

EFFECT OF WOMEN'S SATISFACTION WITH
CAREER DRESS ON WILLINGNESS TO MAKE
TRADE-OFFS FOR MORE SIZING OPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of career women's satisfaction with career dress on their willingness to trade off styling options, shopping time, and money for additional sizing options in ready-to-wear suit jackets. Data were collected at meetings of professional women's associations. Results indicated that women who were more satisfied with their career dress were less willing to spend additional time and money to get more sizing options; no effect for styling options was found.

INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction with clothing has been studied in the context of consumer satisfaction. Wall, Dickey, and Talarzyk (1978) described satisfaction with clothing as consumer satisfaction with clothing. It can be considered "a key post purchase evaluation" (Wall, Dickey, & Talarzyk, 1978, p.104) and therefore, influential in determining future behavior. Bessom (1964) suggested that understanding consumers and the practices that consumers engage in to choose clothing helps to identify those things which provide for satisfaction with the resulting purchase. She defined clothing satisfaction in terms of the purchase process.

White (1976) inferred that satisfying the needs of consumers is the goal of business and that changes in consumers' needs and expectations must be researched and understood in order to predict satisfaction with clothing. Ryan (1954) discussed the need to know about consumers' purchase and use practices in order to know how to educate consumers in their quest for satisfaction with clothing. Bathke and Burson (1964) noted that information about the manner in which individuals evaluate clothing leads to an enhanced ability to predict satisfaction. These researchers suggested that clothing satisfaction is not just total gratification or answering all needs but rather a process of evaluation which leads to an expected result.

The general focus of early research was on kinds of complaints about clothing and the physical properties of clothing. Little emphasis has been placed on characteristics of the marketplace or, more importantly, on the consumer. A more thorough understanding of all factors is needed to expand knowledge of consumers' satisfaction with clothing and textile products.

Jenkins (1973) and Stemm (1980) considered the fit of apparel to be an important decision criterion in clothing purchases. Hughes (1977) suggested that clothing size is so important that it may preclude use. Ondovcsik (1981) discussed consumer confusion and dissatisfaction with apparel sizing and indicated a need for research to assist the apparel industry in further satisfying the needs of its consumers.

The focus of the present research is on women employed in professional or managerial occupations. Career women are of special interest because this group is growing (The Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1985) and may be placing pressure on the apparel

industry in a variety of ways. The use of special apparel such as the skirted suit for career dressing has been advocated in popular literature. Mangan (1980) suggested that garments tailored similar to menswear, such as suits and suit-type jackets, are the most difficult and costly to alter. Therefore, sizing which provides for good fit is more important with these garments than with dresses and other more loosely fitting garments.

METHODOLOGY

Survey methodology was used. The following variables were measured: career women's satisfaction with a specific suit-type jacket; willingness to trade styling options for sizing options; willingness to spend more shopping/travel time for sizing options; willingness to spend more money for sizing options and career women's fit problems with career dress.

The satisfaction measures were adapted from the 4-point satisfaction scales used by Best and Andreasen (1976) and Hughes (1977). The satisfaction measures were limited to the satisfaction construct based on the recommendation of Aiello, Czepiel, and Rosenberg (1977) that researchers avoid mixed scales of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. A decision was made to use a 4-point scale based on the fact that the removal of the neutral point would require that respondents answer either negatively or positively. Steiniger and Dardis (1971) suggested that a 4-point scale could be used when overall high dissatisfaction had not been previously reported nor was expected. Since career dress satisfaction had not been previously evaluated and overall high dissatisfaction was not expected, the 4-point scale was deemed appropriate for this product category.

Career women's willingness or unwillingness to trade styling options for sizing options was measured by use of a 4-point willingness scale (1 = Very willing, 4 = Not at all willing).. Career women's willingness or unwillingness to spend more shopping/travel time to get more sizing options was measured by use of a 5-point scale (1 = None, 5 = Very much). Career women's willingness or unwillingness to spend additional money to get more sizing options was measured by use of a 5-point scale (1 = None, 5 = \$40.00 and over).

To be eligible to participate in the study, consumers must have been women who were employed at least 20 hours per week, in professional or managerial occupations as described in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1977) and must have had a skirted suit or suit-type jacket in their work wardrobe.

