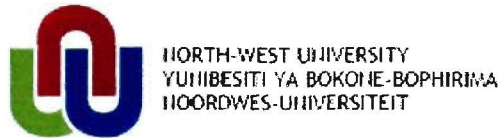


North-West University



A study of students' perceptions of textile labels and their consequent purchasing behaviour

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**A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree Master in Consumer Sciences at the Potchefstroom
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SUMMERY

All people are consumers of various textile products. In the process of obtaining these products, consumers are subjected to a consumer decision making process of realising a need, searching for a suitable product, evaluating alternatives, and eventually choosing and purchasing a product to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Besides the obvious characteristics of a textile product such as colour, size and style, the fabric label attached to the product is one of the stimuli which helps the consumer to make a decision to purchase or not. The label is the only source of information about the fibre content, size and care of the product:

As very little is known about South African students' perception of textile product labels and their consequent purchasing behaviour, the aim of this study was to explore this phenomenon. The study was done amongst both male and female students between the age of 18 and 30 years at the University of Zululand. Several focus group discussions were held. The data were analysed by making use of thematic content analysis.

The study found that students were aware of textile product labels and of most of the information that is generally displayed on such labels, such as fibre content, care instructions and brand name. It was found that participants had strong opinions about the location of the label. The display of labels with a brand name on textile products was perceived as both a status symbol associated with the class level of the user and also as a preference for quality. Labels with a well-known brand name have the most influence on the purchasing decision, while it was found that the care instructions on labels have very little or no influence. The size indication on a label influences the purchasing decision dramatically. Participants who do not find the right size become frustrated because they experience this as bad service from the retailer. Packaging labels and tags influence purchasing behaviour like any other labels. The difference however, is that these are generally not kept by consumers for later reference.

OPSOMMING

Alle mense is verbruikers van verskillende tekstielprodukte. In die proses van die verkryging van hierdie produkte, is verbruikers onderhewig aan die verbruikers- besluitnemingsproses van bewus wees van 'n behoefte, die soeke na 'n gepaste produk, evaluering van alternatiewe en die uiteindelijke kies en aankoop van die produk tot hul tevredenheid of nie.

Behalwe vir die ooglopende eienskappe van die produk soos die kleur , grootte en styl is die etiket op die tekstielproduk een van die stimuli wat die verbruiker in sy besluit om te koop of nie te koop nie, help. Die etiket is die enigste bron wat inligting oor die veselinhoud, die grootte en oor die versorging van die produk verskaf.

As gevolg van beperkte inligting oor die Suid-Afrikaanse student se persepsie van etikette van tekstielprodukte en hulle gevolglike aankoopgedrag, was die doel van die studie om die aangeleentheid te ondersoek. Die studie is onder mans- en damesstudente tussen die ouderdom van 18 en 30 jaar aan die Universiteit van Zoeloeland gedoen. Verskeie fokusgroepbesprekings is gehou en die data is volgens temas geanaliseer.

In die studie is bevind dat die studente van tekstielproduketikette asook van die inligting soos veselinhoud, versorgingsinstruksies en handelsnaam wat daarop verskyn, bewus is. Die deelnemers het sterk menings gehad het oor die plasing van die etiket. Die vertoning van etikette met 'n bekende handelsnaam word gesien as beide 'n statussimbool, wat met die sosiale klas van die gebruiker geassosieer word, en ook as 'n voorkeur vir kwaliteit. Etiket, met bekende handelsname op, het die grootste invloed op die aankoopbesluit, terwyl die versorgingsinstruksies op die etiket min of geen invloed het nie. Die grootte-aanduiding op die etiket beïnvloed die aankoopbesluit dramaties. Indien die deelnemers nie die regte grootte kry nie, lei dit tot frustrasies omdat hulle dit as swak diens van die handelaar beskou. Verpakkingsetikette en hangetikette het die selfde effek op aankoopgedrag as enige ander etiket. Die verskil is net dat laasgenoemde nie vir latere verwysing gebêre word nie.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

All people are consumers of a wide range of products and our survival depends on the products used in daily life. People are driven by different needs at a particular time. The Maslow hierarchy of needs ranges from the more pressing needs to the least pressing human needs. These needs, according to Maslow start from physical needs, safety, social, emotional, esteem and finally end with self-actualisation needs (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:223). Sheth *et al.* (1999:344) support this idea and mention that motives have direction as well as strength, and they are goal oriented because they drive one to satisfy a specific need. The specific needs in buying behaviour can be the need for affiliation, the need for power and the need for uniqueness (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:84). A good example can be given in the use of textile labels. The process known as consumer behaviour plays an important role in finding solutions to solve problems that consumers might have towards their need satisfaction. This process makes consumers aware of certain products or stimuli. Awareness as defined by Wright (2004:487) is a measure of the proportion of target audience who has heard of a particular product or service. In this work consumers' awareness of information on textile labels is studied.

Labels are one of the stimuli that help a consumer to make a decision. In the decision making process people select, organise and interpret stimuli differently, that is why one has a process called perception (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:596). Textile products are a kind of stimuli that consumers are exposed to. The consumers' interest in labels may be focused on quality, appearance or social acceptability. Consumers purchase brands or products that are broadly in accordance with their self-perception (Cant *et al.*, 2006:117). Their behaviour arises from experience, which is part of the learning process. Wilkie (1994:143) defines learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour, feelings and one's way of thinking. Past experiences help consumers to change their behaviour in purchasing. The literature reviews three levels of consumer decisions: The first level is learning, which is an extensive problem solving stage where consumers need information for establishing criteria which are used to judge specific

brands. The second level is limited problem solving, which indicates that the basic criteria for preferences for the selected group of brands have not been fully established. The last level, which is the particular response behaviour, states that the consumers have less knowledge of criteria needed to evaluate considered brands (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:269).

After the learning process consumers acquire beliefs about certain products which drive them to buy. These accumulated feelings about their possessions are prioritised by individuals and lead them to have attitudes towards products. As defined by Wright (2004:256), attitudes are learned predispositions because consumers may form, or have existing attitudes reinforced before, during or after a purchase. Generally speaking in life the attitudes are subjected to change and they take place at a point in time. Attitudes as the last internal factor in the decision making process connect one to the second set of the external factors, which is part of the discussion in this study.

In the buying situation there must always be a continuous and simultaneous interaction between the internal and the external factors influencing the process. The internal factors include the needs, personality, attitudes, communication, motivation and perception. The external factors comprise of social class, culture, sub-culture, age, age cohort and reference group. The external factors are sometimes influenced by communication in a buying situation. Communication can be in the form of advertisements, sales promotions, personal selling and fashion shows, special events, visual merchandising, public relations, print media and the broadcast media (Solomon and Rabolt 2004:322-323). The communication process is influenced by the existing culture within a society. Sheth *et al.* (1999:149) mentioned that culture is learned; it regulates society; makes living more efficient, it is adaptive, and arranged hierarchically. Research indicates that with communication consumers are allocated to a social classes, which is defined as the amount of status the members of the class have in comparison with members of other social classes (Schiffman & Kanuk 2007:358). Wright (2004:345) supports this definition according to which different classes are outlined as upper, middle, working, objective and subjective classes. In a social class consumers communicate face to face and by so doing they are influenced by friends, neighbours, peers and family members.

It is well known that consumers in a social class belong to a particular culture and generally speaking culture differs from country to country. The research shows that among cultures one has a large number of subcultures. Solomon and Rabolt (2004:37) expressed the opinion that subcultures are small groups of people within the common culture with shared beliefs and a value

system based on common life experiences. It is important to realise that the sub-groups are formed or can be formed by, for example, age, gender, ethnic origin, religion, beliefs and leisure pursuits. Students in this study were part of such a sub-culture. These groups are characterised by different life-styles and mostly influenced by reference groups. Reference groups can be described as groups that people identify with and refer to in order to evaluate and regulate their beliefs, opinions and actions (Solomon, 1996:340). Reference groups are crucial for the marketing of products and services, being more selective and more set in their ways (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:179).

The reference group also belongs to a certain age category, which is why their needs and preferences are nearly the same as those of others who are close to their age. It is agreed that consumers having same ages are likely to have common characteristics and similar experiences and are then referred to as "My generation". The fashion marketers communicate their products and services to one or more specific age cohort (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:179) categorises the age cohorts as the depression and world war II cohorts, post war cohort, the baby boomers I cohort, the baby boomers II cohort, the generation X cohort, the generation Y cohort and the generation Z cohort. In this research the researcher dealt with the generation Y cohort, born between 1977-1987. They love to shop and are knowledgeable about brands and fashion but at the same time distrustful about traditional marketing. This generation has been shown to have information about textile product labels and fashion (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:179).

Generally speaking there are many kinds of labels such as food labels, pesticides labels, eco labels, chemical labels, and record labels. Stickers, forms, tags and ribbons are also relevant kinds of labels used by manufacturers. Other kinds of labels are stated as wool labels, flammability labels on piece goods and dimensional stability labels. Labels appear on clothes and household textiles, including products such as towels, table cloths, bed linen, carpets, mattresses and many more.

From the researcher's point of view, labels have some information that guides the consumers during purchasing. Specifically on textile product labels information may include the fibre content, country of origin, manufacturer's name, care instructions, size, brand name and price (Fritz & Cant, 1986:234). The placement and attachment of labels is also regarded as important in this research (Brown & Rice, 1998:277). In some countries for example the United States of

America, labelling information like fibre content and country of origin, is required by law (Collier & Tortora, 2001:21).

1.2 The problem statement

Although some research on labels has been done in other countries like Japan, China, and the U.S.A, it is not always relevant to the South African consumer. Very little research about textile product labels has been done in South Africa and due to that, there is a lack of information on this particular topic.

For many years it was easy to take care of textile products. Most were made of cotton which could be washed and ironed and if it was white, it could be bleached. Today the market is flooded with textile products which are made of a variety of fibres or fibre blends. This situation can confuse the consumer on how to take proper care of all the textile products. Besides that, it is almost impossible for the consumer to decide what to buy because they do not have the knowledge to guide them. Textile labels which have some information on can be very useful. If consumers make use of this information it will promote consumer satisfaction with regard to choice and care of products. On the other hand some consumers may be overwhelmed by all the information and ignore it which could result in a negative experience when a favourite acetate blouse is ruined by a too high ironing temperature.

As one lives in an ever changing world, new textile fibres and products are entering the market, daily. Therefore, it is necessary to update consumer knowledge via textile product labelling.

It is important to obtain information on what consumers recommend on the improvement of textile labels. The consumers at the end of the day should be satisfied with what the manufacturers and retailers provide on their labels. The labels should be in such a way that they attract and inform consumers to buy.

Against this background, the following questions arise: To what extent are students, as consumers, aware of the information written on textile product labels? Does the student consumer feel satisfied regarding choice, use and care of textile products? Is the students' knowledge of this type of information updated from time to time, as new types of information become available? What do labels mean to students? Do students consider labels during their decision making on whether to buy or not to buy? Do they consider the information on price, store name, country of

origin, fibre content, care instructions and manufacturer's name when purchasing textile products? It is, therefore, necessary to investigate students' views and perceptions on textile product labelling

1.3 The aims and objectives

The main aim of this study is to explore students' views and perceptions on textile product labels and its relevancy to purchasing behaviour. To achieve this aim the following objectives were formulated:

- o To explore students' awareness about textile product labels;
- o To explore the students perceptions of textile labels; and
- o To explore whether there is a relationship between students' perception of textile product labels and their purchasing decision.

1.4 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework serves as an illustration of the relationship between the concepts identified as relevant to the study. The conceptual framework developed by the researcher in this study starts with consumer behaviour. Wright (2004:489) defines consumer behaviour as the behaviour of individuals when buying goods and services for their own use. This behaviour is leading to the decision making process. The outcome of this decision depends on many influential variables or factors which are divided into broad categories namely: Internal or individual factors and external or environmental factors. The internal factors influencing consumer behaviour are personality, learning, attitudes, communication, motivation and perception. The external factors dealt with are: social class, culture, subculture, age, age cohort and reference group. The five steps in decision making process are stated as problem recognition, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, action and purchase decision and the post buying evaluation (Wright, 2004:27). In this study, the perception of textile labels regarding the information on labels, types of labels, and the placement of labels is studied. According to the population (students) studied by the researcher, the above mentioned factors, if properly addressed contribute to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

A conceptual framework showing the relationship between perception of textile product labels and consumer behaviour.

