

## **A Comparison of Fit Satisfaction For Overweight and Obese Women between USA and Taiwan**

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The entire world is facing a crisis of epidemic proportions. The incidence of overweight and obese adults has increased significantly during the past three decades. In America, a 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination (NHANE) Survey, reported almost 65 % of American adults were overweight and 31 % were obese. Obesity rose 61 % from 1990 to 2000, and the obesity rates continue to rise quickly due to diet and lack of exercise (Sevrens, 2002). Taiwan is also facing the same situation. However, the need for well-fitted, plus-sized apparel for women has long been overlooked in the apparel market. With an increasing population of women falling into the plus-sized apparel market and the associated potential for large profits, more companies have begun to focus on producing better-fitting, more attractive plus-sized apparel. Plus-sized apparel is the fastest growing market segment worldwide.

The complex shape of the adult female body, the shortage of good anthropometric data, the social-psychological impact of apparel in relation to the body, and the complexities of sizing and grading apparel to establish a range of sizes are the main reasons fit problems occur.

In this study, overweight and obese women for both USA and Taiwan were used because fit has been a significant concern in the women's plus-sized apparel market. United States and Taiwanese plus-sized women based on Body Mass Index (BMI) were compared regarding the relationships among body shape, fit problems, and their fit satisfactions. With the end goal of creating a cross-national comparison studies, that focused on the overweight and obese women, may provide important information to marketers in their development of international plus-sized marketing strategies. One hundred forty nine U.S. and 83 Taiwanese plus-sized women completed self-administered questionnaires. Five-point scales were used to measure the fit satisfaction of six illustrated garment types (jacket, blouse, skirt, dress, jeans, and pant). The findings indicated that both respondents had a high level of dissatisfaction with their ready-to-wear. Approximately three-fourth of respondents altered up to 100% of their garments. Most fitting problems experienced by both U.S. plus-sized women and Taiwanese plus-sized women were associated with pant lengths and their torso, especially, in the lower body. In addition, results of the Cross-tabulations revealed there were significant associations between fit problems (hip, thigh, armhole, abdomen,

back width and shoulder seam) and body shape for U.S. plus-sized women, and there was a significant association between body shape and back width fit problem for Taiwanese plus-sized women. The ANOVA results reported that there were significant associations between fit satisfaction of individual garment and body shape. Pearson's Correlation Matrix revealed that there were significant association between overall RTW fit satisfaction and total fit problems and fit satisfaction of individual garments for both subjects. Cross-national comparison studies, such as this one, that focus on the consumer's fit satisfaction may provide important information to marketers in their development of international marketing strategies.