

EXPECTATIONS OF STORE PERSONNEL MANAGERS
REGARDING APPROPRIATE DRESS FOR
FEMALE RETAIL BUYERS

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose and Objectives	2
Hypotheses	3
Assumptions and Limitations	3
Definition of Terms	4
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	5
Influence of Clothing on First Impressions	5
Women in the Work Force	7
Clothing as a Factor in Career Success	9
Characteristics of Fashion Leaders	10
Summary	12
III. RESEARCH PROCEDURES	13
Type of Research Design	13
Development of the Instrument	14
Population for the Study	14
Method of Data Analysis	15
IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA	17
Responses	17
Expectations of Personnel Managers	18
Fashion Leadership and Business Uniform Scores	22
Regional Comparison	24
Buyer Activity	24
Expectations Regarding Dress Codes	26
Comments of Personnel Managers	29
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	30
Conclusions	30
Recommendations	31
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	33
APPENDIXES	35
APPENDIX A - INSTRUMENT	36

Chapter	Page
APPENDIX B - LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL	39
APPENDIX C - LIST OF RETAIL STORES	42
APPENDIX D - CHI-SQUARE VALUES	46

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Expectations of Personnel Managers Regarding Dress of Female Buyers for Two Types of Buyer Activity . . .	19
II. Comparison of Fashion Leadership and Business Uniform Scores for Two Types of Buyer Activity	23
III. Comparison of Fashion Leadership Scores and Business Uniform Scores Among Three Regions	25
IV. Expected Dress for Female Buyers in Two Types of Buyer Activity	27
V. Expectations of Personnel Managers Regarding Dress Codes for Female Buyers	28
VI. Chi-Square Values for Individual Items	47

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Protection from the environment is only one function performed by clothing. Clothing often communicates membership in societal groupings, such as age, sex, social class, occupational status, and religious affiliation (Ritchey, 1978). In fact, clothing contributes to the establishment of an individual's identity throughout all stages of development (Horn, 1975).

We live in a society in which most of the body is hidden, and it follows that costumes would be a factor in impression formation (Conner, 1975). Studies by Douty (1963), Hault (1954), and Rosencranz (1962) have shown that clothes have an undeniable influence on the characteristics one attributes to those with whom one comes in contact (Ryan, 1966). However, clothing seems to exert more influence in introductory meetings and limited contact situations than when the person is known (Conner, 1975).

Business careers often involve limited contact situations. Molloy's (1977) research shows that certain wardrobe components can increase a woman's chances of success in the business world. The personal appearance an individual presents projects a certain impression to the viewer regardless of the accuracy of that impression. For this reason, "wardrobe engineering" (Molloy, 1977, p. 16) seems to be a helpful tool in career advancement.

Since the introduction of Molloy's work, emphasis has been put on dressing for a successful business career. The theory that clothing can advance or impede career progress is increasingly popular, and invites further research.

Molloy's (1977) research covered careers for women in education, journalism, accounting, medicine, law, and banking. A study at Florida State University has explored appropriate dress for retail executive trainees (Miller, 1976). There is, however, no conclusive study examining the expectations of store personnel managers concerning the appropriate dress for female retail buyers.

Retailing, in direct opposition to such businesses as banking and accounting, is a highly fashion-oriented enterprise. For this reason, the Molloy (1977, p. 34) "business uniform" may not be the most appropriate costume for female retail buyers. Those aspiring to careers as retail buyers can gain from a study of wardrobe components appropriate for that position. Therefore, there is a need for such a study to be conducted.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the expectations of store personnel managers regarding appropriate dress for female retail buyers. Four objectives were formulated for the study. They were as follows:

1. To determine whether female buyers are expected to exert fashion leadership.
2. To determine whether female buyers are expected to wear the "business uniform."

3. To compare differences in expected dress for retail buyers according to region of the United States. The regions were east, central, and west.
4. To determine whether an association existed between expectations of personnel managers regarding dress of retail buyers in two types of buyer activity. The activities were working in the office or on the sales floor and attending a seasonal market.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- H₁: There is no significant difference in appropriate dress for female buyers as perceived by store personnel managers based on geographical location.
- H₂: There is no significant association between the expectations of personnel managers regarding dress of retail buyers in two types of buyer activity.

Assumptions and Limitations

The following assumptions were made for the study:

1. Personnel managers can provide accurate assessments regarding appropriate dress for buyers.
2. Stores selected for the study are representative of other retail stores in the region.

The limitations of the study were as follows:

1. The study was restricted to perceived appropriate dress for female retail buyers in ladies and junior ready-to-wear apparel departments.

2. The study was limited to perceptions of personnel managers in retail stores according to their responses to a mailed instrument.
3. The sample of retail stores was limited to those listed in Fairchild's Financial Manual of Retail Stores, 1980 (1981).

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used in the study:

1. Department Store - a retail outlet which characteristically sells home furnishings in addition to clothing and household goods (Horn, 1981).
2. Retail Buyer - a person who selects and purchases merchandise for a department or group of departments within a retail store (Duncan and Hollander, 1977). In this study the term refers to female buyers of ladies' and juniors' ready-to-wear.
3. Specialty Store - a retail outlet which offers a complete selection of a narrow line of merchandise (Boone and Kurtz, 1974). In this study the term refers to specialty stores carrying women's clothing.
4. Market - a center where textile and apparel manufacturers exhibit and sell seasonal fashion goods to the retailer prior to each consumer buying season (Greenwood and Murphy, 1978).
5. Fashion Leader - a person who is among the first to begin wearing newly introduced fashions, and to whom others look for fashion information (Summers, 1970; Baumgarten, 1975).
6. Business Uniform - a tailored, skirted suit with a matching skirt and jacket, usually in a dark neutral color, with a contrasting blouse (Molloy, 1977).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies have explored the importance of clothing as an expression of individual personality and in the formation of first impressions (Douty, 1963; Hoult, 1954; Rosencranz, 1962). Clothing as a factor in career success has been studied by Molloy (1977) and by Miller (1976). Because of their unique involvement in the marketing of clothing, careers in the fashion industry have usually been left out of these studies.

