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WATSON, EMILY WAGONER. Consumer Purchasing Behavior and Buying Practices for Men's Lightweight Underwear. (1975) Directed by: Dr. Eunice Deemer. Pp. 73.

The purpose of this study was to determine (1) the purchasing behaviors and buying practices of men's lightweight underwear consumers and (2) the relationships that exist between demographic variables and selected purchasing behavior and buying practice variables.

An observation form and interview schedule were developed for the collection of data. The study was conducted during June, 1974, in the budget departments of two department stores in Atlanta, Georgia. The research population consisted of eighty-one purchasers for whom both an observation of purchasing behaviors and interview on buying practices were completed.

The most outstanding behaviors observed during the purchasing decision were as follows: (1) the primary source of information for the majority of customers was on the front of the product package, (2) greater uncertainty existed in the purchase of men's lower underwear garments than upper garments, (3) alternative or additional sources of product information were derived through interpersonal communication, and (4) deliberation time to make a purchase decision was very short.

Major findings related to buying practices for men's lightweight underwear included the following:

(1) brand A, with the leading share of sales, had a very positive brand image, (2) consumers predominantly purchased white T-shirts, athletic shirts, and briefs, but purchased colored or printed boxers, (3) eighty-one percent of the purchases were planned prior to entering the store, (4) a majority of the subjects purchased underwear two to three times a year, (5) the usual number of garments purchased at a time was either three or six, (6) brand switching occurred with high frequency, and (7) items of information most often used to assist underwear selection were size, brand, fabric, and price.

CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOR AND
" "
BUYING PRACTICES FOR MEN'S
LIGHTWEIGHT UNDERWEAR

by

Emily Wagoner Watson

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the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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Approved by

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The wide variety of apparel available on the market today provides the consumer with freedom of choice but may tend to confuse the consumer. The diversity in brands, quality, pricing, packaging, advertising, and product characteristics creates a competitive market for apparel. Lack of experience with a product may be a decisive influencing factor in the consumer's selection of a new wardrobe; however, many other factors may compete to influence the consumer's selection.

According to Engel, Collis, and Blackwell in Consumer Behavior, in order to understand the act of purchasing "it is necessary to examine the events that precede and follow the purchase."¹ Consumer purchasing actions are stimulated by a variety of factors. "Evaluative criteria" are those factors utilized by the consumer to evaluate alternatives for a purchase decision. For a specific type of product, some evaluative criteria may stand out for

¹James F. Engel, David T. Collis, and Roger D. Blackwell, Consumer Behavior (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 7.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The wide variety of apparel available on the market today provides the consumer with freedom of choice, but may tend to confuse the consumer. The diversity in brands, quality, pricing, packaging, advertising, and product characteristics creates a competitive market for apparel. Past experience with a product may be a decisive influencing factor in the consumer's selection of men's underwear; however, many other factors may compete to influence the consumer's selection.

According to Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell in Consumer Behavior, in order to understand the act of purchasing "it is necessary to examine the events that precede and follow the purchase."¹ Consumer purchasing actions are stimulated by a variety of factors. "Evaluative criteria" are those factors utilized by the consumer to evaluate alternatives for a purchase decision. For a specific type of product, some evaluative criteria may stand out "as

¹James F. Engel, David T. Kollat, and Roger D. Blackwell, Consumer Behavior (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 7.

being critical in that they must be satisfied before a purchase will be made."²

Little research has been conducted to identify and analyze the evaluative criteria that affect purchase decisions expressly for men's underwear products. Information generated by clothing manufacturers is generally kept confidential for competitive reasons. Most published research relating to purchasing behavior and buying practices for apparel has been largely devoted to women purchasing outerwear for themselves. In addition, most research designs have involved simulated purchase conditions or post-purchase conditions; "in the field" research has not been widely utilized.

Men's underwear as an apparel category typically has been considered in the marketer's view as a low interest product which requires little thought, arouses only minor concern, and generates little emotional response on the part of consumers. Different brands are largely undifferentiated and highly fungible. Therefore, it is necessary for marketers of men's underwear to understand the dynamics that occur with consumers at the point of purchase, in order to compete effectively in a highly competitive environment.

Knowledge concerning the effect package design, package copy, and package display have in stimulating the

²Ibid., p. 431.

consumer of men's underwear is limited. Assumptions are made concerning the role of various purchase stimulating techniques in purchase decisions, but the assumptions are typically not tested in the marketplace. An understanding of consumer purchasing behavior and buying practices should be valuable to marketers in order to optimize the use of purchase stimulating techniques to promote effectively the sale of the product.

The present study was undertaken in an effort to determine which evaluative criteria are critical for the consumer of men's lightweight underwear. Leading objectives for the marketing of packaged goods include trial purchases and repeat purchases. Knowledge of consumer purchase processes, behaviors, practices, and satisfactions should be valuable to manufacturers, as well as to retailers, in order to provide to the consumer critical evaluative criteria at the point of purchase.

Scope and Limitations

The question this research study asks is: What evaluative criteria are critical for the consumer of men's lightweight underwear?

The objectives of the study were:

1. To observe consumers selections of men's underwear.
2. To secure information on buying practices for men's lightweight underwear.

3. To determine the factors which influence the consumers selections of men's underwear.
4. To determine what relationships exist between purchasing behaviors and sex, age, ethnic group, and store location.
5. To determine what relationships exist between selected buying practices and sex, age, ethnic group, and store location.

The study was limited to individuals observed purchasing men's underwear in two branches of a large department store with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, on June 7, 8, 14, and 15, 1974. The sample included both male and female purchasers of men's underwear. A completed sample required both an observation during the purchase decision and an interview after the sale transaction. All collection of data was conducted in the budget departments of the two store branches.

Data collected in the study included:

1. Demographic data: sex, age, ethnic group, and store location.
2. Consumer purchasing behavior during the purchase decision process for men's lightweight underwear.
3. Buying practices for men's lightweight underwear.

The following terms are defined for application to the study:

1. Consumer. A purchaser of men's lightweight underwear.
2. Behavior. Observable actions or reactions of an individual in a specific situation.

3. Men's Lightweight Underwear. Basic white or fashion underwear garments for men, limited to T-shirts, athletic shirts, briefs, and boxer shorts.
4. Buying Practices. Acknowledged decision criteria influencing the consumers purchase of economic goods.
5. Purchase Decision. The act of making a judgment for selecting an item to buy.
6. Purchasing. The implementation of a purchase decision.

The assumption was made that it would be possible to observe consumer purchasing behavior and survey buying practices using the instruments developed for this study. The assumption was also made that the data generated from the research population could be generalized for the average consumer in a similar distribution channel.

The general hypotheses tested were as follows:

- (1) significant relationships exist between observed purchasing behavior and dependent variables and (2) significant relationships exist between buying practices and dependent variables. The method of analysis to test the hypotheses was chi-square.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature reviewed for this study was divided and reported as follows:

1. Consumer behavior
2. Influences on consumers' purchasing behaviors and buying practices
3. Selection and purchase of men's apparel

Many factors compete to influence consumers' behaviors, purchase decisions, and buying practices. The first section of the review of literature serves to discuss consumer behavior in light of relevant theories and studies. Literature specifically related to selected variables that influence consumers' purchasing behaviors and buying practices is included in the second section. The final section reviews literature pertaining to the selection or purchase of men's apparel.

