

**FASHION CLOTHING INVOLVEMENT, OPINION LEADERSHIP AND OPINION
SEEKING AMONGST BLACK GENERATION Y STUDENTS**

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May 2014

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree of Masters of Commerce in Marketing Management, is my own work and that all the sources obtained have been correctly recorded and acknowledged. This dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at any institution of higher learning.

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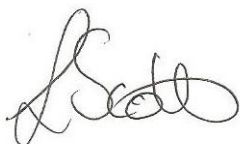
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To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, the undersigned, have language edited the completed research of Pulaki Joseph Tshabalala for the Magister Commercii in the discipline of marketing management thesis entitled: *Fashion clothing involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students*.

The responsibility of implementing the recommended language changes rests with the author of the thesis.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda Scott', with a stylized, cursive script.

Linda Scott

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A special word of thanks to the following persons who have assisted me in completing this study:

- To the omnipresent, omnipotent God who remains present with his whole being at all times, and leads the path in my life. *Kube wena Nkosi wawungenami, ngabe ngafele ndleleni!* (If it had not been the Lord who was on my side...I wouldn't have made it this far!)
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Vanderbijlpark

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ABSTRACT

FASHION CLOTHING INVOLVEMENT, OPINION LEADERSHIP AND OPINION SEEKING AMONGST BLACK GENERATION Y STUDENTS

Keywords: fashion clothing, product involvement, fashion opinion leadership, fashion opinion seeking, black Generation Y students

Opinion leadership and opinion seeking are central constructs in academic studies of new product innovations. Fashion opinion leaders are those individuals who accelerate the fashion maturity process by legitimising a fashionable trend and influence other consumers to adopt the new innovative style as a replacement for the current accepted one. Consumers who accept information and adopt new style innovations are called opinion seekers and are important to the diffusion of new fashions because they may act on the information they receive from the opinion leaders.

In South Africa, the fashion industry, which consists of a combination of the manufacturing, retail, media and recruitment sectors, generates billions of South African rands per annum, and is the fifth largest employment sector in the country. In fact, the fashion and textile industry in South Africa employed approximately 143 000 people in March of 2005, and contributed 12 percent to total manufacturing employment.

Post 1994, it was evident that the fashion industry in South Africa underwent a metamorphosis from a protected market where domestic manufacturers dominated to a market that increasingly faced competition from international sources. During the first decade of democracy, the country joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and opened its creative market to international trade. This saw the industry generate sales of R34 billion, of which 9.4 percent was from clothing sales, and with only 18.7 percent of textiles output being exported. This suggests that the South African retailing industry yields substantial value chain power.

There appears to be few published research studies focusing on fashion opinion leadership and opinion seeking amongst the black Generation Y students in South Africa. Owing to the importance of the fashion industry sector, together with the ethnic and cultural diversity of

South Africa, the size of the black Generation Y cohort, and the higher social standing and future earning potential of those with a tertiary qualification, it is important to explore black Generation Y students' fashion opinion leadership/seeking and fashion involvement.

In South Africa, the Generation Y cohort is the first generation to grow up in an era of freedom and constantly changing technology – two forces that serve to broaden the divergence between this fascinating generation and previous generations. In 2013, the Generation Y individuals accounted for an estimated 38 percent of the South African population, and members of the black Generation Y accounted for 83 percent of the country's Generation Y cohort.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate fashion clothing involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour amongst South African black Generation Y students.

The target population for this study were male and female black undergraduate and postgraduate students, aged between 18 and 24, and enrolled at South African registered public higher education institutions (HEIs). The sampling frame for this study constituted the 23 South African registered public HEIs that existed in 2013. This sampling frame was narrowed down using judgement sampling to two HEI campuses in the Gauteng province – one from a traditional university and one from a university of technology. The Gauteng province was selected over other provinces in the country because it contained the highest percentage of the 23 public HEIs.

A self-administered questionnaire was designed based on the scales used in previous studies. Lecturers at each of the two campuses selected to form part of the sample were contacted and asked if they would allow the questionnaire to be administered on their students during lectures. Once permission had been gained, the questionnaires were distributed to students during the scheduled lectures.

The questionnaire requested respondents to indicate on a six-point Likert scale the extent of their agreement/disagreement with items designed to measure their fashion clothing involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. In addition, the students were asked to provide certain demographic data.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into fashion clothing involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour amongst black Generation Y students in South Africa. Findings from this study show that there is a significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students, and that females have a significantly higher level of fashion product involvement compared to males.

Insights gained from this study will help fashion marketing better understand this cohort's involvement in fashion, which, in turn, should help them tailor their marketing efforts in such a way as to appeal to this segment in an improved manner.

OPSOMMING

MODE-BETROKKENHEID, MENINGSVORMING EN MODE-NAVOLGING ONDER SWART GENERASIE Y STUDENTE

Sleutelwoorde: mode klerasie, produkbetrokkenheid, mode-meningsvorming, mode-
navolging, swart Generasie Y studente

Mode-meningsvorming en die navolging van nuwe mode-neigings is bepalende faktore in akademiese studies oor produkvernuwings. Mode-meningsvormers is daardie individue wat die groeiproses van die mode versnel deur 'n nuwe mode-neiging te regverdig en ander gebruikers ooreed om die nuwe styl as plaasvervanger vir die huidige aanvaarde styl te aanvaar. Gebruikers wat die inligting aanvaar en stylvernuwings aanneem, word navolgers genoem en hulle is belangrik vir nuwe modes omdat hulle op die inligting wat van die meningsvormers ontvang is, mag reageer.

Die mode-industrie in Suid-Afrika, wat uit 'n kombinasie van die vervaardigings-, kleinhandel-, media en werwingsektore bestaan, genereer biljoene Suid-Afrikaanse rand per jaar en is ook die vyfde grootste werkverskaffersektor in Suid-Afrika. Trouens, die mode- en tekstielbedryf in Suid-Afrika het 143 000 werknemers gehad in Maart 2005 en het 12 persent bygedra tot die totale vervaardigings werksgeleentede.

Na 1994 het die mode-industrie in Suid-Afrika 'n metamorfose ondergaan van 'n beskermd mark, waar plaaslike vervaardigers die mark gedomineer het, na 'n toenemende kompeterende mark met internasionale rolspelers. Gedurende die eerste dekade van demokrasie, het die land by die Wêreldhandelsorganisasie (WHO) aangesluit en daarmee sy kreatiewe mark vir internasionale handel oopgestel. Die industrie het verkope van R34 biljoen rand gegeneer waarvan 9.4 persent klere-verkope was en slegs 18.7 persent van die tekstiel uitset uitgevoer is. Dit beteken dat die Suid-Afrikaanse kleinhandelsbedryf aansienlike waardeketting krag het.

Dit blyk dat daar min gepubliseerde navorsingstudies is wat fokus op die mode-meningsvorming en navolging onder swart Generasie Y studente in Suid-Afrika. Op grond van die belangrikheid van die mode-industrie, die etniese en kultuurdiversiteit van Suid-Afrika, die grootte van die swart Generasie Y groep, en die hoër sosiale stand en toekomstige

inkomste potensiaal van diegene met 'n tersiêre kwalifikasie, is die ontginning van die mode-meningsvorming/navolging van swart Generasie Y studente belangrik.

Die Generasie Y groep in Suid-Afrika is die eerste generasie wat in 'n tydperk van Vryheid en voortdurende tegnologiese verandering opgroei. Hierdie twee kragte verbreed die gaping tussen hierdie en vorige generasies. In 2013, het die Generasie Y individue 'n beraamde 38 persent van die totale Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking uitgemaak, terwyl 83 persent van die Generasie Y groep, swart was.

Die primêre doelwit van hierdie studie was om die betrokkenheid van swart Generasie Y studente in Suid-Afrika in mode-klerasie, aankoopbesluitneming, meningsvorming en navolging te ondersoek.

Die teikenpopulasie het bestaan uit manlike en vroulike swart voor- en nagraadse-studente tussen die ouderdomme van 18 en 24 jaar wat by 'n openbare Suid-Afrikaanse hoër onderwysinstelling (HOIs) geregistreer is. Die steekproefraamwerk is op oordeel gebaseer en twee HOI kampusse in die Gauteng provinsie – een 'n tradisionele universiteit en die ander 'n universiteit van tegnologie – is gebruik. Die Gauteng provinsie is gekies omdat hierdie provinsie die hoogste persentasie van die 23 openbare HOIs bevat.

'n Self-geadministreerde vraelys is ontwerp gebaseer op skale wat in vorige studies gebruik is. Dosente by die twee kampusse wat gekies is om deel te wees van die steekproef, is genader en toestemming verkry om die vraelyste gedurende klastyd te versprei.

Deelnemers moes op 'n ses-punt Likertskaal aandui tot watter mate hulle saamstem/verskil met items wat ontwerp is om hulle mode-betrokkenheid, meningsvorming of navolging te meet. Verder moes die studente ook bepaalde demografiese inligting verskaf.

Die bevindings van hierdie studie verskaf waardevolle insigte in die betrokkenheid van swart Generasie Y studente in Suid-Afrika by mode klerasie, aankoopbesluitneming, meningsvorming en navolging. Daar is bevind dat daar 'n beduidende verband tussen mode-produk betrokkenheid, mode aankoopbetrokkenheid, mode-meningsvorming en mode-navolging is onder swart Generasie Y studente. Verder is bevind dat vroulike studente beduidend meer betrokke is by mode-produkte as hulle manlike eweknieë.

Die insigte van hierdie studie sal die mode-mark in staat stel om die betrokkenheid van die groep by mode beter te verstaan en hierdie begrip sal die mark in staat stel om hulle bemerkingspogings wat op hierdie groep fokus, te verbeter.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Opinion leadership and opinion seeking are central constructs in academic studies of new product innovations. Sproles (1981:116) states that for decades the phenomena of fashion behaviour has been a pertinent subject of academic theories, social analysts, business entrepreneurs, moral critics and cultural historians. Vieira (2009:179) adds that from an academic perspective, researchers have concluded that the process by which new style innovations and clothing concepts, “style statements” and taste continually move across society has been the subject of debate for centuries. King *et al.* (1980:18) conceptualise the fashion change agent as a fashion opinion leader who is conscious about the changing fashion trends on a regular basis, and who also keeps his/her wardrobe up-to-date with current style innovations most of the time. In recent years, the market has shifted swiftly, allowing consumers the freedom to monitor their fashion environment.

In the contemporary world, people employ fashionable clothing to signal information about their personality and status (Baron *et al.*, 2000:42). Status, wealth and education have been positively associated with opinion leadership (King & Summers, 1970:43). Fashion conscious consumers become especially interested in and preoccupied with clothing and trends (Goldsmith, 2000:1), so that their knowledge allows them to influence others on decisions in some given area of fashionable clothing (Summers, 1970:179). Goldsmith and Clark (2008:309) state that fashion opinion leaders have been recognised as important to the diffusion of new clothing fashions for a long time because they exercise a powerful influence on consumers who seek them out as sources of information about clothing and fashionable trends.

Opinion leaders are individuals who have an informal influence on the buying behaviours of other consumers (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:282). Workman and Johnson (1993:61) regard fashion opinion leaders as those individuals who accelerate the fashion maturity process by legitimising a fashionable trend and influence other consumers to adopt the new innovative style as a replacement for the current accepted one. Consumers who accept information and adopt new style innovations are called opinion seekers and are important to the diffusion of

new fashions because they may act on the information they get from the opinion leaders (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008:309-310). Goldsmith (2000:2) concurs with Flynn *et al.* (1996:138) regarding opinion seekers not seeming to have the same interest in and knowledge of a particular product category as opinion leaders do, and so they seek information and advice from opinion leaders.

The youth represent an important target market for any industry sector given their current and future market potential (Foscht *et al.*, 2009:223), including the fashion industry. The youth of today are referred to as Generation Y, and this denotes individuals born between 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004:21). In South Africa, the Generation Y cohort represented an estimated 38 percent of the population in 2013, with approximately 83 percent of this cohort consisting of African people (hereafter referred to as black Generation Y) (Statistics South Africa, 2013). The sheer magnitude of the black Generation Y cohort in South Africa makes it a substantial market segment.

The youth market is a highly coveted consumer segment that is difficult to both reach and influence (Bennett & Lachowetz, 2004:239). Those enrolled at tertiary institutions (students) constitute a particularly attractive target market to marketers, given that an individual's investment in tertiary education correlates with a higher social class status and future earning potential (Bevan-Dye, 2012:34). Cart and Machado (2010:22) state that South African retailers are already targeting Generation Y in their advertising campaigns and marketing strategies because of their social class status and similarities in their style of dress.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In South Africa, the fashion industry, which consists of a combination of the manufacturing, retail, media and recruitment sectors, generates billions of South African rands per annum, and is the fifth largest employment sector in the country (Fashion Web, 2013). In fact, according to Vlok (2006:229), the fashion and textile industry in South Africa employed approximately 143 000 people in March of 2005, and contributed 12 percent to total manufacturing employment.

Post 1994, it was evident that the fashion industry in South Africa underwent a metamorphosis from a protected market where domestic manufacturers dominated to a market that increasingly faced competition from international sources (Harrison & Dunne,

1998:45). Chaddha *et al.* (2009:15) state that during the first decade of democracy, the country joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and opened its creative market to international trade. This saw the industry generate sales of R34 billion (Chaddha *et al.*, 2009:16), of which 9.4 percent was from clothing sales, and with only 18.7 percent of textiles output being exported (Vlok, 2006:228).

According to Anstey (2004:1843), a strategic analysis of South Africa's fashion industry in 2000 concluded that despite the costs of production being higher than countries in Asia, South Africa was globally competitive in the cut-make-and-trim (CMT) area at the basic item labour-intensive end of the industry due to faster response times from local companies. This suggests that the South African retailing industry yields substantial value chain power (Vlok, 2006:228).

Berman and Evans (2007:5) indicate that retailing in South Africa is a significant field of study, as fashion and fashion trends within the industry mirror trends within the overall economy. Consumers enter into a retail experience with a set of expectations that includes but is not limited to what they would like to see happen, and what store and product attributes should be present (Wirtz *et al.*, 2007:6). Failure to meet these set of expectations will lead to an interpersonal exchange of information within that (particular) retail store.

Gatignon and Robertson (1986:536) consider interpersonal influence as an exchange process of information and focus on both opinion leaders and opinion seekers. According to Flynn *et al.* (1996:138), opinion seekers are those individuals who are particular information demanders, whilst opinion leaders are those individuals who are particular information suppliers.

There appears to be few published research studies focusing on fashion opinion leadership and opinion seeking amongst the black Generation Y students in South Africa. Owing to the importance of the fashion industry sector, together with the ethnic and cultural diversity of South Africa (Kühn, 2010:3), the size of the black Generation Y cohort, and the higher social standing and future earning potential of those with a tertiary qualification, it is important to explore black Generation Y students' fashion opinion leadership/seeking and fashion involvement.

Therefore, this study aimed to determine fashion clothing involvement, fashion clothing purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour amongst the black Generation Y students. The findings of the study will contribute to fashion retailers' understanding of this lucrative market segment.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were formulated for the study:

1.3.1 Primary objectives

The primary objective of this study was to investigate fashion clothing involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour amongst South African black Generation Y students.

1.3.2 Theoretical objectives

In order to achieve the primary objective, the following theoretical objectives were formulated for the study:

- Outline the concept of fashion consumption, in accordance with the literature
- Conduct a review of the literature on product involvement
- Review the literature on fashion clothing involvement
- Review the literature on fashion clothing opinion leadership
- Review the literature on fashion clothing opinion seeking
- Conduct a review the literature on the Generation Y cohort, including the market potential of South Africa's black Generation Y cohort.

1.3.3 Empirical objectives

In accordance with the primary objective of the study, the following empirical objectives were formulated:

- Determine whether there is a relationship between black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour
- Determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement influences their fashion purchase decision involvement

- Determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement influences their fashion opinion leadership behaviour
- Determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement influences their fashion opinion seeking behaviour
- Determine whether male and female black Generation Y students differ concerning their fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

Following the formulation of the empirical objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase involvement, fashion leadership and fashion seeking amongst black Generation Y students.

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students.

Ho2: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement does not significantly influence their fashion purchase decision involvement.

Ha2: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement does significantly influence their fashion purchase decision involvement.

Ho3: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does not significantly influence their fashion opinion leadership behaviour.

Ha3: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does significantly influence their fashion opinion leadership behaviour.

Ho4: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does not significantly influence their fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

Ha4: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does significantly influence their fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

Ho5: There is no significant difference between male and female black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

Ha5: There is a significant difference between male and female black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study included a literature review and an empirical study. Following a descriptive research design, the relevant information was gathered by means of the questionnaire survey method.

1.5.1 Literature review

In order to underpin the empirical study, a review of the South African and international literature was conducted using secondary data sources that included the Internet, textbooks, magazines, academic journals, and online academic databases.

