Uncovering the influence of personal values on the preference for certain casual clothing - Intrinsic product evaluative criteria

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ABSTRACT

Since consumers are supporters of market growth and help to maintain the competitive advantage, an integral part of any clothing retailer's task is to understand consumer purchasing behaviour, especially important factors that drive their purchasing decisions. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of personal values on intrinsic evaluative criteria in terms of female consumers' preference during clothing purchasing decisions. An exploratory quantitative research design was used to collect data from 316 female respondents (18 to 66 years) residing in Johannesburg, South Africa. Nonlinear canonical correlation analysis (OVERALS) results suggested that female consumers are aware of what they want to communicate through clothing, and they are therefore likely to consider evaluative criteria that will help them achieve their goals. More specifically, the study has brought about an understanding of the significance of certain evaluative criteria in the achievement of female consumers' personal values.

Keywords: clothing, intrinsic evaluative criteria, Kahle's List of Values, nonlinear canonical correlation analysis (OVERALS), personal values, purchasing decision

Female consumers' decision making and spending are imperative to the South African local clothing retail sector (Marketline, 2015). Although the clothing retail sector will continue to grow (Smith, 2018), South African consumers are currently in a recession, which has resulted in consumers shopping less frequently and spending less during each shopping trip (Goko, 2017). As a result, South African consumers are less loyal to any one retailer and shop around in search of products that appeal to their beliefs, values or ideas (Thomson, 2018). Clothing retailers are thus adopting various strategies to grab consumer attention (Kinley, 2010). Importantly, cultural diversity (De Bruyn & Freathy, 2011), the newfound spending power and unique product preferences of emerging middle-class female consumers (Korhonen, 2018) are challenging clothing retailers to continuously update their product offerings in order to cater for specific clothing preferences.

Consumers evaluate and select clothing products from a range of alternatives, based on a wide set of descriptive, inferential and informational evaluative criteria (Newcomb, 2010; Rahman, 2011). The evaluative criteria are divided into intrinsic and extrinsic attributes. The intrinsic evaluative criteria of a clothing product, referred to as those attributes directly related to the product, such as colour, style, fabric and fit, can include two subcategories of aesthetic and functional product characteristics (Newcomb-Hopfer & Istook, 2016). The aesthetic evaluation of clothing is a consideration of beauty or appearance, while functional evaluation involves an assessment of utility (Dedhia, 2019). On the other hand, extrinsic evaluative criteria are intangible attributes indirectly related to the physical product, such

as price, brand name and country of origin. Consumers often use both evaluative criteria concurrently to assess a product (Rahman, Kharb & Chen, 2017). The impact of these evaluative criteria may differ depending on the goals and aspirations a consumer holds when deciding between clothing products. Clothing may represent the latest fashion or assist in creating a particular image or self-enhancement of the wearer, which are likely to vary in accordance with the social context (Kaiser, 1998). Dressing thus becomes an intentional behaviour (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009) that assists the wearer in achieving a particular goal through what they wear. As such, intrinsic evaluative criteria may be regarded as essential when it comes to appearance management.

To assist the consumer in making the right choice for the purpose of appearance, the consumer resorts to using evaluative criteria they prefer when selecting among alternative clothing items and different garment types (Cassill & Drake, 1987). When evaluating clothing products among the alternatives, researchers (Jin & Bennur, 2015; Newcomb-Hopfer & Istook, 2016; Chowdhury & Akter, 2018) have shown that consumers use different evaluating criteria. Moreover, the same consumer may not find the same evaluative criteria important when considering different types of clothing they are interested in (Newcomb-Hopfer & Istook, 2016). For instance, darker colours are preferred when purchasing a pair of trousers, but not for a top (Orzan & Ciocodeica, 2018). Through establishing which intrinsic evaluative criteria are most important in influencing their clothing purchasing decision, consumer-responsive strategies can be developed to give a retailer a competitive advantage.