Consumer Behavior

The consumer has a great amount of power through spending. "The consumer, in great part, dictates the products made, the channels of distribution for them,

and their prices."³ A study of consumer behavior can provide information for improving consumer market needs, input to marketing decision making, and insight for social policy decisions relating to consumer interests.⁴

"The motivation of human behavior, not surprisingly, is exceedingly complex and is the result of a myriad of influences and relationships." The phenomena of consumer behavior are frequently represented in models which provide a coherent explanation of the buying process and specify how elements interact to affect buying decisions.⁵ Kotler offers a simplified model which illustrates the buying process as a system of inputs and outputs (Figure 1). Overt purchasing responses result from buying influences which are processed through the buyer's psyche. In Kotler's model, the

various influences and their modes of transmission are shown on the left. At the right are buyer's responses in choice of product, brand, dealer,

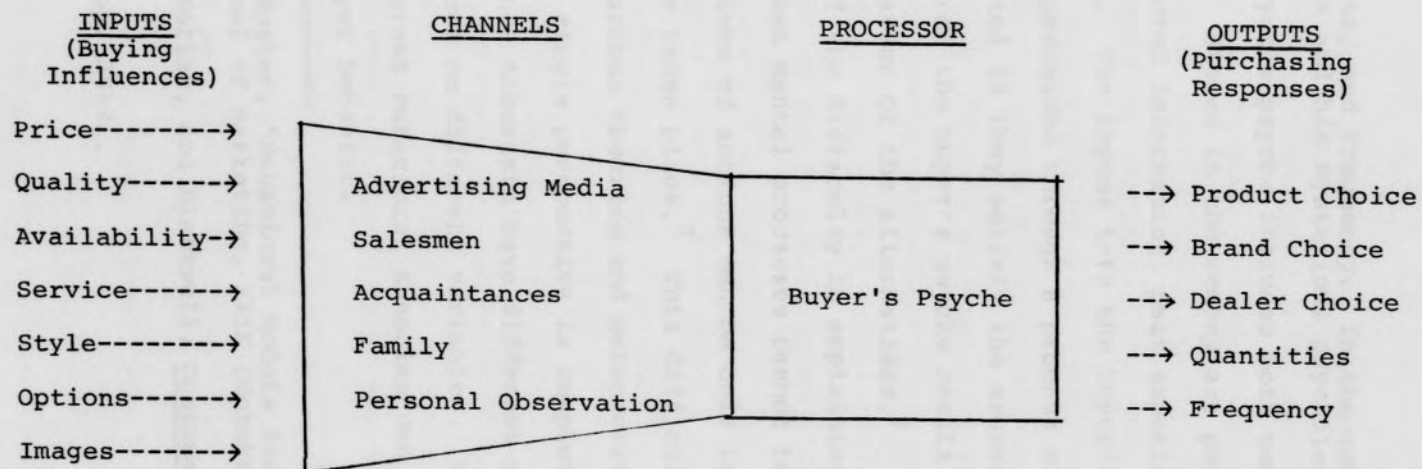
³James U. McNeal, Dimensions of Consumer Behavior (2d ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Grofts, 1969), pp. 6-7.

⁴Harold H. Kassarian and Thomas S. Robertson, Perspectives in Consumer Behavior (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Co., 1973), pp. xvi-xvii.

⁵Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, Consumer Behavior, pp. 19, 34.

FIGURE 1

Kotler's Model of the Buying Process as a System of Inputs and Outputs



quantities, and frequency. In the center stands the buyer and his mysterious psychological processes.⁶

The buyer's psyche includes both memory and facility for thinking. Stored in the memory are personality characteristics, stored information, past experiences, and values and attitudes. The inputs into the buyer's psyche create arousal, are perceived through a process of comparison, and are selected if they satisfy the aroused drive or need. The outputs from the buyer's psyche result after a search for and evaluation of the alternatives.⁷

Part of the difficulty in explaining human behavior is the fact that mental processes cannot be observed directly. Explanations of actions can be only inferences as to what must have taken place.⁸ This difficulty gives rise to many and various theories and perspectives on consumer behavior. No single perspective is complete in itself, especially since theorists have different purposes and therefore, focus on different variables. Nevertheless, parts of different behavioral theories can contribute to explaining buyer behavior.

⁶Philip Kotler, "Behavioral Models for Analyzing Buyers," *Journal of Marketing*, XXIX (October, 1965), 37.

⁷Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, Consumer Behavior, pp. 41-49.

⁸Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Four radically different theories on human behavior that contribute in explaining individual buyer behavior were discussed by Kotler: (1) The Marshallian economic theory maintains that purchasing decisions result from rational attempts to maximize the utility of the purchase; (2) The Pavlovian learning theory concludes that behavior is conditioned by learning through association and therefore, behavior is largely habitual; (3) The Freudian psychoanalytic theory emphasizes that behavior is influenced by subtle and complex gratification of instincts; and (4) The Veblenian social-psychological theory claims that economic consumption is motivated by prestige seeking.⁹

According to Festinger, "when a person is faced with a decision between two alternatives, his behavior is largely oriented toward making an objective and impartial evaluation of the merits of the alternatives. Data from experiments designed to study pre-decision activity showed that the more carefully a person evaluated information beforehand, the greater was the amount of dissonance reduction in the post-decision period. In the post-decision behavior, an individual is more partial and biased in evaluating the alternatives involved in the

⁹Kotler, "Behavioral Models," pp. 38-45.

decision in an attempt to reduce dissonance. Festinger stated that although most of the experimental data showed that the pre-decision process is rational, observation and experience would support that occasionally decisions are made on an impulsive basis.¹⁰

Woods believed that customers tend to have traits that classify them. He stated that although a customer would most likely not always react in exactly the same way, people do tend to be rather consistent in their behavior. The classifications and descriptions of the consumer market given by Woods are as follows:

- "1. A habit-determined group of brand loyal customers, who tend to be satisfied with the last purchased product or brand.
2. A cognitive group of consumers, sensitive to rational claims and only conditionally brand loyal.
3. A price-cognitive group of consumers, who principally decide on the basis of price or economy comparisons.
4. An impulse group of consumers, who buy on the basis of physical appeal and are relatively insensitive to brand name.
5. A group of emotional reactors, who tend to be responsive to what products symbolize and who are heavily swayed by "images."

¹⁰Leon Festinger, Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 152-155.

6. A group of new consumers, not yet stabilized with respect to the psychological dimensions of consumer behavior.¹¹

Influences on Consumers' Purchasing Behaviors
and Buying Practices

"The wide variety of goods in our affluent society makes it difficult for the consumer to make those decisions which will give him the greatest satisfaction."¹² Every consumer purchase decision is influenced by a vast number of factors. Consumer choice behavior ranges from complex, conscious decision-making processes to quick judgments.¹³

The consumer uses various sources of information to search for alternatives to the purchase decision. In their theory of buyer brand choice, Howard and Sheth summarized that the "elements of a buyer's brand-choice decision are (1) a set of motives, (2) several alternatives of action, and (3) decision mediators by which the motives are matched with the alternatives." Decision mediators are learned through information from the buyer's

¹¹Walter A. Woods, "Psychological Dimensions of Consumer Decision," in Consumer Behavior and the Behavioral Sciences--Theories and Applications, ed. by Steuart H. Britt (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), p. 532.

¹²Mary Shaw Ryan, Clothing: A Study in Human Behavior (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1966), p. 142.

¹³Flemming Hansen, "Consumer Choice Behavior: An Experimental Approach," in Perspectives in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Harold H. Kassarian and Thomas S. Robertson (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Co., 1973), p. 223.

environment or through actual experience of purchasing and consuming.¹⁴

An internal search utilizes information stored in the consumer's memory. Several authors have supported the idea that the consumer's own experience with a product is the most reliable and informative source of information. Bell believed that once a satisfactory product has been found, the consumer will tend to repurchase it, and repeat purchases will often lead to the establishment of a habit or to brand loyalty.¹⁵ Ryan added that manufacturers "assume the customer will look for, and buy, garments having features which have proved satisfactory in the past, and will avoid garments with characteristics which have proved unsatisfactory."¹⁶

Although the majority of purchases do not involve a search for information because past solutions are recalled and implemented, an external search for information occurs if the consumer perceives a value relative to the costs involved. Sources of external information

¹⁴John A. Howard and Jagdish N. Sheth, "A Theory of Buyer Behavior," in Perspectives in Consumer Behavior, ed. by Harold H. Kassarjian and Thomas S. Robertson (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Co., 1973), p. 520.

¹⁵Carolyn Shaw Bell, Consumer Choice in the American Economy (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 284.

¹⁶Ryan, Clothing, p. 178.

upon which to make a purchase decision include personal sources, advertisements, and dealer visits.¹⁷

Research findings have supported the tendency for consumers to seek product information from personal sources.