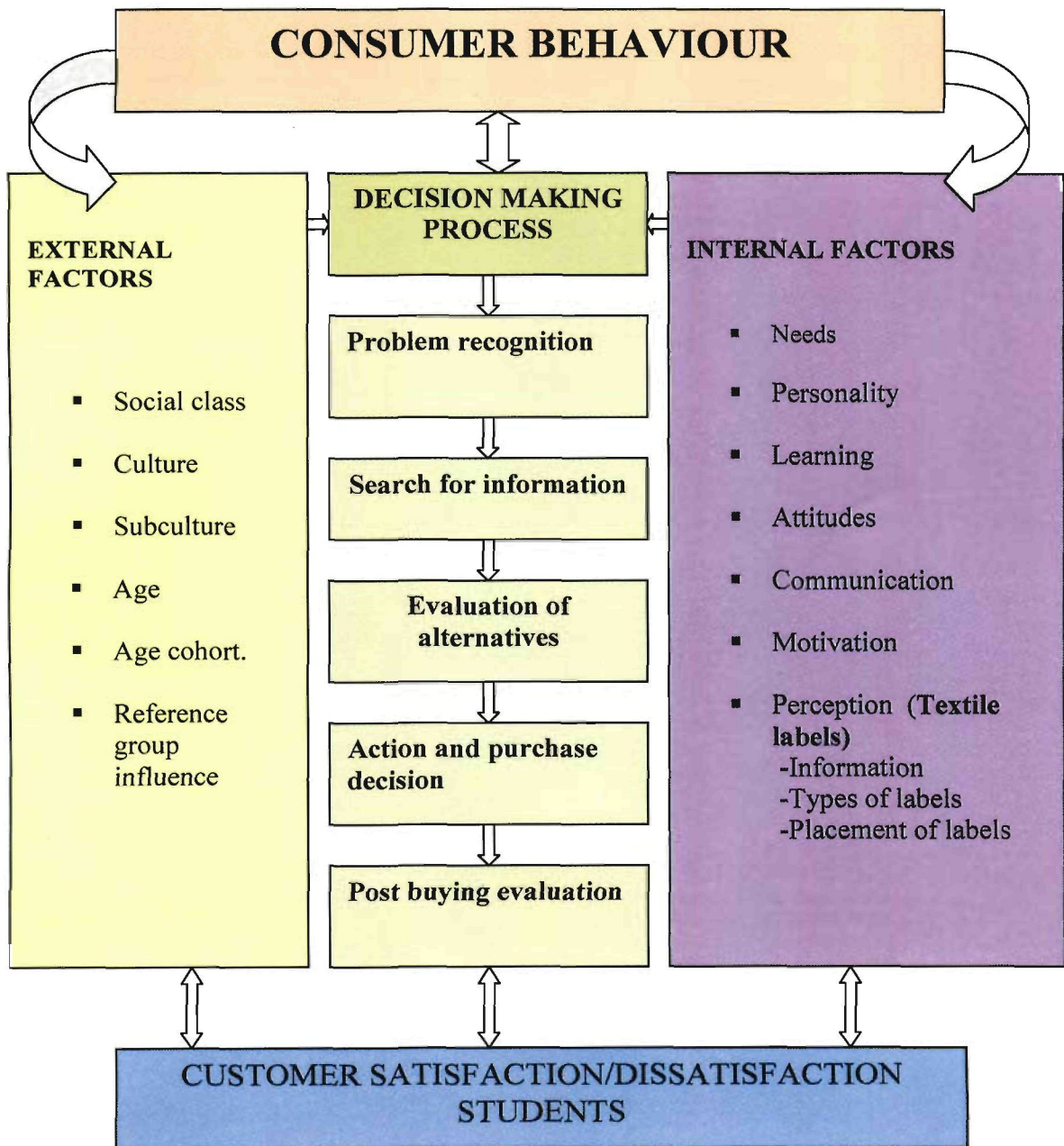


Figure 1

1.5 Definition of terms

1.5.1 Consumer

A consumer is a person who identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase, uses the product or service and disposes of the product (Solomon, 2004:596).

1.5.2 Consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour is the study of individuals, groups, or organisation of processes they use to select, secure and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society (Wright, 2004:487).

1.5.3 Awareness

Awareness is a measure of the proportion of target audience who heard of a particular product or service. (Wright, 2004:487).

1.5.4 Perception

Perception is the process by which individuals select, organise and interpret information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the world (Kotler, 2000:173).

1.5.5 Purchasing behaviour

Purchasing behaviour is the behaviour that involves two types of purchases: trial purchases (the exploratory phase in which consumers evaluate a product through direct use) and repeat purchases which usually signify that the product meets with the consumer's approval and that the consumer is willing to use it again (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:545-546).

1.5.6 Purchasing decision

This act is part of purchasing behaviour which involves the in store choice, influenced by salespersons, product display or other product characteristics (Blackwell *et al.*, 2006:81).

1.5.7 Textiles

Textiles refer to any material made of interlacing fibres. A textile is a flexible material comprised of a network of natural or artificial fibres often referred to as thread or yarn (Collier & Tortora, 2001:3-5).

1.5.8 Product / Service

A product or service can be anything that satisfies (or exceeds) a need or want, functional, rational, emotional, and psychological, in exchange for some kind of payment (money or some other benefit other than money) (Wright, 2004:425).

1.5.9 Textile fibre products identification Act

The Act regulates use of fibre names in textile product labelling to protect consumers from unscrupulous trade practices (Kadolph, 2007:487).

1.5.10 Focus group

A focus group is a special kind of interview situation that is largely non-quantitative (Neuman, 1997:253).

1.5.11 Label

A label is a stamp, tag or other means of identification, or authorised substitute therefore, affixed to textile fibre products by Act or regulations and on which the information required is to appear. (Hatch, 1993:135)

1.6 Methodology

The qualitative research methodology was used. The data were collected through listening, sound recording, jotted notes, observation and interviews with focus groups, and the data were transcribed, analysed, coded and reported.

1.7 Limitations of the study

To narrow the scope of the study, it mainly focused on the group of students within the University of Zululand (KwaDlangezwa area). Male and female students were part of the focus groups. The study looked at the awareness, the perceptions, views and buying behaviour of

consumers regarding textile product labels. Other variables may affect the results of the study and, therefore, the results cannot be generalised to all students and consumers.

1.8 Significance of the study

The significance of the study is to meet the aims and objectives of the research project. The study may also help legislative bodies like the SABS to develop better policies and also motivate aspects on the importance about labels. The information on consumer perceptions can be valuable to the manufacturers regarding the information needed on labels or the placement of labels. If textile product labels are well designed and contain useful information, marketers can use labels to promote their products

1.9 Chapter layout

The mini-dissertation is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the research. The second chapter presents the literature review on consumer behaviour. The third chapter comprises of the literature on textile product labels. The fourth chapter addresses the methodology. The fifth chapter focuses on the results and discussions, and the last chapter includes the summary, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

2.1 Introduction

The literature on consumer behaviour is discussed in this chapter. It will address concepts such as consumer behaviour, decision making process, factors influencing consumer behaviour such as the internal and the external factors, and customer satisfaction.

2.2 Consumer behaviour

Generally, in short, consumers may be described as individuals having unique characteristics. Many authors define the concept of consumer behaviour and their definitions include the selection, purchase, use and disposal of products and services in order to satisfy needs and desires of the consumers (Blackwell *et al.*, 2002:6; Solomon, 2004:596; Wright, 2004:487). A consumer as defined by Solomon (2004:596) and Blackwell *et al.* (2002:6) is a person who identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase, uses the product or service and then disposes of the product. Windham and Orton (2000:1) state that according to Webster's dictionary "a consumer is a person or an organisation that consumes, spends, absorbs, or devours commodities and services". Consumers display their behaviour in different ways when they purchase, use, evaluate and dispose of products and services. This process, according to Cant *et al.* (2006:13), is also called consumer behaviour. Wright (2004:489) supports what is already defined by the above mentioned authors by stating his definition of consumer behaviour as describing how individuals behave when buying goods and services for their own use. Wilkie (1994:127) in his definition defines consumer behaviour as dealing with people, what they purchase and why people purchase the way they do. He includes marketing as well meaning, where market places serve consumers. Wilkie (1994:128) and Blackwell *et al.* (2002:6) agree with other authors but in addition their definition includes mental and physical activity that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires. Antonides and Raaij (1998:4) differ slightly from other authors by stating that consumer behaviour concerns mental and physical acts, including the motives and causes of individuals regarding orientation, purchase, use, maintenance and disposal and household production of goods and services from

the market sector and the household sector, leading to functionality and the achievement of consumer goals and values, and thus to satisfaction and well-being, taking into account short-term and long term effect and individual and societal consequences. Loudon and Della Bitta (1993:5) also support the view of Antonides and Raaij (1998:4) by mentioning that consumer behaviour involves the decision process and physical activity that people engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using, or disposing of goods and services. Schiffman and Kanuk (2000:5) do not differ much from the view of Hawkins *et al.* (2004:7) by stating that the study of consumer behaviour focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption related items. That includes what they buy, when they buy it, where they buy it, how they buy it, and how often they use it. Berkowitz *et al.* (1986:718) as well as Hawkins *et al.* (2004:7) describe consumer behaviour as involving actions of a person to purchase and use products and services, including the mental and social processes that precede and follow these actions. Blythe (1997:2) describes consumer behaviour as the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour, and environmental events by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives. The idea is supported by Engel *et al.* (1993:G-3) in their definition written in the glossary.

It is obvious that the above mentioned authors have something in common in defining consumer behaviour. They all indicated in their definitions the selection, purchase, disposal and satisfaction of needs. The economy depends on consumer's needs and wants. The marketers must also know everything about consumers, what they want, how they think, and how they spend their leisure time in order to provide goods and services in line with their needs.

2.3 Factors influencing consumer behaviour

Consumers are individuals with different backgrounds opportunities and, therefore, needs and their behaviour will therefore greatly differ. There are two major factors which have an influence on the consumers' behaviour and decision making process which will be discussed as the internal and external factors. The internal factors that influence consumer behaviour are personality, learning, attitudes, communication, motivation and perception. Following internal factors are external factors such as social class, culture, subculture (students), reference groups, age and generation Y.

Consumer decision making is seen as a problem solving activity. It helps people to decide whether to buy or not to buy. Consumer decision making helps when engaged in a particular

buying situation. For this study both the individual and the environmental influencing variables will be discussed (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:109). The discussion will start with the internal factors followed by external factors.

2.3.1 Internal factors

2.3.1.1 Needs

There is a difference between a need and a want. A need is defined as an unsatisfactory condition of the customer that leads him or her to an action that will make that condition better. A want is a desire to obtain more satisfaction than is absolutely necessary to improve an unsatisfactory condition. (Sheth *et al.*,1999:344). Needs are defined as any physical or emotional body requirements. Consumers are driven by a need at a particular time and according to Maslow, the human needs are arranged in a hierarchy from more pressing needs to the least pressing needs (Blackwell *et al.*,2001:238). In their order of importance, they are physical needs, safety needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs. Consumers try to satisfy their most important needs (Kotler, 2000:172; Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:111). Needs depend on the personality of individuals and personality will be discussed as the second concept in the decision making process.

2.3.1.2 Personality

According to Solomon and Rabolt (2004:250), personality refers to a person's unique physiological make up and how it consistently influences the way a person responds to his or her environment. Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:109) support this definition as he defines personality as the combination of unique, individual characteristics reflecting consistent and enduring patterns of behaviour. The consumers have high and low levels of involvement affecting attention, information search, and purchase consumption (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:125) and the levels are discussed as follows:

- **Highly involved consumers**

These consumers have a complex purchasing process because they are motivated to make careful purchase decisions. They seek information on products that will be relevant to suit their personality. They have a strong belief in brands and can also differentiate between brands in a product class. They are most of the time brand-loyal and believe in brand experimentation to learn about new alternatives for future purchases. They have interest in brands, enjoy shopping and are satisfied by products. They spend most of their time doing shopping.

- **Lowly involved consumers**

These consumers do shopping carelessly. When making purchase of goods they like switching brands. The consumers concentrate on only important decisions of their lives, and on brand comparison, and usually do not see differences. Consumers get confused easily because they do not pay much attention when purchasing products.

