

**Male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business
apparel and the influence on the purchase decision**

by

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Dedicated to:

My father, who has always believed in me,
motivated me to continue with my studies,
and still inspires me to do my best.
You are dearly missed.

Declaration

I, Philné Lundie, hereby declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Master of Consumer Science at the University of South Africa, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution.

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SUMMARY

Numerous authors are in agreement about apparel being a means of communication, especially in the workplace environment (Howlett et al. 2013; Li et al. 2012; Kang et al. 2011; Kwon 1994; Stuart & Fuller 1991). In fact, business apparel has been found to be used as a tool to communicate perceived meaning about the wearer to others, such as level of education, diligence, and even occupational ability (Kwon 1994; Stuart & Fuller 1991). Business apparel has the ability to be used by the wearer as a means to impress others but have also been found to produce positive feelings like confidence, productivity and dependability in the mind of the wearer (Peluchette et al. 2006). Moreover, minor changes in an outfit can influence the opinions and judgements made by others about the wearer (Howlett et al. 2015; Howlett et al. 2013). Otnes and McGrath (2001) suggest that men may attempt to achieve professional success when purchasing business apparel as the apparel worn at work may be related to achieving success in the workplace.

Men are becoming more evident in the ready-to-wear apparel retail market, which may be explained by a shift in the way society sees traditional gender roles (McNeill & Douglas 2011; Otnes & McGrath 2001). In fact, Otnes and McGrath (2001) propose that men who are not limited by the view of traditional gender roles shop with motivation, often displaying shopping behaviour considered as feminine, but do so with a specific goal in mind. Increased marketing activities targeting male consumers (Seo et al. 2001), a greater variety in ready-to-wear business apparel options, due to the tendency towards a more casual dress code in many workplaces (Torres et al. 2001), and an increased consciousness about managing their own appearance (Sindicich & Black 2011) contribute to changes in the apparel purchasing behaviour of male consumers. Kang et al. (2011) suggest that men in particular expect specific outcomes, such as career advancement, communicating a positive impression to others, improving personal performance in the workplace, and feeling good about themselves, which they associate with their business apparel.

Well-fitting apparel makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the wearer. Consumers, including men, often consider the fit of ready-to-wear apparel items as an aspect to consider when evaluating alternatives for purchasing. This is significant

since the fit of apparel contributes not only to the physical comfort of the apparel item but also involves an aesthetic as well as a socio-psychological dimension (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). Fit problems with ready-to-wear business apparel among male consumers have been reported by various authors (Sindicich & Black 2011; Sindicich 2008). However, getting a clear indication of consumers' evaluation of apparel fit remains a complicated process (Chen 2007) and with the wide range of body shapes among apparel consumers, as well as their range of preferences towards apparel fit, problems with the fit of apparel items continue to be a topic of concern for manufacturers and retailers (Bye & LaBat 2005; Anderson et al. 2000) and the task of providing consumers with satisfactory fit is notably difficult (Ross 2005). Considering the influence which consumers' expectations of the fit of their apparel has on the apparel purchase decision, the limited research about male consumer expectations regarding the fit of apparel is a problem worth addressing. This includes what their expectations are with regard to the fit of their business apparel, as well as factors they consider to be important when in the process of purchasing business apparel. Therefore, the overall purpose of this study was to gain knowledge regarding the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations that South African male consumers hold towards the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, and to determine the extent to which their expectations influence their apparel purchase decisions.

The study employed an exploratory, quantitative research approach. Data were collected by means of an electronic questionnaire through a combination of both purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic and psychographic profile of the sample by means of frequencies and percentage distributions and to analyse the coded data. A correlation coefficient was calculated and was used to determine the reliability of the constructs, namely the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of fit and the importance of these apparel attributes when respondents purchase ready-to-wear business apparel. A multiple linear regression model was applied to determine the relationship between the expectations and the extent to which these influence the purchase decision regarding business apparel.

The results of this study indicated that respondents showed a higher level of agreement with the functional expectations of the fit of their business apparel than with the aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations. However, the multiple linear regression model indicated that respondents placed greater importance on the aesthetic and socio-psychological aspects of apparel when in the process of purchasing ready-to-wear apparel for the workplace. In terms of functional expectations, respondents expected their business apparel to fit well when in their size, as well as to be comfortable and of good quality. The results further indicated that the respondents expected the fabric of ready-to-wear business apparel to be comfortable, that they like the colour of the apparel item, and that wearing the apparel item would contribute to positive feelings of self. Socio-psychological expectations included that the respondents expected ready-to-wear business apparel with good fit to make them feel fashionably dressed, give them confidence at work and also make them feel like they are a part of the company, as their business apparel should adhere to the dress code of the company. It is therefore recommended that ready-to-wear apparel manufacturers, as well as marketers and retailers, not only consider the functional aspects of apparel fit, but also focus on the aesthetic and socio-psychological aspects of apparel fit, as these also play an important role in the male consumer's evaluation of ready-to-wear business apparel and therefore also his assessment of his own satisfaction during use. Ready-to-wear business apparel marketers and retailers can integrate male consumers' expectations towards fit and business apparel in general into marketing strategies and as a means to retain current consumers.

KEYWORDS: fit, business apparel, ready-to-wear garments, appearance management, male shopping behaviour, expectations, evaluation, quality, purchase decisions, South Africa.

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CHAPTER 1

THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

Chapter one provides an overview of the study by presenting the background, the problem statement as well as the purpose of the study along with the research objectives. This chapter further gives a brief description of the research methodology with specific focus on the research design, sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Apparel can be seen as a tool with which to communicate, specifically in the workplace, and plays an important part in forming first impressions of the wearer as apparel assist in the judgement by others regarding the wearer's attractiveness, intelligence and social status (Bell 1991) to name a few qualities. More so, business apparel, be it formal or more casual, can be used effectively by the wearer as a tool to portray specific roles in the workplace environment (Sindicich 2008), for instance portraying occupational status such as management or executive positions (Howlett et al. 2015). Therefore, according to Kwon (1994), the role that apparel plays in non-verbal communication and the formation of opinions about people in terms of their work-related abilities cannot be denied. This may explain why apparel might be used not simply for its functionality in that it covers the body, but also for its expressive attributes in that apparel is able to assist the wearer in creating the desired image (Bakewell et al. 2006).

With this in mind, it has been noted that apparel purchasing behaviour of men, in particular in modern society, has changed from that of previous generations. In the past, men used apparel primarily for its functional attributes and for the purpose of comfort (Li et al. 2012). However, men appear to be more positive about purchasing apparel items than in previous years (Chang et al. 2004). McAlinden (2004) agrees that some men are not limited by what can be described as traditional gender roles (where a man's role is to provide money for his wife to spend), but rather take an

interest in their own appearance and therefore also in shopping to maintain their image. Moreover, Otnes and McGrath (2001) propose that men often acknowledge that shopping can be an enjoyable activity for them in which to participate.

Furthermore, male consumers are also presently more frequently exposed to apparel marketing initiatives than in the past (Bakewell et al. 2006). For example, the concept of 'new man' advertising, the rise of the 'metro sexual' image and transforming societal views on homosexuality, are all societal changes which have an impact on men's fashion consciousness (Li et al. 2012; Sindicich 2008; Bakewell et al. 2006). According to Bakewell et al. (2006), advertising campaigns have endeavoured to encourage men to associate apparel and personal style with success ('new man' advertising), and therefore pay more attention to their appearance. The 'metro sexual' image relates to 'new man' advertising in that a modern man (a man who has an interest in fashion and a sense of style) is more confident to display shopping traits that have formerly been considered as feminine (McAlinden 2004; Otnes & McGrath 2001). Subsequently, the changing views of the modern man's identity are resulting in male consumers feeling pressured to conform to the standards which are placed on a man's physical appearance (McNeill & Douglas 2011), be it through the public or through apparel retail marketing strategies.

As a result of regular exposure to apparel marketing initiatives, as well as pressure from society, male consumers are now showing a greater interest in apparel and are consequently more inclined to participate in apparel shopping and purchasing activities such as browsing, evaluating alternatives and socialising in the retail environment (Seo et al. 2001; Otnes & McGrath 2001). In fact, South African men also seem to take an interest in their own personal appearance and use apparel as a means of finding their own style (Euromonitor International 2016), which may be one of the reasons men are becoming more willing to shop for apparel.

As a matter of fact, the growing South African middle class is a promising market for apparel retailers to target, especially as the apparel market, which was already an R29.57bn market in 2011, was expected to expand by almost 15% over the 2012-2016 forecast period (PWC 2012). The estimated growth in the apparel retail market therefore implies that consumers are expected to continue purchasing apparel items,

and possibly spend even more of their income on apparel purchases. In general, the employment rate among men in South Africa, not taking into account variables such as race or age, is higher than that of women (Statistics South Africa 2015). Moreover, men in South Africa presently hold key positions in companies and earn higher salaries in comparison to women (Euromonitor International 2016). Therefore, focusing research on male apparel consumers may provide a better understanding of the male consumer's apparel purchasing behaviour in the South African retail context (Du Plessis et al. 2011), which may prove valuable for apparel retailers and marketers to build appropriate product strategies for male apparel consumers.

Male shopping and purchasing behaviour in general often appears to be predominantly functional in nature so as to avoid criticism from others for being too concerned about physical appearance (McNeill & Douglas, 2011). For example, if a man can legitimise purchasing a grooming product (traditionally seen as feminine) such as aftershave moisturiser in order to avoid rash, instead of simply enhancing his own appearance, he may be more comfortable with purchasing the product. Men may also want to legitimise apparel product purchases in this way. In fact, in a study done by Kwon (1994) on the influence of business apparel and gender on the self-perception of occupational attributes, men perceived business apparel as a tool to enhance ten occupational attributes, which included responsibility, competency, knowledgeability, professionalism, honesty, reliability, intelligence, trustworthiness, willingness to work hard and efficiency. According to Kang et al. (2011), the significance that men attach to their work identity will have an impact on the way they choose to communicate their identity at work through apparel they choose to wear. Despite changes in the male shopper's approach to apparel and the recent growth globally in the men's business apparel market (Sindicich & Black 2011), male consumers' apparel shopping and purchasing behaviour is currently a limited area of research, internationally (Otnes & McGrath 2001) as well as in South Africa (Thomas 2008).

Even though some workplaces have adopted a more casual mode of dress (Woodard 1999), it seems as though many companies are moving back towards formal business apparel as men are becoming increasingly conscious about their own image (Sindicich 2008). Given that various companies have different dress codes for their employees, it is necessary to define business apparel for the purpose

of this study. Business apparel refers to apparel items that could be worn in a corporate workplace environment and may include apparel items such as suits, shirts, trousers, jackets and ties (Sindicich 2008; Lui & Dickerson 1999). Some companies may require employees to wear formal business apparel, such as the traditional business suit; whereas others may allow a more casual mode of dress (Smith et al. 2011). For the purpose of this study, business apparel refers to formal (suit and tie), smart-casual or business-casual (formal trousers or jeans or slacks and a buttoned shirt), as well as casual (jeans or slacks and a T-shirt or golf shirt) apparel of which men can choose to wear in the corporate workplace environment, excluding uniforms and apparel which require employees to look the same.

According to Sindicich (2008), the fit of a ready-to-wear business apparel item may specifically influence the consumer's decision to make an apparel item purchase, or not, because the fit influences the comfort of the apparel item when worn. The manufacturer makes ready-to-wear apparel items to fit individuals without knowledge of their exact measurements (Laitala et al. 2011; Chun-Yoon & Jasper 1993), seeing that sizes are based on the market's ideal body (Muthambi et al. 2016). In order to obtain good fit, consumers have to be satisfied with the level of physical comfort, psychological comfort and the appearance of the apparel item in relation to their body (Ross 2005), to name a few of the more general indicators of satisfaction. Although each individual consumer has his/her own criteria about the way in which an apparel item should fit, apparel that impede movement or cause discomfort are not examples of good fit (Nkambule 2010; Sindicich 2008). Therefore, the male consumer will most likely be satisfied with an apparel item purchase when the fit is comfortable, looks attractive when worn and provides him with positive feelings about himself. Since consumers display different preferences regarding what they deem good fit, satisfying consumers' apparel needs area challenging goal to achieve (Pisut & Connell 2007; Ross 2005) in the ready-to-wear industry.

Dissatisfaction among male consumers regarding ready-to-wear apparel has been reported in various studies. Hogge et al. (1988) found that, although the fit of apparel items was the most important factor for both elderly and non-elderly men during apparel purchasing, both groups experienced fit problems with shirt and jacket sleeve length. According to Kurt Salmon Associates (2000), as cited by Bye and LaBat (2005), 62% of males reported fit problems with apparel items. To illustrate the

scope of the apparel fit problems which men often experience, Ross (2005) found that, when studying sizing and fit of men's underwear, 67% of the respondents were dissatisfied with at least one area of their underpants and 60% with undershirts. Also, in a later study done by Sindicich and Black (2011), it was found that at least 40% of male respondents were dissatisfied with mainly the key sizing dimensions of their business apparel, for instance neck circumference, sleeve length, waist circumference, pants leg length, and suit chest size. Therefore, it is clear that the fit problems that men experience with ready-to-wear apparel have not been resolved.

Not only is fit in general an important attribute which influences the level of satisfaction with an apparel item, but Lui and Dickerson (1999) point out that fit is also considered an important selection criterion when male consumers make business apparel purchasing decisions. Howarton and Lee (2010) agree that consumers generally consider the fit when evaluating ready-to-wear apparel. Though, the way in which fit is evaluated differs from consumer to consumer, and their evaluations of the fit (and expectations of the fit) are therefore subjective in nature (Chen 2007). Nevertheless, an apparel item that fits in such a way as not to restrict the wearer's movement can be described as one that fits well (Laitala et al. 2011) and will be comfortable to wear. Furthermore, it is also important to consider that men place more emphasis on the performance of a branded apparel item because such an item is expected to fit well (Thomas 2008). However, the expectation raised by male consumers may disappoint when it comes to ready-to-wear business apparel as Pisut and Connell (2007) point out, namely, that fit in general is a continuous problem when purchasing apparel items, which may lead to consumers developing a negative attitude towards apparel purchasing. Howarton and Lee (2010) agree that fit is a key reason for consumer complaints regarding apparel. On the other hand, Torres et al. (2001) are of the opinion that consumers who are satisfied with their ready-to-wear apparel purchases will probably make repeat purchases at the same store. It is therefore clear that apparel fit contributes to the consumer's satisfaction with the apparel item after purchase. For this reason, retailers are pressured to strive for well-fitting ready-to-wear apparel.

In general, satisfaction with apparel items is determined by the relationship between the consumer's expectations of the apparel item and the actual product performance (Otieno 2000). Furthermore, consumers are likely to consider purchasing apparel

items that they believe will satisfy their needs and may base their expectations of the product's performance on aspects such as physical comfort, aesthetic preferences and latest fashion trends (Sindicich 2008), which all relate to fit. In terms of the satisfaction with apparel products, consumers also consider functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological attributes of apparel items to evaluate the quality, and these attributes also act as indicators of the product's performance during and after purchasing (Smith et al. 2011; Smith 2010; Fiore & Damhorst 1992). In fact, Zhang et al. (2002) state that the comfort and style of apparel are important attributes used by consumers to evaluate apparel items as these correspond to the physical and psychological comfort resulting from wearing an apparel item. Given that the fit of apparel items relates to the aforementioned attributes of apparel, it is important to consider fit as an attribute of apparel items that may influence the male consumer's decision to purchase business apparel.

Apparel attributes include the inherent characteristics of the apparel item or the functional attributes, such as its colour and fibre content, which cannot be changed unless the apparel item itself is altered (Fiore & Kimle 1997). The functional attributes of apparel are intrinsic to the apparel item (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a) and have an impact on the product's performance, more specifically, the wearer's expectations of the apparel item's performance (Sindicich 2008). Aesthetic attributes of apparel items also form a part of the product's intrinsic features (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a) and largely contribute to the apparel item's attractiveness (Smith 2010). According to Fiore and Kimle (1997), the aesthetic attributes of apparel items influence the wearer on an emotional level. Socio-psychological attributes of apparel items may evoke cognitive meaning in the mind of the wearer (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004) and are therefore described as symbolic attributes since they communicate the meaning of an outfit (Fiore & Kimle 1997).

When considering the fit of apparel items, it is clear that the fit not only influences the physical performance (functional attributes) in that the apparel item should fit comfortably and be durable (Hogge et al. 1988), but fit also influences the physical appearance (aesthetic attributes) in that the apparel item should look good on the body (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004), as well as the cognitive or symbolic effect (socio-psychological attributes) in that apparel can make the wearer experience a particular emotion, such as dominance (Jason 2011; Nkambule 2010). In fact, early adolescent

girls were found to attach certain functional expectations (comfortable fit), aesthetical expectations (satisfying appearance or fits the body), and socio-psychological expectations (emotional feelings or cognitive meaning) to the fit of apparel (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004), which explains the expressive nature of apparel. Although not thus far established in literature, this may also be applicable to male consumers in that they may attach any of these functional expectations (comfortable fit), aesthetical expectations (satisfying appearance or fits the body), and socio-psychological expectations (feeling of control or dominance) to the fit of their business apparel. In light of the fact that the evaluation of the fit of apparel items cannot be judged without considering the consumer's expectations of fit (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004), it is therefore important to consider the expectations men have towards the fit of their ready-to-wear business apparel.

In general, consumers follow the consumer decision-making process, albeit the sequence depending on the situation, when purchasing items that are not inexpensive (Lamb et al. 2011) such as business apparel. The first step, problem or need recognition occurs when consumers experience an imbalance between what they desire and what they currently have (Kardes et al. 2011). For example, the male consumer becomes aware of the fact that he needs a new shirt for work. The inconsistency motivates the consumer in general to act and leads to the search for information which may include various sources such as personal experience with the product, other people (family, friends or co-workers), or marketing initiatives (Lamb et al. 2011; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010). In most cases, consumers in general then use specific criteria to evaluate alternatives and establish the expected outcome of a purchase decision (Du Plessis et al. 2011; Kardes et al. 2011).

Evaluating alternatives is a critical stage in the decision-making process as the consumer may decide to purchase the apparel item, consider alternative items or postpone the purchase decision altogether (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010). According to Lamb et al. (2011), the consumer will narrow down the number of available alternatives by choosing product attributes (such as style, brand, price, or fit of apparel) and excluding alternatives without those attributes. According to Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010), the evaluative attributes used by consumers may include physical performance attributes but also symbolic attributes, such as feelings generated and prestige afforded by the apparel item. Jason (2011) agrees

that consumer expectations regarding a particular product can originate from previous experiences with the same product, knowledge about the product, and socio-psychological needs that the product could satisfy, for instance satisfying the consumer's expectations or needs about the product on an emotional level. In light of this, the male consumer may consider the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological attributes of apparel fit (or all three or only some) as important when evaluating business apparel alternatives. The consumer then responds to the apparel item by choosing the most desirable alternative (Du Plessis et al. 2011). At this point the important question from a marketing perspective is whether the purchase will result in consumer satisfaction with the apparel item. According to Kardes et al. (2011), if the product's performance matches the consumer's expectation it is likely that the product will be purchased again in future, but if the expectations are not met and the performance is poor or disappointing, the consumer is more likely to consider other options. Therefore, focusing on fit as a criterion, especially on the expectations of fit for the evaluation of alternatives in the case of ready-to-wear business apparel purchases, may provide a better understanding of the male apparel purchasing decision.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Changes such as greater exposure to fashion (Bakewell et al. 2006; Chang et al. 2004) and women challenging male gender roles (Otnes & McGrath 2001), contribute to the dynamic apparel purchasing behaviour of male consumers. Even though male consumers these days are more evident in the retail environment, a continuous flow of research regarding their apparel purchasing behaviour is currently limited, especially when compared to the variety of apparel purchasing research done on their female counterparts. Especially in terms of studies focusing on female consumers in relation to business apparel, research has been done on apparel sizing and fit preferences and problems (Nkambule 2010), the use of quality indicators when evaluating business apparel (Smith 2010), the evaluation of the quality of business apparel (Smith et al. 2011), and the interaction between provocativeness of female business apparel and occupational status (Howlett et al. 2015). Internationally, some studies have focused on researching men's fashion

consciousness (Bakewell et al. 2006), their decision-making styles in the retail context (Bakewell & Mitchell 2006), male shopping behaviour (Doyle et al. 2008), the perceptions and realities of men's shopping behaviour (Otnes & McGrath 2001), their shopping behaviour relating to casual apparel (Seo et al. 2001), as well as the male consumer's shopping satisfaction and store preferences (Torres et al. 2001). However, despite the fact that male consumers are becoming more evident in the apparel retail market, their apparel purchasing behaviour remains a limited area of research, especially in relation to business apparel.

A study of the literature revealed that the fit of an apparel item is an important quality indicator which consumers use when making apparel purchasing decisions (Kasambala 2013; Chen 2007; Alexander et al. 2005; Bye & LaBat 2005; Otieno et al. 2005; Anderson et al. 2000). Authors who focused their research on female consumers agree that if the female consumer is not satisfied with the fit of an apparel item, the purchase decision will either be postponed or other alternatives will be considered (Jason 2011; Smith et al. 2011; Nkambule 2010; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). The same may be true in the case of male consumers, seeing that the fit of apparel items has been found by Lui and Dickerson (1999) to be important selection criteria for male consumers during apparel purchasing. Although a small number of studies have researched the fit issues male consumers have with ready-to-wear apparel (Sindicich & Black 2011; Sindicich 2008; Ross 2005; Hogge et al. 1988), research regarding male consumers' fit problems with ready-to-wear apparel in the South African context is limited and more so with regard to business apparel.

South Africa is a country with people from various ethnic groups (Statistics South Africa 2015), with body shapes dissimilar to the Western ideal body shape (Zwane & Magagula 2007), on which South African ready-to-wear apparel sizing is based (Muthambi et al. 2016), which implies that the ready-to-wear business apparel market has to provide well-fitting business apparel for consumers with various body shapes. Moreover, consumers from different ethnic groups have different preferences towards the ideal body size (Cachelin et al. 2002), as well as concerning the fit of apparel items (Sindicich 2008), and this may further complicate the process of providing well-fitting business apparel to the South African apparel retail market. Because of these differences, the male consumer in particular might be experiencing fit problems with business apparel. Another motivation for focusing this research

study on the South African apparel retail market (a R29.57bn market in 2011), is that this product category was estimated to expand by 14.7% over the forecast period of 2012-2016 (PWC 2012). Also, a rapid growing number of consumers are becoming more evident in the South African middle class, with an increased ability to spend their income on apparel products (Tustin et al. 2014; PWC 2012) which may also have an effect on the business apparel market. In fact, seeing that the employment rate among men in South Africa is higher than that of women (Statistics South Africa 2016), male consumers are able to spend more on apparel purchases. In light of the above, focusing research on male consumers in the South African apparel retail market, and their fit expectations with regard to business apparel, seems to be imperative.

In South Africa, studies related to apparel have focused largely on female consumers. Some of these studies researched female consumers' apparel fit problems (Makhanya et al. 2014), their apparel disposal behaviour (Meyer 2014), their evaluation and selection behaviour (Momberg et al. 2012), the needs and problems that women experience concerning branded apparel (Jason 2011), the use of quality indicators during apparel purchase evaluation (Smith 2010), the way in which working women evaluate the quality of their business apparel (Smith et al. 2011), and the role of aesthetics in female consumers' evaluation of the quality of apparel (De Klerk & Lubbe 2008). Although some studies have studied men in the South African context, like the study of Taljaard (2015), which studied South African male consumers' motivations to purchase eco-friendly apparel, or Thomas (2008), which looked at the brand-wearing male consumer in terms of searching and evaluating behaviour, and Radder et al. (2006), which explored the decision-making styles of South African consumers, a lack of literature is still apparent when it comes to South African male consumers' ready-to-wear apparel purchasing behaviour and even more so with regard to ready-to-wear business apparel. Therefore, considering the fact that consumers' expectations about the performance of an apparel item are closely linked to their decision to make the purchase or not (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995b), the limited research about male consumer expectations regarding the fit of business apparel is a problem worth addressing. Considering the above, the problem lies in that little knowledge about the South African male consumer's expectations

with regard to the fit of their business apparel, as well as factors they consider as important when in the process of purchasing business apparel exists.

Consumers have certain expectations about apparel items, such as the way it should fit, the way it should make them feel, and the message it should send to others, and therefore also associate a certain level of quality with it (Jason 2011). The literature revealed that consumers in general want to wear apparel items that are comfortable, attractive and that communicate certain emotional and cognitive messages, not only to themselves but also to others (Jason 2011; Kang et al. 2011; Nkambule 2010; Hogge et al. 1988). More specifically, business apparel can be used as a means of managing first impressions (Howlett et al. 2013), and also to communicate certain attributes in the workplace environment, such as the wearer's work-related ability, level of education (Stuart & Fuller 1991), responsibility, competence, honesty, reliability, intelligence, trustworthiness, willingness to work hard, efficiency (Kwon 1994), and also professionalism, confidence, creativity, and being a company representative (Kang et al. 2011). However, limited studies have been done in the South African context about whether or not male consumers use their business apparel as a tool to manage their own appearance for the purpose of attaining work-related outcomes in the workplace.

Seeing that male consumers have been found wanting to wear comfortable apparel (Hogge et al. 1988), and that size, fit and comfort have emerged as factors influencing men's business apparel purchasing behaviour (Lui & Dickerson 1999), their expectations of ready-to-wear business apparel may then also include a functional dimension. Men have also been found not only wanting to feel good about themselves in the workplace, but they also believe that business apparel can communicate identities like professionalism and creativity to others (Kang et al. 2011). Therefore, the aesthetic dimension and socio-psychological dimension of consumer expectations, proposed by Tselepis and De Klerk (2004), may also be relevant dimensions to apply to men's fit expectations, of which there is a lack of research.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Therefore, an understanding of male consumers' functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel may shed some light on their business apparel purchasing behaviour, which in turn may pave the way for retailers and marketers to better provide this target group with business apparel items with which their consumers are satisfied. It therefore seems necessary to gain knowledge regarding the expectations that South African male consumers hold about the fit of their business apparel, and also concerning the extent to which ready-to-wear business apparel purchase decisions are influenced by expectations regarding fit.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is to investigate male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to wear business apparel and the way in which it influences their purchasing decisions, within a South African context. In order to achieve the aim of this research study, the following research objectives were formulated:

Research objective 1: To explore the functional expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel.

Research objective 2: To explore the aesthetic expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel.

Research objective 3: To explore the socio-psychological expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel.

Research objective 4: To determine the extent to which expectations (functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological) influence the purchase decisions of male consumers in relation to business apparel.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of the study was to explore and describe the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and to determine the extent to which these expectations regarding fit influence the purchase decision. A brief overview follows of the research design, sampling strategy, method of data collection, and data analysis utilised as a part of the research methodology for the current study.

1.5.1 Research design

The current study fits into the quantitative paradigm which is used when the goal is to seek facts and causes of social phenomena (Neuman 2014). Seeing that the research study involved multiple respondents, it was important to ensure impartiality and avoid bias, which the quantitative paradigm assured, due to limited involvement between researcher and respondents (Masue et al. 2013). An exploratory research design assisted the researcher in gaining a basic understanding of male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and the importance thereof when evaluating it for purchasing as an exploratory approach allowed the researcher to explore the area of research where there is a lack of understanding due to insufficient detail about the phenomena. Descriptive research enables researchers to examine relationships of traits and characteristics, as well as identifying current situations (Bhattacharjee 2012), and therefore was also used in the current study, as this study deals with respondents (male consumers) in a specific context (the workplace) and their expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel.

1.5.2 Sampling strategy

The inclusion criteria for this study were that respondents had to be men working in a corporate environment in South Africa, who wear formal business apparel (business suits), smart-casual (slacks/jeans and buttoned shirts with or without a blazer) and/or casual business apparel (jeans/slacks and T-shirts or polo shirts). Men who wear uniforms at work were not included in the study sample. A non-probability, purposive sample was used since this sampling strategy allowed the researcher to draw a sample that consists of specific characteristics that are representative of the typical attributes of the population (Barratt et al. 2015) required for this study. In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling was also used since it enabled the

researcher to request individual respondents to identify further individuals for participation in the study (Neuman 2014; Babbie 2007) and thereby increase the total number of respondents to the study as purposive sampling rapidly exhausted the number of possible respondents.

1.5.3 Data collection

A research proposal for the current study was presented to the UNISA Ethics Review Committee for approval before data collection commenced. Ethical clearance was given with reference number 2014/CAES/186. Data collection was done by means of an online questionnaire using Survey Monkey seeing as this approach eliminated issues regarding time and effort. This approach enabled the researcher to use the quantitative data to depict and investigate the multiple variables (Maree 2007), outlined in the objectives of this study. The online questionnaire was divided into three section namely Section A (demographic information), Section B (functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations), and Section C (extent to which expectations influence purchase decisions with regard to business apparel). The questions were formulated based on an understanding of previous studies on ready-to-wear apparel fit and aspects about the topic which served as a guideline for the construction of the questions. Likert scales were mostly used as it gives the researcher the opportunity to measure respondents' attitudes with ordinal measures (Maree 2007). The questionnaire was piloted, after which changes were made to the questionnaire that included technical issues such as numbering of questions and also clarification of some questions (like stating concepts in layman's terms) that could have been misunderstood by respondents. The data was collected through an email that was sent to the target sample of men, explaining the reason they were requested to take part in the study, the purpose of the research and kindly requesting prospective respondents to participate by following the provided link and complete the online questionnaire. To encourage snowball sampling, the researcher also kindly requested respondents to forward the email with the link to their male colleagues, friends and/or family members who also fit the inclusion criteria for this study. The online questionnaire was completed by 216 respondents.

