Fashion involvement of affluent female consumers

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FASHION INVOLVEMENT OF AFFLUENT FEMALE CONSUMERS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in The School of Human Ecology

by
Robin Danielle McFatter
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ABSTRACT

Fashion involvement is a consumer’s perceived importance of fashion clothing (O’Cass, 2001). It is important to investigate fashion involvement to understand consumer purchase behavior and to develop improved marketing strategies. Although researchers agree that consumers consider apparel purchases to be important, there has been little research done regarding fashion involvement (O’Cass, 2000) of affluent female consumers.

The purpose of this study was to measure the fashion involvement of selected affluent female consumers from eight metropolitan areas in the United States and to identify relationships between fashion involvement and other selected variables. After controlling for socioeconomic demographic characteristics, the following variables were investigated with correlation and regression analyses: media usage, personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness), and price perceptions (price/quality and prestige sensitivity) of affluent female consumers.

Regression results showed that media usage was significantly related to fashion involvement, indicating that media usage was the best predictor of fashion involvement. Prestige sensitivity was significantly related to fashion involvement, indicating that respondents’ perceptions of purchasing high prestige products was a predictor of fashion involvement. Price/quality was significantly related to fashion involvement; respondents’ perceptions of the price of a product were a good indicator of its quality. Results indicated that personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness) were not significant predictors of fashion involvement.

Regression analyses of the demographic characteristics were consistent with previous literature. A statistically significant negative relationship was found between age and fashion
involvement in this study, with younger ages indicating higher fashion involvement. Income was positively related to fashion involvement; as income increased, so did fashion involvement. Education was negatively related to fashion involvement; fashion involvement increased as education levels decreased.

By focusing solely on female consumers, with money to spend and access to retail fashion, the results can provide information into a recently untapped market. Marketers can use this research in developing improved marketing strategies to this market. Retailers can benefit from this information when pricing and promoting, and educators can expand on the findings by developing new studies examining affluent female consumers.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Because products have different meanings to different people, consumers form differing attachments to them. Unique consumer-product relationships develop specific to the individual and the situation, but the nature of the product is also highly relevant. The meaning of products may ultimately depend more on the nature of consumers rather than the nature of products (Martin, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Understanding how involved consumers become in their apparel - that is, their attachments to them - provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of consumer behavior and the nature and role of the product category of fashion (Martin, 1998). Evard and Aurier (1996) found involvement to be at the heart of the “person-object relationship” and the relational variable most predictive of purchase behavior (Martin, 1998).

Contemporary fashion research indicates consumers are often distributed across a wide range of fashion consciousness and behaviors. The highly fashion involved consumer has historically been important to fashion researchers and marketers because fashion involved consumers are seen as the drivers, influentials, and legitimists of the fashion adoption process (O’Cass, 2000). It is important to investigate fashion involvement to understand consumer purchase behavior and to develop improved marketing strategies.

In the United States, women control most of the annual household expenditures (McGuinn, 2000). Researchers report that the market segment of affluent women is growing. The number of affluent women grew by 68% from 1997 to 1999, compared with a 36% growth of affluent men within the same period. Between 1980 and 2000, women’s attitudes about themselves, their needs and their interest in managing and investing money changed dramatically.
(McGuinn, 2000). Due in part, to higher education, women have increased their earning power in the workforce and are now responsible for more than $2 trillion of annual expenditures in the United States alone. Women controlled more than half of all private wealth in the United States in 1999, and it is predicted that women will control two-thirds of all private wealth in the United States by 2020 (McGuinn, 2000).

Fashion involvement will be investigated within selected groups of income and gender in this study. After controlling for socioeconomic demographic characteristics, the strength and direction of the relationships between fashion involvement, media usage, personality traits, and price perceptions of affluent female consumers will be assessed. Although many researchers agree that consumers consider apparel purchases to be important, there has been little research done regarding fashion involvement (O’Cass, 2000) of affluent female consumers. The proposed research is part of a larger, ongoing study that is concerned with the enhancement of the domestic market for exotic leather apparel and accessories.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine if media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers can predict their fashion involvement. By predicting the fashion involvement of affluent female consumers, retailers and marketers will be able to accurately target this market segment. Additionally, the research will broaden our understanding of consumer behavior.

Objectives

Objective 1

To determine the fashion involvement of select affluent female consumers from eight metropolitan areas in the United States
Objective 2

To describe the media usage, personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness), price perceptions (price/quality and prestige sensitivity), and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers.

Objective 3

To identify relationships between fashion involvement and the media usage, personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness), price perceptions (price/quality and prestige sensitivity), and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers.

Objective 4

To investigate if media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers are predictors of their fashion involvement.

Hypotheses

H1. There will be a relationship between fashion involvement and media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers.

H2. Media usage, personality traits, and price perceptions can be used to predict fashion involvement of affluent female consumers, while controlling for selected demographic characteristics.

Limitations

The sample for the proposed study is limited to affluent female consumers residing in eight metropolitan areas of the United States. The cities, selected because they are regional fashion centers, included: Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, and San Francisco. The consumers in other large cities or rural areas may or may not...
behave the same way as those in the selected areas. The results are based on data collected from affluent female consumers with annual household incomes of $75,000 or more and therefore cannot be generalized either to female consumers with moderate incomes or to male consumers (Xu, 2000).

**Definition of Terms**

**Consumer behavior** - “the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires” (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004, p. 23)

**Consumer involvement** - a consumer’s perceived relevance of an object (e.g. product or brand, advertisement, or purchase situation) based on the inherent needs, values, and interests of the person (Solomon et. al., 2004)

**Product involvement** - a consumer’s level of interest in a particular product (Solomon et. al., 2004)

**Purchase involvement** - a consumer’s measure of personal significance relating to purchasing activities (Slama & Tashchian, 1985)

**Advertising involvement** - a consumer’s interest in processing marketing communications (Solomon et al, 2004)

**Fashion involvement** - a consumer’s perceived importance of fashion clothing (O’Cass, 2001)

**Self-confidence** - a measurement of the perception of oneself as a leader and having confidence (Xu, 2000)

**Public self-consciousness** - the awareness of the self as a social and public object (Gould & Barak, 1987)
Price/quality- belief that the level of the price cue is related positively to the quality level of the product (McGowan & Sternquist, 1998)

Prestige sensitivity- perceptions of the price cue due to inferences about what it signals to other people regarding the purchaser (McGowan & Sternquist, 1998)
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study will investigate the fashion involvement of affluent female consumers. The following review of literature presents a) involvement theory, b) fashion involvement theory, c) young affluent consumers and affluent female consumers, and d) selected variables related to purchase behavior.

Consumer Involvement

The construct of consumer involvement is important in understanding consumer behaviors related to consumer possessions. Several broad types of consumer involvement may be related to the product, to the message, or to the perceiver (O’Cass, 2000). Consumer involvement has often been used to understand consumers’ behavior relating to objects (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Mittal & Lee, 1989; Slama & Tashchian, 1985; Zaichkowsky, 1986). Zaichkowsky (1986) identified the antecedents of involvement as a) person factors, b) object or stimulus factors, and c) situational factors. The factors can trigger different types of involvement (product, purchase decision, and advertising) that can produce differing results or consequences of involvement.

