

CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH AVAILABLE SELECTION FOR THOSE WHO WEAR DIFFERENT-SIZE MATERNITY WEAR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine overall satisfaction with available selection, effect of size as a contributing factor in overall satisfaction, satisfaction with selected purchase sources, and satisfaction with selected maternity clothing categories for those who wear different-size maternity wear. In addition, the number of maternity wear items purchased at selected purchase sources and the number of maternity wear items purchased in selected maternity wear categories were investigated. Data were collected using a modified questionnaire developed by Greer (1988). A sample of 83 females derived from prepared childbirth classes was placed into small-, average-, and large-size categories by self-reported maternity wear size. Data were analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance, the Dunn multiple comparison procedure, and descriptive statistics. No significant differences were found among the groups for overall satisfaction with available selection, effect of size as a contributing factor to overall satisfaction, satisfaction with selected purchases sources, and satisfaction with selected maternity clothing categories. Significant differences were found among the groups for amounts purchased at selected purchase sources.

INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction following product purchase is a growing concern for many consumers (Engel, et al., 1990) and has become an integral part of clothing research. Recent clothing research that has focused on these aspects of post-product purchase has included satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with fit, sizing, and available selection of clothing for a variety of consumers (LaBat and DeLong, 1990; Chowdhary and Beale, 1988; Baines-Love, 1982; Doss, 1990; Greer, 1988).

The maternity wear clothing market includes only 1.5% of the nation's population (Maternity, 1987) and is a relatively narrow market segment

sold primarily in specialty and department stores (Horgan, 1983). Maternity wear does not offer the range of styles and price points that women may have enjoyed prior to pregnancy (No Baby, 1987). In addition, maternity wear manufacturers, like the majority of women's apparel manufacturers, tend to cater to average-size women.

Maternity wear may not be readily available for women who fit into either the small- (underweight and/or short) or large-size (overweight and/or tall) apparel market. Though general categories of apparel for the small- and large-size customer have increased in recent years, (Small Clothes, 1981; Catering to Petites, 1989; Brill, 1985a) research has indicated that neither category has been saturated. There are still segments of the small- and large-size apparel market that have not been satisfactorily met (Who is the Large-size, 1988). Maternity wear for small- and large-size consumers may be one of the niches that has yet to be filled by the apparel industry.

Maternity clothing is especially important to the pregnant woman in maintaining her self-concept and in preparing for the new or ongoing role as a mother (Kaiser, 1990; Fawcett & Larkin, 1986). Having appropriate clothing to wear during this time of change is both physically important as the body grows and psychologically necessary for her well-being. In a recent study researchers found that satisfaction with maternity wear may not be uniform for all groups of women with regard to clothing size. They suggested that further research was warranted (Koch & MacGillivray, 1992).

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of self-reported maternity wear size on overall satisfaction with available selection, effect of size as a contributing factor to overall satisfaction with available selection, satisfaction with available selection at selected purchase sources and within selected maternity wear categories. In addition, amount of maternity wear items purchased at selected purchase sources and amount of maternity wear items purchased in

selected maternity wear categories for different-size pregnant females was investigated.

DESIGN

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated:

H1. There will be no significant differences in mean response to overall satisfaction with available selection of maternity wear for different-size pregnant females.

H2. There will be no significant differences in mean response to size as a contributing factor in overall satisfaction with available selection of maternity wear for different-size pregnant females.

H3a. There will be no significant differences in mean response to amount of maternity wear items purchased at selected purchase sources for different-size pregnant females.

H3b. There will be no significant differences in mean response to satisfaction with available selection of maternity wear at selected purchase sources for different-size pregnant females.

H4a. There will be no significant differences in mean response to amount of maternity wear items purchased in selected maternity wear categories for different-size pregnant females.

H4b. There will be no significant differences in mean response to satisfaction with available selection in selected maternity wear categories for different-size pregnant females.

Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a modified version of a 17-question Maternity Clothing Survey developed by Greer (1988). A seven-point Likert scale was used for all items. The item used to measure overall satisfaction with available selection of maternity clothing ranged

from Strongly Dissatisfied to Strongly Satisfied. The effect of size as a contributing factor in overall satisfaction was added to the instrument with Strongly Affected to Affected designations. The amount of maternity wear items purchased at selected purchase sources and amount of maternity wear items purchased in selected maternity wear categories were designated with one indicating None Purchased to seven indicating Many. Satisfaction with selected purchase sources and selected maternity wear categories were scaled from Strongly Dissatisfied to Strongly Satisfied.

Current self-reported maternity wear size was investigated by asking respondents to indicate the last maternity wear article purchased. A table with all possible sizes was provided and respondents circled their current size.

Appropriate demographic questions were also included. Demographic questions included in the survey pertained to trimester of pregnancy, first or subsequent pregnancy, age, education, employment, and family income. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate the approximate amount spent to purchase maternity clothing for this pregnancy and the use of alternative sources of maternity clothing.

The instrument was pretested with women in prepared childbirth classes who were not members of the final sample. The instrument was refined based on the results of the pretest.

Procedure

The sample was drawn from participants attending hospital-sponsored or individually instructed classes for expectant parents in Virginia's New River and Roanoke Valley areas. In this area, prepared childbirth classes are often required by the attending physician and are participated in by first-time parents and those who have previously experienced birth.

Childbirth classes were attended to explain and distribute the questionnaires. Subjects were asked to take the questionnaire home and complete it at their leisure before the next meeting of the class. Completed questionnaires were collected during the next class. Respondents who did not return the questionnaire at that time were given addressed stamped envelopes.

Analysis of Data

The nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance, and the Dunn multiple comparison procedure were chosen for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Respondents were grouped into three size categories for analysis. The small category included respondents who reported maternity wear sizes between 2 and 8. Those reporting maternity wear sizes 9 to 13 were considered average and those reporting size 14 and over were considered large. Size divisions were based on published literature (Gioello & Berke, 1979; Small Clothes, 1981; Catering to Petites, 1989; Brill, 1985b).

To facilitate analysis of the variables, respondents' answers relating to satisfaction were grouped into low, moderate, and high distributions in the following manner for the 7-point scale:

| | | |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Low | Moderate | High |
| Less than 2.49 | 2.5 to 5.49 | 5.5 or greater |

Respondents' answers relating to the amount of maternity wear items purchased in selected purchase sources and the amount of items purchased in selected maternity clothing categories were grouped into low, moderate, and high distributions in the following manner:

| | | | |
|------|---------|----------|---------|
| None | Low | Moderate | High |
| 1 | 2 and 3 | 4 and 5 | 6 and 7 |

RESULTS

Description of the Respondents

One hundred fifty-five questionnaires were distributed during prepared childbirth classes. A total of 83 usable questionnaires were returned (54%). The distribution of respondents by self-reported maternity wear size is as follows:

| | | | | | |
|-------|----|---------|----|-------|----|
| Small | | Average | | Large | |
| # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 17 | 20 | 37 | 45 | 29 | 35 |

Ninety-four percent of the sample was in their third trimester (7 to 9 months) of pregnancy.

Seventy-six percent indicated this was their first pregnancy.

Respondents were between the ages of 18 and 40. Over 70% of the respondents indicated some college or higher level of education after high school.

The majority of respondents (77%) were working full-time outside the home during pregnancy. The largest percentage of respondents (27%) indicated a family income of \$30,000 to \$39,000 and the next largest percentage of respondents (23%) indicated a family income of \$50,000 or more.

The larger percentage of respondents (43%) indicated they spent between \$100 and \$249 on maternity wear for this pregnancy. The next largest percentage of respondents (28%) indicated they spent between \$250 and \$499 for maternity wear for this pregnancy. The expenditures per pregnancy of this sample are below the average expenditure of \$400 to \$750 stated by the industry (No Baby, 1987).

The sample was asked to indicate use of alternate clothing sources of maternity wear. Categories to choose from included 1) clothing from a previous pregnancy, 2) borrowed clothing, 3) rented clothing, 4) clothing sewn by self or seamstress, and 5) non-maternity clothing such as oversized women's wear or men's clothing. All groups indicated low use of maternity clothing from previous pregnancy, or rented maternity clothing sewn by self or seamstress. The results may be attributed to a large percentage of the respondents being first-time mothers and being employed fulltime. They neither had previously worn maternity clothing nor had time to sew. In addition, there were no available sources for renting maternity wear in the area in which the respondents lived.

