



Reviewing the concept of the “Pure” white menswear shirt

By

Lester Jacque Vermeulen

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Supervisor: Alletia Chistin, Avril Dahl

Co-supervisor: Maryna Bezuidenhout & Bryan Ramkilawan & Karen Suskin

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25 October 2010

DECLARATION

I, Lester Jacque Vermeulen, declare that the contents of this dissertation/thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation/thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.



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1. Introduction

1.1. The setting

The white shirt is one of the most basic male garments. The origins of the white shirt date back as far as the sixteen hundreds when it was used as an undergarment. In the wearing of armour the similarities between armour and the common day white shirt can be traced in sections such as the collar and the placket. In modern day society the white shirt is used in corporate battle (Giuntini & Hagen(eds), 2008:113).

As we move into the 21st century, the persistence of the white shirt as a staple basic menswear garment is clear. As the white shirt developed over the ages its significance has changed in many ways: from being used by knights in armour, to distinguishing blue collar from white collar workers during the industrial era.

Wearing clothes are part of everyday life, especially the white menswear shirt. It reflects a number of concepts when seen: businessman, Mormon or casual wearer - all depending on the manner in which it is worn (Giuntini & Hagen(eds), 2008:111).

The white shirt evokes a number of preconceived ideas: purity; crispness; cleanliness; even righteousness. All these ideas do seem positive at first, but, when taken into the context of being good to the environment, the white shirt is not! To obtain its crisp white appearance the garment needs to be bleached. This is not an environmentally friendly process. The sheer fact that the garment is crisply white means it needs to be washed more often – using more energy and wasting water (Graham-Rowe, 2006:13). The fabric of which the garment is made is most likely to be a poly-cotton: a non-recyclable material due to the blend. And is this garment made according to fair trade regulations?

1.2. The problem

What current perceptions are associated with the white men's shirt?

1.3.1 The sub-problems

- 5 What is the signification behind a white shirt?
- 6 How aware is the South African male consumer of his ecological and social responsibility and what can be done to inform the consumer about ecological and social aspects of the production cycle?
- 7 How can a range of "pure" white shirts subscribe to consumers' ecological values?

2. Literature review

The textile industry across the world provides employment to millions of people and clothes millions more. For this reason it creates a large carbon foot print and human rights violations within its scope are plentiful. Ecological issues are not new to the textile industry (Dickson, *et al.*, 2009:28).

As ecological and social issues keep being brought up for attention by organisations such as the WWF(World Wildlife Fund) and Evergreen, awareness of our ecological impact on the environment is increasing. This gives rise to a new consumer: one who understands that with the exchange of monetary value for a product, a certain amount of control has been given to retailers: control of sourcing and of production. This control can either be executed in a sustainable manner or not. The informed consumer understands that the choice between a sustainable product and a non- sustainable product gives them the control to purchase ethically or not (Benson.2007:58).

With the consumer's increasing knowledge of ecological issues, retailers now sell organic products. Many of these "organic" products appeal to consumers because the term "organic" is commonly associated with sustainability. The product is thus marketed as a sustainable product to the consumer. Yet the production process of this product, from raw materials to the product itself, does not always subscribe to sustainable methods. The

practice known as “green washing” may be used - for instance, a laminated swing tag declaring the product to be “eco-friendly” may be attached, but may not reflect the truth (Brand *et al.*, 2008:5).

Understanding our social and ecological responsibilities as humans has slowly become a necessity and environmentalists urge that the individual incorporate these responsibilities into everyday life. Design as we know it is going through a transition. Designers are not simply designing any more. They are starting to seek extra meaning in their designs. Designers are replacing value for values. Many new terms have developed, such as “cradle to cradle”, “cradle to grave” and “reuse, reduce and recycle” (Song, 2007:54).

“Slow design” is a philosophical concept of designing a truly social and eco- positive product. Slow design calls on designers to centre their attention on a combination of individual, socio-cultural and environmental well-being: taking the design, production process and resource consumption rate and slowing it down, thus enabling the incorporation of high quality into all aspects of the product (Fuad-luke:2010).

Within the sustainable slow design manifesto designers are called upon to design for not just market-driven needs, but for real needs instead. Along with encouragement to use ecologically safe methods of production, slow design requires designers to educate the client and consumer in a similar way of thinking by the use of literacy and graphics.

Slow design therefore requires the product to be both well-designed and eco-friendly, that it incorporates fair trade practices, that it is durable and finally, at the end of its life cycle, that it can be reused or recycled into a new product, or else disposed of in a natural way.

The slow design process is all-inclusive, holistic, considered and reflective: it allows for the evolution and improvement of the design outcome (Fuad-luke:2010).

2.1. Rationale

My aim is to find a method of clarifying and informing consumers about the source of the product; educating the consumer about cleaning methods; and, if the product is no longer wanted, where the product can be reused, recycled or disposed of by ecologically sound means. My product range of “pure” white shirts (actually off-white and unbleached) will

not only be aesthetically appealing: it will be sourced from fair trade and eco-friendly sources. All information on sourcing and production will be available for reviewing on the internet.

3. Methodology

3.1.Sub- problem

What is the signification behind a white shirt?

3.1.1. Objectives:

- a) To research and understand the semiotics used in the concept of the white shirt throughout the ages and worldwide.
- b) To identify and analyse the primary components in the white shirt signification.

3.1.2. Techniques and methods:

- a) Research the internet and history books for the detailed understanding and contextualisation of the white shirt.
- b) Comprehending the writings by David Chandler, Enzo Manzini and Alastair Fuad-luke and applying them to the white shirt.

3.1.3. Delimitations

My research into signification and meaning will be conducted exclusively in relation to the white shirt.

3.2.Sub-problem

How aware is the South African male consumer of his ecological and social responsibility? And what can be done to promote this by informing the consumer about ecological and social aspects of the production cycle?

3.2.1. Objectives:

- a) To ascertain the state of the ecological and social conscience of the South African male.
- b) To obtain a clear understanding of how the consumer would like to be informed about the ecological and social aspects of a garment.

- c) To determine what information the consumer would find important

3.2.2. Techniques and methods:

- a) *Interviews: to help gain an understanding of the best ways to inform the consumer about the ecological and social aspects of the source of a garment.*
- b) *Questionnaires: to help establish all the above information and allow the consumer to determine what information interests them most.*
- c) The methods listed above will all be used in conjunction with each other to be able to determine the most accurate information.

3.2.3. Delimitations

This research will be conducted with men aged between 20 and 40 years. The research will be conducted across a variety of income groups.

3.3.Sub-problem

How can a range of “pure” white shirts subscribe to consumers’ ecological values?

3.3.1. Objectives:

To produce a range of “Pure” menswear garments with specific focus on the “Pure” white shirt. The product will come from natural sources and be produced under fair trade standards. The “Pure” white shirt source information will be accessible on the internet, together with other information pertaining to the proper care of the shirt and methods of eco-disposal. The range will also include basic pants and a small number of over-garments.

4. Techniques and methods

- a) Sourcing and buying suitable fabrics.
- b) Field trips to factories and farms to observe working conditions.
- c) Designing and recreating a range of different styles.
- d) Sewing

- e) Printing
- f) Sourcing information on current trends (from fashion magazines and WGSN.com)

4.1.1. Delimitations

My fabrics will need to be eco-friendly and of fair trade origin. The sourcing of these are not easy and will require considerable time spent searching and travelling to find ethically acceptable raw materials.