Previous research has shown several ways in which consumers become involved with products and the effect that product involvement has on various purchasing and consuming behaviors (Mittal & Lee, 1989; Tigert, Ring, & King, 1976). In 1985, Zaichkowsky developed the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) scale to measure product involvement. Tests of construct validity over three products demonstrated the scores were positively related to perceptions of brand differences, brand preferences, interest in gathering information about the product category, and comparison of product attributes among brands (Zaichkowsky, 1985).
Laurent and Kapferer (1985) concluded that consequences of consumer behavior differ depending on the antecedents of involvement. An involvement profile containing five antecedents of product involvement: a) the perceived importance of a product, b) the perceived importance of negative consequences from a mispurchase, c) the subjective probability of a mispurchase, d) the pleasure value of the product, e) and the perceived sign or symbolic value of the product was developed by Laurent and Kapferer (1985). Martin (1998) approached the consumer-product relationship from the product’s side of the dyad, noting that products are more controllable than consumers. The study identified and differentiated between low involvement and high involvement products, and provided strategies for marketers to attract or create highly involved consumers (Martin, 1998).

Differing levels of purchase involvement influence consumers’ attitudes and behaviors associated with the activity of purchasing. Slama and Tashchian (1985) developed a scale to measure the purchase involvement of consumers. A Likert-type scale was used to test the relationships between specific market characteristics and purchasing involvement. Differences in marketing segments relating to gender, education, income, and stage of the family life cycle were identified with respect to purchasing involvement. The research suggested that marketers consider purchasing involvement as well as product involvement when attempting to explain consumer behavior (Slama & Tashchian, 1985).

Advertising involvement is a consumer’s interest in processing marketing communications (Solomon et al, 2004). Greenwald and Leavitt (1984) distinguished between audience involvement and actor involvement in advertising stating that “in the advertising situation the practical concern is more with the consumer’s acquiring knowledge- namely audience involvement (p.583).” Focusing on audience involvement, four levels of involvement
in advertising were identified from the lowest level to the highest level: a) pre-attention, b) focal attention, c) comprehension, and d) elaboration. Levels of audience involvement were linked to: a) psychological concept variables of attention capacity, b) levels of processing, c) different representational systems, and d) arousal (indirectly). The researchers concluded that low levels of involvement use little capacity and extract information used to determine if a higher level will be invoked. If a higher level is invoked, the information serves as raw material for analysis by the next higher level. Higher levels were found to require greater capacity and result in increasingly durable cognitive and attitudinal effects (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984).

O’Cass (2000) developed a model to measure the relationship between four types of involvement and the higher order construct of consumer involvement. The “second-order” construct of consumer involvement is composed of four “first-order” constructs, that is, four specific forms: a) product involvement, b) purchase decision involvement, c) advertising involvement and d) consumption involvement. The four forms of involvement represent basic types that are related to a consumer’s environment. Involvement is maintained as an enduring relationship between a consumer and an object, rather than a temporary or situational one. O’Cass (2000) developed scales to measure each “first-order” involvement and used preliminary tests of the involvement scales to determine the internal reliability of the model. The product involvement scale contained items that represented the degree to which the consumer was involved in the product of fashion clothing. Gender and age had negative relationships with each of the four types of involvement. Female respondents were more highly involved in fashion clothing, its purchase, advertising and wearing than male respondents. Younger respondents were more involved than were older respondents. Age showed a negative relationship across the four types of involvement; as age increased, each type of involvement decreased. The results
suggested that the issues of age and gender are important to consider when investigating fashion clothing involvement.

This study will add to a broader understanding of consumer involvement by focusing on the product of fashion. By determining which variables are important when marketing to affluent female consumers, the study will offer valuable data to marketers and researchers when developing strategies to target this particular market.

Fashion Involvement

Fashion leaders comprise a unique and important segment of the apparel market. Because they are among the first to purchase apparel when new styles appear on the market, their reactions to new styles may be crucial to the eventual success or failure of the product (Goldsmith, Moore, & Beaudoin, 1999). Fashion leaders have an impact and an influential effect on later adopters. They influence fashion followers by providing them with exposure to new styles. Fashion leaders spend more money on apparel, read more fashion magazines, go shopping more often, and tend to be younger than fashion followers (Beaudoin, Moore, & Goldsmith, 1998). Fashion leaders are more interested in fashion and enjoy shopping more than followers. Since fashion leaders are the first to adopt new fashions, they accept more social risk than followers do when purchasing new fashion products. They are also more inner directed, less cost conscious, less traditional, and less practical when purchasing new fashion products than fashion followers (Belleau, Nowlin, Summers, & Xu, 2001). By studying the real self-image of female fashion leaders, Goldsmith et al (1999) found that leaders have a unique self-image compared to later buyers. The fashion leaders viewed themselves as more comfortable, pleasant, contemporary, formal, colorful, and vain than later adopters. In a study examining the personal characteristics of frequent clothing buyers, four psychological constructs a)
innovativeness, b) knowledge, c) involvement, d) and opinion leadership were also associated with heavy use of clothing purchases (Goldsmith, 2002).

Because of the attention young adults pay to fashion, this age group must figure highly in any study of clothing (Auty & Elliott, 1998). In Auty and Elliott’s (1998) study of fashion involvement, self-monitoring and the meaning of brands; perceptions of brands were perceived differently according to the age and sex of the respondent. The findings suggest that women and younger people were most positive about their trendiness.

Fashion involvement is a consumer’s perceived importance of fashion clothing (O’Cass, 2001). Tigert et al. (1976) found that fashion involvement is composed of five dimensions of fashion adoption-related behavior: a) fashion innovativeness and time of purchase, b) fashion interpersonal connection, c) fashion interest, d) fashion knowledgeability, e) and fashion awareness and reaction to changing fashion trends. Results demonstrated that the highly fashion involved consumer is also a heavy fashion clothing buyer (Tigert, et al, 1976). O’Cass (2001) examined the relationships between gender, self-monitoring, motives for clothing consumption, materialism, age, and fashion clothing involvement. Fashion clothing involvement was divided into fashion purchase decision and fashion product involvement. Materialism and motives for consumption were found to have a statistically significant relationship with consumer’s level of fashion clothing involvement. Self-monitoring levels did not differ by age and gender, and self-monitoring was not strongly related to materialism and fashion clothing involvement. Age and gender were shown to have a significant effect for purchase decision and product involvement, with females and younger consumers possessing much stronger involvement in both (O’Cass, 2001).
Using Zaichkowsky’s (1985) PII scale, Fairhurst, Good, and Gentry (1989) studied women’s fashion apparel involvement across two fashion-oriented groups: a) women’s specialty store customers, and b) female home economics students. The five dimensions of fashion involvement presented by Tigert et al (1976) were used to validate Zaichkowsky’s involvement instrument. Results supported the PII as being a reliable and valid measure of the involvement construct (Fairhurst, Good, & Gentry, 1989). Behling (1999) developed a scale to measure involvement with fashion or clothing that is not age dependent. A single-factor eight item scale was developed that appears to be valid and reliable in measuring involvement with fashion (Behling, 1999).

This study focused on fashion involvement of affluent female consumers. By identifying selected variables that are the most significant to fashion involvement, marketers can better accommodate the needs of this target market.

**Affluent Female Consumers**

Real household income rose by more than 50% in America from 1970 to 2000. In 2003, of the 112 million households in America, almost 27 million of them had annual incomes of $75,000 or more. Fifteen million of those earned over $100,000 annually (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003). Wealth is becoming more concentrated at the top of the income scale. The income of the highest earning households grew the fastest from 1970 to 2000, while the gap in household income between top earners and middle earners has widened (Silverstein et al., 2003).

