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

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Thesis
PhD Cons Sc (Clothing Management)

Supervisor: Prof HM de Klerk

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

by

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

Although studies concerning the Internet as new shopping environment and the Internet consumer are on the increase, only a few studies have been specifically aimed at the problems that online apparel consumers encounter regarding the disadvantages of not being able to actually see, touch / handle or try on the garment before making the decision to buy (Beck, 2002; Fiore & Jin, 2003, Sasaki, Ikeda & Shimizu, 2004).
A need also exists for empirical research on the South African Internet apparel consumer as, with one exception (Jacobs, 2003), the studies referred to were planned and executed in America, Asia and, to a lesser extent, in a European context. Another important issue in the South African context is that very little textile information is supplied in any retail environment. Consumers often have only a very limited textile knowledge, which is usually based on experience. By developing and implementing a consumer guide, consumers could be educated to demand more accurate and informative textile labelling to help them when making purchase decisions.

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

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

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

From the results it is apparent that South African career women lack general textile knowledge and seldom have the ability to relate physical fibre and fabric properties to performance properties. They therefore often act on their emotions.
during apparel assessment and purchasing. The results underline the importance of supplying textile information to facilitate decision-making. Results from the final phase of the study indicate that by supplying information the online consumer is able to make more confident decisions.

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

**DIE ONTWIKKELING VAN ‘N AANLYN GIDS VIR DIE BEOORDELING VAN KLEDINGTEKSTIELKWALITEIT**

deur

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

Alhoewel studies wat handel oor die Internet as nuwe koopomgewing en die Internetverbruiker aan die toeneem is, is slegs enkele studies gerig op die probleem wat aanlyn kledingverbruikers ondervind weens die feit dat die kledingstuk nie werklik gesien, aangeraak of aangepas kan word voor die aankoopbesluit geneem word nie (Beck, 2002; Fiore & Jin, 2003, Sasaki, Ikeda & Shimizu, 2004).
Daar bestaan ook 'n behoefte aan empiriese navorsing oor Suid-Afrikaanse Internet kledingverbruikers, aangesien die studies, op een uitsondering na (Jacobs, 2003), in die VSA, Asië en, tot 'n mindere mate, in Europa beplan en uitgevoer is. Nog 'n belangrike aspek in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks is dat baie min tekstielinligting in enige kleinhandelomgewing aan die verbruiker verskaf word. Verbruikers het dikwels 'n gebrekkige tekstielkennis en die beperkte kennis wat sommige wel het, is dikwels op ondervinding baseer. Die ontwikkeling en implementering van 'n verbruikersgids kan 'n bydrae maak tot die opvoeding van verbruikers om meer eise te stel vir akkurate en omvattende tekstieletikettering om hulle te help met die besluitnemings-proses.

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

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

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

Die resultate toon dat Suid-Afrikaanse beroepsvroue 'n gebrek het aan algemene tekstielkennis en selde die vermoë besit om die verband tussen die fisiese vesel- en kleedstoefeienskappe met die gedragseienskappe in verband te bring. Hulle steun op
hul emosies tydens die beoordeling en aankoop van kledingprodukte. Die resultate onderstreep die belangrikheid van die verskaffing van tekstielinligting om besluitneming te fasiliteer. Die resultate van die finale fase dui daarop dat, indien voldoende inligting aan die aanlyn verbruiker verskaf word, hulle met meer selfvertroue besluite kan neem.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.................................................................................................................. i
SUMMARY........................................................................................................................................ ii
SAMEVATTING............................................................................................................................... v
LIST OF FIGURES.............................................................................................................................. xv
LIST OF TABLES............................................................................................................................... xvii

CHAPTER 1: THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE......................................................................................... 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 1

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND................................................................................................... 3
1.2.1 The Internet as new shopping environment........................................................................... 3
1.2.2 Internet consumer behaviour and decision-making............................................................. 4
1.2.3 The online apparel consumer ............................................................................................... 5
1.2.3.1 The apparel consumer’s assessment of quality and specific problems encountered by online apparel consumers.................................................. 7
1.2.4 The interactivity of the Internet and the importance of online interactive decision aids................................................................................................................... 8
1.2.5 The expected significance of the study................................................................................ 9