1.5.2 Empirical study

The empirical portion of this study comprised the following methodology dimensions:

1.5.2.1 Target population

The target population for this study were male and female black undergraduate and postgraduate students, aged between 18 and 24, and enrolled at South African registered public HEIs. The target population was defined as follows:

- Element: male and female black undergraduate and postgraduate students aged between 18 and 24

- Sampling Unit: South African registered public HEIs
- Extent: South Africa, Gauteng province
- Time: 2013

1.5.2.2 Sampling frame

The sampling frame for this study constituted the 23 South African registered public HEIs that existed in 2013. This sampling frame was narrowed down using judgement sampling to two HEI campuses in the Gauteng province – one from a traditional university and one from a university of technology. The Gauteng province was selected over other provinces in the country because it contains the highest percentage of the 23 public HEIs (Bevan-Dye, 2012:38).

1.5.2.3 Sample method and sample size

A non-probability convenience sample of 400 black undergraduate and postgraduate students will be taken – 200 per selected HEI campus. A sample size of 400 students was deemed sufficiently large in that it is in the range of other studies that focus on the Generation Y cohort such as that of Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001:33) (sample size of 368), Bakewell *et al.* (2006:173) (sample size of 346), and Kueh and Voon (2007: 667) (sample size of 470).

1.5.2.4 Measuring instrument and data collection method

A self-administered questionnaire was designed based on the scales used in previous studies. The scale adapted by O’Cass and Choy (2008:345) was used to measure the fashion clothing involvement of the South African black Generation Y students. The fashion clothing involvement scale comprises two sub-scales – fashion clothing product involvement (six items), and fashion clothing purchase decision involvement (five items).

Fashion opinion leadership was measured using the two scales originally developed and validated by Flynn *et al.* (1996:146) and adapted by Goldsmith and Clark (2008:314). The opinion leadership scale comprises six items, and the opinion seeking scale comprises six items. Responses were measured on a Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree. In addition, questions pertaining to respondents’ demographical information were included. The

questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting participants to follow the given instructions.

The questionnaire was pilot tested on a convenience sample of 50 black Generation Y students that were not included in the main sample in order to ascertain its reliability. Results of this pilot test were duly coded and tabulated.

Lecturers at each of the two campuses selected to form part of the sample were contacted and asked if they would allow the questionnaire to be administered on their students during lectures. Once permission had been gained, the questionnaires were distributed to students during the scheduled lectures.

1.5.3 Statistical analysis

The captured data was analysed using the statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21.0 for Windows. The following statistical methods were used on the empirical data sets:

- Reliability and validity analysis
- Factor analysis
- Descriptive analysis
- Significance tests

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study complies with the ethical standards of academic research. This includes guaranteed confidentiality of both the respondents and the HEIs at which they were registered at the time of the survey. All responses are reported on in an aggregate format. Furthermore, participation in the survey was strictly on a voluntary basis.

1.7 CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION

Chapter 2 explores the literature on fashion clothing involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. In addition, this chapter includes a review of the literature on the Generation Y cohort, with particular reference to South Africa's black Generation Y.

In Chapter 3, an outline of the methodology of the empirical study is provided. The design of the questionnaire, the sample design, the sample size and the processing together with the analysis and evaluation of data are discussed.

Chapter 4 reports on the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 provides the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings of the study. In addition, suggestions on future research avenues are outlined in Chapter 5.

1.8 DEFINITIONS OF KEY WORDS

Generation Y is a generational cohort defined as the population of a country born between 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004:2).

Opinion leaders are those individuals who possess an unprecedented amount of product knowledge, and are therefore able to exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the purchasing decisions of other consumers (Flynn *et al.*, 1996:138).

Opinion seekers are those individuals who search out advice from opinion leaders on product categories before or when making a purchase decision (Flynn *et al.*, 1996:138).

Fashion clothing involvement implies the involvement of fashion conscious consumers in the domain of fashion and, as such, these consumers are drawn into the style of fashion of the moment, and there are those who place a greater attention and emphasis on their daily wear (O’Cass & Julian, 2001:3).

Fashion consumption is defined as the use of fashion clothing purposes beyond utilitarian needs, which is mostly achieved while enabling the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It also encompasses a multifaceted range of interactions between consumers and the fashion system (Nordic Fashion Association, 2012).

Product involvement is defined as the perceived personal relevance of a particular product or brand to an individual, based on interests, values or on inherent needs (Antil, 1984:204; Slama & Taschian, 1985:73; Zaichkowsky, 1985:343; Richins & Bloch, 1986:282; Celsi & Olson, 1988:211).

1.9 SYNOPSIS

This chapter has laid the foundation for the study. The introduction and background to study were discussed briefly in the chapter. It was stated in the introduction that Generation Y cohort comprises individuals born between 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004:2). Furthermore, it was stated that the black Generation Y cohort are an important segment for fashion retailers given the size of the segment.

The problem statement and objectives of the study were also outlined in the chapter. The research design and methodology was briefly outlined, namely the literature review, empirical study, target population, sampling frame, sample method, sample size and the measuring instruments, along with the data collection method. In addition, the statistical analysis used to compute the data was highlighted briefly. The classification of chapters for the entire study was provided.

The next chapter provides a review of the literature on fashion involvement and opinion leadership.

CHAPTER 2

FASHION INVOLVEMENT AND OPINION LEADERSHIP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of involvement originates from the field of social psychology (Sherif & Cantril, 1947:280) and was later melded to marketing and consumer research in Krugman's (1965:349-356, 1966:583-596, 1971:3-9) extensive research in the field of television advertising and involvement. In terms of consumer behaviour research, involvement refers to a product or consumption-related stimulus's "degree of personal relevance" and interest to an individual, and may be defined in terms of product involvement, brand involvement or even advertisement involvement (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:229). This degree of personal relevance ranges on a continuum from high to low (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006:93; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:229). Over the years, several studies have sought to understand the influence of consumer involvement in various consumption-related situations (Tigert *et al.*, 1976; Bloch, 1982; Traylor & Joseph, 1984; Fairhurst *et al.*, 1989; Flynn & Goldsmith, 1993; Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; Bloch *et al.*, 2009). Several factors, including perceived financial risk, perceived social risk, and the conspicuousness of the product help explain the degree of product involvement, where certain product categories are high involvement and others low involvement (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006:93; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:229).

Typically, apparel is considered a high-involvement product category (Kim, 2005:208). The concept of fashion involvement has been extensively studied (Tigert *et al.*, 1976; Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006; O'Cass & Choy, 2008; Vieira, 2009). Khare and Rakesh (2010:211) posit that researchers have used the consumer involvement concept as a starting point in trying to understand consumers' interest in the fashion product category. Kim (2005:208) explains that consumers' involvement with the fashion product category influences several aspects of their consumer decision-making process, including their information search about specific fashion brands.

Tigert *et al.* (1980:18), indicate that highly involved fashion consumers have traditionally been regarded as important to marketers because they are seen as drivers and influencers of fashion clothing adoption, and the purchase thereof. Goldsmith *et al.*, (1999a:9) add that this notion is derived from the reaction fashion consumers have to new styles, and indicate that

their reaction may be crucial to the ultimate success and failure of the fashion product in that it is a determinant of purchase involvement. Mittal (1989:150) defines this as “the extent of interest and concern that a consumer brings to bear upon a purchase-decision task”.

Opinion leadership is significant in the context of involvement, including fashion involvement. According to Blackwell *et al.* (2006:535), a high level of product involvement with a particular product category is the most typical characteristic of opinion leaders across product categories.

As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of the study was to determine fashion clothing involvement, fashion purchase involvement, opinion leadership, and opinion seeking amongst the black Generation Y students. In order to set the theoretical underpinning of this study, Chapter 2 starts with a discussion of fashion consumption. This is followed by a review of the literature pertaining to product involvement, which narrows down into a discussion of the literature on fashion clothing involvement and fashion purchase involvement. The chapter also provides a review of the literature on the concept of opinion leadership. In addition, there is a description of the characteristics of the Generation Y cohort, who, as indicated in Chapter 1, represent the target population of this study.

2.2 FASHION CONSUMPTION

Clothing consumption refers to the purchase and wearing of clothing to satisfy functional needs, and in the case of fashion clothing, to satisfy symbolic needs (Khare & Rakesh, 2010:209). Consumers use fashion clothing as a way of reflecting their self-image (Law *et al.*, 2004:365), tastes and lifestyles (Khare *et al.*, 2012:43). Fashion is related strongly to time, and is a very visible reflection of modern society’s orientation towards continuous change (Cholachatpinyo *et al.*, 2002:11). Often, changes in fashion clothing and style are attributed to the efforts of marketers who, in a ploy to encourage the continuous purchase of the latest fashion, create the planned obsolescence of fashion (Law *et al.*, 2004:362).

2.2.1 Fashion defined

Vieira (2009:180) states that fashion may be conceptualised as an object, such as fashion clothing, as well as a behavioural process of diffusion through social influence. Creekmore (1974:5) posits that fashion play a crucial role in enhancing the self-image of the consumers. Law *et al.* (2004:365) add that fashion clothing often serves to aid individuals, especially the

youth, to develop their appearance and consequent self-image. Fashion and style are unique dimensions of consumer behaviour, and are ways through which consumers signal their sense of identity (Rathnayake, 2011:121).

Historically, the emphasis on fashion has been primarily in the female sphere (Rathnayake, 2011:122). In support of this statement, Beaudoin *et al.* (2003:23) state that while in the history of fashion men have played a crucial role as fashion creators, fashion consumption has generally been associated with women. Haynes *et al.* (1993:151) add that, in comparison to males, females typically have been perceived as having more interest in fashion. Interestingly, the gap in fashion involvement between male consumers and female consumers has narrowed (Sproles, 1979:221).

2.2.2 Explaining fashion consumption

Consistent change in styles and trends propel the consumption of fashion clothing in the market place. There are many different ways of viewing and interpreting this notion. Within fashion circles, there are different fashion terms that classify different categories of fashion trends and style. The constant change in fashion or fashion trends influences the consumption of fashion clothing (Law *et al.*, 2004:362). Whilst clothing consumption involves the satisfaction of biogenic needs such as warmth and protection (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:116), fashion clothing consumption goes a step further in that it acts as a way of self-expression; that is, it enables an individual to signal their self-identity to others (Law *et al.*, 2004:365).

The concept of fashion consumption stems from consumers' desire to remain fashionably relevant and up-to-date with the latest fashion trends. According to Law *et al.* (2004:362), the need to be fashionable and up-to-date with clothing is particularly synonymous with the Generation Y cohort. O'Cass (2004:869) agrees, and posits that fashion apparel is now regarded as a possession that holds a significant position in society, especially amongst members of the Generation Y cohort.

2.2.3 Concept of fashion consciousness

The concept of fashion consciousness, according to Rathnayake (2011:121), is an important research field, and has been the focus of several studies, but mostly in developed countries, as opposed to developing countries. Parker *et al.* (2004:176) state that although developed

countries have been saturated with studies pertaining to fashion consciousness, little is known about this consumer behaviour-related phenomenon in developing countries.

The level of fashion consciousness amongst consumers may be derived from high involvement in fashion products. According to O’Cass (2004:870), involvement in fashion clothing is salient because of the influence it has on the social and economic aspects of consumers’ lives. Holmlund *et al.* (2011:108) posit that in terms of the influence of fashion consciousness on the social aspects of consumers’ lives, often consumers are propelled by their motivation to fit into a particular group, and avoid transmitting the wrong signals. Rathnayake (2011:122) argues that the concept of fashion consciousness goes beyond the social desire to fit into a particular group, but rather focuses on the individual’s “inner or outer self”. In the case of the inner self, fashion consciousness is derived from an individual’s self-awareness. In contrast, when self-awareness is directed outwards, an individual can be seen as displaying a high level of public self-consciousness. However, Holmlund *et al.* (2011:110) maintain that fashion-consciousness is more a product of an individual’s desire to heed social norms, which includes replacing worn-out garments on a regular basis, keeping up with the seasonal fashion changes and/or purchasing fashion clothing in accordance to fluctuations in body weight.

2.2.4 Explaining the phenomenon of fashion change

Fashion change, according to Law *et al.* (2004:362), refers to a seasonal change in fashion clothing prompted by fashion marketers with the sole intention of motivating consumers to buy new fashion items continuously. Cholachatpinyo *et al.* (2002:13) indicate that fashion change may be classified into four levels, namely macro-subjective (fashion change as a reflection of social needs), macro-objective (marketers’ interpretation and communication of fashion social needs), micro-objective (consumers interaction with fashion items in the market), and micro-subjective (consumers use of fashion items as an extension of their self-image). Essential to each of these levels is the process of the diffusion of fashion items from one stage to another. Vieira, (2009:179) explain that the diffusion of fashion is equivalent to fashion change, and in many instances, is driven by fashion conscious consumers who are classified into groups that are interrelated and largely fuelled by the desire to remain fashionably relevant within the changing fashion environment

Cholachatpinyo *et al.* (2002:25) state that within the fashion environment, fashion diffuses from fashion opinion leaders to fashion opinion seekers. Vieira (2009:180) adds that in every fashion environment, there are fashion agents, who monitor the fashion life cycle and ensure that their clothing is kept up-to-date with the latest fashion trends. According to Law *et al.* (2004:363), depending on the life span of that particular fashion item, the diffusion then escalates to its peak, whereby the majority of fashion consumers accepts and adopt the style. Once established, the fashion item will cascade to the decline stage where fashion followers will adopt the out-dated fashion item/style.

2.2.5 Fashion change frameworks

The fashion change framework is linked largely to the phenomenon of the fashion change process. Different researchers in the field of fashion marketing have developed a number of frameworks in relation to fashion change. According to Law *et al.* (2004:363), these frameworks include the trickle-down theory, the mass-market theory, the collective selection theory, and the subculture leadership theory.

Simmel (1904:135) explains the trickle-down theory involves the upper class members of society dictating new fashion trends via the fashions they select, thereby introducing new fashion trends to fashion followers. Law *et al.* (2004:363) indicates that the mass-market theory involves mass media bringing about changes in fashion styles and trends. In the collective selection theory, Blummer (1969:276) states that fashion is used as socialising agent, meaning you ought to be stylish to fit in the social scene. Law *et al.* (2004:363) indicates that the subculture theory involves fashion trends originating in certain subcultures within a society and trickling up to other members of that society.

2.2.6 Attitude of the youth towards new fashion trends

According to Parker *et al.* (2004:176), marketers across the globe are drawn to members of the Generation Y cohort because of their discretionary spending power and the impact they have in setting long lasting trends. Khare and Rakesh (2010:209) posit that the youth market is regarded as a prominent consumer segment, highly influenced by global trends and is thus a major consumer research topic in the field of fashion marketing. Generation Y individuals are not only highly involved in fashion clothing but also have a higher propensity to spend (O’Cass & Choy, 2008:341).

Recent studies in the field of fashion marketing show that most members of the Generation Y cohort in developing and emerging countries are receptive to global trends. Khare and Rakesh (2010:209) state, for example, that traditional values in India have started to mix with western values, and that Indian Generation Y individuals are drawn to western trends as a symbol of a global value system. O’Cass and Choy (2008:341) add that in the case of China, the youth market is highly sought after by fashion marketers and is recognised as an important lucrative segment. Khare and Rakesh (2010:215) conclude that Generation Y individuals in less developed countries are drawn towards the western culture and are becoming more conscious about fashion brands and trends.

In developed economies, such as the United States of America (USA) and Japan, members of the Generation Y cohort also represent an important segment for fashion clothing (Parker *et al.* 2004:178). Gurău (2012:105) posits that Generation Y individuals tend to be fastidious in that they prefer product items that match their personality and lifestyle, paying less attention to brands. Parker *et al.* (2004:178) found that when buying apparel, in contrast to Chinese Generation Y individuals who place little value on fashion clothing, USA and Japanese Generation Y individuals place a far higher premium on style over comfort, thereby suggesting a strong involvement with fashion apparel

These findings suggest that Generation Y individuals’ interest in fashion clothing and fashion clothing involvement may differ across cultural settings. Product involvement, as it relates to fashion apparel is discussed in the following section.

2.3 PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT

O’Cass (2004:870) indicates that the concept of fashion clothing involvement is understood best through the consideration of consumer-fashion clothing bonding or relationships. O’Cass and Choy (2008:342) define product involvement as a feeling of attachment and interest consumers exhibit towards specific product types. Naderi (2013:85) asserts that various types of mass media stimuli may trigger such interest, including print media content, television content, or content in other types of media. Kim (2005:207) posits that having an interest in a specific product type typically translates into such consumers having more knowledge about the features, attributes, and benefits of products in that category, and being more observant to any form of marketing or advertisement relating to that product class of interest. According to Goldsmith and Clark (2008:309), this increased knowledge and heightened interest often

translates into that person becoming an opinion leader in that product category, influencing the behaviour of others via word-of-mouth communication (WOM). Schiffman *et al.* (2010:281) indicate that due to the credibility of WOM communication, many marketers are engaging in initiatives designed to encourage positive WOM communications amongst the target market(s) concerning their market offerings. This suggests that consumer involvement in a specific product domain, along with opinion leadership behaviour and WOM communication is a key factor in marketing and promotional strategies.

