

## APPAREL STYLES SUITABLE FOR YOUNG SWAZI WOMEN WITH THE PREVALENT BODY SHAPES

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### ABSTRACT

Young Swazi women conform to different body shapes, with the most prevalent body shapes being the triangular and hourglass, yet ready-to-wear apparel is traditionally manufactured using the Western hourglass body shape. Most consumers are not aware of their body shape; hence lack knowledge on apparel styles that suit their bodies. It is therefore imperative for consumers to be schooled on apparel styles that best suit their body shapes and for apparel manufacturers to consider the prevalent body shapes in the designing of apparel for Swazi women. Thus, this study aimed at assessing apparel styles suitable for young Swazi women with the two most prevalent body shapes. Through purposive sampling, two women representing the two most prevalent body shapes were selected as models using a drop value formula for body shape identification. A semi-open ended evaluation form containing photographs of the models in leotards and four different apparel styles was used by three experts in the field to assess the suitability of apparel styles. The findings of the study revealed that different apparel styles and colours suited different body shapes, and that some apparel styles designed for the hourglass body shape are not suitable for the triangular body shapes.

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### INTRODUCTION

In our daily lives, we are faced with the challenge of selecting the right clothing for either ourselves or for other individuals, or we are simply uneasy of the physical appearance of people in their choice of apparel styles. This is not only a challenge for individuals but also for apparel sales assistants, body image consultants, fashion designers, ready-to-wear manufacturers and uniform committees in organisations. These challenges are as a result of the different or unique body dimensions of individuals.

Frost-Sharratt (undated) says everyone is unique, and you can be assured that there is no one quite like you anywhere else in the world. Whilst this certainly makes life more interesting, it causes difficulties for fashion designers and retailers as they try to manufacture clothes that can be worn by everybody. By nature, the anatomy of the human body differs from individual to individual and these anatomies differ more from age to age and from one ethnic group to another (Makhanya et al, 2014).

A study by Mabuza (2014), which sought to compare the body shapes of female Swazi consumers with those of body forms used in apparel manufacturing shown that the prevalent body shapes amongst young Swazi women are the triangular body shape (54.5%), hourglass (34.7%), rectangle (7%) and inverted triangle (3%). Makhanya et al (2014) reported based on their study that the three most predominant body shapes among African women from the varied South African ethnic groups were also the triangle (58.7%), hourglass (27.5%) and rectangle (12.8%) body shapes. Apparel manufacturing firms in Swaziland export most of

their products to neighbouring countries and internationally. Conversely, local retail outlets sell imported apparel that is traditionally manufactured using the Western (Caucasian) ideal/hourglass body shape (Zwane and Magagula, 2006; Mabuza, 2014; Makhanya et al, 2014), which does not match the body shape most prevalent among young Swazi women.

The prevalent body shapes among women in Swaziland are the triangular and hourglass body profiles (Mabuza, 2014). The triangular body shape, also known as the pear shaped figure (Connell et al, 2003), is characterised by having a larger hip circumference than their bust and low hip-to-waist ratio (Simmons et al, 2004). The subject has narrower shoulders, wider hip, and/or thighs, with an average to smaller bust, narrow back, slightly small waist, low hip curve, round buttocks, a possibly low waist, longer legs, straight upper body lines and curved lower body lines (Rasband, 2002; Connell et al, 2003). The aforementioned authors agree to the figure appearing larger in the hips than in the bust and some having no clearly defined waistline, shown in Figure 1. The distinguishing mathematical formula used to identify the triangular body shape is Hip minus bust:  $\geq 8.9\text{cm}$  and  $\leq 23\text{cm}$ , (Mabuza (2014).

The hourglass body shape, sometimes called a balanced body shape, has a relatively small circumferential difference in the bust and hip measurements, and the ratio of their bust-to-waist and hip-to-waist is almost equal (Simmons et al, 2004). Rasband (2002) and Connell et al (2003) define it as a subject having a larger bust and possibly shoulders, slightly wider back, slightly small waist, slightly large hips and buttocks, rounded body lines; body appears balanced but the bust, hips and waist are emphasized, as shown in Figure 2. The distinguishing mathematical formula used to identify the hourglass body shape: Hips minus bust:  $< 3.6\text{cm}$ ; bust minus waist:  $\geq 17.8\text{cm}$  and  $\leq 28\text{cm}$  (Mabuza, 2014).

