

**An exploration of pupils' and parents' dissatisfaction with
school uniforms in selected secondary schools in Botswana**

by

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ABSTRACT



Causes for parents' and pupils' apparent dissatisfaction with the school uniforms in two selected secondary schools in Botswana, namely Ledumang and Gabarone Secondary Schools were investigated.

In Botswana, school uniforms are compulsory in all government secondary schools (Internet, Ledumang Senior Secondary School:1). In the year 2003, approximately 160,690 pupils attended secondary schools in Botswana in the 232 secondary schools at the time (Internet, Ministry of Education:1; National Development Plan 9, 2003:287, 288). Weitzel (2004:13) defines a *school uniform policy* as a policy that states what the pupils must wear and a *school dress code policy* as a standard of "aesthetic appearance" stating what the pupils are not permitted to wear while at school.

It is general practice for the secondary school uniforms to be chosen by the Parents' Teachers Associations (PTA) or School Board of Governors at a specific school (Corbin, 1999:1; Botswana Education Act, 1967:4). School uniforms are currently supplied by various retailers such as K.M. Dressmaking in the Bontleng mall in Gaborone; Woolworths, Kopano Stores, Cash Bazaar, Ackermans, and Pep Stores as well Taku-Taku that stock the black flat shoes and socks. Parents or guardians are usually advised where to buy the school uniforms.

At present there is free trade and lack of quality standards for textiles in Botswana: no quality assurance exists for school uniforms. As at the time of this research, the BOBS (Botswana Buro of Standards) draft was still at an embryonic stage. School uniform manufacturers therefore due to free trade, may buy any fabric to produce uniforms as opposed to definite SABS standards that exist for school uniforms in the Republic of South Africa. The concern then is that of consumers who already experience financial constraints may be negatively affected by school uniforms of inferior quality. Inferior quality may contribute to frequent requests for replacement of school uniforms by needy pupils. Apart from problems that may be related to the use of textiles of inferior quality (Kincade, Giddings & Chen-Yu, 1998:84), dissatisfaction with school uniforms may be caused by the psychological meanings attached to clothes (Dittmar & Cox, 1995:239), for example objections to the style and color of school uniforms as well as a psychological objection to prescribed dress and limited choice in general.

Due to personal experience as a teacher and a notion that dissatisfaction with school uniforms exists, it seemed necessary to investigate parents' and pupils (girls) satisfaction/dissatisfaction with girls' school uniforms to identify existing problems. This will enable the researcher to suggest amendments to improve the situation.

Data was collected through structured questionnaires. The respective Parent Teacher Associations (PTA's) were involved (n=10). to complete a questionnaire that contained questions pertaining to quality standards used, school uniform selection procedures and general monitoring processes. PTA members were also asked to comment on pupils' expectations and satisfaction with school uniforms. Parents/guardians and pupils in forms four and five were recruited for participation (n=105): they filled in a second questionnaire jointly. Questions evolved around their buyer behavior regarding school uniforms; their use of extrinsic and intrinsic quality cues to judge the quality of garments; expectations regarding the durability and performance of the school uniforms and problems experienced with school uniforms. The questionnaires primarily provided quantitative data that was analyzed through descriptive statistics. A few open questions were included to allow respondents to express their views about existing uniforms without much limitation and to provide opportunity for suggestions to improve problem surrounding their school uniforms.

The results showed that the majority of parents and pupils always used certain intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues during the pre purchase evaluation of school uniforms. Intrinsic cues included aspects relevant to fit, while extrinsic factors referred to the appearance and texture of the fabric, the service of the supplier, neatness of construction and the functioning of the fasteners. Although up to 50% of the respondents indicated that they always consulted the labels of school uniforms for specific information (specifically colorfastness, care instructions, brand) this information was unfortunately not always present. Responses indicated that extrinsic cues were more often used as an indication of quality than intrinsic cues. Dissatisfaction with school uniforms was attributed to problems that relate to textile of inferior quality, poorly constructed garments as well as fit problems: color fading, variation in the color at point of purchase, loose buttons and unfinished seams were reported. The fact that the majority had to do some repairs to uniforms within the first six months, indicate that urgent measures are required to deliberate and set definite quality standards for the manufacturers and suppliers. In terms of the style of school uniforms, respondents complained that uniforms were not suitable for winter, that they would like some leniency, i.e. having a choice of what to wear (skirts or trousers or dresses). Responses indicated that respondents' expectations regarding how long school uniforms should last, were not unrealistic.

PTA members of both schools were unfortunately not aware of the non-existence of standards for school uniforms. Nor were they aware of the problems that parents and pupils experienced on a daily basis. Although parents' view regarding the suitability of the school uniforms did not coincide with the views of their daughters, certain problems can be overcome through well-formulated quality standards and some lenience in terms of what pupils are allowed to wear. Results were discussed within the systems perspective, which clearly indicated that although parents and pupils were not totally dissatisfied with school uniforms, certain elements of the school uniforms required urgent improvement. Collaboration with the SA Buro of Standards that already has quality standards for school wear in place, was suggested



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

1.1 BACKGROUND

In Botswana, school uniforms are compulsory in all government secondary schools (Internet, Ledumang Senior Secondary School:1). It is therefore a compulsory purchase that parents and guardians must make for the period the child is at secondary school. Weitzel (2004:13) defines a *school uniform policy* as a policy that states what the pupils must wear and a *school dress code policy* as a standard of “aesthetic appearance” stating what the pupils are not permitted to wear while at school. In the year 2003, approximately 160,690 pupils attended secondary schools in Botswana in the 232 secondary schools at the time (Internet, Ministry of Education:1; National Development Plan 9, 2003:287, 288). In general, the age of pupils at secondary schools ranges from fourteen (14) to twenty (20) years (Botswana Education Act, 1967:44).

It is general practice for the secondary school uniforms to be chosen by the Parents’ Teachers Associations (PTA) or School Board of Governors at a specific school (Corbin, 1999:1; Botswana Education Act, 1967:4). These bodies are composed of school administrators, teachers and parents of children who attend the school. Each school body chooses its own style, color and the elements of the uniform. Ledumang Senior Secondary School’s uniform for girls consists of a turquoise tunic and skirt, navy pullover with turquoise stripes, white socks, black flat shoes and a school tie (Internet, Ledumang Senior Secondary School:1). The common styles of dresses are princess line or a bodice joined to a six-panel flare skirt. The Parents Teachers Association (PTA) also selects the supplier of school uniforms through a selective tender process. Uniforms of Ledumang Senior Secondary School are, for example, supplied by K.M. Dressmaking in the Bontleng mall in Gaborone (Internet, Ledumang Senior Secondary School:1). Chain Stores like Woolworths, Kopano Stores, Cash Bazaar, Ackermans, and Pep stores occasionally supply certain parts of the school uniform like pants and skirts, while Taku-Taku often stock the black flat shoes and socks. According to Thari (2006:1) of Botswana Press Agency, Cash Bazaar (CB stores), Pep Stores and Ackermans realized high sales of school uniforms in December 2005 and January 2006.

Parents or guardians are usually advised where to buy the school uniforms. Parents and guardians (destitute and orphan guardians) who cannot afford to buy the school uniforms request for assistance from local authorities. In the local authorities, the department of Social Welfare and Community Development (S&CD) purchase school uniforms for the needy children and orphans while the Remote Area Development Programme Department (RADP) provides for the Remote Area Dwellers pupils. The S&CD department replaces the uniforms after every two-year period but requests for replacement may be made anytime. Replacements may be due to poor quality, improper care or normal child growth.

At present there is free trade and lack of quality standards for textiles in Botswana: no quality assurance exists for school uniforms. As at the time of this research, the BOBS (Botswana Bureau of Standards) draft was still at an embryonic stage. School uniform manufacturers therefore due to free trade, may buy any fabric to produce uniforms as opposed to definite SABS standards that exist for school uniforms in the Republic of South Africa. The concern then is that of consumers who already experience financial constraints may be negatively affected by school uniforms of inferior quality. Inferior quality may contribute to frequent requests for replacement of school uniforms by needy pupils. Apart from problems that may be related to the use of textiles of inferior quality (Kincade, Giddings & Chen-Yu, 1998:84), dissatisfaction with school uniforms may be caused by the psychological meanings attached to clothes (Dittmar & Cox, 1995:239), for example objections to the style and color of school uniforms as well as a psychological objection to prescribed dress and limited choice in general.

Consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction manifests during product use. Kincade *et al* (1998:81) stated that “product failure during post-purchase use is an important antecedent to dissatisfaction”. Potential problems that could result in consumer dissatisfaction with school uniforms could thus be ascribed to:

- Absence inappropriate quality standards for school uniforms
- Non agreement with systems for the selection of school uniforms;
- Inappropriate /absence of labeling and consequent improper care of school uniforms;
- Unrealistic expectations of consumers due to limited textile knowledge;
- Negative associations with school uniforms due to limited choice, i.e. prescribed style, color etc;
- Lack of choice from the consumer’s point of view.

Due to personal experience as a teacher and a notion that dissatisfaction with school uniforms exists, it is necessary to investigate parents’ and pupils (girls) satisfaction/dissatisfaction with girls’ school uniforms to identify existing problems. This will enable the researcher to suggest amendments to improve the situation.

1.2. APPLICATION OF THE STUDY

An exploration of the antecedents of pupils’ and parents’ dis/satisfaction with school uniforms may be useful to:

- Guide school boards when setting or reviewing the school uniform standards
- Assist school boards and suppliers to achieve higher levels of consumer satisfaction in the future
- Consumer and Textile Professionals when educating both consumers and suppliers of school uniform about quality of textile products, labeling and care.
- Encourage the suppliers and manufacturers of school uniforms to improve their products /uniforms based on customer’s expectations
- Inform parents and pupils about the selection procedures of school uniforms
- Contribute to existing knowledge and literature of consumer behavior in Botswana



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. HISTORY OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Uniforms as a form of dress are said to communicate a silent message to the viewer. For example, uniforms represent “power and authority; social /cultural role; rank and privilege; identification and membership; loyalty and competence” (Kaiser, 1998:355; Johnson, Schofield & Yurchisin, 2002:125; Kraft, 2003:38; Marshall, Jackson, Stanley, Kefgen & Touchie-Specht, 2004:106). Furthermore, Kaiser (1998:354) maintains that clothing is a visible base for “assigning and receiving rewards in the form of compliments and group recognition; they also promote a sense of cohesiveness as a group look emerges”. According to Brunnsma (2004:3, the use of school uniforms date as far back as the year 1222 when they were used in France, Germany and England. They were influenced by the religious groups mainly to keep fashionable (at the time) silk clothes in the classrooms. It is believed the Catholic Church first introduced school uniforms in their schools, followed by private schools and later also the government and public schools (Brunnsma & Rockquemore, 1998:53; Weitzel, 2004:18). School uniforms encouraged respect for those in authority and served as a social class symbol (lower class). Later on it served to identify the educated and well off (Brunnsma, 2004:5).

In 1895, during a national conference, the role of dress in academia was defined. Requirements were set for academic ceremonial dress (Weitzel, 2004:16) and these symbolized the major and the degree of achievement. In secondary schools, the uniform identifies the specific school that is attended; also that one has successfully completed primary education. In other words, it creates an image of success “in educational pursuits and professional careers” (Marshall *et al*, 2004:103). The Department of Education in America drew a “Manual on School Uniforms” in February 1996 soon after President Clinton’s speech in which he advocated mandatory school uniforms (Brunnsma, 2004:212; Weitzel, 2004:18). Since then, an increasing number of schools are introducing school uniforms in the United States of America.

In Botswana, one can assume the school uniform policy was adopted from the British who were the colonial rulers. The Africa News reports that in Zimbabwe they “still cling to the British system of uniforms at all schools as one way of differentiating school children and pupils from various schools” (The Daily News / All Africa Global Media, 2005:1) and the same applies to Botswana.

2.2. FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Kaiser (1998:362) and Swain (2002:54) maintain that schools that have a school uniform use it to specify school identity, and to maintain order and discipline. When considering security, it is easy to identify who belongs to the school premises and who does not. School uniforms apparently also encourage pupils to learn (Hollowman, 1995:35; Brunsmas & Rockquemore, 1998:1; Cariso, Cohn, King in West, Tidwell, Bomba & Elmore, 1999:92; Stanley and Brown in Kraft, 2003:2). Besides making the pupils appear “neat and decent”, school uniforms enhance a sense of belonging and school pride. It also limits parents’ expenditure on expensive branded clothing (Internet, Ledumang Senior Secondary School:1). The school uniform “promotes peace in the classroom” as it diminishes arguments or comparison of clothing brands (Kraft, 2003:3). Over and above, the clothing is supposed to protect the wearer from the weather, enhance sexual attraction and provide pleasure from the aesthetic appearance as well as status as an “extension of self” (Barnett, Knox & McKeown, 1993:128; Hawkins, Best & Coney, 1995:522). The same may be expected from the school uniforms and may specifically contribute to dissatisfaction with school uniforms because it suppresses individuality (Kaiser, 1998:376-377)..

According to Kaiser (1998:361) organizations such as schools tend to have a context of formality; hierarchical structures and large numbers of membership that can last for an extensive period of time. The formal party plays a part in promoting goals, rules and procedures of the organization while through the hierarchical structures; the powerful may maintain their influence in the organization and even on future members. The influence later turns into a tradition which becomes valuable and eventually passed on from one generation to another. These values are often expressed through uniforms. Uniforms also differentiate organizations and become a symbol or emblem of the school. Ranks of power are also depicted through uniforms. In schools there is a practice to indicate the ranks of head girls through badges to reveal status.

2.3 QUALITY OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS

2.3.1 Quality defined

Quality of school uniforms has been criticized extensively in Botswana where there are no quality standards for school uniforms. The International Standards organisation (ISO) defines quality as “the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (Brown & Rice, 2001:37). Another definition of quality is “the extent to which the specimen provides the service characteristics that the consumer desires” (Maynes in Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995:149). In other words, the consumer’s perceived quality depends and differs according to the consumer’s desires or expectations. It has been found that at point of purchase, consumers use certain extrinsic and intrinsic quality cues such as brand name, place of origin, fabric texture, fit, garment construction methods, fiber content as indicated on the label and price to judge the quality of the garment. After purchase, during use, consumers continue to evaluate the quality of the garments (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995:150; Hines & O’Neal, 1995:227; Brown & Rice, 2001:44), e.g. based on performance and service life. Extrinsic as well as intrinsic cues can be used to evaluate the quality of apparel products (Brown & Rice, 2001:43, 48).

2.3.2 Extrinsic indicators of quality

Extrinsic cues refer to attributes of the garment that can be changed without necessarily altering the product itself (Brown & Rice, 2001:48), for example, price, image and reputation of the manufacturer or retailer, brand name, and country of origin. Extrinsic cues may strongly influence consumers' evaluation of the quality of school uniforms.

2.3.3 Intrinsic indicators of quality

Intrinsic properties are those that will affect the product when they are altered and refer to properties such as design or style, materials, construction and finishes.

