

Understanding Clothing Selection: The Perfect Ways of Choosing Men's Suit Jacket for Good Grooming

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ABSTRACT

Suit jacket as an outer garment has been able to maintain its exclusivity, dignity and constructional processes over the years. Its production appears very interesting and challenging. Apparently, selecting the right suit jacket for good grooming sometimes seems difficult and, if care is not taken, one may end up opting for wrong size. In some occasions, the choice of lapel type in conformity with an individual's figure type may create some kind of pandemonium. The study seeks to bring to limelight major issues involving the selection of perfect suit jacket. The specific objectives were to identify the materials for making suit, examine the factors that contribute to perfect suit production and identify some common problems associated with suit construction and selection. The qualitative research design was employed to conduct an in-depth analysis of the core components of a well-tailored suit jacket. Research instruments such as observation and photography were used for the required data of the study. The findings revealed that choosing the perfect suit for good grooming can be challenging since the embodiment of suit jacket involves several technical issues. Again, the vital parts of suit jacket such collar, lapel, shoulders, sleeve and body measurements equally contribute to good fit.

Keywords- Suit, Jacket, Good grooming, Perfect, Lapel, Draping.

I. INTRODUCTION

Clothing is a necessity as far as human life is concerned. Indeed, it's a basic factor contributing greatly in diverse ways to improving man existence (Forster, 2014). Adu-Akwaboa (1994) believes that the progressive development of clothing production started as leave coverings, animal skins and in subsequent generation moved into the art of spinning and weaving.

Opoku et al. (2015) are of the view that technology has influenced clothing production right from fabric manufacturing to garment production respectively. Garments from the perspectives of Gavor et al. (2016) and

Carr and Pomeror (1992) are classified into undergarment, inner-garment and outer-garment.

Choosing under-garment and inner-garment for good grooming has never been a problem as compared to the outer-garment since an individual's appearance is described in accordance with a given outer-garment worn (Forster, 2014).

Selecting perfect outer-garment such as suit (jacket) sometimes appears very difficult. Baiden et al, (2022) believe that suits and for that matter jackets and trousers (pants) are tailored to conform to the contours of the human figure. Opoku et al. (2019) write that a suit is a piece of clothing (garment) worn on top of the body over other clothes (shirt, vest) that is creatively crafted,

moulded and manipulated to conform to the contours of a particular figure type.

Looking at the description of a suit as mentioned, it is assumed that, the jacket should be able to fit as accurately as possible provided the suit is of the right size.

The wearing of suit is as old as its construction. Over the years, many people have developed interest in the use of suits irrespective of their prices. The wearing of suits ranges from formal, semi-formal and casual in terms of dressing. People from the executive class like the bankers, lawyers, lecturers, parliamentarians, business managers and the clergy are considered prime users of suit in the 21st century.

Irrespective of suit patronage globally, some men find it difficult to choose the perfect suit size for their figures since they lack the skills in choosing the right suit. In most cases, many people buy the wrong size out of ignorance and this tends to affect their appearance and also subject them to ridicule. Apparently, choosing the right suit length, collar size, reverse (lapel) type or size, sleeve length, pocket type and the number of buttons have become a challenge to many people (Cabrera and Antoine, 2015).

To buttress this point, Carr and Pomeror (2010) believe that when suit is not tailored to fit the human figure, it ends up creating fitting or draping problems. However, for a suit to hang perfectly, it must be taken into consideration the type of figure and its measurements. Accurate taking of measurements for men's suit production is a key but the issue is majority of men purchase their suit from the general market without necessarily having their figure types and measurements being factored into the production. Aldrich (2013) is of the view that when suits are made under the customized or bespoke construction phenomenon, it tends to fit better; thereby making the wearer appearing well in stature.