Results of these studies show that clothing can make a difference in social relationships and in career success. Students who are planning careers as retail buyers would benefit from information concerning dress which would enhance success in the fashion industry. This study was devised to contribute to the ability of students to develop a professional wardrobe for a career in the fashion industry.

Influence of Clothing on First Impressions

"First impressions play a very important part in the later social interaction between individuals" (Ryan, 1966, p. 8). If a first impression is favorable, a positive attitude toward further interaction may evolve, while an unfavorable first impression may actually create avoidance of further encounters. Clothing, as a part of an individual's personal appearance, is one of the aspects used in forming first

impressions. In fact, clothing can actually simplify perceptions of people or situations (Ryan, 1966). When forming impressions of others, some aspects of clothing, for instance, appropriateness, may affect the total impression perceived more than others.

Several studies and pilot investigations have provided evidence that clothing is used in forming impressions. Photographs of actual people were used by Houtt (1954). Heads and bodies of the subjects in the pictures were exchanged so that each head was judged by respondents with the clothing of each body. Respondents assigned different characteristics to the same head when it was shown with differently clothed bodies, giving evidence that clothing was a factor in impression formation. In another phase of the same study, 13 models stood before judges on two different occasions. The models, who were known by the judges, were told to wear sloppy clothing on one occasion, and to dress up on the other occasion. No significant differences were found in ratings on the two separate occasions, as there had been when respondents were judging pictures of strangers. This indicated that clothing influences perception of personal characteristics of those unknown to the observer, but does not influence impressions of those with whom one is well acquainted.

Douty (1963) also used photographs in her study, but rather than exchanging the heads and bodies, she photographed each of her four models in four different costumes and a control smock. Four groups of judges rated each photograph according to perceived characteristics of the pictured persons. Two other groups of judges were shown the same photographs and asked to rate the costumes in terms of the traits of the women who would probably buy and wear them. The changes in

clothing were found to have significant influence on the judges' ratings of social status and personality traits. Douty (1963) concluded that further inquiry is needed into the meaning of clothing to individuals and the part clothing plays in the interaction of persons in a social world.

Drawings were shown to the respondents in Rosencranz' (1962) study. The respondents gave detailed descriptions of personality, age, and social status of pictured persons, as well as giving descriptions of total situations. Thus, clothing does tell the observer certain things about the wearer, whether or not those impressions are correct.

A study conducted at Arizona State University consisted of a four-by-four factorial experiment designed to determine the affects of person and costume on athletic, social, and intellectual impressions (Conner, 1975). Sixteen photographs were evaluated by judges of the same age, sex, and occupation as the picture subjects. When the results of the study were analyzed, they indicated that

Costumes convey clues which are consistently perceived by observers . . . clothing changes the strength of the initial impression of a person . . . (and) costume has a greater effect on social impression than does a person. The data demonstrated that clothing is a conceptually important and statistically significant influence on the formation of social impression (Conner, 1975, p. 40).

Women in the Work Force

The entry of women into the male-dominated work force began at the turn of the century, when women of the middle classes began working to earn their own living. When entering the work force, women dressed in "male-inspired copies of shirt-waist dresses in order to gain acceptance in the business world" (Boynton, 1974, p. 84). Practicality

and efficiency were the main concerns, but the clothes, which closely imitated male clothing, were also "symbols of the qualities of honesty, seriousness, loyalty, efficiency, and capability associated with male workers" (Boynton, 1974, p. 84). The tailored suits and shirt-waist dresses chosen by working women presented a mannish look (Rosencranz, 1972).

However, beginning with World War II and increasing during the women's liberation movement of the 1960's, men's and women's roles began to be remolded, becoming intermingled (Boynton, 1974). "The most far-reaching affects for women's equality (in the work force) were under President Johnson with the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex" (Boynton, 1974, p. 12). During both the women's movement at the turn of the century and the 1960's movement, feminists desired women in the work force, with an emphasis on the professions (Boynton, 1974).

Changing roles have produced uncertainty about actions expected of men and women. This uncertainty has appeared in professional goals as well as personal goals. Career women may have special difficulties in facing role conflicts and in realizing the expectations of those who employ and supervise them (Dillon, 1980).

Expectations of women, as opposed to men, have been largely based on female appearance, clothing, and image (Molloy, 1977). Men's clothing has not traditionally been as subject to the effects of fashion. The slow change characterizing fashion for men has provided them with "a business uniform and a reliable barometer of appropriate business dress" (Dillon, 1980, p. 125). Dress for professional women, however, has become more flexible, with new identities and complexities (Anspach, 1967).

Clothing as a Factor in Career Success

Molloy (1977) conducted scientific research over a period of nine years on clothing which contributed to women's success in business careers. The purpose of his research was "to use data to manipulate the dress of an individual to draw a favorable response from the people he or she meets" (p. 16). Results of this wardrobe manipulation were quite helpful in many situations. Manner of dress was found to either impede or accelerate promotions, influence the way a woman was treated by men in her work situation, and even create differences in hiring and firing. As a result of his research, Molloy stated that

By making adjustments in a woman's wardrobe, we can make her look more successful and better educated. We can increase her chances of success in the business world; we can increase her chances of becoming a top executive; and we can make her more attractive to various types of men (p. 16).

Molloy began his research while conducting an independent research study as part of a government project. The topic of his initial research study concerned teachers' clothing and its effect on students. His results showed that the color, pattern, and cut of a teacher's clothing could affect the attitude, attention span, and conduct of high school and junior high school students. This project led him into further clothing research in careers from politics to large corporations. His results repeatedly showed that clothing could make or break a woman's career in business. He recommended that women adopt a business uniform, consisting of a skirted suit and blouse. The suit was recommended to be dark with a contrasting light blouse. Research supported the fact that the uniform worked.

Professionals studied by Molloy (1977) included accountants,

reporters, doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, teachers, and women in "glamour industries" such as television. He entirely avoided professionals in the fashion industry.

An important fact which Molloy's research disclosed was that geography played a part in the successful results of wardrobe manipulation. He found that clothing which proved successful in the east might not have the same results in the mid-west or in California.