In terms of the **style** of school uniforms, it is important that the style chosen must accommodate different body (figure) types as very few people have a perfect or ideal body (Pechoux & Ghosh, 2002:1; Fan, 2004:1). The clothing style, fit and size should provide both physical and psychological comfort (Li, 2001:2). The body image, which is how one perceives her/his body, contributes to self-esteem and personality development. A positive body image heightens self-esteem and contributes to successful interpersonal relationships, but a negative body image may result in low confidence (Fan, 2004:8). Research indicates that more women are satisfied with their dressed bodies than when undressed (Markee *et al* in Fan, 2004:11). Individuals thus use clothing to camouflage or hide undesirable figure attributes because dress can enhance the perception of body appearance. The same can be assumed for, and expected of school uniforms. Style has an influence in amount of ease the garment has. Design ease for example provides more comfort and allows ease or room for body movement (Yu, in Fan, Yu & Hunter, 2004:38). Body image is related to personality. Certain individuals prefer certain styles and colors because they match their personality (Pechoux & Ghosh, 2002:1). Although any uniform must suit a variety of individuals irrespective of personality, body type etc., the fact that school uniforms are sold in fashion retailers as well as the fact that school uniforms do not provide an individual to dress according to mood etc, may result in an unrealistic expectation of school uniforms and a negative evaluation.

Clothing **fit and sizing** depend on several factors such as the manufacturers sizing, body cathexis, the style /design and fashion (Fan, 2004:10). In the study by LaBat and DeLong there is a strong correlation between body cathexis and consumer satisfaction with clothing fit (Fan, 2004:11). Clothing that fits well does not create bulges or puckers, and allows maximum comfort and body movement to the wearer (Li, 2001:3; Shen & Huck in Fan, 2004:31). It has been noted that catalog and expensive clothing sizes are relatively bigger than clothing that costs less (Kinley, 2003:26). Independent retailers even have "hard-to-find sizes" that chain stores ignore (Kerrigan, 1987:2). Fan (2004:33) maintains that clothing size affects consumer satisfaction. Suppliers of school uniforms are therefore expected to have styles and sizes that fit their target market (pupils) better in order to beat their competitors and to maintain satisfied consumers (Brown & Rice, 2001:42; Li, 2001:1).

Textiles used for school uniforms must have certain properties: it should also be warm enough in winter and cool enough in summer to maintain the “right thermal environment to the body that is essential for its survival” (Barnett, *et al*, 1993:128; Li, 2001:3). **Fabric finishes** used for school uniforms include stain-release finishes such as Teflon-French shield stain protector, wrinkle-resistance and micro sanding for increased softness.

2.4 PROBLEMS WITH SCHOOL UNIFORMS

2.4.1 Introduction

Problems with the quality of school uniforms can be related to both extrinsic and intrinsic cues and can be attributed to inferior quality and/or improper maintenance and care.

A study performed by Hjorth-Anderson and Sproles (in Kincade *et al*, 1998:81), revealed that some of the products that are sold to consumers often “fail to meet consumers’ quality expectations in post-purchase use”, due to poor quality products and improper labeling. Among textile products, common quality problems either were attributed to manufacturing processes or incorrect labeling, or to inadequate labeling and poor standards (Kincade *et al*, 1998:81; Botswana Consumer Protection Office Report, 2005:2). Problems such as color changes; color bleeding, shrinkage, twisting and holes in the fabrics often cause dissatisfaction with textile products (Kincade *et al*, 1998:84). Research conducted in Northern Ireland by Barnett *et al* (1993:128) regarding the quality of the school uniforms covered durability, appearance retention, washability and comfort as the dimensions of quality required parents and students to evaluate the school blazers, the skirts, the blouses and the trousers. Results showed that the garments lost their appearance and wore out quickly (Barnett *et al*, 1993:128). Kadolph (1998:28) maintains that cleaning of garments, that is, the way the textile products are handled (improper care) can influence the durability and can accelerate its wearing out (Makaba, 2001:8). Dissatisfaction with school uniform can thus also be attributed to improper care rather than poor quality *per se*.

2.4.2 Problems with quality standards for school uniforms

2.4.2.1 Neglect of quality standards in Botswana

The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS 1444) specifies fabrics for school wear in the RSA as polyester/viscose (50/50), as well as the weave type: plain or twill or cord; breaking strength of plain woven fabric; seam properties; yarn ply; resistance to pilling; dimensional changes during washing; colorfastness to washing; perspiration, rubbing and light resistance. The producer/supplier that is selected by the school board must also provide samples of textiles for school uniforms that meet specific standards and specifications (SABS 1444). In Botswana, the Botswana Bureau of Standards (BOBS) has not yet finalized standards for textiles, but meanwhile the schools could (if they wanted to), use SABS standards, just like the department of Supplies in Botswana uses SABS standards to produce uniforms for the Botswana Police Force and Botswana Defense Force.

2.4.2.2 Expectations of the PTA of quality of school uniforms

The schools specify their school uniforms through management routines. The school head sees to it that the school board or PTA chooses a school uniform as part of day-to-day management duties (Botswana Education Act, 1967:36; Barnett *et al*, 1993:120). The school board sets the standards for the school uniforms as well as the theme that will represent/reflect the image of the school (White, 2001:1). It also selects the style, colors and ultimately the elements that the girls' schools uniforms will be composed of, e.g. dress, skirt, pants, blouses and so forth. Therefore it may be assumed that the PTA takes responsibility for issues surrounding school uniforms.

In the United States of America, the Department of Education stipulates in their Manual on School Uniforms that for the policy to be successful, the following steps must be taken (Lumsden, 2001:3):

- “Get the parents involved from the beginning
- Protect students' religious expression
- Protect students other rights of expression
- Do not require students to wear a message
- Assist families that need financial help”.

The manufacturer or supplier that is selected by the PTA must supply the school uniform per their standards, to coincide with the image of the school to satisfy both parents and pupils. The school uniform is expected to be always available for parents and pupils to buy, also at an affordable price. It then becomes the duty of the PTA to monitor and enforce the standards within which the school uniforms must be supplied.

2.4.2.3 Expectations of parents and pupils on quality of school uniforms

Parents and pupils are the buyers and end users of school uniforms. The parents finance school uniforms purchases and determine where to buy it as well as information or quality cues to consider before buying including clothing brands (Assael, 1997:10, 12; Sheth, Mittal & Newman, 1999:586; Lachance, Beaudoin & Robitaille, 2003:47). Families share information regarding clothing values and experiences. Within the systems approach, one should acknowledge the expectations of parents as well as expectations of the pupils because it is inevitable that the expectations and eventual satisfaction with school uniforms would result from their interactive interpretations of the performance of school uniforms. It is assumed that parents and pupils expect that school uniforms would be of good quality, affordable, accessible, durable and easy to maintain and care for.

Regarding cost and accessibility, school uniforms are expected to be affordable and accessible. For example, some retailers/suppliers offer schools “a volume discount” if they are selected and recommended as the principal suppliers (Zirkel, 1998:1). Often, parents initiate a second hand shop within the school where uniforms can be purchased at a lower price (Barnett *et al*, 1993:128).

Durability is of utmost importance for school wear. Kincade *et al*, (1998:84) define durability as “a measure of product life cycle length”. Silver in Corbin (1999:4) notes that parents expect school wear to be durable and to

last for the whole year or even beyond (Brown & Rice, 2001:46). In some instances retailers even supply pants of which the knees are reinforced with two layers of fabric to make them more durable and all stress points are reinforced (Corbin, 1999:4). Durability also involves the type and quality of fasteners, facings, seams, stitching threads as well as the fabric. During use consumers consider or perceive quality as durability (long wearing) but also the ease of care and ability to maintain color, size and shape over time (Hines & O'Neal, 1995:230; Brown & Rice, 2001:45). Maintenance inevitably affects appearance retention of school uniforms.

2.5. CONSUMERS' USE OF INFORMATION AND EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Literature shows that, when purchasing clothing, consumers consider fashion styles; color; brand, country of origin, fiber content from the label, garment details, comfort, quality, fit and price before purchasing (Brown & Rice, 2001:48; Chen-Yu *et al*, 2001:63). Product labels are important as they inform consumers about product quality, performance and care (Fianu & Harrison-Arthur, 1997:98; Mangleburg, Grewal & Bristol, 1997:256). Care labels should be formulated according to fibre content, which should also be indicated on the label tag (SABS 0153; ISO 9000). Consumers with limited textile knowledge and those with limited experience may consider price as an indicator of quality (Brown & Rice, 2001:48; Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:442). Mangleburg *et al* (1997:277) indicate that teenage females are inclined to use labels more often than males because of their socialization. Labels could "promote consumer satisfaction with regard to choice, use and care of textiles and clothing" (Fianu & Harrison-Arthur, 1997:98) because consumers then have more realistic expectations.

2.6. ROLE OF THE SUPPLIER/S

2.6.1 Implementation of school uniform standards by suppliers

Suppliers should be able to conform to the standards set by the school board. It is of utmost importance that the PTA stipulates in the contract that the school uniform should be available at all times and that a range of sizes is available to prevent frustration and consumer dissatisfaction. Some suppliers even extend their range of products to include socks, ties and shoes to create a one stop school uniform shopping experience (Sheth, Mittal & Newman, 1999:12). Supplier could benefit if they always meet consumers' needs: this could enhance consumer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Sheth *et al*, 1999:13). Suppliers that meet target market standards satisfy their consumers and so succeed in their business (Sheth *et al*, 1999:13; Brown & Rice, 2001:46). A selected supplier must have the capacity to produce large numbers and must have enough storage to cope with even unexpected demands.

2.6.2 Point of sale (POS) influence

At POS, the store personnel and the in-store promotions apparently influence the purchasing decision of "materialistic youths" (Goldberg, Gorn, Peracchio & Bamossy, 2003:284). Considering an example of Ledumang Senior Secondary school uniform, it means the consumer has to rely on the sales personnel to indicate which uniform is specified by the specific school since not much information is given elsewhere. When school uniforms

are purchased in clothing retail stores, it is inevitable that pupils will compare the extrinsic attributes of the uniform i.e. the style, color, etc.) with fashion wear, and this may contribute to their dismay and consumer dissatisfaction.

When evaluating information available, there is also consideration of available service like credit services or club membership benefits offered by retailers such as Jet Stores. Though Jet Stores is a fashion clothing store, they have found it necessary to include school uniforms to cater for their customers who have school children. With such a service it is convenient for the consumer to purchase fashion clothing as well as school uniforms from the very same shop at the same time using club card or credit services offered (Sheth *et al*, 1999:12).

Within the systems perspective, a consumer thus considers all the contributing factors when making a purchase decision. If a consumer is “forced” to choose a specific product due to lack of alternatives, the hierarchy of factors is dismantled (equifinality) and this may result in consumer dissatisfaction due to negative disconfirmation of expectations even before the product (school uniform) is used.

2.7 CONSUMERS DIS/SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL UNIFORMS

2.7.1 Consumer satisfaction *per se*

Consumers’ satisfaction with a purchase is primarily a “function of the initial performance expectations” (Hawkins *et al*, 1995:521). If perceived performance level coincides with a consumer’s expectations, the result is consumer satisfaction. However, if the performance level is below the expected level, the result is negative disconfirmation which results in dissatisfaction. If performance is above the expected level, the result will be positive disconfirmation of expectations which may lead to consumer satisfaction and a potential commitment to always buy the same product from the same manufacturer /supplier when the need arises (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997:582).

Consumers purchase products that they believe will “fulfill their performance expectations” (Brown & Rice, 2001:21). Performance expectations vary according to individual consumer and product end use (function). Garvin (in Kadolph, 1998:21) maintains that there are eight dimensions of quality in an apparel product. These are: the consumer’s perceived quality, performance, aesthetics, durability, serviceability, conformance, features and reliability. All of these affect consumer expectations for example, the school uniform will be expected to last for at least a minimum period of time, no color fading is expected in a certain period, easy care, no shrinkage, no seam failures and neither holes. Expectations, however, are not necessarily realistic. Satisfaction (output) is perceived only when consumer expectations are met. Dissatisfaction often leads to complaints and supplier/brand switching (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:121; Kincade *et al*, 1998:83) which may be difficult in terms of school uniforms because of limited options. Dissatisfied consumers may develop a negative attitude towards the school uniform or supplier.

Purchasing of school uniforms is done by different people or often done as a joint activity. Weitzel, (2004:36) found that 69% of pupils participated in “Back-to-school” shopping. Mangleburg *et al* (1997:256) observed that families delegate shopping duties to their children due to time pressure. Thari (2006:1) found that pupils and parents shop together for school uniforms in Gaborone, apparently to address the problem of fit. Dissatisfaction with school uniforms thus involves parents as well as students.

2.8 NEGLECTED ISSUES SURROUNDING COMPULSORY SCHOOL UNIFORMS

2.8.1 Aesthetics

Aesthetic experience is defined as “the sensitive selection or appreciation of formal, expressive, or symbolic qualities of a product..., providing non-instrumental benefits that result in pleasure or satisfaction” (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:4). In apparel, the formal qualities that stimulate the senses are the “color, texture, line, shape, rhythm, and proportion” (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:6) and these “evoke” consumers’ emotions (Lamb & Kallal, 1992:43). Aesthetic features draw the attention of consumers (Brown & Rice, 2001:44). Lubbe (2003:4) determined that sight and touch (appreciating color and feeling the fabric texture) are used by consumers to evaluate the quality of garments. Furthermore, while buying and wearing garments, aesthetic features raise a wearer’s emotions, giving a feeling of dominance or confidence. Since the style and color of school uniforms are prescribed, the consumer is left with no choice and this may result in a form of resistance and dissatisfaction.

2.8.2 Physical and psychological aspects of clothing

Pupils are usually at their teenage stage of both physical and psychological development (;Hines & O’Neal, 1995:232; Weitzel, 2004:21-23). Weitzel (2004:21-23) refers to Erikson’s model of identity development; stating that secondary school pupils are in the “identity seeking stage” while Kaiser (1998:354) refers to it as a “transitional period of adolescence”. It is a developmental stage at which the adolescent develops his/her sense of self. He argues that dress is used by pupils or teenagers to show their identity. Adolescents do this by trying to “experiment with roles and personality and eventually discard undesirable roles” (Weitzel, 2004:21-22) or try to understand group values and workout how to relate to them without necessarily losing their uniqueness (Kaiser, 1998:354). Li (2001:1) maintained that today’s consumers prefer clothing that makes them feel and look good. Due to the regulations attached to school uniforms, pupils may feel inhibited, especially those trying to maintain their uniqueness as part of individuality. This may result in dissatisfaction (output).

2.8.3 Self expression

Dress is a means of self expression (Hines & O’Neal, 1995:232). It also has a psychological role in peer acceptance, personality and identity development and can be a source of discrimination within schools (Weitzel, 2004:22). While school uniforms are meant to prevent discrimination and consequent “negative implications associated with dress” it may inhibit personal expression and be evaluated negatively by the pupils (Weitzel, 2004:23).

Hines and O'Neal, (1995:231) found that a good quality garment does more than save money (economical), it also excites the wearer and provides the wearer with confidence and even a feeling of social recognition. The consumer's personal values such as self-esteem and social recognition are also met (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995:155; Hines & O'Neal, 1995:231; Lubbe, 2003:iv). Secondary school uniforms thus serve as a symbol (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:9) of being at secondary school, which may gain one the respect and admiration by others (Drake, Spoons & Greenwald, 1992:17) - especially juniors in primary school. As such it has been concluded that, a consumer is satisfied (output) with an apparel product (input) when her physical and emotional expectations (transformation) have been met (Fiore & Kimle, 1997:13; Li, 2001:3; De Klerk & Lubbe, 2004:5).