Data were collected at regularly planned meetings of professional women's associations. Analysis of variance was used to test the effect of general career dress satisfaction on willingness to trade styling options, willingness to spend additional shopping/travel time, and willingness to spend additional money for more sizing options. Tukey's range test was used to determine posteriori contrasts present at the .05 level of significance. Kendall's correlation coefficient (tau) was used to test the hypothesis that level of satisfaction

with career dress is an inverse function of experience with fit problems.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- Hypothesis 1: Willingness to make trade-offs for more sizing options is a negative function of general satisfaction with career dress.
- Hypothesis 1a: Career women who are more satisfied with their career dress will be less willing to trade styling options for more sizing options than those who are less satisfied.
- Hypothesis 1b: Career women who are more satisfied with their career dress will be less willing to trade additional shopping/travel time for more sizing options than those who are less satisfied.
- Hypothesis 1c: Career women who are more satisfied with their career dress will be less willing to trade additional money for more sizing options than those who are less satisfied.
- Hypothesis 2: Level of satisfaction with career dress is an inverse function of frequency of experience with fit problems.

SAMPLE

A total of 286 questionnaires were distributed and collected. The results were based on the analysis of 218 usable questionnaires. The sample consisted of working women whose ages ranged from 18 to over 65 years. Of the 218 respondents, the largest category was 35 to 44 years of age (26.6%). Over 80% of the respondents had attended college. Total gross family income of the respondents ranged from \$5,000 to over \$50,000 with modal income in the \$50,000 and over category. Of the total sample 57.8% were married, 28.4% were unmarried, and the remaining 11.9% were single, never married.

RESULTS

H1a: Career Women who Are More Satisfied with their Career Dress Will Be Less Willing to Trade Styling Options for More Sizing Options than Those who Are Less Satisfied.

It was expected that respondents who indicated a high level of satisfaction with their career dress would be less willing to accept fewer styling options to get more sizing options than respondents who indicated a low level of satisfaction. Analysis of variance of general satisfaction and willingness to trade styling options for more sizing options is presented in TABLE 1.

Reference to TABLE 1 indicates that willingness to trade styling options for more sizing options was not significantly different for the four levels of satisfaction with career dress. The respondents were equally willing to trade styling options for more sizing options, regardless of level of satisfaction reported.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents reported general satisfaction with career dress as Somewhat Satisfied with a mean of 1.91. Even though the respondents were generally satisfied with their career dress they were willing to trade styling options for sizing options. Specifically, a mean of 1.99 (Very willing = 1, Not at all willing = 4) was associated with willingness to trade styling options for more sleeve lengths. A mean of 1.95 (Very willing = 1, Not at all willing = 4)

was associated with willingness to trade styling options for torso lengths, and a mean of 1.96 (Very willing = 1, Not at all willing = 4) was associated with willingness to trade styling options for bust proportions. Perhaps a more equal distribution of respondents within the 4 satisfaction levels would have produced different results.

TABLE 1

Analysis of Variance of Willingness to Trade Styling Options for More Sizing Options and Satisfaction with Career Dress

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
<u>Main Effect</u>					
Satisfaction					
Between Groups	3	19.896	6.632	1.212	.306
Within Groups	212	1159.595	5.470		
Total	215	1179.490			

(n=215)

Thus, the data did not support Hypothesis 1a that career women who are more satisfied with their career dress will be less willing to trade styling options for more sizing options than those who are less satisfied. A large proportion of respondents were very willing to accept fewer styling options to get more sizing options in sleeve length (34.9%), in torso length (35.3%), and bust proportions (36.2%). Only about 5% of the respondents were not at all willing to trade styling options for more sizing options.

H1b: Career Women who Are More Satisfied with their Career Dress Will Be Less Willing to Trade Additional Shopping/Travel Time for More Sizing Options than Those who Are Less Satisfied.

Willingness to spend more time for sleeve length options is presented in ascending order according to number of respondents in a category. Only 3.7% of the respondents were not willing to spend any additional time to get more sleeve length options. 15.6% of the respondents reported willingness to spend a little more time for more sleeve length options. 42.7% of the respondents were willing to spend some more time for more sleeve length options. Over one-third of the respondents were willing to spend much more time (24.3%) or very much more time (13.3%) in pursuit of more sleeve length options. The mean willingness to spend more time for sleeve length options was 3.28 (Very much additional time = 5, and None = 1).

Willingness to spend more time for more torso length options is presented in descending order, according to number of respondents in a category. 40.4% of the respondents were willing to spend some more time for more torso length options. 39% were willing to spend much more time or very much more time to get more torso length options. 17.4% of the respondents were willing to spend a little more time for more torso length options. Only 3.2% were not willing to spend more time to get more torso length options. Mean willingness to spend more time for more torso length options was 3.26 (Very Much Additional Time = 5 and None = 1).

