A STUDY OF THE TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE OF SALESPERSONNEL AND CUSTOMER DISSATISFACTION WITH SELECTED APPAREL

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Science

by

Barbara Ann Good, B.S.
The Ohio State University
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Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
School of Home Economics
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ABSTRACT

The intent of this study was to determine: 1) the textile knowledge possessed by garment salespersonnel; 2) the primary reasons given by consumers for the return of garments; and 3) relationships between textile product knowledge of salespersonnel and ratio of garment returns to sales.

The research site selected was a large metropolitan department store and three of its branch stores. Within the store, twelve women's dress departments were studied since both the prime purchasers and prime consumers of the merchandise were women. Information was needed from two sample groups: consumers who had returned dresses and salespersonnel. Information from a random sample of 185 return records was recorded onto a Returned Merchandise Form developed by the researcher. The sample of salespersonnel included individuals selling dresses in the twelve departments studied. A multiple choice Textile Product Knowledge (T.P.K.) measure was developed, pretested, and administered to these women.

An Item Analysis was performed on the T.P.K. measure, reliability at the .470 level was determined by Kuder-Richardson 20 Reliability estimate. Means, frequency counts, and percentages were employed to evaluate descriptive data while chi square analysis, simple correlations, and ANOVA were used to test hypotheses. The .05 level of significance was chosen for acceptance or rejection of relationships or differences.
Although findings indicated that garment salespeople need additional textile training, no significant relationship was found between the score achieved by a salesperson on the T.P.K. measure and educational level attained or experience. A significant (p < .01) association was found between the primary reasons given by customers for the return of garments and timespan between purchase and return, and a lesser association (p < .10) between retail price and reason for return. The primary reasons given for the return of dresses were related to style, fit, or aesthetics and most individuals returned merchandise during the week following purchase. Although not significant, results suggested a relationship between salespersons' T.P.K. scores and percentage of garment returns.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism is an evolving concept which has grown in response to
the increasing complexity and impersonality of our society and will
become an even greater force in the future. The consumer movement
undertakes to advance the well-being of the buyer of goods and services.
(Cravens, 1970)

By the mid-1970's the United States will become the first nation to
achieve a trillion dollar economy. (Nichols, 1970) This growth has
fostered such an avalanche of new and diverse products that no consumer
can expertly evaluate all the products he purchases. He often lacks
either the time, the interest, or the capability to search out and
evaluate product information. Instead, and by necessity, he must rely
on sources both impersonal and commercial in nature.

One source of information customers utilize at the point-of-purchase
is a salesperson. Thus, the salesperson becomes a communication link
between the manufacturer and the consumer and is often asked to provide
information about the care and performance qualities of the garments he
sells. Manhart (1964) introduced her study entitled "Programmed
Instruction of Textile Sales Personnel" with the statement:
...a continuing complaint which is voiced by the consumer is the problem of either receiving no information or incorrect information from salespersons about textile merchandise in department stores...the consumer needs further information as to the optimum care to be given the fabric and its physical properties...The ideal situation is to have educated and informed salespersons prepared to answer consumer questions, and serve as consumer educators. (p. 1)

An unwise purchase may create an unhappy consumer whose needs have not been met and whose money has been wasted. A substantial number of consumer complaints related to clothing items arise because the garment failed to meet the customer's expectations of fit, fabric, or performance. (Canoyer, 1966) The unhappy customer may express her dissatisfaction in numerous ways. Whether she complains to family and friends, refuses to return to the store to shop, or returns the garment to the retail establishment, it is the retailer who bears the immediate loss of profit, customer goodwill, or both.

Although only a small percentage of these dissatisfied consumers actually complain or return their unsuccessful purchase to the retail establishment, reasons for garment returns have been investigated and compiled. Studies of customer returns caused by failure in performance or durability of the garment point to the many problems which arise because the customer is not informed about how to care for the garment. (Lubarthe, 1954; Myers, 1961; Steiniger, 1970)

The salesperson has the responsibility of communicating accurate information about the textile performance characteristics and fabric care of the garments to customers, and of interpreting directions printed
on the permanent care labels required after July 3, 1972. In addition, she must be aware of defects in garment construction, fabric, or finish and report these to the buyer so the defective garments are returned to the manufacturer rather than sold to customers.

Should the salesperson fail in either task, that is, informing the customers, or in locating and removing inferior garments from the selling floor, the expected result would be a dissatisfied customer and a possible profit loss. The responsibilities of the salesperson are great, thus it appears that employment of knowledgeable salespersonnel should be reflected in a lower rate of returned merchandise to the retail establishment than when less knowledgeable sales personnel are employed.

There is a scarcity of studies which relate the salesperson's communicable textile product knowledge to the profits of a retail establishment. More information regarding consumer dissatisfaction and its relationship to the textile knowledge of salespersonnel would be of benefit to the retailer, the salesperson, and the ultimate consumer.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The intent of this study was to determine the knowledge possessed by salespersonnel of textile fibers, fabrics, and finishes and their corresponding care and performance characteristics. Concurrently, the primary reasons given by consumers for the return of textile products to the retail establishment were to be identified. Following examination of relationships between the textile product knowledge of sales personnel and customer returns, recommendations were developed pertaining to training programs for retail sales personnel.
SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of research undertaken included: 1) salespersonnel from Women's and Misses' dress departments at one metropolitan retail depart-
ment store, and 2) customer return records from these same departments
in the store.

The questionnaires and instruments used to obtain data from the two
samples limit the data received to specified areas related to the goals
of the study.

HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses were developed:

1. The primary reasons given by customers for the return of garments
will vary with:
   a. Retail price of the garment
   b. Time span between the date of purchase and the date the garment
      was returned to the retail establishment.

2. A positive relationship will exist between salespersons' textile pro-
duct knowledge and:
   a. Education level attained
   b. Total number of years of retail experience.
   c. Information sources

3. An inverse relationship will exist between the salespersons' textile
product knowledge and the ratio of Dollar's Worth of garment returns
to Gross Sales.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Consumer dissatisfaction - A customer's feeling of displeasure when
needs and wants are not fulfilled or expectations are not met.
2. **Label** - Any printed message attached to merchandise or printed on a package which may identify the manufacturer and describe the product, its contents, its origin, information related to use, care, and purchase of the item. (Sears, 1971)

3. **Rate of Return** - The ratio: \[
\frac{\text{Dollar's worth of goods returned}}{\text{Dollar's worth of goods sold}}
\]

4. **Retail Establishment** - The store in which the garment is purchased. In this study, the downtown store or a suburban branch of a large metropolitan department store.

5. **Return** - A garment, purchased by a customer, which is brought back to the retail establishment. The customer is refunded her money and the store regains possession of the "returned garment."

6. **Store** - Designation used to indicate the retail establishment used as a research site in this study. DT (Downtown) used to specify the main store; BR (Branch) used to specify a branch store.

7. **Suburban Stores** - Also designated as branch stores, these stores are miniatures of the main downtown store, but are located at different geographical locations outside the central city.

8. **Textile Product** - The designated clothing item (apparel or garment) discussed, specifically Women's and Misses' Dresses.

9. **Textile Product Knowledge** - Interpretation of label terminology, explanation of care procedures, description of garment characteristics and performance expectations composes this knowledge.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Consumer oriented research is in its infancy. The majority of studies have been conducted within the last ten years by universities, business firms, and governmental agencies, yet little integration of these findings has occurred. Conklyn (1971) suggested the need for research aimed at identifying consumer concerns and problems and exploring their degree of association to other factors.

CONSUMERISM

Within the past decade the public's interest in consumerism has grown, and the problems the consumer faces are beginning to be viewed with greater understanding. It would appear that a major cause of consumer problems is a breakdown in communication between the manufacturer and the ultimate consumer. (Canoyer, 1966) The unhappy consumer often receives insufficient or faulty information regarding the product, its usage or care, and as a result problems develop. In the past consumers' complaints brought little corrective action from manufacturers, but today this is beginning to change.

The question has arisen: whose responsibility is it to provide needed information and how can it best be communicated to the consumer? A limited number of laws have been enacted which support the rights of the consumers. Yet, textile producers, garment manufacturers, retailers,
consumer agencies and representatives of advertising have continued to
debate the issue of responsibility. Unfortunately for the consumer, few
conclusions have been reached; however the need for improving communica-
tion and information feedback to all parties has become evident.

Many textile and garment manufacturers have attempted to bridge
the communication gap by the use of labels. The issuance of a trade
regulation by the Federal Trade Commission requiring all articles of
clothing leaving a manufacturer after July 3, 1972 to carry a permanently
attached label giving instructions for care and maintenance is a step
forward. The resulting standardization of information and warnings
placed in prominent garment locations should facilitate the task of the
consumer in making shopping decisions. (Klauer, 1972)

Consumers have indicated they recognize the value of these labels,
but stated that often they do not understand the textile information
provided, or the terms used. (Klauer, 1965; Lamb, 1970) It is at this
point that the retailer will have a role to play in the dissemination of
information. The manufacturer can place a hang tag or permanent care
label on the garment, but someone must be available at the point of
purchase to interpret this information to the customer who does not
understand the label. (Hansen, 1965)

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Aaker and Day (1971) in their book, Consumerism: Search for the
Consumer Interest outlined three facets of consumer concern: 1) protec-
tion against clear cut abuses, 2) provision of adequate information,
and 3) protection of consumers against themselves and other consumers.
It is the second facet, the provision of adequate information, which
directly relates to the study undertaken. The desire of consumers for
adequate information about the goods they plan to purchase is not a
recent development. The right to be informed prompted the earliest
Federal legislation concerned directly with the consumer, namely, the
Mail Frauds Statute of 1872.

In a democracy, it is believed that an informed public will make
correct decisions. Today many consumer advocates argue that the buyer
does not need protection, only information. Once he knows what the
product does, its cost per unit, its life span, and warranty he can make
a wise decision. The responsibility for seeing that this information is
provided falls to various sectors of the economy. Ayers (1964) outlined
the task to be accomplished:

Producers, distributors, and government must be con-
vinced to work for reasonable standards, adequate in-
formative labeling and hazard prevention so that the
consumer-buyer can know at the point of sale that per-
formance he may expect from the item purchased. These
agencies must see the problem in such breadth that pro-
grams do not hamstring industrial or artistic experi-
mentation and innovation. (Ayers, 1964, p. 6)

The doctrine of consumer sovereignty requires that the sovereign be
at least moderately prudent and purposeful in making decisions. (Lamp-
man, 1962) Responsibility for consumer protection cannot be fully
allocated to the business or governmental sectors. The best protection
against dissatisfaction in the marketplace is self-protection through
information. A recent Celemose publication outlined customer rights and
responsibilities, noting that only when the consumer accepts responsi-
bilities do the corresponding rights benefit him. (Celanese Fibers Marketing Company, 1971)

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<th>CONSUMER RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
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<td>1. To become informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To selection and choice</td>
<td>2. To buy wisely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To performance</td>
<td>3. To give proper care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To safety</td>
<td>4. To exercise normal caution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To recourse</td>
<td>5. To transmit dissatisfaction</td>
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Consumer protection through the provision of information will result from the co-ordinated efforts of manufacturers, distributors, and consumers. Improving labeling by inclusion of better and more reliable product and guarantee information is the responsibility of the producer. For the distributor, this will necessitate the expense of training salespersonnel or otherwise providing information to customers to aid in the interpretation of the label. (Dana, 1969) Finally, the consumer must be concerned enough and alert enough to read the label, apply its directions, and communicate her dissatisfaction if the product does not meet expectations.

CAUSES OF CONSUMER PROBLEMS

The problems of the textile consumer are multi-dimensional and many relationships have yet to be explored. One area where exploratory study is needed is in regard to customer complaints and returns to retail stores. Little effort has been made to view customer complaints or returns with the goal of improving or adapting retail services to the consumer. (Myers, 1961) Instead, studies of returns have been related to the internal defects of textile products. Yet Myers (1961) and
Labarthe (1954) in conclusions drawn from laboratory studies of returned "defective" garments have shown that sixty percent of garment failures are traceable to customer handling rather than inherent defects. This is further indication that the communication link essential to customer satisfaction has broken down between producer and consumer. In order to prevent a repetition of this occurrence, it becomes necessary to discover where the communication system has been severed and to what extent it is due to the seller's omissions and commissions. (Canoyer, 1966)

At one time, consumers and retailers alike were able to recognize the names of fibers and understand their characteristics when used in apparel. (Dickerson, 1966; Rogers, 1967) Today with 19 generic groups of synthetics (Manmade Fiber Producers Association, 1970) and more than 1000 trade names (Loblang, 1968) communicating the differences to the manufacturer, the retailer, and finally to the consumer becomes a monumental task. The continued growth in textiles makes it increasingly difficult for the consumer to make wise price and quality comparisons. She often lacks information concerning the care and end-use performance of many of these new products and cannot predict how satisfactory they will be. (Steiniger, 1970) The multiplicity of the market has caused the consumer to rely on the salesperson more heavily, but few researchers have questioned whether the salesperson has been able to assimilate all the new knowledge.

It has been found that consumers are likely to become confused when selecting items purchased infrequently. (Day, 1970; Staab, 1967)
Shopper competence can often be based on experience when purchasing nondurables which are consumed in a short period of time, cost little, and are frequently replaced. In shopping for semi-durables, such as clothing, the consumer often has little practical knowledge. She needs to know and is beginning to demand to know at the point of sale what she can expect from the item purchased. In these instances, the customer depends more on the expertise of the supplier than on her own judgement.

CONSUMPTION OF CLOTHING

Ayers (1964) noted that all consumers need at least some clothing and textile items to live and function in society. Therefore, it would appear that further study of the consumption of clothing will benefit the whole of society. Today women are the primary purchasers in our society. Rogers (1967) estimated that 85 percent of consumer buying could be credited to the female population. It is interesting to note that both Labarthe (1954) and Myers (1961) found that the highest percentage of customer complaints and returns were women's garments (dresses). Therefore, in studying the woman purchaser who is both customer and consumer of garments from women's departments one can gain a representative sample of the population.

Johnson (1968) described the woman shopper as a customer in the store and a consumer when she gets home. He noted that at the point of purchase she is concerned with tangible values such as color, price, size, aesthetics, fit, or functionality. Disappointment or dissatisfaction resulting from the failure of tangible values to meet the needs of the consumer can be attributed to her own mistaken judgement.
Serviceability or performance were noted by Johnson (1968) as being intangible characteristics of a product which are expected by implication, but cannot be predicted at the time of purchase. This is in contrast to tangible values which are evident at the point of purchase. Color fastness, wear resistance, and dimensional stability are examples of intangible characteristics. Evaluation of these intangible values occurs only as the consumer wears and cares for the garment. When disappointment or dissatisfaction resulting from the failure of intangible values occurs, blame is often attributed to the retailer.

TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE OF SALESPERSONNEL

It is believed that the salesperson at the point-of-purchase is a prime source of customer information and should be qualified to provide the communication link necessary between the producer and consumer. (Dickerson, 1966; Canoyer, 1966) To perform this task effectively, it becomes essential that the retail sales person be able to supply meaningful textile information to the consumer. (Lamb, 1970; Ayers, 1964; Dickerson, 1966; Steiniger and Dardis, 1971) Interpretation of label terminology, explanation of care procedures and description of performance characteristics are but some of the types of information sought by consumers from salespersonnel. (Lamb, 1970)

The problem of salespersonnel's competence is a recognized concern of the retailer.

If we are to do our share to build the market and the economy to a much larger goal, we will need to improve the customer services for which we are charging...
One of the most important distribution tools is good
selling - not only politeness in welcoming customers or directing them to the proper place for certain merchandise, but also the knowledge of the goods themselves... (Lazarus, 1954, p. 789)

Confusion over fabric terms and inability to explain the merchandise are examples presented by Altman (1965) and Jeffers (quoted by Anderer, 1965). Steiniger and Dardis (1971) in their study of consumers' textile complaints found the salesperson to be ranked last when the sample group of consumers evaluated the best sources of valid product information. McEachran (1962) found customers often asked questions of salespersonnel when purchasing fabrics, yet less than ten percent of the customers felt salespersonnel were always able to give helpful information. The majority thought salespersons were of real assistance only occasionally. This points to the possibility that the retailer may no longer be performing the function of supplying product information, or that the supplied information is of inferior quality. The consumer, business, and industry all stand to lose if the consumer is dissatisfied.

At the present time, few studies have been conducted which evaluate the textile product knowledge of salespersonnel. Hansen (1966) conducted a study of salespersonnel as a source of information for consumers of textile products. The aspects dealt with included: 1) ascertaining the textile information possessed by salespersonnel, the information they would like to possess, and the types of questions customers asked them; 2) determining the consumer's reliance on the salesperson as a source of textile knowledge. Hansen's results indicated "that salespersonnel do not have as much textile knowledge about the merchandise as they need and
would like to have. Therefore, further training for salespersonnel could enable them to serve as effective sources of information for consumers of textiles." (Hansen, 1966, pp. 62-63)

Lamb (1970) and Steinerger (1970) suggested that there may exist a relationship between the knowledge the salesperson is able to communicate to the consumer and the resulting degree of consumer satisfaction with textile products. The provision of accurate information relating to garment performance and fabric care at the point of purchase would aid the consumer in avoiding possible harm to garments caused by improper care due to: 1) mis-interpretation of label directions, 2) experimentation, or 3) ignorance of fiber content. This in turn could reduce returns and happier customers would result. (Lamb, 1970; Dickerson, 1966)

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

The consumer who finds the garment purchased is unsatisfactory is very likely to complain, if not to the retailer to family and friends. Early studies have shown that customers often do not return garments or lodge a formal complaint, but instead choose not to return to the store to shop, particularly if the item purchased was inexpensive. (Lampman, 1962; Anderer, 1965; Steinerger, 1970; Peach, 1969) A certain percentage, calculated by Steinerger (1970) to be equal to about 25 percent of the unhappy customers, will return the merchandise to the retail store or register a complaint. In either case, the retailer stands to lose either a potential customer or a percentage of his profits. It becomes essential that he utilize what information is available to its utmost to pinpoint where the information communication system needs to be strengthened.
Steiniger and Dardis (1971) in their study of consumer textile complaints found that women's outerwear accounted for 25 percent of all complaints indicated by the consumers sampled. Wear problems related to construction and fabric failure were the primary causes of dissatisfaction. Mawhinney (1955) conducted a survey of the reasons for consumer textile returns and found strong indications of the potential influence a salesperson has on reducing the number of customer returns and complaints. Hansen, quoting Mawhinney's conclusions stated "Better salesmanship by salespeople is indicated as one of the main factors needed to help decrease returns." (Hansen, 1966, p. 10)

The literature reviewed would indicate that there is a need to further explore the relationship of customer dissatisfaction as indicated by garments returned to the retailer and the textile knowledge the salesperson is capable of communicating.

**REVIEW OF SPECIFIC STUDIES**

Four studies were used by the investigator as reference sources to determine procedures to be utilized in the course of the investigation. These studies by Conklyn, Hansen, Lamb, and Steiniger also contributed to the theoretical framework of this investigation. A brief review of each is presented and the contributions to the present study are noted.

"**CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH DRESS PURCHASES MADE IN A LARGE MIDWEST DEPARTMENT STORE.**" *Nancy Conklyn*, 1971. Conklyn's study was designed to determine consumer satisfaction with dresses at the point of purchase and several months later. Reasons for selection of the store and dress
were ascertained through the use of open-ended questions. The customer's awareness and use of fiber content and care labels in caring for the garments and the customers' problems encountered were also viewed.

Data for the study were collected in two moderate price dress departments at a downtown store and three suburban branches. The departments selected sold dresses appealing to different aged women. Findings showed younger women selected dresses on the basis of style, type, and fashion while older women were more concerned with fabric and care. Types of fabric construction, finishes, and fiber names prevalent among women's dresses were noted, though the consumer's understanding of terms was not tested. Results indicated that only 55 percent of the garments purchased possessed care labels, while 94 percent carried fiber content tags. Wrinkling and raveling of seams were the most common problems.

"CONSUMER'S TEXTILE COMPLAINTS," LYNN BARABARA STEINIGER, 1970. Steiniger's study was undertaken to investigate the sources of dissatisfaction with textile products, the action taken by customers when the product proved unsatisfactory, and the handling of the customer textile complaints by the distributor.

A mail questionnaire followed by phone calls to non-respondents was used to contact a random sample of consumers in Syracuse, New York. Data was gathered regarding: 1) causes of consumer dissatisfaction with textile products; 2) information and sources of information utilized prior to the purchase of the textile item; 3) action taken by the store when the customer registered a complaint. Chi square analysis was used to ascertain the relationships between unsatisfactory textile items and
purchase features such as price, brand, store of purchase, and action taken by consumer when the item proved unsatisfactory.

A sample size of 279 was achieved. Results showed 98.5 percent of the consumers to be women and all to be 18 years of age or older. (p. 40) Consumers indicated heavy reliance on their own past experience, on brands, and on labels, tags, and packaging; however only slight reliance was placed upon the salesperson for information prior to the purchase of textile products.

Consumers were found to be generally satisfied with textile product performance, however several problems were common among clothing and textile items. These problems and causes of customer complaints were divided by Steiniger into three areas: 1) Wear and Durability; 2) Appearance, Ease of Care; 3) Comfort. The percentage of consumers indicating each as a problem area is shown below.

Wear and Durability = 67%
   Construction; Fabric failure (42%)
   Stretching/Shrinkage (13%)
   Color Change (12%)

Appearance, Ease of Care = 24%
   No iron fabrics need ironing (12%)
   Wrinkling of fabric (8%)
   Hard to clean (4%)

Comfort = 9%
   Clinging of fabrics (7%)
   Hotness, stiffness, stickiness (2%)
   (Steiniger, 1971, pp. 45-46)

The specific problems most frequently mentioned for clothing and household linens were related to no-iron fabrics which required touch-up ironing, puckering of hems, raveling and splitting of seams, and defective
closings.

The cost of 98 percent of the clothing or linen items which had proved unsatisfactory was $15.00 or less and two-thirds of the items had been worn slightly if at all. (p. 67) Only 23 percent of the sample group of consumers who encountered problems with garments or were dissatisfied had registered complaints with the retailer. No significant relationship was found between complaint action taken and the cost, sale status, use of charge account, or wear life of the clothing. The majority of consumers (66 percent) did not return to the same store to make a similar purchase. (p. 80)

"IDENTIFICATION OF CERTAIN TEXTILE KNOWLEDGE NEEDED BY FABRIC SALESPEOPLE." JUNE M. LAMB, 1970. Lamb pointed to the important role over-the-counter fabric salespersonnel play in providing customers with textile-related information. She undertook to discern some of the textile knowledge salespeople find necessary in the performance of their jobs and to develop a one hour instructional program on the basis of data obtained. This educational program was administered to salespersonnel and evaluated by them.

Thirty-four fabric salespersonnel completed a four part questionnaire and participated in the instructional program. The questionnaire sought four types of information: 1) personal and background data; 2) frequency of questions customers ask about fabrics; 3) customer questions which salespersonnel found the most difficult to answer; and 4) the salesperson's suggestions of appropriate fabrics for given enduse situations.
Lamb found salespersonnel desired additional information and were receptive to the training program developed and presented. The program utilized various visual aids and handouts to transmit information regarding fabric properties; end use, care, and compatible findings for knit and durable press fabrics; and a summary discussion of the need for current information.

Results of the study led Lamb to conclude that there exists certain identifiable knowledge related to textiles which salespersonnel recognize as important to effective performance in their jobs. Over-the-counter fabric salespeople desire and are receptive to instructional programs planned specifically for them. Such programs equip fabric salespersonnel to furnish more accurate information to consumers. It was felt that the effectiveness of training programs was dependent on the administrator's ability to relate information presented to experiences relevant to the audience.

"A STUDY OF SALESPERSONNEL AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS OF TEXTILES," NANCY HANSEN, 1966. Hansen's purpose was to determine the textile information known by salespersonnel and to determine customer reliance on salespersonnel as a source of textile knowledge. To accomplish this purpose Hansen developed a questionnaire to which 193 salespersonnel responded. Question selection and material included were based on three criteria: 1) relevancy: the item of information must aid the salesperson in answering consumer questions; 2) ability to obtain needed information: the respondent must be willing and able to reply; 3) length: the questionnaire must be completed in a limited amount of
time set by the store management.

The questionnaire utilized an indirect approach. Each salesperson was to indicate on a ranking scale how many salespeople would know the answer and how desirable it would be to include the topic in information given to salespersonnel. Two open-ended questions were included to determine which questions salespersonnel found the most difficult to answer and what specific complaints customers have about fabrics or garments. Analysis of the two open-end questions showed salespersonnel to rank questions most difficult to answer in the following order: 1) care, 2) wash and wear, 3) performance and finishes, fiber information, 4) wear problems, 5) shrinkage, 6) color fastness, 7) crease resistance and wrinkling, 8) general information. (Hansen, 1966, p. 33)

Salespersonnel ranked customers' reasons for complaints according to the frequency with which they occurred. The primary causes of complaints were related to care, followed by: color fastness, wash and wear, shrinkage, wear problems, general information, crease resistance and wrinkling, and fiber information.

Hansen hypothesized that the textile information which clerks' thought others would know was a reflection of self and if the clerks knew a specific item he would indicate less need to include it in textile training. The hypothesis was not confirmed by the study; no relationship was shown between topics salespeople thought others knew and topics they would like included in training programs.

Hansen concluded that salespersonnel do not have as much information as they would like and need. There were indications of consumers depend-
ing on salespersonnel for assistance in making purchasing decisions; further training, Hansen felt, could enable salespersonel to serve as more effective sources of information.
CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURE

The purposes of the present study were to determine the textile product knowledge possessed by salespersonnel, the causes of consumer dissatisfaction with apparel, and factors which may contribute to this dissatisfaction. The study was confined to twelve women's dress departments in a retail establishment where women were both the prime purchasers and the prime users of the merchandise selected. One large department store with numerous branch stores was selected as the research site since there was need for consistency in the recordkeeping systems and merchandise return policies among the departments.

The procedure is presented under the following headings: development of instruments, selection of research site and sample, collection of data, and analysis of data.

DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUMENTS

The hypotheses made it necessary to measure: 1) salespersons' textile product knowledge, 2) the rate of customer returns of garments to the retail establishment, and 3) the reasons for return of garments by customers. In addition, selected background information was needed about the sales persons and the retail establishment used as the research site. Since the review of literature did not reveal instruments

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appropriate for the measurement of the variables included in the study, the investigator sought to develop appropriate measures.

The site of the investigation was a retail establishment and included both the downtown and branch stores. After obtaining approval from store executives to conduct the investigation in the specified retail establishment, the researcher met with the head of the Store's Research Department. Plans of the investigation were presented and procedures outlined for the use of store records and contact with store personnel. Store officials stressed the importance of developing measures which would 1) minimize the time involvement of salespersonnel and 2) reduce interaction with store personnel. These time restraints made it necessary to use measures which were simple to administer and to complete.

The questionnaire method was chosen to obtain information from the sample of salespersonnel. Individual responses were obtained from a series of limited-response questions. This form was selected for the following reasons: 1) it had the advantage that scoring could be made more objective and reliable than when an open-end interview technique or free response questionnaire was used (Aleamoni, 1971), and 2) the salespersonnel were able to complete it at their own pace without leaving the selling floor. Survey forms were developed to record information concerning returned merchandise and store operations.

TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE MEASURE

An instrument was needed to ascertain the extent of knowledge salespersons possessed about textile care and performance of the garments
they sold. Since the measure would be administered to salespeople on the selling floor, it was necessary to devise a paper and pencil instrument which could be completed within a short time period.

The Textile Product Knowledge Measure was developed with another investigator whose dissertation required a similar instrument. (Orsini, 1972) Studies by Lamb (1970), Conklyn (1971), Hansen (1966), Manhart (1964), Koch (1963), and Steiniger (1970) were reviewed as one means of identifying textile product information needed by salespersonnel in women's dress departments. Studies by Labarthe (1954) and Steiniger (1970) were used to identify causes of consumer dissatisfaction. In addition, the two researchers observed salespersonnel in dress departments, surveyed label information found on dresses, and reviewed current textile handbooks and textbooks to provide the basis for developing questions dealing with the following aspects: 1) fiber characteristics, 2) fabric performance, 3) fabric finishes, 4) label information, 5) garment care.

Multiple choice questions were developed since statements with fixed alternatives may be answered quickly and are adaptable to the measurement of understanding. In developing this instrument several considerations were necessary: 1) The salesperson must not be intimidated by the questions, thus, questions were stated as queries a customer might make of a salesperson and alternatives presented were structured to resemble a salesperson's reply; 2) the questions asked should be relevant to the garments sold; 3) the textile information called for should be within the conceivable knowledge boundaries of an informed salesperson;
4) the questions should be structured so the salesperson could work intermittently on the questionnaire while remaining on the selling floor and servicing customers; and 5) the questions asked must be relevant to salespeople selling in various women's dress departments. Forty-two statements, each with five alternatives of which one was a correct answer, were developed.