The study seeks to address some issues pertaining to the selection of perfect suits for good grooming among men. The specific objectives as directed at answering the research questions are to identify the materials for making perfect suit, examine the factors that contribute to the selection of perfect suit and identify some common problems associated with suit production. For the purpose of achieving the aim and objectives of the study, the questions below were formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the materials for making perfect suit?
2. What factors contribute to the selection of perfect suits for good grooming?
3. What are the common problems associated with suit production?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept Suit and Jacket Production

As old as the suit's creation is its use. Nobody is specifically aware of who created the suit as a piece of clothing (Opoku et al., 2019). Probably, the original

designers who invented this trade of stitching are still unknown. Also, it is unclear from whence the earlier producers got the ideas for making suits. Research have shown that the first lounge suit rose to fame or popularity during the middle of the nineteenth century, indicating that there were other productions prior to this time. Over the years, suits which include jackets and pants or trousers have been created for upper-class and noble men, particularly those from British royal family. According to several academics, a suit is a set of clothes made from the same fabric in terms of fibre type and colour. A basic character of a well-tailored suit represents beauty, dynamism, and other attributes that authentically reflect the concept of good grooming. As they have been in use for so long, suits have undergone various style, fabric, and functional transformations. Despite all of these, the production, purpose and philosophy behind this great craft have remained same (Sheaffer, 2001).

The production of superior woolens and worsted textiles for bespoke works takes place in the Great Britain that is why it is regarded as the birthplace of tailored and custom-made suits. The Great Britain tailored suits are said to have specific qualities that make them fit and drape nicely on the human form than those from any other country when considering regional variations in suit designing. The originality of British suit has always been superior because of how padding of the shoulders-through to the sleeve head, chest, seams, and hems are creatively treated (Baiden et al., 2022).

Italian suits also appeared, however they differed from British suits in terms of style. Compared to British tailoring, Neapolitan tailoring (Italy) uses softer fabrics. In most cases, padding is applied halfway through the fabric rather than the entire outfit. Italian suits don't have the sleeve head raised as that of British suits. The shirt-sleeve method is the one used by Italians to fasten their suit sleeves. For ease of movement, the side seam shape is made slightly slack (Opoku et al. 2019).

The first tailored suit made in America roughly appeared in the 1920s, but it wasn't until the 1950s that it really started to catch on. The shoulder line of this suit extends past the shoulder bone, making it impossible for the sleeve head (crown) to rest exactly on the bone. As a result, the sleeve pulls or droops slightly from the shoulder bone. American suits tend to be "baggie," with less defined form than suits made in Italy and Great Britain (Cabrera and Antoine, 2015). The old-fashioned tailoring method is still used today in many places even though there are new technologies that can speed up manufacturing.

Analyzing the history of suits and jackets is simple when you look at its decade developments. According to Baiden et al. (2022), early fashions serve as inspiration for modern outfits sold worldwide. The main factors that have influenced the current suit production are the social, economic, and cultural contexts.

In terms of style and fabric choice, the 1990s saw a significant turning point in men's fashion. This was the

time when the Victoria era in the West came to an end and a new fashion for men's attire emerged. According to Opoku et al. (2019), men's fashion started to undergo many alterations that may help men look attractive and presentable at all events and circumstances.

Between the Victorian era and the nineteenth century, sack suits replaced Victoria frock suits. The wearing of three-piece suits, which included the pants, jacket and a matching waistcoat, was a typical practice during this time. Also, wearing contrasting pants or trousers became fashionable. Using the same fabric for the jacket and the pants was another technique to wear suits back then. Yet wearing a contrast waistcoat underneath a suit also gained popularity. Turn-ups or cuffs were used to make ankle-high pants or trousers for coats. Men's pants had a lot of fullness applied to the back and front, including pleats, darts, creases, and tucks.

Another significant issue during that time was that, the processes used to produce suits were governed by tight laws, and anyone found in violation of the dress code would face consequences. During the middle of the century, social and cultural forces assisted in the elimination of the aforementioned regulations. The men's outfits from the 1910s, according to Opoku et al., (2019) resembled those from earlier eras. The only distinction was that males in the middle working class added caps to their attire at this time.

Short coats or jackets with two or three buttons started to be worn after the World War I (inspired by military uniforms). Long tailcoats and pinstriped suits are styles that originated in the early 1920s. The choice of fabric colour, ties, and shoes all became popular during this period. The re-appropriation of wartime attire as a fashion trend during World War I actually took a different turn.

