FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE OF A PRE-PACKAGED WOMAN'S BLOUSE IN AN ACTUAL BUYING SITUATION IN A DISCOUNT STORE

by

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A PROBLEM

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

"The homemaker is a 'purchasing agent' for the family--she is not selected because of a particular skill in this area and has many other duties and distractions in connection with it." She does not know all of the alternatives and does not have clear cut goals for family satisfaction. At the same time, there are many family members to please."[1] During an era in which specialization of skill has become so important in the labor force, skill in purchasing is immaterial.

Studies on consumer behavior consistently show the consumer does not take advantage of the information at her disposal. With a growing concern for protecting the consumer, many theories have developed relating to the reasons for the seemingly apathetic and indifferent behavior. It has been theorized that the homemaker is impulsive, that the homemaker is uninformed, that the homemaker is not interested in the functional assets of the product since she knows little about them and feels there is little difference between brands; that concern for durability is passé and

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[1]Warren Vincent, Economics and Management in Agriculture (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 146.

attention to style is fashionable. The question arises, is the consumer getting "gypped" or is she aware of the quality received in relation to the price paid? If fashion is of so great importance, perhaps less durability at a lower cost is her choice.

To determine some of the motives influencing the attitude of the consumer in making a purchase, the writer will explore changes in the society and the retail industry since World War II and attempt to ascertain the effect upon the consumer.

Changes in Society

The picture of typical America on the farm is no longer apropos but has been replaced by the family living in suburbia on a one hundred fifty foot lot. With advancing technology hastening industrialization in the first half of this century, the move was to the city. Today only one out of eight families lives in a rural community. As incomes increased and transportation improved, cities grew larger, and migration to satellite communities began. In the last ten years the suburban population has increased eighty percent.

Transportation improvements have had tremendous impact upon the American society. Since they have reduced the distance between communities, one may commute daily to a job or move frequently to another community as job opportunities arise, or as a company demands.

Mobility has influenced the social structure of the nation, making it more affluent. As labor unions increase the income and status of the laborer, upward mobility is more readily attainable. One is judged more by his own merits than on family background. Thus, the lower class is diminishing as the middle class becomes larger.[2] However, as one establishes his social position, desire for approval takes on greater impetus. Britt said, "We are becoming a nation of conformists."[3]

One of the means of social approval is through ownership. William Whyte, Jr. feels that this desire for approval has brought forth both conspicuous consumption and conspicuous abstention, since one may be condemned as quickly for flaunting his possessions as for not keeping up in the race for ownership.[4]

Another avenue of social approval is through participation in accepted activities. One not only participates but must also have all of the necessary equipment or have the means to rent it. Change is seen as fashionable, and one must remain in fashion. A particular type of home or community is fashionable; a particular sport at a given time, a type of automobile, the possession of a certain appliance,

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[2]Ernest Dichter, "Psychology of Textiles," Understanding Consumer Behavior, edited by Martin M. Grossack (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1946), p. 312.

[3]Steuart H. Britt, The Spenders (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1960), p. 37.

[4]William H. Whyte, Jr., Organization Man (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), p. 313.

or shopping at a certain type of store may be fashionable. It has become fashionable to buy on credit and use charge accounts. Fashion affords our affluent society the opportunity to rationalize its self-indulgent behavior.

The nation is child-centered and many activities of the family are vented toward the good of the child. To this end the modern family will engage in many sports in which the children can participate. This is made possible by the fact that the breadwinner of the family will put in fewer hours on his job and receive greater financial return for his efforts than his forefathers. Joseph Marcus, president of a discount chain, has said the term "everyday needs" will have to be redefined to include sporting goods, sportswear, hobby equipment, and other leisure time items.[5]

A rather interesting paradox has developed within our society. The society of today has more money and more time than any generation in our history, and yet there are more demands upon both of these resources. To maintain the standard of living set forth as desirable and necessary for social prestige, two incomes are often demanded. This has led to an increase in the number of women in the labor force and in the number of men holding two jobs. While new technological advances have made life easier, social and economic demands have made life more harried. Time for the daily duties of cleaning, cooking, shopping and other

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[5]"The Giants Plan to Get Bigger," Business Week, (June 6, 1964), p. 100.

household chores has become an element of short supply. This situation has brought about a new mode of informal living and a change in personal values, tastes, and preferences. The rugged individualism that established this country is passe, and interdependence is a way of life.

The Consumer

George Katona explains that to understand consumer behavior, "One must look at motives, opinions, and attitudes that influence decision making. The consumer is a human being influenced by past experiences, cultural and social norms, attitudes, habits and emotions, as well as by the group to which he belongs. He is apt to prefer short cuts, follow rules of the thumb, and behave in a routine manner, but he is capable of acting intelligently. When he feels it really matters, he will act and choose to the best of his ability."[6]

When one considers the large array of products on the market, it is understandable that the consumer uses short cuts. However, Dr. Steuart Britt, Professor of Marketing and Advertising at Northwestern University, feels that most of the decisions are not resolved in a rational manner. "Most of us kid ourselves into believing that we are logical, rational human beings, and neglect the fact that most of our thinking is not based on reason."[7]

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[6]George Katona, The Powerful Consumer (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., Inc., 1960), p. 241.

[7]Steuart H. Britt, Ph.D., loc. cit., p. 15.

Authorities agree that a consumer decision is made with the thought of satisfying a psychological as well as a physical need. Dr. Britt further states, "One of the basic ideas is that a sale depends on whether the potential customer believes that the purchase of the product will raise his own evaluation of himself."[8]

The consumer described by George Katona is unimaginative in demanding new products unless the utility is shown to him by his own peers as representative of a higher standard of living.[9] The image the consumer perceives of a product will be in terms of his own frame of reference. Thus, a product perceived as upgrading to one customer may actually be seen as downgrading to another.

Dichter feels the rise of the upper-lower class into the middle class has placed greater emphasis on purchasing as a means of establishing a place in society. "These new members of the middle class are often insecure in their judgment of products. They are anxious to purchase not merely products but roots in the middle class."[10]

The consumer's frame of reference may also be in terms of personal values. A study conducted by the University of Rhode Island found that the most significant

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[8]Ibid., p. 17.

[9]George Katona, loc. cit., p. 241.

[10]Ernest Dichter, "Psychology of Textiles," Understanding Consumer Behavior, edited by Martin M. Grossack (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1964), p. 317.

factor in general satisfaction was dependent upon the personal values of the individual. Women who placed great importance on beauty found appearance the most significant factor. Women with limited time placed ease of care as the most important factor in general satisfaction.[11]

The University of Rhode Island study probed into the reason for the selection of the blouse and found color, fiber, and style, respectively, as the most important factors at the time of purchase. When the respondents were questioned a month after the purchase of the blouse, style and cut were the most important factors, followed by ease of care. When interviewed several months after the purchase, comfort rated first, the compliments received rated second, and ease of care rated third.[12] Color was by far the most significant factor at time of purchase but had relatively little importance later.

The values of consumers seem to have changed in the last two decades. This change may be seen in the lack of concern for the functional properties of a product and an increase in importance of fashion. The University of Rhode Island study and many others noted the respondents do not use labels or look at hang tags on the products they purchase.[13]

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[11]Agricultural Experimental Station, Consumer Satisfaction With Women's Blouses; Part I (Kingston: University of Rhode Island, 1959), p. 86.

[12]Ibid., p. 8.

[13]Ibid., p. 26.

In the Rhode Island study construction rated low among the significant factors which contributed to general satisfaction. Another point that might have significance is the fact that many women forty years and older showed more concern for the performance of the blouse than the younger women.[14]

A consumer's preferences are for the prettier, cheaper, or nicer style, whether it bears a label or not, according to Rose White."[15] She does not feel that the consumer is looking for durability, but rather an item to conform with current fashion.

