

## **A study of dilemma faced by the student population of Panjab University Chandigarh in finding plus size clothing**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Individuals have varied body shapes that cause fit of an apparel to bulge, sag or wrinkle in an unflattering manner causing a person to feel uncomfortable and unrepresentable. The world of Globalization has seen a shift causing an increasing demand for plus size clothing. There are limited stores offering apparel to population that has a higher BMI and is actually overweight. The present study saw that people these days are demanding “Ready To Wear” and “Off the Rack” clothing. Research has made an attempt to find out what the existing ‘pret-a-porter’ has to offer to Plus Size Population in Chandigarh. A survey revealed that 2XL size is in greater demand. The available garments lack in design detailing, fabric type besides not fitting well around the bust area and crotch area. Manufacturers need to devise a way to solve their problems by engaging suitable designers and by offering more alteration facilities at retail outlets. They also need to review their standard body measurement charts. All members of the supply chain need to focus on what this particular clientele is demanding as this is in the interest of all stake holders.

**Key Words :** Dilemma, Plus size clothing

### **INTRODUCTION**

Clothing is fiber and textile material worn on the body. Clothing performs a range of social and cultural functions, such as individual, occupational and sexual differentiation, and social status. In many societies, norms about clothing reflect standards of modesty, religion, gender, and social status. Clothing may also function as a form of adornment and an expression of personal taste or style. Ready-to-wear or prêt-à-porter often abbreviated RTW; “off-the-rack” or “off the-peg” in casual use is the term for factory-made clothing, sold in finished condition, in standardized sizes, as distinct from made to measure or bespoke clothing, tailored to a particular person’s frame. Well-fitted garments are defined as those that are comfortable to wear, allow sufficient ease for freedom of movement, conform to present day fashion and are also free of wrinkles, sags or bulges. An individual’s basic body shape affects the fit of apparel. A study of anthropometrical measurements is required for understanding the physical differences among body shapes which is essential for

designing and sizing of apparel. The word Anthropometry originates from the Greek word, which literally means “measurement of humans”. In physical anthropology, it refers to the measurement of living human individuals, for the purposes of understanding human physical variation. Standardization or universalization of consumer goods is a symbol of civilization. Ready-to-wear is apparel that is mass produced in standardized sizes for a target market or target customer. Standardized garment sizing is based on the assumption that people can be categorized by key anthropometric measurements. Plus size clothing is a euphemistic term given to clothing proportioned specifically for people whose bodies are larger than the average person’s. Historically, plus-size apparel has been available only in women’s size apparel. The body mass index is a value derived from the mass (weight) and height of an individual and is an attempt to quantify the amount of tissue mass (muscle, fat, and bone) in an individual. The BMI of overweight or obese individuals is higher and this results in excessive tissue mass (muscle, fat and bone) making the person look big sized. These people require plus size clothing and find it difficult to get apparel that flatteringly fits their body sizes.

### **Review of Literature :**

Horn (1968) in his study pointed out that humans have used apparel for reasons of modesty, protection from the elements, adornment, status, and as an expression of self from the earliest recorded history. Throughout most of human existence, apparel was custom made from measurements taken from an intended wearer to fit the individual’s size and shape. Thus whatever may be the size category a person desires clothes that fit well.

Ashdown (1998) revealed that the purpose of a sizing system for apparel should be to make available clothing in a range of sizes that fits as many people as possible. The researcher feels that this includes plus size range as well.

Hobson (2001) pointed out in his study that Hot Topic, a successful teen retailer, was one of the first to develop garments for larger size teens. This study recognized that the plus-size teen body does not conform to the shape and size of the woman’s plus-size clothing industry. Hot Topic developed an in-between sizing unique to their store. Apparel in this new size range became the retailer’s fastest selling items. Eventually, this success led to the development of the spin-off store, Torrid, in 2001, which caters to the needs of the female plus-size teen. Thus 2001 seem to have drawn the attention of manufacturers to plus size clothing.

Connell *et al.* (2006) in their research revealed that fitting issues exist with mass customization software and are especially seen in plus sizes. They concluded that these fitting issues cannot be resolved until up-to-date 33 anthropometric survey data of plus-sizes are available to the software programmers.

Bye *et al.* (2006) proposed the use of a 3D body scanner which is an instrument designed to create an accurate computer image of the body. Cameras, using a white light or laser, can map a 360-degree view of the body, resulting in a cloud of data points. Length, width, circumference, body angles, landmark points, shape, and volume measurements of the body are taken by this measurement and a permanent electronic record is created for future reference and analysis in pattern development and grading. Such a device should be expected to solve the dilemma of a plus size customer.