Later, suit designers and manufacturers turned to slender or straight pants with small reverses (lapels). Double-breasted waistcoats were paired with single-breasted jackets. Suits in the 1930s underwent a little modification from those of the 1920s as many people sought to appear fashionable in their attire. Yet, suit production methods evolved to be versatile to accommodate mass production. Construction techniques did not significantly change from the 1940s and the 1960s. Early developments served as inspiration for the suits made throughout these times. Because so many individuals required showy clothing or clothing for disco in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively, brighter colours were added to the suit production process.

Suits in the early 2000 emerged in appealing hues, very attractive and were constructed with vents at the rear. Men's suits and jackets are currently experiencing the concept of "colour blogging." Men's suits are currently being made in vivid colours and in a close-fitting style, as they have been since 2010. The single-breasted jackets with either one or two vent openings have been the order of the day. Those who care about fashion want to see fresh developments in the suit-

production industry. Designers, however, are also putting in a lot of effort to create and release designs that satisfy the needs of cherished users.

The present suits on the market are inspired by the previous styles, according to a careful examination of the advancements in suits and jackets. The creation of suits has always been based on identical principles; the only difference is that the current fashion favours more vibrant (pastel) colours than in the past.

Materials for Suits Production

Many materials go into the construction of suit especially the jacket. Cabrera and Antoine, (2015) believe that irrespective of the numerous items and processes that constitute the assembling of a suit, the fashion fabric plays a vital role for ensuring good fit. Choosing the right fabric with the right characteristics has never been a simple exercise. Several fabrics stand the chance of being used for the production of suits but the properties inherited in the fabrics and their effects on the constructional processes and the finished product (suit) is the most important thing to consider.

Wynne (1997) and Sackey (2007) relate that wool has always been the taste for some designers and manufacturers. To buttress this point, these authors believe that wool tailors wonderfully and at the same time not only keep the body warm in winter, but ventilate well during summer; thereby making the wearer feels good and comfortable. Another characteristic of wool is that, it is flame-resistant, and naturally water-resistant.

Tyler (2008) asserts that fabrics such as cotton, silk, linen and those of synthetic category can be used for the production of suits but their drapery characteristics and fitting dimensions may be entirely different from wool.

Wool and its types have some sorts of natural stretch which when come into contact with heat and steam swell, thereby making it possible to be manipulated through moulding to conform to the contours of the human body (Opoku, et al; 2019).

Besides the fashion fabric as indicated earlier on, there are some other items that facilitate easy sewing and perfect fit of a suit. Few among these materials (trimmings) from the angle of Cabrera and Antoine (2015) include wool canvas interfacing. This item is used as supporting fabric for the jacket front section. The interfacing adds body and shape to the suit fabric and reduces unnecessary wrinkles. The best way to use wool canvas interfacing is to first soak in cool water and allow it to drip-dry and later on press before use just to avoid shrinkage in the finished suit. Lining according to Fringes (2008) is a lightweight, smooth fabric of nylon, silk or polyester employed to hide or cover the understructure of the jacket and to facilitate sliding the jacket on and off comfortably. Regardless of the lining being lightweight and soft, it must be strong to withstand constant and long-term wear. It is very important to understand that the grain at which the fashion fabric is cut must correspond with the lining in order to avoid unnecessary stretch and folds. The

role of under collar in jacket construction cannot be underestimated. A very hard-wearing wool fabric in the same colour that coordinates with the jacket fabric is appropriate. It is however used to give body and provide smooth and sharp edges to the jacket collar.

Shoulder pads are employed in moulding the jacket especially the shoulders and sleeve head (crown). The pad is gracefully shaped layers of cotton wadding covered with muslin. Pads do not only define the shoulders but also help in staging the sleeve thereby perfecting the crown.

Generally, there are other materials such as pocket fabric, French canvas and sleeve-head- bias strip which contribute to the sewing of a suit and its fit just like the materials enumerated earlier.

