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Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

The role of informational cues in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making

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Dissertation

Masters in Consumer Science

April 2014

The role of informational cues in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making

By

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for a Master's degree in Consumer Science

In the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Science

Department of Consumer Science

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University of Pretoria

2014

Declaration

I, Ruth Kawira Njagi, hereby declare that the dissertation hereby submitted by me is my own work for a Master's degree in Consumer Science at the University of Pretoria, and has not been previously submitted for a degree at this university or any other university.

Ruth Kawira Njagi

Dedication

I hereby dedicate this dissertation to my daughter **Hayley Kendi**, mini-me who allows me to be away for studies and inspires progress when she says “mommy, work smart and not too hard”; my mom, **Dr. Kageni Njagi**, who still sees the best in me; my dad **Prof Jackin Nanua**, who invested in my education and could not wait for me to complete this study; my siblings **Miriam, Jeff, John and Mercy** and my nephews **David and Nathaniel**, who call to make sure I am still pushing on.

Acknowledgement

I thank God the Father with whom all things are possible "...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfector of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:1-2). I owe my deepest appreciation to numerous people without whom this dissertation would not have been possible.

- Kindest, warmest thanks to my supervisor and mentor, Dr Arda Retief, for her patience, dedication, motivation, and guidance throughout the struggle to see the dissertation through.
- Sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor De Klerk, who guided my study through constructive feedback and advice.
- To my family for providing spiritual, emotional, and financial support when my academic hope seemed bleak
- My sincere appreciation to my research consultant, Jacqui Sommerville, who went above and beyond to give advice, direction, and meaning to the data, and to Ms Fransonet Reyneke for her dedication to the analysis and interpretation of the data. Your expertise is highly regarded.
- Appreciation to my peer reviewer, Dr June Serem for motivating me by staying up with me till late as I worked and for waking me up at ungodly hours to type
- To my friends and colleagues for helping with data collection
- Thanks to the University of Pretoria for the opportunity to study and for the research bursary to collect data
- And finally to all the staff members at the Department of Consumer Science, University of Pretoria, for sharing their wealth of knowledge and for their support throughout my four years of study.

Abstract

The role of informational cues in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making

By

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Degree: **Masters in Consumer Science: Clothing Management**

Apparel purchase is an everyday decision process for consumers and the decision is motivated by various consumer needs. As an important aspect in the study of consumer behaviour, the link between South African young adult male consumers' perception of apparel quality, use of informational cues, and apparel evaluation criteria needs to be established. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the role of intrinsic and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making.

The quantitative research approach involved a structured questionnaire with Likert-type four-point scales to measure the importance of informational cues in the quality assessment of smart casual wear. This study involved a non-probability purposive sample of 330 young adult males between the ages of 24 and 36 living in Pretoria and Johannesburg, Gauteng. The study included purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Descriptive analyses were used to determine the importance of apparel features in the assessment of apparel. Correlation analyses were conducted to explore relationships among the quality dimensions. Lastly, exploratory analyses were done to measure the interaction of demographics and shopping behaviour with the importance of apparel quality dimensions.

Results showed that South African young adult male consumers rank comfort most important in their quality assessment criteria, next to durability, in assessment of smart casual apparel. The country where garments are manufactured or assembled is the least important to the young adult South African males. The strongest relationship among the various apparel dimensions existed between extrinsic features and aesthetic

performance. The weakest relationship, although positively significant, existed between the extrinsic features and functional performance. This suggests that to some extent, male apparel consumers form links between apparel features as each feature to some extent influences the importance placed on other apparel quality features.

Furthermore, findings suggest that male consumers differ in their apparel assessment criteria based on how much money they have for apparel, and that income is an important socio-economic variable in apparel purchase decision-making. Most of these male consumers, although not experts in the field of apparel quality, considered it important to assess apparel for perceived quality during the pre-purchase phase of consumer decision-making. In all, informational cues, although varying in importance, play a role in the young adult male's quality assessment of smart casual wear.

Keywords: *gender; apparel quality; consumer decision-making; evaluative criteria; functional performance; aesthetic performance; formal features; extrinsic features; image variables*

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Chapter One

THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Quality is a very subjective issue (Brown & Rice, 2014:75-80; Kadolph, 1998:13; Scheller & Kunz, 1998) and it is only possible to truly measure quality and satisfaction with quality after the interaction between the product and the user. Although greatly researched, the topic of clothing quality and the criteria used to assess quality remains important in the field of apparel manufacture and retail marketing, more so since consumers prefer high quality items (Dickson, Lennon, Montalto, Shen & Zhang, 2004). Quality in production is aimed at achieving acceptable measures for all dimensions of quality and getting it right the first time. The producer perspective suggests that a quality product should meet acceptable measures for all dimensions of quality, consistently meeting pre-determined quality evaluative criteria during production (Brown & Rice, 2014:75-80; Kadolph, 1998:11-40). The product based approach considers quality as a measureable quantity of an attribute that a product possesses. The value based approach suggests that a product's value is a measure of its worth once it conforms to specifications at an acceptable cost for both the producer and consumer. From the consumer perspective, apparel product quality depends on desirable characteristics of importance to the user, defining quality according to fitness for use. Quality is defined according to the individual consumer's satisfaction with apparel characteristics (Brown & Rice, 2014:77-80). The features and attributes of a product that a consumer perceives as beneficial in a product, which they then use as standards for assessment, determine the fitness for use concept. Consumers use informational cues during decision-making to help make judgements of the quality of apparel. Apparel informational cues include the intrinsic features, which are the formal features of the garment such as design, construction, materials, and finishes, and the extrinsic cues which include brand name, price, country of origin, and the store image. These informational cues are attributes that are visible to the consumer, and readily accessible through physical interaction with the garment, garment labels and information from others.

Apparel purchase is an everyday decision process for consumers and the decision is motivated by various apparel needs. Kaiser (1998:14-17) and Craig (1968:2-3) provide four theories on people's motivation to wear clothing: the modesty theory suggests that clothing is used to conceal parts of the body; the protection theory suggests that clothes protect the human body from outside elements; the adornment theory suggests that clothes are decorative in nature and are used for display, identity, expression, and attraction among others; and the immodesty theory suggests that clothes are used for sexual attraction. The consumer decision-making process involves identifying a consumption problem, searching for information to aide in decision-making and to help reduce perceived risk, and evaluating the final set of alternatives leading to an economic choice or informed purchase decision (Kotler & Keller, 2009:99; Solomon, 1996:268-269). Therefore, in apparel consumption, decisions on what to buy depend on the consumer's motivation and apparel information obtained, and the decision on what to consume requires the most thorough scrutiny of informational cues. A consumer's perception of apparel quality and informational cues is an important factor in the consumer's pre-purchase behaviour and a determinant in clothing purchase decision (Chaudhuri, 2006:1-4; Swinker & Hines, 2006). These perceptions of quality may vary among different genders. Clothing has been used for many purposes which include supporting the wellbeing of society through the maintenance of traditional gender roles, and expected social behaviour (Craik, 2004:70-91; Marshall, Jackson, Stanley, Kefgen & Touchie-Specht, 2004:82-86; Kaiser, 1998:65-87). Gender in this case refers to biological differences between males and females. Gender is important in the social psychology of clothing as gender images and social meanings are expressed and shaped by clothes (Kaiser, 1998:65-67).

In the past consumer behaviour research on clothing quality evaluative criteria has mostly been inclined on the female consumer and her perceptions of apparel quality (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012; Hsu & Burns, 2002; Gong, Li, Wu, & Zhang, 2002; Hines & Swinker, 2001; Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Lee & Burns, 1993; Heisy, 1991). Male and female consumers tend to have different orientations in their consumptions patterns and behaviour (Heglesen & Nessel, 2010; Noble, Griffith & Adjei, 2006; Homburg & Giering, 2001). In relation to males, studies have been inclined on describing their shopping behaviours (Kuruvilla, Joshi, & Shah, 2009; Du Preez, Visser & Zietsman, 2007; Otnes & McGrath, 2001; Seo, Hathcote, & Sweaney, 2001), decision-making styles (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2004), their clothing attitudes in relation to body images (Lennon, Rudd, Sloan, & Kim, 1999), their shopping orientations and perceptions of single dimensions of clothing quality, such as brand (Shim, Kotsiopulos, & Knoll, 1991; Behling & Witch, 1988), and store attributes (Hassan, Muhammad & Bakar, 2010; Torres, Summers & Belleau, 2001). The time and effort spent in the selection of clothing is higher for younger adult males than for older adult males, as they seem to

use both image and performance cues when making decisions (Seo *et al.*, 2001; Kinley, Conrad & Brown, 2000). Chen-Yu and Hong (2002) found that perceived performance at purchase and expected future performance are significantly related to satisfaction with the product at purchase. They also determined that for male consumers, perceived performance satisfaction increased their purchase intentions and made the male consumers more willing to pay a significantly higher price for the item.

1.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Consumers' perception of quality is multidimensional (Swinker & Hines, 2006; Hines & O'Neal, 1995), meaning that consumers assess apparel on multiple garment information cues. The problem this study will address is the role of multiple informational cues in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during apparel purchase decision-making. Published research on South African male consumers' perception of apparel quality is limited. As an important aspect in the study of consumer behaviour from a male perspective, the link between South African young adult male consumers' perception of quality apparel, use of multiple informational cues, and evaluation criteria needs to be established. This could provide valuable information to assist retailers and manufacturers in meeting young male consumers' expectations and ensuring consumer satisfaction. As male consumers become more and more involved in the purchase of merchandise (Seo *et al.*, 2001), the need to understand the role of intrinsic formal apparel features and extrinsic features as cues in their assessment of apparel quality increases. Textile experts may argue that apparel consumers are unable to determine product quality without knowledge on how to determine acceptable tensile strength of threads used, know the fastness of dyes, distinguish among natural and synthetic fabrics and their properties, and determine performance before purchase. Research concurs that consumers do not have the knowledge on intrinsic formal features to form perceptions or predict the actual quality of apparel and therefore often rely on extrinsic features as cues of quality (Brown & Rice, 2014:70; Dick, Jain, & Richardson, 1997). However, to date, there is no known study of this kind in South Africa. In order to understand what role intrinsic and extrinsic features play as cues for quality assessment in the purchase decision-making, the study first aimed to determine the importance of functional performance and aesthetic performance in the young male's quality evaluation of apparel; and secondly, to determine his use of intrinsic formal features and extrinsic features as cues in the evaluation of functional performance and aesthetic performance of the clothing product. Aesthetic and functional performance, although part of post purchase assessment, are factors that affect pre-purchase assessment. Understanding the importance of

these performance features in defining quality is necessary in gauging young adult male consumers' perception of quality apparel.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The study on male consumers' use of extrinsic cues in the pre purchase evaluation of apparel has both practical and theoretical significance. Results of this study could assist manufacturers and retailers in providing appropriate information sources that could assist the male consumer in the evaluation of the quality of his smart casual wear when purchasing the clothes. The results of this study could also help scholars enhance theory on quality assessment models from the male perspective, as well as a South African perspective and be used in conjunction with other similar studies to compare male consumers' clothing quality evaluative criteria from a global perspective. The assessment of apparel quality before purchase is a crucial step in the decision-making process and understanding how young adult male apparel consumers perceive apparel quality and use the informational cues as indicators of quality is relevant in understanding their purchase decision-making.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the role of intrinsic and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making.

The main objective of this study is to explore and describe the importance of informational cues in young adult males' assessment of perceived quality of smart casual wear.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explore and describe the importance of intrinsic formal features and extrinsic features in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.

    1.1 To explore and describe the importance of intrinsic formal features (design, construction, materials and finishes) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.
    1.2 To explore and describe the importance of extrinsic features (brand name/label, store image, country of origin and price) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.

2. To explore and describe the importance of functional performance and aesthetic performance of in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.

   2.1 To explore and describe the importance of functional performance (comfort, durability and ease of care) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.

   2.2 To explore and describe the importance of aesthetic performance (sensory, symbolic and expressive aspects) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.

3. To explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic features, and functional performance and aesthetic performance in the young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.

   3.1 To explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic formal features and functional performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

   3.2 To explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic formal features and aesthetic performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

   3.3 To explore and describe the relationship between extrinsic features and functional performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

   3.4 To explore and describe the relationship between extrinsic features and aesthetic performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

1.5 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions underlie the study:

(1) Respondents willing to participate in the study will respond to questions with complete honesty allowing their valid personal opinions to surface;

(2) Participants will generally be familiar with the laymen's terms used in the questionnaire; and

(3) Respondents are novices in the field of textiles and will not be able to accurately evaluate formal apparel features such as the pros and cons of certain materials, proper methods of construction and finishes, and the latent aspects of apparel such as durability and reliability. Novices are likely to focus on product attributes that are easy to understand or product information that has been brought out through retailers' and marketers' promotional activities

such as extrinsic label information (Azevedo, Pereira, Ferreira & Miguel, 2009: 59; Jamal & Al-Mari, 2007).

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A survey design was used as the research was quantitative and exploratory and descriptive in nature. The aim was to explore and describe young adult male consumer's perceptions of quality of apparel through perceived benefits and use of informational cues during the assessment of smart casual wear. Self-administered, structured questionnaires were used to collect data (Dooley, 2001). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section sought consumers' personal information and the second section had subsections based on the apparel informational cues. The questionnaire was evaluated by experts in the field of consumer studies and by a statistician to ensure that the content was appropriate for the data sought after. The questionnaire was pilot-tested. Of the 35 questionnaires handed out, twenty-eight were returned with constructive comments and questions to consider. The appropriate changes were made before the questionnaire was distributed.

This study involved a non-probability purposive sample with a target of between 300 and 400 young adult males in urban Pretoria and Johannesburg, Gauteng. A convenience sampling of working young adult males was used, coupled with the snowball technique used to gain access to other respondents who fit the profile (Walliman, 2005:279).Completed questionnaires were collected from respondents as soon as they were completed. Of the 700 questionnaires printed out initially and distributed, only 381 were returned and of those only 330 were suitable for use.

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The pilot-tested questionnaires were first analysed, and as a meaningful sample size of 28 respondents was obtained their constructive comments could be used to improve the questionnaire. Prior to statistical analysis, the researcher coded all the responses by hand (330 questionnaires) and delivered to the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria for data-capturing. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations), and correlations as well as analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyse the data. Findings cannot be generalised to the whole population, but only to young adult males living in the Pretoria and Johannesburg areas in Gauteng, South Africa.

1.8 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The cognitive theory in conjunction with information processing is discussed as this drives what the consumer perceives to be quality and their expectations for such. From a fashion perspective, the fashion consumer decision-making process is denoted by stages, which are a fashion need, awareness of the fashion object, interest, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase evaluation (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004: 352; Sproles & Burns, 1994: 264-267).

Internal cognitive processes precede consumer decision-making. Cognition describes how consumers make sense of the environment and stimuli around them and how they react to it (Kaiser, 1998: 32-46). Product characteristics and attributes are defined according to a consumer's interpretation of situational factors together with knowledge and experience. Cognitive theory attempts to explain consumer behaviour by understanding the thought processes, with the assumption that humans make choices that make the most sense to them. When assessing products consumers seek and process information about multiple product-attributes (Eckman, 1997). This is a cognitive process where motivation, perception, attitudes, integration and knowledge provide the means to assess and deduce informational attributes relating to perceived apparel quality.

1.9 DEFINITIONS

- **Apparel** – clothing when it is being sold in shops/stores (Hornby & Wehmeier, 2001:44). In this study, apparel and clothing will be used synonymously and will sometimes be referred to as a garment.
- **Consumer**– an individual who buys apparel goods for consumption and uses the services of the retail store during the purchasing process.
- **Evaluative criteria** – the attributes used to assess a product during purchase decision-making (Belch & Belch, 2007:112; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:365-366)
- **Extrinsic features -** Extrinsic features are image variables that are considered a part of the garment, although not physical and include brand, price, and country or origin among others.
- **Informational cues** – Cues are features of products used by consumers to appraise the perceived quality of the product (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995). These include the features and indicators of apparel quality.

- **Intrinsic features** – intrinsic features are part of the garment which if changed will change the structure of the garment (Brown & Rice, 2014:69).

- **Quality evaluative criteria** – the set of product specific and product related attributes or quality indicative cues used by consumers as the standard measure of quality during the evaluation of apparel products before purchase.

- **Smart casual wear:** a loosely defined dress code; casual, yet "smart" (*i.e.* "neat") enough to conform to the particular standards of certain Western social groups (Oxford online dictionary, 2012).Smart casual wear for men includes dress trousers—this includes chinos—a long-sleeve dress shirt (tie optional), leather loafers or dressy slip-ons, dress socks, a belt, and, if appropriate, a sport coat or blazer. Some interpretations allow for v-neck sweaters and knit pullovers over button-down shirts

- **Young adult** - Erik Erikson's Stages of human development defines a young adult to be between the ages of 18 and 35 (Geiger & Castellino, 2011)

1.10 SUMMARY

Clothing is an aspect of everyday life and it is important to understand how young male consumers perceive quality and what they expect from quality apparel. The study seeks to explore the apparel related attributes that young male consumers deem important in the evaluation of apparel before purchase. It also seeks to describe the criteria used for evaluation based on these findings.
In a time where clothing is not only used for covering the body but also for self-expression, it is important for educators, marketers, retailers and manufacturers to understand the criteria young male adults, as prominent consumers in society, use in evaluating the apparel merchandise they seek to purchase and the extrinsic attributes important in influencing their perception of apparel quality.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: The study in perspective

This chapter sets the context for the study by providing a discussion about the nature and background of the research topic. Important elements of the chapter include: the problem statement, justification for the research, a brief discussion of the methodology,

data analysis and theoretical perspective as well as the objectives of the study. Concepts used in the study are defined and research assumptions are also included.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature addressing the needs of this study, focusing on the concept of apparel quality, consumer knowledge and expectations of apparel quality, and the attributes and product features used to evaluate apparel quality before purchase decisions and after purchase and consumption.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

This chapter introduces theories that the research is based on. It briefly discusses the cognitive theory as part of the consumer purchase decision-making process. Additionally, a conceptual framework is laid out, defining consumer knowledge and expectations and their importance in the apparel quality evaluative criteria, followed by t he aim of the study and the research objectives.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter contains the description of the research design , the sample framework and sampling procedures for the study, the development and pilot test of the questionnaire, data collection procedures and data analysis. The quality of the research is also explained in terms of validity and reliability of data collection techniques, and ethics regarding data collection is addressed.

Chapter 5: Results

The data analysis and results of the study are presented in this chapter using various tables and graphs. They are then interpreted and discussed with possible explanations for these results. The findings may not necessarily be discussed in the order in which they appear in the questionnaire.

Chapter 6: Interpretation of the results

This chapter contains a summary of major findings. Data is interpreted and presented as per the objectives. The findings of the study are briefly discussed and linked to past literature and theory.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

A conclusion is made regarding the study as a whole. An evaluation of the overall study follows which discusses the methodology and the validity and reliability of the data. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed with reference to manufacturers and retailers, fashion marketers, consumer educators and theorists. Recommendations are suggested for future and further studies and limitations to this study are discussed. Finally, concluding remarks are made.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to understand the role of intrinsic and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making, one has to understand the role of apparel in the male consumer's life. The literature review starts with an overview of gender in terms of social roles and social behaviour, and a review of males as apparel consumers in society as it concludes with the discussion of informational cues in consumer behaviour research.

2.1 GENDER AND APPAREL CONSUMPTION

Clothing has been used for many purposes which include supporting the wellbeing of society through the maintenance of traditional gender roles, and expected social behaviour (Craik, 2004:70-91; Marshall *et al.*, 2004:59-95; Kaiser, 1998:65-92). Gender in this case refers to biological differences of males and females. According to Kaiser (1998: 66), people are socialized to accept cultural definitions of gender and culture dictates the categories and differentiates social expectations for each gender. All societies differentiate gender appearances in some way (Marshall *et al.*, 2004:82-87; Roach & Eicher, 1973:121-138). Garments may be gender coded such that certain elements of dress within a culture have been designated as exclusively male or female symbols (Marshall *et al.*, 2004:82-87). Gender is important in the social psychology of clothing as gender images and social meanings are expressed and shaped by clothes (Kaiser, 1998:65-92). Gender roles in society continue to change from the traditional to a more egalitarian, as more young males live independently and alone, and find themselves participating in household management and being responsible for the purchase decisions of their own apparel.

2.2 MALE APPAREL CONSUMERS

Male consumers use clothing for functional purposes as well as to enhance perceived physical attraction, announce their identity, show their values, express moods and propose different attitudes (Dodd, Linaker, & Grigg, 2005; Dodd, Clark, Houston & Baron, 2000), although social

pressure is more apparent on the female consumers' buying behaviour (Kolyesnikova, Dodd &Wilcox, 2009). Males are becoming more interested and concerned with appearance, style and fashion (Howlett, Pine, Orakçıoğlu & Fletcher, 2013; Stone, 1999:200-222; Kaiser, 1998:92). The change in lifestyles and roles of males as consumers is changing the apparel industry, though the change is not as rapid as that of the female apparel industry. Many businesses in the men's wear industry are capitalising on this new fashion interest and now offer increasingly diverse men's apparel products (Howlett, *et al.*, 2013). According to Du Preez *et al.* (2007), the male consumer segment in South Africa is a growing market and more men are becoming "solely responsible for their own apparel purchases". Du Preez *et al.*, (2007) found that younger South African males have high levels of apparel expenditure and mostly enjoy shopping for fashion and brands. Lemphert (2004) concurs that young male shoppers have an appetite for looking good and therefore spend a lot of money on apparel. Smith (2008) describes these young male consumers as a "retailer's dream" because when shopping they spend more money, make snap decisions and return less merchandise than female shoppers. Young males also seem to seek information on products and their alternatives to aid in the purchase decision and acquisition of the best value product (Noble *et al.,* 2006; Kinley *et al.*, 2000). In apparel purchase, these sources of information can be apparel labels and hangtags, advice and help of salespeople, opinions of others, and previous experience with similar apparel. In a qualitative study on male shopping behaviour, Otnes and McGrath (2001:119) found that many males assessed alternatives among available merchandise during purchase decisions, claiming that, "...it was important to go to different stores, to compare prices, and compare the different qualities..." Therefore, these apparel informational cues, intrinsic and extrinsic, play a role in the evaluative criteria used by young male apparel consumers. .

2.3 PERCEIVED APPAREL QUALITY FEATURES

Quality assessment of product attributes is essential in influencing consumer purchasing intention, especially the choice of apparel (Kamenidou, Mylonakis & Nikolouli, 2007). Consumers assess products on various attributes considered most important (Dickson *et al.*, 2004). Cues are attributes of products used by consumers to appraise the perceived quality of the product (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995). The cue utilization theory (Richardson, Dick & Jain, 1994) suggests that products have intrinsic and extrinsic cues, which are used to assess quality. In apparel, the intrinsic attributes are those that if changed, will change the structure of the garment and include the general design, materials used, methods of construction and finishes applied to the final garment (Brown & Rice, 2014:69). Extrinsic cues are those, if changed, will not alter the garment structure. These extrinsic cues are like symbols for association in cognitive reasoning (De Klerk & Tselepis, 2007) and include

brand name, designer labels, country of manufacture or origin, the consumer's image of the retail store, and the price.

Figure 2.1 describes the concept of apparel quality used in this study. The aspects presented influence perceived quality of apparel and can be used as quality indices by consumers who evaluate apparel quality.

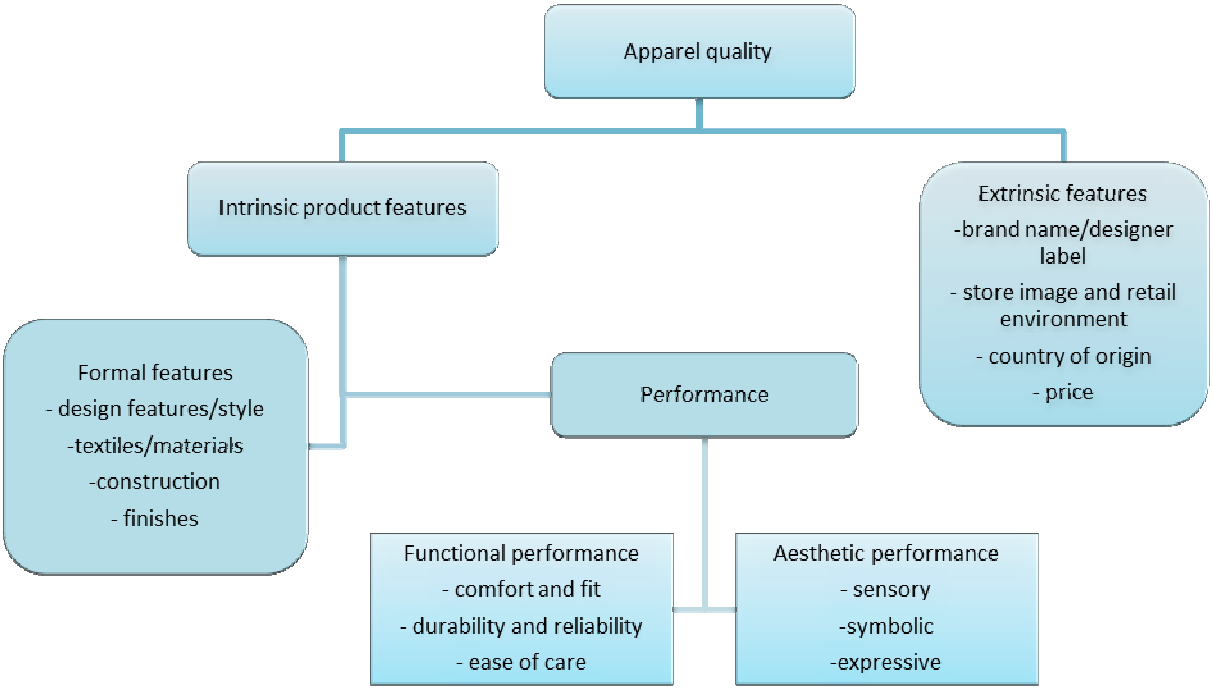

Figure 2.1: Concepts of apparel quality

(Brown & Rice, 2014: 69-70; Hsu & Burns, 2002)

2.4 INTRINSIC FEATURES

Intrinsic cues are tangible attributes of a product that a consumer can assess using the senses to determine the perceived quality of the product. They are classified as the apparel's formal features and performance properties.