4.1.2. Requirements

This sub-problem requires large amounts of capital. The total design process needs to be followed. Included in this is the actual designing of the garments, followed by pattern -making and then construction of the sample garments.

4.1.3. Evaluation and proposed outcomes

- a) Awareness of the desires, needs, likes and dislikes of my target audience.
- b) A range of "Pure" white shirts which allows the consumer to track the development sources of the garment from start to finish.
- c) The product must embody a timeless quality which will appeal to all ages, not just my target group.

4.2. Definition of terms

Ecological	The branch of biology dealing with the relation and interaction between organisms and their environment.
Environment	The aggregate of surrounding things, conditions, or influences; surroundings; milieu.
Ecology	The air, water, minerals, organisms, and all other external factors surrounding and affecting a given organism at any time.
Sustain cycle.	To keep up or keep going as an action or a process in a continuous cycle.

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ABSTRACT

Wearing clothes such as the white shirt is a part of everyday life and history. In the 21st century, the persistence of the white shirt as a staple basic menswear garment is still apparent, and thus the focus of this range.

The white menswear button- up shirt is not simply worn for any insignificant reason but may signify a number of associations, such as: purity, status, class, righteousness or it may even stand as a symbol of human rights. I would also want to add eco-consciousness to these meanings. As environmental awareness increases and the need to curb the effects of global warming becomes more pressing, the design-conscious and eco-conscious consumer plays a fundamental role in achieving this role.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the significance of the white shirt, and to pose it as an essential item in the post-modern man's wardrobe. The design factor will imbue these garments with natural aesthetic appeal and added value will be achieved through a sustainable design approach.

As environmental awareness increases and the need to curb the effects of global warming becomes more pressing, the role of the design-conscious and eco-conscious consumer becomes fundamental. I believe there is a need for the consumer to be educated and informed about the sources of raw materials. Therefore I intend to follow and document the production process of the garment, making this information available to the consumer through the use of a QR barcode. This, when scanned, will link the consumer to a website with all the information required to select, care for and dispose of the garment in an eco-friendly manner.

My main research question is:

What current perceptions are associated with a man's white shirt?

The following sub-questions will be examined:

- What is the significance borne by a white shirt?
- How aware is the South African male consumer of his ecological and social responsibility and what can be done to educate and inform the consumer about ecological and social aspects of the production cycle?
- How can a range of "Pure" white shirts subscribe to the principles of "slow design"?

I intend to examine all possible meanings of the white shirt in order to determine what it has signified over time. My aim is to provide an extra dimension to the white shirt which will contribute towards the curbing of harmful effects on the environment, while simultaneously following innovative design principles.

The body of this thesis consists of three main chapters. Chapter 2 will provide a theoretical basis for this research and will reflect on dominant trends of the white shirt through history, examining its significance. I will scrutinize the meaning and the reasons for the uses of white and argue its place within the ecological social sphere

Chapter 3 will describe the theory of sustainability and slow design with reference to my key theorist, Fuad-Luke. I will explore the current trends of sustainability. I aim to investigate a select group of South African male consumers to determine their role and interest in sustainability.

In the practical component, Chapter 4, the corresponding representational components between the traditional white shirt and sustainability will be identified, developed, adapted and applied to create a "Pure" range of sustainable shirts. The intention is that the range will appeal to a tasteful and style-conscious outlook and, I hope, will be irresistible to the South African menswear market.

Chapter 2

2.1 The historic tunic

In this chapter I intend to explore the historical origins of the white button-up shirt and uncover the meanings of its use. I intend to reveal how the white shirt can be used in the concept of 'signification', described by David Chandler as "Anything which can be 'read' for meaning". I will explain the reason for its use and what makes it an impartial classic garment. The white shirt is still considered to be a stylish item in every man's wardrobe (David Chandler: 2005).

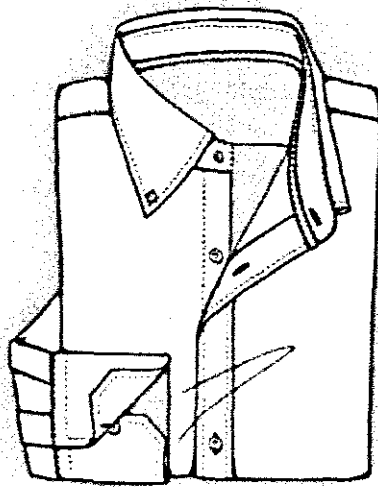


Figure 2.1 White shirt (wgsn:2010)

The white shirt is one of the most basic garments and the single most popular shirt in a man's wardrobe. The origins of the white shirt date back as far as the 1200's, when it was used as an undergarment for armour and tunics. This undergarment would be washed on a regular basis to keep outer garments cleaner for longer. *Its main use was to protect or cushion the wearer from the hard metal armour. This undergarment was usually white or off-white according to the natural colour of the fabric.* As the use of the undergarment spread, the edge of it began to be seen showing at the neckline of the tunic. Further developments saw the front section of the undergarment's neckline split. This was presumably to relieve constriction caused by the rising neckline. From the 1500's to the 1800's the neckline is seen to reach up to just under the chin, often tied down with a cravat. The visible points of the undergarment then become white and stiffened. During the 1800's this stiff edge would be folded down, and so the white collar was born (Laver,1969:77-192).



1511 1540 1562 1785 1849 1870

Figure 2.2 The rise of the undergarment (Laver, 1969:77-192)

As the white undergarment developed into an individual garment, the similarities between armour and the common white shirt can be recognised. These can be seen in details such as the cuffs and the placket. Armour was the common wear of medieval knights during battle. These knights were lords and governors of their regions and held the highest positions in society (Laver,1969:182).

In modern day society the white shirt is a standard sartorial item in the corporate environment. It is a prominent component of the formal tuxedo outfit –which usually reflects high status or importance. As the white shirt has developed over the ages, its significance has changed in many ways: from symbolising distinction for medieval knights, to implying class differences between blue-collar and white-collar workers during the industrial era in America. Still today the white shirt is considered to be a shirt that signifies prestige. It has even come to be known as the American presidential shirt, seen worn by President Barack Obama in the LIFE magazine picture below (Giuntini & Hagen(eds), 2008:113)&(www.ctshirts.co.uk; 2010).



Figure 2.3 Scott Olson, Clinton, Obama Commemorate Historic Selma March, 2007-04. Selma, Alabama (LIFE.com:2010).

The signification of the garment now known as the white button-up shirt evokes many concepts, all depending on the manner and context in which the shirt is worn. Knights during the 1200's would ensure that their undergarments appeared crisp and white to flaunt their status as the masters of servants who could wash their garments for them. During the industrial era the white collar was so popular, that office workers would have several white clip- on collars, to show that they belonged the elite society of office workers. The white shirt is used within many different contexts and for numerous occasions. It forms a large element of the staple production garment within the textile industry (Giuntini & Hagen(eds), 2008:111).

