Custom Fit: Is it FIT for the Customer?

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Body scanning information for virtual personalisation and mass customisation in the garment production process is forging ahead. A major difficulty discussed in this paper is garment fit; the production of better fitting clothes would significantly increase consumer satisfaction and reduce garment returns. Although the current limitations of automated measurement extraction will be minimised in time, the process, in itself, cannot provide mass custom fit.

Garment fit satisfaction is subjective, encompassing physical and psychological factors. Fit generally relates to the garment design/style and it is then left to the customer to interpret how closely the garment should conform to the body. Traditionally garment fit is determined by the interpretation of derived measurement data to produce pattern-drafting co-ordinates that reflect the 'ideal' customer size/shape profile. The process contains an implicit fit rationale, which can produce a disparity between actual body shape and proportions, and the pattern geometry.

Body shape, the different proportions between the form, width and length of body segments, is key. Garment sizing/fit and its infinite variables impose on one's body cathexis; the self-evaluation of body image satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Garment fit expectations are problematic, the intended garment-to-body fit relationship and body shape proportions/size indicators need clarification. To aid clarity I have introduced the terms distal and proximal fit, which describe the proximity of the garment to the body. Other problematic areas include automated landmarking, incomplete anthropometric body scanning data, and readily transposable haptic/virtual 2D/3D pattern design co-ordinates.

Virtual garment fit (an integral part of the e-business strategy) is intended to increase confidence in custom fit. However if the custom fit garments supplied are produced through adapting traditional pattern design parameters then the proffered fit is only a coincidental fit. Therefore, in this context, can custom fit be fit for the customer?