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RETAIL BUYERS SALEABILITY JUDGEMENTS:
A COMPARISON OF MERCHANDISE CATEGORIES

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

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By

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the saleability judgements of retail store buyers of women's and men's wear. A sample of 81 women's and men's wear buyers, representing two specialty stores and one mass merchandiser, was sent questionnaires. Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation was used to reduce the number of product, vendor and information source variables to eight factors. Three significant differences existed between the women's wear and men's wear buyers, verifying that not all retail buyers are alike. Results will benefit educators in preparing students to become more effective buyers, retail management can incorporate this same information into a buyer training program and apparel manufacturers can use the study in planning product strategies to retailers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The function of the retail buyer is to select and buy saleable merchandise. This merchandise must be profitable for the retail organization and, even more importantly, must meet the needs and wants of that retail store's customer. This selecting and buying requires decisions involving saleability judgements. These saleability judgements are decisions about product, vendor and information sources and are critical to successful retail buying. The department store buyer is viewed as an expert in evaluating products and vendors. In fact, sizable amounts of capital are entrusted to the retail buyer for selecting merchandise which will meet the retailer's objectives as well as the consumer's wants.

Buying essentials are taught in universities and executive training programs, yet very little documentation exists on how buyers use product and vendor criteria in judging merchandise. In addition, there is strong evidence to indicate that few buyers enter the marketplace with an explicit list of criteria to be used in product evaluation. Two factors that contribute to the lack of explicit criteria

are the complexity of the buyers' decision process and the multiplicity of variables (product, vendor and information source) that have significant bearing on the decision (2).

An opportunity exists to analyze saleability judgements concerning merchandise. Francis and Brown (1) found that not all retail buyers are alike. Examining judgements of the buyers for women's and men's merchandise categories, which make up a substantial percent of total store business, would produce interesting results. These results would aid persons in store management, education and apparel manufacturing by examining the saleability judgements of the retail buyer and the similarities and differences of these judgements between the two categories.

Use of an established theory of merchandise buying behavior, adapted from an industrial buying model (4), provides a basis for collecting and interpreting empirical data. This study will enable individuals in store management, education and apparel manufacturing to understand saleability judgements used for different merchandise categories.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of the study is to investigate the saleability judgements of retail store buyers of women's wear and men's wear. Two objectives of the research are

- 1) to establish product, vendor and information source

variables used by women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers and (2) to compare these requirements of women's wear buyers to men's wear buyers.

Hypotheses

H1 Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers will not differ on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables.

H2 Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers will not differ on the purchase from vendors on a regular, on-going basis.

H3 As buyers' retail buying experiences increases, the proportion of purchases made from vendors used on a regular, on-going basis increases.

H4 Sales representatives are the most important source of information for women's wear and men's wear buyers.

H5 Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers will not differ in the frequency of purchases made which are straight reorder, modified reorder and new task.

H6 Buyers at the three stores will not differ on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables.

Assumptions

1. Retail buyers attempt to purchase saleable garments that closely fit consumer needs and wants.

2. Retail buyers attempt to purchase saleable garments

which will contribute to the organization's profitability.

Delimitations

1. The sample will be limited to buyers of two specialty stores and a mass merchandiser in the Southwestern region of the United States.

2. The research will be limited to women's wear and men's wear buyers.

3. Merchandise requirements will be limited to product vendor and information source variables.

Limitations

1. Different levels of buyer experience and education may produce varying results.

2. Results can only be generalized to women's wear and men's apparel buyers.

3. The subjects will be basing judgements on a hypothetical purchase rather than on an actual purchase.

4. The sample will consist of buyers from two types of retail institutions in one geographical location which will limit the generalizability of the results.

Definition of Terms

1. Department store.-- A retail store which has a year-round commitment to full-price lines of soft goods and home furnishings; particularly in the flagship store (5).

2. Information source variables.-- Various authorities

consulted in the decision-making process such as sales representative, trade advertising, competing stores, supervisors/upper retail management, other buyers and resident buying office.

3. Mass merchandiser.-- A retail store which tends to offer fewer customer services and focuses on lower prices. In this study, the mass merchandiser operates on a closed membership basis only (3).

4. Merchandise category.-- A major classification of apparel within a retail store. This study deals with buyers of merchandise for women's apparel and men's apparel. Women's merchandise categories include coats, suits, dresses, sportswear, intimate apparel and accessories. Men's merchandise categories include: clothing, furnishings, accessories and active sportswear (5).

5. Product variables.-- Factors that are used in selecting products, such as (a) quality; (b) styling; (c) distinctiveness; (d) brand name; (e) country of origin; (f) color; (g) fiber content and; (h) position on fashion cycle.

6. Retail buyer.-- The person who identifies, evaluates and purchases merchandise for the retail store which will be ultimately purchased by the consumer.

7. Saleability judgements.-- Characteristics used by retail buyers to evaluate garments to be purchased. Three types of saleability judgements will be examined in this

study: product, vendor and information source.

8. Specialty store.-- A retail store that offers a single type of product or group or related products for sale (6).

9. Vendor.-- A supplier of merchandise.

10. Vendor variables.-- Factors that are used in selecting vendors, such as (a) pricing strategy; (b) promotional incentives; (c) selling history; (d) terms of sale; (e) steady source of supply; (f) good delivery; (g) reputation of vendor; (h) past experience with vendor; (i) financial condition of vendor; (j) return policy; (k) type of purchase and; (l) vendor loyalty.

Importance of the Study

Judging the saleability of merchandise is very critical to successful retail buying. Store management, buyers and merchandise managers will find this information useful in developing buyer training programs. Educators can use this same information in designing their retailing curricula. If more is known about how buyers make decisions regarding the saleability of merchandise, it may be possible to more effectively prepare students to become buyers. The third source to benefit from the study is the apparel manufacturer. For a manufacturer to be a success, the apparel product must be selected by the retail buyer and be accessible to the ultimate consumer. The identification of

important merchandise and vendor characteristics would aid in the success of all the above.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

A review of literature will be presented for the following: (1) Sheth's theory of merchandise buying behavior; (2) Saleability judgements and; (3) Merchandise categories.

Theoretical Framework

Model of Merchandise Buying Behavior

A theory of merchandise buying behavior (17) will serve as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory is presented in the model designated as Figure 1. The diagonal marks illustrate the parts of the model to be tested.

This model was chosen because it describes and explains the merchandise buying behavior of the retail organization and consists of the following constructs: merchandise requirements, supplier accessability, choice, ideal supplier/product choice. The model proposes that in determining the actual supplier/product choice, four constructs (merchandise requirements, supplier accessability, choice and ideal supplier/product) act as influences.

Merchandise requirements are the product variables and refer to the merchandise buying motives and their associated

