's α	**0.927**	**0.788**	**0.796**

The descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha (α) were calculated for each of the three factors (constructs) and indicated in **Addendum B**. The descriptive statistics included the minimum, maximum, means and standard deviation for each item associated with each factor, in addition to the overall mean and overall standard deviation for each factor. The descriptive statistics for Prestige Sensitivity were as follows: $Min_{Prestige\ sensitivity} = 0$; $Max_{Prestige\ sensitivity} = 6$; $M_{Prestige\ sensitivity} = 3.421$; $SD_{Prestige\ sensitivity} = 1.327$. For Factor 2, Importance of Fit, the following descriptive statistics were obtained: $Min_{Fit} = 1$; $Max_{Fit} = 5$; $M_{Fit} = 4.229$; $SD_{Fit} = 0.843$. The descriptive statistics for Added Value included: $Min_{Added\ Value} = 0$; $Max_{Added\ Value} = 6$; $M_{Added\ Value} = 4.325$; $SD_{Added\ Value} = 1.063$. Cronbach's alpha coefficient established the internal consistency reliability of the measurement instrument. This coefficient varies from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 typically indicating a highly reliable scale (Malhotra, 2010:319; Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:177). Cronbach's α values indicated that the reliability for all the constructs were high with Prestige Sensitivity = 0.92, Importance of Fit = 0.78 and Added Value = 0.79. The cumulative % of variance explained by these factors was 54%. This means that 54% of the total observable variance can be explained by using three factors rather than all the variables.

5.2.1.1 Factor 1: Prestige sensitivity (PS)

The original prestige sensitivity scale of Lichtenstein *et al.* (1993) included nine items, of which six were employed in the present study. Prestige sensitivity is a price-related construct consistent with a perception of price in its positive role. Lichtenstein *et al.* (1993) define prestige sensitivity as "favourable perceptions of the price cue based on feelings of prominence and status that higher prices signal to other people about the purchaser," hence the respondent's sensitivity was measured regarding this conceptual definition.

In addition to the prestige sensitivity scale, the study also included a price reliance schema scale and a brand item scale pertaining to the dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour. The price reliance schema scale (price quality schema) also represents price in its positive role. Peterson and Wilson (in Lee & Lou, 1995:23) suggest that over time consumers develop a "price reliance schema" for certain product categories, or an expectation that "the higher the price the better the quality." The notion is that consumers with a strong price-reliance schema are more inclined to prefer higher-priced products, implying that they perceive a positive relationship between price and quality. Consumers' price reliance schema was measured using an adapted version of both the Lichtenstein *et al.* (1993) scale and the Lee and Lou (1995) scale, resulting in four items used for the present study.

To measure the dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour, nine items were adapted from the scales of Wood (2004), Del Río *et al.* (2001) and Lichtenstein *et al.* (1993).

Ten items loaded onto Factor 1, which was relabelled 'Prestige sensitivity.' The definition for this factor was consistent with that provided by Lichtenstein *et al.* (1993). It is evident from **Table 5.4** that all ten items relate to male consumers' sensitivity to prestige when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. The six prestige sensitivity items implemented in the study all loaded onto this factor. Factor 1 also included the loadings of two brand purchasing dimension items ("*I think others make judgments about me by the kinds of products and brands I buy*" and "*The brands from these stores say something about me as a person*") and two price reliance schema items ("*The price of their clothing is high which means it is better quality*" and "*I can tell the quality of the clothing just by looking at the price*") which can be associated with the respective label.

Prestige sensitivity is believed to be associated with behaviours in the marketplace that are more socially visible (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993:242). Men maintain that high price apparel is an indicator of brands prestige (Lee, 2001:68). Keeping in mind the items which loaded onto this factor, consumers who select high-priced products due to the influence of prestige may be prompted to conform to what others expect, thus they make use of the price cue to deal with perceived risk. Consumers' motivation to comply with peer expectations indicate that they strive for social acceptance by buying expensive products (Völckner, 2008:371).

The male consumers in the present study showcase significant price-quality beliefs with regard to prestige sensitivity as they associate the price of the apparel item with the quality; the higher the price the better the quality. Cues which are easily identifiable, such as price, are more likely to be employed by consumers when shopping. Consumers rely on the price cue as it saves them time and facilitates convenient shopping by simplifying the decision making process (Völckner & Hofmann, 2007:193). Consumers' motivation to follow price-quality beliefs may indicate the role that social recognition plays in price-quality assumptions, signifying that peers possibly will disapprove of a medium to low quality purchase (Völckner, 2008:371).

The brand dimensions which loaded onto this factor represent the brand's prestige *("I think others make judgments about me by the kinds of products and brands I buy")* and the reflection of brand image onto self-image *("The brands from these stores say something*

about me as a person"). Consumers who prefer prestige brands are inclined to favour brands that strengthen or emphasise their actual/desired self-image and convey this image to relevant others. Namely, highly conscientious consumers are prestige sensitive, thus prefer prestige brands to express an image to their peers which is consistent with their self-concept. Such an image may reflect aspects including 'reliability,' 'hard-work,' 'success' and 'achievement' (Casidy, 2012:243, 247).

To determine male consumers' preference for certain items within the prestige construct, the total percentage of agreement was calculated for each of the ten items loaded onto Factor 1: Prestige sensitivity (See **Addendum B**). This was done by using the respondents' ratings regarding their level of agreement with the particular items (statements), namely strongly agree (5) and very strongly agree (6). The prestige sensitivity item with the highest total percentage of agreement and hence the most important to these men was *"The brands from these stores say something about me as a person"* (25.98%; n = 53). This relates to the brand image, and consequently, what it reflects in terms of these male consumers' self-image is an important factor when evaluating speciality stores product assortment. The second highest total percentage of agreement was *"People notice when you buy the most expensive brand of clothing"* (24.51%; n = 50), indicating that these men may use price as a surrogate indicator of prestige and may perceive that the positive impact of high prices may signal underlying aspects such as status or wealth to others.

5.2.1.2 Factor 2: Importance of fit (IOF)

To measure the importance of fit, six items were adapted from the literature (Brown & Rice, 2014; Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012). All six items loaded onto Factor 2 and related to male consumers fit criteria. Factor 2 encompassed the importance of fit during the evaluation process and emphasised the criteria employed by men pertaining to their expectation of good fit. This factor was relabelled 'Importance of fit.'

The total percentage of importance for each of the six items which loaded onto the fit construct was calculated to determine male consumer's preference for certain fit criteria (See **Addendum B**). The results show that all the criteria pertaining to good fit had a high total percentage of importance. The specific fit criteria considered most important and most preferred by the participants was *"Good overall fit"* (91.67%; n = 187), which suggests that when considering fit criteria during the evaluation of speciality stores product assortment, male participants want the garment to fit well. Good fit of a garment indicates

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that it conforms to the three-dimensional human body (Brown & Rice, 2014:121). *"Good overall fit"* was followed by *"The shoulders and chest of jackets and other upper body garments fit smoothly and comfortably, sleeve length is appropriate for arm length"* (90.69%; n = 185). The men in the present study rated feeling comfortable in the clothing they wear as important, which confirms previous findings (Frith & Gleeson, 2004:43) and illustrated their need for their upper body garments to fit smoothly and comfortably.

5.2.1.3 Factor 3: Added value (AV)

Items from both the price reliance schema scale (Lee & Lou, 1995; Lichtenstein *et al.,* 1993) and dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour scale (Del Río *et al.*, 2001; Lichtenstein *et al.,* 1993; Wood, 2004) loaded onto Factor 3. The former measured price in its positive role and the latter measured the dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour. A total of seven items loaded onto Factor 3, were relabelled 'Added value.' This factor and its various items related to the added value male consumers believed they would receive when selecting particular speciality retailers. The present study considered 'Added value' in line with the definition provided by Woodruff (1997:142), who described customer value as "a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or hinder) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situations."

Table 5.2 demonstrates that the male participants associate various characteristics with the Added Value construct. Two items from the price reliance schema scale loaded onto Factor 3, namely: "*I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores*" and "*I think they offer value for money.*" Five brand purchasing dimension items also loaded onto Factor 3. These items included *"They offer my usual brand which I like to stick with as it saves me time," "The brands they carry are in line with my lifestyle," "I can buy my favourite brands from there, regardless of price," "Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand"* and *"They offer brands that have a good reputation."*

To establish the items within the added value construct which these men most prefer, the total percentage of agreement was calculated for each of the seven items loaded onto Factor 3 (See **Addendum B**). This showcased the criteria which may influence male consumers' evaluation of speciality stores' product assortment. The added value item with the highest total percentage of agreement and thus the most preferred was *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores"* (49.51%; n = 101). This item was a component of the price reliance schema, where price takes on a positive role,

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indicating that these men may rely on price as a surrogate indicator of product quality (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993), which they may use as criteria when evaluating speciality stores product assortment. The second highest total percentage of agreement for the added value construct was *"Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand"* (48.53%; n = 99). This indicates that the male participants consider quality an important factor when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment.

Future recommendations would be to explore the effect that these three attributes have on other retail format such as department stores. Pappu and Quester (2008:430) found that department stores, compared to speciality clothing stores, had significantly higher rating regarding retailer brand equity dimensions including retailer awareness, retailer perceived quality and retailer loyalty. Department stores, over specialty stores, were the store type men most frequently visited when shopping for apparel suggesting that these men believed that department stores offer the variety in price ranges, quality of merchandise and merchandise selection they desire (Torres *et al.*, 2001:209). Therefore, when evaluating retailers' product assortment, men may perceive product attributes somewhat differently in such retail formats and attach value to different aspects of product attributes when evaluating assortments in department stores than they would in speciality stores.

5.2.2   Results of the conjoint analysis

In this section, the results regarding the conjoint analysis are presented and discussed. Objectives 2 to 4 pertained to the relative importance of intrinsic (colour, style, perceived quality) and extrinsic (store image, brand/ retail store, country of origin) product attributes used by male consumers to evaluate the apparel assortment of South African speciality stores. The most common function of conjoint analysis in consumer research involves the analysis of consumer evaluations of various arrangements of product attributes (Mazzocchi, 2008:347). Conjoint analysis necessitates that respondents make trade-offs as they evaluate various product attributes, much the same as consumers would make in the marketplace when evaluating the various dimensions of product alternatives (Huber, 2005:7). The conjoint analysis approach presents an array of outputs for analysis, which include part-worth utilities and the relative importance of product attributes (Orme, 2010:77). Having the necessary data concerning the relative importance of several product attributes in the minds of consumers is beneficial in terms of new product development (Zhang *et al.,* 2002:53). The results and consequent analysis regarding the relative attribute importance (**Section 5.2.2.1**) and the utility values (**Section 5.2.2.2**) are

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presented in a sequence of tables and figures. Thus, providing an indication of male consumers' preference for certain apparel product attributes when evaluating the product assortment of speciality stores.

5.2.2.1 Results and interpretation of relative attribute importance

This section examines the relative importance of intrinsic product attributes (style, colour and perceived quality) and extrinsic product attributes (brand name, store image, country of origin) used by South African male consumers to evaluate apparel assortment of speciality stores. It also includes the ranking/rating of all the intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes used simultaneously by South African male consumers to evaluate speciality stores' product assortment. It is important to note that aspects such as price and brand were included in other item scales as they may overpower choice.

In a conjoint analysis study, respondents judge a set of hypothetical attribute alternatives which are usually displayed as profiles. When judging these profiles, consumers provide significant estimations of their preferences, more specifically, they indicate the relative importance of the product attributes. The aim of the present research was to determine the product attributes South African male consumers use to evaluate the apparel product assortment of speciality stores. To statistically deduce the value, or utility, male consumers attach to certain attributes and attribute levels within speciality stores, the respondents were presented with hypothetical profile scenarios which represented possible product assortments they may encounter in such retail formats. The assortment profile scenarios comprised different levels of six attributes: brand, style, store image, colour, country of origin and perceived quality.

The respondents were requested to indicate their preference for the assortment profiles (27 pair-wise profiles) by making trade-offs between pairwise full profile combinations on a 9 point scale, thus representing their preference structure. The reporting of the results is subject to the extent to which the respondents most preferred a profile. One (1) indicated a strong preference for the left profile and nine (9) indicated a strong preference for the right profile. This provided an indication of the product attributes within a speciality store's assortment that the respondents most prefer and which exert an influence on their evaluation and final decision making process. The data from the consumer trade-off choice profiles were analysed with the use of the Conjoint Value Analysis (CVA) system. This included the calculations of relative importance of the product attributes and the utility values of the attribute levels. When calculating the respondents' attribute level utility

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values, CVA applied the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression method. OLS is appropriate for rating-based data, making the process suitable for the present study as male respondents were required to compare one product assortment to another (rating rather than ranking-based data). OLS can provide significant and useful diagnostic information regarding the quality of the calculated utilities (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:11). R-square, a goodness-of-fit measure (Malhotra, 2010:691), was applied to evaluate the quality of the conjoint model (Hair *et al*., 2010:298). The higher the values regarding the goodness of fit measure, the better the fit (Hair *et al*., 2010:298). The average R-square for the present study was 0.904, indicating that the model fits the data well.

Table 5.3 presents the results of the relative importance of each attribute. The six product attributes comprising of brand, style, store image, colour, country of origin and perceived quality were included in the 27 pair-wise profiles, depicting possible assortment offerings. The relative importance of each attribute is presented in ranking order. The number of levels employed for each respective attribute is also indicated in **Table 5.3**. An important factor to consider is that the number of levels selected to define an attribute has substantial relevance regarding the results. "Number-of-levels effect" may occur, wherein the attributes which are defined by more levels may achieve higher average importance (Orme, 2002:3) as indicated by the high relative importance of brand which contained six levels and store image which contained five levels, whereas the other attributes only contained four levels. To counteract this, CVA provides a tool which generates a well-balanced, "nearly orthogonal" design. Level balance occurs when each attribute level is shown an equal number of times and an orthogonal design refers to a design with zero correlations between pairs of attributes. This procedure ensures that each pair of attribute levels are shown approximately the same number of times, and each level from one attribute is equally likely to be shown with any level from another attribute (Sawtooth Software Inc., 2002:7).

TABLE 5.3: **RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF ASSORTMENT ATTRIBUTES IN RANKED ORDER**

Ranked order	Assortment attributes	Relative importance	Number of levels
1	Brand	30%	6
2	Style	17.3%	4
3	Store image	14.9%	5
4	Colour	14.1%	4
5	Country of origin	12. 9%	4
6	Perceived quality	10.9%	4

When describing the relative importance of each attribute, it is important to consider the effect of each attribute with regards to the total utility of a product. The impact of each attribute's effect on a product indicates the range in the attribute's utility values (Orme, 2010:79). Consequently, percentages are calculated from relative ranges and a set of attribute importance adding to 100% is achieved. The attribute levels selected for the study governs the importance of each attribute (Orme, 2010:79). The average attribute importance's for the present study is represented in **Figure 5.4** as percentages in ranking order, from most to least preferred. It is important to note that the attribute importance has a significant zero point, although when calculating the importance of an attribute, it is always relative to the other attributes employed in the study (Orme, 2010:80).

	Brand	Style	Store Image	Colour	Country of Origin	Perceived Quality
■ Series1	30.00%	17.30%	14.90%	14.10%	12.90%	10.90%
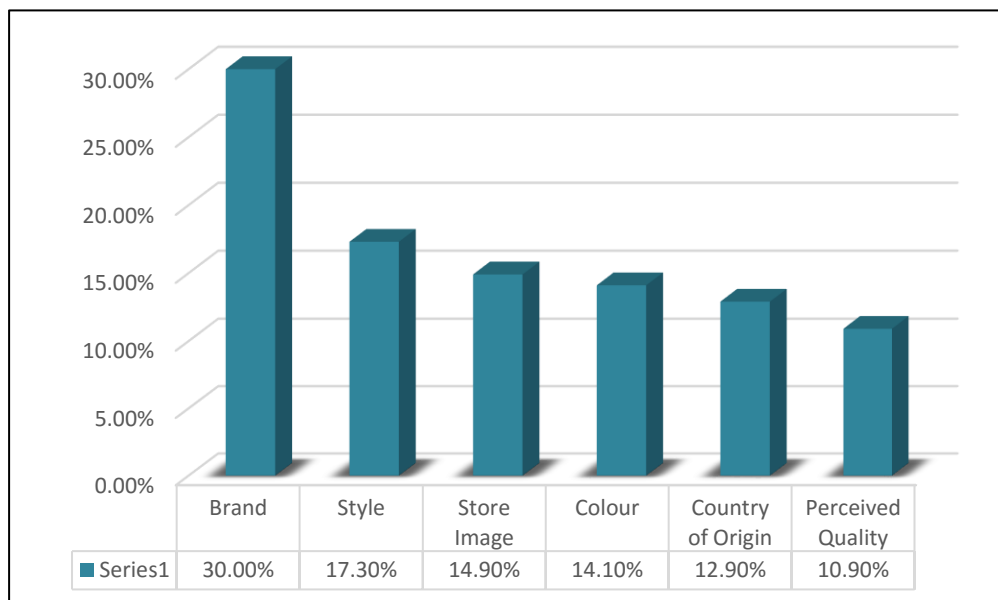
FIGURE 5.4: **RELATIVE ATTRIBUTE IMPORTANCE**

According to the selected attributes included in the profiles the results indicated that the attribute rated to have the most relative importance was brand (30%), followed by style

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(17.3%). The remaining attributes' relative importance were store image (14.9%), colour (14.1%), country of origin (12.9%) and lastly perceived quality (10.9%). The above product attributes which constituted the choice sets or combinations of attribute profiles, as it pertains to the product assortments that speciality stores may offer, will now be discussed individually.

5.2.2.1.1 Brand (Extrinsic)

When interpreting the outcomes of conjoint analysis, it was found that brand was rated the highest relative important attribute among the sample of South African male consumers in their evaluation of speciality stores' product assortment. The results indicated that the relative importance of brand in the evaluation stage of the decision making process was 30%. This outcome is not surprising as the South African market is considered to be brand conscious (W&RSeta, 2012a:26). Brand as a representation of self-image is an attribute distinctly significant and specific to clothing brands (Wood, 2004:21). Apparel brands hold a strong meaning for male consumers and serve as a method of communication to others (Zayer & Neier, 2011:100). The psychological or symbolic features characterised by the image a brand may offer presents critical reasoning as to why consumers choose particular brands over others (Lee, 2001:60). Branded clothing allows brand orientated male consumers to feel better about themselves as they experience more comfort and an increase in their self-image and confidence (Thomas, 2009:39).