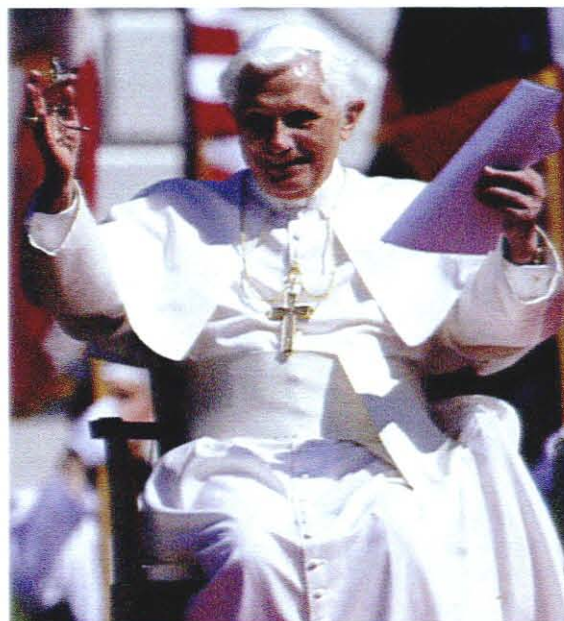


Figure 1.4 Mailonline.com, *Pope celebrating his 81st birthday,2008-04. Washington (Mailonline.com:2010)*

White, as a colour, can represent a number of preconceived ideas. There is purity, for example. When a bride wears a white wedding gown it is a representation of purity. When the idea of cleanliness is portrayed in a washing powder advertisement, it is usually a crisp white shirt that is used to prove the cleaning power of the product. White also can be associated with righteousness: the Catholic Pope's traditional gown is white. The significance of a white shirt can also have a more literal meaning: the only 'White Shirt' day in the world takes place at General Motors in the town of Flint in the USA, where employees wear white shirts on the 11th of February to commemorate the day in 1937 when manual workers won a sit-down strike. The white shirt is still worn each year to symbolise equal rights of all employees from those at entry level to the upper management (www.ctshirts.co.uk, 2010).

The various meanings associated with the white shirt are usually positive, but when it moves into the context of being environmentally considerate, white in a garment is not very friendly. In order to obtain the popular bright white colour, white hues are created through chemical bleaching. *This process is not at all environmentally friendly.* Furthermore the sheer fact that the garment is white means that it needs to be washed frequently. This uses large amounts of energy and water (Graham-Rowe, 2006:13).

The wearing of a garment such as the white shirt is part of everyday life and therefore part of our history. In the 21st century, the persistence of the white shirt as a staple menswear garment is still apparent. The white menswear button- up shirt may just be worn casually but, *more often, it signifies a number of associations when worn: purity; status; class; righteousness or it may even be symbolic of human rights.* Despite all these associations, what must now be considered is the association of the white shirt with the environment. Seen together, a clear conflict of principles becomes apparent. The meaning of a garment reverts back to its wearer as the garment's use is dependent on choices made by the consumer.

Chapter 3

In this chapter I will explore the eco- awareness of the South African male consumer in a market which is gearing up to be sustainable. I also will explore the theory of slow design and a "cradle to cradle" design approach.

3.1 'Sustainability' as a necessary and not an idealistic concept.

"Sustainable development: "Development which meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of the future to meet its needs"(UN World commission on Environment and Development 1987).

Sustainability is a term which includes not only environmental issues but social responsibility as well. Sustainability demands that production and consumption do not diminish limited resources, but make use of renewable resources. Renewable resources include recycled fabrics and reclaimed petroleum-based fabrics.

The production and life cycle of a garment has a large carbon footprint which can be divided into three sections: methods of obtaining raw material, for example cotton farming; processing of fabric and garment construction; and the life cycle of the garment from retailing to discarding of garment.

The method by which the raw material for fabric is obtained plays a large role in ecological impact. I will focus on the production of cotton. It is the largest non-food crop in the world and is most suitable for use in shirts worn in the South African climate. The difference between conventionally grown cotton and organic cotton is immense. Conventional cotton uses genetically modified seeds which in itself poses a threat to the soil. Furthermore, some side-effects of genetic modification may pose threats to human health such as cancer. Conventional cotton is one of the top ten most chemically intensive crops in the world. *Organic cotton, by contrast, makes use of non-harmful chemicals, cutting chemical use by a staggering 73 %.* However, organic cotton requires vast amounts of precious water as well as large tracts of land. This is because the crops need to be rotated to preserve the soil quality, thus yielding the long filaments of fibre which produce a better quality yarn. Both organic and conventional cotton require large quantities of precious water. To give an example of the problems associated with this, cotton farming in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is the cause of the drying up of the Aral Sea. These resources could have been used instead to produce food in this impoverished area (Codrington,2005:77).

Alternative methods of obtaining sustainable raw material is through the recycling and reclaiming of fabric. This includes the recycling of used garment fibres. Reclaiming fabrics is a process where the petroleum component in synthetic fabrics is extracted from used synthetic fabrics then used again to replace the petroleum component in the production of new recycled synthetic fabric. Known as "Reclaimtm", this process uses far less energy and fewer resources than growing organic cotton does. While this process is a far more sustainable option, its production is still under trademark and is therefore not widely available (Seireeni & Fields, 2009:78).

Further production processes such as the dyeing, bleaching and finishing processes applied to fabrics to obtain qualities such as crease-resistance and water resiliency, contaminate thousands of litres of water for a single line of garments. For a garment to be considered sustainable and eco- friendly, it must adhere to a number of guidelines: it should be made from recycled, reclaimed or organic fabrics which are obtained and produced in an ethical manner; all processes such as dyeing, bleaching and fabric finishing must also be done in by a method which does not harm the environment. Two thirds of the carbon footprint of a garment is formed after purchase, during the washing and drying of the garment. This aspect includes the consumer of course and gives him a role to play in obtaining a truly sustainable cycle in the use of the garment.

To obtain a truly sustainable product, the design philosophy known as "slow design" can be applied. Eco-cotton is an essential move toward sustainability although still not a perfect solution. For the future, the hope is that synthetic reclaim fabric technology will provide further relief to earth's many landfills. (Stehouwer&luyt,2008:165)

3.2 Slow design as frame work

Slow design is a concept which is discussed by theorists Enzo Manzini and Alastair Fuad-luke. It is a philosophical method of designing an eco-positive product. Slow design is a theoretical method which derived from the theory of Slow Food, according to which, organic food is sourced locally and prepared in the presence of the consumer. This extends the period of time taken to obtain and prepare food, while giving the consumer the pleasure of enjoying the process. The success of this concept has since been adapted to create a design philosophy for designers, now known as Slow Design. The concept calls on designers to centre their attention on a combination of individual, socio-cultural and

environmental well-being: to take the design, production process and consumption and slow it down. In this way, high-quality can be incorporated into all aspects of the product and its production process(Fuad-luke:2010).

For a sustainable process the Slow Design manifesto, calls upon designers not to design according to market- driven needs but rather to design for real needs, needs which comply with functional, fundamental human needs. Designers should make every attempt to use ecologically safe methods of production. Designers should educate the client and consumer using literacy and graphics to clarify production processes. Slow design therefore requires the product to be well-designed, eco-friendly, adherent to fair trade practices and to be durable yet reusable at the end of its lifespan and so able to be recycled into a new product. The slow design process is all-inclusive, holistic, considered and reflective. It allows for the evolution and improvement of the design outcome. The concept of slow design might not be able to be totally applied to the South African garment production process at present but ,as an emerging local designer producing small runs, I have the opportunity to control the process. Subscribing to an eco-philosophy, I intend to reverse the negative impact that the white shirt has had up till now. Slow design has gained great momentum due to the increase in international concern of the effects of global warming (Fuad-luke:2010).