1.3 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AND OBJECTIVES ........................................... 11
1.3.1 The conceptual framework.................................................................................................... 11
1.3.2 The problem statement......................................................................................................... 13
1.3.3 Objectives and sub-objectives for the study......................................................................... 14
1.3.3.1 Objective 1..................................................................................................................... 14
1.3.3.2 Objective 2 ................................................................................................................... 15
1.3.3.3 Objective 3 ................................................................................................................... 15
1.4 THE PRESENTATION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY .......... 15

CHAPTER 2: THE INTERNET, INTERNET CONSUMER AND INTERACTIVE POSSIBILITIES OF THE INTERNET .......... 18

2.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 18

2.2 THE INTERNET AS NEW SHOPPING ENVIRONMENT .......... 19

2.3 THE INTERNET SHOPPER: EXPECTATIONS, CONCERNS, BEHAVIOUR, AND DECISION-MAKING .......... 24

2.3.1 Internet consumers’ expectations and concerns .......... 24

2.3.2 Internet consumer behaviour, decision-making and identified shopping orientations .......... 25

2.3.2.1 The online apparel consumer and expected Internet features .......... 31

2.3.2.2 The apparel consumer’s assessment of quality and specific problems encountered by online apparel textile consumers .......... 35

2.4 THE BENEFIT OF INTERACTIVE AIDS AND IMAGES .......... 42

2.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY ................................................................. 46

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE FIRST PHASE OF THE STUDY .......... 49

3.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 49

3.2 THE CHOSEN CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH PHASES, AND OBJECTIVES .......... 51

3.2.1 Objective 1 ......................................................................................................................... 52

3.2.2 Objective 2 ......................................................................................................................... 53

3.2.3 Objective 3 ......................................................................................................................... 53
3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY AND RESEARCH STYLE CHOSEN FOR THIS STUDY

3.4 CHOICE OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLES FOR PHASE ONE

3.4.1 The units of analysis for the first phase of the study

3.4.2 Sample selection for the first phase of the study

3.5 THE CHOICE, DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION OF THE DATA COLLECTING TECHNIQUE

3.5.1 Structured questionnaire (first phase of the study)

3.5.2 Data collecting procedures for phase one

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

3.6.1 Coding and capturing the data obtained in phase one

3.6.2 Operationalisation

3.7 QUALITY OF THE DATA

3.7.1 Validity

3.7.2 Reliability

3.7.3 Representative sampling

3.7 DATA PRESENTATION

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF PHASE ONE OF THE STUDY

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

4.2 RESULTS RELATING TO SUB-OBJECTIVES

4.2.1 Formal physical features that adult career women use in their assessment of apparel textile quality when purchasing formal and casual daywear (Sub-objective 1)
4.2.1.1 Relatedness of formal, physical features of textiles and performance aspects when assessing quality during the purchasing process (Sub-objective 1.1) ................................................................. 73
4.2.1.2 The importance of label information (Sub-objective 1.2) ................. 97
4.2.2 Consumers’ experience with and willingness to participate in distance shopping (Important for Objective 2) ............................................. 102
4.2.3 Other information obtained from the questionnaire .......................... 105

4.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE STUDY ................................................................. 106
4.3.1 Introduction .................................................................................. 106
4.3.2 The formal physical features that adult career women use in their assessment of apparel textile quality when purchasing formal and casual daywear (Sub-objective 1) ....................................................... 107
4.3.2.1 The relationship of formal, physical features of textiles and performance aspects when assessing quality (Sub-objective 1.1) .. 108
4.3.2.2 The use of labels and type of information utilised in the decision-making process (Sub-objective 1.2) ................................................. 116
4.3.3 Textile information that would be helpful for decision-making (Important for Objective 2: The development of a textile quality assessment guide) ................................................................. 117
4.3.4 Other information obtained from the questionnaire ......................... 117

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY FOR THE SECOND AND THE FINAL PHASES OF THE STUDY ......................................................... 119

5.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEXTILE ASSESSMENT GUIDE AND MOCK WEB SITE (Second phase of the study) ............... 119

5.2 CHOICE OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE FOR PHASE THREE .... 123
5.2.1 Sample selection for the third phase of the study .......................... 123
5.3 THE CHOICE, DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION OF DATA COLLECTING TECHNIQUES ......................................................... 125
5.3.1 Data collecting technique .......................................................... 125
5.3.2 The structured questionnaire for the third phase of the study ....... 126
5.3.3 Data collecting procedures for phase three .............................. 128

