

Determining female consumers' perceptions of garment fit, personal values and emotions when considering garment sizing

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Abstract

Female consumer's clothing shopping experience is primarily influenced by the appearance and fit of a garment that may be influenced by their personal values and is a process that involves emotions (Otieno *et al.*, 2005; Lopatovska and Arapakis, 2010). Very little research focusing on the emotional impact and the role that personal values play in the female consumers' shopping experience of ready-to-wear garment fit has been conducted in South Africa to date. The primary objective of this study was to explore the areas of concern of garment sizing to establish the emotional impact garment sizing and the resulting fit have on the female consumer purchasing behaviour when evaluated against their personal value system. This study applied the means-end chain theory approach that allowed the researcher to explore female consumers' personal values and the resulting emotions, through the application of the laddering interview techniques. Using open-ended questions, this study aimed to discover the role of female consumers' perceptions of garment sizing and the resulting emotional effects of garment fit on their purchasing decisions. The findings from the data collected from a purposeful and convenient sample of 62 female consumers from Gauteng, Johannesburg showed that the majority of the participants in this study failed to attain their personal values through the fit of a garment due to inconsistent, unreliable and inaccurate sizing, garment sizing which is unsuitable for various body shapes and the unavailability of certain clothing sizes in ready-to-wear garments. The study established that it is extremely important that South African clothing manufacturers and designers should strategize to satisfy the clothing need of the consumers who are currently having problems with garment sizing, by understanding female consumers' garment sizing and fit needs through extended research of their target markets.

Key words: garment sizing, personal values, emotions, means-end chain theory, laddering

Background Literature

Ever since garments were first produced for an unknown customer rather than a specific person with known body dimension and garment fit preferences, manufacturers of ready-to-wear garments have attempted to estimate the dimensions of the garments that they must produce in order to sell them successfully (Petrova, 2007:57). However, the satisfaction of

ready-to-wear garments is especially dependent on the evaluations of whether the size and fit of the garment fulfils the consumer's aspirations through clothing (Kim *et al.*, 2002:481), that can be an emotional process.

The fit and size of a garment as indicated by the label on ready-to-wear clothing found in retail outlets are among the most important evaluative criteria female consumers use when purchasing ready-to-wear clothing (Hugo and Aardt, 2012). Fit and size give expression to the experience of physical comfort as well as the appearance of the wearer (Kim and Damhorst, 2013). Although garment sizing is considered a secondary factor that influences garment fit (Barona-McRoberts, unpublished), female consumers often complain of incorrect garment fit which may be due to several factors that stem from the problems associated with garment sizing (Otieno, 2008; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). In turn, this may affect consumers' purchasing decision (Ashdown *et al.*, 2005) of ready-to-wear clothing. The following discussion summarizes some of the main factors that contribute to garment fit problems arising from incorrect garment sizing as found in literature.

Unstandardised sizing system

Non-adherences to a standardised sizing system of ready-to-wear clothing by manufacturers contribute to the problem of garment sizing and subsequently garment fit. Winks (1997) defines a sizing system as "a set of pre-determined body sizes designated in a standard manner, resulting in the development of a size chart which provides the measurements necessary for garment production". Moreover, garment sizing has never been standardised since custom clothing gave way to ready-to-wear clothing (Geršak, 2013) due to the fact that clothing manufacturers attempt to estimate the dimensions of the garments that they produce in order to sell them successfully (Petrova, 2007:57). According to Ashdown (2014), sizing systems are designed to provide the best fit for the consumer as well as to provide enough variation to accommodate the consumers with various needs. Most importantly, it must provide an appropriate size selection. Furthermore, standard sizing systems are there to ensure consistency and clarity in garment size dimensions (LaBat, 2007) as well as to help clothing manufacturers and designers to categorise garments of different sizes in a way which customers will help identify the garments that will provide a better fit (Glock and Kunz, 2000). However, adherence to a standard sizing system is entirely voluntary as the published standards by various countries are not mandatory (Ashdown, 2014). This means that most clothing manufacturers do not follow the published standards. They

deviate when it suits them, resulting in varying standards (Winks, 1997; Alexander *et al.*, 2005) as also found by Faust *et al.* (2006) on variations in Canadian women's ready-to-wear clothing.

