

INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT AND BACKGROUND  
CHARACTERISTICS ON INFORMATION  
SOURCE UTILIZATION BY  
RETAIL APPAREL  
BUYERS

By

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Theoretical Rationale.....	2
Expectations.....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Purpose and Objectives.....	8
Research Questions.....	8
Assumptions.....	9
Conceptual Definitions.....	10
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	13
Organizational Buying.....	13
The Buying Center.....	14
Organizational Buying Models.....	14
Assessment of Models.....	33
Influence and Sources of Information.....	34
Social Influence and Power.....	34
Influence within an Organization.....	36
Background of the Individual.....	44
Specialized Education.....	45
Lifestyle/Psychographics.....	46
Locus of Control.....	48
Role Orientation.....	52
III. METHODOLOGY.....	54
Research Design.....	55
Population and Sample.....	55
Methods of Data Collection.....	56
Instrumentation.....	58
Product Characteristic Uncertainty and Information Source Usage.....	59
Role Orientation.....	59
Lifestyles.....	60
Demographic and Specialized Education Variables.....	60
Operational Hypotheses.....	61
Statistical Analysis of the Data.....	62

Chapter	Page
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	63
Response Rate.....	63
Sample Characteristics.....	65
Testing of the Hypotheses.....	69
Hypothesis 1.....	69
Relation of These Findings to Previous Studies.....	74
Hypothesis 2.....	76
V. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	92
Summary of Procedures.....	93
Summary of Findings.....	93
Implications.....	97
Recommendations for Future Study.....	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	99
APPENDICES.....	104
APPENDIX A - CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE SURVEY.....	105
APPENDIX B - QUESTIONNAIRE.....	110

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Bases of Influence in Organizations.....	37
II. Similarities of Power Bases to Influence Bases.....	39
III. Product Variables Studied in Retail Buying.....	42
IV. Information Sources used in Retail Buying.....	43
V. Questionnaire Response Rate.....	64
VI. Sample Characteristics.....	66
VII. Analysis of Variance for Product Characteristics by Information Sources.....	70
VIII. Analysis of Variance for Information Source Importance by Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity.....	77
IX. Analysis of Variance for List of Value Sources by Information Sources.....	79
X. Analysis of Variance for Information Sources by Years as a Retail Buyer.....	86
XI. Analysis of Variance for Information Sources by Years in Present Position.....	87
XII. Analysis of Variance for Information Sources by Years at this Store.....	89
XIII. Analysis of Variance for Information Sources by Level of Education.....	90



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Organizational Buyer Behavior Model.....	16
2. A Model of Environmental Effects on the Organizational Buying Process.....	17
3. A Model of the Buying Organization.....	19
4. A Model of Interpersonal Determinates of Buying Behavior.....	20
5. A Simplified Model of Individual Behavior.....	22
6. An Integrative Model of Industrial Buyer Behavior.....	23
7. A Theory of Merchandise Buying Behavior.....	26
8. Conceptual Model of the Patronage Decision in Organizational Buying.....	29
9. The Motivational Model.....	31
10. The Group Consensus Model.....	32

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

There have been numerous studies completed in the field of organizational buying. Many of these studies focus on industrial buying, a process that involves the purchasing of equipment and other inputs used in the manufacturing process. Little research has been done in the area of retail buying within an organization. Retail buying involves procurement of merchandise for the ultimate consumer (Hirschman & Mazursky, 1982).

A rich literature exists in the industrial buying area. However, it is difficult for researchers to generalize the industrial buying results to retail buying situations. Since the majority of studies on organizational buying behavior have been conducted in the area of industrial buying, there is a need to conduct research on retail buying.

One of the most neglected areas in retailing research is that of retail apparel buyer behavior. A retail apparel buyer is responsible for procuring apparel items for the ultimate consumer. Little research focuses on retail apparel buying. Of the few studies focusing on retail

apparel buying, the consensus is that retail apparel buying is vastly different than industrial buying (Hirschman, 1981; Hirschman & Mazursky, 1982). To gain a better understanding of retail apparel buying, additional research is needed.

### Theoretical Rationale

A major portion of a buyer's job is to make accurate and timely decisions. Individual buyers may vary in their approach to decision making. In addition, their buying decision process may vary based on different circumstances (e.g. available information, product objectives).

This study utilizes Sheth's (1973) model of industrial buyer behavior (see Figure 6 pg. 23) to gain a better understanding of the decision making process used by retail apparel buyers and the factors that affect this process. Studies such as those by Ettenson and Wagner (1986) and Francis and Brown (1985-1986) have found the Sheth (1973) model to be applicable in the retailing realm.

The Sheth (1973) model contains the following major components: expectations, industrial buying process, conflict resolution, and situational factors. This study considers the first component of the model, expectations. According to Sheth (1973) the following five subcomponents make up the expectations component: background of the individual, information sources, active search, perceptual distortion, and satisfaction with purchase. This study examines three of these five subcomponents: background of the individual, information sources, and active search. The

expectations component and three of its subcomponents are described in the paragraphs below.

### Expectations

Expectations, according to Sheth (1973), "refer to the perceived potential of alternative suppliers and brands to satisfy a number of explicit and implicit objectives in any particular buying decision" (p. 52). Explicit and implicit objectives are often related to characteristics of the product or brand. Explicit objectives are clear and detailed. For example, explicit objectives may relate to pricing and shipping terms. Buyers can easily express, recognize and understand these objectives. Implicit objectives are those which are only inferred. For example, implicit objectives may related to quality and aesthetics. These objectives are not as easily perceived as the explicit objectives and each individual could evaluate an implicit objective differently.

Expectations regarding explicit and implicit objectives are influenced in part by an individual's background. These expectations could also be influenced by the goals of a buyers' employer. Thus, buyers bring to the decision process a variety of expectations.

Sheth (1973) proposes five subcomponents impacting a buyer's expectations. Three of these subcomponents are examined in this study. Each of these three subcomponents is discussed in the paragraphs below.

Background of the Individual. Sheth (1973) denotes the background of the buyer as potentially the most significant factor in determining a buyer's expectations in the buying process. Differing lifestyles, educational levels and goals are important determinants in understanding an individual's development of expectations. Sheth proposes the background subcomponent is a combination of three specific factors including, specialized education, role orientation, and lifestyles. Each of these factors is proposed to have a major affect on the buyer's decision making (buying) process.

The specialized education subcomponent is comprised of demographic information. Demographic information helps researchers describe and segment a larger population into similar subgroups. In the specialized education subcomponent, demographic information refers to items such as level of education and specialized vocational training. The level of a buyer's education may affect the decision making process. For example, a buyer who has more years of education and experience may engage in the decision making process differently than a buyer with less education and experience.

The role orientation subcomponent can be operationalized by researchers as a measure of a buyer's role ambiguity and role conflict. Role ambiguity is present when an individual is uncertain as to what their exact role is within the organization. Role conflict is present when an individual is receiving incompatible demands from two or

more persons within the organization and the responsibilities those demands involve are hard to perform simultaneously. Sheth would hypothesize that buyers who are experiencing ambiguity or are in conflict with their role in the organization, may engage in the decision making process differently than buyers who are not.

The third component of the background factor is lifestyle. According to Sheth (1973), lifestyle is a psychographic measure of a buyer's values, interests, and activities. Sheth (1973) suggests that lifestyle factors play an important role in the development of a buyer's expectations. Thus, buyer's personality, values, and interests may impact their decision making (buying) process. For example, a buyer who values security may engage in the decision making process differently than a buyer who values excitement.

Active Search and Information Sources. Active search is the process a buyer engages in when attempting to obtain additional information from available information sources. Many factors influence the buyer's active search process. For example, uncertainty about an implicit or explicit objective may influence the active search process. Sheth (1973) proposes that buyers will conduct the information search process differently based on their expectations. Also, the importance of an information source may vary based on the buyer's expectations.

## Statement of the Problem

Influence within an organization arise from many sources. A few studies such as those by Thomas (1982), Silk & Kalwani (1982), Miler (1987), and McMillian (1973) attempted to measure and define the sources of influence faced by organizational buyers. Jackson, Keith, & Burdick (1984) suggest that the influence structure within a buying group is likely to vary on a number of factors characterizing the purchase situation.

Studying influence within a buying group can be done by first examining the factors that may have influence potential in the purchasing process. The type of buying situation is one factor that may influence the purchasing process. Another factor that may have an influence on the purchase process is expectations about product characteristics.

Miler (1987) attempted to determine the variables that influence an apparel buyer in a decision making process. Miler concluded that retail apparel buyers were influenced by several variables including: interorganizational influences, environmental factors and the individual.

Francis and Brown (1985-1986), focusing on retail buyers, attempted to determine the information sources most important to a buyer in a decision making process. An information source is one the buyer will utilize to obtain additional information. This source could be an object (such as a newspaper) or another person (such as a peer or

boss) and has the potential to influence the buyer. Francis and Brown (1985-1986) concluded that a sales representative was the most important information source.

The product characteristics most important to a retail buyer were also considered in the Francis and Brown (1985-1986) study. Product characteristics are variables buyers use when selecting merchandise and include such things as quality, fashionability, and planned retail price. As with an information source, a product characteristic has the potential to influence the buyer. Francis and Brown concluded that quality was the product characteristic most important to retail buyers.

The above cited studies have contributed to the understanding of influence within the organization. In addition, they have added to the knowledge of information source usage and product characteristic importance.

Buyers are perceived to be experts at satisfying their own and their companies explicit and implicit purchase objectives. In an attempt to satisfy these objectives, the apparel buyer may become uncertain about an implicit or explicit objective. In response, the apparel buyer may require additional information to decrease this uncertainty. Uncertainty in decision making among retail apparel buyers has not been studied.

Apparel buyers are likely to become uncertain about product characteristics when making purchase decisions. For example, a buyer could be uncertain about the quality of a particular item. When buyers are uncertain about quality



they may seek additional information about quality to reduce uncertainty. Determining if uncertainty about product characteristics influences a retail apparel buyer's choice of information sources would be an addition to the understanding of retail apparel buying.

### Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to study the use of information sources by retail apparel buyers when making decisions under circumstances of uncertainty. This study has two major objectives:

1. To identify the information sources retail apparel buyers utilize when they are uncertain about particular product characteristics.

2. To determine if retail apparel buyer background characteristics are associated with their utilization of different information sources when uncertain about particular product characteristics.

### Research Questions

The following variables are utilized in the research questions and the study:

Product Characteristics include: quality, anticipated margin, expected sales, consumer demand, and aesthetics.

Information Sources include: upper management, buying office, another buyer/peers, sales representative, trade publications, and competition.

The following research questions were developed in relation to the purpose and objectives of this study:

RQ1: When retail apparel buyers become uncertain about a specific product characteristic, does the importance placed on information sources vary?

RQ2: When retail apparel buyers become uncertain about product characteristics, do their background characteristics have an effect on the importance placed on different information sources?

RQ2.a: When retail apparel buyers are uncertain about product characteristics, does their role orientation have an affect on the importance placed on different information sources?

RQ2.b: When retail apparel buyers are uncertain about product characteristics, does their lifestyle have an affect on the importance placed on different information sources?

RQ2.c: When retail apparel buyers are uncertain about product characteristics, does their specialized education have an affect on the importance placed on different information sources?

#### Assumptions

Investigating the relationship between information sources utilized, product characteristics, and the background of the buyer is based on the acceptance of the following assumptions:

1. Buyers have purchase expectations regarding the following product characteristics: quality, anticipated margin, expected sales, consumer demand, and aesthetics.

2. When a retail buyer is in a state of uncertainty, the person or thing reducing the risk is the most influential. Therefore, the person or thing sought out by the buyer in a period of uncertainty is a potential influencer for that situation.

3. Retail buyers are most frequently in a new task buying situation due to the type of merchandise involved in the fashion industry (Francis & Brown, 1985-1986; Hirschman & Mazursky, 1982; Miler, 1987). As a result, in this study buyers are assumed to be in new task buying situations.

#### Conceptual Definitions

Fashion Merchandise: Merchandise considered "new" each season and appealing to consumers for a short time.

Staple Merchandise: Goods demanded throughout the year that are always in stock.

New Task: According to Robinson, Faris, and Wind (1967), a new task is a requirement or problem that has not arisen before, little or no relevant past buying experience exists to draw upon, a great deal of information is needed and a need arises to seek out alternative ways of solving the problem.

Buying Group: A group composed of persons such as the General Merchandise Manager, Divisional Merchandise Manager,

Another Buyer or anyone who may be involved in or influence the buying process.

Group Influences: The interaction of several individuals simultaneously guided by a shared set of objectives, norms, and expectations (Webster & Wind, 1972).

Uncertainty: Questionable, doubtful, or unknown (Allee, 1986).

Purchase Uncertainty: Purchase uncertainty describes a situation in which, for each purchase decision, probabilities cannot be assigned to the possible outcome (Goetz & Felknor, 1982).

Information Source: Any person or thing that a buyer utilizes to obtain information when experiencing purchase ambiguity. "Various authorities consulted in the decision making process such as sales representatives, trade advertising, competing stores, supervisors/upper retail management, other buyers and resident buying offices" (Stone, 1987, p.4).

Product Characteristics: Attributes used in selecting products such as quality, fashionability, and planned retail price (Stone, 1987).

Psychographics: The procedure used to describe personal values, attitudes, and personalities. According to Reynolds and Darden (1974), "Psychographics is a quantitative, multi-variate research procedure that gives numbers to common sense; like the fact that some people are more likely to be your customer than others;...(p. 84).

Department Store: Retail establishments that, "Typically possess a local or regional influence, which enables them to adapt quickly to changes within the immediate market environment. These department stores offer an extensive assortment of customer services, position themselves as fashion leaders, and carry nationally branded merchandise distributed on a selective basis. Examples in the USA would include Bloomingdales, Neiman-Marcus, and Macy's" (Mazursky & Hirschman, 1987, p. 46).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter begins with a discussion of organizational buying and a review of the more widely utilized organizational buying models. Next, sources of influence and information which may be present during a buying decision are presented. Finally, a discussion of individuals' background factors which may affect the buying process are discussed.

#### Organizational Buying

Organizational buying is a complex process of decision making and communication involving several organizational members and relationships with other firms and institutions (Webster & Wind, 1972). Much more than simply placing an order with a supplier, one researcher has defined organizational buying as a process involving the interaction among individuals involved with the purchasing decision (Calder, 1978).

Organizational buying is more difficult than individual buying because more people are typically involved and people are likely to play different buying roles. Although the final decision may be made by the purchasing agent, there is

the possibility of other organizational members having an affect on the purchasing agents decisions.

### The Buying Center

Webster and Wind (1972) suggest the concept of the buying center to describe organizational buying. The buying center is defined as all individuals participating in the purchase decision making process, who share some common goals and the risks arising from decisions (Webster & Wind, 1972). The buying center is the focal point of many vendors. However, to fully understand or be capable of identifying key buying center members, much research is needed to define each buying center member's relative influence and respective role in the decision to purchase.

### Organizational Buying Models

Researchers have proposed several models to add to the understanding of organizational buying behavior. Two models researchers widely utilize are the Webster and Wind (1972) and Sheth (1973) models. Other models of organizational buying behavior include those of Sheth (1981), Anderson and Chambers (1985), and Cravens (1981). Currently three types of models attempt to explain the organizational buying process: task models, nontask models, and complex or joint models.

Task models stress the importance of economic variables in the purchase process. Focusing on economic variables emphasizes finding the least cost solution in the purchasing

process (Webster & Wind, 1972). Nontask models attempt to explain organizational buying behavior based on behavioral variables. An example of a nontask variable is the buyer's motives. Behavioral variables may be determinants of the buyers final purchase decision (Johnston, 1981). Complex or joint models attempt to incorporate both task and nontask variables into an explanation of organizational buying behavior.

Webster and Wind Model. The Webster and Wind (1972) model of organizational buying behavior attempts to recognize the complex interactions of task and nontask variables of individual, group, organizational, and environmental factors in determining buying responses to marketing efforts. The main thrust is to determine if these variables have any influence in the decision making process of an organizational buyer. The influence these variables have on the buying decision is expressed in the following equation:  $B = f(I, G, O, E)$ , where "buying behavior (B) is a function (f) of individual characteristics (I), group factors (G), organizational factors (O), and environmental factors (E) (Webster & Wind, 1972, see Figure 1).

