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## Awareness of Cotton Among Generation Y

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Awareness of Cotton Among Generation Y

A Research Paper Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies  
Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies

By  
Keidra Hatchett  
Nichole Williams  
August 2010

**APPROVAL PAGE**

This research paper was prepared by Keidra Hatchett and Nichole Williams under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupation and Technical Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Occupation and Technical Studies.

**APPROVAL BY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Signature Page	ii
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapters	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	1
Research Goals	1
Background and Significance	2
Limitations	4
Assumptions	4
Procedures	4
Definition of Terms	5
Overview of Chapters	6
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	8
Marketing Response and Expectations among Generation Y consumers	8
Product Development and Brand Awareness	13
Buying Behavior of Generation Y	15
The Influences of Broadcast Media on Generation Y	19
Summary	22
III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES	23
Population	23
Instrument Design	23

Methods of Data Collection	24
Statistical Analysis	24
Summary	24
IV. FINDINGS	26
Overview of Responses	26
Specific Data on Student Awareness	26
Summary	30
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	32
Summary	32
Conclusions	33
Recommendations	35
REFERENCES	36
APPENDICES	39
Appendices A, Participant Letter	39
Appendices B, Survey Instructions	40
Appendices C, Sample of Student Survey	41

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Total Population Results for Questions 1-5	27
Table 2. Total Population Results for Questions 6-9	29

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Makeup of Adult Internet Population by Generation	20

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cotton is one of the most important apparel fibers around the world. In 2004, U.S. cotton fiber production totaled approximately 8.5 billion pounds (Monthly Economic Letter, 2004), which accounted for about 30% of textile fiber consumption in the United States (Segal & Wakelyn, 1998). Although cotton apparel is prominent, the awareness of it as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric among Generation Y is unknown. “Gen. Y consumers are often described as a free spending, but hard to reach generation of 71 million 8-25-year-olds” (Horovitz, 2002, p. 1B). According to Martin and Turley (2004), Gen. Y spends an average of \$30 on every mall trip and as a cohort group they influence between \$300 to \$400 billion in family purchasing. “The wealthiest members of Gen. Y are those 19-25 years old” (Martin & Turley, 2004, p. 464). With Gen. Y being the largest group of people since the baby boomers being able to connect with the market will benefit the cotton industry in profit.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The problem of this study was to determine the awareness and use of cotton in fabric and clothing by Gen. Y (college students 18-25) for enhanced product marketing.

### **RESEARCH GOALS**

The objectives of this study were established to guide an answer to this problem:

RO<sub>1</sub>: What influences college students awareness of cotton?

RO<sub>2</sub>: Do college students consider fabric content when purchasing garments?

RO<sub>3</sub>: Do college students have knowledge of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric?



RO4: Do social networking, television, and magazines contribute to college students' awareness of cotton?

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Cotton has been the textile at the forefront of fabric history leading to developments in textile technology and production. Known to be one of the first textiles worn, cotton dates back over 7,000 years ago to ancient Egyptian civilization (Eubank & Tortora, 2009). Cotton is one of the most, if not most, important natural fibers on Earth. Production of cotton spans to over 90 countries, solidifying cotton as a significant industry in markets around the world (Pizzuto, 2010). Cotton production is an economic medium for developing countries while maintaining its presence in more developed industrial nations.

Known as "The Fabric of Our Lives," cotton has grown into a multibillion dollar industry (Cotton Inc., 2010). The average human being comes in contact with some form of cotton on a daily basis. Not only is cotton a fabric staple in the apparel industry, but there is also a strong presence in other industries including interior furnishings and industrial manufacturing areas (Pizzuto, 2010). Over 125 million bales of cotton are produced by nations spanning the globe annually (Pizzuto, 2010). This textile continues to evolve in many areas including marketing, advertising, product development, and textile manufacturing.

Cotton is known for its distinct fabric characteristics. These characteristics include great strength and abrasion resistance, which allows cotton to be used in a variety of items including jeans, shoes, towels, and t-shirts. A breathable fabric, cotton is highly moisture absorbent, offering a cooling effect that contributes to enhanced comfort

compared to unnatural fibers. Though cotton is one of the leading fibers in fabric softness there are various types of cotton including Egyptian, which is one of the softest, yet most durable types of cotton (Pizzuto, 2010).

Cotton Incorporated is the official promotion organization of cotton. This organization represents cotton in every facet of the textile industry from the growing and manufacturing to the marketing and advertising. Cotton Inc.'s (2010) objective is to build and reach various markets through product development, marketing, and advertising. The entity has been highly influential in maintaining cotton's positive image among various consumer groups.

Through innovative print advertisements, social movements like the green movement, and creative television commercials featuring catchy jingles sung by well-known celebrities, Cotton Inc. has managed to reach out to every consumer group except Generation Y. This generation is more complicated to reach out to due to their overwhelming differences compared to their predecessors like the Baby Boomers. These differences include their attitudes toward cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric, brand knowledge, fabric knowledge, and advertising mediums such as the internet, social networking, and print media (Martin & Turley, 2004).

The significance of this study is that there is a lack in supporting evidence leading to Generation Y's awareness of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric. What is known is that Generation Y's purchasing power reaches over \$300 billion in family purchases annually, specifically with college students spending over \$200 billion themselves annually (Martin & Turley, 2004). This subgroup, which includes ages 18-25, is known to be the wealthiest among the members of Generation Y. According to Martin

and Turley (2004), this presents an opportunity to US retailers to take advantage of this market through developing products and advertisements that will cater to this subgroup.

### LIMITATIONS

The limitations created for this study are as follows:

- This study was limited to college students between the ages of 18-25.
- The awareness of cotton will be limited to Gen. Y from the Hampton Roads area during this study.
- College students in the Hampton Roads area will be the focus of the study.

### ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were made in this study:

- Fabric content is not a major factor among Gen. Y (college students) when buying clothing.
- Cost is a big factor among Gen. Y (college students) when buying clothing.
- Gen. Y (college students) buys clothing based on look and trends, not fabric.
- Print media is the least effective way to reach Gen. Y in terms of bringing awareness to cotton fabric.
- The Internet is the most effective way to reach Gen. Y in terms of awareness of cotton fabric.