The affluent women’s market is growing as an increasingly important financial segment. The newly dominant role played by women as both consumers and influencers of consumption is just as important as the increased wealth of Americans (Silverstein et. al., 2003). Women are responsible for 83% of all consumer purchases (Barletta, 2003). The percentage of women in the
workforce has risen steadily and dramatically since the 1960’s and the percentage of married couples with a wife in the labor force has nearly doubled. Not only are more women working, but they are also earning higher salaries than ever before, with nearly a quarter of married women earning more than their husbands (Silverstein et. al., 2003). “Women are now deeply integrated into the workplace, are more educated on average than men, and often earn as much as or more than men” (Barletta, 2003 p.6). Women are earning more, owning more, and their financial power is accelerating, however, independent of income or ownership, women control most of the spending in the household (Barletta, 2003). In 1999, it was reported that the economic clout of American women is greater than that of many prosperous countries (McGuinn, 2000).

In 1997, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that women comprised 47 percent of individuals with assets over $500,000. The Federal Reserve cited that women control 51.3 percent of the private wealth in the United States. In addition, the largest wealth transfer in history will take place as the baby boomer generation inherits wealth from their parents. Because women generally outlive their husbands, the family assets will become concentrated in the boomer women (Barletta, 2003).

From 1987 to 1999, the number of female-owned businesses grew 103 percent, or one and a half times as the national average. Their employment levels grew 320 percent and their revenues grew 436 percent. The fastest growing female-owned businesses were the larger companies with more than 100 employees (Barletta, 2003).

The trade publication Brandweek (1999) reported that the luxury spending patterns of affluent consumers who did not inherit their wealth and who did not necessarily grow up privileged are changing. Neelakantan (1999) reported that the psychographic of young, affluent
consumers in America is concerned with being the first to know, to see, to experience, and to acquire a particular piece of merchandise. The segment likes to dress modestly but fashionably; they want to stand out without being flashy. There is a large and growing market comprised of the newly affluent who are smart about money and pressed for time. They are not price-resistant, but do want to know what their money buys them (Neelakantan, 1999).

Young female consumers have been influenced by several environmental factors that separate them from older shoppers. Young American females have been conditioned into consuming earlier than previous generations and have been socialized into shopping as a form of leisure. They have developed in an environment that provides more reasons and opportunities to shop as well as additional consumption opportunities such as television, the internet, and traditional catalog based shopping. Furthermore, young females are more apt to have become accustomed to media that depict affluent and opulent lifestyles (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). These factors make the young female target market appealing to retailers and marketers.

Marketing to women delivers a better return on the marketing dollar through both higher customer acquisition and greater customer retention. Because women are more inclined to long-term brand relationships, enhanced loyalty means every marketing dollar invested in acquiring female customers results in a higher retention rate (Barletta, 2003).

The present study examines the specific target market of affluent female consumers. The female consumer is important to marketers because women control most of the purchases in the United States. With more women acquiring greater wealth through increased education, higher earning potential, inheritance and retirement, the affluent female is an important market to investigate.
Selected Variables

Demographic characteristics have been found useful in selecting media and designing store atmospheres when variations in clientele are small. Combinations of socioeconomic characteristics have significantly contributed to the explanation of patronage decisions between discount and department stores across product risk categories. Specific retail shopping sub-segments, such as the in home shopper, have been found to possess unique demographic profiles with higher income and educational levels (Bearden, Teel & Durand, 1978). In a study examining the personal characteristics of frequent clothing buyers, two demographic variables, age and sex were associated with buying. The study also found that women reported buying more than men did and younger consumers more than older ones (Goldsmith, 2002). In a study examining the demographic, psychographic, and media consumption differences between patrons and non-patrons of four retailing institutions, some consistency in shopper characteristics was observed. Results showed that shoppers were less traditional, more socially conscious, younger, and more educated than non-shoppers across retail institutions. (Bearden, Teel & Durand, 1978).

Information about the specific media used by consumers and their demographic characteristics can aid media planning while psychographic descriptions of consumers can be useful in developing message content. An understanding of consumers’ characteristics and the media they consume most heavily are valuable when directing selected promotional themes to target markets (Darden & Ashton, 1975). One study indicated the selection of media is based on the characteristics of media, the demographics and psychographics of the target market, and the characteristics of the product. Results indicated that self-consciousness and demographic variables such as age, education, occupation, marital status, ethnic group, and political outlook
affected the usage of newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and direct mail (Khan, Chang & Horridge, 1992).

Consumers’ price perceptions have effects on their purchase behavior. Consumers perceive price differently for different products. They have individual price perceptions and buy products that are priced at what they are willing to pay for those products (Ehrenberg, Schriven & Barnard, 1997). High price can be viewed positively or negatively. In a positive sense, it may be considered a sign of quality or a prestige signal it sends to others about the purchaser. Other consumers may view price negatively, signifying a decrease in their monetary resources. A strong price/quality perception suggests a firm belief that the price of a product is a good indicator of its quality. Prestige sensitivity can be viewed as the tendency to make attributions about other consumers, or to be sensitive to attributions made by other consumers, on the basis of the price level of purchase. Prestige sensitivity is related to socially visible behaviors, whereas price/quality perceptions are influenced by cues that reinforce the validity of using price to imply quality (McGowan & Sternquist, 1998). Price-quality perceptions and prestige sensitivity are the two constructs used to represent the positive role of price. Multi-item indices were developed to measure each of the seven constructs. All items are scored on seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Xu, 2000).

Personality traits have been shown to influence consumer decision-making behavior. The personality variables self-confidence and anxiety were reported to be related to consumer choice behavior. Six personality factors were constructed relating to consumers’ choice behavior in a simulated shopping environment (Horton, 1979). The effects of life-style and self-perception on consumers’ purchase intention or behavior toward clothing products have also been investigated.
Studies concluded that consumers with different self-perceptions have different attitudes or responses toward fashion/clothing products (Gutman & Mills, 1982).

Self-confidence and public self-consciousness are two aspects of self-concept that have frequently been studied to determine their influence on consumers’ purchase intention and product brand choices (Solomon & Schopler, 1982; Hughes, 1976; Landon, 1974; Wells & Tigert, 1971). Self-confidence was described by Wells and Tigert (1971) as a measurement of the perception of oneself as a leader and having confidence. They found that self-confidence is part of the psychographic profile that can be created to differentiate consumers’ preferences for products. In Solomon and Schopler’s (1982) study, public self-consciousness was designed to measure the extent to which people are concerned about their appearance, style of behavior, and the general impression they make on others. Results indicated that clothing measures showed a consistent and pervasive correlation with scores on public self-consciousness. Feningstein, Scheier, and Buss (1975) constructed the standard index of public self-consciousness. The seven-item, seven-point, Likert-type scale was designed to measure the degree to which a person expresses an awareness of self as a social object with an effect on others (Feningstein, et. al., 1975).

**Summary**

Although much research has been done concerning the construct of involvement, limited research has been dedicated to fashion involvement, specifically that of affluent female consumers. The present study focuses on fashion involvement to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between fashion involvement and media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and demographics of affluent female consumers. The present study is part of a larger, ongoing study that is concerned with the enhancement of the market for exotic leather
apparel and accessories. This research is intended to be useful in developing marketing strategies for advertisers and retailers when targeting affluent female consumers. Educators can also use this research to expand on studies examining affluent female consumers.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine affluent female consumers to identify the variables that predict fashion involvement. Specifically, the fashion involvement, media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and demographics of affluent female consumers were examined to identify any significant relationships. The research will add to a broader understanding of consumer behavior. The present research study is part of a larger project concerned with the enhancement of the domestic market for exotic leather apparel and accessories (Xu, 2000).