Word-of-mouth communication is discussed in the following section.

2.3.1 Information seeking through word-of-mouth (WOM)

Blackwell *et al.* (2006:533) define WOM communication as “the informal transmission of ideas, comments, opinions, and information between two people, neither one of which is a marketer.” Similarly, Lim and Chung (2014:39) define WOM as an informal mode of communication aimed at conveying a special message about the assessment of goods and services to those consumers who are independent of the marketers. Sweeney *et al.* (2012:237) states that marketers across the globe have cut their spending on traditional media and opted instead for stimulating positive WOM.

Through WOM, consumers garner information from other consumers who are well informed about a specific product. This mode of communication, according to Warring (2013:331), is crucial in the concept of the innovation diffusion theory, which essentially explains the diffusion process of a new product item from one stage to another through the communication of personal influence.

Given the idea that fashion clothing is in a constant state of flux, whereby new fashions are introduced on a seasonal basis, this diffusion process, especially the role of WOM communication in the process, has important implications to fashion marketers. According to Schiffman *et al.* (2010:283), this is especially true in the age of virtual social networks such as Facebook, where WOM communication ceases to be simply between two consumers but rather has the capacity of going global. This infers that fashion marketers may utilise online social networking sites to spread the diffusion of new apparel trends faster and further by stimulating WOM communication.

The following section reviews the factors that have been identified as having an influence on product involvement.

2.3.2 Factors influencing the level of product involvement

For decades, product involvement has become a widely applied theoretical concept in the field of consumer behaviour and fashion marketing (Quester & Smart, 1998:220). Bloch *et al.* (2009:49) highlight that product involvement has a significant influence on consumers' innovativeness, brand loyalty, satisfaction, opinion leadership and decision processes. Kim (2005:209) defines product involvement as a motivational state of stimulation and sense of interest, influenced by different internal and external factors. These factors include age, subjective product knowledge, social influence and product category.

Te'eni-Harari and Hornik (2010:500) state that levels of product involvement vary according to age groups. O'Cass (2004:872) found that younger consumers in general place more emphasis on their appearance compared to their older counterparts. In support of this statement, Vieira (2009:183) add that younger consumers place more emphasis on their appearance because they want to be accepted socially, to mimic an aspiration group, or to gain social approbation.

In addition to age, Te'eni-Harari and Hornik (2010:500) indicate that the level of product involvement is highly influenced by subjective product knowledge. Viot (2012:221) posits that subjective product knowledge is vital to consumers, in that it forms part of their expertise, influencing the consumer decision-making process at each of the different phases of the product life cycle. Te'eni-Harari and Hornik, (2010:500) suggest that the more knowledgeable a person is about a product, the more highly involved he/she becomes with that product.

Social influence is thought to have an important influence on product involvement. According to Langner *et al.* (2013:32), an individual who acquires self-identity through belonging to a specific social group will adopt the character traits of that social group, including those pertaining to their consumption-related behaviour. Schiffman *et al.* (2010:281,283) add that in today's age of online social networking sites, the reach of social influence on consumption-related behaviour has become global. Given the popularity of online social networking amongst members of the Generation Y cohort (Bevan-Dye,

2012:34), this social influence is likely to be a particularly important factor influencing product involvement, including fashion clothing involvement amongst members of this cohort. As such, social influence in tandem with social networking plays a crucial role in facilitating product involvement among consumers (Te'eni-Harari & Hornik, 2010:500).

An individual's level of product involvement is also influenced by the product category. Schiffman *et al.* (2010:229) indicate that product categories may be distinguished in terms of their level of perceived risk (for example the level of social, psychological, financial, physical, and/or performance risk that their purchase entails) and the information search and processing required prior to their purchase. Product categories that have little perceived risk, and that require very limited information search, are known as low-involvement products, whilst those that involve a high degree of perceived risk, and that require moderate to extensive information search and processing, are known as high-involvement products. Rathnayake (2011:121) highlights that fashion clothing is used as a signal of a person's self-concept and as a conspicuous statement of status. This suggests that fashion clothing is a high-involvement product category, one that carries social and psychological risk and necessitates information search and processing.

In one study that examined 20 product categories, Kapferer and Laurent (1986:48) found that there is a higher level of product involvement for the clothing and perfume categories than other product categories.

The following section focuses on fashion clothing involvement.

2.4 FASHION CLOTHING INVOLVEMENT

According to O'Cass (2004:870), fashion involvement should be interpreted in terms of consumer-fashion clothing attachment. Auty and Elliot (1998:109) suggest that understanding how consumers interpret clothing, and how fashion conscious consumers evaluate and make judgements about the same fashion brand, is vital to fashion clothing marketers. Naderi (2013:86) reiterates that fashion apparel is regarded as a high-involvement product category because fashion conscious consumers use fashion as a means of self-expression.

Vieira (2009:179) posits that, in recent years, many consumers have gained self-confidence through self-identity, and have managed to embrace new style differently without

succumbing to any pressure for conformity. This evolution in the world of fashion prompted researchers to redefine fashion involvement in relation to different types of involvement. According to Vieira (2009:180), now fashion involvement can be defined as the perceived personal interest from the fashion conscious consumer by fashion apparel. In support of this definition, O’Cass (2000:547) states that the continuous change in fashion clothing and fashion style implies that many fashion conscious consumers are drawn into the latest fashion trends, and they seem to place greater emphasis on their day-to-day wardrobe.

2.4.1 Factors influencing fashion involvement

Fashion clothing involvement, according to O’Cass (2004:870), is influenced by three consumer-centric factors, namely materialism, gender and age. Materialism, according to Ogden and Cheng (2011:433), refers to an obsession with material possessions and is a trait that has gained in momentum in recent years following the rapid growth of the modern consumer culture. Hourigan and Bougoure (2012:128) posit that materialism is a negative personality trait that envy is believed to influence. When it comes to fashion clothing, people are drawn to the notion that the more designer label apparel they have, the more fashionably relevant they are. In support of this statement, O’Cass (2004:871) adds that materialism is one of the essential dimensions of consumer behavior, mainly because of its great influence on creating attachment to possessions.

O’Cass (2004:872) found that when it comes to gender and fashion, women are more involved and interested in clothing than men. This is in line with the findings of Auty and Elliot (1998:114), who examined fashion involvement, self-monitoring and the meaning of brands, and found that men and women exude different attitudes towards branded jeans, especially in relation to their image, modern appearance, practicality, quality and trendiness. This notion confirms that men and women shop differently. According to Cho and Workman (2011:366), in most households 80 percent of buying decisions are made by women, and when compared with men, women approach shopping with a different attitude; they shop for fun and spend more time seeking information about the product item before making a purchase.

The constant change in fashion clothing styles and trends can have a significant impact on the way in which fashion conscious consumers monitor their daily wear. According to O’Cass (2001:47), self-monitoring significantly influences fashion conscious consumers, and how

they monitor and control their self-presentation in relation to social cues and their social status. The author adds that high self-monitors utilise clothing items for their symbolic value and as a way of self-presentation. Law *et al.* (2004:368) concur and indicate that self-presentation is critical to fashion conscious consumers, and this is because the cultural context and society create and determine the standard of fashion and style. As such, self-monitoring, according to O’Cass (2001:47), affects the behaviour of fashion conscious consumers, mainly because it is associated with the level of interest in maintaining a front through clothes that are used as props to convey an image of self to other people.

O’Cass and Choy (2008:341) conducted a study aimed at examining Chinese Generation Y consumers’ involvement in fashion clothing and perceived brand status. Their study was in line with McWilliam’s (1997:60) assertion that consumers do not treat all product categories as equally important or involving, and therefore, by extension, are unlikely to consider all brands. In order to test this argument, O’Cass and Choy (2008:343) developed a theoretical model aimed at examining Chinese Generation Y consumers’ fashion clothing involvement effects on specific brand-related consumer responses, including brand status and willingness to pay a premium for a specific brand. Figure 2.1 presents their theoretical model.

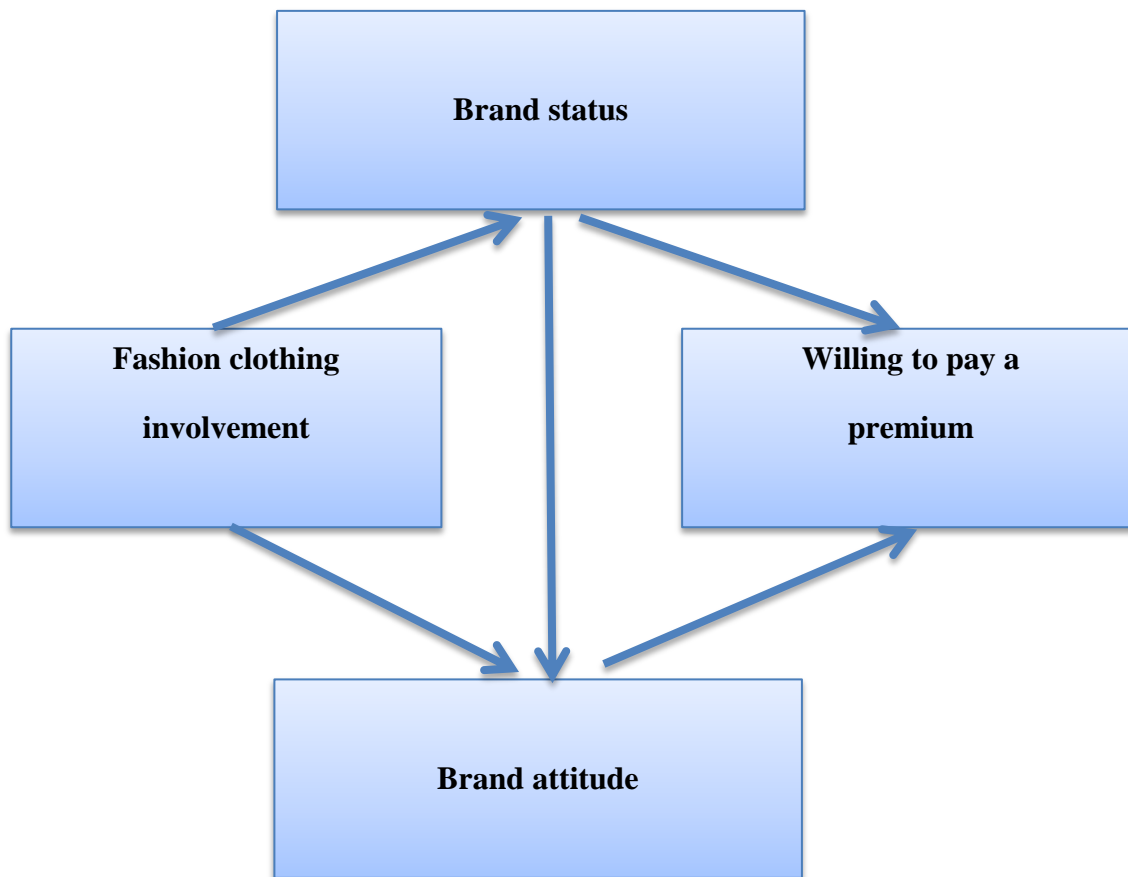


Figure 2.1 Theoretical model of fashion clothing involvement and brand status
 (Source: O’Cass & Choy, 2008:343)

O’Cass and Choy (2008:346) study findings show that Chinese Generation Y consumers’ level of involvement has a positive effect on brand-related responses such as perception of brand status and brand attitude. Furthermore, they found that brand status and brand attitude have positive influences on consumers’ willingness to pay a premium for a specific brand. Vieira (2009:185) adopted the model for examining an extended theoretical model of fashion clothing involvement that included materialism, gender, age, time, commitment, knowledge, confidence and patronage. Vieira’s (2009) findings show that not all of the hypothesised antecedents had an influence on fashion involvement. The author reported that only age had a significant influence on fashion clothing involvement, and that fashion clothing involvement mediates two theoretical relationships; one is between age and commitment, and the other is between age and subjective knowledge. These findings support McWilliam’s (1997:60) observation that knowing how involved consumers are with different brands is essential for

fashion clothing marketers, especially in terms of creating brand loyalty within different brand categories.

The concept of opinion leadership is discussed in the following section.

2.5 OPINION LEADERSHIP

According to Vernetta (2004:90), opinion leadership was first explored in the 1950s by USA researchers in the field of sociology. However, Van der Merwe and Van Heerden (2009:66) state that the concept of opinion leadership has its roots in an earlier research study conducted by Lazarsfeld *et al.* (1948:178). Schiffman *et al.* (2010:282) define opinion leadership as, “the process by which one person (the opinion leader) informally influences the actions or attitudes of others, who may be opinion seekers or opinion recipients.” Coulter *et al.* (2002:1289) indicate that opinion leaders are product experts who provide information to those consumers who are in need of advice about a particular product category. Flynn *et al.* (1996:138) posit that opinion leaders play a significant role in providing information and influencing others. Schiffman *et al.* (2010:282) add that WOM communication is central to the concept of opinion leadership, and that opinion leadership occupies an important place in marketing and consumer behaviour theory, given the perceived credibility of opinion leaders’ WOM communication.

2.5.1 Importance of opinion leadership in marketing

Chaney (2001:302) states that because opinion leaders are highly influential to opinion seekers and recipients, marketers target and use them for communicating product and company information. In support of this statement, Coulter *et al.* (2002:1290) posit that opinion leaders are essential to marketers, in that their knowledge about a particular product class makes them a sought after group of specialists to target. Beatty and Smith (1987:84) add that opinion seekers rely on opinion leaders for information about particular product categories, and that the information gleaned from opinion leaders enables them to make better purchase decisions. Sarathy and Patro (2010:128) conclude that opinion leaders are considered a vital part of the marketing strategy because of their strong influence on the purchase decisions of opinion seekers and recipients.

2.5.2 Differences between opinion leaders and opinion seekers

People seek information from those who are well informed about a particular product category in order to make more informed purchase decisions. Opinion leaders are those individuals who, because of their greater involvement with a particular product category and consequent greater knowledge about that category, provide opinion seekers with the right information about the product class (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008:309). Opinion seekers, in contrast, often lack knowledge concerning a particular product category, which motivates them to seek the advice of opinion leaders (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006:28).

2.5.3 Characteristics of opinion leaders and opinion seekers

Opinion leaders have different characteristics to those of opinion seekers in that they are perceived as being more influential, and as having the ability to disseminate information of a new product item for a long time (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008:309). Flynn *et al.* (1996:137), add that consumers seem to trust opinion leaders more than television advertisements, or any other medium used to disseminate information about new product items. Blackwell *et al.* (2006:535) assert that whilst opinion leaders are typically from the same demographic as their opinion receivers, they tend to have a higher social standing, have greater self-confidence, be more gregarious, and be more involved in a product category, which renders them more knowledgeable about that category. Polegato and Wall (1980:327) indicate that opinion leaders are highly informed, confident in what they say, highly trusted by other consumers, and in the case of fashion clothing, act as a catalyst in stimulating interest in new clothing styles.

In contrast, opinion seekers lack the involvement and consequent knowledge required to offset the perceived risk of making a purchase decision in that product category (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006:535). According to Flynn *et al.* (1996:138), opinion seekers consume information from opinion leaders in an interactive two-way flow of WOM communication. This implies that opinion leaders and opinion seekers need each other to create the two-way flow of communication. Goldsmith and Clark (2008:311) posit that the main characteristic of opinion seekers is the ability to pay attention to the views and opinions provided by opinion leaders. Unlike, opinion leaders, opinion seekers do not have many identified characteristics, and this is because the concept of opinion seeking is not documented as well as that of opinion leadership (Flynn *et al.* 1996:138).

In the light of the characteristics of opinion leaders and opinion seekers outlined here, the next section focuses on the role of opinion leadership in fashion.

2.5.4 Importance of opinion leadership in fashion

Opinion leadership is documented as having a significant role in fashion, and this is because fashion conscious consumers are on the lookout for fashion advice in order to avoid looking similar to other persons (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006:31). Polegato and Wall (1980:327) state that it is crucial for fashion marketers to focus their attention on opinion leaders, given that they play a significant role in creating awareness about new styles and new fashion items. Through WOM, opinion leaders are able to influence other consumers to choose the perfect fit within a specific fashion category. Goldsmith and Clark (2008:309) posit that some fashion conscious consumers spend more time learning about the latest trends and new fashion styles, that their experience and knowledge qualifies them to become opinion leaders to others.

