

# FACTORS AFFECTING EVALUATION OF CLOTHING FIT:

## A case study of Adolescents in Sekondi-Takoradi

Jennifer Ama Aklamati, Adwoa Tweneboah Twum\*, Seyram Ama Deikumah  
Department of Fashion Design and Technology, Takoradi Polytechnic, Ghana

### Abstract

Fit is an important factor for consumers wearing ready-made clothes. Problems related to apparel fit stem from a variety of factors. The aim of this study is to determine adolescents' evaluation of clothing fit in terms of functional and aesthetic characteristics. It also assesses how female adolescents and male adolescents differ in the evaluation of the fit of their clothes. A cross-sectional survey design was employed. A total sample of 400 adolescents were selected using random sampling technique. Determination of sample size was based on Taro Yamane's formula from a population of 12,000. Structured questionnaire with closed ended questions design based on the Likert scale was used as the instrument for eliciting the desired information. The data analysis was performed. The main statistical tools used were means and standard deviations while the Independence Sample T-test was run to verify if evaluation of clothes was independent of gender in terms of both the aesthetic and functional dimension. Findings have clearly shown that aesthetic and functional factors play vital roles in determining clothing fit. Also evaluation of clothing is based on some factors such as size, ease, fabric, brand name, comfortability, feeling good among others. Results further suggest that this consumer group probably does not have the expertise, knowledge and cognitive skills that can enable them, during the evaluation phase of the decision-making process, to realistically evaluate this very important dimension of the quality of clothes.

**Key words:** Adolescents, clothing, fit, functional, aesthetic.

### INTRODUCTION

The relationship between consumers' perceptions of certain types of clothing and human behaviour can be explained through characteristics of society. Society largely impacts on the way in which consumers behave towards evaluating, purchasing, and using products. The expectation before purchasing process is based on the beliefs of the customers on the performance of the products. Besides, the expectation of post-purchase process is the opinion of the customers on the performance of the products. Satisfaction, therefore, becomes the expression indicating that the performance and benefits of the products surpass the expectations of the customers (Peter & Olsan, 2005).

Clothing is one of the most noticeable aspects of adolescent culture and is an important means by which individual adolescents express their identities. One manifestation of society's influence on adolescents is evident in the clothing they choose to wear (MacGillivray & Wilson, 2009). Adolescence clothing is one of the fastest growing demographic groups and the new fashion leaders of the youth consumer market with buying power (Grant & Stephen, 2005 ;Solomon, & Rabolt, 2004).

Little research has been done worldwide on adolescents as a consumer market, especially regarding their evaluating criteria, expectations and problems related to clothing. Clothes are used by adolescents to feel better about their bodies, to conform to their peer group and to conform to specific role models (Kaiser, 1999; Sproles & Burns, 1994). Igbo and Anikweze (2005) noted that during the adolescence stage, clothing becomes very important because adolescents use them to identify and belong to peer groups. Cox and Dietz (1998) also affirmed that adolescents use clothing to make statements about the fact that they have come of age.

### Problem Statement

A good clothing item with a good fit ought to conceal the wearer's figure faults, complement the body and provide well-balanced proportions (Tate, 2004). However, a casual observation of clothing worn by some adolescents in Sekondi-Takoradi showed fault and did not complement the body and this result in many faults such as defective waist lines, wrinkles and pulls around the arm scye and unnecessary fluffiness which in term spoil the overall beauty of the clothing item. Brown and Rice (2001) stated that more than 70 per cent of the clothing that is relegated to stock clearance sales is the result of bad fitting or construction. According to Alexander et al., (2005) dissatisfaction with fit is the most common problem with garment purchases. Therefore,

an understanding of the consumer's expectations and evaluations regarding the fit of his or her clothes could help companies to meet demands for comfortable and well-fitting clothes for consumers. Yet there is little of information regarding how consumers evaluate clothing fit. There was therefore the need to explore and document adolescent consumer's expectations and evaluations, as well as their satisfaction with the fit, of clothes that they select.

### Aim

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the views of adolescents' consumers in Sekondi - Takoradi in view of their expectations and evaluation of clothing fit.

### Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following questions were posed to serve as a guide:

1. What role does the functional and aesthetic characteristics of fit play in the adolescent's expectations with regard to the fit of their clothes?
2. How do female adolescents and male adolescents differ in the evaluation of the fit of their clothes?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Framework

The dress of an individual is a kind of "Sign Language" that communicates a complete set of information and is usually the basis on which immediate impressions are formed. Clothing is also a form of artistic expression that reflects the cognitive, moral and social aspects of human life (Kaiser, 1999). Garment quality is not determined by the quality of manufacture only, but by a number of other influential factors as well. Formability of the fabrics in particular, garments manufacturing processes and the stability of the newly created form, directly impact on garment appearance quality (Caplan, 2005).

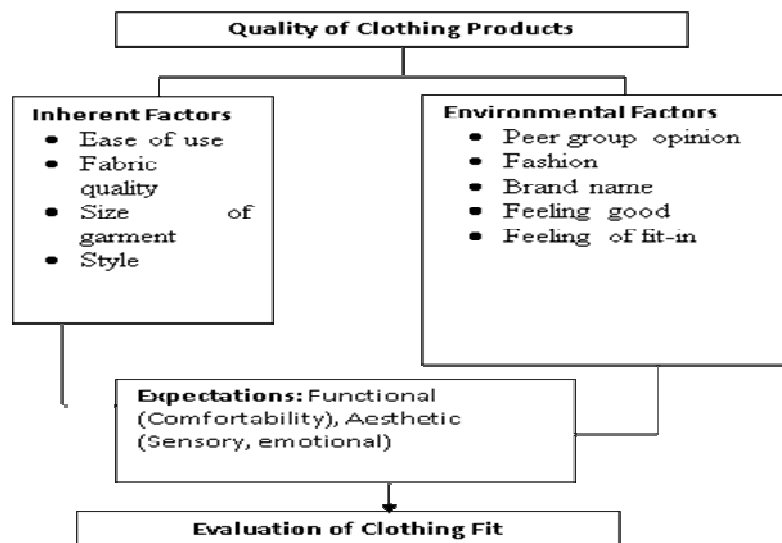


Figure 1. Schematic Representation of the Factors affecting Quality of Clothing Products (Fit). Source: Adopted from de Klerk and Tselepis (2007).

## METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Area in the Western Region of Ghana, using cross-sectional survey design. Survey design permitted the researchers to summarize the characteristics of different groups. The design involved the selection of 400 adolescents in public SHS out of a population 12000 adolescents from the 11 public SHS to participate in the study.

A minimum sample size was calculated based on the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination for estimating proportion in a finite population (Uzoagulu, 1998), drawn from the population of 12000 students in public SHS in Sekondi-Takoradi.

Based on this formula, a total number of 400 SHS students was sampled for the study. The sampling frame for sampling the students was by class list. A table of random numbers was employed in selecting the respondents in each school. This was based on the ratio of students in that particular school. Equal proposition of both females and males were taken especially from the mixed schools. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. It was developed through the review of related literature and also base on the research questions. Data was administered and collected by visiting the sampled schools. The main statistical tools used were means and standard deviations while the Independence Sample T-test was run to verify if evaluation of clothes was independent of gender in terms of both the aesthetic and functional dimension.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Age Distribution of Respondents

Three hundred and forty one (341) of the respondents representing 85.2% are within the age group 15-18, 59 representing 14.8% are within the age group 19-22. The distribution of the respondents by age appears not evenly spread among the two adolescent of age groups considered for this research. This implies that approximately 85% of the views leading to conclusions drawn from the research could be certified largely to people of age group 15-18.

**Research Question 1:** What role does the functional and aesthetic characteristics of fit play in the adolescent's expectations with regard to the fit of their clothes?

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations on respondent's opinion on the role of functional and aesthetic characteristics of fit of clothing.

