Factors influencing the purchasing behaviour of sports apparel consumers in Johannesburg

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to determine the factors that influence the purchasing behaviour of Generation X and Y sports apparel consumers in Johannesburg. This was achieved by using the theory of planned behaviour. Understanding why customers buy specific products presents an opportunity for companies to design marketing communications strategies that will ensure more customer buying decisions. Quantitative research methods were used in this study. In total, 70 responses were obtained. Based on the proposed research model, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were found to have a positive influence on attitude. Also, it was found that attitude has a positive influence on purchase intention. The study recommended that managers and marketers of sports apparel companies use experts in the field to run their promotional campaigns. Furthermore, they need to make it easy for their consumers to access sports apparel and provide them with enough information so that their consumption is informed by knowledge. Moreover, managers and marketers need to create favourable consumer attitudes towards their products or brands by using reputable celebrities to endorse them and genuinely engage in charitable initiatives.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, Generation X, Generation Y, consumers, sports apparel, generational cohorts

INTRODUCTION

The factors underlying how and why people shop for specific products has been widely studied for many years (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). However, these studies have demonstrated that consumer behaviour is unpredictable and dynamic (Jin & Kim, 2003). Understanding why customers buy particular products presents an opportunity for companies to design relevant strategies that will increase customer buying decisions.

The study described in this paper investigated the factors influencing the buying behaviour of Generation X and Y sports apparel consumers in Johannesburg, South Africa. In recent years, the sports apparel industry has become a profitable business globally (Euromonitor International, 2014). According to Watts and Chi (2019), consumers are becoming more interested in healthy lifestyles, resulting in an increased demand for sports apparel that meets performance, functionality and style criteria. Furthermore, sportswear has become an ordinary part of people's wardrobes that goes beyond the gym.

The focus of the present study was on Generation X and Generation Y consumers because there is limited research on their buying behaviour in Johannesburg. For years, generational differences, especially between Generation X and Generation Y have been important subjects of academic research on consumer behaviour (Acar, 2014); Connor, Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). There is no single definitive timeframe for Generations X and Y cohorts. However, Lissitsa and Kol (2016) refer to Generation X as those people born between 1961 and 1979, whilst Generation Y (sometimes referred to as millennials) are those born between 1980 and 1999. There are sometimes notable differences in the consumer behaviour of different generational cohorts that marketers need to be mindful of.

It is very important for clothing marketers to have sufficient knowledge of the many factors that influence consumer decisions in order to ensure successful product delivery and customer retention in the marketplace (Mafini & Dhurup, 2014). In addition, Maziriri, Chuchu and Madinga (2019) argue that retailers need to develop an understanding the factors that influence buyers when selecting a store from which to buy the products they seek.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Owing to the competition amongst sports apparel companies, firms need to study consumer behaviour to understand the reasons behind consumer buying decisions so that they can meet customer needs and wants. The present study aimed to provide sports apparel companies with an understanding of the factors that influence consumer buying behaviour.

Previous studies of sports apparel consumption locally and internationally have paid little attention to the measurement of consumer decision-making trends (Mandhlazi, Dhurup, & Mafini, 2013); Mafini & Dhurup, 2014). In addition, there is insufficient research on the factors influencing the buying behaviour of Generations X and Y consumers in Johannesburg.

Moreover, Watts and Chi (2019) maintain that, despite the substantial growth in the use of sports apparel, not much research has been done on the determinants of sportswear consumption for casual wear. As pointed out in Chi and Kilduff (2011), there is still a gap in the literature in terms of exploring the purchase intention for sports apparel. This gap still exists in South Africa and more studies are needed to address it. Consequently, it is a worthwhile exercise to examine the factors that influence the attitudes and purchase intentions of South African consumers towards sport apparel, especially foreign brands (Dhurup, Muposhi, & Shamhuyenhanzva, 2015).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

- Determine the factors that influence the buying behaviour of Generation X and Generation Y sports apparel consumers in Johannesburg.
- Determine which of the independent variables have significant relationships with attitude and purchase intention.
- Understand how marketers and managers can improve consumer purchase intention.