5.2.2.1.2 Style (Intrinsic)

Style, with 17.3%, was the second most relative important attribute influencing male consumers' evaluation of product assortment. Style is considered to be one of the features which attract customers' attention to the initial selling of a garment (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). Several researchers have reported on style as an important product attribute (Eckman *et al.*, 1990; Frith & Gleeson, 2004:44; Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2002). Hugo and Van Aardt (2012:460) established that the criteria most often used by apparel consumers when evaluating the quality of a garment are intrinsic attributes including physical features such as style. Eckman *et al.* (1990:18) found that clothing styles have an effect on consumers' purchasing decisions with a definite impact on consumers' evaluation of apparel. Style is a significant evaluative criteria when shopping for clothing and it is important that styles complement the figure (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:464). Clothing style effects the impressions formed by others and the perception of oneself, as it impacts self-description through the stimulation of related trait concepts (Hannover & Kühnen, 2002:2521, 2522). Men have the necessary knowledge in

presenting themselves and are aware of the styles which work best for their body shape (Frith & Gleeson, 2004:44), thus, the style of a garment has to be correct to provide the consumer with suitable fit and overall comfort (Zhang *et al.*, 2002:57).

5.2.2.1.3   *Store image (Extrinsic)*

The third relative important attribute was store image, with 14.9%. Store image offers various advantages to retailers. Specifically, the image of a store is an important factor in any retailer's business and the possession of certain strong store image features enhances the store's ability to attract consumers (Thang & Tan, 2003:198). Store image represents one of retailers' most vital communication tools with their target customers (Birtwistle & Shearer, 2001:16). For instance, the image of a store can convey aspects such as quality to customers where a retailer with a strong image can apply their good reputation to distinguish their product as quality (Liljander, Polsa & Van Riel, 2009:287). Store image also forms a significant element regarding the branding strategy retailers can employ to distinguish themselves in the marketplace (Janse Van Noordwyk, 2008:ii). Retailers' image can serve as an essential foundation towards retail brand equity (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004:340). The results for the present study indicate that retailers of speciality stores targeting men may benefit by implementing both quality and fashionable aspects regarding store image in their brand strategies and effectively communicate these aspects to consumers, thereby enhancing consumer's perception of the store image. It is also important that speciality store retailers successfully manage these aspects in order to build brand equity.

Store image perceived in a positive light by consumers serves as a stimulus to particular advantageous consumer behaviour. Favourable store image could result in positive consumer attitudes and emotional states, patronage preference and behaviour, approach behaviour and consumer satisfaction (Janse Van Noordwyk, 2008:192). Consumers' perceptions of the dimension of retailers' image can contribute to the development of strong brands and distinctive retail brand associations in consumers' minds (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004:340). The exact attribute combination regarding store image that customers consider as important depends on the retail sector, target market and consumers' motivation (Birtwistle & Shearer, 2001:16). With regards to the present study, the male participants considered the combination of quality and fashionable store image important when evaluating retailers of speciality stores' product assortment.

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5.2.2.1.4 Colour (Intrinsic)

Colour was not far behind store image and ranked as the fourth attribute influencing male shoppers' evaluation process with 14.1%. Colour had a relatively low importance for the men in the present study, compared to those in previous studies (Liu & Dickerson, 1999; Thomas, 2009). This may indicate that when evaluating speciality stores product assortment, other factors possibly have a greater influence on the male consumer evaluation process, rather than colour. Since colour has the ability to activate consumer interest (Funk & Ndubisi, 2006:41), retailers use colour to grab consumers' attention with the intention of selling a garment (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). The formal qualities of colour bring about an aesthetic experience of pleasure by stimulating the element of sight (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008:36, 42), thus appealing to consumers' visual senses. Some South African male consumers immediately search for the right colour once a clothing item has attracted their attention (Thomas, 2009:37). The male sample in the present study were more concerned about product attributes, such as brand, style and store image, when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment as opposed to finding the right colour.

5.2.2.1.5 Country of origin (Extrinsic)

Country of origin was ranked as the second lowest product attribute with a relative importance of 12.9%. The importance of country of origin information to consumers has been found to be a function of consumer ethnocentrism and specific product types mediate the strength of this relationship (Dmitrović & Vida, 2007:1), thus the effect of country of origin is product specific. It has been found that consumers utilise the country of origin extrinsic cue and attach value to this cue during their decision making process when purchasing apparel (Moore & Carpenter, 2008:331). Ha-Brookshire (2012:31) also established that country of origin (COO) and the multilevel COO information, namely, country of parts (COP) and country of manufacturing (COM), had an impact on consumers' purchase preferences for apparel. Although these authors have reported on the positive influence of country of origin, this extrinsic cue was not considered an important product attribute in the present study when men evaluated speciality stores' assortments. Eckman *et al.* (1990:19, 21) state that when consumers are requested by a researcher to rate criteria they may be inclined to assign more significance to extrinsic product characteristics than they normally would in a natural situation. In their study, country of origin had minor importance to participants, which was attributed to the fact that in previous research, country of origin may have been important due to the prompting of patriotic attitude by predetermined scales.

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5.2.2.1.6   *Perceived quality (Intrinsic)*

Perceived quality was the lowest ranked attribute among male respondents in their evaluation of product assortments, with a relative importance of 10.9%. Perceived quality can be described as the subjective judgements of consumers regarding the comprehensive excellence or superiority of a brand (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000:201; Zeithaml, 1988:3). Consumers often evaluate product quality using informational cues, including both intrinsic and extrinsic cues, which can be associated with the product. These cues can be employed in combination or as single cues to form perceptions of a product's quality (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:180). Apparel quality comprises of two dimensions, namely physical features, such as garment design, fabric and construction, and performance features (intrinsic). The latter comprises of aesthetic aspects, including the general appearance of the garment and the design elements which affects the visual appeal of clothing, and functional aspects, such as durability and ease of care (Brown & Rice, 2014:69-70). Consumers tend to think they utilise intrinsic cues as the basis for their evaluations of product quality since it provides justification for their product decisions as rational or objective, although, in many cases consumers use extrinsic cues, such as price and brand, to evaluate quality (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012:180). This may be the case in the present study since brand received the highest relative importance ranking, consequently these men use brand and store image to evaluate quality. Previous studies also suggest that personal variables such as knowledge may have an effect on how consumers evaluate the quality of clothing and why they find some cues more important than others (Hines & Swinker, 2001:72). Additionally, women have been found to be more concerned with the quality characteristics of clothing, such as easy care, since they are more likely to be taking care of the garments (Zhang *et al.*, 2002:58); men, more often than not, hand this task to their mothers or wives.

5.2.2.2 Results of relative utility values of attribute levels

When evaluating product attributes, consumers make trade-offs. Consumers may compare the price of a product to the product's perceived quality and depending on the attribute which holds more value or worth for the consumer, a trade-off will be made resulting in the consumer either accepting or rejecting the product. When making such trade-offs consumers provide an indication of the true value of product alternatives (Orme, 2010:20), thereby showcasing their actual preference structure (Hair *et al.*, 2010:279). The value or worth that consumers place on particular attributes and their relevant levels represents the utility of a product (Hair *et al.*, 2010:266). Utility is comprised of the combination of part-worth estimates or utility values for any particular set of attribute levels used to define the

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product (Hair *et al.*, 2010:265, 266). Thus, utility includes all features of the product and is a measure of an individual's overall preference (Hair *et al.*, 2010:266). Each attribute level's utility value presented in **Table 5.4** illustrates the value that male consumers attach to certain attribute levels. The attribute levels with the highest utility values, or part-worths, hold the most value for these consumers and are thus the most preferred. The attributes included in the product assortment profiles are ranked in **Table 5.4**, from most important to least important, namely brand, style, store image, colour, country of origin and perceived quality. The specified levels of each attribute are also indicated in descending order, along with the average part-worth utilities for each attribute level which were rescaled to help with the ease of interpretation.

TABLE 5.4:   UTILITY VALUES OF EACH ATTRIBUTE LEVEL

Attribute	Attribute relative importance	Attribute levels	Attribute level utility values
Brand	30%	Polo	0.644
		Guess	0.588
		Levi's	0.584
		Diesel	0.531
		Truworths Man	0.518
		Markham	0.505
Style	17.3%	Classic Style	0.438
		Casual Style	0.427
		Trendy Style	0.303
		Active/ Sports-Wear	0.223
Store Image	14.9%	Quality Image	0.347
		Fashion Image	0.307
		Value For Money Image	0.298
		Exclusive Image	0.297
		Prestige Image	0.278
Colour	14.1%	Neutrals	0.384
		Earth Tones	0.380
		Seasonal Colours	0.333
		Bright Colours	0.173
Country of Origin	12.9%	RSA	0.340
		Europe	0.280
		Mixed	0.280
		China	0.150
Perceived Quality	10.9%	Durable	0.266
		Well Made	0.237
		Easily Maintainable	0.223
		Colour Fast	0.172

In the present study, the utility values or part-worths for each attribute level were measured using an arbitrary additive constant. Thus, only the utility values within the same attribute can be compared to one another. One cannot directly compare the utility value of

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one attribute level, e.g. classic style with 0.438 utiles, to the utility value of another attribute level, e.g. neutral colours with 0.384 utiles (Orme, 2010:78-79). The attribute level utility values provided in **Table 5.3** are illustrated graphically in **Figures 5.5** to **5.10** for each individual attribute and discussed accordingly.

Figure 5.5 indicates the utility values that respondents assigned to the various levels of brand**.**

	Polo	Guess	Levi's	Diesel	Truworths Man	Markham
Utility Values	0.644	0.588	0.584	0.531	0.518	0.505
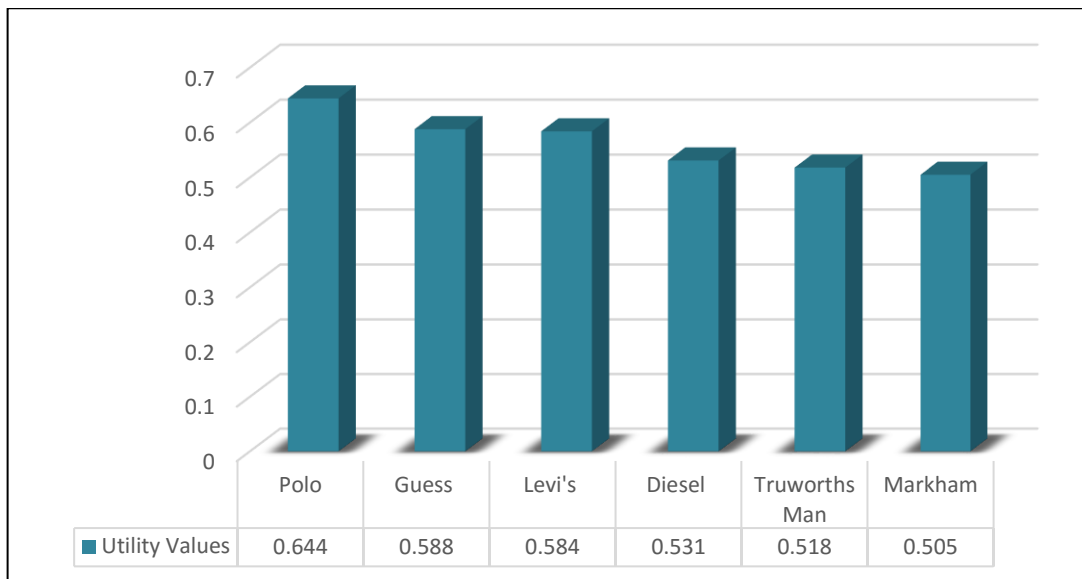
FIGURE 5.5:   UTILITY VALUES OF BRAND

Brand was divided into six levels, namely, Polo, Guess, Levi's, Diesel, Truworths Man and Markham. The brand level with the highest utility value, and hence most preferred by the male respondents, was Polo (0.644), followed by Guess (0.588) and Levi's (0.584). The brand level with the lowest utility value was Markham (0.505), which indicates that this brand level was the least preferred by male respondents.

Polo South Africa is a designer, lifestyle brand with a signature preppy style and thus communicates a lifestyle message parallel to this. Guess is an upscale lifestyle clothing brand which communicates a distinctive image that is fun, fashionable and sexy. Consumers purchase fashion own brands, which represent strong symbolic dimensions which communicate lifestyle messages and use them as a means of self-expression within their social contexts (Moore, 1995:23). Nelissen and Meijers (2011:349) establish that brand labels are identified as costly signals which create beneficial social consequences. As price communicates a social message, such as exclusivity or status, it brings about

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social consequences for consumers, such as gaining someone's attention (Min *et al.*, 2012:430). Thus, the male participants may want to portray certain lifestyles associated with being preppy or fun and adventurous through the use of Polo and Guess brands, or convey a social message in an attempt to achieve various social outcomes. These findings are a reflection of the predominantly young sample of the present study.

Figure 5.6 shows the level utility values for style which male respondents indicated as most and least important in their evaluation of product assortments within speciality stores.

	Classic Style	Casual Style	Trendy Style	Active/Sports Wear
Utility Values	0.438	0.427	0.303	0.223
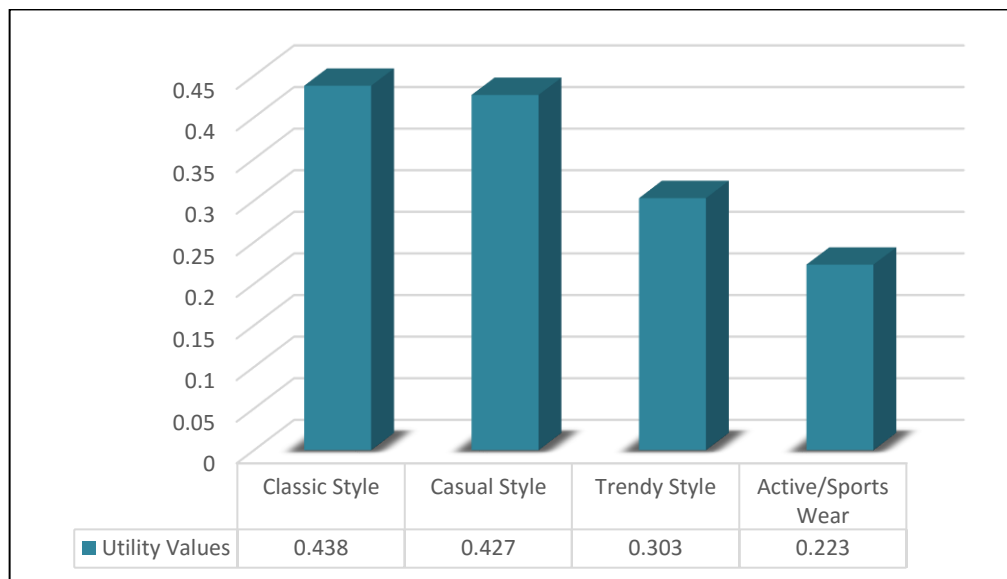
FIGURE 5.6:   UTILITY VALUES OF STYLE

Style comprised four attribute levels, namely classic styles, casual styles, trendy styles and active/sports-wear. The highest level utility value for the attribute style was the classic style (0.438) followed by casual style (0.427). Male respondents indicated that trendy style (0.303) and active/sports-wear (0.223) were the least important when evaluating product assortments.

Hannover and Kühnen (2002:2513, 2521) speculate that different clothing styles may bring about acquired self-descriptions and consumers may perceive themselves according to the clothing they are wearing. More specifically, consumers wearing formal clothing are expected to behave more in line with formal stereotypes as opposed to consumers wearing casual clothing, who may perceive themselves as more casual, relaxed or nonchalant. For the present study, classic styles can be considered more work-wear orientated compared to the other styles incorporated in the study. This style level may

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have been significant to the male respondents seeing as most of them are entering or are part of the work force. Consequently, wearing classic styles may result in certain assimilated self-descriptions concerning trait categories that are associated with classic styles. Through this association these men may wish to communicate a certain image, such as wealth, or achieve career progressions in their working environments (Kang *et al.,* 2011:422). Casual styles were also considered an important attribute level, which may be a further indication that comfort is an essential requirement for men (Lee, 2001:65; Thomas, 2009:39). Although style was an important factor for consumers, trendy style was not a major concern, which was also confirmed in the study conducted by Zhang *et al.* (2002:57). The style attribute level with the lowest utility value was active wear and as such it does not represent an important evaluative criteria. It may be that the male participants do not purchase their active wear from the speciality stores included in the present study, instead, they may opt for speciality stores which specifically offer active/sports-wear which is more focused and lifestyle orientated.

Figure 5.7 depicts the utility values of the store image attribute levels.

	Quality Image	Fashionable Image	Value for Money Image	Exclusive Image	Prestige Image
■ Utility Values	0.347	0.307	0.298	0.297	0.278
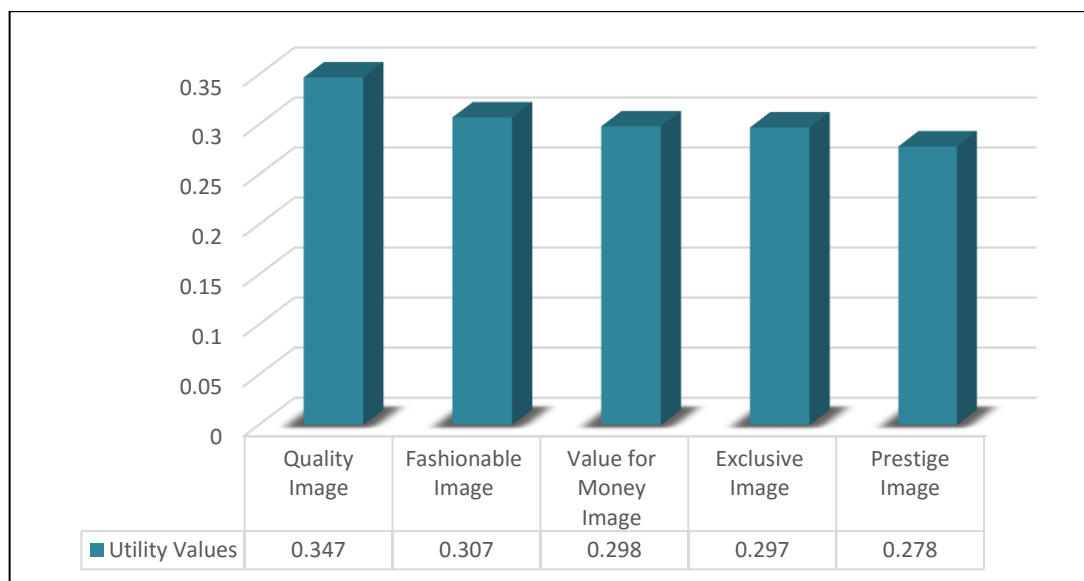
FIGURE 5.7:   UTILITY VALUES OF STORE IMAGE

Store image included the following five attribute levels: quality image, fashionable image, value for money, exclusive image and prestige image. The levels, with the highest utility value and most preferred by the male respondents were quality image (0.347) and fashionable image (0.307). Value for money image (0.298) and an exclusive image (0.297) were the third and fourth most preferred store image levels. The attribute level least

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preferred by the male respondents and with the lowest utility value, was prestige image (0.278).