While hourglass body shaped consumers may not have much of a challenge in selecting suitable apparel styles, the triangular body shaped consumers are more likely to face challenges in dressing well to project a satisfactory and pleasing look. One has to create a balance on other body shapes to be similar to the hourglass body shape. The underpinning theoretical framework on selection of suitable styles for one's body shape lies in self-concept and self enhancement.



**FIGURE 1: TRIANGULAR BODY SHAPE**  
(Saboura, 2011)



**FIGURE 2: HOURGLASS BODY SHAPE**  
(Saboura, 2011)

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Self-concept is an overall perception of who a person is and it integrates personal qualities and other characteristics in defining self (Kaiser, 1997). An individual's self-concept is dynamic based on the situation or social surroundings. Self-concept can constitute different dimensions including actual-self (how an individual perceives him/herself), the ideal-self (attributes an individual would like to possess) and social-self (how an individual believes others perceive them) (Keogan, 2013: 9).

An individual's self-concept has an effect on personal clothing preferences. The clothing

selection or preferences on a particular day may be influenced by emotional state of an individual, their ideal and actual self-concepts, function to attend, or the ambience prevailing at a particular time. For example, persons who are depressed at the time they make the colour selection may opt for cooler colours, whereas persons who are happy may tend to select brighter, warmer colours (Keogan, 2013). The opposite may be applicable when a person wants to elevate his/her emotions by wearing warm colours. For consumers who are aware of their body shapes, they may also be influenced by their body profiles in clothing preferences.

Clothing preference is significant in self-enhancement. Self enhancement is portrayed either through self-advancing, enhancing the positivity of one's self concept, or self-protecting through reducing the negativity of one's self-concept. The adoption of one of the above approaches is depended on individual characters. Self-protection is likely to be adopted by persons with lower self-esteem or in addressing body liabilities in order to enhance self-concept (Kramer et al, 2007). The selection of befitting apparel styles for some body shapes may be more of self-protection than self-advancing depending on the body shape.

To select befitting styles for body shapes, elements and principles of design are applied to create positive illusions and certain aesthetics. Elements of design serve as a foundation for the development and creation of textiles and clothing products, including fabrics for interior spaces (Sarkar, 2011). Across the disciplines, the elements of design: line, space, shape, form, texture, and colour are used by every designer to achieve a desired effect on a garment. When applied in clothing selection, the importance of these elements cannot be underestimated. The shape of the garment may be body concealing or body revealing, depending on the design details of the garment, but the illusion of the garment shape is always dependent on the body shape within the garment. The division of space with construction details, decorations, texture, colour, and printed fabric design is critical to the style of the garment (Marshall et al, 2012) and contributes towards an enhanced appearance.

Principles of design are the arrangement of the elements of design into a complete coherent composition in the work of a designer by applying balance, proportion and scale, harmony, rhythm, emphasis and unity (Rasband, 2002; Marshall et al, 2012). Focusing

on synthesizing or harmonizing principles, proportion renders a feeling of unity created when all parts relate well with each other. Varying the sizes and shapes of garment parts creates interest. Good scale means that all parts of an outfit including accessories are consistent in size with each other and with the person. Balance is an equal distribution of weight (actual or visual) from a central point or area by the use of lines, shapes, colours, texture and patterns to break up the area or space (Rasband, 2002; Marshall et al, 2012). Balance gives a feeling of equal attraction on both sides of a central line. Everything on a garment looks like it belongs where it is. No part seems too heavy for the rest. A balanced look gives a sense of equilibrium (Rasband, 2002; Marshall et al, 2012). Unity exists when all parts of the outfit create a satisfying combination or harmony. It is the result of good proportion, balance, rhythm, and emphasis (Sarkar, 2011; Marshall et al, 2012).

In terms of suitable basic apparel style components, Brown and Rice (2001) stated that varying the silhouette of a garment yields different styles. Silhouette is determined by the amount and location of fullness in the garment and the methods for controlling the fullness. The silhouette of a garment can take many forms. Where the demarcation line separating the upper and lower torso on the garment is located, it has a significant effect on the silhouette and style of the garment. Complete apparel style is composed of or a combination of, but not limited to, garment features, namely neckline, collar, sleeve, cuff, pockets, tucks, pleats, creases and ruffles. A style is the distinctive design characteristics of a product that distinguishes it from other products of the same type (Kaiser, 1985; Marshall et al, 2012). Brown and Rice (2001) defined the style of garment as being the cut of its structural lines in a manner that has become recognized, accepted and named.

Given the lack of knowledge on body shape by consumers, Mabuza (2014) recommended that consumers be schooled on the different body shapes that exist within the population to help them attempt to identify which body shape they are more aligned to and which apparel styles were most suitable for their body shapes to minimise fit problems.