HYPOTHESES

From various literature sources like Putra, Hartoyo and Simanjuntak (2017); Min, Chang, Jai, & Ziegler (2019); Paul, Modi and Patel (2016) and Cristea and Gheorghiu (2016); Mubarok (2018) it was found that perceived product quality, brand image, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control have a positive influence on consumer attitude. Watts and Chi (2019) further state that attitude has a positive influence on purchase intention.

Based on that knowledge, the following hypotheses were then developed to test these relationships between the variables:

H1 - Perceived product quality positively influences the attitudes of sports apparel consumers.

H2 - Brand image positively influences the attitudes of sports apparel consumers.

H3 - Subjective norms positively influence the attitudes of sports apparel consumers.

H4 - Perceived behavioural control positively influences the attitudes of sports apparel consumers.

H5 - Attitude positively influences the purchase intentions of sports apparel consumers.

Figure 1 below illustrates the proposed research model that was used in the study. In the end, the empirical results determined the viability of the model.

FIGURE 1: HYPOTHESISED RESEARCH MODEL
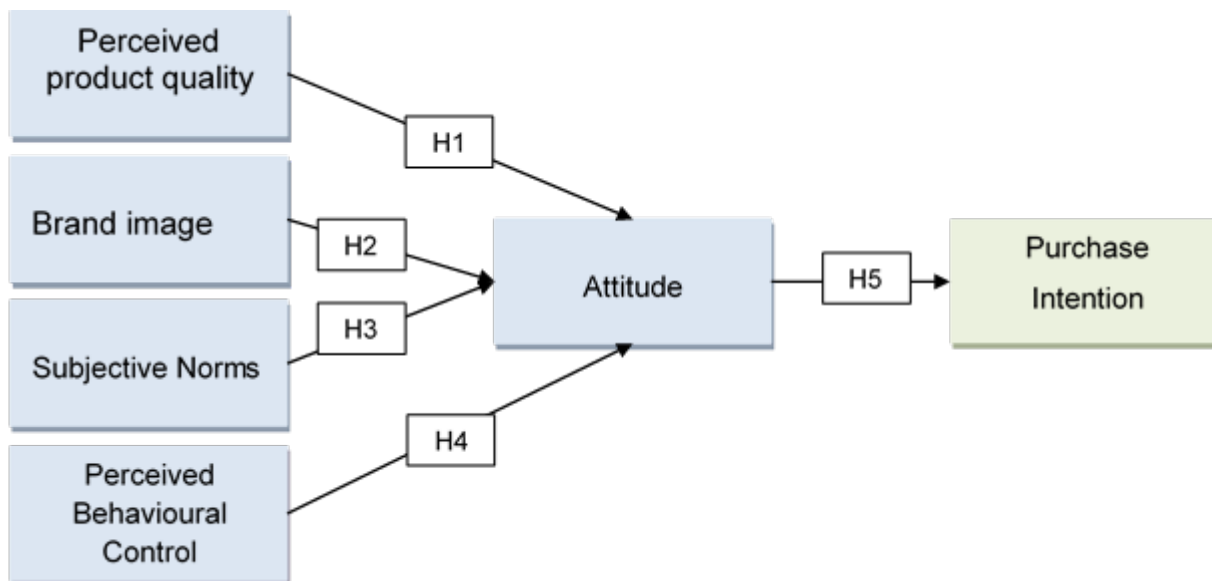
Source: Author's own construct

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE CONCEPT OF CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

