

**INFLUENCE OF A SALES PERSON'S APPEARANCE AND  
PERSONALITY ON THE PURCHASE DECISION - An  
Empirical Study of Nairobi's Middle Socio-Economic Class  
Consumers**

BY

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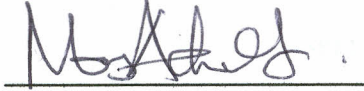
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*Influence of a sales  
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## DECLARATION

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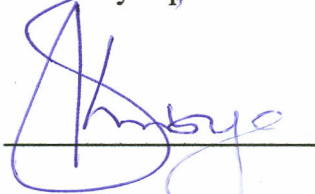


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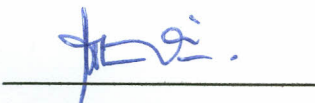


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## **DEDICATION**

**This project is dedicated:**

**To my dad**

**who taught me the value of education**

**and instilled in me the spirit of hard work.**

**To my mum lily,**

**Who believes in me.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

In retail stores sales people occupy a central position. Therefore a store image and ability to build loyalty can heavily depend on the characteristics and appearance of the sales person. In view of the interest appearance has received, it was surprising that in marketing literature there were relatively few studies examining the role of appearance in consumer behavior. Moreover most studies done on appearance seem to have been conducted in the developed countries. The goal of this paper was therefore, to explore the impact of salesperson appearance in a sales context. Specifically, it aimed at investigating whether different styles of a salesperson appearance influence the customer's evaluation of the salesperson and its impact on purchase decisions of Kenyan consumers. Appearance being a stimulus and a response can call forth responses such as admiration, approval, rejection or ridicule towards a sales person.

A conceptual model was developed to provide a basis for examining this influence. Based on this model, the study was categorized into three parts: (a) Influence of a sales persons' appearance, (b) influence of a sales persons' personality, and (c) consumers' perception of the sales persons' personality based on appearance. It was a descriptive type of research study, based on consumers of ages 13 to above 40 years old. The middle socio economic class of consumers within Nairobi formed the target population for study. Estates conforming to this group were sampled from the city planning and housing and a multistage random sampling method used to get the sample unit for study. Questionnaires with four parts were developed as instrument of measurements and administered to 200 respondents. A total of 173 respondents, 91 males and 82 females, were used to analyze

this research. The findings deduced that the appearance styles of the salesperson had an influence on desirable characteristics of the salesperson such as trustworthiness, reliability, and expertise as well as an impact on the purchase decision. Several marketing applications were discussed and recommendations given.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Research has established appearance as a viable factor in forming a first impression of another person (Giles and Chavasse 1998). Several researchers cited external cues including appearance style as important contributors in determining status, personality, age, occupation, gender of the person and similar expectations about an individual in a first impression situation (Taylor 2000, Conner et al 1973, Buckle 2001).

Appearance is the initial idea that an individual forms about another person and it determines whether a person decides to pursue any type of decision or relationship. People tend to form impressions of each other rather quickly, such as a suit and tie, for example, may lead to the interpretation of a variety of other characteristics, such as being conservative politically, or having a conservative job, such as a businessman. People also use behavior to draw conclusions about others. For example, if someone observes a sales person helping an elderly person up the stairs in a supermarket he or she concludes that the store is welcoming, thoughtful and probably mindful.

The observation and evaluation of each other's appearance is thus integral to human interaction. Appearance is a factor in every day human lives and interaction with others (Horn and Gurrell 1981). It can transmit a vast number of meanings such as identity, value,

mood and attitude (Stone 1962). Appearance is a medium of communication and portrays both symbolic and cognitive meanings.

First impressions are largely derived from outward appearance and they establish non-verbal cues and symbols of the kind that clothing provides (Stones 1976). The way a person is perceived is important in establishing the self in new social roles. Symonds (1974), a psychoanalyst argues that analyzing one's appearance may tell us more about the self than other direct approaches to personality assessment because appearances are certainly easier to identify than personality types. According to Darmhorst (1990), clothing is a systematic means of information about the wearer. It sends multiple meanings and messages to the perceiver. Previous researches show that clothing plays an important role in human behavior. It is not only considered as a body protection or decoration tool but also as a communication tool in human interaction.

In retailing, the sales person is a powerful influence on consumer purchase decisions. A store image and ability to build loyalty can heavily depend on the characteristics of the sales person. He or she is the first line in the achievement of customer service objectives.

Characteristics such as effectiveness, expertise, friendliness and appearance affect consumers' attitude (Blackwell and Miniard 1995). The more the consumer likes the sales person; the more likely the consumer accepts the sales persons' recommendations.

Researchers and critics have recognized the importance for effectiveness of a sales person appearance. In retail stores sales people occupy a central position. Therefore the appearance

and personality of the sales person in stores would be an influential non-verbal communication cue that interacts with consumers during sales. Engel et al (1995), contends that a consumer may fully anticipate buying a particular brand of a product but his / her intention to purchase may change if the appearance of the sales person is not welcoming. On the other hand consumers may lack interest in buying a product, but because of the appearance of the sales person the consumer may purchase the product.

Age groups can be very important as a means of understanding and segmenting an apparel market (Hawkins et al 1998). It affects behavior. Age differences are expected to influence consumer perception.

The prominence given to the appearance of a sales person has led to much criticism being directed towards the job type being the determinant of how the sale person should appear. Carthcart (1999), found appearance, knowledge, experience and personal conviction to be perceived as desirable qualities of the sales person. Visual characteristics as age, type of tie, and color of clothing were found to be associated with the "ideal" sales person (Sandra and Pritchett 1971). Lindsey (2005) found that appearance had an effect on the sales persons' self-conviction and in turn sales. Siwon (2001) tested the influence of consumers' age and clothing type of the sales person on the consumer attitude towards the sales person performance.

Further research by Kroll and Moven (1997) supports the idea that compliance with comments is higher when the sales person and the consumer share similar wearing apparel tastes.

The present study differed from previous researches in that only dress was used as the variable in ascertaining purchase intention (Siwon 2001). Previous studies tended to use either exclusively male or exclusively female participants. The present approach involved both male and female participants and looked at the overall appearance as well as personality of the sales person and how it would influence Kenyan consumers.

Moreover most of the studies seemed to have been conducted in the developed nations. In Kenya, no studies of this nature seem to have been conducted. It was thus the purpose of this study to determine the influence of the sales person appearance and personality on purchase decision on Kenyan consumers. A selected group of consumers within Nairobi was chosen for the study.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

A substantial amount of research had been directed towards identifying effective sales behavior. In retail stores sales people occupy a central position. Therefore the appearance and personality of the sales person in stores would be an influential non-verbal communication cue that interacts with consumers during sales.

In view of the interest appearance has received, there are relatively few studies examining the role of appearance in consumer behavior. Studies done on appearance seem to have focused only on the manner of dressing and not personality type, which also constitute appearance. So what seem to lack is research aimed at providing cues to the sales person about the overall appearance and personality type to employ to different customers in a given sale situation in order to enhance selling performance. Appearance being a stimulus and a response can call

forth responses such as admiration, approval, rejection or ridicule towards a sales person. The more the consumer likes the sales person; the more likely he or she accepts the sales persons' recommendations.

In addition, the studies seemed to have been conducted on consumers in the developed countries, yet studies have shown that consumers in different regions differ in attitudes, needs or/and wants which affect purchasing habits in turn (Aren 2000). In Kenya no research seemed to have been done of the same nature. It was thus the aim of this study to find out the extent to which appearance and personality of the sales person affect the purchase decision of Kenyan consumers.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective was to determine the extent to which appearance and personality of a sales person influences purchase of a product. Find out whether improved appearance through dress styles and personality such as friendliness and expertise could lead to better sales.

Specific objectives were:

1. To determine the influence of a sales person appearance style (classy, up-to-date, ordinary or sexy) on consumers' purchase decisions.
2. To determine the influence of a sales person personality (attentive, efficient, trustworthy, professional, friendly or approachable) on consumers' purchase decision.
3. To determine whether the perceived personality is influenced by the appearance of the sales person.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. Does the appearance style of a sales person, whether classy, ordinary, sexy or up-to-date affect consumer-purchasing intention?
2. Does the personality of a sales person, whether approachable, attentive, friendly, efficient or professional affect consumers' intention to purchase a product or service?
3. Does the appearance style affect consumers' perception of the sales people's personality?

## **1.5 Hypothesis**

The hypotheses generated for the study were:

1. Purchase decision is greater for products presented by attractive sales people of good appearance than for products presented by unattractive sales people.
2. (a) A sales person in an attractive appearance is has good personality.  
(b) They are considered trustworthy and to have more expertise than unattractive sales persons.
3. The perceived personality of a sales person is dependant on the sales persons' appearance.

## **1.6 Limitation of the study**

1. Physical factors such as height, weight, face, race and so on, also make up the appearance of the sales person. However, this study only limited itself to the variables that can be changed depending on changes in the environment. The research focused on appearance as reflected by dress and grooming outlined in the conceptual framework.

2. The study also limited itself to only one region, which was Nairobi. For a more conclusive result, all other areas in Kenya should have been studied. However this deemed impossible due to financial and time constraints.

### **1.7 Assumptions of the study**

In the proposed study the following assumptions were made:

1. All respondents will be cooperative and provide reliable responses.
2. All the consumers selected for the studied have once in a while met a sales person during their shopping.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The study will extend the understanding of adolescents and adult consumers' interactions with the sales person. It will also contribute to the greater knowledge of the human race when it demonstrates that first impressions affect people's opinions and decisions about one another.

Manufacturers, intermediaries, and mostly apparel marketers may apply the findings of this study to their business strategies so that they can increase profits by using the right clothing type of a sales person to attract potential consumers and stimulate purchase.