Robinson states, "Even wear and tear can be dismissed as of little moment, for its permissible limits are determined far more by concern for appearance than by serviceability."[16] It is questionable whether the consumer wishes more durability built into a product.

The desire of conspicuous consumption rather than durability, Packard believes, is the consumer's purpose in his purchases. He feels that Americans are more interested in increasing their incomes than in getting maximum satisfaction from a limited income.[17]

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[14] Ibid., p. 25.

[15] Rose V. White, "Interpreting the Age of Consumerism," Journal of Home Economics, (September, 1961), p. 532.

[16] Dwight E. Robinson, "The Economics of Fashion Demand", Quarterly Journal of Economics, 75(1961), pp. 376-398.

[17] Vance Packard, The Wastemakers (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1960), p. 236.

Quinn believes that there is a growing tendency on the part of the consumer to assume that a product will perform well.[18] Thus, the consumer feels no obligation to examine the functional properties of an item.

"That the consumer is lost in the wilderness of commodities is again a half-truth," according to Katona. "He does not exclusively care about the functional properties or 'real value' of the goods he buys, but he does not disregard them. He does not know enough about the durability and serviceability and whether or not it is worth paying more for."[19] Katona feels that most of the consumers' choices are between fairly equal products.

Britt agrees with Katona in his statement about the consumer's dilemma. "But one of the greatest needs of the consumer is for a discernible difference among competing products. For a great many consumer products, it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to make judgments on a completely logical, rational basis."[20]

Since the consumer has become more dependent upon manufactured goods for his existence, many organizations and the federal government are concerned about the protection of the general public against unscrupulous businessmen. Jules Labarthe writes, "At no previous time in history since man first began to clothe himself has the user of clothing

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[18]University of Rhode Island, loc. cit., p. 58.

[19]George Katona, loc. cit., p. 241.

[20]Steuart H. Britt, loc. cit., p. 41.

materials been so dependent on manufactured goods and on what the manufacturer and retailer say about them; at no time has man had so wide a choice."[21]

The federal government has shown much concern over the fate of the consumer. More than thirty-five agencies are charged in some way with protecting the consumer. President Lyndon Baines Johnson, in February, 1964, sent a special message, dealing with the consumer, to Congress and asked for ten new laws to build additional defenses against firms who defraud the buyer. "The antiquated legal doctrine 'Let the buyer beware' should be superceded by 'Let the seller make full disclosure,'" urged the President.

Hahn believes the concern is well-founded. "The whole field of merchandising has become more complex by the introduction of so many substitutes for goods. Customers must guess what is in the item; only the manufacturer knows."[22]

Protection for the consumer has come mainly in the form of more informative labeling, but the problem of getting the customer to use the labels has perplexed the experts. Britt said, "Even if we could examine all the information about how a product was produced, packaged, and priced, most of us would not do very much with the information. We just are not that <u>rational</u> as human beings. Even if we

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[21]Jules Labarthe, Textiles: <u>Origins to Usage</u> (New York: McMillan Co., 1964), p. 1.

[22]Lew Hahn, <u>Stores, Merchants, and Customers</u> (New York: Fairchild Publication, Inc., 1952), p. 320.

had all of the knowledge about quality, price, and quantity produced, - we probably would not act very differently in order to get the best price."[23]

Kiplinger magazine, exploring another view stated, "How expert are you in finding your way through the confusing names used in the textile industry?"[24] The report was speaking of the sixteen generic names established for the Textile Products Label Identification Act. At the same time, the article questioned their value to the consumer.

Packard feels that the present apathy on the part of the consumer toward durability and serviceability has been induced by the manufacturer and advertisers, to keep spending in pace with production. "Style can destroy the value of possession even while their utility remains unimpaired. The challenge of obsolescence of desirability is the creation of a strategy to persuade the public that style is an important element in the desirability of one's product."[25]

Britt contradicts Packard's point of view. He feels advertising helps the consumer by giving information about the product before making a purchase. He does not feel that advertising can force people to buy but rather points out a means of satisfying a need. The consumer

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[23]Steuart H. Britt, loc. cit., p. 58.

[24]Kiplinger Magazine, (November, 1960).

[25]Vance Packard, loc. cit., p. 58.

is still free to choose among the many products advertised.[26]

It does appear that the consumer has found some short cuts such as using brand names, shopping at a familiar store, or repeating a purchase. The experts seem to agree that the consumer is not primarily concerned with durability but disagree on the reason.

Changes in the Retail Industry

A revolution is taking place in the retail industry. Although this change actually began as early as 1930, it has been especially apparent since World War II, moving with increasing rapidity in the last seven years. The result has been a decrease in business in downtown areas, as suburban shopping centers have sprung up at an incredible rate. The small specialty store and variety store have been hurt the greatest, as customers seem to prefer large department stores with many items and services under one roof. In turn, the large department stores and chains have been hit by the establishment of discount stores. The swift rise of the discount store caught the industry unprepared. As a result, these stores were well established before the industry began to fight back.

Morris Natelson, partner of Lehman Brothers, stated two causes for the retail revolution: (1) dispersion of the population from large cities to satellite communities,

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[26]Steuart H. Britt, loc. cit., Chapter 12, p. 147.

and (2) an increase in wage rates for all store employees.[27] The effect of suburbanization on the retail industry was not immediately recognized by most retailers. In 1946 when the situation became apparent, most retailers were tied to downtown leases. Thus, the discounters were the first to capitalize on the suburban shopping centers.

With wage increases in all areas of employment, the retailers were forced to find a method of cutting down on the number of employees. Self-service was found to be one answer. The effectiveness of sales personnel has been steadily decreasing[28], and the consumer likes to look at the variety of merchandise offered for sale. A study of two hundred housewives in New England found that women preferred the discount store because of location, good parking facilities, and self-service. They like to browse without being given a "sales pitch," since the help is usually too poor to bother with.[29]

The innovation of prepackaging has come hand-in-hand with self-service. The idea began in the supermarkets and followed to the department store and discount house.[30]

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[27]Morris Natelson, "What's Behind the Retail Revolution," The Retail Revolution (New York: Fairchild Publication, Inc., 1962), p. 1.

[28]William Whyte, Jr., "What's Wrong With the Retail Industry?" Editors of Fortune, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1953), p. 53.

[29] "Why Shoppers Like Discount Stores," Business Week, (August 5, 1961), p. 111.

[30]Business Week, (February 20, 1965), p. 90-92.

Prepackaging is an effective means to tell the consumer the best features of the items and is easier to display. The William Carter Co. boosted their sales one hundred percent with the packaging of infants wear. Holland, their firm manager, has said, "The package reassures the customer that she is buying a group of items that (1) have been carefully selected by an authority, (2) are of top quality, and (3) are stylish." He listed the following new developments as being particularly relevant: "The fact that there are more women working--one out of three now--means that they have less time to shop, to choose, to evaluate: therefore a critical need exists for a well-selected assortment." The shoppers are insistent in their demand for style, not only in the products, but in the package in which these products come. The increasing customer acceptance of self-service, even in the best department stores, means a heavier burden on the package to stimulate sales.[31]

The Phillip-Jones Corporation in 1955 started prepackaging their Century line of Van Heusen shirts. After a year and a half of testing in fifteen department stores the prepackaged shirts were put out on a nationwide basis. They reported that the package was clean, clear, and pointed out the best features of construction.[32]

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[31]"Potent Packaging," Dun's Review and Modern Industry, Vol.83 (May, 1964), p. 68-69.

[32]"Increasing Shirt Sales Credited to Prepackaging," Packaging Parade, Vol. 24, Part II (July, 1956), p. 58.

Prepackaging has led to vending machines as another means of merchandising. Vending machines are being tested by a number of large companies for types of clothing the customer buys often and does not try on before purchasing.