Bertrandias and Goldsmith (2006:25) conducted a study aimed at investigating the relationship between the need for uniqueness and attention to social comparison information with fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. The authors surveyed undergraduate students in the USA, and their findings show that both the need for uniqueness, and attention to social comparison information, were related positively to fashion opinion leadership, and that attention to social comparison information was also related positively to fashion opinion seeking, but that the need for uniqueness was related negatively to fashion opinion seeking.

Goldsmith and Clark (2008:308) examined hypothesised relationships between the need for uniqueness, attention to social comparison information, status consumption and role-relaxed consumption concerning opinion leadership and opinion seeking for new fashion clothing. The authors surveyed 598 consumers between the ages of 18 and 83 years. Their findings show that the need for uniqueness related positively to opinion leadership, but negatively to opinion seeking amongst younger consumers. Furthermore, they reported that attention to social comparison information was more highly related to opinion seeking than to opinion leadership, and that status consumption had the largest overall positive influence, followed by role-relaxed consumption, which was related negatively.

With the importance of opinion leadership in fashion outlined. The next section of the study focuses on the Generation Y cohort.

2.6 GENERATION Y

Generational research is based on the idea that different age cohorts share similar influences, and that these influences persuade their consumption-related behaviour (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006:245), thereby making generation cohorts an important marketing segmentation base (Blythe, 2008:196; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:410). Ma and Niehm (2006:621) propose that marketers need to have a deep understanding of each generational cohort and their characteristics, in order to develop relevant marketing strategies tailored to appeal to different cohorts. Sutherland and Thompson (2003:130) add that each generational cohort is unique in that it shares common characteristics moulded over time through shared experiences.

There are four major generational cohorts alive today, namely the seniors, the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:410). This study focuses on the youngest of these four generational cohorts – the Generation Y cohort. Generation Y includes individuals born between 1986 and 2005 (Markert, 2004:21), which in 2013 included those aged between nine and 28 years old (Bevan-Dye, 2013:157).

In the next section, the characteristics of the Generational Y cohort are outlined.

2.6.1 Characteristics of the Generation Y cohort

One of the most defining characteristics of members of the Generation Y cohort is that they have grown up in the digitally-connected world of the Internet, mobile telephony, global 24/7 news television channels (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008:372; Nicholas *et al.*, 2011:29), and online social networking sites (Bevan-Dye, 2013:158). As such, they, more than any previous generation, have greater access to information and exposure to global trends (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2008:231), including fashion clothing trends. Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001:37) indicate that because Generation Y individuals have been brought up in a “media-saturated, brand-conscious world”, they are less susceptible to marketing hype. Even so, they still appear to show a marked interest in branded designer clothing (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2008:231; O’Cass & Choy, 2008:348; Khare & Rakesh, 2010:21), especially brands that are associated with a higher level of perceived status (O’Cass & Choy, 2008:348).

Parker *et al.* (2004:176) assert that the Generation Y cohort regards fashion as symbolic and significant in their life. Martin and Turley (2004:466) add that the Generation Y consumer values fashion, and as such they spend most of their disposable income on trendy apparel.

A study by O’Cass and Choy (2008:341-352) revealed that the Generation Y cohort (note: the sample comprised university students aged between 18 and 25) have a high fashion involvement in tandem with a high level of fashion consumption and are willing to pay a premium for specific fashion clothing brands. Grant and Stephen (2005:425) also reported that the highest demand for fashion clothing comes from the highly conscious 9 to 14 year old group. The authors further revealed that the main market growth is from the fashion conscious 14 to 18 year old group, which has shown positive sales growth of designer clothing, especially from females.

The following section describes the size and importance of the South African black Generation Y cohort.

2.6.2 South African Generation Y cohort

In South Africa, the Generation Y cohort is the first generation to grow up in an era of freedom and constantly changing technology; two forces that serve to broaden the divergence between this fascinating generation and the previous generations (Bevan-Dye, 2013:158). In 2013, the Generation Y accounted for an estimated 38 percent of the South African population. Africans accounted for the majority of this figure, given that they made up an estimated 83 percent of the country’s Generation Y cohort (Statistics South Africa, 2013). As such, in marketing terms, the South African black Generation Y cohort represents an important-sized market segment.

The portion of the black Generation Y cohort attending HEIs are likely to be of particular interest to marketers as a tertiary qualification generally is linked to a higher future earning potential, as well as a higher social standing within society (Bevan-Dye, 2013:156). Both of these qualities make black Generation Y students potential future Black Diamonds, which is a label given to South Africa’s rising African middle class (Jones, 2007). Members of the Black Diamond segment are characterised as being conspicuous status consumers of a variety of luxury brands including designer clothing brands (De Waal, 2008), which makes them an important segment for branded fashion clothing marketers. There are strong signs that the

South African Generation Y cohort will follow in this tradition, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that the country's youth are materialistic, status conscious, and attracted to international fashion clothing labels (Naidoo, 2008).

2.7 SYNOPSIS

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature relevant to the study. The conceptual framework for the study was developed by integrating various antecedents of fashion involvement and opinion leadership. Consumers seem to use fashion clothing to symbolise wealth and status, and it appears that they seek information from people they know and trust. The literature suggests that fashion involvement is linked to an individual interest on a particular product category of fashion clothing.

It also appears that the Generation Y cohort is the most sought after generation by fashion retailers due to their potential of having enough disposable income. A significant proportion of the Generation Y cohort is conscious about fashion, and constantly searches for, and uses, information provided on the Internet and/or by media. Furthermore, the black Generation Y cohort seems to be leading ahead of the fashion plateau when it comes to the fashion cycle, with little information available about their level of involvement.

In the next chapter, a detailed description of the research design and methodology is discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology applied in this study. Malhotra (2010:39) defines marketing research as “the systematic and objective identification, collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of information for the purpose of improving decision making related to the identification and solution of problems and opportunities in marketing”. West (1999:1) indicates that marketing research involves the use of a specific set of qualitative and/or quantitative research techniques to gather, analyse and report on marketing-related problems or opportunities. This study is rooted in consumer behaviour research, which according to Schiffman *et al.* (2010:25), is a field of study that evolved as an “extension of the field of marketing research”.

As indicated in Chapter 1, the primary objective of this study was to investigate fashion clothing involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour amongst South African black Generation Y students. In accordance with the primary objective of the present study, the following empirical objectives were formulated for investigation:

- Determine whether there is a relationship between black Generation Y students’ fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership, and fashion opinion seeking behaviour.
- Determine whether black Generation Y students’ fashion product involvement influences their fashion purchase decision involvement.
- Determine whether black Generation Y students’ fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement influences their fashion opinion leadership behaviour.
- Determine whether black Generation Y students’ fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement influences their fashion opinion seeking behaviour.
- Determine whether male and female black Generation Y students differ concerning their fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking.

Chapter 3 outlines and describes the research methodology employed in collecting and analysing the required data for addressing these objectives. As such, this chapter discusses the sampling procedure along with questionnaire design used for data collection process, and the statistical techniques employed to analyse the data. The chapter begins with a discussion on research design.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Malhotra (2010:42), a research design constitutes the framework that guides the processes involved in conducting a research project. Churchill and Iacobucci (2002:90), in highlighting the value of following a research design, indicate that it helps to ensure that the research study will be relevant to the issue being investigated, and that efficient and effective procedures are followed in gathering and analysing the data required to address that issue. Cant *et al.* (2003:27) state that research designs, pertaining to both qualitative research and quantitative research, may be classified broadly into three primary designs, namely exploratory research, casual research and descriptive research. An illustration of these three research designs is provided in Figure 3.1.

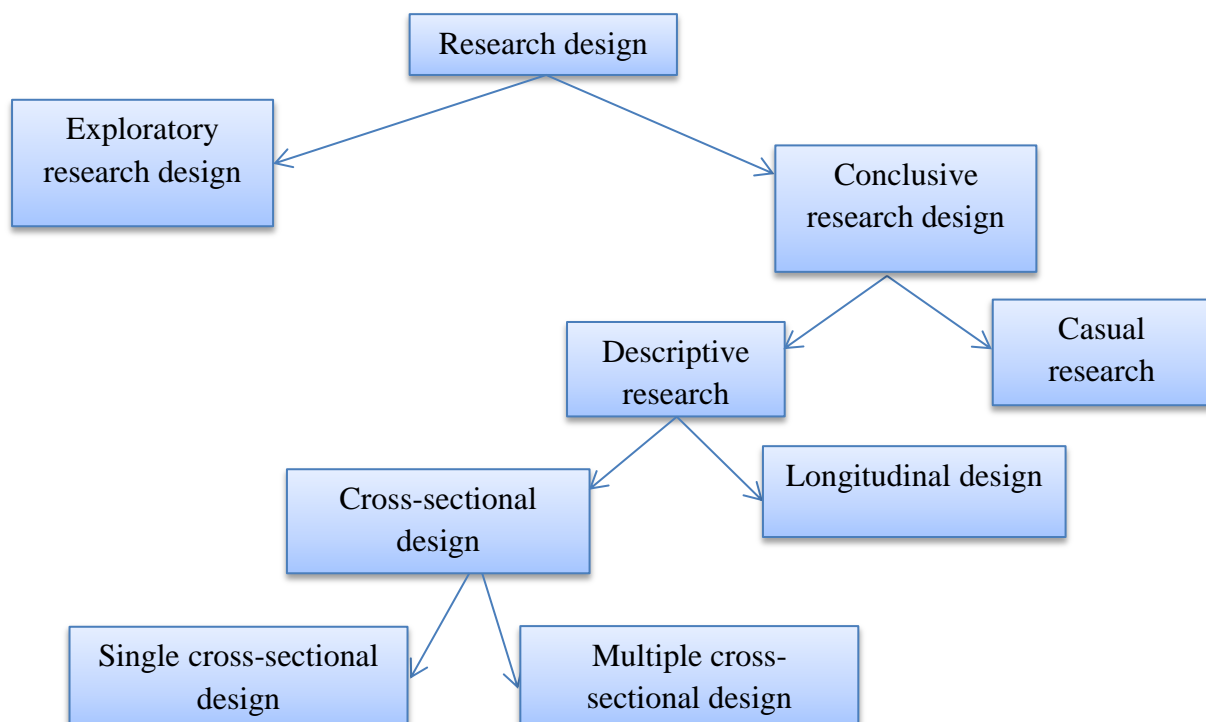


Figure 3.1 Classification of types of research designs (Source: Malhotra, 2010:103)

In the case of exploratory research, the primary objective is to gain insight, clarity and understanding of a problem or issue (Malhotra, 2010:104). Exploratory research is a valuable way of uncovering new insights and understanding of an issue, and assessing a phenomenon from a new angle (Saunders *et al.*, 2000:97). Exploratory research has several possible applications, including formulating a research problem more precisely, determining priorities for further research, clarifying key concepts (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:95), and developing hypotheses (Malhotra, 2010:104). Typically, exploratory research studies are flexible and rarely use probability sampling plans (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:95; Malhotra, 2010:105), large samples, or structured questionnaires (Malhotra, 2010:105). Examples of exploratory research methods include focus groups, in-depth interviews and projective techniques (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:47).

As indicated in Figure 3.1, in contrast to exploratory research, causal and descriptive research are categorised as conclusive research designs. Conclusive research designs involve quantitatively analysing data obtained from large representative samples in order to use the findings as input into managerial decisions (Malhotra, 2010:105).

Causal research focuses on uncovering evidence of cause-and-effect relationships between independent and dependent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2009:52). That is, causal research seeks to determine whether a change in an independent variable gives rise to an observed change in another dependent variable (McDaniel & Gates, 2001:221). Causal research studies generally utilise experiments (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:91) and have a planned and structured design (Malhotra, 2010:113).

The primary purpose of descriptive research is to answer who, what, when, where, why and how questions, typically pertaining to attitudes, perceptions, preferences and intentions (McDaniel & Gates, 1999:68; Hair *et al.*, 2009:51). Descriptive research studies are planned, structured and make use of large representative samples (Malhotra, 2010:106). As shown in Figure 3.1, descriptive research may be further classified as being longitudinal or cross-sectional (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:110; Malhotra, 2010:108), with cross-sectional designs being classified as being either single or multiple cross-sectional designs (Malhotra, 2010:108).

For the purpose of this study, a descriptive research design using the single cross-sectional design was employed to obtain the required information for addressing the empirical objectives and testing the related hypotheses.

The following section outlines the sampling strategy followed for collecting the required data.

3.3 SAMPLING DESIGN PROCESS

According to Malhotra (2010:372), a sampling design process entails the five interrelated steps of defining the study's target population, determining the sampling frame, deciding upon the sampling method to follow, determining the number of elements to include in the sample and executing the operational plan by gathering the required data. These five steps are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

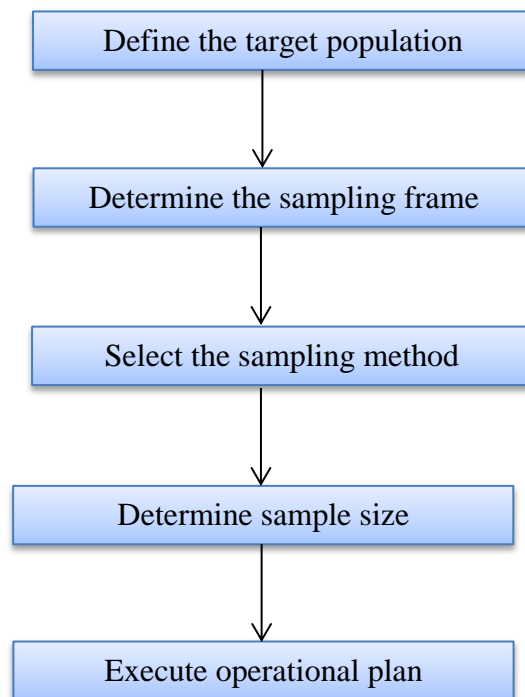


Figure 3.2 Sampling design process (Source: Malhotra, 2010:372)

The sub-sections that follow discuss each step in the sampling design procedure shown in Figure 3.2.

3.3.1 Defining the target population

A target population refers to the total collection of elements that conform to certain specifications (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:448) that possess the information required to address the objectives of the study (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2007:333; Malhotra, 2010:372). Aaker *et al.* (1995:82) highlight the importance of ensuring that the target population is defined correctly and precisely in order to ensure the value of the findings. Malhotra (2010:373) indicates that a target population should be defined in terms of the elements that have the required information, the sampling units where those elements are to be found, the extent, which refers to the geographical scope of the study and the time period of the study.

Since this study aims to investigate fashion clothing involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students in South Africa, the target population relevant to this study was defined as full-time black Generation Y students, aged between 18-24 years, enrolled at South African registered public HEIs in 2013. The reason for such an inclusion of race was based on the South African research which found that the black Generation Y HEI students are likely to be future Black Diamonds, who represent the country's rapidly growing middle class with a buying power of approximately R200 billion (Akpojivi, 2013:652). Youn (2009:392) concludes that business organisations and fashion retailers target this specific generational cohort.

3.3.2 Sampling frame

A sampling frame, which is a representation of the target population elements (Malhotra, 2010:373), refers to a list of the elements or sampling units from which the sample is to be drawn (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:451; Parasuraman *et al.*, 2007:333). A sampling frame may be anything from a telephone book, to a directory listing businesses or institutions in an industry, to a map of a specific geographic area (Malhotra, 2010:373).

The initial sampling frame for this study comprised the 23 registered South African public HEIs, as listed by Higher Education in South Africa (HESA, 2011). At the time of the study, these 23 HEIs included 11 universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology (HESA, 2009). Owing to time and financial constraints, non-probability judgement sampling was used to narrow to sampling frame to two HEI campuses located in the Gauteng province, one of which was from a traditional university and the other from a

university of technology. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Gauteng province was selected over other provinces in the country because it contains the highest percentage of the 23 public HEI campuses.