1.5.4 Data analysis

Given that the study was framed in a quantitative approach, answers to research objectives were found by statistically analysing the data and by interpreting the results (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham 2009). The data analysis was done by Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the study sample by means of frequencies and percentage distributions and to analyse the coded data. By using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the reliability of the constructs was determined. Furthermore, a multiple linear regression model was applied to determine whether or not a correlation exists between the South African male consumer's functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations of the fit of his business apparel and the importance thereof when he makes a purchase decision. The results were discussed in relation to the research objectives set for the study.

1.6 FLOW OF THE DISSERTATION

The chapters for this written dissertation are as follows from Chapter 1:

1.6.1 Chapter 1: The Study in Perspective

The first chapter of this dissertation gives an overview of the study by presenting the background, the problem statement and the justification of the study. The aim and objectives of the study is also given in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a brief explanation of the research methodology with specific focus on the research design, sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis.

1.6.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

An overview of the relevant literature is presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. This chapter presents apparel as a tool of appearance management in the workplace as well as the changing patterns of apparel consumption among male consumers. Fit of ready-to-wear business apparel is also defined and discussed, with some focus on previous studies regarding male consumers. Apparel fit is also presented in terms of the consumer's expectations thereof and how the fit of ready-to-wear apparel items is often used by consumers to evaluate an apparel item's quality. Finally, the

proposed conceptual framework for this study is presented, followed by a discussion on how the concepts relate to one another.

1.6.3 Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the full research methodology applied in this study. The research design showing the plan of the study is presented. Detailed discussion is given on the research design, sampling strategy, method of data collection and data analysis used for the study. Furthermore, this chapter concludes by addressing the ethical considerations for the current study.

1.6.4 Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the results obtained from the questionnaire are presented and discussed in relation to the research objectives. The demographic and psychographic information of respondents is presented as frequency and percentage distributions. The respondents' functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations regarding the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel are depicted in tables and presented in terms of percentages. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for questions regarding the functional expectations, the aesthetic expectations as well as the socio-psychological expectations, and is presented in this chapter. Finally, the multiple linear regression model that was used to determine the importance of functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological aspects of apparel items when respondents purchase ready-to-wear business apparel, is presented and explained.

1.6.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the final chapter, conclusions are drawn from the results of this study. A brief summary of the demographic and psychographic results of the study is given in this chapter, followed by a brief conclusion of the key results of the study in relation to the research objectives. The study is then evaluated in terms of its validity and reliability. The limitations of the study are addressed as well as recommendations made, based on the conclusions drawn from the results. Lastly, suggestions for future research are made.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two provides an overview of relevant literature as well as an introduction to the conceptual framework for the study which comprises the main focus of the research.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Conducting a literature review takes into account the fact that knowledge increases and that there is therefore much to learn from previous research, with an opportunity to expand on it (Neuman 2014). The literature review for the current study explores apparel as a tool of appearance management, more specifically how apparel contributes to appearance management in the workplace, as well as the changing patterns of apparel consumption among male consumers. Fit of ready-to-wear business apparel is also discussed, focusing on previous studies that were conducted, with specific attention to male consumers. To illustrate the importance of focusing research on the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, problems that have been found relating to the ready-to-wear business apparel fit and its recurring impact on the evaluation stage of the decision-making process are also discussed. Fit is presented in terms of the consumer's expectations thereof and how the fit of ready-to-wear apparel is often used by consumers to evaluate an apparel item's quality. A conceptual framework is presented and illustrates the way in which male consumers shop with motivation and with certain outcomes in mind, and how their expectations regarding the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel influence the evaluation of apparel items during the purchase situation, as well as after the purchase has been made.

2.2 APPAREL AS A TOOL FOR APPEARANCE MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

In many professional workplaces, the business suit is considered an acceptable dress code and is a means whereby men can positively augment the image they choose to communicate to others (Howlett et al. 2013). However, many companies may allow a more casual mode of dress (Peluchette et al. 2006), which complicates the process of defining business apparel. In a broad sense, business apparel may be defined as the attire worn by employees at work such as trousers, a shirt, and a jacket (Rafaeli & Pratt 1993) and does not include a uniform. Furnham et al. (2013) explain that formal attire, such as a suit, is commonly accepted as appropriate business apparel in some workplaces; whereas wearing jeans and a t-shirt is often considered suitable as part of a casual dress code in others. Shin and Dickerson (1999) state that casual apparel generally include apparel items with a loose fit, manufactured from durable fabrics, whereas formal apparel, such as the business suit, is typically worn in more formal situations. Adding to the difficulty of defining business apparel, wearing tailored trousers with a long-sleeved shirt is considered as a smart-casual dress code (Furnham et al. 2013). In light of the above, the current study defined business apparel not only as a suit and tie, but also included smart-casual apparel such as slacks or jeans and a buttoned shirt with or without a blazer, and casual workplace apparel such slacks or jeans and a golf shirt, T-shirt, or polo shirt, with or without a blazer. Uniforms, such as dark blue suits worn by airline pilots or overalls worn as protective apparel, are not included in the definition of business apparel for this study. Company branded apparel, such as a tie marked with the company logo or the company name on a shirt pocket, were not considered as uniform in the current study seeing as other parts of such business outfit may be augmented by the wearer.

Appearance and apparel are considered essential in the communication of an individual's personality, as well as occupational and social roles (Howlett et al. 2013). Individuals do not simply wear apparel as a basic covering, but also use it to manage their appearance and improve their self-confidence (Tiggemann & Lacey 2009). However, according to Peluchette et al. (2006), individuals probably have varying levels of interest in apparel in general. In studying whether various outfits worn by the same salesman might communicate different meanings about the wearer to

others, Stuart and Fuller (1991) found that the salesman was considered to be more ambitious, better educated and having a higher level of product knowledge when wearing four of the more traditional outfits than when wearing less traditional apparel. Another study done by Peluchette et al. (2006), examining the wearer's beliefs and attitudes towards their own apparel worn in the workplace, found that when apparel is used as a tool to impress others, the wearer may experience feelings of confidence, productivity and dependability. It is therefore also evident that apparel in general has the ability to influence the perceptions of, not only others, but also the individual who is wearing the apparel (Adam & Galinsky 2012). The fact has been established that apparel in general is often used by the wearer as a tool of appearance management, and aspects related to the current study will be highlighted in the discussion to follow.

Smith (2010) defines appearance management as all the thought, decisions and actions of individuals which relate to their own personal appearance. Apparel has also been found to be used to manage the wearer's appearance in the context of the workplace. Kwon (1994) found in his study on the impact which apparel has on the wearer's self-perception of his own ability at work, that men considered the impact of appropriate business apparel on their own abilities at work to be substantial, more so than the extent to which the women in the same study believed it to be so. According to Kwon (1994), the men from this study were also of the opinion that apparel worn in the workplace has the power to communicate to others certain personal attributes about the wearer such as intelligence, competence, honesty and reliability. In fact, a study conducted by Peluchette et al. (2006) to examine beliefs and attitudes regarding apparel worn in the workplace, in which 60% of the respondents were male, revealed that these consumers believe they are able to influence other people's impressions of them and obtain specific outcomes in the workplace by modifying their workplace apparel.

A later study by Howlett et al. (2013) investigated the influence of apparel on first impressions of others and found that quick judgements are made of individuals, based on what they are wearing, and that subtle modifications to an outfit can influence these judgements and affect conclusions drawn by others about the individual. Bell (1991) supports the idea that even a slight change in an outfit can alter the perceiver's impression of an individual and conclusions may be drawn about

the wearer, solely based on what he or she is wearing. Therefore, these studies have all pointed to the fact that individuals use their business apparel to manage their own appearances, which may include managing other's impressions about personal and job-related attributes in the workplace, and that even slightly altering an outfit may change these impressions about the wearer.

Other than playing a role in the formation of the impression of the wearer, apparel can communicate certain personal values about the wearer to others such as the level of self-esteem, respectability, group membership, status and confidence projected by the wearer (Rosenblad-Wallin 1985). These personal values may also be specific to male consumers and what they may want to communicate to others in the professional environment. The important role of business apparel in assisting to achieve specific personal values for the wearer can therefore not be underestimated as apparel worn in the workplace can be used by the wearer as a tool to influence impressions as well as perceptions of the wearer as made by others (Peluchette et al. 2006).

Furthermore, Adam and Galinsky (2012) suggest that there are certain symbolic meanings connected to apparel and that the physical experience of wearing an apparel item has the power to make the wearer personify that which the apparel item symbolises. However, apparel items have symbolic meaning not only for the wearer but, according to Stuart and Fuller (1991) also provides symbolic meaning to others about the wearer. A study conducted by Kang et al. (2011) found that the male participants expected specific outcomes which they associated with their business apparel. Career advancement, communicating a positive impression to others, improving personal performance in the workplace and feeling good about oneself were important outcomes, which these men expected to achieve. Kwon (1994) also provides evidence that men's perceptions of apparel are closely related to social status, and also connected to their success in the workplace environment. Thus, men may use their business apparel, whether it is formal or informal, to accomplish certain expected outcomes in the workplace.

2.3 MEN IN THE APPAREL RETAIL MARKET

The male apparel market has undergone significant growth from the late 1990s through to mid-2000. A possible reason to explain the growth of the male apparel market may be that men are increasingly becoming more conscious about their own personal appearance (Sindicich & Black 2011) and therefore also more involved in managing their own appearance, which includes the act of purchasing apparel. The transformation in gender roles, such as women contributing to the family income, as well as men becoming more involved in household responsibilities, has also been stated as a reason for men's increased involvement in the retail environment (McNeill & Douglas 2011; Otnes & McGrath 2001). Other than changes in men's lifestyles, Torres et al. (2001) are of the opinion that men nowadays show interest in fashionable and comfortable apparel due to the tendency of a more casual dress code in some workplaces, and that men are actively involved when it comes to purchasing their own apparel.

With the growing number of brands and retail outlets persuading consumers to make apparel purchases in general (Lysonski & Durvasula 2013), it is proving to be a challenging task to keep up with male apparel consumers' needs and preferences. In order to acquire and maintain consumers' patronage and loyalty, it is imperative for retailers and apparel marketers to understand how and why consumers make purchasing decisions and, in particular, how men make apparel purchasing decisions. The menswear apparel market has undergone significant changes in the past decade (Torres et al. 2001). Changes in men's lifestyles and work environments have resulted in the changes in the male apparel industry, such as an increased variety of apparel items available for men through which to express their individuality. Society's evolving outlook on gender roles, as well as advertising campaigns encouraging men to take responsibility for their own appearance and image, are considered to be some of the causes that have an impact on men's fashion consciousness (Li et al. 2012; Sindicich 2008; Bakewell et al. 2006). In fact, McAlinden (2004) states that, since the emergence of the 'metro sexual' male image in advertising, which promotes an interest in traditionally feminine characteristics such as attractiveness and appearance management, many modern men feel more comfortable in taking an interest in fashion. Male consumers may therefore show a

greater interest in apparel and are thus more prone to participate in apparel purchasing activities, due to repeated exposure to non-stereotypically masculine marketing initiatives targeting men, as well as pressure from society to manage their own appearances (Seo et al. 2001).

Instead of simply purchasing apparel as a covering for the body, an increasing number of men perceive shopping as a positive experience and take responsibility when it comes to purchasing apparel items (Doyle et al. 2008; Chang et al. 2004). Bakewell et al. (2006) agree that men today show a greater degree of participation in ready-to-wear fashion apparel shopping than men in previous generations. In fact, before the 1990s men largely used their apparel items for comfort and utility (Li et al. 2012), not showing much responsibility towards their own personal appearance or image. Contrary to this, Generation Y males (born after 1977) view apparel consumption in a more positive light compared to previous generations (Bakewell et al. 2006), but possibly not yet at the metro-male level of today.

According to Doyle et al. (2008), the 'new man' is an emerging theme in the ready-to-wear apparel retail market. This means that, due to the changing view of what constitutes masculine-appropriate behaviour and men becoming more involved in tasks previously considered to be appropriate only for women (McNeill & Douglas 2011), men are becoming more aware of fashion and, more importantly, are also becoming more active participants in the apparel purchase process in the pursuit of their personal image (Doyle et al. 2008). The transformation of gender stereotypes, specifically the shift of the traditional roles in the workplace as well as in the household, is another source of motivation for men to take responsibility for managing their own appearance (Bakewell et al. 2006) and a noteworthy reason for men's changed apparel purchasing patterns in the retail environment (Li et al. 2012). McNeill and Douglas (2011) found that the influence of the media, to which men are continually exposed, is also altering society's expectations of males and men feel pressured to conform to the societal ideals placed on a man's appearance. For this reason, men may be more evident in the apparel retail environment than in previous years.

2.4 MALE SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR

Otnes and McGrath (2001) developed the theory of male shopping behaviour, based on previous literature and evidence from their own research, which explains the motivations of male shopping behaviour. Shopping behaviour can be defined as the way in which individuals decide to purchase a product, including the evaluating behaviour before purchasing the product, as well as choosing the store from which to purchase the product (Kardes et al. 2011). As a result of various societal changes contributing to the transcended view of gender roles, Otnes and McGrath (2001) suggest that men are more motivated to shop with intent. Various authors are in agreement that men show an increased willingness to shop with motivation (Cho & Workman 2011; Thomas 2008; Bakewell & Mitchell 2006; Torres et al. 2001). When purchasing ready-to-wear business apparel, men may therefore demonstrate shopping behaviour in line with this view of shopping with motivation.

As mentioned before, the societal changes which contribute to the changed view of gender roles in society include that men are becoming more involved in household tasks and women are becoming more evident in the workplace environment (McNeill & Douglas, 2011). Otnes and McGrath (2001) propose that, in order to explain the motivations for male shopping behaviour, it is important to recognise male shopping behaviour both as a result of these transcended gender roles, as well as an opportunity for men to experience achievement during the shopping situation as well as when using the product. To explain, the authors state that men who have abandoned the view that shopping is an activity appropriate for women only, may shop willingly, as well as display non-stereotypical shopping behaviour such as evaluating alternatives before a purchase is made, browsing behaviour, helping friends with purchases in the retail environment, as well as socialising while shopping.

The results of a study done by Thomas (2008), to describe the brand-wearing South African male consumer, also support the notion of men displaying non-stereotypical apparel shopping behaviour, for example, touching the fabric and removing apparel items from the rail to evaluate it before purchasing. Although the men in the study disliked using fitting rooms in apparel retail stores, they admitted to using it for specific apparel items such as pants and more expensive apparel items. Bakewell

and Mitchell (2006) found, when researching male versus female consumer decision-making styles, that the men in the study considered shopping not only for utility but also as a leisurely activity. The theory of male shopping behaviour (Otnes & McGrath 2001) also suggests that, as a result of physical, intellectual and sexual achievement orientations, male consumers may display shopping behaviour typically described as 'feminine'. Men, who are not restricted by a traditional mind set on gender-appropriate behaviour, will possibly evaluate alternatives and display browsing behaviour while shopping for business apparel, in an effort to achieve shopping-related or possibly even workplace-related outcomes.

On the other hand, if shopping is perceived as a threat to a man's masculinity, the male consumer will most likely shop simply to achieve utilitarian goals (the acquisition of goods) (Otnes & McGrath 2001), perhaps in order to avoid criticism from others for being too concerned about his own physical appearance (McNeill & Douglas 2011). In both of the above mentioned scenarios, the male consumer will attempt to achieve a range of specific outcomes when engaging in the shopping experience. In fact, men often shop with a specific goal in mind (Bakewell & Mitchell 2006) and may also reflect on the necessity of an apparel item before the purchase takes place (Thomas 2008). The different outcomes that male consumers strive for in the retail environment can be described as achievement-oriented shopping behaviour (Otnes & McGrath 2001).

Otnes and McGrath (2001) further explain that, for the male consumer shopping is often an opportunity to compete with retailers in order to attain shopping success. This might elucidate the fact that male consumers are likely to shop at many different retail stores to find the appropriate apparel item (Cho & Workman 2011; Bakewell & Mitchell 2006). Male consumers may also strive to attain sexual success or control in the retail environment, by purchasing items from feminine product categories such as lingerie and gourmet foods (Otnes & McGrath 2001). Also, financial success as an achievement outcome motivates male consumers to engage in intensive browsing behaviour while shopping, as men may want to 'beat' the retailer. According to Torres et al. (2001), the price of an apparel item is an important store attribute which male consumers use when deciding between various apparel retail stores to purchase apparel for themselves. Besides shopping, sexual and financial success, Otnes and McGrath (2001) state that status or identity success can

motivate male consumers to spend large amounts of time in fitting rooms. Thomas (2008) agrees that a need for a certain level of status can motivate men to purchase apparel, especially branded apparel, as it is often seen as a way to enhance one's image. As an attempt to achieve professional success, the same kind of care is often shown by male consumers when selecting apparel for the business environment (Otnes & McGrath 2001). Seeing that apparel can be used as an effective tool to portray specific roles in the workplace environment (Sindicich 2008) and that it also plays an important role in non-verbal communication and the formation of opinions about people in terms of their work-related abilities (Kwon 1994), it is not surprising that male consumers might choose their business apparel with a great deal of consideration, while also displaying non-stereotypical shopping behaviour.

2.5 MEN'S FIT PREFERENCES OF READY-TO-WEAR APPAREL

Apparel in general can be used as a tool for individuals to associate themselves with a particular social class, to present a positive image to others, and to improve their own general appearance (Bansal 2008; Alexander et al. 2005). Moreover, apparel choice reveals something to others about the wearer's personality and aids in creating one's own personal image (Anderson et al. 2000). However, people are dissimilar and the attitudes, values and expectations that people have of apparel, specifically of the fit of apparel, differ from individual to individual (Alexander et al. 2005). It is therefore necessary to define apparel fit.

Apparel fit can be described as the correlation between the apparel item and the wearer's body (Nkambule 2010). In particular, Chen (2007) defines apparel fit as the relationship between the size and silhouette of the garment and the contour of the human body. Fundamentally, good fit is when a balanced relationship exists between the apparel item and the wearer's body, whereas poor fit will be evident when there is a conflicting relationship between the apparel item and the wearer's body.

However, although fit can be defined with slight changes and emphasis being placed on different aspects, the definition of fit remains a practical experience that requires evaluation of the apparel item. According to Chen (2007) and Alexander et al. (2005), apparel fit evaluation is a much more complicated process because the

wearer's evaluation of the fit of the apparel item varies from person to person, according to individual preferences, and is therefore a subjective measure. Factors which influence the consumer's preferences of apparel fit include fashion trends, body shape, age, lifestyle, social affiliation, geographic location, level of education and cultural norms (Pisut & Connell 2007; Alexander et al. 2005).

Although consumers have different preferences of apparel fit, Alexander et al. (2005) assert that, if an apparel item looks good on the wearer, then good apparel fit has been achieved. However, whether or not the apparel item looks good on the wearer's body is contingent on the elements of apparel fit, which includes garment ease or comfort, fabric grain, line, set, and balance (Nkambule 2010; Chen 2007; Alexander et al. 2005). Garment ease can be described as the difference in measurement that is present between the garment and the wearer's body and includes the amount of fabric used to allow free movement (wearing ease) as well as the amount of fabric used to create the silhouette of the apparel item (design ease) (Gill 2011; Chen 2007; Alexander et al. 2005). According to Nkambule (2010), ease in apparel items depends on the current fashion styles, the type of fabric used, and the wearer's body proportions and preferences. Furthermore, the comfort as well as the fit of an apparel item is determined by the amount of ease that is present in the garment (Gill 2011; Kinley 2010). For instance, two apparel items that are made for the same body measurements will fit the consumer's body differently as a result of the wearing and design ease used to make the garment. In that case, if a brand employs a fitted design (with less ease), the consumer who prefers to wear a loose fit might have to purchase the apparel item in a size larger than his usual size.

Fabric grain as an element of apparel fit relates to the relationship between the fabric, the pattern and the wearer's body (Chen 2007) and essentially determines the final appearance of the apparel item (Nkambule 2010). When an apparel item has been cut on the correct grain, it will look good on the wearer. Line is another element of apparel fit and it includes the garment's seams, darts, hems and pleats, and creates a visual impression that makes the wearer appear shorter or taller, heavier or thinner (Nkambule 2010; Chen 2007). Therefore, when the lines of an apparel item follow the shape of the wearer's body, for instance the seams or other garment details appear in the appropriate position on the body, the overall appearance will look good. An apparel item will also appear to fit well when the garment set is

appropriate, i.e. that there are no wrinkles visible on the apparel item (Chen 2007). Lastly, the fit of an apparel item is also affected by the balance of the garment. Nkambule (2010) suggests that when an apparel item is made up of parts that are similar in scale balance is achieved because the garment is then in proportion. This means that when looking at the apparel item, it should seem as though it is capable of carrying the weight of the wearer's body. On the other hand, in the case of a garment where balance is not achieved, the apparel item will shift or droop, having a negative influence on its fit.

Considering that consumers may not be aware of the aforementioned elements of apparel fit, other aspects like price and brand name are often used as evaluation criteria before purchasing an apparel item, as they have price and/or brand information available at the point of sale (Smith 2010). According to Bye and LaBat (2005), apparel consumers also tend to use the fit as a gauge to evaluate whether an apparel item's quality is adequate. Moreover, Lui and Dickerson (1999) and Hogge et al. (1988) found that men ranked fit as the most important selection criteria when making apparel purchasing decisions. Nkambule (2010) agrees that fit is an indicator by which the quality of an apparel item can be measured. In fact, a study conducted by Thomas (2008) on the brand-wearing South African male consumer, found that branded apparel is expected to be of a higher quality and have a better fit than non-branded apparel and found the fit of branded apparel items to be an important influential feature during evaluation.

However, getting a clear indication of consumers' evaluation of apparel fit remains a complicated process (Chen 2007) and with the wide range of body shapes among apparel consumers, as well as their range of preferences towards apparel fit, problems with the fit of apparel items continue to be a topic of concern for manufacturers and retailers (Bye & LaBat 2005; Anderson et al. 2000). Although apparel items should fit a person's body in such a way as to not cause discomfort or restrict the wearer's movement (Sindicich 2008), dissatisfaction regarding the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, specifically among male consumers, has been reported since 1988 (Hogge et al. 1988).

According to Kurt Salmon Associates, as cited by Bye and LaBat (2005), 62% of males encountered fit problems with apparel items; Sindicich (2008) also found a

high frequency of dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear business apparel. Over 27% of respondents in Sindicich's study indicated that shirt necklines are too tight and one third of respondents affirmed experiencing problems with sleeve length, neck size, or pants' length (Sindicich 2008), which are key measurements of male ready-to-wear apparel. Sindicich and Black (2011) also found that at least 40% of respondents reported some sort of dissatisfaction with certain areas in business apparel design.

The fact that men are experiencing fit problems with the key measurements of ready-to-wear apparel is alarming, since these body measurements are linked to the size designation of garments (Sindicich 2008). A possible reason for this occurrence may be that the dimensions used for ready-to-wear apparel sizing systems are based on anthropometric studies of perfectly proportional body shapes in the particular population (Alexander et al. 2005). Standard sizes often fail to meet the needs of all consumers in the apparel market because of the growing diversity in consumer groups (Pisut & Connell 2007). One such example is the South African apparel retail market, which is an ethnically diverse environment (Statistics South Africa 2015) and therefore is a market with various body shapes. Consequently, many male consumers' body measurements will differ from the standard sizes used by manufacturers. Furthermore, different manufacturers often have dissimilar standards towards the fit of the ready-to-wear apparel which they provide to apparel consumers. On top of that, some manufacturers or retailers may prefer to provide consumers with ready-to-wear apparel items with a tight fit, whereas another may choose to provide apparel with a loose fit (Nkambule 2010). The signature fit of each brand is created by applying different amounts of ease to the standard body measurements. This leads to garments from different retailers or brands with the same size designation fitting differently on the same individual, which may add to the male consumer's confusion when attempting to find ready-to-wear business apparel that fit well.

According to Pisut and Connell (2007), fit continues to be a particularly difficult problem; they list out-dated body measurements, inconsistent size categories among manufacturers, and unavailability of measurements to consumers, as some of the reasons. Sindicich and Black (2011) also reason that, because of an inconsistency in sizing standards and contradictions between consumers' fit criteria and manufacturers' actual sizing systems, consumers are often left with no choice but to

choose an area of their body on which they prefer their clothing to fit properly. It may be assumed that consumers are then required to purchase business apparel that do not sufficiently fit their bodies, or that they are compelled to have alterations made on their business apparel. This may lead to dissatisfaction since men generally do not want to spend a lot of time in fitting rooms, trying to find the right fit (Thomas 2008), and then having to spend more time and money on apparel alterations.

The consumer is not the only party bearing the consequences when ready-to-wear apparel does not fit well. There is a certain cost involved for manufacturers and retailers as well (Kasambala 2013). In fact, unsatisfactory fit may result in apparel items being returned to the retailer. Alexander et al. (2005) agree that apparel that are returned due to bad fit often end up on markdown racks, which has negative financial implications for retailers. Other ways that manufacturers and retailers are negatively influenced by apparel fit problems include when a consumer is dissatisfied with the brand, when sales are lost, or when time is wasted in fitting rooms (Sindicich 2008; DesMarteau 2000).

Dissatisfaction with fit may often also be as a result of consumer ignorance. Male consumers may in some cases expect sales personnel to provide them with adequate product knowledge when making apparel purchases (Otieno 2000) and may be dissatisfied when sales personnel are unable to assist. Furthermore, male consumers may assume to know their own sizes and purchase a ready-to-wear business apparel item without trying it on to assess the fit, only to find that the fit is unsatisfactory and then return it to the store, which is costly for the consumer as well as for the retailer. Li et al. (2012) are of the opinion that masculinity currently promotes the expression of one's individuality without restriction on gender and, as a result, a wider range of styles, cuts, and silhouettes are becoming available for male consumers from which to choose. Torres et al. (2001) agree by stating that, as a result of men's changing lifestyles, a demand for more variety in male apparel items is evident. Male consumers therefore have a greater selection of ready-to-wear business apparel, with varying forms of fit, available to choose from, and an understanding of their apparel choices is important.

The essential determining factor of good or bad fit is the level of comfort which the wearer experiences when wearing the garment. Good fit, therefore, involves more

than merely the measurements of the wearer's body (Anderson 2000). In fact, when an apparel item fits the body well, the wearer will feel both comfortable and confident (Alexander et al. 2005). Some contributing factors which conceivably enhance the physical comfort of the apparel item's fit may include properties such as elasticity, flexibility and the weight of the item; in other words, comfort while moving, sitting and bending when wearing the apparel item (Nkambule 2010). Moreover, the comfort experienced when wearing an apparel item also includes a psychological and a social dimension. Psychological comfort is when the wearer experiences positive feelings (e.g. feeling professional) when wearing a particular apparel item, whereas social comfort will be experienced when the outfit is suitable for the setting (e.g. the workplace) or for the occasion (e.g. a job interview), as well as contentment with the impression made on others (Otieno et al. 2005).

Another factor that has an influence on the level of comfort of apparel items is the consumer's preference of how apparel items should fit (Kinley 2010). For example, one man might prefer a buttoned shirt with a tight fit, whereas another might choose to wear a semi-fitted shirt, and yet another might want a shirt with a loose fit. Consumers' apparel fit preferences can further be explained in terms of their functional, aesthetic and symbolic preferences towards apparel fit. Nkambule (2010) explains that apparel that fits well is not only functional (as it allows for comfortable movement) but is also satisfying on an aesthetical level (as it looks attractive) and on an emotional level (as it can improve self-esteem and professionalism). Men's preferences of apparel fit, specifically relating to the functional, aesthetic and emotional dimensions of fit, will therefore differ.

2.6 APPAREL EVALUATION AND THE ROLE OF CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

Apparel items that fit well will look aesthetically attractive, which subsequently has a sensory, emotional and symbolic impact on the wearer (Nkambule 2010). This, in turn, may elicit either a positive or a negative reaction from the wearer and result in appreciation or rejection of the apparel item. Therefore, when the male consumer is wearing a ready-to-wear business apparel item that fits his body well, he may experience a positive reaction on a sensory, emotional and symbolic level. On the

other hand, a poor fitting apparel item attracts negative attention, making the wearer feel uncomfortable (Anderson et al. 2000). These positive or negative reactions when wearing newly purchased ready-to-wear apparel items will consequently have an impact on the male consumer's evaluation thereof after the purchase has been made and the apparel item has been worn.