### PROCEDURES

The researchers will survey Gen. Y (college students) between the ages of 18-25 on basic awareness of cotton as a durable, comfortable, and versatile fabric. The researchers will also conduct a literature review on the topics of consumer behavior, social networking, print media, broadcast media, and product marketing and advertising.

The literature review supplies the reader with a knowledge base of the study surrounding the topic. This enables the researchers to make educated recommendations while conducting the research.

Data will be collected using a quantitative method. Using a quantitative method is a good way to analyze numerical data according to consumers' purchases, attitudes, knowledge, and their exposure to advertisements and other market-related information (Moriarty et al., 2009). The quantitative method will be conducted by a confidential survey of 400 college student in the Hampton Roads area to better determine their awareness of cotton as a fabric among Gen.Y. Once the surveys are collected, the finding will be tabulated and compared to the literature review to show and determine the awareness level of cotton as a durable, comfortable, and versatile fabric.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions were associated with the field the researchers were studying:

- **Broadcast Media-** Media that transmits sound or imagery electronically such as radio, TV, and internet (Moriarty et al., 2009). They engage in sight and sound and are more entertaining than print media (Moriarty et al., 2009). Broadcast media also uses emotion and repetition to intensify memory (Moriarty et al., 2009).
- **Gen. Y** (Generation Y)- This Generation was born between 1980-1996 and is known as the Echo Boomers because they are the children of the baby boomers. They are known to be technology savvy due to them being raised around computers (Moriarty et al., 2009). According to Moriarty, this group is the main

group marketers are trying to reach due to them being in the formative years of their brand relationship.

- **Hampton Roads Area-** The name of both a body of water and the land areas which surround it in southeastern Virginia in the United States and the area is also nicknamed the "Seven Cities" due to the presence of the seven large cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach located in the area (wordiq.com).
- **Print Media-** Advertisements in newspapers, magazines, brochures, posters, and billboards are all examples of print media (Moriarty et al., 2009). Print media usually has more information, richer imagery, and longer messages than broadcast media (Moriarty et al., 2009).
- **Social Networking-** According to Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 1), social networking is “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” This information will vary depending of the nature of the social site you use. Examples of this would be Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace.

## OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter I presented the reader with the problem of the study which is to determine the awareness and use of cotton in fabric and clothing by Gen. Y (college students 18-25) for enhanced product marketing. The research goals were established to determine what influences college students' awareness of cotton, which will be highlighted through

survey research. The background of the study includes that Cotton Inc. desires to promote more toward Generation Y, which is a growing consumer group with massive purchasing power, in order to build awareness of cotton among this consumer group. The term Generation Y is introduced in definition of terms, which in this study, has great meaning and applies to college students between the ages of 18-25.

In Chapter II a literature review was conducted to further gain knowledge in the content areas of marketing responses and expectations among the Generation Y consumers, product development and brand awareness, buying behavior of Generation Y, and the influence of broadcast media on Generation Y. This chapter provides a better understanding of the consumer behavior of Generation Y and the way marketers reach out to this generation.

In Chapter III the researchers used information gathered from Chapter II to develop a survey that would measure Generation Y's awareness of cotton as a versatile, durable, and comfortable fabric. Chapter III offers further rationalization regarding the methods implemented to conduct the survey.

In Chapter IV the findings of the conducted study are reported. The findings of the survey guided the researchers in drawing conclusions and recommendations of the study. Conclusions are drawn from Generation Y's awareness of cotton as a versatile, durable, and comfortable fabric. The awareness is further discussed and recommendations are made for further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

When analyzing Generation Y's awareness of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric, it is critical to review research associated with this topic. In this chapter the following topics will be discussed: 1) Marketing response and expectations among Generation Y consumers, 2) Product development and brand awareness, 3) Buying behavior of Generation Y, and 4) Influence of broadcast media on Generation Y.

#### **MARKETING RESPONSE AND EXPECTATIONS AMONG GENERATION Y CONSUMERS**

Marketers, retailers, and fashion designers are presented with the overwhelming challenge of marketing goods and services to Generation Y. This generation has been coined as the most difficult to reach, though many find them to be guilty of spending their resources freely (Horovitz, 2002). Many marketers develop marketing strategies by first identifying what they know about Generation Y. According to Horovitz (2002), the makeup of Generation Y happens to be the most ethnically diverse compared to other generations. The diversity of Generation Y factors into how they respond to marketing that is geared toward their generation. The writer goes on to reveal that the most critical sub-group of Generation Y is the teen market, due to their spending ability and influencing over \$300 billion in spending.

Horovitz (2002) states that marketers ability to reach out to Generation Y is even more challenging than in recent years when their marketing message was being conveyed to the Baby Boomers generation. Generation Y does not positively respond to the same forms of marketing and advertisements as the Baby Boomers. Since the establishment of

Music Television (MTV) marketers have been under the assumption that the best way to reach adolescents is through this television channel, but Generation Y has proven this to be untrue. Due to marketers' growing frustration with Generation Y they have renamed this group "The Unreachables" (Horovitz, 2002, p. 1B). Horovitz adds, "this is the first generation of Americans that resists reading and increasingly keeps the TV off" (Horovitz, 2002, p. 1B).

Marketers have stopped trying to reach Generation Y as a whole and have found success by reaching them on an individual basis (Horovitz, 2004). Executives at Mountain Dew have found that handing out samples of their products at events attended by Generation Y generates positive responses and feedback (Horovitz, 2004). The consumer associates the positive feelings that are felt with that event with the product. Burwick, a Mountain Dew executive, states, "there's a Pavlovian connection between the brand and the exhilarating experience" (as cited in Horovitz, 2002, p. 1B).

Horovitz (2002) insists that marketers must focus on building trust and exclusivity with Generation Y. The Generation Y consumer wants to feel as if they came across the product or brand on their own merit. Jay Wilson, Vice President of Vans Apparel Company, adds, "You can't just blast away on MTV anymore. Eventually you'll get overexposed and kill your business" (as cited in Horovitz, 2002, p. 1B). Another piece of information known about Generation Y is that they withdraw from branding and hard sells; this creates even more of a need for marketers to establish an emotional connection with the Generation Y consumer (Horovitz, 2002).