Common Problems Associated with Suit Production

Sewing suits especially the jacket has never been a child's play. Taking and using accurate body measurements is very important in tailoring and for that matter suit production. Dilorenzo (2010) believes that when measurements for garment are taken wrongly, there is the likelihood for it to be also made wrongly. Poor measurements can create problems after the garment is made and due for fitting. If measurements are relegated to the background, the end result tends to be terrible. In most cases, the suit jacket after construction, either becomes undersize or over-size on the body if the measurements are found to be wrong, and this phenomenon is applicable to all garments.

Employing good patterns for the suit (jacket) is very necessary. Cabrera and Antoine (2015) assert that the basic pattern pieces such as the jacket front, side piece or panel, back, sleeve and the collar are the main components that need to be accorded the necessary attention. The nature of the patterns can either be closed fitting like the British suit or more relaxed and loose as of American fit. Equally important factors to consider may include the front style in respect of single or double breasted jacket and the nature of the lapel or reverse (Aldrich, 2013). The choice of lapel type is a matter of taste and current trend. A perfect lapel will make the jacket stay in fashion for many years, and should be about 8cm or between two fifths and a half of the measurement taken from the lapel roll line to the armhole seam. Application of interfacing (fusing) is another dimension of suit construction that can negatively distort the beauty of the jacket if care is not taken. Block fusing technique is preferred because it makes room for the jacket components to be fused before fullness (if present) are applied (Baiden, 2022). There are several issues that can affect the jacket construction but the preliminary ones mentioned are crucial to the success of the finished garment (suit).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper examines the perfect ways of selecting suits especially the jacket for good grooming.

Again, it underscores the technicalities involved in achieving good fit in suits. The qualitative research design was employed to conduct an in-depth analysis of the core components of a well-tailored suit. From the perspective of Krathwohl (2009), qualitative is a field of study whereby the researchers attempt to comprehend a particular situation by studying all elements within the setting. The researchers adopted this method to help gather data from the various parts of a good tailored suit (jacket). In order to achieve the objectives of the study, descriptive research approach coupled with observation in respect of well-made suit, and photography constituted the main tools employed by the study. The major areas of suit that can either distort or project its image were taken into consideration. These areas include body measurements (size range) and their technicalities, collar treatment, shoulder line treatment, introduction of vents, armhole treatment, jacket length, pockets placement, button closure, lapel or reverse treatment and sleeve application. In order to analyze and discuss fully the sections mentioned, photographs of suit jackets and their prominent components were utilized for better analysis and comprehension.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As indicated earlier, this study seeks to identify some common problems associated with suit construction and selection for good grooming. It also underscores the need to understand key areas of suit jacket that may affect its beauty and function. However, the discussion shall consider the major components of a well-tailored suit jacket and their effects on fitting.

Body Measurements

There are several technicalities of taking body measurements for suits (jackets) construction. Body measurements play a very vital role in the manufacturing of garments and more especially jackets (suits). When body measurements are wrongly taken, there is the tendency to also make wrong or bad patterns and this submission is in consonance with the assertion proposed by Carr and Pomerar (1992). These authors believe that if care is not taken whilst taking and recording body measurements, the end result could be disastrous. The effect of incorrect measurements can run through the entire jacket (suit) constructional processes. Measurements are grouped into vertical and horizontal and each category has a unique role to play in sewing. It is very prudent to understand that all the body measurements that require the tape measure to be placed in such a way that it goes in a circumference manner are characterized as horizontal measurements. Typical examples of these measurements include the neckline, around arm, wrist, hip (seat), and the chest. Technically, the chest measurement dictates the size of the suit jacket and professionally, it should relate well with the seat (hip) measurements. Vertical measurements involve placing the tape measure in a vertical manner without necessarily

having to move around the body. Some measurements classified as vertical encompass shoulder line, sleeve length, jacket length, trousers or pants length. Special consideration in terms of ease or allowance is given to the jacket when taking the measurements. If measurements for making suit appear to be same as an ordinary men's shirt, the probability of either producing something small or baggie becomes obvious. It is always important to accord individual measurement special treatment. Ideally, men's measurement for the chest is always bigger than any part of the body provided perfect fit is required. For an ideal man's figure, the seat (hip) should be smaller than the chest.

