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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF HOME-BASED FASHION ENTREPRENEURS AND CUSTOM-MADE GARMENTS

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Visual Arts in
Fashion

In the Faculty of Human Sciences

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation submitted for the degree Master of Visual Arts in Fashion is my own work. All the sources of information utilised in the study were referenced in line with the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) referencing guidelines. This work has not been submitted at VUT or any other university.

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ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction has proven to be a major determinant on the success or failure of a business. Regrettably, fashion entrepreneurs are not meeting customer expectations because they have problems that are affecting the quality of their work. In order to promote customer satisfaction, fashion entrepreneurs require a master plan that is customer-based. Thus, they could implement customisation of garments to address customers' concerns. It is, therefore, crucial for home-based fashion entrepreneurs to be aware of their customers' needs and the factors that affect their satisfaction to boost its levels.

Based on this background, it was found necessary to conduct a research study with the aim to determine factors that affect customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in the Emfuleni Local Municipality. A qualitative study, applying purposive and snowball sampling techniques, was conducted by means of one-on-one interviews. Data saturation guided the study and was reached after nineteen women were interviewed and two more interviews were done to enhance credibility. Analysis of data was conducted applying the six stages of Creswell's approach of data analysis. During this process four themes emerged and were presented in line with their categories.

The study findings revealed that some of the factors that largely influenced customer satisfaction were service quality, product quality, price, value and location. Garment fit and uniqueness were also found to be reasons why participants opted for custom-made garments. However, some of the participating women did not get the satisfaction they were seeking. Their satisfaction was negatively affected by garment quality, lack of communication, missing delivery deadlines and inaccessibility of the entrepreneur. The research outcome provides home-based fashion entrepreneurs with useful information to improve the levels of customer satisfaction.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the introduction and background, which includes customer satisfaction, fashion entrepreneurs and custom-made garments, motivation, problem statement, research question, aim and objectives, key terms and chapter outline of the study.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Currently, businesses operate in highly competitive environments (Saha, Islam & Hoque 2016:252), and need to implement strategies that focus on customer satisfaction in order to sustain business and acquire more customers (Kasiri, Cheng, Sambasivan & Sidin 2017:91; Bello 2018:321). Customer satisfaction (see 2.3.2) can be enhanced by adopting customisation (Uma & Chandramowleeswaran 2015:127) whereby customers will be provided with garments that are made according to their specifications. Thus, customisation can be employed to distinguish products and services from competitors (Uma & Chandramowleeswaran 2015:134). Unfortunately, fashion entrepreneurs who produce custom-made garments are experiencing challenges which have led to business closures for some of them (Apunda 2017:2); therefore if fashion entrepreneurs could become aware of what affects their customers, and address the problems, customer satisfaction levels will increase. In brief, greater levels of customer satisfaction could help sustain home-based fashion businesses. This study focuses on customer satisfaction in the context of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. The factors that affect customer satisfaction of home-based fashion entrepreneurs are also explored.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The primary goal of every business is to satisfy customers (Bello 2018:322) given that they are the key asset to business growth (Eklof, Podkorytora & Malova 2018:2). Attention has been given to customer satisfaction by researchers and business owners in order to ascertain the factors that affect customer satisfaction (Bello 2018:322; Eklof, Podkorytora & Malova 2018:1). The following aspects provide the background to this study: entrepreneurship, fashion entrepreneurs, fashion entrepreneurs in Emfuleni Local Municipality, challenges that fashion entrepreneurs face, customer satisfaction, types of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, factors

affecting customer satisfaction, importance of customer satisfaction, custom-made garments and motivation.

1.2.1 Entrepreneurship

An entrepreneur is a person who identifies an opportunity and develops the idea to start their own business (Burke 2010:12; Suhaimi *et al.* 2016:131; Okyere 2017:161). Entrepreneurs are often seen on the rise when the economy is depressed because it becomes more difficult for people to get employment, so they take initiatives to start their own businesses (Carr & Newell 2014:3). They can either be influenced by pull or push factors (Akinyemi & Adejumo 2017:625). The entrepreneurs influenced by push factors (e. g., unemployment, insufficient salaries and job dissatisfaction) mainly aim to survive and reduce poverty because of lack of opportunities (Akinyemi & Adejumo 2017:625). The entrepreneurs' main goal of the pull factor (e.g., self-fulfilment, wealth and independence) is to make profits, grow and gain competitive advantage (Akinyemi & Adejumo 2017:625). Similarly, fashion entrepreneurs are also influenced by pull and push factors in an attempt to alleviate poverty and to fulfil their desires.

Small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) are important to the growth of many economies in the world. In South Africa (SA), up to 41% of the economy is attributed to small businesses (Seda 2019:24; Bvuma & Marnewick 2020:5). This has led the South African (SA) government to put plans (e.g., National Development Plan 2030) in place to support economic growth through small businesses as well as reducing the unemployment rate (Bhebhe 2016:49; Baporikar 2016:19; Strydom 2017:685). SMMEs and entrepreneurship are significant to economic development, employment creation and economic transformation (Okyere 2017:161). In this study, fashion entrepreneurs are the focus.

1.2.2 Fashion entrepreneurs

The fashion entrepreneur is an individual who identifies fashion-related opportunities to start their own fashion business (Burke 2010:12). Fashion entrepreneurs can either be artisan or opportunistic entrepreneurs (Carr & Newell 2017:2; Jere, M. Jere, A. & Aspelung 2014:11). An artisan fashion entrepreneur starts a business with limited business skills, but with sufficient fashion-related technical skills, such as fashion design, pattern drafting and garment construction. On the other hand, an opportunistic entrepreneur seizes opportunities to make

profits regardless of not having passion or talent in that field. In the event that the business fails, the opportunistic entrepreneur assumes no responsibility instead continues on to take other promising opportunities (Fadlia & Ramadani 2019:652). In a similar way, an opportunistic entrepreneur has vast knowledge in business skills and identifies a fashion-related gap in the market, seizes the opportunity but lacks fashion-related skills (Carr & Newell 2017:2). The current study includes both the artisan and opportunistic entrepreneurs. Originality, skills and competency are very important in the success of fashion entrepreneurs, regardless of the group they fall under (Carr & Newell 2017:2; Jere *et al.* 2014:11; Farashahi 2019:8). Moreover, fashion entrepreneurs are categorised into different groups such as clothing, shoes and accessories. This study focuses on custom-made garment businesses, namely, custom-made womenswear which includes all types of womenswear.

1.2.2.1 Fashion entrepreneurs in Emfuleni Local Municipality

The study will be conducted in the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM). The ELM forms part of the Sedibeng District Municipality (SDM), which is located within the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The towns in the region are Vanderbijlpark, Vereeniging, and Vaaloeier surrounded with townships of Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Boipatong, Bophelong, Tshepiso and Evaton (ELM 2019).

A significant percentage (approximately 80%) of fashion entrepreneurs in the Emfuleni Local Municipality are self-employed and are home-based businesses (Van Wyk 2007:96; Nana 2018:118). Most of these fashion entrepreneurs have set up businesses because of push factors such as unemployment in the fashion industry, job losses, pressure to sustain the family and unsatisfactory working conditions (Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:230; Strydom 2019:13). Previous studies (Van Wyk 2007:96; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:230; Nana 2018:93) in the Emfuleni region also indicated that fashion entrepreneurs use their personal savings and money borrowed from family members to fund their businesses. Less than half of the respondents who took part in the Moloi and Nkhahle (2014) study had sewing skills from tertiary institutions. The other entrepreneurs acquired their sewing skills from on-the-job training, government training workshops and family members who used to make garments (Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:230). However, fashion entrepreneurs experience challenges that will be discussed subsequently.

1.2.2.2 Challenges that fashion entrepreneurs face

Studies have been carried out on the challenges that fashion entrepreneurs face, which might lead to dissatisfaction of customers if not addressed (Van Wyk & Van Aardt 2011; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014). Some of the difficulties that fashion entrepreneurs encounter are lack of skills in garment construction, patternmaking and business skills, which are essential to the success of the business (Almanza & Van den Berg 2016:9; Sitharam & Hoque 2016:279). A case in point is if an entrepreneur lacks in marketing and financial skills, it may affect the profitability of the business despite good quality of products offered. Moreover, there is stiff competition in the field because barriers to entry are low, whereby anyone can buy a sewing machine and start sewing; this easy access enables unqualified entrepreneurs to also start businesses (Almanza & Van den Berg 2016:10) in a fashion-related field.

Similarly, Emfuleni fashion entrepreneurs face shortcomings such as personal qualities (tolerance of risk), business skills (marketing, financial planning and management) that an entrepreneur should possess (Van Wyk & Van Aardt 2011:182). These fashion entrepreneurs also do not have fashion equipment to enhance the quality of their work, such as cover stitch machines, industrial overlocking machines, domestic press, industrial press and industrial iron (Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:231). This type of equipment is expensive, and the fashion entrepreneurs cannot afford to purchase it because of inadequate funds (Van Wyk 2007:96; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:231). In due course, these challenges may lead to dissatisfaction, which could mean switching of customers because of competition, negative word-of-mouth and possible closure of business.

1.2.3 Customer satisfaction

One of the most essential resources of any business is satisfied customers, of which no business can operate successfully in their absence (Saha, Islam & Hoque 2016:252; Khadka & Marharjan 2017:1). A customer is a person who pays for usage of, or ownership of a product or service (Lombard & Parumasur 2017:3). Customer satisfaction can be defined as a comparison of customer expectations in relation to the performance of a product or service (Schiffman & Kanuk 2014:10; Felix 2015:42; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14). Satisfaction is therefore achieved when there is either parity between expectations and performance, or when performance exceeds

expectations (Schiffman & Kanuk 2014:10; Felix 2015:42; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14). On the other hand, dissatisfaction occurs when a customer's experience with a product/service is negative or unpleasant (Felix 2015:42; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14; Boadi, Guoxin & Sai 2017:559). Thus, if a customer receives the ordered garment, and among other criteria it fits well, satisfaction will be achieved, but the contrary is also true. Hence, achieving customer satisfaction has become a key differentiator and an essential element of business strategy in the world of competition in a campaign to obtain and retain customers (Eklof, Podkorytora & Malova 2018:1).

1.2.4 Types of customer satisfaction (and dissatisfaction)

There are two types of customer satisfaction, namely, transaction-specific and cumulative satisfaction (Anderson 1994:54; Su & Tong 2016:430). Transaction-specific satisfaction refers to satisfaction of a single purchase made (Anderson 1994:54; Su & Tong 2016:430), for instance, the single purchase of a clothing item will be assessed based on the customer's expectations of how the garment will perform. Cumulative satisfaction, on the other hand, refers to satisfaction of all the purchases made from the same retailer in a period of time (Anderson 1994:54; Su & Tong 2016:430). For example, the customer will assess all clothing purchases they made over time from the same fashion entrepreneur or retailers, and base their judgment on prior expectations and experiences. However, customers may face dissatisfaction despite the effort retailers put to satisfy them (Bearden & Teel 1983:21). The main types of dissatisfaction in customised garments from retailers are usage of poor-quality fabrics, sub-standard construction and improper fit (Apunda 2017:3). Garment fit has been one of the main problems that cause customer dissatisfaction, and as a result, clothes bought are returned to the retailer (Shin 2013:1). It is also one of the reasons why custom made apparel is so popular and that is because they can achieve a perfect fit (Sawyer 2019:36; Opayele *et al.* 2020:350).

1.2.5 Importance of customer satisfaction

The importance of customer satisfaction is undeniable and has become one of the best ways to gain favourable business position over competitors (Bello 2018:321), particularly for small businesses (fashion entrepreneurs) as it may become expensive to attract new customers. (Fourie 2015:181). As a matter of fact, customers seek where they can get quality service, competitive

prices, value for money, convenient location and quality garments that meet their expectations (Kumar & Reinartz 2016:37; Atiyah 2017:24; Apunda 2017:4; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:16). If these expectations are not met, customers tend to switch to alternative businesses (Apunda 2017:4). Thus, keeping customers satisfied will result in repeated purchases as well as telling other people positively about the business its offers (Duy & Hoang 2017:383; Khadka & Marharjan 2017:5646; Bello 2018:321). If customers get value for money when they purchase garments, they may become loyal to that business, whereas dissatisfied customers may engage in negative word-of-mouth messages which can ruin business reputation, profitability and possibly switch to competition (Duy & Hoang 2017:383). As a result, especially with small businesses, this may lead to poor performance and closure of the business (Duy & Hoang 2017:383; Fourie 2015:181). In addition, a previous study's findings (Makopo, De Klerk & Donoghue 2016:200) indicated that dissatisfied customers stopped ordering garments from custom-made clothing businesses they usually purchase from and engaged in negative word-of-mouth. Therefore fashion entrepreneurs need to maintain their standards to keep customers satisfied (Fourie 2015:182; Peprah 2015:8). This includes addressing the customers' concerns quickly and efficiently because the success or failure of a business depends on them. In view of this, it is crucial for fashion entrepreneurs to be aware of their customers' needs and the factors that affect their satisfaction to improve the level of satisfaction.

1.2.6 Factors affecting customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is influenced by many factors. In this study, the factors that were considered are: service quality, product quality, price, value and the location of the fashion entrepreneur. The reason being that other factors are more applicable to well established businesses. These are briefly defined and discussed below.

1.2.6.1 Service quality

Service quality is defined as the fulfilment of customers' service needs and expectations from businesses rendering services (Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200) and is an important factor in the success of many businesses across industries (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2010:10). This can further be illustrated by the time taken to solve problems, and how easy and friendly the employees and business owners (fashion entrepreneur) are when complaints are brought forward.

In that way, satisfaction levels will increase if customers are offered quality services. To examine and explain service quality, Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1985; 1988) developed a model named SERVQUAL. Since homebased fashion entrepreneurs are small businesses and are not solely offering service to the customers but also manufactured products, the complete SERVQUAL model was not applicable for this study. A previous study by Chingang and Lukong (2010:11), noted that in order to assure credible and valid findings, the researcher can choose dimensions that are most suitable for a specific service being evaluated moreover, it (Servqual model) can be used in various industries. Hence, three of the service quality dimensions, namely, reliability, responsiveness and assurance are most relevant for this study, as the excluded dimensions (e.g., tangibles and empathy) are more relevant to service industries. The purpose of using this model was to find out if these dimensions influence customer satisfaction.

- Reliability refers to the capacity to offer reliable and precise services (Atiyah 2017:23; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200). In the context of this study, reliability, for example, implicates the keeping of promises that were made to meet on the agreed dates for fittings or delivering garments on time.
- Responsiveness is the responsibility to address the concerns of customers about a product or service (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985:47; Atiyah 2017:23; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200). In a fashion-related context, it could be the altering of a garment after fittings until the customer is satisfied.
- Assurance is when the business employees or the owner assures customers that they have knowledge of their work and they can be trusted (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985:47; Atiyah 2017:23; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200). In terms of the fashion entrepreneur, this is shown by knowledge of fabric, suggestion of suitable colour, shapes and silhouettes for a particular figure can make the customer trust business services.

1.2.6.2 Product quality

Product quality can be defined as the fulfilling of customers' expectations concerning the product or service's features (Kotler & Armstrong 2010:240; Apunda 2017: 34). Defining quality has proven to be difficult for customers and manufacturers (Syduzzaman, Rahman, Islam,

Habib & Ahmed 2014: 343; Agyekum, Haifeng, Agyeiwa 2015: 25), and therefore eight dimensions of product quality are suggested by Garvin (1984). These include performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics and perceived quality. Three dimensions, namely, performance, durability and aesthetics are the focus of this study because these dimensions are important to customers who seek custom-made garments with relation to their quality and appearance (Shin 2013:2; Apunda 2017:4), and will be shortly discussed:

- Performance refers to the characteristics of a product that provides useful benefits to the customer. This is shown in the ability of the garment to retain colourfastness, strength or abrasion resistance (Mehta 2012:9; Syahrial, Suzuki, Schvaneveldt & Masuda 2018:96; Du Preez, Dreyer, Botha, Van der Colff & Coelho 2018:38).
- Durability is the life cycle of a product before the product becomes unwanted (Mehta 2012:9; Syahrial *et al.* 2018:97; Du Preez *et al.* 2018:46), for example, durability of a garment is when it lasts for a long time.
- Aesthetics is the appearance of the garment; how attractive it appears, or how well it fits the wearer (Mehta 2012:9; Thurai 2017:14; Syahrial *et al.* 2018:96; Farashahi 2019:69).

The ultimate decision of the product's quality is based on the customer's preferences (Mehta 2012:9). Therefore, ensuring product quality in the customers' view will benefit the business in due course.

1.2.6.3 Price

The survival and success of a business also depends on its profitability, which is influenced by the price of the product (Parumasur & Lombard 2014: 9). Price has many dimensions, such as fairness, reliability and price-quality ratio (Razak, Nirwato & Triatmanto 2016:60; Mbengo & Phiri 2017:271). In this study, three dimensions are explored:

- Price fairness refers to reasonable prices for products (Nazari, Hosseini & Kalejahi 2014:133; Mbengo & Phiri 2017:272; Yaqub, Halim & Shehzad 2019:66).

- Price reliability refers to no hidden costs and prices do not change abruptly (Mutonyi, Beukel, Gyau & Hjortso 2015:1071; Mbengo & Phiri 2017:272).
- Price quality ratio is when the price requested is well balanced with the quality of the product (Mutonyi *et al.* 2015:1071; Razak *et al.* 2016:60; Mbengo & Phiri 2017:272).

1.2.6.4 Value

Value can be defined as what is paid for a product compared to what is gained from the product (Anderson *et al.* 1994:54-55; Kurtulus & Okumus 2010:23; Kumar & Reinartz 2016:36). To a greater extent, value is essential in promoting and enhancing long-term success of a business (Morar 2013:169; Zahid & Ahmed 2017:47). Providing customers with value will boost sales, which in turn can lead to satisfaction, and strengthen the financial position of a business (Demirgunes 2015:211-212; Kumar & Reinartz 2016:60). Value is a concept that includes functional, emotional and social dimensions.

- Functional value is created by the performance or functionality of the product (Morar 2013:174; Demirgunes 2015:213; Zahid & Ahmed 2017:47), like the reliability and durability of a garment.
- Emotional value is based on customers' feelings towards the product or service obtained from the business (Morar 2013:174; Demirgunes 2015:213; Puolaski 2016:29; Animashaun, Tunkarimu & Dastane 2016:13), for instance, garments that fit well may boost positive feelings about one's body shape (Shin 2013:1).
- Social value promotes social relations of the customer (Morar 2013:174; Demirgunes 2015:213; Puolaski 2016:29; Animashaun *et al.* 2016:13). Garments that fit will enhance successful outcomes, self-worth, confidence and social well-being (Shin 2013:2).

1.2.6.5 Location

Business location refers to the area where the business is situated in order to carry out operations (John, Ejikeme & Alfred 2015:296). Choosing a business location is one of the most important considerations a business owner should take. The location of a business should not be

underestimated, as it can influence the profits, growth and survival of a business (John *et al.* 2015:295). Moreover, the selected location should accommodate the business's needs, target customers, the workers and the machinery in order to offer the required services (Gordon 2017:10). There are many factors to consider when choosing a location, and for this study the focus is on factors that affect customers, namely, accessibility, visibility and parking space of the business.

- Accessibility: the location should be approachable, and target customers. It is important that customers must be able to locate the business easily (John *et al.* 2015:296; Gordon 2017:10; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1201; Wilbard, Mbilinyi, Maliva & Mkwizu 2018:18).
- Visibility: refers to the location being visible to customers' passing (Gordon 2017:11; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1201; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:19). In this case, the fashion entrepreneur could put signs or dressed mannequins to advertise their work.
- Parking space: should be available and safe upon visiting the business (Gordon 2017:11; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:18), particularly when a customer visits the fashion entrepreneur, they should not struggle to find parking or fear for the safety of their vehicles.

1.2.7 Custom-made garments

Custom-made garments are garments originally made, from designing the garment up to the construction of the garment according to the individuals' specifications (Amed, J. Amed, I. & Chowdhury 2017:178; Kasiri, Cheng, Sambasivan & Sidin 2017:91). Customisation of garments has become a solution to problems of fit, style, construction and body shapes (Apunda 2017:13). Many individuals order custom-made garments to solve fitting problems and to provide uniqueness and elegance (Amed *et al.* 2017: 178). Adopting of customisation as a strategy to distinguish the company's products or services from others, and to satisfy customers, can be to the benefit for both the fashion businesses and their customers (Kasiri *et al.* 2017:91). Businesses would experience an increase in sales and profits due to the unique and stylish garments, while customers get more satisfaction and unique designs (Schweiggert & Weiss 2013:41; Seo 2018:3). As a result, a customer's desires are more expressed in customised garments than in standardised garments (Seo 2018:10). This would enhance willingness to pay, although it could

be more expensive, or may take longer to receive the product (Schweiggert & Weiss 2013:41; Kasiri 2016:5).

1.3 MOTIVATION

Globally, SMMEs and entrepreneurship are crucial to the support and development of many countries by providing employment and products. The situation in South Africa is no different, as small businesses are considered to be of vital importance to the economic growth of the country (Chimucheka & Mandipaka 2015:149; Baporikar 2016:191). Unfortunately, small businesses among other factors are facing challenges such as lack of skills, inadequate funding and high competition, (Almanza & Van den Berg 2016:29). As a result, most of these new businesses close in the first three years of operation (Strydom 2017:685; SEDA 2018:2), hence this study focuses on the service and products that home-based fashion entrepreneurs offer to their customers.

This study was conducted in the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM), where home-based fashion entrepreneurs encounter problems that may compromise business' growth. Fashion entrepreneurs located within the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM) should ensure customer satisfaction to women who wear custom-made garments. Many women prefer to wear custom-made garments because of different reasons of which poverty is one, and they cannot afford to buy garments in retail stores. Figure problems is another problem, therefore standard garments from retail stores do not fit well as they are made on standardised measurements. Women's own uniqueness and style are often not addressed when buying clothes from retail stores. Due to these reasons, women depend on fashion entrepreneurs to make them quality garments, but unfortunately, fashion entrepreneurs are failing to fulfil the desires of these women (Sawyer 2019:111). A need for research to be conducted on what affects the satisfaction of women who wear custom-made garments in the Emfuleni Local Municipality was identified.

Various studies (Kuhn & Mostert 2015; Aoun 2016; Sakar & Karim 2019) that have been conducted focus on mass customisation (mass produced customised garments), retailing and entrepreneurship. However, several studies regarding factors affecting customer satisfaction are in the context of other fields, namely, communication (Mollah 2015), hospitality (Ahmad, Zakaria, Omar & Amran 2017) and tourism (Wahyono 2018). In order to improve the levels of

customer satisfaction it is of great importance for fashion entrepreneurs to be aware of their customers' needs and the factors that affect their satisfaction. This will possibly change their business approach that will have an effect on the sustainability of the business.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The importance of satisfied customers in any business cannot be disputed, especially when considering the financial prosperity of the business. Customer satisfaction, therefore, plays an important role in the success or failure of a business. However, businesses experience problems that can lead to customer dissatisfaction. Previous studies (Van Wyk 2007; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a; Nana 2018; Strydom 2019) that were conducted in the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM) indicate that fashion entrepreneurs lack technical and business skills which contribute to customer dissatisfaction. Some aspects of dissatisfactions that fashion customers experience include poor garment quality, poor service quality, unfair pricing and no value for money. As a result, the women who wear custom-made garments are not satisfied and they stop ordering garments, or they go to another entrepreneur.

Therefore, a situation of dissatisfaction warrants research to be conducted, to explore the subject of customer satisfaction of custom-made garments. More importantly, there is lack of research that can help fashion entrepreneurs to understand customer expectations and what affects their satisfaction of custom-made garments. This study therefore seeks to explore and address this gap by investigating key factors (e. g. product quality, service quality, price, value and location) affecting customer satisfaction on custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM).

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Considering the background to this study and subsequent problem, the following research question, aim and objectives are stated.

1.5.1 Research question

What factors contributes to customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in the ELM?

1.5.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the factors that affect customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in the ELM.

1.5.3 Objectives

In order to achieve the aim of this study, literature-related, empirical-related and outcome-related objectives have been set.

1.5.3.1 Literature-related objective

The literature-related objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth literature review on customer satisfaction in order to identify and obtain background knowledge on factors affecting customer satisfaction.

1.5.3.2 Empirical-related objectives

The empirical objectives of this study were to:

1.5.3.2.1 Identify the demographic characteristics of custom-made garment customers; and

1.5.3.2.2 Explore factors that contribute to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in terms of:

- Service quality.
- Product quality.
- Price.
- Value.
- Location.

1.5.3.3 Outcome-related objective

The outcome-related objective of this study is to apply findings in making recommend strategies for fashion entrepreneurs of the ELM on how to improve the level of customer satisfaction.

1.6 KEY TERMS

This section presents key terms that were used in the study. The following are the terms and their definitions used in this study:

- **Customers** are individuals who purchase products or service for own use or consumption (Lombard & Parumasur 2017:3).
- **Customer satisfaction** is a sense of contentment after consumption of the product or service which is a result of an assessment that takes places between expectations and performance (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:493; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14; Agus 2019:655).
- **Custom-made garments** are made in accordance to actual personal measurements of an individual following their specifications and preferences (Ahmed *et al.* 2017:178; Kasiri *et al.* 2017:91) to fit a unique body and style (Di Lorenzo 2010).
- **Dissatisfaction** occurs when a customer is not satisfied with a produc or service's performance after usage (Felix 2015:42; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14; Boadi, Guoxin & Sai 2017:559).
- **Fashion entrepreneur** is a person who operates a fashion business to create wealth through innovative skills (Burke 2010:12).

1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The subsequent is an outline or brief description of each chapter of this research study:

Chapter 1 presents the introduction, background and motivation of the study. In addition, the problem statement, research question, aim and objectives of the study will be addressed.

Chapter 2 is a review of literature on customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs.

Chapter 3 describes research methodology used for the study. The data gathering method, analysis and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter 4 is the evaluation of research findings and interpretation of the study.

