



SPOTLIGHT ON

POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, RESEARCH & INNOVATION EFFECTIVENESS OF A CLOTHING SELECTION GUIDE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS IN GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA



DR AUBREY RAMATLA

**PRESENTED
BY:**

This study explores visually impaired consumers' challenges when selecting clothing, such as difficulty identifying colours, patterns, styles and reading care labels. These challenges often lead to mismatched outfits, highlighting the need for solutions that promote independence and self-expression. The research emphasises the importance of appropriate garment selection for 20 visually impaired individuals, as it significantly impacts their social integration and professional opportunities. The study's methodology involved three phases: training visually impaired consumers, observing them in a mock retail environment and collecting qualitative and quantitative data through focus group interviews. The analysis identified vital themes: shopping independence, perceived value, usefulness and inclusion. The Braille Communicative Tool (BCL) emerged as a crucial aid in improving accessibility and understanding during shopping. The findings highlight the BCL's potential to empower visually impaired consumers by fostering greater autonomy and inclusion in retail environments while emphasising ongoing improvements to meet users' diverse needs. While most participants found the BCL easy to use, some reported challenges, including time-consuming searches and limited garment information.

In conclusion, the study suggests that expanding the tool to include more detailed information on garment origin, gender classification and style could further enhance its effectiveness.

DATE: 23 MARCH 2026

TIME: 12:00 – 13:00

VENUE: Building 25 – Room 25,
Arts Campus

OR

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Limited space available. To confirm your seat, please email botesjc@tut.ac.za by 19 March 2026.

FACILITATOR: Pfunzo Sidogi - Assistant Dean: Postgraduate Studies,
Research & Innovation.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Aubrey Ramatla is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Fashion Design and Technology at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), Pretoria, with over twenty-seven years of academic, research and industry experience. He began his academic journey with a National Diploma and B Tech in Fashion Design and Technology, later completing a Master of Technology degree focusing on the decision-making processes of visually impaired consumers in apparel retail environments. He further strengthened his pedagogical expertise through a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Vocational Training from the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. He completed his Doctor of Arts and Design in Fashion at TUT. His doctoral research advanced inclusive design through the application of a Braille Communicative Tool to enhance the retail experiences of visually impaired consumers.

A recognised innovator, Dr Ramatla developed the “Communication Tool for Use by Visually Impaired Consumers,” certified by the National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO). This invention earned him the Best Innovation Award at the TUT Research Academic Awards in 2017 and a nomination for the Faculty Artistic Award. Through a career that bridges scholarship, innovation, industry practice and community engagement, Dr Ramatla has positioned himself as a leading voice in inclusive fashion design, curriculum transformation and socially responsive design innovation in South Africa and beyond.