Knowledge on suitable apparel style choices for the predominant body shapes for Swazi women would assist consumers in reducing fit problems and in making unflattering clothing choices. The purpose of the study was to assess apparel

styles that are suitable for young Swazi women with the two most prevalent body shapes being triangular and hourglass, in order to suggest apparel style choices with appealing silhouettes and colours for the two body shapes most prevalent amongst Swazi women.

**METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative and comparative research design was used for this study. Two women representing the two prevalent body shapes were selected as models using purposive sampling; a drop value formula for body shape identification was used. The drop value formula is the difference between key body circumference measurements (bust, waist and hips). Photographs of the models in leotards and in four different apparel styles were taken and used in a semi-open ended evaluation form for the assessment of the suitability of the apparel styles and colours for the prevalent body shapes by three purposively selected clothing and textile lecturers. The evaluators were knowledgeable on apparel style assessment and they received matching colour-printed evaluation forms. Literature was used to reconcile responses in the case of disunity in the responses given by the experts. Data were subjected to qualitative analysis, specifically thematic and comparative analysis and displayed in tables according to the objectives of the study for easier coding and identification of themes, categories and the relationship between the categories.

**RESULTS**

**Visual effect of apparel styles on critical body parts of the prevalent body shapes**

Figure 3 shows the two body shapes of the models in leotards that were used to assess the effect of the apparel styles. Contained in Table 1 to Table 4, are the responses from judges for different apparel styles labelled as a, b, c, and d for the triangular body shape and e, f, g, h for the hourglass body shape.

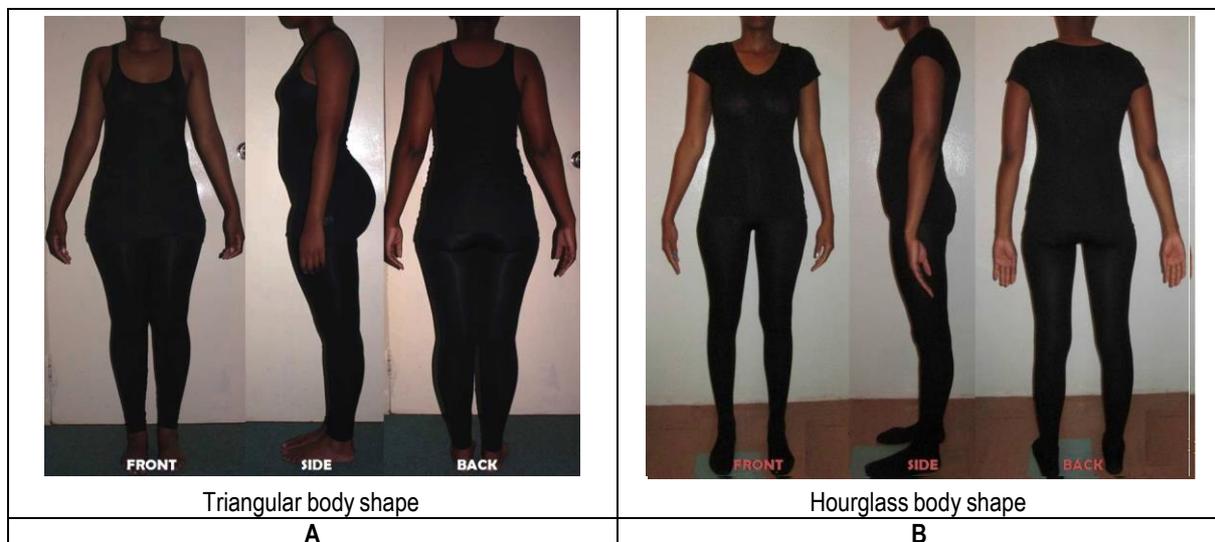
**Assessment of apparel style on a triangular body shape**

**Style a**

In Table 1, two judges agreed that the apparel style made the shoulders appear broader than in Figure 3(A); on the bust, all three judges gave different responses; stating that the bust appeared small, same/similar and larger. Two judges said the apparel style make the waist appear smaller and the same number of judges agreed that the apparel style make the hips/buttocks appear larger.