3.3.3 Sampling method

According to the steps in the sampling design process illustrated in Figure 3.2, the next step after determining of the sampling frame is the selection of the sampling method. According to Malhotra (2010:373), the selection of which sampling method to use to gather the required data involves decisions concerning using probability or non-probability sampling as well as sampling with or without replacement. Over and above deciding whether to use probability or non-probability sampling, it is also necessary to select a specific sampling method. The various sampling methods classified under probability or non-probability sampling are illustrated in Figure 3.3

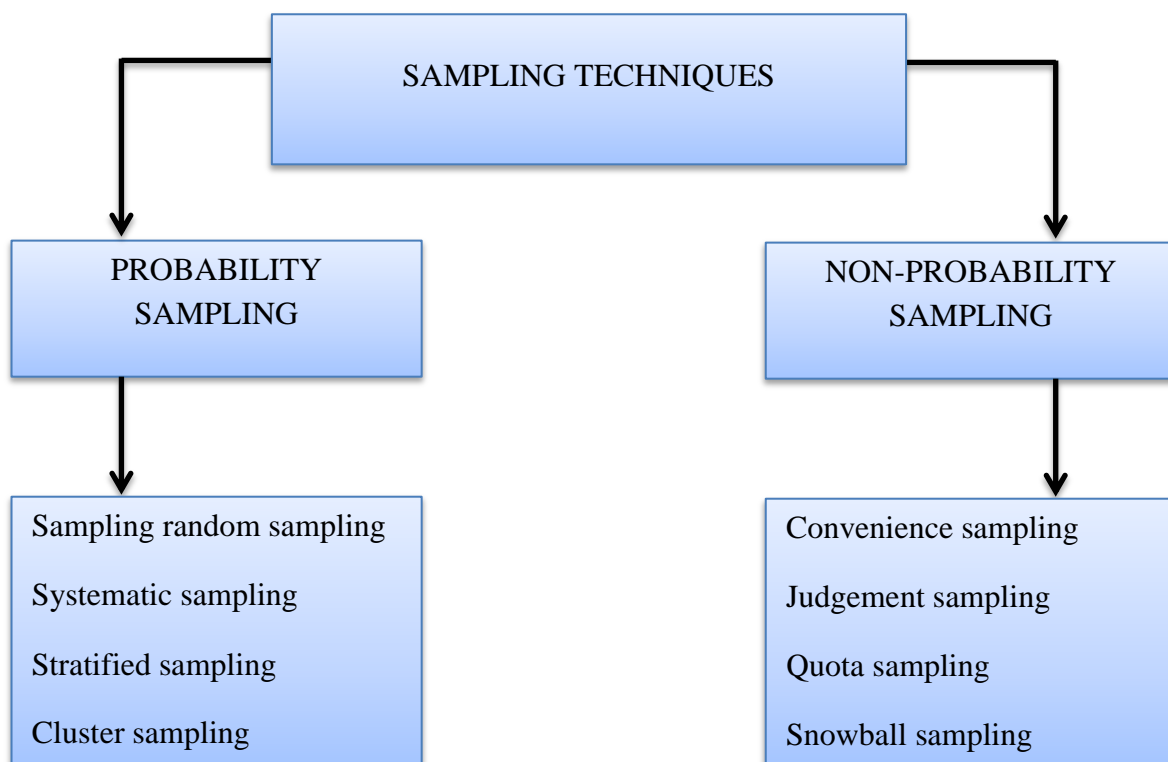


Figure 3.3 Probability and non-probability sampling methods (Source: adapted from Malhotra, 2010:396)

Probability sampling is a procedure where each element in the population has a known and equal chance of being selected as part of the sample (McDaniel & Gates, 2001:341; Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:453; Malhotra, 2010:376). As illustrated in Figure 3.3, probability sampling includes simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling.

In contrast to probability sampling, non-probability sampling is a procedure whereby sample elements are selected based on the researcher's personal judgement rather than on chance (Malhotra, 2010:376). As shown in Figure 3.3, non-probability methods include convenience sampling, judgemental sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (as presented in Figure 3.3). Whilst probability sampling is preferable because the sample elements are objectively selected (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:458), non-probability sampling is frequently used for monetary, practical and convenience reasons (Welman & Kruger, 2001:47). In addition, it is possible for a non-probability sample to be more representative than a probability sample (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:459) and to provide good estimates of the characteristics of the population (Malhotra, 2010:376).

For the purpose of this study, a non-probability, convenience sample of 400 full-time undergraduate and postgraduate black Generation Y students was used. Several demographic questions concerning the participants' gender, age, province of origin and mother tongue language were included in the questionnaire in order to assess how representative the sample was of the population.

3.3.4 Sample size

Sample size refers to the number of sample elements to be included in a sample (Welman & Kruger, 2001:63). There are several ways of determining the sample size. First, the sample size may be determined using the statistical approach. Secondly, the sample size may be determined by considering certain qualitative factors such as sample sizes used in comparable studies, the type of statistical techniques that are going to be used to analyse the data, the type of research design being followed, resource constraints, and the required level of precision (Malhotra, 2010:374).

In this study, the sample size selection was guided by sample sizes used in similar studies. A sample size of 400 black Generation Y students was selected for this study. This sample size

is consistent with past studies conducted among the Generation Y cohort, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Previous related studies that used similar sample size

Authors	Year	Country	Sample size
Wolburg and Pokrywczynski	2001	USA	368
Bakewell <i>et al.</i>	2006	UK	346
Kueh and Voon	2007	Malaysia	470
O’Cass and Choy	2008	China	460

Source: Adapted from Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001:33); Bakewell *et al.* (2006:173); Kueh and Voon (2007:667); O’Cass and Choy (2008:334)

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A self-administered survey questionnaire was employed to gather the data required for this study. The survey data collection method is an ideal method for collecting quantitative data from large samples (Hair *et al.*, 2009:235). The survey method involves the use of a structured questionnaire that may be administered in four basic ways, namely through telephone interviews, personal interviews, mail interviews or electronic interviews (Malhotra, 2010:212). The modes of administering survey questionnaires may also be classified as person-administered, telephone administered, self-administered and computer assisted (Hair *et al.*, 2009:337). This study made use of a self-administered survey questionnaire. Malhotra (2010:211) advises that questions in a self-administered questionnaire should be kept simple and that clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire should be provided.

The main survey was administered in 2013. Various lecturers at the two campuses selected to form part of the sample were contacted and asked if they would allow the questionnaire to be administered on their students during lectures. Once they had given their permission, the questionnaires were distributed to their students during the pre-agreed scheduled lectures.

The mode of the administration guided the design of the questionnaire used to gather the required data.

3.5 DESIGN OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

According to Malhotra (2010:335), a questionnaire is a formal set of questions designed to generate required data in accordance with the objectives of the research study. Churchill and Iacobucci (2002:354-356) suggest that careful consideration of the questionnaire design steps, illustrated in Figure 3.4, should contribute to the successful development of a questionnaire.

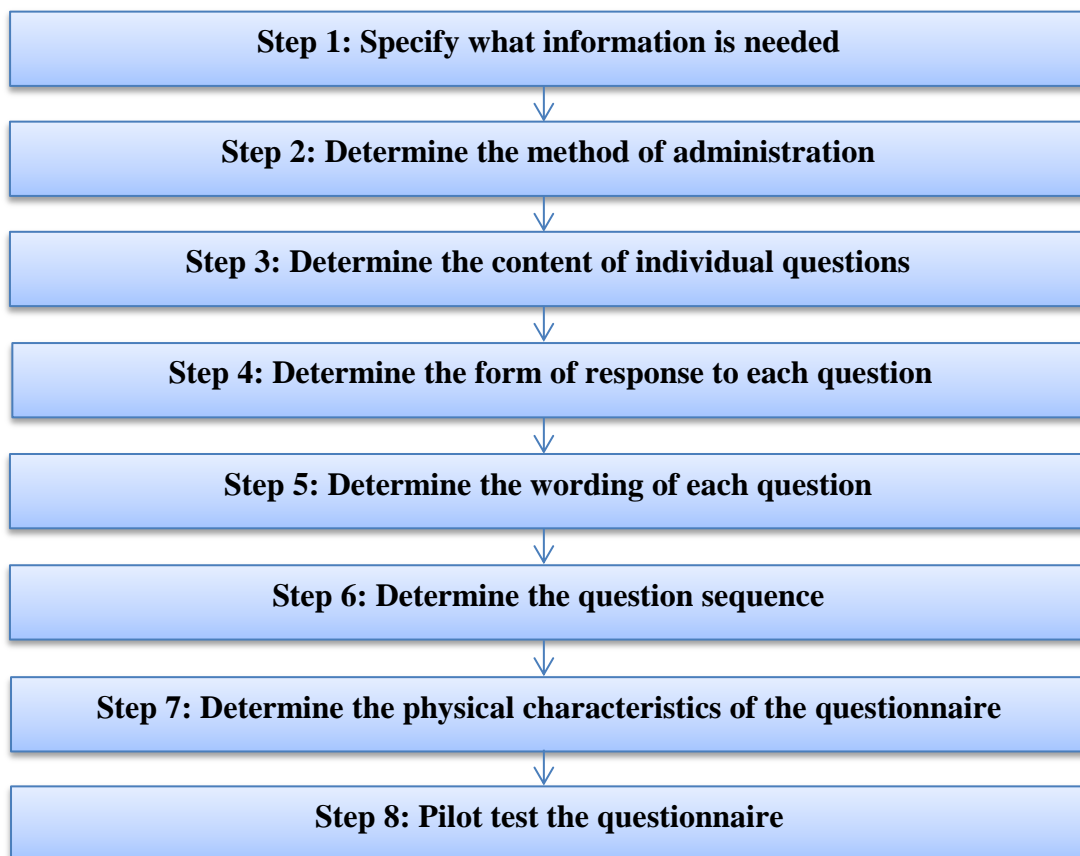


Figure 3.4 Questionnaire design steps (Source: adapted from Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002:354-356)

Malhotra (2010:335) adds that researchers must also take into consideration the three following objectives when designing a questionnaire:

- A questionnaire must translate the required data into specific questions
- A questionnaire must be sufficiently interesting and not be too long in order to encourage individuals in the sample to participate in the study and complete the questionnaire

- A questionnaire should minimise respondent error by ensuring that questions are phrased in a way that the participants are able and willing to answer.

The information required was specified as black Generation Y students' fashion clothing involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour. Given the self-administered nature of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was kept short and phrased clearly, with simple English terminology, to ensure that respondents are able to understand and provide accurate answers. Detailed and clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire were provided. In addition, the questionnaire included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and assuring the confidentiality of any information provided, including the name of the participant's HEI campus, in order to encourage participation in the study. The content of each question was scrutinised to ensure that it was necessary.

The survey questionnaire included two sections – Section A and Section B. Section A of the questionnaire encompassed seven demographic variables, namely name of institution, year, gender, race, age at last birthday, province of origin, and mother-tongue language. The questions in Section A were measured using nominal scales.

Section B consisted of 23 items related to fashion clothing involvement, fashion opinion leadership, and fashion opinion seeking amongst the black Generation Y cohort. This section made use of previously validated scales. The scale adapted by O'Cass and Choy (2008:345) was used to measure the fashion clothing involvement of the South African black Generation Y students. The fashion clothing involvement scale comprises two sub-scales – fashion clothing product involvement (six items), and fashion clothing purchase decision involvement (five items).

Fashion opinion leadership was measured using the two scales originally developed and validated by Flynn *et al.* (1996:146) and adapted by Goldsmith and Clark (2008:314). The fashion opinion leadership scale comprises six items, and the fashion opinion seeking scale comprises six items.

All scaled responses were measured on a six-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree.

In accordance with Step 7 in Figure 3.4, a sample copy of the questionnaire and cover letter was printed and assessed to ensure that it had a professional look and that it was easy to answer. In addition, five individuals were selected to pre-test the questionnaire – three of whom were between the ages of 15-18, who indicated having little knowledge about fashion. The other two were university students between the ages of 20 and 22, who indicated having ample knowledge about fashion. During this stage, the face validity of the questionnaire was tested through determining how easily the participants understood the questionnaire and whether the questions were articulated in an understandable manner. All five of these individuals were excluded from the pilot and main survey. The feedback received from the pre-testing phase was used to refine the wording of certain questions in order to make them more understandable.

Once the pre-test was completed and the necessary changes made to the questionnaires, the questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample of 50 students. These students were excluded from the main survey. The pilot test was conducted to test the reliability of the scale. The results from the captured data of the pilot study revealed that if item B13 – Other people seldom come to me for advice about choosing fashion – was removed from the fashion opinion leadership sub-scale, it would increase the Cronbach alpha value from an unacceptable 0.428 to an acceptable 0.774 level. Similarly, the removal of B21 – I seldom ask other people about what clothes to buy – from the opinion seeking sub-scale increased the Cronbach alpha value from an unacceptable 0.297 to an acceptable 0.676 level (Malhotra, 2010:319).

3.6 DATA PREPARATION

According to Cant *et al.* (2003:149), data preparation entails assessing the quality of the gathered data and capturing that data in an electronic format so that it can be read and analysed using a statistical software package, such as SPSS. Malhotra (2010:42) indicates that data preparation encompasses several processes, including data editing, coding, transcription, and verification. Cant *et al.* (2003:149) add that the purpose of data preparation is to facilitate statistical analysis by ensuring the availability of high quality data.

3.6.1 Data editing

Malhotra (2010:453) explains that editing involves screening each questionnaire to check for responses that are incomplete, inconsistent and/or illegible. Hair *et al.* (2009:455) add that it

is also at this stage that any questionnaires completed by participants that fall outside of the specified target population are discarded.

In this study, any questionnaires completed by individuals who did not form part of the defined target population were discarded. In addition, questionnaires with missing values exceeding 10 percent in the scaled-response section were discarded.

3.6.2 Data coding

The coding step of the data preparation process focuses on grouping and assigning numerical values to the individual responses for each of the questions (Hair *et al.*, 2009:461).

The questionnaire used for the current study was divided into two sections. Section A was designated to collect demographic data and Section B was formulated to measure fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. The questionnaire was pre-coded under the supervision of the study supervisor, with the additional help of a statistician. Data pertaining to this study were coded per construct as presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Coding information

TYPE OF DATA	VARIABLE	QUESTION NUMBER
Demographic data	A1 to A7	Section A, Questions A1 to A7
Fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking	B1-B23	Section B: Items B1-B23

3.6.3 Data tabulation

Data tabulation involves counting the number of cases that fall into each instance (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:577).

Once the preliminary data preparation process was completed, the next step was to analyse the data.

3.7 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The captured data were analysed using IBM's SPSS, version 21.0 for Microsoft Windows. The following sections explain the statistical methods applied to the empirical data set.

3.7.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics provide a description and summary of the data obtained from a sample (Welman *et al.*, 2011:231). According to Malhotra (2010:486), the three summary measures typically applied include measures of location, measures of variability and measures of shape.

3.7.2 Measures of location

Measures of location, also known as measures of central tendency, include the mean, the mode and the median. These measures are used to describe the centre of the distribution of a data set (Hair *et al.*, 2009:483).

In this study, the mean was employed as the measurement of location. The mean, or arithmetical average, is calculated by summing the scores in a data set and then dividing that by the number of scores. The mean is a robust measure that is a suitable measure of location for data gathered using interval or ratio scales (Malhotra, 2010:486).

3.7.3 Measures of variability

Measures of variability, also known as measures of dispersion (Hair *et al.*, 2009:486), refers to the range of the distribution of values in a data set around the mean, median or mode (Welman & Kruger, 2001:209). Malhotra (2010:487) indicates that measures of variability include the range, interquartile range, variance or standard deviation, and coefficient of variation, and that these are suitable for analysing data gathered using interval or ratio scales. In this study, the standard deviation was used as the measure of dispersion. McDaniel and Gates (2001:412) define the standard deviation as "the square root of the sum of the squared deviations from the mean divided by the number of observations minus 1".

3.7.4 Measures of shape

The measures of shape describe the shape of the distribution in terms of its skewness and kurtosis (Shukla, 2008:101), and are used to assess the normality of a distribution (Pallant, 2010:57). Skewness is an assessment of the symmetry of a distribution, where a zero value indicates a perfectly symmetrical distribution. Kurtosis is an assessment of the relative

flatness or peakedness of a distribution, where a zero value indicates a normal distribution (Malhotra, 2010:488).

3.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

According to McDaniel and Gates (1999:304), the reliability of a measurement scale depends on whether it provides consistent results over repeated measures. Malhotra (2010:318) adds that reliability is determined by assessing the correlation between scores obtained from different administrations of the scale, where high correlation values indicate reliability.

In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the scales in the measurement instrument. This alpha coefficient is a measure of internal consistency (Hair *et al.*, 2009:353; Malhotra, 2010:319). While Cronbach coefficient values ranging between 0.70 and 0.80 are recommended (Zikmund, 2000:515), coefficient values ranging from between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable (Malhotra, 2010:319).

Validity refers to the extent to which a measurement instrument measures what it was intended to measure. The main forms of validity include content or face validity, criterion validity and construct validity (Pallant, 2010:7).

In this study, content and construct validity were assessed. Assessing content validity involves subjectively evaluating whether the items included cover the whole domain of the construct being measured (Malhotra, 2010:320). Construct validity is a difficult form of validity to establish (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:410) and necessitates a deep understanding of the theoretical foundations underlying the domain of the construct (McDaniel & Gates, 2001:261). Construct validity requires that measures in a scale correlate positively with the other measures of the same construct (convergent validity) but do not correlate with measures of other constructs (discriminant validity). Clark and Watson (1995:316) indicate that an average inter-item correlation coefficient of between 0.15 and 0.50 suggests convergent and discriminant validity.

3.9 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis, according to Hair *et al.* (2010:94), is a multivariate statistical technique that is used to analyse the structure of the interrelationships amongst a large set of variables by

grouping highly correlated variables into factors. Factor analysis may be either exploratory or confirmatory in nature, depending on the purpose of the study (Pallant, 2010:181).