2.4.1 Formal features

Intrinsic formal qualities include design, materials, construction and finish (Brown & Rice, 2014:69) and are major determinants of other attributes. Design and materials play a big role in the evaluation of clothing as the plan for the style and determine the fit, comfort and fashion ability of a garment. Materials used and finishes applied may influence the consumer's assessment of garments through the tactile aspect, hence influencing consumer's perception of future serviceability, in terms

of sensory comfort, perceived durability and ease of care, as well as the perceived aesthetic performance. The three principle constructs of apparel product quality that contribute to the meaning of quality, according to Scheller and Kunz (1998), are the product's structural integrity, the presence of aesthetics and the power of appeal. The aesthetic design cues used in the "universal apparel evaluative criteria" are colour/pattern, style, fashionability and appearance/attractiveness (May-Plumlee & Little, 2006). Consumers' preference for design and styling depend on their view of what's beautiful, fashionable, or trendy (Kaiser, 1998:274-277). It has been found that fashionable styles are influential in consumer apparel choices for both men and women (Dickson *et al.*, 2004). A product with a good design may be the best seller because appearance is a factor that can attract a consumer to the product, and communicate perceived aesthetic performance. Workmanship together with material quality is a part of the structural integrity of apparel. The Chambers Dictionary (Brookes, 2006: 1774) defines workmanship as the manner of making. Quality of workmanship, in relation to the making of clothing articles, is the degree of perfection in the making of the garment which includes the materials and methods employed in the construction, consistency in piecing the garment together, and the finishes applied to the garment which include the neatening of seams, addition of decoration and pressing. Many performance, appearance and extrinsic attributes and consumer's perceptions of quality depend on the quality of materials and workmanship. Although these intrinsic formal features contribute to apparel quality, the average consumer would find it very difficult to accurately assess these features (Dick *et al.*, 1997), but may continually use them as cues to assess perceived performance hence the quality of the garment.

2.4.2 Performance features

Perceived performance is the consumer's view of how well the product fulfils its functions according to what the consumer sees and knows of the product, and not necessarily the actual performance of the product. The performance cues relate to the appearance and the function of the garment and include attributes such as aesthetics, comfort, care and durability (Hines & Swinker, 2001).During purchase-decision-making, a consumer assesses apparel based on the benefits they assume will be obtained by the choice of apparel and a key to perceived future experience and perceived product performance is information. Apparel consumers may be unable to determine performance quality without knowledge on how to determine acceptable tensile strength of threads used, know the fastness of dyes, and distinguish among synthetic fabrics and their properties before purchase. However, consumers continue to consume apparel items with expectations of using the apparel over a long period, and likelihood of product success or failure will either confirm or disconfirm performance expectations (Kincade, Giddings, & Chen-Yu, 1998).

Functional performance

The cues that relate to the functional performance of the garment include serviceability attributes such as comfort including fit, care and perceived durability (Hines & Swinker, 2001). Consumers can only predict the functional performance during the purchase decision-making, although they continue to assess apparel product based on perceptions of these latent aspects, which can only be seen during wear and laundering. As a quality dimension, the perceived serviceability, durability and ease of care of a garment after purchase is influenced by the formal qualities of the garment. In apparel, serviceability refers to its ability to be cleaned and maintained (Brown & Rice, 2014:70; Kadolph, 1998:30-32). The durability of a garment refers to the shelf life of the garment. According to Kadolph (2010:42), durability is measured by the strength of the materials used under pulling forces, their resistance to frictional forces, the ability of the garment to retain its original size and shape, and the materials' tolerance to flexing, creasing and wrinkling without breaking or coming apart. The aesthetic performance of a garment during servicing refers to how well a garment maintains its visual appeal and dimensional stability once worn and laundered. An item perceived as unattractive, will not be acceptable to a consumer, and therefore not serviceable regardless of other properties related to durability, comfort and care (Brown & Rice, 2014).

Comfort refers to the ease of wear and movement given by a garment to the person wearing, and its feel against the human body. Different aspects of comfort can be measured. The garment's formal features and sensory aspects can have a marked influence on physical comfort, which is affected by the ease of movement the garment provides the wearer, absorbency, conductivity, the texture of the fabric against the skin, and how it conforms to the consumer's figure, although some of these comfort aspects are latent. "Fit refers to how well a garment conforms to the three dimensional human body" (Brown & Rice, 2014:179). Apparel construction, design and sizing affects garment fit and manufacturers and retailers must understand that this affects the consumer's purchase-decision process (Ashdown, Loker, & Schoenfelder, 2005: Gong *et al.*, 2002; Anderson Brannon, Grasso, Presley, Stevenson & Woronka, 2001), especially since fit determines the comfort afforded to a wearer as well as the aesthetic appeal of the garment when worn. Expectations on fit come from information as to how certain styles are supposed to look on the body and what the current fashion is. Ashdown *et al*. (2005) used the current sizing system in the United States in a study and it offered an acceptable fit to only half of the participants. Poor sizing and fit is the number one reason for returns and markdowns of women's clothing according to Yu (2004:33). Dissatisfaction in fit due to sizing of ready-to-wear apparel has been blamed on apparel that does not conform to the dimensions variability of the human body (Devarajan, Istook & Simmons, 2004; Kinley, 2003; Brown & Rice, 2014:170-184; Ashdown, 1998). De Klerk and Tselepis (2007) suggest that fit of clothes, as a

main determinant of satisfaction or dissatisfaction after purchasing, should fulfil functional, cognitive, and emotional needs. With that, fit should provide comfort to the wearer, contribute to sensory beauty, as well as give the wearer a sense of belonging and pleasure in terms of fashion ability and meeting group norms. Hsu and Burns (2002) found that fit, next to comfort, was a very important clothing evaluative criterion. In trying to understand consumers' perceptions of foreign brands of jeans, Wu and Delong (2006) found that comfort and fit suitable to Chinese consumers' figures superseded other quality indicative cues like the design and cut.

Although consumers may not be able to readily and accurately predict the functional performance of a garment at the point of purchase, they however can assess aesthetic characteristics (Chen-Yu, Williams & Kincade, 1999).

Aesthetic performance

The power of appeal of a garment can be the actual qualities of the apparel product that are attractive, or what the consumer perceives and believes to be attractive (Kaiser, 1998:289-304), and includes the objective and subjective nature of a garments attractiveness (Crilly, Moultrie & Clarkson, 2004). The aesthetic experience of apparel products results from the perception of appearance attributes that make sense to the viewer (Hekkert, 2006).The attributes related to the appearance of the garment include colour, line, form, style details, and size among others. Brown and Rice (2001:46-54) suggest that quality of workmanship also be included as an aesthetic attribute as its effects include the symmetry of the garment, matching patterns and motifs, and the beauty of neat seams on certain fabrics. Kim, Forsythe, Gu, and Moon (2002) identify appearance needs to be satisfied through the consumption of apparel as experiential, social and functional. Functional attributes satisfy perceived physical utility; social aspects satisfy symbolic dimensions such as approval, affiliation, personal expression and ego; while experiential reflect sensory and expressive needs for individuality, variety and sensory gratification. According to De Klerk and Lubbe (2004), the role of aesthetics, affected by the intrinsic formal qualities of a garment, is important in consumer behaviour and the perception of quality as it affects the sensory, emotional, and the cognitive dimensions of the consumer.

The sensory qualities of aesthetic attributes play a major role in assessment, as they stimulate the senses in such a way that they will influence the consumer's perception of apparel quality (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2004).Sensory aspects of apparel include the feel of the garment as well as how it looks to a consumer, the tactile and visual elements. Consumption of clothing may depend more on their social meanings than functional utilities (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:291). Appearance is often dictated by rules of interpretation based on social interaction and culture. Individuals use different forms of

dress as symbols to differentiate themselves from other consumers in society. The cognitive dimension allows a consumer to make meaning of an item for him or herself hence the symbolic aspect of an apparel product.

The symbolic function allows individuals' recognition as they express their identity in society as well as personal lifestyles. Clothing as a silent language depicts the wearer's individuality, aspirations and what they represent (Marshall *et al.*, 2004:104-105). According to Kaiser (1998:216), a sign is anything with social meaning, making clothing a powerful sign and therefore a powerful expressive medium.

Expressive value of apparel is affected by the opinion of others, whether it is society, mass media, or peers. Consumers have expressed the need for apparel to fulfil social expectations such as fashion ability and good fit, which allows the wearer to feel comfortable around peers and in society. Expressive value towards clothing sometimes supersedes functional aspects of clothing as consumers will purchase pricy items and well-known brands of clothing in order to conform to the expectations of others and achieve a sense of belonging (Lee, Kim, Pelton, Knight & Forney, 2008). Aesthetic performance cues are very important in apparel as they communicate product form and the images of the extrinsic cues.

2.5 EXTRINSIC FEATURES

Extrinsic cues of a product do not influence the performance or look of a product because they are not physical components of the product. Erikson, Johansson and Chao (1984) refer to extrinsic cues as image variables because they are distinct from the physical characteristics but are still identified with the product. Their findings show that these image variables influence consumer beliefs of products performance and quality, and in turn affect consumers' purchase decisions. Extrinsic cues are used when the consumer does not have information about tangible or intrinsic traits of product due to lack of experience with the product, insufficient time or interest to assess intrinsic attributes (Smith, De Klerk & Fletcher, 2011). Extrinsic cues as part of quality in the broad are therefore a gateway for consumers to assess the quality of apparel through their beliefs of perceived performance. They include brand name, price, country of origin and store image.

2.5.1 Brand and perceived quality

As an immediate informational cue, brand name, to varying degrees, plays a role in the quality evaluative criteria and may influence the assessment of apparel for purchase and the repeat purchase intention. A brand is a name, symbol, slogan and association that represent a certain product in the marketplace. "Brands are units of social consumption...and borrow existing social

association" (Grant in Zaltman, 2003:227), and are used by consumers as symbols of lifestyles, roles and identity. Associations are dimensions of the brand that may include the product's formal features and attributes, its functional attributes and the benefits, physical, emotional, or psychological, which come from consuming the product, and brand personality as perceived by the consumer. These parts of a brand are the stimuli which consumers interpret and are usually shared by many individuals and only consumers familiar with the apparel labels and brands will use it to judge apparel quality at purchase. Brand names have overtaken the "use classification" of products in today's consumer society (Kincade *et al.*, 1998). Brands create and communicate qualities associated with products with specific meanings to consumers (Crilly *et al.*, 2004) and are therefore an essential part of product assessment to consumers (Pecotich & Ward, 2007; Srikatanyoo & Gnoth, 2002). Brand names are very important in that if the degree of symbolism and association is consistent with previous experience then it affects a consumer's future inclination to a product due to the meanings previously attached to the brand. The importance consumers place on brand names when evaluating products depends on their ability to judge product quality (Tan, 2010), in the sense that when there is more product related information or identifiable quality cues, consumers should not rely heavily on brand as a determinant of quality.

In some cases, strong brands carry aesthetic appeal, promote perceived excellence in quality, and cater for consumers' psychosocial needs. Japanese consumers who need to express individuality through creative choice rated Western strong brands as high quality, reputable and prestigious (Knight & Kim, 2007). However, strong brand names can mislead consumers' perceptions of product quality (Hui, 2010) leading to poor purchase decisions. Past research has shown that male consumers dissatisfied with perceived performance at purchase would more likely switch stores than brands (Chen-Yu & Hong, 2002). Some consumers do not place a lot of importance on brand as a determinant of apparel product quality due to awareness of the specific brands that do fulfil their fit needs, part of garments' performance (Tan, 2010; De Klerk & Tselepis, 2007).

Consumers may form beliefs about product attributes and quality based on the image of the brand's home country. The effect of country of origin in brand assessments is so strong that it may overcome the power of well-known brands (Koubaa, 2008). This is why, during the assessment of same brands manufactured in different countries, consumers' brand perceptions vary. Since consumers exaggerate perceived quality for products from more industrialized countries, country of origin becomes an important factor with unfamiliar brand names. Zolfagharian and Sun (2010), in a study to explore how bi-cultural consumers differ from mono-cultural consumers, they found that bi-cultural consumers are more likely to provide a favourable assessment and entertain purchase

intention of foreign brands than the mono-cultural consumers who favoured brands from their country. Brand, however, may have a limited influence on country of origin assessment by consumers especially when it involves a physical encounter with the product whereby the consumer gets a chance to assess all attributes closely.

2.5.2 Country of origin and perceived quality

Country of origin, manufacture, assembly or design has a significant impact on perceived apparel quality. Country of origin has been defined as the country where the headquarters of the brand is located, the country of manufacture or assembly, and something simple as “made in”, part of the label information (Brown & Rice, 2014:48-49). Information on and expectation of a country of origin may affect the attention given to other product attributes, affect the interpretation of other available product information, and may act as a feature of the product during assessment (Josiassen & Assaf, 2010; Miyazaki, Grewel & Goodstein, 2005). The effect of country of origin as an attribute on the assessment of products will depend on the amount of knowledge a consumer has and their familiarity with the product categories (Essousi & Merunka, 2007; Insch & Mc Bride, 2004; Chiou, 2003). Consumers’ perceptions of new products from a given country are related to the image and beliefs they hold for its well-known products (Agarwal & Sikri, 1996), meaning quality perceptions can be transferred from product to product depending on perceived similarity between product categories and the satisfaction consumers experience with other goods from that country.

In the global economy, Western and European countries are described as highly industrialised countries while African countries are seen as developing. The highly industrialised and economically developed countries may carry a more positive quality assessment especially since they have gained reputation in the manufacturing and distributing industry. Also these countries have established their presence globally and gained consumer trust in product quality. Consumers should be especially more sensitive to the reputation of the country of design for status symbol products such as apparel. This renders country of origin most important when products are more complex in design, that evoke strong perceived risk, that carry strong social connotations, and that need complex manufacturing methods and technology (Hamzaoui & Merunka, 2006). Consumers who prefer high fashion, luxury and conspicuous products will source products from well-known brands and more industrialized countries of origin and manufacture (Kamenidou *et al.*, 2007; Wang & Chen, 2004; Kaynak & Kara, 2000; Piron, 2000) due to the positive brand image foreign goods carry and their association with high quality. Other studies have shown that country of origin is not important in the quality evaluative criterion, neither is the location of the garment manufacturer (Hsu & Burns, 2002). The lesser developed and newly industrialized countries are assessed less negatively with

product quality for technologically simpler products (Ahmed, Johnson, Ling, Fang, & Hui, 2002; Ahmed, d'Astous & Eljabri, 2002). Country of origin not only affects consumers' perception of quality, but it also influences their perception of price (Insch & Mc Bride, 2004). Research shows that the less developed countries of origin had better price image related issues (Leonidou, Palihawadana & Talias, 2007).

2.5.3 Price and perceived apparel quality

Price is an important part of a consumer's quality evaluative criteria and many marketers use price as a signal of quality especially because some consumers relate higher prices with high quality products and with it the image of the store offering the product. The use of price as an attribute may be different for different country products and product categories. "Quality has a significant and strong impact on the consumer's perceived value of a product ... and a consumer is willing to pay a higher price when he perceives the product to be of higher quality" (Karnes *et al.,* 1995:224), although in the midst of additional visible quality cues, the influence of price in purchase decision becomes less. According to Kincade *et al.* (1998:87), "consumers expect value for money" and their expectation of product performance during and after purchase increases the more the product costs. The price determines purchases because it is information readily available to the consumer before purchase and is usually set at a level that consumers are willing and able to pay at a given time. According to Chen-Yu & Hong (2002), young Korean males, during assessment of clothing, would be more assured of quality by higher priced fashion items, just as the Chinese male consumers in a study on their judgements of products made from highly and newly industrialized countries found t-shirt quality to be strongly related to price (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2004). In addition, in another study by Dickson *et al.* (2004), price had the greatest influence on consumer purchasing. Boyle and Lathrop (2009) challenge this consumer's perception of the relationship between price and product quality. In their study, they found that consumers are less knowledgeable and involved in the purchase of non-durable goods due to less downside risk in these purchases making them prone to negative "objective price-quality correlations", and suggest that consumers search for information on products and their attributes, and use other reliable indices of quality other than price when evaluating products.

2.5.4 Store image and perceived apparel quality

The retail store environment consists of store image, store atmospherics and store theatrics (Lewison, 1994). Image is a complex mix of meanings and relationships serving to characterise the store for people (Nell, 2013; Hasan, Muhammad & Bakar, 2010; Hu & Jasper, 2007). Most shoppers react positively to a store environment specifically designed with their psychological preferences or

ideal store image in mind (Pan & Zinkham, 2006; Erdem, Oumlil & Tuncalp, 1999; Groeppel & Bloch, 1990). Hasan, *et al.* (2010), contend that consumers have a set of store attributes or characteristics defines the store image for them and influences their decision to patronise a specific store. Consumers individually perceive a retail store on a number of different dimensions that collectively make up the image of the store that influences the assessment of its apparel products; these dimensions include merchandise, service quality, atmospherics, convenience and accessibility. The perceived image of a store and its influence on product quality assessment varies by product classes (Nell, 2013; Hasan, *et al*., 2010; Hu & Jasper, 2007)

Merchandise covers all product aspects like the reputation of quality apparel, availability and assortment of apparel merchandise, and service policies. Total product also includes the environment in which the product is purchased (Manganari, Siomkos & Vrechopoulos, 2009). Torres *et al.*, (2001) and Otnes and McGrath (2001) found that male consumers evaluated store attributes among alternatives, namely price ranges, quality of merchandise, and available assortment. The store image must coincide with the actual performance of the product sold in it, more so with the higher priced items (Kincade *et al.*, 1998). Quality assurance and post purchase control are strategies, which affect perceived product quality and include warrantees and guarantees. Loomba (1998) simply defines warranty policies as a "business practice where reputable sellers stand behind their goods". Product warranties decrease perceived risk (Tan, Lee& Lim, 2001), increase perceived product quality and retailer trust (Albaum & Wiley, 2010; Yun, 1997), and positively influence consumer satisfaction and post purchase assessment (McCollough & Gremler, 2004).

Customers are more likely to shop in a store and recommend it if they like the store's atmosphere (Grewal, Baker, Levy & Voss, 2003). Store atmosphere is a factor created by different psychological stimuli such as the lighting, symbols, noise, shapes, scents and colours used within the retail environment to create an image of the store and its merchandise (Hasan, *et al.*, 2010). These stimuli are used as they convey richer meanings especially in circumstances where the store and the brands carried are unfamiliar (Hu & Jasper, 2007). Consumers use these stimuli when forming expectation reinforcement from the store (Nell, 2013; Hasan, *et al*., 2010). If ambience, overall presentation and reputation, is poor and the distance to other stores is short, then the chance that consumers will leave that store to visit another store increases greatly (Koelemeijer & Oppewal, 1999).

2.6 SUMMARY

Clothing has been used for many purposes which include supporting the wellbeing of society through the maintenance of traditional gender roles, and expected social behaviour (Craik, 2004:70-91; Marshall *et al.*, 2004:59-95; Kaiser, 1998:65-92). Male consumers not only purchase apparel for

its functionality but also as a symbol of their values and as a means of expression. Apparel features may be used by consumers during purchase decision-making as indicators of perceived value and quality. South African males have shown interest in shopping for fashionable and branded apparel (Du Preez *et al.* 2007). Attributes such as fashionability and brand names among others influence consumers' apparel purchasing intentions. In apparel, there are intrinsic and extrinsic cues. Intrinsic cues are those which if changed, change the structure of the garment. They include the design, workmanship, materials and finishes. Functional performance and aesthetic cues are also included within the intrinsic features. Extrinsic features are image variables considered a part of the garment, although not physical, and include brand name, price, country of origin, and store image. These apparel attributes are important in the fashion consumer's decision-making process as they affect the consumer's perception of apparel quality.

Chapter Three

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

As part of consumer behaviour, the role of informational cues in the quality assessment of apparel may be viewed through the consumer decision-making process that explains why and how consumers purchase apparel, highlighting the cognitive processes relevant to the different stages of the decision process. Within the cognitive theory in conjunction with the information processing paradigm is discussed as this drives what the consumer perceives to be quality and their expectations for such. A conceptual framework is proposed that outlines the role of informational cues within the apparel consumer decision-making process.

3.1 CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The theory of reasoned action, first derived by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein in 1980, suggests that the decision to engage a particular behaviour is the result of a rational process where options are considered, outcomes evaluated and a decision is reflected in behavioural intentions (Baron, Branscombe & Byrne, 2008:162). The traditional consumer decision-making process involves identifying a problem that arises from a need, searching for information to aid in decision-making, and evaluating the final set of alternatives leading to an informed purchase decision (Kotler & Keller, 2009:99; Belch & Belch, 2007:107-120; Antonides & Van Raaij, 1998; Solomon, 1996:268-269). From a fashion perspective, the fashion consumer decision-making process is denoted by stages similar to the traditional consumer decision-making process, which are a fashion need, awareness of the fashion object, interest, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase evaluation (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:352; Sproles & Burns, 1994:264-267). Both approaches are illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

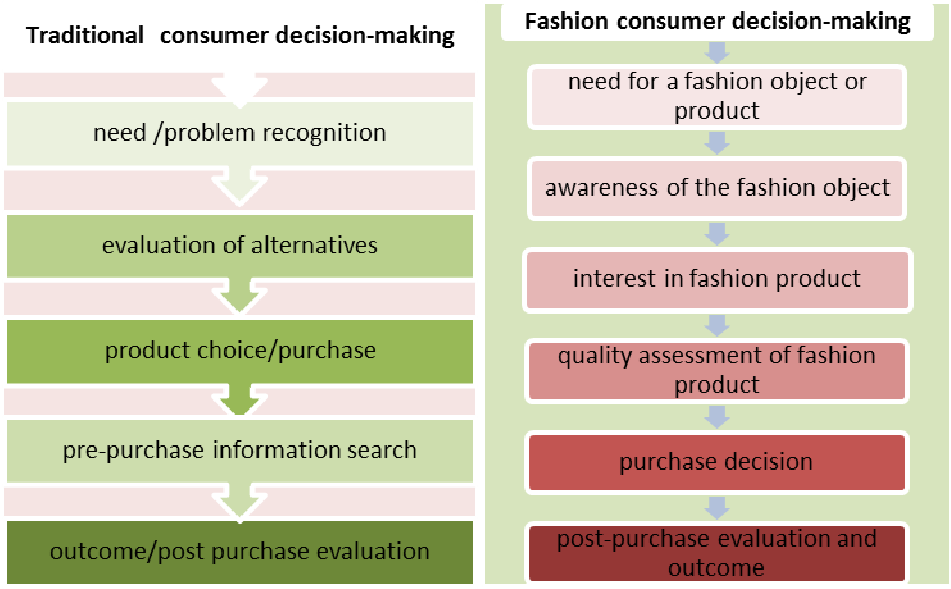

Figure 3.1: Model of consumer decision-making - Traditional vs. Fashion (Belch & Belch, 2007:107; Solomon, 1996:268-269; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:353)

3.1.1 Need

The need for a fashion object underlies the fashion consumer's decision-making process and is followed by the interest stage, which coincides with obtaining information on the apparel item based on previous experience, from information sources, and through involvement with the object. Information useful in apparel purchase decisions include product specific and product related cues that a consumer deems useful or beneficial to their need, as well as information gathered from previous experiences with apparel as a product class. The most sought after sources of information are salient such as in-store available product information, social and neutral sources such as friends and colleagues, consumer reports, and commercial sources such as advertisements, displays and sales people (Berman & Evans, 2010:614; Cant, Van Heerden & Ngambi, 2010:51). Leonidou, Hadjimarcou, Kaleka, and Stamenova (1999) found that some consumers consider experiential knowledge and opinions from others great sources of information for evaluating products. Useful information may include information on the current trends, types of apparel product, styles appropriate to the age/social group and form/shape of the individual, the variations in the style, the different brands available, the price tag attached to each garment, and the centre of distribution for easy access.

3.1.2 Information search

Sources of information for apparel consumers that may be used during the evaluation stage of decision-making are visual observations and verbal discussions (Kotler & Keller, 2009:99; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:358; Sproles & Burns, 1994:268-272). Visual cues of a garment include hang tags, labels and the physical product, and provide information such as brand, country of manufacture, size, fibre

content, care instructions, and price, which consumers often use to predict the latent quality aspects of the garment such as perceived performance (Shin, 2000; Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Davis, 1987). Consumers consider verbal discussions, a decisive factor during purchase decision-making, as a great source of information for evaluating products (Leonidou *et al.*, 1999). Adequate professional advice and positive interaction with salespeople can also be viewed as the opinion of others (Groeppel & Bloch, 1990). In a study done on young male consumers, Kinley *et al.* (2000) found that this group relies on reference groups as well as elements of retailers' promotions for information to use during the apparel purchase decision-process.

3.1.3 Apparel quality assessment

Product attribute evaluation is a major part of consumer behaviour where products are evaluated to assist consumers with decision-making and purchase decisions. Evaluative criteria include the attributes of a product used for appraisal and influence purchase intention and decision (Kotler & Keller, 2009:99; Belch & Belch, 2007:111-112; Kamenidou *et al.*, 2007; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:365-366). Due to increased consumer interest and globalisation, consumer decision-making in terms of criteria used in purchasing garments has become similar across different cultures and peoples. Various attributes are used to assess products based on what the consumer deems most important. A consumer integrates their motivation for apparel purchase, perception of quality, and attitude in order to determine which informational cues are important to them and establish a criterion for evaluating apparel before purchase. The consumer's apparel appraisal criterion is broken down to clothing attributes that contribute to the consumer's perception of a good quality apparel product. The quality assessment criteria vary with consumer, situational factors, and product class (Tan, 2010; Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2001:568). Research shows that consumers use quality cues or attributes that they deem important to them during the evaluation of apparel. This means that for each consumer, quality in clothing can be defined by different sets of attributes, depending on the fitness for use concept.