EVALUATION AND PRETESTING OF TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE MEASURE.

The 42 statements were reviewed for clarity, accuracy, and appropriateness by Textile and Clothing faculty and graduate students at the Ohio State University. Revisions were made on the basis of recommendations received. To establish validity, the revised measure, which included 41 statements, was pretested on a group of 59 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory textiles course at Ohio State University. It was felt that the knowledge of these students at the end of their first quarter of basic textile study might be equivalent to that of an experienced salesperson. The questionnaire was used as an in-class review by the students and no advance notice of its administration was given.

The questionnaires were scored and analyzed. The range of scores was from a high of 35 to a low of 20 from a possible score of 40. A mean score of 29.51 was achieved, and the median score was 29. An item analysis was computed to indicate those statements which discriminated the knowledgeable students from the less well-informed. Statements were retained which were significant at the .05 level or less. Further examination of less significant statements was made and several were
revised, yielding a total of 26 items in the measure to be pretested.

The revised instrument was pretested on 27 retail salespersonnel
under conditions closely duplicating proposed administration procedures.
The results were analyzed by the use of an item analysis and final re-
visions were made. (See Table 1) The statements selected for use in
the final instrument was significant at the .20 level of this pretest.
One statement, although not significant was included in the final ques-
tionnaire to psychologically support the salesperson's confidence in her
ability to respond correctly. This statement was eliminated in the
final analysis of data. The final measure included 25 multiple choice
statements. (See Appendix B)

SCORING Each multiple choice statement had one correct answer and four
incorrect alternatives. Each correct answer was scored as one point and
each incorrect answer as zero points. The scores were summed to yield a
Textile Product Knowledge Score for the salesperson. Each set of
alternatives in the pretests had included the response "I'm not certain"
which was scored as an incorrect answer. In the final questionnaire,
this alternative was eliminated. Evaluation of the pretests revealed
that salespersonnel avoided the response "I don't know" and chose to
leave the question unanswered rather than admit they did not know the
answer. Thus, in the final measure, each statement had four alternatives
of which one was the correct response.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: SALESPERSONNEL

A short questionnaire was designed to obtain background information
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>POSSIBLE SCORE</th>
<th>SCORE RANGE</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student pretest</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>20.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespersonnel pretest</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11-23</td>
<td>17.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from salespersonnel, the sources of information about textile products handled by the salesperson, identification of the department in which she worked, and the store of employment. By insuring that the salesperson remained anonymous, it was felt that possible anxiety caused by taking a "test" would be minimized and that the salesperson would express her true feelings and knowledge without fear of reprisal from her employer.

The questionnaire was constructed by the investigator and refined through a series of evaluations by the Ohio State University Textile and Clothing graduate faculty. Assistance in this evaluation process was also provided by the Head of the Research Department and the Personnel Manager at the department store used as a research site.

The questionnaire included categories dealing with various aspects of the salesperson's background: 1) the store where she worked; 2) her department number; 3) her experience; 4) her educational level; 5) the source of her textile information; 6) self-evaluation of her ability to deal with customer questions; and 7) textile information she would like to possess. Several alternatives were listed for each category and the salesperson simply checked the one which applied to herself. The final question, dealing with information she would like to possess, was an open ended question with space allowed for the salesperson to express herself.

The revised form of the Salespersonnel Background Information Questionnaire was pretested on department store personnel at the same time that the Textile Product Knowledge Measure was administered to
determine its clarity and the time necessary for completion. (See Appendix A)

RETURNED MERCHANDISE FORM

A form was developed to record the descriptive data for the sample of items of apparel returned to the retail establishment. The researcher was privileged to copy the information directly from store merchandise returned records located at the Downtown store; therefore, a concise form was necessary to eliminate unnecessary time expense in recording information.

Each garment returned was identified on the Returned Merchandise Form by the department number, the store of purchase, and the store of return. A checklist of alternatives for each item was developed to facilitate data collection. It was also necessary to identify the type of garment being returned since department store dress departments handle garments other than dresses. The three categories established following a survey of women's dress departments were: dresses and jumpers, suits, and separates (i.e. blouses, jackets, pants). Price groupings were categorized as follows: $10.00 and under, $11.00-$20.00, $21.00-$50.00, $51.00-$100.00, $101.00 and up. These five groupings were selected because they took into account the price ranges of garments within the women's and misses' dress departments under study, and were comparable to those used by Steiniger (1971). Four periods of time were identified as the time-span elapsing between purchase and return of the garments: 0-7 days, 8-30 days, 31-90 days, 91 or more days. These periods were selected following the review of literature and consultation
with the Store's research personnel.

The reason given by the customer for returning the garment as recorded on the store merchandise return record, was also sought. Studies by Steiniger and Dardis (1971), Smith (1966), and Labarthe (1954) were utilized in addition to the investigator's past experience in retailing to develop four main categories and the subcategories of reasons for garment returns. The reasons were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appearance and ease of care</th>
<th>Wear and Durability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard to clean, staining, soiling</td>
<td>Construction/fabric failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No iron fabrics need ironing</td>
<td>Stretching/shrinkage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrinkling of fabric</td>
<td>Color change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Husband (wife, etc.) not like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>Changed mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong size</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Returned Merchandise Form was evaluated by the Store's Research Department and members of the Investigator's Research Committee at the Ohio State University. Following revisions based on their suggestions, the one page form evolved. (See Appendix C)

**STORE INFORMATION FORM**

A form was developed to obtain information about the Store in which the study was to be conducted. This information was needed to identify and select the sample of salespersons and to aid in the analysis of data. Information sought included: 1) the size, location of branch operations, policies, and operations of the stores, 2) the number of salespersons...
employed and a description of the current Employee Training Program, and 3) statistical data about returned merchandise.

The information relating to the Store and its personnel was retained in the researcher's files as reference material. Demographic data related to the physical size and geographic location of the downtown and branch stores, division of the store into department groupings, and employment statistics were utilized in selection of the research site and sample groups. Background information related to the training program for personnel, store return policies, and merchandising philosophy provided a frame of reference for evaluation of the findings.

Statistical data pertaining to each department's Net Sales, Dollars-Worth of Returns, Gross Sales, and number of transactions were essential for an analysis of the Store's Rate of Returns. These figures were converted into percentages for each of the seven dress department groups studied by calculating the Dollar's-Worth of garment returns to the Gross Sales (i.e. the dollar's worth of garments sold) for the 1971 fiscal year to yield a Rate of Return for each department. The average price of garments sold in each department was also calculated from the Store's statistical records.

The questionnaire, consisting of short answer questions and tables for statistical information, was evaluated and approved by the head of the Store's Research Department prior to its administration. (See Appendix D)
RESEARCH SITE

The research site selected was a metropolitan department store which ranked among the fifty top-volume department stores in the United States during 1970 (Campbell, 1971). The choice of this store as a research site was based on three criteria:

1. Prior contacts of the researcher in retailing facilitated understanding the store's policies and record keeping systems.

2. The store included a main downtown store plus suburban stores. This offered an opportunity to select a sample group from varied economic and geographical locations, but to maintain as a constant the store's policies, record keeping systems, and classification of departments.

3. The store's computerized record keeping system facilitated the use of current statistical data.

Executive personnel at the store was approached and permission was received to administer the questionnaires and gather the data essential to the investigation.

THE STORES The downtown store and three of the six suburban branch stores were included in the study. The downtown store served as the headquarters of store operations and led in volume of business. The suburban stores were selected on the basis of volume of business, differentiated geographical locations, and date of establishment. Table 2 includes the rank order by volume of business and the years in operation for the stores included in the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STORES N=7</th>
<th>RANK ORDER OF 7 STORES (By volume of business)</th>
<th>YEARS IN OPERATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch C</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEPARTMENTS WITHIN THE STORES: The departments studied were the Women's and Misses' Dress Departments. Dress departments were selected because women were both the major customers and the major consumers of the merchandise. Some suits and separates were handled in these departments, but the number was minimal. Studies by Ayers (1964), Rogers (1967), Smith (1968), and McNeal (1965) have established the importance of women as purchasing agents. Thus the population groups, served by salespersonnel in a dress department, were intimately concerned with their purchase and its ability to fulfill expectations. Regardless of the garment price, salespersonnel employed in dress departments require similar textile knowledge to answer the questions these women raise.

The Store had 15 Women's and Misses' Dress Departments; however, only 12 departments were included in the study. Three departments had either been phased out or were newly established during 1971. Since some of the departments carried similar merchandise and utilized the same personnel, the 12 departments were divided into seven subgroups based on the Store's organizational scheme. Table 3 shows the scheme for grouping the departments and the identifying type of merchandise.

SELECTION OF SAMPLES

Information was needed from two sample groups: 1) consumers who had returned garments and 2) salespersonnel. Although the consumer was never contacted directly, the record of her return of a garment was utilized. The sample of salespersonnel were from the twelve departments in which women's and misses' dresses were sold. Criteria for the selection of each sample is discussed in the following sections.
### TABLE 3

SCHEME FOR ASSIGNING DEPARTMENTS INTO SUBGROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBGROUP NO.</th>
<th>TYPE OF MERCHANDISE</th>
<th>NO. OF DEPARTMENTS INCLUDED IN THE SUBGROUP</th>
<th>AVERAGE PRICE(^a) OF GARMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Designer Dresses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$105.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Better Women's and Misses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$53.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Women's Better Half-size Dresses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$49.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Career-girl Dresses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$38.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Budget Women's and Misses' Dresses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Housedresses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Women's and Misses Basement Dresses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Store's statistical records were used to compute the average price of garments.
CONSUMERS WHO RETURNED GARMENTS  Records of garments returned to the Store during the six months preceding the investigation were made available to the investigator. The most recent return records were not utilized, since they were kept in the individual departments and the researcher had the use of only those filed in the central office. A random sample of 185 return records were reviewed and information was recorded on the Returned Merchandise Forms. The sample included a minimum of 15 returns from each department.

SALESPERSONNEL  The sample of salespersonnel included those individuals selling garments in one of the 12 departments studied. Only salespersonnel at the Downtown or one of the three suburban stores designated as Research Sites were eligible for selection. Store records revealed there would be a sample size of 123 if all eligible personnel completed and returned the questionnaires.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTRUMENTS

TEXTILE KNOWLEDGE MEASURE AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR SALESPERSONNEL

The Textile Knowledge Measure and the Background Information Questionnaire for Salespersonnel were administered to the designated sales people during the second week in May. A four-day administration period was deemed necessary for several reasons. First, geographical distances made administration at more than one store-per-day impractical for the investigator. Second, to reach the maximum number of salespeople at any given store it was necessary to alternate administration times. The choice of time and method of administration was determined by the Store's
Research Head and the Personnel Manager. Managers of the individual branch stores determined the best method to be used in their particular store. The first week in May marked the end of an extensive store-wide sale and business during the second week was expected to be slower. The use of a slower business period would allow salespersonnel sufficient time to complete the questionnaires. All department heads and buyers were notified in advance of the investigator's impending visit and their co-operation was urged by Store's executives.

The investigator's plan was to administer the measures to salespeople during their working day by approaching the salesperson on the selling floor. Each employee in the selected departments would be provided with a questionnaire, an envelope, and a pencil if necessary. The questionnaires contained a cover sheet which asked the salesperson's co-operation in the study and gave directions for replying to the questions. Finally, the cover sheet reassured the salesperson that she would remain anonymous; the only identification required was her department number. The two questionnaires: Salespersonnel Background Questionnaire and Textile Knowledge Measure were stapled together to form a small booklet. The Background Information instrument was placed first in an attempt to attain answers unbiased by information included in the Textile Product Knowledge Measure.

Since only 15 minutes was required, the salesperson could remain on the floor while she completed the questionnaire, place the questionnaire in the envelope provided, seal and return it to the investigator. During the day the investigator would move from department to department
distributing the materials, supervising the administration of the measures, and collecting the sealed envelopes. This method minimized the opportunity for the salespeople to discuss the questions or seek assistance in completing the questionnaire.

To include salespeople absent the day of the investigator's visit, questionnaires were left with the Department Manager for all personnel who would be working during the following three to four day period. The salesperson's name was printed on the cover sheet of the measure which was easily detached to maintain their anonymity.

**ACTUAL ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES** Upon arrival at the Research Site it was necessary to revise the administration procedures outlined. It was found that the four stores employed approximately 98 salespersonnel in the women's and misses' dress departments. This total of 98 was below the anticipated sample size and necessitated a revision to reach a greater percentage of salespersonnel.

In addition to the need to contact the maximum number of salespersonnel possible in each store, a second factor necessitated the revision of plans. The date of administration of the questionnaires to the salespersonnel, May 9-13th, was the week preceding Mother's Day. Traditionally a busy time in dress departments, several advertised dress sales further contributed to an upsurge of business during this week. The increase in business meant salespersonnel could not be expected to complete the measure in one short time period, but necessitated sufficient time to work on it intermittently. Supervision by the researcher of all personnel completing the measure became unfeasible and the
opportunity for personnel to discuss the questions increased. Somewhat balancing this factor was that in a busy department there was little opportunity for salespersonnel to converse on the selling floor and their coffee breaks were at staggered times.

The investigator, in administering the questionnaires, contacted the buyer or department manager in each department, distributed the questionnaires to salespersonnel, and determined from the Store Time Sheet the number of salespersonnel absent. Questionnaires were left with the department manager to be completed by these sales women on their next working day. This deviation from planned procedures was necessary because a large number of personnel at the Branch Stores work part-time, evenings, or on alternate days and the percent of the total salesforce working on a given day was small. Several branch department managers indicated the problem of reaching all salespersonnel at one time makes group meetings or training sessions difficult to schedule.

On the day of the administration of the measure, the investigator collected all completed measures and made arrangements to return to collect the remainder several days later. As the measures were collected, the investigator talked with as many personnel as possible to obtain their comments and reactions to the measure.

At Branch C a slightly different procedure was employed at the suggestion of the Manager. All questionnaires were left with the Fashion Coordinator who distributed them, collected the sealed envelopes, and returned the completed measures to the researcher. In this instance, the researcher had minimal contact with salespersonnel.
RETURNED MERCHANDISE FORM

The Store's returned merchandise records were utilized to obtain data which were recorded onto the Returned Merchandise Forms for the 12 departments studied. The information was recorded by the investigator during the third week in March.

A separate form was completed for each returned item. The first fifteen return records from each department for the period studied were chosen as the sample. The researcher did use discretion in determining that the returns in each of the seven groups of departments came from both the Downtown Store and Suburban Branches.