Smith et al. (2011) and Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) propose that consumers evaluate apparel items in terms of intrinsic product features (fabric, style or design, construction and size) and extrinsic product features (brand name, price, store and opinions of others). The fit of apparel items can be seen as an intrinsic product feature (Smith et al. 2011; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a) and essential, as an apparel item will not be purchased if it does not correspond with the consumer's expectations (Sindicich 2008). The intrinsic aspects of apparel items, such as the design details and fit, are key factors involved in consumer selection and evaluation of ready-to-wear apparel for purchase (Li et al. 2012). It has also been proven that men consider fit as an important selection criterion when purchasing apparel items (Sindicich & Black 2011). Although the fit of ready-to-wear apparel items is considered as an intrinsic aspect, it has an impact on other dimensions of apparel as well. To explain, Nkambule (2010) states that, when an individual is wearing an apparel item that fits well, the individual will not only look attractive on an aesthetic level but that it will also evoke sensory, emotional and cognitive responses from the wearer.

Besides considering the fit of apparel items while evaluating ready-to-wear apparel, the quality of the apparel item has also become an important factor which male consumers consider when making apparel purchasing decisions (Torres et al. 2001). In fact, apparel fit is seen as one of the main factors used by consumers to evaluate apparel quality (De Klerk & Lubbe 2008). Jason (2011) agrees that apparel fit is often used by consumers to evaluate apparel quality as it influences the attractiveness and comfort of an apparel item. Furthermore, De Klerk and Lubbe (2008) and Fowler and Clodfelter (2001) are of the opinion that apparel quality is considered as a main source of consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear apparel items. Therefore, the fit of apparel is also closely linked to the consumer's final satisfaction, as it is often used by consumers to evaluate the quality of the item (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). Based on this, Tselepis and De Klerk (2004)

propose that the evaluation of apparel fit is to be studied as a part of apparel quality, seeing that they are interrelated.

Quality of apparel items, from an industry perspective, is defined by the level at which the apparel item conforms to the manufacturer's specifications and centres on the apparel's physical properties, which can be considered objectively (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995b; Scheller 1993; Fiore & Damhorst 1992). According to Fowler and Clodfelter (2001), physical properties such as design, fabric and construction, as well as performance properties like attractiveness, durability, and serviceability, are important aspects of apparel quality considered from an industry viewpoint. However, from the consumer's perspective, apparel quality assessment is more subjective in nature (Fiore & Damhorst 1992) seeing that consumers do not always have the technical skills to judge an apparel item's quality (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010) and therefore do so based on physical properties, which include objective performance features of the product's performance, but also based on the consumer's own perceptions, which are often subjective as it may include abstract features of the product (Forsythe et al. 1996).

Smith et al. (2011) agree that consumers may choose apparel items based on both its functional performance properties and its sensory-aesthetic performance properties. However, consumers' expectations about the performance of apparel items and the evaluation thereof relate to not only functional and sensory-aesthetic performance, but also to the symbolic performance dimensions (Smith et al. 2011; De Klerk & Lubbe 2008). De Klerk and Lubbe (2008) and Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) agree that apparel items have behavioural properties which can be described as functional (durability and comfortable fit), aesthetic (appearance and aesthetic experience on a sensory and emotional level), and cognitive (symbolic significance of the apparel item). For example, the male consumer may expect his ready-to-wear business apparel not only to fit well and make him experience positive emotions (e.g. confidence) in the workplace, but he may also expect it to symbolise a certain level of status in the company.

Consumers also make use of apparel attributes, which are often linked to perceived social, economic, physiological and aesthetic consequences, to judge the quality of apparel items (Forsythe et al. 1996). It is understandable then that consumers'

expectations of apparel quality, and the ability to discern various attributes of quality, will vary (Fowler & Clodfelter 2001). Therefore, from a consumer perspective, apparel quality is referred to as perceived quality (Forsythe et al. 1996; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995b; Scheller 1993; Fiore & Damhorst 1992). Various dimensions influence consumers' perceptions of apparel quality, such as the durability of the apparel item, the overall appearance, and the care needed for it to last (Forsythe et al. 1996). Fiore and Damhorst (1992) agree that the apparel item's appearance (specifically its attractiveness) and the care requirements are important attributes and add that fibre content is also used by consumers as an attribute of apparel quality evaluation. According to Tselepis and De Klerk (2004), apparel consumers choose apparel items based on their physical characteristics (like the apparel item's design, construction, finish and textiles) which they expect to cause specific 'behaviour' or performance during use. Abraham-Murali and Littrell (1995b) state that consumers consider the construction, fabric, and the fit of an apparel item as important apparel attributes of perceived quality while evaluating an apparel item before purchase, whereas the fabric, care requirements and the fit are used to judge apparel quality during use. Therefore, the evaluation of apparel quality is a continuous process where the performance of apparel items is judged against consumers' initial expectations (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995b; Fiore & Damhorst 1992) and during which consumers also gain knowledge and experience with the specific apparel item, which in turn will possibly influence their expectations, as well as future apparel purchase decisions.

Apparel consumers, in general, have specific expectations about apparel items, due to previous experience with similar apparel products, or from information that is available to them (De Klerk & Lubbe 2008; Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). Based on the consumer's specific expectations of apparel items, evaluation of the quality of a new apparel item will take place at the point of sale (De Klerk & Lubbe 2008). Abraham-Murali and Littrell (1995b) agree that consumers evaluate the quality of apparel items not only at the point of sale but also during use. After a purchase has been made, consumers generally assess their own satisfaction with the product against their initial expectations thereof; satisfaction is achieved when the product performs as expected but the consumer will be dissatisfied if the product does not live up to its expectation (Kardes et al. 2011). Du Plessis et al. (2011) describe consumer

expectations as beliefs regarding a product's performance in that consumers expect a certain result from the product after purchase. The male consumer may therefore also exhibit expectations regarding the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and these expectations may influence quality evaluation at the point of sale, while also having an impact on the assessment of his satisfaction with the apparel item after purchase.

Apparel in general consists of inherent qualities which include attributes such as the apparel item's colour and fibre content (Fiore & Kimle 1997). The inherent qualities, or functional attributes, of apparel items include the intrinsic product features, which form part of the product and therefore also influence the apparel item's performance (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). Furthermore, Sindicich (2008) also states that the functional attributes of an apparel item have an impact on its ability to perform the way in which the wearer expects it to perform. The male consumer may expect the style of his business apparel to fit his body well, while at the same time expecting it to fit comfortably so as not to restrict his occupational tasks. This is significant for retailers and marketers to be aware of, seeing that an apparel item will not be purchased if it does not meet or exceed the wearer's expectations thereof (Sindicich, 2008), or, if the apparel item has already been purchased, it may be returned.

Apparel items also have aesthetic attributes or expressive qualities, which can be described as the emotions related to wearing an apparel item (Fiore & Kimle 1997). Like the functional product features, the aesthetic attributes of apparel items also form a part of the intrinsic product features (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995b) and include attributes which contribute to the attractiveness of the apparel item (Smith 2010). Nkambule (2010) explains that the aesthetic attributes of apparel relate to the sensory stimulation from the intrinsic product features and result in sensory enjoyment of wearing an attractive apparel item. In fact, Adam and Galinsky (2012) advocate that an apparel item not only has the power to influence the perceptions of others, but that wearing an apparel item can also influence the feelings of the wearer. The findings of a study done by Holmlund et al. (2010) regarding the apparel purchase behaviour of mature women also confirm that apparel has the ability to make one feel better about oneself, which may also be applicable to male consumers. The male consumer may, therefore, expect his business apparel to fit well and make him look attractive and fashionably dressed in the workplace, which

might evoke a positive emotional feeling about himself when among his colleagues at work. If a positive response (feeling good about himself in the workplace) is evoked from wearing the apparel item, the wearer may experience after-purchase satisfaction and possibly return to the same store for future business apparel purchases.

Other than functional and aesthetic attributes, apparel items also have cognitive or socio-psychological attributes, which can be described as symbolic qualities that are able to communicate the meaning of an outfit (Fiore & Kimle 1997). Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) agree that socio-psychological attributes may evoke certain emotional feelings and cognitive meaning in the mind of the wearer. Also, the fit of apparel items, having sensory, cognitive and emotional attributes, is able to send out a specific message to others about the wearer, as well as making the wearer feel dominant in a specific situation (Jason 2011; Nkambule 2010). The male consumer may expect to feel successful and confident when wearing business apparel with a good fit and may even expect to receive positive comments from others in the workplace because of what he is wearing.

In general, products that meet consumers' expectations will in all probability be bought again, whereas consumers will consider alternatives for future purchases in the case of disappointing product performance (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010). Therefore, the importance of understanding consumers' expectations of retail products should not be underestimated, since purchase decisions are made based on how consumers expect the product to perform (Du Plessis et al. 2011). For this reason, it is important for marketers and retailers to understand the expectations that male consumers have regarding the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, as expectations of the fit may be used during purchasing to evaluate the apparel item's quality and after purchase to assess their own satisfaction with the apparel item.

Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) proposed a theoretical framework for researching early adolescent female consumers' expectations of apparel fit, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 and discussed in the following section.

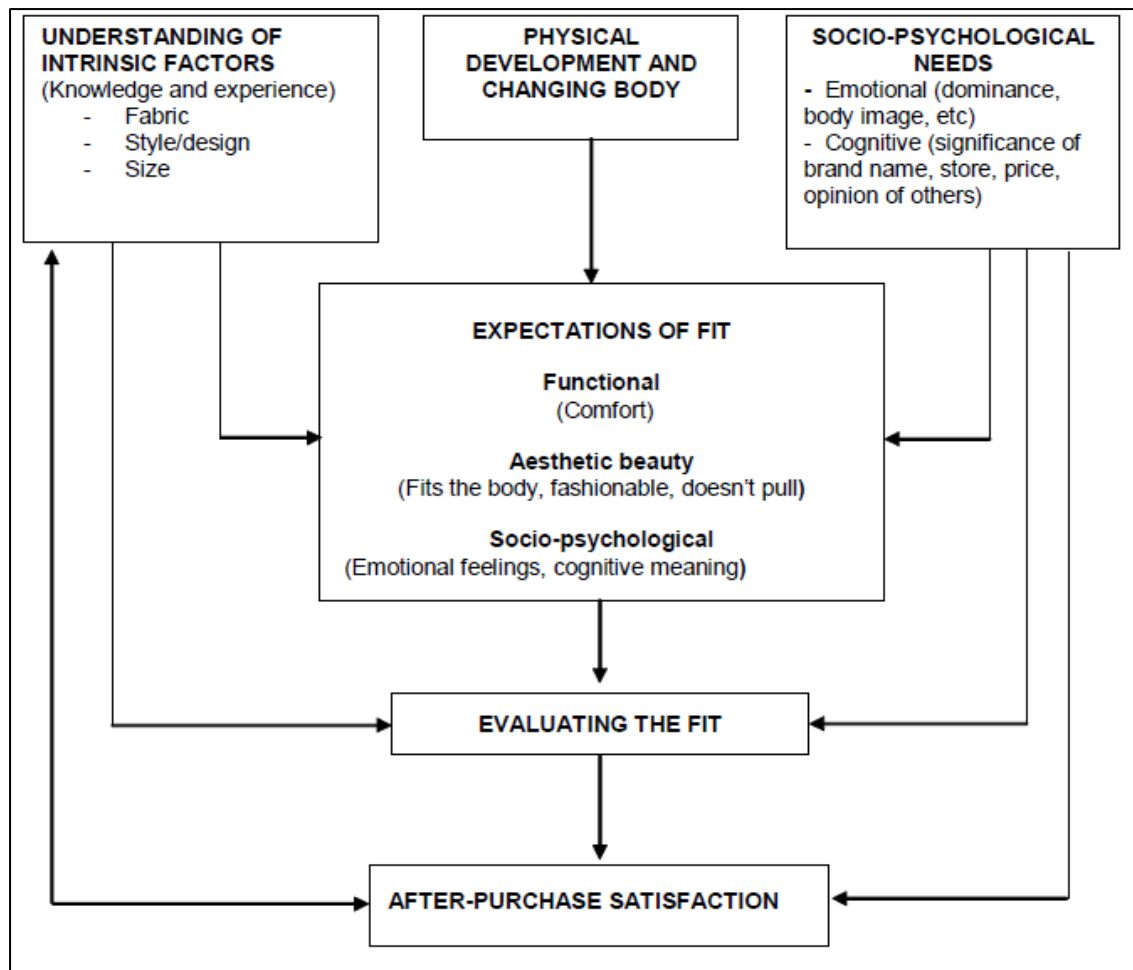


FIGURE 2.1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK PROPOSED FOR RESEARCHING EARLY ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE FIT OF APPAREL (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004).

In their framework (Figure 2.1), the authors conclude that the early adolescent female consumer has specific functional needs regarding the fit of apparel, which concern functional and aesthetic expectations, as the apparel item should be comfortable, suit her body, and be suitable for the occasion (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). The authors assert that an understanding of the intrinsic factors of apparel, which influence the fit, plays a role in the consumer's expectations thereof and should be considered when evaluating the fit. Furthermore, the early adolescent female consumer's socio-psychological needs occur at both emotional and cognitive levels and influence her expectations about the fit of her apparel.

At an emotional level, the fit of apparel provides the consumer with a feeling of control or dominance in a group. Brand name, price, store image and satisfying the

norms set by others are significant on a cognitive level when the consumer evaluates the fit of apparel. During evaluation of the fit of an apparel item, the socio-psychological needs may take priority over the knowledge about the intrinsic factors, so much so that the consumer takes cognitive shortcuts and uses extrinsic indicators of fit, like brand name or price, to evaluate the fit of the apparel item (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). The authors also state that cognitive disconfirmation may occur when the consumer had unrealistic expectations of the apparel item or when evaluation of the fit was not based on technical knowledge or former experience.

The functional (comfortable fit), aesthetic (satisfying appearance) and socio-psychological (feeling of control or dominance) expectations, proposed by Tselepis and De Klerk (2004), may also apply to the male consumer as he may expect his business apparel to be functional in that it is comfortable, allowing for adequate space for easy movement, and that it is suitable for the specific business environment. Aesthetic expectations that male consumers may have regarding the fit of their business apparel may include that it fits well, looks attractive and that it is fashionable. On a cognitive level, men may also expect their business apparel to provide them with a feeling of dominance or control in the workplace, as well as satisfying the norms in that it complies with company standards. Men will have different requirements in terms of what their apparel in the workplace should bring about for them and therefore their expectations relating to the fit of their business apparel will also differ. Therefore, the functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations of apparel fit are applied to men in the current study in order to determine whether they are relevant to male consumers with regard to their ready-to-wear business apparel purchases.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study was developed alongside the background of the literature review and the framework by Tselepis and De Klerk (2004), keeping the research objectives in mind. The schematic representation of the conceptual framework, presented in Figure 2.2, therefore serves as a means to explore male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and the impact on the purchase decision. The framework draws attention to the most important concepts of the study, while at the same time indicating the connection between the concepts. Furthermore, the conceptual framework ensures that all aspects that the study aims to consider are included when drawing conclusions and making recommendations at the end of the study.

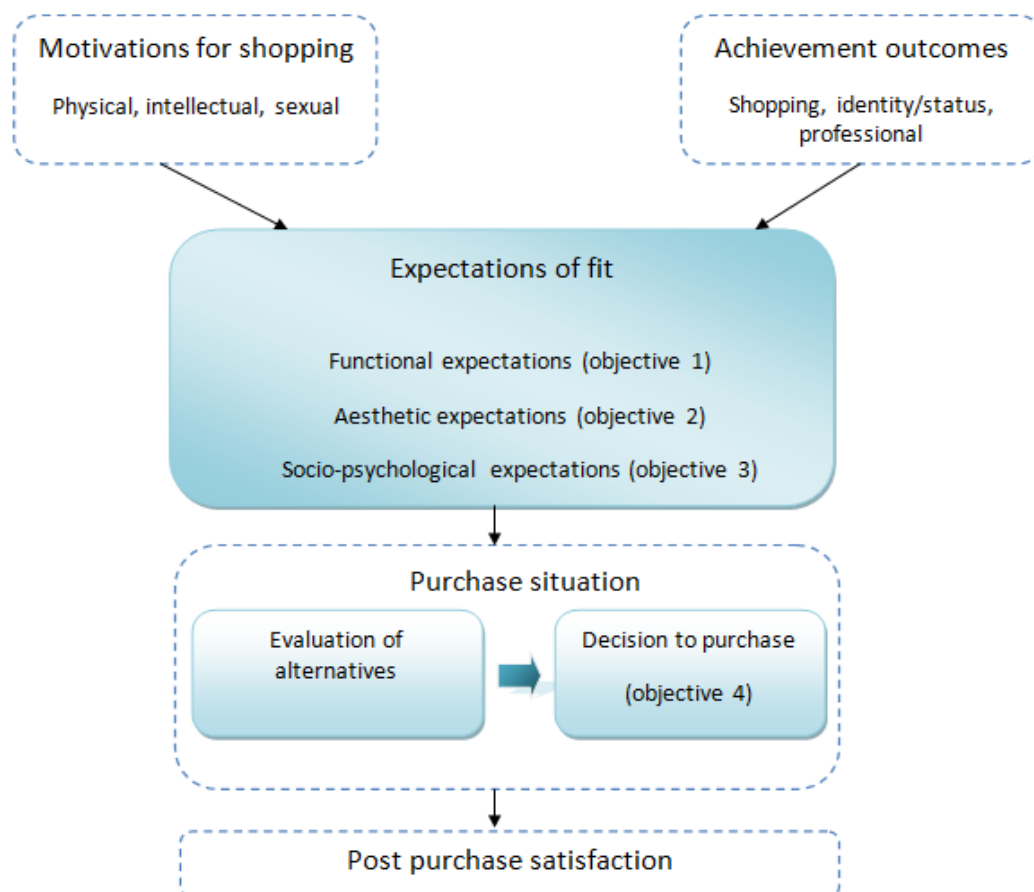


FIGURE 2.2: PROPOSED SCHEMATIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The above conceptual framework suggests that male consumers' motivations for business apparel shopping are rooted in achievement orientations, as they often want to shop purposefully and with a specific goal in mind. Otnes and McGrath

(2001) found, in studying the perceptions and realities of male shopping behaviour, that men, who do not see shopping as just a female activity, acknowledge shopping to be an acceptable activity in which to engage. The authors argue that, as a result of physical, intellectual and sexual motivations, male consumers may display shopping behaviour typically described as 'feminine'; including browsing behaviour, alternative evaluation and bargaining. When shopping for business apparel, male consumers may therefore do so with motivation and as a way of achieving a specific goal, and at the same time displaying behaviour such as browsing, bargaining and evaluating alternatives before purchase. Although the motivations for shopping were not included as an objective to examine in the current study, they were included in the conceptual framework as a starting point to illustrate male consumers' possible stimuli for business apparel shopping.

As further implied by the conceptual framework, and according to the theory of male shopping behaviour by Otnes and McGrath (2001), male consumers attempt to achieve certain outcomes in the retail environment. According to these authors, men often perceive shopping as an opportunity to compete with the retailer and as a result feel as though they have achieved shopping success. Furthermore, shopping with others also presents the male consumer with an opportunity to show proficiency in the retail environment, thereby advancing his self-esteem and sense of power. Other ways in which the male consumer can achieve success in the retail context, according to the authors, is by displaying knowledge in product categories considered as 'feminine' (to attain sexual success), or by purchasing products at the lowest available price (to attain financial success).

Otnes and McGrath (2001) further suggest that male consumers may want to achieve a specific status or identity and may attempt to do so by purchasing elite brands. As apparel plays an important role in the way he constructs his identity (Otnes & McGrath 2001), the male consumer may feel that he has achieved success when he experiences positive feedback as a result of his business apparel. Finally, the male consumer may also attempt to achieve professional success when purchasing business apparel as he may want to achieve success in the workplace. Kang et al. (2011) support the suggestion that men expect specific outcomes, such as career advancement, communicating a positive impression to others, improving

personal performance in the workplace, and feeling good about oneself, which they associate with their business apparel. Kwon (1994) also provides evidence that men's perceptions of apparel are closely related to social status, and also connected to their success in the workplace environment. Thus, men may use their business apparel to accomplish certain expected outcomes in the workplace. Therefore, shopping success, identity success (status), and professional success were included in the conceptual framework as outcomes that male consumers may seek to achieve in the shopping context, and to show how the male consumer may wish to achieve success by his ready-to-wear business apparel shopping. However, these were not included as an objective to examine in this study.

As the current study seeks to examine male consumers' expectations regarding ready-to-wear business apparel fit, the conceptual framework further suggests that, since the male consumer shops with intent, he will expect the prospective business apparel item to perform in a certain manner, especially relating to the fit. According to Tselepis and De Klerk (2004), the evaluation of the fit of apparel items is better studied together with the consumer's expectations thereof. Hence, the expectations of fit, proposed by Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) for studying the fit expectations of early adolescent female consumers, were included, since it may also be applicable to male consumers. The rest of their framework, however, was not applicable to the current study and was therefore not included in the conceptual framework. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, the assumption is made that the framework proposed by Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) may also be applicable to male consumers who purchase ready-to-wear business apparel, and it therefore contributed to the development of the conceptual framework for this study. According to the authors, the evaluation of the fit of an apparel item, as well as the consumer's expectation thereof, will affect the ultimate satisfaction with the product. With this in mind, this study set out to explore the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations that male consumers hold of the fit of their business apparel.

A search of the literature revealed that consumers purchase apparel, using functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological indicators as evaluation of apparel fit. De Klerk and Lubbe (2008) agree that the quality of apparel includes both physical product characteristics (the product itself) and functional, aesthetic and cognitive behavioural characteristics. The authors state that functional behavioural

characteristics of apparel include aspects such as durability and comfort (De Klerk & Lubbe 2008). Functional indicators cannot be seen separately from intrinsic product features, which are inherent in the product and influence its performance (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) state that the functional factors contribute to the final fit of the apparel item. For the purpose of this study, functional expectations of the fit of business apparel refer to care, style or design, fabric, comfort, workmanship or construction, colour, versatility or use, and size.

The aesthetic dimension includes attributes which contribute to the attractiveness of the apparel item and also form a part of the intrinsic product features (Smith 2010; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). According to Nkambule (2010), the aesthetic dimension relates to the sensory stimulation from the intrinsic product features and results in sensory enjoyment of wearing an attractive apparel item. For the purpose of this study, the aesthetic expectations of the fit of business apparel include style or design, attractiveness, colour, fabric, workmanship or construction, touch, being fashionable, and evoking feelings from the wearer. Extrinsic product features do not form a part of the product itself but rather include emotional and expressive dimensions related to apparel (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). Smith et al. (2011) explain that extrinsic product features have an influence on emotional quality indicators, cognitive quality indicators and the importance of self and others. These factors may evoke certain emotional feelings and cognitive meaning in the mind of the apparel consumer (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). Furthermore, these cognitive behavioural characteristics of apparel items have certain symbolic significance for the wearer (De Klerk & Lubbe 2008). The socio-psychological expectations of the fit of business apparel observed in the current study include brand name, price, store image, symbolic meaning, confidence, being fashionable, comments of others, and striving to belong.

The conceptual framework further indicates the influence of the fit expectations of ready-to-wear business apparel on the purchase situation. The consumer decision-making process shows how consumers generally make purchasing decisions in the retail environment (Du Plessis et al. 2011; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010) and also relates to male consumers' business apparel purchase decisions. Firstly, when the consumer experiences a gap between what he has and what he wants, the decision-making process is triggered as he recognises a problem (Lamb et al. 2011). The

male consumer may realise that his current wardrobe is not sufficient in order to achieve success in the workplace, or he may experience pressure from other employees, his boss or even his family or friends to purchase a new business apparel item. This contradiction in what the consumer wants (or needs) as opposed to what he has, motivates him to act, which in turn leads to a search for information intended to assist in solving the problem (Kardes et al. 2011; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010). The male consumer makes use of different sources of information such as the Internet (Otnes & McGrath 2001), past experiences with the same product (Kardes et al. 2011), or external sources such as family, reference groups, culture, social groups, the economy, as well as business and marketing activities (Du Plessis et al. 2011).

After searching for information about the desired product, the consumer will probably identify various possible solutions and verify the outcome of each option (Du Plessis et al. 2011), as well as evaluating the expected performance of each possible alternative (Lamb et al. 2011). While evaluating alternatives, apparel consumers consider certain apparel attributes that form the basis for evaluation and direct the search for information (Zhang et al. 2002). Thomas (2008) explored the searching and evaluating behaviour of brand-wearing male consumers in the apparel retail environment and found that evaluating apparel items before purchasing forms a part of male consumers' apparel purchasing behaviour. This was especially evident in the fact that participants in this study took apparel items off the rail, touched the fabric and some of them even made use of fitting rooms to evaluate the fit. The male consumer will therefore reject an apparel item if he expects that it will not perform as he desires and he will probably then reconsider more alternatives or even postpone the purchase altogether. It may therefore prove beneficial for retailers to understand which factors male consumers consider to be important when making business apparel purchase decisions.

In fact, Du Plessis et al. (2011) state that, after evaluating the alternatives, the consumer responds by purchasing the most suitable option, or by choosing to postpone the purchase. An important aspect for retailers to consider is whether the consumer will be satisfied with the item after the purchase has been made. This post-purchase evaluation occurs in the last stage of the decision-making process, where the purchased item is evaluated against the consumer's initial expectations of

its performance (Kardes et al. 2011), and although not as a research objective, was included in the conceptual framework for the current study, as consumers' expectations of a product are interrelated with their ultimate satisfaction (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010).

The evaluation of a product after it has been purchased may result in a positive, a negative or a neutral response (Du Plessis et al. 2011). If the consumer's perceptions of the product's performance are in line with his initial expectations he will be satisfied, whereas dissatisfaction will occur if real performance fails to live up to the expectations of perceived product performance (Kardes et al. 2011; Lamb et al. 2011). As consumers generally make purchasing decisions based on their predetermined expectations (Du Plessis et al. 2011), the male consumer's fit expectations will have an impact on the evaluation of the apparel item during the purchase situation as well as after or during use. Therefore, an understanding of male consumers' expectations of the fit of their business apparel may assist retailers and marketers who focus on men's apparel to be better equipped to provide them with satisfactory ready-to-wear business apparel. The male consumer's level of satisfaction with the ready-to-wear apparel item is important seeing that it will influence not only future purchases, but that it may also lead to repeat purchases and consumer commitment to the specific brand (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2010).

2.8 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Chapter 2 presented the relevant literature on the main concepts of the study of male consumers' fit expectations relating to ready-to-wear business apparel and the impact on the purchase decision. The chapter addressed how apparel is used as a tool for appearance management, especially in the context of the workplace. The literature review also included an overview of the reasons for growth in the male consumer apparel retail market and the changing consumption behaviour of male consumers, highlighting the need to conduct research in a South African context. The chapter also explained how male consumers' motivations for shopping may cause them to engage in shopping behaviour, traditionally considered as feminine, in order to achieve certain outcomes. Apparel fit was defined and a brief description

was given regarding the elements of good fit. The chapter also discussed apparel fit as an indicator of apparel quality evaluation. In this regard, a definition of apparel fit was given from both an industry perspective as well as from a consumer's perspective of perceived quality. Attention was also drawn to consumers' expectations with regard to apparel fit and how these expectations relate to the evaluation of apparel items. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the conceptual framework, explaining how each of the concepts relates to one another. In the next chapter, a discussion of the methodology applied in the study is presented.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Chapter three clearly defines the research methods used to conduct the study and discusses the collection and analysis of the data.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review, presented in Chapter 2, revealed that men not only use apparel as a tool of appearance management in the workplace, but are also becoming more evident in the apparel retail environment as active apparel shoppers. At the same time, the review of relevant literature also showed that men frequently experience problems with the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel. In light of the above, the aim of this study was to explore and describe the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and to determine the extent to which these expectations influence the purchase decision.

In this chapter, the research method that was applied to operationalise the objectives will be discussed in detail, with specific attention to the research paradigm in which the study was framed, research design, sampling strategy, method of data collection, and data analysis. The ethical considerations for this study are also addressed at the end of this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Before commencing with any research project, it is important to consider in which research paradigm the study will be framed. According to Neuman (2014), a research paradigm refers to a broad framework for theory and research that takes into account basic assumptions, fundamental issues, and methods for pursuing answers. The research paradigm can further be defined as the plan of the research

project that includes all of the actions that will be utilised in the study and which describes the detailed methods of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation (Creswell 2014). Maree (2007) describes quantitative research as an objective, controlled, outcome-oriented, and systematic research paradigm that uses numeric data from a selected population to examine variables regarding a specific social phenomenon. In order to address the objectives of the current study, quantitative techniques were considered appropriate for data collection and analysis, which therefore affirmed the use of the quantitative paradigm for this study.

A quantitative approach is advantageous as it enables the researcher to measure objective facts, focus on variables, include many respondents, use tools to collect numerical data, and apply statistical analysis methods (Leung 2015; Neuman 2014; Haq 2014). Furthermore, the low level of involvement between researcher and respondents in the quantitative paradigm ensures impartiality and avoids bias, seeing that the researcher deals with multiple respondents (Masue et al. 2013). Hence, the quantitative paradigm was deemed suitable for this study to examine male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to wear business apparel and the way in which it influences their purchasing decisions, as the researcher was not directly involved in any form of data gathering (McCusker & Gunaydin 2015). In the next section, the research design that guided the current study is presented.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of the research design is to provide structure to the research as it involves all of the decisions made in the planning of the study in the form of a logical plan as an attempt to maximise the validity of the research findings in a comprehensible way (Du Toit 2015). Creswell (2014) agrees that the research design gives direction in a research study as it clearly describes all of the procedures involved in answering the research questions. The current study adopted a multiple research design approach which included descriptive, exploratory and survey design approach.

