

A SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY OF CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEXTILE LABELS AND THEIR CONSEQUENT PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

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DEDICATIONS

This study is dedicated to my nuclear family; my husband Thabiso who once again acted the two roles of a father and that of a mother in my absence as I pursued my studies; my daughter Ts'episo [9], who always asked me to pass so that I could be a better mother; my son Thabelo [6], who always told me of his dream when I do not have to go to school anymore.

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SUMMARY

Background and motivation

Consumers are faced with choices of textile products on the market every day, and it should be determined whether labels, being a major source of information at the point of sale, assist consumers in their decision making. Regarding the concept of labelling, the nature of a typical textile label was defined and the information to be included in a label was identified as the size of the product, care instructions, fibre content, country of origin, name of the manufacturer and the brand name. It was discovered from literature that consumer behaviour is influenced by the external factors and determined by the internal factors such as personality and self-concept, attitudes, perceptions, motivation and involvement, memory and learning and emotions. The aim of the study was to explore consumers' awareness and perceptions of textile product labelling and to determine the extent to which the consumers use the information on the textile product label when making decisions on or purchasing textile goods.

Methodology

As very little is known about this phenomenon regarding the South African consumer, a qualitative, explorative, descriptive research strategy was followed. Focus groups were used for data collection and participants were selected by purposive sampling so that only the knowledgeable consumer with reference to the textile label was included. The research was made trustworthy by using the purposive sampling, and conducting a pilot test before data collection. In addition, peers and study leaders monitored all the processes of the research. Data were analysed using a qualitative thematic research analysis method. Identified themes and concepts were then discussed under the pre-determined categories of awareness, perceptions and the influence each of these themes has on the decision-making process when purchasing textile products.

Results and discussions

The results revealed that the consumers were very aware of the existence of a label, they were even able to define it, and they could identify it in a number of ways. Consumers were also aware of the type of information provided by the textile product labels. The perceptions that the consumers have about the information found on the label and the nature of the label are discussed at length in the text. It was discovered that textile labels do influence the decision-making process

of the consumers when purchasing textile products and the information on size is the most important to consumers.

OPSOMMING

Agtergrond en motivering

Verbruikers moet daaglikse keuses maak oor tekstielprodukte wat in die handel verkrygbaar is en daar behoort vagestel te word of etikette, wat een van die belangrikste inligtingsbronne by die verkooppunt is, die verbruiker in die besluitnemingsproses help. Volgens die literatuur word verbruikersgedrag deur eksterne faktore en interne determinante soos persoonlikheid en selfkonsep, houdings, persepsies, motivering en betrokkenheid, geheue en leer en emosies beïnvloed. Die doel van die studie was om die verbruiker se bewustheid en persepsies van tekstielproduketikette te ondersoek en om te bepaal in watter mate die verbruiker hierdie inligting gebruik tydens die besluit om tekstielware te koop. Afgesien van die konsep van etikettering, is die tipiese etiket gedefinieer en die inligting wat op die etiket moet verskyn is geïdentifiseer as die grootte van die produk, versorgingsaanwysings, veselinhoud, land van oorsprong, die naam van die vervaardiger en die handelsmerk.

Metodologie

Aangesien daar baie min oor hierdie fenomeen rakende die Suid-Afrikaanse verbruiker bekend is, is 'n kwalitatiewe, verkennende, beskrywende navorsingstrategie gevolg. Om die data te versamel is daar van fokusgroepe gebruik gemaak en die deelnemers is doelbewus uit ingeligte verbruikers rakende tekstieletikettering gekies. Deur van genoemde steekproef gebruik te maak en 'n loodsstudie te doen, is daar gepoog om die navorsing geloofwaardig te maak. Verder is dit met literatuur geverifieer en medestudente en studieleiers het die navorsingsprosedure gemonitor. Data is volgens 'n kwalitatiewe tematiese analisemethode ontleed. Die temas en konsepte is onder voorafbepaalde kategorieë van bewuswording, persepsies en die invloed wat hierdie temas op die besluitnemingsproses tydens die aankoop van tekstielprodukte het, bespreek.

Resultate en bespreking

Die resultate het onthul dat verbruikers baie bewus van die bestaan van etikette is, dit kan definieer en verskillende tipes kan identifiseer. Verbruikers is ook bewus van die inligting wat deur die tekstielproduketiket verskaf word. Die persepsies wat die verbruikers oor die aard van en die inligting op die tekstielproduketiket het, word volledig in die teks bespreek. Daar is bevind dat die verbruiker tydens die besluitnemingsproses by die aankope van tekstielprodukte deur die

etiket beïnvloed word en dat die inligting rakende die grootte van die tekstielproduk die belangrikste vir die verbruiker is.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AATCC:	AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEXTILE CHEMISTS AND COLOURISTS
FTC :	FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
ISO :	INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF STANDARDS
ITS :	INTERTEK TESTING SERVICES
RN :	REGISTRATION NUMBER
SABS :	SOUTH AFRICAN BUREAU OF STANDARDS
SANS :	SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STANDARDS
stanSA:	STANDARDS SOUTH AFRICA
WPL :	WOOL PRODUCT LABELLING

CHAPTER 1

A SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY OF CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEXTILE PRODUCT LABELS AND THEIR CONSEQUENT BEHAVIOUR

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and setting

The people in South Africa are consumers of textile products, such as clothes, bedding, towels, and table linen. In purchasing these items, a person goes through a decision making process. The consumer must first decide whether to buy or not to buy, secondly which one of the many on the market to buy, thirdly which shop to buy from, and lastly how much he or she is willing to pay (Solomon, 2004:352).

A consumer in the context of the study is a person who makes use of textile products and services. The processes involved in consumption include identifying a need or desire to make a purchase, using the purchased products or services and disposing of them when they are no longer needed. Consumption of these goods and services happens in two ways. It can either happen at a personal level, in which case an individual buys goods or services for personal consumption (for instance a person who buys an apparel item), or at an organisational level, e.g. an institution such as a school, a church, or a manufacturing firm. The intention to benefit from a product purchased (Rice, 1993:94; Hawkins, *et al.*, 1998:132). An example would be a guesthouse manager purchasing linen for the guest house.

With the knowledge of levels of consumption explained above, it is necessary to conduct studies that will be applicable and appropriate to the South African consumers. As Blackwell *et al.* (2001:11) put it, consumers are like fingerprints, and no two are exactly identical. In addition, the consumer today is by far different from the consumer ten years ago. According to Windham and Orton (2000:2), many consumers with old ways of doing things have become new consumers and, in doing so, have transformed into more powerful beings. Their strength is noticed by the easy access to countless information sources, innumerable products and services, and greatly extended communities the new consumer has.

Windham and Orton (2000:4) argue that this has put the new consumer in an unprecedented position of control. The new consumer knows more, has more choices, and can act with fewer logistical constraints than ever before. It will be pointless, therefore, to ignore the fact that consumers want to have control over their purchases.

The views and perceptions of consumers affect consumer behaviour directly (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:7; Engel *et al.*, 1995:108; Solomon, 2004:74). The behaviour is directly dependent on internal influences which each individual human being is subjected to (Solomon, 2004:70). Such influences will include perceptions, personality, emotions, motivation, learning, memory and attitudes. These factors influencing the consumer's behaviour are dealt with in this study. There is, however, a set of external factors that also influences consumer behaviour. Included in the latter would be culture, subcultures, reference groups, family, demographics, changing gender roles, social and economic status and marketing strategy. These factors will not be dealt with in this study

Perception, which is the main focus of this study, is the process of organising and interpreting sensations into meaningful experiences. It is the actual result of the psychological processes in which meaning, context, past experiences and memories are involved (Mischel, 1999:5; Mowen & Minor, 2004:98; Schiffman, 2001:518; Solomon, 2004:49). The sensations from which perceptions will be formed are, among others, from a textile product label. The consumer sees, reads and feels the label on a textile product, and conclusions about the label and products are drawn, thus perceptions are formed.

The label attached to the textile product is the first communication between the retailer or manufacturer and the consumer (Cooklin, 1997:116). It therefore contains some information that helps the consumer to make decisions on whether to buy or not to buy the product displayed on the shelf. According to Kadolph (1998:150), labels which are sewn on or hang-tags on articles give information on the total make up of the particular item and how it has to be taken care of, just like an operation manual. In some cases it will appear on the packaging, if the products are sold in packaging (Drew, 1992:45). Because labels are informative, they play an important role in the maintenance of the textile products.

The type of information found on the labels, which information is mandatory and which is voluntary, are issues of concern on textile products. According to Brown & Rice

(1998:18-19), Oehlke (2002:58) and Stone (1999:138), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the United States of America regulates the information given on the textile article labels. In South Africa, as stated by McCleary (2004) during personal communication, the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) regulates the textile and many other labels, to ensure that the standards are met.

Brown & Rice (1998:19); Drew (1992:43); Kadolph (1998:149), and Stone (1999:158), all agree that a textile product label must supply information about the textile fibre content of the fabric used, country of origin and care instructions as mandatory information. Kadolph (1998:97) added that voluntary information that promotes the manufacturer or marketer, as well as such information as size, style and colour, which helps consumers to make a choice, is also allowed.

With all the information found on each product, it is not easy to confirm the use of all of it by the consumer. Exploring the views and perceptions of consumers about the textile product labelling will enlighten that aspect (Wright, 1997:418). There are many new products reaching the supermarkets at one time; it has been estimated that 1 000 new products reach the British supermarkets each month, hence the need for effective labelling to enable selection (Anon, 1995:19). No estimates for South Africa could be found at the time of the literature search, but the above estimate gives an idea of the kind of confusion the consumers have to deal with.

Most of the new products generally are made in South Africa. They are displayed on the supermarket shelves, all competing for consumers' selection. Some consumers, as Solomon and Rabolt (2004:352) state, make decisions in the store as they purchase. Wright (1997:417) also informs that the only source of information a consumer has about the product at the point of sale is the label. The question that remains now is whether the information on the label is sufficient, relevant, clear, easy to understand and important to the consumer.

1.2 The problem statement

South African consumers regularly purchase textile products and encounter various problems during use. Consumers sometimes become disappointed with these products

after use because they perform differently than expected by, for example, losing shape and/or fading after a few laundering sessions.

It may happen, as Molefe, (2004) informed the researcher during personal communication, that consumers return the garments and request a refund. Against this background, it must be kept in mind that there are information labels on the products to assist the consumers in making informed choices, but to which extent do consumers use these labels?

Many questions can be asked regarding textile labels, such as: What information appears on the labels? Is it valuable to the consumers? Do the consumers even read these labels? Do they use the information on the labels to make a decision to purchase or not to purchase a garment? Generally, are these labels necessary from the consumers' perspective? Is there need for any improvement on the way labels are designed, made, and inserted or positioned in the textile articles? What about the care labelling symbols used on the labels, do all the textile product consumers in South Africa know the meaning of all the symbols?

Here is a relevant example that would be clear. Recently the slogan "Proudly South African", also applicable to textile products, was introduced to the market. Textile products labelled "Proudly South African" probably have influenced the perceptions and awareness of the South African textile consumer about labels, but has this been investigated before they were put on the market? One wonders if the slogan "Proudly South African" makes the perception of these products any different from that of other textile products made in other countries but sold in South Africa. All these questions show a deficiency in knowledge about the South African consumer's perceptions and behaviour regarding textile product labels.

New products are introduced into the market time and again. This can make it difficult for consumers to decide on what to buy. The extensive research done on the American and the European consumer's perception and behaviour is not representative of the consumers from other parts of the world (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:32). The information is not applicable in South Africa. This poses a problem of marketing strategies that may not be exactly directed to the South African consumer. It is therefore necessary to study the South African consumers' views and perceptions on textile labelling.

1.3 Objectives of the study

Having identified the problem and searched through literature, the following objectives were set for the study:

- ◆ To determine South African consumers' awareness about textile product labelling
- ◆ To explore the consumers' perceptions of textile labels
- ◆ To determine the extent to which the consumers use the information on the textile product labels when making purchasing decisions

1.4 The conceptual framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 illustrates the totality of the study, depicting areas of interest and the interrelationships among the areas. As can be observed from Figure 1; textile consumers' behaviour is influenced by the external and internal factors, some of which are stipulated below. The textile label is the stimulus of concern here as it is the consumers' awareness of and perceptions about it that are unknown. The arrows indicate the relationships among the factors contributing to the ultimate purchasing behaviour of a consumer. The major components of the framework are the following:

- The consumer may be consuming textile goods and services as an individual or on behalf of an institution such as a school, company, church or community.
- Textile product labelling happens to be the stimulus of interest for the purpose of the study, and is a source of information which can be used during alternative evaluation.
- Consumer behaviour is influenced by external factors and internal factors. This happens after a process of decision making.
- The information, meaning and past experiences influence consumer perceptions on textile labelling.
- The ultimate purchasing behaviour.

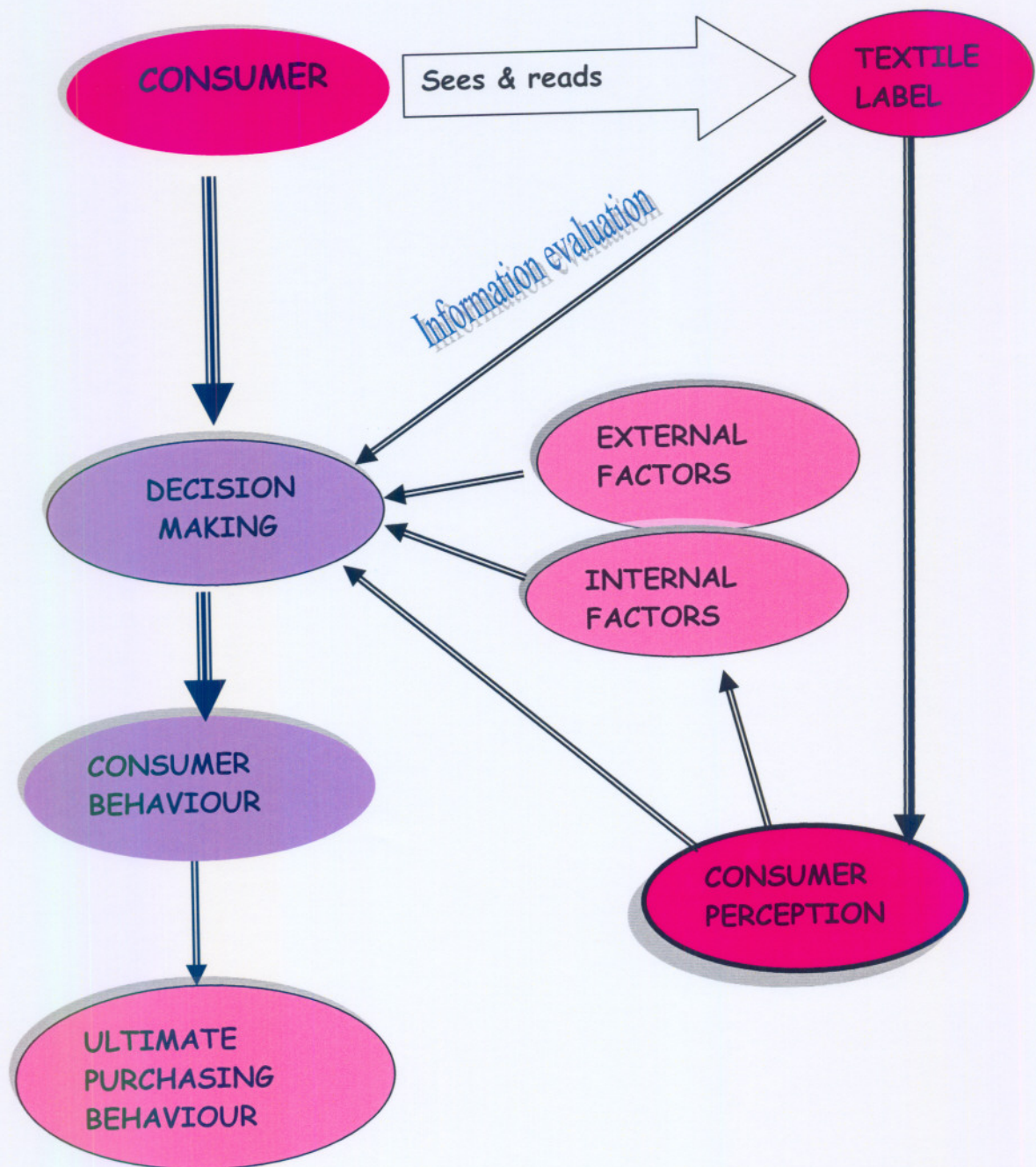


Figure 1. Conceptual framework *(developed by researcher from the literature and the research objectives)*

1.5 Contextual definitions of terms

Following are definitions of key concepts, used within the context of the study.

Awareness: A state of knowing something well enough to identify and explain it in appropriate terms (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004:531-2).

Consumer: A person or organisation that identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase, uses the product or service and then disposes of the product (Solomon, 2004:8).

Consumer behaviour: A decision process and physical activity individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using or disposing of goods and services. (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:6; Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:10; Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993:342; Solomon, 2004:9).

Consuming: How, where, when and under what circumstances consumers use products and services (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:6).

Label: In the context of this study, a textile product label is an extra piece of fabric attached to the textile product. This label is made of fabric which differs in type, colour and texture from that of the product on to which it is attached. The label conveys valuable information to the consumer and the ultimate caretaker of the product. The information includes care instructions, fibre content, country of origin, brand name or trademark, size and sometimes colour.

Perception: The process of organising and interpreting sensation into meaningful experiences. It is a result of psychological processes in which meaning, context, judgement, past experiences and memories are involved (Solomon, 2004:49; Schiffman, 2001:518; Mischel, 1999:5).

Perceptual set: Readiness to make a particular response or a class of responses to particular organisations of stimuli. It may be established by the prior conditions of exposure (Schiffman, 2001:518).

Textile product: For the purpose of this study the term refers to all the products made from textiles, for example clothing items, towels, bed linen, table linen and some window treatments like curtains.

1.6 Strategy

The study was qualitative and descriptive in nature. Data were collected by using focus group discussions, from which extensive information was gathered. Consumers were purposefully recruited from the shops as they purchased their textile products and further selected to form the discussion groups.

Only consumers who purchased or searched for textile products only were recruited. The researcher conducted the discussions, using questions adopted from literature and developed through piloting. During the discussions, a tape recorder was used with the consent of the participating consumers to capture the proceedings of the discussions. First the recordings were transcribed verbatim, and then cleaned, to remove filler words and to elaborate explanations that did not necessarily respond to the questions asked. Data were then analysed into categories and themes responding to the set objectives of the study. The use of purposive sampling, pre-piloting and piloting the instrument as well as using the literature as control, all contributed to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

1.7 Chapter layout

The mini-dissertation comprises of five chapters. The first chapter gives the background information, problem statement, motivation, objectives, significance and limitations of the study. The second chapter comprises of the relevant literature reviewed for purposes of the study. This chapter serves as a literature control, contributing towards the trustworthiness of the study. The third chapter focuses on the methodology followed in conducting the study as well as reasons for the selection of methods used. The fourth chapter addresses the results and discussions of the data collected, using methods stated in chapter three. Chapter five presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations made by the researcher upon completion of the study. As well as the article about the study.

1.8 Significance of the study

As stated in the objectives, the study will make known the views and perceptions of textile consumers about textile labelling. These will include the expectations of the consumers in as far as desirable labels are concerned. In doing so, it will also identify the types of labels in South Africa on textile products, the weaknesses of textile labelling as seen by the consumers and the discomfort and comfort brought about by the labels on their garments.

The study will also exploit information that will be helpful to the government legislative body responsible for drafting the South African Textile Labelling Act.

The study also intends to be of assistance to manufacturers in the textile industry in South Africa, to instil awareness regarding the design and placement of labels, as well as information appearing on them. This might even give South African manufacturers some ideas about marketing their textile products through appealing labels.

When this study has been completed, the industry, educators and students in the field of textiles and associated disciplines as well as textile consumers will have access to the information to refer to. Knowledge of views and perceptions of the South African consumers regarding textile labelling will be available. On a similar note of professionalism it will open room for further research in the field of textiles and their consumption. Planning for consumer education will be made easier by the basic understanding of the consumer as researched by this study.

1.9 Contribution of article authors

The study was planned and implemented by a team of researchers, working together towards the same set of objectives stated in a previous paragraph of this chapter. The contribution of individual researchers is given in Table 1:

Table #1

Authors' contribution to the article

Name	Contribution to the study and article
P.Maqalika-Mokobori	First author, searched for and reviewed literature, gathered, interpreted and analysed the data, prepared and did the writing-up of the mini-dissertation.
Ms M. Larney	Supervised the whole study and the activities of the first author.
Ms M.D. Venter	Co-supervisor.
Dr E.L. Kempen	Project leader; organised sponsorship to make it possible for the study to happen. Also acted as an overseer for the whole process.

The statement below is from the co-authors of the article, confirming their individual roles in the study. The statement also grants permission for the article to form part of the mini dissertation:

I declare that I have approved the above-mentioned article, and that my role in the study, as stated above, is representative of my actual contribution and that I hereby give my consent that it may be published as part of the Masters' mini-dissertation of Mrs P. Mokobori.