Lapel (Revere) Selection

In some context, lapels and reverses can be used interchangeably in the sense that they virtually mean the same thing in garment construction. Aldrich (2015) believes that lapel is a section on each side of a suit jacket immediately beneath the collar which is folded back on either side of the front opening. It is important to understand that lapels in garments turn back on their own due to the treatment employed during construction. The wearer of a garment (especially suit jacket) with lapels does not require forcing the lapels to turn back.

Whenever it happens that one needs to make the lapels turn back or lie flat, then it is obvious that there is a problem with the lapels (constructional defects). Specifically, the aesthetic purpose for creating lapels in garments outweighs that of functional benefits. Lapels make jackets appear beautiful and attractive while offering a more formal style that is synonyms with men's

executive wears. In effect, they add an invaluable touch of formality to suit jackets (Opoku et al 2019). Choosing the right lapel is of great importance since there are differences in figure types. Basically, there are three main forms of lapels in suit jacket construction which include notch, peak and shawl. Each type depending on the individual figure type has its own characteristics. To further explain this point, lapels should always be a reflection of the jacket's proportion. While jacket proportion falls in consonance with the figure type, the nature of the lapel also becomes considerable factor. The dynamic nature of fashion can sometimes make certain garments look odd from the perspectives of professional designers or tailors. Technically, the size of individual figure is a key requirement or consideration for choosing the size of lapels.

For instance, a wide lapel on a well-proportional figure or body will make the garment appear good while the same wide lapel on a small figure has the tendency to dwarf the body. This phenomenon is an eye-opener to the lovers of jackets because the nature of the lapel has an influence on individual figure type.

Lapel should extend just to the mid-point between the collar and the shoulders. Baiden et al. (2021) assert that there is no restriction and static rule on lapel selection because the choice of lapel is a matter of taste and current trend. The underlining principle for choosing lapels from the angle of the researchers is that, the safe width for lapels should be the type that will make the suit jacket remain in fashion for longer period and still have good market.

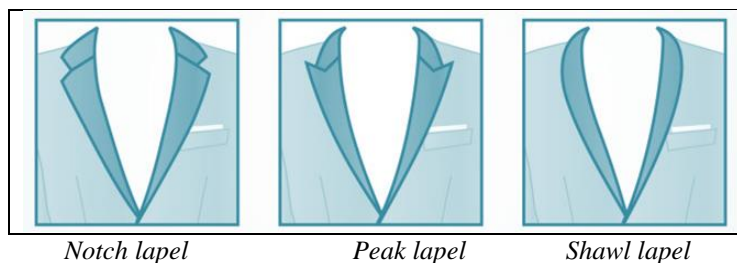


Figure 1: Basic Types of Lapel (Revere)

Source: Real Man Real Style

Choosing the Right Suit Jacket Length

There is a very unique way of classifying jacket length in modern-day fashion. For many fashion designers and forecasters, choosing the perfect jacket length has been a matter of taste but the researchers posit that, suit jacket length selection should be given the needed attention because of the role it plays when it comes to perfect grooming. It should not be considered as ordinary garment length. As stated by Aldrich (1998), Armstrong (2005) and Cabrera and Antoine (2015) *mini, medi, moda* and *maxi* are the general categorization of dress or skirt length. Professionally, a well-tailored suit jacket length contributes tremendously to its fit. Aside classifying jacket fit (in terms of length) as regular, loose

and slim, it can also be grouped as waist-length, hip-length and thigh length. Another significant way of looking at the parameters of the length given, some designers prefer using upper (waist), mid (hip-length) and lower (thigh-length) to differentiate suit-jacket length.

Someone may think that once an individual's body measurements are taken (customized fashion) prior to jacket construction, there will be no need to worry about the nature of the length. The fundamental truth is that, the length of an individual's sleeve has influence on the jacket length, whether right or wrong; when judged against formal dressing and good grooming. It should be noted that when someone wears formal suit jacket, it is required that the jacket length must be able to cover the

mouth of the trousers' front and back pockets and the zipper (fly). Men's suit jacket length should fall past the waist and cover the top of the curve formed by the buttocks when choosing the appropriate length. Another significant way to know if the length of your suit jacket is right is to try on the jacket and turn your hands towards your body, then make an attempt to grab or hold the hem as in figure 2.

