A CONSUMER EVALUATION OF MODERNITY
ON WOMEN'S DRESSING

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ABSTRACT

According to the history of fashion, there are a number of reasons why human beings put on clothes. Today, there is debate over modesty and immodesty in dress that is seen everywhere. The Zimbabwean culture defines a certain dressing code of a woman cherished which is compatible with the norms and values of the African society in general but modernity has crept in causing changes in the way ladies dress. Skirts, dresses and trousers among others have attracted the attention of many in terms of basic body covering, beauty, dignity and identity. However, people as consumers hold a number of different beliefs about ladies dressing brands in any category, but not all of the beliefs are activated in forming an attitude. On the other hand, to predict attitudes, it is imperative to know how much importance consumers attach to attributes of brands. In measuring beliefs about the performances and importance attached to ladies dressing on given attributes, two thousand respondents were interviewed. Researchers employed the multiattribute attitude model as well as an experimental design and an analysis paradigm to investigate the impact of various attribute combinations on attitude formation. The results expressed extreme attitudinal position in relation to miniskirts, mini-dresses and see-through dressing.

Keywords: factorial design, modernity, women dressing, multiattribute attitude model, attitude.

INTRODUCTION:

A miniskirt, sometimes hyphenated as mini-skirt, is a skirt with a hemline well above the knees, generally halfway up the thighs and a mini dress is a dress with a similar high hemline. The popularity of miniskirts is commonplace among many women, mostly preteens teenagers, and young adults. The miniskirt has spread beyond a simple street fashion into a major international trend. With the rise in hemlines, the wearing of tights and see-through is also becoming more common (Adburgham, Alison, 1967).

In this 21st century, trousers also have become highly fashionable for women. Miniskirts are also seen worn over trousers or jeans, or with leggings that provide coverage of each leg from above the knee. The popularity of miniskirts and trousers became more common in 2011 for the first time in Zimbabwe. Due to the proliferation of such dressing, attitudes are being formed.

Attitudes are one of the most heavily studied concepts in consumer behaviour. According to Gordon Allport's classic definition in Belch and Belch (2003), "Attitudes are learned predispositions to respond to an object." Eagly and Chaitken (1995) and MciLveen and Gross (2004) define attitudes as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with a degree of favour or disfavour. Kaiser (1994) further defines attitudes as predispositions on specific stimuli such as dress and these are derived from values and norms. Thus, attitudes are influenced by norms and values derived from culture. Perani and Wolf (1999) further postulate that dress can be used to define culture since it communicates affiliation and demonstrates values, attitudes, beliefs and norms.

In Zimbabwe, women are expected to wear dresses, blouses and skirts and other forms of dress which are not alien to cultural values.

In this study, the object is women dressing and the learned predispositions are the beliefs and the importance attached to the dressing brands. More recent perspectives view attitudes as a summary construct that represents an individual's overall feelings of or an evaluation toward an object. Consumers hold attitudes toward a variety of ladies dressing and this is important to marketers. Attitudes are vital to marketers because they theoretically summarize a consumer's evaluation of a brand and represent positive or negative feelings and behavioural tendencies (Belch and Belch, 2003). As a matter of fact, attitudes are normally evaluated using mathematical approaches, such as the Fishbein model and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) [Bettman, Capon, Lutz, 1975].

The Fishbein multiattribute attitude model is presented below

$$A_B = \sum_{i=1}^{n} B_i x E_i$$

Where
A_B is the attitude of an individual toward brand B,
B_i is the numerical value of beliefs about brand B's performance on attribute i,
E_i is the importance attached to attribute i,
 n   is the number of attributes considered.

For example, a consumer may have beliefs about various brands of dressing on certain attributes. One brand may be perceived as having thick material and thus giving basic body covering, providing dignity, and helping in identity. Another brand may not be perceived as having these attributes, but consumers may believe that it performs well on other attributes such as covering body parts and beauty.