2.3.1.3 Learning

Past experience helps consumers to change in their behaviour in purchasing. Learning as defined by (Wright, 2004:156) is a relatively permanent change in behaviour and ways of thinking, brought about by perceptual and cognitive experiences and social and cultural interaction. Learning is an on-going process as people are continuously learning throughout their lives. When one learns: one listens, observes, reads, and watches others and things around one. In consumer behaviour marketers and consumers want to know how each other learns, behaves and what is their means of communication (Wright, 2004:157).

The three levels of consumer decision making are stated as extensive problem solving, limited problem solving and routinised response behaviour with extensive problem solving. Consumers need information for making criteria which are used to judge specific brands. There is also information that needs to be considered. In limited problem solving the basic criteria for preferences have not been fully established about selected group of brands. More brand information is added to discriminate among various brands and in routinised response behaviour, the consumers have less experience of products with criteria to evaluate considered brands. Little information is needed for additional information (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:526).

2.3.1.4 Attitudes

Attitudes are learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way with respect to a given object. Attitudes are learned and are formed in purchasing behaviour as a result of experience with products. Attitudes have a motivational quality. They have consistency in the behaviour they reflect. Attitude changes, therefore they are not permanent (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007:238). Attitudes have three dimensions namely as cognition, which is the perceptual component of attitude, affect, which is the evaluation component of attitude and conation which

is the behavioural intention. These elements are interrelated in a complex way (Blythe, 1997:71).

2.3.1.5 Communication

Communication is defined by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004: 293) as a transmission or exchange of information and or message. It is usually used in promotions. Communication involves a sender encoding a message and sending that information to a receiver who decodes the message and provides a response through feedback.

2.3.1.6 Motivation

Motivation is the process that leads people to behave as they do. With motivation the consumer wishes to satisfy the aroused need. After a need has been activated, tension follows which drives the consumer to attempt to reduce or eliminate the need (Solomon, 2004: 114); (Hawkins *et al.*, 2004: 259). Motives have direction as well as strength. They are goal oriented because they drive one to satisfy a specific need. The three motivational conflicts are Approach-Approach conflict, Approach-Avoidance conflict and Avoidance-Avoidance conflict. (Shiffman and Kanuk, 2000: 84) and (Cant *et al.*, 2002:117).

Motivation is the basis for all consumer activities. Motivation changes in reaction to life experience. Needs never cease, because they are never fully satisfied. As old needs are satisfied, new needs emerge, and success and failure influence goals. This model motivates the individual to behave in a way that he believes has an impact in satisfying his needs and in that manner the tension will be reduced. If needs and wants are not fulfilled, they cause tension. Tension drives the individuals to behave in a certain way; it fulfils a certain need or goal. After reaching the goal the tension is reduced. The literature shows that there are two types of motives that influence consumer purchasing of clothes or other products and they are called manifest and latent motives. Manifest motives are defined as motives that are freely admitted, and latent motives are defined as motives that are unknown to the consumer and sometimes the consumers are reluctant to admit them. Purchase motives are discovered by consumers through peer group style, good looking and fit, show age, (young) and status.

2.3.1.7 Perception

Perception is one of the internal influencing variables in the decision making process. It is defined as the process by which stimuli are selected, organised and interpreted (Solomon, 1996:56). According to Cant *et al.* (2006:116) the perceptual process in consumer behaviour involves the following:

The perceptual process.

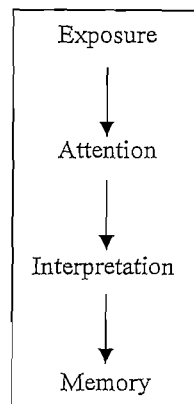


Figure 2 (Cant *et al.*, 2006:116)

- **Exposure**

Exposure is defined as “the degree to which people are helped to notice a stimulus that is within a range of the sensory receptors “. Once a consumer is exposed, needs together with interests, develop. Consumers are exposed through advertisements that are displayed in some unconventional places e.g. on walls in sports stadiums, beginning of movies, rest rooms and backs of shopping trolleys. The main idea of exposure is to make sure that the message is sent or delivered, seen and heard even though there is no guarantee that consumers will pay attention to it (Cant *et al.*, 2006:115). The cognitive consistency theory states that as the consumer weighs the advantages and disadvantages of various purchases, their information search continues. The new information will be receptive if it is consistent with the decisions, values, beliefs and attitudes and most of the time they avoid information that is discrepant (Hawkins *et al.*, 2004:308). Adding to the statement, Schiffman and Kanuk (2004:172) mention that consumers have great interest in messages they find pleasant or with which they are sympathetic and they do not like and will avoid threatening and painful messages. Selective exposure helps the consumers to decide which stimuli and situations they will be exposed to. Usually in marketing, “selective” exposure is important in both place and promotion elements of the marketing mix (Wilkie, 1994:216)

- **Attention**

After consumers are exposed to the message they attend to it. Wilkie (1994:217-218) and Solomon (2004:64) define attention as the momentary focusing of information processing capacity on a particular stimulus. Schiffman and Kanuk (2004:172) state that interests of people are not the same especially in selecting preferred information, messages and type of medium. During purchasing consumers are interested in the quality of the textile products, appearance and their social acceptability. Cant *et al.* (2006:117) support the idea by stating that people attend to messages in line with their interests e.g. experience, self image, social and cultural environment as well as their personality.

The three types of attention are planned, spontaneous and involuntary attention. Planned attention takes place when consumption activities are guided by the attention process. Following planned attention is involuntary attention, where consumers' consciousness is influenced by external stimulus forces. The spontaneous attention combines the two and it simply arises at the point in time.

- **Interpretation**

Attention is followed by interpretation of the message where, information is interpreted according to attitudes and experience, self-image, beliefs and general disposition. An example given is a brand name where there is communication of expectations regarding product attributes and product performance. Signs and symbols convey marketing messages, and this is the reason why marketers rely heavily on them (Wilkie, 1994:231; Solomon, 2004: 69; Hawkins *et al.*, 2004:317 and Shiffman & Kanuk, 2004:176).

The three basics of interpretation according to Wilkie (1994:231) are organisation, categorisation, and inferences. In short the basics of interpretation explain the grouping of stimulus, identifying the stimulus to know what it is and to think more about it before taking any decision.

- **Memory**

Memory is the last stage of the perceptual process. Through advertisements, advertisers try to make sure that information is retained in the memory of customers. This information is helpful, because it is recalled during buying. It is not easy for customers to remember every message for products always when they make purchases. Marketers use point of purchase promotions to remind the customers of their messages and products. The three important factors affecting

memory or recall are positive-sleeper effect where the customer may be unconvinced by an advertising message, but could still buy the products. This may be the result of effective point of purchase promotion. The boomerang effects where the customers are reversing their decision to buy a product, but instead buying a competing product. The reason might be that the competing product is well positioned. The last factor affecting recall is the overcrowded file space where recall is extremely difficult because of overcrowding of information in the customer's mind. The customers become confused and end up buying the competing product. (Cant *et al.*, 2002:105)

2.3.1.8 Perception and marketing in the retail strategy

Exposure is very important and marketers use it effectively to attract consumers. According to the literature, advertisements should be placed in high traffic areas and they should be visible and clear so that they are highly exposed. Brand image is also important as it deals with brand awareness where consumers have the image of the product in mind. Price as a quality cue forms part of the heading because price is an indicator of product quality according to consumer's view. Marketers price their products high so as to prove that they sell quality (Wilkie, 1994:247).

2.3.1.9 Marketing implications of consumers' perceptual inferences

When consumers make a decision about a product they look or think about the brand name which suggests special qualities or characteristics of the product or its owner. Consumers are seduced by the brand name of the product, the product may be regarded as good, which offers it the opportunity to gain ground and it may be rejected if it does not perform to its expectation. Examples of popular brand names are Nike, Diesel, Puma, etc. The consumer categorises shops, supermarkets, firms, and hardware stores by rating them according to their product's performance. Price is viewed as the cost and an extrinsic or external cue, which helps the consumers to judge the quality of the product. Advertising is considered as one of the communication methods used by marketers to convey messages to consumers. Some advertisements are written like this statement: "You get what you pay for". These statements give consumers a guarantee that they will not regret buying the product and they will be satisfied with what they are paying for. In most cases money or price is associated with quality. The interpretation for the above statement can have two different meanings when looking at quality. If the price is high or too high, it may mean the quality is good and if the product is low priced, it might well mean that the quality is poor. A product that is low in price may experience a decrease in demand because it is perceived as lacking in desired quality. Retailers use reference prices and

special sales prices when they announce sales. Reference prices are used to project an image of more value for money, especially for new product brands. (Wilkie, 1994:247-252; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004:186 Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:243)

2.3.1.10 Perceived quality

Quality is defined as "the consumer's evaluative judgement about an entire overall excellence or superiority in providing desired benefits" (Hawkins *et al.*, 2004:320). Perceived quality has advantages in extending market shares, reducing cost and lessening price elasticity. Quality has extrinsic and intrinsic cues. Extrinsic cues include the price, brand name, packaging, store name, and country. The dimensions of quality features such as performance, reliability, durability, serviceability and aesthetics are important. The service quality dimension includes reliability, empathy tangibles, responsiveness and assurance.

The first assessment of quality takes place when the consumer decides whether to buy or not to buy the product. At this stage the focus is on style, colour, fabric, fit and construction details such as seams and stitches. The second assessment takes place after the garment has been worn and it is based upon performance criteria. These criteria will retain a consumer's loyalty (Brown & Rice, 1998: 38-39).

2.3.1.11 Type of risks

Loudon and Della Bitta (1993:511-512) discussed the risks that consumers may perceive in a purchase situation. They mention that the money is lost when the brand does not perform to consumers' expectations where its price is more than it should be, for its performance. In some instances products that are too expensive are exposed to these risks.

2.3.2 External factors influencing consumer behaviour

2.3.2.1 Social Class

Social class is a group of people in a country who are considered equal in status or community esteem, who socialise together on a regular basis formally and informally and who share behaviour patterns. The distinctive behaviour under social class patterns is occupation, income and education. Lower, middle and upper class people respectively buy products that communicate their status. Marketers should advertise for people of different classes. The types of shops where consumers purchase their goods reflect their type of social class (Cant *et al.*, 2006:78).

2.3.2.2 Culture

As defined by Solomon and Rabolt (2004:37), culture is the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among members of an organisation or society.

According to Assael (1987:141), the broadest environmental factor affecting consumer behaviour is culture. It is stated that culture affects the purchasing behaviour and this is reflected in the values consumers learn from society. The examples of values, to mention a few, are individuality, independence, achievement and self-fulfilment. Culture is defined as a set of socially acquired values that society accepts as a whole and transmits to its members through language and symbols. Cultural values are learned, are guides to behaviour and are both permanent and dynamic.

2.3.2.3 Subculture

Subculture is defined as a distinct cultural group that exists as an identifiable segment within a larger, more complex society e.g. students. It is categorised on the basis of demographics. Sub-cultural influences affect values among groups within the country. It can be identified by age, geography or ethnic identity (Wright, 2004:353).

2.3.2.4 Age

The era in which a consumer is born creates for that person a culture bond with a million of others born during the same time period. As one grows, needs and preferences often change, often in unison with those of others who are close to one's own age. Consumers' age exerts an influence on their identity. A market needs to recognise this (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:178).

2.3.2.5 Age cohort

An age cohort consists of people of similar ages who have undergone similar experiences. They share common memories about culture heroes, for instance the Y-generation cohort born in 1977-1987. Its members have grown up in an era of instantaneous global communication, fragmented media and a powerful focus on materialism. The teenagers of today are probably going to be, or are already, the most sophisticated and seasoned customers ever. This generation of teenagers has an increased influence on household spending and has developed sophisticated decision making skills as a result of having to shop for themselves because of working parents. They are choosy about where they spend their money and shop extensively for sales and good value. It is a more

pragmatic generation than other generations ever were, and has a no-nonsense alarm that goes off fast. Its members walk in and usually make up their minds fairly quickly about whether they want the product or not. They know that a lot of advertising is based on lies. An aspect of selling to this teenage market segment is that brand loyalties established here, will carry through to adulthood. Marketers wishing to connect with teens need to ensure their campaign and messages incorporate symbols, issues, language, images and media that are appropriate and to which this target market can relate. In South Africa the impact of Generation Y is even more important than in the U.S.A. The generation Y customers make up about 64% of the population of South Africa and spend R2 billion a year. In South Africa the group consists of school pupils, university students and young working adults. The drive to create a normal society in South Africa means that global brands, which represent normality, are powerful attractions for this age group (Cant *et al.*, 2002:91-92).