Papali Maqalika-Mokobori

Mrs M. Larney

Mrs M.D Venter

Dr E.L. Kempen

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the relevant literature that was reviewed and was divided into two sub-sections. The two sub-sections are consumer behaviour and the concept of labelling. The section that looks at consumer behaviour gives definitions by several authors, the internal determinants of consumer behaviour are reviewed extensively to give the reader an understanding of the origin of the behaviour displayed by the consumer. The second section looks closely at the concepts underlying the textile product labels.

Literature section 1: Consumer behaviour and the decision-making process

2.2 Consumer behaviour

As viewed by Wilkie (1994:127) consumer behaviour is about people, what people purchase and why people purchase the way they do. It is about marketing, how products and services are designed for and sold to consumers in the market place. It is also about the consumer market place itself, in which billions of purchases occur each year, in millions of marketing outlets. Blackwell *et al.* (2001:6), Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:10) and Wilkie (1994:128) agree that consumer behaviour by definition is a mental, emotional and physical activity that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires. Loudon & Della Bitta (1993:247) added the evaluation process to the list of activities consumer behaviour entails. Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:10) strengthened the definition above by adding that all these activities are done to satisfy needs.

An umbrella definition of consumer behaviour that would accommodate the similarities, minimise the differences and be justified in terms of comprehensiveness would be as follows: Consumer behaviour comprises the mental and physical activities (behaviour patterns) of decision units (individuals as well as families), which precede, determine and follow on the decision process for the acquisition of need-satisfying products, ideas and services (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:10; Engel *et al.*, 1995:78).

Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:11) concur with the other authors but add that consumer behaviour includes the decision process that precedes and follows these purchase actions. In continuation, Engel *et al.* (1995:78) further qualifies consumer behaviour as being of particular interest to those who desire to influence or change that behaviour, including whose primary concern is marketing, consumer education and protection, and public policy.

Consumer behaviour does not merely happen. It is a process influenced directly by some internal and external factors. According to Blackwell *et al.* (2001:23), Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:13), Mowen and Minor (2004:123), Solomon (2004:17) and Wilkie (1994:214) consumer behaviour is influenced by external factors as well as internal factors. Some internal factors are personality, attitudes, perceptions, motivation and emotions, to mention but a few, while the external factors that influence behaviour include culture, sub-cultures, social and economic status. For purposes of this study, the focus will be on the internal factors, specifically perceptions. Figure 2 shows both the internal and external influences accompanying consumer behaviour. The relationships between the factors are also depicted in the diagram by means of arrows.

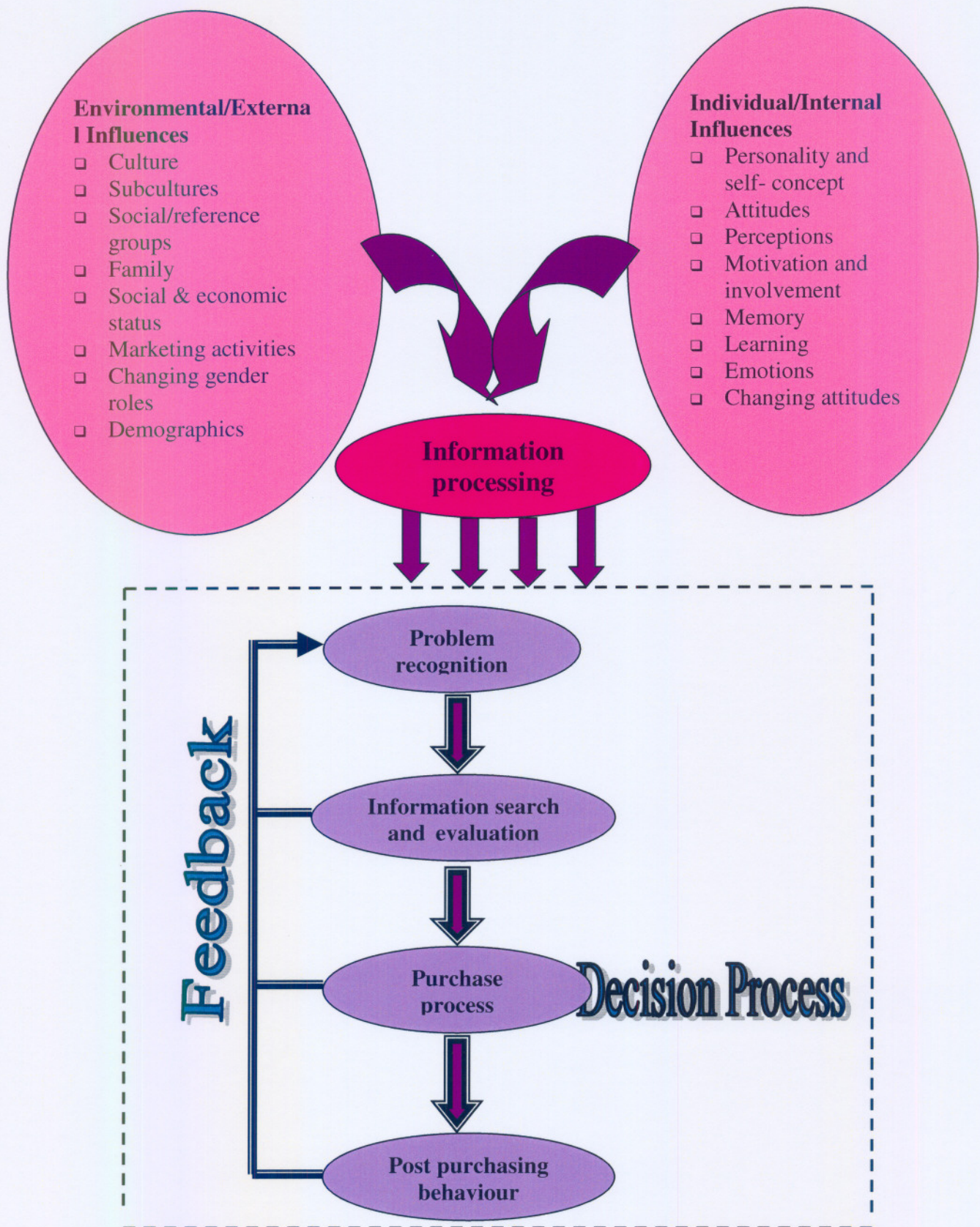


Figure 2: Influences on consumer behaviour (developed by researcher from Blackwell et al., 2001:23; Solomon, 2004:17; & Wilkie, 1994:124)

2.2.1 Internal factors which influence consumer behaviour

This part of the chapter deals basically with the internal factors determining consumer behaviour. These factors are internal because they give the researcher an insight into the consumers' internal world. As Hayes (2000:8) explains, the phenomenological approach used in this study catches the meaning of social events, looking through the eyes of the people actively involved. The internal factors include personality/self-concept, attitudes, perceptions, motivation-involvement, memory-learning, emotions and changing attitudes. Emotions and changing attitudes will not be discussed for the purposes of this study.

2.2.1.1 Personality and self-concept

According to Mischel (1999:4) personality is the ability to elicit positive reactions from other people in one's typical dealings with them. Mischel goes on to say that personality has popularly been equated with social skill and effectiveness. Solomon (2004:188), however, noted that personality refers to a person's unique psychological makeup and how it consistently influences the way a person responds to his or her environment.

Mowen and Minor (2001:100) explained that the word personality comes from a Latin word "persona" which means "actor's face mask". Like a mask, personality is worn as a person moves from one situation to another in a lifetime. Sigmund Freud developed the idea that much of one's adult personality stems from a fundamental conflict between a person's desire to gratify his or her physical need and the necessity to function as a responsible member of society (Solomon, 2004:188). However, less specifically, Mischel (1999:4) noted that personality might be taken to be an individual's most striking or dominant characteristic. In this sense a person may be said to have a "shy personality" or a "neurotic personality", meaning that his or her dominant attributes appear to be shyness or neurosis.

Personality, as deduced from the previous definitions, can be seen in the behaviour one displays in his or her actions. The actions one engages in are most of the time influenced by the self-concept one has. Mowen and Minor (2001:109) explained that because people have a need to behave consistently with their self-concept, this perception of themselves forms part of the basis of personality.

This is so because consumers can maintain their self-esteem and gain predictability in interactions with others by acting in a manner consistent with their self-concept. This then characterises personality, meaning the self-concept one has, and the self-esteem one maintains, both contribute to one's personality.

Solomon (2004:150) defines self-concept as the beliefs a person holds about his or her own attributes, and how he or she evaluates these qualities, while self-esteem is defined as the positivism of a person's self-concept. Mowen and Minor (2004:100) agree with the two definitions and only add that the self-concept includes the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself/herself as an object. Solomon (2004:151) clarifies that people with low self-esteem expect that they will not perform very well, and they try to avoid embarrassment, failure or rejection.

The relationship between personality, beliefs, values and attitudes as seen by Webb (2002:145) is such that values and beliefs exercise a direct influence on one's personality. Webb (2002:145) and Rice (1993:87) agree that the values and beliefs develop into attitudes later.

2.2.1.2 Attitudes and consumer behaviour

Loudon and Della Bitta (1993:176) define attitudes in four ways:

- ◆ How positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable a person feels towards an object. In other words, the feeling one gets after evaluation of objects in general.
- ◆ Learned predisposition to respond to an object or class of objects in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way. This incorporates notions of readiness to respond towards an object.
- ◆ An enduring organisation of a motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive process with respect to some aspect of the individual's world. They view attitude as being made up of three components, namely
 - 1) the cognitive/knowledge,
 - 2) the affective or emotional, and
 - 3) the conative/ behavioural-tendency component.

- ♦ Attitudes are multidimensional in nature. A person's overall attitude toward an object is seen to be a function of the strength of each of a number of beliefs the person holds about various aspects of the object, as well as the evaluation he gives to each belief as it relates to the object. A belief is the probability a person attaches to a piece of knowledge being true.

Aaker *et al.* (2001:128) define attitudes as a 'mental state used by individuals to structure the way they perceive their environment and guide the way they respond to it'. Wilkie (1994:159) defines attitudes as learned predispositions to respond to an object or class of objects in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way. Wilkie (1994:159) argues that the word attitude is derived from Latin words for "posture" or "physical position". The general notion was that the body's physical attitude suggests the type of action in which a person would engage. A summary of the meaning above is illustrated schematically in Figure 3 which shows the components of attitude.

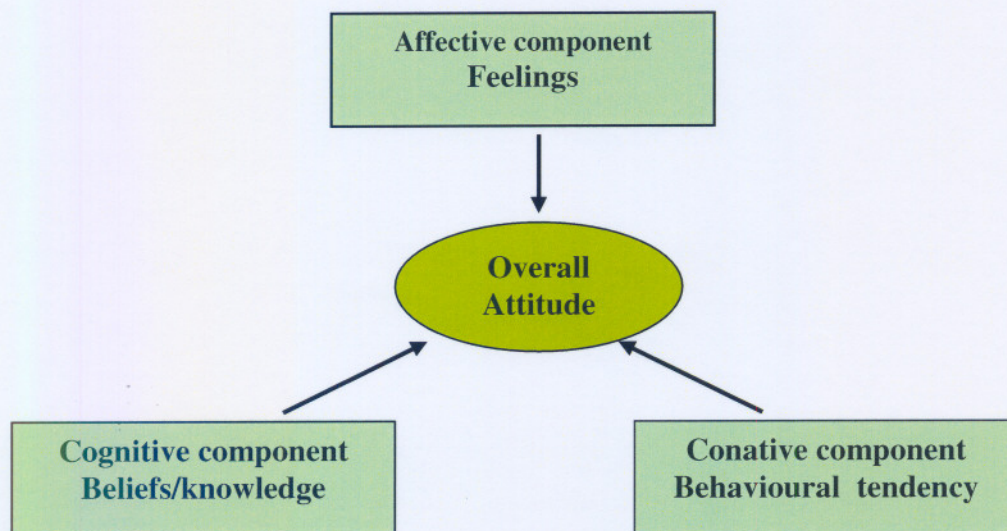
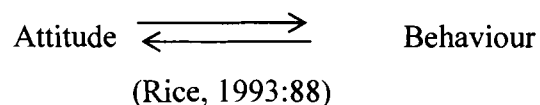


Figure 3: Components of attitudes (*developed from Rice 1994:12-15*)

In his review of other authors' definitions, Webb (2002:140) concludes that there are as many definitions of attitudes as there are attitudes themselves. But interestingly all seemingly agree that it is a mental state of readiness, a way an individual structures his/her own particular world, organised through experience, such that when confronted with a certain stimuli he/she can act in a certain manner.

The relationship between consumer attitude and consumer behaviour is generally positive, but is often not as strong as one might expect (Wilkie, 1994:160). Webb (2002:128) argues that attitudes are not generally held to be the only cause of human behaviour. Behaviour is the end result of a very complex interchange between factors both internal and external to that person whose behaviour is under investigation. Although attitudes are constituents of the internal factors, they are conditioned through external experience. The gathering of that experience is not a random process, but it is organised through a process known as learning.

Rice (1993:127) explains that attitudes are related to a person's behaviour that is part of the individual's perceptual world. Rice (1993:128) argues that they represent our basic orientation towards the given stimulus and as such form an important part of the way in which people perceive and react to their environments. It is commonly held that attitudes are "leading variables" to behaviour. This means that attitude change pre-dates and predicts behaviour. In addition to that people indulge in a particular behaviour that leads to outcomes that have form their attitudes. The combination is usually represented by the illustration shown below:



Attitudes are important to consumers because they perform several functions. These functions include helping the consumer to adapt to the market place, and the ego defence function which protects the consumers from injury to their self-identities. Other functions are the expressive function which enables the consumers to express their personal values in behaviour, and the knowledge or appraisal function which actually helps the consumer to organise their knowledge about the market place (Rice, 1993:92).

2.2.1.3 Consumer perceptions

Attitudes are formed from perceptions. By definition perception is a process of sensing, selecting and interpreting consumer stimuli in the external world (Solomon, 2004:290; Wilkie, 1994:163). It is concerned with the translation from the external physical world to the internal mental world that each of us actually experiences. The five human organs, i.e. eyes, ears, mouth, nose and skin serve as the sensory receptors receiving input from the environment (Wilkie, 1994:163).

Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:9) do not differ in opinion from other authors as they define perception as the process by which an individual observes, selects, organises and reacts to environmental stimuli in a meaningful way. As seen by Hawkins *et al.* (1998:290) perception is a critical activity that links the individual consumer to a group, situation, and marketer influences. Hawkins *et al.* (1998:290) argue that a sound knowledge of perceptions is essential in marketing to avoid problems when communicating with various target audiences. Solomon (2004:78) agrees with the other authors by the illustration in Figure 4 which gives an overview of the perceptual process:

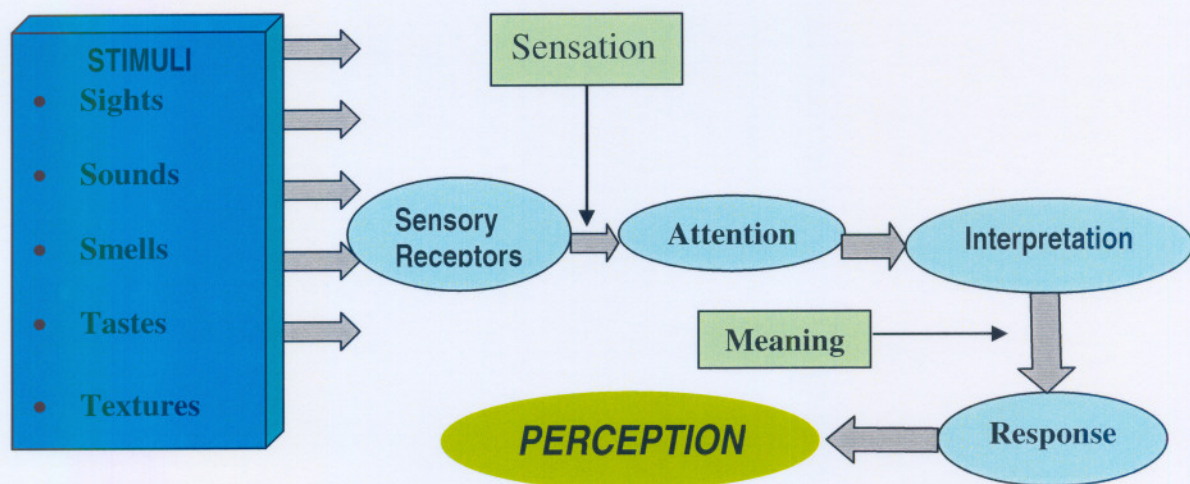


Figure 4: An overview of the perceptual process (Solomon 2004:79)

Solomon and Rabolt (2004:290) add that the process of perception ends in interpretation. Perceptions are influenced by a number of dynamic and changing factors, singly or in combination, and either when the stimulus occurs or when reaction is required. Many variables will affect perception. Some of the most important ones in the process are portrayed in another model of perception and the variables include impulse, observation, selection, organisation and reaction (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:218).

Hawkins *et al.* (1998:291) emphasise that perceptions are part of information processing. Information processing involves a series of activities by which stimuli are perceived, transformed into information and stored in a consumer's mind. Figure 5 illustrates an information-processing model having four major stages, i.e. exposure, attention, interpretation, and memory. The first three constitute perception.

Exposure occurs when a stimulus such as a billboard comes within a range of a person's sensory receptor nerves – vision, for example. Attention occurs when the receptor nerves pass the sensation on to the brain for processing. Interpretation is the assignment of meaning to the received sensations. As it can be observed in Figure 5, memory is the short-term use of the meaning for immediate decision making or the longer-term retention of the meaning (Hawkins *et al.*, 1998:290).

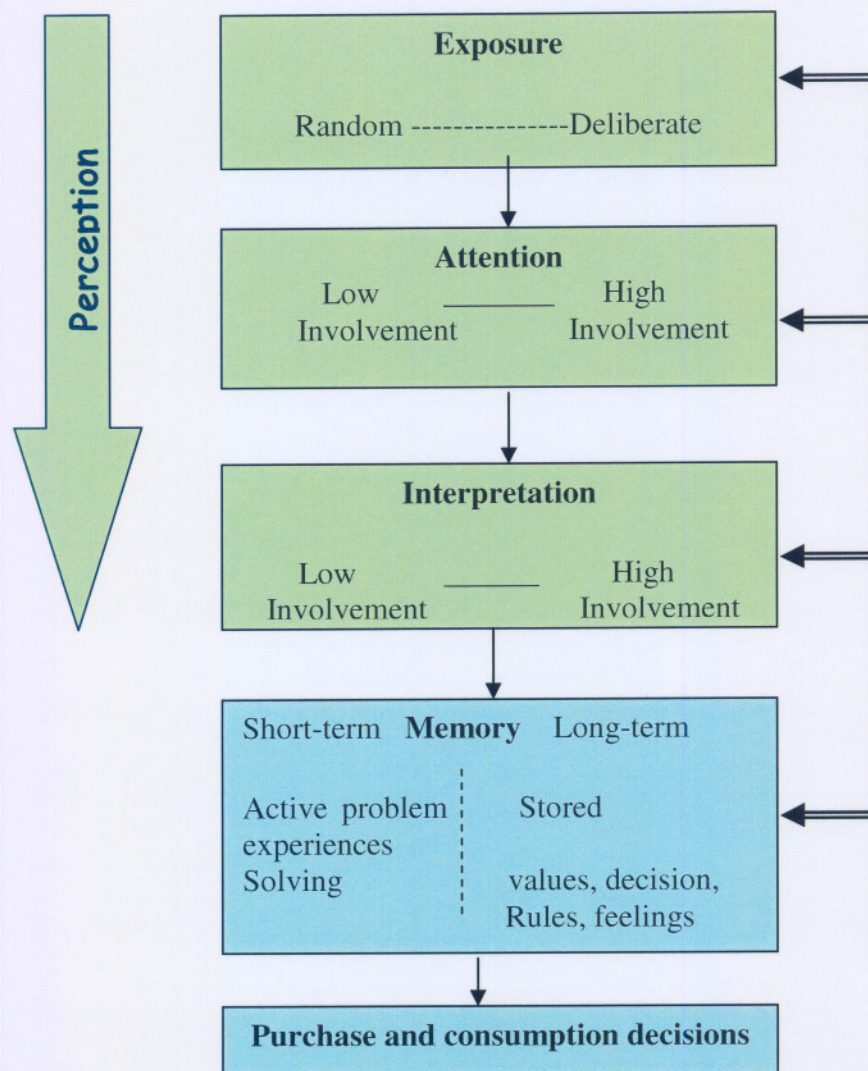


Figure 5: Information processing for consumer decision making. (Hawkins *et al.*, 1998:293)

According to Solomon and Rabolt (2004:290) the study of perception focuses on what we add or take away from the raw sensations as we choose which ones to notice, and then go about assigning meaning to them. The consumers see the entire collection of textile products on the market but decide to buy some after assigning meaning to them to make decisions. In the study of perception there are several ways to look at the construct. There

are, however, some outstanding overlaps of these categories, i.e. object perception, person perception and physical perception.