2.9. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The systems theory is applied to organize the discussion of this research project. The systems perspective poses that in any system, inputs are transformed into outputs (Spears & Gregoire, 2003:2). In this research inputs represent (i) certain extrinsic and intrinsic quality indicators that may be used by consumers (parents and pupils) to assess the quality of the school uniforms; and (ii) by the PTA to set quality standards for suppliers and manufacturers of school uniforms. These quality standards are interpreted/ transformed in terms of products (uniforms) that are purchased and worn and eventually evaluated by parents and pupils within their expectations (which may be realistic or not), to conclude the output of their assessment, i.e. dis/satisfaction (Spears & Gregoire, 2003:3). The evaluation process is done in an environment where exposure to other influences is also acknowledged and thus represents an "open system". School uniforms are therefore inevitably compared to other clothing products (in the stores and during use). Not all the quality indicators are considered of equal importance during product evaluation. Within the systems perspective it is proposed that certain indicators will be considered more crucial (hierarchy of indicators) although the culmination of all factors eventually determine the outcome of the judgment. Any comments about school uniforms serve as feedback that can be used by the PTA to increase consumer satisfaction. This can be done through control over the production process; rules that govern the wear of the school uniforms; amendment of quality standards; identification of suppliers, etc.

Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework that was compiled within this perspective.

Conceptual framework

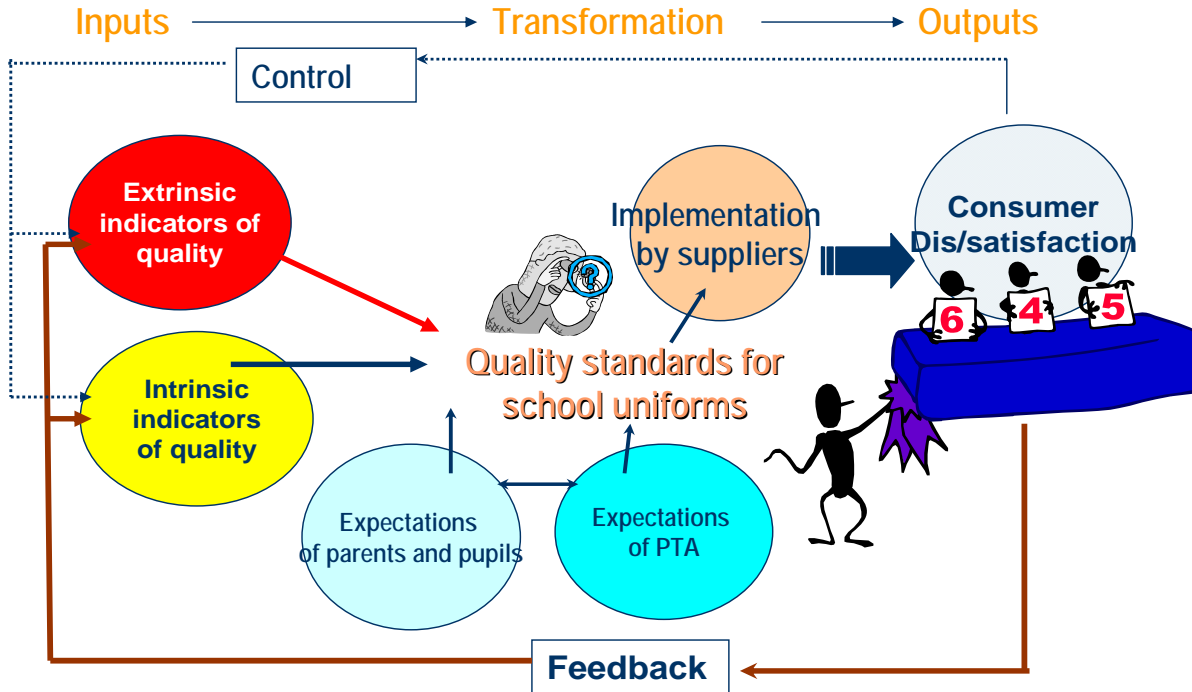


FIGURE 2.1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.10. RESEARCH AIM

The aim is to explore and describe pupils' and parents' satisfaction with the school uniforms for girls in selected secondary schools in Botswana to expose problems that could be addressed to increase consumer satisfaction.

2.10.1 Research objectives

- To describe the quality standards that the school boards of Ledumang and Gabarone Secondary Schools in Botswana apply for the selection of girls' school uniforms.
- To describe specific extrinsic and intrinsic quality indicators that are considered by parents and pupils to judge the quality of school uniforms.
- To describe the performance expectations of parents and pupils regarding specific extrinsic and intrinsic attributes of secondary school uniforms.
- To explore and describe the antecedents of parents' and pupils' dis/satisfaction with school uniforms in terms of their initial expectations and existing quality standards.
- To suggest amendments in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic properties of school uniforms that could enhance consumer satisfaction with school uniforms (based on literature).



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was cross sectional in kind and collected empirical data through a survey approach from respondents in world one (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:5-7). The quantitative approach enabled an assessment of relationships such as the relationship between consumers' expectations and their satisfaction with school uniforms (Leedy, 1997:106; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:49). According to Babbie & Mouton (2001:232, a survey may be employed for descriptive, explanatory as well as exploratory purposes and is suitable for consumer behavior studies (Sheth et al, 1999:482; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:183). The predominant quantitative approach that implemented structured questionnaires also included personal interviews (qualitative).

3.2. METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Population

The population consisted of Gaborone residents (Botswana) where there are 22 secondary schools of which 14 are junior secondary and 8 senior secondary schools. Gaborone residents (parents who buy the school uniforms and probably maintain them) who have daughters (who meet the selection criteria) who have attended secondary schools in Gaborone for at least two years were chosen. Respondents (school head, PTA members, parents and pupils) had to be willing and available during the time of the study (June/July 2006). Permission was needed from the Department of Secondary Education of the region, as well as the heads of schools. School heads obtained the approval of their boards before participation. The unit of analysis was all PTA members as well as girls and their parents in secondary schools in Gaborone.

3.2.2 Sample

Purposive sampling was done to identify parents of pupils of two senior secondary schools in Gaborone (urban area) in Botswana. Purposive sampling was done to involve those with experience of buying and using school uniforms and who were knowledgeable (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 206). In all, 150 girls in form 5 and their parents, as well as all the School Board members (PTA) from the two schools were included as respondents. The participants had to be willing and volunteering to participate.

3.2.3 Data collection

The following procedures were applied.

3.2.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire provided a systematic and structured technique to obtain information from participants in an accurate and easily quantifiable manner (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:74-75). Closed as well as open ended questions were organized in two parts: (i) for completion by the PTA and (ii) for completion by the parents and pupils. The questionnaire was first subjected to content interpretation by three experts in clothing theory before it was finalized. The closed questions were coded for statistical analysis. The open-ended questions were coded in terms of coherent concepts and interpreted.

Part 1: Potential respondents (PTA) were individually **interviewed** by appointment by the researcher either at school or their homes. Interviews of the school board covered school uniform selection procedures and quality indicators. An advantage of the interview format was that all questions could be completed and that problems could be clarified immediately. Higher returns were also insured in this way (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:266).

Questionnaire for the PTA consisted of the following sections:

Section A: Demographics and information regarding the identification of supplier(s)

Section B: Consideration of extrinsic and intrinsic quality indicators.

Part 2: Pupils received **questionnaires** to take home for their parents to complete. These questionnaires consisted of five sections:

Section A: Demographics of the respondents

Section B: Extrinsic indicators of quality used when purchasing school uniforms

Section C: Intrinsic indicators of quality used when purchasing school uniforms

Section D: Maintenance and care of school uniforms

Section E: Consumer expectations and satisfaction with school uniforms

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

3.3.1 Part 1: Interviews

The content of the narratives of the interviews was analyzed to identify relevant constructs (open coding) for the purpose of discussion of quality indicators. Quality indicators that were mentioned were extrinsic or intrinsic, aesthetic or psychosocial influences. The extrinsic indicators referred to aspects such as cost of school uniforms; imported versus locally produced uniforms; brand names. Intrinsic indicators covered aspects such as the type of fabric used; construction, i.e. type of seams and stitching used; finishes, such as wash and wear finishes. In terms of aesthetics, the respondents reacted to prompts on confidence, attractiveness while psychosocial aspects involved identification with the school, images. These were identified, grouped and organized through axial coding.

3.3.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were coded according to pre-determined data definitions in agreement with the statistician and relating to theory. For statistical analysis, descriptive statistics were applied.

3.3.3 Potential error was addressed through:

- a thorough study of existing literature
- assessment of the questionnaire beforehand by specialists in Textiles and Clothing and lecturers in Consumer Studies at the University of Pretoria
- discussion of the questionnaire with a statistician in terms of content and applicable procedures
- a pre-testing of the questionnaire by ten form 5 girls of Gaborone Senior Secondary School in Botswana during June 2006.

The above procedures were included to ensure content validity. Babbie & Mouton (2001:236) emphasizes that the respondents have to be competent to answer the questions and must also be willing to participate in the research. Questions must also be relevant. In the researchers view, these were acknowledged during the final formulation of questions. Quantitative as well as qualitative questions were asked in an effort to include triangulation.

3.4. OPERATIONALIZATION

Objective 1: *To describe and evaluate the quality standards that are applied by the PTAs to select the school uniforms for girls:*

Interviews were transcribed to identify concepts that pertained to the research phenomenon. These were coded and interpreted in terms of quality indicators, specifically extrinsic and intrinsic cues.

Objective 2: *To describe specific intrinsic and extrinsic quality indicators considered by parents and pupils to judge the quality of school uniforms:*

Responses to questions were rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Objective 3: *To describe the performance expectations of parents and pupils regarding specific extrinsic and intrinsic quality attributes of secondary school uniforms.*

Responses to questions were rated on a 5-point Likert scale and subjected to factor analysis. The same procedure was followed with questions relating to maintenance and care to identify problems that might result in dissatisfaction with school uniforms.

Objective 4: *To describe the antecedents of parents' and pupils' dis/satisfaction with school uniforms in terms of their initial expectations and existing quality standards.*

Responses to questions ranged from very satisfactory to dissatisfactory for separate items of the school uniform items, i. e. dress, skirt, pants and blouse.

Objective 5: *To suggest amendments in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic properties of school uniforms that could enhance consumer satisfaction with school uniforms (based on literature).*

Results were interpreted in terms of theory to suggest amendments in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic properties of school uniforms that could enhance consumer satisfaction. The respondents themselves raised some points when responding to questions on what they did not like about school uniforms and suggested what they would like to be changed in the future.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. PART 1, QUESTIONNAIRE A

4.1.1 Demographic information of PTA members

4.1.1.1 Gender

The PTA's of both the selected schools were included in the research. Only willing participants who were available at the time for participation, were included. Eventually an even number of males (n=5) and females (n=5) were interviewed. Seven participants were from Ledumang Senior Secondary School and three were from Gaborone Senior Secondary School. .

4.1.1.2. Years of PTA membership

Participants' years of membership of the PTA's are indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 4.1: YEARS OF PTA MEMBERSHIP (n = 10)

Years of experience	n
1.5	1
2	4
4	1
5	1
6	2
17	1

Four of the participants had served for two years as PTA members while the experience of five others was more extensive. The longest period of serving as a PTA member was 17 years. One could conclude that the majority had four and more years of experience and were thus supposed to be very familiar with issues relating to school uniform issues if it is assumed that this is the responsibility of the PTA.

4.1.2 PTA members' expectations of, and knowledge about school uniforms

4.1.2.1 Period that current school uniforms have been in use

Respondents had to indicate how long existing school uniforms had been in use. Five indicated a period of more than 10 years while three did not know. The latter is a concern because one would expect a PTA member to be fully informed. According to the Botswana Education Act, (1967:15) Gaborone Senior School was opened on

30th August 1965 and Ledumang Senior School on the 1st January 1994. It would therefore be correct to state that both school uniforms were in use for more than 10 years at the time of the study as no changes to the color or style of the initial uniforms had been made since. During the time only two changes were made: an introduction of trousers as part of school uniform for girls, and changes to their ties. With specific reference to the style and the color, one respondent from Gaborone Secondary School explained that the uniforms remained unchanged to maintain the tradition and pride of the school. This supports an observation of Stanley and Brown in Kraft (2003:2), namely that school uniforms are meant to provide a sense of belonging and school pride and are therefore not changed frequently. A concern however, is whether the needs of the pupils are served this way.

4.1.2.2 Suppliers of school uniforms

Respondents were asked to indicate whether a specific supplier was selected by the PTA to supply the school uniform items or whether different suppliers and retailers were involved.

It was indicated that at least two items are supplied by most of the listed suppliers except for Kopano store. Other retailers that supplied items were: Woolworths (5 items); Ackermans (4 items); Cash Bazaar and PTA supplier (3 items). According to the schools' prospectus that are sent to parents/guardians upon admission of their children, Ledumang Secondary School indicate K. M. Dressmaker in Bontleng Mall, Gaborone as the principal supplier of all items, i.e. dresses, skirts, trousers, blouses, ties, blazers and jerseys. The blazer, jersey and blouses have a school emblem or logo embroidered on them. Parents of Gaborone Secondary School are advised to buy from a supplier of their choice, the prospectus only indicates which items are stipulated. It is proposed that schools consider – as a cost recovery strategy and to simultaneously increase convenience and accessibility - inviting suppliers to advertise in their school prospectus at a fee that is decided by the PTA to inform parents where school uniforms could be purchased.

4.1.2.3. Selection of school uniforms

Respondents had to indicate whether the selection of school uniforms was done by the committee alone; by the committee plus parents or a joint effort of the committee, parents and pupils.

There was no consensus among the respondents, i.e. even PTA members were not certain what the procedures were. Some indicated that school uniforms are primarily selected by the PTA (n = 4); others thought that the PTA worked in collaboration with parents (n = 4); a minority was of the opinion that PTA, parents and pupils worked in conjunction (n = 2). All agreed that no other authorities were involved.

Respondents who indicated that pupils were involved in the evaluation process, all indicated that uniforms are considered “whenever necessary to do so”. One respondent from Ledumang Senior Secondary School when asked to explain how pupils are involved, explained that the Head Girl and Head Boy attends PTA executive

meetings, which allows the Head Girl to present girls' concerns relating to school uniforms. Surprisingly the other respondents were not aware of this practice and it was not clear whether and how other students are acknowledged; whether a feedback mechanism was used or if any resolutions are ever made. One must keep in mind that the school uniforms at both schools have not undergone major changes over the years.

The majority (n = 7) of respondents were of the opinion that school uniforms are considered whenever the need arises while some indicated that the uniform never changes (n = 3). Clearly, there was no consensus. Even members who had served for shorter periods of time on the PTA should have been more informed. It is alarming that members were not even aware of who selects the school uniform. If it is assumed that the responsibility of school uniform lies with the PTA, they should be better informed. Their ignorance shows that school uniform issues are probably neglected.

4.1.2.4 Quality standards

The majority of respondents indicated that quality standards for school uniforms are mostly set by the PTA's themselves (n = 7); however, some were uncertain (n = 3). It is assumed that PTAs should have the school uniform quality specifications documented and available for members as members have to be informed all the times. Advice or guidance in this regard may be sought from the school Home Economics teachers, the Home Economics Officers in the Local Authorities, the Botswana Bureau of Standards, the Botswana Central Supplies Office (Uniform Unit) or the Integrated Field Services (Garment Unit) as well as the University of Botswana (Home Economics Department). It was not clear whether any expertise was consulted to assist PTA's on quality standards of school uniforms.