Professionally, a good fit for the jacket length should lie in the middle of the palm. Technically, if you find it difficult to grab the hem of the jacket, then it

implies that the length is too long to be considered appropriate for good grooming. In the same view, if the jacket length just ends at the wrist, then it indicates that the length is too short. An ideal fit for the length will cover a man all the way down to where his butt begins to turn inward. Men should understand that the jacket length has the tendency to influence how balanced the upper body is to the lower body. As previously stated, the suit-jacket length should finally fall just past the point where the fingers meet the palm or right about the middle of the palm.

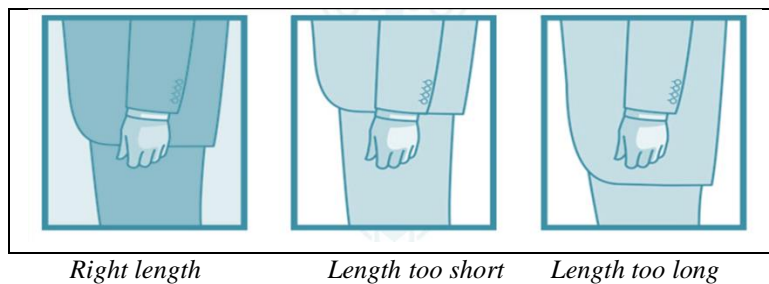


Figure 2: The Right Suit Jacket Length
Source: RMRS

Collar Treatment and Selection

It is very easy to determine faults on the features of a suit jacket at a glance but how to remedy such problems becomes a challenge. When these features go wrong or are poorly made, distortion cannot be avoided. Typical areas on the jacket such as the sleeve, collar, and pocket have great impact on the beauty of the garment. The nature of drape exhibited by the collar will however indicate whether it is good or bad.

Apparently, it is easy to identify a good-fitted collar from a badly-fitted one, even though, ascertaining and describing the cause of the poor fit can sometimes be very difficult. Some jacket designers contacted for the study believe that areas that can wrongly affect jacket collar fit may include wrong collar size, collar weight, bad shoulder line and back length being too short. If the

weight of the collar appears too heavy, it may be attributed to the padding mechanism and in some cases, not choosing the right weight of interfacing for fusing the collar pieces or layers. Additionally, without putting on a jacket to check how the collar behaves, it will be difficult at a glance to judge whether the collar will fit well or not. A good fit of suit-jacket collar requires that, it must rest against the inside shirt collar, which should precisely rest against the neck's back. This phenomenon helps prevent 'standing-away' and 'bunching-in-back' syndrome mostly seen in jacket collars. It is quite obvious that when a collar is too loose, it is very easy to spot there will be a gap where it will be flopping back off the neck. A tight collar, on the other hand, is more prone to cause bunching and folds directly behind the collar and frequently causes the inside shirt to wrinkle.

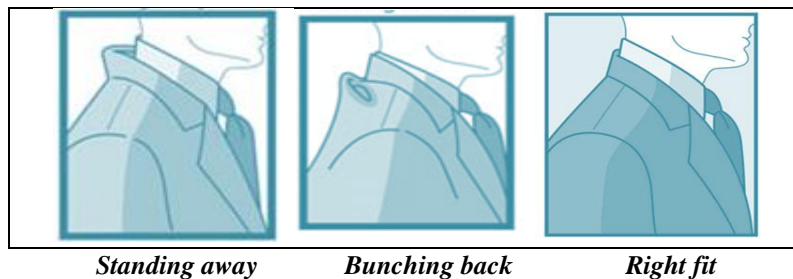


Figure 3: Choosing the Right Collar
Source: RMRS

The Suit-Jacket Sleeve

The jacket sleeve plays a crucial role in the overall fit and beauty of the suit jacket. In fact, it is obvious to identify a good sleeve from a bad one. Messing

up the sleeve will automatically damage the jacket. The jacket sleeve in particular means a lot to many designers and consumers because the least mistake committed in the sleeve can push the jacket off-track.