3.1.4 Purchase decision and post purchase evaluation

Purchase decision is the intention of buying an item that meets expectations after the interpretation and evaluation of attribute information. A major driver of consumer purchase decisions is the consumer's expectations of a product's ability to fulfil a need and of its performance during use. Consumers make purchase decisions with expectations of product performance already in their mind and therefore continue to assess the products after buying and during consumption. The expectancy theory suggests that consumer behaviour is influenced by consumer expectations of more desirable consequences from a product (Solomon, 2007:127), and it focuses on the cognitive

factors as drivers of consumer behaviour. Expectations are anticipations that a consumer has on the experience of owning and using an apparel product and are based on knowledge gained about the product and the information the product communicates to the consumer observing it (Desmet, 2003).Consumers are becoming more aware of the importance of quality in apparel they purchase (Roberts & Lane, 2007; Gong *et al.*, 2002) and therefore have certain expectations of clothing deemed as high quality (Swinker & Hines, 2006). To a consumer, the visible "product form may create or influence beliefs pertaining to...durability...value...ease of use...appropriateness and prestige" (Bloch, 1995:19). However, a misperception of visible cues together with lack of product knowledge can lead to wrong inference of the performance of a product. Consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction occur at the point of purchase and during use of the product, and is the result of a comparison process between expectations of and perceived performance (Chen-Yu *et al.*, 1999). This makes post-purchase evaluation a determinant of further information search and repeat purchase intentions based on the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

3.2 COGNITIVE PROCESSES RELEVANT TO EVALUATION IN CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING

A consumer's decision-making is preceded by internal cognitive processes where information is processed to help in making purchase decisions. Cognition is concerned with how consumers make sense of the environment and stimuli around them and how they react to it (Cant, *et al.*, 2010:51; Kaiser, 1998: 32-46). The cognitive structure is developed through individual characteristics and repeated encounters with environmental situations (Chaudhuri, 2006:27-38). As a result, product characteristics and attributes are defined according to a consumer's interpretation of situational factors together with knowledge and experience. Cognitive theory attempts to explain consumer behaviour by understanding the thought processes such as information processing, with the assumption that humans, during decision-making, make choices that make the most sense to them. In the consumer decision-making paradigm, the consumer uses the cognitive, "abstract representation of reality", to interpret information from the environment, retrieve other information from memory, make associations with received information, and address problems such as assessment of alternatives. The information-processing paradigm suggests that, in assessment, consumers seek and process information about multiple product-attributes (Cant, *et al.*, 2010:51). This is a cognitive process where motivation, perception, attitudes, integration and knowledge provide the means to assess and deduce informational attributes in terms of perceived apparel quality. The consumer decision-making process is shown in Figure 3.2 with the relevant psychological processes that affect the consumer's decision.

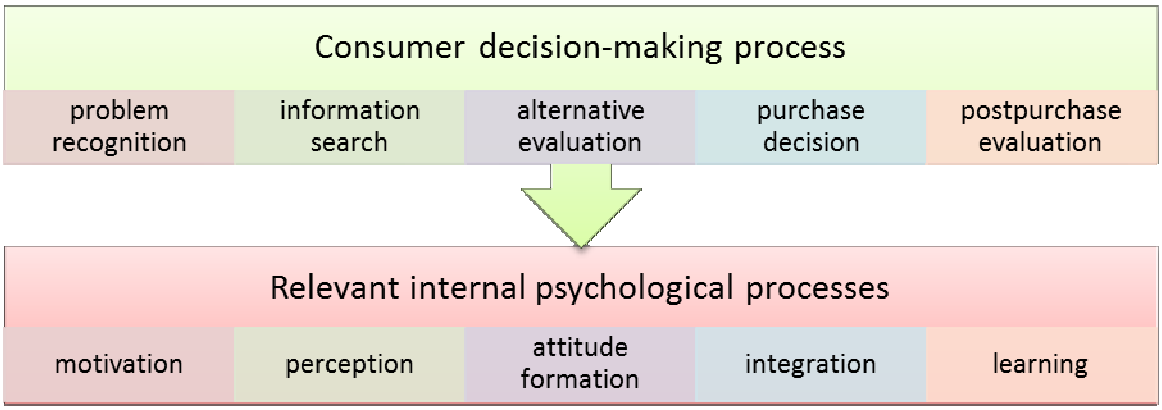

Figure 3.2: Basic model of decision-making and the relevant internal psychological processes

(Belch & Belch, 2007:107)

3.2.1 Motivation

Motivation is the driver of behaviour. The cognitive approach to motivation suggests that consumers respond to stimuli and purchasing processes according to interpretations of salient criteria, learned goals, and expectations (Cant *et al.,* 2010:52; Wyer, 2008:34-43). Apparel is a high body/self-involvement product that can be motivated by the physical, symbolic, functional, or emotional aspects of apparel. In their quest to better understand modern consumer behaviour by examining inherited psychological adaptations for solving social challenges, Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) state that making friends and attaining status as one of the seven fundamental evolutionary motives that influence consumer behaviour. They suggest that the underlying subconscious reason for their behaviour is the need to be happy, satisfied and experience pleasure. In essence, people want to feel good. Feeling good and attractive is of value to man (Aydinoğlu & Krishna, 2012; Larsen 2000) who may see it as a goal of existence (Swann, Pelham & Krull, 1989) or a source of self-esteem (Smeesters, Mussweuler & Mandel, 2010). Oyserman (2009) suggests that decisions to consume are often motivated by either personal or social identity, and marketers are capitalising on this by trying to link products to their target consumers' identities by highlighting traits, age, gender, and other personal or group characteristics.

3.2.2 Perception

In cognition, perceptions are formed which aid the consumer in making judgements (Cant *et al.*, 2010:55; Kotler & Keller, 2009:93; Zainbooks, 2008:7). Perception is the process in which a consumer senses and attends to external stimuli, in this case the in-store informational cues, and how this information is interpreted and given meaning (Belch & Belch, 2007:112). A consumer's perception of apparel quality strongly influences buyer behaviour as consumers form impressions and images of

apparel and its attributes that they apply when making judgements (Chaudhuri, 2006:1-4; Summers & Wozniak, 1991). With this in mind, perception of quality cues differs among consumers depending on their interpretation of the cues, expectations, needs, and experiences (Kotler & Keller, 2009:93; Wyer, 2008:45-53; Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:289-315).

3.2.3 Attitude formation

Attitudes on the other hand are an expression of an item appraised, either favourable or unfavourable, and are thought to affect behaviour (Baron*et al.*, 2008; Hasan, Muhammad & Bakar, 2007; Morgan, King, Weiss, & Schopler, 1986:402)). Learning theories suggest that attitudes are learned ways of responding to stimuli (Kotler & Keller, 2006:180; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004:553). According to Martin Fishbein in Morgan *et al.* (1986: 403), an attitude is abstracted from the totality of a person's feelings, beliefs and behavioural intentions. The attitude of the individual acts as a platform for the consumer to express confidence in the purchase as well as communicate satisfaction with the value of the product. A consumer's attitude is affected by expectations of a product and is used to predict the behaviour of the consumer toward the product.

3.2.4 Integration and learning

Integration processes are the way consumer motivation, quality perception, and attitude are interpreted through the concept of apparel quality during information processing directed to decision-making. Learning plays a big role in motivation, perception, and attitude formation and reflects knowledge achieved through experience. Cognitive learning involves the thought process as a step between a stimulus a consumer is exposed to and the response given or decision made (Kotler & Keller, 2006:180). Learning plays a big role in perception and attitude formation, and reflects knowledge achieved through experience. In any field, it is important to understand how knowledge…affects what is known" (Burns & Lennon, 2000). Knowledge is an important tool in consumer decision-making as it reduces consumers' over reliance on extrinsic attributes in their purchase decisions. Apparel is a knowledge domain in which people can acquire knowledge through informational cues and experience rather than intrinsic formal training, although intrinsic formal training programs are available in many institutions. People are exposed constantly to apparel information and concepts through day-to-day activities, the general media and other external sources. In clothing purchasing, consumer knowledge of the characteristics and variations of a product, together with prior experience with apparel products can be determinants of a consumer's belief of its performance and a big influence on the purchasing decision process (Guo & Meng, 2008).

3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

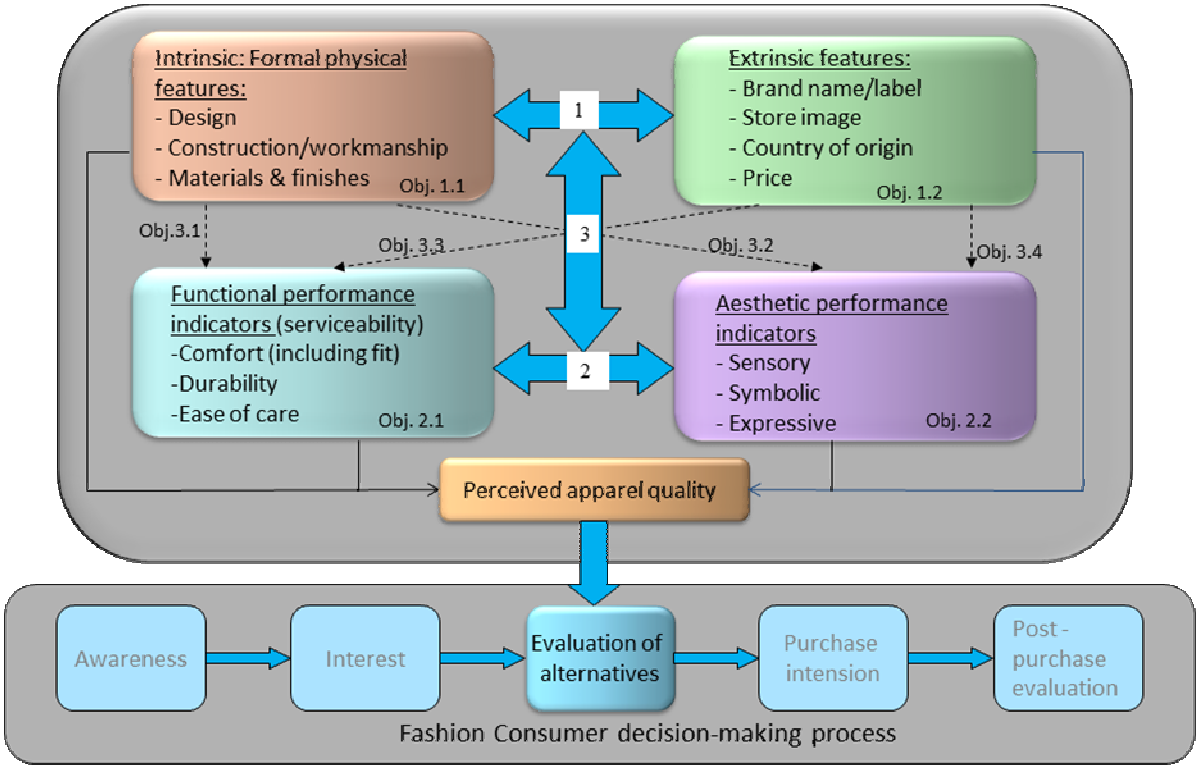

Figure3.3: Schematic conceptual framework

After doing a thorough review of literature a schematic conceptual framework was developed for this study (

Figure3.3). During apparel purchase decision-making, the consumer is presented with various informational cues, which include the intrinsic formal features and the extrinsic features, from sources such as labels and sales people. Perceived performance of an apparel item can be properly evaluated post purchase during wear and care and therefore can only be predicted using information available. It is clear that the young adult male consumer may use intrinsic formal features and extrinsic features when evaluating the functional and aesthetic performance features of smart casual wear during the purchase stage in order to form a perception of the perceived quality of the clothes.

In the following section the aim of the study and the objectives (as indicated on the conceptual framework) are stated.

3.4 THE AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

3.4.1 Aim of the research

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the role of intrinsic and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making.

3.4.2 Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to explore and describe the importance of informational cues in young adult males' assessment of perceived quality of smart casual wear.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explore and describe the importance of intrinsic formal and extrinsic features in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.

    1.1 To explore and describe the importance of intrinsic formal features (design, construction, materials and finishes) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.

    1.2 To explore and describe the importance of extrinsic features (brand name/label, store image, country of origin & price) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear

2. To explore and describe the importance of functional performance and aesthetic features of in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.

    2.1 To explore and describe the importance of functional performance features (comfort, durability and ease of care) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.

    2.2 To explore and describe the importance of aesthetic features (sensory, symbolic and expressive aspects) in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.

3. To explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic features, and functional performance and aesthetic performance in the young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.

3.1 To explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic formal features and functional performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

3.2 To explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic formal features and aesthetic performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

3.3 To explore and describe the relationship between extrinsic features and functional performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

3.4 To explore and describe the relationship between extrinsic features and aesthetic performance in young adult males' assessment of smart casual wear.

3.5 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to introduce and explain the theoretical perspective as used in this study. The consumer decision-making paradigm is highlighted by various stages. This study focused on the apparel assessment phase which is important before a purchase decision is made. As discussed in this chapter, consumers appraise apparel before purchase for perceived quality. Appraisal is mediated by cognition; the way the consumer makes sense of cues presented and perceived benefits of the apparel features. This study seeks to explore the role of informational cues at the quality assessment stage of decision-making among the young South African male consumers. Information discussed above and in the earlier chapters was used in the development of a conceptual framework for the study. An outline of the research methodology employed for this study is presented and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the description of the quantitative research design, the objective pertaining to this phase and the research questions, the sample framework and sampling procedures, the development of the questionnaire, the data collection procedures, and data analysis. The quality of the research is also explained in terms of validity and reliability of data collection techniques.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH VARIABLES

4.1.1 Research design

A survey design was used as the research was quantitative in nature and intended to explore and describe consumer's perceptions of quality of apparel through perceived benefits and use of informational cues during the assessment of smart casual wear. Exploration tackles areas where little research has been done (Walliman, 2005:249). Its nature was to explore existing theories, concepts and methodology that might be used or adapted. Descriptive research attempts to examine situations in order to establish the norm, through human observations and responses (Walliman, 2005:249). The survey design was used for this study as it was an appropriate means to describe and explain respondents' perceptions, opinions, characteristics and behaviour (Neumann, 2000:247) as well as to determine the importance of informational cues (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Isaac & Michael, 1997:136-141) as it allowed for the measurement of many variables, the quality measurement cues. This research approach is typified by deduction as it is guided by preceding theory as discussed in the literature review and the theoretical frameworks (Walliman, 2005:249-50).

4.2 METHODOLOGY

4.2.1 Sample, sampling strategy, and data collection process

4.2.1.1 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was young adult males. Although there have been inconsistencies in defining an age range for young adults, Erik Erikson's Stages of human development defines a

young adult to be between the ages of 18 and 36 (Geiger & Castellino, 2011). Young males between the ages of 24 and 36were selected for this study because this group has a high proportion of independent young adult males who are earning salaries and are involved in the selection and purchase of their own clothing. Respondents were preferred to have a source of income, but they were not asked how much they earn as this seemed invasive and level of income would not indicate the consumer's propensity to spend their disposable income on apparel. Instead, respondents were asked for the amount of money they were willing to spend on apparel monthly. This study sought to exclude young married males whose partners did apparel shopping on their behalf. Males working in the apparel and textile industry were also excluded due to biased sensitisation to apparel quality, and therefore do not accurately represent the average young adult male. Due to the assumed life stage of the respondents, the smart casual wear genre was chosen as the unit of consumer assessment. Smart casual wear is a loosely defined dress code; casual, yet "smart" (neat) enough to conform to the particular standards of certain social groups (Oxford Online English Dictionary). Smart casual wear included plenty of garment pieces that could be mixed and matched by consumers to create a smart casual look.

4.2.1.2 Sampling strategy

This study was not restricted to employed males but to males with a source of income for their apparel purchase. This study involved a non-probability purposive sample with a target of between 300 and 400 young adult males. This is close to the required sample size of 384 for a given population size of more than 100,000 people as stipulated by Isaac and Michael (1997:201). According to the Statistician General's report (Lehohla, 2012), the number of young adult males between the ages of 25 and 34 living in Gauteng is 1 430 386. The units of analysis were sampled in urban Pretoria and Johannesburg, Gauteng. A convenience sampling of working young adult males was used, coupled with the snowball technique used to gain access to other respondents who fit the profile that the initial groups may be acquainted with. In the snowball technique, the starting point was making contact with one or more people belonging to this study's population and getting information or referrals about others in the same research sample group (Walliman, 2005:279).

4.2.1.3 Data collection process

Two research assistants (friends with Bachelor degrees) were recruited and trained on data collection using the informational cue questionnaire. They were well versed on the purpose of the study and the purpose of the questionnaire. They were also trained on snowball sampling and following up on these respondents, as well as ensuring that the questionnaire was accurately completed. All clothing and textiles terms and jargon were well defined and explained where needed

to ensure that they could explain the entire questionnaire clearly to all respondents sourced. The two research assistants accompanied the main researcher during the pilot study in order to grasp the techniques. Permission was sought from corporations, office and store managers to manually distribute questionnaires to their employees who fit the research population group. A transmittal letter accompanied the questionnaires with a concise explanation of the purpose and importance of this study, and establishing a reasonable return date and time (Addendum A). The respondents were requested to volunteer information on other suitable respondents who fit the profile that they may know or come in contact with. Other questionnaires were handed out personally to respondents who were readily and easily accessible to the researcher. Completed questionnaires were collected from respondents as soon as they were completed. Problems arose with the data collection time frame due to non- or delayed responses from the respondents, due to lack of time to fill it in or due to misplaced or lost questionnaires. Some organisations were consulted prior to data collection and the various representatives stressed that web-based questionnaires were the most convenient for the respondents in the respective companies. This however proved not to be so as less than 15 respondents completed the web-based questionnaires. Of the 700 questionnaires printed out initially and distributed, only 381 were returned and of those only 330 were suitable for use. The largest problem with the physical distribution was non-response due to loss and misplacement of questionnaires. Respondents who were busy at the time of distribution were given three to seven days to complete before the researcher returned to collect but many claimed to have misplaced them and asked for second questionnaires to complete. This time the researcher urged them to fill it in on the spot as the researcher waited. All questionnaires were checked by the researcher at collection to ensure that they had no missing data.

4.2.2 Instrument development

In the survey design, questionnaires are used to collect data (Dooley, 2001). The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide young males with a list of aspects of the intrinsic formal, functional performance, aesthetic performance, and extrinsic quality indicative attributes that may be used to evaluate the quality of garments during purchase and find out which are the most common among the respondents as well as the importance placed on these selected attributes.

The self-administered questionnaire used in this study was in the English language. Information from literature reviewed as well as statements from previous apparel quality evaluation research instruments was used to develop a questionnaire that measures the role of intrinsic formal, functional performance, aesthetics, and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young

adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making (Swinker & Hines, 2006; Wu & Delong, 2006; Hsu & Burns, 2002; Hines & Swinker, 2001).

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section sought consumers' personal information and the second section had subsections based on the apparel informational cues measured by the statements as shown in Table 4.1. The question of age was left open for respondents to fill in, and was grouped for coding before data capturing. The other demographic questions were fixed response statements on educational qualification, ethnic background, and consumer's source of income. The questions in the second half of the first section explored consumer's shopping behaviour, allowing multiple choice responses that included the retail stores the respondents most frequented, and the smart casual clothing items purchased in the past six months. Structured response questions included frequency of smart casual purchase, and whether or not these consumers assess smart casual apparel for quality. The question on the amount consumers were willing to spend on apparel per month was also left open for respondents to fill in, and the responses were later categorized and coded before data capturing.

Table 4.1: Structure of the questionnaire

SECTION	CONSTRUCTS MEASURED	QUESTION NUMBERS
A	Demographics (Age, highest qualification, ethnic background, source of income)	Question A1-4
A	Shopping behaviour (stores frequented, purchase frequency, items purchased, monthly apparel expenditure)	Question A5-8
A	Pre-purchase assessment of apparel quality	Question A9
B	Informational cues used in apparel quality assessment	
B	Formal intrinsic features	Question B10
	Design	Question B10.1-10.4
	Construction/Workmanship	Question B10.5-10.8
	Materials and finishes	Question B10.9-10.12
B	Extrinsic features	Question B11
	Price	Question B11.1-11.3
	Brand name/designer label	Question B11.4-11.6
	Store image	Question B11.7-11.9
	Country of origin	Question B11.10-11.12
B	Functional performance	Question B12
	Durability	Question B12.1-12.4
	Comfort and fit	Question B12.5-12.8
	Ease of care	Question B12.9-12.12
B	Aesthetic performance	Question B13
	Symbolic	QUESTION B13.1-13.4
	Expressive	QUESTION B13.5-13.8
	Sensory	QUESTION B13.9-13.12

Likert-type scales asked consumers to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to the attitude object (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 2001:500). Section B contained 36 question statements. Respondents were asked to rate sets of statements on a four-point Likert-type scale indicating importance of informational cues and their role in perceived apparel quality. The scale ranged from very important, important, slightly important, to not important. This part of the questionnaire measured the different quality dimensions that could be used by consumers to assess apparel quality during purchase evaluation. Questions preceding the statements asked consumers to indicate the importance of aspects in assessing quality of apparel either when deciding what to buy, or when considering smart casual clothes. Section B was divided into four subsections with statements gauging the consumer's perception of quality of apparel using intrinsic formal features, extrinsic apparel features, functional performance properties of serviceability, and aesthetic performance properties respectively. Male consumers were asked to indicate the level of importance of these different attributes in their assessment criteria.

4.2.2.1 Operationalisation and conceptualisation

Table 4.2: Operationalisation of research constructs/objectives

OBJECTIVE 1: To explore and describe the role of intrinsic formal and extrinsic features in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during apparel purchase decision-making				
SUB-OBJECTIVES	**INDICATORS**	**RELATIVE QUESTIONS**	**EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS**	**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS USED**
1.1 To explore and describe the role of **intrinsic formal features** in young adult males quality assessment of smart casual wear	-Design -Materials & Finishes -Construction/workmanship	Section B V10.1-V10.12	(i) design features i.e. pockets, pleats (ii) fibre content of the clothing item (iii) matching stripes, checks, or prints	-Descriptive statistics* -Exploratory analysis**
1.2 To explore and describe the role of **extrinsic features** in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear	-Price -Brand name or designer label -Store image -Country of origin	Section B V11.1-V11.12	i) High priced clothing ii) Presence of a designer label iii) Aesthetically appealing store environment iv) A garment from an economically developed country	-Descriptive statistics* -Exploratory analysis**
OBJECTIVE 2: To explore and describe the role of functional and aesthetic performance of in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during apparel purchase decision-making				
SUB-OBJECTIVES	**INDICATORS**	**RELATIVE QUESTIONS**	**EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS**	**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS USED**
2.1 To explore and describe the role of **functional performance** features in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear	- durability -comfort (including fit) - ease of care	Section B V12.1-V12.12	i) good colour retention or colourfastness ii) no static build-up iii) clear, easy to follow care instructions	-Descriptive statistics* -Exploratory analysis**
2.2 To explore and describe the role of **aesthetic** performance in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear	- symbolic - expressive - sensory	Section B V13.1-V13.12	i) Symbolise my lifestyle ii)makes me feel good about myself iii) has a flattering colour	-Descriptive statistics* -Exploratory analysis**

OBJECTIVE 3: To explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic features, and functional performance and aesthetic features used as informational cues in the young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.			
SUB-OBJECTIVES	**INDICATORS**	**RELATIVE QUESTIONS**	**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS USED**
3.1 To explore and describe the relationship between the importance of **intrinsic formal** features and **functional performance** in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.	Design, construction/ workmanship, materials & finishes in relation to comfort, durability & ease of care	Section B V10.1-V10.12 and V12.1-V12.12	-Descriptive statistics* -Correlation procedures***
3.2 To explore and describe the relationship between the importance of **intrinsic formal** features and **aesthetic performance** in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.	Design, construction/ workmanship, materials & finishes in relation to sensory, symbolic & expressive aspects	Section B V10.1-V10.12 and V13.1-V13.12	-Descriptive statistics* -Correlation procedures***
3.3 To explore and describe the relationship between the importance of **extrinsic** features and **functional performance** in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear.	Brand name/label, store image, country of origin & price in relation to comfort, durability & ease of care	Section B V11.1-V11.12 and V12.1-V12.12	-Descriptive statistics* -Correlation procedures***
3.4 To explore and describe the relationship between the importance of **extrinsic** features and **aesthetic performance** in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear	Brand name/label, store image, country of origin & price in relation to sensory, symbolic & expressive aspects	Section B V11.1-V11.12 and V13.1-V13.12	-Descriptive statistics* -Correlation procedures***

*Descriptive statistics include frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviation, aggregate scores
**Exploratory statistics include the coefficients of determination, General Linear ANOVA procedure, Scheffé's post hoc comparisons
***Correlation procedures include Cronbach's alpha, Pearson's correlation coefficient, Scatter plots

4.2.2.2 Pre-testing the instrument

A self-administered questionnaire used for this study was prepared from a thorough review of literature. The questionnaire was evaluated by the study leaders, some experts in the field of consumer studies, and by a statistician to ensure that the content was appropriate for the data sought after. Consultation by the different experts ensured the proper questions were asked in the correct format and layout and also the right number of questions per construct for valid data. Also the Likert-type scale was finalised with the most appropriate measures to indicate the importance of informational cue statements to the male consumer. Coding was discussed for the measures and a coding column added.

A pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted prior to the final data collection. The sample for the pilot test was purposeful with voluntary participation in the survey. The population included postgraduate working male students from the University of Pretoria as the age group represents the population for the final study. Thirty-five questionnaires were printed out and distributed to the volunteers with an agreement that after completion, they would be available for a short discussion to address face and construct validities, relevance to the purpose of this study, and to give the researcher a chance to answer questions and clarify ambiguous terms to the participants. The pilot study aided in estimating the required length of time to complete the questionnaire. Of the questionnaires handed out, twenty-eight were returned with constructive ~~comments~~ and questions to consider. The statistician and study leaders were consulted on appropriate changes. These included adding extra response columns for other sources of income and allowing multiple responses on some questions such as clothing retail stores frequented.

Table 4.3: Descriptive results for pilot study

Quality dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Intrinsic formal features	2.77	0.27	0.76
Extrinsic features	2.72	0.37	0.68
Functional performance	3.12	0.31	0.85
Aesthetic performance	2.92	0.43	0.62

N = 28; Scale 1 = not important, 4 = very important.
Note: Each mean score represents the average of the cue's importance to young adult males' perception of quality

The responses of the pre-test were coded and captured, then analysed by statisticians at the University of Pretoria. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the pilot study in order to establish the internal consistency and reliability of the research instrument. Results are shown in Table 4.3 above. The reliability coefficient for statements representing intrinsic formal aspect was at 0.76, at 0.68 for statements representing extrinsic cues, 0.85 for items representing functional performance, and

0.62 for the items representing aesthetic performance. The pre-test respondents were asked to indicate which statements in the questionnaire were unclear or confusing and to make suggestions on rewording for clarity and what statements would best express their thoughts when assessing apparel. Intrinsic formal and functional performance correlation coefficients were high showing that there was consistency in the survey responses. The statements for aesthetic performance cues that had considerably low coefficient values were adapted to address the problem before the final questionnaire was printed and distributed. Adaptations included rewording of statements to ensure it meant the same thing to all or most respondents. These changes improved the reliability and face validity of the questionnaire. (The Cronbach α values determined for the responses of the sample of 330 respondents were all above 0.75 as discussed in Chapter 5).

4.2.3 Data analysis and data presentation

4.2.3.1 Coding and capturing data

Pre-coding was done for the entire questionnaire and values given for all responses. Prior to statistical analysis, the researcher coded all the responses by hand based on initial pre-coding from the 330 usable questionnaires returned. The coded questionnaires were then delivered to the Department of Statistics at the University of Pretoria for data-capturing. A preliminary summary of the data captured was given to the researcher together with the 330 questionnaires for checking. Some responses were missing coding on the questionnaire and these were corrected and returned to the statisticians for re-entry.