Chapter 5 consists of the conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter defined the boundaries of the study in brief by presenting an introduction and background, which described the three constructs, namely, customer satisfaction, fashion entrepreneurs and custom-made garments. In addition, the problem statement, research question, aim and objectives were addressed, giving a clear pathway for the study. Key terms and a chapter outline were also provided to understand the words used in the research as well as to have an overview of all the chapters of the study. The next chapter reviews the literature on the above-mentioned constructs.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents an in-depth literature overview on constructs of the study concerning customer satisfaction, fashion entrepreneurs and custom-made garments, as discussed in the sections below.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges businesses are facing is ensuring and sustaining customer satisfaction, which is salient in the financial growth of a business (Ahmad 2017:100; Khadka & Marharjan 2017:5). Thus, it is apparent that ascertaining it has become a primary goal for businesses to retain customers and thereby promote long term relationships that benefit the business (Adekiya 2016:25; Yaqub, Halim & Shehzad 2019:68). In an effort to enhance the levels of customer satisfaction, the fashion entrepreneurial businesses could employ customisation of products and services (Uma & Chandramowleeswaran 2015:127). The introduction of customised products, in this case custom-made garments, would broaden the scope of selected elements such as colour choice, style and fit preferences as well as the levels of customer satisfaction (Seo & Lang 2019:3). As a result, a business may gain competitive advantage over other businesses (Uma & Chandramowleeswaran 2015:134; Kasiri, Cheng, Sambasivan & Sidin 2017:91), if they could satisfy the needs of customers in terms of garment selection.

In view of the above, it was deemed necessary to conduct a study with the purpose explore factors that affect customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. Although there are studies available about customer satisfaction in general (Kuhn & Mostert 2015; Hameed, Dastageer & Shahab 2020), fashion entrepreneurs (Van Wyk 2007; Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014) and customisation (Tsyewu, Danquah and Gavor 2018; Makopo 2014) in the specific field of fashion, customer satisfaction was not addressed. Related studies by Makopo (2014) and Sawyerr (2019) were limited to garment quality as one of the factors that affect customer satisfaction. This study presents an opportunity to broaden current knowledge by exploring service quality, product quality, price, value and location as factors that affect customer satisfaction. The study's findings could contribute in improving customer satisfaction in the field of home-based fashion entrepreneurs.

The following is a discussion of the factors that influence customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM). The study is built on three pillars, namely, fashion entrepreneurs, customer satisfaction and custom-made garments. The discussion on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs (section 2.2) will concentrate on fashion entrepreneurs, fashion entrepreneurs in ELM, and challenges that fashion entrepreneurs face. Thereafter, customer satisfaction (section 2.3) will be presented under the sub-headings of customer satisfaction theory, approaches to satisfaction/dissatisfaction, importance of customer satisfaction and factors affecting customer satisfaction. Lastly the section on custom-made garments (2.4) will provide an overview and importance of garments, custom-made garments and factors influencing interest in garments (custom-made garments). To achieve this, relevant literature is extracted from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books and publications, along with credible internet websites. In line with the discussion, a theoretical framework summarising the study is presented in Figure 2-1 see also 2.3.

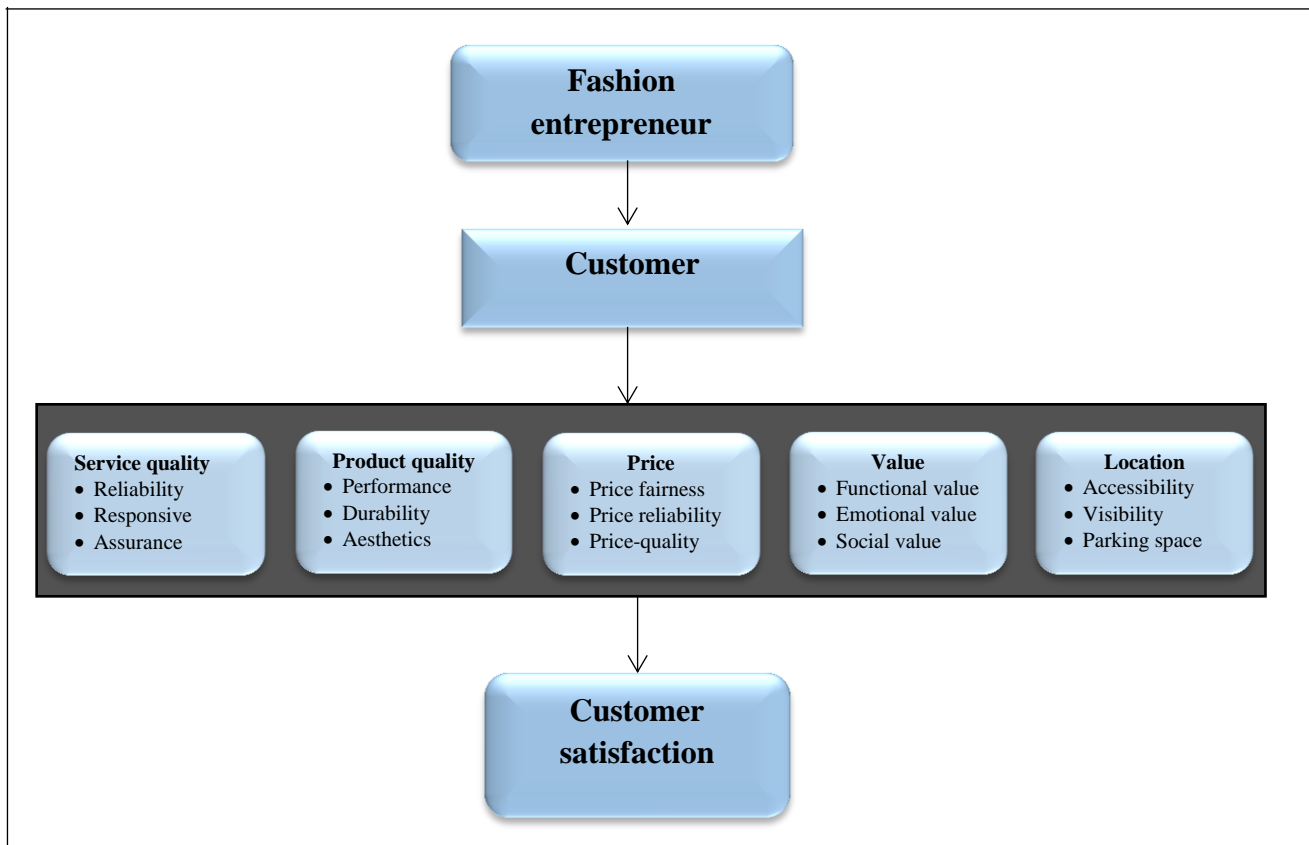


Figure 2-1: Theoretical framework adapted and modified from Ahmad *et al* (2017).

2.2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURS

Entrepreneurship and small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) are usually interchanged, although there are slight differences in their meanings (Okyere 2017:161; Strydom 2019:13). SMMEs are businesses that originated from the entrepreneurship efforts of individuals (Okyere 2017:160). Irrespective of their differences, these small businesses promote economic growth, create employment and help reduce poverty (Suhaimi, Al Mamun, Zainol, Nawi, Permerupan & Malarvizhi 2016:133; Okyere 2017:161). Both entrepreneurship and SMMEs will be considered for this study but entrepreneurship is the term that will be used. Globally, the growth and development of many economies is attributed to both entrepreneurship and small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) (Tshikhudo, Aigbavboa & Thwala 2015:1; Strydom 2017:685; Jacob & Ehijiele 2019:81). This is why the governments of Zimbabwe and Nigeria, considering their poor economies, have gone to the extent of incorporating compulsory (i.e. for Zimbabwe) education of entrepreneurship in higher institutions to prepare the youth to be self-dependent in efforts to reduce the unemployment rate (Jacob & Ehijiele 2019:81; Ndofirepi 2020:2). This is also applied in South Africa, as the CAPS Consumer Studies curriculum at school level has an entrepreneurial component which is valuable, although the effectiveness thereof is underutilized and undervalued (Du Toit 2021:1). South Africa (SA) is no different to these and other countries; 45% of its economy is contributed by these small businesses, which prompted the government to promote small businesses as they strive to minimise unemployment and grow the economy (Tshikhudo, Aigbavboa & Thwala 2015:1; Bhebhe 2016:49; Baporikar 2016:19; Strydom 2017:685). In fact, SMMEs and entrepreneurship have been proven to be significant in creating job opportunities that change and raises the economy (Suhaimi *et al.* 2016:133; Okyere 2017:161).

Entrepreneurship is the ability of an individual to generate wealth by using available resources to take advantage of possible opportunities, which includes recognising the related risks (Suhaimi *et al.* 2016:131; Okyere 2017:161). An entrepreneur is therefore a person who has that ability of identifying opportunities to make profits by utilising their creativity (Alam, Masroor, Sultana & Rahman 2016:85; Okyere 2017:161; Kabir 2018:49). In other words, “entrepreneurship is the act and entrepreneur is the actor” (Okyere 2017:161), and Kabir (2018:50) condenses it to a person who fulfils the efforts and addresses gaps. These individuals (entrepreneurs) are self-employed,

they are known to be innovative, gather resources required, have the knowledge of customers' needs, know where to get supplies and are prepared for any risks related to the business (Nashikhah & Triyono 2019:37; Strydom 2019:13; Ayo, Segun & Adebayo 2021:40). Entrepreneurs increase when times are difficult in the country because people will attempt to mitigate the effects of a depressed economy, so they become resourceful and turn to self-employment (Carr & Newell 2014:3; Suhaimi *et al.* 2016:133).

There are two classes of factors that are involved in influencing entrepreneurs to start their own businesses, namely, push and pull factors (Akinyemi & Adejumo 2017:625; Kabir 2018:50). Push factors prompt one to engage in entrepreneurship work (Kabir 2018:50); examples are unemployment, insufficient salaries and job dissatisfaction, which focus on sustaining lives and fight against poverty (Akinyemi & Adejumo 2017:625; Kabir 2018:50). On the contrary, pull factors draw one into entrepreneurship (Kabir 2018:50). Pull factors' examples are self-fulfilment, wealth and independence, which are inclined to profit making, develop and position the business well in the market (Akinyemi & Adejumo 2017:625). Also, these two classes of factors can impact differently on individuals, meaning that a push factor for one person can be a pull factor to another (Kabir 2018:50). In the same manner, these factors motivate fashion entrepreneurs to start businesses in order to alleviate poverty and satisfy their needs.

2.2.1 Fashion entrepreneur

Fashion entrepreneurs, like any other entrepreneurs, are individuals in the fashion industry who start their businesses to create wealth through their innovative skills by producing goods, or offering services in the field of fashion, for example, home-based custom-made garments, or fashion styling (Burke 2010:12; Nashikhah & Triyono 2019:37). These fashion entrepreneurs can be classified in two groups, that is artisan, or opportunistic entrepreneurs (Carr & Newell 2017:2; Jere, M. Jere, A. & Aspeling 2014:11). The artistic side of the fashion entrepreneurs is what motivates most of them to start their own fashion labels, although they have minimal knowledge on business operations (Sithole *et al.* 2018:7; Farashahi 2019:7). On the other hand, opportunistic entrepreneurs are driven by their ample knowledge in business to start a business, regardless of limited fashion technical skills (Carr & Newell 2017:2; Farashahi 2019:7). Fashion entrepreneurs can also have both artistic and opportunistic characteristics (Farashahi 2019:7). In either case, the fashion entrepreneurs are expected to have the ability to compete, be original,

determined, disciplined and be risk takers so as to be successful (Carr & Newell 2017:2; Jere *et al.* 2014:11; Nana 2018:37; Farashahi 2019:8). Although, there is no masterplan that exists for entrepreneurs to succeed, there are characteristics that are crucial for fashion entrepreneurs, discussed below:

2.2.1.1 Innovation and flexibility

Innovation is one of the factors greatly affiliated with the fashion industry (Unay & Zehir, 2012:316). It is required in the contest of obtaining customers and gaining a competitive edge (Unay & Zehir, 2012:315; Alam *et al.* 2016:86; Strydom 2017:687). Although important, it can be a problem for entrepreneurs to rely on (innovation) solely without other skills, given that the competition could copy their work (Sarkar & Karim 2019:667). This creates excessive pressure and would require them to act fast in implementing new ideas and master the way of seizing opportunities before the ideas expire, otherwise their survival would be difficult (Sarkar & Karim 2019:667). On the other hand, Strydom (2017:687), Amornpinyo (2018:116), Irjayanti and Azis (2015:523), Alam *et al.* (2016:86) and Bhatt and Sankhla (2018:1112) argue that the fashion field is constantly changing and the chances of success are higher if a business is new, innovative and flexible because these are the most needed factors to prompt rapid moves. Furthermore, innovation can shape the business into a new direction of success through the application of well created and nurtured ideas (Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014b:81). These two factors might assist entrepreneurs to gain business lost by big fashion companies and flexibility could accommodate customers' input in designing their own garments, (Sithole *et al.* 2018:9). That way, businesses would be able to survive and achieve unique designs (Sithole *et al.* 2018:11).

2.2.1.2 Passion and Ambition

If a fashion entrepreneur strongly desires to be successful, then they should be passionate and motivated to build the business (Irjayanti & Azis 2015:523; Strydom 2017:687; Nashikhah & Triyono 2019:37). This is because much work and many hours are required to achieve a lot, yet the rewards are small without a guarantee that one would succeed (Shroff 2019:1). To get through all these difficult moments, entrepreneurs must be passionate about their work to lead to great accomplishments (Irjayanti & Azis 2015:523). Together with passion, being ambitious motivates an entrepreneur to make an effort to generate something that is exceptional as well as

show the magnitude to which the entrepreneur is prepared to reach in realising their goal (Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014b:81). It is essential to note that money should not be the driving factor in this business, but the desire to be competitive, to surpass targets set for oneself and to persevere would give positive results and differentiate an individual from other entrepreneurs (Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014b:81; Shroff 2019:1). In addition, it should be kept in mind that plans made in the absence of passion lack a crucial element to identify a gap in the industry (Malhotra 2019:1).

2.2.1.3 Determination

Great success is achieved by those who are determined, people who can endure the hardships of running a business and those who persist until they realise their dream (Van Wyk 2007:20; Shroff 2019:1). It is important to keep in mind that developing a business needs time, let alone success and requires even more time, hence giving up should not be the first option if one is determined (Van Wyk 2007:20; Shroff 2019:1).

2.2.1.4 Confidence

Confidence is an important characteristic for a fashion entrepreneur to possess; however, over-confidence can also be detrimental in setting up a business (Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014b:81; Shroff 2019:2; Malhotra 2019:2). Overrating oneself would suppress knowledge intake as well as the outcome, it is advised that the entrepreneur should leave room for failure but with certainty that they could manage a business, and their judgement should not be clouded by the need to achieve (Shroff 2019:2; Malhotra 2019:2; Nashikhah & Triyono 2019:37). Self belief inspires individuals to set high goals, helps in overcoming hardships and to develop exceptional plans for businesses (Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014b:81). Furthermore, a person cannot expect other people to believe in them if they do not believe in themselves (Malhotra 2019:2). In essence, confidence is an element that is required to become a successful entrepreneur.

2.2.1.5 Communication Skills

To get people interested into a particular brand, the owner should be able to effectively communicate their vision and ideas, otherwise the business will not reach its heights of success (Ayo, Segun & Adebayo 2021:38). Moreover, to create relationships that persuade people and produce results all centre on good communicating skills (Van Wyk 2007:19), which are achieved

by means of writing, listening, speaking and reading (Ayo *et al.* 2021:38). These methods allow communication between the entrepreneur and the customer to be clear, to be interpreted and comprehended, leaving no questions if the skill is mastered (Ayo *et al.* 2021:38). The fashion business is people-oriented, whereby entrepreneurs maintain contact with suppliers, designers, manufacturers and distributors, thus communication skills are an essential quality (Malhotra 2019:2). Moreover, important decisions to run the business will need to be communicated clearly by the owner.

2.2.1.6 Risk Tolerance

Although people do not like to live in uncertainty, entrepreneurs should be ready to take risks and provide solutions where possible (Van Wyk 2007:22; Chavez 2016:17). In addition, Bhatt and Sankhla (2018:1112) claim that the path to success is paved when the entrepreneur knows how to deal with situations that have no guarantee. Giving emphasis on that point, Moloi and Nkhanhle (2014b:80) and Chavez (2016:17) state that in reality, risks are unavoidable because starting a business is itself risk taking, and additional risks will emerge when the business is in operation. Moreover, entrepreneurs use personal finances to start a business, which is a big risk given that there is no assurance of success (Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014b:80; Nana 2018:40). Therefore, entrepreneurs should calculate the risk they are taking and not to rush into decisions, otherwise failure will be inescapable (Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014b:80; Nana 2018:40; Malhotra 2019:2). Taking risks help entrepreneurs to come out of their comfort zone, which may lead to new opportunities as well as develop their socio-economic status (Ayo *et al.* 2021:40). The brilliance of an entrepreneur is in the ability to recognise and minimise the risks in business (Nana 2018:40; Shroff 2019:2). Most of all, entrepreneurs should not delay setting up their businesses by waiting for ideal conditions as this would ultimately prevent many to realise their dream of becoming an entrepreneur (Malhotra 2019:2).

2.2.2 Fashion entrepreneurs in Emfuleni Local Municipality

Emfuleni Local Municipality is dominated by home-based and owner-operated fashion entrepreneurs which form approximately 80% of fashion businesses in the area (Van Wyk 2007:96; Nana 2018:118). The majority of these fashion entrepreneurs are motivated by push factors (see 2.2) to start their own businesses in order to survive (Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:230).

To support their businesses financially they use borrowed funds from family and personal savings (Van Wyk 2007:96; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:230; Nana 2018:93). Regarding sewing knowledge, some of them have attained tertiary education in fashion, inherited the skills from family members, on-the-job training and government training workshops (Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:230). Like other small businesses which have a limited budget for advertising their businesses (Strydom 2017:687), these entrepreneurs use word-of-mouth, guerrilla marketing (unconventional way of advertising products and services that a business offers), viral marketing (customers use internet to share information about products and services of a business) and digital marketing (online marketing) as their advertising tool (Van Wyk 2007:96; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:230, Strydom, Kempen & Tselepis 2022:5). However, they also experience challenges in running their businesses.

2.2.3 Challenges that fashion entrepreneurs face

All businesses across industries are bound to encounter problems, especially small businesses but it is up to the owner to focus on challenges and build the business (Irjayanti & Azis 2015:523). Some of these challenges, if not solved, may cause customer dissatisfaction, which is not good for the business (Van Wyk & Van Aardt 2011; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014). The difficulties that fashion entrepreneurs mainly experience are that they have limited knowledge in the making of garments and skills in business, which are critical in a business operation (Almanza & Van den Berg 2016:9; Sitharam & Hoque 2016:279). Similarly, Tsyewu (2018:17) found that due to improper training, substandard work was being produced by Ghanaian entrepreneurs and their industry experienced a decrease in its activities. The problem is they prefer to be trained on the job, which deprives them of a tertiary course that prepares them for challenges (Tsyewu 2018:17). This was noted by Sarkar and Karim (2019:669) that many entrepreneurs who went through entrepreneurship training had a chance of survival compared to self-trained entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, insufficient funds to support the business for high rentals, materials and equipment that are costly have added to the strain on fashion entrepreneurs (Sithole *et al.* 2018:10; Sarkar & Karim 2019:666). Tough competition is also a challenge in the fashion industry because it has easy access, which allows unqualified entrepreneurs to venture into the fashion area (Irjayanti & Azis 2015:523; Almanza & Van den Berg 2016:10; Sarkar & Karim 2019:667). This may

become a huge problem because technical processes are involved which needs training and skills (Farashahi 2019:10). In addition, cheap products that are imported from other countries are making it difficult for local producers to compete since customers become price sensitive because of an economic crisis (Sithole *et al.* 2018:10). Another problem highlighted in the study of Sithole *et al.* (2018), which fashion entrepreneurs face is that sometimes they sell items on credit and lose money because they do not have a system in place to claim it back.

In like manner, Emfuleni fashion entrepreneurs share the same difficulties as other fashion entrepreneurs, such as insufficient knowledge on how business is operated and the personality that is required to run a business (Van Wyk & Van Aardt 2011:182). Also, they do not have suitable equipment to do their job properly such as cover stitch machines, industrial overlocking machines, domestic press, industrial press and industrial irons (Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:231). This is because the entrepreneurs do not have enough funds to buy the machines, given that they are costly (Van Wyk 2007:96; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:231). Consequently, the business will be affected by all these problems and can suppress revenue enhancement.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's theoretical framework (Figure 2-1) is adapted and modified from the study of Ahmad *et al* (2017). The conceptual framework (Ahmad *et al* 2017) was developed by combining SERVQUAL model which examined five dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles and empathy) of service, Utilitarian and Hedonic model (perceived value) and Cognitive Dissonance Theory (customer expectations). The study (Ahmad *et al* 2017) was conducted to determine if service, perceived value and customer expectations influenced customer satisfaction. In this study the focus is on five aspects concerning customer satisfaction, namely, service quality, product quality, price, value and location. These aspects are discussed in view of the Expectancy-disconfirmation theoretical perspective.

2.3.1 Customer satisfaction theory Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theoretical Perspective

Various theories were developed about the standards used with regards to customer satisfaction evaluation, such as the Equity Theory, the Attribution Theory and the Value-Percept Theory, to name few (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:491; Yuksel, A & Yuksel, F 2008:95). In order to

provide an understanding of customer satisfaction, the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) was chosen as the perspective from which this study was conducted. This theory consists of four elements, namely, expectations, performance, disconfirmation and satisfaction (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:492), that are discussed preceding the description of Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory:

- **Expectations** are beliefs that customers have of how products will function before purchases (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:492; Gocek & Becceren 2012:89). These beliefs are mainly developed from advertisements that businesses make, previous experience with the product or service, word-of-mouth from friends and family, price as well as the presence of customer-business relationship (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:492; Gronroos 1984:37; Kuhn & Mostert 2015:35). These expectations are significant when making choices on the type of products/services to buy (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:492; Sattari 2007:36). After consumption, expectations then act as a reference point of the performance to be assessed against (Oliver 1980:460; Churchill & Surprenant 1982:492). In custom-made garments, for instance, expectations can be affected by the fashion entrepreneur's effectiveness, price or quality of garment construction.
- **Performance** refers to how the real product or service is functioning, which customers compare with predicted expectations and as a result of this evaluation, disconfirmation may occur (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:492). In relation to garments, the performance attributes fall under the categories of aesthetic (e. g. colour, appearance) or functional performance (e. g. comfort, care, fit) (Hugo & Van Aardt 2012:465-466).
- **Disconfirmation** implies the difference between pre-existing expectations and actual performance of a product or service, and is either positive or negative (Churchill & Surprenant 1982:492; Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F. 2001:108). Satisfaction or dissatisfaction will result from this discrepancy (Churchill *et al.* 1982:492). However, when both sides of the evaluation are equal, confirmation takes place which also satisfies the customer.
- **Satisfaction** occurs when there is a confirmation of the expectations. It is an impression that depends on an individual and whenever it is assessed it is done against a reference point (Olander 1977 cited in Yuksel, A & Yuksel, F 2008:95; Mill 2011:8), implying that satisfaction with a product or service may differ from person to person. This is due to different measures used to evaluate satisfaction (see also 2.3.2).

The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) was developed by Oliver (1977) after discovering that customer satisfaction theories that pre-existed (Festinger 1957; Sheriff & Hovland 1961) had limitations (Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F 2008:99). The EDP attained recognition in research studies as opposed to other theories of assessing customer satisfaction (Oh & Parks 1997 cited in Yuksel, A & Yuksel, F 2008:98). EDP assumes that customers have expectations of how a product or service will function before purchasing (Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F 2001:108). These expectations are used as a baseline to measure satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Oliver 1980:460; Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F 2001:108). Similar to other customers, customers of custom-made garments rely on aspects such as word-of-mouth or social media when they decide to order garments from a fashion entrepreneur. Consequently, this influences their expectations of how the garments will look like, or how the garments will fit, or how the colour of the garment will suit them. As a result, confirmation, positive or negative disconfirmation will occur (Spreng, MacKenzie, Olshavsky 1996:15; Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F 2001:108). Confirmation is when the expectations that the customer had before buying a product/service were fulfilled, thus satisfaction will be achieved (Spreng *et al.* 1996:15; Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F. 2001:108), for example, when a customer expects a properly finished garment and he/she receives a product fulfilling the expectation. Positive disconfirmation refers to tangible performance that surpasses a customer's prior expectations which results in satisfaction (Oliver 1980:461; Spreng *et al.* 1996:15; Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F 2001:108). In this regard, customers rely on the expertise of the fashion entrepreneur. Thus, customers are satisfied because the outcome exceeds their expectations. Negative disconfirmation means that the real performance of the product or service is lower than expectations, which lead to dissatisfaction (Oliver 1980:460; Spreng *et al.* 1996:15; Yuksel, A. & Yuksel, F 2001:108; Krivobokova 2009:567; Aigbavboa & Thwala 2013:49). For example, dissatisfaction might occur when a customer expects a garment of high quality fabric but then receives a garment constructed of low quality fabric.

2.3.2 Customer satisfaction

Customers are people who buy products with the intention to consume or possess them (Lombard & Parumasur 2017:3), which emphasises their importance in any business (Saha, Islam & Hoque 2016:252; Khadka & Marharjan 2017:1). For this reason, knowledge of customers' needs, buying power and behaviour patterns should be of primary concern (Lombard

& Parumasur 2017:3), of any business or entrepreneur. In agreement with this notion, Hameed *et al.* (2020:628) suggest that businesses should change focus from product-centric to customer-centric due to the fact that customers are the main drivers to business. It is therefore crucial to work closely with customers (Hameed *et al.* 2020:628), and failure to do this will leave customers with no choice but make comparisons of what is available with the objective to acquire products and services that fulfil their expectations (Dimyati 2016:76; Seo 2018:2; Hameed *et al.* 2020:628). With reference to this, providing customer satisfaction can help in securing market share.

Customer satisfaction can be defined as an impression of gratification following a good or excellent consumption experience of the product or service, which is a result of comparing expectations and performance (Schiffman & Kanuk 2014:10; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14). If what was expected of the product is the same as how it functions, or when the function exceeds the expectations, then satisfaction will occur (Schiffman & Kanuk 2014:10; Felix 2015:42; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14; Agus 2019:655). In contrast, dissatisfaction occurs when there are unfavourable or unpleasant experiences when using the product or service (Felix 2015:42; Kotler & Armstrong 2016:14; Boadi, Guoxin & Sai 2017:559). In customised garments, customers expect well-fitting and accurate constructed garments in which satisfaction would occur if the garments received are well-fitting or if these expectations are surpassed, and conversely dissatisfaction will take place. Hence, customer satisfaction has become a unique selling point and a vital factor for a business plan of action in a competitive market attempting to retain customers (Eklof, Podkorytora & Malova 2018:1). Similarly, as stated by Hameed *et al.* (2020:630), customer satisfaction emerges as a critical element in running a successful fashion business.

