

**A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF SINGLE ADULT FEMALES  
WITH RESPECT TO RETAIL EVENINGWEAR IN SHOPPING MALL  
CHAIN STORES IN THE DURBAN METROPOLITAN AREA**

**By**

**TAMARA HIRAMAN**

**Submitted in Partial Compliance with the Requirements for the  
Master of Technology Degree in the Department of Fashion  
at the Durban University of Technology**

**Supervisor: Philippa Kethro**

**November 2006**

**A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF SINGLE ADULT FEMALES  
WITH RESPECT TO RETAIL EVENINGWEAR IN SHOPPING MALL  
CHAIN STORES IN THE DURBAN METROPOLITAN AREA**

By

**TAMARA HIRAMAN**

**Submitted in Partial Compliance with the Requirements for the  
Master of Technology Degree in the Department of Fashion  
at the Durban University of Technology**

I hereby declare that 'A Study of the Perceptions of Single Adult Females with Respect to Retail Eveningwear in Shopping Mall Chain Stores in the Durban Metropolitan Area' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tamara Hiranman (Miss)

30/11/2006  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ms Philippa Kethro (Supervisor)  
Masters in Technology: Fashion

30 November 2006  
Date

November 2006

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my parents for their support, patience, love and understanding throughout my study career.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the following people for their assistance throughout this research endeavour:

My supervisor, Ms Philippa Kethro, for her encouragement, guidance and patience. Her wisdom and support were a tremendous aid throughout my period of study.

My parents, Mr and Mrs K Hiranman, for their constant care and support and for affording me the opportunity to further my studies.

Sholan Maniram, for his concern and constant encouragement throughout this research endeavour.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the eveningwear preferences of single women (unmarried, divorced, widowed), between the ages of 25 and 40, who live/work in the Durban Metropolitan area. This study aimed to uncover the factors that influence the eveningwear purchase decisions of single women in the hope of proposing practical changes in retail eveningwear design. These influences were investigated in the light of social-psychological factors and centred on the concept of dress as a phenomenon of visual communication. ✓

Data collection for this study was Qualitative and took the form of interviews and questionnaires. It addressed all critical questions of this investigation, except the question of singleness and eveningwear choice, which proved a difficult subject to broach. The data was aggregated and analysed according to the aims and objectives of this study, with particular emphasis on specific garment design characteristics (silhouette, fabric, structural detail, functional detail, ornamental detail) and their social-psychological significance for the single study participants.

The findings of this investigation revealed a great deal of autonomy with regard to eveningwear choice and a distinct preference for classically styled garments as opposed to up-to-the-minute styles that are constantly changing. The practical component of this study clearly illustrates these findings through a visual medium and extends them to include observer perceptions and the situated meanings that connect singleness and eveningwear choice.

*what  
visual  
medium?*

	Page no
<b>Preliminaries</b>	i
Dedication.....	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Annexures.....	vi
List of Tables.....	vii
<b>Table of Contents</b>	
<b>Chapter 1 Orientation.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Motivation for Research.....	4
1.3. Definition of Key Terms.....	5
1.3.1. Eveningwear.....	5
1.3.2. Single Female.....	5
1.3.3. Clothing.....	5
1.3.4. Adornment.....	6
1.3.5. Appearance Management.....	7
1.3.6. Fashion.....	8
1.4. Statement of Purpose.....	9
1.5. Objectives of Study.....	9
1.6. Critical Questions in this Study.....	10
1.7. Delimitations.....	10
<b>chapter 2 Literature Review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1. Introduction.....	12
2.2. Singleness and Changing Social Perceptions.....	12
2.2.1. Why Women Choose to Remain Single.....	14
2.3. Western Culture and Social Acceptance.....	15
2.3.1. Western Culture, Ideals of Beauty and Body Image.....	16
2.3.2. Western Culture and Appropriate Dress.....	18
2.4. Fashion and the Influence of the Media.....	21
2.5. Summary.....	22
<b>Chapter 3 Data Collection and Analysis.....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1. Introduction.....	24
3.2. Choice of Research Design.....	24
3.3. Phase 1.....	25
3.3.1. Garment Selection for Focus Group Interviews.....	29
3.4. Phase 2: Focus Groups.....	31
3.4.1. Advantages of Focus Groups.....	31
3.5. Sampling Criteria for Focus Group Participants.....	31
3.5.1. Recruitment and Organisation: Focus Groups 1 and 2.....	34
3.5.2. Recruitment and Organisation: Focus Group 3.....	35

	<b>Table of Contents continued.....</b>	<b>Page no</b>
	3.6. Conducting Focus Groups.....	35
	3.7. Data Analysis.....	36
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Data Analysis and Main Findings.....</b>	<b>38</b>
	4.1. Introduction.....	38
	4.2. Evaluation of Selected Garments.....	39
	4.3. Discussion: Body Image.....	45
	4.4. Discussion: Aesthetic Fashion Expression.....	46
	4.4.1. Too Shiny/Too Glittery.....	46
	4.4.2. Shapeless.....	47
	4.4.3. Simple/Elegant.....	47
	4.5. Discussion: Comfort.....	48
	4.6. Conclusion.....	49
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Conclusions: The Rationale for Practical Research.....</b>	<b>51</b>
	5.1. Introduction.....	51
	5.2. Rationale for Practical Research Presentation.....	52
	5.2.1. Presenting Findings.....	53
	5.2.2. Extending Findings.....	54
	<b>List of References.....</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>Annexures.....</b>	<b>62</b>

<b>LIST OF ANNEXURES</b>	<b>62</b>
Annexure A: Letter of Request to Store Manager, Requesting an Interview.....	62
Annexure B: Store Manager's Agreement to Participate.....	64
Annexure C: Focus Group Participant's Agreement.....	66
Annexure D: Follow-up Questionnaire for Focus Group Participants.....	68



<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>		<b>Page no</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Table 1: Phase 1 Data Collection conducted over 15 days.....	26
	Table 2: Profile of Single Female Consumers at Shopping Mall Chain Stores in the Durban Metropolitan Area.....	28
	Table 3: Silhouettes of Selected Eveningwear Garments.....	30
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Table 4: Design Variables used in Data Analysis.....	40
	Table 5: Participants' Perception of Selected Eveningwear.....	42
	Table 6: Main Concerns of Single Female Participants.....	44
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Table 7: Examples of the Limited Range of Occasions Attended by Single Women.....	56

# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION

### 1.1. Introduction

Clothing across almost all cultures forms a significant part of non-verbal communication. It is a means through which information is transmitted about the wearer to the rest of society (Kaiser, 1990). Although various messages may be transmitted through dress it is often a symbol of status in the community; a form of non-verbal communication, accepted as the norm (Wilson, 1985:155).

Human beings possess an innate desire for approval and social acceptance (Hurlock, 1984:27). This desire affects almost all aspects of human behaviour, particularly those relating to social interaction. In most cultures dress is accepted as a form of social interaction and seen as an extension of the physical body. According to Entwistle (2000:1), this view considers dress as an essential part of daily life which greatly influences our social acceptance.

Our ideas on appropriate dress are determined by various factors. These factors shape our perceptions of dress thereby influencing our clothing decisions. While some decisions surrounding dress are made consciously, others are unconsciously based on various social and psychological factors.

Managing our appearance is an important part of daily life (Hurlock, 1984:3). It is a way in which we either expose or conceal various aspects of ourselves from society. Often we use our clothing to create a particular image in the hope of being admired or socially accepted (Rubinstein, 2001:206). The availability of appropriate clothing to create these images is therefore a key concern for many in western society. ✓✓

Relevant to this study is the single female's perception of appropriate dress, in particular, her perception of appropriate eveningwear. Informal investigation revealed that this burgeoning consumer segment (Stone, 2000:1) was insufficiently catered for by the clothing retail industry, particularly in the area of suitable eveningwear.

When women attend social occasions, they must contend with social expectations that their dress represents them to some degree (Roach and Eicher, 1965:44). This study was therefore aimed at identifying the eveningwear needs of the single female consumer, factors that influence her preferences and ultimately, purchase decisions. The literature review for this investigation examines issues surrounding clothing choice and explores various influences on body image, perception and fashion expression.

In order to gather information on sensitive issues like singleness, body image and personal preference, I chose to adopt a Qualitative approach. Data was gathered through interviews and focus groups, then transcribed and analysed to uncover influences on eveningwear choice.

The influence of singleness on eveningwear choice was difficult to establish. Investigating this influence could possibly have taken the route of in-depth, one-on-one interviews with each participant. However, while providing me with the opportunity to investigate this influence it would not have guaranteed the participants' ability to respond. While both forms of data collection have their advantages, I felt it necessary to exploit the interactive generation of data found in a focus group (Morgan, 1998:12). Interviewing participants in focus groups thus proved most practical in terms of this investigation. *(size of groups?)*

The needs of this consumer cluster were examined in terms of garment styling. By discussing specific design characteristics with participants I hoped to propose practical changes in the design of retail eveningwear. These changes were intended to benefit both the retail industry and the single female consumer.

The findings of this study were thereafter used in the practical component of this investigation. The practical component was intended to provide a visual interpretation of the findings and propose the type of eveningwear necessary to satisfy the single female's needs.