4.3.3.2 Statistical analyses

Descriptive statistics

Data was analysed through descriptive analysis, where frequency distributions determined how many respondents fit into each demographic category, the respondents shopping behaviours, as well as to establish the level of importance of the informational cues to the male consumer. Data was grouped into components of intrinsic features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance and an aggregate score calculated and presented through the means and standard deviation of the variable groups. Aggregate scores using the means procedure helped determine the strength of the constructs and sub-constructs in terms of the importance to consumers.

Correlation procedures

Correlation procedures were used to further analyse and explore the data captured. Correlation is a measure of the relationship between two variables. Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α) was calculated for the quality features, all dimensions grouped with like ones, in order to measure the internal consistency of the measuring scale for each main construct. Correlation procedures were then performed on the four main constructs: intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance. The Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between two constructs and to test for the significance of the relationship. Scatter plots were used to demonstrate the pattern of the relationship.

Exploratory analysis

An exploratory analysis of the relationships among male consumer characteristics and the use of informational cues was conducted. The General Linear analysis technique ANOVA was used to examine the influence of demographics (age, level of education, race or ethnicity, monthly apparel spend, and tendency to assess quality during decision-making – independent variables) on the importance placed on each of the informational cues(intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance - dependent variables). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a test that examines variations in individual item scores, focusing on the interaction and interaction contrast of the group items (Isaac & Michael, 1997:126). If the difference in the use of informational cues between the demographic groups was significant, a post hoc analysis, Scheffé's Test, followed to show where the major difference lay and the strength of the difference was shown through box plots. Box plots (Figure 4.1) are graphs that present distribution or ranges of values of a selected variable as defined by values of a categorical variable (Statsoft Inc., 2012). Data are distributed in quartiles with a box placed around the midpoint, which are the means and median. The mean is the line that divides the box while the median is the diamond symbol embedded in the box. Whiskers on either side of the box represent a selected range of variation (standard variation) for the upper and lower quartiles.

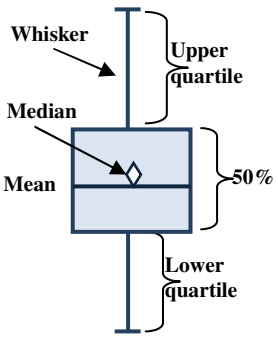

Figure 4.1: Interpretation of a box plot (Statsoft, 2012)

4.2.3.3 Data presentation

The data obtained through the questionnaire, after statistical analysis, were arranged in tables and graphs. Data for the first and second objectives were arranged into frequency distribution tables where all attribute statements were listed in one column and use frequency of each cue and the mean scores on the other columns. Other frequency distribution tables presented the various means and standard deviations of the informational cue values. Correlation procedure data was also arranged on correlation coefficient tables and Pearson's correlation matrix, scatter plots for linear relationships, ANOVA tables for exploratory analysis, and box plots to show the variance among the exploratory analysis data.

4.3 QUALITY OF THE STUDY

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. **Theoretical validity** was achieved through thorough literature review and clear non-ambiguous definition of concepts within this study's framework. Literature provided acquaintance with established theories that had been previously and successfully applied in similar studies. Theories such as consumer decision-making, cognitive assessment and information processing have become a benchmark in the study of consumer behaviour.

Criterion-related validity looks at the relationship between a score and an outcome (Isaac & Michael, 1997:125). It involves multiple measurement of a concept being studied. A factor analysis was done on the pilot sample questionnaire responses to compare the similarity of the scores of statement measuring the same concept. This means that the questionnaire was more valid if the responses to these statements were not very different from each respondent.

Face validity is used to indicate whether the instrument, on the face of it, appears to measure what it claims to measure (Isaac & Michael, 1997:125).

Content validity shows how well the content of the questionnaire represents the topics/concepts of this study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005:160-162; Isaac & Michael, 1997:125). This was established by the researcher and other experts reviewing the questionnaire, checking and ensuring that all statements to be measured in the questionnaire clearly related to perceived quality, perceived performance, and the role of extrinsic cues in defining quality.

To establish face and content validity of the survey instrument, an initial version of the questionnaire was given to experts from the Consumer Science Department specialising in consumer research.

Reliability of the instrument was established by piloting the questionnaire on twenty nine purposefully selected males prior to the distribution of the final questionnaire. There was a lot of technical jargon as pointed out by respondents to the pilot study that could not be understood by those not specialising or exposed to the field of apparel. At the end of the pilot study some of the respondents gave suggestions on how to simplify wording and make the statements easy to understand.

Inferential validity relates to the conclusions made from analysis and interpretation of data. With the aid of a statistician, appropriate statistical techniques were used for each group of constructs in order to maximize the use of data and draw clear valid inferences. These included descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and analyses of variance.

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a measuring tool (Pieterson & Maree in Maree, 2007:215; Isaac & Michael, 1997:134). The questionnaire contained different statements (3-4) measuring the same concept, for instance the intrinsic, formal features the importance of design, workmanship and fabrics/materials were determined by using three different statements related to each of these aspects. Cronbach's Alpha was used on the items in the final study to calculate reliability. Reliability coefficient was then calculated for said constructs to ensure the degree of agreement and consistency was adequate for the scale to be reliable. Alpha values for the pilot study are presented in the pre-test discussions in this chapter.

Representativeness of the sample in terms of ethnic background as a demographic category might have been compromised due to the age group, non-probability sampling, as well as assumed non-response rates. This study therefore may only be generalised to young adult males living in Gauteng, South Africa.

4.4 ETHICAL CONCERNS

Although the subjects in this study were not exposed to any unreasonable discomforts, risks, or violations of their human rights, permission to conduct this study was sought from the appropriate body at the University of Pretoria prior to collecting any data. All respondents were notified during recruiting that participation was voluntary and that they did not have to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with. Care was taken to ensure guaranteed confidentiality and to respect survey participants' privacy and the voluntary nature of their involvement. People were encouraged to respond but not coerced or pressured in any offensive way.

4.5 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to describe the research methods and procedures used for the study, starting with instrument development as per objectives, to the collection of data. The results and statistical findings of the study are presented in the next chapter. Discussion of the results takes place in chapter six.

Chapter Five

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. All findings were based on the purpose of the study which was to explore the role of intrinsic and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making.

5.1 PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

5.1.1 Distribution of demographic data

Table 5.1 presents demographic data of the respondents. Frequencies and percentages were used to show the response distribution. The average age of the young adult male respondents was 28 years. Age was classified into two groups post data collection, 24-29 and 30-36. The majority of the respondents 63% were between the ages of 24 and 29 years, and the rest, 37%, were between the ages of 30 and 36. Of the respondents, 57% were black, 34% were white, 6% of mixed race (coloured), and 3% were Asian. For this study, Asians and mixed race categories were combined and grouped with "other", giving a total of about 9% respondents. In terms of the highest academic qualification achieved at the time of data collection, the three categories were reduced to two, with matriculation (known as matric from here on) as one, and respondents who had achieved a post-matriculation (post-matric) certificate/diploma or tertiary degree classified as post-matriculation. In this category, 51% of the respondents had completed matric, and 49% of the respondents achieved a post-matric qualification. The profile of the sample shows that respondents were representative of Gauteng's urban population with respect to ethnic background. The sample also contained an equal number of respondents in both education categories.

Table 5.1: Demographic data

DEMOGRAPHICS

Categories in Questionnaire			Categories after regrouping		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age in years			**Age in years**		
24-29	208	63.03	24-29	208	63.03
30-36	122	36.97	30-36	122	36.97
Ethnic background			**Ethnic background**		
Black	188	56.97	Black	188	56.97
White	111	33.64	White	111	33.64
Mixed	21	6.36	Other	31	9.39
Asian	9	2.73			
Other	1	0.3			
Education qualification			**Education qualification**		
Degree	72	21.88	Post-matric	161	48.94
Certificate/Diploma	89	26.97			
Matric certificate	168	50.91	Matric	168	51.06

n = 330

5.1.2 Shopping behaviour

Table 5.2 shows the shopping habits of the respondents, from the clothing stores they most frequent to the amount of money they were willing to spend on clothing monthly. Of all the respondents, 44% shopped seasonally, 31% shopped occasionally, while only 21% shopped for clothing monthly. Medium priced chain stores were the most frequented by the majority of the respondents (68%), while 36 % of the respondents seem to prefer low priced stores, and 22% bought their smart casual wear at men's wear designer stores. Only 7% of the respondents buy their clothes at upmarket stores. The number of jeans and T-shirts bought by the respondents during a six month period surpassed all other clothing items, followed by button-up shirts (55%), golf shirts (49%), and chinos (45%). Many respondents (56%) claimed to always assess the quality of smart casual clothing before purchase while only 24(7%) seldom or never assess their smart casual clothing for quality. Two hundred and seven (63%) respondents indicated willingness to spend up toR1000 on the purchase of smart casual clothing per month, with 40 respondents (12%) on the high end willing to spend more than R2000 monthly on their apparel. Results for apparel quality assessment showed that over half of the respondents (56%), assessed a garment for quality before purchase, while only seven percent seldom or never evaluate apparel for quality.

Table 5.2: The shopping behaviour of respondents
SHOPPING BEHAVIOR

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Clothing stores most frequented (refer to Questionnaire, Addendum A)		
Low price chain stores	118	35.76
Medium priced clothing store	225	68.18
Men's wear designer stores	73	22.12
Upmarket stores	24	7.27
Men's outfitters	14	4.24
Other stores	8	2.42
Frequency of shopping		
Occasionally	103	31.21
Seasonally	146	44.24
Monthly	69	20.91
Weekly	12	3.64
Number of clothing items bought in the past six months (at the time of data collection)		
Button-up shirt	182	55.15
Chinos	150	45.45
Dress trousers	80	24.24
Golf shirt	161	48.79
Sports jacket	77	23.33
Button-up jersey	76	23.03
Blazer	84	25.45
Sweater	102	30.91
Jeans	247	74.85
t-shirt	244	73.94
Waist coat	43	13.03
Other	14	4.24
Amount respondents are willing to spend on apparel monthly (Rand)		
0-500	103	31.21
501-1000	104	31.52
1001-1500	53	16.06
1501-2000	30	9.09
2001+	40	12.12
Pre-purchase quality assessment		
Always	186	56.36
Sometimes	120	36.36
Seldom/Never	24	7.27

n = 330

5.2 RESULTS

5.2.1 Importance of intrinsic formal features and extrinsic features in the assessment of apparel quality

In the second section (B) of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the degree of importance of each of the statements given on a four-point Likert-type scale. The scale ranged from "not important" and "slightly important", to "important" and "very important". The first sub objective sought to explore and describe the role of intrinsic formal features and extrinsic features in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during apparel purchase decision-making. There were 12 statements for each feature measured. Results were presented in the form of frequencies and percentages. The most important informational cue was determined according to

the highest mean score. The results for all statements are presented in Table 5.3 and Table 5.4 below**.** More specifically, the specific objective for Table 5.3 sought to explore and describe the role of intrinsic formal features (design, construction, materials and finishes) in apparel quality assessment, while the specific objective for Table 5.4 sought to explore and describe the role of extrinsic features (brand name/label, store image, country of origin & price) in apparel quality assessment.

Table 5.3 shows results of the importance placed on intrinsic formal features. Intrinsic formal features are physical properties of garments. The three intrinsic formal features, design, materials, and workmanship, are represented by specific statements. Statements regarding design and workmanship received high scores for both "very important" and "important". Within design statements, "a style that is in fashion" was rated less important than the other three measurement statements. Materials and finishes seemed less important than workmanship and design as only the fibre content was very important to the respondents. Although the stability and texture of the fabric was important, the presence of finishes seemed to be less important overall as more than half of the respondents indicated that this aspect was only slightly important or not important at all.

Table 5.3: Intrinsic formal features as indicators of quality during purchase (N=330)

	Very important		Important		Slightly important		Not important	
Design	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Classic , timeless style (does not go out of fashion quickly)	133	40.30	115	34.85	60	18.18	22	6.67
A colour that tunes in with my existing clothes	127	38.48	127	38.48	50	15.15	26	7.88
The design features such as pockets, buttons, pleats	118	35.76	128	38.79	53	16.06	31	9.39
A style that is in fashion	73	22.12	111	33.64	88	26.67	58	17.58
Materials and finishes	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The fibre content of the clothing item	110	33.33	121	36.67	66	20.00	33	10.00
The fabric should be firm and stable (closely woven)	78	23.64	132	40.00	84	25.45	36	10.91
The fabric's texture (e.g. a smooth surface)	77	23.33	141	42.73	83	25.15	29	8.79
Presence of fabric finishes (i.e. pre-washed ; anti-static)	51	15.45	103	31.21	103	31.21	73	22.12
Workmanship/construction	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Construction that holds together (seams/hems intact)	132	40.00	122	36.97	52	15.76	24	7.27
Neat construction (straight seams, no loose threads, no puckers)	127	38.48	123	37.27	59	17.88	21	6.36
Colour matching between the fabric, threads, lining and trimmings	85	25.76	106	32.12	82	24.85	57	17.27
Matching stripes, checks or prints	79	23.94	103	31.21	87	26.36	61	18.48

The extrinsic features included statements on the price of apparel, the presence of a brand name or designer label, the image of the store to the consumer, and the country or origin information. Descriptive results presented in Table 5.4 show that the extrinsic factors seem to be less important to the respondents. Although special deals and bargains seem to be important (36%), respondents did not think that higher prices could be equated to better quality. Likewise, a well-known brand at a higher price was also not seen as an important indication of quality. The presence of designer labels seem to be a relatively important indication of quality, while brands that have proven to be reliable or durable and brands known for their good fit, are seen as important and very important indicators of quality. Store attributes that had an effect on the respondents' perception of quality were the store's reputation for quality clothes, while good return and exchange policies were important and the aesthetic appeal of the store slightly less important. The country of origin did not seem to play such an important role as some of the other features. A country renowned for durable clothing seemed to be slightly more important than a country known for its quality clothes, while clothing products from the economically developed countries seemed to play a less important role when assessing quality.

Table 5.4: Extrinsic features as indicators of quality during purchase (N=330)

	Very important		Important		Slightly important		Not important	
Price	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Special deals/bargains on clothing	99	30.00	119	36.06	72	21.82	40	12.12
High priced clothing as this indicates good quality	60	18.18	98	29.70	115	34.85	57	17.27
A well-known brand at a higher price	58	17.58	92	27.88	115	34.85	65	19.70
Brand	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Clothing brands that have proven to be reliable/durable	155	46.97	132	40.00	35	10.61	8	2.42
Brands known for their good fit	143	43.33	127	38.48	51	15.45	9	2.73
The presence of a designer label	58	17.58	95	28.79	92	27.88	85	25.76
Store	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The clothing store's reputation for quality clothes	127	38.48	132	40.00	61	18.48	10	3.03
The store with good return and exchange policies	90	27.27	103	31.21	89	26.97	48	14.55
Aesthetically appealing store environment	67	20.30	103	31.21	110	33.33	50	15.15
Country of origin	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The country of origin's reputation for quality products	51	15.45	92	27.88	100	30.30	87	26.36
A country of origin known for durable clothing	48	14.55	103	31.21	106	32.12	73	22.12
A garment from an economically developed country	29	8.79	61	18.48	100	30.30	140	42.42

5.2.2 Importance of functional performance and aesthetic performance in the assessment of apparel quality

Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 present results for the second objective which aimed at exploring and describing the role of functional performance and aesthetic features in young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during apparel purchase decision-making. Results for the functional performance quality indicators, as shown in Table 5.5, had the highest number of "very important"/"important" responses across the table of statements. The statements "comfortable to wear and move in" and "a style that fits my body well" had the highest "very important" ratings with 64% and 66% responses respectively.

Table 5.5: Functional performance as quality indicator during purchase (N-330)

	Very important		Important		Slightly important		Not important	
Durability	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Good colour retention/colourfastness	152	46.06	140	42.42	31	9.39	7	2.12
Recovers well after stretching	143	43.33	140	42.42	39	11.82	8	2.42
Resistance to snagging (no pulling up of surface yarns)	113	34.24	138	41.82	65	19.70	14	4.24
Resistance to abrasion (not form little balls on surface)	111	33.64	129	39.09	75	22.73	15	4.55
Comfort	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A style that fits my body well	219	66.36	89	26.97	21	6.36	1	0.30
Comfortable to wear and moves easily with the body	211	63.94	93	28.28	25	7.58	1	0.30
Provides good absorbency and ventilation i.e. breathable)	118	35.76	126	38.18	78	23.64	8	2.42
No static build-up (does not cling)	91	27.58	128	38.79	85	25.76	26	7.88
Ease of care	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Machine washable	144	43.64	91	27.58	68	20.61	27	8.18
Easy care finishes (i.e. wrinkle or stain resistance)	98	29.70	105	31.82	90	27.27	37	11.21
Clear, easy to follow instructions for ease of care	95	28.79	125	37.88	78	23.54	32	9.70
Tumble dryable	93	28.18	71	21.52	89	26.97	77	23.33

Table 5.6 (next page) presents the descriptive statistics for the aesthetic features as quality indicators used during pre-purchase decision-making. The expressive statement "makes me feel good about myself" had the highest score of "very important" as rated by 61% of the respondents. All sensory statements were rated high on both "very important" and "important" except for "has a flattering colour" with the highest score of 34% on "important". Only two statements were indicated as "not

important" in apparel quality assessment; these statements were "impresses other people" (32%), and "conceals body parts I feel are physically flawed" (31%).

Table 5.6: Aesthetic performance as quality indicator during purchase (N=330)

The apparel I choose	Very important		Important		Slightly important		Not important	
Symbolic	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Makes me feel comfortable amidst my peers	149	45.15	109	33.03	44	13.33	28	8.48
Symbolises my lifestyle	144	43.64	108	32.73	53	16.06	25	7.58
Symbolises my profession	90	27.27	98	29.70	87	26.36	55	16.67
Impresses other people	57	17.27	69	20.91	99	30.00	105	31.82
Expressive	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Makes me feel good about myself	202	61.21	94	18.48	29	8.79	5	1.52
Helps me express my identity	111	33.64	114	34.55	82	24.85	23	6.97
Expresses my masculinity	72	21.82	103	31.21	90	27.27	65	19.70
Conceals body parts I feel are physically flawed	56	16.97	86	26.06	85	25.76	103	31.21
Sensory	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Has smooth seams or edges that do not irritate the skin	140	42.42	117	35.45	55	16.67	18	5.45
Feels pleasant on my skin	130	39.39	145	43.94	33	10.00	22	6.67
Falls softly on my body (does not pull or bulge anywhere)	103	31.21	118	35.76	69	20.91	40	12.12
Has a flattering colour	81	24.55	114	34.55	78	23.64	57	17.27

5.2.2.1 Summary

To get a better understanding of the importance of apparel quality informational cues as rated by consumers, an aggregate analysis was performed. Based on the descriptive review of all statements in the above Tables (5.3, 5.4. 5.5 and 5.6) an aggregate score was taken of the quality indicators. Mean scores represent summations of individual scale items that comprise each informational cue.

Findings presented in Table 5.7 show that as much as functional performance is a latent aspect of quality, it had the highest mean score of 3.09 (M_{max}=4) with comfort and durability rated the highest among all quality indicators with mean scores of 3.27 and 3.17 respectively. Aesthetic performance, with a mean score of 2.86 was the second most important dimension, followed closely by the intrinsic formal dimension, with a mean score of 2.84. For aesthetic performance, sensory significance of apparel had a higher mean score (2.86) than expressive (2.82) and symbolic significance (2.80). Design had the highest mean score of 2.94 for the intrinsic formal dimension and materials and finishes the lowest at 2.73. Under the extrinsic features, brand name was the biggest determinant of quality with a score of 2.97. The extrinsic dimension had the lowest mean score of 2.63 as price and country of origin carried the lowest mean scores overall; 2.46 and 2.21 respectively.

The results show that respondents deem functional performance to be the most important determinant of apparel quality assessment during purchase decision-making.

Table 5.8 summarises the importance placed on the different quality indicators used by young adult males to form their perception of quality of smart casual apparel during purchase decision-making.

Table 5.7: The means and standard deviations for intrinsic and extrinsic features and functional and aesthetic performance (arranged in order of importance)

Variable	M	SD
Functional performance	3.09	0.50
Comfort	3.27	0.54
Durability	3.17	0.64
Ease of care	2.82	0.74
Aesthetic performance	2.86	0.58
Sensory	2.96	0.72
Expressive	2.82	0.65
Symbolic	2.80	0.72
Intrinsic formal features	2.84	0.51
Design	2.94	0.61
Workmanship	2.86	0.66
Fabric/materials	2.73	0.66
Extrinsic features	2.63	0.55
Brand	2.97	0.62
Store image	2.81	0.69
Price	2.46	0.89
Country of origin	2.21	0.84

N = 330; Scale 1 = not important, 4 = very important.
Note: Each score represents the average of the importance of each quality indicator to young adult males' perception of quality

Table 5.8: The means and standard deviations for each quality indicator (arranged in order of importance)

Variable	M	SD
Comfort	3.271	0.54
Durability	3.167	0.64
Brand	2.973	0.62
Sensory	2.958	0.72
Design	2.943	0.61
Workmanship	2.861	0.66
Expressive	2.820	0.65
Ease of care	2.817	0.74
Store image	2.806	0.69
Symbolic	2.796	0.72
Fabric/materials	2.726	0.66
Price	2.461	0.89
Country of origin	2.214	0.84

N = 330; Scale 1 = not important, 4 = very important.
Note: Each score represents the average of the importance of each quality indicator to young adult males' perception of quality (to discern between the means 3 decimals were retained in the table; colours are used to indicate which dimension each represents)

5.2.3 Relationships between the apparel features in the assessment of apparel quality

The findings that follow were based on objective three, which was to explore and describe the relationship between the importance of intrinsic, extrinsic and performance dimensions as informational cues in the quality assessment of smart casual wear.

5.2.3.1 Consistency within measures of informational cue importance

Coefficient Alpha quantifies reliability and is used to measure the internal consistency of scores comparing at least two measurements in a scale and is appropriate in estimating the internal consistency of an attitude scale in a Likert-like format (Isaac & Michael, 1997:132). In this study, the scores or values were obtained from the measurement of the male consumers' perception of the importance of apparel quality informational cues. It is highly unlikely to obtain perfectly reliable scores therefore reliability is measured with an allowance for error (Salkind, 2010: 159; Isaac &Michael, 1997:134-135). According to Isaac and Michael (1997:135), consumers' attributes such as motivation, attitudes, changes in standards of evaluation and memory of particular facts, and the guessing of answers could affect the reliability of the scores thus introducing measurement error. The ways in which a researcher can optimise Cronbach's coefficient alpha is through the characteristics of the sample and the number of items on the instrument. This study used a heterogeneous sample composed of different ethnicities, different levels of highest education qualifications achieved, and a larger size of the population in order to enhance internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha as a test for reliability is a lower-bound estimate meaning that actual reliability may be a bit higher (Isaac & Michael, 1997:131-133). It is commonly agreed that for reliability the coefficients needs to be at 0.7 or higher, with 0.90 being a high coefficient (Salkind, 2010:159). Even though the Cronbach's alpha for a group of statements is higher than 0.7, one should also consider each variable's correlation with the total. If the correlation is low, removal of this statement will usually improve the overall Cronbach alpha as well as the internal consistency (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for each group of features representing formal intrinsic, extrinsic, functional performance and aesthetic features (Questions 10, 11, 12 and 13 respectively). For intrinsic formal features, the Cronbach's alpha was at 0.77; above 0.7 meaning that the statements to test the objectives were reliable.

Table 5.9 indicates how the Cronbach's alpha for all the statements would be affected if each specific statement were to be excluded. In the case of the statements representing the formal intrinsic features, removal of any of the statements would lower the Cronbach's alpha.

The correlation with the total should ideally be above 0.40, but (the statistician pointed out that) the statements with a correlation between 0.31 and 0.39 could be retained as the alpha values were above 0.74 (McCrae, Kurtz, Yamagata, & Terracciano, 2010; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; Taylor, 1990).

Table 5.9: Cronbach's coefficient alpha for intrinsic formal features as indicators of quality

	Raw Variables	
Intrinsic formalfeatures	**Correlation with total**	**Alpha**
The design features such as pockets, buttons, pleats	0.42	0.75
Classic , timeless style (does not go out of fashion quickly)	0.31	0.76
A colour that tunes in with my existing clothes	0.41	0.75
A style that is in fashion	0.31	0.76
The fibre content of the clothing item	0.35	0.76
The fabric should be firm and stable (closely woven)	0.43	0.75
The fabric's texture (e.g. a smooth surface)	0.44	0.75
Presence of fabric finishes (i.e. pre-washed ; anti-static)	0.48	0.74
Colour matching between the fabric, threads, lining and trimmings	0.55	0.74
Matching stripes, checks or prints	0.45	0.75
Neat construction (straight seams, no loose threads, no puckers)	0.39	0.75
Construction that holds together (seams/hems intact)	0.32	0.76

N = 330; Raw variable α= 0.768

For the extrinsic features, the Cronbach's alpha for the raw variables was 0.78. Table 5.10 (next page) indicates how the Cronbach's alpha for all the statements would be affected if each specific statement were to be excluded. The first statement posed a threat to the rest of the data as it had a very low correlation at 0.09. This was due to the ambiguity of the statement presented to measure the price construct. 'Special deals/bargains on clothing' could mean sales on quality merchandise, or just the purchase of cheap apparel. Hence, the statement was removed from further analysis as it reduced the internal consistency and reliability and would not correlate highly with the other statements. By removing this statement the Cronbach's alpha for the external features was increased to 0.80. The fifth statement on 'clothing brands that have proven to be reliable and durable' also presented a challenge with a low correlation score of 0.20, but by removing the statement, the Cronbach's alpha would only improve the original value from 0.77 to 0.78. On the recommendation of the statistician this statement was retained for further analysis because in as much as it might have been perceived as a double barrelled statement it pointed in one performance direction.

Table 5.10: Cronbach's coefficient alpha for extrinsic features as indicators of quality

	Raw Variables	
Extrinsic features	**Correlation with total**	**Alpha**
Special deals/bargains on clothing	0.09	0.80
High priced clothing as this indicates good quality	0.47	0.76
A well-known brand at a higher price	0.55	0.75
The presence of a designer label	0.52	0.75
Clothing brands that have proven to be reliable and durable	0.20	0.78
Brands known for their good fit	0.37	0.77
The store with good return and exchange policies	0.34	0.77
The clothing store's reputation for quality clothes	0.41	0.76
Aesthetically appealing store environment	0.45	0.76
The country of origin's reputation for quality products	0.56	0.74
A country of origin known for durable clothing	0.47	0.76
A garment from an economically developed country	0.54	0.75

N = 330
Raw variable α= 0.777

The Cronbach's Coefficient alpha for the functional performance features of apparel was at 0.81. As indicated in Table 5.11 the removal of any of the statements would lower the overall Cronbach's alpha in most cases. This means that the statements for functional performance were very reliable and internally consistent.