A store image reflecting quality positively influences consumers' perception of private label brand quality (Vahie & Paswan, 2006:67). Hence, the male consumers in the present study may prefer product assortment from speciality stores which convey a quality image since this quality image is reflected onto the brand. This indicates that quality brands are an important aspect to these men. Even though the male respondents preferred a quality store image, perceived quality received the lowest relative importance. This may indicate that men rather employ the store image as a reflection of the overall perceived quality and other attributes, such as durability and construction of the product, are not used as indicators of physical quality during the evaluation process.

Fashion image was also an important store image level amongst these male consumers. Bakewell *et al.* (2006:175) established that men's perception and relationship toward fashion is twofold in nature, either a person is or is not fashionable. If fashion consciousness exists, then the individual will be knowledgeable, like and consume clothing products. In the case where fashion consciousness does not exist, the individual will not dedicate any consideration to their own or others clothing choices, they will also not spend time shopping for clothing (Bakewell *et al.*, 2006:175). Thus, the men in the present study can be described as fashion conscious in that they are knowledgeable, like and consume clothing products. The fact that trendy styles did not receive a high utility value may suggest that although they are fashion conscious they may not necessarily embrace new styles.

Value for money was also considered significant amongst these men. Vahie and Paswan (2006:79) found the price/value dimension of store image influenced the affective dimension of private label brands. This implies that when these male consumers believe they receive good value for money when shopping at a store, the positive feeling associated with this is expected to increase their preference towards the private label brand.

The male participants assigned the lowest utility value to prestige store image. This is surprising since "prestige sensitivity" emerged as a factor in the exploratory factor analysis and exclusive brands such as Polo and Guess were most preferred by the respondents during the conjoint analysis. This may be explained by the trade-offs consumers make

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when evaluating various product attributes in the marketplace, where one attribute holds more value than another. Although prestige was considered an important aspect in the factor analysis, it may have been less important when compared to other attribute levels in the conjoint analysis. Another explanation for the findings may be that the men in the present study subconsciously associate prestige with a quality store image or a fashionable store image, thus prestige may consequently be implied by these store image attributes.

The utility values for colour are illustrated in **Figure 5.8**, as male respondents indicated their preference for the most important colour scheme when evaluating product assortments of speciality stores.

	Neutrals	Earth Tones	Seasonal	Brights
■ Utility Values	0.384	0.38	0.333	0.173
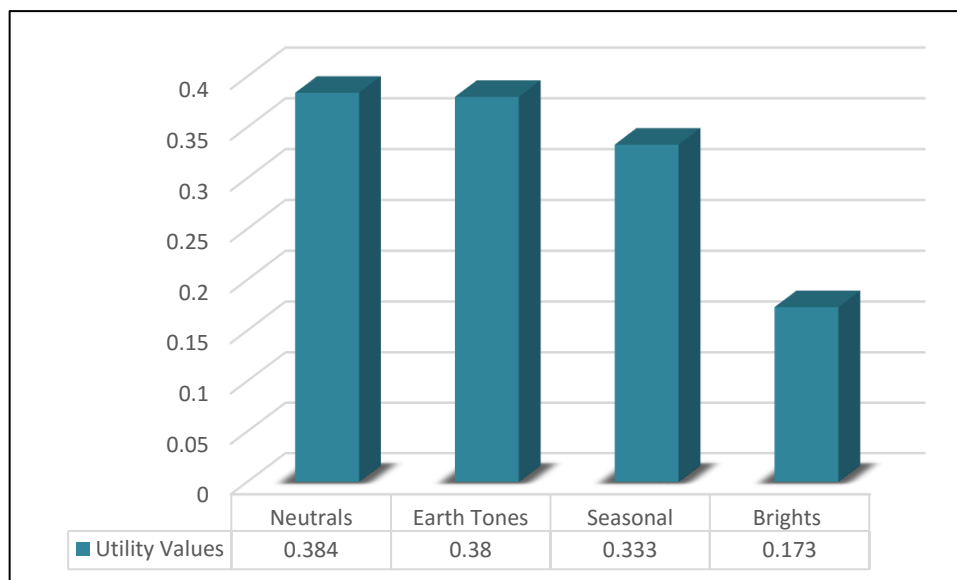
FIGURE 5.8:   UTILITY VALUES OF COLOUR

Colour was divided into four attribute levels, namely, neutrals, earth tones, seasonal and brights. Three of the attribute levels were closely rated. Neutrals received the highest utility value of 0.384, followed by earth tones (0.380) and seasonal colours (0.333). The attribute level least preferred by the male respondents and rated significantly lower was bright colours (0.173).

The male participants' preference for neutral colours can be associated with the colour scheme offered by classic styles which may also represent work-wear. Neutral colours may also have been most preferred as these colours can easily be blended with other colour groups, simplifying male consumers' apparel choices and hence their shopping

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experience. The significant difference between neutral colour and bright colours could be an indication that these men avoid bold colour choices as it may be perceived as too flamboyant or feminine. Ellis and Ficek (2001:1376) found that gender played a role in colour preference. Females were more likely to choose pink and purple while males preferred black and chose various shades of blue as their favourite colour. Dickson and Littrell (1998) identified two market segments, namely, the creative ethnic consumers and the plain and simple consumers. Creative ethnic consumers preferred a unique and dramatic look where bright colours were desirable; the plain and simple consumers avoided elaborate patterns and surface designs and preferred dark colours in blue hues or neutral colors, such as black, white, or grey.

Figure 5.9 shows the utility values for the attribute levels of country of origin in which the clothing was manufactured.

	South Africa	Europe	Combination	China
■ Utility Values	0.34	0.28	0.28	0.15
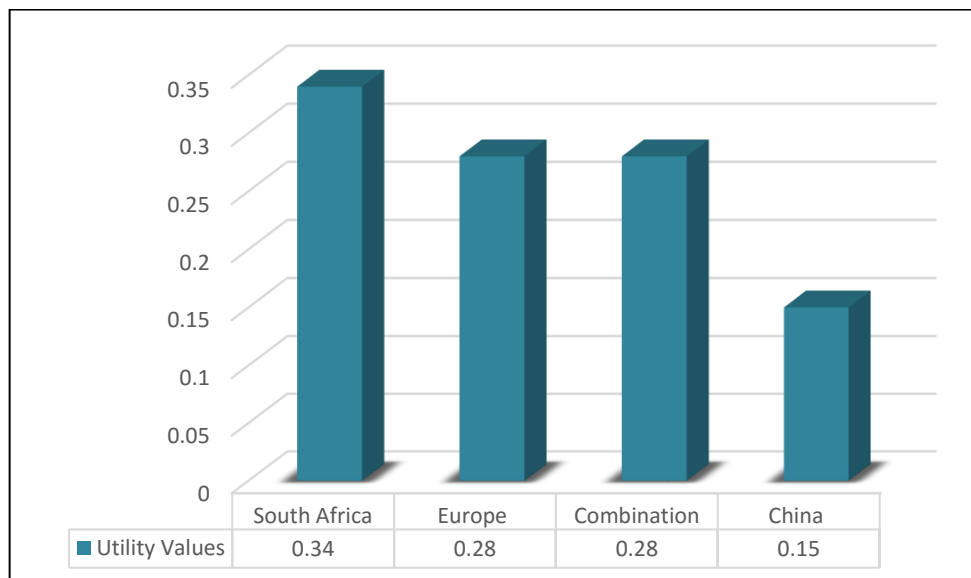
FIGURE 5.9: UTILITY VALUES OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Country of origin comprised of South Africa, Europe, China and a combination of local and international manufacturers. The country of origin level that male respondents assigned the highest utility value to was South Africa (0.34). The utility values of Europe and a combination of local and international manufacturers exerted the same influence on male respondents' evaluation process with utility values of 0.28. China was the attribute level least preferred by the male respondents, as the country of origin, with a utility value of 0.15.

Male consumers' preference for apparel manufactured in South Africa may be indicative of these consumers' patriotism and support towards local businesses when making apparel purchases. They may want to contribute to job creation and enhance the South African economy since the South African apparel industry is greatly dependent on imported material. These men may perceive that the clothing manufactured in China, compared to South Africa or European countries, may not be satisfactory in terms of quality, hence the low utility value assigned to this attribute level. Respondents in the study conducted by Patterson and Tai (1991:34) also rated apparel from China the lowest when expressing their attitudes towards clothing apparel.

Figure 5.10 indicates the perceived quality levels preferred by male respondents when evaluating speciality stores' product assortments.

	Durability	Well Made	Maintainable	Colour Fast
■ Utility Values	0.266	0.237	0.223	0.172
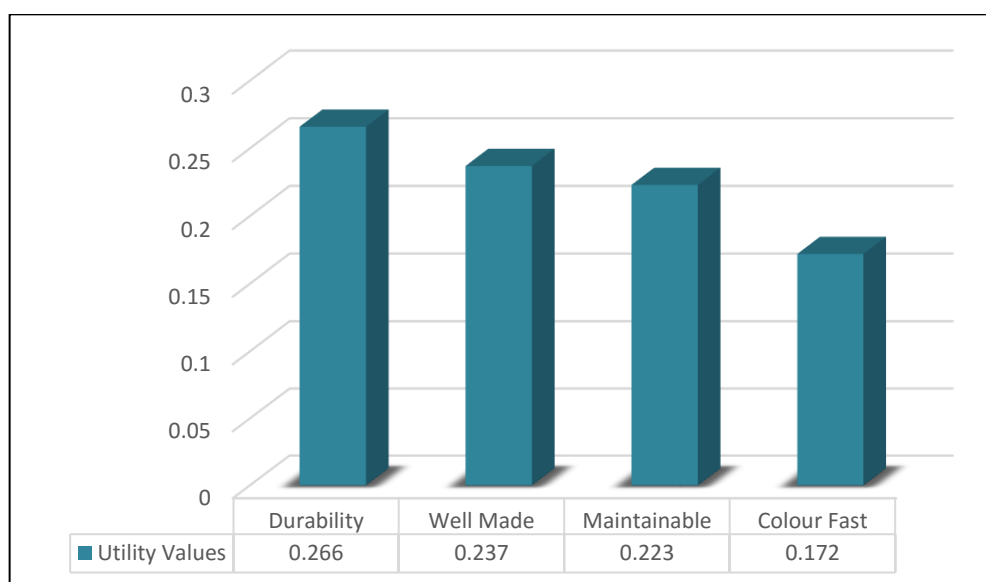
FIGURE 5.10: UTILITY VALUES OF PERCEIVED QUALITY

Perceived quality contained four attribute levels namely, durability, well made, maintainable and colour fast. The perceived quality level with the highest utility value was durability (0.266), followed by well-made or construction (0.237) and easily maintainable (0.223). Male respondents placed the lowest value on colour fast (0.172).

Male consumers in the present study may have automatically inferred sufficient quality features, such as durability and construction, from high-priced apparel and employ brand as an indicator of quality. This was confirmed by Lee (2001:71), who indicated that male consumers may instinctively presume that high-priced brand name apparel will perform

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well and be of high quality, thus not truly appreciating these benefits. What the brand image reflects onto the wearer was considered a more important aspect. Nevertheless, durability and construction were considered important product attribute levels in terms of perceived quality. This could be attributed to the fact that the performance of a clothing item (durability) is established by its physical features (construction), therefore consumers buy clothing with certain physical features that they consider will meet their expectations regarding the garment's performance (Brown & Rice, 2014:69).

5.3   CLUSTER ANALYSIS

This section discusses the clustering of male consumers in terms of their preferences for product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. Cluster analysis involves the grouping of observations into clusters where observations within the same group or cluster are relatively homogenous. Clustering is a valuable classification technique for segmenting markets (Mazzocchi, 2008:263). By combining conjoint analysis with cluster analyses, the results can provide more efficient information, including segmentation and socio-economic factors that may have an influence on consumers' preferences (Alriksson & Öberg, 2008:119). To identify and describe clusters of male consumers regarding their preferences for product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, a cluster analysis was conducted.

Four questionnaires were omitted from the cluster analysis due to missing values, rendering 200 respondents for the cluster analysis technique. The cluster analysis was based on the importance of product attribute (preferences for attributes) in the conjoint analysis. The cluster analysis was carried out using a non-hierarchical *k*-means clustering method wherein the desired number of clusters are specified in advance and the best solution is chosen (Cornish, 2007:3-4). The *k*-means clustering approach was applied iteratively and considered a five, four, three and two cluster solution. The *k*-means method produced a four cluster solution which was deemed the most suitable in the context of the present study. Subject to male respondents' preferences for particular product attributes when evaluating product assortment within speciality stores with the intent to purchase, the four clusters were labelled accordingly **(Figure 5.11)**. This included Cluster 1: style guys (n = 44); Cluster 2: origin guys (n = 28); Cluster 3: brand loyalist (n = 78) and Cluster 4: colour guys (n=50).

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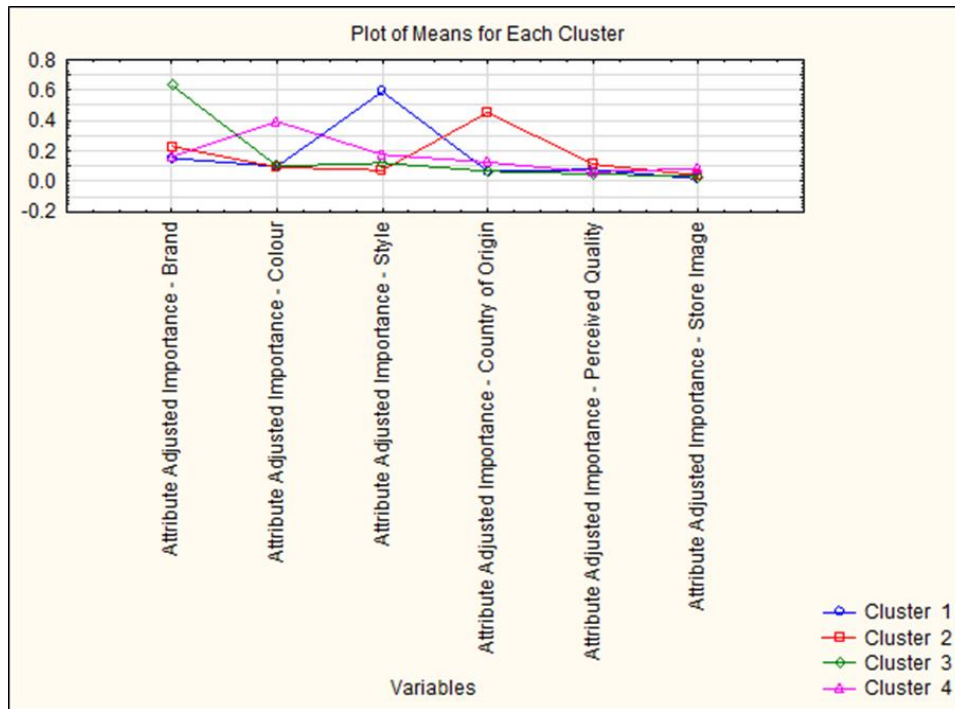
FIGURE 5.11: RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF ATTRIBUTES FOR VARIOUS CLUSTERS

Table 5.5 provides the demographic comparison of the four clusters, which will be discussed individually along with the male participants' preferred retail store choice and the brand and price items that received the highest rating based on their retail store choice in the conjoint questionnaire.

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TABLE 5.5:   DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF CLUSTER (n = 200)

	Style guys (n = 44)		Origin guys (n = 28)		Brand loyalist (n = 78)		Colour guys (n = 50)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age								
20-29 years	**24**	**55%**	**15**	**54%**	**47**	**60%**	**18**	**36%**
30-39 years	9	20%	3	11%	17	22%	12	24%
40-49 years	3	7%	5	18%	6	8%	9	18%
50 or more	8	18%	5	18%	8	10%	**11**	**22%**
Population Groups								
Caucasian (White)	**33**	**75%**	**18**	**64%**	**43**	**55%**	**41**	**82%**
Black (African)	8	18%	3	11%	**24**	**31%**	3	6%
Coloured	0	0%	1	4%	3	4%	0	0%
Asian	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%
Indian	3	7%	**6**	**21%**	6	8%	5	10%
Mixed race	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	2%
Income								
R10 001-R20 000	**19**	**43%**	**8**	**29%**	**25**	**32%**	**18**	**36%**
R20 001-R30 000	12	27%	7	25%	18	**23%**	4	8%
R30 001-R40 000	7	16%	2	7%	18	**23%**	8	16%
R40 001-R50 000	3	7%	7	25%	3	4%	7	14%
More than R50 001	3	7%	4	14%	14	18%	**13**	**26%**

Each cluster will be discussed in terms of retail store most frequently visited, and the brand and price items that received the highest rating from the male participants based on this retail store choice (**Table 5.5**). Demographic variables such as age, population group as well as income are also incorporated into the discussion below.

5.3.1   Style guys

Style guys constituted 22% of the sample (n = 44). For the style guys, style was most important during the trade-off process of the conjoint analysis, as 100% of these respondents preferred the style attribute. It is evident from the demographic information (**Table 5.5**) that more than half of the respondents who were identified as style guys belonged to the younger age group, 20-29 years (55%; n = 24). This group had a higher representation of White respondents (75%, n = 33) and constituted the lower to middle income bracket (R10 001-R20 000). The speciality store these men most frequently patronised was Markham (34%; n = 15). The statements most of these respondents agreed with in terms of their decision concerning their favourite speciality store included, *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores"* (Price Reliance Schema), indicating they are concerned with the positive role of price, *"They offer brands that have a good reputation"* (Brand) and *"Quality is my primary concern when buying a*

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brand" (Brand). Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:229) identified a male decision making style group akin to this cluster called the reluctant perfectionists. These men indicated that attractive styling was important to them; they have high expectations for products and will spend time and energy visiting different stores to attain high-quality products. From this it is clear that style guys consider quality and style important attributes when shopping for apparel and reflects their preferences for patronising speciality stores such as Markham.