It is suggested that the evaluative criteria a consumer applies when considering clothing alternatives, could be in support of their underlying desired end-state or personal values (Vincent, 2014; Rahman, Jiang & Liu, 2010; Kim, Forsythe, Gu & Moon, 2002; Laverie, Kleine & Klein, 1993) such as reported by Rahman et al., 2010; Perreau 2016 & Rahman et al., 2017). Personal values largely influence rational choices among the alternatives (Yang, Ding & D'Alessandro, 2018). Personal values, such as a sense of belonging, self-fulfilment, being well respected, having confidence, and a sense of accomplishment are linked to basic human needs and therefore occupy a higher position in an individual's internal evaluative hierarchy (Becker, Engelbrecht, Boonzaaier, Finch, Meiring & Louw, 2017). This means they are more enduring in nature than attitudes. While various studies (Rahman, Ya & Liu, 2009; Jin & Bennur, 2014; Newcomb-Hopfer & Istook, 2016; Rahman et al., 2017; Chowdhury & Akter, 2018) have attempted to identify the evaluative criteria clothing consumers apply when evaluating clothing during the purchasing decision, none have linked the preferred evaluative criteria used for particular clothing items to the consumers' personal values. This study specifically aimed to investigate the effect of personal values on the preferred intrinsic evaluative criteria (fit/size, colour, design, appearance, fabric content and suitability) when purchasing a casual blouse/top, trouser/skirt and a dress.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND/LITERATURE

Consumer evaluation of the clothing product

Much of the effort that goes into a purchasing decision occurs at the stage where a choice is made among the available alternative clothing products (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). In this phase of the decision-making process, consumers' perceptions of the clothing item they anticipate purchasing include an evaluation of the clothing and the application of specific evaluative criteria in order to assess the suitability of the item (Saricam, Kalaoglu, Ozduygu & Orun, 2012). In terms of the preferred intrinsic and extrinsic evaluative criteria used by consumers and how they relate to shopping behaviour, most researchers have investigated which evaluative criteria are preferred when purchasing clothing. Hispanic consumers were found to use intrinsic attributes largely when making their casual clothing purchasing decisions (Newcomb-Hopfer & Istook, 2016). Indian and Chinese consumers cited intrinsic attributes as their top five apparel selection criteria (Rahman et al. 2017). Eckman, Damhorst & Kadolph (1990) found that 80 percent of consumers' responses to clothing evaluation referred to intrinsic evaluative criteria rather than extrinsic criteria, and Chinese female consumers relied more heavily on intrinsic evaluative criteria to judge the quality of sleepwear (Rahman et al. 2009). What is not apparent from these studies is how personal values impact evaluative criteria preference and decision making among consumers.

Consumer Personal values and their influence

Today there is probably no other sphere of human activity that reflects an individual's values and lifestyle better than clothes (Vincent, 2014), resulting in a relationship between personal values and the way consumers dress their bodies (Kaiser, 1998). Since consumers are supporters of market growth and help to maintain the competitive advantage (Boso, Yaw & Amankwa-Amoah, 2018), an integral part of any clothing retailer's task is to understand consumer purchasing behaviour (Cant & Van Heerden, 2013); especially important factors that drive their clothing purchasing decisions. The concept 'personal values' has been extensively influenced by the theoretical and operational contribution of Rokeach (1968,1973,1979), who views a personal value as a centrally-held belief guiding actions and judgements across specific situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate end-states of existence. Personal values and value perception constitute the principal driving force behind purchase intention (Nwankwo, Hamelin & Khaled, 2014) and serve as the criteria of preferences where it will practically lead to a specific decision-making attitude, behaviour and satisfaction (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Essentially, the purchasing behaviour of the consumer reflects the actions which are based on a significant relationship between their values and consequential wants and actions (Chan, 2013). As such, personal values are among the most powerful explanations of, and influences on, the way consumers are likely to behave when evaluating clothing products, and finally deciding which clothing item to purchase from the available alternatives (Vincent, 2014; McNeill & Moore, 2015).

The List of Values (LOV) scale

Many studies in marketing research have used the List of Value (LOV) scales introduced by Kahle (1983) to measure personal values (Bloemer & Dekker, 2007) The LOV methodology presents a set of nine personal and social values that consumers can identify with, namely self-respect, self-fulfilment, fun and enjoyment of life, excitement, sense of accomplishment, security, sense of belonging, warm relationships with others, and being well respected. The benefits of using the LOV is that it provides a better understanding of consumers and is also a mechanism to gain better insights into the role that personal values play in consumer behaviour (Gurel-Atay, Kahle, Jorge & Kim, 2019).