*you need some visuals in this dissertation. It lacks visual appeal and detail*

## 1.2. Motivation for Research

My initial motivation to conduct this research was prompted by an ever-deepening interest in the fields of psychology and sociology. While studying towards a Bachelor of Technology Degree in Fashion, I felt particularly drawn to aspects of social behaviour, body image and their relation to clothing selection. This interest formed the main motivation for the study.

I had always been interested in the design of women's eveningwear. I was therefore excited to learn, through reading and informal interviews with single women, that this was an area that needed attention. Informal discussions conducted with single females between the ages of 25 and 40 revealed that they were inadequately catered for in retail outlets, particularly in Durban's Metropolitan area. Further reading on aspects of clothing and social behaviour also identified the single female as an important emerging segment of the consumer market. Subsequent discussions with colleagues and supervisors convinced me of the benefits of this research to both the single female consumer and the retailers and I therefore chose this as the focus of my study, with particular emphasis on social-psychological influences and their relation to design characteristics.

✓✓

### 1.3. Definition of Key Terms

Key terms identified as most relevant to this study are briefly defined below to avoid possible imprecision of their usage throughout this study.

#### 1.3.1. Eveningwear

For the purpose of this study the term eveningwear will be used to refer to female evening occasion wear. This includes those items marketed in retail outlets as eveningwear as well as formal items that may be mixed and matched to form an evening occasion ensemble.

#### 1.3.2. Single Female

For the purpose of this study the term 'single female' will be used to refer to an adult female who is unmarried. She is considered an independent adult relying on employment for her income to provide for her needs.

#### 1.3.3. Clothing

Clothing is broadly defined as anything used to cover the body. This covering is thought to provide two levels of protection: firstly from the natural elements and secondly as a shield from public gaze (Roach and Eicher, 1965:185). The creation of a barrier between the wearer and society is in western culture sometimes viewed as an act of modesty (Kaiser, 1990:15).

Clothing is, more importantly for this study, an expressive medium through which various messages may be conveyed. Communication and interpretation of dress is thus regarded as significant, lending insight into various ideas and beliefs of the wearer (Wilson, 1985:123). The idea of clothing as a tool of non-verbal communication is thus particularly relevant to this study.

#### 1.3.4. Adornment

The term adornment commonly refers to the enhancement of physical appearance through decoration or modification (Kaiser, 1990:4). The beautification of the body is a cross-cultural practice aimed at the enhancement of one's physical features. Although methods of adornment differ from culture to culture, the primary aim remains the same; to create a more desirable physical self (Craik, 1994:153).

In most cultures adornment plays an important part in social interaction (Hurlock, 1984:4 – 6). As an extension of the physical self, it helps improve the appearance of the wearer while communicating symbolically to the rest of society. Although this form of communication is subject to cultural perception, the pursuit of social acceptance is regarded as the key motivation (Rubinstein, 2001:3).

As a key motivation for all aspects of human behaviour, the need for social acceptance plays a key role in choice of adornment. Each culture has its own ideas on appropriate dress and acceptable forms of adornment. While women

make daily decisions on whether to enhance or conceal physical characteristics, the desire for social acceptance is intensified when 'going out'. When making these choices women are drawn to particular styles of eveningwear for various reasons. Once again, the reasons behind these choices are most significant to this study.

### **1.3.5. Appearance Management**

According to Kaiser (1990:5), appearance management is best described as a process. This description adopts the belief that numerous considerations are made before deciding on appropriate dress. Such considerations as culture, status and body image thus significantly affect our choices of adornment (Wilson, 1985:118). One of the aims of this study is to identify such considerations in single female eveningwear purchase decisions.

Decisions surrounding appearance are also based on personal beliefs and past experience. These social-psychological influences are intangible yet greatly affect our choices. Our beliefs and experiences of appropriate dress are often culturally dependent, determining the design characteristics we find appealing. It is therefore our perception of 'appropriate' dress that influences our decisions to enhance or alter our physical appearance, making 'appropriateness' one of the key considerations in dress and adornment (Crane, 2000:1).



### 1.3.6. Fashion

Webb-Lupo and Lester (1987:30) provide a brief and apparently simplistic definition in stating: "Fashion is the style that is popular at the present time". Note the key words "style", "popular" and "present time" which appears frequently in studies and discussions of fashion. Sproles, quoted in Kaiser (1990:4), extends the ideas of style, popularity and time in his reference to fashion: "A dynamic social process by which new styles are created, introduced to a consuming public, and popularly accepted by that public."

Fashion is also about expressing the human body. For Entwistle (2000:1), the body forms the primary motivation for fashion when she argues that "Fashion is about bodies: It is produced, promoted and worn by bodies. It is the body that fashion speaks to and it is the body that must be dressed in almost all social encounters."

One of the objectives of this study is to establish the role fashion plays in the eveningwear decisions of single women. The study aims to establish whether fashion influences the single female's decisions and if so to what extent. This is an important consideration as most chain stores supply fashionable clothing that are not necessarily appropriate for the single female.

#### **1.4. Statement of Purpose**

This study focuses on the preferences of single adult females with regard to retail eveningwear. I have therefore attempted to accurately examine the factors that influence the eveningwear purchases of single women in the light of social-psychological issues. I have also sought to provide retailers of eveningwear with information that can contribute to their longer term merchandise planning.

#### **1.5. Objectives of this Study**

The aim of this study was to identify the factors that influenced the single females' eveningwear purchases. In an attempt to uncover these factors, the following formed the basis of the research design:

- Finding through focus interview data collection, key social-psychological factors surrounding the eveningwear purchase decisions of single adult females;
- Establishing the role fashion trends play in the single female's eveningwear purchase decisions; and
- Investigating the role body image and self-image play in relation to the perception of appropriate eveningwear.

## 1.6. Critical Questions in this Study

The purpose and objectives of this study devolve upon the following critical questions:

- How is meaning attached to evening wear styles by the 'solo female' and what are the social-psychological factors that impact most strongly on her eveningwear purchase decisions?
- Where does the lack of congruence between eveningwear merchandise and the requirements of the 'solo female' lie?
- How do body image, self-image and social pressure impact on the eveningwear purchase decisions of the 'solo female'?
- How does fashion trend influence eveningwear purchase decisions?
- How are social occasions differentiated in terms of appropriate dress?

## 1.7. Delimitations

- This study was restricted to single adult females between the ages of 25 and 40 in the Durban Metropolitan area focusing on their preferred design characteristics.

*X*

*what about the numbers in your sample groups?*

- The study did not take into consideration the ethnicity and race of participants in this investigation.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to uncover the various factors affecting the eveningwear decisions of single women. Because of this focus it was important to examine the effect singleness may have on their attitudes and perceptions.

Literature on consumer behaviour is vast and varied. I was therefore faced with the challenge of selecting the most relevant theory for this review. I have highlighted a variety of perspectives and views that focus on western culture, with particular reference to metropolitan societies.

In the first section of this chapter I examine factors that affect the decision to remain single versus the social perception of singleness. I then look at western cultural notions of social acceptance that embrace physical beauty, body image and appropriate dress. Next I briefly discuss fashion and the influence of the media. Finally I sum up these perspectives.

#### 2.2. Singleness and Changing Social Perceptions

In the past, singleness has been seen as a negative status, particularly for women. It has been viewed as an 'alternate lifestyle' or as a transitional period before marriage as opposed to a lifestyle decision (Eitzen, 2005:441). The

reason behind this negative attitude was society's belief that a woman's social and economic status was enhanced through marriage. For most married women, this meant limited social activity and freedom, as well as complete dependence on their husbands' income. Dependence on a spouse for money or status meant that a married woman's identity was hinged on that of her husband.

Although singleness has been regarded as a negative status, an increase in the number of 'deviant' lifestyles has promoted a change in social attitude. Together with changing gender roles, this new attitude has created an improved environment for the single lifestyle, enabling women to become self-supporting members of society (Wilson, 1985). This change is of particular importance to this study. As independent members of society, single women are now in control of their own identity and image.

The increased role of women in the western economy has also brought about opportunities for career advancement and increased financial freedom. This newfound financial independence and social status has undermined the necessity of marriage for economic purposes, shifting the motives for marriage (Stein, 1976:97-98).

The change in social perceptions has become evident in the accommodations made for the single lifestyle (Bianchi and Casper, 2000:2). Singles apartments, singles vacations and singles consciousness-awareness groups are a testament to altered attitudes and a decrease in social stigma.

### 2.2.1. Why Women Choose to Remain Single

Freedom and independence are strong motivating forces in the decision to remain single (Knox, 1985:170). Educated women, in particular, see their youth as the appropriate time to establish and further their careers, instead of settling down. Studies have also revealed that single women are more likely to advance in their chosen profession than their married colleagues (Baca Zinn and Eitzen, 2005:445). This is probably due to the absence of family burdens often borne by married women (Kephart, 1981:509). Thus, by delaying or rejecting marriage, single women not only increase their chances of succeeding in their chosen career, but gain increased social status.

Apart from more rewarding careers single women are free to lead active social lives. They are able to spend more time with friends or pursue other personal goals unrestricted by family, children or partners (Allen-Benton, 2004:38). This shift in the social expectations of women, from family-oriented to career-oriented, is likely to have a profound effect on the attitudes of single women, making them more aware of personal needs and preferences.