Multiattribute attitude models help marketers understand and diagnose the underlying basis of consumers' attitudes. By understanding the beliefs that underlie consumers' evaluations of a brand and the importance of various attributes or consequences, the marketer is able to develop communication strategies for creating, changing, or reinforcing brand attitudes. The model provides insight into several ways marketers can influence consumer attitudes. These include:

• Increasing or changing the strength or belief rating of a brand on an important attribute.
• Changing consumers' perceptions of the importance or value of an attribute.
• Adding a new attribute to the attitude formation process.
• Changing perceptions of belief ratings for a competing brand (Belch and Belch, 2003).

In this study the attitude-behaviour link should show factors affecting choice of dress. The marketing mix elements are used to create favourable attitudes toward new dressing, reinforce existing favourable dressing brands, and/or change negative attitudes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF DRESSING:

GENERAL PERSPECTIVE:

Beliefs concerning specific attributes or consequences that are activated and form the basis of an attitude are referred to as salient beliefs. There is need to identify and understand these salient beliefs. However, recognition of the saliency of beliefs varies among different market segments, over time, and across different consumption situations (Belch and Belch 2003).

Francoise, B.D. (1998) and Guhl &Stalmans (2003) maintain that men and women of Rome were very interested in fashion. They wore tunics, which were knee-length for the men and floor-length for the women. Heavy white togas were worn on formal occasions. They further argue that toward the end of the Middle Ages, clothing became more elaborate in the whole world. Wealthy men wore a jacket, often with skirting, and aristocratic women were partial to flowing gowns and headdresses shaped like hearts or butterflies or tall steeple caps.

Westerners are also expected to dress modestly too. Pakistani society observes traditional dress customs and it is advisable for women to wear long skirts, baggy trousers and long sleeved tops. Dress codes for men are more lax, though shorts are uncommon. Vest tops, bikinis and miniskirts in public are considered immodest and are thus a social taboo (Said al Fawaid, 2008).

On the other hand, hundreds of South Africans have marched in Johannesburg to protest over an assault on two women who were attacked for wearing mini-skirts. Some of those in the crowd wore mini-skirts and carried placards which read: "We love our minis". The two women were attacked at a Johannesburg rank for minibus taxis in December, allegedly by waiting drivers (ZNBC, 2012).

Bramsky, S. & Reynolds, S. (1995) also assert that clothing during the Renaissance was very important to the aristocracy, because it demonstrated one's cleanliness and wealth. In 20 to 21st centuries girls wore many layers of clothing: a chemise, stockings, a leather corset, a bodice, and petticoats, topped by a gown. Women layered on a chemise, a corset, numerous petticoats, and a dress, Encyclopædia Britannica (2003).

Doctor Horvat (2001) maintains that dress began to change in a way that increasingly accentuated the idea not only of equality among sexes — with increasingly unisex clothing — but also the notion of equality among social classes. The differentiation in dress that still remained in the '60s to indicate a class or office of life has largely disappeared.

Parents purchasing trousers, dress or skirt for their children may prefer a brand that performs well on basic body covering, a preference that leads to a more favourable attitude toward any brand. On the other hand, teenagers and young adults may prefer a brand that beautifies and makes their appearance unique and fashionable. Okeh (2009) shares the same notion: In the history of fashion and costumes, there is always a reason why cloth is worn. In the same vein; it was observed that in making clothing choices, younger populations are demonstrating awareness that a style or mode of appearance has meaning (Hebdige, 1979; Ode leye, 2000).

The implication is that all the layers of women dressing emphasize on body covering and dignity. It is also evident that ladies' dressing is controversial in many countries.

ZIMBABWEAN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE:

Women in Zimbabwe are discouraged from exposing their body parts by the community at large**.** Values, attitudes and life styles are reflected in dress (Horn, 1995). Other researchers also argue that specific culture defines what women and men are expected of them (Anderson, 1997; Berns, 2007).

Zimbabwean political leaders have on numerous occasions castigated miniskirts, see-through and tight dressing. Moreover, they castigate the youth subculture of wearing dress exposing the midriff and upper chest. This view is expressed as a taboo in the Zimbabwean culture. Actually women are not supposed to move around exposing body parts because modesty is greatly valued by the people of Zimbabwe.

Older women tended to place minimal emphasis on the issue of attracting the opposite sex, hence indicated that dress should be practical and comfortable and easy to wear. The practices of exposing one's body by wearing clothes which are sleeveless, too tight or too small were viewed as a breach of norms (Manwa and Ndamba, 2010). Chimhundu (2010) also argues that argues that dress may be a mode of communication.