Advertising provides another means of replacing the sales person, since one advertisement can reach thousands of people at one time, and a sales person can only reach those persons who come into the store. Manufacturers and retailers feel that advertising is the best means to sell their wares. Through advertising the customer is ready to buy when she comes into the store.[33]

The U.S. News and World Report relates that while the department and the discount stores vie for position they are becoming more alike. The discount store is increasing the number of services offered under one roof, and the department store is going into self-service. Both are increasing the number of items they have for sale.

The discount store has been designed to appeal to the family as opposed to the department store character which appeals mainly to women. To upgrade their store but maintain price, the discount store has introduced unknown brands or unbranded merchandise at the sacrifice of quality. Brecker suggested if one wishes to get a "bargain" it is important to compare quality as well as price.[34]

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[33]William Whyte, Jr., loc. cit., p. 53.

[34]Ruth Brecher and Edward Brecher, "Can You Still Get Bargains in Discount Stores?" Redbook (April, 1965), p. 62.

James S. Schoff, president of Bloomingdale's Department Store, defined a department store as a retail store that offers goods for all members of the family. It differs from a discount store by not only carrying a large assortment of items, but also a wide assortment of each item and a wide choice of services for the customer such as charge accounts, delivery service, sales people, and a wide range of price. The department store has a character that is related to what is sold and carries items which could not be sold in surroundings where price is the basic appeal. Besides the usual items, the department store carries the hard to obtain, unusual items and a wide range of hard-to-obtain sizes. The department store never did have the patronage of the low income group and never will, but will appeal to the middle income even more as incomes rise. Schoff feels the department store must continue to stress fine quality, fashion, and service.[35]

Sol W. Cantor, president of Interstate Department Stores, Inc., does not believe that price is the basic appeal for the discount stores. He believes that the customer is attracted because they carry a full line of merchandise attractively displayed and offer self-service--"Doing business at the customer's convenience, not at the convenience of the sales person." The aisles are wide and the floor

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[35]James S. Schoff, "Department Store's Position in Today's Distribution," The Retail Revolution, A series of lectures for the New York Society of Security Analysts, arranged by Fairchild Publications, Inc. (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1962), p. 37.

plan is designed to speed the flow of traffic. The discount stores are open evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays: times when it is possible for families to shop together. They do not ask the customer to pay for services she does not want or use. Cantor says that discounting does not appeal to the blue collar worker alone but to eighty-five percent of the population. He feels that the discount store will continue to be successful as long as discounters remember to keep their margin low and pass the savings on to the customer.[36]

Britt, reporting on a survey carried on in a supermarket, said that the customer was looking for warmth, friendliness, and social status in her choice of stores. If competitive prices are also offered, this, of course, helped to reinforce customer loyalty.[37]

Summary

Research findings agree that in the last two decades there has been a definite shift of values among the consumer, from concern for durability to concern for style. The cause of this phenomenon has been placed on advanding technology making it impossible for the consumer to understand the functional properties of the product; on a greater desire

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[36]Sol W. Cantor, "Discounting - Fact or Fiction," The Retail Revolution, A series of lectures for the New York Society of Security Analysts, arranged by Fairchild Publications, Inc. (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1962), p. 29.

[37]Steuart H. Britt, loc. cit., p. 190.

for upward mobility, and thus conformity to a social class; on a swift moving society in which an article may become quickly outdated; on advertising with its basic appeal for the consumer to spend his money; on lack of concern for making best use of present incomes; and on a tendency of the consumer to trust the manufacturer and retailer and to assume the product will perform well.

Some manufacturers and the federal government have become concerned over the protection of the consumer, spending much time and money to provide better information. The problem they have faced is that of getting the consumer to use the information.

The investigator feels the information provided may not be fulfilling the needs of the consumer and may need to be revised. The study to be carried on will bear this purpose, so that needs of the consumer can be determined.

Focus of the Study

The researcher will explore the shopping habits of the consumer through an observation and interview at the time the decision to buy has been made. The objectives, assumptions, and hypotheses of this study are as follows:

Assumptions

1. Factors influencing decision-making in the purchase of a pre-packaged blouse may be obtained through observation and interview.

Objectives

1. To determine the factors influencing decision-making in an actual buying situation in a discount store.
2. To ascertain the performance the consumer expects from her purchase.

Hypotheses

1. The consumer does not use the information provided on the labels and hang tags.
2. The consumer expects the garment to perform well.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This study is designed to determine the attitude and behavior of the consumer during the period in which the decision to buy a particular blouse is being made. The research is descriptive in nature.

The methodology of the study includes a discussion of the (1) development of an instrument, (2) selection and description of the sample, (3) description of the blouses, (4) community setting, (5) description of the store, (6) pre-test, (7) administration of the instrument, and (8) method of analysis.

Development of an Instrument

Two methods of data collection were selected: interview and observation. The investigator felt these methods would be the most effective in obtaining both subjective and objective information.

The interview method was used for its proficiency in obtaining attitudes from the respondents. "Feelings and attitudes.....have been found to reveal themselves in personal interview with considerable clarity and correctness. This is the area in which the interview as a fact-

finding instrument has its greatest value."[1] The interview method requires less literacy and intelligence on the part of the respondent than a questionnaire and thus may be used with a larger segment of the population.

The most important advantage of the interview method rests on the fact that questions may be elucidated or clarified, reducing the probability of error in interpretation. The disadvantage of this method is the factor of human bias. It is difficult for one to interpret the words of another without placing personal connotation on the meaning. Much skill is needed for depth probing and artful use of the interview method. To make best use of the method with a limited amount of training, a structured interview schedule was developed. This type of interview requires less skill than the depth probe, but ascertains the respondents' attitudes and lends itself to comparisons between responses.

For clarity of meaning and ease of analysis the interview schedule was divided into four parts consisting of the reasons for choice of blouse, the performance expected, the respondent's general satisfaction, and background information. Side remarks or expressions were noted, since they may indicate a diverse attitude from the one recorded.

Observations were made to determine the validity of the responses in the interview. The interview evoked the attitude of the respondent toward the blouse, but obser-

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[1]Walter Bingham and Bruce Moore, How To Interview (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 247-248.

vations provided a means of comparison to substantiate reasons for the attitude. Goode and Hatt state, "Science begins with observation and must ultimately return to observation for its validity."[2] The observation method also contains danger of bias as in the interview method and, in addition, there is the possibility of avoiding the obvious. Therefore, a structured observation schodule was developed. This schedule was in the form of a check list for definite observations and provided space to write in general information about the blouse or respondent.

The observation check list included three age categories: 16-24, 25-40, and 40 and over. The age of the respondent was estimated by the interviewer. These groupings were representative of three stages in the life cycle and three stages of development in the retail industry. The 16-24 age group generally have more money, less experience, and fewer responsibilities. The 25-40 age group represents women with growing families with a large number of expenses and responsibilities. With many demands for their energy and income, less time is available for making decisions and errors are more costly. They have experienced the rise of the discount store. The 40-over group would have gained experience in purchasing before World War II. They have experienced many changes in the retail industry and probably have had disillusionments with some of the new textiles.

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[2]William J. Goode and Paul K. Hatt, Methods in Social Research (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), p. 119.

One of the requirements of successful observation is for the observer to be inconspicuous. If the individual becomes aware of being observed, her behavior pattern may be altered. Since customers in a store expect others to move around them, this did not create a problem. On no occasion did the respondents indicate an awareness of having been observed.

Selection and Description of the Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from the population of female customers in a local discount store. The criteria for selection required that they be 16 years of age or older and that they purchase a pre-packaged blouse for themselves. In the event of many customers at one time, it was planned that every third customer would be interviewed. The investigator found it impossible to follow this schedule. There would be long periods in which no one would approach the counter and other times in which several women would be looking at one time. Mother and teenage daughter groups were not interviewed because the attitude and behavior of a single individual could not be obtained.