Establishing relationship through appearance, personality and sales will aid in discovering how sales people can proactively affect their performance.

Theoretically, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge about effective sales behavior and performance.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The review of literature for this study had sub-sections; appearance as a non-verbal form of communication which explains how the appearance affects interpersonal interaction and interpretation, the relationship between personality and appearance, the buying characteristics of the adolescent and adult consumers, the influence a sales person has on consumers, similarity effects, empirical studies that have been conducted on appearance, the theoretical and development of a conceptual framework

#### 2.1 Appearance as a Non-Verbal Form of Communication.

Appearance is part of the silent language communicated through use of visual and non-verbal symbols. Goffman (2000), calls these sign vehicles or cues that select the status to be assigned to individuals and define the way others treat them.

Mead (1992) developed a theory for understanding the linkages between identity and the social aspects of clothing. The author discussed clothing as a communicator from the perspective of symbolic interaction theory. The theory states that, "people live in a symbolic environment as well as a physical one and the behavior is stimulated by symbols as well as by physical acts that almost all the symbols learnt are acquired through communication or interaction with others". It explains that individuals acquire identities through social interaction in various settings such as social, physical and biological surroundings. Most

symbols are communicated verbally and others are transmitted through site such as objects (clothing and adornment). Identities are communicated by clothing because it shows the social position of the wearer to both the wearer and the perceiver. This theory can be applied to appearance by considering the qualities of clothing that presents stimulus information to the perceiver.

Being unattractive is in part related to genetics, and while change is possible through surgery or diet, such changes are often difficult to accomplish. However, clothing provides an opportunity for more manageable change (Horn 1975). Clothing, like other aspects of human physical appearance has various social aspects and meaning. Wearing specific types of clothing or the manner of wearing clothing as well as accessories can have the deliberate purpose, or the desirable or undesirable side effect, to correctly or incorrectly be interpreted as a person. For example, the gay community in the United States identifies themselves by wearing earring in one ear (Lindsey 1999).

Depaulo and Friedman (1998), define non-verbal communication as recovery of thoughts and feelings without words. People who have special relationship may have social sensitivities of understanding the non-verbal communication cues in the interaction. People who were willing to ask for help were more accurate at reading these nonverbal cues.

Clothing has a function in strengthening or weakening the boundary of a person. It is generally seen as an extension of the body thus termed as a "second skin" in establishing physical boundaries about the self. Appearance is both a stimulus and a response. It stimulates the wearer as well as the beholder. It calls forth responses of admiration, approval, acceptance, rejection, or ridicule.

According to Beeson, appearance influence judgments of an individual's personality trait (Horn 1975). For instance, Darley and Cooper (2000), investigated the relationship between a political campaigner's clothes and appearance and campaign effectiveness. The potential voter was more reluctant to take or look at the information provided by a deviant with long hair, beard, dungaree and an old navy army jacket, than from a normally dressed individual with conventional sports clothing and short hair.

Physical appearance communicates ones abilities and seriousness in delivering a message or performing a task. It can transmit meanings such as self reliant, hardworking, and capable of performing and so on about an individual. In a research, effect of appropriate and inappropriate clothing on job interviews, a suit was considered inappropriate for a grounds person and was overalls for orientation. Results indicated that the interviewee, who wore a suit for a grounds person position, was considered to have limited choice of clothes to wear, whereas the interviewee, who wore an overall for the orientation advisor position, was judged less interested in the position and less confident.

Appearance expresses ones personality (Conner et al 1975). It is a symbol which when interpreted correctly tells us who the person is, thus they say appearance maketh man.

Clothing brings a sense of belonging and conformity to a group. It is a factor in interpersonal distance (Workman1987). Fashionable clothing results in perceptions of greater sociability than unfashionable clothing. A person wearing fashionable clothing receives more positive interactions with others than a person wearing out of date clothing. If the clothing worn does not reflect current fashion, the wearer may be considered different. Snow found out that there

was relatively a high degree of clothing interests among attorneys, sales men and schoolteachers, while factory workers attached the least importance (Horn 1975).

Interpersonal distance in social interaction could be modifiable through manipulation of clothing. The appearance of a person can give the impression of being conservative, daring, understanding or tolerable. Mazzella et. al (1994), deduce that a judge in a hearing is likely to give fewer sentences to a conventionally dressed criminal than a hippie dressed criminal.

Clothing therefore communicates massive meaning of identity to the perceiver. Some clothing indicates the modesty of the wearer. For example, many Muslim women wear head or body covering that proclaims their status as respectable women. Other clothing may indicate flirtatious intent. For example, a Western woman might wear extreme close-fitting and body-revealing black or red clothing, exaggerated make-up, flashy jewelry and perfume to show sexual interest. A man might wear a tightly-cut shirt and unbutton the top buttons.

However, what constitutes modesty and allurements varies radically from culture to culture, person to person within different contexts in the same culture, and over time as different fashions rise and fall. Moreover, a person may choose to display a mixed message (Horn 1975).

Clothing thus influence how people see you, how you present yourself to the world, tell people about your preferences, interests and feelings

### 2.1.2 The Role of Appearance in Marketing

One of the earliest studies was conducted by Baker and Churchill (1977) as cited by Claus et al (unpublished). They found that in print advertisements an attractive model had a positive effect on consumers' evaluation of the advertisement. However, purchase intentions of female customers were not influenced by the model's attractiveness. Male participants were more likely to purchase one of the advertised products, a cologne/perfume, when it was presented by an attractive female model, and coffee, the other product, when it was presented by the unattractive female model. This suggests that a match between the product and the presenter's appearance moderates the effect of attractiveness on purchase decision.

The match-up hypothesis was examined by Till and Busler (2000). Contrary to expectations, an attractive male presenter in a print advertisement improved consumers' attitude towards the product and their purchase intention regardless of whether the product was considered attractive and enhancing (a cologne) or neutral (a pen). Similarly, in another advertising study, it was shown that an attractive spokesperson in a television insurance commercial had a more positive effect on purchase intentions (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 1996). The research on the appearance stereotype was extended to personal selling in a non-profit context by Reingen and Kernan (1993). They found that attractive individuals were more successful in soliciting donations than their less attractive counterparts. Using a descriptive research design, Ahearne, Gruen, and Jarvis (1999) showed that the attractiveness stereotype might also extend to personal selling in a business-to-business marketing context. They found that attractive pharmaceutical sales representatives were judged to be more likeable, experienced and trustworthy by physicians and achieved better sales results. Interestingly, the

positive effects of salesperson attractiveness became less pronounced the longer the relationship between the physician and the salesperson. Based on the foregoing discussion, it is assumed that a salesperson's physical appearance should also have a positive result on purchase decisions in a consumer context.

## **2.2 Relationship between Appearance and Personality**

An individual can be described as cheerful, friendly, sensitive or bad tempered and e.t.c. This determines his/ her unique response to the environment otherwise referred to as personality. Personality can thus be defined as the characteristic way of thinking, feeling and behaving that constitute the individuals distinctive method of relating to his environment (Horn 1975). Considerable evidence shows that people do make judgments about the personality of an individual based solely on appearance.

Douty (2001) studied the influence of clothing in the formation of impression of personality and concluded the same. Personalities such as friendliness and competence affect relationship with others. In 1977, Folks and Sears (as cited by Taylor, et. al) defined the characteristic of friendliness as a positive outlook and positive attitude towards people and things. The characteristic of competence matters mostly when it depends on the nature of the relationship that he/she has with a person. For example, people who bring in their cars to be fixed expect mechanics to be good at fixing cars. Appearance is the most important compared to personality because it is hard to avoid forming impressions of people based on their appearance. One reason is the stereotype that a person who is physically attractive has other positive qualities as well. Jackson, Hunter and Hodge (1995; as cited by Taylor, et. al) state

that attractive people also are believed to possess qualities that seem irrelevant to physical beauty, such as mental health, dominance, and intelligence. Students rated a lecture by a female teacher more interesting and judged the woman to be a better teacher when she was made up to look more attractive, rather than plain Chaikin (2000). Attractive defendants sometimes even receive sentences that are more lenient when they are perceived as physically attractive in their appearance (Mazzella and Feingold (1994). These studies show that the perception of appropriateness of clothing is an important element in interpretation of a person. Clothing affects people's perception of personal traits, ability and attitudes.

### **2.3 The Shopping Behavior of Adolescents and the Adult Consumers**

Understanding consumer behavior and opinions of each age group is an important aspect in marketing. Hawkins et al (1998) indicate that the adolescents and the elderly differ in choice of products, services activities and media. The forces that shape the lives of each generation are different from other generations as they pass through various age categories.

Age groups can be very useful as a means of understanding and segmenting an apparel market, because age affects individual thinking, feelings and believes.

#### **2.3.1 The Adolescent consumer**

Adolescents have their own language and way of speaking their own expression. Marketers are using this behavior among young consumers to launch brands or to reposition current brands to appeal to this large target market.

Harden's (1997), study on 'Women's attitudes toward TV shopping,' found distinct attitude differences between younger and older focus group participants. Younger participants

viewed many products as gaudy and cheap. They also felt hosts were snobby and fake. Older participants were more apt to consider the products as unusual and of high quality. They also seemed to enjoy the hosts, finding them informed and friendly.

Young consumers today also have a unique information seeking source that other generation didn't have when they were young e.g. internet and computer communication (Kotler 2005). Members of the network generation are moving from T.V and watching less each year as the flexibility and interactive nature of the Internet is shaping their perception of shopping, information gathering, and virtually all other aspects of marketing.