Other influences on singleness are largely psychological. Sometimes these factors are beyond the control of single women and in these instances singleness is not a lifestyle choice. These factors range from exposure to a single parent home, a fear of intimacy, disability or the simple inability to find a suitable partner (Gardner, 1999).

Women who are single for the afore-mentioned reasons may not reflect the attitudes of women who are single by personal choice. For example, women who are single as a result of such circumstances may base their eveningwear decisions on the prospect of meeting potential partners.

### **2.3 Western Culture and Social Acceptance**

Clothing in western culture is often viewed as more than a body covering; it is a means of self-expression (McCracken, 1995:58-60). As Brydon and Niessen have also noted, the way we dress serves as an outward display of our personality, morals and individual beliefs (1998:305). While the expression of these beliefs may not always be conscious, it plays a key role in our clothing purchase decisions.

Ideas and associations surrounding dress are acquired impressions (Barnard, 1996:53). These accumulated ideas are internalised and applied to almost all aspects of physical adornment and appearance management. While our beliefs surrounding these issues may vary; the general intention is to create an image that would be considered socially acceptable.

According to Hurlock (1984:27) western culture greatly increases the desire to be noticed. This stems from the desire to express ones individuality through dress; an accepted form of self expression in western culture Due to her independent lifestyle, the single female's image may possibly reflect her personal desires and not a desire for social acceptance.



### **2.3.1. Western Culture, Ideals of Beauty and Body Image**

From an early age young women are taught to focus on their looks and appearance, learning to adorn themselves to become more desirable (Guy, Green and Banim, 2001:26). They are made to believe that this desirability is achieved through their ability to mirror the physical ideals of their culture. By adopting these ideals as their own, members of society restrict the range of acceptable variations within that culture (Roach and Eicher, 1965:34)

Every culture holds different ideals of physical beauty. These ideals are influenced by the activities and practices that go to make up lifestyle trends. In recent years western culture has placed great emphasis on physical health and the pursuit of the 'perfect' body. This trend has encouraged a preference for slender, athletic body types in men and women of western societies (Rubinstein, 2001:223).

The Western cultural focus on healthy living is clearly reflected in the media (Crane, 2000:10). Glossy magazines popularly endorse new forms of exercise, diet and a religious devotion to skin-care, promoting society's ideal of physical beauty. With this increased awareness comes increased pressure to pursue a healthier lifestyle of a physically flawless body (Rubinstein, 2001:248). The media offers women a wide range of advice on socially acceptable consumption. This advice often centres on specific body types; the identification of its flaws, and the various ways to disguise them. Although this advice sounds less harmful than the promotion of an atypical ideal, it nonetheless maintains the

belief that a woman's self worth is determined by her physical appearance (Wilson, 1985:123-124).

Through constant exposure to the ideals of western culture women come to believe that there is only one way to look (Ferguson cited in Grogan, 1999:95-96). But for most women in western society, the idealised slender physique is unattainable. This makes the pursuit of this body type irrational and in some cases harmful. The promotion of a lifestyle epitomised by unrealistic physical ideals encourages women to pursue physical perfection regardless of their own body type and genetic make-up (Guy, Green and Banim, 2001:88).

Failure to meet the standard of beauty set by our culture results in lowered self-esteem and negative body image (Grogan, 1999:100). This negative image impacts upon the ability to make decisions related to the body and aspects of appearance management (Lo Castro, 1996:22). The ability to differentiate between flattering and unflattering garment styling can become impaired, affecting purchase decisions.

Because single women have more time to pursue personal goals, the pursuit of physical health may well be of key concern. The media's current focus on health and physical well-being could therefore be a major influence on her body image and appearance management decisions.

The unattainable standard of beauty in western culture may not however have such a great effect on single women. While it is normal to seek confirmation of

one's status through comparison, the autonomy of singleness may be an indication of the single woman's disregard for social pressure to conform.

### 2.3.2 Western Culture and Appropriate Dress

Women learn that being 'appropriately' dressed is important to feeling confident and comfortable in a social environment (Guy, Green and Banim, 2001:27). The selection of 'appropriate' clothing however is not merely based on one's perception of appropriate dress but their perception of their physical body too.

One of way<sup>s</sup> in which women in western societies attempt to cope with media standards of physical beauty is through dress and adornment decisions. ←

According to Fiore and Kimle (1997:30-31) consumers perceive garments in relation to their own body image. The way they feel about themselves is reflected in the garment design characteristics they prefer as well as those they reject. Their perception is based on personal experienced and observed interaction between specific garment styling and their own body type. Thus, they develop preconceived ideas about garment design characteristics in relation to their own bodies.

In an attempt to create the desired image they purchase what they consider to be figure-flattering garments. Choosing the 'right' clothing can be seen as an alternative to permanent forms of body modification (Spillane, 1995:11). This allows women to create the illusion of a perfectly proportioned body through the masterful assembly of garments. This is one aspect of what is considered

'appropriate' dress, where the physical body projects an 'appropriate' image at a social engagement.

Another aspect of being 'appropriately' dressed lies in the practices and activities of western culture. Because dress is a social practice, time, place and activity are represented in clothing, and the 'right dress' is that which is considered both socially acceptable and occasion appropriate (Guy, Green and Banim, 2001:86).

Clothing worn to an engagement during the day differs from that worn in the evening. The signs and symbols of western culture require eveningwear to be glamorous and attractive and therefore only appropriate for particular engagements. This makes context of dress an important consideration in clothing purchase decisions. In most cultures, meeting these social expectations enables to us to feel comfortable in a social environment (McCracken, 1995:59).

Such cultural values are widely adopted and understood, making them symbols that can be interpreted by others. These symbols give cultural meaning to neutral artefacts, like clothing, making them an interpretative part of social interaction. In this way, certain appearances or material clothing artefacts come to represent shared values within a culture (Kaiser, 1990:49). Because of this clothing choice is affected by social expectations, which differ for particular social engagements.

Hollander (cited in Dant, 1999:101) argues that freedom, for women, is not achieved through dress alone but through social reaction to the accepted norms of our culture. In western culture, the feminine identity is hinged on the ability to display feminine attributes in a social environment (Craik, 1994:79). Women in western culture therefore seek to display feminine characteristics, particularly at social engagements, where judgements about their appearance can be made. This social orientation makes women more conscious of their clothing and adornment choices than their male counterparts, making dress for most women, an increasingly important part of social interaction

Clothing choices are then based on feelings about the physical self and cultural understandings of appropriate occasion dress. Hurlock (1984:114) describes clothing choice as a compromise between individual desires and the socially defined expectations of our culture. Our clothing choices therefore act as indication of ones conformity or resistance to the socially defined expectations of our culture (Rubinstein, 2001:3).

Due to the single woman's increased freedom and independence, she is liable to experience more social interaction than married women. On one hand, this increased interaction might make the single woman more aware of her physical appearance and adornment preferences. Knowing that she will be observed more frequently may increase the desire for social acceptance, emphasising the need for 'appropriate' eveningwear choices. On the other hand, greater commitment to personal needs and preferences may have the opposite effect.

## 2.4. Fashion and the Influence of the Media

The media is regarded as a powerful tool of modern culture (Kaiser, 1985:51). It is a means through which information is transmitted and a reflection of social trends.

Men and women depicted in fashion media are often seen as society's 'ideals' of physical beauty (Rubinstein, 2001:208). Fashion models are therefore widely regarded as the standard to which western society should aspire. Frequent exposure to this standard encourages the belief that to look good in fashionable/trendy clothing, one needs to look like a fashion model.

Modern media also places great emphasis on the pursuit of youth. A youthful appearance and a perfect life are shown by the media as inseparable (Gerber, 2003:1). Aging, a natural part of life, is persistently portrayed as a dreadful fate. It is no longer acceptable in western culture to age naturally or without the aid of various youth-preserving products (Rubinstein, 2001:227-230). The effects of promoting a standard of beauty unattainable by the average women are often underestimated (Ware, 1995:1). In some instances it results in a lowered sense of self-worth which leads to an unhealthy obsession with physical appearance and beauty.

Fashion is aesthetically associated in the media with youth, physical perfection and, in most instances, health. In addition, the ability of the media to provide up-

to-date information that capture lifestyle trends and makes it not only a yardstick for modern living, but an influential part of modern culture (Grogan, 1999:94).

Fashion trends are also often associated in the media with lifestyle contexts and leisure occasions, which must in turn have some effect on clothing purchase. For single women, the question of how fashion may be connected to media portrayal of eveningwear is relevant to their purchase decisions – they may look to fashion trends in the media as a point of reference but not necessarily as the image to which they aspire. This connection is also significant for retailer merchandising of eveningwear.

## 2.5. Summary

The broad issues discussed in this review constitute possible social-psychological influences on eveningwear purchase decisions for single women. These factors relate directly to feelings about the body either by the wearer, by an audience or society as a whole. Issues relating body image and social acceptance feature throughout this review as an invariable consideration in clothing purchase decisions.

Body image is possibly one of the most influential factors on our clothing decisions (Rubinstein, 2001:230). The mental image we have of our bodies determines which physical characteristics we choose to highlight and which we choose to conceal. Although the image we have of our bodies may not always

be accurate, it nevertheless plays an important role in our dress and adornment decisions (Kaiser, 1990:9).

