

Attributes Influencing Consumer Perception of Apparel Quality with Special Focus on Care-labels, a case of Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract:

Apparel consumers use different criteria, including textile attributes and social environment when evaluating apparel quality. The apparel attributes consumers use are grouped into two, namely intrinsic attributes, including, garment style, color, fiber content, etc and extrinsic attributes such as price, country of origin, packaging, among others. Care-labels is also a critical attribute that influence perceptions of apparel quality, since it is associated with different fibres, texture, garment constructions, fabric finishes, among others, as well as time and money required in the care of apparel. The purpose of this study was to assess the attributes influencing perceptions of apparel quality, with special focus on care-labels. The major objectives of this study were to; determine the awareness of care-labels; investigate the existence of care-labels on the locally made and imported apparel products; compare the awareness of care-labels between the academic and non-academic staff and to compare the intrinsic and extrinsic apparel attributes in influencing perceptions of apparel quality. The study adopted a descriptive survey research approach. The target population was 3364, comprising 3000 from Kenyatta University (KU) and 364 from Kenya Utalii College (KUC) staff communities. The sample size was 10% of the target population, i.e. 336, which was worked out to reflect the proportions in KU and KUC, i.e. 300 and 36, respectively. The data were collected using questionnaires which were researcher-administered as well as "drop and pick" self-administered, in cases where the respondents were not available to give the information. The pre-test was used to test the validity of the research instrument and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument. The raw data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyse data. The null hypothesis was tested at $p < 0.05$. An ANOVA was conducted to compare the consumer's education level in relation to the awareness of the individual care-label symbols. In addition, a post hoc test was also used to find out the effect of consumers' education level on the awareness of individual care-label symbols. Descriptive statistics revealed that the awareness of care-label symbols was low among consumers. The results also revealed that majority of consumers never find care-labels on the locally produced apparel compared to the imported ones. The t-test yielded a p-value of 0.000, implying that there was a relatively more awareness of care-labels among academic staff. The ANOVA results. revealed that education level determines the awareness of the symbols. The findings from the post hoc test further confirmed that respondents with higher education had more awareness of care-label symbols and vice-versa. Descriptive statistics analysis indicated that intrinsic and extrinsic apparel attributes had mean scores of 4 and above, i.e. 4.034 and 4.5562, respectively, implying that both of them influenced consumer perceptions of product quality. However, extrinsic attributes had more influence on the apparel quality, since it had a higher mean score

of 4.5562. The study recommends, among others, that apparel producers and retailers should promote the awareness of care-labels symbols and their interpretations. The teaching of Home Science in schools should be emphasized to enhance textile properties' knowledge at the basic level. It is also recommended that the textile and apparel producers be compelled using the relevant government legislation to put genuine and comprehensive care-labels instructions on their textile goods before . dispatching them to the market. The legislation should include care-labels instructions as a mandatory feature and one of the quality indicators of apparel to be used to assess the quality of apparel. The study further recommends that KEBS increase its efforts at ensuring that all apparel and other textile products bear care-label instructions.