Studies exploring behavior of adults' consumers like "relationship between clothing and self perception" states that self perception has been defined as the feelings and beliefs that people have about themselves (Kaiser 1985). Self-perception is generally multidimensional. Kaiser believed that peer acceptance is vital to adolescents' socialization, self-esteem and body image. Clothing similar to ones peers is considered as essential factor for acceptance. Dake and Ford (1979), investigated 'relationship between self perception and perceived clothing deprivation among adolescents,' and found that low self perception was related to high perceived clothing deprivation (i.e. to be perceived right is not dressed right) Zollo (1995), states that adolescents are trendsetters who extend fashion and culture to the population at large.

### 2.3.2 The Adult Consumers

Blackwell et al (2001), indicate that today's elderly consumers are known as the 'young again' market consumers who think feel and buy young. That the today adult consumer is more fashion conscious and spends more money than the adult consumer in the past generations (Kotler 2005).

Chowdhary (1999), found that elderly consumers liked stylish clothing over classic clothing. However, when the elderly consumers were asked to choose a style they liked the most, they selected the style that researchers defined as classic clothing. Researchers defined classic clothing as a style that the participants wore in their teens or youth. A style that elderly consumers considered to be classic or trendy differed from other consumers groups.

Jackson (1992), examined the apparel expenditure patterns of people of 40 years and older. Results showed that the participants perceived their body changes during aging by their need for altering ready to wear apparel or by choosing flattering dress designs.

The elderly consumers are more likely to use market-dominated sources such as newspaper and radio. Therefore marketers need to redirect product messages to elderly consumers by increasing advertisement that reflects the consumers' lifestyle.

Summers, Belleau and Wozniak (1992), compared the shopping behaviors of four age groups and found that the oldest group in the study 40 years old had lower shopping involvement than the younger group 18-25 years. However, older generation showed high score on being quality conscious than did younger participants.

## **2.4 Influence of the Sales Person on Consumers.**

Evans (1999), stated that the sales person and the consumer are involved in the interaction of purchase decisions, which depends on how the two parties view and react to each other. There is a view that effective selling depends on matching buyer and seller styles. For example, people tend to buy insurance from people very much like themselves for such factors as age, height, income, political opinions, religious beliefs, and smoking.

Wilkie (1994), indicated that the reason why a sales person has a strong influence on the consumer purchase decision is that the sales person has more product knowledge and more experience of sales interaction than the consumer.

Effective door-to-door sales person succeeded because of something in the dynamics of the face-to-face interaction and not knowledge of persuasion techniques (Weitz 1992). Salesperson's effectiveness in sales interaction affects purchase decision. Elderly consumers' perceptions of sales person are affected by the sales person service, hospitality and personal characteristics. For older and sometimes lonely people contact with sales person is an important source of company, human contact and interaction.

Selling behavior includes adapting to consumer, establishing influence bases using effective technique and controlling the sales interaction. The sales person resources include product and consumer knowledge, analytical and interpersonal skills and availability of services. Up market fashion and department stores make heavily use of sales person. Their consumers expect to receive the personal attention of sales staff.

In an apparel research, Shim and Kotsiopulus (1993), found that friendliness, availability, product knowledge and appearance are important characteristics of the sales person.

Hawkins (1998), states that the sales personality is all about the sales man and that it can be produced and improved by developing the qualities in the positive traits. A person may not have all essential qualities of a sales person but has to strive in order to compensate the lacking. The positive qualities to be developed, in order to increase and improve the salesman's personality such as kindness, courage, confidence, honesty, loyalty, empathy, good health, and cheerfulness.

Mental traits including accuracy, alertness, imagination, initiative, observation, and self-confidence affect sales. The salesman should be alert, ready to find out ways and means of serving the customers. Alertness is a part in which the sales person should inspire confidence of the customers. Customers normally would not like hurried salespersons as well slow ones. If a salesman with imagination will have the capability to visualize the articles required by the customer, such a customer would be relieved and so grateful for suggestions and ideas given by the salesperson. The salesperson should assist wavering customers into making decisions by gentle means of questions and suggestions Hawkins (1995).

Evans (1999) states that the ability to make friends and to get along with the people is one of the most valuable assets a sales person should possess. The approach taken by the salesman should always be polite and welcoming, never losing temper, saying thank you and good-bye to a consumer.

Characteristics of sales interaction have three stages: orientation, evaluation, and consumption. In orientation, the sales person learns about consumers' interests and the consumer learns about the products and services of the store. In evaluation, consumers

examine the alternative products and services while in consumption phase, consumers decides whether to buy or not to buy (Kotler 2005).

Influence of sales person is stronger in the evaluation phase because the sales person could suggest the order and number of the product alternatives to be evaluated and use prepared presentation/demonstrations to guide the consumer attention.

Cabaltero and Pride (1984) argue that both male and female consumers prefer a highly attractive female in a catalogue and show more response to a mail order. This provides evidence that a sales person has some influence on consumer behavior. The sales person generally has more knowledge and experience of sales interaction than the consumers (Wilkie 2000).

## **2.5 Similarity Effect**

Bercheid and Reis (2000), found that shared similarity between personal characteristics during interaction would influence attraction. People with similar attitudes interact nonverbally in more positive ways, regardless of whether they are new acquaintances.

A research conducted by Johnson (1995), showed effectiveness of similarity attraction. Results indicated that elderly consumers viewed an older sales person positively than a younger sales person because of similarity in age.

Stone (1962) states that individuals who share similar appearance symbols or an understanding of such symbols are more likely to engage in role taking as meaningful communicators.

People are more likely to comply with the request from someone who wears same type of clothes than from someone who wears differently. Similarity in appearance plays a role in determining compliance.

## 2.6 Empirical Studies

Various researches have shown consistently, that appearance has an effect on interpersonal interaction and interpretation. Carthart (1999), found appearance, knowledge, experience and personal conviction to be perceived as desirable qualities. Visual characteristics as age, type of tie, and color of clothing were found to be associated with the "ideal" sales person (Sandra and Pritchett 1971).

Lindsey (2005), study done in America, on the role of appearance on sales via state of mind, concluded that by improving appearance the sales person experienced increased level of self confidence and reported being in a better mood, thereafter improved performance in sales.

Siwon (2001), tested the influence of consumers' age and clothing type of the sales person on the consumer attitude towards the sales person performance.

Further research by Kroll and Moven (1997) supported the idea that compliance with comments is higher when the sales person and the consumer share similar wearing apparel tastes.

The present study differed from previous researches in that only dress was used as the variable in ascertaining purchase intention (Siwon 2001). Previous studies tended to use either exclusively male or exclusively female participants. The present approach involved

both male and female participants and looked at the overall appearance as well as personality of the sales person and how it would influence Kenyan consumers.

Moreover most of the studies seemed to have been conducted in the developed nations. In Kenya, no studies of this nature seem to have been conducted. It was thus the purpose of this study to determine the influence of the sales person appearance and personality on purchase decision. A selected group of consumers within Nairobi was chosen for the study.

## **2.7 Conceptual Framework**

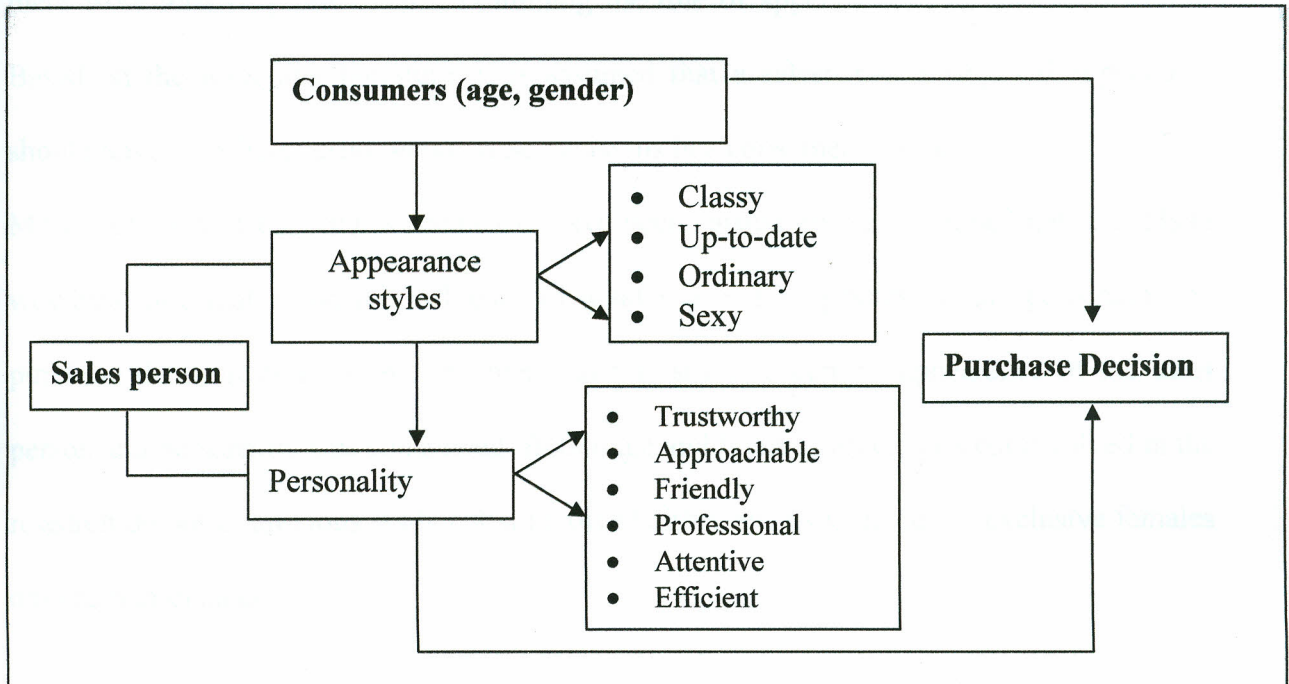
Symbolic interaction theory developed by Mead (1992) that most symbols are communicated verbally and others are transmitted through site such as objects (clothing and adornment) was used to formulate a conceptual framework that guided the study. This framework considered site objects such as clothing and the personality of the sales person to affect consumers purchasing decision. Personality such as friendliness, competence, mood, attention and respect, accorded by the sales person also the type of decision one has to make. The proposed model suggested that there is an interaction between the sales person's appearance, personality and the purchase decision of consumers. However, the perception of all these is dependant on the age and gender of the buyer.