2.3.2.6 Reference group influence

The reference group is a group that serves as a reference point for individuals in the formation of their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:264). The reference group helps to provide people with roles and standards that directly influence their needs and purchasing behaviour, for example, the family influence on what the child wears for going to church (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:168). The influence a group exerts on an individual's purchasing behaviour depends on three factors namely, the individual purchasing behaviour, the nature of the group, and the nature of the product. Indirect reference groups consist of those individuals or groups with whom a person does not have direct face to face contact, such as movie stars, sports heroes, political leaders, TV personalities, or even a well dressed and interesting looking person on a street corner. Factors that affect reference group influence are information and experience, credibility, attractiveness, and power of the reference group and the conspicuousness of the product (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:265).

All the external as well as the internal factors mentioned, are involved in the decision making process of consumers that will be discussed below as they play an important role as part of the literature in this field of research.

2.4 The decision making process

Hawkins *et al.* (2004:500) describe the term consumer decision as giving an image of an individual evaluating the attributes of a set of products, brands, or services and possibly selecting the one solving the recognised need for least cost. In most cases many consumers' decisions focus

not on brand attributes but rather on the feelings or emotions associated with acquiring or using the brand or the environment in which the product is purchased or used. Hawkins *et al.* (2004:500) motivated the statement by mentioning that the brand may be selected not because of an attribute but because it makes consumers feel good. The consumers in their daily life are confronted with decisions to take on a variety of products available to them. A decision as defined by Schiffman and Kanuk (2007:226) is the selection of an option from two or more alternative choices. Generally speaking this statement is true for the reason that you cannot make a decision without two or more alternative choices. When making an alternative choice, it is either that you buy or not buy, or to choose from different brands. A decision making process is important in this study and it is viewed as a process whereby people engage in some kind of decision making, going from the beginning through a process starting with a need realisation or a want to buy a product or service, do the purchasing and ending with usage and evaluation of the product (Wright, 2004:27). This is the most important process and it implies that the steps in decision making should be studied by marketers in order to understand how consumers formulate their beliefs after obtaining the information and what they use as criteria to specify their choices (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2001:526). Customer decision making is a cognitive process that consists of those mental activities that determine what activities are undertaken to remove a tension state caused by a need (Cant *et al.*, 2002:174).

In support of the literature on the decision making process, the researcher gave a practical example related to the study in the following manner: a consumer may realise a need to buy a garment (need recognition) and end with the purchase (actual buying), usage and evaluation of the product (post purchase action). It is, therefore, important to discuss the five stages guiding consumers in their decision making process and they are outlined as follows:

2.4.1 Step 1: Problem recognition

In this stage the individuals recognise that they have a need which they want to satisfy. A need is defined as any physical or emotional body requirement. This need is directed towards a goal and that goal can be achieved by purchasing behaviour. The need might be caused by an external stimulus such as a brand name or an image of a garment product advertised on the glass door of a shop. The need regarding this garment creates the beliefs and attitudes regarding the brand preference (Cant *et al.*, 2006:195). Three factors affecting need or problem recognition are information stored in memory, individual differences and environmental and individual influences. In addition, social influences are important for customers who value the response of

others. Problem recognition can take place at all the stages of the decision making process e.g. problems associated with whether a product is needed, problems concerning what product to buy or which brand to select, problems concerned with whether to buy for cash or on credit or how to postpone the act of buying, and problems concerning whether customers are satisfied with what they have bought.

Most customer problems arise as a result of internal and external barriers. Internal barriers include distorted perceptions and negative attitudes. External barriers include lack of funds and credit facilities, the unavailability of a product, the need for more information, uncertainty about the expected outcome because of unforeseen circumstances, the inability to make a decision and lack of criteria on which to base post-buying assessment. Most customer problems arise as a result of assortment indecencies, new information, expanded desires and expanded or reduced means (Cant *et al.*, 2002:177).

2.4.2 Step 2: Search for information

The consumer during this step looks for information about possible solutions. In an external search a person seeks some advice using environmental and marketing sources, whereas in internal search the person uses information stored in the memory, experience and personal competence (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:115). Pre-purchase search begins when a consumer perceives a need that might be satisfied by a purchase and consumption of a product. After recognising a problem a consumer begins to search for information and proceeds to the purchase decision process. The experience will be with products and brands and this action is called internal search. The external search for information is needed when past experience or knowledge is insufficient. The risk of making a wrong purchase decision is high and the cost of gathering information is low. The primary sources of external information are personal sources such as relatives and friends whom the consumer trusts, public sources including various product-rating organisations such as consumer reports, government agencies, TV consumer programs, and market dominated sources such as information from sellers that include advertising, sales people, and point of purchase displays in stores.(Berkowitz *et al.*, 1986:112).

Information search comes from two sources named internal (memory) and external (outside) sources. If the internal information search is insufficient, that is if the individual does not have enough knowledge of the product category to be able to make a choice, an external search will be

undertaken (Blythe, 1997:120). Customer search is the mental and physical activities undertaken by customers to obtain information on identified problems. It is basically a learning process by which customers become aware of alternative products or brands, specific stores, specific trading centres, prices of products, terms of sale and customer services (Cant *et al.*, 2002:178).

2.4.3 Step 3: Evaluation of alternatives

With enough information that has been collected, the consumer evaluates or assesses the various alternatives and comes to a decision whether to buy or postpone the purchase (Wright, 2004:28). Much of the effort that goes into a purchase decision occurs at the stage at which a choice must be made from the available alternatives. The alternatives actively considered during a consumer's choice process are his or her evoked set which is composed of those products already in memory (the retrieval set) and those prominent in the retail environment (Solomon, 1996:280).

2.4.4 Step 4: Action and purchase decision

This step is critical as it involves the evaluation of criteria for determination of expected outcomes of purchase, or the consumer may even decide to postpone a final decision (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:119). Choosing a store is also important in this step. The consumer responds by committing him or herself in a positive manner to buy or decide against a purchase (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:353).

2.4.5 Step 5: Post buying evaluation

This is the final stage of the decision making process. The consumers use the product and evaluate whether they are satisfied with it, which is whether it satisfies their need and solves the problem. Positive reinforcement is where it is mentioned that the product is good. No comment about the product may be made. It is also where it is satisfying. Negative word of mouth communication in a form of rumours can also be made. If the consumer feels that the product does not live up to standards, she or he can find fault, complain, demand their money back or even switch brands when they are buying next time (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000:526). If a need is fulfilled, the consumer or customer is satisfied, which is the most important aim of the marketers.

2.5 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is defined as the individual's perception of the preference for the product or service in relation to his or her expectations. The customers whose experience falls below expectations will be unsatisfied. On the other hand, the customers whose expectations are exceeded will be very satisfied (Schiffman & , 2000:173).

Customers and consumers need to be treated well from time to time, therefore, the purpose of the business is to create and to retain a satisfied customer (Sheth *et al.*, 1999:11). The amenities and service provided by employees also contribute to good customer retention. Performance, quality and service keep the customers satisfied. Several types of customers are listed as loyalists, apostles, defectors, consumer terrorists and hostages.

2.5.1 Customer's satisfaction depends on the marketing mix

The marketing mix combines the four P's, which are product, price, promotion and place. The combination of the four P's meets customer needs and provides customer value. With regard to textile products it should be of good quality and should also satisfy the customer's needs. The packaging, colour, price, quality and brand should meet the requirements of consumers. Regarding price, the textile product's price should meet the standards in terms of quality, beauty and performance. The promotion for the brand can be done on television and on the radio for completeness. Different stores are ranging according to price, quality etc. which will give consumers an image about the product, which will result in repeatable or not repeatable buying of consumers.

CHAPTER 3

TEXTILE PRODUCT LABELS

3.1 Introduction

The second part of the literature following the chapter on consumer behaviour is the literature on textile product labelling. It is important in this chapter to know the definitions of textiles and labels as the terms will be used throughout the study. A textile is a flexible material comprised of a network of natural or artificial fibres often referred to as thread or yarn. Textiles are formed by weaving, knitting, crocheting, knotting or pressing fibres together (Collier & Tortora, 2001:6).

Labels as defined by Fritz and Cant (1986:234) describe the fibre content as well as the instructions for the care and laundering of the textile products. They are generally found on the inside back collar of most garments. Labels display information such as fibre content, country of origin, manufacturers' name, care instructions, size, price and brand names. This information can be very helpful in selection, purchase and during use and care of textile items (Cooklin, 1997:117; Brown & Rice, 1998:19; Hatch, 1993:139). Textile labels sometimes can be confusing and may be ignored by some consumers. This could be due to the manner in which they are written, for example style and language. The updating of consumer knowledge is necessary from time to time as new types of textile products become available. Careful attention to labelling can increase satisfaction with apparel and household textile products. It is the responsibility of the manufacturer to label textile fibre products properly when they are ready for sale or when they are ready for delivery to consumers.

3.2 Information on labels

3.2.1 Fibre content labelling

Fibre content labels explain the fibres used in making textile products and must not be false, deceptive, or misleading. In some countries like the U.S.A. (United States of America) fibre content labels are required by national law: The Wool Products Labelling Act:1939, the Fur Products Labelling Act:1951, the Textile Fibre Product Identification Act:1960 (TFPIA); and their amendments.

The fibre contents and their percentages should always be included on labels. Any fibre present with less than 5% of the weight of the fabric will not be listed by its generic name. The reason for this statement is that the particular fibre will not perform to satisfy the user (Hatch, 1993:130). The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) administers the above mentioned laws and requires that manufacturers identify or state:

- All fibres available that account for more than 5% of the product's weight.
- The weight of items in descending order for each fibre class present.
- The country of origin and the place where the fibre was processed e.g. "Made in the U.S.A", if the product is made totally in the U.S.A of U.S.A materials.
- Whether the item is imported and if the material is imported from other countries.
- The manufacturer's name or Registered identification Number (RN).

A fibre can be written "All" instead of "100%" especially if the product is made from one fibre e.g. "All wool", or "100% wool". These requirements can only be applied to fibre. Collier and Tortora (2001:503) emphasized that all textile articles must have labels.

3.2.2 Country of origin

Many countries do require that the country of origin must be indicated on labels e.g. Fritz and Cant (1986:234) emphasise that the 1970 Act on textile products in the U.S.A requires that labelling must indicate the country of origin (where the product is manufactured) and the fibre composition. This idea is supported by Wolfe (2003:338) and he also suggests that the information should include the generic names of the fibres used as well as their percentages, care instructions for garment maintenance, and the identification of the distributor of the produce. Such information, according to these authors, is very crucial and in some countries it is required by law. According to Wolfe (2003:338), some of the information on labels is not required by law and these include fabric construction, special finishes, performance standards and brand names. The information about the country of origin is important, especially for exported garments (Brown & Rice, 1998:21).

3.2.3 Manufacturer's name

A manufacturer is any person or firm who manufactures, produces or in any way processes fibres or products made from them. It is important that the label must carry the name of the manufacturer. The manufacturer should ensure that the manufacturer's name information appears

on each piece label (Kadolph, 1998:153; Brown & Rice, 1998:20). The manufacturer's name is important for the purpose of consumers' complaints. It should be written so that consumers will know whom to contact for complaints if the product is failing to perform as desired (Hatch, 1993:131).

3.2.4 Care instructions

Care instructions are important on textile product labels, because it gives consumers and dry cleaners guidance on how to care for or maintain the product in the best possible way (Oehlke, 2002:58). The information provided is about the procedure to be followed during washing, bleaching, tumble drying, ironing or dry cleaning (Cooklin, 1997:118). Without this information the consumers will find it difficult to decide on the appropriate care treatment of the textile item.

