

## Apparel Needs and Expectations Model: A New Paradigm of the Apparel Product Development Process

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Modern apparel product development merges the disciplines of art, design, technology, business, sociology, and psychology to create products which satisfy consumers' needs and expectations while yielding a profit for the manufacturer (Curwen, Park, & Sakar, 2013). In a global context, apparel manufacturers must operate in an arena dictated by international politics, natural resources, technology, and various cultures (Keiser & Garner, 2012). The ability to identify how these various forces influence the target customer's needs and expectations of apparel will facilitate financially profitable apparel product development. In our discipline, few models exist to guide the design segment of apparel product development (Carroll & Kincade, 2007; Lamb & Kallal, 1992). To date there is no known comprehensive, integrative model existing, which examines both micro- and macro-level forces that determine whether a new proposed design will address the target customer's needs and expectations of apparel.

This proposed model, called the Apparel Needs and Expectations (ANE), is intended to give a holistic structure for understanding the complex forces which form customer needs and expectations of apparel (see Figure 1). The model can eventually facilitate product developers, designers, and merchandisers in apparel industry as well as apparel students and researchers in academia: 1) to better understand the forces which form the target customer's needs and expectations; 2) to identify emerging trends which may alter apparel needs and expectations; and 3) to uncover areas where further research is warranted.

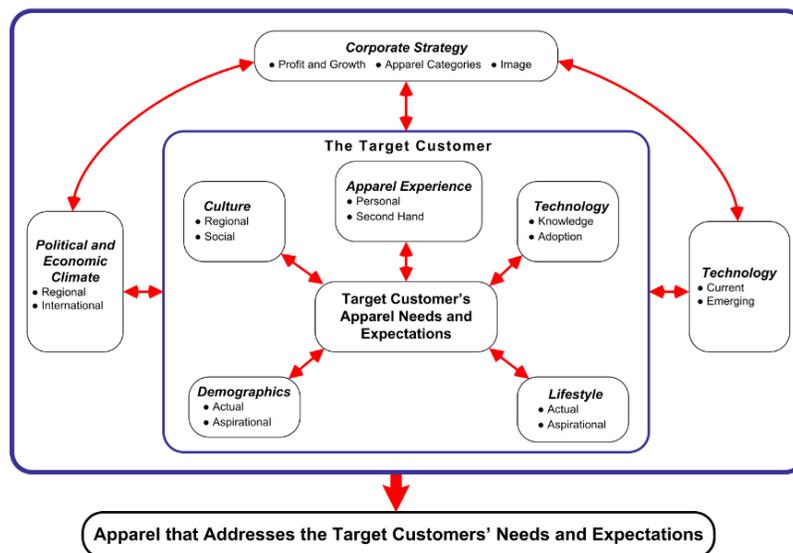


Figure 1. Apparel Needs and Expectations Model

As shown in Figure 1, the target customer is at the center of this proposed ANE model. The customer is examined in relationship to the forces directly impacting one's apparel needs and expectations. Direct forces upon any given consumer include demographics, culture, lifestyle, technology and apparel experiences. The ANE model details the various elements, which comprise each of these forces and how these dictate a consumer's apparel needs and expectations at any given point in history. This model acknowledges that each consumer can move in and out of an apparel manufacturer's target population due to changes in any of these forces. Changes in forces can be temporary or permanent and dictate both consumer needs and expectations of apparel during that time frame.

Surrounding the target customer and one's direct forces are additional forces, which impact the target customer. These forces include the economic and political climate, technology, and a company's corporate strategy. The ANE model proposes that the target customer's needs and expectations of apparel are not only influenced by these forces, but also exert an outward force upon them. The model examines the relationship of the forces among political and economic climate, technology, and a company's corporate strategy. It explores the dynamic interaction of the target customer with each of these forces and how that interaction changes a given consumer's needs and expectations of apparel. In addition, the model shows how both the inner forces and the outer forces acting upon a target customer come together to produce apparel which addresses both the needs and expectations at any given time in history.

The ANE model is unique as it has both industry and academic application and can be used to uncover product attributes (e.g. style, performance, price) necessary to satisfy the target customer's needs and expectations, and provide a holistic structure for identifying areas where future research is needed. More specifically, the model can provide a structure for apparel students to understand the dynamic environment in which apparel product development takes place around the globe and for academic researchers to identify new trends and areas of future research. Further in-depth flowcharts of each dimension in this model are available for various levels of users and will facilitate the use of this model in the product development process. This model reflects the current, consumer-driven era in which apparel companies must closely align their new product design and development with consumer's needs and expectations rather than simply designing products.

## References

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