

Young households' allocation of resources for their homes' interiors

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Dissertation

M Consumer Science (Interior Merchandise Management)

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Dedicated to

My parents

Declaration

I, Christine Swanepoel, declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree M Consumer Science: Interior Merchandise Management, at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



Christine Swanepoel

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Summary

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by

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Young households who are new to the interior goods market pertinently experience the financial implication of major purchases, such as furniture or appliances. Due to the high start-up expense of furnishing a home, younger consumers may not be able to afford all the durables they need simultaneously, and would therefore have to deliberate and prioritise their spending in terms of the different interior product categories and zones in their home. In this deliberation, households will justify their expenditures on the basis of the need they have for the perceived value or meaning a room or object has. It is proposed that consumers often evaluate and purchase objects for its symbolic meaning rather than for its pragmatic, functional value or meaning. Since individuals define themselves and others in terms of their possessions and appearance, the home serves as the ideal social environment in which to convey a desired message regarding the household's identity and values.

Extant research shows that a common order of acquisition of household durables exists for different consumer groups, and that different consumer groups attach different levels of importance to the symbolic meanings of products and appearances. Consequently, this study set out to investigate and describe young households' allocation of financial and physical resources (i.e. money, effort and attention) toward specific interior product categories and different zones in their home; to investigate and describe households' justification for the allocation of their resources in terms of the functional utility, symbolic meaning (specifically status) and aesthetic appeal of interior products and zones; and to investigate and describe whether young households from different population groups (specifically White and Black) and income groups differ in their interior choices. These objectives were approached from the *symbolic interactionist*, *cultural* and *multiple mental accounting* perspectives.

Data was collected from 277 respondents residing in Tshwane, Gauteng during May to December 2011, by means of a structured questionnaire. The sampling criteria were age (25-39 years), location (Tshwane) and home occupancy status (owning or renting a home with multiple rooms).

Findings indicated that young households valued a *room* mostly for its perceived symbolic meaning, then its aesthetic appeal and lastly its functional purpose, but conversely valued the utilitarian purpose of an interior *object* the most and its symbolic meaning the least. Most resources were therefore allocated to rooms in the social zone, since this area presents more opportunities for appearance and impression management, by means of social symbols, than other, less public areas of the home. Furniture, as interior product category, was households' largest expenditure, possibly due to the role furniture's utilitarian purpose plays in making a home functional and liveable.

Regardless of their level of income, Black households allocated more resources to the interiors of their homes for symbolic- and aesthetic-related reasons, than their White counterparts. There was no significant difference between population groups in terms of their tendencies to allocate resources toward the interiors of their homes for utilitarian reasons. No significant differences were observed among the three income categories regarding the allocation of their resources, except when physical resources were allocated toward the interiors of zones in their homes for aesthetic reasons. In this particular instance, households in the upper income category (> R29 000) devoted the most effort and attention to the appearance and emotional appeal of their interiors.

The findings of this study have useful implications for retailers, buyers and forecasters in the household furniture, appliances and equipment sector, as well as for consumer facilitation. Retailers may incur noticeable losses if they underestimate the importance of interior goods' functional qualities, relative to their symbolic and aesthetic utility. In terms of visual merchandising, retailers may benefit from displaying interior goods as part of a 'room' instead of displayed as separate entities, since consumers, especially Black consumers, would pay more attention to the contextual symbolic and aesthetic meanings of interior goods. The findings also contribute to existing literature, which is dated and limited regarding households' acquisition of interior durables, as well as the functional, symbolic and aesthetic motivations that guide households' allocation of resources towards different zones and interior product categories in their homes, especially in the South African context.



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CHAPTER 1

THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

This chapter sets the context of the research by explicating the research problem and providing an overview of the structure of the dissertation

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The financial implication of major purchases, such as furniture or appliances, can be quite stressful for households, and finances (in terms of affordability) are inevitably pertinent in terms of their purchase decisions (Yoon, Oh & Cho, 2010:34). To complicate matters further, different household durables generally compete for the same disposable income. Typically, younger consumers who are new to the interior goods market cannot afford all the durables they need simultaneously and therefore have to deliberate and prioritise their spending (Kasulis, Lusch & Stafford, 1979:47, 56; Wilska, 2002:201, 209). The durables owned by a household would depend on factors such as income, wealth, social class, family size, duration of marriage or relationship, willingness to use credit, et cetera (Hebden & Pickering, 1974:67; Fine & Simister, 1995:1050). Since household durables are mostly expensive and intricate due to the technology involved, the purchasing process is also complex. The complexity of the process is further determined by individuals' prior experience (Bettman & Park, 1980:234) and whether the purchase is entered into as a high- or low-involvement activity (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff & Terblanche, 2004:79).

The fact that consumers evaluate products based on functional or pragmatic benefits has been the topic of many studies in the past (Clark, Zboja & Goldsmith, 2007:45). However, it has been postulated that consumer goods are often purchased mainly for their symbolic meaning rather than for their functional value (Solomon, 1983:319; Leigh & Gabel, 1992:27). In other words, goods are not always chosen for its functional value but because it communicates a certain desired image to significant others (Belk, 1980:365; Shukla, 2008:26; Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999:18, 23) or in the hope that it will elicit a positive response from a reference group (Mason, 1981:vii; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:29). It is also argued that consumers tend to define themselves, and often others,

in terms of their position in society by means of their possessions (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004:38; Internet: Ndenze, 2004:1). The interior of one’s home provides the ideal canvas to manipulate and convey this desired image. Particular aspects of interior design, such as furniture, its arrangement, the colour scheme and style can be used to convey messages of the self, one’s ideas and values, and one’s social status (Yoon *et al.*, 2010:33, 34).

Empirical research on consumers’ choice of interior products and services from a consumer’s perspective is limited. Being an expensive product category that is pertinent in terms of the planning of the interiors of people’s homes, its conspicuousness, aesthetic properties, and its use to reflect social status, this topic deserves attention. Many new interior outlets have opened their doors across South Africa since 2000 (Sonnenberg & Erasmus, 2005:10), which confirms the importance of this product category.

Although households’ purchasing of durables is mainly determined by functional properties, aesthetic appearance, and cost or affordability (Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34), the question worth asking is to what extent young, relatively inexperienced consumers also attach importance to the symbolic value of interior goods when considering utilitarian features of products. Extant research indicates that this would probably vary for different consumer groups and would depend on the product type (Donoghue, De Klerk & Ehlers, 2008:42). Donoghue and Erasmus (1999:21) found that Black, female South African consumers consider not only functional and economic factors when choosing major electrical household appliances, but that they also have clear social and symbolic objectives, such as to impress others. The authors did not, however, indicate whether these expressive, symbolic motives take precedence over the purely utilitarian considerations involved in their complex purchases. In a study by Donoghue *et al.* (2008:47) on consumers’ perceptions of symbolic and functional performance failures of major electrical household appliances, findings revealed that South African consumers do not distinguish between symbolic and functional performance failures of appliances, and that they considered both of equal importance. This study would therefore add to the existing body of literature by focussing on another product category and exploring some precedence of one utility over the other.

In an explorative, comprehensive study titled “My Home: Shelter, Shack or Showroom?” that involved 3500 respondents, the UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing revealed that South African consumers regard their homes as an important part of their identity (Internet: Ndenze, 2004:1). This idea is supported by Gunter (2000:15) and Sparke (2004:72, 73) who revealed that the home is linked to a person’s self and identity, and ultimately to the person’s self-esteem and social status. This seems to be the case in the South African context as well, as the UCT/Unilever study revealed that 76% of the respondents considered their homes to reflect their position in

society and 88% wanted their homes to create the best impression possible (Internet: Study finds that home is where the money goes, 2004:1; Fredericks, 2005:1). This suggests that consumers are guided by emotional, social, and ultimately symbolic objectives when planning the interiors of their homes. The study's conclusions may, however, be too broad to be very useful: the sample involved respondents from all income groups, races, and ages, in both urban and rural areas (Internet: Ndenze, 2004:1; Internet: Study finds that home is where the money goes, 2004:1). For the purpose of consumer facilitation in urban environments where major retailers compete for the attention of fast growing upper- and middle income markets in South Africa, it makes sense to explore the choice and buying behaviour of a more specific yet viable sample.

In the past, a few researchers have studied the priority assigned to products during the acquisition of household durables in an attempt to determine which durables are regarded necessities and which are considered luxuries that are only bought if extra money is available (Kasulis *et al.*, 1979:47). Findings indicated that a common order exists within homogeneous consumer groups (McFall, 1969:55; Kasulis *et al.*, 1979:56; Dickson, Lusch & Wilkie, 1983:434). An explanation or reasons for the order of purchases are, however, still lacking (Hebden & Pickering, 1974:68). More recent literature on this topic could not be found, which confirms the need to explore which interior purchases are predominantly based on their functional utilitarian value, and which are driven by the intrinsic symbolic meaning, such as expression of status or 'good taste'. Evidence of this kind would be useful to interior designers and during consumer facilitation in a pre-purchase context. Simultaneously, it seemed meaningful to investigate the context in which these interior products are used. It is therefore worth exploring which areas in the home are considered in terms of its functional value and which are valued for their intrinsic symbolic meaning, such as the possibility for expressing status or 'good taste'. Retailers could utilise such evidence in terms of their marketing messages and in terms of their allocation of floor space and visual merchandising.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

New homeowners spend more money on furniture and furnishings for their new homes than established households during the same timeframe (Burns, 2008:1; Siniavskaia, 2008:4), and their buying patterns are relatively easy to record as they tend to make most of their purchases in the first few years after setting up their homes (Siniavskaia, 2008:2, 6; Lin, 2004:4). Young households are classified as being in the 'honeymoon' stage of their lifecycle, which is the stage after moving out of their childhood home and perhaps getting married or moving in with a partner. This stage may last until their first child is born. These individuals generally have high start-up expenses because they need several items to set up their new house (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:333; Wilska,

2002:205). So called 'living room scales' have been developed to measure homeowners' attitudes toward the décor of their own living rooms, to determine the meaning that this room holds for them (Kempen, 2008:73); to measure taste cultures and status based on living room possessions (Laumann & House, 1970); as well as to measure households' social status based on the décor of their living rooms (Chapin, 1933 in Guttman, 1942:362). Limited empirical evidence exists, however, of how young households prioritise their interior purchases for their new homes, and how they justify these purchases. In other words, evidence is still lacking in terms of which evaluation criteria are more prevalent in this durable product category, and whether specific priorities are assigned to different zones in their homes. On face value, major prominent, upmarket interior outlets seem to devote more floor space to furniture and interior objects required for the so-called social zones, while prominent interior outlets that target lower income groups devote ample space for furniture and interior objects used in the private zones, for instance bedrooms. Empirical evidence to explain this observation is lacking. Research has confirmed that people from different cultural and socio-demographic backgrounds attach different meanings to their homes and use them in different ways (Gunter, 2000:99-103). Therefore, findings from research conducted in other contexts, especially in first-world countries, cannot be applied successfully in the South African context and a local study was thus deemed necessary.

1.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Indications are that, during the first six months after moving into their new homes, 83-92% of young North American couples or individuals spend money on electronics and kitchen appliances, 60-68% on furniture, 57% on window coverings, and 33-34% of new homeowners spend money on bedding and mattresses (Internet: Welcome disc, 2010:1; Welcome home, 2008:1). Most new homeowners therefore apparently allocate money to the kitchen and social zones (living room and dining area) of their homes, where these appliances, electronics, and most furniture are used. Of all retail trade sales in South Africa, household furniture, appliances, and equipment sales showed the highest annual increase (17.7%) between June 2009 and June 2010 and the third highest increase (7.7%) between February 2010 and February 2011. Sales in this category amounted to R9115 million between December 2010 and February 2011, and in January 2012 alone, retail sales reached R2467 million (Internet: Statistics South Africa, 2010:2; Statistics South Africa, 2011:2; Statistics South Africa, 2012:7). New homeowners would presumably have contributed greatly to these sales figures. A Datamonitor study on furniture retail sales in South Africa indicated that living room furniture made up a 49.3% share of all furniture sales in 2009 (Internet: Datamonitor, 2011). Siniavskaia (2008:3), however, found that bedroom furniture, including

mattresses, accounted for the highest spending in furniture sales in America in 2007, followed by living room sofas, other living room furniture, dining room furniture, and lastly outdoor furniture.

A number of studies have indicated that people's cultural and socio-demographic backgrounds influence the way they use a house and perceive its meaning (Gunter, 2000:99-103). People from different countries, for instance, use the kitchen in their homes for different purposes and combinations of activities (Gunter, 2000:101,102; Bechtel in Low & Chambers, 1989:176). Just as rooms may differ in their purpose or meaning, interior products also have different purposes or meanings, namely, utilitarian value, enjoyment, representations of interpersonal ties, identity and self-expression, financial aspects, appearance-related value and status (Richins, 1994:507). All of this suggests that some kind of priority may be assigned to interior objects for different zones in homes, and that it may differ for different consumer groups and probably also in different contexts. A better understanding of such an inclination could be useful for retailers to purposely design their product mix and their in-store product display in order to lure customers to their stores. Gaining an understanding of the reasons behind such prioritisation for different consumer groups may also help to better forecast the demand for these household durables.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of the research is to investigate and describe young households' acquisition of interior merchandise – i.e. furniture, appliances and technology, soft furnishings, and decorative objects for their homes – specifically to gain evidence of the allocation of their financial and physical resources, as well as their prioritisation of the different zones in their homes. Empirical evidence of this kind would be useful to retailers and professionals in the interior industries to augment their marketing mix, in-store design, and consumer facilitation. The research will also attempt to describe the relative importance that symbolic meanings in interior objects hold for these households, compared to functional and aesthetic utility. Such evidence would be important, especially during consumer facilitation, because it would contribute to a better understanding of the decision rules that are applied during consumer identification of 'suitable' or 'desirable' product alternatives.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives directed the research design and methodology:

Objective 1: To investigate and describe young households' allocation of resources towards interior goods for their home:

1.1 The allocation of their financial resources

1.1.1 to different zones of their homes, and

1.1.2 to specific product categories, namely furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, and decorative objects, within their budgets.

1.2 The allocation of their physical resources (i.e. effort and attention) to different zones of their homes.

Objective 2: To investigate and describe households' justification for the allocation of their resources, i.e. the functional utility of interior products and zones, versus their regard for the symbolic meaning of interior products and zones (specifically status), versus aesthetic appeal.

Objective 3: To investigate whether young households' interior choices, as outlined in objective 1 and 2, differ across different

3.1 population groups, specifically White and Black, and

3.2 income groups,

to indicate whether such consumers' choices differ for specific subcultures.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This predominantly quantitative research study is descriptive and explorative in nature. The research followed a deductive approach, therefore a thorough investigation of existing literature and theories pertaining to culture and consumption, the functional and symbolic meanings of household objects, status, and identity portrayal preceded the data collection phase. The study was cross-sectional because it measured the responses of young households concerning the prioritisation of the zones in their homes, and their interior goods purchases, at a given time and place (i.e. 2011, in Tshwane). Data was collected in Tshwane, Gauteng from May to December 2011 by means of a structured questionnaire consisting of six sections, namely Section A: Demographic information; Section B: Prioritising zones in the home; Section C: Prioritising interior objects in the home; Section D: Social considerations; Section E: Interior purchase preferences; and Section F: Aesthetics. Section B contained a qualitative oriented, exploratory question that

was inspired by a laddering or means end chain interviewing technique and acted as a probing question to triangulate the findings from the preceding questions (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988; Barrena & Sánchez, 2009:145). The questionnaire was only available in English.

Age, location and home occupancy status were purposively used as sampling criteria. The sample frame consisted of young adult households between the ages of 25 and 39 who resided in their rented or owned homes, with multiple rooms, in the Tshwane metropolitan area of Gauteng. Data collection was performed by the researcher on a drop-off-collect-later basis to all willing participants who were obtained via convenience, purposive criterion, and snowball sampling techniques, which enabled contact with a cohort in the same categories. Trained fieldworkers were also employed at a later stage of data collection to distribute and collect questionnaires to suitable Black respondents in the same manner. This was necessary since the initial procedure did not recruit a satisfactory representation of Black households. Data collection proved to be difficult because respondents participated voluntarily and anonymously and were permitted to withdraw themselves from the study without explanation. This meant that respondents were not obligated to complete or return questionnaires and ultimately only one follow-up request was made. A total of 277 usable questionnaires were collected.

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was conducted by the researcher and a qualified statistician from STATOMET at the University of Pretoria. Analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics, i.e. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and exploratory factor analysis. Post hoc tests, specifically Tukey's (HSD) test, were performed to distinguish significant differences among subsets of the sample. Means, medians, frequencies, and percentage distributions were calculated as part of the descriptive statistics. Coding and checking of the data were primarily done by the researcher, though a trained assistant aided in coding and checking the qualitative question to improve interrater reliability (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:147). Findings are presented in the form of tables and graphs.

1.8 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Symbolic interactionism was used in conjunction with *multiple mental accounting* as theoretical frameworks to guide this research project. Reference was also made to the assumptions from the *cultural perspective* to support the theory of *symbolic interactionism*. These three perspectives complement one another within the context of this study.

Symbolic interactionism is based on the premise of social interaction, and thus explains how individuals communicate with society and reference groups and give meaning to their environment through a complex set of social symbols (Leigh & Gabel, 1992:28; Solomon, 2007:158; La Rossa & Reitzes, 1993 in Plunkett, 2008:1). In order to communicate with their reference groups in the appropriate symbolic language, people acquire goods, including interior goods, based on their symbolic meanings. *Symbolic interactionism* plays a vital role in this study because interior settings, such as the home, consist of multiple symbolic cues. For instance, interior objects can be used as status symbols, as means to express self- and group identity, represent interpersonal relationships, and to personify the owner's values. Since individuals are concerned with expressing themselves to their reference groups in a socially acceptable way, two main areas of focus of this perspective are appearance management and appearance perception (Richins, 1994; Leigh & Gabel 1992:28, 30; Kaiser, 1997:39). This study attempts to discover whether young households are concerned with symbolic purchases for their home and whether they allocate money and effort for the purpose of managing appearances and perceptions by a deliberate prioritisation of certain areas of the home.

The *cultural perspective* explicates *how* symbolic meanings are assigned to objects. Culture is learned and enduring and entails material objects, ideas, values, attitudes and behaviour patterns that are shared by a group (Ferraro, 2001:22). Individuals do not function in isolation but as part of a group or subgroup (i.e. culture or subculture group) formed by, for instance, age, lifecycle stage, interests, occupation, socio-economic status, et cetera. The *cultural perspective* is based on the assumption that people belonging to the same culture group or category will have shared experiences and similar beliefs, customs, values, and behaviours that are signified through cultural products or artefacts. Such cultural products may indeed include furniture, decorative objects, other interior goods, or the home in general (Rengel, 2007: 347, 249; Kaiser, 1997:351). People are thus taught by enculturation and socialisation how to interpret cultural symbols and how to employ cultural forms (such as the home and interior objects) to differentiate themselves from other culture groups (Ferraro, 2001:25). The *cultural perspective* is valuable to this study in order to understand the differences in behaviour of different cultures and subcultures defined by

population groups and location (Black and White population group in Tshwane), age and lifecycle stage (25 to 39 year old homeowners or renters) and other socio-economic factors (income and level of education).

When one understands that people as consumers do not always make rational choices or try to weigh cost and utility, but base their purchase and consumption decisions on a multitude of cultural and emotional factors, with underlying sociological and psychological motives, the relevancy of *mental accounting* to this study becomes apparent (Gilboa, Postlewaite & Schmeidler, 2010:5; Scheff, 1992:104). In view of discovering how households allocate their resources when decorating their homes within a predetermined budget, an explication of the psychology of choice is needed (Thaler, 1999:184). As a theory of behavioural economics, *multiple mental accounting* places economic behaviour within timeframes and expense categories that make sense to the consumer, but may seem anomalous according to the rational choice theory. *Mental accounting* is the process whereby households label or categorise different expense categories in a top-down manner (i.e. larger categories, then subcategories or bundles). A portion of the household budget is then explicitly or implicitly allocated to each bundle, for example to furniture or appliances. This is done to exercise self-control. Young households are believed to act on a constrained budget because they have not been earning a salary for long or are still earning at entry level, have large monthly instalments on their new house, or are in the process of furnishing their first home, which can be quite expensive. It is proposed that, due to their limited budgets, young households need to carefully evaluate how much they spend on the interior of their homes, and would therefore allocate separate budgets to different interior product categories, as well as to different areas of the home. This study attempts to discover on which product category and on which zone of the home the most of households' money, effort and attention was spent, and why.

1.9 PRESENTATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is presented in the subsequent chapters that address the following:

Chapter 1 sets the context of the research by explicating the research problem and providing an overview of the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 is an overview of relevant literature that provides the theoretic framework of the study

Chapter 3 introduces the three theoretical perspectives, namely the *symbolic interactionist perspective*, *multiple mental accounting*, and the *cultural perspective*, which were used to structure the conceptual framework, formulate the research objectives, and interpret the research. The research objectives are also stated.

Chapter 4 explicates the research design and research methodology in accordance with the research objectives.

Chapter 5 presents the results in accordance with the objectives for the study, with inclusion of graphs and tables to aid the interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 6 presents a discussion and implications of the findings for retail as well as consumer facilitation, provides a reflection on the research and a subsequent discussion of problems encountered, concluding with suggestions for further research.



CHAPTER 2

HOME INTERIORS AS VEHICLE TO CONVEY A PLETHORA OF MEANINGS

This chapter is a review of relevant literature that provides the theoretic framework of the study

2.1 WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME?

For many people, being able to own their own house is a big achievement in life, as it is one of the largest personal financial commitments an individual or household ever make. Owning a home is a cultural ideal or goal toward which individuals purposefully strive. Extant research place the concept of home within physical, psychological, social, cultural, and symbolic contexts, highlighting the complexity of the concept and the plethora of meanings it may have. It is argued that the personal, emotion-based relationship that a person can have with a house is what makes it a home (Moore, 2000:210, 212; Coolen, Kempen & Ozaki, 2002:114).

Pragmatically stated, a house provides one with a place to live. It meets certain basic needs, such as providing shelter from the environment and protection from dangers, as well as being a place to raise a family and perform the basic activities of daily life (e.g. eat and sleep). However, a house also fulfils many higher-order psychological functions, such as giving a person the opportunity to establish and experience personal relationships, independence, territoriality, privacy, creativity, and productivity. A home gives people a feeling of stability and belonging, as it is the place where households converge daily. It so happens that homeowners regard their homes as a greater anchor point in their lives than renters do, partly because of the greater financial commitment buyers make when purchasing a house, but mainly due to the sense of permanency this act suggests. It can therefore be said that a home meets all the needs in Abraham Maslow's needs hierarchy (Hablemitoğlu, Özkan & Purutçuoğlu, 2010:214-215). Apart from these and other *needs* that a home fulfils, it also addresses a person's *wants* – specifically the want to improve their physical environment in terms of appearance and convenience. Households have to counterbalance their wants and needs and calculate the time, effort and money involved when

planning their homes' interiors to benefit the most from their home's design (Gunter, 2000:4, 5, 8, 12; Hayward, 1975 in Moore, 2000:210; Nielson & Taylor, 2007:128).

Evidently, a house is much more than just a shelter for people and their belongings – it is a symbolic environment where a person's identity may be developed and certain goals may be attained. Although people live in physical environments (the house), they create cultural environments within them (the home) by personalising and humanising their environment (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:123, 144; Hayward, 1975 in Moore, 2000:210). To be converted into a home, a house should be personalised in terms of its façade, décor, and furnishings (Sixsmith, 1986:282; Smith, 1994:44; Kenyon, 1999 in Moore, 2000:211). Such personalising changes convert a home to become an extension and expression of the “self” or the “family” (Becker, 1977 in Sadalla, Vershure & Burroughs, 1987:570; McCracken, 2005:46; Gunter, 2000:7, 16; Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). Different areas of the home would inevitably mean different things to different family members, thereby creating different symbolic environments within the same home (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:138). This means that a bedroom, for instance, may have different connotations depending on how the space is used or defined (Sandstrom, Martin & Fine, 2006:7). Adults may experience their bedroom as a calm place meant for resting after a busy day at work; a child's bedroom may be a fun-filled, imaginative place but at another time feel like a prison if the child is forced to stay there as punishment; a teenager's bedroom is his/her personal territory that represents his independence and developing identity; and members of a household respect the main bedroom as the parents' private domain.

A home becomes a comforting space that creates order in a person's or family's life when they take control of it and make it their own. For some, the homeliness of a house depends on the social relationships that are formed within this environment. This includes not only relationships with other inhabitants of the house, but also with friends and relatives that are invited into the home. Chapin (1928, 1933) realised that because guests are invited into the home and mostly entertained in the living room, this area is ideal for expressing the household's social status through the presence (or absence) of certain possessions (Guttman, 1942:362). His Social Status Scale has since been renamed the Living Room Scale and has been modified to reflect the contents of a modern living room (Internet: Chizinsky, 2010; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2011). A home is furthermore the milieu of childhood memories, and special occasions, such as birthdays or holidays when loved ones come together to celebrate. ‘Home’ can thus be seen as an embodiment of a family's personal and social identity, their relationships with people close to them, experiences and events that shape them, and memories that they cherish (Gunter, 2000:4, 12, 13; Tognoli, 1987 in Moore, 2000:210).

It can be concluded that for a house to become a home, three dimensions of home should be present, namely the personal home, the social home, and the physical home. In a study regarding “homeyness” as material culture, adjectives that were used by respondents to describe a “homey” home included comfortable, informal, unique, warm, welcoming, and lived in, whereas words that denoted the opposite of “homeyness” included pretentious, formal, cold, and decorated (McCracken, 2005:26, 27). This may well indicate that a house can only be a home if the individuals that live there invest their personal and social identities into it.

2.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOME AND CULTURE

One’s home is considered a place for cultural activity and cultural expression, where one’s individual and social identities are portrayed (Sixsmith, 1986:282). A person’s culture is everything that they have, think, and do as active participants of a society (Ferraro, 2001:22). Culture implies learned beliefs, values and customs that provide people with an identity and direct the behaviour of a specific society (Evans, Jamal & Foxall, 2009:285; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:366). These learned beliefs and values that ultimately lead to attitudes and behaviour (Rokeach, 1970:112), not only differ amongst cultures, but also vary amongst subgroups in a culture, as well as amongst the individuals in a group. Within a group, a shared cultural background will result in similar interpretations of, and associations with visual codes and their meanings and therefore expression through cultural forms is possible (Rengel, 2007:247, 249).

The home, as cultural form, reflects an individual family’s ideas, values, and social status (Marcus, 1995:50; Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). It is argued that different rooms in a home have different levels of perceived expressiveness. For example, living rooms and the front exteriors of houses are the two main areas where impression management is usually attempted due to their visibility to significant others, such as friends or acquaintances, to whom the owners would like to communicate certain qualities of the self (Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:570, 585; McCracken, 1987, in Belk, 1988:153; Gunter, 2000:110). These qualities can include socio-economic status, personality traits, aesthetic preferences (or personal taste) (Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:570), and lifestyle (Gunter, 2000:116; Del Río, Vázquez & Iglesias, 2001:454). The personalisation of homes is similarly affected by the same factors that determine a household’s lifestyle, namely, economic, social, cultural, and political factors (Lawrence, 1987 in Low & Chambers, 1989:91). Additionally, rooms or areas in a home are usually classified, named and used, based on cultural and social norms (Lawrence, 1987 in Low & Chambers, 1989:89; Gunter, 2000:101), for example *family room* or *bathroom*.

A number of studies have indicated that the design of a house, its meaning, and how it is used, are influenced by cultural, socio-demographic and psychological dimensions (Gunter, 2000:99-103). The use of the kitchen, for instance, differs among cultures. Traditionally, Australians use the kitchen for preparing *and* eating food, whilst laundry is done in a separate laundry room as per obligatory building legislation. The British, however, employ a different system whereby laundering and cooking both take place in the kitchen, and if space allows it, eating occurs in a separate dining room (Gunter, 2000:101, 102). Seventy percent of Iranian households, conversely, prefer to do their laundry outdoors even if 90% have large enough kitchens to accommodate laundry facilities. Iranian women often use their kitchens to entertain female guests who have come to cook together socially (Bechtel in Low & Chambers, 1989:176). One can therefore not assume that studies done in other contexts, e.g. North America, United Kingdom or the East, would apply in South Africa. As mentioned, differences in social class may also bring about differences in the way that homes are used and awarded meaning. People in a higher social class are believed to value both the functional and symbolic meanings of furniture and pay more attention to the coordination thereof than people in a lower social class do. These households, conversely, do not pay much attention to coordination, but when they do, they typically buy ready-matched furniture sets for a room. They have also demonstrated a greater concern with functionality than with appearance (Settle & Aldreck, 1986:206).

Differences in culture may influence the way that living rooms, specifically, and the objects in them are used, as well as what they mean to the owner (Rechavi, 2009:142). The living room acts as the social context wherein adults structure and express what is important to them. It is where many cherished possessions are kept. To children, the bedroom performs this role, since it is the area where they keep all their possessions that aid in the development of their identity and where they spend a lot of their time. This explains why, when respondents (in a study by Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:136, 137) were asked to indicate the area in their homes where they felt the most 'at home', the majority of children indicated their bedrooms, and the majority of adults indicated the living room, and secondly the kitchen. In that particular study only 13% of adults regarded their main bedroom as the area in the home where they feel most at home.

2.3 THE ARRANGEMENT OF DIFFERENT ZONES IN A HOME

A study of different culture groups in South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia revealed that allocating a certain area of the home to public activities and separating it from a more private area of the home is a universal phenomenon, which is essential if certain cultural values are to be preserved. The design of a home thus aims to distinguish between public and private zones (Lawrence, 1987 in Low & Chambers, 1989:90; Gunter, 2000:95; Nielson & Taylor, 2007:129). Public zones, also called social zones, are accessible to both the household and visitors. If the house serves as a place where social 'performances' take place, then the public space is the front region or stage where performances are delivered. The private zone acts as the backstage areas in this analogy, as this is where visitors are not generally allowed to go (Goffman, 1959 in Rechavi, 2009:133).

Individuals may take great care to display a specific image of themselves to others through the décor and layout of the public or social zones in the home (Gunter, 2000:98, 110) and, provided that identity expression is important to them, they may place more emphasis on, and perhaps allocate more money to the furnishing and decoration of these highly visible areas. The most public or social areas in homes usually include the entrance hall and *living areas* (living and dining rooms) where guests are received and entertained.

Along the privacy gradient, the *kitchen* comes after the living areas. Throughout history the kitchen has undergone many changes in the way it is used – from being the main room of the home where all social activities took place, to a back area that only servants occupied, to a streamlined workspace for the modern 'servantless' housewife, and back to being the centre of family life. A growing tendency in contemporary homes is to have an open-plan layout of the public or social areas, which also includes the kitchen. This spatial layout allows for free movement through the house and easier communication with the rest of the household and guests (Gunter, 2000:97, 98; Pile, 2007:484). Since appliances are often used as status symbols, it is presumed that the kitchen can be used for impression management and identity expression if it is made visible to guests (Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999:20; Donovan, 2010). In a more recent study it was found that South African consumers regarded functional utility more important than symbolic aspects when choosing major household appliances in open plan homes (Donoghue, Erasmus & Sonnenberg, 2011).

Although the *bathroom* is essentially a private area, visitors to the house must inevitably occupy it at some point, which therefore places it on the border between public and private (Gunter, 2000:98). Because visitors see it, the bathroom can effectively be used as means of self-

expression (Gunter, 2000:108). For instance, if bathrooms are *en suite* they often serve as status symbols for middle-class homeowners. The installation of corner bathtubs, more than one basin, or inclusion of a gymnasium, for example, could be indicative of the owners' wealth (Gunter, 2000:109).

Bedrooms also have special significance in some cultures in terms of how it contributes to the household's status level. In Britain, the number of bedrooms often determines the value and status of the house. Economically speaking, the number of bedrooms adds more value to the house than the size of these rooms (Gunter, 2000:107, 108). However, larger rooms, in this case bedrooms, may act as an indication of the family's status and wealth (Sadalla & Oxley, 1984:395). Main (master) bedrooms may even be designed as a suite, with an incorporated lounge area, dressing room, and *en suite* bathroom. In North America, money spent on the main bedroom is likely to earn a good return on investment when the house is sold (Nielson & Taylor, 2007:152). Generally, the main bedroom is considered to be the most private room in the house, and is therefore located the furthest away from the social zones. Normally, few visitors will ever be allowed to go into the bedrooms of the house, especially the main bedroom, unless they have especially been invited to inspect the room (for example in the event that a tour of the home is given), or have a special relationship with the occupant of the room. Children and teenagers, however, usually entertain friends in their bedrooms, implying that these bedrooms are generally more visible to outsiders (Gunter, 2000:107, 108). It is possible that a distinction is made between main/ master bedrooms, guest bedrooms and children's bedrooms in terms of the decoration of these rooms, based on their level of visibility to outsiders. The question is whether the private areas of the home will receive the same attention in terms of time, effort and money spent by the homeowner on its interior decoration when it is *not* generally visible to guests.

2.4 THE MEANING OF INTERIOR OBJECTS IN A HOME

2.4.1 People cognitively assign meaning to objects

People cognitively assign meaning to objects to make better sense of their world. Meanings may be pragmatic, such as saying that a car is meant to provide transportation from one place to another. But a car may have deeper symbolic meanings as well, for example signifying freedom, independence, success, or even fun. Similarly, interior objects and layouts in a home hold certain meanings. Meanings of objects are created through interaction with others (Kaiser, 1997:42; Charon, 2007:60; Plunkett, 2008:1), rather than being intrinsic to objects (Blumer, 1969 in Charon, 2007:46; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:7). Semiotics – the study of how cultural meanings are produced and communicated – explain that symbols are the medium through which meanings are shared in

social interaction with others (Kaiser, 1997:25; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:4). An individual's interpretation of the meaning of a symbol is therefore dependent on his cultural and social background. In other words, people's culture and socialisation guides the way in which they define their environment and respond toward it. Consequently interior objects, as cultural forms or symbols, may have different meanings for different people (Ferraro, 2001:23; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:7).

2.4.2 Possessions have private and public or social meaning

It is important to consider that possessions have both a private and a public or social meaning. The private meanings of a possession are those subjective meanings assigned by its owner, whereas public or social meanings are given to an object by members of a social subgroup, or society as a whole (i.e. non-owners), and are generally agreed upon, which makes the meanings 'shared' (Richins, 1994:504,505). As explained, shared meanings and perceptions derive from shared experiences or activities and socialisation within a culture. People with a similar history of enculturation are bound to perceive cultural symbols or forms in similar ways. An object's private meanings, however, are subject to the owner's personal history with it. It may inevitably also contain elements of its shared public meaning, such as its financial value. One may thus conclude that objects may purposefully be used by individuals to communicate certain personal ideas and values to others. Individuals, however, may want to consider what an object means in a social context before choosing it to communicate aspects of their identity to others (Richins, 1994:506; Rengel, 2007:247). The value or priority assigned to each of these categories is, however, not clear in terms of specific zones of the home.

Despite the different personal and social reasons for which objects may be owned and displayed, one must bear in mind that some household objects are owned and displayed simply for pragmatic purposes (Low & Chambers, 1989:233). However, even objects that seem to be used for utilitarian purposes function within the symbolic realms of culture. Although a television set has utilitarian worth in that it provides one with information and entertainment, it is possible to obtain the same benefits from another source. It is thus owned for its cultural meaning, i.e. its representation of how people choose to spend their time and money, which is in congruence with their specific social culture. Everyday utilitarian objects can indeed provide information about the self, although it is often harder to recognise due to its pervasiveness (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:20, 92).

2.4.3 Objects are multidimensional in their meaning

Objects are therefore multidimensional in their meaning because of the many different sources of their meanings. Various dimensions of meaning have been proposed, such as Nöth's (1988, in Richins, 1994:507) three different meaning frames for commodities, namely utilitarian, economic and sociocultural, and two extra meaning dimensions for possessions, namely aesthetic and sacred. An amalgamation of different meaning frames or categories proposed by several empirical researchers, including Nöth, produced the following four meanings of possessions: *utilitarian value*, *enjoyment*, *representations of interpersonal ties*, as well as *identity and self-expression*. These categories were later elaborated to include *financial aspects*, *appearance-related value* and *status*. Objects, including interior goods, are valued by individuals and by society because of these meanings (Richins, 1994:506, 507).

According to basic economic theory, an object has value if it is useful. A possession would therefore have an increased value if it provides a necessary function or allows one to lead a more efficient life. Possessions are also valued if they enable an enjoyable activity, or provide some form of pleasure, relaxation, or a sense of escape, for example a sound system (Richins, 1994:510). The use of objects to form and symbolise interpersonal relationships is well researched by anthropologists. Significant people and the objects associated with them become extensions of the self (Marcus, 1995:74). Of all adults interviewed by Czikszenmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981:86), 82% considered at least one possession as important due to its connection with a close relative. Gifts, heirlooms, photographs, and objects made or owned by a loved one or close friend, are all kinds of objects that are valued for their meaning as representation of interpersonal ties.

Possessions may also express a person's identity and self in several ways. They may represent a link with an individual's own past, express personal values or religious beliefs, communicate a person's ethnic identity, demonstrate competence or personal achievement, or enable an individual to differentiate him/herself from others. (Lawrence, 1987 in Low & Chambers, 1989:103; Richins, 1994:507, 510). Possessions furthermore provide financial (economic) value if they are bought as an investment and if they are expensive. Appearance-related value stems from the physical appearance or style of the object itself or the potential of the product's appearance to enhance the owner's appearance or self-feelings (i.e. make them look and feel good). Possessions are valued as social status symbols if they grant the owner social prestige (i.e. recognition), thus make others admire them (Richins, 1994:510, 519). Such items should, however, be deliberately displayed (i.e. used as a tool) where they are visible to guests, in order to receive the desired recognition.

With reference to the public and private meanings of objects, it is important to consider that the value of an object may be observed by both the owner and non-owners, therefore making the meaning both private and public (or social). The utilitarian meaning and enjoyment value of objects are the two values that are usually recognised by owners as well as non-owners. Moreover, possessions may be valued for more than one reason, for instance a piece of furniture's functionality (utilitarian value) as well as the fact that it was a housewarming gift from a parent, thus representing an interpersonal tie (Richins, 1994:507).

It is important to realise that people can attach meaning to nearly everything. It is not only the object's appearance that influences individuals to assign a meaning to it, nor are the conventions of culture the only guide as to which meanings objects may or may not have for a person. More often than not meanings are derived from a person's own life experiences, relationships and interactions with the world around them. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981:56) conducted a study on the special (private) meanings families attach to their household objects. Family members indicated their most special interior items and were required to elaborate on why they considered these items to be so special. Of all the reasons why people considered their most special possessions to be significant, the two categories of meanings that were most prevalent were meanings related to the activities and accomplishments of the *self* (mentioned by 87% of respondents), and meanings related to *enjoyment* (mentioned by 79% of respondents). Other motivations that are relevant to this particular study and are worth mentioning include *personal values* (53%) such as the embodiment of an ideal or accomplishment, *style* (60%), *utilitarian purpose* (49%), intrinsic qualities such as an object's *uniqueness* (17%) or *physical description* (46%), a connection with non-family, in particular *friends* (24%), and *ethnic associations* (9%) (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:85). Traditional cultural values, however, still seem to play an important role in meaning formation, as some tendencies prevailed in the study by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981:87, 88), for instance, televisions and sound systems mostly signify the self and experiences; furniture signifies the self, immediate family, and memories; visual art are valued for their intrinsic qualities; and photos are predominantly symbols of memories.

2.4.4 Meanings are context specific

While objects have meanings or values assigned to them, they can also reflect certain matters. The interior goods in a living area are specifically said to reflect a family's cultural acquisitions and attitudes, which in turn will influence the attitudes of others towards the family and determine their social status as a result (Chapin, 1933 in Guttman, 1942:362). In another study by Wilson and

Mackenzie (2000:346, 347, 349), it was shown that living room interiors can reveal several characteristics of the occupants, such as their age, social class, family status, aspirations, lifestyle and sense of style.

Different culture groups not only have different tastes in consumer durables, such as interior goods, but also have different purchasing patterns and priorities due to their historical backgrounds (Bechtel in Low & Chambers, 1989:176; Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007:8). In other words, a person's buying and usage behaviour is influenced and driven by social rules and norms, as learned by socialisation into a specific culture. For instance, middle-class people in India and Sri Lanka use their refrigerators as a tool to achieve admiration and status from peers by displaying it in the dining room where it is visible to visitors (Low & Chambers, 1989:233). Visibly displaying appliances was also observed of lower working class households in North America. Higher social classes, conversely, took appliances for granted and did not attach as much social meaning to them. Their appliances were placed out of sight, however, they did show a preference for appliances that matched in design and brand, suggesting that they placed more value on physical appearance (Settle & Aldreck, 1986:207). George Herbert Mead emphasises the socialising or integrating function of objects, explaining that objects have the ability to reveal social goals and expectations through their use (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:51; Charon, 2007:122). Young couples, for instance, have revealed their favourite items in their home to be those that reflect their future plans and goals (Olson, 1985 in Belk, 1988:148). Some of the household interior objects that people use to communicate something about themselves include floor coverings, art, plants, electronic equipment, lighting, decorative artefacts, curtains, chairs, rugs, pictures, musical instruments, the style of their furniture and the arrangement thereof, as well as the use of colour (Guttman, 1942:362; Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:585, 586).

2.5 HOUSEHOLDS' CHOICE OF INTERIOR PRODUCTS

2.5.1 Relevant factors

Individuals interact with household interior products on a daily basis. This person-product relationship is complex because a person's perception of, and response to a product may be influenced by many underlying factors including culture, peer groups, or even economic circumstances. The three main aspects that form part of a product's design or configuration, and may affect consumer behaviour relating to categorisation, preference, choice, and use of the product, are:

- its function (*utilitarian* purpose), e.g. a reading light versus a spot light;
- its possibilities for communication or interpretation (*symbolic* purpose), e.g. to convey status; and
- its *aesthetic* appearance, e.g. a specific style or interior trend (Veryzer, 1995:642, 643).

Two other factors that are often considered prior to the selection of an interior product are its structure and materials, which are also linked to aesthetic properties, and the cost involved, that are associated with affordability (Pile, 2007:403).

2.5.2 Relevant definitions

Interior products include furniture, soft furnishings, appliances, technology and decorative objects, which will each be defined in turn:

The **furniture** category includes beds, seating (chairs and sofas), tables and storage units (Kilmer & Kilmer, 1992:494-502; Nissen, Faulkner & Faulkner 1994:577-584). Furniture may express individuality by acting as a reflection of the owner's lifestyle and activities, and individual preferences or taste, therefore serving the purpose of personalising a home. It may also fulfil the needs of comfort, utility, aesthetics and social interaction with others through its design and actual placement in a home or a room (Kilmer & Kilmer, 1992:486). The meanings that furniture hold for people will be discussed further in a subsequent section.

Soft furnishings broadly refer to household goods made of fabric textiles, for example, curtains, blinds, rugs, cushions and bed linen (Oberoi, 2011:1).

Major household kitchen **appliances** refer to any large electronic device used for cooking and cooling food, drying clothes, and cleaning (e.g. dishes or clothes) (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:234).

Technology in this case refers to electronic entertainment systems such as televisions, DVD players, sound equipment and computers.

Decorative objects are accessorising objects that may be functional but are not necessarily used as such and are rather displayed for their aesthetic value. These objects are also often displayed because of the memories of people, places or events the owners attach to it, and the continuity it provides (Kilmer & Kilmer, 1992:521). Decorative objects include indoor plants, art (i.e. paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculptures and ornaments etc.), wall hangings (e.g. tapestries), mirrors, vases, lamps, non-functional glassware or ceramics, et cetera (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:606-615). These items tend to enrich and personalise a space, which adds to its 'homeyness' (Kilmer & Kilmer, 1992:520). Household accessories reflect the individuality and personal taste of the owner more than any other interior product. It may therefore also be a successful tool in

expressing a person's cultural background (Allen, Jones & Stimpson, 2004:265), and to reflect the interior trends at a particular point in time.

2.5.3 Specific meanings associated with furniture

2.5.3.1 Introduction

Research has shown that besides the house itself, furniture is the largest personal household consumption expense that households will have (Lihra & Graff, 2007 in Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). One could presume that the reason for the importance of furniture is that a house devoid of furniture would be uncomfortable and potentially embarrassing, but one should consider that the presence of furniture pieces in a home may only be considered comfortable and necessary within one's own specific cultural habits and expectations. Ownership of furniture in post-modern Western cultures is indicative of a settled lifestyle and surplus exchange power, which is further indicative of stability in the lives of the owners. The importance granted to furniture could thus be due to fact that it is functional and can easily be displayed. Owning several furniture items only became prevalent in the Middle Ages, during which household furniture became symbolic of a family's affluence and stability. In other cultures, ownership of furniture was a clear indication of authority and power (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:58, 59, 60).

Apart from being functional, other reasons for furniture being special to people include comfort and enjoyment, important memories of experiences and relationships, and its representation of personal accomplishments. In a study by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981:56), families were asked to indicate which items in their homes are special to them in some way. In order of most to least mentioned, the following ten categories of objects contained most of the special objects mentioned by respondents: *furniture*, visual art, photographs, books, stereo equipment, musical instruments, televisions, sculptures, plants, and plates. The furniture category included sofas, chairs, and tables, whilst beds were categorised separately. According to especially the older and adult female respondents, furniture pieces are special to them because they represent ties to other people and to the past. Of all the reasons why furniture pieces are considered special or important to people, 17% of the reasons referred to the relationship that furniture objects have with the self, compared to 15% of the time that furniture objects were linked to immediate family members. Another 15% of the reasons referred to its tendency to evoke memories, 12% quoted stylistic reasons, 11% tied it with experiences, and only 5% of the meanings were utilitarian in kind (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:61, 62). This study revealed that furniture has meanings relating to identity (specifically personal history and self-

expression), aesthetics, interpersonal ties and utilitarian purpose, which supports suppositions of Kilmer and Kilmer (1992:486).