The objective of exploratory factor analysis is to reduce a large number of variables into a smaller number of underlying factors (Hair *et al.*, 2009:563; Malhotra, 2010:636). In contrast, confirmatory factor analysis is used to confirm hypotheses regarding the underlying structure of a variable set (Pallant, 2010:181).

Before conducting a factor analysis, it is necessary to establish whether the sample data is appropriate for factor analysis. This involves calculating the Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. Factor analysis is appropriate if the Bartlett test of sphericity value is significant at the 0.05 level and the KMO statistic is between 0.50 and 1.00 (Malhotra, 2010:638,641).

Thereafter, it is necessary to select between common factor analysis, which considers only the shared variance in estimating factors, and component analysis, which considers the total variance in deriving factors (Hair *et al.*, 2010:107). Principle axis factoring is an example of a common factor analysis approach, whilst principle component analysis is used for component analysis (Malhotra, 2010:643). The factor rotation methods include orthogonal approaches such as varimax, quartimax and equamax, and oblique approaches such as direct oblimin and promax (Pallant, 2010:185).

This study uses confirmatory factor analysis to assess whether the items in the antecedents of fashion product involvement, purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and opinion seeking scales, load as expected, based on the studies conducted by O’Cass and Choy (2008:345), and Flynn *et al.* (1996:142). Principle component analysis using the varimax rotation was applied for this confirmatory factor analysis.

3.10 TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

A hypothesis is defined as “a statement that specifies how two or more measurable variables are related” (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:976). Hypotheses tests or tests of significance necessitate the formulation of a null (H₀) hypothesis and its associated alternative hypothesis (H_a), the selection of an appropriate statistical procedure, together with its corresponding test

statistic, for testing that null hypothesis and the selection of a specific significance level, which is denoted by α (Malhotra, 2010:489).

In this study, five sets of hypotheses were formulated in accordance with the empirical objectives of the study. For each of these sets, the appropriate statistical procedure for testing the null hypothesis was identified. The significance level was set at $\alpha=0.05$, and the decision rule applied was as follows:

- If p-value $\geq \alpha$, conclude H_0
- If p-value $< \alpha$, conclude H_a

The section that follows outlines why each statistical procedure was selected and indicates the specific empirical objective(s) that each procedure was used to address.

3.10.1 Correlation analysis

When the research objective is to determine the strength of association between two continuous variables, then Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficient is the appropriate statistical technique to apply (Malhotra, 2010:562). As one of the empirical objectives of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership, and fashion opinion seeking behaviour, a Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis was carried out.

3.10.2 Regression analysis

When the research objective is to determine the influence of one (bivariate regression) or two or more continuous independent variables (multiple regression) on one continuous dependent variable, then regression analysis is the appropriate statistical procedure to apply (Malhotra, 2010:568,577).

In order to address the empirical objective of determining whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement influences their fashion purchase decision involvement, bivariate regression analysis was conducted. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement

and fashion purchase decision involvement influences, first, their fashion opinion leadership behaviour, and secondly, their fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

3.10.3 T-tests

When the research aim is to explore mean differences between two groups on one categorical variable, then the independent samples t-test is a suitable statistical method (Pallant, 2010:114). Given that one of the empirical objectives of this study was to determine whether male and female black Generation Y students differ in their fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership, and fashion opinion seeking, an independent samples t-test was conducted.

3.11 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the methodology of the empirical study was described. In addition, the sampling strategy employed to collect the required data was outlined briefly. The statistical methods employed to analyse the collected data were discussed. These methods include descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, reliability and validity analysis, t-tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The chapter concluded with a discussion on statistical procedures employed on the study.

Chapter 4 reports on and explains the results of the data collected in this study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a discussion relating to the reporting and interpretation of the empirical findings acquired from the data gathered during the main survey of the study. In addition, this chapter contains an overview of the results obtained from the pilot test in Section 4.2. Section 4.3, discusses the preliminary data analysis, which included the coding and tabulation of the gathered data. Section 4.4, entails a description of descriptive statistical analysis of the data, including the reliability and validity of the main survey. The results from the testing of the hypothesis outlined in Chapter 1 are reported on and interpreted in Section 4.5.

For the purpose of this study, the statistical analysis program SPSS version 21.0 was utilised to perform data analysis. The initial statistical step involved the analysis of the pilot results of the questionnaire, while the second stage focused on analysing the results of the main survey study.

The following section discusses the results of the pilot phase of the study.

4.2 RESULTS OF THE PILOT TEST

Following the initial pre-testing of the questionnaire, which was conducted in order to ascertain face and content validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on a non-probability, convenience sample of 50 students at a HEI campus that was excluded from the sampling frame, in order to establish the reliability of the multi-item scales within the questionnaire.

Table 4.1 presents the results captured during the pilot test.

Table 4.1 Summary of the pilot test results

Items	Number of items	N	Initial Cronbach alpha	Cronbach alpha after deletion of B13 & B21	Initial average inter-item correlation	Average inter-item correlation after deletion of B13 & B21
Product involvement	6	50	0.898	0.898	0.607	0.607
Purchase decision involvement	5	50	0.779	0.779	0.427	0.427
Opinion leadership	6	50	0.428	0.774	0.123	0.403
Opinion seeking	6	50	0.297	0.676	0.071	0.302

According to Malhotra (2010:319), Cronbach alpha coefficients range from 0 to 1, and a value above 0.600 denotes acceptable internal consistency reliability. Pallant (2010:6), however, suggests that a Cronbach value of 0.700 or above is preferable. As can be seen from Table 4.1, two of the four scales, namely product involvement (Cronbach alpha = 0.898) and purchase decision involvement (Cronbach alpha = 0.779) returned alpha values above the recommended 0.700 level, thereby indicating good reliability. However, both the opinion leadership (Cronbach alpha = 0.428) and the opinion seeking (Cronbach alpha = 0.297) delivered unacceptably low alpha values. An inspection of the SPSS output indicated that the deletion of B13 from the opinion leadership scale would raise the Cronbach alpha value to an acceptable 0.774, and the removal of B21 from the opinion seeking scale would raise its alpha value to an acceptable 0.676 level. As such, these two items were removed from the main survey questionnaire.

In terms of the average inter-item correlation coefficients following the removal of the two items, three of the four scales returned coefficients within the recommended range of 0.15 to 0.50, thereby indicating convergent and discriminant validity (Clark & Watson, 1995:316). Although the average inter-item correlation coefficient for the product involvement scale fell outside the recommended range, it was decided to continue with the main survey given that Pallant (2010:100) indicates that this merely suggests a strong relationship between items in the construct.

The next section focuses on the data gathering process and preliminary analysis of the data.

4.3 DATA GATHERING PROCESS AND PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, the data gathering process, together with the preliminary data analysis, are discussed

4.3.1 Data gathering process

In accordance with the sampling plan stated in Chapter 3, 400 self-administered questionnaires were taken to the lecture venues of the lecturers at the selected two registered public HEI campuses (200 questionnaires per HEI) who had agreed to allow the questionnaire to be distributed to students, either during class time or after class. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A was designed to gather demographic information, and Section B was designed to measure fashion product involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking. The questionnaire included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study. Students were requested to participate voluntarily.

Of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 354 were returned completed, thereby providing a response rate of 89 percent. HEI A returned 184 completed questionnaires, whilst HEI B returned 170 completed questionnaires. Any questionnaire completed by non-black students or students falling out of the specified 18 to 24 year age range were discarded.

4.3.2 Preliminary data analysis

Conducting a preliminary data analysis is essential, and typically involves the coding and tabulation of the raw data prior the analysis of the data set (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2002:572). The next section focuses on discussions relating to the coding and tabulation of the data.

4.3.2.1 Coding

According to Malhotra (2010:454), coding is the technical process, which entails assigning a code, usually a number, to each possible response to each question. In support of this description, Ghauri *et al.* (1995:98) add that coding means defining categories, and assigning a number to each category.

For the purpose of this study, questions in the questionnaire are categorised into two sections, namely Section A, consisting of seven questions that relate to obtaining the participants' demographic information, and Section B, comprising 23 scaled items, aimed at acquiring

information relating to fashion product involvement, purchase decision involvement, opinion leadership, and opinion seeking. Variables and codes used in Section A and B of the final questionnaire, are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Coding data

Section A: Demographic data			
Question	Code	Variable	Value assigned to responses
Question 1	A1	Name of HEI	HEI A (1); HEI B (2); HEI C (3)
Question 2	A2	Academic year	1 st Year (1); 2 nd Year (2); 3 rd Year (3); Post Graduate (4)
Question 3	A3	Gender	Male (1); Female (2)
Question 4	A4	Race	African (1); Asian/Indian (2); Coloured (3); White (4); Other (5)
Question 5	A5	Age	18 (1); 19 (2); 20 (3); 21 (4); 22 (5); 23 (6); 24 (5); 25 (7)
Question 6	A6	Province	Eastern Cape (1); Free State (2); Gauteng (3); KwaZulu Natal (4); Limpopo (5); Mpumalanga (6); Northern Cape (7); North West (8); Western Cape (9)
Question 7	A7	Your mother tongue language	English (1); IsiNdebele (2); IsiXhosa (3); IsiZulu (4); Sesotho sa Leboa (5); Sesotho (6); Setswana (7); siSwati (8); Tshivenda (9); Xitsonga (10)

Table 4.2 Coding data (continued...)

Section B: Fashion product involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking			
Item	Code	Construct measured	Value assigned to responses
Item 1	B1	Product involvement	Strongly disagree (1)
Item 2	B2		Disagree (2)
Item 3	B3		Slightly disagree(3)
Item 4	B4		Slightly agree (4)
Item 5	B5		Agree (5)
Item 6	B6		Strongly agree (6)
Item 7	B7	Purchase decision involvement	Strongly disagree (1)
Item 8	B8		Disagree (2)
Item 9	B9		Slightly disagree(3)
Item 10	B10		Slightly agree (4)
Item 12	B12	Opinion leadership	Strongly disagree (1)
Item 13	B13		Disagree (2)
Item 14	B14		Slightly disagree(3)
Item 15	B15		Slightly agree (4)
Item 16	B16		Agree (5)
Item 17	B17		Strongly agree (6)
Item 18	B18	Opinion seeking	Strongly disagree (1)
Item 19	B19		Disagree (2)
Item 20	B20		Slightly disagree(3)
Item 21	B21		Slightly agree (4)
Item 22	B22		Agree (5)
Item 23	B23		Strongly agree (6)

4.3.2.2 Tabulation

In most research studies, tabulation is conducted once the data has been coded. According to (Zikmund, 2000:437), tabulation refers to the orderly arrangement of data in a table or other summary format. Table 4.3 illustrates frequencies obtained from the total sample, for Section B of the questionnaire, aimed at investigating fashion product involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking amongst the black Generation Y students.

Table 4.3 Frequency table of responses

Scale B: Fashion product involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking						
Scale item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6
B1	24	26	31	97	113	63
B2	20	29	49	108	107	41
B3	18	39	53	101	89	54
B4	27	34	40	93	95	65
B5	45	42	56	98	67	46
B6	57	61	63	95	55	23
B7	27	41	55	81	78	72
B8	30	46	59	78	85	56
B9	13	34	72	96	95	44
B10	15	37	57	89	108	48
B11	15	32	64	88	117	38
B12	91	87	59	66	34	17
B13	17	66	65	69	71	66
B14	70	83	63	90	36	12
B15	32	58	62	90	76	36
B16	48	54	62	90	74	26
B17	34	59	73	80	72	36
B18	65	56	54	69	76	34
B19	92	74	55	49	43	41
B20	91	70	49	57	54	33
B21	31	72	57	60	57	77
B22	87	77	54	65	46	25
B23	92	58	61	61	46	36

The following section, Section 4.4, provides a description of the sample used in this study.

4.4 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

According to Kolb (2008:117), demographical information refers to the characteristics of the individuals participating in a sample. Pie charts and stack bars are used here to provide a description of the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Figure 4.1 represents the number of responses acquired from each of the two HEI campuses. Of the 354 participants, 52 percent came from a traditional university (HEI A) and 48 percent from a university of technology (HEI B).

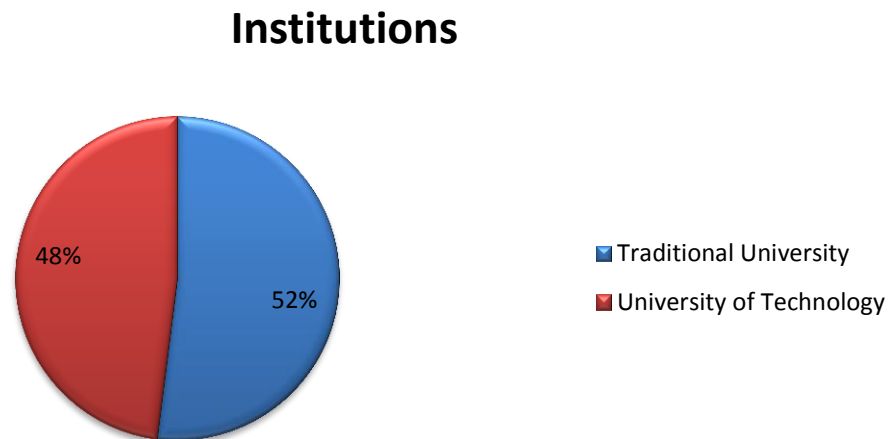


Figure 4.1 Institutions of participants

Figure 4.2 indicates the participants' current year of study, where 35 percent were first-year students, 32 percent second-year students, 28 percent third-year students, and 5 percent were postgraduate students. Of the participants, 6 percent failed to answer this question. This 6 percent is categorised as missing.

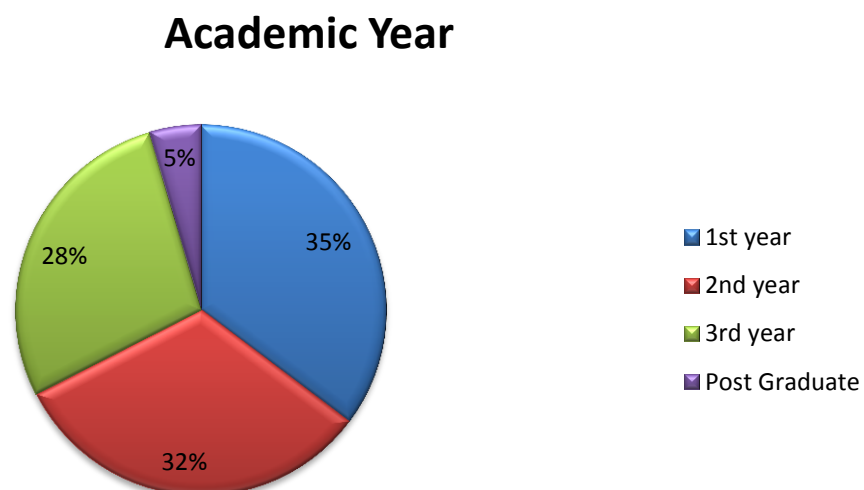


Figure 4.2 Academic year of participants

As illustrated in Figure 4.3, 54 percent of the participants were male and 45.8 percent female. Of the participants, 1 percent failed to answer this question. This 1 percent is categorised as missing.

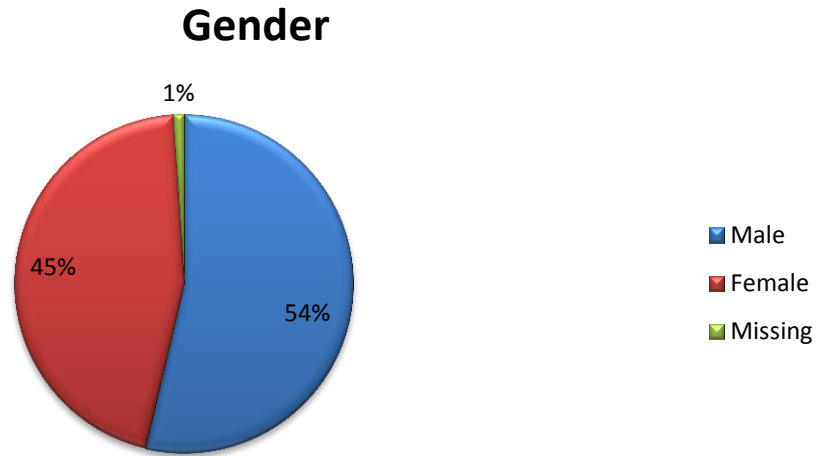


Figure 4.3 Gender profile of participants

Figure 4.4 represents the age spread of the sample. Of the participants, 7 percent were 18 years old, 21 percent 19 years old, 25 percent 20 years old, 23 percent 21 years old, 12 percent 22 years, 8 percent 23 years and 4 percent 24 years old.