4.1.2.5 Size standards

Confusion about whose sizing standards are used is evident: the majority indicated that manufacturers' sizing standards are used (n = 5); one individual was of the opinion that South African Standards are used (n = 1); and three referred to British sizing standards (n = 3) while one person did not know which standards are used. The PTA apparently does not specify the sizing standards to be used by the suppliers.

Brown and Rice (2001:42) maintain that sizing standards generally vary from one company to another as a way to build up a distinctive fit that appeal to their target customers. Lack of sizing standards for school uniforms may create confusion and irritation and be a major cause of consumer dissatisfaction. The use of different sizing standards may result in a preference for specific brands and specific retailers. It should however not be promoted due to the confusion that may occur.

4.1.2.6 Expected durability of school uniforms

A two year period seems to be regarded an acceptable period for school uniform items to last based on figures provided when respondents had to indicate the expected durability of the various school uniform items. The

majority (n=8) expected the dresses to last for two years while only one person expected dresses to last for one year. Similarly the majority (n = 6) expected the skirts to last for two years; and only one expected skirts to last one year. The majority (n = 7) expected the trousers to last for two years while three expected a one year period before replacement. For the blouse, the majority (n = 7) expected it to be worn for two years; one person expected the blouse to last one year while another indicated six months as the expected period of wear. The varied responses may relate to the number of items that pupils have to wear. Blouses are probably also washed more often than skirts, and that could contribute to a shorter expected period of wear for the blouses. Respondents' expectation of the durability of the school uniform items seem realistic because it coincides with the report of Brown and Rice (2001:46) who indicate that a minimum of one year is acceptable. In Botswana, the textiles used for school uniforms are not specified in terms of minimum standards. This deserves further attention because it has consequences for the durability and the eventual period that a school uniform will last.

4.1.2.7 Selection of the suppliers by the PTAs

Respondents rated the importance of a list of aspects that related to the selection of suppliers on a three-point scale.

- The majority (n = 9) agreed that a **supplier's capacity** is *very important* (missing: n=1) in terms of its potential to be identified as a supplier of school uniforms.
- The majority (n = 7) indicated that it is *very important* that suppliers **produce school wear of good quality**; two indicated this aspect to be *important* (missing: n=1).
- The majority (n =7) of the PTA members also agreed that it is *very important* that **suppliers are accessible**: two members indicated that it is *important* (missing n=1).
- The majority (n = 7) of the respondents indicated that it is *very important* for the **supplier's specimen to meet the PTA's specifications**, while three indicated that it is *important*.
- **Reasonably priced** school uniforms were considered *very important* by nine respondents and *important* by one person.

Although PTA members not necessarily realised their responsibilities in terms of school wear (see 4.2.1), the majority, when confronted with statements that pertained to the selection of suppliers, indicated that all of the factors are *very important*. These factors were specifically selected in accordance with previous research and all reflected good practice (Zirkel, 1998:1; Sheth et al, 1999:12; Clark, 2006:1).

4.1.2.8 Importance of quality attributes

Thirty-one cues were listed for PTA members to score (see Table 4.2). These attributes represented intrinsic attributes; extrinsic attributes; attributes that specifically relate to the durability and maintenance of school uniforms as well as aspects of aesthetical nature (Table 3).



TABLE 4.2 IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY ATTRIBUTES IN TERMS OF SCHOOL UNIFORM (n=10)

Quality attributes	Intrinsic/Extrinsic/Aesthetic/Durability/	Very important	Important	Uncertain	Less important	Not important at all
Shrink proof fabric	I	10	0	0	0	0
Strong and neat seams	I	9	0	1	0	0
Seam edge finishing	I	9	1	0	0	0
Affordable school uniform	E	9	1	0	0	0
School uniform should be colorfast	I	9	1	0	0	0
Correct size label should be attached	E	9	0	0	0	0
Fabrics as per PTA specifications	I	8	0	0	1	1
Durable school uniform	D	8	2	0	0	0
All trimmings and fasteners must match the fabrics	I	8	1	1	0	0
School uniform should be durable	I/D	8	2	0	0	0
Strong seam type	I	7	3	0	0	0
Color should match the school image	I	7	2	0	1	0
The color should be approved by parents and pupils	I/A	7	2	0	0	1
The trimmings and fasteners should last as long as the fabric	I	7	2	0	1	0
School uniform should make the wearer proud	E/A	7	2	0	1	0
School uniform should make the wearer decent and neat	I/A	7	3	0	0	0
School uniform construction methods as per PTA specifications	I	6	2	0	2	0
Wash and wear fabric, easy care	I	6	2	0	1	0
Style should fit most figure types	I	6	4	0	0	0
Fabric content appear on the label	E	5	2	0	1	0
Stitch density as per PTA specifications	I	5	3	1	0	0
Hem width should not be too narrow	I	5	3	1	0	0
School uniform should make the wearer feel unique	E/A	5	5	0	0	0
Ease of stain removal	I/D	4	5	0	1	0
Simple, easy style of school uniform	I	4	5	1	0	0
School uniform should be warm to wear in winter	I	4	6	0	0	0
School uniform should be cool to wear in summer	I	3	7	0	0	0
Machine washable school uniform	M	2	4	1	1	2
School uniform should be dry cleanable	M	2	1	1	4	2
Correct care label should be attached to the school uniform	E	2	5	1	2	
The color should be fashionable	I/A	1	3	3	4	0

Shaded areas indicate attributes considered very important by the majority (n>5)

Quality attributes that were considered very important by eight and more of the respondents (n=10), represented *intrinsic factors* that related to fabric choice and good construction standards (i.e. shrink proof fabric; Strong, neat seams and seam finishes and trimmings and fasteners that match the fabrics and indicate good construction; The use of colorfast fabrics that also adhered to PTA standards). *Extrinsic factors* that were considered very important in terms of the indication of quality by eight and more respondents, involved the cost/affordability of uniforms and labeling. The latter inevitably involve the suppliers that differ in terms of price, brands and labeling and may suggest that certain suppliers are preferable. Without an indication of the cues that are used, respondents also indicated that the durability of a garment is a very important indicator of quality (n=8). For some, the thickness of the fabric may suggest just that, while others may use

cues such as price or brand (extrinsics). Aesthetic factors were indicated as very important by more than seven respondents (n=10): uniforms that appear neat and that will make the wearer proud (extrinsics) seem to be important quality indicators. Other very important indicators that were identified by more than six of the ten PTA members, referred to *intrinsic factors* i.e. respondents suggested that styles that fit most figure types indicate good quality; they also indicated that specific construction techniques such as hem width and stitch length; fabric type and fiber content as well as wash and wear properties are very important indicators of quality. Maintenance and care aspects are apparently considered less important indicators of quality than construction and fabric type.

The quality of school wear is thus judged according to objective, relevant factors such as fabric type and construction techniques. Quality is however also associated with convenience and easy care and indirectly assumed through visual appearance, i.e. style, label.

4.1.3 Open ended questions for PTA members

Open questions were included to allow PTA members to express themselves with regard to (i) school uniform selection procedures, (ii) pupils' satisfaction with school uniforms and (iii) performance of school uniforms.

4.1.3.1 Suggested selection procedures

Some of the respondents suggested *changes in school uniform selection procedures*, i.e. that parents and pupils become involved (n=2); that suppliers become involved (n=1); that the supply contract is reviewed every five years (n=1). Others, however, indicated that there is no need for change (n=4) because school uniforms represented a tradition of the particular school and instilled pride. This coincides with Kaiser's report (1998:361) that school uniforms are maintained to retain a certain tradition that is valuable and is passed on from one generation to the other. The one respondent who suggested that contract should be reviewed, indicated that it would improve competition and reduce chances of complacency. Those who suggested the involvement of parents, pupils and suppliers reasoned that this would monitor the quality of school uniform production and enable changes that reflect time and fashion trends.

4.1.3.2 The PTA's impression of the satisfaction of pupils (girls) with current school uniforms

Given the opportunity to indicate whether they thought the girls were satisfied with current school uniforms, only one of the members (n=10) was of the opinion that girls are *very satisfied*; five indicated that they are *satisfied* and three indicated *dissatisfaction* (missing: n=1). The individuals who responded that pupils are satisfied or very satisfied with the school uniforms based their opinions on no evidence of complaints; that girls wear the school uniform daily (they probably ignored the fact that it is compulsory); that girls did have some choice, i.e. to wear a dress or trousers (which in their view provided enough variation) and that the school uniform identifies them with the school. Those who indicated that pupils are not satisfied reasoned that the girls do not like the striped blazers and that dresses should be shorter and that the style should be more fashionable.

4.1.3.3 Performance of school uniforms within PTA expectations

The majority of the respondents (n=7) indicated that their expectations were met and defended their statement by stating that they were not aware of complaints; that they liked the color; that the style is universal; that the uniform is of good quality, and durable. They also indicated that the uniforms provide the pupils with a sense of pride and belonging and that according to them, neither parents nor pupils wish to change it. The only PTA member that indicated that expectations are not met complained that school uniforms are not colorfast. Two respondents did not comment. The majority of the PTA respondents' expectations are thus fulfilled and consequently most of the PTA members seem satisfied. Although only one out of ten members reacted negatively, the complaint has to be noted. Problems with color fastness of school uniforms are not unusual (Barnett *et al*, 1993:128) because of the extreme conditions that school uniforms are subjected to: e.g. exposure to sunlight, frequent wash.

4.2 PART 2: QUESTIONNAIRE B

4.2.1. Demographic information

4.2.1.1 Demographic information of the parents and pupils

A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed in Ledumang (n=80) and in Gaborone (n=100). Only 105 (58.3%) questionnaires were successfully retrieved despite repeated reminders. It was clearly stated that questionnaires could be filled in by parents/guardians or pupils of the two senior secondary schools that participated; namely Ledumang Senior Secondary School (n = 57) and Gaborone Secondary School (n = 48). As expected, most of the participants (n=105) were females (n = 94; 89.5%). Only nine (8.5%) men (fathers / guardians) took part (missing responses: n=2).

Although pupils in two grades were allowed to participate, most of the 105 participants were in form 5 (n=99). The rest were form 4 (n=4); missing (n=2). Participation of a larger percentage of form 5 pupils was understandable because the eldest sister was requested to partake; this was also preferable because of more extensive experience of older pupils with the school uniforms. This contributed to more valid responses.

4.2.1.2. Buyers of the school uniforms

Respondents had to indicate who usually purchases the pupils' school uniforms. Frequency of purchases (every term, every year or occasionally) was also requested:

- **Pupils** who purchased school uniforms (one or other item) *every term* were in the minority (n=14; 13.3%). A few purchased *once every year* (n=11; 10.5%) and more did so *occasionally* (n=25; 23.8%).
- **Parents /guardians** purchased school uniforms *every term* (n=17; 16.2%); *once every year* (n=41; 39.0%); or *occasionally* (n=19; 18.1%).
- **Siblings** (i.e. either an elder sister or brother) purchased school uniforms *every term* (n=2; 1.9%); *once every year* (n=2; 1.9%); or *occasionally* (n=12; 11.4%).

- **Others** who were specified as buyers of school uniforms represented joint ventures by parents and pupils (n=1) or the grandfather and pupil (n=1). In both cases, shopping for school uniforms was done *occasionally*.

Most of the purchases were thus made *once per year* by parents while most of the pupils and siblings do it *occasionally*. The results support the literature, for example, Weitzel (2004:36) found that 69% of the pupils participated in back to school shopping and Mangleburg *et al* (1997:256), observed that shopping duties were delegated to children by parents occasionally due to time pressure.

4.2.1.3. Experience of the respondents with the school uniforms

In order to get an idea of parents' experience with school uniforms, they were asked to indicate the number of daughters of the same parent /guardian other than the participant that attended the current school in the past ten years. They indicated that 44 had one daughter, 21 had two daughters, six had three, and three had four or more daughters in the same school while one had no other children in the school over the stated period. Unfortunately 30 did not respond to the question though it intended to establish their purchasing experience with the school uniform of the particular secondary school.

Pupils also had to indicate how long they had been attending the specific secondary school to establish their experience with that school uniform as an indication of the validity of their responses. This question was supposed to indicate experience and potential to evaluate the performance and quality of the school uniforms, hence add to the validity of the research findings. The majority (n=88) were in the school for one to two years, seven (n=7) were in the school for one year only while four (n=4) were there for more than four years.

4.2.1.4. Number of school uniform pieces owned by an individual

The question referred to certain school uniform items in order to establish how many skirts or trousers pupils' owned as an indication of their experience with purchasing, wearing and caring procedures. The items listed for the study were trousers, skirts, dresses and blouses. Ledumang Secondary School's girls' uniform also involves a princess line sleeveless dress with no collar, a blouse with an emblem, a six panel skirt and grey pants. Gaborone Secondary School had a golden and navy dress (tunic) with a bodice and short regular sleeves with turn-up cuffs, grey trousers and a white blouse. Both schools permitted short sleeved as well as long sleeved blouses with a shirt collars.

TABLE 4.3: NUMBER OF SCHOOL UNIFORM ITEMS OWNED BY PUPILS (n = 105)

School uniform item	Number of the school uniform items owned by a pupil				
	1	2	3	4 or more	Total
Skirt	43	9	5	0	57
Trousers	45	43	10	2	100
Blouse	3	33	26	37	99
Dress	66	14	3	0	83

An equal number of girls owned one skirt and one pair of trousers; an equal number owned one or two pairs of trousers (some could have owned one skirt and one pair of pants). Trousers seem to be more popular (n=100) than skirts (n=57). The one school however, did not have skirts as part of their uniform: they wore trousers or dresses. An overwhelming majority of the pupils (n=96) owned two or more blouses, probably because the blouses had to be washed more often and they could be worn with the sleeveless dress, as well as the skirt and pants. The majority only owned one dress (n=66) probably because this could be alternated with trousers or skirts. The majority owned trousers (n=100). Although many (n=43) owned two pairs of trousers, only 14 owned two dresses. Trousers and dresses seem more popular than skirts.

4.2.2 Purchasing and suppliers of school uniforms

Participants had to identify the suppliers where they usually purchased school uniforms as well as how frequently shopping for school uniforms was done.

TABLE 4.4: SUPPLIERS OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS AND FREQUENCY OF SHOPPING (n=105)

Supplier/ retailer	At least once a term		Maximum once in six months		Maximum once per year		Maximum once in two years		Never		Total (excluding "Never")
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Ackermans	10	14.1	14	30.4	9	13.6	4	8.9	21	16.0	37
Cash bazaar	7	9.8	2	4.3	3	4.5	0	0	41	31.3	12
Jet stores	7	9.8	14	30.4	16	24.2	2	4.4	24	18.3	39
Pep stores	28	39.4	11	23.9	18	27.3	8	17.8	8	6.1	65
PTA supplier	11	15.5	1	2.2	13	19.7	26	57.8	8	6.1	51
Woolworths	8	11.3	4	8.6	7	10.6	5	11.1	29	22.1	24
Total	71	100	46	100	66	100	45	100	131	100	228

Table 4.4 shows school uniforms are mostly purchased once per term (n=71) or once per year (n=66). An even number did so once in six months (n=46) or once in two years (n=45).

Of the 71 respondents who purchased at least once per term, 39.4% (n=28) did so at Pep stores. All the other stores were patronized by 15% (n=11) or less respondents. Of the 46 respondents who purchased school uniform a maximum of once in every six months, purchased from Jet (30.4%; n=14); Ackermans (30.4%;n=14) or Pep stores (23.9%; n=11). Many did not patronize other suppliers.