Overall, western society places great pressure on its members to conform to its ideals. This social pressure, coupled with a desire for approval, leads many in society to seek various methods of physical modification. Clothing is one of the most easily modified ways of gaining social acceptance in western society. It offers both a physical covering and a means of self-expression, within the confines of cultural ideals.

The relationship between fashion and social acceptance is also of crucial importance in western culture. The perception and interpretation of fashion trends plays a role either of conformity or resistance to conformity. The decision to deviate from fashion trends in favour of alternate styles of dress is often determined by physical, biographical and sometimes geographical factors affecting choice and social acceptance.

Combined, these factors form the base around which all decisions on appearance management are made. Single women's evening occasion dress preferences need to be considered in the light of these factors.



## CHAPTER 3

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. Introduction

Significant to this study were the underlying factors that influence clothing choice and ultimately purchase decisions. While factors affecting choice are vast and varying, body image and social acceptance may be viewed as constant.

In order to explore how these factors influence the single female's purchase decisions, I adopted a qualitative approach to this study. Qualitative techniques are based on the analysis of verbal and non-verbal responses and are most useful in an attempt to understand concepts and ideas within a specific culture or social setting (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:7). In this instance a qualitative approach afforded me first-hand experience of the attitudes associated with single female's eveningwear purchase decisions.

#### 3.2. Choice of Research Design

The data collection for this study was conducted in three phases. While each phase dealt with a different research sample the data was inter-linked in an attempt to sustain credible arguments throughout this investigation.

*The first phase* of this investigation dealt with retail store managers. Data gathered during interviews with these managers helped create a profile of single women in the Durban Metropolitan area. This phase also dealt with the sampling of twelve garments used as a projective stimulus in this investigation.

*The second phase* dealt with single women themselves, focusing of their preferences regarding research garments and the social-psychological influences connected to these preferences. This phase involved three focus group sessions in which selected eveningwear garments were used as a projective stimulus.

*The third phase* again dealt with single women in a group interview. This interview was used to make propositions about the socially situated meanings that connect singleness and eveningwear choice.

### **3.3. Phase 1**

Data collection for this phase commenced in 2004. Data gathered during this phase was used for the assembly of a profile of single female consumers in the Durban Metropolitan area. This profile provided a base around which all other aspects of the study were formed as well as a means through which theoretical views could be verified.

In order to assemble this profile I obtained information from sources selected for their ability to provide accurate information on the single female

consumer. *The store managers of four chain stores* were therefore identified as most qualified to provide data on this consumer cluster.

Selection of the four retail chains was determined through informal interviews with single women who worked/shopped in the Durban Metropolitan area and were dissatisfied with retail eveningwear. The four most popular chain stores mentioned by the women were thus identified as appropriate for this study. By focussing the study on a specific area (Durban Metropolitan) I believed that I would be able to sustain valid arguments and suggest feasible changes in the design of retail eveningwear.

The managers of the four chain stores were first contacted telephonically. During initial contact the store managers were briefed on the nature of the study and the type of assistance that was required. Once satisfied with the objectives of my study, arrangements were made to meet on specific dates and times to conduct their interviews.

**Table 1 Phase 1 Data Collection conducted over 15 days**

<b>Chain Store</b>	<b>Branch</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Manager</b>
Store A	Pavilion	14/09/2004	A
Store B	Gateway	29/09/2004	B
Store C	Pavilion	17/09/2004	C
Store D	Pavilion	14/09/2004	D

To ensure that the data collection was efficient each store manager was contacted telephonically to confirm the date and time of their interview. On arrival for the interviews, the store managers were once again briefed on the research topic and presented with a letter of request (see Annexure A) and written agreement. The agreement stated that the manager was willing to assist me in my study by providing information on the single female consumer, peculiar to his/her chain store and understood that the interview would be recorded for analytical purposes. By signing the agreement the manager also consented to the use of the information in a written report (see Annexure B).

Interviews with store managers were recorded by means of field notes. At the end of each interview, I discussed the relevance of each question and how the responses would be used. The managers were informed that their responses helped provide a foundation for the rest of the study. They were also informed that the information would be used to assemble sampling criteria for the second phase of data collection.

After the interviews, the store managers were asked for further assistance in the form of clothing sponsorships to assist me to conduct the focus group interviews. Once they had obtained permission from their respective Head Offices, garments in the appropriate sizes were made available to me for use in the investigation.

**Table 2 Profile of Single Female Consumers at Shopping Mall Chain  
Stores in the Durban Metropolitan Area**

<b>KEY QUESTIONS</b>	<b>STORE A</b>	<b>STORE B</b>	<b>STORE C</b>	<b>STORE D</b>
<b>THE AVERAGE AGE RANGE OF THE SINGLE FEMALE CONSUMER PARTICULAR TO YOUR STORE</b>	25 – 50 years old	18 – 28 years old	18 – 35 years old	14 – 32years old
<b>THE AVERAGE INCOME BRACKET OF THE SINGLE FEMALE CONSUMER PARTICULAR TO YOUR STORE</b>	R 4000 – R 25000 per month	R 3000 - unknown per month	R 3000 – R 7000 per month	R 3000 – R 25 000 per month
<b>A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SINGLE FEMALE CONSUMER PARTICULAR TO YOUR STORE</b>	Professional women, confident shopper	Modern, career women	Young, fashionable, trendy	Trendy, career oriented women

There is a huge lack  
of visual detail here.  
The dissertation needs  
illustrations of the garments,  
silhouettes and photos etc.

The preceding table is representative of the store managers' responses to interview questions during Phase 1 of the data collection process. The table reflects a concise profile of single female consumers particular to each of the four chain stores in the Durban Metropolitan area.

### **3.3.1. Garment Selection for Focus Group Interviews**

Having established a participant profile, I now sought to establish criteria for garment sampling. The selection of garments for the focus interviews group interviews formed the second part of Phase 1 in this investigation. The garment selection process followed these guidelines:

- the identification of eveningwear available in each store, according to silhouette variety (a wide-leg trouser against a narrow-leg trouser); and
- the identification of commonly available silhouettes in pants, skirts, tops and dresses across stores.

A week before scheduled interviews with the store managers, I compiled a list of the eveningwear available in the four chain stores and their silhouettes. Eveningwear was thereafter selected with the intention to borrow at least three garments from each store. The list of selected garments was compiled based on the eveningwear available at the Westville Shopping Mall in Durban.

The following silhouettes were identified as common to each of the four chain stores:

*— you should show the actual silhouettes*

**Table 3 Silhouettes of Selected Eveningwear Garments**

<b>GARMENTS</b>	<b>SILHOUETTES</b>		
<b>PANTS</b>	Bootleg	Wide leg	Slim Fit
<b>SKIRT</b>	Flared	A-line	Handkerchief
<b>TOP</b>	Boob-tube	Camisole	Asymmetric
<b>DRESS</b>	Fishtail	A-line	Handkerchief

The presentation of garments to the focus group participants was intended to provide insight into their eveningwear preferences. By offering a display of eveningwear available in the chain stores, I could obtain valuable information relating to specific design characteristics. Critical evaluations of selected eveningwear would also provide me with definite guidelines for the practical component of this study.

The eveningwear available in the chain stores was examined in terms of five design characteristics: silhouette, fabric, functional detail, structural detail and ornamental detail. The actual garment selection, however, was based on silhouette. This ensured that the selection was unbiased and representative of eveningwear across all four chain stores.



### 3.4. Phase 2: Focus Groups

Focus groups are an extremely effective means of data collection. They bring together members of a specific group to discuss issues important to the researcher (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The facilitator/researcher guides the discussion around key issues of the investigation while helping respondents elaborate on their responses where necessary. The discussion in a focus group is mainly informal with participants able to speak in an uninhibited manner (Flick, 1998:122-124).

*You should mention the workable size of a focus group.*

#### 3.4.1. Advantages of Focus Groups

- useful in attempts to understand the breadth, range and scope of an issue;
- when seeking an “insider view”, greatly increasing validity; and
- when probing for information on sensitive issues such as body image and self-image (Greenbaum, 2000:20).

### 3.5. Sampling Criteria for Focus Group Participants

A sampling frame for potential focus group participants was assembled subsequent to interviews with the store managers. Using their single woman consumer profile as a guideline, I then considered a number of further participant sampling factors: This provided a valuable basis for the selection of focus group participants.

The age range of focus group participants was refined through data extensively sourced online through the Internet. This data took the form of articles and web pages on existing studies related to this investigation (Ganahl, 2004:1-3; LookSmart's FindArticles, 2000). These sources revealed that international studies conducted on the single female market were restricted to women aged between 25 and 40. This age range fell within that suggested by the retail managers. I there found it viable as a sampling criterion.

The dress size of the single women selected for this study was also important. I decided that it was necessary to place a limitation on the dress size of potential focus group respondents. This would ensure that a minimum number of items could be borrowed without affecting the validity of the data. Recruiting participants that were larger than a size 38 might have introduced factors not relating strictly to eveningwear choice and singleness. I considered that larger respondents might experience increased dissatisfaction based on the unavailability of size rather than style. Potential participants were therefore required to be between sizes 34 and 38. ✓

Another significant factor identified during phase 1 was income. According to the managers, most women who shopped at their stores were career oriented and sought eveningwear reflecting their status but still undeniably feminine. Being confident and sure of what they wanted meant that little assistance was required from staff. Money was also less of a concern when compared with those consumers who were married or had children. It was also interesting to note that most single women who shopped at shopping mall chain stores earned a salary of R3000 per month and upward.