The organization is influenced by a number of environmental factors including political, legal, cultural, and social factors (see Figure 2). The environment is seen as both a constraint and an information source acting upon the buying process. Environmental factors influence the



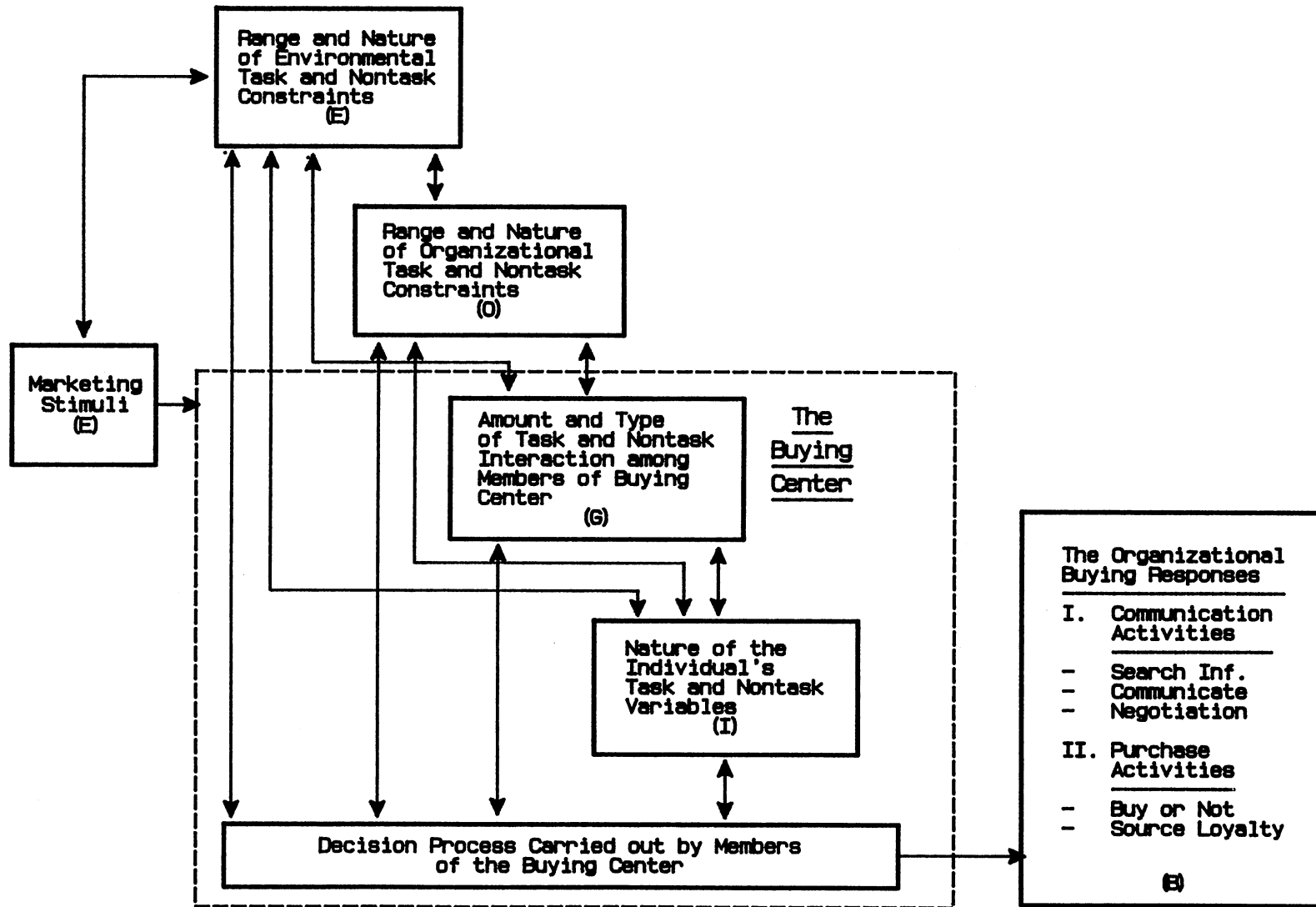


Figure 1. An Organizational Buying Behavior Model. (Webster & Wind, 1972)

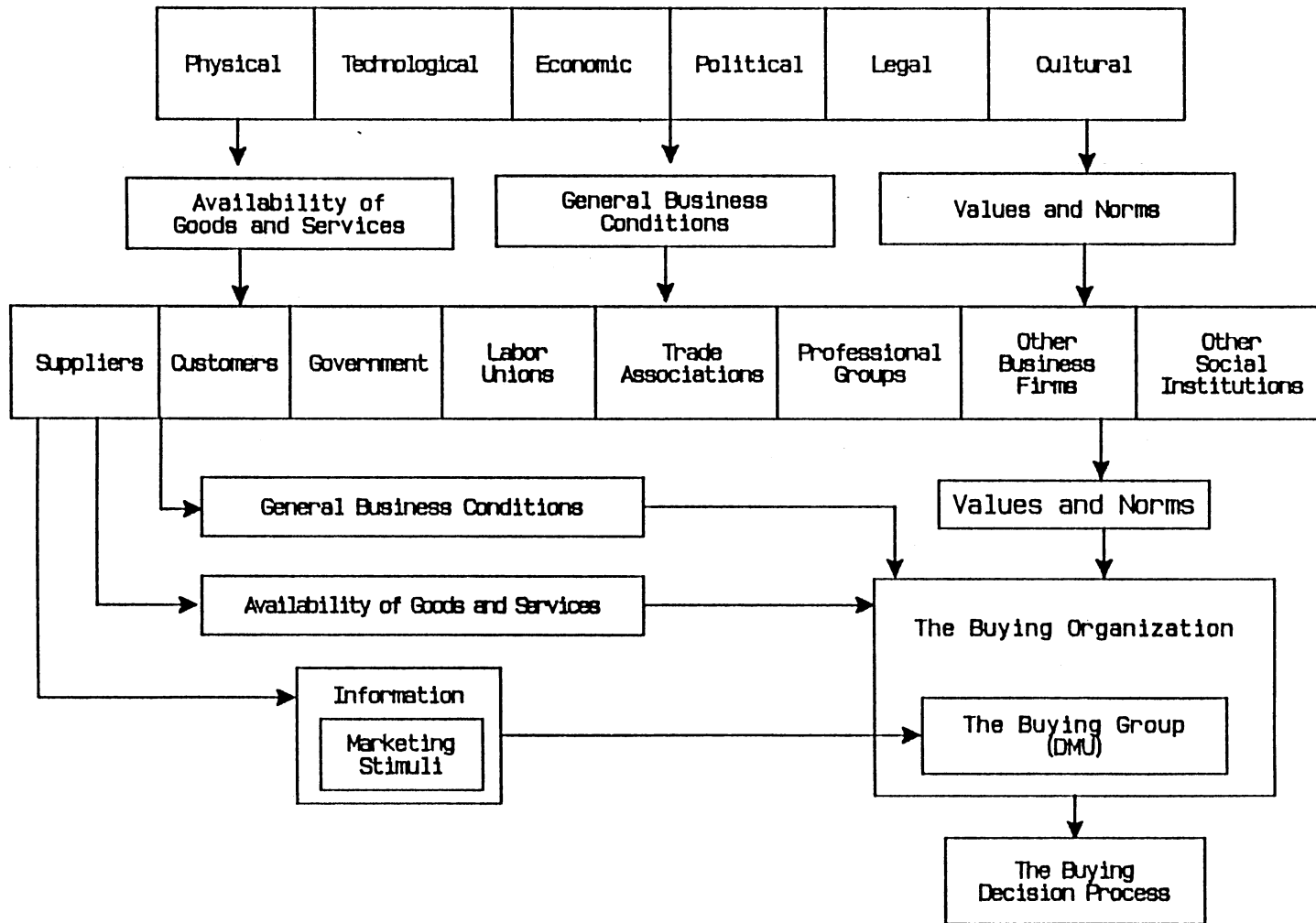


Figure 2. A Model of Environmental Effects on the Organizational Buying Process (Webster & Wind, 1972).

buying process in a number of ways and the model emphasizes these forces as determinants of buying behavior.

The organization also serves as a source of influence on the buying process (see Figure 3). Organizational goals tend to motivate individuals involved in the purchase (decision making) process. The model stresses the interdependency of the organization and its larger environment. The four subsystems of the organization variable (people, technology, structure, and tasks) are all interactive and influence one another. Individuals must consider these four specific and distinct aspects when developing marketing strategy to influence the buying process.

Webster and Wind (1972) refer to the third variable of their model, group factors, as "interpersonal". The group factors variable includes both dyadic interaction as well as a broader category of group influence (see Figure 4).

Webster and Wind (1972) define interpersonal influence as the predominance of one person on another (p.75). Understanding each person's roles, expectations, behaviors, and relationships with others will help define each person's responsibilities in the buying process.

Finally, the fourth variable in the model, individual behavior, is seen as a critical part of the buying process (Webster & Wind, 1972). The individual is the center of the buying process. This model describes individual behavior as a function of three factors: (1) the person's personality, motivation, cognitive structure, and learning process;

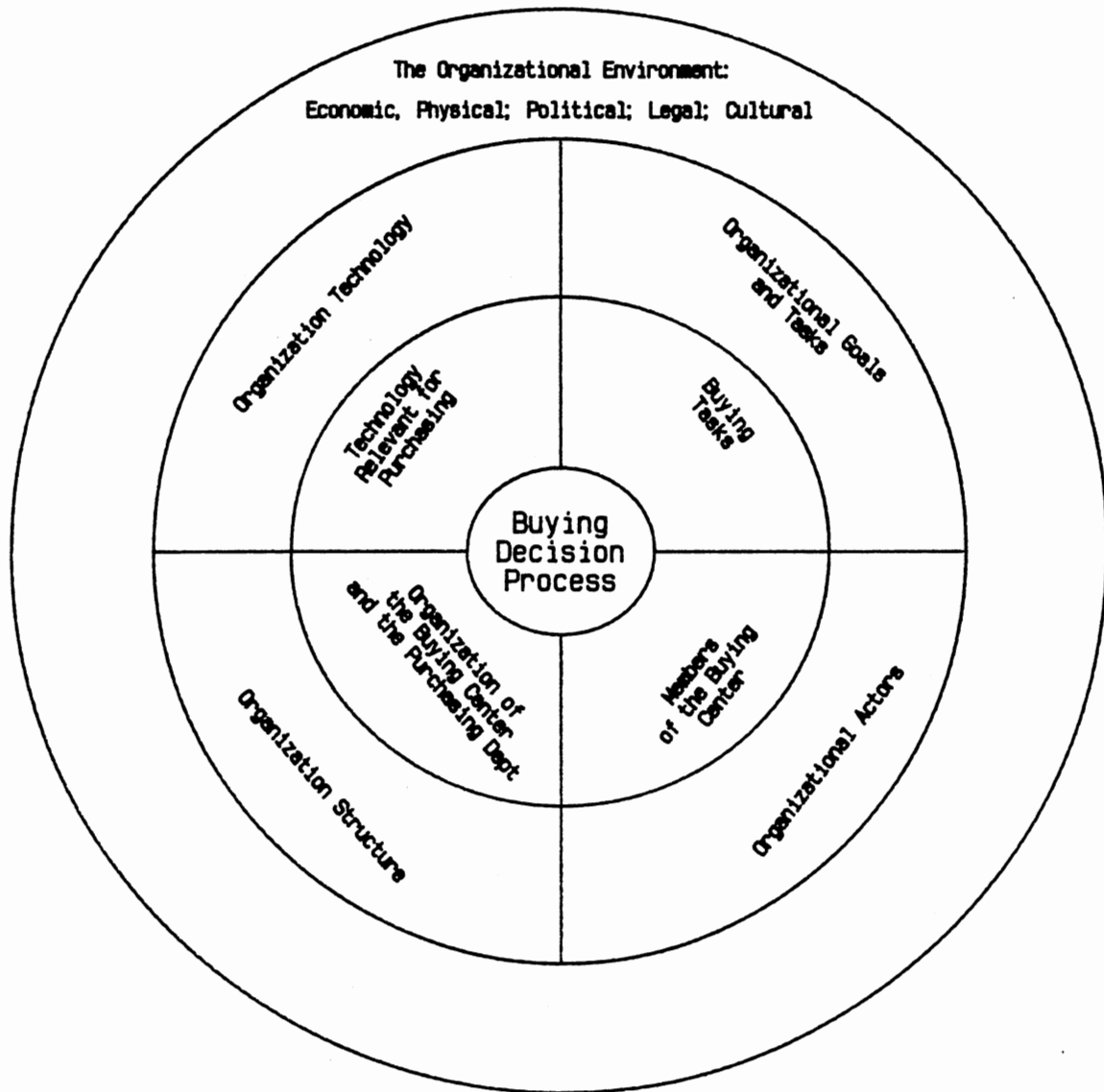


Figure 3. A Model of the Buying Organization (Webster & Wind, 1972).

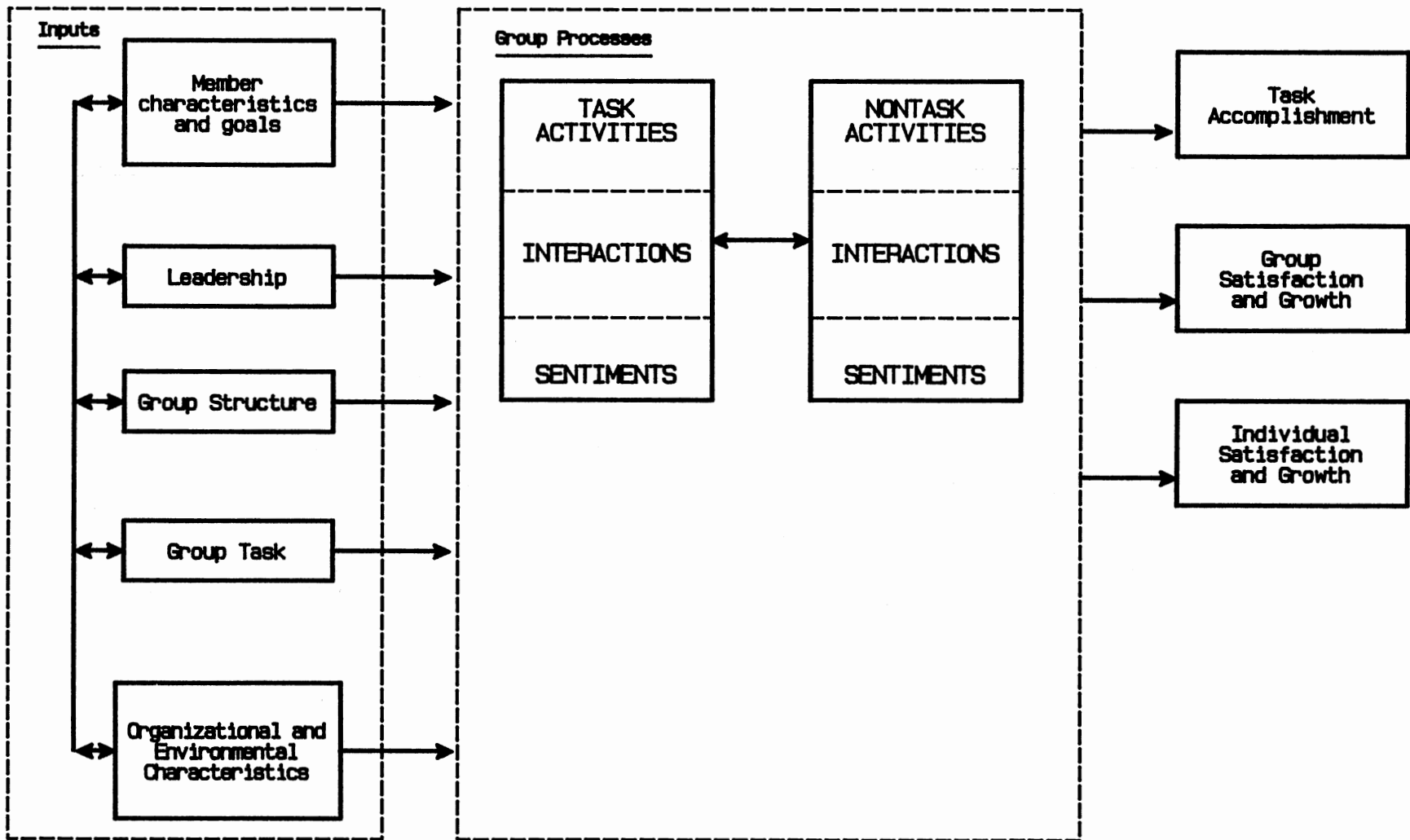


Figure 4. A Model of Interpersonal Determinates of Buying Behavior (Webster & Wind.1972)

(2) his interaction with the environmental situation; and  
(3) his preference structure and decision model (Webster & Wind, 1972, see Figure 5).

Webster and Wind (1972) suggest that the buyer is the final decision maker. Therefore, other buying center members may attempt to constrain or otherwise influence the choices available to the buyer. Understanding an individual's behavior will help provide useful insight into the buying process. Many researchers investigating organizational buying use the Webster and Wind (1972) model to study the influence of different variables on the buying center.

The Sheth Model (1973). Sheth's (1973) industrial buyer behavior model is a second widely used model in assessing a buyers' decision making process. The Sheth model is limited to organizational buying and contains a large number of variables presented in a flow-chart-type diagram. The Sheth model proposes four specific aspects of organizational buyer behavior: expectations, the industrial buying process, conflict resolution, and situational factors (see Figure 6). The Sheth model allows for influence sources outside as well as inside the organization.