The formal jacket sleeve is made from the two-piece sleeve block, which has the back and front sleeve joined together to form a full piece. One basic key concerning the sleeve is that, there is always a right and left sleeve. Interchanging these sleeves during attachment will amount to dangling effect. For professional suit producers, this effect has never been an issue as compared to amateur designers. The technicalities involved in fixing the sleeve can sometimes call for spending hours to achieve perfect fit. The ease allowance at the sleeve head which is manipulated to achieve good crown, can at the same time be worrisome. When choosing suit jacket, you need to consider whether the ease at the sleeve head (crown) has been well manipulated and controlled.

Allowing ease at the sleeve head is very important since much of the beauty around the sleeve crown largely depends on this fullness or decorative technique. Without the ease, there is the probability for the armhole to swallow up the sleeve. Aside the effects of the ease, the length of the sleeve should also be considered and treated well for perfect fit.

The sleeve of a suit jacket should never completely conceal the sleeve of the inner shirt. The shirt cuff should ideally extend half an inch past the jacket cuff. In choosing ready-to-wear jacket, the sleeve must fall where the base of the thumb meet the wrist. Avoiding wrinkles and twisted sleeves is of great benefits to good grooming.

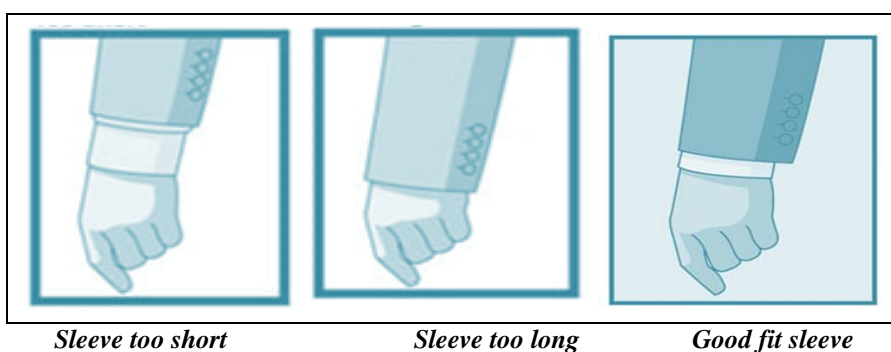


Figure 4: Choosing the Right Sleeve
 Source: RMRS

Shoulder Line Treatment

Generally, shoulder lines in garments construction are one of the difficult areas especially in jacket to amend. The correct length for shoulder lines should be from the neck to the shoulder bone. As discussed in the literature, the American jackets mostly have the shoulder lines extended beyond the shoulder bone (Antoine, 2009). The shoulders should lie flat, and the seam at the top of the shoulder should match the length of the bone beneath it. Right where the arm hits the shoulder is where the shoulder line should meet the sleeve of the jacket. Once more, if the seam connecting the sleeve to the jacket is hiked up along the shoulder bone or dangles down, the garment will never fit properly.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

Selecting the right suit (jacket) is as important as the processes involved in its production. Suit has been on the market for several decades. Irrespective of mass production, which has one way or the other affected or altered the traditional methods of construction, this professional craft in the clothing industry has over the years maintained its beauty and recognition.

Suit jacket is a particular garment that is creatively moulded to conform to the anatomy of its users. Individual designers who produce suits have to follow certain measures due to the technicalities embedded in the

production. To tailor a suit jacket to the contour of a figure requires several efforts and constructional precision.

This study has been able to amass some major factors that are of much interest to suit producers and users. Taking accurate body measurements can never be underestimated because it contributes enormously to the overall fit of the garment.

Additionally, the type and the size of the lapel employed for suit jacket construction is a key to the beauty and performance of the jacket. Relegating the professionalism in choosing the right lapel may affect the look of this article in general.

It has been established by this study that the procedures for treating the jacket collar, lapel, length, sleeve and shoulders are all relevant and need to be observed critically in the quest to achieving correct fit for good grooming especially in men’s clothing.

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