

## Abstract

### Purpose

This paper explores fashion availability, fit and affordability in the UK stores especially for those women who wear size 16 and over; and examines their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the retail experience.

### Design/methodology/approach

The satisfaction of customer needs remains a fundamental tenet of marketing theory, research and application. This survey was an exploratory study into satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the fashion provision and shopping environments for women in the UK. A questionnaire solicited the views of 250 women thereby enabling the researchers to gauge consumers' views on sizing, fit and fashion availability, perception of current offers, pricing and shopping environments.

### Findings

A large percentage of females, particularly those who wear size 16 and over, are dissatisfied with retail environments, fashion and sizing provision among major UK market players. While most women shopped from the high street and department stores, the larger woman had great difficulty in finding well-fitting fashionable clothing in general, and with certain categories being most problematic. Respondents' views would appear to contradict previously accepted wisdom that clothing consumption activity is leisure and pleasure orientated; many negative experiences prevailed leaving them unhappy and disenfranchised.

### Research limitations/implications

The findings presented are the views of women's experiences in one city in the UK. Future research could include a wider sample from more cities.

### Practical implications

Marketers should be aware of the need for affordable fashions for larger women. Lack of appropriate sizes is a major source of dissatisfaction. This creates negative emotions in terms of: merchandise choice, visual merchandising, store environment, sales personnel attitude, pricing policies and promotional activities. These factors are the very foundations of consumer satisfaction and the evidence of consumer dissatisfaction resulting in avoidance behaviour should be particularly worrying for retailers, given that they are operating in an increasingly competitive and saturated fashion environment.

### Originality/value

This paper provides an initial indication of what creates consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction about fashion, fit, affordability and retail environments in the UK particularly among larger women. This paper shows areas of specific concern for marketers.