Miller (1997) stated that consumers bring a set of expectations to their purchase process. Their expectations are the function of past history as well as of current purchase situation.

Engel et al (1995), contends further that consumers form attitudes towards products and services. Therefore, services having the most favorable attitude are chosen. Based on this

proposition, this model suggested that consumer attitude towards the sales person influence the consumer purchase decision.

**A Conceptual Model showing the Influence of the Sales Person's Appearance on the Purchase Decision of Consumers.**



**Figure 1. Source: Author**

**2.9 Gaps in the Study**

Major issues emerged as gaps in the review literature. The results derived from the studies on appearance were of limited value to marketers as they focused solely on interpersonal perception and never investigated the impact of appearance on relevant marketing variables such as purchase decisions. A further survey revealed that virtually few of the studies

investigating the role of appearance in marketing research were in the area of advertising research and not personal selling.

## **2.10 Conclusions**

In view of the interest appearance has received, it was surprising that in marketing literature there were relatively few studies examining the role of appearance in consumer behavior. Based on the foregoing literature, it is assumed that a salesperson's physical appearance should have a positive result on purchase decisions in a consumer context.

Moreover most of the studies seemed to have been carried out in developed nations. There was little information on the influence of a sales person's appearance and personality on purchase decision of Kenyan consumers. In this study, a general appearance of the sales person and personality was considered. Both male and female participants got involved in the research unlike in previous studies that involved either exclusive males or exclusive females only as participants.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter on research methodology, discussed mainly the research design, locale of the study, the target population, sample selection, the instrumental development, which describes the development of questionnaires, data collection that elaborated the process of data collection and finally the data analysis that explained how data collected was analyzed.

#### 3.1 Research Design and Locale of the Study.

The study adopted a descriptive research design to find out the extent to which appearance and personality of the sales person affect the purchase decision of consumers in different age groups. Descriptive researches are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification (Orodho 2005). Lindsey (2002) also used the design to study the role of appearance on sales via state of the mind. The locale of the study was Nairobi, Kenya.

#### 3.2 Target Population

The population of interest in this study consisted of all individual household consumers in Nairobi of ages 13 to 40 years old. Nairobi was conveniently chosen because of the large and diverse population thus varied opinions were collected. Although this study should have carried out a sample drawn from the whole consumer population in Nairobi, this deemed not feasible because of time constraints, financial limitations and possible difficulties of constructing the sample framework. Consequently, it targeted the middle class consumers

only, based in Nairobi. This group was chosen because past studies revealed that the upper class was uncooperative and inaccessible. Thus the possibility of reaching them within the short time available would have been impossible. Lower class would cause additional difficulties in data collection by requiring explanations and possibly translation of questionnaires in to Swahili or mother tongue. They are also believed to ask for money in exchange of information.

Adolescents and adults were chosen because according to Blackwell et al (1995), the population of this age group is rapidly increasing and would become increasingly important to marketers.

### **3.2.1 Study Sample**

In a research done by Ahmed (1992), residential areas of Nairobi can be divided in to 3 distinctive sections that correspond to socio- economic class of residents. This resulted from the colonial legacy of race separation that gave way to economic barriers in post independence period. Estates in the south lands and a part of east lands like south B, south C, Highrise, Buruburu, Donholm, Otiende e.t.c fall under the middle class category.

The population of Nairobi's middle socio economic class of people was compiled from the office of city planning and housing census of 1999. A total of 535,664 people were found to fall in this category with 264,174 being males and 271,490 being females all spread in the 35 estates shown in appendix E with 49,426 households.

The study sample included 100 males and 100 females of ages 13-40 years living within the 35 estates that belonged to middle class people. The sample size was determined by using the following formula suggested by Yamane (1967).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n= sample size, N= population size and e = level of precision desired or margin of error (in this case e= 0.1)

Inserting the required information in to the formula gives: -

$$n = \frac{264,174}{1 + 264174 (0.1)^2} = 100 \text{ males}$$

$$n = \frac{271490}{1 + 271490 (0.1)^2} = 100 \text{ females}$$

### 3.2.2 Sample Frame

The sample frame for the study was developed from the 1999 Kenyan population and housing census and necessary population changes adjusted.

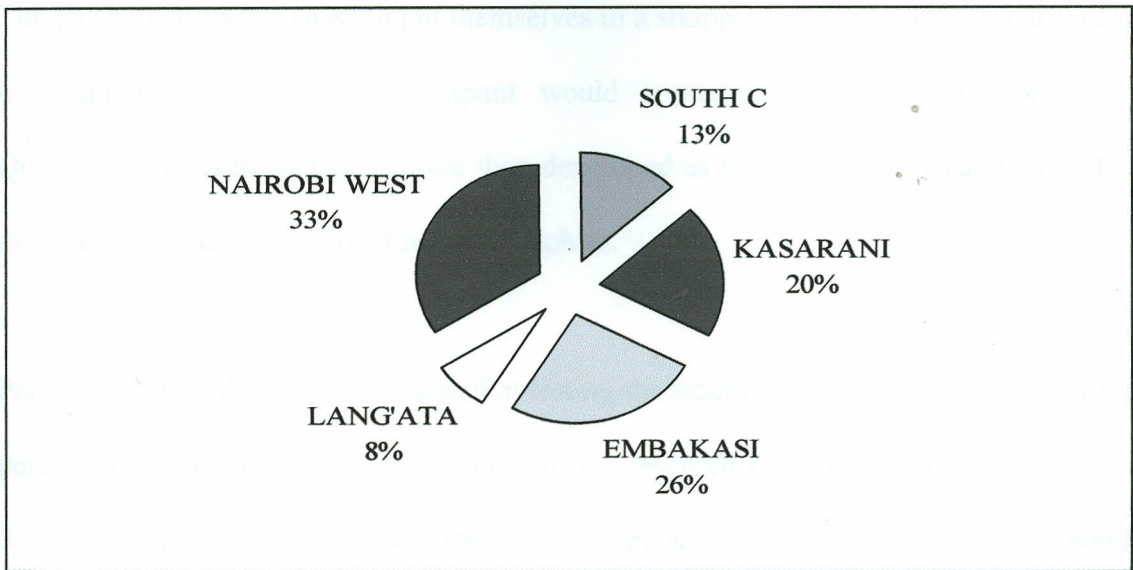
### 3.2.3 The Sample Design

The survey adopted multi-stage sampling method. From the 35 estates compiled from the national population and housing census of 1999, a simple random sample of 5 estates was drawn by lottery method. These were south C, Kasarani, Embakasi, Lang'ata and Nairobi West. In each of the selected estates a systematic technique was used where every 5<sup>th</sup> house on the same line was picked as a sample unit. A total of 27 number of households were selected in South C, 39 Kasarani, 51 Embakasi, 15 Lang'ata and 68 in Nairobi West, giving a percentage proportion of 13.3%, 19.5%, 25.5%, 7.5% and 34% respectively

**Table 1. Sample Distribution**

<b>Estates</b>	<b>Number of households</b>	<b>Number of households selected</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
South C	3948	27	13.3
Kasarani	5562	39	19.5
Embakasi	7307	51	25.5
Lang'ata	1895	15	7.5
Nairobi West	9654	68	34

**Source: Own computation from National Population and Housing 1999 (Government of Kenya)**



**Figure 2. Proportion of the sample distribution**

### 3.2.4 Selection of the Household

In each 5<sup>th</sup> household selected, the total number of the occupants above 13 years was recorded then one participant randomly selected by lottery method to respond to the question.

### 3.3 Research Instrument

Questionnaires were used to collect the information. Careful emphasis was put on the design of the questionnaires, which were adapted from the studies of Sarah et al (2000) and Caballero (1994). This was to ensure that it would not affect the response rate, the reliability and validity of the data to be collected.

Questionnaires are considered ideal for collecting data because the participants individually record and interpret the instruments (Orodho 2005). For some of those who were not able to interpret or react to a question, interviews were considered.

The participants were asked to put themselves in a shopping scenario. The scenario presented a situation in which the participant would approach a sales person or vice-versa. Questionnaires with four parts were then developed as instrument of measurement. Part one of the questionnaire collected the demographics.

Part two consisted of questions aimed at testing the extent to which the appearance of a sales person affects their purchase decision. For this research respondents were given five items depicting various designs of a sales persons' appearance and were asked to respond on a three-point scale. These items were adapted from Sarah et al (2000), study on attributes of a female appearance.

While part three was to test the extent to which the personality of a sales person affect their purchase decision. Seven statements adapted from Caballero et al (1994) were used. The responses were recorded on a three point scale ranging from 3= agree 1= strongly disagree. 5 personality traits were also used to test this study; attention given, trustworthy, knowledge of goods, efficiency and confidence given by the sales person. These were also adapted from caballero et al study. On a three point scale the respondents were asked to state how important these traits are when desiring to purchase a product from the sales person ranging from 3=important to 1= not important.

Part four of the questionnaire sought answers on consumers' perception of the sales persons personality based on appearance. What impression would a sales person in a sexy, ordinary, up-to-date, and classy look give when they interact with the participant? Various impressions

were used as constructs to measure. They were, friendly/unfriendly, approachable/unapproachable, trustworthy/untrustworthy, efficient/inefficient, professional/unprofessional and attentive/inattentive.