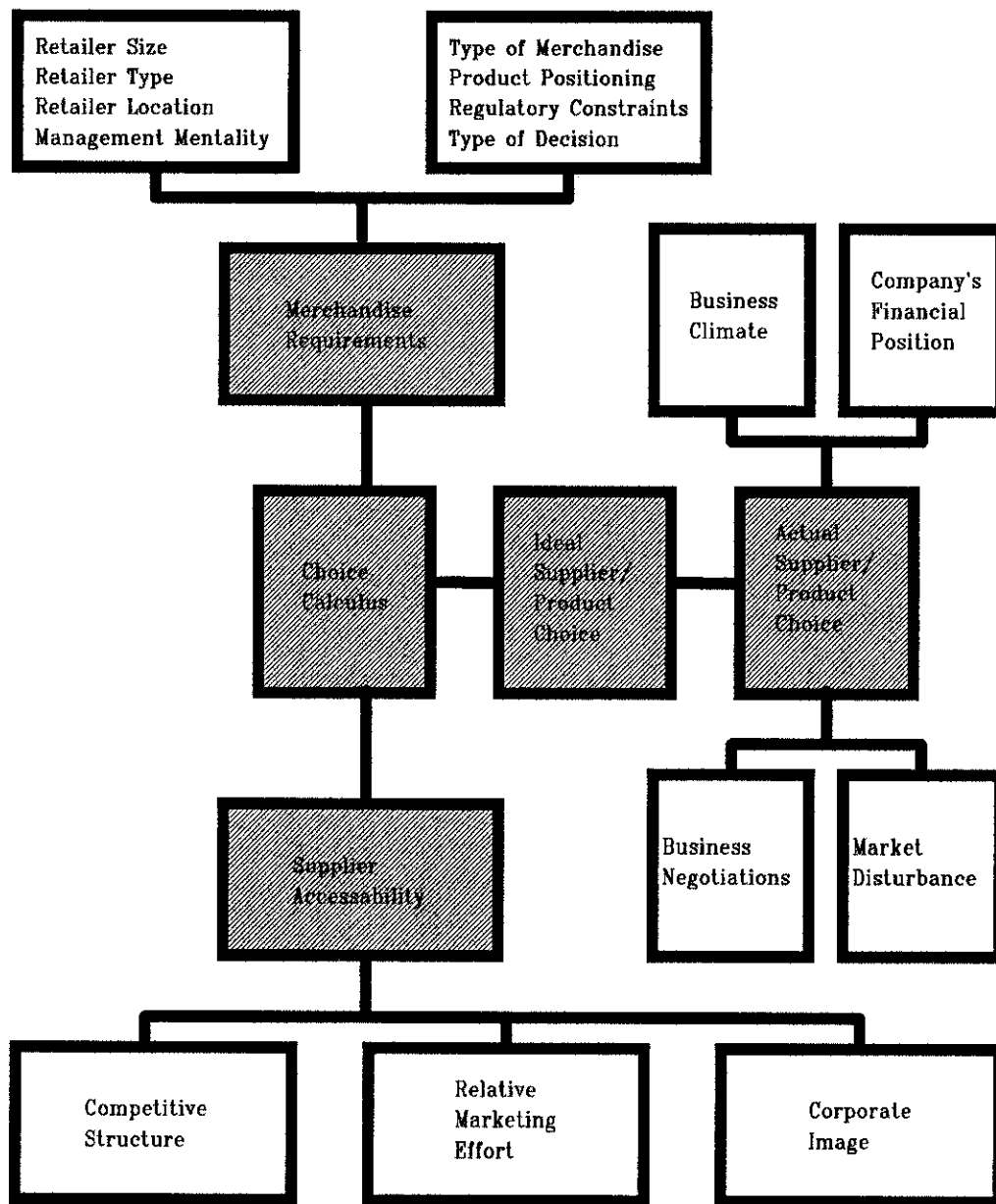


Fig. 1—Sheth's model of merchandise buying behavior.

purchase criteria. These requirements include items such as quality and brand (16).

Supplier accessibility are the vendor variables and refer to the evoked set of choice options available to a retailer to satisfy merchandise requirements. This accessibility represents vendor variables such as pricing strategy and good delivery (16).

Choice is the phase of a buyer's decision process in which merchandise requirements (product and vendor) and information source variables are matched to the strategic purchasing policy of the retail establishment to arrive at the ideal product choice. This represents the type of purchase made.

"Ideal" supplier/product choice refers to the best choice of a supplier (vendor) and/or product from among those accessible to the retailer to satisfy merchandise requirements. This construct represents the outcome that uses the product and vendor variables to reach a buying decision.

Actual supplier/product choice represents the actual choice of a supplier or product made by the retailer. Ad hoc situational factors such as business climate, business negotiations, a company's financial position and/or market disturbances may intervene in this stage (or earlier) of the selection process. The retailer is motivated to select another supplier/product which is not the ideal choice.

A retailer's merchandise buying behavior is a function of the merchandise requirements, supplier and merchandise accessibility and judgement by which the buyer selects the best supplier. This ideal supplier/product choice represents the outcome of an ideal situation not influenced by situational factors, whereas the actual supplier/product choice represents the outcome of a conditional analysis influenced by situational factors.

Saleability Judgements

Retail buyers are expected to evaluate and integrate a wide variety of information when judging merchandise saleability. These saleability judgements are based upon information about product and vendor obtained from information source variables.

Product Variables.--As suggested in retailing and fashion merchandising textbooks (3, 4, 20), the saleability of fashion merchandise is a matter of judgement that involves product variables, such as fiber content, color, brand and country of origin. However, no indication is given as to how these product variables are integrated when buyers select merchandise. Sheth's (16) model of industrial buyer behavior noted that saleability judgements included product variables of quality and brand. As reported by Hirschman (10), brand name was one of the most often cited product variables used to determine merchandise saleability.

Hirschman and Mazursky (11) identified that product variables of reputation and aesthetic properties were used by retail buyers to determine saleability. Francis and Brown (8) reported apparel buyers were the most concerned with product variables such as styling and quality when determining merchandise saleability. A most recent study by Ettenson and Wagner (5) found that apparel buyers used product variables of fiber content, cut, color, brand and country of origin to determine merchandise saleability.

Information Source Variables.--Sheth's model of industrial buyer behavior (16) noted that the buyer's expectations of meeting merchandise requirements are based on several factors. One of these, information source, deals with the buyer's exposure to various sources of information such as non-personal (competing stores and trade advertising) and personal sources (sales representative, upper retail management and resident buying office). Francis and Brown (8) tested the information sources of personal selling, vendor advertising, trade publications, retail management, peers and resident buying office among a sample of apparel and appliance buyers. These two groups reported personal selling to be the most important information source.

Vendor Variables.-- Sheth's (16) model of industrial buyer behavior stated that saleability judgements included

the vendor variables of delivery time, after sale service, price and past experience with supplier. Empirical studies have identified vendor variables (5; 8; 10; 11; 13). These studies reported that buyers view price, delivery, vendor reputation, steady source of supply, fair price, selling history, terms of sale, past experience with vendor, financial condition of vendor, return policy and promotional strategy to be of major importance in determining the saleability of merchandise.

Type of buying decision, a component of Sheth's (16) model of industrial buyer behavior, is greatly influenced by the amount of perceived risk that the buyer feels in making buying decisions. According to Assel (1), three types of buying decisions include: "new task," "modified rebuy" and "straight rebuy." "New task" involves the buyer gathering a great deal of information before placing the order due to the perceived risk involved. Before purchasing a line for the first time and/or a new style, a buyer will make use of the marketer as well as the general information sources in order to reduce the amount of perceived risk involved with the purchase decision. For example, a women's dress buyer has read in various trade publications that "minis" are going to make a come back in the summer season. Before making a commitment to buy a "trendy" item such as a mini, he/she will probably also check with other sales representatives, management, peers and/or a resident buying

office to access the saleability of this item.

A "modified rebuy" is an order which cannot be placed without checking around for a little more information and is less risky than the "new task". For example, a junior buyer has sold a particular jean very well for the summer season and wants to bring in the same style but in a corduroy fabric for the fall season. The buyer will probably want to consult with the vendor to determine the best weight, fiber content and colors for the fall season before placing an order.

"Straight rebuy" is a routine order placed without gathering any new information and involves the least amount of risk. For example: a men's furnishings buyer will place a "straight rebuy" for basic socks. The socks are a basic item and are stocked from season to season without any changes to styling, fiber content and/or colors. Francis and Brown (8) reported that appliance buyers made more routine purchases than retail buyers of apparel.

Hakansson, Johanson and Wootz (9) found buyers to be more concerned with function and quality than with price and vendor loyalty. Francis and Brown (8) reported a significantly greater proportion of purchases were classified as from a "regular vendor" (i.e., a vendor chosen on a regular basis) by both apparel and appliance buyers.

Merchandise Categories

As stated earlier, all retail buying decisions are not alike. In a typical department store, women's and men's wear comprise over 55 per cent of the total store business (15). Of the total store buyers, almost half (40%) of the buyers are purchasing some category of women's wear. Limited research has been conducted regarding the judgements used by retail buyers in selecting women's wear and men's wear. In comparing apparel and appliance buyers, Francis and Brown (8) reported that apparel buyers were concerned with product variables such as fashionability, styling, color and distinctiveness when judging saleability. The sample used in that study was composed of apparel buyers for small specialty shops, department stores, chain stores and discount stores. In a study conducted on men's wear buyers in department and specialty stores (12), variables of quality, availability and profit potential were found to have been the most important considerations in selection of new items.

Differences in merchandise variables used to determine saleability are probably due to the differences in the women's and men's wear industries. According to Forbes Magazine (19), "The basic reason that the men's and women's clothing industries are so different is that one sells clothes [men's], while the other sells fashion [women's]."

Fashionability has been found to be more important for women's wear than for men's wear (2; 7; 14; 18). Research on retail buyer's judgements regarding women's and men's apparel is very limited.

In conclusion, the retail buyer's decision making process is complex and based upon various saleability judgements. In judging merchandise saleability, the buyer evaluates information on product and vendor variables from information source variables before making the actual supplier/product decision. Because of the differences in the women's wear and men's wear merchandise categories, these differences may affect product, vendor and information variables used by retail buyers.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Sample

The population of this study was composed of two groups of apparel buyers: (1) Retail buyers who purchase women's apparel and (2) retail buyers who purchase men's apparel. The buyers represented two forms of retail: specialty and mass merchandising. These retailers are located in the southwestern region of the United States and were chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study and for their geographic accessibility to the researcher.

One prestigious specialty store chain was founded in the early 1900's and has been in the women's and men's wear business since this time. The buying office purchases for 22 stores located across the United States and has an annual volume of \$750 million. The second lower-priced specialty stores chain was founded in the 1930's and has been in the women's and men's business the same length of time. The buying office purchases for 145 stores in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico and has an annual volume of \$360 million. The mass merchandiser has been in the women's and men's business for 92 years and has an annual volume of \$5.2 billion.

The buying office purchases for 260 locations world-wide, and has an annual volume of \$360 million.