CHRISTIANITY PERSPECTIVE:

The views of Roach-Higgins et al. (1995) and Hollander (2009) towards nudity have a religious base because nudity is associated with shame of the body. Religiously inspired women often used clothing as a badge of honour and a source of protection, both in and out of the pulpit. It is also believed that many women who chose

respectable dress were educated, middle-class journalists, essayists, and educators, (Lurie A. 1983). They further postulate that with time, many women became increasingly convinced that "respectable" dress was critical to race uplift. Respectable dress entailed modest, yet tasteful, clothing—elegance and beauty were not anathema to the pious woman in this view.

White (1901) of the Seventh Day Adventist Church argues, 'A person's character is judged by his style of dress. She goes on to assert that refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of simple and appropriate attire. Chaste simplicity in dress, when united with modesty of demeanour, will go far toward surrounding a young woman with that atmosphere of sacred reserve which will be to her a shield from a thousand perils'. The implication is that no education can be complete without the right principles in regard to dress. Moreover, the belief has its roots in Deuteronomy 22 verse 5 which says, 'The woman shall not wear that which pertains unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abominations unto the LORD thy God'.

Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, shares the same sentiment, 'When a woman is seen in trousers, we should think not so much of her as of all mankind, of what it will be when women will have masculinised themselves for good (Pope Pius XII, 1954). Horvat (2001) concurs. They strongly believe that it also applies to individuals, whose dignity demands of them that they should liberate themselves with free and enlightened conscience from the imposition of pre-determined tastes, especially tastes debatable on moral grounds.

In his address to the Latin Union of High Fashion in 1957 Pope XII stated that a "garment must not be evaluated according to the estimation of a decadent or already corrupt society, but according to the aspirations of a society which prizes the dignity and seriousness of its public attire." In addition, Father Breda in Freppon (2002) stated, "The manner in which we dress ourselves" should "express our masculinity and femininity," and that we "should be able to recognize a man and a woman by the clothes they are wearing."

Other churches like Dutch Reformed Church, Anglican, Lutheran, Apostolic Faith Mission, Zion Christian Church and the Pentecostals emphasise modesty, dignity and identity. However, some of the ladies who put on minis, trousers, tight and see-through dressing are from all these churches. Hence church leaders think that many women have given in to the tyranny of fashion, and that they have lost the very concept and instinct of modesty and dignity.

The argument of the church leadership is also anchored on St. Paul who wrote in the New Testament that," In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in decent apparel; adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety." (1 Tim. 2:9).

METHODOLOGY:

The research applied a multiattribute attitude model as well as the design and analysis of experiment paradigm to investigate the impact of various attribute combinations on attitude formation. A scientific methodology that is currently experiencing increasing popularity among such diverse disciplines as basic sciences and social sciences was applied. However, there have been considerable differences in the nature of variables and data in each context. The major purposes of experimental design are confirmation and exploration.

In this research the first step was to apply the Fishbein model to generate data related to the effect of dressing brands attributes on attitude of individuals towards the various dressing brands. The data was subsequently analysed using a three-factor factorial design statistical model.

THE 2^3 *FACTORIAL DESIGN* FRAMEWORK AND THE FISHBEIN MODEL:

In the theory of experimental design and analysis the notions of factor and treatment play a central role. A factor may be either qualitative or quantitative and, in the context of experimental design and analysis, it represents an input variable whose effect on a response variable is being investigated. Treatments are the different possible levels at which a given factor is measured or observed.