Perceptual set as defined by Wilkie (1994:144) is the readiness to perceive or act in a particular way in a given situation. Engel *et al.* (1995:198) use the expression perceptual set interchangeably with expectation. They, however, notify that comprehension will depend on prior conceptions of what we are likely to see. In their study Engel *et al.* (1995:199) report that in tasting and rating labelled and unlabelled beer, participants rated all the unlabelled products the same, simply because they had no expectations regarding the taste. The expectation created by the brand label was powerful enough to alter consumers' perceptions of the products (Engel *et al.*, 1995:199; Solomon, 2004:82).

2.2.1.4 Motivation

Blackwell *et al.* (2001:238) note that to be in a position to answer a question like “Why do people buy the things that they buy?” one requires an understanding of consumer motivation. Consumer motivation represents the drive to satisfy both the physiological and the psychological needs through product purchase and consumption (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:242; Solomon, 2004:114-115). According to Solomon (2004:115) motivation occurs when a need that a consumer wishes to satisfy is aroused. Once the need has been activated, a state of tension exists that drives the consumer to attempt to reduce or eliminate the need. Figure 6 elaborates on the process of motivation and the relationship between all other processes involved in it. The recognition of needs is actually the first part of the decision process shown in Figure 2 referred to as “problem recognition”.

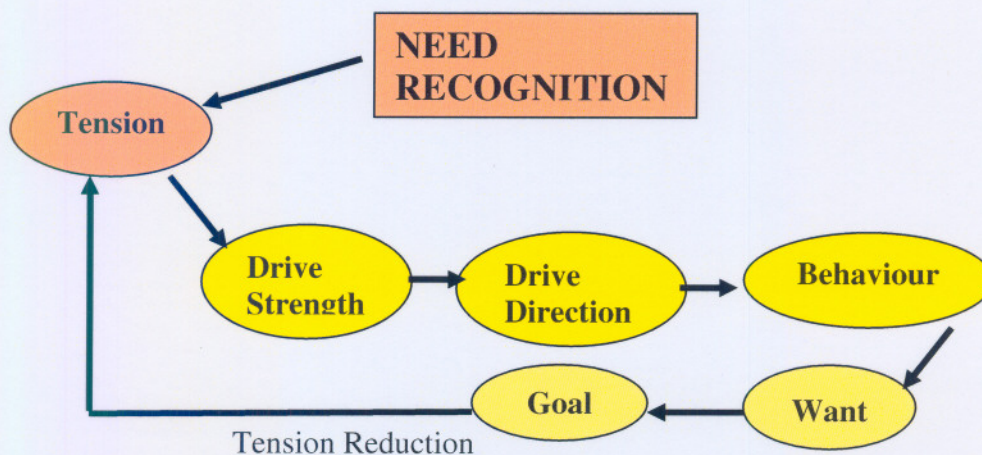


Figure 6: An overview of the motivation process (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:239)

There are different types of needs that a consumer has to satisfy in his or her entire life. In addressing these needs Maslow arranged them in a hierarchy to indicate the relationship among the different types of needs. The achievement of one need makes way for the recognition of a new higher-level type of need. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is famously presented in a pyramid to indicate that a certain type of need must be fulfilled before one can think of fulfilling others in a higher level. (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:238).

Solomon (2004:116) interpreted Maslow's hierarchy of needs and made an observation that important needs to the consumer relevant to the studies of consumer behaviour include, inter alia, the following: *Need for affiliation* to be in the company of other people. This need is relevant to products and services that are consumed in groups and alleviate loneliness, such as team sports, bars, and shopping malls. *Need for power* to control one's environment. Many products and services allow consumers to feel that they have mastery over their surroundings, ranging from "hopped-up" muscle cars and loud boom boxes (large portable radios) to hotels, restaurants, and resorts that promise to respond to the consumer's every whim. *Need for uniqueness* to assert one's individual identity. Products that pledge to accentuate a consumer's distinctive qualities satisfy this need. For example, Cachet perfumes claim to be "as individual as you are".

2.2.1.5 Learning and memory

Even though learning and memory are two separate factors that affect consumer behaviour individually, they are discussed together here due to the relationship they have with each other. Memory, as can be observed in Figure 7, is a result of learning. It can also happen that a learning process taps information from the memory storages. For this reason memory plays an important role in a learning process.

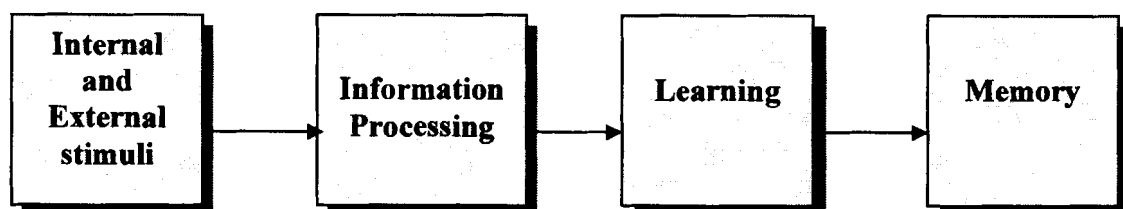


Figure 7: The relationship between learning and memory. Derived from Hawkins *et al.* (1998:343)

Most consumer behaviour is learned behaviour. The majority of values, tastes, behaviour, preferences and feelings are accumulated over time through a learning process. The extrinsic components of consumer behaviour, such as culture, family and small group membership, provide learning experiences which have an impact on the type of life-style one pursues and the products and services that are consumed (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003:269).

Wilkie (1994:143) defines learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour, feelings and one's way of thinking. This change is actually due to the effects of information and experience. Educationists, however, see it as a process of acquiring new knowledge that is expected to bring a change in behaviour of the learner (Seale, 1999:104). In advertising, the type of learning that takes place in most of the cases is observational learning, as advertisements are mostly visual. Observational learning occurs when people watch the actions of others and note the reinforcement they receive for their behaviour (Solomon, 2004:93). A learning process that involves attention, retention, product processes and motivation will result in observational learning.

According to Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:256) learning results from information processing and the changes in memory are caused by the process as illustrated in Figure 7. In supporting the statement about relationship between learning and memory, Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:268) asserts that memory is the total accumulation of prior learning experiences and comprises short-term and long-term memory.

From the explanation above the following can be deduced: Learning is a process. It constantly develops and changes as a result of newly gained knowledge or experience. The newly acquired knowledge and experience serve the consumers, and are the foundation upon which they will base their behaviour in similar situations in the future. This is what makes learning different from instinctive behaviour.

Hawkins *et al.* (1998:345) define memory as total accumulation of prior learning experiences. Solomon (2004:98) argue that during the consumer's decision-making process, the internal memory is combined with the external memory. In other words, all the product details on the packages, in shopping lists, and other marketing stimuli are stored in the memory to permit brand alternatives to be identified and evaluated. Memory

is the short-term use of the meaning for immediate decision-making or the longer-term retention of the meaning (Hawkins *et al.*, 1998:346).

2.2.1.6 Decision making

Buying and consumer decision-making processes are complicated as a result of external influences that have to be handled within an internal frame of reference that has come about through consumer socialization (that may be/have been restricted) (Fellman, 1999:205). Sproles and Burns (1994:158) illustrate that different sources of information are used at different stages of the adoption process. The stages are awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, purchase action and post purchase behaviour (Gilbert, 1999:98; Sproles & Burns, 1994:156).

To illustrate the importance of consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviour, Chen-Yu and Kincade (2000:13) emphasise that the success in apparel business cannot only depend on either store image or brand name but the consumers' overall perception towards the product determines their purchase behaviour.

In their study that assessed the effects of product image at three stages of consumers' decision-making process for purchasing apparel products, Chin-Yu and Kincade (2000:13) concluded that a good product image alone cannot determine a consumer's purchase decisions. In addition to developing the product image, marketers must understand that other characteristics like style, fabric, quality and fibre content can have an impact on their target customers' purchase decisions. The characteristics mentioned above are some of those listed by various authors (Kadolph, 1998:152; Brown & Rice, 1998:19; Hatch, 1993:144; Drew, 1992:43) as those about which information should be provided in a textile product label.

2.3 Literature section 2: The concept of textile labelling

A textile product label in the context of this study refers to the extra piece of fabric attached to the textile products. This piece is usually made of a different material in colour and fibre content. The major purpose of this label is to give information about the product. Such information will include the care instructions, fibre content, size of the product, country of origin and the brand name.

From reviewed literature, Cooklin (1997:117) states that labels are of great benefit to the wearer. An important aspect of finishing garments is to ensure that correct labels are in the right position.

Regarding the legality of the existence of labels in textile products, Costantino (1998:41) noted that in terms of labelling, the standards for consumer information and protection in the United Kingdom are largely government-imposed. Costantino (1998:41) further added that in accordance with the European Union (EU) directives, a composition labelling which gives information about the fibre content is made compulsory by law. This means that all textile products in the EU must have information about the fibre composition.

The information on a typical textile label should include the information about the fibre content of the fabric used to make up the product, the country of origin, care instructions and name or registration number (RN) of the manufacturer (Brown & Rice, 1998:19; Cooklin, 1997:117; Drew, 1992:44; Hatch, 1993:142; Kadolph, 1998:150). Kadolph (1998:151) states that the federal law and regulation in the United States of America (USA) require the mentioned information on the label, but other information such as size, price, colour, certification, brand name and claims about the product's performance is voluntary. This information may actually promote the manufacturer and retailer. Brown & Rice (1998:19) add that this voluntary information is also designed to help the consumer in selecting an appropriate product.

According to Cooklin (1997:118) size labels must be suitable for the country or countries where the garments are going to be sold. Cooklin (1997:118) goes on to say that it would be pointless to export garments carrying the British sizing system labels to a country using a totally different sizing nomenclature. This information is regarded as voluntary and it is provided to assist the consumer in the decision-making process for purchasing. The International Organisation of Standards also subscribes to the laws indicating the information that goes onto the labels. The details of information to include on the textile product labels as required by the law in most countries are given in the paragraphs that follow.

2.3.1 Fibre content

The fibres of which the fabric is made must be declared in standard terminology. The fibres must be listed in their percentage composition. Fibres should, however, be listed only if they make up more than 5% of the total composition of the fabric. The above statement does not hold if a small percentage (less than 5%) contributes significantly to the performance of the fabric, for example 1% spandex for elasticity, 2% nylon for strength and 1% metallic fibre to control electrostatic (Hatch, 1993:144; Kadolph, 1998:152; Brown & Rice, 1998:18). Drew (1992:43) and Kadolph (1998:152) both agree that the fibres making up the fabric that has been used to construct the garment must be described by their percentages in descending order, that means that the list should start with the most used fibre, ending with the least used fibre.

According to Brown & Rice (1998:19) and Kadolph (1998:152), the labels should identify the fibre content of the linings and interlinings separately from that of the garment. They went on to say that the fibres used in the garment trim, additional materials like lace and ribbon, need not be identified on the label if they account for less than 15% of the garment's surface area. The fibre content label must, however, include the term "exclusive of decoration". In the case of ornamentation like embroidery, it need not be identified if it constitutes less than 5% of the total weight of the garment. Likewise the fibre content label must have written on it "exclusive of ornamentation".

Hatch (1993:144) also observed that the percentage listed may not be exact, a plus or minus of a 3% deviation is allowed. This means that a garment with a label that reads 45% polyester and 55% cotton may actually have 42% polyester cotton and 58% cotton or 48% polyester and 52% cotton. Hatch (1993:144) emphasises that only the generic and common names of fibres are allowed to be used in the designation of the fibre content of a textile product. If this is ignored many misunderstandings will result. There are standards and regulations for specifying types of fibres.

It is stated that the use of uncommon names really results in misunderstanding. In the sheet market for instance the term percale that is always on the sheet labels, seems to be misunderstood by both the consumers and the industry alike (ANON, 2004:13).

According to a spokesman of the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) the correct definition of “percale” is: “a closely woven plain fabric, usually from Egyptian cotton, of lighter weight than chintz”. Percale sheets should be woven of a finer thread, whether cotton or poly-cotton. Thread count plays a major role in the production of percale (ANON, 2004:12). The closeness of the weave and fineness of yarn should deliver a higher thread count. As a given rule, it should be about 72 threads/cm (180 threads/inch) or higher. It was discovered that some sheets with percale written on them had a lower thread count than they should have according to the definition.

2.3.2 Manufacturer’s name

Brown & Rice (1998:20) and Kadolph (1998:153) agree that information about the manufacturer must be provided on the label. It is required in the USA that the manufacturer’s name and registration number (RN) or Wool Product Labelling act (WPL) number must be given, so that consumers know who to contact, should the product fail to perform as expected or as desired.

2.3.3 Country of origin

In today’s global market textile products may possibly be manufactured in one country, with yarn spun in another country, fabric constructed in another country and dyeing or other finishes applied in the fourth country (Brown & Rice, 1998:20). The fifth country may fabricate the fabrics into a garment or any end-use product. Only two countries at the most are disclosed on a textile product label. These two countries must be the last in the manufacturing sequence, where a significant transformation of the product occurred (Brown & Rice, 1998:20). The information about the country of origin is of utmost importance in exported garments (Cooklin, 1997:118).

2.3.4 Care instructions

Care instructions are given by means of the care labels. These care labels have rules governing them in terms of what information must be provided and how they must be written (Hatch, 1993:142). These labels are the implied warranty by the manufacturer that if the customer follows the care instructions provided, the garment will retain its shape and general appearance for a reasonable lifespan (Brown & Rice, 1998:21).

Care labels as Cooklin (1997:118) noted, provide very specific information regarding washing and ironing temperatures, whether bleaching agents can be used or not, and the suitable type of dry cleaning solvents. Oehlke (2002:58) informs that the care labels are meant to inform both the consumer and the dry cleaner on what processes should be followed for cleaning. To back up the comment, Oehlke (2002:58) goes on to say that in the USA, the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Care Label Rule mandates that the information be accurate and true for each item to which the label has been attached.

Unfortunately, many of the labels today are inaccurate and fail to furnish safe, effective care instructions. In the later studies, Oehlke (2003:59) observed that even with good labelling disaster can still happen. In one situation a spotter/cleaner received a sweater in a hamper with other garments. Noticing that its label called for hand washing and listed the fibre content as 100% wool, he placed it in the washable hamper and routed it to the wet cleaning department. The woollen sweater lost shape because it was not hand washed.

The care instructions must be provided as a prerequisite for the law governing the garment labelling in most countries. This must happen for such a garment to be accepted for sale on the market (Hatch, 1993:142). Only standard terminology should be used on the labels, and the terminology is in most cases set by the International Organisation of Standardisation (ISO) (Kadolph, 1998:153). Whether or not the garment should be dry cleaned, machine or hand washed, the temperature of the washing water and that of the iron as well as the drying instructions of such a garment if it is washable, should be provided on the label.

Symbols representing the same information may be used. These symbols can be used alone or with words explaining their meaning. It has been gathered from literature that there are basically five symbols from which the rest are derived. The symbols are based on the care processes followed in general to maintain the textile products, which are instructions on washing, bleaching, drying, dry-cleaning and ironing.

In the actual textile products, added information is provided on each of these basic symbols. This is done to give clear instructions on the care labels suitable for the different garments on the market produced by the manufacturer, for instance in washing it will give more details on what temperature of water to use and the method of washing suitable

(Brown & Rice, 1998:21; Kadolph, 1998:154; Kylo, 2003:11; Hatch, 1993:143). For bleaching it will need more information on whether or not the article should be bleached and if it is to be bleached, what type of bleaching agent would be suitable (Kylo, 2003:12; SABS, 2001:9). Figure 8 indicates the basic symbols that are being used to represent instructions corresponding to them as they are found in the textile products' care labels.

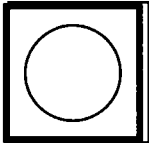
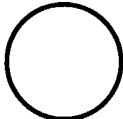
BASIC SYMBOLS	INSTRUCTIONS THEY REPRESENT
	Washing symbol
	Bleaching symbol
	Drying symbol
	Dry cleaning symbol
	Ironing symbol

Figure 8: The basic labelling care symbols and the instructions they represent
(European ITS, 1999:7).

In the case of drying, the details on the method of drying suitable for the garment are needed. Some articles may need to be dried on a flat surface while others may be drip-dried. The dry cleaning symbol needs details that tell the consumer and the launderer whether the article is dry cleanable or not, also the type of dry-cleaning agent suitable (Hatch, 1993:213).

The ironing symbol gives details on whether the article needs to be ironed or not and if it is to be ironed, the temperature of the iron must be indicated (Kadolph, 1998:154). The Japanese ITS (1999:7) have extra information on wringing, on their labels. They provide information on whether the article may be wrung or not. If the article is to be wrung, it is also expected of the label to instruct on the method of wringing; it may be gentle or normal.

Because manufacturers are now dealing with the international global market, the language becomes a barrier in the understanding of the labels (Kyllo, 2003:10). Kyllo goes on to say that care symbols are the easiest way to have a multilingual label. However, Kyllo (2003:10) adds that the harmonisation of care label symbols has not yet happened at a global level. Global representatives to the International Organisation of Standardisation (ISO) committee on textiles are working hard to achieve harmonisation. Until then, manufacturers must try to satisfy many requirements with the present care label.

In its code of practice the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS, 2001:7) still makes reference to the ISO and abides by them because there are no South African standards as yet. SABS (2001:7) however, states that when a care instruction label is to be permanently attached to an article, the appropriate symbols shall be either woven or printed on a label of suitable size and material. The symbols must be clearly legible and the label material and symbols must be able to withstand the indicated cleaning treatment throughout the useful life of the article.

On a similar note Kadolph (1998:155) argues that because the labels must be permanent, they must behave like the garment. Different types of labels are available in terms of fibre content, fabric structure, colour and size. The Care Label Regulation of the USA specifies that the labels must be permanent; it is therefore worthwhile to determine the manner in which they respond to use and care and how long the label remains legible.

These labels must be compatible with the fabric used to construct the garment and its care requirements should be similar to those stated by the care label. Kadolph (1998:154) adds that sewn in labels must be comfortable to the user, durable, easy for the operator to handle and attach, permanently legible and appropriate in cost.

Labels in garments must be as visible as possible, their positioning is therefore of utmost importance. The location of sewn in labels in garments may, according to Kadolph (1998:154), be specified by the Care Label Regulation in the USA and is based on the product type. The details of the acts and regulation will however be discussed later in the section on the laws and regulations. Pants and slacks for example generally have their labels located at the waistband at the centre back seam. Some voluntary information as discussed on page 24-25 paragraph 2.3 under the title “The concept of labelling” is also allowed (Kadolph, 1998:156).

2.3.5 Labelling acts and regulations in textile products

Brown & Rice (1998:18-19) agree with Stone (1999:138) that there are laws and regulations governing the labelling process in the textiles, apparel/clothing as well as soft furnishing/household linen industry in the European Union and the USA. Some of these involve the specific fibres to be identified; others involve safety of the products themselves, while some are concerned with the care information of the garment. All these acts are basically implemented to protect the consumers and traders against false advertising and labelling. Table 2 gives details of the purpose of each regulations/act/law governing the labelling process in the fashion industry.

Table 2**Key Federal Laws Affecting the Fashion Industry (USA)**

<i>Product And Labelling Laws Designed To Protect The Consumers</i>	<i>Purpose And Provision</i>
1. Wool Product Labelling Act-1939; amended in 1986 (WPL)	1. Protects consumers from unrevealed presence of substitutes or mixtures. Federal Trade Commission responsible for enforcing law
2. Fur Product Labelling Act-1951	2. Protects consumers and retailers against misbranding, false advertising, and false invoicing
3. Flammable Fabric Act-1954, revised in 1972	3. Prohibits manufacturing or sale of flammable fabrics or apparel
4. Textile Fibre Identification Act-1960; amended in 1986	4. Protects producers and consumers against false identification of fibre content.
5. Fair Packaging and Labelling Act-1966	5. Regulates interstate and foreign commerce by prohibiting deceptive methods of packaging or labelling.
6. Care Labelling of Textile Wearing Apparel Ruling-1972; amended in 1984, 1997	6. Requires that all apparel have labels attached that clearly inform consumers about care and maintenance of the article

2.3.6 The brand names

This is a piece of information provided by the manufacturer voluntarily to assist and sometimes influence the consumers in the decision-making process. In most cases it does not appear on the label but is included here because the participating consumers made mention of it. Hatch (1993:135) defines a trademark as a distinctive mark placed on or attached to goods by a manufacturer to identify him as made or sold by him. The use of a trademark indicates that the maker or dealer believes that the quality of the goods will enhance its standing or goodwill, and a known trademark indicates to the buyer the reputation that it staked on the goods.

Clifton and Simmons (2003:13) on the other hand define brand as a trademark or goods of a particular make. Davis & Dunn. (2002:58) agree with the definition. The brand may also be defined by saying that the word "brand " itself comes from the Scandinavian word for 'fire' (=brand) and branding is literally to mark something with fire just like they used to do with cattle in the Wild West (Clifton & Simmons, 2003:13; Nilson, 2003:11).