In order to guarantee satisfaction, businesses should identify their determinants. Previous studies highlighted determinants which include service quality, product quality, price, value and location of business (Khan & Afsheen 2012; Ehsani & Ehsani 2015; Razak, Nirwanto & Triatmanto 2016; Gordon 2017; Wilbard, Mbilinyi, Maliva & Mkwizu *et al.* 2018; Dimyati 2016 & Agus 2019). However, it is a challenge to meet customers' needs because their expectations change fast, due to their experiences and wide information on products provided by businesses when advertising

(Yaqub *et al.* 2019:66; Agus 2019:653). It is therefore, for businesses to remain informed and keep in touch with customers' needs and expectations (Yaqub *et al.* 2019:68).

2.3.3 Approaches to customer satisfaction (and dissatisfaction)

There are two approaches to customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction, which entails transaction-specific and cumulative satisfaction (Anderson, Fornell & Lehmann 1994:54; Su & Tong 2016:430; Bakar, Amaliay & Hidayati 2019:163).

2.3.3.1 Transaction-specific satisfaction

Transaction-specific satisfaction is when a customer is satisfied or dissatisfied with a particular product after its consumption (Anderson *et al.* 1994:54; Hamza 2014:4; Su & Tong 2016:430; Bakar *et al.* 2019:163). In other words, the customer is satisfied or dissatisfied with the purchasing of a specific garment item that meets or does not meet expectations.

2.3.3.2 Cumulative satisfaction

Cumulative satisfaction involves the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of all the products bought from one shop at different times (Anderson *et al.* 1994:54; Hamza 2014:40; Su & Tong 2016:430), for example, customers are satisfied/dissatisfied after rating all the garments they bought from a fashion entrepreneur over time. It appears that cumulative satisfaction is viewed differently by both businesses and customers. Businesses view cumulative satisfaction as a predictor of customer loyalty and repeat purchase intentions, whilst customers view cumulative satisfaction as a differentiator of various business relationships available (Kuhn 2015:33; Popp & Woratschek 2017:259). Additionally, cumulative satisfaction is the reason businesses are motivated to finance customer satisfaction initiatives and the evaluation is more constant because it develops over a period (Hamza 2014:4, Su & Tong 2016:430; Bakar *et al.* 2019:163). Zhong and Moon (2020:3) noted that there is a direct link between this assessment of cumulative experience of a product or service and decision-making process as well as buying behaviour.

2.3.4 Importance of customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is of great importance to any business because it provides a pathway that makes it possible to position the business strategically over competitors (Bello 2018:321).

Although it is important for any business to grow their customer base, there is consensus about the importance of building long-term relationships with customers (Adekiya 2016:25; Duy & Hoang 2017:383; Khadka & Marharjan 2017:5646). If these relationships are nurtured well, they may result into repeated purchases, positive word-of-mouth and customer loyalty (Adekiya 2016:25; Khadka & Marharjan 2017:5646; Bello 2018:322; Bakar *et al.* 2019:163). The opposite is also true when customers are not satisfied with purchases or services, they can harm the business reputation through spreading negative word-of-mouth and complaining behaviour which may affect the financial growth of the business (Duy & Hoang 2017:383; Bakar *et al.* 2019:163). This behaviour results in switching to other businesses without indicating what dissatisfies them (Hamza 2014:2; Duy & Hoang 2017:383). This is substantiated by the findings in Makopo *et al.* (2016:200), that customers who were not satisfied with their custom-made garments switched to alternative businesses and engaged in negative word-of-mouth.

However, the opposite behaviour may also occur. Dissatisfied customers repurchased from the same business that disappointed them, while some customers who were satisfied with the products and services rarely or never again purchase from the store (Leecharoen 2019:124). It was also indicated that repeated garment orders may occur with the presence of trust and commitment (Leecharoen 2019:132). Since customers are inclined to seek other businesses if their desires are not fulfilled, it therefore remains significant for them to be satisfied despite the action they will take. It is more difficult when it involves small businesses because it may prompt the entrepreneurs to close doors (Duy & Hoang 2017:383; Fourie 2015:181). With this understanding, Kumar and Reinartz (2016:37), Atiyah (2017:24), Apunda (2017:4) and Wilbard *et al.* (2018:16) suggest that to satisfy these needs, business should offer good service, prices customers can afford, value for money, a convenient location and garments that are of good quality; for example, customers may become loyal because of getting value for money every time they purchase a garment. This suggests that home-based fashion entrepreneurs should keep everything under control, including attending to customers' complaints in a fast and effective manner to avoid failure (Fourie 2015:182; Peprah 2015:8).

2.3.5 Factors affecting customer satisfaction

Various studies suggest that service quality (Dimyati 2016; Agus 2019), product quality (Makopo *et al.* 2016; Apunda 2017), price (Matzler, Wu¨rtele & Renzl 2006; Mbengo 2017),

value (Zeithaml 1988; Aulia, Sukati, & Sulaiman 2016) and location (Gordon 2017; Wilbard *et al.* 2018) are factors that affect customer satisfaction. These are discussed, considering customer satisfaction of custom-made garments by home-based fashion entrepreneur.

2.3.5.1 Service quality

Much attention has been given to service quality across industries because of its ability to promote customer satisfaction (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2010:10; Agus 2019:653) and because of its multidimensional factor (see dimensions of service quality 2.3.5.1.1). Service quality can be defined as attributes of service (e. g. delivery time) satisfies the desires and anticipations of customers (Dimiyati 2016:74; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200; Samudro 2019:1078). Providing excellent service will earn companies a favourable position and strengthen their status in the market, particularly with companies that are not able to provide good product quality (Dimiyati 2016:74; Xu Blankson & Prybutok 2017:21; Agus 2019:652; Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp & Oláh 2019:7; Samudro 2019:1078). The opposite is also true as satisfaction levels can go down because of bad service experiences, even if the product is good (Sawyer 2019:81). Service providing does not only include monetary exchange, but also the emotions between the customer and service provider, for example, a smile and being responsive seem to be not significant but they have far-reaching consequences, whereas unfriendliness and unresponsiveness will negatively affect customer satisfaction (Bakar *et al.* 2019:163). As mentioned, participants from the study of Sawyer (2019:81) concur with Bakar *et al.* (2019:163) but they also claim that garment quality may be compromised if the customer-entrepreneur association becomes very friendly. More service quality duties that can impress customers, if implemented well, are to handle customer complaints quickly, with ease and friendliness, enlightening customers of products and awareness of customer service needs (Khan & Afsheen 2012:12834; Agus 2019:652). This also is applicable to fashion, as most participants in the study of Hameed *et al.* (2020:634) attest that their satisfaction was met when the purchase system of the store was accommodative to customers and allowed them to change garments if they had a complaint with the garments they bought.

However, Khan and Afsheen (2012:12834) point out that mistakes are inevitable, and customers are aware that businesses are not perfect, but they expect action to be taken regarding their

concerns. In case errors occur, businesses should take it as an opportunity to redeem their reputation positively by surpassing customers' expectations (Atiyah 2017:22; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1196). In addition, this is well addressed by ensuring of good service during purchases as well as post-purchase (Dimiyati (2016:74). Customers give equal position to the service received and the way that service is received, compared to their expectations (Kasiri *et al.* 2017:92 & Pakurár *et al.* 2019:7).

The level of service quality rendered is also crucial so businesses should give greater importance in educating their employees on appropriate behaviour such as friendliness, politeness and knowledge of products (Kuhn 2015:33; Bakar *et al.* 2019:164). That way, customer complaints will be minimised, satisfaction levels will increase together with positive word-of-mouth (Pakurár, *et al.* 2019:7; Yaqud *et al.* 2019:66). If dissatisfaction occurs, negative word-of-mouth will be conveyed, considering the impact of social media (e. g. Facebook, twitter), which will be detrimental to the growth of a business (Agus 2019:655).

2.3.5.1.1 Dimensions of service quality

The SERVQUAL model was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithmal & Berry (1985; 1988), which consists of five dimensions, namely, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles and empathy. SERVQUAL assists to identify the impact of quality dimensions on the development of service quality, which may lead to customer satisfaction (Bello 2018:324). As mentioned earlier (1.2.4.1), for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on reliability, responsiveness and assurance.

- Reliability is when customers can depend on businesses for providing them with quality performances and accuracy on billing or providing the service (Atiyah 2017:23; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200). Maintaining this, Pakurár *et al.* (2019:8) claims that it will have an effect on the satisfaction of customers. Reliability is shown by keeping promises that were made to deliver garments on time, or meeting on agreed dates for fitting garments.
- Responsiveness is the readiness to react quickly in issuing a service; it also includes handling the concerns of customers about a product or service (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985:47; Atiyah 2017:23; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200; Agus 2019:655). In

addition, Pakurár *et al.* (2019:9) highlights that responsiveness involves passing on of information about delivery dates, providing full attention and willingness to help in every way possible and avoid distress to customers, for example, taking the shortest achievable time to correct errors in a garment.

- Assurance is when business employees, or the owner, are confident in their product knowledge and skills, which would give customers confidence and trust to purchase from that specific business (Atiyah 2017:23; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1200; Pakurár *et al.* 2019:5). Further, the ability to maintain trust and keeping customers informed through interacting with them regardless of their demographics (e. g. education, age) that would give them assurance to become regular customers of the business (Pakurár *et al.* 2019:9). This is shown by a fashion entrepreneur, concerning, for example, knowledge of fabric, suggestion of suitable colour and silhouettes for different figures can make the customer trust its business services.

2.3.5.2 Product quality

Product quality can be defined as the outstanding features of a product that has the ability to fulfill customers' desires (Fiore & Damhorst 1992:168; Kotler & Armstrong 2010:240; Razak *et al.* 2016:6; Demir & Mukhlis 2017:67), which in turn would strengthen and distinguish the position of the business in the market (Kuhn 2015:32; Demir & Mukhlis 2017:67). Garment quality is impacted by the quality of fabric used, its construction and the fit, thus it will be considered good quality if it performs as it is intended (Tsyewu *et al.* 2018:16). For example, fit is one of garment quality features and is of great importance in determining custom-made garment quality when fulfilled customers' appreciation of these garments is boosted (Tsyewu *et al.* 2018:21; Honu, Agbenyeku & Addy 2020:13). The only problem with garment quality features (e. g. fit, style, durability) is that it depends on the wearer despite the fact that the producer met the specified quality standards (Shin & Damhorst 2018:353). Study findings of Apunda (2017) on custom-made garments indicated that good quality garments were purchased in huge quantities, which resulted into high revenue for the business. On the other hand, Makopo *et al.* (2016:199) argues that a problem may arise if the garment's quality is sub-standard, since customers pay for custom-made garments before any construction because the evaluation of garment quality takes place post-purchase. It is therefore important for fashion entrepreneurs to

be on terms with the customer-based approach to quality in order to provide them with quality products that specifically fulfill their expectations.

2.3.5.2.1 Customer-based product quality approach

A customer-based approach is an aspect related to product quality (Garvin 1984:25; Demir & Mukhlis 2017:66), and although this approach is subjective, it matters the most because evaluation comes from the end-user (customer) of the product (Mehta 2012:9; Razak *et al.* 2016:61; Demir & Mukhlis 2017:66). The customer-based approach defines product quality as the extent to which the expectations or needs of a customer are satisfied by a product (Garvin 1984:26; Fields, Hague, Koby, Lommel & Melby 2014:406). Therefore, product quality is a crucial aspect for businesses to satisfy its customers (Apunda 2017:34; Xu *et al.* 2017:21; Agus 2019:652). For example, if customers expect to receive well-constructed garments, it would be regarded as high quality if the garment was indeed well constructed.

However, there are three challenges associated with this approach that Garvin (1984:27) and Smith (1993:238) highlighted. The first problem is that some customers' needs may only arise after the product is presented (Garvin 1984:27; Smith 1993:238). In custom-made garments, some fashion entrepreneurs require customers to provide fabric which they may later realise they supplied a lightweight fabric rather than heavy weight fabric to make the desired garment. Secondly, it could be a challenge to convert customers' needs into product features (Garvin 1984:27; Smith 1993:238). Based on the researcher's experience with custom-made garments, customers could describe, explain or provide a drawing of the garment they have in mind. However, when the fashion entrepreneur has to construct the actual garment, the problems are realised. In addition, Makopo *et al.* (2016:202) pointed out that it can sometimes be hard to share emotions and intangible ideas that a customer expects to see on a garment. Thirdly, it is not feasible for one product to have the ability to meet all customers' needs given that they are different and like different attributes of a product (Garvin 1984:27; Smith 1993:238). Therefore, a product that satisfies most customers is considered to be high quality (Garvin 1984:27). Customers use different measures to identify quality of products, such as intrinsic and extrinsic features that are relevant to their needs (Agyekum *et al.* 2015:25; Kasambala 2016:2; Makopo *et al.* 2016:186; Apunda 2017:37).

- **Intrinsic features**

Intrinsic features are embedded to the product, making it difficult to change the product without changing the product's appearance, which includes style or design, fabric and construction (Hugo & Van Aardt 2012:462; Kuhn 2015:32; Apunda 2017:14; Makopo *et al.* 2016:186; Suganya & Ganesamurthy 2020:414). They (intrinsic features) are frequently utilised to determine quality when the product is in use; searching for products before purchase and when the features are expected to offer high benefits (Zeithaml 1988:9; Mbambonduna 2018:4). Some intrinsic features can be judged on site, for example colour and fabric, whereas style and design can only be verified by fitting the garment before the actual purchase is made. Moreover, they can satisfy several unexpressed anticipations of a customer about self, popularity and aesthetic appearance (Suganya & Ganesamurthy 2020:417). Intrinsic features are continually evaluated until the garment is no longer wanted, which would make it possible for customers to choose where they can buy their garments on a regular basis (Apunda 2017:35). The problem in some cases, is that customers misjudge products because they do not have enough information on product features (Fiore & Damhorst 1992:168).

- **Extrinsic features**

Extrinsic features can be changed without changing the product's (a garment, in this case) look, for example, price and brand (Kuhn 2015:32; Aulia *et al.* 2016:153; Makopo *et al.* 2016: 186; Suganya & Ganesamurthy 2020:414). These features are more frequently applied when customers find it difficult to assess a product and cannot find readily available information about garment features on clothing information labels (Zeithaml 1988:9; Mbambonduna 2018:4). As a result, price becomes an indicator of quality (Agyekum *et al.* 2015:25; Kuhn 2015:32; Mbambonduna 2018:4).

2.3.5.2.2 Dimensions of product quality

Product quality has eight dimensions that Garvin (1984) proposed, which include performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics and perceived quality. These can be used to position a business in the market (Garvin, 1984:30; Jaskulka 2013:32; Thurai 2017:9). Product quality is critical and is impacted by these dimensions (Garvin,

1984:30). For the purpose of this study, performance, durability and aesthetics will be the focus as these are regarded as important by custom-made garment customers when considering quality (Shin 2013:2; Apunda 2017:4).

- Performance refers to features of a product that provides utilitarian benefits to the customer, which affects the way the product functions. This is evident when a garment retains colourfastness, strength or resists abrasion (Garvin 1984:30; Mehta 2012:9; Syahrial, Suzuki, Schvaneveldt & Masuda 2018:96; Du Preez, Dreyer, Botha, Van der Colff & Coelho 2018:38);
- Durability is the ability of a product (garment) to stand daily use, strain and damage before it is replaced or becomes undesirable (Mehta 2012:9; Demir & Mukhlis 2017:68; Syahrial *et al.* 2018:97; Du Preez *et al.* 2018:46). Further durability is when a garment lasts for a long-time.
- Aesthetics is demonstrated by the look of the product (garment); how appealing and how well it fits the wearer. This in turn depends on the individual choices of style/design or fabric (Mehta 2012:9; Thurai 2017:14; Demir & Mukhlis 2017:68; Syahrial *et al.* 2018:96; Farashahi 2019:69). Garment quality is not only the customers' concern, but it should be exceptional and appealing (Apunda 2017:34) regarding the style and exclusiveness.

2.3.5.3 Price

The price of products impacts the economic prosperity of a business, and is core to its survival. Businesses should therefore be prudent when pricing their products (Parumasur & Lombard 2014:9; Dimyati 2016:75; Konuk 2017:142). Price can be defined as the money required to buy products that customers are willing to pay in order to own or use the product or service (Parumasur & Lombard 2014:24; Dimyati 2016:75; Razak *et al.* 2016:61). Price is an extrinsic feature and is usually the first element that customers assess when purchasing products, which may influence customer satisfaction as well as the way customers perceive the business (Konuk 2017:142; Du Preez *et al.* 2018:36; Hameed *et al.* 2020:630). Price is often regarded as an important factor for customer satisfaction than the actual product quality (Popp & Woratschek

2017:255; Cham, Lim & Cheng 2018:179). Custom-made garments are a good illustration of this aspect because high prices are viewed to be an indicator of good quality products, even if the construction may be sub-standard (Ahmed. J. Ahmed. I & Chowdhury 2017:178).

Considering customers' perceptions and behaviour when determining prices may benefit the business because customers who are satisfied and loyal become less sensitive to product prices (Demirgunes 2015:212; Popp & Woratschek 2017:263). Higher levels of satisfaction are obtained when product benefits surpass product price, which also has great influence in accepting new products (Mbengo 2017: 270; Popp & Woratschek 2017:267).

2.3.5.3.1 Dimensions of price

Like service and product quality, price is multi-dimensional. Six dimensions of price satisfaction were identified by Matzler *et al.* (2006), namely, price fairness, price reliability, price quality ratio, price transparency, price confidence and relative price. These dimensions are extremely important when customers are purchasing products and are key factors to customer satisfaction (Mbengo 2017: 270). The dimensions explored in this study are price fairness, price reliability and price quality ratio.

- Price fairness refers to reasonable prices for products in comparison with the benefits that the customer will gain, what other customers are paying and what competitors are charging for the same product (Mbengo & Phiri 2017:272; Konuk 2017:142; Yaqub *et al.* 2019:66). If the prices are too expensive compared to competitors, it will discourage customers to buy from that business (Cham *et al.* 2018:179). Fair pricing of products has a significant impact on the way customers perceive a business (Zhong & Moon 2020:2), especially when they pay different prices compared to other customers. This may lead to unwillingness to purchase from the business and lead ultimately to customer dissatisfaction (Razak *et al.* 2016:6; Zhong & Moon 2020:2). Unfavourable pricing may cause customers to switch from one business to another (Keaveney 1995).
- Price reliability refers to prices that are constant and have no unexpected charges of a product or service (Mutonyi, Beukel, Gyau & Hjortso 2015:1071; Mbengo & Phiri 2017:272), for example, the quoted price is maintained from the time the customer places an order until the order is completed and delivered.

- Price quality ratio is when the price charged and product quality offered are at the same level, in other words there is balance between price and quality (Mutonyi *et al.* 2015:1071; Razak *et al.* 2016:60; Mbengo & Phiri 2017:272), for example, the quality of the garment should correspond with the price charged.

2.3.5.4 Value

Value can be defined as an assessment of what is gained from the product in contrast to the price paid for the product (Anderson *et al.* 1994:54-55; Kurtulus & Okumus 2010:23; Kumar & Reinartz 2016:36; Razak *et al.* 2016:60). As a result, value perceptions are impacted by this exchange between the price and product quality, which is important as it may encourage repurchase intentions as well as an increased revenue (Demirgunes 2015:211-212; Aulia *et al.* 2016:151; Kumar & Reinartz 2016:60). Positive behaviour of value-centred customers towards the supplier (fashion entrepreneur) will increase and customers would be more satisfied if benefits such as comfort, fit and style are a priority (Aulia *et al.* 2016:151; Animashaun, Tunkarimu & Dastane 2016:100; Du Preez *et al.* 2018:38).

However, Garvin (1984:27) and Aulia *et al.* (2016:151) argued that a product may not possess all the value dimensions needed by the customer because a business may not have the ability to offer the dimensions in need through the product. Importantly, businesses need a better view of perceived value to determine the dimensions that they can create, which should be done through the customers' point of view (Aulia *et al.* 2016:151; Bai, Li & Niu 2016:916). This is because it is the customers who recognise and select what value is; based on this, customers' buying behaviour is crucially affected by perceived value (Bai *et al.* 2016:916; Puolaski 2016:7). Another important point is that businesses should be aware that customers derive value from what a product offers, and also view products as a collection of benefits rather than a collection of features (Aulia 2016:153; Bai *et al.* 2016:916). As an illustration in custom-made garments, its benefits are uniqueness, fit and comfort. Value is essential in promoting and enhancing the position of the business to gain a unique selling point and long-term success (Morar 2013:169; Puolaski 2016:35; Zahid & Ahmed 2017:47). The following dimensions of value are briefly discussed.

2.3.5.4.1 Dimensions of value

Products possess different dimensions of value they can offer to consumers such as functional value, emotional value and social value. These dimensions could be offered at once otherwise some products might lack a certain value, which could result in customers not satisfied with the product (Bai *et al.* 2016:916).

- Functional value is when a product offers the benefit of performing well to the user (Zahid & Ahmed 2017:47; Zhang, Bian, Cao & Yu 2018:48), like the reliability and durability of a garment (Puolaski 2016:29). Functional value is one of the basic values a customer should attain before experiencing other benefits of the product.
- Emotional value is when positive feelings toward a product are raised (Morar 2013:174; Demirgunes 2015:213; Puolaski 2016:29; Animashaun, *et al.* 2016:13; Zhang *et al.* 2018:48). For instance, a garment that fits well may boost positive feelings about one's body shape (Shin 2013:1). Positive emotions enhance satisfaction, which can lead to customers frequenting a business, while negative emotions can discourage the satisfaction and perceptions of customers towards the value of the products (Animashaun, *et al.* 2016:23; Aulia *et al.* 2016:154).
- Social value is when the benefits of a product would encourage social relations of the customer by providing a feeling of belonging to a certain group as well as maintaining their need for individuality (Bai *et al.* 2016:920; Jiang & Zhang 2018:48; Zhang *et al.* 2018:48). This is illustrated when garments that fit improves a successful outcome, self-worth, confidence and social well-being (Shin 2013:2). Social value has become a matter of concern to customers when purchasing clothes owing to the knowledge acquired and the increase in experience of the products (Bai *et al.* 2016:917).

2.3.5.5 Location

Business location refers to the area where the business is situated to carry out operations that is accessible to customers (John, Ejikeme & Alfred 2015:296; Risnawati, Sumarga & Purwanto 2019:40; Amini & Wiranatakusuma 2020:33). A strategic location can influence the success of a business by the number of customers who will gain from a place (Dube, Brunelle, & Legros

2016:146; Gordon 2017:18; Amini & Wiranatakusuma 2020:33). Prices of the products, type of business, delivery network or individual guidelines can be affected by the environmental issues, and it is of utmost importance to understand the surroundings of the location from where the business will operate (John *et al.* 2015:296; Dube *et al.* (2016:146). An underrated business location can have negative consequences for the business, such as low profits and growth (John *et al.* 2015:295; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1197). In light of this, Gordon (2017:10) provides an overview that the chosen location for business operations should accommodate the needs of the business, target customers, the workers, the machinery and obviously a good product that can impress customers. If a business is located with intention, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty will be achieved, but the opposite is also true (Dube *et al.* 2016:145; Agus 2019:660). This calls for serious considerations on location choices, planning, market research and understanding of the demographics of place, given its impact on maximising income and minimising cost (Dube *et al.* 2016:145; Agus 2019:660; Jie 2019:29).

A point worth noting is that to gain competitive advantage, a business should possess other factors that competitors do not have, such as a good location (Amini & Wiranatakusuma 2020:33). Competitors can copy prices, service or products offered, but not location, which is why it is a unique factor that may influence the decision of a customer on store choice (Jaravaza & Chitando 2013:302; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:16). In relation to home-based fashion entrepreneurs, it is important for them to note that compatibility between the location and type of business is important for the success of a business (Jaravaza & Chitando 2013:302; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:16). This supports the view that location on its own can assist a business to thrive or fall apart (Wilbard 2018:16).

2.3.5.5.1 Factors affecting customer satisfaction of location

Customers visit shops frequently to purchase goods they need, and can base their choice of shop according to location and convenience in relation to other factors like service, price and quality product. Factors to consider when choosing a location for the business are accessibility, visibility and parking space of the business.

- Accessibility is when target customers can get to the business without difficulties (John *et al.* 2015:296; Gordon 2017:10; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1201; Wilbard *et al.*

2018:18). If location is not convenient and easy to access, customers may not know about good quality products that a business is offering (John *et al.* 2015:296; Agus 2019:661). Being far from target customers can reduce the number of visits a customer can make to a shop (Agus 2019:661). With relation to the fashion entrepreneurs, a business can benefit greatly if it is located close to public transport, to other shops in a mall or shopping centre, residential area or workplace (John 2015:295; Dube *et al.* 2016:145; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:16 Agus 2019:661).

- Visibility refers to the location being visible to customers who are passing (Gordon 2017:11; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1201; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:19). In this case, home-based fashion entrepreneurs can put signs outside the business to advertise their work. That way people passing will be aware of a business operating in their area (Wilbard 2018:19).
- Parking space should be available and safe upon visiting the business (Gordon 2017:11; Wilbard *et al.* 2018:18). Similarly, with regards to home-based fashion entrepreneurs, the location should be convenient with safe parking space, given that most of these businesses are in residential areas. Some residential areas are not safe and not easy to get parking, which can be a disadvantage to these businesses (Wilbard 2018:18; Jaravaza & Chitando 2013:303).

2.4 OVERVIEW AND IMPORTANCE OF GARMENTS

Garments are essential for every human being and, according to Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs, garments are a basic need; their main use is to protect the body from heat, cold, rain and climate changes (Sahoo 2018:2; Kodzoman 2019:90). In addition, garments indicate the identity, occupation alongside social status of an individual (Cham *et al.* 2018:174; Hernandez 2018:5; Sahoo 2018:2; Kodzoman 2019:90). More evidence (Cham *et al.* 2018:174; Hernandez 2018:5; Zhang *et al.* 2018:47; Kodzoman 2019:91) show that garments are a form of a communication device that relates information about the wearer, for example, doctors, soldiers, what religion and gender, to name a few. Furthermore, garments signal the exceptional nature and creative talent of an individual (Kodzoman 2019:90). In certain circumstances, people wear a certain style of garment because they do not have a choice, especially in places of work and religion (Sahoo

2018:4). It is also worth noting that a person can dress in a certain style without any message they want to convey (Feinberg 1992:18).