Nevertheless, the leading complaint from female consumers is that garment sizing is inconsistent (Howarton and Lee, 2010; Kasambala 2013, unpublished) resulting in an inability to make an accurate judgment in terms of the fit of the clothing item. According to Alexander *et al.* (2005) in designing women's ready-to-wear garments, one of the primary reasons for deviating from the standards is that clothing manufacturers often view their sizing system strategies as a means of enabling market differentiation. Clothing manufacturers have different target populations of women whose lifestyle, income and body shapes differ (Alexander *et al.*, 2005). This results in a selling tool used by retailers to distinguish their brand from the brands of other clothing manufacturers (Pisut and Connell, 2007; Otieno, 2008).

Lack of current anthropometric data

A lack of current anthropometric data on actual body size and shapes in the population as well as consumer feedback is also instrumental in contributing to garment sizing and fit problems (Ashdown, 2014). Ideally, garments should be designed according to the participant's body dimensions in order to fit well (Daanen and Reffelrath, 2007). Although some clothing manufacturers have carried out their own studies to collect body measurements of their customers, this is not a common practice (Ashdown, 2014). The majority of garment manufacturers may still be using outdated sizing systems from the studies conducted in the 1940s (Simmons *et al.*, 2004a; Alexander *et al.* 2005; Pisut and Connell 2007) and in many cases it is assumed that the methods used to collect the data were flawed (LaBat, 2007:94).

Sizing system in South Africa

There has been lack of current anthropometric data to describe the civilian population in South Africa. The only sizing chart developed in South Africa is from specialist groups such as the South African Defence Force (Steenkamp, 2001). According to a study conducted by Strydom (2006) investigating the origin and use of sizing systems in South Africa. The researcher discovered that the sizing system mainly in use is based on the British system. However a large number of respondents were unaware of the origin of the sizing system used in their manufacturing or clothing retail environments in South Africa as some thought that it was European whilst another thought that it was South African and the balance did not know. This suggests that the garment sizing systems currently in use by manufacturers and retailers in South

Africa, has been adopted from the British, mainland European and American systems and adapted over time.

Body shapes and sizing systems

Ashdown (1998) further points out that most sizing systems are based on two or three body dimensions such as bust, hip and waist measurements, which do not accommodate the specific body dimensions of large variations of female body shapes and proportions in the population. As a result, a large number of female consumers do not fit well into the garment sizes currently in the United States of America, including South Africa (Strydom and De Klerk, 2006:87). Clothing manufacturers and retailers in South Africa have surprisingly little idea of the size and shape characteristics of its population as a wide spread survey of anthropometric sizing has never been conducted on the general population in South Africa (Pandaram, 2013). Strydom (2006) further points out that clothing manufacturers and retailers do not define body shape when designing garments, they only cater for an average figure. This may imply that the situation in South Africa regarding dissatisfaction with garment fit related to garment sizing is no different from elsewhere in the world. Additionally, clothing manufacturers generally do not test their sizing strategies through consumer feedback in relation to the fit of their clothing either. This means there is no general body of knowledge correlating satisfaction with garment sizing and the resulting fit (Ashdown, 2014).

Vanity sizing

The use of vanity sizing augments the garment sizing problem further. Vanity sizing is the clothing industry's term for the fact that clothing manufacturers mark down their garment sizing by placing a smaller size label on a garment with larger measurements to satisfy the psychological need of consumers who want to feel slim (Alexander *et al.*, 2005; Pisut and Connell, 2007). This practice is used as a marketing tool to enable clothing manufacturers to benefit from store patronage (Apeageyi, 2008). The opposite of this is the claim that clothing manufacturers only produce garments in small sizes and mark the sizes up as a marketing advantage for garments that should only fit thin 'trendy' bodies (Laitala *et al.*, 2011). As a result a large number of female consumers do not fit well into their usual garment sizes currently being used in South Africa (Strydom and De Klerk, 2006:87) which may be very frustrating to the female consumers.

Theoretical perspective

Further to the sizing problems at hand, consumer's often view clothing as an extension of the self, resulting in decisions on how the clothing fits the consumer's personality (Feather *et al.*, 1996) or appearance which is most likely to be influenced by the consumer's personal values (Otieno *et al.*, 2005). According to Kim (2005) and Kaze (2010), personal values are representations of goals or standards that individuals use to guide their actions and thoughts as well as the evaluations of the appropriateness of a garment. From the consumer's perspective, garment fit aids to enhance the individual's appearance and serves as a personal expression of self, hence, communicating the consumer's personal values to others (Kaiser, 1998; Kim *et al.*, 2002) which cannot be communicated in any other way. Naturally, when female consumers feel uncomfortable with the sizing of the garment and the role it plays in exemplifying the personal values of the consumers, negative emotions such as frustration may be experienced (Doshi, 2006).