Among respondents who purchases uniforms at most once per year, the majority (n=18; 27.3%) purchased at Pep stores, followed by Jet (n=16; 24.2%), the PTA supplier (n=13; 19.7%) and Ackermans (n=9; 13.6%). Other stores were patronized by a small minority (n=9). Those who purchased at most once in two years mostly shopped at the PTA supplier (n=26; 57.7%), Pep stores (n=8; 17.7%) or Woolworths (n=5; 11.1%). Considering all the suppliers of school uniforms, Pep stores seem to be the most frequently patronised supplier followed by

the PTA supplier, Jet, Ackermans, and Woolworths (Table 4.5). Pep stores are commonly known to offer more affordable prices.

4.2.3 Quality cues used when buying school uniforms

4.2.3.1 Extrinsic cues

Respondents were given a list of cues and had to indicate whether they *always*, *sometimes* or *never* considered them to judge the quality when purchasing school uniforms. Figures in Table 4.5 were rearranged in descending order for “Yes *always*” responses to visually present the more prominent cues.

TABLE 4.5: EXTRINSIC QUALITY CUES USED AT PURCHASING STAGE (n=105)

Extrinsic cues	Always		Sometimes		Never		Missing
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Comfortable loose fit last longer and is preferred	71	67.6	23	21.9	7	6.7	4
The fit of the uniform depends and differ according to manufacturer	67	63.8	22	21.0	11	10.5	5
You buy from specific suppliers you believe sell quality clothing	59	56.2	34	32.4	7	6.7	5
Appearance and fabric texture indicate better quality	58	55.2	32	30.5	10	9.5	5
Care instruction on label	47	44.8	40	38.1	7	6.7	11
Branded products are of better quality than others	38	36.2	29	27.6	33	31.4	5
Colorfastness on the label	36	34.3	42	40.0	13	12.4	14
Expensive uniform is of better quality	20	19.0	66	62.9	16	15.2	3
Imported uniform better quality than locally produced	15	14.2	40	38.1	46	43.8	4

Note that the shaded areas identify responses over 50%, i.e. majority of respondents

Table 4.5 shows that extrinsic quality indicators that are **always** used as indication of quality by more than 50% of the respondents are: comfortable loose fit; specific brands/ manufacturers because they differ in terms of fit; reputation of the supplier and appearance and fabric texture. Care instructions on the label were used by most of the respondents and so were the brand of the uniforms and indications of colorfastness on the label. Price and reference to imported goods were less important than the formerly mentioned.

The results support the literature that at point of purchase, consumers use extrinsic quality cues such as the name of the manufacturer and the supplier as indicators (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995:150; Hines & O’Neal, 1995:227; Brown & Rice, 2001:44).

4.2.3.2 Intrinsic cues

Intrinsic cues are those which, when changed, will change the garment, e. g. the material/fabrics and other materials, design/style, finishes and construction methods/stitches and seams (Brown & Rice, 2001:48; Glock & Kunz, 2000:106). Abraham-Murali and Littrell (1995:150) as well as Hines and O’Neal (1995:227) report that certain intrinsic cues are used as indication of quality at point of purchase and mentioned materials (that seemed less prominent in this research, possibly because there is no choice) as well as construction methods, that were

also indicated by respondents in this research. Respondents' indication of intrinsic cues used, is presented in Table 4.6 in descending order of the "always" responses.

TABLE 4.6: INTRINSIC CUES USED WHEN PURCHASING SCHOOL UNIFORMS (n=105)

Quality cues	Always		Sometimes		Never		Missing
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Clothing construction neatness in general	72	68.6	18	17.1	4	3.8	11
Fasteners functioning	66	62.9	19	18.1	9	8.6	11
Matching thread color	51	48.6	22	21.0	21	20.0	11
Seam appearance	42	40.0	37	35.2	16	15.2	10
Pockets reinforcement	39	37.1	30	28.6	26	24.8	10
Fabric /material	31	29.5	48	45.7	14	13.3	12

More than 60% of the respondents indicated that they rely on *general neatness of the clothing construction* and the *functioning of fasteners* as indication of the quality of school uniforms. *Thread color* was also mentioned by a noteworthy percentage of respondents. These three indicators refer to more obvious cues than *pocket reinforcement* that is investigated by a smaller percentage of respondents.

4.2.3.3 Maintenance and repairs done to school uniforms

The respondents were asked about the maintenance of the school uniforms to establish how soon repairs were required. Such questions were in line with the evaluation of product quality as literature had indicated that consumers continue to judge the quality of the products basing on their performance and service life (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995:150; Hines & O'Neal, 1995:227; Brown & Rice, 2001:44). Table 4.7 shows that repairs were required within six months of purchase by the majority of respondents and that less than 10% apparently never did repairs on skirts and pants and less than 20% never repaired blouses and dresses. An indication of the type of repairs is reflected in Table 4.8.

TABLE 4.7: REPAIRS DONE TO SCHOOL UNIFORM ITEMS (n=105)

How soon was it necessary to do repairs?	Within six months		Between six months and one year		After one year		After two years		Never		Missing
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Skirt	27	25.7	3	2.9	14	13.3	13	12.4	7	6.6	41
Trousers	36	34.3	9	8.6	25	23.8	15	14.3	8	7.6	12
Blouse	44	41.9	10	9.5	8	7.6	14	13.3	19	18.1	10
Dress	28	26.7	8	7.6	20	19	19	18.1	16	15.2	14

Bolded figures indicate the majority of the responses per option

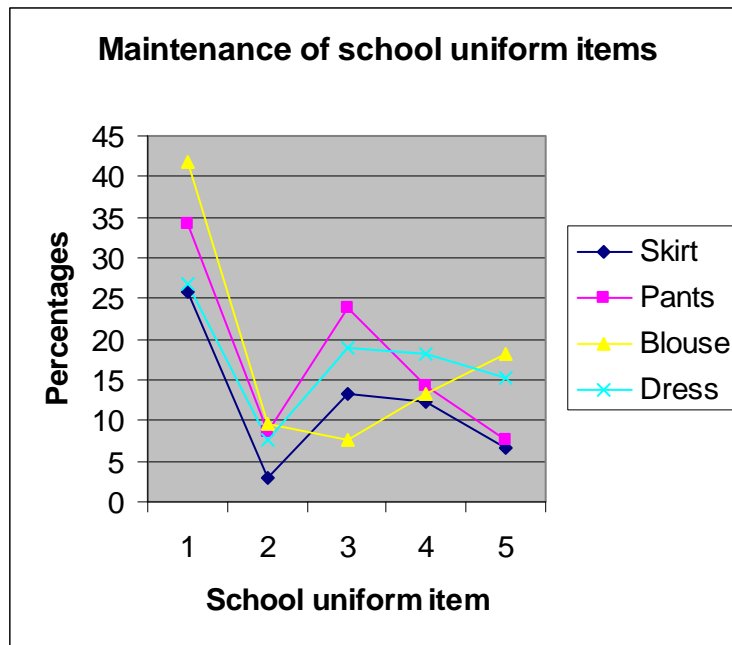


FIGURE 4.1: MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL UNIFORM ITEMS

Table 4.7 indicates **how soon repairs** were needed on specific school uniform items. Table 4.8 indicates which **problems** were experienced as well as the period within which the problems occurred.

TABLE 4.8: PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WITH SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Problems experienced	Within six Months (n)	Within one Year (n)	After one year (n)	After two years (n)	Uncertain (n)	Missing (n)	Total repairs (excluding uncertain and missing) (n)
Armhole tear	44	13	8	18	12	10	83
Bodice side seam tear	45	17	8	10	15	10	80
Tight fit around hipline	37	11	16	20	10	11	84
Tight fit around waistline	29	18	18	22	8	10	87
Waistline seam tear	41	12	23	7	11	11	83
Loose buttons	9	4	16	26	43	7	55
Color fading	15	16	24	21	19	10	76
Color bleeding when washing	39	6	16	3	27	14	64
Disintegration/tear/holes in the fabric	41	14	20	8	12	10	83
Total	300	111	149	135	157	93	

The majority of the problems listed were experienced within six months of purchase. Six out of the nine problems were experienced by over 80% of the respondents within six months of purchase. Many of the problems are however associated with poor fit and could indicate improper selection of size during purchase, e. g. bodice side seam tear, armhole tear, waistline seam tear, and tight fit around hipline as well as tight fit around waistline. Problems with loose buttons and color fading apparently only realized after two years for the majority. Problems experienced may contribute to dissatisfaction with school uniforms due to non-conformance with expectations.

Dissatisfaction often leads to complaints or supplier and brand switching (Kincade et al, 1998:83; Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:121).

4.2.4. Consumers' expectations and dis/satisfaction with school uniforms

4.2.4.1 Consumers' expectations of the durability of school uniform items

According to the results in Table 4.9 respondents expected school uniforms to last from six months to more than two years for specific items. This indicated the durability expectations.

TABLE 4.9: CONSUMERS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE DURABILITY OF SCHOOL UNIFORM ITEMS (N=105)

Specific items of school uniforms	Minimum of six months		Minimum of one year		Minimum of two years		Longer than two years		Uncertain	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Dress	1	0.9	12	11.4	44	41.9	36	34.3	2	1.9
Skirt	1	0.9	17	16.2	33	31.4	20	19.0	1	0.9
Blouse	28	26.7	28	26.7	20	19.0	14	13.3	7	6.7
Trousers	3	2.9	24	22.9	28	26.7	37	35.2	3	2.9

Most of the respondents (n=44; 41.9%) expected school dresses to last for a minimum of two years and more than a third expected dresses to be worn longer. Although such expectations might not necessarily be realistic, failure to meet their expectations may cause dissatisfaction.

Concerning the durability of the skirt, the majority of the respondents expected skirts to be worn for two years and more. This coincides with expectations about school dresses.

More of the respondents expected blouses to last one year or less: this possibly explains why girls own more blouses (see Table 4.9).

Despite the fact that trousers may involve specific fit problems when girls are growing, more than 60% expected trousers to be worn for more than two years. The expectations may thus be unrealistic when frequency of wear and growth of girls are taken into consideration.

4.2.4.2 Consumers' expectations of performance of school uniforms

Respondents also rated the performance of the school uniform items based on their experience. The scale ranged from 1 to 5 (1: unacceptable; 5: excellent).

TABLE 4.10: CONSUMERS' RATING OF THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS (n=105)

School uniform items	Excellent		Good		Uncertain		Poor		Unacceptable	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Dress	21	20.0	59	56.2	4	3.8	8	7.6	3	2.9
Skirt	15	14.3	38	36.2	7	6.7	8	7.6	3	2.9
Trousers	45	42.9	34	32.4	8	7.6	3	2.9	4	3.8
Blouse	20	19.0	47	44.8	14	13.3	12	11.4	6	5.7

Table 4.10 shows that all the items were rated excellent or good by the majority of respondents. Respondents' rating of the skirts was lower than for the other items; however, the majority was still satisfied.

The PTA, in their judgment of girls' satisfaction with school uniforms, was thus right. .

4.2.4.3 Consumers' dis/satisfaction with specific quality attributes of school uniforms

Attributes such as style, color, appearance retention, fit and comfort can contribute negatively or positively to consumers' satisfaction with clothing (Brown & Rice, 2001:42; Fan, 2004:33). The fit is related to the style while colorfastness, durability, dimensional stability (maintenance of shape and size) and comfort in summer and winter depend on the fabric used. The results of the respondents' evaluation are shown in Table 4.11.

TABLE 4.11: RESPONDENT' SATISFACTION WITH CERTAIN QUALITY ATTRIBUTES (n=105)

Quality attribute of the school uniform	Very satisfactory (n)	Satisfactory (n)	Neutral (n)	Unsatisfactory (n)	Very unsatisfactory (n)	Missing (n)	Total (excluding missing) (n)
Color fastness	9	45	22	15	6	8	97
Comfort in summer	20	34	22	14	6	9	96
Comfort in winter	5	18	27	27	20	8	97
Comfort of fit	18	42	20	10	7	8	97
Durability	14	31	28	15	9	8	97
Fabric color combination	25	28	25	13	5	9	96
Fit	10	43	28	12	5	7	98
Retention of shape and size	8	27	36	14	12	8	97
Price/affordability	7	28	34	20	7	9	96
Style/design	22	43	21	6	5	8	97
Total	138	339	263	146	82		

Quality attributes that were rated **satisfactory to very satisfactory** by more than 50% of the respondents were: Style/design (n=65 [22+43]); Fit (n=53 [10+43]); Color fastness (n=54 [9+45]); Fabric color combination (n=53 [25+28]); Comfort of fit (n=60 [18+42]) and Comfort in summer (n=54 [20+34]). As such one could state that these attributes met their expectations.

Quality attributes that hovered between **satisfactory** to **neutral** for more than 50% of responses were: Price/affordability (n=64 [28+34]); Durability (n=59 [31+28]).

Indicators that were rated **neutral** to **unsatisfactory** by more than 50% of the respondents were Comfort in winter (n=74 [27+27+ 20]); Retention of shape and size (n=62 [36+14+12]). The majority of the respondents were thus not satisfied with the school uniforms' comfort in winter and retention of shape and size. However, if respondents expected school uniforms to be worn for more than two years, unrealistic expectations may be the cause of their dissatisfaction rather than poor performance of the uniforms. Girls in form 4 and form 5 are in a phase of physical development and it would be unrealistic to expect any item to last that long.

4.2.5. Open questions for parents/guardians

4.2.5.1 School uniform selection procedures

Parents were asked to suggest how the school uniform selection procedures could be improved in the future. Suggestions varied and covered the selection procedures, the school uniform regulations, the school uniform items and prices. Results in Table 4.12 indicate their suggestions. All suggestions, save for one, suggested the involvement of other, if not all affected parties, namely pupils, parents, teachers and designers. As often happens in surveys, 84 (80%) unfortunately did not make suggestions. It could however not be assumed that they were satisfied. Consumers are often reluctant to become involved with remedial action due to low involvement; fear of discrimination; non-interest; poor knowledge etc.

TABLE 4.12: SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE UNIFORM SELECTION PROCEDURES (n=105)

Suggested selection procedures	(n)	%
Appoint a school uniform committee	1	1
No suggestion/ satisfied	8	7.6
Create discussion forums between teachers and pupils	3	2.9
Avoid monopoly of suppliers	2	1.9
Consult parents	1	1
Consult fabric designers	1	1
Involve both pupils and parents	5	4.8
Missing	84	80
Total	105	100

4.2.5.2 Concerns about the style of school uniforms

In response to the open question on style, only 15.2% of the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied and they suggested a complete change in the style of the dress mainly because dresses had to be worn with blouses, which is too hot in summer.

4.2.5.3 Concerns regarding the color of school uniforms

Satisfied parents commented that the color is beautiful, “cool” and unique. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either very satisfied with the color of the school uniforms (n=6; 5.7%) or satisfied (n=50; 47.6%). Those who were not satisfied (n=25; 23.8%) complained that the color is too bright and soils easily and that they disliked the color. Some parents complained that the color green/turquoise faded too easily. Color will always involve personal preferences and taste and if the majority is satisfied, this is probably not an issue to be concerned with.

4.2.5.4 Concerns regarding the durability of school uniforms

School uniforms are apparently not as durable as some expected it to be. Problems that occurred, were that trousers tore around the pockets; dresses lasted for twelve months, faded color; blouses “burnt” too easily when they were ironed and the jerseys lost color and shape too soon.