Mpampa *et al.* (2010) studied that body somatotype determine where excess fat is stored and, therefore, affect the fit of apparel in these areas. Brock *et al.* (2010) said that in order to improve the fit of apparel for plus-size teens, current 34 anthropometric data must be obtained and new

sizing and grading methodologies need to be formulated. These methodologies should be applicable to both manual and computerized drafting and should facilitate mass customization of apparel.

Vuruskan and Bulgun (2011) in their study pointed that major obstacle facing apparel manufacturers who develop apparel for plus size teens is the current industry standards of sizing and anthropometric data available. A possible resolution to this problem may be found in technological advancements in the apparel industry, technological developments in apparel sizing and fit.

### **Emergence of the problem :**

The review of literature points to the fact that plus size population is growing and this population is demanding comfortable well fitted ready to wear clothing. Industries must speedily realize how profitable plus size clothing can be and cater to catch to the needs of this population. More designers need to showcase their collection in International Fashion Shows making plus size models walk for them on the ramp. Findings of this area specific research can help fill the demand supply gap for plus size clothing. In the World of Globalization, it has been seen that there are very limited plus size clothing stores in India and next to none exclusive plus size clothing stores in Chandigarh. Due to the change in the lifestyles of the urban population a lot of people complain of being overweight and continuously struggle to reduce and maintain them. People requiring larger size ready to wear clothing find it very difficult to get the right fit, comfort and styles that flatter their personality. Keeping in mind all the literature reviewed the present researcher feels that there is a need to understand what details a plus size customer wants from the designers, manufacturers and retailers of the apparel industry. As such solution/solutions need to be found to the dilemma faced by Plus Size customers in finding suitable clothing. A research needs to be undertaken to study the demand for plus size clothing and to explore the availability of same in Chandigarh so that this data can be shared with the manufacturers and designers. This will help the consumers and the apparel businesses in terms of satisfaction and money turnover, respectively in this region in particular.

### **Objectives of the study :**

The study has the following objectives:

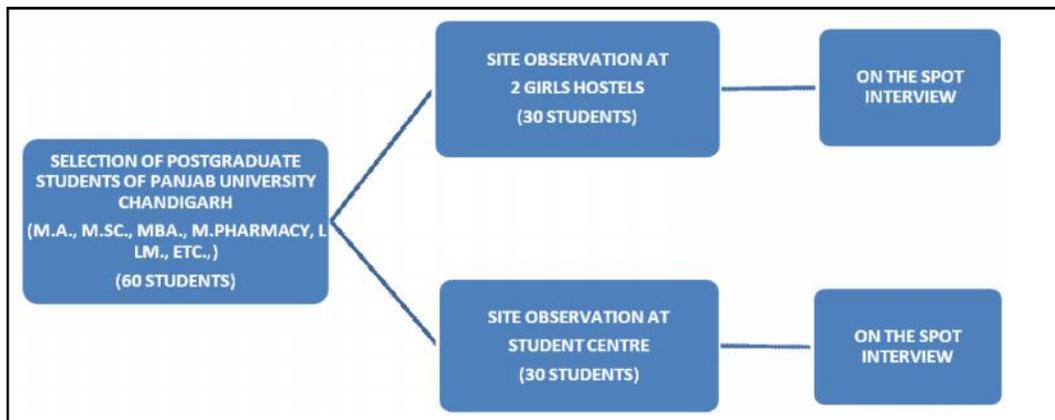
1. To identify the female student population for plus size clothing in Panjab University, Chandigarh.
2. To study the dilemma faced by this student population in purchasing plus size clothing.
3. To take a feedback for availability of required Plus Size Clothing from these respondents

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design :**

Research Design 'deals with a logical problem and not a logistical problem'. Before a builder or architect can develop a work plan or order materials he must establish the type of building required, its uses and the needs of the occupants. Similarly in social research sampling, method of data collection (e.g. questionnaire, observation, interview schedule and document analysis), and design of questions are all subsidiary to the matter of what data is needed to be collected.

The design for the present investigation is as follows:



### Sample of the study :

A sample pool of 60 postgraduate female students requiring plus size clothing on the campus of Panjab University, Chandigarh were selected for the purpose of investigation. The selection of the sample was done in two stages and the technique of observation was employed to draw out the sample.

### Stage I :

Two hostels where girls were residing were randomly selected out of nine hostels for girls of Panjab University, Chandigarh. 30 students, 15 each from each selected hostel were who needed plus size clothing were taken as respondents.

### Stage II :

A schedule of 5 working days was fixed by the investigator in the afternoon at student centre of Panjab University, Chandigarh. This spot is famous for the delicious food court, cafeteria and the entertaining events in which maximum gathering of students comes out for relaxation and refreshment. By visual observation 30 students requiring plus size clothing were drawn out from visiting student population for the purpose of investigation. Hence, a group of total 60 students, 30 from each stage were selected for the purpose of inquiry in this study.