Survey design is a common approach in quantitative studies (Crano et al. 2015) and is often used for the advantage of reducing financial costs and time constraints

(Hardigan et al. 2016). Survey-based research also gives the researcher the opportunity to obtain information from a specific number of respondents who presumably have the information needed to address the objectives of the study and are willing to share their opinions (Hofstee 2009). Furthermore, with the use of survey research, quantitative numeric descriptions of respondents' attitudes and opinions can be gathered through instrument-based questions, which can then be analysed and interpreted statistically (Creswell 2014). The survey method was considered suitable to use since the current study addressed specific objectives and set out to analyse and interpret the gathered data (Bhattacharjee 2012).

The study employed both a descriptive as well as an exploratory research design, in the form of a survey. Neuman (2014) is of the opinion that the purpose of descriptive research is to provide a comprehensive representation of a phenomenon and that it attempts to describe the research questions accurately. For this reason, a survey research design in the form of a questionnaire as data-gathering technique was considered appropriate for the current study. Descriptive research also assists researchers in examining relationships of traits and characteristics, as well as identifying current situations (Bhattacharjee 2012). As this study deals with respondents, namely male consumers, in a specific context, namely the workplace, and their expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, this approach is in congruence with the goal of this study. Ensuring the validity of the data collection instrument, and therefore the validity of a study's findings, is a weakness of descriptive research, which the researcher had to consider (Singh 2006).

To overcome this drawback of descriptive research, the data collection instrument was piloted before using the data collection instrument for the main study. Recommendations were made to improve the quality of the questionnaire, such as stating the purpose of the study in layman's terms, changing statements in Section B to specify expectation, and technical aspects related to the layout and design to properly space questions so that the respondents will find it easy to read the online questionnaire. A professional statistician was also requested to scrutinize the online questionnaire, which also contributed to a more accurate instrument that would contribute to the validity of the data collection instrument. This will be explained in more detail in section 3.5.4 of this chapter, along with a discussion of the pilot study.

In addition to adopting a descriptive research approach, an exploratory research design was also applied. Du Toit (2015) states that an exploratory research design is the type of study where a lack of understanding exists as a result of insufficient detail about the phenomena; it can be used to formulate more specific questions to address in future research studies. Furthermore, exploratory studies aim to ascertain the facts, collect new data, and to determine whether interesting patterns exist in the data (Neuman 2014). Hence, exploratory research is considered appropriate to gain a basic understanding of male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and the importance thereof when evaluating it in the purchase situation. The results of exploratory research provide initial insight and may then be used to formulate even more detailed questions to consider for future, more defined investigations (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham 2009). In the next section, a discussion follows of the sampling strategy used to recruit respondents for this quantitative study.

3.4 SAMPLING STRATEGY

The choice of sampling method to be used in research depends on the type of population being studied (Sydor 2013). The target population for this study was male apparel consumers, working in a corporate environment, who wear formal business apparel (business suits), smart-casual or business-casual apparel (formal trousers, slacks and a buttoned shirt with or without a jacket) and/or casual business apparel (jeans or slacks and a T-shirt or golf shirt). Men wearing uniforms at work were not included in the study sample. The inclusion criteria for the current study are quite specific therefore it describes a population with particular characteristics (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015; Neuman 2014). Therefore, a non-probability sampling strategy was used to draw a sample for this study.

Neuman (2014) defines a sample as a small set of respondents selected by the researcher from a large pool and further explains that samples used in exploratory research are usually drawn by using non-probability sampling techniques. Some of the main considerations for using non-probability sampling were based on Maree's (2007) opinion that, in some instances, this strategy is warranted when a limited time

frame, limited financial resources, and difficulty in finding respondents from the target population exist. In the case of non-probability sampling, where samples are gathered on account of convenience, the researcher can attain an adequate sample size with satisfactory statistical power (Crano et al. 2015). Due to time and financial constraints, two non-probability sampling strategies, namely purposive sampling and snowball sampling, were applied to gather a sample for the current study.

Purposive sampling, according to Krishnaswami and Ranganatham (2009), is based on the judgement of the researcher since the sample consists of specific characteristics that are representative of the typical attributes of the population. Neuman (2014) adds that the researcher using purposive sampling chooses respondents with a particular purpose in mind. This means that the sample consists of a deliberate choice of respondents who have specific characteristics (based on the inclusion criteria) and who are available, as well as willing, to participate (Etikan et al. 2016). Seeing that the desired sample for the current study was men who wear formal business apparel, smart-casual apparel and/or casual business apparel in a workplace environment where uniforms are not worn as business attire, purposive sampling was an effective technique for this population with specific inclusion criteria (Sydor 2013). However, purposive sampling generally produces smaller samples in comparison to other sampling methods (Barratt et al. 2015) and it was therefore deemed necessary to use an additional sampling method. In fact, Ellard-Gray et al. (2015) advise that it is a good idea when choosing a suitable sampling strategy not to rely too heavily on a single technique.

Hence, snowball sampling was also included as sampling technique to recruit as many respondents as possible for the study. Snowball sampling was considered as an appropriate additional sampling technique since it enables the researcher to identify a single respondent in order to gather data, which was done through purposive sampling in the current study, who in turn is requested to recruit further individuals for participation in the study (Babbie 2007). The assumption of this sampling strategy is that the initial respondents have contact with additional potential respondents with similar characteristics (Neuman 2014), such as colleagues or acquaintances in the workplace environment. Based on the inclusion criteria set out for the study, the researcher identified 50 prospective respondents who were known to the researcher (as family members, friends or work colleagues). The prospective

respondents were contacted via email, to explain the purpose of the study, and to request each respondent to complete the data gathering instrument. The researcher requested each respondent to forward the email they had received from the researcher to five or more prospective respondents who also fit the inclusion criteria to ensure an unbroken chain of respondents. The snowball sampling strategy is helpful seeing that it is a relatively hands-off approach and that it might have been more challenging otherwise to obtain respondents who fit the specific inclusion criteria (Crano et al. 2015).

The size of a study sample depends on both the characteristics of the population and the level of confidence in sample precision required (Laher 2016). Therefore, given that the target population was not a diverse population but rather clearly defined by the inclusion criteria (Neuman 2014), a smaller sample was deemed adequate. Crano et al. (2015) agree that when the goal of the study does not rely on extremely precise findings, a smaller sample of respondents is considered to be appropriate. In fact, Henn et al. (2006) state that an optimum sample size does not exist, seeing that the size of a study sample depends on not only the precision required in the study but also on the resources available to the researcher. Therefore, based on the guideline that more than 100 responses should be included in quantitative studies (Haq 2014), as well as on guidelines pertaining to sufficiency (Schönbrodt & Perugini 2013) it was decided, taking into consideration the specific inclusion criteria for the target population of the study, that a minimum number of 200 respondents were satisfactory to draw meaningful conclusions from the data.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

In light of the quantitative paradigm in which the study was framed, a survey design in the form of an online questionnaire was undertaken to acquire the data. Survey research is defined by Neuman (2014) as quantitative research wherein a large number of people are asked to answer the same set of questions and their responses are recorded in a methodical manner. This approach enabled the researcher to use the quantitative data to depict and investigate the multiple variables and answer the research questions (Maree 2007), which were outlined in

the objectives of this study. In the case of this study, survey-based research aimed to obtain information from at least 200 respondents with the required characteristics (South African working men who wear some form of business apparel at work) and who are willing to share their opinions (Hofstee 2009) by means of the online questionnaire. In light of this, a survey in the form of a questionnaire was deemed a suitable method of data collection for this study as it aimed to assist the researcher to explore male consumers' expectations regarding the fit of their business apparel and its influence on their purchase decision.

3.5.1 Data collection instrument

A survey, in the form of an online questionnaire, was considered an appropriate data collection instrument to gather information from respondents for the study. According to Crano et al. (2015), questionnaires are normally used when collecting information about respondents' beliefs and attitudes regarding particular phenomena. This method of data collection is advantageous seeing that it can be done in a relatively short time, and since the data can be presented in the form of charts, graphs or tables and then analysed with statistics (Neuman 2014). Hofstee (2009) agrees that using questionnaires typically makes it easier to analyse and convert gathered data to quantitative results. Furthermore, questionnaires are also considered as common instruments of data collection as they allow large samples to be reached without the use of much money and effort (Bhattacharjee 2012; Singh 2006).

For the purpose of this study, an online questionnaire was used for the data collection process. Seeing that the researcher resided outside of South Africa at the time the study was conducted, the use of an electronic questionnaire was based on convenience and also eliminated issues regarding time and effort, since male respondents in a business environment may be more accessible by means of a computer to take part in the study. Even though electronic surveys are a relatively new method of data collection, it is becoming a more popular method of data collection, which is well worth considering (Schuldt & Totten 2015; Baker 2012), for the reason that it gives the researcher access to prospective respondents who are located far away and maybe difficult to reach otherwise, as well as providing the convenience of automated data collection, which reduces issues regarding time and effort (Wright 2005).

Electronic questionnaires as data collection tool also minimise the cost of the study (Schuldt & Totten 2015), while at the same time providing automated descriptive statistics and the option of exporting the data to the appropriate statistical software for more complex statistical analysis (McPeake et al. 2014; Wright 2005). The electronic questionnaire was time-efficient for the respondents, seeing that it was fast and easy to complete (Schuldt & Totten 2015). Moreover, the use of online questionnaires ensures voluntary participation (Crano et al. 2015) as respondents are not coerced by the researcher or a field worker to complete the questionnaire (Maree 2007) and allowed to opt out at any time by not completing a section or a question they did not feel comfortable with. Neuman (2014) agrees that electronic surveys are not only one of the cheapest data collection techniques but also fast and unbiased as there is limited contact between the researcher and respondents. One way to direct potential respondents to a site where an online survey instrument can be completed is to contact them through email (Crano et al. 2015) and providing a hyperlink to the website where the survey can be completed (Baker 2012), which was regarded as a suitable method for the current study. The procedure of data collection is discussed in section 3.5.5 of this chapter, where more detailed information is given relating to this data collection method.

No data collection instrument is without flaws and it is therefore necessary to consider potential drawbacks to using online questionnaires for data collection. According to Crano et al. (2015), some people may not have access to computers and it may have an impact on obtaining a representative sample for research studies. However, computers have become an integral part of the way business is conducted in most workplaces today and employees are required to have basic computer skills (such as email) in order to be considered for appointment (Peng 2017; Phillips & Reddie 2007; Salanova et al. 2000). It was therefore assumed that men who are employed in the business context have access to computers, internet and email addresses at their workplace and therefore the use of an electronic questionnaire was deemed suitable. McPeake et al. (2014) present some of the weaknesses of electronic questionnaires as data collection method, including the possibility of poor response rates, unrepresentative samples, and difficulty of obtaining prospective respondents' email addresses. However, various strategies were applied in order to overcome these weaknesses. Firstly, as an attempt to

increase response rates, the layout and structure of the questionnaire was kept as short as possible and the respondents were informed of the estimated time to complete all the questions. Then, as a result of the purposive sampling strategy used in the current study, the issue regarding population limitations was of less concern than it would have been in the case of probability research (Wright 2005). Finally, the snowball sampling method assisted with obtaining email addresses of prospective respondents, as the initial respondents were requested to identify new respondents whose email addresses they presumably already had.

In light of the above, a structured online questionnaire (Addendum A) was employed to gather data regarding the expectations that male consumers hold regarding the fit of business apparel and the extent to which these expectations influence the purchase decision. In the following section, more detail is given regarding the development of the questionnaire. The data collection instrument, as well as a discussion about the development, operationalisation and testing thereof, is given in the following section. The procedure employed to collect the data for this study will also be discussed in more detail.

3.5.2 Development of the questionnaire

The researcher developed the questionnaire after a thorough examination of various studies on the topic, conducted by different authors. Although these studies did not specifically study consumer expectations of apparel fit, they did focus on functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological dimensions of ready-to-wear apparel (Jason 2011; Smith et al. 2011; Nkambule 2010; Smith 2010; Thomas 2008; Tselepis & De Klerk 2004; North et al. 2003; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a; Fiore & Damhorst 1992). The researcher therefore developed the questionnaire for the current study, based on an understanding of previous studies concerning ready-to-wear apparel fit and aspects concerning the topic. Additionally, the questions were formulated to answer the objectives of the study.

During the process of developing a data collection instrument like a questionnaire, various aspects should be taken into account in order to ensure a well-constructed measuring tool. Neuman (2014) describes questionnaires as tools with which researchers can gain knowledge of respondents' opinions and attitudes in the research situation; questionnaire items should therefore avoid confusion as well as

emotional language. It was therefore imperative to take care while constructing the questionnaire and to make sure that the questions were relevant to the objectives of the study. As mentioned in the previous section (3.5.1), which discussed the data collection instrument, the researcher had to take into account various pitfalls when using questionnaires as data collection instrument. To emphasise, seeing that the target population was working men who might not want to spend time answering the questionnaire, due to time constraints, the number of statements in the online questionnaire was limited, which eliminated the disadvantage of respondents not wanting to spend or having enough time to complete the questionnaire (McPeake et al. 2014; Hofstee 2009; Wright 2005). This did not compromise the quality of the data, seeing that all of the items necessary to measure the constructs were included.

Another way used to ensure a structured questionnaire was to eliminate ambiguity, so as to ensure that the respondents understood the meaning, and to group the questions that relate to one another together in order to make the questionnaire more organised (Bhattacharjee 2012). Furthermore, in order to reduce the possibility of low response rates of electronic surveys (Crano et al. 2015), it was necessary to send a follow-up email as reminder to prospective respondents a few weeks after sending the initial email. The online questionnaire was developed and designed using Survey Monkey, an online survey service. Survey Monkey is an online creation software service that provides a variety of tools and options to create and employ online surveys in an effective way (Wright 2005). The online questionnaire had a professional look, was easy to read and the title was concise, explaining the purpose of the study (Neuman 2014).

3.5.3 Operationalisation of the questionnaire

Neuman (2014) states that, in order for the researcher to measure constructs empirically, it is necessary to link the construct's conceptual definition to a set of measurement procedures (the construct's operational definition), such as a survey questionnaire. In light of this, the operationalisation of the current study's constructs was done in the form of a survey questionnaire. Crano et al. (2015) explain operationalisation as the process whereby a conjectural construct is translated into a measurement of procedure with the purpose of observing, recording and replicating the construct. For the purpose of the current study, this was done in the form of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections (see

Addendum A). The researcher used various previous studies to develop the questionnaire for the current study (Jason 2011; Smith et al. 2011; Nkambule 2010; Smith 2010; Thomas 2008; Tselepis & De Klerk 2004; North et al. 2003; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a; Fiore & Damhorst 1992). These previous studies served as a guideline for the development of the questions regarding functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of ready-to-wear business apparel fit.

Section A of the online questionnaire elicited demographic information and respondents were required to choose the most appropriate answer for each question. Demographic information included age, marital status, highest level of education, and number of years employed by the company. Psychographic information was also included in Section A and questions elicited answers about whether respondents shop for business apparel alone or with others, the amount of money that male consumers are willing to spend on business apparel, and the frequency of purchasing business apparel from various apparel outlets. Closed-ended questions were used in this section where respondents had to select one choice in response to a question, seeing that concepts can then be operationalised in a way that generates precise measures (Henn et al. 2006). Closed-ended questions can be described as enquiries where respondents are asked a question and provided with a set of responses from which to choose (Neuman 2014) and were suitable for this section of the questionnaire, seeing that responses are easy to code and analyse, and since it enabled respondents to answer these questions in a short period of time (Babbie 2007; Singh 2006).

In conjunction with closed-ended questions, Section A of the online questionnaire also included three partially open questions, which means that a response option, providing respondents with an opportunity to give an alternative answer, is added (Bhattacharjee 2012). The questions regarding respondents' level of education, outfits worn in the workplace, and business apparel shopping cohorts included a response choice where respondents had a choice to write their own answer, since the answers from which to choose may not have included all possible answers (Babbie 2007). Although it may make the coding of answers more complicated, the advantage of using partially open questions, which include a response option labelled 'other', is that it gives respondents the opportunity to specify their own response (Neuman 2014).

The question regarding the frequency with which respondents purchase ready-to-wear business apparel from various apparel outlets requested respondents to choose the best option, indicating frequency on a 5-point scale that contained the following choice descriptor categories: 1=never, 2=once a year, 3=seasonally, 4=monthly and 5=weekly (Addendum A). This type of scale is referred to as a Likert scale, which is one of the most commonly used scales in survey research, as it provides the researcher with the ability to measure respondents' attitudes with ordinal measures (Maree 2007). Babbie (2007) defines the Likert scale as a measure which uses standardised response categories as a way to determine the relative intensity of different items. The Likert scale is a reliable approach to create measurement scales since the multiple choice format, where respondents indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement given, promotes efficiency (Crano et al. 2015). According to Van Laerhoven et al. (2004), the Likert scale is one of the simplest measurement scales for respondents to complete. Although other types of items may also be used, the most common Likert scale includes response categories such as strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. The Likert scale was also used in Section B, as well as in Section C of the online questionnaire, which will be discussed in the following section.

Section B of the online questionnaire addressed the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations which this study examines and was also measured on a Likert scale where respondents had to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with the given statements. Functional expectations of ready-to-wear apparel fit were measured in this section and included questions regarding care, style or design, fabric, comfort, workmanship or construction, colour, versatility or use, and size. Aesthetic expectations measured included questions regarding style or design, attractiveness, colour, fabric, workmanship or construction, touch, being fashionable, and evoking feelings from the wearer. Socio-psychological expectations were also measured in Section B and included questions regarding brand name, price, store image, symbolic meaning, confidence, being fashionable, comments of others, and striving to belong to a group.

For the purpose of this study workmanship or construction, colour, and style or design were recognised as both functional and aesthetic variables. According to

Abraham-Murali and Littrell (1995a), the functional attributes of apparel are inherent into the product and influence the apparel item's performance. However, the aesthetic attributes of apparel also form a part of the intrinsic product features, but contribute to the attractiveness of the apparel item (Smith 2010; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). Therefore, the workmanship or construction of apparel items can be seen as a functional attribute in that the apparel item's construction will influence its durability (Smith et al. 2011; Tselepis & De Klerk 2004), as well as an aesthetic attribute, given that the construction (including the finishes) of the apparel item adds to the appearance thereof (Nkambule 2010). The colour of an apparel item, as a functional attribute, affects the ability to coordinate the item with the wearer's current wardrobe (Jason 2011) and, as an aesthetic attribute; the colour has an impact on the attractiveness of the apparel item (Nkambule 2010). As a functional attribute, an apparel item's style or design will have an impact on the way it fits the wearer (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004), while as an aesthetic attribute the style or design influences the attractiveness of the apparel item when worn (Nkambule 2010; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). Furthermore, 'fashionable' was recognised as both an aesthetic and a socio-psychological variable, seeing that individuals use apparel not only to look fashionable (aesthetic attribute) but also to feel fashionably dressed (socio-psychological attribute) (Smith et al. 2011; Nkambule 2010; North et al. 2003; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995b).

Closed-ended questions were used in this section where respondents had to select one choice in response to a set of statements (Bhattacharjee 2012). Closed-ended questions were suitable for section B seeing that responses can be compared easily, coded and analysed (Babbie 2007), and also because respondents could easily answer them without spending too much time doing so (Neuman 2014). Respondents were required to, once again, choose the best option in response to various statements, based on a 5-point Likert scale that contained the following choice descriptor categories: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree (Addendum A). Table 3.1 below illustrates the specific variables measured in relation to fit expectations, along with the statement and the question number as it appeared in the online questionnaire.

Section C of the online questionnaire elicited information from respondents regarding the extent to which functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations

influence their purchase decisions in relation to business apparel. When considering the fit of apparel items, it not only influences the physical performance (functional dimension) in that the apparel item should fit comfortably and be durable (Hogge et al. 1988), but apparel fit also influences the physical appearance (aesthetic dimension) in that it should look good on the body (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004), as well as the socio-psychological dimension, as it can make the wearer feel dominant (Jason 2011; Nkambule 2010). Male consumers may consider these dimensions of ready-to-wear business apparel fit as important during the purchase situation, or may even regard one of the dimensions as more significant while purchasing apparel for the workplace. Therefore, respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they consider each variable to be important when selecting or buying clothes for the workplace. This was also based on a 5-point Likert scale that contained the following choice descriptor categories: 1=not important at all, 2=fairly unimportant, 3=undecided, 4=fairly important and 5=very important (Addendum A). Table 3.1 illustrates the factors measured in relation to purchasing business apparel, with each statement and question number given as it was stated in the online questionnaire.

TABLE 3.1: OPERATIONALISATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Study objective	Aspect measured	Statement in questionnaire	Question number
To explore the functional expectations that male consumers hold regarding the fit of their business apparel	Size	The clothes should fit well when it is in my size	9.1
	Fabric	The fabric should be of good quality	9.2
	Care	The type of material used to make the clothes should make caring for the clothes easier	9.3
	Style/design	The style of the clothes should fit my body well	9.4
	Comfort	The fit of the clothing item should be comfortable	9.5
	Colour	The colour of the clothing item should tune in well with my existing wardrobe	9.6
	Workmanship/construction	The construction of the clothing should be durable	9.7
	Versatility/use	The clothing item should coordinate well with other clothing items in my wardrobe	9.8
To explore the aesthetic expectations that male consumers hold regarding the fit of their business apparel	Colour	I should like the colour	9.9
	Style/design	The design should be attractive	9.10
	Attractiveness	The fit of the clothing item should make me look attractive	9.11
	Fabric	The fabric should be comfortable	9.12
	Workmanship/construction	The finishes of the clothing item should add to a professional look	9.13

	Touch	The fabric should be pleasant to touch	9.14
	Fashionable	The fit of the clothing item should be fashionable	9.15
	Emotional feeling	The fit of the clothing item should make me feel good about myself	9.16
To explore the socio-psychological expectations that male consumers hold to the fit of their business apparel	Brand name	The brand name of the clothing item should symbolize good fit	9.17
	Price	The price of the clothing item should symbolize good quality	9.18
	Store image	The store image should give me peace of mind	9.19
	Symbolic meaning	I will feel successful when my workplace clothing fits me well	9.20
	Confidence	The fit of the clothing item should give me confidence at work	9.21
	Fashionable	I will feel fashionably dressed when the clothing item fits well	9.22
	Comments of others	I will receive compliments from colleagues and clients when wearing well-fitting clothes in the workplace	9.23
	Striving to belong	The clothing item should adhere to the dress code of my company and should make me feel like I am part of a group	9.24
To determine the extent to which functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations influence the purchase decisions of male consumers in relation to business apparel	Care	Care of the clothing item	10.1
	Style/design	Style / design	10.2
	Comfort	Comfortable fit	10.3
	Versatility/use	The clothing item is versatile	10.4
	Colour	Colour	10.5
	Attractiveness	The clothing item makes me look attractive	10.6
	Fabric	Fabric	10.7
	Fashionable	The clothing item is fashionable	10.8
	Brand name, price, store image	Brand name, price and store image	10.9
	Symbolic meaning	The clothing item makes me feel successful	10.10
	Confidence	The clothing item gives me confidence	10.11
	Comments of others	Other people (colleagues and clients) will like the clothing item	10.12

3.5.4 Piloting the questionnaire

The data collection instrument for this quantitative study was in the form of an online questionnaire. Although this technique is regarded as an acceptable method of collecting data, it is important to note that all sample-based research, such as questionnaires, poses the possibility of some type of error (Jonker 2013). Therefore,

the newly-constructed questionnaire was piloted for clarity in order to bring possible problems to light and to eliminate mistakes before it was sent to the main sample (Henn et al. 2006). Piloting the data collection instrument is essential as it aids in eliminating ambiguous questions as well as questions that are difficult to understand, and it creates an opportunity for constructive feedback on the structure of the instrument (Singh 2006). The pilot for the current study was done in order to ensure clarity of the instrument, to estimate the time required to complete the online questionnaire, to assess recruitment potential (Thabane et al. 2010), as well as to ensure that the data collection instrument included all aspects relevant to the study of male consumers' ready-to-wear apparel fit expectations.

The data collection instrument, the online questionnaire developed to address the objectives of the study, was used to conduct the pilot. An email with a link to the online questionnaire was sent to a convenient sample of male respondents, known to the researcher, who fit the inclusion criteria of the main study. The email message, which clearly explained the purpose of the study, requested respondents' voluntary participation in the pilot by completing the online questionnaire and sending feedback through email after completion. A total of seven male participants completed the pilot online questionnaire and also replied via email with comments regarding the clarity of the instructions, the overall structure and flow of the instrument, the comprehensibility of the questions, and the time frame in which the online questionnaire was completed.

Piloting the data collection instrument offered an opportunity for minor adjustments to be made in order to improve clarity, to minimise confusion and to present questions in an uncomplicated manner. The main corrections that were made after the piloting exercise of the questionnaire included stating the purpose of the study in layman's terms, to make it easier for respondents to understand. Other aspects that were rectified included technical points that were brought to the researcher's attention by the statistician. For example, in Section B, instead of the statement "The clothes fit well when it is in my size", it was changed to "The clothes *should* fit well when it is in my size", as this section set out to examine respondents' expectations. A structural adjustment that was made to the online questionnaire was to include a progress bar at the top of each page (which was possible to include as a part of the Survey Monkey database plus account plan), as an indicator of how many questions have

yet to be completed. This increased motivation seeing that respondents were able to track their own progress without wondering about the length of the online questionnaire. All of the comments and recommendations made by the respondents of the pilot exercise were considered and addressed in revising the data collection instrument for the main study. An example of the online questionnaire that was used for the main study is presented in Addendum A.

3.5.5 Procedure of data collection for the main study

After the pilot exercise of the questionnaire was conducted, corrections were made to the online questionnaire and a final questionnaire was drafted on Survey Monkey for the main study. The questionnaire was administered to the initial 50 respondents electronically, in the form of an email with a link to the online questionnaire. There was, however, the concern of low response rates that had to be taken into consideration, which is often the case with electronic data collection techniques (McPeake et al. 2014). The researcher attempted to increase the response rate by sending follow-up emails to encourage respondents to complete the questionnaire and by requesting respondents to forward the email to friends and colleagues who also fall into the target population and fit the inclusion criteria.

An email, accompanied by the link to the electronic questionnaire, was sent to respondents including information explaining the purpose of the study and why the respondent's answers will be of value, with instructions explaining how questions should be answered, and the name and contact details of the researcher. The researcher also assured respondents via the email that their answers would be handled with strict confidentiality (Hofstee 2009). Prospective respondents were also assured that their participation is voluntary and that completing the online questionnaire serves as consent for participation. A total number of 216 online questionnaires were completed of which all were used seeing that the online survey 'submit' button would have been automatically disabled until the respondent had answered all of the questions (Baker 2012). In addition, to avoid duplication, any respondent attempting to complete the survey from the same computer twice, would be directed to a page which expressed appreciation for taking part in the study. After the data for the study were collected, the data analysis commenced. An explanation of the data analysis is presented in the following section.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of data gathered for the purpose of research has the function of presenting large amounts of information to determine whether causal patterns and trends exist (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham 2009). Given that raw data mean nothing without appropriate statistical methods being applied to it, data analysis can be described as the process of making raw data meaningful and drawing some results from the data (Singh 2006). According to Neuman (2014), data analysis includes steps such as coding the data, entering the data, and presenting the data using the appropriate statistical methods, for example, frequency tables. Therefore, after data collection for the current study took place, questionnaires were prepared for data entry by coding the responses in order to understand the meaning of the data (Creswell 2014). This was done by extracting the numerical data from Survey Monkey onto a Microsoft Office® Excel® spreadsheet. Data analysis was done in conjunction with the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) in South Africa, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22).

Suitable statistical methods were used to analyse the data gathered for this study. Descriptive statistics were used for the demographic and psychographic data. According to Babbie (2007), descriptive statistics provide the researcher with quantitative descriptions of the data in a manageable format. Descriptive statistics used in the study included frequency distributions, percentage distributions, means and standard deviations. Given the quantitative nature of this study, answers to research objectives were found by interpreting the numerical data and the results (Singh 2006). In addition to descriptive statistics, a correlation coefficient was calculated from the data and was used to determine the relationship between functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of fit and the extent to which these expectations influence the purchase decision regarding business apparel. Cronbach's alpha is one of the most important criteria to evaluate the measurement instrument's quality and therefore also the reliability of the study (Spiliotopoulou 2009). Therefore, the Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the constructs as it is indicative of the internal measure of consistency (Kuijpers et al. 2013; Furlong et al. 2000).

Regression analysis, a form of inferential statistics, was also employed in order to determine whether the results from the descriptive statistics were owing to random factors or whether a real relationship exists (Neuman 2014). Regression analysis can be described as a type of inferential statistical analysis which and is used to assess the value of a response variable from the known values of one or more explanatory variables or predictors (Lang 2007). Multiple linear regression models reveal a causal relationship between a dependent variable and independent variables in an attempt to determine the combination effect of the predictor variables in relation to a particular criterion measure (Bao 2015; Crano et al. 2015; Creswell 2014). In the case of the current study, a multiple linear regression model was utilised to determine whether or not a correlation exists between the South African male consumer's functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations of the fit of his business apparel and the importance thereof when he makes a purchase decision.

