

# **The Apparel Industry**



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# *Preface*

*'In examinations those who do not wish to know ask questions of those who cannot tell.'*

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

*'That state of restful coma that . . . dons dignity by the name of research.'*

HAROLD LASKY

*'For every person who wants to teach there are approximately thirty who don't want to learn much.'*

W.C. SELLAR and R.J. YEATMAN

I have come to the end of the task of writing this book realising that I have defied all three of the views expressed above. Initially the aim was to pull together into one source a rather disparate range of topics and material which I felt should be available in one place to students embarking upon graduate or postgraduate courses in apparel studies. In so doing I have assumed that the students want to learn what I believe they need in order to embark on careers in the industry and that they would welcome a text which made revision for examinations relatively easier. I have also taken the stance on research philosophy that research is a good thing and that students should be encouraged to continually pose the question 'how do we know that?' The positivist research ethic has been adhered to wherever possible and its corollary that scientific research findings should be regarded as the most important underpinning of any conclusions I have drawn.

This has uncovered some interesting gaps in our knowledge, particularly in relation to global statistics of production and consumption, and has highlighted problems in dealing with issues related to achieving an understanding of the so-called fashion process.

I have also attempted to locate discussion of the sector firmly within the context of the wider economics research base – reflecting a view that the industry is not so special or different from other branches of light engineering that it has to be treated as some sort of special case. This is not to deny that the sector has at least one unique feature – its labour intensity – which has largely conditioned its global configuration.

My view of what should be included has been formed by some twenty years of experience in teaching graduate and postgraduate programmes which contain substantial elements of economics and, in effect, reflects what might best be described as the Hollings view of what students destined to work in the clothing industry need to know. Hollings introduced the first UK graduate programme in clothing studies in the early 1980s and it quickly became apparent that the existing literature on the economics of the industry (as opposed to design and textile technology, for example) was somewhat limited. Therefore, we started to generate our own literature in an in-house journal which has evolved over time into the *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, now in its fifth year, which aims to fill a gap between journals dealing with design issues and those dealing with textile science subjects.

Clearly, it is not possible within this text to provide a complete survey of the many disciplines introduced (such as marketing or logistics). However, I believe it will enable students to appreciate the contribution these subjects can make to an understanding of the apparel industry's problems. I hope also that the issues have been covered in sufficient depth to provide a sound basis for revision purposes and, with the references provided, a starting point should students need to research these issues in more depth.

One of the central themes of the text is that the late 1990s have witnessed, in the UK, a significant change in the trend in output and employment in the apparel manufacturing sector. This represents a significant break with the experience of the last 25 to 30 years and, in effect, represents a second watershed in the evolution of the industry. This will have important consequences for the range of skills required of future employees in the sector and, I believe, make the range of topics covered in this text even more relevant in the future.

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Manchester

# *Acknowledgements*

I believe that the need for a textbook covering the range of issues included here has been recognised since the early 1980s within the Department of Clothing Design and Technology as it developed degree level courses preparing students for a career in the apparel sector. However, until now the conditions to allow the preparation of such a text have not existed. Therefore, the most important contribution to acknowledge is that made by my Head of Department, Catherine Fairhurst, for creating the timetable environment which allowed me sufficient time to prepare the manuscript.

It follows from this that a debt of gratitude is owed to all the other staff in the Department who covered various activities for me. A particular debt is owed to a number of colleagues – both inside and outside my own University – who read early drafts of various chapters. I would like to thank Professors Ian Taplin (at Wake Forest University) and David Jeremy (at MMU); Andrew Godley (at Reading) and Gaynor Lea-Greenwood (MMU) for their efforts.

An enormous vote of thanks must also go to Paula Lilley, Melissa Blanchard and Deirdre Berriman who produced the manuscript for me, thereby coping heroically both with my somewhat idiosyncratic handwriting and archaic, scissors and paste method of text production. All the diagrams were produced by Paul Muirhead.

Finally, my sanity was preserved by long walks with Dino the Dog, without which I would probably not have reached the end of the task.