Retail stores select different ready-to-wear items to perform different roles in their merchandising mix. Due to the size of the specialty and mass merchandiser, each utilizes several individuals to purchase ready-to-wear stock. This study was limited to those persons who select only women's or only men's wear merchandise in these three stores. Collectively, these buyers purchase all categories within the women's wear and men's wear area. For example, the women's wear buyers represented in this study purchased coats, suits, dresses, sportswear, intimate apparel and accessories. The men's wear buyers purchased clothing, furnishings, accessories and active sportswear.

Eighty-one buyers were sent questionnaires. Sixty-three buyers returned usable questionnaires with 40 being women's wear buyers and 23 being men's wear buyers. The Director of Executive Personnel, the Women's Wear Divisional and the Director of Public Relations gave permission to conduct the study with the two specialty stores and mass merchandising buyers, respectively.

Instrumentation

The instrument was designed to obtain information about three types of variables: product, vendor and information source. The instrument (Appendix A) was an adaptation of

Francis and Brown's instrument (2). Product variables rated the importance of each variable in making buying decisions on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 representing "not at all important." Product variables included characteristics such as: quality, color, fiber content, brand name, styling, distinctiveness, country of origin and position on fashion cycle.

Vendor oriented variables included pricing strategy, promotional incentives, terms of sale, selling history, steady source of supply, good delivery, reputation of vendor, past experience with vendor, financial condition of vendor, and return policy. Respondents measured the importance of each variable in making buying decisions on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 representing "not at all important."

Sources of information dealt with the buyer's exposure to various sources of information. Sources of information consulted in the process of decision-making included two types personal and non-personal. These sources included sales representative, trade advertising, competing stores, supervisors/upper retail management, other buyers and resident buying office. Respondents measured the importance of each variable in making buying decisions on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 representing "not at all important."

Additional information was collected about the type of buying decision. Buyers were asked to assign percentages to three types of buying decisions that are encountered in making a purchase: (1) new task, (2) modified reorder and (3)

straight reorder. The total of percentages of the three were to equal 100 percent.

Vendor loyalty was determined by indicating the percentage of purchases from a regular (on-going vendor), untried vendor and occasional vendor. The total percentages assigned to the three were to add to 100 per cent.

Respondents were asked demographic questions relating to area currently being bought, type of merchandise purchased, buying experience, education, sex and age. The Cronbach Alpha test for reliability and validity (1) yielded an overall reliability coefficient of .70. Reliability coefficients for individual sections of the instrument resulted in the following: Product .60, Vendor .75, and Information Source .72.

Collection of Data

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a retail buying class to ensure that the task and instructions were clear and required no further explanation. In addition, an interview session was also held with a former department store buyer to provide further refinement (6). The questionnaire was then refined based on the findings and suggestions of the pre-test and the interview.

Data were collected via a mail questionnaire sent to the sample of eighty-one apparel buyers. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter (Appendix A) briefly explain-

ing the study, thanking each participant and giving directions for obtaining a copy of the results (see Appendix A). A stamped self-addressed envelope was also included with one specialty store's and the mass merchandiser's questionnaires. The second specialty store's questionnaires were distributed and collected by the women's Apparel Divisional. A follow-up postcard (Appendix A) was mailed to encourage the return of the questionnaire to buyers who had not responded one week prior to the deadline. Sixty-three usable questionnaires (77.7% return rate) were returned to the researcher and used in this study.

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed using SAS (5) which included computing mean scores, standard deviations, frequency distributions, percentages, Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation, and Analysis of Variance. Frequency distributions and mean scores were used to determine a profile of all buyers and a profile of women's wear buyers and men's wear buyers. Mean scores were also used to determine the most important source of information for women's wear and men's wear buyers (Hypothesis 4).

Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation was used to reduce the eight product, ten vendor and six information source variables into factors. Factor scores were determined for each factor and used in further

analysis.

The General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if women's wear buyers and men's wear buyers differed on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables (Hypothesis 1). In addition, ANOVA was used to determine if differences existed between women's wear and men's wear buyers on the purchase from vendors on a regular, on-going basis (Hypothesis 2); purchases which are straight rebuy, modified rebuy and new task (Hypothesis 5); and if buyers of the three stores differed on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables (Hypothesis 6).

In addition, a demographic variable (retailing experience) was examined to determine if the proportion of purchases made from vendors on a regular, on-going basis increases as buyers' retailing experiences increase (Hypothesis 3). Type III Sum of Squares were used to determine significance. Statistical significance was determined for all analyses at the .05 level of probability.

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CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The hypotheses this research proposed to answer were:

(1) Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear buyers will not differ on the importance on product, vendor and information source variables. (2) Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers will not differ on the purchases from vendors used on a regular, on-going basis. (3) As buyers' retail buying experiences increases, the proportion of purchases made from vendors used on a regular, on-going basis increases. (4) Sales representatives are the most important source of information for women's wear and men's wear buyers. (5) Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers will not differ in the frequency of purchases made which are straight reorder, modified reorder and new task. (6) Buyers at the three stores will not differ on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables. The data were analyzed by computing mean scores, standard deviations, frequency distributions, percentages, Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation and Analysis of Variance.

Sample Characteristics

The sample for this study consisted of 63 retail apparel buyers with 40 buyers (63.5%) purchasing women's wear and 23 buyers (36.5%) purchasing men's wear (Table 1). When asked what type of merchandise best described the area each bought, 59 percent indicated "updated" (i.e., more fashionable) while 41 percent said "traditional" (i.e., classic, less fashionable) merchandise. The majority of buyers had more than 12 months of total buying experience. The largest number of buyers (76%) reported having a bachelor's degree and 9.5 per cent held a master's degree. Sixty-eight per cent of the buyers were female and 32 per cent were male. The majority of the buyers (73%) were between the ages of 25 to 34 years of age.

TABLE I
DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Area Bought</u>		
Women's Wear	40	63.5
Men's Wear	23	36.5
Total	63	100.0
<u>Type of Merchandise Bought</u>		
Traditional	26	41.3
Updated	37	58.7
Total	63	100.0

TABLE I--Continued

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Length of Buying Experience</u>		
Less than 6 months	3	4.8
6 to 12 months	1	1.6
1 to 2 years	9	14.3
2 to 4 years	15	23.8
4 to 6 years	8	12.7
6 to 10 years	15	23.8
Over 10 years	12	19.0
Total	63	100.0
<u>Education</u>		
High School	1	1.6
Some College	8	12.7
Bachelor's Degree	48	76.2
Master's Degree	6	9.5
Total	63	100.0
<u>Sex</u>		
Female	43	68.3
Male	20	31.7
Total	63	100.0
<u>Age</u>		
Below 25	1	1.6
25 to 29	23	36.5
30 to 34	23	36.5
35 to 39	6	9.5
40 to 44	6	9.5
Above 44	4	6.3
Total	63	100.0

Closer detail of the differences between women's and men's wear buyers (TABLE II) revealed that more than half

(65%) of the women's wear buyers classified the type of merchandise bought as updated as compared with only 49 percent of the men's wear buyers reported buying updated merchandise. The men's wear buyers had slightly more buying experience (none had less than one year of experience) than did women's wear buyers. However, more women's wear buyers had over 10 years of buying experience (22.5%) as compared with only 13 percent of the men's wear buyers having this same amount of experience. The percentage of women's wear and men's wear buyers holding Bachelor's degrees were about equal (75%, 78.3% respectively). However, a higher percentage of men's wear buyers (17.4%) held advanced degrees as compared with women's wear buyers (5.0%). The women's wear buyers were predominantly female (80%) but the men's wear buyers were almost evenly mixed (47.8 females and 52.2% males). The women's wear buyers tended to be slightly younger with the greatest proportion (42.5%) in the 25 to 29 age range while the greatest proportion (43.5) of the men's wear buyers were in the 30-34 age range.

TABLE II
DESCRIPTION OF WOMEN'S WEAR AND MEN'S WEAR BUYERS

Characterisitcs	Women's Wear		Men's Wear	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Type of Merchandise Bought</u>				
Traditional	14	35.0	12	52.2
Updated	26	65.0	11	47.8
Total	40	100.0	23	100.0
<u>Length of Buying Experience</u>				
Less than 6 mos.	3	7.5	0	0.0
6 to 12 months	1	2.5	0	0.0
1 to 2 years	5	12.5	4	17.4
2 to 4 years	8	20.0	7	30.4
4 to 6 years	5	12.5	3	13.0
6 to 10 years	9	22.5	6	26.1
Over 10 years	9	22.5	3	13.0
Total	40	100.0	23	99.9
<u>Education</u>				
High School	1	2.5	0	0.0
Some College	7	17.5	1	4.3
Bachelor's Degree	30	75.0	18	78.3
Master's Degree	2	5.0	4	17.4
Total	40	100.0	23	100.0
<u>Sex</u>				
Female	32	80.0	11	47.8
Male	8	20.0	12	52.2
Total	40	100.0	23	100.0

TABLE II--Continued

Characterisitcs	<u>Women's Wear</u>		<u>Men's Wear</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Age</u>				
Below 25	0	0.0	1	4.3
25 to 29	17	42.5	6	26.1
30 to 34	13	32.5	10	43.5
35 to 39	4	10.0	2	8.7
40 to 44	4	10.0	2	8.7
Above 44	2	5.0	2	8.7
Total	<u>40</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Development of the Factors:
Product, Vendor and Information Source

Factor analysis using the Principal Components Method with Varimax Rotation was computed on the product, vendor and information source variables. To reduce the eight product variables, ten vendor variables and the six information source variables, a correlation matrix was generated and then a factor analysis was used to create clusters of variables that were all correlated with each other.