The expectations component in the Sheth model is similar to the group factors component in the Webster and Wind (1972) model. The expectations component considers the people involved in the decision to purchase and their expectations. According to Sheth (1973), "Expectations

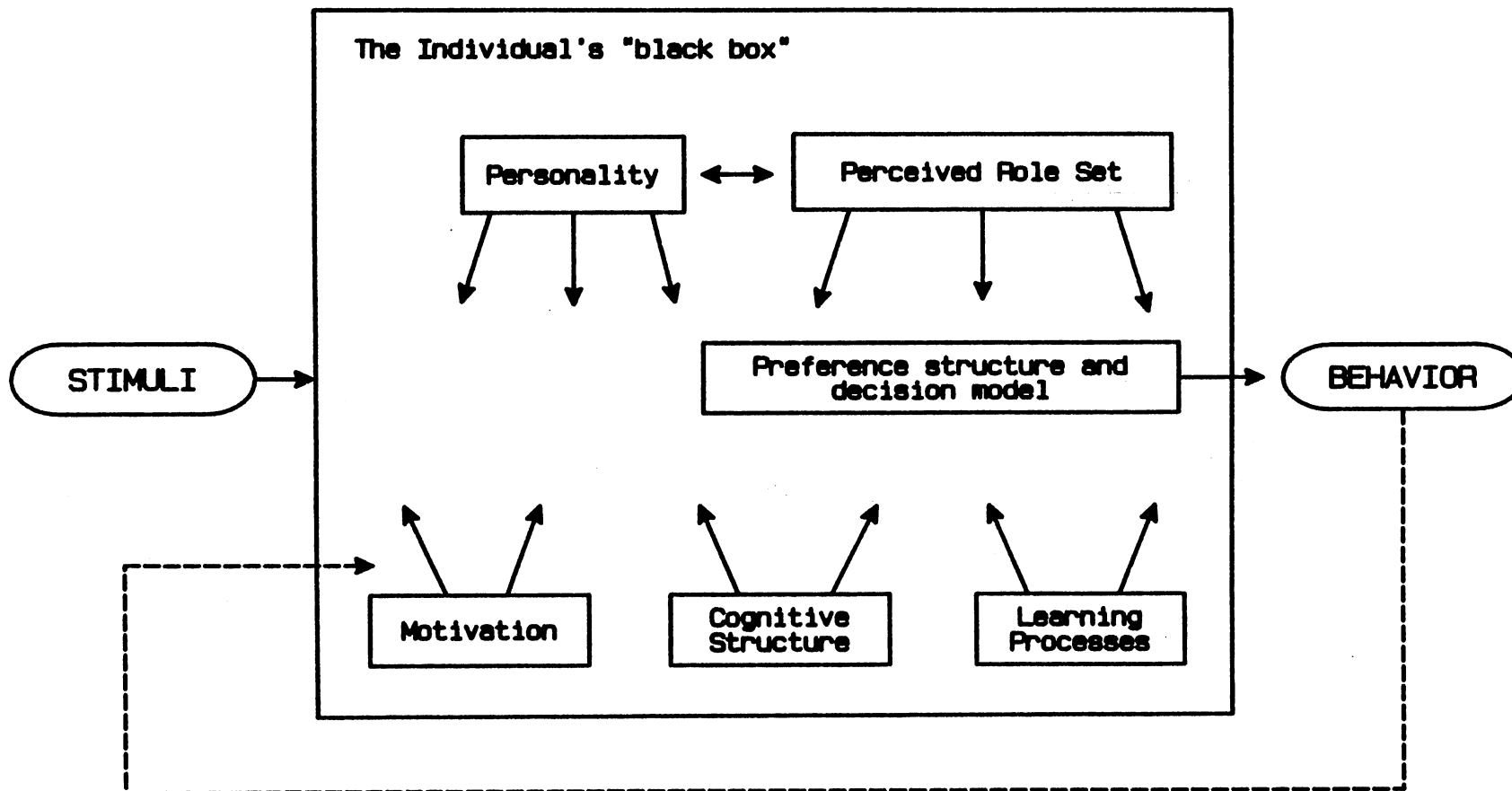


Figure 5. A Simplified Model of Individual Behavior (Webster & Wind, 1972).

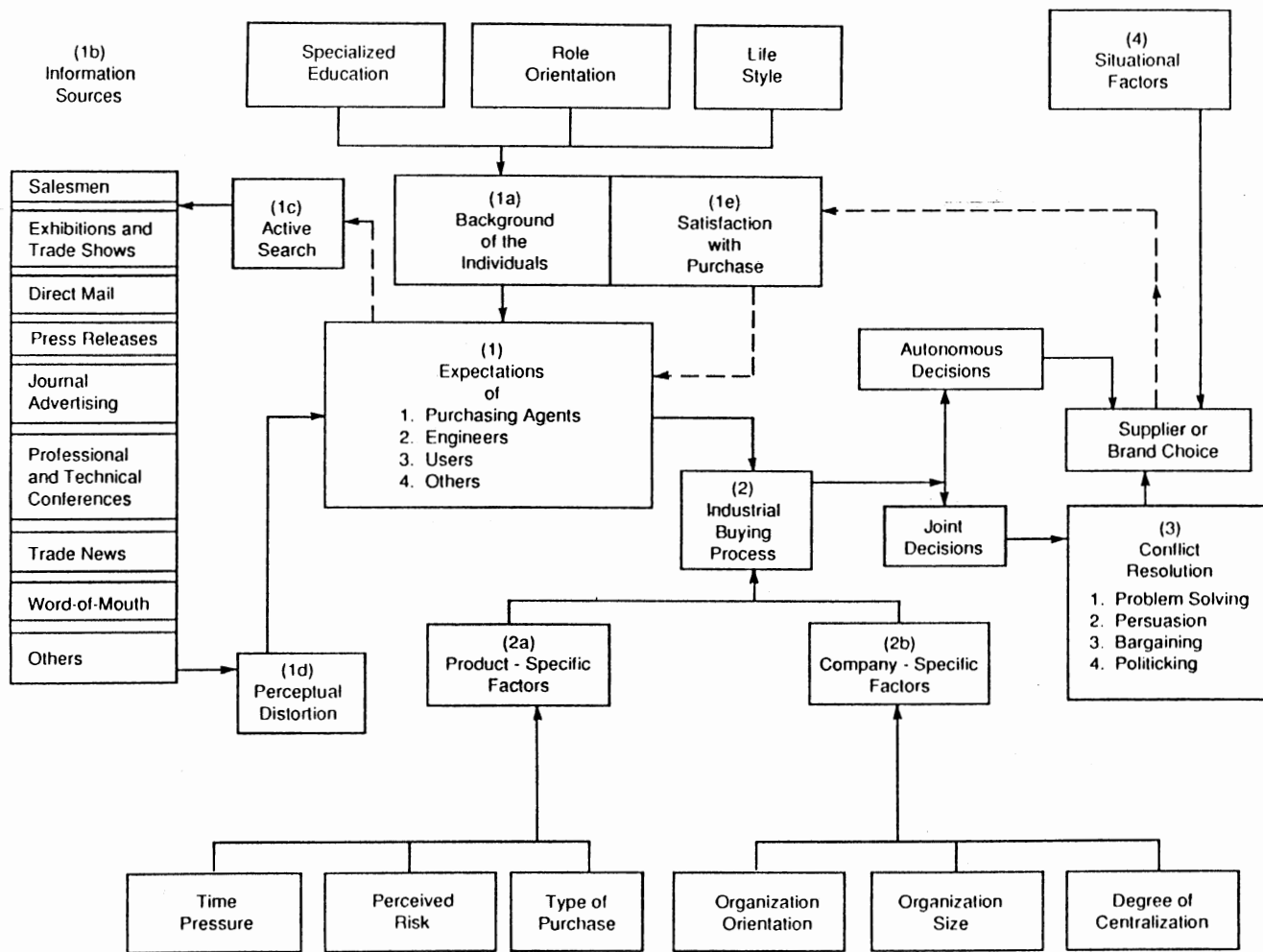


Figure 6. An Integrative Model of Industrial Buyer Behavior (Sheth, 1973).



refer to the perceived potential of alternative suppliers and brands to satisfy a number of explicit and implicit objectives in any particular buying decision" (p.52). Sheth divides the expectations component into five specific processes that determine the differential expectations of those involved in the decision to purchase: the background of the individual, the information sources, active search, perceptual distortion, and satisfaction with the purchase. Sheth (1973) refers to the information sources as the information available to the decision makers.

In the second component, the industrial buying process, researchers can determine whether a buyer's decision will be joint or autonomous. In determining whether a decision is joint or autonomous, Sheth (1973) proposes six basic factors. Three of these factors are product-specific factors and three of them are company-specific factors (see 2a and 2b in Figure 6, Sheth, 1973).

When the buying decision is to be joint, the possibility of conflict may occur. When this happens, the third component, conflict resolution, becomes important in understanding how conflict is resolved in a joint decision-making process. Four types of conflict resolution are included in the model: problem solving, persuasion, bargaining, and politicking.

The final component of the Sheth (1973) model is situational factors. According to Sheth, uncontrollable events may intervene and affect the decision-making process. An individual cannot plan or control these occurrences. Some

of these events might include, a recession, a strike or walkout, machine breakdowns, foreign trade, price changes, or temporary economic conditions (Sheth, 1973).

The Sheth Model (1981). Sheth's (1981) merchandise buying behavior model attempts to examine the buying behavior of a retail organization. The model does not describe how an individual person buys merchandise. Therefore, all personal attributes and values associated with individual decision-making are absent from the model. In lieu of this, the model incorporates company demographics and psychographics as an attempt to account for interorganizational differences in merchandise buying behavior (Sheth, 1981). The model consists of five basic components: merchandise requirements, supplier accessibility, choice calculus, ideal supplier/product choice, and actual supplier/product choice (see Figure 7).

The merchandise requirements can be either functional or nonfunctional. Functional requirements are those which relate directly to merchandise the retailer's customers want in the outlet (Sheth, 1981). Nonfunctional requirements are those which encompass all other buying motives and criteria. These requirements may include competition, product positioning, past traditions, and regulatory constraints. Merchandise requirements represent retailer needs, motives and purchase criteria (Sheth, 1981). Merchandise requirements will vary from outlet to outlet.

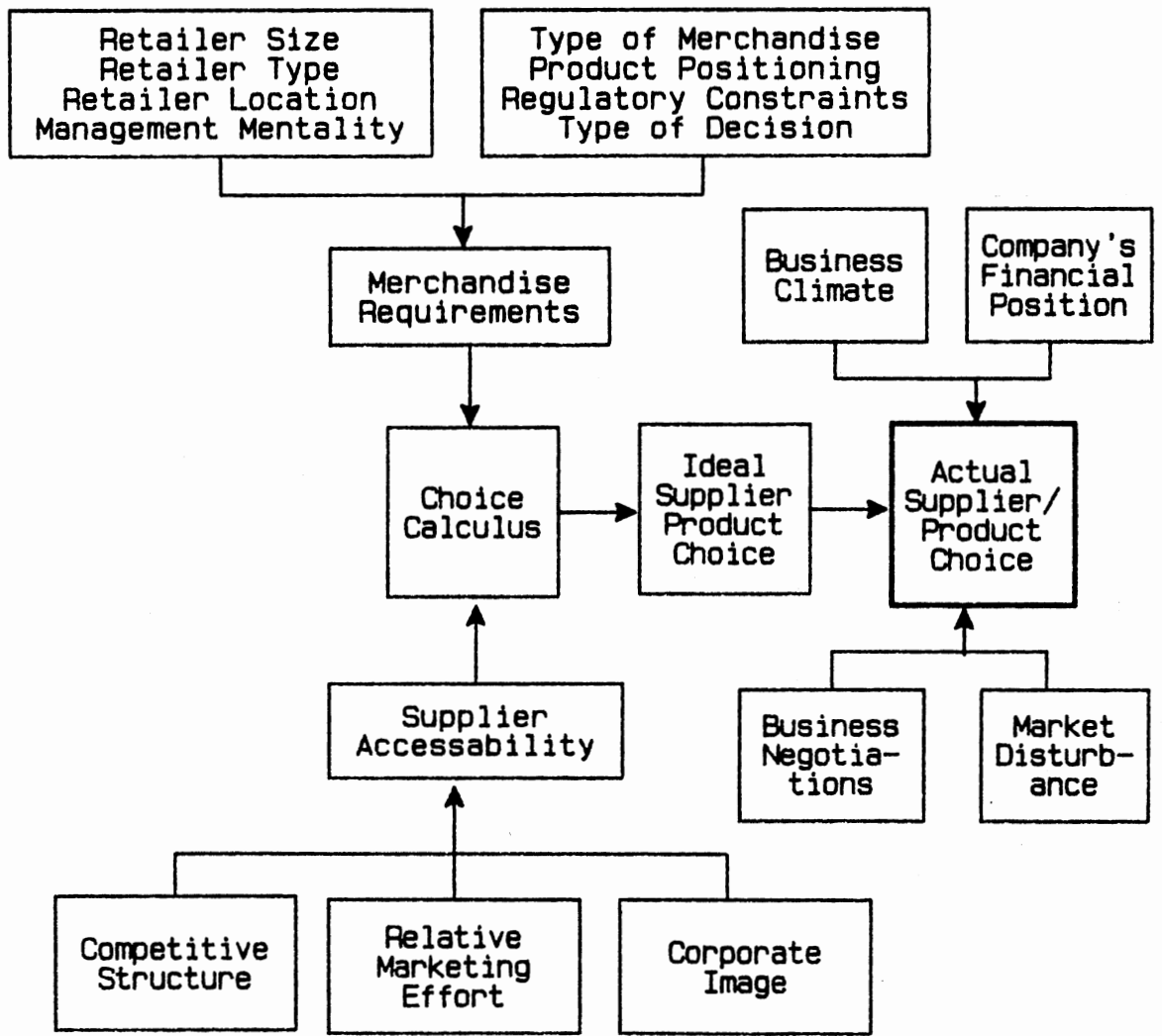


Figure 7. A Theory of Merchandise Buying Behavior (Sheth, 1981).

Supplier accessibility refers to the choices a buyer encounters when fulfilling merchandise requirements. Three factors in the Sheth (1981) model influence supplier accessibility. These factors are, the competitive structure of the supplier industry, the relative marketing effort by different suppliers, and the suppliers positive or negative corporate image (Sheth, 1981).

Choice calculus is the process used by the retailer when seeking to optimize the balance between merchandise requirements and supplier accessibility. The model suggests three distinct choice rules may be employed when obtaining this balance: trade off, dominant, and sequential.

The fourth component of this model is the outcome of the matching process between merchandise requirements and supplier accessibility. Sheth (1981) labels this component ideal supplier/product choice.

The final component, actual supplier/product choice, represents the actual choice the retailer will make. Ideally, this component should mirror the previous component, ideal supplier/product choice. However, ad hoc situational factors may occur which would cause the retailer to alter or change his decision. Sheth (1981) groups these situational factors into four categories: business climate, company's financial position, business negotiations, and market disturbance.

The Cravens Model (1981). The Cravens (1981) patronage decision model attempts to explain the patronage decision in

organizational buying. This model is specifically concerned with the patronage decisions of retail firms rather than industrial firms. According to Cravens, "a retailer's patronage decision is the decision to buy a product from one supplier rather than another" (p.6).

The Cravens (1981) patronage decision model also examines the various types of influence that may occur when making a patronage decision. Types of influence in the patronage decision are complex and interrelated (see Figure 8). The model attempts to conceptualize influence and determine if the same types of influence are operative in all patronage decisions. Cravens proposes that decisions will vary based on six influence factors. The model recognizes six influences upon supplier selection, evaluation processes, and criteria: the organizational decision situation, product/service, type and characteristics of the buying organization, the decision maker(s) characteristics and experience (the buying unit), information sources, and external factors (Cravens, 1981). The model delineates the factors that may influence the patronage decision and attempts to identify the evaluative criteria and the use of this criteria in evaluating suppliers.