Care instructions must always be visible at the point of sale so that consumers will be able to read the information before purchasing. Care instructions should also be repeated on the packaging of the item. If the label is not visible because of packaging, folding or display, additional labelling is required. The information in that case should be provided on the outer packaging, on a removable label or ticket attached to the article or as a pamphlet accompanying the article. The care instructions should be specific, clear and sufficient. Both Corbman (1983:543) and Kadolph (1998:153) indicate that only standard terminology should be used on labels, and in most cases, it is set by the International Organisation of Standardisation (ISO). The care instructions must apply to all parts of the garment in such a way that the parts will not melt and discolour during use and care. In the U.S.A, the Federal Trade Commission Care Labelling Rule requires that manufacturers attach care instructions to each item and that the information must be correct (Oehlke, 2002:58).

According to Corbman (1983:540), some textile items need extra care besides that of laundering or dry cleaning. This extra care includes, clean storage when the textile product is not in use, frequent brushing and airing, mending, stain removal prior to washing, proper laundering methods, proper pressing and ironing, which must also be included in the care label.

From the consumer's point of view, accurate and clearly written care instructions are not only giving a guide for cleaning and maintenance but also a determining guide for purchasing. The garments that are easy to care for are often preferred to those that require difficult care procedures. From the manufacturer's point of view the incorrect cleaning methods result in

damage of the garments and that most of the time leads to consumer complaints and costly consumer returns. It is, therefore, important to write care instructions accurately and clearly on labels for consumers to understand in order to avoid or prevent customer or consumer dissatisfaction. Care instructions can be either in a written or in a symbol form. The symbol can be used alone or with words to explain the meaning. Consumers and dry cleaners are responsible for the damaging of textile products after purchase.

One of the problems that manufacturers are encountering is the problem of language. Language is a problem because manufacturers are now dealing with the international global market. In this regard Kylo (2003:10) states that care symbols are the easiest way to have a multilingual label.

It is important that instructions and warnings should provide complete instructions about regular care for the garment, or provide warnings if the garment cannot be cleaned without harm. Consumers should be assured that if care instructions are followed there will be no harm to the product. The instructions and warnings must ensure that care labels should remain attached and legible throughout the useful life of the product (Kadolph, 1998:154).

3.2.4.1 Information on how to write care instructions

The instructions on labels can be in symbols in addition to words, but the writing must always fulfil the requirements. The following symbols are used in labels and the writing style and symbols can differ from manufacturer to manufacturer and country to country (Kadolph, 1998:153).

Basic care symbols (Directorate Cultural Affairs:1991:2)

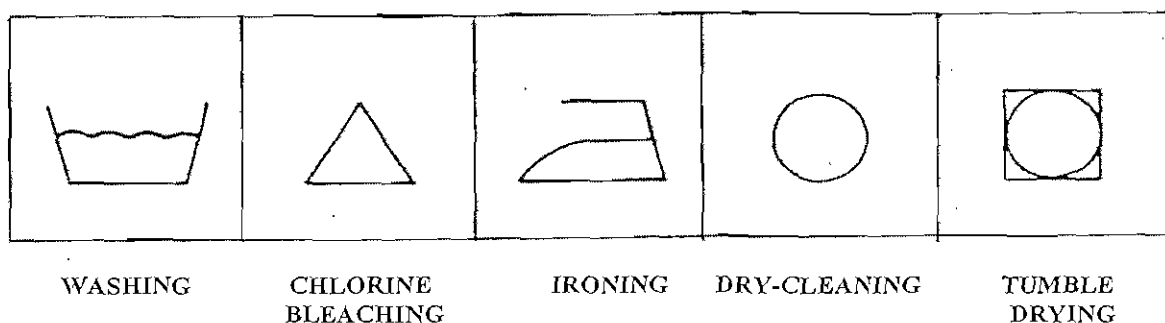


Figure 3

3.2.5 Size indication

Clothing size and product measurements are information that is included on labels. Clothing sizes in different countries differ (Winks, 1997:1). From the researcher's point of view, the sizing system for clothing in South Africa is not standardised and the consumers are misled by information written about clothing sizes. Consumers are complaining about the sizes written on textile products, especially clothes and underwear. Brown and Rice (1998:133) state that the two types of size designation on clothing are a lettered system and a numbered system. In the lettered system letters like S for "small" M for "medium" and L for "large" are used. Continental sizing involves the use of numbers such as 34, 36 and 38 up to 44. These numbers do not correlate with the body measurements of consumers, which can cause some confusion during the buying process. The size of clothing influences the decision making process.

3.2.6 Brand name

Brand name trademark influences consumers during the decision making process. It is used as a means of identification, a symbol of status, used to assess quality. A brand name or trademark is a distinctive mark placed on or attached to goods by the manufacturer to identify him as having made or sold the item (Hatch, 1993:135). From the definition of Cant *et al.* (2006:236), brand name is defined as a trademark or goods of a particular make. A true brand name, according to Taylor (2003:5), has a distinctive name and symbol that are known by a large proportion of the target audience and are trusted by customers with experience.

3.3 Location or placement of textile labels

The literature shows that most labels are attached permanently inside the garment on the side seam or at the back on the neckline of garments, like blouses, dresses etc. Labels should not be placed where they will scratch or irritate the wearer (Wolfe, 2003:338). Some labels are inside and some are outside, whereas some of the garments have tags on. If the garment label is inside the packaging where it can't be seen, it creates a problem; therefore the same information should be placed outside on the packaging. It is recommended that if labels are not attached to garments they must at least be replaced by accompanying commercial documents, with names, descriptions and details of the textile fibre content.

The fibre content information, in cases where a label is to be permanently attached to an article, shall be either woven into, or printed on a label of suitable size and material so that the

information is clearly legible and be capable of withstanding the appropriate cleaning treatment throughout the useful life of the article. The font size on labels should be visible to the reader. The size of the label should not be too big if it is intended for the back neck of the product. If it is intended for brand name it could be big for visibility. Sizes vary according to where they are attached.

Piece goods articles should have attached labels at the end of each roll or bolt (Collier & Tortora, 2001:503). Swing tickets or removable adhesive labels can be attached to articles non-permanently. Labels can be in the form of a note on, or contained in the commercial documents accompanying the goods, e.g. the invoice, receipt, brochure, pamphlets, etc., relating to the specific article. If the items are sold as a complete unit e.g. skirt and top, the requirement is that only one label or indication of fibre must be made, but only if the items are of the same fibre content.

3.4 Types of labels

Stickers, tags, and ribbon are relevant kinds of labels used by manufacturers. Most labels in textile products are sewn in and made of fabric with the information printed on them or woven in. It is very important to have the care instructions more permanently in the item for future references (Kadolph, 1998:154).

3.5 Requirements of labels

Labels for clothing and bed linen should be of an acceptable textile material. Labels should maintain uniformity all the time. They should also be of an acceptable colour and finishing. The size, finish and colour of labels should be specified by the manufacturer. Labels should be delivered in dry condition and always clean (Kadolph, 1998:154).

The literature review on labels and consumer behaviour has been discussed and the following chapter is about the methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the literature on textile product labels, which now brings one to a new chapter on the methodology of this research. Research methodology describes the system of rules and procedures as well as gives detailed report on how findings have been obtained by the researcher.

Qualitative research was used for this study and it is defined as a research strategy emphasising words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Neuman, 1997:328; Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17). It involves an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. The other reason is that it specifically investigates the perceptions and awareness of the consumer regarding textile labels as indicated by the objectives of the study.

Qualitative research investigates the why and how of an issue as compared to the what, where and when of quantitative research (Webb, 2002:164). It uses smaller but focused samples. Qualitative research is exploratory in nature (Denzin and Lincoln (1998:198) state that qualitative research is not measured in terms of quantity, amount and intensity but implies an emphasis on process and meaning that are examined vigorously. In addition to that Yates (2004:158) emphasises that qualitative research investigates a topic in a given content without dealing with variables.

The researcher is an instrument of research in qualitative research (Marais & Poggenpoel, 2003:167). The data is collected by means of focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and non participant observation. (Yates, 2004:155-171). Data are also collected within a short period of time but with more information (Krueger, 1994:75). The focus group size could range from four to twelve respondents, in order to allow everyone an opportunity to share information (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:186).

4.2 Advantages of qualitative research methods

The qualitative research method was used because the following advantages of these procedures have been identified (Babbie, 1992:285; Thyer, 2001:337-338):

- By manipulating your own behaviour as an observer, you are able to test hypotheses by creating situations that are unlikely to occur naturally.
- It often makes the observer less obstructive and in so doing reduces the likelihood that *the observer will influence the respondents' behaviour*.
- By participating fully in the activities of the community the researcher does not stand as an outsider.
- By only observing, especially in an unobtrusive manner, the researcher will achieve the most objective experience of the community.
- It gives a comprehensive perspective on the problem under investigation.
- It aims at in-depth investigation of a problem.
- Data are gathered directly and are never of a retrospective nature.
- In the case of unknown, obscure, unobtrusive or badly defined situations it can be used with a high degree of success.

4.3 Disadvantages of qualitative research methods

According to the same authors there are also some disadvantages of this research method (Babbie, 1992:306-309; Thyer, 2001:338):

- When the researcher fully participates in the activities of the community, respondents will act as naturally as if no outsider is present because they are not involved as part of the project.
- By only observing, the researchers will never have the full experience of being part of the community in which the research takes place.
- Data gathered can seldom be quantified because of the small amount of respondents normally used in studies of this nature.
- Even if permission has been obtained to study a particular community, problems of acceptance of the researcher by the respondents, might still exist.
- Validity can be a major concern.
- Reliability can also pose a problem.
- Accurate instruments for measuring field variables are lacking.

- It can be a laborious, expensive and time consuming endeavour
- It can be physically exhausting, since the researcher obtains masses of data and experiences on a daily basis without the conveniences of home or office.

4.4 Reasons for using focus groups

A focus group is defined as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions of a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (Krueger, 1994:18). Focus groups are described by Morgan (1997:6) as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. According to Morgan (1997:2), focus groups are used as a self-contained method in studies in which they serve as the principal source of data. They are used as a supplementary source of data in studies that rely on some other primary method, such as a survey and finally focus groups are used in multi-method studies that combine two or more means of gathering data in which no one primary method determines the use of the others.

4.5 Sampling method

Sampling by definition is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study. Samples are always sub-sets or small parts of the total number that could be studied. Much of the data needed for information purposes are collected through sampling. Before gathering a sample, it is important to find out as much as possible about the population. The term "population" refers to the larger group from which the sample is taken. The overall demographics: age, sex, class etc. are important in this research for sampling because the information is needed later for the data analysis part of research and also help in deciding sample size.

A list of contact information was taken for those who were accessible. This procedure is called a sampling frame. A convenience sampling which is one of the non-realistic sampling approaches was used. This sampling is also called haphazard or accidental method. It uses people who just happen to be walking by or show special interest in the research. This method was used in exploratory research.

4.6 Selection of respondents

Students from the University of Zululand who were available, were conveniently selected to participate in a series of focus groups. The groups included females and males and consisted mostly of youths between the ages of 18 and 30. This age group has the common characteristic that it consists of students studying at the same university and they wear more or less the same clothing style. Six focus groups of six persons were used, which counts to 36 respondents. According to Krueger (1994:124), *four groups will be enough because data saturation could occur after the third group*. However, to ensure to have enough data, six focus groups were used. The respondents were told about the research topic, venue, time, date and incentives. The researcher's contact number was given to the respondents and in return the cell phone numbers of the respondents were taken in case of emergencies.

4.7 Measurement of trustworthiness

Different authors such as Guba (1981:215-216), Mishler (1990:99), and Creswell (1994:164) used some measures to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research. The researcher used Guba's model (1981:215-216) for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative data. The researcher used the model because Guba's model is comparatively well developed conceptually and has been used by many qualitative researchers. Guba's model is based on the identification of four aspects of trustworthiness and it is outlined as truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

4.7.1 The model is set out below as:

- **Truth value**

Truth value asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects or informants and the context in which the study was undertaken. Truth value was obtained by using the strategy of credibility. A qualitative study can be considered credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognise the description. It is the most important criterion for the assessment of qualitative research. A pilot study of one focus group interview was performed to establish the research setting before the actual project started. Field notes and the tape recording were also used to obtain trustworthiness. This was done by interviewing six groups from the same cohort independently. The truth value was established by comparing the responses from these

similar groups. Data that seemed spurious or out of resonance with the most of what others in the same group agreed with and was not repeated or was repudiated by other groups was rejected. This study, therefore, looked at generalised trends for the groups. This procedure minimised the occurrence of false statements.