The two-step flow hypothesis was designed to account for the tendency for ideas to flow from the mass media to people designated as opinion leaders and from the leaders to the less active segment of the population.¹⁸

According to Cox, personal sources of information have been found to be highly effective influences on purchase decisions. The strength of consumer channels tends to be to provide information with which to evaluate a product, whereas market dominated channels of information serve primarily to create awareness and to stimulate interest in a product. Market channels and consumer channels of information are generally complementary.¹⁹

Cheskin believed purchase behavior to be psychological and not totally rational. He supported Cox's theory that market-dominated sources of information must be appealing devices to motivate people to buy,

¹⁷Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, Consumer Behavior, pp. 378-388.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 389-390.

¹⁹Donald F. Cox, "Two-Step Flow of Communication," in Consumer Behavior and the Behavioral Sciences--Theories and Applications, ed. by Steuart H. Britt (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), pp. 433-435.

since rational attributes may not appeal to consumers. Although he qualified that the product must be good to encourage repeat sales, Cheskin believed a successful and profitable marketing program depended on effective packaging; a brand name symbolizing quality, association, and performance; motivational advertising; and the right price for the target consumer population.²⁰

Koponen stated that "the sales effect of marketing is greatest when competing brands are physically alike." The perceived differences between brands physically alike are based on non-physical properties. Influencing consumer choice depends on factors such as advertising, merchandising, and packaging. The efforts of marketing aim to create a brand image which will appeal to the personalities and needs of potential customers.²¹ According to Bell, branded merchandise succeeds only if the consumer recognizes, prefers, and chooses the brand. Reiteration of a brand name through advertising is important in order to influence consumers, reinforce consumer habits, encourage repeat sales, and reduce dissonance.²²

²⁰Louis Cheskin, Why People Buy (2d ed; New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1959), pp. 38, 54-57.

²¹Arthur Koponen, "Personality Characteristics of Purchasers," in Consumer Behavior--Contemporary Research in Action, ed. by Robert J. Holloway, Robert A. Mittelstaedt, and M. Venkatesan (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1971), p. 90.

²²Bell, Consumer Choice, pp. 192, 294.

In spite of marketing efforts to reiterate brand name through advertising, "empirical data have shown that 'brand loyalty' is nowhere near as strong as most sellers would like...." Brand switching existence is documented by the shifting market share among nationally distributed brands as well as by the growing market of private-label merchandise. Consumers switch brands for reasons ranging from a desire for variety to dissatisfaction with a previous brand.²³

Advertising serves not only to provide information about products and brands, but also about purchase channels. Dealer visits were previously mentioned as a third source of external information. Shopping in retail outlets, though a relatively expensive method of search, can provide the consumer with information on product attributes.²⁴ Various product attributes have been found to affect purchasing behavior and buying practices.

Product display was found to be an important influence of product selection in a study conducted by Point-of-Purchase Advertising Institute. Findings from the study reported that nearly one-third of discount store patrons make unplanned purchases and 80 percent

²³Bell, Consumer Choice, p. 297.

²⁴Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, Consumer Behavior, pp. 397-399.

of their buys were attributed, at least in part, to store display. To many of the consumers, the display served as a recall for a desired product.²⁵

Although a consumer usually does not have complete information about the quality of competitive products, he forms perceptions from the information available. Price information is generally available, and therefore, used as a criterion for assessing product quality. Depending on individual needs, price may be a positive or negative influence. Monroe reported results from seven studies that all revealed perceived product quality directly related to price.²⁶

Shapiro offered four explanations of the role of price in judging quality of products: ease of measurement, effort and satisfaction, snob appeal, and perceptions of risk. First of all, price is a single, concrete, measurable cue and provides ease of measurement. Secondly, consumer satisfaction depends in part on the effort expended to obtain the product, and expenditure of money is viewed as the expenditure of effort. Thirdly, some consumers put a premium on

²⁵"Displays Create Unplanned Purchases," Advertising Age, XLII (September 20, 1971), 34.

²⁶Kent B. Monroe, "Buyer's Subjective Perceptions of Price," Journal of Marketing Research, X (February, 1973), 72.

goods and services merely for the sake of expensiveness. Last of all, consumers are generally concerned with getting good quality and choose higher priced products to reduce the risk of poor quality.²⁷

Results from an experiment designed to test brand selection as a function of information quantity showed an indirect relationship between increased package information load and consumer's ability to select the best buy. However, a direct relationship existed between increased package information load and consumer's selection satisfaction and certainty.²⁸

Store choice of consumers both influences and is influenced by purchasing behavior and buying practices. An acceptable shopping experience tends to influence repeat purchases which in turn lead to shopping habits and store loyalty.²⁹ Factors which differentiate retail outlets include product choice, services, personnel, reputation, advertising, and location.

Consumers surveyed in a suburban Maryland shopping center ranked factors influencing store patronage as

²⁷Benson P. Shapiro, "The Psychology of Pricing," Harvard Business Review, XLVI (July-August, 1968), 20-24.

²⁸Jacob Jacoby, Donald E. Sellar, and Carol A. Kohn, "Brand Choice Behavior as a Function of Information Load," Journal of Marketing Research, XI (February, 1974), 63-69.

²⁹Bell, Consumer Choice, p. 305.

follows: product price to value relationship, store specialization, quality of merchandise, service, and store location.³⁰ Callahan found similar findings in a study of consumer attitudes with over 1200 participants from five stores. Reasons for store preference indicated by the consumers were variety and choice, service, credit, quality of goods, and personnel.³¹

Buying decisions and practices vary among people and by circumstance. Key demographic variables influencing behavior are age, sex, social class, regional groups, and ethnic groups. Demographic variables are useful in focusing on characteristics that relate to differences in behavior and choice of consumers. Purchasing habits change throughout the family life cycle. The early years of marriage have been characterized by a high degree of joint husband-wife shopping and decision-making, whereas it is less so in the later years.³²

Sex differences in consumers tend to affect interests and values in purchasing. Boomer stated that "men are getting more involved in purchases once exclusively

³⁰Marvin A. Jolson and Walter F. Spath, "Understanding and Fulfilling Shoppers' Requirements: An Anomaly in Retailing," Journal of Retailing, XLIX (Summer, 1973), 39-43.

³¹Francis X. Callahan, "Advertising Influence on Consumers," Journal of Advertising Research, XIV (June, 1974), 45.

³²Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, Consumer Behavior, p. 339.

female." Women were at one time credited with making the majority of family purchasing choices, but the trend has reversed.³³

Persons in the same social class tend to behave like one another, and also "tend to buy the same products, shop at the same stores, and undergo similar decision processes." Among other factors, social class affects consumer motivations, perceptions, personalities, learning, family structure, and decision processes. According to Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, the information sources of the lowest classes are often very limited; as social class increases, access and response to media information increase. A finding from a study reported by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell indicated that in the problem-recognition stage, lower class individuals are more likely to buy only when the immediate need arises.³⁴

Kassarjian and Robertson proposed that there are apparently some racial differences in consumption, but most implied differences are a function of a composite of variables associated with race, including income, household size, family structure, and urban location.

³³Peggy Boomer, "Male Market: Big, Rich, but Tough," in Dimensions of Consumer Behavior, ed. by James U. McNeal (2d Ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Grofts, 1969), p. 239.

³⁴Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, Consumer Behavior, p. 303.

They concluded that the similarities between Negro-Caucasian consumption patterns far outweigh the differences.³⁵

One real difference in shopping patterns between Negroes and Caucasians has been the significant portion of Negro customers in downtown stores of large cities. In many cities, the Negro consumption characteristics for some products have accounted for a large percent of the total market for these products.³⁶

Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell discussed several consumption patterns that have been found to characterize the Negro subculture: (1)...Negroes have more careful purchasing habits, and take the purchase of products more seriously than equivalent whites," (2) Negroes appear to be more brand loyal than equivalent whites, and (3) Negroes tend to purchase more luxury items than white consumers of the same income level.³⁷

Selection and Purchase of Men's Apparel

The amount of published research on selection and purchase of men's apparel is limited. However, several studies have been made relative to influences

³⁵Kassarjian and Robertson, Perspectives, p. 460.

³⁶D. Parke Gibson, The \$30 Billion Negro (London: Macmillan Co., 1969), pp. 23-27.