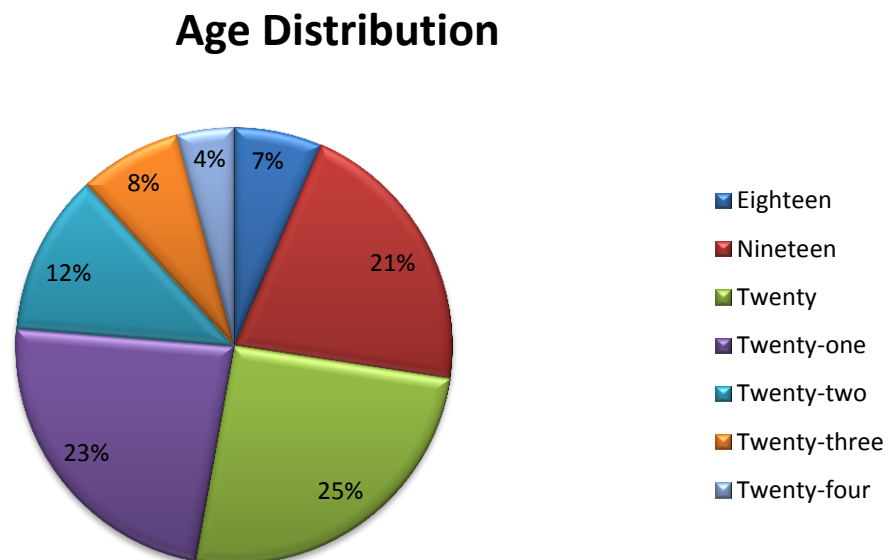


Figure 4.4 Age distribution of participants

Figure 4.5 describes the sample participants according to their province of origin. Of the participants, 2 percent were from Eastern Cape, 11 percent from Free State, 47 percent from Gauteng, 3 percent from KwaZulu Natal, 19 percent from Limpopo, 7 percent from Mpumalanga, 0.3 percent from Northern Cape, 9 percent from North West and 1 percent from Western Cape. This means that the sample contained participants from each of South Africa's nine provinces.

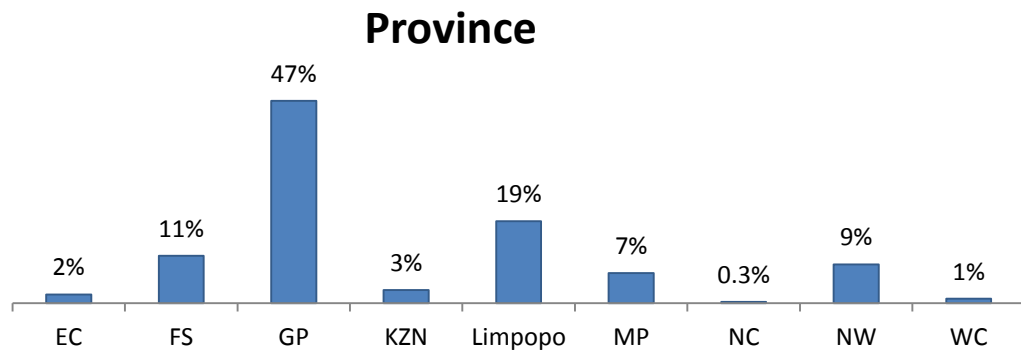


Figure 4.5 Province spread of the participants

Figure 4.6 depicts the home language of the participants. Of the participants, 1 percent indicated Afrikaans as their home language, 0.9 percent English, 10 percent IsiNdebele, 17 percent IsiXhosa, 15 percent IsiZulu, 29 percent Sesotho sa Leboa, 12 percent Sesotho, 3 percent Setswana, 6 percent siSwati, 6 percent Tshivenda and 1 percent Xitsonga.

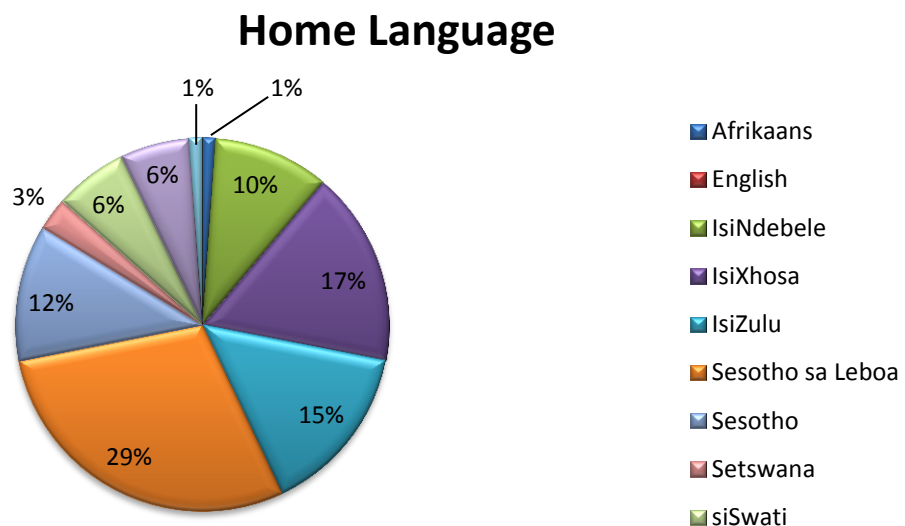


Figure 4.6 Home language of the participants

The following section reports on the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument used in the main survey.

4.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The Cronbach alpha and average inter-item correlation values computed on the scaled items in the main survey are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Reliability and validity of the main survey

Constructs	Number of items in scale	Cronbach alpha	Average inter-item correlation
Construct 1	6	0.914	0.640
Construct 2	5	0.849	0.534
Construct 3	3	0.727	0.471
Construct 4	5	0.710	0.330

The Cronbach alphas were computed as 0.914 for Construct 1, 0.849 for Construct 2 and 0.710 for Construct 4, thereby indicating good reliability for the product involvement and purchase involvement scales, as well as the opinion seeking scale. However, Construct 3, opinion leadership, returned an unacceptable Cronbach alpha of 0.595. An inspection of the SPSS output revealed that the removal of items B15 (My opinion of fashion does NOT seem to count with other people) and B17 (When they choose fashionable clothing, other people do NOT turn to me for advice) would improve the Cronbach alpha to the acceptable level of 0.727, as reported on in Table 4.4.

In order to establish construct validity, the average inter-item correlation was computed, where values ranging between 0.15 and 0.50 indicate convergent and discriminant validity (Clark & Watson, 1995:16). Whilst the average inter-item correlation coefficients fell within the recommended range for Constructs 3 and 4, and only slightly outside the range for Construct 2, it was fairly high for Construct 1. This suggests that while Construct 1 exhibits convergent validity, it does not necessarily possess discriminant validity.

Following the removal of the problematic items, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted.

4.6 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

O’Cass and Choy (2008:345) conducted an exploratory factor analysis to assess the dimensionality of fashion product involvement and purchase decision involvement. Flynn *et al.* (1996:142) conducted a similar analysis to assess the antecedents of fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. As this study utilised the scales used by these aforementioned authors, confirmatory factor analysis, using principle component analysis with the varimax rotation, was undertaken to ascertain whether the items in the scales loaded the same in the South African context.

In the first confirmatory factor analysis on the two sub-scales pertaining to fashion clothing involvement, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett test of sphericity yielded satisfactory results (KMO=0.886, Bartlett’s test=2572.753 (df=55), $p=0.000<0.05$), thereby indicating the suitability of the data set for factor analysis. As expected, two factors were extracted with eigenvalues above 1.0 that explained 67 percent of the total variance.

Table 4.5 illustrates the rotated factors for the fashion clothing involvement scale, together with the factor loadings from the study conducted by O’Cass and Choy (2008:345).

Table 4.5 Confirmatory factor analysis: fashion clothing involvement

Items	Factors in the O’Cass and Choy (2008) study	Factors in the current study	
		F1	F2
B1	1	0.788	
B2	1	0.814	
B3	1	0.736	
B4	1	0.774	
B5	1	0.828	
B6	1	0.804	
B7	2		0.802
B8	2		0.782
B9	2		0.734
B10	2		0.684
B11	2		0.696

As is evident from Table 4.5, the items loaded on the same factors as those in the study conducted by O’Cass and Choy (2008:345).

In the second confirmatory factor analysis on the two sub-scales pertaining to fashion opinion leadership, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett test of sphericity again yielded satisfactory results (KMO=0.755, Bartlett’s test=692.567 (df=28), $p=0.000<0.05$), thereby indicating the suitability of the data set for factor analysis. As expected, two factors were extracted with eigenvalues above 1.0 that explained 56 percent of the total variance.

Table 4.6 illustrates the rotated factors for the fashion opinion leadership scale, together with the factor loadings from the study conducted by Flynn *et al.* (1996:142).

Table 4.6 **Confirmatory factor analysis: fashion opinion leadership**

Items	Factors in the Flynn <i>et al.</i> (1996) studies	Factors in the current study	
		F1	F2
B12	1	0.727	
B14	1	0.794	
B16	1	0.776	
B18	2		0.626
B19	2		0.669
B20	2		0.677
B22	2		0.603
B23	4		0.703

As is evident from Table 4.6, the items loaded on the same factors as those in the study conducted by Flynn *et al.* (1996:142).

4.7 **SUMMARY MEASURES**

According to Pallant (2010:53), summary measures include statistics such as the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. Table 4.7 presents the descriptive statistics – mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis values – computed for fashion product involvement, fashion purchase involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students.

Given the six-point Likert scale used ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree, higher mean values indicate greater fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst the black Generation Y students.

Table 4.7 Descriptive statistics summary

Item	Valid N	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Construct 1: Fashion product involvement	354	3.90	1.203	-0.373	-0.446
Construct 2: Purchase decision involvement	354	4.01	1.108	-0.374	-0.453
Construct 3: Opinion leadership	354	3.05	1.179	0.000	-0.500
Construct 4: Opinion seeking	354	3.08	1.130	0.088	-0.285

As is apparent from Table 4.7, all scales may be classified as normally distributed, since none of the skewness scores fall outside the -2 or +2 range. In terms of the peakedness of the data distribution, the kurtosis values computed indicate a relatively flat distribution.

Means above 3 were computed on each of the four constructs of fashion product involvement, purchase decision involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking. This suggests that black Generation Y students are involved with fashion products and fashion purchase decisions, and that they consider themselves to be both fashion opinion leaders and fashion opinion seekers. Construct 2, fashion purchase decision involvement, scored the highest mean (mean = 4.01), which suggests that black Generation Y students put a great deal of consideration into purchases decisions involving fashion clothing. The means computed for opinion leadership (mean = 3.05) and opinion seeking (mean = 3.08) are very close, which suggests that black Generation Y students are both opinion leaders and opinion seekers when it comes to fashion clothing.

The following section, Section 4.8, discusses the hypotheses testing undertaken in this research study.

4.8 TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

In order to achieve the empirical objectives and test the hypotheses set out in Chapter 1, several tests of significance were undertaken, including correlation analysis, regression analysis and t-tests. For each of these tests, the significance level is set at the conventional 5 percent level; that is, $\alpha=0.05$ and the decision rule is as follows:

- If p-value $\geq \alpha$, conclude H_0
- If p-value $< \alpha$, conclude H_a .

4.8.1 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was undertaken to address the first empirical objective formulated in Chapter 1, which was to determine whether there is a significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students.

The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion leadership and fashion seeking amongst black Generation Y students.
- Ha1: There is a significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students.

Table 4.8 reports on the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 4.8 Relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students

	Fashion involvement	Purchase involvement	Opinion leadership	Opinion seeking
Fashion involvement				
Pearson's correlation	1	0.626**	0.522**	0.172**
Significance		0.000	0.000	0.001
N	354	354	354	354
Purchase involvement				
Pearson's correlation	0.626*	1	0.400*	0.248*
Significance	0.000		0.000	0.000
N	354	354	354	354
Opinion leadership				
Pearson's correlation	0.522*	0.400*	1	0.293*
Significance	0.000	0.000		0.000
N	354	354	354	354
Opinion seeking				
Pearson's correlation	0.172*	0.248*	0.293*	1
Significance	0.001	0.000	0.000	
N	354	354	354	354

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

As can be seen from Table 4.8, there is a statistically positive relationship between fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement ($r=0.626$, $p=0.000<0.05$), fashion opinion leadership ($r=0.522$, $p=0.000<0.05$), and fashion opinion seeking ($r=0.172$, $p=0.001<0.05$) amongst black Generation Y students. In addition, there is a statistically positive relationship between fashion purchase decision involvement and fashion opinion leadership ($r=0.400$, $p=0.000<0.05$) and fashion opinion seeking ($r=0.248$, $p=0.000<0.05$) amongst black Generation Y students. Similarly, there is a statistically positive relationship between fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking ($r=0.293$, $p=0.001<0.05$) amongst black Generation Y students. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H_01 , is rejected and the

alternate, Ha1, is concluded. There is a significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students.

4.8.2 Regression analysis

Regression analysis was undertaken to determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement significantly influenced their fashion purchase decision involvement. This analysis addresses the second empirical objective in Chapter 1. The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

Ho2: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement does not significantly influence their fashion purchase decision involvement.

Ha2: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement does significantly influence their fashion purchase decision involvement.

Table 4.9 presents the results of the regression analysis.

Table 4.9 Influence of black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement on their fashion purchase decision involvement

	Standardised Beta	R ²	t-value	Significance level
Dependent variable: Fashion purchase decision involvement				
Independent variable Fashion product involvement	0.626	0.392	15.070	0.000
*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)				

As Table 4.9 shows, black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement ($\beta=0.626$, $p=0.000<0.05$) has a statistically positive influence towards their fashion purchase decision involvement. The coefficient of multiple determinations (R^2) was 0.392, which indicates that approximately 39 percent of the variance in black Generation Y students' fashion purchase decision involvement can be predicted by their fashion product involvement. Therefore, the null hypothesis, Ho2, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, Ha2, concluded; that is, black

Generation Y students' fashion product involvement does significantly influence their fashion purchase decision involvement.

In order to address the third empirical objective in Chapter 1, regression analysis was again conducted to ascertain whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement influence their fashion opinion leadership behaviour. The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

Ho3: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does not significantly influence their fashion opinion leadership behaviour.

Ha3: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does significantly influence their fashion opinion leadership behaviour.

Table 4.10 presents the results of this regression analysis.

Table 4.10 Influence of black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement on their fashion opinion leadership behaviour

	Standardised Beta	R ²	t-value	Significance level
Dependent variable:				
Fashion opinion leadership		0.281		
Independent variables:				
Fashion product involvement	0.447		7.699	0.000*
Fashion purchase involvement	0.120		2.071	0.039*

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

As shown in Table 4.10, black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement ($\beta=0.447$, $p=0.000<0.05$) and fashion purchase decision involvement ($\beta=0.120$, $p=0.039<0.05$) has a statistically positive influence towards their fashion opinion leadership. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) was 0.281, which indicates that approximately

28 percent of the variance in black Generation Y students' fashion opinion leadership behaviour can be predicted by their fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement. Therefore, the null hypothesis, Ho3, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, Ha3, concluded; that is, black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does significantly influence their fashion opinion leadership behaviour.

In order to address the fourth empirical objective in Chapter 1, regression analysis was again conducted to ascertain whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement influence their fashion opinion seeking behaviour. The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

Ho4: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does not significantly influence their fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

Ha4: Black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement does significantly influence their fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

Table 4.11 presents the results of this regression analysis.

Table 4.11 Influence of black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement on their fashion opinion seeking behaviour

	Standardised Beta	R ²	t-value	Significance level
Dependent variable: Fashion opinion seeking		0.062		
Independent variables: Fashion product involvement	0.028		0.415	0.678
Fashion purchase decision involvement	0.231		3.478	0.001*
*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)				

As indicated in Table 4.11, whilst black Generation Y students' fashion purchase decision involvement ($\beta=0.231$, $p=0.001<0.05$) does have a statistically significant positive influence of their fashion opinion seeking behaviour, their fashion product involvement ($\beta=0.028$, $p=0.679>0.05$) has a non-significant influence. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H_04 , is rejected concerning fashion purchase decision involvement and the alternative hypothesis, H_{a4} , is accepted. However, there is insufficient evidence to reject H_04 in the case of fashion product involvement's influence on fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

The following section considers the differences between male and female black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

4.8.3 Independent samples t-test

For the purpose of this study, an independent sample t-test was used to determine if there were any differences between male and female black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion leadership and fashion seeking. This independent sample t-test is aimed at addressing the fifth empirical objective set out in Chapter 1. The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

Ho5: There is no significant difference between male and female black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

Ha5: There is a significant difference between male and female black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

Table 4.12 reports on the calculated t-values and p-values

Table 4.12 Gender differences

	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Fashion product involvement	-0.42778	-3.355	0.001*
Purchase decision involvement	0.15331	1.286	0.199
Fashion leadership	-0.20627	-1.630	0.104
Fashion seeking	-0.06228	-0.513	0.609

*Significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

As is evident from Table 4.12, the only significant difference between males and females occurred on fashion product involvement ($p=0.001<0.05$). Therefore, for fashion product involvement, H_05 is rejected and its alternative, H_a5 concluded; that is, black Generation Y female students have a significant higher level of fashion product involvement compared to their male counterparts. In terms of fashion purchase decision involvement ($p=0.199>0.05$), fashion opinion leadership ($p=0.104>0.05$) and for fashion opinion seeking behaviour ($p=0.609>0.05$) there is no significant difference between male and female black Generation Y students. As such, for these dimensions, there is insufficient evidence to reject H_05 .