Table 5.11: Cronbach's coefficient alpha for functional performance as indicator of quality

	Raw Variables	
Functional performance	**Correlation with total**	**Alpha**
Good colour retention/colourfastness	0.43	0.80
Resistance to abrasion (not form little balls on surface)	0.51	0.79
Recovers well after stretching	0.60	0.79
Resistance to snagging (no pulling up of surface yarns)	0.53	0.79
Comfortable to wear and moves easily with the body	0.36	0.81
A style that fits my body well	0.30	0.81
No static build-up (does not cling)	0.56	0.79
Provides good absorbency and ventilation (i.e. breathable)	0.55	0.79
Clear, easy to follow instructions for ease of care	0.46	0.80
Easy care finishes (i.e. wrinkle or stain resistance)	0.65	0.78
Machine washable	0.37	0.81
Tumble dryable	0.31	0.82

N = 330
Raw variable α= 0.813

For aesthetic performance, the Cronbach's alpha was at 0.83, meaning that the statements to test the objectives were very reliable. Table 5.12 indicates how the removal of each of the statements would affect the Cronbach's alpha. It is clear that the removal of any of the statements would decrease the Cronbach's alpha. This is an indication of both reliability and internal consistency for the statements used to measure aesthetic performance as quality indicator.

Table 5.12: Cronbach's coefficient alpha for aesthetic performanceas indicator of quality

	Raw Variables	
Aesthetic performance	**Correlation with total**	**Alpha**
Symbolises my lifestyle	0.59	0.81
Impresses other people	0.47	0.82
Makes me feel comfortable amidst my peers	0.46	0.82
Symbolises my profession	0.51	0.82
Makes me feel good about myself	0.35	0.83
Helps me express my identity	0.59	0.81
Expresses my masculinity	0.47	0.82
Conceals body parts I feel are physically flawed	0.47	0.82
Feels pleasant on my skin	0.50	0.82
Falls softly on my body (does not pull or bulge anywhere)	0.56	0.82
Has smooth seams or edges that do not irritate the skin	0.37	0.83
Has a flattering colour	0.57	0.81

N = 330
Raw variable α= 0.833

5.2.4 Correlations between the informational cues

Table 5.13: Means and Standard deviation of informational cues

Variable	Mean	Std Dev
Intrinsic formal features	2.84	0.51
Extrinsic features	2.63	0.55
Functional performance	3.09	0.50
Aesthetic performance	2.86	0.58

N = 330; Scale 1 = not important, 4 = very important.

The third objective of the study was to explore and describe the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic features, and the functional performance and aesthetic performance used as informational cues in the young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making. Correlation is a measure of the linear relationship between two variables. It is the degree to which pairs of data values cluster together around a line of best fit and is denoted by a correlation symbol "r". Positive r values denote positive associations between the variables and negative values denote negative associations. The value of one, negative or positive, denotes a strong linear

correlation, representing extreme values or the perfect correlation, and is represented in a perfect straight line on a scatter plot. Scatter plots provide a visual representation of the linear relationship between two variables. Scatter plots reveal associations, positive, negative, or non-existent, of the values of two variables. Interpretation of the Pearson's correlation coefficient was based on strength of the correlation values as described by Evan's (1996). His guideline suggests five levels for the absolute value of "r". Table 5.14 below shows these guidelines for the interpreting the correlation coefficient. R^2 indicates how much of the variance in the dependent variable is accounted for by the independent variable (McCrae, Kurtz, Yamagata, & Terracciano, 2010)

Table 5.14: Guidelines for interpreting Pearson's correlation coefficient(Evans, 1996)

R	Strength	R^2*
0.00 < r <0.19	Very weak	0 – 3.9%
0.20 < r <0.39	Weak	4 – 15.9%
0.40 < r <0.59	Moderate	16 – 35.9%
0.60 < r <0.79	Strong	36 – 63.9%
0.80 < r < 1.0	Very strong	64 – 100%

Where for instance r = 0.55 suggests a moderate positive correlation and r = -0.55 a moderate negative correlation
*R^2 = coefficient of determination, expressed as a percentage, measures the proportion of variability in one variable that can be determined from the relationship with the other variable.

Pearson's correlation analysis was performed in order to explore relationships among the quality dimensions. Results are presented in Table 5.15 below. In examining the correlation matrix with correlations between all quality dimension variables, patterns observed were similar and showed very significant positive correlations. There was a consistent statistical significant positive relationship that is moderately strong among the quality dimension pairs; that is, between intrinsic formal features and functional performance; intrinsic formal features and aesthetic performance; extrinsic features and functional performance, and extrinsic features and aesthetic performance. There was only a weak, although highly significant, positive relationship between extrinsic and functional performance dimensions.

Table 5.15: Pearson's correlation between dependent variables

		Functional performance	Aesthetic performance
Intrinsic formal features	R p-Value	0.51 <.0001**	0.42 <.0001**
Extrinsic features	R p- Value	0.33 <.0001**	0.53 <.0001**

*Note **p<0.01; N = 330*

The following scatter plot represents the relationship between intrinsic formal features and functional performance.

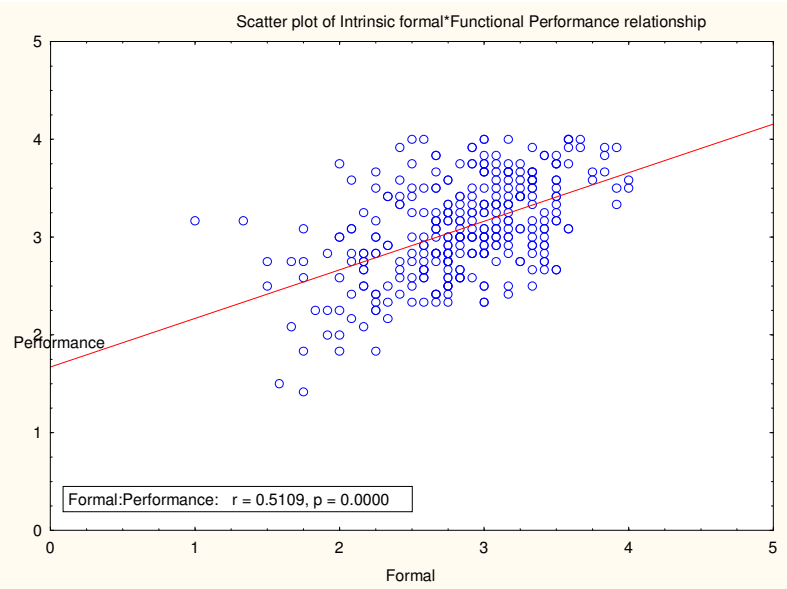

Figure 5.1: Scatter plot of Intrinsic formal features*functional performance relationship

The means (Table 5.13) for the importance of intrinsic formal features (M= 2.84; SD = 0.51) and the functional performance (M= 3.09; SD 0.50) suggests that the intrinsic formal features are important and that functional performance features are equally important (M_{max}=4). The Pearson's correlation coefficient value, r=0.51, was significant at p<0.0001. These results showed a positively correlated relationship between the variables. According to Evans (1996), the r value of 0.51 constitutes a moderate positive correlation between the two variables (Table 5.15). The scatter plot above, Fig. 5.1, suggests a linear relationship between intrinsic formal features and functional performance. It seems the higher the values of intrinsic formal features, the higher the functional performance response was as well.

Figure 5.2: Scatter plot of intrinsic formal features*aesthetic performance relationship

The means (Table 5.13) for the importance of intrinsic formal features (M=2.84; SD = 0.51) and the aesthetic performance (M=2.86; SD = 0.58) suggest that intrinsic formal features and aesthetic performance features are equally important (M_{max}=4). Pearson's correlation test was run to determine and quantify the relationship between intrinsic formal features and aesthetic performance. The Pearson's correlation coefficient value, r=0.42, was significant at p<0.0001. These results showed a positively correlated relationship between the variables. According to Evans (1996), the r value of 0.42 constitutes a moderate positive correlation between the two variables (Table 5.15). The scatter plot (Figure 5.2), suggests a linear relationship between aesthetic and intrinsic formal features. When the respondents' placed more importance on aesthetics performance the importance placed on intrinsic formal features was higher as well.

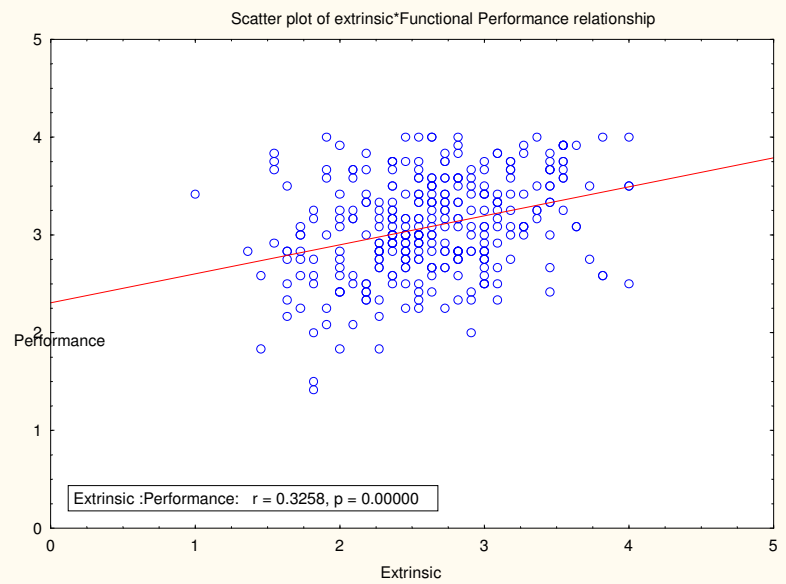

Figure 5.3: Scatter plot of extrinsic features* functional performance relationship

The means (Table 5.13) for the importance of extrinsic features (M=2.63; SD = 0.55) and the functional performance (M=3.09; SD = 0.50) suggest that intrinsic formal features are important, while extrinsic features are slightly important (M_{max}=4). Pearson's correlation test was run to determine and quantify the relationship between extrinsic features and functional performance. The Pearson's correlation coefficient value, r=0.32, was significant at p<0.0001. These results showed a positively correlated relationship between the variables. According to Evans (1996), the r value of 0.33 constitutes a weak positive correlation between the two variables (Table 5.15). The scatter plot (Figure 5.3), suggests a weak linear relationship between extrinsic features and functional performance. Compared to other correlation values in the study, the relationship between extrinsic features and functional performance was the weakest.

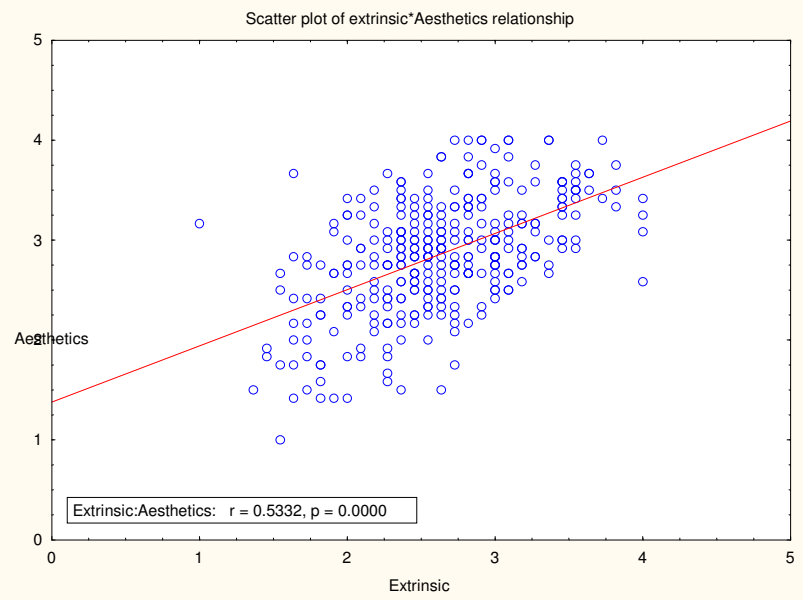

Figure 5.4: Scatter plot for extrinsic features* aesthetic performance relationship

The means (Table 5.13) for the importance of extrinsic features (M=2.63; SD = 0.55) and the aesthetic features (M=2.86; SD = 0.58) suggest that extrinsic features are slightly important, while aesthetic features are important (M_{max}=4). Pearson's correlation test was run to determine and quantify the relationship between extrinsic features and aesthetic performance. The Pearson's correlation coefficient value, r=0.53, was significant at p<0.0001. These results showed a positively correlated relationship between the variables. According to Evans (1996), the r value of 0.53 constitutes a moderate positive correlation between the two variables (Table 5.15). The scatter plot (Figure 5.4), suggests a linear relationship between extrinsic features and aesthetic performance. It seems the higher the values of extrinsic features the higher the aesthetic response was as well.

5.2.4.1 Summary

The four main constructs tested to establish relationships included intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance. Information generated by Pearson's correlation analysis of the main constructs, correlated together produced a correlation coefficient of p<0.0001 for all possible correlations. Most values produced a moderately strong positive correlation (r = 0.42 to r = 0.53) save the extrinsic features-functional performance correlation at r = 0.32, which indicated a weak, but positive correlation, meaning that extrinsic cues are not important indicators of functional performance features. Scatter plots provided a descriptive view of the deviation from the line of best fit.

5.2.5 The influence of demographics on the importance of apparel features as quality informational cues

Additional exploratory analyses using the General Linear Model were run to discover the influence of demographics on the importance of intrinsic formal features, functional performance, aesthetic performance, and extrinsic features. In building the GLM, consumer characteristics or variables that might have an effect on the response variable were included. These variables included race, age, monthly apparel expenditure (Rand), education level reached, practice to assess quality before purchasing. This model was most appropriate in capturing the influence of these specific variables on the informational cues used when choosing and purchasing quality apparel. The limitation in using the general linear model is that this test just gives a slight indication of the direction of data. It does not measure or indicate other mechanisms that affect consumer's reliance on the informational cues. R-square is a test that evaluates model fit. It is used to evaluate if variability in outcomes has been accounted for. The R-square was used to show the percentage of variation of the dependent variable (informational cues) as explained by the independent variable (demographic data). For tests with R-Square values less than ten percent, the source of residual variance within the measures was determined. The independent variable class levels of age, race, monthly apparel expenditure, education level, and tendency to assess quality during purchase decision-making are identified by indicating the number of levels as well as a description of the levels. For monthly apparel expenditure only the different levels were each assigned a number which was used in further discussions (Table 5.16).

Table 5.16: Class level information

Class	Levels
Race	3: Black; white; other
Age group	2: under 30; over30
Spend (R)	5: 1 (0-500); 2 (501-1000); 3 (1001-1500); 4 (1501-2000); 5 (2001 +)
Education level	2: Matriculation; post matriculation*
Quality assessment	3: Always; Sometimes; Seldom/ Never

Number of observations used 329 (as one questionnaire was incomplete regarding the above)
*Post school certificate/diploma; degree or equivalent

5.2.5.1 The influence of demographics on consumer's perception of intrinsic formal features as informational cues

A General Linear procedure was conducted to examine whether any of the independent variables (age, race/ethnic background, education level, monthly apparel expenditure, and tendency to assess quality) had an effect on the dependent variable (intrinsic formal features). Results in Table 5.16 show the effects of demographics in terms of age group, education level achieved, ethnic

background, monthly apparel expenditure, and tendency to assess quality on the importance consumers place on intrinsic formal features during apparel quality evaluation. Further analyses using the ANOVA, were conducted to investigate whether there was an important relationship between consumer characteristics and the perceived importance of the various intrinsic formal features in the quality assessment of apparel. The demographic classes that showed a significant relationship were further explored to determine where the differences lay within the different class levels.

Table 5.17: General Linear Model P-value and R-square for intrinsic formal cues

Source	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Sum of Squares (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Value (F)	Pr >F (P)
Model	10	12.51	1.25	5.56	**P<0.0001***
Error	318	71.61	0.23		
Corrected total	328	84.12			
R-Square	**Coeff. Var.**	**Root MSE**	**Formal Mean**		
0.149	16.67	0.47	2.85		

*Sig. Level:*p≤0.05*

Table 5.17 above includes coefficients of determination (R-square), F statistics, DF, and probability levels associated with the ANOVA table below. The variation of the importance of intrinsic formal features was calculated based on the demographic variables. With ANOVA, the F-test revealed a value of 5.56 at a significance of p<0.0001. Demographic characteristics explained 14,9 % (R^2 expressed as %) of the variance in the importance of intrinsic formal features in the quality assessment of apparel. The contribution of demographics was highly significant at p<0.01. Further analyses were done in order to determine which means contributed to the variance effect.

Table 5.18: Analysis of variance: interaction between demographics and intrinsic formal features

Class	DF	Type III SS	MS	F	P-value
Race	2	0.50	0.25	1.11	0.3313
Age	1	0.24	0.24	1.06	0.3029
Monthly apparel expenditure	4	3.52	0.88	3.91	**0.0041***
Education level	1	0.15	0.15	0.66	0.4175
Quality Assessment	2	5.19	2.59	11.52	**<0.0001***

*Sig. Level:*p≤0.05*

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as a way to compare means among the different levels of demographic categories, to show which demographic groups were particularly different from each other. Results are presented in Table 5.18 above. ANOVA revealed no statistically significant interaction between importance of intrinsic formal features and the independent variables (race, age and education level). At a confidence level of 95% (p<0.05), the most significant within group variance was found in the apparel quality assessment category, with an F value of 11.52,

p<0.0001. The other demographic categories with significant within group variance was the monthly apparel expenditure category, p = 0.0041. This means that the main difference in the importance and use of intrinsic formal features in the assessment of apparel among the respondents depended on how important the quality assessment was during purchase and how much money they were willing to spend on apparel per month. A post hoc test, Scheffé's test, was conducted to determine the significant differences between the means for apparel quality assessment and the means for monthly apparel expenditure. Results are presented in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19: Scheffé grouping for monthly apparel expenditure levels and intrinsic formal feature interactions

Scheffé Grouping	Mean	N	Levels of monthly apparel expenditure*
A	3.15	40	5
AB	2.97	53	3
AB	2.88	30	4
B	2.77	103	2
B	2.73	103	1

Note: P=0.05, F=2.4,
Error Degree of Freedom=318;
Error Mean Square = 0.23
Minimum significant difference = 0.29
Harmonic mean of cell sizes = 51.75
* 1 (R 0-500); 2 (R 501-1000); 3 (R 1001-1500); 4 (R 1501-2000); 5 (R 2001 +)

The main differences in means were noted between the means for level five and one, and level five and two of monthly apparel expenditure as indicated in Table 5.19. This shows that the difference between means for respondents willing to spend up to R500 and respondents willing to spend more than R2000 was highest at 0.42, while the difference between means for the respondents willing to spend between R501 and R1000 and those in the highest spend bracket was second at 0.38. Figure 5.5 below shows a box-plot of the distribution of intrinsic formal features' importance to the different monthly apparel expenditure levels to get a descriptive view of how the money consumers are willing to spend on apparel per month interacts with the importance of intrinsic formal features in consumer assessment of apparel quality.

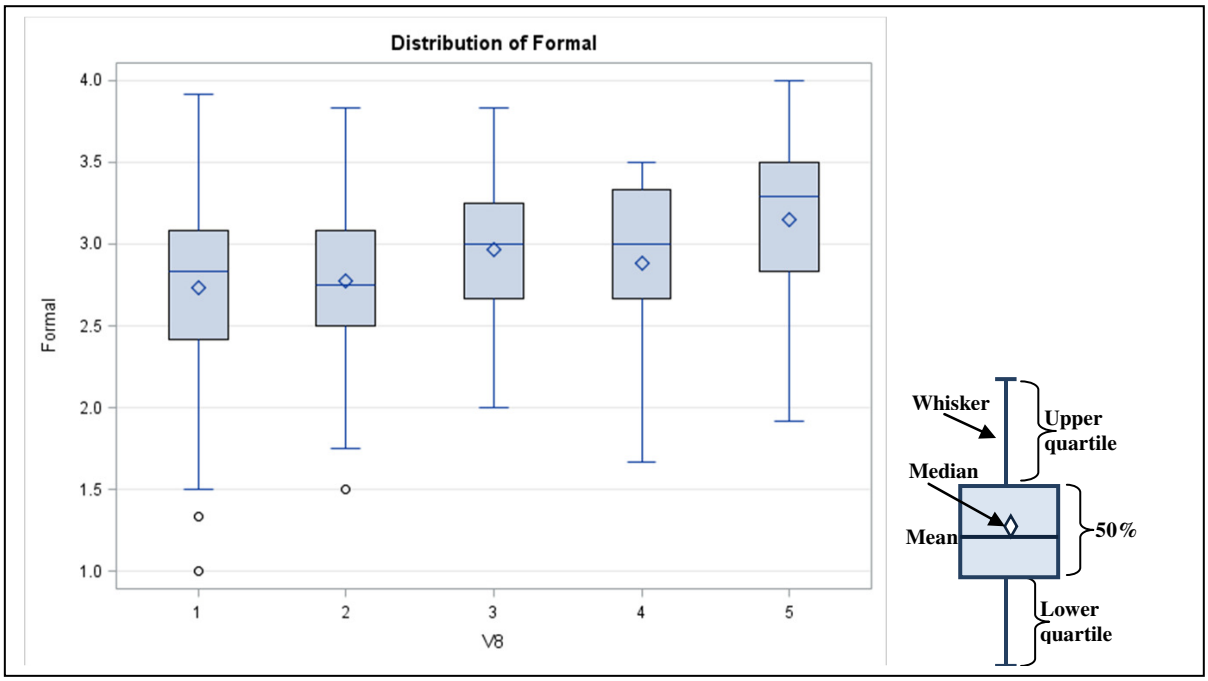

Figure 5.5: Summary of the distribution of intrinsic formal features as explained by monthly apparel expenditure

Based on the above box plot (Figure 5.igure 5.5), for the effect of monthly apparel expenditure on the importance of intrinsic formal cues, the variations as explained through Scheffé's post hoc comparison in Table 5.20 was visible.

Table 5.20: Scheffé grouping for quality assessment and intrinsic formal feature interactions

Scheffé Grouping	Mean	N	Assess
A	2.96	186	1:Always
A	2.75	119	2:Sometimes
B	2.44	24	3:Never/Seldom

Note: p=0.05, F = 3.02
Error Degree of Freedom=318;
Error Mean Square = 0.23
Minimum significant difference = 0.22
Harmonic mean of cell sizes = 54.11

The main differences in means were noted between the means for levels one and three, and levels two and three of apparel quality assessment. This shows that the difference between means for respondents who "always" assess apparel for quality during purchase decision-making and those who "seldom/never" assess was highest at 0.52, while the difference between means for the group of respondents who "sometimes" assess apparel for quality during purchase decision and those who "seldom/never" assess was at 0.31. The difference in the importance of intrinsic formal features means among those who "always" and "sometimes" assess quality was not significant. Scheffé's grouping in Table 5.20 shows the group of respondents who "always" and "sometimes" assess apparel for quality during purchase in group A, and those who "seldom or never" assess apparel for quality in group B. In Figure 5.6 below, the distribution of the importance of intrinsic formal features'

to the different apparel quality assessment groups is plotted to get a descriptive view of how the quality assessment of apparel at purchase interacts with the importance of intrinsic formal cues.

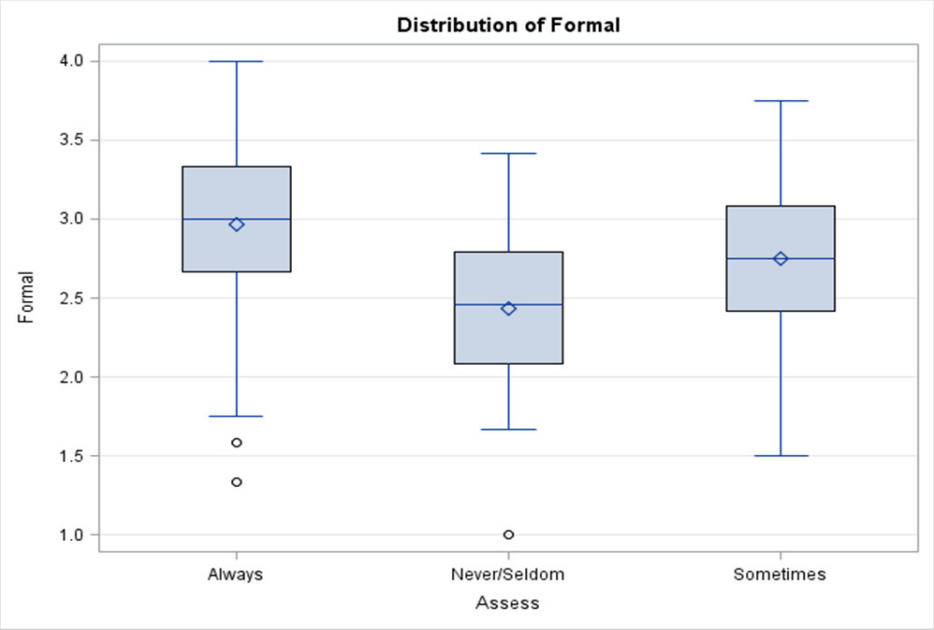

Figure 5.6: Summary of the distribution of intrinsic formal features as explained by quality assessment

Based on the above box plot (Figure 5.6) for the effect of apparel quality assessment on the importance of intrinsic formal features, the variations as explained through Scheffé's post hoc comparison in Table 5.20 were visible.

5.2.5.2 The influence of demographics on consumer perception of extrinsic features as informational cues

A General Linear procedure was conducted to examine whether any of the independent variables (age, race/ethnic background, education level, and monthly apparel expenditure) had an effect on the dependent variable (extrinsic features). Results in Table 5.21 show the effects of demographics in terms of age group, education level achieved, ethnic background, and monthly apparel expenditure on the importance consumers place on extrinsic features during apparel quality evaluation. Further analyses using the ANOVA, were conducted to investigate whether there was an important relationship between consumer characteristics and the perceived importance of the various extrinsic informational cues in the quality assessment of apparel. The demographic classes that showed a significant relationship were further explored to determine where the differences lay within the different class levels.

Table 5.21: General Linear Model P-value and R-square for extrinsic features

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F	P-value
Model	10	11.75	1.18	4.34	**<.0001***
Error	318	86.07	0.27		
Corrected total	328	97.82			
R-Square	**Coeff. Var**	**Root MSE**	**Formal Mean**		
0.120	19.80	0.52	2.63		

*Sig. Level:*p≤0.05*

Table 5.21 above includes the coefficient of determination (R^2), F statistics, DF, and probability levels associated with the ANOVA table below. The variation of the importance of extrinsic features was calculated within the demographic variables. Within ANOVA, the F-test revealed a value of 4.34 at a significance of p<.0001. Demographic characteristics explained 12% (R^2 expressed as %) of contribution of demographics was highly significant at p<0.01. Further analyses were done in order to determine which means contributed to the variance effect.