**Style b**

In assessing style **b** in Table 1, all three judges gave different responses on the effect of the apparel style on the appearance of the shoulders. One judge stated that the apparel style make the shoulders appear narrower than in Figure 3(A), another judge stated that the shoulders appeared broader and the last judge observed no difference in the appearance of the shoulders. On the bust, all three judges gave different responses; that the bust appeared



**FIGURE 3: MODELS' BODY SHAPES**

**TABLE 1: EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT OF THE FOUR APPAREL STYLES ON THE BODY PARTS OF THE TRIANGULAR BODY SHAPE**

Apparel Style a	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	1.Narrower 3.Broader	1	3	3
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 3.Same/similar 4.Larger	2	4	3
	The waist appears	1.Smaller 5.Larger	1	5	1
	The hips/buttocks appear	2.Larger 3.Rounder	3	2	2
Apparel Style b	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	1.Narrower 2.Same/similar 3.Broader	1	3	2
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 3.Same/similar 4.Larger	2	4	3
	The waist appears	4.Straight 5.Larger 6.Same/similar	6	4	4/5
	The hips/buttocks appear	3.Rounder 4.Flat 5.Same/similar	3	4	5
Apparel Style c	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	2.Same/similar	2	2	2
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 3.Same/similar	2	3	3
	The waist appears	1.Smaller	1	1	1
	The hips/buttocks appear	2.Larger 3.Rounder 5.Same/similar	3	5	2/3
Apparel Style d	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	2.Same/similar 3.Broader	2	2	3
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 3.Same/similar 4.Larger	2	3	4
	The waist appears	1.Smaller 6.Same/similar	1	6	6
	The hips/buttocks appear	1.Smaller 4.Flat 5.Same/similar	4	5	1

**TABLE 2: EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT OF THE FOUR APPAREL STYLES ON THE BODY PARTS OF THE HOUR GLASS BODY SHAPE**

Apparel Style e	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	1. Narrower 2. Same/similar 3. Broader	2	3	1
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 3.Same/similar 4.Larger	2	4	3
	The waist appears	1.Smaller 6.Same/similar	1	6	1
	The hips/buttocks appear	1.Smaller 3.Rounder 4.Flat	4	3	1
Apparel Style f	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	2.Same/similar	2	2	2
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 4.Larger	2	4	4
	The waist appears	1.Smaller 3.Less curvy 5.Large	1	3	5
	The hips/buttocks appear	2.Larger 4.Flat	4	2	2
Apparel Style g	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	2.Same/similar 3.Broader	3	2	2
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 3.Same/similar	2	3	3
	The waist appears	4.Straight 5.Larger 6.Same/similar	5	4	6
	The hips/buttocks appear	2.Larger 4.Flat	4	2	2
Apparel Style h	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	Shoulders appear	2.Same/similar 3.Broader	3	3	2
	The bust appears	2.Smaller 4.Larger	2	4	4
	The waist appears	4.Straight 5.Larger	4	4	5
	The hips/buttocks appear	1.Smaller 2.Larger 3.Rounder	2	3	1

small, same/similar and larger. For the waist, one judge was undecided between straight or larger, another judge found the apparel style to make the waist appear the same, and the last one found the waist to be straight. According to the three different responses given by the judges, the hips/buttocks were said to appear rounder, flat and same/similar.

#### **Style c**

In assessing apparel style **c** in Table 1, all three judges agreed that the shoulders appeared the same or similar. Two judges found the apparel style made the bust appear the same/similar to Figure 3(A) and for the waist, all three judges agreed that the waist appeared smaller. For the hips/buttocks, judges differed in responses. They found the apparel style made the figure appear the same/similar, rounder and larger.

#### **Style d**

In assessing style **d** in Table 1, two judges agreed that the apparel style make the shoulders appear the same/similar. All three judges gave different responses on the effect of the apparel style on the bust; that the bust appeared smaller, same/similar and larger. Two judges found the apparel style made the waist appear the same/similar to Figure 3(A). All three judges had different observations on the effect of the apparel style on the appearance of the hips/buttocks; that the hips/buttocks appeared flat, smaller and same/similar to Figure 3(A).

#### **Assessment of apparel style on an hourglass body shape**

#### **Style e**

In assessing style **e** in Table 2, the three judges gave different responses on the effect of the apparel style on the appearance of the shoulders. One stated that the apparel style make the shoulders appear narrower than in Figure 3(B), another judge stated that the shoulders appeared broader and the last judge observed no difference in the appearance of the shoulders. On the bust, all three judges gave different responses; that the bust appeared small, another stated same/similar and the last stated larger. Two judges found the apparel style made the waist appear the smaller. For the hips, all three judges gave different responses; that the hips/buttocks appeared smaller, flat and rounder.