The 2^3 *factorial design* experiment that generated attitude data for this research is described as follows. The experiment's objective was to investigate the effect of length of female dress (L), "see-throughness" (S) and tightness (T) of female dress, on attitude of individuals towards ladies' dressing styles. So, the factors in this experiment were L, S and T as defined before. The response variable was attitude of an individual towards a specified brand of female clothing item. Factor L was measured at the two levels of mini length (L_1) and standard length (L_2). Factor S was measured at two levels see through (S_1) and non-see through (S_2) while T was observed at two also, levels tight dress (T_1)   and free dress (T_2). The levels of each factor were considered as treatments. Treatments L_1, S_1 and T_1 were referred to as "low" levels for their respective factors while L_2, S_2 and T_2 were

"high" levels. In the context of this research the terms "low level treatment" and "high level treatment", were referred to as factors L, S and T. They were purely denominational and no moral or quantitative connotations may be associated with them. Treatments were administered by way of asking experimental units to quantify their belief of whether a specified treatment of a factor, or a combination of treatments from two or more factors, possess a stated attribute. In addition to that, experimental units were requested to assign a numerical value to the importance that they attach to a given attribute. The attributes considered in the experiment were basic body coverage, body protection, beauty, dignity and identity.

A Likert scale was designed to assist experimental units quantify their beliefs. For example, individuals were asked to assign an integral numerical value between negative five (-5) and positive five (+5), inclusive, against their belief of whether a mini-skirt possesses the attribute of basic body coverage. In this way the treatment L_1 of factor L would have been administered. The individual's overall attitude towards the treatment was then determined using the Fishbein multiattribute attitude model for attitude measurement towards an object.

In addition, the factorial design was chosen since researchers wanted to investigate the joint or interaction effects of the factors at their different levels. For example, the effect, on attitude towards ladies' dressing, of a mini, see-through tight dress would be investigated.

The researchers considered two-hundred and fifty (250) replications of the experiment using randomly selected adult individuals (experimental units). The experimental units were drawn from the seven districts of Masvingo province. Each district was considered to be a sampling cluster. Let A_{jke} represent the observation (attitude) recorded in the eth (e= 1, 2, . . . 250) replicate, under the combination of the ith level of factor L, j^{th} level of factor S and k^{th} level of factor T where i,j,k=1,2.

The observations may be described by the linear statistical model:

$$A_{eijk} = \mu + \gamma_i + \alpha_j + \beta_k + (\gamma\alpha)_{ij} + (\gamma\beta)_{ik} + (\alpha\beta)_{jk} + (\gamma\alpha\beta)_{ijk} + \varepsilon_{ijk}$$

Where

μ is the overal population mean attitude, γ_i is the mean attitude attributed to factor L, α_j is the mean for factor S, β_i is the mean for factor T, and $(\gamma\alpha)_{ij}, (\gamma\beta)_{ik}$ $(\alpha\beta)_{jk}, (\gamma\alpha\beta)_{ijk}$ are interaction effect means. The term ε_{ijk} represents the random error with zero expectation and constant variance.

All the three factors are initially assumed fixed, and the treatment effects are defined as deviations from the overall mean (overall mean attitude), μ. The hypotheses, for the main effects, to be tested were:

H_0: All main effects are equal to zero.

Versus

At least one main effect is not equal to zero.

Hypotheses from interaction effects are:

H_0: All interaction effects are equal to zero.

Versus

At least one interaction effect is not equal to zero.

In each replication of the experiment all possible combinations of the levels of the factors were investigated. With a slight change of notation, the treatment combinations in standard order are (1), l, s, ls, t, lt, ts and lts, where the presence of a lower case letter signifies the higher level of the corresponding factor, and the absence of a letter means that the corresponding factor is observed at the low level. Conventionally, (1) represents the treatment combination of the three factors all measured at the low level. These lower case letters also represent the total of n observations taken at that particular treatment combination.

The seven degrees of freedom between the eight treatment combinations were associated with the main effects of L, S and T; the two factor interactions ls, lt and st; and the three factor interaction lst.

The effect of a factor is defined to be the change in attitude produced by a change in the level of the factor. This is frequently called a main effect because it refers to the primary factors of interest in the experiment. *Thus, the average main effects of the treatments are given by*

$$L = \frac{1}{4n}[l - (1) + ls - s - t + lt + lst - st], \quad S = \frac{1}{4n}[s + ls + s + lst - st - l - t - (1)]$$

$$T = \frac{1}{4n}[t - (1) + lt - ls - s + lst + st - l], \quad L = \frac{1}{4n}[l - (1) + ls - s + lst - st]$$

Similar expressions for interaction effects can easily were derived using Table 3.1 of algebraic signs for calculating effects in the 2^3 Factorial Designs.