TABLE 4.13: RESPONSES OF PARENTS ON DURABILITY OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Responses	n	%
Very satisfied parents	1	1.0
Satisfied parents	34	33.4
Dissatisfied parents	29	27.6
Missing	41	39.0
Total	105	100

The majority of respondents (n=64) expressed their dis/satisfaction with school uniforms. There was a small difference between those who were satisfied or very satisfied (n=35) and those who were dissatisfied (n=29).

4.2.5.5 Concerns regarding suppliers of school uniforms

Parents’ indicated their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with suppliers of the school uniforms in terms of specific factors:

4.2.5.5.1 Fabric/material of the school uniform

Respondents complained that the color of the uniforms was not consistent from one supplier to the other and that the uniform was supplied in different shades of the same color. They indicated that the material of the blouses was of poor quality and that the material burnt too easily during ironing.

4.2.5.5.2 Suppliers’ service

Parents suggested that an additional supplier could be introduced since the existing one was unable to supply the whole school with items of good quality and was unable to satisfy the demand of supplying school uniforms consistently. Parents objected to a monopolized supply of school uniforms by specific suppliers and preferred purchasing from other retailers. They indicated their dissatisfaction with the supplier of the school uniforms.

4.2.5.6 Maintenance and care of school uniforms

School uniforms are used on daily basis hence require frequent care. Care encompasses “any treatments that are required to maintain the new look of a textile product during use, cleaning, or storage. Improper care can result in items that are unattractive, not as durable as expected, uncomfortable or unusable” (Kadolph & Langford, 2002:28). Parents as school uniform buyers and caretakers have to care for the uniforms properly for it to last. The care label would be the ideal reference as to what sort of care should be given to the school uniform. Among the respondents, 31.4% (n=33) were satisfied with the maintenance of school uniforms while 23% (n=24) indicated dissatisfaction. Satisfied respondents indicated ease of maintenance though there was an occasional need to fix buttons or to sew up a few loose stitches, which was acceptable to them.

TABLE 4.14: SATISFACTION WITH MAINTENANCE OF UNIFORMS (n=105)

Response	n	%
Satisfied with maintenance	33	31.4
Not satisfied with maintenance	24	23
Missing	72	68.6
Total	105	100

Parents who were dissatisfied were concerned that there were no care instructions attached to garments and this was verified by the researcher at the manufacturer’s place of business. The only label attached identified the manufacturer and the size of the garment. Uniform items purchased from retailers like Pep Stores, Jet Stores and Ackermans, on the contrary, had clear care instructions in addition to size and the manufacture’s name. Parents who were dissatisfied indicated that the school uniform was not easy to maintain as the material got torn easily even if great care was taken during laundry, the color faded too soon, and the uniform needed frequent washing as well as regular maintenance. Another problem was that jerseys showed dimensional instability as they lost shape after a few washes.

4.2.5.7 Most important advantages of school uniforms

The majority of respondents (n=44; 41.9%) indicated that the advantage of the school uniforms were to identify the pupil with the school and schoolmates. Should it be necessary, for example in the case of an accident, a pupil would be easily identified as belonging to a particular school (refer to Table 4.15).

TABLE 4.15: ADVANTAGES OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS (n=105)

Advantages	n	%
Equal status for pupils	25	23.8
Identity with the school	44	41.9
Aesthetic experiences	6	5.7
Reduces competition on clothing	4	3.8
Cool to wear in summer	2	1.9
Missing	24	22.9
Total	105	100

Besides the advantage of identification, compulsory school uniforms make it much easier for pupils to dress for school. Some indicated that pupils have a choice of items, for example a pupil could choose to wear a skirt, trousers or a dress. Some (n=25; 23.8%) of the respondents indicated that school uniforms have a further advantage of concealing socio-economic status as well as reducing any possibility of competition among pupils. Also, the school uniform is said to be affordable as it is comparatively cheaper than branded fashion clothes, which might have a greater appeal to the students. School uniform then, “saves” private clothes as these are reserved for after school and other private activities. Respondents also indicated, from parents’ viewpoint, an advantage of aesthetic experiences, i.e. school uniforms appear neat, tidy and presentable. Also school uniform was noted by parents as having a positive element of control; parents noted that to some extent school uniforms control pupils’ behavior, especially in public.

4.2.5.8. Problems considered most prominent with school uniform by parents

Respondents’ satisfaction with specific attributes of school uniforms is revealed in Table 4.11. In the open question, respondent got the opportunity to specify/explain this issue: 52 (49.9%) indicated that there were problems with the school uniform; which translates into dissatisfaction. Problems that arose varied from care, dimensional stability, color fastness, psychological discomfort and suppliers’ incapacity.

Respondents (9 out of 61 who responded) indicated that the blouses tear easily and jerseys like wise fray easily; some parents (2 out of 61) noted that jerseys are of poor quality as they lose shape after only a few laundry sessions; some (7 out of 61) indicated that the school uniform needed regular cleaning and that drying the uniform was a problem on rainy days. Respondents also complained that the color of the school uniform tended to bleed and faded quickly. Other respondents (17 out of 61) felt that the uniform was expensive and that, not all parents could afford to buy the full school uniform while 10 out of 61 respondents indicated that the school uniform denied pupils’ freedom of choice as some pupils did not like wearing school uniform. Also wearing school uniform might make pupils to be insecure or too self-conscious because the public was easily drawn to watch what a pupil did and how s/he did it. Uniform might also indicate that one was from a vulnerable or weak group and might easily be attacked whether physically, verbally or in any other way. Also when wearing school uniforms, pupils might misbehave in public with the belief that the uniform might protect them while on the other hand, pupils might be associated with any thing bad that might be known about their school. Certain respondents (12 out of 61) noted problems related to fit as well as the style. It was noted that the style did not suit pupil’s figures especially that there were gathers below the shoulder yoke. Only two parents observed that since pupils were required to wear only jerseys with the school emblem, pupils might be hard hit by harsh winters as the jersey was too light and might not be warm enough in winter. Parents (6 out of 61) indicated that there were not enough suppliers and this resulted in non-availability as well as shortage of sizes of school uniforms from time to time.

4.2.6 Open questions for pupils

4.2.6.1 Pupils' dis/satisfaction with present school uniforms

Failure of school uniforms to meet pupils' expectations will inevitably result in consumer dissatisfaction. Pupils' expectations in this research were considered in terms of durability and performance of uniforms. Affordability, availability of school uniforms at time of purchase as well as the size and fit of the uniforms were also taken into consideration. Refer to Table 4.16 for results.

TABLE 4.16: PUPILS' SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL UNIFORMS (n=105)

Level of satisfaction	n	%
Very satisfied	1	1.0
Satisfied	35	33.3
Dissatisfied	66	62.9
Missing	3	2.8
Total	105	100

Only one of the respondents indicated that she was very satisfied with the school uniform in general. Pupils who were satisfied with the school uniform (n=35; 33%) mentioned that the skirt is durable and colorfast. A number of them (n=31; 29.5%) were satisfied with the style and color. Only one student was satisfied with the jersey, mentioning that the jerseys are warm and durable. Similarly only one student recorded satisfaction with the trousers and explained that they are cool in summer. Another student mentioned that the school uniform gave her a choice of what to wear for school while another appreciated the school emblem on the uniform because it distinguished them from pupils from other schools. This reflects a sense of pride.

The reasons that pupils provided for their satisfaction coincided with those of their parents, i.e. providing a choice of what to wear to school and as a way of identification with schoolmates.

Dissatisfied pupils gave several reasons for their negative evaluation: some (n=7; 6.7%) mentioned that the blouses are of low quality and tore easily, that buttons fell off soon, that trousers' pocket openings tore easily, that jerseys lack dimensional stability as they stretched out of shape and size. Respondents (n=11; 10.5%) also indicated that the color of the uniform was not colorfast and that the blouses burned easily during ironing. Durability and colorfastness of the blouses depend on the type of fabric and dye used, and the finish. Literature shows that synthetic fibers are durable garments and even the type of dye used was colorfast.

According to the SABS specifications 1444 poly-cotton fabric (65% polyester and 35% cotton) is recommended for school uniforms, for shirts or blouses. In addition, care instructions should be attached to assist consumers on properly care for the blouses. With regard to colorfastness, the dye used depends on the fabric and synthetics are generally more colorfast than natural fibers. Cotton, on the other hand, is usually dyed using a water-soluble dye and is less color fast than viscose and rayon (Ingamels, 1993:19). Problems that were identified could thus be ascribed to the textiles used.

Seventeen (n=17; 16.2%) respondents indicated that they did not like the style or the color of the school uniform. Concerning fit, the main concern was the non-availability of sizes at suppliers, which forced them to take sizes that were not right for them. According to Rasband, (2002:18-19), sizes differ from one manufacturer/brand to the next and this may create confusion. Manufacturers change the size standards for different reasons like economy, amount of ease to be added, etc. Sizes may also differ according to the target market,

Pupils also indicated that they did not like style of dress, the striped blazer, the blouse or the new tie that was added to the school uniform. Pupils complained that the dresses were too long. Some indicated that the blazer and the shirt with the emblem/logo were too expensive. A few indicated that the school uniform was badly constructed: that the hems of shirts came unfinished, that buttons were loose and that the seams around pocket openings of pants were not closed. This resulted in valid dissatisfaction. The problem is aggravated when there are only a few suppliers of school uniforms that restrict consumers' choice.

School uniform is referred to as "dress" in the Botswana Education Act Cap. 58: 01 of 167 [as amended], part III section 11(1)(h). Section 11 of part III of the Education Act gives the board statutory power to prescribe school uniforms and related rules. This gives pupils no option but to wear school uniforms as prescribed. Inevitably, pupils would want some degree of flexibility with the rules, for example, a few commented that they would like the trousers to be worn everyday, rather than to have strict rules to wear a certain type of uniform on a given day. In Gaborone Secondary School for example, girls are expected to wear a dress on some days and the trousers on other days. Pupils disapprove this practice.

4.2.6.2 Suggested changes to school uniforms

More than one suggestion per pupil was possible and therefore the number of suggestions exceeded 105 (i.e., the sample size) because some respondents mentioned more than one factor, so they appeared more than once in the frequency (Table 4.17).

TABLE 4.17: SUGGESTED CHANGES TO SCHOOL UNIFORMS BY PUPILS

Future Changes	n	%
Dress regulations	18	17.1
Comfort and style of school uniform	35	33.3
Color of school uniform	22	21
Fabric	31	29.5
No changes	18	17.1
Construction of school uniform	12	11.4
Prices/Affordability	3	2.9
Supplier of school uniform	7	6.7
Total	146	139

Pupils suggested certain changes to dress regulations, i.e. that the dresses should be done away with in favor of skirts, that sandals could be introduced for summer, to include jackets in school uniforms, to make ties

compulsory, to introduce white socks, to ban multicolored scuffs, to allow pants to be worn all year round and to strip teachers of their power to enforce school uniform.

Apart from some who indicated that dresses should be done away with, some wished to change the style of the dresses (n=35; 33.3%) in terms of a sleeveless dress without a collar; and to allow skirts that suit individual figures better, They objected against the flare skirts and also suggested a change of the style of the blazer.

Some respondents (n=22; 21%) suggested color changes, as they were not comfortable with school uniform colors. They indicated the color is too bright (gold) and that it should be changed to navy blue while others noted that the emblem is not always of the same color. The same complaint was made about the blouses: apparently the color often varies from creamy white to bright white. They indicated that the blouses should be the same, preferably a pure, bright white.

Respondents (n=31; 29.5%) suggested that the quality of the material used for all the school uniform items should improve. Some suggested different materials for summer and winter because uniforms were not always comfortable during summer and winter. The possibility of a more comfortable stretch fabric was also mentioned.

There were specific suggestions in terms of the construction, namely to improve the quality of seams and hems (n=12; 11.4%). Suggestions to change the suppliers (n=7; 6.7%) were based on complaints about construction and sizing, the quality of material used as well as suppliers' service in general..

Only a small minority complained about the cost of school uniforms, they specifically referred to the additional costs due to embroidery of the emblem on blouses that increased the prices of blouses by 100%.

4.2.6.3 Pupil's personal experiences with school uniforms

Pupils could also freely express their feelings about personal experiences with school uniforms. Comments were coded and conceptualized: psychological influences as well as comments about aesthetics were prevalent (Table 4.18).

TABLE 4.18: PUPILS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH SCHOOL UNIFORMS (n=105)

Pupils' feelings	n	%
Psychosocial Influences	20	19.1
Aesthetic experiences	52	49.5
Missing	33	31.4
Total	105	100

Respondents (n=8; 7.6%) who experienced negative feelings when wearing school uniforms, felt awkward, imprisoned and felt that they had no freedom. Those who experienced positive feelings (n=13; 12.4%) indicated a sense of belonging and identity with the school. Some mentioned that school uniforms contributed the feeling

of having a life goal, also of being future responsible citizens of Botswana. Respondents thus mentioned psychosocial influences (n=20; 19.1%).

Regarding aesthetic experiences, the majority of respondents (n=52; 49.5%) felt confident, attractive, smart, comfortable, proud, good, special and felt like professionals. On the negative side, a few of the respondents (n=5; 4.8%) felt the school uniform did not look nice on them and hence hated themselves when wearing school uniforms.

4.2.6.4 Dislikes about wearing school uniforms

Pupils were asked to express their dislikes about school uniforms. The results are shown in Table 4.19.

TABLE 4.19: PUPILS’ DISLIKES ABOUT WEARING SCHOOL UNIFORMS (n=105)

Pupils dislikes	n	%
Style and comfort	17	16.2
Fit and figure types	11	10.5
Psychosocial aspects	16	15.2
School dress regulations	20	19
No dislikes	15	14.3
Missing	26	24.8
Total	105	100

Pupils expressed particular dislikes about school uniforms: 14.3% liked the school uniforms while 16.2% did not like the style of the school uniforms and claimed that they were not well designed. They further indicated that regarding comfort, the school uniforms failed to meet desired levels of comfort especially in cold weather. The respondents (10.5%) indicated that the school uniforms did not fit or suit them, so they looked “shapeless” while wearing it. The other issue was that the school uniforms do not match students’ complexion. These accentuated complaints about aesthetic properties.

In terms of psychosocial aspects, pupils indicated that school uniforms contributed to their identification with the school; in fact, 15.2% of the respondents indicated that they experienced some association with the school, whether good or bad.

Referring to school dress regulations, legislation (in this instance the Education Act Cap 58:01 of 1967) compels each school governing body in the country to prescribe school dress. Effectively this means that the wearing of uniform is imposed in a manner that does not allow any deviation. This is reflected in the prospectus of each school. All prospectuses state that it is compulsory to wear school uniform even during weekends when attending school activities. Some of the respondents (19% of them), expressed their dislike to being forced to wear the same uniform daily. Teachers enforce regulations related to school uniforms and regularly check whether the girls are appropriately dressed, also whether the length of dress is satisfactory. The results support Kaiser (1998:376-377), namely that school uniforms could suppress pupils’ individuality. The reasons that the style and color were of the school uniforms did not suit ones’ figure and complexion are aesthetic

expressions that consumers usually consider when choosing clothing. Under circumstances where girls have no choice, consumer dissatisfaction may occur.

4.2.6.5 Positive responses about school uniforms

The majority (n=61; 58.1%) of the respondents indicated that school uniforms made them appear equal, that is, it leveled pupils' socio-economic status. School uniforms also made them feel educated and raised hopes for a higher status in the future. Pupils felt proud, dignified, respected and appreciated. With other schoolmates, the pupils felt at home, secure and united when wearing school uniforms.