Dress for retail executive trainees was studied by Miller (1976). The study involved a comparison of attitudes of prospective employers and fashion merchandising students about appropriate dress for retail executive trainees. The results from both students and employers were assessed independently and then compared to determine similarities and differences. Both students and employers were asked to identify appropriate business dress for the retail executive trainee, and to evaluate the importance of appearance and dress in relation to other selected hiring considerations.

Results showed that while both employers and students judge clothing and appearance to be important in hiring, they did not agree on clothing items which would positively influence chances of being hired. However, the study did reveal that clothing and appearance can contribute a strongly negative or strongly positive impression during a job interview appraisal.

Characteristics of Fashion Leaders

The general population sometimes looks to those in the fashion industry for fashion information. Often, those in fashion-related occupations serve as role models for fashion behavior exhibited by the

general public. Fashion leaders, or those to whom others look for fashion information, have been studied by various researchers, and certain common characteristics have emerged.

In an attempt to identify and profile women's clothing fashion opinion leaders, Summers (1970) analyzed fashion adoption and information diffusion among female homemakers in Indianapolis, Indiana. The study revealed that although fashion leadership is a widely spread trait, fashion leaders tend to be concentrated in those segments of the samples which were younger, had more education, had higher occupational status, and had higher incomes. Fashion opinion leaders generally had some degree of social mobility. Affiliations with organizations and participation in social activities, along with increased social communication, appeared as common characteristics of fashion leaders.

Studying early fashion adoption and opinion leadership on the Purdue University campus, Baumgarten (1975) found fashion leaders to be socially active and highly appearance conscious. Leaders of fashion opinion were usually consumers of mass media such as magazines, newspapers, and television. Additionally, Baumgarten found this group to be highly interested in and knowledgeable of fashion.

A fashion opinion leadership inventory was used in Shrank and Gilmore's (1973) research to identify

those persons who contributed to the diffusion of fashion goods through early purchase and use of fashion innovations, and who believed themselves to be in the vanguard of the fashion picture (p. 536).

Fashion innovativeness was judged on the basis of adoption of certain clothing and accessory items and the time the items were adopted. The Fashion Opinion Leadership Inventory was used to identify

behaviors and characteristics common among those judged to be innovators.

Shrank and Gilmore's (1973) findings showed innovators in general to be more secure than less innovative subjects. Clothing interest was also discovered to be an important quality of early adopters. The study found fashion innovators to be distributed throughout the social strata, rather than being concentrated in the higher social class.

Polegato and Wall (1980) studied information seeking by fashion leaders and followers among female undergraduates. The results indicated that leaders read more fashion magazines, noticed what friends wore, talked more to friends about new clothing styles, and read more newspaper fashion columns than the followers. In addition, leaders were far more likely than followers to use technical, marketer-dominated sources of information. It was further discovered that the majority of leaders lived in urban communities.

Summary

It has been shown that clothing not only influences first impressions, but can also be a factor in career success. Research showed that clothing appropriate for career success can be determined, but fashion industry careers have usually not been studied in relation to dress appropriate for career success. A study of dress appropriate for retail buyers would begin the bank of knowledge about clothing which would enhance success in fashion careers.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The purpose of the study was to examine the expectations of retail store personnel managers regarding appropriate business dress for female retail buyers. A review of literature revealed no studies of business dress for this particular profession. The type of research design, development of the instrument, sampling technique, collection of data, and the method of data analysis are described in this chapter.

Type of Research Design

The type of research design chosen for use in this study was descriptive. Best (1977, p. 117) stated that descriptive research "deals with the relationships between variables." The variables examined in this study were not manipulated. One of the classifications of descriptive research is the survey. The survey method is generally used to obtain opinions or attitudes of individuals. This study was of the descriptive type, utilizing the survey. The criterion variable, the appropriate business dress for female retail buyers as perceived by store personnel managers, was examined to determine if the variables--geographical location of the store and type of buyer activity--made a difference in the appropriate dress expected of buyers.

Development of the Instrument

The instrument used in this study consisted primarily of a Likert-type scale of nine statements concerning the appropriateness of dress for retail buyers. (See Appendix A.) The statements were based on definitions of fashion leadership formulated by previous researchers. Five choices of responses for each item formed a continuum ranging from definitely true to definitely false. Four multiple choice questions followed. The additional questions were formulated to ascertain whether written dress codes were used and whether they applied to buyers; if clothing purchased in the store was preferred for business wear; and if buyers' clothing should differ from that of sales personnel.

The instrument was pilot tested with four Stillwater retailers who sell ladies ready-to-wear. The owner/manager of each store completed the instrument. As a result of the pilot study, the format of the instrument was altered slightly to make directions easier to read and items easier to answer. The boxes containing possible responses were placed in front of the items rather than after the items. The Stillwater retailers commented that most items were easy to understand, however, one item was reworded for clarity.

Population for the Study

The population used in the study was taken from Fairchild's Financial Manual of Retail Stores, 1980 (1981) which gives names and financial statements of all publicly owned retail stores across the United States and Canada. The sample included only department stores and specialty stores selling juniors' or ladies' ready-to-wear in the

continental United States. Because of the relatively limited number of stores in the population (149), the entire population was surveyed. The instrument, together with a letter of transmittal (Appendix B) was mailed to the personnel managers of the stores in the population. A second instrument and letter were mailed to non-respondents four weeks later.

Method of Data Analysis

After the data were collected, frequency counts were made of responses to each question for the total group. Each item, one through nine, was denoted as either positive or negative for the researcher's use only. Responses to positively stated items (items one, three and six) were weighted on a five-to-one scale from definitely true to definitely false. This was reversed for the negatively stated items (items two, four, five, seven, eight, and nine), with a score of one for definitely true and five for definitely false. The total score was the sum of the weighted responses.

Two scores on items one through nine were computed: one for expected dress in the office or on the sales floor, and one for expected dress at a seasonal market. A total score of 34 to 45 on questions one through nine indicated that buyers for that store were expected to exhibit fashion leadership. A total score of 9 to 20 indicated that buyers were not expected to be fashion leaders. A score of 21 to 33 indicated a neutral attitude about fashion leadership.