Sample

The sample for the study consisted of 45 interviews which met the criteria. The interviewing was conducted at various times of the day throughout the two week period in order to obtain a diversified sample. A description of the sample includes age, education, marital status, age of

children, occupation of husband, occupation of wife, and income.[3]

Age of Sample. The age distribution of the sample is shown on Table 1. The greatest number, 25 or 55 percent, were in the 25-40 age group. The median age for the city of Flint is 26 years.

Table 1. Number and percentage of customers interviewed in discount store in each age group

Age Group	Number	Percentage
16-24 years	12	27
25-40 years	25	55
40-over years	8	18
Totals	45	100

Education Level. The educational level of the sample is described in Table 2. It reflects the median education level for the city of Flint, with 78 percent having attended high school. Since the respondents were asked the school they last attended, the table does not indicate the number who actually graduated from high school. All of the sample in the 16-24 year group had reached high school. In the 25-40 age group, only four percent had not reached high

[3]Income was estimated from occupatin based on 1960 U. S. Census for city of Flint.

school, and in the 40-over age group, 38 percent had not reached high school. However, in the 25-40 age group and the 40-over age group 16 percent and 25 percent, respectively, had attended a college or university. Since many of the respondents in the 16-24 age group were still in high school, age may be the primary factor for their education level being lower than the other two age groups.

Table 2. Number and percentage of customers interviewed in a discount store at each educational level

Educational Level	Number	Percentage
Elementary	2	4
Junior high school	2	4
Senior high school	35	78
College or university	6	14
Totals	45	100

Occupation of Husbands. The majority of the husbands of the interviewees were employed as skilled laborers (31 percent), with unskilled laborers as the second major occupation (20 percent). The large number in this area of employment is representative of the industrial character of the city. Since many of the women seemed uncertain as to the classification of their husbands' jobs, the proportion of skilled and unskilled laborers may be incorrect, although

the type of employment is accurate as given by the respondents.

Table 3. Number and percentage of husbands of interviewees in a discount store in different occupations

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Skilled laborer	14	31
Unskilled laborer	9	20
Managerial position	3	7
Office	1	2
Transportation	2	4
Farmer	1	2
Professional	2	4
Salesman	1	2
Totals[a]	33[a]	72

[a]Twelve women or 27 percent were not married.

Occupation of the Interviewee. Twenty-nine of the 45 women interviewed or 64 percent were not employed. Seven of the unemployed women were still attending high school. The remaining 16 were employed at various occupations. Table 4 shows the distribution of employment.

Table 4. Number and Percentage of interviewees in a discount store in different occupations

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Factory	4	9.0
Office	3	7.0
Retail	1	2.0
Waitress	4	9.0
Professional	2	4.5
Housecleaning	2	4.5
Unemployed	29	64.0
Totals	45	100.0

Age of Children. Twelve women in the study were not married; one of these women was a divorcee with children. Only eleven women did not have children. All of the married women had children. The ages of the children were determined in two categories: 12 years and under, and over 12 years of age. These groups were chosen because above 12 the interviewer felt the children would be capable of sharing the family responsibilities, although they would take a greater share of the family dollar for their care. Table 5 shows the distribution of children by age categories.

Table 5. Number and percentage of children of interviewees in a discount store in age categories

Age of Children	16-24	25-40	40-over	Number	Percentage
12 and under only	2	19	1	22	40
Over 12 only	0	14	8	22	40
No children	10	1	0	11	20
Totals	12	34	9	55[a]	100

[a]Ten women had children in both age groups.

Income of Husbands of Interviewees. Since many people are sensitive about divulging their income to a stranger, the investigator estimated incomes based on the occupations the respondents reported for themselves and their husbands. Table 6 shows the occupation and median income for men in the Flint area as reported by the 1960 U. S. Census.[4]

Income of Interviewee. The incomes shown in Table 7 are based on the median income for females in the Flint area as recorded by the U. S. Census Bureau, 1960. Since these incomes represent part time as well as full time employment the figures shown may indicate a lower median income than actually received by full time employees.

[4]U. S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, Characteristic of Population, 1960. Vol. 1, Part 24, p. 619-20.

Table 6. Number and percentage of husbands of interviewees in a discount store with income estimated on basis of occupation

Occupation	Income[a]	Number	Percentage
Professional	$7,298	2	4.4
Skilled laborer	6,721	14	31.0
Unskilled laborer	4,744	9	20.0
Manager	7,268	3	7.0
Office	5,259	1	2.1
Salesman	6,915	1	2.1
Transportation	6,749	2	4.4
Farmer	4,102	1	2.1
Totals[b]		33	73.1

[a]Estimated on basis of occupation as recorded by U. S. Census Bureau.

[b]12 women or 27% were not married.

Table 7. Number and percentage of interviewees in a discount store with income estimated on basis of occupation

Occupation	Income[a]	Number	Percentage
Professional	3,020	2	4.5
Factory	4,359	4	9.0
Office	3,549	3	7.0
Retail	1,628	1	2.0
Waitress	1,299	4	9.0
Housecleaning	607	2	4.5
Totals[b]		16	36.0

[a]Estimated on basis of occupation as recorded by U. S. Census Bureau.

[b]29 women or 64 percent were not employed outside the home.

Community Setting

The research study was administered in Flint, Michigan, an industrial city with a population of 196,940 and with another 178,000 people living in the surrounding area. The only major industry in the community is General Motors, manufacturing automobiles and accessories. Since many of the citizens are employed by General Motors, the economy of the community is indirectly dependent upon national prosperity. For the past 20 years, Flint has experienced rapid growth and steady employment. The median income of $6,340 per year in Flint is higher than the national average. This prosperity and promise of high incomes has brought an influx of people from other parts of the nation, particularly the South.

As a result of this rapid growth, less class distinction in living areas may be observed in Flint than in most communities. However, as migration has leveled off in more recent years, housing developments have brought together people of common income levels.

Because high school graduation was not a requirement for factory employment until 1958, many people coming to Flint had little education. As more education was required by the factories, Flint has offered over 1,200 adult courses to the people of the community. Through these courses many people have been able to complete high school and train for skilled positions. Home arts have been found to be exceedingly popular with the adult population, enabling them to

use their leisure for creative expression and useful pursuits. In 1960 the median number of years completed in school for the Flint area was 10.9, which, although low, reflects a developing interest in education.

The median age for the city of Flint is 26 years, indicating a recent influx of young people seeking employment. Of the males over 14 years of age, 82 percent are working, and 32 percent of the females are engaged in gainful employment. The high rate of employment and income has brought many new retail businesses into the area with supermarkets and discount stores particularly flourishing.

Description of the Discount Store

The interviewing took place in Yankee Stadium, located in the Northwest Shopping Center in Flint. Yankee Stadium is one of a chain of discount stores owned by Yankee Stores, Inc., with main offices in Flint. Permission to do the interviewing was obtained from the main office and from the store manager. The investigator found the management and employees to be most cooperative.

Yankee Stadium in Flint is one of the largest stores in the chain with approximately 100,000 square feet of selling space. All soft good items usually available in any department store are sold here, as are many hard good items, such as lawn mowers, household appliances, air conditioners, hardware, photographic equipment, and auto parts. A beauty shop, barber shop, shoe repair, small cafeteria, and dry

cleaning pick-up station are services offered to the customers. Some of the retail departments and all of the services are leased to outside concerns by Yankee Stores, Inc.

Flint Yankee Stadium, built about five years ago, is quite modern in character. The aisles are wide, lighting is bright, and the merchandise is well displayed. Most of the merchandise is either hanging or neatly displayed on tables; very little merchandise is dumped in bins. Yankee Stadium resembles the stereotype of a middle priced department store.