According to Taylor (2003:5) a true brand has a distinctive name and symbol that are known by a large proportion of the target audience. Taylor goes on to say that these brand identifiers are not only recognised, but they are also associated with a trusted customer experience. In addition strong brands have not only functional credentials but also emotional connections by appealing to the head and the heart. The characteristics of a strong brand are illustrated in Figure 9.

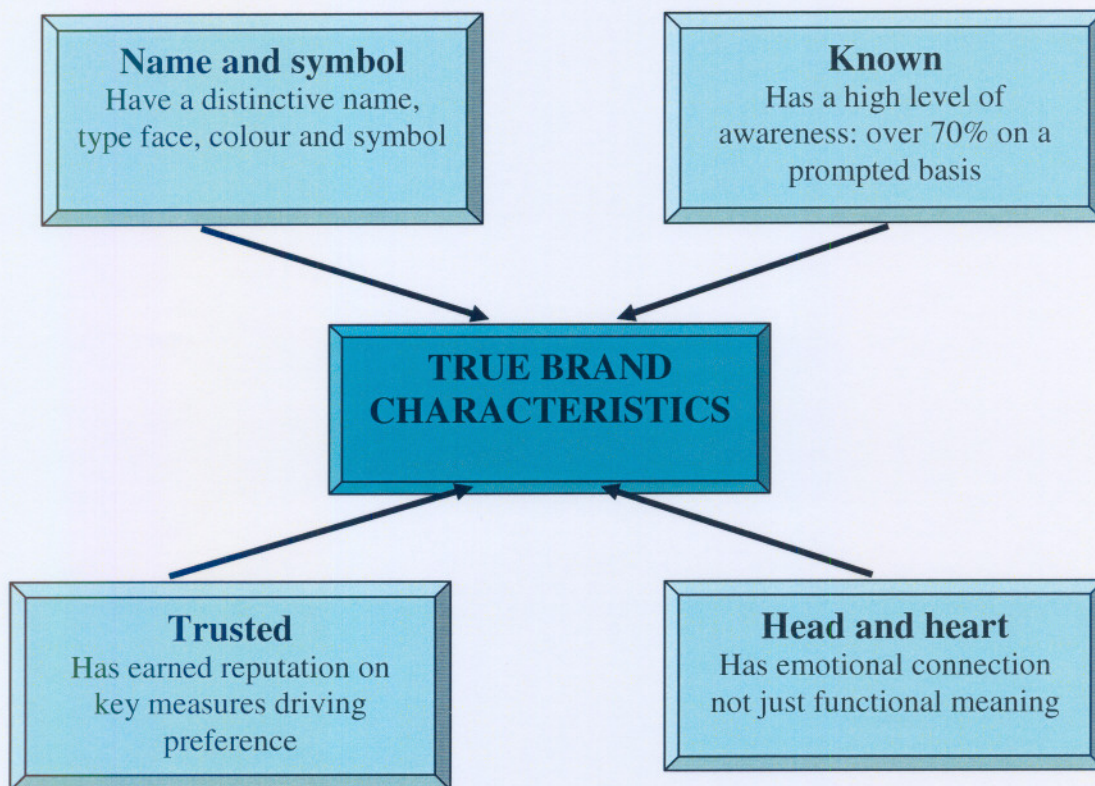


Figure 9: Characteristics of a true brand (Taylor, 2003:6)

Nilson (2003:14) and Vincent (2002:5) agree that many of the products and services produced by ordinary brands are as good if not better, in total quality, than the ones of the cult brands. In clarification of the quality relation with brands, Vincent (2002:6) illustrates

that the amateur basketball players prefer Converse shoes to Nike in terms of quality, yet Nike ranks higher on their scale of greatness.

2.3.7 Key issues in textile labelling

From the literature reviewed, it was discovered that South Africa has a body responsible for the standards as a whole. The SABS recently referred to as standards South Africa (stanSA), is an autonomous body responsible for standardisation of products on the South African market. South Africa, however, does not have any act, rule or regulation governing the labelling process in the country. There are only standards set by the SABS that must be followed. Many research projects and campaigns have been conducted in the Americas and other parts of the world, but the South African consumer has not been studied much. Most of the research done in South Africa is on marketing issues, while the actual views, expectations and perceptions of the South African consumer remain almost untouched. The reports available in the books read in South Africa are about the overseas consumers.

It also became apparent that in textile labelling there are two sets of information that can be included on the labels. The information can be mandatory, in which case it must be provided without fail; this type of information has to remain on the textile product for as long as the product is in use, in other words it must be permanent and legible. The type of information in this set includes the fibre content, country of origin, name of the manufacturer and care instructions. Alternatively the information can be voluntary and this type may or may not be included in the labels. This information is basically of assistance to the manufacturers, to market themselves and help the consumer to make a choice at the point of purchase. Information in this type includes size, colour, and brand name.

It also stood out clearly that there are many factors influencing the choice of textile products. The factors can be internal to an individual consumer, or external. The textile product label in this study is the external stimulus that attracts the attention of the consumer. This relationship is illustrated in the conceptual framework in Figure 1 of the study. The consumer will in turn read and maybe use the information on the label as part of the information search and evaluation processes at point of sale. The consumers do this to facilitate proper decision making. Starting from the recruiting stage for the participants of the study, the differences among consumers were noticed. It therefore became clear that

consumer behaviour differs from one consumer to the other, hence the need to conduct studies similar to this one if consumer understanding is sought.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter describes the procedures and methods used in the study. It describes in detail the research design used and the reasons for the choice of the design. The procedures for subject selection are explained and motivated. Lastly, the development of the instrument used to collect and to analyse data is also described and motivated. Focus group discussions were used to determine the awareness of the Potchefstroom consumers about textile product labelling in general. In these group discussions the views and perceptions consumers have about textile labelling were also investigated and explored. The relationship between the information on the labels and the decision making process in the purchase of textile products was determined.

3.2 Research design

The study is descriptive and explorative in nature, following the qualitative method. It uses the phenomenological approach, which aims to understand the internal world of the respondents and how they perceive events and experiences in that world. Hayes (2000: 373) defines the phenomenological approach as the approach to a study which aims to represent the experiences from within the person's own subjective world.

This type of research is more individualistic than the social constructionism applied by discourse analysts and it involves a deeper penetration into the individual's mental world (Hayes, 2000:171-172). Denzin and Lincoln (1998:198) explained that qualitative research implies an emphasis on process and meaning that are vigorously examined. The areas which qualitative research emphasise as stated in the first part of the paragraph are not measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity and frequency because that would involve numerical values. Yates (2004:158) also emphasised that qualitative research does not deal with variables but investigates a topic in a given context. Qualitative researchers are concerned with behaviour from the subjects' point of view or their perspectives.

Qualitative research is, as explained by Bannister *et al.* (1994:168), an attempt to capture the sense that lies within, and that structures what we say about what we do. It is an exploration, elaboration and systemisation of the significance of an identified phenomenon

and the illuminative representation of meaning, of a delimited issue of a problem. Qualitative research is used to answer the 'why', the 'how' and the 'what' types of questions. It is not used for the 'how many' questions; that is the provenance of the quantitative research school of thought (Webb, 2002: 164). In practising qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of research (Marais & Poggenpoel, 2003:167). This was true in the case of this study since the researcher had to be there with questioning and listening skills to conduct the focus groups and compile the responses to the study objectives.

According to Yates (2004:155-171), in exploring human views and perceptions one would use data collection methods like in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and non-participant observation. Focus group discussions were found to be the most appropriate for this study by the research team because they allow for group encouragement, as group members stimulate each other to participate. Besides that, the discussions are more relaxed and generate considerable amounts of information from different participants within a short time (Krueger, 1994:75).

Bloor *et al.* (2001:186) explained that the size of a focus group could range from four to twelve. The group must be small enough for everyone to have the opportunity to share insights and yet it should be large enough to provide diversity of perceptions. An average size of six per focus group was used for this study, the smallest being four and the largest ten. Most groups had eight participants. This number was noticeably the most manageable size for a focus group.

3.3 Ethical consideration

The consent form that had the purpose of the study, the research team and method of data collection was attached to the leaflet given to the consumers to sign and bring with them to the focus group meeting (Annexure C). The rights of the consumer to choose to participate were explained in this form. The form sought permission from the consumers to record the proceedings of the focus group discussions in which they participated. The participants were also assured of confidentiality of the procedures. Ethical approval for the project was obtained from the Ethics Committee (project number 04k11).

3.4 Subject selection

The target population consisted of Potchefstroom consumers buying from the local clothing and interior retail outlets, namely Woolworths, Sheet Street, Mr Price and Topics. The shops selected have clear principles regarding acceptable quality. It has also been observed that these shops have labels on their products, some of which are special labels for the specific shop. Woolworths is one such example.

At first, the criterion for a consumer to be included in the focus group was that he or she should be observed reading a textile product label. Permission for this was obtained from the store managers of all the stores used. A letter used for this purpose can be viewed in annexure A. However, not many people were seen reading a label in the stores. When the first criterion did not produce the expected results, a second one was decided on, namely that the consumer should at least be engaged in assessing the product somehow, either by feeling or handling it or just by holding it up to check on the drapability. Assessment of the ability of the product to stretch was added to the selection criterion which was used to select some participants for the focus groups.

Focus groups provide for a means of gathering qualitative data from a group of participants, preferably with some substantial knowledge of the topic of discussion (Krueger 1994: 48). To ensure that the participants had sufficient knowledge, purposive sampling was used. This is a method of sampling where, as explained by Webb (2002:86), the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of the researcher's judgement of their capabilities. Ary *et al.* (1990:127), Kinnear and Taylor (1996:84) and Williams (2003:95) agree that in this way of sampling the researcher builds a sample that satisfies the specific needs of the study being conducted.

The nature of the study also played a major role in the decision on the sampling method. Perceptions can only be formed after an object has been seen, touched, tasted, smelled and or heard (Solomon, 2004:298; Wilkie, 1994:189) and for these reasons only the consumers who read the labels or examined a textile item in some way were included in the focus groups. Further inclusion criteria were that these consumers had to be adults, with some form of income, and to be responsible for making the final decisions on textile purchases made for the home or family.

3.5 Recruitment

The process of recruiting the consumers was the most frustrating part of the study to the researcher. One obvious reason was the language problem. Potchefstroom citizens are predominantly Afrikaans speaking. To the researcher, as a foreigner who cannot speak the local language, this posed a serious problem. Some potential participants who qualified to be part of the focus groups could either not understand English or were simply not willing to hold a conversation in English.

Language plays a very important role in conducting a focus group discussion because it is a phenomenological method where people are coming to grips with the complexities of human behaviour (Louw & Edwards, 1997:584). When using this method the participants are expected to and must be allowed to tell their personal experiences of life in their own words (Hayes, 2000:8; Louw & Edwards, 1997:584). This means that if different languages are spoken, the discussions will be impossible.

When approached and a prospective participant agreed to participate in a focus group discussion to be held on a date most suitable to him or her, a consent form and an invitation note that had the details of the what study would involve, were handed to the consumers (Annexure B & C).

3.6 Measures for ensuring trustworthiness

As stated by Winter (2000:24) and also by Krefting (1991:56), validity and reliability are not applicable to qualitative research. Instead, terms like trustworthiness, worthy, relevant, plausible, confirmable, credible and/or representativeness are considered more appropriate. It is for this reason that the researcher found it worth employing some measures to ensure that the research would be and could be regarded as scientific and trustworthy (Creswell, 1994:164; Mishler, 1990:99; Wolcott, 1990:189).

All four criteria of ensuring trustworthiness, namely applicability, consistency, neutrality, and truth-value, were used (Krefting, 1991: 214-222). The details of the application of the strategies to obtain each criterion are given below:

Applicability The strategy of transferability was used to make it applicable. This entails the use of a purposive sample. The sample included only consumers who had an interest

in textile labels. A dense description of the methodology and results, including verbatim quotations, was given.

Consistency This was ensured by using the strategy of dependability. The researcher and the study leader (independent coder) analysed the raw data separately and identified categories, themes and concepts, after which consensus discussions were held. The same question guide was used for each focus group.

Neutrality This was obtained by using the strategy of conformability. All records and transcripts of the respondents were kept. The group discussions were also coupled with consumers' handling of actual labels and field notes were taken during the discussions to confirm the respondents' views.

Truth-value This was obtained by using the strategy of credibility. A qualitative study can be considered credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretations of human experiences that people who share the same experience will recognise the description. To achieve this, a pilot study was performed to explore the research setting. Participants were allowed enough time to express their views during the focus group sessions. Field notes were discussed with the correspondents to confirm their opinions, literature control was used for verifying the data and a co-researcher reviewed the raw data as well as the analysed data.

3.7 Data collection

3.7.1 Conducting focus group discussions

The focus groups were held at Maestro's Coffee Shop situated at the River Walk shopping mall in Potchefstroom. Maestro's is a quiet coffee shop that was found conducive for group discussion and the interior of the shop is welcoming and of professional class. This made some of the participants feel honoured, which was mission accomplished on the part of the research team.

The participants were allowed to order tea or coffee with an accompaniment of their choice. This was done as a gesture in appreciation of their willingness to participate in the study and as an incentive. The participants were also given a monetary gift as a token of

appreciation. This remuneration was placed in an envelope together with a “Thank you” message and given to the participants (Annexure E).

The questions, which were carefully developed after considerable reflection, were reduced from an initial number of twelve to the final number of three. This was done to allow the participants to discuss the topic freely and extensively. It meant therefore that the researcher used listening skills to identify the participants who gave all the information needed. Some participants needed to be prompted to still say more. Krueger (1994:52) justifies this by saying that the moderator is the person who actually facilitates the discussion.

The questions, written on small cards, were given to the participant at the beginning of the discussion and they were given a few minutes to read them. (The focus group discussion questions can be seen in annexure D). Then the researcher read out the questions to the participants aloud. A single question was addressed at a time. It must be noted that during the focus group discussions, no pressure was exerted on the participants to reach consensus. This is the unique element of the focus groups (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:188; Krueger, 1994:50). After each focus group discussion the annotations made during the session were discussed with the participants to ensure that they agree about the summary, thus increasing the credibility of data through a member check.

The researcher had to be patient in asking questions in such a way that participants would not feel rushed, but rather relaxed and would be able to supply the information requested from them. This slow, relaxed environment gave each participant a chance to share his or her views. It is the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that no one dominates the discussions, and that all participants say something in response to each question of discussion. The skills to control and manage the focus group discussions were practised in the pre-pilot sections of this study. After the third focus group was held, data saturation was reached and the other discussion groups were held to confirm the findings.

3.7.2 Data analysis

The recorded data were first listened to on the evening following the discussion to avoid losing the essence and impressions of the actual discussion. The tape was listened to twice at first, followed by a third time during which it was transcribed verbatim, repeating for

clarity. The thematic qualitative approach was used to analyse the data. This form of analysis is a useful way of exploring the richness of quality data. Hayes (2000:171) explains that themal analysis involves identifying particular themes, which occur in the material that is being studied.

Hayes (2000:171) goes on to say that these themes may emerge from the data as they are analysed. Alternatively themes may have been determined prior to the analysis, in which case the analysis would consist of identifying statements which relate to them. From the transcribed data important ideas about the label that corresponded with the objectives and the guiding questions posed were listed. The noted points were then categorised into themes. It must be kept in mind that these themes were identified in correlation with the objectives of the study.

Literature control was conducted to verify the results of the research. One or more quotes per theme were selected and supported by references to relevant literature.

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CHAPTER 4

RESULT PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter the results in terms of responses from the participants are presented and discussed in relation to the literature reviewed. The responses will be discussed as they are being presented in a narrative manner. The way in which the objectives were discussed during data collection will be maintained in the reporting of the results. For instance the issues of discussion were in the following order:

- The awareness of a label
- Consumers' perceptions about the textile labelling
- The influence information on the labels has on the consumer's decision making when purchasing textile products

From the responses to each question, certain concepts emerged which were selected, grouped and coded into themes and categories. The same concepts may appear under all three objectives. They however will be responding to the particular objective being discussed at a time.

It must be noted that the USA Federal Trade Commission (FTC) based on the International Organisation of Standards (ISO) makes the laws and acts referred to in the document in America. There are presently no laws and acts governing textile product labelling in South Africa. The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) now called standards South Africa (stanSA) has a few regulations that are also based on the standards set by the ISO.

In answering the question posed as “what is a label?” The participating consumers identified the label in two areas; those areas were in terms of its nature and in terms of the information the labels provide. The discussions under awareness will therefore be focused on the theme of appearance. The second theme will be on the information known by the participating consumers to be provided on the label.

4.1 Objective 1: Awareness

4.1.1 Theme 1: Nature of a label

In this theme the nature of textile labels that can be observed and felt or otherwise identified was discussed. It is in this theme that participating consumers' awareness about the textile label was evaluated. Different concepts came up and are reported in the paragraphs to follow.

4.1.1.1 Concept 1: Attachment of a textile label

The participating consumers identified a textile label as an extra to the actual textile product. They also noted that it is attached in some way to the garments. In the discussion it became apparent that according to the participating consumers a textile product label is a different item from the garment and the two serve different purposes. This was mentioned by one of the participating consumers who said:

“.....it is an extra piece of fabric attached to the garment or any textile product...”

On a similar issue another consumer said:

“.....labels are attachments on the textile products....”

The consumers' awareness was backed up by Belck *et al.* (1984: 94) who said that labels were sewn on or hang tags on the garments. An additional back up of the consumers' awareness confirming statements from the literature is available. The SABS (2001:7) states that labels should be marked directly on the fabric, securely attached to the article, or attached in a non-permanent way using a swing ticket, normally referred to as a hang tag, or in the form of a note on the container or commercial document accompanying the goods.

The consumers were also aware that the textile product labels are attached to the garments in some suitable way. Since labels are not part of a garment in the same way that a sleeve or collar would be, the consumers knew that a label could not simply be placed anywhere in a garment. To make a point clear one of the participating consumers said:

“.....it is sewn somewhere in the corner or seam of a product.....”

Despite the understanding the consumers have about labels, the participating consumers made no mention of the hangtags as part of information related to the products. They informed the researcher that they have seen them but have never regarded them as a form of labelling. They said this when the hangtags were shown to them by the researcher in an attempt to tap their memory.

4.1.1.2 Concept 2: Form of identification

The consumers also mentioned that they sometimes use the labels to mark their children's clothes for easy identification at school where other children will be wearing the same uniform. They added that some of the textile product labels already make a provision for that function in which case the label will have "name" written on it and dotted lines where the name can be written. One of the consumers said:

"..... we sometimes use these labels to mark our children's clothes when they go to school by writing the names of the child on the dotted line provided....."

4.1.2 Theme 2: Information provided by the textile product label

The consumers agreed that the labels always bear valuable information to the consumer and the ultimate caretaker of the product. The labels were clearly regarded as of great importance to the consumers that participated in this study. The concepts that follow clarify this more specifically.

4.1.2.1 Concept 1: Importance of information

Much and important information is provided by the textile product label as identified by the participating consumers. According to these consumers, the information is of great importance. In accordance with this, one of the consumers said:

".....it always has some information on it....."

The other consumer added by saying;

".....these labels bear important information about the product....."

In relation to the consumers' awareness discussed above, Belck *et al.* (1984:94) and Kadolph (1998:151) agree that even though existing labelling laws are far from perfect or inclusive, they do provide valuable information for the consumer to use in selecting textile products and in caring for them properly. The type of information was also identified by the consumers as the size of the product, fibre content of the product, and country of origin, care instructions, name of the manufacturers, brand name and any other special treatment that may accompany the product to enhance its serviceability.

The consumers were in agreement with Drew (1992:44) who stated that the information on a typical textile label will include information about the fibre content of fabric used to make up the product, the country of origin, care instructions and name or registration number (RN) of the manufacturer. In addition, the findings of a study done by Chowdhary (2003:244) also support the findings of the consumers that labels and hangtags had useful information.

4.1.2.2 Concept 2: Size

In discussing information about the size of a product, consumers agreed that size is always given on the label. One of the consumers said:

“.....such information will include size.....”

The other consumer put it in the following manner:

“.....yes, I think the information about size is important it is also interesting how sizes differ in different countries.....”

It is true after all that sizes in different countries are likely to differ, and even in the same country for the different designers. This is supported by Winks (1997:1-2) who informs that the sizing systems vary from country to country. According to Winks (1997:1) it can happen that sizes differ in different countries, their effect on people may also differ within one country, depending on the style and type of garment.

4.1.2.3 Concept 3: Fibre content

The other piece of information the consumers identified was the fibre content of the fabric making up the textile product. They agreed that it is usually provided on the labels even though some labels seem to be ignoring it. One of them told the group that:

“.....the label provides information about the textile product itself, which is its fibre content.....”