2.5.3.2 *Functional utility of interior products*

Some interior products are sought for their tangible benefits, i.e. their ability to meet certain functional or practical needs, in which case researchers from the rational school of thought argue that consumers are rational decision-makers that try to maximise utility by evaluating the product based on objective criteria such as price, size, physical performance, durability, et cetera, before making the decision to purchase it or not (Bhat & Reddy, 1998:33). When purchasing interior products, two of the attributes that households may evaluate, and perhaps even base their decision on, are product performance and value for money (Del Río *et al.*, 2001:454).

Product performance refers to the idea that products are chosen with a specific end-use in mind and to meet certain physical requirements at a desired level for a reasonable period of time (Lamb *et al.*, 2004:217). For instance, if a home theatre system is bought for the purpose to listen to music and watch movies, it should deliver an acceptable level of sound and image quality, consistently, and for a reasonable period of time for it to satisfy the consumer and thus meet the consumer's expectations regarding its performance. Performance is very important in terms of major household appliances as they are expected to perform certain functions for a considerable period of time. An interior product's performance is affected by the quality of the materials, finishes, components, and construction. Good quality products are expected to be durable and perform reliably (Pile, 2007:403).

Young consumers in the process of procuring items to fill their new homes may experience some financial strain due to the high cost of some interior product types, as well as the typically large amount of items that are purchased over a relatively short period (Siniavskaia, 2008:2, 6). When buying interior goods, these individuals may therefore have to adhere to a self-assigned budget or else incur some level of financial risk. In this situation, young households may deliberately seek **value for money** when shopping for interior goods. Consumers usually aim to buy products whose quality, appearance, convenience, and/or functional attributes justify the price (Lamb *et al.*, 2004:405). For instance, a product of good quality that has the potential to remain in a good, usable condition for a reasonable period of time may command a higher price than a product that is not expected to last that long, and yet still be considered 'good value for money' because the quality and durability justifies the higher price in the eyes of a specific consumer. In other words, some aspect of the product makes it worth the price paid for it. The opposite may also hold true – if

a consumer cannot afford an expensive product, they may have to accept a product of poorer quality, or inferior appearance, for instance. For this consumer it may still be a relatively good product, especially if they consider the benefit of buying it at an affordable, lower price. Therefore it is also 'good value for money'. In this case, the product's price makes a certain aspect of the product more acceptable (Internet: University of Cambridge, Secretariat, 2008).

Although economists work with the assumption that a person's income and the product's price are the most important factors in determining product choice, they admit that other factors called cultural variables also play an important role. These factors, however, cannot be quantified and are thus not included in the theory of demand (Amaturo, Costagliola & Ragone, 1987:228).

2.5.3.3 *Symbolic utility of interior products*

Symbolic meanings that are attached to an object refer to abstract meanings beyond its functional use. These meanings are given to objects during the consumption process, i.e. through the way that they are used (Wilska, 2002:196). Amongst others, meanings may include inferences made about the object's emotional qualities and its users (Nasar, 1989:237). Consequently, some products are meant to meet a different kind of need other than a purely functional one. These needs are often related to self-image and social identification and are thus more emotional in nature. Research has shown that consumers use subjective evaluation criteria such as their individual tastes, pride, need for self-expression, or need for adventure, in order to choose symbolic products (Bhat & Reddy, 1998:33). Some of the symbolic meanings that households may consider in their purchasing of interior products include the potential of products to reflect a particular lifestyle, indicate or improve their social status or prestige, or be an indication of good taste, (Del Río *et al.*, 2001:454).

Often, the style of a home expresses the **lifestyle** the owners have or want to have (Gunter, 2000:116). A person's lifestyle is a reflection of their self-identity and, amongst others, comprises a person's money-spending habits, interests, use of time, opinions, and general way of life (Rengel, 2007:259). For instance, in a home there could be a focus on the formal entertaining of guests, casual comfort, private relaxation, or hobbies (such as cooking, reading, or watching movies) (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:171), depending on the positioning of furniture, main functions of rooms or areas, or the prominent display of personal items (Gunter, 2000:145). In other words, individuals that like to socialise at home with friends or family may place a high priority on the purchasing of objects that promote socialisation, such as sofas, coffee tables, televisions, and dining room furniture. Similarly, individuals that enjoy cooking or baking as a hobby are likely to spend a

significant proportion of time and money on acquiring the desired kitchen appliances and equipment. Lifestyle is greatly influenced by one's demographics, social class, reference groups, cultural environment, and family (Rengel, 2007:259; Solomon, 2007:456). Conclusively, a household's lifestyle is proved to be a determining factor in the style of their home's décor (Belk, 1988:152).

Furniture styles can be indicative of **social status or prestige**. Social status is awarded based on a person's ranking with regard to their relative *wealth* (amount of assets), *power* (the degree of personal choice and influence over others), and *prestige* (degree of recognition received by others) (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:338). As a result, some individuals may be prone to buying seemingly expensive interior durables, and displaying it so that others can recognise their wealth and award them a certain level of status (Gunter, 2000:117, 155).

Individuals may use their possessions or home interiors as an indication of their good sense of style or fashion, or discerningly **good taste**, as this could have an impact on their level of social prestige (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:31; Gunter, 2000:159). Taste defines who we are and is an important part of self-expression. It is described as "judgments based on ideas of beauty, order, and arrangement." (Arnould, Price & Zinkhan, 2003:325). Whether an individual indeed has 'good taste' or a 'good sense of style' is for the audience (visitors) to decide (Rengel, 2007:263). It is said that each person has a specific 'taste culture' that is influenced by their age, personality, racial background, place of origin and class. Since a person's class is a product of their income, occupation, and most importantly, their education gained from schooling and mass media (Gans, 1974:70; Solomon, 2007:462, 467), these socio-economic factors are likely to affect a person's taste as well.

2.5.3.4 Aesthetic utility

It is gathered from archaeological evidence that people have attempted to beautify their surroundings since ancient times. An early example of decorated houses is found in the ruins of the ancient city of Çatalhöyük in what is now Turkey. Inside the mud-houses, raised platforms were covered in rush matting and walls were plastered, painted red and decorated with handprints, stars, circles or pictures of animals. Çatalhöyük was famous for their woven textiles in geometric patterns, which was used for the cushions and bedding that provided comfort and beauty in their homes (Binggeli, 2007:25, 26).

An interior object or space has aesthetic value if it evokes a deep level of satisfaction or sense of pleasure that emanates from the visual appearance of the object and not from its functional purpose. If an interior object or space evokes a positive emotional response, the design is considered expressively and aesthetically successful (Abercrombie, 1990:71; Pile, 2007:39). The home is one of the few environments in which a person has the absolute freedom to express their personal idea of beauty. A person's unique tastes and preferences would inevitably influence what they consider to be beautiful, whether in art, décor, clothing, or any other type of design. A person's tastes and preferences in interior décor are in turn affected by their personality (Gunter, 2000:127), values, attitudes, and lifestyle (Ritterfeld, 2002 in Sprigler, 2006:13). It is also affected by what is deemed popular and fashionable by reference groups (Pile, 2007:39), as well as their own involvement with the interiors of their homes, i.e. how important it is to have a home that is 'beautiful' and 'trendy'. What constitutes as beautiful or visually pleasing is also dependent on time and culture (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:15; Pile, 2007:39), as can be observed in the great variety of interior styles across the world and across time. However, generally a good, aesthetically pleasing spatial design requires that the selection and combination of a room's furnishings, textiles, and background materials (such as floor and wall coverings) must be based on the basic elements (i.e. line, colour, shape or volume and texture) and principles of design (i.e. proportion and scale, rhythm, balance, emphasis and harmony). The choice of colours, textures, and finishes will convey a specific 'feeling' and character to a room (Allen *et al.*, 2004:11, 242, 243). Likewise, visual product aesthetics are physical characteristics of a product such as colour, size, material, ornamentation, shape, and proportion – also combined in accordance with the basic rules of design. These visual properties greatly influence consumer perceptions regarding a product's functional and symbolic meanings, as well as the evaluation and comparison of, and ultimately the satisfaction with, the specific product under perusal (Veryzer, 1995:641, 642; Bloch, Brunel & Arnold, 2003:551; Workman & Caldwell, 2007:591).

People have a need for beauty in their lives (Liu, 2003:1294). Abraham Maslow (1987 in Chiu & Lin, 2004:189) altered his popular hierarchy of needs to include aesthetic needs, which involves the need for beauty, order, symmetry, and perfection. It is believed that having beautiful things around us can give us a sense of well-being and energy (Gunter, 2000:133). This may explain why consumers often base their product choices on physical appearance, or aesthetic value, and the product's visual distinctiveness in the marketplace. Due to saturation in many product markets, including the interior product market, manufacturers need to produce products that are recognisable, memorable, and significantly different from those of competitors (Bloch *et al.*, 2003:551). A product's appearance is usually the first thing buyers tend to notice about it and in terms of interior goods the appearance is associated with trends at a particular point in time. Hence, differentiation on the base of visual aesthetics has become apparent in increasingly more

product categories, including home furnishings. Aesthetics as a selection criterion is even more relevant in the interior furnishings industry, which is subject to changes in fashion and is constantly updating materials and styles (Nielson & Taylor, 2007:5).

All products are presumed to possess some level of aesthetic value purely because it has a physical form or appearance that can be perceived, just as so called 'art' objects may have a utilitarian value, for example, a painting that is meant to set the mood of a room. The appreciation of a product's nature, whether utilitarian, symbolic or aesthetic, is context and perceiver specific (Veryzer, 1995:643). Interior goods, for example, are generally meant to be functional to some extent, but may be bought and consumed based on their physical appearance as well, depending on the individual's (or perceiver's) intention with it. Yalch and Brunel (1996:405) found that consumers believe an aesthetically pleasing product performs the same on a functional level as a non-aesthetical product at meeting lower order needs, but can satisfy a higher order need better. For example, a sofa may be comfortable (a lower order, basic need) regardless of its aesthetical appearance, but a more pleasing looking sofa will serve higher order needs (e.g. variety-seeking, beauty, self-expression, achievement) better than a perceivably unattractive sofa would.

Some consumers place a higher value than others on the ability of visual product aesthetics to be an extension of their self. Such people consider beautiful objects and spaces to not only enhance the quality of their own life, but also to satisfy the higher order needs of society. People also differ in their ability or acumen to recognise, evaluate and distinguish between good and poor product or spatial designs. Furthermore, people show different responses to visual product aesthetics, and at different levels. Reactions may be emotional or behavioural, such as experiencing enjoyment or excitement, sensory interaction with the product, and eventually purchasing the product. Visual consumers will ultimately place higher importance on a product's aesthetic characteristics than less visually inclined consumers would when making a product choice. Different consumer groups will also attach varying significance to product aesthetics (Bloch *et al.*, 2003:551-553; Workman & Caldwell, 2007:591). Factors such as one's culture, peer group, or economic circumstances may be influential in how prone one would be to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of a product (Veryzer, 1995:64). Therefore, the decision-making process will vary for different consumer groups, as their ability, and also motivation, to distinguish between the aesthetic qualities of products differ (Ritterfeld, 2002 in Sprigler, 2006:11).

Decorative interior objects, as the name implies, are generally valued for their visual appearance. Decorative interior goods include two-dimensional art pieces (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:609). The use of two-dimensional art pieces purely to decorate one's home has only become commonplace during the Renaissance. Before then, portraits or pictures were only owned by rulers or the clergy, and

before that – even since primitive times – homes were beautified by means of structural decorations, such as frescoes and mosaics, or decorations on utilitarian or religious items, such as on weapons, rugs or vases. Thus, owning art solely to appreciate it for its aesthetic qualities is a relatively recent concept in history. *Visual art*, referring to two-dimensional representations, excluding photographs but including non-original works and art by children and other family members, were said to hold some special meaning by 26% of the respondents interviewed for a study by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981:63).

In the same study, there appeared to be a great difference in the importance attached to visual art objects between members from different social classes. Firstly, the upper-middle class is far more likely to own and display art objects in their homes than the lower-middle class. Secondly, when the lower-middle class owns art, it is generally mass-produced pieces, whereas the upper-middle class usually owns more original artworks. The reason for this is seemingly economic, but it is perhaps also due to the upper-middle class' tendency to view art objects as a symbol of their affluence and presumed superiority, excellence, and good taste, while the lower classes have not assumed this cultural meaning (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:18, 64, 65).

But what special meanings do individuals attach to their art objects? Surprisingly, only 16% of Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's respondents mentioned any aesthetic characteristic of the art object as a reason for its significance, and only 10% of the reasons were related to any style, fashion, design or decorative aspect of the object. Two other important reasons given for valuing an art object were its connection with immediate families and the past memories that it evokes (both 15.6%). Other reasons include its connection with non-family relationships (12.5%) and its embodiment of some characteristic of the self (10%). Thus, people seem to be less concerned with the aesthetic appeal of an art object than would be expected, and more with the remembrance of relationships and experiences, and the resulting feelings it brings forth (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:65).

Conclusively, individuals have a need for beauty in their lives. In their daily interactions with products, one design consideration is the product's aesthetic appeal. Individuals base their appreciation for, and response to the aesthetic nature of an interior object on any of a number of factors that include their cultural background, personality, values, attitudes, lifestyles, economic status, et cetera. Which means that based on personal background and circumstances, some may value an object's aesthetic qualities more than its other qualities, or value its aesthetic qualities more than another person would value it. It was also discovered that interior products that are supposedly meant to be valued for its prominent aesthetic purpose, may hold several other

possible intrinsic meanings, or meet other higher order needs, such as representing interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging, or expressing some quality of the self.

2.6 HOME INTERIORS AS A VEHICLE TO PORTRAY STATUS

2.6.1 Conspicuous consumption of interior goods

One of many symbolic meanings that home interiors can convey is that of *status* (Charles, Hurst & Roussanov, 2009:457). An individual or family's social status is their position in society awarded on the basis of their income, education, and cultural and material possessions (Chapin, 1933 in Guttman, 1942:362; Solomon, 2007:462; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:338). For an object to be considered a status symbol, it could be rare, expensive, old, or simply attract the attention of people who are perceived to have status, which would automatically make it more attractive and desirable to people of a lesser status (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:30). Interior goods can specifically be bought to express or improve social status and position, in which case this type of consumer behaviour is classified as *status consumption*. If this consumption is performed overtly in an attempt to impress significant others, display wealth, and as a result gain status and prestige, it is defined as *conspicuous consumption* (Mason, 1981:vii, ix; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:27; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:338). Because status can only be recognised and duly awarded if it is reflected in something noticeable, status consumption has to be conspicuous (Veblen, 1899 in Mason, 1981:108; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:27) and the so-called 'status' element should have a shared meaning. For interior goods to be conspicuous, it must be displayed in the social zones of the home. Henceforth, conspicuous consumption will refer to consumption that is visible, with the purpose to impress and gain status. Conspicuous consumption is mostly connected to highly visible goods such as clothes, jewellery, mobile phones and cars (Charles *et al.*, 2009:426; Shukla, 2010:2). South African homeowners seem concerned with displaying their interior goods and furnishings conspicuously, as revealed in the UCT/Unilever study. Empirical findings indicate that when people spend money on their home, they are inclined to place more emphasis on the rooms that visitors see (Internet: Ndenze, 2004:1), which explains the Living Room Scale's rationale (Chapin, 1933 in Guttman, 1942:362) that is used to calculate status.

Objects can have special meaning to a person if it represents a person's goals and accomplishments. For many males their car serves this very purpose. They want others to notice it and recognise how hard they worked for it, thus how deserving they are of it. The purpose of status symbols, such as expensive cars or furniture, is therefore usually to make the owner stand out and receive recognition for their accomplishments. Women, by comparison, are more likely to

emphasise the interpersonal relationships represented by their special possessions. While for men, objects represent personal and status achievement, security and self-completion, women attach memories and emotions to their favourite possessions, and thus possibly to their homes in general (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:141-143; Solomon, 2007:473; Belk, 2004). Depending on cultural values regarding family decision-making, decisions with regard to interior decoration may be shaped by input from both partners. The fact that men and women attach different meanings to household interior goods may complicate the process or result in different aspects or areas of the home being a reflection of a different partner's influence. The influence of gender on the allocation of resources, including its justification, is a possibility for further research.

2.6.2 The influence of reference groups

Unless a person manages to live in complete isolation, there will inevitably be several groups and subgroups to which he/she belongs, or with which they feel a connection or relate to in some way (Kaiser, 1997:349). These groups are referred to as 'others' and can include *significant others*, such as friends, family, or colleagues; *generalised others*, such as society, culture and current fashion trends; or *reference group others*, which are the people with whom an individual identifies and whose perspective is adopted in a particular social context (Sonnenberg & Erasmus, 2005:12; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:67; Charon, 2007:163). Reference group others are said to expose people to specific behaviours and lifestyles, influence a person's self-concept, values, and attitudes, and encourage conformity to group norms (Bearden & Etzel, 1982:184; Rousseau, 2003b:370; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:67). Young households form an exclusive group segmented by their age, lifecycle stage, and common interest in furnishing their new homes (Leigh & Gabel, 1992:30). This group is known to purchase for symbolic reasons because they are an upwardly mobile group in a role transition phase and are thus likely to be concerned with social advancement (Leigh & Gabel, 1992:31, 37). Being part of, or becoming new members of this exclusive group presents the opportunity for self-evaluation and self-comparison with people with similar values and social identities (Kaiser, 1997:359; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:29). If young households are mainly other-directed, they would have a need for approval or admiration from their peers and would thus be concerned about the expectations and opinions of significant or reference group others (Mason, 1981:39; Kaiser, 1997:473). Endeavours to manage the appearance of one's home and other's perceptions of it would not exist if the opinions of others did not matter. The influence of reference groups on the behaviour of individuals is subsequently discussed.

A person's peer or reference group may exert a lot of influence over a member's consumption decisions (Mason, 1981:103; Shukla, 2008:26). For instance, because of the shared public or social meanings objects have, individuals are likely to choose possessions based on what they want to communicate to their reference group. Interior goods may be used by young households to express wealth, status, a high level of education, good 'taste' or fashion sense, or some other quality they possess and want others to notice (O'Cass & Frost, 2002:69; Heaney, Goldsmith & Jusoh, 2005:84; Sonnenberg & Erasmus, 2005:12; Shukla, 2008:27). Consumers want to avoid making poor product choices (Sirgy, 1983:135), whether on a utilitarian level, or from an aesthetic or expressive viewpoint, as that could potentially elicit criticism from reference groups. Researchers have claimed that personal possessions, including interior goods, may often be considered extensions of a person's self (Belk, 1988:139, 151; Mittal, 2006:554; Nissen *et al.*, 1994:175). It can therefore be argued that criticism against a consumer's chosen interior goods can be interpreted by that consumer as criticism against his/her self.

In post-modern societies, status, or an increased social standing, is achieved through merit and one's occupational and educational success. Status and success are intangibles that, by definition, cannot be perceived by others unless they are embodied by something tangible (Mason, 1981:108; O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:35). Social class or status as a product of education, income and occupation (Solomon, 2007:462; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:338), is a mean of categorising a population into homogeneous groups. Another way to categorise people according to their social class is by using the SAARF Universal LSM (Living Standards Measure) tool. Each LSM group is identified by the major household durables (i.e. appliances and electronics) they generally possess (Du Plessis, 2003:87; SAARF, 2009:33, 35; SAARF, 2011:53-59). Households in the eight highest LSM groups (LSM Group 7-Low to LSM Group 10-High) own all or most of the household durables listed, are better educated (i.e. have post-matric qualifications), and earn a higher monthly income than members from the lower six LSM groups (Du Plessis, 2003:90). People with a high level of education (usually upper-middle class) often wish to express their educational achievements as it is believed to increase their social standing (Mason, 1981:108, 110, 114; Chao & Schor, 1998:113). A potential way to do this is by means of their household possessions. It can thus be argued that those who wish to make their new social identity visible to others would have to engage in conspicuous consumption (Amaturo *et al.*, 1987:231). Usually individuals will attempt to secure their 'deserved' status through acceptable types of conspicuous consumption in order to gain 'horizontal within-group' status advantages. On the other hand, those with limited educational and occupational prestige attempt to compensate for this by imitating the professional middle-class in their conspicuous display of possessions, in the hope to secure 'vertical between-group' status benefits (Mason, 1981:110, 150). If this young consumer group is as concerned with social advancement as expected, then their possessions must inevitably be chosen carefully to impress

significant and reference others and have to be displayed conspicuously (O’Cass & Frost, 2002:69).

2.7 HOME INTERIORS AS A VEHICLE TO PORTRAY IDENTITY

2.7.1 Identity and self-expression

An exploration of symbolic interaction through cultural forms is not complete without a discussion of the self and identity. From a symbolic interactionist perspective the self is reflexive, meaning it is a product of an individual’s relationships and interaction with others. A person sees him/herself as a social object and a social process that has the ability to constantly adapt in response to social situations and symbols. A person’s self-concept, i.e. how they define their self, is formed by social interaction and social experiences. It consists of multiple identities, namely, the *physical* self (e.g. height, hair colour); the *social* self (e.g. social roles, such as head of the household; social statuses, such as social class, ethnicity or gender; and group membership, such as family, workplace, or organization); the *reflective* self (e.g. character traits and behavioural tendencies, such as being shy, spiritual, or enjoying music); and the *oceanic* self (e.g. vague, general statements, such as being human). An individual’s self-concept is thus a product of the social roles they fulfil, the perception of others with whom they interact, and the different identities they assume (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:93, 97-100).

According to Goffman’s dramaturgical theory (1959, in Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:104, 105), the essence of who a person is, i.e. their self or identity, lies in their behaviour and how others respond to it. An individual therefore wishes to express his/her identity to others like an actor expresses ideas to an audience through the use of language, props and scenery. Households can use their homes and interior possessions as scenery and props for self-expression. In expressing themselves, households are attempting to positively control the impression that others have of them. Households must rely on symbols (i.e. the appearance and content of their home) to portray the intended message to the audience (Lawrence, 1987 in Smith, 1994:33; Hayward, 1977 in Smith, 1994:32; Marcus, 1995:59).

A home’s layout, style, decoration, and furnishings are all means of self-expression and have in many instances been used to measure the social class of individuals as well as to interpret numerous other messages about them such as their lifestyle and personality (Belk, Bahn & Mayer, 1982:6, 7; Sixsmith, 1986:290). This explains the use of the Living Room Scale (Chapin, 1933 in Guttman, 1942:362) to indicate status: this scale assumes that households would pay more attention to the social zones of their homes to convey specific messages about themselves. The

cultural perspective postulates that people are categorised and characterised on the basis of their possessions (Kaiser, 1997:49, 50). When a person is in contact with an object, it is usually within the context of cultural meanings that assists with an interpretation of the object and the person. This implies that the self, the object and the 'other' is in a triadic relationship to each other (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:50). It is believed that the objects an individual surrounds themselves with are inseparable from who they are, because these things provide a framework of experience that forms the individual's self (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:16).

2.7.2 Implications of individual and cultural or collective identities for the purchasing of interior goods

Researchers have claimed that personal possessions, including interior goods, are often considered extensions of a person's self (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:15; Belk, 1988:139, 151; Nissen *et al.*, 1994:175; Mittal, 2006:554). This may also be true for collective selves (Belk, 1988:152). Objects may represent dimensions of differentiation or integration. In the case of differentiating objects, these symbols of the self are meant to highlight the individual qualities of the owner, thereby separating the owner from his or her social context. Objects, as symbols of the self, may also focus on the similarity between the owner and others, such as a shared lifestyle or ethnic group, thereby integrating the individual into his or her social context (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:38). Findings of research in social contexts vastly different to South Africa (e.g. individualistic societies versus collectivist societies) should therefore be applied with caution in a local context.

Individuals make use of their possessions to express aspects of their identity, for example, social identity, to others (Solomon, 1983:320; Solomon, 2007:161) irrespective of whether this representation is realistic or not (Kaiser, 1997:53; Rengel, 2007:246). Individuals thus purchase (or avoid) products with symbolic meanings that correspond with (or contradict) the actual or ideal image they want to portray (Rousseau, 2003a:287). For example, young households, particularly from higher income groups, that are concerned with status and impression management may use their ability to buy interior durables on credit (Burns, 2008:1) to effectuate their ideal selves sooner and thus achieve the status they believe they deserve. The 'actual' self is the image a person holds of him/herself as he/she perceives him/herself to be, whereas the 'ideal' self is the image of him/herself as that person would like to be, and the ideal social self-image is how people would like others to see them (Sirgy, 1983:164; Solomon, 2007:157; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:164; Van

Gorp, 2005:5). This active attempt to buy products that coincide with a specific self is called the image congruence hypothesis (Rengel, 2007:258; Solomon, 2007:162).

Four levels of self (Belk, 1988:152; Solomon, 2007:164) include the family self, community self, group self, and individual self. A person may assume any or all of these identities at some point and all of these identities may be expressed through consumption of interior goods. The home and its furniture and other interior objects are, however, the main defining consumption objects for the *family self*. The *community self* is reflected in a person's attachment to their neighbourhood, whereas the *group self* is manifested in a person's affiliation with a specific subculture, such as social groups. *Individual identities* are represented by personal possessions and are seen as a reflection of a collective social identity because consumers are seen as a product of their social and cultural milieu (Wilska, 2002:196, 197). Collective identities, such as that of a specific race, culture group, or social class, are often linked in some way with consumption. In other words, a person's culture group, for instance, may influence buying habits and motivations in a significant manner. African Americans, for instance, express their racial or cultural identity and distinctiveness from White Americans by expressing different tastes in consumer products, or by simply using the same products that White people use, but in a different way (Lamont & Molnár, 2001:41-43; Wilska, 2002:208; Solomon, 2007:466).

In some instances, culturally influenced consumption is a result of acculturation. Acculturation is simply defined as "all changes that arise following 'contact' between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds" (Sam & Berry, 2006:11). It is a progressive process (Els, 1993:19, 71; Sam & Berry, 2006:11) that may be spontaneous, enforced or guided (Els, 1993: 25, 27). The International Organization for Migration explains that acculturation happens when people or groups of one culture progressively adopt certain elements of another culture, such as their ideas, values, behaviour, or norms (Sam & Berry, 2006:11). One culture could, for instance, after continued first-hand contact with another culture (Els, 1993:19; Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936 in Sam & Berry, 2006:11), introduce them to their views of personal expression of social status, or expose them to other ways of utilising their home. Furthermore, other culture groups (in a plural society especially, such as in North America and South Africa) can also play a role in an individual's tendency to consume conspicuously and for status gains. It was found that African Americans have a desire to rid themselves of a stigmatised social identity, and therefore use visible symbols of high status (e.g. good-quality clothing) to disprove the images of poverty and lower-class that they feel they were labelled with in the past. This desire is especially prevalent when interacting with White Americans (Lamont & Molnár, 2001:36, 37). It can thus be reasoned at this stage that different culture groups use one another as reference groups with whom they compare themselves. The manifestation of identity and lifestyles through consumption is, however, not necessarily a

conscious process (Wilska, 2002:208), especially since the social meanings of objects often become intrinsic to a specific culture or subculture (Kaiser, 1997:51).

2.7.3 Cultural ideologies of individualism and collectivism

Because South Africa is a plural society, different cultural ideologies may prevail, particularly those of individualism and collectivism. Traditionally, White people have a more individualistic cultural background, while Black people tend to be more collectivist (Wissing, Wissing, Du Toit & Temane, 2006:14). The symbolic use of dwellings and household objects as means of conveying self-identity and group identity can also be understood in terms of these ideologies (Low & Chambers, 1989:212; Eleb-Vidal, 1983 in Wilson & Mackenzie, 2000:344). In more traditional, collectivist societies, especially in rural areas, social relations are highly valued and consumption that enhances the group rather than the individual is rewarded with increased levels of prestige. In this type of society, the use of material objects, such as dwellings, as a representation of an individual's identity (particularly their social status) is not as effective since people tend to know their peers and neighbours personally. In modern individualised societies, however, especially in urban areas where social mobility is possible and individual consumption that reflects hard work is encouraged, individuals feel the need to define their status in terms of their material possessions. This is especially the case when there is increased social and cultural heterogeneity and people need to find ways to express their status in a socially acceptable way. In modern-day American culture, houses and household objects are increasingly used for this purpose (Low & Chambers, 1989:212, 213; Wong, 1997:199; Chao & Schor, 1998:114). Researchers in South Africa have come to a similar conclusion (Internet: Ndenze, 2004:1). The above may, however, suggest that individuals place more or less emphasis on certain zones in their home, based on their individualist or collectivist social backgrounds. In other words, if material objects are not likely to encourage social status recognition from cultural peers, the public or social areas of the home might not receive a high priority in terms of special attention given to its décor.

Although young homeowners may have the desire to express their social status and impress others with their possessions, financially this behaviour may not always be viable. Young homeowners typically have high initial and on-going expenses when setting up their homes in the beginning (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:333), and would therefore not be able to purchase all the desired household durables at once. Therefore, these homeowners inevitably need to prioritise their purchases of appliances, furniture and other household objects. Empirical evidence of how this is done is lacking at present.



CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This chapter introduces the three theoretical perspectives, namely the symbolic interactionist perspective, multiple mental accounting, and the cultural perspective, which were used to structure the conceptual framework, formulate the research objectives, and interpret the research

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A perspective is the point of view, or angle, from which a person attempts to make sense of the world they live in. Individuals cannot view a problem or situation from all possible perspectives at once, but has to focus on certain aspects or stimuli while necessarily ignoring others. A person's perspective guides his/her perception and interpretation of reality. Perspectives are created by the social world we live in; therefore individuals may adopt several perspectives depending on the role they currently fulfil or the social group they belong to. A situation may be approached from the perspective of one's age, gender, occupation, nationality, social class et cetera (Charon, 2007:3, 4, 5, 9). A *theoretical* perspective is a hypothetical model for empirically observing and interpreting reality, by means of predetermined theoretical assumptions that draw attention to specific aspects of a phenomenon to facilitate better understanding of it (Internet: Dogra, 2011).

3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.2.1 Introduction

This investigation is mainly guided by two theoretical perspectives, i.e., the ***multiple mental accounting perspective***, to explain households' financial deliberation as they make interior purchases for their home within category specific and time specific budget constraints, as well as the ***symbolic interactionist perspective***, which explains households' interaction with others through social symbols embodied in their home and interior possessions. In addition, the ***cultural perspective*** is discussed briefly in terms of its basic assumptions to provide useful insights into how members of different culture and socio-cultural groups prioritise their interior goods purchases

and how important symbolic meaning is in the context of the home. Literature confirms the relevance of these theoretical perspectives as points of departure for this study, therefore this chapter discusses the pertinent theoretic assumptions and applications.

3.2.2 Multiple mental accounting perspective

3.2.2.1 Introduction

How do consumers make choices and decisions in the economic marketplace? What motivates economic decisions? What are the constraints that consumers face? How do consumers experience and evaluate the outcome of their transactions? Behavioural economics attempt to answer these types of questions by incorporating the social, emotional, and cognitive factors that play a role in economic decision-making. *Mental accounting* is a model of behavioural economics, which in turn is a deviation of neoclassical economic theory (Camerer, Loewenstein & Rabin, 2004:5; Pesendorfer, 2006:718). In order to better understand *mental accounting's* core assumptions, it will first be described what mental accounting is *not*, starting with a brief discussion of the assumptions of neoclassical economic theory and rational choice theory, and how mental accounting (as a form of behavioural economics) counters these basic economic theories.

Neoclassical economic theory states that consumers attempt to maximise utility by making a rational preferred choice from an identifiable number of outcomes. Utility, in economic terms, measures the level of satisfaction a consumer experiences when consuming goods or services, in other words, how well goods or services meet a consumer's needs (Internet: Weintraub, 2002). The rational choice theory, which lies at the core of neoclassical economics and is sometimes referred to as the neoclassical paradigm (Green, 2002:51), states that individuals weigh costs against benefits before making a choice based on their predetermined preferences that will maximise personal advantage or gain, and minimise disadvantage or loss. Simply put, individuals wish to make a choice that will give them the most benefits (i.e. meet their needs the best, or maximise their utility) at the lowest cost. The rational choice theory further assumes that information regarding all alternatives is complete, individuals are able to rank all alternatives according to their preferences, and these preferences are transitive¹. Additionally, individuals are subject to budget constraints and must therefore choose from the alternatives that they can afford and decide how much they are willing to spend (Zey, 1992:11; Green, 2002:4, 5, 10; Internet:

¹ Transitivity means that, if a consumer prefers product A to B and B to C, then he/she inevitably prefers A to C. Similarly, if the consumer is indifferent when choosing between product A and B and indifferent when choosing between B and C, then he/she is also indifferent when choosing between A and C (Green, 2002:5).

Business Dictionary.com, 2012). However, one of the problems with these assumptions is that consumers often do not know what possible bundles of alternative goods or services are available to them at a given time, and therefore cannot possibly make a rational preferred choice amongst all of the possibilities (Zey, 1992:11; Gilboa *et al.*, 2010:3). Moreover, the rational choice theory neglects to acknowledge any sociological, biological, or psychological motivations that guide human decision-making, especially emotions, nor the intrinsic costs involved in making a choice, such as potential criticism and other social risks (Scheff, 1992:104 Gilboa *et al.*, 2010:5).

According to Thaler (1999:184), who first developed the concept, studying *mental accounting* enhances one's understanding of the psychology of choice. Consumers are seldom rational in their decision-making, often do not have access to all the product information they need, and have any number of motivations that direct their economic behaviour, of which some may seem anomalous from a neoclassic perspective (Gilboa *et al.*, 2010:5). It is proposed that individuals or households develop implicit or explicit *mental accounting* systems, i.e. carefully deliberated processes to reflect on their personal and household budgets (Thaler, 1985:199). Consequently, similar to financial accounting, *mental accounting* is the process of coding, categorising and evaluating transactions in order to keep record of what happens to a household's money and to control spending (Thaler, 1999:186).

3.2.2.2 *Basic assumptions of the multiple mental accounting perspective*

Mental accounting is grounded on the following three assumptions (Thaler, 1999:184):

- The first assumption describes how outcomes (or transactions) are perceived and experienced and how decisions are made and evaluated. For example, rationalising a luxury purchase by framing it as an investment.
- The second involves the assignment of activities to specific accounts. For example, labelling an expense category as 'living room furniture' or 'appliances' and an income category as 'regular income' or 'windfall'.
- The third assumption deals with the frequency with which accounts are evaluated. For example, having a weekly budget for entertainment, but a yearly budget for household interior goods.

These three basic assumptions, as outlined above, will be discussed in depth in the ensuing sections.

3.2.2.3 *Decision-making and evaluation of outcomes*

It is accepted economic theory that consumers wish to make themselves as happy as possible by maximising their gains and minimising their losses, in other words maximising their *utility*, as previously discussed. *Multiple mental accounting* states that the way a person subjectively frames or interprets a transaction in their mind, from a certain perspective, will determine the utility he/she receives or expects to receive (Ramphal, 2006:18). O'Curry (1999, in Kivetz, 1999:250) explains this framing heuristic as follows: An amount of R1000 earned through hard work may be perceived (or framed) as serious, expected earnings, whereas R1000 gained in lottery winnings may be framed as costless, frivolous, and unexpected. The manner in which people interact with money tends to differ, depending on the way that they cognitively frame and label it (Kivetz, 1999:250).

Sometimes consumers may have a need to justify or provide reasons for their consumption decisions, whether to themselves or to others, especially in the case of expensive, hedonic, or luxury goods. It is easier to justify the purchase of necessities (e.g. a bed), than to explain hedonic purchases (e.g. a pool table) or luxury purchases (e.g. artwork), because by definition the latter two types of goods are not essential. However, if the purchase of luxury items is framed as an investment, as opposed to simply consumption (i.e. because they liked it and wanted it), it might be easier for consumers to provide reasons for their extravagant purchase (Kivetz, 1999:250, 252).

One way for consumers to placate themselves when making purchases that they find difficult to rationalise is by 'decoupling' the transaction from the consumption. This involves putting a temporal separation between the date of payment and the consumption of the product and therefore mentally reducing the cost. The most common way of doing this is by using credit cards or store accounts (Kivetz, 1999:252, 253; Thaler, 1999:192). Credit cards as a decoupling method is attractive because postponing the payment makes the expenditure less salient, especially considering that the payment will be mixed up with other transactions on the monthly statement. Framing the purchase as part of a larger totalled amount blurs the linkage between payment and consumption. The amount will also seem less in relation to the overall balance, thereby reducing the psychological 'pain of payment' effect that may have deterred the purchase. Store accounts are even more effective at segregating the expense from consumption since payments are spread out over a larger timespan and the initial expense is reduced to smaller, more manageable payments. It has been hypothesised that consumers prefer to have their losses separated and ascribed to different days (or weeks, or months) (Thaler, 1999:188, 192, 193; Kivetz, 1999:251, 253) in order to lessen the perceived impact. Decoupling of payments is thus a form of hedonic framing, which

refers to the framing of outcomes or transactions in order for consumers to make economic decisions that will leave them as satisfied as possible.

3.2.2.4 *Assigning activities to accounts, labelling funds, and categorising expenditures*

One thing that *mental accounting* and the neoclassical model of rational choice agree on is that consumers seek to fulfil their needs whilst being restricted by a budget (Gilboa *et al.*, 2010:1). To allow for these budget constraints, consumers would typically categorise their expenses using a 'top-down' approach, i.e. start with major categories or bundles (e.g. *housing* and education), then move down to subcategories (e.g. *household furniture* and maintenance), and then break it further down to sub-subcategories or bundles (e.g. living room furniture, bedroom furniture, kitchen appliances, et cetera). A budget is either implicitly or explicitly allocated to each bundle or category. The explicitness of a budget refers to how clearly the budget is defined in terms of how much money is allocated to what and how strictly the budget is adhered to. It is found that tight budgets are more explicitly defined than larger budgets. Income is also labelled as, for instance, 'regular' (e.g. monthly income) and 'windfall' (e.g. an income tax return), whilst wealth is subdivided into accounts such as 'current', 'savings', 'pension', and so forth. The reasons for categorising income, wealth, and expenditures are twofold; firstly it makes it easier to make trade-offs amongst competing uses of funds, and secondly it serves as a way to exercise self-control (Gilboa *et al.*, 2010:5, Thaler, 1985:207; Thaler, 1999:193).

Inadvertently, households tend to link expenditure categories to a specific income or wealth category, which is referred to as expense tracking (Kivetz, 1999:250; Ramphal, 2006:23). Expenses that are framed as frivolous or luxurious (i.e. items that one would seldom buy for oneself because they are harder to justify) are more readily funded by windfall income than by more 'serious' sources of funding, such as the household's lifetime savings account or even their regular income (i.e. salary). Similarly, large once-off expenses, such as a kitchen remodelling, will ideally be budgeted for and paid out of a savings account instead of the household's current account. An important aspect of *mental accounting* is that it violates the economic principle of fungibility. If accounts were fungible, the money in one would be substitutable for the money in another. However, in the examples above it is shown that money from certain wealth or income accounts will not be used to fund expenses from certain categories or bundles (Thaler, 1999:197; Kivetz, 1999:250). Expenditure budgets are also non-fungible, as demonstrated by in experiment by Heath and Soll (1996, in Thaler, 1999:194). This implicates that households are not likely to spend money on household interior goods out of any mental account other than the relevant interior budget. It is therefore possible that households have separate subcategory budgets for each room or zone in their house or for each type of interior good, e.g. furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, and decorative items.

3.2.2.5 *Balancing of accounts*

Just like a business would balance their financial accounts monthly or annually, mental accounts are also balanced at certain intervals, because apart from category specific budget constraints, consumers also have to consider time specific budget constraints. For instance, an individual who receives a monthly salary will go through the budgeting process on a monthly basis and prioritise purchases within a specific timeframe and category before purchase decisions are made (Thaler, 1985:207). Depending on a household's income level, budgets can either be defined over short or long periods. Poorer households may have weekly and monthly budgets, whilst richer households may have yearly budgets in certain expense categories (Thaler, 1999:193). Goods that are consumed regularly, for example food, may be part of accounts that are tallied every week; goods such as clothes that are purchased seasonally may be paid out of monthly or quarterly accounts, and expensive, long-lasting consumer durables such as furniture or appliances may be assigned to mental accounts that are balanced yearly or even more seldom than that (Heath & Soll, 1996 in Thaler, 1999:194). Since furniture and other household durables are generally an expensive product category, consumers must either save for longer or resort to buying on credit to have the goods they want. Buying on credit has its benefits because it delays payment, as explained, and perhaps even prolongs the budgeting period for this specific mental account. However, it requires careful financial deliberation because of the potential financial and social risks involved (Erasmus & Mathunjwa, 2011).

In short, *mental accounting* involves the cognitive process whereby households cognitively assign a budget to different product categories or bundles and then undergo expenses in these product categories, which is similar to the opening of an account in financial accounting. Expenses in these categories are funded from specific income or wealth sources, depending on how the expense was framed (i.e. perceived). Expenses are tracked against the set budget to determine whether over- or under-spending took place. Subsequently, the account is closed or balanced once the predetermined time period has passed (e.g. a month, a year). Households thus assign labels to both goods (i.e. create expense accounts such as furniture, appliances, et cetera) and the money used to fund their expenses (e.g. savings, current, pension) (Ramphal, 2006:24, 25, 75).

3.2.3 Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is the study of how people give meaning to their environment through the use of a complex set of symbols (La Rossa & Reitzes, 1993 in Plunkett, 2008:1). It is based on the premise of social interaction and explains how individuals use social objects to communicate with society and reference groups (Solomon, 2007:158; Leigh & Gabel, 1992:28). Symbols are one of many 'social objects' towards which individuals direct their actions, or use in social situations to communicate something to others or to themselves (Charon, 2007:48). Other social objects include the self, other people, (Charon, 2007:48), appearances (Kaiser, 1997:42) and possessions (Schultz, Kleine & Kernan, 1989:359). Symbolic meanings of social objects are created through interaction with others (Plunkett, 2008:1; Charon, 2007:60), rather than being intrinsic to objects (Blumer, 1969 in Charon, 2007:46; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:7). Three major assumptions of *symbolic interactionism* are that individuals create their own realities by means of appearance management; individuals use symbols to direct behaviour; and social meanings and interpretations emerge from interactions between people (Kaiser, 1997:41, 42). These assumptions and other concepts of *symbolic interactionism* will subsequently be discussed in view of the research problem.

3.2.3.1 *Individuals create their own realities through appearance management*

Individuals create their own realities by understanding, interpreting and giving meaning to their world through the use of shared symbols. Without symbolic interaction, people would just physically respond to their environment instead of understanding it and choosing how to react to it. An individual's reality is therefore his/her own creation, combined from the symbols of their past and present (Charon, 2007:60).

Two main focuses of this perspective are appearance management and appearance perception (Kaiser, 1997:39). Kaiser (1997:5) describes *appearance management* in terms of personal appearance and clothing. However, the definition can be applied to the appearance of one's home, which is meant to be a reflection of the self. *Appearance management* includes all the decisions, thought processes, activities, and actions leading to the purchase and wear of clothing items, as well as processes of body modification (Kaiser, 1997:5). In an interior context, appearance management is viewed as all the planning, decisions, activities, and actions involved in the purchase of interior products for the home, or the process of changing the physical appearance of the home. Painting walls, changing the layout, buying new furniture, or even tidying a room are examples of appearance management in the home context.

The main difference between appearance management and appearance perception is that appearance management is a conscious process that individuals engage in on a daily basis, whereas appearance perception, although also a daily occurrence, is often a subconscious process (Kaiser, 1997:5, 7). *Appearance perception* is about how people form impressions, or make evaluations about others and about themselves, based on the observation of visual cues or stimuli, such as the appearance of an individual's home (Belk *et al.*, 1982:6; Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:584, 585; Kaiser, 1997:7). Based on the appearance of a home, inferences are made about occupants' personal identity, social status, and friendliness (Nasar, 1989:239).

For the purpose of this study, appearance perception is concerned with how an individual views and interprets the appearance of another individual's home, or his/her own home. Whereas appearance management involves creating and maintaining the appearance of an individual's own home based on that individual's own perception of it, or the perception they want others to have of it. Appearance management is therefore essentially the same as creating and managing perceptions about an appearance.

Goffman's dramaturgical theory (1959, in Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:105, 210) states that an individual is like an actor performing a role to an audience. An individual is constantly engaging in impression management, in other words, attempting to communicate a desired image about the self to others by manipulating appearances. Individuals can use the appearance of their home as a social symbol to create a desired impression (Kaiser, 1997:41; Sonnenberg & Erasmus, 2005:14). Because meanings are not intrinsic to an object but are created through interaction with others (Plunkett, 2008:1; Charon, 2007:60; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:7), individuals must rely on the symbolic meaning that their significant others share and understand when attempting appearance management. Through this use of product symbolism individuals define their social reality by giving meaning to their world. In particular, they may use objects (e.g. their home, its interior décor, or interior goods) to clarify their social roles as a part of the self and to validate their associated behaviour (Solomon, 1983:320, 321). A person's social roles may include their membership to a certain group (e.g. family), but also their social statuses, such as social class, ethnicity and gender (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:41, 128). Other aspects such as taste, personality, lifestyle (Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:570; Belk *et al.*, 1982:6), or future goals (Olson, 1981, 1985 in Belk, 1988:148) can be expressed in the interior of a home. In a broader sense, a person's choice of interior goods could also reveal a desire to either conform or be unique (Sonnenberg & Erasmus, 2005:14; Christie, 2011:149).