### Tools used :

The tool developed was a structured interview schedule that had 23 items related to plus size clothing for female postgraduate students of Panjab University, Chandigarh. The questions related to elements and principles of design and problems related to availability, comfort, fit, style, cost, trial and lack of standardized sizes and ease in the problem areas of a human figure.

### Procedure of the study :

Based on the research design a structured questionnaire was inducted to the identified respondents. The researcher asked questions and filled up the answers herself. Wherever there was an ambiguity in the questions they were explained to the respondents in order to get appropriate answers. If the respondents hesitated in giving certain information the investigator reassured that the information would be kept a secret and not disclosed to anyone. Once the data was collected from all the 60 respondents it was tabulated for data analysis purpose. Each question was picked

up one by one from all the respondent sheets and the responses were noted. The trends began to reflect in the remarks column.

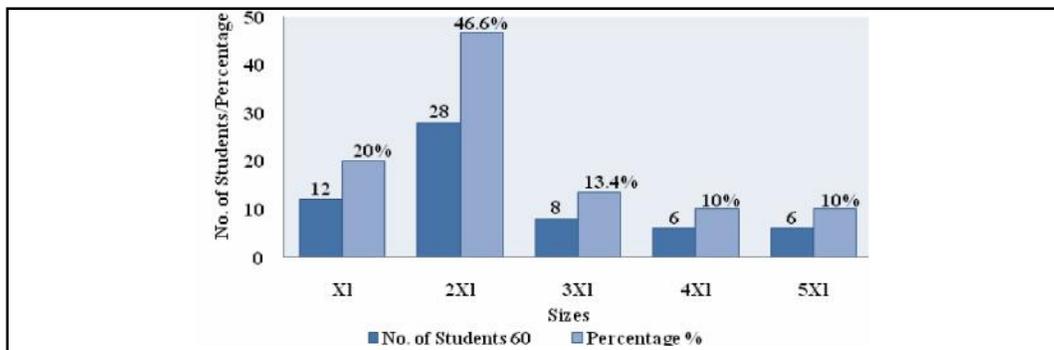
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was tabulated on a sheet for organizing it for analysis purposes. Percentages were calculated to see the trends. This data was shifted on to an excel sheet for generating Bar Graphs. Inferences were drawn from the Tabulated Data and Bar Graphs.

The data in Table 1 and Fig. 1 shows that most commonly sold plus size of apparel is 2XL.

**Table 1 : Size of apparel mostly sold**

| Sr. No. | Sizes | No. of students (n=60) | Percentage (%) |
|---------|-------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1.      | XI    | 12                     | 20             |
| 2.      | 2XI   | 28                     | 46.6           |
| 3.      | 3XI   | 8                      | 13.4           |
| 4.      | 4XI   | 6                      | 10             |
| 5.      | 5XI   | 6                      | 10             |

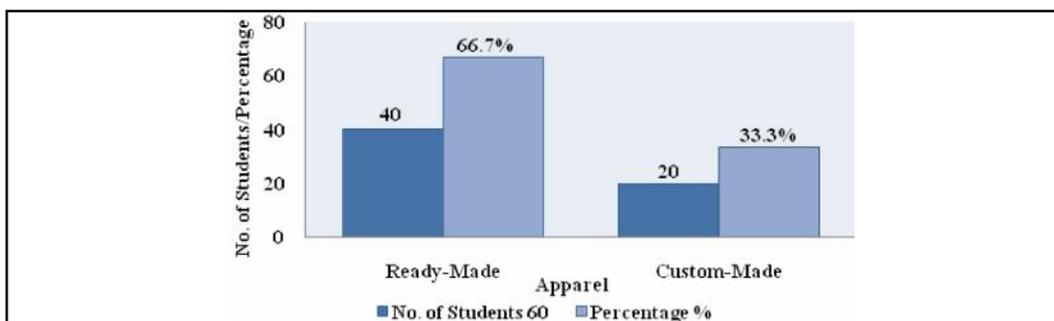


**Fig. 1 : Bar graph shows size of apparel mostly sold**

The data in Table 2 and Fig. 2 shows that plus size clientele prefers readymade garments over custom made garments.