Sample

The sample was limited to female consumers, over the age of 21, with annual household incomes of $75,000 or more. Names and addresses of 1200 female consumers were purchased from Survey Sampling Inc. (SSI), Fairchild, CT, for use in the final survey. The women sampled were systematically nth-selected from a relevant sampling frame in eight metropolitan statistical areas that are regarded as primary fashion centers of the United States and included: Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, and San Francisco. The sample was representative of the racial mix within the desired income range of the female population of each locale. Household incomes of the members of the sampling frame were predicted instead of being measured or reported (Xu, 2000).

In accordance with federal and university regulations, research that involves the use of human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the committee for Use of Animals or Human Subjects in Research. This study was part of a larger project, which was approved as shown in Appendix A (Xu, 2000).
Research Design

A mail survey was used to collect quantitative data to test hypotheses. The survey was conducted following Salant and Dillman’s (1994) total survey design strategy. A premium (small key chain) was offered to the first 200 respondents who participated in the survey as an inducement for subjects to complete and return the survey instrument in a timely manner (Xu, 2000).

Initial contact with the participants was made through a personalized letter informing them of their selection for the study and the impending receipt of the survey. The survey instrument with cover letter and stamped, self-addressed return envelope was mailed approximately one week later. A postcard was sent to all respondents approximately seven to ten days later thanking them and reminding them to complete and return their survey if they had not already done so. A follow-up letter with another copy of the survey and another stamped, self-addressed return envelope was mailed to non-responsive subjects approximately three weeks after the first survey mailing. A sample contact letter, cover letter, postcard reminder, and follow-up letter are included in Appendix B. A sample survey instrument is shown in Appendix C. The questionnaires were coded prior to mailing to enable the identification of respondent locale and to allow for non-respondent follow-up contact (Xu, 2000).

Variables and Instrumentation Development

Fashion Involvement

The validated fashion involvement index, developed by Tigert, Ring and King (1976) was used to measure consumers’ traditional attitude toward fashion products. Five dimensions were included in the index as follows: fashion innovativeness and time of purchase, fashion interpersonal communication, fashion interest, fashion knowledgeability, fashion awareness and
reaction to changing fashion trends. The answer options for two of the items measuring fashion involvement: fashion innovativeness and time of purchase; and fashion awareness and reaction to changing fashion trends, were ordered in a reverse direction from the other three items of the fashion involvement index. These two variables were reversed in the coding procedure. Each of the first four dimensions was measured by a single item on a three-point scale, with one = least fashion involved and three = highest fashion involved. A five-point scale for a single item was used to measure the fifth dimension, with one = least fashion involved and five = highest fashion involved. Reliability analysis produced a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.76, indicating high intra-correlations among the five items used to measure fashion involvement (Xu, 2000). In the current study, the responses measuring fashion involvement were standardized and then summed to form a single fashion involvement score. The five fashion involvement scale items were statistically significant and correlated to each other between .34 and .65, further confirming the reliability of the scale.

Media Usage

Participants were asked to indicate their usage of fashion information including magazines, TV shows, movies, catalogs, celebrities, and the Internet. Seven items measuring consumers’ usage of media for fashion information were summed to construct the media usage score. Each item was measured on a five-point scale, with one = strongly disagree and five = strongly agree.

Personality Traits

The personality traits included in the analyses are consumer’s self-confidence and public self-consciousness. The Wells and Tigert (1971) validated self-confidence index was used to measure consumers’ perceptions of themselves as leaders having confidence. This study used a
six-item index. Each item was measured on a seven-point scale, with one = strongly disagree and seven = strongly agree (Xu, 2000). One item was reverse coded to follow the same order. Feningstein, Scheier, and Buss’s (1975) index was used to measure public self-consciousness. The seven-item, seven-point, Likert-type scale measured the degree to which a person expresses an awareness of self as a social object with an effect on others. The seven-point scale was from one to seven, with one = strongly disagree and seven = strongly agree (Xu, 2000). Each item in both scales was summed to produce two personality totals: self-confidence score and public self-consciousness.

**Price Perceptions**

Consumer perceptions of price/quality and prestige sensitivity were measured. Two validated indices developed by Lichtenstein, Ridyway, and Netemeyer (1993) were used to measure price/quality and prestige sensitivity. A four-item index was used to measure the price/quality. Prestige sensitivity was measured by an eight-item index. Both indices used a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from one = strongly disagree to seven = strongly agree (Xu, 2000). Item responses in each index were summed to create two scores; the price/quality score and the prestige sensitivity score.

**Selected Demographic Characteristics**

The consumer’s age, income, education, race, and work status were included in analyses of the study as control variables and were measured with forced choices and open-ended responses (Xu, 2000). Where necessary, these variables were dummy coded. The dummy coded categories were: race = white (1), other (0); and work status = employed (1), unemployed (0).
**Data Analysis**

Each returned questionnaire was coded and entered into an SPSS data file. The data were cross-checked and corrected. Frequency analyses were employed to verify that the data were normally distributed. Descriptive statistics were conducted to examine respondents’ expected means and ranges were used to interpret the results of the frequency analyses because normative scores for the variables do not exist. The potential range was created by summing the least possible score of the items and the largest possible score of the items. The expected means were created by summing the largest possible scores of each item and dividing by half for each variable. To test hypothesis one, Pearson’s and Spearman’s correlational analyses were used to determine if a strong relationship exists between fashion involvement and the independent variables. To test hypothesis two, a two-step hierarchical regression was used to assess which, if any, variables were significant in predicting fashion involvement. The first step used the selected demographic characteristics as control variables. In step two independent variables were entered into the analysis.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the results of the data analysis. The sample description is presented first, followed by descriptive statistics. Correlation and regression analyses are presented next, with the results of hypothesis testing and discussion ending the chapter.

Sample Description

The sample consisted of 1200 female consumers over the age of 21 with an annual household income of at least $75,000. The geographic locations of the respondents included Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; New Orleans, Louisiana; New York, New York; and San Francisco, California. Four hundred and thirty surveys were returned for a response rate of 36%; numbers may vary due to missing responses (22 surveys were returned as undeliverable). A sub-population was selected with 239 respondents having actual annual household incomes of $75,000 or more.

The majority of the respondents, 69% (n=239) were in the age range of 41 to 60 (Table1). Twenty-two percent of the respondents were 31-40; nearly 2% were between 21 and 30. Almost 7% of the respondents were over 61 years old. Fifty-two percent of the respondents reported annual household incomes between $75,000 and $149,999. Thirteen percent reported incomes between $125,000 and $149,999, and 35% reported incomes of $150,000 and over. The majority of the respondents, 90%, had some college education, a college degree, or an advanced degree. Seven percent were high school graduates, while 3% had trade or technical school training or less than a high school diploma. Eighty-one percent of the respondents were white with the other 19% being American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, African American, or Hispanic.
Sixty-two percent were employed with the other 38% being a homemaker, retired or unemployed.