If assuming that the individual wishes to express his/her identity or self to others through the medium of the interior of his/her home, one must consider the complex nature of the self and the

many facets of the self that can be expressed. The self is a social structure because an individual's self-concept is a product of the social roles and identities the individual acquires through interaction with others (social self), the individual's perceived personality traits (reflective self), as well as the individual's physical characteristics (physical self) (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:97, 99). A person's self-concept is also formed by the perspectives others have of the individual as well as the 'looking-glass self', which refers to the selectively interpreted appraisals of others (how a person *thinks* another feels about him/her) (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:97, 101; Ashworth, 1979:98). Rousseau (2003a:287) and Sirgy (1983:167) add that the individual has an 'actual' and 'ideal' concept of self, which is used to purchase (or avoid) products whose symbolic meanings correspond with (or contradict) the actual or ideal image they want to portray. The 'actual' self is the image a person holds of him/herself as he/she perceives him/herself to be, whereas the 'ideal' self is the image of him/herself as that person would like to be (Sirgy, 1983:164).

3.2.3.2 *Individuals use symbols to direct behaviour*

People are constantly aware of visual, symbolic stimuli in their environment and will react to its meaning in a learned manner that is dictated by society, or subgroups within society (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:8; Solomon, 1983:320). It is therefore possible to manage or direct, not only the perceptions of others, but also their behaviour by exposing them to symbolic forms. However, the meanings of symbols need to be shared in order for it to be successful communication tools (Kaiser, 1997:42; Banister & Hogg, 2004:851).

Individuals may employ alternative ways to influence others' behaviour, but the use of props is successful because it facilitates credibility (Kaiser, 1997:196) and supports behaviour (Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:572). For instance, if a person wants to bring across the impression that he or she is educated and knowledgeable, owning a washing machine or entertainment system with the latest innovations and technology might support that intended idea. Having a beautifully decorated home could lead visitors to believe that the owners have good taste or a sense of style. In these examples, interior objects or appearances are used as symbols which, if the same meaning is interpreted and understood by specific others, will direct behaviour, i.e. initiate a response from these significant others (Kaiser, 1997:42), perhaps in the form of a compliment or approval (Solomon, 1983:324).

By manipulating the style of their home's interior, the spatial arrangement, and the type of interior products in it, a household can control the symbolic information their home reveals about themselves, as well as their expectations regarding behaviour in a particular room. Décor styles

and interior goods have proved to be indicative of the household's level of formality, maturity, conservatism, individualism, family orientation, cultural sophistication and friendliness (Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:584). The arrangement and style of living room furniture, for instance, affects the mood and may express in symbolic terms aspects such as whether the household uses the room to socialise with many people or few at a time (e.g. symbolised by the number and arrangement of seating); prefers quiet or noisy activities (e.g. symbolised by the presence of books versus stereo sound equipment); or encourages guests to relax and make themselves at home (e.g. symbolised by informal, comfortable, easy-to-clean furniture).

3.2.3.3 *Social meanings and interpretations emerge from interactions between people*

Perceptions and behaviour cannot successfully by way of using social objects if the receiver of the symbolic message does not interpret the meaning in the same way as the communicator intended it to be understood. Symbolic definition should thus occur through continuous interaction with others or through socialisation, which starts during childhood. People with a common background of enculturation and socialisation are expected to have a similar understanding of their environment and the symbols used in it to communicate with others (Kaiser, 1997:42; Plunkett, 2008:3; Solomon, 1983:321). These 'others' include significant others, such as friends, family, or colleagues; generalised others, such as society and current fashion trends; or reference group others, which are the people with whom an individual identifies (Sonnenberg & Erasmus, 2005:12). *Symbolic interactionism* is grounded on the assertion that individuals interact with reference groups and larger society to determine what the appropriate way is to behave under certain circumstances, or which interior items are appropriate for their homes or their social identities. Society, as well as subgroups within society, gives objects their social meaning, which the individual then uses to communicate with others. Social symbols do not have to be consumed in public for it to retain its meaning; it can be consumed in the privacy of a home as well (Leigh & Gabel, 1992:28, 29). Therefore, although symbolic meanings are created through interaction with society, symbolic messages can also be communicated *and* interpreted by the same individual (Solomon, 1983:324). Objects may indeed have meanings that are either public or private, as well as meanings that are recognised as both public *and* private (Richins, 1994:507).

In summary, *symbolic interactionism* explains how individuals interact with society and reference groups through the use of symbols which, along with the self and possessions, are social objects. Individuals create their own realities or give meaning to their environment by attaching learned, shared meanings to objects and appearances, which they learn to manipulate in order to create a

desired impression. Perceptions and behaviour can be directed by means of visual and symbolic stimuli embodied in interior objects or décor, but the symbolic meanings attached to these visual cues must be shared in order for it to be used as successful communication tools. Social meanings and interpretations emerge as a result of interaction between individuals and society or reference groups. People with similar backgrounds of socialisation and enculturation will have similar understandings of their symbolic environment, for example the home, making symbolic communication possible by means of home interiors.

While *symbolic interactionism* focuses on how individuals communicate with themselves and others through the use of symbols, i.e. social objects that include the self, possessions, others, and appearances, the *cultural perspective* explains how the meaning of objects (i.e. cultural forms) are established, learned and shared through enculturation and socialisation, which are in itself symbolic interaction (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:31). An outline and brief discussion of the basic assumptions of the *cultural perspective* follows.

3.2.4 Cultural perspective

3.2.4.1 Introduction

Culture is what characterises every society. It is in essence a social creation, a product of communication and a perspective on reality that involves ideas, rules, conventions and values that are adopted by members of a culture and are manifested in their behaviour and in the cultural forms they use. Culture is symbolic in nature and is something that must be shared in order for a society to successfully interact on a deeper level (Shibutani, 1955 in Charon, 2007:37, 62).

Individuals will inevitably belong to several groups and subgroups in their life, to which they relate on some level. These groups or subgroups are cultural. Individuals belong to cultural categories in some combination based on gender, physical appearance, social class, age, and ethnicity (Kaiser, 1998:349). The *cultural perspective* assumes that people belonging to the same culture group or category will have similar beliefs, customs, values, and behaviours that are symbolised by cultural products or artefacts, such as furniture, decorative objects or other interior goods (Kaiser, 1998:351). People create, recreate, learn and transfer culture by constant interaction with and interpretation of cultural messages. These messages are imbedded in symbols or cultural forms (Kaiser, 1998:351; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:31).

The *cultural perspective* was useful to investigate the potential meanings of interior goods for households in terms of the role of these meanings in behaviour and relations between people (Kaiser, 1997:27). Studies suggest that people from different age, income, educational and social class groups attach different symbolic meanings to certain aspects of housing, but that members of the same group are likely to make the same symbolic inferences, due to shared cultural experiences (Nasar, 1989:237; Rengel, 2007:247). The researcher was interested in knowing whether young households from different population groups attach different priorities to different zones in their homes and to different interior product categories when spending money, effort and attention on furnishing their homes. It was also attempted to discover whether young households from different population groups varied in the way that they motivate the allocation of their resources. The data obtained from Black and White respondents pertaining to their priorities and motivations was compared. However, due to the low number of Black respondents in relation to White respondents, the study could not be primarily guided by the *cultural perspective*. Nevertheless, a specific population group is only one of the subcultures that young households can belong to. Another subculture was explored, namely income group, which was divided into three groups: upper income, middle income and lower income.

3.2.4.2 *Basic assumptions of the cultural perspective*

The following assumptions of the *cultural perspective* were acknowledged in this study:

- One assumption of the *cultural perspective* is that collective values and ideologies, such as status achievement, are perpetuated by everyday cultural objects, or cultural forms. These objects or cultural forms are tangible aspects of culture and tend to provide clues about characteristics such as social class, ethnicity, lifestyle, gender and age. Cultural forms therefore categorise the people that are associated with it (Kaiser, 1997:49, 50; McCracken, 1986:72, 79). For example, owning specific types of furniture such as custom designed or imported leather furniture.
- A second assumption is that the cultural ideologies and values represented in everyday objects are shared by all group members and the messages are easily understood by all (Kaiser, 1997:49, 51; Belk, 1988:152). Culture is thereby a shared perspective on reality (Charon, 2007:163). Different groups develop their own idioculture, or system of shared knowledge, beliefs, acceptable behaviours and values, such as status, that serves as a frame of reference for interaction among group members (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2007:31; Kaiser, 1997:51). Possessions are said to be part of this social communication system that people within a culture use to communicate information about themselves and their

relationships with others (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979 in Richins, 1994:505). For example, incorporating local artefacts in your home may indicate respect for local communities.

- Thirdly, culture provides abstract representations of social life (Kaiser, 1997:53). Ferraro (2001:22) defines culture as “everything that people have, think and do as members of their society”. This may include household durables, which are part of the ‘system’ that influences behaviour patterns, ideas, values, and attitudes in people forming part of a culture group (Hiebert, 1983:25; Ferraro, 2001:22). Culture tends to influence consumption behaviour and decisions such as product choice (Shaw & Clarke, 1998:165, 167), as well as the way that individuals interpret appearances (Kaiser, 1997:53). Thus, individuals may use their possessions or home interiors to symbolise their social reality, i.e. their social identity and status to others (Solomon, 1983:320). For example, installing the latest technology in your kitchen to impress others.

In conclusion, the *cultural perspective* assumes that people belonging to the same culture group or category (e.g. characterised by age, population group or income group) will have learned similar beliefs, customs, values, and behaviours through socialisation into the group, and that this commonality helps them to interpret the assigned meanings of cultural products or artefacts, such as furniture, decorative objects, or other interior goods that they display and use in their homes (Kaiser, 1998:351). People create, recreate, learn and transfer culture by means of constant interaction with and interpretation of cultural messages. These messages are imbedded in symbols or cultural forms, for example homes and interior objects (Kaiser, 1998:351; Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:31).

3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.3.1 Introduction

It is traditionally believed that consumers behave rationally when making product decisions because they weigh their options and finally choose the product (or brand) that meets their needs the best, or give them the greatest utility. As seen earlier, this forms the basic argument of the rational choice theory. It is, however, postulated that while consumers certainly have reasons for preferring certain products and for the choices they make, these reasons do not always result in rational actions. According to neoclassic economic theory, rational actions refute the influence of emotions, values and habits on behaviour, and state that utility-maximisation is only focused on obtaining a functional means to an end (Zey, 1992:15, 17, 18). However, when choosing products, instead of just using objective criteria such as price, performance, et cetera, on which to base their

decisions, consumers also apply personal or emotional criteria that originate from a consumer's image, pride, likes and dislikes, and other non-rational purchase motivations (Rousseau, 2003c:110). Consumers identify a number of relevant evaluative attributes to help them differentiate between similar products when searching for the one that meets their needs the best. It is believed that consumers evaluate the utility of products or brands along two main dimensions, namely functional and symbolic benefits (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1996 in by Del Río *et al.*, 2001).

3.3.2 Functional and symbolic dimensions in brand evaluation

A conceptual framework (Figure 3.1) designed by Del Río *et al.* (2001:454), depicting this dichotomous classification of brand utility, will be discussed. This is followed by an explanation of the model, after being adapted (Figure 3.2), to indicate an aesthetic dimension, how consumers make interior product choices based on their available resources and the priorities they assign to certain zones in their home, as well as certain interior product categories.

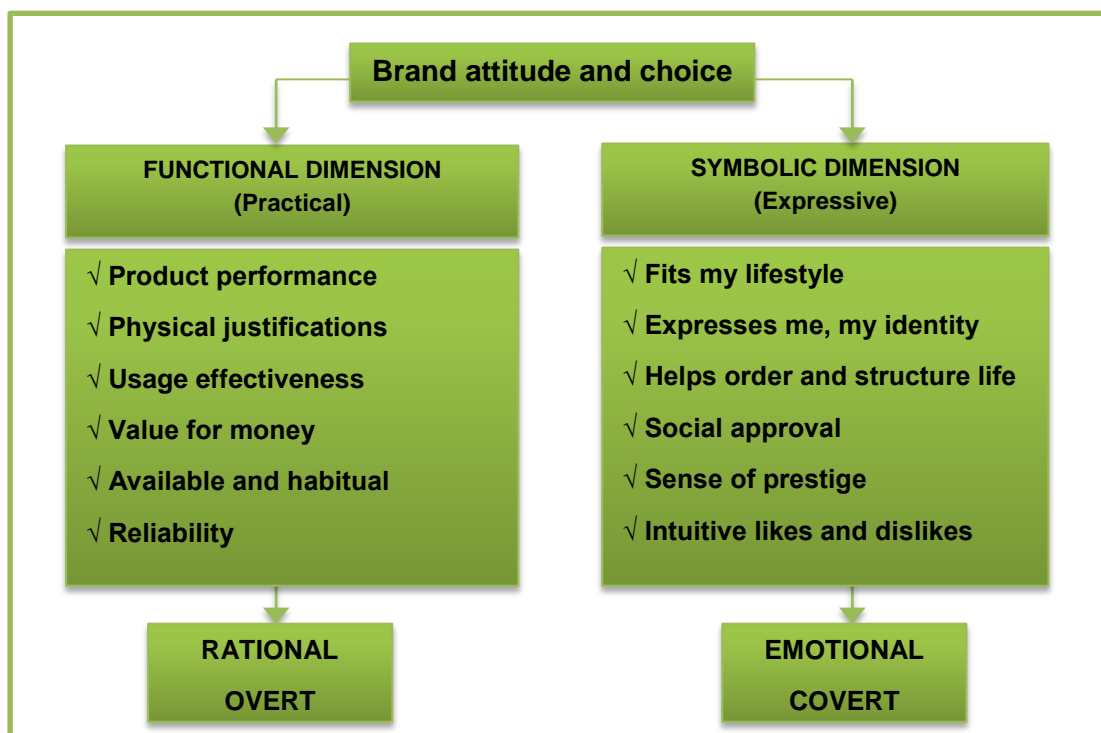


FIGURE 3.1: FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC DIMENSIONS IN BRAND EVALUATION (Del Río *et al.*, 2001)

It is postulated that consumers' attitudes toward, and choice of product brands depend on their evaluation of certain product attributes or potential benefits that can be obtained through use, or ownership of the brand (Rousseau & Pitt, 2003:261). These attributes are classified as being either

functional or symbolic, and are associated with either the brand or the product itself. This ordering correlates with the classifications of attitude functions as developed by Katz (1960, in Rousseau & Pitt, 2003:269), namely utilitarian and value-expressive functions. The functional dimension of attributes refers to what the product does for the consumer and what practical benefits it has, and therefore includes product performance, physical justification, usage effectiveness, value for money, availability, and reliability. Evaluating a product along its functional dimension is a practical and rational approach to buying and is concerned with a product's visible (i.e. overt) qualities.

Conversely, products have a symbolic dimension conveyed primarily by its brand name or image. Evaluating products on the basis of their more expressive and extrinsic qualities is an emotional consumer response (i.e. covert or concealed). Symbolic benefits of a product or brand include its potential to fit a certain lifestyle, express an identity, give structure and order to life, command social approval, convey a sense of prestige, and represent the intuitive preferences of a person. Consumers usually evaluate brand attributes more subjectively, as the purchase and consumption of brands have the ability to communicate a person's self-image and convey certain impressions to people in their particular social environment (Del Río *et al.*, 2001:453, 454, 460). Consumers, however, do not base their consumption decisions on the evaluation of only one or the other dimension, but rather perceive brands holistically. Product attributes are evaluated with the perceived brand image in mind, and the overall impression of the brand is reinforced by the experience of using the product once it is purchased (Del Río *et al.*, 2001:453, 560). The final decision may hence result as a compensatory decision (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:491), for example, deciding that the status associated with the product would negate the fact that the couch is less comfortable.

3.3.3 Conceptual framework for this study

The model developed by Del Río *et al.* (2001) was adapted for an interior product purchase situation. Due to the complex nature of the product type, young households have to deliberate what proportion of their financial and physical resources to allocate to each interior product category and possibly each zone in their home (Objectives 1.1 and 1.2), as it is proposed that different product types and areas of the home form separate mental accounts, each with its own budget. Because furnishing a home is expensive, young households can probably not afford to give each room and each product category equal priority, whether financially or in terms of effort and attention devoted to planning, searching and purchasing. Therefore, by using a process of *mental accounting*, households prioritise the areas in their home and the different interior product categories and spend their money and effort accordingly (Objectives 1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.2). The

existing model was further adapted to include an aesthetic dimension, since aesthetic appearance, utilitarian purpose, and symbolic purpose are the three main dimensions of a product's design or configuration that may affect households' preferences for and choices of interior products and décor, and ultimately their justification for the allocation of their resources (Objective 2) toward interior product categories and interior zones in their homes (Veryzer, 1995:642, 643). A third adaptation to the model is the inclusion of the influence that a specific subculture may have on households' allocation of resources toward cultural forms, namely interior zones and product categories (Objective 3). Figure 3.2 reflects the conceptual framework which includes all the constructs that are relevant in terms of the objectives for the study.

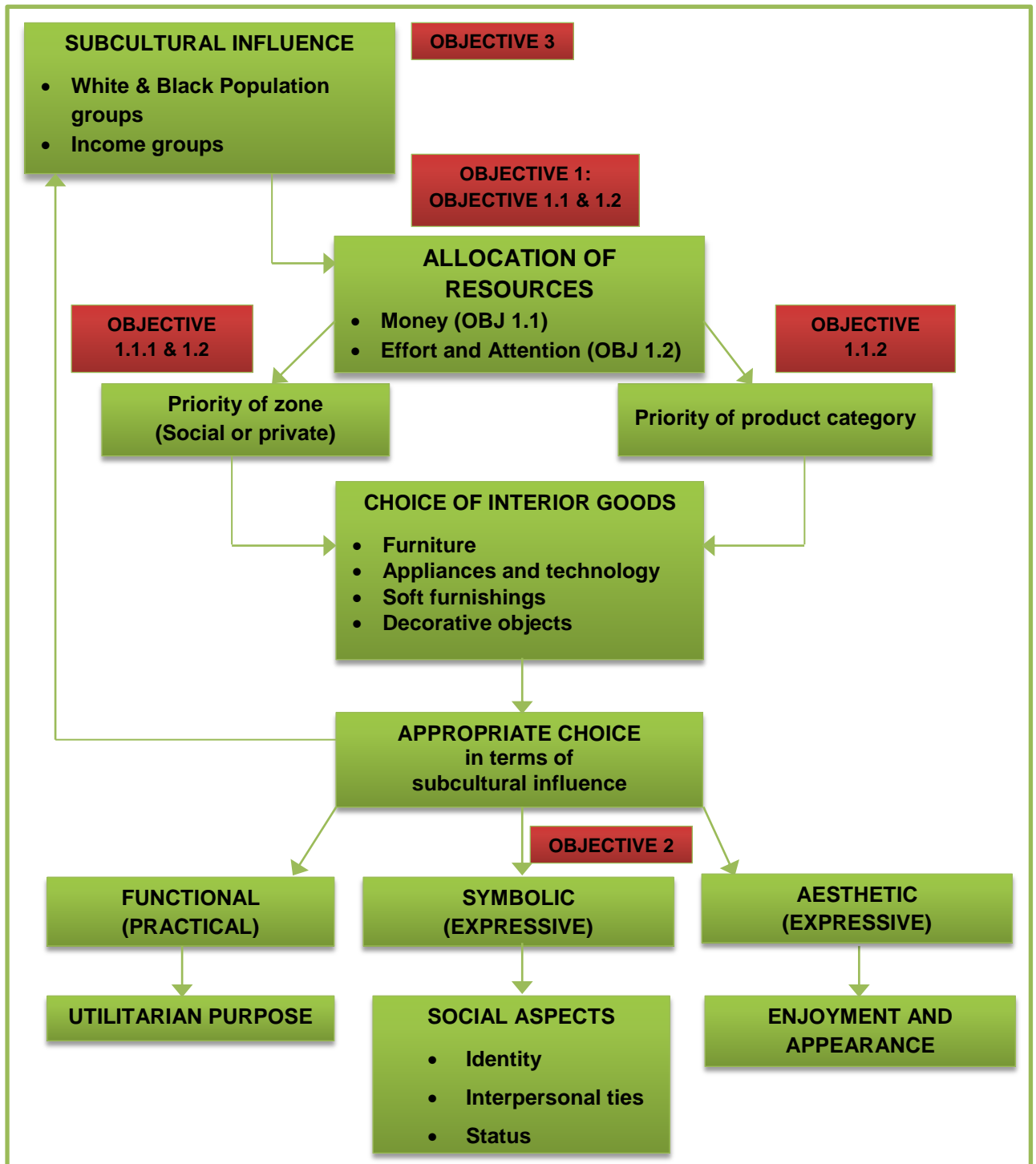


FIGURE 3.2: ADAPTED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A home can be divided into a social (public) zone and a private zone. The social zone is usually inclusive of the living room and dining room, or in the case of an open plan home, both the living and dining room, and in some cases the kitchen. For the purposes of this study, the kitchen was categorised separately as semi-private, as many people prefer not to allow guests into the kitchen (Gunter, 2000:98). The social or public zone is named as such because it is visible to visitors and is normally the place where these visitors are entertained. The private zone of the home includes the bedrooms and the main bathroom. These parts of the home are meant to be used by the family only, with the exception of children's bedrooms, which serve as a place to socialise with friends. The family bathroom can be classified as semi-private as well, due to it generally being used by visitors in the absence of a dedicated guest bathroom (Gunter, 2000:95, 97, 98, 107, 108).

Interior products can be categorised as furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, and decorative objects. Furniture, which is normally movable but can be built in, includes items such as seating, beds, tables, and storage units (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:577-584; Kilmer & Kilmer, 1992:494-502). Soft furnishings encompasses all household goods made of fabric textiles, for example, curtains, blinds, rugs, cushions and bed linen (Oberoi, 2011:1). Appliances and technology are combined to include all electronic appliances used for cooking, cleaning, cooling and drying, as well as any audio-visual equipment such as televisions, sound systems and computers (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:234). Decorative objects may be functional but are not necessarily meant to be used and are normally displayed for its aesthetic value. It includes indoor plants, any form of artwork, wall hangings, lamps, mirrors, vases and non-functional glassware or ceramics (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:606-615).

Income groups and racial or population groups are subcultures within a larger cultural society (Mason, 1981:22; Evans *et al.*, 2009:285; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:393) that influence households' consumption and social identity, as well as their choice of interior goods (Lamont & Molnár, 2001:41; Wilska, 2002:208). A household's culture may affect their perceived meaning of a room or the interior objects in it, and subsequently determine the way that they are used (Rechavi, 2009). It is said that possessions, such as furniture and other interior goods, are social or cultural symbols that are used to communicate personal messages to others, such as personal information about one's personality, or social messages, such as information about one's status or culture. Even utilitarian objects are used within the realms of culture and are thus considered cultural objects (Gunter, 2000:116; Charon, 2007:48; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:20, 92). These arguments confirm that interior objects indeed possess a functional, symbolic and aesthetic utility (Veryzer, 1995). Interior goods from the mentioned product categories are therefore chosen or prioritised to meet households' desired functional, symbolic or aesthetic utility, using certain criteria (Objective 2) to ensure the most appropriate choice. An appropriate choice would be an

interior product that meets the consumer's or family's wants or needs, or both, in terms of functional and/or symbolic and/or aesthetic utility and that is preferably in line with their self-allocated budget limit for the particular zone or product type to which it belongs.

Two utilitarian benefits that interior products may provide are good product performance and value for money. Products are chosen with a specific end-use in mind and, in order for it to meet a consumer's needs on a functional performance basis, it should meet certain physical requirements at a desired level for a reasonable period of time (Lamb *et al.*, 2004:217). To regard an interior product as one that provides 'value for money', its quality, appearance, convenience, and/or functional attributes should justify the price (Lamb *et al.*, 2004:405). Such a product may, for instance, be of superior quality, which justifies a higher price, or command a lower price due to its less superior quality, yet in both cases the value expected and received is in line with the price asked and is thus considered good value for money (Zeithaml, 1988 in Sweeney & Soutar, 2001:204; Internet: University of Cambridge, Secretariat, 2008). Seeking value for money is a rational behavioural tendency, as consumers tend to seek a solution that will meet their particular need in the most optimal way possible whilst incurring minimal costs (Del Río *et al.*, 2001:454; Zey, 1992:10).

As explained, consumers do not always behave in a rational, calculating way when searching for products. Often their emotions or other subjective motivations take precedence in their decision-making process (Zey, 1992:17, 18; Rousseau, 2003c:110). This approach may result in consumers making product choices based on symbolic benefits, despite the product perhaps lacking in utilitarian areas such as performance, reliability, or comfort. Symbolic attributes in most cases provide an expressive quality to products and include a product's potential to generate social approval from others, award a sense of prestige or status to the owner, be representative of an individual's or household's lifestyle and identity, or represent and facilitate interpersonal ties with others. Consumers evaluate products such as interior goods that possess expressive qualities, while consciously or subconsciously considering the social implications it may have. The extent of others' influence on a person's buying behaviour is subject to the individual's attitude toward the reference group, the nature of the group, and the nature of the product under consideration (Rousseau, 2003b:370). Gaining social approval from significant others may stem from their approval of one's possessions (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:29), which might affect one's choice of interior product, although unconsciously. Possessions have in many cases been used to determine a person's social status (Laumann & House, 1970). Products such as interior goods that are conspicuous to significant others are especially helpful determinants of status (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:26). A person's social status is his position in society or in a group based on his/her wealth,

prestige, power and influence (Rousseau, 2003b:372; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:338). What constitutes as a high status product is also determined by cultural values and conventions.

A person's lifestyle is a reflection of his/her self-identity and, amongst others, comprises a person's money-spending habits, interests, use of time, opinions, and general way of life (Rengel, 2007:259). Individuals may perceive their interior possessions and their home as extensions and symbols of their self, specifically their cultural and personal identities (Belk, 1988). Interior objects can reflect an individual's social roles (Solomon, 1983), ethnic identity, values, achievements, personal history, tastes, and uniqueness. Interior objects that are heirlooms, gifts and objects made by significant others may represent interpersonal ties and memories. Interior objects such as furniture and its arrangement, technology and appliances, may also serve a social function by facilitating interaction with others (i.e. being necessary when entertaining guests at home), which help strengthen relationships (Richins, 1994; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981:31, 86).

In addition to the abovementioned attributes, Del Río *et al.* (2001:457) also labelled visual product aesthetics as a symbolic benefit to base product evaluations on because visual aesthetics, acting as a symbol, may influence consumers' perception of a product with regard to its durability, price, youthfulness, and innovativeness (Bloch, *et al.*, 2003:551). Having aesthetically pleasing interior products could also indicate to observers that the consumer has good taste or is in keeping with the latest fashion trends in interior goods, which may be beneficial to the consumer on a social level (Gunter, 2000:117). Other proposed reasons for paying attention to the visual aesthetics of products when making purchase decisions are that owning products with superior designs has the potential to make people feel better about themselves, make their world a better place to live in and give them pleasure (Bloch *et al.*, 2003:556). Gunter (2000:133) adds that being surrounded by beautiful objects may have a positive effect on one's well-being. An interior object or space has aesthetic value if it evokes a positive emotional response such as a deep level of satisfaction or sense of pleasure from the viewer, which emanates from the visual appearance of the object and not from its functional purpose (Abercrombie, 1990:71; Pile, 2007:39).

3.4 AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

3.4.1 Aim of the research

The aim of the research is to investigate and describe young households' acquisition of interior merchandise – i.e. furniture, appliances and technology, soft furnishings, and decorative objects during the early stages when setting up their homes – specifically to gain evidence of their prioritisation of the different zones in their homes, as well as the allocation of their financial and physical resources (i.e. money, effort and attention). The research also attempts to describe the relative importance that symbolic meanings in interior objects hold for these households, compared to functional utility. Empirical evidence of this kind can be useful to professionals in the interior industries during consumer facilitation, as well as to retailers to augment their marketing mix and in store design.

3.4.2 Research objectives

The following objectives directed the research design and methodology:

Objective 1: To investigate and describe young households' allocation of resources towards interior goods for their home:

1.1 The allocation of their financial resources

1.1.1 to different zones of their homes, and

1.1.2 to specific product categories, namely furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, and decorative objects, within their budgets.

1.2 The allocation of their physical resources (i.e. effort and attention) to different zones of their homes.

Objective 2: To investigate and describe households' justification for the allocation of their resources, i.e. the functional utility of interior products and zones, versus their regard for the symbolic meaning of interior products and zones (specifically status), versus aesthetic appeal.

Objective 3: To investigate whether young households' interior choices, as outlined in objective 1 and 2, differ across different

3.1 population groups, specifically White and Black, and

3.2 income groups

to indicate whether such consumers' choices differ for specific subcultures.

3.5 SUMMARY

The assumptions of the *multiple mental accounting perspective* firstly allow an interpretation and discussion of findings in terms of how outcomes (or interior related transactions) are perceived and experienced, and how interior related purchases are made; secondly how activities are assigned to specific accounts, how funds are labelled and expenditures are categorised; and thirdly explain the frequency with which accounts are evaluated. The *symbolic interactionist perspective* describes how individuals create their own realities by employing appearance management; how they use symbols to direct behaviour; and how social meanings and interpretations can emerge from interactions between people. The *cultural perspective* explicates how collective values are produced and reproduced through cultural forms; that collective values and ideologies are shared by group members; and that culture provides abstract representations of social life. A conceptual framework was adapted from a model that was developed by Del Río *et al.* (2001) and research objectives were formulated.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter explicates the research design and research methodology in accordance with the research objectives

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Rubin and Babbie (2001 in Fouché, Delport & De Vos, 2011:143) define the term *research design* as all the decisions one makes in planning a study. This includes decisions about the research style or approach, sampling methods, data collection methods, and data analysis plans. This chapter explicates how the research design or plan was executed by discussing the above aspects.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.2.1 Research style

This predominantly quantitative research study is descriptive and explorative in nature. It is a cross-sectional study, as it explores the purchase behaviour of young households in the greater Tshwane region at a given time. Quantitative data was collected through a survey that utilised a structured questionnaire that contained six sections.

Exploratory research is conducted to provide insight into a situation, phenomenon, or population group. A general picture is formed of the basic information pertaining to a new area of interest that not much is known about. In this study, exploratory research is employed to gain a broad understanding of young households' acquisition of household interior goods. When more is known about the situation, phenomenon or population group, descriptive research may be conducted in order to investigate the situation more intensively (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95, 96). Descriptive research aims to describe the nature of certain characteristics of people, groups, situations, or

environments (Zikmund & Babin, 2007:42). It provides specific details regarding a situation or social setting and aims to answer 'how' and 'why' questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96). In this study, young households between the ages of 25 and 39, living in the Tshwane region of Gauteng, are broadly described in terms of how they prioritise and motivate their interior purchases for their homes. Specifically, this group is described in terms of how they prioritise the areas of their homes in terms of money, time, and effort spent on the decoration and furnishing thereof; how they prioritise interior product categories for the room with the highest priority; their symbolic, aesthetic and utilitarian motivations for purchasing interior products; their predilection for status consumption and buying for impression management; and the importance they place on visual aesthetics of interior products. Empirical research on young adult consumers' choice of interior products is limited. However, they presumably form a large part of the buying force in this product category.

This study follows a predominantly quantitative approach. Quantitative research aims to answer specific research questions objectively by quantifying variables. It is meant to establish, confirm, or validate relationships between predetermined variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:94, 95). Quantified responses can be analysed statistically by being compared, aggregated, summarised and averaged, after which objective conclusions are drawn. Quantitative data are, however, lacking in richness of meaning (Babbie, 2007:23).

Qualitative research aims to explore and better understand the nuances of a particular complex phenomenon by collecting large amounts of verbal and nonverbal data which they organise into categories and describe in order to make inferences and consequently answer more general research questions regarding the phenomena in question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:95, 96).

Primary data was gathered by means of a structured questionnaire consisting of six sections. All six sections provided quantitative data, with one section containing an open-ended question (repeated in both of the section's subsections) that provided qualitative data. The qualitative question, in the form of an open-ended question, was used to explore the deeper motivations behind the prioritisation of the areas in a home. After a certain room or area has been assigned top priority and reasons for this priority were supplied, the importance of these reasons was explored by means of an open-ended question. Having a qualitative question in a predominantly quantitative study is referred to by Creswell (1994, in De Vos, 2002:366) as the dominant-less-dominant model of combination approaches.

The research was cross-sectional because it measured the responses of young households over the period of May to October, and December 2011, in Tshwane, Gauteng (Babbie, 2007:102).

4.2.2 Sampling plan

4.2.2.1 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was young households living in Tshwane, Gauteng. Households were included in the sampling frame if they met the following sampling criteria, namely:

- *Age*: The respondent is between the ages of 25 and 39 years;
- *Location*: The household lives in the Tshwane region of Gauteng; and
- *Home occupancy status*: The household owns or rents a house or townhouse or flat with multiple rooms.

Although marital status, racial category, combined household income and highest level of education were requested in the first section of the questionnaire, these categories were not used as criteria on which to base the exclusion of respondents.

4.2.2.2 Sampling

A feasible sample group of 277 respondents was obtained through three non-probability, or non-random sampling methods. Data obtained from non-random samples cannot be generalised to the whole population (Walliman, 2005:276).

A combination of the **convenience and purposive criterion sampling** techniques was used to obtain a sample group that is homogeneous on the grounds of age group, geographic area, and home occupancy status (owning or renting their *own* house). Thirty-five participants were preselected because they possessed the predetermined characteristics or criteria that are of interest in the particular study, and because they were available and willing to participate (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:80; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392; Walliman, 2005:278). Additionally, 44 undergraduate Consumer Science students were trained as fieldworkers. They were responsible for the return of 98 usable questionnaires. Some participants also acted as fieldworkers by distributing to and collecting questionnaires from other potential participants that fit the predetermined characteristics. Therefore, in conjunction with the abovementioned techniques, **snowball sampling** was employed to attain the desired number of participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:80; Walliman, 2005:279; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:393).

4.2.3 Data collection

Due to the personal nature of some of the questions, self-completion of questionnaires was preferred over face to face interviews as the latter method may lead to social desirability bias or dishonesty on the part of the respondent, due to the lack of anonymity. Self-completion has the further advantage of allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire in their own time, and to consult with another household member before answering a question (Zikmund & Babin, 2007:144). Questionnaires in paper format were delivered by hand by the researcher or the identified fieldworkers to members of the sample group. Surveys were collected after an agreed upon time period by the researcher or the particular fieldworker. Envelopes accompanied all questionnaires.

A combination of tactics was implemented to maximise the response rate. The questionnaire had a cover letter with the University of Pretoria emblem and the relevant department's contact details at the top. This was aimed at providing credibility and authority to the questionnaire and thus increasing the response rate (Zikmund & Babin, 2007:147). The cover letter broadly explained the subject of the research project of which this survey formed a part, and that the questionnaire would take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The researcher's phone number and email address were included and respondents were encouraged to contact the researcher if they had any enquiries during or after the process. Respondents were also assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality with which all responses will be treated. It was also stated that respondents are allowed to withdraw themselves from the study, without explanation, at any time before the questionnaire is collected, if they wish to do so (Zikmund & Babin, 2007:146).

An incentive in the form of a lucky draw for a R500 gift voucher at a large, well-known shopping centre in Tshwane, Gauteng, was offered to increase potential respondents' motivation to complete the questionnaire (Zikmund & Babin, 2007:147). An additional lucky draw to the same value was offered to all respondents who acted as fieldworkers and distributed and returned at least ten usable questionnaires. Participation in each of these lucky draw competitions were explained to be voluntary, and anyone who wished to participate needed to provide only their contact number on a tear-off slip at the bottom of the questionnaire. The lucky draws were performed by the researcher in January, after the data collection phase was concluded and the two winners were notified telephonically. To ensure ethicality, the coding assistant acted as a witness to the lucky draw.

Since no records were kept of the respondents' identities (to ensure their promised anonymity), once in the possession of the researcher, no questionnaire could be connected with an individual respondent again. Responses were slow throughout the seven months of data collection, and

because only willing people were included and people were allowed to withdraw themselves from the study even after agreeing to participate, it became difficult to retrieve questionnaires. Whenever possible, follow-up contact was made to remind people to return their questionnaires, especially if a person indicated initially that he/she wanted to participate, which proved to be successful in most cases. If people did not respond after several reminders, their questionnaires were deemed irretrievable, as one should at some point accept their unresponsiveness as a refusal to participate.

The reason for resuming data collection in December after the initial closing of data collection at the end of October was due to the low number of Black respondents in comparison to White respondents. If the researcher wished to make a comparison between the data obtained from White and Black respondents, a more sizeable proportion of the sample had to be Black respondents. By the end of October, Black respondents made up only 13.6% of the total sample group. At the final closing of data collection, Black respondents totalled 19.5% of the total population. Because sampling was based on convenience and snowballing, it is understandable that fieldworkers and respondents acting as fieldworkers are likely to approach potential respondents that are of the same racial category as what they are. Only five of the 44 fieldworkers were Black, resulting in fewer Black respondents than White respondents. Despite all efforts to increase the number, over a period of seven months only 54 Black respondents were recruited. Black respondents that fit the criteria of home occupancy status proved difficult to find because young Black adults often tend to cohabitate with their relatives rather than having their own private living arrangements. In 2001, 25% of urban Black households were three-generational, in other words, comprising grandparents, their adult children, and grandchildren. The population census data of 1996 and 2001 revealed an increase in extended family living amongst the Black population, of which the numbers were significantly higher than for the White population (Amoateng, Heaton & Kalule-Sabiti, 2007:49, 52, 53).

4.2.3.1 *Structured questionnaire*

A structured, self-administered questionnaire (See Appendix A) was distributed to potential respondents that fit the criteria for inclusion. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather facts and opinions regarding the prioritisation of and motivation for interior purchases from young households living in Tshwane, who are in the process of furnishing their homes or have done so recently (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:186).

In order to eliminate any errors, the structured questionnaire was given to a statistical research consultant to evaluate. On her recommendation, changes were made to the wording and numbering of some questions and items within questions. Also, one of the demographic questions regarding the number of children in a household was removed, since it served no apparent purpose. The three point Likert-type scale (Definitely Agree/Maybe Agree/Definitely Disagree) was expanded to a four point Likert-type scale (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree). Lastly, suggestions were made regarding the structure and formatting that ultimately reduced the questionnaire by a page, which is advantageous, since respondents may be more likely to fill in and complete a questionnaire if it is not perceived to be too long (Strydom, 2011b:242). The questionnaire was subsequently subjected to a pilot study consisting of five potential respondents that met the desired criteria. Respondents were obtained in the same manner as the rest of the ultimate sample group, which was through convenience and purposive, criterion sampling. Only one suggestion was made by one of the pilot respondents, and that was that not enough writing space was provided for the open-ended question. However, after consideration, it was decided by the researcher that there is sufficient space, since only a twenty- word answer was requested. No other concerns were raised and no respondent errors occurred. The questionnaire was also perused by two recently graduated Master's students in the Consumer Science field, with regard to linguistics and comprehensiveness. They made a suggestion regarding the wording of one item which, after correction, reduced any potential confusion as to its meaning. With the further guidance of a statistician, the structured questionnaire was finalised, which is in compliance with the anticipated statistical procedures. The questionnaire in its now final form was distributed by hand. The questionnaire consisted of the following sections, namely:

- **Section A: Demographic information**

This section consisted of six statements or questions that described the respondent in terms of age, marital status, home occupancy status, racial category, level of education, and combined monthly household income.

- **Section B: Prioritising zones in the home**

This section was divided into two subsections with four questions each, which was inspired by a laddering or means-end chain interviewing technique, which involves a question elaborating on the previous question in a probing manner to gain deeper understanding of the situation. Combined, these subsections provided an indication of consumers' prioritisation of zones in their home. The first subsection investigated which four areas in the home respondents have spent the most *money* on in terms of their interior decoration furnishing. The second subsection investigated which four areas in the home respondents devoted the most *attention and effort* to in terms of finding the right

interior items to decorate and furnish them. The first question required respondents to indicate from a list the four areas in their home that they have spent the most money or effort and time on, and then to rank them in descending order. The list contained eleven different rooms, with an additional space provided if a respondent wanted to indicate a room that was not on the list. The second question consisted of fourteen statements on a four point Likert-type scale (with the options being Definitely Agree, Probably, Unlikely, and Definitely Disagree) pertaining to the room that was indicated as one (1) in the preceding question, i.e. the room on which the most money or effort and time was spent. Respondents were required to indicate to what extent they agreed with the fourteen potential reasons for spending the most money or effort and time on this particular room, as it applies to them. An additional space was provided, should a respondent have a reason that was not contained in the list. The scale is an adapted version of Richins' 1994 Possession Rating Scale, which was compared to the content of Sweeney and Soutar's 2001 PERVAL (Perceived Value) Scale. Neither of these scales could be used as is in this particular section because both contained items that were not deemed relevant to this study. The third question in Section B was an open-ended question where respondents had to provide an explanation as to why the above indicated reasons (all marked as Definitely Agree) were important to them. The last question required respondents to rank order the three areas in their home that they have neglected the most in terms of money or effort and time, in order to furnish the four areas indicated in the first question. Rooms are ranked most neglected, slightly less neglected than 1, and slightly less neglected than 2.

- **Section C: Prioritising interior objects in the home**

This section provided an indication of consumers' prioritisation of categories of interior objects by means of a constant-sum scale. Respondents were asked to indicate proportionately in percentages how they would allocate insurance money to each of the four different interior product categories (furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, and decorative objects). The percentage awarded to each of the four categories should add up to 100%.

- **Section D: Social considerations**

This section consisted of five statements on a four point Likert-type scale (with the options being Definitely Agree, Probably, Unlikely, and Definitely Disagree) measuring consumers' tendencies for conspicuous consumption, status consumption and purchasing for impression management. The items in this scale were adapted from Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn's 1999 Status Consumption Scale. The wording remained mostly the same, with the exception of the first item on which was elaborated and the negatively worded statement which was reversed.

- **Section E: Interior purchase preferences**

This section consisted of twenty statements on a four point Likert-type scale (with the options being Definitely Agree, Probably, Unlikely, and Definitely Disagree) measuring a variety of symbolic and functional purchase objectives when purchasing interior goods, including the financial considerations involved. Statements were arranged randomly to avoid bias. Twelve items from Sweeney and Soutar's 2001 PERVAL (Perceived Value) Scale were adapted and used in conjunction with three items inspired by Richins' 1994 Possession Rating Scale, and four items inspired by Bloch, Brunel and Arnold's 2003 CVPA (Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics) Scale.

- **Section F: Aesthetics**

This section consisted of eleven statements on a four point Likert-type scale (with the options being Definitely Agree, Probably, Unlikely, and Definitely Disagree) measuring the level of significance that visual aesthetics have for respondents when interacting with interior products. The first four statements measure the value that aesthetically pleasing interior products have for respondents, the next four statements measure respondents' ability to make good aesthetic judgments (their aesthetic acumen), and the last three statements measure respondents' response when confronted with aesthetically pleasing interior products in a retail environment. These eleven statements were taken from Bloch, Brunel and Arnold's 2003 CVPA (Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics) Scale and were modified only to make it applicable to interior products.

4.3 OPERATIONALISATION

The questionnaire was divided into sections with each section reflecting one or more of the study's objectives. The operationalisation of the questionnaire, in accordance with the objections that were met, is tabulated below.

TABLE 4.1: OPERATIONALISATION

	OBJECTIVE	SECTION	VARIABLES	STATISTICAL ANALYSIS
1	<p>To investigate and describe young households' allocation of resources towards interior goods for their home:</p> <p>1.1 The allocation of their financial resources</p> <p>1.1.1 to different zones of their homes, and</p> <p>1.1.2 to specific product categories, namely furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, and decorative objects, within their budgets.</p> <p>1.2 The allocation of their physical resources (i.e. effort and attention) to different zones of their homes.</p>	B, C	B1.1-1.4; B4.1-4.3; B5.1-5.4; B8.1-8.3; C1-4	Descriptive statistics
2	<p>To investigate and describe households' justification for the allocation of their resources, i.e. the functional utility of interior products and zones, versus their regard for the symbolic meaning of interior products and zones (specifically status), versus aesthetic appeal.</p>	B, D, E, F	B2.1-2.15; B3.1-3.3; B6.1-6.15; B7.1-7.3; D1-5; E1-20; F1-11	Descriptive statistics, ANOVA. Open question: open coding, categorisation. Exploratory factor analysis. An adaptation of Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn's Status Consumption Scale (1999). An adaptation of Sweeney and Soutar's PERVAL Scale (2001) (consumer PERceived VALue). An adaptation of Bloch, Brunel and Arnold's CVPA Scale (2003) (Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics). Cronbach's Alphas.

TABLE 4.1: OPERATIONALISATION CONTINUED

	OBJECTIVE	SECTION	VARIABLES	STATISTICAL ANALYSIS
3	To investigate whether young households' interior choices, as outlined in objective 1 and 2, differ across different 3.1 population groups, specifically White and Black, and 3.2 income groups to indicate whether such consumers' choices differ for specific subcultures.	A	A4, A6	Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Tukey's HSD test (post hoc).

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics, namely frequencies, means, medians and percentage distributions, for the demographic data that were subsequently presented in graphs, figures and tables. A qualified statistician from STATOMET of the University of Pretoria assisted the researcher in terms of relevant inferential statistics. Statistical procedures included Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and factor analysis. Post hoc tests were performed, specifically Tukey's (HSD) test, to distinguish significant differences among subsets of the sample.