Hypothesis One and Two

Results from the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis procedure indicated that there were no significant differences among the groups for overall satisfaction and effect of size as a contributing factor of overall satisfaction in available selection. Therefore, hypotheses one and two were accepted.

Distribution of respondents by size and level

of overall satisfaction with available selection is reported in Table 1. In general, all groups reported themselves to be moderately satisfied (48%) with the available selection of maternity clothing. However, more respondents (35%) reported a low satisfaction with the available selection of maternity clothing than a high satisfaction (17%).

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents' Level of Overall Satisfaction with Available Selection

| | Small n = 17 % | Average n = 37 % | Large n = 29 % | Total N = 83 % |
|----------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Low | 38 | 38 | 31 | 35 |
| Moderate | 56 | 43 | 48 | 48 |
| High | 6 | 19 | 21 | 17 |

The large-size group reported a slightly higher distribution of overall satisfaction with available selection of maternity wear (21%) than average-size respondents (19%) and a much greater distribution than small-size respondents (6%). This may be due to recent marketing strategies to improve the large-size apparel market (Mansfield, 1986; Brubach, 1987).

The total sample was almost equally divided among low, moderate, and high effect (approximately 33%) of size as a contributing factor of overall satisfaction of available selection (see Table 2). The small-size group expressed the highest percentage (41%) of effect of size as a contributing factor of overall satisfaction. The higher distribution percentage of effect of size as a contributing factor for petites may be due to less selection in their size ranges. In addition, the large-size group indicated both a moderate (38%) and high (31%) distribution percentage concerning effect of size as a contributing factor. The percentages may indicate limited selection within their size ranges also.

Hypothesis Three and Four

Hypothesis 3 and 4 concerned the amount of items purchased at selected purchase sources and

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents' Level of Effect of Size as a Contributing Factor in Overall Satisfaction

| | Small n = 17 % | Average n = 37 % | Large n = 29 % | Total n = 83 % |
|----------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Low | 29 | 35 | 31 | 33 |
| Moderate | 29 | 35 | 38 | 35 |
| High | 41 | 30 | 35 | 32 |

the amount of items purchased in selected maternity wear categories as well as satisfaction with selected purchase sources and selected maternity wear categories. Inconsistency in respondents' answers for these variables were noted. Respondents who completed the questions incorrectly were deleted before analysis; therefore, the total number of responses (n) varies for each variable.

Table 3
Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance of Amount of Maternity Wear Items Purchased at Selected Purchase Sources

| Purchase Sources | n | Small Mean | Average Mean | Large Mean | Kruskal Wallis | p value |
|-----------------------------|----|------------|--------------|------------|----------------|---------|
| Department Stores | 53 | 3.30 | 2.86 | 2.86 | .38 | .8270 |
| Maternity Specialty Stores | 50 | 2.30 | 2.15 | 2.60 | .79 | .6733 |
| Large-Size Specialty Stores | 46 | 1.00 | 1.90 | 2.41* | 7.60 | .0223 |
| Discount Stores | 53 | 3.70 | 3.87 | 3.65 | .24 | .8849 |
| Mail-Order Companies | 50 | 1.70 | 1.64 | 1.89 | .14 | .9335 |
| Second-Hand Stores | 46 | 1.89 | 1.00* | 1.82 | 6.50 | .0388 |

* Mean is significantly different ($p \leq .05$), Dunn's test.

Hypothesis 3a. The amount of items purchased from the selected purchase sources is presented in Table 3. Significant differences were found for the amount of items purchased at large-size specialty stores and second-hand stores.

Therefore, parts of hypothesis 3a were rejected.

A Dunn's multiple comparison test was completed for the large-size specialty stores and second-hand stores. The test indicated that large-size women were significantly different from the other groups in the amount of items purchased in large-size specialty stores. Large-size women may have purchased more items at this source than the other groups because it had been a source of clothing used prior to pregnancy.