Results of a factor analysis conducted on the three sets of variables (product, vendor and information source) resulted in eight factors and are presented in TABLE III. The eight factors are as follows: Three product factors include Brand Name, Product Fashionability and Quality; three vendor factors were termed Negotiations, Reputation and Price/Promotion; and two information source factors were

labeled Personal Sources and Competition. Factor scores for each of the items comprising the eight factors were produced by a SAS (7) score procedure which combined the factor loadings with the raw data. All items loaded above .47 and were retained in one of the eight factors.

TABLE III
PRODUCT, VENDOR AND
INFORMATION SOURCE FACTORS

Factors	Loadings
<u>Product Factors</u>	
1) <u>Brand Name</u>	
Country of Origin	.80
Brand Name	.74
Styling	.72
% variance explained	1.89%
2) <u>Product Fashionability</u>	
Distinctiveness	.81
Position on Fashion Cycle	.80
% variance explained	1.84%
3) <u>Quality</u>	
Quality	.84
Fiber Content	.58
Color	.47
% variance explained	1.50%
<u>Vendor Factors</u>	
1) <u>Negotiations</u>	
Selling History	.79
Terms of Sale	.75
Return Policy	.69
Steady Source of Supply	.54
% variance explained	2.39%

TABLE III---Continued

Factors	Loadings
<hr/>	
2) <u>Reputation</u>	
Good Delivery	.79
Reputation of Vendor	.70
Past Experience with Vendor	.64
Financial Condition of Vendor	.50
% variance explained	2.09
<hr/>	
3) <u>Price/Promotion</u>	
Pricing Strategy	.75
Promotional Incentives	.72
% variance explained	1.43%
<hr/>	
<u>Information Source Factors</u>	
<hr/>	
1) <u>Personal Sources</u>	
Sales Representative	.75
Resident Buying Office	.72
Other Buyers	.69
Supervisors/Upper Retail Management	.64
% variance explained	2.01%
<hr/>	
2) <u>Competition</u>	
Competing Stores	.87
Trade Advertising	.85
% variance explained	1.69%
<hr/>	

Product Factors.--The product variables initially included eight product characteristics. These characteristics were quality, color, fiber content, position on fashion cycle, styling, distinctiveness, brand name and country of origin. Respondents measured the importance of each variables on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 representing "not at all important. Three factors with eigenvalues over one were

generated yielding a three factor solution to factor analysis of the eight product variables. Evaluation of factor loadings indicated that all variables loaded high (.47 was arbitrary) on one of the factors. Factor loadings for the product variables and the per cent of variance explained by each factor are listed in TABLE III.

Product factor one was labeled Brand Name with three product variables (country of origin, brand name and styling) being retained in this factor with factor loadings between .72 and .80. Buyers who rated brand name important also indicated country of origin and styling to be important in the decision process. This factor is identical to the factor Brand Name found by Francis and Brown (1).

Product factor two, Product Fashionability, was composed of two product variables (distinctiveness and position on fashion cycle) with factor loadings of .80 and .81. The product's position on the fashion cycle (i.e. introduction, rise, culmination and decline) and the distinctiveness of styling were important criteria in the buyers selection of an apparel product. This factor is also identical to the factor Product Fashionability found by Francis and Brown (1).

Product factor three, Quality, retained three product variables (quality, fiber content and color) with factor loadings between .47 and .84. Buyers who scored high on this factor felt that quality, fiber content and color were

important determinants in selecting apparel.

Vendor Factors.--The Vendor factors initially included ten statements about vendor characteristics. These characteristics included selling history, terms of sale, return policy, steady source of supply, good delivery, reputation of vendor, past experience with vendor, pricing strategy, promotional incentives and financial condition of vendor. Buyers indicated the degree of importance for each variable by use of a five-point Likert scale; "1" represented variable not important and "5" represented an extremely important variable.

Three factors with eigenvalues over one were generated yielding a three factor solution to factor analysis of the ten vendor variables. Evaluation of factor loadings indicated that all variables loaded high (.47 was arbitrary) on one of the factors. Factor loadings for the vendor variables and the per cent of variance explained by each factor are listed in TABLE III.

Vendor factor one was labeled Negotiations, with four vendor variables (selling history, terms of sale, return policy and steady source of supply) being retained in this factor with factor loadings between .54 and .79. Buyers felt that negotiations such as selling history, terms of sale, return policy and steady source of supply were important in selecting vendors. This factor is also identical to the factor Negotiations found by Francis and Brown (1).

Vendor factor two, labeled Reputation, with four vendor variables (good delivery, reputation of vendor, past experience and financial condition of vendor) with factor loadings between .64 and .79. Buyers who scored this factor as extremely important placed importance on good delivery, reputation, past experience and financial condition of vendor in selecting vendors.

Vendor factor three was labeled Price/Promotion with two vendor variables (pricing strategy and promotional incentives) being retained in this factor with factor loadings of .72 and .75. Buyers who scored this factor high indicated that they placed importance on pricing strategy and promotional incentives when selecting a vendor.

Information Source Factors.--The information source variables initially included six statements about information source characteristics. These sources included sales representative, trade advertising, competing stores, supervisors/upper retail management, other buyers and resident buying office. The degree of importance of each information source variable was assessed with a five-point Likert scale "1" represented not important and "5" represented extremely important. Two factors with eigenvalues over one were generated yielding a two factor solution to factor analysis of the six information source variables. Evaluation of factor loadings indicated that all variables loaded high (.47 was arbitrary) on one of the factors. Factor loadings for the

information source variables are located in TABLE III.

Information Source factor one was labeled Personal Sources and included sources such as sales representative, resident buying office, other buyers and supervisors/upper retail management. Personal sources was an appropriate label because each variable retained would require a personal contact. Factor loadings were between .64 and .75. Buyers who felt that personal information sources were important in making purchase decisions scored this factor as very important.

Information Source Factor two, Competition, retained the two variables competing stores and trade advertising with factor loadings of .85 and .87. Buyers who scored this factor high placed importance on competing stores and trade advertising as information sources used in making purchases.

Women's Wear and Men's Wear Buyers Compared On Product, Vendor and Information Source Variables

Null Hypothesis One

Women's apparel buyers and men's apparel buyers will not differ on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables.

The General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if women's wear buyers and the men's wear buyers differed significantly on the product, vendor and information source variables. Significant differences existed between the two groups of buyers on three

of the eight factors (TABLE IV): Reputation ($p < .05$), Price/Promotion ($p < .05$) and Competition ($p < .01$). Means scores were used to determine where the differences occurred between the two groups of buyers. (See Appendix B for complete Analysis of Variance tables).

TABLE IV
DIFFERENCES AMONG THE WOMEN'S APPAREL BUYERS AND
MEN'S APPAREL BUYERS ON PRODUCT, VENDOR AND
INFORMATION SOURCE FACTORS

Factors	F values from ANOVA
<u>Product Factors</u>	
1) Brand Name	0.24
2) Product Fashionability	0.04
3) Quality	0.52
<u>Vendor Factors</u>	
1) Negotiation	0.00
2) Vendor	4.46*
3) Price/Promotion	5.53*
<u>Information Source Factors</u>	
1) Personal Sources	2.14
2) Competition	5.34*
* $p < .05$	

Vendor.---Significant differences existed between women's wear and men's wear buyers when rating the importance of the vendor factors labeled Reputation ($p < .05$). Results indicated women's wear buyers placed more importance on good delivery, reputation of vendor, past experience with

vendor and financial condition of vendor than did men's wear buyers. Both groups of buyers rated the variables that composed the factor "Vendor" in the same descending with "good delivery" being the most important variable. However, each of the four variables were more important to the women's wear buyers than to men's wear buyers. The rating of "good delivery" as the most important factor to both groups would relate to the fast selling rate of apparel goods as compared to non-apparel goods and the need for timely deliveries. This factor is even more important to the women's wear buyers since fashion goods can be quickly dated. On the average, the women's wear area replaces its stock 3.2 times a year as compared to the men's wear area of 2.2 times a year (6).