Kahle's (1983) LOV scale applied in clothing research

The LOV scale has also been used in clothing research to study the influence of personal values on consumer behaviour. To this effect, Lyu, Hahn & Sadachar (2018) explored how different traits, such as personal values and innate innovativeness, predict a positive attitude towards 3D fashion products through domain-specific variables such as fashion innovativeness and fashion leadership. Ceballos & Bejarano (2018) utilised a dramaturgical framework to understand adolescents' relationship with fashion by identifying the values guiding adolescent social performance. Findings indicated that while some of these emerging market adolescents adhered to global generalisations about teenagers, certain specific contextual influences were found to express their values and, by extension, their fashion wants. Additionally, Yilmaz, Gungordu & Yamusak (2016) measured the relationship between the list of values and consumers' decision-making styles. It was found that there is a significant and positive relationship between some values and certain consumer decision-making styles. In the earlier studies, self-directed consumer values were significantly related to types of needs satisfied by apparel products in the case of Chinese and South Korean female consumers (Kim et al., 2002). It was also found that dissimilar personal values do, in fact, contribute differentially to a consumer's involvement in fashion clothing and its consumption (O'Cass, 1999). The LOV scale is therefore a suitable measure to identify the particular personal values that play a major role in consumers' clothing decisions (Gurel-Atay et al., 2019).

The study aimed to answer the research question: Which personal values influence female consumers' evaluative criteria preference during the clothing purchasing decision? This question arose from the premise that as female consumers often choose clothing for its expressive qualities (Kaze, 2010), underlying personal values may influence

the evaluative criteria they prefer to use when selecting clothing to express a particular appearance. The study was therefore situated within the pre-purchase decision-making stage, when a consumer identifies a clothing product within a retail environment that incorporates and represents most of the characteristics that he or she considers important (Erasmus, 2013), and has to choose between alternatives. Although intrinsic evaluative criteria in particular are used in clothing purchasing decisions, only a few researchers have found the relationship between specific evaluative criteria that aid in achieving the personal values a consumer considers important.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study adopted an exploratory quantitative survey research design which involved a group-administered questionnaire used to collect primary data.

Sample characteristics

A non-probability purposive, snowball and convenience sampling strategy was used to recruit female respondents between 18 and 66 years of age, primarily residing in the Johannesburg Metropolitan area in the Gauteng province in South Africa. A recent report base on the Global Consumer Survey (Statista, 2019), showed that the South African revenue or turn over in the fashion segment amounts to R9 284,50 million, of which 53.8 percent is contributed by female consumers. Moreover, the media typically portrays female consumers as clothes-obsessed shoppers (Koca & Koc, 2016); they will therefore provide valuable insight into the personal values they aim to attain through the evaluative criteria they use to achieve this aim. Readily available respondents were recruited (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2009) as a strategy to satisfy specific inclusion criteria which included their ability to buy their own ready-to-wear clothing, and make their own clothing purchasing decisions, resulting in a purposively selected sample of respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). These respondents were recruited at gatherings such as baby showers, church breakfast prayer meetings, stokvel meetings (a stokvel is a traditional community-based savings scheme) (Ndwandwe, 2016) as well as arranged meetings at participants' homes. Snowball sampling was also used to recruit additional respondents by asking participants for further contacts, based on the key assumption that members of the target population know one another (Vogt, Garner & Haeffele, 2012), making it possible to grow the sample (Laher & Botha, 2012). A total of 350 female consumers completed the questionnaires, after which 316 questionnaires were identified as usable for the study (N = 316).

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS (N = 120)

Demographic characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18–25	47	14.9
26–35	108	34.2
36–45	90	28.5
46–55	47	14.9
56–65	23	7.3
66+	1	0.3
Ethnicity		
Asian	11	3.5
Black	263	83.2
Coloured	16	5.1
White	25	7.9
Educational level achieved		
Less than matric	35	11.1
Matric (Grade 12)	112	35.4
Diploma	77	24.4
Undergraduate	38	12.0
Postgraduate	53	16.8
Occupational status		
Managerial	23	7.3
Office	69	7.3
Lecturer/Teacher	27	8.5
Medical/Health sector	23	7.3
Student	41	13.0
Self-employed	53	16.8
Housewife	43	13.6
Retired	4	1.3
Other	27	8.5

Of the 120 respondents who provided demographic information, most were aged between 26 and 45 years (62.7%). The majority of respondents were black females (83.2%), and most had matriculated (35.4%). Of those who were currently active in the labour market, most were in some form of service-sector employment (45.8%). Table 1 shows smaller demographic frequencies of the characteristics of the respondents.

Research instruments

Personal values

When considering Kahle's (1983) nine LOV items for this study, the researchers were concerned that the personal value of 'security' in the LOV scale might mislead the respondents when they had to consider the level of importance of this item on their purchasing decision. It was decided to replace it with the term 'confidence', which is the term typically used in the field of the social psychology of clothing in reference to the feeling women gain from well-fitting clothing (Kaiser, 1998; Alexander, Connell & Presley, 2005), such as a sense of security. Therefore, all other remaining values from the LOV scale were applied including the item 'confidence' which replaced the 'security' item in the LOV scale. Respondents were asked to rate each personal value item on a 7-point Likert scale, with end-points 1 = not at all important to me and 7 = extremely important to me in relation to what they would like to convey through the clothing (casual top/blouse, trousers/skirt and dress) they generally purchase.