Generation Y marketing consultant, Whitespeed, insists that the most successful medium of communicating with Generation Y is through email (Horovitz, 2002).



Whitespeed adds, “They don’t read. They don’t watch TV. But they’re on their computers constantly” (as cited in Horovitz, 2002, p. 1B). The Generation Y consumer is not interested in receiving spam or junk emails; they prefer email advertisements that are intended to highlight their specific interests (Horovitz, 2002).

Many researchers agree that the key to reaching out to Generation Y is through building relationships. Researchers Ma and Niehm (2006) go on to identify preferred retail settings among Generation Y consumers. They highlight the shopping orientations preferred by older (18-27) Generation Y consumers in relation to their specific expectations for receiving retail services. The study was conducted based on three different retail settings including department, specialty, and discount stores. Each setting was compared to a list of questions associated with a retail survey and given to a sample of older female Generation Y consumers. These results were then compared to store loyalty and patronage (Ma & Niehm, 2006). The findings revealed how the Generation Y consumer finds significance and fulfillment in retail services.

Ma and Niehm (2006) insist that retailers have a chance to capture and encourage store patronage by offering customized services to the Generation Y consumer. Retailers can no longer depend on various brands to attract and encourage spending among their target market. Through offering customized services, such as developing personal clientele and advanced notices of sales, the retailer can build, strengthen, and maintain lasting customer relationships.

Known information about the Generation Y consumer offers clues to why there is a need to build relationships among the retailer and this generation. There are over 15 million college students included in Generation Y, and the average student works part

time, which allows more time for discretionary shopping (Ma & Niehm, 2006). This piece of information alarms the researchers that the older Generation Y consumer is capable of being an important segment of customers. Also, the Generation Y consumer is driven off of diversity, which is contrary to popular belief that this generation drives off of conformity. Dias states that the Generation Y consumer craves large shopping areas/floorplans that feel less crowded (as cited in Ma & Niehm, 2006).

The findings of Ma and Niehm's (2006) research offer a look into the consumer mind of Generation Y. The average Generation Y consumer frequently buys apparel at specialty retail stores, which identifies the exclusivity characteristic of this generation. Buying preference is followed by department stores, discount stores, and internet shopping. When purchasing a "staple fashion item" the Generation Y consumer expects high retail service, compared to service expected of a discount or internet store (Ma & Niehm, 2006).

Findings also indicate that the attributes of the clothing also guides the Generation Y consumer in purchasing decisions. In many cases the aesthetic of the garment including style, fit, and look of the garment held more weight than the service offered by the retailer (Ma & Niehm, 2006). This indicates that specific services offered do not hold more value than the visual attributes of the garment. Findings also support that Generation Y consumers with brand consciousness place more value on customer service (Ma & Niehm, 2006).

Ma's and Niehm's (2006) evidence supports that brand consciousness, convenience, and price-consciousness are all important purchasing factors to the Generation Y consumer. The researchers suggest that in the absence of most of the

factors, price becomes the determinant for purchasing decisions (Ma & Niehm, 2006).

Ma and Niehm (2006) argue that value for the Generation Y customer is found not only in customer service and garment aesthetic, but in the retailers' ability to offer preferred clothing brands at the desired price ranges.

Cui, Matiru, Sullivan, and Trent (2003) also write about Generation Y's reaction to marketing. The researchers evaluate Generation Y's response to cause-related marketing in relation to their purchasing habits by assessing attitudes toward cause-related marketing and likeliness to purchase a good or service based on cause-related marketing promotions. This relates to Generation Y's need to become emotionally connected with a brand or retailer.

Cause-related marketing has become a large part of marketing strategies among brands and retailers. A large part of Cotton Inc.'s marketing message is to encourage the use and purchase of cotton apparel due to its natural elements which promote the green movement (Cotton Inc., 2010). Cui et al. (2003) stated that consumers are more likely to purchase goods and services when they promote specific causes and also see cause-related marketing as an opportunity to build brand image among consumers, which in turn may increase purchasing among the brand (2003). The researchers agree that marketers and retailers are placed in a unique situation when promoting to the Generation Y consumer through cause-related marketing because this generation is at a pivotal age where they begin to build value about their buying principles (Cui et al., 2003).

Cui et al. (2003) found that the female Generation Y consumer is more likely to purchase a garment that supports a cause and looks at cause-related marketing as a way for retailers to illustrate support for society. The researchers find that cause-related

marketing is a prime venue to ensure patronage from the Generation Y consumer and encourage marketers to implement cause-related marketing into their marketing strategies (Cui et al., 2003).

## PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND BRAND AWARENESS

Though marketing is an integral part of supplying goods and services to the consumer, the initial process must always be succeeded by satisfactory product development. The marketing process cannot be addressed without knowing who the target market is and what they prefer to see in a good or service. The following section will discuss the consumers' reaction to product development and brand awareness.

Research by Fiore, Kadolph, and Ogle (2005) proposes that college students who major in apparel studies often lack the critical thinking skills to process the value of product development and aesthetics of a garment. Though the research focuses on apparel studies students, the writers provide an in-depth look into how the Generation Y consumer reacts to product development. The research finds that aesthetic qualities such as color, shape, texture, line, balance, and rhythm of a garment are overlooked by the average student, in turn decreasing the immediate value of the garment (Fiore, Kadolph, & Ogle, 2005). The authors insist that building value and preference solidify the consumers' aesthetic response to garments (Fiore et al., 2005).

The researchers propose two concepts retailers can integrate into product development plans in order to encourage and build critical thinking skills among their target markets and achieve customer satisfaction. The first method is Total Customer Integration (TCI), which encourages the retailer to always revert back to what the customer or future customer wants in a garment at all stages of the production process

(Fiore et al., 2005). The second, Mass Customization, offers each individual customer the option to choose certain elements in the design of the garment, including measurements, fit, and style preference, in order to ensure absolute customer satisfaction (Fiore et al., 2005). This process also builds awareness with the consumer on different elements of the aesthetics of the garment and design process. The idea of Mass Customization fits into Generation Y's craving for exclusivity in goods and services; this process allows the consumer to make decisions based on their preference and encourages individuality.

