Consumer behaviour: Factors Affecting Online Clothing Purchases in South Africa

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DECLARATION

I, Matthew John Gammie, declare that

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ABSTRACT

Consumer buying behaviour is a well documented topic and as such has inspired a wealth of literature. In South Africa online shopping is a relatively new concept and as such still faces a variety of teething problems that can only be addressed once a better understanding of consumer buying behaviour has been reached. This study deals specifically with online clothing buying behaviour in South Africa. Seeking greater understanding of consumers' buying behaviour in the clothing sector will assist online vendors in creating favourable experiences for online shoppers and therefore assist their attempts to satisfy their target markets. A quantitative study was conducted the aim of which was to determine what factors would attract consumers to purchase clothing online. Four hundred potential respondents were approached, however, only 289 took part in the study. To be considered for the survey respondents were required to be South African residents currently active on the social network, Facebook. The study aimed to create a profile of online clothing shoppers in South Africa and ascertaining what factors may improve their attitudes toward online shopping. The study revealed that a major challenge faced by online clothing is that of securing an initial purchase, however, once this initial purpose has been achieved respondents generally had a more favourable attitude toward shopping for clothing online. It was further revealed that certain factors or offerings could also improve consumers' attitudes. The study showed that the majority of respondents, when provided with customisation options, had a significantly improved attitude toward online shopping. Social networks were another factor identified by the researcher as potentially having the ability to positively impact on consumers' online shopping behaviour. The study revealed that in South Africa social networks are currently limited in their impact on buying behaviour, however, there were indications that social networks may prove useful to both vendors and consumers alike in future. Finally some of the most notable recommendations were that vendors should emphasise branding, obtain endorsement from public figures and tailor their payment and returns policies to suit the preferences of the consumers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

While there is an abundance of information on the topic of consumer buying behaviour, from psychological perspectives (for example Maslow's hierarchy of needs later to be discussed) to factors that affect consumer buying behaviour, there is a distinct lack of information on the topic of online consumer buying behaviour. Especially when specifically referring to online buying behaviour of clothing. Understanding the factors that influence buying behaviour is of extreme importance to vendors as it will allow them to better satisfy their target market and as such run more successful businesses.

This chapter serves to present an overview of the entire study. A discussion detailing the research problem and areas of focus will follow and will specify the intent of the study. The objectives, research question and limitations encountered during this study will also be discussed.

1.2 Problem Statement

In South Africa online shopping faces a variety of challenges including: Internet access and apprehension over ease of use and security concerns among others. One of the major concerns specific to online clothing shopping is that identified by van Staden and Maree (2005) who believed that certain products are less inclined to be purchased without the consumer first having a tangible experience with them. One means by which to overcome this may be to incentivize shoppers with superior offerings and competitive pricing.

Dennis et al. (2010), believed e-shopping to be a key for consumers and vendors alike. Access to reviews and fashion advice simplifies the shopping experience while

simultaneously providing consumers with reliable opinions from peers. Apart from appealing to the time and money conscious shopper e-shopping also provides a social arena in which shoppers can interact. The problem facing online clothing vendors is to identify what consumers perceive to be value and what factors may exist to convince them of these factors for a given site.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions were constructed to serve as a guide in the research process in an attempt to address the objectives:

- What is the profile of an online clothing shopper in South Africa?
- What patterns do these online clothing shoppers follow?
- Will increasing the offerings available affect online shoppers' buying behaviour?
- Can social networks influence online shoppers' buying behaviour?

1.4 Objectives
The following objectives were identified:

- To create a profile of online clothing shoppers in South Africa.
- To determine online clothing shopping patterns.
- To determine what would encourage people to purchase online.
- To establish the impact social networks can have on online clothing shopping.
- To establish whether customisation can affect online clothing purchases.

1.5 Focus of the study

This study will focus on Internet users in South Africa, specifically those active on social networks. It will determine a profile of online clothing shoppers and attempt to identify the

effect of customisation, social networking, product category and price. The study will be restricted to the social network site, Facebook, as this will assist in the objective of identifying the role social networks can have on online purchases. Furthermore online shoppers are Internet users and therefore using the Internet as a medium to distribute the questionnaire is appropriate.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The primary constraint identified in the study was the lack of demographic diversity of the respondents. Further limitations identified in the study are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

1.7 Chapter Structure

- Chapter One: will provide a broad overview of the study.
- Chapter Two: will review existing literature to provide a theoretical basis for the study.
- Chapter Three: will discuss the research methodology used in this study.
- Chapter Four: will present the results of the study.
- Chapter Five: will present a discussion of the results of the study.
- Chapter Six: will present the limitations and conclusions of the study, while also suggesting recommendations for further study.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has provided a brief introduction, structural framework and overview of the study to follow. A discussion of the research objectives, the research questions and the limitations of the research has been included. The research is of value as it will allow online vendors to understand what it is that consumers seek when shopping for clothing online. By gaining some insight and understanding of consumers buying behaviour,

vendors will be able to better satisfy their consumer needs. Chapter Two will focus on the existing literature which will form the foundation for the empirical study to follow.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide some insight into the already existing information on the topic of consumer buying behaviour. It will serve to provide readers with an understanding of key concepts on the topic, and a degree of insight as to how consumers conduct themselves when buying goods and services.

This chapter will begin by looking at consumer buying behaviour in general, before focusing on consumer buying behaviour with regard to online buys. It will define online shopping and describe the various perceptions people have of online shopping before describing the benefits it can provide. Finally this literature will also investigate online shopping in South Africa specifically in clothing purchasing.

2.2 Consumer buying behaviour

In order to discuss consumer buying behaviour, it seems that the first logical step would be to define what is meant by the term consumer as it may mean a variety of things to a variety of people. Zukin and Maguire (2004) define consumption as a social, cultural, and economic process of choosing goods and this process reflects the opportunities and constraints of modernity. Mohr and Fourie (2004) suggest that a consumer is a member of a household who consumes goods and services in an attempt to satisfy a want or a need. To an ecologist a basic description of a consumer might be an organism that consumes or uses a resource to its detriment. For example a lion may be considered a consumer as it consumes an impala.

For the purposes of this study a consumer can be seen by the economic standard similar to the definition provided by Mohr and Fourie. A consumer is therefore an individual within

society who consumes goods and services (for example food, clothing and postal services) and in return contributes to the economy of that region. Consumer buying behaviour therefore entails an understanding of the way an individual acts when purchasing a good or service and how they may be influenced by external stimuli and their surrounding peers.

2.2.1 A psychological perspective to buying behaviour

Abraham Maslow sought, by means of a pyramid structure, to explain why people's needs at a particular time may be a certain way inclined. However, he continued by suggesting that people's needs may differ as circumstances vary (Kotler & Keller 2009). For example: gaining the approval of others may be a highly weighted priority of one individual while another is far more occupied with the need to satisfy their hunger.
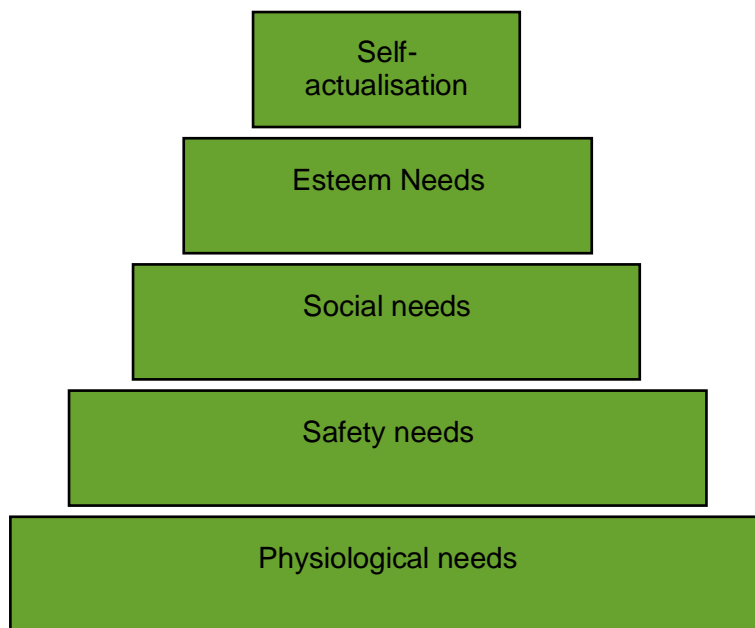
Figure 2.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs
Adapted from Kotler and Keller. 2009.

Maslow's hierarchy (Kotler & Keller 2003) suggests that this is explained by the arrangement of one's needs from the most urgent to the least, (where the most urgent forms the foundation of the pyramid and the least urgent the pinnacle). As shown by

Figure 2.1, the needs (from most important to least important) are as follows: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, self-actualisation needs. It is believed that people will satisfy their most urgent needs first and only after these primary needs have been satisfied will they progress to attempt to satisfy the next most urgent need in the hierarchy. An example includes an impoverished person who eats from a rubbish bin. Their most urgent need is to satisfy their need for hunger (level 1) and in doing so they have little or no concern over how others may perceive them (social needs, level 3 and esteem needs, level 4). Once the impoverished person has satisfied their need for hunger they may then address the need for security, (i.e. A warm place to spend the night, level 2).

Further research on the field conducted by Yinon, Bizman, and Goldberg (1976) revealed that not only are people influenced by their position on the pyramid structure and the associated needs, but their relative satisfaction on achieving a need is also influenced by the level of that need. For example a person is likely to be more satisfied to achieve a high level need than a low level one, especially when they perceive their associated reward as ranking higher than others. Maslow's proposed explanation is therefore not without fault as people are independent beings that make decisions uniquely from one another. What one person may deem to be important may not be seen as important to another and therefore will effect their need recognition and related level of satisfaction derived from satisfying a particular need.

Three decision making models as identified by Richarme (2005) can be best represented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Representation of decision making models

Founder	Model	Description
Bernoulli (Early '1700s')	Utility theory	Consumers base decisions made on the expanded outcomes. Consumers are therefore seen as rational and as capable of predicting probable outcomes of decisions made. They therefore make decisions to maximise their future well being.
Simon (Mid '1950s')	Satisficing theory	Satisficing suggests that consumers decision making process went only as far as to a point where they wanted to be and then ceased. Simply put, consumers ended the decision making process once they reached a point of perceived satisfaction.
Kahneman & Tversky (Late '1970s')	Prospect theory	The prospect theory expands on the Utility and Satisficing theories by adding the elements value and endowment. Value allowed a reference point from which gains and losses could be evaluated. Endowment suggests that an item or buy is more precious if one owns it themselves than if someone else owns it.

While the explanations in Table 2.1 may serve to simplistically describe consumers and need satisfaction, it does little to create an in depth understanding that can be used to predict buying behaviour and is therefore limited in its usefulness from marketers or sales executives' perspective.

Gillham, Crous and Scheppers (2003) believes using the above models confines the consumer to being understood only on a very linear level and that these approaches neglect to account for the actual engagement in the shopping experience itself. Failure to see the shopping experience as more than merely a means to an ends ignores the possibility that shopping as an experience in itself can serve to satisfy some form of need. It is therefore important to consider the process or act of shopping in creating satisfaction as well as the ends in itself, section 2.2.2 will discuss the consumer buying process.

2.2.2 Consumer buying process

Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003) identify buying behaviour as being comprised of both mental and physical activities of consumers, or groups thereof. They believe these activities precede, determine and continue the decision making process for the buying of a product in the pursuit of satisfying a need. Gillham et al. (2003) believe that shopping is not simply a means to an end (i.e. one goes shopping only to address one's need for hunger) but rather may also exist as an end in itself, as can be seen when observing the act of buying itself. The activity therefore does not simply address a specific need in the form of a product or service but rather includes the experience of shopping itself. The buying decision process has been summarized in a five stage model by Kotler and Keller (2009).
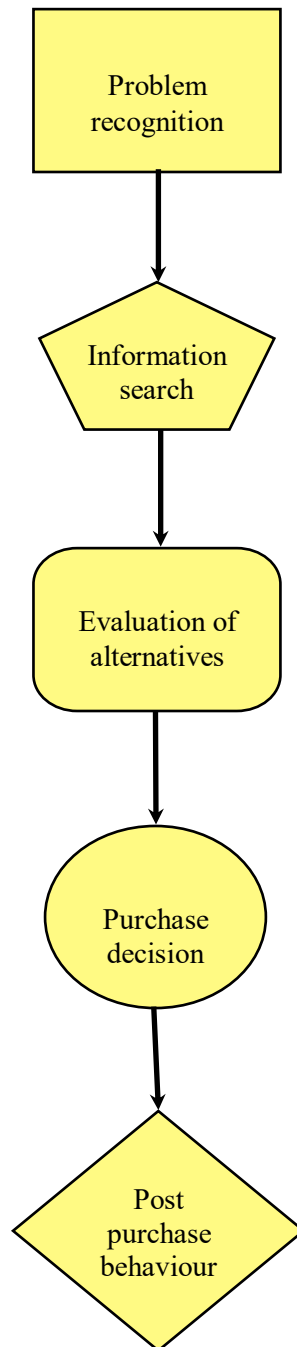
Figure 2.2 A five stage model for consumer buying

Adapted from Kotler and Keller. 2009.

Kotler and Keller (2004) believe that consumers, when making a buying decision, pass through the five stages as suggested by Figure 2.2 above. They suggest problem recognition, where consumers become aware of a need not satisfied to be the first step. Once the need is identified consumers, in an attempt to best for fill that need, will conduct a form of research to gain insight and understanding of what options are available to them to address that need. With the options available now presented they must be compared to one another and the most appropriate option selected before the buy can take place. Finally after the buy has occurred there will be some form of post purchase behaviour where the product is evaluated and a sense of satisfaction or disappointment is felt. It is through understanding these various stages that marketers and sales people will be able to best appeal to the consumers. For example by knowing how people search for information, and where they search, retailers will be able to identify what channels will inform consumers of their offerings. This model however, applies mainly to the purchase of expensive and non-routine purchases, whereas consumers may be inclined to bypass certain stages as suggested in Figure 2.2 when purchasing inexpensive or routine goods.

Consumers however vary from one another and as a result it may prove worthwhile to explore the influence of various factors on their buying behaviour, this will be done in the following section.

2.3. Factors effecting consumer buying behaviour

Various factors have been identified, by North et al. Among others, as affecting consumers' buying behaviour, among these factors are attitude, branding, the level of customisation and gender. These factors will be discussed in the section to follow.

2.3.1 Attitude

Man's unpredictable social behaviour has from time to time attempted to be explained by attitude. People as emotional beings are vulnerable to a variety of interpretations of circumstances. Attitude cannot be dealt with in absolution but must rather be considered in an abstract manner given its lack in definitive constraints (Soars 2003).

Betts and McGoldrick (1995) illustrate how people's perceptions can shape retail, by referring to a trend in shopping behaviour in the United Kingdom when sales promotions take place. They have observed that in the decade leading up to a recession people are so eager to participate in price reduced sales that they are even willing to wait over night outside department stores (for example Harrods) to avoid congestions and disappointment associated with sales. However, as recession draws nearer they are less inclined to make none essential buys and become more value conscious reducing the impact of sales significantly. Betts and McGolgrick (1995) also noted that stores in an attempt to kick start spending began to increase the number of sales and the time for which they ran. Shoppers however became skeptical of the integrity of these sales and curbed spending accordingly.

Rice (1997) cited in Anderson (2006), believes the importance of attitude on marketing as being somewhat obvious. Meaning products perceived as having desirable characteristics are likely to be favoured and therefore, should the right mix of events (such as availability and affordability) occur it is probable that these products will be purchased. This suggests that someone in an optimistic frame of mind, when faced with a product they had a positive experience with, will be more likely to buy the item again. It is this implication that highlights the link between marketing, attitude and buying behaviour. One way to create a link between attitude and buying may be to create an associated familiarity with which the consumer can identify as is the case in branding.

2.3.2 Branding

Klein (2000) identifies the core meaning of any modern organisation as being its brand and with it its corporate consciousness. Klein continues to describe the birth of brands as being the result of an attempt to establish consumer familiarity with products, until in the 1980's when successful corporations were beginning to produce brands as opposed to products. Klein (2000) believes that it is this identification that people will feel with a logo that will inspire a positive attitude in consumers, this positive attitude would generally be the result of experience and increase demand for the brand. North, de Vos and Kotze (2003a) share Klein's notion that brands are a strategic tool that organisations are required to use to create awareness, increase demand, and mould a corporate image with which

consumers can identify. McCoy (2001) suggests that brands, to be effective, must be consistent in their quality and easy to identify. It is these features that will remain in the mind of consumers and create a degree of loyalty to the product. Anderson (2006) on consumer buying, emphasizes the importance of the need for consistency of products by suggesting a consumer who has bought, used and been satisfied with a particular item will be more likely to buy the same item from the same brand in future.

It is therefore essential to create brand loyalty, as it is brand loyalty that will result in repeat customers thereby providing sustainable profits for the organisation, furthermore, the power of a brand is potentially able to achieve higher profit margins and better access to distribution channels. Finally brands are also able to lay the foundations that may serve as the platform for product line extensions (Aaker, 1991 cited in North et al. 2003(a)). In future these product line extensions may serve to increase the offerings of the brand and expand the market to which it appeals, thereby aiding the bottom line.