Table 5.22: Analysis of variance: interaction between demographics and extrinsic features

Class	DF	Type III SS	MS	F	P-value
Race	2	0.35	0.18	0.64	0.5255
Age	1	1.46	1.46	5.40	**0.0208***
Spend	4	6.35	1.59	5.87	**0.0001***
Education level	1	0.95	0.95	3.50	0.0622
Quality Assessment	2	1.76	0.88	3.25	**0.0401***

*Sig. Level:*p≤0.05*

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as a way to compare means among the different levels of demographic characteristics, to show which demographic groups were particularly different from each other. Results are presented in Table 5.22 above. At a confidence level of 95% (p≤ 0.05) ANOVA revealed statistically significant interaction between importance of extrinsic features and the independent variables age, monthly apparel expenditure, and apparel quality assessment. The F-test revealed a statistically significant (p=0.0208) interaction between extrinsic features and the two age groups. The results reveal a statistical highly significant (p=0.0001) interaction between the five levels of monthly apparel expenditure and extrinsic features and a statistically significant (p=0.0401) interaction between the three levels of apparel quality assessment and extrinsic features. Further analyses were done in order to determine which means contributed to the variance effect. A comparison of means was done within the different levels of demographic groups to show which levels within each significant source were particularly different from each other. This means that the main difference in the importance and use of extrinsic features in the assessment of apparel among the respondents depended on how much money they were willing to spend on apparel per month,

age, and on whether or not they assess apparel for quality during purchase decision-making. Since extrinsic features had a very high significance value, a post hoc test, Scheffé's test, was conducted to determine the significant differences between the means of the monthly apparel expenditure levels, age groups, and levels of quality assessment for extrinsic features. The set of effects are presented below, in Table 5.23 for monthly apparel expenditure and in Table 5.24 for age group and Table 5.25 for apparel quality assessment.

Table 5.23: Scheffé grouping means of measurement for extrinsic*monthly apparel expenditure interaction

Scheffé Grouping	Mean	n	V8*
A	2.92	40	5-R2001+
AB	2.78	53	3-R1001-1500
AB	2.77	30	4-R1501-2000
B	2.52	103	1-R0-500
B	2.50	103	2-R501-1000

Note: p=0.05, F=2.4,
Error Degree of Freedom=318;
Error Mean Square = 0.27
Minimum significant difference = 0.32
Harmonic mean of cell sizes = 51.75
*V8= monthly apparel expenditure

Significant differences were noted between monthly apparel expenditure level 5 and 1, 5 and 2. This shows that the difference between means for respondents willing to spend up to R500 and respondents willing to spend more than R2000 was highest at 0.42, while the difference between means for the group willing to spend between R501 and R1000 and those in the highest spend bracket was second at 0.39. In Figure 5.7 below, the distribution of the importance of extrinsic features to the different monthly apparel expenditure levels was plotted to get a descriptive view of how the money consumers are willing to spend on apparel per month interacts with the importance of extrinsic cues in consumer assessment of apparel quality.

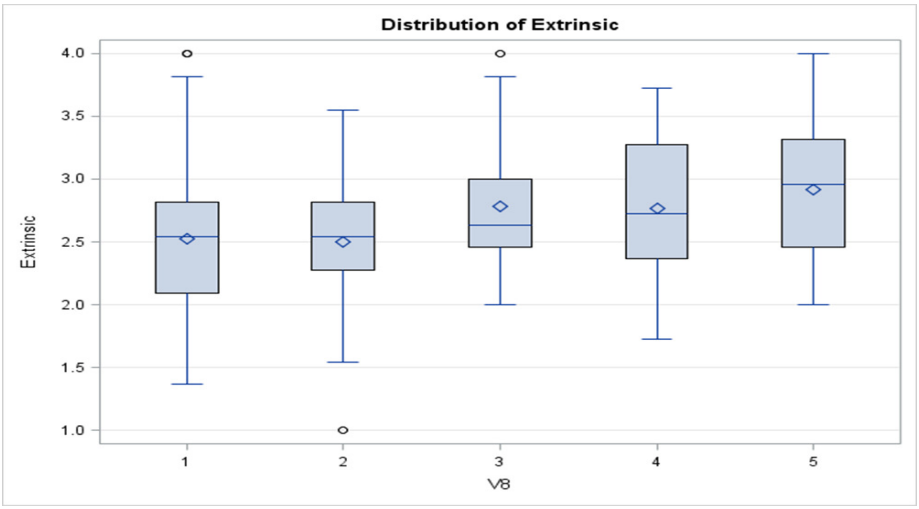

Figure 5.7: Summary of the distribution of extrinsic features as explained by monthly apparel expenditure

Based on the above box plot, Figure 5.7, for the effect of monthly apparel expenditure on the importance of extrinsic cues, the variations as explained through Scheffé's post hoc comparison in Table 5.23 was visible.

Table 5.24: Scheffé grouping means of measurement for extrinsic*age interaction

Scheffé Grouping	Mean	N	Age
A	2.69	122	30 +over
A	2.59	207	Under 30

Note: P=0.05, F=3.02
Error Degree of Freedom=318;

Although there were significant differences among the means as shown in the ANOVA test (p=0.0208), Scheffé's test presented in Table 5.24 could not conclusively indicate where the variance occurred among the age groups. All means compared fell within the same measurement range and the post hoc comparison could not identify the variance. In Figure 5.8 below, the distribution of the importance of extrinsic features' to the two age groups was plotted to get a descriptive view of how the money consumers are willing to spend on apparel per month interacts with the importance of extrinsic cues in consumer assessment of apparel quality.

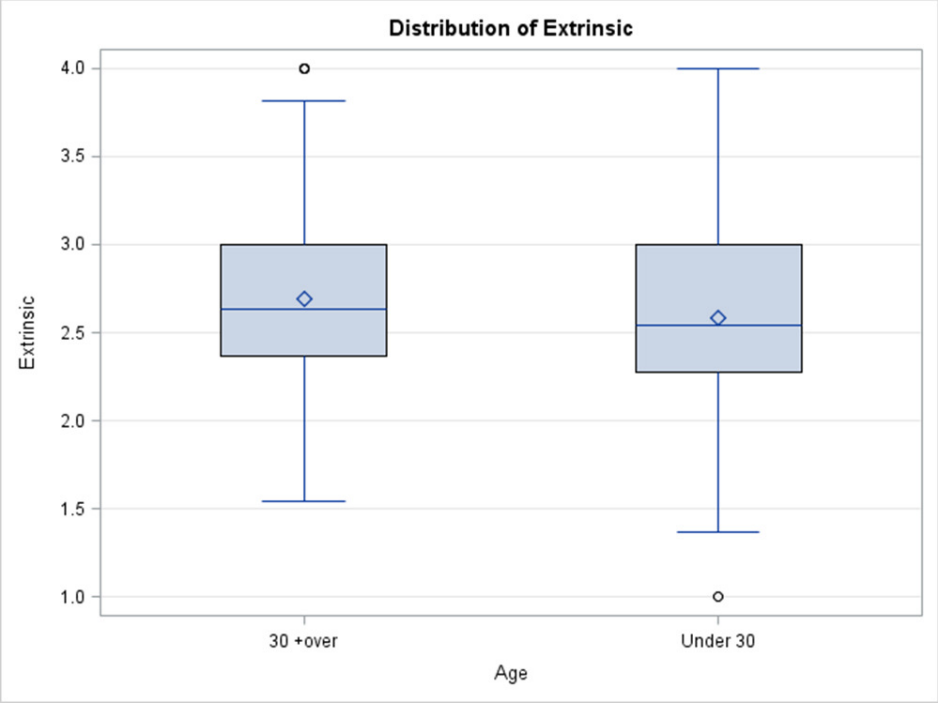

Figure 5.8: Summary of the distribution of extrinsic features as explained by age

According to the box plot above, Figure 5.8, the distribution of both the importance of extrinsic cues in apparel quality over the two age groups was quite similar with the median and means within the

same value bracket and similar quartiles. The whiskers for each box plot are also almost equal in length. With a p value of 0.0208, the variation in values was significant but not very clear with further analysis presented in the box plot.

Table 5.25: Scheffé grouping means of measurement for Extrinsic*Quality Assessment interaction

Scheffé Grouping	Mean	N	Assess
A	2.74	24	Never/Seldom
A	2.68	186	Always
A	2.53	119	Sometimes

Note: P=0.05, F=3.02,
Error Degree of Freedom=318;
Error Mean Square = 0.27
Minimum significant difference = 0.25
Harmonic mean of cell sizes = 54.11

Although there were significant differences among the means as shown in the ANOVA test (p=0.0401), Scheffé's test shown in Table 5.25 could not conclusively indicate where the variance occurred among groups. All means compared fell within the same measurement range group. The post hoc comparison could not identify among which quality assessment levels the variance occurred. In Figure 5.9 below, the distribution of extrinsic features' importance to the different quality assessment groups was plotted to get a descriptive view of how the consumer's propensity to assess apparel for quality at purchase interacts with the importance of extrinsic features in consumer assessment of apparel quality.

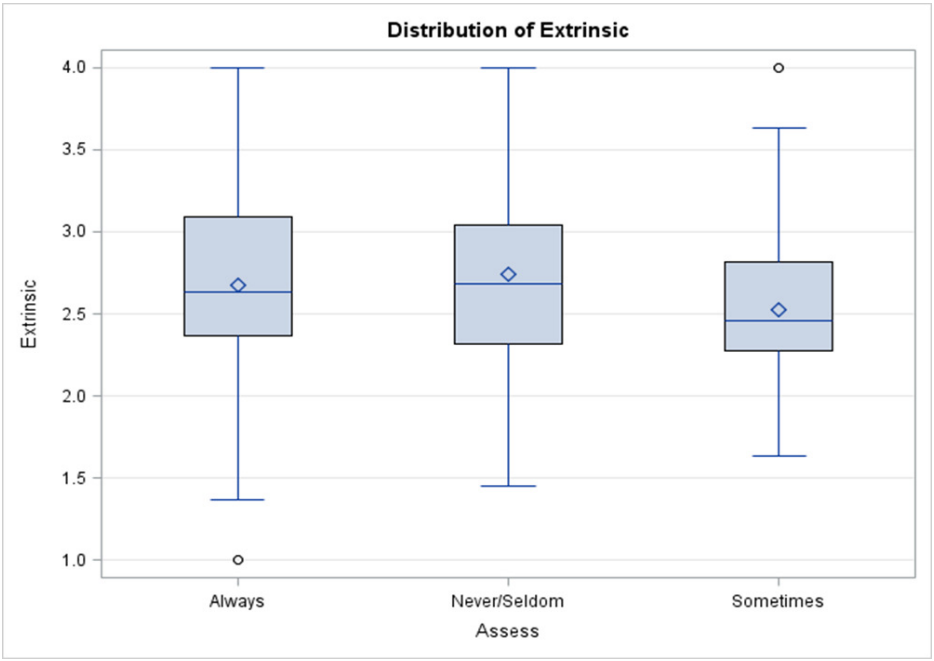

Figure 5.9: Summary of the distribution of extrinsic features as explained by quality assessment

According to the box plot (Figure 5.9), the distribution of the importance of extrinsic features in apparel quality over the three quality assessment groups was quite similar with the median and means within the same value bracket and similar quartiles. The whiskers for always and never/seldom box plot are also almost equal in length. With a p value of 0.0401, the variation in values was mildly significant but not very clear with further analysis presented in the box plot.

5.2.5.3 The influence of demographics on consumer's perception of functional performance indicators as informational cues

A General Linear procedure was conducted in order to examine whether any of the independent variables (age, race/ethnic background, education level, monthly apparel expenditure, and tendency to assess quality during purchase decision-making) had an effect on the dependent variable (functional performance features). Results in Table 5.26Table 5. show the effects of demographics in terms of age group, education level achieved, ethnic background, monthly apparel expenditure, and tendency to assess quality during purchase decision-making on the importance consumers place on functional performance cues during apparel quality evaluation. Further analyses using the ANOVA, were conducted to investigate whether there was an important relationship between consumer characteristics and the perceived importance of the various functional performance informational cues in the quality assessment of apparel. The demographic classes that showed a significant relationship were further explored to determine where the differences lay within the different class levels.

Table 5.26: General Linear Model P-value and R-square for functional performance

SOURCE	DF	Type III SS	MS	F	P-value
Model	10	7.55	0.76	3.28	**0.0005***
Error	318	73.19	0.23		
Corrected total	328	80.73			
R-Square	**CoeffVar**	**Root MSE**	**Formal Mean**		
0.09	15.54	0.48	3.09		

Sig. Level:$p \leq 0.05$*

Table 5.26 above includes the coefficient of determination (R-square), F statistics, DF, and probability levels associated with the ANOVA table below. The variation of the importance of functional performance features was calculated within the demographic variables. Within ANOVA, the F-test revealed a value of 3.28 at a significance of p=0.0005. Demographic characteristics explained 9% (R^2 expressed as %) of the variance in the importance of functional performance features in the quality assessment of apparel. The contribution of demographics was highly significant at p<0.01. Further analyses were done in order to determine which means contributed to the variance effect.

Table 5.27: Analysis of variance: interaction between demographics and functional performance

Class	DF	Type III SS	MS	F	P-value
Race	2	0.35	0.18	0.76	0.4676
Age	1	0.89	0.89	3.86	0.0503
Spend	4	1.50	0.38	1.63	0.1661
Education level	1	0.04	0.04	0.18	0.6737
Quality Assessment	2	3.68	1.84	8.00	**0.0004***

*Sig. Level:*p≤0.05*

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as a way to compare means among the different levels of demographic sources, to show which group means were particularly different from each other in importance of functional performance features. Results are presented in Table 5.27 above. At a 95% confidence level (p≤0.05), ANOVA revealed no statistically significant interaction between importance of functional performance features and most of the demographic variables. No further analysis of effects and interactions was required for these datasets. The test however showed significant results in the interaction between functional performance features and quality assessment (p=0.0004). This means that the main difference in the importance and use of functional performance features in the assessment of apparel among the respondents depended on how important quality assessment was during purchase. A post hoc test, Scheffé's test, was conducted to determine the significant differences between the apparel quality assessment group means within the functional performance features values. Results are presented in Table 5.28.

Table 5.28: Scheffé grouping means of measurement for functional performance*quality assessment interaction

Scheffé Grouping	Mean	N	Assess
A	3.19	186	Always
AB	2.96	119	Sometimes
B	2.90	24	Never/Seldom

Note: P=0.05, F=3.02
Error Degree of Freedom=318;
Error Mean Square = 0.23
Minimum significant difference = 0.23
Harmonic mean of cell sizes = 54.11

Significant differences were noted between groups of consumers who "always" and "never/seldom" assess apparel for quality at purchase. The difference in means between respondents who "always" and those who "seldom/never" assess apparel for quality was highest at 0.29. In Fig. 5.10 below, the importance of functional performance to the different quality assessment levels was plotted to get a descriptive view of how consumer's propensity to assess quality at purchase interacts with the importance of functional performance in consumer assessment of apparel quality.

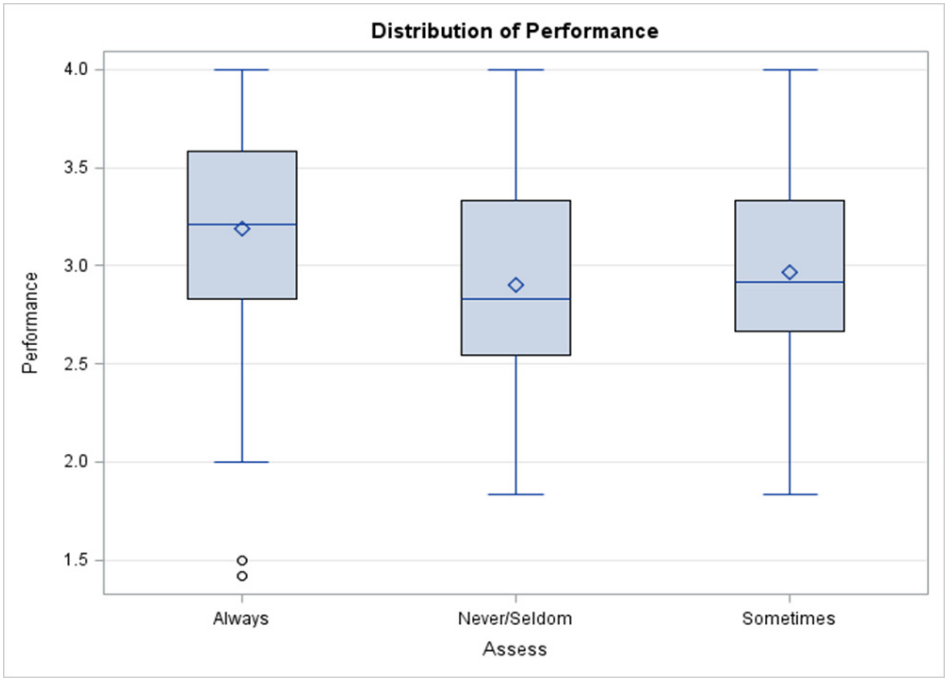

Figure 5.10: Summary of the distribution of functional performance as explained by quality assessment

Based on the above box plot (Fig. 5.10), for the effect of quality assessment on the importance of functional performance features, the variations as explained through Scheffé's post hoc comparison in Table 5.28 was visible.

5.2.5.4 The influence of demographics on consumers' perception of aesthetic performance indicators as informational cues

A General Linear procedure was conducted in order to examine whether any of the independent variables (age, race/ethnic background, education level, and monthly apparel expenditure) had an effect on the dependent variable (aesthetic features). Results in Table 5.29 show the effects of demographics in terms of age group, education level achieved, ethnic background, and on the importance consumers place on aesthetic performance during apparel quality evaluation. Further analyses, using the ANOVA, were conducted to investigate whether there was an important relationship between consumer characteristics and the perceived importance of the various aesthetic features in the quality assessment of apparel. The demographic classes that showed a significant relationship were further explored to determine where the differences lay within the different class levels.

Table 5.29: General Linear Model P-value and R-square for aesthetic performance

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F	P-value
Model	10	6.65	0.66	2.07	**0.0267***
Error	318	102.22	0.32		
Corrected total	328	108.86			
R-Square	**CoeffVar**	**Root MSE**	**Formal Mean**		
0.06	19.8	0.57	2.86		

*Sig. Level:*p≤0.05*

Table 5.29 above includes the coefficient of determination (R-square), F statistics, DF, and probability levels associated with the ANOVA table below. The variation of the importance of aesthetic performance was calculated within the demographic variables. Within ANOVA, the F-test revealed a value of 2.07 at a significance of p=0.0267. Demographic characteristics explained 6% of the variance in the importance of aesthetic performance in the quality assessment of apparel. The contribution of demographics was significant at p<0.05. Further analyses were done in order to determine which means contributed to the variance effect.

Table 5.30: Analysis of variance: interaction between demographics and aesthetic performance

Class	DF	Type III SS	MS	F	P-value
Race	2	1.73	0.86	2.69	0.0696
Age	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.9533
Spend	4	3.19	0.80	2.48	**0.044***
Education level	1	0.11	0.11	0.36	0.5499
Quality Assessment	2	1.25	0.63	1.94	0.1447

*Sig. Level:*p≤0.05*

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as a way to compare means among the different levels of demographic groups, to show which group means were particularly different from each other in importance of aesthetic performance. Results are presented in Table 5.30 above. At a 95% confidence level (p≤0.05), the only significant within group variance was found in the monthly apparel expenditure category, p = 0.044. The ANOVA tests showed insignificant results in the interaction between aesthetic demographics and (p = 0.0696), age (p = 0.9533), education level (p = 0.5499), and levels of quality assessment (p=0.1447). This means that the main difference in the importance and use of aesthetic performance in the assessment of apparel quality among the respondents depended on how much money they were willing to spend on apparel per month. A post hoc test, Scheffé's test, was conducted to determine the significant differences between the monthly apparel expenditure group means. Results are presented in Table 5.31.

Table 5.31: Scheffé grouping means of measurement for Aesthetic performance*monthly apparel expenditure interaction

Scheffé Grouping	Mean	N	V8: monthly apparel expenditure
A	3.05	30	4:R1501-2000
A	2.99	40	5:R2001+
A	2.90	53	3:R1001-1500
A	2.84	103	1:R0-500
A	2.74	103	2:R501-1000

Note: P=0.05, F=2.40
Error Degree of Freedom=318;
Error Mean Square = 0.32
Minimum significant difference = 0.35
Harmonic mean of cell sizes = 51.75

Although there were significant differences among the means as shown in the ANOVA test (p=0.044), Scheffé's test shown in Table 5.31 could not conclusively indicate which groups were particularly different from each other. All means compared fell within the same measurement range group. The post hoc comparison could not identify among which monthly apparel expenditure level the variance occurred.

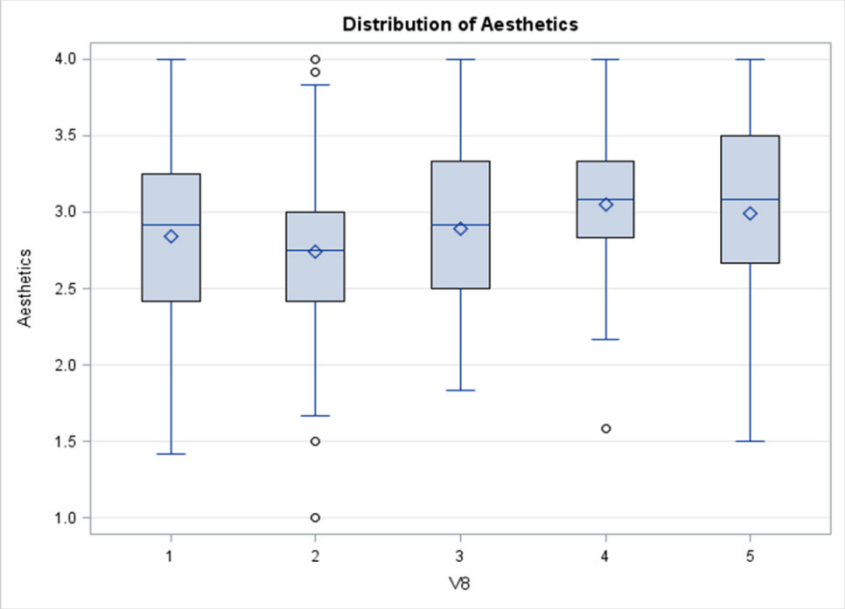

Figure 5.11: Summary of the distribution of aesthetic performance as explained by monthly apparel expenditure

According to the box plot above, Fig. 5.11, for the effect of monthly apparel expenditure on the importance of aesthetic performance was quite similar for all the groups with the median and means within the same value bracket and quartiles. With a p value of 0.0401, the variation in values was mildly significant but not very clear with further analysis presented in the box plot.

5.2.5.5 Summary

The exploratory analysis sought to explore possible effects of respondents personal profiles on the importance placed on the apparel quality dimensions. Variance in means of intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance due to demographics were analysed. Profile classes included age, ethnic background, monthly apparel expenditure, education level, and tendency to assess apparel quality during purchase decision-making. Although these classes did not account for all variability, monthly apparel expenditure and quality assessment seemed to dominate variance effects for most quality dimensions. There was a significant interaction between monthly apparel expenditure and the importance of intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, and aesthetic performance. A significant interaction was also observed between tendency to assess quality and the importance of intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, and aesthetic performance. Age only had an interaction with extrinsic features with no significant difference between the two age groups used in this study. Scheffé's grouping and box plots provided visual representations of the interaction between the profile classes and importance of apparel quality features.

In the next two chapters the findings will be interpreted and then discussed based on objectives and literature. The last chapter will give conclusions of the findings, highlight the limitations of the study and practical and theoretical implications, and finally make recommendations for further studies.

Chapter Six

INTEPRETATION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the role of intrinsic formal and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making.

To achieve this, the first two objectives of the study explored and described the role of intrinsic formal and extrinsic apparel features, and functional performance and aesthetic performance as informational cues in young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making. The research was quantitative and a structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. Informational cues were presented through various descriptive statements and consumers rated their importance in apparel quality assessment. The intrinsic formal features included design, materials and finishing, and workmanship/construction cues. Extrinsic product features studied included brand name/designer label, country of origin, price and store image. Functional performance features of serviceability included comfort, durability, and ease of care. Lastly, the aesthetic properties studied related to sensory, symbolic, and expressive needs of the consumer. The role of the informational cues in the quality assessment criteria was explored through the fashion consumer's decision-making process.

The study then explored the correlation between the different dimensions. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to find the relationship and scatter plots to give a visual representation of the variance of the data.

Through exploratory analysis, the study further investigated the influence or effect of demographic variables (educational qualification, age group, and ethnic background) and shopping habits (monthly apparel expenditure and quality assessment at purchase) on the importance placed on all four apparel quality dimensions.

6.2 DATA INTERPRETATION

6.2.1 Consumer personal profile

Descriptive analyses were conducted for the two parts of the personal information survey. Part one provided initial questions for general demographic information. This study included a purposeful sample of male consumers between the ages of 24 and 36. The sample proved representative of the general population as the number of respondents from each ethnic background closely coincided with percentages observed in the population census of the respondents' location. The number of respondents who had furthered their studies past high school was almost equal to the number of respondents who only had a high school qualification or less. These results implied that data gathered from the educational qualifications segments could be compared. This study however did not examine respondents' fields of study or specialisation, considering this study explored informational cues in the assessment of apparel quality. All respondents who pursued higher education after high school specialised in areas other than quality assurance or textiles and apparel.

In this study, shopping habits varied among the respondents. Almost half of the respondents shopped for apparel seasonally. Many also shopped for apparel occasionally. Only a few respondents shopped weekly. Clothing stores frequented by most respondents were medium priced, which included Woolworths, Edgars, and Truworths Man (68%). Low price chain stores such as Mr. Price, Jet, Ackermans, PEP, and Meltz among others were also frequented by many respondents (36%). Most were willing to spend between R0-R1000 per month. Most of the male consumers in this study (56%) claimed to always assess apparel for quality before purchase. This finding implies that consumers prefer the physical experience with a garment for a more accurate quality assessment. This could be true as Workman and Cho (2013) found that men and women still prefer touch shopping channels, meaning they prefer to shop in the traditional brick-and-mortar. Very few respondents (7%) claimed to seldom or never assess apparel quality at purchase. This finding is an indication that quality is important in the pre-purchase assessment of apparel in the fashion consumer decision-making process.

