

Exploration of Plus Size Women's Apparel Satisfaction, Non-Wear, and Discard

Halimat Ipaye

Dr. Jean L. Parsons, Thesis Co-Supervisor
Dr. Jana M. Hawley, Thesis Co-Supervisor

Abstract

This study explored the apparel satisfaction, non-wear and discard habits of plus size women in the United States. According to Renoux's theory of retail satisfaction (1973), satisfaction with retail consists of three dimensions: shopping system satisfaction, buying system satisfaction, and consuming system satisfaction. This theory formed the apparel satisfaction portion of this study. This study took a qualitative approach and used semi-structured interviews with twenty plus size (women's apparel size 14-32) women age eighteen and above from all over the United States.

The findings of the study indicate that plus size women are unsatisfied in some way with each of the dimensions of retail satisfaction. It was discovered that apparel fit, lack of store selection, and the inaccessibility to retailers carrying plus size apparel led the women's apparel dissatisfaction. The results indicate that plus size women discard a small amount of apparel in part due to a style scarcity mentality—style scarcity meaning there was a perceived lack of options available to replace apparel. Style scarcity was sometimes coupled with weight fluctuation and the need for various sizes in the women's wardrobes, causing non-wear of some apparel. In addition, some women held onto typically smaller apparel in hopes it would fit again one day. Designers and retailers may want to use the information as a starting point for catering to a plus size customer.