Evaluative criteria preference

Based on the findings from various studies (Eckman et al. 1990; Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Zhang, Li, Gong & Wu, 2002; Forney, Park & Brandon, 2005; Rahman et al. 2010; Rahman, 2011; Saricam et al. 2012), and the preliminary literature review, seven intrinsic evaluative criteria were identified as being of concern to South African casual wear consumers. The pre-selected evaluative criteria – fit/sizing, style/design, colour/pattern, appearance, appropriateness/acceptability, comfort, and fibre content/material – were used to rate the importance of each evaluative criteria against each clothing product category (casual trousers/skirt, blouse/top, skirts and a dress) by means of a 5-point Likert scale, with end-points 1 = not at all important to me and 5 = extremely important to me. The word 'casual' was included to provide respondents with the context in which their rating was required.

Research procedure

The purpose of the study, as well as ethical principles of confidentiality, voluntary participation and anonymity, were explained to prospective participants. After collecting the consent forms, respondents completed the questionnaire which took about 15-30 minutes. The questionnaire was pilot tested beforehand. After completing the questionnaire, a token of appreciation was given to each respondent as the study relied on voluntary participation and female consumers offered up their personal time to take part in the study. Data were coded, captured on a spreadsheet, and the statistical software program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23 (IBM) was used for data analysis.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Research Committee of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at UNISA (Ref # 2014/CAES/175).

Validity of the instrument

To ensure validity, prior to data collection, some experts in the field of clothing pilot tested the instrument. Thereafter, necessary modifications were made to the instrument for the main study. The study used Kahle's 1983 LOV to measure personal values, and this scale has previously been validated (Chryssohoidis & Krystallis, 2005). A statistician was also consulted and verified the appropriateness of the instrument for data capturing and analysis purposes.

Statistical analysis

Nonlinear canonical correlation analysis (OVERALS) was used to determine the effect of personal values (dependent variable) on the importance attributed to the intrinsic evaluative criteria (independent variable) explored in this study. OVERALS is a multivariate statistical technique used to explore and model the strength of the correlation between two or more datasets (variables) (Theodosiou, Angelis & Vakali, 2007) instead of between the variables themselves, as in principle component analysis (Meulman & Heiser, 2011). According to Meulman & Heiser (2011), the scaling levels in the analysis can be any mix of nominal, ordinal and numerical data. OVERALS does not assume an interval level of measurement or that the relationships are linear. In this study, OVERALS was performed using the ordinal data rating information on personal values and evaluative criteria for the clothing categories studied. The goal with OVERALS is to account for as much of the variance in the relationships among the sets as possible in a low-dimensional space (Meulman & Heiser, 2011). The advantage of OVERALS is the possibility of graphically representing the relationships between variables belonging to the considered sets of variables (Grześkowiak, 2016) in the form of biplots. The interpretation of OVERALS results includes evaluation of the weights and the component loadings as well as the biplot presentation, which allows the assessment of correlation among the variables.

RESULTS

Nonlinear canonical correlation analysis (OVERALS)

The importance of each of the variables for the two sets (personal values and evaluative criteria) is confirmed by analysing the component loadings presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4, with weight, loading and multiple fit measures reported for each of the clothing categories. Weight is the regression coefficient in each dimension for every quantified variable in a set. It provides an indication of the contribution of each variable to the dimension within each set (Meulman & Heiser, 2011). A larger positive weight means that this variable provides stronger discrimination between groups (in favour of the group above the y-axis). A negative value means that this variable is stronger in discriminating in favour of the group below the y-axis. Loading corresponds to the weight and is used to validate the scores. The loading and weight should be comparable. Multiple fit was used to show the importance of the variable in discriminating between the groups. The largest values indicate the strongest discriminatory power overall. Tables 2, 3 and 4 show each variable with three different corresponding values. All output relates to the second dimension (when looking at the biplot graph, which would be the vertical axis), since that is the dimension that effectively separates the groups.

The variables that discriminate best between the two sets of values (personal values and evaluative criteria) in purchasing the clothing categories studied (casual blouse/top, trousers/skirt and a dress) are verified by the values reported under multiple fit. The values of discriminating variables are highlighted in italics, and the largest values indicate the strongest discriminatory power overall in the purchasing of a casual blouse/top, trousers/skirt and a dress.