Items seven, eight and nine referred to use of the "business uniform" recommended by Molloy (1977). Total scores on these three items were computed. A total score of three to six indicated that the

personnel manager expected female buyers to wear the "business uniform." A score of 12 to 15 indicated that the "business uniform" was not the type of business dress expected of retail buyers. A score of seven to eleven indicated a neutral response to these items. Scores on items seven, eight, and nine were tabulated and compared by region.

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study.

H₁: There is no significant difference in appropriate dress for female buyers as perceived by store personnel managers based on geographical location.

H₂: There is no significant association between the expectations of personnel managers regarding dress of retail buyers in two types of buyer activity.

A probability level of .05 was selected as the level for acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses.

Analysis of variance was used to compare fashion leadership scores (items 1-9) and business uniform scores (items 7-9) among the three regions of the country. Chi-square tests were used to compare responses to each item based on type of buyer activity (in the office or on the sales floor and at a seasonal market). Frequencies were calculated and reported for items 10 through 13. These items dealt with whether the stores had dress codes, and which employees were expected to follow them.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The study was undertaken in order to examine the expectations of store personnel managers regarding appropriate dress for female retail buyers. The objectives of the study were to determine whether female buyers were expected to exhibit fashion leadership; to determine whether female buyers were expected to wear a business uniform; to compare differences in expected dress of retail buyers in various regions of the country; and to determine whether there was an association between expectations of personnel managers regarding dress of retail buyers in two different types of buyer activity.

Responses

An instrument (Appendix A) was developed to collect information from personnel managers. The instrument was mailed to 149 retail stores across the United States (Appendix C). Six were returned by the post office as impossible to forward. Sixty-seven instruments were returned by respondents, 45 after the first mailing and 22 after the second mailing. Three of these were unusable, leaving 64 instruments, or 43 percent of the total population for use in the analysis of data. Two of the three unusable instruments were only partially completed and the other was not answered because no buyers were located in that store.

Data were analyzed as a total group. Then stores in the population were divided into three regions--east, central, and west--based on their proximity to the three largest apparel markets: New York in the east, Dallas in the central part of the country, and Los Angeles in the west. (See Appendix C.) A comparison was made to determine whether differences existed among the three regions.

Expectations of Personnel Managers

Information was obtained on expectations of fashion leadership of buyers, and expectations of buyers' use of the business uniform recommended by Molloy (1977). Because the business uniform stays basically the same regardless of fashion changes, buyers who were expected to wear the business uniform would not be classified as fashion leaders. Personnel managers were able to choose from five responses: definitely true, partly true, undecided, partly false, and definitely false. A frequency distribution of responses is shown in Table I.

More than 66 percent of the personnel managers responding expected buyers to be first to try newly introduced styles in the office or on the sales floor (definitely true-4.69 percent plus partly true-62.50 percent). A slightly higher percentage, 70.31, indicated that buyers should be first to wear new styles while attending a seasonal market.

About 73 percent of respondents indicated that it was either definitely or partly true that buyers should dress conservatively and not wear extreme fashions in the office or on the sales floor. Sixty-four percent expected buyers to dress conservatively at a seasonal market.

More than 84 percent of the personnel managers expected buyers'

TABLE I
 EXPECTATIONS OF PERSONNEL MANAGERS
 REGARDING DRESS OF FEMALE BUYERS
 FOR TWO TYPES OF BUYER ACTIVITY
 (N=64)

Item ^a	Office or Sales Floor		Seasonal Market	
	N	% ^b	N	% ^b
1. First with New Styles				
DT	3	4.69	10	15.62
PT	40	62.50	35	54.69
U	8	12.50	8	12.50
PF	10	15.60	7	10.94
DF	3	4.69	4	9.62
2. Conservative Dress				
DT	15	23.44	14	21.87
PT	32	50.00	27	42.19
U	2	3.12	6	9.37
PF	12	18.75	10	15.62
DF	3	4.69	7	10.94
3. Example to Others				
DT	18	28.12	15	23.44
PT	36	56.25	41	64.06
U	3	4.69	4	6.25
PF	5	7.81	3	4.69
DF	2	3.12	1	1.56
4. Commonly Accepted				
DT	2	3.12	0	0.00
PT	14	21.87	14	21.87
U	3	4.69	3	4.69
PF	26	40.62	29	45.31
DF	19	29.69	18	28.12
5. Just Begun to be Accepted				
DT	3	4.69	3	4.69
PT	8	12.50	8	12.50
U	11	17.19	11	17.19
PF	22	34.57	19	29.69
DF	20	31.25	23	35.94

TABLE I (Continued)

Item ^a	Office or Sales Floor		Seasonal Market	
	N	% ^b	N	% ^b
6. Latest Colors				
DT	17	26.56	23	35.94
PT	38	59.37	32	50.00
U	1	1.56	1	1.56
PF	5	7.81	5	7.81
DF	3	4.69	3	4.69
7. Suited Skirts				
DT	5	7.81	1	1.56
PT	13	20.31	15	23.44
U	10	15.62	11	17.19
PF	18	28.12	19	29.69
DF	18	28.12	18	28.12
8. Neutral Colors				
DT	1	1.56	0	0.00
PT	5	7.81	3	4.69
U	3	4.69	4	6.25
PF	14	21.87	16	25.00
DF	41	64.06	41	64.06
9. Business Uniform				
DT	3	4.69	1	1.56
PT	15	23.44	15	23.44
U	3	4.69	6	9.37
PF	12	18.75	10	15.62
DF	31	48.44	32	50.00

^aItems have been shortened for this table.

^bPercentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

DT = Definitely True
PT = Partly True
U = Undecided
PF = Partly False
DF = Definitely False

clothing to be an example to others of new styles coming into fashion while working in the office or on the sales floor. This percent rose to 87.4 for attending a seasonal market. Fewer than two percent of the respondents indicated that this statement was definitely false.

Only about one fourth of the respondents indicated that they expected buyers to wear those styles which have been commonly accepted by the general public in the office or on the sales floor. Seventy percent indicated that this was partly or definitely false. One fifth found the statement partly true for buyers attending a seasonal market, but none found it definitely true. About three fourths of the personnel managers indicated that buyers should not wear only commonly accepted styles at a seasonal market (definitely false-28.12 percent, partly false-45.31 percent).