A retailer's need to brand their company happens at all stages of the apparel process including design, production, and consumption. A consumers' perception guides them in all stages of the purchasing process; brand awareness is one of the most important factors in deciding to buy a garment. How the consumer feels about a specific apparel brand can be the deciding factor on whether a garment will be purchased or not.

*In Exploration of Apparel Brand Knowledge: Brand Awareness, Brand Association, and Brand Category Structure*, the researchers conducted a survey to investigate female college consumer's knowledge of apparel brands (Dew & Kwon, 2010). The researchers cited the goal of brand awareness is to create strong emotional feelings toward the brand which in turn creates a relationship between the brand and consumer (Dew & Kwon, 2010). The results of the survey found that the female college student is aware of brands that are marketed specifically to their consumer group and also show positive feelings toward those brands (Dew & Kwon, 2010). This finding shows that Generation Y is conscious of marketer's successful attempts to reach out to their market. The survey also found that brands with higher points of brand awareness among female college students does not solidify positive feelings toward the brand (Dew &

Kwon, 2010). This finding revealed that though Generation Y is highly aware of brands; their awareness does not increase patronage or use of specific retailers or brands.

### BUYING BEHAVIOR OF GENERATION Y

Generation Y is one that is more easily influenced than the other generations. According to Martin and Turley (2010), Generation Y consumers are more likely to be motivated objectively and socially when it comes to making purchases. Generation Y is known to spend more money when shopping, but they are also the hardest to reach (Martin & Turley, 2010). “The wealthiest members of the Generation Y consumption group are those 19-25 years old, many of who are employed in either part-time or full time jobs” (Martin & Turley, 2010, p. 1). On average, Generation Y spends \$30 dollars of every mall trip, and as a group they influence between \$300 billion to \$400 billion in family purchasing (Martin & Turley, 2010). About 80% of Generation Y consumers attending college are employed (Martin & Turley, 2010). “With buying power exceeding \$200 billion annually, older Generation Y consumers represent a significant opportunity for US retailers today” (Martin & Turley, 2010, pp. 1-2). According to Martin and Turley (2010), even though the information on how to market to Generation Y is growing, there is little statistical documentation describing how these consumers perceive and use malls.

Because one-third of the generation consumption group has reach adulthood, they are known to make their own purchase-related decisions (Martin & Turley, 2010). According to Martin and Turley (2010), the older Generation Y consumers that attend college spend above \$105 billion and earn \$6,000 annually. Martin and Turley (2010) also state “the average college student spends nearly \$300 per month on personal or discretionary items, with the greatest amount of this spending being used for food,

personal care, and music purchases” (p. 3). “The average college student has over 11 hours daily of free or discretionary time to fill” (Martin & Turley, 2010, p. 3). According to Martin and Turley (2010), “little is known about the consumption patterns of older Generation Y consumers, and even less is known about their attitudes and behaviors in the marketplace, and the process by which they obtain consumption-related perceptions” (p. 3).

Consumer socialization tends to have a major influence on the buying behaviors of Generation Y. “The most common approach to understanding how younger consumers obtain these consumption-related perceptions is most often grounded in socialization theory” (Martin & Turley, 2010, p. 3). Consumer socialization has to do with the “processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace” (Martin & Turley, 2010, p. 3). According to Martin and Turley (2010), research suggests that one of the strongest socializations agents utilized in examining general consumption outcomes is the customer’s motivation to consume. “Social motivations to consume have been positively associated with peer communication about consumption, greater exposure to television and certain types of parent child communication” (Martin & Turley, 2010, p. 3).

According to Cosenza and Taylor (2002), teen females will go through at least three stages during ages 10 to 22.

As they move from first experimenting with new clothes and make-up in their early teen to their mid-teens, when in a similarly pronounced way their bodies change and their self-esteem drops dramatically followed by the third phase when they realized who they are, where they’re going and become more confident,

comfortable with themselves as young women. It has been found that high-school teens and college students tend to like different things. High-school students wear more of logo-type clothing, as opposed to college students who wear plain clothing (Cosenza & Taylor, 2002, p. 3).

Consumers usually make purchases based off of need recognition and this is known as conceptual development (Cosenza & Taylor, 2002). Once the consumer recognizes the need they start to research other information about products and start evaluating and comparing alternatives before making their final purchase (Cosenza & Taylor, 2002, p. 3). According to Cosenza and Taylor (2002), how consumers select where they will make a purchase is a critical issue. Research shows that consumers weigh their shopping options based on where the shopping venue is located, brands carried, and placement of the actual stores within the mall, aesthetics, and more (Cosenza & Taylor, 2002).

College students express more individuality when it comes to fashion choices (Cotton Inc., 2010). For many college students, the work load can be tough and fashion and appearance tend to not be as important anymore like it was in high school. College students tend to be more concerned about their grades and tuition and not on clothing (Cotton Inc., 2010). Cotton Inc. did a Lifestyle Monitor™, which showed how appearance and shopping tends to drop off when teenage women mature to college women (Cotton Inc., 2010). According to this study, females between the ages of 16-19 shop 3.19 times more than women between the ages of 20-24 who shop 2.11 times (Cotton Inc., 2010). The study also showed that while 25% of young shoppers spend \$200 dollars per month on clothing, only 12% of older shoppers spend that much, which



is less than half (Cotton Inc., 2010). One interesting fact from this study shows that 31% of older women sacrifice comfort for fashion, as opposed to 48% of younger women would (Cotton Inc., 2010). With the economy being in a state of recession now, college students are really on a budget, which accounts for their declining interest in appearance (Cotton Inc., 2010).

