



## CONSUMER PURCHASE DATA AS A STRATEGIC PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TOOL

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### ABSTRACT

*As the apparel market becomes progressively more competitive and market driven, manufacturing firms must cultivate the ability to design and develop products responsive to the changing wants and needs of their customers. Product attribute analysis of consumer purchases provides insight into product preferences and changing preferences over time. This study examined the attributes of intimate apparel purchased in a department store. Patterns of consumer's preferences were found in the attributes of products purchased when analyzed both overall and individually by manufacturer. In addition, this research examined use of attributes to forecast purchase behavior and to identify features important for product development. Results of the study have implications for the use of point of sale (POS) data by manufacturers of apparel products.*

**KEYWORDS:** Product development strategy, Evaluative criteria, Consumer purchase, Product attributes, Attribute forecasting

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### Introduction

To remain competitive and profitable, the apparel industry must continue to improve its ability to respond to the wants and needs of consumers. The last decade witnessed the gradual evolution of the industry from a traditional "push mode" of producing and then selling product to a "pull mode" of anticipating consumer demand and delivering appropriate product. This evolution to a more market responsive industry has driven change in many aspects of the business environment including product design and development. Consistent with this trend, increased emphasis on improving the apparel product development

process can be noted in the industry trade literature in recent years. New product development is viewed as the next critical focus for companies who have improved their supply chain performance (Conrad, 1999). Continued globalization of the industry and ever expanding efforts to market products internationally increase the need for detailed understanding of the increasingly critical role of the consumer in the product design and development process.

One strategy employed in efforts to make products more consumer responsive is use of methods such as data mining to reveal information contained in large stores of detailed data. Data mining is undertaken on the premise that useful insights into behavior