**Descriptive Analysis of the Independent Variables**

The variables were measured by multiple items. The fashion involvement score was computed by standardizing the five items in the index and summing each of the items. For the other selected multi-item variables, a variable score was computed as the sum of the items, and descriptive statistics are provided (Table 2).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Information</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 and over</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-$99,999</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-$124,999</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000-$149,999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 and over</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade or technical school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced degree</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Status</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Selected Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Involvement</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>-4.55</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Usage</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.19</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>18.00a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.95</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Self-consciousness</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.65</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price-Quality Schema</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.99</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td>21.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige Sensitivity</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26.61</td>
<td>9.96</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

Fashion Involvement

Four of the items measuring fashion involvement were measured on a three-point scale. The potential range for each of these items was from 1 to 3 with an expected mean of 1.5. The last item was measured on a five-point scale with the potential range from 1 to 5 and an expected mean of 2.5. Fashion innovativeness and time of purchase produced a mean of 2.3, which was higher than expected. Fashion interpersonal communication had a mean of 1.48, which was slightly lower than expected. Fashion interest and fashion knowledgeability had higher than expected means of 1.92 and 1.83, respectively. Fashion awareness and reaction to changing trends had a slightly higher mean than expected at 2.83. Overall, respondents were slightly more highly fashion involved than expected. Fashion interpersonal communication was the only item with a value lower than expected.

Media Usage

A Likert scale was used to measure media usage with one = lowest media usage and seven = highest media usage. The media usage score was computed as the sum of the seven items in the survey measure. The expected mean of media usage was 17.5 with a potential range from 7 to 35. The mean of media usage was 19.19, with a range of 6 to 32. The results indicated that the respondents had higher than expected levels of media usage.
Personality Traits

Self-confidence

Self-confidence was measured by six items on a seven-point Likert scale, with one = lowest self-confidence and seven = highest self-confidence. The self-confidence score was computed as the sum of the seven items in the survey measure. The expected mean of self-confidence was 21 with a potential range of 6 to 42. The self-confidence score had a range of 11 to 30, with a mean score of 23.95. The results indicated that the respondents had a higher level of self-confidence than was expected.

Public Self-consciousness

Seven items were used to measure public self-consciousness on a Likert scale, with one = lowest public self-consciousness and seven = highest public self-consciousness. The public self-consciousness score was computed as the sum of the seven items in the scale. The potential score for public self-consciousness ranged from 7 to 49, with an expected mean of 24.5. The actual score of public self-consciousness had a range of 7 to 35, with a mean score of 23.65. The results indicated that the respondents’ public self-consciousness was lower than what was expected.

Price Perceptions

Price/quality Relationship

Four items were used to measure price/quality on a Likert scale, with one = most negative price/quality and seven = most positive price/quality. The price/quality score was computed as the sum of the four items in the survey measure. The potential range for price/quality was from 4 to 28, with an expected mean of 14. The score for price/quality had a mean of 18.99, with a
range of 6 to 28. This indicated that the price/quality relationship perceived by the respondents was higher than expected.

**Prestige Sensitivity**

Eight items were used to measure prestige sensitivity on a Likert scale, with one = lowest associated prestige and seven = highest associated prestige. The prestige sensitivity score was computed as the sum of the eight items in the survey measure. The expected mean for prestige sensitivity was 28, with a potential range of 8 to 56. The prestige sensitivity score had a range of 8 to 54 and a mean score of 26.61, indicating that the prestige sensitivity of the respondents was lower than expected.

Results of the descriptive analysis showed that the average score for fashion involvement was slightly higher than expected. Media usage and self-confidence had average scores that were higher than expected, although the public self-consciousness average was lower than expected. The price/quality average was higher than expected and the prestige sensitivity average was lower than expected.

**Correlational Analysis**

Correlational analyses were performed between fashion involvement and the control and independent variables in the study (Table 3). Spearman’s correlation was used to test race and work status as these variables measured at the nominal level. Pearson’s correlation was performed on the remaining variables.

The most significant correlation was between media usage and fashion involvement \(r=.296\). Prestige sensitivity and fashion involvement had the second highest correlation \(r=.219\). The third highest correlation was between public self-consciousness and fashion involvement \(r=.199\). A significant correlation indicates a reliable relationship, but not
necessarily a strong correlation. While these correlations were statistically significant, all of the relationships could be described as fairly weak. Media usage, prestige sensitivity, and public self-consciousness were the most significant variables related to fashion involvement.

Table 3. Correlations to Fashion Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fash. Inv.</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.219**</td>
<td>.296**</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.199**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Regression Analysis**

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed to investigate which, if any, of the selected variables could be predictors of fashion involvement (Table 4). The first step involved the selected demographic characteristics. The regression model was significant, \(F = 2.47, p < 0.05\) with a low \(R^2\) of 0.051, indicating that 5.1% of the variance in fashion involvement was explained by the demographic variables. Age, income, and education were significantly related to fashion involvement. Age had a negative relationship with fashion involvement, with younger respondents having higher fashion involvement. Education was negatively related to fashion involvement; as fashion involvement increased, education levels decreased. Income was positively related to fashion involvement; as income increased, so did fashion involvement. Because the sample was relatively homogeneous, few differences were found among demographics. These demographics are slight predictors of fashion involvement in affluent female consumers.

Step two was performed with the addition of the predictor variables: media usage, personality traits, and price perceptions. The regression equation was significant \(F = 4.24, p < 0.05\), with an \(R^2\) indicating that 12.2% of the variance in fashion involvement can be explained by the predictor variables. Furthermore, the change in \(R^2\) was statistically significant indicating that
the predictor variables were in and among themselves important factors. Media usage had a coefficient (beta) of .212, indicating that it was the best predictor of fashion involvement. Media usage was positively related to fashion involvement with higher media usage indicating higher fashion involvement. The types of media measured were movies, television, magazines, catalogs, and the Internet. This may indicate that media influence affluent, female consumers, and that the media they use is important in predicting their fashion involvement. Prestige sensitivity had a coefficient (beta) of .153 indicating that it is a predictor of fashion involvement. This indicated that respondents’ perceptions of the purchase of high prestige products are a predictor of fashion involvement. Price/quality was significantly related to fashion involvement, with a coefficient (beta) of -.128, indicating that it is a predictor of fashion involvement. The negative direction was unexpected and suggests that the respondents’ perceptions of the high price of a product are not necessarily an indicator of good quality. Results indicated that personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness) were not significant predictors of fashion involvement.

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Predicting Fashion Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step and Predictor Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.225</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>-.111*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.120*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.208</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>-.122*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.399</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Status</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.345</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>-.086</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.108*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.212*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Self-consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price-quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>-.128*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige Sensitivity</td>
<td></td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.153*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Regression is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
The variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to test for possible collinearity. Usually, a VIF score of four or five is an indicator of a potential problem. In the regressions that were performed, the variance inflation factor did not exceed 1.57. Thus, there is no indication of collinearity between fashion involvement and the predictor variables.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

**Hypothesis 1**

There will be a relationship between fashion involvement and media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers.

Correlation results indicated that media usage, prestige sensitivity and public self-consciousness were significantly related to fashion involvement. While statistically significant, the relationships could be described as weak.

**Hypothesis 2**

Media usage, personality traits, and price perceptions can be used to predict fashion involvement of affluent female consumers, while controlling for selected demographic characteristics.

Regression results indicated that consumers’ media usage and price perceptions (prestige sensitivity and price/quality) were significant predictors of fashion involvement. Results also indicated that consumers’ personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness) were not significant predictors of fashion involvement. There was a significant positive relationship between the consumer’s fashion involvement and income, and a significant negative relationship to age and education.
Discussion

A profile of the sample revealed that it was relatively homogeneous. This may be attributed to the selection criteria used to obtain the sample. The sample consisted of female consumers, age 21 and over, with annual household incomes of $75,000 or greater. The geographic locations of the respondents included Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; New Orleans, Louisiana; New York, New York; and San Francisco, California.