TABLE 4.20: PUPILS' POSITIVE RESPONSES ABOUT WEARING SCHOOL UNIFORMS (n=105)

Responses	n	%
Status	61	58.1
Group belonging	26	24.8
Convenience	2	2
Nothing	3	2.9
Missing	13	12.4
Total	105	100

Respondents (n=24; 24.8%), indicated that they felt a sense of belonging to a school or group, they could be easily identified with the school, or if out somewhere, felt that they represented the school. A small minority of respondents felt school uniform saved them time as they did not have to search for what to wear. This confirms Swain (2002:54) and Kaiser (1998:362) who indicated that school uniforms are meant to identify the pupils with the schools. And that school uniforms conceal the background of pupils and make them equal, promote a sense of belonging and save time in choosing what to wear on daily basis (Hollowman, 1995:35; Kraft, 2003:2).



CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are presented according to the objectives of the research.

- **Objective 1:** To describe the quality standards that the school boards of Ledumang and Gaborone Secondary Schools in Botswana apply for the selection of girls' school uniforms.

The Ledumang Senior Secondary School PTA claimed to have definite quality standards for the selection of school uniforms in place since the opening of the school in 1994. However, these were not availed to the researcher despite considerable effort to access the information. Having no records might lead to some PTA members not knowing who determines the quality standards and also not knowing they exist. Some of the respondents (PTA member) did indeed have no knowledge of the existence of such standards. According to the school prospectus (2006:6), girls' school uniforms comprise of a white blouse with school an embroidered emblem, shirt collar and regular sleeves (long or short); the turquoise tunic with school emblem (of appropriate length); turquoise skirt (of appropriate length) and grey slacks. There were no written quality standards available to who ever might need it; i.e. a parent, a retailer a manufacturer and even the researcher. The researcher is unable to conclude that the school uniforms are produced in conformance with PTA standards due to non-availability of such a document. Kadolph, (1998:13) defined quality as "the way the product or service conforms to specifications...", thus there were no specifications for the researcher to refer to.

Gaborone Senior Secondary School PTA also claimed to have quality standards, these were however also not in written format. The researcher was told that they used a specific dress as an example to whoever wanted to produce the school uniforms. The school prospectus (2005:12) indicated the dress as "the gold, belted tunic with a navy blue collar and navy blue turn-up band on the sleeves. The tunic should have a waistline". The trousers were described as "grey tailored slacks" and the blouse as "white school shirt". In neither of the schools any specifications in terms of type of materials, the weave, construction methods (e.g. seam type, stitch type and stitch density) that are crucial intrinsic cues of quality, were specified. The dresses' length was at least stated as "knee length". The specifications/descriptions rather, were not enough to guide the consumer or the producer of school uniforms to be able to purchase (in the case of the consumer) or produce the exact school uniform in case of a producer / manufacturer. According to SABS specifications for school uniforms in South Africa (1444), the fabric for school wear is clearly specified as polyester/viscose (50/50) or polyester/cotton (65/35). The weave type is specified as plain, or twill or cord) and other construction methods like the seam type etc. are specified. This could serve as an example for school wear in Botswana.

The style (intrinsic quality cue) of the school uniform for both schools was also not fully described. For example, the sleeves of the Gaborone Senior Secondary School dresses were not described as short regular sleeves, the

shoulder yoke was also not covered as well as the six-panelled skirt to be joined to the bodice. Ledumang Senior Secondary School did not indicate that the style of the dress was princess line. A pictogram of the design as well as a sample of fabric to show the weave and the colour could be used. Both the design/style and fabric are intrinsic cues of quality.

The labels of school wear were also not mentioned in the prospectuses of both schools although a label serves as a useful extrinsic indicator of quality that could contain such information as fibre content, size and care instructions. The researcher visited the supplier recommended by Ledumang Senior Secondary School and inspected the school uniforms. The label attached only showed the name of manufacturer and his place, and the size of the garment

One may thus conclude that guidelines in terms of intrinsic quality indicators are non-existent in the selected schools and that the matter needs to be attended to so that quality standards could be monitored properly and objectively. It is suggested that tenders for the supply of school uniforms need to be reviewed periodically, i.e. after three to five years to maintain quality standards.

- **Objective 2:** To describe specific extrinsic and intrinsic quality indicators that are considered by parents and pupils to judge the quality of school uniforms.

The results showed that the majority of parents and pupils always observed extrinsic quality attributes during pre purchase evaluation of school uniforms: the fit of uniforms, the supplier as well as the look and feel of the fabric were indicated as the prominent extrinsic indicators of quality. In terms of intrinsic indicators of quality, a general impression of neatness and the fasteners were used to guide quality judgment. The latter indicates a very general evaluation: only smaller percentages of respondents attended to actual stitching, seam types etc. This coincides with indicators used during the pre purchase evaluation at point of purchase for other types of clothing and emphasises the need to improve the quality standards through well formulated specifications so that consumers who do not necessarily have the knowledge and skills to judge the quality standards properly are protected (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995:150; Hines & O'Neal, 1995:227). At the moment lack of well-documented quality standards (extrinsic as well as extrinsic indicators) at both schools probably indicate that pupils and parents have valid grounds for dissatisfaction with school uniforms. One could thus anticipate a preference for certain suppliers/store who are trusted to provide quality goods. Glock and Kunz (2000:5,6) state that consumers are not knowledgeable enough on the properties of fibre or fabrics and finishes to enable thorough evaluation of intrinsic quality and performance of the products. They then revert to extrinsic cues like price and supplier reputations.

- **Objective 3:** To describe parents' and pupils' expectations regarding the performance of secondary school uniforms in terms of specific extrinsic and intrinsic attributes.

Parents and pupils' expectations of the (durability) of school uniform items seemed realistic: the majority expected dresses, trousers and skirts to last at least two years while the blouse was expected to last for a year. Respondents were apparently satisfied with the performance of the dresses, trousers and skirts but were dissatisfied with the blouses. The number of school uniform items owned by pupils also seemed realistic: pupils owned more blouses than skirts and trousers because they needed to be washed more frequently.

Respondents' expectations with regard to intrinsic attributes such as style were met as the majority of the respondents (over 50%) rated it very satisfactory. However, dissatisfaction was expressed with regards to maintenance of shape and size (dimensional stability) by the majority (over 50%). This could be attributed to the textiles used (poor quality) or improper and frequent wash by respondents. Problems that related to durability and maintenance were fit-related, such as armhole seam tears. These could be due to poor construction, poor sizing or growth of pupils: if uniforms are expected to last two years, it is inevitable that uniforms would eventually undergo stain in certain areas and tear more easily. Glock and Kunz (2000:5,6) however emphasize that manufacturers often cut production costs by using less rigid quality standards or omitting some steps in the manufacturing process to save costs. This may explain why consumers raised issues such as unfinished hems, loose threads and loose buttons.

Although parents indicated that they were generally satisfied with the style and colour of the school uniforms, the pupils did not agree. This is understandable because parents could be more practical while pupils would prefer to be individual and fashionable. Both however shared the sentiments that the material came in different shades and there was colour fading due to poor quality standards.

- **Objective 4:** To explore and describe the antecedents of parents' and pupils' dis/satisfaction with school uniforms in terms of their initial expectations and existing quality standards.

Although respondents indicated that they were generally satisfied with school uniforms, certain problems that occurred indicated urgent review by the responsible PTA's to improve satisfaction.

It became clear that school uniforms needed basic repairs within six months after purchasing: problems such as seam tears within six months and poorly constructed fasteners were major causes of dissatisfaction. This confirms concerns raised by Glock and Kunz (2000:5, 6) that manufacturers cut production costs by lowering quality standards to save costs.

Pupils wanted more freedom of choice in terms of style, to express their own personality and to feel less restricted. They indicated preference for trousers rather than dresses and were unhappy about hard and fast rules

in terms of wearing specific types of uniform on specific days. Literature indicates that style, colour and fit are important in terms of a wearer's satisfaction with clothing (Brown & Rice, 2001:42; Fan, 20004:33). This explains why pupils who wear the uniforms have more complaints than parents who only evaluate certain of the quality indicators.

- **Objective 5:** To suggest amendments in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic properties of school uniforms that could enhance consumer satisfaction with school uniforms (based on literature).

Specific standards should be formulated to prevent production and supply of school uniforms of inferior quality. Materials chosen for the school uniforms should be of good quality shrink proof, colourfast and durable. Rasband, (2002:28) maintain that "every fibre or fabric, natural, synthetic or blend, is available in several levels of quality from low to high". Under such circumstances, the manufacturer / supplier has to be able to check the quality (perform quality tests) of the fabric before using it to ensure the quality of the school uniforms. Kadolph & Langford (2002:11) maintain that the manufacturers have to ensure that products meet specific quality standards. Manufacturers and the PTA's must understand their target market's expectations and needs so that they formulate production standards, materials and styles that meet the performance expectations of their consumers (parents and pupils).

The suggestion is that the PTA's or even manufacturers could approach the Botswana Bureau of Standards to interact with the South African Buro of Standards to formulate suitable standards for future application in Botswana. In addition suppliers should be advised to have the materials tested and to indicate quality standards clearly on the labels of garments (i.e. an extrinsic indicator that could be useful to indicate quality).

Tenders for supply of school uniforms should be invited and revised every three to five years to accommodate the needs of parents and pupils from time to time and to allow healthy competition in the market place among suppliers and improve product quality in the long run. Evaluation of the school uniforms should be done at regular intervals (three to five years). Such evaluation could involve all the stakeholders such as pupils, parents, suppliers and any other relevant authorities. Such evaluations would provide the necessary feedback to both the PTA and the suppliers whether customers/consumers of school uniform were satisfied. As Kadolph (1998:16) stated, "customers and their satisfaction is the basic underlying principle of total quality management". Such evaluations could show whether the consumers (parents and pupils) are satisfied with the quality of the school uniforms before a situation gets out of hand. Suppliers as well could be able to set their business objectives including customer satisfaction. From such evaluations, suppliers could learn what quality characteristics the customers' desire and were willing to pay for, hence incorporate such into the school uniforms (Glock & Kunz, 2000:5).

It was expected that consumers would want school uniforms to be affordable. The idea of having a second hand clothing (school uniforms) shop could be considered as indicated in Barnet *et al*, (1993:128). This could assist those who could not afford new school uniforms and would ensure some return on a item that is outgrown within a short period of time.

Kadolph (1998:28) maintain that cleaning could influence durability and that improper care could accelerate the wearing out of garments. Consumers (parents and pupils) are responsible for the durability, maintenance and care of the school uniforms. First, at purchasing stage, they should carefully inspect the construction of the school uniform, ensure that it fits properly and all parts that need reinforcement like pocket openings are secured /reinforced. Unfortunately parents and pupils do not necessarily have the skill to do this and therefore rigid manufacturing standards have to be out in place to assist in this regard. In the same manner, clear care instructions should be provided on the labels of school uniforms. Complaints that blouses burn easily when ironed, indicate the presence of synthetic fibres. Unless this is clearly communicated through care instructions on a permanent label, consumers will continue to experience this problem. Proper care elongates the service life of a product while improper care results in fabric degradation both mechanically and chemically due to “abrasion of a wet fabric, cleaning agents and laundering condition” (Hurren *et al*, in Lau & Fan, 2002:931). The burning of the blouse is also an indication of a product failure to meet consumer’s expectations in post purchase use, which was also revealed in the study by Hjorth-Anderson and Sproles (in Kincade *et al*, 1998:82).

Concerning winter uniforms, the suggestion is to encourage the wear of trousers instead of dresses and skirts and to introduce elasticized waists to address fit problems.

SUMMARY

An overall judgment of pupils’ and parents’ responses indicated that dissatisfaction with school uniforms exist, but that it is not necessarily severe. Within the systems perspective that was chosen for the organization of this research, it is imperative to look at respondents’ overall satisfaction with school uniforms but to simultaneously acknowledge individual judgments such as intrinsic attributes versus judgment of extrinsic attributes. Despite a notion that pupils and parents are generally dissatisfied with school uniforms, responses revealed that they are actually relatively satisfied with school uniforms in general. However, they are particularly dissatisfied with certain intrinsic attributes such as fit, the quality of construction and the stability of the colour during wear and care procedures. This may cause higher levels of discontent despite a more positive evaluation of the school uniform in general. It is thus very important to identify specific problems and to try to address those to ensure increased satisfaction with school uniforms.

Respondents indicated that they mainly use extrinsic indicators during pre purchase evaluation. However, their negative experiences involve intrinsic attributes as well as certain extrinsic attributes such as complaints about the combination of items that they are supposed to wear. The predominance of extrinsics during pre purchase evaluation may indicate limited knowledge and skills to judge intrinsic attributes so that the reputation of the store /supplier and the label are used as short cuts to conclude buyer decisions. Unfortunately even here, the situation is not ideal: the labeling of school wear does not provide enough detail to allow informed buyer decisions. Simple care instructions were not present, neither could any indication of fibre content be found.

Many of the causes for dissatisfaction are attributed to factors should be addressed as a matter of priority. It is of utmost importance that schools formulate clear standards for school uniforms so that the quality of the school uniforms can be monitored and improved. The PTA's should take up this matter in conjunction with interesting parties because suggestions for changes that were made by pupils are not necessarily unrealistic. Pupils and parents acknowledges the advantages of school wear as affordable clothing that contribute to the image of the school and prevent discrimination amongst pupils but they requested some lenience, e.g. having the choice to wear skirts rather than dresses or to wear trousers rather than skirts whenever they wished to do so.

Within the systems perspective, satisfaction with school wear could be enhanced in several ways (equifinality), e.g. to provide clear standards for school uniforms that would ensure that the durability of the school wear meets their expectations; to provide pupils some choice in terms of what to wear and to ensure that the services provided by suppliers are properly monitored. This will have no bearing on the fact that pupils not necessarily like the colour of the uniform or the style of the uniform but the improvements will certainly counterbalance negative judgments. It is suggested that PTA's accept the responsibility for school wear as an ongoing responsibility rather than to assume that a uniform is a tradition that cannot be amended. The research revealed that the majority of the PTA members were aware that the uniform of the school is their responsibility but the majority also indicated that very little had been done about it during their term of service.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to two senior secondary schools located in Gaborone. The limiting factors were the time available for the study and funds: transport costs were high as repeated visits were required to retrieve the questionnaires before the schools closed for the holidays. Parents were not very keen to complete and return the questionnaires in time. A larger turn-up could have been realized if the questionnaires were to be filled by pupils alone.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

It is suggested that suppliers of school uniforms become involved to determine their frustrations. Lacking quality standards, increased outcries for affordable school uniforms etc. exert pressures that cannot be ignored. It is suggested that other schools are approached to determine whether they have properly formulated standards for school wear in place and to come to some agreement about future initiatives that would benefit all parties involved. The main issue is that school uniforms are compulsory and that lack of choice may cause frustration any way. Any measure that could prevent dissatisfaction, should thus be pursued, e.g. to have some freedom of what to wear (e.g. a skirt or trousers) and to have the assurance that good fit and proper quality standards are ensured.



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Department of Consumer Science

AN EXPLICATION OF CONSUMERS' SATISFACTION WITH SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRLS' UNIFORMS IN BOTSWANA

Dear participant,

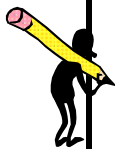
Thank you for completing this questionnaire. The information is required as part of my research for my post graduate studies. All the information will be treated as strictly confidential and the names of participants, their individual views and opinions will not be disclosed. The findings will be used to make suggestions that could be beneficial for your school and it will be reported to the school upon completion of the project.