6.2.2 The role of informational cues in the assessment of apparel quality

6.2.2.1 Objective 1: The role of intrinsic formal and extrinsic features in the quality assessment of apparel at purchase

Importance of Intrinsic formal features in the assessment of apparel quality

The first objective was to describe the role of intrinsic formal and extrinsic features in young adult males' assessment of apparel during purchase decision-making. The first quality dimension assessed in the study was intrinsic formal features of apparel used to assess smart casual wear. The results of this part of the study indicated that intrinsic formal features were important in the assessment of apparel quality. Although all criteria involving intrinsic formal features were indicated as being important, results of this study showed varying degrees of importance for the different aspects included in intrinsic formal features. More specifically, the design features were rated higher than workmanship and materials. Consumers indicated that construction should be neat and hold together as anticipated, and that puckers and loose threading should not occur or be visible. To a consumer, seams and hems that are intact could be the first indication of the structural stability of the garment, and may influence perceived durability and reliability.

Materials and finishes as part of the intrinsic formal features had the lowest categorical mean for importance and were indicated as the least important intrinsic formal features. This result was expected as consumers, without knowledge in the field of textiles or textile specific information at purchase, would not know how to determine acceptable tensile strength of threads used or distinguish among synthetic and natural fabrics and their properties. The presence of fabric finishes were indicated as the least important in the assessment of materials and finishes.

Within the intrinsic formal features, the most important assessment cue was design. Design can be seen as how a fashion is stimulated through the enhancement of elements such as line, form, shape, colour, pattern, and silhouette. Statements used to represent the design dimension included "design features such as pockets, buttons, pleats", "classic timeless style", and "colour that tunes in with my existing clothes". Studies show that design attributes differ in their effect of clothing attractiveness (Eckman & Wagner, 1994) and that they affect consumers' beliefs about the product (Brown & Rice, 2014: 70). The importance of a colour that tunes in with consumers' existing clothes during assessment can be explained by Bloch's (1995) model of consumer response to product form which suggests that a clothing item is just one component of a consumer's larger assortment of clothing and reactions to a specific design can be altered by how it fits in with the larger group. Although the average consumer would find it very difficult to accurately assess intrinsic formal features (Dick, Jain, & Richardson, 1997), the quality assessment of smart casual wear by male consumers was important.

Importance of extrinsic features in the assessment of apparel quality

The second quality dimension assessed in the study was the extrinsic features of apparel used to assess smart casual wear. The results of this part of the study indicated that extrinsic features were ranked the lowest in importance among all quality dimensions in the assessment of apparel quality. Among the extrinsic cues, country of origin had the lowest importance in consumer assessment of apparel quality next to price.

Country of origin has been defined as the country where the headquarters of the brand is located, the country of manufacture or assembly, and something simple as "made in", part of the label information, and in other terms, the place where the materials were transformed into a product (Brown & Rice, 2014:179) therefore the lowest among all the apparel quality dimensions. This corroborates findings by Hsu & Burns(2002) which show that country of origin is not important in the quality evaluative criterion, neither is the location of the garment manufacturer. Country of origin, although ranked significantly low, does affect consumers' perception of quality depending on product type or category (Chryssochoidis, Krystallis, & Perreas, 2007; Ahmed, Johnson, Yang, Fatt, Teng & Boon, 2003). Among the country of origin assessment statements, a country of origin known for durable clothing was of highest importance (46%). This result is consistent with findings by Agarwal&Sikri (1996), who found that consumers perception of new products from a given country are related to the image and beliefs they hold for its well-known products. Consumers in this study indicated that a garment from an economically developed country is not important in their evaluation of country of origin information. Studies show that a country's level of development mainly affects high involvement, sophisticated technological products (Leonidou *et al.*, 2007; Leclerc *et al.*, 1994) and that lesser developed countries are evaluated less negatively for technologically simpler products (Ahmed, *et al.*, 2002a; Ahmed *et al.*, 2002b) such as apparel.

Price was indicated as being less important in the quality assessment of apparel. In terms of price, only 48% of the respondents considered high priced clothing as an indicator of good quality important. This was inconsistent with numerous price-quality studies that show that price has a significant influence on consumer's perception of product quality (Rao, 2005; Brown & Rice, 2014:75-79; Fowler & Clodfelter, 2001; Viljoen, 1998). The most important requirement was special deals/bargains on clothing, ranked important by the majority of the respondents (66 %). Boyle and Lathrop (2009) challenge this consumer's perception of the relationship between price and product quality. In their study, they found that consumers are inclined to have negative "objective price-quality correlations", and suggest that consumers use other reliable indices of quality and not price when evaluating products.

Findings show that among the extrinsic features, store image was deemed more important for quality assessment than the other extrinsic features. Store image is a mix of meanings and relationships that a consumer associates with attributes of the store. All statements regarding store image features were indicated as being important by more than 50% of the respondents. “A store with good return and exchange policies” seen as important by 58% of the respondents. Return and exchange policies and warrantees are quality assurance strategies that affect perceived product quality, as they encourage consumers to purchase products and test performance quality. Such policies have been found to decrease perceived risk (Tan *et al.*, 2001) and increase perceived product quality and retailer trust (Albaum & Wiley, 2010; Yun, 1997). The majority of consumers (78%) found “the clothing store’s reputation for quality clothes” important while 51% of consumers considered an aesthetically appealing store as important in their apparel purchase. This finding was also reported by Chang, Burns, & Francis, (2004) who found that the physical store environment directly influences the hedonic shopping value and shopping experience satisfaction for both men and women, but that during apparel purchase men relied more on utilitarian constructs. The store atmosphere is important in consumers’ patronage and perception of product quality (Grewal *et al.*, 2003; Koelemeijer & Oppewal, 1999. These findings have serious implications for retailers. It is important for managers to see store image through consumer perspectives and understand how they evaluate the various aspects of the image in order to better satisfy their clientele and gain loyalty.

The lack of knowledge or inability to judge quality may increase the importance based on brand name as indicator of quality as extrinsic features are mainly used in the absence of intrinsic product information. Brand name had the highest importance ranking of the extrinsic features. Findings show that “clothing brands that have proven to be reliable and durable” and “brands known for their good fit” were very important to more than 80% of the respondents. To consumers, post-purchase evaluation contributes to previous experience. A possible explanation for consumer reliance on brand is that if a brand has proven to be reliable in the past then its symbolism of quality will be consistent with new experience. The finding on the fit of brands coincides with findings from Kaplan and Okur (2008), Wu and Delong (2006), Delong, Bao, Wu, Chao and Li(2004) and Hsu and Burns (2002) who found that fit and comfort were among the most important attributes considered during clothing purchase decision-making. Research has also shown that some consumers do not place a lot of importance on brand as a determinant of apparel product quality due to awareness of the specific brands that do fulfil their fit needs (Tan, 2010; De Klerk & Tselepis, 2007). These findings show that brands are an essential part of product quality assessment to consumers, and that consumers rely on previous experience with a brand when making quality judgements on apparel.

6.2.2.2 Objective 2: The role of functional performance and aesthetic performance in the quality assessment of apparel at purchase

Importance of functional performance in the assessment of apparel quality

Although consumers may not be able to readily and accurately predict the functional performance of a garment at the point of purchase (Chen-Yu *et al.*, 1999), results of this study show that the respondents still ranked functional performance most important among all dimensions measured in the assessment of apparel quality. Among functional performance informational cues, findings show comfort to be the most important, with over 90% of respondents ranking garments that are comfortable to wear and move in, and a style that fits their body well as most important. Comfort influences overall functional performance and satisfaction after purchase (Kamalha, Zeng, Mwasiagi, Kyatuheire, 2013). Seventy five percent of respondents indicated that apparel that provides good absorbency and ventilation is important. Absorbency refers to the ability of fibres to take in moisture making the garment comfortable and easy to care for while ventilation allows for air to pass through which is beneficial in hot climatic conditions. All these findings are very consistent with numerous studies done through the years, which prove that to consumers, comfort is one of the most important attributes of the pre-purchase assessment criteria (Hugo & van Aardt, 2012; Yeh, 2005; Hsu & Burns, 2002; Swinker & Hines, 2001; Workman, 1990; Jenkins, 1973).

Karnes *et al.* (1995) define durability as the expected life of a garment, and reliability as the time it takes a product to fail. Durability is measured by the strength and pliability of the materials used, resistance to frictional forces, the ability of materials to recover after stretching, and the materials' tolerance to creasing and wrinkling (Kadolph, 2010:43). Durability was ranked as the second most important informational cue by a majority of the respondents. Eighty percent of respondents indicated that good colour retention/colourfastness, and good stretch recovery as important in assessing apparel quality. Over 70% of respondents also indicated that the other two durability statements (resistance to abrasion and resistance to snagging) also important in assessing apparel quality. The high value given to these features was surprising as durability is a latent aspect that can only be predicted during post-purchase evaluation, and hence drives consumer satisfaction and redress behaviour (Kincade *et al.*, 1998). The results prove that consumers continue to assess quality with the hope that the garment will perform well after purchase.

Results of this study revealed that ease of care was the least important of the functional performance cues. Ease of care can be assessed at purchase through the review of the labels. Studies show that South African consumers are knowledgeable about care symbols but do not use this knowledge and label information to make purchase decisions (Van der Merwe, Bosman, Ellis, Van der Colff, and

Warnock, 2013). However, Mastamet-Mason, De Klerk, Sommerville and Ashdown (2008) suggest that consumer knowledge of the label information does not mean that the consumer will correctly interpret and apply it during purchase decision-making. Seventy percent of respondents rated machine wash-ability of apparel as most important among the care informational cues. According to the country report for home laundry appliances in South Africa by Euromonitor (2013), in today's urban living, there is an increase in the purchases of washing machines which has become a norm with the middle and upper income groups. In today's fast paced urban living, washing machines to young male adults may be seen as a way to make life easier as doing laundry, and in essence hygiene, is at the push of a button. Consumers also considered clear, easy to follow instructions and easy care finishes such as wrinkle or stain resistance important in their assessment of functional performance features. The least important of all performance requirements was apparel that can be tumble dried. This was rated least important by more than 50% of the respondents. This was expected as consumer research on appliances show that tumble dryers next to dishwashers are not considered essentials but are seen as luxury appliances by the average South African consumer (Euromonitor, 2013).

Quality of apparel in the whole means different things to different people depending on their perception of the value of a product and their expectations of performance and durability (Mehta, 1992:4-5).In clothing purchasing, consumer knowledge of the characteristics and variations of a product, together with prior experience with apparel products are determinants of a consumer's belief of its performance. Based on the findings of this study, perceived future performance continues to be a major driver of apparel consumer purchase decisions.

Importance of aesthetic performance in the assessment of apparel quality

Based on aggregate scores, all criteria involving aesthetics were considered important by the male consumers. Results of this study showed varying degrees of importance for the different aesthetic features. The aesthetic experience of apparel products results from perception of appearance attributes and how they make sense to the viewer (Hekkert, 2006). Aesthetics were found to be important in the quality assessment of apparel among the respondents. Sensory aesthetics had the highest mean of 2.96. Apparel is a high body/self-involvement product and hence can be judged by how it interacts with the user. Sensory aspects of apparel include the feel of the garment as well as how it looks to a consumer, the tactile and visual elements (Workman, & Cho, 2013). Over 75% of respondents indicated that when it comes to quality, garments should feel pleasant on the skin, fall softly on the body with no pulls or bulges anywhere, and have smooth seams or edges that do not irritate the skin when worn. This is supported by Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) who suggest that the underlying subconscious reason for consumption is the need to experience pleasure.

The expressive function of aesthetics was indicated as the second in importance next to symbolic significance. Clothing as a silent language depicts the wearer's individuality, aspirations and what they represent (Marshall *et al.* 2004:104-105). According to the male consumers in this study, the most important expressive informational cue and overall aesthetic requirement was apparel that makes them feel good about themselves. The finding is consistent with research that shows that feeling good and attractive is of value to man (Aydinoğlu & Krishna, 2012; Larsen 2000; Bloch & Richins, 1992). This finding supports cognitive theories of emotion that argue that emotion arises from assessment. The adornment theory suggests that clothes are used for display, identity, and expression among others (Kaiser, 1998:15-27). Findings show that respondents prefer apparel that helps express their identities more important than apparel that helps express their masculinity. This is supported by Kim *et al*. (2002), who suggest that the needs that social attributes of apparel should satisfy include approval, affiliation, personal expression and ego.

In terms of symbolic aesthetics, the most important requirement to the male consumers was apparel that symbolises their lifestyles. Desmet's theory on social product emotions suggests that consumers appraise products in terms of "legitimacy", whereby consumers apply social standards and norms to personal views (2003:10). Consumers tend to follow social identities and are influenced by the physical and symbolic meaning of apparel as defined by their reference group (Ventakesh, Joy, Sherry & Descheues, 2010; Whitler & Spira, 2002; Kleine, Kleine & Kernan, 1993). This is true to an extent as many respondents found that apparel that makes them feel comfortable around their peers is important in assessing apparel quality at purchase. Respondents however did not agree with importance of apparel that impresses other people. This contradicts Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) who state that making friends and attaining status is one of the seven fundamental evolutionary motives that influences consumer behaviour. Smart casual wear encompasses a wide range of apparel combinations that are casual yet neat enough to wear to work. Although less than the other symbolic dimensions, 57% of respondents ranked apparel that symbolises their profession important. These findings on the role of aesthetics in the quality assessment of apparel reinforce findings by Crilly*et al.* (2004) which suggested that consumers use apparel as symbols to reflect their taste and social values. These findings show that the aesthetic features of apparel are important indicators of quality during apparel purchase decision-making.

6.2.2.3 Objective 3: Relationships between intrinsic and extrinsic features, and functional and aesthetic performance in the young adult males' quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making.

This objective sought to explore and describe the possible relationships between the importance placed on intrinsic formal, extrinsic, functional performance, and aesthetic features in the quality assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision-making. The relationships among the importance of the informational features in the apparel quality dimensions were explored through Pearson's correlation coefficient.

The relationship between the intrinsic formal features and functional performance

As indicated by the results, there was a positive relationship between the intrinsic formal features and the functional performance features. The positive linear relationship among the values was moderately strong with plotted values congregated towards the line of best fit. This suggests that quality in materials, design, and workmanship dictate the garment's durability and reliability, comfort, and care. Functional performance was measured through statements such as "comfortable to wear and move in, fits the body comfortably, and garment breathability" for comfort, "colourfastness, stretch recovery, and resistance to snagging and abrasion" for durability, and "clear easy to follow instructions, and easy care finishes" for care. Since functional performance is latent, intrinsic formal features may be used to assess these latent aspects as the garment may influence consumer belief about durability and ease of care and use (Bloch, 1995:19). Functional performance, especially comfort and durability was more important for assessing quality (Mean= 3.09) than intrinsic formal features (M= 2.84). The moderate linear relationship between intrinsic formal and functional performance features indicate that consumers may use formal features to assess the perceived performance of garments during purchase decision-making. Durability may be measured by the strength of materials under applied forces as well as the quality of construction methods employed. Intrinsic formal features may also be used to assess comfort. A garment wearer's physical comfort may be affected by the ease of movement afforded by materials used, the style and cut of garment, excellence in construction, as well as the fibre composition and fabrication methods that affect the garment's breathability and conductivity. Care may be influenced by the chemical properties of treatments used and their reaction with the fibre compositions of materials used and finishes applied. From the significantly positive correlation findings, it is possible that the male consumer evaluates the intrinsic formal features based on the benefits they assume they will get from perceived future experience and perceived product performance. A misperception of intrinsic formal features together can lead to wrong inference of the garment's quality and thus misguide the

consumer's expectations of functional performance. But based on these findings, it can be said that consumers use intrinsic formal features as a measure of perceived functional performance.

The relationship between the intrinsic formal features and aesthetic performance

According to De Klerk & Lubbe (2004), aesthetics are affected by the intrinsic formal qualities of a garment, as aesthetic responses are formed on the basis of intrinsic elements of the stimulus. Using Pearson's correlation, significant, positive relationships were found between the intrinsic formal and the aesthetic informational cues' ($p<0.001$). The linear relationship among the values was moderately positive which suggests that the importance of intrinsic formal features correlated with the importance of aesthetic features. Aesthetics are often extended to design as a visual element, and therefore to apparel which is consumed visibly (Eckman & Wagner, 1994). Design contributes to aesthetics as it provides form, colour, and line. Brown and Rice (2014:70-78) suggest that quality of workmanship also be included as an aesthetic attribute as its effects include the symmetry of the garment, matching patterns and motifs, and the beauty of seams on certain fabrics. Findings show that the importance of intrinsic formal features is consistent with importance of aesthetic features as informational cues.

The relationship between the extrinsic features and functional performance

Extrinsic features can be seen as label information since they are part of apparel labelling. Labelling is a powerful signal of product quality as it gives important information that consumers use to predict functional performance (Shin, 2000; Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Davis, 1987), as it decreases perceived risk and increases consumer confidence in the care of apparel items (Yan, Yurchisin & Watchravesringkan, 2008). Using Pearson's correlation with an alpha level of $p<0.001$, significantly positive relationships were found between the extrinsic and the functional performance informational cues' values. The linear relationship among the values was significantly positive, although weak. The correlation results show consistency with past studies which show relationships between functional performance and the different extrinsic informational cues. For instance, Kincade *et al.* (1998) found that the perception of durability and life expectancy of products positively increases with an increase in the cost. In a study by Yasin, Noor, and Mohamad (2007) consumers felt that brands from countries with good image are more reliable. This suggests that male consumers' beliefs about extrinsic features of a product had some influence on the perception and expectation of functional performance.

The relationship between the extrinsic features and aesthetic performance

Erikson *et al*. (1984) refer to extrinsic features as image variables because they are distinct from the physical characteristics but are still identified with the product. Aesthetics can be described as the

visual appeal of a garment. These are both dictated by how self and others interpret the product. They both influence consumer beliefs about products and affect purchase intentions. Findings of the study indicated a significant, positive relationship between the extrinsic and aesthetic informational cues at $p<0.001$. This linear relationship, although moderate, had the highest r value. The positive relationship can be explained through past research that has linked the importance of various extrinsic features to consumer's perception of aesthetics. Shim, Morris and Morgan (1989) tested the role of external variables on attitudes of college students towards both imported and domestic apparel and found that the students favoured the styling of foreign apparel, the fashion involvement and the role they play in social acceptance. Kamenidou *et al.* (2007) and Dickson *et al.* (2004) also concur, as they found that among the Greek and Chinese, consumers choice of foreign apparel was influenced by the aesthetics and psychosocial superiority of foreign manufactured apparel as opposed to domestic apparel products. The symbolic aspect of aesthetics has also been linked to other extrinsic features as consumers associate retail stores and brands with specific social class and images portrayed (Engel *et al.,* 1995). In South Africa, younger consumers have shown the need for brand name to enhance self-esteem and assist in conformation with peer groups (Maqalika-Mokobori, 2005). These results show that South African male consumers link the extrinsic and aesthetic quality features in the assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making.

6.2.3 The influence of respondents' profiles on the importance placed on apparel quality features as informational cues

6.2.3.1 Influence of age

Findings show that age had a significant effect on the importance placed on extrinsic features (price, brand, store image and country of origin). The two age categories the respondents were placed in were 24-29 (63%) and 30-36 (37%). Previous studies show that age has an influence on consumer purchasing habits and preferences (Akpinar, 2012; Creusen, 2010; Maqalika-Mokobori, 2005). According to Seo *et al.* (2001) and Kinley *et al.* (2000), the time and effort spent in the selection of clothing is higher for younger adult males than for older adult males, as they seem to use both image and performance features when making decisions. Chryssochoidis *et al.* (2007) linked age and education level to perceptions of country information where older consumers held high beliefs in country information, as was the same for the less educated.

According to the results of this study, age had no significant influence on the importance placed on other quality apparel aspects, namely intrinsic formal, functional performance, and aesthetics. This was very different from previous research as Creusen (2010), found significant relations between age, education, and income and the importance of aesthetics, functional performance, and quality

perception during purchase decision-making. A possible explanation for the lack of significant differentiation in the importance of the other informational features by age could be that the ages of respondents in the study were too close and they therefore had similar consumer preference and perceptions of apparel. Perhaps a wider age range in the study would have yielded significant differentiation in these cues.

6.2.3.2 Influence of ethnic background

The ethnic background classes observed in this study were black, white, and other which included Asians and coloureds. Results show that ethnic background had no effect on the role informational features play in the assessment of smart casual apparel. This contradicts previous studies which show that ethnicity has an effect on quality perceptions (Bandyopadhyay & Pardasani, 2010; Pankhania, Lee, & Hooley, 2007; Lee & Um, 1992). Lee and Um (1992) also found that there are indeed ethnic differences in the evaluation of product attributes. This could possibly be explained by urban consumer socialisation through advertising and marketing campaigns, as well as the influence of workplace and social situations, as the majority of respondents held some form of employment. This study did not delve deep into consumer behaviour but only touched on the use of informational cues. Future studies could investigate or explore differences of urban and rural living consumers within ethnicities and how South African ethnic backgrounds affect the way consumers behave.

6.2.3.3 Influence of level of education

The two categories of education level observed among the respondents was matriculation (equivalent to a high school diploma), and post matriculation which included advanced diplomas and certificates and college degrees. There was no significant variation among the levels, meaning that none of the education level categories differed in the way respondents rated the importance of informational features used in assessing apparel quality. The use of informational features in the product quality assessment has been linked to knowledge of and familiarity with the product (Hines & Swinker, 2001). The finding is in tune with findings which show that education together with occupation are major influences on purchase behaviour, more specifically the use of label information (Van der Merwe *et al.*, 2013), choice of retail formats (Prasad, 2012), and assessment of country of origin information (Chryssichoidis *et al.*, 2007). Significant relationships have also been found between education and the importance of product quality in purchase decisions (Akpinar, 2012; Creusen, 2010). Findings of this study suggest that, within the sample, education qualification does account for variances in importance placed on informational cues, but a larger sample might yield significantly different results of variances.

6.2.3.4 Influence of monthly apparel expenditure

The unique contribution of monthly apparel expenditure was highly significant for the importance of intrinsic formal and extrinsic quality features, but only slightly significant for the importance of aesthetic features in the assessment of apparel quality. This finding can be explained by either the theory of conspicuous consumption where consumers shop lavishly for apparel as a public good, or by income or socio-economic situations where consumers buy what they can afford. Previous researchers have found significant relations between income and consumer purchase decisions (Akpinar, 2012; Bawa and Ghosh, 1999). Consumers earning higher income considered aesthetic aspects, functional performance, and overall product quality more important in apparel assessment (Creusen, 2010). Unfortunately, this study did not explore respondent's monthly net income in order to establish the percentage of disposable income reserved for apparel. Further studies are needed to establish why the variance exists among the respondents' use of informational cues.

6.2.3.5 Quality assessment of apparel at purchase

Most male respondents in this study said that they always assess apparel for quality before purchase. The propensity for consumers to assess apparel quality at purchase is linked to the role and importance of extrinsic features, intrinsic formal features, and the perceived functional performance. This can be explained by the fact that findings show that consumers use extrinsic informational cues in the absence of other informational cues to assess quality, based on beliefs they hold about the country of origin or manufacturer of the garment or brand; previous experience with and marketing efforts towards a brand; the image of the store in their minds and the reputation of the store for quality products; and their perception of price and quality. This finding was expected as theory links these quality dimensions to apparel. On the other hand, aesthetic performance had no significant link to quality assessment, suggesting that as much as it influences consumer decision-making, it does not influence consumer's perceptions of quality. This is contrary to previous findings that show that aesthetic attributes include colour, silhouette, and texture (De Klerk & Lubbe, 2004), as part of the intrinsic qualities of a garment. A possible explanation for this finding could be that aesthetic performance is often dictated by rules of interpretation based on social interaction and how the male consumers view them as separate from the physical. This could be true as aesthetic performance is influenced by personal taste and current fashions (Brown & Rice, 2014:70) and therefore apparel may be used as symbols to reflect the consumer's taste, individuality, and values (Crilly *et al.*, 2004; Marshall *et al.*, 2004:115-118). These findings suggest that quality assessment is a big part of the South African male fashion consumer's decision-making process and that consumers use the informational cues in their apparel quality assessment criteria.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Consumers' perception of quality is multidimensional (Swinker & Hines, 2006; Hines &O'Neal, 1995), and varies between consumers and different product classes. In as many perspectives as there are in defining apparel quality, the consumer is deemed to be the final judge. The quality assessment of product features has an influence on consumer purchase behaviour (Kamenidou *et al.*, 2007). Apparel products have intrinsic features that include functional performance and aesthetics, and extrinsic features. In the past consumer behaviour research on clothing quality evaluative criteria has mostly been inclined on the female consumer and her perceptions of apparel quality (Hugo & Van Aardt, 2012; Hsu & Burns, 2002; Gong *et al.*, 2002; Hines & Swinker, 2001; Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Lee & Burns, 1993; Heisy, 1991; Cassill & Drake, 1987; Davis, 1987). Male and female consumers tend to have different orientations in their consumptions patterns and behaviour (Heglesen & Nessel, 2010; Noble, *et al.*, 2006; Homburg & Giering, 2001).As an important aspect in the study of consumer behaviour from a male perspective, the link between South African young adult male consumers' perception of quality apparel, use of multiple informational cues, and evaluation criteria needs to be established. Understanding the importance of these performance features in defining quality is necessary in gauging young adult male consumers' perception of quality apparel. This study sought to explore and describe the role of intrinsic and extrinsic apparel features as informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making.

In this chapter, general conclusions are made based on the three objective formulated for the study. This is followed by an evaluation of the research study, a discussion of the limitations, and the achievement of the sub objectives. Theoretical and practical implications are then discussed. Recommendations for further research and for follow-up studies are made.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

7.2.1 The role of intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance in the quality assessment of smart casual wear.

Respondents in the study had different perceptions of the importance of informational cues in the quality assessment of apparel. Based on mean importance scores, functional performance features (M=3.09) were placed as the most important apparel quality assessment cues. Extrinsic features were less important (M=2.63). Intrinsic formal apparel features are part of the garment that if changed, will change the garment's structure and appearance. The most important intrinsic formal feature to the male consumers is design, next to workmanship. Design features and materials used are a direct influence of current fashion trends, and globalisation introduces the influence of foreign cultures and fashions to the South African consumer. Although not many male consumers are interested in the styles that are currently in fashion, most choose styles that complement what they have and that will not go out of style quickly. Therefore, male apparel consumers choose a design with expectations of wearing it for a long time. Findings on workmanship imply that consumers pay attention to structural quality during assessment. Although these male consumers might be novices in the field of textiles and garment construction, they expect a certain standard of garment construction to be met.