- **Applicability**

Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or to other groups. A convenient sample was used in this research. Two perspectives of applicability are appropriate for qualitative research namely transferability and generalisation. The ability to generalise is not relevant in many qualitative research projects. Transferability of findings and the degree to which data obtained in a group being studied might be generalised to fit what would be obtained if a new group, consisting of different individuals but with the same characteristics as the first group was to be studied. This means that data from the first group can be applied to the second (new) group. In this study applicability of results obtained was ensured by choosing groups that are large enough. Each group in the study was, therefore, chosen to have six individuals. Data were considered to be of significance if they tended to appear across these independent groups. The findings, therefore, should be applicable to other contexts and with other groups i.e. general applicability of findings is ensured. It also means that the findings are transferable to other groups.

- **Consistency**

This is about the consistency of the data, that is whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with other subjects. One learns from the informants rather than controls them. Consistency is defined in terms of dependability. In this study consistency was ensured by interviewing several independent groups. Common findings between independent groups indicated their level of consistency.

- **Neutrality**

Neutrality as a criterion of trustworthiness and discusses the freedom from bias in the research procedures and results. Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivation and perspectives. In this study neutrality was ensured through the manner in

which the questions were put to the informants. This was done by formulating the questions such as not to prompt the answers in a particular direction. Body language that might hint at what the views of the researcher were, was also avoided. An independent assistant was also used to interact with the groups. This was important since the study was on textiles and the manner of clothing of the interviewer could also affect answers from those interviewed. A different person with a different dress sense was, therefore, important as an independent interviewer. The findings obtained from the different interviewers were thereafter compared to ensure that neutrality was maintained.

4.8 Ethical guidelines or considerations

The researcher explained the purpose of the focus group as it fits within the broader context of the research study. The respondents were informed to ask questions that the researcher preferred to answer at the end of the focus group and they were written on a piece of paper to ensure that they would be dealt with.

The moderator and assistant moderator assured respondents that everything they share in the focus group will be treated as confidential. It was emphasised both at the beginning and at the end of the session that respondents should respect each other's privacy and anonymity. The contact information of the study officials was written on consent forms so that they could call for more specific information if needed. Respondents were given refreshments and a small reimbursement to thank them for their time. The ethical approval for the project was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (Project number 04k11).

4.9 Venue

The venue used was in the Department of Consumer Sciences, University of Zululand. The room was big and airy with one big window. It was relaxing, quiet, with bright lights, was air-conditioned and out of traffic, it was generally welcoming. Refreshments were served after discussions. Generally it was conducive to meet with respondents, and as a proof, the respondents were looking happy and relaxed.

4.10 Data collection

4.10.1 Conducting focus group discussion

The researcher welcomed each group to the focus group interview. She introduced herself and the research assistant. She asked everyone to introduce her or himself while in the mean time she tried to create and maintain a comfortable environment. Respondents were given name tags on which to write their names. The procedure to be followed during the focus group activity was explained. The research assistant was in charge of controlling the tape recorder and writing the notes and the researcher was in control of the respondents and the topic. The consent forms which was the ethical permission by the University of North -West (Potchefstroom Campus) were signed by the respondents. The purpose of using a tape recorder was explained to the respondents. A warm-up question relating to the topic was first asked, and following that the three major questions about the research topic were asked. They were as follows:

- **What are textile product labels?**
- **What are your perceptions about the textile product labels?**
- **How do these labels affect your purchasing decision?**

At the end of the discussion respondents were thanked with refreshments and given incentives as appreciation for their time and willingness to participate.

4.11 Data analysis

Data analysis is one of the most important processes of focus groups. According to Krueger (1994:9-18), nine ingredients are critical to qualitative data analysis and are listed as follows: the analysis must be systematic, sequential, verifiable and continues; it requires time, it should seek to enlighten, is improved by feedback, is a process of comparison and is situational responsive.

4.11.1 Several steps were used in this research for data analysis and they are as follow:

- **Step 1 (Collection of data)**

Data were collected from the focus groups through interviews, tape recording and written notes.

- **Step 2 (Capturing and transcription of data)**

After each focus group meeting the researcher and assistant listened to the tapes and compared the content with their notes to capture the context. The researcher listened for a second time to the tapes and transcribed it verbatim in a word document. With the aid of the assistant, the transcriptions were checked again to the tapes to make sure that nothing was left out and for clarity. It is important to capture the interaction between respondents as well as the frequency and extensiveness of the comments.

- **Step 3 (Coding of data)**

After all the focus group data were transcribed the transcripts were read and re read to look for trends and patterns. Coloured stickers were attached as the researcher came across an idea or phenomenon. Codes were placed in the margin of the transcript. This is a very time consuming process, but very important to get the essence of the data.

- **Step 4 (Participant verification)**

The researcher identified particular themes and concepts and tried to understand the intent of the respondents.

- **Step 5 (Debriefing between researcher and assistant)**

The researcher and the assistant met to capture the highlights and contrast findings from earlier focus groups.

- **Step 6 (Interpretation of data)**

The data were interpreted and elaborated on to form conclusions of the research.

The following chapter will discuss the findings which are considered as the most important in this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the aims and objectives of this research, stated as consumers' awareness, perceptions and views about textile product labels and their relevancy in purchasing decision.

The following three questions were asked, namely:

1. What are textile product labels? (Awareness)
2. What are consumers' perceptions of textile product labels? (Perception)
3. How do textile product labels affect consumers' purchasing decision? (Purchasing decision)

These types of questions are found in qualitative methods of research and can also be used by focus groups.

The following procedures were used in reporting the results:

First, a *summary report on the focus groups' responses in connection with the questions* will be presented. The literature supporting the summary, if available, is discussed and quotations of responses presented.

5.2 Objective 1: Awareness of textile product labels

Four themes were identified under this objective and they are outlined as information on labels, types of labels, appearance of labels and placement of labels. Each theme has its own concepts where applicable and the concepts are also discussed, addressing the question of awareness.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Information on labelling

The respondents were aware of the labels found on textile products. They mentioned that they include the information on fibre content, country of origin, manufacturer's name, brand name, care instructions and size. The following concepts were discussed.

5.2.1.1 Concept 1: Fibre content

The respondents showed an awareness of the fibre content. They understood fibre content as describing the different fibres in textile products. They mentioned that the types of fibre and their percentages are very important because it determines how the fibre will perform, for example: is it crease resistant, absorbent and resilient?

Hatch (1993:130) and Kadolph (1998:152) support the idea of the information given by the respondents. According to them, the fibre content should always be included on labels and any fibre present with less than 5% of the weight of fabric will not be listed by the generic name. The reason for this statement is that, the particular fibre does not influence the overall performance of the fabric (Hatch 1993:130).

The following were quotes given by the respondents:

“...is about the fibre content like 100% cotton...”

“...is about the material used for the product...”

“...it looks like most of the fibre content according to the percentage which is written 100%...”

5.2.1.2 Concept 2: Country of origin

The respondents were familiar with this concept. They described it as a place where the product originated. The respondents were concerned about imported products. One of the countries mentioned was China. They criticised products made in China as not of good quality most of the time and highlighted that the Chinese stores are selling fake products. They mentioned China as one of the countries selling falsely labelled products. They were scared that imported goods would affect the South African economy.

Cooklin (1997:118) mentions that the country of origin is important, especially for imported textile products. Brown and Rice (1998:20) state that textile fibres may be manufactured in one country, with yarn spun in another country, and all these countries must be mentioned for all end products. The Textile Fibre Product Identification Act of America (TFPIA) requires labels to disclose three things to consumers namely, fibre content, manufacturer or importer and country of

origin (Hatch, 1993:131. Consumers' scepticism towards imported textile products from China emphasise the importance of a measure like that of the TFPIA.

Here are the quotes presented by the respondents:

"...labels tell us about the place of origin, for an example, made in China, Italy..."

"...Chinese goods are cheap and fake...fakers are good fakers..."

"...Cheap label (sic) clothes from China affect South African economy..."

5.2.1.3 Concept 3: The manufacturer's name

According to the given responses, respondents showed clearly that they were aware of the use of the manufacturer's name. They mentioned that the manufacturer's name is important for the consumers in case of complaints about the product. The manufacturer's name gives consumers an indication on whether the product is genuine or an imitation. The name gives the consumer a chance to compare products according to quality and price.

The literature confirms that in some countries the label must carry the name and the registration number(RN) of the manufacturer (Hatch, 1993:131; Kadolph, 1998:153; Brown & Rice, 1998:20). It is evident that such information supports the consumer's need to identify the product quality and it gives the consumer an address for their complaints if not satisfied with the product.

The quotes were presented as follows:

"...manufacturer's name is important for consumer's complaints..."

"...it helps consumers to be aware whether the label (sic) is an imitation or not..."

"...helps consumers to compare products..."

5.2.1.4 Concept 4: Brand name

The respondents were aware of the brand name and they associated it with quality. Brand name was also associated with some selected stores they mostly trust. They also mentioned that brand name can be a private label. The kinds of brand names mentioned were Levi's, Diesel, Nike, Puma and Playtex.

Brand names are normally associated with quality and it also has an emotional connection by appealing to the head and the heart of the consumer (Taylor, 2003:5).

The quotes from the respondents were as follows:

“...giving particular clothing a brand name, e.g. Diesel or Levi's...”

“...anything regarded as something with quality...”

“...labels are associated with brand name and with some store name...”

5.2.1.5 Concept 5: Care instructions and special care

About this concept the respondents had knowledge on what care instructions entail. They described it as giving instruction about how to take care of a particular product in order to maintain its expected standard. They were also aware that if proper care is not given to the product, it will be damaged.

In comparison with what the literature is saying, the above mentioned facts are relevant. The care instructions are important in textile product labels because they give consumers and dry cleaners guidance on how to care for or maintain the product in the best possible way. The information provided is about the procedure to be followed during washing, ironing, dry cleaning, bleaching and tumble drying, and without this information the consumer will find it difficult to decide on the appropriate care treatment of the textile item (Cooklin, 1997:11; Kadolph, 1998:15; and Hatch, 1993:134).

The participants' quotes were as follows:

"...is about care labelling of the textile products, even though we read what is on the label after washing, especially when the garment is damaged..."

"...giving instructions on how to take care of a particular product..."

"...reading of labels is important because some clothes shrink..."

"...consumers do not take labelling seriously, they do not follow the instructions especially about temperatures..."

5.2.1.6 Concept 6: Clothing size

The respondents' awareness of clothing size was proven. They were aware that clothing size is indicated on a label, normally at the back of the clothing item. The actual clothing size is a *problem identified by the majority of consumers*. They mentioned that wrong sizes are given most of the time because they do not fit when tried on. To them size designation was sometimes misleading. They suggested that manufacturers must cater for all sizes in the market. Another suggestion by the respondents was that the manufacturers and consumers must do research on size indication.

Literature reveals that size designation is inseparable from fit. It also supports the idea that size indication is sometimes misleading. This is a result of clothing sizes and systems that differ from country to country and sometimes from manufacturer to manufacturer (Winks, 1997:1). Different systems are used to indicate clothing sizes. One method involves lettering such as small(S) medium(M) and large(L). Another system gives information written in numbers, for an example size 10, or 12 (Brown & Rice 1998:134).

The quotes were presented in this manner:

"... Wrong sizes are sometimes given on the labels, sometimes X-large does not fit as always and I must have XX-large to fit, while I didn't become bigger"

"...the information about size is wrong; most of the times the manufacturers and retailers do not

do research on whom they are selling to...”

5.2.2 Theme 2: Types of labels

The three concepts that were found under this theme were package labels, tags and fabric labels. Respondents were able to identify them.

5.2.2.1 Concept 1: Package labels

On this concept, the respondents did not explore much on the information regarding the package labels. They saw package labels as a form of labelling a product. The respondents were also aware that there are package labels that are not permanent but they give information on size and brand names. They realised that the information on package labels might not be the same as information on labels attached to products. They mentioned that attached labels are more important than labels on packages, because package labels are easily thrown away.

The literature shows that when items are sold in packages, like hosiery for instance, each individual item does not need a label. It is sufficient that the required information like fibre content and country of origin are printed on the product package (Hatch, 1993:135).

The following were statements made by the respondents:

“...the package labels are written sizes like small, medium, large (sic)...”