#### **Style f**

In assessing style **f** in Table 2, all three judges agreed that the shoulders appeared the same or

similar to Figure 3(B). Two judges found the apparel style made the bust appear larger. All three judges had different observations on the effect of the apparel style on the waist, stating that the waist appeared smaller; another found it made the waist less curvy and the last one saw the waist to be larger than in Figure 3(B). Two judges agreed that the apparel style made the hips/buttocks appear larger.

#### **Style g**

In assessing style **g** in Table 2, two judges agreed that the apparel style make the shoulders appear the same/similar to Figure 3 (B). Two judges out of three found the apparel style made no recognisable difference in the appearance of the bust. All three judges had different observations on the effect of the apparel style on the waist, stating that the apparel style make the waist appear same/similar, straight and larger. Two judges agreed that the apparel style make the hips/buttocks appear larger.

#### **Style h**

In assessing style **h** in Table 2, two judges agreed that the apparel style made the shoulders appear broader and made the bust appear larger than in Figure 3(B). The same number of judges found the apparel style made the waist appear straight compared to Figure 3 (B). All three judges had different observations on how the apparel style made the hips/buttocks appear. One judge stated that the hips/buttocks appeared smaller than in Figure 3(B), another judge stated that they appeared rounder and the last judge stated that they appeared larger.

#### **Assessment of overall apparel look on the triangular body shape**

Table 3 **below** presents the evaluations of the overall appearance of the body shape and the suitability of the apparel style for the triangular body shape. All three judges had different observations of the effect of the apparel style **a** on the body size. One judge stated that it makes the body size appear curvy; another judge said the body size appeared fuller and the last stated that the apparel style had no effect on the body size. Two judges agreed that the apparel style make the body shape appear more of an hourglass shape instead on the triangular body shape in Figure 3(A). All three judges had different observations on whether the apparel style is suitable for the body shape or not; one stating that the apparel style is very suitable, another found it to be just suitable and the last

judge found it to be marginally suitable for the body shape.

In Table 3, all three judges agreed that the apparel style **b** made the body size appear fuller and two judges agreed that the apparel style make the body shape appear rectangular shaped instead of the triangular body shape it actually is in Figure 3(A). The same number of judges found the apparel style to marginally suitable for the body shape.

Two judges agreed that the apparel style **c** made the body size appear slimmer and hourglass shaped, as reflected in Table 3. All three judges had different observations on whether the apparel style was suitable for the body shape or not. One judge found it to be just suitable, another found it to be very suitable for the body shape and the last judge found it to be marginally suitable. For the apparel style **d** in Table 3, two judges agreed that the apparel style make the body size appear slimmer and three judges found the body shape still appeared to be triangular shaped. The three judges differed on suitability of styles to body shape. One found the apparel style to be suitable, another one to be slightly suitable and the third one not suitable for the body shape.

#### **Assessment of overall look on the hourglass body shape**

In assessing apparel style **e** in Table 4 below, two judges agreed that the apparel style made the body size appear slimmer and the body shape appeared the same/similar to Figure 3(B). Two judges found the apparel style to be suitable for the body shape. In Table 4, two judges agreed that the apparel style **f** make the body size appear fuller and still appeared hourglass shaped, and the same number of judges found the apparel style marginally suitable for the body shape.

For apparel style **g** in Table 4, all three judges had different observations of the effect of the apparel style on the body size. One judge found the apparel style made the body appear slimmer; another found the body curvier and the last judge found the body fuller. Two judges found the apparel style made the body shape still appear hourglass shaped. The same number of judges found the apparel style marginally suitable for the body shape.

In Table 4, two out of three judges found the apparel style **h** made the body size appear

slimmer and the body appeared rectangular shaped. One judge found the apparel style to be marginally suitable for the body shape whereas the second judge found the apparel style unsuitable for the body shape. There was no response from the third judge.

#### **Suitable apparel colours for the prevalent body shapes of young Swazi women wearing four styles**

Contained in Table 5 and Table 6, are the responses from judges on the suitability of the colour for the different apparel styles labelled as a, b, c, and d for the triangular body shape and e, f, g, h for the hourglass body shape.

#### **Suitable colours for the triangular body shape**

For the triangular body shape in Table 5, two judges found the colour(s) of apparel style **a** and **b** to be suitable for the body shape. The same number of judges found the apparel colour (s) in style **c** to be marginally suitable for the body shape. For style **d**, the three judges had varying observations on the suitability of the apparel colour(s) for the body shape. One judge found the apparel colour(s) to be very suitable for the body shape, another judge found it to be marginally suitable for the body shape and the last judge found it to be unsuitable for the body shape.