There are several theories that attempt to understand why people experience emotions, of which the cognitive appraisal theory of emotions is but one. In this regard, this theory is used to understand the emotional expression resulting from garment sizing in relation to female consumers' personal values.

Defining the cognitive appraisal theory of emotions

According to Lazarus (2001), "the cognitive appraisal theory of emotions is defined as a quick evaluation a consumer makes of a situation with respect to their wellbeing". The answers to the evaluations are what causes the emotions that a consumer experiences. As an example, an ill-fitting garment does not produce emotions, but the evaluation of what is at stake in terms of the consumers' aspirations through a well-fitted garment; that is what gives rise to a particular negative emotional response. Thus, underlying the emotional responses are the personal values an individual seeks to achieve through the garment she purchases. Specifically, one approach used in describing and differentiating between and among the evaluations are the dimensional processes, which refer to the process of answering evaluative questions (Demir *et al.*, 2009). One of the evaluative questions most likely to be asked by the consumer when faced with an ill-fitting garment is whether this negatively perceived situation affects the female consumer's personal values. Siemer *at al.* (2007) states that these evaluative questions which differentiate between emotions are named appraisal dimensions. Furthermore, garments and appearance are closely related to the social environment (Cardoso

et al., 2010), and the emotions this research intends to identify are those elicited when personal values are either challenged or maintained through garment fit which results from garment sizing problems. Therefore, this study applied the social standards dimension as the appropriate dimension to use when evaluating personal values when considering the sizing of garments and the resulting emotions.

Personal values and emotions related to garment sizing and fit

Personal values can be regarded as the points of reference in the evaluation processes. Emotions may be elicited depending on the perceptions of whether the fitting of the garment matches or mismatches the personal values which the female consumer may seek through clothing. Hence, an emotional state will not be elicited by the garment sizing problem and the resulting fit as such, but by the evaluative significance of this problem to an individual's personal values (Siemer *et al.*, 2007).

The personal values that consumers attach to products such as garments can be broken down into two types, namely instrumental and terminal values (Chema *et al.*, 2004). According to Chema *et al.* (2004) and Karve (2011), instrumental values are core values that act like tools or methods in achieving the desirable end-state, while terminal values are desirable end-states that individuals work towards achieving through garments. These personal values have a large influence on the cognitive processes of consumers (Chema *et al.*, 2004) in their evaluation of garment fit.

Furthermore, emotions and personal values are closely related to each other. According to Frijda (2007) cited in Nurkka (n.d.), every emotion hides a concern and in Frijda's vocabulary, "concern is a synonym for motive, a need, a desire, a goal as well as the personal values, referring to all things that people care for and are important to them". In this regard, a personal value is the concern, which is also the terminal personal value that gives the situation (for instance improper fitting garment resulting from garment sizing problems) its emotional meaning and the emotions point to the presence of some concern in the mind of the consumer. Hence, the elicited emotion by the female consumers indicates the presence of a concern, which is also the terminal personal value for garment fit which came to light as a result of garment sizing problem. Thus, in this study, the emotional responses are regarded as the outcome of an appraisal or evaluation process in which the problems of garment fit emerging from complications of garment sizing are linked to the underlying concerns or terminal personal values.

The role of emotions in marketing research has been well documented, however, in South Africa very little research has been conducted where the social standards dimension of appraisal has been applied to uncover the underlying emotions of female consumers when faced with garment sizing problems when purchasing ready-to-wear clothing.

Furthermore, fewer studies have reported on the deeper personal values that may contribute to emotions that consumers experience as a result of ill-fitting garments emanating from garment sizing problems found in the South African clothing retail environment. In spite of the awareness of the problems of sizing in the clothing industry, exploring consumers' perceptions regarding this problem can give an insight to the personal values female consumers in Gauteng, South Africa aspire to achieve through the contribution garment sizing makes to the fit of the garment.