Most importantly, garments should be comfortable and suitable for the occasion to fulfil the needs of an individual (Sahoo 2018:4; Hernandez 2018:4). Body structure, and beauty (which brings innermost happiness) should be taken into consideration because garments have effect on a person's mood (Sahoo 2018:8; Kodzoman 2019:91; Ajwani 2020:1349). This is because garments not only fulfill the physical needs but also address emotional needs and inner satisfaction (Obinnim & Afipongo 2015:1859; Zhang *et al.* 2018:47). Hence, great importance is given to garments because they are also significant to an individual's reputation and dignity (Sahoo 2018:8; Kodzoman 2019:90). Bearing this in mind, Kodzoman (2019:90) suggests garments that people wear should not impact or create the wrong impressions in the viewer's mind. Therefore, to achieve this goal, customers seek garments that rightfully project their desires. As Hernandez (2018:29) states, the answer to this might be addressed by means of custom-made garments if suitable garments are not available.

2.4.1 Custom-made garments

Customers face difficulties in choosing garments that can meet their desires because the market is flooded with many brands that are similar (Dimyati 2016:76). This has caused the distinctiveness or uniqueness in garments to be compromised (Jiang & Zhang 2018:47). The solution to this matter is customisation of garments where fit, style, construction and body shape problems are solved (Shin 2013:2; Apunda 2017:13). Customisation of garments is the process where garments are designed and constructed as per the preferences of an individual in accordance with their personal measurements (Ahmed *et al.* 2017:178; Kasiri *et al.* 2017:91; Opayele A., Kolawole, Opayele M. 2020:350) to fit a unique body and style (Di Lorenzo 2010). Most individuals order custom-made garments, anticipating that the garments will be of high quality, fit well, be unique and elegant compared to standardised garments (Makopo *et al.* 2016:184; Ahmed *et al.* 2017: 178; Apunda 2017:38). This is especially true for customers who are looking for social and emotional value in a product, and are more likely to be satisfied with customised products because there is a wide range of choices (e.g. design, colour and style) they can select from (Hernandez 2018:1; Seo & Lang 2019:6). This can help customers to manipulate

the available options (design, colours and style) to their preference which can fit into their social groups (Seo & Lang 2019:6).

Employing customisation can be a way to differentiate a business from its competitors (Kasiri *et al.* 2017:91), when both the business and customers will gain; and where the financial position of the business will be strengthened, including gaining customers that cannot afford garments provided by large fashion companies who concentrate on mass customisation (Sithole *et al.* 2018:11). On the other hand, customers will get unique styles that fit their body shapes and will be more satisfied (Schweiggert & Weiss 2013:41; Seo 2018:3). As a result, individual demand for customised garments and positive assessments of these garments will increase significantly (Klesse, Cornil, Dahl & Gros 2019:879; Zaggel, Hagenmaier & Raasch 2018:1). Customers will also be encouraged to pay more for the garments despite the high prices, together with lengthy time taken to make and finish the garment (Schweiggert & Weiss 2013:41; Kasiri & Mansori 2016:70).

However, dissatisfaction is also inevitable although businesses work hard to meet their customers' needs (Bearden & Teel 1983:21). The common types of dissatisfaction with custom-made garments are fabrics that are poor in quality, and poor in construction that result in ill-fitting garments (Apunda 2017:3). To solve this, businesses should first know factors that influence custom-made garment interest, which they should try to address where they lack by providing desired garments.

2.4.2 Factors influencing interest in garments (custom-made garments)

Customers use unique garments to mirror their characters and way of life (Suganya & Ganesamurthy 2020:413). It is because of this that a customer's interest to buy certain garments is influenced by the value they expect to benefit from the product (i. e. emotional and social value) (Aulia *et al.* 2016:153; Puolakoski 2016:25). In addition, their beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and curiosity of clothing have effect on their purchases (Cham *et al.* 2018:176). Besides the above-mentioned customers (especially mature women), buying behaviour is also impacted by product attributes such as design, fit, comfort, colour, quality and individuality (Holmlund, Hagman & Polsa 2011:20; Suganya & Ganesamurthy 2020:413). All these attributes influence customisation to be effective and valuable (Seo 2018:2). Therefore, fashion businesses

should know customers' garment interest to provide them with garments that satisfy them (Cham *et al.* 2018:176). Below is a further discussion on factors (individuality/uniqueness, fit and comfort, flattering designs and word-of-mouth) that influence custom-made garment interest.

2.4.2.1 Individuality and Uniqueness

Individuality is the personality of an individual that differentiates one from a group of people and uniqueness is defined as one of a kind (Cham *et al.* 2018:176; Merriam-Webster online dictionary 2020). To differentiate themselves customers, seek individualised garments rather than ready-to-wear clothes and it gives them joy to be unique (Zaggl *et al.* 2018:1). These individuals who seek to be outstanding use garments to indicate who they are and what they stand for (Cham *et al.* 2018:174). In other words, garments are not only worn to fulfill fundamental needs but are also a tool to express oneself, for example, identity, social and financial status, to name a few (Obinnim & Afipongo 2015:1858; Cham *et al.* 2018:174). This has led these individuals to give great attention to what they wear, hence they seek customised garments because they are made to fulfill one's desires (Cham *et al.* 2018:177; Klesse *et al.* 2019:879).

Custom-made garments are perceived to be a better choice of garment since they possess unique features that can be used to promote self-image as an example; career women, for instance, could choose customized garments to improve their career image (Kasiri *et al.* 2017:91; Hernandez 2018:11; Seo & Lang 2019:9). Thus, it is apparent that social distinctiveness is an effective cue that raises customers' opinion in favour of customised garments (Seo & Lang 2019:14). In order to fulfill their uniqueness, boost their confidence and their social status, customers continuously acquire new garments that are rare to find, or different from the ones in the market (Cham *et al.* 2018:176; Seo & Lang 2019:5).

2.4.3 Fit and comfort

Fit is considered to be the principal factor for determining garment quality, satisfaction and dissatisfaction of an individual when purchasing garments (Hugo & Van Aardt 2012:460; Coury 2015:13; Kasambala 2016:8; Saeed 2018:16; Shin & Damhorst 2018:352). That is why custom-made garments are preferred than ready-to-wear garments because they provide proper fit (Sawyer 2019:36; Opayele *et al.* 2020:350). It depends on an individual-fit choices, figure size

and shape, thus it is not easy to define which makes it subjective (Kasambala 2016:3). However, in literature, fit is when a garment closely shapes and sits well and comfortably on the body (Hernandez 2018:5; Sawyerr 2019:36), it enhances the confidence and appearance of an individual (Kasambala 2016:24; Hernandez 2018:4). Unfortunately, due to the use of standardised measurements, producers are struggling to accommodate various unique body shapes and sizes (Kasambala 2016:4; Apunda 2017:13; Hernandez 2018:1; Shin & Damhorst 2018:352). If the use of a standard system continues, the fit problem will remain, therefore there is need for more research on the figure sizes and shapes, especially in Africa (Zwane & Magagula 2007 cited in Kasambala 2016:4). The results of this has been that customers return or do not buy ill-fitting garments at all, which has cost businesses a good deal of income every year (Nkambule 2010:5; Coury 2015:10; Holmlund, Hagman & Polsa 2011:2; Shin & Damhorst 2018:352). This disappoints and impedes the pleasure of the shopping experience for most customers, especially women (Nkambule 2010:5; Kasambala 2018:19).

It is therefore critically important for businesses to provide and customers to receive well-fitting garments. The reason is that businesses may not succeed in selling poor-fitted garments and customers will feel comfortable as well as look good in well-fitted garments (Hernandez 2018:5; Saeed 2018:15). Thus, it becomes a delight for customers to find a garment with proper fit and size as well as have a high level of satisfaction (Klesse *et al.* 2019:879; Hernandez 2018:38). This is emphasised in the studies of Coury (2015), Cassidy (2017) and Hernandez (2018), who state that if the fit is not good despite the garment being good fabric quality and stylish, it is worthless because dissatisfaction is inevitable. Regrettably, most women resort to alterations because of difficulties in finding well-fitting garments (Coury 2015:9). In which the fit of an altered garment will not be perfect compared to the custom-made garment (Jie 2019:8). To ensure good fit in garments, comfort should also be present and a series of fitting assessment sessions of the garment should be conducted (Hernandez 2018:5; Jie 2019:5; Sawyerr 2019:38).

Similar to fit, comfort differs from one individual to another and customers often use it to assess garment quality as well as determine the choice and overall satisfaction of garments (Hugo & Van Aardt 2012:460; Coury 2015:13; Saeed 2018:16; Shin & Damhorst 2018:352). Comfort refers to how a person feels in the garment and the effectiveness of a fabric in conducting the temperature and humidity from the person and surroundings (Sawyerr 2019:38). This is the

reason why it is influenced by the wearer, garment fit and environment (Kasambala 2016:224; Hernandez 2018:4; Sawyerr 2019:38), which can limit the designer to provide comfort in a garment; for example, garment fabric composition and the customers' choice of fabric (Sawyerr 2019:39). However, to achieve comfort, designers should apply correct methods of sewing and pattern-making (Sawyerr 2019:39).

2.4.3.1 Flattering designs

Flattering designs are one of the reasons that motivate interest in customised garments (Seo 2018:2). Customers seek garments that embrace and drape well on their bodies to give their figure a beautiful shape (Adelaja, Salusso & Black 2016:5), especially customers with figure problems, who seek garments that conceal the irregularities and enhance the good part of the figure, resulting into appealing designs (Holmlund *et al.* 2011:12; Gbetodeme, Amankwa & Dzegblor 2016:55). Irrespective of their age, women want to look fashionable despite their perceived faulty body shapes; they want designs that make them younger and slimmer (Holmlund *et al.* 2011:12; Kasambala 2016:44). For garments to be pleasing, they should have all design elements working harmoniously in a garment with the figure in mind (Asare, Monnie & Gavor 2018:59). Structurally, garments should look appealing to satisfy the wearer's desires; the embellishments should raise emotions of inner satisfaction and functionally their performance should be as anticipated (Obinnim & Afipongo 2015:1859). The silhouette, lines, colour and texture of garments should therefore all be used in the design process to give a professional look (Gbetodeme *et al.* 2016:55; Asare *et al.* 2018:58). This is affirmed in the study by Suganya and Ganesamurthy (2020), that women's purchasing decisions were based on colour, style, fit and fabric, of which colour seemed to be a major motivator toward positive buying decisions.

Most importantly, the overall shape and colour of the garment is seen from afar so it should give initial indications that are impressive (Gbetodeme *et al.* 2016:55). In this way the designs will impact positively on the choice of garments (Holmlund *et al.* 2011:13). However, the lack of suitable designs due to sizing systems that do not cater for changing body shapes dissatisfies customers (Holmlund *et al.* 2011:2).

2.4.4 Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is when a person shares their negative/positive experiences with a product or service they used/consumed, or they share other people's experiences through electronic means, or in-person (Anderson 1998:6; Saleem & Ellahi 2017:601; Cham *et al.* 2018:178; Schiebler 2018:12; Bakar *et al.* 2019:165; Milakovic, Anic & Mihic 2020:1667). In other words, WOM is a powerful marketing tool for businesses upon which the information circulating may translate to sales, or abandoning of the business (Cham *et al.* 2018:178; Huete-Alcocer 2017:78). Word can circulate like wildfire and businesses can suffer or succeed (Schiebler 2018:1; Bakar *et al.* 2019:165). This person-to-person information sharing about the product creates awareness among customers, which shape their attitudes, expectations, purchasing decisions and behaviour (Cham *et al.* 2018:178; Huete-Alcocer 2017:78; Saleem & Ellahi 2017:598; Schiebler 2018:12; Bakar *et al.* 2019:165; Milakovic, Anic & Mihic 2020:1673). This is because customers listen and trust other customers more than companies, especially if they belong to the same social group or status (Huete-Alcocer 2017:79; Saleem & Ellahi 2017:613; Milakovic *et al.* 2020:1668). WOM has proven to be more effective than commercial advertisements on televisions and newspapers (Bakar *et al.* 2019:165).

WOM is more pronounced among fashion information seekers, who trust other fashion-conscious people to help them with information related to fashion (Saleem & Ellahi 2017:615). Their desire to improve themselves and fulfil social needs motivate the reason why they share information (Schiebler 2018:24). Another reason behind WOM is the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with products (Schiebler 2018:24; Huete-Alcocer 2017:79), although a positive WOM is the one that influences product (garments) interest (Schiebler 2018:24). This is substantiated in the study by Cham *et al.* (2018:178) that WOM enhances the interest in garments, and those customers who are pleased may revisit and influence others to purchase from the same business. WOM may lead customers in need of garments that fit, self-identify or are unique to customisation if ready-to-wear garments cannot meet their needs. Hence, WOM can be used to gain and please customers, which businesses should aim to do.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the literature in fulfilling the literature-related objective (see section 1.7.4). In addition, a discussion on customer satisfaction, its importance and the factors that affect it were presented, together with the customer satisfaction theory and how it fits in this research. A discussion was presented on fashion entrepreneurs and the characteristics that are important for fashion entrepreneurs to possess as well as the challenges they face. Custom-made garment literature was also examined and factors influencing interest in customisation were described and explained. The next chapter describes the methods and methodology used to explore this research study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents research methods and methodology for the proposed study under the following sub-headings: research design; research approach; sampling; data gathering; data analysis process; trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a strategy that is followed in carrying out a research study (Babbie & Mouton 2016:74), whereby the research questions determine the research design (Babbie & Mouton 2016:7; Maree 2016:364). A qualitative research design was selected for this study to collect data and answer the research question regarding customer satisfaction of home-based custom-made garments. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the conduct, opinions or lived experiences of people (Babbie & Mouton 2016:270). The research study is exploratory due to the little or no research that was done on key factors that affect customer satisfaction on home-based custom-made garments. Exploratory research sheds more light on the topic that is being investigated (Babbie & Mouton 2016:80). A similar South African study (Makopo 2014), also examined customer satisfaction of custom-made garments, but the focus was on product quality as a factor for customer satisfaction and complaint behaviour. This study explores other factors that affect customer satisfaction on home-based custom-made garments using qualitative design, as stated in 1.7.5.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Considering the nature of this study that seeks to explore customers' lived experience and satisfaction with custom-made clothes, a phenomenological approach was applied. Phenomenology is when a phenomenon is viewed from the participant's point of view on what they experienced regarding the issue being discussed (Creswell & Creswell 2018:13). In this study, participants were asked about their experiences regarding satisfaction on custom-made garments in the context of home-based fashion entrepreneurs.

3.3 SAMPLING

A description of the sampling process, which includes study population and research setting, sample selection and sample size as well as role of the researcher, is presented in this section.

3.3.1 Study population and research setting

The population of the study were women (see Table 3-1) residing in the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM) that ordered and purchased customised garments from home-based fashion entrepreneurs. The Emfuleni Local Municipality is situated 70km South of Johannesburg and is located within Sedibeng District Municipality SDM that is in Gauteng province of South Africa (see 1.2.2.1). The small businesses in the region along with home-based fashion entrepreneurs have capitalised on opportunities to set up small businesses that render products and services to the ELM residents (Ndege 2015:77). Apparently, about 80% of fashion entrepreneurs in the area are home-based (Nana 2018:90). However, previous studies indicate that these fashion entrepreneurs encounter challenges such as lack of technical skills, business skills and entrepreneurial characteristics which may lead to customer dissatisfaction if not addressed (Van Wyk 2007; Moloi & Nkhahle 2014; Almanza & Van den Berg 2016). Therefore, the ELM was selected in order to gain insight on customers' experiences and what affects their satisfaction with garments/products manufactured by home-based fashion entrepreneurs.

3.3.2 Sample selection and sample size

A sample is a segment of population that represents the total target population (Maree & Pietersen 2016:164). For the purpose of this study, a non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive and snowball sampling, was applied for sample selection. Purposive sampling is based on the judgement of the researcher with regard to selecting the participants that will contribute to answer the research question (Babbie & Mouton 2016:166). In accordance to what purposive sampling means, the researcher selected women who met the inclusion criteria from WhatsApp personal network. WhatsApp is a communication media that is internet based, which requires the use of smart phones (Terpstra 2013:3; Wasserman & Zwebner 2017:2). It allows people to have conversations in the form of text or audios as well as to make voice and video calls (Wasserman & Zwebner 2017:2). Lately, students engage in discussions about their studies using WhatsApp

text, audios or calls and this has promoted efficient communication amid scholars (Shahid 2018:23).

Snowball sampling is based on referrals, whereby the respondent refers to another respondent (Babbie & Mouton 2016:167). To demonstrate snowball sampling in this research, the researcher asked for recommendations of other women who were interested and who met the inclusion criteria to take part in the study and when the interviews would be scheduled. These methods are suitable, especially when it is a challenge to find suitable people to participate in the study to answer research questions (Maree & Pietersen 2016a:198). Participants were selected according to the inclusion criteria (Table 3-1, section 3.3.2.1) in order to gain insight into their experiences regarding customer satisfaction on custom-made garments of home-based fashion entrepreneurs. The sample size was based on data saturation, which imply that no new information was obtained from participants to answer the research question better (Creswell & Creswell 2018:186). In this study, data saturation was obtained after nineteen interviews, and to ensure data saturation and credibility, two additional interviews were conducted.

3.3.2.1 Recruitment of participants

The recruiting of initial participants was conducted by means of a purposive sampling technique using the inclusion criteria in Table 3-1 below. Women who fitted the criteria of the study were invited on voluntary grounds from the church women's group using WhatsApp personal network. The response was low, with a total of five out of thirty women; additional participants who were interested came from snowballing and notified the researcher using WhatsApp messages. Information on the study and the criteria of who could participate was communicated through WhatsApp calls and messages and the date for interviews was arranged. During this time, the participants were asked for referrals from their social circles.

Table 3-1: Inclusion criteria for participants

Inclusion criteria	Motivation
The participants had to be women.	The research studies of Nana (2018) and Strydom (2019) indicated that most home-based fashion entrepreneurs who make custom garments in the ELM are making womenswear. Hence, the choice of participants to be women.
18 years and above.	The participants could give their consent to participate in the study.
The women who could speak English.	Since the researcher conducted the interviews, it was decided to select women who could speak English because of language limitation from the side of the researcher. In addition, the choice to use English was based on Nana (2018:122) and Strydom (2019:56) that Sesotho is the language that is widely spoken in ELM which has terms that can be difficult for participants to understand, thus the population preferred to use English.
Women who reside in the Emfuleni local municipality.	They know the home-based fashion businesses in the area better. Previous studies (Van Wyk 2007; Moloi & Nkhanhle 2014; Almanza & Van den Berg 2016; Nana 2018; Strydom 2019) in Emfuleni local municipality revealed that fashion entrepreneurs lack skills that can affect customer satisfaction. Thus, women from this region are suitable for this study to shed light on which factors affect their satisfaction so as to provide information that can help fashion entrepreneurs in enhancing satisfaction levels.

Inclusion criteria	Motivation
Women who purchased custom-made garments in the past.	The participants would be able to shed more light on what affects their satisfaction.

3.3.3 Role of the researcher

The following tasks were performed by the researcher with the guidance of study leaders regarding the search of factors that affect customer satisfaction of home-based fashion entrepreneurs:

- Conducted a thorough literature review to be more knowledgeable in the subject under study.
- Developed the demographic and semi-structured interview questionnaires.
- Recruited participants.
- Scheduled and conducted interviews.
- Transcribed data as well as organised and make sense of it in preparation for analysis.
- Coded the data and developed categories into themes used in reporting the findings.
- Analysed the data and wrote up the findings.
- Compiled the study's chapters to make up the dissertation.

3.4 DATA GATHERING

Data gathering were conducted by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews to guide the direction of the interview (Nieuwenhuis 2016a:93). In this case, WhatsApp call was used to converse with participants on an individual level and was the method used to facilitate the interviews. The aim of conducting interviews was to determine and gain insight on what factors affect customer satisfaction on custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion businesses of Emfuleni Local Municipality. The interviews were conducted in a way that accommodated both the participants and the researcher. A pilot test preceded the interviews.

3.4.1 Pilot interviews

A pilot interview was conducted to make sure if the research instrument (i. e. the interview schedule (see below) was clear and understandable to participants (In 2017:601; Malmqvist, Hellberg, Mollas, Rose, & Shevlin 2019:2), and to determine if the interview questions would answer the research question. A pilot interview for this study verified the method used to collect data (Van Teijlingen & Hundley 2002:33). Pre-testing of the interview schedule assisted in identifying errors that may cause the main study to fail, or show the need for modifications of questions (Van Teijlingen & Hundley 2002:33; Malmqvist *et al.* 2019:2). Against this background, the interview schedule was tested, and a few minor changes were made to improve it. After the test, the wording of two questions changed and two were added. It was realised that the participants needed more detail in answering the question on service quality and value, so it was elaborated on, and follow-up questions were added to get more information. The rest of the questions remained the same. The wording of Question 3 on demographics and location were altered. Table 3-2 provides the changes implemented to the interview schedule.

Table 3-2: Interview schedule modifications

Demographic questions		
Read from	Changed to	Reason
#Q3: On average, how much do you spend on custom-made garments per month?	On average, how much did you spend on the custom-made garments being discussed?	The reason to change the wording for question 3 was that people do not buy custom-made garments as often as other products. The researcher realised that if the amount of money spent was to be averaged per month, it would be small and meaningless
Location		

Read from	Changed to	Reason
# How important is the location of the dressmaker/tailor to you?	Tell me what you think about the location of a fashion designer/tailor and how important it is to you?	The question regarding the location of the business was changed to avoid one/two-word answers such as “very important”.
Service		
#Addition	Do you have confidence and trust in the designer who made the garments we are discussing? Why?	
Value		
# Addition	Tell me how you felt/feel about yourself wearing these garments?	

Following the modification of questions, the semi-structured interview schedule and demographic questions were compiled. Below are demographic questionnaire and the interview schedule that was utilised to gather data.

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

- **Question 1:** What is your age?
- **Question 2:** What is your current occupation?
- **Question 3:** On average how much did you spend on the custom-made garments being discussed?
- **Question 4:** For which occasion do you order clothing from home-based fashion entrepreneurs? You can provide more than one answer.

Option	Type of clothing	Yes/No
1	Work wear	
2	Normal day wear	
3	Leisure wear	
4	Church wear	
5	Evening wear	
6	Wedding attire	
7	Any other	

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Broad questions

- Tell me about your experience with the home-based fashion designers/dressmakers/tailors who made your garments in the past.
- What do you regard as an important factor when you order custom-made garments?

Further questions regarding customer service dimensions

-Service quality

- Tell me more about the service that the home-based fashion designer/dressmakers/tailors offered you.
- Do you have confidence and trust in the designer who made the garments we are discussing? Why?

-Product quality

- What were your expectations regarding the quality of the garments that you ordered and were they met or not?

-Price

- Tell me what you think about the prices charged by home-based fashion designers/dressmakers/tailors?

-Value

- What would you say about the value of the custom-made garments that you purchased?
- Tell me how you felt/feel about yourself wearing these garments?

-Location

- Tell me what you think about the location of a fashion designer/tailor and how important it is to you.

-Overall

- How do you feel about all the garments you ordered?

3.4.2 One-on-one interviews

One-on-one interviews are one of the methods of data gathering in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton 2016:289). Interviews are mainly conducted to attain in-depth knowledge about a subject matter by allowing participants to tell their lived experiences in which decision-making process of individuals, opinions and beliefs are identified (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011:109; Babbie & Mouton 2016:289). In one-on-one interviews, the participant should preferably do most of the talking while the interviewer listens carefully and follows up on issues raised by the participants (Babbie & Mouton 2016:289). Unfortunately, the time scheduled for the interviews to be conducted was affected by the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the consequences of which were unbearable, and which propelled governments to restrict the movement of people (Abdullah, Dias, Muley & Shahin 2020:1; Morris, Rogers, Kissmer, Du Preez & Dufourq 2020:193). Hence, the choice of administering one-on-one WhatsApp call

interviews was motivated by the Covid-19 situation. Another motivation to use WhatsApp was that it is easily available to many and has become a common communication tool for social or business, even among students (Wasserman & Zwebner 2017:2; Shahid 2018:23).

3.4.3 One-on-one interview procedures

The process of one-on-one interviews begins by developing a rapport with the participants so that both the interviewer and interviewee are comfortable before the interview begins (Hennink *et al.* 2011:124). Regardless of using WhatsApp calling an understanding of each other was established before the commencement of interviews. This was done prior to asking of questions, by means of explaining the purpose of the study and interview (Babbie & Mouton 2016:290). The interviewer also explained the entire process that was to be followed to achieve the goal of the interview, as well as assuring the interviewee of the ethics that were to be followed such as anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the interview at any given time (Babbie & Mouton 2016:290). In order to ensure this, participants were not asked their names in the demographic section and were also requested not mention any names of the entrepreneurs they dealt with.

Furthermore, in transcription of data actual names were omitted and code names were given to participants, for example, #P1. The interviews were conducted via WhatsApp calls, the questions were asked one at a time upon which the participant responded thus making it possible for the conversation to take place. Follow-up questions were asked where necessary. The interviews were recorded. Recordings were transferred to a memory stick and the researchers' computer hard drive in case the recorded response might be deleted in error (Babbie & Mouton 2016:290; Creswell & Creswell 2018:190). All the questions asked were the same in all interviews. The terms designer, dressmaker or tailor were used in place of fashion entrepreneurs to ensure that participants had a better understanding of the questions. After all the interviews were completed, data analysis process was set in motion.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe factors that contribute to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion

entrepreneurs. A descriptive approach was followed because of insufficient information and the desire to obtain enhanced knowledge on the aforementioned phenomenon (Fouché & De Vos 2011:95). Qualitative data analysis aims to derive meaning out of text data by dividing and classifying the information, and for this study, Creswell's method of data analysis was applied (Creswell & Creswell 2018:191). The analysis involved different stages of analytic tasks, such as organising and preparing data for analysis, developing a general sense of the data, obtaining an in-depth understanding of the data, the coding process, representation of the findings and interpretation of the data

Stage 1: Organising and preparation of data for analysis

Organising and preparing the data for analysis entailed the transcribing the interview content, going through the material, classifying the information and ordering the data based on the sources of information (Creswell & Creswell 2018:193). After each interview, the recordings were downloaded to a memory stick as well as the researcher's computer as a means to create space for more recordings. The researcher then created folders for each participant with a code name (e. g., #P1). Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

Stage 2: Developing a general sense of the data.

This stage presented an overview of the information and a pathway to understand its overall meaning. Furthermore, it provided the understanding of what participants were saying, as well as the manner in which they expressed ideas. It also gave a picture of the depth, credibility and usefulness of information (Creswell & Creswell 2018:193). The researcher read the data thoroughly to make sense of it and understand the experiences of the participants. This was also conducted to ensure that all the information was typed verbatim as in the recordings. The responses for the same question were then grouped together in order to compare them.

Stage 3: Obtaining an in-depth understanding of the data.