Increased globalisation has made production easier to source the world over. This coupled with developments in technology have resulted in products being largely similar to one another and performing the same function. These products are not only remarkably similar to one another on an attribute basis but also on price. McCoy (2001) suggests that brands will in this instance serve to differentiate the products from one another. Richarme (2005), when describing Simon's Satisficing Theory, suggests that once a consumer is satisfied with the performance of a particular product the buying process will come to an end. It will be this satisfaction coupled with consistency of the product that will begin to create loyalty to the brand and entrench the brand's position in the market (McCoy 2001). This is because a brand is more than simply a product with a logo but rather is a representation of a set of physical characteristics that create a psychological image in the mind of a consumer. When this image is favourable the brand will have a positive perception and be attractive to its target market. One way to differentiate products is through customisation by appealing to the specific need of individual consumers.

2.3.3 Customisation

Brands are not born over night and young up and coming entities need to explore alternate avenues that will make their products attractive to buyers and create long standing relationships with them. The term mass customisation refers to the large scale production of goods and services specified to individual requirements. Co-design is one option within mass customisation whereby the product design is based on the individual customer's selections from a range of features offered (Fiore, Lee & Kunz 2004). This explanation is further substantiated by mass production's sense of having an industry transforming potential extension in mass customisation. Where mass customisation refers to a production process using the same set of production resources to produce a variety of similar products yet individually unique on completion, (TC2 2002 cited in Communications of the Association of Communications for Information Systems 2003).

Frank and Muller (2004) describe mass customisation as providing, "individually customised goods and services with mass production efficiency." It is the ability to produce smaller runs of non homogenous products while maintaining reasonable output and efficiencies thereby enabling producers to remain price competitive. As companies are producing smaller runs it is required that they are able to process customers in smaller batches or groups. To achieve this a company wide philosophy must developed, where employees strive to achieve design processes which are married with non traditional, flexible production and a learning culture is harnessed in the company. This will inspire creativity in the organisation and allow for non traditional production methods that will cater to the relatively new fad that is customisation.

When referring to clothing apparel in terms mass customisation it can be seen as similar and in some cases synonymous with tailoring given the following definition of tailored as provided by Encyclopedia.com, 2009 (online):

> "adj. 1. (of clothes) smart, fitted, and well cut: a tailored charcoal-gray suit. (of clothes) cut in a particular way: her clothes were well tailored and expensive.
>
> 2. made or adapted for a particular purpose or person: specially tailored courses can be run on request."

Each of these definitions creates an understanding, that tailored goods are goods that are in some way assembled to meet individually specified requirements. Furthermore, there is an implication that flexibility of production is a pre requirement in producing these goods. An implication also exists that individualised goods are the way forward and that consumers, as well as creating a demand for customised goods, are also willing to pay a premium for them.

Whether goods are branded or customised the attitudes and perceptions may vary from one gender to another as a result the effect of gender on consumer buying behaviour will be explored in the next section.

2.3.4 Gender

While attitude, branding and customisation are all factors that impact on consumers and their buying behaviour (Pillay and Singh 2010), it is possible that males and females may perceive these and other factors differently from one another.

A MasterCard survey conducted across 14 countries in the final quarter of 2007 found that although women make more purchases than males it is in fact males who are bigger online purchasers, by approximately 20%, when it comes to the amount of currency spent. This seems largely to be attributable to the fact the most popular items bought online are big ticket items, for example airline tickets and hotel bookings. However, the same study suggests that ladies clothing and accessories are the fourth most purchased category of items. The study further suggested increased online buys on all goods citing increased comfort with shopping online, satisfactory previous experiences and decreased suspicion over security factors (MasterCard 2010).

Hansen and Jensen (2008) conducted a study and too revealed differences in the online buying behaviour of women and men when it came to clothing buys. They suggest that women seek different benefits from the online shopping to what men do in that women are shopping more "for fun" whereas men are considered shopping for purpose and are "quick shoppers". This in turn would affect the website layout, the products on offer, the

secondary benefits and especially the experience on offer when considering the target market of a given brand. Hansen and Jensen (2008) continued by observing that shopping behaviours are further affected, often exaggeratedly so, by whether the purchaser is buying for themselves or for their partner. All these factors require attention from a clothing retailer both online or in store as both parties must understand their customer bases in order to best serve them. The same study also showed one commonality across genders in online clothing purchases, both men and women are affected by the lack of a third party opinion when shopping online and this in some instances acted as a barrier. Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boschoff and Terblanche (2004) state that the decision maker in a family situation is responsible for the decision of whether or not to buy. This can act as a barrier as their permission must be sought before a buy can take place. Du Plessis and Rousseau (2003) support this notion and suggest four varying types of decision processes: husband-dominant, wife-dominant, automatic and syncratic. In the first two scenarios one definite decision maker exists (the husband or the wife), in the third scenario the decision is taken individually by either spouse, and in the third scenario the decision is a joint one between both parties.

Finally it has also been observed that professionals in high positions of employment are often busy and unable to take time to shop. They therefore favour an online option when it comes to buying dress shirts appropriate for work. Furthermore the same professionals are inclined to pay additional sums for the convenience offered and are impressed when provided with options regarding fit, styling and colour (Brandon 2010).

2.4 Online consumer buying behaviour

2.4.1 What is online shopping (e-commerce)?

The unveiling of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1989 has opened up new channels and changed the way people accomplish things, (Pillay and Singh 2010). Pillay and Singh (2010) further suggest that consumers are able to make purchases from almost anywhere, including their homes and offices, as consumers are now able to shop with the click of a button.

One of the most prominent benefits provided by the Internet is its ability to link entities all over the world in real time. It is through this that the Internet is able to empower both businesses and people alike to interact with one another. E-commerce is the act of buying or selling both goods and services over the Internet and is restricted only to transactions that occur over the Internet (Baltzan & Phillips 2009).

Online shopping is therefore a means by which retailers are attempting to utilise technology to appeal to a wider customer base and spread their market share to potential customers who would otherwise not have been aware of their product offerings (Pillay and Singh). It also appeals to people's need for convenience and assumes that ease of purchase will increase the probability of their goods being bought. Products are viewed online and selected remotely before being paid for, mostly by credit card.

2.4.2 Shopping online versus in store

It is largely accepted that most people consider the act of shopping to be a daily routine, however, with the rapid developments in technology it is an area that has already been subject to change and is likely to be further influenced in future, (van Staden & Maree 2005).

van Staden and Maree (2005), when commenting on existing literature, agree that studying the reach of the Internet and other relevant technological advances is important. However, they suggest consumer experiences to be a neglected area. In their opinion consumers with unique thoughts, feelings and past experience need to be considered when discussing online shopping, and not just the application possibilities provided by the Internet. An example of this exists in Hansen and Jensen's (2008) research that suggests that men and women alike are swayed by the lack of a third party opinion when shopping online. This suggests that people are inclined to seek acceptance from peers and are reluctant to make decisions alone. On the contrary North, Mostert and du Plessis (2003b) believe that internet shopping is on the increase and that consumers are going to be drawn in by the advantages provided in time saving. They suggest both time and cost are saved by buying online and negotiation of terms is simplified. This should create a positive attitude in the

consumer especially if a favourable return policy is in place, it will also do a great deal to promote online shopping.

Shopping online and shopping in store are not always in opposition of one another. Farag, Schwanen, Dijst and Faber (2007) note that shopping in store and online can in fact complement one another. One reason for this could be that online shoppers who hope to benefit from better prices online yet wish to see and touch the items before buying may go to a store to do so. While in the store they may be tempted to make impulse, non essential buys that would not have been made online. Similarly online shopping is benefitted in that consumer anxiety is reduced as a result of their tangible experience with the product. The research conducted in this study also showed that online shoppers frequent stores more often but spend less time in them, implying that they know exactly what they are looking for and where to find it.

van Staden and Maree (2005) in their observations found that different items face different hurdles in terms of online buying. Some items are unlikely to be purchased online because traditionally shoppers are inclined to want to touch/taste/feel the product before committing to it. Clothing is one such item that presented problems as even experienced online shoppers were reluctant to buy clothes online. Fresh produce was an area that saw varied results as traditional shoppers preferred to select their own produce and buy it themselves while some shoppers were willing to trust the in store staff to complete the task.

The second stage of Kotler's five stage buying process is information search, North et al. (2003b) believe this to be greatly simplified by the Internet as it offers a wealth of information about products, product features, relative pricing and supplier reliability. These factors can be considered in real time and a more educated decision made on what to buy and from whom to buy it.

Geography may be another factor that influences people's willingness to buy online. An interesting finding by Farag et al. (2007) was that urbanization has had an impact on the level of internet shopping conducted. It seems logical that people living in cities will be more educated and more technologically adept due to their constant exposure. This being

the case it stands to reason that online shopping will be more acceptable to urban dwellers and this is indeed the case, (Farag et al. 2007). Interestingly enough, however, the impact of urbanization does not cease there. It was found that although urban individuals shop more online, all else being equal, shop accessibility will also impact on online buying. As the number of shopping opportunities within a 10 minute cycle distance of the potential shopper increases so does the positive impact on online shopping decreases, (Farag *et al.*, 2007).

van Staden and Maree (2005) identified a major perception difference between online shopping and in store shopping as being that of money saving. Online shoppers believe that the mass of options and information on the Internet enabled them to look for the best possible option at the best possible price. An indirect saving was also identified as shoppers believed that they were able to bypass the buying of non essential items as one's focus remains solely on the purchase at hand. However, this also prevents consumers from progressing as they may be inclined to shop online with intent for a specific product when in store interaction may have exposed them to new products more suitable to their needs.

2.5 Factors affecting online buying behaviour

2.5.1 Age, socioeconomics and income

Demographics is often used as a divider to differentiate groups of people in order to gain better understanding and more accurate information on target groups. It is no different when it comes to the Internet, where it is largely accepted that younger generations are more likely to be accepting of the new technology and the offerings it can provide.

Farag et al. (2007) found that men and younger people have greater experience on the Internet and as a result of this familiarity have a more positive outlook when it comes to internet shopping. This was similarly observed in educated people, where people with higher levels of education where deemed as having more internet experience and therefore are more comfortable with online shopping.

Studies conducted by North et al. (2003b) have alluded to the fact that online shopping is more prevalent in certain groups than in others. For instance, it was suggested that educated people, (i.e. people with university degrees, post-matriculation diplomas, matric certificates) are more inclined to be Internet buyers. This may be because they are more technologically savvy than their less educated peers, due their having more access to the Internet or greater disposable incomes, and this research was said to be in line with that conducted in the United States of America. The research further indicated that households with greater incomes were also more prevalent when it came to online shopping, however, it could be suggested that this is directly related to education and it has already been established that higher levels of online shopping and education are closely linked (North *et al.*, 2003c). Another observation by North et al. (2003c) was that online shopping is appealing to the time conscious individual and individuals who find it difficult to visit shops. This includes high powered business executives, new mothers, the elderly and handicapped people. Hernandez, Jimenez and Martin (2010) agreed that older adults were more active participants in e-commerce. It was found that in spite of technical illiteracy and difficulties associated with their before their first buy, after becoming familiar with online shopping and having performed a few transactions their attitudes, perceptions and behaviour altered in favour of online shopping. This is in contrast with the findings of Singh (2001). However, further research conducted by Pillay and Singh (2010) revealed that in the case of more expensive purchases consumers did become more confident in online retail.

Hernandez et al. (2010) on exploring socioeconomic factors reported the following: they found that experience gained during the online shopping process by individuals served to nullify socioeconomic characteristics as variables to explain behaviour. It was suggested that through their participation in the buying process their behaviour began to evolve, and what were initially considered important variables diminished in significance when it came to repurchasing decisions. Behavioural factors rather than socioeconomic factors can be seen as relevant when determining target markets and exploring online shopping. It should, however, be noted that the possibility exists that developing countries have lower education levels and internet access (Goldstruck 2010, cited in Pillay and Singh 2010). This may serve to reduce technological experience and knowledge which in turn will reduce the effect of moderating behaviour related to information technology.

One major driving force behind comfort with the idea of shopping online is that of familiarity (Singh 2001). It stands to reason that people with higher levels of education will have greater access to modern technology and a better understanding of the offers that it can provide. Young people who grow up using this technology are also likely to have a higher acceptance level of these offerings and will be more inclined to pursue the benefits on offer.

2.5.2 The influence of social e-shopping

Social network sites allow people present themselves to others, maintain connections, establish new connections and articulate socially online. These sites can be used merely for social use, for guidance and reassurance or for work-related activities (Ellison Steinfield & Lampe 2007). While age, socioeconomics and income are seen as affecting online behaviour it is through understanding these behaviours that marketers and retailers will be able to appeal to the various target markets. Young people active on social networks like Facebook can be targeted through this medium. Dennis, Morgan, Wright and Jayawardhena (2010) define e-shopping as the combination of online shopping and social networking. It was suggested that this form of shopping is able to provide shoppers with access to reviews, product and fashion information and simplifies the buying process by providing a great variety of products. E-shopping therefore provides the benefits of saving time and money associated with online shopping while also providing entertainment and a third opinion as is the case with traditional in-store shopping. One limitation of the third party would be that they do not see the purchaser in the item being purchased, however, it does still appeal to the social aspect of shopping.

E-shopping is seen as being able to fulfil the social aspect of shopping as well as the functional role. It creates an avenue through which shoppers are able to browse, buy impulsively, and complete both planned and unplanned activities. It also creates a conversation point for shoppers further adding to the social value of the activity (Dennis et al. 2010).

2.5.3 Internet apprehension and website satisfaction

While social networks and e-shopping are ways in which potential target markets can be appealed to, this does not account for potential shoppers intimidated by the Internet. The preceding discussions have placed significant emphasis on the role that experience working with the Internet plays in easing people's concerns over online shopping (North, et al. 2003c). People are social beings who are guided by previous experience and by experience of those they know and trust as was shown by the positive effect social media has on online buying. With this in mind it seems essential to know what factors create apprehension and anxiety in potential users, and what factors will increase their satisfaction levels when using the services on offer.

North et al. (2003b) noted that consumers who have become loyal to a particular brand or store expect that when they go online they will be able to find the same store. It is therefore advisable to maintain the same level of product and services as consumers are more easily able to form a bond and level of trust with the vendor. The site should also be set out in such a way that provides familiarity to the consumer and has cues to trigger a sense of familiarity with the traditional store. This familiarity will induce a positive attitude in the consumer which Farag et al. (2007), suggest is a characteristic displayed by online shoppers.

When a shopper is interested or intends to buy an item they place it in their virtual cart or basket before moving to check out. This is unlikely to occur without there being upfront product and availability information. Retailers must therefore tailor their sites to provide this information before customers have to place items in their cart or basket (Close & Kukar-Kinney 2010). Further observation revealed that consumers are also prone to place items in their cart or basket even if they do not intend to buy them immediately, thus using the basket functionally as a wish list for future buys. This information is useful to retailers as it indicates that cart or baskets must be persistent, where persistent refers to the cart or basket's ability to store the selected items between purchases. This will save the customer time and entice them to buy items previously researched. Finally it should be as simple as possible once items have been placed in the shopping cart so that consumers can buy items painlessly making the experience satisfactory. It is this satisfaction that will pave the way

for future online transactions. Shoppers, who have a pleasant online experience, where they quickly and easily get what they want online, are inclined to return to the site and buy again (North et al. 2003b).

Personal experience can be seen as reducing the perception that technology is intimidating (North et al. 2003b). Having a site that is user friendly and familiar to the user from the onset seemingly is the most satisfaction inducing circumstances for the shopper. It is through this satisfaction that clients will gain further confidence in the service and loyalty to the product and site.

2.5.4 Risk perceptions

While anxiety and apprehension over online shopping can greatly be attributed to the site itself and its ease of use, security is another major concern that requires attention (Pillay and Singh 2010). South African consumers have a relatively high level of concern when it comes to safety, as a result they are seeking safer options when shopping and in an attempt to address these concerns shopping centres are having to visibly display security precautions through visible guards patrolling and closed-circuit television surveillance, (Jordaan 2002). This has a dual effect as consumers are forced to pay higher prices as a result of shopping centres overheads being increased, and retailers are forced to continually update and spend money on security. Online shopping, however, bypass these security concerns as consumers can shop from the comfort of their living room and have goods delivered directly to their home or place of business (Pillay and Singh 2010).

van Staden and Maree (2005) describe a scenario where a first time online grocery shopper was presented with a list of items purchased over the last three months after merely presenting their credit card number, and this even though the purchases were made in store! van Staden and Maree continue by suggesting that consumers find it somewhat unnerving to know that stores, companies and businesses have access to an abundant information and that this feeling is intimidating and in a sense anxiety inducing.

Although internet shopping bypasses the risk associated with being in public, Singh (2001) identified security as a major concern for online shoppers. This fear was expressed by

apprehension to use credit cards online and fear that goods may never be delivered after having been purchased. The findings of the study were extremely clear as respondents showed fear of hackers, did not trust websites and were reluctant to buy products they had not had tangible contact with (Singh 2001).

North et al. (2003c) suggest that one means to overcome a sense of risk perceived by online buyers is that the Internet provides access to online testimonials and review of previous shoppers experience with the various vendors. Dennis et al. (2010) conducted research that indicates that younger online shoppers are less inclined to buy in to the promises offered in online marketing but are more likely to believe in real experiences. These experiences are found online on social networks where peers express opinions and share views on a variety of topics. This again speaks to the importance of consistency of products as well as how essential it is to understand the behaviour of one's target market. This still does not overcome the hurdle, as identified by van Staden and Maree (2005) that consumers are unable to touch, taste and smell the item, but it does create piece of mind over concerns about reliability.