In Table 2 the variables that discriminate best between the two sets (personal values and evaluative criteria) in the purchasing of a casual blouse/top, in order of importance, are (1) fit/sizing, (2) self-respect, (3) confidence, and (4) fibre content/material. This suggests that these are the most influential variables

TABLE 2
OVERALS COMPONENT LOADINGS RESULTS OF THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERSONAL VALUES AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA IN THE PURCHASING OF A CASUAL BLOUSE/TOP

|	Weight	Loading	Multiple fit
Sense of belonging	-0.209	-0.074	0.045
Excitement	0.198	0.216	0.040
Warm relationship with others	0.292	0.135	0.086
Self-fulfilment	-0.333	-0.376	0.119
Being well-respected	-0.249	-0.338	0.067
Fun and enjoyment	-0.069	-0.080	0.006
Confidence	0.475	0.228	0.228
Self-respect	-0.496	-0.545	0.251
A sense of accomplishment	-0.138	-0.268	0.023
Styling/Design (blouse/top)	-0.378	-0.471	0.144
Colour/Pattern (blouse/top)	-0.031	-0.060	0.003
Appearance (blouse/top)	0.153	0.148	0.024
Appropriateness/Acceptability (blouse/top)	-0.129	-0.131	0.022
Fit/Sizing (blouse/top)	-0.578	-0.584	0.337
Comfort (blouse/top)	-0.100	-0.178	0.013
Fibre content/Material (blouse/top)	0.446	0.358	0.201

in relationships among variable sets when purchasing a casual blouse/top.

The biplots illustrated in Figures 1 to 3 for a casual blouse/top, trousers/skirt and a dress, respectively, indicate that the second dimension provides a clearer grouping between the sets of variables. The variables that plot close together show that the relationship between these variables is stronger than those that plot further apart. Variables that plot further from the origin (0,0), or where y = 0, indicate stronger discriminatory power between the two sets. In other words, the distance from the origin to each variable point approximates the importance of that variable. The interpretation of findings centres on variables that are grouped close together as well as variables that are on the same side of the axis (i.e. variables above 0 on the y-axis and variables below 0 on the y-axis).

Figure 1 is a biplot approximation of the correlations between personal values and evaluative criteria in the purchasing of a casual blouse/top. The biplot clearly shows that the discriminating variables identified in Table 2 are positioned far from the origin, while colour/pattern shows the least discriminatory power among all of the variables, suggesting that colour/pattern is the least influential variable in relationships among variables in the purchasing decision for a casual blouse/top.

Relationships between a personal value set and an evaluative criteria set are clearly observed in the upper and

FIGURE 1
BIPLOT FOR A CASUAL BLOUSE/TOP
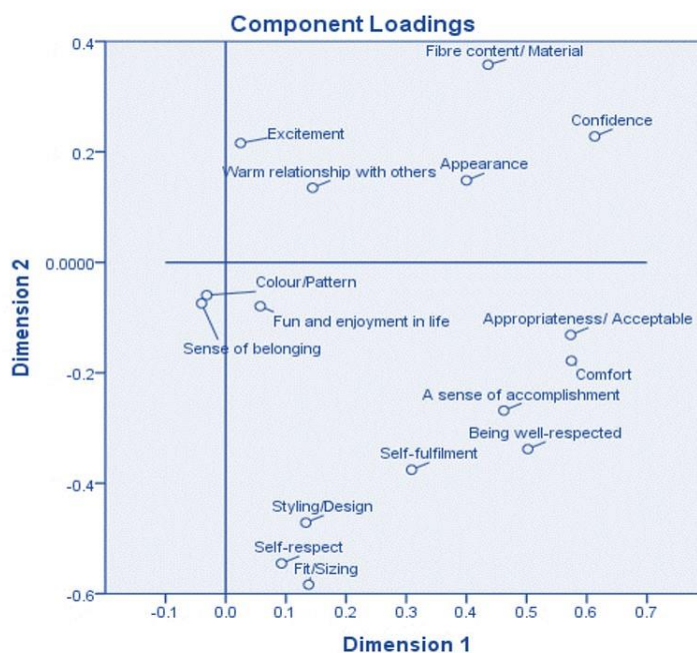
lower y-axis of the biplot. The component loading above 0 on the y-axis indicates that the appearance of a casual blouse/top is moderately associated with warm relationship with others, excitement and confidence. This means that when deciding to purchase a casual blouse/top, female consumers in this study felt they would be drawn to the appearance of a casual blouse/top because it influences them to have a warm relationship with others and it creates a sense of excitement. Besides that, female consumers also felt that through the appearance of a casual blouse/top, they gained a sense of confidence. In contrast, the component loading below 0 on the y-axis shows that the fit/sizing of a casual blouse/top may have a significant influence on self-respect, as these are positioned furthest from the origin. Another important association is that through the styling/design of a blouse/top, female consumers in this study seemed to achieve self-fulfilment, while a sense of accomplishment was moderately influenced by the comfort of a casual blouse/top. However, appropriateness/acceptability of a casual blouse/top seemed not to have a significant influence on either fun and enjoyment or sense of belonging. Finally, the importance of fibre content/material was apparent, occupying the top most position (above 0 on the y-axis), which has no correlation with any of the other variables as seen in the biplot.