A number of authors have defined consumer behaviour (also referred to as buyer behaviour) in the literature. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2017), consumer behaviour is the buying behaviour of final consumers who are the individuals and households that purchase goods and services for personal use. Consumer behaviour involves the psychological processes of buyers recognising and finding ways to meet their needs; interpreting information; and making and implementing plans (Furaiji, Łatuszyńska, and Wawrzyniak, 2012). These processes would lead to decisions about whether to buy a product, which brand to buy and where, which would be facilitated by comparing shopping options before making the purchase.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

It is important for companies to understand consumer behaviour if they want to attain commercial success (Furaiji et al., (2012). Furthermore, the relationship between the marketing strategy of a firm and consumer buyer behaviour depends on its management's understanding of this behaviour. As highlighted in Chi and Kilduff (2011), previous research has shown that there are misalignments between what companies believe their consumers value and what consumers actually value.

THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR (TPB)

The present study used the TPB to predict the consumer purchase intention for sports apparel of Generations X and Y consumers in Johannesburg. This theory has been applied in a variety of areas, such as healthcare, environmentally friendly clothing in Zheng and Chi (2014) and various consumer goods for the prediction of consumer purchase intention and subsequent behaviour.

According to Watts and Chi (2019), the TPB proposes that an individual's behavioural intention is dependent on his/her attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. The general rule is that the greater the intention to engage in a behaviour, the greater the likelihood that it will be done (Ajzen, 1991).

FACTORS INFLUENCING BUYER BEHAVIOUR

Perceived product quality – in broad terms, quality can be defined as excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1988). Studies by Boisvert and Ashill (2011), Aynadis (2014) as well as Putra et al. (2017) maintain that perceived product quality has a positive influence on consumer attitude.

Brand image – can be defined as the perceptions about a particular brand as reflected by the brand associations held in the memory of the consumer (Keller, 1993). Brand names have a significant effect on consumer choice of sportswear (Dickson & Pollack, 2000).

Subjective norms – are the result of perceived social pressure to perform a behaviour or not (Ajzen, 2015 and Kim & Chung, 2011). According to Kim and Karpova (2010), previous studies indicate a positive relationship between subjective norms and attitude.

Perceived behavioural control (PBC) – is the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behaviour and is a reflection of experience as well as anticipated hurdles and hindrances (Ajzen, 1991). Previous studies have found that PBC has a positive influence on consumer attitude (Cristea & Gheorghiu, 2016) and purchase intention (Kim, Ham, Yang and Choi, 2013).

Attitude – is the extent to which an individual has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour under consideration (Ajzen, 1991 and Kim & Chung, 2011). Studies by Zheng and Chi (2014) and Gopi and Ramayah (2007) found that attitude showed the most significant impact on consumer purchase intention.

Purchase intention – refers to a consumer's plan or willingness to buy a certain product or service in the future (Chiu, Chang, Cheng, & Fang, 2009). According to Hien, Phuong, Tran, & Thang, 2020), purchase intention is a reflection of the planned or predicted future behaviour of a consumer and indicates the probability that it will result in a buying behaviour.

RESEACH METHODOLOGY

TARGET POPULATION

This study was conducted in Johannesburg, South Africa. All persons aged between 18 and 59 years old were the target of this study.

SAMPLING SIZE

The respondents had to be Generation X and Y sports apparel consumers with buying power in Johannesburg. The participants had to be representative of the country's diverse population, so the researcher randomly selected people regardless of their gender; race; educational level; employment status; and income level. A total of 70 responses were obtained.

SAMPLING METHOD

Probability sampling, also known as random sampling, was used in this study. In particular, simple random sampling was used. In simple random sampling, every unit in the population has the same probability of selection (Vehovar, Toepoel, & Steinmetz, 2016).

The randomly selected participants included family, friends, colleagues and other members of the public in various areas within the city.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary data were used in the present study. The online survey method was used, because it was considered safe in light of COVID-19 risks. To collect the primary data for the study, a link to the e-survey was sent to the respondents electronically, and they had to complete it in their own time and at their own pace.

THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A closed-ended questionnaire was used. The questionnaire consisted of two sections (A and B). Section A was mainly for demographic and consumer data. Section B consisted of the Likert scale questions. There were 40 questions, sourced from existing literature like Schnurr, Brunner-Sperdin, and Stokburger-Sauer (2017); Hakim and Susanti (2017); Hien et al., (2020); Watts and Chi (2019); Zheng and Chi (2014); Chi and Kiddulf (2011); Chiu, Kim and Won (2018); Ghafoor, Ahmed, Naeem and Huang (2018), as well as articles written by several authors who had studied some of the constructs included in the questionnaire. Only a few of the questions were constructed by the researcher.

The research instruments selected had, on average, a Cronbach's alpha of more than 0.7, which suggests that the questionnaires were reliable for the study (Nunally, 1978).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All the respondents were above the age of 18. Informed consent was requested from the respondents prior to participation. The participants' right to privacy was respected. Their confidentiality and anonymity were also maintained. No personal information that could be used to identify the respondents was requested. The respondents were allowed to withdraw their participation at any stage. It was explained to the respondents that their participation was voluntary and that no benefit would accrue to them because of them participating in this study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using a computer software program called STATISTICA. Firstly, the data were analysed for reliability and validity. Thereafter, data analysis generated descriptive and inferential statistics.

DATA QUALITY

In order to ensure that the study was credible and of a good quality, the researcher had to adhere to certain principles. The Cronbach's alpha co-efficients for all the constructs were above 0.8, which indicated excellent reliability. The sample size of this study was small relative to the hypothesised model; therefore, the findings were only tested for face validity.

TABLE 1: CRONBACH'S ALPHA RESULTS

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Perceived product quality	0,94	Excellent
Brand Image	0,90	Excellent
Subjective norms	0,87	Excellent
Perceived behavioural control	0,86	Excellent
Attitude	0,92	Excellent
Purchase intention	0,85	Excellent

RESULTS

This section presents the descriptive and inferential statistical findings of the study. Table 2 below shows that majority (60%; n = 42) of the respondents were female, with the dominant age group ranging from 30 to 39 years old, (59%; n = 41). Blacks were the dominant ethnic group (80%; n = 56). Most of the respondents (39%; n = 27) held a bachelor's degree, whilst only 13% (n = 9) had a postgraduate qualification. Most of them were employed (87%; n =61). In terms of monthly income levels, the majority (29%; n = 20) of those surveyed earned between R15 000 and R29 999. More than half of them (54%; n = 38) indicated that they were in favour of stores inside a shopping mall. Most of them (51%; n = 36) indicated that they bought sports apparel to participate in physical activities (like exercising).

TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND CONSUMER PREFERENCES/REASONS

Variable	Distribution	% Response	Number of respondents
Gender	Female	60%	42
	Male	40%	28
Age	18 – 29	29%	20
	30 – 39	59%	41
	40 – 49	9%	6
	50 - 59	4%	3
Race	Asian	0%	0
	Black	80%	56
	Coloured	6%	4
	Indian	6%	4
	White	9%	6
Highest education level	Below matric	1%	1
	Matric	11%	8
	Diploma	29%	20
	Bachelor's degree	39%	27
	Postgraduate	13%	9
	Masters	7%	5
	Doctorate	0%	0
Employment status	Employed	87%	61
	Unemployed	4%	3
	Self-employed	6%	4
	Prefer not to say	3%	2
Monthly income level	R0 – R2 999	4%	3
	R3 000 – R7 999	1%	1
	R8 000 – R14 999	16%	11
	R15 000 – R29 999	29%	20
	R30 000 – R49 000	20%	14
	R50 000+	10%	7
	Prefer not to say	20%	14
Preferred option when buying sports apparel	Stores inside a shopping mall	54%	38
	Stores inside shopping centres	29%	20
	Stand-alone stores	11%	8
	Online stores	6%	4
Reasons for buying sports apparel	For participating in sports activities	9%	6
	For doing physical activities (like gym)	51%	36
	For casual wear	40%	28
	Total	**100%**	**70**

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 3 below, where the relationships between the variables are illustrated.