Disposable incomes have decreased, as well as credit availability, which has made impulse buying in the retail environment widely accepted (Cardona, Kim, & Park, 2005). Impulse buying is said to generate \$4 billion of annual sale in the U.S., which accounts for 40% of consumers (Cardona et al., 2005). Impulse buying is one of the main reasons college students purchase clothing. According to Cardona, Kim, and Park (2005), “impulse buying behavior is a sudden, compelling, hedonically complex buying behavior in which the rapidity of an impulse decision process precludes thoughtful and deliberate consideration of alternative information and choices” (p. 3). Another term that is often used is fashion-oriented impulse buying. “For clothing, fashion oriented impulse buying refers to a person’s awareness or perception of fissionability attributed to an innovative design or style” (Cardona et al., 2005, p. 2). There have been a limited number of studies determining the difference between impulse and non impulse buying behaviors. “Many researchers have provided theoretical frameworks for examining impulse buying related to psychological variables (e.g., personality, self regulation), hedonic experiences (e.g., shopping enjoyment, emotional state, mood) and situational variables (e.g., available time, money) in a shopping context” (Cardona et al., 2005, p. 2). Because of fashion-oriented impulse buying, it was proven that fashion student/majors had higher scores in impulse buying than students with other majors (Cardona et al., 2005).

Emotion is a big factor that can control many things in our lives. According to Cardona, Kim, and Park, (2005), “emotion that encompasses affect and mood is an important factor in consumer decision making” (p. 4). Emotion is usually put into two categories, positive and negative. When consumers go shopping, they usually have a great experience which uplifts their spirits giving them positive energy (Cardona et al., 2005). Positive emotions usually lead to impulse buying more so than negative emotions. Determining the buying behavior among Generation Y is vital to be successful in terms of marketing correctly. According to Belleau, Pinel, Summers, and Xu (2010), Generation Y is more than three times the size of Generation X and is the largest market since the baby boomers. Among Generation Y, they are known for having major spending power, the ability to be trendsetters, receptivity to new products, and potential for becoming lifetime customers (Belleau et al., 2010). “Because this generation represents a significant behavior shift, a broad multifaceted approach to advertising is necessary to effectively reach them” (Belleau et al., 2010, p. 3).

#### THE INFLUENCES OF BROADCAST MEDIA ON GEN. Y

Television is said to have a huge influence on buying behavior. “There is positive association between television viewing and materialism among adolescents and viewing in Generation Y households is around 7 hours a day making them one of the most television acculturated generations ever” (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003, p. 2). Television is known to have a huge impact of individual’s consumption perceptions and portrays a belief in the consumers mind that material things are a good thing (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). It is also said that Generation Y is more in tune with a materialistic culture due to technological innovations (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). According to Bakewell and

Mitchell (2003), “proliferation of communication technologies, mass media, international travel and multinational marketing campaigns has played a major part in promulgating the “American Dream” (p. 3). Shopping is often referred to as a form of recreation that is becoming a hobby for many consumers particularly within the Generation Y (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). Generation Y, as opposed to other generations, have many more options when it comes to shopping (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). Not only does Generation Y shop at malls, they have access to shop on television, Internet, and even catalogs (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003).

The Internet is one of the most used pieces of technology. “The web continues to be populated largely by younger generations, as over half of the adult Internet population is between 18 and 44 years old” (Fox & Jones, 2009, p. 1), Generation Y has been re-named the “Net Generation”.

Figure 1 shows the percentage make up of Internet users by generations:

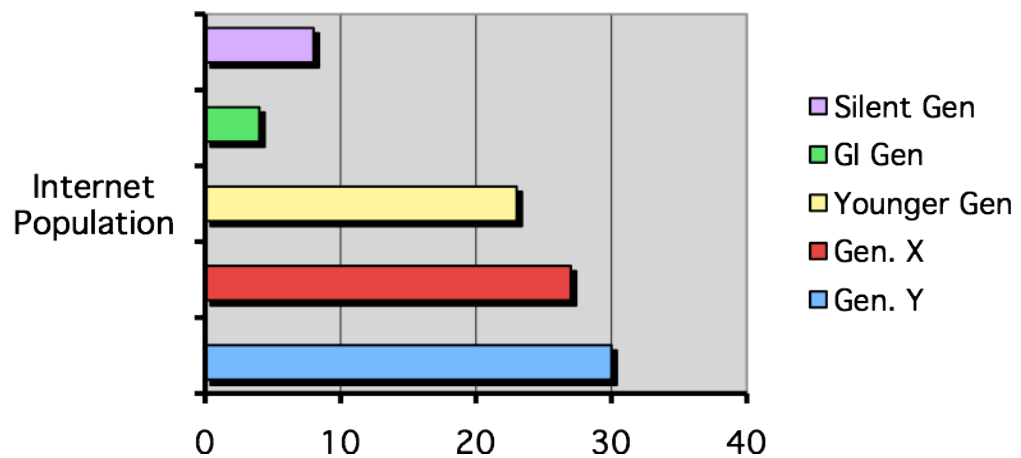


Figure 1, Makeup of adult internet population by generation (Fox & Jones, 2009)

According to Fox and Jones (2009), 90% of people between the ages of 18 and 24 use instant messaging, social networking email, and blogging as communication tools.

All of these things are forms of online activity. With the percentage being high among 18-24 year olds; fashion marketing through these forms of communications could be a huge success. Generation Y uses the Internet most when with family and friends than when being alone (Fox & Jones, 2009).

Due to the hard economic times and reduced traffic in retail areas, retailers have expanded their options when it comes to marketing (Forman, Lester, & Loyd, 2005). “Adage.com recently reported that young adults and teens 13-24 are spending 16.7 hours online (excluding email) per week and 13.6 hours watching TV” (Forman et al., 2005, p. 2). It is said that Generation Y navigates through the internet with the same ease as their parents did in shopping malls and is more brand conscious from being raised in a media saturated environment (Forman et al., 2005).

Online shopping is rising among all generations. According to Forman et al. (2005), the Internet provides many different appealing benefits and also gives the consumer unlimited access to information sources. “The internet provides the opportunity for a company to develop or enhance its image, reach geographically dispersed customers, promote and demonstrate new products, and develop relationships with potential customers which allows instantaneous communication and feedback” (Forman et al., 2005, p. 5).

Social networking also has a big influence of Generation Y. Because they are on the Internet so much, gearing fashion marketing to social networking sites may have a major influence on their buying habits. Some of the more social networking sites include Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter. “Social network sites provide a rich source of naturalistic behavioral data which allows researchers to explore large scale patterns of

friending, usage, and other visible indicators, and continuing an analysis trend that started with examinations of blogs and other websites” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 9).