4.5 QUALITY OF THE DATA

4.5.1 Validity

A valid measuring instrument or scale performs in two ways: firstly, it measures what it is supposed to measure, and secondly, it measures the intended concept accurately (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:28; Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:172). There are two dimensions to the validity of a research project, namely external and internal validity. External validity, i.e. the generalisability of the findings to other population groups, cannot be guaranteed because of the non-probability sampling techniques used. It can, however, be improved by clearly defining independent variables for other researchers who wish to replicate the study at another time or place (Walliman, 2005:278, 294, 295). Internal validity is mostly relevant to studies that wish to establish a causal relationship and is not relevant to most descriptive studies (Trochim, 2006a:1), however, internal validity is important to any research study. Generally, internal validity may be compromised by faulty measuring instruments that do not measure what it is intended to measure (Walliman, 2005:295; Leedy &

Ormrod, 2010:99). A measuring instrument may have more than one purpose and therefore the validity of the instrument must be tested on different levels (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:160). The four types of validity to be evaluated are face, content, construct, and criterion validity:

- **Face validity** is not considered by all methodologists as a scientific measure of validity since it involves potential respondents or other untrained individuals evaluating the instrument on 'face value', thus only cursorily. It is a more informal way of determining whether the survey items and scales 'appear' to be relevant measures of the concept and will be correctly interpreted by the respondents (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:174; Litwin, 1995:35; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:92). The questionnaire was divided into sections based on the objectives of the study and scale items were formulated based on all concepts comprised in the conceptual framework. The questionnaire appeared to measure all objectives as laid out in the aim of the study. The preliminary survey was tested on five potential respondents for comprehensiveness and linguistics. The survey was worded in layman's terms to avoid misinterpretations. It was ensured that the final survey items and scales were understandable and concepts were clearly defined (Churchill, Brown & Suter, 2010:259).
- **Content validity** involves that trained individuals with some knowledge of the topic, and preferably also research design, evaluate the instrument and its individual items. Assessing the instrument for content validity involves determining whether the instrument is really measuring the concept it is meant to measure and whether there are enough items in the scale to effectively measure the concept. For instance, are the items measuring predilection for status consumption truly reflecting predilection for status consumption, and are there enough items in the scale to measure it accurately and convincingly? It is therefore important to assess whether a scale indeed includes everything it should, whilst excluding anything it should not, in order to measure the concept sufficiently (Delport & Roestenburg, 2011:173; Litwin, 1995:35). In this study, existing measuring scales were adapted and pre-tested with regard to the appropriateness of the scales and their items by two graduated Master's students and a professor in the Consumer Science field, and a statistical research consultant, to ensure that the questions produce the desired responses and thus serve as a true measure of the concept (Trochim, 2006c:1).

- **Construct validity** determines how meaningful a measurement instrument is and how and why it performs the way it does. Constructs are characteristics that cannot be directly observed and measured, but is known to exist, based on what is observed in people's behaviour (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:92). This requires a thorough understanding of the theory that underpins the research, since it is important that the constructs themselves are understood as well as how they relate to one another. For instance, the relationship between the constructs conspicuous consumption and status consumption should be understood in order to design a scale that measures both. A review of existing literature was conducted prior to survey design to ensure all relevant constructs are understood and measured correctly (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:174, 175; Litwin, 1995:43, 44).
- **Criterion validity** involves multiple measurements and a comparison of scores on an instrument with that of an external criterion that is known to be a valid and reliable measurer of the same concept (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:174; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:92). Different scales or scale items measuring the same concept are an indication of criterion validity if the different methods provide similar results. Furthermore, existing instruments that have already proved to be valid and reliable were adapted to suit the interior environment.

4.5.2 Reliability

In order for a measurement to be accurate (validity), it should also be consistently the same. The reliability of a measuring instrument is the consistency with which the measuring instrument yields similar results under similar conditions, should it be administered by independent researchers. In other words, reliability indicates how reproducible the survey's data is (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:29; Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011:177; Litwin, 1995:6). Reliability is improved by internal consistency, which means that a group of items that measure the same construct give similar results (Trochim, 2006d:1). Thus, a construct is measured with two or three similar questions in a scale. If the answers to these questions are correlated, the measurement of that construct is considered reliable and the data is said to be richer (Internet: Colosi, 1997:1; Litwin, 1995:21). This is also a form of triangulation, namely triangulation of measures (De Vos, 2005:362). The most frequently used method for testing internal consistency is Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Trochim, 2006d:1). The coefficient alpha measures *how well* the individual items in the scale are able to measure the different aspects of a construct in order to get a comprehensive measurement of the construct. Adding more items to a scale can improve the internal consistency reliability if the Cronbach's alpha indicates that it is too low (Litwin, 1995:24, 27).

A pre-test of the questionnaire indicated that the questions were interpreted correctly by all the participants and were easy enough to answer, which reduces measurement error and thus increases reliability (Trochim, 2006b:1). An absence of measurement error increases the measurement instrument's precision (Litwin, 1995:6).

4.6 ETHICS

Strydom (2011a:114) describes ethics as a set of moral principles that are accepted by individuals or groups as rules or standards against which researchers, for instance, should evaluate their behaviour towards respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, research assistants and students.

The following ethical issues, as identified by Strydom (2011a:115-126) and Babbie (2007:62-69), were considered during the data collection phase:

- **Avoidance of harm:** The questionnaire contained no questions that required respondents to provide answers that may cause them emotional distress or discomfort due to the unreasonably sensitive or personal nature thereof. Respondents were informed via the cover letter that they may withdraw themselves from the study without explanation should they wish to do so. Therefore, if anyone did not feel comfortable to complete, for instance, the demographic questions, they were under no obligation to participate in the study.
- **Informed consent and voluntary participation:** In studies where respondents are not subjected to any harm or discomfort, where their anonymity is assured, and where the information they are asked to divulge is not very personal, it is not necessary to obtain formal informed consent from respondents. Respondents participated in the study on a voluntary basis and were informed that they may withdraw themselves from the study without explanation if they wish to do so. Participation in the lucky draw was also strictly voluntary and anonymous. No personal details that may link a particular questionnaire to a particular person were requested. A contact number of the researcher, as well as the department from where the study is conducted, were provided in the cover letter in the occasion that respondents had enquiries regarding the research project or questionnaire itself. The aim of the study was clearly stated in the cover letter. Participation in the study was interpreted as consent given.

- **Deception of respondents:** In no instance was information withheld or incorrect information given that would have influenced respondents' decision to participate in the study. The researcher did not intentionally mislead the respondents, disguise the aim of the research, or misrepresent facts in any part of the questionnaire or correspondence accompanying it.
- **Violation of privacy, anonymity or confidentiality:** Confidentiality refers to the manner in which information is handled and indicates a continuation of a person's personal privacy. Confidentiality was ensured by not divulging the information obtained to others or using it for any matter other than the research study for which it was obtained. Respondents' anonymity was ensured by not asking for any personal details that may reveal a respondent's identity. Envelopes accompanied questionnaires to ensure further anonymity and privacy. Questionnaires could in no way be traced back to individual respondents.
- **Actions and competence of the researcher:** This implicates that the researcher and those involved should be competent and adequately skilled to carry out the research project. This research project forms part of the Master's degree in Consumer Science at the University of Pretoria. The researcher had to complete a series of modules that equipped her with the necessary background knowledge, as well as present a written proposal to the department before being deemed competent to proceed with data collection. The study leader supervised the entire process, and student fieldworkers, as well as a coding assistant, were thoroughly trained to ensure that their conduct was acceptable and ethical.
- **Cooperation with contributors:** Contributors may include financial sponsors, colleagues and co-researchers. Contributions may be made formally or informally. In this study, no financial sponsors were involved, and colleagues that contributed were acknowledged. The main formal contributors to the research were the study leader and the statistics team.
- **Release or publication of findings:** A research report containing the findings was compiled as accurately and objectively as possible. Findings were conveyed truthfully, comprehensively and unambiguously, and will be published as part of a Master's dissertation for future perusal by interested parties.
- **Debriefing of respondents:** A debriefing session provides respondents the opportunity to relay their experience, and any problems or misunderstandings that may have occurred can be rectified. Since the survey was self-administered through written questionnaires, as opposed to in-depth interviews or focus groups, a debriefing session was not deemed relevant. The researcher or Consumer Science department may be contacted with any queries.



CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results in accordance with the objectives for the study, with inclusion of graphs and tables to aid the interpretation of the findings

5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

5.1.1 Profile of the sample

A discussion of the results begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of the sample. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, of which 284 were retrieved. Seven of these were discarded on the grounds that all sampling requisites were not met. As a result, a total of 277 usable questionnaires were obtained from respondents that were specifically targeted due to their compliance with the sampling criteria of age, geographic location, and homeownership status.

Age: Respondents' (N = 277) ages varied between 25 and 39 years of age in accordance with the selection criteria for participation (Mean: 28.2; Median: 27). One respondent refrained from disclosing his/her age because he/she considered this information to be of a too personal or sensitive nature. However, only people who confirmed that they were within the desired age bracket were approached, therefore it was not necessary to omit this respondent's questionnaire from the study.

Age is known to influence a person's identity, specifically on a cultural level. People from the same age group (or age cohort) tend to have a subcultural connection brought on by their similar experiences, for instance, in terms of historical events or popular culture in a specific context, for example South Africa. This similarity results in people of a certain age group sharing certain priorities, preferences, and needs as they move through each lifecycle (Solomon, 2007:512; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:78). Respondents aged 25 to 35 belong to Generation Y (born 1977-1994) and those aged 36 to 39 belong to Generation X (1966-1976) (Solomon, 2007:514,524).

Marital status: The majority was either married or living with a partner ($n = 170 / 61.4\%$); the rest were single ($n = 104 / 37.5\%$). Three respondents ($n = 3 / 1.1\%$) did not disclose their marital status.

For the purpose of this study, households were classified as being single or dual households, referring to the number of adults that can contribute financially to the household and can partake in decision-making. Dual households may have the advantage of having two adults' income at their disposal, which may influence the budget for and thus prioritisation of interior goods. A single adult may also have a different lifestyle and different needs in terms of household interior goods than that of a couple, which would affect their acquisition of interior goods.

Ownership status: The majority of the respondents ($n = 156 / 56.3\%$) rented their homes. The majority of home renters were single ($n = 83 / 53.9\%$), and the remaining 46.1% ($n = 71$) of home renters were part of dual households. Of all homeowners ($n = 119 / 43\%$), the majority ($n = 98 / 83\%$) was part of dual households, and the remaining homeowners ($n = 20 / 17\%$) were single. Two ($n = 2 / 0.7\%$) respondents did not disclose their homeownership status.

Literature suggests that homeowners regard their homes with more permanency than renters do, most likely because of the greater financial commitment that buyers make when purchasing a house. (Gunter, 2000:39). The lack of stability that home renters experience may prevent them from spending as much money or effort on their home interiors as they would have, had they owned the properties.

Population group: In terms of the Employment Equity Act of South Africa, which describes the various population groups in the country, respondents ($N = 277$) could be distinguished as: White ($n = 215 / 77.6\%$); Black ($n = 54 / 19.5\%$); Indian ($n = 5 / 1.8\%$); and Coloured ($n = 3 / 1.1\%$). A South African study has shown that spending patterns of Black consumers differed considerably from those of the average Indian and Coloured household with the same level of expenditures, and have proved to be more dissimilar in their spending patterns to their White financial counterparts than what households from the other two population groups are (Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007:7). For further analysis, only White and Black respondents were retained, since the representation of other population groups was too small. The rest of the study will therefore only reflect on the decision-making behaviour of White and Black population groups.

Highest level of education: The respondents' distribution in the sample based on level of education is depicted in Figure 5.1 below:

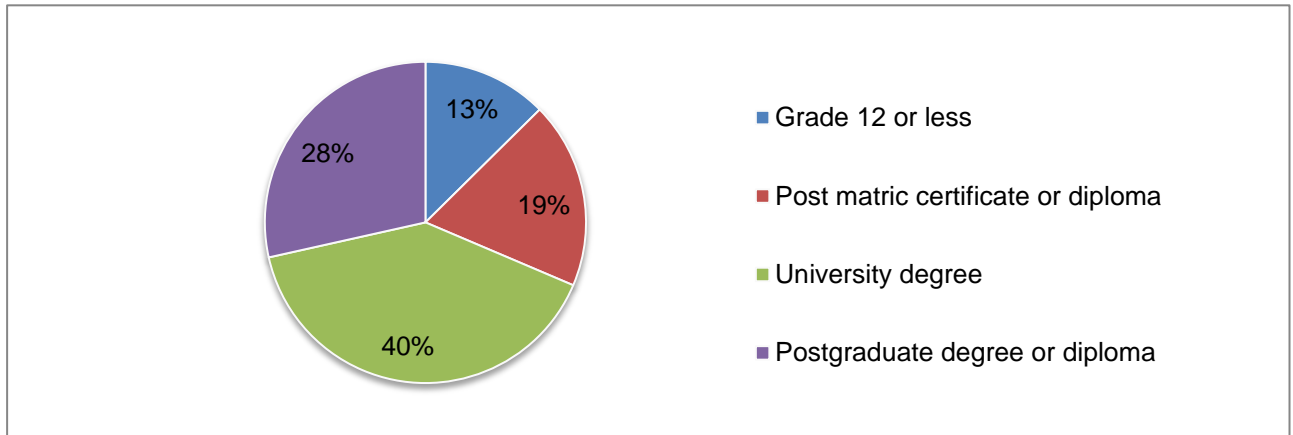


FIGURE 5.1: EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS (N = 277)

A good representation of respondents (sample: N = 277) with tertiary and postgraduate education was obtained (n = 242 / 87.4%); 28.5% (n = 79) possessed a postgraduate degree or diploma; 40.1% (n = 111) possessed a university degree; 18.8% (n = 52) possessed a post matric certificate or diploma; and 12.6% (n = 35) possessed a Grade 12 or lower qualification. Those with higher levels of education (mostly upper-middle class) (Mason, 1981:114) often wish to communicate their educational achievements as it is believed to increase their social standing (Mason, 1981:108, 110; Chao & Schor, 1998:113). That may result in a choice of visually significant products for their homes that are status-bearing. Households' highest level of education was requested in order to provide an overview of the sample, especially concerning socio-economic status or social class, to which education is a contributing factor.

Household's monthly income²: The respondents' income distribution is portrayed in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2 below. Household income was requested as an exact specification of income, as opposed to income categories from which they could choose. This explicit format of a potentially sensitive question may be the reason why 8% of respondents (n = 22) were unwilling to disclose this information. Household income was requested to serve as an indication of spending power.

² For the purpose of statistical analysis, monthly household incomes were divided into three groups, namely:

- Lower income group: ≤ R14 500 (South African urban household mean income)
- Middle income group: > R14 500 – ≤ R29 000
- Upper income group: > R29 000 (Mean income of Tshwane's highest income area)

(Internet: IOL Property.co.za, 2010; Bizcommunity.com, 2010; City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, 2008:41)

TABLE 5.1: MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME (N = 277)

Monthly household income	n	%
≤ R10 000	40	14.4
> R10 000 - ≤ R15 000	33	11.9
> R15 000 - ≤ R20 000	41	14.8
> R20 000 - ≤ R30 000	63	22.7
> R30 000 - ≤ R40 000	39	14.1
> R40 000 - ≤ R50 000	18	6.5
> R50 000	21	7.6
Missing	22	8

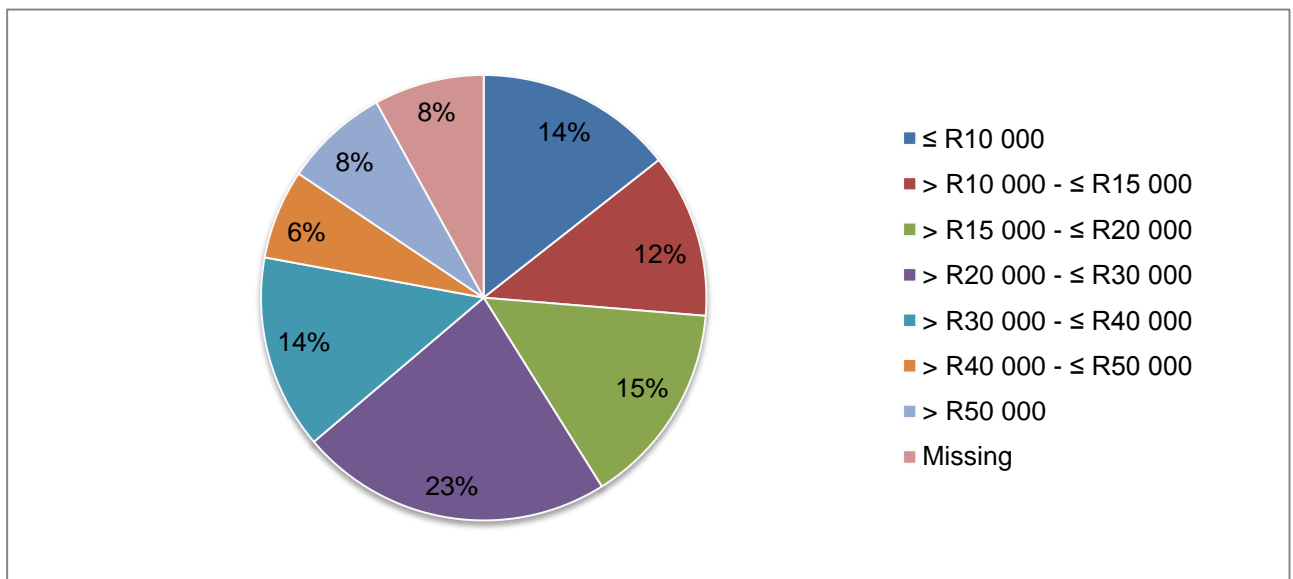


FIGURE 5.2: MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF THE SAMPLE (N = 277)

The mean monthly household income of the sample was R27 094 (Median: R23 500). A total of 22.4% (n = 57) of respondents earned the South African urban household average of R14 500 per month or less (Internet: IOL Property.co.za, 2010; Bizcommunity.com, 2010), whilst 9% (n = 23) of respondents earned the Tshwane household average of R8000 per month or less (City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, 2008:41). Forty percent (n = 102) of respondents earned more than the average monthly household income (i.e. > R29 000) of Tshwane’s highest income area (i.e. Pretoria East). Fifty percent of the sample earned more than R23 500, which placed them in the upper income category of Tshwane and in either the LSM 10-Low or LSM 10-High group (Internet: Bizcommunity.com, 2010; SAARF, 2011:59). For further statistical analysis, income groups were integrated in terms of three groups, namely ≤ R 14 500, > R14 500 – ≤ R 29 000 and > R 29 000.

5.1.2 Summary

The questionnaire was completed by 277 willing respondents from households living in the Tshwane metropolitan area of Gauteng, South Africa. Demographic data obtained from these respondents included their age, marital status, homeownership status, population group, highest level of education, and combined monthly household income. Only one age group was formed, namely 25 to 39 years old, because that was a prerequisite for participation. On the basis of marital status, respondents were grouped into single (n = 104 / 37.5%) and dual income households (n = 170 / 61.4%). In most cases, a dual household has a larger income at its disposal as opposed to having only the income of one breadwinner (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:333). This has consequences in terms of how much of the household budget can be allocated to household interior goods, which may lead to a difference in spending behaviour between the two groups (single versus dual). The majority of respondents (n = 156 / 56.3%) rented their homes, which may affect the permanency with which respondents viewed their homes, and subsequently how they allocated their resources toward their homes' interior. The majority of rented homes were occupied by singles (n = 83 / 53.9%), whilst the majority of owned homes were occupied by dual households (n = 98 / 83%). Due to the low numbers obtained in the Coloured (n = 3 / 1.1%) and Indian (n = 5 / 1.8%) population groups, only two population categories were retained for further analysis, namely White (n = 215 / 77.6%) and Black (n = 54 / 19.5%), and the Coloured and Indian respondents were thus excluded for subsequent analyses.

Income and education levels are two components of a household's socio-economic status (Gans, 1974:70; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:340) and are determinants of a household's need for social recognition and status (Mason, 1981:108, 110; Chao & Schor, 1998:113), as well as their buying patterns (Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007:8). It is also believed that people with different levels of education, income and social class view certain aspects of housing differently (Nasar, 1989:237). Of all the respondents (N = 277), 77.6% (n = 198) earned more than the average monthly income of urban South Africa, which is R14 500 (Internet: IOL Property.co.za, 2010; Bizcommunity.com, 2010), and 40% (n = 102) of the respondents earned more than the average monthly household income of the highest earning area in Tshwane, which is R29 000 (City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, 2008:41).

Of the Black and White respondents earning a monthly household income of \leq R14 500, the largest percentage of White respondents (n = 17 / 44.7%) possessed a degree and the largest percentage of Black respondents (n = 7 / 43.7%) possessed a certificate or diploma. A further 37.6% of the respondents' household incomes were between the South African urban household average and

the average of the highest earning area in Tshwane (i.e. > R14 500 to ≤ R29 000). In this income bracket, the largest percentage of White (n = 32 / 40%) and Black respondents (n = 8 / 53.2%) possessed a degree. Of the remaining 40% of respondents (in the > R29 000 income category), the largest percentage of White (n = 35 / 41.7%) and Black respondents (n = 7 / 46.7%) possessed a degree. The level of income earned by an individual often directly and positively correlates with their level of education (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:342). Therefore, households with a higher level of education should theoretically earn a higher income than households with a lower level of education. However, some respondents possessed a postgraduate qualification although their incomes were similar to that of the lower income category (≤ R14 500) (White: n = 13 / 34.2%; Black: n = 2 / 12.5%). This may be explained by the fact that some households (n = 104 / 37.5%) were single person households; or in the case of dual households, only one household member might have been employed, which in both instances meant that these households only had one income at their disposal. Findings relating to income and education are portrayed in Table 5.2 and Figures 5.3 – 5.5.

TABLE 5.2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION (WHITE AND BLACK RESPONDENTS) (n = 248)

Income Category		White < Grade 12	Black < Grade 12	White Grade 12	Black Grade 12	White Cert/Dipl	Black Cert/Dipl	White Degree	Black Degree	White PostGrad	Black PostGrad	White TOTAL	Black TOTAL
≤ R14 500	n	0	0	3	4	5	7	17	3	13	2	38	16
	%	0	0	7.9	25	13.2	43.7	44.7	18.7	34.2	12.5	100	100
> R14 500 – ≤ R29 000	n	1	0	11	1	7	6	32	8	29	0	80	15
	%	1.2	0	13.7	6.7	8.7	40	40	53.3	36.2	0	100	100
> R29 000	n	0	0	6	0	17	5	35	7	26	3	84	15
	%	0	0	7.1	0	20.2	33.3	41.7	46.7	30.9	20	100	100
TOTAL:												202	46

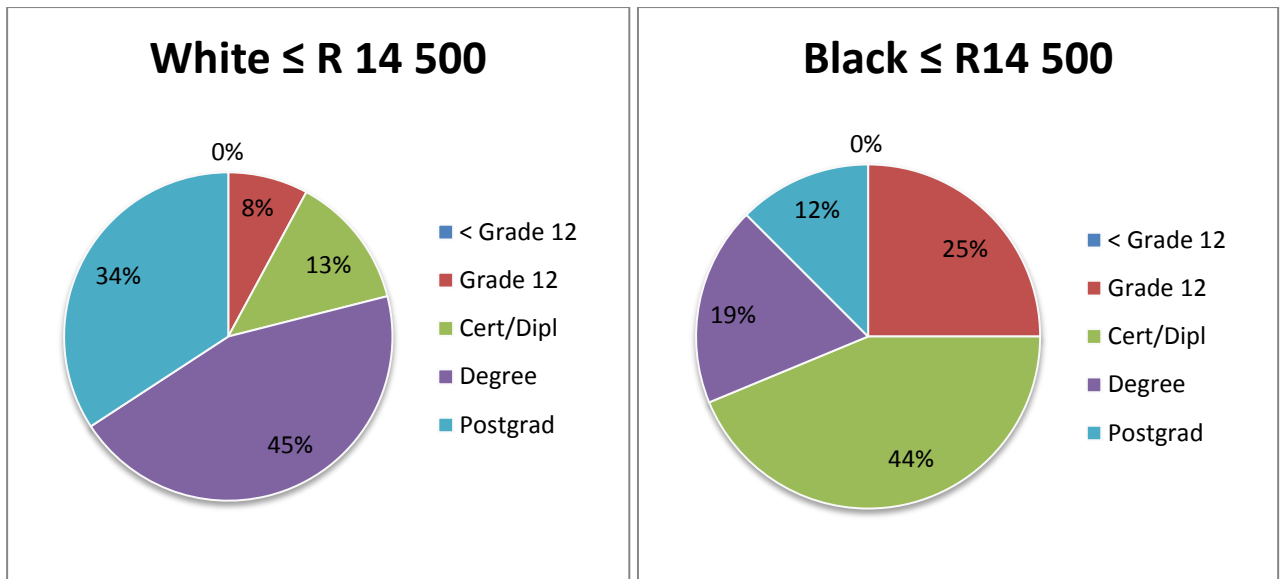


FIGURE 5.3: HOUSEHOLD INCOME (\leq R14 500) AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF WHITE (n = 38) AND BLACK RESPONDENTS (n = 16)

Figure 5.3 shows that the education levels of White respondents were higher than that of Black respondents in the \leq R14 500 income category.

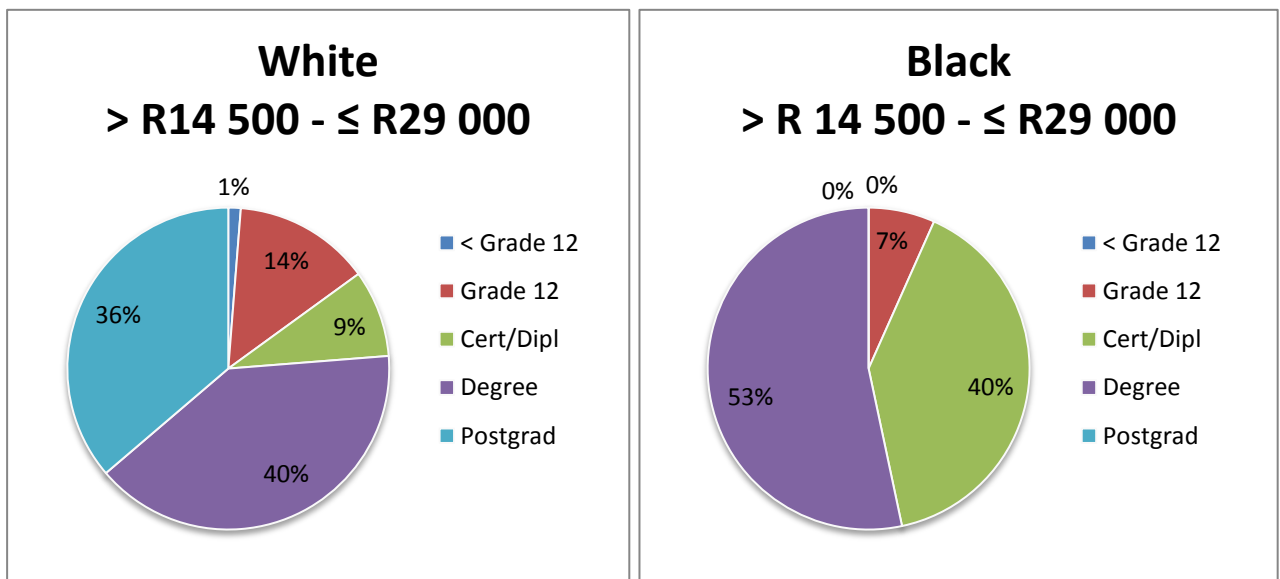


FIGURE 5.4: HOUSEHOLD INCOME (> R14 500 – \leq R29 000) AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF WHITE (n = 80) AND BLACK RESPONDENTS (n = 15)

In the middle income category (> R14 500 – \leq R29 000), 35% of White respondents possessed a postgraduate qualification, whereas none of the Black consumers did. Nevertheless, the majority of Black respondents (53%) who took part in this study possessed a degree (Figure 5.4).

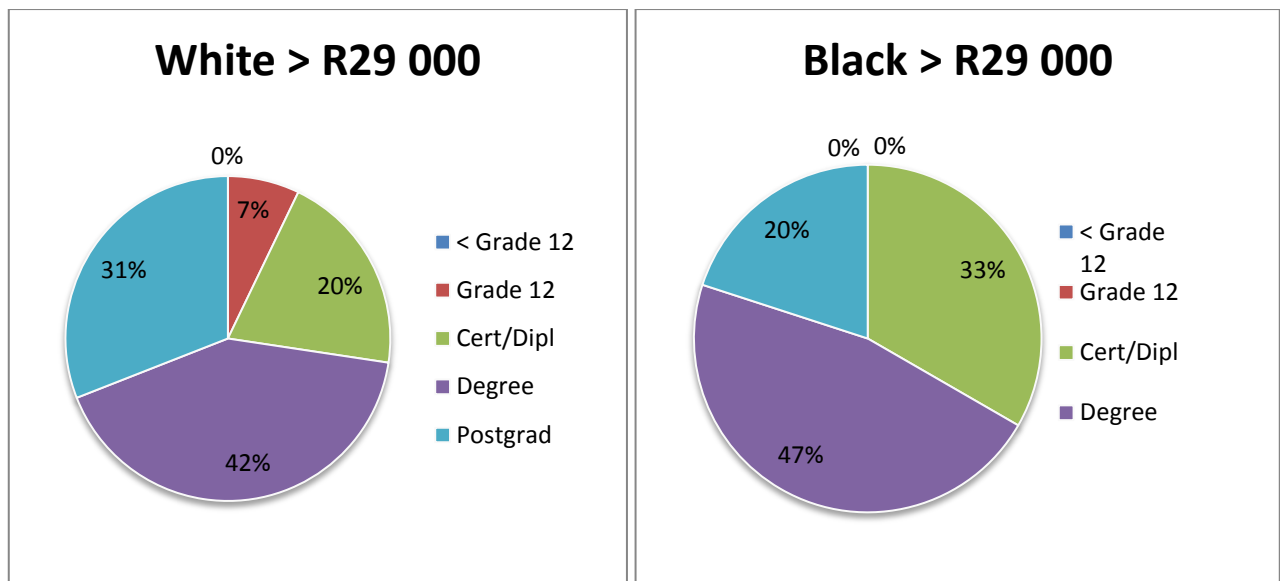


FIGURE 5.5: HOUSEHOLD INCOME (> R29 000) AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF WHITE (n = 84) AND BLACK RESPONDENTS (n = 15)

Interestingly, the education level of White and Black respondents in the highest income category was very similar (Figure 5.5).

5.2 PRIORITISING ZONES IN THE HOME

5.2.1 Prioritising of zones in terms of money

Respondents (N = 277) were required to select from a list³ the four areas in their home that they spent the most money on in terms of its interior planning and furnishing and to rank it in descending order in terms of amount of money spent. The findings are presented in Figure 5.6.

³ Lounge/s; Dining area; Open plan lounge and dining area; Kitchen area; Bedroom (main); Bedroom (Children); Bedroom (guest); Bathroom (main); Bathrooms (guests, family); Patio/ outdoor entertainment area; Study/ home office; Other: please specify.

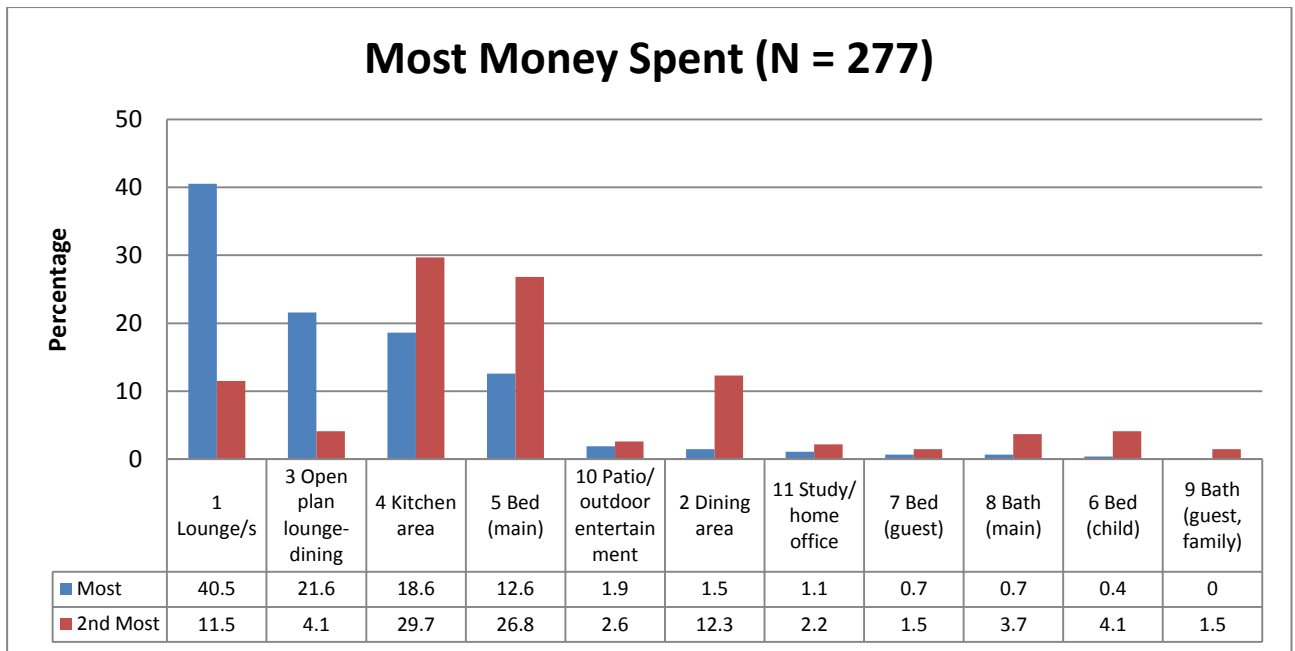


FIGURE 5.6: AREAS IN THE HOME RANKED ACCORDING TO MOST MONEY SPENT (N = 277)

Of the 277 respondents, 40.5% (n = 109) spent the most money on their lounge/s. The open plan lounge and dining area was second (n = 58 / 21.6%), the kitchen was third (n = 50 / 18.6%), and the main bedroom was fourth (n = 34 / 12.6%) in terms of most money spent. The remaining five areas were apparently not awarded as much in terms of their budgets. A 2001 North American study on households' furniture purchasing decisions showed that furniture is most frequently purchased for the living area (social zone) (Roy, 2002, in Yoon *et al.*, 2010:37), which relates to the findings of this study. A Datamonitor study on furniture retail sales in South Africa revealed that living room furniture made up a 49.3% share of all furniture sales in 2009 (Internet: Datamonitor, 2011).

Of the 277 respondents, 29.7% (n = 80) spent the second most money on their kitchen, 26.8% (n = 72) spent the second most money on their main bedroom, and 12.3% (n = 33) and 11.5% (n = 31) spent the second most money on their dining room and lounge/s respectively. Because of the low number of respondents (< 2%) that awarded first and second financial priority to the rest of the areas (i.e. children's bedrooms, guest bedrooms, main bathroom, guest/ family bathrooms, study/ home office, patio/ outdoor entertainment area, and miscellaneous areas, e.g. entrance hall), it was decided to focus only on the areas that were awarded the most money, namely the public or social areas (i.e. lounge/s, dining room, and open plan lounge and dining) that are normally frequented by visitors and that formed the social zone of a home. The kitchen as semi-private zone and main bedroom as private zone were explored separately.

Of the 255 White and Black respondents that indicated their income, 22.4% (n = 57) formed part of the lower income group (\leq R14 500), 37.6% (n = 96) formed part of the middle income group ($>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000) and 40% (n = 102) formed part of the upper income group ($>$ R29 000). All three income groups spent the most money on the social zone, followed by the kitchen and thirdly the main bedroom as portrayed in Table 5.3.

TABLE 5.3: AREAS IN THE HOME RANKED ACCORDING TO MOST MONEY SPENT PER INCOME GROUP (n = 255)

Income Category	Total	Social zone		Kitchen		Main bedroom		Other	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
\leq R14 500	57	26	45.6	18	31.6	11	19.3	3	5.3
$>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000	96	66	68.7	15	15.6	12	12.5	3	3.1
$>$ R29 000	102	70	68.6	16	15.7	9	8.8	7	6.9

Respondents were asked to indicate, through their level of agreement, which of the listed reasons explained the prioritisation in terms of money spent on the area they indicated as their first priority in the previous question. For the purpose of statistical analysis, the responses of White respondents (N = 215) were compared with those of Black respondents (N = 54) in order to determine whether there were any significant differences in their motivations for spending money on a particular area of their home.

5.2.1.1 Social zone

Figure 5.7 compares White and Black population groups in terms of their reasons for spending the most money on the social zones of their homes.

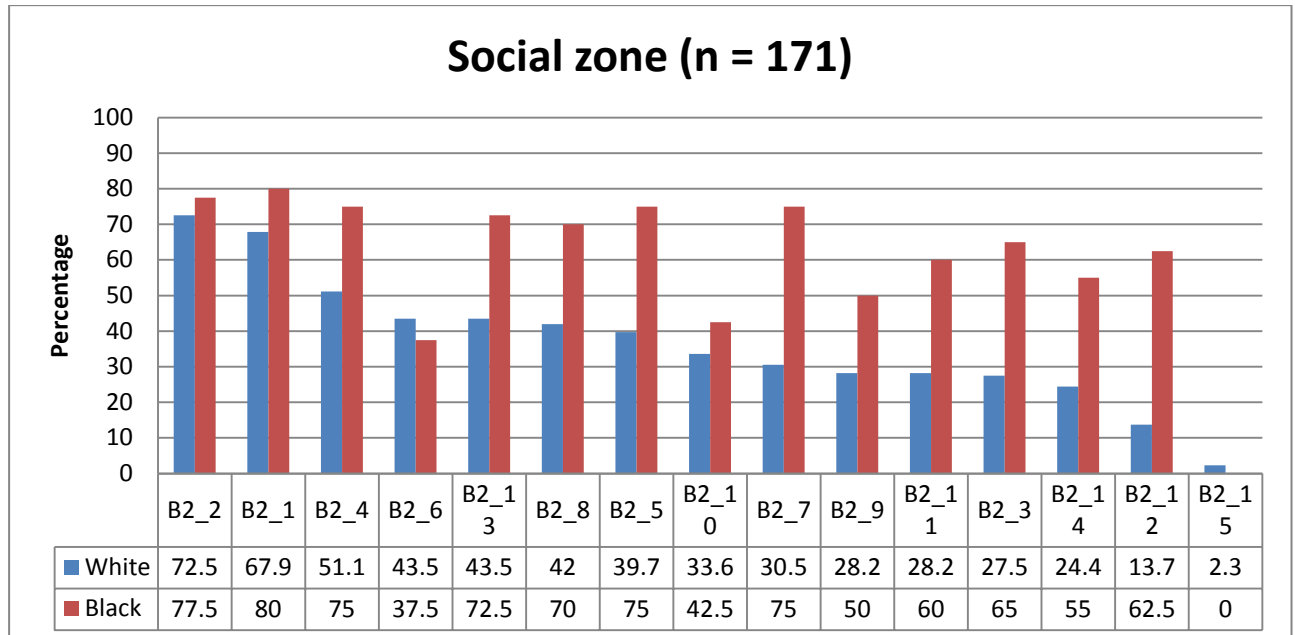


FIGURE 5.7: MOST MONEY SPENT ON THE SOCIAL ZONE: COMPARISON OF WHITE (n = 131) AND BLACK RESPONDENTS (n = 40)

Of all White respondents (N = 215), the majority (n = 131 / 60.9%) claimed to have spent the most money on the social zones of their home (i.e. lounge/s, dining room, and open plan lounge and dining). Of all Black respondents (N = 54), 74.1% (n = 40) made the same claim. Although more Black than White respondents indicated the social zone as the area where the most money was spent, > 60% of the sample agreed about the area where the most money was spent.

The majority (> 50%) of White respondents offered three symbolic reasons, rather than functional reasons, for spending the most money on the social zones of their homes. The three reasons mentioned by most White respondents (N = 131) were:

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 95 / 72.5%);

This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (n = 89 / 67.9%); and

This area should reflect my identity (n = 67 / 51.1%).

These three reasons indicate that respondents valued the specific **symbolic** aspects or meanings, namely, **social status**, **enjoyment**, and **self-expression** in the social zones of their homes. The

reason that was selected the least by White respondents (N = 131) was related to fashion trends (**appearance**):

Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably spend more money on interior goods for this area (n = 18 / 13.7%).

This may indicate that White respondents did not regard interior trends as an important reason because that would imply regular changes, which result in larger expenditures, or that they were *not* that concerned with buying the latest interior fashion.

The majority of Black respondents ($\geq 70\%$) selected seven different reasons for making the social zone their first financial priority. The most prominent reason selected by Black respondents (N = 40) was related to **enjoyment**, namely:

This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (n = 32 / 80%).

The other prominent reasons were:

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 31 / 77.5%);

This area should reflect my lifestyle (n = 30 / 75%);

This area should create a good impression about our family (n = 30 / 75%);

The items used in this area are generally more expensive than items for other areas (n = 30 / 75%);

I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (n = 29 / 72.5%); and

This area is special to me and my family (n = 28 / 70%).

These seven reasons were all **symbolic** in nature and showed that Black consumers' social zones may communicate expressions of the **self (identity)**, representations of **interpersonal ties**, **enjoyment**, and mostly a need to reflect **social status**. The reason selected by the least number of Black respondents (N = 40) was a symbolic reason to do with the need to **express the personal self**:

This area should reflect my identity (n = 15 / 37.5%).

5.2.1.2 Kitchen

Of all the White respondents (N = 215), 19.5% (n = 42) spent the most money on their kitchens. For the Black respondents (N = 54), the findings were similar (n = 8 / 14.8%). The reason why the majority of White respondents (N = 42) spent the most money on their kitchen was:

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 24 / 57.1%).

This reason was a **symbolic** in nature, i.e. expressing their need for gaining **social status** from significant others. Six other reasons were selected by 40.5% to 47.6% of the White respondents. These reasons were based on **expression of the self, enjoyment, utilitarian purposes, and interpersonal ties**. The reason offered by only one White respondent was:

Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably spend more on interior goods for this area,

which may indicate that White respondents do not see the kitchen as a place where interior trends can be incorporated successfully. Most kitchen expenses are durables or fixtures, which may also explain their disregard of trends in this area.

Black respondents (N = 8) indicated two **status-seeking** reasons for spending the most money on their kitchens, namely:

*This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 7); and
This area should create a good impression about my family (n = 7).*

The next three most prominent reasons selected by Black respondents (N = 8) were related to **enjoyment** and **status-seeking**, namely:

*This area is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (n = 6);
I find it exciting / enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (n = 6); and
If I purchase beautiful things, I would like to place them where others will notice them (n = 6).*

All the above reasons are **symbolic** in nature. The reason mentioned by only one Black respondent was **functional** in nature, namely:

I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable before moving in.

5.2.1.3 Main bedroom

A similar percentage of White and Black respondents (White: $n = 29 / 13.5\%$; Black: $n = 5 / 9.3\%$) spent the most money on the main bedroom of their homes. The majority of White respondents ($N = 29$) chose two **symbolic** related reasons pertaining to **enjoyment** as motivation for spending the most money on their main bedrooms. These reasons were:

*This is the area where I spend the most time, thus I want to enjoy it ($n = 18$); and
I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area ($n = 18$).*

Two other prominent reasons were:

*This area should reflect my lifestyle ($n = 16$); and
This area should reflect my identity ($n = 15$).*

These reasons are indicative that the main bedroom is used as a place to **express the personal self**. The reason offered by the smallest number of White respondents ($N = 29$) was **functional** in nature, namely:

I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable before moving in ($n = 4$).

Black respondents ($N = 5$) identified three prominent reasons for spending the most money on their main bedrooms. These three **symbolic** related reasons demonstrated the need to **express their personal self**, to gain social approval or **status**, as well as **appearance-related** needs. The reasons were:

*This area should reflect my identity ($n = 3$);
This area should create a good impression about our family ($n = 3$); and
Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area ($n = 3$).*

Two reasons that were chosen the least by Black respondents (N = 5) were related to **status-seeking** and the **expression of the personal self**, namely:

*The items used in this area are generally more expensive than items for other areas (n = 1); and
This area should reflect my lifestyle (n = 1).*

However, since the total number of Black respondents who identified the main bedroom was so small (n = 5), it was not worthwhile to conclude anything from the reasons why they spent the most money on that area. A larger representation of the Black population should be obtained in future research studies before valid conclusions can be made regarding the motivations behind Black households' financial expenditure on their main bedroom.

5.2.1.4 *A further exploration of the prioritisation of money spent in specific zones of their homes*

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted, in particular a Maximum Likelihood Exploratory Factor Analysis, specifying a Direct Quartimin Oblique Rotation (Jennrich & Sampson, 1966). This was followed by an assessment of the internal consistency of each factor or element. From the Scree plot of the Eigenvalues (≥ 1.5), a three factor structure seemed viable. However, in this format, one item had to be discarded because it did not load on any of the elements and its value was too low. Factor loadings of > 0.3 were deemed acceptable. This option involved all of the remaining items. The findings are represented in Table 5.4: figures are presented in descending order for each of the three factors.

TABLE 5.4: FACTORS PERTAINING TO MOST MONEY SPENT, IDENTIFIED THROUGH FACTOR ANALYSIS (n = 269)

Question: With reference to your FIRST choice indicated in Question 1, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statements below: <i>I have spent the MOST MONEY on this area of my home because ...</i>	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
This area should create a good impression about our family.	-0.040	0.809	-0.007
If I purchase beautiful things, I would like to place them where others will notice them.	0.022	0.624	0.123
This area is visible to visitors that come to my home.	-0.109	0.581	0.141
This area should reflect my lifestyle.	0.029	0.564	-0.009
This area is special to me and my family.	0.232	0.423	-0.026
This area should reflect my identity.	0.161	0.392	-0.142
This is the area where I spend most of my time and I want to enjoy it.	0.167	*0.258	-0.094
Several items were needed before we could utilise this area for its intended purpose.	0.085	0.044	0.701
I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable beforehand.	0.093	0.060	0.675
Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area.	0.847	-0.055	0.098
Stores offer a large variety of products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area.	0.793	-0.048	0.102
Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably spend more money on interior goods for this area.	0.711	0.084	0.034
I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area.	0.681	0.125	-0.040
% Variance explained (VP)	62.30	13.80	12.40
Cronbach's Alpha	0.86	0.76	0.69
Mean	3.00	3.30	2.90
Standard Deviation	0.80	0.50	0.90

* The item was retained as it did not load onto any of the other factors and did not deviate too far below the factor loading of 0.3.