Wagener (2004) identifies credit cards as the preferred method of payment in spite of many people feeling uncomfortable sharing their credit card information. A further problem with credit cards is that not everybody has one and this limits the potential market for online shopping. As a result it is advisable to offer a choice of payment methods, not only will this broaden the target market, but it will also create a sense of trust between the customers and the retailers. To increase online shopping websites security needs to be improved upon, this can be done by (Pillay and Singh 2010):

1. Retailers need to provide secure payment systems that protect both the seller and the buyer. Paypal is one such payment agency who will ensure online transaction safety.
2. Encryption can be used to protect personal information as it is transmitted over the Internet.
3. Retails, upon capturing this information, must store it in a secure manner.
4. Guarantees and warrantees can be used to ease the buyers' anxiety while at the same time projecting confidence.

5. Consumers should be allowed the opportunity to insure their goods during the purchasing process. Not only will this transfer the risk from the vendor to the buyer but it will also protect the buyer.

6. Finally a strong relationship with a reliable delivery company is advisable.

2.6 Online buying in South Africa

South Africa suffers from issues such as a lack of education, high crime rates and unequal distribution of wealth and, these three factors possibly have impact on online shopping in the country. As stated earlier higher educated, upper income earners are among those most likely to shop online, and security issues have a significant bearing on confidence to do so, (North et al. 2003b).

Another problem online shopping faces in South Africa is that a great deal of the population does not have access to the Internet and therefore regardless of willingness are unable to shop online, (Singh 2001). It is however predicted that the use of the Internet will grow in South Africa as education levels increase and the schooling infrastructure improves. The younger generations will become exposed to technology in their learning institutions and again in their working environments after graduation, (North et al. 2003b). Furthermore Goldstuck (2010), cited in Pillay and Singh (2010), has identified Internet penetration as exceeding 5 million users in 2010 and attributes this penetration to improved broadband technologies in the country becoming the norm both in business and at home.

Pillay and Singh (2010), cite a Mastercard survey (2009) as identifying that 80% of internet users in South Africa shop online with a majority of those shoppers buying entertainment items such as CDs and DVDs.

North et al. (2003c) in a study exploring the concerns of South African internet shoppers identified three major concern related to security: seller's credibility, possible implications of providing credit card details, and the security of Internet payment methods. South Africa is relatively new and inexperienced when it comes to the Internet and online

shopping in particular, however, people are rather at peace using internet banking. It is this experience and experience in online shopping that may increase people's confidence and aid online shopping, as people's perceptions improve and attitudes change from apprehensive to positive.

Webchek (1999 cited in North et al. 2003c), lists the following factors that South Africans consider before deciding to buy on the Internet: security; reliability; convenience; ease of finding the product; Internet speed; item price and the ability to make an informed buy. Again many of these factors are long term fixes that will be assisted by improved education and equal wealth distribution. Experience with online buying is another area that will increase activity and retailers should take note of trends noted overseas regarding simulating the online page to the in store atmosphere, providing varied payment options and so forth.

2.6.1 Potential for the South African Online clothing market

South Africa as a country is still relatively unspoiled compared to the developed countries of the northern hemisphere. It is this abundance of space, offering a variety of activities and an abundance of wildlife that attracts tourist from the world over. In the USA, Adult Travelers finds shopping to be the most popular activity. Research done by The Shopping Traveler shows 77 per cent of shopping done by travellers as having most of the money spent being on clothes and shoes, not on souvenirs (Craft, 2009). This may provide a potential area for growth as tourists purchasing clothing locally may in future be interested in capitalizing on the benefits provided by the Internet that enables online buying to take place anywhere.

2.6.2 Online clothing buying in South Africa

Regardless of income bracket or social status people are able to project an image of who they are through what they wear. Given that clothing is a representation of a person (van Eck et al 2004), the fashion implications are immense meaning that consumers have a high item turnover rate, and dress age appropriately. This information can be used by marketers

to target the online market who have been previously identified as young technology savvy individuals, and time conscious executives among others. Different brands can therefore target the different target markets through the products they offer, for example a lounge shirt manufacturer would be wise to target the high powered time conscious business executive.

In South Africa it has been found that Black adolescents cannot afford to be ignored as a market segment in the clothing industry. In the past by not attending to this market potentially profitable opportunities have been forgone, (van Eck, Grobler & Herbst 2004). General perceptions, about this up and coming segment of the population regarding branded clothing, is that brands will flourish both among males and females. Unbranded goods are perceived somewhat less positively, but not to such an extent that their worth goes unrealised, (van Eck et al. 2004).

One means identified by van Eck et al. (2004) to address this market and appeal to their need for social appreciation is to gain the endorsement of brands by influential people. These may include community leaders, idol figures, television personalities and other trend setters and will serve to uplift the credibility of the brand and increase its appeal, (van Eck et al. 2004).

2.7 Summary

In order to create an understanding of consumer buying behaviour the term consumer was defined, after which a psychological perspective was explored with the intention of providing insight as to why consumers act the way they do. The traditional perspectives suggested that consumers must fulfil a range of needs and that certain needs are higher priority than others. Only once these basic needs have been satisfied can a consumer attempt to attend to higher level needs. It was suggested that consumer buying behaviour is a complex process and has other external factors acting on it, this led to research on the effect of branding and customisation on consumer's perceptions and therefore their buying behaviour. It was also found that gender plays a role in perceptions and satisfaction levels and that as a result of this the buying behaviour will differ from males to females. As the

research became more refined it became necessary to define online shopping and explore whether there was any significant differences between online buying behaviour and that of traditional shopping.

Although need satisfaction remained central to the buying process, online shopping was seen to face a number of challenges and unique characteristics. These included apprehension over the technology used, security concerns, the potential loss of the social experience, concerns over tangibility issues. This however also opened the door to reveal certain characteristics that some people are more inclined to shop online, (i.e. age, education levels, and urbanisation). Finally the research came to a point where it explored online shopping in South Africa and showed how the findings align with research done elsewhere in some instances and differ in others. The nature of online shopping for clothing in South Africa showed a distinct gap in the research and it is this gap that will be addressed by conducting an empirical study. Chapter Three discusses the methodology that will be employed in conducting the empirical study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A review of available literature on the subject, done in chapter two, provided the foundation for the empirical study to determine various factors around the subject of online clothing purchasing in South Africa. The aims of the study were also briefly addressed as consumer buying behaviour was discussed and certain observations regarding the impact on online buying made clear. This chapter will attempt to provide a clear understanding of the procedures followed to carry out the empirical study. The research study is elaborated on from chapter one, research approach and instrumentation are presented and the choices motivated. Sekaran and Bougie (2010) have identified the research design as needing to be done in such a way that all required data can be gathered, collaborated and analyzed so a solution to the research problem can be identified. The chapter will begin by presenting the research problem before discussing the objectives, various aspects of sampling, research tools and instruments used to gather information on online clothing shopping in South Africa.

3.2 Statement of the research problem

In South Africa online shopping faces many challenges which include: limited internet access, apprehension over ease of use and security concerns. One major concern specific to the online clothing industry, is that identified by van Staden and Maree (2005), who identified that certain products (clothing among them) are less inclined to be brought without a tangible interaction with the product. One way to combat this may be to incentivise shoppers with greater offerings, such as customisation, buying incentives and price advantages.

Dennis, *et al*., (2010) believe e-shopping to be the key. The access to reviews as well as product and fashion advice simplifies the shopping experience while at the same time providing the consumer with reliable opinions from peers. Apart from appealing to both money and the time conscious shoppers this also provides a social arena to complete the shopping experience. The problem facing potential online clothing vendors is the identifying what consumers perceive as good value and what factors may exist to convince them of these factors for a particular site.

Based on the above, the following questions can be seen as the foundations for the study to follow:
1.   What is the profile of an online clothing shopper in South Africa?
2.   What patterns do these online shoppers follow?
3.   Will increasing the offerings available affect online shoppers' buying behaviour?
4.   Can social networks influence online shoppers' buying behaviour?

Given the research questions above, it is now possible to indicate what the aim of the research.

3.3 Aim and Objectives of the study

3.3.1 Aim

The aim of this research is to profile online clothing shoppers in South Africa and to identify potential aspects that may serve to increase the market potential for vendors. This will be done by assessing the impact of social networks, customisation and understanding why some products may be more likely to be purchased than others. To achieve this aim the following objectives have been formulated.

3.3.2 Objectives

- To create a profile of online clothing shoppers in South Africa.
- To determine online clothing shopping patterns.
- To determine what would encourage people to purchase online.
- To establish the impact social networks can have on online clothing shopping.
- To establish whether customization can affect clothing online purchases.

3.4 Focus

The study will focus on internet users in South Africa, specifically those active on social networks. It will determine a profile for online clothing shoppers and attempt to identify the effect of customisation, social networking, product category and price. The study will be restricted to the social network, Facebook, as this will aid in the objective of identifying the role social networks can have on online buying, furthermore, online shoppers are internet users and therefore using the internet as a medium to distribute the questionnaire is appropriate. The study is also restricted by time constraints and specifying the medium will assist in ensuring its timely completion.

3.5 Sampling

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) suggest that surveys are useful, powerful methods of data collection that empower researchers to find answers to unanswered questions through data collection techniques and analysis. These surveys however must be targeted at the correct population, otherwise they can be more counter productive in that they may be more harmful than useful. The selection of the correct individuals from the entire population is known as sampling, (Sekaran & Bougie 2010). This sample group must be small enough that the researcher is able to accurately withdraw the relevant information in a reasonable timeframe from them, while still being representative of the entire population. The sample will, in almost all instances, not be a 100 percent accurate representation of the population

but in cases where the sample is correctly chosen the results will be acceptable for generalization. It is for this reason that the selection of the sample group is of extreme importance (Lind, Marchal & Wathen 2010).

Two types of sampling have been identified by Sekaran and Bougie (2010): probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is defined by Lind et al. (2010) as a sample of items or individuals from a population, chosen in such a way that each member has a chance of being included in the sample. Non-probability sampling by contrast is when certain members or elements of the population have zero chance of being included in the sampling (Sekaran & Bougie 2010). An example of this would be if one were to use the social medium of Facebook as a distribution channel for a questionnaire, anyone not on Facebook would have a zero chance of being included in the research.

Castillo (2009) describes snowball sampling as a non-probability sampling technique used by researchers to identify potential subjects where they may otherwise be hard to come by. Gray (2004) similarly describes snowball sampling as being a sampling method where the researcher identifies a small number of possible subjects and approaches them. After collecting the data from these subjects the researcher is then referred to further subjects by the initial sample group. In the case of Facebook security settings restrict access between users to protect individuals' privacy. For this reason snowball sampling can be considered appropriate as respondents will be able to suggest and inform other potential respondents.

In the study presented the objectives are aimed toward information surrounding online purchasing behaviour and as such it is unnecessary to view the responses of individuals without internet access, as would be the case if convenience sampling were to be used. Purposive sampling will ensure that all data collected will be rich and should provide insight into the issues identified as greatly important to the study. Exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling, (Castillo 2009), is when the respondents pass on the survey to other potential respondents who in turn pass it on to further potential respondents. The key element in non-discriminative sampling is that there is no restriction on which the survey can be distributed to as is shown in Figure 2.1.
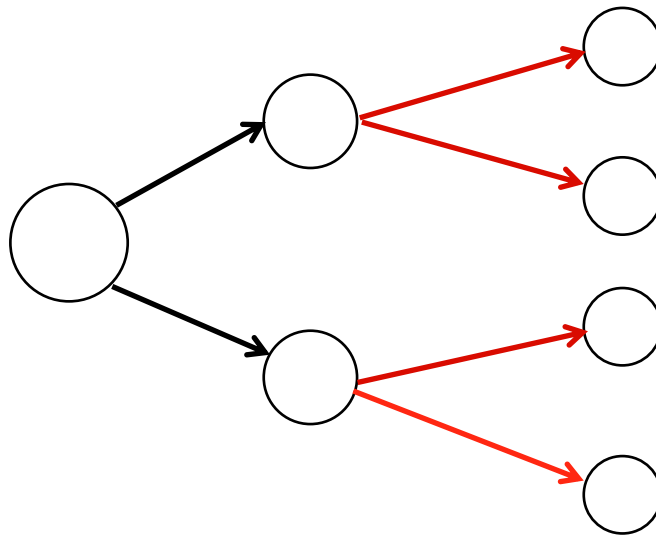
Figure 2.1 Non-Discriminative Snowball sampling

Source: Adapted from Castillo (2009).

3.5.1 Advantages of Snowball sampling

Castillo (2009) on snowball sampling has identified the following two advantages:

Respondents are able to pass on the survey to other potential respondents. This enables researchers to approach populations otherwise difficult to access, whether it is a result of circumstances or rarity of the population. A by-product of this is that the process is relatively inexpensive, simplistic and quick as only a limited amount of planning is required and only a small initial sample is needed and much of the onus for extending the sample size is passed on to the respondents.

3.5.2 Disadvantages of snowball sampling

Castillo (2009) by the same token accepts that snowball sampling is not without fault and suggests the following possible failings of this sampling method:

Researchers are required to place a great deal of trust in the respondents and their participation, resulting in limited control from the researcher's perspective. Following this the limited control will also affect the representativeness of the study as the researcher is unlikely to know the true distribution of the survey and therefore will be uncertain as to the extent results may be generalised.

The study is further compromised due to sampling bias as respondents will have a tendency to nominate people they know and like as potential future respondents. This creates the risk that all respondents will share similar traits and opinions.

It is possible that drawing conclusions beyond the actual sample may be difficult (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005) in the case of snowball sampling, however, the study is concerned with online users and social network users making snowball sampling a useful method. With snowball sampling having been selected the next step that remains is to determine the sample size.

3.6   Sample size

Sample size is a major concern when designing any statistical study, if the sample size selected is too large there will be additional expenses incurred by the researcher and if the sample is too small the results will not be accurate, making the conclusions drawn inaccurate (Lind et al. 2010). Determining the sample size can therefore be based on the degree of accuracy deemed acceptable to those implementing the research. Saunders et al. (2003) on deciding suitable sample sizes believes that a compromise must be reached between the accuracy of the findings and the amount of time and money spent collecting, checking and analysing the data. Also of importance is the size of the population from which the sample is to be drawn.

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) cited in Sekaran and Bougie (2010), have simplified the process of determining the sample size by creating a table that researchers can use to determine the sample size required for their study. Before the table complicated formulae were used to reach the same result. In the case of conducting a study on Facebook one must simply determine the number of Facebook users, which will be used as the

population, and follow the table to determine the number of potential respondents required. Facebook in South Africa currently has approximately three and a half million users in South Africa (the population) which according to the table means that a minimum 384 potential respondents (the sample) must be reached. Although response rates may be typically low in this form of questionnaire distribution Sekaran and Bougie (2010) have stated that a response rate of 30% is acceptable meaning that 116 responses will be sufficient for analysis.

3.7   Data collection approach

There are various methods by which data is able to be collected, each with their own merits. Of important is to match the correct data collection technique with the study so that the findings will have maximum relevance (Sekaran & Bougie 2010).

Qualitative data can be collected by various means, including: secondary data, interviews, questionnaires, unobtrusive measures, focus groups and the observation of behaviour and or events (Gray 2004). Sekaran and Bougie (2010) believe answers broad in nature, are characteristics of qualitative research. Given the methods of collection it is therefore time consuming but the information collected can be relatively rich and provides a great deal of depth into the research topic. Quantitative data on the other hand is generally gathered through structured questions that provide insight through analysis of numerical values and statistical relationships, (Sekaran & Bougie 2010). Goddard and Melville (2005) describe the difference between qualitative and quantitative data as being that qualitative data deals with values that fall into categories while quantitative data has numerical values. Quantitative data analysis is seen as the most appropriate for a study seeking to determine profiles and predict behaviour using statistical analysis of the survey data (Gray 2004).

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are available to be used for this study and the various methods available to each of them. However, this study will use a questionnaire that will be distributed electronically using Facebook to gather the data relevant to the objectives and research questions. The reasons for this selection are the ease of distribution, the cost effectiveness of this methodology and the low probability of error

given the use of Questionpro. The major disadvantage of this approach is that the respondents are limited to those people with internet access, however, given that the study explores online behaviour it is reasonable to exclude the responses of those unable to participate on this basis.

3.8   Data collection instruments

Today surveys are one of the most common and widely accepted methodologies by which researchers are able to collect information used to describe, compare and explain behaviour and events (Gray 2004). As discussed earlier this data can be collected in various ways including: observation, interviews, questionnaires and unobtrusive measures.

Maylor and Blackmon (2005) identify interviews as one of the most common techniques used for business and management research, where an interview is defined as asking someone questions directly. Gray (2004) elaborates on this definition by stating that an interview is a conversation between people in which one person has the role of being the interviewer or researcher. The person conducting the interview will often have a predetermined set of questions on hand for the interview as in the case of a structured interview. Goddard and Melville (2005) suggest one area where the interview is preferable to a questionnaire as being when the respondents are unable to read or write. They then continue by stating other advantages as being that the researcher can ask for clarity from the respondent when responses are unclear and can follow up on interesting answers.

Gray (2004) defines questionnaires as a research tool in which the respondents are asked to complete the same set of questions in the exact order. Gray (2004) continues by describing questionnaires as being ideal in situations where the sample is relatively large and where standardized questions are needed. This will provide the platform for an analytical approach that explores the relationships between variables. A questionnaire has the advantage of being flexible in its application, meaning that respondents can complete it at a time suitable to them and are also not inhibited when answering sensitive questions (Goddard and Melville, 2005).