³⁷Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell, Consumer Behavior, pp. 259-260.

and factors involved in the selection and purchase of men's apparel.

Martin believed that marketers are faced with the obligation to recognize consumers' needs for product information and to assist them in satisfying these needs. In 1970, Martin conducted a study to identify the kinds of information the consumer wants in order to make a purchase decision. Subjects from Springfield, Illinois were shown a drawing of a garment and asked to choose from a list up to five factors of information they would most want to make a purchase decision. The majority of the respondents chose price as the prime element for a decision. The physical attributes of the garment, color and fabric content, were of next importance. Overall, the respondents indicated that information with a garment is a prime factor in a buying decision.³⁸

Harper conducted a study during 1970 in Waco, Texas, to investigate factors that affect men's clothing selections, in particular, the usage of various types of advertising media. The sample included 98 male participants with varied socioeconomic strata and ages. Data were collected by means of a three-part questionnaire:

³⁸Claude R. Martin, "What Consumers of Fashion Want to Know," Journal of Retailing, XLVII (Winter, 1971-1972), 65-71.

"Men's Wear Questionnaire" and "Advertising Questionnaire" developed by the author and Crane's Introvert-Extrovert Test. The sample expressed high interest in comfort and style for "dressy" clothing, low concern overall with price or long wear, and little influence from outside sources as buying motivators. The preferred sources of information in buying clothing were store-oriented techniques and interior store displays; newspapers, magazines, and television were not considered as important sources. The men preferred exact cost, detailed garment descriptions, and exact garment illustrations in advertising.³⁹

A similar study undertaken by Moore in 1969 investigated what motivates men in their purchases of specific clothing items. Questionnaires were mailed to a sample randomly selected from a telephone directory in South Dakota. Like Harper, Moore found that store displays were the most important source of fashion ideas. Moore concluded that brand names were not important motivating factors to the men in her study, since over one-half of the participants failed to respond when

³⁹Jereleen Horlen Harper, "The Use of Advertising Media as Related to Factors Affecting Masculine Apparel" (unpublished Master's thesis, Texas Woman's University, 1971).

asked the brand name of the last specific clothing item purchased.⁴⁰

During the fall of 1968, Russell studied the factors influencing men's interest in fashionable clothing. The sample consisted of 207 male students from two selected colleges in Kentucky and Texas and 68 fathers of public school children in Kentucky. Data were collected by means of an author developed "Fashion Interest" questionnaire. The findings showed that the younger men rated significantly higher in fashion interest than the older men. Personal opinion was regarded as most influential in buying clothing, and comfort and style were the factors indicated as most important in clothing selection.⁴¹

The influence of brand name on the perception of product value was investigated in 1969 by Eccher. One hundred students from Oklahoma State University comprised the sample. The students viewed a set of slides, each picturing a man's white dress shirt labeled with a brand name, and rated the products by completing a semantic

⁴⁰Sandra Schroder Moore, "Motivating Factors in the Purchase of Specific Clothing Items by Selected Groups of Men in South Dakota" (unpublished Master's thesis, South Dakota State University, 1971).

⁴¹Sallye Sue Russell, "Masculine Fashion Indices as Related to External Motivations of Yesterday and Today" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Woman's University, 1971).

differential for each slide. Findings showed that perceived values of the shirts varied directly by brand name.⁴²

During the summer of 1968, Banks surveyed factors involved in shopping for soft goods, with special emphasis on purchase planning and shopping activity. The study was conducted in a city in New York, and the sample consisted of 103 females who had purchased a soft goods item within two weeks prior to the interview. The findings showed strong brand preference in three categories of soft goods: foundation garments, towels and sheets, and men's and boys' socks and underwear. Thirty-nine percent of the subjects reported buying an advertised brand and 37 percent, a store brand of men's and boys' socks and underwear. The largest percentage of planned purchases by brand was for men's and boys' clothing.⁴³ Shopping activity was found to be related to the price of the item. Findings showed that high purchase planning but

⁴² Jerry James Eccher, "The Influence of Brand Name on the Perception of Product Value" (unpublished Master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1970).

⁴³ Jerry Charlene Banks, "A Study of Shopping Behavior for Soft Goods" (unpublished Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1969).

low shopping activity items were men's wear, women's hose, and yard goods.⁴⁴

To obtain information on discount store customers' shopping patterns and attitudes for selected categories of soft goods, Doran gathered a sample of customers from two discount stores in Syracuse, New York during 1966. One hundred women agreed to participate and were interviewed in their homes. Among the findings, Doran reported that one-half of the women preferred self-service and one-half desired some form of sales clerk service when selecting men's shirts, socks, and underwear. Fifty-six percent of the sample responded that they purchased men's shirts, socks, and underwear as the need arose rather than waiting for a sale. Nationally advertised brands for men's socks and underwear were preferred by 43 percent of the respondents.⁴⁵

In 1969 Motichek investigated the influence of selected aesthetic and economic factors on consumers' selections of men's sleeveless undershirts. The sample consisted of 120 male respondents, 40 from each of three

⁴⁴Jerry Williams and Rachel Dardis, "Shopping Behavior for Soft Goods and Marketing Strategies," Journal of Retailing, XLVIII (Fall, 1972), 33-41.

⁴⁵Winifred Pulver Doran, "A Study of Discount Store Customers' Shopping Patterns for Soft Goods" (unpublished Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1967).

social classes, from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The researcher developed a questionnaire to determine respondents' personal data, comparisons of three different undershirts, and buying practices for undershirts. Buying practice data indicated 72 percent of the respondents purchased undershirts at least once a year, 58 percent of all respondents were not influenced in their selection of undershirts by price, and 70 percent of the undershirt purchases were made by the wife. Colored undershirts had not been previously purchased by any of the respondents, in addition, a substantial majority (78 percent) indicated no intention of purchasing such apparel.⁴⁶

Two articles on men's underwear garments stressed that comfort is of primary importance in all underwear. An article on men's knit briefs pointed out difficulties in shopping critically for undershorts: natural shyness about scrutinizing such items, sealed plastic packaging, analyzing fabric properties, and determining fit. The article concluded that wearing experience is the only effective means of appraising the ultimate objective of comfort.⁴⁷ The desirable attributes of men's undershirts

⁴⁶Mary Helen Motichek, "Social Class Differences in Consumer Acceptance of Men's Undershirts Composed of Cotton, Polyester, and Cotton-Polyester Blend" (unpublished Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1970).

⁴⁷"Men's Knit Briefs," Consumer Reports, July, 1970, p. 434.

cited were fit, absorbency, ease of care, shape retention, and comfort.⁴⁸

⁴⁸"Men's Undershirts," Consumer Bulletin, September, 1969, p. 17.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

This study was designed to investigate consumer behavior and buying practices in purchasing men's lightweight underwear. Interest in this topic was an outgrowth from the researcher's employment in the Product Development Department of a major manufacturer of men's and boys' underwear.

The procedure for the study was divided and implemented in the following phases:

1. Development of instruments
2. Pretesting the instruments
3. Arrangements for acquiring sample
4. Collection of data
5. Analysis of data

Development of Instruments

Instruments developed to collect the data were an observation form and an interview schedule. The observation form was devised for the purpose of recording the behaviors of consumers while making a purchase decision for men's lightweight underwear. This observation instrument was structured to allow the researcher to record, with

checks or minimal writing, specific behaviors. The purchasing behaviors observed included eye movements, hand movements, verbal communications, comparisons, and the sequence and length of purchase decision. An example of the "Observation of Purchasing Behavior" form is shown in Appendix A.

The interview schedule was developed to obtain data from the consumers regarding selected buying practices. The format included structured, open-end items which required short responses. The interview was planned to last approximately five minutes, in order to prevent detaining the respondents. The elicited buying practice information involved current purchase description and intention, usual purchase channel, purchase cycle, brand switching, purchase decision rationale, and size decision rationale. An example of the "Interview on Buying Practices" form is shown in Appendix A.

Content validity of the instruments was judged according to the objectives outlined for the study by the advisory committee of the researcher and by the management personnel of Hanes Knitwear's Marketing Research Department.