3.3 The consumer's role

As ecological and social issues are constantly being brought to our attention by organizations such as the WWF(World Wildlife Fund) and Evergreen, awareness of our impact on the environment has increased. This growing awareness gives rise to a new consumer: one who understands that with the exchange of monetary value for a product, he is the one with the power of choice. This is known as "consumer sovereignty". This monetary control has also been given to manufacturers and retailers whose key concern is the profit margin. The control of sourcing and production can either be done using a sustainable method - or not. The informed consumer understands that the choice between a sustainable product and a non- sustainable product gives him the option to purchase ethically or not. This new, informed consumer currently represents a small section of the market: mostly the wealthy, intellectual and well-off members of society(Harrison, Newholm, Shaw,D.2005:28).

“Proving its resilience and classic trustworthiness, the white shirt is once again at the front of city boys’ wardrobes in these credit crunching times. Gordon Gekko-style ostentatiousness, loud colours and eye-catching ties are out and a new sober seriousness in - and nothing says ‘lets get down to business’ like the rolled-up sleeves of a white shirt. No one wants to look like a wide boy,” an Ernst & Young consultant was recently quoted as saying.” (www.ctshirts.co.uk;2010)

While consumer sovereignty may exist, its power can often be seen as null and void. It is overwhelmed by the amount of finance that the consumer has at his disposal and how well the consumer is informed. For the majority of consumers price is of most importance. Aesthetic appeal and other requirements are secondary. Consumers normally trust that the goods they purchase are safe for human consumption. But this may not always be the case. For example, in 2007 a number of Chinese products were recalled from the United States due to inappropriate and unsafe elements, such as N-kids drawstring flannel pants: they were not flame-resistant and posed a threat of burn injuries(Paulins & Hillery,2009:111-117).

With the consumer’s increasing awareness of ecological issues, retailers now sell organic products. These “organic” products appeal to consumers because the term “organic” is commonly associated with sustainability, and the product will be marketed to the consumer as a sustainable product. Yet the product’s production process, from raw materials to the shelf does not necessarily subscribe to truly sustainable methods. The casual and misleading use of such terms is known as “Green washing”. A laminated swing-tag may claim a product to be “eco-friendly” when the term has no justification (Speshock,2010:7).

Within the South African retail sector Woolworths’ eco-friendly garments are slowly becoming fundamental reflection of a philosophy of design. Woolworths spearheaded the African Regional Organic Conference in 2007, as Africa is the world’s fourth largest organic cotton producer. At the conference Woolworths pledged to sell in excess of R1 billion of organic cotton to help develop the organic cotton pipeline in the country by 2012(Woolworth,2006). With an overview of how the organic cotton process works, and how it is a less harmful option to the environment, I set out to determine whether the South African male consumer is interested in going green.

3.3.1 Primary data collection

The information sourced will help determine whether the South African male consumer is interested in his role within the theoretical process of slow design. In other words:

How aware is the South African male consumer of his ecological and social responsibility, and what can be done to inform the consumer about ecological and social aspects of the production cycle?

I conducted my questionnaire exercise at CPUT during a student exhibition where it was completed by various gentlemen. Twenty questionnaires were completed. Each was comprised of 10 questions: 7 multiple-answer and 3 short-phrase responses were needed, in order to not to frustrate the reader with long answers.

My findings showed that 80% of men wear white shirts and some wear them as often as four times a week. A white shirt is the choice for a formal event. The consumer showed interest in the fabric content and care instructions; 80% of men liked natural fabric for the comfortable way it feels; while giving away or passing down was the common method of disposal. A positive attitude toward eco-friendly garments was found and comfort and design were the highest priority.

My findings were as follows:

Table 3.3.1 : Survey results of 20 South African males

Own a white shirt				Yes 16	No 4
Wears a white (per fortnight)		1 7	2 7	3 4	More 2
Occasions to wear a white shirt to		Casual 10	Formal 19	Semi-formal 15	Casual-stylish 12
Check label for	Don't 8	Fabric content 12	Country of origin 3	Care instructions 8	All 3
Prefer natural fabrics				Yes 16	No 4
Discarding of clothes		Throw away 5	Eco-waste 1	Pass down 12	Sell 2

Perception of eco-friendly	Nothing 8	Unappealing 0	Comfort 5	Adds value 3	Way to go 4
Expectation of an eco-friendly garment		Long lasting 17	Classic design 12	Well designed 18	Comfort 19

My findings reinforce my notion of the popularity of the white shirt and furthermore, as the white shirt remains the classic choice for formal events, it shows that it has retained signification.

The consumer shows a clear desire to not just allow clothing to be landfill material, but reveals a tendency to follow the traditional method of handing down or giving away clothing, and takes into consideration the care of the product. The term eco-friendly seems to be a positive attribute to the garment while the consumer makes it clear that the garment needs to compete as any other garment for it to be purchased. It seems that the consumer will take the environment into consideration but only at the right price.

Understanding our social and ecological responsibilities as humans has become a necessity and environmentalists urge that the individual incorporate these responsibilities into everyday life. Design as we know it is going through a transition. Designers are not just designing any more. They are starting to seek extra meaning in their designs. Designers are replacing value for values. Many new terms have developed such as "cradle to cradle", "cradle to grave" and "reuse, reduce and recycle". The role of the consumer in the slow design process is to go natural, wear clothes longer, wash them less, repair them if damaged and dispose of them in an eco-friendly way. If you don't want it, pass it down or give it away. Help close the loop which links us all in the great circle of life. (Song, 2007:54).

My observation is that as eco-consciousness spreads it will follow throughout the fashion consumption cycle. It will not see a decline. Eco-consciousness is now a lifestyle standard from which future generations will be able to develop further and integrate these design principles across all disciplines.

To apply the principles of slow design to a clothing range, a measure of sustainability is essential. This can be seen as a loop. For a truly sustainable garment cycle we need to adhere ideally to all 15 principles in the slow design manifesto (as in Appendix A). This includes the need for the consumer to become a proactive user who gives back in order to fulfil his role in a sustainable cycle. As seen in these findings, the South African male consumer seems willing to make the right choices. Liability falls on the designers to create and develop an attractive method to edify the consumer about his responsibility to sustainability and the environment. (Refer to APENNDIX A for Slow Design Manifesto)

Chapter 4

In this chapter I will make use of the findings taken from data analyzed in the preceding chapters, to design a menswear range of eco-friendly shirts and complementary denim trousers, as well as t-shirts and knit tops. This range will subscribe to slow design principles whilst appealing to the consumer as high-quality basic garments, with integrated designer details.

The design process of this range has three major influences: the slow design principles of Alastair Fuad-luke, discussed in chapter 3, Appendix A: the types of consumers and trends sourced from trends sites such as WGSN: and my own inspiration, gained from *Earth and Nature* while on a field trip to the West Coast coastal region, discussed later in this chapter.