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Research can be described as the organised and rigorous process of investigation with the intention of describing phenomena and developing and testing notions and theories (McCusker & Gunaydin 2015). Rigour in research is determined by evaluating the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments used to collect data for the study (Heale & Twycross 2015). Reliability and validity can be described as the measurement ideals that researchers need to strive for as it assists in determining the truthfulness and credibility of research findings (Neuman 2014). Therefore, reliability and validity of the measuring instrument and research process is of paramount importance in any research study as these are used to express the quality of a given measure (Creswell 2014). Bhattacharjee (2012) agrees that reliability and validity are important standards to guarantee that the measuring procedure is sufficient and accurate. This is especially important when questionnaires are used as data collection technique (Van Laerhoven et al. 2004). In brief, reliability refers to the internal qualities of measurement, whereas validity has to do with the interpretation of a measure (Crano et al. 2015). To ensure that

accurate data were obtained, it was important to consider both the reliability and validity of the current study separately.

3.7.1 Reliability

Reliability can be explained as the consistency with which a measurement assesses a particular construct (Crano et al. 2015). Not only does reliability require item responses to be consistent across constructs, but also that it should be stable over time (Creswell 2014). In other words, when the research instrument, in the current study the online questionnaire, gives the same data every time it is used, and a difference in the results is simply due to variations in the subject being measured, it is considered internally consistent and is therefore reliable (Heale & Twycross 2015; Denscombe 2007).

Therefore, the online questionnaire should be dependable in that it yields similar results every time it is used under the same conditions (Bhattacharjee 2012). As an attempt to improve the reliability of the current study, the constructs were clearly conceptualised (Neuman 2014). The Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University screened the questionnaire in order to ensure that the data of the study could be statistically analysed. Furthermore, to ensure reliability of the online questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with the help of male respondents in South Africa who fit the inclusion criteria of the main study. The pilot test was the first round to assess the measuring instrument on a small sample population; this assisted the researcher to identify potential problems with the design (Crano et al. 2015). The same questionnaire was completed electronically by 216 South African men working in various workplace environments. Moreover, the questionnaire was constructed in such a way that made it easy to understand and simple to complete without taking too much of the respondents' time. Before answering the online questionnaire, respondents had the opportunity to read a cover letter ensuring their anonymity. Respondents were also assured that the questionnaire had no wrong answers and they were therefore encouraged to answer each question according to their own opinion, which also added to the reliability of the study. Another way that reliability was warranted in this study was by determining Cronbach's alpha, to determine the internal consistency of the measuring instrument (Heale & Twycross 2015).

3.7.2 Validity

The validity of a measuring instrument determines whether meaningful inferences can be drawn from the findings (Creswell 2014). To explain, validity is the relationship between a measurement instrument and the construct being measured (Crano et al. 2015) and the extent to which the construct is accurately measured (Heale & Twycross 2015). Therefore, validity in research refers to the accuracy and precision of the data, and it involves that the data need to be appropriate to the study's objectives (Leung 2015; Denscombe 2007). Measurement validity is the degree to which an empirical indicator corresponds with the conceptual definition of the construct that the indicator is supposed to measure (Neuman 2014). According to Crano et al. (2015), different components should be taken into consideration in the process of verifying the validity of measuring instruments. The various components of measurement validity, including face validity, content validity, and construct validity (Peck et al. 2012), as well as the theoretical validity (Creswell 2014), are presented in the following section as applied to the current study.

3.7.2.1 Face validity

Face validity refers to whether the measuring instrument appears to be an accurate measurement of what it is supposed to measure, specifically in terms of the respondents' understanding of constructs (Neuman 2014; Bhattacharjee 2012). The online questionnaire for the current study was developed alongside a thorough review of related literature. As suggested by Heale and Twycross (2015), the researcher made use of subject and research expertise, which involved the study leaders and the statistician. The questions in the online questionnaire clearly related to the expectations that men have of the fit of their business apparel and the way that these expectations influence their purchase behaviour. Another way that face validity was ensured was by pilot testing the online questionnaire before data collection for the main study commenced. However, face validity alone is not sufficient to ensure measurement validity. Therefore, content validity and construct validity were also considered.

3.7.2.2 Content validity

Content validity of the measuring instrument suggests that it includes the complete range of content that it sets out to measure (Bhattacharjee 2012; Peck et al. 2012) and that it covers the meaning of the conceptual definition of the construct (Neuman

2014). For this study, content validity was warranted by developing the online questionnaire so as to reach the objectives of the study. Moreover, the online questionnaire included specific constructs relating to each of the objectives to be studied. Relevant literature was reviewed in order to gain knowledge about the aspects that would ensure representative coverage of the construct (Heale & Twycross 2015; Crano et al. 2015). Therefore, the current study's questions in the online questionnaire were constructed in such a way that they relate to and answer the research objectives. This ensured that the content of the measuring instrument measured the complete series of concepts under consideration (Crano et al. 2015).

3.7.2.3 Construct validity

The online questionnaire covered all the objectives of this study in order to ensure that it measured what it was supposed to measure (Crano et al. 2015). The constructs set out in the objectives included functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological aspects and all were included in the questionnaire. Additionally, more than one statement for each construct was included. Peck et al. (2012) state that construct validity, also known as theoretical validity, examines how well the relationships of the aspects measured accurately reflect the identified variables. Therefore, it is possible to make deductions about the test scores related to the concept being studied (Heale & Twycross 2015). As suggested by Bhattacharjee (2012), the online questionnaire was tested on a sample group with the same characteristics and criteria as that of the main study, which ensured that the questionnaire measured what it was intended to measure.

3.7.2.4 Theoretical validity

A thorough review of relevant literature enabled the researcher to become familiar with the concepts used in the study and served as a basis for the forming of the research objectives. The theory of male shopping behaviour (Otnes & McGrath 2001) and the research done by Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) were used as background for further examination of other sources of information to determine the specific aspects to study. The online questionnaire was developed with the above in mind and the questions were compiled in the most meaningful, easily understandable way possible.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations in a research project take account of the concerns and conflicts that might occur during the study and it is therefore imperative to balance the quest for knowledge and the rights of those being examined (Neuman 2014; Henn et al. 2006). The current study sought to determine specific aspects of male consumers' expectations of the fit of business apparel and the way in which it influences their decisions in the purchase situation. According to Thomas and Piccolo (2015) ethical practices in research include integrity of and transparency from the researcher, voluntary participation and confidentiality of respondents, informed consent, and freedom from partiality. Therefore, the researcher had to consider the ethical aspects that might have occurred during the course of the study. First of all, the proposal for this study was presented to the UNISA Ethics Review Committee for approval before data collection took place. Ethical clearance was given by the aforementioned Ethics Review Committee, with reference number 2014/CAES/186 (Addendum B).

Moreover, the online questionnaire was formulated in order to reach the objectives of the study and to obtain results without risking the respondent's anonymity. Considering the electronic nature of the questionnaire, respondents were assured that their responses would be anonymous and that the results obtained through the study's data would only be used for the purpose of this study and nothing else. Even though the initial prospective respondents were known to the researcher, it was not possible to identify who completed the online questionnaire or to link the responses to a specific respondent. Seeing that the link provided in the email directed the respondents directly to Survey Monkey, their answers to the online questionnaire were anonymous. The researcher would therefore be unable to identify which of the prospective respondents answered the questionnaire and also did not have access to respondents who were reached through the snowball sampling method's email addresses. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to respondents in an email before they committed to answering the questionnaire. Seeing that data was collected electronically, the email cover letter explained to respondents that their responses would be handled confidentially, and that no personal information would be viewed by the rest of the research team or used in possible publications.

Responding to the email and completing the questionnaire were seen as consent from the respondent to participate in the research study, which was also stated in the email sent to prospective respondents.

The following additional measures were taken into consideration when requesting potential respondents to participate in this online survey:

- The respondents were informed about the purpose of the research (Thomas & Piccolo 2015).
- Participation was voluntary and thus respondents were prepared to dedicate time to the online questionnaire (Neuman 2014).
- Respondents were assured that their identity will be held anonymous and that they were able to withdraw at any time (Baker 2012; Hofstee 2009).
- The respondents were assured that their opinions were of value and that there were absolutely no wrong answers to any of the questions (Crano et al. 2015).
- Respondents were guaranteed that the information given on the online questionnaire would be treated as confidential and that the findings will be reported honestly, and only for the purpose of the current study (Bhattacharjee 2012) and also that none of their personal information will be made available for viewing to anyone or included in future studies or publications.

3.9 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The methodology discussed in this chapter enabled the researcher to gather the necessary data to achieve the research objectives. In this chapter, specific consideration was given to the quantitative paradigm in which the study was framed. The survey research design was also discussed, along with reasons for using this approach for the current study. In addition, the non-probability sampling method was highlighted, which explained the use of purposive as well as snowball sampling techniques. Thereafter, the method that was employed to collect data was presented, with specific detail about the online questionnaire as data collection instrument, as well as the development and operationalisation of the questionnaire. Specific attention was also given to the way in which the pilot test for the online

questionnaire was conducted as well as the procedure of data collection for the main study.

This chapter also addressed the descriptive and inferential statistical methods that were used for data analysis. Finally, the chapter concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations that had to be considered for the study. The methodology enabled the researcher to analyse the collected data and draw conclusions from the results. A detailed discussion of the results of the study can be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter four discusses the results of the study. The results are structured and presented according to the objectives of the study and are discussed in relation to the problem statement with reference to relevant literature.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results of the data gathered by means of an online survey are presented in relation to the research objectives. The demographic information of respondents (Section A of the online survey) is presented in the following section as frequency and percentage distributions. Demographic information included respondents' age, marital status, level of education, and how long they have been employed by their current company. Respondents' psychographic information is then presented by means of frequency and percentage distributions. Psychographic information (Section A of the online survey) included the apparel that respondents wore in the workplace, their business apparel shopping cohorts, how much they were willing to spend on business apparel per year, and the frequency with which they purchased business apparel from various retail outlets.

Thereafter, the respondents' functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations regarding the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel (Section B of the online survey) are depicted in tables in terms of percentages. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for questions regarding the functional expectations, the aesthetic expectations as well as the socio-psychological expectations, and are presented in this chapter. Finally, the multiple linear regression model that was used to determine the importance of functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological aspects of apparel items when respondents purchase ready-to-wear business apparel, is also presented and explained in this chapter.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A total number of 216 electronic questionnaires were completed on the online survey instrument, Survey Monkey. All 216 questionnaires were used for data analysis and interpretation. All respondents were South African men who held jobs in an official workplace environment. Respondents' demographic information included age, marital status, level of education, and the duration of employment with their current company. Bar graphs of the results are included in the following section to assist in the presentation of the results.

4.2.1 Age distribution of respondents

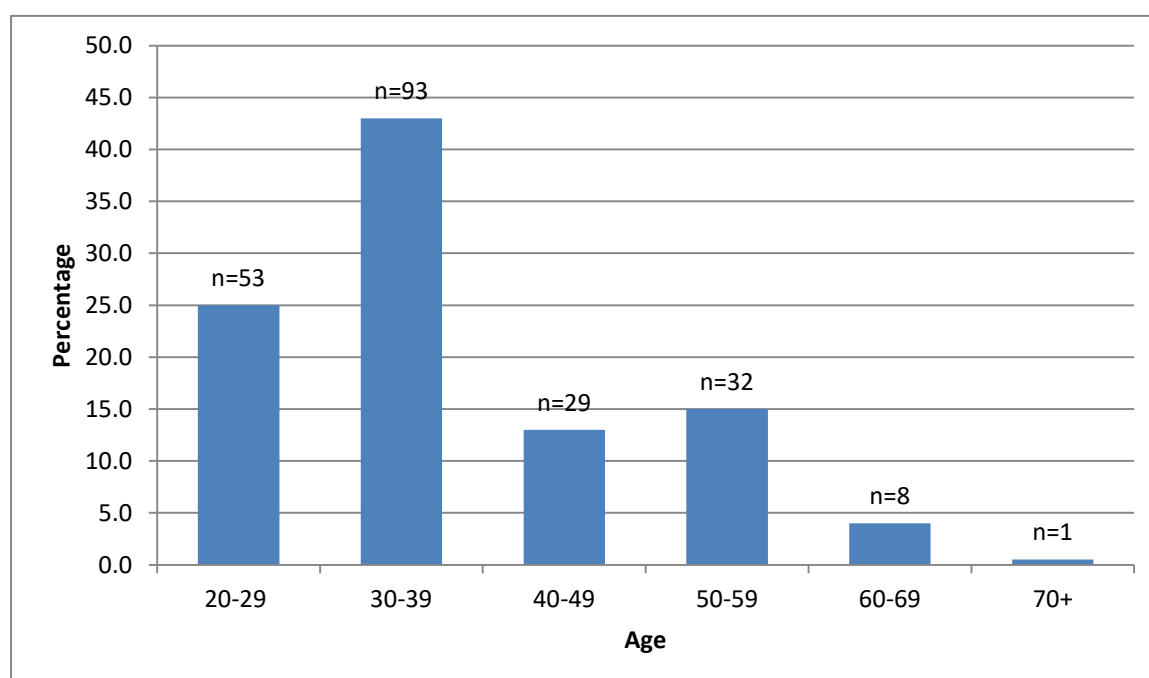
The age profile of the respondents who participated in this study is depicted in Table 4.1 by means of frequency distributions and percentage distributions. The results in Table 4.1 indicate that the majority of the respondents (43%, n=93) were between the ages of 30 to 39 years, and that a quarter (25%, n=53) were between 20 to 29 years old. More than two thirds (68%, n=146) of the respondents form a part of the so-called 'Y' generation, born between 1977 and 1994 (Cui et al. 2003). Those who form part of Generation Y have been more exposed to modern media and apparel marketing and therefore view fashion in a more positive light than past generations and, as a result, also show higher involvement in apparel purchasing activities (Bakewell et al. 2006). Statistics South Africa (2015) estimate the mid-year population of the country at nearly 55 million people, with approximately 27 million (49%) being male, of which nearly 5 million (19%) are between the ages of 20 and 29 and about 4 million (15%) are between 30 to 39 years of age (Statistics South Africa 2015). Moreover, Generation Y male consumers in South Africa have been found to be highly media-oriented (Du Preez et al. 2007), which means that they are regularly exposed to apparel marketing initiatives.

The results in Table 4.1 further show that a smaller group of respondents were between the ages of 50 and 59 years old (15%, n=32), and 40 to 49 old (13%, n=29). Only a very small number (4%, n=8) of respondents were between 60 to 69 years of age, whereas only one (0.5%) respondent was between the age of 70 and older.

TABLE 4.1 AGE OF RESPONDENTS (N=216)

Age of the respondents	n	Percentage (%)
20 - 29 years	53	25
30 - 39 years	93	43
40 - 49 years	29	13
50 - 59 years	32	15
60 – 69 years	8	4
70 and older	1	0.5

The data relating to the respondents' age are visually presented in Figure 4.1 which gives a better indication of the differences between the age groups.

**FIGURE 4.1 AGE OF RESPONDENTS**

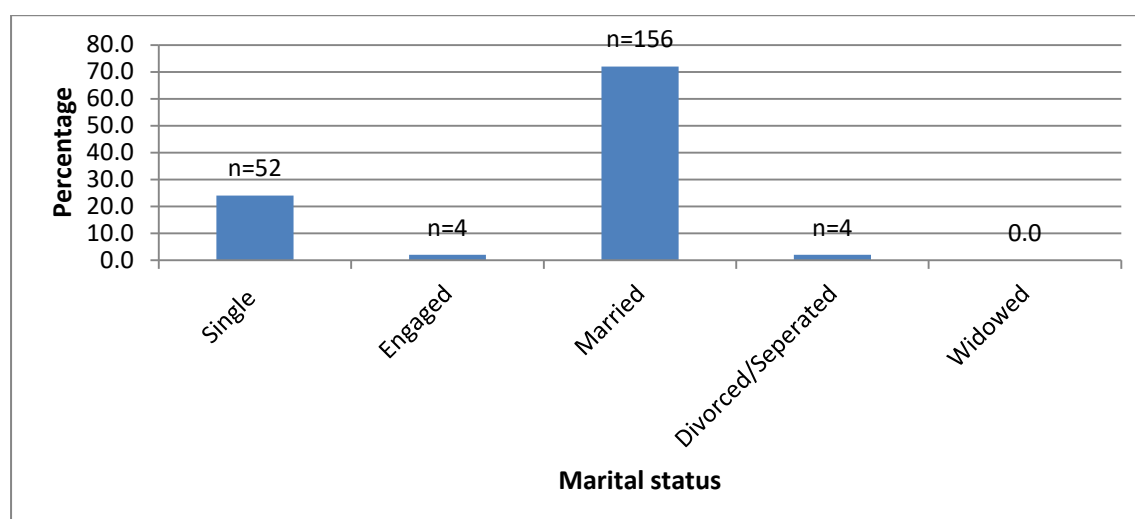
4.2.2 Marital status distribution of respondents

The results on marital status are presented in Table 4.2 and show that 72% (n=156) of the respondents were married. According to Statistics South Africa (2016), 40% of employed South Africans are married. Only 24% (n=52) of the respondents were single, with just 2% (n=4) being engaged, and another 2% (n=4) divorced. As can be seen in the results, none (0%, n=0) of the respondents in this study was widowed.

TABLE 4.2 MARITAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (N=216)

Marital status of the respondents	n	Percentage (%)
Single	52	24
Engaged	4	2
Married	156	72
Divorced	4	2
Widowed	0	0

The graph in Figure 4.2 presents the data relating to the respondents' marital statuses indicating the large portion of married respondents against a smaller portion of single respondents who took part in the study.

**FIGURE 4.2 MARITAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**

4.2.3 Education level of respondents

Table 4.3 below shows both the frequency distribution and the percentage distribution of respondents' answers regarding their level of education. Fourteen of the respondents selected the 'other' response option and gave various responses to this question. These responses were coded and included in the existing response options. After coding, the 'primary school completed' category was renamed as the 'non-matriculated' category, seeing that some of the respondents indicated having completed school only to a certain grade in high school and therefore also having completed primary school but not matriculated. The data displayed in Table 4.3 indicate that 44% (n=94) of the respondents held a post-graduate university degree, 24% (n=52) held a university degree and 18% (n=40) have completed a certificate or

diploma. Matric was the highest level of education for 12% (n=25) of the respondents, while only 2% (n=5) have not matriculated.

TABLE 4.3 HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION (N=216)

Respondents' level of education	n	Percentage (%)
Non-matriculated	5	2
Matriculated	25	12
Diploma / Certificate	40	18
University degree	52	24
Post-graduate university degree	94	44

Figure 4.3 illustrates the respondents' highest level of education by means of a graph, indicating the stepwise descent of education level from those who hold postgraduate degrees to respondents without a matric qualification.

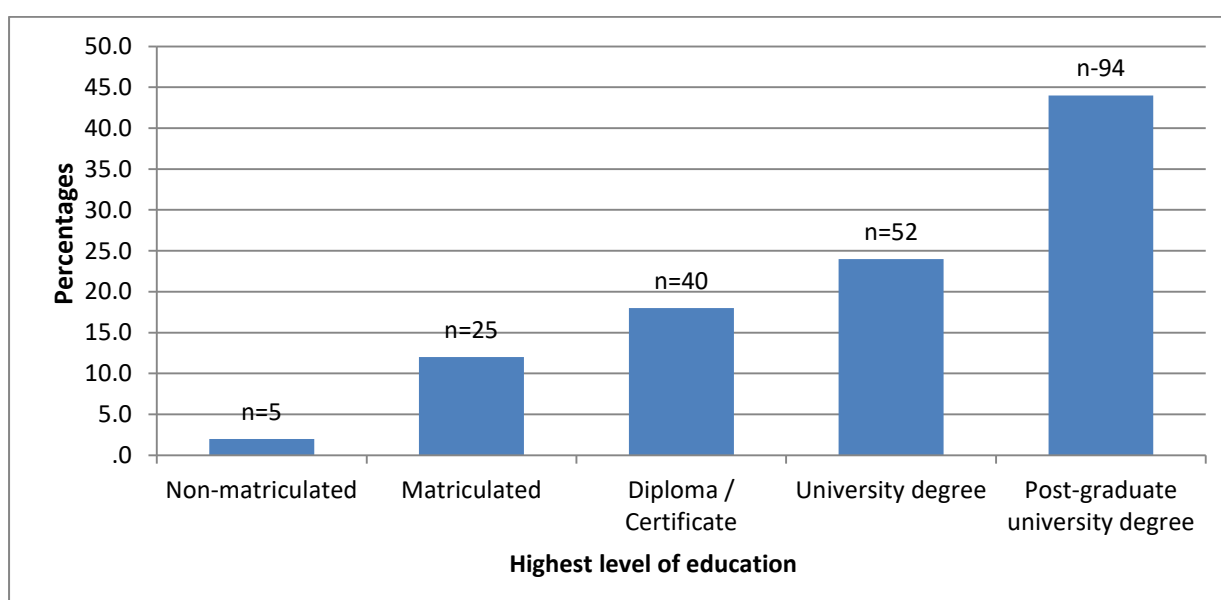


FIGURE 4.3 HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The results in Figure 4.3 above clearly illustrate that only 14% of the respondents did not have a post-matriculation qualification, whereas 86% of the respondents were qualified beyond matriculation to some extent. In 2011, over 160 000 students graduated with degrees or received diplomas or certificates from public Higher Education Institutions in South Africa (South Africa Department of Higher Education and Training 2013). Despite the rising problem of unemployment among graduates in South Africa, it was evident in 2005 that, having completed secondary school or holding some form of tertiary education qualification, undoubtedly increases the

chances of entering the labour force market (Burger & Woolard 2005). This is also displayed by the sample in the current study, with most of the respondents (86%) having either completed a diploma or certificate, a university degree or a post-graduate university degree. Anand et al. (2016) more recently found that, even though work experience is a more important influencing factor of entering the labour force market in South Africa, education is an important determinant of job security, which implies that the probability of the educated individual transitioning from employment to unemployment is low.

4.2.4 Number of years employed at current workplace

Table 4.4 indicates the results regarding the duration that the respondents have been employed by their current companies. The results show that 30% (n=66) of the respondents have been employed by their current employer for 2-5 years. The results further indicate that 23% (n=49) of the respondents have been employed by their current employer for 6-10 years, 22% (n=48) of the respondents were employed for 2 years or less, and 12% (n=26) of them were employed for 11-15 years by their current employer. Only 10% (n=21) of the respondents have been employed by their current employers for 20 years or longer and 3% (n=6) between 16 and 20 years.

Unemployment is an on-going problem in South Africa and it is also evident in the male working-age population (between 15 and 64 years), with an unemployment rate of 24, 6 % (Statistics South Africa 2016). Nevertheless, 49, 1% of the male working-age population in South Africa hold employment in the formal sector (non-agricultural), the informal sector (non-agricultural), agriculture, or private households (Statistics South Africa 2016).

TABLE 4.4 DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT AT CURRENT WORKPLACE (N=216)

Total number of years employed at current employer	n	Percentage (%)
Under 2 years	48	22
2 – 5 years	66	30
6 – 10 years	49	23
11 – 15 years	26	12
16 – 20 years	6	3
20 years or more	21	10

The data concerning the total number of years the respondents have been employed by their current employer are also illustrated in the graph presented in Figure 4.4, showing that employment less than two years to approximately 10 years at one company was more characteristic of the respondents who took part in the study.

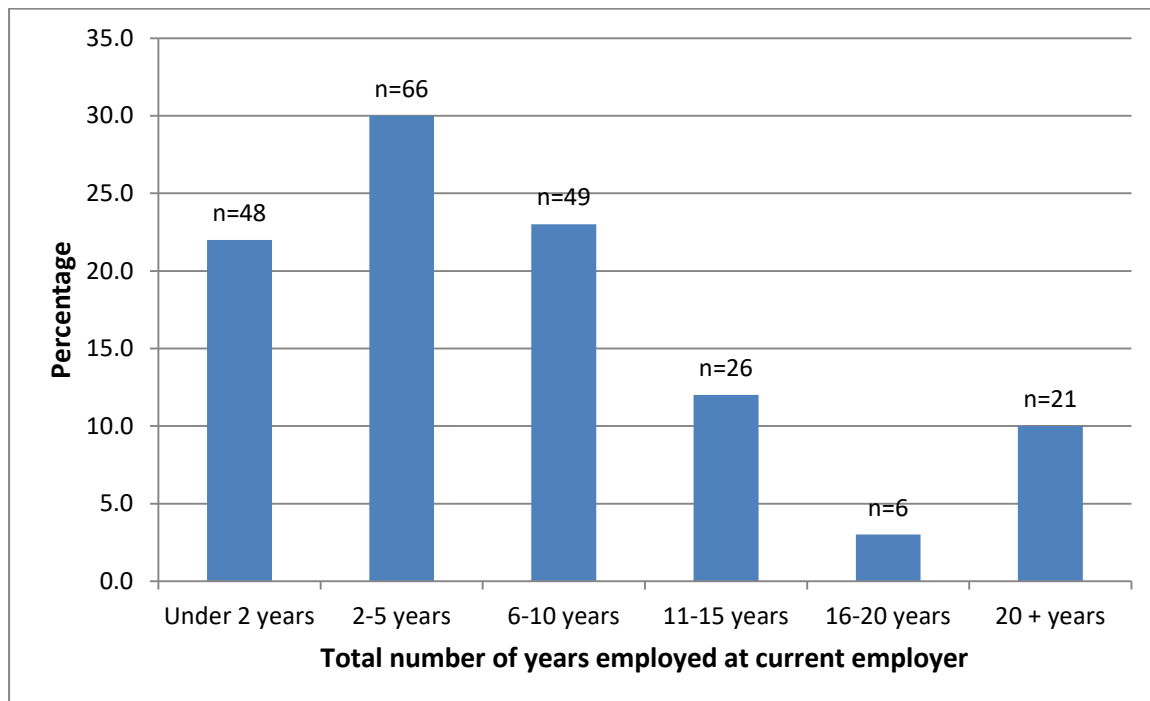


FIGURE 4.4 DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT AT CURRENT WORKPLACE

4.3 PSYCHOGRAPHIC RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Additional information regarding respondents' patronage of ready-to-wear business apparel, i.e. which apparel they wear in the workplace, their business apparel shopping cohorts, how much they were willing to spend on business apparel per year, and the frequency with which they purchased business apparel from various retail outlets, were included in Section A of the online survey (Addendum A). These results are presented in the following section.

4.3.1 Apparel worn in the workplace

Table 4.5 shows the frequency distribution and the percentage distribution of respondents' answers about the apparel worn in the workplace. Categories for the response options for the question regarding apparel worn in the workplace were selected subsequent to a review of relevant literature (Kang et al. 2011; Woodard 1999; Bell 1991). The pilot testing of the questionnaire aided in ensuring that all possible business apparel items relevant to this study were included in the existing response categories. Also, an open response option, labelled 'other', was included in case some of the respondents' answers didn't fall into the categories provided. Twenty-four of the respondents selected the 'other' response option and gave various answers to this question. The researcher coded the 'other' responses and added corresponding answers to the existing categories. The 'apparel provided by company' category emerged among these answers and was added as a new category.

TABLE 4.5 APPAREL WORN IN THE WORKPLACE (N=216)

Apparel worn in the workplace	n	Percentage (%)
Jeans / Slacks and T-shirt / golf shirt	39	18
Jeans / Slacks and buttoned shirt	53	25
Formal trousers and buttoned shirt	107	49
Suit and tie	11	5
Apparel provided by company	6	3

The results in Table 4.5 show that almost half (49%, n=107) of the respondents wear formal trousers and a buttoned shirt to work. A smaller number (25%, n=53) of respondents wear jeans and/or slacks and a buttoned shirt to work, whereas even fewer (18%, n=39) of them wear jeans and/or slacks and a T-shirt and/or golf shirt. Only a few (5%, n=11) of the respondents indicated wearing a suit and tie in the workplace. Also, a small number (3%, n=6) of respondents wear apparel provided by their employers, such as company branded apparel and protective apparel, which they are required to wear to work.

These results regarding apparel that respondents wear in the workplace are depicted by means of a graph in Figure 4.5, indicating the dominance of formal trousers and buttoned shirts worn to work.