5.3.2 Origin guys

The origin guys comprised 14 % of the sample (n = 28). With regards to the conjoint analysis, most (64%) of the origin guys preferred the country of origin attribute and 25% preferred brand attribute. Thus, the respondents who formed part of this cluster had a high preference for country of origin. Origin guys belonged to the 20-29 age group (54%; n = 15), with lower to middle income levels (R10 001-R20 000). This segment was predominantly White (64%; n = 18) and compared to the other clusters, had the highest representation of Indian respondents (21%; n = 6). These respondents most frequently visited Polo (28%; n = 9). The origin guys mostly agreed with the statement, *"Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand"* (Brand), indicating that for these guys, quality was important. Moore and Carpenter (2008:331) established country of origin as a cue or information piece for consumer's perception of apparel quality. This was followed by the statement, *"They offer brands that have a good reputation"* (Brand). A store's reputation can be associated with its quality, thus, a good reputation may indicate good quality products (Thang & Tan, 2003:198). Consequently, the origin guys use country of origin and store reputation as important attributes to evaluate quality.

5.3.3   Brand loyalist

The brand loyalist segment was the largest of the four clusters and represented 39% (n = 78) of the sample. The majority (97%) of the brand loyalists mostly preferred the brand attribute when performing the conjoint tasks. This indicated the brand loyalists have a high regard for brand and consider this attribute important when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. A significant number of brand loyalists fall into a younger age group, i.e. 20-29 years (60%; n = 47). This segment primarily constituted White respondents (64%; n = 18). Additionally, this cluster had the highest representation of Black respondents (31%; n = 24) and belonged to the lower to middle income brackets (R10 001-R20 000). This indicates that younger Black consumers show brand loyalty

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traits. This cluster made most of their store visits to Truworths Man (21%; n = 16). The statements most of these respondents agreed with included, *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores"* (Price Reliance Schema), followed by *"They offer brands that have a good reputation"* (Brand) and *"I think they offer value for money"* (Price Reliance Schema). Brand loyalists consider price in its positive role, indicating that this cluster of men may use price as an indicator of quality (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993). Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:292, 234) identified two male decision making style groups similar to this cluster. The first group included the confident brand/quality seekers. These men strongly agreed with the statement, "The higher the price of the product, the better its quality". The second group was the quality and value seekers. These men indicated that getting good quality was very important to them and that they make an effort to buy the best value for money. Thus, quality is an important aspect to these men and will have an effect on their loyalty behaviour towards retailers of speciality stores. Failure to provide adequate quality may result in these men switching brands and therefore retailers.

5.3.4 Colour guys

Colour guys constituted 25% of the sample (n = 50), representing the second largest cluster. More than two thirds (64%) of the colour guys preferred the colour attribute in the conjoint analysis. Although respondents who constitute this cluster are primarily younger (20-29 years: 36%; n = 18), a large portion of this segment can be described as older compared to the other clusters (50 or more: 22%; n = 11). This indicated that older male consumers consider colour important in terms of their preferences for speciality stores' assortment. The men who formed part of this cluster were predominantly White (82%; n = 41). The colour guys were effectively represented in the middle and high income levels (R10 001-R20 000 and more than R50 001). The higher income group may reflect the older male consumers as they may earn more than their younger male counterparts. The colour guys most frequently visit Truworths Man (32%; n = 16). The statements that were most important to these men regarding why this particular store was their favourite included, *"Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand"* (Brand), followed by *"They offer brands that have a good reputation"* (Brand) and *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores"* (Price Reliance Schema). Colour was found to be an important factor for female consumers when evaluating apparel quality (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008:36, 42). Colour guys may use a reputable retailer as an indicator of quality since the reputation of a retailer influences consumers' perception of product quality (Purohit & Srivastava, 2001:133). This cluster also perceives price in its positive role in

which high price reflects quality (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993) and may use price as an indicator of quality.

5.4   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the results of the present study. The various objectives of the study concerning male consumers' use of product attributes during their evaluation of speciality stores' product assortment were answered with the use of conjoint analysis and exploratory factor analysis. This comprised both the intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes most preferred by the male respondents during their evaluation process. The chapter also included the profiling of male consumer groups into homogenous clusters.

The following chapter, **Chapter 6**, offers a comprehensive discussion of the final conclusions of the study and provides the implications, limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 6 encompasses the final conclusions of the present research, based on the results presented and discussed in Chapter 5. The overall purpose of this study was to explore and describe the intrinsic and extrinsic attributes used by South African male consumers when evaluating apparel product assortment within speciality stores. This was achieved in line with the theoretical background of the consumer decision making process. A self-administered questionnaire was used as the primary data collection method to determine male consumer's preference structure when evaluating product assortments. Existing scaled items were applied to gain insight into male consumer's evaluation process. Conjoint analysis was also employed to determine the trade-offs among various product attributes and utility levels which constitute the product assortments. Additionally, cluster analysis was performed to profile male consumer groups. The data analysis and interpretation of results was carried out against the specified objectives. Final conclusions regarding each objective and consequent findings are presented along with the implications and recommendations for retailers and marketers. The chapter concludes with the final implication of the study, limitations, recommendations for future research and final conclusion.

6.1   CONCLUSION IN TERMS OF THE SAMPLE

South African male apparel consumers were selected to partake in a conjoint questionnaire using a predefined set of criteria concerning demographic characteristics including age, ethnicity, income and location. The sample consisted of 204 male consumers, residing in the greater Tshwane area, Gauteng. The majority of the sample were between the ages of 20-29, representing 53% (n = 108), followed by ages 30-39 years, representing 20% of the sample (n = 41), indicating the study comprised of a relatively young sample of male consumers. The participants were mainly Caucasian (White) with 67% (n = 137) and Black (African) with 20% (n = 40), followed by the Indian group representing 10% (n = 20). The consumers were economically active and constituted a middle-high income bracket thus being able to afford apparel from speciality stores' product assortment. The largest part of the sample earned between R10 001-R20 000 (34.8%). The second highest income category comprised respondents earning between R20 001-R30 000 (20.59%). These findings demonstrate that the sample

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included predominantly younger male consumers who show an interest in clothing and may be willing to pay higher prices for apparel products as they have the means to do so. Retailers should therefore keep this in mind when developing product assortments and marketing strategies. The knowledge regarding these male consumers' preferences may prove beneficial in terms of understanding consumers' selection criteria when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, implementing a more effective merchandise mix, assisting in the planning of promotional campaigns and improving the training strategies for sales staff. The practical data provided by the study could enhance consumer satisfaction and increase revenue.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS IN TERMS OF MALE CONSUMERS' EVALUATION OF PRODUCT ASSORTMENT

The evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process constituted the focal point of the research and the consumer decision making model was implemented as theoretical framework. The consumer behaviour model, or decision making model of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013), was used to guide the study. Consistent with this conceptual model, various influences (internal and external) affected male consumers' decision process as well as their self-concepts and lifestyles, resulting in processes which may lead to purchasing behaviour (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24).

The consumer decision making process encompasses a sequential and repetitive series of psychological and physical activities (Cant *et al.*, 2006:193). This process consists of various steps consumers will undergo before making a purchase. These steps include recognising a problem (need recognition), searching for information, evaluating alternatives, choosing a product and the outcome after it has been chosen (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:352). The purpose of the present study was to provide empirical evidence that could clarify which product attributes are used by male consumers when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment.

Consumer decision making is a cognitive process that comprises mental activities which identify what actions must be carried out to satisfy a need (Cant *et al.*, 2006:193). Within the cognitive view, consumers process information which leads to the development of preferences and essentially the intent to purchase (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:481). Consumers use their cognitive structures, formed from new and existing knowledge

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regarding a specific product and stored in an individual's memory, to assist in their evident behaviour towards a product, including purchasing decisions (Christensen & Olson, 2002:478; Marks & Olson, 1981:145).

As consumers evaluate products they use specific criteria which signify product attributes considered important in their purchasing decisions (Berman & Evans, 2010:204; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:489). During the evaluation stage of the consumer decision making process, male apparel consumers employed compensatory decision rules, allowing them to make trade-offs among attributes (Blythe, 2008:272). A positive evaluation of a product assortment on one attribute is able to balance out a negative evaluation on another attribute; weakness in one area can be compensated for in another (Blythe, 2008:272; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:491). Compensatory decision rules enable male consumers to evaluate the product assortment in terms of each attribute and assign a specific weight to each assortment establishing a potential purchase choice (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:491).

As male consumers evaluated speciality stores' product assortment, they were able to form preferences among the assortments, evidently influencing their decision to shop at specific speciality stores. During the evaluation process the men indicated the product attributes within speciality stores' product assortment they most preferred, and attached the most value to. The attribute most favoured was brand (extrinsic product attribute) which received a relative importance of 30%, style (intrinsic product attribute) was the second most important attribute, with 17.3%, store image (extrinsic product attribute) was the third most preferred product attribute constituting male consumers' preference structure, with 14.9%, colour received a relative importance of 14.1%. The male consumers attached the least amount of value to country of origin, with 12.9%, and perceived quality, with 10.9%. In addition to the trade-off process, the male consumers also considered other product attributes important in terms of their preference when purchasing from speciality stores. This included various dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour (extrinsic product attribute), price (extrinsic product attribute) in its positive role and the importance of apparel fit (intrinsic product attribute), which were incorporated in an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The EFA rendered three factors labelled prestige sensitivity, importance of fit and added value.

The findings demonstrate that male consumers use both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. The male participants attached different relative importance to certain attributes, providing an indication of their

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preference structure regarding speciality stores which may, consequently, influence their purchasing behaviour. Information such as this may be of particular significance to these retailers as it provides a deeper understanding regarding male consumers' selection criteria when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, with the intention to purchase. Knowledge regarding male consumer's preference structure can assist retailers to effectively plan and develop the ideal product assortment. Marketers can use male consumers' preference for certain attributes to better define the target market and their specific needs, and consequently implement effective advertising and promotional campaigns.

The revised conceptual framework (CF) below (**Figure 6.1**) illustrates the findings of this study. The conceptual framework provides some indication of the relative important product assortment attributes, which constitute male consumers' preference structure. The revised CF was developed in connection with the consumer decision making process, focusing on the evaluation stage. It highlights the product attributes considered most important to male participants, during the trade-off process in the conjoint analysis, when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. It also incorporates the preference for certain speciality stores, and thus speciality stores' assortment, regarding the attributes of price, brand and fit which were incorporated in the exploratory factor analysis and resulted in three factors, namely prestige sensitivity, importance of fit and added value.

Male consumer's apparel assortment evaluation process
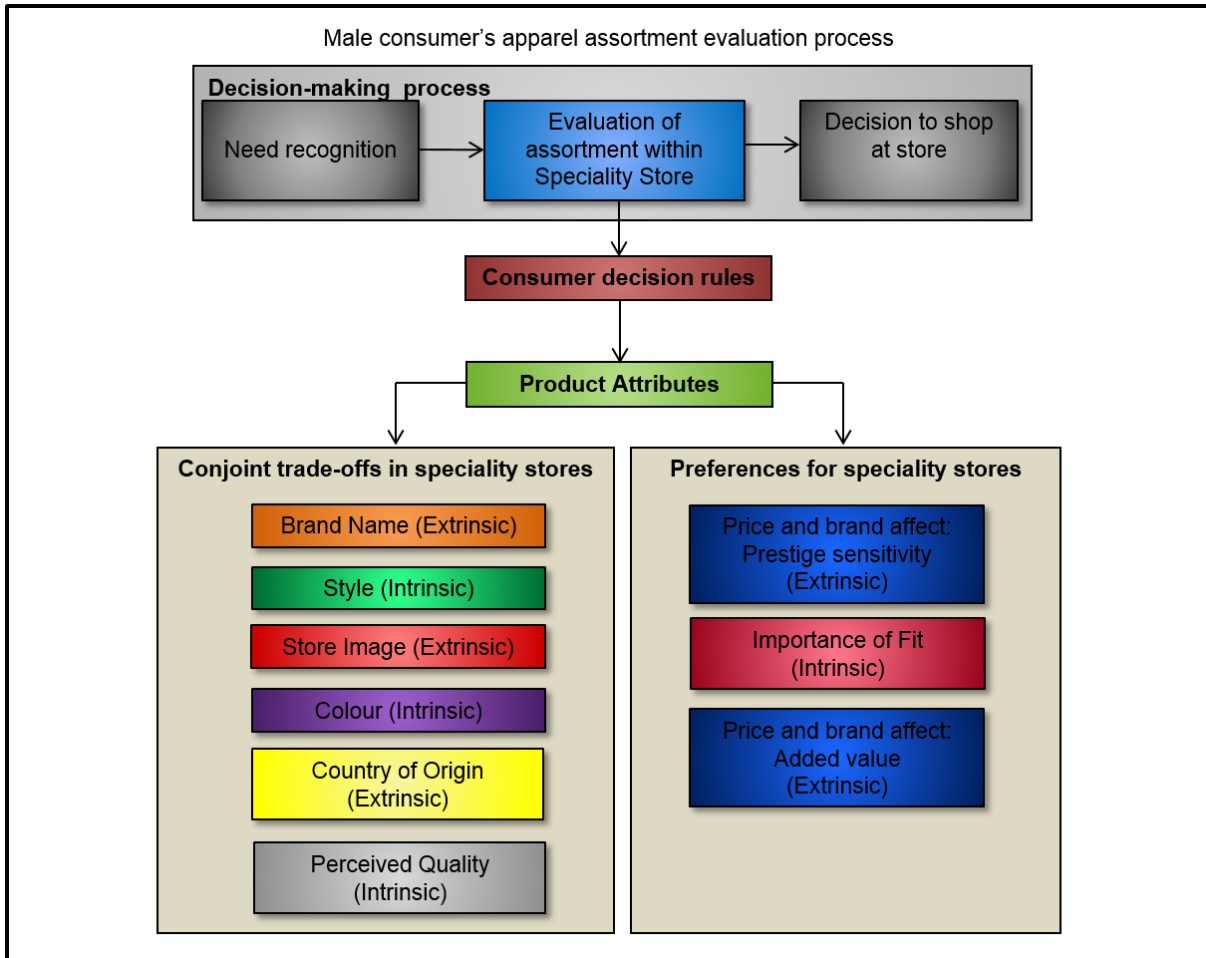
FIGURE 6.1:   REVISED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

6.3   INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES USED IN EVALUATION OF PRODUCT ASSORTMENT

In line with the theoretical perspective employed in the study, this section considers the results of the present research. It includes the discussion, conclusion and recommendations concerning the various objectives set for the study. The section concludes on the first objective of the study, namely the importance of price, brand and fit regarding male consumers' preference for speciality stores. The section also concludes on the second, third and fourth objectives pertaining to the relative importance of product attribute when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, namely the relative importance of intrinsic cues (style, colour, perceived quality and importance of fit) and extrinsic cues (brand name, store image, country of origin and price) used by South African male consumers to evaluate apparel assortment of speciality stores. The fourth objective of the study includes the ranking/rating of all the intrinsic and extrinsic cues used

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simultaneously by South African male consumers to evaluate speciality stores' product assortment. To determine the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes, exploratory factor analysis and conjoint analysis was applied in accordance with these four objectives. Conclusions in terms of the importance of price, brand and fit pertaining to male consumers' preference for speciality stores will be discussed in the next section.

6.3.1   Preferences for speciality stores (EFA dimensions)

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted as a data reducing technique on the items measuring the factors, price, brand and fit. Price included a prestige sensitivity item scale and a price reliance item scale, both representing the positive role of price. The brand item scale related to dimensions of brand purchasing behaviour, whilst the fit criteria item scale related to the importance of fit for male consumers. Items from these scales loaded onto three factors, labelled "Prestige sensitivity", "Added value" and "Importance of fit".

6.3.1.1 Prestige sensitivity (Extrinsic)

Prestige sensitivity was a significant factor for the male consumers in the present study. This indicates the male participants had a high regard for the positive perceptions of the price cue, grounded in feelings of importance and status that higher prices indicate to other people regarding themselves (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993:236). Moore and Carpenter (2006:267) and Moore and Carpenter (2008:332) also found that for the apparel category, prestige sensitivity signifies a positive perception of price, suggesting consumers perceive higher prices as a cue for prestige. High prices served as a stimulus which influenced consumers purchasing behaviour. Price carries out two main functions during the evaluation of product alternatives. Firstly, it serves as a measure of sacrifice, where a decrease in monetary resources takes place, thus representing the negative role of price. Secondly, as a cue which provides information to consumers, representing price in its positive role associated with consumers' price-quality beliefs and as an indicator of prestige (Amara & Bouslama, 2011:6; Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993:236; Völckner, 2008:359). This study focused on the positive role of price. Both prestige sensitivity and price-quality beliefs are driven by pressure and motivation to conform to peer expectations (Völckner, 2008:373). Consequently, individuals have apparent expectations regarding certain outcomes which they associate with their dress. Dress is used to gain positive outcomes, such as conveying a desirable impression to important others (Kang *et al.,* 2011:422). From this, one can surmise that since men in the present study value prestige they expect

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to achieve certain outcomes from their dress by purchasing higher-priced clothing, which signifies a prestigious symbol to their peers.

The results indicate these men assume a positive relationship between price and product quality and therefore rely on the price reliance schema. The use of a price-quality schema, or price reliance schema, can be regarded as consumers' tendency to use price to draw positive conclusions about the quality of a product (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993:236, 242; Zhou, Su & Bao, 2002). Lee (2001:68) established that men believed that high-price is directly related to top-quality apparel, which is initially an essential component of prestige brands. As consumers' level of prestige sensitivity increases, so does the positive effect of price-quality beliefs regarding consumers' response to price as an informational component - the higher the price the better the quality (Völckner, 2008:363). This is confirmed by Chowdhury and Andaleeb (2007:48), who found support for the premise that a perception of high price has a positive influence on consumers' perception of quality when evaluating a product. Similarly, the study conducted by Völckner and Hofmann (2007:194) also found consumers use price as a significant indicator to determine the quality of a product. Alternatively, Lee and Lou (1995:26) found that price had a negative effect on the perception of product quality. This established that the relationship between price and product quality is not necessarily positive in all cases worldwide.

During the evaluation process, consumers who possess a strong price-reliance schema place a greater reliance on the price cue than those without a strong price-reliance schema (Lee & Lou, 1995:23, 26). Völckner (2008:370) suggests that consumers constantly pay attention to the price cue. Consumers may rely on their price quality schema or price reliance schema as a shortcut in their decision making process (Zhou *et al.*, 2002:361). By employing the price cue, consumers reduce the task of the decision making process (Völckner & Hofmann, 2007:193). Consumers who identify high prices as advantageous, due to their price-quality beliefs, use the price cue to deal with information which may present certain risks thereby easing their cognitive tasks (Völckner, 2008:370). Min *et al.* (2012:430) state that price has the potential to convey psychological, social and functional importance to consumers.