Goddard and Melville (2005) expressed concerns with interviews, suggesting researchers may be inclined to direct the answers of their respondents. However, questionnaires are susceptible to the same vulnerability in instances where the researcher has not constructed the questionnaire appropriately. Sekaran and Bougie (2010) believes that problems researched using the appropriate methods will positively impact the value of the research, while those where an inappropriate method is used will result in questionable reliability and accuracy.

The appropriate research for this study is a quantitative survey as it will answer questions about relationships among the identified variables measured. This will lay the foundation for behavioural explanation and prediction with regards to the respondents. As the sample is relatively large, i.e. 384 potential respondents, the use of an electronic questionnaire is appropriate. Respondents are therefore required to be literate, have internet access and due to the use of Facebook be active on social networks. As the study is exploring online shopping behaviour these limitations are not unacceptable. The research tool selected is therefore a questionnaire and will be discussed further in the next section.

3.9   The questionnaire as a research tool

A questionnaire is a list of questions provided to the respondent by the researcher that respondents are required to answer, (Goddard and Melville 2005). Sekaran and Bougie (1992) defines a questionnaire as a pre formulated set of written questions that respondents must record their answers to and believes them to be at their maximum efficiency when the researcher knows what is required and how the variables of interest will be measured.

Gillham et al. (2000), cited in Gray (2004), point out some of the inherent advantages provided by questionnaires:

- They have a low time and money cost attributed to them.
- Data inflow is quick and from a great variety of people.
- Completion of the questionnaire can be done at a time and venue convenient to the respondent.

- Data analysis done on closed questions can be coded quickly and is relatively simple.

- Anonymity of the respondents can be relatively easily guarded.

- Interviewer bias will be minimized as respondents are not influenced by mannerism and emphasis of the interviewer.

It should also be noted, however, that questionnaires have their limitations in that respondents may find it easy to decline to answers resulting in a low response rate and the findings could be inaccurate. To add to this, misinterpretation of questions is also possible and unable to be clarified by the researcher (Gray 2004).

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) list two means to distribute questionnaires: personally administered and mail questionnaires. Personally administered questionnaires are confined to a specific area making the results an accurate indication of those respondents but generalisation inaccurate. The respondents will however have the researcher on hand to clarify points of confusion and with the researcher present, the response rate is likely to be higher than if they were mailed. Mail distributed questionnaires on the other hand are able to cover an extensive geographical area, while also providing greater flexibility to the respondents (Sekaran and Bougie 2010). The disadvantage is that responses are lower in mailed questionnaires and doubts of the respondents are unable to be clarified. The low response rate can however be countered by follow up letters and reminders as well as efficient questionnaire design.

For this study an electronic questionnaire method is effective as it has a wide reach accessing a broad target population, it is inexpensive as the sending out of the questionnaires is free and if the questionnaire design is appropriate will provide high quality data. Furthermore, the electronic submission and responses act to increase the response rate as the potential respondents will already be on the internet and can submit their responses immediately. Follow up letters and reminders will also be relatively easy to send electronically. Responses will also be able to be easily quantified, analysed and summarised through computerised spreadsheets and other available technology.

3.10 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire design process is focused on three primary areas: principles of wording, the planning of issues (how the variables will be categorised, scaled and coding of responses), and the general appearance of the questionnaire, (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). These issues are of extreme importance in questionnaire design as, when handled correctly, they serve to minimize bias in the research. A further important element to consider in questionnaire design is that of confidentiality of the respondents. To provide this the questionnaire kept social and demographic questions to a minimum, thereby restricting the amount of personal information required.

The questionnaire was based on the research conducted in Chapter Two of the study and aims to try to provide information on the gap identified in the existing literature. The questionnaire aims to: profile online clothing shoppers in South Africa, determine clothing shopping patterns, identify factors that may entice people to conduct online shopping, to gauge the impact of social networks on online shopping and the impact of customisation. To accomplish this, the questions were designed to begin by questioning broad topics before refining the search to greater detail.

Accompanying the questionnaire was a cover letter that explained the purpose of the questionnaire (Appendix 1). The questions were then asked in a closed-ended manner meaning that respondents were required to select an option from a predetermined set of alternatives (Sekaran and Bougie 1992).

As the distribution of the questionnaire was done electronically, it was decided that closed-ended questions were most appropriate as this with the use of simple language made for easily understood questions minimising error. It was further decided that clear instructions and a limited number of questions would serve to prevent boredom and maintain the interest of the respondents. Careful attention was also paid to the order of the questions as in some instances the preceding questions may influence the answers of the latter questions. Short questions were also opted for to maintain attention and reduce misunderstanding (Sekaran and Bougie 1992).

3.11 Questionnaire pretesting and validation

Once a questionnaire has been finalised it is important to take steps to ensure that it will serve the purpose for which it was intended, for this reason pretesting is an important step to be taken. Once the pre-test has been distributed and the results collected the researcher will be in a position to establish the validity of the test.

3.11.1 Pretesting the questionnaire

Pretesting involves distributing the questionnaire to a limited number of respondents to test appropriateness of the questions and comprehension of the responses (Sekaran and Bougie 2010). The primary purpose of the pretesting of a questionnaire is to ensure that any problems can be identified and corrected before distributing the questionnaire. It will assist in ensuring that respondents understand what questions are asking and the length of the questionnaire is adequate (Maylor and Blackmon 2005). It will also allow the researcher to evaluate whether instructions will be adequately followed, if distribution and returning of the questionnaire is practical and whether or not the data is able to be easily input into the necessary spreadsheets for evaluation.

The pre-test for this study was done as follows: a draft questionnaire was initially distributed to a group of potential respondents who provided feedback before the necessary amendments were made. Following this the questionnaire was distributed to a small pilot group of MBA students to establish the appropriateness and suitability for the target population. The pilot test consisted of having the electronic questionnaire distributed by means of e-mail to a focus group of 16 students and the supervisor to ensure that understanding and interpretation was achieved in line with the goals of the study. The pre-test process was done online as would be the case when the final questionnaire was to be distributed. Following the recommendations from the focus group the necessary refinement and rephrasing took place.

3.11.2 Validation of the questionnaire

On referring to validity of a questionnaire, Goddard and Melville (2005) defined the term validity as meaning that the measurements are correct and that the instrument measures that which it is supposed to and does so correctly. Gray (2004) stated that in order to achieve validity it is essential for the researcher to first identify the content that the research intends to cover. Goddard and Melville (2005) continued by describing reliability as meaning that the measurements taken are consistent with one another and were the same experiment to be conducted elsewhere under the same circumstances the results would be the same. Sekaran and Bougie (2010) have grouped the various types of validity tests into three broad categories: content validity, construct validity, and criterion-related validity. For the purposes of this study only content and construct validity will be discussed.

Content validity is when an estimate of the extent a research tool takes items from the subject (Gray 2004). Plainly put content validity is achieved when the measure includes an adequate, representative set of subjects that address the idea or concept being tested (Sekaran and Bougie 2010). The feedback received in the pretesting phase of the questionnaire content validity appeared to be met when investigating online clothing purchases in South Africa.

Sekaran and Bougie (1992) described construct validity as testifying to how well the results from a particular measure fitted into the already existing theories around which the test was designed. Gray (2004) simplified the explanation of construct validity, he explained that the extent to which the instrument measures the theoretical concept, or construct, under investigation is the degree to which it has construct validity.

3.12 Administration of the questionnaire

Gray (2004) stated that in order for a questionnaire to be effective it is not enough for it to merely be well designed, it must also be administered with care in an attempt to maximize

the response rate. The following are a few means by which questionnaires can be administered, (Gray 2004):

Table 3.1 – Representation of questionnaire administration methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Postal questionnaires	Inexpensive. Covers a wide geographical area. Respondents can complete them at their leisure. Respondents can ponder their responses at length. Respondents can remain anonymous. Answers are likely to be honest as there is no one to impress.	Timeous distribution and returns. Onus is on the respondent to return the questionnaire giving rise to low response rates and affecting the ability to generalise answers. Questions cannot be excessively elaborate or require complicated answers as it potentially creates confusion. It is assumed that respondents are educated and literate giving rise to response bias.
Delivery and collection questionnaires	Contact between the researcher and respondents may increase the response rate.	More costly than postal or online questionnaires. Time consuming.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Online questionnaires	Instant distribution. Easy to return to the researcher. Respondents have anonymity and will therefore be less inclined to produce socially desirable responses.	Possibly considered spam. Difficult to control who responds to the survey potentially creating a form of bias. Web addresses may require passwords that will then act as a barrier to the respondent.
Structured interviews	Higher response rates. Questionnaires can be difficult, time consuming and costly. Provide for open ended questions and detailed responses.	Expensive as they require intensive face-to-face time between respondents and researchers. The interviewer can influence responses through their actions or through the respondents hope to provide socially desirable responses.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Telephone questionnaires	Allows respondents from a wide geographical area to be approached. Response rates are relatively high. Interaction between respondents and researchers assist with increasing response rates. Potential respondents can be approached at different times of the day and throughout the week. Responses are instant.	Questions must be short and fairly simple. Response choices limited and uncomplicated.

The questionnaires were administered by means of: Facebook. Reminders were then sent periodically using the same channels as the questionnaire in an attempt to increase the response rates (Gray 2004).

3.13 Data capturing methods

The survey for this study was hosted on QuestionPro, an online survey hosting site. The choice to use an electronic questionnaire was primarily based on the fact that one of the characteristics required by a respondent was Internet access which is the basis for this study.

There was no capturing as required responses were captured as the survey was answered.

3.14 Data analysis methods

Gray (2004) suggests that before data can be analyzed it first has to be 'cleaned', which is to say it must be checked for obvious errors. Following this standard editing and coding procedures were used to allow the data to be reduced to a manageable amount using summaries, finding patterns and applying statistical techniques. Gray (2004) describes independent variables as being those variables that affect the dependent variables. The independent variables in the study relating to online clothing purchases are as follows: age, race, gender and internet access of respondents.

By contrast dependent variables are those variables that are the subject of the research. The dependent variables of the study include:
the influence of: online shopping on traditional purchases, the benefits and costs of online purchasing on consumers, and the impact of social networks on online purchasing behaviour.

3.14.1 Analysis and presentation of data

Maylor and Blackman (2005) advise the use of specialised statistical software programs to analyse data. This study deals with quantitative data and for convenience and in an attempt to ensure accuracy Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (SPSS) will be used in data analysis. The study will use exploratory data analysis techniques: frequencies, central tendencies and measurements of dispersion.

Frequency counts are described by Maylor and Blackman (2005) as a compact way in which to present information from a questionnaire in a summary form. The results can be shown in a table, diagram or graph which will enable anyone observing the findings to draw conclusions. The same is true for the other exploratory techniques, central tendencies and measurement of dispersion and as well as visual displays numerical summaries of location, spread and shape will also be incorporated.

The study will then serve to challenge the theories and concepts presented in the literature review, it will also attempt to identify relationships that may exist between dependent and

independent variables. The study will consequently aim to explain consumer behaviour specifically in the online clothing industry in South Africa.

Once collected the data was organised, in order to provide value, into meaningful categories. Simple tabulation, cross tabulation and summaries highlighting the relevant responses will be the focus for the data analysis. All collected data will be analysed statistically using the SPSS and presented in the chapter to follow using both descriptive and inferential statistics. All analysis will be done in accordance with the 5 objectives identified at the beginning of the chapter.

Both frequency and central tendency statistical techniques are presentation methods associated with descriptive statistics. In the use of inferential statistics T-Test and Pearson correlation methods will be implemented.

All questionnaires were completed by respondents online using QuestionPro, the questionnaires were then coded online as QuestionPro provides some statistical and reporting tools to report the results. Analysis will therefore initially use tools available from QuestionPro before further analysis using SPSS for final presentation.

3.15 Summary

In this chapter the research methodology was discussed. This detailed the research design used, sampling methods and the data collection instrument. To begin with the research problem was discussed and then stated, following this the aims, objectives and focus of the study were detailed. The population was identified as South African residents with internet access before the sample population was restricted to Facebook users resident in South Africa. The distribution of the questionnaire to this sample group was done using snowball sampling on Facebook. The research tool instrument and data collection method was therefore done as an online questionnaire and the reasons for this choice were provided in the chapter. Finally the procedures and techniques used for analysis in the study were also specified. Chapter four will present the data obtained from the respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four serves to present the data gathered, as per the research methodology described in the previous chapter, from the respondents. Two hundred and eighty-nine subjects participated in the study and of those two hundred and sixty-four completed the questionnaire representing a 91% completion rate. Data received from incomplete surveys was analyzed only for the questions that were answered both: correctly, and accurately while still proving valuable in meeting the objectives previously described. The average time taken to complete the survey was five minutes. The results will be presented as follows: they will be set out in two sections where the first will discuss the demographic profile of the respondents in relation to their online clothing buying behaviour and the second will present an analysis of the data in terms of the study's objectives.

4.2 Demographic profile of the respondents

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that information regarding the respondents' demographic information would be made available. It was of importance to the researcher that an understanding of the respondents' online buying behaviour relative to their: age, gender, race, marital status, and employment back round were achieved.

Table 4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

Demographics		Percentage
Age	Younger than 20	0
	20 - 24	6
	25 - 29	**53**
	30 - 34	27
	35 - 39	4
	40 - 44	2
	45 - 49	1
	50 - 54	0
	Older than 54	7
Gender	Male	**55**
	Female	45
Race	Black	8
	White	**80**
	Indian	8
	Mixed	2
	Other	2
Marital Status	Married	42
	Divorced	3
	Widowed	0
	Single	**54**
Employment Status	Student	3
	Part time employed	3
	Full time employed	**80**
	Other	14
Monthly Income	R5 000 or less	6
	R5 001 - R10 000	9
	R10 001 - R15 000	12
	R15 001 - R20 000	12
	R20 001 - R25 000	15
	> R25 000	**46**

Table 4.1 illustrates that the majority of the respondents were White, males belonging to the category 25-29 years of age. Furthermore the majority of these respondents were employed full time earning in excess of R25 000.00 per month as middle and senior managers.

4.3 Internet behaviour of the respondents

The central theme of this study focused on two key areas: the first was access to the internet, and the second involved willingness to shop online. In an attempt to gain an understanding of these variables respondents were asked for how long they had, had internet access and whether or not they had previously made an online purchase.

4.3.1 How many years have respondents had internet access
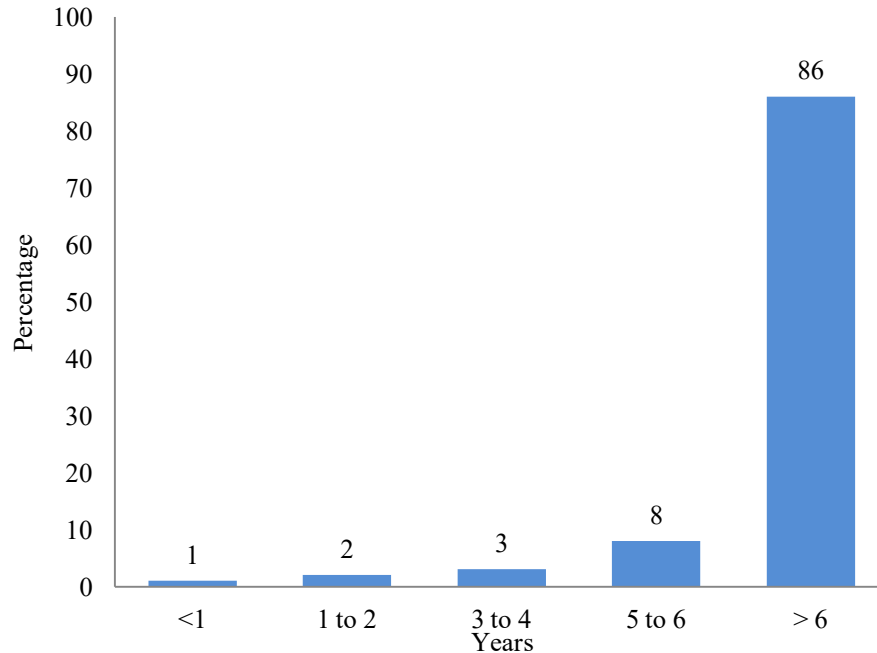
Figure 4.1 Length of time respondents had internet access

Figure 4.1 Illustrates that the majority of respondents had internet access for a period of longer than six years. The results are no doubt influenced by the fact that in order to participate in the survey respondents were required to have internet access, however, it is clearly evident that the longer the period the greater the number of respondents with internet access.

4.3.2 Respondents who had made online purchases
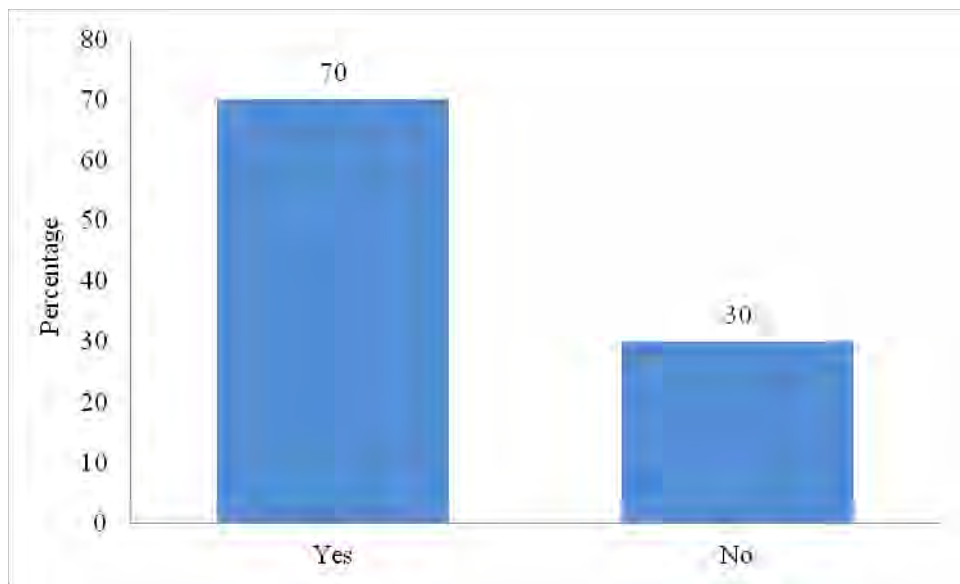
Figure 4.2 Participation in online purchasing

In responding to whether or not they had made online purchases of any kind 70% of the respondents confirmed that had done so, leaving only 30% of respondents who had never before made an online purchase.