Extrinsic features are image variables that although part of the product whole, when changed they don't change the structure or appearance of the garment. Firstly, it is clear that brand name is the most important extrinsic features in the assessment of apparel. Young adult males link brand names to the functional performance of apparel as they seek brands known for their good fit, part of comfort, and brands that have proven to be reliable and durable important in the selection of smart casual wear. Store image was indicated as slightly less important, but still influenced the male consumer's perception of quality. The young adult male consumer relies on stores with a reputation for quality clothes. This is reinforced by their consideration of the stores' quality assurance policies for returns and exchanges during purchase decisions. The findings imply consumers continue to assess apparel quality even after purchase and that store image contributes to male consumer's post purchase satisfaction/dissatisfaction and redress behaviour. This means that if quality expectations are not met through apparel purchased, they would consider returning the item for a satisfactory one. Past research shows that price can give a perception of quality. Contrary to that belief, the young adult males (in this study) do not consider price an indicator of apparel quality. They do however, consider special deals or bargains. It can therefore be concluded that for these consumers, value for money supersedes lavish spending.

Functional performance is a latent aspect that is evaluated through the interaction between the consumer and the apparel. It is associated with durability and reliability, comfort, and ease of care. Although a latent aspect, male consumers tend to rely highly on perceived performance, namely durability and comfort, as an indicator of quality apparel. Ease of care is the least likely of the functional performance features to affect apparel quality assessment.

Aesthetic performance communicates product form and image in terms of how a garment feels, and looks like when worn, and what apparel symbolises and how it is used as a form of expression by the wearer. The results indicate that male consumers wear apparel that makes them feel good about themselves. They also consider how it symbolises their lifestyle and expresses their identity. The belongingness theory suggests that all social functioning beings have a yearning to belong to a larger group (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001; Bauermeister & Leary, 1995). Male consumers are not different as they make purchase decisions based on apparel that makes them feel comfortable amidst their peers. Consumers have also indicated that apparel that provides sensorial comfort is important when assessing the quality.

In conclusion, the role of informational cues used by young male adult consumers in the assessment of smart casual wear is arranged from most important to least important: Comfort, durability, sensory aesthetics, brand names, design, workmanship/construction, expressive aesthetics, ease of care, store image, symbolic aesthetics, materials and finishes, price, and country of origin. South African young adult male consumers rank comfort most important in their quality assessment criteria, next to durability. Based on the findings, the country where garments are manufactured or assembled is the least important to the young adult males in this study.

7.2.2 The relationships between the intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance

In most cases, consumer's apparel quality evaluative criteria will differ due to the benefits sought after by the consumer. Therefore it is expected that for each consumer, a set of quality features will be ranked differently in terms of importance placed on each informational cue. Literature shows that some features influence the perception of others. The relationship between the different features was explored.

Intrinsic formal features correlated highly with functional performance and aesthetic performance. Comfort, which had the highest mean (3.27) among all other informational cues is affected by the materials used, the design of the garment, and the quality of the workmanship. Durability as well is a product of good design, excellence in construction, and the type of materials used and finishes

applied. Design features which affect reliability, comfort, and aesthetics, are very important aspects used in quality assessment. Pre purchase information searches and previous experiences with like-products contribute to quality expectations during product quality assessment. Male consumers form both aesthetic and functional performance expectations based on their perceptions of intrinsic formal features. They also rely on these expectations when assessing extrinsic features.

The highest correlation was between extrinsic features and aesthetic performance. Both apparel quality dimensions relate to image, extrinsic features with product image and aesthetic performance with self-image. This implies that to some extent, male apparel consumers link their perception of apparel to the perception of others. The choice of brand name or the cost a consumer is willing to pay may just be a reflection of the expectations or influence of others. Interestingly, the lowest correlation, although still significantly positive, was between extrinsic cues and perceived performance. Young male consumers in this study have linked extrinsic cues to previous performance experiences, which means, that if a male consumer's expectations are positively met or surpassed, he will use this information for the next product choice. The use of extrinsic features in assessment is also influenced by information from others as male consumers consider the reputation of these image variables in the assessment of perceived functional performance.

In conclusion, intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance and aesthetic performance significantly and positively correlate with each other. South African male consumers use different combinations of these features to form quality assessment criteria that are most beneficial to them. All the apparel quality features measured to some extent also influence the importance of the other features during the assessment of smart casual wear.

7.2.3 The interaction of demographic variables with apparel quality informational cues

Previous studies show that consumer profile variables which include demographics, socio-economic classes have an effect on consumer purchase behaviour. The findings of this study show that for South African young adult males, the amount of money they are willing to spend on apparel per month significantly accounts for the variance in the role of various informational cues in their apparel quality assessment. This finding suggests that male consumers differ in their apparel assessment criteria based on how much money they have for apparel, and that monthly income is an important influential socio-economic variable in apparel decision-making. South African young adult males are aware that quality is an issue in the manufacture and consumption of apparel. Most of these male consumers, although not apparel experts, consider it important to assess apparel for perceived quality during the pre-purchase phase of consumer decision-making. This suggests that they are aware of and compare the different qualities of garments that are available to ensure they get good

value. The age of consumers shows potential for explaining the variance in the importance placed on informational cues. The present study however only included young adult males between the ages of 24 and 36, and the variance could not be clearly explained by the two age groups within the sample.

7.3 EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the role of informational cues on young adult males' assessment of apparel quality during purchase decision-making. The intent was to establish what the young adult male consumers in South Africa deem important in their quality apparel assessment criteria.

7.3.1 Quality of the results

This section discusses the validity and reliability of the results in order to establish the accuracy and consistency of the measurement tool and the concepts measured. Validity was achieved through the measuring tool, the self-administered questionnaire. Statements representing the various informational cues were sourced from past like research and wording slightly adapted for the present study. Other statements were derived from theory on apparel quality. A pilot study was conducted in order to pinpoint issues respondents would encounter with the questionnaire during the actual study. Issues that arose regarding wording, ambiguity of statements, and personal profile categories were resolved prior to the study. A transmittal letter which accompanied the questionnaire further re-iterated the purpose of the study and the importance the researcher placed on anonymity. The researcher also rejected questionnaires that were not adequately completed or usable. Reliability and internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

7.3.2 Achievement of objectives

The objectives of the study were all met. The measurement tool proved useful as it provided findings on the role of intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance, and aesthetic performance used as informational cues by young adult male consumers. It is now possible to get insight into the young adult males' apparel assessment criteria. The relevant relationships among the importance placed on informational cues were found and relevant conclusions made. The questionnaire produced enough data for further exploratory analyses to try to explain the variance in findings, and it opened a path for future studies featuring demographics and socio economic variables.

7.4 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY

A major driver of consumer purchase decisions is the consumer's expectations of a product's ability to fulfil a need and of its functional performance during use. The expectancy theory suggests that consumer behaviour is largely influenced by consumer expectations of more desirable consequences from a product (Solomon, 2007:127-128).Consumers are getting more aware of the importance of quality in apparel they purchase (Roberts & Lane, 2007; Gong *et al.*, 2002) and therefore have certain expectations of clothing deemed as high-quality (Swinker & Hines, 2006). From the consumer perspective, apparel product quality depends on attributes desirable and of importance to the user, and the individual consumer's satisfaction with these attributes. Evaluative criteria are the attributes of a product used to appraise a product during purchase decision (Belch & Belch, 2007:119). The informational cues used varied in importance among the young adult males. From the results of this study comes a new clothing quality assessment criterion from a South African male perspective. The findings of this study contribute to the assessment criteria in the pre-purchase evaluation phase of the fashion consumer decision-making. Young adult male consumers assess apparel for quality and use intrinsic formal and extrinsic features to assess perceived performance. This study helps show where significant relationships occur among the apparel quality dimensions. More studies need to be done in different geographical locations as well as inclusive of other age groups in order to formulate a more comprehensive criterion that male consumers use in assessing apparel quality, so that marketers can better understand their target markets, and theorists can better explain the South African male fashion consumer decision-making paradigm. Knowledge of the relation of demographic variables to more apparel specific aspects contributes to the factors that influence consumer decision-making and is more informative for product development and marketing purposes.

7.5 IMPLICATIONS

The following suggestions for managerial practices and education policy are based on the researcher's opinions after careful observation of the results and conclusion.

7.5.1 Manufacturers and retailers

Investigating the criteria male consumers use in evaluating garment quality at points of purchase, as well as the importance they place on each of the attributes used will assist retailers and manufacturers in meeting young male consumers' expectations, ensuring consumer satisfaction. A retailer is likely to have more of an impact on consumers' service quality evaluation than on product

quality evaluation (Sweeney, Sortar, & Johnson, 1992: Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988). In order for retailers to maintain satisfactory service quality they have to recognise consumer's desires and expectations of pre-purchase and post-purchase service quality as well as maintain personnel who are knowledgeable in product specific issues and service delivery, as well as willing and able to serve the classes of clientele that the retailer serves.

7.5.2 Fashion marketers

Extrinsic features are image variables that are presented to the consumer through various marketing efforts. Extrinsic features are used by many consumers in the absence of intrinsic formal feature knowledge. The results of this study show that extrinsic features were ranked less important than all other quality dimensions. Consumer's perceptions of store and brand image play an integral role in promotional strategies (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 1990). Whether or not they are aware of it, fashion marketers have the greatest influence on the features consumers deem important, and in turn on their choice of clothing. Fashion marketers' roles include marketing research and product management regarding consumer knowledge, anticipating consumer apparel needs, producing and coordinating garments from different designers and manufacturers, and positioning, pricing and promoting the product. Marketers recognise the need to include the target consumer's perspective of quality in their apparel product marketing efforts. This study is a platform for marketers to realise the importance male consumers place on apparel quality dimensions in the assessment of apparel products. Marketers should also use studies like this one to monitor consumer expectations and satisfaction with fashion products and services.

7.5.3 Educators

This study observed associations among the quality dimensions studied (intrinsic formal features, extrinsic features, functional performance and aesthetic performance). Consumer researchers should develop a conceptual framework acknowledging the relationship among the different apparel features as informational cues showing which aspects of the quality dimensions interact directly. These aspects should show the roles that each informational cue within the quality dimensions can play. Exploring consumer knowledge of apparel attributes and features and their importance will also help scholars enhance theory on apparel quality evaluation models from different gender perspectives.

Due to increased consumer interest and globalisation, consumer decision-making in terms of criteria used in purchasing garments has become similar across different cultures and peoples. Results from this study can be used in conjunction with other similar studies conducted in other areas of the world

to compare male consumers' clothing quality evaluative criteria from a global perspective. This should aid educators and marketers in establishing apparel evaluative criteria based on geographic location and cultural perspectives, and exploring possible similarities and differences among the importance placed on the various apparel features.

7.6 LIMITATIONS

One study of South African male consumers does not provide a basis for knowledge on male consumer behaviour since it only looks at smart casual wear and a specific consumer. This study also focused on males living in Pretoria and Johannesburg, Gauteng. It should be noted that as one of the largest urban locales in South Africa, the cultural context may not necessarily be similar to those of rural and across country settings. In view of this, conclusions drawn from this study need to be taken with caution when generalising to male consumers from other areas within South Africa. Studies need to involve multiple male consumer segments and multiple products in order for the information on behaviour to be generalisable.

This study targeted young adult males living in urban Gauteng, and preferably with some form of income. Of the 700 questionnaires distributed, only 330 were used for the actual study. While some of the respondents admitted to be too busy to fill in a questionnaire, many respondents claimed to have misplaced the first copy. Due to financial constraints, only a few were given a second copy. The non-response rate of 53% was alarming yet anticipated and with that, the sample size was small.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

To enhance the relevance of the findings, this study can be extended in several ways.

1. Findings show that demographics and shopping behaviour account for a small percentage of variation in the ranking of informational cues. The findings of this study only found monthly apparel expenditure and quality assessment before purchase to have a significant impact on informational cues used in quality assessment. Further refinement of the demographic variables may be necessary to ensure that definitions of consumer categories such as income level and disposable income for apparel that may influence monthly apparel expenditure; educational background and area of specialisation, and ethnic background information such as traditional cultural practices are included in the study. Additional studies that include other personal variables that may influence consumers' use of informational cues in the

assessment of apparel quality are needed in order to get a bearing on clothing quality from a South African perspective.

2. As an extension to this study and the existing theory, a qualitative study could be conducted to give further insight into male consumers' perceptions of apparel quality. A qualitative study could also explain why certain informational cues such as functional performance were rated higher than the others, pinpointing the underlying influences. Data from the qualitative study can help improve the male fashion consumer decision-making model to include other consumer specific and situation specific variables that may influence the male consumer's apparel purchase.
3. Research has shown that consumers use extrinsic features and other image variable to assess apparel at purchase due to limited knowledge of intrinsic features and therefore the latent functional performance. This study presented consumers with concrete clothing features to choose from. Importance claimed of these features as informational cues was mostly based on information from past experiences and knowledge. When presented with stimuli, physical garments to evaluate and rate the apparel features, the respondents may rank the importance of the various informational cues differently. As an extension of the study, a study which includes a physical garment for analysis during data collection could yield significantly different results due to direct product involvement, physical evaluation, and non-reliance on information stored in memory.
4. The fashion product evaluation stage of the fashion consumer decision-making process was used as the theoretical framework for the present study. The consumer behaviour models highlight the influence of external environmental and personal/situational factors on consumer decision-making (Tan, 2010; Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff & Terblanche, 2008:72; Solomon, 2007:44; Antonides & Van Raaij, 1998). This study bypassed all other processes in the consumer decision-making and focused on specific apparel attributes within the fashion product evaluation stage of the process, but not on the reasoning behind smart casual apparel consumption. A study should be conducted to investigate the specific environmental and situational factors that influence the young adult male consumer's purchase behaviours, apparel preferences, and decision-making.
5. A similar study, with the same research variables could be used to compare or investigate the differences between how young adult males and females in South Africa perceive apparel quality and rank informational cues during the assessment of apparel.

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Addendum A:

Transmittal letter and Questionnaire

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

Department of Consumer Science

Dear Respondent,

I am currently enrolled for the M. Consumer Science (Clothing Management) degree at the University of Pretoria. The aim of the questionnaire is to gain some understanding of how young working men assess quality when purchasing smart casual wear.

Your decision to complete and return this questionnaire will be interpreted as confirmation that you have agreed to participate. Please note that your participation is voluntary. All information will be treated as strictly confidential and your responses will remain anonymous.

The questionnaire consists of different sections. Please read the instructions carefully before you indicate your answers: **every question must be answered for the questionnaire to be useful.** The questionnaire consists of four pages and should take approximately 15minutes to answer.

Please note that when referring to **SMART CASUAL WEAR** in the questionnaire, the following definition applies:

Smart casual wear is a loosely defined dress code; casual, yet "smart" (neat) enough to conform to the particular standards of certain social groups. Smart casual for men includes dress trousers—this includes chinos—a long/short-sleeve shirt (tie optional), leather loafers or dressy slip-ons, dress socks, a belt, and, if appropriate, a sport jacket or blazer. Some interpretations allow for sweaters and knit pullovers paired with button-down shirts; especially V-neck sweaters.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Ruthie KawiraNjagi

February 2013

For office use

Respondent number **N** | | | |

Do not fill in *if your wife or partner purchases your clothes.*

Section A: Demographic information

Please answer the questions by making a cross (X) in the appropriate block::

	Years		
How old are you?		V1	

2. Please indicate your highest qualification

Matric certificate		V2	
Post-school certificate/ diploma			
Degree or equivalent			

3. Ethnic background

Black		V3	
White			
Mixed race (Coloured)			
Asian			
Other: please specify			

4. Current work status

Full time employed		V4	
Part time employed			
Self employed			
Other			

5. Where have you **mostly purchased** your smart casual wear during the **past year**? (Mark only **one** answer)

Clothing chain stores (e.g. Mr Price, Meltz)		V5	
Medium priced clothing chain stores (e.g. Edgars, Woolworths, Truworths Man)			
Men's wear designer stores (e.g. Polo, Kurt Geiger)			
Upmarket stores (e.g. V+king))			
Men's outfitter (e.g. Heeren 2000)			
Other: please specify			

6. How often do you purchase smart casual wear? (Mark only **one** answer)

Weekly		V6	
Monthly			
Seasonally			
Occasionally			

7. I have purchased these smart casual clothing items in the past 6 months. Mark **all** that apply.

Button-up long or short sleeve shirt		V7.1	
Chinos		V7.2	
Dress trousers		V7.3	
Golf shirt		V7.4	
Sport jacket		V7.5	
Button-up jersey (cardigan)		V7.6	
Blazer		V7.7	
Round or V-neck sweater		V7.8	
Jeans		V7.9	
T-Shirt		V7.10	
Waist coat		V7.11	
Other, please specify:		V7.12	

8. How much are you willing to spend on smart casual wear per month?					V8
9.I assess the quality of smart casual clothing items before I purchase anything	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	V9

Section B:

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements in your quality assessment of smart casual wear.*Answer the questions by making a cross (X) in the appropriate block*

10. When deciding what to buy, the following aspects are important to help me assess quality	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important	
The design features such as pockets,buttons, pleats	4	3	2	1	V10.1
Classic , timeless style (does not go out of fashion quickly)	4	3	2	1	V10.2
A colour that tunes in with my existing clothes	4	3	2	1	V10.3.
A style that is in fashion	4	3	2	1	V10.4
The fibre content of the clothing item	4	3	2	1	V10.5
The fabric should be firm and stable (closely woven)	4	3	2	1	V10.6
The fabric's texture (e.g. a smooth surface)	4	3	2	1	V10.7
Presence of fabric finishes (i.e. pre-washed; anti-static)	4	3	2	1	V10.8
Colour matching between the fabric, threads, lining, and trimmings	4	3	2	1	V10.9
Matching stripes, checks or prints	4	3	2	1	V10.10
Neat construction (straight seams, no loose threads, no puckers)	4	3	2	1	V10.11
Construction that holds together(seams/hems intact)	4	3	2	1	V10.12

11. When considering smart casual clothes, the following aspects are important to assess quality	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important	
Special deals/bargains on clothing	4	3	2	1	V11.1
High priced clothing as this indicates good quality	4	3	2	1	V11.2
A well-known brand at a higher price	4	3	2	1	V11.3
The presence of a designer label	4	3	2	1	V11.4
Clothing brands that have proven to be reliable / durable	4	3	2	1	V11.5
Brands known for their good fit	4	3	2	1	V11.6
The store with good return and exchange policies	4	3	2	1	V11.7
The clothing store's reputation for quality clothes	4	3	2	1	V11.8
Aesthetically appealing store environment	4	3	2	1	V11.9
The country of origin's reputation for quality products	4	3	2	1	V11.10
A country of origin known for durable clothing	4	3	2	1	V11.11
A garment from an economically developed country	4	3	2	1	V11.12

12.When considering smart casual clothes, the following aspects are important quality cues	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important	
Good colour retention/colourfastness	4	3	2	1	V12.1
Resistance to abrasion (not form little balls on surface)	4	3	2	1	V12.2
Recovers well after stretching	4	3	2	1	V12.3
Resistance to snagging (no pulling up of surface yarns)	4	3	2	1	V12.4
Comfortable to wear and moves easily with the body	4	3	2	1	V12.5
A style that fits my body well	4	3	2	1	V12.6
No static build-up (does not cling)	4	3	2	1	V12.7
Provides good absorbency and ventilation (i.e. breathable)	4	3	2	1	V12.8
Clear, easy to follow instructions for ease of care	4	3	2	1	V12.9
Easy care finishes (i.e. wrinkle or stain resistance)	4	3	2	1	V12.10
Machine washable	4	3	2	1	V12.11
Tumble dryable	4	3	2	1	V12.12

13. When deciding what to buy, it is important that a smart casual garment I choose	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not important		
symbolises my lifestyle	4	3	2	1	V13.1	
impresses other people	4	3	2	1	V13.2	
makes me feel comfortable amidst my peers	4	3	2	1	V13.3	
symbolises my profession	4	3	2	1	V13.4	
makes me feel good about myself	4	3	2	1	V13.5	
helps me express my identity	4	3	2	1	V13.6	
expresses my masculinity	4	3	2	1	V13.7	
conceals body parts I feel are physically flawed	4	3	2	1	V13.8	
feels pleasant on my skin	4	3	2	1	V13.9	
falls softly on my body (does not pull or bulge anywhere)	4	3	2	1	V13.10	
has smooth seams or edges that do not irritate the skin	4	3	2	1	V13.11	
has a flattering colour	4	3	2	1	V13.12	

Thank you very much for your time

AddendumB:

Ethics approval for review of human subjects

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ETHICS COMMITTEE
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

07 August 2012
Dr A Retief
Department of Consumer Sciences
University of Pretoria
Pretoria
0002

Dear Dr Retief

EC120707-066 Informational cues used by young adult male consumers in their quality assessment of smart casual wear

The project conforms to the requirements of the Ethics Committee.

Kind regards

Prof NH Casey
Chairman: Ethics Committee

Agriculture Building 10-20 Tel: 012 420 4107 ethics.nas@up.ac.za

Addendum C:

Signed plagiarism policy agreement

Signed declaration of originality

PLAGIARISM POLICY AGREEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY: Natural and Agricultural Sciences
DEPARTMENT: Consumer Science

The Department of Consumer Science places specific emphasis on integrity and ethical behaviour with regards to the preparation of all written work submitted for academic evaluation.

Although academic personnel will provide you with information regarding reference techniques as well as ways to avoid plagiarism, you also have a responsibility to fulfil in this regard. Should you at anytime feel unsure about the requirements, you must consult the lecturer concerned before you submit any written work.

You are guilty of plagiarism when you extract information from a book, article or web page without acknowledging the source and pretend that it is your own work. In truth, you are stealing someone else's property. This doesn't only apply to cases where you quote verbatim, but also when you present someone else's work in a somewhat amended format (paraphrase), or even when you use someone else's deliberation without the necessary acknowledgement. You are not allowed to use another student's previous work. You are furthermore not allowed to let anyone copy or use your work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own.

Students who are guilty of plagiarism will forfeit all credit for the work concerned. In addition, the matter can also be referred to the Committee for Discipline (Students) for a ruling to be made. Plagiarism is considered a serious violation of the University's regulations and may lead to suspension from the University.

For the period that you are a student at the Department Consumer Science, the under mentioned declaration must accompany all written work to be submitted. No written work will be accepted unless the declaration has been completed and attached.

I (full names): Ruth Kawira Njagi
Student number: 10508326
Subject of the work: The role of informational cues in young adult male's assessment of smart casual wear during purchase decision

Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism entails and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this dissertation is my own, original work. Where someone else's work was used (whether from a printed source, the internet or any other source) due acknowledgement wasgiven and reference was made according to departmental requirements.
3. I did not make use of another student's previous work and submitted it as my own.
4. I did not allow and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting itas his or her own work.

SIGNATURE

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This document must be signed and submitted with every

essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation and/or thesis.

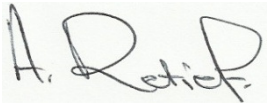
Full names of student: Ruth Kawira Njagi

Student number:10508326

Declaration

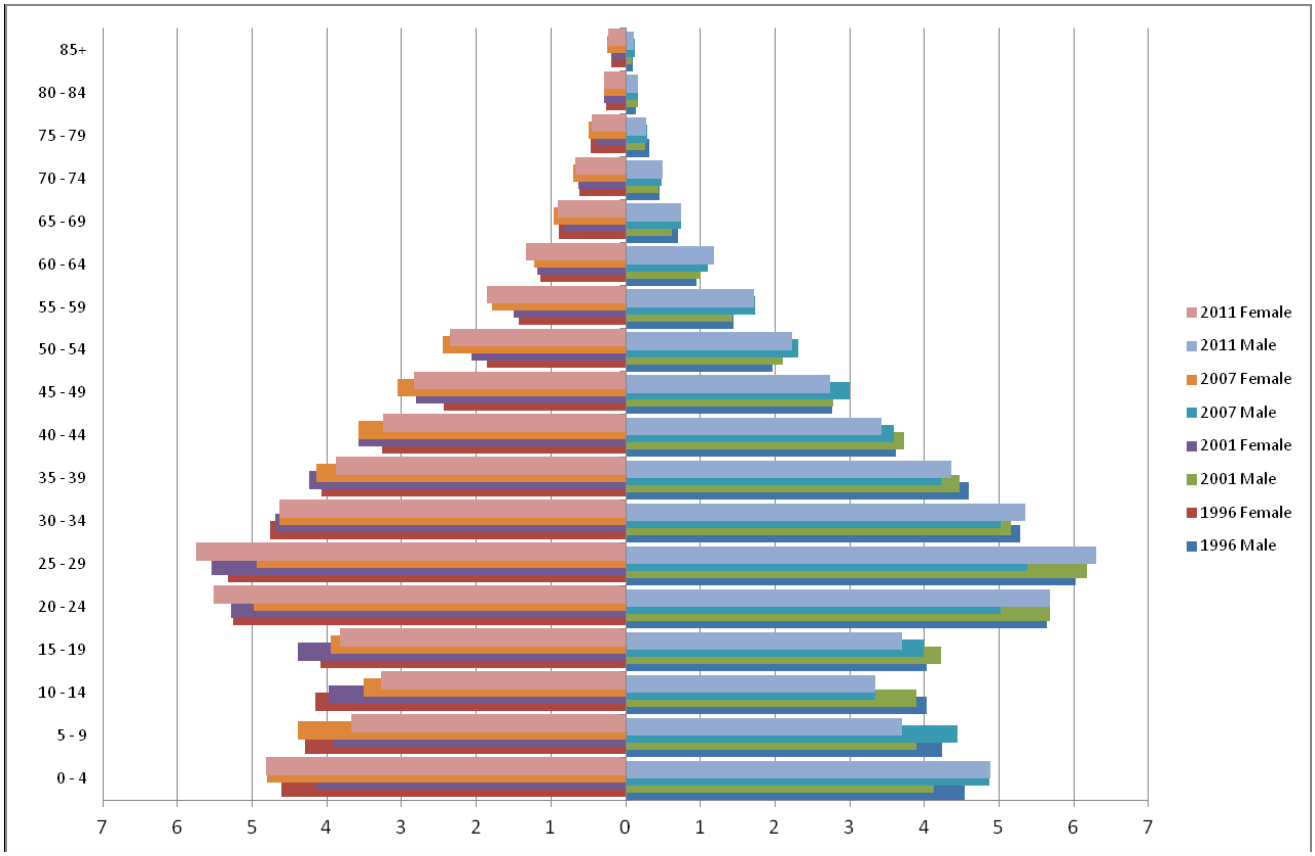
1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this **dissertation** (eg essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation, thesis, etc) is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

SIGNATURE STUDENT: 

SIGNATURE SUPERVISOR: 

Addendum D:

Gauteng: percentage distribution of population by five-year age groups and sex



Gauteng: percentage distribution of population by five-year age groups and sex (Lehohla, 2012).