Additionally, the price cue exerts an influence on consumers' choices regarding apparel formats (Moore & Carpenter, 2006:265). Price and quality were the highest ranked attributes amongst male consumers when deciding upon a clothing store to shop at (Torres *et al.*, 2001:208). Hansen (2005:432) found price had an indirect effect on buying

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intentions, namely price had an effect on perceived quality, which as a result influenced attitude and consecutively influenced consumers' buying intentions. Moore and Carpenter (2006:265, 267) found prestige sensitivity and price-quality schema are inclined to have a positive effect on consumers' patronage towards apparel retail formats that employ high-priced strategies. However, contrary to the present study, the authors established that prestige sensitivity was unrelated to the patronage intentions regarding speciality stores.

The two brand dimensions which loaded onto this factor related specifically to prestige sensitivity. From the results, it is clear that these men believe others make judgements about them by the kinds of brands they buy and thus, they enjoy the prestige that particular brands offer. Consequently, this can also be associated with a need to conform to peer expectations. This is in accordance with a study conducted by Zayer and Neier (2011:97) where a brand relationship emerged amongst men, called the mentor. This brand relationship encompassed substantial socio-emotional rewards and affect. Consumers described this brand relationship with a sense of respect and admiration, and consumers intended to gain positive outcomes by utilising or being affiliated with the brand. Thomas (2009:33) established male participants feel that branded clothing makes good impressions on other people which relates to financial well-being. The author similarly found that branded clothing helps male consumers conform to certain groups as it plays a significant role in their acceptance by their peers (Thomas, 2009:39). The male participants in the study also maintain the brands say something about them as individuals. This is associated with brand image and the use of the brand as a social symbol (DelVecchio, 2001; Wood, 2004). Wood (2004:20) found that image was an essential component of purchasing certain brands since the brand translated to consumers' self-image and consumers believed particular apparel items said something about them as a person. Branded clothing influences the way men feel about themselves, namely wearing branded clothing enhances the wearer's self-image, confidence, creates positive personal experiences and contributes to their personal status (Thomas, 2009:33).

Prestige sensitivity plays an important role for customers who are inclined to showcase their place in society. An in-depth understanding regarding this concept enables marketers to segment consumers according to their prestige orientations. If marketers effectively identify and communicate with prestige sensitive consumers, it will ensure repeat purchases and loyal customers. The results indicate it is crucial for a pricing strategy to be implemented throughout retailers' entire strategy in terms of men's speciality stores. Apparel retailers must be attentive to the fact that price-quality beliefs are significant

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factors regarding the behaviour of these male consumers and take this into account when setting prices. Price tiers can therefore be applied as a method of market position for clothing retailers and brands. Retailers and manufacturers can employ price tier strategies by appropriately branding their store formats or using store brands as a method to signify specific price tiers, for example, store brands can be branded in a way that emphasises certain lifestyle messages to consumers regarding the prestige of the brand.

6.3.1.2 Importance of fit (Intrinsic)

Exploratory factor analysis was implemented to measure this attribute using an additional scale item. The criteria pertaining to the importance of fit was significantly high for these male consumers, indicating this product attribute is heavily relied upon when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. It is surprising that such minimum research has been undertaken regarding the sizing and fit of men's clothing (Sindicich & Black, 2011:446). Fit it is an important component of any apparel retailer's business and having the necessary insight regarding fit is valuable for manufacturers and retailers operating in the apparel industry (Brown & Rice, 2014:212). This allows the production of consistent fit for set target markets, which provides manufacturers and retailers with a competitive advantage and consequently, enhances revenue and customer satisfaction (Brown & Rice, 2014:213).

For the present study, *"Good overall fit"* was an important criteria for the male participants when considering the importance of fit during the evaluation of speciality stores' product assortment. The importance of fit for South African male consumers has been confirmed by Thomas (2009:37), who established that fit represents an important criteria for men as they search for their specific size once a clothing item has caught their attention. Frith and Gleeson (2004:48) identified that men are very practical when choosing their clothing and an important aspect regarding such practicality was that clothes must fit well. Liu and Dickerson (1999:255) found that fit was the most important selection criteria for Taiwanese men concerning business apparel purchases. Fit was also the most important aspect of quality regarding the purchase of jeans (Wood, 2004:20).

Comfort, in terms of upper body garment, was a primary concern regarding the importance of fit. Frith and Gleeson (2004:43) found comfort was a priority for male consumers when choosing clothing. For these men it was essential that clothing fit well, thus ensuring they display a suitable appearance and feel comfortable. Zhang *et al.* (2002:53) also established that fit and comfort were amongst the most important attributes for Chinese

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consumers. In addition, male consumers opt for branded clothing which is regarded as more comfortable and assists them in looking good, thereby contributing to their physical satisfaction (Thomas, 2009:35).

Correct garment dimensions were also considered important fit criteria for male consumers in the present study. This included appropriate chest size and sleeve length, correct waist and, although to a lesser extent, correct shirt neck circumference and correct pants inseam. It has been found that in terms of the physical size of apparel garments, some men experience difficulties when trying to find suitable clothing which meets their expectations. Men who do not conform to typical apparel sizes, such as very tall, broad-shouldered or short men, are frustrated when attempting to fit into average sized clothing (Frith & Gleeson, 2004:43). Sindicich and Black (2011:460) found male consumers experience a number of problems pertaining to fit when selecting and wearing business clothes, namely men encountered problems with garment dimensions which included neck circumference, sleeve length, waist circumference, pants leg length and suit chest size (Sindicich & Black, 2011:460).

These findings have implications for retailers. Brown and Rice (2014:212) state that although fit issues are often as a result of careless design or construction, many fit problems can be traced back to the wearer's individual characteristics. Retailers of speciality stores therefore could benefit from offering fitting and alteration services which male consumers may require. Such services could increase male consumers' preference for specific retailers' merchandise assortment. It is also important that manufacturers achieve consistent fit during each stage of the production process. All production personnel must be well trained and understand the importance of good fit and the implication this has on customers and apparel retailers' business (Brown & Rice, 2014:213). Retailers can also provide information regarding garment dimensions on the labels of clothing which male consumers may consider important, such as the chest size, the sleeve length of the garment, the waist size, shirt neck circumference and the pants inseam, thereby ensuring men find suitable clothing which meet their expectations.

6.3.1.3 Added value (Extrinsic)

Speciality stores are able to achieve success with niche markets or specialised segments of the market, such as men, by creating perceived value on a subjective level. Subjective value encompasses attributes which cannot be defined but add value, such as a brand name. Perceived value also includes objective value which encompasses product

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attributes that are measurable, such as quality (Parrish, Cassill & Oxenham, 2006:428; Parrish, Cassill, Oxenham & Jones, 2004:7). Liljander *et al.* (2009:281) found that the perceived value and quality of store brand apparel were the key factors of purchase intentions. The value dimension may be used when trying to establish whether a store is expensive or not, for example a product's quality-price ratio (the value of a product) may signify a suitable price image. Thus, consumers do not merely use the price of a product to determine the expensiveness of a store, they may also employ quality (Amara & Bouslama, 2011:12). Creating perceived value to customers is therefore an important factor in the success of a niche market strategy within a private label programme (Parrish, 2010:555). Perceived value must be created with consumer orientation in mind. More specifically, perceived value is crucial in that the consumer needs to observe it and the products need to represent it (Parrish, 2010:558).

The most important aspect regarding added value for the male participants was *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores."* Here, the price cue takes on a positive role where higher price indicates favourable quality (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993). For fairly expensive products, consumers are inclined to use straightforward and basic heuristics that have been learned, such as "you get what you pay for" (Völckner & Hofmann, 2007:193). The speciality stores applied in the current study offer higher priced apparel and therefore male consumers may apply such practical methods to simplify their decision making process.

Brand quality also contributed significantly to the added value construct. Thomas (2009:35) established the quality of clothing was an important factor to men as it was considered even before the evaluation process took place. During the visual evaluation men determined the quality of the clothing item. Where a branded item is concerned, they immediately evaluate it as good quality (Thomas, 2009:49). Liljander *et al.* (2009:286) ascertained that the perceived quality of store-branded apparel has a positive influence on the perceived value of apparel. Additionally, Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:234) identified a cluster of men who possess traits associated with price-value consciousness decision making styles. These men noted that getting good quality was extremely important.

A brand with a good reputation was an important factor when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. Image and reputation were found to be two of the critical components of own brands (McColl & Moore, 2011:98). Consumers prefer stores with a good reputation since they associate the store's reputation with the quality and value of their

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purchasing decision (Thang & Tan, 2003:198). Retailers play a vital role in communicating a quality image to their customers and the reputation of the retailer affects consumers' perception of product quality (Purohit & Srivastava, 2001:133). Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991:307) also confirm that a favourable brand and store information positively influence perceptions of quality and value and consumers' willingness to buy. A store's reputation, in terms of its merchandise and service quality, has a negative influence on the perceived risk of financial losses that consumers may incur (Liljander *et al.*, 2009:286). Therefore, if consumers have a positive perception of the stores reputation, this reduces the perceived risk of purchasing from the store.

The men in the present study preferred certain speciality stores as they believed they offered value for money. Thomas (2009:30-31, 38) found that one of the reasons male consumers wear branded clothing was due to the physical qualities they attach to it. Particularly, they believed branded clothing offered better quality, lasted longer and provided value for money. The men who showcased traits related to the price-value consciousness decision making styles, as identified by Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:234), also expressed they pay meticulous attention to purchasing products that offer the best value for money.

The male participants prefer speciality stores which carry brands that are in line with their lifestyle. Own brand personality is created largely through the related lifestyle it represents and the common values between the retailer and consumer that it signifies (Moore, 1995:23). Parrish (2010:555) states that private label brands must be lifestyle driven in order to be successful. Fashion own brands which achieve success employ a strong symbolic dimension which communicates lifestyle messages to the consumer. Consumers acquire these own brands and use them as a method of self-expression within their social contexts (Moore, 1995:23). For male consumers, the representations of image, lifestyle or personality, such as those showcased in print/audio-visual media or store displays, are crucial when comparing ideas and seeking approval (Kinley *et al.*, 2000:72).

The men in the present study stick with their usual brand, and hence speciality store, as it saves them time. Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:229, 234) identified a time-energy conserving trait amongst male shoppers' decision making styles. This trait indicates male shoppers save time and energy by visiting the same stores, allowing quick purchasing decisions. Time saving was a common characteristic found in the study conducted by Thang and Tan (2003:198). This characteristic was important to consumers who wanted to

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enhance visits to their preferred retail stores and were less prone to switch stores. Some male shoppers use a simplifying decision making style to moderate the difficulty of the shopping task and the time expended partaking in the activity. The need to reduce shopping time could be associated with shopping being viewed as a feminine activity (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006:1299).

The statement *"I make my purchase according to my favourite brand, regardless of price"* contributed the least to the added value factor. This item provides a deeper understanding of brand loyalty and illustrates consumers' price sensitive/insensitive brand loyalty towards products (Wood, 2004:13). The male consumers in the present study showcased price sensitive brand loyalty, which indicates price may affect whether they stick with the brand or not. Although this study has indicated that the male participants may perceive price in its positive role, where high prices may be used to signal either prestige or quality to others, they most likely still have a cut-off concerning an acceptable price requirement. Price was also an important factor to the male consumers in the study conducted by Thomas (2009:36, 50). These men claimed to look at the price tag and stated that they would only buy an item when the price was acceptable. They did, however, indicate they were willing to pay more for clothing with a brand name.

It is crucial that retailers of speciality stores attract their male consumers by enhancing the value perception when they come into contact with them. Particular emphasis should be placed on the idea that they will get what they pay for when selecting clothing from certain product assortments. Since quality was a significant criteria when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, it is important that both marketers and retailers emphasise the quality of apparel to consumers. This can be achieved through active communication of quality information with the use of product packaging, in-store information/displays and effective marketing campaigns. Retailers must be aware of customers' quality requirements to ensure acceptable and superior quality. Retailers must also maintain and deliver a high level of brand quality by implementing effective quality control systems. Brand reputation was important in terms of added value and thus retailers and marketers must preserve a suitable reputation by screening out unsatisfactory products and providing consistently high standard apparel products. Apparel retailers must have a comprehensive understanding with regards to what constitutes added-value in consumers' minds, thereby resulting in successful product development, assortment planning and market strategies.

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6.3.2 Relative importance and ranking of intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes (conjoint trade-offs)

During the conjoint tasks, the male consumers assigned specific weights or values to the various product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, thereby providing an indication of their preference structure. The male consumers applied compensatory decision rules during the evaluation stage, enabling them to make trade-offs amongst attributes (Blythe, 2008:272). The following section provides comprehensive insight regarding the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes, in order of preference, during the male consumers' evaluation process.

6.3.2.1 Brand (Extrinsic)

The results from the present study indicate that brand (extrinsic product attribute) was the most important relative attribute among the intrinsic and extrinsic attributes employed by male consumers when evaluating speciality store's product assortment. This is consistent with findings from Herbst and Burger (2002:43), who also established brand as the most important attribute with an average importance of 32.2%. Similarly, brand names were also a chief concern when respondents selected clothing for leisure activities in the study conducted by Lee (2001:65). Brand consciousness was a trait found among male consumers' decision making styles, suggesting that men rely on brands when making decisions (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:231, 235; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004:335). The brand consciousness displayed by male consumers can be a representation of their need to use shopping as a signal of their dominance in the marketplace as they are achievement orientated; they shop to win (Otnes & McGrath, 2001:128, 129). Male consumers form a range of brand relationships with fashion goods in order to attain certain outcomes. Many of these relationships exhibit strong associations to concepts of masculinity, including winning and achievement (Zayer & Neier, 2011:98).

The brands with the highest preference ratings for the present study included Polo, Guess and Levi's. In terms of store brands, the retailer is the brand and all the items the retailer carries are branded with the store's own brand, including retailers such as Polo (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:585). Store brands are also referred to as private label brands, house brands or distributor brands. These are developed by retailers and sold in their own stores (Kotler & Keller, 2012:481). Fashion retailers are increasingly using private labels as a competitive strategy (Parrish, 2010:546). In a fierce competitive market, own brands are used to set fashion retailers apart. They are recognised as the approach fashion

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retailers can use, in terms of operations, to control both the supply chain and the representation of the brand with the use of advertising, design, merchandise and store image. Fashion retailers are thus able to react more quickly to market developments with such a degree of control (McColl & Moore, 2011:100).

Thomas (2009:38) showcases that men have distinct reasons as to why they purchase branded clothing. The buying behaviour of consumers who purchase private label clothing brands is affected by factors such as the brand awareness of stores, the brand image of the store, comfort and durability (Krishna, 2011:53). This was also confirmed by Lee (2001:71), who found that Korean male consumers were reluctant to select brands with low awareness. Their decision regarding a brand was based on the brand's symbolic value in that the brand's image reflected their own individual social and economic success. Both brand image and self-image are significant aspects in understanding what motivates brand selection (Wood, 2004:20). If brands possess a suitable image they positively influence the patronage decisions and purchasing behaviours of consumers (Porter & Claycomb, 1997:373). Thomas (2009:31) found that male consumers make certain associations with branded clothing. They believe that branded clothing fits better and represents the latest fashion trends (Thomas, 2009:31). Branded clothing was also regarded as more comfortable and assisted male consumers in looking good, thereby contributing to their physical satisfaction (Thomas, 2009:35).

A retailer's and brand's success is established by how effectively the retailer's image and the product satisfies consumers' expectations (Porter & Claycomb, 1997:385). It is critical that the image of the brand is consistent within the store and with regard to the merchandise and communication (McColl & Moore, 2011:98). Success factors regarding own brands include the exclusivity they offer to companies and their focus centered approach concerning the needs of the target market (McColl & Moore, 2011:98). More specifically, to ensure niche markets within the private label merchandise are successful, the product and brand needs to be differentiated (Parrish, 2010:555). As such, marketers must apply focused differentiation to their marketing strategies (Moore, 1995:25). This is achieved through the exclusivity retailers' own brand offers using specific image dimensions. The benefits that own brand exclusivity provides a retailer, includes protection from being compared to competitors and customer loyalty (Moore, 1995:26).

To ensure retailers make acceptable private label strategy decisions, they must fully understand the various components affecting consumers' brand choices. This will enable

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retailers to provide the male market with differentiated products, thereby offering them what they need (Parrish, 2010:555). Fashion retailers must also understand the significance of own brand as a strategic and marketing instrument (McColl & Moore, 2011:100). If managers understand how men form brand loyalty towards apparel brands, they can implement marketing strategies which successfully attract male consumers and convey certain brand personalities and lifestyles that would appeal to men (Zayer & Neier, 2011:100).

As the most important attribute, speciality stores should create and maintain their own brands by developing their own brand image, which represents various lifestyle messages focused on males' interests and activities, through brand advertising and promotion. Similarly, marketers must employ a distinct own-brand market positioning. Such a market positioning strategy can be achieved through lifestyle advertisements geared towards the target customer with the use of selected magazines or various social media platforms. Speciality store staff must also be trained, when interacting with customers, to communicate the brand image and the consequent lifestyle message it represents. Brand was the most important attribute for these men during their evaluation process and in the present study, the retailer was the brand and the items the retailer carried were the store's own brand. When planning the merchandise assortment, retailers of speciality stores should focus on exclusivity by offering their own private brand merchandise.

6.3.2.2 Style (Intrinsic)

Style was the most important intrinsic product attribute for these consumers when assessing speciality stores' product assortment. Style is an attribute which attracts customers' attention and may stimulate the initial selling of a garment (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). Clothing styles influence both the impressions formed of others and one's own perception (Hannover & Kühnen, 2002:2521, 2522). Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:229) identified a male decision making style group labelled "Reluctant perfectionists" who considered fashionable and attractive styling very significant. Style was also one of the most important attributes for Chinese consumers (Zhang *et al.*, 2002:53). Men want to look good and search for clothes that complement their bodies and thus, are aware of the styles which are most appropriate for their figures (Frith & Gleeson, 2004:44).