4.4 Analysis of Objectives

The section to follow sets out to analyse the collected data against the relevant objectives identified in chapter three. The questions analysed in this section varied in that some questions allowed respondents to select more than one option while others limited respondents to only one response. Cross tabulation was also used to identify relationships between the variables.

4.4.1 Objective one: To create a profile of online shoppers in South Africa

Questions 2; 3; 4; 7; 8; 10; 17 (see Appendix 1) were constructed and analysed to meet this objective.

4.4.1.1 Age of online clothing shoppers

Table 4.2 The relationship between age and online clothing shopping.

Age	Have you ever purchased clothing online	
	Yes %	No %
Younger than 20	0	0
20 - 24	2	1
25 - 29	**21**	33
30 - 34	13	16
35 - 39	2	2
40 - 44	0	2
45 - 49	1	0
50 - 54	0	0
Older than 54	2	5

Table 4.2 shows that the only category where more respondent had made online clothing purchases than those that had not was between the ages of 20 – 24. This shows that a great deal of apprehension still surrounds online clothing shopping.

4.4.1.2 Gender of online clothing shoppers

Table 4.3 The relationship between gender and online clothing shopping.

Gender	Have you ever purchased clothing online	
	Yes %	No %
Male	25	35
Female	16	24

In table 4.3 gender and online clothing purchases of respondents were compared. The table shows that in both males and females the majority of respondents had never shopped for clothing online.

4.4.1.3 Race of online clothing shoppers

Table 4.4 The relationship between race and online clothing shopping.

Race	Have you ever purchased clothing online	
	Yes %	No %
Black	1	4
White	34	50
Indian	5	4
Other	1	1

In comparing race and online clothing shopping it is evident from table 4.4 that the race category described as "White" had the highest proportion of online shoppers with 34%. Indians (5%) had the next highest proportion of respondents who have taken part in online clothing shopping.

4.4.1.4 Employment status of online clothing shoppers

Table 4.5 The relationship between level of employment and online clothing shopping.

Which employment level best describes you	Have you ever purchased clothing online	
	Yes %	No %
Non management employee	10	14
Junior manager	5	9
Middle manager	12	17
Senior manager	13	20

Table 4.5 shows that little notable difference between: position within the organization, and respondents having previously purchased clothing online. Senior managers and middle managers were the most frequent with 13% and 12 % respectively. Following this was: non management employees with 10% and junior managers with 5%.

4.4.1.5 Monthly income bracket of online clothing shoppers

Table 4.6 Relationship between income bracket and online clothing shopping

Please specify you monthly income	Have you ever made an online clothing purchase	
	Yes %	No %
R5 000 or less	1	2
R5 001 - R10 000	1	5
R10 001 - R15 000	5	7
R15 001 - 20 000	7	6
R20 001 - 25 000	8	8
> R25 000	18	32

Table 4.6 illustrates that respondents earning R25 000 per month have the greatest frequency of having participated in online clothing shopping (18%), this was then followed by respondents earning between R20 001 and R25 000 per month with a frequency of 8%.

4.4.1.6 Relationship between monthly clothing expenditure and potential online monthly clothing expenditure
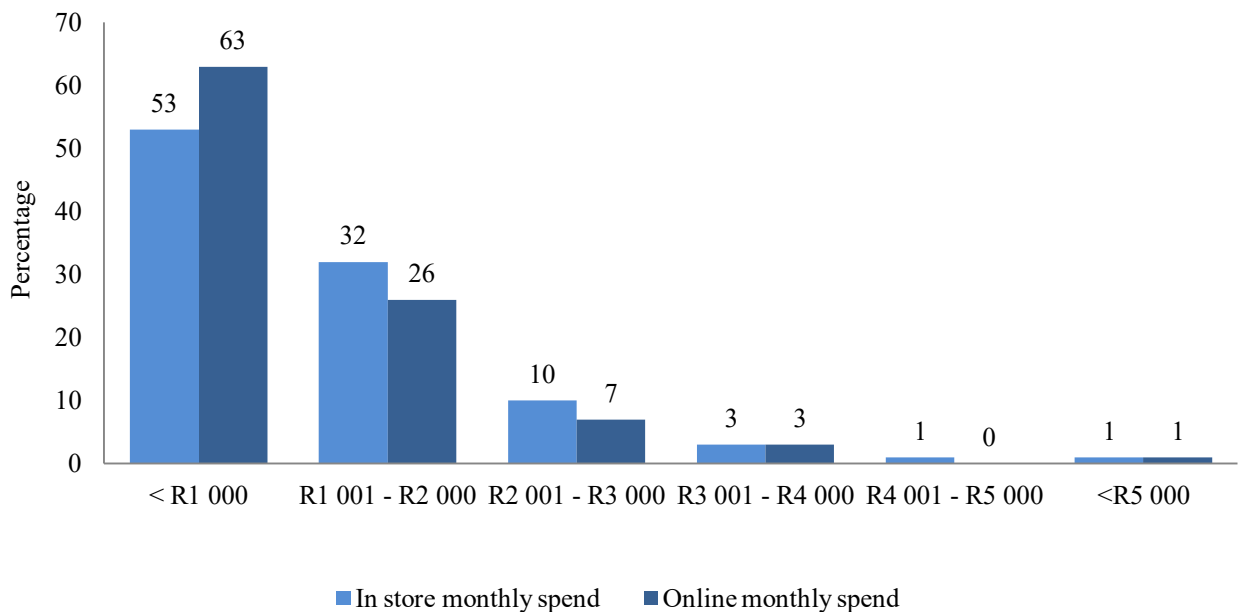
Figure 4.4 Respondents monthly clothing expenditure

Figure 4.4 reflects the relationship between the amount of money respondents currently spend on clothing monthly and what they might spend online. The table shows that whether shopping online or not the majority of respondents would spend R1 000, or less, per month on clothing. However, a trend does seem to exist when presented with the option of shopping online. There is an increase in the percentage of respondents who will spend R1 000 or less while all other categories remain the same or see a decrease in the monthly expenditure. This may be attributed to people's scepticism with regard to online shopping.

54

4.4.2 Objective two: To determine online clothing shopping patterns

Questions: 13 and 14 as set out in were analysed to meet this objective.

4.4.2.1 Formal versus informal clothing purchases made online
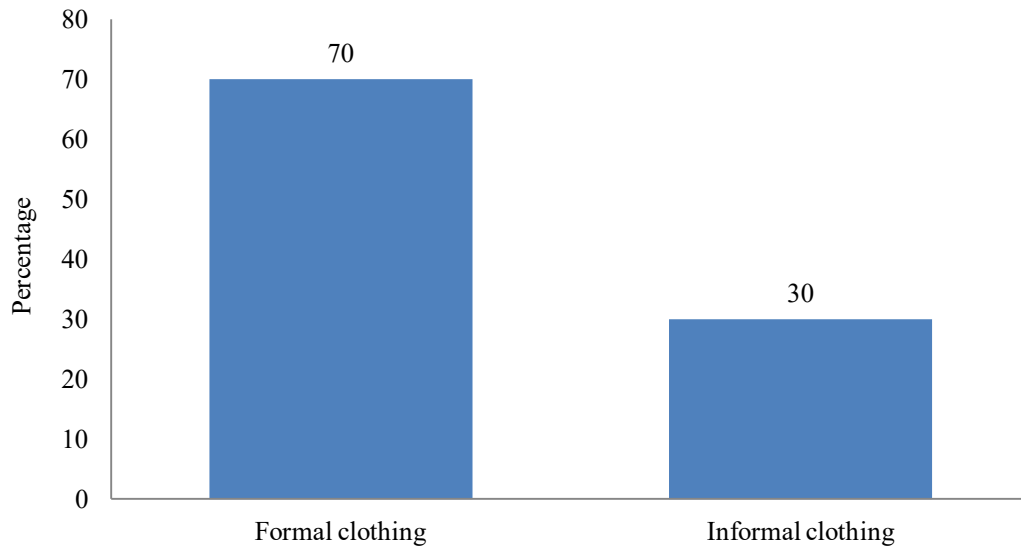
Figure 4.5 Relationship between formal and informal online clothing purchases

Figure 4.5 shows that the vast majority of online clothing purchases were made on informal clothing, 80%, leaving only 20% of clothing purchases made on formal clothing.

4.4.2.2 Items previously purchased by online clothing shoppers
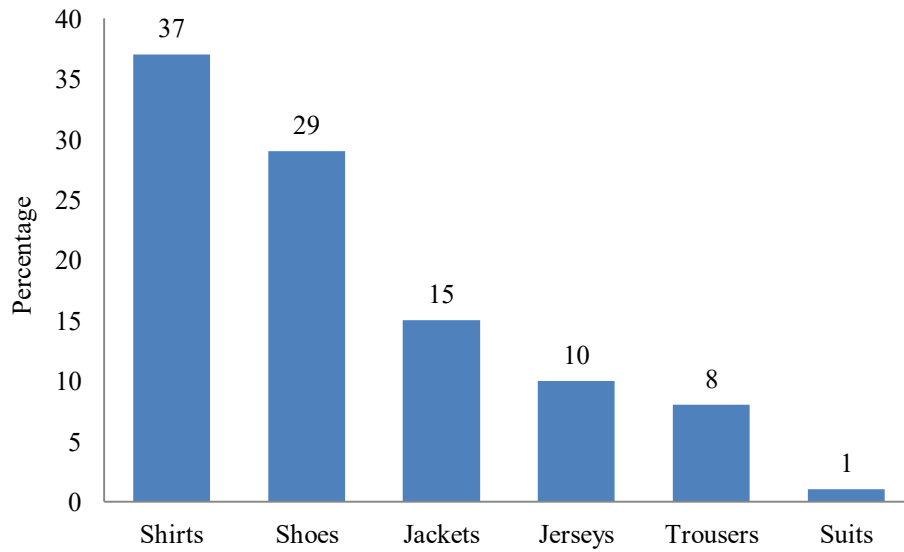
Figure 4.6 Frequency of items purchased online

The results in Figure 4.6 show what items of clothing respondents had purchased online before. The greatest frequency was for shirts with 37% followed by shoes with 29%. Suits, a relatively expensive purchase, were the least frequently purchased with only 1%.

4.4.3 Objective three: Attitudes toward online clothing purchases

In analysing the data relating to what people's attitudes toward online clothing shopping was the questions: 15; 16; 17 were analysed.

4.4.3.1 Would you consider buying clothing online in future
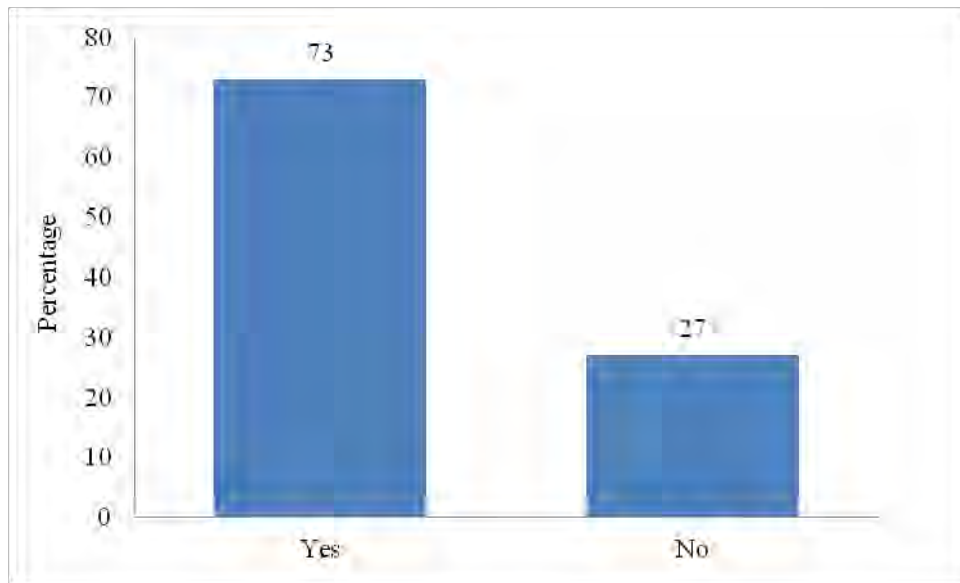
Figure 4.7 Attitude toward repurchase of clothing online

Of the respondents who had taken part in online clothing shopping, the majority of (73%) of them would consider buying clothing online again in future. This is illustrated in Figure 4.7.

4.4.3.2 What items would you consider buying
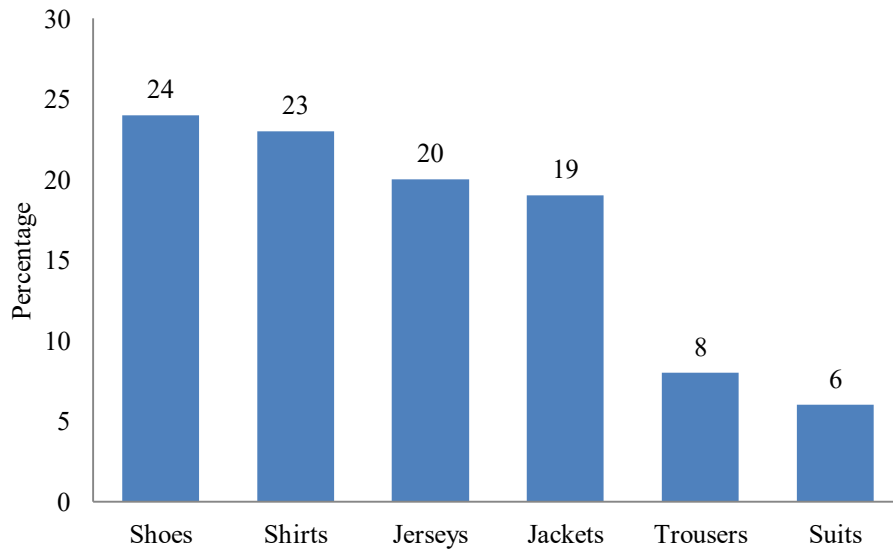
Figure 4.8 Online repurchase preferences

Figure 4.8 shows respondents who had both: participated in online shopping and would consider doing so again in future, and what items they would consider buying. The figure shows that shoes (24%) were the item most likely to be purchased, closely followed by shirts (23%), while suits (6%) was, once again, the item least likely to be purchased.

4.4.3.4 Reasons not to buy clothing online in future
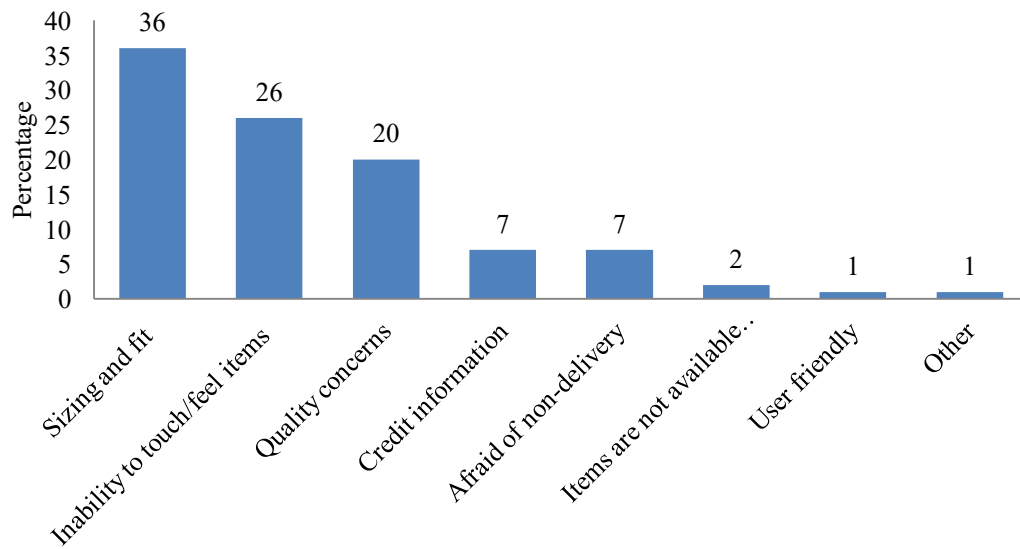
Figure 4.9 Deterrents from online clothing purchases

Figure 4.9 shows that 36%, the majority of respondents not willing to purchase clothing online, were unwilling to do so due to sizing and fit concerns. Other notable issues were: inability to touch/feel the items before purchase (26%) and quality concerns, (20%). Addressing these concerns would impact on people's perceptions of the product being purchased and simplify the buying process.