THE STORE INFORMATION FORM

The information to complete this measure was also obtained by the investigator during the third week in March. The data required was gathered in two manners: 1) structured interviews, using the questionnaire as a basis, were held with the Head of the Store's Research Department and the Personnel Manager. 2) statistical information was copied from computerized records by the researcher onto the tables constructed.

The Store personnel involved in these interviews were mailed a copy of the measure prior to the investigator's visit to the store and compiled much of the needed information.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The procedure and type of analysis to be used was determined following consultation with a statistician. Frequency counts, percentages, and means were used to evaluate the descriptive data collected.
An Item Analysis was performed on the Textile Product Knowledge measure to estimate the reliability of the instrument, determine the significance level of each item, and its relative difficulty. (See Appendix F) The Kuder-Richardson 20 Reliability Estimate was used as an index of the internal consistency of the test. It is a function of the number of items on the test, the variability of the scores, and the proportion falling in the upper and lower groups for each item. A level of .400 was set as the criteria of acceptance for this test.

Statement number 1 of the Textile Product Knowledge measure was not included in the analysis. This item was included in the Measure because during the pretest all personnel were able to answer it correctly. It was felt that the psychological reinforcement of immediately knowing a correct response would reassure and encourage salespersonnel to complete the measure.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES Chi square analysis was used to test the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis was tested using a three-way analysis of variance, assuming additivity to view the effect of education level, years of retail experience, and information sources of salespersonnel on their Textile Product Knowledge score. The .05 level of significance was used to determine whether observed differences among the sample was of a magnitude to be attributed to a factor other than sampling variation. A two-way analysis of variance was used to determine the effect of interrelationships between education level and years of experience on Textile Product Knowledge scores.

The third hypothesis, an inverse relationship will exist between
salespersons' scores on the Textile Product Knowledge measure and the ratio of sales to returns, was tested by a simple correlation and by Kendall's tau. The simple correlation, which assumed a normal distribution of observations, was used to measure the extent to which two variables were linearly related. The Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation, r, was calculated from matched-pair data. The Pearson product-moment coefficient is an unbiased estimate of R, the population correlation, and can be used to provide a test for the \( H_0: R=0 \) against the alternative \( H_1: R<0 \). R has a value of +1 to -1.

A nonparametric statistical procedure, using Kendall's tau, \( \tau \), was selected to further examine the possible relationships. This measure does not depend on a normal distribution of observations, but views two pairs of members randomly selected from the population. Tau is a measure of the likelihood of the second variable changing in the same direction as the first. The statistic used is \( T \) and is the summation of all possible pairs of observations for a pair. \( T \) is used to test \( H_0: T=0 \) against \( H_1: T<0 \). The null being rejected if \( T \) is too small. \( T \) has a range of values from +1 to -1.

For both statistical tests, the salespersons' scores on the Textile Product Measure and the garment return ratios were viewed for each of the seven departmental subgroups which were designated in Table 3. The garment return ratios were computed from data from the Downtown and six Branch Stores, while the salespersons' scores were those obtained as a result of the administration of the Textile Product Knowledge Measure at the Downtown and three Branch Stores.
The .05 level of significance was used for acceptance or rejection of relationships or differences in this study. In describing the findings, "highly significant" refers to acceptance at the .01 level, and "significant" refers to acceptance at the .05 level. "Tendency for significance" at .10 level is indicated to suggest possible relationships or differences.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The analysis of data from the study of the Textile Product Knowledge of salespersonnel and consumer dissatisfaction with women’s dresses is reported under the following headings: descriptive data and testing of hypotheses.

DESCRIPTIVE DATA FOR RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT, SALESPERSONNEL AND RECORDS OF RETURNED MERCHANDISE

To aid in the interpretation of statistical data, it was necessary to compile and analyze background information about the samples. This information contributes to a more insightful analysis of statistical data.

RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT

The retail establishment chosen as a Research Site was an established firm which had been in existence for over one hundred years. The firm had grown from a single store into a corporation supervising a downtown store and six branch operations in addition to several other retail establishments. The Store has continually modernized its physical plant and today boasts a computerized record-keeping system.

In operating a successful business, store executives were aware of the importance of the personnel they employ. Effort has been made to
attract young, aggressive but affable executives who were capable of communicating their enthusiasm to the salesforce. Also, executives were aware of the important role played by the selling force in encouraging customers to return.

The Store competed with discount stores on only a very limited range of goods. Instead, the policy was to offer a broad assortment of merchandise which appealed to customers who have taste, discrimination for quality, and some affluence so that price was not their primary concern.

STORE POLICIES AND BACKGROUND The Store selected carried merchandise geared to attract the upper middle class of the area. Its movement into selected suburban communities reinforces this fact. Executive personnel noted that the Store prided itself on fashion emphasis and used this feature to attract customers. This was in contrast to many stores which use promotional devices such as clearance sales or bargain days to gain customers. Store executives seemed concerned with handling quality merchandise and providing good service.

The Store's policy regarding returns was described by the research department as "liberal." No written policy existed, but generally the store would refund the consumer's purchase price on any legally returnable item for which she could show proof of purchase. Exceptions were made as the situation warranted. An item purchased at the Downtown or Suburban Store may be returned to any one of the Stores. At the time this study was conducted, the Store was in the process of formulating an Official Return Policy.
DEPARTMENTS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY  Approximately 230 different selling departments were identified within the department store selected as a Research Site. Of these departments, the 15 which specialized in women's and misses' dresses were selected as a sample. Further investigation revealed that three departments had not been in existence during the entire 1971 fiscal year. Elimination of these narrowed the sample to 12 departments.

These 12 departments were found in the Downtown Store and at each of the Branch Stores. At the Downtown Store, the 12 departments were organized into 7 selling groups. Each group had a buyer and a specified set of salespersonnel. The buyer at the Downtown Store also supervised and bought merchandise for the selling groups at all Suburban Stores.

The organization of selling groups in the Suburban Branches differed from the Downtown Stores. The seven selling groups were not separate, thus, two or three groups were often combined to form a department. The salespersonnel at the branches often sold merchandise belonging to two or more of the seven selling groups.

The inconsistent distribution of personnel necessitated a final regrouping of departments for the purpose of analysis. The 12 departments were divided into three groups: 1) departments selling better dresses, 2) departments selling medium price dresses, and 3) departments selling the lowest price dresses. (See Table 4)

STORE'S RATIO OF SALES TO RETURNS  Computation of the percentage of garment returns in dollars to Gross Sales was made for the 1971 fiscal year. Calculation of the ratio of returns to sales was done on a
### TABLE 4

**FINAL SCHEME FOR GROUPING THE TWELVE DEPARTMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP NUMBER</th>
<th>TYPE OF MERCHANDISE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS INCLUDED IN THE GROUP</th>
<th>AVERAGE PRICE(^a) OF GARMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 Better Dresses | Designer Dresses  
Better Women's and  
Misses Dresses | 5                                           | $79.00                          |
| 2 Medium Price Dresses | Women's Better Half-size Dresses  
Career-girl Dresses  
Budget Women's and  
Misses Dresses | 4                                           | $38.00                          |
| 3 Lowest Price Dresses | Housedresses  
Women's and Misses'  
Basement Dresses | 3                                           | $16.00                          |

\(^a\) Store's statistical records were used to compute the average price of garments.
storewide basis. This included a total of seven stores rather than limiting it to the four selected as research sites and provided a comprehensive picture of the individual departments. A ratio for each of the 12 departments was computed and a ratio for each of the 7 selling groups was also computed.

As presented in Table 5, the rate of returns to sales ranged from 19.56 percent for the Lowest Priced Dresses to 21.95 percent for the Better Dresses. The rate of returns to sales for the seven subgroups showed a greater range than for the three groups with the Women's and Misses' Better dresses at 15.25 percent and the Designer Dresses at 23.31 percent.

The return data were analyzed in a second manner. This required that the Rate of Returns by Department group at the Downtown Store and the Rate of Returns at the six Branch Stores be compared. (See Table 6) The Branch Stores appeared to exhibit a higher rate of returns to sales than did the Downtown Store; however, a representative from management indicated that all records from Branch Stores had not been returned to the Downtown Store for filing. From the information available, the higher rate of returns for the Branch Stores may be explained by the accessibility of the suburban stores to the consumer and the fact that garments purchased by the consumer on a special trip to the Downtown Store located in the central city may be returned to a Branch Store located in the shopper's local community. This was particularly true in the case of the most expensive garments, where the greatest selection was found at the Downtown Store.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>SUBGROUP</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>SUBGROUP</th>
<th>Average Price a</th>
<th>Rate of Returns to Sales</th>
<th>Average Price a</th>
<th>Rate of Returns to Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Better</td>
<td>I-Designer Dresses</td>
<td>1-Better</td>
<td>II-Better Women's &amp; Misses</td>
<td>$79.00</td>
<td>21.95%</td>
<td>$105.00</td>
<td>23.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$53.00</td>
<td>21.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Medium</td>
<td>III-Women's Better Half-Sizes</td>
<td></td>
<td>IV-Career-Girl</td>
<td>$38.00</td>
<td>19.19%</td>
<td>$49.00</td>
<td>19.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V-Budget Women's &amp; Misses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$38.00</td>
<td>19.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$28.00</td>
<td>19.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Lowest</td>
<td>VI-House&amp;dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td>VII-Women's and Misses</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>19.56%</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>22.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basement Dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$12.00</td>
<td>15.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Store's statistical records were used to compute the average price of garments.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>SUBGROUP</th>
<th>GROUP RATE OF RETURNS</th>
<th>SUBGROUP RATE OF RETURNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>Total of 6 Branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>Total of 6 Branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Better Dresses</td>
<td>I - Designer Dresses</td>
<td>13.35%</td>
<td>28.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II - Better Women's and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Misses'</td>
<td>13.50%</td>
<td>36.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.19%</td>
<td>24.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Medium Price</td>
<td>III - Women's Better</td>
<td>13.30%</td>
<td>21.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresses</td>
<td>Half-Sizes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV - Career-Girl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V - Budget Women's &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Misses'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Lowest Price</td>
<td>VI - House-dresses</td>
<td>13.23%</td>
<td>24.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresses</td>
<td>VII - Women's and Misses'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basement Dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STORE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR SALESPERSONNEL. At the time of the study, the Store's Training Program was under review and revisions were to be made during the following months. The salespersonnel selected as a Sample had been trained in the program described below.

Training programs at the Downtown and Suburban Stores were basically the same. Each store had a Training Department responsible for the orientation and training of personnel. The Personnel Director at the Downtown Store served as the directing force for training departments at the six Suburban Branches and at the Downtown Store.

The Training Program for Salespersonnel encompassed a total of 16 hours. It oriented the salesperson to store policies, operation of cash registers, and types of saleschecks to be written. No information was provided about textile care and performance of garments within the training program. This program of instruction was generalized to be applicable to all 200 departments in the store.

The home furnishings and fabric departments had special co-ordinators whose job it was to inform both the salesforce and public regarding the care and performance of textile products. Within other departments, (i.e. dress departments) the responsibility rested with the buyer or department head. These individuals, during their Executive Training, attended classes geared to provide information about fabrics and their characteristics. It was their responsibility to educate the salespersonnel.

Clinics, or retraining programs, were conducted by the Store's Training Department. Salesmanship training was held annually and
Fashion Clinics were a semi-annual occurrence. The Store also employed "Shoppers" who circulated through the Store posing as customers and evaluating salespersonnel. On the basis of their ratings, retraining of individual personnel was conducted as necessary.

Review of literature yielded no study of the effectiveness of training programs within a department store. Lack of research made evaluation of the program difficult and comparison impossible. The Store's own recognition of a need to update their program would indicate that there were improvements which could be made. When questioned, the possibility of including textile training had not been considered. The addition of salesmanship training was the major revision planned.

SALESPERSONNEL

The salespersonnel included in the study were those who sold women's and misses' dresses at the four research sites. According to Store records, the Store (Downtown plus six Branches) employed over 8000 individuals and approximately 55 percent or 4400, were salespersonnel. The dress departments employed a total of 300 salespersonnel of which 123, or 40 percent, were eligible to be included in the study. Their eligibility was based upon employment at one of the four research sites.

The investigator visited each of the departments at the time of the administration of the Background Information Questionnaire and the Textile Product Knowledge Measure. At this time, she attempted to ascertain the total number of individuals currently employed in the department. The information was obtained from the Store Time Sheet,
the work schedules for each department, and the buyer or department manager. While in the department, the number of questionnaires to be administered was determined and the questionnaires distributed.

Tabulations indicated approximately 98 saleswomen were employed in the departments studied; there were no salesmen. The actual number of salespersonnel employed was smaller than anticipated. This might be attributed to the period when the estimate of 123 was made: the Christmas season or during a storewide sale when extra personnel were hired on a temporary basis.

**SAMPLE SIZE** A total of 92 questionnaires were distributed to the salespersonnel at the four Stores included in the study. Of these 75 were returned which represents 81.52 percent of the total administered and 76.53 percent of the total employed in these departments. (See Tables 7 and 8) The rate of return was representative of the co-operation exhibited by all store personnel during the course of the study, and reflected the interest taken by salespersonnel and department managers in the need for additional textile information.

Three questionnaires from Branch B were, of necessity, returned by Special Delivery mail to the researcher. These completed measures were lost in the mail and received only after the analysis of data was complete. The missing questionnaires were considered refusals in the analysis and contribute to the low percentage of returned questionnaires from Branch B.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPT. SUBGROUP</th>
<th>DOWNTOWN</th>
<th>BRANCH A</th>
<th>BRANCH B</th>
<th>BRANCH C</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I- Designer Dresses</td>
<td>7 7 100.00</td>
<td>3 3 100.00</td>
<td>3 2 66.67</td>
<td>2 0 0.00</td>
<td>15 11 73.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II- Better Women's</td>
<td>5 5 100.00</td>
<td>5 4 80.00</td>
<td>4 4 100.00</td>
<td>3 3 100.00</td>
<td>17 16 94.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III- Better Half-Sizes</td>
<td>3 3 100.00</td>
<td>3 2 100.00</td>
<td>2 1 50.00</td>
<td>1 1 100.00</td>
<td>8 7 87.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV- Career Girl V- Budget Women's</td>
<td>2 0 0.00</td>
<td>2 1 50.00</td>
<td>3 3 100.00</td>
<td>1 0 0.00</td>
<td>8 4 50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V- House Dresses</td>
<td>4 4 100.00</td>
<td>4 4 100.00</td>
<td>2 1 50.00</td>
<td>4 4 100.00</td>
<td>14 13 92.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI- Basement Dresses</td>
<td>4 4 100.00</td>
<td>5 4 80.00</td>
<td>1 0 0.00</td>
<td>1 0 0.00</td>
<td>11 8 72.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20 26 93.60</td>
<td>21 23 87.14</td>
<td>20 14 70.00</td>
<td>15 12 80.00</td>
<td>92 75 81.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. No. Adm. = Number Administered
b. No. Ret. = Number Returned
c. % Ret. = Percent Returned
d. Three questionnaires lost in the mail.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION GROUP</th>
<th>BRAND A</th>
<th>BRAND B</th>
<th>BRAND C</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Better Dresses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Medium Price Dresses</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.78</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lowest Price Dresses</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87.50</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>89.46</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Three questionnaires lost in the mail.
EDUCATION The educational level of salespersonnel was divided into four categories: 9 of the respondents had less than a high school education, 44 were high school graduates, 17 had attended college, and 5 were college graduates. Distribution of the sample on the basis of education level was evenly dispersed among the seven departmental groups. The mean and modal educational level attained was high school graduate.