## SUMMARY

In Chapter II, the researcher reviewed literature related to marketing response and expectations among Generation Y consumers, product development and brand awareness, buying behavior of Generation Y, and the influences of broadcast media of Generation Y. This review provided the reader and researcher with a deeper understanding concerning the areas of Generation Y, buying habits, and fabric awareness.

In Chapter III the researcher used the information from Chapter II to develop a survey that would measure the relationships between Generation Y and their awareness of cotton as a fabric. This chapter provides further details and explanations regarding the implementation and methods used to conduct the research.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

The problem of this study was to determine the awareness and use of cotton in fabric and clothing by Generation Y for enhanced product awareness. The methods and procedures developed in this chapter were used to measure student's awareness of cotton as a durable, versatile, and comfortable fabric. Included in this chapter are sections on population, instrument design, methods of data collection, and statistical analysis.

#### **POPULATION**

The population of this study included college students between the ages of 18-25 in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. There are a total of 403 male and female participants to the study. The participants came from Old Dominion University.

#### **INSTRUMENT DESIGN**

An anonymous survey was developed by the researchers. The instrument was composed using closed-ended questions relating to the awareness of cotton as a durable, comfortable, and versatile fabric and broadcast and print media influences.

The questions explored the student's awareness and preference of cotton clothing followed by questions identifying broadcast and print media as influences of the awareness of cotton. These questions were developed using a Likert-scale method of assessment. The researchers gathered information from the literature review to establish questions that would measure the participant's awareness of cotton as a durable, comfortable, and versatile fabric. These questions related to the research goals of this study. See Appendix A.

## METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Participants were college students randomly selected according to age and major. The researcher provided the participant with a survey packet. The survey packet included a cover letter, instructions, and the survey. The participant was instructed to read the cover letter, instructions, and then complete the survey. After completion the participant returned the survey packet to the researcher. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey letter and instructions.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Following the collection of surveys, the awareness of cotton as a durable, versatile, and comfortable fabric were tabulated and recorded. The Likert-scale was used to provide data to determine the mean of the students' understanding on the awareness of cotton as a fabric. It was also used to determine the number and frequency of response to each item.

## SUMMARY

Chapter III outlined the methods and procedures used to generate data to answer the research goals. The population of this study included college students between the ages of 18-25 in the Hampton Roads Virginia area. The students study at Old Dominion University.

The instrument used to generate findings was a close-ended question survey presented in a Likert-scale format. The Likert-scale determined students' awareness and opinion of cotton as a comfortable durable and versatile fabric. Following the collection of surveys, the awareness of cotton as a durable, versatile, and comfortable fabric were

tabulated and recorded. These findings were then used to determine the relationship between cotton awareness and Generation Y.

Chapter IV reports four sets of findings from the conducted research. The first set of findings revealed in Chapter IV illustrates the students awareness of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric. The second set of findings reveals the relationship between cotton fabric and costs. The third set of findings reveals the relationship between students' and their awareness of cotton as a fabric in general. The fourth set of findings reveals the relationship between students' awareness of cotton and broadcast media. The last set of data shows the relationship between students' awareness of cotton and print media.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings resulting from the survey. The data presented are the result of the survey administered to students enrolled in various courses at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. The study attempted to identify the awareness of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric among Generation Y.

#### **OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES**

The information gathered from the survey was compiled and reported in this chapter. The total number of participants in this survey was 403. There were a total of 252 females and 151 males. The individuals surveyed were a range of freshman to senior classifications including 93 freshman, 76 sophomores, 98 juniors, and 136 seniors.

#### **SPECIFIC DATA ON STUDENTS AWARENESS**

The instrument was designed to collect specific data regarding student's awareness of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric and factors that led to the awareness of cotton. Questions 1 through 9 were set up using the Likert method of measurement.

Question 1 was designed to measure students' awareness of the fabric they were currently wearing. Of the responses, 103 responded (25.5%) they were in strong agreement that they were aware of the fabric they were wearing; 103 responded (25.5%) they were in agreement; 59 responding (14.6%) they were undecided; 49 (12.1%) they were in disagreement; and 89 (22%) they were in strong disagreement about the awareness of the fabric they were currently wearing. The mean score for this statement

was 3.20, indicating that the average response to this statement was undecided. See Table 1.

Table 1

*Student Responses*

Item	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean
1	89	49	59	103	103	3.20
	22%	12.1%	14.6%	25.5%	25.5%	
2	24	23	89	155	112	3.76
	5.9%	5.7%	22%	38.4%	27.9%	
3	41	44	47	124	147	3.72
	10.1%	10.9%	11.7%	30.8%	36.5%	
4	35	43	68	143	114	3.64
	8.7%	10.7%	16.9%	35.5%	28.3%	
5	25	33	93	139	113	3.70
	6.2%	8.2%	23.1%	34.5%	28%	

Question 2 was designed to measure students' preference of cotton fabric as a means of clothing. Of the responses, 112 responded (27%) they were in strong agreement of preferring cotton as a means of clothing; 155 responded (38.4%) they were in agreement; 89 responded (22%) they were undecided; 23 responded (5.7%) they were in disagreement; and 24 responded (5.9%) they were in strong disagreement about their preference of cotton as a means of clothing. The mean score for this statement was 3.76, indicating that the average response to this statement was agree. See Table 1.

Question 3 was designed to measure students' consideration for price when purchasing cotton. Of the responses, 147 responded (36.5%) they were in strong agreement with considering price when purchasing cotton clothing; 124 responded (30.8%) they were in agreement; 47 responded (11.7%) they were undecided; 44 responded (10.9%) they were in disagreement; and 41 responded (10.1%) they were in

strong disagreement about considering price while purchasing cotton clothing. The mean score for this statement was 3.72, indicating that the average response to this statement was agree. See Table 1.