Approximately 66 percent of the personnel managers indicated that it was definitely or partly false that buyers should begin to wear new styles just after others begin to wear them both in the office or on the sales floor and at a seasonal market. Seventeen percent responded that this statement was partly or definitely true for both types of buyer activity.

Approximately 86 percent of the respondents expected buyers to wear clothing in the latest fashion colors both in the office or on the sales floor and at a seasonal market. Only one eighth indicated that this statement was partly or definitely false for both types of buyer activity.

Use of the skirted suit was expected by about one fourth of the personnel managers for both types of buyer activity, but more than half (56.24 percent for in the office or on the sales floor and

57.81 percent at a seasonal market) did not expect buyers to wear skirted suits. Fewer than a tenth (9.37 percent) of the respondents expected buyers to dress in dark neutral colors in the office or on the sales floor, and fewer than five percent expected buyers to wear dark neutrals at a seasonal market. The adoption by female buyers of a business uniform was expected in the office or on the sales floor by approximately 25 percent of the respondents. However, 48.44 percent indicated that it was definitely false that buyers should adopt a business uniform in the office or on the sales floor and one half of the respondents indicated that this was definitely false for a seasonal market.

Fashion Leadership and Business Uniform Scores

Fashion leadership and business uniform scores are presented in Table II. The range of possible scores on items one through nine was 9 to 45. A total score of 9 to 20 indicated no expectation of fashion leadership. A total score of 21 to 33 indicated a neutral attitude toward fashion leadership, and a total score of 34 to 45 indicated that fashion leadership was expected of buyers. Total scores on the fashion leadership expectations ranged from 23 to 42 with a mean of 32.8 for in the office or on the sales floor, and 22 to 42 with a mean of 33.7 for the seasonal market. Fifty-six percent of the scores for in the office or on the sales floor were in the 34 to 45 range, indicating that fashion leadership was expected. Of the seasonal market scores, 61 percent fell in the range of expected fashion leadership. Fewer than two percent of scores for in the office or on the sales floor fell in the non-leadership range, and none of the seasonal market scores fell in that range.

TABLE II
 COMPARISON OF FASHION LEADERSHIP AND
 BUSINESS UNIFORM SCORES FOR TWO
 TYPES OF BUYER ACTIVITY

Range	Office or Sales Floor		Seasonal Market	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
<u>Fashion Leadership</u>				
9-20	1	1.56	0	0.00
21-33	28	43.75	25	39.06
34-45	36	56.25	39	60.93
<u>Business Uniform</u>				
3-6	7	10.90	3	4.69
7-11	18	28.12	23	35.94
12-15	39	60.93	38	59.37

Possible scores on the expected use of the business uniform (items seven, eight, and nine) ranged from three to fifteen. A total score of three to six indicated expected use of the business uniform. A score of seven to eleven indicated a neutral attitude toward use of the business uniform, and a score of 12 to 15 indicated rejection of the business uniform. Total scores on the business uniform items ranged from four to fifteen for both types of buyer activity (Table II). Sixty-one percent of business uniform scores in the office or on the sales floor fell into the 12 to 15 range, indicating that personnel managers did not expect buyers to adopt a business uniform for wear in the office or on the sales floor. Of the scores for the business uniform at a seasonal market, 59 percent fell into the 12 to 15 range.

Regional Comparison

Analysis of variance was used to determine whether there were differences in fashion leadership scores and business uniform scores among the three regions: east, west, and central. Four comparisons were made: (1) leadership in the office or on the sales floor, (2) leadership at a seasonal market, (3) use of the business uniform in the office or on the sales floor, and (4) use of the business uniform at a seasonal market. Data from the analysis of variance are shown in Table III. None of the F-values were significant.

Buyer Activity

The Chi-square test was used to determine the association between expectations of buyers' dress in the office or on the sales floor and at a seasonal market for each item on the instrument. Due to the

TABLE III
 COMPARISON OF FASHION LEADERSHIP SCORES
 AND BUSINESS UNIFORM SCORES
 AMONG THREE REGIONS
 (N=64)

Source of Variation	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Value	Probability
Leadership - Office or Sales Floor				
Region	2	23.918	0.87	0.4257
Residual	61	27.613		
Leadership - Seasonal Market				
Region	2	39.755	1.78	0.1766
Residual	61	22.285		
Business Uniform - Office or Sales Floor				
Region	2	12.906	1.23	0.2992
Residual	61	10.484		
Business Uniform - Seasonal Market				
Region	2	10.541	1.34	0.2701
Residual	61	7.882		

relatively small number of participants, responses were grouped into three categories rather than five: definitely true and partly true; undecided; and definitely false and partly false. Chi-square values for all items were significant at the .0001 level (Table IV). An observation of the frequencies among the cells indicated that the expectations of personnel managers were very similar whether in the office or on the sales floor or at a seasonal market. The individual Chi-square values may be seen in Appendix D.

Expectations Regarding Dress Codes

Four items on the instrument dealt with store dress codes. Responses to these items are found in Table V. Personnel managers were asked whether one should be able to distinguish between buyers and salespersons by their clothing. Approximately 41 percent of respondents indicated that it should be obvious from clothing whether an employee was a buyer or a salesperson, while 59 percent replied that it should not be obvious.

Seven eighths of the respondents said their stores had specific written dress codes. Of stores with written dress codes, 88 percent indicated that the codes applied to all store employees. About 11 percent of dress codes applied to only salespersonnel. None of the responding stores had dress codes which applied to only management personnel.

Half of the personnel managers responding expected buyers to wear clothing purchased in their store frequently. One fifth expected buyers to always wear clothing purchased in the store, and another fifth expected buyers to wear clothing purchased in the store sometimes.