Table 3.1: Algebraic Signs for Calculating Effects in the 2^3 Factorial Design

Treatment Combinations	1	L	S	LS	T	LT	ST	LST
(1)	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	-
L	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+
S	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+
Ls	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
T	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
Lt	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
St	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Lst	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Sums of squares for the effect are easily determined since each effect has a corresponding single-degree-of-freedom contrast. In the 2^3 design with n replicates, the sum of squares for any effect is denoted by SS and given as

$$SS_{Effect} = \frac{(Contrast)^2}{8n}$$

The data for the attitude towards ladies' dress problem is summarised below. The totals for the treatment combinations were generated using the Fishbein model.

Table 3.2:   Data for women's dress problem

(1) = - 110 418   *t= -80 870   s= -375   st=27 380*
  l= -25 782   lt= 38 904   ls= 59 876   lst= 100 563
From Table 3.2 and also using previously stated formulae for treatment effects we get
L = 160.98, S = 146,196;   T = 57,598;   LS = 51,850; LT = 28,656;
ST=116, 230;   LST=489, 29
The analysis of data is summarised in the ANOVA table as follows:

ANOVA TABLE FOR THE 2X3 WOMEN's DRESSING FACTORIAL EXPERIMENT

Source of variation	SS	DF	MS	F
L	23,96	1	23,96	13,47
S	18,3	1	18,3	10,64
T	17,9	1	17,9	10,41
LS	16,47	1	16,47	9,58
LT	17,08	1	17,08	9,9
ST	19,7	1	19,7	11,45
LST	16,8	1	16,8	9,4
Error	1,72	7	2,51	
Total	131,11	14		

F_critical (1, 7) =5, 59
All F-calculated values are greater than the F-critical ratio. This means each treatment has a significant effect on formation of attitude towards ladies' dressing style. This means that in general if you alter the length of a skirt the attitude of a randomly selected individual, towards the skirt, is most likely to shift from positive to negative attitude or the other way round depending on the selected individual. This is consistent with results of interviews conducted on the subject of ladies' dressing brands.
Most individuals that were interviewed expressed extreme attitudinal position in relation to miniskirts or mini-dresses. These extreme views were mostly influenced by factors such as age, religious inclinations and the geographical position of one's home (rural or urban).

DISCUSSION:

Beliefs about the performances and importance attached to ladies dressing were measured against the following attributes: Basic Body Covering (BBC), Body Protection (BP), Beauty (B) and Dignity (D) and Identity (I). The measurement or evaluation of performances were also based on the ladies dressing brands and these included mini tight dress/skirt, standard tight dress/skirt, mini free wear dress/skirt and standard free wear dress/skirt which were either non see through, see through or trousers.

The results supported the hypothesis that the length of either a skirt or a dress has some effect on the attitude of individuals. The young people, especially females in the age groups 13-19 years and 20-29 years, view any dressing as fashion- whether see-through, tight or mini. The age group 30-39 years, traders and a few in 40-49 years (those with high academic profiles and in white collar jobs) support the idea of fashion.

However, elderly people (50 years ++), farmers, religious leaders and traditional leaders (village headmen, councillors and chiefs) base dressing on cultural values and norms of the African society. Their attitude on tight, mini, and see- through dressing is extremely negative while they cherish standard dress in length (below the knee level). They also uphold a dress which is not see- through and that which is free-wear.

As consumers it was crystal clear that they hold a number of different beliefs about ladies dressing brands in any category. However, not all of these beliefs are activated in forming an attitude. On the other hand, to predict attitudes, one must know how much importance consumers attach to attributes of brands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since most of the elderly people, political leaders and church leaders support the standard dress, the young generation need to reconsider adopting what cultural norms and values dictate.

The manufacturers and marketers in general have to embrace the idea that the Zimbabwean culture does not support nudity or flaunting of bodies as if it is a product that is being put up for sale. Good dressing is regarded as a cultural value. This is sufficed to say that modernity is not a license to dress anyhow.

There is nothing wrong in dressing the way one wants but sanity and moral justification should be parts of the variables to be considered along with one's culture when putting on some clothes.

Further studies can be done on the possible consequences of miniskirts, ladies trousers, see-through and tight dress.

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