Price/Promotion.--Significant differences were reported between the women's and men's buyers on the Vendor factor "Price/Promotion" ($p < .05$). Women's wear buyers placed more importance on the pricing strategy and promotional incentives offered by the vendor than did men's wear buyers. In examining the means of the two variables, more importance was placed on pricing strategy than promotional incentives by both groups of buyers. In recent years, apparel stores offering regular-priced merchandise have been heavily challenged by the increasing number of off-price retailers that are upgrading their merchandise in order to win over the traditional department store shopper (4). To combat this

challenge the regular-price apparel retailers are developing highly competitive pricing strategies to entice shoppers back from off-price competitors. This competitive pricing strategy is important to the women's wear buyers of fashion oriented apparel due to the higher costs normally associated with these goods.

Competition.--Significant differences existed between the ratings of these two groups of buyers when rating the importance of the information source factor "Competition" ($p < .05$). Women's wear buyers placed more importance on competing stores and trade advertising than did the men's wear buyers. This may be due to greater competition in women's apparel with more retailer's offering women's apparel than men's apparel. During the decision to purchase, the apparel buyer is exposed to various sources of information: (1) Personal sources such as the sales representative, supervisors/upper retail management, peers and resident buying offices; and (2) Non-personal sources such as competing stores and trade advertising. While results indicated that women's wear buyers placed more importance on Competition factors (competing stores and trade advertising) than did men's wear buyers, both groups of buyers were very aware of merchandise the competition had to offer. This could be attributed to the competitive market from which these buyers were drawn and/or indicative of the competition that is existing in today's retail area.

Summary of Differences Among Women's Wear and Men's Wear Buyers

The use of the General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed three significant differences between women's wear and men's wear buyers on the product, vendor and information source factors. Significant differences between buyers occurred with two vendor factors and one information source variable. While the women's and men's wear buyers did not differ significantly on the product factors, the women's wear buyers placed more importance on five of the eight product variables (quality, color, position on fashion cycle, styling and brand name) than did the men's wear buyers. Generally, the women's wear buyers placed more importance on (1) the vendor variables of good delivery, reputation of vendor, past experience with vendor, financial condition of vendor, pricing strategy and promotional incentives; and (2) the information source variables of competing stores and trade advertising. On the basis that some differences existed (three out of a possible eight), the null hypothesis was rejected.

Women's Wear Apparel Buyers and Men's Apparel Buyers Compared on Vendor Loyalty

Null Hypothesis Two

(2) Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers will not differ on the purchases from vendors on a regular, on-going basis.

To determine the difference in use of vendors used on a regular basis by women's and men's apparel buyers, the General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. The two groups of buyers did not differ significantly on the purchase from vendors on a regular, on-going basis ($p < .41$). (See Appendix B for Analysis of Variance table). Mean scores revealed women's wear buyers and men's wear buyers purchase approximately the same percentage of merchandise from a regular vendor (66.2 and 69.7 respectively). However, frequency distributions indicated that 17.5 per cent of the women's wear buyers purchased from a vendor on a regular, on-going basis 50 per cent of the time or less. None of the men's wear buyers purchased from a regular vendor less than 50 per cent of the time. The men's wear buyers considered a regular vendor to be one from which purchases were made 50 per cent of the time or more. Once a vendor has been found to be satisfactory in product and delivery, both groups of buyers indicated they preferred to purchase from the same vendor. Since no significant differences existed, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Buyer's Retail Buying Experience Compared
With Frequency of Purchases From A Regular Vendor

Hypothesis Three

(3) As buyer's retail buying experience increases, the proportion of purchases made from vendors used on a regular, on-going basis increases.

The General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if the proportion of purchase made from vendors used on a regular, on-going basis increased as the buyer's retail buying experience increased. Type III Sums of Squares were used to determine significance. (See Appendix B for Analysis of Variance Table). Least Square Means (LSM) were used to plot differences between the six levels of buyer's retail buying experience (See Figure 2).

Respondents were asked the length of time they had been buying apparel in their area. Significant differences were not found ($p < .09$) between the six levels of buying experience (less than 6 months, 6-12 months, 1-2 years, 2-4 years, 4-6 years and 6+ years) and frequency of purchases made from vendors on a regular, on-going basis. Plotting the Least Square Means (Figure 2) indicated that buyers who had been buying for 6-12 months were most likely to purchase on a regular, on-going basis; while buyers who have 6+ years buying experience least likely to purchase on a regular, on-going basis. Therefore, there is no evidence from this research that the proportion of purchases made from vendors used on a regular, on-going basis increases as retail buying experience increases and the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis.

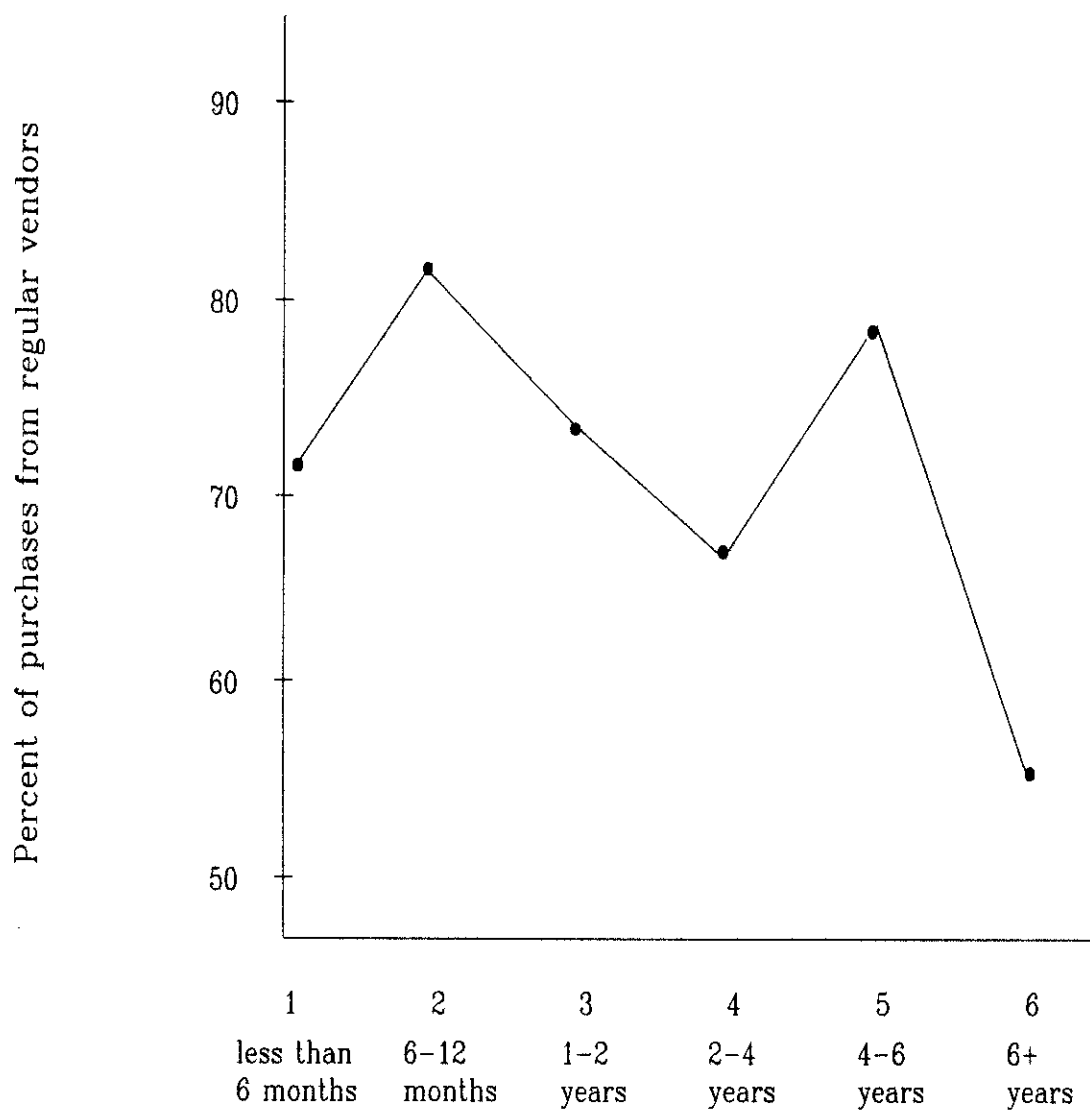


Fig. 2--Buyer's length of retail buying experience.

The Most Important Information Source
for Women's and Men's Apparel Buyers

Hypothesis Four

(4) Sales representatives are the most important source of information for women's and men's apparel buyers.

Use of mean scores (TABLE V) indicated that both groups of buyers rated Competing Stores as the most important source of information in purchasing apparel. The sales representative was ranked as third in importance. Therefore, hypothesis four was rejected. This finding does not support the earlier findings of Francis and Brown (1) who found that the sales representative was the most important information source.