Methodology

The sampling method used in this study was purposeful and convenient. The female participants selected were older than 18 years, who were employed and purchased their own ready-to-wear garments from clothing retailers, residing in the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan area in Gauteng, South Africa. This resulted in 62 participants volunteering to take part in this study. In light of the fact that an exploratory approach was undertaken, the sample size was based on sufficiency (Greeff, 2007) and largely determined by the nature of the research instrument and its complexities. Since the purpose of this study was to establish the emotional impact garment fit has on the female consumer when they evaluate the occurrence against their personal values, the study used the laddering approach through which the personal values and emotions attributed to garment fit as it emerges from the problems of garment sizing that were recorded.

Means-end chain theory and the laddering instrument

Gutman (1982) defines means-ends chain as a model that seeks to explain how a product such as clothing selection facilitates the achievement of desired end-states or personal values. The theory suggests that consumers think about product characteristics or attributes in terms of the consequences which may be perceived as either positive (benefits) or negative (risks) (Veludo-de-Oliveira *et al.* 2006; Zinas and Jusan, 2011). These consequences have to be in harmony with the personal values of the consumer which is the highest level in the entire process. Thus, the model examines the association between the attributes and the personal values in the context of

consumer evaluations. In doing so, the means-end chain theory provides a clear view of the consumption motives and allows access to the ways in which consumers perceive products and themselves, as well as words or emotions used to express these perceptions (Costa *et al.*, 2004).

According to the means-end chain theory, the information which is contained in the consumers' memories (Zinas and Jusan, 2011) is most commonly revealed with the help of a laddering technique. Laddering normally involves a structured tailored interviewing format which primarily uses a series of directed probes to uncover the underlying reasons why an attribute or consequence is important to the participant (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988). The *hard laddering* approach was applied as this does not involve face to face or personal interviews, but is instead based on a structured, self-administered questionnaire that participants are asked to complete on either a computer or with pencil and paper (Kaciak and Cullen, 2005). Since hard laddering can minimise the influence of an interviewer resulting in increasing the objectivity of the results (Zanoli and Naspetti, 2002), this was considered to be the most appropriate approach to uncover female consumers' personal values and the resulting emotions caused by the problems of garment sizing for this study which result in poor fitting garments.

The laddering exercise was aimed at uncovering the emotional impact resulting from the problems female consumers experienced with garment sizing in general. The hard laddering exercise was conducted through the question, "*when shopping for clothing, what are the three main problems you have experienced in South Africa with garment sizing in general?*" The hard laddering procedure initially identified the attributes or characteristics (positive or negative) based on the question. This was followed with a prompt to reflect on the attributes listed by the participant through a probing question such as, "Why is the attribute important to you?" that may lead to a consequence, and a further prompt to determine why the consequence identified was important that lead to the personal values associated with the consequence. Through this technique the participant was allowed to continue revealing the importance of a particular answer which is what the laddering technique essentially aims to achieve (Veludo-de-Oliveira *et al.*, 2006).

Analysis of the hard laddering data

The hard laddering data were first analysed and coded according to the procedure suggested by Reynolds and Gutman (1988). The content codes were entered into the Mecalyst V 9.1 software program, which tabulated an implication matrix portraying the degree of connection between the various attributes, consequences and values. Furthermore, a hierarchical value

map (HVM) was constructed from the implication matrix, which graphically represented the most frequently mentioned links gathered across all the participants and presented the findings.

Findings and discussion

The HVM (Figure 1) features rectangle blocks; each rectangle block contains the code label and the percentage of participants who named or mentioned that particular code. Personal values that are at the top of the map are linked by arrows from the middle levels, which are the consumer consequences, while consequences are linked by arrows from the attributes which are at the bottom of the maps or form the first row at the bottom of the map. The thickness of each line represents the number of occurrences of a particular link between two codes. Thus, the thicker lines refer to links mentioned by a larger number of participants. Regarding the derived HVMs, even though different attributes, consequences and personal values resulting from the emotional connotation with the attribute and the consequence are mentioned by many different participants, it does not necessarily mean that it is represented in the HVM. Deciding which code labels should be represented was accomplished by selecting a cut-off level to indicate which links or associations between the code label should be represented or omitted in the HVM. For example, a cut-off of 2 implies that all links or an association mentioned by at least two participants is represented in the HVM. The chosen cut-off for each of the maps in this study is based on the balance of meaningful information retained and clarity of the map created as indicated by Reynolds and Gutman (1988:20). The findings are structured to reflect the purpose of this study, which is to explore the area of concerns with garment sizing and to establish the emotional impact garment sizing has on the female consumer when they evaluate this phenomenon against their value system and to determine the role that garment sizing plays in female consumers' perceptions of garment fit as well as its effect on the purchasing decision.