#### **Suitable colours for the hourglass body shape**

As presented in Table 6, two judges out of three found the apparel colour(s) in style **e** to be suitable for the body shape and the same number of judges found the apparel colour(s) in style **f** to be marginally suitable for this body shape. Two judges found the apparel colour(s) in style **g** to be marginally suitable for the body shape and the same number of judges found the apparel colour(s) in style **h** to be marginally suitable for the body shape.

#### **A guide for ideal apparel styles that suit the prevalent body shapes of young Swazi women**

Table 7 shows the results of the most suitable apparel styles and colours for the most prevalent body shapes as found in the study.

**TABLE 3: EVALUATION OF OVERALL APPAREL LOOK ON THE TRIANGULAR BODY SHAPE**

Apparel Style a	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	2. Curvier 5. Fuller 6. Same/similar	2	5	6
	The body shape now appears	1. Triangular shaped 3. Hourglass shaped	3	3	1
	The apparel style is	1. Very suitable for this body shape 2. Suitable for this body shape 3. Marginally suitable for body shape	2	3	1
Apparel Style b	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	5. Fuller	5	5	5
	The body shape now appears	4. Rectangular shaped 5. Circle shaped	4	4	5
	The apparel style is	2. Suitable for this body shape 3. Marginally suitable for this body shape	2	3	3
Apparel Style c	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	1. Slimmer 5. Fuller	5	1	1
	The body shape now appears	1. Triangular shaped 3. Hourglass shaped	3	1	3
	The apparel style is	1. Very suitable for this body shape 2. Suitable for this body shape 3. Marginally suitable for this body shape	2	3	1
Apparel Style d	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	1. Slimmer 6. Same/similar	1	6	1
	The body shape now appears	1. Triangular shaped 6. Same/similar	1	6	6
	The apparel style is	1. Very suitable for this body shape 3. Marginally suitable for this body shape 4. Not suitable for this body shape	1	4	3

Apparel styles suitable for young Swazi women with the prevalent body shapes

**TABLE 4: EVALUATION OF OVERALL APPAREL LOOK ON THE HOURGLASS BODY SHAPE**

Apparel Style e	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	1.Slimmer 2.Curvier	1	2	1
	The body shape now appears	4.Rectangular shaped 6.Same/similar	4	6	6
	The apparel style is	2.Suitable for this body shape 4.Not suitable for this body shape	2	4	2
Apparel Style f	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	4.Straight 5.Fuller	4	5	5
	The body shape now appears	3.Hourglass shaped 4.Rectangular shaped	3	3	4
	The apparel style is	2. Suitable for this body shape 3. Marginally	2	3	3
Apparel Style g	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	1.Slimmer 2.Curvier 5.Fuller	1	2	5
	The body shape now appears	1.Triangular shaped 3.Hourglass shaped	3	3	1
	The apparel style is	2. Suitable for this body shape 3. Marginally suitable for this body shape	3	3	2
Apparel Style h	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
	The body size appears	4.Straight	-	4	4
	The body shape now appears	4.Rectangular shaped	-	4	4
	The apparel style is	3. Marginally suitable for this body shape 4. Not suitable for this body shape	-	4	3

**DISCUSSION**

Overall it was shown that different apparel styles did in fact have an effect on the body by altering the appearance of its shape and size.

**Visual effect of apparel styles on critical body parts prevalent body shapes of young Swazi women**

On the triangular body shape, apparel styles with flared or A-line silhouettes were found to add slight fullness to the buttocks/hip area and the longer the flare, the fuller the figure appears due to the opening out design of the style.

**TABLE 5: EVALUATION OF SUITABILITY OF APPAREL COLOURS ON THE TRIANGULAR BODY SHAPE**

Apparel Style	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
<p>Apparel Style a</p> 	The apparel colour(s) is	1.Very suitable for this body shape 2.Suitable for this body shape	1	2	2
<p>Apparel Style b</p> 	The apparel colour(s) is	1.Very suitable for this body shape 2.Suitable for this body shape	1	2	2
<p>Apparel Style c</p> 	The apparel colour(s) is	1.Very suitable for this body shape 3.Marginally suitable for body shape	1	3	3
<p>Apparel Style d</p> 	The apparel colour(s) is	1.Very suitable for this body shape 3.Marginally suitable for this body shape 4.Not suitable for this body shape	1	4	3

These findings are consistent with findings of Saboura (2011) where apparel styles that expose shoulders were found to create an illusion of width on the shoulders, making them appear broader, though narrow shoulder-straps were found to have no effect on the appearance of the shoulder size. Loose-fitting tops proved to

give an illusion of an enlarged upper torso and when the waist is defined, it appears even narrower due to the heavy bottom of the figure and added fullness of the upper torso, thus giving an illusion of balanced body proportions (Saboura, 2011; Mabuza, 2014).