**Table 1: Role of Functional and Aesthetic Characteristics of fit of Clothing**

Item/Statement	Male		Female		Total	
	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.	Mean	Std.
I. I select clothes to enhance specific parts of my body.	3.64	1.269	3.87	1.210	3.75	1.244
II. Fit is more important than size .....	3.87	1.149	3.87	1.016	3.87	1.083
III.I have problem finding clothing fits well.	3.56	1.259	3.89	1.097	3.72	1.191
IV.I buy clothes that are bigger than my size....	3.18	1.391	3.07	1.501	3.12	1.446
V.I am satisfied with most of my clothing...	3.96	1.104	4.34	.959	4.15	1.050
VII. I am conscious of effects my clothes .....	4.13	.992	4.25	.971	4.19	.982

N= 400 Source Field Survey Data, 2014

Overall, the mean scores range from a low of 3.12 with a standard deviation of 1.44 to a high of 4.19 with a standard deviation of .98 across the functional and aesthetic characteristics of fit of clothing. The low mean score of 3.12 with a standard deviation of 1.44 suggests that both males and females neither agreed nor disagreed with the fact that they buy clothes that are bigger than their size even if they like the style (item IV) while the standard deviation suggests that respondents were consistent with their disagreement since the standard deviation indicates that about 68 per cent of the responses to item IV would lie closer to the mean.

On the other hand, mean scores ranging between 3.72 and 4.19 are indications of adolescents' agreement with the fact that functional and aesthetic characteristics of clothing fit have a role in the adolescent's expectations while the standard deviations 1.19 and .98 indicate a small disparity in their opinion with regard to adolescents' agreement with the fact that functional and aesthetic characteristics of clothing fit. With respect to the mean score of 3.72, adolescents agree that they have problem finding clothing that fits well. This confirms Chun-Yoon & Jasper's, (1995); Faust, Carrier & Baptist's, (2006) claim that African developing countries such as Ghana also face apparel fit problems, but sizing issues are often overlooked or regarded as unimportant issues, finally giving rise to non-standardised size ranges that do not conform to the recommendations given by standard bodies. While the highest mean score of 4.19 suggest that adolescents are conscious of the effects their clothes have on their appearance.

Based on the fact that respondents to agree with six out of seven of the items in the scale (Table 1) is an indication that truly functional and aesthetic characteristics of clothing fit play a role in adolescents' expectations and evaluations regarding the fit of his or her clothes. This confirms the argument made by De Long (1998) that there is a connection between aesthetics and the way adolescents clothed their bodies to be appreciated by themselves and also by others.

**Research Question 2:** How do female adolescents and male adolescents differ in the evaluation of the fit of their clothes?

**Table 2: Means for Adolescents Differences in Evaluation of the fit of Clothes**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	200	3.72	.615	.043
Female	200	3.88	.497	.035

Source Field Survey Data, 2014

With respect to the means and standard deviation, Table 2 shows the mean scores for males ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=.61$ ) and mean score for females ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=.49$ ) on whether or not both males and females adolescents differ in the evaluation of the fit of their clothes. The means of both males and females are closer to 4.00 statistically, and therefore suggest that both males and females were of the opinion that there is a difference in the evaluation of the fit of their clothes between adolescents' males and females.

Table 3 presents the t-test information needed to decide whether or not the difference between adolescents' males and females scores in evaluation of the fit of their clothes was statistically significant.

**Table 3: Independence Sample T-Test for Adolescents Differences in Evaluation of the fit of their Clothes**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	13.754	.000	-2.861	398	.004	-.160	.056
Equal variances not assumed			-2.861	381.317	.004	-.160	.056

Reading the top line of the t-test results, it can be seen that the mean difference in evaluation of the fit of clothes between adolescents' males and females statistically significant. Putting the descriptive and inferential results of the independent samples t-test together, the complete answer to the research question is presented as:

For fit of clothes, females ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=.49$ ) are more likely to evaluate the fit of their clothes significantly more than males would do ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=.61$ ),  $t(398) = -2.86$ ,  $p=.04$  (two-tailed). This finding has revealed gender differences in perceptions and evaluation with fit. This is in line with the argument that male's buying behaviors and attitudes towards clothing are different from those of female (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Liu & Dickerson, 1999; Moore, Doyle, & Thomson, 2001). Thus, adolescents' evaluation of clothes depends on gender in terms of both the aesthetic and functional dimensions.