Three factors or elements emerged: four items loaded onto factor 1; seven loaded onto factor 2; and two loaded onto factor 3. After investigation and interpretation of the content (descriptors) of the three factors, they were named:

- Factor 1: Enjoyment and Appearance;
- Factor 2: Social aspects; and
- Factor 3: Utilitarian purpose.

If the original construct, i.e. meanings of possessions as described by Richins (1994), is defined in terms of the elements that interactively contribute to the phenomenon, six elements are relevant, namely: enjoyment, status, identity expression, interpersonal ties, utilitarian, and appearance. However, in the context of this research, findings suggest that when respondents prioritised the areas in their home based on money, they based their justifications on three broader categories, rather than the six that was originally investigated on the grounds of literature, namely:

- ENJOYMENT and APPEARANCE (that merges two of the original elements: *Enjoyment* and *Appearance*);
- SOCIAL ASPECTS (a merge of three of the original elements: *Status*, *Identity Expression*, and *Interpersonal Ties*);
- UTILITARIAN PURPOSE (retention of the original element).

ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE related reasons explained the largest variance in responses, while SOCIAL and UTILITARIAN reasons were subordinate. Cronbach's Alphas of 0.86 (Factor 1), 0.76 (Factor 2) and 0.69 (Factor 3) showed acceptable internal consistency. This research therefore concluded three more encompassing factors which suggest that, in this context, respondents did not evaluate their interiors in as much detail as per the original Richins (1994) study.

5.2.1.5 Households' explication of money spent

In terms of young households' purchasing of interior goods for certain areas in their homes, three elements of, or reasons for the prioritisation of money were determined through factor analysis, namely (1) ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE; (2) SOCIAL; and (3) UTILITARIAN. Firstly, young households seemed not to distinguish between the enjoyment experienced by shopping for interior goods and the aesthetic pleasantness that interior goods offer. Young households placed a high level of importance (Mean: 2.98; Max: 4) on the ENJOYMENT involved in shopping for and decorating a specific room, and the APPEARANCE of interior products. This element explained 62.3% of the variance of responses.

Secondly, if young households spent money on a specific area of the house for a certain SOCIAL reason, such as *identity expression*, they were likely to do so for reasons pertaining to *status*, and *interpersonal ties* as well. As indicated by the mean (Mean: 3.3; Max: 4), young households regarded social aspects to be highly relevant when prioritising zones in terms of the amount of

money spent on interior products. This element accounted for a further 13.8% of the variance of responses.

Thirdly, despite young households' regard for symbolic aspects in terms of the prioritisation of their money, they still valued the UTILITARIAN PURPOSE of a room (Mean: 2.9; Max: 4) and acknowledged the importance of interior goods to make a room liveable and functional. This element explained 12.4% of the variance of responses.

Upon investigation of the means of all three of these factors that were influential in the prioritisation of money, it can be concluded that all three factors are important to young households when motivating the way in which they prioritised their money. The mean for the second factor, namely SOCIAL ASPECTS is the highest, but the means for all three factors are > 2.8 (Max: 4). This suggests that young households were concerned with both functional and symbolic purposes of interior products for their home. They were most concerned with expressing and managing their social image through their homes (symbolic), followed by attaining personal enjoyment and visually pleasant interiors (aesthetic), but utilitarian aspects of a room (functional) were slightly lesser prevalent.

5.2.1.6 *Distribution of factors by income categories for money spent*

It seemed worthwhile to explore, through correlation of demographic data and the results of factor analysis, whether households in different income categories motivated the money allocated to the interiors of different zones in their homes with the same reasons or not. The reasons, as proposed by factor analysis, are enjoyment and appearance (Factor 1); social aspects (Factor 2); and utilitarian purpose (Factor 3). Respondents (N = 248: only including White and Black respondents that disclosed their income) were grouped into three income categories (Internet: Bizcommunity.com, 2010), namely:

- ≤ R14 500 (n = 54 / 21.8%)
- > R14 500 – ≤ R29 000 (n = 95 / 38.3%)
- > R29 000 (n = 99 / 39.9%)

Henceforth the three categories will be referred to as lower, middle, and upper income. Respondents' perception of (i.e. agreement to) the relevance of a factor influence on their allocation of resources were measured on a four point Likert-type scale and expressed as factor scores, namely:

- 1 = Definitely Disagree;
- 2 = Unlikely;
- 3 = Probably;
- 4 = Definitely Agree

Their responses to the items in each factor were averaged for each individual respondent, resulting in factor scores with non-integer values for some individuals, and thus also for the different quartiles of each income category in the sample. Findings revealed that respondents in the lower income category (\leq R14 500) spent money on the interiors of specific zones in their homes for mostly enjoyment and appearance related reasons. Respondents in the middle income category ($>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000) tended to justify the allocation of their financial resources mostly in terms of social reasons. Respondents in the upper income category ($>$ R29 000) indicated that all reasons could be strongly associated with their behaviour, although those pertaining to social aspects were more relevant. Findings are presented in a box plot for each factor. Box plots show both location and distribution of a variable, give an indication of the symmetry and skewness of the data, and show outliers if there are any (Internet: NetMBA.com, 2010). See Appendix B for an explanation of box plots. Figure 5.8 provides a graphic representation of money spent on the interiors of specific zones for ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE (aesthetic) related reasons, per income category.

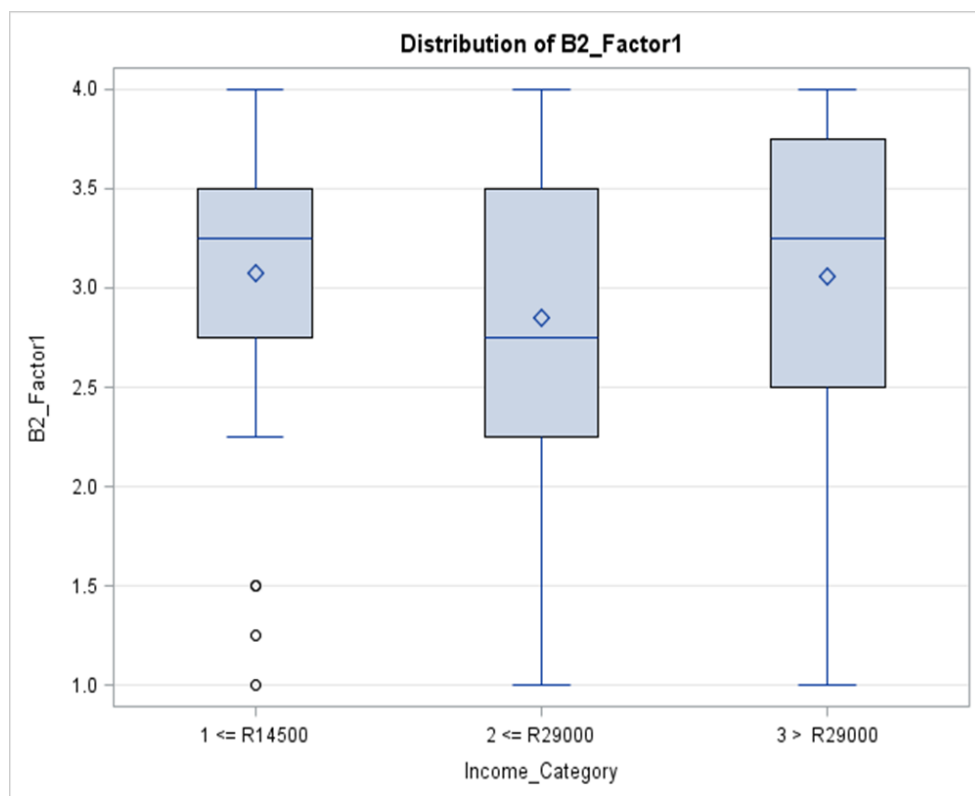


FIGURE 5.8: ALLOCATION OF MONEY (B2) (FACTOR 1: ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 248)

A large majority (75%) of respondents in the lower income category had the highest factor scores, namely $2.7 \leq 4$, which means that this group had strong inclinations to spend money on their home interiors for enjoyment and appearance related reasons. The lower income category's responses were more evenly distributed around the mean (Mean: 3.1) and more concentrated towards definite agreement (Min: 2.2; Max: 4), with the exception of a view outliers, compared to the respondents from the middle (Mean: 2.8) and upper income categories (Mean: 3) whose responses were more skewed to the right (i.e. towards agreement) but also more widespread (Min: 1; Max: 4). This indicates that respondents in the latter income category were not concurring about the influence that enjoyment and appearance factors had on the allocation of money to their home interiors, to the same extent as respondents in the lower income category. Half of the respondents (50%) in the middle income category (Median: 2.7) were somewhat less likely to spend money on the interior of a specific zone of their homes for enjoyment and appearance related reasons, than the same percentage of respondents in the lower (Median: 3.2) and upper income categories (Median: 3.2).

Figure 5.9 provides a graphic representation of money spent on the interiors of specific zones for SOCIAL reasons, per income category.

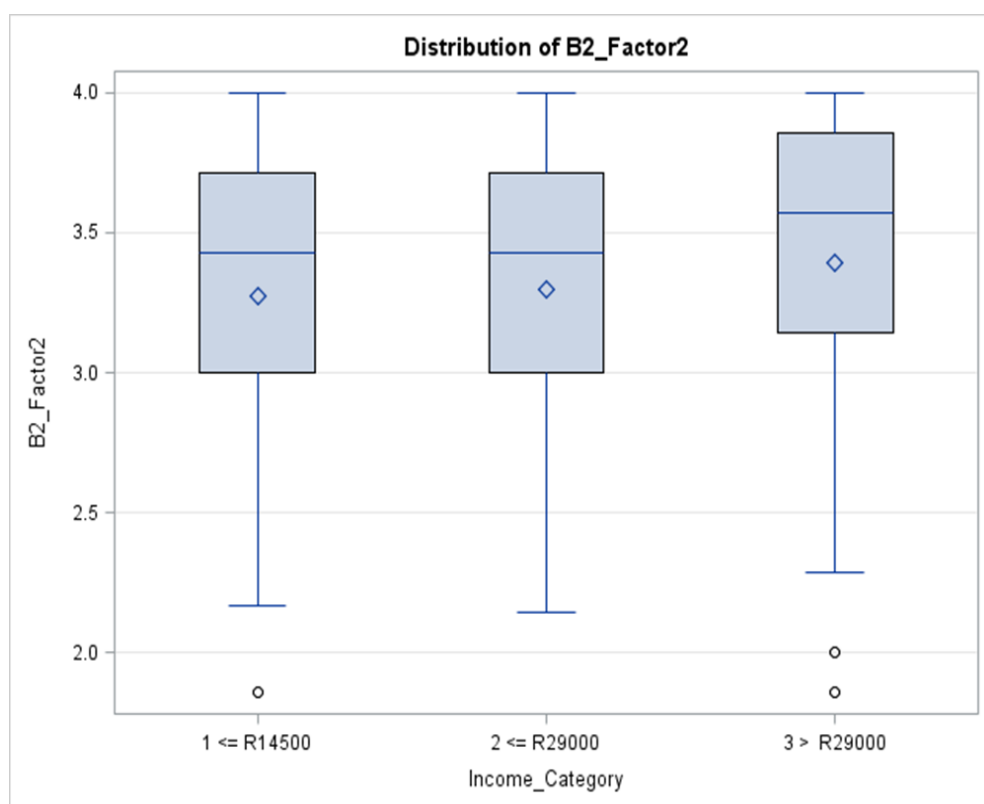


FIGURE 5.9: ALLOCATION OF MONEY (B2) (FACTOR 2: SOCIAL ASPECTS) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 248)

All three income categories were in strong agreement that they spent money on their home interiors for social reasons. Seventy-five percent of respondents in all three income groups revealed factor scores ≥ 3 . However, respondents in the upper income category were the most likely to spend money for social reasons (Mean: 3.4), compared to respondents in the middle (Mean: 3.3) and lower income categories (Mean: 3.3). There were no respondents in any of the income categories indicating the contrary, i.e. that they *did not* spend money on their home interiors for social reasons. There were, however, some outliers in the lower and upper income category, but none that indicated complete disagreement (i.e. a factor score of 1). Responses in all three income categories were skewed to the right (i.e. towards agreement) and not as widespread as for factor 1 (Min: > 2; Max: 4).

Figure 5.10 provides a graphic representation of money spent on the interiors of specific zones for UTILITARIAN related reasons, per income category.

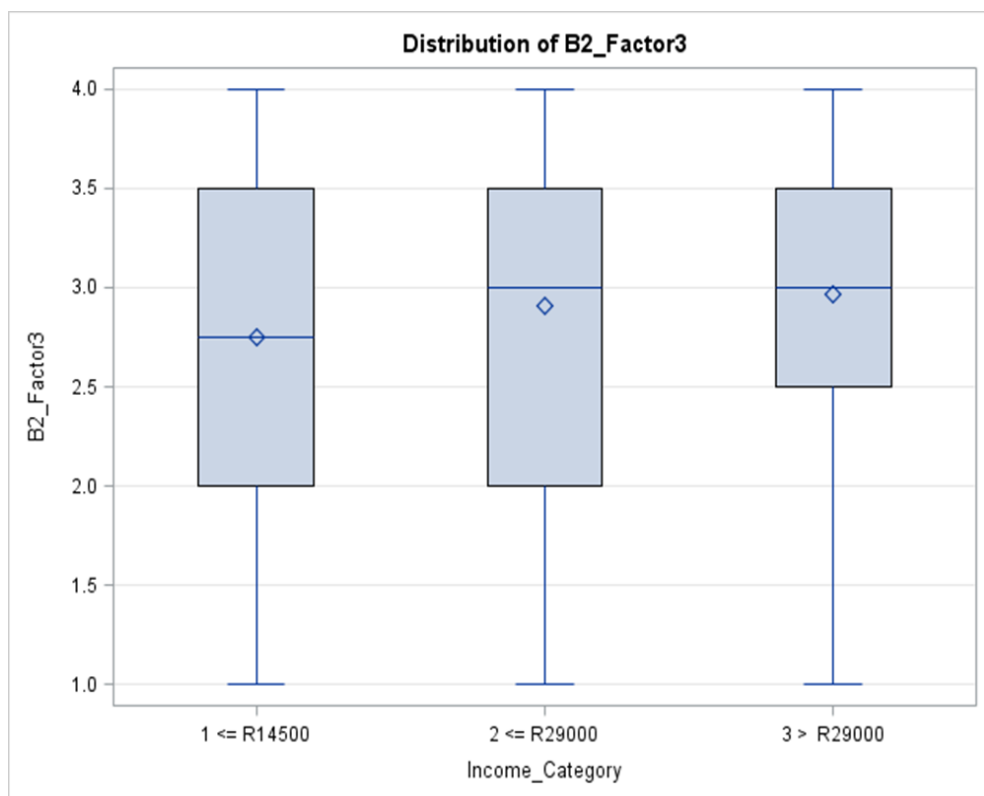


FIGURE 5.10: ALLOCATION OF MONEY (B2) (FACTOR 3: UTILITARIAN PURPOSE) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 248)

The distribution of data was widespread for all three income categories' responses (Min: 1; Max: 4). Responses from respondents in the lower and middle income categories were more evenly distributed whereas responses from respondents in the upper income category were skewed to the right (i.e. towards agreement). More respondents in the upper income category indicated a high

likelihood for spending money on the interiors of specific zones in their homes for utilitarian reasons, since 75% of respondents in this income category scored $2.5 \geq 4$, compared to the scores of $2 \geq 4$ of 75% of respondents in the other income categories. No outliers were recorded.

The means and standard deviations for each income category per factor are represented in Table 5.5.

TABLE 5.5: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF INCOME CATEGORIES PER FACTOR (MONEY) (n = 248)

Income category	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev
≤ R14 500	3.1	0.7	3.3	0.5	2.7	0.9
> R14 500 – ≤ R 29 000	2.8	0.8	3.3	0.5	2.9	0.9
> R29 000	3.0	0.8	3.4	0.5	3.0	0.8

5.2.2 Investigation for significant differences in terms of money spent

5.2.2.1 Significant differences in terms of income (Factor 1)

Three income groups were investigated, namely ≤ R14 500, > R14 500 – ≤ R29 000 and > R29 000. Means in terms of money spent (Factor 1: Enjoyment and Appearance) are reflected in Table 5.6.

TABLE 5.6: MEANS FOR MONEY SPENT (FACTOR 1) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 248)

Income Category	n	Money: Factor 1 (Enjoyment and Appearance)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
≤ R14 500	54	3.07	0.68	0.1372
> R14 500 – ≤ R29 000	95	2.85	0.81	
> R29 000	99	3.06	0.76	

$p \leq 0.05$

No significant difference among the income groups was evident ($p = 0.1372$), which means that there is no significant difference in income groups' expenditure of money on the interior of their homes in terms of aspects relating to enjoyment and appearance.

5.2.2.2 Significant differences in terms of population groups (Factor 1)

Two population groups were investigated, namely Whites and Blacks. Means in terms of money spent (Factor 1: Enjoyment and Appearance) are reflected in Table 5.7.

TABLE 5.7: MEANS FOR MONEY SPENT (FACTOR 1) PER POPULATION GROUP (n = 248)

Population Group	n	Money: Factor 1 (Enjoyment and Appearance)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Black	46	3.39	0.75	< .0001
White	202	2.89	0.74	

$p \leq 0.05$

A significant difference between the population groups was evident ($p \leq 0.0001$), which means that there is a significant difference in population groups' expenditure of money for the interior of their homes in terms of aspects relating to enjoyment and appearance. Black respondents spent significantly more money than White respondents for this purpose. In the questionnaire, a four point Likert-type scale was used (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree) where a mean of 3.39 indicates that Black respondents demonstrated a high to very high level of agreement in terms of money spent. A mean of 2.89 indicates that White respondents demonstrated a moderate to high level of agreement.

5.2.2.3 Significant differences in terms of income (Factor 2)

Three income groups were investigated, namely $\leq R14\ 500$, $> R14\ 500 - \leq R29\ 000$ and $> R29\ 000$. Means in terms of money spent (Factor 2: Social aspects) are reflected in Table 5.8.

TABLE 5.8: MEANS FOR MONEY SPENT (FACTOR 2) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 248)

Income Category	n	Money: Factor 2 (Social aspects)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
$\leq R14\ 500$	54	3.27	0.50	0.1017
$> R14\ 500 - \leq R29\ 000$	95	3.29	0.48	
$> R29\ 000$	99	3.39	0.49	

$p \leq 0.05$

No significant difference among the income groups was evident ($p = 0.1017$), which means that there is no significant difference in income groups' expenditure of money on the interior of their homes in terms of social aspects.

5.2.2.4 Significant differences in terms of population groups (Factor 2)

Two population groups were investigated, namely Whites and Blacks. Means in terms of money spent (Factor 2: Social aspects) are reflected in Table 5.9.

TABLE 5.9: MEANS FOR MONEY SPENT (FACTOR 2) PER POPULATION GROUP (n = 248)

Population Group	n	Money: Factor 2 (Social aspects)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Black	46	3.57	0.41	< .0001
White	202	3.27	0.49	

$p \leq 0.05$

A significant difference between the population groups was evident ($p \leq 0.0001$), which means that there is a significant difference in population groups' expenditure of money for the interior of their homes in terms of social aspects. Black respondents spent significantly more money than White respondents for this purpose. In the questionnaire, a four point Likert-type scale was used (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree) where means of 3.57 and 3.27 both indicate that Black and White respondents demonstrated a high to very high level of agreement in terms of money spent.

5.2.2.5 Significant differences in terms of income (Factor 3)

Three income groups were investigated, namely $\leq R14\ 500$, $> R14\ 500 - \leq R29\ 000$ and $> R29\ 000$. Means in terms of money spent (Factor 3: Utilitarian purpose) are reflected in Table 5.10.

TABLE 5.10: MEANS FOR MONEY SPENT (FACTOR 3) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 247; Missing = 1)

Income Category	n	Money: Factor 3 (Utilitarian purpose)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
$\leq R14\ 500$	54	2.75	0.88	0.2677
$> R14\ 500 - \leq R29\ 000$	94	2.90	0.88	
$> R29\ 000$	99	2.97	0.82	

$p \leq 0.05$

No significant difference among the income groups was evident ($p = 0.2677$), which means that there is no significant difference in income groups' expenditure of money on the interior of their homes in terms of utilitarian purpose.

5.2.2.6 Significant differences in terms of population groups (Factor 3)

Two population groups were investigated, namely Whites and Blacks. Means in terms of money spent (Factor 3: Utilitarian purpose) are reflected in Table 5.11.

TABLE 5.11: MEANS FOR MONEY SPENT (FACTOR 3) PER POPULATION GROUP
(n = 247; Missing = 1)

Population Group	n	Money: Factor 3 (Utilitarian purpose)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Black	46	2.97	0.87	0.3971
White	201	2.88	0.85	

$p \leq 0.05$

No significant difference between the population groups was evident ($p = 0.3971$), which means that there is no significant difference in population groups' expenditure of money for the interior of their homes in terms of utilitarian purpose. Black respondents spent more money than White respondents for this purpose, but not significantly so. In the questionnaire, a four point Likert-type scale was used (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree) where means of 2.97 and 2.88 both indicate that Black and White respondents demonstrated a moderate to high level of agreement in terms of money spent.

5.2.3 Prioritising zones in terms of effort and attention

Similar to the previous section, respondents (N = 277) were asked to select from the same list⁴ the four areas in their home that they devoted the most effort and attention to in terms of finding the right interior items to decorate and furnish them, and again to rank it in descending order from most to fourth most important in terms of effort and attention devoted. The findings are presented in Figure 5.11.

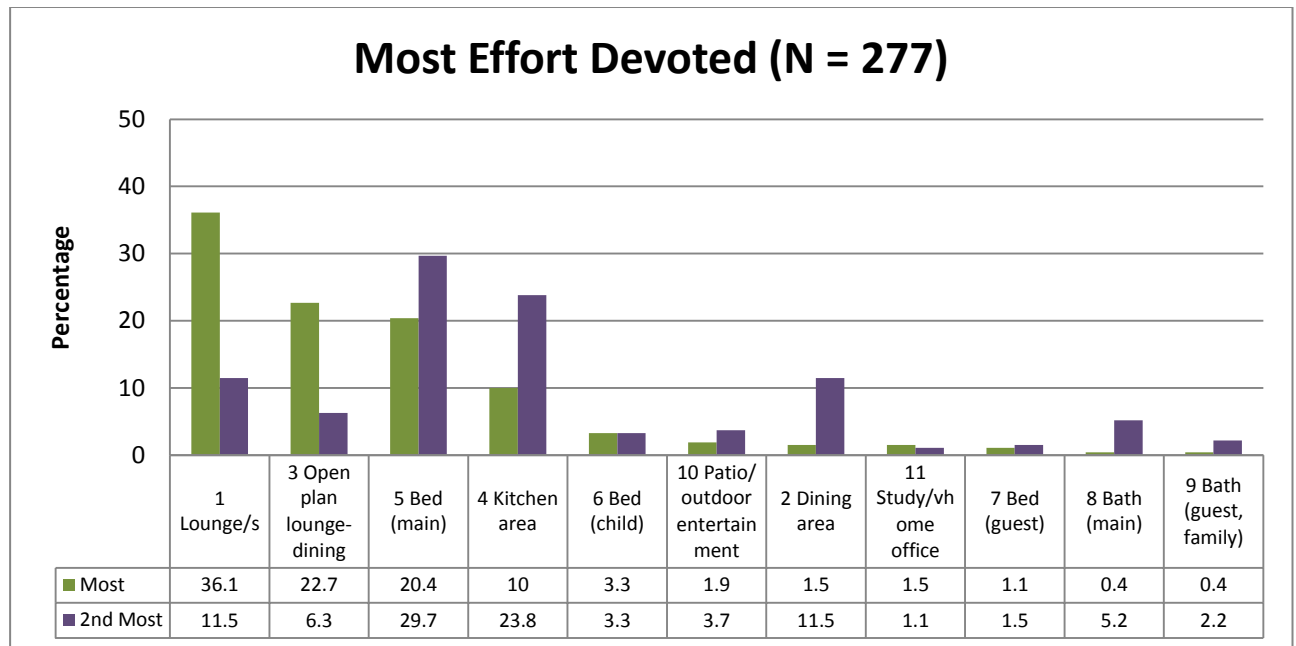


FIGURE 5.11: AREAS IN THE HOME RANKED ACCORDING TO EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO THE AREAS (N = 277)

A strikingly similar pattern emerged between respondents' effort and attention devoted to the zones in their homes and money spent (compare with Figure 5.6). Of the 277 respondents, 36.1% (n = 97) indicated that they devoted the most time and effort on their lounge/s. The open plan lounge and dining area was given top priority by 22.7% (n = 61), followed by the main bedroom (n = 55 / 20.5%) and the kitchen area (n = 27 / 10%). The remaining areas were not identified as the number one priority in terms of effort and attention devoted by a noteworthy number of respondents (< 5%).

⁴ Lounge/s; Dining area; Open plan lounge and dining area; Kitchen area; Bedroom (main); Bedroom (Children); Bedroom (guest); Bathroom (main); Bathrooms (guests, family); Patio/ outdoor entertainment area; Study/ home office; Other: please specify.

The main bedroom was selected as the room that the second most attention and effort was devoted to by 29.7% (n = 80) of respondents, while 23.8% (n = 64) of respondents indicated the kitchen area as their second priority. The lounge area and dining area were both selected by 11.5% (n = 31) of respondents as the area on which the second most effort and attention was devoted. Once again, the four areas that were most prominently the areas that households spent the most of their effort and attention on were the social zone (i.e. lounge/s, dining area, and open plan lounge and dining area), the kitchen area, and the main bedroom. The other rooms were indicated by too few respondents to warrant further discussion.

Of the 255 White and Black respondents that indicated their income, 22.4% (n = 57) formed part of the lower income group (\leq R14 500), 37.6% (n = 96) formed part of the middle income group ($>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000) and 40% (n = 102) formed part of the upper income group ($>$ R29 000). All three income groups devoted the most effort and attention to the social zone, followed by the main bedroom and thirdly the kitchen. The kitchen and main bedroom are thus differed in the case of the allocation of physical resources. These findings are portrayed in Table 5.12.

TABLE 5.12: AREAS IN THE HOME RANKED ACCORDING TO MOST EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED PER INCOME GROUP (n = 255)

Income Category	TOTAL	Social zone		Kitchen		Main bedroom		Other	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
\leq R14 500	57	29	50.9	8	14.0	17	29.8	3	5.3
$>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000	96	56	58.3	8	8.3	23	23.9	9	9.4
$>$ R29 000	102	66	64.7	10	10.4	15	14.7	11	10.8

Once again, respondents were asked to indicate, through their level of agreement, why they devoted the most effort and attention to the area they indicated as number one in the previous question. For the purpose of statistical analysis, the responses of White and Black respondents were compared in order to determine any significant differences in their motivations for devoting the most effort and attention to a particular area of their home.

5.2.3.1 Social zone

Figure 5.12 compares White and Black respondents in terms of their reasons for devoting the most effort and attention on the social zones of their homes.

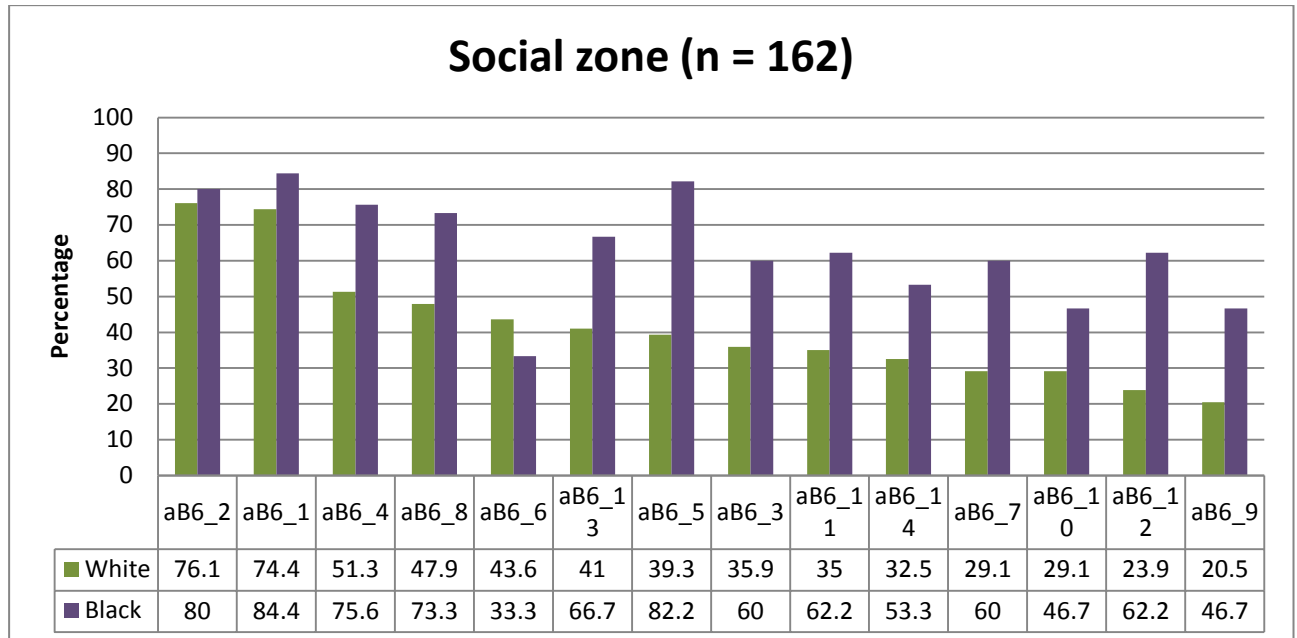


FIGURE 5.12: MOST EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO THE SOCIAL ZONE: COMPARISON OF WHITE (n = 117) AND BLACK RESPONDENTS (n = 45)

Of all White respondents (N = 215), the majority (n = 117 / 54.4%) declared to have allocated the most effort and attention to the social zone of their home (i.e. lounge/s, dining area, and open plan lounge and dining area). Of all Black respondents (N = 54), 83.3% (n = 45) made the same claim. The majority (> 50%) of White respondents (N = 117) indicated three symbolic reasons for devoting the most effort and attention to the furnishing of the social zone of their home, namely:

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 89 / 76.1%);

This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (n = 87 / 74.4%); and

This area should reflect my lifestyle (n = 60 / 51.3%).

These reasons were indicative that White respondents valued the **symbolic meanings** of **social status**, **enjoyment**, and **identity expression** that the social zone may embody. The reason that seemed the least applicable to White respondents (N = 117) was:

I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable before moving in (n = 24 / 20.5%).

The above reason is **functional** in nature and the low apparent response rate suggests that for White households **utilitarian** reasons are less prominent than social and enjoyment related factors.

Black respondents once again showed a tendency to select a wide variety of reasons for devoting the most effort and attention to the social zones of their homes. Eleven of the fourteen possible reasons were selected by the majority (> 50%) of Black respondents (N = 45), namely:

This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (n = 38 / 84.4%);

This area should create a good impression about my family (n = 37 / 82.2%);

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 36 / 80%);

This area should reflect my lifestyle (n = 34 / 75.6%);

This area is special to me and my family (n = 33 / 73.3%)

I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (n = 30 / 66.7%);

Stores offer a large variety of products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area (n = 28 / 62.2%);

Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably spend more money on interior goods for this area (n = 28 / 62.2%).

If I purchase beautiful things, I would like others to notice them (n = 27 / 60%);

The items used in this area are generally complicated/ time-consuming to buy (n = 27 / 60%); and

Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to devote more attention to this area (n = 24 / 53.3%).

These reasons were indicative of the meanings of **enjoyment**, **identity expression**, **social status**, **interpersonal ties**, **functionality** and **appearance** that the social zone may facilitate and symbolise. The multitude of reasons may indicate uncertainty that can be explained in another study or through a qualitative investigation. In contrast, White respondents (> 50%) only indicated three reasons. The two most prominent reasons for White respondents' effort and attention were also amongst the three most prominent reasons for Black respondents, namely:

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home;

This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it; and

This area should reflect my lifestyle.

The reason that Black respondents (N = 45) responded to the least number of times was:

This area should reflect my identity (n = 15 / 33.3%).

The identity referred to here is the household or individual's **personal identity**, not their social identity (Richins, 1994:507), which is represented by personal history, personal achievements, and uniqueness.

5.2.3.2 **Kitchen**

Of all White respondents (N = 215), only 10.7% (n = 23) indicated that they assigned the most effort and attention to their kitchen area, which was similar to the responses of Black respondents (n = 4 / 7.4%). Only two reasons were chosen by the majority of White respondents (N = 23), namely:

*This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 12); and
I find it exciting / enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (n = 12).*

These reasons suggest the need for **social status** gains and **enjoyment** in White households. Three more reasons were given by between 40 and 50% of White respondents to support the prioritisation of their kitchens in terms of effort and attention. The meanings reflected in these reasons allude to **identity expression**, **utilitarian** function, and physical **appearance**. They were:

*This area should reflect my lifestyle (n = 10);
I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or
receive anything suitable before moving in (n = 10); and
Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to devote more attention
to this area (n = 10).*

Only two White respondents indicated that:

*Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably devote more attention to interior
goods for this area.*

Three reasons were selected by all of the Black respondents (N = 4). These reasons were **symbolic** in nature and referred to a need for **enjoyment**, **identity expression**, and **social status**, namely:

*This is the area where I spend the most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (n = 4);
This area should reflect my lifestyle (n = 4); and
This area should create a good impression about our family (n = 4).*

More than 50% of the Black respondents (N = 4) also indicated eight other reasons relating to **status, enjoyment, identity expression, utilitarian purpose, and appearance**, namely:

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (n = 3);

If I purchase beautiful things, I would like others to notice them (n = 3);

I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (n = 3);

This area should reflect my identity (n = 2);

This area should create a good impression about my family (n = 2);

Several items were needed before we could utilise this area for its intended purpose (n = 2);

Stores offer a large variety of products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area (n = 2); and

Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to devote more attention to this area (n = 2).

The remaining three reasons, of which two are **utilitarian** and one related to **appearance**, were indicated by individuals, namely:

I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable before moving in (n = 1);

The items used in this area are generally complicated/ time-consuming to buy (n = 1); and

Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably devote more attention to interior goods for this area (n = 1).

Two of the reasons least frequently offered by White respondents, were offered by all and nearly all of the Black respondents, namely:

If I purchase beautiful things, I would like others to notice them; and

This area should create a good impression about our family.

Due to the low number of respondents that indicated the kitchen as their first priority in terms of effort and attention given to it, no substantial conclusions could be drawn from any of the responses in this category for White or Black respondents.

5.2.3.3 *Main bedroom*

Again, a low number of respondents declared the main bedroom as the room to which they devoted the most effort and attention (White: $n = 50 / 23.3\%$; Black respondents: $n = 5 / 9.3\%$). The two main reasons for devoting the most effort and attention to the main bedroom by the majority of White respondents ($N = 50$) were:

This area should reflect my identity ($n = 31$); and
I find it exciting / enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area ($n = 26$).

These reasons, as well as the next five in sequence of priority, are **symbolic** in nature and were indicated by between 40 and 62% of White respondents ($N = 50$). Reasons pertaining to **enjoyment, identity expression, appearance, and interpersonal ties** were offered as motivation for awarding the main bedroom top priority, namely:

This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it ($n = 24$);
This area should reflect my lifestyle ($n = 23$);
Stores offer a large variety of products for this area, which encourages my interest and the attention that I devote to this area ($n = 23$);
Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to devote more attention to this area ($n = 22$); and
This area is special to me and my family ($n = 20$).

The reason that only one White respondent selected was:

This area is visible to visitors that come to my home.

This is worth mentioning, since one in five Black respondents chose this as a reason for the main bedroom's first priority, compared to one in 50 White respondents. It is apparent that White respondents do not have a need to express their social status in the main bedroom, probably because this is considered a very private area of the home that is not viewed by visitors. It may be that Black households do not have similar views regarding the privacy of their main bedrooms and regard it as a canvas for expressing status. However, a larger number of respondents and a follow-up study are needed to substantiate this supposition and this could be investigated in follow-up research.

The two main reasons why they devoted the most effort and attention to the main bedroom, as indicated by Black respondents (N = 5), were:

*This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (n = 3); and
I find it exciting / enjoyable to purchase for this area, which encourages me to devote more
attention to this area (n =3).*

Both these reasons refer to **enjoyment**. The latter of the two reasons was also indicated by White respondents as one of their main reasons. Four reasons were not selected by any Black respondent (N = 5): three of these reasons were **utilitarian** (functional) and the fourth related to **interpersonal ties**:

*The items used in this area are generally complicated / time-consuming to buy (n = 0);
I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or
receive anything suitable before moving in (n = 0);
Several items were needed before we could utilise this area for its intended purpose (n = 0); and
This area is special to me and my family (n = 0).*

Due to the low number of respondents who regarded the main bedroom as the most important room in their home, no noteworthy conclusions could be drawn from these responses. Future studies in this regard involving a larger sample of Black respondents could be done to understand these households' motivations regarding the amount of effort and attention they bestow on the interior planning and décor of their main bedrooms and kitchens.

5.2.3.4 A further exploration of the prioritisation of effort and attention devoted in specific zones of their homes

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted, in particular a Maximum Likelihood Exploratory Factor Analysis, specifying a Direct Quartimin Oblique Rotation (Jennrich & Sampson, 1966). This was followed by an assessment of the internal consistency of each factor or element. Upon an evaluation of the Scree plot of the Eigenvalues (≥ 1.5), one prominent factor and two others emerged and a three factor solution again seemed plausible. The same item was discarded because it did not load on any of the elements in the previous scale. The convention of using factor loadings of > 0.3 was used. Findings are represented in Table 5.13. Figures are presented in descending order for each of the three factors.

TABLE 5.13: FACTORS PERTAINING TO MOST EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED, IDENTIFIED THROUGH FACTOR ANALYSIS (n = 269)

Question: With reference to your FIRST choice indicated in Question 5, please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the statements below: <i>I have spent the MOST ATTENTION on this area of my home because ...</i>	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
This area should create a good impression about our family.	0.765	0.053	-0.007
This area should reflect my lifestyle.	0.737	0.059	-0.123
This area is visible to visitors that come to my home.	0.709	-0.254	0.244
If I purchase beautiful things, I would like to place them where others will notice them.	0.543	0.097	0.167
This area should reflect my identity.	0.416	0.191	-0.234
This is the area where I spend most of my time and I want to enjoy it.	0.385	0.087	-0.032
This area is special to me and my family.	0.344	0.283	0.027
Several items were needed before we could utilise this area for its intended purpose.	0.074	0.111	0.744
I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable beforehand.	-0.006	0.181	0.708
Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area.	-0.051	0.879	0.084
Stores offer a large variety of products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area.	-0.032	0.786	0.175
I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area.	0.115	0.678	-0.026
Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably spend more money on interior goods for this area.	0.249	0.550	0.102
% Variance explained (VP)	59.70	16.70	13.20
Cronbach's Alpha	0.74	0.86	0.78
Mean	3.30	3.10	2.80
Standard Deviation	0.60	0.70	0.90

Three factors or elements emerged: seven items loaded onto Factor 1; four loaded onto Factor 2; and two loaded onto Factor 3. The same three factors were obtained except the first and second factors were substituted, i.e.

- Factor 1: Social aspects;
- Factor 2: Enjoyment and Appearance; and
- Factor 3: Utilitarian purpose.

Cronbach's Alphas of 0.74 (Factor 1), 0.86 (Factor 2) and 0.78 (Factor 3) showed acceptable internal consistency. An interesting finding was that young households prioritised the interior décor of the rooms in their homes in accordance with the same factors, irrespective of whether financial

considerations or effort and attention were at stake. However, in terms of the most money spent, Factor 1 (ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE) explained > 60% of the variance followed by SOCIAL ASPECTS (13.8%) and UTILITARIAN PURPOSE (12.4%). In terms of effort and attention to the interiors, the factor pertaining to SOCIAL ASPECTS explained 59.7% of the variance, followed by ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE (16.7%) and UTILITARIAN PURPOSE (13.2%). In both cases however, the mean for the factor pertaining to SOCIAL ASPECTS was the highest (≥ 3.1) of the three factors. In terms of money spent, aspects pertaining to ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE came to mind more strongly, although SOCIAL ASPECTS were attended to more pertinently according to the means for the three factors. In terms of effort and attention to the interior of the home, SOCIAL ASPECTS came to mind more strongly and were attended to more pertinently.

5.2.3.5 Households' explication of effort and attention devoted

In terms of the effort and attention young households bestowed on the interior of a specific room, three elements of, or reasons for the prioritisation of effort and attention were determined through factor analysis, namely (1) SOCIAL ASPECTS; (2) ENJOYMENT AND AESTHETIC VALUE; and (3) UTILITARIAN PURPOSE. Young households were apparently inclined to place the highest priority on a room based on SOCIAL motivations (Mean: 3.3; Max: 4) such as *identity expression*, *status*, and *interpersonal ties*. This factor explained 59.7% of the variance.

Factor 2, namely ENJOYMENT AND AESTHETIC VALUE (Mean: 3.1; Max: 4), was devoted less effort and attention than the former factor, i.e. social aspects. Young households once again seemed not to distinguish between the enjoyment experienced by shopping for interior goods and the aesthetic pleasantness that interior goods offer. This factor explained 16.7% of the variance.

The mean of Factor 3 (UTILITARIAN PURPOSE) (Mean: 2.8; Max: 4) indicated that young households bestowed less effort and attention on the interiors of their homes in terms of UTILITARIAN PURPOSE than in terms of the former factors. This factor explained 13.2% of the variance.

It is concluded that symbolic motivations, specifically social reasons such as expressing identity and status and representing or facilitating interpersonal ties, and emotional reasons such as enjoyment and aesthetics, were considered most important when young households allocated resources (i.e. money, effort and attention) to the interiors of their homes. Functional (utilitarian)

reasons, although also important, played a less influential role in young households' allocation and prioritisation of resources.

5.2.3.6 *Distribution of factors by income categories for effort and attention devoted*

It was hence explored how households in different income categories motivated the allocation of effort and attention to the interiors of different zones in their homes. The reasons as proposed by means of factor analysis were ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE (Factor 1); SOCIAL ASPECTS (Factor 2); and UTILITARIAN PURPOSE (Factor 3).

Findings revealed that respondents in the lower income category (\leq R14 500) mostly devoted effort and attention to the interiors of specific zones in their homes for SOCIAL reasons; respondents in the middle income category ($>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000) also tended to justify the allocation of their physical resources mostly with SOCIAL reasons; and respondents in the upper income category ($>$ R29 000) indicated that all reasons were relevant although SOCIAL ASPECTS and ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE were more prevalent. UTILITARIAN motivations were a low priority for 25% of respondents in each of the three income categories. Findings are once again presented in terms of box plots for each factor. Figure 5.13 provides a graphic representation of effort and attention devoted to the interiors of specific zones for SOCIAL reasons, per income category.

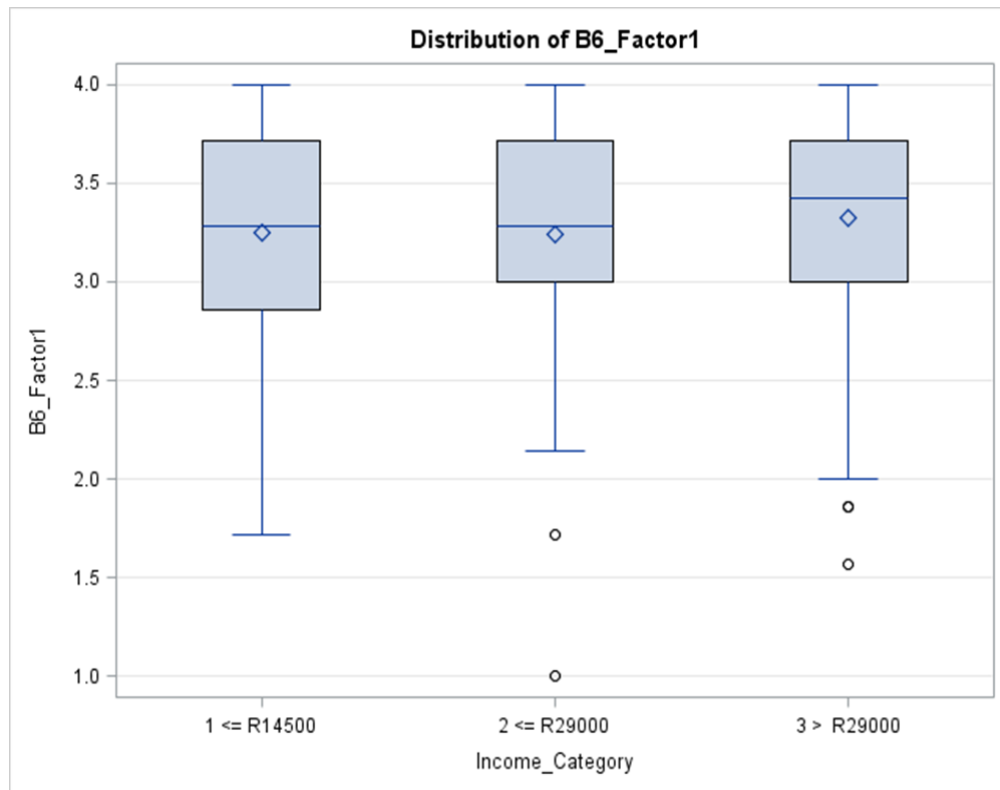


FIGURE 5.13: ALLOCATION OF EFFORT AND ATTENTION (B6) (FACTOR 1: SOCIAL ASPECTS) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 248)

The means and medians for responses from all three income categories were high (Means / Medians: 3 > 3.5), indicating that respondents from all three income categories devoted effort and attention to their home interiors for social reasons – especially the middle and upper income groups as 75% of them had factor scores ≥ 3 , while all factor scores were > 2 . However, outliers were present in the data of both these income categories. The response distribution of the respondents from the lower income category was wider (Min: 1.7; Max: 4) than for the other income categories' data, but all three data sets were slightly skewed to the right (i.e. towards agreement).