The questionnaires were personally administered using drop and pick method to ensure a high response rate.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The process of data collection started immediately after training of research assistants. 3 experienced researchers, physically administered questionnaires to the households. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered to the various household members. However only 175 were received back, giving a response rate of 87.5%.

### **3.5 Operational Definition and Measurement of Variables**

The dependent variable in the study was whether a decision (purchasing) would be pursued or not. Purchasing was defined as the consumer willingness to buy a product or service.

The researcher tested the independent variables, which were appearance and personality, and how each of them affected the dependent variable.

The gender of the participants was defined by determining whether they were male or female. Participants were asked to fill in the age bracket within which they fall to define their age.

Appearance was measured by the different design styles adapted from Sarah et al (2000) study on attributes of a female appearance. The designs were:

**Classy style-** characterized by simple, conservative and tailored lines

**Ordinary-** informal, casual and comfortable with minimum ornamentation

**Sexy-** incorporated gently curved lines to convey femininity

**Up-to-date-** reflected extremes in fashion and those that have bold severe design lines.

Personality was defined as characteristics that are easily determined by a brief encounter with a person. Statements adapted from Callabero (1994) study were used to measure part of this variable. Other constructs namely, friendly/unfriendly, approachable/unapproachable, trustworthy/untrustworthy, efficient/inefficient, professional/unprofessional and attentive/inattentive adapted from Sarah (2000) were also used.

The term clothing in the research referred to any tangible or material object connected to the human body.

Appearance - styled features such as make up, hairstyle, accessories, dressing and the overall grooming.

### **3.6 Pre testing of Instruments**

Pre testing formed an important part of the research process. The questionnaire was administered to one secondary school to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument being used. During the design of the survey and the survey pre-test, an effort was made to check for consistency in the interpretation of questions and to eliminate ambiguous items.

Common languages used were English and Kiswahili. Participants in the study were interviewed in a language they well understood. 3 trained research assistants and the principal researcher then conducted the survey.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistical analyses were used to analyze the results. Actual counts and percentages to determine the influence of each variable on consumers were considered. Data was accurately coded and checked. Ten percent (10%) of all the coded data were double checked to ensure quality control. Statistical software of SPSS were then used to aid in data analysis. Graphic presentation and tables were used to present the findings.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

A research permit was obtained from Kenyatta University and Office of the President. An informed consent was also obtained from the participants after the study objectives and methodologies had been read to them.

# CHAPTER 4

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, research findings are presented and organized around the hypothesis and objectives that guided the study.

### 4.1 Description of the study population

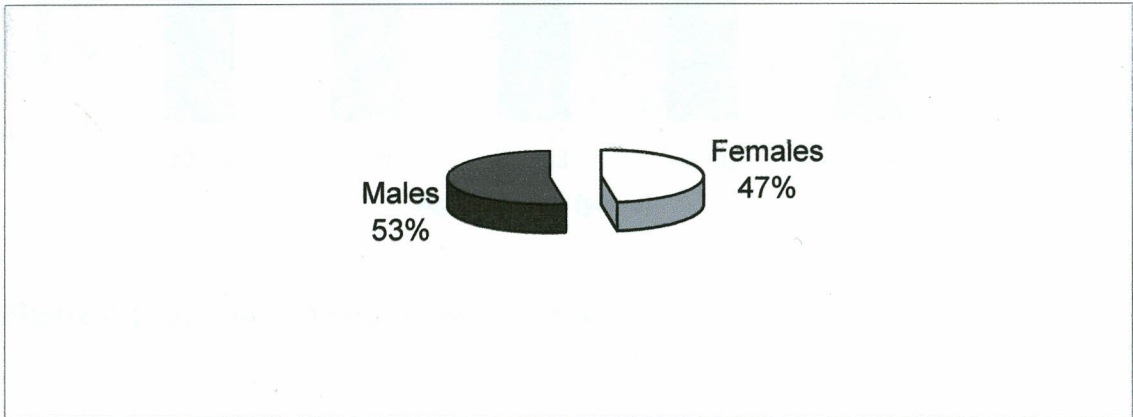
Out of the 200 questionnaires dispersed, only 175 were received back, giving a response rate of 87.5%. A total of 173 males and females participated in the research. Two questionnaires were not responded to accordingly.

Demographic characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Males	91	55
Females	82	45
	<b>N= 173</b>	
<b>Age intervals (years)</b>		
13-19	62	35.5
20-26	29	16.8
27-33	30	17.6
34-40	28	16.5
Above 40	24	13.6
	<b>N=173</b>	

**Table 2. Demographic distribution of the respondents.**

### 4.1.2 Gender distribution

The sample of respondents included 91 males and 82 females giving a percentage of 53% and 47% respectively.

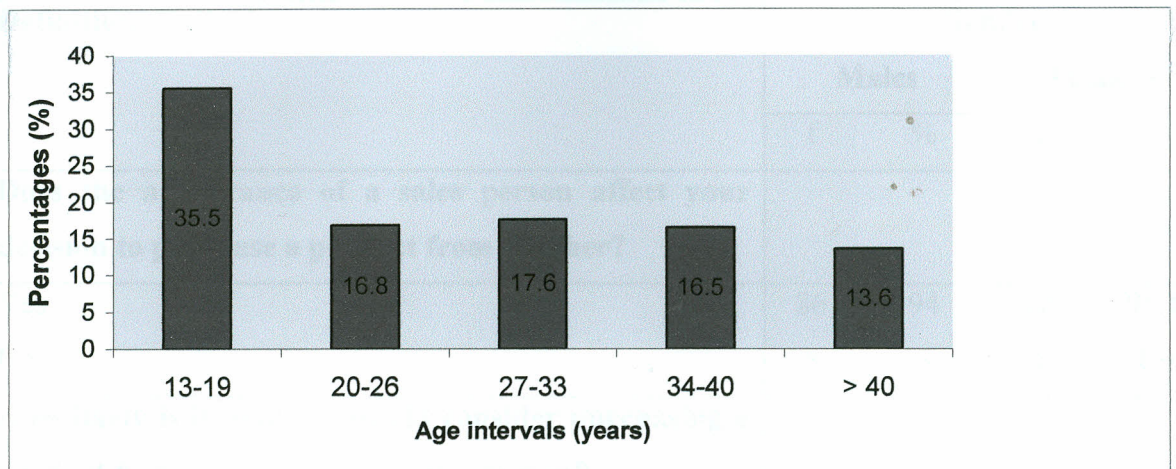


**Figure 3. Proportion of respondents by Gender.**

### 4.1.3 Age distribution

The age of the respondents was captured in five (5) categories; 13-19 being the lowest and above 40 the highest age category.

35.5% of the participants were of ages 13 to 19 years old who formed the majority, followed by those of ages between 27-33 years (17.6%). Those of 40 years and above formed the least with a percentage of 13.6% while 20-26 years and 34-40 years had 16.8% and 16.5% respectively.



**Figure 4. Proportion of respondents by Age.**

## **4.2 General perceptions**

### **4.2.1 Influence of the Sales Persons' Appearance.**

Hypothesis 1 was generated to examine whether there is a significant interaction between the appearance styles (classy, ordinary, up-to-date or sexy) of a sales person and the purchase decision of a consumer.

The participants' responses were recorded on demographic characteristics. There were differences in the responses on the sales person appearance with regard to age and gender differences.

### **4.2.2 Participants' Gender and the sales person's appearance.**

Asked whether the appearance of a sales person affect the participants' decision to purchase a product from the sales person, 95.1% of the females and 94% of the males reported being affected.

Definition	Gender			
	Males		Females	
	f	%	f	%
<b>Does the appearance of a sales person affect your decision to purchase a product from him/her?</b>				
Yes	86	94	78	95.1
No	5	6	4	4.9
<b>How likely is it that you would consider purchasing a product from an unattractive sales person?</b>				
Likely	6	6.6	3	3.6
Indifferent	18	19.7	8	9.7
Unlikely	67	73.6	71	86.5

**Table 3. Participants' response on the sales person's appearance by gender.**

Most respondents, males and females alike, preferred buying from an attractive sales person.

When asked whether they would consider buying a product from an unattractive sales person,

the males 73.6% while females 86.5% cited not likely to purchase.

However results in table 4 showed evidently that the type of appearance preferred is dependant on gender perception.

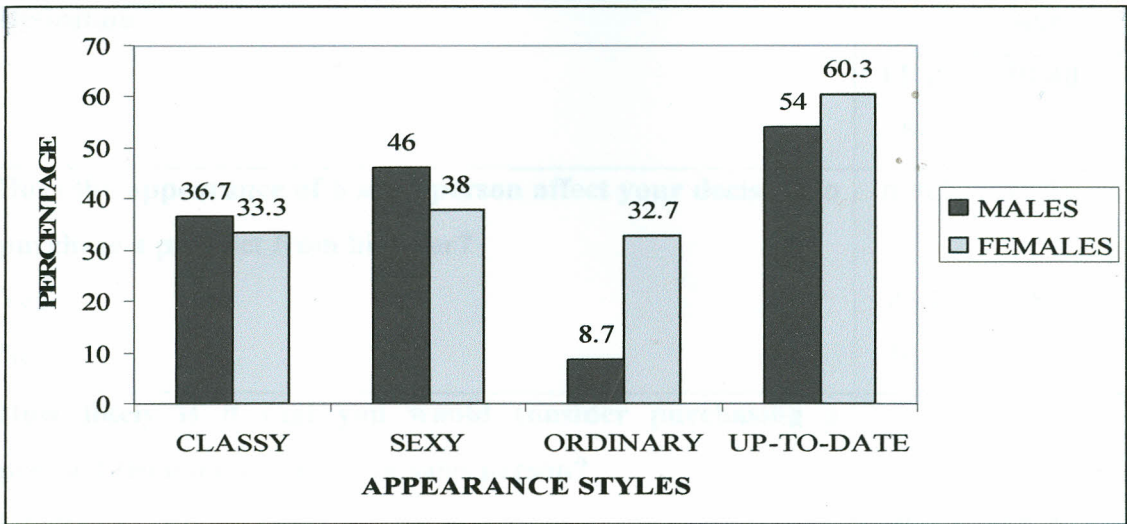
Results showed that a sales person with an up-to-date and a sexy look would score highly compared to other appearances. 54% males and 60.3% females reported likely to get attracted to purchase more from an up- to- date design of appearance.