Willingness to spend more time to get more bust proportion options is presented in descending order, according to number of respondents in a category. Approximately 38.1% of the respondents indicated that they were willing to spend much or very much more time for more bust proportion options; 37.2% were willing to spend some more time to get more bust proportion options. 19.3% of the respondents indicated willingness to spend a little more time, and 4.6% were not willing to spend any additional time to get more bust proportion options. Mean willingness to spend more time to get more bust proportion options was 3.24 (Very Much Additional Time = 5, and None = 1).

It was expected that career women who reported high satisfaction with their career dress would be less willing to spend additional shopping/travel time to get more sizing options than would those who reported low satisfaction with their career dress. Analysis of variance of mean general satisfaction and mean willingness to spend additional shopping/travel time to get more sizing options is presented in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2

Analysis of Variance of Willingness to Trade Time for More Sizing Options and Satisfaction with Career Dress

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
<u>Main Effect</u>					
Satisfaction					
Between Groups	3	64.676	21.559	2.871	.037
Within Groups	212	1591.897	7.509		
Total	215	1656.573			

(n=215)

Results indicated that there was a significant difference ($F = 2.871$, $p = .037$) in willingness to spend more shopping/travel time among levels of general satisfaction. Tukey's range test indicated that respondents who reported that they were very satisfied (mean = 9.34), somewhat satisfied (mean = 9.80), or not very satisfied (mean = 9.94) with their career dress indicated significantly ($\alpha = .05$) less willingness to spend more time in order to get more sizing options than did those who reported that they were not at all satisfied with their career dress (mean = 15.0). Because responses were summed for the 3 dependent variables, willingness to spend time ranged from 1.0 to 15.0.

H1c: Career Women who Are More Satisfied with their Career Dress Will Be Less Willing to Trade Additional Money for More Sizing Options than Those who Are Less Satisfied.

Willingness to spend more money to get more sleeve length options is presented in descending order according to number of respondents in each category. 40.4% of the respondents indicated that they were willing to spend \$10.00 to \$20.99 more to get more sleeve length options, 33.9% of the respondents reported willingness to spend less than \$10.00 more for more sleeve length options. 9.2% of the respondents were willing to pay an additional \$21.00 to \$39.99 for more sleeve options and 5% of the respondents indicated willingness to pay an additional \$40.00 or more for more sleeve length options.

Mean willingness to spend more money for more sleeve length options was 2.65 (\$40.00 and over = 5, None = 1).

Willingness to spend more money to get more torso length options is presented in descending order according to number of respondents in each category. 46.3% of the respondents indicated that they were willing to spend \$10.00 to \$20.99 more for more torso length options in a suit-type jacket. 28.9% said they were willing to spend less than an additional \$10.00 for more torso length options. 10.6% indicated willingness to spend an additional \$21.00 to \$39.99 for more torso length options; 4.6% indicated willingness to spend an additional \$40.00 or more for more torso length options. However, 8.3% of the respondents indicated that they were unwilling to pay additional money for more torso length options. Mean willingness to spend more money for torso length options was 2.7 (\$40.00 and Over = 5, None = 1).

Willingness to spend more money to get more bust proportion options is presented in descending order according to number of respondents in each category. 36.75% of the respondents indicated that they were willing to spend an additional \$10.00 to \$20.99 for more bust proportion options. 31.7% of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to spend less than \$10.00 for more bust proportion options. 13.8% of the respondents indicated that they were unwilling to spend more money to get more bust proportion options. 11.9% were willing to spend \$21.00 to \$39.99 more for more bust proportion options. Finally, 5% of the respondents were willing to spend an additional \$40.00 or more for more bust proportion options. Mean willingness to spend more money was 2.63 (\$40.00 and over = 5, and None = 1).

It was expected that respondents who reported satisfaction with career dress would be less willing to spend more money to get more sizing options than those who did not report satisfaction with career dress. A summary of an analysis of variance of general satisfaction level and willingness to spend additional money to obtain more sizing options is presented in TABLE 3. Responses to the three dependent variables were summed, so that willingness to spend more money ranged from 1.0 to 15.0.