TABLE V
MEANS FOR INFORMATION SOURCE VARIABLES

Variable	Means
1) Competing Stores	3.73
2) Supervisors/Upper Retail Management	3.57
3) Sales Representatives	3.46
4) Trade Advertising	2.88
5) Other Buyers	2.63
6) Resident Buying Office	2.07

In examining the means, the women's wear buyers and men's wear buyers both indicated that competing stores was the most important information source (TABLE VI). Sales

representatives were the second most important source (3.34) to the men's apparel buyers. Even though this source ranked third in importance for the women's wear buyers, the rating was higher (3.52) than the men's wear rating. Women's wear buyers rated all information sources higher than did men's wear buyers.

TABLE VI
WOMEN'S AND MENS INFORMATION SOURCE VARIABLES

Variable	Means Women's Wear	Means Men's Wear
1) Competing Stores	3.87	3.47
2) Supervisors/Upper Retail Management	3.77	3.21
3) Sales Representative	3.52	3.34
4) Trade Advertising	3.02	2.65
5) Other Buyers	2.82	2.30
6) Resident Buying Office	2.17	1.91

As stated earlier, competition among retailers has greatly increased in the past few years resulting in what some have termed as an "overstored" condition in some markets (4). The number and kinds of stores has increased and this had led to intense competition among retailers. This has greatly increased the retail buyers awareness of what competition has to offer and would explain the high rating of this variable as an important information source.

Women's Wear and Men's Wear Buyers Compared On
Types Of Purchases

Null Hypothesis Five

(5) Women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers will not differ in the frequency of purchases made which are straight reorder, modified reorder and new task.

The General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if women's wear buyers and men's wear buyers differed significantly on the purchases made which are straight reorder, modified reorder and new task. Significant differences existed between the two groups of buyers on the proportion of orders which were straight reorder purchases ($p < .02$), a routine reorder placed without gathering any new information. The two groups of buyers did not differ significantly on the proportion of orders which were modified reorder ($p < .72$), an order which cannot be placed without checking around for more information, and new task order ($p < .25$), an order which requires gathering a great deal of information before placing the order. (See Appendix B for Analysis of Variance tables). On this basis, the null hypothesis was partially rejected.

Further examination of the significant difference ($p < .02$) between the two groups of buyers on straight reorder indicated that almost one-fourth (24%) of the men's wear

purchases were classified as a straight reorder. By comparison, the women's wear buyers placed straight reorders only half as frequently (12.38%). As pointed out earlier by the researcher in the review of literature, this difference is probably due to the differences in the women's and men's wear industry. Even though certain areas of men's wear are becoming more fashion oriented, more of the men's wear merchandise would be classified as basic and therefore a larger percentage would be purchased on a straight reorder basis. This is further supported by the fact that the women's wear buyers purchased over 60 per cent (61.30%) of their merchandise as new task and the men's wear buyers purchased a little more than one-half (52.59%) of their merchandise as new task.

Comparison of The Three Stores on
Product, Vendor and Information Source Variables

Null Hypothesis Six

(6) Buyers at the three stores will not differ on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables.

Use of the General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicated that the three stores (exclusive specialty, lower-priced specialty and mass merchandiser) differed significantly on three of the eight factors. Two significant differences between stores occurred with the product variables Product Fashionability ($p < .03$) and Quality

($p < .02$). One significant difference occurred with the vendor variable Price/Promotion ($p < .001$). TABLE VII summarizes the findings. (ANOVA tables are located in Appendix B). Type III Sums of Square were used to determine significance.

TABLE VII
TYPES OF DIFFERENCES AMONG STORES ON
PRODUCT, VENDOR AND INFORMATION SOURCE FACTORS

Factors	F value
<u>Product Factors</u>	
1) Brand Name	1.29
2) Product Fashionability	3.79*
3) Quality	4.51*
<u>Vendor Factors</u>	
1) Negotiation	.79
2) Reputation	1.65
3) Price/Promotion	8.99***
<u>Information Source Factors</u>	
1) Personal Sources	.92
2) Competition	2.97
* $p < .05$	
*** $p < .001$	

Product Fashionability.--Significant differences existed between the three stores when rating the importance of the product factor Fashionability ($p < .03$). Results indicated that the exclusive specialty store placed more importance on Product Fashionability (i.e. distinctiveness and position on fashion cycle) than the lower priced specialty store and

mass merchandiser. These results were anticipated in view of the fact that the exclusive specialty store has a national reputation for offering the finest in apparel merchandise, attention to detail and being fashion forward. The lower priced specialty store chain and the mass merchandiser were more concerned with position on fashion cycle than with distinctiveness. Retailers that stock lower priced apparel are less interested in distinctive merchandise which normally is higher-priced and are more concerned with where the fashion is on the fashion cycle. When a fashion is at its peak, it is in such demand that it can be mass produced and sold at prices within reach of most consumers.

Quality.--Significant differences existed between the three stores when rating the importance of the product factor Quality ($p < .02$). The same results occurred with the Quality factor that occurred with Product Fashionability in which the exclusive specialty store placed more importance on quality, fiber content, and color than the lower priced specialty store and mass merchandiser. The exclusive specialty store placed the most importance on quality followed by color and then fiber content. The quality ranking was expected because of the type of merchandise that is offered. This is the same order that the lower priced specialty store and the mass merchandiser indicated. Color has become an important product variable. The mass merchandiser buyers

reported quality to be more important than the lower priced specialty store buyers. Two reasons may be: 1) Previous problems with the receipt of inferior products which lead to an increased buyer awareness of product quality and 2) A very quality conscious customer (5).

Price/Promotion.--Highly significant differences existed between the three stores when rating the importance of the vendor factor Price/Promotion ($p < .001$). The mass merchandiser store buyers were more concerned with pricing strategy than the two specialty stores. Because of the type of retailing (mass merchandising), merchandise is offered at a discount to its members, therefore the buyers are very concerned with pricing strategy when making purchasing decisions in order to pass along "savings" to their customers. Mass merchandise buyers were not as concerned with promotional incentives as were the two specialty store chain buyers.

Summary of Differences Among The Three Stores on Importance of Product, Vendor and Information Variables

Significant differences were found between the three stores on three of the eight factors: Product Fashionability, Quality and Price/Promotion factors. Generally the exclusive specialty store buyers were more concerned with a product's fashionability, distinction and quality than were buyers from the lower priced specialty store and the mass

merchandiser. Of the eight factors, each store reported quality to be of the most concern when determining merchandise saleability. Color was second in importance to quality for the specialty store. The lower priced specialty store buyers and the mass merchandise buyers were more concerned with the Price/Promotion factor than were the exclusive specialty store buyers. Each store was equally concerned with merchandise position on the fashion cycle.

On the basis that some differences existed (three out of a possible eight factors), null hypothesis six was rejected.

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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the saleability judgements of retail store buyers of women's wear and men's wear. The Sheth Model of Merchandise Buying Behavior (3), the conceptual model used in this study, has proposed that in determining the actual supplier/product choice, four constructs (merchandise requirements, supplier accessibility, choice and ideal/supplier/product) act as influences.

Retail buyers are expected to evaluate and integrate a wide variety of information when judging merchandise saleability. These saleability judgements are based upon product, vendor and information source variables used by retail buyers.

The sample chosen for the study was retail buyers of women's wear and men's wear from three stores: (1) An exclusive well-known specialty store, (2) A lower priced specialty chain and (3) A world-wide mass merchandiser. A four-page questionnaire, an adaptation of the instrument used by Francis and Brown (1), was mailed to a sample of 81 women's and men's wear buyers. Seventy-seven per cent (n=63) returned usable questionnaires.

Sample Characteristics

Of the 63 respondents, 40 purchased women's wear and 23 purchased men's wear. The majority of buyers had more than 12 months of total buying experience. College degrees were held by 76 per cent of the sample and 9.5 per cent held graduate degrees.

Sixty-eight per cent of the buyers were female and 32 per cent were male. The majority of the buyers (73%) were between the ages of 25 to 34 years of age.

In general, women's wear buyers were predominantly female, slightly younger than the men's wear buyers, and more likely to have extensive buying experience. The men's wear buyers held more advanced degrees and tended to buy areas that were more traditional than did the women's wear buyers.

Development of Product, Vendor and Information Source Factors

Six research hypotheses were developed to answer the research questions posed for the study. In order to prepare the raw data for analyses, Principal Components Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation was used to reduce the eight product, ten vendor and six information source variables to eight factors. Factor scores were determined for each factor and used in further analyses. The following are the eight factors:

Product Factors.

Factor 1. Brand Name

Factor 2. Product Fashionability

Factor 3. Quality

Vendor Factors.

Factor 1. Negotiations

Factor 2. Reputation

Factor 3. Price/Promotion

Information Source Factors.

Factor 1. Personal Sources

Factor 2. Competition

Testing of the Hypotheses.--The General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if women's wear buyers and men's wear buyers differed significantly on the product, vendor and information source variables (Hypothesis 1). Results indicated that women's wear buyers and the men's wear buyers differed significantly on two vendor factors, Reputation and Price/Promotion, and one information source factor, Competition. Women's wear buyers were more concerned with good delivery, reputation, past experience, financial condition of vendor, pricing strategy, promotional incentives, competing stores and trade advertising than were the men's wear buyers. Null hypothesis 1 was rejected.