Pretesting the Instruments

A pretest was conducted in order to gain experience with and evaluate the use of the observation form and interview schedule. Permission was granted by the vice-

president of a large department store in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to conduct the pretest in the men's department. The researcher observed and interviewed five individuals during the pretest. Analysis of the pretest led to minor revisions in both instruments: several items were deleted or rephrased for simplification on the observation form, and one item on the interview schedule was restructured.

Arrangements for Acquiring Sample

Permission to conduct the research in two branches of a department store chain with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia was obtained from the vice-president in charge of the budget departments. The objectives and procedure for the study were introduced to the store management by the Marketing Research personnel of Hanes Knitwear, and the cooperation of the store's management was verified. Arrangements were made for the researcher to observe and interview individuals shopping for men's underwear in the budget departments of the downtown branch and a suburban branch.

Collection of Data

Data were collected for the study during June, 1974. Existing marketing research has indicated that June is a peak month for non-gift purchases of men's underwear and is

ranked second to December as a month for gift purchases. In an effort to obtain a larger sample for the study, the four days of data collection were Friday and Saturday of the two weekends preceding Father's Day. Days of data collection were alternated between the downtown and suburban stores on the first weekend and then this order was reversed the following weekend. All observations and interviews were conducted by the researcher.

The data collected for the study included demographic information, purchasing behaviors, and buying practices. Individuals shopping for men's lightweight underwear were observed unobtrusively by the researcher and the behaviors exhibited by the customers while making a purchase decision were recorded on the observation form. Only one customer at a time was observed, until either a sale was transacted or until the customer left the department without making a purchase. After a purchase the customer was approached by the researcher, introduced to the purposes of the study, and asked permission for an interview concerning his or her buying practices related to men's underwear. To control for biases, the researcher read the interview introduction and questions so that an exact procedure was used with each subject.

The research population consisted of all purchasers for whom the researcher was able to complete an observation

form of the purchase decision behavior and conduct an interview of buying practices. A total of ninety-seven observations were made; however, for various reasons, only eighty-one interviews were completed.

Analysis of Data

Frequency counts for all purchasing behavior and buying practice items were tabulated. Cross tabulations and percentage distributions of the demographic variables with selected purchasing behavior and buying practice variables were also made. The chi-square test was used in the statistical analysis of the cross tabulated frequency data. Findings at the .05 level of probability were considered significant; whereas findings at the .10 level of probability were regarded as trends.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Data collected and analyzed in this study are presented and discussed under the following headings: demographic information, consumer purchasing behavior, and buying practices.

Ninety-seven observations of customers' purchasing behaviors were made; however, sixteen interviews were not conducted for various reasons (Table 1). The distribution of customers for whom interviews were not conducted was heavily skewed toward the female. The total number of subjects for whom both an observation form and interview schedule were completed totaled eighty-one.

Demographic Information

Demographic data collected for the study included sex, age, ethnic group, and store location. Table 2 shows the research population distribution by demographic variables. The distribution of subjects in the dichotomous variables, sex, ethnic group, and store location, tended to be relatively equal. On the days of data collection, 54 percent of the subjects were female; 56 percent, white; and 54 percent, downtown customers.

TABLE 1
Frequency of Reasons for Not Conducting Interviews
by Sex, Ethnic Group, and Store Location

	Reasons for Not Conducting Interviews			
Variables	Customer Did Not Buy	Customer Did Not Have Time for Interview	Customer Left Depart- ment Too Quickly	TOTAL
<u>Sex</u>				
Male	-	-	1	1
Female	7	4	4	15
<u>Ethnic Group</u>				
White	2	4	3	9
Black	5	-	2	7
<u>Store Location</u>				
Downtown	6	-	3	9
Suburban	1	4	2	7
TOTAL	7	4	5	16

Five classifications of age were used. The distribution of subjects by age tended to be greater in the younger age groups. Twelve percent of the sample fell into the under 20 year old group; 30 percent were 20 to 29 years old; 27 percent were 30 to 39 years old; 16 percent were 40 to 49 years old; and the remaining 15 percent were 50 years or older.

TABLE 2

Distribution of Subjects by Selected Demographic Variables:
Sex, Age, Ethnic Group, and Store Location

Variables	Number	Percentage
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	37	45.7
Female	44	54.3
<u>Age</u>		
Under 20	10	12.3
20-29	24	29.6
30-39	22	27.2
40-49	13	16.0
50 and over	12	14.8
<u>Ethnic Group</u>		
White	45	55.6
Black	36	44.4
<u>Store Location</u>		
Downtown	44	54.3
Suburban	37	45.7

The demographic data were cross-tabulated to determine whether significant relationships existed between paired variables. Findings showed that blacks significantly purchased at the downtown store location, whereas whites purchased at the suburban store location (Table 3).

TABLE 3

Comparison of Subjects by Purchase
Location to Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group ^a	Purchase Location			
	Downtown		Suburban	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
White	12	14.8	33	40.7
Black	32	39.5	4	4.9

^aSignificant at the .05 level

Correlational analysis of age by sex indicated a strong trend toward the younger males shopping for themselves (Table 4).

TABLE 4

Comparison of Subjects by Sex to Age

Age ^a	Sex			
	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Under 20	8	9.9	2	2.5
20-29	13	16.0	11	13.6
30-39	6	7.4	16	19.8
40-49	6	7.4	7	8.6
50 and over	4	4.9	8	9.9

^aSignificant at the .10 level

Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Individuals shopping for men's lightweight underwear were observed while making a purchase decision, and purchasing behaviors applicable to the study were recorded, tabulated, and analyzed. To determine whether consumer behaviors varied in the purchase of an upper underwear garment versus a lower, all behaviors, except the purchase decision length, were analyzed separately for upper garments and lower garments.

Eye movements.---Overt eye movements of the customers were observed to determine the influence of package design, copy, and display. Table 5 gives the distributions of subjects by observed eye movements. Fifty-two percent of the subjects who purchased an upper garment and 67 percent of the subjects who purchased a lower garment looked at the front of the package in hand. Furthermore, 13 percent of the subjects who purchased an upper garment and 22 percent of the subjects who purchased a lower garment looked on the reverse side of the package. It is clearly evident that the primary source of information for most customers was on the front of the package. Overall, greater frequencies of eye movements were observed for purchasers of lower garments than for purchasers of upper garments. Twenty-nine percent of the customers for both upper and lower underwear garments were observed to have

obviously searched for some specific information, apparently necessary for a purchase decision.

TABLE 5

Distribution of Subjects by Observed Eye Movements

Observed Eye Movements	Upper Garments		Lower Garments	
	Number	Adjusted ^a Percentage	Number	Adjusted ^b Percentage
Looks at front of package in hand	25	52.1	45	67.2
Looks at back of package in hand	6	12.5	15	22.4
Obviously searches for something specific	14	29.2	20	29.9
Other Movement	-	-	1	1.5

^aPercentage is calculated on total number of upper garment purchasers (N=48)

^bPercentage is calculated on total number of lower garment purchasers (N=67)

Hand movements.--Hand movements were observed to secure additional consumer behaviors during the purchase decision process. The most outstanding finding was that no subjects were observed to have opened a package containing an upper garment, whereas 8 percent of the subjects purchasing lower garments opened a

package and inspected the garments. In each instance, the opened package was returned to the display unit and an unopened package was selected for purchase.

Auditive comments.--Customers' auditive comments were recorded according to predetermined categories relating to product characteristics. In Table 6 the frequencies and percentages of subjects by unaided auditive comments show similarity between customers purchasing upper and lower garments. The four comments most frequently verbalized by customers of both upper and lower garments were related to garment size, style, specific features, or color. These product characteristics might be indicative of the factors which most strongly influenced the purchase decision.

Observation of the auditive comments also included a record of whether the customers requested assistance from a sales clerk, accepted volunteered assistance from a sales clerk, talked to a companion, or talked to another customer. Findings shown in Table 7 indicate that alternative sources of product information for the subjects were apparently derived through interpersonal communication. Twenty-three percent of upper garment and 18 percent of lower garment customers communicated with a store employee prior to the purchase decision.