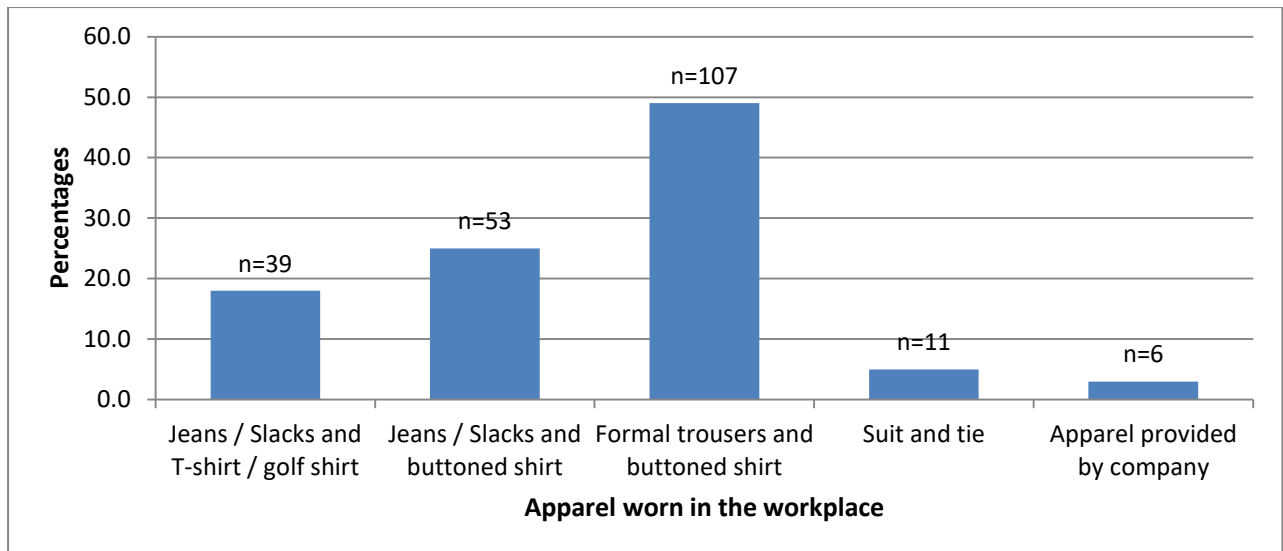


FIGURE 4.5 APPAREL WORN IN THE WORKPLACE

When considering the 'jeans and/or slacks with a T-shirt and/or golf shirt' category and the 'jeans and/or slacks with a buttoned shirt' category, it is interesting to note that 43% (18%+25%), n=92 (39+53) of the respondents wear jeans and/or slacks as the fundamental item of their workplace outfit and then make slight changes by wearing a more casual T-shirt and/or golf shirt (18%, n=39) or a somewhat smarter buttoned shirt (25%, n=53), with the buttoned shirt being the slightly more preferred option. This is significant since small changes to an outfit can have a big impact on the information communicated to others (Howlett et al. 2013).

By combining the 'jeans and/or slacks with a buttoned shirt' category and the 'formal trousers with a buttoned shirt' category, a smart-casual look is created, which is worn by the larger number (74%, n=160) of respondents. Within the smart casual look, wearing formal trousers emerged as the most preferred option. A more casual look is followed by 18% (n=39) of the respondents, who wear jeans or slacks with a T-shirt or a golf shirt; only a few of the respondents (5%, n=11) indicated wearing a suit and tie to work, which is considered a more formal mode of dress. This corresponds with literature which indicates that many workplaces are moving away from the traditional business suit to a more casual and smart casual dress code (Kang et al. 2011; Sindicich 2008; Peluchette et al. 2006; Woodard 1999).

4.3.2 Shopping cohorts when purchasing business apparel

Nine of the respondents selected the 'other' response option and gave various answers to this question. The researcher, once again, coded the response options as they were given in the online questionnaire, so as to include all responses in the existing response options. As in section 4.3.1, the 'apparel provided by company' category emerged among these answers and was added as a new category. The responses for sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 correspond, in that the number of respondents for the newly emerging response option is equal for both questions. Table 4.6 shows the frequency distribution and the percentage distribution of respondents' answers regarding with whom they shop when purchasing apparel for the workplace.

TABLE 4.6 SHOPPING COHORTS WHEN PURCHASING BUSINESS APPAREL (N=216)

Shopping cohorts when purchasing business apparel	n	Percentage (%)
Alone	77	36
Girlfriend / Wife / Partner	130	60
Sister / Mother / Family member	2	1
Friends	1	0.5
Apparel provided by company	6	3

Table 4.6 illustrates the percentage distribution of the respondents' shopping cohorts when purchasing business apparel. It was found that 60% (n=130) of the respondents shop with their girlfriends, wives or partners. A study done by Lui and Dickerson (1999) similarly found that Taiwanese male consumers are often influenced by their wives or girlfriends when making business apparel purchases. A more recent study, profiling South African male consumers, agreed that girlfriends and wives are considered to be valuable shopping companions (Du Preez 2007). The results in Table 4.6 further show that 36% (n=77) of the respondents indicated shopping for business apparel alone. This also corresponds with the literature indicating that men are becoming more active participants in the apparel retail environment (McNeill & Douglas 2011; Bakewell et al. 2008; Doyle et al. 2008). As mentioned before, 3% (n=6) of the respondents were provided with business apparel by their companies. Only 1% (n=2) of the respondents shop with their sisters,

mothers or family members when purchasing business apparel, while only one (0.5%) respondent does so with a friend.

The data related to respondents' shopping cohorts when shopping for business apparel are illustrated by means of a graph in Figure 4.6, which clearly shows the male shopper who purchases his business apparel alone starting to compete with the most preferred shopping cohort, namely the girlfriend/ wife/partner cohort.

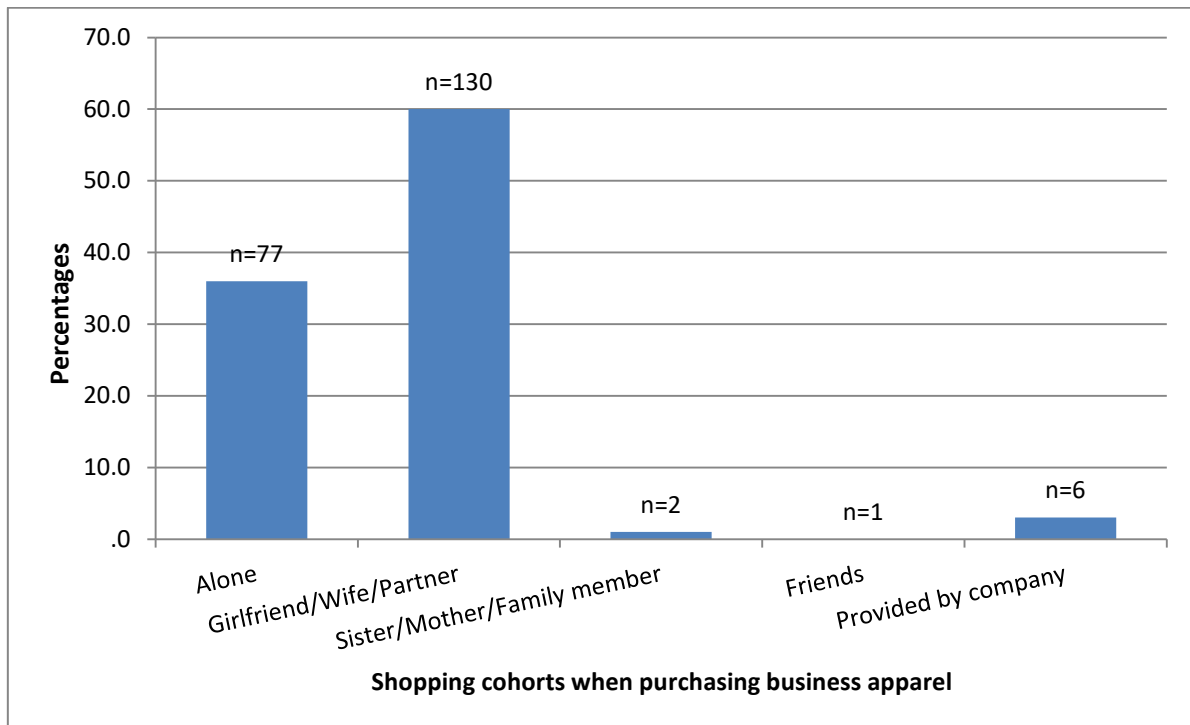


FIGURE 4.6 SHOPPING COHORTS WHEN PURCHASING BUSINESS APPAREL

4.3.3 Amount willing to spend on business apparel (per year)

The results in Table 4.7 outline the amount of money (in South African Rand) that respondents are willing to pay for their business apparel on an annual basis. A total number of five (2%) respondents were not willing to spend any amount of money for purchasing business apparel. However, it is clear that almost half of the respondents (49%, n=106) were willing to spend between R2 000 and R4 000 on apparel for the workplace. Du Preez et al. (2007) similarly found that young South African male consumers spend approximately R500 on apparel purchases per month. This calculates to around R6 000 annually, which is in line with the results of the current study, seeing that a portion of the R6 000 will presumably be used to purchase apparel for the workplace.

The results further indicate that 23% (n=49) of the respondents were willing to pay between R1 000 or less for their business apparel, while only 19% (n=41) were willing to spend between R5 000 and R7 000 annually. Fewer (7%, n=15) of the respondents indicated a willingness to spend R8 000 or more when purchasing apparel for the workplace. Since PwC's report on the outlook of South African retail and consumer products for 2012-2016 states that the apparel sector will expand by 15% per annum for this period (PwC 2012), the spending patterns of these respondents may yet increase substantially.

TABLE 4.7 AMOUNT WILLING TO SPEND ON BUSINESS APPAREL PER YEAR (N=216)

Amount respondents were willing to spend on business apparel (per year)	n	Percentage (%)
None	5	2
R1, 000 or less	49	23
R2, 000 – R4, 000	106	49
R5, 000 – R7, 000	41	19
R8, 000 or more	15	7

The results concerning the amount that respondents were willing to spend on their business apparel (per year) are shown in the form of a graph in Figure 4.7. The figure clearly illustrates the large proportion of male respondents willing to spend a substantial amount of up to R4 000 annually on business apparel purchases.

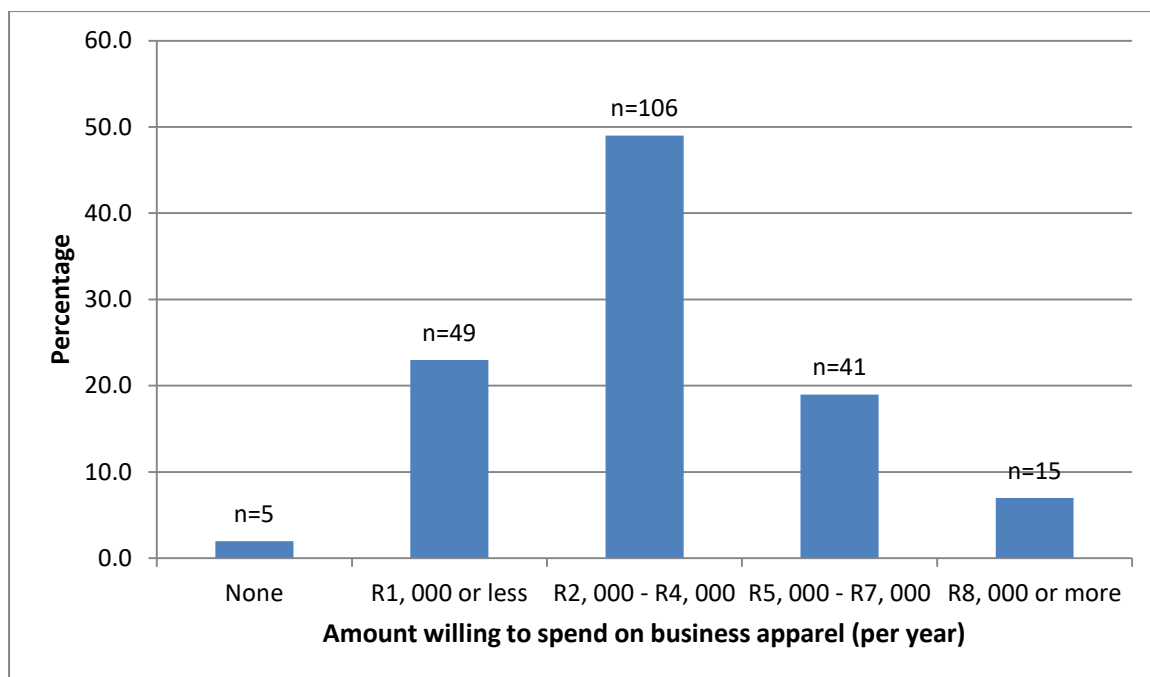


FIGURE 4.7 AMOUNT WILLING TO SPEND ON BUSINESS APPAREL (PER YEAR)

4.3.4 Frequency of purchasing business apparel from different retail outlets

This question aimed to determine how often respondents purchase business apparel from selected apparel retail outlets in South Africa. Table 4.8 shows the frequency distribution and the percentage distribution of the data as presented in the questionnaire, according to the 5-point Likert scale, with response options 1=never, 2=once a year, 3=seasonally, 4=monthly, 5=weekly.

TABLE 4.8 FREQUENCY WITH WHICH RESPONDENTS PURCHASE BUSINESS APPAREL FROM VARIOUS RETAIL OUTLETS (N=216)

Business apparel retail outlets	1: Never	2: Once a year	3: Seasonally	4: Monthly	5: Weekly
Supermarkets(e.g. Pick n Pay, Game, Checkers)	77.3% n=167	11.6% n=25	10.6% n=23	0% n=0	0.5% n=1
Clothing chain stores (e.g. Woolworths, Edgars, Truworths)	6.0% n=13	25.5% n=55	61.6% n=133	6.5% n=14	0.5% n=1
Men's outfitters (e.g. Martin Delport, Coquis)	72.7% n=157	18.5% n=40	7.9% n=17	0.5% n=1	0.5% n=1
Tailor	90.3% n=195	8.8% n=19	0% n=0	0.5% n=1	0.5% n=1

An examination of Table 4.8 reveals that a noteworthy number of the respondents **never** purchase their business apparel from tailors (90.3%, n=195), supermarkets (77%, n=167), and men's outfitters (72.7%, n=157). Only a few of them indicated that they never make use of clothing chain stores (6%, n=13) for business apparel purchases. **Annually**, 25.5% (n=55) of the respondents purchase their business apparel from clothing chain stores, 18.5% (n=40) from men's outfitters and 11.6% (N=25) from supermarkets. No more than 8.8% (n=19) of the respondents purchase their business apparel from tailors once a year.

The results further show that 61.6% (n=133) of respondents purchase business apparel from clothing chain stores on a **seasonal** basis. According to the retail trade sales report, compiled by Tustin et al. (2014), the high-selling months in the South African apparel retail sector is April/May, October/November and December, which indicate seasonal purchasing behaviour. A significantly smaller number of the respondents indicated that they make use of supermarkets (10.6%, n=23) and men's outfitters (7.9%, n=17) to purchase their business apparel seasonally, whereas none of them did so from tailors (0%, n=0).

It is interesting to note that very few of the respondents purchased their business apparel **monthly** from clothing chain stores (6.5%, n=14), men's outfitters (0.5%, n=1) and tailors (0.5%, n=1). None (0%, n=0) of them purchased their business apparel from supermarkets on a monthly basis. Also, a notably low number of the respondents make use of supermarkets (0.5%, n=1), clothing chain stores (0.5%, n=1), men's outfitters (0.5%, n=1), and tailors (0.5%, n=1) for purchasing business apparel **weekly**.

To sum up, the above results show that the South African men who participated in this study mostly purchased their business apparel seasonally and preferred to do so mainly from clothing chain stores, like Truworths, Woolworths and Edgars. This agrees with a study done by Du Preez et al. (2007), who profiled South African male consumers as traditionalists, shopping enthusiasts, dynamics, and laggards. Although these four clusters varied in terms of consumer demographics, lifestyles and shopping orientation; Edgars and Truworths were among the preferred stores from which to purchase apparel, across all four profiles (Du Preez et al. 2007). Similarly, a study conducted by Li et al. (2012) revealed that respondents preferred

to purchase apparel from department stores due to favourable price ranges, quality of merchandise, and the variation in merchandise selection.

4.4 RESULTS WITH REGARD TO OBJECTIVES 1 TO 4 OF THE STUDY

In Section B of the online questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with various statements related to functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of the fit of their business apparel. A total number of 216 online questionnaires were completed of which all were used seeing that the survey 'submit' button on the online survey service, Survey Monkey, was supposed to be automatically disabled until the respondent had answered all of the questions. However, possibly due to technical problems on Survey Monkey, it may have been possible for respondents not to complete the entire questionnaire yet still being able to submit it or some respondents may have decided to discontinue their input in completing the questionnaire. Therefore, data are presented of 215 respondents who answered Section B of the online questionnaire. Section C of the online questionnaire required the respondents to indicate the extent to which the functional aspects, aesthetic aspects, and socio-psychological aspects of the fit of their business apparel influence their purchase decision. The data are presented of 211 respondents who answered Section C of the online questionnaire.

In the following section, the reliability of the constructs is presented in section 4.4.1. This was necessary in order to determine the internal consistency of the measuring tool. Following on this, the results of the study are presented in relation to the research objectives.

4.4.1 Reliability of constructs

The measurement procedure, namely the completion of an electronic questionnaire, was completed only once to gather the data for this study. Thus, it was necessary to examine the reliability of the measuring instrument in terms of its internal consistency. As defined by Heale and Twycross (2015), internal consistency of the measuring instrument relates to "the extent to which all the items on a scale measure one construct". In order to facilitate the examination of the internal consistency of the different items that made up the measuring instrument, as suggested by Kuijpers et

al. (2013), Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The Cronbach's alpha is indicative of the internal measure of consistency and should ideally be as close to 1 as possible, however anything from 0.70 upwards is deemed acceptable (Spiliotopoulou 2009; Furlong et al. 2000).

Table 4.9 presents the Cronbach's alpha which was calculated for the questions in the online questionnaire measuring the functional expectations (V9.1-V9.8), for the questions measuring the aesthetic expectations (V9.9-V9.16), for the questions measuring the socio-psychological expectations (V9.17-V9.24), as well as for the questions in Section C of the online questionnaire concerning the importance of the functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological factors of ready-to-wear business apparel during purchasing (V10.1-V10.12).

TABLE 4.9 RELIABILITY OF CONSTRUCTS

Constructs	Question number on electronic questionnaire	Internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
Functional expectations	V9.1 - V9.8	0.71
Aesthetic expectations	V9.9 – V9.16	0.80
Socio-psychological expectations	V9.17 – V9.24	0.80
Importance during purchasing	V10.1 – V10.12	0.80

As can be seen in Table 4.9, the functional expectations (0.71), the aesthetic expectations (0.80), the socio-psychological expectations (0.80), and the importance of the factors during purchasing (0.80) all reflected acceptable Cronbach's alpha levels and can therefore be considered reliable constructs of the measurement instrument, measuring respondents' functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, as well as the importance of the expectations during purchasing.

4.4.2 Results regarding the functional expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel (Research objective 1)

For the purpose of this study, functional expectations were measured by determining care, style or design, fabric, comfort, workmanship or construction, colour, versatility or use, and size of apparel. Each of the aforementioned functional attributes is

presented in Table 4.10, alongside the specific statement as it was provided in the online questionnaire. For this section, the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ response options were added together. This was done in order to simplify the presentation of the data. For the same reason, the ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ response options were also combined. Consequently, for interpretation purposes, response options were adapted to ‘strongly agree/agree’=1, ‘undecided’=2, and ‘strongly disagree/disagree’=3. Table 4.10 below shows the frequency distribution and the percentage distribution of these results.

TABLE 4.10 FUNCTIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF THE FIT OF BUSINESS APPAREL (N=215)

Statement as given in the questionnaire		Functional attribute measured	1: Strongly agree / Agree	2: Undecided	3: Strongly disagree / Disagree
9.1	The clothes should fit well when it is my size	Size	99.6% n=214	0.5% n=1	0% n=0
9.2	The fabric should be of good quality	Fabric	97.6% n=210	1.9% n=4	0.5% n=1
9.3	The type of material used to make the clothes should make caring for it easier	Care	91.2% n=196	7.4% n=16	1.4% n=3
9.4	The style of the clothes should fit my body well	Style / Design	96.3% n=207	3.3% n=7	0.5% n=1
9.5	The fit of the clothing item should be comfortable	Comfort	99.1% n=213	0.5% n=1	0.5% n=1
9.6	The colour of the clothing item should tune in well with my existing wardrobe	Colour	71.7% n=154	17.2% n=37	11.2% n=24
9.7	The construction of the clothing should be durable	Workmanship/ Construction	95.9% n=206	3.3% n=7	1% n=2
9.8	The clothing item should coordinate well with other clothing items in my wardrobe	Versatility / Use	71.2% n=153	16.7% n=36	12.1% n=26

The Cronbach’s alpha for the functional aspects (V9.1-V9.8) was 0.71, indicating reliability of the scale items. It is clear from Table 4.10, depicting respondents’ functional expectations of the fit of their business apparel, that 99.6% (n=214) of the sample expected a business apparel item to fit well when it is in their size. The respondents also expected the fit of their business apparel to be comfortable (99.1%, n=213) and the fabric with which the apparel item is made to be of good quality (97.6%, n=210). In a study conducted by Hogge et al. (1988), it was also found that men (both young and old) wanted comfortable apparel. In addition, Lui and

Dickerson (1999) found that, not only comfort, but size and fit as well, were factors that influenced men's business apparel purchasing behaviour. The importance of these findings is related to the fact that the fit of an apparel item determines the level of comfort, as well as its durability, and acts as an indicator of apparel quality (Jason 2011). Furthermore, Nkambule (2010) agrees that the fabric of the apparel item affects its quality, which according to Torres et al. (2001), is an important criterion considered by men when purchasing apparel.

The results in Table 4.10 further suggest that the style or design of business apparel is expected by 96.3% (n=207) of the respondents to fit the body well, whereas 95.9% (n=206) of the respondents indicated that they expect the workmanship or construction of their business apparel to be durable. Additionally, 91.2% (n=196) of the respondents indicated that the material which is used to make business apparel should enable easier caring of the product. Although 71.7% (n=154) of the respondents expected the colour of their business apparel to tune in with their existing wardrobe and 71.2% (n=153) agreed that the apparel item should coordinate well with other apparel items in their wardrobe, respondents showed a higher percentage of agreement with the other functional expectations such as size (fit), comfort, fabric quality, style or design, and durable workmanship or construction. Lui and Dickerson (1999) also agree that, according to their study, male consumers regard fit, style and quality as important selection criteria for business apparel purchases. A later study by Zhang et al. (2002), examining Chinese consumers' use of apparel attributes during evaluation, found apparel fit to be the most important attribute, followed by style and comfort.

In short, the above results therefore suggest that the respondents expected the fit of their business apparel to be comfortable when an item is in their size. The respondents also expect their business apparel to be made with good quality fabric, to be durable, easy to care for and that colour and versatility or use are of lesser importance where functional expectations are concerned (see Table 4.10).

4.4.3 Results regarding the aesthetic expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel (Research objective 2)

The aesthetic expectations were determined through measuring style or design, attractiveness, colour, fabric, workmanship or construction, touch, fashionability of

the business apparel as well as the feelings it evokes from the wearer. These aesthetic attributes are presented in Table 4.11 alongside the particular statement as it was provided to respondents in the online questionnaire. To simplify the presentation of the data, the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ response options were added together. Similarly, the ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ response options were also combined. Consequently, for presentation purposes, response options were adapted to ‘strongly agree/agree’=1, ‘undecided’=2, and ‘strongly disagree/disagree’=3. The percentage distributions for these results are presented in Table 4.11.

TABLE 4.11 AESTHETIC EXPECTATIONS OF THE FIT OF BUSINESS APPAREL (N=215)

	Statement as given in the questionnaire	Aesthetic attributes measured	1: Strongly agree / Agree	2: Undecided	3: Strongly disagree / Disagree
9.9	I should like the colour	Colour	93% n=200	5.1% n=11	1.9% n=4
9.10	The design should be attractive	Design/Style	85.1% n=183	12.6% n=27	2.3% n=5
9.11	The fit of the clothing item should make me look attractive	Attractiveness	75.8% n=163	16.7% n=36	7.4% n=16
9.12	The fabric should be comfortable	Fabric	97.6% n=210	1.9% n=4	0.5% n=1
9.13	The finishes of the clothing item should add to a professional look	Workmanship/ Construction	89.7% n=193	6.5% n=14	3.7% n=8
9.14	The fabric should be pleasant to touch	Touch	73.5% n=158	20.5% n=44	6.0% n=13
9.15	The fit of the clothing item should be fashionable	Fashionable	65.5% n=141	23.3% n=50	11.2% n=24
9.16	The clothing item should make me feel good about myself	Emotional feeling	90.2% n=194	7.4% n=16	2.3% n=5

The eight factors that make up the aesthetic component (V9.9–V9.16) have a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.80, which indicates reliability of the scale. Table 4.11 shows responses for the research sample’s aesthetic expectations of the fit of their business apparel. A large percentage (97.6%, n=210) of the respondents indicated that they expected the fabric of their business apparel to be comfortable. Of the respondents, 93% (n=200) expected to like the colour of their business apparel, and 90.2% (n=194) expected their business apparel to make them feel good about

themselves (emotional feeling). Nkambule (2010) states that apparel can stimulate the wearer on an emotional level, which in turn may lead to a positive or negative response towards the apparel item.

Table 4.11 further shows that 89.7% (n=193) of the respondents expected the finishes (workmanship or construction) of their business apparel to add to a professional look and 85.1% (n=183) of the respondents expected the design or style of their business apparel to be attractive. This is explained given that people make judgements about others, based on physical appearance, which are greatly affected by apparel choice (Howlett et al. 2013; Bell 1991). This finding is also in alignment with Otnes and McGrath's theory of male shopping behaviour, which states that professional success is a goal that male consumers keep in mind when purchasing apparel for the business environment (Otnes & McGrath 2001). Furthermore, 75.8% (n=163) of the respondents expected the fit of the business apparel items to make them look attractive, whereas 73.5% (n=158) expected the fabric to be pleasant to touch and 65.5% (n=141) of the respondents expected the fit of the business apparel to be fashionable.

Workmanship or construction, colour and style or design were considered as both functional and aesthetic aspects to be measured. This ensued from a review of relevant literature and since these factors may contribute to the functionality, as well as the aesthetics, of apparel items. The responses of these factors will therefore be considered in terms of functional vs. aesthetic expectations of the fit of business apparel. More respondents agreed with colour as an aesthetic expectation (93%, n=200) than with colour as a functional expectation (71.7%, n=154). Although the extent to which an individual experiences colour on a conscious or unconscious level is uncertain (Bakker et al. 2013), it is undeniable that colour influences individuals' feelings, behaviour and aesthetic judgements (Elliot & Maier 2014). To explain, consumers have different perceptions and preferences towards cool colours (blue-green, blue and blue-violet) and towards colours that appear warm (yellow-green, yellow, orange, red and red-violet) (Miller et al. 2005), which have been found to influence consumers' perceptions of a store, as well as their intention to purchase (Wu et al. 2013). Therefore, consumers' choices and feelings may also be influenced by the colour of apparel items, which explains why the male consumer expects to like the colour of a business apparel item (aesthetic) more than he expects it to

coordinate with his wardrobe (functional). 'Workmanship or construction' as a functional expectation (95.9%, n=206) was agreed with more by the respondents than 'workmanship or construction' as an aesthetic expectation (89.7%, n=193). Apparently, respondents rather expected their business apparel to be durable than they expected the finishes to add to a professional look. 'Style or design' as functional expectation was also agreed with more (96.3%, n=207) than as an aesthetic expectation (85.1%, n=183). It appears that respondents expected the style of the business apparel to fit well more so than they expect it to be attractive. This is supported by the fact that well-fitting apparel have the ability to communicate an improved image about the wearer (Howlett et al. 2013). The fit of apparel items has also been found to be an important evaluation criterion during apparel purchasing (Bye & LaBat 2005), as well as being linked to both the functional and aesthetic aspects of apparel items (Jason 2011).

The results regarding respondents' aesthetic expectations therefore show that the respondents expect their business apparel to be made of comfortable fabric, to be in a colour that they like, that makes them feel good about themselves in the workplace and assists them to look professional (workmanship or construction) and attractive in their business apparel. The touch of the fabric and a fashionable fit are of lesser importance to these respondents than the other aesthetic expectations, namely fabric comfort, colour, emotional feeling, workmanship or construction, and attractiveness. According to Jason (2011), the fit of apparel items adds to the sensory qualities thereof and, as a result, influences the emotional impact the apparel item has on the wearer. Thus, when an apparel item fits the body well, the wearer will feel both comfortable and confident (Alexander et al. 2005). The abovementioned results support this notion in that the respondents showed agreement not only towards the functional expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, but also towards the aesthetic expectations.

4.4.4 Results regarding the socio-psychological expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel (Research objective 3)

Socio-psychological expectations selected for measurement in this study included brand name, price, store image, symbolic meaning, confidence, being fashionable, comments of others, and striving to belong to a group. Each socio-psychological

attribute is presented in Table 4.12, as well as the corresponding statement, as it was provided in the online questionnaire. To facilitate the presentation of the data, the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ response options were combined. Likewise, the ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ response options were also added together. Consequently, response options were adapted to ‘strongly agree/agree’=1, ‘undecided’=2, and ‘strongly disagree/disagree’=3. The percentage distributions for these results are depicted in Table 4.12.