Anderson and Chambers Model (1985). The Anderson and Chambers (1985) reward measurement model of organization buying behavior proposes that the reward and measurement system is a fundamental influence on the behavior of buying

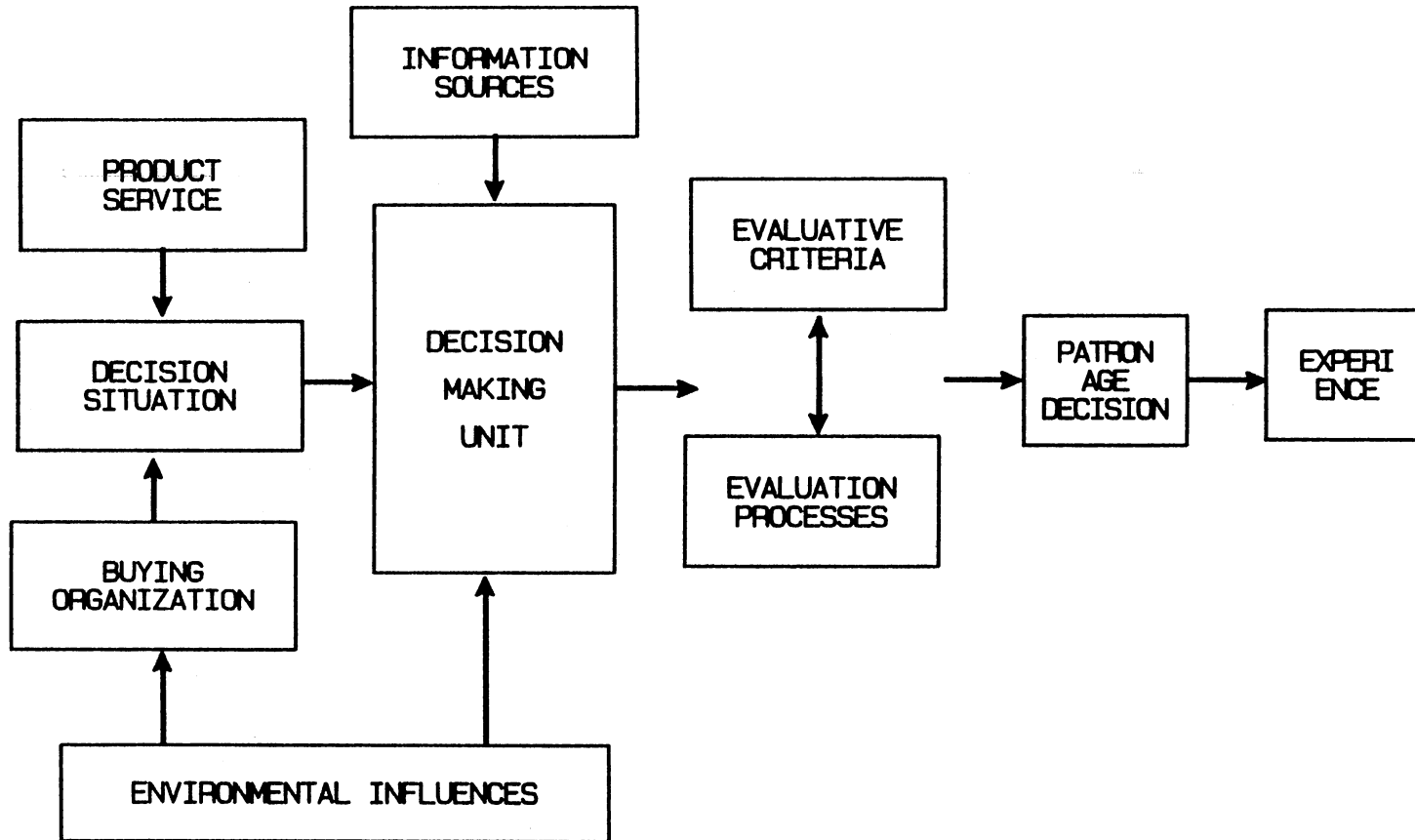


Figure 8. Conceptual Model of the Patronage Decision in Organizational Buying (Cravens, 1981).

participants. This model suggests that individuals within an organization react and behave based on the way they are rewarded and evaluated. Anderson and Chambers suggest that organizational behavior is similar to work behavior, meaning that all activities (including procurement of merchandise) carried out by an individual are done for the organization. These individuals are then evaluated for their performance according to the organization's policies. In-turn, an individual's motivation and performance are greatly affected by the results of their evaluation. This evaluation, in-turn has an important effect on the buying center and buying process.

Anderson and Chambers (1985) divide the reward/measurement model into two submodels. The first submodel deals with motivation of individual purchasing process participants (Anderson and Chambers, 1985, see Figure 9). The second submodel encompasses the process of group interaction and consensus formation (Anderson and Chambers, 1985, see Figure 10). When the submodels are combined, the total model attempts to explain the behavior of individuals and how individuals interact to form group decisions in a purchase process.

The model is divided into direct and indirect paths to measure satisfaction and help determine motivation. Motivation to participate in the purchase process is then explained by expectations of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (see Figure 9).

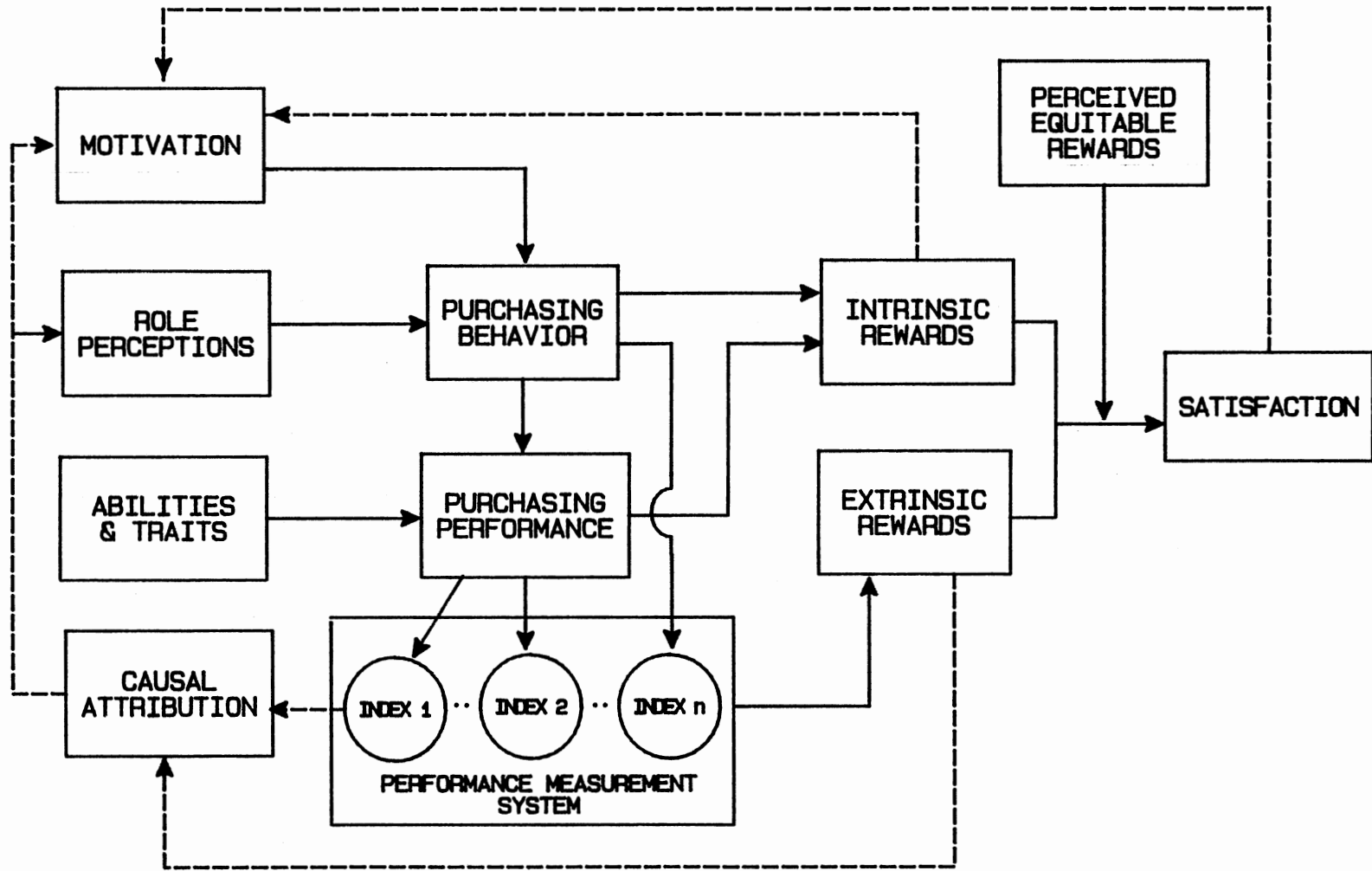


Figure 9. The Motivational Model (Anderson & Chambers, 1985).



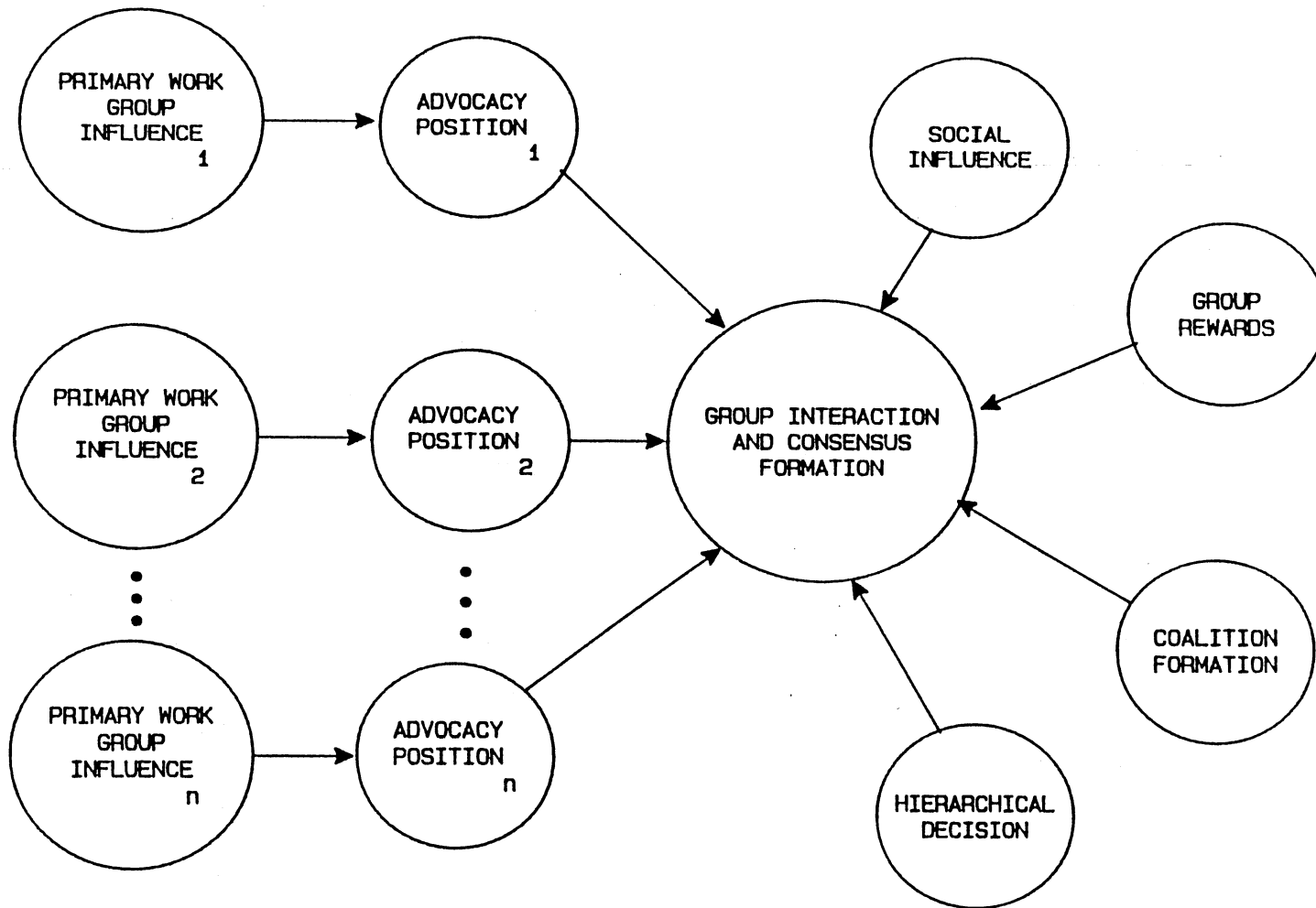


Figure 10. The Group Consensus Model (Anderson & Chambers, 1985).

### Assessment of Models

Each of the aforementioned models has been developed to encompass various aspects of the organizational buying process. These particular models were chosen for review because they appear to be more applicable in a retailing realm and directly relate to the study. Other models tend to be more applicable in an industrial realm. The previous discussion provides a review of relevant literature concerning the broad generalizations of several organizational buying models.

Each model attempts to describe the various factors (influence) involved in a buying (decision making) process. In addition, each model ventures to determine the elements inside and outside of the organization that may have an effect on the buying (decision making) process, the actual buying process, and the subsequent effects of the process.

This research specifically focuses on information sources buyers utilize when they are uncertain about particular buying objectives. It also seeks to determine if an individual's background affects utilization of information sources. The Sheth (1973) model clearly defines these variables: buying objectives (expectations), background factors, and information sources.

The following sections will consider the variables pertinent to this study. Specifically, literature on influence and sources of information an individual may

receive in a buying process and the background of the individual will be reviewed.

### Influence and Sources of Information

Influence can come from many sources and can happen in numerous ways. According to Robertson (1971) and Katz (1968), personal influence refers to a change in an individual's attitude or behavior as a result of interpersonal communication. Others have defined influence as the ability of one to persuade another without applying coercion or authority (Zandrosny, 1959; Ehrmann, 1964).

When making decisions, individuals allow or at least accept, a medium level of ambiguity before seeking additional information. (Berlyne, 1960). However, when the ambiguity level rises significantly above this medium point, individuals will seek information and advice to help define the situation and reach a decision. After seeking out information and advice individuals may be influenced by the information source. As stated by Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Lindskold (1972), "Influence is conceived as a causal relationship between a source's behavior and a target's behavior" (p.291). Both of the participants can be influenced.

### Social Influence and Power

French and Raven (1959) explain the phenomena of power and influence as a dyadic relation between two people. This relation may be viewed by examining the one exerting

influence or the one the influence is exerted upon. The concept of power is examined by considering the person upon whom the power is exerted.

Power is potential influence and is defined as the ability of one to influence another (French & Raven, 1959). Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Lindskold (1972) suggest that the relative power one holds over another is a result of expertise, status, or prestige. The power demonstrated by the influencer and influencee will vary greatly from one situation to another. Thus, with differing amounts of power, individuals will produce different types of influence. In order to examine the influence exerted as a result of power, one must begin by understanding the differing types and amounts of power.

Bases of Power. French and Raven (1959) describe the basis of power as the relationship between the influencer and the influencee which provides the source for that power. Although there may be countless possible bases of power, French and Raven (1959) define five which are common and important to understanding influence. These are: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power.

Reward power is the influencee's perception that the influencer has the ability to mediate rewards. Coercive power is the influencee's perception that the influencer has the ability to mediate punishments. Legitimate power is based on the influencee's perception that the influencer has

a legitimate right to prescribe behavior. Referent power is the influencee's identification with the influencer. The influencee's perception that the influencer has some special knowledge or expertness is referred to as expert power.

### Influence Within An Organization

Results from a study conducted by McMillan (1973) suggested that day-to-day influence between organizational members does not necessarily follow any set format or hierarchical pattern. In fact, organizational bases of influence may be more informal than formal.

Thomas (1982) suggests that formal organizational influence is derived from the buyer completing tasks through the formal "top-down" organizational structure. Informal influence is obtained from sources other than those in the formal "top-down" organizational structure (see Table I).

When studying formal and informal bases of organizational influence, the extent of influence exerted on a social level is considered. Deutch and Gerard (1955) suggest two types of social influence: normative and informational. Normative social influence is best described as willingness to conform to the influential contingencies of another. Informational social influence is the inclination to receive information from others as evidence about reality (see Table I).

Rabolt & Drake (1984-1985) and Thomas (1982) conducted studies to examine normative and informational social influence as a type of influence exerted upon a buyer.

TABLE I

## BASES OF INFLUENCE IN ORGANIZATIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL BASES	<u>SOCIAL BASES</u>	
	NORMATIVE	INFORMATIONAL
FORMAL (TOP-DOWN)	<u>Influencers</u> -authority & relative position	<u>Influencers</u> -product preferences
INFORMAL	<u>Influencers</u> -stature, prestige, friendship	<u>Influencers</u> -credibility, expertise

Thomas, R.J. (1982) p.173.

Rabolt & Drake focused on the influence patterns of consumers and Thomas focused on influence patterns in an organization. Both studies concluded that normative and informational influence play an important role in the influence received from others when making a decision to purchase.

Thomas (1982) conveniently linked the organizational bases of influence, formal and informal, to the social bases of influence, normative and informational. In doing this, Thomas presented four possible bases of social and organizational influence present in an organizational buyer's decision making processes. These bases of influence are formal normative, informal normative, formal informational, and informal informational (see Table I).

These bases of influence presented by Thomas (1982) are similar to French and Raven's (1959) bases of power. Formal normative would be similar to French and Raven's legitimate power. Informal normative can be classified as referent power. Expert power would fall in the category of informal informational (see Table II). Formal informational is the only cell which does not contain a power base similar to one proposed by French and Raven.

Influence in consumer decision making. When making decisions, it is often assumed that retail buyers act similarly to consumers (Hirschman & Mazursky, 1982). When consumers make a purchase, they are the sole purchaser; however, when ambiguity in decision making arises, they may

TABLE II

## SIMILARITIES OF POWER BASES TO INFLUENCE BASES

ORGANIZATIONAL BASES	<u>SOCIAL BASES</u>	
	NORMATIVE	INFORMATIONAL
FORMAL (TOP-DOWN)  <b>French &amp; Raven's</b>	<u>Influencers</u> -authority & relative position {legitimate}	<u>Influencers</u> -product preferences
INFORMAL  <b>French &amp; Raven's</b>	<u>Influencers</u> -stature, prestige, friendship {referent}	<u>Influencers</u> -credibility, expertise {expert}



seek approval or advice from another source whereby influence may be present. Likewise, a retail buyer acts as a sole purchaser and, when uncertain about something, may actively seek out another source for advice.

In a consumer study conducted by Rabolt and Drake (1984-1985), normative and informational bases of influence were examined. The study analyzed the type of influence accepted by career women concerning their career apparel. This study was similar to a previously mentioned one by Thomas (1982), concerning normative and informational bases of influence on organizational buyers.

The results of the Rabolt and Drake (1984-1985) study were similar to the findings of Thomas (1982). In both studies, normative influence was offered most often by superiors and informational influence was offered most often by friends and co-workers.