It appeared that the single woman's attitude toward retail eveningwear was not restrained by their income capacity or their age. Interviews with the store managers indicated that two out of four stores were looking to increase sales in eveningwear. Both these facts suggested that there was a growing demand from single females to purchase eveningwear.

After careful consideration of the store managers' responses and secondary information, I decided on the following sample for my study:

- single women (unmarried, widowed, divorced);
- aged between 25 and 40 years of age;
- between dress sizes 34 and 38; and
- employed with a salary of more than R3000 per month.

— How many  
single  
women ?

This profile was used to screen potential respondents to ensure they met the required criteria.

### 3.5.1. Recruitment and Organisation: Focus Groups 1 and 2

Advertisements were posted outside three venues in the Durban Metropolitan area. The selected venues of a gym, hair salon and beauty salon seemed logical choices as all three dealt with aspects of physical well-being and appearance management. However, response to the advertisements was poor. Whereas I had hoped to receive a minimum of twenty responses, I only received two. I therefore sought alternate means of participant recruitment.

The new method of recruitment had to ensure that a <sup>vague</sup> large number of potential respondents could be reached quickly and conveniently. In order to achieve this I enlisted the help of a volunteer. The volunteer helped by providing me with a list of names of single women who were willing to participate in this study.

→ How many eventually arrived?

Arranging the focus groups through a volunteer presented advantages and a few disadvantages. An important advantage of using an acquaintance as an intermediary to recruit participants was being able to avoid mistrust or hesitation to participate (Krueger and King, 1998:52). Each selected participant was asked to invite a friend or acquaintance who also fitted the sampling criteria, to attend the focus group session. An advantage of this method was that not all the participants knew each other and therefore could not base their discussions on the assumptions found in friendships (Morgan, 1998:67-68). This arrangement also ensured that all participants would attend the focus group at the scheduled date and time. I had been granted permission to conduct the

focus groups in a boardroom in the city centre, making it convenient for the focus group participants to attend.

*Comment on this first meeting.  
- number etc?*

A disadvantage of using an intermediary was the inability to communicate directly with the participants and I therefore relied on the volunteer to screen potential participants during the course of her working day.

### 3.5.2. Recruitment and Organisation: Focus Group 3

*size?*

The third focus group was organised by me. In this instance I recruited a family member, who fitted the sampling criteria requirements, to help with the recruitment process. The recruitment technique used in this instance was the recruiting of 'friends by friends,' whereby each selected participant invited a friend or acquaintance to attend the focus group. This meant that at least two people in the group would know each other.

Each recruit was contacted telephonically to confirm her willingness to participate as well as her compliance with sampling criteria. Once this was established arrangements were made to meet at a date and time convenient to all participants. It was agreed that the focus group be conducted at the home of one of the participants to provide a relaxed setting.

*what size was it?  
How did it differ from  
the previous focus groups?*

### 3.6. Conducting Focus Groups

At the commencement of each meeting, the group was provided with a clear explanation of the investigation. They were also informed on how the data

would be used and of the possible significance it could have on the design of retail eveningwear. Each participant was then presented with an agreement confirming their willingness to participate in the study, their understanding that they would participate in a group interview and consenting to the information being used for research purposes (see Annexure C).

Each discussion followed a flexible guideline that ensured key points of the investigation were covered. I guided the discussion around these issues while allowing the conversation to continue naturally. ✓✓

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

The data recorded during each focus group meeting was transcribed for later analysis. After sorting the data and conducting a brief analysis, I found the data lacking in depth and therefore insufficient to sustain a plausible argument. It was therefore necessary to conduct a second data collection in the form of a follow-up questionnaire (see Annexure D).

The objective behind the questionnaire was to clarify statements, preferences and general vagueness overlooked during focus group discussions. The questionnaire comprised closed and open-ended questions and was based on participants' responses during the focus group interviews.

While focus group interview data relating to evening garments, body image and fashion could be confirmed through these questionnaires, data relating to evening occasions and venues was inconclusive.

The questionnaires for focus groups 1 and 2 were administered by a volunteer while the questionnaires for focus group 3 were administered by me. The questionnaires were collected after a week and the data sorted into tables. Each table displayed combined data from the focus group discussions and the questionnaires, providing a stronger basis from which conclusions could be drawn.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND MAIN FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Introduction

In Chapter 3 data collection involved three phases: In the first phase data related to sampling profiles of single women and in the second phase investigated single women. The third phase of data collection related to single women and singleness with regard to eveningwear choice. This phase, however, is linked to the practical component of this study which is discussed later in this chapter. The data analysis and findings presented in this chapter deal with Phase 2 of data collection.

This study sought to identify eveningwear most appealing to single women. More importantly it sought to identify the social-psychological factors influencing their purchase decisions. Identifying design characteristics most preferred by single women was of key importance, as I had aimed to propose practical changes in eveningwear design based on these findings.

The following analysis focuses on social-psychological influences on singleness and evening occasion wear. Twelve single women were asked about these concerns during focus group discussions. These issues were not addressed directly but through the use of eveningwear garments as a projective stimulus.

*all focus groups?  
The same 12 women?  
NOT CLEAR*



The participants' assessment of the garments thus provided insight into the various internal and external factors surrounding eveningwear purchase decisions.

Participants' responses to the garments were thereafter aggregated and analysed with appropriate theory in accordance with the aims and objectives of this study. Establishing links between singleness and the role it played in eveningwear purchase decisions was not easy. I was unable to ask direct questions of participants about the relationship between their preferences and their being single. It was therefore only possible at this stage to identify trends in the data that might reflect these attitudes.

#### **4.2. Evaluation of Selected Garments**

The following table is representative of participants' responses to selected eveningwear presented during the focus group discussions. The responses were aggregated and distributed under categories that best addressed the key issues of this study. These categories are design variables of silhouette, fabric, functional detail, structural detail and ornamental detail. These variables constitute the basic ways in which one garment differs from another.

Lack of visual detail

**Table 4 Design Variables used in Data Analysis**

<b>DESIGN VARIABLES</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>SILHOUETTE</b>	This is the outline of the garment that defines the extent of its form either distinctly or indistinctly.
<b>FABRIC</b>	Fabric refers to the cloth or material used in the garment's construction. The fabric may be made of natural or synthetic fibres depending on the function of the manufactured garment.
<b>STRUCTURAL DETAIL</b>	The structural detail of a garment determines how it is constructed or put together to fulfil its function. This determines the structural shapes and parts of the garment, how these parts will be put together and how they will relate to each other in terms of fit.
<b>FUNCTIONAL DETAIL</b>	Functional detail deals with the way the garment 'works'. It is therefore concerned with functioning parts of a garment that contribute to the overall effectiveness of item. For example, a pocket that holds things or a zipper or button that opens or closes to allow the wearer to get in or out of the garment would be regarded as functional details.
<b>ORNAMENTAL DETAIL</b>	Ornamental or decorative details are for aesthetic purposes only. These details thus affect neither the fit nor the performance of the garment and are therefore subordinate to functional or structural design. However, it is important for these details to compliment each other in terms of design.

According to Davis (1980:12-19) consumers perceive these design characteristics in terms of their own body. This perception is often based on interaction between the garment and the body. Thus consumers make purchase decisions based on the design characteristics of a garment as well as successful interaction between the garment and their own physical characteristics.

The following table offers a detailed explanation of the participant's perception in terms of these five design variables. I divided these responses into five categories to simplify the analytical process and to assist in identifying criteria for the practical component of this study.