TABLE 4.12 SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPECTATIONS OF THE FIT OF BUSINESS APPAREL (N=215)

	Statement as given in the questionnaire	Socio-psychological attributes measured	1: Strongly agree / Agree	2: Undecided	3: Strongly disagree / Disagree
9.17	The brand name of the clothing item should symbolise good quality	Brand name	59.5% n=128	21.4% n=46	19.1% n=41
9.18	The price of the clothing item should symbolise good quality	Price	59% n=127	16.3% n=35	24.6% n=53
9.19	The store image should give me peace of mind	Store image	64.6% n=139	20.0% n=43	15.4% n=33
9.20	I will feel successful when my workplace clothing fits me well	Symbolic meaning	61.4% n=132	17.2% n=37	21.4% n=46
9.21	The fit of the clothing item should give me confidence at work	Confidence	66.5% n=143	17.2% n=37	16.3% n=35
9.22	I will feel fashionably dressed when the clothing item fits well	Fashionable	71.7% n=154	18.6% n=40	9.8% n=21
9.23	I will receive compliments from colleagues and clients when wearing well-fitting clothes in the workplace	Comments of others	50.7% n=109	28.8% n=62	20.5% n=44
9.24	The clothing item should adhere to the dress code of my company and should make me feel like I am part of a group	Striving to belong	70.7% n=152	16.3% n=35	13% n=28

The Cronbach’s alpha of the socio-psychological factors is 0.80, which indicates reliability of the scale (Kuijpers et al. 2013). Table 4.12 illustrates the respondents’ socio-psychological expectations of the fit of their ready-to-wear business apparel. A large proportion (71.7%, n=154) of the respondents indicated that they will feel fashionably dressed when their business apparel fit well (fashionable). According to Holmlund et al. (2010), fashionable apparel has the ability to improve a person’s feeling about him/herself.

Moreover, the results above show that many of the respondents (70.7%, n=152) expected their business apparel to adhere to the company's dress code and make them feel like part of a group (striving to belong). They furthermore expected the fit of their business apparel to give them confidence at work (66.5%, n=143). Kang et al. (2011) conducted a study regarding men and the use of apparel to communicate identities in the workplace and found that, 'confidence' and 'company representative' came forward as two of the four categories of apparel items in the workplace.

While store image emerged as a noteworthy socio-psychological expectation for 64.6% (n=139) of the respondents, 61.4% (n=132) of the respondents indicated that they will feel successful when their business apparel fit well (symbolic meaning). The brand name (59.5%, n=128) and price (59%, n=127) of their business apparel were less important socio-psychological expectations to the respondents. Finally, half of the respondents (50.7%, n=109) indicated that they expected to receive compliments from their colleagues and clients when wearing business apparel that fit well (comments of others). The fit of apparel items has sensory, cognitive and emotional attributes, being able to send out a specific message to others about the wearer, as well as making the wearer feel dominant (Jason 2011; Nkambule 2010).

'Being fashionable' was considered as both an aesthetic and a socio-psychological aspect to be measured. This was owing to a review of the relevant literature and since this factor may contribute to the aesthetics as well as the socio-psychological influence of apparel items. The responses of business apparel being fashionable will therefore be explained in terms of aesthetic vs. socio-psychological expectations of the fit of business apparel. Interestingly, respondents expected to feel fashionable when their business apparel fit well (71.7%, n=154), which was measured as a socio-psychological expectation, more than they expected the fit of their business apparel to be fashionable (65.5%, n=141), which was measured as an aesthetic expectation. A well-fitting apparel item can stimulate the wearer on a sensory, symbolic and emotional level (Nkambule 2010) and therefore allow the respondents to feel fashionable.

The results therefore indicate that the respondents expected to feel fashionably dressed in well-fitting business apparel. They wanted their business apparel to adhere to the dress code of the company, and as a result provide them with a feeling

of belonging to the group at work. They also expected the fit of their business apparel to give them confidence in the workplace. The store image, symbolic meaning, brand name and price of their business apparel were less important socio-psychological expectations for these respondents. The respondents did not regard the comments they receive from others as a very important socio-psychological expectation.

In order to assist with comparing respondents' level of agreement with each set of expectations, the percentages of the response categories from Tables 4.10 - 4.12 were added and an average percentage was thereby calculated for each set of expectations. The average percentages for the response categories (strongly agree/agree, undecided, and strongly disagree/disagree) are shown in Table 4.13. In doing so, it was possible to demonstrate the level of respondents' agreement and disagreement with the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations measured in Section B of the online questionnaire.

TABLE 4.13 RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF AGREEMENT/DISAGREEMENT WITH BUSINESS APPAREL FIT EXPECTATIONS (N=215)

Expectations of the fit of business apparel	Average percentage: Strongly agree / agree	Average percentage: Undecided	Average percentage: Strongly disagree / disagree
Functional expectations	90.3%	6.35%	3.4%
Aesthetic expectations	83.8%	11.75%	4.4%
Socio-psychological expectations	63%	19.47%	17.51%

Table 4.13 shows the average percentage of 90.3% calculated for the eight functional attributes measured, where respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statements regarding their functional expectations of the fit of their business apparel. Similarly, an average percentage was calculated for the 'undecided' response option, revealing that an average 6.35% of the respondents were unsure about functional expectations, whereas an average percentage of only 3.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statements regarding functional expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel.

An average percentage of 83.8% was calculated for the eight aesthetic attributes measured, where respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statements regarding their aesthetic expectations of the fit of their business apparel. Likewise, an average percentage was calculated for the 'undecided' response option and 11.75% of the respondents were unsure about aesthetic expectations, while an average percentage of 4.4% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statements concerning their aesthetic expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel.

For the eight socio-psychological attributes measured, an average percentage of 63% was calculated, where respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statements regarding their expectations of the fit of their business apparel. In addition, an average percentage was calculated for the 'undecided' response option and 19.47% of the respondents were unsure about the statements concerning their socio-psychological expectations, whereas an average percentage of 17.51% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statements.

From the average percentages calculated, it is evident that the respondents indicated a greater level of agreement with functional expectations of business apparel, followed by aesthetic expectations and, lastly, with socio-psychological expectations. This may be a result of male consumers' traditionally utilitarian approach to apparel purchasing (Li et al. 2012; Doyle et al. 2008) and that the respondents were possibly unaware of their own aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations regarding the fit of their business apparel.

In conclusion, the results of the study revealed that the respondents expected their business apparel to be in a style that fits well, while being comfortable to wear and made of good quality, comfortable fabric. The respondents also expected their business apparel to be in a colour of their liking and that it should make them feel good about themselves in the workplace. When their business apparel fit well, the respondents of this study would like to feel fashionable. They also wanted their workplace apparel to make them feel like they fit into their work environment, as well as giving them confidence in the workplace. Although respondents showed a higher level of agreement with the functional expectations than with the aesthetic expectations and the socio-psychological expectations, further analysis was necessary to determine whether the functional expectations were considered as

important during business apparel purchasing. The following objective was therefore formulated to determine the extent of the various factors' influence on the respondents' business apparel purchase decisions in order to determine which factor garners preference.

4.4.5 Results regarding the extent to which functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations influence the purchase decisions of male consumers in relation to ready-to-wear business apparel (Research objective 4)

In order to determine the extent to which respondents' functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations influence their business apparel purchasing decisions, the fourth objective for the study was formulated. The aspects measured, along with the related statement on the online questionnaire, are depicted in Table 4.14. With the aim of simplifying the presentation of the data, the 'very important' and 'fairly important' response options were added together for this section. Likewise, the 'not important at all' and 'fairly unimportant' response options were also combined. Consequently, for presentation purposes, response options were adapted to 'very important/fairly important'=1, 'undecided'=2, and 'not important at all/fairly unimportant'=3. These percentage distributions are displayed in Table 4.14.

TABLE 4.14 EXTENT TO WHICH RESPONDENTS CONSIDERED FUNCTIONAL, AESTHETIC AND SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS TO BE IMPORTANT WHEN PURCHASING BUSINESS APPAREL (N=211)

	Statement as given on questionnaire	Aspect measured <i>F = Functional A = Aesthetic SP = Socio-psychological</i>	1: Very important / Fairly important	2: Undecided	3: Not important at all / : Fairly unimportant
10.1	Care of the clothing item	Care (F)	78.7% n=166	11.4% n=24	10% n=21
10.2	Style / design	Style/Design (F)	84.8% n=179	7.6% n=16	7.6% n=16
10.3	Comfortable fit	Comfort (F)	99.6% n=210	0.5% n=1	0% n=0
10.4	The clothing item is versatile	Versatility/Use (F)	80.6% n=170	11.4% n=24	8.1% n=17
Average percentage:			85.9 %	7.73%	6.43%
10.5	Colour	Colour (A)	84.4% n=178	9.0% n=19	6.7% n=14

10.6	The clothing item makes me look attractive	Attractiveness (A)	73.4% n=155	14.7% n=31	11.8% 25
10.7	Fabric	Fabric (A)	79.2% n=167	12.3% n=26	8.5% n=18
10.8	The clothing item is fashionable	Fashionable (A)	62.6% n=132	15.2% n=32	22.2% n=47
Average percentage:			74.9%	12.8%	12.3%
10.9	Brand name, price and store image	Brand name, price, store image (SP)	40.3% n=85	21.8% n=46	37.9% n=80
10.10	The clothing item makes me feel successful	Symbolic meaning (SP)	54% n=114	16.1% n=34	29.9% n=63
10.11	The clothing item gives me confidence	Confidence (SP)	70.2% n=148	10.9% n=23	18.9% n=40
10.12	Other people (colleagues and clients) will like the clothing item	Comments of others (SP)	38.4% n=81	18.0% n=38	43.6% n=92
Average percentage:			50.73%	16.7%	32.58%

From the percentage distributions reported in Table 4.14, it is evident that the respondents prefer business apparel with a comfortable fit (99.6%, n=210), a stylish design (84.8%, n=179), in a colour of their liking (84.4%, n=178), and which is versatile (80.6%, n=170) when purchasing apparel for the workplace. Young employed men may regard the fit, colour, and style or design as important aspects to consider while purchasing business apparel, given that they are yet contending in the workplace and they might expect to be appraised by their personal appearance just as much as by their professional abilities (Lui & Dickerson 1999; Hogge et al. 1988). Table 4.14 further indicates that the fabric (79.2%, n=167) and the care (78.7%, n=166) of the apparel item were also important aspects of consideration for the respondents when purchasing business apparel.

The factors of least importance for respondents when making business apparel purchases were being fashionable (62.6%, n=132); symbolic meaning (54%, n=114); brand name, price and store image (40.3%, n=85); and, comments of others (38.4%, n=81). These results are in alignment with what was revealed about the respondents' expectations of the fit of their business apparel in sections 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 of this chapter. In section 4.4.3 it was revealed that only 65.5% (n=141) of the respondents expected the fit of their business apparel to be fashionable. Also, the results in section 4.4.4 indicates that only 61.4% (n=132) of the respondents expected to feel successful when wearing well-fitting business apparel; that the brand name (59.5%, n=128), the price (59%, n=127) and the store image (64.6%, n=139) symbolise good

apparel quality; and only 50.7% (n=109) expected to receive comments from colleagues when wearing well-fitting business apparel. However, further analysis of the results was required in order to determine whether the percentage distributions produced a reliable representation of the results. Therefore, the means and standard deviations for the three factors in Section B were calculated, as well as for the factors in Section C, which are referred to as ‘importance during purchasing’, and are presented in Table 4.15.

TABLE 4.15 MEANS OF COMBINED FACTORS

Factor	Question number	Mean	Standard deviation
Functional	V9.1 - V9.8	1.62	0.40
Aesthetic	V9.9 – V9.16	1.86	0.49
Socio-psychological	V9.17 – V9.24	2.40	0.66
Importance during purchasing	V10.1 – V10.12	2.23	0.57

From the information presented in Table 4.15 it is clear that the respondents were in agreement with all of the factors. However, the ‘functional factor’ can be seen as the most important factor for the respondents ($M = 1.62$, $SD = 0.40$), followed by the ‘aesthetic factor’ ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 0.49$). The ‘importance during purchasing factor’ ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.57$) and the ‘socio-psychological factor’ ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.66$) indicate slightly less agreement from the respondents, but agreement none the less. Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents were in agreement with all of the aforementioned factors since the mean value for all of the factors were less than 3 ($M < 3$) and are indeed important regarding male consumers’ expectation of the fit of ready to wear business apparel and the influence on the purchase decision.

In addition to the inferential statistics, a multiple linear regression model was applied with Section C, namely the importance factor, as the constant (dependent) variable, and with functional expectations, aesthetic expectations and socio-psychological expectations as independent variables in order to explain the relationship between the variables. The multiple linear regression model assisted the researcher in determining the relationship between the three independent or predictor variables

and the dependent variable (Lang 2007). Therefore, multiple linear regression enabled the researcher to identify the best predictor of the factors male consumers deem important when purchasing apparel for the workplace in the case of this study. These results can be seen below in Table 4.16 (Model Summary), Table 4.17 (ANOVA), and Table 4.18 (Estimated Model Coefficients).

TABLE 4.16 MODEL SUMMARIES

Model	R	R Square
1	.804 ^a	.647

a. Predictors: (Constant), Expectations_socio-psycho, Expectations_functional, Expectations_aesthetic

TABLE 4.17 STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.464	3	14.488	126.318	.000 ^b
	Residual	23.742	207	.115		
	Total	67.206	210			

a. Dependent Variable: Section C (Importance)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Expectations_socio-psycho, Expectations_functional, Expectations_aesthetic

Multiple regression was calculated to predict the importance (dependent variable) based on the respondents' functional expectations (independent variable), aesthetic expectations (independent variable), and socio-psychological expectations (independent variable). As seen in Table 4.16 and Table 4.17 above, a significant regression equation was found with $F(3, 207) = 126.318, p < .000$, with an R^2 of .647. This indicates that the independent variables (functional expectations, aesthetic expectations and socio-psychological expectations) statistically significantly predict the dependent variable (the importance during purchasing) and that the regression model is a suitable fit for the data set.

TABLE 4.18 ESTIMATED MODEL COEFFICIENTS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.324	.117		2.762	.006
	Expectations_functional	-.012	.071	-.009	-.171	.864
	Expectations_aesthetic	.397	.065	.341	6.101	.000
	Expectations_socio-psycho	.494	.041	.577	11.982	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Section C (Importance)

Table 4.18 indicates the statistical significance of the independent variables. The independent variable, functional expectations (sig=.864), were negatively related to importance with the other variables held constant. This elucidates that functional expectations did not show a significant unique prediction towards the importance of the purchase decision. On the other hand, both aesthetic expectations (sig=.000) and socio-psychological expectations (sig=.000) were significant predictors of importance, thereby showing a significant contribution towards determining the importance of influential factors of purchasing decisions.

This implies that the respondents placed higher value on the importance of aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of the fit during business apparel purchasing, than on the importance of functional expectations. Various authors agree that consumers not only consider functional aspects of apparel when evaluating it for purchasing, but also take into account other aspects of the apparel item, such as comfortable styles that fit well and also stimulate the senses (Jason 2011; Nkambule 2010; Seo et al. 2001).

The fit of apparel items, according to Jason (2011), has an impact on its durability and how comfortable it will be when the individual is wearing it, therefore playing an essential role as indicator of apparel quality. The degree of comfort of an apparel item, which is related to its fit, is largely influenced by the apparel item's style or design. However, the fit of apparel items is not simply important as a functional aspect thereof, but also on an aesthetic and a socio-psychological level.

Jason (2011) and Nkambule (2010) agree that, during the evaluation of an apparel item, consumers not only consider styles that fit comfortably, but also take into account its aesthetic and cognitive impact. According to Nkambule (2010), a wearer's emotions may be lifted when others admire his/her outfit and will produce a feeling of comfort in the workplace. Confidence at work and feeling good about themselves have been found to be expected outcomes that male consumers attach to their business apparel (Kang et al. 2011). Furthermore, male consumers also consider their business apparel as a manner of attaining upward mobility in the workplace (Kang et al. 2011; Peluchette et al. 2006).

4.5 CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to explore male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to wear business apparel and the way in which it influences their purchasing decisions, in a South African context. In this chapter, the results regarding the functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations that South African male consumers hold towards the fit of business apparel, were presented. The results regarding the importance of the aforementioned expectations during the purchasing process were also presented in this chapter.

Although respondents showed a higher level of agreement with the functional expectations of the fit of their business apparel than with the aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations, they seemed to place greater importance on the aesthetic and socio-psychological aspects of apparel when in the process of purchasing apparel for the workplace. This study therefore confirms research results that male consumers not only use the functional aspects of apparel when evaluating the fit and the quality thereof, but that they also consider the aesthetic, as well as the socio-psychological, features of business apparel items. In the next chapter, the conclusions drawn from the results of the study will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Chapter five provides a concise conclusion of the study that derived from the analysis and interpretation of the data. This chapter also addresses the limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the results of the current study were presented according to the research objectives set out in Chapter 1 of the dissertation. The aim of this study was to examine male consumers' expectations of the fit of business apparel and the importance thereof during the purchase decision. The theory of male shopping behaviour, functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations regarding apparel fit, as well as the apparel decision-making process, served as a foundation for the formulation of the research objectives.

In summary, Chapter 2, the literature review of the dissertation, showed several authors agreeing that apparel can be used to communicate certain attributes about the wearer, especially in the workplace (Howlett et al. 2013; Li et al. 2012; Kang et al. 2011; Kwon 1994; Stuart & Fuller 1991), where it may have an influence on aspects related to the work environment, such as job performance or even career advancement. Although some studies have focused on male consumers in South Africa, investigating the brand-wearing male consumer's searching and evaluating behaviour (Thomas 2008), male consumers' patronage behaviour (Du Preez et al. 2007), male consumers' intent to purchase eco-friendly apparel (Taljaard 2015), as well as the decision-making styles of South African male and female consumers (Radder et al. 2006), a lack of literature is still apparent when it comes to male consumers' ready-to-wear business apparel purchasing behaviour in the South African context.

The literature review presented in Chapter 2 also confirmed that the fit of an apparel item is an important quality indicator used by consumers when making apparel purchasing decisions (Jason 2011; Smith et al. 2011; Nkambule 2010; Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). Although some studies have been done, focusing on male consumers and the fit of ready-to-wear apparel, such as comparing elderly men's preferences and fitting problems (Hogge et al. 1988), investigating sizing and fit of men's underwear (Ross 2005), exploring interests and needs in men's business apparel (Sindicich 2008), and assessing the fit and sizing of men's business apparel (Sindicich & Black 2011), research in relation to male consumers and the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel is limited in the South African context.

Furthermore, the expectations of consumers about the performance of an apparel item are closely linked to their decision to make the purchase or not (Abraham-Murali & Littrell 1995a). Considering the potential influence that consumers' expectations of the fit of their apparel have on the apparel purchase decision, the limited research about male consumer expectations regarding the fit of apparel seemed like a problem worth addressing. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to gain more insight about the South African male consumer, specifically regarding their expectations with regard to the fit of their business apparel, as well as factors they consider as important when in the process of purchasing business apparel.

Therefore, due to the nature of the study an exploratory and descriptive research design was employed to reach the objectives, whereby data were collected by means of an online questionnaire and analysed through descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentage distributions, means and standard deviations), as well as inferential statistics (multiple linear regression). The data gathered through the online questionnaire provided results for the demographic profile (age, marital status, level of employment, and length of employment at current workplace) and the psychographic profile (apparel worn in the workplace, business apparel shopping cohorts, amount willing to spend on business apparel annually, and frequency of purchasing business apparel from various retail outlets) of the respondents. In order to determine respondents' functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of their ready-to-wear business apparel, statements were given on a Likert scale. In addition, respondents indicated their level of agreement with functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological attributes of ready-to-wear business apparel on a Likert

scale to determine the extent to which these are important when purchasing business apparel.

The final chapter in the dissertation will conclude by providing a brief summary of the demographic and psychographic results of the study. Then, a conclusion will be given of the key results of the study in relation to the research objectives. The limitations of the study will also be addressed and recommendations will be made based on the conclusion drawn from the results. Finally, suggestions for future research will be given at the end of this chapter.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

A purposive and snowball sample of 216 males, working in a business environment, completed the online questionnaire. Due to the limited sample size, the results of the current study cannot be generalised to a larger South African population, but are limited to the sample of this study.

The respondents were South African working men who are 20 years and older, of which the majority were between 20 to 39 years of age. This means that the majority of respondents form part of Generation Y, born between 1977 and 1994, and are more inclined to take part in apparel shopping behaviour than the previous generation. Most of the respondents held a post-matriculation qualification, which served as an indication of the specialisation respondents required to establish themselves in their careers and to enhance the assurance of job security. The majority of the respondents were married. The demographic and background information further revealed that more than three quarters of these men have been employed by their current employers for 10 years or less, which is an indication of the range of employment years, particularly of the respondents in this study. This implies that most of the respondents may still be in a situation where they are encountering some competition in the workplace, in which instance their business apparel may be used as a tool to create the correct image, as well as to increase their chances of professional advancement.

The main conclusions in relation to the additional information regarding respondents' patronage of ready-to-wear business apparel are given in the following section.

5.3 PSYCHOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Minor adjustments to an outfit can have a significant impact on the information communicated to others, and in the current study many of the respondents indicated wearing jeans and/or slacks as the fundamental item of their workplace outfit and then make slight changes to a more casual T-shirt and/or golf shirt or a somewhat smarter buttoned shirt, with the buttoned shirt being the slightly more preferred option. The preferred option of the buttoned shirt may be explained by the belief that an outfit can affect other's views about the wearer; more specifically, in the workplace it may influence other's opinion about the wearer's job-related competence. Respondents may also believe that their colleagues or clients will regard someone who wears less formal apparel in the workplace, like a T-shirt or a golf shirt, as less professional. Another reason may be that the respondents of the current study may feel more competent and professional when wearing a buttoned shirt, as opposed to a T-shirt or a golf shirt in the workplace environment. Men also have different preferences when it comes to fit criteria of apparel items (Sindicich 2008) which could explain why some of the respondents may prefer wearing loose-fitting apparel, such as a T-shirt or a golf shirt, while others would rather wear more slim-fitting apparel items, for instance a buttoned shirt.

Conversely, the results also indicated that almost half of the respondents considered formal trousers, in combination with a buttoned shirt, which form part of the smart-casual look, as an appropriate outfit for them to wear at work. This result concurs with Jason's (2011) finding that South African women preferred a smart-casual mode of dress in the workplace. Therefore, this study supports the fact that, in the case of business apparel for men in the South African context, many workplaces are moving away from the traditional business suit to a more casual and smart-casual mode of dress to which previous studies have also alluded.

When shopping for apparel in general, men are often accompanied and influenced by their wives or girlfriends, as these shopping cohorts often influence male

consumers' business apparel item purchases. The majority of the respondents shop for business apparel with their girlfriend, wife or partner, which may be for the reason of giving advice on apparel choices. In fact, male consumers often make use of other individuals as sources of information with regard to the chosen apparel item's fit, colour, fashionability, construction, as well as whether the garment represents his desired image (Seo et al. 2001). Divorced male consumers often use position media as information sources for formal apparel purchases, more so than those who are married (Shin & Dickerson 1999), seeing that married men (or those who are in a relationship) might believe that their partners are adequate sources of information and because they value the opinions of their partners. It might even be the case that these respondents may yet see the act of apparel shopping as a feminine activity and therefore prefer not to shop for business apparel alone.

On the other hand, it is essential to note that male consumers are becoming more active participants in the apparel retail environment, which see men shopping, with little to no help from others, for the apparel they require. In fact, instead of simply purchasing apparel to cover the body, a growing number of men take responsibility when it comes to purchasing apparel items, which was also the case for a significant number of the respondents in that they shop for business apparel alone, without the assistance of other people. A possible reason for this may be that most of the respondents were a part of a media-oriented generation (Generation Y) who are more exposed to fashion marketing activities, and therefore might not hesitate to participate in apparel shopping activities, also pointing towards the fact that men are taking charge of their business image through the apparel they choose to wear. For this reason, many of the respondents may prefer to purchase apparel for the workplace on their own, as they might be familiar with and confident about what they want to purchase with regard to business apparel.

The psychographic results of this study further showed that almost half of the respondents were not willing to spend much on their business apparel per year, as the median for business apparel purchases is between R2 000 and R4 000 per year. Seeing that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 39, their meagre spending might be explained by the fact that they are still relatively young and most likely have several expenses, which means that they can use only a small portion of their income for business apparel purchases. Another reason may

be that the majority of the respondents have been employed by their current employers either between two to five years, or less than two years, which might mean that many of them are possibly still competing for higher salaries and therefore might not be able to spend more on business apparel purchases.

The results further indicate that the majority of the respondents were also more inclined to purchase ready-to-wear business apparel from retail stores such as Woolworths, Edgars and Truworths, as opposed to men's outfitters and tailors. Edcon Holdings Limited led menswear in the South African retail market in 2015, with a value share of 12% and attributes the success to its wide range of internationally recognised brands, whereas the Truworths Group had a value share of 11%, with their success being driven by its private label (Euromonitor International 2016). In terms of apparel in general, Woolworths Holdings Limited had a market capitalisation of R65.5 billion at June 2014, and aimed to be a leading fashion retailer in South Africa with a strategy for Woolworths Clothing and General Merchandise to provide consumers with quality products at affordable prices (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2014). Generation Y South African male consumers have also been found to prefer these retail stores for their ready-to-wear apparel purchases in general (Taljaard 2015). Male consumers may choose to patronise retail stores such as the before mentioned ones to purchase business apparel items due to favourable price ranges, quality of products, and the variety of apparel items available.

In the following section the key conclusions of this study are given, which address the research objectives set out in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS REGARDING MALE CONSUMERS' FUNCTIONAL EXPECTATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE FIT OF THEIR BUSINESS APPAREL (RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1)

The first objective of this study was to explore the functional expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel. Functional aspects of apparel items cannot be seen separately from intrinsic product features, which are a part of the product and influence its performance. Functional expectations were

measured in relation to the care, style or design, fabric, comfort, workmanship or construction, colour, versatility or use, and size of ready-to-wear business apparel.

Apparel items should fit the wearer's body in such a way as to not cause discomfort or restrict movement. Therefore, it is not surprising that the respondents in this study expected the fit of their business apparel to be comfortable. Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) proposed that adolescent female consumers have functional expectations of the fit of their apparel in that it should be comfortable, permitting easy movement. Similarly, the current study confirmed that it is also true in the case of this sample of male consumers with regard to ready-to-wear business apparel.

The fit of an apparel item is one of the criteria used by consumers to evaluate the product before purchasing. It is apparent that the men in this study expected their business apparel to fit well when it is in their size, while also expecting the style or design to fit well. The fit of apparel items is closely linked to the consumer's final satisfaction, as it is often used as an evaluation criterion of its quality, which implies that an apparel item will probably not be purchased by these male consumers unless it fits well. Durability of the workmanship and construction also appeared to be an important functional expectation the men in the current study have of ready-to-wear business apparel items. Similarly, Lui and Dickerson (1999) found that size, fit and comfort are factors that men consider when purchasing business apparel. This is significant since the fit of an apparel item determines the level of comfort, as well as its durability, and acts as an indicator of apparel quality (Jason 2011). In addition, if an apparel item does not fit well, the consumer may dislike the garment altogether, which might discourage the consumer to make a purchase.

The sample of male consumers in the study also expected the fabric of their business apparel items to make caring for it easy. The fabric of apparel items affects its quality, which is an important apparel purchasing criterion. These men may therefore expect the fabric of their business apparel to make caring for it easy since they consider it to be a criterion of the apparel item's quality. Furthermore, the respondents didn't expect their business apparel items to be versatile or the colour to tune in with their existing wardrobe as much as they expected it to fit well, be comfortable, be made of good quality fabric, have a well-fitting design and durable workmanship or construction. Finally, the respondents strongly agreed or agreed

with the statements regarding their functional expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT MALE CONSUMERS' AESTHETIC EXPECTATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE FIT OF THEIR BUSINESS APPAREL (RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2)

The second objective of this study was to explore the aesthetic expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel. In this study, aesthetic expectations included or design, attractiveness, colour, fabric, workmanship or construction, touch, being fashionable, evoking feelings from the wearer.

The fit of apparel items adds to the sensory qualities thereof and as a result may have an influence on the emotional impact the apparel item has on the wearer. Male consumers in the current study expected their business apparel to be made of fabric that is comfortable, to be in a colour of their liking, and to make them feel good about themselves. When the male consumer feels comfortable and positive about himself, he might also feel good in the workplace. Seeing that apparel can stimulate the wearer on an emotional level, which in turn may lead to a positive or negative response towards the apparel item (Nkambule 2010), these respondents may experience after-purchase satisfaction if a positive response (feeling good about themselves in the workplace) is evoked from wearing the apparel item.

Furthermore, the respondents also wanted to look professional and attractive in their business apparel. This is not surprising given that people make judgements about others based on physical appearance, which is greatly affected by apparel choice. Moreover, professional success is a goal which male consumers keep in mind when purchasing apparel for the business environment and these respondents may wish to make positive first impressions in the workplace environment and for this reason want their business apparel to make them look professional.