4.4.4 Objective four: To establish the impact social networks can have on online clothing shopping

4.4.4.1 Social network feedback increases my confidence when buying online
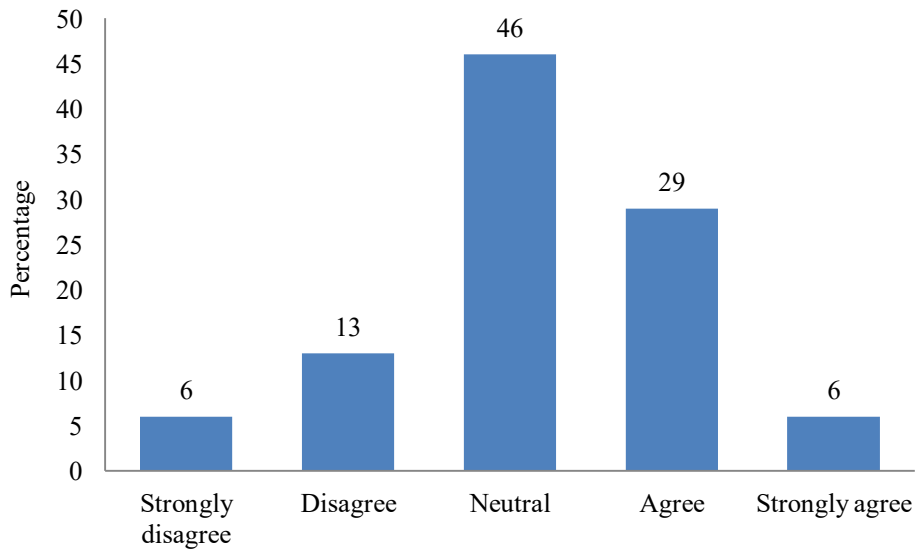
Figure 4.12 Social network feedback's ability to assist online purchases

When asked if social network feedback increases respondents' confidence when buying online, a 46% majority responded neutrally, while 29% responded that they agreed. Further responses are illustrated in Figure 4.12.

4.4.4.3 When purchasing online do you seek advice on social networks
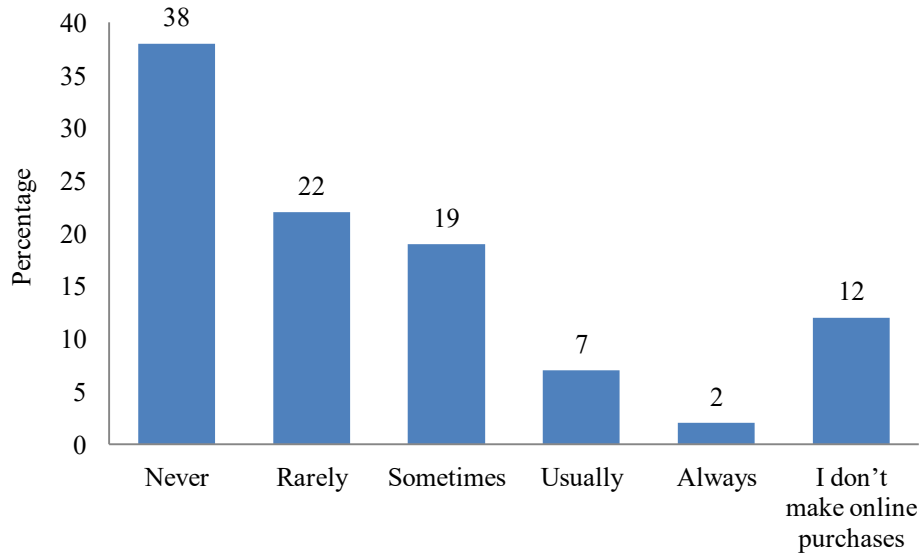
Figure 4.13 Use of social network feedback in online purchasing decision

Figure 4.13 show a majority of 38% of respondents never seek advice on social networks prior to making online purchases. By contrast only 2% of the respondents responded that they always seek advice on social networks prior to making a purchase.

4.4.4.4 What feedback would you be interested in reviewing from your social network
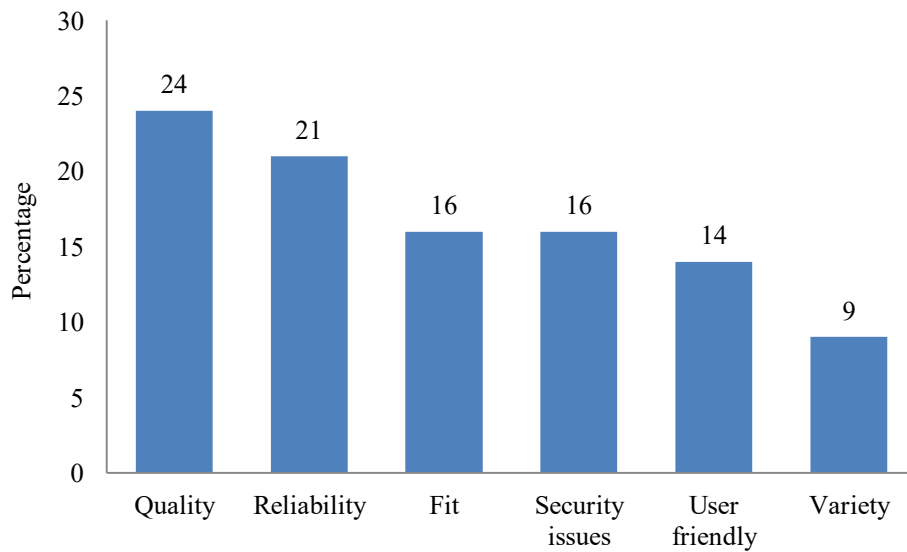
Figure 4.14 Relevant social network feedback

Figure 4.14 shows that 24% of respondents were interested in reviewing feedback regarding the quality of the goods. Reliability is the next most sought after feedback with 21% and then: fit (16%), security issues (16%), user friendly (14%) and finally variety with 9%.

4.4.5 Objective five: To establish whether customisation can affect online clothing purchases

Questions: 2; 3; 4; 20; 21; 22 were analysed in an attempt to establish whether customisation can affect online clothing purchases.

4.4.5.1 Relationship between age and inclination to buy customised clothing online

Table 4.7 Age and attitude toward customised clothing

Age	Would you be more inclined to buy clothing online if it were customised	
	Yes %	No %
Younger than 20	0	0
20 - 24	4	1
25 - 29	**42**	12
30 - 34	22	5
35 - 39	2	2
40 - 44	1	1
45 - 49	1	0
50 - 54	0	0
Older than 54	3	4

As can be seen from table 4.7, customisation is viewed positively as a whole. In all age categories, with the exception of 50-54 years, respondents were inclined to increase or maintain the amount of clothing purchased online where customisation was on offer.

4.4.5.2 Relationship between gender and inclination to buy customised clothing online

Table 4.8 Gender and attitude toward customized clothing

Gender	Would you be more inclined to buy clothing online if it were customised	
	Yes %	No %
Male	**45**	10
Female	30	15

In the case of both males and females alike respondents were more inclined to buy clothing online if it were customised, this is clearly shown by table 4.8. The table also shows that males place a greater value on customisation than do females with, 45% of males being more inclined to buy customised clothing whereas only 30% of females are of the same opinion.

4.4.5.3 Relationship between race and inclination to buy customised clothing online

Table 4.9 Race and attitude toward customized clothing

Race	Would you be more inclined to buy clothing online if it were customised	
	Yes %	No %
White	61	20
Black	7	2
Mixed	4	0
Indian	3	3

All race groups showed an inclination toward purchasing customized clothing online. Indians showed the least variance when presented with the option of customization as they displayed an equal split between those more inclined to purchase clothing online as a result of customization and those not more inclined to do so. Whites showed an alarming improvement in their attitude toward online clothing purchases when presented with customization options as can be seen by 61% of respondents reacting positively.

4.4.5.4 What would you consider the most important customisation options?
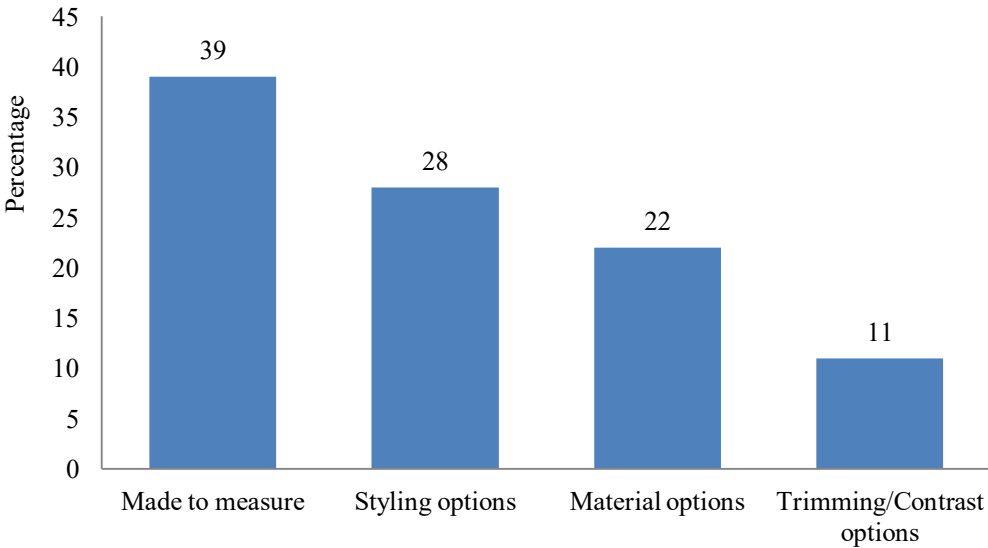
Figure 4.15 Value assigned to customisation options

Figure 4.15 shows which customisation options were perceived as being most important. Responses were only drawn from those respondents who were more inclined to buy clothing online if it were customised. Of these respondents 39% of the respondents regard garments being made to measure as being the most important customisation option.

4.4.5.5 Would you be willing to pay a premium for customised clothing
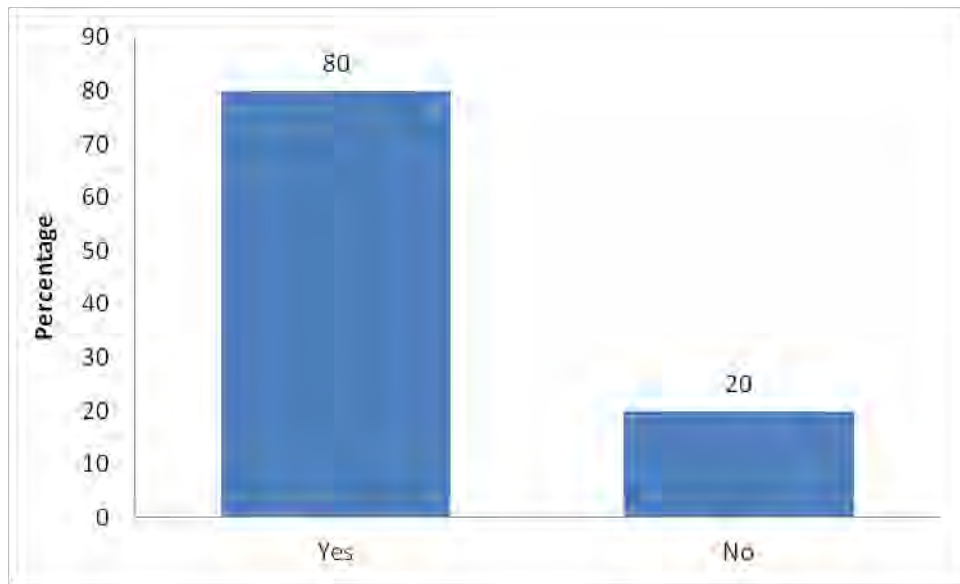
Figure 4.16 Respondents' price sensitivity to customised clothing

Of the respondents willing to buy clothing online if it were customised, an overwhelming majority, (80%), were willing to pay a premium for the service. This implies a great deal of value being attributed to the service.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the results that were obtained from participants in the study. Analysis of the data revealed that information, regarding all 5 objectives identified for the study, had been gathered. The most notable findings from the research revealed that: informal items were preferred to formal items, that customised clothing positively impacted an individual's inclination to purchase clothing online, and that they were willing to pay a premium for this service. Social networks were also identified as having a limited impact on online clothing shopping at this time, however, there was data implying that they may prove a useful tool in the future. The analysed data was generally in line with the available literature explored in chapter two.

A full review of the results will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as a bridge between the already existing literature which was discussed in chapter two and the results provided in the previous chapter. As described in the conclusion of chapter two a gap exists in the research on the topic of online clothing shopping in South Africa, however, wherever possible useful results from related studies will be included in the discussion to follow. The format will be as follows, the demographic profile of the respondents will be discussed after which the results for each of the five objectives will be discussed.

5.2 Demographics

For the purposes of this study age, gender, race, employment status and employment level within an organisation were analysed to provide the data for demographic profiling. One factor that may have affected the demographics of the respondents is the manner by which the data was collected. In this instance questionnaires were distributed using snowball sampling through the medium of Facebook. As a result potential respondents were limited to people registered on Facebook. To add to this the first batch of potential respondents approached were all acquaintances of the researcher. It was hoped that respondents would then further distribute the questionnaire to other potential respondents and diversify the sample group. It should be noted that as Facebook was the distribution medium, security settings prevented respondents from forwarding the questionnaire to people other than those registered as their "friends" on their Facebook profiles. The effect of this is evident in the lack of demographic diversity of the respondents.

The majority of respondents fell into the age category 25-29 years, with the next highest response rate coming from people aged 30-34 years. At the time of distribution of the questionnaire the researcher was 29 years of age and as such it seemed reasonable that the majority of his acquaintances would fall between the ages of 25 and 34 years. The acquaintances who then chose to forward the questionnaire on to their own acquaintances were similarly limited by the extension of their friendship circles and would probably have again appealed to people of a similar age to themselves, and as a result the researcher. A second significant spike exists in the older than 54 category, this can be attributed to the fact that family and family acquaintances felt obliged to assist with the research. Another factor unrelated to the researcher yet worthy of mention is that the age group 25-34 is peaking socially, as Facebook is a social interaction site it is reasonable to expect a high response rate from this age group. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Kotler & Keller 2003) shows that people are inclined to address their needs systematically according to their urgency. If this is the case physiological needs are to be addressed and then security needs, following these social needs are sought after. People both nearing and recently in their thirties can be considered to be reaching a point in their life where they are upwardly mobile, suggesting that the first two needs have been met and that social needs are next on the agenda. The fact that the majority of the respondents were single (54%) implies that social needs have not yet been met and it could be assumed that respondents are using Facebook to fulfil this need. Gillham et al. (2003) caution researchers that confining research to psychological decision making models alone is limiting in that it restricts understanding only to a linear level and neglects to allow for satisfaction gained through the shopping experience itself.

5.3 Objective one: To create a profile of online shoppers in South Africa

5.3.1 Age of online clothing shoppers

The results from this study revealed that the majority of respondents who had previously purchased clothing online were aged between 25 and 29 and accounted for 21% of the total respondents. A further 13% of respondents who had purchased clothing online were aged between 30 and 34 meaning that 34% of respondents were aged between 25 and 34.

Farag et al. (2007) conducted research that revealed that men and the younger generation have greater experience and familiarity of the Internet and as a result a more favorable perception of online shopping. North et al. (2003c) in their research found that higher education levels were prevalent in online shoppers. The age group 25-34 potentially appealed to both observations as they had sufficient time to gain formal education, (matric certificates, university degrees and post-matriculation diplomas) and while their seniors may have had the same opportunities, the age group 25-34 were more likely to be familiar with the technology used in online shopping as a result of their use of social networks and other online platforms.

5.3.2 Gender of online clothing shoppers

Across both genders respondents who purchased clothing online were in the minority. Males, however, showed a greater tendency to shop online than females. Farag et al. (2007) attribute this to the fact that men are more familiar with technology as a result of their working environments. Brandon (2010) suggested that individuals in high positions of employment (mostly men) are often busy and as a result favour an online option when it comes to buying items, such as shirts appropriate for work. North et al. (2003c) through their research suggested that Internet shopping is on the increase and that consumers are drawn by the advantages of time and money saved, therefore if Brandon's (2010) observations are correct (that males experience more time pressure), males should be more prevalent in online shopping. Hansen and Jensen (2008) through their studies revealed that men and women displayed differences in their online shopping behaviour. They suggest that whereas men are "quick shoppers" seeking a product to address a need, women shop for fun and attach a social element to shopping. This could account for fewer females having purchased clothing online in South Africa as shopping online neglects the social element in that consumers who shop online bypass the personal interaction that takes place when shopping in a store.

5.3.3 Race and online clothing shopping

While white had the highest percentage of online shoppers it should be noted that of the four race categories only Indians had a higher response rate of the respondents who had purchased clothing online (5%) than those who had not (4%). Singh (2001) identified a problem online shopping faces in South Africa is that a large portion of the population is without access to the Internet. Furthermore, he believes one means by which online shopping will increase is if consumers are able to alter their behaviour. He stated that through purchasing products online people are able to overcome their apprehension toward doing so and will be more inclined to make further purchases online. North et al. (2003c) suggested that Internet use will increase as education improves in South Africa.