Brown & Rice (1998:23) and Stone (1999:140) agree that the textile fibre identification act of 1960 which was last amended in 1986 was set up in the USA to protect the consumers against the false identification of fibre content. Drew (1992:43) and Kadolph (1998:150) point out that for the act to meet the fibre identification requirements; a label has to disclose the fibre content in percentages of each in a garment in order of predominance, accurate within 3% with a zero tolerance to the 100% contents. According to Brown & Rice (1998:23), Drew (1992:43) and Kadolph (1998:152) the types of fibres have to be listed in descending order. Only the fibres that constitute 5% or more should be listed fully unless fibre content below 5% contributes significantly to the performance of the garment.

4.1.2.4 Concept 4: Country of origin

Country of origin was the next piece of information in line for discussion. It was also identified as familiar to consumers and therefore they would expect to see it on the textile labels. One consumer said:

“.....the label also includes the information on where the product was made, the country of origin.....”

Literature supports the consumers' opinion on the issue of the inclusion of information about the country of origin. Brown & Rice (1998:20) state that in today's global market, textile products may possibly be manufactured in one country, with yarn spun in another country, fabric constructed in another country and application of dye or other finishes done in the fourth country. The information about the country of origin is of utmost importance in exported garments (Cooklin, 1997:118).

4.1.2.5 Concept 5: Care instructions

Care instructions proved to be the most popular piece of information to the consumers. They were mostly aware of the existence of this information and would identify different forms in which it is usually given on the label. They identified the set of care instructions as based on washing, drying, ironing, dry-cleaning and bleaching. It was, however, apparent that some of the care instructions were better understood in comparison with the others. When the care symbols were shown to the consumers for identification, some of the less important details on the symbols could not be identified even though the symbols themselves were understood.

To clarify the awareness extent of the consumers regarding the care instructions, some quotations articulated by some of the consumers are used.

“.....information on dry-cleaning and hand washing is provided on the labels.....”

“.....it gives the care instructions and definitely the washing instructions.....”

“.....non shrinkage, colour fastness, hand wash, machine wash, and tumble dry instructions must always be on the label.....”

“.....they will tell you how to take good care of the garment, which is how to wash, dry and iron it.....”

The instructions must be provided and according to the law governing the garment labelling in the United States of America it is a prerequisite for such a garment to be accepted for sale on the market (Hatch, 1993:143). Only standard terminology, in most cases set by the International Organisation of Standards, may be used in the labels (Kadolph, 1998:157). Care labels as Cooklin (1997:118) notes, provide very specific information regarding washing and ironing temperatures, whether bleaching agents may be used or not, and the suitable type of dry cleaning solvents utilised if needed.

4.1.2.6 Concept 6: Name of the manufacturer

The name of the manufacturer and the brand names are discussed together here because for both of them there was little to be said by the consumers. Even in the little that they had to say the two were used interchangeably. One of the participants simply said:

“.....the brand name is there too.....”

Brown & Rice (1998:20) and Kadolph (1998:153) agree that information about the manufacturer must be provided on the label. It is required that the manufacturer's name and registration number (RN) should appear on the label.

4.2 Objective 2: Consumer perceptions about textile product labels

This portion of the results addresses the second objective that contributes most to the achievement of the whole study of perceptions. From the gathered literature, perception is one of the internal or individual determinants of the ultimate consumer behaviour displayed by the action or the kind of purchases made. Perceptions that the participating consumers had about issues of textile labelling are a result of a process that started with exposure to an external stimulus, the attention paid to it and the interpretations made about the information; and ultimately perception formed (Hawkins, *et al.*, 1998:290). This part will report on the perceptions the consumers had and the bases thereof.

Perceptions of the consumers were explored by asking one open-ended question “What are your perceptions about the textile product label?” that made almost all the participants want to say something. The consumers' perceptions can be grouped into two categories:

- 1) The perceptions about the nature of the label
- 2) Perceptions about the information found on the label

4.2.1 Category 1: Perceptions of the consumers about the nature of the label

The themes that emerged under the perceptions of consumers regarding the nature of the label are: legibility, type of label, position of the label and an object of irritation.

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Legibility

In the context of this study legibility means the ease with which the consumers can find, see and read the label. A number of concepts emerged from this theme and those were fading, the colour of the label, the font size used on the label, the dimensions of the label itself and the symbols used on the label to disseminate information.

4.2.1.1.1 Concept 1: Fading

The consumers had a complaint about the label that fades off, resulting in loss of the information. Labels should in as much as possible behave like the articles to which they have been attached. In addition the labels should remain as legible as possible for as long as the lifespan of the product they have been attached to. A participating consumer who had experienced a problem with a fading label said:

“.....a winter item is washed once or twice, in the next winter season the label information is gone and the information is forgotten so proper care will not be practiced, that garment may not last for a long time.....”

Kadolph (1998:150) reinforced the perceptions of the consumers by saying that the principle upon which the textile labelling procedure works is based on the fact that textile product labels must be permanent, and must therefore remain legible for the entire lifespan of the article to which it has been attached. And so should the information.

4.2.1.1.2 Concept 2: Colour of the label

The consumers raised a complaint that some of the labels were made of colours that were not user friendly, especially to the aged and the aging. The particular group of consumers who raised this complaint explained that a very bright colour was sometimes used and it became a torture to read such a label. One of the consumers said:

“..... the colours that the manufacturers use, sometimes they make me wonder if they are aware that as people age reading becomes an extra effort. The colours are sometime too bright to read in the shops that have these special lights.....”

At least the consumers' fears can be allayed by the fact that there is a rule in SA that demands that manufacturers use only the acceptable colours in making the labels (SABS, 2000:3).

4.2.1.1.3 Concept 3: Font size

The other defect of the textile product labels, as the participating consumers perceived, was the font size used on the labels. The consumers were concerned that the font used was sometimes too small for anyone to read with comfort. One of the consumers said:

“.....sometimes it is like the manufacturers want to discourage us from reading the labels, the font is as small as that use on some binding contracts.....”

According to SANS (2004:7) the label must be of an acceptable size that conforms to the standards of manufacturing in South Africa.

4.2.1.1.4 Concept 4: Dimensions of the label

They also said that other labels were made too small. One had to struggle trying to read them in the poor lighting conditions of the shops. One participant in particular had this to say about the size of the label:

“.....the size of the label itself must not be too small.....”

4.2.1.1.5 Concept 5: The symbols used

One other concern the consumers raised was that some of the symbols used on the labels need a very knowledgeable person to read and understand. As much as the symbols are helpful where languages are not known, one still needs to have an idea about their meaning. One consumer said:

“.....one needs a degree to understand some of these symbols.....”

As far as the consumers are concerned the symbols are very helpful because they help in cases where language could otherwise be a barrier of communication in today's global trading. Some consumers said:

“.....using care symbols is good because it is easier to interpret the symbols than the language, some people can not read English.....”

“..... even if a person can read symbol are easier to look at.....”

Kyllo (2003:10) pointed out the value of symbols in labels by stating that care symbols are the easiest way to have a multilingual label. Kyllo (2003:10) also noted that the harmonisation on the label has not yet happened at a global level. This could be the reason for the misunderstanding the consumers are experiencing, especially now that manufacturers are dealing with the international global market that calls for a consideration of language which should not be allowed to become a barrier in the understanding of the labels.

4.2.1.2 Theme 2: Type of label

Different types of labels were identified by the consumers during the discussions. The consumers were familiar with all the types. The types provided by the researcher were the ones that have information printed on them and the ones that have information woven or embroidered on them. The handling of the different types of labels assisted the consumers to clarify their points in informing the researcher about the comfort of the labels especially in the textile apparel products.

4.2.1.2.1 Concept 1: Fibre content of the label

The fibre content of the label itself was a point of concern raised by the consumers. The label, as the consumers stated, is made of different fibre content from the one making up the garment to which it is attached. This was confirmed by the consumers who explained that sometimes when ironing a garment using a suitable temperature, the label is damaged by the iron. In relation to this issue one consumer said:

“.....the printed label sort of melts when ironed accidentally with the iron that comfortably irons the article it 'labels'. When this label dries up it scratches like nothing and nobody can stand that, it does not only irritate but it also hurts. The discomfort is unbearable.....”

Sharing the concern discussed above one participant said:

“..... the label care instructions do not say anything about the label itself, so it might as well be made of the same material as the garment, otherwise consumers be warned.....”

One consumer echoed what the other had already mentioned about the effects of high temperatures of the iron above by saying:

“.....ironing instructions given are for the actual garment and it says nothing about the label, so the ironing temperature that suits the garment in most cases does not suit the label. It actually destroys it and makes it hard, irritating and unbearable.....”

Most consumers confessed that they solve this problem by cutting off the label and simply forgetting about it. But this also brings about other problems. The consumers mentioned these when they said:

“.....it is also worth considering whether the label can be taken off with ease without doing any harm to the fabric of the actual product. At times we use scissors.....”

Yet another consumer shared perceptions about the label and the irritation it causes sometimes by saying;

“..... I would really prefer not to have it on the clothes because it irritates and sometimes it scratches after ironing.....”

There was however a consolation given by one of the consumers:

“..... the material making up the woven label remains soft and comfortable even after ironing. The high temperatures of an iron do not affect it.....”

The concerns of the consumers were not quite unjustified as the same issues were addressed by the reviewed literature where SANS (2004:3) pointed out that the labels must be made in accordance with sound manufacturing practices, and be of acceptable material.

4.2.1.2.2 Concept 2: Construction of a label

The labels' construction and the way in which the information is presented on the labels were identified as printed or of a complex construction which could either be woven or embroidered. In the printed labels the information is simply printed onto the labels in a different colour, while otherwise the information may be woven or embroidered onto the label.

The consumers had concerns about these ways of applying information onto the labels. This was noted by one consumer who voiced a concern that the labels sometimes did not provide the comfort they were supposed to be experiencing in textile apparel. The consumer said:

".....we want to do away with the printed labels and adopt only the ones with information woven on them. This is because the printed one irritates when ironed by mistake and information on it fades....."

On the contrary another consumer had this to say about methods of label construction:

".....the material making up the woven label remains soft and comfortable even after ironing. The high temperatures do not affect it....."

The concern raised by the consumers was not really off-track as it was also addressed by SANS (2004:3) by informing that the label must be made in accordance with sound manufacturing practices, uniform and of acceptable material, make and finish.

4.2.1.3 Theme 3: Position of the label

Consumers had a concern about the ever changing positioning of a textile product label with a special interest in apparel. This change seemingly brings about some confusion to consumers. What the consumers worry about is supported by literature as Cooklin

(1997:118) stated that the labels are of great benefit to the wearer, and it is an important aspect in finishing the sample garments to make sure that the label is in the right position where it will be easy to see.

4.2.1.3.1 Concept 1: Visibility

The participating consumers expressed their dissatisfaction with the visibility of the labels in textile products. At one point it was known that a label will be attached at the back neck and that made life easy, for today's consumer with a tight life schedule. Presently consumers have to spend time in shops searching for a label. This is not one of the favoured activities. One participant complained:

".....imagine having to stand in the store fiddling with the garment trying to locate the label, in a store that is most probably not lit appropriately for reading, but for the appeal to the consumers....."

The issue became one that was discussed at length. More consumers had the following to say about the positioning of the label:

".....I think they must be visible, it must be easy to see so that you don't have to spend time searching for it....."

The complaints of the consumers are addressed by Kadolph (1998:150) who states that labels in garments have to be as visible as possible, and that their positioning is therefore of utmost importance. The position of the sewn on labels in garments is specified by the Care Label Regulation and is based mostly on the product type (Kadolph, 1998: 150).

4.2.1.3.2 Concept 2: Consistency in positioning

The consumers are of an opinion that there should be consistency in the position of the label and it should not change. It was at this point that the consumers mentioned other uses of the label that are affected by the never ending change in position of the labels. For instance for apparel items that have necklines, it has been a norm that they would have the label attached to the back neck. That is also helpful when training children to dress themselves up, because it is easy to identify the side with a label as the back. Now if the label position was changed it would confuse the routine. One participant said:

“.....Change is good but this one with the position of the label in clothes mostly confuses, you will be surprised that not only the children but even adults get confused by the fact that you never know where the label is.....”

Kadolph (1998:150) echoed the consumers' concerns by informing that the positioning of the labels is of utmost importance, and that it should therefore be consistent. Kadolph (1998:150) continues by saying that the position of the label is, however, determined by the product type.

4.2.1.3.3 Concept 3: Actual placement

The actual side on which the label is placed was also of concern. Some of the consumers even had some suggestions of the most suitable places in the garments. There was, however, a difference in opinion as opposed to other concepts. Some consumers preferred the label at the back and others preferred it on the side. One of the consumers said:

“.....it is better to have the label on the side seam because when placed at the back neck it scratches and irritates.....”

4.2.1.4 Theme 4: The label as object of irritation

Participating consumers shared their concerns about the labels that irritate in several ways, some of which affect one's self esteem negatively, while others simply cause a continuous discomfort to the body. The ways in which labels were found to be irritating were thematically analysed into specific concepts below.

4.2.1.4.1 Concept 1: Scratching

The researcher was informed by the participating consumers that it was not only the position where the label was placed that contributed to the discomfort it caused the wearer. To a certain extent the type of label had a role to play as well. The printed labels that consumers said were most of the time made up of a silky material would not irritate at first, but after laundering particularly ironing, it would melt and dry into a hard residue that would scratch. It is due to the discomfort caused by the scratching that some consumers confessed:

“.....when I cannot bear the discomfort of scratching, I just take a pair of scissors and cut it off completely; and unfortunately the information is gone after the cutting.....”

4.2.1.4.2 Concept 2: Embarrassment

According to the consumers, the labels have a tendency to pop out and appear where they are not supposed to be. They belong to the wrong side of the articles but they come out. This, to the consumers, meant that the labels were not very well attached to the wrong side where they were supposed to stay. This popping out of the labels happened almost all the time and was embarrassing since one would not know when it had popped out. One's self esteem would therefore be affected negatively. An irritated consumer participating in the group reported this:

“.....Just yesterday, my first day at the University where I was supposed to make a lasting impression, guess what happened; my label kept popping out and my neighbour kept putting it back where it belongs, and down it went with my good first impression.....”

4.2.2 Category 2: Consumers' perceptions about the information on the label

As it became apparent from the discussions regarding awareness at the beginning of the chapter, consumers expect to gain some specific types of information from the labels. For that reason, themes emerged from the focus group discussions with regard to perceptions addressing the information and they were as follows: size of the product, fibre content, country of origin, care instructions, name of the manufacturer and brand name.

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Size of the product

As one piece of information provided by the label, size was seen by the participating consumers to be insufficiently informative for one to make a decision based on it alone. Furthermore the labels in South Africa are according to the participants not standardised. The two concepts regarding the information on size emerged as standardisation and range of measurements.

4.2.2.1.1 Concept 1: Standardisation of size

The participating consumers perceived the sizing systems in South Africa as non-standard. With globalisation in the picture one can expect more problems with sizes. This is because according to the consumers a size '10' in one shop does not fit the same person the same way as a size '10' in the next shop. The thought of the consumers is that worse can be expected from different countries. Consumers are misled by the information that is not standardised; therefore information about size in South Africa is not fully dependable. One always has to try on the garments, as for other products like bed linen it becomes even more complicated. The visit to the fitting room is helpful but wastes the valuable time of the consumers with the kind of lifestyles most working consumers are leading today. One consumer who has apparently had a bad experience with the sizing system related this incident:

"..... I once saw a shirt, fitted it and it was the right size but I wanted a different colour. The next day I sent my wife to buy the shirt of the same size and style in a preferred colour, as promised the colour was there but the shirt it did not fit, the style was the same and the size marked on the label the same. The only difference about the two shirts was the colour and the stock-lot. This means that a size large in their old stock was not the same as a large in the new stock....."

Winks (1997:2) shared a concern that sizes can vary substantially, even with regard to the same garment type. Not only are there differences from one country to another, but also within the same country and within the same shop. The sizing system for one branch of the clothing industry does not necessarily coincide with that of another. The size given on the label could therefore only be a guide but not invariably be depended upon.

4.2.2.1.2 Concept 2: Range of measurements

The participating consumers were of an opinion that the inclusion of measurements in a range could be very helpful, as this would make it possible for consumers to check their sizes based on the body measurements in range that would be given on the label. One participant pointed out the following:

".....there are already some shops that include the body measurements in range for purposes of making our life simple. True enough this does not actually

standardise the sizes but at least it makes the choice of sizes possible without being forced to go into the fitting room.....”

The consumers felt that this could be helpful, only the basic measurements such as hipline, waistline and bust line should be included in a range. This would, according to the consumers, make the size selection easier. To echo the importance of the inclusion of the measurements one consumer said:

“.....in a ruler or measuring tape 44cm will always be 44cm no matter who measures it. If they put sizes and the measurements in range, then we can know that indeed the size measures the given figures.....”

To echo the need for the inclusion of the measurement ranges on the label, Brown & Rice (1998:132) are of an opinion that a set of body measurements related to the figure types serve as the basis for the numbered sizing of apparel. This therefore would mean that the size together with the basis from which it was derived will be on the label which will make it even more helpful.

4.2.2.1.3 Concept 3: Size indication

The consumers wondered why sizes were presented in different formats. Some manufacturers use the more general version of “small, medium and large” and others use numeric version like “8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20”. To demonstrate their confusion of the size indication consumers said:

“.....The way in which the size is presented on the labels is not the same. Presently different brands present size using a system that suits them. This can make choices difficult.....”

Brown & Rice (1998:133) state that there are two types of sizing systems called numbered and lettered sizing systems. The lettered system is general and is simply “S” for small, “M” for medium and “L” for large with no specific measurement ranges. The latter though numeric is not as precise as one would expect because it also puts a number of variety of measurements in one size, for instance a range of measurements qualify to be in

size “8”. The need for standardisation, especially with the sizing systems, cannot be over emphasised.

4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Fibre content

According to the responses the consumers appeared to find fibre content as essential for inclusion in the label information because it is a determining factor as to whether or not the product is suitable for the intended purpose. The difference in fibre content brings about the difference in behaviour of the textile products due to different fibre properties the different fibres have. It is from this variety of properties that consumers either benefit or get a reason to complain. Several concepts emerged from the theme of fibre content and these are discussed below.

4.2.2.2.1 Concept 1: Resiliency

The participating consumers also informed the researcher that their lifestyles determine the type of fibres making up the products they choose. As a result it is helpful to them in making a choice that would suit their lifestyles if the fibre content is indicated on the label. Certain fibres are good in a suitcase, as the participating consumers put it, while others are not.

“..... I travel a lot in my lifestyle and would therefore want to know the fibre content of the textile product, especially clothing, to be in a position to decide whether it will suit my “ever on the move” kind of lifestyle. I like apparel that does not crease a lot like polyester products”

According to Hatch (1993:251), the properties of most synthetic fibres allow them the resiliency, they therefore, do not crease easily, unlike some natural fibres, like cotton, which are not crease resistant but need regular ironing.

4.2.2.2.2 Concept 2: Absorbency

For those who participate in sports the absorbent fibres are suitable. This is a group of consumers who prefer the strong fibres that absorb moisture well. A problem of ironing to them is a minor one and can be compromised. This group would prefer to see “cotton” and “linen” on the textile product labels. One consumer put it this way:

“.....it is important to identify the fibres in the label for one’s comfort. Polyester is not a natural fibre, in it you can really get hot and you sweat a lot.....”

The other consumer had this to say:

“.....in summer we wear cotton dresses because they are cool to wear as they will absorb the moisture. The same goes for athletes their shirts must be made of cotton otherwise they will feel clammy and the garments full of sweat would stick to their heated bodies and make them feel worse.....”

For the comfort of the product during wear, certain properties contribute favourably. If the fibres that are known to have such properties are listed on the labels, then the choice will be made simpler. For instance, Louw and Dennyssen (1993:153) state that cotton is absorbent. They explain that cotton absorbs a moderate amount of moisture and that helps to cool down the body, making it suitable and comfortable to wear in hot weather.

4.2.2.2.3 Concept 3: Effects of heat

Cotton is inclined to wrinkle and it therefore requires a lot of ironing. However, that is, not an invincible problem because the resistance to high temperatures will make cotton stand the ironing it requires. Polyester on the other hand does not require much ironing, but being a thermoplastic fibre; it is highly sensitive to high temperatures and can even get destroyed by such temperatures. It is necessary to include the information about the fibre content on the labels. One of the consumers reported:

“.....it is important to know the fibre content of the product as it gives one an idea of how it behaves when exposed to heat”

According to Louw and Dennyssen (1993:153) cotton is strong and it is not destroyed by high temperatures, hence it’s widely used in the making of napkins, dish towels and kitchen swabs, because these products are sometimes boiled to remove stains.

4.2.2.2.4 Concept 4: Allergenic potential

Consumers reported that in some cases allergic reactions develop from certain fibres.

“..... I for one would not buy a textile product whose fibre content is not stated, this is because my children develop allergies from some of the synthetic fibres.....”

To stress the importance of listing the fibre content, another consumer said:

“..... this point of allergic reactions is not just one point; it is a crucial one because if someone is allergic to something anything can happen.....”