The classification scheme used by Thomas (1982) may prove to be useful in studying retail apparel buyers. This is likely because retail buyers are similar to consumers and organizational buyers.

Sources of influence in apparel buying. Very few studies have been published in the area of retail apparel buyer behavior. Only a few researchers have looked at influence and sources of information present when the retail buyer makes a decision. Studies considering influence and sources of information include those of Miler (1987), Francis and Brown (1985-1986), Ettenson and Wagner (1986),

Hirschman (1981), and Hirschman and Mazursky (1982). Considering these five studies, the variables retailers reported as being highly important buyer objectives include quality, expected sales, selling history, anticipated margin, estimated demand, and aesthetic quality (see Table III). Quality appears to be the most important buyer objective. Retailers ranked quality as the number one buyer objective in both the Stone (1987) and Francis and Brown (1985-1986) studies. In addition, quality was ranked highly by retailers in the other studies as well (see Table III).

Using highly important buyer objectives would help determine where buyers seek information when they are uncertain about objectives important to them. Thus, determining where a buyer seeks information would help determine those people and things involved in the decision to purchase.

Information or influence source was also considered in three of the five studies on retail apparel buying presented in this review (see Table IV). Sources of influence the buyer may be exposed to vary from situation to situation. Francis & Brown (1985-1986) determined buyers of different product categories in their study were not alike. Therefore, determination of the information source used by the buyer in specific buying situations would prove to be useful.

TABLE III  
PRODUCT VARIABLES STUDIED IN RETAIL BUYING

STUDY <sup>a</sup>	A	B	C	D	E <sup>c</sup>	F
<b>VARIABLES</b>						
Expected Sales	1b					
Quality	2	1			4	1
Country of origin						3
Fashionability		6			3	3
Good buy	5					
Color	6	8				7
Fiber	7					6
Styling	8	3				5
Planned retail price	9					
Merchandise mix	10					
Delivery		2		5	3	
Key seasonal item	4					
Steady supply		4				
Brand name		10				4
Price	3	5			2	
Distinctiveness		7				2
Terms of sale		9				
Selling history			1			
Cut			3			
Markup/Anticipated Margin			2	2		
Advertising allowance			4			
Estimated demand				1		
Reputation of product				3		
Aesthetic quality				4	1	
Rate of sale					3	
Budget needs					5	
Service					5	

a A- Miler (1987)

B- Francis & Brown (1985-1986)

C- Ettenson & Wagner (1986)

D- Hirschman & Mazursky (1982)

E- Hirschman (1981)

F- Stone (1987)

b Ranked by order of importance as indicated in each study.

c Studies E and F included some ties.

TABLE IV  
 INFORMATION SOURCES USED IN RETAIL BUYING

STUDY <sup>a</sup>	A	B	C	D
SOURCES				
Upper Management	1b	4		2
Buying Office	2	6	5	6
Vendor Advertising		2	4	
Another Buyer/Peers	3	5	6	5
Sales Representative		1		3
Trade Publications		3	2	4
Buyers Judgement			1	
Predicted Sales			3	
Competition			6	1

a A- Miler (1987)  
 B- Francis & Brown (1985-1986)  
 C- Hirschman & Mazursky (1982)  
 D- Stone (1987)

b ranked by order of importance as indicated in each study

## Background of the Individual

Some of the studies that address retail apparel buyers have considered background; however, none of these studies have determined if the background of the individual has an affect on the buying (decision making) process. In this section, a discussion of the individuals background factors that may affect the buying process are presented.

Understanding why people make different decisions and why they are influenced by a multitude of forces gives rise to several difficult questions. Understanding the background of the individual may help determine why people have different purchasing patterns. Variables researchers could use to examine an individual's background are mentioned in the paragraphs below. A detailed discussion of each variable appears later in this chapter.

Specialized education is one variable researchers have used to understand an individual's background. Specialized education can include actual educational achievement (high school or college) as well as any vocational training or actual on-the-job experience.

Lifestyle/psychographic variables have also been examined to understand the background of the individual. Lifestyle/psychographic data have been shown in previous research (Demby, 1974) to explain a great deal about purchasing activity.

Another important psychological variable researchers have used to examine the background of the individual is

the individual's locus of control (Lefcourt, 1981; Ryckman & Malikioski, 1974). Locus of control is a measure of how individuals feel about the amount of control they have over their life. Some individuals may believe they control their destiny while others may believe their lives are controlled by outside forces.

A fourth variable researchers have used in examining an individual's background is the role orientation of individuals in their organization or job environment. This role orientation can be operationalized by measuring an individual's role ambiguity and role conflict in relation to their job. Individuals who are either ambiguous about their roles or have conflicting roles may perform differently than individuals who are not ambiguous or in conflict with their roles (Katz and Kahn, 1978).

Each background variable, specialized education, lifestyle/psychographics, locus of control, and role orientation is examined in the paragraphs below. Possible ways of assessing these background variables are also discussed.

#### Specialized Education

Specialized education refers to any form of knowledge achieved by an individual. This could include level of formal education (high school or college), vocational training, or actual on-the-job training (years in present occupation or years with present company). These education variables may have very different effects on the way

individuals make decisions. Individuals with less education may approach decision making differently than individual's with a higher level of education.

One study concluded that judgments may be less intuitive than previously believed (Ettenson & Wagner, 1986). If judgment is learned, specialized education is an important component of a buyer's background.

Francis and Brown (1985-1986) and Stone (1987) considered buyers' retail experience in relation to the proportion of purchases the buyers made from vendors on a regular on-going basis. Both studies found that as years of retail experience increased, use of a regular vendor also increased. This conclusion lends support to the assumption that buyers' level of specialized education may affect the buyer's decision process.

#### Lifestyle/Psychographics

Lifestyle/Psychographics refer to various forms of measurement which analyze how a consumer thinks, feels, and reacts (Nelson, 1971). According to Reynolds and Darden (1974), "Psychographics is a quantitative multivariate research procedure that gives numbers to common sense; like the fact that some people are more likely to be your customer than others;..." (p.84). Lazer (1963) suggests that a lifestyle is something concerned with those unique ingredients or qualities that describe the style of life for some culture or group, and distinguish it from another.

According to Assael, (1981), lifestyle is defined as a mode of living identified by a person's activities, interests, and opinions.

According to Demby (1974), lifestyle reflects behavior; thus, making it an extremely reliable source of information about an individual. A researcher can assess an individual's interests, activities, and values as a professional by utilizing one of the various psychographic scales.

List of Values. A relatively new instrument, the List of Values (Kahle, 1985) is a reliable and less cumbersome alternative in the measurement of values than previous methods. Although relatively new, the List of Values (LOV) instrument has proven to be successful in depicting specific values such as self-respect, sense of belonging, and security in an individual's life (Kahle, 1985).

Many times the meaning and motive behind an action is a process of some value. A value according to Kahle and Timmer (1983) is what a person will prize, hold in esteem, and nurture. For this reason, a value is central to a person. Because of the deep-rooted importance of values to a person, values will also influence behavior.

The List of Values (LOV), developed by Kahle (1985), is a scale which allows researchers to compare and contrast an individual's values. The nine specific values researchers can measure utilizing LOV are as follows: self-respect, sense of accomplishment, being well respected, security,



warm relationships with others, sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment in life, self-fulfillment, and excitement. The LOV utilizes interval level ratings of an individual's values as opposed to using rank ordering or choosing the single most important value. Individuals are asked to rate how important each value is to them in their life.

Researchers can then classify individuals according to the values the individual chooses as most important.

Values have a pervasive influence on how people adapt to their life circumstances (Kahle, 1985). The ability of values to affect an individual's lifestyle may explain why apparently similar individuals make different decisions under the same circumstances. For example, why does an individual choose one brand and another individual choose another brand? Assessing the values of an individual may lead to an understanding of why individuals make differing decisions or engage in different decision processes.

### Locus of Control

Locus of control within an individual refers to how much the individual believes his own behavior influences what happens to him. Gibson, Ivancevich, and Donnelly (1985) define locus of control as "the degree to which individuals believe that what happens to them is or is not within their personal control" (p. 81).

Researchers have developed several instruments and methods of analysis that attempt to determine an individual's locus of control. Some of these include the

Levenson I,P,C, scales, the Rotter I-E scale, the Malevolent-Benevolent questionnaire, and the Desirable-Undesirable events locus of control items.

Rotter I-E Scale. The Rotter (1966) I-E scale for measuring internal and external locus of control is the most commonly used locus of control device (Lefcourt, 1981; Phares, 1976). The Rotter I-E scale may prove most useful when assessing influence in the form of either internal or external reinforcements that an individual experiences in a decision making process.

The Rotter I-E scale defines people as being either external or internal in control. Those who are external tend to perceive their fate as being controlled by powerful others or as having unpredictable lives due to the great complexity of forces surrounding them (Rotter, 1966). Internalizers are people who perceive what happens to them is contingent upon their own actions. As a rule, internal people believe they alone control their own fate (Rotter, 1966; Phares, 1976).

Of the various studies utilizing the Rotter I-E scale, consensus exists concerning the nature of internals and externals. Internals tend to be: (a) more alert to aspects of the environment which provide useful information for future actions; (b) place great value in the areas of skill and achievement and are more concerned with ability, and particularly failures; (c) are resistant to subtle influence attempts; and, (d) are more independent and rely more on

their own judgements (Rotter, 1966). Externals have been found to: (a) respond and conform to both high and low levels of influence attempts; (b) are less confident in their actions; (c) tend to be less motivated, less skill oriented, and more chance oriented; and, (d) tend to respond to others on the basis of prestige or expertise (Phares, 1976)

The Rotter I-E scale is a 29 item, forced-choice test, that includes 6 filler items. The filler items are included to make the purpose of the test more ambiguous.

I,P,C Scales. The Levenson (1981) I,P,C scales were originally developed as a reconceptualization of the Rotter (1966) I-E scale. These I,P,C scales contain both items adapted from the Rotter I-E scale and items that tap all three of the scales dimensions: internal (I scale), powerful others (P scale), and chance (C scale) (Levenson, 1981).

The I scale is designed to measure the extent to which people believe they control their own lives. The P scale measures the extent that people believe others have control over them. The control or C scale is basically a measure of an individual's perception of chance control (Levenson, 1981). An example of chance control would be found in the statement "It's not wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad luck" (Levenson, 1981, p.17).

The Levenson I,P,C, scales are comprised of three 8-item subscales. These subscales are scored in a Likert format ranging from -3 to +3. The questions are presented in a unified scale consisting of 24 items (Levenson, 1981). Scoring is completed by totaling the number of circled responses for each scale separately and then adding a base score of 24 to eliminate negative values (Levenson, 1981).

The major difference between the Rotter I-E scale and the Levenson I,P,C scales is found in the external measure of locus of control. Levenson (1972) assumes that externals are more accurately described by separating the external component into two specific areas: powerful others and chance control. Rotter (1966), on the other hand, considers both control by powerful others and chance control simultaneously and makes no distinction between the two. Levenson, however, assumes externals have differing amounts of each type of external control (powerful others and chance control). Thus, to fully understand one's locus of control, Levenson believes researchers should view the two external components separately. Several studies have been completed which add to the validity and reliability of Levenson's assumption (Ryckman & Malikioski, 1974; Prociuk & Breen, 1974).

Either scale (Levenson I,P,C or Rotter I-E) would provide an accurate measure of an individual's locus of control. However, the division of the external component into two parts as in the Levenson I,P,C scales may yield a more accurate description of the external type of person.

## Role Orientation

Role orientation can refer to an individual's role ambiguity and role conflict in relation to their job. Role ambiguity occurs when individuals are uncertain or not specific about their roles. For example, individuals who have high role ambiguity may not be certain as to the specific duties of their job (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Role conflict involves a clash of opposing ideas and interests. For example, an individual may be receiving several demands from several individuals within the organization. These demands may be difficult to perform simultaneously. Both role ambiguity and conflict may have a major impact on how the individual behaves in certain situations (Anderson & Chambers, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964).

In a buying (decision making) process the degree of role ambiguity and conflict an individual possesses may have a direct effect on the individual's ultimate decision. According to Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, and Snoek (1964) role conflict can occur when the demands from one person are incompatible with the demands from others. They term this phenomenon inter-sender role conflict. This type of role conflict could easily affect a buying decision since many times there is more than one individual involved in making buying decisions. Individuals who are involved in the buying process will naturally want the best for themselves. This self-interest of others can cause the primary buyer

(decision maker) to experience a high level of role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964).

Role ambiguity is usually a direct response of individuals who have insufficient information to perform adequately (Kahn et al., 1964; Hase & Bowditch, 1977). In other words, individuals who are uncertain as to what they are supposed to do may experience role ambiguity. Individuals with high role ambiguity are likely to require additional information in a buying (decision making) process in order to make a decision (Kahn et al., 1964; Huse & Bowditch, 1972). Individuals with high role ambiguity may approach the process of decision making differently, because of their uncertainty, than individuals with low role ambiguity.

Each factor (specialized education, lifestyle/psychographics, locus of control, and role orientation) may affect an individual's buying (decision making) process. Although other factors may have an effect on an individual's buying decisions, these factors are among the most common.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to study the use of information sources by retail apparel buyers when making decisions under circumstances of uncertainty. A review of the literature supports that retail buyers utilize many information sources when making purchase decisions. The majority of these studies have considered buyers' information source use in general. Few, if any, investigations have considered specific product characteristics and buyers' information source usage. In addition, none of the previously conducted studies have included the following variables: uncertainty, role ambiguity, role conflict, and lifestyles. These variables based on the literature review can be hypothesized to affect retail apparel buyers' utilization of information sources.

Portions of Sheth's (1973) model of industrial buyer behavior guided this study. Specifically, the expectations component was considered. The three subcomponents of the expectations component examined were: background of the individual, information sources, and active search. The background of the individual consists of three specific factors: specialized education, lifestyles, and role

orientation. The procedure used for assessing each of these factors is discussed in the instrumentation section.

In the first section of this chapter the research design for this study is described. Methods of data collection are discussed in the second section. Next, a description of the research instrument is presented. Finally, operational hypotheses and the statistical analyses appropriate to test them are described.

### Research Design

A survey research design was used for this study. Survey research can be explanatory and analytical in nature. Using survey research, "inferences can be drawn from samples to the whole population regarding the prevalence, distribution, and interrelations of economic, sociological, and psychological variables" (Compton and Hall, 1972, p.140). Therefore, with a sample survey, researchers can obtain the opinions and attitudes of individuals.

### Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of retail apparel buyers employed by department stores located in the West South Central region of the United States. The West South Central region as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census (1988) includes: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. These states were chosen because of their close proximity to the educational institution and budget limitations.



A listing of department stores in the West South Central region was obtained from the Sheldon's Directory (1988) and the Dun and Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory (1988) and was used as the sampling frame. Stores listed in both directories were considered for inclusion in the study. Financial and operating information about the stores was obtained from both directories for descriptive purposes.

Stores with a sales volume greater than one million dollars and with more than one store were included in the sample. Stores of this size were more likely to have similar buying situations than smaller stores. After selecting specific stores to include in the study, buyer names and addresses were obtained from the Sheldon's Directory (1988).

#### Methods of Data Collection

Dillmans' (1978) Total Design Method (TDM) for implementing mail surveys was employed for this research. A total of three mailings and one follow-up postcard was administered to apparel buyers. In accordance with the TDM of data collection, the first procedure was to develop a basic appeal to the potential respondents. In the cover letter of the first mailing, the nature of the study and the need for help in finding a solution was expressed (see Appendix A). According to Dillman (1978), "Many specifics flow from this basic appeal and intertwine to comprise the TDM implementation procedures" (p.163).

According to Dillman (1978), personalization is a major vehicle in conveying the importance of a study. Personalization was used throughout this study to aid in communicating the importance of the respondent's participation to the success of the study. In this study, all correspondence was reproduced on Oklahoma State University stationary and addressed in a normal business fashion (see Appendix A). Other techniques, as suggested by Dillman (1978), and implemented in this study included: first class postage on all mailings, individually applied signatures, and individually addressed envelopes. Also, as Dillman (1978) suggests, the first mailing was sent on a Tuesday (September 27, 1988). This mailing contained a cover letter, questionnaire, and self-addressed, stamped return envelope.

One week after the initial mailing, a postcard follow-up was sent to all recipients of the initial mailing. This postcard served as a thank you for those who had already returned questionnaires and as a reminder for those who had not.

The second follow-up mailing was sent three weeks from the date of the initial mailing. This mailout consisted of a cover letter informing respondents that their questionnaire had not yet been received, and included a replacement questionnaire and another return envelope.

The third and final mailing was sent seven weeks from the initial mailing. This mailing consisted of another cover letter, questionnaire, and return envelope. Due to

time constraints, questionnaires received after November 28, 1988 were not included in this analysis.

Follow-up telephone calls were made to those buyers who returned partially complete questionnaires. All buyers contacted agreed to answer questions they had failed to complete.

### Instrumentation

A self-administered mail questionnaire was used for data collection (see Appendix B). The questionnaire included previously utilized scales as well as scales developed by the researcher. This study was part of a larger study; therefore, only parts of the instrument in Appendix B were utilized. A majority of the items in section II and all of the items in sections III and IV were used in this study. The variables measured in section II included: product characteristic uncertainty and information source usage. Section III included items measuring role ambiguity, role conflict and lifestyles. Selected demographic characteristics were measured by items in section IV. These items and scales were utilized in an attempt to operationalize the expectations component of the Sheth (1973) model. A description of the selected scales and their relationship to the components of the Sheth (1973) model follows.