TABLE IV
 EXPECTED DRESS FOR FEMALE BUYERS IN
 TWO TYPES OF BUYER ACTIVITY^a
 (N=64)

Item	Chi-square Value ^b	Probability
1	60.46	0.0001
2	55.59	0.0001
3	54.17	0.0001
4	117.62	0.0001
5	94.06	0.0001
6	128.00	0.0001
7	113.76	0.0001
8	62.32	0.0001
9	76.92	0.0001

^aIn the office or on the sales floor and at a seasonal market

^bDegrees of freedom = 4

TABLE V
 EXPECTATIONS OF PERSONNEL MANAGERS REGARDING
 DRESS CODES FOR FEMALE BUYERS
 (N=64)

Item ^a	Number ^b	Percent ^c
10. Obvious whether employee is buyer or salesperson		
Yes	26	41.27
No	37	58.73
11. Written dress code		
Yes	56	87.50
No	8	12.50
12. Dress code applies to whom		
All store employees	47	88.68
Sales personnel only	6	11.32
Management personnel only	0	0.00
13. Clothing purchased in store		
Always	13	21.67
Frequently	30	50.00
Sometimes	12	20.00
Occasionally	5	8.33
Never	0	0.00

^aItems were shortened for this table.

^bNumber does not always equal 64 because some respondents left one or more items blank.

^cPercent of those responding to the item.

Comments of Personnel Managers

Several respondents commented that expected dress of buyers should be appropriate for the age and figure type of the buyer. One respondent indicated that grooming and total personal appearance was more important than particular clothing styles. Another respondent wrote that clothing and appearance had nothing to do with an individual's effectiveness as a buyer. One respondent indicated that the store's buyers had mostly contact with other professionals during the work day, and rarely came into contact with the public in work situations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research has shown that clothing can affect first impressions and business success. This study was conducted to determine the expectations of store personnel managers regarding appropriate business dress for retail buyers. An instrument was mailed to personnel managers of 149 department and specialty stores listed in Fairchild's Financial Manual of Retail Stores, 1980.

Responses from 64 participants were used for the analysis of data. Analysis of variance was used to compare fashion leadership scores and business uniform scores among stores in three regions of the United States. Chi-square tests were used to compare responses to each item based on expected dress in the office or on the sales floor, and at a seasonal market. Frequencies were tabulated and reported for four items on the instrument dealing with store dress codes.

Conclusions

A majority of the personnel managers participating in the study expected buyers to exhibit fashion leadership by wearing newly introduced fashions and being an example to others of new trends. Respondents indicated that although buyers were expected to be fashion leaders, conservative, business-like dress was expected both in the office or on the sales floor and at a seasonal market. This would seem

to indicate that they expected buyers to be fashion leaders within the limits of dress considered appropriate for business wear.

The respondents did not expect female buyers to adopt a business uniform for either type of buyer activity examined in the study. Responses strongly indicated that dark neutral colors were not expected for buyers' clothing.

The analysis of variance revealed no significant differences in expectations of personnel managers among the three regions of the country; therefore hypothesis one could not be rejected. This is in opposition to Molloy's (1977) findings of differences in successful dress for women professionals in various geographical regions. The Chi-square tests indicated that expectations for buyers' dress in the office or on the sales floor were very similar to expectations for buyers' dress at a seasonal market; therefore hypothesis two was rejected.

Almost all of the stores with written dress codes expected all store employees to follow them. None of the responding stores had written dress codes for management personnel only. The majority of the personnel managers expected buyers to wear clothing purchased in the store frequently.

Recommendations

Information gained in this study can be used to aid clothing, textiles and merchandising students in career wardrobe planning. Findings can be discussed in the senior seminar course in clothing, textiles and merchandising, since most of those students are planning careers in the fashion industry. The study may also prove helpful in a course on

professional image and dress as well as in student organization meetings.

The following recommendations for further study are suggested:

1. Replicate the study using male buyers.
2. Replicate the study using management level personnel other than buyers in the fashion industry, such as manufacturers' sales representatives, designers, fashion coordinators and personnel managers.
3. Determine whether there are differences in expected dress of buyers in high fashion specialty stores and full line department stores.
4. Determine whether there are differences in expected dress of buyers in different departments, such as children's wear, housewares, or cosmetics.
5. Compare the expected dress of female executives in retailing with that of female executives in such professions as law, medicine, banking, or university administration.
6. Compare types of clothing actually worn by females in various professions.
7. Compare clothing attitudes of female executives in various professions.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT

QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: Please indicate your opinion regarding expected dress of female buyers in two situations: (1) In the office or on the sales floor, and (2) At a seasonal market. Circle the letters indicating your reaction to each item using the following guide:

Definitely true - DT
 Partly true - PT
 Undecided - U
 Partly false - PF
 Definitely false - DF

Office or Sales Floor	Seasonal Market
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF
DT PT U PF DF	DT PT U PF DF

1. Buyers should be first to try new styles when they are introduced.
2. Buyers should usually dress conservatively and not wear extreme fashions.
3. Buyers' clothing should be an example to others of new styles coming into fashion.
4. Buyers should wear only those fashions which have been commonly accepted by the general public.
5. Buyers should begin to wear new styles after those styles have just begun to be worn by others.
6. Buyers should wear clothing in the latest fashion colors.
7. Buyers should usually wear tailored skirted suits.
8. Buyers should usually dress in dark neutral colors such as navy, black, gray, or brown.
9. Female buyers should adopt a "business uniform" much like a business man has traditionally worn.

Circle your answer to the following questions.

10. Should it be obvious simply from observing their clothing and appearance whether an employee is a buyer or a salesperson?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Does your store have a written dress code?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (Go to Question 13)
12. If your answer to question 11 was yes, to whom does it apply?
 - a. all store employees
 - b. sales personnel only
 - c. management personnel only (including buyers)
13. Should buyers wear clothing purchased in your store?
 - a. always
 - b. frequently
 - c. sometimes
 - d. occasionally
 - e. never

Thank you again for your valuable assistance in this project. Please feel free to enclose any additional comments and return the questionnaire in the self-addressed envelope.

APPENDIX B

LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

O K L A H O M A S T A T E U N I V E R S I T Y
DEPARTMENT OF CLOTHING, TEXTILES AND MERCHANDISING

March 30, 1981

Dear Personnel Manager:

In recent years, much emphasis has been placed on dressing for a successful business career.