According to O’Cass (2000), female consumers are more highly involved in fashion clothing, its purchase, advertising, and wearing than male respondents. With the affluent women’s market growing as an important financial segment (Silverstein et. al., 2003), and women being responsible for 83% of all consumer purchases (Barletta, 2003), it is suggested that affluent female consumers would be highly fashion involved. Although the sample for the present study consisted of affluent female consumers, the fashion involvement score was low.

Khan et. al. (1992) indicated that variables such as age, education, race, and self-consciousness were related to media usage. A significant positive relationship was found between media usage and fashion involvement in affluent female consumers. This indicated that media usage was a predictor of fashion involvement. The media analyzed in this study were movies, television, magazines, catalogs, and the Internet. Perhaps affluent female consumers are most concerned with these types of media.

Belleau et. al. (2001) found fashion leaders to be less cost conscious and less practical than fashion followers. The results of this study indicated that the respondents made judgments about the relationship between the price of a product and the quality of that product, although the relationship between higher price and better quality was not very strong. The results indicated
that respondents were concerned with the prestige associated with higher priced products. Perhaps because the respondents had incomes of $75,000 or more, they were more willing to pay for the prestige associated with higher priced products.

Goldsmith et. al. (1999) found that fashion leaders have a unique self-image and opinion leadership was associated with heavy clothing purchases. While the literature indicates that people with higher fashion involvement tend to be more self-confident, the present study revealed that respondents were not highly fashion involved, but displayed high levels of self-confidence and moderate levels of public self-consciousness. The high self-confidence levels could be attributed to the fact that most of the respondents were aged 41-60, employed, and had higher education levels. Although the literature indicated that these personality traits might have some relationship to fashion involvement, they were not significant in this study. This could be attributed to the level of education obtained by the respondents. The majority of the respondents had some college, a degree, or advanced degree, and this could have contributed to higher self-confidence levels.

The literature indicated that age might have a negative relationship with fashion involvement (O’Cass, 2001; O’Cass, 2000; Beaudoin et. al., 1998; Auty et. al., 1998). A negative relationship was found between age and fashion involvement in this study, with younger ages indicating higher fashion involvement. Bearden et. al. (1978) indicated that shoppers have higher income and education levels than non-shoppers do. In this study, income showed a significant positive relationship with fashion involvement; income increased with fashion involvement. Education was negatively related to fashion involvement in this study with lower education levels indicating higher fashion involvement. Work status and race were not significant predictors of fashion involvement in this study. For race, 80% of the sample was
white and 62% if the respondents were employed, so there may not have been enough variation in the sample to pinpoint differences.
CHATER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to determine if media usage, personality traits, price perceptions, and selected demographic characteristics of affluent female consumers can predict their fashion involvement. Conclusions are based on the results from statistical analysis of survey results. Relationships to fashion involvement are discussed including the following variables: media usage, personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness), price perceptions (price/quality and prestige sensitivity), and selected demographic characteristics.

After controlling for selected demographic characteristics, the following were analyzed: media usage, price perceptions and personality traits. Hypothesis one was partially supported and it can be concluded that consumers’ media usage and price perceptions were significant predictors of fashion involvement, while personality traits were not.

There was a significant relationship between consumers’ media usage and fashion involvement. Because significance was found, marketers and retailers can use these types of media when appealing to affluent, female consumers. The media included in this study were movies, television, magazines, catalogs, and the Internet. These types of media would be effective in promoting products to this target market.

There was no significant relationship between personality traits (self-confidence and public self-consciousness) and fashion involvement. Higher self-confidence is generally related to higher fashion involvement. While self-confidence was high in this study, it was not significant in predicting fashion involvement in affluent female consumers. Marketers and retailers should gear their promotion strategies toward other personality traits when appealing to
affluent female consumers. Perhaps an understanding of how traits such as self-image or self-concept relate to fashion involvement would better help to target affluent females.

There was a significant relationship between the consumers’ prestige sensitivity and price/quality and fashion involvement. Affluent female consumers in this study associated higher price with more prestige for the purchaser, but not necessarily higher quality for the product. Marketers and retailers should take this into account when promoting fashion products to this target market. Perhaps studying how affluent female consumers view the prices of promoted products may help when appealing to this market.

This study was taken from a random sample within selected parameters of affluent female consumers across the United States and therefore can be generalized to a broader population of affluent female consumers in the US. The sample was relatively homogeneous; meaning that most of the respondents tended to think alike. The homogeneity of the respondents makes the findings more reliable, and supports what is found in the literature. Age, income, education, race, and work status were the selected demographic characteristics used to relate to fashion involvement of affluent female consumers. Previous literature suggested that gender and age had negative relationships with involvement (O’Cass, 2000). The regression results supported previous findings with a significant negative relationship of age and education to fashion involvement and a significant positive relationship to income. Regression results indicated that the selected demographic characteristics accounted for only 5% of the variance, which was not strong in this study.

Respondents in the present study indicated that media usage was a predictor of fashion involvement. Since those who market products want consumers to purchase products, media such as magazines, TV shows, movies, catalogs, celebrities, and the Internet help the consumer
to become involved with the product. If product involvement is high, research has shown that the consumer may be more interested in purchasing the product. Since the fashion involvement scale measured dimensions such as fashion innovativeness and time of purchase, fashion interpersonal communication, fashion interest, fashion knowledgeable, fashion awareness and reaction to changing fashion trends; consumers who are highly fashion involved may also promote products with which they are involved to others. The results of this study add to the knowledge of fashion involvement in the purchase process.

Because media usage and price perceptions were significant in predicting fashion involvement in affluent female consumers, marketers should consider targeting these variables when promoting fashion products to this market. The content of the message in advertising is also important when targeting this audience.

Involvement theory helps to explain how consumers behave in the marketplace. If consumers are highly involved with a product, such as a fashion product, they are more likely to relate to the product and purchase it. Many researchers who study the process of purchasing apparel products have used involvement theory. Consumers who are highly involved with a fashion product may purchase it sooner than others and also may encourage others to purchase it as well. Therefore, understanding the fashion involvement of consumers is of primary importance to those who design, produce, and sell products to consumers.

**Recommendations and Implications**

Because the sample was homogeneous, there were few differences found among the respondents. This confirms previous results and is a positive indicator for marketers focused on affluent female consumers because the information is more reliable. Media usage and prestige sensitivity were significant in predicting fashion involvement in affluent female consumers,
however the other main variables showed no significance. The following recommendations are made for future research:

1) Examine the specific types of media influencing affluent female consumers to investigate which were most important.

2) Select other variables to predict fashion involvement such as self-image, family status, lifestyle, spending behavior, or leisure interests and activities.

3) Select a sample limited to younger, less educated consumers who aspire to be affluent.

This study can be useful to marketers trying to promote products to affluent female consumers, because it adds to the knowledge base. This research focused solely on affluent female consumers, who have money to spend, as well as direct access to retail fashion. After controlling for selected demographic characteristics, descriptive analyses showed that lower than expected levels of fashion involvement were found. This suggests that affluent females are basic consumers. The homogeneity of the sample implies that the results are reliable and could be generalized to a broader population of consumers. Marketers can benefit from this information by developing pricing and promotional tactics to appeal to this market. Retailers can also benefit from this study by knowing what to consider when pricing products and promoting to affluent consumers. Educators can use this research as a basis for developing new studies examining affluent females. By knowing how involved this market is in fashion and which variables might aid in predicting fashion involvement, new strategies can be developed in terms of design, development, and selling.
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Barletta, M. (2003). Marketing to women: How to understand, reach, and increase your share of the world’s largest market segment. Chicago, IL, Dearborn Trade Publishing.