Covered in chapter 2 are the origins of the white button-up menswear shirt and how it has developed and changed, embodying certain meanings in different contexts. I intend to make use of this understanding to create a new meaning, a pure meaning, one which has a sustainable message and which will show how and where the garment comes from.

4.1 Application of slow design principles

To subscribe to slow design principles, the range needs to be made from high quality, local and eco-friendly material, produced in a socially responsible way, promoting design sustainability as an opportunity, not a threat. I also intend to educate the consumer on methods used to prolong the lifespan of the garment and will endorse repair, reuse and disposal or recycling in an eco-friendly manner. When applying the relevant principles to the range I approached them as a checklist, therefore if one point does not fulfil all requirements, it will be pointed out how the next best option has been used.

The sourcing of eco-friendly fabrics brought in options such as hemp, linen and cotton fabric. While the options are available, they either require wholesale purchases or do not subscribe totally to slow design principles. These require fabrics to be grown and produced locally as the source of the fabric is not traceable further than retailer. Due to budget restraints I have had to opt for the primary requirements of high quality, natural, unbleached fabrics such as cotton and linen. During the design process the end use was considered (what will happen to the product once discarded). For this reason I decided to use

(cotton) denim for the pants as denims are also a staple garment and can be recycled, for instance, to create insulation for hollow walls. Such projects are run by large labels like Levis (Levi Strauss & co,2010.)

As I will be making the garments for the initial range myself, I will also be doing the production. In the event of my needing to produce more, I will make use of a local company, Matthew Victoria cc. This operates with a group of home-based studios run by women who were retrenched from the local fashion industry due to the influx of Chinese imports.

To apply the principle of promoting sustainability, each garment will have a Quick Response tag (QR tag) which is barcoded and can be scanned with cell-phone applications such as Scan Life. The URL link in the barcode will then lead consumers to a profile page of the specific garment containing details of source of fabric, production, care instructions and end-use or discarding of the product. The application of this online linking to the garment creates an opportunity to educate the consumer on his ecological responsibility in a friendly way, not as a threat.



Figure 4.1.1 QR tag (wgsn:2010)



Fig 4.2.1 Lester Vermeulen, *Inspiration snaps*, 2010-02. Cape Columbine nature reserve, Western Cape. (Vermeulen:2010)

4.2 Trends and inspiration

The application of slow design principles to the range is the primary, yet subliminal, aim of this range, as the main concern for the consumer is price and design style. For trend direction I made use of a trend forecasters such as World Global Style Network, Style.com and coolhunter.com. Trends such as 'super-niche' markets, where one garment is made in different variations are forecasted. Simplification and resource restriction are key creative components in expected trends. I analyzed and appropriated predicted silhouettes, colours and designs of key items according to trend forecasts. With these guidelines in place I set out on an inspiration-seeking field trip to the Cape Columbine nature reserve on the west coast. A camping site situated in the heart of nature reserve has amazing rock formations, indigenous fauna and flora and other natural elements. From these I drew inspiration to design this range of eco-friendly garments.



Figure 4.2.2 Lester Vermeulen, *Inspiration boards*, 2010-02. Cape (vermeulen:2010)

My "Pure" range consist of 8 off-white button-up shirts, 2 denim shorts, 2 full-length denims, 3 t-shirts and 1 loose knit top. The range is designed for spring/summer 2010/11. Although produced for the 2010/11 season', the design of the garments has a timeless style, making it possible for the garments to be worn beyond seasonal boundaries, thus prolonging the use of the garment.

4.3 Sizing

For the production of the garment I used sizing for tall, slender men(as I am a tall, slender male myself), and found great difficulty in finding garments which fit well in length and width. For the purpose of the project I obtained model cards of men taller than 1,80m from Base models to determine an average size chart for tall and slender, my medium size, which is as follows:

<u>Measurement</u>	<u>CM</u>
Height	190
Chest	100
Scye depth	24
Natural waist	90
Half back	21
Sleeve hind arm	67
Shirt length	87
Cuff	23
Scye (arm hole)	55
Waist	93
Side seam length	110
Seat	105
Inner leg	90

4.4 The Garments

4.4.1 Style 1: Feather

Fabric: 95% cotton
5% elastane

Colour: off-white

This is a semi-fitted panelled button-up shirt with a short collar detail and a feather-shaped bib detail running along the centre front. A variety of handmade pleats, folds and pin tucks are used to depict the feather details. This garment can be worn with most bottoms and can be dressed up as formal or dressed down for a more casual look.

Inspiration:

I drew inspiration from the shape and line detail in the structure of the feather while making use of the more conventional round tip shape



Figure 4.4.1 Feather button-up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.2 Style 2: Shongololo (centipede)

Fabric: 95% cotton
5% elastane

Colour: off-white

A semi-fitted button-up shirt with regular collar and cuff details. The pleats running symmetrically along the centre front of the garment, are intended to depict the tracks of a centipede in the sand. The garment is finished off with mother-of-pearl buttons.

Inspiration:

I gained my inspiration from the tracks of a centipede in the sand, found early on a misty morning.

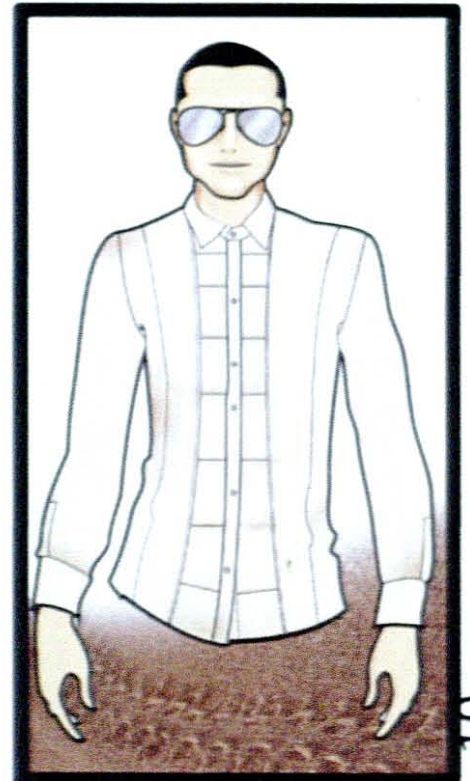


Figure 4.4.2 Shongololo button-up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.3 Style 3: Branch

Fabric : 95% cotton
5% elastane
Colour: off-white

A semi-fitted, basic button-up panelled shirt with a regular collar. The shirt has an interesting detail on the centre front button stand, as one section breaks through the other to overlap in the opposite direction and is partly attached to the pocket. The garment is finished off with mother-of-pearl buttons.

Inspiration:

The detail in the button stand was inspired by the rigid angles of the branch of a dried bush as it stretches across a rock.



Figure 4.4.3 Branch button up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.4 Style 4: Aloe curves

Fabric: 95% cotton
5% elastane
Colour: off-white

A semi-fitted, button-up shirt with curving panels and a regular collar. The shirt has curving panel line details on the front and the back. The two centre curves are decoratively stitched to create texture. It has a basic button stand, the plackets on the sleeve open into a curved panel on the sleeve. The garment is finished off with mother-of-pearl buttons.

Inspiration:

The curved panels are inspired by the outer curves of the aloe plant leaves as it is shaped in opposing curves.