### Product Characteristic Uncertainty and Information Source Usage

Retail apparel buyers indicated the importance of information sources when uncertain about specific product characteristics using a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 was not at all important and 5 was extremely important. Five questions containing one product characteristic and six information sources were asked. The five different product characteristics were: quality, anticipated margin, expected sales, consumer demand, and aesthetics. The six information sources were upper management, buying office, another buyer/peers, sales representative, trade publications, and competition.

In each question, buyers were asked to rate the importance of each information source in providing additional information about the specified product characteristic when uncertain about the characteristic. This scale was used to assess the active search and information source components in the Sheth (1973) model. For example, in the expectations component the buyer may become uncertain about an explicit or implicit product characteristic. The buyer then engages in an active search for additional information sources.

### Role Orientation

A buyer's level of role conflict and role ambiguity was measured using an adaptation of the instrument developed by

Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). This scale consisted of six role ambiguity items and eight role conflict items. This scale was used to assess the role orientation component of the Sheth (1973) model.

Buyers responded to each item on a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 was strongly agree and 5 was strongly disagree. The individual item scores were summed to obtain a single score for each role orientation variable. Summed role ambiguity scores could range from six to thirty, while summed role conflict scores could range from eight to forty. The six role ambiguity items were reverse scored.

### Lifestyles

The List of Values Scale (Kahle, 1984) was used to assess the lifestyle component of the Sheth (1973) model. Buyers were asked to rate how important nine different values were to them in their lives. These values included: sense of belonging, excitement, warm relationship with others, self-fulfillment, being well-respected, fun and enjoyment in life, security, self-respect, and a sense of accomplishment. Buyers responded on a nine-point Likert-type scale, where 1 was not at all important and nine was extremely important.

### Demographic and Specialized

#### Education Variables

Seven demographic characteristics were measured in this study. Sex, age range, and compensation were used only for

descriptive purposes. The remaining four characteristics were used to assess the specialized education component in the Sheth (1973) model and included years as a retail buyer, years in present position, years at present store, and level of education.

### Operational Hypotheses

Hypotheses were developed in accordance with the previously stated objectives of the study. Hypotheses are stated in the null form and are as follows:

Ho1: In a situation of decision making uncertainty, there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and product characteristics.

Ho2: In a situation of decision making uncertainty, there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the background of a buyer.

Ho2.1: There will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail buyer and the buyer's role ambiguity and role conflict.

Ho2.2: There will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the buyer's lifestyle.

Ho2.3: There will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the buyer's specialized education.

## Statistical Analysis of the Data

The demographic data were summarized using descriptive statistics. Frequencies were calculated for the following variables: sex, age range, compensation, years as a retail buyer, years in present position, years at present store, and level of education. As a result of this analysis, some categories were collapsed to make the cell distributions more equal.

Analysis of variance, an inferential statistic, was used to test hypotheses. Analysis of variance seeks to determine if the differences between the means in two or more groups are different enough to be attributed to something other than sampling error (Huck, Cormier, & Bounds, 1974).

Each product characteristic was treated as an independent variable and one-way AOV tests were performed for the dependent variable, information source importance. Several two-way AOV tests were performed using product characteristics and each of the following as independent variables: role conflict, role ambiguity, each item on the list of values scale, years as a retail buyer, years in present position, years at present store, and level of education. The dependent variable in each of these tests consisted of the importance ratings for six information sources. When significant differences existed, Tukey's post hoc test (Huck, et al., 1974) was used to determine where the differences actually appeared.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to study the use of information sources by retail apparel buyers when making decisions under circumstances of uncertainty. This chapter begins with a discussion of the response rate and sample characteristics. The results of each hypothesis test and a discussion of the findings are then presented.

#### Response Rate

The data for this study were obtained from a self-administered questionnaire mailed to 442 retail apparel buyers. The first mailing was sent on September 27, 1988. Questionnaires returned after November 28, 1988 were not included in this study.

The initial mailing of 442 questionnaires resulted in a 14.7 percent response rate or 65 questionnaires (see Table V). Four hundred and forty-two follow-up postcards were mailed one week after the initial mailing. The response rate for this mailing resulted in a 14.5 percent response or 64 questionnaires.

The second follow-up mailing of 313 questionnaires was sent exactly three weeks from the initial mailing. Response



TABLE V  
QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATE

Item	Number	Percentage <sup>a</sup>
<u>Initial Mailing</u>		
Questionnaires mailed	442	
Questionnaires returned	65	14.7
<u>Postcard Mailing</u>		
Postcards mailed	442	
Questionnaires returned	64	14.5
<u>Second Follow-up Mailing</u>		
Questionnaires mailed	313	
Questionnaires returned	58	18.5
Nonreachable, addressee left company	14	3.2
<u>Third Follow-up Mailing</u>		
Questionnaires mailed	241	
Questionnaires returned	19	7.9
<u>Total Returns from Respondents</u>	206	48.13 <sup>b</sup>

a Percentage increment of responses based on a potential sample of 442.

b Response rate =  $\frac{\text{Total Number Returned [206]}}{\text{Sample [442] - Nonreachable [14]}} (100)$

to this mailing resulted in an 18.5 percent response rate or 58 questionnaires. After the second mailing, fourteen buyers were identified as no longer reachable. The third mailing of 241 questionnaires resulted in a 7.9 percent response rate or 19 questionnaires.

Total response from the initial 442 questionnaires was 206 usable questionnaires. This response yielded a 48.13 percent response rate (see Table V).

#### Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 206 retail apparel buyers from department stores located in the West South Central region of the United States. Table VI provides a summary of the sample characteristics. Almost 60 percent of the respondents were from Texas, while 4.9 percent were from Oklahoma, 21.8 percent were from Louisiana, and 13.6 percent were from Arkansas.

One hundred and forty-eight respondents were female (71.8%) and fifty-eight were males (28.2%). Two-thirds of the respondents were under 40 years of age. Of those 40 years of age, about one-half were under the age of 30. Sixteen of the respondents were over the age of 60.

The sample was well educated with a majority (97.5%) having completed high school. In addition, one hundred and fifteen (55.8%) had completed college and twenty (9.7%) had either completed some graduate work or had a graduate degree. Only two respondents had not completed high school.

TABLE VI  
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Variable	f <sup>a</sup>	%
Number by State (N=206)		
Arkansas	28	13.6
Louisiana	45	21.8
Oklahoma	10	4.9
Texas	123	59.7
Sex (N=206)		
Males	58	28.2
Females	148	71.8
Age (N=206)		
20-29	66	32.0
30-39	74	35.9
40-49	32	15.5
50-59	18	8.7
60 & over	16	7.8
Education (N=206)		
Some High School	2	1.0
Completed High School	18	8.7
Vocational/Technical training beyond high school	3	1.5
Some College	45	21.8
Completed College	115	55.8
Some Graduate Work	13	6.3
A Graduate Degree	7	3.4
Other	3	1.5
Compensation (N=200)		
\$10,000-14,999	15	7.5
15,000-19,999	20	10.0
20,000-29,999	51	25.5
30,000-49,999	94	47.0
50,000-69,999	12	6.0
70,000 or more	8	4.0
Total Years Retail Buyer (N=206)		
Less than 1 year	8	3.9
1 year to 23 months	19	9.2
2-5 years	57	27.7
6-10 years	49	23.8
11-15 years	33	16.0
More than 15 years	40	19.4

TABLE VI (CONTINUED)

Variable	f <sup>a</sup>	%
Years This Position (N=206)		
Less than 1 year	34	16.5
1 year to 23 months	37	18.0
2-5 years	74	35.9
6-10 years	37	18.0
11-15 years	9	4.4
More than 15 years	15	7.3
Total Years <u>This</u> Company (N=205)		
Less than 1 year	3	1.5
1 year to 23 months	19	9.3
2-5 years	67	32.7
6-10 years	67	32.7
11-15 years	22	10.7
More than 15 years	27	13.2

<sup>a</sup>f is the frequency of responses.

The three respondents who selected "other" were omitted from further analysis on level of education since "other" was not defined.

Regarding total compensation, more than half of the respondents had salaries exceeding \$30,000. The majority (47%) fell in the \$30,000 - 40,000 range. Only eight (4%) respondents made \$70,000 or more while fifteen (7.5%) of the respondents made \$10,000 - 14,000. Six respondents chose not to answer this question.

More than three-fourths of the respondents had been retail buyers for more than two years. A large number (40 or 19.4%) of the respondents had been buyers longer than fifteen years, while only 8 or 3.9 percent had been retail buyers for less than one year.

A relatively large proportion of buyers (34.5 %) had been in their present position for less than two years. In comparison, a smaller proportion of buyers had been in their present positions for eleven or more years (11.7 %). The largest number (74 or 35.9%) had been in their present positions for 2 - 5 years.

Twenty-two respondents had been with their employing company for less than two years. The largest proportion of respondents had been with their employing company for 2 - 10 years (65.4 %), while twenty-seven respondents had been with their present employer for more than 15 years.

## Testing of the Hypotheses

Two major hypotheses were tested as described in Chapter III. In the following sections, the results of each hypothesis test are reported and discussed.

### Hypothesis 1

The first null hypothesis, that in a situation of decision making uncertainty there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and product characteristics, was rejected. The analysis of variance procedure compared the means of the information source ratings for each product characteristic. There were significant differences in the degree of importance buyers placed on each information source when uncertain about a particular product characteristic. In the following paragraphs results related to each product characteristic will be discussed individually.

Quality. When apparel buyers were uncertain about quality, the importance placed on the six information sources was significantly different (see Table VII). A Tukey post hoc test was performed to determine which means were significantly different.

The highest mean ( $\bar{M}=3.29$ ) was obtained by the information source "another buyer/peers". A Tukey post hoc test revealed no significant differences between the importance buyers placed on "upper management" ( $\bar{M}=3.01$ ), "another buyer/peers" ( $\bar{M}=3.29$ ), and "sales representative"

TABLE VII

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS BY INFORMATION SOURCES

Product Characteristic	Information Source*						significance	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	F-value	of F
Quality**	3.01 <sup>abc</sup>	2.89 <sup>bcd</sup>	3.29 <sup>a</sup>	3.10 <sup>ab</sup>	2.59 <sup>d</sup>	2.77 <sup>cd</sup>	10.51	.0001
Anticipated Margin	3.60 <sup>a</sup>	2.54 <sup>d</sup>	2.96 <sup>bc</sup>	3.17 <sup>b</sup>	2.18 <sup>e</sup>	2.73 <sup>cd</sup>	41.34	.0001
Expected Sales	3.32 <sup>a</sup>	2.80 <sup>cd</sup>	3.15 <sup>ab</sup>	3.15 <sup>ab</sup>	2.54 <sup>d</sup>	2.94 <sup>bc</sup>	14.22	.0001
Consumer Demand	3.29 <sup>a</sup>	3.02 <sup>ab</sup>	3.27 <sup>a</sup>	3.17 <sup>ab</sup>	2.93 <sup>b</sup>	3.22 <sup>ab</sup>	3.95	.0015
Aesthetics	3.07 <sup>a</sup>	2.67 <sup>b</sup>	3.12 <sup>a</sup>	2.94 <sup>ab</sup>	2.66 <sup>b</sup>	2.65 <sup>b</sup>	8.66	.0001

\* Information Sources = (1) upper management; (2) buying office; (3) another buyer/peers; (4) sales representative; (5) trade publications; (6) competition.

\*\* Based on Tukey post hoc test, means with the same letter are not significantly different.

( $\bar{M}$ =3.10) when uncertain about quality. Buyers placed a similar degree of importance on these sources of information when uncertain about quality.

Buyers considered "trade publications" ( $\bar{M}$ =2.59) to be the least important source of information when uncertain about quality. Buyers placed the same degree of importance on the "buying office" ( $\bar{M}$ =2.89), "trade publications" ( $\bar{M}$ =2.59), and "competition" ( $\bar{M}$ =2.77).

One explanation for these results is that trade publications may not specifically address the quality of an apparel item. On the other hand, another buyer/peers may be familiar with the quality of a particular brand or item and thus be a better source of information. Likewise, upper management or a sales representative would be likely to possess information on quality that might make them a more important source of information.

Anticipated Margin. Significant differences in information source importance were found when buyers were uncertain about anticipated margin (see Table VII). The most important information source was upper management ( $\bar{M}$ =3.60). The importance buyers placed on upper management when uncertain about anticipated margin was significantly different from the importance they placed on all other sources of information.

Trade publications received the lowest mean ( $\bar{M}$ =2.18). Buyers considered "another buyer/peers" and "sales representatives" to be of the same importance, as well as



"another buyer/peers" and "competition". In addition, buyers considered the "buying office" and the "competition" to be of the same importance with means of 2.54 and 2.73 respectively.

Trade publication may have been rated lowest because publications do not assess the marginal needs (anticipated margin) of individual stores. In comparison, upper management, the most important source, could provide exact anticipated margin goals.

Expected Sales. Upper management was rated as the most important source of information ( $\bar{M}=3.32$ ) when buyers were uncertain about expected sales. Trade publication was the least important source of information ( $\bar{M}=2.54$ ). Buyers placed the same importance on "upper management" ( $\bar{M}=3.32$ ), "another buyer/peers" ( $\bar{M}=3.15$ ), and "sales representatives" ( $\bar{M}=3.15$ ) when uncertain about expected sales. These buyers also rated the "buying office" and the "competition" as having the same degree of importance as a source of information.

It is logical that "upper management" was rated as the most important source of information since they would have access to expected sales for their company. Therefore, a buyer who is uncertain about expected sales would be able to obtain the most accurate information from upper management. In addition, upper management may have experience with a particular product and be better equipped to project expected sales. Upper managements' experience in the

marketplace may be another reason buyers believe them to be a good judge of expected sales.

Consumer Demand. There were significant differences in the importance buyers placed on the various information sources when uncertain about consumer demand. However, fewer differences between information sources were found for this product characteristic. Buyers rated "upper management", "the buying office", "another buyer/peers", "sales representative" and "competition" similarly. Also, buyers considered the "buying office", "sales representative", "trade publications", and "competition" to be of the same importance.

One explanation for the similarity in information source ratings is that additional information from any source may be helpful. Consumer demand for an apparel item is hard to determine due to changing consumer tastes and fashions. Each information source may provide a different view of consumer demand. When these different views are used together, they may provide the buyer with a broader perspective on consumer demand.

Aesthetics. "Another buyer/peers" was rated by retail apparel buyers as the most important source of information when uncertain about the aesthetics of an apparel item. The information sources less important to the apparel buyers in providing them with additional information when uncertain about aesthetics were "buying office" ( $\bar{M}=2.67$ ), "sales representative" ( $\bar{M}=2.94$ ), "trade publications" ( $\bar{M}=2.66$ ), and

"competition" ( $\bar{M}=2.65$ ). The source most important to the apparel buyers was "another buyer/peers" ( $\bar{M}=3.12$ ).

"Another buyer/peers" may have been the most important information source due to the nature of the product characteristic, aesthetics. Aesthetics is an intrinsic product characteristic. An intrinsic characteristic is one which is related to the real nature of a product. It would be harder for someone/thing that was removed from the actual product, such as competition, to provide information about aesthetics. On the other hand, "another buyer/peers" possibly in direct contact with a product might provide an intrinsic evaluation of the product.

Based on the findings presented for each of the five product characteristics (quality, anticipated margin, expected sales consumer demand, and aesthetics), the first null hypothesis was rejected.

#### Relation of These Findings to Previous Studies

In this study, buyers selected "upper management" as the most important source of information when uncertain about three of the five product characteristics (anticipated margin, expected sales, consumer demand). Therefore, "upper management" was the most important information source in this study. In addition, buyers considered "another buyer/peers" as the most important source of information when uncertain about the remaining two product characteristics (quality, aesthetics). "Another

buyer/peers" was thus the second most important source of information in this study.

These findings were similar to findings reported by Miler (1987) and Mazursky and Hirschman (1987). Miler concluded that upper management was the most important source of information and another buyer was the third most important source of information. Mazursky and Hirschman found the most important information sources were internal and personal in nature. Internal and personal sources may include the buyer's own experience or another source in the organization who is close and personal to the buyer. The Mazursky and Hirschman findings are similar to the findings of this study in that upper management and another buyer/peers could be classified as internal personal sources.

The results of this study do not support earlier findings of Francis and Brown (1985-1986), Stone (1987), or Hirschman and Mazursky (1982). Francis and Brown found personal selling (sales representative) to be the most important information source, while Stone found competing stores to be the most important information source. Hirschman and Mazursky found the buyer's personal judgement (self) to be the most important source of information. Differences in these findings could be due to geographical or sample differences. Another reason could be that this study examined information source importance when considering a specific product characteristic. The other

studies only considered information source importance in general.

### Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2, that in a situation of decision making uncertainty, there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the background of the buyer, was assessed by testing three subhypotheses. These subhypotheses are based on Sheth's (1973) model of industrial buyer behavior. According to Sheth the variables (role orientation, lifestyle, and specialized education) compose an individuals background. The statistical testing of each subhypothesis is discussed in the following sections.