4.9 SYNOPSIS

This chapter set to report on and interpret the empirical findings of the study. In Section 4.2, the pilot study results were outlined and discussed. Following the pilot study results is a discussion regarding the main survey's data gathering process and preliminary data analysis in Section 4.3. Section 4.4 presented a description of the sample and Section 4.5 focused on the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument used in the main survey, which was followed by the confirmatory factor analysis in Section 4.6. Descriptive statistics or summary measures, including the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were presented in Section 4.7. In Section 4.8, tests of significance were undertaken in order to test the various hypotheses formulated in the study. These tests of significance included correlation analysis, regression analysis and an independent sample t-test. The next chapter, Chapter 5, presents the recommendations and concluding remarks of the study.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Fashion clothing consumption is central to those who are highly involved with the fashion clothing product category; that is, fashion clothing consumption is driven by consumers' interest and involvement in fashion clothing. The constant change in fashion styles and trends places fashion conscious consumers under immense pressure, as they constantly have to keep up with the latest fashion trends (Section 2.2.2). In the fashion arena, WOM communication plays an important role in the way in which information on fashion styles and trends are shared (Section 2.3.1). An individual's involvement with fashion clothing products is thought to be the result of several internal and external factors (Section 2.3.2). These factors include age, gender, materialism, time, commitment, knowledge, confidence and patronage. Those individuals who are highly involved with and interested in fashion clothing tend to be better informed about the product category, which tends to make them fashion clothing opinion leaders. Such opinion leaders are important to fashion clothing marketers in that they play a highly influential role in the fashion clothing purchase decisions of others in the market place (Section 2.5.1). Consequently, fashion opinion seekers rely on fashion opinion leaders for advice and opinion on fashion product class (Section 2.5.2).

Opinion leadership is highly significant in marketing. Mass media communication is not as credible as the WOM communication that opinion leaders, seekers and receivers engage in, and as such, marketers often try to stimulate opinion leadership in order to disseminate information about new fashion clothing styles and trends. Therefore, the antecedents of opinion leadership and opinion seeking are central in the field of fashion marketing (Section 1.1).

The youth, who are classified currently as the Generation Y cohort, represent an important current and future market segment for fashion clothing marketers. Understanding their characteristics and mind set is essential, especially for those fashion marketers targeting this cohort (Section 2.6.1). In South Africa, members of the Generation Y, particularly the African portion of this cohort, represent a significantly sized market segment.

Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate fashion clothing involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking within the South African context. Specifically, the study focused on black Generation Y students because first, members of this cohort are believed to be the future members of the Black Diamond segment, a segment that is characterised as being conspicuous status consumers of a variety of luxury brands, including designer clothing brands. Secondly, they are likely to be of particular interest to marketers as generally, a tertiary qualification is linked to a higher future earning potential as well as a higher social standing within society, and thirdly, individuals with tertiary qualifications are regarded as highly informed and influential to their peers (Section 2.6.2).

As such, the primary objective formulated for this study, as outlined in Chapter 1, was to investigate fashion clothing involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership, and fashion opinion seeking behaviour amongst South African black Generation Y students.

This primary objective was disaggregated into six theoretical objectives (Section 1.3.2) and five empirical objectives (Section 1.3.3).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the study (Section 5.2), present the main findings of the study (Section 5.3), and to make recommendations (Section 5.4) based on the findings of the current study. The chapter comprises an outline of the limitations of the study and suggestions for the future research opportunities (Section 5.5), and points out the contribution made by the study (Section 5.6). The chapter culminates with concluding remarks (Section 5.7).

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In order to provide the appropriate recommendations based on the current study, it is necessary to take account of the insights gained over the previous four chapters.

In Chapter 1, a brief introduction to the study was provided in Section 1.1. This was followed by the problem statement (Section 1.2), which explained why there was a need to undertake this study within the South African environment, and particularly, amongst the black Generation Y cohort. The primary objective of the study, along with the theoretical and empirical objectives, was outlined in Section 1.3. Section 1.4 focused on providing a brief

overview of the proposed research design and methodology of the study in tandem with the ethical considerations of the current study, as described in Section 1.5.

Chapter 2 included the literature review, as led by the study's theoretical objectives. The chapter comprises a discussion on the concept of fashion consumption (Section 2.2), along with a review of the literature on the phenomenon of fashion change (Section 2.2.4) and the fashion change framework (Section 2.2.5). Product involvement was discussed in Section 2.3, which comprises the concept of information seeking through WOM (Section 2.3.1) and factors influencing the level of product involvement (Section 2.3.2). The antecedents of opinion leadership and opinion seeking were discussed in Section 2.5, whilst the target population of the study, specifically the Generation Y cohort, was discussed in Section 2.6.

According to the published literature, there has been a noticeable finding, which shows that peers and product category influence the product-involvement level of the Generation Y cohort, and that the product-involvement amongst these individuals relies on subjective product knowledge and product category (Section 2.3.2). Furthermore, studies show that the need for uniqueness and attention to social comparison information is positively related to fashion opinion leadership, and that attention to social comparison information is also positively related to fashion opinion seeking, but that the need for uniqueness is negatively related to fashion opinion seeking (Section 2.5.4). Section 2.6.1 describes the characteristics of the Generation Y cohort, and indicates the significance of understanding this group of individuals, especially when it comes to their involvement in fashion clothing and the level of fashion influence they have over their peers.

The chapter also focused on WOM communication, which is credited for being a perfect tool for marketing and disseminating essential information amongst consumers. Studies shows that consumers rely on each other for information and advice, and that WOM is a powerful tool of marketing communication that most companies are starting to adopt and implement as part of their marketing strategy (Section 2.5.1).

Chapter 3 includes a description of the research methodology employed in the study. The study used a descriptive research design (Section 3.2). The target population for the study was defined as black Generation Y full-time students between the ages of 18 and 24 years enrolled at South African registered public HEIs in 2013 (Section 3.3.1). The sampling frame

for this study consisted of the 23 public registered HEIs in South Africa, which, using non-probability judgement sampling method was narrowed down to the campuses of two institutions in the Gauteng province. This sampling frame comprised one university of technology and one traditional university (Section 3.3.2). Thereafter, a non-probability convenience sample of 400 black Generation Y students, as defined by the target population, was employed (Section 3.3.3 and 3.3.4). A self-administered questionnaire consisting of existing scales was utilised to collect the required data (Section 3.6). Section 3.7 described the different techniques employed to analyse the collected data.

Chapter 4 reported on the findings of the empirical part of the current study. Prior to conducting the tests of significances necessary for addressing the empirical objectives of the study, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted (Section 4.6). In addition, the reliability and validity of the measurement scales were assessed (Section 4.5). The results presented in Section 5.3 are in accordance to the empirical objectives formulated for the study.

5.3 MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section discusses the main findings of the current study in accordance to the empirical objectives formulated in Chapter 1.

5.3.1 Relationship between black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour

The first empirical objective set out in Chapter 1 was to determine whether there was a relationship between black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour. A correlation analysis using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficient was undertaken in order to address this objective. As is evident from Table 4.8, there is a statistically positive relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students. The strongest relationships were observed between fashion clothing involvement and fashion purchase involvement, and between fashion involvement, fashion purchase involvement, and fashion opinion leadership. A significant but weak positive relationship occurred between fashion involvement, fashion purchase involvement and fashion opinion seeking behaviour, as well as between fashion opinion leadership and fashion

opinion seeking behaviour. This is consistent with a number of previous studies (Section 2.5) and suggests that the more involved black Generation Y students are with fashion clothing, the more they present as fashion opinion leaders amongst their peers. This is in line with Goldsmith and Clark's (2008:309) assertion that certain consumers become involved in fashion products because they want to gain more knowledge, which will later qualify them as opinion leaders to opinion seekers.

5.3.2 Influence of black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement on their fashion purchase involvement

The second empirical objective formulated in Chapter 1 was to determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement influences their fashion purchase decision involvement. Regression analysis was undertaken in order to address this objective. According to the results reported on in Table 4.9, black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement has a significant positive influence on their fashion purchase involvement. This suggests that the more involved black Generation Y students are with fashion products, the more attention they pay to their fashion purchase decisions (Section 2.2.2).

5.3.3 Influences of black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement on their fashion opinion leadership behaviour

The third empirical objective formulated in Chapter 1 was to determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement predicts their fashion opinion leadership. As with the second empirical objective, regression analysis was undertaken in order to address this objective. The results in Table 4.10 indicate that whilst both fashion involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement have a significant positive influence on fashion opinion leadership, fashion involvement has the strongest influence on opinion leadership. This suggests fashion involvement is the strongest predictor of fashion opinion leadership amongst black Generation Y students in South Africa.

5.3.4 Influences of black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement on their fashion opinion seeking behaviour

The fourth empirical objective formulated in Chapter 1 was to determine whether black Generation Y students' fashion product involvement and fashion purchase decision involvement predicts their fashion opinion seeking behaviour. As with the second and third empirical objectives, regression analysis was undertaken in order to address this objective. The results in Table 4.11 indicate that even though black Generation Y students' fashion purchase decision involvement has a statistically significant positive influence on their fashion opinion seeking behaviour, their fashion product involvement has a non-significant influence on their fashion opinion seeking behaviour. These findings are in accordance with the literature that indicates that fashion opinion seekers tend to be less interested and involved in a particular product category than their opinion leader counterparts, which leads to them being less knowledgeable about that product category. Notwithstanding this lack of fashion involvement, their fashion purchase decision involvement; that is, the extent to which they consider a fashion purchase decision, influences them to engage in fashion opinion seeking behaviour.

5.3.5 Black Generation Y student gender differences concerning fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking

The fifth empirical objective set out in Chapter 1 focused on determining whether male and female black Generation Y students differ concerning their fashion product involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. An independent sample t-test was conducted in order to address this objective, where the expected mean was set at mean > 3. As indicated in Table 4.12, black Generation Y females have a significantly higher level of fashion product involvement compared to their male counterparts. Previous studies also found females to be more interested and preoccupied in fashion compared to males (Section 2.2.1). Therefore, in comparison to males, black Generation Y female students appear to be more involved in fashion products.

In accordance with the findings of this study, the following section outlines several recommendations.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the literature review, along with the empirical findings culminated from the South African black Generation Y student sample concerning fashion clothing involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking.

5.4.1 Target marketing efforts at black Generation Y students

It is evident that black Generation Y students gravitate towards quality brands and trendy clothing items, almost to a point of not considering the price tag attached. This suggests that they are prepared to pay a premium for high quality branded fashion apparel. Targeting the black Generation Y cohort enrolled at tertiary institutions and graduates should be a key marketing tactic for fashion marketers as this group of individuals are likely to have a high future disposable income. In addition, their possible role model position within society is likely to make them trend setters amongst the wider South African Generation Y segment, especially the sizable African portion thereof.

5.4.2 Use different marketing communication appeals to appeal to fashion opinion leaders and fashion opinion seekers

The findings of this study suggest that black Generation Y students include both fashion opinion leaders and seekers. For fashion clothing marketers, both segments are important. However, the promotional appeals used to reach these two segments need to be different. Fashion opinion leaders are likely to be more innovative concerning fashion apparel and are more prone to have a need to be on the cutting edge of what is fashionable. Therefore, marketing communication messages that stress the innovativeness, trendiness and uniqueness of new fashion styles are possibly more appealing to them. In contrast, fashion opinion seekers are more likely to purchase and wear fashion apparel as a way of gaining social acceptance amongst their peers. Marketing communication messages that utilise the reference group appeal could potentially garner greater appeal amongst this segment. Fashion marketers may also consider using local black celebrity endorsers to simulate fashion opinion leadership in an effort to appeal to black Generation Y fashion opinion seekers.

5.4.3 Stimulate word-of-mouth communication on social networking sites

In South Africa, as is the case around the world, members of the Generation Y cohort are known to be heavy users of virtual social networking sites such as Facebook. Such sites are well adapted as a platform for WOM communication, which is considered to be one of the

most credible and persuasive forms of communication. As such, fashion marketers should consider introducing a novel, interesting or even debatable issue related to the fashion apparel brand on to popular social networking sites that stimulate WOM communication. A prerequisite to the success of such a marketing communication strategy is a clear, in-depth and up-to-date understanding of this cohort's perceptions and attitudes.

5.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

This study investigated fashion clothing involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking amongst the South African black Generation Y students. This study, like most research studies, has a number of limitations, which present several future research opportunities.

The first limitation is that the study made use of a non-probability sampling method. As such, even though several demographic questions were included in an effort to ascertain how representative the sample was of the defined target population, care should be taken in generalising the findings to the population under study. In addition, whilst the sample included participants from each of the country's nine provinces, those respondents were drawn from two campuses located in only one province – the Gauteng province. A study that includes a sample of participants from HEI campuses across all nine provinces is likely to provide a more in-depth understanding of black Generation Y students' fashion clothing involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour. Furthermore, a study that includes self-monitoring behaviour and the meaning of fashion brands amongst the black Generation Y students would be valuable.

5.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into fashion clothing involvement, fashion purchase decision involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviour amongst black Generation Y students in South Africa. Findings from this study have shown that there is a significant relationship between fashion product involvement, fashion purchase involvement, fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking amongst black Generation Y students, and that females have a significantly higher level of fashion product involvement compared to males. Insights gained from this study will help fashion marketing better understand this cohort's involvement in fashion, which, in turn, should help them tailor their marketing efforts in such a way as to appeal to this segment in an improved manner.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Fashion apparel represents an important tool for signalling one's self-concept to most individuals, particularly the youth, and WOM is a powerful form of communication used to share information about the latest fashion trends and styles. The key insights from the study are that black Generation Y students are highly involved in fashion apparel and that they influence each other when it comes to fashion apparel trends.

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ANNEXURE A



FASHION CLOTHING INVOLVEMENT, OPINION LEADERSHIP AND OPINION SEEKING AMONGST GENERATION Y STUDENTS

Dear Student

My name is Pulaki Joseph Tshabalala. I am registered as a full-time student for M.Com in Marketing Management at the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) and I am currently working towards my dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Ayesha Bevan-Dye.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to research fashion-clothing involvement, opinion leadership and opinion seeking amongst South African Generation Y students. Generation Y refers to people who were born between 1986 and 2005.

Please take a few minutes to assist me and complete the attached questionnaire. All responses will be kept confidential and will merely be outlined in the form of statistical data in the analysis and used for research purposes only.

Thank you for your important contribution to this study.

Pulaki Joseph Tshabalala

North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus)

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Section A: Demographic Section

Please mark each question with a cross (X) in the appropriate box.

A1	Name of institution	North West University (Vaal Campus)	Vaal University of Technology	UJ
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A2	Year	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	Post Graduate
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A3	Gender	Male	Female
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A4	Race	Black African	Asian	Coloured	White
		Other (please specify):			

A5	Your age at last birthday	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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A6	Province where you grew up				
	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo
	Mpumalanga	Northern Cape	North West	Western Cape	

A7	Your Mother Tongue language						
	Afrikaans	English	IsiNdebele	IsiXhosa	IsiZulu	Sesotho sa	Sesotho
		Setswana	siSwati	Tshivenda	Xitsonga		

Section B: Please indicate the extent to which you disagree/agree with the following statements using a cross (X).

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Fashion clothing means a lot to me	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Fashion clothing is significant to me	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	For me personally fashion clothing is important	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I am interested in fashion clothing	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I pay a lot of attention to fashion clothing	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	I am very involved with fashion clothing	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Deciding which fashion clothing brand to buy is important	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	I think a lot about which fashion clothing brand to buy	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
9	Making purchase decisions for fashion clothing is significant	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	I think a lot about my purchases decisions when it comes to fashion clothing	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	The purchase decisions I make for fashion clothing are important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	I often persuade other people to buy the fashion that I like	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Other people seldom come to me for advice about choosing fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	People that I know pick their fashions based on what I have told them	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	My opinion of fashion does NOT seem to count with other people	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I often influence other people's opinions about fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	When they choose fashionable clothing, other people do NOT turn to me for advice	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	When I consider new fashions, I ask other people for advice	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I do NOT need to talk to other people before I buy a clothing item	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	I like to get other people's opinions before I buy a new fashion item	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	I seldom ask other people about what clothes to buy	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	I feel more comfortable choosing clothing items when I have gotten other people's opinions on them	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	When choosing fashionable clothing, other peoples' opinions are NOT important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6

Thank you