Figure 4.4.4 Aloe curves button up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.5 Style 5: Rock cove

Fabric: 95% cotton
5% elastane
Colour: off-white

A semi-fitted, basic button-up panelled shirt with regular collar and cuffs. The shirt has a panel detail on the front crossing the button stand, the centre panel is covered in stitch detail to create a texture. The garment is finished off with mother-of-pearl buttons.

Inspiration:

The detail in the centre panel was inspired by the shapes and angles of the boulders along the west coast.

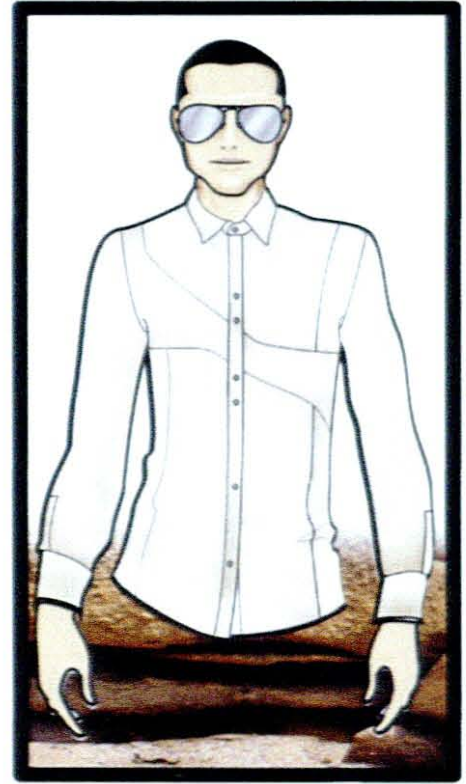


Figure 4.4.5 Rock cove button up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.6 Style 6: Straps

Fabric: 95% cotton
5% elastane
Colour: off-white

A semi-fitted, basic button-up panelled shirt with regular collar. The shirt has panels with strap details running through the front and the back panels. The straps are decoratively top-stitched to create the illusion of one continuously woven strap across the whole shirt. It has a basic button stand and plackets. The garment is finished off with mother-of-pearl buttons.

Inspiration:

The straps were initially running in random directions, but to create an aesthetically pleasing garment I aligned the straps.



Figure 4.4.6 Straps button-up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.7 Style 7: Plain panelled print

Fabric : 95% cotton
5% elastane
Colour: off-white

A semi-fitted, basic button-up panelled shirt with regular collar and cuffs. The shirt has an interesting detail in the method of print: the fabric is printed on the reverse side, revealing a slight yet effective detail. The shirts will have regular button stands. The garment is finished off with mother-of-pearl buttons. The print is placed strategically for best impact.

Inspiration:

The print to be printed on the reverse of the fabric is inspired by the washed up sea weed which I found along the coast.

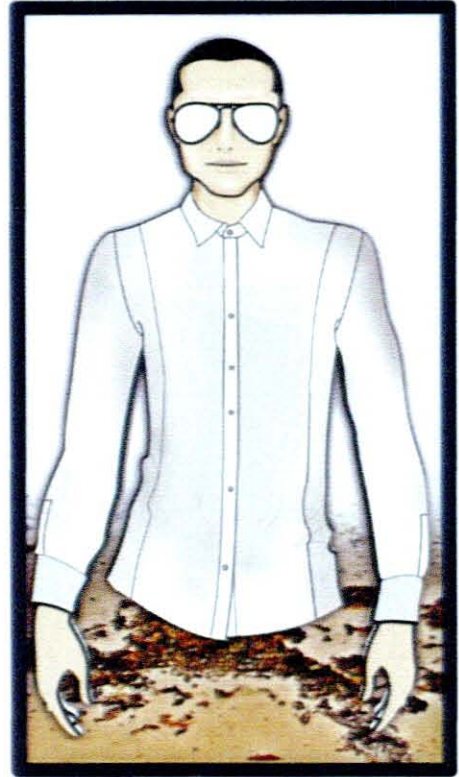


Figure 4.4.7 Plain panelled print button-up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.8 Style 8: Plain dart print

Fabric: 95% cotton
5% elastane
Colour: off-white

A semi-fitted, basic button-up panelled shirt with regular collar and cuffs. The shirt has an interesting detail in the method of print as the fabric is printed on the reverse side, revealing a slight yet effective detail. The shirts will have regular button stand. The garment is finished off with mother of pearl buttons. Inspiration: The print to be printed on the reverse of the fabric is inspired but the washed up sea weed which I found along the coast.



Figure 4.4.8 Plain dart print button up shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

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4.4.9 Style 9: Wave T-shirt

Fabric : 85% cotton
15% elastane

Colour: dirty beige and white

A fitted t-shirt with detailed panels, the front panel is white and runs in a curved form across the chest and stretches over both sleeves and runs through the back as well. The lower panel of the shirt is stylized with pintucks mimicking panel lines. Trim for the neck line is cut from matching fabric to the curved panel.

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is from the shape of a wave as it approaches the coast, in uneven curves and stretches across the whole length of the beach before meeting the coast.

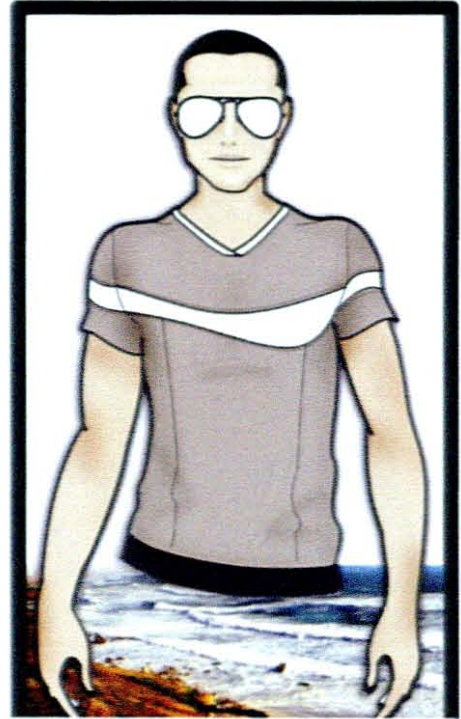


Figure 4.4.9 Wave t-shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.10 Style 10: Plain dart print

Fabric : 85% cotton
15% elastane

Colour: dirty beige, white and muttoncloth trim.

A fitted t-shirt with detailed trimming, the front and the back of the t-shirt has a dirty cream muttoncloth trim running in a curve across the chest and stretches over both sleeves. It runs through the back as well. Trim for the neckline is cut from white knit fabric.

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is from the shape of a rock found on the beach. A section of the rock is broken off forming a neat path or ridge across the rock.