The variables that discriminate best between the two sets, in order of importance, are: (1) fibre content/material, (2) colour/pattern, (3) self-respect, and (4) warm relationship with others (Table 4). This implies that these variables were the most influential in relationships among variable sets when purchasing a pair of casual trousers/skirt.

Biplot approximation of the correlations between personal values and evaluative criteria when purchasing a pair of casual trousers/skirt is shown in Figure 2. The discriminating variables presented in Table 3 are positioned far from the origin. Being well respected shows the least discriminatory power among all of the variables, implying that being well respected is the least influential variable in relationships among variable sets when purchasing a pair of casual trousers/skirt.
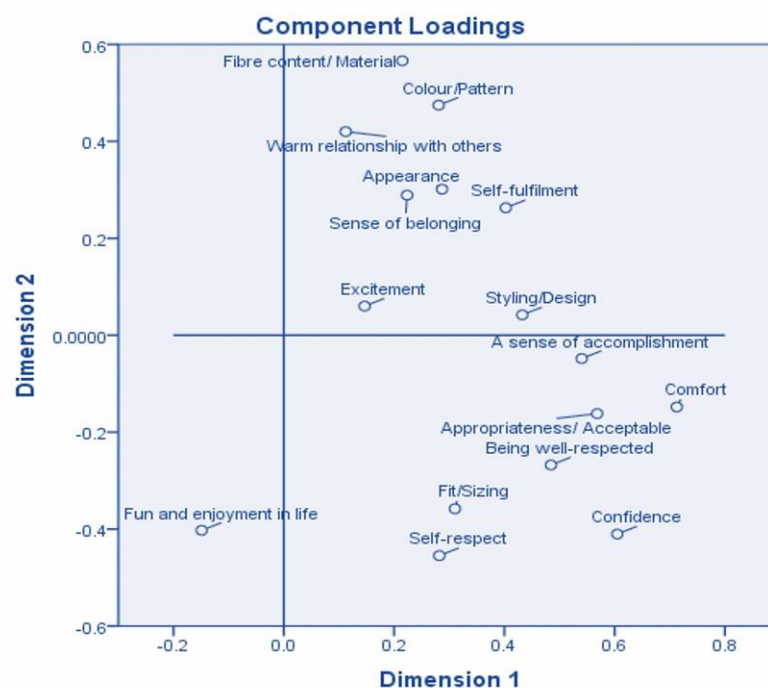
The relationships between personal values and evaluative criteria when purchasing a pair of casual trousers/skirt are clearly observed in Figure 2. The component loading above 0 on the y-axis indicates that when purchasing a pair of casual trousers/skirt, female consumers found fibre content/material and colour/pattern to exert a strong influence on warm

TABLE 3
OVERALS COMPONENT LOADINGS RESULTS OF THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERSONAL VALUES AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA IN THE PURCHASING OF A PAIR OF CASUAL TROUSERS/SKIRT

	Weight	Loading	Multiple fit
Sense of belonging	0.177	0.289	0.038
Excitement	-0.237	0.060	0.058
Warm relationship with others	0.370	0.420	0.139
Self-fulfilment	0.215	0.263	0.048
Being well respected	-0.068	-0.268	0.010
Fun and enjoyment	-0.327	-0.403	0.110
Confidence	-0.343	-0.410	0.123
Self-respect	-0.423	-0.455	0.183
A sense of accomplishment	0.355	-0.048	0.127
Styling/Design (trousers/skirt)	-0.104	0.042	0.011
Colour/Pattern (trousers/skirt)	0.470	0.475	0.221
Appearance (trousers/skirt)	0.281	0.301	0.080
Appropriateness/Acceptability (trousers/skirt)	-0.180	-0.162	0.032
Fit/Sizing (trousers/skirt)	-0.342	-0.358	0.117
Comfort (trousers/skirt)	-0.106	-0.148	0.015
Fibre content/Material (trousers/skirt)	0.479	0.566	0.231

relationship with others. Another important association is that the appearance of a pair of casual trousers/skirt gave female consumers a sense of belonging as well as self-fulfilment. Respondents also felt that the styling/design of a pair of casual trousers/skirt, which has relatively weaker discriminatory power, provided weak excitement. The component loading below 0 on the y-axis shows that female consumers felt strongly that they would gain self-respect, confidence as well as fun and enjoyment through the fit/sizing of a pair of casual trousers/skirt. Furthermore, respondents also indicated that the appropriateness/acceptability (with the least discriminatory power) of a pair of casual trousers/