Hypothesis 2.1. The subhypothesis that there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the buyer's role orientation was rejected (see Table VIII). The summed scores for the role ambiguity and role conflict scales were dichotimized to form high and low level groups at the median split. This was done to aid in the analysis and discussion.

There were no significant differences in the importance placed on the information sources based on level of role ambiguity. Further, no significant differences were found in the importance placed on five of the information sources based on level of role conflict. Buyers did rate the importance of "another buyer/peers" differently based on

TABLE VIII

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR INFORMATION SOURCE IMPORTANCE  
BY ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY

INFORMATION SOURCES	ROLE AMBIGUITY				ROLE CONFLICT			
	LOW	HIGH	F-VALUE	SIG.	LOW	HIGH	F-VALUE	SIG.
Upper Management	3.15	3.36	2.74	N.S.	3.28	3.24	.10	N.S.
Buying Office	2.82	2.75	.30	N.S.	2.82	2.75	.30	N.S.
Another Buyer/Peers	3.21	3.10	.74	N.S.	3.30	3.01	5.60	.0189
Sales Representative	3.13	3.08	.19	N.S.	3.14	3.07	.41	N.S.
Trade Publications	2.59	2.57	.01	N.S.	2.69	2.47	3.25	N.S.
Competition	2.91	2.82	.46	N.S.	2.96	2.76	2.53	N.S.

their level of role conflict. Buyers in the low role conflict group rated the information source "another buyer/peers" as more important than buyers in the high role conflict group.

Only one of the information sources was affected by the buyers' role orientation. However, based on the findings the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2.2. The subhypothesis that there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the buyer's lifestyles was rejected. There were significant differences in the importance buyers placed on an information source based on their value ratings (see Table IX).

Lifestyles were measured using nine value items from Kahle's (1985) List of Values. Each of the nine value items was dichotomized to form high and low value groups. Buyers rating a value either 7, 8, or 9 were categorized as being in the high value group (that value was highly important in their life) while those rating a value 6 or less were categorized as being in the low value group (that value was less important in their life). The split between 6 and 7 was generally the median; therefore, to maintain consistency each value was split at this point.

The importance placed on upper management as an information source was significantly different for buyers in the high value groups and those in the low value groups for the value items "being well respected", "security", "self-

TABLE IX  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR LIST OF VALUE SOURCES BY INFORMATION SOURCES

Item*	<u>Upper Management</u>				<u>Buying Office</u>			
	Low	High	F-value	significance of F	Low	High	F-value	significance of F
1	3.15	3.30	.94	N.S.	2.60	2.85	2.81	N.S.
2	3.12	3.33	2.52	N.S.	2.72	2.82	.50	N.S.
3	3.21	3.27	.16	N.S.	2.58	2.85	3.00	N.S.
4	2.41	3.27	2.89	N.S.	1.53	2.81	6.91	.0092
5	2.73	3.31	6.14	.0140	2.39	2.82	3.22	N.S.
6	3.17	3.27	.32	N.S.	2.43	2.84	4.67	.0318
7	2.94	3.31	4.07	.0449	2.72	2.80	.17	N.S.
8	2.33	3.29	6.27	.0131	1.77	2.81	7.22	.0078
9	2.21	3.28	5.01	.0263	2.32	2.79	.93	N.S.



TABLE IX (CONTINUED)

Item *	<u>Another Buyer/Peers</u>				<u>Sales Representative</u>			
	Low	High	F-value	significance of F	Low	High	F-value	significance of F
1	3.00	3.21	2.64	N.S.	2.84	3.21	9.66	.0022
2	2.99	3.25	3.90	.0495	3.02	3.16	1.50	N.S.
3	2.98	3.22	2.83	N.S.	2.88	3.18	5.48	.0203
4	2.05	3.18	6.30	.0128	3.05	3.11	.02	N.S.
5	2.83	3.19	2.71	N.S.	2.82	3.13	2.64	N.S.
6	2.80	3.22	5.97	.0154	2.71	3.17	9.29	.0026
7	3.09	3.17	.18	N.S.	2.91	3.14	2.16	N.S.
8	2.27	3.18	6.55	.0112	2.90	3.11	.43	N.S.
9	2.26	3.17	4.08	.0446	2.58	3.12	1.76	N.S.

TABLE IX (CONTINUED)

Item*	<u>Trade Publications</u>				<u>Competition</u>			
	Low	High	F-value	significance of F	Low	High	F-value	significance of F
1	2.30	2.69	8.64	.0037	2.58	2.97	7.65	.0062
2	2.36	2.70	7.49	.0068	2.68	2.96	4.48	.0355
3	2.35	2.66	5.01	.0263	2.67	2.92	2.97	N.S.
4	1.95	2.60	2.14	N.S.	2.37	2.87	1.14	N.S.
5	2.17	2.62	4.52	.0347	2.73	2.87	.42	N.S.
6	2.25	2.64	5.20	.0236	2.61	2.90	2.61	N.S.
7	2.55	2.59	.03	N.S.	2.66	2.90	1.80	N.S.
8	2.50	2.58	.05	N.S.	3.03	2.86	.22	N.S.
9	1.68	2.60	4.34	.0385	2.84	2.86	.00	N.S.

\* Item = (1) sense of belonging; (2) excitement; (3) warm relationships with others; (4) self-fulfillment; (5) being well-respected; (6) fun and enjoyment in life; (7) security; (8) self-respect; (9) a sense of accomplishment.

respect", and "a sense of accomplishment". In each case, a greater degree of importance was placed on upper management by the high value groups than by the low value groups (see Table IX).

Those who value security on the job may be concerned with the security of their position. Upper management may have influence on the security of an individual's position. Buyers who valued security tended to consider upper management as an important source of information under circumstances of uncertainty.

In rating the importance of a buying office as an information source, differences in the importance rating were found based on value ratings. For the value items "self-fulfillment", "fun and enjoyment in life", and "self-respect", the high value groups placed a greater degree of importance on the buying office than did the low value groups.

According to Kahle (1984), persons who value self-fulfillment prefer more challenging tasks. As a result of spending time with the more challenging tasks, self-fulfillers value convenience products and especially services. In relation to this study, the buying office is a service to the department store. Therefore, buyers in this study who value self-fulfillment in their life might consider the buying office an important information source. Using the buying office may free up time for more challenging tasks.

Another buyer/peers as an information source was rated differently by buyers in the low value groups and those in the high value groups for the value items "excitement", "self-fulfillment", "fun and enjoyment in life", "self-respect", and "sense of accomplishment" (see Table IX). For these items, the high value groups placed a greater degree of importance on "another buyer/peers" than did the low value groups.

The importance placed on sales representatives as an information source was significantly different for buyers in the high value groups and those in the low value groups for the value items "sense of belonging", "warm relationships with others", and "fun and enjoyment in life". In each case, a greater degree of importance was placed on sales representatives by the high value groups than by the low value groups (see Table IX).

Those who value a sense of belonging generally view themselves as belonging to something (Kahle, 1985). Possibly, those buyers who valued a sense of belonging, view themselves as having a close relationship with a particular sales representative. Buyers who utilize one particular sales representative extensively may feel a bond with that sales representative. As a result, buyers who value a sense of belonging and have a close relationship with one sales representative would consider that sales representative an important information source.

In rating the importance of trade publications as an information source, differences in the importance rating

were found based on value ratings. For the value items "sense of belonging", "excitement", "warm relationships with others", "being well-respected", "fun and enjoyment in life", and "a sense of accomplishment", the high value groups placed a greater degree of importance on trade publications than did the low value groups (see Table IX).

Competition as an information source was rated differently by buyers in the low value groups and those in the high value groups for the value items "sense of belonging" and "excitement". For these items, the high value groups placed a greater degree of importance on competition than did the low value groups.

This analysis indicates that those values which are important in an individual's life, do have an affect on how the individual uses information when uncertain about product characteristics.

Hypothesis 2.3. The subhypothesis that there will be no difference between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the buyer's specialized education was rejected. The first four questions in section IV of the questionnaire were used to measure the specialized education of the buyers. Specifically, these questions measured years as a retail buyer, years in present position, years at present store, and level of education. Each question tapped an aspect of a buyer's specialized education.

There were significant differences between ratings of upper management importance based on years as a retail buyer

(see Table X). Upper management as an information source received the highest importance ratings by buyers who had less than one year of buying experience ( $\bar{M}=4.18$ ). Those who had been buyers for 6 - 10 years ( $\bar{M}=3.08$ ) rated upper management less important as an information source than buyers in any of the other experience groupings.

A Tukey post hoc test revealed that differences in importance placed on upper management as an information source were between those buyers with less than 1 year of experience and those with 6 - 10 years of experience. No other significant differences were found between the information importance ratings based on years as a retail buyer. It appears that those with less experience may go to upper management when uncertain more so than those with more experience.

Buyers were asked to indicate how long they had been in their present position. Years in present position accounted for only one statistically significant relationship (see Table XI). The importance placed on a sales representative as a source of information differed significantly based on the years a buyer had been in their current position. Buyers who had been in their present position for 1 to 5 years and more than 11 years rated the sales representative similarly as a source of information. The importance buyers placed on the sales representative as an information source was significantly different for those who had been in their position for less than a year and those who had been in their positions for 1 year to 23 months. Those who had been

TABLE X

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR INFORMATION SOURCES BY YEARS AS A RETAIL BUYER

Information Sources**	Categories*						Significance	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	F-value	of F
A1***	4.18 <sup>a</sup>	3.71 <sup>ab</sup>	3.24 <sup>ab</sup>	3.08 <sup>b</sup>	3.17 <sup>ab</sup>	3.17 <sup>ab</sup>	3.06	.0110
A2	3.00 <sup>a</sup>	3.19 <sup>a</sup>	2.70 <sup>a</sup>	2.71 <sup>a</sup>	2.54 <sup>a</sup>	2.96 <sup>a</sup>	1.65	N.S.
A3	3.51 <sup>a</sup>	3.53 <sup>a</sup>	2.95 <sup>a</sup>	3.20 <sup>a</sup>	3.24 <sup>a</sup>	3.08 <sup>a</sup>	1.75	N.S.
A4	3.13 <sup>a</sup>	3.46 <sup>a</sup>	3.07 <sup>a</sup>	3.00 <sup>a</sup>	2.99 <sup>a</sup>	3.22 <sup>a</sup>	1.30	N.S.
A5	2.95 <sup>a</sup>	2.85 <sup>a</sup>	2.48 <sup>a</sup>	2.60 <sup>a</sup>	2.48 <sup>a</sup>	2.58 <sup>a</sup>	.93	N.S.
A6	2.90 <sup>a</sup>	3.02 <sup>a</sup>	2.65 <sup>a</sup>	2.89 <sup>a</sup>	2.95 <sup>a</sup>	2.97 <sup>a</sup>	.89	N.S.

\* Categories = (1) less than 1 year; (2) 1 year to 23 months; (3) 2-5 years; (4) 6-10 years; (5) 11-15 years; (6) more than 15 years.

\*\* Information sources = (A1) upper management; (A2) buying office; (A3) another buyer/peers; (A4) sales representative; (A5) trade publications; (A6) competition.

\*\*\* Based on Tukey post hoc test, means with the same letter are not significantly different.

Table XI

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR INFORMATION SOURCES AND YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION

Information Sources**	Categories*					Significance	
	1	2	3	4	5	F-value	of F
A1***	3.20 <sup>a</sup>	3.45 <sup>a</sup>	3.15 <sup>a</sup>	3.33 <sup>a</sup>	3.26 <sup>a</sup>	.75	N.S.
A2	2.86 <sup>a</sup>	2.63 <sup>a</sup>	2.79 <sup>a</sup>	2.89 <sup>a</sup>	2.75 <sup>a</sup>	.42	N.S.
A3	3.03 <sup>a</sup>	3.42 <sup>a</sup>	3.11 <sup>a</sup>	3.16 <sup>a</sup>	3.06 <sup>a</sup>	1.14	N.S.
A4	2.68 <sup>a</sup>	3.49 <sup>c</sup>	3.15 <sup>bc</sup>	2.89 <sup>ab</sup>	3.34 <sup>bc</sup>	6.57	.0001
A5	2.72 <sup>a</sup>	2.50 <sup>a</sup>	2.57 <sup>a</sup>	2.49 <sup>a</sup>	2.69 <sup>a</sup>	.50	N.S.
A6	2.77 <sup>a</sup>	2.75 <sup>a</sup>	2.85 <sup>a</sup>	2.97 <sup>a</sup>	3.03 <sup>a</sup>	.53	N.S.

\* Categories = (1) less than 1 year; (2) 1 year to 23 months; (3) 2-5 years; (4) 6-10 years; (5) more than 11 years.

\*\* Information Sources = (A1) upper management; (A2) buying office; (A3) another buyer/peers; (A4) sales representative; (A5) trade publications; (A6) competition.

\*\*\* Based on Tukey post hoc test, means with the same letter are not significantly different.



in their positions for 1 year to 23 months rated the sales representative as highly important ( $M=3.49$ ), whereas, the sales representative was not as important to those who had been there for less than a year.

One explanation for this finding may be that newly employed buyers may be more concerned with learning the job. They may not yet know enough about the boundaries of their job to utilize outside sources of information. Another explanation might be that relationships have not yet been developed enough to warrant utilizing sales representatives.

There was no significant difference in the importance placed on the various information sources based on the number of years the buyer had been at their current store (see Table XII).

There were significant differences between the ratings of information source importance based on the level of education (see Table XIII). The significant differences occurred for two of the information sources: upper management and trade publications.

When considering upper management, those who had some high school, had completed high school, or had vocational/technical training beyond high school rated information sources differently from those who had completed college, done some graduate work, or who possessed a graduate degree. However, there was no difference in importance ratings for those with some high school, a high school degree, and vocational/technical training beyond high school and those who only had some college. Also, those who

TABLE XII

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR INFORMATION SOURCES BY YEARS AT THIS STORE

Information Sources**	Categories*				F-value	Significance of F
	1	2	3	4		
A1***	3.29 <sup>a</sup>	3.22 <sup>a</sup>	3.25 <sup>a</sup>	3.31 <sup>a</sup>	.10	N.S.
A2	2.70 <sup>a</sup>	2.90 <sup>a</sup>	2.74 <sup>a</sup>	2.72 <sup>a</sup>	.50	N.S.
A3	3.41 <sup>a</sup>	3.23 <sup>a</sup>	3.01 <sup>a</sup>	3.14 <sup>a</sup>	1.39	N.S.
A4	3.18 <sup>a</sup>	3.11 <sup>a</sup>	3.01 <sup>a</sup>	3.20 <sup>a</sup>	.63	N.S.
A5	2.67 <sup>a</sup>	2.67 <sup>a</sup>	2.48 <sup>a</sup>	2.55 <sup>a</sup>	.66	N.S.
A6	2.75 <sup>a</sup>	2.94 <sup>a</sup>	2.73 <sup>a</sup>	2.98 <sup>a</sup>	1.01	N.S.

\* Categories = (1) less than 23 months; (2) 2-5 years; (3) 6-10 years; (4) more than 11 years.

\*\* Information Sources = (A1) upper management; (A2) buying office; (A3) another buyer/peers; (A4) sales representative; (A5) trade publications; (A6) competition.

\*\*\* Based on Tukey post hoc test, means with the same letter are not significantly different.

TABLE XIII

## ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR INFORMATION SOURCES BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Information Sources**	Categories*				F-value	Significance of F
	1	2	3	4		
A1***	3.81 <sup>a</sup>	3.27 <sup>ab</sup>	3.17 <sup>b</sup>	3.00 <sup>b</sup>	3.62	.0142
A2	2.89 <sup>a</sup>	2.81 <sup>a</sup>	2.77 <sup>a</sup>	2.58 <sup>a</sup>	.39	N.S.
A3	3.05 <sup>a</sup>	3.24 <sup>a</sup>	3.14 <sup>a</sup>	3.03 <sup>a</sup>	.39	N.S.
A4	3.22 <sup>a</sup>	3.13 <sup>a</sup>	3.07 <sup>a</sup>	3.01 <sup>a</sup>	.34	N.S.
A5	2.97 <sup>a</sup>	2.75 <sup>a</sup>	2.51 <sup>ab</sup>	2.06 <sup>b</sup>	5.50	.0012
A6	3.05 <sup>a</sup>	3.12 <sup>a</sup>	2.74 <sup>a</sup>	2.59 <sup>a</sup>	2.96	N.S.

\* Categories = (1) some high school, completed high school, vocational/technical training beyond high school; (2) some college; (3) completed college; (4) some graduate work, a graduate degree.

\*\* Information Sources = (A1) upper management; (A2) buying office; (A3) another buyer/peers; (A4) sales representative; (A5) trade publications; (A6) competition.

\*\*\* Based on Tukey post hoc test, means with the same letter are not significantly different.

had some high school, completed high school, or had vocational/technical training beyond high school placed more importance on upper management as an information source than did the other groups. One explanation may be that those who were less educated were less certain about their jobs than those who were more educated and thus, relied more on upper management.