Furthermore, 18 percent of customers buying upper garments and 27 percent of customers buying lower garments communicated with a shopping companion.

TABLE 6

Distribution of Subjects by Auditive Comments (Unaided)

Comments Relating to:	Upper Garments		Lower Garments	
	Number	Adjusted ^a Percentage	Number	Adjusted ^b Percentage
Brand	1	2.1	2	3.0
Color	4	8.3	5	7.5
Fiber content	1	2.1	1	1.5
Fabric characteristics	-	-	1	1.5
Garment feature	5	10.4	4	6.0
Number in package	1	2.1	3	4.5
Price	3	6.3	3	4.5
Size	9	18.8	13	19.4
Style	8	16.7	7	10.4

^aPercentage is calculated on total number of upper garment purchasers (N=48)

^bPercentage is calculated on total number of lower garment purchasers (N=67)

TABLE 7

Distribution of Subjects by Recipient
of Interpersonal Communication

Recipient of Communication	Upper Garments		Lower Garments	
	Number	Adjusted ^a Percentage	Number	Adjusted ^b Percentage
Sales clerk-- customer requested	5	10.4	6	9.0
Sales clerk-- clerk volunteered	6	12.5	6	9.0
Accompaniment	9	18.8	18	26.9
Another customer	-	-	1	1.5

^aPercentage is calculated on total number of upper garment purchasers (N=48)

^bPercentage is calculated on total number of lower garment purchasers (N=67)

Comparative variables.--Inter-brand and intra-brand comparisons during the purchase decision process were observed and recorded to gain additional insight into purchasing behavior. Fifteen percent of upper garment customers and 21 percent of lower garment customers exhibited inter-brand comparison making. The most frequent aspect of inter-brand comparison involved package fronts; however, the absolute point of comparison on the

package front could not be determined merely through observation. Intra-brand comparisons tended not to be an important aspect of purchasing behavior in this study.

Length of purchase decision.--The total purchase decision time was recorded in an attempt to determine relative deliberation during the selection of men's lightweight underwear. Fifty-four percent of the research population spent one minute or less to make a purchase decision (Table 8). This finding seems to support the fact that men's underwear as an apparel category is a low interest product, requiring little thought on the part of the consumer.

TABLE 8

Distribution of Subjects by Length of Purchase Decision

Intervals in Minutes	Number	Percentage
0 to $\frac{1}{4}$	15	18.8
> $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$	14	17.5
> $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1	14	17.5
> 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$	3	3.7
> $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2	15	18.8
> 2 to 3	1	1.2
> 3 to 4	3	3.7
> 4 to 5	7	8.7
> 5	8	10.0

The length of purchase decision was compared to sex, age, ethnic group, and store location of the subjects. Purchase decision time was found to be significantly longer in the downtown store than the suburban store. The probable reason that purchase decision time was longer downtown was the fact that the downtown store stocked a larger variety of brands, styles, sizes, and fabrics. Deliberation during the purchase decision was also found significantly longer for blacks than for whites (Table 9).

Buying Practices

The customers observed during their purchase decisions were also interviewed after the sale transaction to obtain data regarding selected buying practices. Consumers who normally purchased men's underwear were asked to complete all interview items; however, the interview was terminated prematurely for those consumers who did not normally purchase men's underwear garments, since probably they would have had unestablished buying practices. Eighty-four percent of the subjects responded that they did normally purchase men's underwear. The remaining 16 percent of the respondents who did not normally purchase were interviewed about current

purchase description and intention and brand selection rationale.

TABLE 9

Comparison of Subjects by Length of Purchase Decision to Ethnic Group and Store Location

Intervals in Minutes	Ethnic Group ^a				Store Location ^b			
	White		Black		Downtown		Suburban	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 to ½	12	15.0	3	4.8	-	-	15	18.8
>½ to 1	12	15.0	2	2.5	4	5.0	10	12.5
>1 to 1½	9	11.3	5	6.3	7	8.8	7	8.8
>1½ to 2	-	-	3	3.8	3	3.8	-	-
>2 to 3	8	10.0	7	8.8	11	13.8	4	5.0
>3 to 4	-	-	1	1.3	1	1.3	-	-
>4 to 5	-	-	3	3.8	3	3.8	-	-
>5	3	3.8	4	5.0	7	8.8	-	-
	1	1.3	7	8.8	7	8.8	1	1.3

^aSignificant at the .05 level

^bSignificant at the .05 level

Brand share and brand selection rationale.--From a marketing standpoint, it is important to know brand share by product type. In addition, marketers must know

consumer perceived attributes of the brands in order to develop product line strategies to effectively compete. Among the brand offerings in the department stores in which the data were collected, Brand A had the leading share of the market across all product types (Table 10),

TABLE 10
Distribution of Subjects by Garment Type
to Brand Purchased

Brand	T-Shirt		A-Shirt		Brief		Boxer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Brand A	20	57.1	8	66.7	20	57.1	20	60.6
Brand B	10	28.6	3	25.0	8	22.9	10	30.3
Brand C	5	14.3	1	8.3	7	20.0	3	9.1
TOTAL	35	100.0	11	100.0	35	100.0	33	100.0

To determine brand selection rationale, subjects were asked, "Why did you purchase this brand today?" Unaided responses to the question revealed that Brand A had a very positive brand image, whereas the predominant appeal of Brand B was price point. Apparently consumers perceived a greater price to value relationship in Brand A than in the other brands offered (Table 11).

TABLE 11

Frequency of Responses by Brand to Selection Rationale

Selection Rationale	Brand A (f)	Brand B (f)	Brand C (f)
Brand	17	5	1
Selection Available	11	5	1
Performance/Service	9	3	-
Comfort/Fit	6	1	1
Cheaper/Price	4	11	-
Style	5	2	2
Experience/Quality	4	2	1
Good/Like	6	5	2
Needed	1	2	1
Fabric	3	1	1
His Choice	3	1	-
Color	2	1	-
Garment Features	3	-	-
Size	2	-	-
Shape Retention/ Does Not Shrink	4	-	-
Dissatisfaction with Other Brands	3	-	-

Current purchase description.--Analyses of product types by size, fabric, and number purchased disclosed no significant findings. Product type purchased by color revealed that consumers predominantly purchased light-weight white underwear garments. Eighty-eight percent of T-shirt purchasers, 91 percent of athletic purchasers, and 76 percent of brief purchasers selected white garments. On the other hand, 78 percent of the subjects who purchased boxers selected colored or printed garments.

A comparison of garment types by frequency of purchase showed that lower garments outsold upper garments: 41 percent of the subjects purchased lower garments only, 18 percent purchased upper garments only, and 41 percent purchased both upper and lower garments.

Current purchase intention.--The timing of the data collection preceeding Father's Day prompted an interview item on respondent's purchase intention. Thirty-five percent of the purchases were intended as gift items and 65 percent, as non-gift items.

A comparison of purchase intention by sex, age, ethnic group, and store location disclosed two significant findings. Expectantly, males significantly purchased the underwear garments as non-gift items. In addition, a significant relationship was found between white subjects and non-gift purchase intention (Table 12).

Findings showed that 19 percent of the subjects made an in-store decision to purchase men's underwear, versus having planned to purchase before entering the store. A significant relationship was found between age and planned purchase. None of the in-store decisions to purchase men's underwear were made by subjects in the age groups under 20 years and 50 and over years (Table 13).

TABLE 12

Distribution of Subjects by Purchase Intention as Gift
Versus Non-Gift Items to Sex and Ethnic Group

Variables	Gift		Non-Gift	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<u>Sex^a</u>				
Male	3	3.7	34	42.0
Female	25	30.9	19	23.5
<u>Ethnic Group^b</u>				
White	11	13.6	34	42.0
Black	17	21.0	19	23.5

^aSignificant at the .05 level

^bSignificant at the .05 level

TABLE 13

Comparison of Subjects by Planned Versus
In-Store Decision to Age

Age Groups ^a	Planned		In-Store	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Under 20	8	9.9	-	-
20-29	17	21.0	8	9.9
30-39	18	22.2	4	4.9
40-49	10	12.3	3	3.7
50 and over	12	14.8	-	-

^aSignificant at the .05 level

Although women have generally been credited as the primary family purchasing agent for apparel, findings from this study showed that 43 percent of the research population were men purchasing for themselves. The additional 57 percent of the subjects included 3 percent men purchasing gifts and 54 percent women purchasing for either a husband, father, friend, son, or grandfather.