In the multiple comparison test, the average-size group proved to be significantly different from the other groups in the amount of items purchased at second-hand stores. The average-size group may have purchased less at second-hand stores because it had greater availability of maternity wear in other sources.

Calculated frequency for amount of maternity wear items purchased at selected purchase sources indicated that respondents frequented department stores and discount stores more often than other purchase sources. Other purchase sources were not used as often which may be due to availability of those sources in the immediate area.

Hypothesis 3b. Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to test satisfaction with available selection by selected purchase source. No significant differences were found among the small-, average-, and large-size groups and hypothesis 3b was accepted.

Frequency was calculated for respondents satisfaction with available selection by purchase source. Moderate to high satisfaction with available selection by selected purchase source was noted for all groups answering this question.

Hypothesis 4a. No significant differences were found among the groups for the amount of maternity items purchased in selected maternity wear categories. Therefore, hypothesis 4a was accepted.

Many clothing categories such as business suits, skirts, shorts, jumpsuits, exercisewear, swimwear, party clothing, sleepwear, and slippers were not purchased by the respondents very often. Clothing categories reported as being purchased more often were dresses, jumpers, slacks, blouses, sweaters, warm-ups, bras, underpants, and hosiery. The results may have

been directly influenced by need, season, and cost.

Hypothesis 4b. Satisfaction with available selection of selected maternity wear categories was calculated and no significant differences were found among the groups. Hypothesis 4b was accepted.

Moderate to high satisfaction was noted for clothing categories more often purchased (dresses, jumpers, slacks, blouses, sweaters, warm-ups, bras, underpants, and hosiery). Again, the results may have been directly influenced by need, availability, season, and cost.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Results of this study imply that small- and large-size women may be as satisfied with the available selection of maternity wear as average-size women. All three groups of respondents (48%) indicated a moderate level of overall satisfaction with available selection.

The fact that all three groups of respondents indicated a moderate level of overall satisfaction with available selection could lead to another conclusion. Perhaps, when average-size women must shop in a more narrow market than accustomed such as the maternity wear market, their satisfaction level with available selection may be somewhat lower than normal. Thus, the average-size group may experience the same level of satisfaction that small- and large-size women experience.

Thirty-three percent of the total respondents indicated low overall satisfaction and only 17% indicated high satisfaction. The low distribution percentage of high satisfaction suggests that a certain amount of dissatisfaction may exist within the maternity wear market for all groups.

Though no significant differences were found among the groups for the effect of size as a contributing factor to overall satisfaction with available selection, the total moderate (35%) and high (32%) distribution percentages concerning the effect of size as a contributing factor to overall satisfaction imply that dissatisfaction with maternity wear may exist.

No significant differences were found among the small-, average-, and large-size pregnant women concerning satisfaction with available

selection of selected purchases sources and satisfaction with available selection of selected maternity wear categories. Participants' responses concerning purchase sources are directly influenced by the purchase sources available to them. Responses concerning selected maternity wear categories are directly influenced by need, availability, season, and cost. This study was conducted within a moderately populated area, therefore, additional study, over time and/or different seasons, in a greater populated area may be warranted.

Significant differences were found in the amount of items purchased at selected purchase sources. The average-size maternity wear customer purchased fewer items at second-hand stores than the other two groups. This implies that the average-size customer may have less need to use a second-hand store as a possible source of maternity wear clothing.

Large-size women were found to be different from the other two groups in their use of large-size specialty stores as a purchase source. For the large-size maternity wear customer, the large-size specialty store may be an excellent source of clothing that can be used during pregnancy. A recommendation for further research would be the study of large-size specialty stores as a viable maternity wear source for large-size women and their subsequent satisfaction with fit during pregnancy.

In general, small-, average-, and large-size groups appear to be moderately satisfied with the maternity wear available. However, a trend toward dissatisfaction is apparent when one considers respondents' distribution percentages of overall satisfaction and size as an effect of overall satisfaction. A trend toward dissatisfaction with available selection may have a negative effect on one's self-concept. Since women wear maternity wear for a relatively short period of time, perhaps study of overall satisfaction and the effect of size on overall satisfaction with availability over time could prove useful.

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