TABLE 3: CORRELATION ANALYSIS

	Correlations (Survey results) Marked correlations are significant at p < ,05000 N=70 (Case wise deletion of missing data)					
Variable	PPQY	BRND	PBCL	SBNM	ATTD	PINT
PPQY	1,000	0,314	0,333	0,337	0,392	0,271
BRND	0,314	1,000	-0,003	0,421	0,154	0,211
PBCL	0,333	-0,003	1,000	0,130	0,412	0,355
SBNM	0,337	0,421	0,130	1,000	0,403	0,406
ATTD	0,392	0,154	0,412	0,403	1,000	0,584
PINT	0,271	0,211	0,355	0,406	0,584	1,000

NB: Items in red indicate significant relationships

Perceived product quality (PPQY) had a significant positive influence on attitude (r = 0.392, p < 0.05) and purchase intention (r = 0.271, p < 0.05). Brand image (BRND) was not significantly related to attitude (r = 0.154, p < 0.05) and purchase intention (r = 211, p < 0.05). Perceived behavioural control (PBCL) was significantly related to attitude (r = 0.412, p <0.05) and purchase intention (r = 0.355, p < 0.05). The results showed that subjective norms (SBNM) had a significant positive influence on attitude (r = 0.403, p<0.05) and purchase intention (r = 0.406, p<0.05). The data analysis revealed that attitude had a strongly positive influence on purchase intention (r = 0.584, p<0.05). Multicollinearity was also not found to be a problem because the correlations between the independent variables were mostly less than 0.4. Wegner (2016) indicates that if correlations between the different pairs of independent variables are less than 0.4, multicollinearity does not adversely affect the predictive validity of the regression model.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 4 below shows the results of multiple regression analysis of the relationship between the independent variables and attitude. The results indicated that perceived behavioural control (PBCL: b = 0.310; p<0.05) and subjective norms (SBNM: b = 0.299; p<0.05) were positively related to attitude. The other variables were not. The three independent variables explained 32% (R^2 = 0.322) of the movement of attitude.

TABLE 4: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND ATTITUDE

	Regression Summary for Dependent Variable: Attitude (Survey results) R= ,567 R²= ,322 Adjusted R²= ,291 F(3,66)=10,448 p<,00001 Std. Error of estimate: ,563					
N=70	Beta coefficient	Std. Error	B Coefficient	Std. Error	t value	p-value
Intercept			1,407	0,426	3,303	0,002
PPQY	0,189	0,113	0,135	0,081	1,666	0,101
PBCL	0,310	0,108	0,285	0,099	2,883	0,005
SBNM	0,299	0,108	0,248	0,089	2,778	0,007

NB: Items in red indicate significant relationships.

Table 5 below illustrates the multiple regression analysis of the relationship between the independent variables and both purchase intention and attitude. Subjective norms (SBNM: b = 0.217; $p<0.05$) and attitude (ATTD: b = 0.444; $p<0.05$) were positively related to purchase intention. The other variables were not. The four independent variables explained 39% (R^2 = 0.394) of the movement of purchase intention.

TABLE 5: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND BOTH PURCHASE INTENTION AND ATTITUDE

N=70	Regression Summary for Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention (Survey results) R= ,628 R²= ,394 Adjusted R²= ,357 F(4,65)=10,567 p<,00000 Std.Error of estimate: ,534					
	Beta coefficient	Std. Error	B Coefficient	Std. Error	t value	p-value
Intercept			1,105	0,436	2,532	0,014
PPQY	-0,027	0,110	-0,019	0,079	-0,248	0,805
PBCL	0,153	0,109	0,140	0,099	1,405	0,165
SBNM	0,217	0,108	0,179	0,089	2,000	0,050
ATTD	0,444	0,117	0,443	0,117	3,788	0,000

NB: Items in red indicate significant relationships.