**TABLE 6: EVALUATION OF SUITABILITY OF APPAREL COLOUR ON THE HOURGLASS BODY**

Apparel Style	Question	Response keys	Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3
<b>Apparel Style e</b> 	The apparel colour(s) is	2.Suitable for this body shape 3.Marginally suitable for this body shape	3	2	2
<b>Apparel Style f</b> 	The apparel colour(s) is	2.Suitable for this body shape 3.Marginally suitable for this body shape	2	3	3
<b>Apparel Style g</b> 	The apparel colour(s) is	2.Suitable for this body shape 3.Slightly suitable for this body shape	2	3	3
<b>Apparel Style h</b> 	The apparel colour(s) is	3.Marginally suitable for this body shape	-	3	3

Close fitting apparel revealed the body shape as it is. They are not recommended because they emphasize the hips and thighs (Villaruel, 2008). Bright or light coloured tops accentuate and draw attention toward the upper torso, and dark or dull coloured bottoms visually reduce the buttocks/hip size. Dropped armholes and bold

check prints used on the upper torso were found to give an illusion of broader or wider shoulders due to bold horizontal lines running across the shoulders. The theory of horizontal lines giving an illusion of width supports the findings (Rasband, 2004). Loose fitting apparel, straight-cut apparel styles, horizontal lines, bright or light

**TABLE 7: SUITABLE APPAREL STYLES AND COLOURS FOR THE MOST PREVALENT BODY SHAPES**

Body Shape	Suitable Apparel Style(s)	Suitable Apparel Colour(s)
Triangular	 <p>Style <b>a</b> is a dark-coloured, flared, mid-thigh length skirt paired with a light-coloured, loose fit top with dropped armholes and a round neckline. Style <b>c</b> is a flared dress with a close-fitting upper torso in one colour with horizontal stripe detailing at the waistline.</p>	 <p>Style <b>a</b> is a contrast of a baby-pink (light colour) upper garment and black (dominant) and white polka dotted skirt. Style <b>b</b> is a contrast of a black and white window-print (vertical and horizontal lines) shirt with a black tank-top and black leggings.</p>
Hourglass	 <p>Style <b>e</b> is a close-fitting knee-length dress with long sleeves and side panels of contrasting colours.</p>	 <p>Style <b>e</b> is a contrast of a light and dark colour; black and light-grey. Black sleeves and side-panels, light-grey on the body with a tinted vertical light-grey line from neckline to hem on the centre front.</p>

**TABLE 8: SUITABLE APPAREL STYLES AND COLOURS FOR THE TRIANGULAR, AND HOURGLASS BODY SHAPES**

Body Shape	Suitable apparel style and colours
Triangular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dark and dull colours on lower torso</li> <li>- Bright/light colours on upper torso</li> <li>- Flared skirts with loose-fitting bodices</li> <li>- Detailed bodices such as beading or ruffles</li> <li>- Dropped armholes on bodices</li> <li>- Horizontal line prints on bodice</li> <li>- Nipped waist apparel styles</li> </ul>
Hourglass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close-fitting apparel</li> <li>- Solid colours, monochromatic colours</li> <li>- Medium prints</li> <li>- Defined waistlines</li> <li>- Hourglass shaped apparel</li> <li>- Fit-and-flare dresses</li> <li>- Nipped waist apparel styles</li> </ul>

coloured apparel all give an illusion of fullness to the body. The results are supported by findings from Saboura (2011) and Mabuza (2004) that it would be better to use bright colours on the upper torso of this figure to balance the heavy bottom and would be more flattering when nipped at the waistline to give the body good balance and proportion (Saboura, 2011; Mabuza, 2014).

For the hourglass body shape, the results revealed that loose-fitting apparel and straight-cut apparel styles in soft fabrics conceal the pleasant silhouette of this figure and gave an illusion of flat buttocks. This was found to be unflattering and can make the body appear rectangular shaped. However, Mabuza (2014) reported that soft fabrics such as knits and liquid silk blends, as well as fabrics with a bit of stretch are ideal for this body shape, as they accentuate and complement the curves as they drape over the figure well. Findings further revealed that vertical seams and contrasting side panels on a close-fitting dress gave a slimming effect to the figure and Saboura (2011) suggests that long, shapely seams that gather in at the waist and flare out again at the hips and have a smooth, snug look, pleasantly show off the silhouette of this figure. Fit-and-flare dresses and close fitting apparel styles in solid colours and (fitting bodice and flared skirt) were found to maintain the hourglass silhouette and this was said to be flattering. The findings support Saboura (2011) and Mabuza (2014) who stated that solid colours and monochromatic outfits look best on this figure, but large prints can de-emphasize the balanced shape of this figure thus making it unflattering.