An ordinary look would attract the least number of people, 8.7% of male participants and 32.7% of females to purchase products. Similarly a significant difference was seen in a sales person with classy look who would only attract 36.7% males and 33.3% females to purchase.

Definition	Gender	
	Males %	Females %
<b>To what extent does these designs of a sales persons appearance attract you to purchase</b>	N=91	N=82
<b>Classy</b>		
Likely	36.7	33.3
Indifferent	20.8	32.9
Not likely	42.5	33.8
<b>Sexy</b>		
Likely	46	38
Indifferent	48	44.7
Not likely	6	13.3
<b>Ordinary</b>		
Likely	8.7	32.7
Indifferent	54.7	22.7
Not likely	36.6	42.6
<b>Up-to-date</b>		
Likely	54	60.3
Indifferent	36	27
Not likely	1	12.7

**Table 4. Influence of the sales persons appearance styles on gender.**

In general a sales person in an up-to-date design (60.3%) would have a high result compared to other designs as clearly shown in figure 5.



**Figure 5. Influence of a sales persons appearance styles on gender.**

#### **4.2.3 Participants' age and sales persons' appearance**

Majority of the participants of age 40 and above (91.8%) reported being influenced by a sales persons appearance compared to those of ages 13-19 (83.7%) and 20-40 (75.2%) when making purchase intentions as shown in the table below.

When asked how likely it is that they would consider purchasing from an unattractive sales person, an average number (58.6%) of participants of ages 13-19 years cited not likely to purchase and 60% of 20-40 years reported the same. A similar response (70.3%) was reported for those of above 40 years old who recorded the highest number.

Definition	Age		
	13-19 %	20-40 %	>40 %
<b>Does the appearance of a sales person affect your decision to purchase a product from him/her?</b>	n=62	n=77	n=24
Yes	83.7	75.2	91.8
No	16.3	24.8	8.2
<b>How likely is it that you would consider purchasing a product from an unattractive sales person?</b>			
Likely	8.6	6.4	10.8
Indifferent	32.6	33.6	18.9
Unlikely	58.6	60	70.3

**Table 5. Influence of the sales persons appearance on age**

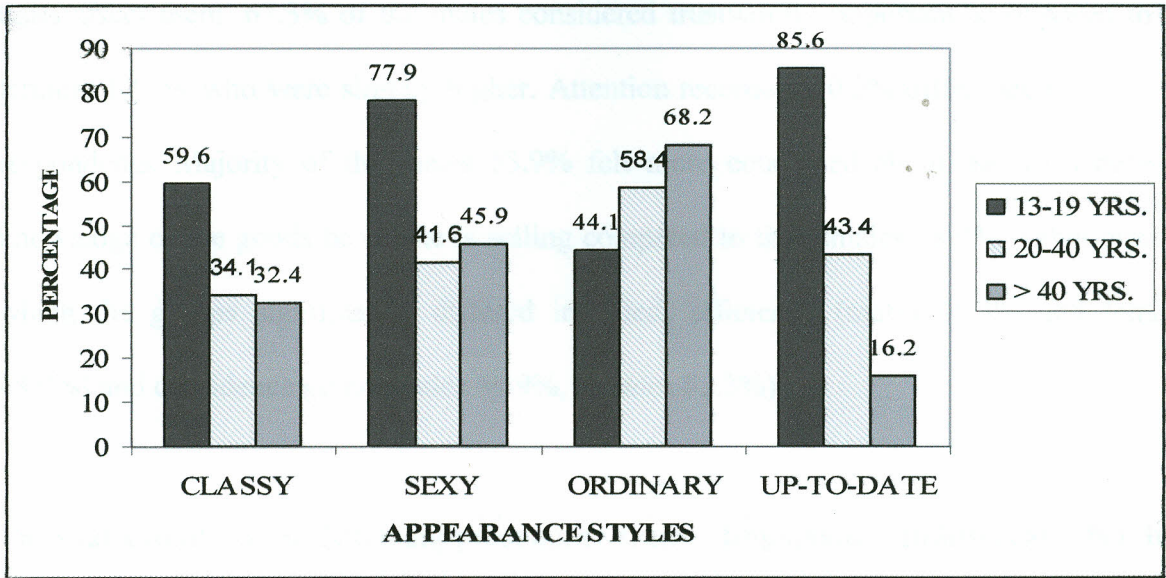
Table 6 shows that, participants of ages 13-19 (77.9%) had the most attraction compared to other age groups in the table on sexy appearances. An ordinary look appeared more appealing for participants of above 40 (68.2%). Those of 13-19 years scored the least in this category with only 44.1% being attracted.

An up- to- date appearance effect, decreases with increase of age across the table. Respondents of age 13- 19 (85.6%) were more attracted to sales people with an up to date look compared to those of above 40 had (16.2%).

Definition	Gender		
	13-19 %	20-40 %	>40 %
<b>To what extent does these designs of a sales persons appearance attract you to purchase</b>	n=62	n=77	n=24
<b>Classy</b>			
Likely	59.6	34.1	32.4
Indifferent	21.1	29	24.3
Not likely	19.2	36.9	43.3
<b>Sexy</b>			
Likely	77.9	41.6	45.9
Indifferent	18.3	26.2	29.7
Not likely	3.8	32.2	24.4
<b>Ordinary</b>			
Likely	44.1	58.4	68.2
Indifferent	1.9	21.8	12.6
Not likely	54	19.8	19.2
<b>Up-to-date</b>			
Likely	85.6	43.4	16.2
Indifferent	13.4	33.3	51.4
Not likely	1	23.3	32.4

**Table 6. Influence of the sales persons appearance styles on age.**

A general analysis as presented graphically in figure 7 shows that participants of above 40 years (68.2%) seem to prefer an ordinary look compared to other designs. The same applies for those of ages 20 to 40 (58.4%). For consumers of age 13 – 19 (85.6%) an up- to-date design would attract them to purchase than the rest of the sales persons' appearance.



**Figure 6. Influence of the sales persons appearance styles on age**

#### **4.3 Influence of the Sales persons Personality traits.**

Hypothesis two was generated to examine whether the personality of a sales person influences the purchase intention of a consumer.

##### **4.3.1 Participants' Gender and sales person's personality**

For hypothesis two, the variable on personality was measured by asking the respondents to state the extent to which the traits given affect their intention to purchase a desired product from a sales person.

To understand the influence of the sales person's personality trait, respondents were asked to indicate whether the traits; attention given, trustworthy, confidence given, knowledge of goods and the sales persons efficiency are important to them when purchasing. Males and females alike felt that a trustworthy sales person and one who gives attention would influence their purchase intention very much. There was however a small difference in how each of the

traits affect them. 67.3% of the males considered trustworthy important as opposed to the females 68.6% who were slightly higher. Attention recorded a 0.2% difference between the respondents. Majority of the males 53.9% felt more concerned about the sales person's knowledge of the goods he or she is selling compared to the females 38.0%. Other areas in which the groups significantly differed included; efficiency (males 40.3% and females 43.0%) and confidence given (males 59.9%, females 61.3%).

<b>To what extent do the following personality traits of a sales person important when deciding to purchase a desired product?</b>	<b>Important %</b>	<b>Indifferent %</b>	<b>Not important %</b>
<b>Males (n=91)</b>			
Trustworthiness	67.3	20.3	12.3
Attention given	65.1	21.5	14.4
Knowledge of goods	53.9	36.1	10.0
Confidence given	59.9	35.1	5.1
Efficiency	40.3	38.8	20.9
<b>Females (n=82)</b>			
Trustworthiness	68.6	24.2	7.2
Attention given	65.3	30.6	14.1
Knowledge of goods	38.0	47.1	14.9
Confidence given	61.3	18.7	20.0
Efficiency	43.0	36.8	20.2

**Table 7. Level of importance of the sales person's personality trait by gender.**

The responded were also subjected to a series of statements that related to the personality of the sales person. Table 8 shows that, most respondents, males and females agreed attractive

sales people as having good personality traits. Amongst those who felt that there is a positive relationship between appearance and personality, the majority were females rather than male respondents. For example a significant higher percentage of females (83.3%) compared with males (58.6%) reported attractive sales people as being reliable.

Though the frequencies relating these data were small, twice as many males as females (40% versus 20%) reported considering personality of the sales person more than his or her own appearance.

Other areas in which the groups significantly differed included: not minding about the sales person appearance when purchasing (males 3.8%; females 1.8%), attractive sales people look knowledgeable (males 44.1%; females 32.8%). Another significant finding, was that majority of the participants (males 75.3%; females 75.7%) preferred purchasing from sales people who dress like them.