Obtaining more insight was achieved through deeper understanding of participants' views with regards to the issue at hand, to know the interconnection of issues, and provide a comprehensive description of the issues within the data (Hennink *et al.* 2011:238; Creswell & Creswell 2018:194). By repeatedly going through the data, the researcher was able to identify

relationships of issues that surfaced. For example, it was discovered that there is a link between garment quality and time taken to produce the garment. Customers who had garments that were made in haste reported that the quality was sub-standard. A detailed account of the findings is recorded in Chapter Four.

Stage 4: The coding process.

The coding process later commenced after all data were transcribed. It entailed arranging of information by bracketing sentences and writing a word or phrase that represented the sentences within the margins (Creswell & Creswell 2018:193). In preparation for coding, the information was tabled into two columns, one for interview data and another for codes. This process involved the reading of data repeatedly to create suitable codes using words and phrases. Upon the completion of coding another table for code development was created. The codes were then organised and grouped into categories which formed the themes that were used to report the findings in Chapter Four.

Stage 5: Representation of the findings

Representation of findings comprised the writing up of the report on the information that was derived from the data as a narrative passage (Creswell & Creswell 2018:195). This was achieved by presenting the findings in accordance with four themes that emerged during the coding process. These were customer-entrepreneur contact experience, garment quality, monetary and non-monetary value and entrepreneur's location. Further, categories were used to assist to break down these themes so as to achieve a structured report. The findings account also included evidence from participants, interpretation and literature (see Chapter Four).

Stage 6: Interpretation of the data

Lastly, the interpretation of the data involved summarising the overall findings, to compare the findings and literature, discuss the findings according to the researchers' view, and identify the limitations and future recommendations of the research, discussed in Chapter Five of the study (Creswell & Creswell 2018:198).

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The concept of being objective in qualitative design through trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is achieved through establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (Babbie & Mouton 2016:277; Nieuwenhuis 2016b: 123). Table 3-3 below indicates how trustworthy components were applied.

Table 3-3: Application of trustworthiness components

Criteria and strategy	Risk	Coping strategy
TRUTH VALUE		
<i>Credibility</i> is the trust put in the research findings that are true and it also ascertains that the findings reported are a truthful interpretation of participants' viewpoint (Nieuwenhuis 2016b: 123; Korstjens & Moser 2018:121).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The risk was that truth of what the participants said and what was reported would have been different. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise the risk of reporting a different story the researcher engaged in detailed interviews which made it possible to understand the lived experiences of individuals (Korstjens & Moser 2018:122; Lemon 2020:605).
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that it was participants' views that were reported, data transcriptions were done word-for-word.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data saturation was reached after nineteen interviews were conducted, and in order to enhance credibility, two additional interviews were conducted when no new information was being

		received.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not acknowledging other people's work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher ensured credibility by acknowledging other people's work used in the dissertation.
APPLICABILITY		
<p><i>Transferability</i> is the way in which the researcher shows that the findings apply to other circumstances (Nieuwenhuis 2016b: 123-124; Lemon 2020:605; Korstjens & Moser 2018:122).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk was that findings would not be applicable in similar situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying purposive snowball sampling provided an opportunity of various characteristics to be represented (e.g. participants' demographics), enabling to get the most out of the information obtained.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, the researcher described the research process in detail so that future researchers could determine if the research findings are applicable to their own population or setting (Korstjens & Moser 2018:122). For example, a comprehensive description of the setting, sample population, sample size (was based on data saturation which was reached), inclusion criteria and the interview procedure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk was that unethical methods would be used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical approval was sought from VUT Ethics Committee before data

		gathering.
CONSISTENCY		
<p>Dependability involves consistency in research findings if the study would be repeated by another researcher (Nieuwenhuis 2016b:124; Korstjens & Moser 2018:122).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk is when the results of the study cannot be reproduced on another occasion or by another researcher using the same instrument on the same target population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report of the study consisted of a detailed process of how the study was conducted to enable future researchers to understand the methods used and replicate the study.
NEUTRALITY		
<p>Confirmability assumes that the researcher will not influence any participants' responses but will remain neutral (Nieuwenhuis 2016b: 125; Lemon 2020:605). This entails the interpretations to be bias free that do not suit the researcher's preferences, but are a true reflection of participants lived experiences (Nieuwenhuis 2016b: 125; Lemon 2020:605; Korstjens & Moser 2018:122).</p>	<p>The risk with confirmability was that researchers' bias would be shown instead of participants' responses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure non-occurrence of researchers' bias, a description of research methods that were applied provided the integrity of results to be scrutinised. and demonstrated the objectivity of all decisions that were made.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also acknowledging of flaws in methodology and the possible implications assisted in ensuring conformability.
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3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section presents ethical guidelines that were followed in this study.

3.7.1 Ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained to serve as proof that ethical rules of research conduct were followed. The evaluation to attain ethical approval is discussed under the subsequent subheadings: legal permission, recruitment of participants and informed consent.

3.7.1.1 Legal permission

In order to conduct this study, the researcher had to seek permission from the VUT Ethics Committee by submitting an application before the commencement of recruiting participants and data gathering. Ethical clearance was then granted; the Ethics Reference Number is: FREC/HS/14/08/2020/6.1.9 (see Annexure B: Ethical clearance certificate).

3.7.1.2 Recruitment of participants

The recruitment of participants was initiated ethically employing a purposive sampling method in accordance with the inclusion criteria (Table 3-1, section 3.3.2.1). During the recruitment process confidentiality and anonymity was also emphasised (see 3.8.1). The following ethical concerns were ensured:

- No coercion to participate in the study. Participants were notified that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so.
- No harm or anything of negative effect was caused during the recruitment of participants.
- Adequate information regarding the study was provided. Information such as the purpose of the study, criteria to participate, request not to mention any business names, no response was right or wrong, they had right to confidentiality and anonymity. This was

done so that participants could decide if they wished to take part or not and to have a general knowledge of the interview process.

3.7.1.3 Informed consent

Prior to the participation of interviews an informed consent letter (see Annexure C: Informed consent form) was prepared and sent as a WhatsApp document. Participants were then requested to give verbal consent prior to the interview, if they agreed to participate in the study. The consent was recorded. The letter was a full disclosure of what the study was about and the purpose of interviews was explained explicitly to the participants. It clearly stated that participants had the right to withdraw from taking part in the study if they wished to do so. In addition, the letter indicated that they had right to confidentiality, anonymity and participation was on voluntary bases.

3.7.2 RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS

The proposed study posed minimal risks to participants.

3.7.2.1 Physical risks

The study might have posed minimal physical risk like fatigue. To minimise this, the interviews were scheduled for 30 minutes to one hour. In addition, the time and place for the interviews were convenient for the participant.

3.7.2.2 Psychological risks

The psychological risk to participants that might have occurred was if the study would arouse feelings of anger when they related their experiences of how they lost money and how their expensive fabrics were ruined. To minimise this risk, questions were asked sensitively to avoid a situation of stimulating past feelings of anger in case there was an individual who had lost money and expensive fabric.

3.7.2.3 Social risks

No social risk to the participants was expected to occur since the interviews were on WhatsApp one-on-one.

3.7.2.4 Legal risks

No legal risks were caused since the researcher adhered to ethical guidelines.

3.7.2.5 Economic risks

Participants chose their most convenient time and place for the interview, which meant no travelling. They also received 100 megabytes of data as reimbursement for their data they used during the interviews. In this way, they did not lose any of their income towards the study.

3.7.2.6 Dignitary risks

No dignitary risks were expected to occur to participants because the researcher treated the participants with respect. The participants' right of privacy was respected during the interview process.

3.7.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study will be of great significance, given that no study was found in the ELM on factors affecting customer satisfaction of custom-made garments; most studies on fashion entrepreneurs in the region focused on business skills and entrepreneurial traits. The study adopted qualitative design, which contributed in-depth knowledge of what affects the satisfaction of ELM custom-made customers. Also, the data produced contributed in setting up a foundation of qualitative future studies.

3.7.4 BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The findings of the study would benefit current and future home-based fashion entrepreneurs from knowing what affects their customers' satisfaction. The findings will be conveyed to the fashion entrepreneurs by means of electronic and hard copy pamphlets; hence, entrepreneurs could improve on the factors affecting customer satisfaction, which may result in gaining more customers, more sales and profits. Customers will also benefit by getting more satisfaction with the quality of garments and services provided by the fashion entrepreneurs.

3.7.5 BENEFITS TO VUT

The study adds to the existing knowledge, given that there is little research on factors that affect customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. The knowledge gained could also be added to the curriculum of fashion diplomas for fashion business subjects. VUT might benefit financially through possible academic publications extracted from this study.

3.7.6 COMPETENCE OF RESEARCHERS

The supervisors that guided the researcher are Dr Hanlie van Staden and Mrs Ilani Wilken from Fashion Design, Visual Arts and Design of VUT.

Table 3-4: Competence of researchers

The researcher	Dr Hanlie van Staden	Mrs Ilani Wilken
The researcher has necessary knowledge on the topic of the study.	Has experience and supervised qualitative studies before.	Has experience and lectures on business of fashion subjects.

3.7.7 CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMITY AND STORAGE OF DATA AND FEEDBACK/DISSEMINATION OF DATA

In this section the following subheadings: confidentiality and anonymity; storage and feedback/dissemination of data are discussed.

3.7.7.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

Complete confidentiality is difficult to ensure in qualitative research because sometimes participants' quotes are reported in the study findings (Hennink *et al.* 2011:71). Based on this, confidentiality was ensured partially in this study (i.e., participants' views were reported). However, the researcher ensured anonymity by removing any information that could lead to the identification of a participant. In addition, participants were assigned code names to protect their right to privacy (e. g., participant #1). This was done throughout the process of data analysis and

reporting of findings. To maintain anonymity for businesses in question, participants were asked not to mention any names, which request they adhered to. If the name of the business had been revealed, the researcher would have assigned a code to protect the reputation of the business (e. g., business #A).

3.7.7.2 Storage and feedback/dissemination of data

The electronic data will be stored for a period of five years, and will be saved on the supervisor's computer in a password protected folder. The researcher will have access to the data in case there is some clarity needed. Feedback will be provided by means of electronic and hard copy pamphlets to fashion entrepreneurs in the area, to make them aware of challenges and improve on areas they are lacking in order to satisfy their customers.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter described research methods and methodology for factors that affect customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. A qualitative research design was proposed for this study, which was exploratory in nature. In consideration, a phenomenological approach was then applied. The sampling population was women who are residents in the Emfuleni Local Municipality. In order to select the sample, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used and data saturation guided the sample size. Data gathering was conducted by means of one-on-one WhatsApp interviews. Thereafter, Creswell's (2018) technique of analysing data was utilised. Finally, yet importantly, ethical considerations were addressed in order to conduct the study ethically. The next chapter provides the findings and discussion of this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides the research findings, evaluation and interpretation of the study.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that affect customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs of Emfuleni Local Municipality. A qualitative research method was applied, utilising one-on-one interviews in order to answer the research question and fulfil set objectives (see 1.5.1 & 1.5.3). Data saturation guided the sample size of the study. It is important to note that participants, during the course of data gathering, used the terms designers, tailors, dressmakers and fashion entrepreneurs interchangeably. Hence, the terminology is employed in their quotations but for the purpose of the study fashion entrepreneur will be used. Interviews were transcribed after each interview and pseudo names were assigned as a way to protect confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Thereafter, data analysis took place according to the specific questions that were asked to deliver themes and codes, categories and themes were assigned. The process of data analysis is described in Chapter 3.

Information obtained from the interviews, could provide insights for home-based fashion entrepreneurs in enhancing the services and products they offer to their customers. Demographics of participants, themes that surfaced from data analysis and the discussion on the study outcomes are provided subsequently. To present the information in an organised way, the findings are presented in accordance to themes and their dissection is in line with categories. The following are the four themes and their categories:

1. Customer-entrepreneur contact experience: customers' general experience; communication between entrepreneur and customer; delivery time and confidence in fashion entrepreneur.
2. Garment quality: general garment aspects; style, fabric; quality of garment construction garment fit and appearance and durability.
3. Monetary and non-monetary value: prices charged; price quality ratio and uniqueness and individuality.

4. Entrepreneur location: accessibility; visibility and secure environment.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this research study included twenty-one women who ordered custom-made garments from home-based fashion entrepreneurs. This section addresses the details of participants' age, occupation, the amount of money they spent on garments and type of garments they order from fashion entrepreneurs. The demographic characteristics are summarised in Table 4-1 of participants to this study:

Table 4-1: Demographic information of participants.

Age group						
25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46 and above	Total number of participants	
4	4	8	4	1	21	
Occupation of participants						
Employed		Self-employed		Unemployed		Other
12		5		1		3
Amount that was spent to buy custom-made garments in Rands						
R100-1000		R1001-2000		R2001-3000		R3001 and above
10		7		2		2
Type of garments for specific occasions						
Workwear	Church wear	Wedding	Evening wear	Leisure wear	Normal day wear	Other
6	8	16	3	2	3	6

- **Age**

The above Table 4-1 indicates that this study had most participants in the age group of 36-40 years. A possible explanation for this is that they have been working for some time, allowing them to order fashion products.

- **Occupation**

Only one of the participants was unemployed and probably relied on other sources for financial assistance to order fashion items.

- **Amount spent to buy custom-made garments in rands**

The above table also shows that ten participants paid money that ranged from R100-R1000. The amount ranging from R1001-R2000 followed, with seven participants and the last four participants ranged from R2001 and above. There are four likely interpretations of why only four participants paid more than R2001. First, maybe they reported the figure for all their purchases. Second, there is a possibility that they made big orders such as bridesmaids' dresses. Third, is that they might have ordered garments from entrepreneurs who charged high prices. Lastly, it could possibly indicate that they were experiencing financial difficulties.

- **Type of garments**

Regarding the type of custom-made garments, participants were allowed to provide more than one answer. They ordered custom-made garments mostly for wedding functions, church wear, and work wear. Evidence from this study's interviews suggested that participants ordered custom-made garments for these events for uniqueness, better fit, to boost their image and to experience their individual preferences of good quality (see theme 4: monetary and non-monetary value). Themes discussed, evolved after data analysis were, namely: customer-entrepreneur contact experience; garment quality; monetary and non-monetary value; and entrepreneurs' location.

4.3 THEME 1: CUSTOMER-ENTREPRENEUR CONTACT EXPERIENCE

The customer-entrepreneur contact experience, in the context of this study, begins on the day participants place an order until delivery day. Throughout this period, the customers engage with the fashion entrepreneur regarding the specifications (designs, fabric, and colour) of garment, taking of measurements, and also fitting sessions. During this process, customers notice the fashion entrepreneur's attitude towards them and subconsciously evaluate the entrepreneur. In Theme 1, four categories, namely, customers' general experience, communication between entrepreneur and customer, delivery time, and confidence in fashion entrepreneur will be discussed.

4.3.1 Customers' general experience

This category provides the description of participants' experiences and other non-specified services they received. As explained earlier, subconsciously, participants evaluated the fashion entrepreneurs and almost half of the participants felt that the service they received was good. None of them (fashion entrepreneurs) displayed unacceptable behaviour. Participants acknowledged that services differed, but were acceptable and they also appreciated the good advice they were given concerning the fabric and designs. One of the participants mentioned that the reception was warm and felt welcomed, which made the whole experience with the fashion entrepreneur satisfactory.

“My best experience is that I had a warm welcome fashion designer who designed for me unique garments which it looked good quality fabrics” [#P17].

Experiencing this welcoming behaviour, participants felt good, which results in positive views. This is in accordance with Bakar *et al.* (2019:163) and Islam, Khadem and Alauddin (2011: 202), who stated that the way service is rendered is highly important. Mannerisms such as a genuine smile, the tone of voice and good facial expressions might benefit the business in a good way. In addition, Bello (2018:323) and Kim, J. and Kim, J.E. (2014:135) described these encounters as defining occasions where the business-customer relationship can grow or degenerate. This is also substantiated in the literature of Kim, J and Kim, J.E. (2014:135) that positive relationships of business-customer can position the company in a way that creates positive word-of-mouth,

satisfaction and loyalty. To further illustrate this, a study by Keaveney (1995:76) reported that thirty-four per cent of participants switched their service providers because workers were unfriendly, uncaring, impolite and irresponsible. In the context of this study, the general experience of participants was good. Furthermore, some of the participants also believed that the services offered were better in comparison to retail stores due to past store experience.

“....she later on uh-h... gave me, she offered the best service which I wouldn't have gotten from a shop” [#P8].

It is known that business representatives' behaviour is the focal point of customers when shopping (Lee, Suen, Chan & Li 2018:3). Providing quality service includes presenting merchandise information, recommendations and addressing customers' problems (Lee *et al.* 2018:3). Apart from their gratification of service experience for custom-made garments, some fashion entrepreneurs offered extra services such as altering of garments, which participants also acknowledged and appreciated. The following is a statement that shows appreciation of garment alterations.

“...she has told me she can now do alterations, so I have taken several of my clothes to her place to be altered, jeans that were wide at the bottom have been made skinny, I have had some outfits uhm made smaller or, you know, according to my size she now does those extra jobs uhm apart from just designing..... I totally appreciate her as my designer” [#P16].

The above finding was unanticipated, which implies that customers appreciate a one-stop shop. Thus, it is a win-win situation for both the customer and fashion entrepreneur to offer extra services like alterations. Deducing from the responses it is evident that fashion entrepreneurs who walk an extra mile in order to provide quality services to their clients has made them satisfied. However, some participants indicated a negative customer-entrepreneur contact experience. Their complaint was that they have lost garments left with a fashion entrepreneur.

“.....and sometimes I will take my stuff to be maybe to be altered to her they will stay there for months Sometimes they will get lost so that's the serious problem that we are experiencing with the designers” [#P9].

Due to having many orders and taking long to complete the orders, deadlines were missed and customers' garments got misplaced. Losing customers' goods showed that the fashion entrepreneur was irresponsible and it is detrimental to the relationship with clients. It is important for customer satisfaction that all these issues are addressed for the sustainability of the business. Challenges give businesses a chance to rectify their mistakes but if ignored, customers may not purchase from them in the future (Atiyah 2017:22; Lee *et al.* 2018:16). Thus, to avoid a bad reputation, businesses should appreciate feedback and act promptly.

Furthermore, participants reported that they complained several times to the fashion entrepreneurs but to no avail. They regarded the experience and services as unpleasant, or not so good. Later, they realised that placing an order was all that the fashion entrepreneurs wanted and they do not care about their customers.

"I would regard the service as not being so good umm... because once-e-e you have placed an order you have given them the materials you cease to matter to the, to the tailor per say because it seems-s-s what they just need is to have as many orders as possible" [#P6].

Not prioritising customers can be detrimental to business and ultimately may lead to loss of pursued orders. Coupled with negative word-of-mouth that might arise from this kind of conduct, the business may lose market share. In reality, customers can decide to change from one service business to another, as they are not just limited to dissatisfaction (Keaveney 1995:79). The services provided by home-based fashion entrepreneurs are addressed independent of garment quality offered, but they influence both customer satisfaction and loyalty (Sawyer 2019:81). Therefore fashion entrepreneurs should make an effort to address customers' concerns with promptness and work hard to develop and save the image of the company (Chavez 2016:20; Bhatt & Sankhla 2018:1112).

Taking into account both positive and negative customer-entrepreneur contact experiences, it was seen that there is a correlation between the price paid and the service received.

“Uh-h... they gave an average uh-h, service but I had paid so much money but then the service was average uh-h... in fact I was not happy about it yeah then they didn’t do their work on time, they were late yeah” [#P3].

The amount that was paid raised expectations of high-quality service, which left the participant disgruntled because the service provided was not corresponding with the money she paid. It was also noted by Kasiri *et al.* (2017:92) and Pakurár *et al.* (2019:7) that customers compared their expectations and the service they received, which when fulfilled might satisfy them (Soliha, Aquinia, Basiya, Waruwu & Kharis 2018:77). Other than the established relationship between price and service mentioned above, participants showed some behavioural intentions after their evaluation of customer-entrepreneur contact experience. Some participants changed their fashion entrepreneurs by using a problem-solving approach, while others indicated their repurchase intentions as well as preferences and recommendations to customised garments. The following sub-headings that were influenced by customer-entrepreneur contact experiences reveal customers’ problem-solving approach; the customers’ repurchase intentions; and customers’ preference and recommendations.

4.3.1.1 Customers’ behaviour with satisfactory/unsatisfactory custommade garments

Customers usually find ways to cope with an undesirable outcome after a service is received (Makopo 2014:28). The evidence disclosed that poor service standards had a negative impact on customers’ buying decisions, which led them to switch fashion entrepreneurs. Participants’ responses indicate that they purchased custom-made garments from different fashion entrepreneurs. They repeatedly referred to “some designers do this, and some do that,” which signifies that they encounter different people and different experiences. The quote below demonstrates that the participant was dealing with different fashion entrepreneurs.

“I do have confidence with the one that I am using now the one I’m currently using now because uh-h... I’ve used them uh-h... and the delivered on time, the service was perfect and I was happy with the outcome” [#P3].

The phrase “the one that I am using now” confirms that the participants either switched or stopped ordering from the fashion entrepreneur who offered unsatisfactory service. It is not

surprising that she changed fashion entrepreneurs because in her other responses the participant frequently highlighted the poor service she received. The participant's voice expression indicated that she probably got anxious when the order was late given that it was for her wedding day and nothing was going according to plan.

4.3.1.2 Customers' repurchase intentions

At least four participants indicated their repurchase intentions for custom-made garments. These participants were happy to the extent that they indicated their intention to order customised garments repeatedly.

" ... completely satisfied and yeah I will definitely uhm... request the services of a home-based tailor again in the future most definitely" [#P11].

Considerations for reordering of custom-made garments again revealed the satisfaction of the participant. In support, Hameed *et al.* (2019:635) highlighted that this would promote positive word-of-mouth as well as repurchasing intentions. Participants also expressed satisfaction with their engagement with fashion entrepreneurs and regarded it as encouraging.

"..... She was encouraging and she did what I wanted in the end. ,, it's not a person that [I] rely on based on time but then I would go there [to] make another dress if need be" [#P18].

According to the above statement, satisfied customer return for more orders and purchases from the same fashion entrepreneur (Zhong & Moon 2020:4).

4.3.1.3 Customers' preferences and recommendations

Customers may develop an inclination towards fashion entrepreneurs after a service or purchase experience. Participants pointed out that when ordering custom-made garments, they prefer referrals from other customers, which is confirmed by various authors (Chang 2020:15; Huete-Alcocer 2018:79 & Teng, Khong, Chong & Lin 2016:1) than just approaching a fashion entrepreneur they do not know/heard about. Participants pay attention to word-of mouth, also preferring to see the entrepreneurs' prior work.

“.....I prefer to see what the tailor has produced before and then I can commit to their service so in a nutshell I prefer referrals. So, the tailors were friendly and understanding regardless of how many requests and changes I made, all my experiences with tailors were truly exceptional experiences” [#P21].

It is described that customers view word-of-mouth as dependable, and is thus a great influencer in purchasing decisions from individuals (Gerber 2016:141). They trust their friends and family more than the advertising campaigns because they are also customers who act on their own initiatives (Gerber 2016:141; Saleem & Ellahi 2017:596; Huete-Alcocer 2018:79). Moreover, when products, for example, custom-made garments are not readily available for evaluation before orders and purchases, customers consider word-of-mouth (Huete-Alcocer 2018:79; Chang 2020:15).

Despite unpleasant experiences such as losing fabric, unfinished garments and paying high prices, six participants still prefer and recommend home-based custom-made garments.

“I always prefer home-based fashion de-designers why because I always have enough time with them to tell them what I want..... and I highly recommend home-based tailors” [#P1].

“So, if you want to go for an occasion and you don’t like to look like anyone else going for the custom-made designs is still the way to go” [#P8].

A possible explanation for this might be that the benefits of custom-made garments outweigh bad experiences. The findings of a study by Honu *et al.* (2020:13) indicated that although custom-made garment businesses sometimes offered poor services, customers regarded customised garments as acceptable.

4.3.2 Communication between entrepreneur and customer

Communication involves in-depth discussions and understanding of individual specifications (Ayo *et al.* 2021:39). Participants pointed out that they preferred fashion entrepreneurs that followed their instructions exactly as they have specified. In addition, participants indicated that

any form of alterations was to be done with their consent, regardless of how big or small the change.

“... to get what I wanted and if not I expect the tailor to communicate with me, but I don't want them to change things without my consent” [#P19].

These comments show that customers appreciate regular communication from fashion entrepreneurs. More importantly, custom-made garments are meant to accommodate customers' preferences, which is probably why participants buy custom-made garments (Kusnezov 2012:5). Communication is a key factor to communicate instructions, which are essential in customised processes but it is challenging to attain (Feng, Ma & Ng 2021:1). Another participant did not like the modification of her design that was implemented without her consent. Poor communication by the fashion entrepreneur led to an unsatisfactory experience, as explained in the following quote:

“Uhm...there's also one other time that we had sat down and planned the design that I wanted but then when I came for a fitting it was a different design altogether. I wasn't happy with it and I said but why is it this garment now totally different from what we sort of discussed and uhm...arranged that my garment should be. She said I thought you would like this better. I did not like that when I am coming, when I'm going to my designer I prefer her to follow my instructions I would have given those instructions for a purpose” [#P16].

The participant expressed unhappiness when the design was changed. Discontent occurs when customers' needs are not met as initially specified (Boadi *et al.* 2017:559). Poor communication can result in misunderstanding customers' requirements, which can be due to lack of knowledge on what should be done or language difficulties (Ayo *et al.* 2021:38). Customers know their own needs, therefore fashion entrepreneurs should acquire all the information they need to assist them in designing the garments. Moreover, they should clarify whatever they do not understand rather than make something that causes disgruntlement (Ayo *et al.* 2021:38).

Regrettably, some fashion entrepreneurs do not communicate enough to get correct information and some customers are not clear on what they want. Due to this miscommunication, wrong designs are made and conflict between the fashion entrepreneur and customer can occur. To

assist with the communication process, the fashion entrepreneur should use visual images and notes to ensure that the customers' needs are met (Lee *et al.* 2018:5; Strydom 2019: 24). Visual presentations will shed light on the customers' needs and can minimise language barriers that cause misunderstandings (Strydom 2019: 25).

Participants also believed that custom-made garments provide them an opportunity to wear what they desire, therefore proper communication with the fashion entrepreneur before garment construction commences will benefit them. However, the findings of this study revealed that some of the fashion entrepreneurs do not communicate about body shapes, suitable dress design or silhouette, selection of fabric and a suitable colour scheme for the customers. The following is a response that indicates fashion entrepreneurs' lack of good advice on what is suitable for customers' body shapes.