Their perception about the fibre content information was that it has to be there and correct so that they will know whether the fabric of the article is suitable for them or their family members. The fibre that causes an allergy will be easy to avoid when it is written on the label. What the consumers are concerned about is based on facts because Belck *et al.* (1984:15) state that some people's bodies have a chemistry, which makes them allergic to certain fibres. Belck *et al.* go on to explain that typical signs of an allergic reaction would include itching, swelling, a rash and a burning sensation. The fact that the fibre content is given in percentages will actually solve this problem. The consumer with an allergic problem will be able to make an appropriate and informed choice.

4.2.2.2.5 Concept 5: Quality

Some consumers use the fibre names to identify quality of the product. It became apparent from the discussions that the natural fibres like cotton, wool, linen and silk are regarded as high quality fibres as opposed to the synthetic (man-made) fibres, which are regarded as low quality. This is not necessarily true because high quality can also be found in the man-made fibres. The natural fibres are not the only high quality fibres. This means that it is incorrect to determine quality by the type and origin of fibre. One of the participating consumers, however, had this to say about low quality:

“..... actually the manmade fibres are made to imitate the natural fibres and that makes them fibres of a lower quality than the natural fibres.....”

The misconception of the consumers was indicated by the comment made by one of the consumers about high quality who said:

“.....natural fibres are of high quality and I would happily pay more for a 100% natural fibre as opposed to a synthetic one.....”

The origin of the fibre cannot be used to determine the quality of a fibre and a product made from it (Merkel, 1991:7; Liddell, 1998:59). Quality depends entirely on the intended purpose of the end product, whether the product can actually perform as expected, last for as long as it is expected and withstand wearing under certain conditions set by the consumer and or manufacturer (Booth, 1969:556). For instance, the cycling shorts made from Lycra are as high a quality as one can expect them to be. The reason for that is the intended purpose of the cycling shorts. They need to have a high elasticity so that they can stretch with the moving parts of the body as the cyclist cycles along the way. Linen, which is a natural fibre, would therefore make poor quality cycling shorts, as they would not behave as required by the sports people.

Merkel (1991:8) states that quality is usually defined by words such as “excellence”, “superiority” and “merit”. It has been observed, however, that serviceability and the performance of the product in use are the major components of quality, as are the labour and skill of workmanship. Merkel (1991:9) continued by saying that the crucial issue surrounding the issue of quality is the ability of a product to retain substantially its original quality characteristics through an expected wear life. This therefore clarifies that the type of fibre does not determine quality. Quality can only be assessed through originality and efficiency in the expected performance.

4.2.2.3 Theme 3: Country of origin

The country of origin is one of the information pieces consumers had perceptions about and will be discussed in detail under different concepts that emerged from the focus group discussions. The country of origin indicates the country in which the product was manufactured. This however may be confusing as globalisation allows more than one country to work on one product before it is ready for consumers as a finished product. The name of a country brings about different perceptions to the consumers. Those concepts are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

4.2.2.3.1 Concept 1: Indication of quality

The participating consumers had different experiences with textile products from different countries. Each one of them could associate some countries with high quality textile products and others with poor quality textile products. Textile products that come from Asian countries like China, Japan and Hong Kong, especially those that are exported to South Africa, are believed to be of poor quality, while those made in India are believed to be of a high quality. Indian textile products are mostly made of natural fibres like cotton, wool, silk and linen. And this is highly appreciated by some consumers, as quoted by one consumer:

“.....oh I love wearing stuff from India, they use the softest cotton one can ever find they use mostly natural fibres and the hand crafted embroidery. It is such a pleasure wearing Indian styles.....”

There are other consumers who had an experience using products from other countries to an extent that they believe in the quality produced by such countries. Due to their trust in the particular countries they have become so loyal to such a country's products that they may not buy if products from that particular country concerned are not available.

The country of origin became more of interest to consumers after the “proudly South African” products were introduced. Some consumers started reading the labels specifically looking for the country of origin, to support the local market. One participant in particular said:

“..... Since I heard that products made in South Africa have their bar code starting with a six I always look for that number at the beginning of the bar code.....”

In addition to the consumers' choice of local products, Kotabe and Helsen (2004:376) say that in some countries consumers are urged to buy products made by local companies. There are consumers who started reading the labels in search of the information on the country of origin after imitation products from Japan and other Asian countries were demolished in South Africa a few years ago. At that time South Africa's aim was to protect its consumers against purchasing the imitation garments of poor quality still priced

high like the original high quality. In those days products made in China, Japan and Hong-Kong were avoided. The youth that participated in the focus group discussions revealed the following:

“.....my peers would laugh at me if they find out that I wear garments from the countries known and believed to produce poor quality products and that harms my status among my peers. For that reason I would check for the country of origin on the label and if it is a “fong-kong” I will not buy it.....”.

Even when the product is still competitive with “made in China” written on its label, it is judged negatively because of the reputation China textile products have in South Africa. Cooklin (1997:119) urges that information about the country of origin is of utmost importance if the garments are exported. This helps the consumer in the decision to support the local market or buy an imported product for reasons best known to the consumer.

4.2.2.3.2 Concept 2: Credibility

In as much as participating consumers had views about the country of origin stated previously, they also expressed their misunderstanding on this piece of information saying that they wonder how the one country of origin is decided upon because some products are produced in different countries at different stages of production. One consumer was recorded saying:

“.....some of these rich countries use the cheap labour in the developing countries in Africa but still say that the products are produced in their countries.....”

The consumers' confusion is understandable because Brown & Rice (1998:19) echo it by pointing out that in today's global market, textile products may possibly be manufactured in one country with yarn spun in a different country, fabric constructed in another country, dyed or printed in yet the fourth country while the fifth country may fabricate the fabrics into end-use products. Brown & Rice (1998:19-20) continue by explaining that the requirement of labelling is that only two countries are disclosed on the label and these two countries should be the last ones in the manufacturing sequence and the significant transformation must have been completed in these two disclosed countries. Normally if a

manufacturer reveals the country of origin of the product, then the country is more likely to be following the correct trading practices.

4.2.2.4 Theme 4: Care instructions

This piece of information guides the consumers in caring for the textile products so that they can maintain their product quality and possibly last for as long as expected. The consumers emphasised the importance and clarity of such instructions or any other special information that would assist in the general care of the product. All these concepts are discussed in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

4.2.2.4.1 Concept 1: Importance

The care instructions that are supposed to be included in the label are on the following laundry procedures: washing, drying, dry-cleaning, bleaching, and ironing. The perceptions that the consumers have about the care instructions provided by the textile label are based on the individual experiences with caring for the products. They were of an opinion that it is important to have the information about how the textile product is to be handled as this can contribute to the good maintenance of the product because the care instruction is given after a number of tests to make sure that the product can stand certain procedures without being damaged if the instructions given are followed. One of them said:

“.....without the care instructions it will not be easy for one to take proper care of the products and they will not last for long.....”

Whether the product needs an iron or not is yet another hassle. It is helpful therefore, to have the ironing instructions on the label as a guide in ironing properly. In a similar way not all textile products can be dried on the line or tumble dried. It is clear that drying instructions are of utmost importance otherwise the articles will lose shape. The bleaching instructions carry the same weight of importance. The consumers are of an opinion that it should be stated whether the textile product can be hand or machine-washed. The temperature of the water used for washing should always be stated. They said that it was good that symbols were used to give the washing instructions as they were easy to read. The importance of the washing instructions was emphasised by the consumer who said:

“.....the labels provide washing instructions which when followed to the last detail help maintain the quality of the product.....”

“.....the washing instructions are essential because one may machine wash something only to find that it shrinks or loses shape.....”

The washing instructions appeared to be of great assistance to the consumers because they tell the consumer how to wash the garment or any other textile product that may have been purchased. Brown & Rice, (1998:21); Hatch, (1993:86) and Kylo, (2003:13) all agree that the label specifies the temperature of the washing water. The inclusion of the care labels therefore becomes helpful in maintaining the quality of the product. The participating consumers were of an opinion that methods of washing should be specified where it is necessary. Because some consumers do not have a vast knowledge about textiles, identification of a suitable washing method cannot be detected easily.

“ regarding the fact that some of us are not so knowledgeable with textiles and how to handle them for the best results, we depend on the care instructions for laundering the articles.....”

In addition there are other garments that need to be dried in the shade and this should be included in the label. Not everybody knows about colourfastness and the influence of light. The consumers had perceived that the major importance of care instructions was to guide the consumer in the selection of the correct laundering procedures. It would be helpful if there would be some guidance in that aspect. The consumers would benefit if they would be informed about colourfastness, this is one of their concerns as mentioned in the first part of this paragraph. Liddell (1998:313) defines colourfastness as the ability of colour to remain despite of certain influences such as washing, dry-cleaning, perspiration, sunlight or rubbing. Some of them said:

“.....in any case we need the information about drying because otherwise we would tumble dry something only to shrink it to quarter of its original size.....”

“.....well some drying instructions are deceiving because it reads ‘do not tumble dry’ but when you do out of lack of other drying facilities, nothing happens.....”

4.2.2.4.2 Concept 2: Special information

In addition the consumers felt that it would be helpful to include information about any special treatment done to the textile product as well as any special way to handle the product. An example given by the consumers was information about the suitable type of detergents for washing the textile products. Consumers mentioned that there were washing instructions but these never informed or even suggested the suitable detergents so the decision would practically be based on trial and error. A concerned consumer said:

“.....include information about the type of detergent suitable for the fabric. Even if the name is not specified simply stating mild or strong will do.....”

4.2.2.5 Theme 5: Name of the manufacturer and brand name

Most of the participating consumers in the focus groups were not aware of the name of the manufacturer as part of the information found on the labels. It could be because the actual name is not given on the label.

4.2.2.5.1 Concept 1: The manufacturer

It became apparent that some of the consumers perceived information about the name of the manufacturer important and informative. This was seen to be of different values to the consumers, as stated by one of the participating consumers who said:

“..... it is good to have the name of the manufacturer on the label because I would want to know who to contact in case I have a complaint. This information is sometimes given as consumer help-line.....”

It is also true that the name of the manufacturer should be given on the label. Brown & Rice (1998:20) and Kadolph (1998:152) mentioned that only the registration number (RN) of the manufacturer would be required. This is intended to give the consumers knowledge of who to contact should there be a complaint.

4.2.2.5.2 Concept 2: Brand name as identification of the product

The brand names are placed in textile labels for several reasons. One of these reasons is to make identification easy, especially to people who are already familiar with the particular brand and are loyal to it. The presence of the brand name makes it easy for them to

identify the desired product easily and quickly. One of the consumers who is already familiar with one brand name had this to say:

“.....searching for a pair of jeans not knowing which brand name is preferred consumes a lot of time in the shop, but if I already know which brand name to look for, my life is simplified..... ”

Hatch (1993:135) states that a brand name may also be referred to as a trade mark and it is attached to goods by the manufacturer to identify them as sold by that specific company.

4.2.2.5.3 Concept 3: Brand name as symbol of status

For those consumers who have identified a brand in which they believe and are loyal to, that brand name becomes of utmost importance. A participating consumer who is a mother of a twenty three-year old son said:

“.....you should see my son he wears adidas all over himself. He wants adidas or nothing. He says he is as good as undressed without it. Most of his friends are the same.....”

Nilson (2003:5) supported these consumers' views by saying that a strong brand will finally have a core of dedicated, committed customers, usually representing a minority of the total customer universe. The brand gives them a sense of high class, high quality and sometimes it helps them to identify with others who follow the same trend. This concept of status is supported by Ind (2003:24-25) by noting that the brand identity is the common door into a relationship for most social classes.

The brand was most noticeable to younger consumers and the fashion followers during data collection. They regarded it as a symbol of status. Interestingly young consumers that participated in the study made it known that the brand name means more to them than it does to the adult consumers, some would even go without a pair of shoes if it is not of a label they trust. At the sight of the brand name and maybe the trademark, those who would want to follow that particular brand easily identify the product. The youth participant had this to say to the group:

“..... I do not have a lot of clothes but I try to buy what I am comfortable in around my friends because I just can't bear the humiliation of wearing something that would degrade my status with my friends.....”

According to Liddell (1998: 238) a brand name is part of the label information that helps the manufacturers to market themselves and for those who follow the brand, it helps them avoid perceived risk as they have grown to trust such a brand, they also identify well with it and will not easily buy anything else.

4.3 Objective 3: The influence that the information on the label has on consumers' purchasing behaviour

This part of the report focuses on the extent to which the information provided on the textile label influences the consumers in their decision making, at point of sale, to buy or not to buy the textile item.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Information

It became apparent from the focus group discussions that the information provided by the labels influences the purchasing behaviour of the participating consumers more than other aspects of the label. The specific pieces of information that actually influence the decision making are discussed in the following paragraphs based on the participating consumers' responses. Size, fibre content, care instructions, country of origin, and sometimes brand name were found to be influential in the decision making of purchases of textile products.

4.3.1.1 Concept 1: Size

This was discovered from the discussions with the participating consumers to be the first piece of information that influences the consumer to decide on buying or not buying. A participating consumer who explained the issue of size used the following illustration:

“.....imagine yourself in a shop; you see a shirt you like very much, the style, the colour and maybe the fabric. When you have to decide whether to buy the shirt or not, then the size is the only information that will help you decide.....”

What this actually means is that it does not matter how much an item may be liked, if it is the wrong size it will not be bought because it will not serve the purpose for which it was bought. In other words size influences the decision making of the consumer at the point of sale.

Size is one of the first pieces of information the consumers said they look for at point of sale/purchase. If a person is looking for a garment to wear, such a person will look for the size that fits. Likewise if bed linen is sought, then only the size that will fit the consumer's bed will be bought. For that reason size is essential and making choices would be almost impossible if the sizes were not given. To emphasise this point, one of the participants said:

“.....size influences my decision making directly because if it is not the right size there is no point in buying it.....”

4.3.1.2 Concept 2: Fibre content

It was discovered from the focus group discussions that the consumers do consider the fibre content when they are making purchases. There are three reasons identified for the stated consideration by the consumers. They are listed below:

- Some consumers reported that they and/or members of their families develop allergies towards some fibres. For that reason the fibres have to be identified in the label so that the choice can easily be made to avoid such fibres that cause problems.
- The properties that different fibres have make them behave in different ways to be suitable for different purposes. The participating consumers stated that their lifestyles differ and this would cause them to have different preferences. One of the consumers informed the group as follows:

“.....I travel a lot so I have to pack clothes that do not need to be ironed seriously, that is why I prefer polyester.....”

- The purposes for which the textile product is purchased also require that the consumers be aware of the fibre content of the textile product. One participating

consumer informed the group that the comfort of a garment is contributed to by the fibre properties. This consumer said:

“.....for a summer dress or an athlete vest it would be uncomfortable to use polyester, but cotton would be most appropriate.....”

It is only when the fibre content is included on the label that the consumers will be able to make informed choices.

4.3.1.3 Concept 3: Country of origin

The information is read by the consumers and lately exercises a tremendous influence since consumer education about the “proudly South African” campaign was introduced. About this a consumer said:

“.....ever since I heard this on a television, I want to support the local market, so I do look out for the country of origin sign to make sure I buy the South African products.....”

In some countries, consumers are urged to buy products made by local companies. In Australia, the “proudly Australian” label has proved to be a successful theme for home-grown companies (Kotabe & Helsen, 2004:377). This issue is still very fresh in South Africa but is making a noticeable mark on the South African market. A participating youth consumer informed the group that in their group of peers they judge quality by the “made in” label. There are countries that are notorious for importing poor quality products into South Africa. This consumer said:

“..... my friends would laugh at me if they see me wearing clothes made in China or any of the Asian countries because they are known to be selling poor quality products.....”

The effect of the country of origin that this consumer confessed about has some support from literature. According to Kotabe and Helsen (2004:376) there is ample evidence that for many products the “made in” information on the label matters a great deal to consumers. The authors went on to say that consumers often seem to rely very heavily on country-of-origin cues to evaluate products.

4.3.1.4 Concept 4: Care instructions

The care instructions form a piece of information that tells the consumer and or care taker of the purchased garment how to launder the textile item if it is desired that it stays in good condition for a long time. These instructions include washing, bleaching, drying, ironing and dry-cleaning. The specific instructions suitable for each item are given on the label, also what to avoid in general.

It was discovered in the discussions that the care instructions do influence the decision making of the consumers whether to purchase or not. The effect that the care instructions have on decision making is mostly affected and determined to a large extent by the personality and life style of individual consumers. One consumer who regarded herself as lazy and not willing to spend much time or energy on laundering and general maintenance of textile products said:

“..... I would not want to buy a garment that forces me to hand wash it, if to keep it in good conditions I will have to hand wash it, I might as well not buy it.....”

About dry cleaning the same consumer said:

“.....Again the dry-cleaning is expensive and I can not afford to dry-clean every time my textile product is dirty.....”

There were many of comments on dry cleaning by the participants, for example:

“... ..to be honest with you once I see dry clean only I avoid such a product. The fact is that dry cleaning is an expensive service....”

“... ..I personally hate the chemicals they use in dry cleaning so I would definitely avoid dry clean only clothes....”

“.....well occasionally I would have only a small collection of dry cleanable items in my wardrobe, especially if I only wear them for certain occasions so I would not have to dry clean them often.....”

In the continuation of the discussion, another participant had this to say about drying:

“..... The season contributes in the deciding on the drying method appropriate. In winter heavy clothes that take a long time to dry are worn more than those that dry quickly, so it will be helpful to buy clothes that can be tumble dried”

The participating consumers confessed their desire to see the ironing instructions on the labels because then they can decide whether to buy or not to buy. One of them said:

“.....with ironing I am not good and I do not enjoy doing it so if it says hot iron I avoid it.....”

There are also ironing instructions that contribute to the decision making of consumers when they make their purchases.

Some consumers said they would buy a garment as long as it does not need to be ironed a lot while some did not mind, in the sense that the effect of the fibre is more important to them so whether they have to iron a lot or not does not make much difference. However, a participating consumer who said she travels much said this to the group:

“..... I really prefer something that does not need ironing when I travel, cotton and other fibres like it I really avoid. I like polyester; it is good in a suitcase.....”

The participating consumers also commented about the bleaching instructions. They confirmed that the information on bleaching does influence them in their purchases in some items in particular towels and sheets. These items may need to be bleached with time so it is wise to be informed of suitability in that laundry step. The consumers also said that the bleaching instructions were sometimes deceiving. One consumer said:

“.....labels are misleading, we know cotton is not damaged by a bleach, but it happens that on a 100% white cotton towel label one gets information like do not bleach.....”

The consumers mentioned that they always try to avoid such items that are white and may need to be bleached but have a label that instructs them not to bleach. One participating consumer who introduced herself as a nurse said:

“.....you see when we buy sheets it has to be cotton sheets because we have to bleach and sterilise them, so for us it goes without saying that when it has a “do not” bleach instruction on it we do not buy it.....”

Another consumer had this to say:

“.....because of their misleading nature, I most of the time use my discretion in deciding on the best care method.....”

To a large extent the information on the label does influence the decision making of the consumers as to purchase or not to purchase a certain textile item.

4.3.1.5 Concept 5: Brand names

Another piece of information that the consumers seemed to be influenced by when making purchasing decisions, is the brand name of the products. This piece of information seemed to influence the decision making of consumers in different ways. For instance the brand name is used by some consumers as means of identification, a symbol of status while others use it to assess quality. One of the participating consumers said:

“.....the brand boosts the morale of the people who choose it. It is prestigious because in most cases it tells people how much you can afford.....”

The other consumer observed the issue of brand similarly by saying;

“.....most brand names are trusted for their long lasting performance. Some therefore symbolise quality.....”

There is literature to back up what the consumers viewed about the brand. The brand identifiers are recognised, but they are also associated with a trusted customer experience (Taylor, 2003:5).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

5.1.1 Introduction

The introduction gives the background setting of the study. The problem that prompted the study to be conducted in the first place was identified from literature and practical observation that on a daily basis the consumers are faced with choices to be made about products on the market. It was concluded that consumers' knowledge and awareness of the labels, (being one major source of information at point of sale), have to be studied to find out whether they assist the consumers in their decision making or not.

5.1.2 Literature review

Relevant literature was reviewed in the areas that addressed the information about consumer behaviour and the concept of textile labelling. It was discovered from literature that the consumer behaviour is influenced by the external as well as internal factors such as personality and self-concept, attitudes, perceptions, motivation and involvement, memory and learning, emotions and changing attitudes. The latter two of the factors are, however, not discussed in the literature for purposes of this study. Regarding the concept of labelling, the nature of a typical textile label was defined and information included in labels identified, e.g. the size of the product, care instructions, fibre content, country of origin, name of the manufacturer and the brand name.

5.1.3 Methodology

The research was of a qualitative, explorative and descriptive kind pertaining to phenomenological research. Focus groups were used for data collection and participants were selected by purposive sampling so that only knowledgeable consumers in relation to the textile label took part in the study. The research was made trustworthy by conducting the purposive sampling, pre-piloting and piloting the instrument before data collection, and literature control. In addition peers and study leaders examined all the processes of the research. Data were analysed by using a thematic qualitative research analysis method. Themes were then identified and discussed under the pre-determined categories of

awareness, perceptions and the influence each of the themes has on the decision-making process for purchasing.