STATEMENT	GENDER	
	Males (n=91) %	Females (n=82) %
Attractive sales people are trustworthy.	42.3	49.5
I don't mind about the appearance of a sales person when purchasing	3.8	1.8
Attractive sales people are reliable	58.6	83.3
I consider the personality of a sales person more than the appearance when making a purchase decision	36.9	20.2
I prefer purchasing from sales people who dress like me.	75.3	75.7
Attractive sale people look knowledgeable of the product being sold.	44.1	32.8
Attractive sales people make me feel secure	67.3	68.6

**Table 8. Participants' responses on influence of a sales person's personality by gender**

#### **4.3.2 Participants Age and sales person personality**

When rated with age, results showed that the participants were significantly different in their perceptions based on age differences. Asked to state the extent to which the traits given affect their intention to purchase desired product trustworthiness and attention given scored highly compared to other traits. 81.7% of the participants within the ages 13-19 and 75.6% of above 40 years age reported trustworthiness of the sales person as important. Participants of ages 40 and above (66%) are highly influenced by the sales persons level of knowledge with the goods he or she is selling compared to other age groups; 13-19 (53.8%) and 20-40 (53.7%). A similar effect was realized with regard to efficiency (78.4%) and confidence given (92%).

<b>To what extent do the following personality traits of a sales person important when deciding to purchase a desired product?</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Indifferent</b>	<b>Not important</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>13-19 years</b>			
Trustworthiness	81.7	12.5	5.8
Attention given	75	22	3
Knowledge of goods	53.8	31.7	14.5
Confidence given	64	25	11
Efficiency	68.3	24	7.7
<b>20-40 years</b>			
Trustworthiness	63	30.2	6.8
Attention given	63.9	25.3	10.8
Knowledge of goods	53.7	22.0	24.7
Confidence given	56.6	33.6	9.8
Efficiency	61.1	26.7	12.2
<b>Above 40 years</b>			
Trustworthiness	75.6	8	16.4
Attention given	59	30	11
Knowledge of goods	66	11	23
Confidence given	92	3	5
Efficiency	78.4	8	13.6

**Table 9. Level of importance of the sales person's personality trait by age**

When subjected to the statements relating appearance and personality, a higher percentage of participants of above 40 years felt that attractive sales people were trustworthy (62%) and made them feel secure (85%), compared with the rest in the age groups.

Most participants do mind about the appearance of a sales person when making a purchasing decision. Only 18% of ages 13-19, 27-33 (28%), >40 (22%) and 23% of ages 20-26 reported

not minding about the sales person appearance. A significant difference on which of the two variable is important was realized. For example participants of ages 13-19 (50%) reported considering appearance more than personality of the sales person and 39% felt otherwise.

Among the respondents, the majority who felt personality being more important than appearance were participants of above 40 years (73%) followed by those of years 27-33 (65%). Most participants reported preferring to purchase from sales people who dress like them, those of ages 13-19 (72%) and 27-33 (71%) scoring the most.

STATEMENT	AGE (YEARS.)		
	13-19	20 - 40	> 40
	(n=62)	(n=77)	(n=24)
	%	%	%
Attractive sales people are trustworthy.	54	37.7	62
I don't mind about the appearance of a sales person when purchasing	18	27.7	22
Attractive sales people are reliable	50	59.3	39
I consider the personality of a sales person more than the appearance when making a purchase decision	39	62	73
I prefer purchasing from sales people who dresses like me.	72	64	58
Attractive sale people look knowledgeable of the product being sold.	44	32	42
Attractive sales people make me feel secure	78	78.6	85

**Table 10. Participants' responses on the sales person's personality by age.**

#### 4.4 Appearance and Perceived Personality.

Hypothesis three was tested by designing a set of questions to obtain opinions concerning the personality trait a sales person in sexy, classy, up-to-date and or ordinary look would give to

the participant when they encounter one another. 7 personality constructs adapted from Sarah et al (2000) study were used as a measure. They were, professional (P)/unprofessional (UP), friendly (F)/unfriendly (UF), approachable (A)/unapproachable (UA), efficient (E)/inefficient (IE), attentive (AT)/inattentive (IAT), and trustworthy (T)/untrustworthy (UT).

This study only tested male and female respondents; consumers' age was never analyzed.

Design of appearance	F	UF	P	UP	AT	IAT	T	UT	A	UA	E	IE
<b>Gender x Appearance</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Classy</b>												
Males	38	62	72	28	64	36	78	22	40.6	59.4	73.2	26.8
Females	29.0	71	70.5	29.5	66.5	33.5	82	18	42.1	57.9	65.7	34.3
<b>Sexy</b>												
Males	67.3	32.7	23.3	76.6	58.6	41.4	34.4	65.6	72	28	43.1	56.9
Females	68.6	31.4	15.0	85.0	43.5	56.5	35.8	64.2	83.3	16.7	33.8	66.2
<b>Up-to-date</b>												
Males	66.3	33.7	26.4	73.6	40.3	59.7	53.2	46.8	65.6	34.4	72	28
Females	69.1	30.9	33.4	66.6	57	43	50.1	49.9	63.3	36.7	68.3	31.7
<b>Ordinary</b>												
Males	50.6	49.6	46.5	53.5	51.6	48.4	68.2	31.8	51.3	48.7	72.3	27.7
Females	51.2	48.8	48.1	51.9	46.9	53.1	61.9	38.1	46.4	53.6	69.4	30.6

**Table 11. Sales person's appearance styles and the perceived personality by gender**

The table above shows, a sales person with a classic appearance was less friendly and less approachable. Only 38% of the males and 29% of he females regarded such a look as

friendly while 40.6% males and 42.1% females considered the sales person approachable.

However the classics look scored highly in professionalism, attention and efficiency.

The sexy and up-to-date designs of appearance would be more friendly and approachable compared to other appearances. 67.3% males and 68.6% females reported that a sexy look gave a friendly impression while 83.3% females and 72% males cited the sales person being approachable.

For the males, a sales person with an up-to-date design would appear less attentive while for the females an ordinary look.

A sexy look design had the least in professionalism compared to other designs with only 23.3% males and 15% females considering them to be experts. Similarly they were also the less trustworthy (males 34.4% and females 35.8%).

A classy, up-to-date and ordinary look would give an impression of being very efficient compared to other designs.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter contains the discussions and interpretation of the findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations with references to the literature reviewed in chapter two used in the course of the study.

#### **5.1 Discussions of the findings and Interpretation**

The study that was conducted showed that different appearance and personality combinations play a major role in developing first impressions and the pursuance of purchase. The findings deduced that the appearance of the salesperson had a distinct influence on desirable characteristics of the salesperson such as trustworthiness, reliability, and expertise as well as an impact on the purchase decision.

##### **5.1.1 Influence of the salespersons' appearance styles**

Salespeople with an attractive appearance are likely to stimulate more purchases in a retail store. Results showed 94% males and 96% females agreeing that the appearance of the sales person affects their decision to purchase a product from them. Majority of the participants of age 40 and above (91.8%) reported being influenced by a sales persons appearance compared to those of ages 13-19 (83.7%) and 20-40 (75.2%) when making purchase intentions. Nevertheless, the type of appearance to exhibit was different for male and female consumers' as well as consumers of different ages. A significant interaction was

observed when the influence of sales persons appearance was related to consumers' age, supporting Hawkins et al (1998) study that age differences are expected to influence consumer perception. A general analysis as presented graphically in figure 7 showed that participants of above 40 years (68.2%) seemed to prefer an ordinary look compared to other designs. The same applied for those of ages 20 to 40 (58.4%). For consumers of ages 13 – 19 (85.6%) an up- to-date design would attract them to purchase than the rest of the sales persons' appearance styles.

Elderly participants (above 40 years) had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson with an ordinary appearance whilst adolescent participants of ages 13 to 19 had a more positive attitude toward the salesperson with a sexy, elegant appearance.

The participants significantly preferred purchasing from a salesperson with a similar clothing type to their own. Males recorded 75.3% whilst females 75.7% as being attracted to buy from sales people who dress like them. This finding supports the proposition of Stone (1962), which indicated that individuals who share similar appearance symbols or at least the same understanding of such symbols are more likely to engage in meaningful communication. If there is similarity between the salesperson and the consumer in the sales interaction, the consumer is attracted to the salesperson and therefore likes the salesperson (Woodside & Davenport, 1974). This similarity might increase the salesperson's attractiveness and in turn might influence a purchase decision.

These results may provide some implications for retailers. When retailers request what their salespersons should wear, they should first understand the clothing type that their target

customers prefer to wear. Department stores may have salespersons wear clothing types according to the target customers in each section.

### **5.1.2 Influence of the sales persons' personality**

The examination of the relationship between personality and purchase decision of consumers showed that whilst a number of personality traits are important to consumers, trustworthiness (81.5%) and attention given (75.6%) to customers mediated attractiveness effects and were the most important. These results are parallel to the hypothesis of this study and also to the findings reported by Claus (2000) in regard to knowledge of goods (67%) and trustworthiness (87.4%) being the most important. Carthcart (1999) found appearance, knowledge, experience and personal conviction to be perceived as desirable qualities.

This implies that a sales person in a retail store who is trustworthy and gives attention to his customers as they enter the store is likely to stimulate more sales. However in order to stimulate purchase, retailers need to improve their sales peoples service performance by training them on aspects such as friendliness, product knowledge, attentiveness and so on.

According to implicit personality theory (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991), people attribute positive personality traits to attractive individuals. Most respondents, males and females agreed attractive sales people as having good personality traits. Amongst those who felt that there is a positive relationship between appearance and personality, the majority were females rather than male respondents. For example a significant higher percentage of females (83.3%) compared with males (58.6%) reported attractive sales people as being reliable. Among the respondents, the majority who felt personality being more important than

appearance were participants of above 40 years (73%) followed by those of years 27-33 (65%). This implies that sales people need to observe their customers age carefully when attending to their needs. Whilst the appearance would attract many adolescents to purchase, the elderly customers are more attracted by the personality.

### **5.1.3 Sales person's appearance style and the perceived personality.**

Several researchers cited external cues, including apparel style as important contributors in determining status, personality and similar expectations about an individual in a first impression situation (Buckley 2001, Carthcart 1999, Conner et al 1975, Harris et al 2002).