".....sometimes they don't give you their expertise because we go to them ah-h... not sure or not knowing exactly if this thing will suit you because you see [it] on someone with maybe not be the same ah-h...physique as you but sometimes they don't give you good advice, that's what I've experienced with the most of them" [#P9].

Most customers rely on fashion entrepreneurs' skills to communicate ideas to select from, and reach an agreement on what needs to be done, although often the opposite takes place (Kusnezov 2012:21; Sawyerr 2019:83). The participants of that study also pointed out that they did not get advice on what was suitable in terms of fabric, design or the quantity of fabric needed since they (customers) provided their own material (Sawyerr 2019:83). Therefore, communication and conversations with customers to identify the features of custom-made garments are important and should be practised always (Kusnezov 2012:20; Al-Azzam 2015:47). However, there are some fashion entrepreneurs who communicate and understand customers well, as mentioned in Al-Azzam (2015:47).

".....she was able to listen to me, to draw what I wanted and also the timing like if I wanted my girls to come at a specific time she would make time to be there and look at them, measure their uh-h... mm... take their measurement and also if there was any follow-up she would also do the same [as] she was easily available at home....." [P8].

“she give me advice on what type of material to buy and how to buy it and where to buy it so-o so far ever since I’ve engaged my dressmaker I’m very happy and content with the quality of material that I order”[P1].

The above-mentioned findings suggest that proper communication between all parties involved will result in satisfaction and correct interpretation of customers’ needs. This will also encourage dependability on fashion entrepreneurs and minimise complaints (Ayo *et al.* 2021:42).

4.3.3 Delivery time

Timeous delivery of completed garments is important because participants highlighted that they were not satisfied with the time taken to complete the garments. They pointed out that fashion entrepreneurs take too many orders, and are not able to finish on the agreed date. This is because most of them work alone, and experience labour shortages. Moreover, pressure to finish on time would compromise the quality of garments. From the participants’ viewpoint, fashion entrepreneurs are not at all serious about taking their businesses to the next level, otherwise they would deliver the goods as promised.

“....and then in the process of doing that they are not truthful because first when you place the order, they will tell you that umm... your garment will be ready within one day. When you go to check after one day, the garment is not ready, not only that there will be a lot of people also in the queue seeking for their garments which are not finished and in the pursuit of aah... trying to cope with the orders they end-up not paying much attention to the making of the garment as it is, they then the end products would not be as good as if the tailor had put more effort” [#P6].

It seems like fashion entrepreneurs set unrealistic time frames in order to obtain more customers, without considering the work load they already have (Honu *et al.* 2020:13), which results in shifting of delivery dates. The following is a response from a participant to indicate dissatisfaction with delivery times.

“The only uh-h... problem that we had with him was he kind of uhm... delayed our order because he had too many orders and he was working as a single person, which made him uhm... have pressure on doing our things on time” [#P2].

This is indicated in the findings of the studies by Nana (2018) and Strydom (2019), that most of these fashion entrepreneurs in the Emfuleni Local Municipality are home-based, they work alone or they have one employee, which can lead to poor efficiency. Another problem that may surface due to entrepreneurs accepting too many orders is that the quality of garment construction may lead to an unsatisfactory outcome. Participants now believe that these fashion entrepreneurs are unprofessional. As a result, they are unsatisfied with their work.

“The services are not always good, maybe because they are not professionals sometimes, they promise to finish your garment in a week, and you go there after a week still not completed, so that the only part that I do not enjoy about home-based designers” [#P10].

This demonstrates participants’ frustration with the issue of time-keeping. It is confirmed that late delivery of orders also resulted in customers’ unwillingness to tolerate late orders (Boison, Nyarko, Addison, Asiedu and Agyapong 2019: 47). The participants in that study expected a minimum of five days for lead-time, or the date agreed on the day of ordering garments (Boison *et al.* 2019: 51). The study findings of Ogunduyile, Makinde, Olowookere and Emidun (2017:114) also attested that fashion entrepreneurs’ delay of orders contributed to customers’ dissatisfaction with the service of the fashion entrepreneur. Due to this dissatisfaction of late deliveries, customers may choose to leave the business and search for another fashion entrepreneur (Boison *et al.* 2019: 51). It is therefore crucial to meet agreed deadlines in order to have enough time to produce quality work and reduce the number of complaints that can develop (Boison *et al.* 2019: 51). However, some participants were satisfied with delivery time of their garments.

“...and honestly, I was impressed by the turnaround time the tailor managed to finish the outfits within the expected time. The clothes were also of impeccable designs and also got more than I had bargained for because the tailor managed to make addition garments with the extra material so for me it was a win-win situation so I was really happy and you know timeframes were very good” [P21].

It appears that participants who had their garments finished on time also received good quality work, which is confirmed in the study by Kader and Akter (2014:272), that there is a link between quality and the period taken to finish the garment.

“.....honestly I was impressed by the turnaround time the tailor managed to finish the outfits within the expected time” [#P21].

In agreement, Gocek and Beceren (2012:91) indicated that delivery times are one of the determinants of customer satisfaction.

4.3.4 Confidence in fashion entrepreneur

This category gives an account of the participants' confidence in the fashion entrepreneur regarding custom-made garments they ordered. Most participants believed that fashion entrepreneurs can construct good quality garments, although they sometimes fail to deliver. They have grown confident in fashion entrepreneurs because of their experience that includes good patternmaking skills and their ability to construct exact ordered garments. Their exceptional sewing of garments and understanding customers' body shape and needs have also influenced them to trust the fashion entrepreneurs. One of the participants confirmed:

“Confidence I have, she is really a good uh-h.... tailor, she has made a lot of clothes for a lot occasions for many bridal teams, for individuals so she has a wealth of experience” [#P8].

Based on the above quote, having experience on making a garment contributes to the quality of products that the fashion entrepreneur delivers. While participants have full confidence in fashion entrepreneurs' work, they firmly believe that they should improve their output.

“.....there is always an improvement, there is always something that you can do better...” [#P16].

However, participants also indicate that fashion entrepreneurs' work is not perfect. If fashion entrepreneurs strive to improve their work, it may place them in a favourable position in the market (Dimiyati 2016:74; Bello 2018:321). Further, some participants indicated that they could not trust fashion entrepreneurs because every time they ordered garments the results were different.

“.....some of the garments will come out perfectly and others will have uhm... things that I won't be happy about so, I can't really have that I have say that I have 100%

confidence in these designers, its simply just taking a chance and of course being attracted by the price” [#P6].

It is apparent from this response that garment quality is not always consistent. This deprives customers of excitement for a new garment because there is no guarantee for good quality work. The interpretation for this is not distinct, but this demonstrates fashion entrepreneurs’ lack of skills. Given that, some of the participants claim that fashion entrepreneurs lack measuring and designing skills.

“.....they also lack a....a....a skill of measurement... [measuring] measuring or they are not very competent but generally I like the...the...the garment...” [#P10].

The participant’s response shows that she is still willing to purchase custom-made garments but it might not be sustainable if fashion entrepreneurs do not improve their fashion-related skills, for example, pattern design. In Alam *et al.* (2016:83), fashion entrepreneurs are encouraged to have a broad understanding of technical skills and management of business to execute duties and address issues in their field. A study in Nigeria revealed that lack of skills such as patternmaking and garment construction has led many fashion entrepreneurs to decline plus size customers because it is a challenge for them to produce proper fitting garments (Adelaja *et al.* 2016:2). Their customers struggle to get desired custom-made garments (Adelaja *et al.* 2016:1), resulting into lack of confidence in fashion entrepreneurs. More evidence indicates that some fashion entrepreneurs were not honest about their ability to construct certain garments. At times, customers got surprised after viewing the finished garments.

“...they lie to you that they can make this kind of a dress of which they will be lying to you. When they will give them your garment to make such some designs you will be surprised or shocked that the design that you were expecting to see it’s not the one but some they are perfect.. it differs....” [#P20].

The above finding accords with previous comments, which disclosed that fashion entrepreneurs are often dishonest to save themselves. They often give unrealistic delivery dates and from this response, it can be derived that it is actually about fashion entrepreneurs’ capabilities. Some fashion entrepreneurs may not want to let go of any orders, or may not want to admit their skills’

limitations. This observation has led to assumptions that fashion entrepreneurs want to maximise profits by any possible means. Similar to the response above, participants in the study of Sawyerr (2019:75) also indicated that some fashion entrepreneurs would sew a different design to the original agreed design instead of the customers' preferences. As a result, this negatively impact on the fashion entrepreneurs' sustainability of their businesses if customers do not have confidence in their work. As mentioned in the findings of Keaveney (1995:77), the implications for unprincipled conduct like being untrustworthy leads to customers to easily change their purchase behaviour, for example, placing orders at different fashion entrepreneurs.

4.4 THEME 2: GARMENT QUALITY

Garment quality includes quality of the garment construction, the fabric used or general appearance of a garment on the wearer. The description and analysis of findings under this theme will be presented according to six categories: general garment aspects: style; fabric; quality of garment construction; garment fit; and appearance as well as durability.

4.4.1 General garment aspects

Garment quality is a crucial factor that customers consider when purchasing garments, and if attained can result in customer satisfaction (Farashahi, Easter & Annett-Hitchcock 2018:370; Noor, Nawi, Nasir & Nordin 2019:820). The study findings show that participants evaluated garment quality differently. Many of them expected good quality garments and some of their anticipations were/not met. The following are their responses:

"I expected the garments to be of very good quality and yes I can every time my expectations were met" [#P14].

"They didn't meet [expectations] it was not equally, it was not designed nicely, I was not happy with the quality, uh-h and the design was not" [#P5].

To determine the quality of a garment customers can either use intrinsic features (e.g., style, fabric, fit and quality) or extrinsic features (e.g., price; see 2.3.5.3.1). Only intrinsic features will be discussed under this theme (for extrinsic features see 4.5.2). Similar to the research findings of Hugo and Van Aardt (2012:460), participants of this study used intrinsic attributes to evaluate

garment quality, which included two groups of features: physical features: style, fabric and quality of garment construction (e.g., seams, zips, buttonholes and hems); and performance attributes: garment fit and appearance as well as durability. They stated that these factors were essential for them to determine custom-made garment quality. The findings below were reported according to the intrinsic features that Hugo and Van Aardt (2012) found in their research, excluding care, comfort and colour, which were not part of their study's findings.

4.4.2 Style

Style is the way in which lines, form, shape and textures are combined together (Hugo and Van Aardt 2012:462). Only three participants indicated that style was an important factor for them when choosing and evaluating custom-made garments. They claimed that custom-made garments provided satisfying unique styles consistently, compared to retail garments.

“My important factors on custom-made garments, first of all style, I like custom-made because when there is a style I know it’s just a few people that have it out there. Unlike the clothes that I buy in shops I have the same style that has everybody else in the streets....” [#P1].

“I get unique and gratifying styles every time when I get a custom made uhm...garment done” [#P21].

According to the findings above, it was assumed that the fashion entrepreneurs had knowledge on the correct use of components of design because participants affirmed their satisfaction with custom-made garments styles. For satisfying styles to be produced, Asare *et al.* (2018:58) assert that fashion entrepreneurs should have knowledge on components of design (e. g., lines, colour, texture, shape) that affect the silhouette and style of a garment. These components are not only creative to apply but can be desirable to customers' aesthetic sense (Asare *et al.* 2018:59).

4.4.3 Fabric

Fabric is a principal element in garment construction that contributes significantly to its quality (Hugo & Van Aardt 2012:462). A few participants highlighted fabric as an important factor when they order custom-made garments. They expected high quality fabric but their anticipations were not met. Participants were not impressed with the quality of fabric that was

used in constructing their garments. They reported that the fabric appeared to be attractive, yet it was cheap quality to the touch.

“I was not happy with the quality of umm..... material that ordered the first time started ordering material, they were good to look at, they looked very nice colourful, and then the problem came when the-e the material arrived. I then figured that the material is not what I expect” [#P1].

“The important factor will be the quality of the material” [#P12].

It is important for fabrics to be of good quality and suitable weight because they impact on how the garment will drape and how it will fit the body (Saeed 2018:16; Tsyewu *et al.* 2018:17). For example, fitted garments will appear and fit differently on a fabric with stretch and may not be the same on a non-stretch fabric (Tsyewu *et al.* 2018:17). For this reason, having knowledge on fabric behaviour may assist fashion entrepreneurs to avoid some problems with garment performance (Apunda 2017:45; Tsyewu *et al.* 2018:17).

4.4.4 Quality of garment construction

Garment construction is a process used to form a garment, which involves the sewing of seams, pockets, zips, buttons, buttonholes, collars and hems (Hugo and Van Aardt 2012:462; Apunda 2017:60). Most participants in this study indicated that the garments were of sub-standard quality, seams' neatening were unsatisfactory, buttonholes were badly done and the hems were not even. Some participants had knowledge about construction so they noticed that the construction of custom-made garments was different from that of retail store garments. As a result, this contributed to participants' dissatisfaction of garment construction quality.

“I did not like how the seams looked, the finishing of the garment was not satisfactory also even the buttonholes did not look like the buttonholes that you would find in garments in proper clothing stores...” [#P6].

“Some tailors had problems in doing the hems of the garment, some were not neatly done as a result at times I would end up doing it on my own because I would not be happy” [#P7].

It appeared as seam construction had no importance because it is inside a garment, but participants checked how the garments were constructed. These findings mirror the situation that was highlighted in Tsyewu *et al.* (2018:20), where small business entrepreneurs in Ghana had limited knowledge on the quality of seams, which in turn affected the overall garment quality.

Another aspect is that participants compared garments from their entrepreneur and from retail stores, and noticed that the standard of garments they received revealed fashion entrepreneurs' lack of skills, thus resulting in dissatisfaction. Participants expected professionally made garments that looked like retail store-bought garments, but the opposite occurred.

“.....the garment does not look uh-h... professionally made at the same time it looks like they don't have experience.....” [#P6].

“My expectations are always highI want things done properly and professionally my first curtain top that I took to my designer wasn't made that professionally such that I had to have her alter it and I thought I was happy with it but when I brought it home and uhm...prepared to wear it for a church function I wasn't too happy with it” [#P16].

The research study of Apunda (2017:62) noted that fashion entrepreneur's skills are shown through the fineness of their work, for example, in seam construction. In addition, ill-constructed garments may lead customers to lose interest or have total rejection (Apunda (2017:62; Tsyewu *et al.* 2018:17). Another research study of Ogunduyile *et al.* (2017:114) also identified that fashion entrepreneurs of Abeokuta, Nigeria, lacked garment neatening techniques, which was regarded as underperformance and dissatisfying.

As stated earlier, by comparing and simply noticing differences in garment construction, participants noted that fashion entrepreneurs do not have suitable machines to do their job properly. They claim that sometimes they improvise to do what is needed, but in the end the work does not look good. Participants expected high standard quality garments irrespective of the producer, whether from home-based entrepreneurs or commercial industry. Poor garment construction was probably due to the lack of funds to buy machinery.

“..... but the expectations were not exactly met cause from my experience the garment looked like really it had been made by a home-based e-eh dressmaker.... It seems um the

work of a home-based e-eh have sorry dressmakers sometimes compromised because they don't have the proper machinery to use under certain circumstances, they end uhm... improvising the machinery" [#P6].

Similarly, it was seen in the research of Ogunduyile *et al.* (2017:116) that lack of equipment and expertise affected the output, which made the fashion entrepreneurs fail to match the quality of retail clothes. It is evident in the literature of Almanza and Van den Berg (2016), Sitharam and Hoque (2016) and Bhatt and Sankhla (2018) that challenges in business should be addressed or may cause greater harm than expected, especially the enhancement of skills. Besides this it is necessary for fashion entrepreneurs to possess proper equipment (Moloi & Nkhahle 2014a:231). This clearly indicates that there is a correlation between garment quality and the equipment utilised (Ogunduyile *et al.* 2017:116). Hence, it is important to make an effort to own the right machines for the job.

However, it seemed that not all fashion entrepreneurs are uninformed in garment construction or other skills needed to do their job. One participant mentioned that her fashion entrepreneur has qualifications which are important for producing high quality garments. A few participants received professionally constructed garments, which were exactly what they imagined. They had no concerns.

"... the garment came out exactly as I wanted to, I gave the picture and every detail was the same so I was very happy even the quality of the sewing was on point" [#P12].

"....all the garments he made for me were professionally made, there was not even one time when I had to go to him to ask him to fix anything. Every time I was happy with the final product" [#P14].

The responses above show that garment construction quality is important to participants, and it appears that they were satisfied with well-constructed garments. Thus, it is important to note that customers' choice of a garment is influenced by the quality of construction, fabric and design, which are highly connected to the function and look of a garment (Apunda 2017:62; Farashahi *et al.* 2018:372).

4.4.5 Garment fit and appearance

Fit is one of the features that customers use when they assess garments for quality (Hugo & Van Aardt 2012:460; Kasambala 2016:8). Most participants in this study indicated that fit was an important factor for evaluating quality and motivation to order a custom-made garment. Participants expected perfect fit, which would accentuate the right areas of the body.

“Custom-made garments uhm... should fit like a glove uhm... fitting is everything uhm... which should be able to sit as I have specified to the person that’s making it.....”
[P15].

Customers consider garment fit as the highest priority before taking into account other factors when buying garments, which determines their satisfaction (Saeed 2018:15; Shin & Damhorst 2018:352; Sulekha & Charu 2018:39). However, to achieve good fit can be challenging because of many other dimensions such as figure variations, fabric and design (Saeed 2018:15; Shin & Damhorst 2018:352). To compound the problem, custom-made garments are not available at the time of placing an order. This leaves customers to depend on the reputation of the fashion entrepreneurs. Despite knowing this, custom-made garment entrepreneurs find it difficult to meet fit choices because it is dependent on customers’ personal preferences and the sizing system being used (Kusnezov 2012:12; Sulekha & Charu 2018:39; Tsyewu *et al.* 2018:21). Thus, it is a concern that fit is not easy to attain, given that most participants in this study indicated that fit was an important factor for purchasing custom-made garments. These participants realised that it could be difficult to get the correct sizes with good fit because they are either small or big.

“... somebody with my body size of a very tiny physic, so I get to get clothes tailored to my size with right the fabric” [P11].

“.....another thing is uh-h because I am a person with a big body I would like uh-h...one of the important factors for me is having clothes that suit my body so yeah I think that will be important factors for me” [P13].

The rationale for these responses might be that retail store garments are standard sizes which sometimes have shortcomings that do not fulfil customers with various body shapes (Shin 2013:1; Makhanya, De Klerk, Adamski & Mastamet-Mason 2014:5). Furthermore, irregular

body shapes contribute to the struggle of getting suitable well-fitting garments (Makhanya *et al.* 2014:4), although customers can obtain ready-to-wear garments with a satisfactory fit that need adjustments (Honu *et al.* 2020:3). In contrast to store-bought garments, custom-made garment fit is excellent and many customers obtain a desirable look with less discomfort (Ahmed *et al.* 2017:178).

Customisation of garments then becomes a means to minimise ill-fitting garments, whereby the sizes can be corrected using individual measurements (Kusnezov 2012:18; Mendes dos Reis *et al.* 2016:4). Regrettably, customers' desires for well-fitting garments are not always fulfilled. Participants commented on the improper garment-fit, which was awkward.

"..... it's on the bust area that it didn't fit well. It was slightly big even on the neckline ..." [#P10].

"....I expected it to fit properly like really tailor-made for me but it looked like something that had been massly produced not in the light of me being the customer....." [#P6].

Attributable to fit problems, a considerable amount of literature has been published on this subject (Romeo 2013; Shin 2013; Brownbridge, Gill, Grogan, Kilgariff & Whalley 2018; Sulekha & Charu 2018; Saeed 2018). These studies have focused on the fit for different age groups, body shapes and sizes. As stated earlier, garment fit seems to be a problem even for those who buy retail clothes. Consistent to this study finding, Pandarum, Harlock and Hunter (2017:52) found that bust, waist and garment length were problem areas of fit in a garment. It can therefore be assumed that the sizing or body measuring system may not be appropriate, particularly in South Africa where women's body shapes and sizes are different from sizing systems used in retail stores (Makhanya *et al.* 2014:5).

Participants also indicated that accurate sizes were a determining factor for good garment fit and appearance. The assumption was that if the sizes were perfect, then the general fit and appearance of the wearer would be satisfying. They assumed that they would not experience any size problems because the fashion entrepreneurs would have taken their personal body measurements, which has an impact on garment fit and appearance.

“...we took measurements and the dress couldn’t fit. It was too small then we had to ask someone to get another bigger dress for the other bridesmaid so that she can join the other bridesmaids, so it was terrible” [#P3].

“Custom-made garments uhm... the beauty about them is that once the measurements are taken and the garment is made to fit properly” [#P15].

From the tone of their responses, it seemed as if customers felt less concerned about garment-fit because body measurements were taken. However, participants also received the wrong sizes and their expectations and desires were not met.

“My expectations of the garment were that the garment fits me very well because they have taken measurements.....” [#P10].

“.....the garment that she makes as my designer has got to fit me perfectly because before designing we do measurements. So, it’s got to fit me perfectly, it has to be done to my taste and uhm...it has to be of exactly how I ask her to do it” [#P16].

Taking body measurements correctly is fundamental because if not done properly it can affect the fit and appearance of a garment. It is therefore assumed that no process in garment construction is to be disregarded. Fashion entrepreneurs should know how to measure properly to avoid producing poor fitting garments, seeing that good fitting garments have to satisfy the customer (Saeed 2018:15). In addition, entrepreneurs should know what is required when working with different shapes so the fit will be perfect. Consistent with the literature of Kasambala (2016:8) to obtain proper fit, well defined individual measurements and body shape are required.

For good fit to be achieved, fashion entrepreneurs should conduct fitting sessions. Although a few respondents mentioned fitting sessions, they are important in the construction process of a garment. Sessions are conducted to ensure garment fit but for some reasons, one of the respondents went for a couple of fitting sessions but still good fit was not achieved. This did not please her.

“The garment was nice I mean it’s the colour that [I] wanted but unfortunately the fit was just not proper, it was a bit loose and we were constantly meeting but the fit was not proper so for me that was not met” [#P19].

There are a number of feasible explanations for this to have occurred. It could be the use of incorrect measurements, pattern drafting, or the fabric was not suitable for the design. In order to minimise the many faults when sewing the actual garment, the entrepreneurs should maybe make sample garments. The development of sample garments is mostly used in the manufacturing industry to determine if the customers’ needs are fulfilled before the mass production of garments start (Hossain & Samanta 2018:512; Abuhay 2020:2). In a similar way, this could help entrepreneurs identify problems and improve the garment look before cutting customers’ fabric. The disadvantage to making a trial garment for home-based entrepreneurs is that it inflates costs and lengthens the process of production, resulting into high priced garments (Feng *et al.* 2021:1). In the study of Hossain and Samanta (2018:512), even companies are concerned and make an effort to cut costs on the construction of toile garments. Furthermore, participants feel that fashion entrepreneurs should conduct multiple fitting sessions to avoid problems with garment fit.

“...the person who is uh-h, ordering the garment should fit prior to the finishing of the garment. I’m saying this because the material maybe very expensive and if the dress is small or maybe very big, it may be a loss to the client so the fitting should be done maybe twice or three times by the client to minimise problems with the sizes” [#P7].

Assuming that fitting sessions are not carried out, there may be a risk of making poor fitting garments. As a result, the customer might not ever wear the garment, and the fabric is wasted. That is why participants are concerned because some of the fabrics they buy are exclusive so for them there is no room for errors. This view was echoed by other respondents who do not appreciate their fabric, money and time to be wasted.

"I also would appreciate if she does not waste any material because in my case uhm... I buy my own material and take it to my designer. So, I do not want to see my material being wasted, you know what I mean. So, when I take my material the most important

thing is it's got to fit me perfectly, there should be no wastage of material.....”
[P16].

The comment sounds like an appeal to the fashion entrepreneur not to waste fabric because it involves money. Fabric or garment waste has been under investigation in recent times, whereby fast fashion production is contributing to environmental decline, amongst other factors (Seo 2018; Brownbridge *et al.* 2018:442). In a way, home-based fashion entrepreneurs are also undermining the environment if they keep producing poor fitting garments that customers reject. This concurs with the literature of Brownbridge *et al.* (2018:449) that ill-fit in garments is the cause of garment rejection that will end up as waste and pollution. Among other factors, this is also attributed to poor sizing systems (Brownbridge *et al.* 2018:449). Future research should investigate the extent to which customers reject custom-made garments. If these difficulties are addressed, then like the findings of Tsyewu *et al.* (2018:21), the satisfaction level of custom-made garment will be high.

For a garment to have an attractive appearance that shows good quality, the garment has to fit properly (Saeed 2018:20). Appearance was also among other important factors that were highlighted. Participants were concerned much about their look and custom-made garments provide them with the desired look if the garments are made without faults.

“...it is more about how I look, how I feel and how I present myself” [P21].

“My bridal party looked impeccable, they looked really beautiful in their bridal attires on the day of the wedding. Their dresses had perfect fit, they had the same shed of fabric same design, they were tailor-made according to their bodies and shapes...” [P8].

A likely interpretation on appearance being significant is because participants feel confident, good and presentable in their custom-made garments. As a result, it promotes their social interactions. Similar to the research findings of Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack and Zahid (2018:346), physical appearance was important. Participants in that study felt motivated to buy garments when seeing their fashion influencers dressed well. Furthermore, in the literature of Farashahi *et al.* (2018:371), appearance is considered an attribute that affects customers' opinions of quality.

4.4.6 Durability

To provide customers with durable garments, fashion entrepreneurs should have knowledge of fabric, seams and accessories such as zips and buttons (Apunda 2017:67). Most participants indicated that durability was important when they order custom-made garments. They share the opinion that custom-made garments are durable compared to retail garments.

“The outfits also have a longer lifetime because of the tailoring quality...” [#P21].

“.....most of these tailor-made garments they last long, their seams don't tear easily just like the garments that I will be buying in the shops” [#P1].

“.....when I get a custom made uhm...garment done and personally I believe that the clothes are longer lasting than ready-made clothes.....” [#P21].

The reason for participants to assert that custom-made garments are more durable than retail clothes is not clear, but it might be related to mass production of fast fashion. In the process of producing large volumes of garments, there is the possibility of compromising the quality in order to meet deadlines, which may not be the case with home-based production process, since the techniques used for customising garments enhance their life span (Mendes dos Reis, Pereira, Lucas and Miguel 2016:10).

Considering these physical and performance features collectively, participants realised that there were garment quality inconsistencies. As a result, they resorted to allocate their orders to different fashion entrepreneurs.