Yankee Stadium is a self-service store, but salespeople are fairly plentiful. Salespeople assist the customer in finding a size or style and keep the merchandise in order, but on no occasion were they observed to "sell." Most of the merchandise is out on display within the reach of the customer.

The Yankee Stadium is located at one end of the shopping center, some distance from the rest of the stores in the area. However, plenty of free parking is offered near its doors. The store is open Sunday until 7:00 P. M. and Monday through Saturday until 10:00 P.M. Saturdays, Sundays and evenings are the busiest times.

The atmosphere in the store was casual and many customers seemed to be browsing. Very few customers gave the appearance of purposeful shopping. During the period of the investigation, the weather was extremely warm, making

the comfort of the air conditioned store a possible factor influencing shopping that particular day.

Description of Blouses

The study was conducted at the end of July which is the end of the summer season in the retail industry. Some sleeveless blouses were available but were limited in color and size. Most of the pre-packaged blouses were a shirtwaist style, ranging in price from $1.00 to $2.79. The majority of the blouses were 100 percent cotton, with the second most popular fabric of 65 percent Dacron and 35 percent cotton. A variety of "end of the season" blouses were dumped on one table, many without labels and representing a variety of fabrics. Most of these blouses were reduced in price. The salesperson informed the investigator that the blouses in more dressy styles hanging on racks were pre-packaged blouses that had been removed from the package and hung on the rack.

Most of the blouses in packages had some kind of label information on them, either written on the package or on a hang tag attached to the blouse. However, much of the information was superficial.

The $2.79 blouse represented the only fall merchandise on display. It was a dark plaid poplin in a blouse jacket style with a zipper front. Some of the pastel colored shirtwaist blouses with roll-up sleeves could be worn either winter or summer.

Pretest

The pretest was administered during July, 1964, at Yankee Stadium, Flint, Michigan. The same store was used for the actual interviewing; however, it is unlikely that the same respondents were questioned.

As a result of the pretest the observation check list was changed. It was found to be too detailed to allow the investigator enough time to make and record all of the observations. The interview schedule was unchanged except for the addition of a miscellaneous category on several questions.

As a result of the pretest, the decision was made to limit the study to pre-packaged blouses. The investigator found that both the blouses on the racks and those on the counter could not adequately be observed. This served to limit the variables, since there were fewer blouses from which the customer could choose.

Administration of the Instrument

Forty-five interviews were obtained during the last week of July and first week of August, 1964, from women 16 years of age and older, who purchased a pre-packaged blouse for themselves. Since Yankee Stadium is self-service, the investigator decided the decision to purchase a particular blouse had been made when the woman turned from the blouse counter. For this reason the actual purchase had not been made at the time of the interview.

The investigator stood as near to the respondents as possible without arousing suspicion, to ensure complete and accurate information. To establish rapport the investigator told the respondents the information would be used in a buying study at Michigan State University. Some respondents expressed their opinions before the questions were asked, and, when possible, these responses were categorized.

Limitation of the Study

Since it was the end of the summer season, the number and styles of blouses were greatly reduced. This factor assisted in reducing the number of variables in the study. However, it is also recognized that the limited supply of merchandise may influence the results of the study by reducing the incidence of impromptu buying or by increasing the significance of price with summer clearance.

The fitting rooms were some distance from the blouse counter, thus offering another limiting factor. The position the investigator assumed made it possible to observe both the counter and the fitting room. However, if the respondent decided to purchase the blouse, it was highly probable that she would not return to the blouse counter. As a result of the position of the fitting rooms, there was little time for the investigator to approach the respondent who tried on a blouse. Several interviews were lost due to this factor.

Method of Analysis

The tabulating of the interview schedule was done entirely by hand. In order to describe the data, the investigator has categorized the reason for selecting the blouse, the performance expected by the respondent, and the care to be given the blouse, and has shown the relationship of observed behavior and available information to consumer expectation and satisfaction.

Whenever possible, percentage comparisons were made. In some cases the number of responses were insufficient for accurate comparison. In these cases numerical summarization was used. All questions were analyzed, although two questions are believed to have been misinterpreted.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

This study has focused on the shopping habits of the consumer in an effort to explore and to discover influencing factors and consumer expectations at the time of purchasing a blouse. The findings were analyzed after grouping the responses of the interviewees into three categories: (1) reasons for choice, (2) the expected performance, and (3) general satisfaction.

Reasons for Choice

To ascertain the most influential factors in the decision to purchase a particular blouse and determine other inducements which may have impelled the respondent to make the decision, the following questions[1] were asked:

What do you think influenced you most in selecting this blouse?

For what occasion do you expect to wear this blouse?

Did you intend to buy a blouse today?

Have you looked at other stores for a blouse?

Do you usually buy your blouses here?

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[1]See Appendix A.

What do you think influenced you most in selecting this blouse?

Since the decision to purchase the blouse had been made just prior to the interview, the investigator felt that this question would elicit the factor most influential at the time of purchase. In some instances multiple responses were given.

Twenty respondents (44 percent) gave color as the influencing factor in choosing the blouse. The numbers and percentages of reasons given by the respondents are as follows:

	Age Group						Respondents' reasons for selection of blouse	
Influencing Factors	16-24 No.	16-24 %	25-40 No.	25-40 %	40-over No.	40-over %	Total Number[a]	Total Percentage
Color	6	38	12	44	2	25	20	39
Style	7	44	5	19	2	25	14	27
Price	2	12	6	22	0	0	8	16
Fabric	1	6	2	7	1	12	4	7
Ease of care	0	0	2	7	1	12	3	6
Fit	0	0	0	0	2	25	2	4
Construction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[a]Multiple responses

The most influential factors seemed to vary from one age group to another. Color and style, both pertaining to appearance as opposed to functional qualities, received over 80 percent of the responses in the 16-24 age group in comparison with 63 percent in the 25-40 age group and 50 percent in the 40-over age group. Price seemed important

only in the 25-40 age group, although it ranked third as the influencing factor in purchasing the blouse. Fit rated consideration only in the 40-over age group with two of the eight responses. Construction and brand received no responses and ease of care was relatively unimportant.

For what occasion do you expect to wear this blouse?

The investigator felt that the customer's reasons might be altered by the occasion for which the blouse was to be worn. The majority of the respondents intended the blouse for some kind of casual wear. Some of the respondents gave multiple responses. The occasions for which the blouses will be worn are as follows:

Occasions for Blouse Wear	Responses	
	Number[a]	Percentage
Sports	23	40
Work outside the home	10	18
Shopping	9	16
Work at home	9	16
Evening wear	6	10

[a]Multiple responses

Did you intend to buy a blouse today?

This question was designed to determine if the purchase was planned or impulsive. Of the 45 respondents 33 replied that they did intend to buy a blouse when they came to the store, while 12 did not come with that intention. The numbers and percentages of influencing factors for the

respondents who intended to buy and for the respondents who did not plan to buy a blouse are as follows:

Influencing Factors	Respondents intending to buy blouse		Respondents not intending to buy blouse	
	Number[a]	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Color	16	41	4	33
Style	12	31	2	17
Price	5	13	3	25
Fabric	3	8	1	8
Ease of care	2	5	1	8
Fit	1	2	1	8

[a]Multiple responses.

Did anything special attract you to these blouses?

The purpose of this question was to determine factors outside of the store or within the character of the store which may have influenced the customer. The majority of the respondents replied that nothing had attracted them to these blouses. The distribution of responses is as follows:

Factors of Special Attraction	Responses	
	Number	Percentage
No attraction	34	76
Counter display	5	11
Counter sign	3	7
Newspaper advertisement	2	4
Friend	1	2
Window advertisement	0	0
Sales personnel	0	0

Have you looked at other stores for a blouse?