Figure 5.14 provides a graphic representation of effort and attention devoted to the interiors of specific zones for ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE related reasons, per income category.

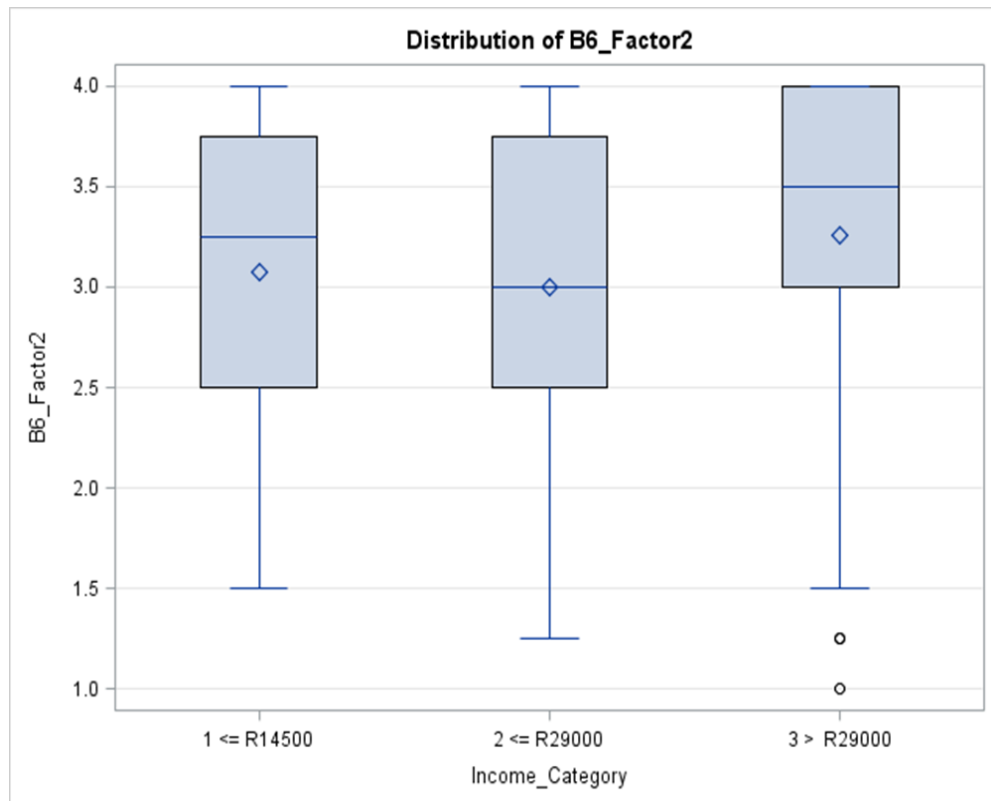


FIGURE 5.14: ALLOCATION OF EFFORT AND ATTENTION (B6) (FACTOR 2: ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 247; Missing = 1)

For factor 2, all three income categories' data sets were more evenly distributed (Min: ≤ 1.5 ; Max: 4) than in the case of factor 1, which indicates that there was lower concurrence among respondents regarding the relevance of enjoyment and appearance-related reasons when allocating physical resources to their home interiors. Seventy-five percent of respondents from the upper income category had factor scores of $3 \geq 4$ (Median: 3.5), making this group the most likely to allocate physical resources to the interiors of specific zones in their homes for enjoyment and appearance-related reasons. The middle income category showed the least likelihood (with a mean and median of 3), which, however, is still a high factor score. Outliers were present in the upper income category, which, along with the larger difference between the mean and median for this factor, indicate noteworthy differences in respondents' behaviour in the highest income category.

Figure 5.15 provides a graphic representation of effort and attention devoted to the interiors of specific zones for UTILITARIAN reasons, per income category.

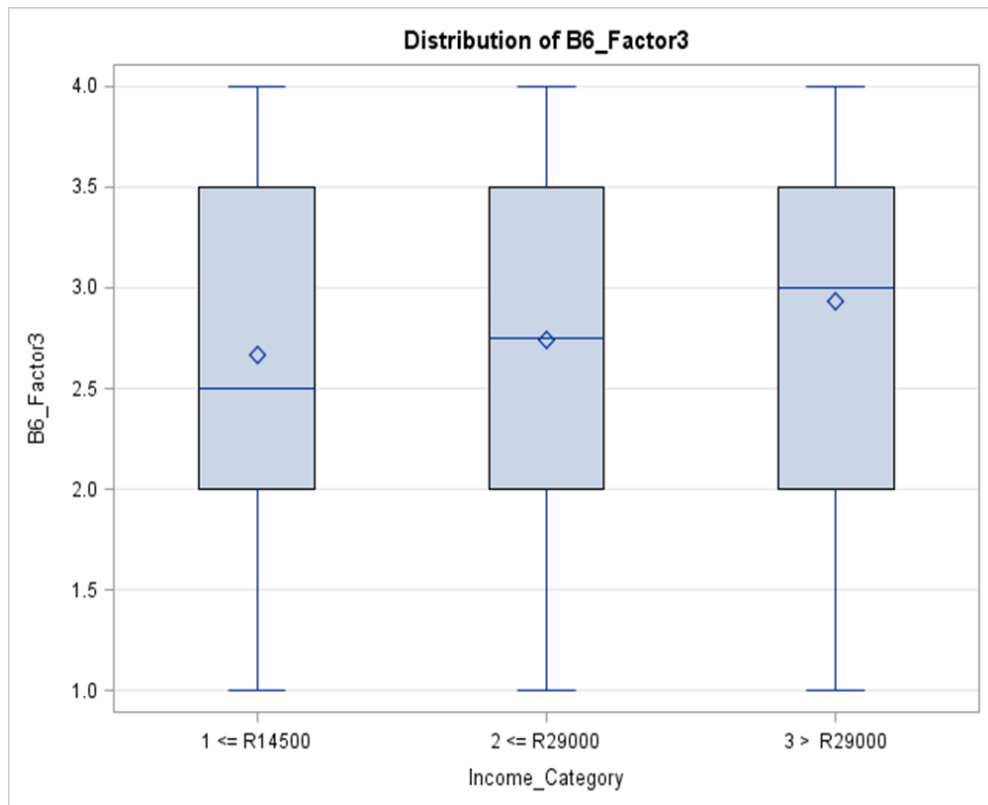


FIGURE 5.15: ALLOCATION OF EFFORT AND ATTENTION (B6) (FACTOR 3: UTILITARIAN PURPOSE) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 247; Missing = 1)

Response distributions for the three data sets were identical (Min: 1; Max: 4), with factor scores of 50% of the respondents $2 \geq 3.5$. The medians for the responses, however, indicate that more respondents from the upper income category (Median: 3) devoted effort and attention to their home interiors for utilitarian reasons, than middle income category respondents (Median: 2.7) and lower income category respondents (Median: 2.5). No outliers were recorded and in this instance the mean and median for the highest income category were more similar.

The means and standard deviations for each income category per factor are represented in Table 5.14:

TABLE 5.14: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF INCOME CATEGORIES PER FACTOR (EFFORT AND ATTENTION) (n = 248)

Income category	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3	
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev
≤ R 14 500	3.2	0.5	3.1	0.7	2.7	0.9
> R14 500 – ≤ R29 000	3.2	0.6	3.0	0.7	2.7	0.9
> R 29 000	3.3	0.5	3.2	0.7	2.9	0.9

5.2.4 Investigation for significant differences in terms of effort and attention devoted

5.2.4.1 Significant differences in terms of effort and attention (Factor 1)

Three income groups were investigated, namely \leq R14 500, $>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000 and $>$ R29 000. Means in terms of effort and attention devoted (Factor 1: Social aspects) are reflected in Table 5.15.

TABLE: 5.15: MEANS FOR EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED (FACTOR 1) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 248)

Income Category	n	Effort and Attention: Factor 1 (Social aspects)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
\leq R14 500	54	3.25	0.53	0.2508
$>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000	95	3.24	0.57	
$>$ R29 000	99	3.33	0.53	

$p \leq 0.05$

No significant difference among the income groups was evident ($p = 0.2508$), which means that there is no significant difference in income groups' dedication of effort and attention to the interior of their homes in terms of social aspects.

5.2.4.2 Significant differences in terms of population groups (Factor 1)

Two population groups were investigated, namely Whites and Blacks. Means in terms of effort and attention devoted (Factor 1: Social aspects) are reflected in Table 5.16.

TABLE: 5.16: MEANS FOR EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED (FACTOR 1) PER POPULATION GROUP (n = 248)

Population Group	n	Effort and Attention: Factor 1 (Social aspects)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Black	46	3.59	0.38	$< .0001$
White	202	3.20	0.55	

$p \leq 0.05$

A significant difference between the population groups was evident ($p \leq 0.0001$), which means that there is a significant difference in population groups' dedication of effort and attention to the interior of their homes in terms of social aspects. Black respondents devoted significantly more effort and

attention than White respondents for this purpose. In the questionnaire, a four point Likert-type scale was used (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree) where means of 3.59 and 3.20 both indicate that Black and White respondents demonstrated a high to very high level of agreement in terms of effort and attention devoted.

5.2.4.3 Significant differences in terms of effort and attention (Factor 2)

Three income groups were investigated, namely \leq R14 500, $>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000 and $>$ R29 000. Means in terms of effort and attention devoted (Factor 2: Enjoyment and Appearance) are reflected in Table 5.17.

TABLE: 5.17: MEANS FOR EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED (FACTOR 2) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 247; Missing = 1)

Income Category	n	Effort and Attention: Factor 2 (Enjoyment and Appearance)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
\leq R14 500	54	3.08	0.75	0.0261
$>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000	94	3.00	0.71	
$>$ R29 000	99	3.26	0.72	

$p \leq 0.05$

A significant difference among the income groups was evident ($p = 0.0261$), which means that there is a significant difference in income groups' dedication of effort and attention to the interior of their homes in terms of aspects relating to enjoyment and appearance. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explicate the differences. A post hoc Tukey's (HSD) Test was performed. Findings for the model, in which income and population groups were accounted for simultaneously, are reflected in Table 5.18 and Figure 5.16.

TABLE 5.18: RESULTS OF THE POST HOC TEST (n = 247; Missing = 1)

Income Category Comparison	Difference Between Means	Simultaneous 95% Confidence Limits	
\leq R14 500; $>$ R29 000	-0.1804	-0.4638	0.1029
\leq R14 500; $>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000	0.0772	-0.2088	0.3632
$>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000; $>$ R29 000	-0.4988	-0.4988	** -0.0164

$p \leq 0.05$

** Significant difference

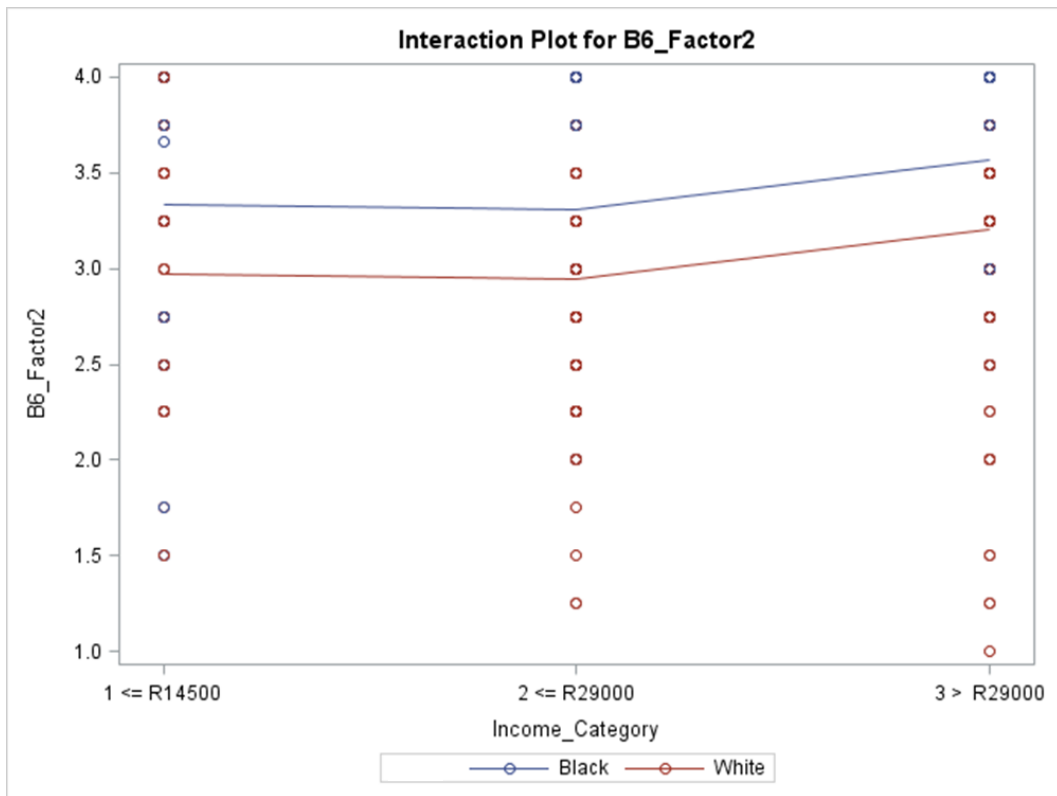


FIGURE 5.16: INTERACTION PLOT FOR EFFORT AND ATTENTION: FACTOR 2
(n = 247; Missing = 1)

The post hoc test showed that means for Black respondents were higher than the means for White respondents across all income groups. The mean was significantly higher ($p = -0.0164$) at the 5% level of significance for the upper income category ($> R29\ 000$) than for the middle income category ($> R14\ 500 - \leq R29\ 000$). There were no significant differences when other categories were compared. The lack of statistical power was due to the lower and upper income categories being unbalanced samples.

5.2.4.4 Significant differences in terms of population groups (Factor 2)

Two population groups were investigated, namely Whites and Blacks. Means in terms of effort and attention devoted (Factor 2: Enjoyment and Appearance) are reflected in Table 5.19.

TABLE: 5.19: MEANS FOR EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED (FACTOR 2) PER POPULATION GROUP (n = 247; Missing = 1)

Population Group	n	Effort and Attention: Factor 2 (Enjoyment and Appearance)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Black	46	3.40	0.77	0.0022
White	201	3.05	0.70	

$p \leq 0.05$

A significant difference between the population groups was evident ($p = 0.0022$), which means that there is a significant difference in population groups' dedication of effort and attention to the interior of their homes in terms of aspects relating to enjoyment and appearance. Black respondents devoted significantly more effort and attention than White respondents for this purpose. In the questionnaire, a four point Likert-type scale was used (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree) where means of 3.40 and 3.05 both indicate that Black and White respondents demonstrated a high to very high level of agreement in terms of effort and attention devoted.

5.2.4.5 Significant differences in terms of effort and attention (Factor 3)

Three income groups were investigated, namely $\leq R14\ 500$, $> R14\ 500 - \leq R29\ 000$ and $> R29\ 000$. Means in terms of effort and attention devoted (Factor 3: Utilitarian purpose) are reflected in Table 5.20.

TABLE: 5.20: MEANS FOR EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED (FACTOR 3) PER INCOME CATEGORY (n = 247; Missing = 1)

Income Category	n	Effort and Attention: Factor 3 (Utilitarian purpose)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
$\leq R14\ 500$	54	2.67	0.90	0.1041
$> R14\ 500 - \leq R29\ 000$	94	2.74	0.91	
$> R29\ 000$	99	2.93	0.87	

$p \leq 0.05$

No significant difference among the income groups was evident ($p = 0.1041$), which means that there is no significant difference in income groups' dedication of effort and attention to the interior of their homes in terms of utilitarian purpose.

5.2.4.6 Significant differences in terms of population groups (Factor 3)

Two population groups were investigated, namely Whites and Blacks. Means in terms of effort and attention devoted (Factor 3: Utilitarian purpose) are reflected in Table 5.21.

TABLE: 5.21: MEANS FOR EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED (FACTOR 3) PER POPULATION GROUP (n = 247; Missing = 1)

Population Group	n	Effort and Attention: Factor 3 (Utilitarian purpose)		Pr > F
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Black	46	2.99	0.93	0.0749
White	201	2.76	0.89	

$p \leq 0.05$

No significant difference between the population groups was evident at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.0749$), which means that there is no significant difference in population groups' dedication of effort and attention to the interior of their homes in terms of utilitarian purpose. Black respondents devoted more effort and attention than White respondents for this purpose, but not significantly so. At the 0.1 level, however, there is moderate evidence of a significant difference. In the questionnaire, a four point Likert-type scale was used (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree) where means of 2.99 and 2.76 both indicate that Black and White respondents demonstrated a moderate to high level of agreement in terms of effort and attention devoted.

5.2.5 Areas in households' homes that were regarded less of a priority

As a means of triangulation, respondents were required to rank in descending order the three areas in their home on which they spent the least amount of money, effort and attention, starting with the room they neglected most of all. These three rooms or areas were thus neglected in favour of the four rooms that received the most money or effort and attention. Respondents were asked to refer to the same list of rooms included in the preceding questions of this section. The response rate for this question was low for the question pertaining to effort and attention, perhaps

due to respondents viewing this question as superfluous. Findings are presented in Figure 5.17 and Figure 5.18.

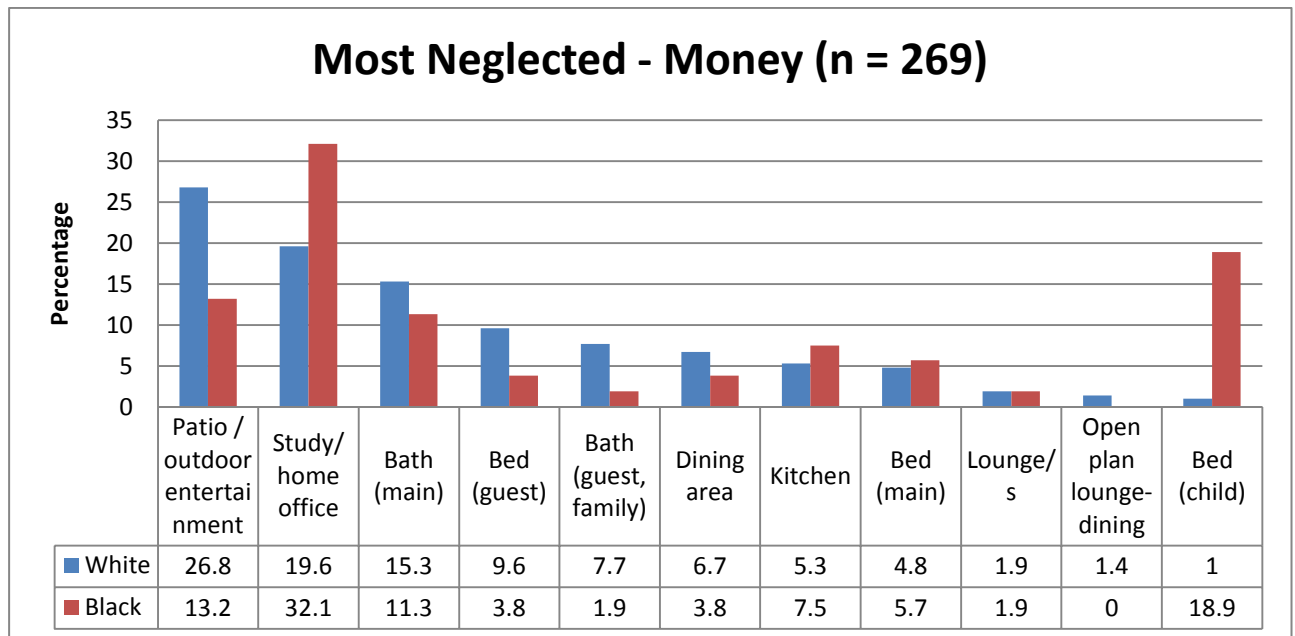


FIGURE 5.17: MOST NEGLECTED AREAS IN TERMS OF MONEY SPENT (n = 269)

In terms of money spent on the décor of various rooms in their homes, White respondents neglected the patio or outdoor entertainment area the most (n = 52 / 26.8%), followed by the study or home office (n = 41 / 19.6%) and the main bathroom (n = 32 / 15.3%). The family bathroom received a higher financial priority than the main bathroom (thus was neglected to a lesser degree), due to it being used by visitors or overnight guests in many instances. This confirms a concern for social issues. Black respondents showed a slightly different pattern of neglect. They spent the least amount of money on the study or home office (n = 17 / 19.6%), followed by a child's bedroom (n = 10 / 18.9%) and the patio or outdoor entertainment area (n = 7 / 13.2%). They had a similar tendency to White respondents in terms of neglecting the main bathroom.

In both groups, the social zones, kitchen and main bedroom were identified as being neglected the least (< 7% of respondents) compared to other rooms in the home, thus reinforcing the findings as discussed in 5.2.1.

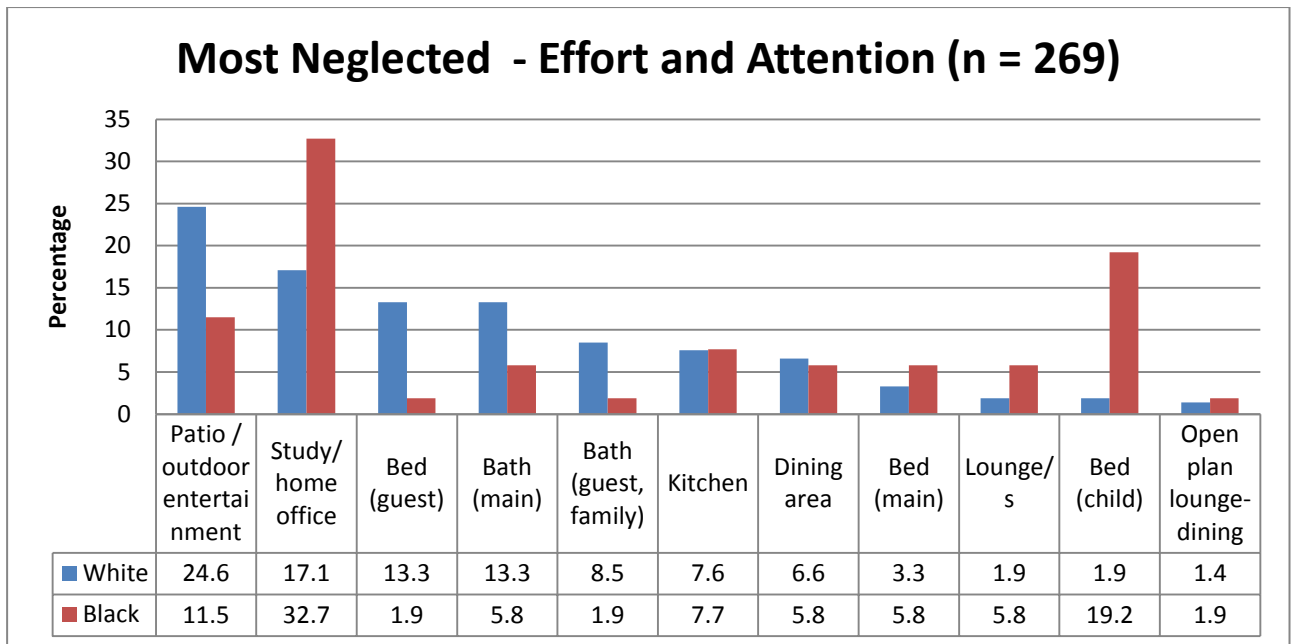


FIGURE 5.18: MOST NEGLECTED AREAS IN TERMS OF EFFORT DEVOTED (n = 269)

White respondents' tendency to neglect the patio or outdoor entertainment area of their homes the most (n = 52 / 24.6%) was also confirmed in terms of the effort and attention bestowed on interior décor. Again the study or home office was neglected slightly less (n = 36 / 17.1%), followed by the main bathroom and guest bedroom (n = 28 / 13.3%). The neglect of the guest bedroom may perhaps be due to it not being occupied by visitors that often, and not by household members at all, especially compared to the social areas of the home.

Black respondents showed the same pattern of neglect in terms of effort and attention compared to neglect in terms of the money spent on the décor of various rooms. The most neglected room was once again the study or home office (n = 17 / 32.7%), followed by a child's bedroom (n = 10 / 19.2%) and the patio or outdoor entertainment area (n = 6 / 11.5%).

Similar to the issue of amount of money spent, the social zones, kitchens, and main bedrooms were neglected by less than 8% of respondents, thus supporting the findings discussed in 5.2.2.

5.2.6 Explication of reasons offered by respondents for the prioritisation of money, effort and attention

As a means of triangulation, respondents were asked to provide a short written explanation as to why the reasons they agreed with (*Definitely Agree*) in Section B2 (Money) and B6 (Effort and Attention) were important to them. The reasons referred to why they spent the most money or effort on particular areas of their homes. Responses were categorised in the same manner as in Section B2 (Money) and B6 (Effort and Attention), thus in terms of Richins' Possession Rating Scale's categories (1994), namely *Utilitarian*, *Enjoyment*, *Interpersonal ties*, *Identity*, *Financial aspects*, *Appearance-related*, and *Status*.

5.2.6.1 *Utilitarian-related reasons*

Rooms are in principle *utilitarian* in nature because a room provides shelter, allows one to perform a specific activity, or simply spend time in it (alone or with others). A room has utilitarian value much in the same way that objects do, since they possess practical characteristics such as having comfortable couches, enough space, and all the equipment one needs. The following reasons were given:

At this stage I buy things that make my life easier rather than pretty things. (V040)

Most of the items that were purchased for the kitchen were purchased because they were either needed or deemed useful, not because they were fashionable. (V126)

It was important to us to create a space where we could be comfortable yet also entertain. Because this space must cater to many different activities, it was important for us not to have too much clutter in this room. We have art on the walls but do not display non-functional items in this space. (V148)

I needed to fill the space, since I did not have any furniture at the beginning. (V169)

This area I spend most of my time, as I work late in evenings and then when I get home go straight to bed and watch TV. (V155)

I love music. I only buy the best equipment to experience the best sound possible for the purpose it was intended for. To buy expensive give one peace of mind on expertise and sound quality. (V028)

We appreciate neatness and comfort, and spend time buying things that make storage attractive and convenient (dual purpose ottomans etc.). We are less inclined to spend money on fashionable statement pieces and more likely to spend money on functional things of quality (good leather, technology etc.) (V031)

I had to find couches which were practical, nice-looking and still well-priced. These couches were purchased from factory outlets of retailers, as I have not been working for long and would rather spend more money on traveling than on furniture. (V049)

Items were expensive i.e. big screen TV and leather couches – needed to make sure we make the right choice. (V062)

I had to find timeless pieces and quality pieces to utilise furniture as long as possible in future. (V243)

In order to spend the money wise that we saved, we spent a lot of time finding the correct finishes and appliances to save as much as possible, while getting the best products. (V208)

My family spend a lot of time in our lounge area, because it's the place we relax in, watch movies, play games, [and do] Bible studies. All our activities happen in this area. (V192)

In summary: Respondents indicated that they valued interior spaces and interior goods that make their lives more efficient, and that are useful, functional, physically comfortable, practical, convenient, durable, and of which the contents are of good quality and good value for money, since they spend a lot of time in that particular room and need a room and accompanying interior goods that will enable them to perform certain activities there as needed.

5.2.6.2 *Enjoyment-related aspects*

Enjoyment encompasses the emotional qualities that a room may possess or evoke in a person. A room may provide pleasure and entertainment or allow a pleasurable activity to take place. It may also provide relaxation, psychological comfort (as opposed to physical comfort, which is classified as utilitarian), or be perceived as a safe, restful environment. The following reasons were given:

My kitchen is my favourite place to be, so it gives me pleasure to spend my time there. I feel in today's world people including myself make purchases based on emotion. We buy things we love and put them in our homes/ rooms we love. (V034)

This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (the feeling and the view). It makes me feel like I'm in a hotel where everything is accordingly not hanging anywhere (sic). (V141)

I spend a lot of time in my lounge because I take pleasure in the relaxed atmosphere as well as the tranquil ambiance that was created by the design. (V168)

For me the living room is where all the drama and suspense happens. It must appeal to me and make me feel secure and comfortable. (V187)

The main bedroom is where one should feel the most at home – therefore much time and money was put into giving it that feel. (V172)

It had to be a room which made you want to sit in, be creative in, generally it had to be warm and inviting. (V026)

To have all you like and cosmetically (sic) welcoming in your house makes you fonder of your home and limits you going out as much. It creates a certain spiritual connection with your space. (V048)

I love cooking and spending time in the kitchen. (V070)

I spend a lot of time in the open lounge/ kitchen hence I need to feel more comfort and thrilled by the extravagant items there and also it's the first place where I go after I wake so it sets the mood for the rest of the day. (V215)

In summary: Respondents indicated that they enjoyed and valued interior spaces in which they felt at home, enjoyed spending time in, and in which they experienced feelings of pleasure, security, and comfort. Some respondents have experienced a spiritual connection with a room, felt that their mood depended on the atmosphere created by the interior, and desired it to be warm, inviting and stimulating.

5.2.6.3 *Aspects related to interpersonal ties*

Homes, and the rooms in them, have the ability to represent and facilitate *interpersonal ties*. An individual may symbolically link a room with a significant other(s) because the objects in it were gifts, heirlooms, or in some other way sentimental and connected with loved ones. People may also value a room because it represents the 'heart of the home' or the centre of family life, or because it enables socialisation with family or friends, which ultimately strengthens interpersonal ties (Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:570). The following reasons were given:

We spend most of our time as a family in the lounge/ dining area. (V057)

I wanted to ensure that this area is comfortable and inviting to guests in order to make them feel at home. (V096)

The lounge area is our safe haven, where we relax and build relationship with our friends and family. We love to make people feel comfortable and at home in our house. (V157)

Myself and my fiancé enjoy spending quality time in the kitchen. It is our un-winding, catching up and relaxing time of the day! We love cooking, drinking wine and preparing our favourite dishes. It is also the gathering space for friends and family in our flat. (V006)

I wanted to make my bedroom a special romantic place for my husband and I. (V025)

The lounge is seen, lived in and enjoyed the most by ourselves, friends and family – you need to sit comfortable to make good company and laughter. See we don't have a big dining or entertainment area, this is where [it] all happens. (V199)

The carpet that we got from our parents lets the room feel warmer, especially in winter. I put special ornaments that my brother bought overseas on the cupboard next to my bed. (V127)

In summary: Respondents indicated that they valued a room where they could spend quality time with family members and friends; a room that had a comfortable, inviting, or even romantic environment, which enabled them to build relationships and enjoy the company of others. Respondents also made mention of interior goods that were gifts from relatives and for this reason occupied a special place in the room and had a special meaning to the owners within the context of their home.

5.2.6.4 *Identity-related aspects*

A room that has the ability to reflect *identity* suggests an interior environment that enables self-expression in terms of the personal self (including religious, ethnic and cultural self), allows for creative expression (including personal taste and style), embodies personal achievement and pride, and symbolises personal history. The aim is to express the personal, private, or actual self, as opposed to the social, public, or ideal self. The following reasons were given:

People come into our house and immediately recognise this as our place. (V051)

My bedroom shows who I am, it has all the things I like, and where I have been, and where I would like to travel to. (V055)

I enjoy beautiful surroundings and expressing myself through the interior of our home. I enjoy being creative in my home. (V098)

Being home alone, I'm more at ease when things are reflecting who I am to myself. (V177)

... while looking for the right interior item, it must reflect the standard that you have set for yourself. (V187)

People must feel welcome in my home, and see that we have a Godly love for our family & friends, that my home is a place of safety is also important to me and people must see that. (V201)

Items in this area are expensive so buying for example a new couch is quite a milestone if you're just starting out. It is gratifying buying an expensive item you have saved for that you will be using for a long time to come. (V220)

After all, it's your home – where you spend a lot of [time] – so it is important to enjoy it and to be proud of it – you are the one who worked for it. (V147)

The bedroom is the place where you relax and sleep and where you are yourself (your private space) and should be an area where you can enjoy the things you love and associate yourself with. (V105)

My bedroom is very personal. I want to express my style and my identity in the décor. (V212)

[The open-plan lounge/dining] is where we display items with sentimental value and a story behind them. (V211)

[The bedroom] should reflect my identity, since that is what is needed in order for me to feel comfortable in this space. (V131)

In summary: Respondents felt more comfortable in a room that, by means of its interior, reflected parts of their identity. Aspects of identity that respondents wanted to be visible in the interior of their rooms included their ambitions, achievements, personal standards and values, religious beliefs, creativity, personal tastes and style, and personal history. Some respondents desired their identity to be recognised by others, and other respondents were satisfied if their identity was expressed only to themselves by the interiors of particular rooms.

5.2.6.5 Financial aspects

A room may be valuable due to the value of its content. Value, in this instance, is expressed in terms of *financial aspects*, for instance the investment value of interior items contained in a room, or the actual expensiveness of individual interior items or a room's décor as a whole. The following reasons were given:

I like to add value to my home. Hopefully I will be able to leave a legacy of a good and easy lifestyle. (V190)

Our TV and computer etc. are in this room, so the items are generally more expensive than in the rest of the house. (V078)

We decided to invest in a good leather couch suite that would last us a few years ... We didn't mind spending the money as long as we got good quality that would last. (V108)

I spent a lot on the kitchen area as quality appliances is essential and a long term investment for a beginner's home. (V243)

In summary: Respondents attached financial value to rooms that contained expensive interior goods, especially if these items were good quality durables and were expected to last a long time.

5.2.6.6 *Appearance-related aspects*

The *appearance-related* value of a room refers to its style of décor, and whether the household considers it to be beautiful or attractive in appearance. The following reasons were given:

We are visual people, we enjoy beautifying our home – and that makes us feel more at home.
(V051)

Everyone wants to live in a pretty house ... why not make [an] effort in creating a home that you can enjoy! (V159)

... having things match makes me feel at ease and clean. (V177)

[I] had to find [the] best matching products for the kitchen in order to create a flowing and well balanced result. (V161)

The living room must also make you feel beautiful ... (V187)

I feel good if my place looks good. (V224)

Furniture fabrics [and the] colours of the painted walls make the space in my lounge modern, yet warm and friendly. (V262)

I wanted my main bedroom to have a specific look/ 'feel' to it, so I spent a lot of time looking for a headboard, side tables and a dressing table that all matched. (V106)

In summary: Respondents spent money, effort and attention to obtaining the desired 'look' overall, or in terms of a specific item, for the sake of achieving a pleasant appearance. Respondents also valued the appearance of a room if the room's interior evoked a sense of feeling 'at home', as well as feelings of comfort, warmth, friendliness, cleanliness, and enjoyment. Some respondents expressed the ability of a room's appearance to make them feel 'good' and beautiful.

5.2.6.7 Status-related aspects

A room that is meant to express social *status* is planned and furnished in a way that will make others think fondly of the individual or household or admire them, and thereby award them prestige. The following reasons were given:

I am an attention seeker, I love style, I love to indulge, so everybody must come to see my place, like it or not. (V047)

The living room is the first room people see when entering my house, therefore I want it to create a good impression. (V072)

A person's kitchen is a good indication of personal style and wealth. (V102).

I think it is important to me that my friends and family think I have a beautiful home. (V98)

We spend a lot of our time in the lounge and dining area, as well as entertain people there, so we bought the most comfortable, yet stylish pieces to show off. (V058)

This area is visible to guests, and should be nice to entertain in. (V101)

I just wanted the best equipment I can find in the market and luxury Italian sofas. (V120)

The main reason for this area is because it is the first room that most people go into, therefore for me first impressions count as to how we live and what kind of people we are. (V237)

In summary: Respondents strongly indicated that they were mindful of visitors (and their opinions) when they purchased interior goods for specific rooms. Respondents were adamant to create the desired impression with the interior of the room and chose interior goods that reflected their good taste, wealth, and desired social status to others.

The majority of respondents revealed that the utilitarian (i.e. functional, practical) meaning or purpose of a room's interior had the most important influence in terms of the amount of money they spent on a room's interior. This was followed by positive emotional factors – mainly the experience of enjoyment derived from activities that took place in the room, or the created atmosphere. The social aspects contained in household interiors, namely interpersonal ties, status and identity expression, were of nearly equal importance in determining the amount of money spent on the

interior of a room. The motivations underlying the prioritisation of money were seldom appearance-related since few respondents mentioned it. Financial aspects, thus the need for expensive, investment-quality interiors, were mentioned by very few respondents, indicating that most young households had an apparent indifference toward premium priced interior goods and subsequent exclusive interior appearances for their homes.

A slight difference occurred when respondents further explained the reasons why they devoted their effort and attention to the interior of a specific room. Whilst utilitarian factors remained the most important to young households, appearance-related factors featured more prominently than in the case of money spent on a room's interior. In third place, enjoyment was still a major influencer, followed by the three social factors (i.e. identity expression, status and interpersonal ties – in that order). If enjoyment and appearance-related factors were treated conjointly, based on a shared emotional connotation, this joint emotional factor appeared as important as utilitarian aspects. Again, financial aspects rarely determined the amount of effort and attention young households devoted to their interiors.

5.3 PRIORITISING INTERIOR OBJECTS IN THE HOME

Figure 5.19 depicts how households prioritised the interior objects that they purchased for the room to which they dedicated the most effort and attention. Respondents were asked to indicate in percentages how they would allocate money proportionately to the following product categories: furniture; soft furnishings; appliances and technology; and decorative objects, in the hypothetical event that they had to furnish a bare room. Percentages had to add up to 100%. A scenario was given in which the room that they devoted the most effort and attention to, was damaged in a flood or fire, and they had the opportunity to spend the money paid out by their insurance company on new interior products. In an attempt to determine whether such prioritisation differed for households of different population groups (as subcultures), the median percentages were calculated for the population as a whole, as well as for Black and White respondents separately.

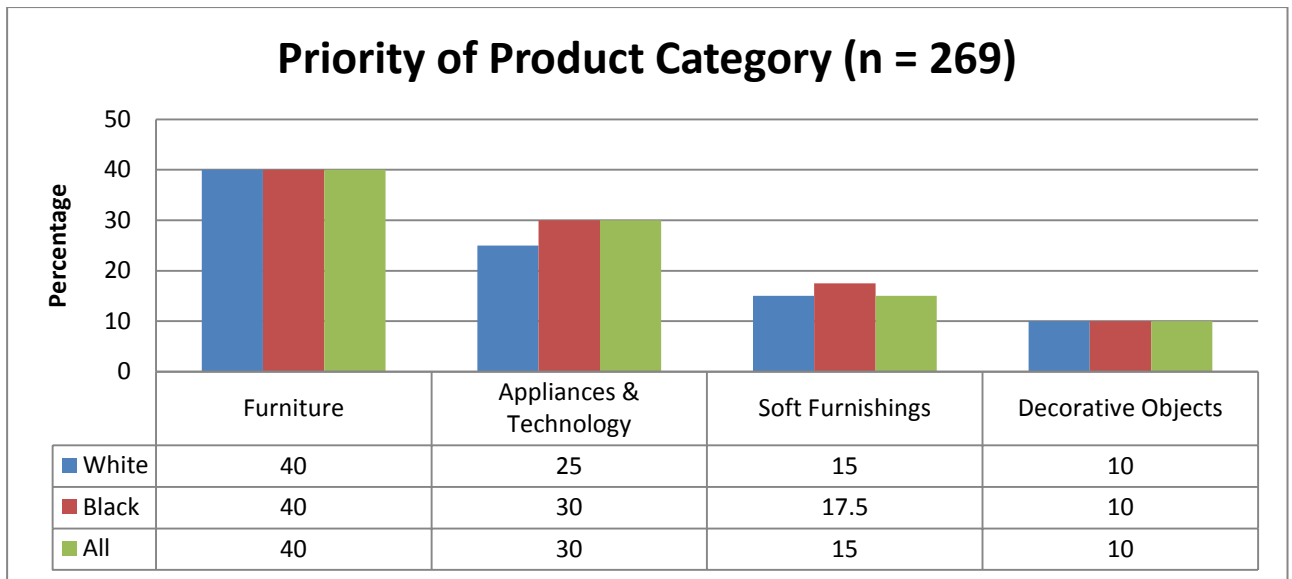


FIGURE 5.19: PERCENTAGE SPENT ON HOUSEHOLD GOODS (n = 269)

Median percentages revealed that there was no clear difference in the prioritisation of interior product categories between Black and White households. The product category that received the highest priority from both population groups was furniture (Median: 40%). This supports Lihra and Graff's (2007, in Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34) statement that, besides the house itself, furniture is the largest personal household consumption expenditure that households will have. Living room furniture, specifically, was the most expensive furniture type (Roy, 2002, in Yoon *et al.*, 2010:37). The second priority was given to appliances and technology (Median: 25%, White; Median: 30%, Black), followed by soft furnishings (Median: 15%, White; Median: 17.5%, Black). Decorative objects received the lowest amount of money from both population groups (Median = 10%).

5.4 SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Respondents' social considerations when prioritising the rooms in their home in terms of money and effort was tested in a preceding section of the questionnaire. As the findings indicated, households spent more money and effort on the social zones of their homes, with supporting reasons indicating a strong tendency to gain social approval and status, manage impressions, and express an identity. As a form of triangulation, the Status Consumption Scale of Eastman *et al.* (1999) was included in the questionnaire to investigate households' status consumption. Findings are revealed in Figures 5.20 to 5.23.

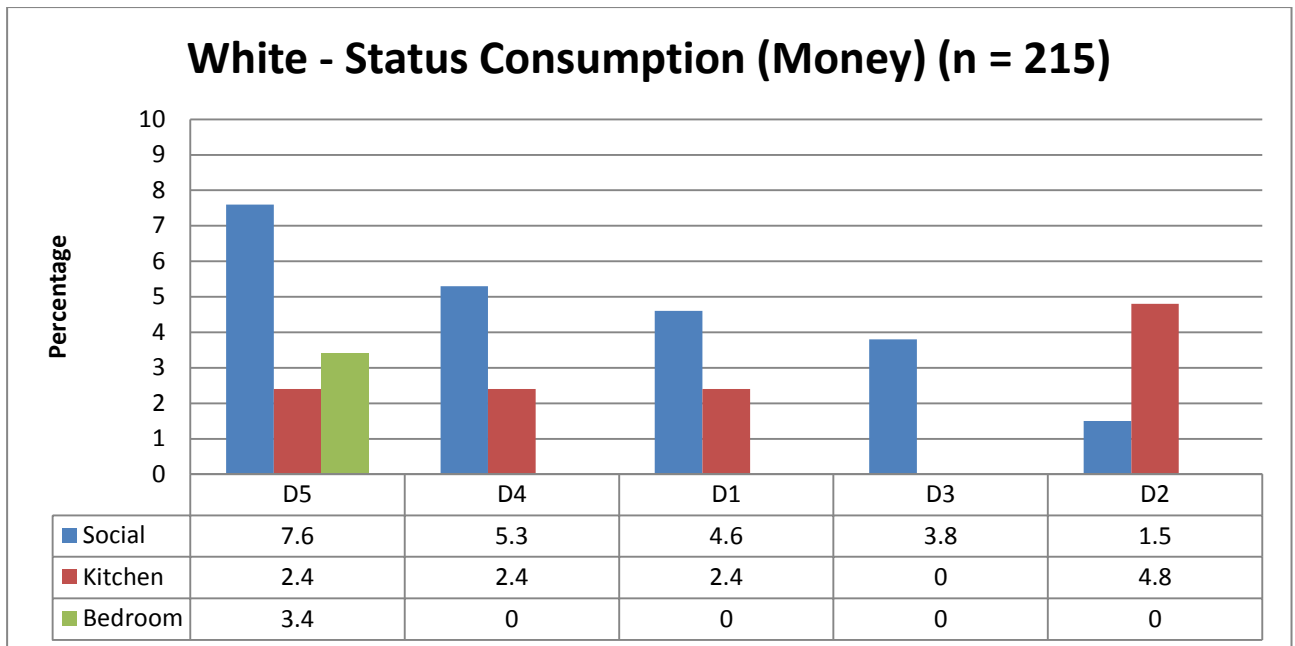


FIGURE 5.20: STATUS CONSUMPTION IN THE SOCIAL AREA, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: WHITE RESPONDENTS AND MOST MONEY SPENT (n = 215)

From the low number of White respondents that showed a tendency for status consumption, especially in comparison with Black respondents, it could be concluded that White respondents were perhaps not as concerned with status consumption in terms of interior goods as Black respondents. Figure 5.20, however, demonstrates that White respondents, who spent the most money on their social zones, were more prone to consuming for status gains and impression management, than those who spent the most on their kitchens or main bedrooms. The main bedroom, in fact, triggered only one favourable response. The main bedroom undeniably held little status potential for White households.

A South African study has revealed that Black South African households annually spend 50% more on goods for visible (conspicuous) consumption than White households with comparable demographics. However, White households' level of visible consumption has proved to be a poor representation of their social status in society, indicating that they may have other means of expressing their position in society than through their conspicuously consumed possessions (Kaus, 2010:10, 15). A limitation of the current study is that some White respondents may have been guilty of response bias and may have felt ashamed to admit that they were concerned with status consumption when purchasing interior goods for their homes.