“..... I go to them but I now decide which pattern to give to which uh-h tailor because I know who is capable of doing what....” [#P7].

It appears that participants' coping mechanisms to avoid disappointments was by ordering from different fashion entrepreneurs in accordance to their abilities. This demonstrates that customers evaluate fashion entrepreneurs' work, and act differently on the results of their assessments. The above aligns with the study findings of Makopo (2014), who maintained that customers cope in many ways, for example, complaining, keeping quiet, or stop ordering.

4.5 THEME 3: MONETARY AND NON-MONETARY VALUE

The categories that were derived in order to constitute this theme are prices charged, price ratio, and uniqueness and individuality. The following describes and evaluates its findings:

4.5.1 Prices charged

Prices charged was the amount of money that fashion entrepreneurs expected customers to pay after the order was completed. The responses from participants demonstrated positive, negative and neutral reactions to the prices charged for the ordered garments. One of the participants who responded negatively was requested by the fashion entrepreneur for additional payment. The participant mentioned that she wanted her order for the wedding that was fast approaching and she ended up paying double than the initial price. This did not please her at all. Moreover, participants felt that the prices for the ordered garments were high in comparison to the service provided and retail store prices.

“They charge us ridiculous prices but yeah, yeah, but I think it’s because it is tailor-made for you that’s why it’s so expensive compared to buying eh-h, new garment but yeah the prices are a bit high” [#P3].

“I think their prices are too exorbitant they are too much because they charge uh-h... about eight hundred... between six hundred to eight hundred for an outfit an... for an outfit and you would have provided the fabric for that outfit whereas if get into a shop you get an outfit that you don’t need to adjust for a cheaper price” [#P10].

However, some participants justified the high prices they were charged but still believed that the prices were unrealistic. Some fashion entrepreneurs also request customers to provide their own fabric, which inflates the price. Some of these participants agree to this because they prefer to choose their own quality of fabric and colour.

Another concern was that custom-made garments entail many processes to get a good fit. Yet retail shops provide cheaper prices for garments that do not need adjustments. The self-employed participants acknowledged that what people consider as expensive might not be, considering the outcome. One interviewee responded:

“I do believe that some do overcharge actually, and I don’t know the reasons behind that but I’m hoping that they overcha [overcharging] or what we think is overcharging is actually eh-h... based on good quality, eh-h... service, material and all else” [#P13].

An interesting observation was that self-employed participants seemed to understand the logic behind high prices, because they relate very well to what happens when running a business. On the other hand, the participants that responded positively regarding charged prices thought the prices were reasonable when compared to the benefits they received. They also compared custom-made and retail store prices in which they regarded store prices to be expensive.

“I weighed my options and found that getting a home-based designer will be cheaper than buying clothes from these shops” [#P6].

“The prices are very fair actually, I think they cheaper than buying clothes hmm... from clothing retailers because they have the same quality from the shops, so I think they charge very fair prices” [#P14].

It is clear from the above responses that affordability is the participants’ motivation to purchasing custom-made garments. Similar to the findings of a study by Honu *et al.* (2020:13), most of the participants chose custom-made garments because of reasonable prices. Different to this study’s findings, Ahmed *et al.* (2017:178) claim that custom-made garments are, in fact, costly and lose their competitive advantage in the market because of their prices compared with retail clothes. Participants also appreciated the fact that they negotiated with the fashion entrepreneur for better prices.

“I think their prices are ok because you can compromise [negotiate] with them if you don’t have enough money, they can do good work with whatever you have” [#P4].

“You can negotiate and meet in the middle than of, if I want to buy profitless dress like in Edgars or whatever the shops you can’t negotiate on the price it’s fixed, but on the designer, you can negotiate on the price” [#P20].

A possible explanation for the above findings is that home-based fashion entrepreneurs agree to negotiate prices, most likely because they are trying to increase sales and save business-customer relationships.

The participants that responded neutrally to charged prices were probably participants who ordered from different fashion entrepreneurs. That is why they could give favourable and unfavourable comments about prices charged. It appears from participant responses that fashion entrepreneurs who charged reasonable fair prices were new in the market, have less experience, or are probably not paying expenses (e.g., rent, salaries). They also mentioned that the fashion entrepreneurs who charge expensive prices are producing good work.

“Home-based tailors some were over charge but some they charge average but some they charge uh-h... far, far much below but what I realised is those who charge below are still looking for more customers and those who have high charges are now in business and have more customers and they are more competent.... it was depending on where they were doing their sewing because those who were doing it in town have rentals so their sewing prices will very high” [#P7].

The finding suggests that the participant buys from different tailors, which qualifies her to give a price review of both positive and negative answers at the same time. From this response, it is seen that there is a relationship between price charged and competency level of the fashion entrepreneur. The explanation for this might be that fashion entrepreneurs have confidence in their work and that customers are willing to pay for the quality of products they produce. This applies also to less confident fashion entrepreneurs. Despite overpricing of garments, some participants are willing to pay high prices if satisfaction occurs.

“.....when they started it’s not that expensive but immediately when they become known that’s when their prices are actually sky rocketing, but I don’t mind paying...” [#P9].

In this case, what is more important to the participants is the benefits received through wearing the garments; and all else is secondary. This is in line with what Schweiggert and Weiss (2013:41) mentioned in their study, that satisfaction results in willingness to pay. Contrary to this, Cham *et al.* (2018:179) claims that high prices drive customers away. Most importantly,

fashion entrepreneurs should avoid making mistakes that are costly, or will result in fabric wastage. Commenting on this issue one interviewee stated:

“.....the few that I didn’t like is when I was overcharged for something small and when e-eh I had a garment made for me and it turned out to be oversized, when the garment was a-ah then fixed it became too small, so I just felt that my material was wasted, and time was wasted, and money was wasted” [#P1].

It is disappointing that one struggles to get the money to purchase a garment that is meant to fulfil needs, but only to be wasted. If fashion entrepreneurs can be more careful or acquire skills in areas they are lacking, it will be greatly appreciated because although the participants like custom-made garments, they cannot continue to buy sub-standard clothing that is highly priced.

4.5.2 Price quality ratio

Price quality ratio is the balance between the price charged and quality of the garment. Only a few participants raised the issue of price-quality and mentioned that the cost of a garment must reflect its quality. Participants seemed to realise the quantity of work that goes into the construction of garments as one of the reasons behind high prices charged by the fashion entrepreneurs. Although participants understood this, they believed that price and quality should balance. One of them responded:

“... if you are paying for an expensive dress, you expect uh-h... good quality.....” [#P3].

“I expected the uhm... material to be 100 percent of good quality because of the price that he had charged” [#P2].

It seems from the quote that the prices and quality of the garment did not correspond. Another issue is that customers could not assess the quality of custom-made garments because at the time of ordering, the garments were not available (Honu *et al.* 2020:13). That may be the reason why some participants prefer to buy from retail stores, as the garments are and can be easily evaluated. Customers consider high priced garments as good quality, fashionable, and great fit but the same applies to the opposite (Farashahi *et al.* 2018:370; Zhong & Moon 2020:3). This

resembles the study of Wakes, Dunn, Penty, Kitson and Jowett (2020:10), when participants anticipated fading of colour and shape transformation of garments that were priced low and with the high-priced garments the expectations were that the colour would be long-lasting. As a result, their assumptions were incorrect after the garments were tested for colour fastness (Wakes *et al.* 2020:11).

On another note, participants interpreted the value of garments differently as they considered the different aspects that contribute to their value. These aspects include the quality of fabric, neat construction of garments, and price charged or uniqueness of the design. They found custom-made garments more valuable than store-bought garments because of the fit they come with and the individuality that is incorporated when designing custom-made garments. Most of the participants acknowledged that the custom-made garments they had ordered had value for money.

“In terms of value uhm... they are more valuable in a sense that uh-h... it’s your own unique design because now you putting your own creativity and the person that was designing it had only you in mind and wasn’t designing it for what the market out there would accept they design it specifically for one person’s uh-h...silhouette and one person’s uhm... on uhm... personality and everything. So, I feel like it’s more valuable to a sense that you end up having those tailor-made clothes and actually valuing them more than the stuff that you get in a usual retail stores” [#P11].

In reference to this answer, value for money is on the basis of the customer receiving unique garments. As discussed in literature review 2.2.5.4, that refers to customers’ different views of value, it is value in this case, that the customers benefit. Unfortunately, some participants did not get value for their money. This did not please them, as one participant indicated that she does not even wear the garments because of poor garment quality.

“As for me there was no value because it was complain[t] after complain[t] to say fix here, fix here, so eih the value. No value” [#P5].

Sadness and disappointment came from the tone of this participant’s answer and the situation seemed worse when the fashion entrepreneur did not address the issue. This is in line with Khan

and Afsheen (2012:12834), who stated that customers are fully aware of businesses' shortcomings but disregarding their complaints causes anger. When the participant was complaining, it was a perfect chance for the fashion entrepreneur to save their name (Atiyah 2017:22; Manurung & Wahyono 2018:1196). As a result, some of the participants do not trust home-based entrepreneurs. Another participant echoed the same view with an addition that garments would sometimes stay a long time with the fashion entrepreneur without her attention. In addition, she noted that fashion entrepreneurs are not serious about their work, which is why they behave in this manner.

“The value actually didn't match the amount of money that I've paid to-o.. to...to the person that made me that and sometimes I will take my stuff to be maybe to be altered to her they will stay there for months” [#P9].

Similar to the above participant (#P5), she (#P9) sounds weakened by the fashion entrepreneurs' behaviour. This brings many questions about the entrepreneurs' competency levels and ethical issues. It also points out the lack of positive entrepreneurial traits which can affect business transactions. As Moloi and Nkhanhle (2014b:80), McNeil and Burgar (1991:35) argue, there are qualities that an entrepreneur should possess to be successful, such as commitment, reliability, integrity, determination and perseverance, to name a few.

4.5.3 Uniqueness and individuality

Uniqueness and individuality are feelings of being different from other people. More than half of the participants indicated preference of custom-made garments because of their desire to look unique. They do not want to wear designs that are commonly available in retail stores. They want to feel good, special and be acknowledged. When they dress, they want to be the only one wearing that kind of design. Their responses include:

“I like the fact that you don't see anything else like that.. that's for me that's excellent that's why keep going back to my designer I like things that are unique I like things that I know this is for me and for me alone” [#P16].

“..... you want to have your garment unique to yourself you don't wanna go and look exact the same as other people which is what you would get if you go to a shop.....” [#P13].

The impression of being exclusive with that kind of garment satisfies their thoughts about themselves. This desire to look unique by participants demonstrates the influence of emotional and social value that needs fulfilment, which can be interpreted as seeking attention, praises, to be valued, to fit into a certain group, or something missing in that person's life. These findings are in agreement with those of Soomro, Parveen and Danwer (2014:46) and Dlodlo (2014:193), who indicated the strong need of participants for uniqueness. They also prefer garments styled in such a unique way that there are no duplicates (Dlodlo 2014:193; Soomro *et al.* 2014:46). Another reason why participants seek uniqueness in garments is to resist the traditions of community standards or groups they are associated with and that they may be labelled as trendsetters (Dlodlo 2014:193). The following is more evidence of participants expressing what they prefer.

“I feel good, I love them because its unique, it's the only one, it's not like when I turn around the street I will see someone else wearing the same outfit, so I love custom-made garments” [#P10].

“I had an idea in my head, and I wanted that executed so that they can look unique for my wedding. So, I think that's what I really prefer when I order custom-made garments the fitting and also that it can outline my personality and my taste” [#P8].

This opinion of being the only one possessing a particular design may be unlikely, given that nowadays there are a lot of imitation of designs through the internet. However, there is the possibility of becoming the only one with that kind of a design among societal groups. Custom-made garments reflect customers' personality more in comparison to retail ready-to-wear garments due to the usage of different combinations of design features, fabric and colour (Hernandez 2018:1). Likewise, Seo and Lang (2019:6) indicated that there are many options to choose from in order to produce unique garments. In the study of Ahmed *et al.* (2017:178), it is noted that custom-made garments represent sophistication and uniqueness, which will remain appealing to many, even in the future.

“.... you know when someone made you something that you really like you feel confident and you feel, you feel beautiful, you feel like a queen because now you are unique to the other people unlike when you go to the shops and buy the same dress as someone else,.....” [#P9].

According to the above, it can be assumed that uniqueness boosts positive emotions, which later results into satisfaction. Therefore, fashion entrepreneurs cannot take this for granted because it has positive and negative impacts on their business’ profit and sales. Most of the participants indicated that custom-made garments had positive effects on them. Though they had many negative things to say about custom-made garments, they still acknowledged that they felt beautiful, confident, good, special and proud. Positive comments from other people made participants feel great and some even asked contact details of the fashion entrepreneurs.

“I felt confident because the garment uhm... was of great quality, it suits my body, like it was perfect the size was perfect so whenever I wore the garment everybody will ask who made it for you it’s so nice, it’s of quality the detail of the garment the sewing is perfect” [#P12].

Participants’ responses about good feelings demonstrate the inner happiness they experienced. This is Venkatesh, Vivekanandan and Balaji’s (2012:7923) argument, that factors such as physiological senses and societal aspects influence the state of mind positively or negatively through garment attributes once it is in use. The report by Haden (2016) also highlighted the same and emphasised that inward joy surpasses being trendy. Adding to that, Haden (2016) pointed out that people should wear clothes to empower themselves and not for praises that are short-lived.

“I felt beautiful, I felt beautiful because some of the people had to come to me and ask me where did I make my garment and who did it for me and they asked me for the details for that person who did my garment” [#P18].

Asking of fashion entrepreneurs’ contact details assured participants that they were indeed looking good in the custom-made garments. Besides feeling beautiful and good, the comments from acquaintances reinforced their emotions that in turn enhanced confidence and satisfaction

levels. Similarly, Shin (2013) indicated the improvement of self-confidence and fit satisfaction after friends' remarks. Unfortunately, some participants did not get to experience what others' felt when they wore their garments. Participant 5, in particular, felt dismayed after receiving a ruined garment and could not wear it.

"I feel bad, I feel painful because I bought my own material go to someone at the end I was not happy. I can't even wear it, I can't" [#P5].

The feelings described above show that the customer was disheartened. Further to this situation of unhappiness, switching and discontinuation of ordering from fashion entrepreneurs occurred. As a solution, the participant noted that buying garments from retail outlets would be better even if the garments were not unique. Another participant experienced both the good and bad side of wearing custom-made garments. The garments that had proper fit boosted the participants' confidence and the ones with improper fit raised negativity, which made her feel big and overweight.

"To be quite honest there were garments that made me feel so good, it gave me a lot of confidence I just wanted to get out there and just walk in this garment but there were ones, for example, I remember I had tailored a dress oh my goodness! I felt so big, I felt fat uhm.. I think that's mainly because as I said previously the dress just didn't fit properly" [#P19].

Feeling good was a result of fulfilled expectations while negative feelings about their appearances indicated that expectations were not met. The study of Kasambala, Kempen and Laschagne (2018:16) revealed that the above-mentioned affect customers' purchasing patterns, whether the emotions are positive or negative. Similar to this research, Noor *et al.* (2019:826) reported that a major factor in assessing aesthetic value was the look or fit of a garment. This confirms the view that fit is an individual matter, it differs from customer to customer (Noor *et al.* 2019:826).

4.6 THEME 4: ENTREPRENEUR'S LOCATION

The entrepreneur's location refers to where the fashion entrepreneur is located. Participants unanimously agreed on the significance of location but differed in opinion regarding the importance level of factors affecting customer location satisfaction. Three factors were identified, which are accessibility, visibility and secure environment.

4.6.1 Accessibility

Accessibility involves ease or difficulty to reach the fashion entrepreneur's location. Many participants classified accessibility as important, although some of them still ordered their garments from fashion entrepreneurs whose location was not easily accessible. Nowadays with the help of Google maps, private transport users acknowledged that they could get to any place. Participants pointed out that it can be difficult to reach fashion entrepreneurs who are in awkward places if using public transport. Therefore, they prefer fashion entrepreneurs who stay in the same or nearby area as themselves.

"I think the location is quite important as well because sometime you find that the customers are people that don't have a car, they will have to get to you by a taxi but if you are staying in a very awkward eh-h... location its quite difficult for them to get to where you are because sometimes you will find that uh-h... people have to use uh-h... two taxis to get to you. So, the location is quite important as well. I prefer if maybe someone is staying in a town better find a place to hire in a township where people can easily access you" [#P9].

From participants' responses, transportation is a major drawback to visit fashion entrepreneurs in complex locations such as some townships without clear address indications. Due to the lengthy process of obtaining custom-made garments, participants found it problematic to work with fashion entrepreneurs that are difficult to reach. Some participants indicated that if the fashion entrepreneur's location is difficult to reach, they would rather consult another fashion entrepreneur.

“I think the location should be easily accessible, the tailor should be easy to reach. It is important to me because if I can’t access my tailor when I need to see him then I’m bound to look for the clothes somewhere else” [#P14].

The evidence indicates switching intentions because of inaccessibility of a fashion entrepreneur. Possibly the participant may go and buy from a retail store or search for a fashion entrepreneur who is conveniently located. Similarly, a study by Keaveney (1995:76) about service companies across disciplines showed that inconvenience in location resulted in switching behaviours. Moreover, Agus (2019:661) highlighted that customers’ visits decrease if a business is in an awkward location. Therefore, entrepreneurs should consider moving their businesses to places that are easy to reach or may experience failure of the business. Emphasising on the matter Jaravaza and Chitando (2013:304) write that easy access to a location may improve business growth. Furthermore, many participants reported that they want to work with fashion entrepreneurs that are close to where they are staying.

“The location of a fashion designer is very important to me. Why it is very important to me there is no need for me to have a tailor who is several kilometres away whereby she is not easily reached or he is not easily reached because the place to that tailor should be easily accessible for me so that any alterations can be made and I can go there frequently to check or going there for the sizing of the garment” [#P7].

This shows that apart from the costs that can be incurred, convenience is also important. The process for producing a good fitting garment may include a number of fitting sessions that require regular visits to the fashion entrepreneur. Therefore, participants would rather stay close where they can walk or use minimal transport fare.

“Uhm...so talking about location I choose uh-h... conveniently located tailors so that it’s easy for me to go for fitting and adjustments. So, my preferred tailors are located in residential areas or maybe busy shopping centres, close to residential areas that I that I live in so then it becomes easy for me to go to them at any time” [#P21].

It is evident in this study that location is important in business operations as stated by many scholars (Jaravaza & Chitando 2013:302; John, Ejikeme & Alfred 2015:296; Risnawati,

Sumarga & Purwanto 2019:40; Amini & Wiranatakusuma 2020:33), and that it impacts on the success of a business. Participants mentioned that they find it difficult to visit their fashion entrepreneurs because the places are far from public transport. This may discourage them to visit the fashion entrepreneurs frequently. The study findings of Bello (2018:326) and Chang (2020:49) indicated that customers preferred to buy from convenient places near their homes. Businesses surrounded by high population exhibited greater returns as well as increased purchase intentions (Bello 2018:326; Chang 2020:49). The distance of location from customers can have a negative impact on customers' opinions on time and energy required to get the goods and services (Sunaryo *et al.* 2019:120).

On the other hand, a few participants commented that they do not mind to travel far to the fashion entrepreneur as long as they receive good quality services. In addition, they suggested that finished garments could be couriered to them, but they omit final fitting sessions. Another thing they value is the relationships they have with the fashion entrepreneur so they would rather go to a person who understands them better.

“Well, I’m not really much worried about the location of the fashion designer or tailor. What’s more important to me is what they give me. I don’t mind traveling far away just to get something of good quality, something that is made well to suit me well, to make me look beautiful and ah presentable so basically I think their location is not a problem with me I can always go to them when I think when I feel I need their service wherever they are, as long as their service is good, as long as they make beautiful custom-made designs for me” [#P1].

Participants are strongly convinced that they will go anywhere for good quality garments but practically speaking it might not be feasible, more specifically when they pay more for public or private transport than the garment. This can become a challenge for fashion entrepreneurs to conduct fitting sessions with individuals who stay far.

4.6.2 Visibility

Visibility in this context includes social media or physical visibility. Social media visibility is whereby advertisements are posted on Instagram, Facebook or WhatsApp status. Physical visibility in this case includes the advertisements that the fashion entrepreneurs carry out through

flyers, flea market displays, business signs or banners put up on a property fence. Few participants noted the importance of visibility when they select a fashion entrepreneur, they expressed their preference to see prior work or get recommendations before committing to order the garments from fashion entrepreneurs. One of the participants viewed the fashion entrepreneurs' profile on social media (e.g. Facebook) upon which she engaged with the fashion entrepreneur and ordered the garments. Other participants stated that their expectations were high because of the garment quality they saw.

".... my expectations were really high I was excited to have my garments made because I had previously seen the garments that the-e... the-e... they made before, so I knew that what I asked for was gonna be delivered." [#P15].

The evidence demonstrates that customer expectations were influenced by seeing fashion entrepreneurs' previous work. Being visible to target customers can be an advantage to fashion entrepreneurs because that is how their work is viewed and evaluated for possible orders. On the other hand, a participant observed that some of these fashion entrepreneurs are not visible at all, in terms of physical visibility and visibility on social media platform such as Facebook. For this reason, participants suggested that fashion entrepreneurs should rent places that are visible and accessible.

"Yeah... most of them they do it in their houses so it's not too much of customers who know where they are. I think if they can find some support that they can have somewhere there is a lot of people or a shopping centre where they can do their things, I think it will be much better for them because now it looks like they are hidden inside their houses" [#P4].

Customers' support is core in business' success but if customers do not know where to find the fashion entrepreneurs then it will be a problem. Hence, visibility is highlighted as important in the studies of Gordon (2017), Wilbard *et al.* (2018) and Manurung and Wahyono (2018).

4.6.3 Secure environment

Generally, people want to feel safe and secure when they visit the fashion entrepreneur, which is contrary to what participants in this study indicated during the interviews. A limited number of

five participants noted their sensitivity as well as the importance of security and cleanliness of the environment. They do not want to feel uncomfortable every time they visit their fashion entrepreneur.

“The location should be in a much safe place and uh-h... a place where you can be able to see that uhm... the amount of clients that he is having so that you feel confident about him so in safe place you would also feel comfortable when you are going to your designer for measurements or etcetera” [#P2].

As previously mentioned, many value security; if fashion entrepreneurs are located in unsafe areas they are encouraged to look or rent places that make their clientele feel secure. Evidence from a participant indicates that not only the surrounding areas of the fashion entrepreneur’s location are a concern, but also the houses where they are carrying on their operations.

“Ah... the location itself was a bit hectic in that uhm... the tailor was located in that area of the town where there is high rates of crime,I would rather this uh... this tailor would be located where its easily accessible and where there is no high rates of crime and where the building is in good condition and has good lighting as well because our country’s crime rate is so high.....” [#P6].

This response highlights that people feel unsafe in high-crime areas. For this reason, these areas can suppress entrepreneurs who home base their businesses in environments such as the described. This in line with Wilbard *et al.* (2018:24), that in congested places customers fear they may lose their belongings such as cell phones and handbags. As stated in Wilbard *et al.* (2018:16), business environments should be safe for everyone who visits the place.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented findings from interviews of twenty-one participants who ordered custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. The purpose of the study was to identify factors that affect customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments. The findings provided insight for fashion entrepreneurs on the areas that affect the level of customer satisfaction. A presentation of findings was done according to the themes that surfaced from the

interviews. The analysis of themes was then provided in accordance with categories. Findings revealed that service quality, product quality, price, value and location all affect customer satisfaction in one way or another.

Customer-entrepreneur contact experience concentrates on the service quality from the time a person orders a garment up to date of delivery. The engagement meetings with the fashion entrepreneur during the mentioned period demonstrated how they served customers. In reference to their experience with fashion entrepreneurs, some participants positively commented on the services they received. However, another group gave negative responses on the quality of services these fashion entrepreneurs offered. This was due to lack of good advice on suitable fabrics to be used, disregarding customers' concerns and losing customers' garments. Further evidence indicated that there was lack of communication that resulted in making of wrong designs. Time taken to finish the garments was also one of the major disappointments to participants. Most fashion entrepreneurs were not meeting deadlines to the point that some of them became untruthful postponing the collection date. This compromised garment quality because fashion entrepreneurs would sew the garments in haste. Participants described fashion entrepreneurs' work as loaded with inconsistencies, in which the fashion entrepreneurs' competency level remained questionable in their minds. Considering these unpleasant experiences, some participants were not pleased, and some switched to other fashion entrepreneurs.

Garment quality focused on the general garment aspects of style, fabric, quality of garment construction, garment fit and appearance and durability. The criterion of evaluation for quality was subjective, inclining to the preferences of an individual. Some participants assessed the garments as a whole, while others paid attention to features such as zips, seams, or buttonholes, in which garment construction was reported to be poor quality and did not reach expectations. This led to different coping strategies such as changing tailors, buying from multiple businesses and refraining from ordering. It was also seen that fashion entrepreneurs' work was undermined by lack of proper equipment and inadequate skills. Apart from poor construction, participants were not happy because they received ill-fit garments. Unfortunately, many participants did not get the satisfaction they were after.

Monetary and non-monetary value provided an understanding of the prices charged and what participants felt about the benefits of custom-made garments. The prices charged were compared to the benefits of custom-made garments and retail prices. Participants liked the idea that prices were flexible and negotiable, unlike in chain stores prices where are rigid, unless it is a sale. For non-monetary value, uniqueness was identified to be one of the main reasons participants acquired customised garments. It was also identified that emotional and social values have an impact on the choices of a desired look. Emotional benefits such as feeling beautiful, confident and proud had positive effects on the participants. Complements from family and friends (social value) reinforced these emotions and satisfaction was achieved. As much as positive emotions strengthened satisfaction levels, so did negative emotions lead participants to stop or switch the fashion entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs' location represented the fashion entrepreneurs' location's accessibility, visibility and secure environment. Findings showed that all participants agreed on the salience of home-based fashion entrepreneurs' location. However, their views on the significance level of factors that affected customer location satisfaction were not the same. The majority of participants stated that accessibility was important. They emphasised that if the fashion entrepreneurs' location was not accessible, they would rather order from another fashion entrepreneur. Apart from accessibility, participants also highlighted the importance of seeing prior fashion entrepreneurs' work. Further comments revealed that participants were not comfortable in crowded places where there is a possibility of them losing their belongings. Thus, it is in the best interests of fashion entrepreneurs to be located in a safe area.