“...labels attached to clothing or any textile products are much better than labels written on packages”

5.2.2.2 Concept 2: Tags

The respondents indicated that the price tags are important as they give an indication of the price, size, manufacturer’s name and place of origin. They are usually in the form of paper, attached with strings and left hanging on the product. They mentioned that price tags are thrown away after purchasing.

The literature does not say much about the tags itself but concentrates much on the actual information written on them.

Here is the quote made by several respondents:

“...labels on paper or packages are easily ignored and thrown away...”

5.2.2.3 Concept 3: Fabric labels

The respondents were aware that the labels on the neck were made up of different kinds of fabrics. According to them the fabric could be soft or hard. They mentioned that labels differ in the way they were written. Some look stamped, have italic words which were bold, embroidered and had symbols and others looked embroidered.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Placement of labels

Respondents mentioned that textile labels are generally attached on the inside back collar or neck and on the side seam of a garment. If they are well attached they did not irritate. Although some of the respondents preferred to have the label with the brand name on, in the inside of the garment, many respondents preferred it on the outside of the garments where it should be visible to attract consumers' attention, especially by the youth.

The literature shows that most labels are attached permanently inside the garments on the side seam, or at the back of the neckline of garments, like blouses, dresses and pyjamas. Labels should not be placed where they will scratch or irritate the wearer (Wolfe, 2003:338).

The following concepts emerged.

5.2.3.1 Concept 1: Embarrassment caused by labels

In their response to this concept, respondents mentioned that the label attached to the garment should not cause discomfort. Some of the labels attached especially at the back frequently turns and are shown on the outside, which is mostly embarrassing. The respondents mentioned that labels attached inside must not show on the outside during wearing. Inside labels are meant to be inside and outside labels, that are for decoration, showing brand name and style are fine if visible on the outside of the product.

The quotes were as follows:

“...inside labels always showing out of the garment are irritating...”

“...labels should be placed or located where it will not irritate the body at all, because they are sometimes a nuisance...”

“...labels should be attached to the side and it must be comfortable.”

“...what I don't like about labelling is to show the brand name outside....it looks bad, and I prefer a brand label that is attached inside the jeans...”

“...outside brands are important and helpful, they are made to attract to buy...”

5.2.3.2 Concept 2: Scratching

Respondents complained that labels that scratch the wearer are irritating. Scratching is sometimes due to the material from which the label was made or could be due to the position where it was attached. The writing used on the label could also cause scratching. Respondents emphasise that scratching caused discomfort to the body.

Scratching labels are not comfortable at all. The material used for labels especially if made of thermoplastic fibres, should withstand the heat of ironing and should also not be subjective to shrinkage as a result of too high ironing temperatures (Collier & Tortora, 2001:42).

Comments are outlined as follows:

“...some materials that are used on labels can shrink or easily burn during ironing...”

“...it will be better if the manufacturers use cotton material inside the textile product labels because it is soft and comfortable...”

“...it is better to cut off the label when it scratches...”

5.2.4 Theme 4: Appearance

5.2.4.1 Concept 1: Visibility

The writing on labels must be visible so that consumers can read the information. If the label is painted, the colour should not fade away, but must be visible throughout the life-span of the product. The respondents complained that some labels fade away after some time and information gets lost.

Fading can be due to washing of the product, ageing, or can be due to the method used for labelling. Kadolph (1998:150) states that labels should be as visible as possible, and their position is important.

One participant commended in the following manner:

“...I had a T-shirt that faded after washing it for a month; I could not see the words again because all the information was lost...”

5.2.4.2 Concept 2: Size of the label

The size of the label depends on where the label is to be located. The labels that are on the outside of the garments are either big or small and they are embroidered, glued or stamped. They are mostly used as a decoration or to display some brands as a form of advertising for movies, celebrities, etc. Usually small size labels are used inside the garments, and contain all the information the consumers might need to take care of the item.

For instance one participant mentioned the following:

“...I do not like big size labels that draw people’s attention...”

5.2.4.3 Concept 3: Colour

Respondents were used to the black and white colours on labels. They criticised labels with colours that do not match the colour of the clothing item. If a garment is white, it should have a white label especially inside, on the side or neck. Outside labels, because they are mostly used for decorations, could have any colour to enhance the beauty of the garment.

Comments are outlined as follows:

“...black and white colours are basic colours that should be used...”

“...too many different colours are annoying...”

“...I hate labels that are made of many different colours not matching the garment...”

5.2.4.4 Concept 4: Writing style

The respondents emphasised that the writing style should be visible, clear and permanent. Everyone should be able to read what is written on the label. Symbols could also be used together with words for better understanding. The language itself should be readable and understandable to consumers.

Comments are outlined as follows:

“...labels should be written clearly...”

“...I hate labels that are not visible, because of the writing style...”

5.2.4.5 Concept 5: Symbols

The respondents had knowledge about the symbols written on their garments' labels. They mentioned that the use of symbols is a good idea because they save space on a piece of label. It was highlighted that symbols inform consumers on how to take care of their garments to prevent damage.

On care labelling, symbols can be used alone or with written words for better understanding. Kylo (2003:10) expresses the opinion that care instructions in the form of symbols are the easiest way to have a multilingual label. Symbols are simple and convenient for consumers.

Quotes were as follows:

“...if a symbol shows hands in a basin, it means hand wash...”

“...I like symbols because they are easy to understand by everybody whether literate or illiterate...”

“...symbols give an instruction on proper care of our clothes...”

5.2.5 Theme 5: Type of language

There was a big argument on what language should be written on the labels as a medium of instruction. According to the respondents, the language should be readable and understandable because to them, the purpose of the label is to give instructions to consumers. Some suggested that English should be used as most people can read and write it, whereas some suggested that symbols should be used in addition for those who cannot read. That means all labels should have both written words and symbols on it.

The following comments were made:

“...it’s better to write English on labels because it is understandable...”

“...I think symbols and words should be written on labels, in case you cannot read, you can understand the symbols...”

5.3 Objective 2: Perceptions

The second objective of this study is to explore consumers' perception about labels and this will be discussed with the use of two themes, namely labelling idea and labels as indication of quality.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Labelling idea

According to the information that respondents reflected on awareness, the respondents would also be able to give their views and perceptions on textile labels. They viewed textile labels as partly good and partly bad. According to them, the good part of labels is that they inform and encourage consumers to buy the products and the bad part is that they are sometimes misleading. For example, they mentioned that sometimes brands and price can be misleading, as they are viewed as related to quality. In this regard, the labelling idea is partially supported and partially rejected by the respondents.

Research shows that labelling is good because it makes consumers aware of the information on textile product labels because without this information they can not anticipated fabric performance (Hatch, 1993:139).

The following comments were given by the respondents:

“...label is a good thing; whoever came with the idea of labels did a good job, especially brand name labels...”

“...labels attract people to buy...”

“...labelling has good information...”

“...some labels are misleading because the sellers want you to buy...”

5.3.2 Theme 2: Quality

According to Hawkins *et al.* (2004:320), quality can be defined as consumers' evaluative judgement about an entire overall excellence or superiority in providing benefit. According to Merkel (1991:18), the performance and the serviceability of a textile product are the major concepts of quality and the crucial issue here is the ability of a product to retain its original characteristics through an expected wear life. When consumers do not have any experience of a product, they often rely on cues such as price, store name and brand name, which are information on a tag or price sticker (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004:188). Engel *et al.* (1993: 823) noted that good clothes have a guarantee that they will last longer and, therefore, consumers become satisfied if the quality is good and dissatisfied if the quality is bad.

Quality is compared with the price of the product according to the respondents. The consumers are prepared to pay more money for goods that are of high quality. Consumers buy from the selected stores that are trusted for selling quality. To the respondents quality plays an important role because they spend a lot of money buying brand name products which are preferred because of its quality. Quality, price, brand name and store name are inseparable according to consumers. The concepts to be discussed under this theme are price, and brand name. The store name was

also very important to the respondents, but the store name is normally not indicated on a label and is, therefore, omitted from this discussion.

5.3.2.1 Concept 1: Price as indication of quality

The respondents mentioned that they are happy to pay more for their textile products because in return they get the quality they prefer. Not all the respondents agreed with that statement because some think that quality is a word used by retailers as an excuse for price increases. The highly priced products are assumed to be of better quality and give consumers satisfaction because of the comfort, durability and maintenance of the products. The consumers mentioned that expensive clothes equal to quality. They also mentioned that expensive clothes last longer. Some respondents are concerned about the price and not the product when buying. They complained that price is added to products because of labels, especially labels with brand names.

Some specific examples of their opinions were:

“...expensive clothes equal quality...”

“...the expensive clothes last longer in terms of quality unlike cheap clothes...”

“...reading labels or having labels on the clothes or textiles is just a waste of money. More money is added on products because of labels...”

Consumers in general assumed that highly priced products are of better quality and low quality is low priced (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004:369).

5.3.2.2 Concept 2: Brand name as indication of quality

According to Taylor (2003:5), a true brand has a distinctive name and symbols that are known and is not just functional, but appeal to the emotion of a large group of consumers. Nilson, (2003:14) and Vincent (2002:6) state that many of the products and services produced by ordinary brands are as good, if not better in quality than private brands.

Some opinions about brand name were as follows:

“...to buy a genuine brand, one should buy from the reputable dealer and not from the street, where they sell ‘fly by night’...”

“...buying the brand name of the clothing is expensive and it is associated with certain products.”

“...If you buy good quality brand name, you know they will perform up to expected standard and they are quality guaranteed”

5.4 Objective 3: Influence of labelling on purchasing decision

Throughout purchasing consumers are guided by the information they have about the products during the process of buying and after purchasing. Purchasing is the process of obtaining goods and services, including receipt and approval of the final invoice for payment. The labelling of products is critical as it involves the evaluation of criteria for determination of expected outcomes of purchasing (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:119).

Many of the respondents indicated that reading the label is not very important to them in their decision to buy or not to buy. To them colour and quality of fabric are more important in their decision to buy. Those respondents who do read the label indicated that the information on the textile product label does influence their purchasing decision. The two themes discussed under this objective were identified as: the information of labelling and labelling as an indication of status. There is much overlapping of concepts of this objective with the concepts of awareness of labels but only the concepts which really play a role in the consumers' purchasing decision are discussed.

5.4.1 Theme 1: Information of labelling

The information which helps consumers in their decision to purchase could be found in the concepts of care instructions, price, and size indication of clothes.

5.4.1.1 Concept 1: Care instructions

To the respondents the information on how to take care of the clothing they buy was very important, especially if it is an expensive product or something that needs special care. Care

labels help consumers to see whether the product can be well maintained even after purchase e.g. dry cleaning products. Some consumers can afford it, but some cannot afford to pay for dry cleaning and then they do not buy the product.

The respondents agreed that care instructions influenced them in their purchasing behaviour. Some respondents read the care label before purchasing whereas some read it after purchasing, especially after the product was damaged in the wash. A few respondents found it time-consuming to read the labels when buying clothes or other textile products.

Care instructions according to Cooklin (1997:118), provide specific information regarding washing and ironing temperature.

The following comments were given:

“...I consider care labelling when buying clothes because I want to see whether I will afford to pay if the label on the product is written ‘dry clean’...”

“...I consider labelling because I used to buy clothes that are written ‘dry clean’...”

“...Labelling is important to consider when buying clothes because you know how to take care of your clothes.”

5.4.1.2 Concept 2: Price

The information on price seemed to be very important to the respondents and it was one of the first labels they looked at. It is understandable because if you can't afford it, it is useless to try it on or look for the right size. They also associated price with quality. To the respondents, products with labels, especially well known brand labels were an indication of quality and, therefore, they will influence their decision to buy the product.

The quotes were as follows:

“...because, I look at the labels before buying especially for price...”

“...I look at the price only and not care about how the product will be taken care of...”

5.4.1.3 Concept 3: Size indication

The respondents mentioned that the size indication on the labels of clothes was important to them, because even if the right colour was there but not in their size, they could not buy the item. Some respondents mentioned that the only label they read is the label which indicated the size of a clothing item.

Comments:

“...It does influence my purchasing decision, because if I cannot get the size I want from the selected textile products, I will not buy....”

“...I look only for the label which shows the size.....”

5.4.2 Theme 2: Labelling as an indication of status

The social class and brand name as concepts are discussed in this theme.