Since the majority of our students are preparing for careers in retailing, information on proper dress for retail buyers would assist us in planning our curriculum.

The enclosed questionnaire has been developed to obtain information regarding appropriate dress for female retail buyers in junior or ladies ready-to-wear departments. Because your store is part of a small but representative sample, your participation is vital to the study.

Please take 5 or 10 minutes to fill out the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Feel free to enclose any additional comments. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lynn Sisler
Head of Department

Jana Gould
Graduate Student

O K L A H O M A S T A T E U N I V E R S I T Y
DEPARTMENT OF CLOTHING, TEXTILES AND MERCHANDISING

May 6, 1981

Dear Personnel Director:

You were recently mailed a questionnaire seeking your opinion about expected dress for female retail buyers.

If you have already completed and returned it to us, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please take 5 or 10 minutes to fill out the enclosed duplicate and return it today.

This questionnaire has been sent to only a small, but representative sample of retail personnel directors, and it is extremely important that your reply be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent the opinions of retail personnel directors. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lynn Sisler
Head of Department

Jana Gould
Graduate Student

APPENDIX C

LIST OF RETAIL STORES

LIST OF RETAIL STORES

Region I - East

1. Gayfers, Mobile AL
2. Casual Corner, Enfield, CT
3. Read's, Bridgeport, CT
4. Ames Dept. Stores, Rocky Hill, CT
5. Sage-Allen & Co., Hartford, CT
6. G. Fox & Co., Hartford, CT
7. Maas Bros., Tampa, FL
8. Jordan Marsh, Miami, FL
9. Burdine's, Miami, FL
10. Ivey's, Winter Park, FL
11. Robinson's, St. Petersburg, FL
12. May-Cohens, Jacksonville, FL
13. Rich's, Atlanta, GA
14. Davison's, Atlanta, GA
15. Levy's, Savannah, GA
16. Bacon's, Louisville, KY
17. The Stewart-Dry Goods Co., Louisville, KY
18. Touraine Stores, Braintree, MA
19. Jordan Marsh, Boston, MA
20. Filene's, Boston, MA
21. Almy Stores, Inc., Brighton, MA
22. King's Department Stores, Newton, MA
23. Philipsborn Stores, Silver Springs, MD
24. Stewart and Co., Baltimore, MD
25. Charming Shoppes, Inc., Cornwells Heights, PA
26. Joseph Horne Co., Pittsburg, PA
27. Strawbridge & Clothier, Philadelphia, PA
28. John Wanamaker, Philadelphia, PA
29. Glosser Brothers, Johnstown, PA
30. Penn Traffic Co., Johnstown, PA
31. Lazarus, Wilkes-Barre, PA
32. Troutman's, Greensburg, PA
33. Hesse's, Inc., Allentown, PA
34. Bamberger's, Newark, NJ
35. Hahne and Co., Newark, NJ
36. Stern Brothers, Paramus, NJ
37. Brooks Fashion Stores, New York, NY
38. Bergdorf-Goodman, New York, NY
39. Ann-Taylor, New York, NY
40. Plymouth Shops, Inc., New York, NY
41. Henri Bendel, New York, NY
42. Loehman's, Bronx, NY
43. Lord & Taylor, New York, NY
44. Alexander's, New York, NY
45. Bloomingdale's, New York, NY
46. R. H. Macy and Co., New York, NY
47. J. W. Mays, Brooklyn, NY
48. Abraham & Strauss, Brooklyn, NY
49. August-Max, Rego Park, NY

50. Fowler, Dick and Walker, Binghamton, NY
51. Denby Stores, Menands, NY
52. The William Hengerer Co., Buffalo, NY
53. Dey Brothers, Syracuse, NY
54. Sibley, Lindsay, & Curr, Rochester, NY
55. Gertz, Great Neck, NY
56. Outlet Dept. Stores, Providence, RI
57. Cain-Sloan, Nashville, TN
58. Castner-Knott Co., Nashville, TN
59. Goldsmith's, Memphis, TN
60. B. Lowenstein's, Memphis, TN
61. Miller's, Inc., Knoxville, TN
62. Thalheimer's, Richmond, VA
63. Miller and Rhoades, Richmond, VA
64. Good's Dept. Stores, Wheeling, WV
65. The Diamond, Charleston, WV
66. J. B. Whites, Columbia, SC
67. Ivey's, Charlotte, NC
68. Garfinkel's, Washington, DC
69. Woodward and Lothrop, Washington, DC
70. Hecht Co., Washington, DC

Region II - Central

1. May D&F, Denver, CO
2. Joslin's, Denver, CO
3. The Denver Dry Goods Co., Denver, CO
4. Kaufman's, Chicago, IL
5. Carson, Pirie Scott & Co., Chicago, IL
6. Goldblatt Brothers, Chicago, IL
7. Marshall Field & Co., Chicago, IL
8. Wieboldt Stores, Inc., Chicago, IL
9. Paul Harris Stores, Indianapolis, IN
10. L. S. Ayres & Co., Indianapolis, IN
11. Block's, Indianapolis, IN
12. David's Dept. Stores, Wichita, KS
13. Maison Blanche, New Orleans, LA
14. D. H. Holmes, New Orleans, LA
15. Muller's, Lake Charles, LA
16. Winkelman's, Detroit, MI
17. L. W. Robinson and Co., Battle Creek, MI
18. Crowley Milner and Co., Detroit, MI
19. Hudson's, Detroit, MI
20. Field's, Jackson, MI
21. D. M. Christian Co., Owosso, MI
22. Smith-Bridgeman & Co., Flint, MI
23. J. W. Knapp and Co., Lansing, MI
24. Herp's, Grand Rapids, MI
25. Hardy-Herpolsheimer, Muskegon, MI
26. Donaldson's, Minneapolis, MN
27. Powers Dry Goods, Minneapolis, MN
28. Dayton's, Minneapolis, MN
29. Stix, Baer and Fuller, St. Louis, MO
30. Harzfeld's, Kansas City, MO