5.3.4 Employment status of online clothing shoppers

Senior managers, closely followed by middle managers, have been identified as the respondents who purchased clothing most online. This supports the findings of North et al. (2003c) whose studies suggested that experience working with the Internet plays a major role in people's inclination to shop online. Senior and middle managers are expected to have a degree of computer literacy and are more likely to have higher levels of experience on the Internet than their juniors. They should, therefore, have a more favourable attitude toward shopping online than their juniors. Brandon (2010) observed that professionals in high positions of employment are too busy to shop, they therefore prefer an online option when it comes to buying shirts appropriate for work. Brandon further noted that these individuals were also willing to pay more for the convenience and services offered, this may serve to suggest that their higher discretionary income allows them the luxury to test online shopping. Another characteristic common among professionals in high positions within an organisation is that they are assumed to have higher levels of education, North et al. (2003c) have identified education levels as affecting individuals tendency to shop online. More educated individuals are believed to be more inclined to shop online as they have a favourable attitude toward the services offered. It is worthwhile to note that Hernandez et al. (2010) on exploring socioeconomic factors related to online shopping behaviour observed that experience gained during the online shopping process served to nullify socioeconomic characteristics as variables to explain behaviour. However, to gain

this experience people are required to make online purchases and to do so they will require Internet access, confidence in the process and the disposable income to do so.

5.3.5 Monthly income of online clothing shoppers

The study clearly shows that the greater the monthly earnings of the respondent the greater the proportion who purchased clothing online. Respondents earning in excess of R25 000 per month were by a significant margin the category with the highest frequency for purchasing clothing online, while the earning categories below this showed steady decline. It could be assumed that respondents earning more than R25 000 per month were of a higher education level, had elevated positions in the workplace and greater work responsibilities, resulting in less time for activities such as shopping.

5.3.6 Relationship between monthly clothing expenditure and potential online monthly clothing expenditure

When shopping for clothing online respondents clearly indicated that they were apprehensive to spend large sums of money on clothing. This is reflected in Figure 4.4 which illustrated that the lower the expenditure bracket the greater the respondents' confidence to buy online. Hansen and Jensen (2008) suggested that both men and women alike prefer to have a third party opinion when shopping, as such this may act as a barrier to online clothing shopping. A further hurdle faced by online shopping is that consumers are reluctant to commit to products that they traditionally evaluate and attribute value to through touching, tasting and feeling. Clothing is relatively susceptible to tangible scrutiny as consumers generally like to try items on to gauge the fit, feel the fabric to assess the quality and seek a third party opinion to gain confidence in their appearance.

North et al. (2003a) believed that the Internet greatly simplified Kotler's five stage buying process as the second stage, information search, is done online. It offers a single location with an abundance of information regarding products, product features, relative pricing, product comparison and supplier reliability. This may aid consumers looking to buy clothing online, for example in the situation identified by Brandon (2010) where

professionals in high positions are constantly under time pressure and as a result reluctant to spend time in malls shopping for dress shirts appropriate for work. A simplified buying process and convenient delivery system would entice them to buy online. However, dress shirts are relatively inexpensive and are only required to be purchased periodically meaning the total expenditure would be low. More costly fashion items may require more thought and a tangible experience as well as consultation with a third party.

5.4 Objective two: To determine online clothing shopping patterns

5.4.1 Formal and informal online clothing purchases

Of the clothing items purchased online, the highest purchases were of informal clothing as opposed to formal clothing. This may be a buying behaviour or may merely reflect a trend in fashion.

5.4.2 Items purchased by online clothing shoppers

This study revealed that of the respondents who had shopped online the majority of purchases made were for shirts (37%) followed by shoes (29%). By a significant margin the least purchased items were suits (1%). Pillay and Singh (2010) revealed that when it came to more expensive purchases consumers did become more confident in online retail. If this were applied to clothing, suits should be the item most purchased online followed by shoes. However, suits are a very specific item when it comes to fitting and as stated the cost is relatively high. A study by Singh (2001) showed that respondents were reluctant, among other things, to buy products with which they had not had tangible contact.

5.5 Objective 3: Attitude toward online clothing purchases

5.5.1 Respondents willingness to repurchase clothing online

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the respondents who had made online purchases would consider doing so again. This supports research performed by Hernandez *et al.*, (2010) who found that even the elderly, with their limited computer literacy, showed improved attitudes and perceptions of online shopping after having performed a few transactions. Hernandez et al. (2010) further found that socioeconomic factors became less reliable as a means of explaining shopping behaviour in people who had participated in online shopping. The research indicated that experience gained during the online shopping process served to nullify variables explaining behaviour. Other studies further supporting the research were conducted by van Staden and Maree (2005), and North et al. (2003c) who believed that a major perception difference between online and in store shopping is that the information available on the Internet simplifies the buying process as identified by the second stage of Kotler's five stage buying process. van Staden and Maree (2005) further observed that perceptions of online shoppers were that they were saving money by shopping online as expenses related to visiting stores and impulse purchases were not incurred. Furthermore, one of the greatest hurdles faced by online clothing vendors was people's desire to have a tangible experience with products, the willingness to repurchase clothing online indicated that experience will help overcome this hurdle.

5.5.2 Clothing items likely to be repurchased by online clothing shoppers

The results from items purchased online are similar to those of items likely to be repurchased online by shoppers. The only exception being that respondents had a greater tendency to purchase shoes online than shirts, however, all other items remained in their same position in the hierarchy. Suits showed a dramatic increase from 1% to 6%.

5.5.3 Reasons not to buy clothing online in future

When expressing their reluctance to buy clothing online, respondents identified sizing and fit concerns as their primary concern with 36% of respondents listing this as a concern. This supports the claims by van Staden and Maree (2005) that shoppers are apprehensive to buy online without having a tangible experience with the product, furthermore, van Staden and Maree used the example of clothing to highlight this issue. The inability to touch/feel the items was the next most prevalent concern expressed by the respondents. This again refers to the concerns over the lack of having a tangible experience with the product expressed by both van Staden and Maree as well as Singh (2001). The third most urgent concern was quality concerns and can again be traced back to the shopper's inability to see the product first hand before making the purchase. North et al. (2003c) stated that consumers become loyal to brands as a result of consistency. It is this brand consistency that empowers shoppers to overcome their concerns regarding the quality of products. In order to capitalise on this brand loyalty, it is advisable for brands to place extreme emphasis on consistency of their products and to replicate their in-store and online offerings. Another means, by which brands can improve their market share, as identified by van Eck et al. (2004), is to gain endorsement from celebrities and other public figure heads. In South Africa the crime rate is of concern to all citizens, online shopping is no different. While it does withdraw consumers from being exposed to certain categories of crimes, by making the need to leave the house obsolete, more sophisticated crimes still exist. Providing credit information was a concern for respondents when shopping online. North et al. (2003c) identified the three major concerns related to security for internet shoppers in South Africa are: the seller's credibility, the implications of providing credit card information, and the security of Internet payment methods. However, North et al. (2003c) also suggested that South Africans are comfortable using Internet banking and other similar experiences would reduce safety concerns and therefore have a positive impact on the attitude toward shopping online. Of equal concern to the respondents as providing credit information, was the fear that goods may not be delivered. Pillay and Singh (2010) suggested that online vendors can have a positive impact on online shoppers' perceptions of payment methods by providing secure payment methods that protect both the buyer and the seller. Another method to ease the concerns of consumers would be to offer a variety of payment methods, for example electronic

transfers. Webchek (1999 cited in North et al. 2003c) found that before buying online South African shoppers experienced indecision based on their concerns regarding reliability. This statement agrees with both the findings of this study and those of North et al. (2003c) once again both experience and brand image can be used to overcome these problems. Of less concern to respondents was the fact that products are not immediately available, the user friendliness of the site and other concerns. North et al. (2003c) believed online testimonials are one method by which the concerns of online shoppers can be put to rest. Based on their research Denis et al. (2010) agreed with this notion but emphasized that younger online shoppers are less inclined to buy into the promises offered by online marketing but rather prefer real experiences.

5.6 Objective four: To establish the impact social networks can have on online clothing shopping

5.6.1 The ability of social network feedback to increase confidence levels in online shoppers

South African citizens are greatly plagued by the thought of criminal activity and security, to add to this online shoppers are often apprehensive as a result of not being able to have a tangible experience with products prior to purchase. North et al. (2003c) suggested that online testimonials and reviews of their experiences by other shoppers could assist in overcoming this apprehension. Dennis et al. (2010) conducted research that indicated younger shoppers prefer real experiences to promises offered by online marketing and believe social networks, where peers express their own opinions and experiences are a useful means to put potential online shoppers' minds at ease. Dennis et al. (2010) define e-shopping as the combination of online shopping and social networking. They also continue to state that by this definition of e-shopping consumers have another dimension added to their shopping experience. Social networks allow third party opinions, product and fashion information and still appeal to shoppers looking to save time and money. The current study supports the claims made by the above mentioned researchers as 29% of respondents responded that social network feedback increases their confidence when buying online.

5.6.2 Use of social network feedback when making online purchases

This study revealed that a significant 38% of respondents never sought advise on social networks prior to making an online purchase. This directly contradicts the opinions of North et al. (2003c) and Dennis et al. (2010) who believed that social networks would be a useful tool to ease the mind of online shoppers. This is not to say that social networks are not useful for this purpose but rather that they are not fully utilized in South Africa at present. The fact that 29% of respondents indicated that social network feedback would in fact increase their confidence when buying online supports the findings of both: North et al. (2003c) and Dennis et al. (2010). The section to follow will identify which topics respondents would consider most important if they were to review social network feedback before making online purchases.

5.6.3 Social network feedback of interest to respondents

Although, based on the responses of this study, South Africans are currently not adequately using social networks when seeking feedback from other online shoppers it may still prove a useful tool to online vendors in future as were the findings of Dennis et al. (2010). This study shows that when reviewing clothing feedback, online shoppers would value information on the following topics: quality, reliability, fit and security, user friendliness and variety. With this information in mind it seems that online vendors would be wise to both advertise and utilize social networks to address potential online shoppers in future.

5.7 Objective five: To establish whether customisation can affect attitude toward online clothing purchases

The final objective of this study was to establish the effect customisation can have on the attitude of consumers toward online clothing purchases. After an extensive search of existing literature no similar analysis has been performed so it was impossible to compare the findings to other research.

5.7.1 Customisation options most valued by online clothing shoppers

Matzler *et al*., (2007) believed that companies are currently faced with a challenge to shift their production and marketing strategy from identifying and appealing to target groups, to making individually customised offerings. They continued to express concern over the possibility that consumers may become overwhelmed by the choices and information made available to them and that this may negatively affect decision making. This phenomenon, coined consumer confusion, is believed to lead to a variety of coping strategies such as: decision delegation, additional information searches, postponement of purchases and in the most severe circumstances abandonment of purchases altogether. However, the results of this study imply a different end result as respondents seemed to assign value to all customisation options on offer when it came to selecting clothing customisation options. Wind and Crook's, (2006) findings were in agreement with the findings of this study that consumers attribute value to having a variety of customisation options. In fact they agree so strongly that they have gone as far as to suggest that modern day consumers, with their comparative shopping and abundant information, are no longer recipients of products and services but rather have become a necessary part of research and development as well as production and marketing.

5.7.2 Customisation effect on price sensitivity

Pine (1993) stated that consumers are no longer willing to sacrifice their preferences in the name of consistency and affordability. Instead they are evolving toward accepting only what they specifically want and need and in compensation they are willing to pay a premium to obtain it. He continues to describe how modern technology and the invention of the Internet have made this a reality for the consumer, furthermore, flexible manufacturing with its economies of scope and mechanized manufacturing have come to the aid of producers creating cost efficiency and sufficient volumes to ensure sustainability of operations. The current study strongly supports the opinions of Pine with 80% of respondents stating that they would be willing to pay a premium for customised clothing. Brandon (2010) found that professionals who were willing to pay additional sums for customised services are further impressed when provided with fit, styling and colour

options, thus supporting the findings of this study which found that respondents sought variety in fit, styling and material options in that order.

5.8 Summary

Chapter Ffive discussed the key findings of the data collected from the respondents who participated in this study. Accompanying the discussion of the results a comparison of the study's findings was made with available literature gathered from related studies. The findings of this study were, for the most part, in agreement with the available literature. Chapter Six will present the conclusions of this study, it will also suggest recommendations and identify the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter six is the concluding chapter of this study and will highlight the salient findings of the study. It will also highlight the limitations identified during the study. Recommendations will also be made for future similar studies on consumer buying behaviour, specifically those regarding online clothing purchases.

6.2 Research implications

The core of the study was the literature review (Chapter Two) and from there the study developed into its current form. It was established that there was a gap in the research on the topic of online consumer buying behaviour specific to clothing. The study aimed to explore factors that currently influence online clothing shoppers and to identify further factors that could be used to improve the attitude towards online clothing shopping. The five objectives set out in the study were designed specifically to identify factors that could improve the consumer attitude toward online clothing shopping. The unveiling of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1989 has opened up new channels and changed the way people accomplish things, (Pillay and Singh, 2010). Pillay and Singh (2010) further suggest that consumers are able to make purchases from almost anywhere, including their homes and offices, as consumers are now able to shop at the click of a button. Therefore, understanding who shops for clothing online and what offerings could improve public attitude toward online shopping is essential to vendors as it will assist them to satisfy their customers and could potentially expand their market. Consumers also stand to benefit from the study as online shopping is identified as being quicker, cheaper and potentially offers wider variety to consumers.

6.3 Conclusions, implications and recommendations

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study, however, it should be noted that these conclusions are based on the opinions of the respondents who took part in the study and cannot be generalised to the South African population as a whole. The research, through its findings, suggests a trend in behaviour does exist among the population surveyed. These trends are potentially of interest both to the consumer and the online vendor and will be discussed accordingly.

6.3.1 Implications of the profile of online shoppers

As is the case for any retailer, online vendors must know who their customers are so that they may be in a better position to satisfy the needs of their market. The findings of this study indicated the following regarding online clothing shoppers in South Africa: they were both males and females (with a weighting towards males) between the ages of 25 and 34 years, they were predominantly Whites followed by Indians who held senior positions in their organisational hierarchy (13% senior managers and 12% middle managers), and as such they were higher income earners (18% earned more than R25 000 per month). This information will aid vendors in addressing their market as they will be able to identify what form of mass media to use in an attempt to create awareness and advertise. They will also be aware that they are addressing an educated computer literate segment of the population and as such can use the Internet with its abundance of information and extensive reach to approach potential customers. The implication of addressing those with elevated positions and relatively high incomes suggests that vendors could provide high end luxury goods with relatively high profit margins. However, they should take care to adhere to the perception of the consumer that online shopping is cheaper than doing so in store. Finally the findings of the study also indicated that familiarity with the technology used, when shopping online, greatly improved consumers' attitude toward online shopping. As technology is always advancing vendors should take care to remain up to date with technology advances in an attempt to retain their current market, furthermore, the South African government's emphasis on improved education suggests that a new generation of online shoppers is on the horizon who will be familiar with online

technology. They may require slightly different offerings but their volume and buying potential should not be ignored.

6.3.2 Implication of online shopping patterns

The findings indicated a preference for informal items, however, clothing is highly susceptible to fashion trends meaning that informal items may not be a preference for online shoppers but may merely reflect the current trend in clothing in South Africa. South Africa is also a very hot country that has somewhat relaxed dress codes both at special events and at the workplace, this could be another factor that influences the tendency of online shoppers to show a preference for informal clothing.

Respondents also showed a significant preference for shirts and shoes as opposed to jackets, jerseys, trousers and suits when shopping online. This is more likely to be attributed to the confidence level of buying online rather than fashion trends in clothing. For example suits are a high ticket item meaning that consumers will need to be extremely confident in the item before outlaying a significant amount of capital. By contrast shoes are more consistently universal, for example a consumer who is a size nine in a particular brand is likely to be the same in another brand. Suits on the other hand show a degree of variance from one producer to another in terms of cut and fit. Consumers will therefore know their shoe size with a high level of confidence and may have less confidence in their suit size, it is this consistency in shoes as an item that may allow it to be relatively frequently purchased online.

Shirts, while they may be faced with some of the same barriers as suits, are by comparison a cheaper item. There is also a degree of consistency in that consumers will probably know their neck size with a high level of confidence, and their body measurements with moderate confidence. This coupled with the fact that shirts are relatively inexpensive may allow consumers the confidence to make the purchase. A shirt is also a relatively distinctive item of clothing worn with a degree of regularity, as such consumers generally need more shirts to allow greater rotation. Trousers on the other hand are less distinctive and the same pair can be worn more frequently, trousers are also more durable than shirts and therefore do not require frequent repurchase.

In order to instil greater levels of confidence in shoppers, vendors can do one or all of the following. First they can approach celebrities and other influential people to endorse their products and instil confidence in the consumer, they could also attach an online review area to their site where real people with tangible experience with the products can provide feedback to other potential buyers, finally they could promote micro stores in key areas where consumers are able to have a tangible experience with the products on offer before committing to them online. Products would need to be delivered exactly as they were displayed in store and the site should resemble the store's layout in order to instil confidence in the consumer. After having a favourable online experience consumers will become confident in the process and could potentially increase their online buying behaviour. Having these stores may also create a social experience for the consumer as they can interact with the sales staff.