EXPERIENCE Salespersonnel were divided into three groups on the basis of their retail experience: 1) those who had worked less than one year; 2) those who had worked a total of two to five years; and 3) those who had worked six or more years. The number of year's experience for salespersonnel who had worked part-time was computed by dividing the total number of years experience by .50 which represented 50 percent time, assuming half time as an approximation of part-time employment. (See Table 9) Total years experience ranged from 6 months to over 30 years. The mean experience level was between two and five years of experience.

The store estimated that approximately 20 percent of their salespersonnel worked on a part-time basis. The sample of 75 included 19 women (25.3) percent who worked part-time and 56 (74.7 percent) who were full-time employees. The major portion of part-time personnel were employed at the branch stores, 18 of the 19 part-time salespersonnel.

Comparison of educational levels and experience levels showed the number of salespeople with more education, attended or graduated from college, were similar; however, 50 percent of the salespersonnel were high
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>SALESPERSONNEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NUMBER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1 year</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or more years</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
school graduates and were represented at higher experience levels. (See Table 10) This would indicate that for high school graduates selling often becomes a career while those who have attended college use retailing as a stepping stone or temporary employment. The turn-over in salespersonnel was not determined in the course of this study.

**INFORMATION SOURCES FOR SALESPERSONNEL.** Listed on the Background Information Questionnaire for salespersonnel were six sources of textile-product information: 1) personal experience, 2) Store training department, 3) the buyer or department manager, 4) customers, 5) fiber and apparel companies, 6) labels and hang tags. Salespersonnel were asked to identify their chief source of textile information. For the purpose of analysis the six information sources were divided into four categories: 1) Experience, 2) Store training, 3) Manufacturers' promotional material, 4) Other. (See Table 11)

The most frequently cited information source and also the most available source of information was the hang tag which provided information for 64 percent of the salespersonnel. Lamb (1970) noted that consumers valued the label as an information source, but indicated they often had difficulty interpreting or applying the stated information. To receive additional explanation of the label the consumer turned to the salesperson. Thus, the salesperson must have sufficient textile knowledge to interpret label terminology and provide accurate information in support of the printed message.
### TABLE 10
DISTRIBUTION OF SALESPERSONNEL ON THE BASIS OF YEARS
OF EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL LEVELS</th>
<th>0-1 Year No.</th>
<th>2-5 Years No.</th>
<th>6+ Years No.</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended high school</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School graduate</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>44.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended college</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>34.00</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 11
INFORMATION SOURCES USED BY SALESPERSONNEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>INFORMATION SOURCES</th>
<th>TOTAL NO.</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Experience</td>
<td>Information received from customers (n = 3)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Experience (n = 10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Store Training</td>
<td>Buyer, department mgr. (n = 9)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training Department (n = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Manufactures' Promotional Material</td>
<td>Labels and Hang Tags (n = 47)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiber and Apparel Co. (n = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other</td>
<td>Miscellaneous sources (n = 4)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SELF EVALUATION BY SALESPERSONNEL OF THEIR ABILITY TO ANSWER CONSUMER QUESTIONS. Personnel completing the Background Information Questionnaire were asked to evaluate their ability to answer customer questions. Four alternatives were offered: 7 felt they answered questions accurately all the time, 63 felt they knew the answer most of the time, and 5 were often uncertain of the answer.

These findings indicated that the majority, 93 percent, consider themselves quite competent. In talking informally with personnel, the opinion was repeatedly expressed that customers expect too much expertise from salespeople in regard to textile performance and fabric care characteristics of the garments they sell. These saleswomen stated their awareness of the wide variety of fabrics and finishes on the market, but expressed dismay at attempting to keep pace with the rapid changes taking place.

INFORMATION REQUESTED BY SALESPERSONNEL. An open-ended question included in the Salespersonnel Background Measure offered each salesperson an opportunity to request specific information which would facilitate her job of answering customer questions. Thirty-six of the seventy-five saleswomen responded. Twenty responses dealt with the need for manufacturers to attach care information and fiber content tags to their garments in prominent locations. Salespersonnel wanted specific care instructions and felt that any hang tag or label without care information was useless to them and to the consumer. Six responses requested periodic seminars or training sessions to keep salespeople up-to-date on new fabrics, their care, and possible problems that can arise.
Another request, frequently voiced, indicated that a referral chart for fabric care would be valuable to salespersonel in answering customer questions. (See Appendix E)

When offered an opportunity to verbally express their views, saleswomen were quick to voice their hope that more information could be provided for their reference. They noted that many garments today do not have fiber content or care information attached either permanently or on a cardboard tag. The heavy reliance of salespersonel on these tags as information sources makes their presence essential. Few of the salespeople were aware that on July 3, 1972 all garments would be required to carry permanent care labels. There was also disagreement regarding whether fiber content was required on garments currently found on the selling floor.

ITEM ANALYSIS OF SALESPERSON'S TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE MEASURE

The sample consisted of 75 salespersons who completed and returned the measure; 92 salespeople had been approached. Scores on the Textile Product Knowledge measure ranged from 7-22 out of a possible 24 points. The mean score was 15.37 with the median score achieved being 15. (See Table 12) The 24 salespersons scoring in the upper 32 percent of the group and the 26 persons scoring in the lower 34.67 percent had mean scores of 18.42 and 12.39 respectively. These two groups were used in computing the item analysis.

During the administration of the 92 questionnaires several salespersons refused to participate in the study, which may indicate a lack of textile knowledge as the reason. This trend led the researcher to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SALESPEOPLE</th>
<th>PERCENT OF SALESPEOPLE</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All personnel</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>15.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>18.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower group</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.67</td>
<td>12.385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
theorize that salespersonnel completing and returning the measure considered themselves fairly knowledgeable; while those who found the questions difficult chose not to complete the measure. Thus the scores would not be indicative of the lower limits of knowledgeability.

Scores of salespersonnel at each of the four research sites were also compared. Results indicated the salespersonnel completing the Textile Product Measure at the Downtown Store and at Suburban Stores achieved similar Textile Product Knowledge scores. The mean score at the Downtown Store was 15.00 while mean scores at the branches ranged from 15.39 to 15.87. (See Table 13)

The Kuder Richardson-20 Reliability Estimate was used as an index of the internal consistency of the measure. The level of reliability achieved was .470; a score of .400 had been set as the criteria of acceptance.

RELATIVE DIFFICULTY MEASURE The relative difficulty of each item composing the Textile Product Knowledge measure was computed as part of the item analysis. Relative difficulty is the percentage of salespersonnel missing the item; a higher percentage indicated the more difficult item.

Analysis of the 24 items revealed that the questions salespersonnel experienced most difficulty in answering related to the care of synthetic fabrics and methods of altering these fabrics. (See Appendix F) As a group, salespersonnel might be expected to have difficulty offering accurate solutions to the problems consumers encounter in caring for garments. The existence of a new Federal Trade Commission ruling which required Permanent Care Labeling after July 3, 1972 was recognized by
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STORE</th>
<th>NUMBER RETURNING QUESTIONNAIRE</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE</th>
<th>SCORE RANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>10-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch A</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15.39</td>
<td>7-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch B</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.87</td>
<td>14-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branch C</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.55</td>
<td>10-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
only 35 of the 75 surveyed.

Salespersonnel were generally knowledgeable regarding the easy care features of polyesters and polyester blends. Over 85 percent of the saleswomen recognized the meaning associated with two trade marks, the Wool-Mark and the term "Sanforized," often found on garment labels. The majority of the sample group answered correctly questions related to the performance properties of fabrics made from synthetic and natural fibers and were aware of the brand names and properties of easy care finishes. Observations by the researcher of salespersonnel revealed that performance properties of various fabrics and finishes are often used as selling points in convincing customers to purchase clothing. This knowledge becomes part of an experienced salesperson's persuasive selling technique.

**DISCRIMINATION INDEX** A discrimination index of each item on the Textile Product Knowledge measure was computed to ascertain the degree to which the item differentiated salespersonnel scoring among the top 32 percent from those scoring among the bottom 35 percent of salespersonnel.

The single item that best discriminated general Textile Product Knowledge was number six on the measure. To correctly answer the question, the salesperson needed to be able to define "virgin wool." 92 percent of the salespersonnel in the top group responded correctly, while 93 percent of the salespeople in the bottom group gave incorrect answers. (See Appendix F)

Other items on the Textile Product Knowledge measure which discriminated between the two groups were: 1) number 18, requiring know-
ledge of the permanent care labeling ruling; 2) number 22, requiring awareness of the properties of Scotchgard finish; and 3) number 11, requiring knowledge about the care of white nylon blouses. As indicated in Appendix F, ten questions were significant at the .01 level or less and appear to be good discriminators of knowledge.

It is interesting to note that the four key items listed above required knowledge concerning: 1) a fiber which has been a staple item for hundreds of years; 2) new innovations in the field of textiles and textile legislation; and 3) care information needed for optimum performance of a synthetic.

RETURNED MERCHANDISE

Approximately 15 Return Merchandise Forms were completed for each of the 12 dress departments included in the study using the Store's return records. Return records from both Downtown and Branch stores were used to select the sample group. A sample size of 185 was achieved. It was necessary to divide the sample into three departmental groups defined earlier (See Table 14) to complete the statistical analysis of data.

GARMENTS RETURNED In recording data on the Returned Merchandise Forms, the investigator included three garment classifications: 1) dresses, 2) suits, 3) separates. Special occasion dresses, gowns, and cocktail dresses were omitted because customer expectations of care and performance of these garments differ from street dresses which are purchased by the majority of women shoppers. In each department, the largest
### TABLE 14
DISTRIBUTION OF RETURNED MERCHANDISE SAMPLE
BY 7 DEPARTMENTAL SUBGROUPS AND 3 GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>SUBGROUP</th>
<th>RETURNED MERCHANDISE GROUP</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>RETURNED MERCHANDISE SUBGROUP</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Better Dresses</td>
<td>I-Designer dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>II-Better Women's and Misses' dresses</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II-Better Women's and Misses' dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Medium Price Dresses</td>
<td>III-Women's Better Half-size dresses</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>35.68</td>
<td>IV-Career Girl</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V-Budget Womens</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Lowest Price Dresses</td>
<td>VI-Housedresses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VII-Basement dresses</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
percentage of garment returns were dresses. (See Table 15)

REASONS FOR RETURN OF GARMENTS Twelve reasons for return of garments to the retail store were included on the Returned Merchandise Form. The scattered dispersion of these reasons among the seven departmental sub-groups made generalizations impossible. (See Table 16) The twelve categories were arranged into three types of reasons for return of garments; 1) Performance, care, and durability, 2) Personal Reasons, and 3) Other Reasons. (See Table 17)

Failure of the textile to meet the customer's expectations was the cause of 22 of the 185 returns. A substantially larger number, 114, gave as the reason for garment return a personal excuse of wrong size, wrong color, or poor fit. The reasons attributed to 49 returns were that the customer did not like the garment once purchased or changed her mind. In viewing this distribution of returns, it must be noted that 1) return information found on store records is recorded by the salesperson onto a line three inches long, which necessitates a concise description of the reason for the return; 2) the reasons recorded are those offered by the customer and may not be the actual reason motivating the return of the garment.

The large number of returns attributed to Personal and Other Reasons indicate that the majority of dress returns were due to the mistaken judgement of the shopper in selecting a garment rather than the lack of serviceability of the garment. Store personnel interviewed noted that "fashion merchandise" is most often returned because the purchaser has made an incorrect judgement of fit, fashion, or aesthetic
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENTAL SUBGROUPS</th>
<th>DRESS No. Percent</th>
<th>DRESS No. Percent</th>
<th>SEPARATES No. Percent</th>
<th>TOTAL No. Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-Designer dresses</td>
<td>34 10.38</td>
<td>5 2.70</td>
<td>7 3.78</td>
<td>46 24.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II-Better Women's and Misses' dresses</td>
<td>28 15.14</td>
<td>- --</td>
<td>- --</td>
<td>28 15.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III-Women's Better Half-size</td>
<td>15 8.11</td>
<td>- --</td>
<td>- --</td>
<td>15 8.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV-Career Girl</td>
<td>16 8.65</td>
<td>- --</td>
<td>2 1.08</td>
<td>18 9.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-Budget Women's</td>
<td>28 15.14</td>
<td>2 1.08</td>
<td>3 1.62</td>
<td>33 17.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI-Housedresses</td>
<td>15 8.11</td>
<td>- --</td>
<td>- --</td>
<td>15 8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII-Basement dresses</td>
<td>18 9.73</td>
<td>1 .54</td>
<td>11 5.95</td>
<td>30 16.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>154 83.24</td>
<td>8 4.32</td>
<td>23 12.43</td>
<td>185 100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REASONS</td>
<td>DEPARTMENTAL SUBGROUPS</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to clean, stain, soil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No iron fabrics, need pressing, wrinkling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction/fabric failure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color change</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not like</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TOTAL = Designer, Dress, and Mixture Dresses
 I = Men's Better Half-Sizes
 II = Women's Better Half-Sizes
 III = Career Girl
 IV = Budget Men's
 V = Women's
 VI = Basement Dresses
 VII = Basement Dresses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS FOR RETURN</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT GROUPS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1(Better dresses)</td>
<td>2(Medium price)</td>
<td>3(Lowest price)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Performance, care, and durability</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other Reasons</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12.97</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>35.68</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24.32</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
value at the point of purchase. The suggestion was made by Executive personnel that performance and care aspects would be of greater importance in lingerie and children's clothing departments and the distribution of reasons given for returning merchandise among the three categories would reflect this.