The review of literature indicated the discount store customer, in particular, does not like to shop around,

but rather prefers "one stop shopping centers." This question was intended to ascertain the extent to which the respondent had looked in other stores before coming to Yankee Stadium. Of the 45 respondents, 36 had not looked at blouses in other stores. Numbers and percentages of respondents who intended to buy and those who bought impulsively in relation to the number of respondents who shopped around are as follows:

Respondents	Respondents intending to buy blouse		Respondents not intending to buy blouse	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Looked at other stores	8	24	1	8
Did not look at other stores	25	76	11	92

The percentage of respondents who shopped around seems to vary with age groups. Four of the eight respondents 40-over had looked elsewhere for a blouse (50 percent). Only two of the 25 respondents in the 25-40 age group (8 percent) had looked at other stores. In the 16-24 age group three of the 12 respondents had looked elsewhere (25 percent).

Do you usually buy your blouses here?

The frequency with which the consumer shops at a store might indicate her knowledge of the merchandise and

influence her ability to predict the performance. It was believed by the investigator that the answer might give some indication as to the type of people who shop regularly at a discount store. The responses were distributed fairly evenly among those who shop at Yankee Stadium regularly for their blouses, those who usually do not buy blouses there, and those who sometimes buy their blouses at Yankee Stadium. The responses are as follows:

Responses	Respondents who buy blouses at Yankee Stadium	
	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	31
No	17	38
Sometimes	14	31

Eleven of the 17 people who stated they never shopped at Yankee Stadium for their blouses had come to the store with the intention of buying. The reasons they gave for selecting the blouse were color or style.

The Expected Performance

The second section of the interview schedule was intended to determine the performance the respondent expected from the blouse. The questions[1] can be grouped into three categories: (1) use of labels, (2) care to be given blouse, (3) the construction of the blouse. These will be compared

[1]See Appendix A.

with the observations made at time of purchase and the information actually found on the label.

Use of Labels

The respondents were asked question directly related to information that usually could be obtained from the label or hang tag. Some of the blouses had the information printed directly on the package and others had separate hang tags attached to the garment. Nine blouses had no label or hang tag. Since the blouse had not been purchased, therefore was not wrapped, some of the respondents looked at the blouse when the question was asked. In spite of this fact, 14 (31 percent) did not know if the blouse had a label or not, 12 (27 percent) said that it did, and 18 (40 percent) said the blouse did not have a label or hang tag. The numbers and percentages of responses to the question, "Did the blouse have a label or hang tag?" for blouses that had labels and those that did not have labels are as follows:

Responses	Blouses with labels		Blouses without labels	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	13	36	0	0
No	11	31	6	66
Don't know	12	33	3	34

In speaking of the blouses with labels, 64 percent of the respondents either did not know or said that

the blouse did not have a label. Only 36 percent were aware of the label.

The brand names of the blouses were not nationally known brands, but some of them are found repeatedly in Yankee Stadium. Of the 45 blouses selected by respondents, 28 had a brand name and 17 did not. The respondents were asked if the brand name was familiar to them. Over 80 percent replied that it was not familiar to them; however, 16 percent had known the brand. In asnwer to the question, "What do you think influenced you most in selecting this blouse?" (see page 38), no one gave brand as a reason for selecting the blouse.

The respondents were asked to identify the fabric from which the blouse was made. Most of the blouses were cotton or a cotton blend. The distribution of blouses made from various fabrics and the respondent's knowledge of the type of fabric is as follows:

Fiber Content of Blouses	Actual blouse fabric		Respondent's knowledge of blouse fabric	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage[a]
100% cotton	29	60	34	75
65% Dacron and 35% cotton	13	33	8	18
Acetate	2	4	0	0
50% cotton and 50% rayon	1	2	0	0
Satin[b]	0	0	1	2

[a]Two respondents did not know.

[b]Incorrect response.

Five respondents called 65 percent Dacron and 35 percent cotton blouses cotton, and one person did not know the fabric in a cotton blouse. Of the two respondents purchasing acetate blouses, one thought the blouse was satin and the other did not know. The blouse of cotton and rayon blend was identified as cotton.

The respondents were asked their opinion of the shrinkage properties of the blouse. The opinion of the respondents as to whether or not the blouse would shrink is as follows:

Responses	Probability of blouse shrinkage	
	Number	Percentage
Yes	8	18
No	33	73
Don't know	4	9

Although 73 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that the blouse would not shrink, only 40 percent of the labels stated any type of shrinkage control. Some of the respondents who felt the blouse would shrink bought a larger size than they normally wear to compensate.

Since the investigator did not record the color of the selected blouses, the exact number of white blouses is unknown. However, most of the blouses offered for sale were in white or pastel colors. When the respondents

were asked, "Do you think the blouse will run or fade?" their responses were as follows:

Responses	Respondent's opinion of blouse running or fading	
	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	4
No	39	87
Don't know	4	9

There was no information pertaining to colorfastness found on any of the labels of the blouses purchased by the respondents.

Care to be Given Blouses

The question pertaining to the respondent's expectation of the ease in caring for the blouse was included as a lead question into the type of care the respondent would give the blouse. However, 43 of the 45 women interviewed answered that the blouse would be easy to care for. One respondent gave a negative response and one did not know.

When the respondents were asked how they would care for the blouse, 39 replied that the blouse would be put into the washing machine with the regular wash, four would hand wash the blouse, and two would put the blouse into the machine with special setting.

The responses were nearly equal for method of drying between using a dryer and line drying, with 20 respondents

using the dryer (44 percent) and 19 respondents line drying (42 percent). Six respondents indicated they would drip dry the blouse. Three labels on blouses stated to drip dry, but all three of the respondents buying these blouses indicated they would use methods other than drip drying. The responses to methods of care to be given the blouse are as follows:

Care Methods of Respondents	Responses	
	Number	Percentage
Regular wash	39	87
Hand wash	4	9
Machine with special settings	2	4
Totals	45	100
Dryer	20	44
Line dry	19	42
Drip dry	6	14
Totals	45	100

The responses to the question inquiring as to whether or not the blouse could be bleached showed 31 negative responses, nine positive, and five uncertain. The responses to the advisability of bleaching the blouse are as follows:

Responses	Respondent's opinion on bleaching blouse Number	Percentage
Yes	9	20
No	31	69
Don't know	5	11

Two labels on the blouses stated not to bleach. Of the respondents purchasing these two blouses, one said she would bleach, and the other stated she would not bleach. As previously stated, a large number of these blouses were pastel colors, perhaps accounting for the large number who felt they could not use bleach.

The distribution of responses to the question about the necessity of starching the blouse was similar to the responses on bleaching,with nearly 65 percent reporting the blouse would not need starching. The numbers and percentages of responses are as follows:

Responses	Respondent's opinion of necessity of starching Number	Percentage
Yes	13	29
No	29	64
Don't know	3	7

Four of the labels stated, "Do not starch." Two of the respondents purchasing these blouses indicated

they would starch the blouse and two reported they would not starch.

The investigator asked the respondents how they determined the care they would give the blouse. One respondent stated she had received the information from the label, and the other 44 respondents said they had determined the care from past experience. Of the blouses purchased by the respondents, only 18 (40 percent) had information about care on the label. Some of this information was limited to simply the word "washable" appearing on the label. The other 27 (60 percent) had no information pertaining to the method of care or washability of the blouse.