When considering trade publications, those who had a high level of education (completed college, some graduate work, a graduate degree) rated trade publications as less important than those with a lower level of education. Conversely, buyers with the least amount of education considered trade publications as the most important source of information. Possibly, buyers with more education are using sources that are more technical than trade publications.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Much research has been conducted on organizational buying behavior. However, the majority of the studies have considered only industrial buyers. Little research attention has been given to retail buyers and their buying processes. Research on retail apparel buying has been regrettably neglected. The literature posits that retail buying is vastly different from industrial buying in terms of the buying environment. Considering this, the realm of retail apparel buying may also be vastly different.

The current study was conducted to better understand the retail apparel buyer and the process of buyer decision making. A portion of Sheth's (1973) model of industrial buyer behavior was examined to determine if the process was applicable for retail apparel buyers. The primary intent was to extend the knowledge of retail apparel buyer behavior and determine variables important in the buying process.

The objectives of this study were 1) to identify the information sources retail apparel buyers utilize when uncertain about particular product characteristics, and 2) to determine if retail apparel buyers' backgrounds are associated with their utilization of different information

sources when uncertain about particular product characteristics.

### Summary of Procedures

Apparel buyers working in retail department stores in the West South Central region of the United States participated in this study. These stores, were chosen based on their size, sales volume, and location.

A self-administered mail questionnaire was used for data collection. One reminder postcard and three mailings were sent to achieve a 48.13 percent response rate. A total of 442 questionnaires were sent and 206 usable questionnaires were received.

Three subcomponents of the expectations component in Sheth's (1973) model of industrial buyer behavior guided the objectives of this study. The specific subcomponents were background of the buyer, active search, and information sources. Instruments were chosen and devised to measure each subcomponent of the larger expectations component.

Analysis of variance was used for hypothesis testing. Tukey post hoc tests were performed on all significant AOV tests to determine the nature of the significant results.

### Summary of Findings

Frequency distributions indicated that the sample was predominantly female (71.8%), well educated (55.8% had completed college), and under age 40 (67.9%). The majority of the respondents had been buyers for six years or more

(59.2%). In addition, the majority of the buyers had been with their current employer for six years or more (56.6%). A large proportion of the buyers had been in their present position for five years or less (70.4%).

The independent variables in the study included five product characteristics (quality, anticipated margin, expected sales, consumer demand, and aesthetics) a measure of role ambiguity/conflict, nine lifestyle values, and four measures of an individual's specialized education. The dependent variables in this study consisted of the importance ratings for six information sources.

The first hypothesis, that in a situation of decision making uncertainty there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and product characteristics, was rejected. There were differences in the importance ratings buyers placed on the various information sources when uncertain about different product characteristics. Tukey post hoc tests were used to assess these differences.

When a buyer was uncertain about an intrinsic quality of a product, such as quality or aesthetics, they tended to place a greater amount of importance on another buyer/peers as a source of additional information. However, when the buyer's uncertainty stemmed from an extrinsic product characteristic such as expected sales or anticipated margin, the buyer tended to place the greatest amount of importance on upper management as a source of additional information.

The second hypothesis, that in a situation of decision making uncertainty, there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail apparel buyer and the background of the buyer, was assessed by considering three subhypotheses. The following variables from Sheth's (1973) model were used to assess a buyer's background: role ambiguity/conflict, lifestyles, and a buyers specialized education.

A buyer's level of role ambiguity was not related to the importance a buyer placed on the various information sources when uncertain about the five product characteristics. However, those buyers with a low level of role conflict tended to rate "another buyer/peers" as an important source of information.

The nine items which measured a buyer's lifestyle generated the most fascinating results. Using analysis of variance it was determined that certain values were related to the importance a buyer placed on an information source. For example, security, a stability value, was related to the importance placed on "upper management" as an information source. Also, fun and enjoyment in life was related to the importance placed on "another buyer/peers". The values which buyers rated as important in their life were in some ways related to information source importance.

The buyers specialized education did account for some significant differences in the importance they placed on the six information sources. Those buyers with less education or less experience rated upper management more important as



a source of information than those who had more experience or more education. In addition, it was determined that those with less education tended to consider trade publications as an important source of information. There were no significant differences between the ratings of information source importance based on the length of time the buyers had been at their current store.

The second hypothesis, that in a situation of decision making uncertainty, there will be no relationship between sources of information utilized by a retail buyer and the background of the buyer, was rejected. The various background factors used in this study (specialized education, role orientation, and lifestyles) did affect the importance buyers' placed on the information sources.

The Sheth (1973) model did prove to be an applicable guide for assessing a retail apparel buyer's purchasing process. When buyers were uncertain they rated the importance of information sources differently based on the product characteristic under question.

A buyer's background had a limited effect upon their utilization of various information sources. Buyer lifestyle factors were associated with usage of information sources. Some of the educational factors were also determinants. Role orientation, in this study, had little affect on decision making except in relation to role conflict and the use of "another buyer/peers" as an information source. Although role orientation was not a significant variable in

this study, it might prove to be highly important when considering other product characteristics.

### Implications

Apparel buyers do utilize different sources of information when they are uncertain about particular product characteristics. The findings could be important for industry professionals. If management knew where buyers were going for additional information when experiencing uncertainty, management could strive to make sure those target sources were supplying correct information. Also, since buyers with less education and experience consider upper management an important source of information, upper management could try to make themselves more available to this group. In addition, the Sheth (1973) model did prove applicable in the retailing realm and thus provides a model for other retailing researchers.

### Recommendations for Future Study

The following recommendations for future research are suggested:

1. Conduct a survey utilizing another region of the United States. The current results represent buyers from the West South Central region. This sample, due to some macro environmental factor in the West South Central region, may not be representative of the entire population.

2. Conduct a survey utilizing different product characteristics and information sources. This study

focused on five product characteristics and six information sources; however, others may explain the uncertainty factor more accurately.

3. Investigate the association between the nine lifestyle values and the buyers decision process. Also, conduct additional research and have buyers choose the one most important value and determine if that one value is associated with information source usage.

4. Conduct a study to determine if there is a different level of uncertainty when considering intrinsic and extrinsic product characteristics. In addition, determine if there is a pattern of information source usage when buyers are uncertain about intrinsic and extrinsic product characteristics.

5. Conduct a study which assesses a buyer's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with past purchases to determine if level of satisfaction has an effect on information source usage.

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**APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A  
CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE SURVEY

## COVER LETTER FOR FIRST MAILING



*Oklahoma State University*

DEPARTMENT OF CLOTHING, TEXTILES & MERCHANDISING  
COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74078-0317  
HOME ECONOMICS WEST 312  
(405) 624-5034

September 27, 1988

Dear

As a retail apparel buyer you are all too aware of the role of uncertainty in purchasing decisions. In an effort to better understand methods for reducing uncertainty in retail buying, we are asking for approximately fifteen (15) minutes of your valuable time to assist us in an important research project by completing the enclosed questionnaire.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by October 11. Sharing your experiences and opinions will be an asset to the success of this study. Thank you in advance for voluntarily completing the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Laura D. Jolly  
Associate Professor

Cindi Anthony  
Research Assistant

Enclosures



## POSTCARD REMINDER

Last week a questionnaire concerning retail apparel buyers was mailed to you. This survey is designed to gain information regarding your decision making process.

If you have already completed and returned it to us please accept our sincere thanks. If not, could you please do so today? This survey has only been sent to a small, but representative, sample of retail apparel buyers. It is extremely important that your responses be included so the results will accurately represent decision making processes of retail apparel buyers.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire or it got misplaced, please call us at (405) 744-5035 and we will send another one in the mail to you today.

Sincerely,

Laura D. Jolly  
Associate Professor

Cindi Anthony  
Research Assistant

## COVER LETTER FOR SECOND MAILING



*Oklahoma State University*

DEPARTMENT OF CLOTHING, TEXTILES & MERCHANDISING  
COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74078-0337  
HOME ECONOMICS WEST 312  
(405) 744-5035

October 18, 1988

About three weeks ago we sent you a questionnaire concerning uncertainty in retail apparel buying. As of today we have not received your response. If you have returned the questionnaire, we appreciate it. If not, a duplicate questionnaire and self-addressed, stamped envelope are enclosed.

Your name was selected as one of a small number of retail apparel buyers. Your response is needed to ensure that replies truly reflect the opinions of retail apparel buyers.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Laura D. Jolly  
Associate Professor

Cindi Anthony  
Research Assistant

Enclosures



## COVER LETTER FOR THIRD MAILING



*Oklahoma State University*

DEPARTMENT OF CLOTHING, TEXTILES & MERCHANDISING  
COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74078-0337  
HOME ECONOMICS WEST 312  
(405) 744-5035

November 15, 1988

We are writing to you about our study of uncertainty in retail apparel buying. We have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

The large number of questionnaires returned is very encouraging. But, whether we will be able to describe accurately how retail apparel buyers deal with uncertainty depends upon you and others who have not yet responded. This is because our past experiences suggest that those of you who have not yet sent in your questionnaire may hold quite different opinions than those who have.

It is for this reason that we are sending you this letter. In case our other correspondence did not reach you, a replacement questionnaire is enclosed. May we urge you to complete and return it as quickly as possible.

Your contribution to the success of this study will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Laura D. Jolly  
Associate Professor

Cindi Anthony  
Research Assistant

Enclosures



**APPENDIX B**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

## RETAIL APPAREL BUYER SURVEY

Please answer all the questions to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers. Your answers are important to the success of the study.

### Section I

In this section of the questionnaire, we are measuring the importance you place on information sources, merchandise factors and vendor factors when making a purchase decision as a retail buyer.

**INFORMATION SOURCES:** Please indicate the degree of importance you place on each source of information when making a purchase decision as a retail buyer by circling a response to the right of each information source.

	<i>Not at all Important</i>	<i>Slightly Important</i>	<i>Moderately Important</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Extremely Important</i>
1. Upper Management	1	2	3	4	5
2. Buying Office	1	2	3	4	5
3. Another Buyer/Peers	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sales Representative	1	2	3	4	5
5. Trade Publications	1	2	3	4	5
6. Competition	1	2	3	4	5

**VENDOR FACTORS:** Please indicate the degree of importance you place on each vendor factor when making a purchase decision as a retail buyer by circling a response to the right of each vendor factor.

	<i>Not at all Important</i>	<i>Slightly Important</i>	<i>Moderately Important</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Extremely Important</i>
1. Terms of sale	1	2	3	4	5
2. Promotional incentives	1	2	3	4	5
3. Reputation of vendor	1	2	3	4	5
4. Past experience with vendor	1	2	3	4	5
5. Financial condition of vendor	1	2	3	4	5
6. Innovative approach of vendor	1	2	3	4	5
7. Return policy of vendor	1	2	3	4	5
8. Pricing strategy	1	2	3	4	5
9. Selling history of vendor	1	2	3	4	5
10. Steady source of supply	1	2	3	4	5
11. Good delivery	1	2	3	4	5
12. Fair prices	1	2	3	4	5



**MERCHANDISE FACTORS:** Please indicate the degree of importance you place on each merchandise factor when making a purchase decision as a retail buyer by circling a response to the right of each merchandise factor.

	No. at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
1. Predicted consumer demand for product	1	2	3	4	5
2. Aesthetic qualities of product	1	2	3	4	5
3. Fiber content	1	2	3	4	5
4. Color of product	1	2	3	4	5
5. Brand name	1	2	3	4	5
6. Product styling	1	2	3	4	5
7. Quality of product	1	2	3	4	5
8. Distinctiveness	1	2	3	4	5
9. Country of origin	1	2	3	4	5
10. Position on fashion cycle	1	2	3	4	5

## Section II

In this section of the questionnaire, we are measuring the role of uncertainty in the buying process.

**PRODUCT UNCERTAINTY:** How often do you feel uncertain about the following product characteristics when making a purchase decision?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1. Quality	1	2	3	4	5
2. Anticipated Margin	1	2	3	4	5
3. Expected Sales	1	2	3	4	5
4. Consumer Demand	1	2	3	4	5
5. Aesthetics	1	2	3	4	5

Sometimes a retail buyer will become uncertain about a product characteristic such as styling. Under such circumstances, some information sources may prove to be more useful than others.

When contemplating an apparel purchase as a retail buyer, please circle the response to the right of each source of information indicating the degree of importance you place on each source when you are uncertain about the given product characteristic.

1. Product Characteristic: **QUALITY**

If you are uncertain about the QUALITY of an apparel item in relation to your present assortment, how important is each of the following sources in providing you with additional information about quality?

INFORMATION SOURCES:	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
a. Upper Management	1	2	3	4	5
b. Buying Office	1	2	3	4	5
c. Another Buyer/Peers	1	2	3	4	5
d. Sales Representative	1	2	3	4	5
e. Trade Publications	1	2	3	4	5
f. Competition	1	2	3	4	5

2. Product Characteristic: **ANTICIPATED MARGIN**

If you are uncertain about the ANTICIPATED MARGIN of an apparel item, how important is each of the following sources in providing you with additional information about the anticipated margin?

INFORMATION SOURCES:	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
a. Upper Management	1	2	3	4	5
b. Buying Office	1	2	3	4	5
c. Another Buyer/Peers	1	2	3	4	5
d. Sales Representative	1	2	3	4	5
e. Trade Publications	1	2	3	4	5
f. Competition	1	2	3	4	5

3. Product Characteristic: **EXPECTED SALES**

If you are uncertain as to the EXPECTED SALES of an apparel item, how important is each of the following sources in providing you with additional information about expected sales?

INFORMATION SOURCES:	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
a. Upper Management	1	2	3	4	5
b. Buying Office	1	2	3	4	5
c. Another Buyer/Peers	1	2	3	4	5
d. Sales Representative	1	2	3	4	5
e. Trade Publications	1	2	3	4	5
f. Competition	1	2	3	4	5

4. Product Characteristic: **CONSUMER DEMAND**

If you are uncertain as to the CONSUMER DEMAND of an apparel item, how important is each of the following sources in providing you with additional information about consumer demand?

INFORMATION SOURCES:	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
a. Upper Management	1	2	3	4	5
b. Buying Office	1	2	3	4	5
c. Another Buyer/Peers	1	2	3	4	5
d. Sales Representative	1	2	3	4	5
e. Trade Publications	1	2	3	4	5
f. Competition	1	2	3	4	5

5. Product Characteristic: **AESTHETICS**

If you are uncertain as to the AESTHETICS of an apparel item, how important is each of the following sources in providing you with additional information about aesthetics?

INFORMATION SOURCES:	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
a. Upper Management	1	2	3	4	5
b. Buying Office	1	2	3	4	5
c. Another Buyer/Peers	1	2	3	4	5
d. Sales Representative	1	2	3	4	5
e. Trade Publications	1	2	3	4	5
f. Competition	1	2	3	4	5

## Section III

In this section of the questionnaire, we will ask some questions about you as an individual.

Please circle the response to the right of the statement indicating the degree to which the condition exists for you in your job.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
1. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	1	2	3	4	5
2. There are clear planned goals and objectives for my job.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have to do things that should be done differently.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I know that I have divided my time properly.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I receive an assignment without the manpower to complete it.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I know what my responsibilities are.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I know exactly what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Explanation is clear as to what has to be done.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I work on unnecessary things.	1	2	3	4	5

The following is a list of things that some people look for or want out of life. Please study the list carefully and then rate each thing on how important it is in your daily life, where 1 = not at all important, and 9 = extremely important. Indicate your rating by circling the appropriate number.

	<i>Not at all important</i>										<i>Extremely important</i>						
1. Sense of Belonging	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
2. Excitement	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
3. Warm Relationships with Others	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
4. Self-Fulfillment	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
5. Being Well-Respected	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
6. Fun and Enjoyment in Life	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
7. Security	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
8. Self-Respect	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9
9. A Sense of Accomplishment	1	--	2	--	3	--	4	--	5	--	6	--	7	--	8	--	9

## Section IV

The following questions are for classification purposes only. Please place a check mark (✓) in the appropriate category for each item.

1. How many total years have you been a retail buyer?

_____ Less than 1 year	_____ 6-10 years
_____ 1 year to 23 months	_____ 11-15 years
_____ 2-5 years	_____ More than 15 years

2. How long have you been in your present position?

_____ Less than 1 year	_____ 6-10 years
_____ 1 year to 23 months	_____ 11-15 years
_____ 2-5 years	_____ More than 15 years

3. How many years have you worked for this store in any job capacity?

_____ Less than 1 year	_____ 6-10 years
_____ 1 year to 23 months	_____ 11-15 years
_____ 2-5 years	_____ More than 15 years

4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (Check One)

_____ Some High School
_____ Completed High School
_____ Vocational/Technical training beyond High School
_____ Some College
_____ Completed College
_____ Some Graduate Work
_____ A Graduate Degree
_____ Other

5. Please indicate your sex.

_____ Male	_____ Female
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6. Please indicate your age range.

_____ under 20	_____ 40-49 years
_____ 20-29 years	_____ 50-59 years
_____ 30-39 years	_____ 60 & over

7. What was the total compensation that you received from your company last year?

_____ 10,000-14,999	_____ 30,000-49,999
_____ 15,000-19,999	_____ 50,000-69,999
_____ 20,000-29,999	_____ 70,000-or more

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*Thank you for your participation!!!*

\_\_\_\_\_ This number is for follow-up purposes only.

VITA<sup>2</sup>

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Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT AND BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS  
ON INFORMATION SOURCE UTILIZATION BY RETAIL APPAREL  
BUYERS

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