#### **Suitable apparel styles for the prevalent body shapes of young Swazi women**

The results revealed that a flared skirt is suitable for all three body shapes, though longer lengths add fullness to the lower body. The triangular body shape is suited by dresses that nip in at the waist and slightly flare out over the hips and thighs as they accentuate the shapely waistline while de-emphasizing the wide hips and bulky thighs. The results further revealed that tops with horizontal lines running across the shoulder-line or bust-line and loose-fitting tops all give an illusion of fullness to the upper torso, therefore are ideal for balancing the heavy bottom of this figure. The results support Mabuza (2014) who also suggests that loose tops are even more flattering when nipped at the waistline as they give the body good balance and accentuate the

slim waist.

Hourglass figures are considered the ideal figure (Mnisi, 2014) and as such are suited by many styles though the findings of the study revealed that not all apparel styles flatter this body shape. Only one of four apparel styles was suitable for the body shape, as agreed upon by the judges; which was a close-fitting dress with contrasting side panels that were seen to flatter this body shape. Short fit-and-flare dresses were also found to be slightly suitable for this shape, though too much flare was found to be unflattering as it adds fullness to the hips and buttocks thus slightly distorting the good proportions of this figure.

#### **Suitable apparel colours for the prevalent body shapes of young Swazi women**

For the triangular body shape, dark colours used for the lower torso together with brighter/lighter colours used for the upper torso were found to be flattering for this body shape. Dark colours tend to recede visually, making an area/object appear smaller whereas light colours stand out, making an object/area appear larger (Rasband, 2002; Sarkar, 2011; Marshall et al, 2012). Saboura (2011) insisted that a heavy print when used on the bodice, takes the focus away from the hips to the top-half of the body when paired with neutral coloured pants or skirt.

Solid apparel colours (one colour) were found to be suitable for the hourglass body shape because the body is not segmented by contrasting colours; therefore the pleasant proportions of the shape are maintained (Rasband, 2002; Sarkar, 2011; Marshall et al, 2012; Mabuza, 2014). Colours look good on this shape but monochromatic outfits look best on this figure. Hourglass figures should wear subtle colours on the bottom to elongate the legs and should avoid baggy or loose-fitting apparel as this will make the figure appear fuller and will conceal all the flattering features of this body shape (Saboura, 2011; Mabuza, 2014).

The judgements were based on three Clothing and Textile instructors who may have been biased in their adjudication process. The few judges pose a threat to the validity of the results, although valuable insights into the relationship between body shape and clothing styles and colours. There is need for further research to be conducted to validate the conclusions drawn from these data.

## **A guide for ideal apparel styles that suit the prevalent body shapes of young Swazi women**

Table 8 presents a guide that can be used based on the results of the study and following sources: Rasband (2002); Villaruel, (2008); Saboura, (2011); Sarkar, (2011); Marshall et al, (2012). The information is a summary of the findings in the form of a framework that can be used as a reference.

### **CONCLUSION**

Close-fitting dresses are mostly suitable for the hourglass body shape but may also suit the triangular body shapes when in contrasting colours and patterns that are suitable for the latter shapes. Fit and flare apparel are also suitable for both body shapes especially the triangular shape. Bright or light colours on skirt and pants are not suitable for the triangular body shape, and if they are used, the garment style should be subtle and slightly fitted and paired with a more dominant style for the bodice. An apparel style guide was created to form guidelines of suitable apparel styles for the prevalent body shapes examined in the study. As a conclusion, apparel styles that best suit the hourglass body shape are not suitable for the triangular body shape.

As most of the apparel in the Swaziland retail outlets is imported and manufactured based on the Western hourglass body shape, thus not suitable for Swazi women with the most prevalent body shapes, it is recommended that apparel manufacturers and retailers targeting Swazi women should be conscious of prevalent body shapes, suitable colours and apparel styles when producing and supplying apparel for young Swazi women. This would give young Swazi women a variety of more apparel styles suitable for their body shapes to choose from. Consumers should be more cognizant of their body shapes, apparel styles and colours that best suit their body shapes in order to make good apparel styles choices.

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