Findings from the laddering question resulted in the HVM presented in Figure 1 with the chosen cut-off of 2. Figure 1 illustrates that "inconsistency" (45%) with garment sizing is the main problem female consumers experience in South Africa. In addition to this, garment sizes that are "unsuitable for various body shapes" (13%), "unreliable" (13%), and "inaccurate" regarding the actual garment dimensions and the indicated size label (11%), as well as "limited stock" (8%) of certain garment sizes were also experienced.

Place Figure 1 approximately here

“Inconsistency”

“Inconsistency” refers to the irregularities and lack of agreement of garment sizing across clothing retailers and within the same shop, is linked to several negative consequences and negative instrumental personal values as reflected through the link to the consequence “try-on” which is the strongest link on the map. Participants explained that garment sizing is so irregular that it is difficult to predict the correct size, as a result it is obligatory to try-on garments before purchasing as the participants felt *“you always have to try-on because you cannot just pick the correct size”*; *“the cut of the sizes is different in various shops, you cannot buy without trying on”*. The consequence, “try-on” is linked to the negative instrumental personal value “wastes time”, which is the second strongest link on the map. Female consumers in this study were of the opinion that trying on garments is a process which, especially to the modern consumer, is a waste of valuable time *“because I cannot buy without fitting, it makes shopping longer and tedious”*. Furthermore, lack of time to try-on garments is one of the contributing factors for some consumers not to make a purchase *“I should have enough time to try-on”*; *“if pressured for time I don’t buy anything”*. This may imply that time-conscious consumers would appreciate it if shopping was made easier by having a proper sizing system, than to spend valuable time looking for correct fitting sizes by trying on garments. As a result the undesirable consequence “try-on” also leads to the negative instrumental personal value “frustrated”, the third strongest link on the map and a weaker instrumental personal value of “sad” which is a negative emotion. Some female consumers explained that *“although trying-on garments is necessary to enable them choose a good fitting garment, it is frustrating, when after carrying and fitting so many clothes, none of them fit properly”*. The other negative consequence linked to “inconsistency” is “unpleasant shopping”. According to the participants, inconsistency makes shopping difficult *“I do not enjoy going to the shops because of inconsistency”*. Subsequently a negative consequence “unsure of your size” also results from the problem of “inconsistency” because a consumer may be unsure of their actual garment size, *“I am not sure of my size”*. This creates a negative instrumental value and a state of being “confused”. The confusion is found in the fact that *“same size fits differently in different shops as a result I end up buying different sizes so long they fit”*. As a result a negative instrumental personal value of being “annoyed” is experienced, which is a negative emotion. From this state, the HVM also

suggests that negative instrumental personal values of being “depressed” and “irritated”, expressed itself as a result of the problem of “inconsistency” are far reaching as garment sizing “...makes me feel my body is fat when I buy bigger size”. However, the consequences relay back to a state of depression and irritation. Because of the elicitation of negative blocking emotions, purchasing decision of ready-to-wear clothing is affected “it is irritating when you don’t find size, I end up leaving”; “if tired of fitting, I get stressed and frustrated, and then I don’t buy, just go home”.

“Unsuitable for various body shapes”