Thank you

Tduetso Mothibi

Study leader: Dr Alet C Erasmus

QUESTIONNAIRE A: FOR SCHOOL BOARD OR PTA MEMBERS



Section A: Demographic information				RESPONDENT NO	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block					VI		
1. Gender	Male	Female		V2			
2. Name of the secondary school				V3			
3. How long have you been a member of the school PTA? (Years)				V4			
4. How long has the current school uniform been in use? (years)	2-5	6-10	10+	I do not know	V5		



Section B: The selection process for school uniforms



5. Please indicate with an X which suppliers provide the listed items of the school uniform.

SUPPLIERS	Dresses	Skirts	Pants	Blouses	None	I do not know	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
<i>A specific supplier selected by school PTA</i>							V6		
<i>Ackermans</i>							V7		
<i>Jet</i>							V8		
<i>Woolworths</i>							V9		
<i>Pep Stores</i>							V10		
<i>Kopano Stores</i>							V11		
<i>Cash Bazaar</i>							V12		
<i>Other (specify below)</i>							V13		
<i>Specify the name of the supplier/s that are not listed here:</i>							V14		
							V15		



**6. Who does the selection of school uniforms, and how frequently do they do it?
Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block**



	The original uniform has never been reconsidered	The uniform is reconsidered <u>every three</u> years	The uniform is reconsidered <u>every five</u> years	The uniform is reconsidered when the <u>need arises</u>		FOR OFFICIAL USE		
						V16		
Ourselves as the school board / PTA executive						V16		
PTA together with parents						V17		
PTA, parents and pupils						V18		
If there are other authorities for school uniforms: Please specify 						V19		
7. Which QUALITY STANDARDS do you use / apply when selecting the girls' school uniforms?	PTA standards	South African standards	British Standards	Other	Uncertain	V20		
8. If other quality standards are used, please specify here 						V21		
9. Which SIZE STANDARDS do you use?	Manufacturer's	South African	American	British	Uncertain	V22		



10. Concerning DURABILITY, how long do you expect the following items to last before needing replacement?

Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block

> Dress	Minimum 6 months	Minimum one year	Minimum two years	Other (specify)
> Skirt	Minimum 6 months	Minimum one year	Minimum two years	Other (specify)
> Pants	Minimum 6 months	Minimum one year	Minimum two years	Other (specify)
> Blouse	Minimum 6 months	Minimum one year	Minimum two years	Other (specify)

FOR OFFICIAL USE

V23		
V24		
V25		
V26		

11. When selecting the SUPPLIER for the school uniform, how important do you regard the below listed factors?

	Very important	Important	Uncertain	Less important	Unimportant
The suppliers' CAPACITY: (ability to produce as many school uniforms as needed)	5	4	3	2	1
The supplier's ability to produce QUALITY school uniforms	5	4	3	2	1
ACCESSIBILITY OF SUPPLIERS to parents	5	4	3	2	1
The supplier's specimen MEETING THE PTA QUALITY STANDARDS for school uniforms	5	4	3	2	1
The REASONABLE PRICE for school uniforms	5	4	3	2	1

V27		
V28		
V29		
V30		
V31		



Section C: Judgment of school uniforms

12. How important do you regard the following in your judgment of the quality of girls' school uniforms?




Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block	Very important	Important	Uncertain	Less important	Unimportant			
The fabric content should appear on the label	5	4	3	2	1	V32		
The fabric(s) used should be the one(s) specified by the school board / PTA	5	4	3	2	1	V33		
The school uniform construction methods should be as specified by the school board	5	4	3	2	1	V34		
The seams should be strong and neat	5	4	3	2	1	V35		
Stitching should be strong (stitch density as specified by the school board / PTA)	5	4	3	2	1	V36		
The hem width should not be too narrow	5	4	3	2	1	V37		
The seam type should be strong	5	4	3	2	1	V38		
The seam edge finishing should be well done to prevent fraying	5	4	3	2	1	V39		
The fabric should not shrink due to laundry	5	4	3	2	1	V40		
The fabric should be an easy care, wash and wear fabric	5	4	3	2	1	V41		
The fabric should allow for ease of stain removal	5	4	3	2	1	V42		
The uniform should be machine washable	5	4	3	2	1	V43		
The style of the uniform should be easy, simple, uncomplicated	5	4	3	2	1	V44		
The school uniform should be affordable	5	4	3	2	1	V45		
The colour should match the image of the school	5	4	3	2	1	V46		
The uniform should be durable, longer lasting	5	4	3	2	1	V47		
The style should fit most figure types	5	4	3	2	1	V48		



12 continued:								
How important do you regard the following in your judgment of the quality of girls' school uniforms?								
Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block								
A school uniform should make the wearer proud	5	4	3	2	1	V49		
A school uniform should make the wearer feel unique	5	4	3	2	1	V50		
A school uniform should make the wearer decent and neat	5	4	3	2	1	V51		
A school uniform should make a girl look beautiful, feel beautiful	5	4	3	2	1	V52		
A school uniform should be colourfast: colour will not fade	5	4	3	2	1	V53		
A school uniform should be strong and should not need regular mending (durable)	5	4	3	2	1	V54		
The school uniform should be dry cleanable	5	4	3	2	1	V55		
An appropriate or correct care label should be attached to the school uniform	5	4	3	2	1	V56		
The school uniform should be cool to wear in summer	5	4	3	2	1	V57		
The school uniform should be warm to wear in winter	5	4	3	2	1	V58		
The correct size label should be attached to the school uniform	5	4	3	2	1	V59		
All trimmings and fasteners should match the fabric	5	4	3	2	1	V60		
The trimmings and fasteners should last as long as the fabric	5	4	3	2	1	V61		
The colour should be fashionable	5	4	3	2	1	V62		
The colour should be approved by parents together with pupils	5	4	3	2	1	V63		

Section D: Open questions

Please explain each of the following in approximately 100 words:

 <p>13. If you could change the selection process for school uniform for this school, how would you change it? Explain</p>	V64		
	V65		
	V66		
	V67		
	V68		
 <p>14. <u>In your opinion</u>, how satisfied are the girls with their school uniform in general? Explain</p>	V69		
	V70		
	V71		
	V72		
	V73		
 <p>15. <u>In your opinion</u>, does the present school uniform perform according to the expectations of the school board? Explain</p>	V75		
	V76		
	V77		
	V78		
	V79		

Department of Consumer Science

CONSUMERS' EVALUATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRLS' UNIFORMS IN BOTSWANA

Dear participant,

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. The information is required as part of my research for my post graduate studies. All the information will be treated as strictly confidential and the names of participants, their individual views and opinions will not be disclosed. The findings will be used to make suggestions that could be beneficial for your school and it will be reported to the school upon completion of the project.

Thank you for participating, may God bless you.

Tuduetso Mothibi

Study leader: Dr Alet C Erasmus

QUESTIONNAIRE B: PARENTS AND PUPILS



Section A: Demographic information			FOR OFFICIAL USE			
Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block		RESPONDENT NO	V1			
1. Gender (PARENT)	Male	Female	V2			
2. Name of the secondary school			V3			
3. Present educational level of the pupil: (Form 4 or 5)			V4			



Section B: Purchasing of school uniforms

4. How often have you shopped for girls' school uniforms at each of the following supplier/retailer in the past?

PARENTS/PUPILS: Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block



Supplier/ retailer	At least once a term	Maximum once in six months	Maximum once per year	Maximu m once in two years	Never	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
<i>Supplier selected by the PTA</i>						V5		
<i>Jet</i>						V6		
<i>Ackermans</i>						V7		
<i>Woolworths</i>						V8		
<i>Cash Bazaar</i>						V9		
<i>Pep Stores</i>						V10		
<i>Other(specify below)</i>						V11		
Specify the other supplier:						V12		

5. Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block

Who does the school uniform shopping in your household, and how frequently do they do it?	Every term	Every year	Occasionally	Never	FOR OFFICIAL USE			
> Pupil					V13			
> Parent/Guardian					V14			
> Older brothers/sisters					V15			
Other: please specify below					V16			
Specify the other person who does the shopping:						V17		



6. **Parents:** How many of your daughters have attended the current school during the past 10 years? (Include even those who were your dependents).

One	Two	Three	Four or more
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7. **Pupils:** How long have you been attending this secondary school?

Maximum 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	Between 2 and 4 years	More than 4 years
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8. **Parents/pupils:** Referring to the current school uniform: How many of the following pieces of school uniform do you have or does your daughter own?

> Skirt	1	2	3	4
> Blouse	1	2	3	4
> Dress	1	2	3	4
> Pants	1	2	3	4

9. **Parent/pupil who takes responsibility for purchase decisions:** When purchasing girls' school uniforms **HOW DO YOU JUDGE THE QUALITY OF THE SCHOOL UNIFORM CONSIDERING THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW?**
Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block

Do you regard more expensive uniforms as of a better quality than cheaper ones?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never
Do you regard imported school uniforms as of a better quality than the locally produced uniforms?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never
Do you consider certain brand names as being of a better quality than others? (for example, Polo, Adidas, etc)	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never
Are you of the opinion that the appearance (for example the color and the feeling of fabric texture) indicates the quality of the uniform?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never
Do you regard crease resistance as an indication that the uniform is of good quality?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never
Have you experienced that the fit of school uniforms differ depending on the manufacturer?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never
Do you buy the school uniform with the intention that it should fit for a relatively long period and therefore it must be comfortable, have roominess or have a loose fit?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never
Do you buy the school uniforms from specific suppliers that you believe sell quality clothing?	Yes, always	Sometimes	No, never

V18		
V19		
V20		
V21		
V22		
V23		
FOR OFFICIAL USE		
V24		
V25		
V26		
V27		
V28		
V30		
V31		
V32		



Section C: To be filled in by Parents and/or Pupils who are responsible for the purchase decisions:

Evaluation of **intrinsic cues** during purchasing

10. When purchasing girls' school uniforms, TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO JUDGE THE QUALITY OF THE UNIFORMS IN THE PAST? Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block				FOR OFFICIAL USE		
Do you attend to the fabric?	Always	Sometimes	Never	V33		
Do you attend to the colourfastness?	Always	Sometimes	Never	V35		
Do you attend to the appearance of the seams?	Always	Sometimes	Never	V37		
Do you attend to the functioning of the fastenings (for example zippers, buttons, buttonholes)	Always	Sometimes	Never	V38		
Do you attend to the colour of the thread used?	Always	Sometimes	Never	V39		
Do you attend to the neatness of the construction of the clothing items in general?	Always	Sometimes	Never	V40		
Do you check that the pockets have been reinforced at the top corners?	Always	Sometimes	Never	V41		

Section D: Maintenance and care

11. Considering your experience with school uniforms, how soon was it necessary to do REPAIRS (MAINTENANCE) on the below listed items? Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block						FOR OFFICIAL USE		
	Within six months	Between 6 months and one year	After one year	After two years	Never			
> Dress	5	4	3	2	1	V42		
> Skirt	5	4	3	2	1	V43		
> Blouse	5	4	3	2	1	V44		
> Pants	5	4	3	2	1	V45		



12. Please indicate with an X in the relevant block your specific experience with the listed problems that could occur with school uniforms as you have experienced it in the past	Within six months	Within one year	After one year	After two years	Uncertain	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
Armhole tear	5	4	3	2	1	V46		
A seam tear around the bust (bodice side seams)	5	4	3	2	1	V47		
Tight or uncomfortable fit around the hipline	5	4	3	2	1	V48		
Tight or uncomfortable fit around the waistline. Note that on a skirt or pants this will be the waistband.	5	4	3	2	1	V49		
A seam tear around the waistline	5	4	3	2	1	V50		
Loose buttons	5	4	3	2	1	V51		
Colour fading	5	4	3	2	1	V52		
Colour bleeding when washing	5	4	3	2	1	V53		
Disintegration/tears/holes in the fabric	5	4	3	2	1	V54		
Section E: Consumer expectations and dis/satisfaction with school uniforms								
13. Concerning the durability of school uniforms, how long do you expect the following items to last? Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block	Minimum six months	Minimum one year	Minimum 2 years	Longer than two years	Uncertain	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
> Dress	5	4	3	2	1	V55		
> Skirt	5	4	3	2	1	V56		
> Blouse	5	4	3	2	1	V57		
> Pants	5	4	3	2	1	V58		



<p>14. How would you rate the PERFORMANCE of the following items based on your experience with school uniforms in the past? (Excellent will imply that the garment is of high quality while unacceptable will indicate very poor performance, hence low quality).</p> <p>Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block</p>	Excellent	Good	Uncertain	Poor	Unacceptable	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
> Dress	5	4	3	2	1	V59		
> Skirt	5	4	3	2	1	V60		
> Pants	5	4	3	2	1	V61		
> Blouse	5	4	3	2	1	V62		
<p>15. Rate your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with existing school uniforms regarding the below listed attributes</p> <p>Please indicate your answer with an X in the relevant block</p>	Very satisfactory	satisfactory	neutral	unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
Style / pattern of the complete uniform	5	4	3	2	1	V63		
Fit of the complete uniform	5	4	3	2	1	V64		
Color fastness of the uniform in general	5	4	3	2	1	V65		
Fabric, color combination of the school uniform	5	4	3	2	1	V66		
Price (affordability)	5	4	3	2	1	V67		
Durability (long wear or lasted for a period you expected)	5	4	3	2	1	V68		
Comfort (in relation to fit)	5	4	3	2	1	V69		
Comfort in relation to coolness in summer	5	4	3	2	1	V70		
Comfort in relation to warmth in winter	5	4	3	2	1	V71		
Maintenance of shape and size	5	4	3	2	1	V72		



<p align="center">Section F: OPEN QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS/GAURDIANS</p> <p>Please answer the following three questions as completely and specific as possible. You may use either English or Setswana.</p>	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
<p>16. What suggestions do you have in terms of how the school uniform selection procedures can be improved in the future?</p>	V73		
<p>17. Please describe your general concerns or feelings regarding the following to indicate your satisfaction with the present school uniform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Style of the uniform: > Color of the uniform: > Durability of the uniform: > Suppliers of school uniforms: > Maintenance and care of uniforms: 	V74		
<p>18. What do you consider to be the most important ADVANTAGES of school uniforms?</p>	V75		
<p>19. What do you consider to be the most prominent PROBLEMS with school uniforms?</p>	V76		
	V77		
	V78		
	V79		
	V80		
	V81		
	V82		
	V83		
	V84		
	V85		
	V86		
	V87		
	V88		
	V89		
	V90		
	V91		
	V92		



<p style="text-align: center;">Section F continues: OPEN QUESTIONS FOR PUPILS</p> <p>Please answer the following five questions as completely and specific as possible. You may use either English or Setswana.</p>	FOR OFFICIAL USE		
<p>20. Explain your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your present school uniform briefly. Be very specific in terms of the various items and the properties of the uniforms.</p>	V93		
	V94		
	V95		
	V96		
<p>21. What is it concerning your school uniform that you would like to be changed in the near future?</p>	V97		
	V98		
	V99		
	V100		
<p>22. How do you feel about yourself when wearing a school uniform?</p>	V101		
	V102		
	V103		
	V104		
<p>23. What do DISLIKE MOST ABOUT wearing school uniforms?</p>	V105		
	V106		
	V107		
	V108		
<p>24. What do you like most ABOUT wearing school uniforms?</p>	V109		
	V110		
	VIII		
	VIII		