Construction of the Blouse

To secure the respondent's general impression of the construction of the blouse, the investigator asked the respondents if they thought the blouse was well made or not. The distribution of responses is as follows:

Quality of Construction	Respondent's opinion of construction of blouse	
	Number	Percentage
Well made	37	82
Not well made	1	2
Don't know	7	16

During the period in which the respondents were selecting their blouses, only 10 (22 percent) were observed

to examine the construction of the blouse and 30 (67 percent) were observed not to examine the construction. The investigator did not make an observation with five respondents. Of the 30 respondents who did not examine the construction, 25 reported the blouse was well made and five did not know. Of the 10 who examined the construction, seven said the blouse was well made, one reported the blouse was poorly made and two did not know. The opinion of those respondents who examined the construction and those who did not examine the construction was similar in their judgment of the quality of construction.

The respondent was considered to have examined the construction if she removed the blouse from the package and appeared to look at some part of the blouse other than a general survey. Since some of the respondents were regular shoppers at Yankee Stadium, past experience may have determined their opinion of the construction, although 84 percent were not familiar with the brand name.

The construction of 35 (78 percent) of the blouses as determined by the investigator was fair and of 10 (22 percent) was poor. However, when construction is considered in relation to price the majority of the blouses are probably equal to expectation. Although 82 percent of the respondents reported the blouses as well made, no one gave this as the reason for purchasing the blouse.

To further determine the respondent's connotation of well made, the respondents were asked if they expected to

make any minor repairs soon. The distribution of responses among those who thought the blouses were well made, those who thought the blouses poorly made, and those who did not know, in relation to their expectation of minor repairs is as follows:

Respondent's opinion of blouse construction

	Well made	Poorly made	Don't know	Total	
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Percentage
Expect repair	12	0	1	13	29
Do not expect repairs	25	1	5	31	69
Don't know	0	0	1	1	2

Of the 37 respondents who thought the blouse was well made, 12 felt they would need to make minor repairs soon. This may in some way be related to the price they paid for the blouse.

The respondents were asked which part of the blouse was most pleasing to them and the part they most disliked. The question was designed to signify the parts of construction the respondent thought well made and those of poor construction. However, the investigator felt the responses in many cases denoted style rather than construction. There were some multiple responses and some of the women gave no response, as may be seen on the following page:

Most Pleasing Part of Blouse	Responses Number[a]	Percentage
Collar	17	34
Sleeves	9	18
Details	6	12
Fabric	4	8
Seam Finish	2	4
Seam stitching	1	2
Hem finish	1	2
Darts	1	2
Blouse length	1	2
Sleeve length	1	2
No response	7	14

[a]Multiple responses

Over 90 percent of the respondents found nothing displeasing about the blouse. The responses to this question are as follows:

Most Disliked Part of Blouse	Responses Number	Percentage
Detail	2	4
Collar	1	2
Sleeve	1	2
No response	41	91

As previously implied, the validity of these responses toward determining the satisfaction of the respondents with the construction of the blouse is dubious. The larger number of people who selected the collar as the most pleasing part did not or could not elaborate as to the factor which

made the collar pleasing. The fact that two-thirds of the respondents had not examined the construction or removed the blouse from the package further substantiates this belief.

General Satisfaction

To determine if the respondents felt they had a "bargain," a satisfactory purchase, or merely had fulfilled the need for a blouse, the respondents were asked their opinion of the worth of the blouse. The investigator first asked if the blouse was worth more than the respondent had paid for it. If the respondent answered negatively, she was asked if the blouse was worth the price paid.[1] To these questions 20 respondents (44 percent) stated the blouse was worth more than the price paid, 23 respondents (51 percent) said the blouse was worth the price paid, and two respondents did not feel the blouse was worth the price they paid. The large number of respondents who thought the blouse was worth more than the price paid would seem to indicate satisfaction with the quality of the blouse regardless of price. Over half were satisfied with the quality in relation to price, if this may be assumed by their willingness to pay the price asked for the blouse.

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[1]See Appendix A.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this research was to determine factors influencing the consumer's decision to purchase a prepackaged woman's blouse and to determine the performance the customer expected from the blouse at the time of purchase. Questions were designed to derive information concerning the reasons for selecting this blouse, the expected performance, and the general satisfaction with the chioce.

The interview method was used to determine the respondent's attitude toward the decision and observations were made of the respondent's behavior while making this decision. Observations were also made of the construction of the garment and of the available information on the blouse. The interviews were conducted in a discount store, Yankee Stadium in Flint, Michigan, with 45 women, 16 years of age and over, who were buying a blouse for themselves. The respondents' backgrounds varied in age, education, income, marital status, and number of children.

The reasons which the respondents gave for selecting the blouses were color, style, and price, in that order. Although color and style, factors pertaining to appearance as opposed to functional qualities, were the main reasons

for choice among the majority of the respondents, price ranked second, displacing style, among those shoppers who had not planned to buy a blouse. In the review of literature there seemed to be some controversy over the importance of price to the discount shopper. The respondents in this study were not selecting their blouses primarily because of price, but rather for appearance. Color was the most important reason for selecting a blouse in the Rhode Island study, which was conducted in every type of store but the discount store. In this study, the discount shopper seemed to be selecting the blouse for the same reasons as did the shoppers in other types of stores surveyed in the Rhode Island study.

The Rhode Island study found that most purchases were planned and the consumer shopped at other stores before buying the blouse. At Yankee Stadium, 73 percent of the purchases were planned, but only 20 percent of the respondents had looked for blouses at other stores. According to the review of literature, this is typical behavior for the discount shopper. They do not like to shop around, but rather prefer "one stop shopping centers," although they generally plan their purchases.

The respondents who regularly shop at Yankee Stadium and those who sometimes buy their blouses there represented 62 percent of the sample. The remaining 38 percent of the respondents reported that they never buy their blouses at Yankee Stadium, but two-thirds of these respondents had come

to the store with the intention of buying a blouse. This fact would seem to indicate either a stigma associated with buying a blouse at a discount store or a reluctance to admit the purchase was impulsive.

The majority of the respondents (77 percent) felt no outside influence had induced them to buy. Advertising, noted in the review of literature as exhibiting great influence upon the consumer, attracted only four percent of the respondents. The review of literature pointed out the ineffectiveness of sales personnel, but stated the consumer uses brand names as a guide to quality. The respondents in this study reported neither of these factors as influential in their decision to purchase the blouse. The counter display and counter sign were the only inducements of any consequence in the character of the store, as expressed by 17 percent of the respondents.

Approximately 30 percent of the respondents were aware of the label or hang tag on the blouse; 70 percent either said the blouse did not have a label or they did not know if it did. Only 27 percent of the respondents were actually observed to read the label or hang tag on the blouse. The majority of the respondents believed the blouse would not shrink (73 percent) or fade (87 percent), in spite of little or no information on the label concerning the performance in these areas. Care was determined by past experience for 98 percent of the respondents, rather than by information on the label or hang tag. These findings are in

agreement with most studies reviewed. However, 75 percent of the respondents thought their blouses were made of cotton, a fabric with which they had probably had experience.

Although the construction was examined by only 22 percent of the respondents, 82 percent felt the blouse was well made. The opinions of the respondents as to construction did not differ between those who examined the construction and those who did not. The investigator found faulty construction in all blouses, but the construction was not rated in relation to price. The Rhode Island study reported similar findings concerning the respondent's opinion of construction and the frequency of examination. The review of literature expressed the opinion of many experts who felt the consumers are interested in appearance rather than in the functional properties of the clothes they purchase. The respondent's frame of reference may differ, as pointed out in the review of literature. The term "well made" seemed to be related to price, since one-third of the respondents expected to make minor repairs soon, although they reported the blouses were well made.

Ease of care did not rate significantly as a reason for selecting the blouse. However, 96 percent of the respondents answered affirmatively concerning ease of care. The majority of the respondents chose washing and drying procedure normally used on cotton. Although some of the blouses were quite heavily sized, 60 percent of the respondents did not feel the blouse would need to be starched. The Rhode

Island study reported 90 percent of the respondents expected the blouse to be easy to care for, but did not select the blouse on the basis of this factor.