**Table 5 Participants' Perception of Selected Eveningwear**

<b>Garment</b>	<b>Silhouette</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Structural Detail Functional Detail Ornamental Detail</b>	<b>Body Image</b>
<b>Black A-line Skirt with Net Underskirt</b>	A-line skirts makes you look fatter	Feels <sup>?</sup> poky Feels itchy Like the satin Satin's okay	Don't like the style	Would make you look fatter
<b>Black and Silver Handkerchief Skirt (short)</b>	Looks untidy Looks raggedy	Feels comfortable Too shiny Don't like the fabric Fabric feels nice	Don't like Handkerchief hemline Like hems one length	For the young Wouldn't try it on in a shop Too fashionable
<b>Black Six-panelled Chiffon Skirt with Slits</b>		Like the fabric	Panels make you look fatter Slits are too revealing Dislike the panels Too many high slits	Good for skinny people Hide bad spots Must have good legs Too revealing Hide the bum and hips
<b>Black Satin-Look Pants</b>		Feels too stiff Looks nice Feels to thick	Needs a smart belt Dislike the pockets and waistband Pants look too long Looks like men's pants	Would wear it Looks masculine
<b>Black Shimmer Pants</b>	Simple	Don't like the fabric Worried about snagging Worried about pulling Too glittery Too shiny	Looks nice Simple styling	Wouldn't wear it Okay for the evening
<b>Black Slim-fit Pants with Diamante' Detail</b>	Has no shape	Nice	Sets nicely Fits nicely Prefer detail at hem rather than waist Like the diamante' buckle detail	For someone who likes showing off Too fashionable Made for skinny women For someone with the perfect body Looks comfortable For teenagers For women who go clubbing
<b>Black and Burgundy Boob-tube</b>	Nice Simple	Looks scratchy Too shiny Nice colour (black and burgundy)	Like the vintage look of the garment Dislike the rose detail Dislike the ribbon detail Prefer straps to strapless	Doesn't suit my body Looks romantic Takes you back in time Feels to fat to wear the top
<b>Grey Asymmetrical Top with Chain Detail</b>		Dull colour Elegant Colour Like the fabric	Dislike the chain as a strap Don't like asymmetrical style Like the chain as a strap Style is elegant Prefer styling to be even not asymmetrical	Pretty but wouldn't wear it For a well-proportioned body Wouldn't buy it Wouldn't wear it Need a good body to wear it
<b>Pink, Black and Silver Camisole</b>		Stretchy fabrics make her stomach look fat Too shiny Like the fabric Like the colour (pink)	Like hems one length Like the style	Nice for a good body Stretchy fabric shows stomach rolls Needs more support for the bust Would like to buy one
<b>Purple Handkerchief Dress with Diamante' Detail</b>		Nice colour (purple) Too clingy	Would look better as a top Prefer hems one length Too revealing Nice style	Must have breasts to wear it Need a good body to wear it For young women Draws attention to the knees and legs Too revealing For skinny, confident women Fits to snug on the body Shows the flaws
<b>Royal Blue Cowl Neck Dress</b>	Simple	Too shiny Too glittery Irritating fabric Cling to the stomach	Nice length (long/full-length)	Clings to the stomach Clings to the bulges Wouldn't wear it
<b>Pink Halter-neck Dress with Fishtail Silhouette</b>	Elegant Don't like fishtail shape	Feels poky Too much glitter Too shiny Feels heavy Feels uncomfortable Like the colour	Like hems one length Don't like a seam across hip line Like halter necks Like the style	Don't like a seam across hip line Conscious of stomach Not good for her body Feels heavy and uncomfortable

The following table (6) was derived from Table 5. This table shows three trends that emerged prominently in Table 5, namely the categories **Body Image**, **Aesthetic Fashion Expressions** and **Comfort**.

The first category, **Body Image**, is one of the key focuses of this study and as such, features as a major influence throughout this investigation and remained an independent category. According to Fiore and Kimle (1997:30), consumers judge apparel based on the way they feel about their own bodies. Their satisfaction with a particular garment is therefore dependent on aesthetically pleasing interaction between the body and the garment. Based on this theory, the twelve single women were shown a range of different eveningwear garments with differentiated body emphasis

In Table 6, the column on **Body Image** deals with concerns surrounding the physical body in relation to eveningwear. The column on **Aesthetic Fashion Expression** looks at aspects of design, perceived and interpreted in relation to the body and the column on **Comfort** deals with physical comfort as well as psychological/perceived comfort in their preferred eveningwear choices.

**Table 6 Main Concerns of Single Female Participants**

<b>Body Image Concerns</b>	<b>Aesthetic Fashion Expression</b>	<b>Comfort</b>
Does not want to appear larger than she actually is	The garment is too glittery/shiny	The fabric feels poky
The size of her bust	The garment looks untidy/raggedy	The fabric feels itchy against the skin
Not being young enough to wear particular styles of eveningwear	The garment is too revealing	The fabric feels too stiff
Not being thin enough to wear particular styles of eveningwear	Garment looks shapeless	The fabric is too thick
Wanting to conceal those parts of her body she considers flaws	The styling of the garment is simple	Garment lacks support for the bust
Not wanting to show her legs	The garment looks elegant	Garment is too revealing
Not wanting to expose too much of her body	The garment looks feminine and pretty	Fabric feels heavy and uncomfortable
Not wanting to look unfeminine	Likes the feel of satin	
Not wanting to be perceived as a show-off		
Not having what she would consider the 'perfect body'		
Not having what she'd consider to be a 'well-proportioned' body		
The garment is too revealing		

### 4.3. Discussion: Body Image

The data analysis revealed numerous body image concerns. These concerns dealt with aspects of the physical body as well as the way they could be perceived in the eveningwear based on their body shape and size. It also appeared that these women assessed eveningwear in terms of their own bodies. A decision to purchase would therefore have a lot to do with interaction between their bodies and the garments as well as the image it might portray.

There was a clear indication that participants were indeed affected by the aesthetic ideals of western culture. The use of the terms skinny, young and perfect body to describe the type of person able to wear a particular garment was clearly a result of social pressure and could be considered a description of the aesthetic ideals of western culture. Participants' responses also indicated concern over their image and how they are perceived in their clothing. It was also evident that they looked to conceal those parts of their body atypical to the western aesthetic ideal to create a more socially acceptable image.

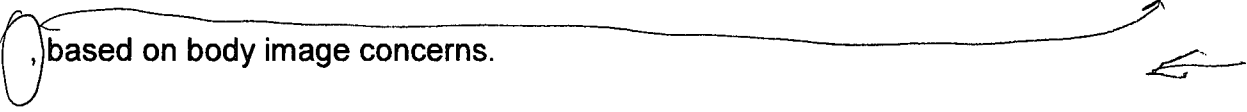
The body image concerns expressed by the participants appear to be the same as those expressed by women in general. Because the question of singleness was not answered by the data collection the researcher could only deduce that because body image plays a role in the eveningwear purchases of women in general it must therefore play a role in the eveningwear purchases of single women.



#### 4.4. Discussion: Aesthetic Fashion Expression

The data in this section deals more specifically with the single women's interpretation of eveningwear design characteristics. The interpretation of these characteristics, however, is still linked to body image. This section looks at the respondents' description of a garment as an insight into their fashion needs,

based on body image concerns.



##### 4.4.1. Too Shiny/Too Glittery

The description of garments as too shiny or too glittery was common during the focus group discussions. This is ironic because eveningwear fabrics and eveningwear in general has some degree of 'glitter'. However this did provide valuable information on the participant's attitude and preferences.

The use of these terms served as an indication that they did not like garments that were too flashy or drew attention to themselves and their bodies. The range of body image concerns expressed by the participants could be an indication that they would not feel comfortable 'standing out' in a crowd. This could once again be linked to social acceptance and not wanting to be considered unacceptable.

#### **4.4.2. Shapeless**

The description of the garment as shapeless tells us about what the single female expects from her eveningwear. This description also has more to do with the physical body than the aesthetic appeal of the garment itself. In western culture being 'shapeless' is considered an undesirable physical characteristic. By choosing a shapeless garment single women would be projecting an undesirable image that fails to enhance the positive characteristics of their body.

Choosing to wear a shapeless garment would be unflattering to any body shape, regardless of body size or proportion. Not wanting to wear a shapeless garment tells us that it is not enough for a garment to hide perceived body flaws but important to accentuate those physical characteristics the wearer considers attractive.

It is also important that the garment adds to the overall image of the wearer. Thus the garment is not only a body covering but also an aid in the creation of a socially acceptable and desirable image. Thus we see that fashion expression has more to do with the body and the single female's psychological needs than the garments themselves.

#### **4.4.3. Simple/Elegant**

This description is commonly used to describe classically styled garments. It is a positive description and an indication that participants considered the garment

appropriate for an evening occasion. Once again this perception is closely linked to body image. The participants are actually describing how they think they would look in the garment and not the garment itself.

As favourable descriptions, the terms simple and elegant, tell us that this is how the single participants would like to be perceived in a social environment. It also tells us that the styling of these particular garments are considered flattering to their body shape, and probably conceal those areas they consider flawed.

#### 4.5. Discussion: Comfort

Comfort emerged as one of the participants' key concerns. It addresses concern over the wearer's ability to move freely in a garment without restriction. It also addresses the psychological comfort one draws from being 'appropriately' dressed (Guy and Banim, 1999). However, most comments surrounding comfort were limited to fabric and how the garment would feel against the skin but not the fit. ←

Frings (1996:77) believed that comfortable clothing is essential for modern lifestyle due to its physical demands, which make freedom of movement imperative. Comfort is thus considered an important factor for all women. The ability to move freely in a garment was therefore an important consideration in the single woman's eveningwear purchases.

According to Abbott and Sapsford (2001:86), women draw psychological comfort from being appropriately dressed. This means that their perception of a 'comfortable' garment is not necessarily based on physical comfort but its appropriateness in terms of an evening engagement. Once again data collection could not establish a relationship between comfort and singleness. However it appears that the need and importance of comfort for women in general is the same as for single women.

#### 4.6. Conclusion

The use of garments as projective stimuli allowed me to address questions as to how is meaning attached to evening wear styles by the 'solo female', to differentiate between acceptable and non-acceptable eveningwear merchandise style details, and to gauge the influence of fashion trend.

For research participants, eveningwear characteristics were connected to the social-psychological factors of body image, aesthetic fashion expression and comfort. These factors can be summarised as follows:

- *Body Image* – the way they feel about their own bodies based on various internal and external factors;
- *Aesthetic Fashion Expression* – their perception of fashionable eveningwear and ideals on appropriateness in terms of their own body and social expectations; and

- *Comfort* – the way they feel in a particular garment based on fit, fabric, styling, cultural ideals on appropriate dress and the image they project at a social engagement.