TABLE 3

Analysis of Variance of Willingness to Spend Additional Money for More Sizing Options and Satisfaction with Career Dress

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
<u>Main Effect</u>					
Satisfaction					
Between Groups	3	60.758	20.253	3.100	.028
Within Groups	212	1384.886	6.533		
Total	215	1445.643			

(n=215)

Analysis of variance indicated a significant difference ($F = 3.100$, $p = .028$) in respondents' willingness to spend more money to get more sizing options among levels of general satisfaction with career dress. Tukey's range test indicated that respondents who

reported that they were very satisfied (mean = 7.97), somewhat satisfied (mean = 8.01), or not very satisfied (mean = 7.87) with their career dress were significantly ($\alpha = .05$) less willing to spend more money to get more sizing options than were those who reported that they were not at all satisfied (mean = 13.5).

In summary, Hypothesis 1, that willingness to make trade-offs for more sizing options is a negative function of general satisfaction with career dress, was not completely accepted. Where time and money were concerned, results supported the hypothesis. However, results did not show that satisfaction with career dress had an effect on willingness to trade styling options for sizing options. Therefore, H1 was only partially accepted.

The data support the hypothesis that career women who are more satisfied with their career dress will be less willing to trade additional shopping/travel time for more sizing options than those who are less satisfied with their career dress. Although an analysis of variance of the data indicated that this hypothesis can be accepted, it should be noted that results were based on a small number of respondents who reported that they were not at all satisfied and that respondents who reported that they were not very satisfied were not significantly different in willingness to spend more time than were those who reported that they were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, and not at all satisfied.

The data support the hypothesis that career women who are more satisfied with their career dress will be less willing to spend additional money for more sizing options than those who are less satisfied. Although analysis of variance of the data indicated that this hypothesis can be accepted, it should be noted that a small number of respondents reported that they were not at all satisfied with their career dress. In addition, there were no significant differences between those respondents who reported that they were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, and not very satisfied. Only those respondents who reported that they were not at all satisfied were significantly more willing than the other three groups of respondents to spend more money to get more sizing options.

Hypothesis 2: Level of Satisfaction with Career Dress Is an Inverse Function of Frequency of Experience with Fit Problems.

It was expected that as frequency of experience with fit problems increased, satisfaction with career dress would decrease. The correlation analysis of general satisfaction and experience with fit problems is presented in TABLE 4. The results indicated a significant, moderate relationship between the two variables

TABLE 4

Correlation Between Satisfaction with Career Clothing and Experience with Fit Problems When Shopping for RTW Career Clothing

Variables	tau	p Value
General Satisfaction by Fit Problems	.2427	.001 (n=216)

(tau = .2427, p = .001). As respondents experienced more fit problems, their satisfaction with their career dress decreased.

The data supported the hypothesis that level of satisfaction with career dress is an inverse function of frequency of experience with fit problems. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to investigate career women's satisfaction with apparel fit and sizing and the resultant effect on willingness to make resource trade-offs. Emphasis was on women employed in professional or managerial occupations because this is a growing market segment.

It has been suggested that retailers may be reluctant to carry proportioned clothing because they may believe that the investment would not be worthwhile due to increased inventory and unwillingness on the part of consumers to change their shopping habits to include proportioned clothing ("Proportioned jeans sized," 1984). Although these concerns are important to retailers, consumers' willingness to change has not been studied.

The present study revealed that satisfaction was reported to be high, although widespread fit problems were also reported. Because fit has been established as one of the most important criteria in clothing choice, it is possible that the respondents of the study accepted a situation for which they believed no solution was offered in the marketplace. Consumers' preconceived ideas about what to expect may have influenced the satisfaction process, leading to low expectations regarding fit, and therefore, a reported high level of satisfaction.

In the present study, the effect of satisfaction on willingness to trade styling options, time and money was not as strong as expected. Only in cases in which respondents reported no satisfaction was an effect shown. It is possible that trading styling options is a different construct than are spending additional resources such as time and money. Time and money may be regarded as personal resources whereas the number of styling options may be considered as dependent upon retail offerings, with less consumer control.

It has been suggested ("Proportioned jeans," 1984) that retailers have viewed the addition of proportioned clothing for women as an inventory problem because they believed that women would be unwilling to accept fewer styles to get more sizing options similar to what is currently offered in men's wear. Furness (1970) concurred, cautioning that unlimited variety could be wasteful and unmanageable. However, present results suggested that career women were highly willing to accept fewer styles in order to get more sizing options. Not only were the respondents willing to accept fewer styles, they also indicated that they would be willing to spend more time and money in order to get proportioned career clothing.

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