Differences between women's and men's buyers on the pur-

chase from vendors on a regular, on-going basis was examined (Hypothesis 2). Use of the General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant difference and the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis. However, frequency distributions indicated that women's wear buyers purchased from a vendor on a regular, on-going basis 50 per cent of the time or less, while none of the men's wear buyers purchased from a regular vendor less than 50 percent of the time.

The General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if the proportion of purchases made from vendors used on a regular, on-going basis increased as the retail buyers' retail buying experience increased (Hypothesis 3). While it was found that buyers who had been buying for 6-12 months were most likely to purchase on a regular, on-going basis, overall results were not significant. The researcher failed to reject the hypothesis.

Mean scores were used to determine if Sales Representatives were the most important information source for both groups of buyers (Hypothesis 4). The women's wear and men's wear buyers rated Competing Stores the most important information source, with the sales representative being the third (of six) most important information source. Hypothesis 4 was rejected.

To determine if women's wear and men's wear apparel

buyers differed on purchases which were Straight Reorder, Modified reorder and New Task (Hypothesis 5), the General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. Significant differences were found between the two groups of buyers on Straight Reorder purchases with men's wear buyers purchases (24%) almost doubling the number of the women's wear Straight Reorder purchases. The two groups of buyers did not differ on purchases which were Modified Reorder and New Task. Null hypothesis five was partially rejected.

The General Linear Model (GLM) with Analysis of Variance was used to determine how the three stores differed on the importance of product, vendor and information source variables (Hypothesis 6). Significant differences existed on three of the eight factors. On this basis, null hypothesis six was rejected. The exclusive specialty store was most concerned with a product's quality, styling and selling history. It was also important for the product to be delivered in a timely manner. The reputation of the vendor was also of importance to the specialty store buyers when selecting saleable merchandise. The lower priced specialty store chain buyers were most concerned with the product's delivery, quality, styling and pricing when determining a product's saleability. The mass merchandise buyers considered a product's delivery, quality and styling to be important variables when selecting saleable merchandise.

The survey research method provided a descriptive and an analytical study. As a descriptive study, the profiles of the two groups of buyers and the three types of stores were determined. As an analytical study, the influence of product, vendor and information source variables on saleability of merchandise was examined. In addition, difference between the three stores on these same variables was established.

Conclusions

This study was designed to look at relationships among selected variables from a model of merchandise buying behavior (3) for an investigation of retail buying behavior and to compare women's and men's wear buyers. Product variables, vendor variables, information source variables, type of purchase, supplier choice, buyer's demographics and store type were analyzed.

Selected variables from Sheth's (3) model were found to be useful in the present study of retail buying behavior. Results confirmed that in determining the actual supplier/product choice, product variables, vendor variables and information sources act as influences. In addition, product, vendor and information source variables were found to be different for women's wear and men's wear apparel buyers. A retailer's merchandise requirements will vary from one product line to another within the same retail establish-

ment.

Two objectives of the research were: 1) To establish product, vendor and information source requirements of women's wear apparel buyers and men's wear apparel buyers and 2) to compare use of these requirements by buyers of women's wear and men's wear buyers. Similarities between the women's wear and men's wear buyers were noted, particularly in regard to product variables, the proportion of purchases from regular vendors and information sources. However, an important outcome of this study was the finding that not all retail buyers are alike. This finding concurred with the Francis and Brown study (1).

Results revealed that women's wear and men's wear buyers emphasized different saleability judgements in making purchasing decisions. In general, women's wear buyers rated product, vendor and information source variables higher than the men's wear buyers. Saleability judgements involving vendor variables (i.e., pricing strategy) were the most important consideration in making purchasing decisions for women's wear buyers, then product variables (i.e., quality and position of fashion cycle) and last, information variables (i.e., competing stores).

The men's wear buyers were almost equally concerned with vendor and product variables and last, information source variables. Women's wear buyers were more concerned about good delivery, quality, styling, reputation of vendor and

color compared to men's wear buyers who were more concerned about quality, selling history, good delivery, styling and reputation of vendor. The importance of good delivery to women's wear buyers as well as styling suggests an interdependence between these variables--styling loses its impact when a store lags in its offerings.

It was also found that none of the men's wear buyers purchased from a regular vendor less than 50 per cent of the time. Over 60 per cent of the women's wear purchases compared to just over 50 per cent of men's wear purchases were classified as New Task purchases. One-fourth of the men's purchases were classified as Straight Reorder compared to 12 per cent of all women's wear purchases.

Competing Stores was the most important source of information used by both groups of buyers in making purchasing decisions. The opinions of supervisors/upper retail management was also reported to be an important information source to the women's wear buyers. Sales representatives were the second most important source for the men's wear buyers. Other Buyers and Resident Buying Office were the least important sources of information for buyers in both groups.

It was also found that women's wear and men's wear buyers from different types of stores emphasized different sets of saleability judgements in making purchasing decisions. This finding is in agreement with Sheth's model (3) which stated that a retailer's merchandise requirements will

also vary from one retail organization to another as a consequence of their own positioning and market niche decisions. In this study, the specialty store buyers, offering higher-priced merchandise, were much more concerned about quality, color and distinctiveness compared to the lower priced specialty store buyers and the mass merchandising store buyers, who were more concerned about Quality and Pricing Strategy.

Implications

Similarities between women's wear and men's wear buyers were found, most notably in terms of product and information source variables. Marked differences between women's wear and men's wear buyers were identified with regard to vendor variables, pricing strategy and competition. These results could be valuable to educators, retail managers and to apparel manufacturers.

Educators, who provide training, and employers in the retailing industry can use these findings in designing their curriculum to emphasize the differences in saleability judgements depending on the line of merchandise. Retail management can incorporate this same information buyer training programs which traditionally have taught the "how to" rather than the why (2). Apparel manufacturers, especially women's wear manufacturers, should be

interested in knowing how important reputation, past experience and financial condition of vendors are to the women's wear buyers. Manufacturers should also be interested in knowing the sales representative (at least for this sample of buyers) is not the most important source of information. Some of the efforts being directed through the sales representatives to influence the buyer to purchase their line may not be that successful. Perhaps some of this effort would be better directed through the buyers' supervisors, which these buyers indicated to be the second most important information source.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future study:

1. The present study could be expanded to a larger sample size to increase the generalizability of the results.
2. Further exploration is needed in the women's wear and men's wear areas to identify the determinants of the differences found in the present study. Sex, education, or interpersonal influences (i.e. opinion leaders and reference groups) may be more important variables than merchandise lines purchased.
3. Exploration in other merchandise areas such as children's wear could help in the development of a model of retail buying behavior.
4. Additional research to include buyers from department

stores would provide useful information regarding the differences according to store type.

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter, Questionnaire and Post Card Reminder

COVER LETTER

March 17, 1987

Dear Buyer:

North Texas State University is interested in investigating the decision-making processes of the retail buyer.

You are part of a carefully selected sample of retail buyers and your participation has been endorsed by your Executive Personnel Director. I would greatly appreciate it if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

You are assured on complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so your name can be checked off of the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire. The numbers in parentheses are used for keypunching purposes only.

Please return the completed survey (do not return cover letter) by April 10, 1987. Directions for requesting a summary of the results are included at the end of the questionnaire. Thank you in advance for you interest and time.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Stone
Master's Candidate

Nancy L. Cassill
Assistant Professor
Major Research Advisor

Enclosure

SURVEY OF RETAIL BUYERS

Instructions: Please answer all questions based on how you feel when you are purchasing women's wear or men's wear merchandise. There are no right or wrong answers. The numbers in parentheses will be used for data entry. The further the number is to the right, the more important the characteristics.

Section I

This section is concerned with characteristics of apparel products. As a buyer, indicate the importance of each of these characteristics when you purchase merchandise in your current area. Circle only one appropriate number for each characteristic.

<u>Product Variables</u>	<u>Not</u>			<u>Extremely</u>	
	<u>Important</u>			<u>Important</u>	
1. Quality	1	2	3	4	5
2. Color	1	2	3	4	5
3. Fiber Content	1	2	3	4	5
4. Position on Fashion Cycle	1	2	3	4	5
5. Styling	1	2	3	4	5
6. Distinctiveness	1	2	3	4	5
7. Brand Name	1	2	3	4	5
8. Country of Origin	1	2	3	4	5

Section II

This section is concerned with characteristics of vendors. As a buyer, indicate the importance of each of these characteristics when selecting a vendor for your current area. Circle only one appropriate number for each characteristics.