FIGURE 2
BIPLOT FOR A PAIR OF CASUAL TROUSERS/SKIRT

skirt influenced being well respected, while a sense of accomplishment was weakly influenced by the comfort of a pair of casual trousers/skirt.

The variables that discriminate best between the two sets, in order of importance, are: (1) comfort, (2) fun and enjoyment, (3) appearance, and (4) being well respected (Table 4), suggesting that these variables are the most influential in relationships among variable sets when purchasing a casual dress.

Biplot approximation of the correlations between personal values and evaluative criteria when purchasing a casual dress is shown in Figure 3. The discriminating variables in Table 4 are positioned far from the origin. Appropriateness/acceptability shows the least discriminatory power among all of the variables, suggesting that this variable is considered the least influential in relationships among variable sets in the purchasing decision relating to a casual dress.

The association between personal values and evaluative criteria for a casual dress is apparent in Figure 3. Variables above 0 on the y-axis indicate that

TABLE 4
OVERALS COMPONENT LOADINGS RESULTS OF THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERSONAL VALUES AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA IN THE PURCHASING OF A CASUAL DRESS

	Weight	Loading	Multiple fit
Sense of belonging	-0.081	0.011	0.008
Excitement	0.230	0.148	0.058
Warm relationship with others	0.010	0.061	0.005
Self-fulfilment	-0.339	-0.393	0.119
Being well respected	-0.408	-0.437	0.170
Fun and enjoyment	0.537	0.342	0.297
Confidence	-0.257	-0.301	0.076
Self-respect	-0.087	-0.288	0.008
A sense of accomplishment	-0.257	-0.307	0.069
Styling/Design (dress)	-0.172	-0.256	0.030
Colour/Pattern (dress)	-0.289	-0.453	0.085
Appearance (dress)	0.432	0.162	0.188
Appropriateness/ Acceptability (dress)	-0.043	-0.095	0.002
Fit/Sizing (dress)	-0.145	-0.423	0.021
Comfort (dress)	-0.588	-0.694	0.346
Fibre content/Material (dress)	-0.097	-0.273	0.010

respondents felt the appearance of a casual dress is important, since it is closely associated with excitement and warm relationship with others. The appearance of a casual dress also seems to moderately influence the sense of belonging among female consumers. Variables below 0 on the y-axis clearly indicate that respondents closely associated self-respect, self-fulfilment, confidence, being well respected and sense of accomplishment with the fibre content/material, styling/design, fit/sizing and colour of a casual dress. From the biplot (Figure 3), the importance of the variables comfort and fun and enjoyment are apparent, as they are positioned furthest away from the origin (above and below 0 on the y-axis) but have no correlation relationship with any of the other variables.

FIGURE 3
BIPLOT FOR A CASUAL DRESS
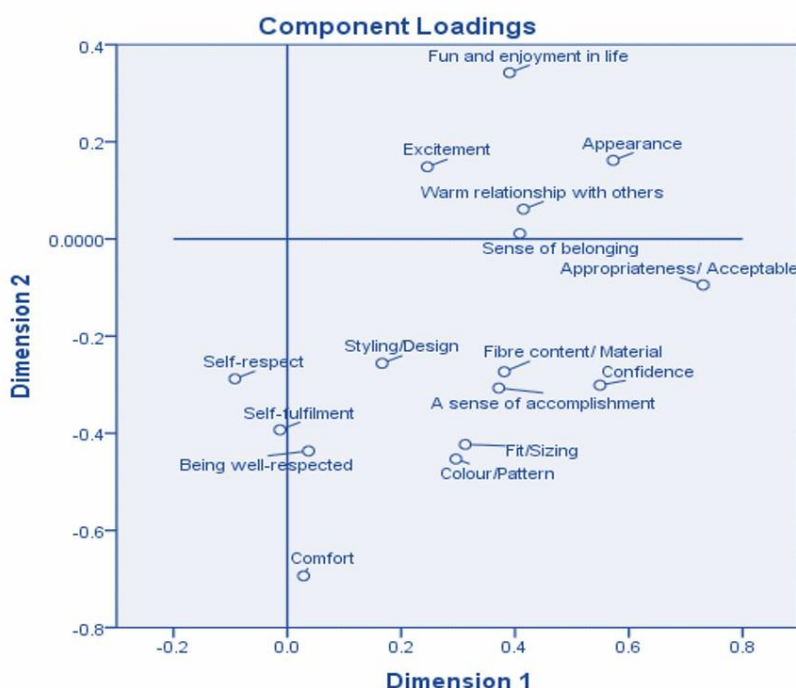
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of personal values on evaluative criteria consumers prefer to use when considering various clothing items during the purchasing decision. OVERALS was performed using the rating information on personal values and evaluative criteria for the clothing categories studied. An overall impression of the biplots approximation in the purchasing of a casual blouse/top, trousers/skirt and a dress supports Kasambala, Kempen & Pandurum's (2014) view that personal values account for specific evaluative criteria used to maintain the personal goals female consumers strive to achieve.