DEPARTMENT GROUPS AND TIME SPAN BETWEEN GARMENT PURCHASE AND RETURN

The date of purchase and the date the garment was returned to the Retail establishment was recorded on the Returned Merchandise form. Time span in days between purchase and return were computed and grouped according to whether 0-7 days, 8-28 days, or 29 or more days had elapsed. Time spans ranged from 1 day to 289 days, with the greatest percentage of returns occurring within the week following the date of purchase. (See Table 18)

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

The three hypotheses generated by the researcher prior to the investigation are examined individually in the following section. For the purpose of analysis, each hypothesis was stated in the null: that any difference found is due to chance. Use of the null hypothesis minimizes the opportunity for personal bias and provides a format that can be tested and interpreted with confidence. The null hypothesis denies the existence of a real difference between alternatives until chance has been eliminated as a possible cause. (Hall, 1967) Should statistical analysis of the data reveal a significant difference, the null hypothesis is rejected on the grounds that the difference is not
### TABLE 18

**DISTRIBUTION OF TIME SPAN BETWEEN GARMENT PURCHASE AND RETURN BY DEPARTMENT GROUP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME SPAN</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT GROUPS</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BETTER DRESSES</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>MEDIUM PRICE</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-7 days</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21.62</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-28 days</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 or more days</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>35.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
due to chance.

**HYPOTHESIS I**

The primary reasons given by customers for the return of garments will vary with:

a. Retail price of garment

b. Time span between purchase and return of garment

**Null Hypothesis**

a. No difference will exist between the reasons for garment return and the retail price

b. No difference will exist between the reasons for garment return and the time span between the purchase and return of the garment.

The variation of reasons for garment return to the retail establishment were analyzed in regard to garment price and time span between purchase and return. Chi square analysis was used to ascertain significant associations between reasons for garment return.

**RETAIL PRICE** Three prime reasons for garment returns and three price ranges were viewed. As indicated in Table 19, more people returning merchandise in the lowest price range ($0.00-$20.00) stated the reason for return was the garment's inability to meet performance expectations than did individuals returning more costly items. Garments purchased at greater cost ($51.00 and up) were more likely to be returned because of improper fit, wrong size, color, or some other fashion aspect. The chi square of 7.055 was not significant at the .05 level; therefore, it was necessary to accept the null hypothesis.
TABLE 19

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN REASONS GIVEN BY CUSTOMERS FOR GARMENT RETURNS TO A RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT AND RETAIL PRICE OF THE GARMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRICE RANGE</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0.00-$20.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$21.00-$50.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51.00 and up</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 7.78 \quad p \leq .05$

$X^2 = 7.05 \quad p \geq N.S.$
and assume that the slight differences exhibited may have occurred as a result of chance errors in the sampling or measurement.

The analysis does reveal a tendency for an association between the reason for return and retail price. Thus, the findings give some support to the premise that more expensive dresses are fashion items which must meet expectations of aesthetic values. Less expensive dresses, characterized by house dresses, are more often purchased for utilitarian reasons and performance and serviceability become important factors. These varied expectations by consumers are reflected in the reasons given for garment returns to the retail establishment.

Regardless of the cost of the item, the primary reasons given by 60 percent of customers returning garments were personal (i.e., related to fit, color, or size) while only 12 percent of the return records studied attributed the return to reasons of performance or wear and durability. Previous studies, by Labarte (1954) and Steiniger (1970), viewed only reasons related to textile problems which makes comparison of results impossible.

**TIME SPAN** The reasons for garment returns by customers were grouped into three categories and the timespans between purchase and return were designated: 0-7 days, 8-28 days, 29 or more days.

There was found to be a significant association between the reasons given by customers for returning garments and time span ($p < .01$), thus the null hypothesis was rejected. (See Table 20) Strongest differences between reasons was found in garments returned after 28 days. According to Table 20, the percentage of returns for Performance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME SPAN</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-7 days</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>34.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-28 days</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 plus days</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 7.78 \quad p < .05 \]
\[ \chi^2 = 13.30 \quad p < .01 \]
and Other reasons remained fairly constant with regard to time span, while a sharp drop in percentage of returns occurred for Personal reasons. Thus, Personal reasons were particularly important during the first seven days, 34.5% percent, but became less important as the time span lengthened.

Forty-nine percent of all garments were returned within the first week, the principal reasons given being Personal or Other. It would appear that the customer had made an incorrect judgement of the fit or fashion appropriateness of the garment and corrected the error by returning the garment. The largest percentage of returns attributed to Performance, 4.86 percent, occurred a month or more after the purchase of the garment. These findings support those of Johnson (1968) and Smith (1966) who noted that at the point of purchase and immediately following purchase the consumer was concerned with tangible values: fit, aesthetics, color, price, size. It was only later that the intangible aspects of serviceability and performance could be evaluated. Galbraith (1967) and Leblang (1963) noted that consumers purchasing women's clothes base their selection on fashion rather than performance characteristics.

HYPOTHESIS II

A positive relationship will exist between salespersons' textile product knowledge and:

a. Education level attained
b. Number of years of retail experience
c. Information sources
Null Hypothesis

a. The education level attained will have no effect on the salespersons' textile product knowledge scores.

b. The number of years of retail experience will have no effect on the salespersons' textile product knowledge scores.

c. The source of information will have no effect on the salespersons' textile product knowledge scores.

A three-way analysis of variance, assuming additivity, was used to view the effect of educational levels, years of experience, and information sources on salespersons' textile product knowledge as measured by the Textile Product Measure. Each of the three variables, education level, years of retail experience, and information sources, was 1) divided into groups or levels, 2) the mean score of salespersonnel in each group determined, and 3) the standard deviation calculated. (See Table 21)

College graduates, as a group, achieved a mean score of 16.40 and scored higher on the Textile Product Knowledge measure than did any other group. Those salespersonnel who failed to complete high school scored the lowest on the Textile Product Knowledge measure, achieving a mean score of 15.00. The score differences might be attributed to the college graduates' familiarity with "tests" and greater self confidence in taking them, while those not completing high school had more difficulty interpreting the questions and selecting an answer.

Examination of Textile Product Knowledge scores by experience groupings revealed that salespersonnel having 2-5 years experience
### TABLE 21

**MEAN SCORES OF SALESPERSONNEL ON THE TEXTILE KNOWLEDGE MEASURE BY EDUCATION LEVEL, YEARS OF RETAIL EXPERIENCE, AND INFORMATION SOURCES.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SALESPERSONNEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>15.34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attended college</td>
<td>15.35</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>16.40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>0-1 year</td>
<td>15.31</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>15.71</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 plus years</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>15.46</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>Personal experience</td>
<td>(15.80)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information from customers</td>
<td>(14.33)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Store Training</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Store training department</td>
<td>(14.00)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buyer, Department manager</td>
<td>(14.14)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacture's promotions</td>
<td>15.39</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiber and Apparel Companies</td>
<td>(14.00)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labels and Hang tags</td>
<td>(15.60)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mean score of sample group (n = 75) = 15.37.*
score somewhat higher than individuals who had worked in retailing 6 or more years. Personnel who had worked 1 year or less occupied an intermediary position. This data suggests that further study be conducted to investigate these results.

Personal experience and labels were found to be the best information sources for the salespersonnel studied. Salespersonnel indicating their reliance on personal experience as an information source achieved a mean score of 15.80, while those personnel utilizing labels and hang tags achieved a mean score of 15.60. No effort was made to determine the types of personal experience which contributed to this knowledge, further study in this area is indicated.

An F test was employed to indicate whether there was more variability between the groups composing the educational levels, years of retail experience, and information sources than within the groups. Table 21 identifies the groups comprising these three variables.

An F ratio was computed individually for each of the three variables studied: educational level, experience, information sources. (See Table 22) The F ratio in each case failed to reach a magnitude which qualified in the extreme 5 percent of the F distribution. This indicated that the scatter among the groups comprising the variable was well within the limits of chance occurrence. The decision was to fail to reject the null and to interpret this aspect of the experiment as failing to show evidence of differences in salespersons' textile product knowledge among educational levels, number of years of retail experience, and the sources of textile information.
## TABLE 22

RESULTS OF THE F TEST USED TO DETERMINE VARIABILITY BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL LEVELS, EXPERIENCE LEVELS, AND INFORMATION SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>D.F.(^a)</th>
<th>(p)(^b)</th>
<th>(p)(^c)</th>
<th>(p) less than(^d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education (4 groups)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>N.S.(^e)</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience (3 groups)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.745</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sources (3 groups)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.705</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\). D.F. - Degrees of Freedom  
\(b\). \(F\) = Value of the statistic which indicates whether there is more variability between the groups than within the groups  
\(c\). \[ F = \begin{cases} 3.76 & (2df), p \leq 0.05 \\ 3.15 & (3df), p \leq 0.05 \end{cases} \]  
\(d\). \(p\) less than - If the null hypothesis is true the chance of \(F\) being the figure indicated or bigger is equal to the percent indicated. A high percent being indicative that the null is true.  
\(e\). N.S. = Not Significant
The lack of significant differences among the four educational groups and the three experience groups led the researcher to undertake further examination of the data, using a multiple group comparison. A two-way analysis of variance was utilized to view the effect that interaction of educational levels and experiences levels had upon textile product knowledge scores. Years of retail experience remained divided into three groups: 0-1 year, 2-5 years, and 6 or more years. Educational levels were redivided into two groups: 1) High school graduate or less and 2) Attended college or beyond.

The two-way analysis showed no significant differences in the Textile Product Knowledge scores when interrelationships between education and experience levels were viewed. Thus, it was not possible to reject the null hypothesis that interrelationships of education and experience levels would have no effect on Textile Product Knowledge scores. Results indicated interrelationships between education and experience influence Textile Product Knowledge scores to a greater extent than did either variable independently. (See Table 23)

Analysis indicated salespersonnel who had attended college and possessed two to five years experience scored the highest, 17.25. (See Table 24) This was, however, the only instance where college educated salespersonnel outscored those with a high school background. The unbalanced size of sample groups comprising each combination may partially account for this factor, but it might be theorized that another factor or interrelationship of factors, presently unidentified, may be significantly related to the Textile Product Knowledge scores observed.
### TABLE 23
INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION LEVELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>p less than</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>.627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience-Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.779</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. D.F. = Degrees of Freedom  
b. F = Value of the statistic which indicates whether there is more variability between the groups than within the groups  
c. $F = 3.10$ (2df) $p < .05$  
   $F = 4.00$ (1df) $p < .05$  
d. p less than = If the null hypothesis is true, the chance of F being the figure indicated or bigger is equal to the percent indicated. A high percent being indicative that the null is true.  
e. N.S. = Not Significant

### TABLE 24
DISTRIBUTION OF MEAN SCORES OF SALESPEOPLE  
BY INTERRELATIONSHIP OF EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIENCE LEVEL</th>
<th>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SALESPEOPLE OBSERVED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1 year</td>
<td>H.S. grad or less</td>
<td>15.83</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1 year</td>
<td>Attended college</td>
<td>14.86</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>H.S. grad or less</td>
<td>15.23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
<td>Attended college</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ years</td>
<td>H.S. grad or less</td>
<td>15.19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ years</td>
<td>Attended College</td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Mean score of all salespersonnel = 15.37.
Further study, utilizing larger sample groups is warranted before conclusions can be made.

**ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS** Further analysis of the Textile Product Knowledge scores of salespersonnel revealed a significant relationship (p ≤ .05) to exist between the salesperson's self evaluation of Textile Product Knowledge and the score achieved. (See Table 25) Salespersonnel indicated on the Background Information Measure which of three knowledge categories best described their ability to answer customer questions: 1) answer accurately all the time, 2) know the answer most of the time, 3) often am uncertain of the answer. An inverse relationship was found to exist. Table 25 indicates that those salespersons who were most confident of their ability to answer customer questions achieved the lowest score, 12.86; while those who expressed doubt in their ability achieved the higher mean score of 16.00.

The results indicate that the attitude of salespersonnel may affect their textile product knowledge and possibly their receptiveness to learning new information. Further investigation should be conducted to determine the effect of attitude and self confidence on the textile knowledge possessed by salespersonnel.

Data from the Textile Product Measure revealed a very significant relationship (p ≤ .01) to exist between the salespersons' scores and the department in which she was employed. (See Table 25) As indicated in Appendix G, a difference does exist between the salespersons' knowledge as measured by the Textile Product Knowledge Measure, and the department subgroup. This would indicate that training received after the
### TABLE 25
RESULTS OF THE F TEST USED TO DETERMINE VARIABILITY BETWEEN SELF EVALUATION CATEGORIES AND DEPARTMENTS OF EMPLOYMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>p less than</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. D.F. = Degrees of Freedom

b. F = Value of the statistic which indicates whether there is more variability between the categories than within the categories.

c. $F = 3.10 \ (2df) \ p < .05$

$F = 2.25 \ (6df) \ p < .05$

$F = 3.10 \ (6df) \ p < .01$

d. p less than - If the null hypothesis is true, the chance of F being the figure indicated or bigger is equal to the percent indicated. A high percent being indicative that the null is true.

### TABLE 26
DISTRIBUTION OF MEAN SCORES ON THE TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE MEASURE ACCORDING TO SELF-EVALUATION BY SALESPERSONNEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF EVALUATION BY SALESPERSONNEL</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE ON TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE MEASURE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SALES PERSONS OBSERVED</th>
<th>STANDARD DEVIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer accurately all the time</td>
<td>12.86</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the answer most of the time</td>
<td>15.60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often am uncertain of the answer</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
salesperson enters a department may influence her ability to answer customer questions. It is also possible that knowledge requirements vary from department to department and the Textile Product Measure may be biased in favor of a certain type or price-range of merchandise.

HYPOTHESIS III

An inverse relationship will exist between salespersons' textile product knowledge scores and the ratio of Dollar's Worth of garment returns to Gross Sales.

Null Hypothesis:

No relationship will be found to exist between salespersons' textile product knowledge scores and the ratio of Dollar's Worth of garment returns to Gross Sales.

Two measures of association were used to determine if any relationships existed between the ratio of sales to returns and the salespersons' scores on the Textile Product Knowledge measure in the seven departmental subgroups. The first measure was the simple correlation r and the second was based on Kendall's tau statistic which does not depend upon a normal distribution of pairs. Results of the two measures were fairly consistent, although no relationships were found which were sufficiently distant from 0 to warrant rejection of the null hypothesis at the .05 level.

In all instances, negative correlations were evidenced. As scores on the Textile Product Measure improved, the rate of returns tended to drop. Thus, it would appear that the salesperson's knowledge may affect the rate of returns. Caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions from the relationship between the test score and percentage of returns.
It would seem that there are often other factors involved that could be of major importance. The type of merchandise carried in the department for example, could affect both the reason for return and the percentage of returns.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Consumerism and the consumer movement is a many faceted force. One aspect of protection and promotion of the consumers' welfare is the provision of adequate information regarding the care and performance of products at the point of purchase. Provision of accurate information has the potential of reducing customer dissatisfaction if the consumer is willing to utilize the information available. The purpose of this final chapter is to provide a critical overview of the purposes and findings of the investigation, to draw conclusions, and make recommendations for further study.