The findings show that when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, male consumers prefer classic styles, followed by casual styles, trendy styles and lastly active/sports-wear. Classic styles may have signified business-wear or work-wear for

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these men since it was described as *"A style or design that satisfies a basic need, characterised by simplicity of design e.g. blazer jackets, cardigan jersey and button-down oxford shirt."* Similarly, Liu and Dickerson (1999:262) found that when male consumers purchased business apparel, style had a significant relative importance as it was ranked as one of their top four selection criteria. Since clothing styles affect the way in which individuals perceive one another (Hannover & Kühnen, 2002), men may use classic styles to convey certain messages to others, thereby assisting them to fulfil certain objectives or pursue achievement outcomes in their working environment including financial success. This is evident in Otnes and McGrath (2001), where men's consumption and shopping habits were motivated by achievement. Thus, male consumers may demonstrate their achievement motivation by considering particular brands crucial in their attempt to achieve certain life goals such as advancing their careers (Zayer & Neier, 2011:98). Casual styles were also considered an important product attribute level. Casual styles can be associated with leisure-wear, which represents no ties, casual shirts and casual jackets. The male respondents in the study conducted by Lee (2001:65) indicated that in terms of leisure-wear, they looked for more diversified styles and pursued comfort and individuality when purchasing leisure-wear.

It is unsurprising that trendy styles received the second lowest utility value. Bakewell *et al.* (2006:175) found that although Generation Y males were aware of the fashion concept, they did not easily accept new styles. This finding is in line with the literature, which indicates that men try to stay within the boundaries of masculine consumption (Zayer & Neier, 2011:88). Some men showcase serious beliefs towards avoiding particular brands due to their feminine connotations and express their aversion for high fashion clothing brands, which they consider as the "epitome of pushing femininity" (Otnes & McGrath, 2001:117; Zayer & Neier, 2011:89). As such, although men may utilise fashion, they still try to maintain their sense of "manliness" (Bakewell *et al.,* 2006:176).

Various studies illustrate the value women attach to style and the role it plays in terms of their evaluative criteria when making apparel purchasing decisions (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008:44; Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:464; North *et al.*, 2003:50). During the evaluation process style plays a crucial role in creating an experience of reality for female consumers (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008:44). Such an experience involves the clothing assisting the consumer to be part of the current fashion within their cultural environment. The clothing item should help consumers fit into a social group, which may include family, friends or colleagues, and it must communicate a message about who and what the consumer is in

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specific social settings. Although the present study did not specifically test for such an influence of clothing on male consumers' evaluation process, it may be men want to experience a message of reality from clothing styles. It is crucial that future studies shed more light on this.

When consumers encounter issues regarding the style of a garment it reduces their tendency towards showing brand loyalty or making repeat purchases (Leung & Taylor, 2002:68). Thus, it is imperative that speciality stores catering for male consumers offer styles which they most prefer such as classical or casual styles, or a combination of the two. Fashion marketing for men should implement achievement orientated advertising campaigns to demonstrate how clothing styles can be used to serve as an important tool in men's lives in terms of accomplishing certain objectives including economic success or career progressions (Bakewell *et al.,* 2006; Kang *et al.,* 2011). As the male consumers preferred classic and casual styles this suggests, in terms of assortment and variety planning, retailers of speciality stores should offer a variation of items which are versatile and could be used both in a work and/or informal setting.

6.3.2.3 Store image (Extrinsic)

Store image was one of the top three selection criteria applied by the male consumers during their evaluation process, subsequently store image represents an important product attribute when assessing speciality stores' product assortment with the intention to purchase. The male participants attached most value to a quality store image, followed by a fashion store image, value for money image, exclusive image and a prestige store image. This is consistent with findings from Vahie and Paswan (2006:79), who established that quality was the most important store image dimension. Du Preez, Visser and Janse Van Noordwyk (2008:55) define store image as "A complex, multidimensional construct based on the perception of tangible and intangible store attributes…" The image of a store is influenced by a number of factors and includes consumers' view regarding a group of prominent store attributes, the significance consumers attach to store image dimensions and sub-dimensions and the manner in which retailers operate store attributes through strategic management (Du Preez *et al.*, 2008:56). Various research has demonstrated that store image is a significant factor influencing consumers' store selection (Birtwistle *et al.*, 1999; Birtwistle & Shearer, 2001; Thang & Tan, 2003). More specifically, a store's reputation is one of the features, in terms of the store image, which affects consumers' store preferences considerably (Thang & Tan, 2003:193). If consumers perceive store

image positively, this in effect reduces their perceived risk of buying store branded apparel (Liljander *et al.*, 2009:285).

A quality image was the most important store image level for the male consumers included in the present study. Consumers' perceptions of store image positively influence stores' own brand image (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003:350). A retailer with a sound image can apply their good reputation to brand their private labels, thereby distinguishing the product as quality (Liljander *et al.*, 2009:287). Vahie and Paswan (2006:78) also established that a quality store image had a positive effect on both the quality and affective dimensions regarding private label brand image. Thus, the quality image conveyed by a store is reflected onto the image of the brands carried by the store. This implies that male participants' positive perception of a quality store image was reflected onto the speciality store's own brand, or private label, resulting in an apparel brand image which signified quality. Consequently, the quality of clothing brands are an important factor for South African men (Thomas, 2009:35). Du Preez and Van Der Vyver (2010:20) also found that the quality of merchandise carried by the apparel retailer was an important sub-dimension for consumers regarding apparel store image. In the study conducted by Vahie and Paswan (2006:80), quality, as an image dimension of private label brands, was not associated with consumers' purchasing intentions for private label brands. Liljander *et al.* (2009:281) confirmed that consumers' purchasing intentions are affected indirectly through store image as it reduces perceived risk and enhances the perceptions of store brand quality.

In addition to the quality store image, the male consumers in the study also prefer speciality stores which communicate a fashionable image and this translates onto the product assortment. Fashion consciousness can be described as "a person's degree of involvement with the styles or fashion of clothing" (Nam, Hamlin, Gam, Kang, Kim, Kumphai, Starr & Richards, 2007:103). Various literature indicates the role fashion consciousness plays in men's lives (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:237; Bakewell *et al.*, 2006:169; Lee, 2001:65). Men's inclination towards new fashions signals a new kind of male shopper, one whose behaviour is in line with the changes in society (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:237). Although these men had a high preference for fashion image, they did not prefer trendy styles which can be explained by Bakewell *et al.* (2006:169), who found relatively high levels of fashion consciousness amongst men, although not necessarily fashion adoption. As such, fashion consciousness did not necessarily translate into

behaviour such as shopping regularly for clothing and adopting new styles. The authors also established that men's perception regarding fashions is notably simplistic.

Value for money image was the third most preferred store image level. According to Amara and Bouslama (2011:7), the concept of value considers how the price of a product relates to the product's quality. This means that consumers do not necessarily look for low prices, instead they look for a satisfactory quality-price ratio. The importance the men in the present study placed on value for money store image is in contrast to other findings in the literature. Birtwistle *et al.* (1999:7) found that price, which reflects value for money, was the most important store image attribute for customers when deciding where to shop for menswear in the UK fashion sector. Additionally, an added value factor emerged during the exploratory factor analysis which demonstrated that the male participants associate added value with the positive role of price, where higher prices signalled quality.

Store image plays a vital role in generating a significant market share and establishing relevance in the competitive apparel retail industry. It represents a critical component of marketing communication since it influences consumers' perception and identity of a store. The result of the store image attribute, and its various levels, indicate that retailers should effectively manage and allocate their resources in order to reinforce the essential store image levels, thereby increasing male consumers' preference towards the product assortment and thus the apparel retailer. Evidently, when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, both a quality and fashionable store image were most preferred among these male consumers. It is imperative that apparel retailers of speciality stores manage these store image levels, thereby establishing a positive store image. Speciality store retailers must ensure the image of the store is in line with the products sold by the speciality store retailer. Thus, store managers should invest the necessary resources to put measures into place, guaranteeing merchandise quality and fashionability. Retailers of speciality stores could also highlight these dimensions in general marketing campaigns with regards to the apparel products carried by the retailer. Lastly, apparel retailers could benefit from higher profit margins by investing in training sales personnel to convey these images to the target market.

6.3.2.4 Colour (Intrinsic)

Similar to style, colour represents a garment feature which may prompt consumers to purchase a garment as it catches their attention (Brown & Rice, 2014:68). Colour is universal and provides consumers with information. The appropriate use of colours can

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differentiate products from competitors. It can also affect both moods and feelings in a positive or negative manner, and thereby consumers' attitudes towards specific products, (Singh, 2006:783). Consumers' colour preference for certain products is determined by the situation and the inherent association consumers may have established with the colour. Thus, preference regarding particular colours does not exist in a vacuum (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999:81).

Colour was rated amongst the lowest three attributes, with a relative importance of 14.1%, followed by country of origin and perceived quality. This indicates colour was not considered as significant as other product attributes within male consumers' preference structures, when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. The colour attribute level with the highest utility value was neutral colours, followed closely by earth tones. This is not surprising since these two colour spectrums are fairly similar to one another. The findings are contrary to previous research wherein colour was established as an important factor for both men and women. Thomas (2009:37) noted the importance of colour to male consumers, as the first thing they did when a clothing item attracted their attention was to search for the right colour. Colour was the second most important selection criteria which influenced Taiwanese male consumers' apparel purchases (Liu & Dickerson, 1999:255). Eckman *et al.* (1990:19) found that for female consumers, colour was a significant criteria when evaluating apparel with the intent to purchase. De Klerk and Lubbe (2008:36, 42) also established that for female consumers, colour was a key factor in generating the required aesthetic experience when evaluating apparel quality. The formal qualities of colour created an experience of pleasure through the dimension of sight. Akcay, Sable and Dalgin (2012:4) found that during the decision making process, colour was an important factor for the clothing category. However, this factor was found to be more important for females than for males, which may explain why colour was not a significant factor for the men in the present study.

Although the male participants did not attach significant value to colour, it is still important for retailers and marketers to understand the significance thereof. The colours most preferred by these men can be used as information cues by speciality stores to build a strong image unique to the brand, thus enabling men to associate the colours with the brand and in effect the retailer. Men's preference for neutral colours and earth tones can be associated with their preference for classic styles which usually includes more neutral and basic colours. These colours can also be implemented in the marketing strategy and used in advertising. If retailers implement the incorrect colour this could have an adverse

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effect on the brand image and consequent sales. The findings illustrate that when planning merchandise assortment, buyers of speciality stores can opt for basic colour palettes such as neutral colours, e.g. black, grey, white and beige.

6.3.2.5 Country of origin (Extrinsic)

Country of origin was rated second last in the conjoint analysis. This result indicates that for these male consumers, country of origin was not considered a significant evaluative criteria utilised when assessing the product assortment of speciality stores. Country of origin was also not an important selection criteria for male consumers' business apparel purchases in the study conducted by Liu and Dickerson (1999:263). Some of these male participants even described the country aspect as meaningless to them. Similarly, the influence of country of origin for apparel products was not significant in the study conducted by Patterson and Tai (1991:31). Although country of origin has been established as a cue or information piece for consumers' perception of apparel quality (Moore & Carpenter, 2008:331), it may be that the men in the present study place more importance on product attributes such as brand and price, rather than country of origin, when inferring quality.

Clothing manufactured in South Africa was the most preferred attribute level for these men, followed by Europe and a combination of local and international manufacturers. Highly ethnocentric consumers are inclined towards domestic products (Zolfagharian & Sun, 2010:356) and Dmitrović and Vida (2007:17) state that consumers with more prominent ethnocentric tendencies are more prone to take note of product origin cues, and consequently choose products, services and brands which have been domestically or locally made. Ethnocentrism was apparent amongst the male apparel consumers in the present study, as they showcased a tendency towards locally made South African products. China received the lowest utility value which may be attributed to the fact that men perceive clothing manufactured in China as poor quality. This is confirmed by Patterson and Tai (1991:35), who found consumers evidently believed that apparel from China and other Southeast Asian countries are inferior in quality and perceived as less expensive.

As men display patriotic tendencies towards apparel products during their evaluation process, managers can utilise country of origin, specifically made in South Africa, as an important tool to position their apparel products and plan product assortments. Brand managers and marketers can effectively implement promotional campaigns which focus on

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"buying domestic" with the use of patriotic concepts and symbols, thereby enhancing the revenue of apparel retailers.

6.3.2.6 Perceived quality (Intrinsic)

ZeithamI (1988:3-4) states that perceived quality differs from objective or actual quality of a product; it is not only confined to a specific attribute of a product, but rather a higher level of abstraction. Perceived quality is a global evaluation that in certain instances reflects an attitude and it is a judgment typically shaped in consumers' evoked set (ZeithamI, 1988:3-4). The findings show that perceived quality was not an important evaluative criterion for these male consumers when assessing speciality stores' assortment, which could be attributed to various factors. The universal and complex nature of the quality concept could result in consumers not expressing concerns about it without directly being prompted to do so (Eckman *et al.*, 1990:21). De Klerk and Lubbe (2008:42) found that even after being probed about the quality of apparel items, female consumers still did not mention durability or ease of care regarding garments. It seemed as if in most situations they rarely intentionally and most likely never considered such functional qualities first. This was attributed to the fact that participants may have been so familiar with the textiles that they automatically knew how the textile would behave when wearing the item. One would still expect some reference regarding the part that textiles play in establishing important functional qualities, including aspects such as easy to care for (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008:45). Consequently, this may also be true for the male consumers in the study. It may also stand to reason that these male consumers use extrinsic product attributes such as brand and price as indicators of quality when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. This was evident with their high regard for a quality store image and what this may consequently signal in terms of brand image, in addition to the positive role of price in the added value factor from the exploratory factor analysis. Additional information with regards to establishing the factors that in fact do influence male consumers' perceptions of clothing quality, in terms of speciality stores' product assortment, is required.

The garments' durability had the highest utility value and can be considered the most preferred perceived quality attribute level for these men; it is important for male consumers that the garment maintains its structure and appearance after wearing and implementing necessary care procedures (Brown & Rice, 2014:70). Similarly, Cox and Dittmar (1995:251) found that men valued the object-intrinsic, functional attributes of clothing, such as durability. Evidently, men associate words such as durability with high-priced apparel (Lee, 2001:68). Women also found that durability, as a functional performance aspect, was

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an important evaluative criteria in terms of apparel quality (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:469). This indicates that durability is an important quality feature for both genders.

Construction, or well-made, was also considered a significant attribute level amongst these male consumers. Construction is a physical feature intrinsic to the garment and involves the workmanship details of the garment (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012:465). In the study conducted by Swinker and Hines (2006:222), construction was rated significantly high by respondents who considered quality important. Zhang *et al.* (2002:56) suggest that workmanship or construction is a key factor for consumers since it represents a tangible component of quality. Consumers are able to visually evaluate how well a garment is constructed. Swinker and Hines (2006:222) indicated there seems to be no agreement between consumers and the industry concerning the significance of a well-constructed garment. This may result in manufacturers and retailers focusing on the incorrect aspects of a garment which may not hold a great deal of importance to consumers. Thus, the tangible quality, such as workmanship or construction, of an apparel item must be correct in order to meet the needs of the consumer (Zhang *et al.*, 2002:57).

Ease of care and colour-fast received the lowest preference rating when considering the importance of perceived quality. Ease of care was also not considered an important selection criterion amongst Taiwanese male consumers when purchasing business apparel (Liu & Dickerson, 1999:262). It is important to note that Zhang *et al.* (2002:58) found female consumers assigned significant importance to ease of care. This was an indication that women, more so than men, were concerned about the care procedures of a garment since they most likely take care of the garments. Colour-fast, or colour which does not move onto other fabrics during storage, use or care, received the lowest utility value and hence was not considered a significant attribute level of perceived quality for these men.

The perceived quality of the retailer's own brand apparel must both satisfy and exceed the requirement of the target market in order to stay ahead of the competition. The findings suggest that perceived quality features may already be included in male consumers' evaluation process and instead they may use extrinsic attributes (e.g., brand, store image and price) as quality indicators. Thus, they may incorporate perceived quality features such as durability and construction automatically and unconsciously, without having to deliberately apply it when evaluating apparel quality. As such, it is crucial that marketers and retailers emphasise the advantages that perceived quality offers regarding speciality

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stores' product assortment, especially in terms of the durability and construction aspects of apparel. This could be implemented by retailers who integrate these aspects in their core strategies and communicate the importance of perceived quality through marketing campaigns and knowledgeable staff who are trained to convey such benefits to the target customer.

6.4   CLUSTER ANALYSIS OF MALE CONSUMERS

This section comprises the findings regarding the clustering of various male consumer groups in terms of their preferences for particular product attributes within speciality stores' product assortment. The implications of their evaluative behaviour during the decision making process are also discussed. The results from the cluster analysis identified a four cluster solution. This included cluster 1: style guys, cluster 2: origin guys, cluster 3: brand loyalist and cluster 4: colour guys.

6.4.1   Style guys

Style guys are concerned with quality and agree with the statements, *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores"* (Price Reliance Schema), *"They offer brands that have a good reputation"* (Brand) and *"Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand"* (Brand). This cluster comprises mostly of younger male consumers who use high prices and retailers' reputation to infer quality. Bakewell and Mitchell (2004:237) found younger male shoppers had a desire for new fashion. The younger group of male consumers in Lee (2001:64) also showed a great interest in clothing, especially for higher priced clothing. Liu and Dickerson (1999:264) established that the more money male respondents spent on their business apparel, the more important style and quality became. As the most prominent group, speciality stores should appeal to them by providing quality apparel in the styles they want.

6.4.2   Origin guys

With regards to the preference for particular speciality stores, origin guys favour quality when purchasing a brand and brands with a good reputation. These consumers rely on country of origin to infer quality when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. Chowdhury and Andaleeb (2007:47) indicate that perceived country of origin directly

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affects perceived quality in a positive and significant way. The findings illustrate that younger male consumers (20-29) consider country of origin important when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. Similarly, Lin and Chen (2006) established that country of origin had a distinct effect on consumers' purchase decisions in the age group 20-29. This was in contrast to the study conducted by Moore and Carpenter (2008:334), who found older consumers considered the country of origin quality cue more important in apparel purchasing decisions than younger consumers. To appeal to the origin guys, retailers can emphasise country of origin and quality in their packaging and garment labels, in-store signage and advertising campaigns.

6.4.3 Brand loyalist

The brand loyalists agree with the statements *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores"* (Price Reliance Schema), *"They offer brands that have a good reputation"* (Brand) and *"I think they offer value for money"* (Price Reliance Schema). This cluster consists of predominantly younger male consumers who associate higher prices with quality and favour brands with a good reputation, which they believe offer value for money. Thomas (2009:30-31, 38) found male consumers believed branded clothing offered better quality which lasts longer and provides value for money. An important finding was that this cluster included the most number of Black respondents, compared to the other clusters. The findings suggest these consumers can be regarded as brand loyal. To establish brand loyalty, retailers must create a positive brand image, thereby attracting male consumers to a particular brand and ensuring repeat purchases. Developing brand loyalty is essential for successful marketing. Achieving a favourable brand image, and consequently, brand loyalty, results in brand equity, which comprises a collection of strong assets, including value, esteem and worth, i.e., all the intangibles that help create satisfaction, retention, and demand in the marketplace (Rath *et al.*, 2008:22). The brand image can be established through advertising campaigns which employ celebrity endorsements that convey an image which appeals to the male consumers constituting this cluster, or a spokesperson which these men can relate to. Additional knowledge regarding how men form brand loyalty towards apparel brands can help managers to implement marketing strategies that successfully attract male consumers.