5.1.4 Results and discussions

The results revealed that the consumers are very much aware of the existence of a label, they were even able to define it, and they could identify it in a number of ways. Consumers were even aware of the type of information provided by the textile product labels, and which proved to correspond with statements in the literature review part of this summary. The perceptions that the consumers have about the identified themes (basically information found on the label and the nature of the label) are discussed at length in the text. It was discovered that textile labels do influence the decision-making process of the consumers for purchasing the textile products. However, the consumers have preferences of information which they allow themselves to be influenced by. For instance, most consumers give size priority over other pieces of information.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

From the results obtained in the study, the following conclusions can be drawn in accordance with the study objectives.

5.2.1 Objective 1: Consumer awareness about the textile product labelling

The conclusion that the consumers are to a large extent aware of the existence of labels is made due to the results discussed in the preceding chapter. The consumers are aware of labels in terms of their nature; they can define and describe them in their own words which were not very different from what literature identified about labels. The consumers were also able to identify the type of information the labels provide and could even identify the symbols used to disseminate such information in cases where too many words would be necessary to be put on a single label.

5.2.2 Objective 2: Consumers' perceptions of textile labels

Upon the completion of the study, the researcher came to the conclusion that the consumers had a variety of perceptions about the textile product labels. These perceptions were based on the nature of the labels and included the appearance and construction of the labels. The above added up to the type of label. The consumers also had perceptions about the positioning of the labels. Some of the perceptions were positive while others were

negative. For instance, the consumers were of the opinion that the positioning of labels was not consistent. This issue of positioning gave birth to concepts of, among others, irritation, confusion and lack of legibility.

The consumers gave much information on their perceptions about the legibility of the labels. As discussed in the focus groups it is here concluded that consumers perceived the label as not always legible because they were not always placed where they could easily be seen and sometimes the size of the label itself, the font size and colour used on the label to give information were not appropriate to all. It also became apparent that the way information about size is presented is not standard in South Africa and this was experienced as an inconvenience by the consumers when making their choices.

It is also concluded that consumers were of an opinion that the fibre content information given on the label was helpful in making informed choices. The consumers also felt that even if one did not possess some background knowledge about the properties of the fibres; the care labels made it easy because they assist with the caring of some fabrics that they would otherwise not be able to care for appropriately. The symbols were commended to be very helpful in the era of globalisation minimising the language barrier and problems of illiteracy. The care symbols, however, call for some understanding since not all consumers understand their meaning well.

There is a general understanding that the labels in South Africa need to be standardised so that they work towards one set of objectives set out to assist consumers to make informed choices that would prove to give them value for their money. The standardisation of the labels would reduce the number of returns in the clothing and other textile product stores, the returns are currently increasing due to the unexpected performance of the textile products. This is due to the difference in performance from the one expected, the expectation that was developed from the information provided by the label.

5.2.3. Objective 3: Influence of textile product labels when making purchasing decisions

To a large extent the consumers in South Africa allow themselves to be influenced by the information provided by the label. The information that appeared to influence the consumers' decision making more than other pieces of information was the size.

Consumers go out to buy textile products of certain sizes. A fitted sheet of 97cm will only fit a single bed, just like a size 38/12 would not fit someone who wears a size 44/18. It is upon this realisation that everyone looks for a specific size before considering any other properties. A textile product may be liked and suitable for an individual but if it is not the right size it will not be purchased because it will not fit. Other pieces of information like the care instructions, fibre content, country of origin and brand name also influence the decision making of the consumers though it is to varying degrees. For instance, the brand name influenced mostly the youth and the fashion followers as their self-esteem is boosted by the brand and it leads to acceptability by the peer members.

The care instructions on the other hand influenced the caretakers of the products more than it did the users. This usually is because they are the ones who are supposed to maintain the quality of the products and are therefore concerned with the care methods appropriate to them. Seemingly the fibre content is only important to some and not to others. This is because people value different aspects in textile products in general. Different consumers define quality differently; therefore their satisfaction rates will differ. They use a number of cues to infer quality. These would include the brand name, price and consumers' own estimates of how much was invested in the advertising campaign for the product.

5.2.4 General conclusion

South African consumers are some of those that are knowledgeable and their awareness, perceptions and ideas for improvement cannot be ignored. These consumers are concerned about their consumption of products and services, in terms of value for money and satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction is, however, determined by overall feelings, or attitudes a person has about the product after it has been purchased. Consumers define product quality differently before and after purchase because of the experience of use, which may confirm their expectations or contradict them. Textile product quality and value are what consumers want. Solomon and Rabolt (2004:85) add that claims of product quality have become strategically crucial especially because of the foreign competition to maintain a competitive advantage.

According to Solomon and Rabolt (2004:86) a consumer study found that attributes of textile products that consumer used to define apparel quality fell into categories such as construction, fabric, fibre, and garment features. Information on some of these attributes is

given in the textile product label. If the market is to satisfy the consumers, these pieces of information have to be taken seriously by ensuring their provision and clarity on the labels.

This study is the beginning of the findings that the researchers are hopefully going to make about South African and their expectations. It suffices to conclude that the textile labels in South Africa are in many aspects not standard. Labels generally are informative but must provide the information clearly to avoid misconceptions. The SABS still has a long way to go in achieving a perfect and acceptable label for South African consumers. Studies like this one are conducted to seek information about consumer preferences and will possibly be coupled with prototype evaluation tests. A perfect and acceptable South African textile label, which would be appropriate internationally, should be developed for the global market.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The inclusion criteria were pre-determined. The study was limited only to those consumers residing in Potchefstroom and who had some knowledge about textile product labels. They had to be decision makers in the purchasing of textile products or at least be able to contribute to the decision-making process. They had to be able to read textile product labels and they had to have some control over some income and be responsible enough to care for others and themselves. The information therefore lacks the perceptions of those who do not know much about the textile labelling and do not read the textile labels. Another limitation that emerged as the research process proceeded was language. The researcher, being foreign, had to recruit people who could express themselves comfortably in English. This is a second language to most consumers in Potchefstroom. In other words the results of the study cannot be generalised for South Africa.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the results and experiences while conducting the study, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations. The recommendations are two-fold; the first section comprises the recommendation for action and the other section involves recommendations for further study.

5.4.1 Recommendations for action:

It is hereby recommended that the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) and other relevant bodies take the following aspects into consideration:

- ◆ South African consumers should be educated more adequately about all of the textile product label aspects (i.e. information and nature)
- ◆ Positioning of the textile label must be standardised
- ◆ The size presentation on labels should be standardised
- ◆ Labels should not fade
- ◆ An appropriate fabric should be used to make a label compatible with the fabric making up the entire textile product
- ◆ Only the essential information must be allowed on the label and measures should be taken against the producers who may ignore the rule
- ◆ SABS should be decentralised so that it can even reach the people at the grass roots.

5.4.2 Recommendations for further study

It is recommended that consumer studies be conducted in the following areas:

- ◆ Perceptions of South African consumers who do not read the labels and reasons for not doing so. This could give a view of why they are not reading the labels, which can be improved upon.
- ◆ The evaluation of consumer education about textile product labels in South Africa
- ◆ Perceptions of all South African consumers about the textile product labels
- ◆ A comparative study on the perceptions and extent to which the labels influence decision making of the different races in South Africa.

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THE ARTICLE

**SOUTH AFRICAN CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS
ABOUT TEXTILE LABELS AND THEIR CONSEQUENT
PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR**

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SOUTH AFRICAN CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TEXTILE LABELS AND THEIR CONSEQUENT PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

ABSTRACT

The study explored the South African consumers' perceptions of textile labelling due to lack of information on the South African scene. The study was conducted according to qualitative methods and used focus group discussions to ensure rich data. Consumers were recruited based on criteria that they should have some control over income, be responsible for decisions in purchasing the textile products and be knowledgeable about textile labels. In general consumers are aware of the existence and nature of labels, they are also aware of information these labels provide. Consumers expect to find information about size, fibre content, care instructions and country of origin. The participating consumers' perceptions about sizing systems revealed that the sizing systems were neither standard nor reliable. They perceived information about fibre content and the care instructions as helpful in choosing and caring for the items. The brand name and the country of origin were found to be influencing the youth and fashion followers in decision making. Size, fibre content, name of the manufacturer and care instructions appeared to influence care takers more in decision making. Factors that influence decision making consequently affect purchasing behaviour. There are recommendations to improve on the quality of the label.

Key words: *awareness, consumer, consumer behaviour, perception, textile label, textile product and decision-making process.*

INTRODUCTION

Background and orientation

It happens on a daily basis that consumers are faced with choices to make. Massive amounts of textile products are placed on the South African market for the South African consumers to select from, and according to Wright (1997:11) in most cases the only source of information about the products at point of sale is the information label. The million dollar question now remains: "Is the information on the label sufficient, relevant, clear to understand, and helpful to the consumer?"

Most consumer studies available in South Africa have been conducted in the United States of America. Since Blackwell et al. (2001:158) pointed out that no two consumers are exactly identical; it was deemed necessary to conduct a study on the South African consumers in South Africa.

While everyone is aware of the existence of the information labels on products on the market in general, the extent to which consumers are aware of as well as how they perceive the textile product labels is not specifically known. It is upon this realisation that this study was decided upon and implemented. The study sought to explore the perceptions of consumers and discover whether the information on the labels has any influence on the consumers' purchasing behaviour.

Perception is a process by which individuals observe, select, organise and react to environmental stimuli in a meaningful way (Du Plessis and Rousseau, 2003:218). In the purchasing of the textile products the consumer will first be exposed to textile products (*observe*) in a shop, have attention drawn to a set of similar products, let us say shirts (*select*); then with information available and acquired prior to the shopping venture, for example by reading, looking and listening, the consumer will rate choices in terms of the first, second and third all in chronological order (*organise*). When the pros and cons of the selected items have been weighed, a decision to purchase only one shirt will be made (*react to environmental stimuli*).

The study is intended to explore these perceptions as they contribute towards the ultimate consumer behaviour. The influence that information on the textile product labels has on the consumers' ultimate purchasing behaviour was also looked at closely. This will highlight the extent to which the information on the textile product label influences the ultimate purchasing behaviour.

The problem statement and research objectives

It is evident from literature that some wrong choices of textile products that do not respond to the actual need are made. These products end up lying in the wardrobes not being used, given away for charity, or returned to the shops. In cases where the right choices have been made, some products soon lose their shape, colour or dye after being laundered for a few times. With information such as fibre content and care instructions provided on the label one would expect that the above-mentioned problems would not be experienced. In the absence of any evidence of the exact cause of the problem, consumers' awareness and perceptions about the information label are questionable.

To address the problem discussed above, the study has the following objectives:

- To determine the awareness of South African consumers about textile labelling,
- To explore the consumers' perceptions of the textile labels.
- To determine the extent to which consumers use the information on the textile labels especially in decision making for textile product purchases.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature was reviewed and categorised in two sections namely:

- Consumer behaviour
- Textile labelling

Consumer behaviour

Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003:10) see consumer behaviour as comprising of the behaviour patterns of decision units, which precede, determine and follow on the decision process for the acquisition of need-satisfying products, ideas and services. On the other hand, Loudon and Della Bitta (1993: 423) define consumer behaviour as a decision process and physical activity individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring using and disposing of goods and services. Engel et al. (1995:98) agree with these and other authors whose definitions do not differ much and they add that consumer behaviour includes the decision-making process that precedes and follows these purchase actions. The behaviour is further qualified as being of particular interest to those who desire to influence or change that behaviour, including those whose primary concern is marketing, consumer education, protection and developing the public policy.

According to Blackwell et al. (2001:184) and Solomon (2004:164), consumer behaviour does not simply happen in a vacuum. It is determined by the internal factors which characterise the individual consumer such as personality and self concept, motivation and involvement, memory, learning, attitudes, perceptions, emotions and changing attitudes. The behaviour is also influenced by the external factors that the consumers are exposed to. The external factors are culture and subcultures, social or reference groups, family, social and economic status, marketing activities, changing gender roles and demographics. For purposes of this study, however, only the internal factors will be briefly discussed.

Consumer motivation represents the drive to satisfy both the physiological and psychological needs through product purchase and consumption (Solomon, 2004:177 & Blackwell et al. 2001:278). Memory is defined as total accumulation of prior learning experiences (Hawkins et al, 1998:345). Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour caused by experiences (Solomon, 2004:83). Blackwell et al. (2001:198) As well as Mischel (1999:4) define personality as the ability to elicit positive reactions from other people in one's typical dealings with them. Personality has been equated to social skills and effectiveness. Attitude is a mental state of readiness, a way an individual structures his/her own particular world, organised through experience, in such a way that when confronted with a certain stimulus he/she can act in a certain manner.

Perceptions By definition, perception is a process of sensing, selecting and interpreting consumer stimuli in the external world (Solomon, 2004:290 and Wilkie, 1994:163). It is concerned with the translation from the external physical world to the internal mental world that each of us actually experiences. The five human organs (eyes, ears, mouth, nose and skin) serve as the sensory receptors receiving input from the environment (Wilkie, 1994:163).

Decision making This is a complex result of internal influences handled by individual consumers internally. The process of decision-making is greatly determined by consumer socialisation (Solomon, 2004:328). A consumer goes through awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, purchase and post purchase stages to complete the process of decision making.

Issues of textile labelling

A textile label A textile product label is an extra piece of fabric attached to the textile product. This label is made of a type, colour and texture of fabric that differs from the product on to which it is attached (Kadolph, 1998:149). The label bears valuable information to the consumer and the ultimate caretaker of the product. The information includes care instructions, fibre content, and country of origin, brand name and/or trademark, size and sometimes colour.

A typical textile label will have the following on it: the fibre content making up the fabric that was used to make up the product; the country of origin; care instructions and name or registration number (RN) of the manufacturer (Brown & Rice, 1998:19; Cooklin, 1997:117; Drew, 1992:44; Hatch, 1993:142; & Kadolph, 1998:150).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

A qualitative, descriptive and exploratory design was used for this research. The nature of this study basically helped in the determination of a suitable method and design. Perceptions and behaviour are the main points of concern in this study.

Louw and Edwards (1997:584) suggest that in studying perceptions and behaviour researchers should use phenomenological methods. Hayes (2000:373) defines the phenomenological approach as the approach to a study or descriptive experience which aims to represent the experiences from within the person's own subjective world. These methods allow people to tell their personal experiences in their own words. In that way an in-depth study of what concerns the people can be made. Focus group discussions were used to gather data because they allow for such discussions with no limits.

There were three main areas of focus and these areas were determined by the objectives of the study and they were all about the textile labels and relevant information. Aspects that enjoyed attention were consumer awareness, perceptions, and the extent to which the information is used in decision making. These areas were presented to the participating consumers in the form of questions and the participants were allowed to say anything related to the question posed.

Occasionally some probing questions would be posed to the participants to clarify what they were putting across as well as to dig deeper into the insights of the participant. The researcher collected data by recording the discussions on a tape which the participants had agreed to. The recorded discussions were then transcribed verbatim and compared to the notes taken during the discussions. The next step was the identification of salient points for each question asked. The points were selected on the basis that they addressed the objectives. These were then analysed, based on literature reviewed.

Sampling

As the method of data collection used in the study required participants who had sufficient information about the topic, subject selection had to be done while bearing the above statement in mind. Purposive sampling was used by following the pre-determined criteria. These entailed:

- control over some income;
- decision maker or at least a member of the decision making team;
- responsibility to oneself and/or others; and
- reading the textile labels.

Those consumers who did not read the label but appeared knowledgeable were closely observed as they examined the textile products. This was a sign that they knew what they were looking for. The consumer would examine the products' ability to stretch, wrinkle, drape and other characteristics. The criteria used in selecting the participants, ensured the participation of consumers with sufficient knowledge about the textile labels.

Recruiting

The researcher recruited qualifying consumers in the apparel and household linen stores whose managers agreed to participate in the project. Consumers who read the textile product labels or examined the products were approached and invited to participate in the study. It was at this time that the consumers were briefed on the purpose of the study and what would be involved. If a consumer agreed to participate after the conversation, the researcher gave an information leaflet that explained the research in detail. Some of the consumers dropped out from being part of the study for the following reasons:

- Some were no longer willing to speak English and communication was impaired.
- Some gave wrong numbers or numbers that did not exist at all.
- A few changed their minds about participating.
- Others' schedules changed or something came up which made it impossible to take part in the study.

Afrikaans is a local language in Potchefstroom and being a foreigner, the researcher could not speak the vernacular language. As most local people preferred their first language, it had to be considered that someone should be able to speak English to participate in the focus group discussions.

Many consumers were approached, and 86 promised to participate, but only 39 finally participated in the focus group discussions. Six focus groups were held with an average of six people in each. Each of the six focus groups included adults and young people, male and female, black and white.

Ethical consideration

The consent form was attached to the leaflet given to the consumers for them to sign and bring with them to the focus group. The form sought permission of the consumers to tape record the proceedings of the focus group discussions in which they participated. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University in Potchefstroom (project number 04k11).

Data collection

As Krueger (1994:73) stated, the focus groups allow for gathering of qualitative data from a group of participants, preferably with some substantial knowledge of the topic of discussion. The method was therefore found suitable for this study. The choice of the focus group discussions as a data collection procedure for this study was supported by Bloor et al. (2001:89) as well as Yates (2004:171) who said focus group discussions generate massive information since the participants are knowledgeable. Open-ended questions are asked to create an opportunity for sharing many opinions.

Occasionally the researcher would direct the question to the participants who were not contributing enough, as that would otherwise have weakened the results of the study. By doing that the researcher ensured participation of all the participants in the discussions. Denzin & Lincoln (1998:63) and Krefting (1991:216) used the same idea. Probing questions were used to get more clarity on the aspects put forward by the consumers. The participating consumers were allowed to make reference to their past experiences and observations about the textile labelling issue.

Venue and time

As the most of the participants worked during the day they preferred to have the group discussions during the evenings. They used to start at 17:00 hours and the meetings were held at Maestro's coffee shop at the River Walk shopping mall in Potchefstroom. This venue was decided upon because it was within reach of many.

As an incentive refreshments were bought for the participants, and in addition a monetary remuneration was given to each participant as a “thank you” gesture.

Measures of trustworthiness

According to Krefting (1991:56) and Winter (2000:24), validity and reliability are not applicable in qualitative research. Instead, terms like trustworthiness, worthy, relevant, plausible, conformability, credibility and representativeness are considered more appropriate.

Being a qualitative research there were measures taken to ensure that the study would be applicable, consistent, neutral and would have truth-value. To ensure applicability purposive sampling of participants was done, for consistency the data collecting instrument was pre-piloted and piloted to develop and strengthen it, for neutrality triangulation was done during data collection where three different researchers were involved in note taking, questioning and interpreting data, while literature control was done to ensure credibility.

Data analysis

A thematic qualitative analysis was used. This method helps in exploring rich data. Hayes (2000:171) explains that this method involves identifying particular themes, which occur in the material being studied. In an explanation Hayes (2000:171) mentions that the themes can either be predetermined before the analysis of data or emerge from data as they are analysed. The actual procedure is explained below.

The tape-recorded data was listened to at least three times by the researcher on the evening of the focus group discussion day. This was to enable the researcher to link the actual discussions of that day with the recordings on the tape while they are still fresh in the mind as suggested by Marais and Poggenpoel (2003:47). The researcher then transcribed the discussions, especially the responses of the participating consumers, verbatim. The tape would be stopped and rewound several times to ensure correct transcription.

The transcribed data could at this stage be studied repeatedly and the main issues that had been raised were identified and listed. By doing so, only relevant parts of the conversations were singled out and retained. Themes were identified and discussed. A literature control was conducted to verify the results of the research as well as to reveal the truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality with no bias whatsoever. The themes were based on the following:

- The awareness of the participating consumers of the textile label.
- The perceptions of the participating consumers about the textile product label.
- The extent to which the information on the label influenced their decision making when purchasing textile products.

RESULTS DISCUSSIONS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

Objective 1: Awareness of the label

The participating consumers were asked one open-ended question which allowed them to tell and discuss all they knew about the label. The wording of the question read as follows:

“What is a textile product label?”

Theme 1: The nature of the label

Concept 1: Attachment of textile product labels The participating consumers identified the label as an extra piece of material attached to the textile products. Belck et al. (1984: 94) agree with the consumers' view by informing that labels are sewn on to the textile garments. The South African Bureau of Standards (2001:7) adds that labels should be securely attached to the article.

Concept 2: Form of identification Consumers mentioned that labels may also be used for purposes of identification. The illustration given was of marking children's clothes.

The labels have provided of space where the name of a child can be written to identify ownership of the garment.

Theme 2: Information provided by the textile product label

Concept 1: Importance of information It was agreed by the consumers that the information the labels provide was of great importance. In relation to that Kadolph (1998:151) stated that labels provide valuable information for the consumer to use in the selection of textile products.

Concept 2: Size One of the identified pieces of information was size of the product. Consumers were aware of the existence of this information. According to Drew (1992:44) a typical label can be expected to provide information that includes size to assist consumers in making choices.