31. Herr's, Springfield, MO
32. The Jones Store, Kansas City, MO
33. Famous-Barr, St. Louis, MO
34. Macy's, Kansas City, MO
35. The May Co., St. Louis, MO
36. Hennessey's, Billings, MT
37. de Lendrecies, Fargo, ND
38. Gidding-Jenny, Cincinnati, OH
39. The Limited Stores, Inc., Columbus, OH
40. The May Co., Cleveland, OH
41. The H & S Pogue Co., Cincinnati, OH
42. McAlpins, Cincinnati, OH
43. Elder-Beerman, Dayton, OH
44. Lazarus, Columbus, OH
45. Rike's, Dayton, OH
46. Shillito's, Cincinnati, OH
47. The Higbee Co., Cleveland, OH
48. LaSalle's, Toledo, OH
49. Wren's, Springfield, OH
50. The M. O'Neil Co., Akron, OH
51. Lion's, Toledo, OH
52. John A. Brown, Oklahoma City, OK
53. Margo's LaMode, Dallas, TX
54. Neiman-Marcus, Dallas, TX
55. Lord & Taylor, Dallas, TX
56. Joske's, Dallas, TX
57. Sanger-Harris, Dallas, TX
58. Dillard's, Ft. Worth, TX
59. Dillard's, Little Rock, AR
60. Foley's, Houston, TX
61. Joske's, Houston, TX
62. Lord & Taylor, Houston, TX
63. The Boston Store, Milwaukee, WI

Region III - West

1. Levy's, Tucson, AZ
2. Diamond's, Phoenix, AZ
3. Goldwater's, Phoenix, AZ
4. Bullock's, Los Angeles, CA
5. Walker-Scott Corp., San Diego, CA
6. Macy's, San Francisco, CA
7. I. Magnin, San Francisco, CA
8. Weinstock's, Sacramento, CA
9. The Broadway, Los Angeles, CA
10. Liberty House of California, Honolulu, HI
11. Judy's, Inc., Van Nuys, CA
12. J. W. Robinson, Los Angeles, CA
13. Meier and Frank Co., Portland, OR
14. Zion's Co-operative Mercantile, Lake City, UT
15. Bon Marche, Seattle, WA
16. People's, Tacoma, WA

APPENDIX D
CHI-SQUARE VALUES

TABLE VI
CHI-SQUARE VALUES FOR INDIVIDUAL ITEMS
(N=64)

Item	True ^a	Undecided	False ^b	Total
1. True				
Frequency	39	3	1	43
Percent	60.94	4.69	1.56	67.19
Undecided				
Frequency	3	5	0	8
Percent	4.69	7.81	0.00	12.50
False				
Frequency	3	0	10	13
Percent	<u>4.69</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>15.63</u>	<u>20.31</u>
Total	45	8	1	64
Percent	70.31	12.50	17.19	100.00
2. True				
Frequency	39	4	4	47
Percent	60.94	6.25	6.25	73.44
Undecided				
Frequency	0	2	0	2
Percent	0.00	3.13	0.00	3.13
False				
Frequency	2	0	13	15
Percent	<u>3.13</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>20.31</u>	<u>23.44</u>
Total	41	6	17	64
Percent	64.06	9.38	26.56	100.00
3. True				
Frequency	52	2	0	54
Percent	81.25	3.13	0.00	84.38
Undecided				
Frequency	1	2	0	3
Percent	1.56	3.13	0.00	4.69
False				
Frequency	3	0	4	7
Percent	<u>4.69</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>6.25</u>	<u>10.94</u>
Total	56	4	4	64
Percent	87.50	6.25	6.25	100.00

TABLE VI (Continued)

Item	True ^a	Undecided	False ^b	Total
4. True				
Frequency	14	0	2	16
Percent	21.88	0.00	3.13	25.00
Undecided				
Frequency	0	3	0	3
Percent	0.07	4.69	0.00	4.69
False				
Frequency	0	0	45	45
Percent	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>70.31</u>	<u>70.31</u>
Total	14	3	47	64
Percent	21.88	4.69	73.44	100.00
5. True				
Frequency	9	1	1	11
Percent	14.00	1.56	1.56	17.19
Undecided				
Frequency	1	10	0	11
Percent	1.56	15.63	0.00	17.90
False				
Frequency	1	0	41	42
Percent	<u>1.58</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>64.06</u>	<u>65.63</u>
Total	11	11	42	64
Percent	17.19	17.19	65.63	100.00
6. True				
Frequency	55	0	0	55
Percent	85.94	0.00	0.00	85.94
Undecided				
Frequency	0	1	0	1
Percent	0.00	1.56	0.00	1.56
False				
Frequency	0	0	8	8
Percent	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>12.50</u>	<u>12.50</u>
Total	55	1	8	64
Percent	85.94	1.56	12.50	100.00

TABLE VI (Continued)

Item	True ^a	Undecided	False ^b	Total
7. True				
Frequency	16	1	1	18
Percent	25.00	1.56	1.56	28.13
Undecided				
Frequency	0	10	0	10
Percent	0.00	15.63	0.00	15.63
False				
Frequency	0	0	36	36
Percent	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>56.25</u>	<u>56.25</u>
Total	16	11	37	64
Percent	25.00	17.19	57.81	100.00
8. True				
Frequency	3	2	1	6
Percent	4.69	3.13	1.56	9.38
Undecided				
Frequency	0	2	1	3
Percent	0.00	3.13	1.56	4.69
False				
Frequency	0	0	55	55
Percent	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>85.94</u>	<u>85.94</u>
Total	3	4	57	64
Percent	4.69	6.25	89.06	100.00
9. True				
Frequency	14	3	1	18
Percent	21.88	4.69	1.56	28.13
Undecided				
Frequency	0	3	0	3
Percent	0.00	4.69	0.00	4.69
False				
Frequency	2	0	41	43
Percent	<u>3.13</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>64.06</u>	<u>67.19</u>
Total	16	6	42	64
Percent	25.00	9.38	65.63	100.00

^aDefinitely true and partly true

^bDefinitely false and partly false

VITA²

Jana Kay Gould

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: EXPECTATIONS OF STORE PERSONNEL MANAGERS REGARDING
APPROPRIATE DRESS FOR RETAIL BUYERS

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