6.3.3 Attitude toward online shopping

When those respondents who had previously made online clothing purchases were asked if they would do so again in future almost three quarters responded positively, this is a strong indicator that familiarity with online shopping is a major contributor to future online shopping behaviour. As such it is advisable that vendors commit resources and efforts to obtaining that first time purchase. In order to do this vendors are required to overcome the apprehension and concerns of potential online shoppers. With these concerns being identified as: the lack of a tangible experience (and as a result the concerns over fit, size, touch and feel of products), quality concerns, revealing of credit information and fear of non delivery, vendors are required to address a variety of different areas and concerns. The most prevalent concern is that of not being able to have a tangible experience with the product. In order to overcome this hurdle it is advised that vendors have return policies that strongly favour the consumer. This will illustrate the vendors' confidence in the products and will allow consumers the confidence to commit to the ever important initial purchase. Another means by which to gain the trust of the consumer is to once again erect micro stores in key areas that will allow the consumer to have a tangible experience with the product in store before making a purchase online. This is a costly exercise and will require attention to detail in ensuring consistency of products.

The issue of quality concerns would be greatly assisted by the offering of a tangible experience with the products and could be further improved upon by creating a brand with which consumers can identify, gaining the endorsement of popular figures in the community (television personalities, idol figures and other known trend setters) will also prove useful. Branding offers a promise of consistency as the symbol represents a familiarity with which consumers can identify. This symbol is of extreme importance as it will allow the consumer to identify the product with which they have previously experienced a high level of satisfaction. It is experience and brand identification that will create brand loyalty and result in repeat business by consumers. Once this loyalty has been achieved it will also increase their profit margins as consumers are less likely to seek the product elsewhere.

Providing credit information and the risk of fraud is a very real concern for consumers, however, it is near the bottom end of the concerns listed by the respondents. This is probably a result of the frequency of this manner of purchasing being on the increase and as a result their familiarity being increased. However, at 7% it still requires some attention and it would be advisable for vendors to allow consumers the option of multiple payment methods and to include the expertise of a third party. The third party could act as an intermediary who holds the payments made by the consumer until such a time as they have received the goods from the vendor, if the goods are never received than payment would never take place and the fee would be returned to the consumer.

The final concern identified by the study was the fear of non delivery of goods purchased. Again the inclusion of a third party in the payment would alleviate these concerns. Additional means by which to increase the consumers' confidence levels would be to offer transport insurance and a variety of delivery options, (couriered, posted, consumer arranged collection) and to establish a strong relationship with a recognized transport company.

Attaching online reviews to the site where consumers make their purchases will also aid in promoting consumer confidence. It would be important that these reviews are honest and made by people who have had real experiences with the products and services on offer.

6.3.4 Influence of social networks

The literature review placed significant emphasis on the fact that shopping is not merely a means to an end but has a social element to it as well. Women in particular were identified as placing value on this element of the shopping experience and concern has been raised over online shopping's ability to provide for this. Social networks provide a platform for consumers to express their opinions and share their experiences thereby catering to peoples' need for social interaction. Furthermore social network sites provide an invaluable base for potential shoppers to view real experiences of their peers and get realistic feedback of the services and products on offer. This will assist in creating the necessary confidence required for online purchases. The responses received revealed that, in South Africa, social networks are underutilized in this regard even though both shoppers and vendors alike could benefit from using their facilities. Vendors need to place more emphasis on attracting potential shoppers to social networks where their products are under review and by doing so will be both advertising their product and creating a brand with which shoppers can identify. One means by which vendors could attract potential shoppers would be to create a forum where they suggest fashion tips and advise people on how to dress for various situations. Further credibility could be generated by employing a popular public figure to write an interactive advice column where consumers could ask questions and gain insights from a recognized expert in the field. Sections should also be dedicated to highlighting the benefits of shopping online (more affordable purchases, time saving, door-to-door delivery, shopping from anywhere, access to information and the wide variety of products on offer) and to specifically create a voice for shoppers to share their experiences regarding: quality, reliability, fit, security and user friendliness of the site.

6.3.5 Influence of customisation

Although some literature does exist discussing consumer confusion, the risk that providing consumers with too much choice is daunting to them, this study found that online shoppers value choice and are enticed by the prospect of customised goods. The age group 25-34 were identified as those shoppers most influenced by customisation options. This is important to vendors who could employ target marketing to address this age group. It may

be advisable to use social networks to address this age group as they are still socially active and doing so may assist in adding a social element to the shopping experience. Customisation as an option may also create a social element around the shopping experience as it allows shoppers to design their own product as it were, it is also somewhat a novelty meaning that consumers will be excited to discuss their findings with other friends and colleges at social gatherings. This will further promote the products and instil confidence in potential customers. A less obvious benefit to the vendor would be that by allowing shoppers to design their own products and therefore obtain an element of exclusivity, added value is created for which the vendor is able to charge a premium. Vendors will also rely on consumers for innovation, negating them of the need to employ designers and research and development teams. Vendors should also note that the results of this study imply that customisation options regarding fit, styling and material options are considered the most important by consumers. Allowing consumers the option to customise their own goods also creates a barrier to entry for competitors as consumers will have their information stored by a particular vendor and will therefore be reluctant to go through the painstaking process of establishing a relationship with another vendor.

6.4 Further recommendations arising from the study

The research objectives were suitably satisfied as certain trends regarding online buying behaviour were identified. The findings of the study were significant as they indicated which offerings consumers find important when shopping for clothing online and it is through addressing these offerings that vendors will be able to satisfy the market in future. However, there is still scope for further improvement and from the research and the conclusions above it is suggested that the following also be considered.

- The benefits of social network sites and their application by both vendors and consumers have already been discussed, however, targeting specific sites may prove more valuable. For example LinkedIn is a network site dedicated specifically to professional networking. As the study revealed that a significant portion of online shoppers are professionals with elevated positions in their

organisational hierarchy, a professional networking site seems a logical avenue to promote one's products and address potential customers.

- Vendors should also identify avenues through which to approach their target market. These avenues should use similar technology to that used when shopping online as the familiarity would assist the consumers and increase their likelihood to make purchases.

- One of the major concerns for consumers when shopping online is their inability to have a tangible experience with the products before purchasing them. It is therefore advisable for vendors to have favourable return policies giving consumers the confidence to make their initial purchase.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the research must be identified as it will provide guidelines for further studies in future. Also listed with the limitations are ways in which these limitations can be overcome for future research.

6.5.1 Sampling method employed and lack of demographic diversity

Although the sample size was sufficient for the type of research the sampling method used, snowball sampling, gave some problems in that there was a distinct lack of demographic diversity. The use of Facebook as a means to distribute the questionnaire was somewhat limiting when combined with snowball sampling. Questionnaires were initially sent only to "friends" of the researcher on Facebook and it was then hoped that these recipients would further distribute the questionnaire to their "friends" and so on. The reliance of the researcher on respondents to further distribute the questionnaire resulted in a lack of control over the process by the researcher which in this case resulted in the majority of respondents being young, White people between the ages of 25 and 34. It is suggested in future studies that the distribution method should include other online methods and not just Facebook. Furthermore, in using Facebook it is advised that the

researcher's initial distribution be done with a degree of demographic diversity as can be seen in the Figure 6.1. The figure shows that the researcher should be the centre of the study as they are the initial distributors of the questionnaire.
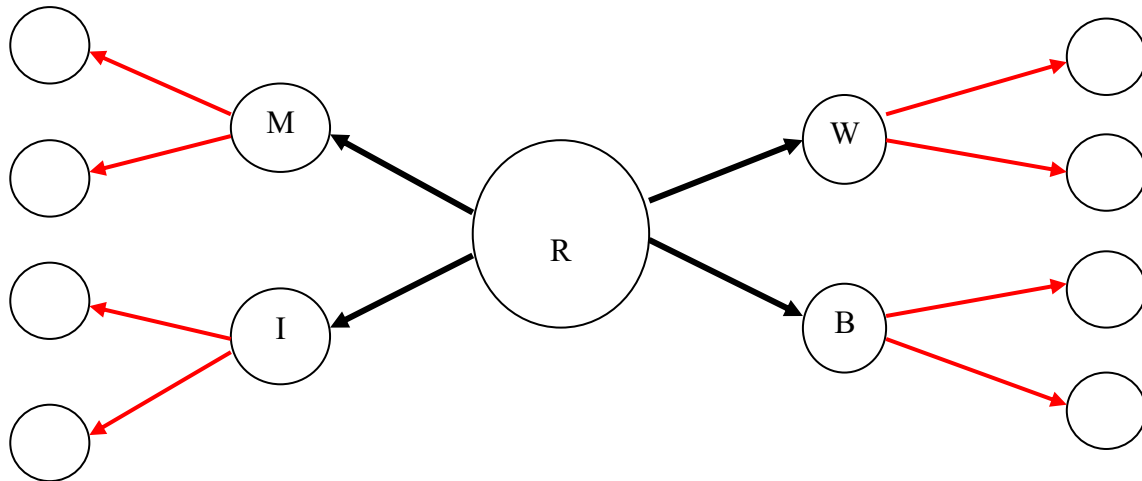

Figure 6.1 Model to achieve demographic diversity

In an attempt to gain demographic diversity the researcher must ensure that all the necessary demographic groups are represented in their initial distribution. These primary recipients would then forward the questionnaire on to their peers and acquaintances and hopefully the snowball effect will represent one of diversity. Figure 6.1 illustrates this point using race as an example. The researcher is at the centre and must distribute to people from all relevant race groups: Whites, Blacks, Indians and Other. It is then hoped that these initial recipients will distribute the questionnaire and it is assumed that they will predominantly distribute it to people sharing a similar demographic to themselves.

6.5.2 Limited scope

This study focused primarily on attitudes of respondents toward online shopping and in doing so focused on the impact of social network sites and of providing customisation options. However, there are many more factors that may influence the attitude of consumers that were not considered. It is therefore recommended that future studies on the topic of online clothing shopping explore some of these other aspects.

6.5.3 Questionnaire format

The questionnaire predominantly allowed the respondents only to select a response from a list of predetermined answers. These were provided by asking respondents to tick only the box or boxes that applied to them and therefore limited their answers. Personal interviews could assist in gaining a more meaningful understanding of respondents' attitudes as it will allow the respondents the opportunity to deviate from the narrow scope provided by a questionnaire. It would also allow respondents the opportunity to clarify any areas they have limited understanding.

6.5.4 Current available literature

While there is an abundance of literature on the field of online shopping both from local sources and sources abroad, the specific nature of the this study meant that the area of study had a relatively limited amount of academic literature meaning it was difficult to obtain information on the topic. Adding to this is the fact that there is a void of information specific to South Africans and their attitude on the topics discussed making it impossible to compare results of the findings. In the case of future studies it is recommended that other online behaviours be observed and compared with the findings in clothing and a variety of sources of information be used. These should include: books, e-books, newspaper articles, online editorials and journals as well as other findings.

6.5.5 Social desirability bias

One of the dangers faced by all forms of research is that of social desirability bias where respondents attempt to respond in such a way as they believe the researcher is expecting them to. Respondents may have felt pressured to respond more favourably than they should have in order to live up to a perceived expectation that they desire to be seen as technologically proficient. If this was the case then the findings of the study could be exaggerated and the attitude of respondents toward online clothing shopping may not be accurate.

6.5.6 Lack of respondent segmentation

The unique nature of this study meant that only limited information was available on various aspects of the study. As a result respondents were grouped into broad categories. In future it is recommended that researchers break down the demographic groups of the respondents further in order to gain a more thorough understanding of their individual preferences and buying behaviours. This can be done along the following criteria: age, race, income bracket, employment position, frequency with which they shop amongst others.

6.6 Recommendations for further research

Analysis of this study, its findings and its limitations, provide the foundation for the research recommendations. This study is to date the only one identified that deals specifically with online consumer buying behaviour of clothing in South Africa. In spite of the limitations the current study does allow for future research in the specified field, the following are the recommendations for further research:

- In the study the sampling frame adopted was for Facebook users resident in South Africa. It therefore excluded anyone not resident in South Africa and anyone without a Facebook account. It is advised that future studies include other social network sites and other forms of online distribution, for example e-mail. Doing this will increase the reach of the study and may aid in improving the demographics of the respondents which will in turn improve the understanding of the study.

- The study was largely descriptive in nature and focused the responses into specified areas provided by tick boxes. In order to increase the understanding of the fields explored it could be worthwhile to focus on a specific field, for example the affect of customisation on attitude of the respondents. This would increase the researcher's understanding of the effect of each individual factor as it impacts on online clothing purchases.

- Qualitative analyses should also be used in future as the responses are limited by the answers provided in the questionnaires. Qualitative analyses will allow respondents to express themselves more accurately and provide a more in depth understanding of the fields being explored.

- Currently there is insufficient literature in the field of online consumer buying behaviour specific to clothing in South Africa. It is advised that further research is conducted with emphasis placed on qualitative research to allow the unique attitudes of the respondents to be understood.

- Future research topics could include:
  - Extending the research to South African citizens other than those on Facebook.
  - Analysing the differences in attitudes of varied age groups and race groups to offerings such as customisation and social networks.
  - The effect of branding on the attitude of online clothing shoppers in South Africa
  - Conduct a qualitative analysis exploring the attitudes of potential online clothing shoppers, and compare this to the experiences of respondents who have shopped online.
  - A review of the extent of online clothing shopping worldwide and a comparison of the most successful vendors. This should also include a detailed report on what offerings these vendors provide and how it influences public opinion of them.

6.7 Summary

The aim of this study was to understand consumers' online clothing buying behaviour. To do this five objectives were identified and a questionnaire was designed to provide insight into these five objectives. The data provided insight into the attitudes and appreciation of the consumers to the various offerings provided by online shopping. It was found that

most respondents who had shopped for clothing online in the past were willing to do so again in future and that providing customisation options was positively viewed by respondents. Although limitations do exist, this study proved to be beneficial in analysing online consumer buying behaviour of clothing in South Africa.

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APPENDIX-1: QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Masters of Business Administration Research Project

Researcher: Matthew Gammie (031 312 7784)

Supervisor: Prof. Anesh M. Singh (031 260 7564)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

Dear Respondent,

I, Matthew Gammie an MBA student, at the Graduate School of Business, at UKZN, invite you to participate in my research project entitled Consumer buying behaviour: Factors affecting online clothing purchases in South Africa. The aim of this study is to, profile a South African online clothing shopper and explore their behaviour.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact either my supervisor or myself at the numbers listed above. The survey should take you less that 10 minutes to complete. In order to begin the survey, click the Continue button, which is understood as you Agree to taking the survey.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely

Matthew Gammie

Date 20 April 2011

Do you currently live in South Africa?

- Yes

- No

Age

- Younger than 20

- 20 - 24

- 25 - 29

- 30 - 34

- 35 - 39

- 40 - 44

- 45 - 49

- 50 - 54

- Older than 54

Gender

- Male

- Female

Race

- Black

- White

- Indian

- Mixed

- Other

What is your marital status?

- Married

- Divorced

- Widowed

- Single

What is your current employment status?

- Student

- Part time employed

- Full time employed

- Other

Which employment level best describes you?

- Non management employee

- Junior manager

- Middle manager

- Senior manager

Please specify your monthly income bracket

- R5 000 or less

- R5 001 - R10 000

- R10 001 - R15 000

- R15 001 - R20 000

- R20 001 - R25 000

- R25 000

How long have you had internet access, (years)?

- < 1 year

- 1 - 2

- 3 - 4

- 5 – 6

- 6 years

How much do you currently spend on clothing, (monthly)?

- < R1 000

- R1 001 - R2 000

- R2 001 - R3 000

- R3 001 - R4 000

- R4 001 - R5 000

- R5 000

Have you ever made an online purchase?

- Yes

- No

Have you ever purchased clothing online?

- Yes

- No

Were the items formal?

- Yes

- No

What items did you buy?

- Shoes

- Trousers

- Suits

- Shirts

- Jackets

- Jerseys

Would you consider buying clothing online in future?

- Yes

- No

What items would you consider buying? (You may select more than one option)

- Shoes

- Trousers

- Suits

- Shirts

- Jackets

- Jerseys

How much would you spend on clothing, online (monthly)?

- R0 - R1 000

- R1 001 - R2 000

- R2 001 - R3 000

- R3 001 - R4 000

- R4 001 - R5 000

- More than R5 000

Why would you not buy clothing online in future? (You may select more than one option)

- User friendly.

- Credit information.

- Afraid of non-delivery of items.

- Quality concerns.

- Items are not available immediately.

- Sizing and fit concerns.

- Inability to touch/feel the items before purchase.

- Other

Why would you not buy clothing online in future? (You may select more than one option)

- Quality was below standard

- I never received my goods

- I was the victim of fraud

- What I received and what I ordered were different

- Sites are difficult to navigate and not user friendly

Would you be more inclined to buy clothing online if it were customised?

- Yes

- No

What would you consider the most important customisation options? (You may select more than one option)

- Made to measure

- Material options

- Styling options

- Trimming/contrasting options

Would you be willing to pay a premium for customised clothing?

- Yes

- No

Are you currently active on social networks other than Facebook?

- Yes

- No

How many social networks are you currently active on? (You may select more than one option)

- Twitter

- Myspace

- Linkedin

- Mxit

- Only Facebook

- Other

Social network feedback increases my confidence when buying online

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

When purchasing online do you seek advice on social networks?

- Never

- Rarely

- Sometimes

- Usually

- Always

- I dont make purchases online

What feedback would you be interested in reviewing from your social network? (You may select more than one option)

- Security issues

- Quality

- Fit

- Reliability

- Variety

- User friendly

APPENDIX-2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

12 May 2011

Mr MJ Gammie (204519731)
Graduate School of Business
Faculty of Management Studies
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Gammie

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0189/011M
PROJECT TITLE: Consumer Behaviour: Factors Affecting Online Clothing Purchases In South Africa

In response to your application dated 9 May 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.
PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor: Prof AM Singh
cc. Mrs C Haddon