Concept 3: Fibre content This was the other piece of information identified by the consumers as provided by the textile label. Kadolph (1998:152) states that fibre content of the garment is given in percentages on the label. This means that the consumers' views correlated with earlier findings. According to Davis (1987:8) the Fibre Products Identification Act in South Africa mandates manufacturers to provide information about the fibre content of the fabric in generic terms.

Concept 4: Country of origin The participants revealed that they would expect to see an indication of the country of origin on the labels, because they are aware of various countries from which textile products are imported into South Africa. Brown & Rice (1998:20) point out that with globalisation, products are exported and imported and the information about the country of origin would therefore be of utmost importance.

Concept 5: Care instructions Such instructions proved to be the most popular piece of information on the label. The consumers identified a set of care instructions as the washing, drying, ironing, dry-cleaning and bleaching instructions. It became apparent that participating consumers had differences of opinion with regard to the usage of symbols as a method of conveying care instructions. It was mentioned that symbols came in handy when goods are exported or imported because they bridge a possible language barrier.

Others felt that the symbols were not always clearly understood by all consumers. Davis (1987:8) highlighted that the Labels Acts in South Africa mandate that care instructions be provided on the labels. On the other hand only standard terminology must be used. The standards are in most cases set by the International Organisation of Standards. This helps in reducing misunderstandings.

Concept 6: Name of the manufacturer and brand name These two are discussed together because little was said about both of them. For many consumers the two were used interchangeably even though the meanings are not the same. According to Davis (1987:8) country of origin is one of the information pieces that manufacturers must provide on the label. In addition, Clifton and Simmons (2003:13) define a brand name as a trademark identifying goods of a particular make.

Objective 2: Consumer perceptions about the textile product label

Perceptions of consumers about the textile product label were explored and for clarity of discussions were divided into two parts, namely

- the general perceptions about the nature of the label and
- perceptions about the information found on the label.

The general perceptions about the nature of the label

Theme 1: Legibility

Legibility here means the ease with which the consumers can find, see and read the label. The concepts that emerged from this theme are fading of print, colour of the label, the font size used on the label, the dimensions of the label and the symbols used to disseminate information.

Concept 1: Fading There were complaints from the consumers that the information on the labels fades with time and that makes the labels non-informative. The principle upon which the labelling procedure is based is the fact that labels must be permanent and must remain legible for the entire lifespan of the item (Kadolph, 1998:150).

Concept 2: Colour of the label Some of the colours used for making up the labels are not user friendly to some people, especially the aged and the aging. The South African National Standards (2004:3) requires that labels must be in accordance with sound manufacturing practices and shall be made of acceptable material, colour, size and finish.

Concept 3: The font size used on the label The participating consumers were of an opinion that the font size used on the label is too small and therefore difficult for anyone to read with comfort. One of the issues that must be observed in following the sound manufacturing practices in applying labels is to make use of an acceptable size (SANS, 2004:3).

Concept 4: Dimensions of the label Some labels were seen as too small for consumers to find and read easily. Other labels were found to be too large and that they caused discomfort. One of the consumers said:

“.....some labels are too small, even finding them is a struggle...”

The other consumer said:

“.....the size of the label must not be too large.....”

Concept 5: Symbols used on the labels In as much as the symbols are helpful where languages are not known, one still needs to have an idea about their meaning. This is not always the case as was pointed out by one of the participating consumers:

“...some of them are so complicated one needs a degree to understand them.....”

Theme 2: Type of label

Concept 1: Fibre content of label Sometimes the labels are made up of different fibre content from that making up the garment to which they are attached. This makes the label behave in a different way from the garment when laundered. In relation to the concerns of the consumers SANS (2004:3) adds that the label shall be made of acceptable material in order to be in accordance with sound manufacturing practices.

Concept 2: Construction of the label It was discovered that labels can be constructed mainly in two ways, the ones with information woven or embroidered onto the label and the ones with information printed onto the label. The construction method has an effect on the type of label preferred by the consumers. This could be because of difference in behaviour when laundered. As previously stated, SANS (2004:3) stipulates that the label should be made of an acceptable material. It is clear that the consumers' concerns are firmly based on what is being encountered in practice.

Theme 3: Position of the label

Concept 1: Visibility Consumers are dissatisfied about the fact that it is not generally known where the labels can be found on the garments. One cannot see them easily and has to search the entire garment to find them. According to the SABS (1979:7) last amended in 1990, a label must be attached to the article securely but sewn in such a way that it will permit the legible presentation of the information. SABS (1979:11) continues to say that a label must be sewn on to the hem, corner or end of an article in such a way that all markings will be clearly legible. This complaint on the consumers' part was also addressed by Kadolph (1998:150) who states that labels in garments must be as visible as possible. The positioning of labels is therefore of utmost importance.

Concept 2: Consistency in positioning Consumers share an opinion that there should be consistency in the positioning of the labels on garments. Currently there is no consistency in positioning the labels. According to Kadolph (1998:150) the positioning of the labels is of utmost importance for ease of access. The suitable position of a label is, however, determined by the type of garment.

Theme 4: Label as object of irritation

The consumers were of an opinion that the label sometimes irritates. This happens in two ways; scratching and simply embarrassing. A label scratches and irritates when it is ironed with a hot iron that is not appropriate for the label even though it may be appropriate for the entire garment. It may also embarrass because it does not remain where it has been put on the garment. When this happens it affects one's self-esteem and that is embarrassing.

Perceptions about the information found on the label

Theme 1: Size of the product

Concept 1: Standardisation The participating consumers perceive the sizing systems in South Africa as not standard and this is confusing because it makes it difficult for consumers to understand how each system works. The sizes are not the same, and even the ones that are the same are not presented the same way. Winks (1997:2) shares a similar concern that sizes vary substantially within the same garment type; not only from one country to another but also within one country. The size is therefore merely a guide and cannot be depended upon.

Concept 2: Range of measurements It was perceived by the participating consumers that the sizes lack dependability and the provision of a range of measurements within which each size can fit, would be helpful to consumers. Brown & Rice (1998:132) report that a set of measurements related to figure types serves as the basis for the numbered sizing of apparel. The inclusion of these measurements will be helpful in making informed choices. Winks (1997:1) also advises that the manufacturers maintain their own fitting tolerance so the consumers would not be complaining if they were aware of this information. The different countries also have different fitting tolerances.

Concept 3: Size indication The consumers wondered why so many different formats have to be used to indicate size. The need for standardisation of the sizing systems cannot be over-emphasised as Brown & Rice (1998:133) also state that there are different sizing systems, the use of which was not governed. The two common systems are the numbered and the lettered systems.

Theme 2: Fibre content

Concept 1: Resiliency The term can be defined as the ability of a garment to shed wrinkles, this would cause such a garment not to require much ironing. Depending on the purpose for which the garment is purchased, this characteristic may be required. Some fibres are already known for their crease resistance properties.

Hatch (1993:251) supports the consumers by explaining that the properties of most synthetic fibres allow them ample resiliency. It will be easy to decide whether a garment wrinkles if the fibre content is provided.

Concept 2: Absorbency This is a property that must be considered depending on the intended purpose of the textile items purchased. Bath and dish towels are meant to absorb moisture so their fibre content has to be known for one to conclude whether they are absorbent. Louw and Dennyssen (1993:153) state that cotton is highly absorbent and is suitable for sports outfits. The inclusion of fibre content in this regard would make choices simple.

Concept 3: Effects of heat The fibres that crease easily must be ironed with a hot iron. It is important therefore to include the fibre content information on the label so that a consumer may be aware of the suitability of the garment to him/her. Louw and Dennyssen (1993:153) add that cotton is not destroyed by high temperatures. This means that the knowledge that a garment is made of cotton would help much and must be included on the label.

Concept 4: Allergenic potential People with allergies will most likely know what they are allergic to and this means that if someone is allergic to polyester and information about the fibre content is included on the label a good choice would be possible. Belck et al. (1994:15) point out that some people's bodies have a chemistry that makes them allergic to certain fibres. Belck et al. (1994:15) emphasise the importance of the information about the fibre content for the sake of the allergic people so that reactions can be minimised.

Concept 5: Quality Some of the participating consumers assessed quality by the type of fibre the material was made up of. Even though this is not correct, the synthetic fibres were believed to be of low quality. Merkel (1991:7) and Liddell (1998:556) agree that quality is dependent entirely on the intended purpose of the purchased garment. Cycling shorts are supposed to be elastic and synthetic fibres like Lycra and Elastin only would make cycling shorts of a high quality.

Theme 3: Country of origin

The information about the country where textile products have been manufactured brings about different perceptions to consumers. Most of the perceptions are based on their previous experiences. Two concepts emerged from this theme and they are indications of quality and credibility.

Concept 1: Indication of quality Some countries are highly regarded as producing high quality products. Textile products that come from the Asian countries like China, Japan and Hong-Kong were regarded as poor quality by the participating consumers. India on the other hand produces mostly natural fibre products. This was highly appreciated by the participating consumers. Kotabe and Helsen (2004: 376) point out that in some countries the consumers are urged to buy products made by local companies. This could be the reason why the consumers prefer to see this information on the labels.

Concept 2: Credibility Consumers also expressed their misunderstanding of this piece of information as they wondered how one country of origin is decided upon because some products are produced in different countries at different stages. The consumers' confusion is understandable because Brown & Rice (1998:19) explain that in today's global market, textile products may possibly be manufactured in more than one country but only a maximum of two countries is allowed to be stated on the label as country of origin and this is usually the last country to process the product.

Theme 4: Care instructions

Concept 1: Importance The care instructions are informative and important to the consumers. This is because they guide the consumer on how to handle the garment so that the original quality would be maintained. They always include information about washing, drying, ironing, dry-cleaning and bleaching instructions. According to Brown & Rice (1998:21); Hatch (1993:86) and Kylo (2003:13), the washing instructions for instance specify the suitable temperature of the washing water. Without such information it would not be easy for consumers to identify the suitable temperatures. It is possible that wrong temperatures would be used which might destroy the garments.

Concept 2: Special information The participating consumers felt that it would be helpful to provide information about any special way suitable for handling the garment to increase value for money and therefore consumer satisfaction. A suitable type of detergent could be suggested.

Theme 5: Name of the manufacturer and brand name

Concept 1: The manufacturer Apparently some consumers perceived information about the name of the manufacturer important and informative. It has been mentioned by Brown & Rice (1998:20) and Kadolph (1998: 152) that the name of the manufacturer is one of the mandatory pieces of information the manufacturers must provide on the label. This is intended to give the consumers knowledge of who to contact for further information about the product.

Concept 2: Brand name as identification of the product The brand is a trade mark that identifies the type of product. It is closely related to the manufacturer because with the brand name the manufacturer can be recognised. In other words brand also helps in the selection of garments, for ease of identification. Hatch (1998:135) suggests that brand names may be used to identify goods as sold or produced by a certain manufacturer.

Concept 3: Brand name as a symbol of status The consumers who have identified a brand and believe that it is of high status, they therefore, feel good about themselves using products of that brand and to them a brand name is of utmost importance. Nilson (2003:5) encountered the same tendencies among consumers and stated that a brand would have a core of dedicated and committed customers, usually representing the minority of the total customer universe.

Objective 3: Influence the information on the label has on the consumers' purchasing behaviour

This part of the report focuses on the extent to which the information provided by the label influences the consumers in their decision making and ultimate purchasing behaviour.

Theme 1: Information provided on the textile label

In decision making, The identified influential concepts on the consumers' purchasing behaviour are size, fibre content, care instructions, country of origin and to some consumers the brand name.

Concept 1: Size The size of the product as indicated by the label, influences the consumers' purchasing behaviour. Even if the textile product is suitable for the need to be addressed it will not be purchased if the size is wrong. According to Cooklin (1997:118) there is extra information that is meant to assist the consumers in making choices. The inclusion of such information on the label might not be mandatory to the manufacturers, but could be fundamentally important to consumers. Davis (1987:8) adds that this information is usually provided on hangtags and would probably include size, price, brand name, store or department name and product promotion.

Concept 2: Fibre content This piece of information influences the consumers, though it does so in different ways. People with allergies to some fibres should be able to identify fibre content of products before they purchase, to avoid a fibre they are reactive to. Furthermore, different properties of different fibres cause the fibres to perform differently when laundered. As people differ, their preferences of laundry processes also differ. The purpose the textile product is purchased for also demands consideration of the suitable fibre content.

Concept 3: Country of origin From the discussions the country of origin is influential. This information seemed more influential recently after the introduction of the "Proudly South African" campaign, which prompted consumer education over the media about locally produced products as well as the implications this has on the country's economy. To some consumers the country of origin is an indication of quality or simply a means of gaining peer acceptance. In the view of Kotabe and Helsen (2004:376) there is ample evidence that in the case of many products the "made-in" information on the label matters a great deal to consumers. The authors continue to explain that often the consumers seem to rely very heavily on country of origin cues to evaluate the products.

Concept 4: Care instructions For many consumers the care instructions are influential. The lifestyles and living standards determine what each consumer will be able or prefer to do in caring for the textile products. Some consumers cannot afford dry-cleaning services; others do not like hand washing while others do not like ironing. Research by Oehlke (2002:58) reveals that care instructions are meant to inform both the consumer and the dry-cleaner about processes to be followed for cleaning the products.

Brown & Rice (1998:21) explain that the care labels are the implied warranty from the manufacturer that if the consumer follows the instructions provided, the garment will retain its shape and general appearance. This information means that the warranty is only applicable on condition that the consumer follows the care-related instructions. If instructions would not be easy for the consumer to follow, the garment will not maintain shape. So it is logical to avoid such a garment.

Concept 5: Brand name There is sufficient evidence that the brand names do influence consumers. Different consumers use the information about the brand for different forms of assessment of the textile products. The forms include the use of this information as means of identification, as a symbol of status and for quality assessment. The use of a brand for assessment is backed by Taylor (2003:5) who echoes that the brand identifiers are recognised, and are also associated with a trusted customer experience.

Limitations

The study was limited only to those consumers who had some knowledge about the textile product labels. The information therefore lacks the perceptions of those who do not know much and do not read the labels. Only the consumers stated in sampling were used. Those had to be decision makers in the purchasing of textile products or at least had to be able to contribute in the decision-making process. They had to read textile product labels; they had to have some control over some income and had to be responsible enough to care for others and themselves.

Conclusion According to the results, the consumers are aware of most aspects of the textile label. It is as Wright (1997:14) mentions that today's consumers are aware and concerned for their health and value for money.

Consumers' responses revealed that information about size, care instructions, fibre content and the country of origin can be rated among the most important types of information. The perceptions the participating consumers hold about textile labels are among others that the label size and position in garments are not standard. The information on printed labels fades very quickly and has to be reviewed.

The sizing systems in South Africa are not consistent. They are confusing and not reliable. The country of origin is more influential now that South Africa educates consumers on the introduction of the "Proudly South African" campaign. The fibre content information is used mostly by consumers knowledgeable about it, while others who do not have background knowledge about fibres resort to other means of testing the fabric.

Finally it was discovered that consumers use the information on the labels to make their decisions in purchasing the textile products. The information that the consumers use to decide includes care instructions, size, fibre content and country of origin. However, only the known and understood information seemed influential.

Based on the research findings the following recommendations are made:

Recommendations for action

- The textile production community should be involved in the implementation of the improvements made on the labels.
- The consumers did not know the difference between brand name and name of manufacturer and need to be educated.
- The South African Bureau of Standards should produce an informative newsletter with information to the consumers and manufacturers about the rules and expectations from the manufacturers, as well as the most recent developments on the labelling issue.
- The South African government should embark on consumer education programmes focusing on all areas of the label.
- Consumers revealed a wrong perception about quality, as a corrective measure consumers have to be well informed about quality issues.

Recommendations for further study

- A similar study should be done including consumers who do not have control over money, those who are not decision makers and those who can not read and write.
- The extent to which the South African Bureau of Standards involves consumers in the decisions about what goes onto the labels and what does not should be investigated.

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SABS see SOUTH AFRICAN BUREAU OF STANDARDS

SANS see SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STANDARDS

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Annexure

‘A’

Letter to the textile product shop managers



YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES UNIVERSITEIT

Mr. J. Ball
The Manager
Mr. Price
Potchefstroom

Re: The South African consumers' views and perceptions on textile product labelling and its relevance to purchasing behavior

Dear Sir/madam,

I am a master's student in the Consumer Science department at the above mentioned University. I work under the guidance of my supervisors whose names are listed below.

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.

We request your permission to come and recruit the label reading consumers to participate in the focus groups in your shop since you sell the textile products. This will not interfere with the buying process of the consumers. The procedure we are going to follow will be simply observing the consumers and approach those who read the labels asking them to participate in the focus group discussions.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and valuable contribution.

Yours sincerely

Papali Maqalika-Mokobori
[M. Consumer Sc. Student]

Mrs. M Larney & Mrs. M Venter
[Supervisors]

Dr E. Kempen
[The Research Coordinator]

Annexure 'B'

Invitation to the focus group discussions



Dear Consumer

My name is Papali Maqalika-Mokobori.

I can be contacted at: **073 4280 359**

I am originally from Lesotho doing my Master degree in Consumer Sciences at the North-West University. My research looks at the *Consumers' views and perceptions on textile product labelling and their knowledge about it.*

I would appreciate it if you could take part in a focus group discussion on this topic to hear your views and ideas about it.

Date: The focus group discussion will take place on: _____

Time: _____

Place: Maestro's coffee shop in the River Walk Shopping Mall opposite Clicks

Come and enjoy some coffee/tee and a piece of cake together with other focus group members while giving your opinion on textile labelling.

Thank you for your interest and willingness to take part. We are looking forward to meeting you at **Maestro's** on the scheduled date indicated above.

Kind regards

Papali



Dear Consumer

My name is Papali Maqalika-Mokobori.

I can be contacted at: **073 4280 359**

I am originally from Lesotho doing my Master degree in Consumer Sciences at the North-West University. My research looks at the *Consumers' views and perceptions on textile product labelling and their knowledge about it.*

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Place: Maestro's coffee shop in the River Walk Shopping Mall opposite Clicks

Come and enjoy some coffee/tee and a piece of cake together with other focus group members while giving your opinion on textile labelling.

Thank you for your interest and willingness to take part. We are looking forward to meeting you at **Maestro's** on the scheduled date indicated above.

Kind regards

Papali

Annexure 'C'

The consent form



YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES UNIVERSITEIT

TITLE OF THE PROJECT:

The South African consumers' perceptions towards textile product labeling and its relevance to purchasing behavior

Dear participant,

Date: 06/08/2004

THE PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the views and perceptions of consumers on textile product labeling. The products include bed linen, towels, table linen, curtains and clothing in general. It is important to determine the relationship between these views and the consumer's decision making when purchasing textile products. It is also important in the light of an investigation on legalizing certain labeling information. This study will use group discussions made up of consumers to obtain the information needed, this will facilitate the making of meaningful recommendations for textile labeling by the researchers.

PROCEDURE FOR THE RESEARCH

- 1) The study entails that you take part in a discussion/focus group on the textile labeling
- 2) The group will be led by a facilitator
- 3) This discussion group is an opportunity for you to give your views and ideas
- 4) There are no wrong or right answers
- 5) You don't have to prepare for the meeting
- 6) Everyone will be given an opportunity to give his/her opinion which may differ from other members' - there may be a debate

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.

WITHDRAWAL

I understand that I can withdraw from the discussion group at any time. I will take part voluntarily.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES OF THIS STUDY

By getting consumers' opinion and views on textile labeling, the labeling information can be improved to enable the consumer to make better purchasing decisions. The information can be used in consumer educational programs. Participants will be remunerated for their willingness after the focus group discussion

INFORMATION

If I have any questions about this project I can contact the project leader, Dr Elizabeth Kempen [Tel: 018 299 2478]

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I, the undersigned _____ (full name) have studied the information regarding the project in the above mentioned sections and also the verbal rendering listened to and declare that I understand it. I was given the opportunity to discuss important aspects of the project with the project leader and I declare that I take part in the project out of free will. I hereby give my consent to be a participant in the above mentioned project.

I would hereby like to exempt the University or any employee or any student of the University from any liability which I might accrue during this project.

I furthermore waive my right to institute any claims whatsoever against the University which may arise during the running of the project or the conduct of any person involved in the project, except for claims arising from the negligent conduct of the University or its employees or students.

I received a signed copy of this consent form

Signature of participant: _____

Signed at _____ on _____

WITNESSES

DATE

1. _____

2. _____

Annexure 'D'

Focus group discussion questions

Focus group discussions in Maestro's

Focus group questions

1

Question 1

- What is a textile product label?

2

Question 2

- What are your perceptions about the textile product labels?

3

Question 3

- Does the information provided on the textile product label influence your decision-making?

4

Annexure 'E'

**Thank you note to the participants
(accompanying remuneration)**

DEAR CONSUMER



*Thank you so much for your time
It is highly appreciated, this is simply a small token of appreciation.
Thank you once again.*

Papali

DEAR CONSUMER



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Thank you once again.*

Papali

DEAR CONSUMER



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DEAR CONSUMER



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