Purchase channel loyalty and rationale.--Men's lightweight underwear is sold in a variety of outlets ranging from specialty fashion stores to grocery stores. Department store loyalty for underwear purchases was determined by asking each subject, "Do you usually purchase men's underwear in a department store?" Ninety-seven percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative that the department store was their usual purchase channel.

Customer rationale for purchasing men's underwear in a department store was also requested. Purchase channel rationale should be an aid to the retailer in buying, stocking, displaying, and advertising men's lightweight underwear. The unaided responses of customers' reasons for purchasing men's underwear in a department store are shown in Table 14. A rank ordering among the responses indicated that buying other items in and liking the store

was first in frequency, convenience was second, and selection was third.

TABLE 14

Frequency of Responses of Stated Rationale for Purchasing Men's Lightweight Underwear at a Department Store

Rationale	Frequency
Buy other/like store	26
Convenience/quick	22
Brands/selection offered	15
Charge account	9
Price/cheaper	8
Work here	5
Service/exchange	2

Purchase cycle.--Respondents were asked several questions pertaining to frequency of purchase for men's lightweight underwear and number of garments per purchase. Knowledge of annual purchase frequency, in addition to number of garments per purchase, can help the marketer to assess overall product demand. The majority of subjects indicated that they purchased underwear two to three times a year (Table 15).

TABLE 15

Distribution of Subjects by Purchase Frequency
for Men's Lightweight Underwear

Frequency of Purchase Per Year	Number	Percentage
1 or less times	15	20.8
2 times	30	41.7
3 times	10	13.9
4 times	3	4.2
5 times	2	2.8
6 times	3	4.2
7 to 12 times	1	1.4
Did not know	8	11.1

Most manufacturers of men's lightweight underwear pack three garments per package. Responses on number of garments per purchase indicated consumer awareness and expectations of the conventional package size. Overall, 38 percent of the subjects responded that the usual number of garments purchased at one time was three and 40 percent responded that the number of garments purchased was six (Table 16).

TABLE 16

Distribution of Subjects by Number of Men's Lightweight Underwear Garments Per Purchase

Garments Per Purchase	Number	Percentage
2	3	4.1
3	28	38.4
4	2	2.7
6	29	39.7
7 to 12	7	9.6
Did not know	4	5.5

Brand switching.--One of the leading objectives of marketing is repeat purchases of a brand; however, customers often have a tendency to purchase different brands within a product category. To determine the extent of and reasons for brand switching, the subjects were asked whether or not the brand purchased on the day of data collection was the same brand normally purchased. For the purposes of this study, an affirmative response was considered to indicate brand loyalty. Subjects responding negatively were asked what their normal brand was and why they had switched.

Brand switching occurred with high frequency (33 percent of respondents) on the days of data collection

for the study. The reasons cited for switching brands, in declining order of frequency, were cheaper price (36 percent), selection offered in store (29 percent), color or design (14 percent), size (7 percent), garment style or features (7 percent), fabric features (4 percent), and dissatisfaction with former brand (4 percent). Knowledge of the brand switching rationale coupled with normal brand selection rationale, should help the marketer develop strategies to induce desired changes in consumer buying behavior.

Correlational analysis of brand loyalty to the demographic variables showed a significant relationship between brand loyalty and ethnic group. Black subjects were found to be more brand loyal, or in other words, the brands purchased on the days of data collection were affirmed to be the brands normally purchased (Table 17).

Incidence of colored underwear purchases.--Men's lightweight underwear has become more fashion oriented in recent years, and selection available in the marketplace now generally includes a wider variety of styles, colors, and fabrics than in the past. To determine incidence of prior purchases of colored underwear, the subjects were asked whether or not they had ever purchased any men's colored underwear. Fifty-four percent of the respondents had previously purchased men's colored underwear

garments. A significant positive relationship was found to exist between black subjects and prior purchase of colored underwear (Table 18).

TABLE 17

Comparison of Subjects by Brand Switching to Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group ^a	Brand Loyalty		Brand Switching	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
White	21	30.4	17	24.6
Black	24	34.8	7	10.2

^aSignificant at the .05 level

TABLE 18

Distribution of Subjects by Prior Purchase of Men's Colored Underwear to Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group ^a	Never Purchased Colored Underwear		Purchased Colored Underwear	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
White	24	33.3	17	23.6
Black	9	12.5	22	30.6

^aSignificant at the .05 level

To gain further insight into the incidence of colored underwear purchases, information was requested on the type of men's colored underwear garments that had been purchased in the past and the color underwear garments worn most frequently (white versus colors). Sixty-seven percent of the subjects who had previously purchased colored underwear stated they had purchased colored boxers, 36 percent had purchased briefs, 21 percent had purchased T-shirts, and 18 percent had purchased athletic shirts. These findings clearly indicate that lower colored underwear garments have greater consumer acceptance than upper garments.

Compared to the 54 percent of respondents who had previously purchased men's colored underwear, only 15 percent of the subjects stated that colored garments were worn most frequently. However, another 22 percent responded that a combination of colored and white underwear garments were worn. The majority of respondents (63 percent) most frequently wore white underwear garments (Table 19).

Significant relationships were found between color of underwear worn most frequently and ethnic group and store location. The black subjects and downtown store subjects were found to wear more colored underwear.

TABLE 19

Distribution of Subjects by Color of Underwear
Most Frequently Worn

Color of Garments	Number	Percentage
Colors	11	15.3
White	45	62.5
Combination of colors and white	16	22.2

Package information utilization.--The four items of package information most frequently cited by consumers as being used to assist in their underwear selection were items generally found on the front of the package. Previous purchasing behavior findings also indicated the primary source of information for most customers was on the front of the package. Table 20 shows the information on a package used to assist purchase selection by frequency of responses. Size was most frequently mentioned as the information used in men's underwear selection. The other key elements of information mentioned by the consumers, ranked in order of frequency, were brand, fabric, and price.

TABLE 20

Frequency of Responses for Information on Men's Underwear
Package Used to Assist Selection

Information on Package	Frequency of Response
Size/waist	34
Brand	19
Fabric	16
Price	16
Number	5
Care/Permanent press	5
Style/type of garment	4
Color	2
Comfort	1
Shrinkage information	1

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

Very little research has been published on purchasing behaviors and buying practices for men's apparel, and in particular, not for men's underwear products. This study was undertaken to determine (1) evaluative criteria critical to the purchaser of men's lightweight underwear, (2) purchasing behaviors and buying practices for men's lightweight underwear consumers, and (3) relationships that exist between selected purchasing behaviors and buying practices for men's lightweight underwear and sex, age, ethnic group, and store location. Information of this nature should be helpful to manufacturers, marketers, and retailers of men's lightweight underwear in product design, packaging, promotion, and display.

An observation form and interview schedule were developed for the collection of data. Subjects for the study were individuals observed purchasing men's underwear in the budget department of two branches of a department store in Atlanta, Georgia. The research population consisted of eighty-one purchasers for whom both the observation of purchasing behavior and interview on buying practices were completed. The assumption was made that

the data generated from the research population could be generalized for the average consumer in a similar distribution channel.

The frequency of occurrence for all purchasing behavior and buying practice items were tabulated. Percentage distributions and cross tabulations of the demographic variables with selected purchasing behavior and buying practice variables were made also.

On the days of data collection, 54 percent of the subjects were female; 56 percent, white; and 54 percent, downtown customers. The distribution of subjects by age tended to be slightly greater in the younger age groups.

Black subjects significantly purchased at the downtown store location, whereas white subjects purchased at the suburban store location. A strong trend was indicated for the younger males purchasing their own underwear.