Question 4 was designed to measure students' decision to purchase cotton clothing due to its durability. Of the responses, 114 responded (28.3%) they were in strong agreement about purchasing cotton clothing due to its durability; 143 responded (35.5%) they were in agreement; 68 responded (16.9%) they were undecided; 43 responded (10.7%) they were in disagreement; and 35 responded (8.7%) they were in strong disagreement about whether they purchase cotton clothing due to its durability. The mean score for this statement was 3.64, indicating that the average response to this statement was agree. See Table 1.

Question 5 was designed to measure students' decision to purchase cotton clothing due to its versatility. Of the responses, 113 responded (28%) they were in strong agreement about purchasing cotton clothing due to its versatility; 139 responded (34.5%) they were in agreement; 93 responded (23.1%) they were undecided; 33 responded (8.2%) they were in disagreement; and 25 responded (6.2%) they were in strong disagreement about purchasing cotton clothing due because of its versatility. The mean score for this statement was 3.70, indicating that the average response to this statement was agree. See Table 1.

Question 6 was designed to measure students' opinion towards cotton as being an essential fabric to a cost effective wardrobe. Of the responses, 86 responded (21.3%) they strongly agreed that cotton is an essential fabric to a cost effective wardrobe; 116 responded (28.9%) they agreed; 118 responded (29.3%) they were undecided; 40

responded (9.9%) they were in disagreement; and 43 responded (10.7%) they were in strong disagreement about cotton as an essential fabric to cost effective wardrobe. The mean score for this statement was 3.40, indicating that the average response to this statement was undecided. See Table 2.

Question 7 was designed to measure social networking sites as influencing students' awareness of cotton. Of the responses, 34 responded (8.4%) they were in strong agreement about being influenced by social networking; 56 responded (13.9%) they were in agreement; 85 responded (21.1%) they were undecided; 79 responding (19.6%) they were in disagreement; and 149 responded (37%) they were in strong disagreement about social networking sites influencing their awareness of cotton. The mean score for this statement was 2.37, indicating that the average response to this statement was disagree. See Table 2.

Table 2

*Student Responses*

Item	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean
6	43	40	118	116	86	3.40
	10.7%	9.9%	29.3%	28.9%	21.3%	
7	149	79	85	56	43	2.37
	37%	19.6%	21.1%	13.9%	8.4%	
8	109	69	63	88	74	2.89
	27%	17.7%	15.6%	21.8%	18.4%	
9	63	48	47	128	117	3.47
	15.6%	11.9%	11.7%	31.8%	29%	

Question 8 was designed to measure magazines influence on students' awareness of cotton. Of the responses, 74 responded (18.4%) they were in strong agreement about being influenced by magazines; 88 responded (21.8%) they were in agreement; 63

responded (15.6%) they were undecided; 69 responded (17.1%) they were in disagreement; and 109 responded (27%) they were in strong disagreement about magazines influencing their awareness of cotton. The mean score for this statement was 2.89, indicating that the average response to this statement was undecided. See Table 2.

Question 9 was designed to measure television's influence on students' awareness of cotton. Of the responses, 117 responded (29%) they were in strong agreement about being influenced by television; 128 responded (31.8%) they were in agreement; 47 responded (11.7%) they were undecided; 48 responded (11.9%) they were in disagreement; and 63 responded (15.6%) they were in strong disagreement about television influencing their awareness of cotton. The mean score for this statement was 3.47, indicating that the average response to this statement was undecided. See Table 2.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, the findings from the student surveys were analyzed and presented. Surveys were distributed to and completed by students at Old Dominion University. The survey used a Likert response method to determine the awareness of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and comfortable fabric among Gen Y. The first set of data revealed the 403 participants' classification including freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. The second data set illustrated the mean and percentage rate of responses to the statements presented in the survey concerning students' influences to the awareness of cotton, consideration of fabric when purchasing cotton, knowledge of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric, and social networking, television, and magazines contribution to the awareness of cotton. In Chapter V a summary of the

research will be presented, also, conclusions will be drawn, and recommendations based on the results of the survey.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the research conducted. Conclusions are drawn based upon the findings. Recommendations are constructed based upon these conclusions.

#### SUMMARY

Cotton production is an economic medium for developing countries while maintaining its presence in more developed industrial nations. Known as “The Fabric of Our Lives,” cotton has grown into a multibillion-dollar industry (Cotton Inc., 2010). The average human comes in contact with some form of cotton on a daily basis. Not only is cotton a fabric staple in the apparel industry, but there is also a strong presence in other industries including interior furnishings and industrial manufacturing areas (Pizzuto, 2010). Over 125 million bales of cotton are produced by nations spanning the globe annually (Pizzuto, 2010). This textile continues to evolve in many areas including marketing, advertising, product development, and textile manufacturing.

The purpose of this study was to determine the awareness and use of cotton in fabric and clothing by Gen. Y (college students 18-25) for enhanced product marketing. The participants of this study included people between the ages of 18-25 in the Hampton Roads area. There were a total of 406 male and female participants in this study.

A survey was used to gather data to address the research goals; it was developed using a Likert-scale. The established research goals were employed to determine the direction of the research and composition of the survey. These goals were to determine the awareness of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric. As a result the survey

measured four key items: what influences college students awareness of cotton, if college students consider fabric content when purchasing garments, if college students have knowledge of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric, and if social networking, television, and magazines contribute to college students' awareness of cotton. The researcher used the findings from the administered survey to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research was to determine if there was a relationship between the buying habits of college students and their knowledge of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric. This research also determined if broadcast and print media had an influence on their awareness of cotton. The first research goal was to determine what influences college students awareness of cotton? The researchers drew upon the findings that determined if Gen. Y had a basic awareness of cotton as a fabric. According to the findings, 51% of the participants knew the fabric they were wearing on that particular day, which was a total of 206 students out of 406. This was a mean value of 3.20. As a result, the researchers concluded that the participants were undecided of their awareness of cotton as a fabric.