These factors are highly likely to influence single women's eveningwear purchases.

Concerns over other physical characteristics took the form of bust size and overall body proportions. Although one's perception of their body is often inconsistent and formed over various stages of their life, interview participants' perception of physical beauty is possibly influenced by factors like the media, peers and fashion models. This was evident in their association of fashionable garments with the 'skinny' physical ideal of western culture.

Overall the response to 'fashionable' eveningwear was negative with most participants showing a preference for classically styled garments as opposed to trendier items. However, this influence was further investigated through the practical component of this study in which single women were asked to comment on the socially situated meanings that connect singleness and eveningwear choice.

Participants in this investigation showed some independence in terms of social pressure. Most participants opted for classically styled garments which they considered flattering for most body shapes. This showed a preference for simply styled eveningwear design that is feminine and timeless.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS: THE RATIONALE FOR PRACTICAL RESEARCH

#### 51. Introduction

This investigation sought to obtain answers to specific research questions.

- What is the scope of eveningwear styling commonly purchased by the single female consumer?
- How is meaning attached to eveningwear styles by the single female and what are the social-psychological factors that impact most strongly on her eveningwear purchase decisions?
- Where does the lack of congruence between eveningwear merchandise and the requirements of the single female lie?
- How do body image, self image and social pressure impact on the eveningwear decisions of single women?
- To what extent does fashion trend influence eveningwear purchase decisions?

This practical component should be incorporated into this dissertation which so lacks usual interest.

I believed that the single women's attitudes toward eveningwear could be evaluated through their comments on a selected sample of appropriate garments. This seemed like a simple yet efficient way of gaining insight into social-psychological influences. However, participants did not directly link their comments on research garments to their single status.

As a research question, the issue of social occasions and the way single women differentiate them in terms of appropriate evening dress remained to be answered. This question was therefore investigated in a practical research presentation, outlined below.

## **5.2. Rationale for Practical Research Presentation**

The practical component of this study is a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation based on findings in phase 2 of this investigation. The purpose of the presentation is two-fold: firstly, it presents the findings of this study through a visual medium and secondly, provides an opportunity to extend these findings.

On the first count, the presentation aims to add a visual dimension to the findings of this study which, after all, deals with a phenomenon of visual communication. As Brydon and Niessen have pointed out, the way we dress serves as an outward visual display of our personality, morals and individual beliefs (1998:305). Dress thus becomes a tool of non-verbal communication that is subject to cultural norms and practices.



On the second count, the presentation aims to extend findings of the study by presenting propositions about the socially situated meanings that connect singleness and eveningwear choices. On a practical level, this means looking at the occasions and events that provide the context for self-expression through dress.

### 5.2.1. Presenting Findings

The analysis of data collected in Phase 2 of the research investigation (discussed in chapter 4 on pages 38 - 50) revealed three major influences on the eveningwear choices of single women between the ages of 25 and 40.

These influences were:

- body image;
- aesthetic fashion expression; and
- comfort.

Examples of Body Image Concerns, Aesthetic Fashion Expression and Comfort, extracted from Table 6: Main Concerns of Single Female Participants, on page 44, are provided below. They represent single women’s interview responses to selected eveningwear garments, gathered during Phase 2.

<b>Body Image Concerns</b>	<b>Aesthetic Fashion Expression</b>	<b>Comfort</b>
Not wanting to expose too much of her body	The garment is too glittery/shiny	The fabric feels itchy against the skin

We need to see  
how as a part of the  
dissertation.

---

In order to visually demonstrate findings , I first present the evening/occasion garment design characteristics that are associated with Body Image, Aesthetic Fashion Expression, and Comfort, as described above. These characteristics include silhouette, fabric, structural detail, functional detail, and ornamental detail (see Table 5, page 42). The images presented during this phase comprises of:

- fabric swatches; and
- technical representations of the design characteristics of the evening wear garments used in phase 2 of data collection for this study.

### 5.2.2. Extending Findings

As a result of the findings in phase 2 of this investigation, a second selection of eveningwear garments was made. This selection was based on the participants' preferred design characteristics, which were motivated by various social-psychological factors. Digital images of the selected garments, in conjunction with footage of particular evening activities, are used in an attempt to extend the findings of this investigation.

To this end, the presentation records a further group of single women's reactions to contextualised visual representation of singleness and eveningwear. By exposing these interview participants to visual representations of occasions, events and settings, further propositions regarding singleness and eveningwear can be made.

Because it has been established that single women show a high degree of autonomy/independence from outside opinion, the completed presentation will be shown to single women as the most important judges of what single women should wear. Participants would be asked to comment on the presentation in terms of singleness and eveningwear choice per social engagement.

We learn through experience that certain actions are acceptable in the context of a particular time and place (Pile and Thrift, 1995:48). So too, are certain styles of dress acceptable at a particular time and place, according to cultural norms and practices. As Mackay (1997:10-11) has shown, social norms are tied to contexts of place. There is thus a strong indication that norms regarding dress will come into play in the situated time and place of social occasions.

The appropriateness of dress for single women can then only be judged by them in terms of occasion, event and setting. The presentation therefore portrays those kinds of occasion, event or venue where single women (who for reasons of marriageable age are between 25 and 40 years old) are likely to be found.

The range of events, occasions and settings attended by single women between 25 and 40 are limited. This does narrow the contextual field quite considerably; as many of the clubs, rave events and bars favoured by younger people are not typically attended by single, professional women. Therefore the acceptability of eveningwear to single women is concerned with the limited kinds of evening contexts that the single woman will find herself in.

**Table 7      Examples of the Limited Range of Occasions Attended by  
Single Women**

<b>Single Women's Evening Activities (25 - 40 years old)</b>	<b>Youth Evening Activities (18 – 25 years old)</b>
Cocktail Lounge	Bar, Club
Perfume Launch	Rave
Upmarket Restaurant	Pizzeria, Steakhouse

*have party?*

It was important, for the second purpose of this presentation, to provide the viewer not only with examples of preferred eveningwear characteristics, but also the evening engagements in which the single woman participates. I have therefore aimed to show how eveningwear preferences may be tied to these activities.

To expedite the extension of earlier research findings, a set of eveningwear garments were selected on the basis of these findings. These garments feature the particular body image, aesthetic fashion expression and comfort elements previously identified in research interviews. Such elements include silhouette, fabric, functional detail, structural detail and ornamental detail as per Table 5: Participants' Perception of Selected Eveningwear on page 42. Scanned photographic images of these garments are therefore presented alongside depictions of evening occasion activities. In this way, the presentation attempts to extend previous judgements relating to the single female's eveningwear preferences in terms of their social significance.

Although various factors impact our ability to consume imagery, modern media is probably the most influential. Modern society is increasingly influenced by communications media, which often relies on visual elements. The media often conveys the ideals of our culture in terms of fashion, aesthetics and social expectations. Because the media shows activities in a context, it often prescribes what is 'acceptable' and 'appropriate' at various occasions. By using a similar mode of visual communication (digital imagery) I have aimed to provide, through a series of situational tableaux a realistic glimpse of dress differentiation for single females.

LIST OF REFERENCES

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abbott, P. and Sapsford, F. 2001. *Young Women and their Wardrobes*. Oxford: Berg.
- Allen-Benton, L. L. 2004. *Understanding How Young High Functioning African American Women Perceive Marriage And Their Thoughts About Remaining Single*. [Online]. Master's Thesis. Available from: [scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/browse\\_by\\_author/a.html](http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/browse_by_author/a.html). [Accessed November 2004].
- Baca Zinn, M. and Eitzen, J. 2005. *Diversity in Families*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Barnard, M. 1996. *Fashion as Communication*. USA: Routledge.
- Bianchi, S. M. and Casper, L. M. 2000. *A Changing Economy and Society* [Online]. Available from: [www.faculty.fairfield.edu/faculty/hodgson/.../PBAmericanFamilies.html](http://www.faculty.fairfield.edu/faculty/hodgson/.../PBAmericanFamilies.html) [Accessed 20 August 2005].
- Brydon, A. and Niessen, S. (ed.) 1998. *Consuming Fashion: Adorning the Transnational Body*. UK: Berg.
- Craik, J. 1994. *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*. London: Routledge.
- Crane, D. 2000. *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender and Identity in Clothing*. Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press.
- Dant, T. 1999. *Material Culture in the Social World: Values, Activities, Lifestyles*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Davis, M. L. 1980. *Visual Design in Dress*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Eitzen, D. S. 2005. *Globalization: The Transformation of Social Worlds*. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Entwistle, J. 2000. *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fiore, A. M. and Kimle, P. A. 1997. *Understanding Aesthetics for the Merchandising and Design Professional*. New York: Fairchild Publications.
- Flick, U. 1998. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Frings, G. S. (ed.) 1996. *Fashion: From Concept to Consumer*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.