**Table 2 : Choice of consumer between readymade and custom-made apparel readymade**

| Sr. No. | Apparel     | No. of students (n=60) | Percentage (%) |
|---------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1.      | Ready-Made  | 40                     | 66.7           |
| 2.      | Custom-Made | 20                     | 33.3           |



**Fig. 2 : Bar graph shows choice of consumer between readymade and custom-made apparel readymade**

The data in Table 3 and Fig. 3 shows that many reported about the non availability of right size apparel as they face fitting problem around bust and crotch area in readymade clothing.

| Table 3 : Problem areas in readymade garments |               |                        |                |
|---|---------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Sr. No.                                       | Problem areas | No. of students (n=60) | Percentage (%) |
| 1.  | Bust          | 14                     | 23.4           |
| 2.  | Neck          | 3                      | 5              |
| 3.  | Arms          | 7                      | 11.6           |
| 4.  | Hips          | 21                     | 35             |
| 5.  | Thighs        | 15                     | 25             |
| 6.  | All of above  | 0                      | 0              |

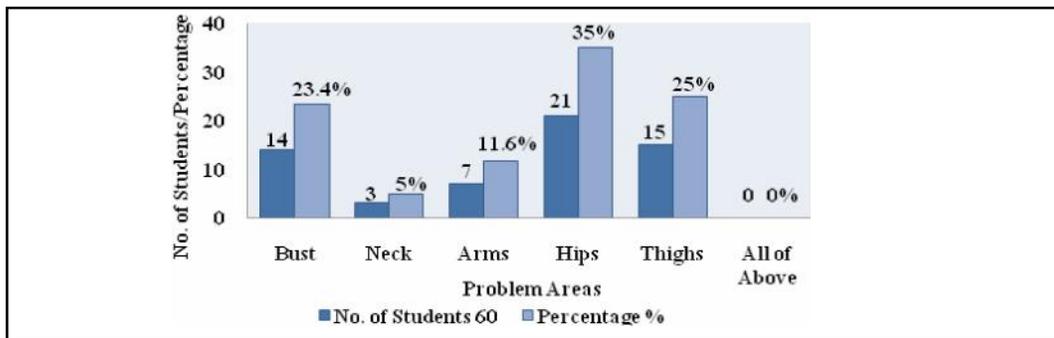


Fig. 3 : Bar graph shows problem areas in readymade garments

The data in Table 4 and Fig. 4 shows that higher percentage of clientele is not satisfied with the style of clothing available to them as they think design features in clothing of their peers are more appealing.

| Table 4 : Design features in clothing of peers |                                      |                        |                |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Sr. No.  | Design features in clothing of peers | No. of students (n=60) | Percentage (%) |
| 1.   | Yes                                  | 31                     | 51.6           |
| 2.   | No                                   | 29                     | 48.4           |

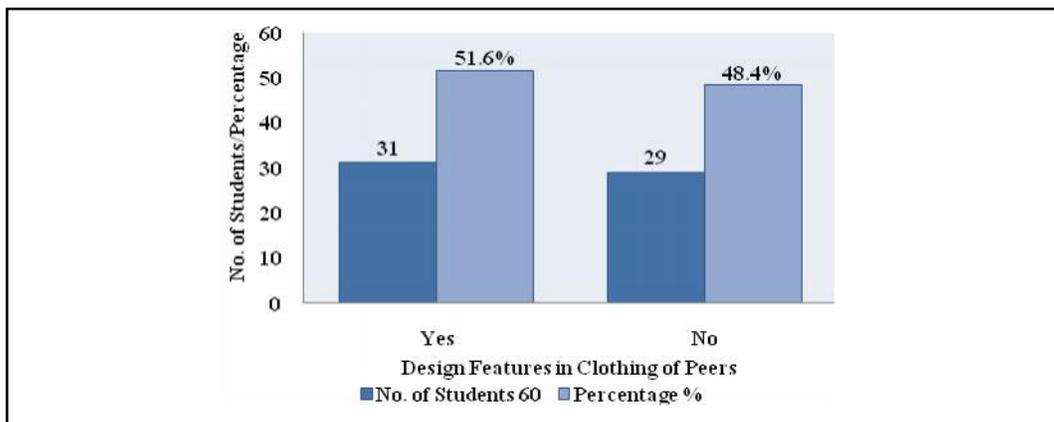


Fig. 4 : Bar graph shows design features in clothing of peers

### **Conclusion :**

The research study revealed that there is a substantial demand for plus size clothing among the student population of Panjab University Chandigarh. This clientele is not satisfied with the available clothing as it lacks styling and appropriate size, fit and comfort. Problem in fit is faced in “round bust” area and “crotch” area. This is a point that all the members of supply chain should consider. They should study the market to know what the clientele demands in plus size clothing. Feedback from the visiting customer should be taken by the manufacturers as it would be in the interest of all stake holders. This study should be taken further and a larger sample survey should be conducted. Measurements should be accordingly standardized and designers should be engaged for styling of plus size garments.

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