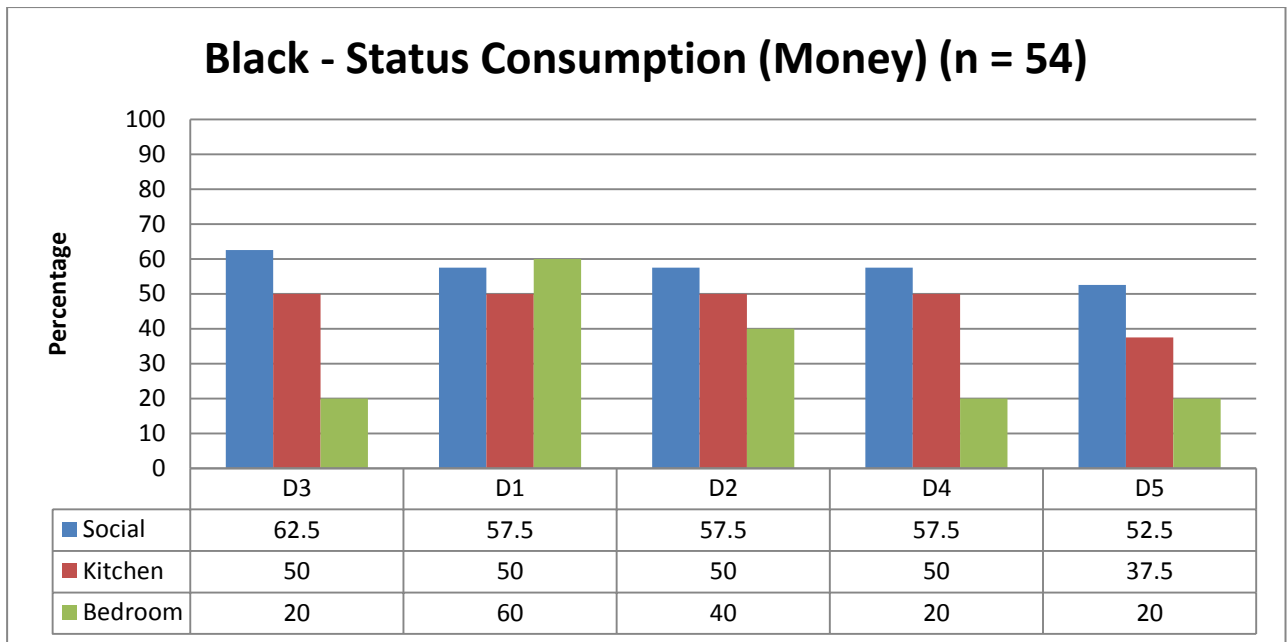


FIGURE 5.21: STATUS CONSUMPTION IN THE SOCIAL AREA, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: BLACK RESPONDENTS AND MOST MONEY SPENT (n = 54)

Figure 5.21 reveals that more Black respondents responded favourably with regard to status consumption propensities. Respondents that spent the most money on their social zones did so considerably more for status gains than those respondents who spent the most on their kitchen or main bedroom. The majority ($\geq 50\%$) of Black respondents did not have strong status consumption tendencies in the interior durables category, though they may be more inclined to purchase for status gains in terms of other durable goods, such as cars (Lamont & Molnár, 2001; Kaus, 2010).

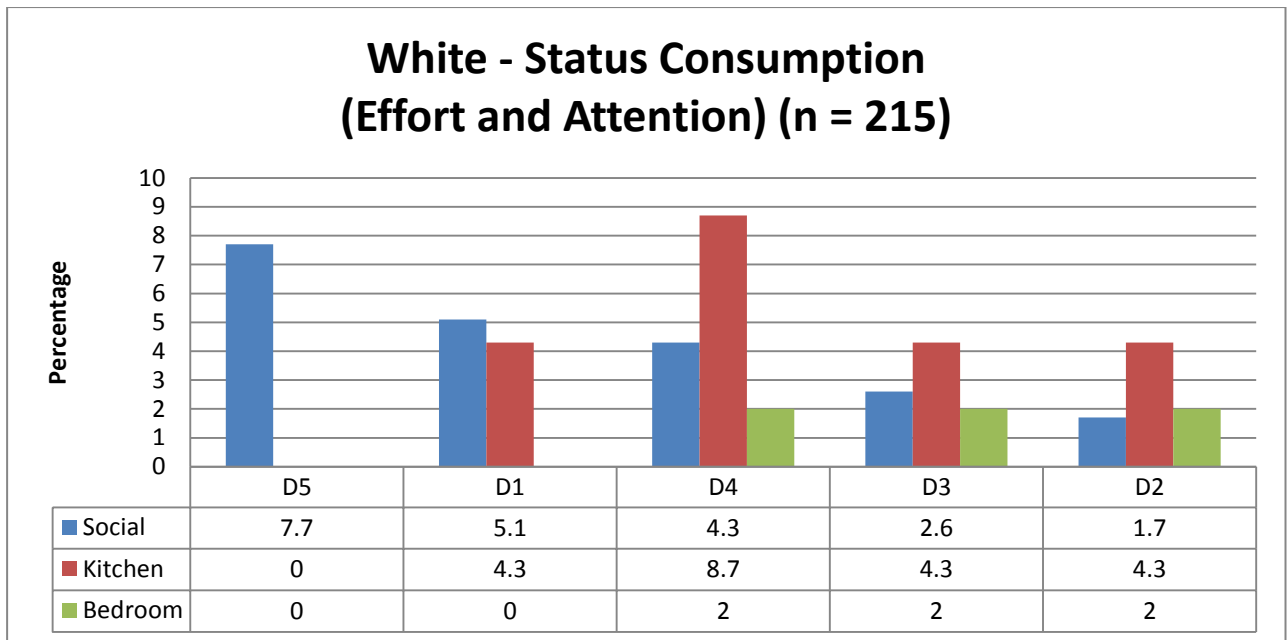


FIGURE 5.22: STATUS CONSUMPTION IN THE SOCIAL AREA, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: WHITE RESPONDENTS AND MOST EFFORT DEVOTED (n = 215)

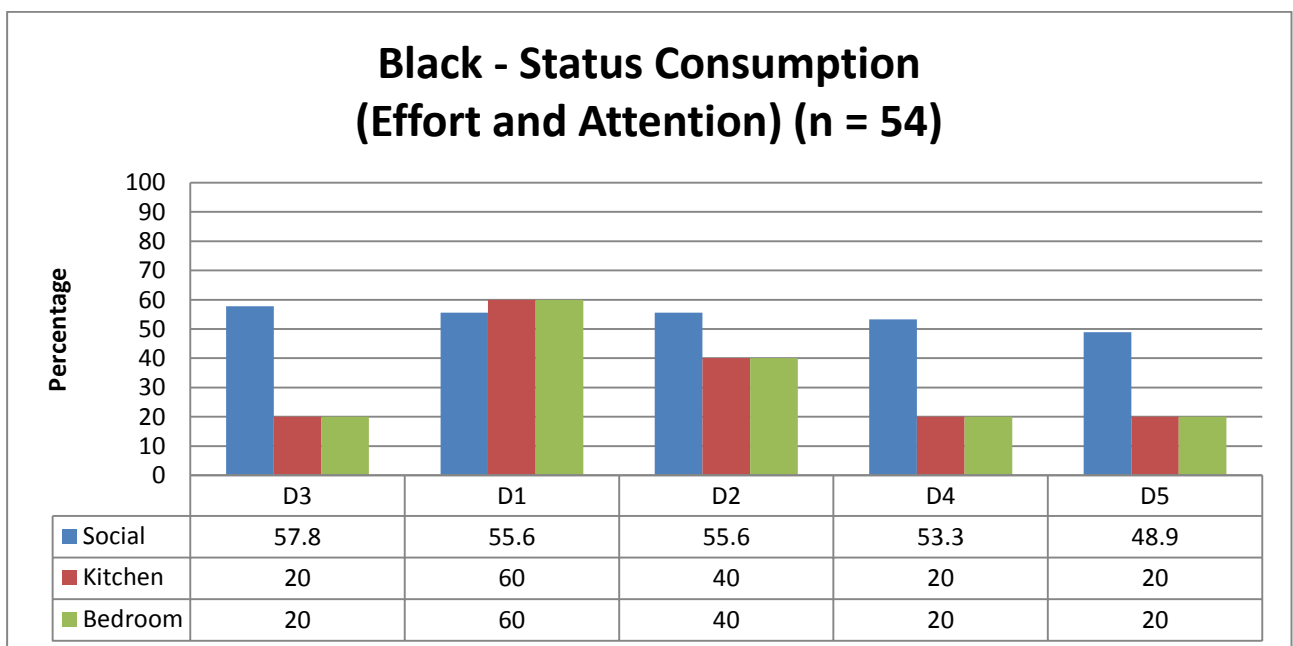


FIGURE 5.23: STATUS CONSUMPTION IN THE SOCIAL AREA, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: BLACK RESPONDENTS AND MOST EFFORT DEVOTED (n = 54)

Figures 5.22 and 5.23 show that the prevalence for status consumption, in terms of effort and attention devoted to the social zone of their homes, was very similar to status consumption in terms of money spent on this area for both population groups. Again, Black respondents were more inclined to spend time and effort on the purchasing of interior goods if it provided status,

compared to White respondents. However, as in the case of money spent, neither White nor Black respondents (< 50%) were very concerned about status consumption.

5.5 HOUSEHOLDS' INTERIOR PURCHASE PREFERENCES

Section E of the questionnaire investigated young households' purchase preferences when buying interior products for the room that they indicated as the one to which they dedicated the most effort. This section consisted of a 20-item attribute scale that included functional, symbolic and aesthetic aspects of interior products that young households may value and therefore prefer to use as buying criteria.

For this section of the questionnaire, Sweeney and Soutar's PERVAL (Consumer Perceived Value) Scale (2001) was revised by adding a fifth dimension, namely *aesthetics*, to the existing four, (namely *quality*, *emotional*, *price*, and *social* aspects). Responses were indicated on a four point Likert-type scale (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree). Items were added to the existing scale, some were reversed, and some items' wording was altered in order to reflect upon the interior product market, instead of consumer durables in general. Two items in the Price dimension jeopardised the internal consistency of the factor as they did not sufficiently indicate households' attention to price when choosing interior products. This dimension was consequently omitted altogether because of its low Cronbach's alpha (3.15) and because removal of any of the items did not improve the Cronbach's alpha for the factor. Findings are presented in Table 5.22.

TABLE 5.22: HOUSEHOLDS' INTERIOR PURCHASE PREFERENCES (n = 269)

Question: Still considering the room that was your FIRST choice in QUESTION 5 , indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your preference of interior goods: <i>For this area in my home, I prefer to buy INTERIOR PRODUCTS ...</i>	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
SOCIAL	0.87	2.60	0.8
That will help me feel acceptable			
That will make a good impression			
That will improve the way I am perceived by others			
That are fashionable / trendy			
EMOTIONAL	0.73	3.70	0.3
That I will enjoy using			
That will give me pleasure			
That I will enjoy looking at			
That will make me feel good			
AESTHETICS	0.72	3.41	0.5
That are beautiful			
That match the other items in the room in terms of appearance / style			
That are different			
That are designed to look good			
QUALITY	0.68	3.76	0.3
That will last a long time			
That are reliable			
That are of good quality			
That are comfortable			

In terms of young households' preference for interior products, respondents indicated that they attached the highest relative importance to the **QUALITY** (or performance) of interior products (Mean = 3.76; Max = 4), which is indicative of its durability, reliability, quality, and comfort (if applicable). Furthermore, young households indicated that their second priority (Mean = 3.70; Max = 4) was the **EMOTIONAL** influences, such as gaining a sense of enjoyment from its use or appearance, or experiencing pleasure or a good feeling. Means indicate little difference between the first and second choice. The **AESTHETIC** appeal of interior products was the third most important consideration for young households (Mean = 3.41; Max = 4). Objects were valued for their beauty, ability to match other items, uniqueness, and visually pleasing design. Young

households had a moderate preference (Mean = 2.60; Max = 4) for objects that have SOCIAL implications, such as providing social acceptance, creating a good impression, improving perceptions, and indicating attentiveness to the latest trends.

A comparison of these findings and findings that resulted from the factor analysis (reported in 5.2.1 and 5.2.3) showed that the **utilitarian function** of an interior *object* was regarded the most important aspect, whereas the **utilitarian purpose** of a *room* was of lesser importance. Likewise, while the **social function** of an interior *object* was the least important of the criteria, the **social purpose** of a *room* was the most important factor in determining the allocation of money, effort and attention to a room's interior décor.

This may indicate that, although young households were mindful of the social image that a room may or may not have as a result of its appearance and the interior items displayed and used in it, they were compelled to admit that the functional benefits of an object, such as its durability and quality, were the main evaluation criteria. One may deduce that interior appearances as a whole were meant to serve an enjoyment and aesthetic purpose first, then a social purpose and lastly a utilitarian purpose. But individually, interior objects were primarily chosen for their functional characteristics, then for their emotional and aesthetic properties, and lastly for their social properties. In terms of consumer facilitation it indicates that interior objects, which are attractive, unique, et cetera, would probably be more popular and acceptable if they were also functional.

5.6 HOUSEHOLDS' CONCERN FOR VISUAL PRODUCT AESTHETICS

Due to a home's interior being largely appreciated on a visual level, young households' concern for visual product aesthetics was investigated. Section F of the questionnaire contained the 11-item CVPA (Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics) Scale of Bloch *et al.* (2003). The wording of this scale was revised to refer to interior products instead of consumer durables in general. The three dimensions of the original scale, namely, *value*, *acumen*, and *response*, were retained. Responses were indicated on a four point Likert-type scale (Definitely Agree/Probably/Unlikely/Definitely Disagree). Findings are presented in Table 5.23.

TABLE 5.23: HOUSEHOLDS' CONCERN FOR VISUAL PRODUCT AESTHETICS (n = 269)

Question: Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the physical appearance and design of interior goods:	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
VALUE	0.84	3.1	0.7
Owning interior products that have superior designs makes me feel good about myself.			
I enjoy seeing displays of interior products that have superior designs.			
An interior product's design is a source of pleasure to me.			
Beautiful interior product designs make our homes better places to live in.			
ACUMEN	0.86	2.9	0.7
Being able to see subtle differences in interior product designs is a skill that I have developed over time.			
I see things in an interior product's design that other people tend to miss.			
I have the ability to imagine how an interior product will fit in with designs of other interior items I already own.			
I have a good idea of what makes one interior product look better than its competitors.			
RESPONSE	0.78	3.0	0.7
Sometimes the way an interior product looks seems to reach out and grab me.			
If an interior product's design really 'speaks' to me, I feel that I must buy it.			
When I see an interior product that has a really great design, I feel a strong urge to buy it.			

Young households revealed that the VALUE they assigned to interior products' appearances was high (Mean = 3.1; Max = 4), in terms of its ability to enhance their quality of life and well-being and give them pleasure or enjoyment. In terms of so-called ACUMEN, the score was moderate (Mean = 2.9; Max = 4), which refers to respondents' ability to recognise good, tasteful designs and evaluate interior products based on their appearance. Young households indicated that visual product stimuli of interior products generated a moderately high level of emotional RESPONSE from them (Mean = 3; Max = 4), specifically in the form of a desire to purchase. This suggests that retailers' and consumer facilitators' marketing strategies to young households should provide them with aesthetically pleasing interior products, since this consumer group consider themselves to be visually inclined. On face value, the means for the three dimensions did not differ much (2.9 to 3.1) and they were not particularly high (Max = 4).

5.7 SUMMARY

Figures 5.24 to 5.27 summarise the findings pertaining to the reasons for young households' prioritisation of resources towards the social zones, kitchens and main bedrooms of their homes, organised in descending order according to the social zone, and presented separately for White and Black respondents.

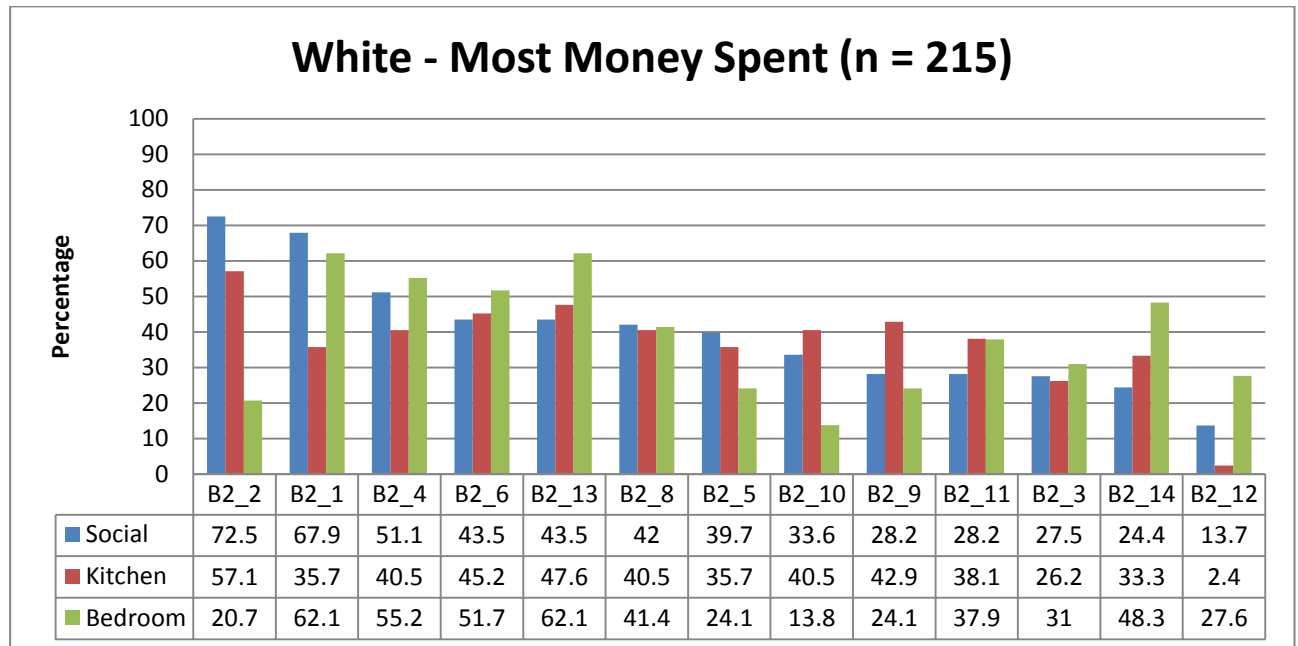


FIGURE 5.24: REASONS FOR MOST MONEY SPENT ON THE SOCIAL ZONE, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: WHITE RESPONDENTS (n = 215)

The majority of White respondents ($\geq 50\%$) indicated two **symbolic-related** reasons for spending the most money on the *social zones* of their homes, namely:

B2_2: This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (72.5%); and

B2_1: This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (67.9%).

These reasons suggest the need for **social status** gains (B2_2) and **enjoyment** (B2_1) in White households. Only one reason was indicated by the majority of White respondents as motivation for spending the most money on their *kitchens*, which was the same as the most prevalent reason for the *social zone* (B2_2), namely a **status-related** need. White respondents indicated four **symbolic-related** reasons, relating to **enjoyment** (B2_1 and B2_13) and **identity-expression** (B2_4 and B2_6), for spending the most money on their *main bedrooms*, namely:

B2_1: This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (62.1%);

B2_13: I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (62.1%);

B2_4: This area should reflect my lifestyle (55.2%); and

B2_6: This area should reflect my identity (51.7%).

Reason B2_1 also explained the majority ($\geq 50\%$) of White and Black respondents' prioritisation of the *social zones* of their homes. **Functional** (i.e. **utilitarian**) reasons (B2_9 and B2_10) were selected by the minority of White respondents ($< 50\%$), but was mostly offered to explain the prioritisation of their *kitchens*. These reasons were:

B2_9: I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable before moving in; and

B2_10: Several items were needed before we could utilise this area for its intended purpose.

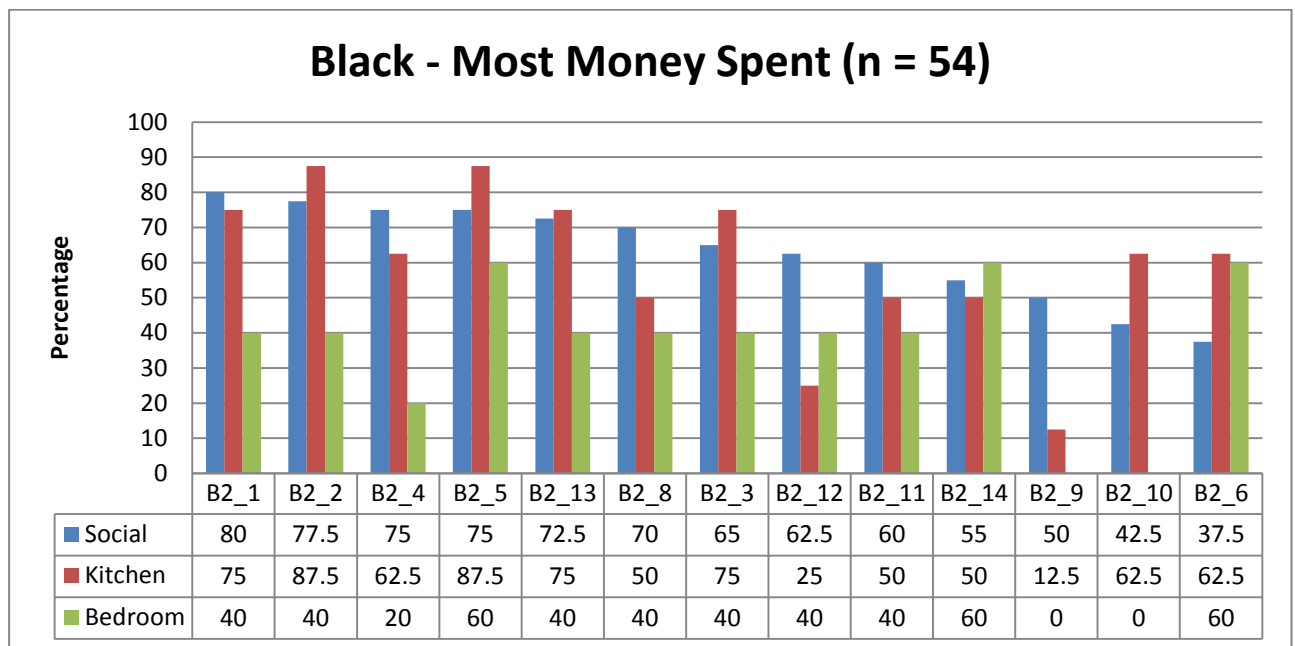


FIGURE 5.25: REASONS FOR MOST MONEY SPENT ON THE SOCIAL ZONE, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: BLACK RESPONDENTS (n = 54)

The majority of Black respondents ($\geq 50\%$) indicated eleven of the possible thirteen⁵ reasons for the prioritisation of their *social zones* and *kitchens*, and three **symbolic** reasons pertaining to **social status**, **identity expression** and **appearance**, for prioritising their *main bedrooms*, namely:

⁵ Reason B2_7 was omitted during factor analysis because it did not load onto any of the three factors, where after thirteen reasons remained.

B2_5: This area should create a good impression about our family (60%);

B2_6: This area should reflect my identity (60%); and

B2_14: Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area (60%).

The fact that Black respondents identified so many reasons, indicate uncertainty or confusion in terms of what really is the most important.

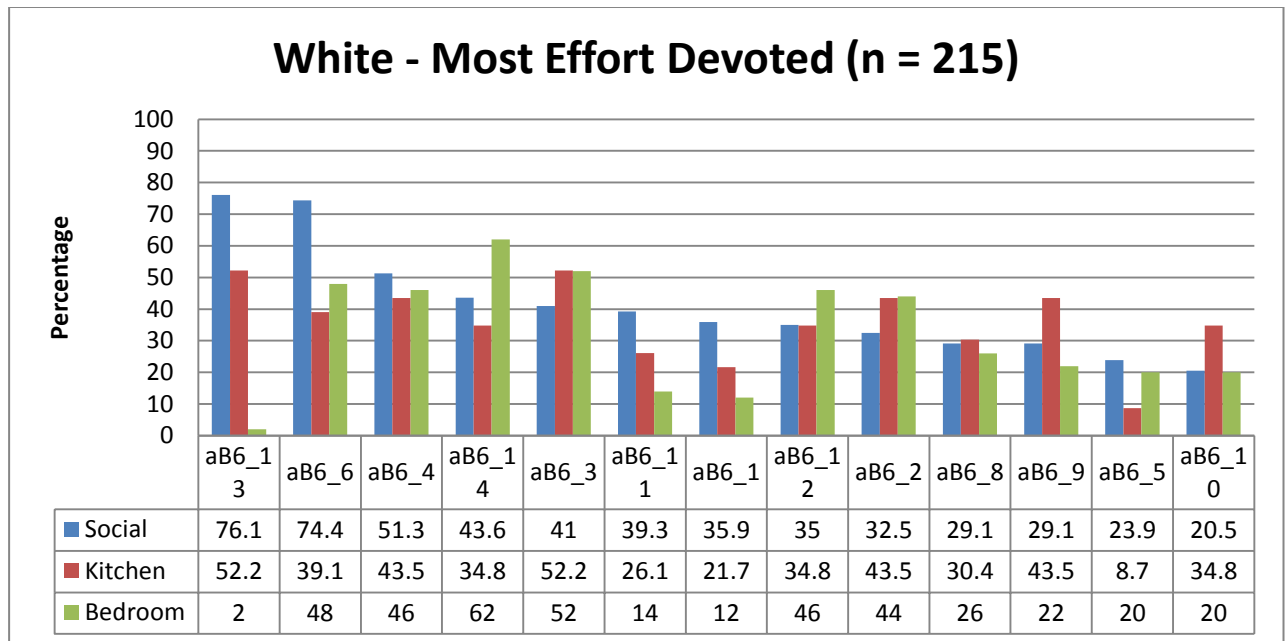


FIGURE 5.26: REASONS FOR MOST EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO THE SOCIAL ZONE, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: WHITE RESPONDENTS (n = 215)

The majority of White respondents ($\geq 50\%$) offered three **symbolic** reasons pertaining to **enjoyment** (B6_13) and **identity expression** (B6_6 and B6_4) for devoting the most effort and attention on the *social zones* of their homes, namely:

B6_13: I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (76.1%);

B6_6: This area should reflect my identity (74.4%); and

B6_4: This area should reflect my lifestyle (51.3%).

The two reasons offered by the majority of White respondents for prioritising their *kitchens* were:

B6_13: I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (52.2%); and

B6_3: If I purchase beautiful things, I would like to place them where others will notice them (52.2%).

These reasons allude to a need for **enjoyment** (B6_13) and **social status** (B6_3). Many modern homes now have open plan configurations, which may explain the enjoyment of new interior products and their visual significance in *kitchens*. The latter reason (B6_3) also explains the majority of White respondents' prioritisation of their *main bedrooms* (52%), together with a reason pertaining to **enjoyment**, namely:

B6_14: Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area (62%).

Once again, a minority of White respond (< 50%) selected **functional** reasons for their *main bedrooms*. **Utilitarian** reasons (functionality), however, mostly explained the prioritisation of their *kitchens* in terms of effort and attention, which seemed logical..

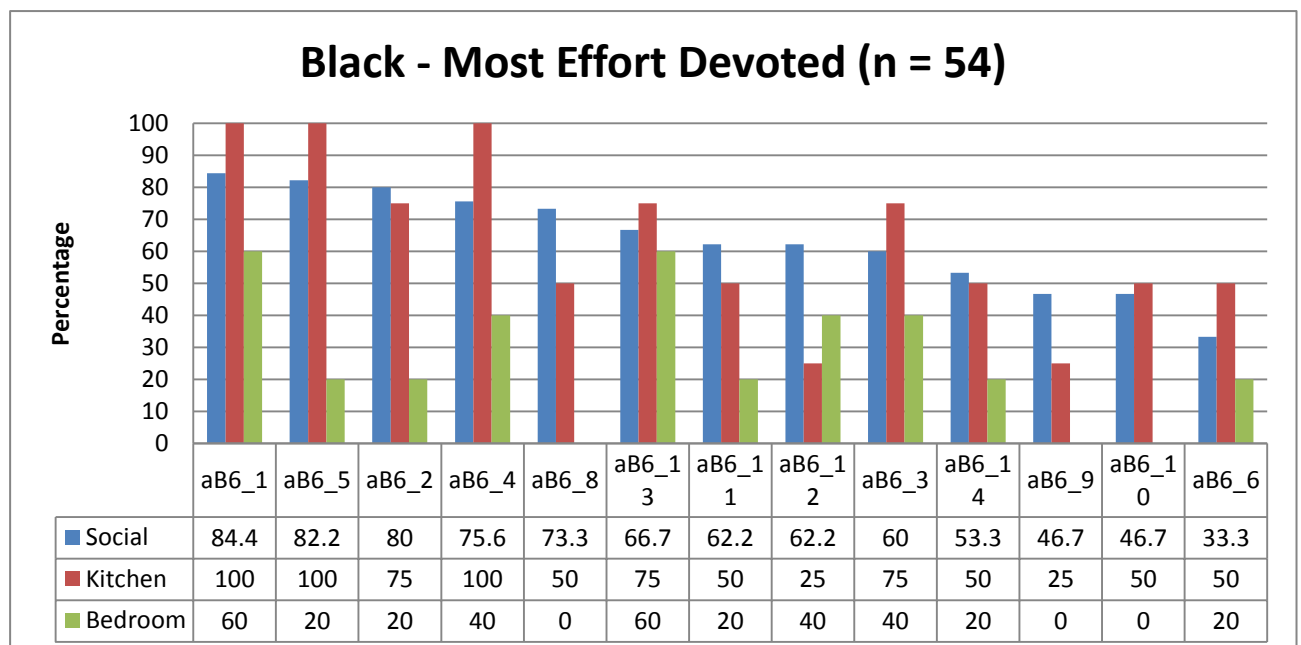


FIGURE 5.27: REASONS FOR MOST EFFORT AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO THE SOCIAL ZONE, KITCHEN AND MAIN BEDROOM: BLACK RESPONDENTS (n = 54)

The majority of Black respondents ($\geq 50\%$) once again offered ten of the possible thirteen⁶ reasons for devoting the most effort and attention on the social zones of their homes, which suggests uncertainty or even confusion. Their three most prevalent reasons related to **enjoyment** (B6_1) and **social status** (B6_5 and B6_2) gains. All three of these reasons were amongst the reasons chosen by a minority (< 50%) of the White respondents, namely:

⁶ Since its complementary item (B2_7) in the scale pertaining to most money spent did not load onto any of the three factors during factor analysis, reason B6_7 was omitted, where after thirteen reasons remained.

B6_1: This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (84.4%);

B6_5: This area should create a good impression about our family (82.2%); and

B6_2: This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (80%).

Eleven of the possible thirteen reasons were offered by the majority of Black respondents to explain the prioritisation of their kitchens in terms of effort and attention devoted. It therefore seems as if Black respondents did not have specific motivations – irrespective of the area under discussion. Only two reasons, both relating to **enjoyment**, were selected by the majority of Black respondents to explain the prioritisation of their main bedrooms, namely:

B6_1: This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (60%); and

B6_13: I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (60%).

Utilitarian reasons were offered mostly as explanation for the prioritisation of the kitchen and social zone.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents a discussion and implications of the findings for retail as well as consumer facilitation, provides a reflection on the research and a subsequent discussion of problems encountered, concluding with suggestions for further research.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to investigate and describe young South African households' acquisition of interior merchandise – i.e. furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, and decorative objects for their homes – as well as the prioritisation of the different zones in their homes, specifically to gain evidence of the allocation of their financial and physical resources. The research also aimed to describe the relative importance that symbolic meanings of interior objects hold for these households, compared to functional and aesthetic utility. The study was conducted in the Tshwane metropolitan area of Gauteng during 2011. This predominantly quantitative research study was descriptive and explorative in nature, as well as cross-sectional, as it explored and described the purchase behaviour of young households in the Tshwane region at a given time. Quantitative data was collected through a self-administered, structured questionnaire that contained one qualitative question. Statistical procedures included Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), factor analysis and post hoc tests were performed, specifically Tukey's (HSD) test, to distinguish significant differences among sub-sets of the sample.

Due to the interconnected nature of the research, *symbolic interactionist, cultural, and multiple mental accounting* perspectives were used to direct the constructs, objectives and discussions. Symbolic interactionism explains how people give meaning to their environment through the use of a complex set of symbols (La Rossa & Reitzes, 1993 in Plunkett, 2008:1). It is based on the premise of social interaction between individuals and society and/or reference groups by means of social objects (Leigh & Gabel, 1992:28; Solomon, 2007:158). These social objects, which individuals use in social situations to communicate something to others or to themselves, include symbols, the self, other people, appearances and possessions (Schultz *et al.*, 1989:359; Charon, 2007:48; Kaiser, 1997:42). This perspective states that the self, as social object and process, has

the ability to constantly adapt in response to social situations and symbols. People are constantly aware of visual, symbolic stimuli in their environment and will react to their meaning in a learned manner that is dictated by society, or subgroups within society (Sandstrom *et al.*, 2006:8; Solomon, 1983:320). It is therefore possible to manage or direct, not only the perceptions of others, but also their behaviour, by exposing them to symbolic forms. However, the meanings of symbols need to be shared in order for it to be successful communication tools (Kaiser, 1997:42; Banister & Hogg, 2004:851). The *cultural perspective* explicates that symbolic meanings are assigned to objects and shared within a culture group. This perspective is based on the assumption that people belonging to the same culture group or category will have shared experiences and similar beliefs, customs, values and behaviours that are symbolised by cultural products or artefacts. Cultural products may include furniture, decorative objects, other interior goods or the home in general (Rengel, 2007: 347, 249; Kaiser, 1997:351). Individuals employ these cultural forms (i.e. their homes and interior goods) to differentiate themselves from other cultures or subculture groups (Ferraro, 2001:25). Because consumption is used for self-definition and self-expression (Van Gorp, 2005:3), consumers base their purchase and consumption decisions on a multitude of cultural and emotional factors, with underlying sociological and psychological motives (Gilboa *et al.*, 2010:5; Scheff, 1992:104). As a theory of behavioural economics, *multiple mental accounting* places economic behaviour within timeframes and expense categories that make sense to the consumer but may seem anomalous according to the rational choice theory. *Mental accounting* is the process whereby households label or categorise different expense categories in a top-down manner (i.e. larger categories, then sub-categories or bundles), then allocate a portion of their budget to each category and lastly 'balance' the account at the end of a predetermined budget period.

Literature has shown that besides the house itself, furniture is the largest personal household consumption expense that households will have (Lihra & Graff, 2007 in Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). Young households in the early stages of the family lifecycle are faced with large housing and related expenses, all competing for the same disposable income in a relatively short time period (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:333; Wilska, 2002:205; Siniavskaia, 2008:2, 6; Lin, 2004:4). Households may not be able to afford all of the interior goods they need or want for their homes simultaneously and are therefore compelled to divide their available budgets among the different areas in their homes and the different product categories in each area, in such a manner that allows them to satisfy their most important functional, symbolic and/or aesthetic needs first. In general a budget refers to available funds, but in this situation it may also refer to the available physical resources (i.e. effort and attention) that households must allocate toward the planning and acquisition activities involved when furnishing their homes.

Major household durables are generally expensive and encompass many factors to consider during the purchase and consumption process. The purchasing of household goods is mainly determined by functional properties, appearance, and cost or affordability (Yoon *et al.*, 2010:33). However, it has been proposed that consumer goods are often purchased predominantly for their symbolic meaning, such as being a communication tool to express a desired image of the self (Belk, 1980:365; Shukla, 2008:26; Donoghue & Erasmus, 1999:18, 23). Consumers are inclined to define themselves and others by means of their possessions (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004:38), making these possessions an effectuation or extension of the self (Belk, 1988:139, 151; Mittal, 2006:554; Nissen *et al.*, 1994:175). The home serves as the ideal ‘canvas’ and interior goods as the ideal ‘medium’ to manipulate and convey a desired image. In particular, the social zones of the home (i.e. lounge/s, open plan living areas and dining rooms) are generally the areas where socialising with guests takes place. These areas of the home therefore present the opportunity for identity expression and conspicuous consumption for social approval and status gains. Chapin’s Social Status Scale (1933, in Guttman, 1942:362), which measured households’ social status based on the décor of their living rooms, provided an indication of how this phenomenon could be explored.

Young households between the ages of 25 and 39, residing in Tshwane, Gauteng, were regarded a subculture group based on their age, location, home occupancy status and common interest in furnishing their homes. Research has confirmed that people from different cultural and socio-demographic backgrounds attach different meanings to their home and use it in different ways (Gunter, 2000:99-103). Limited empirical evidence exists, however, of how young households in a South African context prioritise their interior purchases for their new home, and how they justify these purchases. In other words, evidence is lacking in terms of which evaluation criteria in this durable product category – i.e. functional, symbolic or aesthetic – are more prevalent and whether specific priorities are assigned to different zones in their homes, which justified a local study. This chapter concludes the investigation with a discussion of the findings as it explicates the research objectives.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

6.2.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Due to the use of non-random sampling techniques, namely convenience, purposive criterion and snowball sampling, the findings of this study are sample specific and cannot be generalised to a greater population. The study was meant to be explorative and to provide findings that could be used to guide future studies. Respondents were all between the ages of 25 and 39 and owned or rented a home with multiple rooms in Tshwane, Gauteng. The sample's median age was 27 years. The majority of respondents were either married or living with a partner (61.4%); the rest was single. This indicated that the majority of respondents were likely to have the financial advantage of dual income, which probably influenced the size of their available budget for interior goods. More than half of respondents (56.3%) rented their homes, the others were homeowners. Homeownership status may have been influential in the planning and furnishing of home interiors as renters may regard their homes with a lesser sense of permanency than homeowners do. The sample consisted of 77.6% White respondents, 19.5% Black respondents, 1.8% Indian respondents, and 1.1% Coloured respondents. The latter two population groups were omitted from all subsequent statistical analyses because of inadequate numbers. A sizable amount of respondents (87.4%) possessed a tertiary and/or post graduate qualification and 13% possessed a Grade 12 certificate or less. Forty percent of respondents earned more than the average monthly household income (i.e. > R29 000) of Tshwane's highest earning area (i.e. Pretoria East). Half of the sample earned more than R23 500, which placed them in the upper income category of Tshwane and in either the LSM 10-Low or LSM 10-High group (Internet: Bizcommunity.com, 2010; SAARF, 2011:59). It was assumed that this investigation would not necessarily have merit in terms of low income groups, who have limited financial resources for products other than essential commodities, and therefore the representation of middle and higher income households seemed appropriate.

6.2.2 Households' allocation of resources to home interiors (Objective 1)

The first objective was to investigate and describe young households' allocation of their resources towards interior goods for their home. This objective was subdivided to separately account for financial resources (i.e. money) and physical resources (i.e. effort and attention). The first of these sub objectives dealt with the allocation of money in terms of the different zones of the home, as well as the different interior product categories, namely furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and

technology, and decorative objects. The second sub objective dealt with the allocation of effort and attention in terms of the different zones of the home.

6.2.2.1 Allocation of financial resources

Homes are divided into a public or social zone and a private zone (Nielson & Taylor, 2007:129; Gunter, 2000:95). The social zone is where socialising with visitors takes place and where households can express their social identity by means of interior goods, its arrangement, colour scheme, and the overall style of the room (Yoon *et al.*, 2010:33, 34). The main bedroom is part of the private zone of the house since it is typically the furthest away from the social zones and the least accessible to outsiders. The kitchen lies on the border of being private or social because homes are increasingly designed with an open plan social zone that includes the kitchen as part of the living area. In more traditionally designed homes the kitchen, especially the scullery, is normally walled off, thereby limiting visitors' access to it.

Findings indicated that, in terms of the room's décor, young households displayed a different level of prioritisation toward private, semi-public and public or social areas in their homes. They spent more money on the social zones of their homes (63.6%), than on their kitchens (18.6%) and main bedrooms (12.6%). These findings are supported by South African retail sales figures: in 2009, living room furniture accounted for 49.3% of all furniture sales nationally (Internet: Datamonitor, 2010), which suggests that social zones in homes command the largest budget. Auxiliary rooms, such as the study, patio or outdoor entertainment area and main bathroom received the smallest budget from respondents (< 2%) and thus the lowest priority.

Findings also indicated that households spent the most money on furniture (Median: 40%), followed by appliances and technology (Median: 30%), then soft furnishings (Median: 15%) and the least money on decorative objects (Median: 10%). This supports the literature, which states that, of all household durables, furniture is the largest expense (Lihra & Graff, 2007 in Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). Literature on *mental accounting* suggests that households categorise their household expenses and proportionally allocate a part of the household budget to each category (Gilboa *et al.*, 2010:5). This means that some expense categories may be awarded a larger budget than others, mostly depending on the average cost of items in this category, but also the relative need for these items for either functional, symbolic or aesthetic reasons. The findings of this study supported the literature because each interior goods category was regarded a different priority in terms of the allocation of households' interior budgets.

6.2.2.2 Allocation of physical resources

Findings indicated that young households devoted more effort and attention on the social zones of their homes (60.3%) in terms of planning and achieving its interior and décor, than on their main bedrooms (20.4%) and kitchens (10%). When explaining why the most effort and attention was granted to their open plan living and dining area, one respondent revealed that:

It is more important to me [that] we entertain guests in a nice and interesting environment, than to spend time on 'everyday' rooms like the main bedroom. (V041)

It is likely that some respondents did not view their private zones (i.e. the main bedroom) as exciting enough to pay the most attention to them in terms of its décor. Previous research revealed that South African homeowners prefer to spend more money (and assumedly also effort and attention) on the rooms that visitors see (Internet: Ndenze, 2004:1), which by implication refer to the social zone of their homes. This accentuates the social significance of the social zones in people's homes. Similar to the issue of most money spent, households devoted the least effort and attention to the study, patio and main bathroom (< 5%).

6.2.3 Justification for allocation of resources (Objective 2)

The second objective of the study was to investigate and describe how young households justify the allocation of their resources (i.e. the extent to which households regard the functional utility of interior products and zones in their homes) versus the symbolic meaning of interior products and zones in their homes (specifically status), versus their aesthetic appeal.

The home acts as a cultural form that is used for cultural expression of individual and social identities (Sixsmith, 1986:282). A person's culture entails his/her learned beliefs, ideas, values, behaviour and possessions. Learned beliefs and values regarding oneself and others ultimately lead to certain attitudes and behaviour (Evans *et al.*, 2009:285; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010:366), for instance attitudes towards a room's appearance. This, in turn, determines the meaning one attaches to that area of the home (Kempen, 2008:73) and behaviour relating to consumption of cultural objects.

6.2.3.1 *Reasons for allocating resources to different zones*

Objective 1.1.1 determined the priority of each zone in the home in terms of allocation of resources. Objective 2 aimed to explain the outcome of this objective by exploring the value and meanings that young households attached to zones or rooms in their homes. It is maintained that different rooms in a home enable different levels of perceived expressiveness. The living room, for instance, is one room where impression management is attempted due to its visibility to significant others, such as friends or acquaintances, to whom the owners would like to communicate certain qualities of the self (Sadalla *et al.*, 1987:570, 585; McCracken, 1987, in Belk, 1988:153; Gunter, 2000:110). Chapin's 1933 Social Status Scale (Guttman, 1942:362), also known as the Living Room Scale (Internet: Chizinsky, 2010; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2011), investigates this phenomenon.

Factor analysis proposed three factors that explained households' prioritisation and allocation of their resources to certain **areas of their homes**. The three factors, namely ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE, SOCIAL ASPECTS and UTILITARIAN PURPOSE, encompassed six meanings that interior objects may have (Richins, 1994:510), namely, meanings related to enjoyment, appearance, status, identity-expression, interpersonal ties, and utilitarian purpose. Young households regarded SOCIAL ASPECTS (Factor 2), such as status and identity-expression and facilitation of interpersonal ties, as highly relevant reasons for spending **money** on a room's interior (Mean: 3.3; Max: 4). They also placed a high level of importance (Mean: 2.98; Max: 4) on the ENJOYMENT involved in shopping for and decorating a specific room, and the APPEARANCE (Factor 2) of interior products. They seemed not to distinguish between the enjoyment experienced when shopping for interior goods and the aesthetic pleasantness that interior goods offer. Literature states that an interior object or space has aesthetic value if its visual appearance evokes a positive emotional response, such as a deep level of satisfaction or pleasure (Abercrombie, 1990:71; Pile, 2007:39), which explains why these two concepts were merged into one factor. Despite young households' high regard for symbolic and aesthetic aspects in terms of the prioritisation of their money, they nevertheless valued the UTILITARIAN PURPOSE (Factor 3) of a room (Mean: 2.9; Max: 4) and acknowledged the importance of interior goods to make a room liveable and functional.

The majority of young households who spent the most money on the social zones and kitchens of their homes, revealed the need to express their social status and need for enjoyment. The majority of young households who spent the most money on their main bedrooms preferred to express their personal identities and need for enjoyment and aesthetic appeal. This supports findings from a study by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981:85) in which the majority of adults attached

special meaning to possessions that caused feelings of enjoyment and were related to their personal values and self. The reasons offered by most young households for spending the most money and devoting the most effort and attention to their homes were:

*This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it (**enjoyment**);*

*This area is visible to visitors that come to my home (**status**);*

*This area should reflect my identity (**identity**); and*

*I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area (**enjoyment**).*

Factor analysis done for reasons explaining the most **effort** and **attention** devoted to household interiors, showed that SOCIAL ASPECTS (Factor 1) came to mind more strongly and were attended to more pertinently (Mean: 3.3; Max: 4). ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE (Factor 2) was the second biggest concern (Mean: 3.1; Max: 4) for young households when allocating their physical resources. Although still important, they bestowed less effort and attention on the interiors of their homes for UTILITARIAN purposes (Factor 3) than in terms of the other factors (Mean: 2.8; Max: 4). Although personal enjoyment and visually pleasant interiors (aesthetics) came first or more strongly to mind in the case of money spent, the expression and management of social image and relationships (symbolic) were young households' strongest concern for the allocation of both financial and physical resources (Mean: ≥ 3.1). The utilitarian purpose of rooms (functional) was a less prevalent issue in prioritising the allocation of their resources, which confirms the significance of status- and aesthetic-related concerns when households are choosing a home.