CRITICAL OVERVIEW

One purpose of the investigation undertaken was to determine the knowledge salespersonnel in 12 women's and misses dress departments located in a large department store possess about the garments they sell. Specifically, textile knowledge related to the performance and care of different fibers, fabrics, and finishes was measured. Secondly, the investigator sought to determine the principal reasons given by consumers for the return of garments to the 12 dress departments. Finally, the data compiled were analyzed to determine whether a relationship existed between the textile product knowledge scores of sales-
personnel in a given department and the rate of garment returns to the same department. Data was collected from two sample groups: salespersonnel and store records of customer garment returns. Background information regarding the Store, its policies, operations, and profits was obtained from Executive personnel.

SALESPERSONNEL TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

A Background Information Questionnaire and a limited-response Textile Product Knowledge measure were developed and administered to 92 salespersonnel at the Downtown Store and three Suburban branches of a large Metropolitan department store. Salespersonnel were approached, given the questionnaire, allowed to complete it on the selling floor unsupervised, and seal it into an envelope which the administrator collected. A sample size of 75 was achieved in this manner.

Administration procedure varied slightly from Store to Store and may have influenced the results in a manner undiscernible by the methods of analysis employed. Standardization of procedures would be recommended for those attempting similar investigations. The possibility must also be acknowledged that person nel may have discussed the questions composing the Textile Product Measure or that distractions on the selling floor made concentration difficult. Administration of the questionnaire to salespersonnel in a quiet room and under supervision may yield different scores, yet it is difficult to predict if they would be better indicators of the salesperson's true knowledge. The atmosphere in which the salesperson completed the measure, with the opportunity to seek assistance from others, to function independent.
of constant supervision, and to be placed in a position of giving an
answer amid distractions may have provided a more realistic setting.

Analysis of Textile Knowledge Measure scores revealed that while
some salespersonnel were well informed the majority needed further tex-
tile information to answer consumer questions. The majority of sales-
personnel utilized information found on garment labels and hang tags
to answer customer questions. Salespersonnel were generally better
informed regarding the performance characteristics of fibers, fabrics,
and finishes than other aspects of textile knowledge. Additional infor-
mation relating to the care and alteration of garments, particularly
those constructed from man-made fibers, is recommended.

Based on the data collected and analyzed, results indicate that
when viewed independently neither educational level, years of experi-
ence, nor source of information influenced salespersons scores on the
measure. The size of the sample group, 75, made it difficult to study
interrelationships of educational level, years of experience, and
information sources to determine whether certain combinations signifi-
cantly affected the scores achieved. A two-way analysis was used to
view interrelationships of educational and experience levels. Although
no significant relationships were found, results indicated that interre-
lationships of these variables influence salespersons' scores on the
measure to a greater extent than when viewed independently. Replica-
tion using a larger sample group is indicated so that other interac-
tions might be viewed.

Salespersonnel recognized their need for additional information
and expressed a desire for all garments to carry labels giving explicit
directions for care of the garment and stating the fiber content. It
would appear that despite rulings by the Federal Trade Commission, a
substantial number of salespersonnel feel that many garments found on
the selling floor do not carry this information.

RETURNED MERCHANDISE

To obtain information regarding why consumers return dresses, a
single-page Returned Merchandise Form was constructed to record informa-
tion from the store's customer return records. A minimum of 15 returns
from each of the 12 dress departments studied were viewed and the infor-
mation recorded on the Returned Merchandise Form.

Sufficient data was collected in this manner to provide a sampling
of the reasons for customer's garment returns, as recorded by sales-
personnel. The researcher, because of time limitations, did not con-
tact the consumer directly. A phone interview to verify the reason for
return and obtain the consumer's evaluation of the textile product
knowledge of salespersonnel would provide further insight into the
problem of consumer dissatisfaction.

The reasons for customer return of garments to the retail estab-
lishment were divided into three categories: 1) Performance (care
and durability); 2) Personal (comfort, fit, size, color); and 3)
Other Reasons (changed mind, not like). Analysis of data from 185
Merchandise Return Forms showed the majority of customers, 60 percent
returned merchandise for Personal Reasons while only 12 percent
attributed the return to the garment's failure to meet expectations of
performance, care, or serviceability. This would indicate that for
dresses and other "fashion merchandise" the customer's prime concern
is the garment's ability to meet fit and style expectations and her
reasons for returning a garment verify the value placed on these aspects.
It might also be suggested that the salesperson's textile product know-
ledge has little influence on the consumers' dissatisfaction or satis-
faction with dresses and fashion apparel. Further study is indicated
to discern if this trend occurs in other garment departments such as
children's wear or lingerie where the aspects of serviceability and
performance may be of greater importance to consumers.

Chi square analysis revealed no significant associations between
reasons for garment return and retail price. A significant association
($p \leq .01$) was found to exist between the reasons for garment returns
and the time span between purchase and return. As the time span length-
en between purchase and return, the percentage of customer's giving
Personal Reasons related to fit, size, or comfort diminished while the
percentages of customer's stating reasons related to Performance or
Other Reasons remained fairly constant.

RELATIONSHIPS OF SALESPERSONEL'S TEXTILE PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE SCORE AND
RATE OF GARMENT RETURNS

The ratio of dollar's worth of returns to Gross Sales was computed
for each of the seven department subgroups and also for the Downtown
and Branch stores. Analysis of data revealed that as the price of the
garment increased the percentage of returns also appeared to increase.
The researcher noted that in all instances the average Rate of Returns
to dress departments in the Downtown Store was much below the rate of
returns to the suburban Stores.

An inverse relationship did appear to exist between the Textile Product Knowledge scores achieved and the rate of returns to any given department. Although not significant, it would appear that departments whose salespersonnel scored well on the Textile Product Knowledge Measure had a lower rate of garment returns and further study would be justified.

CONCLUSIONS

Three hypotheses and numerous subhypotheses were formulated as part of this exploratory study. For the purpose of analysis, all were stated as null hypotheses. The hypotheses are presented below followed by the conclusions drawn from the results.

NULL HYPOTHESIS I

a. No difference will exist between the reasons for garment return and the retail price.

DO NOT REJECT THE NULL, BUT CANNOT ACCEPT IT. A tendency for association appeared to exist between the reasons for return and the retail price. ($\chi^2=7.05 \ p < .10$)

b. No difference will exist between the reasons for garment return and the time span between the purchase and return of the garment.

REJECT THE NULL. A significant ($p < .01$) association was found between the primary reasons given by customers for the return of garments and time span.

NULL HYPOTHESIS II

a. The educational level attained will have no effect on the salespersons' textile product knowledge scores.

ACCEPT THE NULL.
b. The number of years of retail experience will have no effect on the salespersons' textile product knowledge scores.

ACCEPT THE NULL. Further analysis of interrelationships between a) educational level and b) years of experience was conducted. Based on the results the null hypothesis of no interrelationships was not rejected, but it could not be accepted. There was a tendency for the interrelationship of educational level and years of experience to significantly affect the salespersons' scores.

c. The source of information will have no effect on the salespersons' textile product knowledge scores.

ACCEPT THE NULL.

NULL HYPOTHESIS III

No relationship will be found to exist between salespersons' textile product knowledge scores and the ratio of Dollar's Worth of garment returns to Gross Sales.

ACCEPT THE NULL. An inverse relationship between the factors did appear to exist. The department's whose salespersons achieved a higher mean score on the Textile Product Knowledge measure had a lower percentage of returns, but the relationship was not strong enough to warrant rejection of the null.

CONCLUSIONS BASED UPON DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1. Salespersonnel need basic textile information regarding fibers, fabrics, finishes, and legislation to better serve consumers. Particular emphasis should be placed upon the special care requirements of synthetic fabrics.

2. The majority of salespersonnel in women's and misses' dress departments were high school graduates, and had worked in retailing from 2-5 years. Educational programs
should be directed toward this education level and present relevant information in an interesting manner.

3. Labels and hang tags were the primary source of textile information used by salespersonnel. Manufacturers must be certain fiber content and care information is attached to each garment. Retailers must educate salespersonnel to understand and interpret accurately what the labels tell them.

4. Salespersonnel consider themselves capable of answering most customer questions, but desire more information about the garments they sell to answer questions more accurately.

5. The Textile Product Knowledge measure developed was an effective tool for measurement of salespersons' textile product knowledge.

6. The primary reasons for customers' return of garments to the retail establishment were personal in nature. Failure of the garment to meet care, performance, or serviceability expectations were reasons given by only 12 percent of the consumers.

7. The majority of customers returned merchandise during the week following the purchase.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Based upon the results of the study the following recommendations are offered.

1. Development and administration of a textile training program followed at a later date by measurement of the salespersonnel's textile product knowledge. The purpose being: to determine if training significantly affects salespersons' Textile Product Knowledge scores.

2. To better understand the reasons consumers return merchandise to retail establishment, further study of these consumers should be made using a personal interview or phone survey.

3. Replication of the current study should be attempted, using departments handling different types of merchandise as the research site. Departments to be explored may include: 1) lingerie, 2) children's wear, 3) menswear, and 4) draperies.

4. Further study should be conducted to determine the number of sales that are lost in a department because salespersonnel cannot answer consumers' questions satisfactorily.

5. Further study of training programs in various types of retail establishments should be conducted to determine the effect of training on the textile product knowledge of salespersonnel.
6. Further investigation should be conducted to determine the effect of the salesperson's attitude toward her job (i.e., enthusiasm and interest) upon her ability to be well informed about the merchandise she sells.
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APPENDICES
Dear (name of store) Employee,

You have been selected to participate in a survey which (name of store) feels will help them in planning future training programs for salespersonnel.

Selection of personnel to participate in this survey was done on a random basis. You will not be identified as an individual. Your department number is the only identification necessary. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

The survey consists of two parts. The first section deals with background information about your experience in retailing and at the (name of store). In the second section, the questions you will be asked pertain to the fabrics used in the garments you sell, terms found on their labels and hang tags, and care information. These are questions a customer might ask as she shops at (name of store), and you are to indicate how you would answer these customer questions.

If you are willing to assist in this survey please fill out the questionnaire. An envelope is provided to ensure the confidentiality of your reply. I will be in the department to collect the sealed envelopes.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]
Graduate Student
Ohio State University
I. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Store selling at: (Circle one) DI XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX

2. Department number (or numbers) whose merchandise you sell.
   a. Check each department number whose merchandise you sell.
      
      | GROUP I | GROUP II | GROUP III |
      |---------|---------|----------|
      | XXX     | XXX     | XXX      |
      | XXX     | XXX     | XXX      |
      | XXX     | XXX     | XXX      |
      | XXX     | XXX     | XXX      |

   b. **CIRCLE** the one department whose garments you sell the most, if you sell merchandise belonging to more than one department.

   c. Of the three groups in a. above, whose garments do you sell the most?
      
      | GROUP I | GROUP II | GROUP III |
      |---------|---------|----------|

3. How many years **experience** have you had in selling?

   | 6 months or less | 2-5 years | 6 or more years (specify ___) |
   | 7 months to 1 year |          |                         |

During this time have you worked:

   | Full time (31 hours per week or more) | Part-time (12-30 hours per week) | Occasionally (11 hours or less per week) |

Do you presently work:

   | Full time (31 hours per week or more) | Regular Part-time (12-30 hours per week) | Contingent (11 hours or less per week) |

4. How far did you go in school? Check the highest education you have.

   | Less 12 years | High School Graduate | College graduate or beyond |
   |              | Refusal |                     |
   | Part of College |                       |                          |

Are you presently a student? **Yes** **No**
5. From whom do you receive information about care and performance characteristics of the garments you sell? Check those which apply.

   Personal experience
   — The store training department
   — The buyer, assistant buyer, department manager
   — Customers
   — Fiber and apparel companies
   — Labels and hang tags
   — Other (specify ____________________________)

   a. Place a second check in front of your most important source of information.

   b. Have you had any training sessions about fabrics and care of garments in your department?   Yes   No.

   c. Have you received any information sheets about fabrics and care of garments in your department?   Yes   No.

6. Do you feel you are able to answer customer questions about the garments' fabric, how to care for it, and how it will wear:

   — Accurately all the time
   — Know the answer most of the time
   — Often am uncertain of the answer
   — Rarely am certain of the answer

7. If a customer were to ask you a question about the care or performance of the fabric used in a dress and you were unsure of the answer what would you do? Check the one action that explains what you would do.

   — Ask another salesperson
   — Ask the buyer, assistant buyer, or department manager
   — Use your past experience to give her an answer which seems logical
   — Other, (specify ____________________________).

8. Is there any information or assistance you would like to have, which would aid you in answering the questions of your customers? Please indicate below.
II. CLOTHING QUESTIONNAIRE

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED BY CUSTOMERS WHILE SHOPPING FOR CLOTHING IN WOMEN’S DEPARTMENT. THERE IS ONE ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION THAT IS BETTER THAN THE OTHER ALTERNATIVES. YOU WILL NOT BE GRADED OR IDENTIFIED. THE PURPOSE OF THESE QUESTIONS IS TO HELP THE [NAME OF STORE] DETERMINE WHAT INFORMATION MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN FUTURE TRAINING SESSIONS.

THANK YOU.

1. "I want a dress to take to Florida on vacation. Which of these will pack well, be easy to launder, and not wrinkle?"
   a. ___ The cotton broadcloth
   b. ___ The acetate knit
   c. ___ The rayon voile
   d. ___ The triacetate jersey

2. "Look at this polyester knit skirt. It seems a little tight in the hips. Can your alteration department let it out for me?"
   a. ___ X No, why don't you try a larger size and we'll have it taken in.
   b. ___ You'll find that as you wear it, the knit will give a little, so you really don't need to alter it.
   c. ___ Yes, I'm certain letting it out won't be a problem.
   d. ___ Why don't you have your drycleaner block it a little larger.