Consumers, when purchasing a casual blouse/top, were more likely to consider the appearance of the garment which is important in merchandising displays that are aimed at attracting the consumer. Significantly, the fit/size of a blouse/top, which remains challenging for most consumers, assists respondents in achieving self-respect through the way it conforms to their body shape. The fit/sizing of the items retailers stock should be of bigger concern as this is where they can assist the consumer to achieve a better self-image through better fitting clothing. The styling/design of a blouse/top is an important mechanism through which self-fulfilment is achieved, and a critical element in attracting consumers through retail merchandising displays. A retailer's image is essential in its merchandise choices when considering their market, as the appropriateness/acceptability of a casual blouse/top seemed to influence fun and enjoyment as well as a sense of belonging.

Clothing retailers should be sensitive to the respondents' consideration of the fibre content/material and colour/pattern of trousers/skirts as the warm relationship it affords them with others by experiencing the approval of their peers through the conformity to fashion. More specifically, the appearance of a pair of casual trousers/skirt aids in their sense of belonging to fashion peers, resulting in self-fulfilment, while the styling/design of the pair of casual trousers/skirt was more helpful in achieving some fashion excitement. Again, in terms of the fit/sizing of a pair of casual trousers/skirt, it was shown that respondents strongly aspired to achieve self-respect and confidence in a well-fitted garment. Retailers should also acknowledge and address the fit/sizing of trousers/skirts as the evaluation of the appropriateness/acceptability of these items influences how well consumers are respected.

For retailers, the casual dress attracts its consumers through the appearance it has which should speak to the excitement and a warm relationship with others it can offer the consumer. The appearance of the casual dress is an essential fashion confirmation item which allows the consumer to achieve a sense of belonging among their peers. Retailers should, therefore, be conscious of the statement casual dresses portray in store as the appearance of these items sends specific messages to the consumer. All other elements contained in casual dresses such as fibre content/material, styling/design, fit/sizing and colour also assist the consumer in gaining self-respect, self-fulfilment, confidence, being well respected and a sense of accomplishment. The casual dress remains a critical symbol of the image of a consumer and should not be underestimated by the retailer. Retailers should ensure that the casual dress is displayed to the consumer with the value it can create; not diminished to something equal to a blouse or pair of trousers. It remains a valuable item that assists the consumer to express all they want to accomplish through their appearance.

IMPLICATIONS

The diversity in consumers' values results in different expectations of what a garment means to them. This results in a variety of clothing shoppers looking at the same garment differently, which need to be accommodated in the South African retail environment. Clothing retailers should understand the implication of consumer diversity and the effect it has on clothing purchases. Especially in the South African retail context, the selection of items that fit well and are appropriately sized for the market they support may be critical in attracting and retaining their shoppers. Merchandise displays should be reconsidered as the appearance of an items holds the key to what the consumer is aiming to achieve. South African retailers should exhibit their merchandise with the values of the consumer in mind. If the potential consumer cannot see the attributes they seek within the clothing displays, they will be lost to another retailer who does speak to them through their merchandising displays.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferences based on a list of seven pre-selected evaluative criteria applicable to clothing which limits the potential of other evaluative criteria that were not taken into account in terms of their influence on female consumers' clothing purchasing decisions. Due to the limited scope of the study, the findings cannot be generalised. In the South African context, in-depth studies on the evaluative criteria female consumers use to facilitate their purchasing decisions may further benefit from expansive clarification through qualitative research approaches in the form of personal interviews and focus groups with female clothing shoppers. A quantitative study that addresses a larger sample size may allow the verification of the relationship between personal values and evaluative criteria preference in female consumers' clothing purchasing decisions.

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