Similar to the issue of amount of money spent, the majority of young households who devoted the most effort and attention on the social zones and kitchens of their homes, revealed the need to express their social status and need for enjoyment. The majority of young households who devoted the most effort and attention to their main bedrooms preferred to express their personal identities, and again, need for enjoyment. The interiors of main bedrooms are therefore approached on a more personal level.

6.2.3.2 Reasons for allocating resources to different interior product categories

Objective 1.1.2 determined the priority assigned to each interior product category. Objective 2 aimed to explain the outcome of this objective by exploring the value and meanings that young households attached to interior objects. The following four dimensions of product value were proposed by the literature, namely, QUALITY, EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, and AESTHETICS (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001:212; Veryzer, 1995:643), which are similar to the factors obtained from

factor analysis for rooms, namely enjoyment and appearance (EMOTIONAL and AESTHETICS), social aspects (SOCIAL), and utilitarian purpose (QUALITY).

In terms of young households' preference for **interior products**, QUALITY (Mean: 3.76; Max: 4) was perceived as the most important criterion, followed by the EMOTIONAL effect interior products may have, then the AESTHETIC appeal, and lastly the SOCIAL implications (Mean: 2.6; Max: 4), such as providing social acceptance, creating a good impression, improving perceptions and indicating attentiveness to the latest trends. Households spent the most money on furniture, which was possibly due to furniture being the widest and most expensive interior object category (Lihra & Graff, 2007 in Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). However, households selected interior objects mostly for their utilitarian value, of which QUALITY is one aspect. Since furniture is a functional product category of which the quality can be judged, households were likely to value it for the utilitarian role it plays in making their homes functional and liveable, which may explain why households spent the most money on this product category.

Respondents may also have recognised the AESTHETIC appeal and SOCIAL values of furniture, for example, the effect it has on a room's style, its ability to express taste or status, or its ability to facilitate interpersonal ties. These meanings were, however, subordinate in their influence of households' interior goods choices.

The second highest spending occurred in the appliance and technology category. These interior objects may have been valued for their QUALITY and utilitarian purpose of enabling certain household activities; their EMOTIONAL value, for instance, the enjoyment they provide if they are used for entertainment or hobby purposes; and their AESTHETIC appeal, since household appliances and technology are increasingly designed to be stylish fashion items.

The third interior product category, in terms of money spent, was soft furnishings, which included window coverings, loose carpets, cushions and bed linen. Their value to young households could lie in their QUALITY and AESTHETIC value.

Households spent the least money on decorative objects, which are meant to serve an AESTHETIC purpose. However, of all interior products, decorative accessories have the ability to express the owner's identity and taste the best (Allen *et al.*, 2004:265). Since SOCIAL qualities of interior goods were the least valued by respondents, this may explain the low priority they assigned to this interior product category. Literature also mentions price as an objective criterion that consumers often consider in a product before purchasing it (Bhat & Reddy, 1998:33; Del Río *et al.*, 2001:454; Zey, 1992:10; Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). In this study, Cronbach's Alphas were calculated

for Sweeney and Soutar's 2001 PERVAL Scale and revealed that two items in the PRICE dimension jeopardised the internal consistency of the factor as they did not sufficiently indicate households' attention to price when choosing interior products. The PRICE factor was subsequently omitted from further analysis. This study could therefore not determine what the effect of price would be on households' preference for interior products. Future research can include a price dimension for a more comprehensive comparison of preferred product dimensions.

When compared to the findings that resulted from factor analysis for the different rooms in a home, findings differed. It was concluded that an interior *product's utilitarian function* is perceived to be most important, but the **utilitarian purpose** and qualities of a *room* seemed the least relevant factor when allocating resources to its décor. The **social function** of an interior *object*, in comparison, was the least valued by young households, while a *room's social purpose* seemed the most important factor in determining the allocation of money, effort and attention to a room's interior décor. Households in this age group are known to be upwardly mobile and to purchase for symbolic reasons because they are in, or entering into, a new phase of their lifecycle and are therefore generally concerned with advancing on a social and professional level (Leigh & Gabel, 1992:31, 37). Since possessions are a revelation of social goals, their consumption patterns are likely to reflect these desires (Charon, 2007:122; Olson, 1985 in Belk, 1988:148). However, findings indicated that young households were not as concerned with the symbolic meanings of interior products specifically, than with the social roles that the rooms in their homes play with regard to expression of their social status (social zone and kitchen) and their personal identities (main bedroom). It may be inferred that a room's interior appearance as a whole was meant to serve an enjoyment and aesthetic purpose first, then a social purpose and lastly a utilitarian purpose. But individually, interior objects were firstly chosen for their functional characteristics, such as durability and quality, then for their emotional and aesthetic properties, and lastly for their social properties. This perhaps shows that households did not recognise the ability of individual interior products to convey social meanings as much as they believed the overall appearance of a room could perform this role.

6.2.3.3 Conspicuous status consumption of interior products

The home as cultural form may express a household's social status (Yoon *et al.*, 2010:34). Across the sample, $\leq 20\%$ young households acknowledged that they consumed interior goods for the purpose of gaining status and managing impressions. This concedes with their earlier responses, which showed that young households do not buy interior goods primarily for social reasons (which includes status gains and impression management), but that social aspects were of lesser

importance. Those that did consume for status gains were more inclined to do so in the rooms that they devoted the most effort and attention to, than the ones they spent the most money on. Young households that spent the most money, effort and attention on the social zones of their homes, were more prone to status consumption than households who favoured their kitchens or main bedrooms. These findings correspond with the literature, which states that in order for attempts at gaining status to be recognised by others, status must be embodied by something tangible and displayed conspicuously in public areas of the home, namely the social zone or kitchen, rather than in private areas such as the main bedroom (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004:27; Mason, 1981:108).

6.2.3.4 Households’ attention to interior product aesthetics

Young households revealed a high perceived VALUE (Mean = 3.1; Max = 4) for interior products’ appearances in terms of the ability it possesses to enhance their quality of life and well-being and give them pleasure or enjoyment. According to literature, consumers perceive aesthetically pleasing products to perform better at meeting higher order needs than unattractive, non-aesthetical products (Yalch & Brunel, 1996:405). In addition, households considered themselves to have a moderate level of visual ACUMEN (Mean = 2.9; Max = 4), which refers to their ability to recognise good, tasteful designs and evaluate interior products based on their appearance. Interior products’ aesthetic qualities generated a moderately high level of emotional RESPONSE from them (Mean = 3; Max = 4) specifically in the form of a desire to purchase. Consumers demonstrating high overall recognition for visual product aesthetics are likely to purchase an interior product simply for its aesthetic value, despite its other functions or benefits (Bloch *et al.*, 2003:556). Young households’ reference groups or socio-economic status, or another aspect of their culture, may have determined their appreciation of interior product aesthetics (Veryzer, 1995:64).

6.2.4 Differences in interior choices across subcultures (Objective 3)

The third objective of the study was to investigate whether young households’ interior choices, as outlined in objective 1 and 2, differed across different population groups (specifically White and Black) and income groups (all middle to upper income groups according to Tshwane census data).

6.2.4.1 Differences in subcultures' prioritisation of zones

It was expected that households from different cultural backgrounds would demonstrate different purchase patterns and priorities that reflect the social rules and norms they have learned from being socialised into a specific culture (Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007:8; Bechtel in Low & Chambers, 1989:176). No difference was observed between White and Black population groups in the ordering of the zones of their homes, nor amongst the three income groups, in terms of money, effort and attention spent on their interiors. The social zone was the area of the home that most households spent the most money on, followed by the kitchen and then the main bedroom. In terms of most effort and attention devoted, the social zone remained the first priority for most households, regardless of the population or income group they belonged to, however, the order of the kitchen and main bedroom differed.

Literature states that people learn through enculturation how to interpret and use cultural forms in order to distinguish themselves from other culture groups, and that people with a similar history of enculturation will perceive cultural symbols and forms in a similar way (Ferraro, 2001:25; Richins, 1994:506). The assumption was that, if enculturation brings about a similarity within groups, there will consequently be a difference between groups with different histories of enculturation and socialisation. The study confirmed this assumption, as will consequently be explained.

6.2.4.2 Differences in subcultures' motivations for prioritisation of zones

Formulating valid conclusions about the difference between White and Black respondents' motivations for allocating their resources *per zone* in their homes was not possible because of the small number of Black respondents that took part in this investigation and because Black respondents indicated such a large variety of reasons. However, similarities existed in terms of the social zone of their homes; > 60% of both population groups agreed that a combination of social aspects and reasons relating to enjoyment could explain why they allocated most of their resources to the social zones of their homes. Across the sample, a combination of social aspects and reasons relating to enjoyment and appearance (especially enjoyment) most prominently explained the allocation of both population groups' resources.

The findings explained in the following section reflect those of White respondents only. The majority of White respondents offered three symbolic reasons for spending money, effort and attention on the *social zone* of their homes. The first related to their need to express their social status because this area is visible to visitors and therefore provides the ideal opportunity for

appearance management. Appearance management is a conscious process that individuals engage in by changing the appearance of their home's interior in order to manage people's perceptions regarding, for instance, their status (Kaiser, 1997:5, 7; Nasar, 1989:239). The second reason was for personal enjoyment. According to respondents, the social zone is the area in which they spent the most time, and that is why they spent the most money, effort and attention on this area's décor. The third most important reason revealed that respondents wished to express their lifestyle (as part of their identities) by means of their social zone's décor. Cultural forms (e.g. the home or interior objects) can symbolise individuals' lifestyles (Kaiser, 1997:49, 50; McCracken, 1986:72, 79). A person's lifestyle is a reflection of their self-identity and, amongst others, comprises a person's money-spending habits, interests, use of time, opinions, and general way of life (Rengel, 2007:259).

White respondents' *kitchens* were indicated as being visible to visitors, making it a social environment where households can communicate their social status via symbols (i.e. kitchen appliances and décor). Enjoyment was another reason for the majority of White respondents favouring their kitchen when allocating resources to its interior and décor. Respondents enjoyed purchasing new objects for their kitchens, which encouraged them to devote more effort and attention to shopping for this area of their homes. Although utilitarian reasons were generally less prominent, they were more pertinent for the kitchen than for the other areas, possibly because a kitchen is the primary work area in a home, which contains appliances and equipment that serve functional purposes (Nissen *et al.*, 1994:232). It can be concluded that White respondents were mindful of the significant others with whom they wanted to communicate, when spending money and time on the appearance of their kitchens.

White respondents attached social and enjoyment value to their *main bedrooms* by indicating that they spent money on main bedrooms' interiors because they enjoyed spending time there, and thus enjoyed buying new products for it. Secondly, they recognised the opportunity to express their self-identity and lifestyle through the décor of the main bedroom. These reasons were not indicative of households' concern for public consumption of cultural symbols, but rather consumption on a personal level, since only a few respondents indicated the main bedroom as being visible to visitors. Not many respondents wished for their main bedroom to create a good impression about their family. This supports the notion that main bedrooms are considered private zones. This is probably learned as part of a cultural belief system (Nielson & Taylor, 2007:129).

Differences between White and Black population groups could not be observed in terms of the *order* in which resources were allocated to different rooms in their homes, or the most prominent *reasons* relating to the decisions pertaining to each zone. Significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) were,

however, evident in the manner in which White and Black households allocated their resources for each of the *three reason dimensions*, namely Enjoyment and Appearance, Social aspects and Utilitarian purpose. Regardless of which income group they belonged to, Black households spent more money, effort and attention on the interior of their homes than their White counterparts, for reasons pertaining to enjoyment and appearance and social aspects. No significant differences were observed between White and Black households' allocation of resources in the case of a room's utilitarian purpose ($p = 0.0749$). This may be explained in view of the literature, which states that functional meanings of objects are generally public meanings assigned by a larger society, and that these meanings are fairly universal and understood by its members (Richins, 1994:507). This finding also realised for meanings attached to the interior of zones in their homes. In the South African context, enculturation appears to have taken place to such an extent that there is agreement between White and Black population groups in middle and upper income groups⁷, regarding the functional meaning of rooms.

Significant differences could not be confirmed among the three income categories of this sample in terms of social and utilitarian reasons, but indeed in the case of the allocation of *effort* and *attention* to interior planning and décor for enjoyment- and appearance-related reasons ($p = 0.0261$). The upper income category of this sample devoted more effort and attention to the interior of rooms for reasons pertaining to enjoyment and appearance. This supports literature, stating that higher social classes pay more attention to the coordination of their furniture and interior objects than lower social classes would. Lower social class consumers are also more likely than higher social class consumers to buy ready-matched furniture sets, for example bedroom sets including a headboard, bedside tables and a dressing table, whenever they do have a preference for coordinated interiors (Settle & Aldreck, 1996:206). Conversely, in terms of *money spent* for enjoyment- and appearance-related reasons, there was no significant difference observed amongst the income groups, indicating that, although they do spend their money differently (i.e. more money or less on different zones), the difference is not significant ($p = 0.1372$).

Findings pertaining to different income categories' reasons for the allocation of resources to *each zone* in their homes revealed that respondents in the monthly household income category \leq R14 500 spent *money* on the interiors of specific zones in their homes for mostly ENJOYMENT- and APPEARANCE-related reasons. Higher income respondents in the income category $>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000 tended to justify the allocation of their financial resources mostly in terms of SOCIAL reasons. Respondents in the upper income category ($>$ R29 000) confirmed that all the

⁷ This study only involved households in middle and upper income groups in Tshwane.

reasons were strongly relevant in terms of their buying behaviour, although SOCIAL-related aspects were more important.

Findings pertaining to reasons for the allocation of *effort* and *attention* were similar to *money spent* in that respondents in the lower income category (\leq R14 500) and the middle income category ($>$ R14 500 – \leq R29 000) mostly devoted effort and attention to the interiors of specific zones in their homes for SOCIAL reasons. Respondents in the upper income category ($>$ R29 000) once again indicated that all the reasons were relevant in terms of their decisions, although SOCIAL ASPECTS and ENJOYMENT AND APPEARANCE were more prevalent. It is noteworthy that UTILITARIAN reasons were a low priority for as many as 25% of respondents, irrespective of income category. Settle and Aldreck (1986:206) maintain that upper class households are cognisant of the functional *and* symbolic value of furniture, which the findings from this study support for higher income consumers. The findings regarding lower income households, however, do not support Settle and Aldreck's supposition that households in lower social classes value functionality above appearance.

6.2.4.3 Differences in subcultures' prioritisation of interior products

Households were required to allocate percentage-wise an unspecified budget toward the furnishing of the room to which they devoted the most effort and attention. Virtually no difference existed between White and Black respondents in the proportional allocation of the furnishing budget. The largest portion of the budget was allocated to furniture (40%), followed by appliances and technology (White: 25%; Black: 30%), soft furnishings (White: 15%; Black: 17.5%) and the smallest portion to decorative objects (10%). Findings revealed that young households mostly evaluated and bought interior goods for their utilitarian purpose and functional properties, followed by emotional, aesthetic and lastly, social reasons. This suggests that respondents most likely allocated their budgets with the functional purpose of interior products in mind. Functional meanings, as well as emotional (particularly enjoyment) and aesthetic appeal of products, are generally public meanings assigned by a larger society, and they are agreed upon and understood by its members (Richins, 1994:507). It is therefore assumed that a public meaning such as the utilitarian purpose or aesthetic appeal of interior products would not be interpreted differently by members of this common society, despite their differences in race (population group), which explains the similar response from both White and Black respondent groups.

6.2.4.4 *Different subcultures' conspicuous and status consumption of interior products*

In terms of status consumption, both White and Black households who spent the most money on their social zones, were more prone to consume interior goods for status gains and impression management, than those who spent the most on their kitchens or main bedrooms. The main bedroom, especially, held little status potential for both Black and White population groups. This room was indicated as being visible to visitors by only one in 50 White respondents (but one in five Black respondents), suggesting that the main bedroom is considered a private zone. Considering that status consumption should be made visible to others in order to be acknowledged, findings of this study, namely, the main bedroom's lack of status-bearing potential, and social zones' greater status-bearing potential, confirms this phenomenon. Previous research has shown that Black South African households annually spend 50% more on goods for visible (conspicuous) consumption than White households with comparable demographics. However, White households' visible consumption has proved to be a poor reflection of their social status in society, indicating that they may have other means of expressing their position in society, other than through their conspicuously consumed possessions (Kaus, 2010:10, 15).

6.3 THE RESEARCH IN RETROSPECT

6.3.1 Introduction and planning

The research followed a deductive approach, meaning that a thorough investigation of existing literature and theories pertaining to culture and consumption, functional and symbolic meanings of household and interior-related objects, social status and identity portrayal were conducted to guide development of the problem statement and research objectives. The literature review preceded the data collection phase. Relevant, recent literature was either limited or predominantly from first-world countries and did not reflect the current South African (i.e. third-world) context.

After an investigation of the literature, a questionnaire was developed with the assistance of a statistician. It was ensured that all intended concepts were measured correctly and logically; that the wording of questions and items were unambiguous; that questions and items were not leading, yet easy to answer; and that it was grammatically correct. Before subjecting the questionnaire to a pilot study, it was submitted to the ethics committee of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Pretoria for approval. Once approval was granted, a small pilot study (five respondents) was conducted to reveal and eliminate any potential problems, should they

arise, however, none did. Data collection commenced in May 2011 and was concluded in December 2011, with a brief interim period in November.

6.3.2 Implementation of the questionnaire

After the researcher and trained fieldworkers had distributed 350 questionnaires, following a drop-off-collect-later procedure, a total of 277 respondents participated on a voluntary basis by completing the structured, self-administering questionnaire. The questionnaire was introduced by a cover letter that provided the respondent with a brief overview of the study's intention, the academic context in which the findings of the study will be used, and an estimated time it would take to complete the questionnaire. Respondents were also assured of the confidentiality with which their identity and responses would be treated, and that their participation would be voluntary, thus that they could withdraw from the study at any time and without explanation. Respondents were encouraged to read the questions carefully, to give their honest opinion throughout, and to contact the researcher in the case of queries. Respondents were not requested to disclose identifying details on the questionnaire; nonetheless, an envelope accompanied each questionnaire to allow for further anonymity.

The research was descriptive and explorative in nature, thus was not intended to be generalised in terms of its findings, but was only to be regarded as being representative of the specific sample, and to forego further research with a more representative sample depending on the findings. Certain limitations prohibited the inclusion of a larger number of Black respondents, namely: time, financial resources, access to homes, sampling techniques and geographical limitations. This study contributed to a Master's degree, and only a limited timeframe was allowed for its completion, thus placing a time restriction on data collection. The sampling techniques that were used involved the sampling of respondents that were easy to obtain, and purposefully approaching only those that fit the predetermined criteria. Snowball sampling was additionally employed to supplement the sample until a satisfactory sample size was reached (Welman, *et al.*, 2005:69). The researcher and the majority of fieldworkers had limited contact with members from the Black population group and would have had to go to inconvenient lengths (which included financial repercussions) to recruit more Black respondents beyond the 54 that were eventually obtained. As another matter of convenience, sampling was limited to the Tshwane region of Gauteng, but the inclusion of other geographic areas as sampling ground would probably have led to an increased number of Black respondents.

6.3.3 Data analysis and conclusions

At the conclusion of data collection, the researcher coded the questionnaires and checked the captured data herself to ensure the accuracy of the data before analysis commenced. To ensure interrater reliability, a trained assistant (fellow Master's student) aided in the coding process of the qualitative question (Welman *et al.*, 2005:147). Any differences resulting from this process were discussed, checked against the literature and re-categorised, once an agreement was reached. During data analysis, Cronbach's Alphas were calculated to confirm the internal consistency of the measurement scales that were used in the questionnaire. Statistical procedures included Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), factor analysis and post hoc tests, specifically Tukey's (HSD) test, to distinguish significant differences among subsets of the sample. The data was interpreted with the aid of a statistician to ensure that the correct conclusions were drawn from the results. Results that emerged from data analysis were visually presented in tables and graphs. Research objectives were met to the satisfaction of the researcher and no unforeseen problems occurred during the research period.

6.3.4 Conceptual framework reassessed

Reassessment of the conceptual framework that guided the study provides insight into how the objectives of the study were met. It was proposed that consumers (i.e. households) are influenced on a daily basis by what they have learned from the subcultures they belong to, namely, culture-specific values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. They use their shared cultural knowledge as a frame of reference for their own actions and interactions within a social environment, for example, the home. This translates into culture being an expected predictor of people's choice of social symbols or cultural forms (i.e. interior goods) and the associated expenditure of resources. Their financial resources (i.e. money) and physical resources (i.e. effort and attention) are allocated from a predetermined budget to specific zones in the home (whether social or private), or toward specific interior product categories, namely furniture, appliances and technology, soft furnishings and decorative objects.

The social zone was first priority for all three income groups. Findings relating to *population groups* indicated that no difference existed between White and Black households' prioritisation of zones or interior product categories. Both population groups allocated their resources mostly to the social zones, then the kitchen and then the main bedroom. They spent the most money on furniture, followed by appliances and technology, soft furnishings, and least of all, decorative objects.

Findings indicated that differences in *income level* did not predict households' preferred zone either.

The way that households use their homes and the objects in them, as well as the meanings and values they attach to rooms and objects, originate from their learned cultural frame of reference (Rechavi, 2009:142; Gunter, 2000:99-103). Literature and factor analysis identified a third dimension of interior products, namely aesthetic-related utility, in addition to the functional and symbolic dimensions explained by Del Río *et al.* (2001:454). Based on this, households' reasons (motivations) were classified as functional (i.e. utilitarian), symbolic (i.e. social aspects regarding identity, interpersonal ties or status) or aesthetic (i.e. concerning enjoyment and appearance). Findings determined that, although the enjoyment and appearance-related value of zones came more strongly to mind when young households deliberated their finances, social aspects were attended to more often in consideration of both financial and physical resource allocation. The utilitarian purpose of a room was indeed the least important concern, yet was still considered. Households preferred basing their interior product purchases firstly on the product's utilitarian attributes, e.g. quality, then its ability to evoke positive emotions, e.g. enjoyment, followed by its aesthetic appeal and lastly its social meanings of conveying status and identity.

Objective 3 aimed to discover whether young households' idioculture determined which type of reasons most prevalently guided their purchase decisions. Findings indicated that difference in *income* did not reflect a significant difference in young households' motivations for the way they allocated their resources. One exception was the allocation of physical resources for aesthetic reasons: households in the upper income group devoted more effort and attention to the appearance and emotional value of their interiors than lower income households. Overall and across the sample, social aspects were most prominent in determining which areas of the home should receive the most money, effort and attention. Although the two different population subcultures agreed on the order of prioritising rooms, there were significant differences between the population groups' tendencies to allocate their resources to a room for a specific reason. Black respondents were more likely than their White financial counterparts to allocate their resources for symbolic and aesthetic reasons. However, there was no significant difference in their likelihood of allocating their resources for functional reasons.

In summary: Households revealed a focus on symbolic and aesthetic reasons, with a room's functional purpose fulfilling a subordinate role when designing its interior. An interior object's utilitarian qualities were the most important evaluation criterion, with social qualities of an interior object being the least valued or recognised. Black households, irrespective of their income, were

more concerned with symbolic and aesthetic purposes of rooms than White households, but the utilitarian purpose of a room had equal importance for both population groups.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited in several ways. Firstly, there was limited availability of *recent* literature about consumers' allocation of resources in their homes, the meanings young households attach to their homes, and the effect of culture on interior goods consumption. This study will contribute to the current literature in these and other areas. Furthermore, available supporting literature mostly originates from the United States of America and the United Kingdom, and is therefore based on empirical research conducted in developed economies. Research from these countries cannot be applied directly to the South African context – a third-world, developing country – without caution, especially when findings refer to cultural and economic behaviour.

The most important limitation lies in the paucity of Black respondents, which prevented conclusions to be made regarding Black households' motivations for allocating their resources to specific zones. Too few Black respondents were recruited, since it was an explorative and descriptive study, using non-probability sampling techniques, namely, convenience, purposive criterion, and snowball sampling. Respondents were sampled if they met all three of the prerequisites for participation, which were age, geographic location and home occupancy status, but also based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. The researcher and fieldworkers could not conveniently sample a large enough representation of Black respondents that met the prerequisites for participation, and that were willing to be part of the study. After the projected six months for data collection elapsed, an additional month of data collection was added in a final attempt to increase the numbers, with some success. An additional 19 respondents were recruited. Unfortunately, with Black households ultimately only comprising 19.5% of the total sample, valid conclusions could not be drawn in all instances regarding Black households' allocation of resources to their home interiors, in particular to the kitchen and main bedroom.

Due to this research project contributing to the completion of a master's degree, a time constraint was placed on the data collection phase. More Black respondents could potentially be included if there had been more time available for data collection. Similarly, if the sampling field was expanded to include neighbouring cities, such as Johannesburg, the sample frame could have increased substantially. This was not considered, however, due to households in Johannesburg's presumably different approach to resource allocation in terms of their home interiors, as a result of

cultural values and social backgrounds being expectedly different to those of households in Tshwane.

A possible detraction from the findings may be due to the occurrence of response bias, in particular social desirability bias. In the case of potentially sensitive or personal topics that may negatively affect a person's social image, respondents may consciously or unconsciously give responses that are considered more socially acceptable or more prestigious. For this reason respondents may, for instance, provide inaccurate details regarding their income and education level (Zikmund & Babin, 2007:132). This study contained a scale with candid questions regarding households' predilection for status consumption and impression management, which in some subcultures may not be socially acceptable behaviour. However, when status-related questions were presented in a scale with other unrelated items, both Black and White respondents revealed a need to communicate their social status. White respondents may have been guilty of social desirability bias if they concealed their true preferences for status consumption because they were ashamed of it. All effort was made to avoid social desirability bias by ensuring respondents of their anonymity during the entire process. Other forms of response biases that may also have detracted from the value of the data are acquiescence bias (i.e. a tendency to agree to the majority of questions) and extremity bias (i.e. the tendency to respond mostly with extremities), which researchers are unfortunately unable to prevent (Zikmund & Babin, 2007:131).

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Possibilities for further research were identified during the research process, the first being that a larger, more representative sample could be involved, especially in terms of Black, Coloured and Indian respondents. This will allow for a better comparison between, and thus an improved understanding of, households from different population groups regarding the allocation of resources toward the décor of their homes. Additionally, a more sufficient comparison could be drawn between these different population groups concerning the reasons they provide for the allocation of their resources toward specific zones and specific interior product categories in their homes. As is, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to a greater population. Secondly, the study could also be conducted in other geographic areas of South Africa, since results may differ.

In addition, future studies that incorporate more respondents from different population groups could specifically explore the link between the individualist or collectivist dimensions of culture and consumers' buying behaviour in the interior goods market.

Besides exploring the behaviour of income groups and population groups as subcultures, the effect of other demographic characteristics as descriptors of subculture could be explored in terms of their perceptions of the utilitarian, symbolic and aesthetic value of their homes. For instance, young households that are still upwardly mobile and at the beginning of the family lifecycle, could be compared with older, more settled households, which form part of a different subculture. In future research, findings could also be presented by education level, together with income level, as components of socio-economic status, which is determinant of purchase behaviour, and which may reveal significant differences in the manner that resources are allocated and justified by households. Level of education was used in this study only to give a more detailed description of the characteristics of the sample, but could be incorporated as a researchable variable in future research.

It is also recommended that a predominantly qualitative study be conducted, involving depth interviews and focus groups. The exploration of symbolic motivations for social behaviour, such as the purchase of household durables to be used as communication symbols, calls for a qualitative, exploratory study, due to the complexity of this type of consumer durable, the decision-making process and the deliberation involved when designing a home's interior. Such a study could benefit from the probing interviewing style that focus groups and depth interviews allow.

6.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study provided empirical evidence that can be useful to retailers, buyers and forecasters in the household furniture, appliances and equipment trade sector, as well as in consumer facilitation. Interesting tendencies in the marketplace were revealed that can be explored in subsequent research. A distinct difference arose in the manner in which White and Black consumers motivate the prioritisation of the zones in their homes: White respondents managed to indicate agreement to only a limited number of reasons for each zone, whereas Black respondents indicated agreement to a multitude of reasons, suggesting that they are either indecisive, less sure of, or not as focused in their prioritisation.

The Black population group may therefore require more guidance in a retail context. South African retailers must be aware of this because Black consumers will in future exhibit even larger spending power in the South African consumer market. There was agreement between the population groups regarding the prioritisation of zones as well as interior objects, but not regarding the reasons for their behaviour in terms of the different zones in their homes. Income, as predictor of spending power, has not revealed any distinct differences in the prioritisation of zones, neither in

the justification thereof. It was clear that the social zones in their homes were generally regarded as most important, and that interior products should firstly be functional. It therefore appears as if interior products that are not functional may assume ‘white elephant’ status and lead to noticeable losses in retail.

There were, however, significant differences in the reasons provided by population groups in terms of expenditure of resources for the interior of their homes. Black respondents, irrespective of their income, allocated significantly more resources for social purposes and purposes relating to enjoyment and appearance than White respondents, which confirms the increased importance of Black consumers in South Africa’s interior goods retail market in future. There was no significant difference in the allocation of White and Black population groups’ resources for utilitarian purposes, which confirms the need for retailers to ensure that interior products are not only interesting, unique or trendy, but also practical or functional. The implication for retail lies in the conclusion that White and Black consumers in South Africa should be marketed to in the same manner, regardless of their spending power, because they have the same purchase motivations in terms of interior goods for their homes. This may imply that, in future, Black consumers would increasingly patronise retail outlets of status, purchasing and demanding interior products that signify status, identity-expression or interpersonal ties, and have aesthetic appeal.

The present study substantiated the fact that households between 25 and 39 years old spent more money, effort and attention on the interior of the *social zones* of their homes, and that the *utilitarian* purposes of rooms were subordinate to social motivations or aspects pertaining to enjoyment and aesthetic appearance. Conversely, young households seemed not to value the possibility of individual interior objects acting as social symbols that communicate status or identity, as much as they perceived it possible from a room’s appearance as a whole. In other words, retailers or visual merchandisers who display interior products as part of ‘rooms’ that incorporate all the elements depicting the functionality, atmosphere and, aesthetics of a room, rather than as individual pieces scattered across a store, may find that consumers, especially Black consumers, are tempted to purchase the entire arrangement on display or at least larger parts of the display. This information will enable retailers to purposefully design their marketing mix and better forecast the demand for different interior product categories for different consumer groups. The findings also contribute to the existing literature, which is dated and limited regarding households’ acquisition of interior durables, as well as the functional, symbolic and aesthetic motivations that guide households’ allocation of resources towards different zones and interior product categories in their homes.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE



**Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Consumer Science**

012 420 2531

May 2011

RESEARCH PROJECT: ATTENTION TO INTERIOR PURCHASES FOR YOUR HOME

Dear respondent,

The intention with this research is to gain some insight into how young households approach and prioritise the interior purchases for their home. The questionnaire forms part of the dissertation for my Master's degree in Consumer Science. Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. **All information will be treated as confidential and the identity of the respondent will not be disclosed.** Respondents may, however, provide their contact details voluntarily on the tear-off slip provided to be entered into a lucky draw to win a Menlyn Park Shopping Centre gift voucher to the value of R500. The winner will be notified telephonically by the end of the data collection phase in January. Participants may withdraw themselves from the study, without explanation, at any time if they wish to do so.

Please read the questions carefully and give your honest opinion throughout.

Thank you for your participation!

For any further enquiries, please contact me via phone or email.



Christine Swanepoel

Student: M Consumer Science Interior Merchandise Management

072 252 3924 / christine.swanepoel@up.ac.za



Study Leader: Prof Alet C Erasmus

✂-----

Cell number:

Questionnaire: JUSTIFYING AND PRIORITISING INTERIOR PURCHASES FOR YOUR HOME

Respondent number	V0	
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PLEASE ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS by circling the most appropriate option from those listed, or by filling in the blank (shaded) spaces as requested. Your honest opinion will be appreciated. **ALL INFORMATION WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.**

SECTION A: PLEASE TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOURSELF										For office use only		
1. What is your age?							Years		A1			
2. Please indicate your marital status:												
Single / Divorced / Separated / Widowed								1	A2			
Married / Living with a partner								2				
3. Do you OWN or RENT your current residence?					Own		1	Rent		2	A3	
4. Please indicate to which racial category you belong:												
White	1	Black	2	Coloured	3	Indian	4	Other: Specify				A4
5. Please indicate the HIGHEST level of education that you have completed:												
Less than Grade 12								1	A5			
Grade 12								2				
Post matric certificate / diploma								3				
University degree								4				
Post graduate degree / diploma								5				
6. Roughly indicate your HOUSEHOLD's average monthly COMBINED income:					R				A6			
PLEASE NOTE AGAIN THAT ALL PERSONAL INFORMATION WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL AND CAN IN NO WAY WHATSOEVER BE LINKED TO SPECIFIC RESPONDENTS												

SECTION B: PRIORITISING ZONES IN THE HOME										For office use only			
Question 1:													
Identify from the list below the FOUR areas in your home that you have spent the most MONEY on in terms of its interior decoration and to furnish it. THEN, number the areas from 1 to 4 in descending order, with 1 being the MOST money spent.													
Example: Entrance hall								2					
A	Lounge/s									B1.1			
B	Dining area									B1.2			
C	Open plan lounge and dining area									B1.3			
D	Kitchen area									B1.4			
E	Bedroom (main)												
F	Bedroom (children)												
G	Bedroom (guest)												
H	Bathroom (main)												
J	Bathrooms (guest, family)												
K	Patio / outdoor entertainment area												
L	Study / home office												
M	Other: please specify...												

Question 2: With reference to your FIRST choice indicated in QUESTION 1 , please indicate to what extent you <i>agree</i> or <i>disagree</i> with the statements below.	Definitely Agree	Probably	Unlikely	Definitely Disagree	For office use only	
<i>I have spent the MOST MONEY on this area of my home because....</i>						
1. This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it.	4	3	2	1	B2.1	
2. This area is visible to visitors that come to my home.	4	3	2	1	B2.2	
3. If I purchase beautiful things, I would like to place them where others will notice them.	4	3	2	1	B2.3	
4. This area should reflect my lifestyle.	4	3	2	1	B2.4	
5. This area should create a good impression about our family.	4	3	2	1	B2.5	
6. This area should reflect my identity.	4	3	2	1	B2.6	
7. The items used in this area are generally more expensive than items for other areas.	4	3	2	1	B2.7	
8. This area is special to me and my family.	4	3	2	1	B2.8	
9. I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable before moving in.	4	3	2	1	B6.9	
10. Several items were needed before we could utilise this area for its intended purpose.	4	3	2	1	B2.10	
11. Stores offer a large variety of products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area.	4	3	2	1	B2.11	
12. Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably spend more money on interior goods for this area.	4	3	2	1	B2.12	
13. I find it exciting/ enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area.	4	3	2	1	B2.13	
14. Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to spend more on this area.	4	3	2	1	B2.14	
15. Other: (please specify)	4	3	2	1	B2.15	

Question 3: With regard to ALL the statements where you circled 4 in QUESTION 2 , i.e. ALL statements with which you DEFINITELY AGREED , explain in at least 20 words why these reasons are important to you.	For office use only	
Example: <i>I spend a lot of time in my home gym and take pleasure in knowing I bought the best equipment I could afford.</i>		
	B3.1	
	B3.2	
	B3.3	

Question 4: Now, look at the list in QUESTION 1 again and indicate which THREE areas in your home you probably neglected in order to furnish the areas that you previously identified in QUESTION 1 . You may use the provided codes (A, B, C, D, E etc.) to indicate the areas.	For office use only	
Example: Most neglected	D	or Kitchen area
1. Most neglected		B4.1
2. Slightly less neglected than 1.		B4.2
3. Slightly less neglected than 2.		B4.3

Question 5: Similar to QUESTION 1 , NOW identify from the list below the FOUR areas in your home that you have devoted <u>the most ATTENTION and EFFORT</u> to in terms of finding the right interior items to decorate and furnish them to your liking. THEN <u>number the areas from 1 to 4</u> , in descending order, with 1 being the MOST attention/effort devoted.			For office use only	
Example: Entrance hall		2		
A	Lounge/s		B5.1	
B	Dining area		B5.2	
C	Open plan lounge and dining area		B5.3	
D	Kitchen area		B5.4	
E	Bedroom (main)			
F	Bedroom (children)			
G	Bedroom (guest)			
H	Bathroom (main)			
J	Bathrooms (guest, family)			
K	Patio / outdoor entertainment area			
L	Study / home office			
M	Other: please specify...			

Question 6: With reference to your FIRST choice in QUESTION 5 , please indicate to what extent you <i>agree</i> or <i>disagree</i> with the statements below.	Definitely Agree	Probably	Unlikely	Definitely Disagree	For office use only	
<i>I have devoted the MOST ATTENTION to this area of my home because....</i>						
1. This is the area where I spend most of my time, thus I want to enjoy it.	4	3	2	1	B6.1	
2. This area is visible to visitors that come to my home.	4	3	2	1	B6.2	
3. If I purchase beautiful things, I would like others to notice them.	4	3	2	1	B6.3	
4. This area should reflect my lifestyle.	4	3	2	1	B6.4	
5. This area should create a good impression about our family.	4	3	2	1	B6.5	
6. This area should reflect my identity.	4	3	2	1	B6.6	
7. The items used in this area are generally complicated/time-consuming to buy.	4	3	2	1	B6.7	
8. This area is special to me and my family.	4	3	2	1	B6.8	
9. I needed more items for this particular area than for any other area because I did not own or receive anything suitable before moving in.	4	3	2	1	B6.9	
10. Several items were needed before we could utilise this area for its intended purpose.	4	3	2	1	B6.10	
11. Stores offer a large variety of products for this area, which encourages my interest and the attention that I devote to this area.	4	3	2	1	B6.11	
12. Interior trends are reflected best in this area, therefore I inevitably devote more attention to interior goods for this area.	4	3	2	1	B6.12	
13. I find it exciting /enjoyable to purchase new objects for this area.	4	3	2	1	B6.13	
14. Stores offer many beautiful products for this area, which encourages me to devote more attention to this area.	4	3	2	1	B6.14	
15. Other: (please specify)	4	3	2	1	B6.15	

Please turn to next page

Question 7: With regard to ALL the statements where you circled 4 in QUESTION 6 , i.e. ALL statements with which you DEFINITELY AGREED , explain <u>in at least 20 words</u> why these reasons are important to you.		For office use only	
Example: <i>I had to find the perfect leather armchairs and soft carpet for my home movie theatre because I wanted it to be comfortable and luxurious, just like a real theatre.</i>			
		B7.1	
		B7.2	
		B7.3	

Question 8: Now, look at the list in QUESTION 5 on page 3 again and indicate which THREE areas in your home you probably <u>neglected</u> <i>in terms of attention and effort</i> in order to furnish the four you indicated in QUESTION 5 . You may once again use the relevant codes (A, B, C, D, E etc.) to specify the areas.		For office use only	
Example: Most neglected	D or <i>Kitchen area</i>		
1. Most neglected		B8.1	
2. Slightly less neglected than 1.		B8.2	
3. Slightly less neglected than 2.		B8.3	

SECTION C: PRIORITISING INTERIOR OBJECTS IN THE HOME Imagine that the room you identified as your FIRST choice in QUESTION 5 on page 3 has been damaged by a flood or a fire and you can now spend the money that was paid out by your insurance company. Please indicate proportionally <u>in percentages (%)</u> how you would allocate the money in terms of the following product categories. <i>The total should add up to 100%.</i>			For office use only	
Interior product category	Examples of interior products in category	Percentage		
1. Furniture	(e.g. beds, tables, couches, bookshelves, piano, etc.)		C1	
2. Soft furnishings	(e.g. curtains, blinds, scatter cushions, rugs, bed linen, etc.)		C2	
3. Appliances and technology	(e.g. fridge, laundry appliances, microwave oven, television, sound system, etc.)		C3	
4. Decorative objects	e.g. any artworks, photo frames, vases, ornaments, mirrors, indoor plants, lamps, etc.)		C4	
TOTAL		100%		

Please turn to next page

SECTION D: SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS When selecting interior goods for the revamping process that was mentioned in the previous question, indicate to what extent you <i>agree</i> or <i>disagree</i> with the following statements regarding the purchasing of interior goods. (<i>Interior goods refer to ALL furniture, soft furnishings, appliances and technology, as well as decorative interior objects</i>)	Definitely Agree	Probably	Unlikely	Definitely Disagree	For office use only	
1. I will buy an interior product (for example a specific type or design or specific brand) because it has status, even if there are others that I prefer.	4	3	2	1	D1	
2. I am interested in the latest interior products with status.	4	3	2	1	D2	
3. I would be willing to pay more for an interior product that has status.	4	3	2	1	D3	
4. The status of an interior product is important to me.	4	3	2	1	D4	
5. An interior product has more value to me if it impresses others.	4	3	2	1	D5	

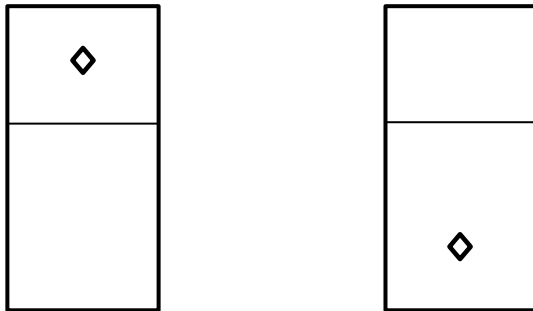
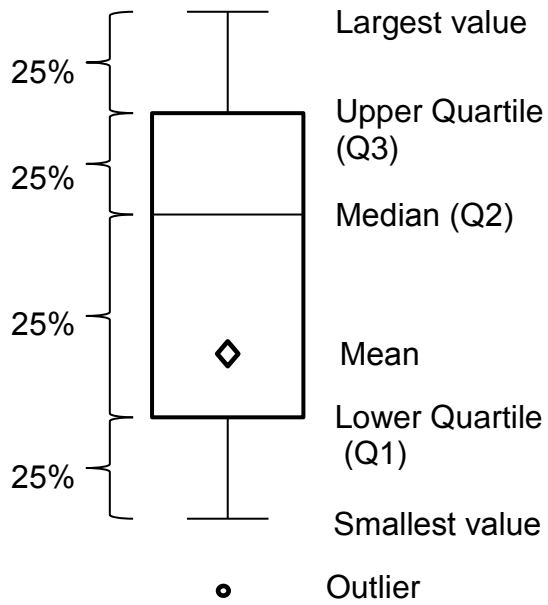
SECTION E: INTERIOR PURCHASE PREFERENCES Still considering the room that was your FIRST choice in QUESTION 5 on page 3 , indicate to what extent you <i>agree</i> or <i>disagree</i> with the following statements regarding your preference of interior goods: <i>For this area in my home, I prefer to buy INTERIOR PRODUCTS...</i>	Definitely Agree	Probably	Unlikely	Definitely Disagree	For office use only	
1. that will last a long time	4	3	2	1	E1	
2. that I will enjoy using	4	3	2	1	E2	
3. that are reasonably priced	4	3	2	1	E3	
4. that will help me feel acceptable	4	3	2	1	E4	
5. that are reliable	4	3	2	1	E5	
6. that are beautiful	4	3	2	1	E6	
7. that will make a good impression on others (e.g. friends, visitors, etc.)	4	3	2	1	E7	
8. that will be good value for money	4	3	2	1	E8	
9. that will give me pleasure	4	3	2	1	E9	
10. that are expensive	4	3	2	1	E10	
11. that I will enjoy looking at	4	3	2	1	E11	
12. that will improve the way I am perceived by others (e.g. friends, visitors, etc.)	4	3	2	1	E12	
13. that will make me feel good	4	3	2	1	E13	
14. that are of good quality	4	3	2	1	E14	
15. that match the other items in the room in terms of appearance/style	4	3	2	1	E15	
16. that are valuable	4	3	2	1	E16	
17. that are different	4	3	2	1	E17	
18. that are fashionable/trendy	4	3	2	1	E18	
19. that are designed to look good	4	3	2	1	E19	
20. that are comfortable	4	3	2	1	E20	

SECTION F: AESTHETICS Please indicate to what extent you <i>agree</i> or <i>disagree</i> with the following statements regarding the physical appearance and design of interior goods:	Definitely Agree	Probably	Unlikely	Definitely Disagree	For office use only	
1. Owning interior products that have superior designs makes me feel good about myself.	4	3	2	1	F1	
2. I enjoy seeing displays of interior products that have superior designs.	4	3	2	1	F2	
3. An interior product's design is a source of pleasure for me.	4	3	2	1	F3	
4. Beautiful interior product designs make our homes better places to live in.	4	3	2	1	F4	
5. Being able to see subtle differences in interior product designs is a skill that I have developed over time.	4	3	2	1	F5	
6. I see things in an interior product's design that other people tend to miss.	4	3	2	1	F6	
7. I have the ability to imagine how an interior product will fit in with designs of other interior items I already own.	4	3	2	1	F7	
8. I have a good idea of what makes one interior product look better than its competitors.	4	3	2	1	F8	
9. Sometimes the way an interior product looks seems to reach out and grab me.	4	3	2	1	F9	
10. If an interior product's design really 'speaks' to me, I feel that I must buy it.	4	3	2	1	F10	
11. When I see an interior product that has a really great design, I feel a strong urge to buy it.	4	3	2	1	F11	

Thank you for your time



APPENDIX B: BOX PLOTS



Data skewed to the left Data skewed to the right