



A CASE FOR THE REVISION OF U.S. SIZING STANDARDS

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ABSTRACT

Apparel consumers today have difficulties finding clothes that provide appropriate fit. In large part, this can be attributed to the outdated sizing standards based on decades-old anthropometric data used by apparel firms to create patterns. This study determines the inadequacies of ASTM sizing standards at meeting the needs of consumers in three target groups, segmented by age: Juniors, Missy, and Over55. Using Body Shape Analysis Software (FFIT for Apparel[®]), SizeUSA data and ASTM measurement data were analyzed for each of the three age groups. Resulting graphs allowed for comparison between the body shapes that predominate in each age group (based on SizeUSA samples) and the body shapes that are accommodated best by the ASTM standards. Results and implications of these comparisons are included in the article.

Keywords: Sizing, Fit, SizeUSA, Body Measurements, FFIT for Apparel[®]

Introduction

Apparel fit ranks high on apparel consumers' lists as an area of intense frustration. A study by Kurt Salmon Associates recently showed that 62% of U.S. consumers are very dissatisfied with the fit of their apparel (Kurt Salmon Associates, 1999). This statistic is particularly telling since comfort and fit are among the highest determinants for apparel purchase in today's markets. A garment that does not fit well, will not sell.

The problem of fit, however, is hard to measure for apparel manufacturers. Often, the only way manufacturers can measure the extent and severity of fit problems is through analysis of the amount of returned merchandise. Sirvart Mellian, an apparel

program manager for the U.S. Navy has said that "quality control people at women's and children's apparel manufacturers report that the highest number of returns retailers get is because of size and fit" (Agin, 1994). However, a focus simply on returns does not give a true indication of the fit problem. It is very hard to quantify losses related to lost sales, brand dissatisfaction, and time wasted in fitting rooms, which are all indicators of the costs of fit problems (DesMarteau, 2000).

The search for the causes of fit problems experienced by so many consumers is a very important one; only by finding the cause may apparel firms start to improve apparel fit. Sizing standards used by the apparel industry to create patterns are one source