The primary source of information for most customers, as measured by frequencies of overt eye movements, was on the front of the package. Greater frequencies of eye movements were exhibited by purchasers of lower underwear garments than purchasers of upper garments, probably indicating greater uncertainty in the purchase of lower underwear garments. In addition, almost twice as many lower garment customers looked on the reverse side of the package. Nearly one-third of the customers for both

upper and lower underwear garments were observed to have obviously searched for some specific information apparently necessary for a purchase decision.

The outstanding finding from the observation of hand movements was the fact that 8 percent of the subjects purchasing lower underwear garments opened a package to inspect the garments, whereas the opening of upper underwear garment packages did not occur. This finding further indicates greater uncertainty in the purchase of lower underwear garments.

Comments most frequently verbalized by the customers of both upper and lower underwear garments were related to garment size, style, features, and color. These auditive comments might be indicative of the factors which most influenced the purchase decision. The frequency of interpersonal communication by the subjects indicated that alternative or additional sources of product information were apparently sought. Twenty-three percent of T-shirt and A-shirt customers and 18 percent of brief and boxer customers communicated with a store employee prior to the purchase decision, and 18 percent of T-shirt and A-shirt customers and 27 percent of brief and boxer customers communicated with a shopping companion.

During the purchase decision, about one-fifth of the subjects were observed to have made comparisons between

two brands. The most frequent aspect of inter-brand comparisons involved package fronts.

Slightly over one-half of the research population spent one minute or less to make a purchase decision for men's lightweight underwear. Only 10 percent of the subjects deliberated more than five minutes. These findings seem to support the fact that men's underwear as an apparel category is a low interest product, requiring little thought on the part of the consumer. Short deliberation time by the consumer affords the marketer little opportunity to stimulate interest at the point of purchase.

One of the general hypotheses for the study was that significant relationships would exist between selected purchasing behavior variables and dependent variables. The length of purchase decision was found to be significantly related to store location and ethnic group. Purchase decision time was longer in the downtown store, probably because the downtown store stocked a greater variety of brands, styles, sizes, and fabrics. Deliberation during the purchase decision was also found significantly longer for the black subjects than for the white subjects.

Relative to the brand offerings in the department stores in which the data were collected, Brand A had the leading share of the sales across all product types, followed by Brand B. Consumer brand decision rationale

revealed that Brand A had a very positive brand image, whereas the predominant appeal of Brand B was price point.

On the days of data collection, consumers predominantly purchased white T-shirts, athletic shirts, and briefs, but purchased colored or printed boxers. Thirty-five percent of the purchases were intended as gift items and the remaining 65 percent, as non-gift items. Over 80 percent of the respondents indicated that the purchase of men's underwear was planned prior to entering the store. Although women have generally been credited as the primary family purchasing agent for apparel, findings from this study disclosed that 43 percent of the research population were men purchasing underwear for themselves.

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents indicated department store loyalty for men's underwear purchases. The most frequently mentioned reasons for purchasing underwear in a department store were buying other items in the store, convenience, and selection.

The majority of subjects indicated that they purchased men's underwear two to three times a year. The usual number of garments purchased at a time was three for 38 percent of the respondents and six for 40 percent of the respondents.

Brand switching occurred with high frequency (33 percent of the respondents) on the days of data collection for this study. The most frequently cited reasons for switching brands were cheaper price and selection offered in store. The high occurrence of brand switching provides the marketer and retailer opportunities to generate additional sales through effective strategies.

Over one-half of the respondents had previously purchased men's colored underwear garments. By product type, the colored garments purchased in the past in declining order of frequency, were boxers, briefs, T-shirts, and athletic shirts. These findings indicate that colored lower underwear garments have greater consumer acceptance than colored upper garments. In spite of the number of respondents who had purchased colored underwear garments in the past, the majority most frequently wore white.

The four items of package information most frequently cited by consumers as being used to assist in their underwear selection were size, brand, fabric, and price. These items of information are found generally on the package front, and previous purchasing behavior findings also indicated the primary source of information for most customers was on the front of the package.

The second general hypothesis for the study was that significant relationships would exist between selected buying practice variables and dependent variables. Non-gift purchase intention was found to be significantly related to sex and ethnic group: male and white subjects significantly purchased the underwear garments without gift intention. A significant relationship was found between age and planned decision to purchase men's underwear. None of the in-store decisions to purchase men's underwear were made by subjects in the age groups under 20 years and 50 and over years.

Ethnic group was found to be significantly related to brand loyalty. On the days of data collection, the black subjects were found to have greater brand loyalty. A significant positive relationship was found to exist between black subjects and prior purchase of men's colored underwear garments. Significant relationships were found also between color of underwear most frequently worn and ethnic group and store location. The black subjects and downtown store subjects were found to wear colored underwear garments more frequently.

Recommendations

The findings from this study indicate a need for more extensive research to determine what product information is missing or unclear to consumers of men's lightweight

underwear, and to determine how to more effectively communicate product information. Further research also needs to determine why greater uncertainty seems to exist in the selection of men's lower underwear garments and how the uncertainty could be alleviated. The very short deliberation time during the purchase decision and the high occurrence of brand switching stress a need to test various promotional and display strategies at the point of purchase to achieve maximum sales effectiveness.

A larger research population would be desirable to increase reliability of the findings. Data from areas of the study most relevant to the marketer and retailer in developing sales strategies could be collected on a periodic basis. This data would help monitor fluctuations in consumer purchasing and buying practices. Further research could include respondents from the upstairs underwear department, as well as the downstairs budget department, to determine what differences and similarities exist.

Follow-up research could be carried out to determine what relationships exist between ultimate garment satisfaction and the selected purchasing behavior and buying practice variables.

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APPENDIX A

OBSERVATION OF PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

Completed _____

_____ Observation Number	<u>Department</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Accompanied</u>
_____ Researcher's Name	Upstairs	Male	White	If adult: _____ Male
_____ Date of Observation	Downstairs	Female	Black	_____ Female
			Other	If child: _____ Male
				_____ Female

UPPERS - T-Shirts(T) and A-Shirts(A)
BRANDS (List as observed)

3. _____ 2. _____ 1. _____

EYE MOVEMENT

1. Looks at front of pkg.--in hand
2. Looks at back of pkg.--in hand
3. Looks at in-store promotion
4. Looks at mannequin
5. Obviously searches for something specific (fabric characteristics, fiber content, gmt. features, number, size, style)
6. Other _____

HAND MOVEMENT

1. Touches package without moving
2. Picks package up
3. Turns package over
4. Opens package
5. Opens--feels garment
6. Opens--inspects garment
7. Returns opened pkg. to case
8. Holds package in hand for intended purchase
9. Other _____

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

1. Comments about brand
2. Comments about color
3. Comments about fabric characteristics
4. Comments about fiber content
5. Comments about garment features
6. Comments about number in package
7. Comments about price
8. Comments about size
9. Comments about style
10. Expresses intended wearer
11. Expresses intended usage otherwise
12. Talks to sales clerk--requested
13. Talks to sales clerk--volunteered
14. Talks to person accompanying
15. Talks to another customer

UPPERS

COMPARISON MAKING

LOWERS

_____ Visual	<u>Intra-brand</u>	<u>Inter-brand</u>	*	_____ Visual	<u>Intra-brand</u>	<u>Inter-brand</u>
	Brand	Brands	*		Brand	Brands
_____ Tactile			*	_____ Tactile		
	Back of pkg.	Back of pkg.	*		Back of pkg.	Back of pkg.
_____ Verbally	Color	Color	*	_____ Verbally	Color	Color
	Fabric	Fabric	*		Fabric	Fabric
	Features	Features	*		Features	Features
	Fiber	Fiber	*		Fiber	Fiber
	Front of pkg.	Front of pkg.	*		Front of pkg.	Front of pkg.
	Number in pkg.	Number in pkg.	*		Number in pkg.	Number in pkg.
	Price	Price	*		Price	Price
	Size	Size	*		Size	Size
	Style	Style	*		Style	Style
Other Behaviors _____			*	Other Behaviors _____		
			*			
			*			
Verbal Comments _____			*	Verbal Comments _____		
			*			
			*			

SEQUENCE OF PURCHASE _____ T-shirt _____ A-shirt _____ Brief _____ Boxer

LENGTH OF PURCHASE DECISION _____ minutes