The second research goal was to determine if college students considered fabric content when purchasing garments and the third research goal was to determine if college students had knowledge of cotton as a comfortable, durable, and versatile fabric? The researchers drew upon the findings that determined if cost was a major factor, as well as the fabric being comfortable, durable, and versatile. The majority agreed when asked the question, "I prefer cotton fabric as a means of clothing". Out of 406 participants, 271 of



them, which were 67.3%, considered price when buying cotton clothing. This had a mean value 3.76, which concluded that the participants agreed. When asked if cotton was an essential fabric to a cost effective wardrobe, 118 participants, who were 29.3%, were undecided. In addition to that number, 202 participants agreed that cotton was an essential fabric to a cost effective wardrobe. This had a mean value of 3.40, which showed that the participants were undecided overall. With a mean value of 3.72, participants agreed that cost was a factor when buying cotton clothing. As a result, the researchers concluded that cost was an issue that was really thought about when buying cotton clothing. When asked the question, “I buy cotton clothing because of its durability”, the data showed that 63.8% agreed. This had a mean value of 3.64, which means that the participants are in agreement overall. When asked the question, “I buy cotton clothing because of its versatility”, 62.5% agreed. This had a mean value of 3.70, which concluded that the participants agreed. After analyzing the results, the researcher concluded that durability was not as important as versatility when buying cotton clothing.

The fourth research goal was to determine if social networking, television, and magazines contributed to college students’ awareness of cotton? The researchers drew upon the findings that determined if print and broadcast media had an influence of Gen. Y’s awareness of cotton as a fabric. When asked the question, “Magazines influence my awareness of cotton as a fabric”, 44.7% of the participants were not influenced and 40.2% were influenced. This had a mean value of 2.89. This showed that the participants were undecided when it came to print media and the influence it had on the awareness of cotton as a fabric. When asked the question, “Social networking sites influence my awareness of cotton as a fabric”, the results showed that 228 participants (53.6%) disagrees and were not

influenced by social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. This had a mean value of 2.37, which meant the participants disagreed overall. When asked the question, “Television influences my awareness of cotton as a fabric”, the results showed that 11.7% of the participants were undecided about being influenced by television. Although, 60.8% of the participants agreed about being influenced by television, this had a mean value of 3.47, which showed that the participants were undecided overall. As a result, the researcher concluded that the participants were undecided when it comes to print, electronic, or broadcast media and their influence on the awareness of cotton as a fabric.

From the findings the researchers concluded that Gen. Y is aware of cotton as a fabric overall. Versatility and durability were important when it comes to cotton as a fabric. From the findings the researchers further concluded that print, electronic, and broadcast media do not have a major effect on their awareness of cotton as a fabric due to the participants being undecided on the influence of print and broadcast media and disagreeing that electronic media has an effect on their awareness.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made by the researchers:

1. Since the research focused on Gen. Y students between the ages of 18-25 specific to Old Dominion University, future research should be performed at various universities within the Hampton Roads area including, but not limited to, Norfolk State University and Hampton University to determine Gen Y’s awareness of cotton as a fabric. Including various universities will broaden the outlooks of the study and expose it to different demographics and psychographics as opposed to only surveying students of Old

Dominion University and may change the results of the study. Having a broad range of participants will give the study more depth in terms of the results.

2. Since the research concluded that Gen. Y was undecided or disagreed on their influence of cotton by print, broadcast, or electronic media, further research should be performed to determine what factors contribute to Gen. Y's awareness of cotton as a fabric.
3. Since the research only focused on print, electronic, and broadcast media as an influencer of cotton as a fabric, further research should be performed focusing on fashion trends as an influence on the awareness of cotton as a fabric. Fashion trends as an influencer may be more effective as compared to media. Focusing on fashion trends probably will contribute to their awareness more than any other factor.
4. Instead of just focusing on print, electronic, and broadcast media as an influencer of cotton as a fabric, research should also focus on cultural backgrounds as an influence on the awareness of cotton as a fabric. Different fabrics are more relevant than others within some cultures due to religion and traditions.

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Marcel Dekkar.

## APPENDIX A

**Nichole Williams & Keidra Hatchett  
Old Dominion University  
228 Education Building  
Norfolk, V.A. 23529**

**Spring, 2010**

Dear Participants,

Your voluntary participation in this research project will aid the completion of a research requirement for the masters program at Old Dominion University within the Department of S.T.E.M.P.S. The survey will measure the awareness of cotton as a versatile, comfortable and durable fabric among Generation Y. The findings gathered will determine the buying habits of Generation Y college students and determine if Generation Y college students factor cotton as a fabric when deciding what to purchase.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. Your choice to participate will not affect your grade in this course. Disclosed information will not be shared or linked to the participation. To further protect your identity it is important that you do not place your name or any identifying markings on the survey packet or answer sheet.

Your participation and honesty are greatly appreciated. Please follow the instructions provided.

Thank you,

Nichole Williams and Keidra Hatchett

## APPENDIX B

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) First, make sure the following are provided in your survey packet envelope: 1) a cover letter, 2) instructions, and 3) survey.
- 2) You are to respond to the survey questions on the answer sheet provided; please **do not** place any markings on the survey packet.
- 3) When you are completed with the survey, please make sure each question is answered.
- 4) Then return the survey to the front of the classroom.



## APPENDIX C

### **“The Awareness of Cotton as a Versatile, Durable and Comfortable Fabric Among Generation Y College Students”**

**Purpose:** The survey will measure the awareness of cotton as a versatile, comfortable and durable fabric among Generation Y (college students).

**Directions:** Please do not write your name or place any markings on the packet.

**Circle One:**    Female            Male

(1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3=undecided 4= agree and 5=strongly agree)

**Circle One:**

Freshman                      Sophomore                      Junior                      Senior

**1. I am very aware of the fabric I’m wearing today.**

1    2    3    4    5

**2. I prefer cotton fabric as a means of clothing.**

1    2    3    4    5

**3. I consider price when buying cotton clothing?**

1    2    3    4    5

**4. I buy cotton clothing because of its durability.**

1    2    3    4    5

**5. I buy cotton clothing because it’s versatility**

1    2    3    4    5

**6. Cotton is an essential fabric to a cost effective wardrobe.**

1    2    3    4    5

**7. Social networking sites influence my awareness of cotton as a fabric.**

1    2    3    4    5

**8. Magazines influence my awareness of cotton as a fabric.**

1    2    3    4    5

**9. Television Influences my awareness of cotton as a fabric.**

**1    2    3    4    5**