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6.4.4   Colour guys

Colour guys agree with the statement *"Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand"* (Brand), *"They offer brands that have a good reputation"* (Brand) and *"I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores"* (Price Reliance Schema). Although respondents in this cluster are relatively younger, this cluster constituted the most number of older male consumers, compared to the other clusters. The findings indicate that older male consumers are interested in colour and may apply it when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. Colour guys are also concerned with quality. Similarly, consumers in the study conducted by Dickson and Littrell (1998) were segmented into two consumer groups according to their desirability ratings for various clothing evaluative criteria. Each group had different preferences in terms of colour palettes although both groups regarded high quality apparel important.

The information gained from the cluster analysis can be used by retailers and marketers to identify specialised markets (niche markets) and to develop targeting strategies aimed towards various apparel consumer groups and their preferences regarding certain aspects when selecting their most preferred speciality stores. The cluster analysis revealed that a good reputation was important to all four clusters, therefore, it is critical for speciality store retailers and marketers to build and maintain a good reputation through effective promotions, including advertising campaigns and word of mouth. Quality was a primary concern for the style guys, origin guys and colour guys. Managers must invest resources in establishing the quality dimensions important to male consumers and they must place sufficient emphasis on the quality of the merchandise the store offers. Similarly, high price, which consumers use as an indicator of quality, was important for style guys, brand loyalists and colour guys. These findings suggest that all four consumer groups find a number of the same aspects important in terms of their preference for speciality stores and marketers and retailers should target each of the clusters accordingly by implementing focused strategies that highlight good reputation and quality.

6.5   IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSORTMENT PLANNING

The study included a total of eight attributes which were presented to male consumers as hypothetical pair-wise attribute combinations (product assortment profiles). The purpose of the research was to establish the value male consumers attached to these attributes when

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evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. The results indicate these consumers employ both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes during their evaluation process. The conjoint analysis allowed the male consumers to make trade-offs between attributes as they compared one attribute to another to evaluate the assortment profiles. This task provided an indication of male consumers' actual preference structure (Hair *et al.,* 2010:279) and revealed brand (extrinsic attribute) was the most preferred product attribute during male consumers' evaluation of specialty stores' assortment. The second most preferred attribute was style (intrinsic attribute), followed by store image (extrinsic attribute), colour (intrinsic attribute), country of origin (extrinsic attribute) and lastly, perceived quality (intrinsic attribute). Exploratory factor analysis provided additional insight into male consumers' preferences when selecting speciality stores. This included two factors labelled "Prestige sensitivity" and "Added value", reflecting the influence of price and brand (extrinsic attributes), and a factor labelled "Importance of fit" (intrinsic attribute). Based on the findings from both the conjoint analysis and the exploratory factor analysis, the ideal speciality store assortment would include the attributes as presented in **Table 6.1**.

TABLE 6.1:   STORE TEMPLATE FOR AN IDEAL SPECIALITY STORE PRODUCT ASSORTMENT

	Importance of attribute	Level ranking
Conjoint trade-offs	Brand (extrinsic attribute)	Polo
	Style (intrinsic attribute)	Classic
	Store Image (extrinsic attribute)	Quality
	Colour (intrinsic attribute)	Neutrals
	Country of Origin (extrinsic attribute)	South Africa
	Perceived Quality (intrinsic attribute)	Durability
Preference when selecting speciality store	Additional selection criteria when evaluating assortment	
	Prestige (price and brand affect)	
	Importance of Fit	
	Added Value (price and brand affect)	

The main findings of the research can be used to formulate recommendations to retailers and marketers regarding the implementation of ideal speciality store product assortments, subject to male consumers' preference structure. The information provided in **Table 6.1** can be applied to the merchandise decisions related to product assortment or more specifically, when planning the merchandise assortments. Previous research has established that assortment planning is an important process for retailers as the appropriate selection of merchandise mix can maximise expected profits. The effective management of assortment planning can reduce both markdowns, due to excessive

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inventory, and lost margins due to stock-outs, thereby increasing retailers' revenue (Rajaram, 2001:186). The product assortment is an important factor which influences consumers' retail choice (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006:236). Paulins and Geistfeld (2003:382) found that the clothing offered by apparel retailers affects store preferences significantly. Thus, the merchandise selection (product assortment) that consumers find attractive is a crucial reason why consumers patronise specific apparel stores. The product assortment offered by a speciality store is important with regards to reaching the identified target customer as well as reaching retailers various goals and objectives in terms of financial gain (Clodfelter, 2008:250).

The male consumers' evaluation process of speciality stores' product assortments, revealed major findings. The findings suggest that men in the present study use clothing as a significant tool to communicate certain messages to others. This can be associated with male consumers' use of dress to communicate certain messages to others and therefore has implications for retailers, marketers and brand managers who target male consumers of a specific income bracket, frequenting speciality stores. The importance these men attach to brands indicates they are brand conscious. Previous research has established that brands are used to assist career progressions or accomplish specific objectives, thus displaying consumers' achievement motivation (Zayer & Neier, 2011). Achievement outcomes are a significant motivation for men's shopping behaviour (Otnes & McGrath, 2001:128-130), similarly the importance men attach to style may also demonstrate their underlying achievement orientation. Hannover and Kühnen (2002) established that style is often used by consumers to form impressions of others, thus the style of clothing, such as classic styles which may be worn in the workplace, could be used to form impressions and achieve certain outcomes, including financial success.

Store image was also an important attribute amongst the male participants. Various authors have emphasised that consumers associate store image with store own brand evaluation (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003; Liljander *et al.*, 2009; Vahie & Paswan, 2006). Hence, a positive store image translates onto stores' own brand and as a result, reflects consumers' self-image as they consume the brand. This can also be associated with the findings from the prestige sensitivity factor indicating the use of brand as a social symbol, in that the brand image was a reflection of consumers' self-image. More specifically, the male consumers preferred certain speciality stores' apparel brands as they believed it said something about them as a person (Prestige sensitivity factor). As a result, store image and brand image could both function as a reflection of consumers' self-image.

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A further indication that the male participants preferred apparel from particular speciality stores' assortment, in order to communicate to others, was the high regard for prestige. Prestige sensitivity indicated consumers' use of high priced clothing as a prestigious symbol to others. Prestige sensitivity is driven by peer expectation (Völckner, 2008:373) and represents consumers' positive perceptions of price, demonstrating what higher prices may indicate to other people regarding themselves (Lichtenstein *et al.*, 1993:236). This indicated the male participants set out to achieve certain outcomes from their dress. The men believed people noticed when they bought the most expensive brand of clothing (Price-Prestige Sensitivity) and that others make judgements regarding the brands they buy (Prestige sensitivity factor). By purchasing expensive clothing which represents prestigious symbols to peers, they are able to conform to peer expectations.

Another major finding was that quality was an important factor for these men. Although perceived quality, and its subsequent levels, was the lowest relative important attribute in the conjoint tasks, the results indicate the men relied on price as an evaluative criteria to infer quality (Added value factor). Quality was also the most important attribute level in terms of store image. This indicates the importance men attach to brands which signify quality, as the store image reflects onto the brand image. As such, these men use brand, store image and price as quality indicators.

The results obtained from the cluster analysis also has implications for marketers and retailers of speciality stores. As illustrated from the findings, different consumer groups have distinct preferences when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, therefore it may be worthwhile to examine the concept on the topic of the importance consumers assign to attributes as a way of segmenting potential market segments. Marketers and retailers can apply the information regarding the preferences of various male consumer groups gained from the clustering technique to determine niche markets and develop targeting strategies. Niche marketing strategies provide retailers with increased profits and market share (Parrish, 2010:546). It is imperative that retail buyers have a comprehensive insight regarding the male target segment. This ensures that the selection of merchandise assortment within speciality stores is in line with various male consumer groups' expectations and preferences for such retail formats.

The above findings provide some implications for clothing manufacturers, retailers, marketers, brand managers and consumer education. This research advances the understanding of male consumer behaviour within a specific retail format. It offers

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preliminary knowledge regarding the importance men attach to certain attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, thereby providing an indication of their preference structure. When evaluating speciality stores' product assortment, the male consumers considered both extrinsic and intrinsic product attributes significant during their evaluation process. The men made trade-offs between attributes, wherein more value was attached to the attributes they most preferred. From a theoretical perspective, when analysing male consumers' decision making process, both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes affect male consumers' evaluation of product assortments. Insight such as this contributes to the existing, although rather limited, body of research regarding male consumers' clothing behaviour and, specifically, their evaluation of product assortment within particular fashion retail environments.

6.6   THE RESEARCH IN RETROSPECT

The aim of the study was to determine and explore the product attributes South African male consumers use when evaluating the apparel assortment of speciality stores. Four fundamental research objectives were compiled to establish the overall purpose of the research. The findings collectively provide a deeper understanding of male consumers' preference structure. The study demonstrated that male consumers preferred certain attributes over others when evaluating product assortments. The male consumers made trade-offs between intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes during the evaluation process, representing the value they attach to various attributes. The research classified male consumers into relatively homogenous groups or clusters according to shared qualities or characteristics within the various clusters. This process identified market segments among South African male consumers with similar preferences when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment.

6.6.1   Background planning

The research topic was comprehensively examined by the researcher and included a meticulous review and analysis of the current literature regarding the main concepts of the study in order to formulate the problem statement and research objectives. The particular topic of interest had received little attention in previous literature. Nevertheless, past literature did provide sufficient information regarding male consumers' shopping behaviour, the evaluative criteria applied by consumers, although mostly female, in certain retail

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settings and the effect of product assortment on consumers' purchasing intentions. Once the necessary literature was gathered and analysed, a paper based and online electronic questionnaire was developed with the assistance of a focus group and pilot study. The focus group and pilot study ensured the concepts and instructions incorporated in the questionnaire were clear and understandable. The online questionnaire was constructed and launched using an Internet based platform called Free Online Surveys and distributed via e-mail. The online and paper based questionnaire included a cover letter (consent letter), wherein the purpose of the study was explained. The form also provided information regarding who the researcher is, the time it would take to complete the questionnaire and a confidentiality clause stating that all data collected during the data gathering and data analysis stage would be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

6.6.2   Data analysis

A total of 204 usable questionnaires were received from the male respondents and coded using Excel. Consulta, a research consulting company, decoded the data from the conjoint tasks using the Sawtooth Software© program. Additionally, the research company conducted exploratory factor analysis and cluster analyses to provide more efficient information regarding male consumers' preferences when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. All the research objectives were achieved to the satisfaction of the researcher and the findings were presented by means of tables and graphs, as illustrated in **Chapter 5**.

6.7   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with all research initiatives, there were a number of limitations associated with the present study. The study included male consumers of various ethnic backgrounds, however the sample was heavily slanted towards the White population group, followed by the Black segment. Since a non-probability sampling design was employed, several members of the population had little to no chance of being sampled, therefore limiting the researchers control over the sample. As such, it can be assumed the study may have yielded different results had the sample included a more balanced distribution of respondents from all South African population groups. Future research can focus on including a more balanced population sample.

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The geographic location of the sample also created certain limitations as the focus of the study was subject to male consumers residing in the greater Tshwane area, Gauteng. This indicates the results from the sample did not provide an adequate representation of all South African male consumers' preference structure with regards to the importance they attach to certain product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortments. As the findings of this study were limited to male consumers residing in Tshwane, future research should include a more representative population sample. Replication of the study in other provinces or countries may provide completely different outcomes regarding male consumers' preferences.

The income level of the respondents and the specific retail format may have also affected the results of the study. The study was limited to a middle-high income group of male respondents, evaluating the product assortments within speciality stores. Consequently, male consumers who comprise different income groups and evaluate other retail formats will most likely place greater importance on other attributes and attribute levels during the evaluation process, compared to the male consumers in the present study.

An additional constraint of the study was the length and complexity of the questionnaire, which took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete and included both conjoint tasks, wherein consumers had to make trade-offs between pair-wise presentations of assortment profiles, and additional exploratory factor analysis questions. As such, respondents may have found the questionnaire somewhat taxing to complete. This was evident in both the paper-based and electronic questionnaire. In terms of the paper-based questionnaire, a number of respondents either omitted various sections of the questionnaire or individual questions. With regards to the electronic questionnaire, several drop-out incidents were noted. Nevertheless, potential respondents were informed about the length of the questionnaire in the cover letter which accompanied it. As the findings corresponded with previous studies which were similar to the present study, any concerns regarding the validity of the results were eliminated.

The online questionnaire also presented other barriers. Although this method of data collection provides various advantages, it is not without limitation. The online questionnaire provided the respondents with anonymity, making it difficult to monitor who had completed the questionnaire. Fortunately, the online website software program ensured that once a respondent had submitted the questionnaire, they could not complete and resubmit the questionnaire again. Another limitation concerning the electronic format is low speed

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internet (low bandwidth), which may have explained the several drop-out incidents as respondents found it difficult to load the last page of the online questionnaire, preventing them from submitting it. It is also significant to note that only consumers who had access to the Internet and an active email were able to complete the online questionnaire, which limited the accessibility to certain individuals.

From the above limitations, it is recommended that caution should be taken when generalising the results of the study to a larger group or the entire South African population. As such, future research must be undertaken to overcome the limitations.

6.8   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Insight regarding male consumers' evaluation process concerning product assortment within speciality stores, particularly in terms of the specific attributes they use as evaluative criteria, is a significant topic of interest which demands more attention in future research. Consequently, during the completion of the research process various opportunities for future research were identified.

Gender has a significant effect on the importance of most attributes (Zhang *et al.*, 2002:58). Although a vast number of research streams have focused on female consumer behaviour in apparel retail environments, it may still prove beneficial to replicate the study onto a female sample within a South African context. It is evident throughout the literature that female and male consumer decision making styles vary; female consumers' evaluation of product assortment within speciality stores may differ significantly. Comparing the value female consumers attach to certain product attributes with the findings of the present research may provide insightful results for both retailers and marketers of speciality stores.

In terms of the geographic area, the research can be replicated onto a larger sample, including respondents from a broader South African context. This may involve a comparison of the present study to male consumers located in various other provinces of South Africa. Additionally, the study could be repeated in other countries, possibly yielding significantly different results. Male consumers' evaluation of product assortment within speciality stores may differ depending on various countries and even cultures, therefore it may be worthwhile to do comparative studies regarding different countries and cultures.

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The research comprised respondents of a higher income bracket, evaluating speciality stores' product assortments. Opportunity for further research is suggested regarding consumers' income level and the specific retail format included in future studies. Examining the decision making process of male consumers from lower income levels and their evaluation of other retail formats, such as department stores, may provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding in terms of the male consumer segment.

The present study was quantitative in nature. An alternative to quantitative research is qualitative research. The qualitative research approach considers characteristics or qualities of a particular phenomenon which cannot easily be reduced to numerical values and pursues a more in-depth understanding regarding complex situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:94, 95). A qualitative study could be conducted wherein the product attributes that were identified as important in the present study could be explored in more depth, providing retailers and marketers with greater understanding as to why male consumers attach more value to certain attributes than others.

6.9   FINAL CONCLUSION

As it is apparent that there is a lack of attention concerning male shopping behaviour in the apparel industry (Kinley *et al.*, 2000:67), the current research stemmed from the need for a deeper understanding regarding male consumers' clothing behaviour. Men's attention, with regards to clothing and dress, is continuously growing and they are taking more control of their own purchasing decisions. Due to this they have become significant consumers in the apparel marketplace (Kang *et al.*, 2011:425). The consumer decision making research regarding male consumers is significant as they represent an important shopping segment (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004:223). Accordingly, the purpose of this particular study was to determine the value male consumers attached to product attributes when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. The study employed the consumer behaviour model of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013) as the theoretical framework from which the conceptual framework was developed along with the set objectives.

Careful consideration and understanding of male buying behaviour, specifically concerning their needs and preferences and what they value in terms of product assortments when making apparel purchasing decisions, can provide fashion retailers with distinct differentiation strategies and competitive advantage. Information concerning product

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attributes from consumers' perspective is also valuable to manufacturers, retailers and marketing managers of the apparel industry in areas such as marketing, merchandising and apparel for male consumers. When determining male consumer preferences for specific product attributes within product assortments, the research proposes the use of conjoint analysis methods in conjunction with exploratory factor analysis and clustering methods to allow for a comprehensive understanding of male consumer clothing behaviour. Various authors (Chen-Yu & Hong, 2002:123; Torres *et al.*, 2001:211) have established that if male consumers are pleased with a store and its attributes they will showcase loyalty towards the store by making repeat purchases. In addition, they will also display brand loyalty and convey positive word of mouth.

The implications of the present research were highlighted along with limitations and recommendations for future research. The objectives were carried out effectively and the consequent knowledge gained from the study adds value and insight to the existing literature regarding male consumer behaviour, the evaluation stage of the decision making process and research streams involving product assortments. The research study can be beneficial to researchers who embark on similar studies. The research can also be of value to manufacturers, retailers and marketers who seek to enhance their merchandise mix by offering customised product assortments, improve advertising campaigns wherein persuasive communication makes use of the product attributes which consumers consider most important and lastly, effectively train sales staff.

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Respondents number (Office use only)

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Dear Participant,

I am undertaking my Master's studies at the University of Pretoria in the field of Clothing Retail Management. My research focuses on the **important aspects male consumers use to evaluate apparel assortment of speciality stores.**

I would value your opinions as you complete the enclosed questionnaire. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete; there are no right or wrong answers. It would be greatly appreciated if you would answer the questions as honestly as possible. Please ensure that each question has been answered for the questionnaire to be useful. You may stop participating at any time should you wish to. All data collected from your answers will be kept confidential and participants will not be identified.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. If you have any questions regarding the study please feel free to contact me, Mareli van Belkum at: 083 642 3218 or e-mail me at marelivanbelkum@hotmail.co.za.

Yours sincerely,

Mareli van Belkum

I hereby give my consent that I am aware of the nature of this research and I am partaking in this study of my own free will.

_____

Participants Signature

Speciality stores are defined as stores which restrict their merchandise to one class and are geared towards a relatively narrow apparel or goods segment with the objective of attracting a particular target consumer.

