



## An Analysis of Apparel Industry Fit Sessions

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### ABSTRACT

*The fit session is the main point of evaluation for a garment during the product development process. This paper presents an analysis of the perceptions and practices of apparel industry professionals regarding best practices and areas for improvement for fit sessions. Participants from a large manufacturer of athletic apparel, including designers, merchandisers, product development managers, and pattern makers responded to a survey. Their responses suggest that fit sessions encompass product development decisions that extend beyond the fit of the garment to evaluation of design. Recommendations address the organization and communication of industry fit sessions with suggestions for using new technology to improve garment fit.*

*Keywords: fit, fit session, sizing, apparel*

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### Introduction

Fit is an important criteria in a consumer's evaluation of an apparel product. According to Kurt Salmon Associates (Kurt Salmon Associates, 2000), 50 percent of women and 62 percent of men cannot find a good fit in apparel. Other studies have shown fit problems to be the reason for 50% of catalog returns (DesMarteau, 2000). With the wide variety of body shapes and sizes and a trend towards more fitted garments, fit problems continue to be an issue for apparel manufacturers and retailers, with no clear resolution.

Apparel manufacturers develop sample size garments for a specific target market and size range as part of the product development process. When an apparel company receives a sample garment, it is typically checked for compliance with

J specified garment measurements, fabric  
T type, and construction details. It is critical,  
A however, to also evaluate the garment on a  
T live body to judge fit, comfort, and  
M appearance. During the product  
development process, the main point of  
evaluation for a sample garment is the fit  
session.

During a fit session, a fit model tries on the garment and provides insight to the fit and comfort of a garment. The fit model represents the shape and size of the target customer, and is not a fashion model. However, human fit models, unlike dress forms, can vary in their measurements and may not be perfectly symmetrical (Farr, Stone, Auliff, & Ouverson, 1996; Workman & Lentz, 2000). Typically, the fit session participants include designers, merchandisers, product development managers, and pattern makers. These