5.4 DATA ANALYSIS ........................................................................ 129
5.4.1 Coding and capturing the data obtained in the final phase of the study ................................................................. 129
5.4.2 Operationalisation ................................................................. 129

5.5 QUALITY OF DATA ..................................................................... 132
5.5.1 Validity ............................................................................. 132
5.5.2 Reliability ......................................................................... 133
5.5.3 Representative sampling ...................................................... 134

5.6 DATA PRESENTATION ................................................................. 134

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINAL PHASE OF THE STUDY ........................................... 135

6.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................ 135

6.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE THIRD PHASE OF THE RESEARCH ................................................................ 135
6.2.1 Demographic information ................................................... 135
6.2.2 Comparison of the content of the website containing the textile guide and the different South African websites used in this study ....... 137

6.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE THIRD PHASE OF THE STUDY ................................................................. 148
6.3.1 Introduction ......................................................................... 148
6.3.2 Interpretation of the results related to the content of the website containing the textile quality assessment guide ................. 148
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, EVALUATION, CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.2 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE DIFFERENT PHASES

7.2.1 Conclusions regarding the use of formal physical textile features in the assessment of quality and career women’s ability to relate these features to performance when making purchase decisions

7.2.2 Conclusions regarding the success of the guide in terms of facilitating decision-making when purchasing garments online

7.3 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

7.3.1 Quantitative research style

7.3.1.1 Data collecting methods

7.3.1.2 Sample selection

7.3.1.3 Data analysis

7.3.2 Quality of the data

7.3.2.1 Validity

7.3.2.2 Reliability

7.3.3 Achievement of sub-objectives and specific aims

7.4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO EXISTING THEORY

7.4.1 Consumer decision-making and apparel purchasing behaviour

7.4.2 The online apparel consumers and specific problems they encounter

7.4.3 Apparel retailing / marketing on the Internet

7.5 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES
7.5.1  Recommendations with regard to the apparel industry and apparel retailers in South Africa .......................................................... 173
7.5.2  Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research ... 175

REFERENCES ....................................................................................... 177

APPENDIX 1 ..................................................................................... 194
A.   Cover letter (Phase 1) .............................................................. 195
B.   Questionnaire (Phase 1) .......................................................... 196
C.   Samples (Assessed in Section D of questionnaire) .................... 205

APPENDIX 2 ..................................................................................... 208
A.   Cover letter (Phase 3) .............................................................. 209
B.   CD ......................................................................................... 210
   Instructions for use of CD .......................................................... 211
C.   Questionnaire (Phase 3) .......................................................... 212

APPENDIX 3 ..................................................................................... 214
A.   Original coding of the results of the third phase of the study ....... 215
B.   Recoded results of the third phase of the study ......................... 217
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: SCHEMATIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS STUDY

FIGURE 2: THE DIMENSIONS OF TEXTILE PRODUCT QUALITY

FIGURE 3: THE INTRINSIC QUALITY ATTRIBUTES THAT PLAY A ROLE IN CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ONLINE TEXTILE GUIDE

FIGURE 4: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PHASES FOR THIS STUDY

FIGURE 5: IMPORTANCE OF CUES USED AS QUALITY INDICATORS

FIGURE 6: IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMANCE FEATURES WHEN PURCHASING FORMAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 7: THE IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMANCE FEATURES WHEN PURCHASING CASUAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 8: DURABILITY INDICATORS USED WHEN PURCHASING FORMAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 9: DURABILITY INDICATORS USED WHEN PURCHASING CASUAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 10: COMFORT INDICATORS WHEN PURCHASING FORMAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 11: COMFORT INDICATORS WHEN PURCHASING CASUAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 12: EASY-CARE INDICATORS WHEN PURCHASING FORMAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 13: EASY-CARE INDICATORS WHEN PURCHASING CASUAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 14: IMPORTANCE OF LABEL INFORMATION WHEN PURCHASING FORMAL DAYWEAR