The product assortment of a store is defined as the number of different product items stocked within each product line.

It is important to note that the product assortments and product assortments features that are included in the questionnaire are fictitious. Therefore, you may not necessarily find a product assortment in the market place with the combination of features that have been presented to you in this questionnaire regarding your decision whether or not you would purchase from such an assortment.

Below are the definitions of apparel assortment characteristics including **BRAND (SPECIALITY STORE), COLOUR, STYLE, COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, PERCEIVED QUALITY** and **STORE IMAGE** which you would potentially consider when evaluating the product assortment within a particular clothing speciality store with the intention to buy.

BRAND (SPECIALITY STORE)

	Levi's.
	Guess.
	Markham.
	Polo.
	Diesel.
	Truworths Man.

COLOUR

	Bright Colours: Colours which have the clearest and most vibrant intensities e.g. bright orange, bright pink, bright red, bright yellow, bright green.
	Seasonal Colour: Colours which are currently on trend e.g. Emerald, Monaco blue, Poppy red.
	Earth Tones: Colours of the earth e.g. sand, rust, brown.
	Neutrals: Colours that can be blended with all other colour groups. Not too dull or too bright e.g. black, grey, white, beige.

STYLE

	Classic Style: A style or design that satisfies a basic need, characterised by simplicity of design e.g. blazer jackets, cardigan jersey and button down oxford shirt.
	Trendy Style: A general direction or movement and reflects the latest fashion e.g. bomber jackets, tailored shorts and short suits.
	Casual Style: Unstructured jackets, knits and woven sport shirts, leisure shorts and co-ordinated tops and bottoms e.g. t-shirt, "sports" jacket, sports shirt, hoodie, jeans.
	Active/Sports-Wear: Clothing worn during active sport participation and leisure time e.g. running tracksuits, athletic shoes, skiwear, and golf wear.

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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

	Made in South Africa: Clothing manufactured in South Africa.	
	Made in China: Clothing which has been manufactured in China.	
	Made in Europe: Clothing which has been manufactured in Europe.	
	Combination of local and international manufacturers: Clothing which has been manufactured locally and internationally.	

PERCIEVED QUALITY

	Durability: The manner in which the product withstands use; how long the product will last.	
	Easily Maintainable: The ease with which fabrics can be laundered and soil removed, the drying time required or amount of ironing needed, and the wrinkling resistance of the garment.	
	Colour Fast: Colour which does not fade or move onto other fabrics during storage, use or care.	
	Well Made: The level and consistency of garment construction e.g. no loose threads, consistent stitching throughout the garment.	

STORE IMAGE

	Quality Image: Stores that stock apparel of a good quality and standard.	
	Fashionable Image: Stores that are known for stocking the most current fashion trends in clothing.	
	Exclusive Image: Stores that stock clothing that is exclusively available in a specific speciality store.	
	Value for Money Image: Stores that focus on offering a value service to customers e.g. garments offered at a discounted price; sale discount.	
	Prestige Image: Stores which are high priced and have high levels of service.	

What follows is a **PAIRWISE** presentation of assortment offerings which differ with regards to **BRANDS (SPECIALITY STORES), COLOURS, STYLES, COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, PERCEIVED QUALITY** and **STORE IMAGES.**

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Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where <u>**1 is strongly prefer left option**</u> and <u>**9 is strongly prefer right option**</u>.

1.

v1 [ ]

Levi's		VS	Guess	
Bright Colours			Earth Tones	
Casual Styles			Classic Styles	
Made in Europe			Made in South Africa	
Durability			Colour Fast	
Prestige			Quality Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

2.

v2 [ ]

Levi's		VS	Markham	
Seasonal Colours			Bright Colours	
Active/Sports-Wear			Casual Styles	
Made in South Africa			Combination	
Easily Maintainable			Well Made	
Exclusive Image			Quality Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

3.

v3 [ ]

Polo		VS	Diesel	
Seasonal Colours			Neutral Colours	
Casual Styles			Active/Sports-Wear	
Made in Europe			Made in China	
Durability			Easily Maintainable	
Exclusive Image			Value for Money Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where <u>1 is strongly prefer left option</u> and <u>9 is strongly prefer right option</u>.

4.

Truworths Man		Markham	
Seasonal Colours		Bright Colours	
Trendy Styles	**VS**	Active/Sports-Wear	
Made in South Africa		Combination	
Well Made		Easily Maintainable	
Exclusive Image		Quality Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

5.

Guess		Levi's	
Earth Tones		Bright Colours	
Classic Styles	**VS**	Trendy Styles	
Made in China		Combination	
Durability		Easily Maintainable	
Value for Money Image		Fashionable Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

6.
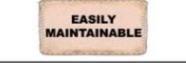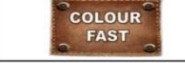
Polo		Truworths Man	
Earth Tones		Bright Colours	
Active/Sports-Wear	**VS**	Casual Styles	
Combination		Made in China	
Well Made		Colour Fast	
Value for Many Image		Prestige Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

188

Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an "**X**", where **1 is strongly prefer left option** and **9 is strongly prefer right option**.

7.

Markham		Diesel	
Markham	Bright Colours	Diesel	Seasonal Colours
	Trendy Styles		Active/Sports-Wear
	Made in South Africa		Combination
EASILY MAINTAINABLE	Easily Maintainable	COLOUR FAST	Colour Fast
QUALITY	Quality Image	FASHIONABLE	Fashionable Image

VS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

8.

DIESEL		GUESS	
Diesel	Earth Tones	Guess	Seasonal Colours
	Trendy Styles		Classic Styles
CHINA	Made in China		Combination
COLOUR FAST	Colour Fast	WELL MADE	Well Made
VALUE FOR MONEY	Value for Money Image	FASHIONABLE	Fashionable Image

VS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

9. What was your age at your last birthday?

10. Please indicate your race or Ethnicity by marking an "**X**" against the appropriate answer in the space provided.

Caucasian (White)	1
Black (African)	2
Coloured	3
Asian	4
Indian	5
Mixed race	6
Other (please specific below)	7

189

Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where **1 is strongly prefer left option** and **9 is strongly prefer right option**.

11.

DIESEL		VS	POLO	
Diesel			Polo	
Seasonal Colours			Earth Tones	
Casual Styles			Active/Sports-Wear	
Combination			Made in Europe	
Durability			Well Made	
Fashionable Image			Prestige Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

12.

Levi's		VS	DIESEL	
Levi's			Diesel	
Neutral Colours			Bright Colours	
Casual Styles			Classic Styles	
Made in South Africa			Made in Europe	
Colour Fast			Well Made	
Prestige Image			Exclusive Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

13.

DIESEL		VS	GUESS	
Diesel			Guess	
Earth Tones			Seasonal Colours	
Trendy Styles			Casual Styles	
Made in South Africa			Made in China	
Durability			Easily Maintainable	
Prestige Image			Exclusive Image	

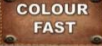| 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

190

Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where **1 is strongly prefer left option** and **9 is strongly prefer right option**.

14.

Markham		VS	GUESS	
Markham	Bright Colours		Guess	Earth Tones
	Classic Styles			Trendy Styles
	Made in South Africa			Made in Europe
WELL MADE	Well Made		DURABILITY	Durability
VALUE FOR MONEY	Value for Money Image		QUALITY	Quality Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

15.

Levi's		VS	POLO	
Levi's	Bright Colours		Polo	Neutral Colours
	Casual Styles			Trendy Styles
Made in Europe	Made in Europe		CHINA	Combination
COLOUR FAST	Colour Fast		EASILY MAINTAINABLE	Easily Maintainable
QUALITY	Quality Image		PRESTIGE	Prestige Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

16.

GUESS		VS	POLO	
Guess	Earth Tones		Polo	Seasonal Colours
	Active/Sports-Wear			Trendy Styles
	Made in South Africa		CHINA	Made in China
WELL MADE	Well Made		COLOUR FAST	Colour Fast
FASHIONABLE	Fashionable Image		QUALITY	Quality Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

191

17. From the **speciality stores below**, please choose the __ONE__ which you most frequently visit by marking an **"X"**.

Truworths Man	1
Timberland	2
Uzzi	3
Guess	4
Levis	5
Diesel	6
Markham	7
Polo	8
V+King	9
Other (Please specify below)	10

v17 [ ]

Opinion on shopping at Speciality Stores

Keeping the **above speciality store choice** in mind, please __rate the level of agreement__ with the following statement, with 1 indicating that you very strongly disagree with the statement and 6 indicating that you very strongly agree with the statement. (Draw) a circle around the number, **in the shaded box**, which is applicable to your answer.

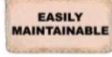|	The speciality store which I have chosen is my favourite because...	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree		
18	I think they offer value for money.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v18	
19	People notice when you buy the most expensive brand of clothing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v19	
20	I can buy my favourite brands from there, regardless of price.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v20	
21	I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v21	
22	Buying a high priced brand makes me feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v22	
23	They offer my usual brand which I like to stick with as it saves me time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v23	
24	Buying the most expensive brand of clothing makes me feel classy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v24	
25	The brands they carry are in line with my lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v25	
26	I can tell the quality of the clothing just by looking at the price.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v26	
27	I enjoy the prestige of buying a high priced brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v27	
28	They offer brands that have a good reputation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v28	
29	They offer my choice of brand that I largely base on price.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v29	
30	The brands from these stores say something about me as a person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v30	
31	The price of their clothing is high which means it is better quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v31	
32	The brands from these stores communicate a satisfying image or status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v32	
33	Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v33	
34	It says something to people when you buy the high priced version of a product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v34	
35	I think others make judgments about me by the kinds of products and brands I buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v35	
36	I purchase the most expensive brand of a product just because I know other people will notice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	v36	

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Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where <u>**1 is strongly prefer left option**</u> and <u>**9 is strongly prefer right option**</u>.

37.

Polo		Levi's	
Neutral Colours	VS	Seasonal Colours	
Active/Sports-Wear		Trendy Styles	
Made in Europe		Made in China	
Colour Fast		Well Made	
Fashionable Image		Prestige Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

38.

Guess		Truworths Man	
Bright Colours	VS	Seasonal Colours	
Trendy Styles		Classic Styles	
Made in China		Made in Europe	
Well Made		Easily Maintainable	
Exclusive Image		Prestige Image	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

39.

Levi's		Diesel	
Earth Tones	VS	Neutral Colours	
Classic Styles		Active/Sports-Wear	
Made in China		Made in South Africa	
Easily Maintainable		Well Made	
Fashionable Image		Prestige Image	

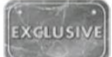| 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

193

Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where <u>1 is strongly prefer left option</u> and <u>9 is strongly prefer right option</u>.

40.

	Polo	VS		Truworths Man
	Bright Colours			Neutral Colours
	Classic Styles			Casual Styles
	Made in China			Made in Europe
	Colour Fast			Easily Maintainable
	Prestige Image			Value for Money Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

41.
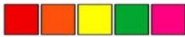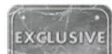
	Truworths Man	VS		Diesel
	Neutral Colours			Earth Tones
	Trendy Styles			Casual Styles
	Made in China			Made in South Africa
	Well Made			Easily Maintainable
	Value for Money Image			Exclusive Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

42.

	Truworths Man	VS		Levi's
	Bright Colours			Neutral Colours
	Active/Sports-Wear			Classic Styles
	Made in China			Made in Europe
	Durability			Colour Fast
	Fashionable Image			Exclusive Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

194

Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where **1 is strongly prefer left option** and **9 is strongly prefer right option**.

43.

Markham	Levi's
Earth Tones	Neutral Colours
Casual Styles	Classic Styles
Combination	Made in South Africa
Colour Fast	Durability
Prestige Image	Quality Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

44.

v44

Polo	Markham
Neutral Colours	Seasonal Colours
Casual Styles	Trendy Styles
Combination	Made in Europe
Well Made	Colour Fast
Quality Image	Fashionable Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Please indicate the importance of the following **fit criteria** when evaluating speciality stores' product assortment. (Draw) a circle around the appropriate answer in the **shaded box**.

	FIT CRITERIA	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Less important	Unimportant		
45	Shirt neck fits comfortably without gaping (being too loose)	5	4	3	2	1	v45	
46	The shoulders and chest of jackets and other upper body garments fit smoothly and comfortably, sleeve length is appropriate for arm length	5	4	3	2	1	v46	
47	In terms of both formal and casual trousers, the waist falls at natural waist or desired waist level	5	4	3	2	1	v47	
48	The pants inseam measurement is correct (the seam of a trouser leg that runs from the crotch down to the bottom of the leg)	5	4	3	2	1	v48	
49	Size of figure corresponds with label size	5	4	3	2	1	v49	
50	Good overall fit	5	4	3	2	1	v50	
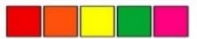
195

Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where <u>1 is strongly prefer left option</u> and <u>9 is strongly prefer right option</u>.

51.

	v51	

DIESEL	Diesel		Markham	Markham
	Neutral Colours			Bright Colours
	Classic Styles	**VS**		Active/Sports-Wear
	Made in Europe			Made in South Africa
WELL MADE	Well Made		DURABILITY	Durability
FASHIONABLE	Fashionable Image		VALUE FOR MONEY	Value for Money Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

52.

	v52	
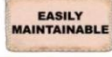
GUESS	Guess		TRUWORTHS MAN	Truworths Man
	Seasonal Colours			Earth Tones
	Trendy Styles	**VS**		Active/Sports-Wear
	Made in Europe			Combination
EASILY MAINTAINABLE	Easily Maintainable		COLOUR FAST	Colour Fast
VALUE FOR MONEY	Value for Money Image		EXCLUSIVE	Exclusive Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

53.

	v53	

TRUWORTHS MAN	Truworths Man		POLO	Polo
	Seasonal Colours			Neutral Colours
	Active/Sports-Wear	**VS**		Casual Styles
	Combination			Made in China
EASILY MAINTAINABLE	Easily Maintainable		DURABILITY	Durability
QUALITY	Quality Image		FASHIONABLE	Fashionable Image

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

196

Please consider each pair of **ASSORTMENT OFFERINGS** below and indicate your preference by marking an **"X"**, where <u>1 is strongly prefer left option</u> and <u>9 is strongly prefer right option</u>.

54.

v54 [ ]

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

55.

v55 [ ]

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

56. Please indicate your approximate **total monthly INCOME before deductions** by marking an **"X"** next to the appropriate answer.

v56 [ ]

Less than R10 000	1
Between R10 001-R15 000	2
Between R15 001-R20 000	3
Between R20 001-R25 000	4
Between R25 001-R30 000	5
Between R30 001-R35 000	6
Between R35 001-R40 000	7
Between R40 001-R45 000	8
Between R45 001-R50 000	9
More than R50 001	10

57. Where do you reside? Please specify the suburb and city.

v57 [ ]

[ ]

As a token of my appreciation, there will be a lucky draw on **30 April 2014** where you can win a R500 gift voucher. If you wish to enter the lucky draw, please enter your cell number ONLY into the space provided.

[ ]

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ADDENDUM B: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Construct	Items	n	Strongly Agree 5	Very Strongly Agree 6	Total % of importance	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's alpha	Overall Mean	Overall Standard Deviation
	Prestige Sensitivity									.927	3.421	1.327
V30	The brands from these stores say something about me as a person. (Brand)	204	39	14	25.98%	0	6	3.63	1.353			
V19	People notice when you buy the most expensive brand of clothing. (Price-Prestige Sensitivity)	204	32	18	24.51%	1	6	3.57	1.354			
V22	Buying a high priced brand makes me feel good about myself. (Price- Prestige Sensitivity)	204	37	12	24.02%	1	6	3.47	1.384			
V24	Buying the most expensive brand of clothing makes me feel classy. (Price- Prestige Sensitivity)	204	30	13	21.08%	1	6	3.47	1.344			
V31	The price of their clothing is high which means it is better quality. (Price Reliance Schema)	204	28	15	21.08%	1	6	3.60	1.249			
V34	It says something to people when you buy the high priced version of a product. (Price-Prestige Sensitivity)	204	27	11	18.63%	1	6	3.53	1.245			
V26	I can tell the quality of the clothing just by looking at the price. (Price Reliance Schema)	204	32	5	18.14%	0	6	3.45	1.237			
V27	I enjoy the prestige of buying a high priced brand. (Price-Prestige Sensitivity)	204	28	9	18.14%	1	6	3.34	1.297			
V35	I think others make judgments about me by the kinds of products and brands I buy. (Brand)	204	21	14	17.16%	1	6	3.44	1.287			
V36	I purchase the most expensive brand of a product just because I know other people will notice. (Price-Prestige Sensitivity)	204	13	5	8.82%	1	6	2.71	1.302			

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Construct	Items	n	Important 4	Very Important 5	Total % of importance	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's alpha	Overall Mean	Overall Standard Deviation
Fit Criteria										.788	4.229	0.843
V50	Good overall fit	204	63	124	91.67%	1	5	4.49	.772			
V46	The shoulders and chest of jackets and other upper body garments fit smoothly and comfortably, sleeve length is appropriate for arm length	204	86	99	90.69%	2	5	4.38	.695			
V47	In terms of both formal and casual trousers, the waist falls at natural waist or desired waist level	204	94	74	82.35%	2	5	4.14	.809			
V49	Size of figure corresponds with label size	204	81	87	82.35%	1	5	4.18	.905			
V45	Shirt neck fits comfortably without gaping (being too loose)	204	89	77	81.37%	1	5	4.13	.864			
V48	The pants inseam measurement is correct (the seam of a trouser leg that runs from the crotch down to the bottom of the leg)	204	81	75	76.47%	1	5	4.05	.922			

Construct	Items	n	Strongly Agree 5	Very Strongly Agree 6	Total % of importance	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's alpha	Overall Mean	Overall Standard Deviation
	Added Value									.796	4.325	1.063
V21	I know I will get what I pay for when I purchase clothing from those stores. (Price Reliance Schema)	204	76	25	49.51%	1	6	4.49	.965			
V33	Quality is my primary concern when buying a brand. (Brand)	204	55	44	48.53%	1	6	4.55	1.032			
V28	They offer brands that have a good reputation. (Brand)	204	71	26	47.55%	0	6	4.48	.949			
V18	I think they offer value for money. (Price Reliance Schema)	204	52	30	40.20%	1	6	4.36	1.057			
V25	The brands they carry are in line with my lifestyle. (Brand)	204	52	27	38.73%	1	6	4.39	.927			
V23	They offer my usual brand which I like to stick with as it saves me time. (Brand)	204	52	26	38.24%	1	6	4.17	1.167			
V20	I can buy my favourite brands from there, regardless of price. (Brand)	204	35	17	25.49%	1	6	3.84	1.155			

200