The study supports earlier findings as the design of appearance worn by the sales person significantly influenced the impression given by the participants. Given the various styles of design adapted from Sarah et al (2000), a number of impressions were cited by the participants supporting the hypothesis three that the perceived personality is dependant on the appearance of the sales person. Symonds (1974), a psychoanalyst argues that analyzing one's appearance may tell us more about the self than other direct approaches to personality assessment because appearances are certainly easier to identify than personality types. A summary of the personality traits drawn were given as in table 12 below.

Sarah et al (2000) results indicated that the up-to-date appearance was approachable, ordinary-some what approachable, sexy look very approachable and sophisticated and classy was somewhat approachable and conventional. This was however different from the results

as the classy and sexy were less approachable, ordinary some how approachable and ordinary approachable.

Design of appearance	Impression formed
Classic	Professional, trustworthy, efficient, less approachable and less friendly
Sexy	Friendly, less professional, some what attentive, less trustworthy, less approachable.
Up-to-date	Friendly, less professional, less attentive, less trustworthy, efficient, and approachable
Ordinary	Somewhat friendly, less professional, somewhat attentive, trustworthy, efficient, and some how approachable.

**Table 12. Summary of impression formed**

This implies that products that need more attention and need one to exhibit more professionalism, one should be in a classis appearance. 72% of the males and 70.5% of the females reported a classis look being professional, while 64% males and 66.5% females reported a classic look being attentive.

## **5.2 Conclusions and recommendations**

This research had shown that (1). Appearance or image is important to sales persons' success (2). Apparel determines the expectations a consumer has of a sales person and (3). People have perception of suitable work apparel for a sales person.

These results may provide some implications for retailers and managers. When retailers request what their sales parson, should wear, they should first understand the clothing type that their target customers prefer to wear.

To stimulate purchase retailers need to understand how much product knowledge their customers expect to know from their sales people or how much interaction they expect to receive from them. Each individual's expectation for the salesperson may vary. For example, some customers may need some time to look around the store but some customers may want immediate attention. Salespersons need to observe their customers carefully to understand each customer's shopping behaviors. Retailers may also provide rewards to encourage customers to give suggestions or recommendations so that they can understand customers' expectations and then provide what customers expect.

## **5.3 Areas for future study**

Because only the middle socio- economic classes of participants within Nairobi were selected, the results may not be generalized to all consumers of the upper and lower class consumers as well as those in other regions. Many studies may be extended from the current research. In this study, a general appearance was computed with the participant being left to imagine what is attractive or not attractive to him/her. Studies can be specific. Arnheim (1949) and Asch (1946) indicated that the perceiver organized component parts of

appearance into a global impression and interdependent meanings. In addition to clothing, other appearances may also be related to consumers' global impressions of the salesperson. For example, salespersons with appropriate styles of hair, cosmetic make-up, accessories, or facial expressions may also increase customers' positive attitudes toward the salesperson.

However, appropriate appearance may vary among consumers. For example, a salesperson with body piercing or tattoos may be considered interesting and unique for adolescent consumers, but considered inappropriate for elderly consumers. Understanding what aspects of the salesperson's appearance their target customers consider appropriate may be important for retailers.

More studies are needed to further understand the influence of appearance in various customer segments. The influence of salespersons' clothing may be different on customers of various stores. In future studies, various types of stores, such as discount stores, outlet stores, or specialty stores also may be used. For example, in the current apparel market, salespersons in department stores or discount stores are often required to wear various styles of uniforms. However, no study has been reported which clothing types may create a more positive consumer attitude toward the salesperson in specific stores.

Additional customer segments may also be considered. For example, customers of other age groups (e.g. children and adult), different areas (e.g., rural and urban), or different cultures or countries could be investigated. Studies may also be extended to involve various job types. Determine which appearance or apparel style is suitable for a particular kind of job.

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**Appendix A.**

**ESTIMATED BUDGET**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	Papers (A4 Photocopy)	Ream	4	350.00	<b>1400.00</b>
2.	Pen (Ball point)	Doz.	1	144.00	<b>144.00</b>
3.	Diskette	Pack	1	250.00	<b>250.00</b>
4.	Cartridges	No.	4	1500	<b>6000.00</b>
5.	CD	No.	4	80.00	<b>320.00</b>
6.	Allowance for 3 Research assistants	Man-day	90	200.00	<b>18,000.00</b>
7.	Allowance for principal researcher	Man -day	30	600.00	<b>18,000.00</b>
8.	Typing the research proposal	Page	50	20.00	<b>1000.00</b>
9.	Printing research proposal	Pages	50	10.00	<b>500.00</b>
10.	Photocopying research proposal	No.	300	2.00	<b>600.00</b>
11.	Photocopying questionnaires	No.	600	2.00	<b>1200.00</b>
12.	Cost of consulting a statistician	Man-day	-	-	<b>6000.00</b>
13.	Binding Research Proposal	Copy	20	60.00	<b>1200.00</b>
14.	Typing final report	Page	67	20.00	<b>1340.00</b>
15.	Printing final report	Page	469	10.00	<b>4690.00</b>
16.	Cost of covering Final Project	Copy	7	300.00	<b>2100.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>62,744.00</b>
	Add 15% contingency	15%	62,744	-----	9411.60
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>					<b>72155.60</b>

**Appendix B.****RESEARCH TIME PLAN**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activities to be done</b>
October 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Defense of proposal</li><li>▪ Submitting proposal for approval</li></ul>
November 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identify estates eligible for study</li><li>▪ Acquisition of research permit</li><li>▪ Training of research assistants</li><li>▪ Pre testing of the instruments</li><li>▪ Collecting of data</li><li>▪ Analyzing and processing of data</li></ul>
December 2006 to February 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Writing of first draft of the report</li><li>▪ Presentation of findings</li><li>▪ Submitting of the report for approval</li></ul>

## Appendix D. QUESTIONNAIRE

I am carrying out a research on the influence of a sales person appearance and personality on purchase decisions of consumers. You have been chosen as one of the respondents. There is no right or wrong answer. Please help me by answering all the following questions.

### PART A

#### Demographics

1. Please tick the age bracket in which you fall.

- i) 13 – 19 ( )
- ii) 20 – 26 ( )
- iii) 27 – 33 ( )
- iv) 34 – 40 ( )
- v) Above 40 years old ( )

2. What is your gender? Male ( ) Female ( )

### PART B

3. Does the appearance of a sales person influence your intention to purchase goods from the salesperson?

Yes ( ) No ( )

4. If the answer to the above question is yes indicate by ticking the box which of the appearances of a sales person would attract you to purchase goods from him/her. (You can tick more than one)

- i) Classy appearance
- ii) Sexy appearance
- iii) Ordinary appearance
- iv) Up- to- date appearance

5. The designs below show the appearance of a salesperson. On a scale of 3 to 1, with 3 indicating likely to attract and 1= not likely to attract, please indicate by ticking whether a sales person in such appearance is likely to attract you to purchase a product from him or her.

**1= not likely to attract me. 2= indifferent. 3=likely to attract me.**

Design of appearance	1	2	3
Classy			
Ordinary			
Sexy			
Up-to-date			

## PART C

7. The following are various personality traits that a sales person might show the moment you meet each other. Indicate by ticking in the box to what extent each of the traits; attention given, level of knowledge of goods he or she is selling, confidence given, efficiency and trustworthiness, influence your intention to purchase a desired product with 1 indicating not important and 3 important.

**1= not important. 2= indifferent. 3=important**

Personality trait	1	2	3
Trustworthy			
Attention given			
Confidence given			
Knowledge of goods			
Efficient			

8. The statements below relate to how you react whenever you want to buy a product from a sales person immediately the sales man approaches you. **Tick the box that best describes your views in question 1 to 8.**

i) An attractive sales person drives me to buy a product.

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

ii) Attractive sales people are trustworthy.

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

iii) I don't mind about the appearance of a sales person when purchasing a product

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

iv) Attractive sales people are reliable

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

v) I consider the personality of a sales person more than the appearance when making a purchase decision.

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

vi) I prefer purchasing from Sales people who dress like me.

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

vii) Attractive sale people look knowledgeable

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

viii) Attractive sales people make me feel secure

3. Strongly disagree  2. Agree  1. Disagree

9. Assume you have met a sales person in one of the following styles of appearance styles; classy, sexy, ordinary and up-to date. Indicate by ticking what impression the sales person would give you the moment you see him or her. The impressions are listed as: -

A= APPROACHABLE or A=UNAPPROACHABLE, F=FRIENDLY or UF=UNFRIENDLY,  
 P=PROFFESIONAL or UP=UNPROFESIONAL, AT=ATTENTIVE or IAT=INATTENTIVE,  
 E=EFFICIENT or IE=INEFFICIENT, T=TRUSTWOTHY or UT=UNTRUSTWORTHY

Design of the Sales persons' appearance	Personality trait shown											
	A	UA	F	UF	P	UP	AT	IAT	E	IE	T	UT
Sexy												
Ordinary												
Up-to-date												
Classy												

**Thank you**

## Appendix E. Estates Belonging to Middle Socio- Economic Class

CITY CENTER	KOMAROCK	KILIMANI
CITY SQUARE	KASARANI	NYAYO HIGHRISE
PANGANI	KAHAWA	EASTLEIGH NORTH
ZIWANI	KENYATTA	UHURU EASTLEIGH
NGARA WEST	EMBAKASI	NORTH
NGARA EAST	HIGHRIDGE	HAZINA
HARAMBEE	RUARAKA	KOMAROCK
HAZINA	DONHOLM	FEDHA
SOUTH B	NAIROBI WEST	
SOUTH C	RIRUTA	
LANG'ATYA	UTALII	
NAIROBI SOUTH	KIMATHI	
IMARA DAIMA	NGUMO	
UMOJA	OTIENDE	

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