5.4.2.1 Concept 1: Social class

In some cases the respondents made purchases not out of interest or need but because they wanted to belong to a certain class. Status was treated as an important aspect, especially amongst the youth. There is high competition amongst the youth in choosing some selected brands. The respondents stated that brand names on labels associate people with different classes according to their economic status. To them a certain brand name is very important and their friends must see what brand name they prefer. Some said that they feel inferior when they are with people wearing certain kinds of labelled clothes. For them high class people do not mix with low class people and wearing brand names put people in a different social class. To the respondents, only people who can afford it financially are able to buy certain expensive brand names.

From their comments it was clear that the respondents distinguished between different social classes as in the definition from Schiffman and Kanuk (2004:372) and they associate different status to different classes especially in what they wear. Peer pressure plays a role in influencing consumers of certain groups to purchase particular goods. Some brands are associated with particular people.

A specific social class is a division of members of a society into a hierarchy of distinct status classes so that members of each class have relatively the same status and members of all other classes have either more or less status (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004:372).

Responses were as follows:

“...you buy labelled products so that other people will see in which class you belong ...”

“...you buy expensive labelled products to impress someone and to be classified with rich people”

“...labelling associates consumers into particular social class...”

“...there is self confidence when buying certain labels...”

5.4.2.2 Concept 2: Brand name

According to the respondents, labels with a brand name were the most important of all labels in textile products. The respondents were well informed about brand names and could give a list of all the popular brands. Although they realised that buying popular brands are expensive they got great satisfaction of their purchases. The respondents avoid buying imitation brand names because they prefer original ones. The respondents bought their brand name products from their trusted stores. If they did not trust the store they did not bother to look for a brand name product. They were very brand loyal and if the product was out of stock they rather went without it, than try another brand

Here are their comments:

“...to buy genuine brand, one should buy from a reputable dealer and not from the street, where they sell ‘fly by night’...”

“...buying clothing with a brand name is expensive but brings happiness...”

“...you can have money but if the brand name of the product you like is not there or not available you totally do not go for another label...”

According to the results the three objectives were successfully met and supported by the literature review. The themes and concepts on the first, second and third objectives will be addressed in a form of table as follows:

Table 1 Summary of research results:

Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective3
Awareness	Perception	Purchasing decision
What is a textile product label?	What are your perceptions on textile product labels?	How does it influence your purchasing decision?
Theme 1	Theme 1	Theme 1
Information on labelling	Labelling idea	Information
Concepts		Concepts
1. Fibre content		1. Care instructions
2. Country of origin		2. Price
3. Manufacturers name		3. Size indication
4. Brand name		
5. Care instructions and special care		
6. Clothing size		
Theme 2	Theme 2	Theme 2
Types of labels	Quality	Labelling as an indication of status
Concepts	Concepts	Concepts
1. Package labels	1. Price	Social class
2. Tags or price slips	2. Brand name	Brand name
3. Fabric label		
Theme 3		
Placement of labels		
Concepts		
1. Embarrassment		
2. Scratching		
Theme 4		
Appearance		
Concepts		

Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective3
Awareness	Perception	Purchasing decision
1. Visibility		
2. Size		
3. Colour		
4. Writing style		
5. Fabric type		
6. Symbols		
Theme 5		
Type of language		

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The last chapter of this research is a short summary of the research background, literature on consumer behaviour, literature on textile product labels, as well as conclusions and recommendations.

6.2 Summary

There is a strong relationship between the concept of consumer behaviour and textile product labels. The conceptual framework in Chapter 1, Figure 1.1 shows this interrelationship clearly. The concept of consumer behaviour is important in this study because it revolves around individuals and groups and the processes they use to select, secure and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy their needs. The products in question in this study are *textile product labels*. The specific questions that were addressed were about the consumers' awareness and perceptions of textile product labels as well as their consequent purchasing decision

Consumer behaviour as well as the decision making process during purchasing is influenced by internal and external factors. The internal factors discussed are needs, personality, learning, attitudes, communication, motivation and perception. The external factors dealt with, are social class, culture, subculture, age, age cohort and reference group. The above mentioned, if properly addressed, contributes to customer satisfaction.

Textile product labels play a major role in this study. The information written on labels includes the fibre content, country of origin, manufacturer's name, care instructions, size and brand name. Not only is the information on labels important but also how labels are located and attached to textile products. Consumers need to know about the types of labels available in the textile industry.

Following the discussion on the background and the literature review on consumer behaviour and textile product labels is the discussion of the methodology used in this study. A qualitative research methodology was found suitable for this study and data were collected by means of focus groups. Six focus groups of six persons were used. Focus groups like other methods of data collection have their own advantages and disadvantages that were fully outlined in Chapter 4. A convenient sampling method was used which is the method usually used in exploratory research.

The respondents selected to participate in the focus group were from the University of Zululand and the group included male and female students. The venue for focus group interviews was in the Department of Consumer Sciences. Their age group was between 18 and 30 years. For measurement of trustworthiness Guba's model was used. This model is based on the identification of four aspects of trustworthiness stated as truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

The ethical guidelines were correctly followed and the ethical approval for the project was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (project number 04k11). Data were collected by means of observation, note taking and tape recording.

The following questions were asked:

- What are textile product labels?
- What are your perceptions about the textile product labels?
- How does it affect your purchasing decision?

After collecting the information on the above mentioned questions, data were analysed and the steps used were data collection, capturing and handling of data, coding data, participant verification, debriefing between moderator and assistant moderator and interpretation of data.

The results were reported according to the objectives of the study. Themes and concepts were identified and discussed.

6.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions in accordance with the objectives can be drawn. It should be kept in mind that the conclusions are only applicable to the students participating in the study and could not be generalised for students everywhere.

6.3.1 Objective 1: Students' awareness about textile product labels

The study revealed that the students interviewed, were aware of textile product labels mainly because of the information they contained. This information included the fibre content, country of origin, manufacturer's name, care instructions, clothing size and brand name. In addition the consumers were able to identify the types of labels, their placement and appearance.

The study found that the respondents knew about packaged labels as a form of labels associated with textile garments. They saw tags as loose labels and knew about the kind of information that is found on those, however, they regretted the fact that such information (and those labels) was soon lost after purchasing.

A label should also not irritate the wearer of the garment. The respondents did not want a label which was attached on the inside of the garment to show on the outside as it might cause 'embarrassment'. The study also found that the appearance of labels is important to the respondents. They preferred labels that were of at least the same quality as the product they were buying. They also wanted a label that will not fall off easily from the product. The writing on the label should also not fade with time. The study found that most respondents preferred English on labels although symbols with written words were also suggested. Their responses were in line with the literature as to what a textile product label is about.

6.3.2 Objective 2: Students' perceptions about textile product labels

The second objective was about consumers perceptions of textile product labels. The respondents had ambivalent feelings and opinions of the labelling idea. They viewed the label as a source of information on fibre content and care instructions as valuable, but sometimes they were misled by information, like brand name and price and then a label is of no use to them.

The respondents were also of the opinion that the price and the brand name on labels of clothing are an indication of the quality of the product. They were willing to pay more for better quality and a well known brand because they think that a product of quality will last longer. There was a concern that because of the label, the price was increased.

They strongly associated brand labels with social class. The perception was that one could tell the class of a person through the brand labels on their clothes they wear and if you want to

be recognised and accepted by your peer group you should wear clothing with well known brand labels.

6.3.3 Objective 3: Influence of labelling on purchasing decision

The third objective was about the relationship between the students' perception of textile product labels and their purchasing decision. Respondents valued the information given on textile labels and showed that they search for these labels with information when making purchasing decisions. Information that was viewed as of importance on textile or fabric labels was fibre content, manufacturer's name, country of origin, brand name, care instructions and the size of the product. Most of the respondents viewed fibre content as a determinant of garment performance for example absorbency, crease resistance and resilience.

The study also found that the respondents valued a label that showed the manufacturer of the textile product. The concept of the manufacturer's name was, therefore, found to be important and useful. It was seen as aiding the customer when it came to avoidance of buying imitations. They saw it as important when there is a complaint about the product. It was also used by consumers to compare between qualities of goods from different manufacturers and as a gauge with regard to both qualities and price.

Respondents also mentioned that the country of origin on labels influenced their decisions when purchasing textile products. This was considered of importance by the respondents as they knew from experience that some countries, like China sell falsely labelled goods including textile products. They expressed feelings of fear that these low value products may affect the South African economy.

Brand, according to this study, has the greatest influence on the purchasing decision of respondents studied as they associated it with quality. Further, an unexpected result was that well-known brands were also associated with particular stores that were viewed as selling products of quality. i.e. well-known brands are found in well-known stores.

The study showed that although consumers knew about care labels it, however, did not carry much weight in their buying decision. Respondents mentioned that according to their knowledge and practice, care instructions tend to be an afterthought considered usually after washing or

ironing, when the product had already been ruined. Therefore, it is concluded in this study that care instructions were not a great determinant of purchasing decisions.

The study found that the size of clothing influenced the purchasing decisions of respondents. This, however, happened at an advanced stage of the purchasing process when a final decision was made. Respondents talked of clothing that they would have bought if there had been a 'right size'. It was mentioned that at times sizes on labels were wrong. The literature associated size with the correct fit for the customer. When all other considerations had been taken into account it is the absence of the 'right fit' that determined whether to buy or not. Size indication influenced the purchasing decision pattern strongly and usually towards the end of the purchasing process.

It could not be determined from this study how loose labels or tags influenced purchasing decisions except for those labels that carried information on price. The conclusion in this study was that packaged labels and tags that included useful information such as price influenced the purchasing decision during a purchase, but had no usefulness in affecting behaviour past the purchase date. These labels were generally not kept for reference by the respondents.

6.4 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the study be carried forward and be done in other multi-racial university institutions where the population will include an equal number of both male and female students. The effect of not finding the right size should also be studied. The question to ask here is what consumers do when they do not find the right size. How do the shop assistants handle this situation and how does the issue of no availability of 'size' affect buying behaviour? The effect of a lack of government regulation on labels in South Africa should also be studied. The country, for example, does not have any regulatory framework that forces manufacturers to show their names on labels.

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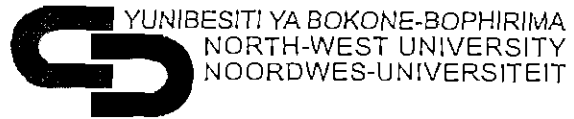
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APPENDIX A

Consent form, which was to be signed by participating students.



Consumer Sciences
Private Bag X6001
Potchefstroom Campus
Potchefstroom
2520

1 November 2005

Re: Consumers' views and perceptions on textile product labelling and its relevance to purchasing behaviour

Dear Student participant,

I am a masters student in the Consumer Science department at the above mentioned University. I work under the guidance of my supervisors.

THE PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE STUDY

We are conducting a study on the topic stated above. The purpose of the study is to explore the views and perceptions of consumers on textile product labelling. The products include bed linen, towels, table linen, curtains and clothing in general. It is of interest for purposes of the study to determine the relationship between these views and the consumer's decision making when purchasing textile products.

PROCEDURE FOR RESEARCH

- The study entails that you take part in a discussion/focusgroup on textile labelling
- The group will be led by a facilitator
- This discussion group is an opportunity for you to give your ideas
- There are no wrong or right answers
- You don't have to prepare for the meeting
- Everyone will be given an opportunity to give his/her opinion which may differ from other members'.

THE USE OF A TAPE RECORDER

You are informed that everything you are going to say will be recorded on tape to ensure that no useful information will be lost. After the group discussions the tapes will be transcribed. You are welcome to read the information through.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The focus group's opinion is kept strictly confidential and only members of the research team will have access to the data. No data in the published dissertation or journals will have information that could identify any focus group member your anonymity will be secured. Participants will be remunerated for their willingness to take part

In light of your exposure to shopping of textile products which involves decision making, we kindly request you to take part in the focus group discussions to be held on dates and venues that will be announced to you.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and valuable contribution.

Yours sincerely

Kate Nwandwe
[M Consumer Sc. Student]

Mrs M Larney & Mrs MD Venter
[Supervisors]

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I[full name] hereby confirm that the purpose of the study has been explained to me and I understand it. I therefore agree to participate in the focus group discussions to generate information on the subject.

I am also aware that the proceedings will be audio taped. I give my consent for use of the information only for the purpose of the study.

My participation in the focus groups is out of my own free will. I received a signed copy of this form

.....
Signature of participant

...../...../2005
Date

Signed at