## CONCLUSION

There is a connection between functional clothing and aesthetic clothing and the way adolescents clothed their bodies to be appreciated by themselves and also by others. In other words, functional and aesthetic characteristics of clothing fit play a role in adolescents' expectations and evaluations regarding the fit of his or her clothes. However, not all functional and aesthetic characteristic of clothing fit play important role as some of adolescent indicated that they experience problems with the fit and sizing in clothes they buy from local retail outlets. Both males and females adolescents differ in their expectations and evaluation of the fit of their clothes but females are more likely to expect and evaluate the fit of their clothes significantly more than males would do.

## RECOMMENDATION

This study clearly underscores the importance fit of ready-made clothing for adolescents. On the basis of information gathered, it is observed that further efforts were necessary to improve the fit of ready-made clothes for adolescents. The stakeholders in the clothing industry, which include apparel consumers, retailers, product developers, clothing manufactures, designers as well as educators and researchers should work together to address the fit problems of adolescent.

## REFERENCES

- Alexander, M., Connell, L. J. & Presley, A. B. (2005). "Clothing fit preferences of young female adult consumers", *International Journal of Clothing Science & Technology*, 17 (1), 52-64.
- Anderson, K. (2005). Pattern making: past to present. Retrieved March 10, 2013, from <http://www.techexchange.com>.
- Brown, P. & Rice, J. (2001), *Ready-to-wear apparel analysis*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall,
- Caplan, R. (2005). *By design* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Fairchild Publications.
- Chun-Yoon, J. & Jasper, C.R. (1995). Consumer preference for size description systems of male's and female' apparel. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 29(2): pp. 429-441. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 8(2), 43-48. *clothing. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 15(4), 446-463.
- Cox, C.E., & Dietz, E. B. (1998). Adapting to teen culture. *Journal of Extension*, 31(1), 11-15.
- de Klerk, H. M., & Tselepis, T. (2007). The early adolescent female clothing consumer: Expectations, evaluation and satisfaction with fit as part of the appreciation of clothing quality. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 11(3), 413-428.
- De Long, M. R. (1998). *The way we look. Dress and aesthetics*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York.
- Faust, M.E, Carrier, S. & Baptiste, P. (2006). Variations in Canadian ready-to-wear standard sizes. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 10(1), 71-83.
- Frith, H., & Gleeson, K. (2004). Clothing and embodiment: Men managing body image and appearance. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 5, 40-48.
- Grant, I.J. and Stephen, G.R. (2005), "Buying behaviour of 'tweenage' girls and key societal communicating factors influencing their purchasing of fashion clothing", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*.. 9 (4 ), 45-66.
- Igbo, C.A., & Anikweze, G. U. (2005). Establishment of average body measurement for women with figure problems. *Ebonyi Technology and Vocational Education Journal*, 1(1), 53-60.
- Kaiser, S. (1999). *The social psychology of clothing: Symbolic appearances in context*, Macmillan, New York, NY.
- Liu, K., & Dickerson, K. G. (1999). Taiwanese male office workers: Selection criteria for business apparel purchase. *Journal of Fashion Merchandising and Management*, 3(3), 255-266.
- MacGillivray, M.S., & Wilson, J.D. (2009). Clothing and appearance among early, middle and late adolescents. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 15, 43-49.
- Moore, C .M, Doyle, S .A. & Thomson E. (2001). Till shopping do us part – the service requirements of divorced male fashion. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 29, 399-407.

- 
- Peter, J .P. and Olsan, J.C. (2005). *Consumer behaviour and marketing strategy*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.,
- Solomon, M. R., & Rabolt, N.J. (2004). *Consumer behavior: In fashion*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall.
- Sproles, G. B. & Burns, L. D. (1994). *Changing appearances: understanding dress in contemporary society*, New York: Fairchild.
- Tate, S.L. (2004), *Inside fashion design*, (5th ed.), Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. techniques. Reston Publishing, Reston, VA. *Technology and Management*, 4(1), 1-13.
- Uzoagulu, A. E. (1998). *Practical guide to writing researches project reports in tertiary institution*. Enugu: John Jacob Classic Publishers.