<u>Vendor Variables</u>	<u>Not</u>			<u>Extremely</u>	
	<u>Important</u>			<u>Important</u>	
9. Pricing Strategy	1	2	3	4	5
10. Promotional Incentives	1	2	3	4	5
11. Selling History	1	2	3	4	5
12. Terms of Sale	1	2	3	4	5
13. Steady Source of Supply	1	2	3	4	5
14. Good Delivery	1	2	3	4	5
15. Reputation of Vendor	1	2	3	4	5
16. Past Experience with Vendor	1	2	3	4	5
17. Financial Condition of Vendor	1	2	3	4	5
18. Return Policy	1	2	3	4	5

Section III

This section deals with buying decision. Please provide estimates of the proportion of your orders which fall into the following categories:

- 19a) Straight Reorder is a routine order placed without gathering any new information on the item to be purchased.
- 19b) Modified Reorder is an order that cannot be placed without checking around for a little more information.
- 19c) New Task is an order in which you begin with very little information and you must answer many questions in your mind before placing the order.

***The total of the three categories should add up to 100 percent.

<u>Straight Reorder</u>	<u>Modified Reorder</u>	<u>New Task</u>
19a) _____%	19b) _____%	19c) _____%

Section IV

As a buyer, please indicate the importance of each information source in making a purchasing decision.

<u>Source</u>	<u>Not Important</u>			<u>Extremely Important</u>	
20. Sales Representative	1	2	3	4	5
21. Trade Advertising	1	2	3	4	5
22. Competing Stores	1	2	3	4	5
23. Supervisors/Upper Retail Management	1	2	3	4	5
24. Other Buyers	1	2	3	4	5
25. Resident Buying Office	1	2	3	4	5

Section V

This section deals with Vendor Loyalty. Please provide estimates of the proportion of orders which fall into the following three categories:

- 26a) Untried Vendor is a vendor chosen for the first time.
- 26b) Occasional Vendor is a vendor chosen from time to time.
- 26c) Regular Vendor is a vendor chosen on a regular basis.

***The total of the three categories should add up to 100 percent.

<u>Untried Vendor</u>	<u>Occasional Vendor</u>	<u>Regular Vendor</u>
26a) _____%	26b) _____%	26c) _____%

Section IV

This section is concerned with your background. Please circle the appropriate letter for each statement.

27. What area are you currently buying?
 1. Women's Wear
 2. Men's Wear
28. Which type of merchandise best describes the area you are currently buying?
 1. Traditional
 2. Updated
29. In question #27, if you circled women's wear, which merchandise category/categories are you currently buying?
 1. Coats
 2. Suits
 3. Dresses
 4. Sportswear
 5. Intimate Apparel
 6. Accessories
 7. Shoes
30. If you circle men's wear in question #27, which of the following category/categories are you currently buying?
 1. Clothing (Suits, Coats, Sportcoats)
 2. Furnishings (Dress Shirts, Neckwear, Underwear)
 3. Sportswear (Sports Shirts, Casual Slacks, Sweaters)
 4. Accessories
 5. Shoes
31. How long have you been buying apparel in the above category/categories?
 1. Less than 6 months
 2. 6 to 12 months
 3. 1 to 2 years
 4. 2 to 4 years
 5. 4 to 6 years
 6. 6 to 10 years
 7. Over 10 years

32. How many total years (including hard lines if any) of buying experience have you had?
1. Less than 6 months
 2. 6 to 12 months
 3. 1 to 2 years
 4. 2 to 4 years
 5. 4 to 6 years
 6. 6 to 10 years
 7. Over 10 years
33. If you have ever bought merchandise for another area other than men's wear or women's wear, please list.
1. No
 2. Yes
List areas 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
34. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
1. Some high school
 2. High school diploma
 3. Some college or vocational training
 4. Bachelor's degree
 5. Master's degree
 6. Ph.D., Ed.D.
35. What is your sex?
1. Female
 2. Male
36. What is your age?
1. Below 25
 2. 25-29
 3. 30-34
 4. 35-39
 5. 40-44
 6. Above 44

If there are any further comments you would like to add, please use the additional space at the bottom of this page. Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated.

If you would like a summary of the results, please print your name and address on the back of the return envelope (Not on this questionnaire) and write "Copy of Results Requested." I will see that you get it.

POST CARD REMINDER

Dear Buyer:

Several weeks ago a questionnaire was sent to you regarding retail buyers.

If you have already completed and returned it, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because it has been sent to only a small but representative sample, it is extremely important that yours be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent the opinion of retail buyers.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Stone
Master's Candidate
North Texas State University

APPENDIX B

Statistical Tables

TABLE VIII
ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
BUYERS BY PRODUCT FACTOR BRAND NAME

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	.2477	.24	.63
Error	<u>58</u>	1.0130		
Total	59			

TABLE IX
ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL BUYERS
BY PRODUCT FACTOR PRODUCT FASHIONABILITY

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	.0367	.04	.85
Error	<u>58</u>	1.0167		
Total	59			

TABLE X
ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
BUYERS BY PRODUCT FACTOR QUALITY

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	.5275	.52	.47
Error	<u>58</u>	1.0081		
Total	59			

TABLE XI
ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
BUYERS BY VENDOR FACTOR NEGOTIATIONS

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	.0006	.00	.98
Error	<u>61</u>	1.0164		
Total	62			

TABLE XII
ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
BUYERS BY VENDOR FACTOR VENDOR

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	4.6752	4.46	.03
Error	<u>61</u>	.9468		
Total	62			

TABLE XIII
ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
APPAREL BUYERS BY VENDOR FACTOR PRICE

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	5.1508	5.53	.02
Error	<u>61</u>	.9320		
Total	62			

TABLE XIV

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL BUYERS
BY INFORMATION SOURCE FACTOR PERSONAL

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	2.0998	2.14	.15
Error	<u>61</u>	.9820		
Total	62			

TABLE XV

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL BUYERS
BY INFORMATION SOURCE FACTOR COMPETITION

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	5.2185	5.34	.03
Error	<u>61</u>	.9636		
Total	62			

TABLE XVI

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
BUYERS BY PURCHASE FROM VENDOR
ON REGULAR, ON-GOING BASIS

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	179.6675	.68	.41
Error	<u>61</u>	263.3424		
Total	62			

TABLE XVII
ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
BUYERS BY STRAIGHT REORDER

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	1951.9467	5.55	.02
Error	<u>60</u>	351.8872		
Total	61			

TABLE XVIII
ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR APPAREL
BUYERS BY MODIFIED REORDER

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	51.7658	.13	.73
Error	<u>59</u>	407.1354		
Total	60			

TABLE XIX
ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR
APPAREL BUYERS BY NEW TASK

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Buyer	1	1073.0324	1.37	.25
Error	<u>60</u>	784.4863		
Total	61			

TABLE XX

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR RETAIL BUYER'S
LENGTH OF TIME BUYING BY PURCHASE FROM
VENDOR ON REGULAR, ON-GOING BASIS

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Model	23*	362.6194	1.76	.06
Error	<u>38</u>	206.4999		
Total	61			

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Length	5	2132.3471	2.07	.09

Length (6 levels)= less than 6 months, 6-12 months, 1-2 years, 2-4 years, 4-6 years and 6+ years.

*Note: Other demographic variables examined included: area (i.e. women's, men's), type of merchandise, total years in buying, other areas purchased, educational background, sex, age, and type of store.

TABLE XXI

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE
BY PRODUCT FACTOR BRAND NAME

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	.8619	.89	.61
Error	<u>35</u>	.9696		
Total	58			

TABLE XXI--Continued

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	2.5026	1.29	.29

TABLE XXII

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE BY
PRODUCT FACTOR PRODUCT FASHIONABILITY

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	1.2306	1.43	.17
Error	<u>35</u>	.8631		
Total	58			

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	6.5484	3.79	.03

TABLE XXIII

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE
BY PRODUCT FACTOR QUALITY

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	1.2529	1.54	.12
Error	<u>35</u>	.8149		
Total	58			

TABLE B-XXIII--Continued

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	7.3478	4.51	.02

TABLE XXIV

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE
BY VENDOR FACTOR NEGOTIATIONS

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	.7382	.63	.88
Error	<u>38</u>	1.1785		
Total	61			

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	1.8534	.79	.46

TABLE XXV

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE
BY VENDOR FACTOR REPUTATION

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	1.0347	1.04	.45
Error	<u>38</u>	.9939		
Total	61			

TABLE XXV--Continued.

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	3.2767	1.65	.21

TABLE XXVI

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE
BY VENDOR FACTOR PRICE/PROMOTION

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	1.5878	2.37	.009
Error	<u>38</u>	.6689		
Total	61			

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	12.0266	8.99	.001

TABLE XXVII

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE BY INFORMATION
INFORMATION SOURCE FACTOR PERSONAL SOURCES

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	1.2418	1.46	.15
Error	<u>38</u>	.8518		
Total	61			

TABLE XXVII--Continued.

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	1.5629	.92	.41

TABLE XXVIII

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR TYPE OF STORE
BY INFORMATION SOURCE COMPETITION

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Type of Store	23	1.4375	1.89	.84
Error	<u>38</u>	.7598		
Total	61			

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>Type III SS</u>	<u>F value</u>	<u>p</u>
Store	2	4.5180	2.97	.06

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