APPENDIX A

APPROVED APPLICATION FOR USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
FORM 1  HUEC USE OF HUMANS AND ANIMALS IN RESEARCH - SUMMARY
1/16/97

To be included in attached required protocol summary are Title, Objectives, Justification, Procedures and Expected benefit(s). Attach consent form (if used), and any survey/questionnaires used. Try to limit the protocol summary to 1-2 typed pages. Studies with human subjects being routed through LAES need only add a separate justification because the form includes all other components of protocol summary.

Title: Market Analysis and Projectional Strategy Development for Louisiana Alligator, Ostrich, and Emu Skin Products

Source of Funds  X  LAES
or Grant routed  LSU Campus
through:

Consent Form:  Not needed  Attached
Instruments:  Not needed  Attached

A student can only be a principal investigator (responsible for protection of human subjects) of an exempted study. Projects undergoing expedited or full review require the faculty advisor as the principal investigator.

Bonnie D. Belleau, Taraa Summers  4-23-98
Researcher (Faculty or Student)  Date

Researcher (If Student, Faculty Advisor)  Date

School Director  Date

This proposal has been reviewed by the HUEC Human and Animal Research Representative and found to be:

Approved  X  Non-approved  In need of modification

Proposed research will be reviewed by:
LSU Campus  LAES  X

If LSU Campus review then review status of proposal will be:
Exempt  X  Expedited  Full

Michael Keenan  5-5-98
HUEC Human and Animal Research Representative  Date
APPENDIX B

SURVEY LETTERS
Initial Contact Letter

May 7, 1999

Ms. «M_1st_name» «last_name»
«street»
«city», «state»
«zipcode»

Dear Ms. «last_name»:

Within the next few days, you will be receiving a request from us to complete a brief questionnaire. Your name was randomly selected from consumers residing in eight major metropolitan areas considered to be the key fashion centers of the United States. We want to learn more about your opinions regarding fashion products made with genuine American alligator leather.

We would greatly appreciate your taking the few minutes necessary to complete and return your questionnaire when it arrives. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Teresa A. Summers, Ph.D.  
Professor and Project Director  
Division of Textiles, Apparel Design, and Merchandising  
School of Human Ecology  
Louisiana State University  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Yingjiao Xu  
Ph.D. candidate
Survey Instrument Cover Letter

May 14, 1999

Ms. «M_1st_name» «last_name»
«street»
«city», «state»
«zipcode»

Dear Ms. «last_name»:

As a consumer, you may be interested in and aware of new and innovative fashion products. Our research team is studying the uses of American alligator leather with the goal of encouraging the manufacture of more fashion products made with this unique material. In order to achieve this goal, information is needed about what you, the consumer, think about these products.

Your name was randomly selected from consumers in eight major cities that are considered to represent the fashion centers of the U.S. In order that the results of the study truly represent the opinions of consumers like yourself, it is important that each questionnaire be completed, folded, and returned in the envelope provided. The first 100 respondents to return the completed questionnaire will receive a genuine alligator leather key chain with our compliments. The swatch of American alligator leather attached to the survey is yours to keep. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that we may check your name off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire itself.

We would be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. Please write to the School of Human Ecology, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA 70803 or fax (225) 388-2697. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely

Teresa A. Summers, Ph.D.                              Yingjiao Xu
Professor and Project Director                        Ph.D. candidate
Division of Textiles, Apparel Design,                
and Merchandising                                      
School of Human Ecology                                
Louisiana State University                            
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Postcard

Last week, a questionnaire seeking your opinions about accessories made with American alligator leather was mailed to you. Your name was randomly drawn from a list of consumers in the eight large cities that are considered to represent the fashion centers of the U.S..

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire to us, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. We are especially grateful for your help because we believe that your responses are vital to our understanding of consumers and their needs.

If you did not receive a questionnaire or it was misplaced, please write or fax us at (225)388-2697, and we will get another one in the mail to you today.

Sincerely

Teresa A. Summers, Ph.D.
Professor and Project Director
Division of Textiles, Apparel Dsgn, & Merch.
LA State Univ. School of Human Ecology
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Yingjiao Xu
Ph.D. Candidate
Follow-up Letter

June 7, 1999

Ms. «M_first_name» «last_name»
«street»
«city», «state»
«zipcode»

Dear Ms. «last_name»:

About three weeks ago, we wrote to you seeking your opinions about accessories made with American alligator leather. As of today, we have not received your completed questionnaire. We realize that you may not have had time to complete the survey; however, we would genuinely appreciate hearing from you.

The study is being conducted to better understand consumers. We are writing to you again because the usefulness of the study depends on receiving a questionnaire from each respondent. Your name was randomly drawn from a list of consumers in the eight cities that are considered to represent the fashion centers of the U.S. In order for the study to be truly representative, it is essential that each person in the sample return her questionnaire.

In the event that your questionnaire has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed. We would be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. Please write or fax us at (225)388-2697.

Sincerely

Teresa A. Summers, Ph.D.
Professor and Project Director
Division of Textiles, Apparel Design, and Merchandising
School of Human Ecology
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Yingjiao Xu
Ph.D. candidate
APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT
ALLIGATORS & FASHION APPAREL
What do you think?

Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed stamped envelope to:
Dr. Teresa A. Summers
Louisiana State University
School of Human Ecology
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
For purposes of this survey, *apparel* includes dresses, sportswear, active sportswear, suits and coats, knitwear, swimwear, rainwear, pants, blouses, and jeans.

Completing the survey will only take you 10-15 minutes. We appreciate your cooperation!

- Please remove the American alligator swatch below and keep it with our compliments.

Remember, the first 100 respondents to return their completed surveys will receive a genuine American alligator key chain!