3. "I'm looking for a sheer dressy blouse, but want something I can machine launder with few problems. What fiber content would you recommend?"
   a. ___ Rayon/Acetate
   b. ___ Silk
   c. ___ X Cotton/Polyester
   d. ___ Acetate

4. A customer is looking for a simple inexpensive shift that she can wear around the house when she cleans and gardens. She expects to wear it often and launder it frequently. What fiber content would you suggest she look for?
   a. ___ X Cotton
   b. ___ Acrylic
   c. ___ Polyester
   d. ___ Nylon
5. A customer found three skirts in your department that she likes. Whichever skirt she buys will have to be lengthened and she wants your advice on which would show the alteration least.
   a. The polyester double knit
   b. The durable-press cotton
   c. The lightweight wool
   d. The wrinkle-resistant rayon

6. How would you respond to a customer who reads the label on a wool dress and asks, "What does 'virgin wool' mean?"
   a. The wool is from the fleece of lambs.
   b. A finish has been applied to make the fabric soft.
   c. The fabric has been reworked from other wool products.
   d. The fiber has not been used in a fabric previously.

7. Your customer's job requires frequent trips abroad. For a sweater that will pack well, wash and dry quickly, resist wrinkles and be warm, but light in weight, what fiber content should she look for?
   a. Rayon
   b. Washable wool
   c. Acrylic
   d. Cashmere

8. A customer reports that dampness in her basement has caused many of her clean clothes in storage to mildew. She wants a summer dress that will resist mildew. What fiber content would you suggest she look for?
   a. Cotton
   b. Linen
   c. Polyester
   d. Rayon

9. "I do a lot of traveling and need a suit that will resist wrinkles and be easy to care for. Which suit would you recommend of these I've chosen?"
   a. The rayon/cotton blend
   b. The silk/worsted wool blend
   c. The rayon/acetate blend
   d. The polyester/wool blend

10. "Which of these fabrics can I expect to resist wrinkles and retain its original shape?"
    a. Acrylic
    b. Rayon
    c. Acetate
    d. Cotton
11. A customer wants a blouse that she can launder with the family wash. Why might you discourage her from buying one made of white nylon?
   a. Nylon is not machine washable
   b. X Nylon attracts color and soil from other garments
   c. Nylon cannot be washed in all-purpose soaps.
   d. Water softeners discolor nylon fabrics.

12. "I want a sleeveless shift that is going to keep me cool and comfortable through the hot, humid summer. These four dresses are about the same weight and weave. Which will be cooler?"
   a. The all nylon
   b. X The all linen
   c. The all acrylic
   d. The all polyester

13. "I bought this navy blue acetate blouse about 6 weeks ago, wore it twice and now there's a light colored streak on the shoulder. What should I do?"
   a. Try hand washing it. Acetate shouldn't be drycleaned or machine laundered.
   b. X Have it drycleaned; it's probably a stain of some sort.
   c. You must have rubbed against something; just machine launder it in warm water.
   d. X The blouse has faded; return it and we'll exchange it for you.

14. A customer wants to know why the iron sticks to and ripples the acetate dress she bought in your department. What would you tell her?
   a. X The temperature of your iron is probably too high.
   b. X Acetate should never be ironed.
   c. The temperature of your iron is probably too low.
   d. The fabric is defective and the dress should be returned.

15. "The label says that this rayon dress should be laundered with care. Can I machine wash it with the family laundry?"
   a. No, rayon is not colorfast and would fade.
   b. Yes, but use cold water.
   c. X No, some rayon is weak when wet and would be damaged.
   d. Yes, but do not machine dry.

16. "Unless you can tell me what to do, I'm going to return this polyester crepe dress. When I launder it, it doesn't come clean. Just look at the soil line around the collar and cuffs!"
   a. The fabric must be defective; please let me exchange it for you.
   b. X This is a problem common in polyesters. Try rubbing an enzyme presoak detergent into the soiled area before laundering.

(continued on page 6)
16. continued.
c. Try washing it in warm water and adding a mild bleach.
d. You'll need to dryclean the dress occasionally if you wish to eliminate the soiled areas.

17. "If this fabric is CREASE-RESISTANT like the label says, does it mean that it won't wrinkle in the back from sitting on it?"
   a. When the label says it won't crease, it won't crease.
   b. X No, it means that the dress resists wrinkling, not that it is wrinkle-proof.
   c. It only means that creases and pleats cannot be pressed into the garment.
   d. It means that it won't be creased or wrinkled when it comes out of the dryer.

18. If a customer says she thought that care instructions were required on labels PERMANENTLY ATTACHED TO GARMENTS, how would you answer her?
   a. Instructions for care not required on labels.
   b. X The F.T.C. has passed a ruling, but it is not in effect yet.
   c. All clothing is required to have permanent labels giving that information.
   d. Care labels are required only on sportswear.

19. "Shouldn't there be a tag on this jacket that tells the fiber content? I thought that was a law."
   a. No, some manufacturers do provide them for advertising purposes.
   b. X Yes, there should be a tag.
   c. The ruling has passed, but is not in effect yet.
   d. That law is only enforced in some states.

20. "I like this dress; can you tell me what this symbol on the label means?"
   a. It is the insignia of the I.L.G.S.U.
   b. It is a sign of fair price dealing.
   c. It is a mark of quality in wool.
   d. X It is the trademark of Ziana nylon.

21. "The label says that this shirt is Sanforized. What does that mean?"
   a. The garment has been wear-tested.
   b. The fabric has been treated to make it lustrous.
   c. X The fabric has been treated to control shrinkage.
   d. Fading is controlled.
22. "The label on this hostess skirt says the fabric is Scotchgard finished. What does that mean?"
   a. ___ The skirt will resist stains and spots for the life of the garment.
   b. ___ The fabric will resist mildew, until the finish wears off.
   c. ___ The skirt will resist shrinkage for the life of the garment.
   d. ___ The fabric will repel stains until the finish wears off.

23. A customer wants to buy a jacket that she will use on camping trips. She wants to know which fabric would be most spot and stain resistant. What is your answer?
   a. ___ Rayon with a Sanitized finish.
   b. ___ Polyester with a Zepel finish.
   c. ___ Cotton with a Koratron finish.
   d. ___ Cotton with a Perma-Pressed finish.

24. Your regular customer comes in complaining that the cotton/polyester dress you mailed out to her has a "fishy" odor. What would you tell her?
   a. ___ Let the dress air out; the odor will disappear.
   b. ___ Most wash-and-wear dresses have that same odor when new.
   c. ___ The odor will disappear the first time the dress is laundered.
   d. ___ The fabric finish is defective; return the dress.

25. A consumer found a permanent-press blouse in your department that she likes, but wonders whether the puckers along seam lines and hem will disappear after laundering. What would you tell her?
   a. ___ A good pressing should smooth the puckers.
   b. ___ The blouse is defective and should be sent back to the manufacturer.
   c. ___ Washing and machine drying will eliminate the puckers.
   d. ___ Most permanent-press garments are puckered when new.
RETURNED MERCHANDISE FORM

TO BE OBTAINED FROM STORE RECORDS. ONE QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE FILLED OUT FOR EACH RETURNED GARMENT.

1. Department Number:
   __XXX, XXX
   __XXX, XXX, XXX
   __XXX, XXX, XXX
   __XXX, XXX
   __XXX

2. Store purchased at: ___DT ___BR Date purchased

3. Store returned to: __DT __BR Date returned

TIME SPAN BETWEEN PURCHASE AND RETURN
   ___0 to 7 days
   ___8 days to 28 days
   ___29 or more days

4. Retail price of garment (without tax):
   ___$10.00 and under
   ___$11.00-20.00
   ___$21.00-50.00
   ___$51.00-100.00
   ___$101 and over (Specify)

5. Description of garment:
   a. ___Dress
   b. ___Suit
   c. ___Separates
      ___Blouse
      ___Jacket
      ___Pant
      ___Skirt
      ___Other

6. Reason given for return of garment:
   a. Appearance and ease of care
      ___Hard to clean, staining, soiling
      ___No iron fabrics need ironing
      ___Wrinkling of fabric
   b. Personal
      ___Comfort
      ___Color
      ___Fit
      ___Wrong size
   c. Wear and Durability
      ___Construction/fabric failure
      ___Stretching/shrinkage
      ___Color change
   d. Other
      ___Husband (wife) not like
      ___Changed mind
STORE INFORMATION MEASURE

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR THE SELECTION OF A SAMPLE

1. Rank order by volume of business of Downtown and Suburban Stores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF STORE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DATE ESTABLISHED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. a. Total number of selling departments in Downtown store ________.

b. How many Women's and Misses' Dress Departments are there ________.

2. a. Which suburban stores have the largest number of Women's and Misses' Dress Selling departments represented? ________

List stores in rank order below:

1. __________________________

2. __________________________

3. __________________________

4. __________________________

**NOTE: Exclude Junior departments, sportswear departments, shoes, coats, suits, lingerie, robes, accessories, bridal, maternity, uniforms, and tall girls.
d. Specify these departments by listing:
   1. The title used to identify each selling area to customers
   2. The type of merchandise sold in the department
   3. The selling departments' (by number) at the DT store and designated suburban stores found in the above named selling areas
   4. The average price of garments sold in each department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. NAME OF SELLING AREA</th>
<th>2. TYPE OF MERCHANDISE HANDLED</th>
<th>3. SELLING DEPARTMENTS</th>
<th>4. AVERAGE PRICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DT. Br. A Br. B Br. C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Personnel
   a. Total number of employees (All stores) __________.
   b. Total number employed in selling (All stores) ________.
   c. Number selling part-time (Less 15 hours per week) at all stores ________.
d. Breakdown by designated stores and departments, of numbers employed in selling.\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENT NUMBER</th>
<th>DOWNTOWN</th>
<th>BRANCH A</th>
<th>BRANCH</th>
<th>BRANCH C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Sales and return figures for the 1971 fiscal year, in designated departments.\(^a\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENT NUMBER</th>
<th>DOWNTOWN</th>
<th>TOTAL &amp; BRANCHES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Net Sales</td>
<td>Gross Dollar Sales</td>
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<tr>
<td>XXX</td>
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<tr>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. The format for the 12 department numbers is shown here.
Part II

BACKGROUND INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR INTERPRETATION OF DATA

1. Statement of store policy/goals (ie. merchandise handled, customers aim to attract).

Statement of store Return Policy.

2. How long (in hours) is the training program for salespersonnel? ___ hours

Is this same amount of time devoted to training personnel at branch stores? Yes ___ No ___ If different, please specify ____________

3. Is information about textile care and performance of garments included in the training program? ___ Yes ___ No

a. If YES, what type of information is included?

b. If YES, what is the source of this information? Check the sources used.

Store developed program ___ Information supplied by textile and apparel companies ___ Information supplied by Co-operative Extension ___ Other, please specify ____________

4. Are there clinics (retraining programs) held for long time employees? ___ Yes ___ No

a. If yes, how often? ________.

b. If yes, what is emphasized?

c. If different procedures are followed at branch stores, please describe below.
REQUESTS RELATED TO HANG TAGS AND LABELS

1. "Need hang tags with care information...permanently attached."
2. "Labels permanently attached, lettering on labels not wash or fade off."
3. "Not enough manufacturers label goods with care instructions, these make it easier to answer customer questions...also need fiber content labels."
4. "Put fabric care hang tags on all garments."
5. "Instruction tags needed on all dresses."
6. "Put care labels and fiber content tags on all dresses."
7. "Included more information on labels and tags."
8. "Labels and tags could be more specific."
9. "Care labels should be sewn into the dress."
10. "More specific washing instructions or garment 'know how' should be included."
11. "Permanent labels needed...giving care and fiber content."
12. "Manufacturers should give more information on tags and labels."
13. "Manufacturers should put more information on the hang tags."
14. "When fiber content is not on the label and washing instructions are not included the result is a frustrated customer."
15. "Many garment do not have washing instructions sewn in, hang tags without this information are useless. A chart of fibers and properties would also be helpful."
16. "We must insist that manufacturers put fabric contents and washing instructions on every item put out...customers also do not like thick bonded which can't be washed or dry cleaned properly and which stretches out of shape. Polyesers are A-one!"
17. "Garment tags often do not specify whether to dry clean or wash."
18. "Some manufacturers do not use hang tags on garments. More information should be included on some garments."
19. "Have the manufacturer label everything."
20. "Include more complete instructions on the tag."
21. "Better labeling is needed from the manufacturer in garments, many have no fiber content labeling."

REQUESTS RELATED TO TRAINING CLASSES

22. "Classes should be given on fabrics and the care of them."
23. "Training sessions and seminars would be helpful."
24. "Have training programs or literature with samples of fabrics and instructions for care."
25. "Periodic seminars at the start of each season to introduce new fashions and fabrics."
26. "Buyers conduct meetings, and manufacturers be certain information is on the tags."
27. "Have a clinic to help us (salespeople) know more about future styles, fabrics, and colors at the start of the season."
REQUESTS RELATED TO THE NEED FOR REFERRAL CHARTS, OR RELATED MATERIALS

28. "Literature from the manufacture directed towards salespersonnel would be of help."
29. "A referral chart telling fiber content and care is needed to aid salespeople. Major customer questions are related to whether to dryclean or wash the dress, and the hang tag should answer but it often doesn't."
30. "The manufactures should get-together and print a pamphlet on trends, styles, colors, and fabrics for the season...to assist the clerks in helping customers co-ordinate their look. Fabrics and skirt lengths should be clearly defined in the pamphlet."
31. "A condensed fabric chart which could be posted in the stock room."
32. "A list of brand name fabrics, their performance, and how to care for them should be provided to each department."

MISCELLANEOUS REQUESTS

33. "I assist myself, and need no further information."
34. "I would like every bit of information possible."
35. "Someone should provide information about the seaming, styles, designs, and colors in the different fabrics."
36. "Any information, from any source would help."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION NUMBER</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL</th>
<th>CORRECT RESPONSES</th>
<th>RELATIVE DIFFICULTY*</th>
<th>DISCRIMINATION INDEX**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Lower Group (n=26)</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
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</table>

a. The 25 questions composing the Textile Product Knowledge Measure are listed in Appendix B.

b. Relative difficulty of the item is the percentage of salespersonnel missing the item. As the percentage increases the item is more difficult.

c. The discrimination index reflects the degree to which the item discriminates between the upper and the lower groups.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION NUMBER</th>
<th>SIGNIF. LEVEL</th>
<th>Upper Group (n=24)</th>
<th>Lower Group (n=26)</th>
<th>RELATIVE DIFFICULTY ( b )</th>
<th>DISCRIMINATION INDEX ( c )</th>
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<td>RANGE OF SCORES</td>
<td>MEAN SCORE</td>
<td>DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES BY STORE</td>
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<td>I - Designer Dresses</td>
<td>10-18</td>
<td>15.27</td>
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<td>11-19</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>Downtown: 11, 14, 15, 15, 16</td>
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<td>III - Women's Better Half-sizes</td>
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<td>IV - Career Girl Dresses</td>
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<td>V - Budget Women's and Misses</td>
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a. Highest possible score = 24
b. Mean score of all personnel = 15.37