“Unsuitable for various body shapes” is linked to the consequence “improper fit”, also the third strongest link on the map. Female consumers expressed the concern that sizing of the garments is not proportional, “some parts of the garments are either too small or too big for certain body shapes”; “I tend to buy larger sizes for the sake of having longer sleeves of blouses or pants”. Zwane and Magagula (2007) agree that women with disproportionate figures, particularly a bottom heavy figure type, may be dissatisfied with the current clothing sizes offered by apparel retailers. This finding suggests that there is a need for developing a sizing system for measuring and classifying female body shapes in South Africa. The consequence “improper fit” is linked to two different negative instrumental personal values of “frustrated” and “annoyed” with the link to “frustrated” being also the third strong link on the map. Participants feel that “it is frustrating if one struggles to find a garment that fits well and altering garments is annoying”. Participants are of the opinion that altered garments may not be reproduced to its original style shape, “alterations make the garment lose the shape”; “sizes are not increased proportionally” which can affect the fitting of the garment. Furthermore, participants think that foreign garment sizing is different and unsuitable for South Africa with varying body shapes, hence the connection between the problem “unsuitable for various body shapes” and the negative consequence “imports sizing is different”, “garment sizing of imported garments for instance Chinese is very different to suit the various body shapes of the South African females”; “I do not like larger size labels” which according to them is rather “embarrassing”. Participants explained that they will not be influenced to purchase a garment with a larger garment size label than they usually wear. This suggests that female consumers in this study perceive that the larger garment size label indicates the size of the person wearing it which can be associated with their personal values “if the size on the label is big I will not buy”; “if the size is larger than 20 I won’t buy, I can get size 16/18 in other shops”. This finding concurs with Laitala *et al.* (2011) who also found some participants refused to try-on a larger garment size label if they did not fit into a

medium. Holmlund *et al.* (2010) also mentioned that mature women avoided international chains where they have to buy larger sizes than normal.

“Unreliable”

“Unreliable” was equally linked to the negative consequence of “try-on”. Again, participants expressed their lack of trust in size labels, *“I do not trust the size labels I have to fit”*. Unreliability of garment sizing was also highlighted by the participants as one of the reasons why garment sizing affects garment fit *“if wrong sizing, you choose wrong items which do not fit properly”*. The HVM also suggests that the negative consequences also linked to “unreliable” is “different materials fit differently”. Participants are of the opinion that different materials (fabric) are sized differently *“I wear different sizes depending on the material, either I go up if non stretchy or down if stretchy material,”* as a result a negative instrumental value and a state of being “confused” is created. Furthermore, the fact that garment sizing is “unreliable”, female consumers become “depressed” at the unpredictability of garment sizing *“the unpredictability of garment sizes is depressing”*. Winks (1997) attributes such problems to manufacturers who make garments to their own specification, basing these upon their own or consumer experiences or alternatively of the retail houses or wholesalers they supply.

“Inaccurate”

“Inaccurate”, that is, when the measurements of the garment and the size labels do not correspond, is linked to the two main already mentioned negative consequences, “try-on” and “improper fit”. Participants are of the opinion that *“garment labels do not correspond with the measurements of the garment”*, likewise the problem of “inaccurate” is associated with the negative instrumental personal values “wastes time”, as well as leading into a state of being “frustrated”, “annoyed” and “sad” which are negative emotions. The actual garment dimensions followed for the size label could be significant for female consumers in terms of selecting the right garment size.

“Limited stock”

The issue of “limited stock” is linked to only one negative consequence, “buying limitations”. Participants expressed the need for *“...in-between sizes”* by explaining that at times their size can be a bit smaller and the next size too big, which leaves them nowhere. Participants further complained of unavailability of stock of certain garment sizes for certain garment designs *“some designs do not include larger sizes”*; *“have more stock for the popular size range (medium sizes) which seem to run out quickly”*; *“smaller sizes finish quickly”*. Because of the “limited stock”, participants are limited to purchase their clothing at certain retailers where

they are sure to find their garment size *“I am restricted to shop at certain shops, for instance, Woolworths where I’m sure to get my size”*. These findings seem to suggest that female consumers with various body shapes and sizes all have problems with the garment sizing. Furthermore, participants also mentioned that limited garment size ranges in store affected garment fit *“if your size is smaller and is not there, you end up taking a bigger size that doesn’t fit well”*; *“I compromise if I don’t find my size, I buy a different size which is available”*. This finding seem to indicate that the limitation of garment sizes leaves consumers with no option other than to settle for the available sizes in retail outlets that do not always fit properly. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Laitala *et al.* (2011) who reported that some respondents felt they had no option as their own bigger size did not exist. The negative consequence of “buying limitations” creates negative instrumental personal values, “annoyed” and “sad” which are negative emotions. However, some participants suggested the possibility of alterations of garments to be a solution to fixing the garment sizing problems if they really like the garment *“if I really like it I buy and alter”*. Although garment alterations are used as the alternative to achieving the preferred fit for some consumers in Gauteng, South Africa, a study conducted by Howarton and Lee (2010) on market analysis of fit preferences of female boomers in the United States of America showed that respondents were unlikely to request garment alterations, but would rather continue looking for fitting garments.