Collectively, these findings provide important insights into what the participants experienced when they visited home-based fashion entrepreneurs. It is therefore up to the fashion entrepreneurs to enhance their technical and business skills in order to fulfil customers' desires. The next chapter provides the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study. It will also reveal if the research findings answered the research question and fulfilled the objectives.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is one of the many factors that affect the growth and survival of the businesses. Many researchers across disciplines investigated the matter to determine the causes. This study explored factors that affect customers' satisfaction of custom-made garments manufactured by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. Chapter One presented an introduction and background to the study, the problem statement, research question, aim and objectives of the study. The subsequent Chapter Two reviewed literature regarding the field of study. A description of research methods and methodology was provided in Chapter Three, where qualitative research design was proposed for the study. Data gathering was conducted by means of one-on-one interviews in order to fulfil the empirical objectives (1.7.5). Chapter Four followed and provided research findings from the interviews of twenty-one participants who order/ordered custom-made garments. Four themes surfaced, namely, customer-entrepreneur contact experience, garment quality, monetary and non-monetary value and entrepreneur's location. The following is an overview regarding the research question, aim and objectives.

5.2 CONCLUSION TO RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The research question of this study was: What are the factors contributing to customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in the Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM)? To address the aim of the study, Chapter Five provides an account of the exploration and description of the factors affecting custom-made customers' satisfaction. The objectives stated to achieve the aim and the details of the research question are discussed subsequently.

5.2.1 Literature-related objectives

An in-depth literature review was conducted to provide the researcher with the background knowledge on factors affecting customer satisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. By so doing, the researcher gained insight on the subject, which assisted in the identification of the gap, the formulation of the research question and the problem statement that outlined the challenges experienced by customers of custom-made garments. The study was based on three constructs including customer satisfaction, fashion entrepreneurs and custom-made garments. Literature revealed that there was little evidence on custom-made garments in the context of home-based fashion entrepreneurs. All the information was extracted from academic books, journal articles, as well as accredited websites, presented in Chapter Two.

5.2.2 Empirical-related objectives

The empirical objectives of this study were to explore factors that contribute to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs. The following is a summary of the findings, according to each objective. The empirical objectives of this study were to:

5.2.2.1 Identify demographic characteristics of participants

The participants of this study were women between the ages 18-50 years. These participants were mostly professionals and cumulatively they spent an average of R1300 per custom-made garment. Participants mostly ordered custom-made garments for wedding attires and formal garments suitable to wear for formal functions, work wear and other, church wear and leisure, day and evening wear.

5.2.2.2 Explore factors that contribute to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of custom-made garments produced by home-based fashion entrepreneurs in terms of:

5.2.2.2.1 Service quality

Service quality entailed the service that participants received from the day they enquired about custom-made garments to the day they received the garments they ordered. This study has indicated that service quality is important, and it affects customer satisfaction levels. Most

participants were satisfied with the overall experience and service they received from home-based fashion entrepreneurs. The findings showed that customers evaluated the quality of service and the way it was offered. Facial expressions such as a smile might seem insignificant but it made the participants' experience with entrepreneurs satisfactory. However, some participants were dissatisfied with the quality of service. Though in general they stated their satisfaction, participants had some areas of service they disliked. They were mostly affected by lack of communication and delivery time of garments. Further evidence showed that participants had many complaints but still nothing was done to address their concerns. Participants became unsure of the entrepreneurs' competency level because of these incompatibilities. Some participants considered to seek services from other fashion entrepreneurs where they could get good quality service.

5.2.2.2.2 Product quality

Product quality was focused on the quality of garment construction, garment fit and the fabric that was used to make the garment. The criteria to evaluate garment quality differed from person to person. Participants' review of product quality was based on style, fabric, quality of garment construction, garment fit and appearance as well as durability. Findings revealed most of the participants' expectations of garment quality were not met, although they regarded quality as the important factor when ordering custom-made garments. Garment fit was also an important aspect when considering customised garment quality. Regrettably, participants were disappointed with garment fit, which was expected to be addressed by customisation. Further analysis uncovered that the shortage of equipment and skills affected the end product quality. Together, these findings demonstrated that garment quality affected customer satisfaction in particular garment fit and garment construction.

5.2.2.2.3 Price

Price was a factor that concentrated on the monetary perspective. On the question of prices charged, this study demonstrated that there was a balanced reaction of opinions and participants regarded prices as reasonable, extremely high and some participants were neutral about prices. The evaluation of prices was based on what participants gained from custom-made garments in comparison with retail charges. Further evidence revealed that participants preferred custom-

made garments because customers could negotiate the prices, unlike store-bought garments. Findings also indicated to a certain extent, prices affected satisfaction.

5.2.2.2.4 Value

The value of garments was more considered in terms of emotional value than, for example, monetary value and participants were more inclined to emotional benefits they obtained from wearing custom-made garments. Most of the participants positively commented on how they enjoyed the benefits of custom-made garments. Their confidence increased after other people appreciated their garments. Furthermore, the desire for uniqueness and individuality motivated about more than half of the participants to order custom-made garments. Apart from purchasing custom-made garments for the above reasons, they also sought for monetary value but resulted in disappointment for a number of participants. These findings also indicated that value affects customer satisfaction, especially concerning uniqueness and individuality as well as emotional benefits (e. g. feeling confident).

5.2.2.2.5 Location

Location referred to where the fashion entrepreneur was located. Although participants differed on what influenced them on location satisfaction of fashion entrepreneurs, they all agreed on its importance. Many of the participants value accessibility to the extent that they were prepared to change from the entrepreneur whose location was difficult to access. In addition, they highlighted the inconvenience and cost implications if the fashion entrepreneur was situated far from their homes. However, some participants did not consider the location of the fashion entrepreneur as a deterrent, their concern was the fashion entrepreneurs' expertise. Regarding visibility, only a few participants acknowledged its significance. Furthermore, the findings showed that participants were concerned with the surrounding environment where the fashion entrepreneurs are located.

5.2.3 Outcome-related objectives

The outcome of the study provided for satisfied and dissatisfied participants regarding their experiences with home-based fashion entrepreneurs, and included satisfaction/dissatisfaction with service quality, product quality, price, value and location. Delivery time and communication

was mainly the cause of service quality dissatisfaction. General service quality was satisfactory to many participants. Product quality was affected by poor garment construction and ill-fit garments while some participants were satisfied with the aforementioned. When participants were questioned about price the scale was balanced. The feeling of being unique satisfied many participants, which increased their confidence. Finally, accessibility to the fashion entrepreneur was their main concern (see Chapter Four). To fulfil the outcome-related objective (see 1.5.3.3), the following strategies are recommended to home-based fashion entrepreneurs by the researcher based on the findings on how to improve customer satisfaction:

- Fashion entrepreneurs are encouraged to upgrade their skills, especially the areas of service and product quality since participants indicated some dissatisfaction with these factors. For example, fulfilling orders within the agreed time frame, will be regarded as being reliable.
- Fashion entrepreneurs should know how to solve complaints and not ignore customers. Pursuing management courses would help entrepreneurs to know these issues and more.
- They should engage in detailed discussions until they understand what the customer wants. While on that point they should write notes and draw illustrations so that they are on the same page with the customer.
- They could also introduce a system to measure customer satisfaction levels that would enable them to know where they need to improve. This could be achieved by asking customers to evaluate them after finishing their orders, or they could use questionnaires to gather information on the service and product provided.
- Prior to starting the business, it is recommended that they should acquire basic tools and equipment to make it easy for themselves to produce better garments.
- They should carry out their operations at a location that accessible to target customers.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations of this study were identified: the first limitation of the study was that it was exploratory and situated in a specific area which means the data is specific only to that group, which is not representative of all the customers of custom-made garments and therefore cannot be generalised. However, it can be transferred to a similar context with same setting. The

second limitation was that the inclusion criteria was limited to women who are most known to be consumers of clothing, but men do buy clothes and they also want to look good. These limitations led to the recommendation of what future studies could examine or include in their studies.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In view of the limitations to this study, recommendations of future studies were made and are as follows:

- An extension of this study could be done by incorporating men, since they are also consumers of custom-made garments.
- Future studies could also be extended to other regions in the province, or could consider the whole province of Gauteng to obtain various demographics of participants.
- Other factors such as reputation, brand and image could also be considered in further studies.
- Findings could be used to compile surveys in order to execute this study on a larger scale.
- The same study which enquires on factors that affect customer satisfaction could be conducted by focusing on customers of well-established fashion houses.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Satisfied customers are essential to the success of any business. Thus, it is salient for fashion entrepreneurs to learn skills as suggested in the recommendation section to improve customer satisfaction levels. In fact, this would benefit all concerned, the customers and the businesses. Customers' desires would be fulfilled and their appreciation of custom-made garments would be increased. On the other hand, businesses will strengthen their position in the market. As a result, many businesses would survive and possibly grow to the level of creating wealth. It is evident from this study that, to a certain extent, service quality, product quality, price, value and location influence customer satisfaction. This implies that not all dimensions of these factors affect customer satisfaction. The dominant reasons that affected customers' satisfaction for service quality was lack of communication and delivery time. Product quality satisfaction levels were mostly affected by garment fit and quality of garment construction. On price satisfaction, the

scale was balanced and price-quality ratio was not a concern for participants. As regards to value, the significant dimensions that impacted satisfaction were emotional value and social value. Finally, customers' satisfaction of location was affected by distance and accessibility.

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ANNEXURE A: PROOF OF NEXUS LETTER



Vaal University of Technology

Your world to a better future

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to inform that a thorough literature search has been performed for:
Chevllin Homela, *Student no. 210102799* on the topic:

“Customer satisfaction: A study of home-based fashion entrepreneurs and custom-made garments.”

The search has been carried out on **19 November 2019** by **Nomgcobo Ntsham**, (Employed in the Gold Fields Library)

According to my knowledge, there is currently no indication of this research being carried out before.

Regards

Nomgcobo Ntsham

Telephone: 016 - 950 9658

E-mail: nomgcobon@vut.ac.za

ANNEXURE B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Chairperson
Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Human Sciences
Vaal University of Technology
28 August 2020

RESEARCHERS: C. Homela

PROJECT TITLE: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF HOME-BASED FASHION ENTREPRENEURS AND CUSTOM-MADE GARMENTS.

QUALIFICATION: Masters of Visual Arts in Fashion

Decision: Provisional Approval

Ethics Reference Number:
FREC/HS/14/08/2020/6.1.9

Student number: 210102799

Dear Ms Homela:

Thank you for submitting the above-mentioned research proposal for research ethical consideration and approval. This application was considered through a full review process. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been provisionally approved. Through the deliberations of the reviewers, the following points were identified that have to be addressed in order to obtain full approval:

1. The researcher should indicate how the anonymity of the businesses will be protected in order to protect the reputation of the businesses the customer participants are questioned about.
2. In the Information leaflet it is stated that participants will be given R100 worth of data, while in the application and the proposal it is given as 100Meg data. The R100 amount would not be ethically acceptable.

As soon as the changes have been made, please submit the revised documents to the FREC for our records.

Upon receiving these revisions full approval will be granted if the revisions are deemed acceptable.

Please submit these revisions before 14 September or request extension if this will not be possible.



Vaal University of Technology

Your world to a better future

Faculty of Human Sciences

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**Chairperson
Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Human Sciences
Vaal University of Technology
18 September 2020**

RESEARCHERS: C. Homela

**PROJECT TITLE: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF HOME-BASED FASHION ENTREPRENEURS
AND CUSTOM-MADE GARMENTS.**

QUALIFICATION: Masters of Visual Arts in Fashion

Decision: Provisional Approval

**Ethics Reference Number:
FREC/HS/14/08/2020/6.1.9**

Student number: 210102799

Dear Ms Homela:

Thank you for submitting the revisions to the above-mentioned research proposal for research ethical consideration and approval. I am pleased to inform you that your application has now been fully approved based on the following points that have now been addressed:

1. The researcher should indicate how the anonymity of the businesses will be protected in order to protect the reputation of the businesses the customer participants are questioned about. **Noted and accepted**
2. In the Information leaflet it is stated that participants will be given R100 worth of data, while in the application and the proposal it is given as 100Meg data. The R100 amount would not be ethically acceptable. **Noted and accepted**

ANNEXURE C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed consent form for research participants

Title: Customer satisfaction: a study of home-based fashion entrepreneurs and custom-made garments

Researcher: Chevllin Homela (Student at Vaal university of Technology)

Cell: 0716273657

Supervisor: Dr H. Van Staden (H.O.D at Vaal University of Technology)

Cell: 0828038402

Co-supervisor: Mrs I. Wilken (Lecturer at Vaal University of Technology)

Cell: 0833114232

Dear Participant,

A research study is being conducted in your area, Emfuleni region for the fulfilment of a Master's degree in Fashion for Chevllin Homela at Vaal University of Technology. The purpose of the study is to find information that can help the small business fashion designers/tailors/dressmakers, in the Emfuleni region, to increase customer satisfaction of the garments and services they offer to the people of the Emfuleni. This will benefit both the fashion designers/tailors/dressmakers and the customers (i.e. you) to these businesses. The fashion designers/tailors/dressmakers will gain more business, which means growth and increased customer satisfaction levels.

You are invited to participate in the study on one-on-one telephonic/WhatsApp audio recording interview / Zoom / Microsoft Teams session upon which the researcher and you will decide a way that is suitable for you. Your invitation was based on that you are: i) 18years and above, ii) you order custom-made garments, iii) you reside in Emfuleni iv) you can understand and express yourself in English and v) you are a woman. If you decide to take part in the study you will be asked questions regarding the garments that you order from small fashion businesses in Emfuleni. The interview should take 30minutes to 1hour maximum.

Participation is on voluntary basis. In the event that you want to withdraw from the interview you can do so without any penalty. Moreover, your identity will remain anonymous when

reporting the findings of the study; a pseudo name will be used to protect your identity. Only your thoughts and views pertaining to the study will be reported. If you incur data cost to download and upload your response to the interview questions, you will be reimbursed an amount of 100 megabytes of data. Please note that participation in the study is free.

The content of this letter will be explained, and you are requested to read it before you give your consent. If you have questions about the study you wish to understand, please ask the researcher without fear. The contact number is provided above.

Your participation in the study is greatly appreciated, kindly give your consent verbally to the researcher.

Participant is willing to take part and gives consent ().

On behalf of participant: _____ Date: _____

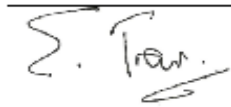
ANNEXURE D: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

Belle Ombre Road
Tamboerskloof
Cape Town
8001.

24 May 2022

LANGUAGE EDITING

This is to certify that I language-edited the dissertation, "Customer satisfaction: a study of home-based fashion entrepreneurs and custom-made garments", by Chevlin Homela for the Master of Visual Arts in Fashion degree, in the Faculty of Human Sciences, Vaal University of Technology.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Trew', is positioned below a horizontal line.

Elizabeth Trew
Trew.eliz@gmail.com
021 424 6135
073 235 1147

ANNEXURE E: QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

- **Question 1:** What is your age?
- **Question 2:** What is your current occupation?
- **Question 3:** On average how much did you spend on the custom-made garments being discussed?
- **Question 4:** For which occasion do you order clothing from home-based fashion entrepreneurs? You can provide more than one answer.

Option	Type of clothing	Yes/No
1	Work wear	
2	Normal day wear	
3	Leisure wear	
4	Church wear	
5	Evening wear	
6	Wedding attire	
7	Any other	

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Broad questions

- Tell me about your experience with the home-based fashion designers/dressmakers/tailors who made your garments in the past.
- What do you regard as an important factor when you order custom-made garments?

Questions for probing

-Service quality

- Tell me more about the service that the home-based fashion designer/dressmakers/tailors offered you.
- Do you have confidence and trust in the designer who made the garments we are discussing? Why?

-Product quality

- What were your expectations regarding the quality of the garments that you ordered and were they met or not?

-Price

- Tell me what you think about the prices charged by home-based fashion designers/dressmakers/tailors?

-Value

- What would you say about the value of the custom-made garments that you purchased?
- Tell me how you felt/feel about yourself wearing these garments?

-Location

- Tell me what you think about the location of a fashion designer/tailor and how much important it is to you?

-Overall

- How do you feel about all the garments you ordered?

ANNEXURE F: THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

A brief account of codes, categories and themes that surfaced from interview data:

THEME #1: CUSTOMER-ENTREPRENEUR EXPERIENCE			
CODES	PARTICIPANT'S ID	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Good service	4,11,13,14,15, 18, 20, 21	CUSTOMERS' GENERAL EXPERIENCE	CUSTOMER-ENTREPRENEUR CONTACT EXPERIENCE
Excellent service	12		
Professional service	19		
Good experience	7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18,19		
Best experience	12, 17		
Great experience	14, 15, 16		
Happy with service	1, 16, 20		
Bad service	9		
Bad experience	3, 5, 9		
Terrible experience	3		
Service not so good	6		
Not great experience	8		

Service was not good	10		
Complained several times	5,6		
Tailors do not care once they receive the order	6		
Overpromise	10,14		
Sometimes garments get lost in their position	9		
No manpower	2		
They do not fulfil desires	9		
Garment unfinished	8		
Not happy about the service	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 16		
Prefers home-based garments	1, 4		
Recommends home-made tailoring	1, 4,8		
Will order again	11, 18, 20		
Good at listening	4, 8, 16	COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ENTREPRENEUR AND CUSTOMER	

Gives advice on how to style the garments	1		
Give time to understand the wants of a customer	15		
Shared ideas for the design	17		
Poor advice on what suits your body shape	9		
Poor communication	10, 18, 19		
Seek for advice on suitable design for my figure	21		
Sufficient time for communication with designer	1		
Got advice on choosing fabric to be used	1, 8, 18		
Received different design from prior discussion	16		
Communication	19		
Want to be consulted of changes	19		

Agreed dates of delivery are not kept	6, 10, 11	DELIVERY TIME	
Regarding time the designer is not reliable	18		
Designers not serious does not deliver on time	9		
Not truthful about time of delivery	6		
Sticks to the timeline	16		
Delay in finishing the garments	14		
Most designers do not deliver on time	8		
Take long to work on garments	9		
Behind time	2, 3, 14,18		
The garments were not ready	3		
They don't value time	9		
Finished the garments on time	21		
Delivered garments on time	3		

Dresses were finished on time	8		
The time frame was good	21		
Met the deadline	12		
Makes time for customers	8		
Received items on time	11		
Delivered on time	3,8		
Good turnaround time	21		
Deadlines were met	19		
Delivery of garments was on time	8		
Good time frame	4		
Impressed on turnaround time	21		
Happy because of time frame and good quality sewing	4		
Confident in the designer	1,4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 20, 21	CONFIDENCE IN FASHION ENTREPRENEUR	

Puts trust in the designer	19		
Do not have confidence all the time	9		
No trust	5		
Not easy to belief in the designer	13		
No confidence until the garment is finished	5, 6		
Trusts some tailors and does not trust some	7		
Trust was broken	8		
It takes time to have faith in the designer	13		
Wealthy of experience	8		
Qualified	12		
Has experience	12		
Designer is knowledgeable	12		
Knows customer interests and character	1		
Understand body shape	13		
Understands customer's needs	17		

Improved skills	16		
Not creative	7		
Designers are dishonesty about their ability to make certain dresses	20		
The designer's work not consistent sometimes good and sometimes not	6		
THEME #2: GARMENT QUALITY			
Quality garment	1, 8, 14, 16, 21	GENERAL GARMENT ASPECTS	GARMENT QUALITY
Good quality in general	3		
Fulfil desires	4, 9, 17, 18, 19		
Something quality	5		
Quality in general	3		
Attracted by the quality of work	15		
The quality in general was disappointing	5		
Expectations of good quality garments	9, 12, 14, 17, 21		
Style	1, 20, 21	STYLE	

Design was bad	5		
What matters is quality and style	21		
Not common designs	4, 8, 15		
I can choose my own garment style	1		
Retail clothes have common style for everybody	1		
Bottom part of dress had good quality fabric	2	FABRIC	
Durable material	9		
Quality of fabric	12		
Good fabric quality	17,11		
Same shed of fabric	8		
Material used not suitable	9		
The top part of the dress was poor quality of fabric	2		
Was not happy with quality of fabric	1		

Expected high quality of material	2, 9, 18		
Fabric used, and needs should match	18		
Garments are well constructed	1	QUALITY OF GARMENT CONSTRUCTION	
Good sewing of zips and buttons	7		
Garments were well executed	8		
Quality construction	12		
Good work	20		
Garments are made perfectly	11		
Perfect construction	3		
Good sewing skills	2		
The sewing was perfect	12		
Neat garments	15		
The sewing was professionally done	14		
Hems were poorly done	7		

Received substandard garment	6		
The buttonholes were badly done	6		
The finishing of seams was not satisfactory	6		
Expectations were not met	5, 7, 10, 20		
Unsatisfactory result	6		
Some garments did not meet expectations	19		
Perfect fit	1,3, 8, 10, 14,15, 16, 20	GARMENT FIT AND APPEARANCE	
Expects garments to fit perfectly	16, 19, 20,21		
Garments accentuates right areas of the body	15		
Fit the way I like	10		
Fit is important	15		
Garment should fit well	8		
Garment fit was not proper	6, 19		

Bust area of the garment did not fit well	10		
Retail garments are not perfect fit	8		
Fit expectations were not met	10		
Most important is appearance	21		
Garments should fit body shape	10		
Want perfect fitting garments	16, 13		
Looked impeccable	8		
Presentation of self	21		
Correct measurement	2		
Accurate sizes	11,18		
Wrong size	1,3,7		
Wrong neck size	10		
Fitting sessions were conducted	1,8		
Went for a couple of fitting sessions but still fit was not achieved	19		

Conduct fitting sessions	7		
Durable seams	1	DURABILITY	
Long lasting garments than ready-made clothing	21		
Retail shop garments are not strong	1		
Durable fabric expectations	9		
THEME #3: MONETARY AND NON-MONETARY VALUE			
The money paid was a lot compared to the service provided	3	PRICES CHARGED	MONETARY AND NON-MONETARY VALUE
Additional payment requested	8		
Commercial designers charge exorbitant amounts	1		
Prices are high	2, 3, 5, 8, 9		
Retails shops are expensive	6		
Tailors who pay rentals were expensive	7		

Prices charged are ridiculous	3		
Tailor-made garments are expensive compared to buying new garment	3		
Prices are exorbitant despite providing material for the outfit	10		
Awfully high prices for designers who pay rentals	15		
Expensive garments compared to retail shops	13		
Some designers overcharge	13		
Reasonable prices	5, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17,19,21		
Fair prices	1, 4, 6, 7, 11, 14, 21		
Expected cheap boutique-looking garments	6		
Prices are less than designer boutiques	6		
The prices are good	4		
Bargained	21		

Affordable prices	6, 19, 21		
Prices are not bad	6		
Price satisfaction	1		
Prices are not bad, all designer's expenses considered	16		
Negotiable prices	4, 16, 20		
The cost of the dress must reflect the quality	3	PRICE-QUALITY RATIO	
Price and quality should balance	2, 3		
Amount of work corresponds with the price charged	2		
Prices and garments do not correspond better to buy something finished that is tangible in retail shops	5		
Unique garments	8, 9, 10, 17,21	UNIQUENESS AND INDIVIDUALITY	

Garments are not replaceable because they are unique and stylish	16		
Like to be different that's why I order custom-made garments	16		
I must feel confident, unique, smart	21		
Own design	4, 8		
Different from retail shop clothes	8		
Not something you get from shops	9		
Not common designs	4, 8, 15		
Should be the only one with that garment	15		
High value	1, 2, 7, 12,15, 16,18		
Value is worthwhile	14		
The neatness of the garment is high quality in value	15		
More valuable than retail clothing	8, 11		
The value was good though disliked some	6		

features of the garment			
Customer preferences added to the garment increase its value	8		
Valuable	6, 10,11		
Value was fair	4,7,20		
Sentimentally the garments are valuable because they are unique	13		
No value	5		
The garment value and the amount paid did not match	9		
Feels good	6, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21		
Felt beautiful and looked like a princess	2		
Feels like a queen, confident and beautiful	9		
Feel proud wearing the garment	20		
Feels presentable	1		
Feel confident	20		
Felt competent because of the fit	7		

Felt amazing	11,15		
Felt comfortable	11, 21		
Felt confident because of great quality and perfect fit	12		
Felt confident because of good quality clothing	14		
Feels different			
It is a good feeling	6		
Always feels elegant, smart and confident	1		
Felt beautiful because people asked of the tailor who made the dress	18		
When comments were passed I felt confident in the garments	6		
Huge confidence due to unique fabric	17		
Felt confident and comfortable	20		
It is a plus people asking of the tailor who made the dress	21		

When people comment the beauty and fit of the garment it gives confidence and feels good	13		
Always amazing to have custom-made garments	15		
Among others I am confident wearing the garment	1		
Receiving compliments makes me happy	16		
Boosted confidence	16, 19, 21		
Can confidently wear the garments	7		
Want to feel, happy and confident	19		
Feels bad and pain but garment was not a success	5		
Feels bad and was not happy in general	5		
Felt so big and fat because some of the garments had ill-fit	19		

THEME #4: ENTREPRENEUR'S LOCATION

Accessible location	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13,15,17	ACCESSIBILITY	ENTREPRENEUR'S LOCATION
Accessibility is important	10		
Location should be accessible	14		
The designer is reachable	20		
The tailor is close by	18		
Prefers designer in the same area	21		
Better to rent a place close to clientele	9		
With private transport it's easy to reach	13		
Can be difficult to reach designers if using public transport	9,12,13,19		
I had seen garments he made previously	15	VISIBILITY	
Purchased after seeing the designer's work	12		

Orders after seeing	21		
Most designers are not visible	4		
Visible area	2		
Saw designer's profile on Facebook	2		
Tailor should find a better location that is safe and accessible	6	SECURE ENVIROMENT	
Safe place	2, 5		
Location should be safe and clean	11		
To feel comfortable when visiting the designer	2		
Environment should be safe	6		
Home-based are safer and calm environment	11		
Position themselves in better location	6		
Not located in safe area	6		
Hectic location	6		

Poor building condition	6		
Location is not a worry	1	DISTANCE	
Location does not matter	3, 19		
Location is not an issue but garment quality	15		
Can go to designer no matter their location	1		
No hustle of going to the designer	8		
Can go to any place for this designer	13		
Location is important	7, 9, 18		
Chooses designers that are located conveniently	21		
Designer's location is not too far	13		
Not far from designer	16		
Not expensive to drive to the designer	16		
Can end up buying somewhere if the tailor is far	14		

Garments can be couriered if designer is far	15		
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ANNEXURE G: TURN-IT-IN-REPORT



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Inspiring thought. Shaping talent.

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³ A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Visual Arts in

Fashion

In the Faculty of Human Sciences

Chevllin Homela

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June 2022

Dissertation

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