- Ganahl, J. 2004. *Women in Asia are Starting to Say 'I don't'* [online]. Available from: <http://www.sfgate.com> [Accessed November 2005].
- Gardner, S. 1999. *Singles*. [online]. Doctoral Thesis. Available from: <http://hdcfs.sdstate.edu/hdcr141/singles/sld021.htm> [Accessed October 2005].
- Gerber, R. 2003. *Beauty and Body Image in the Media*. [Online]. Available from: [http://www.media\\_awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women\\_and\\_girls/women\\_beauty.cfm](http://www.media_awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_beauty.cfm) [Accessed 16 August 2003].
- Greenbaum, T.L. 2000. *Moderating Focus Groups: Involving Community Members*. California: Sage Publications.
- Grogan, S. 1999. *Body Image: Understanding Body Dissatisfaction in Men, Women and Children*. London: Routledge.
- Guy, A., Green, E. and Banim, M. 2001. *Through The Wardrobe: Women's Relationships with Clothes*. Oxford: Berg.
- Hurlock, B. 1984. *The Psychology of Dress: An Analysis of Fashion and Its Motivation*. Salem: Ayer Company.
- Kaiser, S. B. (ed.) 1997. *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearance in Context*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Macmillan.
- Kaiser, S. B. 1985. *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment: Symbolic Appearance in Context*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kephart, W. M. (ed.) 1981. *The Family and the Individual*. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. USA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Knox, D. (ed.) 1985. *Choices in Relationships: An Introduction to Marriage and the Family*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. USA: West Publishing.
- Krueger, R.A and King, J.A. 1998. *Involving Community Members in Focus Groups: Focus Group Kit 5*. California: Sage.
- Lo Castro, A.M. 1996. *Aspects of Physical Appearance and Clothing Behaviour*. Master of Arts Thesis, University of South Africa.
- Mackay, H. (ed.) 1997. *Consumption and Everyday Life*. London: Sage Publications.
- McCracken, G. 1995. *Culture and Consumption: Clothing as Language*. USA: Indiana University Press.
- Morgan, D.L. 1998. *The Focus Group Guidebook: Focus Group Kit1*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- Morgan, D.L. 1998. *Planning Focus Groups: Focus Group Kit 2*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Pile, S. and Thrift, N. (eds.) 1995. *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*. London: Routledge.
- Roach, M. E. and Eicher, J. B. (eds.) 1965. *Dress, Adornment and the Social Order*. 2<sup>nd</sup>ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Rubinstein, R. P. (ed.) 2001. *Dress Codes: Meanings in American Culture*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. USA: Westview Press.
- Rubin, H. J. and Rubin, I. S. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. California: Sage Publications.
- Single Serving, Please* [online]. 2000. Available from: <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/...> [Accessed 25 August 2005].
- Spillane, M. 1995. *Bigger Ideas from Colour Me Beautiful: Color and Style Ideas for the Fuller Figure*. London: Piatkus.
- Stein, P. J. 1976. *Kritik des Single- Begriffs und Eine Arbeitsdefinition* [online]. Available from: [http:// www.single-generation.de/usa/peter-j-stein.htm-3lk](http://www.single-generation.de/usa/peter-j-stein.htm-3lk) [accessed 18 August 2005].
- Stone, E. 2000. *The Dynamics of Fashion*. New York: Fairchild.
- Ware, N. 1995. *Women's Image in the Media. Ecommerce Solution* [Online]. Available from: [www.mytholyoke.edu/~nware/](http://www.mytholyoke.edu/~nware/) [Accessed 16 August 2003].
- Web-Lupo, A. and Lester, R. M. 1987. *Clothing Decisions*. California: Glencoe Publishing Company.
- Wilson, E. 1985. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. London: Virago.

**ANNEXURE A**

**Letter of Request to Store Manager,  
Requesting an Interview**

T. Hiraman  
185 Centre Street  
Overport  
Durban  
4001

Tel.: 031 2072721

2004-09-09

The Manager

Pavilion Centre  
Spine Road  
Westville

Dear Sir/Madam

### REQUEST TO CONDUCT INTERVIEW

1. I am a registered student with the Durban Institute of Technology, studying towards a Master's Degree in Fashion. My study is entitled: "A study of the perceptions of single adult females with respect to retail eveningwear in shopping mall chain stores in the Durban Metropolitan area."
2. I seek your assistance in creating a profile of the single female consumer with regard to your chain store.
3. I would be grateful if you would grant me permission to conduct an interview with you, at your convenience.
4. I also request your permission to tape the interview. This is necessary for both the analysis of data and to avoid possible misunderstanding between interviewer and respondent.
5. This information will appear in my dissertation under a pseudonym.
6. I await your early response.

Yours faithfully

---

T. Hiraman

**ANNEXURE B**

**Store Manager's Agreement to Participate**

T.Hiraman  
185 Centre Street  
Overport  
Durban  
4001

Tel: 031 2072721

The Manger  
Westville Pavilion

**AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to participate in an interview  
on \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that the interview will be recorded and that  
all information will be treated by the researcher as confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participants Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature

**ANNEXURE C**

**Focus Group Participant's Agreement**

**“A study of the Perceptions of Single Adult Females with Respect to Retail Eveningwear in Shopping Mall Chain Stores in the Durban Metropolitan Area.”**

**PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to participate in a group interview on \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that the group interview will require three other participants to be present at the same time. I also understand that all information elicited during the interview will be used for research purposes only.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature



**ANNEXURE D**

**Follow-up Questionnaire  
for Focus Group Participants**

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### “A Study of the Perceptions of Single Adult Females with respect to Retail Eveningwear in Shopping Mall Chain Stores in the Durban Metropolitan Area”

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

1. As a single woman, where do you like going on an evening out?

1. Movies		2. Restaurants		3. Coffee Houses
4. Clubs		5. Theatres		6. Bars/Pubs
7. Dances		8. Other (specify)		9. Other (specify)

2. Please put together one evening ensemble you would most likely wear to each of the places ticked in Question 1.

#### OPTIONS AVAILABLE ON LOOSE SHEET PROVIDED

Fill in one letter in each space

	TOPS	BOTTOMS
1. Movies		
2. Restaurants		
3. Coffee Houses		
4. Clubs		
5. Theatres		
6. Bars/Pubs		
7. Dances		
8. Other		
9. Other		

3. Give brief reasons for your answers to the previous **Question 2**.

eg. Formal (shiny) pants with sleeveless top – shiny pants look sexy, sleeveless tops show my toned arms

Evening Activities	Reasons for Eveningwear Choices
1. Movies	
2. Restaurants	
3. Coffee Houses	
4. Clubs	
5. Theatres	
6. Bars/Pubs	
7. Dances	
8. Other	
9. Other	

4. What influences your eveningwear choices?

Number the following from 1 to 10 in order of importance. 1 = most important and 10 = least important.

Colour of the garment		Styling of the garment	
Your body shape		Your body size	
Who you are going out with		Who you could meet while you are out	
What others will think of you		What time you are going out	
Comfort		What is in fashion at the time	

5. How do you feel when attending formal gatherings, as a single woman?

Tick ONE of the following options

Avoid them altogether		Take a friend along for company or support		Depressed, you hate being alone	
Nervous at first but improves as the evening progresses		Sad to be alone but try to look happy		Confident, you mingle well with strangers	
Excited at the prospect of meeting new people		Doesn't make a difference whether you are alone or with a partner		Other (specify)	

Give ONE reason for you previous choice.

---



---

6. Do you feel different going out as a single woman as opposed to a couple?

YES	NO
-----	----

7. How do you feel and why? Tick ONE of the reasons provided

Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Free
Excited	Nervous	Other (specify)

---



---

8. When going out, do you consider the prospect of meeting a potential partner?

YES	NO
-----	----

9. If so, does this influence your eveningwear choices?

YES	NO
-----	----

9. If you answered YES to Question 9 – Give 2 examples of what you would wear.

Give examples based on what you already own OR what you would like to own.

---

---

---

---

---

**OPTIONS FOR QUESTION 2**

TOPS			
<b>A</b> Strappy top	<b>B</b> Sleeveless top	<b>C</b> Long Sleeved top	<b>D</b> Short sleeved top
<b>E</b> ¾ sleeved top	<b>F</b> Cowl neck top	<b>G</b> Halter-neck top	<b>H</b> Boob-tube top
<b>I</b> Cropped top	<b>J</b> Turtle-neck top	<b>K</b> Gypsy style top	<b>L</b> Off-the-shoulder top

BOTTOMS			
<b>A</b> Bootleg jeans	<b>B</b> Regular fit jeans	<b>C</b> Formal pants (shiny)	<b>D</b> Formal pants (matt)
<b>E</b> Bootleg pants	<b>F</b> Bell-bottom pants	<b>G</b> Flared pants	<b>H</b> Palazzo pants
<b>I</b> Wide legged pants	<b>J</b> Slim fit pants	<b>K</b> Mini skirt (straight)	<b>L</b> Knee-length skirt (straight)
<b>M</b> Calf-length skirt (straight)	<b>N</b> Long skirt (straight)	<b>O</b> Mini skirt (flared)	<b>P</b> Knee-length skirt (flared)
<b>Q</b> Calf-length skirt (flared)	<b>R</b> Long skirt (flared)	<b>S</b> Short dress (straight)	<b>T</b> Short dress (flared)
<b>U</b> Long dress (straight)	<b>V</b> Long dress (flared)	<b>W</b> Medium length dress (straight)	<b>X</b> Medium length dress (flared)
<b>Y</b> Other (specify)			