Your completion of this questionnaire signifies your consent to voluntarily participate in this research study. Individual results of this study will be completely confidential, your name will never be used and analysis will be completed with groups of responses only.
Please circle your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alligator leather apparel has unique qualities, such as texture, suppleness and luster.</td>
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<td>Alligator leather apparel is durable.</td>
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<td>Wearing alligator leather apparel is socially acceptable.</td>
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<td>Alligator leather apparel requires special care.</td>
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<td>Apparel made from alligator leather is higher priced than apparel made from other leathers.</td>
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<td>The American alligator was removed from the endangered species list in the late 1980s.</td>
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<td>Alligator leather apparel is available in a wide assortment of colors.</td>
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<td>Alligator leather apparel is fashionable.</td>
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<td>Alligator leather apparel is attractive.</td>
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<td>Wearing alligator leather apparel is prestigious.</td>
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<td>It’s important for my apparel to be unique.</td>
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<td>Please circle your response.</td>
<td>Extremely Disagree</td>
<td>Quite Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Mixed Feeling/Don't Know</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Quite Agree</td>
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<td>Durability is an important quality to be considered when selecting apparel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social acceptance is important for me when I select apparel.</td>
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<td>Care of the product is a factor that influences my selection of apparel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price is very influential on my selection of apparel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I will not buy apparel made of skins from endangered animals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Color is very influential on my choice of apparel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I buy apparel that is fashionable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wearing apparel that is pleasing to others is important to me.</td>
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<td>Wearing prestigious apparel is important to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchasing alligator leather apparel will be personally rewarding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I'm willing to pay more to purchase genuine American alligator leather apparel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to buy American alligator leather apparel.</td>
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<td>Statement</td>
<td>Extremely Disagree</td>
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<td>Most people who are important to me will not object if I buy alligator</td>
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<td>leather apparel</td>
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<td>My husband/significant other will not object if I buy alligator leather</td>
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<td>Most of my friends think that I should buy alligator leather apparel</td>
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<td>My professional colleagues think I should buy alligator leather apparel</td>
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<td>My social status makes me think of purchasing alligator leather apparel</td>
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<td>The fashion media suggests that I should buy alligator leather apparel</td>
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<td>Generally speaking, I want to do what my husband/significant other thinks</td>
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<td>I should do</td>
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<td>Generally speaking, I want to do what my close friends think I should do</td>
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<td>Generally speaking, I want to do what my professional colleagues think I</td>
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<td>should do</td>
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<td>Generally speaking, I want my behavior to fit my social status</td>
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<td>Generally speaking, I want to do what the media suggests I should do</td>
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<td>The old saying &quot;you get what you pay for&quot; is generally true.</td>
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<td>The price of a product is a good indicator of its quality.</td>
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<td>Generally speaking, the higher the price of the product, the higher the quality</td>
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<td>You always have to pay a bit more for the best.</td>
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<td>People notice when you buy the most expensive brand of a product.</td>
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<td>Buying a high price brand makes me feel good about myself.</td>
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<td>Buying the most expensive brand of a product makes me feel classy.</td>
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<td>I enjoy the prestige of buying a high priced product.</td>
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<td>It says something to people when you buy the high priced version of a product</td>
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<td>Your friends will think you are cheap if you consistently buy the lowest priced version of a product</td>
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<td>I think others make judgements about me by the kinds of products and brands I buy.</td>
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<td>Even for a relatively inexpensive product, I think that buying a costly brand is impressive</td>
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</table>
Please circle your response.

✦ In general, would you say you buy women's clothing fashions
   a. earlier in the season than most other women
   b. about the same time as most other women
   c. later in the season than most other women

✦ How much information about new women's clothing fashions
do you give to your friends?
   a. very little
   b. average amount
   c. a great deal

✦ What would you say about your interests in women's clothing
fashions?
   a. less interested than most other women
   b. about as interested as most other women
   c. more interested than most other women

✦ Compared with most other women, how likely are you to be
asked for advice about new women's clothing fashions?
   a. less likely to be asked than most other women
   b. about as likely to be asked as most other women
   c. more likely to be asked than most other women

✦ Which one of the statements below best describes your reaction
to changing fashions in women's clothes? (Even though there
may be no statement listed that exactly describes how you feel,
make the best choice you can from the answers listed.)
   a. I read the fashion news regularly and try to keep my wardrobe
      up to date with the fashion trends.
   b. I keep up to date on all the fashion changes although I don't
      always attempt to dress according to those changes.
   c. I check to see what is currently fashionable only when I need to
      buy some new clothes.
   d. I don't pay much attention to fashion trends unless a major
      change takes places.
   e. I am not at all interested in fashion trends.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Mixed Feeling/ Don't know</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If given a choice, I would choose apparel made with genuine American alligator leather over other crocodilian species.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>If given a choice, I would choose leather apparel made in America over imports.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When considering a leather purchase I rarely think about where it was produced.</td>
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<td>I have more self-confidence than most people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am more independent than most people.</td>
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<td>I think I have a lot of personal ability.</td>
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<td>I like to be considered a leader.</td>
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<td>I've never been really outstanding at anything.</td>
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<td>I often can talk others into doing something.</td>
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<td>I'm strongly concerned about my style of doing things.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I'm concerned about the way I present myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>I'm self-conscious about the way I look.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>I usually worry about making a good impression.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>One of the last things I do before leaving my house is look in the mirror.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm usually aware of my appearance.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm concerned about what others think of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please circle your response or provide your response in the blanks provided.

♦ I often buy clothing that is advertised................... 1 2 3 4 5

♦ I buy more clothing items if I have seen them worn or used by a celebrity..................... 1 2 3 4 5

♦ I tend to notice clothes in movies...................... 1 2 3 4 5

♦ I notice clothing in television shows................... 1 2 3 4 5

♦ I notice the clothing in magazines..................... 1 2 3 4 5

♦ I seek out the latest fashions on the Internet.... 1 2 3 4 5

♦ I like to buy clothes from upper-scale catalogs.................................................. 1 2 3 4 5

♦ On average, how many movies (including video rentals, TV, theater) do you see per month? __________

♦ On average, how many hours per week do you watch TV? __________

♦ What are your three favorite TV shows?

________________________

________________________

________________________

♦ Which of the following magazines do you read on a regular basis?(Select all that apply.)


10. Other. Please specify __________________________
Please tell us about yourself. Circle the appropriate response.

◆ Do you own any genuine American alligator leather apparel?
  1. Yes, If yes, how many items? ______
     how many items acquired in the last 5 years? _____
  2. No
  3. Not sure

◆ Do you own any other genuine exotic leather (crocodile, ostrich, lizard, etc.) apparel?
  1. Yes, If yes, how many items? ______
     how many items acquired in the last 5 years? _____
  2. No
  3. Not sure

◆ What is your racial or ethnic background?
  1. American Indian
  2. Asian or Pacific Islander
  3. African American (Black)
  4. Hispanic
  5. White, not of Hispanic origin
  6. Other __________

◆ Which category best describes your age?
  1. 21-30
  2. 31-40
  3. 41-50
  4. 51-60
  5. 61-70
  6. 71 and over

◆ What is your current marital status?
  1. Single, never married
  2. Married
  3. Divorced
  4. Widowed
  5. Living together
Please tell us about yourself. Circle the appropriate response.

♦ Which category best describes your education?
  1. Less than high school diploma
  2. High school graduate
  3. Trade or technical school
  4. Some college
  5. College degree
  6. Advanced degree

♦ What is your current employment status? (select only one)
  1. Employed
  2. Homemaker
  3. Retired
  4. Unemployed
  5. Other. Please specify________

♦ If employed, what is your usual occupation? (select only one)
  1. Professional
  2. Technical
  3. Management
  4. Self-employed
  5. Other. Please specify________

♦ Approximately how much have you spent on clothing in the last 6 months?

____________________________________

♦ What was your household income last year?
  1. less than $50,000
  2. $50,000-$74,999
  3. $75,000-$99,999
  4. $100,000-$124,999
  5. $125,000-$149,999
  6. $150,000 and over
Thank you for your participation. The information you have provided will help researchers understand preferences of fashion consumers. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to write them in the space provided below.

Please send me a summary of the results.

Louisiana State University
Agricultural Center
VITA

Robin Danielle McFatter was born on May 25, 1981, in Slidell, Louisiana. She was raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and graduated as Salutatorian from Hamilton Christian Academy in 1999. She then studied fashion merchandising in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences from McNeese State University. In just three years, Robin graduated Magna Cum Laude from McNeese in May 2002. In January 2003, Robin came to Louisiana State University to study apparel design under the direction of Dr. Bonnie Belleau in the School of Human Ecology’s Textiles, Apparel Design, and Merchandising division. After graduating from LSU, Robin hopes to find a position that allows her to use the knowledge she has gained about the fashion industry and the skills she has acquired in garment construction.