Table 6 below presents the results of the multiple regression analysis of the relationship between the independent variables and purchase intention. Perceived behavioural control (PBCL: b = 0.290; $p<0.05$) and subjective norms (SBNM: b = 0.350, $p<0.05$) were positively related to purchase intention. The other variables were not. These three independent variables explained 26% (R^2 = 0.260) of the movement of purchase intention.

TABLE 6: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND PURCHASE INTENTION

n = 70	Regression Summary for Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention (Survey results) R= ,510 R²= ,0.260 Adjusted R²= ,227 F(4,65)=7.740 p<,000 Std. Error of estimate: ,586					
	Beta coefficient	Std. Error	B Coefficient	Std. Error	t value	p-value
Intercept			1,728	0,443	3,897	0,000
PPQY	0,056	0,118	0,040	0,084	0,478	0,634
PBCL	0,290	0,112	0,266	0,103	2,585	0,012
SBNM	0,350	0,112	0,288	0,093	3,108	0,003

NB: Items in red indicate significant relationships.

The results above indicate that perceived product quality and brand image had no significant positive influence on attitude. This means that H1 and H2 are not supported. Subjective norms and PBC have a significant positive influence on attitude, which means that H3 – H4 are supported. Also, attitude is positively related to purchase intention, which supports H5.

CONCLUSION

In the study, it was empirically found that brand image and perceived product quality have no significant influence on attitude, meaning that enhancing them will not have a significant impact on attitude. This requires further investigation as it is incongruous to many previous studies. Subjective norms and PBCs have a positive influence on the purchase intention of sports apparel consumers. Promoting subjective norms and PBC will positively improve consumer attitude. It can also be concluded that promoting consumer attitude will enhance purchase intention. Managers and marketers can consider using sports celebrities to advertise their products. Chew and Leng (2016) indicate

that sports celebrity endorsements have a positive influence on consumer behaviour. The management of sports apparel companies should make sure that it makes it easy for consumers to access products. Watts and Chi (2019) suggest that managers could use a variety of sales channels to ensure that targeted consumers access apparel easily and conveniently. Furthermore, in their marketing communications, managers should create a perception of affordable prices through discounts, advertisements and the introduction of innovative products. The management of sports apparel companies needs to focus its marketing communications strategies on ensuring that the creation of a favourable consumer attitude towards the firms' products. Many people appear to have a favourable attitude towards buying sports apparel and are keen to purchase it, which is good for the management of sports apparel companies. With this in mind, managers must ensure that they adequately advertise their products to entice more consumers to buy them. They can use social media, such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, and other platforms, such as television, radio and sports newspapers or magazines, to promote existing products, new products and upcoming ones. They can also angage in charitable

Overall, the study made three contributions to the literature. Firstly, it confirmed the applicability of the TRA and TBP to research on Generations X and Y sports apparel consumers in Johannesburg. Marketers could use this information in studying consumer buying behaviour in respect of other products. Secondly, since this study was focussed on Generations X and Y, the proposed model could be extended to other generational cohorts and in other geographical areas. Lastly, the measuring instrument used was found to be valid and stable, which would make it useful for future researchers when conducting similar studies.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

The present study had a number of limitations. The sample size was relatively small and may not be representative of the general population. This study can therefore not be generalised to the broader population. The study was only conducted in Johannesburg, which excluded consumers from other towns/cities. Future research could look at carrying out a similar study in other cities and across the nine provinces of South Africa. A qualitative approach can also be adopted in order to probe deeper into the phenomenon, and thus gain more understanding about the subject. Other researchers could consider studying consumer purchasing behaviour in relation to specific brands. In the future, researchers could also look at different industries/products in order to gain more knowledge about consumer behaviour.

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