FIGURE 15: IMPORTANCE OF LABEL INFORMATION WHEN PURCHASING CASUAL DAYWEAR
# List of Tables

| Table I: | The structure of the questionnaire (First phase) | 58 |
| Table II: | Operationalisation: Objectives and sub-objectives, relative questions, and statistical methods | 65 |
| Table III: | Ages of respondents (First phase) | 70 |
| Table IV: | Education level of respondents (First phase) | 70 |
| Table V: | Intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues used when purchasing garments | 71 |
| Table VI a: | The importance of performance features when purchasing formal day or office wear | 73 |
| Table VI b: | The importance of performance features when purchasing casual wear | 74 |
| Table VII a: | Indicators of durability when buying formal day or office wear | 75 |
| Table VII b: | Indicators of durability when buying casual wear | 76 |
| Table VIII a: | Indicators of comfort when buying formal day or office wear | 78 |
| Table VIII b: | Indicators of comfort when buying casual wear | 79 |
| Table IX a: | Indicators of easy-care when buying formal day or office wear | 80 |
| Table IX b: | Indicators of easy-care when buying casual wear | 82 |
| Table X a: | The durability rating of medium weight woven fabrics | 84 |
| Table X b: | The durability rating of light weight woven fabrics | 85 |
| Table X c: | The durability rating of knitted fabrics | 85 |
TABLE XI a: THE COMFORT RATING OF MEDIUM WEIGHT WOVEN FABRICS

TABLE XI b: THE COMFORT RATING OF LIGHT WEIGHT WOVEN FABRICS

TABLE XI c: THE COMFORT RATING OF KNITTED FABRICS

TABLE XII a: THE EASE OF CARE RATING OF MEDIUM WEIGHT WOVEN FABRICS

TABLE XII b: THE EASE OF CARE RATING OF LIGHT WEIGHT WOVEN FABRICS

TABLE XII c: THE EASE OF CARE RATING OF KNITTED FABRICS

TABLE XIII a: MOST PREFERRED FABRIC FOR A SUIT FOR FORMAL DAYWEAR AND REASONS FOR CHOICE

TABLE XIII b: MOST PREFERRED FABRIC FOR A BLOUSE, SHIRT OR TOP FOR FORMAL DAYWEAR AND REASONS FOR CHOICE

TABLE XIII c: MOST PREFERRED FABRIC FOR A SKIRT OR SLACKS FOR CASUAL WEAR AND REASONS FOR CHOICE

TABLE XIII d: MOST PREFERRED FABRIC FOR A BLOUSE, SHIRT OR TOP FOR CASUAL WEAR AND REASONS FOR CHOICE

TABLE XIII e: MOST PREFERRED FABRIC FOR A JACKET FOR CASUAL WEAR AND REASONS FOR CHOICE

TABLE XIV: THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH LABEL INFORMATION IS USED

TABLE XV a: THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF LABEL INFORMATION WHEN PURCHASING FORMAL DAY OR OFFICE WEAR

TABLE XV b: THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF LABEL INFORMATION WHEN PURCHASING CASUAL WEAR

TABLE XV c: THE IMPORTANCE OF FIBRE CONTENT TO CONSUMERS

TABLE XVI: PRODUCT INFORMATION THAT WOULD INDUCE CONSUMERS TO DO DISTANCE SHOPPING

TABLE XVII a: PRICE RANGES RESPONDENTS WERE WILLING TO PAY FOR FORMAL DAY OR OFFICE WEAR

TABLE XVII b: PRICE RANGES RESPONDENTS WERE WILLING TO PAY FOR CASUAL WEAR
| TABLE XVIII: THE STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE (Third phase) | 126 |
| TABLE XIX: OPERATIONALISATION: OBJECTIVE, RELATIVE QUESTIONS, AND STATISTICAL METHODS | 131 |
| TABLE XX: AGES OF RESPONDENTS (Third phase) | 135 |
| TABLE XXI: EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS (Third phase) | 136 |
| TABLE XXII: LENGTH OF INTERNET USE | 136 |
| TABLE XXIII: FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE | 136 |
| TABLE XXIV: FREQUENCY OF ONLINE APPAREL PURCHASING | 137 |
| TABLE XXV: INTERNAL RELIABILITY OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE DIFFERENT WEBSITES | 138 |
| TABLE XXVI: COMPARISON OF THE CONTENT OF THE WEBSITE CONTAINING THE TEXTILE GUIDE AND THE DIFFERENT SOUTH AFRICAN WEBSITES | 139 |
| TABLE XXVII: COMPARISON OF CONTENT OF WEBSITE WITH TEXTILE GUIDE AND VARIOUS SOUTH AFRICAN WEBSITES | 145 |
| TABLE XXVIII: DESIGN, TECHNICAL ELEMENTS AND CREDIBILITY OF THE DIFFERENT WEBSITES | 146 |