The Rhode Island study found factors of appearance to be more significant when the blouse rated high in general satisfaction, as determined by the respondents' willingness to pay more for the blouse. Although nearly half of the respondents in this study indicated the blouse was worth more than the price they paid, displaying a high rate of satisfaction, their reasons for purchasing the blouses were proportionately the same between functional qualities and factors of appearance as those who expressed a lower rate of satisfaction. The influence of "end of the season" sales or the consumer's expectation of discount bargains could account for some of the differences in the two studies.

The three age groups selected by the investigator as indicative periods in the retail industry, and the respondent's previous experience as a consumer yielded differences of little significance. The 40-over age group was more inclined than the other two groups to buy for functional qualities and to look at other stores. However, they were less apt to plan their purchases, more acquiescent about construction, and made more errors in determining types of fabric. They were only slightly more inclined to look at construction or labels. The 25-40 age group was slightly more price conscious and less impulsive, but the least apt to look at other stores. This group was inclined to feel

the blouse was worth exactly the price paid. The 16-24 age group selected the blouse almost exclusively for appearance, but were as conscious of the functional qualities as the other two groups. They were less likely to use labels than were the older groups. Like the 25-40 age group, their purchases were planned and they generally did not look at other stores.

Conclusions

The group of respondents shopping for blouses in a discount store in this limited sample did not profess to use labels or hang tags and were not observed to do so. The women seemed to expect the garment to perform well, as evidenced by the large number who did not anticipate shrinkage, fading, or minor repairs, but did expect ease of care. The majority of the respondents felt the blouse was well constructed, although only a small number examined the construction.

Color and style, both factors of appearance, were most influential in the decision to purchase the pre-packaged blouse. Since the price range was narrow in the discount store and the shoppers may have found all of the blouses within their budget, cost of the blouse became less influential as a factor affecting choice of the garment. Therefore, appearance might well be the most significant factor among blouses which are fairly equal in price.

Type of care to be given the garment was determined almost exclusively by past experience, rather than information on the label. However, most of the blouses were of a cotton fabric and a larger number were thought to be cotton by the respondents, a fabric which is familiar to them. Thus, they may not have felt the need to refer to the label for this type of information. The Rhode Island study reported that when labels were used, it was primarily for care information.

The expectation of the respondent for future performance of the blouse seemed to be related to previous experience rather than information gained at the time of purchase. Although the brand name was not familiar, 62 percent of the respondents had previously bought blouses at the store. However, the expectations were as high among those who had not previously purchased a blouse at Yankee Stadium. To some degree, the respondent's expectations for the blouse seemed to be related to the price she paid.

The consumer does not use the label. This fact was borne out in this study as it has been in past studies. However, in more cases than not, the information on the label was sketchy. There appears to be a need for further study to determine the kind of information that would be helpful to the consumer. In this study, the fabric of the blouse she purchased was familiar to the consumer, but what help does she have in situations where the fabric is one for which she has no information from past experience?

The consumer makes many purchases and lacks the time to obtain all of the information necessary for intelligent decision-making. However, it must be recognized that the respondents did not examine the construction of the blouses. Thus,at the time of purchase they did not explore all possible avenues open to them for acquiring knowledge about the blouse. The quality attained for the money outlay must have been satisfactory for the majority of the respondents, since the blouse was a repeat purchase.

As new fibers continue to enter the retail market, educators will need to find guidelines for the consumer to follow in making a purchase. For these to be effective, more research is needed to determine the needs and values of the consumer. The consumer education program to date may not be meeting the needs of the consumer in terms of her values. In this study it does not seem that the method used by the consumer for making her decision would be applicable for making a decision to purchase a blouse of an unfamiliar fabric.

The main purpose of this research was to determine the consumer's use of available information and to ascertain influencing factors in the purchase of a pre-packaged blouse. As a result of this descriptive study, the following recommendations are made for additional studies:

1. A replication of this study on blouses made from unfamiliar fabric.

2. A replication of this study with women in other discount stores, using a larger population.
3. A replication of this study using other articles of clothing which may be less important for their current fashion.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

REASONS FOR CHOICE

1. What do you think influenced you most in selecting this blouse?

   ____price ____color ____style ____fabric
   ____brand ____construction ____ease of care ____fit
   (Which would you rate as your first reason?)

2. For what occasions do you expect to wear this blouse?

   ___work outside the home ___work at home ___sports
   ___shopping or afternoon wear ___evening wear or dress

3. Did you intend to buy a blouse today? ___yes ___no

4. Did anything special attract you to these blouses?
   ____yes ____no
   ___newspaper advertisement ___counter display ___friend
   ___window advertisement ___sales person ___counter sign

5. Have you looked at other stores for a blouse? __yes __no

6. Do you usually buy your blouse here? __yes __no __sometimes

EXPECTED PERFORMANCE

1. Is this brand name familiar to you? ___yes ___no

2. Was there a label or hang tag on the blouse? __yes __no __DK

   (Alternate) 2. Was there information on the label?
   __yes __no __DK

3. Do you expect the blouse to be easy to care for?

   __yes __no __DK

4. How do you expect to care for this blouse? (Can it go into the regular wash or will it need special care?)
   ___regular wash ___washing machine with special setting
   ___hand wash ___self-service dry cleaning
   ___commercial dry cleaner

Omit if dry cleaned,
5. How will you dry it? ___drip dry ___dryer ___line dry

6. What kind of fabric do you think is in the blouse?
   ___cotton ___cotton and Dacron ___acetate
   ___nylon blend ___rayon

7. Do you think the colors will run or fade? __yes __no __DK

8. Do you think it will shrink? __yes __no __DK

9. Can the blouse be bleached? __yes __no __DK

10. Do you think the blouse should be starched? __yes __no __DK

11. Will you care for the blouse in this way because of past experience or from information found on the blouse?

_____past experience _____information on the blouse

12. In general, would you say the blouse was well made?
___yes ___no ___DK

13. Do you expect to make any minor repairs very soon? Example, restitching of seams, sewing on button.
___yes ___no ___DK

14. What part of the blouse pleased you most?

____collar	____buttonholes	____darts
____seams-width	____buttons	____shoulder width
____seams-stitch	____hem-width	____waist length
____seams-finish	____interfacing	____blouse length
____sleeves	____details	____sleeve length
____grain of fabric	____hem-finish	____bustline width

15. What do you dislike most about this blouse?

____collar	____buttonholes	____darts
____seams-width	____buttons	____shoulder width
____seams-stitch	____hem-width	____waist length
____seams-finish	____hem-finish	____blouse length
____sleeve	____interfacing	____sleeve length
____grain of fabric	____details	____bustline width

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Are you married? ___yes ___no

2. Do you have children? ___yes ___no
_____under 12 _____over 12

3. Do you work outside the home? _____yes ____no
Occupation? _____

_____factory	_____retail	_____professional
_____office	_____waitress	_____housecleaning
_____other		

4. Husband's occupation

_____skilled labor ____office worker ____farmer
_____unskilled labor ____transportation____professional
_____managerial position____retired ____salesman
_____other

5. What school did you last attend?

_____elementary _____high school
_____junior high school _____college or university
_____other

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION SHEET

1. Approximate age of customer.

_____16-24 _____25-40 _____40 or over

2.	Customer removes blouse from package.	__yes	__no	__DK
3.	Customer looks at a similar blouse.	__yes	__no	__DK
4.	Customer appears to examine construction.	__yes	__no	__DK
5.	Customer tried on blouse.	__yes	__no	__DK
6.	Customer was with a friend.	__yes	__no	__DK
7.	Customer looked at the label.	__yes	__no	__DK

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