The touch of the fabric and a fashionable fit is of lesser importance to these respondents than the other aesthetic expectations, such as fabric comfort, colour, emotional feeling, workmanship or construction, and attractiveness of the fit. When

considering the theoretical framework proposed for researching adolescent girls' expectations about the fit of apparel, Tselepis and De Klerk (2004) suggest that these adolescent female consumers expect apparel to fit the body and be fashionable. Male consumers in the current study also expected business apparel to fit well but didn't expect it to be fashionable. A possible reason may be that these men are more concerned with achieving success in the workplace than conforming to the latest fashion trends.

The respondents agreed with 'workmanship or construction' (finishes) as a functional aspect, more than as an aesthetic aspect. Therefore, respondents expected their business apparel to be durable, more than they expected the finishes to add to a professional look. This can be explained by the fact that the workmanship of apparel items serves as a tangible indicator of quality (Zhang et al. 2002), which the male consumer may also consider when evaluating business apparel for purchase. Alternatively, respondents expected to like the colour (aesthetic expectation) of their business apparel more than they expected the colour (functional expectation) to tune in with their existing wardrobe. However, 'style or design' as functional expectation was again agreed on by more respondents than 'style or design' as an aesthetic expectation. Therefore, it may be concluded that respondents expected the style and design of the business apparel to fit well more so than they expected the style and design to be attractive.

Seeing that the majority of the respondents also strongly agreed or agreed with the statements regarding their aesthetic expectations of the fit of their business apparel, it is clear that this sample of male consumers not only hold functional expectations towards the fit of their business apparel, but also aesthetic expectations.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT MALE CONSUMERS' SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPECTATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE FIT OF THEIR BUSINESS APPAREL (RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3)

The third objective of this study was to explore the socio-psychological expectations that male consumers hold towards the fit of their business apparel. Other than functional and aesthetic attributes, apparel items have cognitive attributes as well, being able to convey a certain message about the wearer. These other aspects of apparel items are also taken into account when male consumers make apparel purchases. Therefore, socio-psychological expectations selected for measurement in this study included brand name, price, store image, symbolic meaning, confidence, being fashionable, comments of others, and striving to belong to a group.

Fashionable apparel has the ability to improve the wearer's feeling about himself (Holmlund et al. 2010), which may explain why the men in the current study expected to feel fashionably dressed in well-fitting business apparel. When these men feel fashionably dressed in the workplace environment, it may have a positive impact on the level of confidence in their professional competence. Early research studying clothing style differences, and the effect on the impression of sociability of the wearer, found that a more fashionable look gives the impression of sociability to the observer about the wearer (Johnson et al. 1977). The assumption can then be made that the men in the current study might be aware of the possible impact of apparel on others' perception about the wearer, and therefore may assume that others will judge their occupational ability based on what they are wearing in the workplace. Seeing that the majority of the respondents fell between the ages of 20 to 39, it is interesting to note that Generation Y males have been found to be fashion conscious when it comes to apparel, which further explains why the respondents indicated that feeling fashionably dressed in well-fitting business apparel is expected.

Men have been found to use their business apparel as a tool to communicate identities in the workplace as it could give confidence and can make an employee feel like a company representative (Kang et al. 2011). The respondents in this study also expected their business apparel to adhere to the company's dress code, to make them feel like part of a group, and to give them confidence at work.

While store image emerged as a significant socio-psychological expectation for these men, the majority of the respondents indicated that they will feel successful when their business apparel fit well. Smith et al. (2011) explain that extrinsic product features have an influence on emotional quality indicators, cognitive quality indicators and the importance of self and others. These factors may evoke certain emotional feelings and cognitive meaning in the wearer's mind. Also, the fit of apparel items, having sensory, cognitive and emotional attributes, is able to convey a specific message to others about the wearer, as well as making the wearer feel dominant. Therefore, the symbolic meaning that the respondents of this study attached to their business apparel (expecting to feel successful) are not surprising.

Half of the respondents indicated that they expected to receive compliments from their colleagues and clients when wearing business apparel that fit well. Therefore, these men do to some extent expect others to notice the apparel that they wear in the workplace. However, the brand name and the price of their business apparel were less important socio-psychological expectations of the respondents in the current study. Contrary to the suggestion that consumers use the cost of the apparel item as well as the brand name to evaluate the quality thereof, the men in this study didn't expect the price or the brand name of apparel items to symbolize good quality. A possible reason for this might be that most of the respondents were qualified to some extent, therefore being knowledgeable about the quality evaluation of apparel items and using other evaluation criteria when purchasing ready-to-wear business apparel.

'Being fashionable' was considered as both an aesthetic and a socio-psychological aspect to be measured. This was due to a review of the relevant literature and because fashion may contribute to the aesthetics as well as the socio-psychological influence of apparel items. Respondents expected to feel fashionable when their business apparel fit well, which was measured as a socio-psychological expectation, more than they expected the fit of their business apparel to be fashionable, which was measured as an aesthetic expectation. The emotional feeling resulting from wearing the business apparel was therefore more important to these male consumers than whether it is actually fashionable or not. This also fits into the theoretical framework, proposed by Tselepis and De Klerk (2004), for researching expectations about the fit of apparel, in that the male consumers in this study

expected their business apparel to provide them with a feeling of dominance or control in the workplace as well as complying with company standards.

Although the average percentage calculated for the eight socio-psychological aspects measured showed a lower level of agreement than with the functional and aesthetic aspects, respondents still showed considerable agreement with the statements regarding their socio-psychological expectations of the fit of their business apparel. The respondents therefore indicated greater agreement with functional expectations of business apparel, followed by aesthetic expectations and then with socio-psychological expectations. This may be a result of male consumers' traditionally utilitarian approach to apparel purchasing. These male consumers may also simply not be as aware of their own aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations regarding the fit of their ready-to-wear business apparel.

Seeing that consumers not only use functional product features during evaluation, but also look for comfortable styles which fit well and also stimulate the senses (Jason 2011), it was decided to determine the extent to which expectations (functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological) influence the purchase decisions of male consumers in relation to business apparel. One might have expected them mainly to consider their functional expectations while purchasing apparel for the workplace, since it emerged as the set of expectations with the highest level of agreement. Following further analysis, however, this was not the case.

5.7 CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE EXTENT TO WHICH FUNCTIONAL, AESTHETIC, AND SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPECTATIONS INFLUENCE THE PURCHASE DECISIONS OF MALE CONSUMERS IN RELATION TO READY-TO-WEAR BUSINESS APPAREL (RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4)

As mentioned before, the respondents expected their business apparel to be in a style that fits well, while being comfortable to wear and being made of good quality, comfortable fabric. The respondents also expected their business apparel to be in a colour of their liking and that it should make them feel good about themselves in the workplace. When their business apparel fit well, the respondents of this study would

like to feel fashionable. They also wanted their workplace apparel to make them feel as if they fit into their work environment, as well as giving them confidence in the workplace. The fourth objective for the study was formulated in order to determine the extent to which respondents' functional, aesthetic, and socio-psychological expectations influence their business apparel purchasing decisions.

During the process of purchasing an apparel item, consumers evaluate the alternatives and respond by purchasing the most suitable option, or by postponing the purchase. Furthermore, consumers' expectations about a product are connected to their ultimate satisfaction, since the purchased item is evaluated against the consumer's initial expectations of its performance. This may encourage the consumer to return to make repeat purchases at the same store, or even become a loyal customer who promotes the store by word-of-mouth.

Various authors agree that consumers not only consider functional aspects of apparel when evaluating it for purchasing, but also take into account other aspects of the apparel item, such as comfortable styles which fit well and also stimulate the senses. A multiple linear regression model showed that the respondents in this study placed higher value on the importance of aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of the fit during business apparel purchasing, than on the importance of functional expectations. This implies that, although these male consumers showed greater agreement with the functional expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel, they do not necessarily consider these as the most important criteria when evaluating the apparel item during the purchasing process.

The fact that they did not consider the functional aspects as the most important criteria when evaluating the apparel item during the purchasing process might seem surprising since the same sample of respondents indicated a high level of agreement with the functional expectations of the fit of their business apparel. The respondents may, however, take the functional aspect of apparel as axiomatic and therefore may not consider the importance thereof while in the process of purchasing apparel for the workplace. Consequently, the respondents may then place a greater consideration on the aesthetic and socio-psychological factors, in that it is important for their business apparel to be aesthetically pleasing and that it should satisfy their socio-psychological needs, i.e. it should give them confidence in the workplace. The

majority of these men were between 30 and 39 years of age, meaning that they are still competing in the business world and believe they are judged on their physical appearance as much as on their professional ability. The respondents may then rather consider the importance of the aesthetic factors, in that it is important that their business apparel should be aesthetically pleasing, comfortable, and make them feel good about themselves, as well as the socio-psychological factors, in that it should make them feel fashionably dressed, give them confidence in the workplace, and make them feel like they are part of the company.

Needs are one of the driving forces of consumers' purchasing behaviour and influence their apparel consumption decisions. The male consumer's need to purchase an apparel item for the workplace may stimulate the purchase situation. Though, consumers use their expectations of products for the evaluation of the product they are considering to purchase. The male consumers in this study reported mainly using their aesthetic expectations and socio-psychological expectations of ready-to-wear business apparel when evaluating apparel during the purchase decision-making process. During evaluation of the fit of an apparel item, the socio-psychological needs may take priority over the knowledge about the intrinsic aspects, to the extent that the consumer takes cognitive shortcuts and uses extrinsic indicators of fit to evaluate the fit of the apparel item (Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). The current study suggests that these male consumers not only use the functional aspects of apparel when evaluating the fit and the quality thereof, but they also consider the aesthetic as well as the socio-psychological features of business apparel items, even more so than the functional aspects. Apparel retailers and marketers should understand their consumers' specific needs and the expectations that they have of the product's performance, since consumer expectations have an undeniable influence on post-purchase satisfaction, where a positive outcome of the product's performance exceeding consumer expectations will result in post-purchase satisfaction. Therefore, if these male consumers' expectations regarding their business apparel are met or even exceeded while wearing it in the workplace, they will possibly become returning shoppers at a particular store or loyal consumers of a particular fit, style or design, outcomes for which retailers need to strive.

The next section of this chapter will provide a discussion of the way in which the current study contributes to theory.

5.8 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

The results of the study contribute to existing theory in terms of male consumers' business apparel fit expectations. Due to the limited sample size and the exploratory nature of the study, the results cannot be generalised to all South African male consumers who wear business apparel. However, the results of the study do offer a starting point for future studies of this nature.

Otnes and McGrath (2001) developed the theory of male shopping behaviour and suggest that men who are not restricted by traditional gender roles are more willing to shop with motivation and display behaviour previously considered as feminine shopping behaviour (such as evaluating alternatives). Cho and Workman (2011), Thomas (2008), Bakewell and Mitchell (2006) and Torres et al. (2001) agree that male consumers have been showing a greater motivation to shop for apparel and do so with a certain motivation. Although it was found in this study that more than half of the respondents were accompanied by their wife, girlfriend or partner when purchasing business apparel, more than a quarter of the respondents admitted to doing so alone. Furthermore, seeing as more than half of the respondents in the current study were married, these results confirm the findings of Lui and Dickerson (1999), as well as Du Preez et al. (2007), who found that men consider their wives or girlfriends to be valuable apparel shopping companions.

Jason (2011), Nkambule (2010) and Seo et al. (2001) agree that consumers consider functional attributes of apparel items, as well as attributes such as comfortable styles which fit well and stimulate the senses, when evaluating apparel alternatives for purchasing. The results of the study confirm that the respondents considered the aesthetic and socio-psychological expectations of the fit of business apparel as more important than the functional expectations during business apparel purchasing.

The current study found that male consumers expected the style of their business apparel to fit well, while being comfortable to wear and made of good quality comfortable fabric. According to Jason (2011), apparel fit is often used by consumers to evaluate apparel quality as it influences the attractiveness and comfort of an apparel item. This is again evident in the current study where business apparel is concerned. It confirms Tselepis and De Klerk's (2004) proposal that the evaluation of

apparel fit should be studied as a part of apparel quality, seeing that they are interrelated. The aesthetic dimension of apparel, according to Nkambule (2010), relates to the sensory stimulation from the intrinsic product features and results in the wearer experiencing positive emotions when wearing an attractive apparel item. The study confirms that male consumers expect to like the colour of their business apparel and that they want their business apparel to make them feel good about themselves in the workplace. On a socio-psychological level, wearing an apparel item may evoke a certain cognitive meaning as well as symbolic significance in the mind of the apparel consumer (De Klerk & Lubbe 2008; Tselepis & De Klerk 2004). The current study also confirms this notion that male consumers want to feel fashionable when their business apparel fits them well, as well as wanting their workplace apparel to make them feel like part of the company and giving them confidence in the workplace.

5.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is important to note that no study is without limitations. It is therefore necessary to address some of the limitations of the current study. The most apparent limitation of the study is that time restrictions, due to the fact that the researcher was living abroad while the study was conducted, and limited financial resources restricted the sample size of the study. In light of the time and financial restrictions, an online survey via email was chosen as measurement instrument for data collection, since coverage is broad and inexpensive (Seo et al. 2001). Consequently, due to the limited sample size, the results of this study cannot be generalised for all South African male consumers. Another limitation is the low response rate to the online questionnaire. Although this was resolved by sending follow-up emails to respondents, the study was not conducted with a representative sample of male consumers in the business environment. Therefore, generalisations cannot be made with regard to the entire population of South African male consumers who purchase ready-to-wear business apparel, but the study offers a point of departure for further studies.

The measuring instrument presented another limitation in the current study. In Section A of the online questionnaire, respondents were required to select which

outfit they usually wore to work. A response option, namely 'other', was added so that respondents had the opportunity to specify their answer in case their choice was not included in the existing options. A small number (3%, n=6) of respondents indicated wearing apparel provided by their employers, which might be explained by the snowball sampling method used during the data collection stage of the study. Another question in the same section, which also included the 'other' response option, inquired about respondents' shopping cohorts when shopping for business apparel. The same number of respondents (3%, n=6) indicated that they were provided with apparel by their employer. As a result of this, a new response option emerged, i.e. 'apparel provided by company'. These men were not included in the sample description and were therefore not targeted as respondents to take part in the current study but they may have received the email link to the online questionnaire through the snowball sampling method. Nonetheless, the number of responses for the newly emerged response option was equal for both questions and the sample addressed the purpose of the study despite this limitation.

A further limitation to the study is the fact that different companies possibly have different regulations in terms of employee dress code, and since different companies and sectors were not stipulated in the current study, the results may not be generalised across all fields of employment. Another reason why the results of this study did not allow for generalisation of the data is the exploratory nature in which the study took place. South Africa is a country with a retail environment consisting of consumers from different ethnic groups (Statistics South Africa 2015) with different body shapes, diverse lifestyles and therefore possibly different expectations of ready-to-wear business apparel fit. However, the current study did not take into account respondents' race or their type of lifestyle. Because of this the current study did not provide any results concerning the demographic influence on the expectations of male consumers, nor was the sample of respondents fully described.

Owing to the non-probability sampling strategy, which included purposive and snowball sampling, there is a limitation regarding the representativeness of the sample. As mentioned before, a small number of the respondents indicated that they are provided with apparel for the workplace by their employer but it was beyond the scope of this study's measuring instrument to determine if 'provided with apparel' referred to uniforms or to company branded apparel. Company branded apparel

might include only specific apparel items (such as a shirt or a tie) and therefore the employee would still have to purchase other items to complete the work outfit. However, it is considered as a limitation in terms of the intention of the sample and should be taken into account and improved in future studies. The term business apparel in this study should also be considered as a possible limitation, because various scenarios within the workplace were not reflected in detail. In this regard, some of the respondents might have had a specific scenario such as having an important meeting in mind when answering the questionnaire, but might have different thoughts about the fit of other business apparel in their wardrobes.

5.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In light of the limitations that were evident in the study, recommendations need to be made in order to improve on them in future studies. The current study was framed in the quantitative paradigm, with a survey design. It is recommended to conduct a qualitative study in the form of interviews in order to gain further insight into South African male consumers' functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological fit expectations towards ready-to-wear business apparel. With a qualitative approach, more knowledge can be obtained regarding the extent to which male consumers' expectations influence their decisions in the purchase situation.

The online questionnaire as data collection instrument produced a small study sample which cannot be generalised to include all South African men and therefore future studies can include more variables and a larger sample when studying business apparel purchasing behaviour of South African male consumers. The measuring instrument can be improved for use in future studies regarding male consumers. Specifically, regarding the question eliciting which business apparel is worn in the workplace, it is recommended to add more response categories to give the respondents more options from which to choose.

Future studies might also consider including a question relating to casual, smart-casual, and formal business apparel in the measuring instrument, in order to determine whether these categories are significant in terms of male consumers' expectations in relation to their occupational success. It is also advised to include

various sectors in business, such as finance and education, so as to provide a more comprehensive depiction of the male consumer in the business environment. Further research might even want to focus attention on specific companies in order to examine what the differences in men's expectations with regard to business apparel might be within a more specific workplace environment.

5.11 RECOMMENDATIONS TO MARKETERS AND RETAILERS

The study revealed that the respondents expect ready-to-wear business apparel to be in a style with a good fit, while being comfortable to wear and made of good quality, comfortable fabric. Furthermore, they want ready-to-wear business apparel in a colour of their liking and which make them feel good about themselves in the workplace. When their business apparel fit well, the respondents would like to feel fashionable. They also want their workplace apparel to make them feel as though they fit into their work environment, as well as portraying an attractive and professional image to others. Apparel manufacturers and retailers should recognise the value of these expectations that South African men have in relation to ready-to-wear business apparel and consequently attempt to provide them with products which exceed their initial expectations of performance. More specific marketing strategies that portray the significance of business apparel in creating a professional image may be considered.

Another important finding of this study revealed that a number of South African male consumers shop for ready-to-wear business apparel without the help of anyone else and take charge of the image that they wish to portray in the workplace environment. Based on this finding, apparel marketers and retailers should be encouraged to supply male consumers with the necessary product information, possibly in the form of apparel labelling and knowledgeable sales assistants. Seeing that the Generation Y male consumer seems confident with apparel shopping activities and willing to experiment with his appearance, marketers and retailers might find it valuable to focus marketing strategies on men's expectations of apparel, especially ready-to-wear business apparel.

The study also revealed that retail stores are most frequently the preferred channel when these South African men shop for ready-to-wear business apparel. Retail stores such as Woolworths, Edgars and Truworths might therefore benefit in recognising the expectations that male consumers hold towards the apparel that they wear in the workplace. It was shown that the men in the current study preferred to wear either jeans and/or slacks with a buttoned shirt, or formal trousers and a buttoned shirt as a workplace outfit. Retailers, as well as marketers, should therefore especially focus on these ready-to-wear apparel items.

The current study also revealed that male consumers want to wear business apparel that are comfortable, durable, well-constructed, easy to care for, and that fit them well. Some South African retailers have made it a priority to provide consumers with apparel that fit well, such as Woolworths Holdings Limited, who launched a 'finding your perfect fit' survey as a means to give direction for sizing and fit (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2014). Other South African retailers should follow suit in an attempt to provide male consumers with well-fitting apparel, especially when it comes to ready-to-wear business apparel, since the findings revealed that these men are more concerned about good fit than with fashionable business apparel.

The findings of the study also suggest that male consumers not only use the functional aspects of business apparel when evaluating the fit and the quality thereof before making a purchase, but that they also consider the aesthetic, as well as the socio-psychological features of business apparel items, even more so than the functional aspects. Based on the findings that these men want well-fitting business apparel that will make them feel fashionable and give them confidence in the workplace, apparel marketing activities can touch on occupational-related success. Furthermore, retailers should understand their target consumers' specific needs and the expectations that they hold towards the product's performance, as consumer expectations influence the consumer's post-purchase satisfaction and this is ultimately what retailers need to strive for to ensure returning customers to the retail store and loyal consumers of the specific brand, fit, or design.

5.12 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Male consumers' apparel purchasing behaviour, especially in terms of their expectations and also relating to sizing and fit, is an extensive topic and far beyond the scope of only one study. Future studies may consider examining functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological fit expectations of business apparel as separate factors. The evaluation criteria used by men who purchase ready-to-wear business apparel may also be a valuable topic to research.

The South African male consumer's lifestyle, shopping orientation and specific patronage behaviour with regard to ready-to-wear business apparel can prove to be a valuable study in order to develop a profile of each segment regarding ready-to-wear business apparel shopping dimensions. Female consumers may even be studied in conjunction with male consumers in order to provide a platform to compare patronage behaviour among the genders.

The current study revealed that men attach symbolic meaning to the apparel that they wear in the workplace and are aware of the fact that it can be used as an appearance management tool. However, future studies may focus on the socio-psychological dimension of apparel in order to provide further insight into business apparel and its role in the workplace environment. A study on the effect of level of employment on the expectations of business apparel may also prove useful, where expectations of consumers in managerial positions are compared to those who hold non-managerial jobs. Future studies could include a comparison of the apparel fit expectations of the various racial groups in South Africa, seeing that consumers from different races have different body shapes and therefore also different expectations in relation to apparel fit.

The study found that male consumers use socio-psychological attributes of business apparel to a greater extent than functional and aesthetic attributes during the evaluation for purchase. This was unexpected seeing that a higher level of agreement was shown towards the functional expectations than with the aesthetic and the socio-psychological expectations. However, even though the male consumer expects to receive compliments from colleagues about his business apparel, this may be of lesser importance to him if the apparel item is uncomfortable due to bad fit. The current study did not take into account the extent to which apparel attributes

influence post-purchase satisfaction with business apparel items. Therefore, more research is required to look into whether or to what extent functional, aesthetic and socio-psychological apparel attributes are mostly used by the male consumer when wearing business apparel, i.e. during use of the product.

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ADDENDUM A: QUESTIONNAIRE



Male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and the influence on the purchase decision

Philné Lundie is a post-graduate student at the University of South Africa and is currently doing a research study regarding men's expectations of how the clothes they wear in the workplace fits and the importance thereof. This will help her to attain her Master of Consumer Sciences degree. Furthermore, the results may contribute to the pursuit of providing men with well-fitting business clothes.

Your support and participation will enable her to conduct the study and will be greatly appreciated. Your participation is **anonymous** and voluntary, and the information provided will be handled with strict confidentiality.

Please read the following questionnaire and complete the questions with care. This should not take more than **15 minutes** of your time.

There are **no wrong answers**.

This study cannot be done without your valued opinions.

Thank you for your kind support in this regard!

By clicking 'next' you are giving consent to take part in this research survey.

SECTION A

Demographics

1) How old are you?

20-29 years	
30-39 years	
40-49 years	
50-59 years	
60-69 years	
70 and older	

2) What is your marital status?

Single	
Living together	
Engaged	
Married	
Divorced/ Separated	
Widowed	

3) What is your highest level of education?

Primary school completed	
Matric	
College diploma	
University degree	
Post-graduate university degree	
Other (please specify)	

4) How many years have you been employed by your current company?

Under 2 years	
2-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
20 years and longer	

5) Which of the following outfits do you usually wear in the workplace?

Jeans and T-shirt	
Slacks and buttoned shirt	
Formal trousers and buttoned shirt	
Suit and tie	
Other (please specify)	

6) With whom do you shop for clothes for the workplace?

Alone	
Girlfriend/ Wife/ Partner	
Sister/ Mother/ Family member	
Friends	
Other (please specify)	

7) How much do you usually spend on clothes for the workplace (per year)?

None	
R1,000 or less	
R2,000 - R4,000	
R5,000 - R7,000	
R8,000 or more	

8) How often do you buy clothes for the workplace from the clothing outlets listed below?

I buy my workplace clothes from...	1: Never	2: Once a year	3: Seasonally	4: Monthly	5: Weekly
Supermarkets(e.g. Pick n Pay, Game, Checkers)	1	2	3	4	5
Clothing chain stores (e.g. Woolworths, Edgars, Truworths)	1	2	3	4	5
Men's outfitters (e.g. Martin Delpont, Coquis)	1	2	3	4	5
Tailor	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION B

Expectations of the fit of workplace clothing

9. Please answer by indicating your expectations of the clothes you wear in the workplace. Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements (please choose an option on the dropdown menu)		1: Strongly agree	2: Agree	3: Undecided	4: Disagree	5: Strongly disagree
9.1	The clothes should fit well when it is my size	1	2	3	4	5
9.2	The fabric should be of good quality	1	2	3	4	5
9.3	The type of material used to make the clothes should make caring for it easier	1	2	3	4	5
9.4	The style of the clothes should fit my body well	1	2	3	4	5
9.5	The fit of the clothing item should be comfortable	1	2	3	4	5
9.6	The colour of the clothing item should tune in well with my existing wardrobe	1	2	3	4	5
9.7	The construction of the clothing should be durable	1	2	3	4	5
9.8	The clothing item should coordinate well with other clothing items in my wardrobe	1	2	3	4	5
9.9	I should like the colour	1	2	3	4	5
9.10	The design should be attractive	1	2	3	4	5
9.11	The fit of the clothing item should make me look attractive	1	2	3	4	5
9.12	The fabric should be comfortable	1	2	3	4	5
9.13	The finishes of the clothing item should add to a professional look	1	2	3	4	5
9.14	The fabric should be pleasant to touch	1	2	3	4	5
9.15	The fit of the clothing item should be fashionable	1	2	3	4	5
9.16	The clothing item should make me feel good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
9.17	The brand name of the clothing item should symbolize good quality	1	2	3	4	5
9.18	The price of the clothing item should symbolize good quality	1	2	3	4	5
9.19	The store image should give me peace of mind	1	2	3	4	5
9.20	I will feel successful when my workplace clothing fits me well	1	2	3	4	5
9.21	The fit of the clothing item should give me confidence at work	1	2	3	4	5
9.22	I will feel fashionably dressed when the clothing item fits well	1	2	3	4	5
9.23	I will receive compliments from colleagues and clients when wearing well-fitting clothes in the	1	2	3	4	5

	workplace					
9.24	The clothing item should adhere to the dress code of my company and should make me feel like I am part of a group	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C

Buying clothes for the workplace

10. Please indicate the extent to which you consider each of the following statements/factors to be important when selecting or buying clothes for the workplace (please choose an option on the dropdown menu)		1: Very important	2: Fairly important	3: Undecided	4: Fairly unimportant	5: Not important at all
10.1	Care of the clothing item	1	2	3	4	5
10.2	Style / design	1	2	3	4	5
10.3	Comfortable fit	1	2	3	4	5
10.4	The clothing item is versatile	1	2	3	4	5
10.5	Colour	1	2	3	4	5
10.6	The clothing item makes me look attractive	1	2	3	4	5
10.7	Fabric	1	2	3	4	5
10.8	The clothing item is fashionable	1	2	3	4	5
10.9	Brand name, price and store image	1	2	3	4	5
10.10	The clothing item makes me feel successful	1	2	3	4	5
10.11	The clothing item gives me confidence	1	2	3	4	5
10.12	Other people (colleagues and clients) will like the clothing item	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your valued participation!

ADDENDUM B: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



CAES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 27/11/2014

Ref #: **2014/CAES/186**
Name of applicant: **Ms P Lundie**
Student #: **46841903**

Dear Ms Lundie,

Decision: Ethics Approval

Proposal: Male consumers' expectations of the fit of ready-to-wear business apparel and the influence on the purchase decision

Supervisor: Mrs M Strdyom

Qualification: Postgraduate degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the CAES Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the project.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the CAES Research Ethics Review Committee on 27 November 2014.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the CAES Research Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*
- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and*



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scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Note:

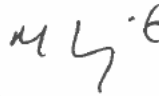
The reference number [top right corner of this communiqué] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the CAES RERC.

Kind regards,



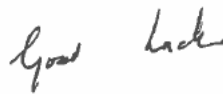
Signature

CAES RERC Chair: Prof EL Kempen



Signature

CAES Executive Dean: Prof MJ Linington



ADDENDUM C: DECLARATION OF EDITING

23 January 2017

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that I have conducted the language editing and reference checking of the dissertation of Philné Lundie.

Title: MALE CONSUMERS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE FIT OF READY-TO-WEAR BUSINESS APPAREL AND THE INFLUENCE ON THE PURCHASE DECISION

Exclusions: Questionnaire.

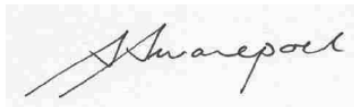
The following reference works were used as sources of authority:

Burger, M. 2010. *Bibliographic style & referencing techniques*. Pretoria: Unisa.

Du Plessis, M. red. 2010. *Pharos Afr-Eng Eng-Afr Woordboek/dictionary*, 2e druk
Kaapstad: Pharos.

UNISA. n.d. *The Master's dissertation and doctoral thesis: a guide to research and the organization of material*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Publications.

Waddingham, A. 2014. *New Hart's rules: the Oxford style guide*, 2nd ed. Oxford: OUP.



Susan Swanepoel - Freelance editor, bibliographer & indexer

Member of PEG (Professional Editors' Guild)

Member of ASAIB (Association for Southern African Indexers and
Bibliographers)

SUSAN SWANEPOEL - FREELANCE EDITOR, BIBLIOGRAPHER & INDEXER
338 Snowy Walker St Garsfontein 0081 • 012 3612125 0728428207 • susanswan338@gmail.com

ADDENDUM D: TURN-IT-IN REPORT

Turnitin Originality Report

M Consumer Science dissertation by P Lundie

From LCS 2017 Submissions (LCS 2017 Submissions)



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