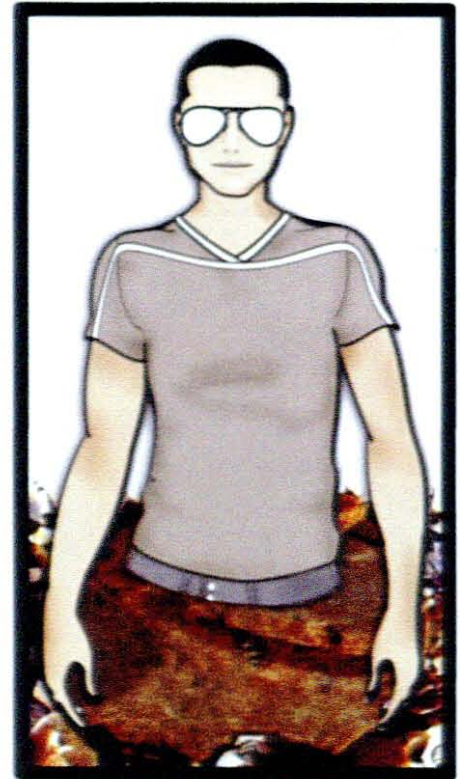


Figure 4.4.10 Path t-shirt (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.11 Style 11: Shift top

Fabric : 100% Wool

Colour: dirty beige

A loose-fitting top with gathered detailed around the neck, specifically over the shoulders, where it is gathered and stitched down with binding with the words PURE printed on it. This garment has a boat neck and loose-fitting sleeves.

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is from the shapes made on the beach as the waves ebb and flow, creating contour lines on the various inclines on the beach sand.

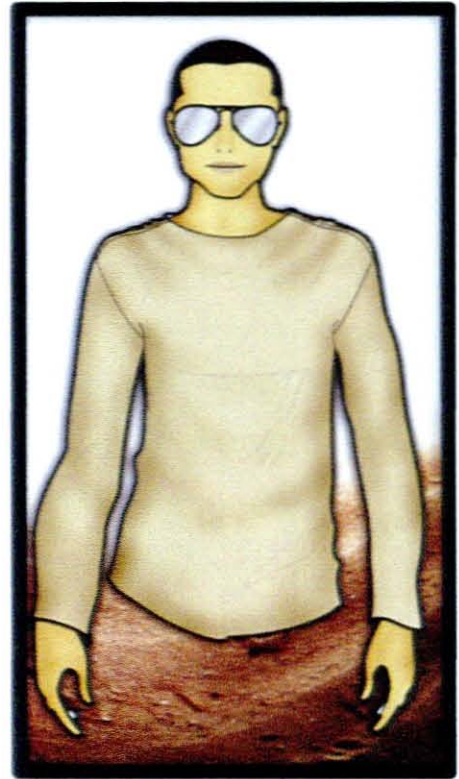


Figure 4.4.11 Shift Top (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.12 Style 12: Fynbos branch

Fabric : 85% cotton
15% elastane

Colour: dirty beige, white trim.

A fitted vest with white detailed trimming. The front of the vest has a detailed flap- like opening which can be opened and closed as desired. Trim for neckline and arm holes are cut from white knit fabric.

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is from the shape of Fynbos branches. As the small twigs extend they meet at the same angle at the start of the sprout.

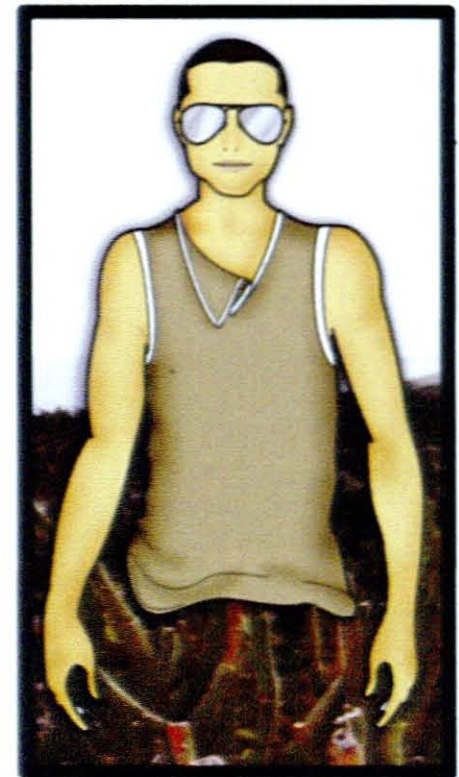


Figure 4.4.12 Fynbos branch (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.13 Style 13: Bay line denims

Fabric : 100% cotton

Colour: Grey and Light Grey

Mid-waist denim pants tapered to the knee and boot- cut down to the end. The details on the hips are in reverse of the fabric and run across the yoke of the pants. The pockets are neatly located in the curve of the front of the garment. The edges of the garment are all top- stitched with off- white top stitching

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is from the bolder shapes made by the rocks as they stretch into the ocean at either end of the bay, forming an incomplete circle, as appropriated in the designed around the waist.



Figure 4.4.13 Bay line denim
(Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.14 Style 14: Tinted denims

Fabric : 100% cotton

Colour: Grey and light grey

low waisted denim, tight fitting down to the knee with a slight bell bottom flare. The curved detailed seam lines on the front and back split the variation in the fabric. One side is the right side of the fabric and the other is the reverse side, creating a tinted effect. For added detail, crack-like pleats are placed on knees and in the pocket facing.

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is from the effect seen on a bush which is half- covered with blossom with the other half empty, while the crack-like pleats are inspired by dried seaweed.



Figure 4.4.14 Tinted denims
(Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.15 Style 15: Over lay denim short pants

Fabric : 100% cotton

Colour: Grey and light grey

mid-waist denim short pants with a straight cut to the knee. The detail on the fly-front overlaps to create a stylistic shape, while still maintaining a simplistic shape in the garment. The edges of the garment are all top- stitched with off- white top stitching

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is sand heaps found on a path at the Cape Columbine nature reserve where shapes in the soil were broken out due to erosion.



Figure 4.4.15 Overlay denim shortpants (Vermeulen,2010)

4.4.16 Style 16: Sling pocket denim short pants

Fabric : 100% cotton

Colour: Grey and light grey

high-waisted denim shorts, with slightly tapered legs. The shorts have curved detail at the pockets as the top end of the pockets form belt loops, and the undersection is the reverse side of the denim, creating an interesting double- layered look. Top stitching is in off-white to accentuate the design details.

Inspiration:

The source of my inspiration is once again from the curved shape of the aloe plant as it ends in a point where, as on the shorts, this point is turned into belt loops .



Figure 4.4.16 Sling pocket denim short pant (Vermeulen,2010)

Chapter 5: Market feasibility

The concept behind my range is to establish and provide the consumer with an alternative variety of quality basic garments such as white button-up shirts, denims and t-shirts. The quality and the design of the product will be the foremost selling-point while, a considered environmental approach in the sourcing of the product will be a supplementary marketing tool.

In a constantly changing market place like clothing retail, some basic apparel items have remained staple items in retail stores. While these products are available at general clothing retail stores, the variety is very limited with little or no design details. My range will aim specifically at providing the menswear niche market with immaculately-designed basic garments which will not only be environmentally considerate, but will be a basic garment that transcends the seasonal boundaries, thus adding value.

5.1 Target market

Our target market is those consumers who visit malls, men aged from 25 to 55 years who operate in corporate and semi-formal environments. The garments can be used just as well in a casual environment and are suitable for many different types of people. The local market is divided into economic, personalized, ethical or apathetic consumer groups. In the retail sector in Cape Town a large segment of consumers can be described as tourists or internationally-orientated consumers. These consumers purchase a variety of products while visiting the city. As the international market has spread across the city, it has developed and been adapted in certain local consumer group markets. One such example can be seen in Greenpoint where an existing upper class market and a large, personalized and consumer-orientated shopping centre – The Cape Quarters- has developed further due to the increase in international consumers. The Cape Quarters is located close to the city as well as being near a residential area with many guest-houses, thus further increasing the need for recreational shopping in the area. A range of high- quality eco-friendly garments will not only appeal to the international market but also to the local market. Each garment is a versatile stand- alone item which can be used for formal or casual occasions (Baker *et al.* (1994).