The above findings and an overall impression of the HVM, clearly revealed that only negative emotions were elicited in the process of evaluating different problems concerning garment sizing. This corresponds with what different researchers had pointed out, that when it comes to garment purchases, women find it difficult to find a garment that fits well, which makes them unhappy consumers (Barona-McRoberts 2005, unpublished; Otieno, *et al.*, 2005; Horwaton and Lee, 2010). The negative instrumental values, expressed as negative emotions specify the desired-end state goals or terminal personal values these female consumers desire to achieve through clothing. The terminal personal values may involve many different and specific goals not known to the researcher and not goals that differentiate the emotions.

Although there are problems with garment sizing, the study also showed that some participants think that garment sizing was “reasonable”. According to these participants, sizes were available if they invested more time in shopping around *“I usually find my size if only I look around”*. This finding seem to suggest that the female consumers in this study acknowledge that there are some issues with garment sizing, however, somehow they choose

to overlook the problem by focusing on finding garment sizes that fit. The central assumption of the cognitive appraisal theory of emotions is that different people may respond with dissimilar emotions to the same situation depending on how each one of them evaluates the situation (Siemer *et al.*, 2007; Roseman *et al.*, 1990). The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that the evaluations of garment sizing resulted in most participants regarding it as harmful (negative) while a few participants thought of garment sizing as beneficial (positive) to the attainment of their personal values.

Conclusion and recommendations

Clothing is about self-expression of personal values to others (Kaiser, 1998; Kim *et al.*, 2002) as well as emotions (Doshi, 2006). As such, female consumers are unlikely to purchase a garment solely as a means of ensuring warmth and to cover the body. Hence, the sizing of a garment could be considered as an important criterion in what the consumer aspires to achieve through clothing to satisfy their emotional and physiological needs by seeking certain personal values through garment fit. However, the findings of the personal values that the participants in this study aspired to achieve through clothing highlighted the following aspects of “inconsistency” “unsuitability for various body shapes” “unreliability”, “inaccuracy”, and “limited stock” of certain garment sizes in retail stores in Gauteng. Therefore, the findings of this study show only negative instrumental personal values expressed by negative emotions.

The cognitive appraisal theories of emotions, according to Lazarus (2001), suggest that emotions are determined by the cognitive evaluation or appraisal of an event that is personally relevant. From this perspective garment sizing does not produce negative emotions, but what the consumer may evaluate to be at stake for them may give rise to a particular negative emotional responses. As such, the expressed negative emotions, by the female consumers in this study, clearly suggest the presence of an underlying concern or the unnamed terminal personal value affected by the problems of garment sizing in Gauteng is inconsistent and warrents further reasearch. The appraisal theory findings show that there is a tendency to approach that which is evaluated as “good” and to avoid that which is “bad). This suggests that the expressed negative emotions may have a strong impact on consumer purchasing behaviour. This suggests that understanding the implications of the negative emotions expressed by participants should enable clothing manufacturers and retailers to make better predictions about consumer purchasing behaviour regarding the garment sizing and fit.

Control over the negative producing situation, such as garment sizing is one way of influencing consumers' purchasing behaviour. Once aware of the expressions of negative emotions, clothing manufacturers and retailers need to respond to these emotions in ways that are conducive to consumers' satisfaction of their offerings. One should keep in mind that aside from seeking to provide female consumers with high quality garments, garment retailers and manufacturers need to take into consideration aspects such as the relationships between various body shapes and garment sizings in their target markets when producing ready-to-wear garments. It is, therefore, recommended that a national sizing study be conducted as very little is known about female body shapes in South Africa. Such knowledge may reduce imports into the country as these garments may not be manufactured for the South African female figure type. The study should be expanded to incorporate a bigger sample size so as to get feedback from manufacturers and retailers on the the challenges of garment sizing and fit currently in South Africa. A study that quantifies and relates garment sizing to personal values and the resulting emotions will allow a more precise understanding of the problems that are particular to South Africa and the personal values that drive the purchasing of garments in Gauteng, South Africa.

Disclaimer: This study was conducted in Johannesburg and Pretoria, Gauteng from a limited number of participants and, therefore, cannot be generalised to all women in South Africa

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FIGURE 1: Hierarchical value map of the problems experienced with garment sizing