5.2 Competition

In the menswear retail sector competition is evident, with retailers such as Woolworths, Edgars and Markhams offering extensive menswear ranges. Retailers like these operate as mass producers, thus they offer a limited range of a basic button-up collar shirt. Due to standard sizing there are some fitting problems and this shortage of options leaves a gap in the market where stores such as Blue Collar White Collar in Kloof Street, Cotton Button at V&A Waterfront and Vogel & Aitken in Cape Quarters have taken their opportunities in this niche market. Yet when faced with finding basic garments, few designer options are available, even within these stores.

5.2.1 Competition price and products

- Blue Collar White Collar – only sells button-up shirts in two designs in a variety of prints . White shirts are plain and few. Shirt costs: R450
- Cotton Button – sells a variety of formal wear. Pants in a basic cut and button- up shirts in a variety of colours and white. All are standard shirts. Shirt costs: R500
- Vogel & Aitken – only sells one shirt design in a variety of exclusive imported fabrics and has no white shirts. Shirt costs: R1500

5.2 Marketing strategy

5.2.1 Retail/online combination

An online store can help target an eco-friendly market of local and international consumers who purchase clothing online. The added advantage of having a physical location in conjunction with an online store is that consumers who have purchased already are able to determine their desired fitting size, and further garment orders can be made online or the other way round if a customer wants to test the fit for future online purchases.

5.2.2 Market penetration and recommendations.

Recommended methods of gaining a market share:

- Provide high-quality garments to gain consumer loyalty.
- Offer a small range of basic garments, each being a stand alone item.
 - Button- up white shirts, denims and T-shirts
- The timeless designs of the garments allow them to extend the boundaries of seasonal changes, allowing customers to return at any time, knowing that there will be a variety of those simple garments on the rail.

- Online store to use with extensive social networking advertising and other online advertising
- The recommended purchase price will be targeted at upper middle and high income consumers at R500.

5.2.3 Branding

As the dominant aspects of the range are simplicity and eco-friendliness, packaging and displays will be kept to a minimum, while being environmentally considerate. The label of the range will be 'Pure' by Le-star' and this label will be used along side a QR tag, with a URL leading to the Pure range website.

5.2.4 Cost

- The costing of the range is as follows:

	Shirts	Trousers	shift tops	T-shirts
Material	R 50	R 70	R 90	R 40
Labour (by CMT)	R 70	R 70	R 40	R 30

Advertising will be executed at first through social networking. This is a low-cost method of promoting the range and is ideal for the target market.



Figure 5.1 Branding for Pure range (Vermeulen,2010)

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has shown how fundamentally important the white shirt is to the male wardrobe. The consideration of the raw material of the white button-up shirt is just as important to the environment as it has been in the past. It has represented many different things, some of which may not have had positive attributes. But as the world slowly becomes more aware of the urgency for a sustainable method of living, the white shirt needs to encompass and represent a truly eco-friendly option. I offer one possible solution, which, if used properly, can contribute to the lessening of the impact that fashion has on the environment.

The option for the consumer, now having a clear understanding of the production of the garment, allows him to make an informed decision and not to leave the responsibility to the retailer and manufacturer. By informing the consumer of their ecological responsibilities we include them in the production cycle, allowing them to close the missing link in the product life cycle. This is necessary to have a truly eco-friendly system.

Although the restricted availability of fabrics that met the criteria of the slow design principles for sustainability was a challenge, I was able to source a limited range of appropriate materials. I have learned from this exercise that the manufacturing process of textiles is itself incredibly destructive, yet, with a little effort, one can limit the damage drastically, as there are many possible options for recycling and renewing resources, and new methods are being developed every day.

The designs I have chosen all meet the criteria required by the slow design principles: high-quality, enduring designs and comfort, the range appeals to both young and old as the design is of a classic nature and does not cater to fast fashion.

It is as important to develop garments in an eco-friendly manner as it is to educate the consumer and encourage him to understand what makes a garment eco-friendly, so that he can make informed choices. The consumer has been the missing link in the cycle to obtain an eco-friendly fashion system.

Appendix A: Slow design manifesto

2.2 Defining slow design

Slow design focuses on ideas of well-being. A manifesto for 'slow sustainable designers' (Flad-Luke 2003a) suggests subtle and dramatic changes to everyday design practice (Fig. 7).

A sustainable slow designer will design to:

1. satisfy real needs rather than transient fashionable or market-driven needs.
2. reduce resource flows and environmental pollution by minimizing the ecological footprint of products-service products.
3. harness solar income - sun, wind, water or sea power and renewable materials
4. enable separation of components of products-service products at the end-of-life in order to encourage recycling, reuse and remanufacturing.
5. exclude the use of substances toxic or hazardous to human and other forms of life at all stages of the product life cycle.
6. engender maximum benefits of well-being to the intended audience
7. educate the client and the user by encouraging sustainable literacy and graphicacy.
8. exclude innovation lethargy by re-examining original assumptions behind existing products
9. dematerialise products into service products wherever there is proven benefit in terms of individual, social and/or environmental well-being
10. ensure physically, culturally, emotionally, mentally and spiritually durable products
11. maximise products benefits to socio-cultural communities.
12. encourage modularity; to permit sequential purchases, as needs and funds permit; to facilitate repair/reuse; to improve functionality.
13. foster debate and challenge the status quo surrounding existing products.
14. publish sustainable designs in the public domain for everyone's benefit, especially those designs which commerce will not manufacture.
15. promote Design for Sustainability as an opportunity not a threat to the status quo

Unknown artist, *slow food*
Manifesto, 2006
(Slowdesign.com, 2009)

Appendix B: Questionnaire survey

1. Do u own a white button up shirt?

Yes	No
80 %	20 %

2. How often do u wear a white shirt?

Per 2 weeks

1	2	3	More
35%	35%	15%	15%

3. To what type of occasion do u wear a white shirt to? (may be more than one)

casual	Formal	semi-formal	casual-stylish
52%	95%	78%	60 %

4. Do you check the label of the garment when purchasing ?

No	39%	
Yes	61%	, for fabric content
Yes	15%	, for country of origin
Yes	40%	, for care instructions
Yes	15%	, for all the above

5. Do u prefer natural fabrics?

yes	no
80%	20%

Why? Luxury and comfort

6. What do you do with your used unwanted shirts?

27%	throw away (bust bin)
5%	dispose via eco-waste method
60%	pass down (give away)
18%	sell

7. Does an Eco-friendly in a garment mean to u?

0%	looks like a potato bag
10%	nothing
24%	feels good
26%	adds value
35%	is the way to go (sustainable)

8. What qualities should an eco-friendly garment have?

85%	long lasting
60%	classic design
80%	well designed
98%	comfortable

9. what would influence you to purchase a eco-friendly garment

Exceptional design, ethical value& value for money

10. What do you do to be sustainable?

Use energy saving globes, use public transport, and shop at Woolworth's

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